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

Executive summary

The evaluation of the interim country strategic plan for the Central African Republic for 2018–2022 was conducted between April 2021 and March 2022 and covered WFP's strategy, interventions and systems for the period between 2018 and mid-2021. Taking a utilization-focused, consultative approach, the evaluation served the dual purpose of accountability and learning and informed the preparation of the next country strategic plan for the Central African Republic. The evaluation assessed WFP's strategic positioning, its contribution to outcomes, the efficiency of implementation and the factors explaining WFP's performance.

The Central African Republic is a sparsely populated lower-income country severely affected by high rates of chronic malnutrition, poverty and gender inequality. The country has suffered recurring political and security crises for several decades. Following the 2013 coup d'état, the situation in the country remains unstable, with a prolonged crisis combining natural shocks, conflict and structural institutional weaknesses.

The interim country strategic plan marked a change from operation- and programme-based planning at the regional and country levels to country-level strategic planning and had the aim of facilitating integration among sectors, focus areas and long-term objectives.

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 found the interim country strategic plan to be aligned with the orientation set out in the national recovery and peacebuilding plan for 2017–2021, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2018–2021 and the humanitarian response plan for 2017–2019. While WFP's coverage of the population's needs was broad, dispersion and geographical prioritization were critical challenges. WFP analyses and assistance could also have given greater consideration to forestry resources.

Despite security and logistics constraints, WFP demonstrated the capacity to meet humanitarian needs, and flexibility in adapting to emerging crises such as the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic. Nutrition and school feeding results were constrained by limited funding, with the funding available directed predominantly to emergency response. Food assistance for assets activities showed potential in stable and secure conditions but were poorly integrated with other WFP activities and the complementary interventions of other actors. While capacity strengthening for public services remained small in scale, WFP effectively provided humanitarian access to international cooperation actors, although the sustainability of its services was limited owing to a lack of local operators. Gender mainstreaming and the consideration of protection issues in WFP interventions have improved since 2018, but analysis of the related results and synergies with other actors could be strengthened.

The evaluation concluded that WFP's ambition of strengthening resilience and institutional capacities required significant adjustments to adapt to the fragile and unstable setting and WFP's increased role in responding to humanitarian needs. Initial assumptions regarding the context, security level, emerging crises and partnerships have not materialized sufficiently to support the logic of the intervention, and the role of the interim country strategic plan as a strategic steering tool was limited.

The evaluation made five strategic recommendations focused on the structure of the next country strategic plan, the resilience and prevention focus, synergies with other actors, gender and protection mainstreaming and conflict analysis. It also made one operational recommendation focused on monitoring and human resources.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the interim country strategic plan for Central African Republic (2018–2022) (WFP/EB.1/2023/5-D/2) and management response (WFP/EB.1/2023/5-D/2/Add.1) and encourages further action on the recommendations set out in the report, taking into account the considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

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

Introduction

Evaluation features

1. The evaluation of the WFP interim country strategic plan (ICSP) for the Central African Republic was conducted between April 2021 and March 2022 with the aim of providing evidence for accountability and learning for informing the development of the next country strategic plan.
2. The evaluation assessed the implementation of the ICSP from 2018 to mid-2021, including WFP's strategic positioning, its effectiveness in contributing to strategic outcomes, the efficiency of ICSP implementation and factors explaining WFP's performance.
3. An independent external team conducted the evaluation using a theory-based, mixed-methods approach and drawing on monitoring data, document review, direct field observation, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with more than 700 stakeholders.
4. Gender, protection and humanitarian principles were fully integrated into the evaluation's methodological approach. Ethical standards were applied to protect the dignity of the people involved in the evaluation and the confidentiality of the information shared. Findings, conclusions and recommendations were discussed with stakeholders during two online workshops in February 2022.
5. Despite restrictions related to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the evaluation team did not encounter any major constraints that compromised the overall credibility of the evaluation. Some of the challenges encountered related to the limited availability of interviewees, data availability and access to remote areas. These were adequately compensated for. Primary and secondary data were carefully triangulated to ensure the validity of the findings presented in the evaluation report.

Context

6. The Central African Republic is a sparsely populated country with a population of 4.9 million people and an area of 623,000 km². It is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 188th of the 189 countries on the human development index in 2020. The World Bank estimates that 71 percent of the population was living below the international poverty line in 2020, with a life expectancy of 53 years.
7. The country has suffered cycles of political and security crises for several decades, with a coup d'état in 2013 followed by communal violence and population displacements. The situation remains unstable, as the prolonged complex crisis combines natural shocks, conflict and structural weaknesses with an almost non-existent administration outside the capital, leaving room for non-state armed groups to control most of the territory.
8. The 2019 global hunger index places the Central African Republic in the lowest position of 117 countries. The economy is based largely on the agriculture sector on which 75 percent of the population depends. Since 2013, the socio-political and security crisis has had devastating effects on the agriculture and livestock sectors and has reinforced pre-existing structural constraints.
9. While the prevalence of global acute malnutrition is 5.8 percent, the prevalence of chronic malnutrition exceeds the critical threshold of the World Health Organization (30 percent) in most prefectures. The country ranks 159th of the 162 in the gender inequality index (2019)¹,

¹ United Nations Development Programme. 2020. *Gender Inequality Index 2019*.

as is reflected in lower school enrolment rates for girls and unequal access to agricultural plots and livestock for women, among other effects.

10. In September 2015, the Government adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are implemented under the national recovery and peacebuilding plan for 2017–2021. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2018–2021 took up the priorities set in that plan, and the first three years of the plan's implementation were accompanied by the humanitarian response plan for 2017–2019.

