



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

Executive Board
Annual session
Rome, 26–30 June 2023

Distribution: General	Agenda item 7
Date: 12 May 2023	WFP/EB.A/2023/7-E/3
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 Zambia (2019–2023)

Executive summary

An evaluation of the country strategic plan for Zambia for 2019–2023 was conducted in 2022 to serve the dual purpose of accountability and learning to inform the preparation of the next country strategic plan.

The country strategic plan was aimed at enabling WFP to make a strategic shift from direct assistance to country capacity strengthening while continuing to respond to emergencies at the request of the Government of Zambia. The plan was approved in June 2019 at an amount of USD 76.2 million, covering 175,000 direct beneficiaries. The objective was to support the Government of Zambia in strengthening its capacity to respond to the high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition through policy and system development and training of government staff and vulnerable communities. Owing to drought and the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic, however, the country strategic plan was revised to USD 142 million and over 2 million beneficiaries by September 2020.

WFP generally reached its targets for crisis response but funding shortfalls, a slow start to activities, delays and cancellations due to the coronavirus disease 2019 resulted in under-execution across the period under review. Zambia's classification as a lower-middle-income country until July 2022 and competing global needs made for a challenging funding environment, resulting in the country strategic plan being only 41 percent funded. The term of the country strategic plan was shortened by one year to align with the upcoming United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework for 2023–2027.

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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Despite emergency response activities tilting the balance of the country strategic plan towards saving lives, WFP continued to make progress on the “changing lives” agenda. The tangible results include support for policy and system development related to nutrition, social protection, gender and increased resilience for smallholder farmers, particularly women, through improved access to markets and training in climate-smart agriculture. The transition away from in-kind transfers and the scale-up of cash assistance, complemented by institutional capacity strengthening initiated in 2021, paved the way for future work with the Government of Zambia on strengthening the use of cash in social protection.

The evaluation generated six main recommendations: i) integrate lessons learned from the implementation of the current country strategic plan into the design of the next country strategic plan; ii) expand the nutrition portfolio; iii) strengthen WFP’s engagement in the social protection space; iv) focus attention on cross-cutting issues, particularly gender, accountability to affected populations and environmental sustainability; v) rethink the funding strategy and approach to refugee emergency response activities; and vi) strengthen the approach to resilience and livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Zambia (2019–2023) (WFP/EB.A/2023/7-E/3) and management response (WFP/EB.A/2023/7-E/3/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 Office of Evaluation commissioned the evaluation of the country strategic plan (CSP) for Zambia with a dual purpose of accountability and learning to inform the design of the next CSP. The evaluation was theory-based and adopted a mixed-methods approach, drawing on secondary and primary data sources, including a three-week field mission in July 2022. Limited monitoring and evaluation data for the outcomes was available for 2022 due to the timing of the evaluation and the country capacity strengthening (CCS) outcome indicators used to measure results at the output level. This was mitigated by the collection of qualitative primary data.
2. Evaluation users include the WFP country office in Zambia, the Regional Bureau for Southern Africa and headquarters divisions, as well as the Government of Zambia, donors and other national and international stakeholders operating in the country.

Context




3. Zambia is a large landlocked country with an estimated population of 19.5 million that is among the world's youngest.¹ The economy grew steadily from the 1990s onward and by 2011 had reached lower-middle-income status, but a deepening economic crisis resulted in its reclassification as a low-income country in 2022. Poverty remains high, with over half the population living below the national poverty line in 2015.²
4. Zambia is facing widespread undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and worsening overnutrition, with widening inequality. The latest demographic and health survey (2018) showed that 35 percent of children under 5 were stunted, 12 percent were underweight (table 1) and 58 percent were anaemic.³

TABLE 1: SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS			
	Indicator	Value	Year
	Total population (million) (1)	19.6	2022
	Income inequality: Gini coefficient (2)	57.1	2015
	Poverty headcount ratio at the national poverty line (percentage of the population) (7)	54.4	2015
	Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the total population (percentage) (4)	51.4	2018–2020
	Weight-for-age (underweight – moderate and severe) (percentage of children under 5) (5)	11.8	2018
	Weight-for-age (wasting – moderate and severe) (percentage of children aged 0–5) (5)	4.2	2018

¹ World Bank. 2022. [Population ages 0–14 \(% of total population\)](#).

² Government of Zambia, Central Statistical Office. 2016. [Zambia 2015 Living Conditions Monitoring Survey: Key Findings](#).

³ Zambia Statistics Agency and others. 2019. [Zambia Demographic and Health Survey 2018](#).

TABLE 1: SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS			
	Indicator	Value	Year
	Height-for-age (stunting – moderate and severe) (percentage of children aged 0–5) (5)	34.6	2018
	Number of refugees (6)	74 716	2022
	Gender Inequality Index (rank) (3)	137	2019

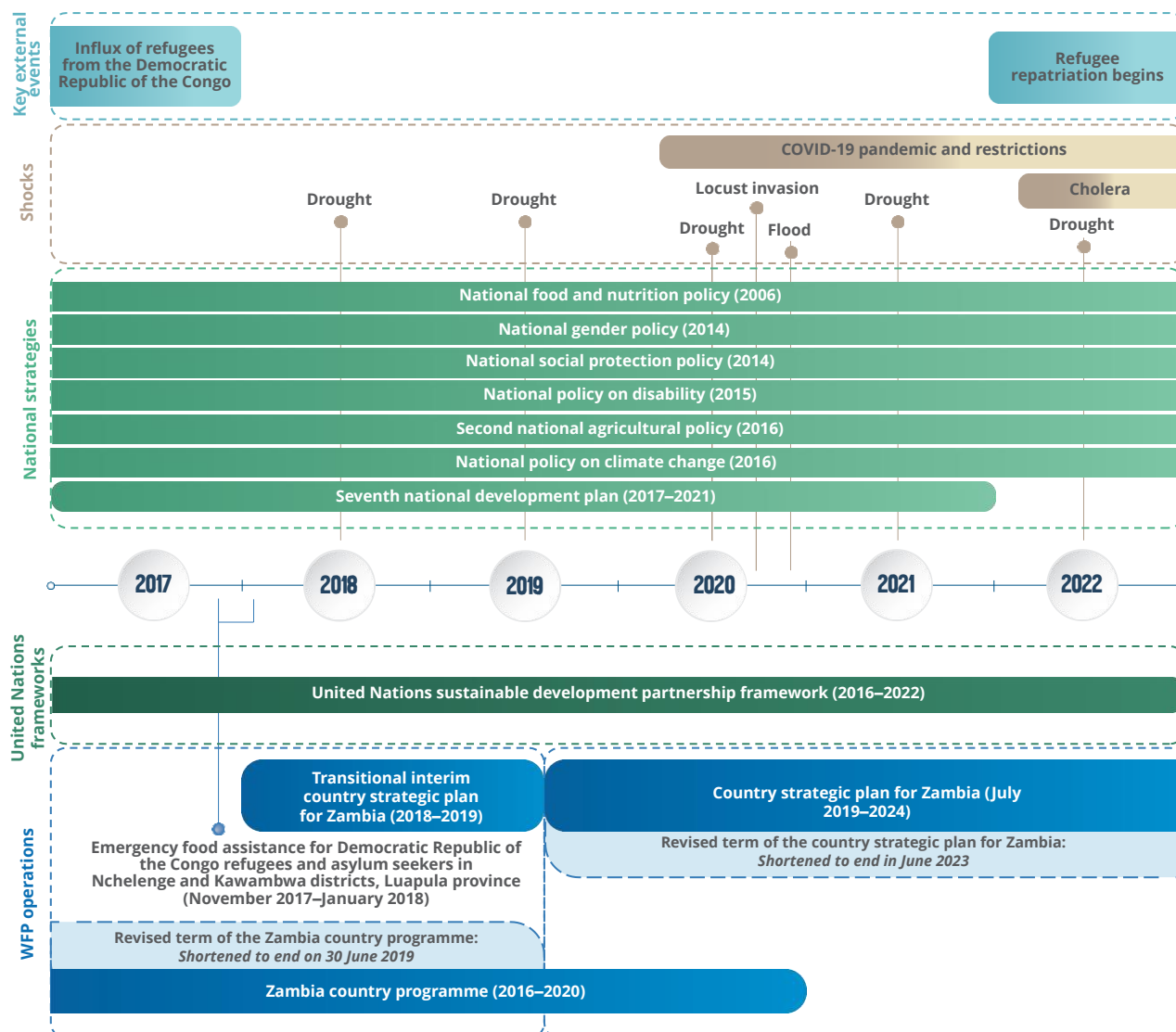
Sources: (1) Zambia Statistics Agency. 2022. Census of Population and Housing; (2) World Bank Open Data; (3) United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Reports for 2016 and 2018; (4) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and others. 2021. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021. Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all*; (5) Zambia Statistics Agency and others. 2019. *Zambia Demographic and Health Survey 2018*; (6) Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2022. Operational Data Portal; (7) Government of Zambia, Central Statistical Office. 2016. *Zambia 2015 Living Conditions Monitoring Survey: Key Findings*.

5. An underdeveloped agricultural sector and climate-change-related shocks are among the key drivers of food insecurity in Zambia. Most of the domestic food supply is produced by rain-fed subsistence agriculture, coupled with unsustainable land use practices that exacerbate vulnerability to climate shocks. At the outset of the CSP, Zambian farmers were recovering from the 2018 and 2019 droughts and flash floods. The recovery was interrupted by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, which drove food prices above average levels and particularly affected urban dwellers.
6. Zambia hosts 100,000 refugees and asylum seekers, mainly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.⁴ WFP assists refugees in the Mantapala settlement in the north of the country, which hosts 20,000 people. The settlement is managed by the Zambian Commission of Refugees, and the Government allocates a plot of land to every refugee household living in the settlement.⁵

⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2022. *Zambia operational update July 2022*.

⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and WFP. 2020. *Zambia: Joint WFP/UNHCR Needs Assessment Mantapala Settlement 2020*.

Figure 1: Overview of significant events, existing policy framework and WFP response in Zambia

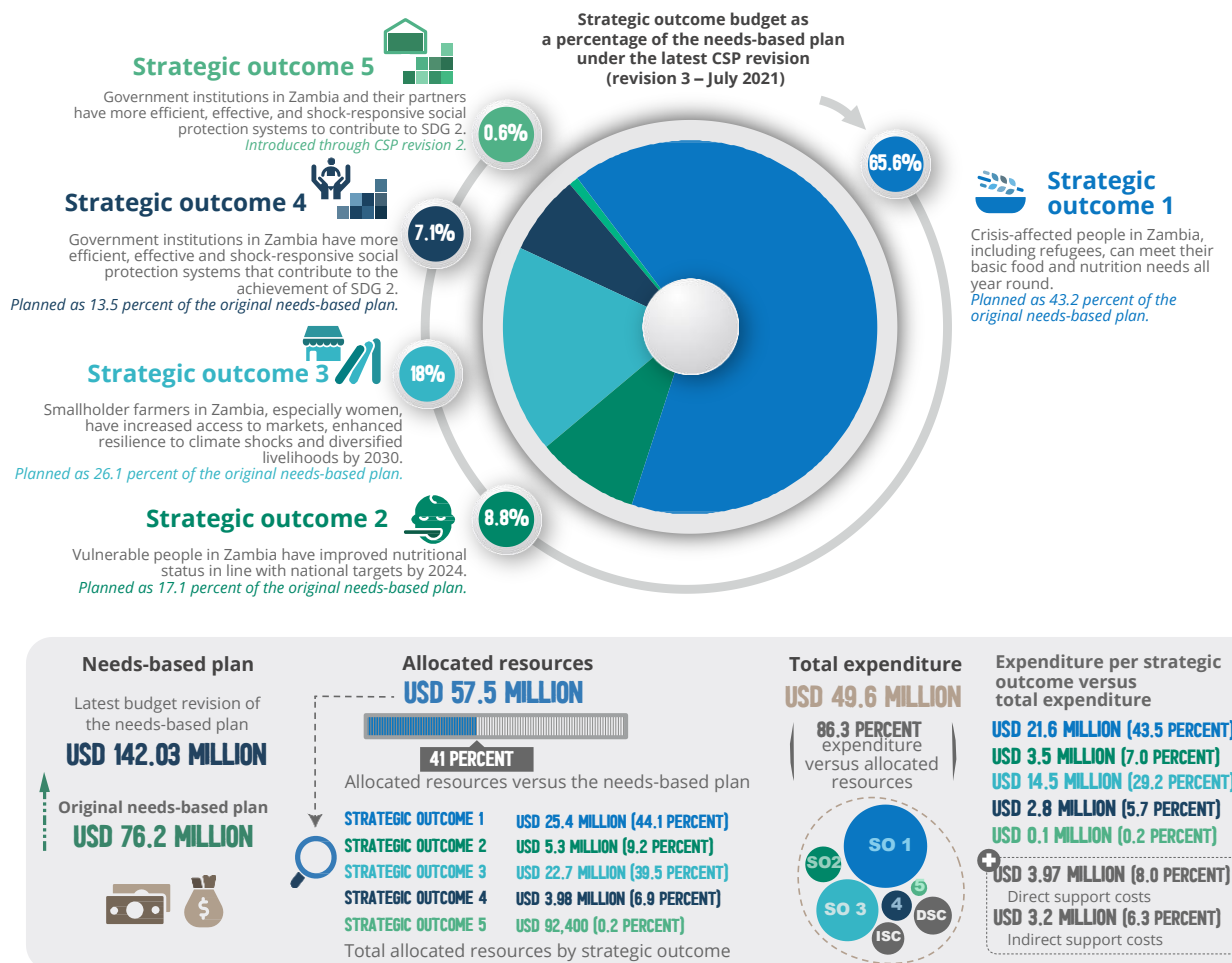


WFP country strategic plan

- The CSP for Zambia for 2019–2024⁶ was designed to respond to the challenges prioritized in the 2018 zero hunger strategic review commissioned by the Government of Zambia, which recognized hunger and malnutrition as multi-faceted issues requiring a collaborative, multisectoral and integrated approach. The CSP was subsequently designed to contribute to the Government's priorities laid out in the seventh national development plan, covering the period 2017–2021, and the Zambia United Nations sustainable development partnership framework for 2016–2022. The CSP design built on the previous transitional interim country strategic plan and was aimed at furthering the shift from direct food assistance to an enabling role. Figure 2 describes the strategic outcomes of the CSP, the resources available and the expenditures made in the period under review.

⁶ The term of the plan was shortened in a 2022 revision.

Figure 2: WFP Zambia needs-based plan, resources and expenditures for the period 2019–2022*



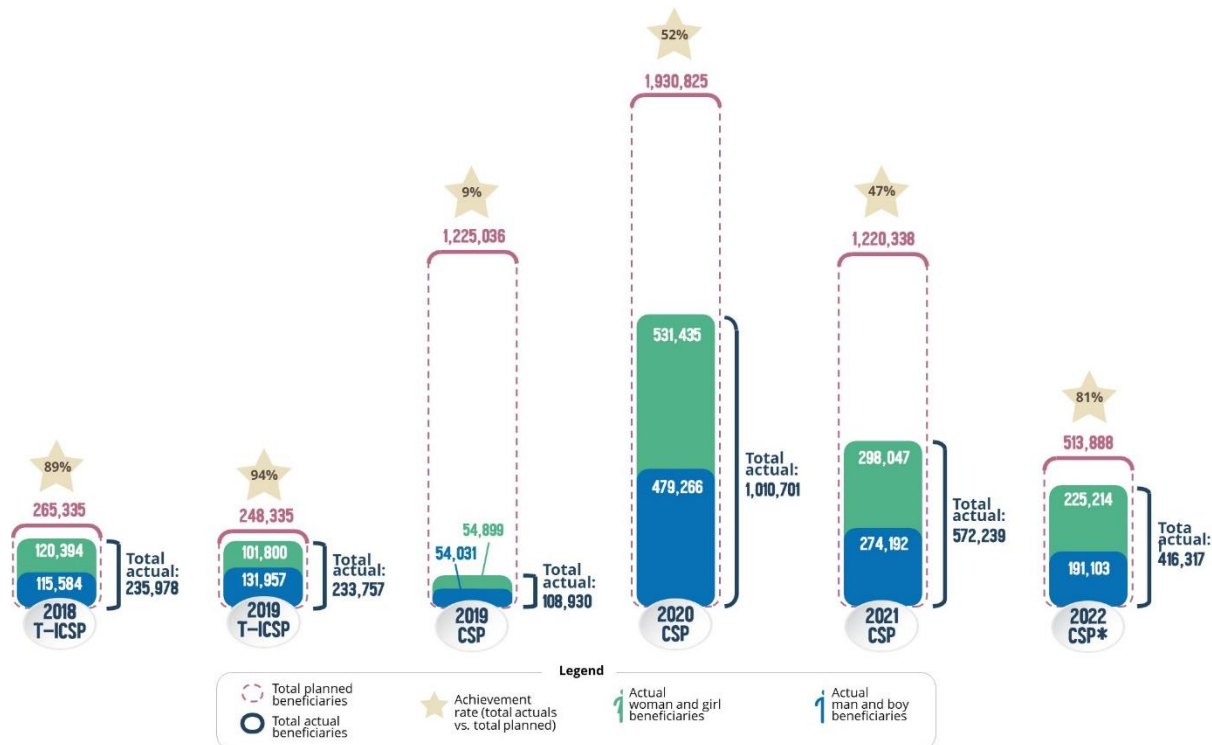
Abbreviation: SO = strategic outcome.

Source: Zambia annual country reports for the years 2019–2021, 2022 mid-year expenditure provided by the Zambia country office.

* Indirect support cost expenditure for 2022 not available at the time of writing.

- Originally planning to reach 175,000 beneficiaries under four strategic outcomes with a total budget of USD 76.2 million, the CSP underwent a series of revisions to respond to drought in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. By September 2020, the assessed needs were USD 142 million and the number of planned beneficiaries had increased to over 2 million. A fifth strategic outcome on service provision to the Government, development partners and other United Nations entities was added under revision 2 in September 2020 (figure 2). As needs subsided towards the end of 2021, the numbers were revised downwards (see figure 3).

Figure 3: Planned and actual beneficiaries under the Zambia transitional interim country strategic plan for 2018–2019 and country strategic plan for 2019–2023*



Abbreviation: T-ICSP = transitional interim country strategic plan.

Source: Zambia annual country reports for the years 2018–2021; WFP country office tool for managing effectively report CM-R001b as of 24 February 2023.

* 2022 figures are preliminary.

Evaluation findings

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

Relevance to needs and alignment with national priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals

- The CSP was designed in consultation with government and United Nations partners. It was informed by the zero hunger strategic review, the seventh national development plan and Zambia Vision 2030, as well as various sectoral policies.⁷ It was aligned with the Government's focus on reducing vulnerability through an integrated development approach and aimed at contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2 and 17 while providing capacity strengthening and emergency support to crisis-affected people, including refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Its design was informed by relevant analyses of food and nutrition insecurity and included a targeting strategy developed in consultation with the Government. There was, however, a degree of misalignment of WFP's geographical footprint in terms of supporting the most underserved, as WFP resilience activities took place predominantly in areas with minimal stressed population as defined by Integrated Food Security Phase classifications.

⁷ Sectoral policies include the second national agricultural policy and its implementation framework, the 2014 national social protection policy and the national food and nutrition strategic plan for 2017–2021.

10. While government partners acknowledge wide consultations at the CSP design stage, there were examples of late involvement, and partners expressed the need for deeper engagement with the Government of Zambia to maximize integration with government systems.

Partnerships based on WFP's comparative advantage

11. The CSP design was aligned with the Zambia United Nations sustainable development partnership framework for 2016–2021 and implementation was coordinated through the inter-agency coordination committees and their working groups. WFP shortened the term of the CSP by one year, to 2023, to align the next CSP with the United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework for 2023–2027, in support of the eighth national development plan.
12. The CSP was designed to maximize synergies and complementarities with United Nations entities based on WFP's comparative advantages, most notably with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for the refugee response, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Labour Organization for the COVID-19 emergency response in urban areas, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for resilience building among smallholder farmers; however, the evaluation found little evidence of coordination with the traditional actors in the area of social protection, such as UNICEF and the World Bank. WFP also engaged with Zambia's private sector to strengthen food systems, but the absence of a coherent engagement strategy limited the potential results. Although WFP considers social protection, resilience and nutrition its comparative advantages,⁸ external actors continue to perceive WFP primarily as an emergency responder.⁹

Strategic position and adaptability to changing needs

13. WFP's strategic positioning remained valid over the term of the CSP as a result of flexible adaptation of support to changing needs and new shocks such as COVID-19 and drought conditions. Its status in Zambia as the preferred partner for food security and emergency response remains strong, not least because of its adaptive capacity, exemplified by its scale-up from 175,000 beneficiaries to a million beneficiaries in 2020 and more than half a million in 2021 and 2022 (see figure 3). In the latter half of 2021, assessed needs were adjusted downward in response to improvements in the situation. WFP also supported the national crisis response, including through contingency planning and helping the Government to devise a recovery action plan for 2019–2020.¹⁰

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

Strategic outcome 1: Crisis-affected people in Zambia, including refugees, can meet their basic food and nutrition needs all year round

14. Overall, WFP's contribution to strategic outcome 1 was limited in 2019 but improved from 2020 onwards, when beneficiary targets for both drought and COVID-19 responses were reached. As indicated in figure 4, the COVID-19 operation reached 322,000 people (97 percent of the target) in six urban districts between July 2020 and April 2021, covering half their food needs through cash-based transfers, as planned. Interviewed beneficiaries

⁸ WFP. 2021. [Zambia annual country report 2020](#).

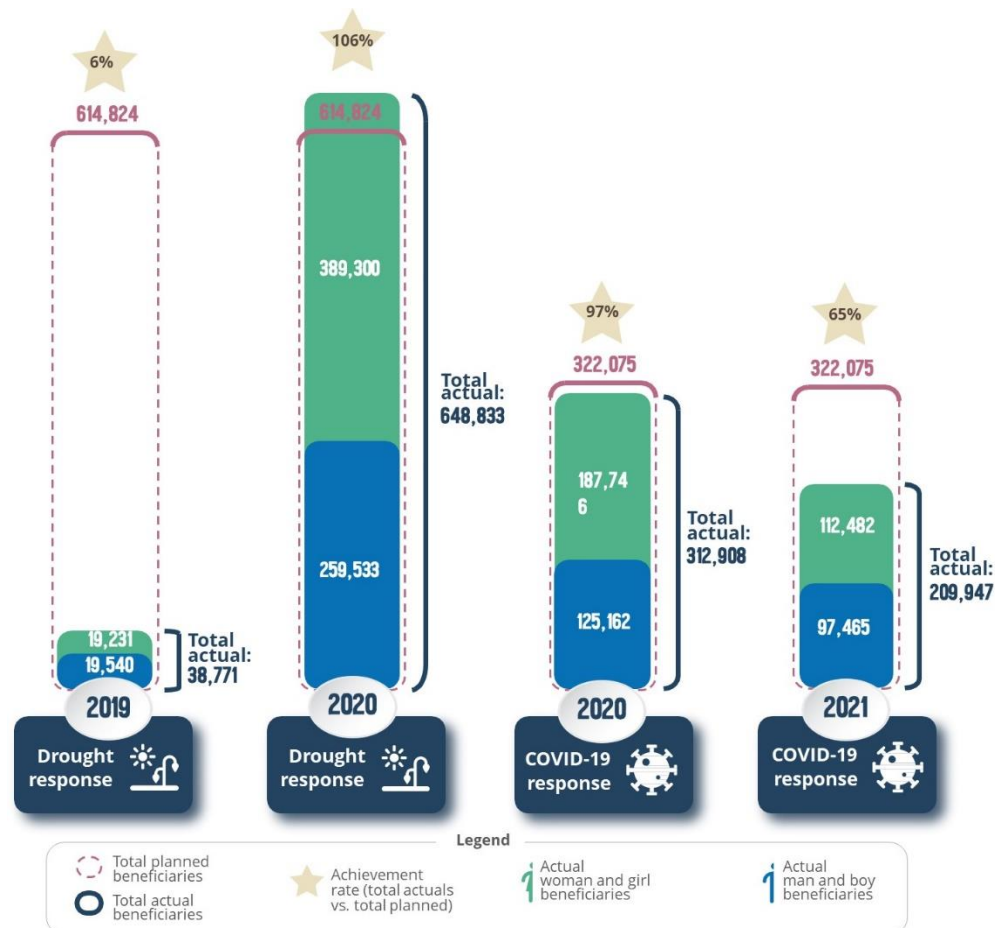
⁹ Key informant interviews.

¹⁰ WFP. 2020. [Zambia annual country report 2019](#); United Nations. 2020. [Zambia launches economic recovery programme](#); Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2019. [2019–2020 Humanitarian Appeal: Zambia](#).

confirmed that the cash helped them to meet daily food needs, purchase children's school supplies and maintain small businesses.¹¹

15. Despite reaching 650,000 people (106 percent of the target for 2020), the government-led response to the drought planned for 2019 was delayed until March 2020, partly due to late arrival of pulses procured by WFP, meaning that the nutritional outcome was not met during the dry season. Reductions in government maize rations (by half) further affected the results.

Figure 4: Planned and actual beneficiaries for 2019–2021, by crisis response



Source: Country office strategic outcome 1 monitoring data.

16. Similarly, WFP support reached the entire refugee population in the Mantapala settlement but funding shortfalls resulted in ration cuts, which limited WFP's contribution to intended outcomes. For example, in 2022, rations were cut to 63 percent of the total transfer value between May to December, contributing to an increase in negative coping strategies, including selling productive assets and food rations and reducing food consumption.¹² The funding shortfalls also limited engagement in resilience building for refugees.

Strategic outcome 2: Vulnerable people in Zambia have improved nutritional status in line with national targets, by 2024

17. WFP supported the development of a more enabling environment to drive improvement in the nutritional situation in Zambia by strengthening the capacity of the Government to integrate nutrition considerations across its programming. The pace and scale of delivery fell

¹¹ Focus group discussion with beneficiaries, revenue drop as reported in revision 2 to the Zambia country strategic plan for 2019–2024.

¹² WFP. 2022. *Zambia country brief May 2022*.

short of expectations, however, mainly due to COVID-19-related implementation delays. WFP supported the National Food and Nutrition Commission in developing a food and nutrition gap analysis to inform the upcoming nutrition policy. Additionally, WFP provided support for nutrition planning in three districts and to 12 district nutrition coordination committees implementing the First 1,000 Most Critical Days programme.

18. WFP contributed to improving nutrition practice in vulnerable communities through social and behaviour change communication campaigns. The campaigns, which reached 60,000 to 120,000 people annually, with stronger performance in 2020 than in 2019, helped to increase awareness and contributed to improved nutrition practices in communities. WFP's outcome monitoring indicates that the proportion of children age 6–23 months who receive a minimum acceptable diet increased significantly in the period under review.¹³

Strategic outcome 3: Smallholder farmers in Zambia, especially women, have increased access to markets, enhanced resilience to climate shocks and diversified livelihoods by 2030

19. WFP contributed to the ability of smallholder farmers, particularly women, to access markets, mostly through training in improved agricultural practices. The adoption of new field-harvesting practices led to increased incomes for smallholder farmers in supported areas, although that cannot be attributed to WFP alone. Despite significant under-execution in 2019 and 2020, WFP reached between 50,000 and 250,000 people annually. Outcome monitoring data for 2021 shows a steady increase in the number of targeted smallholders selling through WFP-supported farmer aggregation systems, though that result could not be independently verified.¹⁴
20. WFP contributed to livelihood diversification through the establishment and training of savings groups, enabling women smallholder farmers to invest in businesses both on and off the farm, diversifying their incomes and thereby strengthening resilience. Savings groups in remote, resource-poor environments remain challenged by liquidity and have yet to have a cash share-out.
21. The introduction of weather and climate insurance services shows promise in improving climate resilience. For example, WFP worked with the United Nations Development Programme, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the private sector on incorporating weather index insurance into Zambia's Farmer Input Support Programme, supporting more than 7,800 smallholder farmers in taking advantage of the insurance. Awareness of the benefits of insurance is still limited, however, especially in remote areas.

Strategic outcome 4: Government institutions in Zambia have more efficient, effective, and shock-responsive social protection systems to contribute to SDG 2

22. The evaluation found that, under strategic outcome 4, WFP had enhanced government capacity for social protection, including in policymaking, vulnerability assessment and nutrition-sensitive programming, and had helped develop the system architecture for social cash transfers. For example, WFP had supported the development of the national home-grown school meals strategy and the handover of the home-grown school meals programme. Coverage of the programme was expanded from 38 to 70 districts over the period of the CSP, providing some 2 million children with more nutritious diets. WFP also supported the development of the national procurement strategy and deployment and rollout of the food tracking system, and helped develop nutrition-sensitive social protection

¹³ WFP. 2022. [Zambia annual country report 2021](#).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

guidelines that will potentially be applied in the new national social protection policy;¹⁵ however, the absence of a coherent strategy and coordination with traditional actors in the social protection space, such as UNICEF and the World Bank, is likely to have limited WFP's potential impact in the area.

23. WFP contributed to the Government's response capacity through digitalization of the social cash transfer mechanism, thus enhancing efficiency, governance and accountability and paving the way for further scale-up, although a unified social register does not yet exist. Support for early warning systems and disaster preparedness has strengthened local government capacity to use weather information, but the evaluation team concluded that it is too early to assess how that support has contributed to shock responsiveness.

Strategic outcome 5: Government institutions in Zambia and their partners have more efficient, effective, and shock-responsive social protection systems to contribute to SDG 2

24. WFP introduced strategic outcome 5 to provide on-demand logistics services to the Government, other United Nations entities and the wider humanitarian community. Services include common distribution platforms, commodity handling, warehouse management and logistical and common premises support. Activities, including last-mile support for drought response and provision of medical supplies, enhanced government disaster response, while supply chain activities supported the achievement of other strategic outcomes and, through the Global Commodity Management Facility, provided other country offices with food stocks.

Contribution to cross-cutting aims

25. **Humanitarian principles.** WFP adhered to the humanitarian principles of maintaining operational independence. The evaluation did not reveal any evidence of bias in the selection of beneficiaries.¹⁶ Almost all beneficiaries interviewed reported that they had been able to access WFP assistance in an unhindered, safe and dignified way.
26. **Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and gender-based violence.** WFP reportedly contributed to protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and gender-based violence by introducing mitigating measures to counter exploitation and gender-based abuse in connection with food or cash distribution, such as training of staff and mobile service providers and social and behaviour messaging.
27. **Accountability to affected populations.** WFP prioritized accountability to affected populations through consultations with stakeholders, timely information provision and a community feedback mechanism that was generally functional and appropriate, although there were gaps in coverage of some beneficiary groups (notably smallholder farmers).
28. **Gender equality and women's empowerment.** Gender was embedded in the CSP design and mainstreamed across the strategic outcomes; however, the design was informed by a rapid rather than detailed gender assessment. WFP strengthened government capacity to integrate gender into programming, potentially contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment at the national level. Specific gender equality and women's empowerment results are visible among women smallholder farmers, but improvements remain to be made overall, with gender-related interventions often being ad hoc. The CSP's focus shifted from women's economic empowerment to gender-transformative outcomes over time, although it is still early to see concrete results.

¹⁵ WFP. *Zambia annual country report 2020*; key informant interviews with Government of Zambia representatives; country office.

¹⁶ Focus group discussions with smallholder farmers, non-governmental organization key informant interviews in districts, Government of Zambia key informant interviews at the district level.

29. **Environmental sustainability.** WFP promoted environmentally sustainable development through training of smallholder farmers in sustainable land management practices and construction of energy efficient cooking stoves in Mantapala and in schools, where establishment of woodlots was also promoted;¹⁷ however, there are deforestation concerns arising from activities such as the refugee response in Mantapala, and access to sustainable wood fuels for WFP interventions is insufficient.

Nexus approach to programming

30. While not explicitly directed at the nexus, the CSP stimulated the development of strategic links between humanitarian and development interventions. WFP support has strengthened the Government's capacity to deliver on its priorities and global commitments across the humanitarian–development spectrum, including in relation to SDG 2 and SDG 17, and was credited with bringing various line ministries together around a common focus, thus contributing to development outcomes at the community level. While the Government has adopted the comprehensive refugee response framework,¹⁸ WFP has not managed to engage in resilience building activities in the Mantapala refugee settlement, mainly due to a lack of funding.

Financial and institutional sustainability of WFP's achievements

31. WFP has contributed to strengthening the Government's systems and capacity to deliver sustainable change, such as through the home-grown school meals programme and the attempts to link the programme to sustainable market opportunities for smallholder farmers. The combination of the Government's commitment to improving nutrition, WFP mainstreaming nutrition throughout its programming and WFP nutrition-focused CCS activities also has strong potential for sustainability. WFP resilience building support has strengthened sustainable food systems in WFP-targeted communities, such as through the cultivation of drought-tolerant crops although lack of agricultural inputs is putting the sustainability at risk. WFP supported the development of nutrition-sensitive social protection guidelines but it is too early to observe a sustainable contribution to wider system change.

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

Timeliness

32. Following approval, CSP execution was slow in July 2019, when the focus was on planning of new interventions. WFP's COVID-19 response was timely, with emergency cash transfers launched in WFP-targeted districts by July 2020. The drought response and some resilience building and capacity strengthening activities suffered delays, however, due to late availability of funding and a long lead time for international and regional procurement, as well as COVID-19 restrictions.

Depth and breadth of coverage

33. The beneficiary targets for the COVID-19, drought and refugee operations were almost all reached (see figure 5) but the nutritional outcome was affected by challenges in the depth of coverage for the drought and refugee operations:
- The Government-led drought response was affected by a decision to halve the pre-agreed maize meal ration (from 400 g per day to 200 g per day).¹⁹

¹⁷ WFP. 2022. *Zambia annual country report 2021*.

¹⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2021. *UNHCR Country Strategy Evaluation: Zambia – Final Report: December 2021*.

¹⁹ WFP. 2020. *WFP Drought Response in Zambia: Operational update*.

- Funding shortfalls in the refugee operation led to the cutting of ration to 63 percent of the planned transfer value from May to December 2022.
 - The breadth and depth of resilience building and CCS activities were reduced because of cancellations due to COVID-19 restrictions.
34. The evaluation found that the CSP geographic footprint was missing nutritionally vulnerable and underserved vulnerable people in northern and western provinces, despite hosting some of Zambia’s most vulnerable people according to IPC data.

Cost-efficiency

35. Despite some data limitations, table 2 indicates that, as widely documented elsewhere, cash-based transfers are a more cost-efficient modality than in-kind food assistance.²⁰ Further, a comparison of cost estimates versus actual distribution costs per mt and USD shows that costs were lower than foreseen in the needs-based plan. COVID-19-related effects on the supply chain drove food prices up in 2021.
36. The evaluation team did not find evidence that alternative, more cost-effective methods of delivery were considered.

TABLE 2: STRATEGIC OUTCOME 1, ACTIVITY 1 – TRANSFER COST (FOOD AND IN-KIND) PER RATION DISTRIBUTED, 2019–2021

Modality and assessment	United States dollars					
	2019		2020		2021	
	Needs-based plan	Actual	Needs-based plan	Actual	Needs-based plan	Actual
Food – cost per mt	178	24	177	206	619	397
Food – cost per monthly ration of 13.5 kg^a	2.40	0.32	2.39	2.78	8.36	5.36
Cash-based transfers – cost per USD	0.54	0.00	0.12	0.07	0.08	0.07
Cash-based transfers – Cost per monthly ration of USD 10 (equivalent to ZMW 187)^b	5.40	0.00	1.20	0.70	0.80	0.70

Source: Zambia country strategic plan revision 3, 27 July 2021, CM-R014 for food and cash-based transfers v2.0, country portfolio budget plan vs actuals report v2.1 (1 September 2022).

^a In 2022, a ration consisted of 9 kg maize meal, 1.8 kg beans, 1.8 kg corn-soy blend, 0.15 kg salt and 0.75 litres oil. Zambia annual country report 2021, focus group discussions with beneficiaries and key informant interviews with implementing partners, Mantapala settlement.

^b Standard ration prior to reductions, per the [Zambia annual country report 2021](#).

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

Mobilization of adequate, predictable and flexible resources

37. The needs-based plan required USD 142,030,298 (2019 to 2024), of which USD 57.5 million was allocated as of September 2022. Although the term of the CSP was shortened from five to four years and the drought and COVID-19 response needs were revised downward, the unmet needs for the CSP are still high.

²⁰ Jeong, D. and Trako, I. 2022. [Cash and In-Kind Transfers in Humanitarian Settings: A Review of Evidence and Knowledge Gaps](#).

38. While it was unable to cover the needs, WFP succeeded in adding new donors to its donor base, including Japan, the European Union, private sector entities and the African Development Bank. WFP Zambia also accessed considerable Central Emergency Response Fund resources to support the 2019 drought response. Funding from the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations and the Central Emergency Response Fund allowed an adequate COVID-19 response in targeted districts.
39. WFP has continually advocated flexible, multi-year funding for durable, long-term solutions that increase the resilience of vulnerable smallholder farmers and enable programme adaptation by WFP. Between 2018 and 2022, there was a modest shift away from earmarking at the activity level and towards the strategic outcome level, giving WFP more flexibility.

Monitoring and reporting systems

40. Monitoring data was broadly sufficient to inform adjustments in programming; however, CCS corporate outcome indicators recorded number of people trained and policies supported and hence did not generate information about the change achieved, thus limiting WFP's ability to adjust its strategic direction based on effect.

Partnerships

41. WFP engaged with a variety of partners to deliver the CSP. The government stakeholders interviewed praised WFP's contribution to food security and nutrition in Zambia and emphasized the importance of delivering through national systems, when fit for purpose. WFP was an active member of the United Nations country team, facilitating an effective and well-coordinated COVID-19 response in partnership with the Government and UNICEF²¹ and with UNHCR in the Mantapala refugee settlement.²²
42. WFP actively engaged with private sector partners to deliver resilience support, such as for weather insurance and a pilot sorghum out-grower scheme. It also co-chairs the Scaling Up Nutrition Business Network to promote private sector involvement in the production of nutritious foods and the promotion of their consumption, though the absence of the big retailers limits the network's effectiveness.

Human resources

43. WFP Zambia has sufficient human resource capacity to deliver the CSP. Almost half of all positions are short-term contracts, however, which affects continuity, both internally and in relation to external partners. A capacity needs assessment of the country office was conducted prior to the CSP and is updated regularly.

Other factors affecting performance

44. Among the key factors that explain WFP's performance and its ability to make the strategic shift under the CSP away from direct assistance and towards capacity strengthening were strong relations with the Government at the central and district levels, a conducive policy environment, appropriate partnerships and adequate human resources. Constraining factors included low levels of international funding owing to competing global priorities and Zambia's classification, until recently, as a lower-middle-income country. The deepening economic crisis in Zambia also affected public funding. Finally, the disrupting effects of the droughts and COVID-19 caused delays in implementation of CCS and resilience building, somewhat interrupting the strategic shift.

²¹ Zambia United Nations Resident Coordinator Office. 2021. *Evaluation of the 2016–2022 Zambia United Nations sustainable development partnership framework*.

²² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2021. *UNHCR Country Strategy Evaluation: Zambia – Final Report: December 2021*.

Conclusions

45. The Zambia CSP combines humanitarian action to mitigate hunger and food insecurity with longer-term development programming focused on resilience building, policy support and capacity strengthening at the national and subnational levels. The intended strategic shift from direct food assistance to national capacity strengthening envisioned in the CSP was interrupted by the need for crisis response to drought and COVID-19. Start-up was slow in 2019, and until mid-2021 most activities apart from crisis response were delayed due to COVID-19. There is evidence of subsequent progress towards development outcomes, however, particularly for policy support and resilience building.
46. The CSP was aligned with key government development strategies and policies as well as the relevant United Nations plans based on WFP's comparative advantages, although there were reports of late consultations with the Government of Zambia at the design stage. The design of the CSP was highly consistent with the Government of Zambia's multisectoral approach to addressing food and nutrition insecurity issues, including building national ownership and capacity to implement nutrition-sensitive approaches in social protection programmes and building the resilience of smallholder farmers while maintaining WFP's traditional emergency response capacities.
47. Regular gathering and analysis of evidence on food security and nutrition issues in Zambia ensured that the CSP could be adapted to the context. There was broad consensus that WFP's targeting strategy was appropriate; however, WFP's geographical footprint for resilience building activities does not extend to the most food-insecure areas, effectively excluding highly vulnerable people in the northern and western provinces. In addition, the CSP does not explicitly target young people, a priority group for the new government that came to power in 2021.
48. While partnerships pursued by WFP were appropriate overall, they were not always based on a strategic approach, which was particularly evident for engagement with the private sector and traditional partners in the social protection space.
49. With malnutrition, notably stunting, remaining at high levels in Zambia, WFP mainstreamed nutrition across all pillars of programme support but implementation fell short of expectations due to COVID-19-related delays. WFP nevertheless played a valuable role in conducting nutrition-related analyses, such as the Fill the Nutrition Gap analysis, which generated recommendations that could inform future food and nutrition policy. Key results included improved diets for vulnerable populations, school children and babies, although those results cannot be attributed to WFP alone.
50. WFP's emergency response to COVID-19 proved effective; however, delays affected the drought response and funding shortfalls led to ration cuts, resulting in the use of negative coping strategies by refugees. Resilience activities in the Mantapala settlement were limited due to lack of funding and contextual factors.
51. The extensive training of smallholder farmers in improved agricultural practice contributed to resilience outcomes, with beneficiaries showing high levels of adoption of new techniques and changed farming practices increasing yields. Access to financial services, availability of extension support and provision of market information and agricultural inputs were all strengthened, positively contributing to the building of sustainable food systems; however, the achievements are not yet sufficiently anchored institutionally to ensure sustainability.

52. Gender was adequately mainstreamed in the design of the CSP and some progress was made towards enhancing women's empowerment; however, evidence of transformative gender equality gains was not confirmed by the evaluation. The evaluation confirmed adherence to the humanitarian principles and accountability to affected populations, although feedback mechanisms were not always adequate, particularly for smallholder farmers. Some interventions raised environmental concerns, such as the felling of trees for fuel around the Mantapala settlement and home-grown school meals programme schools.

Recommendations

53. The evaluation resulted in six recommendations, of which three are strategic and three are operational.

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1	In the design of the next country strategic plan WFP should:	Operational				
1.1	Collect more data and evidence on the needs of vulnerable young people in order to inform future country strategic plan targeting decisions.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau	High	December 2023
1.2	Re-examine Integrated Food Security Phase Classification and nutrition-focused assessments to consider adjusting its geographic footprint for resilience building activities to ensure coverage of underserved areas.	Operational	Country office		High	December 2023
1.3	Ensure earlier and deeper engagement with the Government of Zambia in the new country strategic plan design process.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau		December 2023
1.4	Conduct a detailed gender assessment to inform the shift to gender transformation in the new country strategic plan and specifically to shape any interventions targeted at women and girls.	Operational	Country office		High	January 2024
1.5	Map out the role of the private sector in the sustainable strengthening of Zambia's food systems in order to inform its new private sector engagement strategy.	Operational	Country office		High	January 2024
1.6	Consider including support for the Government of Zambia on national early warning systems with regard to climate shocks.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau	High	May 2024
2	WFP should expand its nutrition portfolio.	Strategic				
2.1	WFP should consider including further strengthening of institutional coordination structures focused on nutrition, particularly at the district and sub-district levels, to enhance their functionality.	Strategic	Country office		High	May 2024
2.2	WFP should advocate the implementation, by the Government of Zambia, of the recommendations stemming from the food and nutrition gap analysis and consider providing support for the process of development of Zambia's future food and nutrition policy.	Strategic	Country office		High	In accordance with timeline agreed with the Government of Zambia

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
2.3	WFP should liaise with the National Food and Nutrition Commission on plans to refresh the Scaling Up Nutrition Business Network to ensure active engagement by members on nutrition issues and National Food and Nutrition Commission leadership of the network, as well as support the decentralization of the Scaling Up Nutrition Business Network to the district level.	Strategic	Country office		Medium	May 2024
3	WFP should strengthen its engagement in the social protection space.	Strategic				
3.1	WFP should define its strategy to support, via country capacity strengthening, the development of Zambia's social protection system (based on the 12 building blocks of a national social protection system).	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	January 2024
3.2	WFP should enhance coordination with other social protection stakeholders, such as the World Bank, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services.	Strategic	Country office		High	January 2024
3.3	WFP should consider supporting the Government in commissioning an assessment of the impact of the home-grown school meals programme on attendance, enrolment and nutritional intake of schoolchildren and define an exit strategy for its engagement with the programme.	Operational	Country office		Medium	August 2024
3.4	WFP should seek to work with the Government of Zambia to leverage the home-grown school meals programme as a potential market for smallholder farmers.	Strategic	Country office		Medium	August 2024

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
4	WFP should make additional improvements to ensure that cross-cutting principles are adhered to.					
4.1	In designing interventions supporting women's empowerment or gender transformation, WFP should report on the specific constraints faced by women and how those can be mitigated or addressed in intervention design.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau	Medium	In accordance with timelines for new intervention designs
4.2	WFP should increase the number of women employed in gender-imbalanced field offices.	Operational	Country office		Medium	August 2024
4.3	WFP should advocate the development of wood lots at schools where school feeding is happening, in order to minimize the felling of trees.	Operational	Country office		Medium	August 2024
4.4	WFP should strengthen community feedback mechanisms to expand coverage and capture of complaints from beneficiaries, especially beneficiaries of resilience building or country capacity strengthening support.	Operational	Country office		Medium	May 2024
5	WFP needs to rethink its funding strategy and approach to refugee emergency response activities.	Strategic				
5.1	WFP should explore, with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, constraints to broadening its resilience building support to include refugees and host communities as target groups.	Strategic	Country office	Country office	High	December 2023
5.2	WFP, in partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, should advocate the addressing, by the Government of Zambia, of constraints to resilience building opportunities for refugees (and host communities).	Strategic	Country office		High	January 2024

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
5.3	WFP should broaden its funding sources to include the business sector, including new innovative partnerships with leading corporations, philanthropic foundations, individual supporters and the Green Climate Fund.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	January 2024
6	WFP should continue to strengthen its approach to building the resilience and livelihoods of smallholder farmers.	Operational				
6.1	WFP should continue to invest in common infrastructure and platforms that enable business-to-business services.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau	Medium	May 2024
6.2	WFP should consider support for smallholder farmers on livestock markets in reflection of their value added in terms of dietary diversity and income generation and should do this in consultation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.	Operational	Country office		Medium	August 2024
6.3	WFP should commission a feasibility study on remote farmers' engagement in commercial farming and explore partnership opportunities with the private sector.	Operational	Country office		High	March 2024
6.4	WFP should support country capacity strengthening at the sub-district level in view of decentralized investments and programming made possible through the Zambia Constituency Development Fund and enter into strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprise Development.	Operational	Country office		High	August 2024

Acronyms

CCS	country capacity strengthening
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CSP	country strategic plan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund