



Evaluation Summary



International
Labour
Office

Evaluation Unit

Improve nutrition, food safety, and food security for China's most vulnerable women and children – Joint final evaluation

Quick Facts

Country: *China*

Final Evaluation: *4/2013*

Type : *Independent*

Technical Field : *IFP/SAFEWORK*

Evaluation Management : *MDG Spanish Funds*

Consultant : *Prof. Chen Jie*

Project Code : *CPR/09/51/UND*

Donateur : *Fondes de MDG – US\$ 6,000,000*

ILO: 481,000 WHO: 1,735,540

WFP: 209,720 UNICEF: 1,080,629

UNIDO: 581,000 UNDP: 567,100

UNESCO: 418,880 FAO: 1,048,600

Summary extracted from the main evaluation report

Improving nutrition, food safety and food security for China's most vulnerable women and children (hereinafter referred to as CFSN) is a joint programme under the MDG-F thematic window on Children, Food Security and Nutrition, the time frame being over three years (December 2009 – April 2013) with an overall budget of US\$ 7 million. The goal is to improve nutrition, food safety and food security for China's most vulnerable women and children,

especially focusing on the high risk group of 1.2 million children and women of childbearing age in China. Pilot studies on comprehensive approaches to food safety, food security as well as maternal and child nutrition intervention were carried out in six of the most impoverished counties. Guided by its goal and employing the strategy of monitoring and evaluation, the joint programme constructed an intervention framework which consists of four main goals with ten sub-projects, involving 8 UN agencies, 4 central government ministries and more than 16 partner institutions in China.

The aim of this final evaluation is to evaluate the outputs and outcomes achieved by the CFSN as well as the resulting impact, and to summarize the best practices gained and lessons learned during the process of the CFSN, in order to scale up their use to other similar development programmes. According to the scope and issues for evaluation designated by the MDG-F Secretariat, the evaluation was carried out on the three levels of design, process and results.

The evaluation adopted a holistic and prospective approach with triangulation as its principle methodology. A multidisciplinary evaluation team was established to comprehensively collect monitoring and evaluation information and conduct interviews

with national, provincial and county level managers and operators as well as MDG-F Secretariat, so as to achieve, through desk studies and field surveys, a multi-perspective evaluation of the outcomes and experience gained by the joint programme on all three levels.

Main findings of the evaluation

On issues such as nutrition intervention, promoting breastfeeding, agricultural development, enhancing the production and monitoring of safe food, information, education and communication of food safety knowledge and laws, and the revision of policies and laws, the CFSN integrated international and domestic resources to encourage UN agencies, Chinese government departments and institutions to tackle the challenge of improving nutrition, food safety and food security for the women and children in China's impoverished areas. In the design process and during implementation, a distinct and highly logical programme management framework was established, including a clear allocation of institutional responsibilities, indicators for results, and a timeframe. At the same time, strategies for monitor and evaluation and promotion were established. PMC, the UN agencies and central government ministries duly adjusted the work plan in accordance with the results of the monitoring and evaluation, and the programme coordination office reported important developments and trends of the programme through channels such as the programme's website, thereby increasing the public's attention and support for the programme.

The CFSN led to a number of new working mechanisms and models, such as the newly established China Food Safety Law Research Center, training of judges for court trials of criminal cases involving food safety, exploring ways to appropriately combine agricultural development and nutrition education, and collaboration among women's associations, health inspection institutes and broadcasting stations in pilot counties to promote food safety laws.

The CFSN adopted the management model of leadership by the government with support from the UN agencies. The sub-projects have the distinct advantage of mutually complementary information and roles. Pilot counties have also developed ways to conduct multi-sector integration intervention for the promotion of food safety laws, and ways for women's associations to acquire contributions from enterprises, so as to improve work efficiency.

Due to reasons such as natural disasters, the planned time for implementation of the CFSN prove to be insufficient, so an application was made for an extension with no cost implications. On the whole, the joint programme has been achieved as originally planned, and the financial goal has been largely met. During implementation, the central government ministries showed a high level of attention and played a proactive part in coordination and management. National technical institutions participated actively, and relevant provincial departments took responsibility for the supervision, examination and management of related sub-projects, converting the results of pilot areas into provincial policy documents. In addition, food safety knowledge was promoted, for example, in the form of theatrical performances spontaneously organized by the residents.

The CFSN produced baseline survey and final survey reports of high quality, and developed a set of surveillance indicators for the nutritional status of vulnerable populations, which received much approval from Chinese government departments such as the Ministries of agriculture and health. Intervention with Ying Yang Baos showed significant results with a marked improvement in indicators such as growth, development, anemia prevalence and various micronutrients among children aged 6-23 months in pilot counties. Agricultural intervention led to a rise in the number of people receiving nutrition intervention and in the consumption of micronutrient-rich food in rural households, both of which exceeded the

expected targets. Although the expected target has not been met for improvement in infant and young child exclusive breastfeeding rates, comprehensive measures such as the establishment of re-evaluation standards for baby-friendly hospitals, revision of the Regulations for Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and maternity protection by enterprises have provided support for improving breastfeeding rates. The newly developed standards for fortification of supplementary food for infants and young children as well as dietary guidance for infants, young children and women have provided evidence for implementing food fortification.

The CFSN produced important outputs instrumental in the successful implementation of the Food Safety Law. For example, recommendations on criminal law amendments were adopted and related instructions were made by state leaders, including the premier of the State Council. At the same time, a number of local enterprises received help to achieve HACCP certification, and an ISO71025 system was established. Contributive attempts were also made to see how primary and secondary schools in rural areas could pursue systematic education in nutrition and food safety and how teachers could receive appropriate training, thereby creating innovative content and forms of training. Media training showed significant results. The advocacy package still needs to be integrated and implemented.

The CFSN offers a relatively high degree of equity. Interventions, for example, made no distinction of gender or race. It produced numerous excellent examples and much experience. For instance, the CFSN carried out surveys on maternity protection, and facilitated the revision of the State Council Special Provisions for the Protection of Female Employees. The joint programme increased the incentives for national government departments to autonomously apply interventions. The central government, for example, decided to provide funds amounting to 100 million Chinese yuan for free Ying Yang

Baos to be distributed to children in 100 impoverished counties. Due to the lack of financial and human resources in the impoverished areas, policy and funding support from national or provincial levels is critical to ensure sustainable development in this aspect.

Conclusions of the evaluation

The CFSN led to cooperation among UN agencies, Chinese governmental departments and technical institutions, and facilitated the integration of resources, in order to jointly tackle the challenge of improving nutrition, food safety and food security for women and children in impoverished areas. The joint intervention model it created is an optimal strategy for addressing target issues.

With a fairly high degree of ownership at national, provincial and county levels, the active participation of governments at all levels as well as technical and financial support from UN agencies enhanced operational efficiency. Multisectoral participation in tackling the challenge of improving nutrition, food safety and food security shows a significant advantage over a single agency operation in terms of efficacy.

The CFSN met the intervention targets of the thematic window, proved to be beneficial in advancing towards the achievement of the MDGs and putting the Paris Declaration into practice at national and local levels, and produced significant intervention results and impact. Certain results have been integrated in national policies or have been widely applied with a fairly high degree of sustainability, the key to ensuring such sustainability of projects in impoverished areas is policy support at national or provincial levels.

Recommendations

1. To strengthen the building of mechanisms for collaboration and coordination among agencies participating in the joint programme, so as to increase the comprehensive analytical capacity of reports from government and technical departments; to optimize coordination

mechanisms for resource management, and enhance the coordination capacity of the programme management office; and to explore ways to set up multilateral financing mechanisms, in order to ensure sustainability of intervention activities in poverty-stricken areas. To initiate comprehensive activities, such as enhancing the management of baby-friendly hospitals, creating baby-friendly communities and implementing the Regulations for Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, so as to develop and popularize foods providing nutrition intervention to pregnant and lactating women, and to facilitate the improvement of nutrition and health among women and children.

2. To scale up a comprehensive intervention model of agricultural development and nutrition education and work on food fortification in impoverished areas, so as to correct the disturbing situation concerning food security and malnutrition.

3. To enhance educational reform and teacher training so as to ensure that health education on nutrition and food safety is integrated into primary and secondary school curricula, leading to increased awareness and behavioural changes of healthy dietary habits and food safety among school children.

4. To continue food security and micronutrient surveys in the long term, in order to provide evidence for policy making on scientific applications in poverty alleviation, food security and nutrition intervention.

5. To continuously integrate food safety campaigns into the routine work of women's associations; to strengthen grassroots advocacy aimed at vulnerable groups by mobilizing the civil society and community bodies through the network of women's associations; and to continue the training of media journalists, government officials, judicial workers, food safety inspectors and food producers, so as to promote enforcement of the new Food Safety Law.

5. To continuously enhance the building of a system for food safety emergency responses and complaints as well as for inspection support by defining roles and responsibility of different sectors, ensure their coordination, accountability and increasing their human and financial resources at the grassroots level; and to comprehensively enhance capabilities for the production, supervision and management of safe food by expanding training on the HACCP system for food manufacturers, increasing laboratory testing capacity, and strengthening the ability to control food safety in poverty-stricken areas.

6. To facilitate the development of rules for the implementation of the Special Provisions for the Protection of Female Employees promulgated by the State Council as soon as possible, and to enhance the ability of employees to carry out collective negotiations on maternity protection, so as to ensure optimal results.