



World Food Programme
Programme Alimentaire Mondial
Programa Mundial de Alimentos
برنامج الأغذية العالمي

Executive Board
Second regular session
Rome, 14–17 November 2022

Distribution: General	Agenda item 6
Date: 5 October 2022	WFP/EB.2/2022/6-F
Original: English	Evaluation reports
	For consideration

Executive Board documents are available on WFP's website (<https://executiveboard.wfp.org>).

Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Kyrgyz Republic (2018–2022)

Executive summary

The evaluation of the country strategic plan for the Kyrgyz Republic covers the period from 2017 to October 2021. It assesses WFP's strategic positioning, its contribution to outcomes, efficiency in implementation and the factors explaining performance. It was conducted using a theory-based, mixed-methods approach designed to serve the dual purpose of accountability and learning and to inform the preparation of a new country strategic plan.

The Kyrgyz Republic is a mountainous, land-locked, lower-middle-income country in Central Asia. Two out of three food-insecure people live in remote valleys where recurring climate-related shocks and disasters affect the livelihoods and food security of families and communities.

The country strategic plan introduced a social protection framework that transitioned WFP's role from implementer to enabler providing technical assistance and supporting the Government in its efforts to strengthen its capacity. The evaluation found that the country strategic plan was relevant to national priorities in its focus on enhancing social protection, country capacity and school feeding.

The social protection logic underpinning the country strategic plan could be expanded and consolidated to better support the most vulnerable. The plan was also somewhat constrained by the lack of a strategic objective related to crisis response.

Beneficiary needs were identified through vulnerability analyses, which were updated during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic. However, the beneficiary selection criteria for some activities could have unintentionally excluded some vulnerable households.

Although WFP's social protection programming was well received by the Government, the organization's support for national systems and structures and the targeting of the most

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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vulnerable was constrained by a lack of harmonization of social protection initiatives by the United Nations country team.

Progress has been made towards gender sensitivity, with significant gains in WFP programming approaches. However, gender-transformative approaches are not yet fully embedded in activities, partly due to limited gender expertise in the country office.

As a partner, WFP was recognized for its comparative advantages in the generation and use of data and analysis and its flexibility and responsiveness to emerging issues. For United Nations reform, WFP is seen as one of the lead agencies supporting the “Delivering as One” approach, the coherence of the United Nations development assistance framework and the imperative to “leave no one behind”.

Generally, resource utilization was timely despite the unforeseen consequences of the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic and socioeconomic and political disruptions. Programme flexibility was facilitated by a high percentage of flexible multi-year funding, which allowed WFP to adapt the country strategic plan to needs arising from the pandemic.

While the country strategic plan has the potential to contribute broadly to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, there is a limited evidence base for determining its long-term contributions to development outcomes. Monitoring systems and capacity strengthening are needed to track long-term outcomes derived from school meals programmes.

WFP has been successful in strengthening national capacity and reaching most of its beneficiary and output targets. It has played a major role in school meals programming, making a positive contribution to national legislative and management systems related to school meals and supporting the rollout of school feeding in individual schools.

The evaluation produced four strategic and two operational recommendations. The strategic recommendations suggest opportunities for WFP to strengthen its internal and external coherence and enhance sustainable programming. The operational recommendations focus on WFP’s ability to reach beneficiaries and track its contributions to development outcomes.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Kyrgyz Republic (2018–2022) (WFP/EB.2/2022/6-F) and management response (WFP/EB.2/2022/6-F/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. Country strategic plan (CSP) evaluations are the primary instrument for accountability and learning in accordance with the expectations of the WFP Executive Board and WFP management. They provide evidence of WFP's strategic positioning and results to inform the design of the next generation of CSPs and potentially the design of United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks.
2. The evaluation of the Kyrgyz Republic CSP for 2018–2022 covered the CSP design phase in 2017 and the implementation of all activities from January 2018 to October 2021.¹ Its main users are the WFP country office and internal and external stakeholders, including beneficiaries.
3. The evaluation adopted a theory-based, mixed-methods approach combining document review, quantitative data analysis, key informant interviews, project site visits including interviews, observations, focus group discussions and remote fixed-response telephone interviews with beneficiaries. WFP principles on the integration of gender into evaluations were applied throughout the process.
4. Because of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the evaluation followed a hybrid approach, with a remote inception phase and an in-country field mission over a three-week period in October 2021. Findings, conclusions and recommendations were discussed with stakeholders during two online workshops in February 2022.

Context

5. The Kyrgyz Republic is a land-locked, mountainous, lower-middle-income country with an ethnically diverse population of 6.7 million people that is young (average age 25),² predominantly rural (63 percent)³ and sparsely populated (34.9 people per square km).⁴ The country has the lowest gross national income in Central Asia and significant multidimensional poverty.
6. The Kyrgyz Republic is vulnerable to disasters because of its geography and its fragile agricultural systems, which among other things suffer from shortcomings in water management. Due to climate change, the country is threatened by increasingly frequent heat extremes and heightened incidence of aridity and drought.⁵ It has also recently experienced a complex socioeconomic and political transition.
7. The Kyrgyz Republic ranked 40 of 116 countries in the 2021 Global Hunger Index.⁶ Despite low levels of hunger, the country's mountainous landscape poses challenges; two out of three food-insecure people live in remote valleys. Food consumption in all provinces has

¹ The scope of the evaluation was established in agreement with the country office based on the assumption that the evaluation report would be presented together with the new CSP at the 2022 second regular session of the Executive Board. The evaluation report therefore includes financial and programme data up to December 2021.

² National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. 2021. [Population](#).

³ World Bank. 2021. [Rural population \(% of total population\) – Kyrgyz Republic](#).

⁴ World Bank. 2021. [Population density \(people per sq. km of land area\) – Kyrgyz Republic](#).










⁵ Development Partners' Coordination Council. 2018. [Kyrgyzstan Ranks Third Most Vulnerable to Climate Change in Central Asia](#).

⁶ Global Hunger Index. 2021. [Kyrgyz Republic](#).

worsened significantly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷ Women face disproportionate nutrition and food security challenges.⁸

8. Smallholder farmers are responsible for 98 percent of Kyrgyz agricultural production.⁹ Their productivity is hampered by inadequate water management; a weak knowledge base; technological gaps; limited access to resources; difficulty complying with technical requirements and quality standards implicated in accessing and operating in markets; and growing vulnerability to environmental shocks and climate change.¹⁰
9. Gender inequality remains a challenge, in particular for women in rural areas, who have limited access to productive assets. Women's right to sell property is subject to the consent of their spouses.
10. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the Kyrgyz Republic. International travel restrictions reduced the vital inflow of remittances, and national restrictions affected rural populations dependent on seasonal agricultural labour. These two factors led to increased poverty and vulnerability, often in peri-urban areas, where there are relatively few alternatives to employment as a source of income.¹¹

TABLE 1: SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS

	Indicator	Value	Year
	Population total (1)	6 724 300	2021
	Gross domestic product per capita (USD) (2)	1 276.2	2021
	Remittances as a percentage of gross domestic product (2)	31.1	2020
	Human Development Index (rank) (3)	120 of 189	2019
	Gini coefficient (3)	27.7	2019
	Percentage of households living in multidimensional poverty (3)	42.3	2019
	Percentage of households living below the national poverty line (USD 1.2 a day) (4)	33.3	2021
	Global Hunger Index (5)	Rank: 40 (of 116) Score: 8.6 (low)	2021
	Gender Inequality Index (rank) (3)	82 (of 162)	2019

Sources: (1) National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. 2021. [Population](#); (2) World Bank. 2020 and 2021. [World Bank Data: Kyrgyz Republic](#); (3) United Nations Development Programme. 2020. [Human Development Report 2020. The next frontier: Human development and the Anthropocene](#); (4) National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. 2021. [The level of poverty in the Kyrgyz Republic](#); (5) Global Hunger Index. 2021. [Kyrgyz Republic](#).

⁷ WFP. 2021. [HungerMap^{LIVE}](#).

⁸ Botreau, H. and Cohen, M. 2019. [Gender Inequalities and Food Insecurity](#).

⁹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2020. [Smallholders and family farms in Kyrgyzstan. Country study report 2019](#).

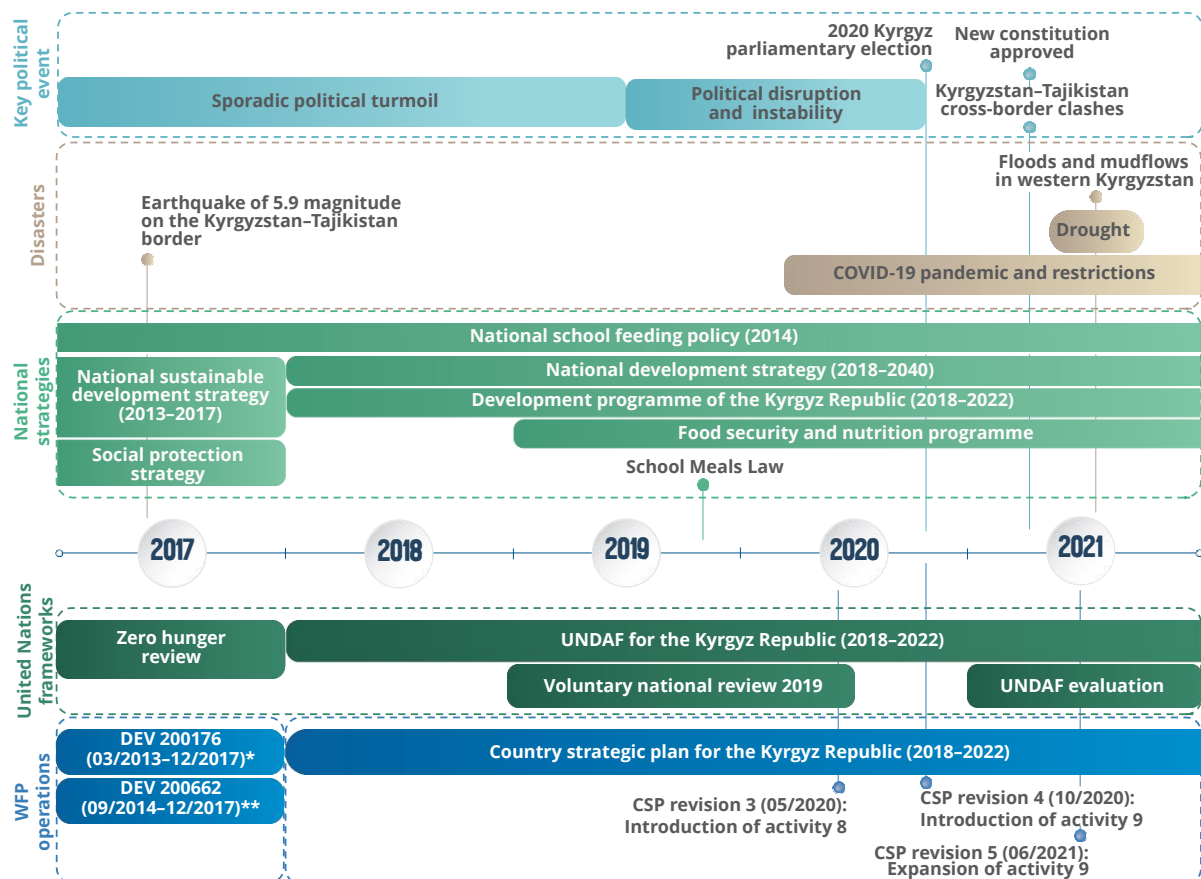
¹⁰ World Bank. 2021. [The World Bank in the Kyrgyz Republic](#).

¹¹ United Nations Development Programme. 2020. [Kyrgyz Republic could see GDP plunge 10 percent as a result of COVID-19, as domestic violence surges](#).

WFP country strategic plan

11. The Kyrgyz Republic CSP for 2018–2022 was approved by the Executive Board in November 2017, and implementation started in January 2018. In line with the WFP strategic plan for 2017–2021, the CSP continued to move WFP away from implementation towards an enabling role by focusing on the provision of technical assistance and government capacity strengthening in food security and school feeding and a greater role for WFP in the coordination and exchange of experience and learning (figure 1).¹²

Figure 1: The Kyrgyz Republic country context and WFP interventions overview



* Development project 200176 – Optimizing the Primary School Meals Programme (March 2013–December 2017).

