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Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Egypt (2018–2023)

Executive summary

The evaluation of the country strategic plan for Egypt for July 2018 to December 2023 and the transitional interim country strategic plan for January to June 2018 covered WFP's strategy, interventions and systems under the plans. Taking a utilization-focused, consultative approach, the evaluation served the dual purpose of accountability and learning and informed the preparation of a new country strategic plan.

The evaluation found that the country strategic plan was relevant to the Government of Egypt's frameworks, policies and strategies and aligned with Egypt's Vision 2030. The targeting of most activities was correctly conducted through government systems given that most WFP activities were integrated into national social protection structures.

Under strategic outcome 1 school feeding, take-home rations and conditional cash-based transfers were successful in responding to aspects of food insecurity, vulnerability and inadequate education. WFP made clear efforts to increase women's participation through a microloan programme, seed funds and business development workshops. Activities under strategic outcome 2 led to enhanced food security, increased breastfeeding and more nutritious diets. Under strategic outcome 3 WFP's work under the First 1,000 Days programme provided critical knowledge on nutrition through social and behaviour change communication and WFP's policy engagement efforts with the Government. The resilience of smallholder farmers was increased under strategic outcome 4, although the results among Bedouins were less than expected.

In line with WFP evaluation policy (2022) (WFP/EB.1/2022/4-C), to respect the integrity and independence of evaluation findings the editing of this report has been limited and as a result some of the language in it may not be fully consistent with the World Food Programme's standard terminology or editorial practices. Please direct any requests for clarification to the Director of Evaluation.

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Support for national partnerships, South–South cooperation and the Luxor centre for technology and innovation under strategic outcome 5 has the potential to enhance WFP's profile.

The protection concerns of beneficiaries were effectively addressed by WFP. Overall, beneficiaries were well aware of WFP's complaint and feedback mechanism. WFP focused on supporting women through various activities, but limited technical expertise constrained its capacity for gender mainstreaming.

Support was generally provided on time, but a lack of available funding impeded timeliness in some instances. Funding also affected beneficiary reach, with WFP performance varying among strategic outcomes. WFP's use of the Government's own procurement systems may have led to some delays.

Under the country strategic plan WFP was able to exercise considerable flexibility and responsiveness to changing circumstances and shocks. WFP formed strong partnerships with the Government and undertook joint activities with other United Nations entities, although not all opportunities for long-term collaboration were seized.

Overall, WFP is on track to achieving the country strategic plan results, albeit with some exceptions. However, a fragmented approach to the identification and delivery of its interventions could limit overall performance.

WFP supported the Government's response to several pressing challenges, including child and maternal nutrition, the food security of refugees and climate change. The Government has worked with WFP to find innovative funding modalities such as debt swaps.

WFP's work in communities where it provided several types of support demonstrated that addressing challenges in a multifaceted way can generate results that are greater than the sum of their parts.

Using existing national systems to identify beneficiaries was an important element in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the results of WFP's activities. However, WFP's competence in identifying the most vulnerable people and communities was not fully used by the country office to strengthen the robustness of government beneficiary selection systems.

The ability of the country office to effectively monitor activities, use monitoring data and ensure that gender was mainstreamed effectively was hampered by insufficient human and financial resources.

WFP successfully supported the Government in the digitization of systems for improved food security and played an important role in country capacity strengthening.

The evaluation makes five recommendations for WFP, three of which are strategic and two operational. The recommendations are that WFP should review its interventions from the strategic and operational perspectives with a view to streamlining and consolidating the number of interventions; support the Government in the refinement of its beneficiary identification mechanisms and on any gaps identified; review its partnerships (including with other United Nations entities and the private sector) to assess their strategic potential under the new country strategic plan; ensure that it has adequate capacity in place for the effective monitoring and follow-up of the interventions it supports, including through the consistent measurement of progress in its support for country capacity strengthening; and ensure that it has the capacity and ability to mainstream gender into the interventions it supports.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Egypt (2018–2023) (WFP/EB.A/2023/7-E/1) and management response (WFP/EB.A/2023/7-E/1/Add.1) and encourages further action on the recommendations set out in the report, taking into account the considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the decisions and recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

Introduction

Evaluation features

1. The country strategic plan (CSP) evaluation was timed to provide evidence and lessons to inform the development of the next WFP CSP for Egypt.
2. The evaluation covered all activities implemented between January 2018 and March 2022 under the transitional interim CSP (T-ICSP) covering January–June 2018 and the CSP for July 2018–December 2023. It assessed WFP's strategic positioning and the extent to which the organization made the shifts expected under the CSP, WFP's effectiveness in contributing to strategic outcomes, the efficiency with which the CSP was implemented, the appropriateness of the operational modalities used to respond to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, and factors explaining WFP's performance.
3. The evaluation was conducted by an independent evaluation team through a mixed-methods approach: qualitative data from key informants were supplemented with quantitative secondary data. Data collection was undertaken through an electronic survey and a combination of remote and face-to-face interviews with a total of 391 persons comprising 300 beneficiaries and 91 other stakeholders; the latter included WFP staff from headquarters, the Regional Bureau for the Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe and the country office, the Government, donors, other United Nations entities and non-governmental organization cooperating partners. Through the triangulation of information the methodology ensured the mitigation of evaluability limitations.
4. Gender and social inclusion were fully integrated into the evaluation's methodological approach. Ethical standards were applied to ensure the dignity and confidentiality of the individuals involved in the evaluation.

Context

5. In 2022 Egypt's population was estimated at 108.8 million people.¹ In 2019, the country's score on the Human Development Index was 0.707 (an increase of 29 percent from 1990), ranking it 116th of 189 countries.² Between 1990 and 2019 life expectancy at birth increased by 7.4 years, mean years of schooling increased by 3.9 years and expected years of schooling increased by 3.5 years.³ Poverty rates decreased to 29.7 percent in 2019–2020, from 32.5 percent in 2017–2018.⁴ However, 6.1 percent of the population is vulnerable to multidimensional poverty and 0.6 percent is in severe multidimensional poverty.⁵ Unemployment among young people declined steadily from 34.7 percent in 2015 to 21 percent in 2019 but increased to 34.1 percent between 2019 and 2021.⁶ In 2021 Egypt ranked 129th of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index, the highest ranking the country has recorded in the past ten years.⁷
6. The percentage of undernourished people increased from 4.4 percent in 2015 to 5.1 percent in 2020,⁸ but the prevalence of severe food insecurity decreased from 8.7 percent in 2016 to

¹ Countrymeters. 2022. [Egypt Population](#).

² United Nations Development Programme. 2020. *Human Development Report 2020. The next frontier: Human development and the Anthropocene*.

³ World Bank. 2022. [Life expectancy at birth, total \(years\) – Egypt, Arab Rep.](#)

⁴ United Nations Development Programme. 2021. [Egypt's Human Development Report 2021](#).

⁵ *Ibid.*










⁶ World Bank. 2022. [Unemployment, youth total \(% of total labor force ages 15–24\) \(modeled ILO estimate\) – Egypt, Arab Rep.](#)

⁷ World Economic Forum. 2022. [Global Gender Gap Report 2022](#).

⁸ FAOSTAT. 2022. [Prevalence of undernourishment \(percent\) Egypt](#).

7.1 percent in 2020.⁹ Between 2014 and 2021 the prevalence of stunting among children under 5 decreased from 21.4 to 12.8 percent and wasting from 8 to 3 percent, while anaemia increased from 27.2 to 43 percent.¹⁰

7. The agriculture sector provides livelihoods for 57 percent of the population.¹¹ Agricultural communities in Upper Egypt, in particular smallholder farmers, are subject to food insecurity, water scarcity, climate variability and unsustainable livelihoods.¹² Egypt is at high risk from natural hazards and very vulnerable to climate change impacts.¹³ The 2021 Global Climate Risk Index ranked Egypt 120th of 180 countries.¹⁴

	Indicator	Value	Year
	Population total (million) (1)	108.8	2022
	Human Development Index (score) (2)	0.707	2019
	Gross domestic product growth (3)	3.3 percent	2021
	Gini coefficient (3)	32	2017
	Unemployment among young people (% of total labour force 15–24 years of age) (3)	21 percent	2019
	Life expectancy at birth (3)	72 years	2020
	Global Hunger Index (score) (4)	57	2022
	Prevalence of stunting in children under 5 (5)	12.8	2021
	Climate Risk Index rank (6)	120	2021

Source: (1) Countrymeters. 2022. [Egypt Population](#); (2) United Nations Development Programme. 2021. [Egypt's Human Development Report 2021](#); (3) World Bank. 2022. [Egypt, Arab Rep.](#); (4) Global Hunger Index. 2022. [Egypt](#); (5) Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics. 2022. [Egypt Family Health Survey 2021](#); (6) GermanWatch. 2021. [Global Climate Risk Index 2021](#).

WFP country strategic plan

8. WFP has provided support in Egypt since 1968. As noted above, a T-ICSP covered the first six months of 2018 and was followed by a CSP covering the period from mid-2018 to the end of 2023. The T-ICSP aimed to support the shift in WFP's focus towards the strengthening of

⁹ World Bank. 2022. [Prevalence of severe food insecurity in the population \(%\) – Egypt, Arab. Rep.](#)

¹⁰ Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics. 2022. [Egypt Family Health Survey 2021](#) (in Arabic).

¹¹ International Fund for Agricultural Development. 2022. [Egypt country page](#).

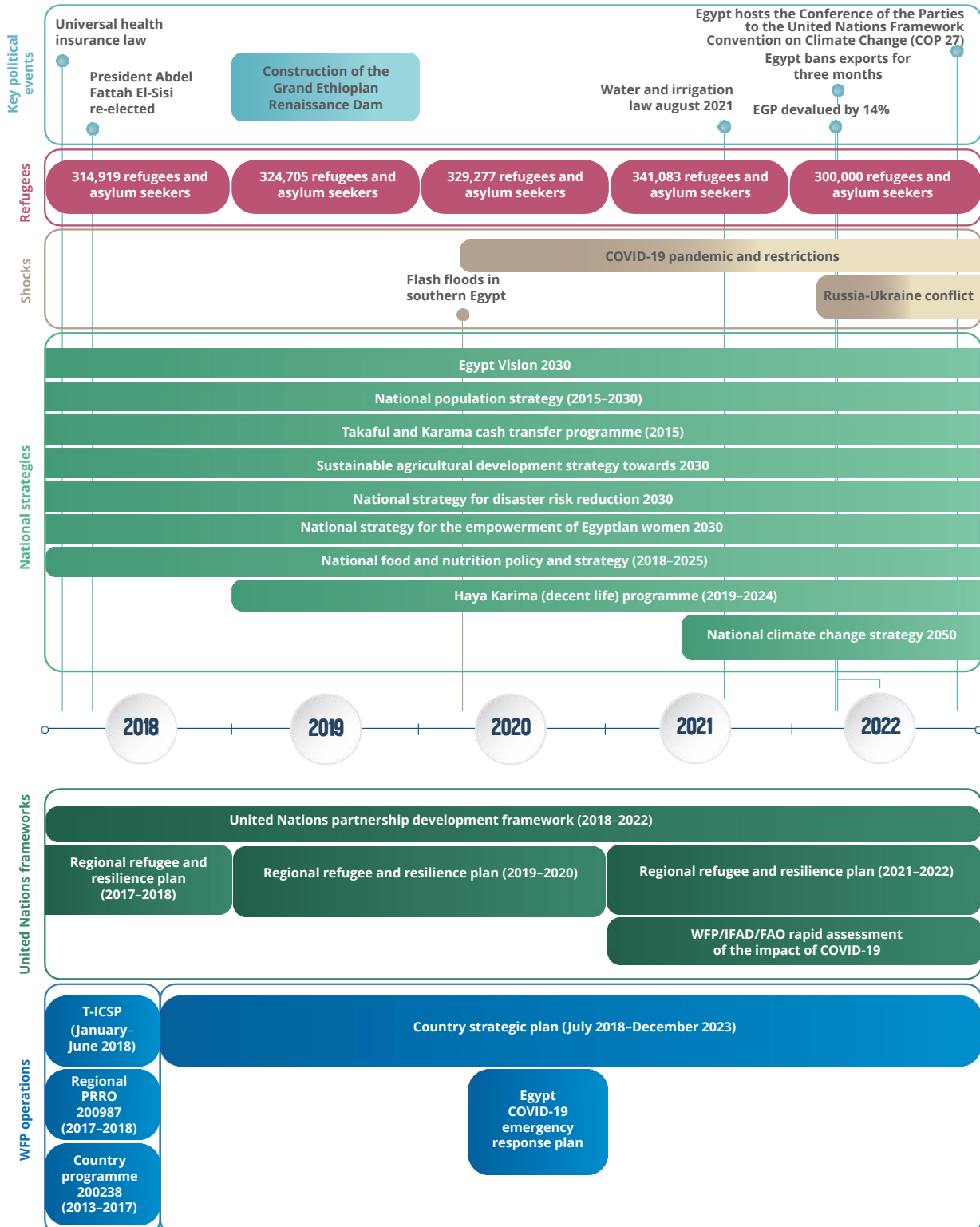
¹² International Journal of Food and Agricultural Economics. 2020. [The Socio-Economic Assessment to Evaluate the Potentiality of Developing the Rural Community in Upper Egypt](#).

¹³ World Bank. 2021. [Climate Risk Country Profile: Egypt](#).

¹⁴ GermanWatch. 2021. [Global Climate Risk Index 2021](#).

national capacity to address the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition and the strengthening of resilience among food-insecure and malnourished populations, and it included a response to general vulnerability and shocks. The CSP added a focus on South-South cooperation and technological support. Figure 1 illustrates the major events affecting the country context, United Nations development assistance frameworks and WFP interventions.

Figure 1: Country context and WFP operational overview of Egypt

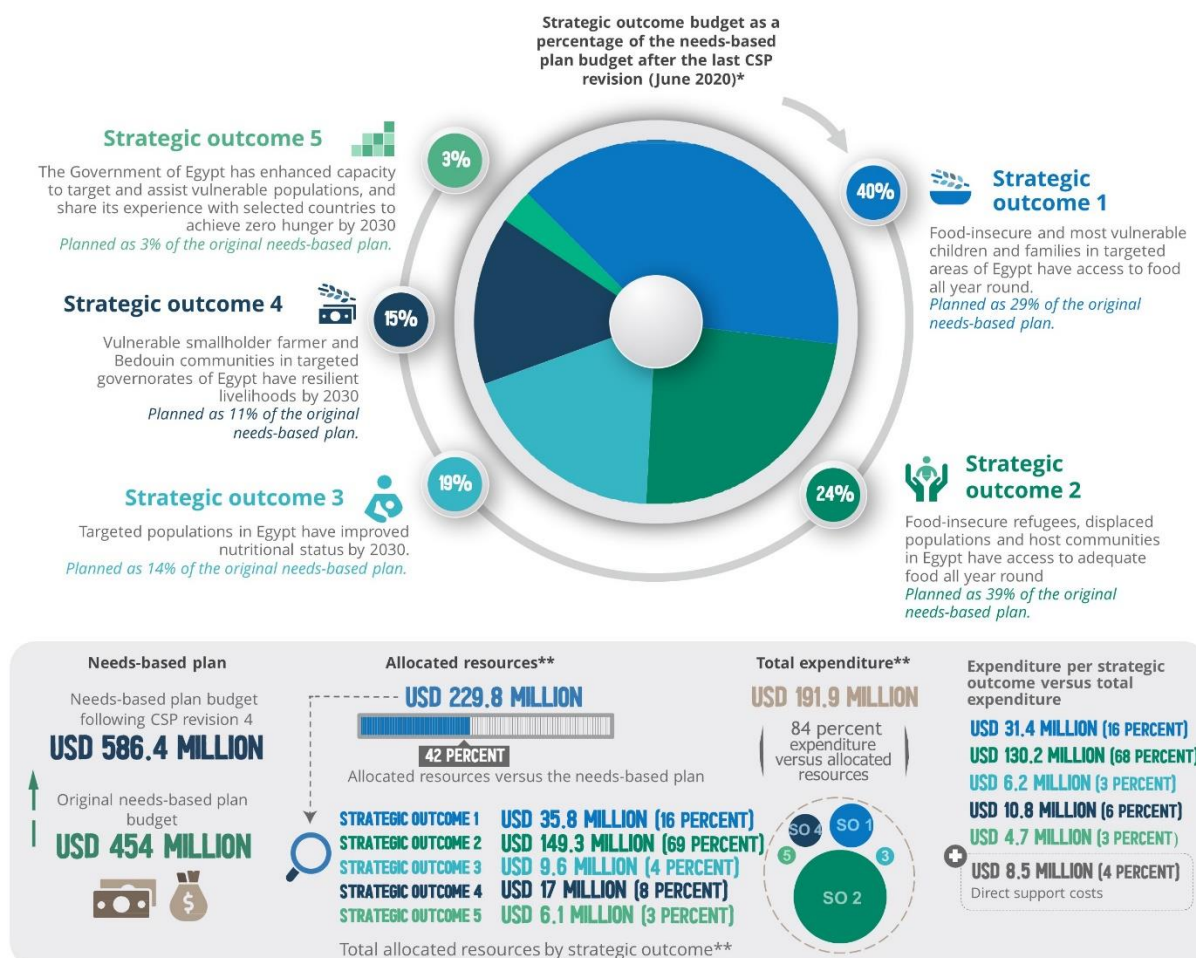


Abbreviations: PRRO = protracted relief and recovery operation.

Source: Office of Evaluation based on the full report on the evaluation of the T-ICSP and CSP.

9. The original needs-based plan for the CSP was USD 454 million (figure 2). By April 2022 that amount had risen to USD 586.4 million, reflecting four CSP revisions. Actual expenditure as a percentage of allocated resources averaged 84 percent across activities and strategic outcomes.

Figure 2: Egypt country strategic plan resource overview, 2018–2023



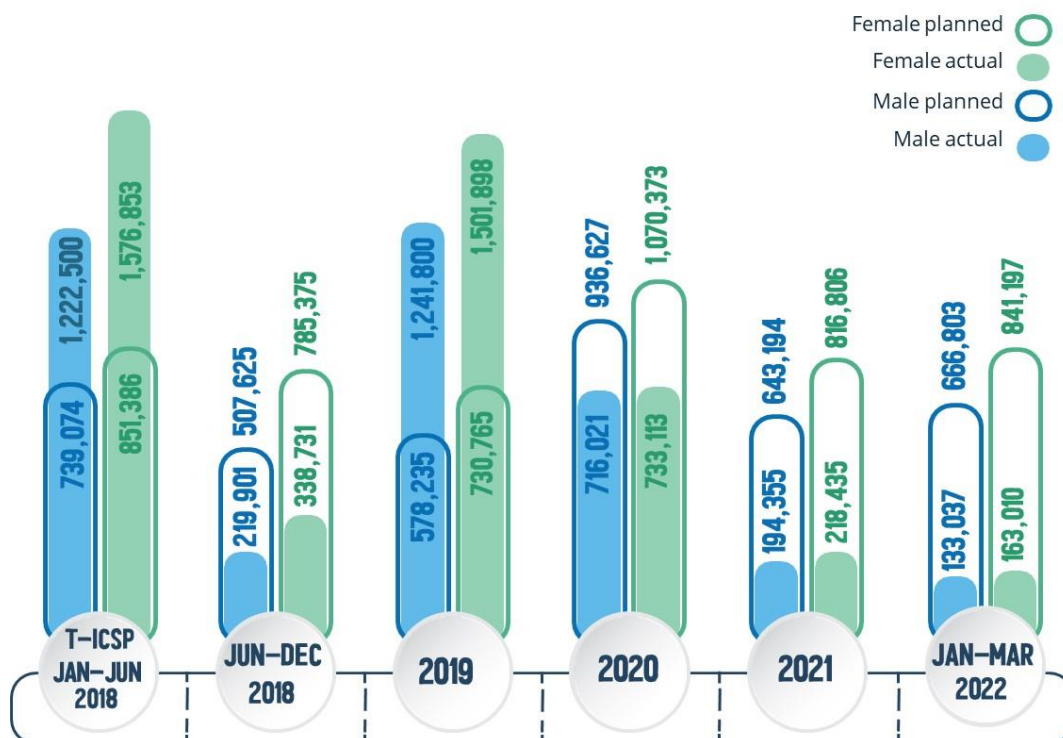
* The needs-based plan budget percentages by strategic outcome have been calculated at the level of total direct costs, including direct support costs (USD 16.3 million) and excluding indirect support costs.

** Allocated resources and expenditure data do not include indirect support costs because the data was extracted at mid-year.

Abbreviation: SO = strategic outcome.

Source: Country portfolio budget resource overview report, data extracted on 7 April 2022 (not available online).

10. WFP provides various types of support in all 27 of Egypt's governorates, with only one programme implemented nationally (the nutrition programme). The CSP initially aimed to reach 1,473,000 beneficiaries, which was revised to 2,111,000. In the second half of 2018 (the first six months of CSP implementation) and over the period from January 2020 through the first quarter of 2022, the beneficiaries reached were consistently fewer than planned. Only in 2019 did the number of beneficiaries reached exceed the number planned.

Figure 3: CSP beneficiaries (planned and actual) by year and sex, 2018–2022

Sources: Annual country reports: T-ICSP 2018, CSP 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021. Actual data for the first quarter of 2022 provided by the country office.

Evaluation findings

To what extent are WFP's strategic position, role and specific contributions based on country priorities, people's needs and WFP's strengths?

Relevance to national policies, plans and strategies

11. The CSP was relevant to government frameworks, policies and strategies and aligned with Egypt's Vision 2030. The CSP strategic outcomes were aligned with various national programmes, including social protection programmes such as *Takaful* and *Karama*, the First 1,000 Days programme and *Haya Karima*. Egypt's constitutional commitment to nutrition reflects the objectives detailed under strategic outcomes 2 (hunger) and 4 (education). Through the provision of food transfers, cash-based transfers (CBTs) and a range of awareness-raising activities, strategic outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 5 promoted the objectives of Egypt's 2017 national food and nutrition policy. Strategic outcome 4 aimed to support the country's 2017 sustainable agriculture strategy.
12. Beneficiary targeting for all activities, apart from those for refugees and displaced persons, was conducted through government systems. This approach was appropriate given the integration of most CSP activities into the Government's social protection structures. On the other hand, there is no evidence that WFP validated the beneficiary lists received from the Government or conducted post-distribution monitoring to ascertain whether the most vulnerable people were actually reached. Some targeting gaps existed with regard to young people and persons with disabilities. In the Bedouin community beneficiaries were identified by community leaders using their own criteria, but there was no clear evidence to confirm that the most vulnerable households were those targeted.

13. The CSP remained highly relevant to the country's circumstances and the intended target groups over the period covered by the evaluation. The breadth of activities and a wide range of sub-activities provided the flexibility needed to respond to changes, mainly in the number and coverage of refugees, and shocks, mainly related to COVID-19. In the response to COVID-19 a shift from conditional to unconditional support was made under strategic outcome 1 (school feeding) and strategic outcomes 2 and 3 (nutrition counselling for pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls) to enable the continuation of support during the pandemic while seeking to reduce potential infection and, through school closures, rates of infection. In addition activity 9, which expanded the provision of food assistance to crisis-affected populations during and in the aftermath of the crisis, was added.
14. The CSP was well aligned with the United Nations partnership development framework for 2018–2022, and WFP engaged in important partnerships with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Collaboration with other entities such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), was more ad hoc and hence less strategic. WFP used its comparative advantage in food security, its in-depth knowledge of the country and its strong relationships with government agencies. It also partnered with private sector actors (for example, on nutrition messaging with Carrefour) and non-governmental organizations.

Delivery of outputs and contribution to strategic outcomes

15. **Strategic outcome 1: Food-insecure and most vulnerable children and families in targeted areas of Egypt have access to adequate food all year round.** The school feeding programme, take-home rations and conditional CBTs were successful and supported the attainment of strategic outcome 1. School feeding supported positive school attendance and retention outcomes, and take-home rations and CBTs enabled households to cope better under the conditions imposed by COVID-19. WFP's efforts to increase women's participation through the microloan programme, seed funds and business development workshops helped some women to increase their incomes, although the pandemic had an adverse effect and made loan repayment more difficult. WFP promoted gender equality awareness in schools and provided lawyers with capacity strengthening on providing support for gender-based violence victims. However, there is no clear evidence of the degree to which activities such as microloans, community hubs and youth capacity development have delivered, or will deliver, on the strategic outcome. In some cases there was a similar lack of clarity with regard to which complementary activities should be implemented to ensure that WFP's engagement leads to the desired results in areas such as infrastructure support for schools and the training of government teachers.
16. **Strategic outcome 2: Food-insecure refugees, displaced populations and host communities in Egypt have access to adequate food all year round.** General food distribution through cash vouchers improved the nutrition status of beneficiaries, although a cap on CBTs restricting them to five members per household constrained their effectiveness. Social and behaviour change communication also contributed to improved nutrition, although in some cases targeting should have been broadened to include all the household members engaged in nutrition-related decision-making and not only pregnant and breastfeeding women. The outcomes of resilience building and the integration of refugees into host communities were not systematically assessed by WFP, but most participants in resilience building activities successfully completed livelihood training and received monthly household assistance, with the potential to improve their nutrition. Despite the lack of a systematic assessment, beneficiaries considered the food assistance provided as part of the COVID-19 response to be an important positive contribution to their food and nutrition security.

17. **Strategic outcome 3: Targeted populations in Egypt have improved nutritional status by 2030.** WFP's assistance supported a number of important national social protection programmes, strategies and initiatives. It played a key role in the Government's First 1,000 Days programme via the development of nutrition counselling materials, nutrition messaging through social media platforms and the fostering of policy dialogue through, for instance, the organization of high-level ministerial conferences. The programme improved the nutrition status of beneficiaries. WFP became the strategic partner for key national programmes, including the Presidential "100 million Healthy Lives" initiative, under which screening for anaemia, obesity and stunting are carried out; the national nutrition strategy and action plan; and the *Haya Karima* social protection programme, for which WFP developed a nutrition component. COVID-19, however, severely affected the outcomes of some activities, such as the development of curricula and social and behaviour change communications under the First 1,000 Days programme.
18. **Strategic outcome 4: Vulnerable smallholder farmer and Bedouin communities in targeted governorates of Egypt have resilient livelihoods by 2030.** Support for communities in Upper Egypt in adapting to climate change and shocks – through capacity strengthening (with regard to, for instance, improvement of irrigation canals and use of solar-powered irrigation), income diversification through in-kind animal loans and technological advancement and agroprocessing practices – showed clear indications of improving resilience in the long term. WFP's support for Bedouin communities through food assistance for assets was useful in creating infrastructure (such as irrigation mechanisms) and led to increased production. However, the support lacked key elements that would enable resilience building; for instance, farmers could not make use of irrigation systems due to the lack of a sustainable system for meeting the recurring seasonal need for seeds and seedlings without continuous support from WFP or other actors.
19. **Strategic outcome 5: The Government of Egypt has enhanced capacity to target and assist vulnerable populations and share its experience with selected countries to achieve zero hunger by 2030.** WFP's support for the development of a geospatial platform strengthened the capacity of government staff to undertake geographical analysis of statistical data on social protection to inform policymaking. The platform also helped the Government to facilitate the monitoring of the supply chain for wheat. Other activities under strategic outcome 5, such as partnerships and the establishment of the Luxor Centre for Knowledge Sharing and Innovation, have the potential to contribute effectively to knowledge sharing and innovation, but more time is required to assess their effect.

Contribution to cross-cutting aims

20. ***Humanitarian principles, protection and accountability to affected populations.*** Most of the protection concerns of beneficiaries were addressed by WFP, but there were concerns that the processes for securing benefits (CBTs or vouchers) were cumbersome for beneficiaries and that beneficiary dignity was not consistently upheld. Results were mixed with regard to the provision of information to, and consultation of, beneficiaries at the programme design stage. Consultations determined the focus of support (for example, which community members should benefit and how) but did not serve to modify the type of support provided or to ensure that support was comprehensive (for example, that business development training was coupled with microloans). Overall, beneficiaries were well aware of WFP's complaint and feedback mechanism, as evidenced by the increase in the number of calls over the years of CSP implementation.
21. ***Gender.*** The country office participated in WFP's gender transformation programme, which led to an improved focus on support for women, in the form of CBTs and capacity strengthening enabling them to supplement their incomes; in addition, gender-transformative messages were incorporated into the work conducted. However,

limited in-house gender capacity could impair the office's ability to ensure effective gender mainstreaming and delivery of relevant results. The gender action plan supported both internal and programmatic gender elements and was reviewed periodically to assess progress. The country office maintained a good gender balance in staffing, and a high proportion of senior roles are held by women.

22. **Environment.** Although WFP did not collect data related to its standard indicators on climate change, efforts to address climate concerns were considered, particularly under strategic outcome 4 where WFP activities supported climate-responsive irrigation practices, household crop and animal choices and harvest management practices, particularly in Upper Egypt. A second phase of those activities will focus on promoting positive environmental and social benefits under all activities while avoiding adverse environmental and social risks and impacts. In addition, country capacity strengthening activities (strategic outcome 5) aimed to address environmental issues, specifically by increasing resilience and government responsiveness, using digital platforms and knowledge exchange.

Sustainability of achievements

23. Knowledge building activities (such as social and behaviour change communication and activities for improving literacy) through which beneficiaries could make use of the knowledge gained without additional support were the most sustainable. The sustainability of other activities varied, particularly for those that included the provision of tangible assets. For instance, the provision of microloans and the distribution of small ruminants were likely to be more sustainable than the distribution of seeds, which were provided without fertilizer. The sustainability of institutional capacity development activities varied, depending on the Government's ability to allocate the resources needed for further uptake. Support for refugees and asylum seekers fell into the emergency response category and hence was intended to be short-lived and not expected to be sustainable.

Strategic links between humanitarian, development and peace work

24. The CSP does not identify how WFP planned to facilitate strategic linkages at the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, and the concept of the peace element has not been explicitly applied. However, some of WFP's work has the potential to contribute to the nexus. For instance, under the "one refugee programme", WFP's engagement with host communities has the aim of supporting the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into local communities and strengthening social cohesion. WFP's efforts to support young people's employment has the potential to strengthen the nexus by providing economic opportunities for young people and helping to prevent social conflict.

To what extent has WFP used its resources efficiently in contributing to country strategic plan outputs and strategic outcomes?

Timeliness of delivery

25. Support was generally provided on time and beneficiaries felt that they received benefits when they expected them. However, a few challenges affected timeliness. First, the availability of resources constrained service delivery, especially as the needs-based plan was only 51 percent funded by the end of 2021. Second, government administrative processes caused some delays, for example, in beneficiary selection and the access authorizations required for some groups of beneficiaries. Third, owing to COVID-19-related restrictions certain activities had to be halted completely (for example, the provision of social and behaviour change communication at health facilities and school feeding) or replaced by others, which required operational adaptations that were time-consuming.

Coverage

26. Targeting systems, which were based on government and UNHCR identification systems, captured the most vulnerable individuals, households and communities, although some groups were overlooked, such as persons with disabilities. While performance varied among strategic outcomes, funding played a vital role in determining reach. Certain other factors, including government requests that all schools in the country be covered by WFP's school feeding support, in addition to the planned community schools, led to wider reach, and some potential beneficiaries were not captured owing to government databases not being updated. Generally, post-pandemic delays caused reduced reach of food distributions while the reach of CBT distributions under strategic outcome 2 was satisfactory. By and large, activities conducted to support responses to climate change (strategic outcome 4) reached their planned coverage targets. However, in Bedouin communities, where support is no longer provided owing to a lack of funding (other than for COVID-19-related support), the need for continued support, such as the provision of seedlings beyond the CSP period, remains pressing.

Cost-efficiency

27. Cost-efficiency was mediated by national requirements. For example, the required use of government procurement mechanisms may have had some cost implications owing to the choice of suppliers. However, for CBT programmes, efficiency (cost-to-transfer) rates were within international standards.¹⁵ Direct support cost challenges included increases in commodity prices during CSP implementation, increased fuel prices causing increases in operational costs and low levels of funding reducing the scale of operations.

	Activity 2	Activity 3	Activity 9	Activity 4
Transfer value of CBTs support (USD)	7 350 539	177 849 359	26 519 969	72 112 107
Total costs (USD)	8 813 417	208 528 478	30 148 478	84 088 315
Cost-transfer ratio (85.5% international standard) (%)	83.40	85.29	87.96	85.76

Source: Country portfolio budget as per CSP revision 4 budget.

Alternative cost-efficient measures

28. Efforts to improve the cost-efficiency of activities included digitization, such as for enhanced beneficiary validation and beneficiary authentication technologies to optimize operation time and reduce the risk of fraud. In addition, an online marketing platform for women entrepreneurs was introduced, and there was a shift from paper-based to online processes wherever possible. The shift from food transfers to CBTs was mainly in response to COVID-19 limitations rather than reasons of cost-efficiency in operations. There were disparities in the costs of distributing food in governorates across Egypt, and while past data on such costs existed they were not used in determining the choice of transfer modality or the most efficient way to deliver food or CBTs.

¹⁵ Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. 2022. [Cash transfers Factsheet](#).

What factors explain WFP's performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected under the country strategic plan?

Use of existing evidence

29. Evidence to inform the implementation of the CSP was derived from three key types of activity: targeted studies and assessments aimed at informing specific areas of work, ad hoc real-time assessments conducted by country office staff, and systematic monitoring and evaluation conducted using robust tools and standard WFP indicators. While the first two informed practice on the ground, a lack of monitoring staff limited WFP's ability to assess all of its activities continually. In addition, although corporate indicators were collected the evaluation team did not observe their use to inform WFP's decision-making.

Resource mobilization

30. WFP faced challenges in securing funding and was critically reliant on very few donors, making it vulnerable to changes in the policies of those donors. Evidence suggests that there was also some funding fatigue. The CSP was only 56.28 percent funded at the time of the evaluation, and more than 62 percent of the available resources were earmarked at the activity level, with the majority of funding destined for crisis response; this constrained WFP operations considerably. In response to this challenge WFP focused on diversifying its donor base, such as by engaging the private sector and securing support from the Government through debt-swap programmes and a programme with the Central Bank of Egypt.

Partnerships

31. WFP's principal partnership in Egypt was with the Government, in which it played an important role as a strategic partner, designer of programmes and implementer. WFP fostered collaboration with various other United Nations entities, including UNHCR, UNICEF and UN-Women. While those collaboration agreements generally produced positive results they were intended for specific activities, and WFP did not act on all opportunities for long-term collaboration. Partnerships with civil society organizations were limited and largely operational, although WFP expected such organizations to play a significant role in sustaining the results of its activities. All partnerships were in overall alignment with the CSP objectives.

Flexibility of country strategic plan implementation

32. When faced with changing circumstances and shocks, WFP was able to exercise considerable flexibility and responsiveness; this was facilitated by the wide range of support areas under the CSP. For example, as part of changes in its approach to working with refugees, WFP was able to expand its activities to cover a broader beneficiary base. In response to COVID-19 WFP was able to switch from food-based assistance to CBTs, reallocate its remaining high-energy biscuits to orphanages when schools closed and expand its portfolio of activities to other beneficiaries, such as through the addition of activity 9.

Other factors that explain WFP performance and its strategic shift

33. Two strategic shifts envisioned under the CSP were the shifts in focus to innovation and country capacity strengthening. WFP put in place a range of innovative digital solutions and focused on country capacity strengthening. Overall, WFP made initial progress in taking on an auxiliary role in relation to government systems, but the ad hoc nature of those efforts and a lack of reliable donor commitments limited performance and potential sustainability. Despite these challenges, WFP's support, including its support for digital solutions and country capacity strengthening, contributed to the Government's efforts to achieve its Sustainable Development Goal objectives. However, gaps in the monitoring and evaluation system make it difficult to assess the extent of the strategic shift made by the country office.

Conclusions

34. WFP is on track to achieving the planned CSP results, albeit with some exceptions. Under strategic outcome 1 (school feeding), take-home rations and conditional CBTs were successful in reducing food insecurity, vulnerability and educational gaps. WFP made clear efforts to increase women's participation through the microloan programme, seed funds and business development workshops. Activities under strategic outcome 2 led to enhanced food security, increased breastfeeding and more nutritious beneficiary diets. WFP's work on the First 1,000 Days programme under strategic outcome 3 provided critical knowledge on nutrition through social and behaviour change communication and policy engagement efforts with the Government. The resilience of smallholder farmers was increased under strategic outcome 4, although the results were less than expected among Bedouins. Support for national partnerships, South-South cooperation and the Luxor centre under strategic outcome 5 enhanced WFP's profile.
35. A fragmented approach to the formulation and delivery of its interventions risks limiting the CSP's overall performance: some activities and sub-activities clearly supported the attainment of strategic outcomes while others appeared to be ad hoc in their implementation and overly broad, as reflected in the lack of complementary activities required to ensure the desired results (see paragraph 15). Donors expressed their preference for certain interventions based on their own needs or their assessment of the sustainability of those interventions. In addition, some of the interventions that are part of mainstream government programmes show greater potential for sustainability, while others show less promise owing to design limitations. A holistic approach to the selection of interventions would have allowed a focus on fewer, more coherent interventions.
36. WFP supported the Government's response to several pressing challenges. In particular, WFP's work in the sectors of child and maternal nutrition, the food security of refugees, the response to climate change and the inclusion of technology and innovation was notable. Thus far the Government has worked with WFP to find innovative funding modalities such as debt swaps, but the degree to which the Government will allocate the necessary resources to ensure that benefits are sustained is less clear.
37. WFP's work was well-aligned with the United Nations partnership development framework and the organization engaged in joint efforts with other United Nations entities. However, WFP did not capitalize on long-term opportunities. WFP's own work in communities where multiple forms of support were provided demonstrated that addressing challenges in a multifaceted way can generate results that are greater than the sum of their parts. At the same time, WFP demonstrated the ability to respond to emergencies and to adapt to changing needs, for example in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
38. Using existing national systems to identify beneficiaries was an important element in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the results of WFP's activities. However, it also resulted in some targeting gaps; for instance, some of the most vulnerable population groups, such as persons with disabilities, were not consistently targeted, and WFP's competence in identifying the most vulnerable people, households and communities was not used to support the robustness of government selection systems.
39. The ability of the country office to effectively monitor activities, use monitoring data and ensure that gender was mainstreamed effectively and that all aspects of accountability to affected populations were effectively included in implementation was hampered by a lack of staff with the right skills. Corporate monitoring data were collected but were not always used, and there were not enough monitoring and evaluation staff to support all operational activities effectively.

40. WFP successfully supported the Government in the digitization of systems for supporting improved food security and played an important role in supporting country capacity strengthening more broadly through training and technical advice. However, a capacity gap assessment that would have enabled the complete handover of those digital tools or the improved targeting relevant to other country capacity activities was not conducted during the CSP design stage.

Recommendations

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1	WFP should review the interventions it engages in, including capacity strengthening activities, from strategic and operational perspectives with a view to streamlining and consolidating the number of interventions that are included in the next country strategic plan while ensuring alignment with government needs and priorities.					
1.1	WFP should engage in capacity strengthening activities that are based on a solid capacity gap assessment and that have clearly identified outputs, outcomes and progress indicators. Such activities should be clearly coordinated with other activities and be aligned with the following sub-recommendations.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, and headquarters divisions including the Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division, the Programme and Policy Development Department, the Gender Equality Office and the country capacity strengthening team	High	2023
1.2	WFP should identify the interventions where it has a unique capacity (comparative advantage) in the Egypt context. Within this set of interventions, WFP should identify and prioritize those for which there is a conducive enabling environment and that can realistically be implemented within the timeframe of the next country strategic plan.					
1.3	WFP should articulate a clear and comprehensive theory of change that lays out how the various interventions collectively are able to contribute to the attainment of the country strategic plan outcomes.					

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2	WFP should support the Government in the continued refinement of its beneficiary identification mechanisms and consult the Government where gaps are identified, including with regard to known vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities.					
2.1	Actions to implement this recommendation could include a periodic review of a sample of the beneficiaries of individual activities, and a review of the mechanisms for transferring data between government offices with a view to ensuring accurate and complete data transfer. The tools for each assessment would depend on the government tool used, but WFP should endeavour to explore whether the beneficiaries targeted meet the basic eligibility criteria and whether all beneficiaries are equally included in programmes. This type of process could serve to strengthen existing systems if gaps are identified. It will also serve to ensure that WFP can achieve its objective of targeting the most vulnerable.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau	High	2023–2028
3	WFP should review its partnerships (including with other United Nations entities and private sector entities) for their strategic potential under the new country strategic plan, seeking to expand engagement with a view to the collective achievement of expected results.					
3.1	WFP should engage more closely with other United Nations entities, and with a more strategic intent, identifying at the design stage those areas where joint programming could serve mutual benefit. Such areas in the new country strategic plan could include gender programming with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, climate change, agriculture, food security and alternative income-generating activities with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Labour Organization, and improved education and nutrition with the United Nations Children’s Fund.	Strategic	Country office	Headquarters Partnerships and Advocacy Department	High	2023
3.2	WFP should foster engagement with the private sector for technical partnerships in selected programmes, with a particular focus on food fortification and the building of resilience with regard to climate change. The overall aim should be to secure flexible multi-year donor funding.					

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3.3	The country office should assess its fundraising and advocacy plan with a view to expanding funding sources and further leveraging domestic financing. This may entail identifying new financing mechanisms with support from headquarters and engaging with the Government to expand the use of tools that have proved valuable, such as debt swaps.					
3.4	WFP should contribute to and inform the engagement between the Government and its other partners by leveraging data, analysis and other tools, convening dialogue and subsequently, where appropriate, assisting in the implementation of government-led projects financed by donors.					
4	For the new country strategic plan WFP should ensure that it has capacity to monitor and follow up on WFP-supported interventions effectively, including through the consistent measurement of progress in its support for country capacity strengthening					
4.1	Based on interventions to be undertaken under the new country strategic plan, WFP should ensure the appropriate level of in-house monitoring capacity. This will also ensure that it has the capacity to undertake recommendation 2.	Strategic	Country office	Headquarters Research, Assessment and Monitoring Division	High	2023
4.2	Where possible, specific indicators for monitoring progress under the country strategic plan should be developed, including in areas such as policy engagement, gender and capacity strengthening.					
4.3	WFP should ensure that feedback loops are in place to ensure that monitoring data is fed back into programmatic decision-making and that programming adjustments are evidence-based.					

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5	WFP must ensure that it has the capacity and ability to mainstream gender into WFP-supported interventions					
5.1	WFP should assess the level of gender capacity required for the effective mainstreaming of gender into interventions in a way that supports gender-transformative results. WFP must ensure that it has at all levels the capacity to undertake robust gender analysis and design.	Operational	Country office	Headquarters Gender Equality Office	Medium	2023
5.2	WFP should ensure that the design of the new country strategic plan is informed by a sound analysis of the gender-relevant aspects of the Egypt context and that programme designs include appropriate gender-related aims and objectives.					

Acronyms

CBT	cash-based transfer
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CSP	country strategic plan
T-ICSP	transitional interim country strategic plan
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women