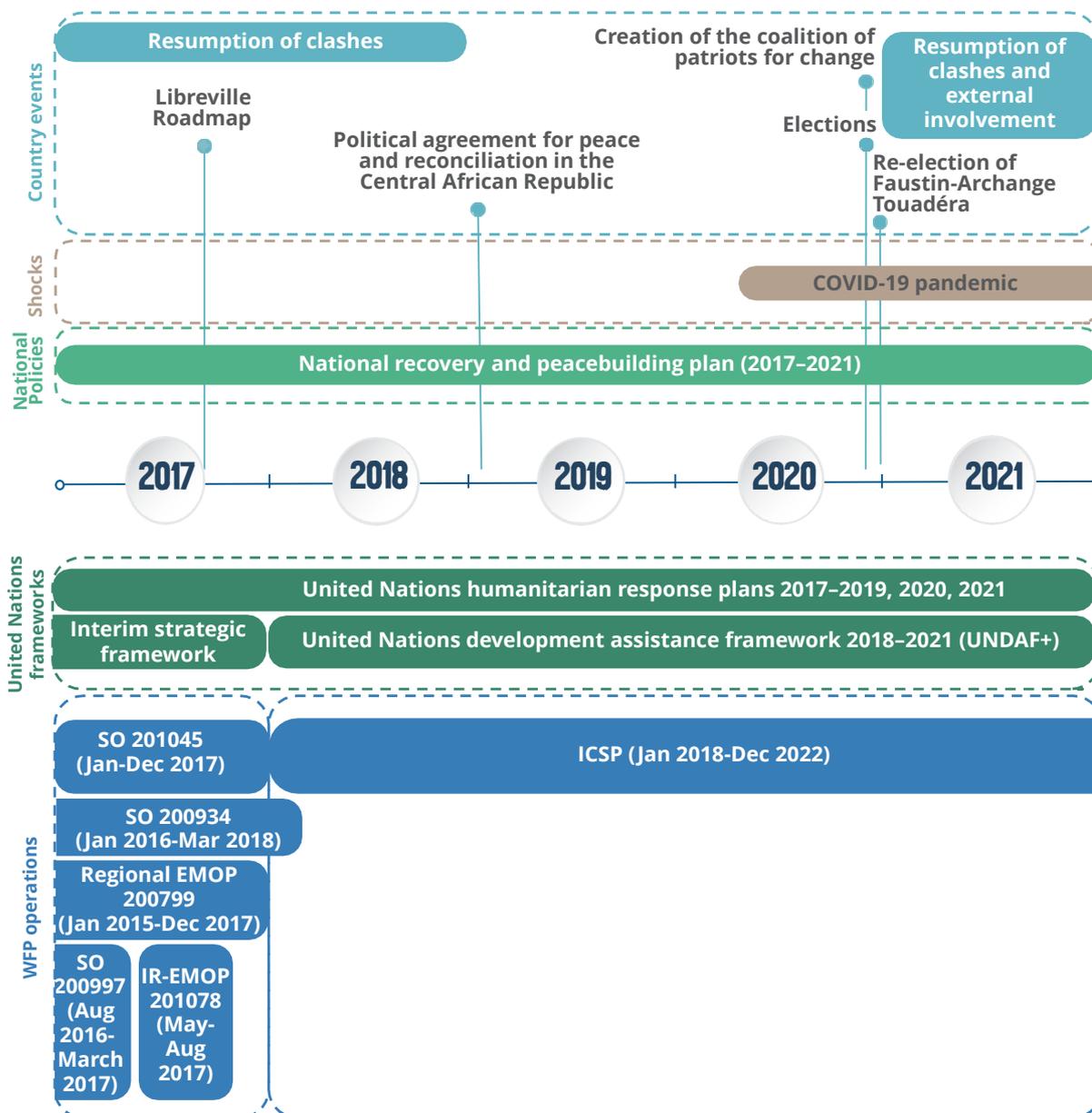
TABLE 1: SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS			
	Indicator	Value	Year
	Total population (million) (1)	4.9	2021
	Human development index (rank) (2)	188 of 189	2020
	Population living below the poverty line (purchasing power parity USD 1.90 a day) (%) (3)	71	2020
	Global hunger index (score and rank) (4)	53.6 117 of 117	2019
	Share of agriculture in gross domestic product (%) (1)	30	2021
	Prevalence of moderate or severe stunting (under 5) (%) (5)	42	2019
	Prevalence of global acute malnutrition (under 5) (%) (5)	5.8 (estimate)	2019
	Gender development index (rank) (2)	188 of 189	2020

Source: (1) World Bank. 2021. [World Bank Open Data](#). (2) United Nations Development Programme. 2020. [Human Development Report 2020. The next frontier: Human development and the Anthropocene](#). (3) World Bank. 2022. [The World Bank in Central African Republic – Overview](#). (4) ACTED, Concern Worldwide and *Welthungerhilfe*. 2019. [2019 Global Hunger Index: The Challenge of Hunger and Climate Change](#). (5) Ministry of Health and Population. 2020. *SMART 2019 – résultats préliminaires, enquête nutritionnelle nationale (SMART) République centrafricaine*.

WFP interim country strategic plan

11. Approved by the WFP Executive Board in November 2017, the ICSP marked a change from operation- and programme-based planning at the regional and country levels to country-level strategic planning. It allowed for holistic medium- to long-term planning across all activities, geographical areas and sectors of intervention with the aim of facilitating integration among sectors, focus areas and long-term objectives. Its initial duration of three years (from 2018 to 2020) was subsequently extended to five years (to 2022). It has five strategic outcomes (figure 2) covering 15 activities.

Figure 1: Country context and WFP operational overview of Central African Republic (2017–2021)

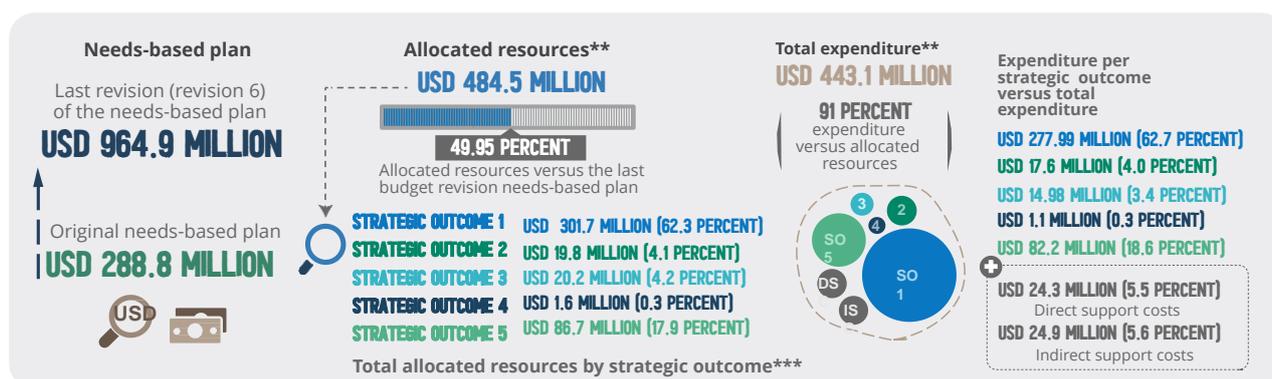
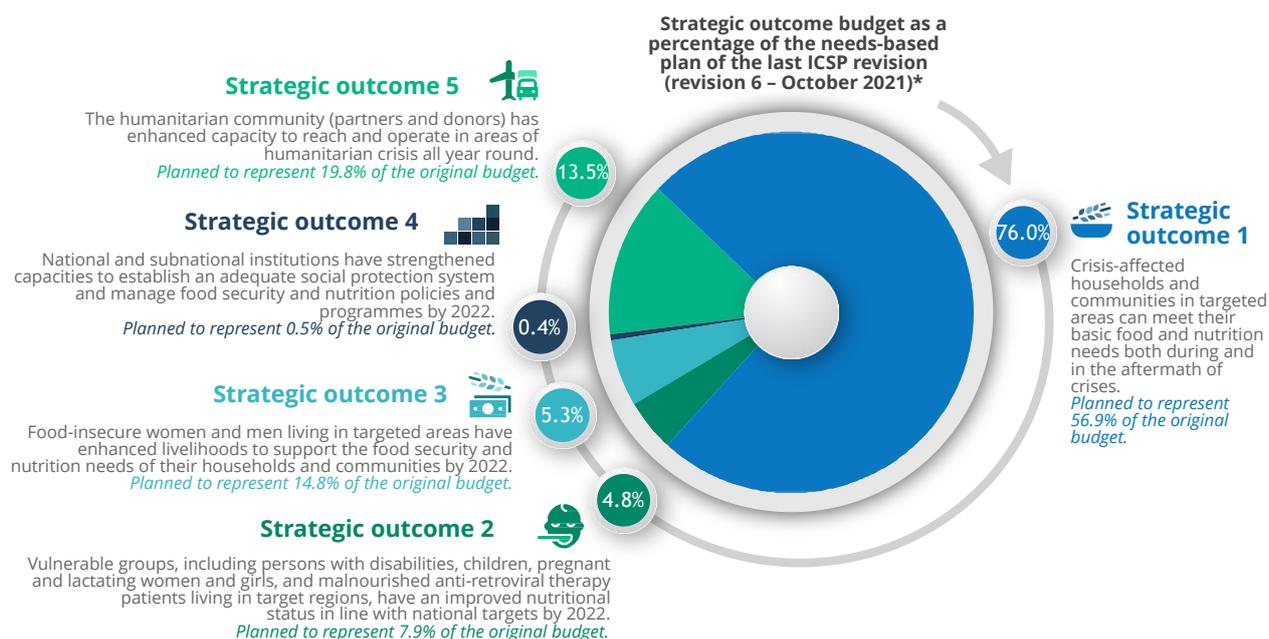


Source: Prepared by the Office of Evaluation based on the full report on the evaluation of the 2018–2022 ICSP for the Central African Republic.

Abbreviations: EMOP = emergency operation; IR-EMOP = immediate-response emergency operation; SO = special operation.

- The ICSP has undergone six revisions, with its needs-based plan increasing from USD 288 million for a period of three years with 1.29 million planned beneficiaries to USD 965 million for a period of five years with 1.5 million planned beneficiaries, as set out in revision 6 of October 2021. As of August 2021, the overall funding level of the ICSP was 48.6 percent. The United States of America has been by far the largest donor, at times accounting for more than half of the funding raised followed by Germany, Japan, Canada and the European Commission.

**Figure 2: Central African Republic ICSP (2018–2022)
strategic outcomes, budget, funding and expenditures**



* The needs-based plan budget percentages by strategic outcome have been calculated at the grand total costs level, including direct support costs (USD 45.2 million) and indirect support costs (USD 58.4 million). These data refer to ICSP revision 6 approved in October 2021.

** Allocated resources and expenditures figures are cumulative, covering the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2021

*** Allocated resources by strategic outcome do not add up to USD 484.5 million as resources were also allocated to non-strategic outcome-specific purposes (USD 3.3 million), and to direct support costs (USD 26.2 million) and indirect support costs (USD 24.9 million).

Source: Country portfolio budget, revision 6 and Integrated Road Map analytics in annual country report 1.

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 alignment

National priorities

- The ICSP was by design coherent with SDG 2 on zero hunger and SDG 17 on partnerships, with links to SDG 1 on poverty, SDG 3 on health, SDG 4 on education and SDG 5 on gender. The orientations set out in the national recovery and peacebuilding plan, the UNDAF and the humanitarian response plan for 2017–2019 were in part reflected in the ICSP but were not fully translated at the operational level.