** Development project 200662 – Support for National Productive Safety Nets and Long-Term Community Resilience (September 2014–December 2017).

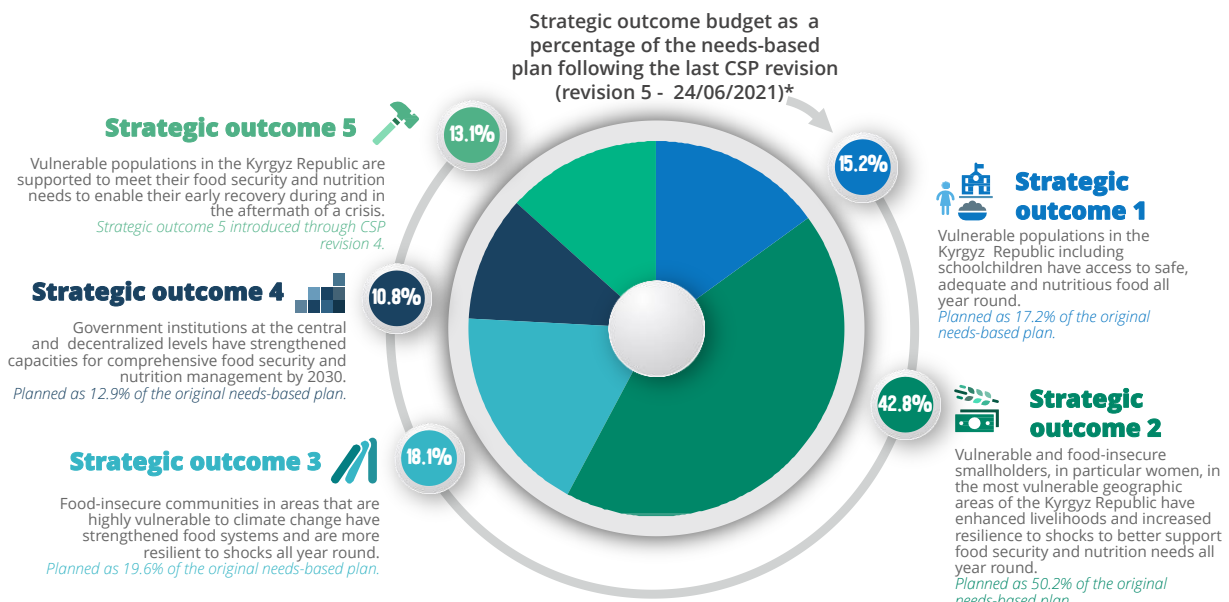
Source: Office of Evaluation, based on the full report on the evaluation of the Kyrgyz Republic CSP for 2018–2022.

12. The CSP was designed to support national social protection in order to address food insecurity among vulnerable populations; strengthen resilience; and support country capacity strengthening (CCS) for government institutions involved in food security and nutrition management. Cross-cutting priorities in the CSP included accountability to affected populations, gender, protection and the safeguarding of the environment. The planned intervention modalities were cash-based transfers, food transfers and capacity strengthening.

¹² WFP. 2017. *WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021)*.

13. The original country portfolio budget was USD 59,254,332 (figure 2) and was intended to reach 631,503 beneficiaries (figure 3). The CSP was revised five times, however, primarily to address emerging needs (the motive behind three of the five revisions), resulting in a budget of USD 68,634,703 (figure 2) and a corresponding increase in planned beneficiaries to 932,936 (figure 3). The CSP was 64 percent funded as of December 2021 (figure 2) and has benefitted from a high percentage of flexible funding and multi-year commitments by its main donors: the Russian Federation (76.5 percent), the Republic of Korea (7.5 percent) and Switzerland (6.5 percent).

Figure 2: Kyrgyz Republic CSP (2018–2022) strategic outcomes, budget, funding and expenditures

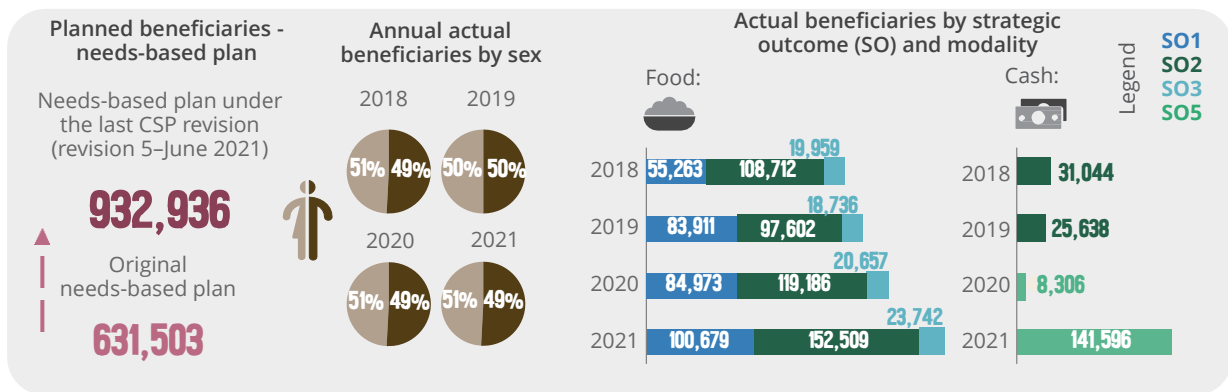


* The needs-based plan budget percentages by strategic outcome have been calculated at the transfer and implementation costs level (USD 60 million) excluding direct (USD 4.4 million) and indirect support costs (USD 4.2 million). This data refers to CSP revision 5, approved on 24 June 2021.

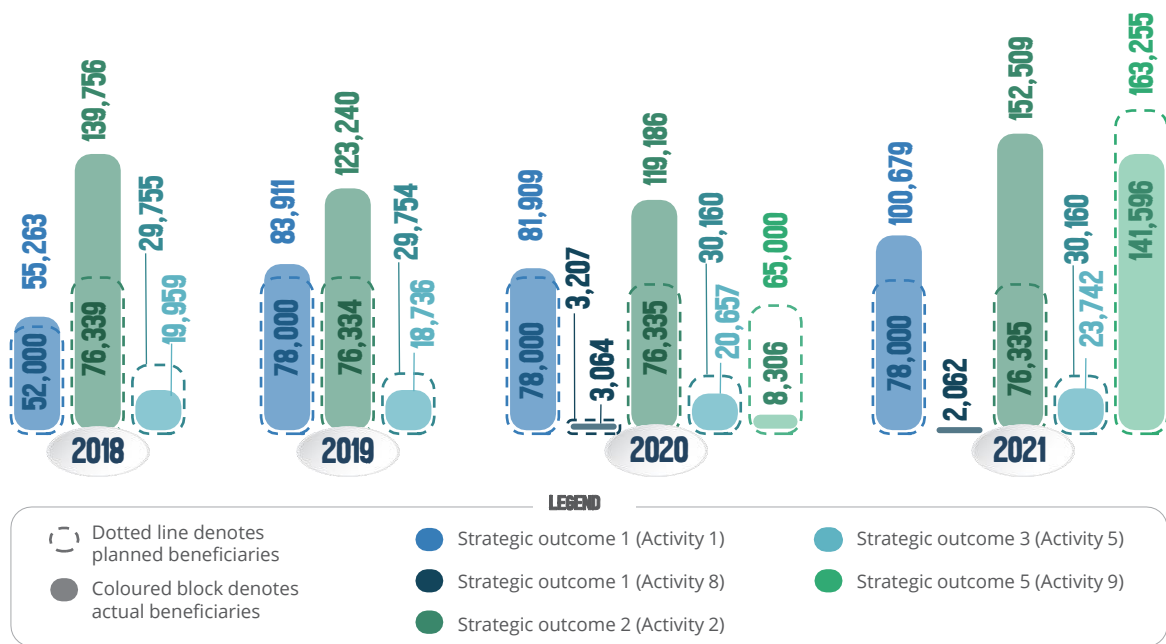
** The allocated resources by strategic outcome do not add up to USD 43.8 million because resources were also allocated to non-strategic outcome purposes (USD 5.1 million) and to direct (USD 2.8 million) and indirect support costs (USD 2.5 million).

Source: Office of Evaluation, based on the Kyrgyz Republic CSP for 2018–2022, CSP revision 5 and Integrated Road Map Analytics annual country report 1 (31 December 2021).

Figure 3: Beneficiary dashboard (2018–2021)



Annual planned versus actual beneficiaries by strategic outcome



Source: Annual country reports for 2018–2021.

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 and strategic positioning

- The CSP was developed through a consultative process with national ministries and other United Nations entities. Its design period coincided with the drafting of the government strategy for 2018–2040 and the mid-term development programme for 2018–2020.¹³
- The CSP was aligned with national priorities, plans and strategies related to food security and nutrition, including the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets prioritized by the Government.¹⁴ It was also aligned with the national sustainable development strategy, which

¹³ In 2021, as part of a legal review of all policies and strategies, the Government replaced the national development strategy with an interim mid-term development programme and action plan for 2021–2026 pending the elaboration of a new national development strategy.

¹⁴ Two national strategic reviews were conducted in 2017 by the National Institute for Strategic Studies, one focused on food security and nutrition and the other on poverty, to identify gaps and opportunities at the individual, institutional and policy levels.

expired in 2017, and the subsequent 2018–2040 *Taza Koom – Zhany Door* (Transparent Society – New Epoch) plan. Furthermore, by supporting social protection the CSP contributed not just to SDGs 2 and 17 but also to SDGs 1 (on poverty), 6 (on water, sanitation and hygiene), 8 (on employment), 9 (on infrastructure), 13 (on climate change) and 16 (on peacebuilding), although these contributions were not formally monitored.

16. The CSP was broadly coherent with national priorities on social protection, capacity strengthening and school feeding and was intended to continue strengthening national capacity for institutionalizing and scaling up WFP interventions using complementary government resources and promoting comprehensive food security governance at all levels. However, activities under strategic outcomes 2 and 3 were not embedded in government programmes and the CSP included a conceptual framework that was limited in bringing together the array of potential CCS engagements (linked to strategic outcome 4) under a broader social protection approach. There is therefore scope to improve the alignment between WFP operations and the institutional social protection system.

Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable

17. Through the CSP, WFP appropriately addressed the needs of the most vulnerable by identifying and working in areas prone to food insecurity and climate disasters; a gender analysis was also integrated into the CSP design and targeting. Vulnerability criteria were used for targeting direct assistance activities and were part of the technical support and advocacy that WFP provided for national and United Nations systems.
18. During the COVID-19 pandemic WFP appropriately updated its target caseload to include newly affected households. Despite the lockdown, WFP was able to adapt field-level projects and continue to reach beneficiaries. The conditionality requirements (the work or training requirements accompanying food and cash transfers) can potentially lead to the exclusion of extremely vulnerable households.

Adaptation

19. CSP strategic positioning remained relevant throughout implementation. The focus on social protection was maintained through field-level resilience building activities and national-level vulnerability mapping support.
20. During the COVID-19 outbreak WFP demonstrated flexibility, and activities were adapted to address the consequences of the pandemic. WFP was perceived as an agile and important partner for the coordination of the COVID-19 response. WFP supported United Nations country team partners and the coordination with the government response to the pandemic.

Coherence and alignment

21. The CSP was coherent with United Nations strategies in the Kyrgyz Republic and its strategic objectives were aligned with priorities 1, 3 and 4 of the country's United Nations development assistance framework (UNDAF). WFP is a leader among United Nations entities in supporting the "Delivering as One" approach and supports UNDAF coherence and alignment by chairing result group 1 and co-chairing result group 3. WFP also co-chairs three working groups, connected to three of the four UNDAF priorities within the Development Partners Coordination Council and the Scaling Up Nutrition initiative with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).
22. WFP's comparative advantages are seen in its ability to generate and use data and analysis; its coordination capabilities; its capacity to deliver; and its practical flexibility and responsiveness with regard to emerging issues. The implementation of the CSP provides examples of effective coordination with the other Rome-based agencies, the International



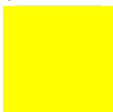

Labour Organization, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; and UNICEF through partnerships that leverage WFP's comparative advantages.

What are the extent and quality of WFP's contribution to country strategic plan outcomes in the Kyrgyz Republic?

Country strategic plan outcomes

23. The CSP met most output targets, but progress towards outcome targets was uneven. According to data from annual country reports, the most of the planned CSP output and beneficiary targets were met or exceeded. The outcome-level indicators do not show the same degree of progress, even when the challenges in measuring actual CSP contributions to development are taken into account.
24. Table 2 summarizes CSP progress against outputs and outcomes. The progress on outputs was gauged by combining the projected annual targets for beneficiaries and assets created. The progress towards outcomes is a qualitative assessment by the evaluation team based on CSP logical framework outcome indicators and a review of qualitative data and documentation.

TABLE 2: CSP PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES			
Strategic outcome	Output progress	Outcome progress	Likelihood of achieving end of CSP outcomes
1: Vulnerable populations in the Kyrgyz Republic including schoolchildren have access to safe, adequate and nutritious food all year round.	Significant progress	Significant progress	Close to achievement
2: Vulnerable and food-insecure smallholders, in particular women, in the most vulnerable geographic areas of the Kyrgyz Republic have enhanced livelihoods and increased resilience to shocks to better support food security and nutrition needs all year round.	Significant progress	Limited progress	Progress to achievement
3: Food-insecure communities in areas that are highly vulnerable to climate change have strengthened food systems and are more resilient to shocks all year round.	Very limited progress	Very limited progress	Very limited progress
4: Government institutions at the central and decentralized levels have strengthened capacities for comprehensive food security and nutrition management by 2030.	Some progress	Limited progress	Limited progress to achievement
5: Vulnerable populations in the Kyrgyz Republic are supported to meet their food security and nutrition needs to enable their early recovery during and in the aftermath of the crisis.	Limited progress	Limited progress	Initial delays but expected to achieve by end of CSP in 2022

Legend			
	= Achievement rate at 90 percent or above		= Achievement rate between 75 and 89 percent
	= Achievement rate between 50 and 75 percent		= Achievement rate below 50 percent

Source: Annual country reports, country office databases and assessments by the evaluation team.

25. Through activities under **strategic outcome 1** WFP successfully contributed to rolling out a school meals programme (SMP) to schools across the country, ensuring high national coverage. More than 80 percent of primary schools have been covered by the SMP, but the remaining schools are geographically the most challenging to reach. WFP also helped strengthen national capacity for the provision of school meals at the Ministry of Education

and Science, although links between ministries were limited because of policy changes. WFP was successful in contributing to national legislative and management systems for the SMP and supporting individual schools with SMP rollout. Overall, CCS linked to the national rollout was extensive, but long-term gains from the SMP for children and vulnerable households are not visible within the current corporate results framework. The SMP continued during the COVID-19 pandemic, adapting to provide food directly to households when schools were closed as part of efforts to contain the disease.

26. **Strategic outcomes 2 and 3** were linked to livelihood and climate change adaptation. As both foresaw similar implementation modalities (food assistance for assets/food assistance for training), the country office created linkages between the two strategic outcomes, with activities under strategic outcome 2 supported by food assistance from traditional donors and those under strategic outcome 3 to be funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF). However, delays in GCF funding limited the implementation of the climate change adaptation activities under strategic outcome 3.¹⁵ Although the coverage of projects was national and consistent over the years, the activities selected were inclined towards the interests of the Government (and men) rather than women; infrastructure and capacity strengthening work was overrepresented and there was little focus on income generation projects. The programme of activities under strategic outcomes 2 and 3 continued during the COVID-19 pandemic with adaptations that enabled WFP to reach affected beneficiaries promptly such as the advance delivery of food rations to allow vulnerable households access to food stocks during lockdown or the halving of food rations to reach more people.
27. Through activities under **strategic outcome 4** the CSP contributed to national capacity strengthening, with interventions in policy development and institutional effectiveness. Government counterparts appreciated in particular WFP's evidence analysis and technical support related to the management of data collection, analysis and data visualization. These activities were embedded in a well-defined conceptual framework, which was not necessarily the case for other CCS areas of engagement. WFP was also active within the United Nations country team providing technical inputs related to United Nations priorities on CCS. CCS efforts were concentrated at the national level, with limited engagement at the district and local levels.
28. **Strategic outcome 5** focused on WFP's engagement in the COVID-19 crisis response. Under this strategic outcome, WFP provided conditional cash-based transfers as part of early recovery assistance for vulnerable households in peri-urban areas affected by the pandemic. Beneficiaries perceived positive household changes as a result of WFP support under strategic outcome 5; however, the prognosis for long-term food security outcomes is not clear given the nature of the activities chosen and the limited amounts transferred. Engagement under this strategic outcome was positively perceived by municipal stakeholders; participation conditions might have led to the exclusion of some vulnerable people, however (although this could not be determined by the evaluation team).

Humanitarian principles, accountability to affected populations, protection and the environment

29. CSP activities were implemented in alignment with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. However, conditional transfer requirements reduced access for those who could not work, possibly preventing vulnerable households from receiving timely support. WFP performed well on protection aspects, which included assessing protection, access, safety and dignity considerations.

¹⁵ The first disbursement of the GCF has been delayed by various complications including changes in the Government structure and in reaching legal agreement.

30. Accountability to affected populations was evidenced through the establishment and use of beneficiary complaint and feedback mechanisms. However, beneficiaries were not fully aware of the mechanisms, which means that they were not systematically used across all WFP activities.
31. Environmental risk assessment was part of all activity selection processes. However, there is less evidence of environmental or climate change adaptation components in project selection, largely due to the absence of dedicated environmental and climate change adaptation expertise caused by GCF funding delays.

Gender

32. Although gender sensitivity is evident in beneficiary inclusion, gender disparities in decision making related to activities meant that women's preferences for projects (such as for childcare and income-generating activities) were underrepresented.
33. The CSP complied with WFP corporate gender requirements on reporting, indicators, beneficiary inclusion and financial tracking. After the design of the CSP, the country office continued to update its gender action plan annually. Moreover, the shift from focal points to a gender results network approach within the country office led to more gender-sensitive engagement throughout the CSP. There are, however, barriers to increasing gender-transformative programming, including a lack of senior gender expertise in the country office.

Sustainability

34. Progress towards the sustainability of CSP achievements varied by strategic outcome. Most progress was made on strategic outcomes 1 and 4 but sustainability in the institutionalization of capacity development remains a challenge. WFP has not developed transition strategies for its activities under most of the strategic outcomes.

TABLE 3: SUSTAINABILITY RATINGS BY STRATEGIC OUTCOME*				
Sustainability rating	Strategic outcome 1	Strategic outcomes 2 and 3	Strategic outcome 4	Strategic outcome 5
Strategic integration	Significant progress	Limited progress	Significant progress	Time-bound early recovery assistance initiated in 2020.
Resourcing	Limited progress	Very limited progress	Limited progress	
Technical capacity	Some progress	Some progress	Limited progress	
Transition and transformation strategy	Very limited progress	Very limited progress	Some progress	
Political will	Significant progress	Limited progress	Some progress	

Source: Evaluation team from document review and interviews.

* Sustainability encompasses the following five dimensions: the degree to which CSP activities are strategically integrated in government programmes; the degree to which the Government is likely to fund continuation of programmes; the technical capacity within the Government to manage and implement programmes; the existence of a WFP-government plan to move away from WFP support; and the degree of political will related to and government ownership of the programmes.

35. Good progress was made on the sustainability and transition of the SMP (strategic outcome 1), but potential barriers to further success include a need for ongoing capacity development and subsidies for the programme. After project support ends, schools

continue to provide hot meals within the SMP but with varying frequency and not always to the level outlined in SMP materials and standards.

36. The strong government representation on the district project coordination committees that select field projects under strategic outcomes 2 and 3 could facilitate the sustainability of social protection gains, but the activities undertaken show limited integration with existing national social assistance programmes.
37. Activities under strategic outcome 4 contributed to national systems but their sustainability is threatened by challenges related to national capacity, mainly due to staff turnover and limited evidence that decision making is data-informed. Activities under strategic outcome 5 were designed to provide temporary early recovery assistance; sustainability is therefore not a key consideration for these activities.

Humanitarian, development and peace work

38. Although WFP has historically engaged in facilitating strategic links at the humanitarian–development–peace work nexus in the Kyrgyz Republic, strengthening these connections was limited by internal and external factors including the decision to build the CSP around focus areas that limited WFP's ability to pivot to emergent opportunities that were not clearly within their scope, as well as perceptions by external stakeholders that WFP's comparative advantages affected its messaging on strategic linkages across the nexus.

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

Timeliness

39. The evaluation found no significant delays in output delivery. Overall, transfers were timely except for the initial cash-based transfers for the emergency response under strategic outcome 5; those were delayed due to the lack of a crisis-response focus area in the original CSP and the need to remedy that lack through a CSP revision. This in turn delayed the receipt of funding from donors and reduced capacity to deliver during the pandemic. The assets created and training provided through conditional in-kind transfers were timely.

Appropriateness of the coverage and targeting

40. The national coverage of the CSP is appropriate and planned beneficiary targets were mostly reached or exceeded. CSP targeting relied on evidence-based methodologies and was conducted using a two-step process of vulnerability analysis and follow-up assessment.
41. The CSP met beneficiary needs although it is possible that some vulnerable households were excluded unintentionally: selection criteria could have inadvertently excluded extremely vulnerable households whose members were unable to work (for health or childcare reasons) or schools whose infrastructure did not meet WFP requirements.

Cost efficiency

42. The CSP was reasonably cost efficient although efficiency varied across activities and strategic outcomes. The pandemic and consequent shift to activities supporting early recovery reduced efficiency in 2020, but efficiency was regained in 2021. Food transfers are more cost-effective for WFP than cash in the Kyrgyz Republic because the Government manages food distribution.

Alternative cost-effectiveness measures

43. Alternative cost-effectiveness measures have been explored within the CSP. The feasibility of such measures, however, is constrained by the almost total reliance on international in-kind food assistance and by the fact that the Government already manages all internal

storage and distribution costs. While little adjustment can be made at the macro level, WFP took steps to increase programme cost effectiveness for activities under all strategic outcomes. There is still room for small operational inefficiencies to be improved but that is likely to result in only marginal gains.

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 data and results-based management

44. The CSP design built on two previous development projects and was informed by an array of food security analyses, the zero hunger national strategic review¹⁶ and relevant evaluations, as well as by corporate sources and studies. It drew upon broad consultative processes and research with national counterparts and United Nations partners.
45. The COVID-19 pandemic led to updated and more frequent data collection exercises related to vulnerability mapping, food insecurity and food prices, some of which informed the development of activities under strategic outcome 5.

Predictability, adequacy and flexibility of resources

46. The CSP benefited from flexible and multi-year funding, but such funding is at risk due to reliance on a small group of donors. The number of donors per year fell from seven in 2018 to three in 2021, with 76.5 percent of the total allocated resources provided by one donor (the Russian Federation). Other donor-funded projects were implemented early in the CSP implementation period, including a rural women's empowerment project and a cross-border peacebuilding project.
47. For the next CSP WFP could, to the extent possible under the circumstances, harness new opportunities for resource mobilization by increasing its engagement in joint programming with other United Nations country team members and seeking support from other donors.

Strategic partnerships

48. While implementing the CSP, WFP maintained its partnership with the other United Nations country team members, the Government and non-governmental organizations and initiated new partnerships as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a partner, WFP's strength is in coordination rather than collaboration, as shown by the relatively few examples of joint programming.
49. Partnerships with government ministries are strong but were often siloed because of the design of the CSP and governmental structure. Partnerships for climate change adaptation were limited during CSP implementation because of funding shortfalls and ongoing government reforms. Civil society organizations perceive their relationship with WFP as having become more transactional during the CSP.

Flexibility in dynamic operational contexts

50. The CSP enabled WFP to adapt programming to respond to evolving opportunities and to adapt project activities to emerging needs, although the CSP focus on development rather than crisis response hampered WFP's ability to introduce new activities outside the focus areas identified at the design stage. Nevertheless, external stakeholders commended WFP's flexibility and proactiveness in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.
51. The CSP architecture is intended to promote internal coherence in WFP operations, supported by the CSP theory of change. However, as each strategic outcome is managed separately, in practice there are limited links among strategic outcomes.

¹⁶ National Institute of Strategic Studies of the Kyrgyz Republic. 2017. [Food security governance review](#).

Enabling environment and internal capacity

52. Consistently strong government interest in social protection and a strong United Nations country team framework for coordination provided a solid enabling environment for WFP operations. Nevertheless, the socioeconomic and political disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and social tensions related to the Tajikistan conflict significantly changed government structures and functioning and shifted priorities, and consequently the country office's ability to partner on activities that aimed at addressing root causes rather than respond to increasing immediate needs.
53. Country office capacity remained consistent during the CSP. However, internal capacity was stretched due to unfilled positions and gaps in organizational structure. This reduced coherence and expertise and increased staff workload throughout the CSP cycle. WFP staff were required to fill monitoring and administrative roles as well as function as "development facilitators" building relationships and providing technical expertise.

Conclusions

54. The CSP facilitated WFP's strategic positioning in CCS and its collaboration with the other members of the United Nations country team in supporting government efforts to achieve SDG targets. It also contributed somewhat to increased strategic engagement across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus – despite internal and external limiting factors – and improved operational flexibility and responsiveness.
55. The design and underlying social protection logic of the CSP supported internal coherence across strategic outcomes. In practice, however, the management of the CSP by strategic outcome did not facilitate synergies.
56. WFP successfully contributed to strengthened national capacity and it achieved most of its beneficiary and output targets. The organization played a major role in school meals programming, successfully contributing to the national legislative and management systems for the SMP as well as supporting SMP rollout for individual schools.
57. Clear targeting and beneficiary selection criteria guided participation in CSP activities and were updated during the pandemic to include households newly affected by food insecurity. Nonetheless, the conditionality of assistance may have excluded extremely vulnerable people or schools unable to meet WFP criteria.
58. WFP's social protection programming was well received by the Government. Even so, its support for national systems and structures and targeting of the most vulnerable were constrained by a lack of harmonization among the social protection initiatives managed by the United Nations country team. There is an opportunity for WFP to expand and consolidate its strategic positioning on social protection to support government efforts.
59. Progress was made towards gender sensitivity, with significant gains in WFP programming approaches and in meeting corporate gender requirements. However, gender transformative approaches were not fully embedded in activities, partly due to limited gender expertise in the country office.
60. As a partner WFP took a leading role in coordination with the United Nations country team, the Government, civil society organizations and funding partners. WFP has forged strong technical and service delivery partnerships with these actors, creating the potential for greater multisector, multi-actor collaboration on joint decision making that leverages complementary expertise across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

61. Sustainability remains a challenge for the CSP activities, particularly with respect to the institutionalization of capacity development. Sustainability challenges also stem from the management of projects as standalone activities rather linked components of long-term, multi-stakeholder programmes.
62. The CSP benefited from flexible and multi-year funding, but that did not lead to expanded resource mobilization. On the contrary, the CSP remains underfunded and the donor base is shrinking.
63. While the CSP has potential to make broad contributions to the achievement of the SDGs, there is limited evidence that can be used to identify long-term contributions to development outcomes. In particular, there is a need for monitoring systems and capacity strengthening for the tracking of long-term outcomes of the SMP.

Recommendations

64. The evaluation led to four strategic recommendations and two operational recommendations relevant to the development of the next CSP for the Kyrgyz Republic.

#	Recommendation	Level/ nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
1	Internal integration, adaptation and coherence. When developing the next country strategic plan, WFP should strengthen the overarching and strategic outcome-specific conceptual frameworks, in particular for country capacity strengthening. WFP should also establish clearer links among strategic outcomes to enhance the internal coherence of the country strategic plan and foster greater contributions to long-term development outcomes.	Strategic	Country office			
	1.1 Develop an overarching conceptual framework for the entire country strategic plan drawing from theories of change specific to each strategic outcome and establish clearer links among strategic outcomes, connecting them conceptually through a pathway for contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals.			Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division (PRO); regional bureau	High	October 2022
	1.2 Update the country capacity strengthening strategy grounded in a documented capacity gap assessment and mainstream it across the whole country portfolio.			Technical Assistance and Country Capacity Strengthening Service (PROT) and its Country Capacity Strengthening Unit	High	October 2022
	1.3 Review the country office organizational structure and staffing capacity to identify gaps and develop approaches to enhance country office expertise in gender, climate change adaptation and country capacity strengthening to support country strategic plan implementation.			Regional bureau	High	June 2023
2	Social protection strategic positioning. For the next country strategic plan, WFP should continue to expand its social protection strategic positioning.	Strategic	Country office			

#	Recommendation	Level/ nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
	2.1 Draw on the findings from the joint Core Diagnostic Instrument assessment, co-funded by the World Bank, the United Nations Children's Fund, the International Labour Organization and WFP, when defining WFP's social protection positioning with regard to all strategic outcomes and in relation to other agencies with the aim of expanding access to national social protection systems that foster people's ability to meet their food security, nutrition and other essential needs.			Regional bureau, Government representatives for social protection and climate change adaptation	High	October 2022
	2.2 Identify means whereby the country strategic plan can contribute to enhancing the management and delivery of existing government social protection mechanisms (such as public works, the social contract, capacity development centres and disaster risk reduction rehabilitation activities sponsored by the Ministry of Emergency Situation). This could include linking nutrition awareness activities to existing education curriculum reform, increasing wraparound support for vulnerable families through interconnected programming or linking activities to existing employment opportunities through state services.			Regional bureau, WFP headquarters (Social Protection Unit), Government representatives for social protection and climate change adaptation	Medium	May 2023
	2.3 Contribute to ongoing discussions on the development of a single United Nations social protection road map, setting out a joint United Nations country team multi-year long-term plan for providing support for national social protection with priority areas for policy development and technical support.			United Nations country team social protection representatives	Medium	May 2023
3	Partnerships and collaboration for impact and sustainability. In the next country strategic plan, WFP should build on existing good practices to continue strengthening its partnerships with the Government, other United Nations entities and civil society for enhanced complementary programming and sustainability.	Strategic	Country office			

#	Recommendation	Level/ nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
	3.1 <i>Government</i> : In order to strengthen the sustainability of country strategic plan outcomes, continue to support the Government and develop a transition strategy that articulates how the Government would continue country strategic plan activities beyond the life of the country strategic plan, including the maintenance of the school meals programme by schools, community development outcomes and country capacity strengthening engagements.			Government representatives involved in development and social protection	Medium	September 2023
	3.2 <i>United Nations country team</i> : Continue to strengthen partnerships with other United Nations entities that have complementary expertise and identify possible synergies across programmes that could be pursued even in the absence of funding for joint programmes. For example, collaborate with the United Nations Development Programme on improving the quality of community-based action plans under strategic outcomes 2 and 3; work with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on agricultural programmes aimed at reducing post-harvest losses; partner with the International Labour Organization to link income-generation training to long-term employment opportunities, especially in peri-urban contexts.			Support from regional bureau and WFP headquarters (Partnerships and Advocacy Department), United Nations country team representatives involved in development and social protection	Medium	September 2023
	3.3 <i>Civil society</i> : Work throughout the next country strategic plan to establish self-sustaining multi-stakeholder non-state actor platforms that can serve as mechanisms for information exchange, continuous socialization and community mobilization on emergent issues in collaboration with the Government. This could include building platforms of school meals programme service providers or expanding project coordination committee membership to include more civil society or women representatives.			Support from regional bureau, civil society groups and non-governmental organizations involved in development and social protection	Medium	May 2024

#	Recommendation	Level/ nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
4	Resource diversification. As part of the next country strategic plan, WFP should continue to seek to diversify its donor base.	Strategic	Country office			
	4.1 Maintain strong relationships with long-standing donors by reviewing donor directions and strategic plans.			Support from regional bureau and WFP headquarters (Private Partnerships and Fundraising Division, Public Partnerships and Resourcing Division)	Medium	December 2023
	4.2 Systematically review where and how WFP corporate terminology and concepts may inhibit donor willingness to support WFP and adapt materials accordingly before approaching new donors.			Support from regional bureau and WFP headquarters (Private Partnerships and Fundraising Division, Public Partnerships and Resourcing Division, Climate and Disaster Risk Reduction Programmes Unit)	Medium	December 2023
5	Coverage and targeting. For the next country strategic plan, WFP should continue to refine and reassess its coverage and targeting to better reach extremely vulnerable or potential new beneficiary groups covered by WFP direct assistance programmes and country capacity strengthening interventions.	Operational	Country office			
	5.1 <i>Extremely vulnerable groups:</i> Integrate unconditional transfer options into projects as part of the WFP support package in line with government social assistance cash transfers.			Regional bureau and WFP headquarters (Climate and Disaster Risk Reduction Programmes Unit; Research, Assessment and Monitoring Division [RAM])	High	October 2022
	5.2 <i>Extremely vulnerable groups:</i> Support the formulation of an inter-agency strategy for complementary holistic wraparound support through multiple interventions aimed at targeted vulnerable households.			United Nations country team agencies engaged in social protection	Medium	April 2023

#	Recommendation	Level/ nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
	5.3 <i>Peri-urban vulnerable groups</i> : Build on early recovery assistance to introduce a development strategic outcome for peri-urban populations and establish new partnerships to link interventions with municipal employment opportunities.			Regional bureau and WFP headquarters (PROT/Country Capacity Strengthening Unit; Social Protection Unit)	High	October 2022
6	Evidence base for development outcomes. In the next country strategic plan WFP should invest further in evidence generation either through WFP-led studies or by supporting government capacity to track long-term contributions to development outcomes, enhance project management and inform policy development.	Operational	Country office			
	6.1 Under school meals programme-related work, advocate, and support the Government in, the measurement of long-term education, health and food security outcomes derived from the school meals programme. Support the integration of WFP tools for assessing school performance into government systems and undertake an assessment of all schools implementing the school meals programme since 2013 to determine their ability to continue the school meals programme after their transition away from WFP support.			Support from regional bureau and WFP headquarters (RAM; School-Based Programmes; Corporate Planning and Performance Division [CPP]), government representatives with links to the school meals programme	Medium	September 2023
	6.2 Under livelihoods and resilience activities, support the Government in undertaking, or directly carry out, studies to track the long-term effects on beneficiaries of participating in food assistance for assets or food assistance for training projects, i.e. their effects beyond the duration of the projects.			Support from regional bureau and WFP headquarters (RAM, PRO, CPP), government representatives with links to food assistance for assets or food assistance for training projects	Medium	September 2023

#	Recommendation	Level/ nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
	6.3 Under livelihoods and resilience activities, consider reintroducing the community asset indicator in the next country strategic plan logical framework and support Government-led mechanisms for measuring the quality and robustness of community infrastructure over time and understanding the long-term contributions and sustainability of WFP-supported interventions and their long-term effects on communities.			Support from regional bureau and WFP headquarters (RAM, PRO)	High	December 2022
	6.4 Under livelihoods and resilience activities, support Government-led mechanisms for identifying the combination of project types to be implemented in a district that is best able to maximize community development outcomes.			Support from regional bureau and WFP headquarters (RAM)	Medium	September 2023
	6.5 For country capacity strengthening interventions, consider developing additional country capacity strengthening output and outcome indicators beyond the current corporate results framework indicators to capture the entirety of WFP country capacity strengthening interventions and measure progress in a more comprehensive and accurate manner.			Support from regional bureau and WFP headquarters (RAM, CPP, PROT/ Country Capacity Strengthening Unit)	High	December 2022

Acronyms

CCS	country capacity strengthening
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CPP	Corporate Planning and Performance Division
CSP	country strategic plan
GCF	Green Climate Fund
PRO	Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division
PROT	Technical Assistance and Country Capacity Strengthening Service
RAM	Research, Assessment and Monitoring Division
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMP	school meals programme
UNDAF	United Nations development assistance framework
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund