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## **Summary report on the evaluation of the WFP country strategic plan for Guatemala (2021–2025)**

### **Executive summary**

Guatemala is a middle-income country with 17 million inhabitants, 56 percent of whom live in poverty. Rates of malnutrition are among the highest in the Latin America and the Caribbean region. Close to half of the population is Indigenous, and people from Indigenous communities are disproportionately represented in the poverty statistics because they face intersecting inequalities and discrimination, with particular impact on women and girls.

The country strategic plan for Guatemala for 2021–2025 was originally planned for the period 2021–2024 but was extended through 2025 to align with the United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework and government administration cycles. The evaluation of the plan served both accountability and learning purposes and sought to inform new programming in the country.

The country strategic plan was approved at USD 158 million but over the years the needs-based plan increased to USD 438 million, mainly in response to hurricanes Eta and Iota, the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic and government demand for WFP services in the procurement and distribution of food and non-food items for national food security and nutrition programmes. As of July 2024, the plan was funded at 55 percent. Procurement for national programmes was the only fully funded component, constituting more than half of the total allocated resources.

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*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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The evaluation concludes that the plan was appropriately designed in relation to needs and was coherent with government aims, supporting national policies and programmes with the purpose of improving food security and nutrition, responding to climate-related shocks and building community resilience.

Overall WFP achieved positive results in Guatemala, although funding levels and the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic slowed the execution of resilience work in the early years of the plan. The most significant results achieved were the provision of food assistance for more than half a million people in 2021 in the aftermath of the hurricanes and the pandemic; increased incomes for smallholder farmers; increased economic empowerment of thousands of Indigenous women through savings groups; and improved economy, efficiency and transparency for national social protection programmes supported by WFP services.

With regard to service provision, the evaluation noted a need for more attention to sustainability, through a stronger integration between service provision and capacity strengthening, and for careful assessment of potential risks for WFP when providing services. Resilience interventions remained geographically limited with little opportunity for scale-up, indicating a need for greater programme integration and for such interventions to be anchored in national institutions at the local level in order to maximize the sustainability of the results.

The evaluation makes five recommendations, of which three are strategic and two operational: strengthen internal coherence and effectiveness by defining a strategy for combining capacity strengthening for national and local institutions with the implementation of projects at the local level; define a strategy for ensuring the sustainability of improvements in procurement and distribution processes through capacity strengthening for relevant institutions; strengthen the capacities of WFP and its partners at the local level; maintain and reinforce a culturally appropriate and inclusive approach to the implementation of the country strategic plan; and further strengthen the implementation of the regional gender policy and strategy, challenge gender stereotypes and encourage shared responsibility for domestic and care-giving tasks.

## **Draft decision\***

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the WFP country strategic plan for Guatemala (2021–2025) (WFP/EB.1/2026/6-D/2) and management response (WFP/EB.1/2026/6-D/2/Add.1).

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\* 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 evaluation of the Guatemala country strategic plan (CSP) for 2021–2025 was commissioned by the WFP Office of Evaluation. It serves the dual purpose of accountability and learning and is expected to support the design of the next CSP for Guatemala. The evaluation offers WFP stakeholders an independent assessment of the organization's performance, opportunities and challenges and makes recommendations aimed at improving the work of WFP in Guatemala.
2. The principal users of the evaluation are the WFP country office in Guatemala, the Government of Guatemala, the Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office, various divisions at WFP global headquarters, the Executive Board, project beneficiaries and other WFP partners such as non-governmental organizations and those in the private sector and academia.
3. The evaluation adopted a theory-based, mixed-methods approach, drawing on monitoring data, document review, a field-based study including semi-structured interviews, a stakeholder survey and focus group discussions with beneficiaries. Gender and other cross-cutting issues were integrated into the evaluation design.

### Context

4. Guatemala is a middle-income country with a stable macroeconomic performance. However, the country is characterized by high inequality (with a Gini coefficient of 48.3)<sup>1</sup> and 56 percent of the population live in poverty. Almost half of its 17.3 million inhabitants<sup>2</sup> self-identify as indigenous Maya, Xinka or Garífuna.<sup>3</sup> About 46.1 percent of the population live in rural areas;<sup>4</sup> smallholder farmers constitute 60.8 percent of farmers and are the segment of the population most affected by extreme poverty.<sup>5</sup> Guatemala ranks 93 of 146 countries in the Gender Gap Index, and Indigenous women and girls are particularly vulnerable to intersecting inequalities: for instance, 62.7 percent of Mayan women are illiterate, and 79.3 percent live in poverty.<sup>6</sup>
5. Guatemala is the tenth country in the world most exposed to extreme climate-related events.<sup>7</sup> In terms of food security, an Integrated Food Security Phase Classification system assessment estimated that 2.7 million people experienced crisis or emergency food insecurity between September 2024 and February 2025.<sup>8</sup> The 2014–2015 national survey of maternal and child health reported that 45.8 percent of boys and 47.1 percent of girls under 5 suffered from stunting, with a prevalence of 61.2 percent in Indigenous girls.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Institute of Statistics (INE). 2023. [Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida](#).

<sup>2</sup> INE. 2024. [Estimaciones y proyecciones de población 1950–2050](#) (consulted on 13 May 2024).

<sup>3</sup> INE. 2019. [Resultados del Censo 2018](#).

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food of the Government of Spain. 2023. [Sectores agroalimentario y pesquero. Ficha sectores – Guatemala abril 2023](#).

<sup>5</sup> Chávez Martínez, O.F. 2022. "Situación del cultivo de maíz en Guatemala: principales limitaciones en la productividad" in *ACI avances en ciencias e ingenierías* 14(1).

<sup>6</sup> Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios Fiscales. 2021. [Mujeres de Guatemala. Un análisis de sus condiciones económicas y sociales](#).

<sup>7</sup> Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft and Ruhr University Bochum – Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict. 2020. [World Risk Report 2020](#).

<sup>8</sup> Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. 2024. [Guatemala: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for June – August 2024 and Projections for September 2024 – February 2025 and March – May 2025](#).

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance, INE and ICF International. 2017. [Encuesta Nacional de Salud Materno Infantil 2014–2015. Informe Final](#).

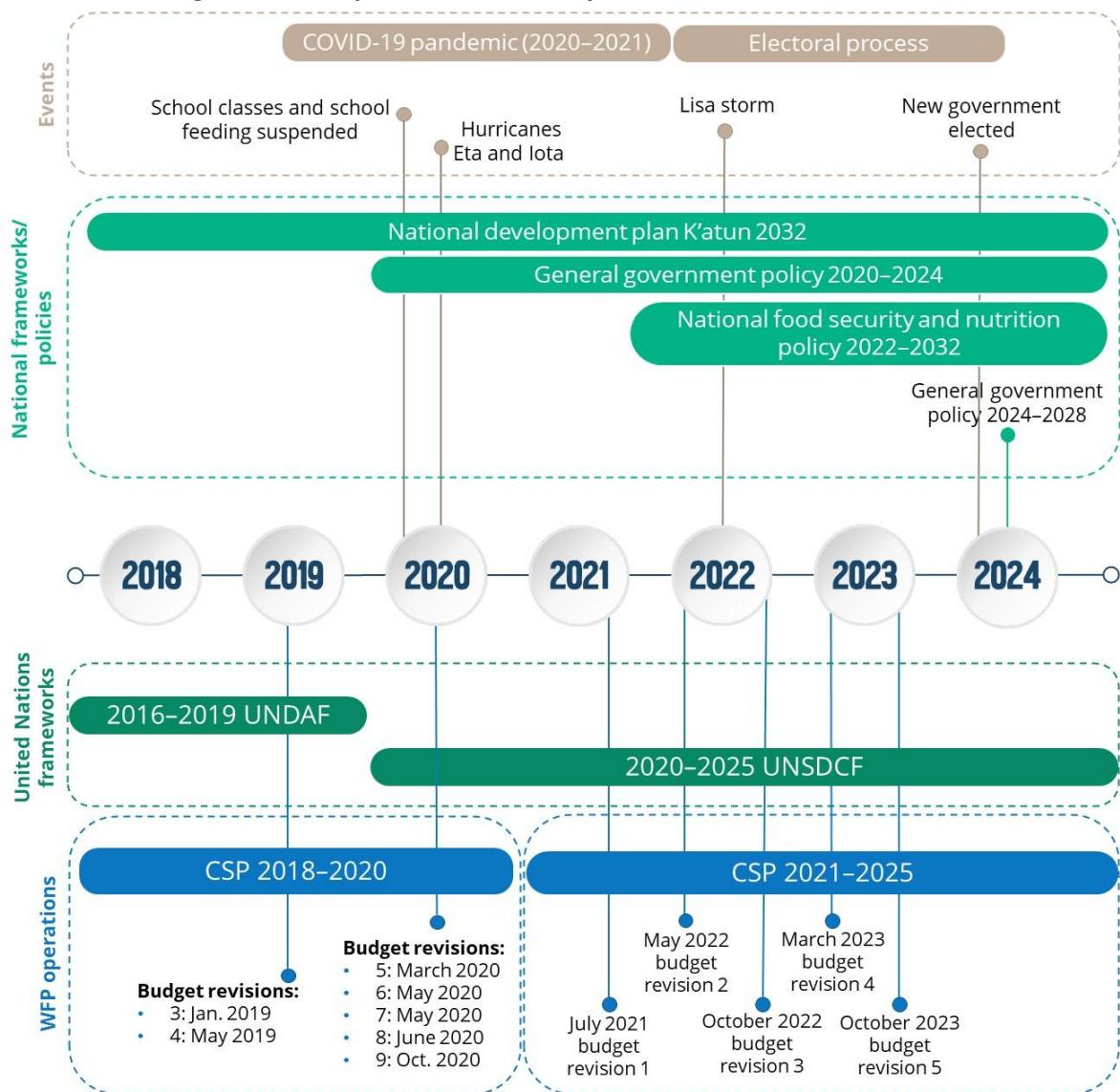
According to the World Bank, child malnutrition rates in Guatemala are among the highest in the region and are the tenth highest in the world.<sup>10</sup>

6. Guatemala's national development plan, *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo K'atun: Nuestra Guatemala 2032*, presents 10 development priorities including food security and nutrition.<sup>11</sup> Since January 2024, the newly elected Government has been committed to combatting malnutrition through the general government policy for 2024–2028, in line with the national food security and nutrition policy for 2022–2037.

### WFP country strategic plan

7. WFP has collaborated with the Government of Guatemala since 1974 to improve food security and nutrition through humanitarian and development assistance. The focus of this evaluation is WFP's second CSP for Guatemala, covering 2021–2025. The evaluation also considers ongoing interventions that date back to the CSP for 2018–2021. Figure 1 shows the country context and the evolution of WFP's operations since 2018.

**Figure 1: Country context and WFP operational overview, 2018–2024**



Abbreviations: COVID-19: coronavirus disease 2019; UNDAF = United Nations development assistance framework; UNSDCF = United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework.

<sup>10</sup> World Bank Group. 2025. [Investing in Nutrition: Key to a More Productive Guatemala](#).

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Guatemala. 2019. [Visión 2030](#).

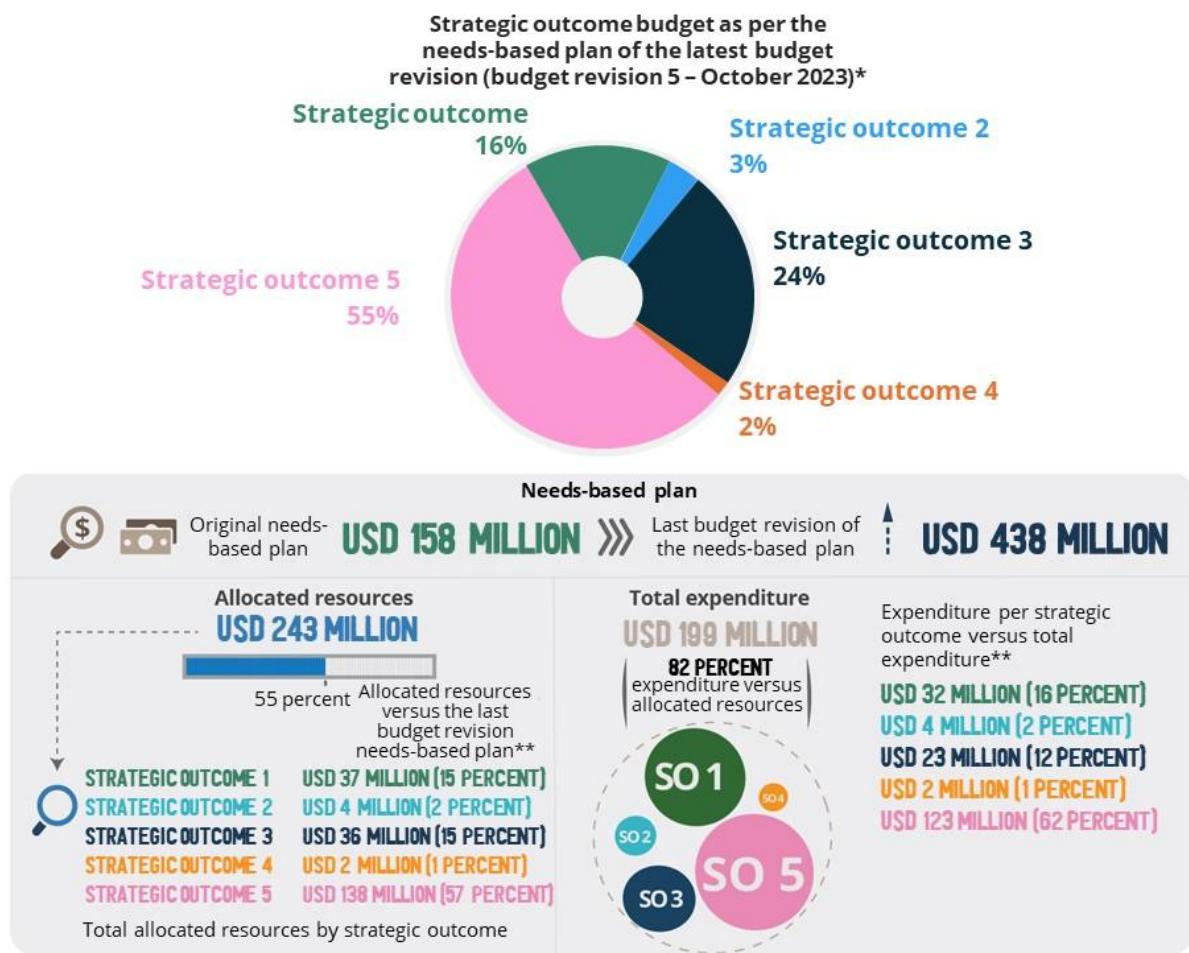
8. The CSP for 2021–2025 was designed to continue WFP’s shift from providing direct emergency assistance to strengthening national systems related to food security and nutrition, which began during the CSP for 2018–2020. Below is a summary of the expected outcomes and modalities of intervention of the current CSP.

<b>TABLE 1: STRATEGIC OUTCOMES AND INTERVENTION MODALITIES OF THE GUATEMALA COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2021–2025</b>		
<b>Focus area</b>	<b>Strategic outcome</b>	<b>Intervention modality</b>
Crisis response	1: Crisis- affected populations in Guatemala are able to meet their essential needs during and in the aftermath of crises	Food (in-kind); cash-based transfers (CBTs) and/or value vouchers; capacity strengthening
Resilience building	2: Vulnerable populations in targeted areas have access to comprehensive services and programmes that promote healthy diets by 2024	Food; capacity strengthening
	3: Rural vulnerable populations and local institutions engage in nutrition and gender-sensitive, sustainable and climate resilient food systems throughout the year	Food; CBTs and/or value vouchers; capacity strengthening
	4: National institutions have strengthened capacities and improve their coordination to manage an integrated social protection system by 2024	Capacity strengthening
	5: National partners have access to efficient services and technical assistance throughout the year	Service delivery

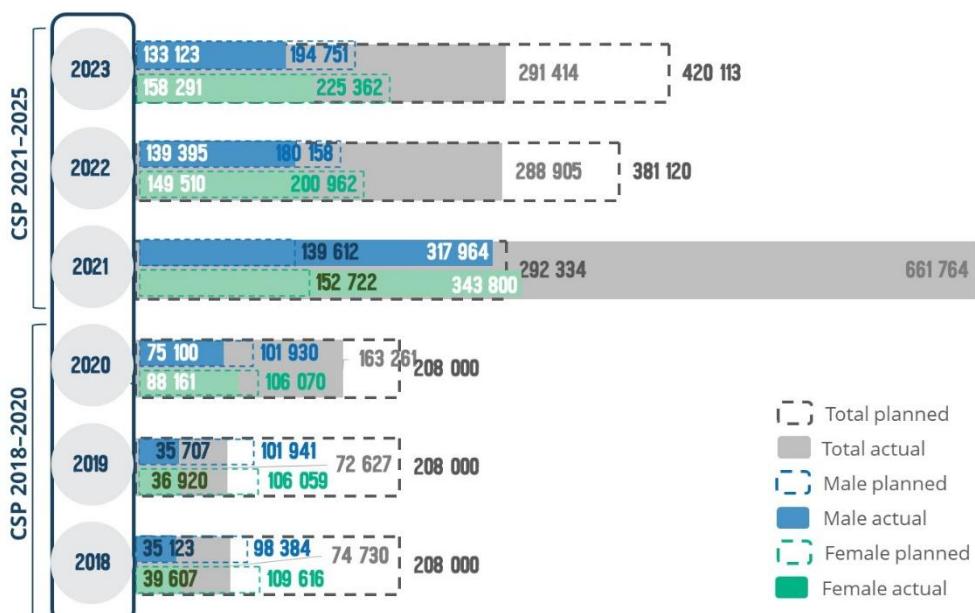
9. As shown in figure 2, the CSP was approved with a needs-based plan budget of USD 158 million. During implementation, the needs-based plan budget grew to USD 438 million, of which 55 percent was government funding for the procurement of food and non-food items for national programmes related to food security and nutrition under strategic outcome 5. The remaining budget under the most recent budget revision has been distributed as follows: 14 percent for crisis response under strategic outcome 1, 21 percent for resilience building under strategic outcome 3, and 4 percent for nutrition and capacity strengthening under strategic outcomes 2 and 4. By July 2024, the CSP was funded at 55 percent, and 82 percent of allocated resources had been spent.<sup>12</sup> The main donors are the European Union, the United States of America and Canada for strategic outcomes 1–4 and the Government of Guatemala for strategic outcome 5.

<sup>12</sup> ACR1-A standard country report (CRF 2022–2025) (internal report), consulted on 27 July 2024, and budget revision 5.

**Figure 2: Guatemala CSP for 2021–2025 strategic outcomes, budget, funding and expenditures, July 2024**



10. As shown in figure 3, WFP increased beneficiary coverage compared with the previous CSP, although it still fell short of the planned number of direct beneficiaries, in large part because of funding shortfalls. The only exception was 2021, when an increase in funding linked to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and hurricanes Eta and Iota enabled WFP to more than double the number of direct beneficiaries.

**Figure 3: Planned and actual beneficiaries by sex and year, 2018–2023**

Source: Annual country reports for 2018–2023.

11. Beneficiaries of national social protection programmes to which WFP provided services are not counted as direct beneficiaries. However, the country office reports<sup>13</sup> that since 2021, an average of half a million people have received fortified food procured by WFP every year under the “Great National Crusade for Nutrition” initiative<sup>14</sup>.

## Key evaluation messages

### Relevance and adaptability

The CSP design was appropriate and relevant to the context and people’s needs, and it was aligned with national policies on food security and nutrition. During the period evaluated, WFP continued to shift from direct assistance to systems strengthening – a change that began with the previous CSP – and was able to adapt to evolving needs and priorities.

12. The design of the CSP aligns with the *Katun 2032* national development plan by promoting rural development and strengthening social protection, as well as being consistent with the national food security and nutrition policy, the Great National Crusade for Nutrition and the work of the country’s “nutrition brigades” by improving access to healthy diets, institutional capacity, social change communication and the promotion of sustainable food systems. WFP also supports the national disaster reduction policy and the national disaster response plan by focusing on institutional capacity strengthening at the local level and resilience building at the community level.
13. WFP demonstrated the ability to adapt to a dynamic setting, adjusting its operations to ensure the continuity of assistance and expanding its coverage in response to emerging needs during hurricanes Eta and Iota and the COVID-19 pandemic. WFP used online questionnaires to conduct rapid assessments, ensuring the availability of vital data despite travel restrictions. WFP also adjusted to the change in government in January 2024 by

<sup>13</sup> WFP annual country reports for 2021, 2022 and 2023.

<sup>14</sup> Government of Guatemala. [Gran Cruzada Nacional por la Nutrición](#).

aligning with new priorities and institutional actors, for instance collaborating with Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food on emergency response and agricultural resilience involving experts in anticipatory action, microcredit and climate change. With the Ministry of Social Development, WFP is supporting efforts to improve the social household registry in order to better target assistance.

### **Effectiveness and sustainability**

Under the CSP, WFP delivered a comprehensive response in Guatemala that addressed both immediate needs and long-term structural challenges by strengthening national social protection programmes and fostering resilience at the community level. The effectiveness and sustainability of results, however, were hampered by insufficient integration of activities during implementation, limited anchoring of activities in national institutions, and decreasing funding.

14. The original design of the CSP was based on a consistent intervention logic that combined the following elements: the strengthening of national and local institutional capacity for food security and nutrition, disaster preparedness and emergency response (strategic outcome 4); direct delivery of food or cash in emergencies to complement government response capacity (strategic outcome 1); provision of procurement services to support implementation of national social protection programmes (strategic outcome 5); and initiatives to strengthen resilience at the individual, household and community levels (strategic outcome 3).
15. During implementation, however, the CSP components were not sufficiently integrated, which limited the effectiveness and sustainability of results. In particular, resilience-building activities (strategic outcome 3) were somewhat geographically dispersed and not always anchored in national institutions. This impeded sustainability, internal and external synergies and opportunities for scale-up. Similarly, under the service provision component (strategic outcome 5), WFP improved the efficiency of national social protection programmes by procuring, transporting and storing food and non-food items. However, the component was implemented separately and was disconnected from the rest of the CSP, which reduced potential synergistic effects, for instance in terms of institutional strengthening and consideration of cross-cutting issues such as gender, inclusion and nutrition. This is particularly important given that the service provision component constituted 57 percent of total allocated resources. The following sections elaborate on the effectiveness and sustainability of achievements under each strategic outcome.

#### **Food security during crises (strategic outcome 1)**

WFP contributed to food access during crises by complementing the Government's response with cash-based transfers and country capacity strengthening. Due to the funding shortage from 2022 onwards, WFP had to reduce the number of beneficiaries in order to maintain a balance between the depth and breadth of coverage and ensure that each person received meaningful assistance.

16. Coverage of planned beneficiaries has varied over the years, peaking in 2021 when the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and in the aftermath of hurricanes Eta and Iota reached more than half a million people – 241 percent of planned beneficiaries, as shown in table 2. Although the effects were necessarily short term, the support was effective in increasing household incomes for a significant number of people, resulting in enhanced

access to food and improvements in food consumption indicators in that period. Although needs remained high, funding began to decrease in 2022 and continued to do so until the end of data collection for this evaluation in July 2024. In order to maintain a transfer value sufficient to ensure the effectiveness of its interventions, WFP reduced the number of targeted departments from 22 in 2021 to 8 in 2024, prioritizing the most food-insecure departments according to the national information system for food security and nutrition. Table 2 shows the sharp reduction in coverage, even without considering the unusually high coverage in 2021. In 2023 only 37 percent of planned beneficiaries were reached. The situation improved slightly in 2024, but coverage remained below 50 percent.

17. As the effects of the immediate crisis subsided along with related funding, WFP incorporated conditional transfers focused on community asset creation as part of a broader resilience strategy tied to regenerative agriculture and climate risk management implemented under strategic outcome 3. These efforts aimed to go beyond immediate food assistance by supporting sustainable development through financial training and local market economic stimulation, with some beneficiaries using the funds to start or grow small businesses. However, the short-term nature of the funding (30 days) limited the effectiveness and sustainability of the results.

**TABLE 2: BENEFICIARIES AND COVERAGE, BY TRANSFER MODALITY, 2021–2024**

Year	Planned			Actual			Coverage %
	Food	Cash and vouchers	Country capacity strengthening	Food	Cash and vouchers	Country capacity strengthening	
2021	75 000	140 000			518 801	0	241
2022	75 000	180 000			173 932	1 766	68
2023	40 000	155 000	4 000		72 913	9 957	37
2024*	40 000	155 000	4 000	14 970	73 638	5 560	44

\* Preliminary figures.

Sources: for 2021–2023 figures: COMET report CM-R020 – Adjusted Participants & Beneficiaries by activity tag as at 11 January 2024; for 2024 figures: COMET reports CM-R015a and CM-P019 extracted on 3 March 2025.

### Access to healthy diets (strategic outcome 2)

WFP's activities complemented national nutrition interventions that achieved broad coverage, but a lack of funding and institutional coordination limited the effectiveness and sustainability of the national programmes.

18. WFP has played a key role in the implementation of national nutrition and food security programmes in Guatemala, particularly through the procurement and distribution of fortified complementary food in support of the "Great National Crusade for Nutrition" programme, which reached 500,000 children under 5 annually between 2021 and 2023.<sup>15</sup> With the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance and the food and nutrition security secretariat, WFP also co-financed a baseline and endline evaluation that helped the Government to track progress and adjust planning of

<sup>15</sup> WFP annual country reports for 2021, 2022 and 2023.

that national programme. The evaluation found that while 88.7 percent of children aged 6–23 months had been reached at least once, only 13.7 percent (in 2021 and 2022) received the recommended number of rations, mostly due to insufficient funding. This limited the nutrition-related results significantly. The evaluation identified areas for improvement, such as government procurement procedures, technical capacity building and coordination between the Ministry of Social Development (procurement) and the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance (implementation), which could be areas for future WFP support.

19. Integrated health and nutrition brigades were launched during the COVID-19 pandemic by the European Union, the United Nations Children's Fund, WFP and the World Health Organization, and they assisted between 3,000 and 20,000 people annually in the period from 2021 to 2023. At the time of writing, the brigades were still operating. The evaluation found that they were an effective way of improving nutrition, but coverage and continuity were curbed by a lack of funding for trained staff. WFP provided technical assistance to facilitate the implementation of a nutrition behaviour change component for the brigades, which is likely to have contributed to an improvement in the dietary diversity indicator, which rose from 45.0 percent to 62.4 percent over the period in Santa Rosa, Jalapa and Alta Verapaz.

### **Resilience building at the community level (strategic outcome 3)**

WFP implemented training activities that strengthened the position of smallholder farmers in the supply chain and gave them an opportunity to protect themselves against adverse climate events, but the results remained at the individual or community level due to a lack of opportunity for scale-up, and sustainability was limited because the activities were not well anchored in institutions.

20. WFP played a critical role in integrating smallholder farmers into the national school feeding supply chain. A joint programme with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Fund for Agricultural Development provided nearly 2,000 farmers and young people with training in agricultural practices, business skills, environmental risk management and taxation, leading to increased incomes for the participants' families. Participants from producer groups in Quetzaltenango and Quiché, for example, saw their average weekly income rise from GTQ 764 to GTQ 66,689 in 2021. During the period 2021–2023, the value of smallholder farmers' sales to schools increased from zero to USD 414,122. The sustainability of these results is uncertain, however, because of budgetary limitations and coordination weaknesses in the WFP-supported inter-institutional technical commissions on school feeding at the departmental and municipal levels and between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food.
21. In partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food, WFP developed a smartphone application (the School Feeding Management Application, or SFMA), which aimed to connect schools and registered suppliers in order to facilitate procurement from local suppliers for the Guatemalan school feeding programme. Use of the application was limited, however, mainly due to connectivity issues.<sup>16</sup>
22. WFP has evolved from focusing on short-term asset creation under the CSP for 2018–2021 to developing strategies for long-term resilience for smallholder farmers through interventions such as microinsurance programmes, the distribution of biofortified seeds, and anticipatory cash transfers that help smallholder farmers to protect their livelihoods from the impacts of adverse climate events, enhancing their ability to cope with recurring

<sup>16</sup> WFP. 2025. *Pilot Impact Evaluation of the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme in Guatemala*.

crises. Parametric microinsurance has been used to provide a financial safety net for farmers in the event of losses caused by extreme weather events such as droughts or excessive rainfall. Compensation under that insurance is triggered when certain predefined weather parameters are met, offering immediate financial support for those affected. During the implementation of the CSP, the number of insured people has grown from 6,455 in 2021 to 71,130 in 2023, demonstrating a successful expansion of this protection mechanism. In 2023, a total of 5,337 households received payments amounting to USD 606,253.

**Strengthening of the national social protection system and emergency response management (strategic outcome 4)**

WFP has contributed to strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Social Development and the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction (CONRED) to implement integrated social protection interventions, improve national emergency preparedness and response, and strengthen local disaster management capacity. However, a fragmented approach to capacity strengthening, limited budget and coordination challenges are curbing the effectiveness and sustainability of the interventions. Since 2024, WFP has increased its focus on informing the design and implementation of public policy and national social protection programmes.

23. WFP contributed to the updating of Guatemala's social development and population policy as well as the design of the integrated national social protection system with the Ministry of Social Development. WFP also worked with the ministry on piloting a gender-sensitive social registry of 19,800 households in five departments, a key tool for facilitating transparent targeting and improving coordination with partners. The evaluation confirmed that the pilot contributed to the reactivation of the disaster risk financial strategy, in coordination with the Ministry of Public Finance, and has the potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the national social protection system. In spite of this, national expansion of the pilot faces budgetary challenges. WFP also collaborated in the development of the Ministry of Social Development's gender policy, the development of a digital learning platform on social protection, and the creation of indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of programmes of the Vice-Ministry of Social Protection.
24. With the purpose of improving national capacity for emergency preparedness and response, WFP supported CONRED and the Ministry of Social Development through logistics assessments and training in planning and response – such as inventory management in humanitarian aid warehouses – for more than 500 government employees. This work included donating drones and mobile storage units and implementing real-time information systems to improve supply tracking. This is likely to have contributed to an increase in the Emergency Preparedness Capacity Indicator score from 2.5 to 4 (with 5 being the highest) within the areas of emergency preparedness and response, design and delivery, and emergency telecommunications.
25. Despite these advancements, municipalities continue to face barriers to effective disaster risk reduction. In particular, the national disaster risk reduction policy, relevant legal frameworks and municipal codes do not assign municipal responsibilities in disaster risk reduction, which limits local authorities' ability to be proactive.

**Provision of procurement and logistics services to national social protection programmes related to food and nutrition security (strategic outcome 5)**

26. Since 2021, WFP has been procuring most of the food for the national food assistance programmes run by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food and transporting it to over 300 municipalities across 22 departments, helping the Government to sustain a consistent flow of commodities. WFP has improved the cost efficiency of government procurement by achieving an average cost reduction of 29 percent for key food products between 2020 and 2024 while increasing the volume of food and non-food items available by 14 percent. WFP has also improved transparency in the procurement process by increasing the use of competitive processes. As shown in table 3, 87 percent of its contracts were awarded through competitive processes, compared to 20 percent of the Government's contracts. WFP also increased the speed of food procurement, from the Government's average of 210 days to 83 days.

**TABLE 3: EFFICIENCY AND TRANSPARENCY GAINS ATTRIBUTABLE TO  
WFP PROCUREMENT PROCESSES, 2020–2024**

	Government of Guatemala	WFP country office supply chain unit
% of contracts awarded by competitive bidding	20 <sup>a</sup>	87
Average time to complete procurement process (days)	210 <sup>b</sup>	83

*Sources:*

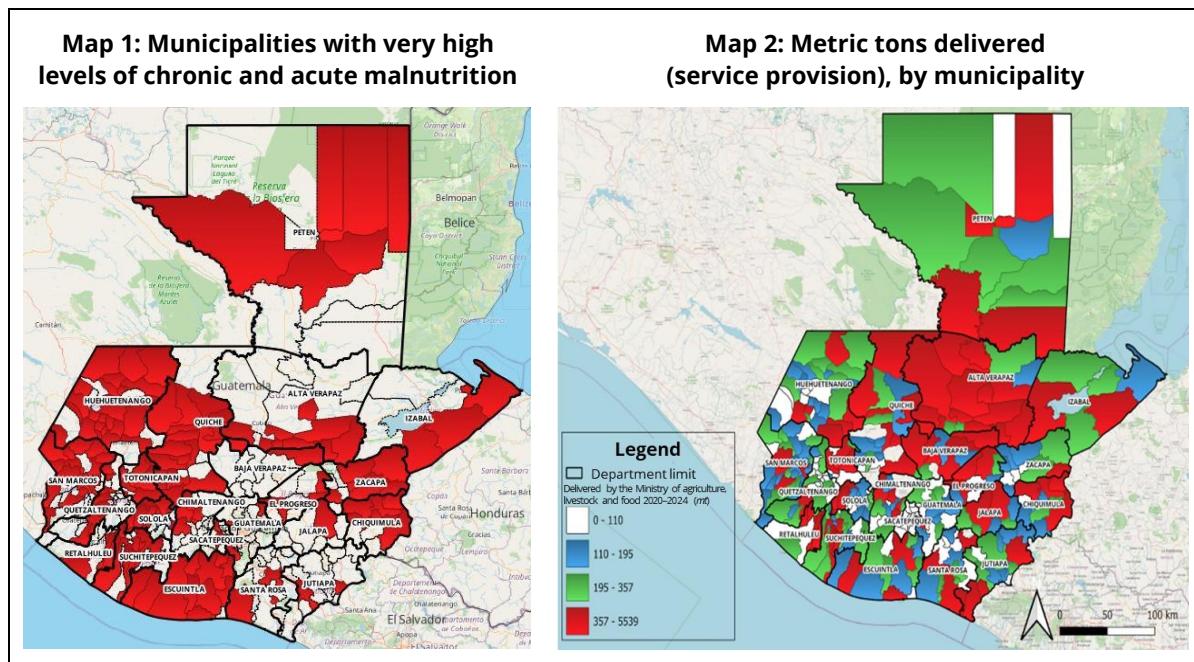
<sup>a</sup> Data extracted from [Guatecompras](#) (Ministry of Public Finance online procurement and contracting system) July 2024.

<sup>b</sup> Centro de Investigaciones Económicas Nacionales. 2023. [Adquisiciones Pùblicas](#).

27. This increased engagement with the Government, based on the provision of services, has positioned WFP as a trusted partner in the Government's implementation of national food security and nutrition programmes, reaching large numbers of beneficiaries.

28. The demand-based agreements between WFP and the Government did not, however, include capacity building aimed at improving the Government's own food procurement and distribution processes, limiting the sustainability of the improvements achieved. Furthermore, targeting, distribution beyond municipal warehouses and post-distribution monitoring were not included in the agreements. The evaluation notes that if WFP is not in a position to ensure that the food it procures and moves is distributed to the most vulnerable, the organization could be exposed to reputational risk in relation to its perceived impartiality and neutrality. For example, as illustrated in the maps below, in some cases the areas in which final distribution took place did not fully align with areas affected by chronic and acute malnutrition. At the time of data collection, discussions with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food and the Ministry of Social Development were ongoing in relation to a potential role for WFP in transporting assistance beyond municipal warehouses.

**Figure 4: Department maps: comparison of chronic and acute malnutrition and food distribution**



*The designations employed and the presentation of material in the maps do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever of WFP concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory or sea area, or concerning the delimitation of frontiers.*

Source: Evaluation team based on data from the national food security and nutrition information system (chronic malnutrition) and the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance (acute malnutrition) for map 1, and WFP service provision data for map 2.

## Cross-cutting issues

### Gender and social inclusion

In Guatemala, WFP has made commendable progress in implementing corporate and regional gender and inclusion strategies by integrating gender equality into its programmes, with a particular focus on economic empowerment. Unequal distribution of the domestic workload remains a key challenge. Efforts to ensure equal opportunities for persons with disabilities are less evident.

29. WFP's corporate and regional strategies aim to address the root causes of gender inequality affecting food security and nutrition and empower women economically by integrating gender equality into WFP programmes. Most significantly, in Guatemala WFP has promoted women's economic empowerment through initiatives such as community economic and social groups. A five-year project on the economic empowerment of Indigenous women has 3,000 direct participants and 18,000 indirect beneficiaries across 32 communities in four municipalities. To cite one result of this project, 157 savings groups supported through capacity building related to production and marketing have saved USD 300,000 to date.
30. WFP has worked through gender equality committees and other groups to promote the redistribution of domestic responsibilities in order to mitigate the potential negative impact of existing arrangements on women's economic empowerment. The evaluation found that while some progress had been made, greater male participation was needed, and more time was required to achieve significant effect.

31. WFP led an inter-agency technical group on persons with disabilities, contributing to the implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy by the United Nations country team, and its leadership was highly valued by the country team. However, the evaluation found no evidence that WFP programming was targeted or adapted to persons with disabilities. In addition there is limited attention to other vulnerable groups such as older adults and people living with HIV. Support for people with HIV has been restricted to a joint initiative with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance, which involved the provision of food assistance and hygiene kits to 80 families in Retalhuleu and Quetzaltenango during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Cultural appropriateness**

In Guatemala, WFP has made significant strides in promoting the cultural appropriateness of its programmes. However, results are more evident in the translation of training modules and materials into Indigenous languages and less so in other areas such as free and prior consultation and the use of Indigenous knowledge in programme design. Also, data disaggregation based on ethnicity is not systematic, limiting opportunities to monitor and adjust programming.

32. In Guatemala, WFP has made significant progress in facilitating the effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in its programme activities by ensuring the translation of workshops and written materials into Indigenous languages. Unfortunately, the disaggregation of beneficiary data by ethnicity is not systematic enough to show the actual percentage of participation. For instance, according to WFP data, in 2023 18.5 percent of its beneficiaries were Indigenous. This seems low considering that in some areas where WFP operates, close to 90 percent of the population is Indigenous. Meanwhile, other forms of internal data indicate a much higher participation of Indigenous people in WFP activities. This lack of clarity prevents WFP from understanding whether adjustments are needed to improve the cultural appropriateness of its activities and the effective participation of Indigenous people in its programmes.

33. The evaluation found that the cultural appropriateness of WFP's interventions was sometimes limited to translation and did not extend to systematic engagement with Indigenous people in programme design and implementation in accordance with WFP guidance.<sup>17</sup> In fact, the evaluation found that intervention design was generally the same regardless of the ethnic background of the target community, which led WFP to miss an opportunity to tailor interventions to local dietary customs, community land ownership, the roles of traditional authorities, and local governance systems. The evaluation found limited coordination with Indigenous authorities at the local level, and limited knowledge and implementation capacity related to the particular needs of Indigenous populations, particularly before the establishment of field offices in 2022. This situation has been improving since the employment of a specialist advisor in the country office in 2024 and the ongoing strengthening of the field offices.

### **Environment, accountability to affected people, protection and humanitarian principles**

34. Climate change mitigation and environmental protection were key elements of farmers' training under the resilience component of the CSP. However, the evaluation found that challenges remain in beneficiary access to climate information, which is not always widespread and is sometimes impeded by limited connectivity in remote areas. On the

<sup>17</sup> WFP webpage on Indigenous Peoples; and WFP. *Guidance Note on Free Prior and Informed Consent*.

humanitarian principles, WFP has largely upheld impartiality, neutrality and independence by prioritizing its assistance based on need and ensuring transparency in selection processes, which communities praised. Nonetheless, and as referred to in paragraph 28 and figure 4, issues persist in ensuring fairness when food distribution is handled through government agreements; local conflicts can also present challenges to ensuring neutrality.

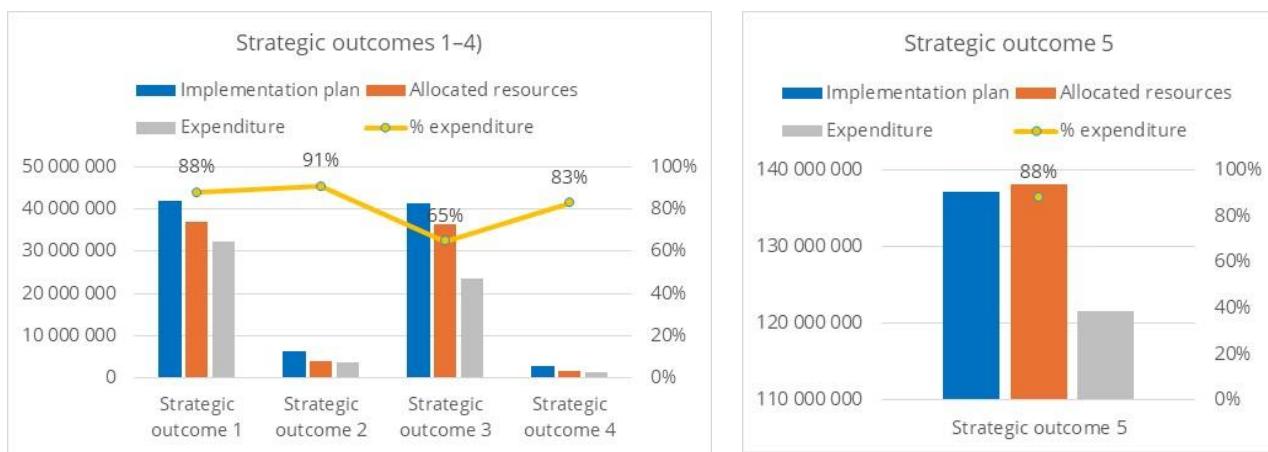
35. WFP has established effective protection and accountability mechanisms such as a confidential hotline, suggestion boxes and community feedback systems. Combined with field staff engagement, these systems have enabled communities to voice concerns and have supported transparency. While such tools have generally been well received by beneficiaries, challenges remain in making them more accessible to vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities. Some community members still report confusion regarding beneficiary selection processes, highlighting the need for better communication and inclusivity.

### **Efficiency of WFP operations**

In Guatemala, WFP is generally implementing its interventions in an efficient manner, with execution rates above 83 percent, as shown in figure 5. The exception is the resilience component (strategic outcome 3), for which only 65 percent of allocated resources had been deployed as of July 2024.

36. WFP has optimized the use of its resources through strategic partnerships with government counterparts, local non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and the private sector, which has helped to ensure the cost-efficient and timely implementation of crisis response, procurement and logistics activities, as well as implementation rates above 83 percent.
37. The evaluation found that the slow execution of the resilience component could be attributed to limitations in WFP staffing and organizational arrangements (including sometimes limited coordination between the country office and field offices) and to insufficient coordination with local authorities in the early years of the CSP. The crisis response operations related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the hurricanes in 2020 and 2021 saw a large increase in the emergency-related workload at the expense of resilience activities.
38. As a consequence of the overwhelming workload in the early years of the CSP, the country office implemented a strategic workforce planning exercise in 2022 to improve the alignment of staff numbers and skills with programmatic needs. Field offices were established in Alta Verapaz, Zacapa and Quetzaltenango to improve coordination with local partners and increase the implementation rates of resilience interventions (see figure 5). Over the CSP period, the country office grew from 30 to 140 employees, bringing new specialized profiles in key areas such as resilience, adaptive social protection and logistics that strengthened WFP's operational capacity, competence and efficiency, although not without challenges with regard to coordination and strategic alignment. A considerable effort to strengthen the field offices is ongoing and is expected to improve implementation before the end of the CSP.

**Figure 5: Country strategic plan cumulative expenditure, 2021–2024 (July) in USD**



Sources: Annual country reports for 2021–2023 and country portfolio budget, plan versus actuals report (as at 24 July 2024).

Note: The service provision component (strategic outcome 5) is shown separately because it was implemented separately from the rest of the programme based on fully funded procurement agreements with the Government.

## Recommendations

39. This evaluation provides five recommendations, two of which are strategic and three operational.

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
<b>Recommendation 1: Strengthen the coherence and effectiveness of the CSP by defining a strategy for combining the strengthening of national and local institutional capacities with interventions at the local level.</b>	Strategic	Country office	Global headquarters	High	February 2026
1.1 Ensure a geographic and thematic focus that favours internal coherence, effectiveness and efficiency.					
1.2 Strengthen the use of lessons learned in informing national programming by systematizing local experiences.					
1.3 Consider conceptualizing service provision as an intervention modality for achieving food security and nutrition outcomes, rather than a separate outcome, in order to show its strategic significance.					
<b>Recommendation 2: In dialogue with national counterparts, define a strategy for ensuring that improvements in procurement and distribution processes are sustained through capacity strengthening for relevant institutions.</b>	Strategic	Country office	Global headquarters	High	February 2026
2.1 Conduct an analysis of WFP's service provision in terms of transaction costs and added value in order to remain competitive and to strengthen WFP's position as a preferred partner in procurement services.					
2.2 Conduct a risk analysis of WFP's involvement in service provision-related targeting, distribution and post-distribution monitoring and define the acceptable level of risk for WFP before signing agreements.	Operational	Country office	Global headquarters	Medium	June 2026
<b>Recommendation 3: Strengthen the capacity of WFP and its partners at the local level.</b>					
3.1 Continue to implement and reinforce the training process for WFP field staff and cooperating partners and monitor performance systematically, including with regard to gender, inclusion and cultural appropriateness.	Operational	Country office	Global headquarters	Medium	June 2026
3.2 Establish formal collaboration with municipalities through memorandums of understanding that clarify roles and responsibilities in alignment with national policies and in coordination with the Secretariat of Planning and Programming of the Presidency.					

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
3.3 Strengthen local capacity to face crises through training in anticipatory planning, the development of local response protocols and the provision of digital tools that allow efficient risk management.					
<b>Recommendation 4: Maintain and reinforce a culturally appropriate and inclusive approach to CSP implementation.</b>	Operational	Country office	Global headquarters	High	June 2026
4.1 Strengthen the participation of Indigenous leaders in the design and implementation of interventions to ensure the cultural appropriateness of WFP activities.					
4.2 Promote the participation of persons with disabilities in CSP activities by ensuring access for all and by ensuring reasonable accommodation and accessible infrastructure for all staff in accordance with WFP's commitment to the implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.					
4.3 Continue to systematically incorporate data disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, disability and age in monitoring and evaluation systems.					
<b>Recommendation 5: Further strengthen the implementation of the regional gender policy and strategy, challenge gender stereotypes and encourage shared responsibility for domestic and care-giving tasks in all WFP activities.</b>	Operational	Country office	Global headquarters	High	June 2026
5.1 Develop community awareness strategies that promote the acceptance of active female participation in activities traditionally carried out by men in "food for work" interventions, while reducing the workload of women through support services such as childcare and time-saving technologies.					
5.2 Ensure that all interventions include a thorough analysis of the needs of women, especially Indigenous and rural women, and systematically analyse the effects of interventions on participation, power dynamics and roles within households and communities.					

## Acronyms

CBT	cash-based transfer
CONRED	<i>Coordinadora Nacional para la Reducción de Desastres de Guatemala</i> (National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction)
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CSP	country strategic plan