14. The Government's management of food security issues has been limited in terms of geographical coverage and the operational capacities of public services. While WFP did not have a consolidated approach to institutional capacity strengthening, efforts were made in the areas of education, nutrition, food security and social protection. Institutional support was strengthened in 2020–2021 through the development of memoranda of understanding with clear capacity strengthening objectives.
15. The Government's framework documents lacked specific operational details, leaving WFP with significant operational room for manoeuvre. As a result, WFP's positioning in the country has been driven more by its own sectoral strategies and international commitments than by alignment with national sectoral frameworks, which presented varying degrees of maturity and adoption.

Vulnerable people and communities

16. While WFP's coverage of people's needs was broad, dispersion and prioritization were critical challenges given the high level of vulnerability to food insecurity. National coverage of humanitarian needs in relation to the humanitarian response plan and the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification was relatively high. However, the security situation and logistics constraints limited regular access to remote populations. In the general distributions for crisis response, the shift from targeting by status to targeting by vulnerability was relevant, but has not yet been widely applied owing to contextual challenges related to acceptance and coverage.
17. School feeding interventions had a relatively modest coverage – 10 percent of the country's schools – compared with needs, and some vulnerable areas were not reached for reasons related to insecurity and other access constraints. Nutrition support activities were targeted using relevant criteria for the individual level with very wide geographical coverage and focusing on children under 5 years of age, pregnant and lactating women and girls and people living with HIV.

WFP strategic positioning in the evolving national context

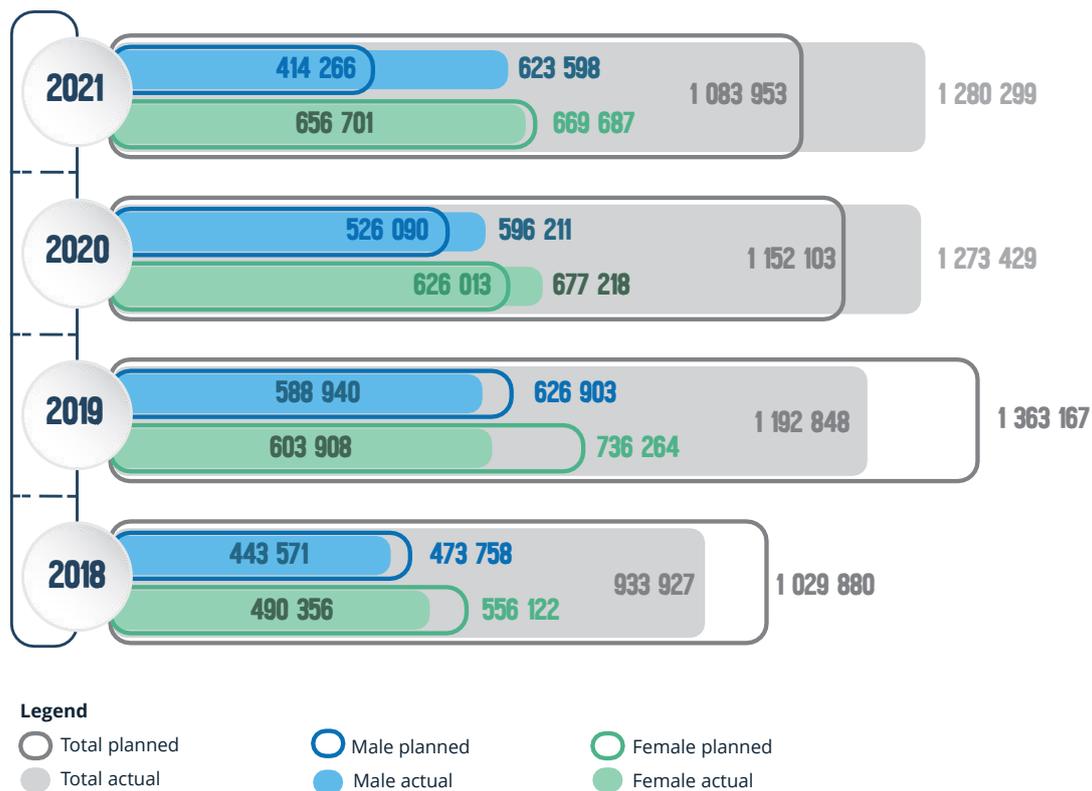
18. WFP's logistics capacity and coverage allowed for response at scale to address multiple emergencies. Adaptation to the context also occurred through the development of large-scale cash-based transfer (CBT) programmes to overcome commodity supply issues and the obstruction of the Douala corridor. The use of CBTs was informed by feasibility studies considering criteria of acceptance, functionality and access to markets. The WFP COVID-19 response illustrated WFP's ability to adapt to evolving challenges by developing new targeting approaches for new geographic areas, including urban settings.
19. The focus on resilience-building approaches (food assistance for assets (FFA) and purchase for progress (P4P)) – considered essential in revitalizing the rural economy – was relatively narrow compared with the opportunities and needs and was largely affected by financial constraints.
20. With regard to nutrition interventions, evidence from the latest surveys, and the country's adherence to the Scaling Up Nutrition movement justify WFP's positioning in relation to the prevention of chronic malnutrition. On the other hand, the appropriateness of the treatment intervention is questioned in light of the prevalence rates of acute malnutrition (less than 10 percent in all prefectures) and the burden that the intervention poses on the national health system, which already struggles to fulfil its priority missions. The relevance of support activities for people living with HIV was also questioned by some stakeholders owing to the limited value transferred compared with living costs and in light of possible tensions between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

Coherence with United Nations actors and other partners

21. WFP played a key role in the implementation of the UNDAF for 2018–2021, being the agency with by far the most significant budget, coverage and logistics and access capacity, and making major contributions to the various humanitarian response plans, including by reaching 80 percent of the population targeted by the humanitarian response plan in 2020.
22. Beyond its mobilization, crisis response and access capacities, WFP's interactions with the agencies responsible for strengthening basic services and livelihoods development were limited. Its coordination with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was formalized and continuous, despite a poorly developed strategy for supporting returning migrants. Opportunities for complementarity with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations were explored in the context of a seed distribution project, although such complementarity is yet to become fully functional. Partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund, which leads in social protection, has not yet been formalized, although synergies exist in nutrition interventions. Interactions with other United Nations entities, such as the World Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, were very limited and lacked synergies or support for relevant target groups such as victims of gender-based violence, despite the major protection issues affecting the country.

What are the extent and quality of WFP's contribution to interim country strategic plan strategic outcomes in the Central African Republic?***Contributions to strategic outcomes***

23. There was a good level of coverage in terms of total beneficiaries, but the size, frequency and quality of support were uneven owing to implementation challenges and the particularly unstable conditions, affecting the achievement of intended results. Nutrition activities were dispersed across the sub-offices, with few dedicated personnel and a large number of partners.
24. Reported indirect benefits of WFP assistance included a significant increase in the business of retailers participating in CBT programmes, reduced debt levels among beneficiaries, and improved national administrative coverage as a result of WFP logistics support for state services. On the other hand, the limited awareness of affected populations with regard to transfer modalities and selection criteria may have contributed to tensions between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in some instances. An overview of the main achievements by strategic outcome is presented in the following paragraphs.

Figure 3: Annual overall actual versus planned beneficiaries by sex

Source: WFP country office tool for managing effectively report CM-R001, covering the period from 2018 to 2021.

25. **Strategic outcome 1: Crisis-affected households and communities in targeted areas can meet their basic food and nutrition needs both during and in the aftermath of crises (general distributions, nutrition and emergency school feeding).** With regard to unconditional transfers, despite lower than planned distribution volumes, WFP consistently exceeded its targets in terms of number of people assisted, albeit with some lack of continuity or ration reductions. Most outcome indicator targets, such as the food consumption score and the share of food in total household expenditures, were achieved. While the emergency school feeding targets in terms of retention and enrolment in school were met, WFP assistance suffered from supply interruptions, leading to reduced rations and fewer days covered.
26. **Strategic outcome 2: Vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, children, pregnant and lactating women and girls, and malnourished anti-retroviral therapy patients living in target regions, have an improved nutritional status in line with national targets (school feeding including home-grown school feeding, and nutrition).** Moderate acute malnutrition prevention and treatment activities faced shortages in the supply of nutrition inputs, with implications for the effectiveness of the interventions. Moreover, few activities for strengthening the capacities of health services to support nutrition activities were carried out. While enrolment and retention targets were met for assisted schools, retention rates for girls were significantly lower than those for boys. The role of school feeding in preventing the recruitment of school-age children into non-state armed groups is difficult to assess, partly because the intervention did not cover some of the geographic areas most affected by insecurity.

27. **Strategic outcome 3: Food-insecure women and men living in targeted areas have enhanced livelihoods to support the food security and nutrition needs of their households and communities (FFA and P4P).** Noteworthy results included a significant increase in the number of beneficiaries reached, beneficiaries' general satisfaction with the activity and a reduction in post-harvest losses. The level of FFA implementation was conditional on the level of security in the targeted areas. On the other hand, there was limited progress in local purchases, mainly owing to funding shortfalls, the limited capacities of technical services and farmer organizations to produce foodstuffs meeting required standards, and WFP's purchasing processes, including the timing of purchases, which did not favour local producers.
28. **Strategic outcome 4: National and subnational institutions have strengthened capacities to establish an adequate social protection system and manage food security and nutrition policies and programmes (institutional capacity strengthening).** Although institutional capacity strengthening was an important component during the evolution of the intervention logic of the ICSP, it was associated with a very limited budget in the ICSP portfolio and was only partially implemented, with little significant progress. Available funds were used mainly for strengthening strategic planning for food security and providing equipment and training, which helped to increase the capacities of technical services at the decentralized level. A specific achievement was the establishment of a school feeding coordination unit in the Ministry of Education, with WFP support. There has been no major progress towards the establishment of a social registry, which could inform the targeting of various interventions.
29. **Strategic outcome 5: Humanitarian community (partners and donors) has enhanced capacity to reach and operate in areas of humanitarian crisis all year round (common services).** WFP's common services strongly supported the coverage of the interventions of the international humanitarian community in remote regions, facilitating access for more than 20,000 humanitarian personnel each year and providing communication and logistics support for the transport of freight and medicines.

Cross-cutting results

30. Overall, activities supported gender equity, with a good gender balance among beneficiaries. Gender mainstreaming in WFP interventions has improved since 2018, although the analysis of the gender-related risks, results and consequences of interventions remains limited. The consideration of protection issues also improved, although measures to ensure greater consideration of protection issues, such as standard procedures for distributions and the integration of protection into post-distribution monitoring, were underused. Partners' capacity in the area of protection could also be strengthened. While WFP put in place several complaints and accountability mechanisms, challenges persisted in ensuring stakeholders' awareness and the reliability of those mechanisms and their use for improved programming.
31. Overall, WFP has managed to reach a significant part of the country, although the fragmentation of armed groups and the limited availability of escorts make security management challenging.

Sustainability and the humanitarian–development–peace nexus

32. The potential for sustainability remains limited, partly owing to institutional weaknesses and the nature of WFP interventions, and the strategy for moving from unconditional to conditional assistance is not clearly defined and operationalized. The involvement of farmer organizations in WFP activities, and the use of approaches that build on the local economy have the potential for sustainability, but capacity strengthening for local stakeholders in the area of activity management has been limited.

33. While there is anecdotal evidence of decreased inter-community violence as a result of food distributions, the humanitarian–development–peace nexus remains, overall, poorly documented and operationalized in the country, with no strategic link to stabilization and insufficient consideration of conflict dynamics, including social cohesion dynamics or the risks related to the road taxes levied by armed groups.

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

Timeliness

34. WFP activities involving direct food distributions suffered delays due to administrative constraints and the belated availability of funding and commodities, which often did not coincide with the country's seasonal needs. At the sub-office level, the delays seriously affected the various food management operations, increasing the risk of losses.
35. The shift to CBTs considerably reduced the risk of delays and pipeline breaks, although the paper voucher modality is associated with significant logistics challenges. With regard to P4P activities, WFP purchases from local producers were constrained by funding availability and delays in the approval of suppliers.

Coverage and targeting

36. The effectiveness of targeting was subject to numerous uncertainties related to inclusion and exclusion errors and coherence, linked to the involvement of community actors, the capacity of partners and the size and frequency of support provision, which was focused on broad coverage. WFP depended to a large extent on the status-based targeting carried out by UNHCR and its partners. Several issues persisted with the shift to the vulnerability-based approach, including the frequency of the updating of beneficiary lists.

Cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness

37. WFP made constant efforts to improve the efficiency of its activities by seeking alternative approaches that would avoid logistics constraints and reduce related costs. Alternative approaches included using local transporters with better logistics capacity, augmenting logistics capacity in some key areas, considering alternatives to road transport and the Douala corridor, and digitizing vouchers via WFP's corporate digital beneficiary information and transfer management platform (SCOPE). The country office scored close to regional averages on logistics performance indicators but faced challenges in keeping logistics management data up to date.
38. The expansion of WFP's presence in the country – including the opening of new sub-offices in Birao, Bria and Bangassou – improved the monitoring of interventions. However, the systems currently in place make it difficult to accurately analyse the fixed costs of the various sub-offices.
39. The possibilities for a consolidated cost-effectiveness analysis were limited given the complexity of the setting, the financing and supply chain issues that condition the proper implementation of WFP activities, and the trends in actual household food security.

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

Evidence base

40. When defining the nature and coverage of its interventions, WFP relied on various country analyses, which supported and integrated annual country-level assessments. Methods for calculating baselines lacked sufficient consideration of certain food or income sources, such as forest resources, which are significant in the country. In the area of nutrition, the quality

and relevance of the existing diagnosis of malnutrition are fragile, and comprehensive analyses of the causes of rising chronic malnutrition are needed.

41. Challenges were observed in the reliability of monitoring data and their use to improve programming and measure intended transformative effects. During ICSP implementation, the strengthening of the country office research, assessment and monitoring unit benefited specific activities, particularly general distributions and FFA.

Funding

42. The ICSP period has seen an increase in the funding rates compared with 2016–2017. Nevertheless, funding remains highly concentrated, with little progress in donor diversification.
43. The full operationalization of the ICSP was affected by fluctuations in funding over time and among strategic outcomes and by certain conditions associated with the funds received, including earmarking at the activity level, or the in-kind nature of donations, limiting the flexibility of resource management.
44. The timing of the funding also constrained the operationalization of the ICSP, as allocations made annually limited the possibilities for multi-annual planning and medium-term approaches.

Partnerships

45. The implementation of the ICSP was not directly supported by solid partnerships with public institutions, although public actors contributed to the management of relationships with local stakeholders. Despite growth in the volume of activities, WFP operations remained concentrated among a few key partners, focused mainly on service delivery.
46. Partnerships with international non-governmental organizations played a dominant role and covered several sectors of intervention. There was a lack of focus on strengthening the capacity of local cooperating partners and limited follow-up on partners' performance at the sub-office level owing to the centralized management of field-level agreements. There were limited spill-over effects to other United Nations entities, with little exploration of opportunities for joint interventions and no inter-agency approach to the management of cooperating partners. Exchanges with the private sector have started, in line with the envisaged strategic shifts, including with transporters, traders and the banking sector.
47. WFP's role in the food security and logistics clusters contributed to overall coordination in key sectors for the ICSP. On the other hand, there was less investment in the education, protection and sustainable solutions clusters, and the emergency telecommunications cluster remained relatively limited and with synergies unexplored.

Flexibility and adaptation to crises

48. The ICSP revisions allowed operational flexibility, with significant planning adjustments on a near-yearly basis. Food loans between activities provided agility in stock and supply chain management.
49. Efforts were made to adapt to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis, including the obstruction of the Douala corridor on which all in-kind food supplies depended. Other adaptations introduced during the ICSP period included the shift to CBTs and the partnerships with financial service providers.
50. The high and growing number of activities of greatly differing magnitudes led to increased transaction and resource management-related costs and undermined the clarity of the overall WFP strategy in the country.

Other limiting factors

51. External constraints such as security, infrastructure and natural conditions affected the regularity of WFP's access to vulnerable populations and the overall implementation of resilience activities. Despite some progress, poor communication network coverage and the absence of a banking network affected opportunities for digitization.
52. The implementation of interventions was strongly affected by staff turnover, notably in the sub-offices, where involvement in decision-making was also limited. The regional bureau's support was relatively limited compared with the country office's needs, particularly in supporting the desired strategic reorientation.

Conclusions

53. The ICSP had the ambition of moving from emergency assistance to the strengthening of resilience and institutional capacities. That shift required adjustments to the approaches and structure of the country office, which demonstrated limited capacity in the face of huge contextual challenges and its increasing role in responding to the humanitarian needs of a large part of the Central African population. Initial optimistic assumptions about the context, security level, emerging crises and partnerships did not materialize sufficiently to support the intervention logic, and the role of the ICSP as a strategic steering tool was limited.
54. **Conclusion 1 – Strategic positioning.** WFP is the main humanitarian actor in the country and its contribution to the implementation of national development plans has been significant and increased over time, including in urban areas, as it provided for the basic needs of nearly one quarter of the population. While the ICSP had the aim of integrating various WFP activities, with crisis response as a transitional stage in the shift to supporting resilience and addressing root causes, emergency actions were expanded without the expected degree of transition to early recovery assistance. The complexity of the ICSP structure also affected the clarity of the overall WFP strategy in the country.
55. **Conclusion 2 – Resilience approaches.** WFP aimed to adjust to the changing circumstances by introducing new, more sustainable approaches whose potential has not yet been fully exploited, being limited to specific geographic areas. A certain stabilization – still fragile – offered opportunities to extend WFP resilience-oriented conditional assistance in order to support the local economy. However, some of the activities requiring long-term approaches, such as local purchases, home-grown school feeding and the prevention of malnutrition, were affected by low levels of funding. Synergies with the resilience approaches of other actors could also be further explored.
56. **Conclusion 3 – Contextual needs and opportunities.** In order to reach the people and communities in need, investments were made in CBTs and digitization, despite the country's structural weaknesses, with support for the local economy provided through financial and telecommunications agencies. However, opportunities exist for WFP interventions to better take into account the contextual specificities of the country, such as the wealth of its natural resources and biodiversity and the role of forest products in the diet.
57. **Conclusion 4 – Security.** The operationalization of the ICSP is largely dependent on access in a volatile security situation, highlighting the need to integrate stabilization issues and conflict analyses into WFP approaches so as to maximize related results and ensure adequate risk management.

58. **Conclusion 5 – Targeting and coverage.** Access constraints and underfunding limited the results of an overall broad targeting approach. Given the level of needs and the available evidence, geographical prioritization was a challenge. The high level of vulnerability, the dependence on food aid, and some institutional weaknesses complicated the shift towards more precise vulnerability-based targeting, eventually linked to an embryonic national social protection system.
59. **Conclusion 6 – Effectiveness.** WFP action was oriented mainly around the distribution of food, limiting the possibilities of transformative effects. Despite discontinuities in general distributions, WFP consistently exceeded its targets in terms of people assisted, mainly by reducing rations, and met most intended food security outcomes. On the other hand, the effects of nutrition activities in the country were relatively limited, and links to school feeding were missing. In the few areas concerned, school feeding supported the role of schools in the fragmented local fabric. FFA showed potential and was favoured by beneficiaries but remained conditional on security levels. Institutional capacity strengthening activities were marginal, despite their strategic importance in supporting state presence throughout the country. WFP helped to ensure humanitarian access for international cooperation actors but opportunities for strengthening local service provision remained limited owing to the lack of local operators. Synergies exist both among WFP interventions and with partners' actions, although such efforts are poorly structured and monitored and are not yet ensuring a transition to conditional assistance, the increased participation of local institutions or a contribution to social cohesion.
60. **Conclusion 7 – Gender, protection and equity.** Modest progress was observed in the integration and promotion of gender and equity throughout WFP activities. Analyses of the issues concerned, and the resources dedicated to them, including dedicated human resources, were limited compared with the coverage of WFP operations and conditions in the Central African Republic, particularly with regard to the specific risks affecting women and the inter-community nature of the crisis.
61. **Conclusion 8 – Funding.** Funding was focused mainly on crisis response, with insufficient mobilization of donors in the areas of resilience, local purchases and school feeding. Despite rigidities in the ICSP framework, WFP was able to adapt in response to the COVID-19 crisis, prioritizing CBTs in response to disruptions in the Douala corridor and facilitating resource lending among activities.
62. **Conclusion 9 – Capacity strengthening.** Overall, the capacity strengthening component of the ICSP could have benefited from stronger linkages to operational plans. At the community level, integrated resilience approaches demonstrated their potential value in supporting the consolidation of the local socioeconomic environment, including through increases in local production and purchases. Scaling up efforts aimed at strengthening farmer organizations through a strong commitment from the Government and other food system actors remain key.
63. **Conclusion 10 – Partnerships.** As a central actor in humanitarian assistance, WFP has a potential strategic and programmatic ripple effect that could be better exploited through synergies with other actors by promoting joint and complementary approaches at various levels.
64. **Conclusion 11 – Monitoring.** While the monitoring system was strengthened throughout the ICSP period, the evidence produced was not always sufficiently consistent and complete to enable assessment of the effects of WFP interventions, and its use for both programmatic adjustments and advocacy purposes could be further explored.

65. **Conclusion 12 – Internal processes and human resources.** There were some delays in the implementation of the ICSP related to financial procedures. The implementation of SCOPE offered a prospect for securing transactions while limiting the costs and time required to implement and monitor CBT programmes in the medium term. In terms of staffing, difficult living conditions affected the retention of human resources, and the development of area offices is not yet fully integrated into country office procedures in regard to communications, the definition of responsibilities and partnership management.

Recommendations

Recommendations	Recommendation type	Priority	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Supporting entities	Deadline for completion
<p>Recommendation 1: Reduce the number – but not the scope – of activities in the next country strategic plan and strengthen advocacy of a more flexible strategic framework, allowing context-specific adjustments and transition-focused approaches.</p> <p>1.1 Consider making certain activities cross-cutting under two or more strategic outcomes and areas of action while avoiding overly strict classification and establishing an enabling framework for shifting funding among activities in the context of the current protracted crisis.</p> <p>1.2 Reduce the number of activities in order to facilitate more flexible use of funds: for example, by mainstreaming capacity strengthening at the national and local levels; retaining two common services support activities – logistics services and the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service; integrating emergency school feeding with general distributions, and home-grown school feeding with food assistance for assets; and reducing the number of nutrition activities.</p> <p>1.3 Promote integrated cross-sectoral approaches for home-grown school feeding, purchase for progress, asset creation and local procurement, involving several activities for one joint outcome.</p>	Strategic	High	Country office	Regional bureau, headquarters, donors	February 2023

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<p>Recommendation 2: Reposition upstream crisis response interventions to focus on prevention and the development of resilience mechanisms with more precise targeting that enhances impact and sustainability.</p> <p>2.1 Strengthen investment in conditional assistance, including by extending food assistance for assets to target additional geographic areas (including stabilized rural and peri-urban areas), long-term displaced persons (with a view to facilitating their transition to return and resilience building) and returnees.</p> <p>2.2 Strengthen local procurement (purchase for progress) and producers' access to markets so as to boost productive capacity (focusing on the effects on beneficiaries rather than on efficiency) and strengthen the link between home-grown school feeding and resilience activities.</p> <p>2.3 Increase the use of cash-based transfers in resilience activities, when relevant.</p> <p>2.4 Invest in approaches aimed at the prevention of chronic malnutrition and support the review and approval of a simplified acute malnutrition management protocol, while focusing nutrition activities on smaller geographic areas and increasing the scope of the activities in those areas.</p> <p>2.5 Promote the consideration of context-specific factors in the protracted crisis, such as integrating forest products into the analysis of, and potentially the responses to, food crises, and taking into account food security and protection issues related to natural resources and associated with population movements and decreased agricultural production, such as those arising from mining.</p> <p>2.6 Fine-tune the geographical targeting of potentially effective interventions, with due regard to the difficulties in ensuring frequent and regular access to specific sites. Strengthen the monitoring of targeting approaches at the individual and household levels and the consistency and coordination of beneficiary lists, and update the lists more frequently.</p>	Strategic	High	Country office	Cooperating partners, donors	October 2022

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<p>Recommendation 3: Support a revision of internal processes aimed at addressing the challenges faced by the current and future country strategic plans.</p> <p>A. Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of interventions with a view to improving their quality and, in the long term, facilitating advocacy with donors by providing evidence of the effect of interventions and bolstering the interim country strategic plan narrative.</p> <p>3.A.1 Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of activities so as to gauge their transformative impact, covering integrated multisectoral approaches, potentially focusing on key indicators and including country-specific indicators, with the aim of demonstrating impact and producing qualitative analyses. Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of underfunded resilience-oriented activities to show their effectiveness and provide inputs for results-based advocacy. Foster synergies with partners' monitoring and evaluation systems and joint data collection in remote areas through increased involvement with the United Nations development assistance framework monitoring and evaluation group.</p> <p>3.A.2 Strengthen mechanisms for ensuring the reliability of key data and context-specific indicators, such as enhanced triangulation and other verification mechanisms, including through capacity strengthening, if necessary.</p> <p>3.A.3 Utilize monitoring and evaluation data to steer strategy and programming, including the fine-tuning of interventions through periodic reviews.</p> <p>B. Human resources</p> <p>3.B.1. Enhance the retention of international staff, including through a reappraisal of the use of consultants (procedures, specific benefits that increase with country experience), and strengthen the means of capitalizing on experience, including with support from the regional bureau.</p>	Operational	High	Country office	Regional bureau, headquarters, donors, other United Nations entities	October 2022

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<p>Recommendation 4: Sustain the ripple effect related to geographical and programmatic coverage by strengthening joint actions and partnerships in the various sectors of intervention.</p> <p>4.1. Continue to support the design of national strategic frameworks focused on the enhancement of social protection, food security and school feeding.</p> <p>4.2. Support capacity strengthening with an operational focus, taking into account the sectoral priorities of public services and the decentralization process, ensuring community involvement and integrating interventions into local structures (decentralized government services and community-based organizations), with the strengthening of community structures linked to various sectors and an improved articulation of field-level agreements.</p> <p>4.3. Promote synergies with the complementary interventions of other organizations, such as resilience activities (with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme), complementary support and protection interventions during distributions (with the United Nations Population Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and specialized non-governmental organizations), logistics support for interrelated actions (with the United Nations Children’s Fund for school feeding and moderate acute malnutrition prevention and treatment, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for food assistance for assets and seed monitoring under purchase for progress) and greater involvement in the sustainable solutions and protection clusters.</p> <p>4.4. Capitalize on and strengthen the capacity of private sector actors within the partnerships framework, including purchase for progress producers and financial service providers in and outside Bangui, while facilitating their links to local traders, especially those participating in the voucher programme.</p>	Strategic	Medium	Country office	Other United Nations entities, government services, cooperating partners	December 2022

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<p>4.5. Support the efficiency of interventions by stepping up negotiations with retailers with a view to bringing voucher values into line with market prices, and by improving the management of contracts with cooperating partners so as to reduce lead times and respect the terms of field-level agreements.</p>					
<p>Recommendation 5: Strengthen the integration of gender and protection considerations into programming.</p> <p>5.1. Strengthen the human resources in charge of gender and protection issues by appointing a gender, protection and accountability officer to manage the complaints and feedback mechanism and be independent of the programme.</p> <p>5.2. Strengthen the integration of protection considerations into programming, taking into account gender issues and the risks of domestic violence, awareness raising for men and awareness raising on theft and pilferage.</p> <p>5.3. Operationalize accountability to affected population mechanisms, including representative complaint committees and regular community interaction through monitoring focus groups.</p>	Strategic	High	Country office	Cooperating partners, government partners	July 2022

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<p>Recommendation 6: Within the framework of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach, support the links to conflict and stabilization dynamics.</p> <p>6.1. Ensure the integration of conflict analyses into strategy formulation for the country strategic plan, with links to discussions among the various national actors and agencies at the programme level and to approaches for sustainable solutions.</p> <p>6.2. Identify potential synergies in the prioritization and design of approaches, using analysis of needs and priorities, including synergies with programmes on community violence reduction, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and considering key geographic areas and beneficiary groups, and during implementation, including localization with the consideration of specific complementary activities for cases of intercommunal conflict and the presence of demobilized combatants or armed groups strongly linked to the community.</p> <p>6.3. Establish the means to monitor the effects of WFP interventions on conflict dynamics, with an enhanced risk management system that makes it possible to track the funding sources of armed groups that derive from humanitarian actions and the transportation of goods.</p>	Strategic	High	Country office	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, cooperating partners, regional bureau, headquarters, donors	July 2022

Acronyms

CBT	cash-based transfer
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
FFA	food assistance for assets
ICSP	interim country strategic plan
P4P	purchase for progress
SCOPE	WFP's corporate digital beneficiary information and transfer management platform
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee