



WFP EVALUATION

Evaluation synthesis of WFP's engagement in middle-income countries (2019-2024)

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World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Context and scope

- **63/89 (70%)** countries where WFP works = **middle-income**.
- Current framing: *“A growing enabling agenda... focused on technical assistance, policy advice, evidence generation and system strengthening”* (Strategic Plan 2022–2025).
- **73 evaluations** from **25 MICs** analyzed.
- Aim = inform next Strategic Plan - evidence on WFP’s MIC strategic positioning, partnerships & results

Reporting to	Income classification	Country
Central headquarters	Upper-middle	China
Asia and the Pacific	Lower-middle	Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Timor-Leste
	Upper-middle	Indonesia
Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe	Lower-middle	Egypt, Tunisia
	Upper-middle	Armenia, Iraq, Türkiye
Western Africa	Lower-middle	Ghana
Southern Africa	Lower-middle	Eswatini, Lesotho, Zambia, Zimbabwe
	Upper-middle	Namibia
Eastern Africa	Lower-middle	Kenya
Latin America and the Caribbean	Upper-middle	Colombia, Dominican Republic, Peru

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: MICs category too broad to inform programming and masks distinct features

Need to better distinguish:

- Upper-MICs;
- MICs hosting refugees, IDPs and assisting irregular migrants;
- MICs in transition settings;
- MICs where WFP does not target direct beneficiaries.

Conclusion 2: WFP's intended strategic shifts broadly realized while retaining key role as emergency responder

- From direct delivery to system strengthening & gap-filling;
- Diversification & expansion of programme offer;
- Pursue integration of displaced population into national systems.
- High level of agility



Conclusion 3: Positive contributions across areas of results articulated in WFP Strategic Plan (2022–2025)

Main areas of results:

- Emergency response;
- Policy advice;
- System strengthening;
- Evidence generation / food security and nutrition analytics;
- Triple nexus.

Main strength: **adaptive capacities**

Challenges:

- Moving upstream from individual pilot activities;
- Handover to national actors;
- Limited donor recognition of and resourcing for capacity strengthening in MICs.



Conclusion 4: Trend towards diversification of WFP's partnerships in MICs, but lacking coherent overarching framing

Overall trends:

- More partnerships with governments;
- Diversification;
- High share of local NGOs partnerships;
- Less with I-NGOs in upper-MICs.

Challenges:

- Clarity of overarching strategic framing;
- Fragmentation of partnership engagement across CSP pillars.



Conclusion 5: Piloting in MICs often lacks a systematic approach to learning and planning for scale-up

Different uses:

- Digitization & analytics to support national social protection programmes;
- Showcasing WFP support & testing innovations.



Conclusion 6: Planning for sustainability following handover of programme is a major gap

Main gaps:

- Planning realistic timelines;
- Clarity on roles & responsibilities;
- Transitioning WFP's role when shifting from WFP-led to government-led activities.

Factors affecting results



Uncertain financing prospects.



Lack of **overarching rationale for engagement** - Also constrains narrative on WFP's added value in MICs.



WFP reputation solely as **lead agency for humanitarian responses**.



Mismatch between **level of ambition & staffing profile**.

Recommendations

1

Set out a clearer **rationale** for WFP's presence and positioning in middle-income countries (in particular, in upper middle-income countries).

2

Clarify & strengthen the development and use of **partnership strategies** in MICs.

3

Strengthen planning for programmatic **handover** and **transition** where relevant & the pathway to country **exit where appropriate**.

4

Enhance the generation of evidence from **pilot activities** to inform decisions regarding potential **scale-up**.