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Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Malawi (2019–2023)

Executive summary

The evaluation of the Malawi country strategic plan for 2019–2023 was conducted between February and December 2022. It covered country strategic plan implementation between January 2019 and June 2022 but also considered data from 2018 to examine the development of the plan. The evaluation assessed WFP's strategic positioning, its effectiveness in contributing to strategic outcomes, its efficiency and the factors explaining performance. It sought to generate evidence and learning to inform the development of the next country strategic plan.

Aligned with the objectives of the WFP strategic plan for 2017–2021, the country strategic plan reflected a shift from direct implementation to capacity strengthening. It aimed to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment, accountability to affected populations and protection in its support of national efforts to tackle hunger, improve nutrition, reduce vulnerability to food insecurity and malnutrition and strengthen resilience to recurrent shocks.

The plan was well aligned with the priorities outlined in the Government of Malawi's development strategies and plans, district-level development plans and emergency and humanitarian response plans. It sought internal coherence through an integrated approach aimed at connecting recovery, resilience building and nutrition interventions. Targeting strategies focused on the most vulnerable, although funding gaps reduced the depth and breadth of coverage.

WFP achieved positive results under each strategic outcome, despite a challenging funding and operational environment. The degree of progress made towards expected outcomes was,

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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however, uneven across and within strategic outcomes, owing in part to funding availability. The integrated approach to programming helped reduce vulnerability in targeted communities.

WFP's initially envisaged shift to an enabling role was impeded by deteriorating food security and its limited ability to define and monitor progress and ensure the sustainability of country capacity strengthening outcomes. Recurrent shocks and growing food insecurity mean that WFP's capacity for operational delivery will likely remain important.

Gender considerations, efforts to foster environmental and climate adaptation and activities focused on accountability to affected populations enhanced the results of the country strategic plan; however, gender-transformative approaches were not consistently integrated into programming.

Decreasing donor contributions over the period 2020–2022 were antithetical to the growing needs in Malawi. To mitigate the effects of the decline, WFP increased its resource mobilization efforts and cost-consciousness and improved targeting.

The evaluation made five recommendations: continue to strengthen programme integration; expand the strategy for phased withdrawal, including WFP's role as enabler; refine WFP's strategic position and programme direction; scale up partnerships and collaboration; and enhance WFP's approach to addressing gender inequality.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Malawi (2019–2023) (WFP/EB.2/2023/6-A/7) and management response (WFP/EB.2/2023/6-A/7/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 Malawi country strategic plan (CSP) for the period 2019–2023 was conducted between February and December 2022. It sought to generate evidence and learning to inform the development of the next CSP.
2. The evaluation covered CSP implementation between January 2019 and June 2022. It also considered data from 2018 to examine the development of the CSP, particularly its design, focus and shifts from previous country planning. The evaluation assessed WFP's strategic positioning, its effectiveness in contributing to strategic outcomes, its efficiency and the factors explaining performance.
3. An independent external team conducted the evaluation using mixed methods and drawing on monitoring data, document reviews and field observations. The team conducted over 230 interviews and focus group discussions with beneficiaries in a variety of settings.
4. The evaluation was designed to include gender equality and human rights dimensions. Ethical standards were applied to safeguard the dignity of the people involved and the confidentiality of the information shared. The preliminary evaluation results were discussed during two workshops with internal and external stakeholders in Lilongwe in November 2022.
5. The evaluation did not encounter major constraints, despite some data inconsistencies and the limited usefulness of the needs-based plan targets due to overoptimistic funding expectations, which made the assessment of target achievement challenging. Intended users include the WFP Malawi country office, the Regional Bureau for Southern Africa, technical divisions at headquarters, WFP's Office of Evaluation, WFP beneficiaries, the Government of Malawi, WFP partners and donors.

Context






6. Malawi is a landlocked country in south-eastern Africa with an estimated population of 19.1 million in 2020 (50.7 percent women and 50.3 percent men); 43 percent of the population are below the age of 15.¹ Most Malawians (84.4 percent) live in rural areas² and more than half the population (51.5 percent) live below the national poverty line.³ Life expectancy at birth is 60 years for men and 68 years for women.⁴ Table 1 provides an overview of selected socioeconomic indicators that reflect the situation in Malawi during the period covered by the evaluation.

¹ World Bank. 2020. [Population, total – Malawi](#). Statistics reflect the situation during the period covered by the evaluation.

² Government of Malawi, National Statistical Office. 2020. [The Fifth Integrated Household Survey \(IHS5\) 2020 Report](#).

³ Government of Malawi, National Statistical Office. 2020. [Malawi in Figures – 2020 Edition](#).

⁴ World Bank. 2020. [Life expectancy at birth, male \(years\) – Malawi](#), and [Life expectancy at birth, female \(years\) – Malawi](#).

TABLE 1: SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS			
	Indicator	Value	Year
	Human Development Index (rank and score) (1)	174 of 189 0.483	2019
	Gender Inequality Index (rank and score) (1)	142 of 162 0.565	2019
	Weight-for-height (wasting – moderate and severe), (% of children age 0–59 months) (3)	3.7	2020
	Height-for-age (stunting – moderate and severe), (% of children age 0–59 months) (3)	33.7	2020
	Adult literacy rate (% , age 15 years and older) (2)	62	2015

Sources: (1) United Nations Development Programme. 2020. *Human Development Report 2020. The next frontier: Human development and the Anthropocene*; (2) World Bank. 2015. *World Development Indicators*; (3) Government of Malawi, National Statistical Office. 2020. *The Fifth Integrated Household Survey (IHS5) 2020 Report*

7. In 2020, the agricultural sector accounted for 22.8 percent of gross domestic product and engaged 84.7 percent of households. According to the 2021 Global Hunger Index, Malawi ranks 81 of 116 countries, falling within the “serious hunger condition” category. A large share of the population experience “very low food security”, with significant disparities between rural and urban areas (67.2 versus 40.7 percent) and women and men (72.2 versus 58.7 percent).⁵
8. Malawi ranked 142 of 162 countries in the 2019 Gender Inequality Index,⁶ reflecting high levels of gender inequality in reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity. Sexual and gender-based violence is widespread, with 34 percent of women age 15–49 years experiencing physical violence and 20 percent experiencing sexual violence by the age of 15.⁷
9. Malawi is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The country has faced several extreme weather events in recent years: floods and El Niño-induced droughts in 2015 and 2016, Cyclone Idai in 2019 and Tropical Storm Ana in 2022 (see figure 1).
10. As of September 2022, Malawi hosted 56,486 registered refugees and asylum seekers.⁸ In April 2021, the Government ordered refugees who had settled in other parts of the country to return to the Dzaleka camp, the only refugee camp in the country. Overcrowding and the rapid transmission of communicable diseases, especially during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, have affected life in the camp.⁹

⁵ Government of Malawi, National Statistical Office. 2020. *The Fifth Integrated Household Survey (IHS5) 2020 Report*.

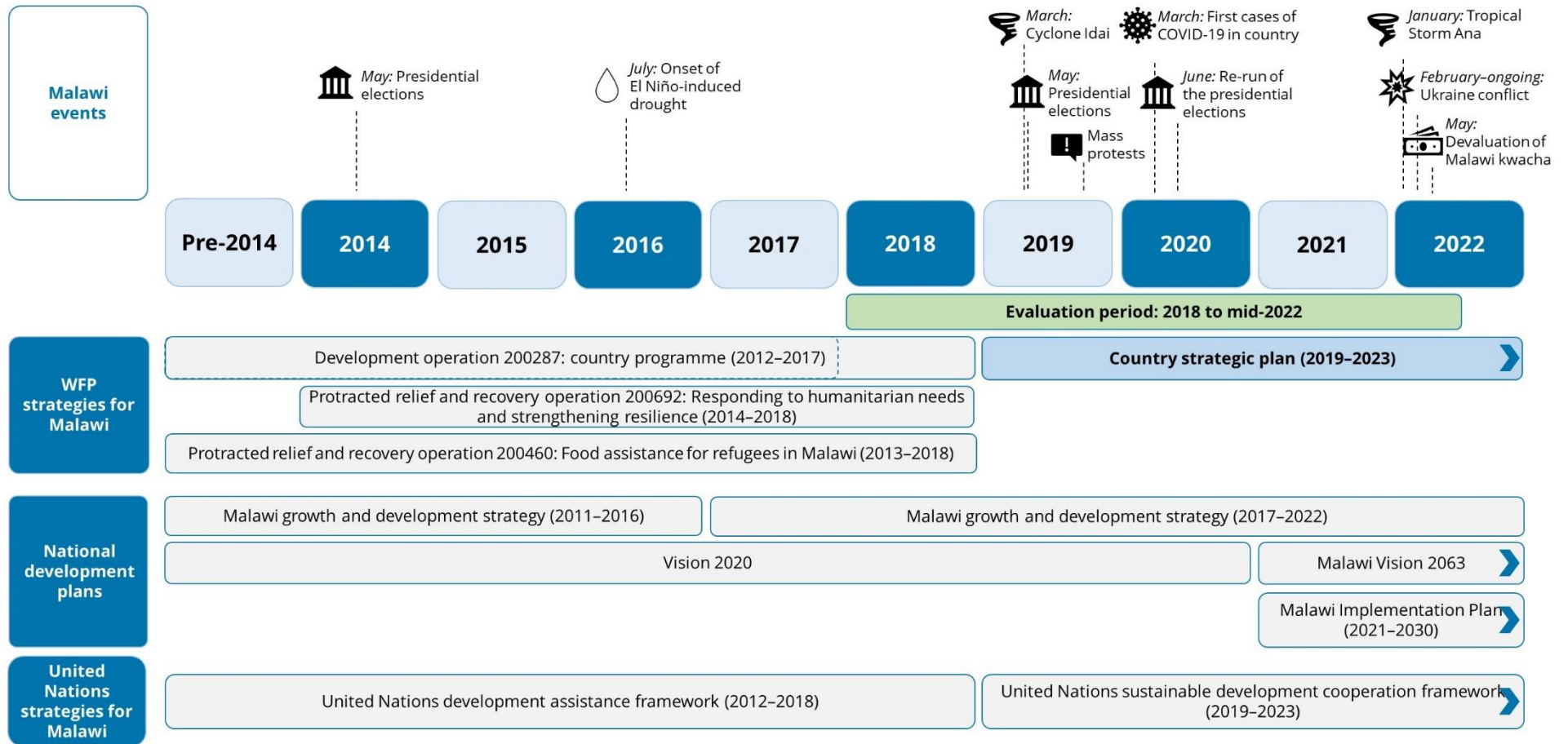
⁶ United Nations Development Programme. 2020. *Human Development Report 2020. The next frontier: Human development and the Anthropocene*

⁷ Government of Malawi, National Statistical Office. 2017. *Malawi Demographic and Health Survey 2015–16*.

⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Operational Data Portal: Refugee Situations – Malawi*.

⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2021. *Malawi Fact Sheet*.

Figure 1: Country context and WFP operational overview

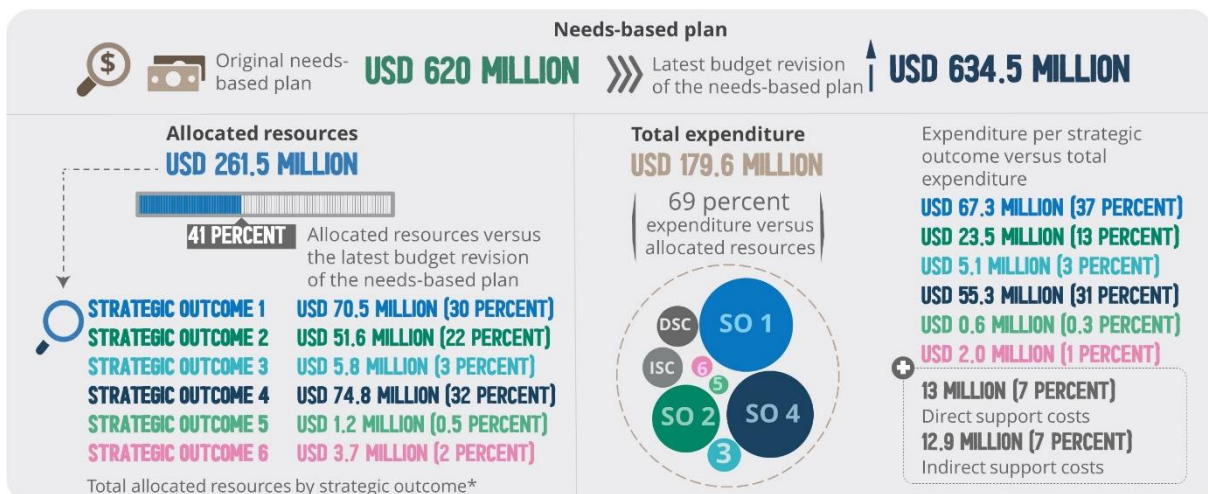
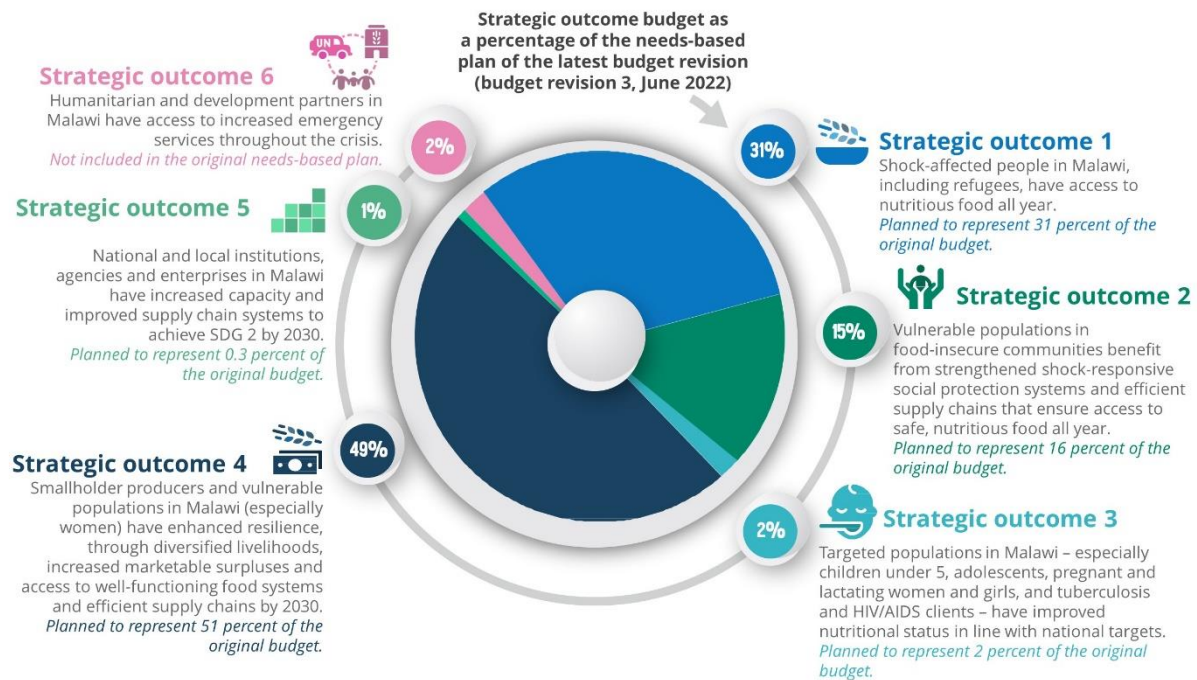


Country strategic plan

11. In accordance with the objectives of the WFP strategic plan for 2017–2021, the Malawi CSP for 2019–2023 reflected a shift from direct implementation to capacity strengthening. It aimed to mainstream gender equality and women’s empowerment, accountability to affected populations and protection considerations in its support of national efforts to tackle hunger, improve nutrition, reduce vulnerability to food insecurity and malnutrition and strengthen resilience to recurrent shocks. The CSP defined five strategic outcomes and six contributing activities.
12. The original needs-based plan for the CSP set out a budget of USD 620 million to reach 4.85 million beneficiaries over five years. The budget increased to USD 634.5 million over the period May 2019–June 2022 through three budget revisions. The first revision, in May 2019 (USD 1.3 million), introduced strategic outcome 6, aimed at providing emergency services to humanitarian and development partners in response to Cyclone Idai. The second, in April 2021 (USD 8.7 million), expanded that outcome in response to COVID-19 and in preparation for possible future emergencies, while the third, in June 2022 (USD 4.7 million), added an activity related to health systems strengthening under strategic outcome 5. The number of targeted beneficiaries remained the same throughout.
13. Implementation began in January 2019 and as of October 2022, 41.2 percent (USD 261.5 million) of the needs-based plan was funded (see figure 2). Resourcing against the needs-based plan was relatively low, with strategic outcomes 1, 4 and 6 funded at less than 50 percent and strategic outcomes 2 and 3 funded at less than 60 percent.¹⁰ The exception was activity 6 under strategic outcome 5, which sought to provide capacity strengthening and partnership activities alongside logistics and procurement services to institutions involved in food security, nutrition, food safety, disaster risk management and emergency response, which was funded at 80 percent. The United States of America was the largest donor, followed by the Republic of Korea and Germany.

¹⁰ Needs-based plan targets were overestimated, as they were based on very optimistic funding expectations that did not materialize.

Figure 2: Malawi country strategic plan (2019–2023) strategic outcomes, budget, funding and expenditures (2019–2021)



* Percentages of allocated resources by strategic outcome do not add up to 100 percent because resources were also allocated to direct support costs and indirect support costs.

Sources: CSP budget revision 3 (needs-based plan); annual country report 2021 (allocated resources and expenditures by strategic outcome); FACTory, Resource situation report, accessed on 21 October 2022.

Evaluation findings

To what extent is the country strategic plan evidence-based and strategically focused to address the needs of the most vulnerable?

Evidence and targeting

14. The CSP and its interventions were informed by the zero hunger and malnutrition strategic review (2018–2019) and extensive vulnerability and food security analyses; however, the CSP lacked the analyses needed to inform a gender-transformative approach or a more systematic and intentional approach to capacity strengthening. CSP targeting strategies focused on the most vulnerable populations identified for each strategic outcome. They

were based on established criteria agreed with the Government and drew upon corporate approaches such as the three-pronged approach¹¹ for the design of resilience interventions.

Alignment with national priorities

15. The CSP was well aligned with the priorities outlined in national development strategies, national emergency and humanitarian response plans and district-level development plans. For example, in Zomba, strategic outcome 2 was especially significant in the context of the Zomba district development plan priorities for school feeding and social support programmes.

External coherence

16. The CSP was designed to contribute to the United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework (UNSDCF) and was aligned with the priorities of other United Nations entities and development partners. WFP leveraged its role in key national clusters and multi-stakeholder working groups, and its partnerships with other United Nations entities supported coherence across stakeholders.
17. The comparative advantages of WFP in Malawi identified by the evaluation were its field presence; its status as a well-respected and credible interlocutor; its humanitarian response capacity; its evidence generation skills; and its work on shock-sensitive social protection. Joint programmes with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development under the CSP leveraged WFP's expertise in those areas of comparative advantage but partnerships did not always translate into coordinated approaches due to inconsistencies in the objectives, approaches and implementation and monitoring models of the respective entities. Additionally, the evaluation noted opportunities to enhance collaboration in support of smallholder farmers, school gardens and advocacy on sustainable food systems.

Internal coherence

18. While the CSP was not initially based on an explicit theory of change, it reflected WFP's aim for coherence through integrated programming that connected recovery, resilience building and nutrition interventions through the intended strategic shift from direct implementation to technical assistance and capacity strengthening. It also set out linkages across strategic outcomes.
19. An explicit theory of change constructed during the first year of CSP implementation clarified the interconnectedness of the strategic outcomes and identified clear impact pathways. It clearly articulated the strategic shift, such as in the changing role of supply chain and logistics from service delivery to technical assistance; however, WFP's capacity strengthening approach was still not reflected in a clear strategy. The theory of change was used to inform programming choices, such as prioritizing home-grown school feeding in the geographic areas where smallholder agricultural market support and asset creation activities were implemented.

Strategic positioning

20. Significant adjustments to the CSP were required due to unprecedented crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and major flooding from Cyclone Idai in 2019 and Tropical Storm Ana and Cyclone Gombe in 2022. WFP remained relevant over the CSP period and was able to adapt to emerging needs and opportunities, such as by adding an activity aimed at strengthening health supply chain systems to enhance pandemic preparedness in June 2022,

¹¹ The three-pronged approach comprises integrated context analysis, seasonal livelihood programming and community-based participatory planning.

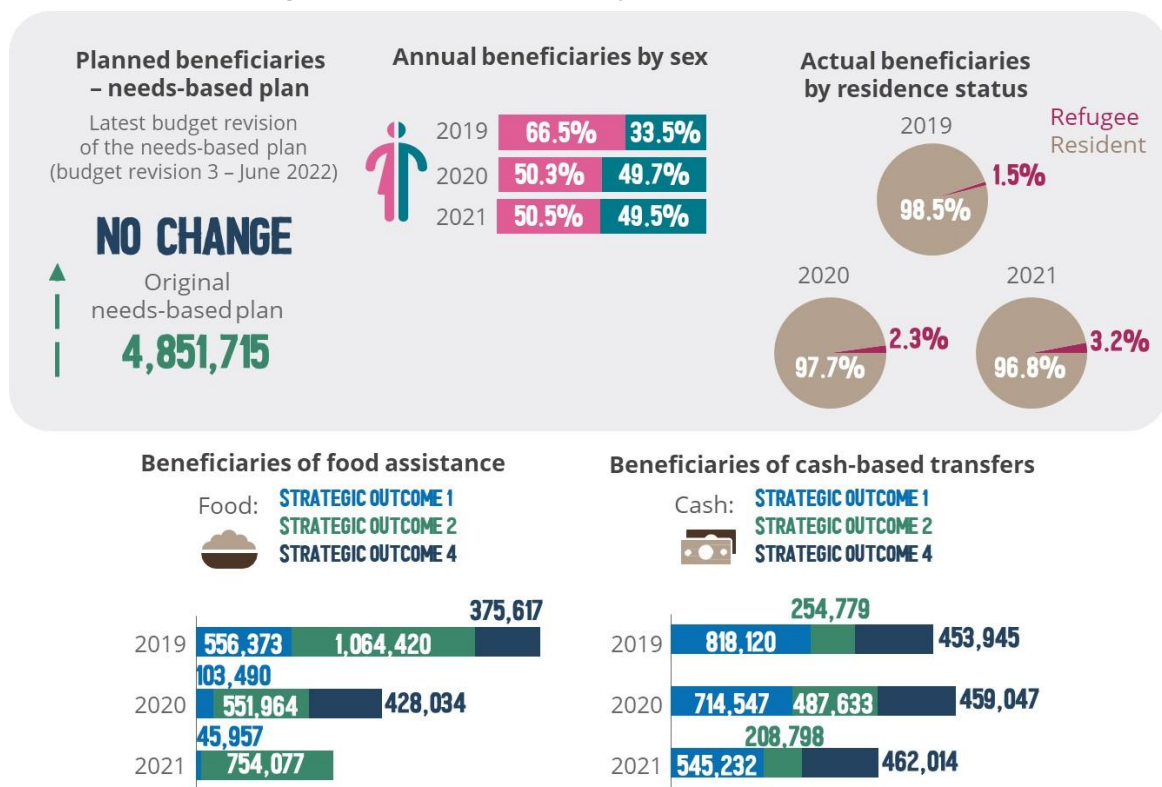
in the light of experience gained during the COVID-19 pandemic. Stakeholders highly valued WFP's agility and operational capacity to respond to emergencies, as well as its work on the generation of evidence for use by the humanitarian community to inform emergency programming. Those aspects were considered essential to WFP's comparative advantage and contributed to its strategic positioning in Malawi.

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

Contribution to strategic outcomes

21. The paragraphs below present an overview of the main achievements under each strategic outcome, while figure 3 provides an overview of the beneficiaries reached.

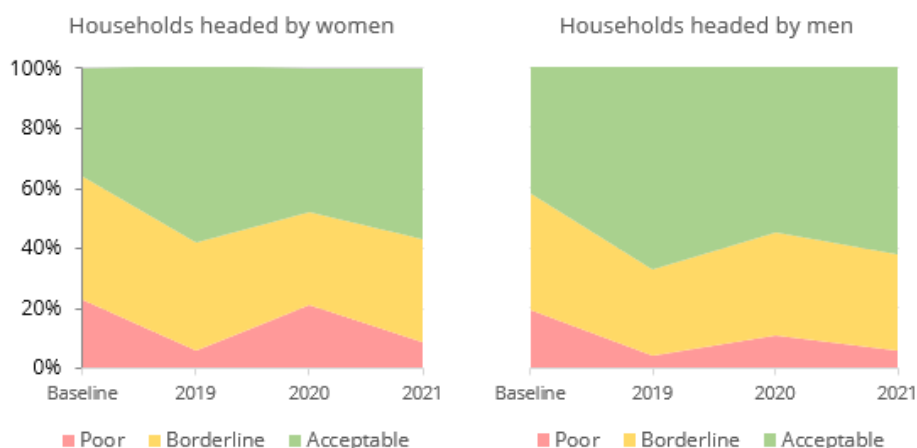
Figure 3: Malawi beneficiary overview, 2019–2021



Sources: Annual country reports for 2019, 2020 and 2021; country office tool for managing effectively CM-R020 report, accessed on 5 May 2022.

22. Under strategic outcome 1, WFP provided in-kind assistance and/or cash transfers to the most food-insecure people affected by annual lean seasons, sudden-onset emergencies and COVID-19. Work under strategic outcome 1 also included WFP's assistance to refugees in the Dzaleka refugee camp through direct transfers and livelihood interventions.
23. The evaluation found that WFP had provided timely and effective responses to lean seasons, flooding and COVID-19. Given the relatively well-resourced lean season response during the period 2019–2021, improvements in food consumption, particularly in 2019 and 2021, and reduced reliance on negative coping strategies among beneficiaries were observed (see figure 4); however, the transfers received did not enable beneficiaries to meet their survival minimum expenditures.

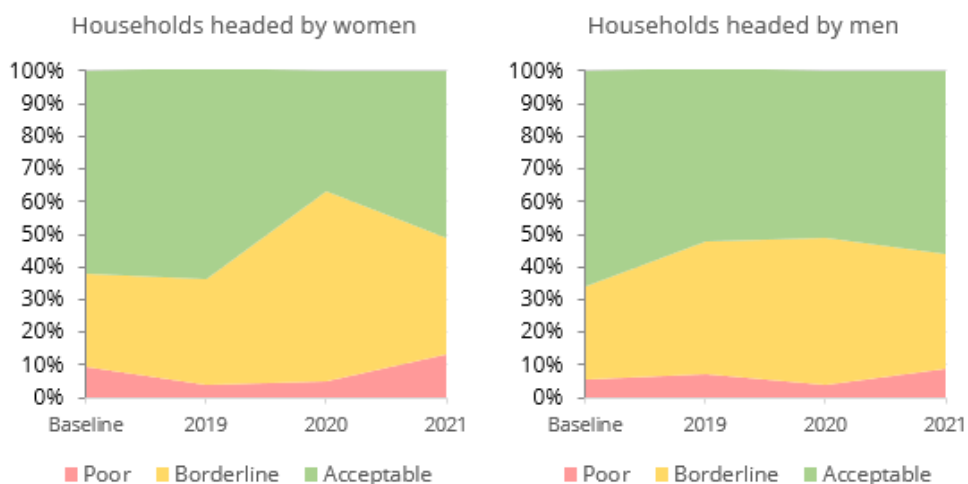
Figure 4: Trend in food consumption score among beneficiaries of WFP lean season assistance, 2018–2021



Source: Annual country reports for 2019, 2020 and 2021.

24. WFP's refugee assistance was consistently underfunded during the period 2019–2022. Despite adjustments such as retargeting based on vulnerability assessments and a shift to cash assistance, reduced transfers led to a deterioration in food and nutrition security outcomes, such as higher proportions of households with poor and borderline food consumption scores. Households headed by women were disproportionately affected (see figure 5). At the time of the evaluation, a livelihoods project introduced in 2020 to improve refugee self-reliance and foster cohesion between refugee and host communities had not yet led refugee participants to generate sufficient income to fill their consumption gaps.

Figure 5: Trend in the proportion of refugee households with poor, borderline and acceptable food consumption scores, 2018–2021



Source: Annual country reports for 2019, 2020 and 2021.

25. Strategic outcome 2 comprised the provision of school meals and capacity strengthening support to render Malawi's national social protection system more shock-responsive and hunger- and nutrition-sensitive.
26. In Malawi, WFP is seen as a critical actor supporting shock-responsive elements of the national social protection system due to its expertise in humanitarian assistance and targeting. During CSP implementation, WFP helped strengthen the Government's technical capabilities for targeting and vulnerability assessments and contributed to the verification

- of government-identified “hotspots” in need of additional support during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also supported the Government’s social cash transfer programme in piloting the provision of cash top-ups for food-insecure households as part of the response to the 2020–2021 lean season.
27. WFP was one of the key actors supporting the provision of school meals in Malawi, primarily promoting the home-grown school feeding model that provides students with meals based on local foods produced by smallholder farmers and procured directly by the schools. By providing take-home rations during COVID-19 related school closures, WFP complemented Malawi’s social protection system and informed the Government’s approach to future implementation. Improved enrolment and attendance, decreased dropout rates and improved nutritional awareness were notable gains, especially among those benefiting from the home-grown school feeding model. Home-grown school feeding also contributed to increased resilience by connecting farmer cooperatives to the school food supply system.
 28. Under strategic outcome 3, WFP aimed to improve the nutritional status of targeted populations, including children under 5, pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls and tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS clients.
 29. The CSP shift from malnutrition treatment to malnutrition prevention drove changes in WFP’s partnerships and its approach to working with Government (especially district governments); it also led to greater integration of malnutrition interventions with resilience programming. One key element was the use of social and behaviour change communication across WFP programming to improve nutrition practices, including in nutrition-sensitive programming. The resulting behaviour changes contributed to improved health and nutrition outcomes among women and children under 5. Nevertheless, the proportion of children age 6–23 months who consume a minimum acceptable diet remains very low, despite some improvements between 2019 and 2021.
 30. Given recent data on chronic food insecurity and, at the time of writing, the expected severity of the 2022–2023 lean season, there is a need to monitor changes in the incidence of moderate acute malnutrition as rising levels may bring about a renewed need for treatment of moderate acute malnutrition.
 31. Under strategic outcome 4, WFP aimed to ensure that smallholder producers and vulnerable populations in Malawi (especially women) had enhanced resilience to cyclical shocks through livelihood diversification, increased marketable surpluses and access to well-functioning food systems and efficient supply chains.
 32. Despite being under-resourced, integrated resilience programming, where implemented, improved food consumption, expanded the livelihood asset base and increased communities’ capacity to manage climate-related shocks. Asset creation activities such as planting backyard vegetable gardens, engaging in soil and water conservation, creating woodlots and planting trees, and developing irrigation and water, sanitation and health-related assets helped mitigate environmental degradation while fostering household access to village savings and loan groups and contributed to an increased ability to pay for food and non-food expenditures. Still, households’ economic capacity to meet essential needs remained low. Although WFP connected farmer cooperatives with schools in the home-grown school feeding programme, there is little evidence that it managed to link smallholder farmers with other markets or that it contributed to enhanced coping mechanisms through crop insurance.
 33. Strategic outcome 5 was aligned with WFP’s corporate approach to increasing investment in upstream capacity strengthening. It focused on three activity areas: vulnerability analysis and evidence generation, supply chain management and food systems development.

34. WFP contributed to strengthening country capacity for vulnerability assessments, shock-responsive social protection and the national universal beneficiary register. Under strategic outcome 5, it also helped to build a national logistics preparedness action plan and improve national food commodity tracking capability. Despite early momentum during the 2021 United Nations food systems summit, however, little progress was made in providing food systems support, partly due to COVID-19 disruptions and the late establishment of a dedicated food systems unit in the country office.
35. Strategic outcome 6 foresaw support through the logistics cluster to improve emergency logistics coordination and supply chain management and the provision of on-demand services to ensure effective emergency assistance.
36. Emergency logistics and supply chain services provided by WFP, such as air transport, early warning systems, health system support and humanitarian staging during the COVID-19 pandemic, were highly regarded by partners and perceived as effective. WFP acted as an essential response enabler for the Government and the humanitarian community during the unprecedented crises in the period 2019–2022 and made strong contributions to the Government's emergency response capacity during that period.

Contribution to cross-cutting aims

37. ***Gender equality.*** WFP built on its prior experience and the Malawi country office action plan for gender (2017–2020), ensuring that activities were gender-sensitive and including women as beneficiaries and participants. Gender integration was strongest in resilience and nutrition initiatives, with WFP successfully promoting women's participation in community committees and household decision-making. Most programming focused on responding to women's immediate food security and nutrition needs, however, rather than integrating a transformative approach that challenged the underlying causes of gender inequality. Gender mainstreaming was limited by the absence of a dedicated budget, insufficient strategic partnerships on the issue and the lack of context-specific gender analyses to inform interventions.
38. ***Protection and accountability to affected populations.*** Beneficiaries were provided with safe access to assistance and services, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse was integrated into agreements with cooperating partners. WFP paid increasing attention to gender-based violence over time, identified protection cases and took action to resolve the issues reported by affected populations. It expanded the complaints, feedback and recourse mechanism in place since 2017 over the course of the CSP to cover all programme activities, although awareness of the tool in the Dzaleka refugee camp remained low despite WFP's efforts to enhance communication.
39. ***Humanitarian principles.*** Consistent use of evidence on needs and vulnerabilities for targeting enabled WFP to adhere to humanitarian principles in recurring and sudden-onset emergencies over the period of CSP implementation. Strengthening of the Government's capacity for vulnerability assessments and use of the universal beneficiary register as an objective way of targeting for horizontal expansion helped to ensure humanity and impartiality. Challenges remain, however, regarding the protracted refugee situation in Malawi, where WFP needs to balance adherence to government policy with discontent among refugee populations, who perceive host-community bias in the livelihood programming supported by WFP.
40. ***Environment and climate change.*** WFP's environmental and climate change interventions operationalized through the integrated resilience programme have improved community capacity to manage natural resources and environmental risks, but climate change adaptation has not been mainstreamed across other activities in the CSP.

Sustainability

41. Despite political will to continue supporting CSP activities, the extent to which benefits in areas such as school feeding, emergency preparedness and shock-responsive social protection are likely to be sustained is limited by the Government's resource constraints and the decline in official development aid inflows.
42. WFP's involvement of subnational structures and processes in integrated resilience building interventions helps foster the sustainability of community-level benefits stemming from those interventions. Its beneficiary graduation model is still a work in progress, however, as there was significant variation in the extent to which communities understood the rationale behind the model and continued to create and maintain assets after the provision of cash ceased, even though they recognized the lasting positive impact of assets in terms of environmental sustainability.

Linkages between humanitarian assistance and development cooperation

43. CSP activities facilitated strategic links between humanitarian and development actors by following an integrated approach to emergency response, recovery and resilience interventions, such as the linking of the lean season response to shock-sensitive social protection, which is regarded as a good example of the humanitarian–development nexus approach. The evaluation found some missed opportunities for greater collaboration among humanitarian and development actors. They include ensuring clarity on the potential roles of the Rome-based agencies in support of humanitarian-to-development linkages and on programme funding challenges among agencies, as well as on the different approaches to supporting social protection.

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

44. WFP's timeliness in delivering outputs, especially in emergency response activities, was praised by its partners. Delays in some areas, partly due to circumstantial or partner-related factors outside of WFP control, had negative consequences for vulnerable groups such as lean season response beneficiaries and targeted refugees.

Coverage and targeting

45. The concentration of most of WFP's programming in the Central and Southern regions of Malawi, where levels of chronic food insecurity and risk of external shocks are highest, was appropriate, and WFP used targeting approaches to ensure that the available resources were used to reach vulnerable groups. Due to funding gaps, however, WFP had to reduce the depth and breadth of coverage, such as by downsizing transfers or shifting from status-based to vulnerability-based targeting in the Dzaleka refugee camp, which risked excluding some vulnerable populations.

Cost-efficiency

46. WFP improved the cost-efficiency of specific activities and of its operational structure in support of the CSP, such as by selecting less expensive delivery partners for complaints, feedback and recourse mechanisms; introducing electronic tendering; improving supply chain processes; and using common long-term agreements among United Nations entities. The cost-efficiency of WFP's activities was also enhanced by the shift towards cash transfers, which were gradually introduced based on market and other assessments and which allowed, for example, savings in fleet costs.

Cost-effectiveness

47. WFP explored various ways to reduce costs, such as using mobile money as a transfer modality and take-home rations for school feeding or establishing a humanitarian staging area, while maintaining the quality and effectiveness of its programmes. Not all explored options were adopted, however, as some did not achieve the expected results.

What are the factors that explain WFP's performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected under the country strategic plan?***Financial resources***

48. The CSP was largely dependent on short-term, strictly earmarked allocations of funding. Donor contributions to the CSP were lower than anticipated and decreased sharply between 2020 and 2022, reflecting wider trends in official development aid to Malawi and in the global funding landscape.
49. All strategic outcomes were under-resourced compared to the needs-based plan targets. Positive donor response to emergency appeals was a significant factor in resourcing strategic outcome 1, meaning that lean-season and emergency responses for each year were relatively well-funded for the period 2019–2021, although funding for emergency appeals subsequently declined. Funding shortfalls faced by WFP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for refugee assistance were compounded by increasing numbers of refugees in the Dzaleka refugee camp.
50. When provided, multi-year funding from donors, such as funding for activities under the United Nations Joint Programme on Girls Education and the Promoting Sustainable Partnerships for Empowered Resilience programme, supported predictability and allowed the country office to better plan for implementation of interventions over longer periods.

Monitoring and reporting

51. The country office improved the use of monitoring and reporting for management decision-making by enhancing the presentation and timeliness of monitoring findings. WFP's current monitoring and reporting systems track progress towards expected outcomes in food and nutrition security but are not structured to track the results of capacity strengthening interventions.

Partnerships

52. WFP improved its partnership practices with cooperating partners by enhancing communication and requiring cooperating partners to have gender and protection officers, which positively affected CSP implementation. WFP played a strong role in coordination and support for the United Nations country team and initiated more strategic partnerships with government agencies based on formal medium-term frameworks or workplans. WFP's partnerships with private sector entities are still in their early stages, however, and have not yet generated intended effects such as the scaled-up commercial production of certain foods.

Human resources

53. Three successive organizational realignment exercises over the duration of the CSP focused on "right-sizing" the country office organizational structure, ensuring WFP's continued field presence and striving to obtain cost efficiencies. While the exercises did not have an adverse effect on WFP's ability to implement CSP activities, building staff capacity to implement the strategic shifts envisaged in the CSP has taken time.

Other factors

54. The CSP's integrated approach facilitated its contributions to outcome-level results. Nevertheless, not all districts experienced similar levels of integration of WFP interventions. WFP's role in shock-responsive social protection was bolstered by having a common agenda among key actors in Malawi. Community-level factors, such as a lack of farmer organization capacity and issues with local land tenure arrangements, affected the results of home-grown school feeding and resilience interventions.
55. Factors that limited WFP performance included the lack of a strategic approach to country capacity strengthening, limited visibility of nutrition-sensitive programming and insufficient guidance and capacity for integrated food system development.

Conclusions

56. **CSP performance.** WFP contributed to positive results under each strategic outcome, despite a challenging funding and operational environment. The degree of progress made towards expected outcomes was uneven across and within strategic outcomes. The organization implemented timely and effective responses to lean seasons, floods and the COVID-19 pandemic and supported social protection through school feeding interventions, but encountered constraints in realizing the full intended benefits of nutrition, resilience building and capacity strengthening interventions.
57. **Integrated approach.** The integrated approach to programming helped to reduce vulnerability in targeted communities by allowing households to benefit from the combined effects of mutually reinforcing interventions. Internal challenges to integration included the structure of the initial line of sight and difficulties in aligning corporate monitoring requirements and financial systems with the theory of change developed by the country office in the first year of the CSP.
58. **Strategic shift.** The intended shift to an enabling role for WFP was impeded by deteriorating food security and WFP's limited ability to define and monitor progress and ensure the sustainability of country capacity strengthening outcomes. Recurrent shocks and growing food insecurity mean that, in the near term, the Government will continue to rely on WFP's capacity for operational delivery, particularly in emergency response.
59. **Humanitarian–development continuum.** WFP's approach to resilience building helped position the organization along the humanitarian–development continuum, but it is still primarily viewed by its partners as a humanitarian emergency responder. Integrated programming has demonstrated the potential to connect crisis response, early recovery and resilience, but achieving results will require long-term investment and collaboration. WFP will also need to clarify its role and position in relation to other humanitarian and development actors and pursue stronger operational alignment.
60. **Cross-cutting objectives.** Protection considerations, efforts to foster environmental and climate adaptation and activities focusing on accountability to affected populations enhanced the overall CSP results. Gender concerns were addressed in terms of women's participation and access to resources, but gender-transformative approaches were not consistently integrated into programming.
61. **Evidence generation and use.** WFP fostered an internal culture of evidence-informed decision-making and provided strong evidence for CSP results. WFP played a leading role in generating evidence on food and nutrition security in Malawi, including by providing national and international partners with valuable information for targeting.

62. **Resourcing and organizational effectiveness.** Decreasing levels of donor contributions over the period 2020–2022 were antithetical to the growing needs in Malawi. WFP applied appropriate measures to mitigate the effects of the decline, including increased resource mobilization efforts, greater cost-consciousness and improved targeting.

Recommendations

63. The evaluation led to four strategic recommendations and one operational recommendation related to the design and implementation of the next CSP for Malawi. The recommendations take into account the inputs and comments received in discussions with the country office, the Regional Bureau for Southern Africa and external partners at two stakeholder workshops held in Lilongwe in November 2022.

Recommendations

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1.	Build on progress made in developing an integrated programme.	Strategic	Country office (management; programme function including monitoring and evaluation and other units as relevant)		High	
1.1	Revise the theory of change and use it to inform the structure of the next country strategic plan and to explore opportunities to better capture the results of integration, including through indicators that go beyond corporate reporting requirements.					December 2023
1.2	Establish greater integration between programme, supply chain and other functions at the country office internally and through external forums (such as United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework discussions).					December 2025
2.	Expand on the strategy for a phased withdrawal in which WFP plays a stronger role as an “enabler”.	Strategic	Country office (management; programme and partnerships functions)		High	
2.1	Develop a more strategic approach to country capacity strengthening grounded in capacity gap assessments conducted with the Government.					June 2024
2.2	Articulate and communicate a clearer strategy for institutional sustainability, including WFP advocacy with the Government on domestic financing for proven programming approaches.					June 2026 and throughout implementation
2.3	Clearly communicate to beneficiaries WFP’s intentions with regard to the transition of beneficiaries and review the parameters of the transition model so that communities are able to sustain benefits once they transition out of WFP support.					December 2024 and throughout implementation

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
3.	Refine strategic position and programme directions for the next country strategic plan.	Strategic	Country office (management; programme function)	Regional bureau and headquarters (relevant Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division units)	High	
3.1	Enhance WFP's strategic positioning in relation to the humanitarian–development nexus, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) clarifying WFP's strategy, approach and positioning in resilience building and the link to early recovery (could include building evidence on “cash-plus”, jobs for youth programming and scaling up of livelihood work with refugees); and b) articulating and communicating WFP's strategy for social protection, which emphasizes the sustainability of social safety nets. 					November 2024
3.2	Refine WFP's approach to strengthening sustainable food systems in Malawi based on food systems mapping.					January 2025
3.3	Build on nutrition-sensitive programming that uses a life-cycle approach and is integrated in other programmes as a means of addressing moderate acute malnutrition.					November 2023
3.4	In the refugee response, continue advocacy with the Government on the comprehensive refugee response framework and enhance communications channels with refugee communities/leaders and other stakeholders.					December 2024

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
4.	Scale up partnerships and collaboration for impact and sustainability.	Strategic	Country office (management: supply chain, programme and partnerships functions)	Regional bureau (partnerships unit) and headquarters (the divisions on the Rome-based agencies and Committee on World Food Security; private partnerships and fundraising; and strategic partnerships)	Medium	
4.1	Strengthen private sector food production and supply chain (transport/distribution/storage) partnerships in support of food systems development and nutrition.					January 2026
4.2	Provide greater strategic emphasis to the relationship with the other Rome-based agencies – in particular the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations – as key partners in food systems capacity development.					January 2024
4.3	Prioritize partnerships that support innovation and enhance the sustainability of programming, expanding country office efforts to work with the private sector and international financial institutions.					December 2025
5.	Enhance the approach to addressing the root causes of gender inequality and advancing the economic empowerment of women.	Operational	Country office (programme function)	Regional bureau (Integrated Strategic Programme Design Unit)	High	
5.1	Explore partnerships for more gender-transformative work.					January 2024
5.2	Strengthen gender analysis to inform the next country strategic plan and integrated context analysis.					November 2023

Acronyms

COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CSP	country strategic plan
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
UNSDCF	United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework