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

### Executive summary

The evaluation of WFP's country strategic plan for Nepal for 2019–2023 covered all the activities implemented from January 2019 to June 2022. It assessed WFP's relevance, effectiveness and efficiency and the factors explaining WFP's performance, served accountability and learning purposes, and informed the preparation of a new country strategic plan.

Physical access constraints, natural disasters and coronavirus disease 2019 are underlying determinants of continued food insecurity among vulnerable people and communities in Nepal. Chronic malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies are major health concerns.

The country strategic plan for Nepal has six strategic outcomes focused on crisis response, nutrition, emergency preparedness and response, resilience building, country capacity strengthening, and service provision for partners.

The evaluation found that the plan is aligned with people's needs, national priorities and Nepal's Sustainable Development Goal targets, while being appropriately adapted to evolving circumstances. The plan's transformative potential would have benefited from clearer positioning of its "changing lives" agenda and stronger interlinkages among strategic outcomes.

*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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*Crisis response.* A strategic outcome dedicated to crisis response proved helpful to the swift activation of crisis response activities. Service provision for humanitarian partners was effective but the results ensuing from WFP's assistance for crisis-affected populations were mixed. Positive results were observed from nutrition interventions but more modest results from cash-based transfers.

*Resilience building.* Strengthened resilience arose from asset building and country capacity strengthening activities. The integration of climate-resilient agriculture and home-grown school feeding helped to diversify the range of nutrition interventions available to schools. However, the broad coverage of communities benefiting from only one or few interventions limited the potential for wider transformative gains.

*Root causes.* Most of the planned outcomes of maternal and child health activities were achieved, and social and behaviour change communication activities proved effective. Rice fortification activities were started but incurred delays owing to underfunding and the effects of the coronavirus disease 2019. Policy-strengthening support for the Government led to enhanced coordination among stakeholders. School feeding activities were effective and continued during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic, with some being handed over to the Government.

Good results were generated from policy support and the strengthening of other normative frameworks. The intertwining of country capacity strengthening and the provision of direct assistance enhanced sustainability and reflected a humanitarian-development nexus approach. However, a lack of capacity needs assessment, and the Government's limited absorptive capacity, among other factors, impeded implementation and the institutionalization of country capacity strengthening and emergency preparedness and response.

Humanitarian principles, gender considerations and the environment received adequate attention, but climate change considerations and disability inclusion were insufficiently mainstreamed within the country strategic plan.

Overall, the country strategic plan was implemented efficiently, with a well justified cost structure and the pursuit of cost savings. Strong supply chain procedures and targeting measures enhanced efficiency. The country office followed up when activities were not implemented in a timely manner.

WFP mobilized appropriate levels of resources for the country strategic plan, although adaptive capacity was constrained by heavy earmarking of funding at the activity level. Despite some joint activities, complementarities and appreciated service provision, WFP did not fully explore and exploit strategic partnerships with stakeholders.

In conclusion, the evaluation found that the plan was evidence-based, addressed the needs of the most vulnerable people and communities in Nepal and was aligned with national priorities while adhering to humanitarian principles and integrating gender and other cross-cutting considerations. Activities were adapted to changing needs and conditions and were implemented efficiently. Results ensuing from the provision of direct assistance and from activities addressing root causes were mostly positive. However, limited convergence among activities, insufficient synergies with partners, insufficient availability of unearmarked funding, the coronavirus disease 2019 and the Government's limited absorption capacity hindered the achievement of optimal results and their sustainability over time.

The evaluation made four strategic and two operational recommendations relating to interconnectedness, coherence and synergies in the new country strategic plan; strategic engagement in country capacity strengthening; support for a national nutrition strategy; strategic engagement in the national school feeding programme; the deepening of climate change and resilience-building support; and the enhancement of the Government's analytical capacities.

**Draft decision\***

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Nepal (2019–2023) (WFP/EB.2/2023/6-A/9) and management response (WFP/EB.2/2023/6-A/9/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.

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

## Introduction

### Evaluation features

1. The country strategic plan (CSP) evaluation assessed WFP's work in Nepal from 2019 to mid-2022 and had the dual objective of serving both accountability and learning purposes. It also considered WFP's transitional interim CSP (T-ICSP) in relation to the development of the CSP and the transition from WFP's previous operations in Nepal.
2. The evaluation applied a theory-based, mixed-methods approach. As well as a document review, the evaluation team conducted more than 126 interviews with WFP employees and external stakeholders, 13 focus group discussions (including in remote mountainous communities), site observations of (re)constructed assets and humanitarian staging areas<sup>1</sup> and an online survey. Findings, conclusions and recommendations were discussed with internal and external stakeholders at two stakeholder workshops.
3. Immediate users of the evaluation include the WFP country office and internal and external stakeholders, including beneficiaries.

### Context

4. Nepal is a mountainous country with an ethnically diverse, predominantly rural (79 percent) population of 29.1 million.<sup>2</sup> It is classified as a "medium human development" country, but a quarter of the population lives below the national poverty line.<sup>3</sup> The Government of Nepal places a strong emphasis on reducing poverty and food insecurity, as defined in its 14th<sup>4</sup> and 15th three-year national development plans.<sup>5</sup>
5. Nepal is among the world's most disaster-affected countries, with flooding, landslides and drought. Recent studies suggest that Nepal faces losing 2.2 percent of its annual gross domestic product by 2050 owing to climate change.<sup>6</sup>
6. Employing more than 60 percent of all workers, agriculture accounts for 25.8 percent of the gross domestic product.<sup>7</sup> The agriculture sector is dominated by subsistence farming, and reliance on food imports is on the rise.
7. Food insecurity in Nepal is associated with physical access constraints and natural disasters, affecting in particular women and certain ethnic and caste groups. Nepal's score on the Global Hunger Index improved from 37.4 ("very serious") in 2000 to 19.1 ("moderate") in 2022,<sup>8</sup> but challenges persist, with more than 12 percent of households having inadequate food consumption.

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<sup>1</sup> Humanitarian staging areas in Nepal are predefined facilities that are used for the storage of humanitarian relief and logistics items, to be used mainly at the onset of an emergency.

<sup>2</sup> National Statistics Office. 2023. [National Population and Housing Census 2021](#).

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2022. [Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2022. Unpacking deprivation bundles to reduce multidimensional poverty](#).

<sup>4</sup> National Planning Commission. 2016. *The Fourteenth Plan (Fiscal Year 2016/17–2018/19)*.

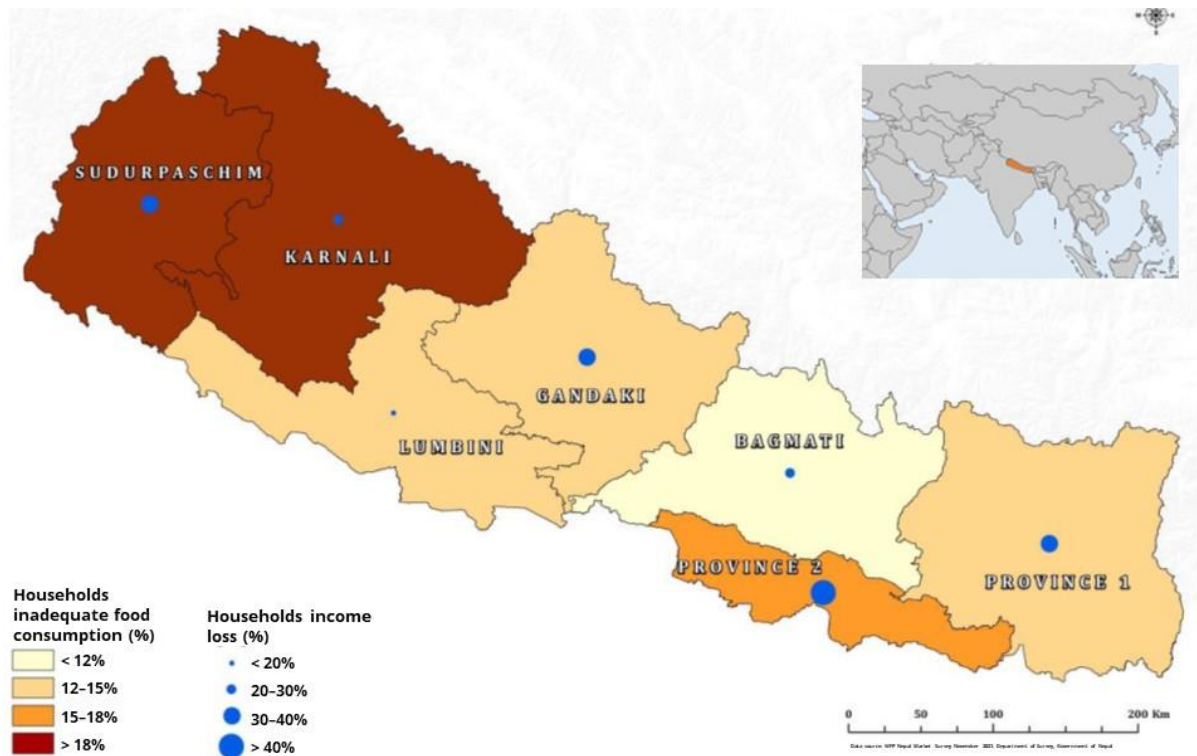
<sup>5</sup> National Planning Commission. 2020. *The Fifteenth Plan (Fiscal Year 2019/20–2023/24)*.

<sup>6</sup> World Bank Group. [Climate Change Knowledge Portal – Nepal](#).

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Finance. 2021. *Economic Survey 2020/21*.

<sup>8</sup> [Global Hunger Index 2022: Nepal](#).

**Figure 1: Nepal: households with inadequate food consumption (November 2021)**



Source: WFP/UKaid. 2021. *The Impact of COVID-19 on Households in Nepal*.










8. Stunting, wasting and micronutrient deficiencies, in particular anaemia, are major health issues. While 27 percent of children are underweight,<sup>9</sup> overweight and obesity are also becoming health concerns.
9. The net enrolment rate in primary education reached 96.3 percent in 2019,<sup>10</sup> but the poor quality of education and inequity in access to it persist.<sup>11</sup> There is a significant gender gap in adult literacy rates, which are 78.6 percent for men and boys and 59.7 percent for women and girls.<sup>12</sup> Gender, caste, class and their intersections are sources of discrimination.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Children's Fund. 2021. *State of the World's Children 2021: On my mind – Promoting, protecting and caring for children's mental health*.

<sup>10</sup> World Bank data, Nepal, 2022.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Institute for Statistics. [Country page: Nepal](#).

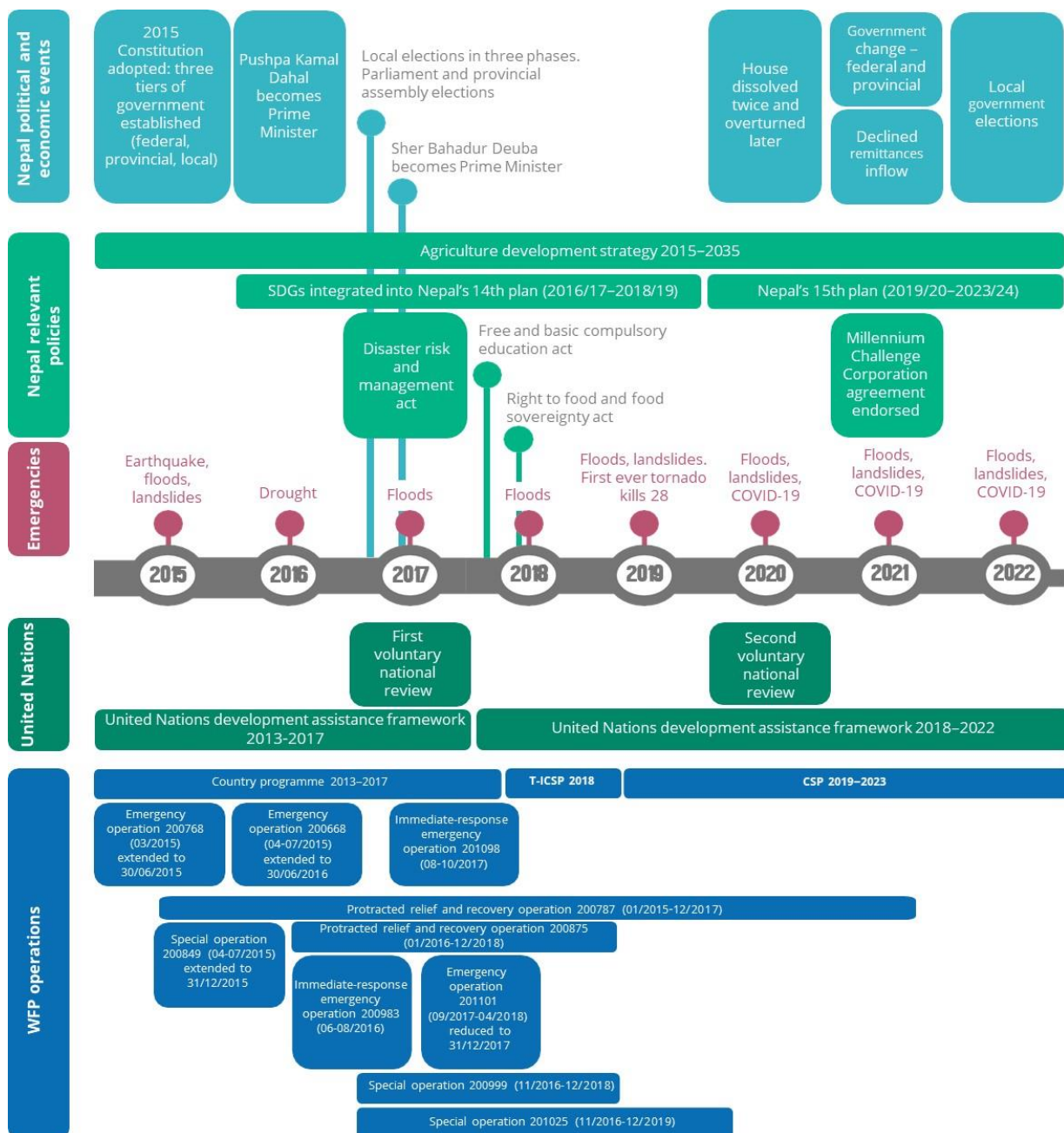
SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS			
	Indicator	Value	Year
	Total population (million) (1)	29.1	2021
	Total fertility rate (2)	2.1	2021
	Human Development Index (rank and score) (3)	143 of 191 countries 0.602	2021
	Rural population (% of total population) (4)	79	2020
	Population living in poverty (%) (5)	25.2	2016
	Agriculture as share of gross domestic product (%) (6)	25.8	2021
	Global Hunger Index (rank and score) (7)	81 of 121 19.1	2021
	Net enrolment rate in primary education (%) (4)	96.3	2019
	Gender Inequality Index (rank and score) (8)	113 of 191 0.452	2021

Sources: (1) National Statistics Office. 2023. *National Population and Housing Census 2021*; (2) United Nations Population Fund. *World Population Dashboard: Nepal*; (3) UNDP. *Human Development Report 2021/2022. Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World*; (4) World Bank Data: Nepal; (5) UNDP. 2022 *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2022. Unpacking deprivation bundles to reduce multidimensional poverty*; (6) Ministry of Finance. 2021. *Economic Survey 2020/21*; (7) *Global Hunger Index 2022: Nepal*; (8) UNDP. *Gender Inequality Index*.

### WFP country strategic plan

10. WFP has operated in Nepal since 1964 implementing a portfolio of country programmes and operations. The T-ICSP of 2018 brought those activities together under one umbrella. It aimed to intensify support for the strengthening of national capacities to respond to natural disasters, and to provide school feeding, nutrition and livelihoods support.
11. The CSP for Nepal for the period from 2019 to 2023 has six strategic outcomes (see figure 3) addressing primarily Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2 and 17. It has undergone five budget revisions since 2019, all of which increased the CSP budget. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic called for a major scale-up and led to the addition of a sixth strategic outcome, encompassing service provision for partners.

Figure 2: Country context and WFP operational overview, 2015–2022



Source: Evaluation team.

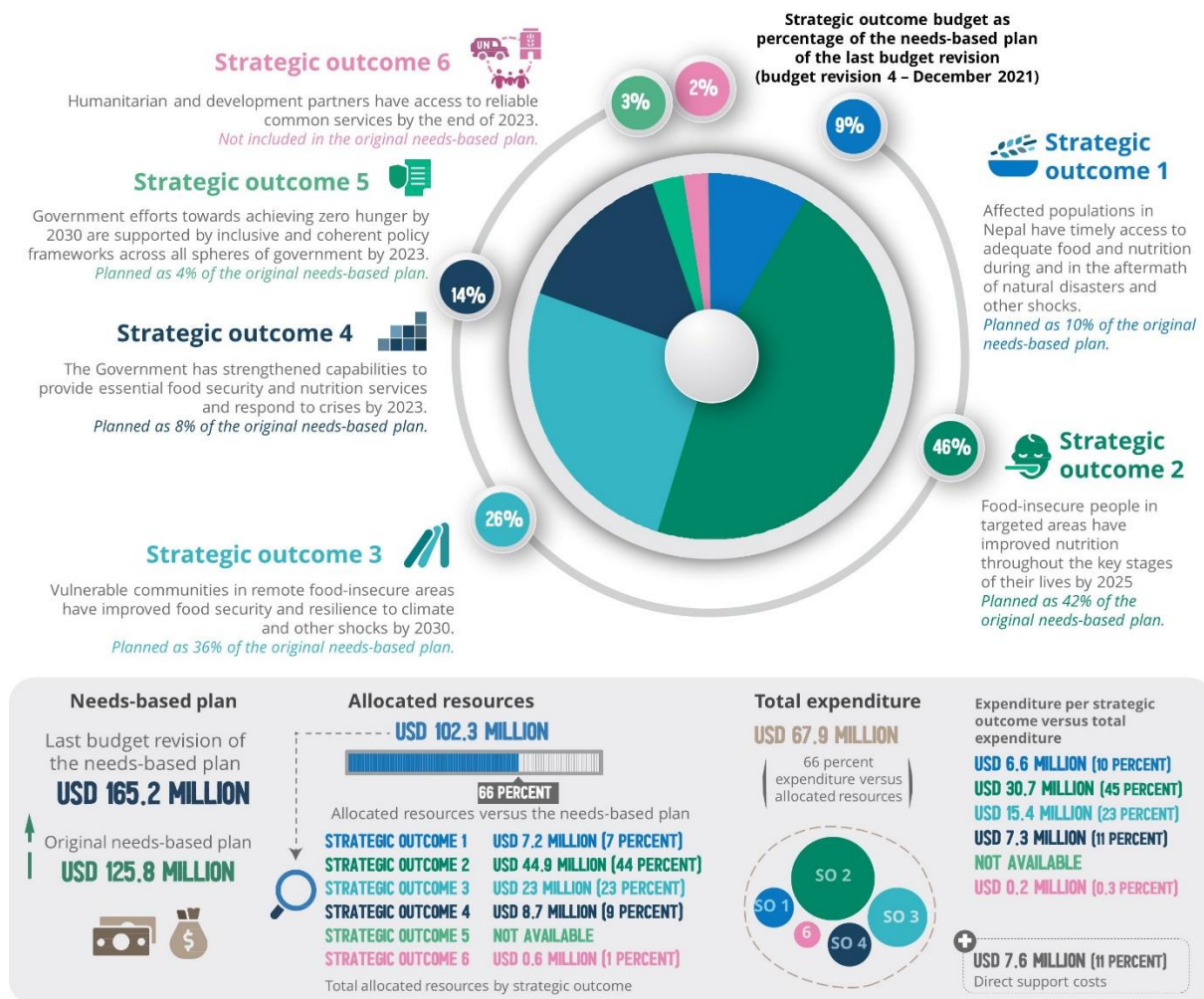
12. The initial budget for the CSP was USD 125.8 million to support 1,675,993 direct beneficiaries.<sup>13</sup> Four budget revisions increased that figure by 31 percent, to USD 165.2 million, to assist 8 percent more direct beneficiaries, bringing the total to 1,809,063 (see figure 4).<sup>14</sup> In December 2022, the CSP was 66 percent funded, with the governments of the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Japan being the major bilateral donors.

<sup>13</sup> Overlaps in beneficiaries receiving assistance for more than one year and/or through more than one transfer modality were corrected in budget revision 1.

<sup>14</sup> A fifth budget revision, approved in September 2022, increased the total budget to USD 169.9 million for a total of 3,247,119 beneficiaries. However, that increase is not within the scope of the evaluation as it was approved after the data collection phase of the evaluation.



**Figure 3: Nepal country strategic plan (2019–2023) strategic outcomes, budget, funding and expenditures (as at July 2022)**



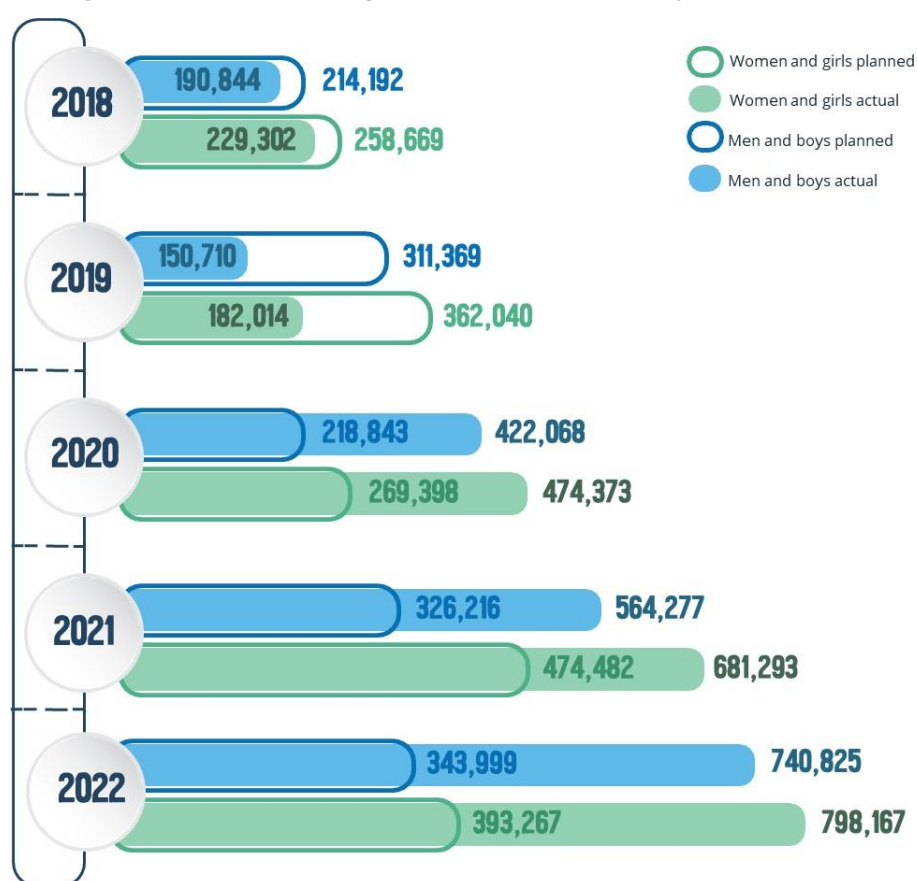
Sources: Nepal country strategic plan (2019–2023) and budget revision 4; country office EV\_CPB resources overview report, data extracted on 4 July 2022 (not available online).

**Notes:**

The allocated resources by strategic outcome do not add up to USD 102.3 million because resources were also allocated to non-activity-specific purposes (USD 4.8 million) and direct support costs (USD 13 million).

Indirect support costs are not included in the allocated resources of USD 102.3 million. The percentages of resources allocated to each strategic outcome are calculated from the needs-based plan excluding indirect support costs.



**Figure 4: Actual versus planned beneficiaries by sex, 2018–2022**

Sources: COMET report CMR001b, for planned numbers for 2018–2022 and actual numbers in 2018–2021. Nepal country office for actual numbers in 2022.

Note: Planned beneficiaries reflect the most recent relevant budget revision. The actual numbers in 2022 cover the period from January to June 2022.

## Evaluation findings

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

#### *Alignment and relevance to needs*

- The T-ICSP and the CSP were based on a wide array of evidence sources and aligned with national SDG priorities and targets – particularly SDG 2 on zero hunger and SDG 17 on partnerships, but also SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5 and 13 – and with key national and sectoral strategies and plans. Extensive consultation with national and subnational governments helped to strengthen ownership by country stakeholders. Over time, implementation modalities were progressively aligned with Nepal's new federal structure, which devolved responsibilities to various tiers of administration.
- Support in areas such as disaster risk and food security monitoring capacity and the establishment of humanitarian staging areas was highly relevant. WFP addressed gaps in government social protection systems at times of disruption, such as disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic, and addressed gender inequality, discrimination and bias for the most affected and vulnerable population groups. However, a strategic framework for WFP's support for social protection in Nepal was lacking, and WFP's strategic positioning as an actor addressing the food security-related consequences of climate change is still considered weak. Based on vulnerability analyses, an initial focus on rural communities was complemented by the targeting of urban communities in 2022.

***Coherence with the wider United Nations system***

15. The CSP was aligned with the United Nations development assistance framework for 2018–2022 in Nepal, although the latter does not provide a framework for WFP's work at the humanitarian–development nexus. Currently, other United Nations entities do not recognize WFP's contributions in the area of shock-responsive social protection beyond immediate safety nets, and interviews revealed limited recognition in Nepal of WFP's efforts to channel its humanitarian assistance through national social protection systems. This situation was largely due to insufficient efforts to raise awareness.
16. Some joint initiatives and complementary activities, for example in nutrition and emergency preparedness, have been implemented with other United Nations entities, and WFP has provided engineering, logistics, procurement and administrative services to partners. However, WFP has not maximized the full range of potential partnerships with other United Nations entities, particularly the other Rome-based agencies – the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Fund for Agricultural Development – which share a common vision of ending hunger and malnutrition.

***Internal coherence***

17. The CSP design lacked an overarching theory of change, which would have shown interconnections among strategic outcomes and, if operationalized, would have helped to maximize synergies. That gap diminished the transformative potential of the CSP and led to “siloed” approaches. However, WFP did make efforts to promote internal coherence among certain programme components, for example by linking school infrastructure improvement and capacity strengthening for the Government, schools and farmer groups to the supply of school meals, and through the mainstreaming of gender equality and disability and social inclusion into activities. The integration of country capacity strengthening (CCS) interventions supplemented direct implementation efforts in specific thematic areas, such as school feeding, nutrition and resilience, but constrained national absorptive capacity and socioeconomic and political factors impeded the intended shift away from direct implementation and towards an “enabling” model. The positioning of strategic outcome 5 within the evidence, policy and innovations function in the country office was unfavourable to ensuring that policy support received attention under the other strategic outcomes.

***Adaptation to changing circumstances***

18. Evidence confirms WFP's ability to adapt to an evolving situation throughout CSP implementation. WFP adapted its operations flexibly, for example by using humanitarian staging areas as logistics hubs for the international and government-led humanitarian response and providing transport and other services. In addition, WFP shifted from the provision of on-site school meals to take-home rations during school closures related to the pandemic.
19. The strong integration of CCS into the T-ICSP and CSP, combined with WFP's extensive field presence, helped to ensure that technical assistance was based on a sound understanding of bottlenecks and government capacity gaps. However, capacity strengthening interventions were not always based on systematic evidence of the capacity needs and gaps within beneficiary institutions making it unclear whether priority gaps have been addressed and creating challenges for monitoring and the identification of required adjustments to approaches.

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

20. **Strategic outcomes 1 and 6 – crisis response:** The incorporation of strategic outcome 1 dedicated to a dormant crisis response proved useful in helping WFP to respond swiftly to the needs emerging from monsoon-induced disasters and COVID-19 in the most affected districts. Significant yearly differences between actual and planned beneficiaries occurred under various modalities owing to changing food assistance needs, varying levels of contributions received, and varying costs of the minimum expenditure basket to which cash-based transfer values were linked.
21. Nutrition messaging, the distribution of wheat-soya blend plus and the outreach and targeting strategy used all contributed to overall positive food security-related outcomes from blanket supplementary feeding activities, although households continued to resort to consumption-based coping strategies in 2021. More modest outcomes from unconditional cash-based transfers suggest that cash might have been used to meet other urgent livelihood needs.
22. WFP contributed to more effective implementation of the activities of its humanitarian partners through the provision of services such as stock-handling, storage space, construction services and cash-based transfer management support. Those services helped to augment the collective humanitarian response capacity when required and enhanced WFP's partnerships with other United Nations entities in accordance with SDG 17.
23. **Strategic outcomes 2, 3 and 4 – building resilience:** WFP's construction and rehabilitation of local infrastructure targeted food-insecure population groups in the most vulnerable communities. Activities resulted in strengthened resilience in those communities through the creation of improved local assets and enhanced livelihood coping strategies, and beneficiaries were sensitized to climate change adaptation. However, the decision – based on the preferences of donors and the Government – to cover a large number of communities with only one or a small number of interventions constrained the potential for wider transformative gains towards community resilience and enhanced food consumption.
24. The linkage of investments in training and the modelling of innovative climate-resilient agriculture to the school feeding programme led to improved nutrition in schools where the home-grown school feeding model was piloted. Benefits for the local economy are also expected to materialize. However, structural challenges – such as the Government's limited absorptive capacity and movement restrictions related to COVID-19 – and the focus on the breadth of coverage described in the previous paragraph impeded the larger food consumption benefits of asset creation, home-grown school feeding and social and behaviour change communication activities in 2020 and 2021.
25. In the area of emergency preparedness and logistics, WFP provided the humanitarian community with coordination support and services, including for the transport of medical aid and the production of maps showing access constraints. The established network of critical humanitarian staging areas proved useful, although the timing of the institutionalization of those areas remains unclear.
26. WFP worked closely with government partners to enhance emergency logistics and preparedness for the delivery of assistance during and in the aftermath of crises. This work included strengthening the emergency response logistics capacity of first responders, which, along with in-kind food contributions, was subsequently deployed for rescue operations during monsoon floods and landslides. The training events for which WFP provided technical assistance were accredited and institutionalized.

27. WFP's support for the national food security monitoring system continued to contribute to a strengthened evidence base on food security. However, the full institutionalization of that system has not yet materialized owing to continued challenges related to the awareness, commitment and capacity of subnational authorities with regard to absorbing the system, putting in question the national food security monitoring system's sustainability.
28. WFP's investments in innovative rapid emergency assessments, early warning and anticipatory actions were appreciated and effective in addressing the increasing unpredictability and magnitude of climate-related disasters in Nepal, and in enhancing synergies among stakeholders. However, as is the case of the national food security monitoring system, the institutionalization of those tools has not yet been completed.
29. **Strategic outcomes 2 and 5 – root causes:** Maternal and child health and nutrition activities reached a high proportion of intended beneficiaries, and the improved infant and child feeding practices acquired by families benefiting from social and behaviour change communication activities offset reductions in wheat and soya blend plus distributions. Nutrition outcomes were achieved, with 76.9 percent of children aged 6–23 months found to have received a minimum acceptable diet in 2020 compared with the baseline of 27.9 percent in 2019. Constraints affecting the regularity of food transfers and the utilization of good-quality local health and nutrition services are being addressed by WFP.
30. School feeding activities supported by WFP achieved positive education and nutrition outcomes. The training of school and district authority staff, the provision of learning resources and local menus, the enhancement of school infrastructure and the implementation of deworming campaigns contributed to those achievements, as did a switch to take-home rations during school closures. The number of planned beneficiaries decreased between 2018 and 2021 as schools in some districts were phased out from WFP's in-kind food assistance.
31. WFP provided material and technical support, including through South–South cooperation, for rice fortification. Preparatory work was nearly completed at the time of the evaluation, but production and distribution had not yet begun. Progress was slowed by factors such as insufficient coordination, underfunding and COVID-19.
32. WFP provided valuable support to the Government for the formulation of rules and regulations related to the right to food and food sovereignty act and for setting up of multi-level structures facilitating the act's implementation. WFP also supported the formulation of sector policies, strategies and guidelines, including for scaling up nutrition interventions. WFP's brokering role fostered synergies and improved coordination among national stakeholders and with development partners, including at the international level (through dialogues for the 2021 food systems summit).

### ***Humanitarian principles and protection***

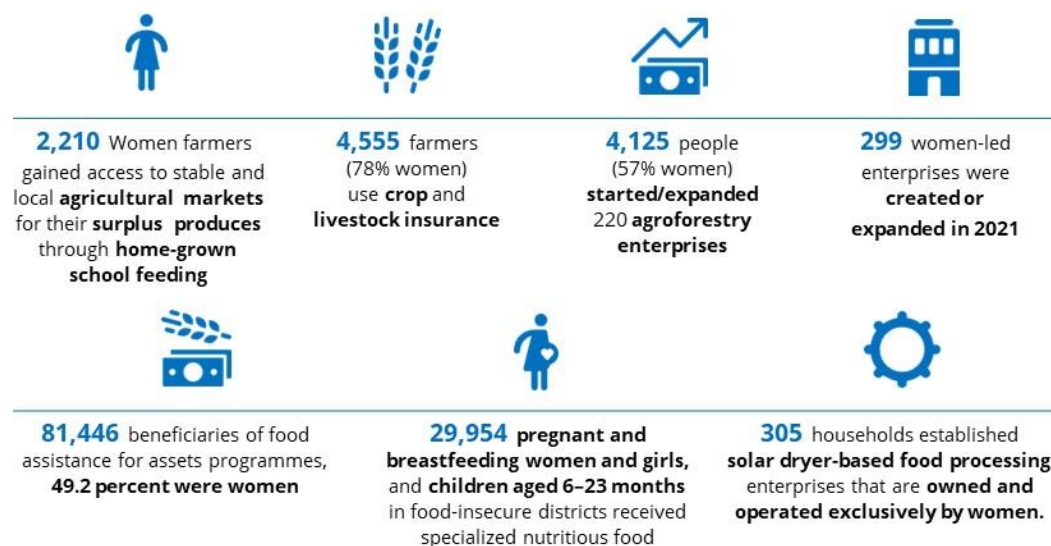
33. WFP activities were implemented in line with humanitarian principles. Standards for accountability to affected populations were applied throughout the design and implementation of activities. WFP's complaint and feedback mechanism was increasingly applied and used by partner agencies, but limited awareness among beneficiaries resulted in low frequency of use.

### ***Gender***

34. Gender equality was strongly mainstreamed throughout the design of the CSP and activities (with gender assessments) and in activity implementation, joint interventions and the monitoring cycle. The country office strengthened its capacity for gender equality, disability and social inclusion by appointing a dedicated employee and activating a country office gender equality and disability and social inclusion network. Despite having gaps in the gender-related indicators in its performance monitoring framework, the country office

undertook analysis to inform a gender equality and disability and social inclusion strategy and approaches.<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 5: WFP's gender equality and women's empowerment results at a glance**



Source: WFP. 2022. *Gender Brief 2021 – WFP Nepal*.

35. However, a proper focus on disability was lacking. The country office has developed a disability inclusion initiative workplan, which lacks dedicated funding. The inclusion of ethnicity-based marginalized groups was a focus of activities under strategic outcome 3.

### **Environment**

36. WFP's attention to environment protection principles was adequate and included several innovative interventions, such as climate-smart villages, innovative agricultural practices and climate-resilient infrastructure. Asset creation and smart agriculture interventions were informed by environmental screening. The country office took measures to decrease its environmental footprint, but climate change was not mainstreamed in all activities.

### **Sustainability**

37. The intertwining of CCS, including through the provision of material support, with the provision of direct assistance enhanced the sustainability of achievements and their potential scale-up. However, progress was uneven among activities owing to a combination of the following factors: sector-specific constraints, challenges inherent to the federalization and decentralization process, and emerging climate-related challenges that are reversing food security gains.

### **Humanitarian–development nexus**

38. Although the T-ICSP and CSP did not include explicit plans on how WFP would address the humanitarian–development nexus, the integration of emergency assistance and multidimensional CCS efforts helped to bridge the continuum of the two elements. The introduction of forecast-based financing reflects WFP's efforts to build links between preparedness, response and long-term resilience and development activities.

<sup>15</sup> WFP Nepal country office. 2019 and 2020 annual country reports.

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

### ***Timeliness***

39. The use of anticipatory funding, the pre-positioning of commodities and the use of 72-hour assessments all helped to ensure timely disaster response. WFP support for humanitarian partners under strategic outcome 6 also helped to ensure a timely collective response. However, other CSP activities experienced delays in implementation due mainly to pipeline breaks, natural disasters and slower than optimal local-level adoption of national policies and procedures. WFP made efforts to address those challenges through continued improvement of internal procedures and the adaptation of activities as required.
40. Strong supply chain procedures enabled low post-delivery losses. Restrictions related to COVID-19 led to the suspension of most field activities in 2020, and continued disruption in 2021. Close collaboration with the Government helped to mitigate some of the challenges, but constraints, such as those affecting the local production of wheat-soya blend plus, could have been better addressed through partnerships with other United Nations entities.

### ***Coverage and targeting***

41. Geographic targeting was consultative, evidence-based and focused on the people and communities most in need, although coverage was ultimately based on resource availability, with prioritization required. There is room for improvement in the consultation of local entities, particularly when communicating the reasons for excluding certain areas. The choice of broad coverage did not sufficiently factor in the convergence among resilience-building activities, which diminished the impact of results.
42. The CSP was correctly focused on rural areas, given their high levels of food insecurity. Assessing and responding to food security needs in urban areas is an area for future attention.
43. Household and individual targeting were appropriate in reaching the most vulnerable, and were effective in avoiding overlaps, for example by using WFP's digital beneficiary information and transfer management platform.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Cost-efficiency and -effectiveness***

44. The delivery of WFP assistance reflects a well justified cost structure. Cost-efficiency was considered at relevant stages of CSP design and implementation, for example in the selection and contracting of cooperating partners, but further efficiencies depend on the availability of multi-year contributions. WFP achieved a reduction in the share of direct support costs in 2021, despite the high costs of transport in Nepal's hard-to-reach mountainous areas. Some efficiency challenges ensued from the underutilization of secondees, internal "silos" and a "project-based approach" in certain sectors.
45. Comparative cost-benefit analysis was undertaken to inform modality choice (in-kind food or cash-based transfers), and the cost-effectiveness of rice fortification in relation to its potential benefits was modelled. For the purpose of further improving cost-effectiveness, the structure was reviewed. The Gorkha suboffice was closed and some staff posts were abolished while others were created. Additional cost-saving strategies included procurement from local vendors, implementation through grassroots organizations, and the use of remote monitoring and local enumerators for data collection.

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<sup>16</sup> WFP Nepal country office. 2021. [2020 annual country report](#).



## **What are the factors that explain WFP's performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected by the CSP?**

### ***Predictability, adequacy and flexibility of resources***

46. Sustained efforts in resource-raising resulted in the mobilization of a high proportion of the total CSP budget, with funding obtained from current and new donors, including development banks. However, resources were heavily earmarked at the activity level, posing a particular constraint for resilience building and food security monitoring activities. The country office resource mobilization strategy rightly calls for a diversification of the donor base and an emphasis on flexible multi-year funding.

### ***Performance monitoring and reporting***

47. The collection and analysis of large amounts of performance data informed decision-making and enabled the country office to respond to WFP's corporate and donor requirements. The country office devised mechanisms for enhancing the cost-efficiency of data collection given its resource-intensity in remote areas of Nepal. The evaluation found some internal overlaps and unclear divisions of labour related to data management, reporting and dissemination among country office units.

### ***Strategic partnerships***

48. WFP partnered flexibly and openly with government authorities at all levels and is engaging increasingly in joint projects with other United Nations entities and fostering consultation with actors at the field level. WFP's responsiveness and efficiency in service provision and its local-level liaison on behalf of other United Nations entities are particularly appreciated. However, increased strategic engagement with development partners is only now gaining traction, mainly owing to strong CCS work with the Government. Collaboration with cooperating partners has been successful but is insufficiently consultative. Partnerships with the private sector and academia are emerging slowly.

### ***Human resources***

49. WFP's broad and stable staffing structure, with strong local presence, supports the effective delivery of results. The use of short-term contracts owing to funding limitations creates a somewhat unstable human resources situation. The country office is making continued efforts to enhance gender parity, including through a recently launched internship programme aimed at attracting young women professionals.
50. Realignment of the country office's organizational structure and the recruitment of specialized personnel have enhanced WFP's technical and oversight capacity. However, capacity gaps remain, including in CCS, and seconded employees are not consistently assigned to tasks in that area, being instead focused on other work requested by the Government.

## **Conclusions**

51. The following nine conclusions are derived from the findings of the evaluation.
52. WFP's alignment with national priorities, adaptability and quick response to crises, including COVID-19, helped to address the needs of the most affected population groups while respecting humanitarian and protection principles. The targeting of communities and beneficiary groups was evidence-based and consultative, with an appropriate focus on remote rural areas. However, at the community level, consultations and information sharing could be improved. WFP's integration of direct assistance and CCS was appropriate. Environmental aspects were integrated, but the attention to disability was limited.

53. Gender equality concerns were mainstreamed in CSP design and implementation, with efforts to empower women as crucial actors in food security and ensure their inclusion in resilience building activities. Evidence building and efforts to integrate gender equality and disability and social inclusion throughout strategic outcomes were commendable, as were WFP's proactive efforts to attract and include more women experts in its team.
54. WFP's shift in role towards one focused more on development and CCS, while maintaining its fundamental humanitarian role, is aligned with Nepal's priority needs and policy direction. WFP has successfully positioned itself in the areas of evidence generation, CCS and shock-responsive social protection in Nepal, although the project-based nature of its funding has impeded the potential for more holistic approaches and constrained the potential impact at scale.
55. In terms of WFP's positioning, the CSP lacked an articulation of WFP's strategic vision for the integration of crisis response and work on resilience building and addressing root causes. The CCS portfolio lacks a systemic approach that informs the design and planning of activities and faces challenges in monitoring and reporting. This has impeded the understanding and visibility among development partners of WFP's role beyond its well-known emergency response mandate.
56. The effectiveness and sustainability of WFP's output- and outcome-level results from the delivery of direct support are mixed. Direct assistance has mostly been effective in providing for at least short-term income generation and basic gender- and shock-responsive social and nutrition services and in enhancing local infrastructure and climate-smart agricultural practices. The prioritization of breadth of coverage over convergence of activities has impeded the potential results of resilience building. Interventions addressing root causes, which combined direct support with technical assistance, showed overall good performance. Activities aiming at increasing the local availability of diverse micronutrient-rich foods were limited in scope, and in the case of rice fortification lacked funding. Unforeseen developments, including COVID-19, worsening socioeconomic prospects and the Government's limited uptake of WFP activities, constrained the overall delivery of sustainable results.
57. WFP's CCS interventions helped to enhance the capacities of national institutions and supported the formulation of relevant policies, legislation and regulatory frameworks and the delivery of basic services. Intensified strategic partnerships with development partners in nutrition and school feeding would have supported more transformative CCS outcomes in thematic areas. Evidence building activities have helped to enhance the national emergency preparedness and response system but the prospects for handover and scale-up are uncertain.
58. CSP activities were implemented efficiently and emergency response was timely. Swift adaptation was facilitated by a comprehensive monitoring system. However, the system is very resource-intensive owing to the remote mountainous location of many of WFP's implementation sites. Cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness were considered, but not always systematically.
59. Resource mobilization has been successful, despite the limited availability of stable multi-year funding. High levels of earmarking, which can create challenges for operational continuity, persisted throughout CSP implementation.
60. WFP's partnership strategy in Nepal is comprehensive but has not been fully operationalized. Close cooperation with the Government has ensured relevance and enhanced results. Although WFP engaged in joint activities with other United Nations entities, more strategic partnerships with all stakeholders, including other development partners, the private sector and academia, have scope for improvement.

## Recommendations

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1	<b>The next CSP design should be based on a set of interconnected and coherent strategic outcomes that foster links between food systems and social protection in order to improve the food and nutrition security and resilience of the most disadvantaged population groups and promote opportunities and benefits for women in food systems.</b>	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	End of third quarter 2023
1.1	Analyse WFP's current portfolio from the perspectives of food systems, social protection, gender equality and disability and social inclusion, and CCS and elaborate a theory of change that prioritizes intervention pathways that are internally complementary and includes explicit synergy pathways across areas.		Country office	Regional bureau	High	April 2023
1.2	Develop a partnership action plan that lays out how new and existing synergies are deepened, prioritized and promoted with other United Nations entities, the Government and other national and development partners in food systems and in response to multidimensional poverty, climate change and social protection.		Country office	Regional bureau	High	End of third quarter 2023
2	<b>Design an evidence-based CCS strategy that addresses policy and regulatory frameworks and the institutional capacities to plan and deliver sustainable programmes aligned with national strategies and priorities.</b>	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	End of fourth quarter 2023
2.1	Building on existing assessments, conduct comprehensive capacity needs assessments of key partner national institutions.		Country office	Regional bureau	High	End of third quarter 2023

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
2.2	Based on the assessments, elaborate a set of needs-based, targeted CCS interventions		Country office	Regional bureau	High	End of fourth quarter 2023
<b>3</b>	<b>Support the Government in designing nutrition-specific and nutrition and gender-sensitive programmes aiming at the prevention of stunting and micronutrient deficiencies, drawing on lessons learned from existing interventions.</b>	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	End of second quarter 2024
3.1	Support the review of existing nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programmes in order to help the Government develop an evidence-based, nutrition-sensitive social protection programme.		Country office	Regional bureau	High	End of second quarter 2024
3.2	Increase or continue advocacy and partnerships to promote the national food fortification agenda and foster interventions that increase the production and availability of micronutrient-rich local foods.		Country office	Regional bureau	High	End of second quarter 2024
<b>4</b>	<b>Continue the hand-over of WFP-supported schools to the national school feeding programme while developing a strategy for supporting the national programme in terms of policy, context-adapted transfer modalities and the management capacity of all engaged actors.</b>	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	End of second quarter 2024
4.1	Develop a five-year road map specifying the respective responsibilities of WFP and its development partners and the implementation timeline for the short-and medium-term interventions agreed to by the Government and WFP.		Country office	Regional bureau	High	End of fourth quarter 2023
4.2	Expand advocacy efforts to generate support for the national school feeding programme from relevant government sectors, private sector representatives, development partners and donors.		Country office	Regional bureau	High	End of second quarter 2024

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
5	<p><b>Deepen WFP's climate change and resilience building support for targeted climate-vulnerable locations and population groups by integrating CCS for national and subnational-level government, advocacy and direct support for the most vulnerable people and communities.</b></p> <p><b>WFP should review its approach to CCS with a view to providing better support to local governments for deeper resilience interventions while working with national and provincial governments and donor partners to explore avenues for resilience building initiatives at scale.</b></p>	Operational	Country office	Country office, donors	Medium	End of fourth quarter 2023
5.1	Support local governments' efforts to analyse, plan, design and implement integrated, inclusive and comprehensive resilience interventions that address a commensurate range of risks and vulnerabilities and promote the empowerment of women and other vulnerable population groups at the municipality level.		Country office	Country office, donors, Government	Medium	End of third quarter 2023
5.2	Based on lessons learned, WFP should work closely with national institutions to adapt and scale up integrated packages of climate change adaptation and resilience building interventions targeting climate-vulnerable locations and population groups, incorporating a watershed or natural boundary approach where appropriate.		Country office	Country office, donors, Government	Medium	End of fourth quarter 2023

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
6	<b>Support the enhancement of the Government's analytical capacities for optimal evidence-based policy formulation and operational response.</b>	Operational	Country office	Country office, donors	Medium	End of first quarter 2024
6.1	Identify and systematize lessons generated from the implementation of food security monitoring activities and other innovative evidence-building methods tested during CSP implementation.		Country office	Country office, donors	Medium	End of fourth quarter 2023
6.2	Based on the lessons learned and best practices identified, determine WFP's framework of support for enhancing the Government's analytical capacities for evidence-based policy formulation and operational response.		Country office	Country office, donors	Medium	End of first quarter 2024



**Acronyms**

CCS	country capacity strengthening
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CSP	country strategic plan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
T-ICSP	transitional interim country strategic plan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme