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Summary report on the strategic evaluation of WFP's support for refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants

Executive summary

This strategic evaluation provides an independent assessment of the support provided by WFP to refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants between 2017 and mid-2024. Its purpose is to meet WFP's accountability requirements and inform the design and implementation of relevant policies, strategies, approaches and partnerships.

The evaluation found that WFP improved its ability to respond to complex and changing displacement situations, but its strategic vision and position on assisting food-insecure refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants remain unclear, particularly with regard to irregular migrants. The approaches WFP uses to provide support are inconsistent among countries, and corporate guidance is insufficient.

WFP's programmatic responses for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants reflect its traditional strengths in addressing immediate needs quickly and at scale during emergencies. The provision of cash assistance grants refugees and internally displaced persons greater autonomy in choosing the types of food they consume, even if the assistance provided is often insufficient to fully meet their needs. WFP's contributions to the longer-term food security and nutrition needs of displaced people and irregular migrants are usually short-term, small-scale and lacking in coherence as they are heavily constrained by the amount and nature of available funding, government policies towards refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, and local opportunities to support people's transition to self-reliance.

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.

Focal points:

Ms A.-C. Luzot
Director of Evaluation
email: anneclaire.luzot@wfp.org

Ms F. Bonino
Evaluation Officer
Email: francesca.bonino@wfp.org

The intersecting vulnerabilities of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants are poorly integrated into relevant policy and guidance and there are significant gaps in WFP's understanding and monitoring of the specific vulnerabilities of displaced people and irregular migrants in their different, evolving circumstances. While WFP considers people's gender, age and disability in targeting its assistance, and needs-based targeting helps to prioritize assistance for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, it is rare for assistance to be tailored to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of different categories of displaced people and irregular migrants.

WFP manages the risks related to its support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants primarily in relation to its ability to navigate access constraints. WFP adequately takes into account the protection risks facing displaced people and irregular migrants in relation to its food assistance interventions, and has made significant progress in developing feedback mechanisms for people in displacement settings. However, there is insufficient consideration of the protection risks for displaced people and irregular migrants in settings other than food assistance distribution points, and WFP struggles to respond to feedback from targeted population groups, including when working in partnership with other organizations. There is a gap in employees' capacity in the areas of displacement and migration, particularly in relation to self-reliance programming and interventions that address the specific vulnerabilities and protection risks of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants.

WFP leverages a range of strategic and operational partnerships to address the increasingly complex challenges faced by refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, but these partnerships would benefit from a clearer delineation of roles and responsibilities. There is also potential to enhance engagement with governments, regional institutions, international financial institutions, other United Nations entities and cooperating partners in facilitating the transition of displaced people towards self-reliance. The effectiveness at the country level of WFP's global partnerships is uneven.

The evaluation recommends that WFP formulate a clear corporate position on assisting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants; specify its programme offer and operational partnerships for integrating refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants into the full range of programmes; strengthen its data systems and analytical capacity; ensure that all programmes are based on comprehensive analysis of the status of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in relation to their intersecting vulnerabilities and protection risks; develop a systematic approach to strategic and operational partnerships with agencies mandated to work on displacement and migration issues; and strengthen resource mobilization with a view to more effectively meeting the immediate humanitarian needs of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants and host populations while embedding support for the transition towards long-term solutions from the start of a humanitarian response.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the strategic evaluation of WFP's support for refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants (WFP/EB.A/2025/7-G/2/Rev.1) and management response (WFP/EB.A/2025/7-G/2/Add.1).

* 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. This strategic evaluation was commissioned by WFP's Office of Evaluation and examines WFP's support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants over the period from January 2017 to July 2024. The evaluation assesses the performance of WFP's interventions in support of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, examines WFP's strategic partnerships, and reviews the organization's engagement with displaced people and irregular migrants with respect to gender equality and women's empowerment, conflict sensitivity, disability, protection, accountability to affected people, and adherence to humanitarian principles. While aiming to meet WFP's accountability requirements, the evaluation report puts strong emphasis on learning and good practice as part of a forward-looking, formative analysis from which to generate evidence that will inform the policies, strategies and approaches that affect WFP's future support for displaced people¹ and irregular migrants.²
2. The primary audience of this evaluation includes WFP's leadership and the technical teams in the Programme Operations Department, the Partnerships and Innovation Department, regional offices and country offices that oversee and manage WFP's operations for assisting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, and the Executive Board. Key external audiences include strategic partners, members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and other relevant country- and regional level partners, including host governments.
3. The evaluation aims to answer the five main questions presented in table 1.

Table 1: Main evaluation questions

	Evaluation question
1	In what ways, and to what extent, is WFP's support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants coherent with the external environment?
2	How effective is WFP's operational and advocacy support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in meeting their short- and long-term food security and nutrition needs?
3	How appropriate and contextualized are WFP's assistance modalities and programming approaches in supporting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in different circumstances and settings?
4	To what extent does WFP create an appropriate internal enabling environment for supporting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants?
5	How effectively does WFP leverage and add value to its partnerships and coordination arrangements in support of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants?

4. The evaluation relied on various data collection methods (figure 1) and was grounded on ten country case studies³ and three thematic studies covering the corporate, regional and country levels, respectively. It applied an approach centred on the facilitation of community-wide participation and the empowerment of women and took into consideration

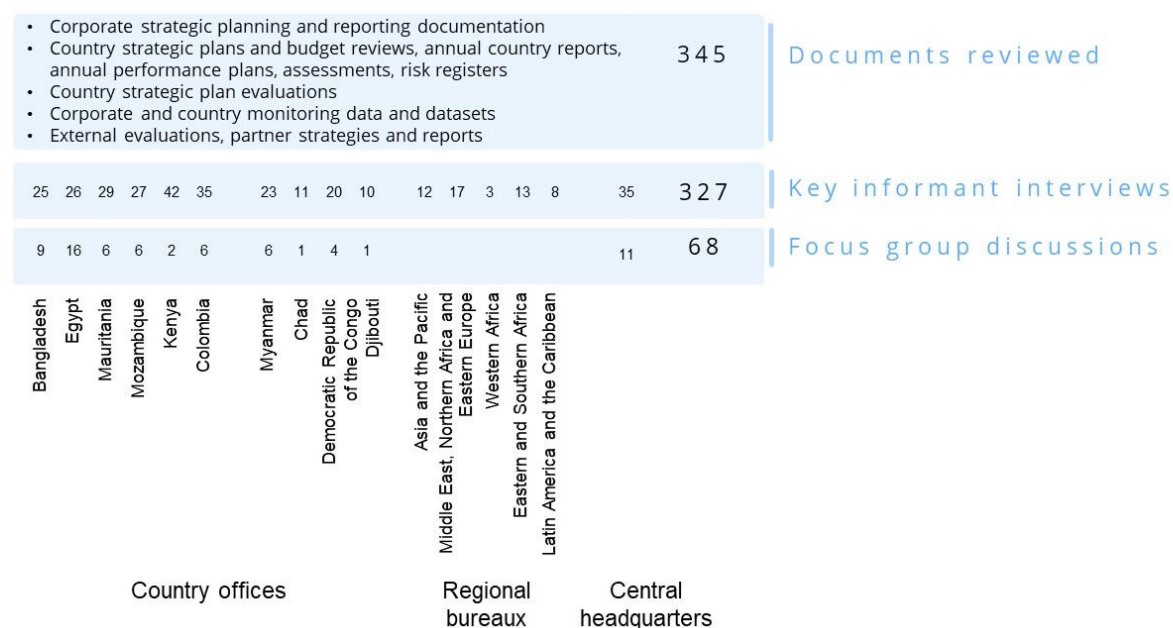
¹ For this evaluation, the term "displaced people" encompasses refugees and internally displaced persons. Host populations and returnees were a secondary focus of the evaluation.

² The evaluation examined WFP's support specifically for irregular migrants. This term is used throughout the report unless direct reference is made to WFP documentation that uses the broader term "migration".

³ The evaluation team visited Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritania, Mozambique, Kenya and Colombia. Remote case studies were conducted for Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti and Myanmar.

the ways in which the specific vulnerabilities affecting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants intersect with other characteristics.

Figure 1: Data collection methods and coverage



Source: Evaluation team.

Context

- At the end of June 2024, approximately 122.6 million individuals around the globe had been forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence and human rights abuses. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that there were about 68.3 million internally displaced persons, 38 million refugees, 8 million asylum seekers and 5.8 million other people in need of international protection.⁴
- A complex range of drivers – including conflict, unexpected weather-related events and the increasing numbers of people engaging in irregular migration – continue to shape displacement and migration within countries and across borders. As these challenges persist and intensify, UNHCR forecasts that the number of forcibly displaced persons and stateless persons requiring protection will reach 139.3 million worldwide in 2025.⁵
- In 2023, 75 percent of refugees and other people in need of international protection were hosted by low- and middle-income countries, and 80 percent of the world's total refugee population was hosted by countries that together secure less than 20 percent of the world's income.⁶ Nearly three in five refugees and internally displaced persons reside in urban areas, where they have limited livelihood opportunities or access to services.⁷ Globally, up to 80 percent of refugees suffer from food insecurity and live in territories facing hunger crises.⁸

⁴ UNHCR. 2024. *Mid-Year Trends 2024*.

⁵ UNHCR. 2024. *Global Appeal 2025: Executive Summary*.

⁶ UNHCR. 2023. *2023 Global Compact on Refugees Indicator Report*.

⁷ UNHCR. 2024. *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2023*.

⁸ Nisbet, C., Lestrat, K.E. and Vatanparast, H. 2022. *Food Security Interventions among Refugees around the Globe: A Scoping Review*. *Nutrients*, 14:3, 522.

8. UNHCR holds the mandate to protect refugees and coordinate inter-agency support for them under the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol,⁹ while the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is tasked with coordinating responses for migrants;¹⁰ there are no legally binding international instruments that ensure the protection of internally displaced persons or irregular migrants. The adoption of international agreements, legal frameworks and humanitarian coordination models for displaced persons varies widely among countries and population groups. This complexity poses significant challenges to United Nations entities in developing and implementing effective, adaptable and targeted responses, particularly when working with governments that may not officially recognize the existence or needs of all displaced people or irregular migrants.
9. In 2016, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly,¹¹ leading to a comprehensive refugee response framework that aims to support an inclusive and holistic response for refugees, host governments and communities that host large populations of refugees for protracted periods.¹² The Global Compact on Refugees¹³ and the Global Compact for Migration¹⁴ were introduced in 2018 to improve international cooperation on the safe and orderly movement of people, and to promote socioeconomic rights and self-reliance for refugees and migrants, regardless of their legal status. Led by the United Nations Secretary-General, a high-level panel on internal displacement was established in 2019 to facilitate collective action,¹⁵ resulting in a draft action agenda on internal displacement.¹⁶
10. Despite the escalating global displacement crisis, the estimated funding shortfall for supporting refugees in 2023 approached 70 percent,¹⁷ exacerbated by a shift in donor funding from addressing protracted displacement crises and working in transition settings to responding to emerging crises.¹⁸ Cuts in aid and food provision disproportionately affect forcibly displaced people, intensifying their fragility and increasing their risks of facing violence and exploitation.¹⁹

Subject of the evaluation

11. WFP seeks “to meet refugee and other emergency and protracted relief food needs”. The strategic plan for 2022–2025 makes specific, but limited, reference to refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, emphasizing the intersection between conflict, weather-related disasters and other risks, and the immediate and longer-term needs of these population groups. Despite references to refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in WFP’s policy framework, the organization has no corporate-level policy for explicitly addressing their needs, and there is no specific guidance on support for

⁹ UNHCR. [About UNHCR. The 1951 Refugee Convention](#).

¹⁰ IOM. [About us. Who we are](#).

¹¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. [The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#).

¹² UNHCR. [Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework](#).

¹³ United Nations. 2018. [Global Compact on Refugees](#).

¹⁴ IOM. 2019. [Global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration](#).

¹⁵ United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement. 2021. [Shining a Light on Internal Displacement: A Vision for the Future – Report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement](#).

¹⁶ Office of the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement. 2022. [Action Agenda on Internal Displacement: Core Commitments](#).

¹⁷ Source: [Refugee Funding Tracker](#) (accessed 30 September 2024). This platform was developed by UNHCR and rolled out in 2019 as a “one stop shop” for financial data related to refugee programmes.

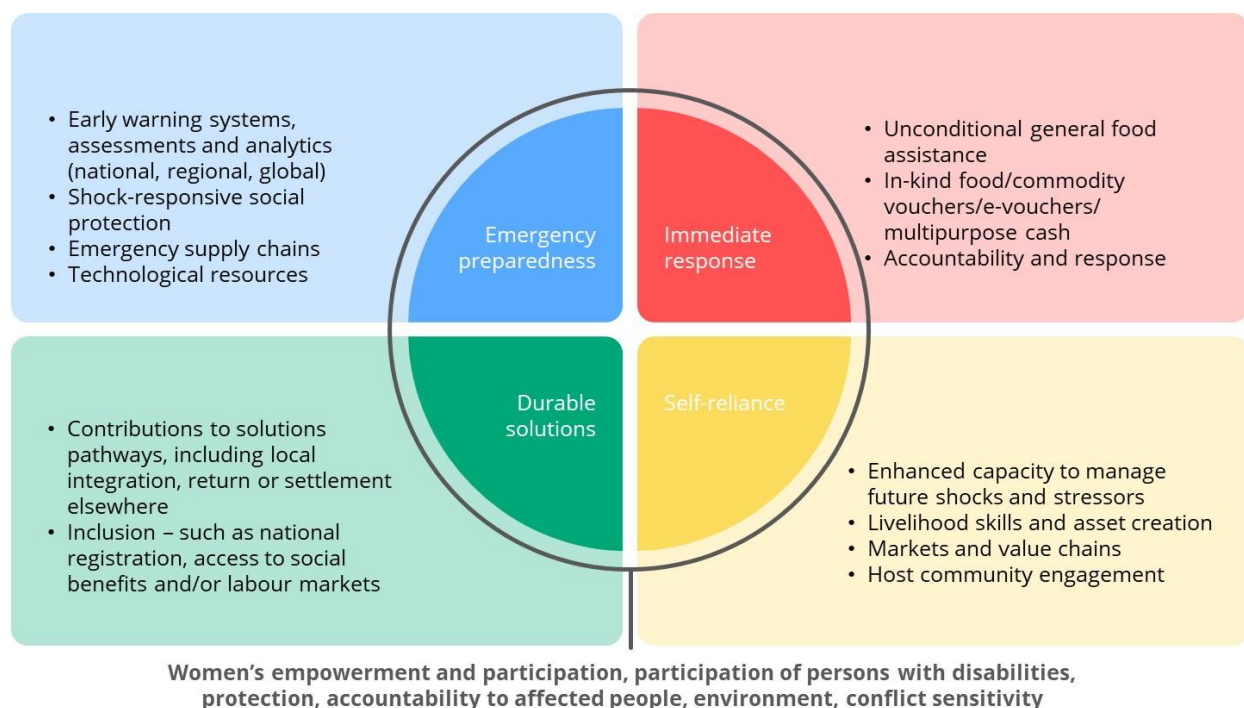
¹⁸ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2024. [Financial Tracking Service](#).

¹⁹ UNHCR. 2022. [Food shortages and aid cuts put more displaced women at risk of gender-based violence](#).

irregular migrants, while corporate and joint WFP-UNHCR guidance on support for refugees and internally displaced persons is available.^{20, 21}

12. In its efforts to align with the international policy environment for supporting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, WFP has assumed a critical role in providing services that help to meet the immediate needs of these population groups. Where possible, it shifts its support to focus on building self-reliance, contributing to durable solutions, mitigating the impact on host communities, and building the preparedness and response capacities of governments and local actors (figure 2). WFP's assistance for displaced people and irregular migrants spans all programmatic and functional areas, including general food assistance, the prevention and treatment of malnutrition, food assistance for assets and training, school meals, food security and nutrition assessments, analysis and monitoring, supply chains and logistics, country capacity strengthening and advocacy. The assistance varies in nature and purpose, depending on the specific circumstances and needs of the affected people, and takes into account cross-cutting concerns related to the support and empowerment of women and girls, community-wide participation, protection, accountability to affected people, the environment, and conflict sensitivity.

Figure 2: Range of WFP's programming for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants



Source: Evaluation team.

13. Unlike UNHCR and IOM, WFP holds no formal mandate for the protection of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants. WFP provides support for these groups through its 2011 memorandum of understanding (MoU) with UNHCR,²² country- or regional level MoUs and technical agreements with IOM, and partnerships with national governments. In 2020, WFP and UNHCR co-created the Joint Programme Excellence and

²⁰ WFP. 2017. *Refugee Assistance Guidance Manual*.

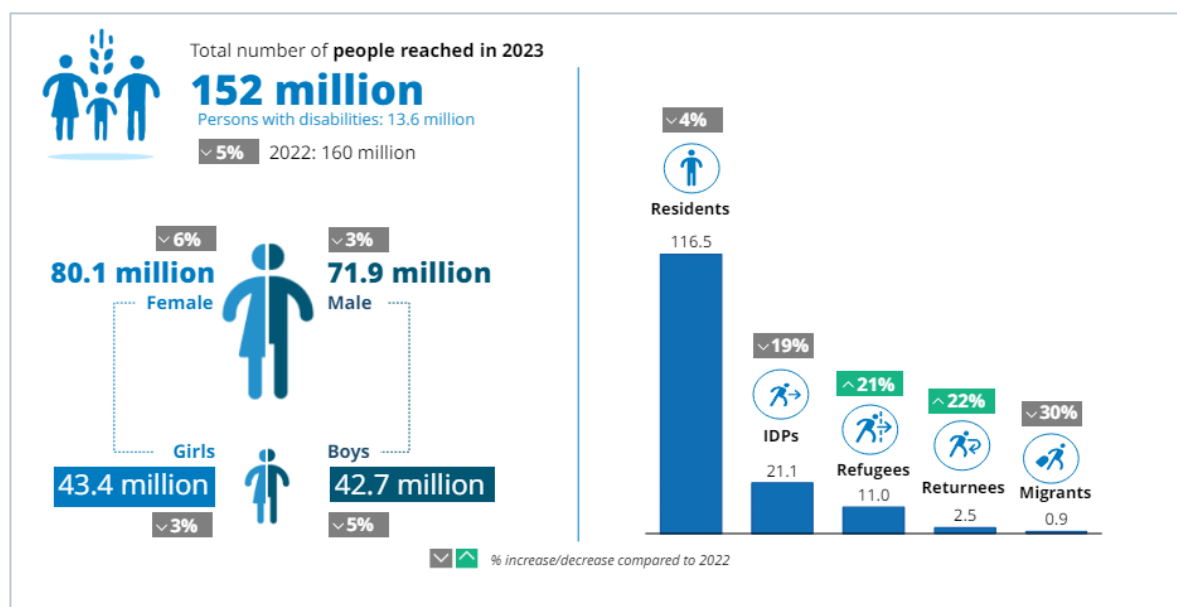
²¹ UNHCR and WFP. 2023. *Joint Guidance: Targeting of Assistance to Meet Basic Needs*.

²² WFP and UNHCR. 2011. *Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and WFP*.

Targeting Hub aimed at strengthening joint programming and implementing organizational policies and guidance effectively.²³

14. Over the last ten years, the number of internally displaced persons, refugees, returnees and irregular migrants assisted by WFP has steadily increased, peaking in 2022 at 38.6 million and declining slightly to 35.5 million in 2023. The proportion of displaced beneficiaries²⁴ within the total number of people assisted by WFP has, however, declined from 37 percent in 2018 to 23 percent in 2023.

Figure 3: People assisted by WFP by sex, age and residence status, 2023



Source: "Annual performance report for 2023" (WFP/EB.A/2024/4-A/Rev.1).

Abbreviation: IDPs = internally displaced persons.

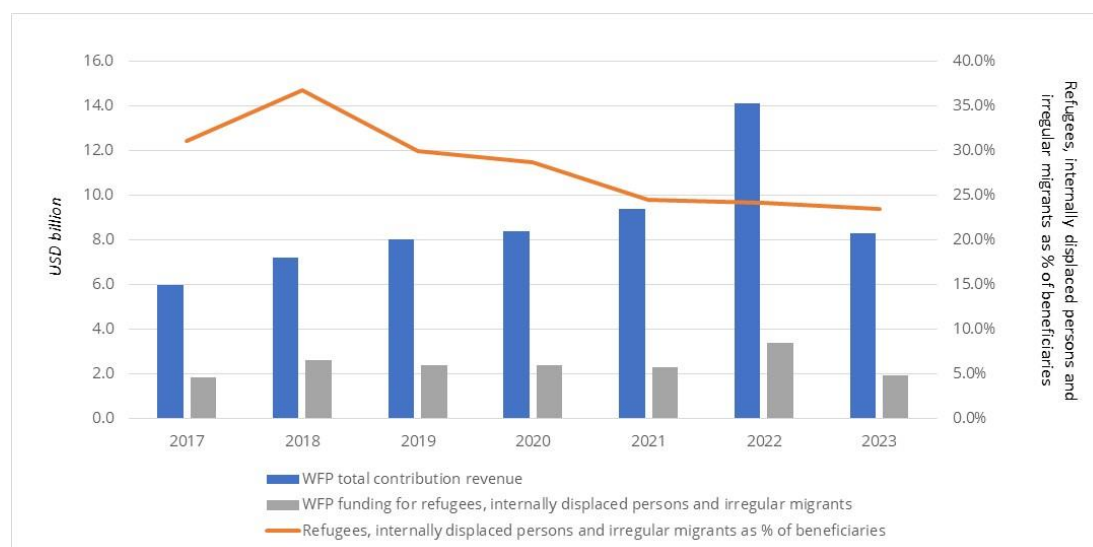
15. In 2023, 60 percent of multilateral resources were allocated to crisis response activities, and particular attention was paid to refugees and the people facing the highest levels of vulnerability.²⁵ While no specific funding data by status are available, an aggregate picture of WFP's funding for its work with displaced people and irregular migrants can be roughly estimated by multiplying overall corporate funding by the proportion of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in WFP's overall beneficiary population (figure 4).

²³ UNHCR and WFP. 2024. [Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub](#).

²⁴ These figures do not include irregular migrants for whom data have been available since only 2022.

²⁵ "Annual performance report for 2022" (WFP/EB.A/2023/4-A/Rev.1). The people experiencing the highest levels of vulnerability are considered to be those facing levels 4 and 5 in the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification.

Figure 4: Approximate trends in funding for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants relative to overall direct funding, 2017–2023*



* Funding for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants is estimated from the percentage of WFP beneficiaries, assuming that the cost per beneficiary for displaced people and irregular migrants is the same as for residents.

Source: Factory distribution contribution and forecast stats, 2024-06-24.

Evaluation conclusions and key findings

Strategic relevance

WFP has enhanced its responsiveness at the global, regional and country levels to increasingly dynamic and complex displacement environments, but its strategic vision and position regarding food-insecure refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants remain unclear. The approaches that WFP adopts are inconsistent among regions and countries, and corporate guidance is insufficient.

16. WFP's policies are broadly aligned with the Global Compact on Refugees and the United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. The integration of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants into WFP's corporate strategies is variable and reveals weaknesses in the organization's work with internally displaced persons and irregular migrants. WFP responds to irregular migration and is aligned with the Global Compact on Migration in only the Latin America and the Caribbean region, despite the high levels of vulnerability associated with irregular migration in other regions. Joint strategies with UNHCR, and WFP's recently developed institutional plan and programmes for responding to internal displacement have not been translated into clear guidance that helps country offices to identify and support locally appropriate pathways for a transition from addressing the immediate needs of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants to building their self-reliance.
17. The extent to which displacement and migration matters are covered in country strategic plan (CSP) documents, and the manner of that coverage are contingent on whether and how populations of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants are recognized and prioritized by governments. WFP's support for displaced people and irregular migrants has consistently operated within national legal frameworks. In CSPs and annual country reports refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants tend to be bundled together with other crisis-affected people, often without explicit recognition in CSP outcomes. WFP's focus on the country level, and its shift away from regional programmes, has created gaps

in the monitoring and analysis required for anticipating and responding to the multi-country and cross-border drivers and effects of displacement and migration.

18. Except in the few countries where WFP has developed an explicit focus on urban environments, refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants living in urban areas are usually not included in WFP's support which is predominantly focused on rural settings. This can create a "pull" factor through which household members seeking to maintain their eligibility for transfers must travel back and forth between urban centres and camps for displaced people.
19. While WFP consistently strives to adhere to humanitarian principles in providing assistance to refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, it is aware of possible trade-offs in applying those principles in certain circumstances, such as when seeking agreements with governments or non-state armed groups in order to maintain humanitarian access. The fact that limited or no assistance is provided to sizeable populations of irregular migrants outside Latin America, or to refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants residing in urban areas, despite their possibly very high levels of food and nutrition insecurity, could be seen as a lack of adherence to the principles of humanity and impartiality.

Effectiveness

WFP's programmatic responses to the needs of refugees and internally displaced persons reflect its traditional strengths in addressing people's immediate needs. There is considerable room for WFP to enhance and improve its approaches to building self-reliance and improving nutrition, and its assistance for irregular migrants is very limited. In some countries, WFP has made important contributions to the integration of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants into national systems, but it has yet to give full consideration to the programme areas where it could deliver longer-term support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants at scale, such as through systems-level contributions to safety nets, school meal programmes, food markets and environmental rehabilitation.

20. WFP is widely recognized as the primary humanitarian food and nutrition agency able to scale up its responses quickly during major displacement crises, and providing leadership in securing humanitarian access to forcibly displaced people.
21. WFP makes important contributions to addressing the immediate food security needs of refugees and internally displaced persons, but the emergency assistance provided to irregular migrants is extremely limited compared with their needs. The provision of cash assistance grants refugees and internally displaced persons greater autonomy. However, refugees in situations of protracted displacement were found to be highly sensitive to reductions in cash assistance, which led to negative coping mechanisms, demonstrating that the refugees continued to depend on transfers. Strategies for enhancing the self-reliance of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants are highly dependent on the economic and security environment, and the willingness and capacity of host governments to extend rights, entitlements or support to displaced people and irregular migrants. While examples of WFP's vocational training and other support for self-reliance were identified, the organization's contributions to self-reliance and the long-term food security and nutrition needs of displaced people and irregular migrants were usually constrained by their short-term and small-scale nature, and often lacked coherence. WFP does not provide support for building the self-reliance of irregular migrants. While the evaluation found occasional evidence of the consideration of environmental matters in WFP's immediate support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, these cases appear to have emerged largely in response to governments' concerns regarding environmental protection and ecosystem rehabilitation in protracted displacement settings.

22. The growing use of cash transfers has enabled WFP to reduce supply chain risks, and allows greater autonomy for the recipient refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants where they have access to local food markets. Local procurement in settings such as those in Bangladesh and Kenya has helped to promote social cohesion and accelerate the transition of programmes from a focus on addressing immediate needs to interventions aimed at building self-reliance. Investments in local supply chains that support displaced people provided WFP with a tool to help governments recognize the benefits of supporting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in order to secure investments in infrastructure and emergency preparedness and response capacity.
23. WFP's interventions for addressing malnutrition among refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants have largely been inadequate in terms of volume and coverage, except in limited camp-based settings such as Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh. When facing funding shortfalls, WFP does not have a clear position on whether to target the most nutritionally vulnerable people on the move with high-quality nutrition assistance or to reach larger numbers of people with lower-quality assistance. Blanket in-kind food or cash distributions have failed to meet nutrition requirements or prevent malnutrition among vulnerable people. "Top-up" assistance and priority access to diversified fresh foods for the population groups most vulnerable to malnutrition have helped to mitigate some of the consequences of significant cuts in general food assistance.
24. Where displaced children have access to schools, there is clear evidence that WFP's provision of daily school meals has helped to decrease the prevalence of short-term hunger. School meal programmes have also provided a stabilizing factor for vulnerable refugee households and appear to have contributed to social cohesion when children from host communities also benefited from school meals, or schools were supplied from local markets.
25. While WFP offers a range of activities aimed at meeting the immediate needs and building the self-reliance of displaced people, it has yet to adopt a coherent and systematic humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach to its provision of support. WFP has made efforts to integrate social cohesion and peacebuilding into its support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, but in many countries, there are gaps in the design of conflict-sensitive programme approaches and the use of context and conflict analysis to inform programme adaptations. WFP's partnerships for ensuring the application of a coherent nexus approach to address the needs of people on the move are limited.
26. In some countries, WFP has made important contributions to the integration of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants into national systems, notably by supporting their inclusion in social registries. Participation in national systems is contingent on governments' recognition of the rights and needs of different categories of people on the move. A common barrier to the participation of refugees is the capacity of host governments to meet additional costs. Many internally displaced persons may also face barriers in obtaining access to national systems, and the evaluation found a gap in WFP's attention to this matter.
27. WFP's contributions to durable solutions are limited in scope and focused on integration into national systems. WFP does not yet play a significant role in advocating or supporting durable solutions in partnership with other agencies. The organization's primary role in advocacy is in addressing the structural factors that constrain the delivery of assistance to refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants. WFP's contributions to joint advocacy that helps to ensure that displaced people are recognized, economically active and self-reliant are highly variable.
28. WFP's use of digital services has helped to improve operational effectiveness and had a positive effect on its interventions for meeting the immediate needs of displaced people. However, its digital and monitoring systems need to become more flexible, mobile and

interoperable in order to provide end-to-end support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, from addressing their immediate needs to building their self-reliance. As a result, some country offices have developed bespoke solutions (table 2).

Table 2: Examples of bespoke digital platforms and tools

Example	Benefit
Digital oversight of supply chain warehouses in Kenya	Improves stock visibility and supply chain efficiency in country-level preparedness and response initiatives
Displacement tracking matrix and data sharing agreement in Mozambique (2023)	Supports the sharing of real-time data between WFP, IOM and the United Nations Children's Fund for a joint response to displacement
Introduction of Building Blocks in Bangladesh developed with the WFP Innovation Accelerator	Supports data privacy, inter-agency data sharing and the reduced duplication of services among agencies
Incorporation of biometric identity and data privacy using Building Blocks in Jordan	Data sharing supports transfer management and beneficiary tracking among agencies
SMS texting in the Gaza Strip	Beneficiaries share updates on the shops where nutritious food products are available
Introduction of a multi-purpose cash platform operated through the Government of Türkiye	Introduces the potential to link cash transfers for refugees to national safety net systems
Introduction of the Mauritania Tekavoul social transfer programme	Integrates social safety nets to promote participation in the economy by host and refugee households

Understanding and integrating the specific vulnerabilities of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants

The intersecting vulnerabilities of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants are poorly integrated into relevant policy and guidance and there are significant gaps in WFP's understanding and monitoring of the specific vulnerabilities of displaced people and irregular migrants in their different, evolving circumstances. While WFP considers people's gender, age and disability in targeting its assistance, and needs-based targeting helps to prioritize assistance for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, it is rare for assistance to be tailored to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of different categories of persons on the move.

29. WFP has relevant, general policies and guidance for targeting assistance in ways that facilitate the participation of all social groups, including women and girls and persons with disabilities and is paying increasing attention to the empowerment of women and the participation of all social groups among refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants. However, there are gaps in WFP's understanding of how the specific vulnerabilities of beneficiaries intersect with their displacement or migration status. This is compounded by the lack of disaggregated corporate data within WFP.
30. Although WFP undertakes a range of assessments and analyses, these are not currently designed to build a comprehensive understanding of the vulnerabilities associated with displacement or irregular migration, or the ways in which displacement and migration intersect with wider risks related to gender, age, disability and protection. Partners

consistently agreed that WFP assessments add value but emphasized that, in dynamic displacement settings, WFP needs to focus on providing its partners with actionable advice when, or before, events occur.

31. Needs-based targeting provides WFP with an important tool that supports the tailoring of assistance to different displacement or irregular migration settings, and the associated opportunities and constraints that exist for different categories of displaced people and irregular migrants. However, the introduction of needs-based targeting has rarely been associated with the provision of support for building the self-reliance of deprioritized households, resulting in some households falling back into a higher vulnerability status. WFP also needs to consider the costs of introducing targeting procedures that require regular updates in dynamic settings.
32. WFP's monitoring systems are not designed to disaggregate data on beneficiaries according to displacement or migration status and in relation to the specific activities that they participate in. They do not allow WFP to track changes in the vulnerabilities that result from shifts in WFP's assistance, nor are they able to track the movement of beneficiaries between CSP activities or across borders. As a result, WFP's ability to analyse its contributions to specific results for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, to compare data among countries, or to build a line of sight that is focused on the beneficiary – such as when programmes facilitate the transition of individuals and households from interventions that address their immediate needs to activities that build their self-reliance – is very limited. WFP's activity-focused approach is also at odds with the systems of UNHCR and IOM, whose mandates require them to understand how status affects vulnerability, creating a barrier to effective data sharing and collaboration.
33. While WFP's interventions for refugees, internally displaced persons, irregular migrants and resident communities are targeted to promote the empowerment and participation of women and girls, they do not address the root causes of inequality, cultural norms, values or power structures, and WFP does not make a meaningful contribution to outcomes related to women's empowerment and the participation of all social groups among displaced people and irregular migrants. There is also little evidence of tailored support for displaced people and irregular migrants who are living with disabilities or are older, suggesting that insufficient consideration is given to how WFP's support for meeting immediate needs should be tailored to address the specific vulnerabilities in households of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants.

Managing risks and the protection of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants

WFP identifies and manages the risks related to its support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants primarily in relation to its access to, and ability to assist, these population groups. WFP takes into adequate account the protection risks faced by displaced people and irregular migrants during its food assistance interventions, and has made significant progress in developing feedback mechanisms in displacement settings. However, its limited capacity to respond to feedback from targeted people, and the protection risks faced by displaced people outside food assistance distribution sites call for more effective collaboration with other agencies.

34. In CSP documents and internal risk registers, country offices identify the risks associated with interventions for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants mainly in relation to humanitarian access, and CSPs are aligned with the rights and entitlements afforded to displaced people by governments. This pragmatic approach can result in the vulnerable displaced or irregular migrant groups that governments do not recognize being overlooked, or can force WFP to find alternative ways of reaching these groups in difficult operational environments. It is unclear how WFP manages risks in these situations.

35. In line with corporate policy, WFP takes protection issues into account in the targeting and delivery of assistance for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, and demonstrates appropriate understanding of protection issues in relation to the provision of food and cash transfers to displaced people and irregular migrants. However, WFP does not sufficiently consider the protection risks that refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants face beyond the immediate vicinity of distribution sites, or how reductions in assistance may lead to negative coping strategies. WFP's cooperating partners need more support in strengthening their capacity to mainstream protection, including in displacement and migration settings.
36. WFP has made significant progress in introducing community feedback mechanisms, which were in place in all the countries covered by the evaluation. Although these mechanisms help to improve beneficiaries' engagement and the management of transfers, WFP has faced challenges with acting on the feedback received, including with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse, and is yet to use this feedback consistently to improve its responsiveness to the concerns of displaced people and irregular migrants. There is room for strengthening partnerships with other actors for more effective referral and resolution of the protection concerns of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, including in regard to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Partnerships in support of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants

Partners perceive WFP's main comparative advantages in supporting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in relation to its ability to mobilize, adapt and scale up its operations quickly in response to emergencies, and its ability to negotiate access to sensitive locations. While WFP capitalizes on a range of strategic and operational partnerships that support country offices in addressing the increasingly complex challenges faced by displaced people and irregular migrants, greater leadership, collaboration and clarity regarding roles and responsibilities are required, and there is significant scope for improving engagement with governments, regional institutions, international financial institutions, other United Nations entities and cooperating partners in helping refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants progress towards self-reliance.

37. WFP is regarded by external actors as a critical partner to their responses in both rapid-onset emergencies and protracted crises. Key elements of WFP's value addition that are widely recognized by partners include:
 - its wide presence in displacement settings and along migration routes, which allows it to reach new arrivals in a timely manner;
 - its supply chain and humanitarian services, including advance financing and rapid response mechanisms, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service and emergency telecommunications;
 - its operational capacity and tools, which provide the flexibility to adapt interventions in dynamic settings, such as transnational displacement situations; and
 - its flexibility and dynamism, supported by its innovation hubs in Colombia, Germany and Kenya.
38. Partners also see WFP's ability to engage governments in negotiating access to vulnerable, displaced people and communities in sensitive locations as a critical contribution to humanitarian work, building on WFP's food security and nutrition mandate.
39. There has been a positive trajectory in WFP's engagement with partners at all levels. A global MoU formalizes the organization's partnership with UNHCR on working with displaced people, and commits both organizations to clarifying their strengths and responsibilities, supporting technical exchange and information sharing, and strengthening joint advocacy,

resource mobilization and data sharing. The WFP-UNHCR joint hub provides country offices with strategic and technical support for strategic planning and programme design, joint assessments and analysis, data-driven targeting and prioritization, accountability to affected people, and data sharing and knowledge management. A recent external review of the joint hub emphasized the hub's important contributions but expressed concerns regarding limited capacity transfer, modest progress on interoperability and the sharing of data, and insufficient high-level support.

40. WFP's partnership with IOM follows a different model based on the case-by-case identification of areas for strategic collaboration at the corporate and country levels. WFP and IOM developed a joint workplan in 2023, and a joint statement of partnership is due to be signed in 2025. It remains unclear how this collaboration will be operationalized at the regional or country level.
41. Through its regional bureaux, WFP participates extensively in regional level coordination mechanisms that support refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants. While most regional partnerships that support displaced people focus on a common humanitarian response to displacement – and irregular migration in Latin America and the Caribbean – there are few examples of WFP supporting joint regional solutions for meeting the longer-term needs of displaced or migrating people.
42. WFP's country offices play a key role in the inter-agency coordination of assistance to support refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants through humanitarian coordination structures, thematic working groups and clusters. Areas in which country-level coordination continues to face challenges include the inter-agency sharing of data on displaced people and irregular migrants, engagement in strategic advocacy with governments, and engagement with development partners – other United Nations entities, international financial institutions and cooperating partners – in developing common strategies to support long-term programming for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, and their transition towards self-reliance.

Resourcing of support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants

Despite the growing numbers of forcibly displaced people and irregular migrants, funding for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants has likely fallen relative to that for resident populations, and has been dominated by short-term, earmarked funding focused on addressing immediate needs, thereby limiting WFP's ability to support self-reliance at scale. There is also a gap in employees' capacity in the areas of displacement and migration, particularly in relation to self-reliance programming and interventions that address the specific vulnerabilities and protection risks of displaced people and irregular migrants.

43. Corporate data on the proportion of direct funding allocated to supporting displaced people and irregular migrants relative to total contributions are not available, and gaps in WFP's data and monitoring systems limit the organization's ability to aggregate and analyse the funding allocated to refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants as distinct beneficiary categories. However, the overall proportion has likely fallen since 2018, in line with the proportion of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants within WFP's overall beneficiary population. A reduction in donor funding relative to needs, including in protracted displacement settings, has led to fewer refugees and internally displaced persons being targeted for WFP support and sometimes halted WFP's provision of targeted support for the prevention of malnutrition among displaced pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls, and children. In countries outside the Latin America and the Caribbean region, the evaluation team was unable to identify instances of WFP's country offices exploring funding opportunities for supporting irregular migrants.

44. The short-term nature of funding for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants has limited WFP's ability to provide long-term support for displaced people. Donors' priorities and earmarking also limit the ability of WFP to shift its strategic response for displaced people and irregular migrants towards the building of self-reliance. While donors with a history of supporting long-term programming indicated their willingness to explore the integration of different population groups into their contribution portfolios, the evaluation identified few instances where donors had earmarked funds for resilience building interventions that supported refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants.²⁶
45. An historical focus on grant funding for meeting immediate needs, and the lack of a clear business proposition appear to have hampered WFP's ability to build the long-term strategic partnerships needed to move refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants towards self-reliance interventions at scale, or to broaden the funding base through, for example, development finance instruments that support long-term solutions for displaced people and irregular migrants alongside resident communities. While the levels of flexible funding received by WFP remain modest relative to other forms of funding they do offer an opportunity to explore efficiency gains in the organization's emergency response and joint efforts to accelerate transitions towards self-reliance.
46. In cases of large-scale displacement, WFP's central headquarters and regional bureaux have provided effective support to country offices for recruiting employees. However, even in protracted crises, difficulties have been apparent in WFP's recruitment of employees who are experienced in displacement and migration issues and have the skill-sets needed to facilitate the transition from interventions that address immediate needs towards longer-term solutions, or to provide refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants with support for the empowerment and participation of women and persons with disabilities, and for protection.

Recommendations

47. The aim of the recommendations is not to introduce new policy but to guide the updating and shaping of existing policies, institutional arrangements and programme support in ways that may enhance WFP's support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants alongside host communities and governments

²⁶ WFP typically classifies self-reliance activities for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants as resilience building, but there are clear distinctions between the two concepts.

No.	Recommendation	Priority, responsibility, deadline
1	<p><i>WFP's corporate positioning</i></p> <p>Formulate a clear vision and corporate position on WFP's support for food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, and systematically embed this position in relevant WFP strategic and normative frameworks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the key elements and boundaries of WFP's strategic approach to assisting food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable refugees and internally displaced persons in emergency and protracted displacement settings, in line with the organization's mandate and addressing emergency preparedness, crisis response and transitions to self-reliance and durable solutions. • Clarify WFP's corporate intention regarding the provision of assistance for food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable irregular migrants, and strategic entry points for supporting this category of people in the future. • Embed WFP's corporate position regarding refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in guidance on the formulation of CSPs and relevant thematic and sectoral policies and strategies. • Define WFP's strategic approach to its work in existing and emergent cross-border displacement and migration settings, and the mechanisms required for a coherent and coordinated multi-country response in such settings. 	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Responsibility: Emergency Preparedness and Response Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Support: Nutrition and Food Quality Service; Gender, Protection and Inclusion Service; School Meals and Social Protection Service; Climate and Resilience Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Analysis, Planning and Performance Division</p> <p>Regional and country directors</p> <p>Digital Services Branch (Technology Division)</p> <p>Digital Transformation and Business Development Branch (Management Services Division)</p> <p>Deadline: End of 2026</p>

No.	Recommendation	Priority, responsibility, deadline
2	<p><i>WFP programmes and related partnerships</i></p> <p>Specify WFP's programme offer and the partnerships it needs in order to adequately integrate refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants into interventions for emergency preparedness, addressing immediate needs, building self-reliance and implementing durable solutions, and foster the introduction of transition pathways from the outset of the crisis response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide country offices with a coherent programme framework that sets out the options for, and boundaries of, WFP's offer for the different categories of refugee, internally displaced person and irregular migrant, and that considers the specific limitations and opportunities for WFP's operational response in different country settings, such as the legal provisions for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants; security and access considerations; the economic environment; and national and local capacity. • Identify critical gaps in WFP's operational guidance and the tools needed to implement its corporate position and programmes in rural, urban and camp settings, and develop or revise relevant guidance and tools with the support of regional offices and country offices. • Identify critical gaps in WFP's internal capacity to implement its programmes for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, including in addressing cross-cutting and protection issues, and the investments required for effective capacity strengthening, guidance, recruitment and support. • Identify and operationalize the broad range of strategic and programmatic partnerships needed to implement and support WFP's programmes for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants with other United Nations entities, international financial institutions, cooperating partners, governments, the private sector, and local stakeholders. • Strengthen WFP's strategic engagement in advocating, together with mandated agencies and other stakeholders, for an enabling environment that supports refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants through the transition of programmes towards building self-reliance and implementing durable solutions in different countries. 	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Responsibility: Emergency Preparedness and Response Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Support: Nutrition and Food Quality Service; Gender, Protection and Inclusion Service; School Meals and Social Protection Service; Climate and Resilience Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Analysis, Planning and Performance Division</p> <p>Supply Chain and Delivery Division</p> <p>Regional and country directors</p> <p>Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division</p> <p>Digital Services Branch (Technology Division)</p> <p>Digital Transformation and Business Development Branch (Management Services Division)</p> <p>Deadline: End of 2026</p>

No.	Recommendation	Priority, responsibility, deadline
3	<p><i>WFP data systems, assessment and analysis</i></p> <p>Strengthen WFP's data systems and analytical capacity to improve the organization's understanding of the intersecting vulnerabilities of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, inform programming, facilitate inter-agency coordination, and enable principled data-sharing on refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed data on refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants by category, as well as age, sex and disability, throughout WFP's data and monitoring systems, and in its assessment methodologies, sampling and analysis, so that programme design, targeting and prioritization can take issues related to forced displacement and irregular migration into account. • Ensure that WFP's corporate systems identify and track refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants throughout the programme cycle and budgeting process. • Strengthen attention given to forced displacement, irregular migration and related issues in WFP's contextual analysis and early warning systems for multi-country, cross-border and individual country settings. • In case of an inter-agency response, strengthen beneficiary management systems and align data privacy safeguards in order to optimize the generation of data on beneficiaries, interoperability and principled data sharing. 	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Responsibility: Analysis, Planning and Performance Division</p> <p>Support: Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service; Programme Monitoring and Reporting Service (Analysis, Planning and Performance Division)</p> <p>Emergency Preparedness and Response Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Regional and country directors</p> <p>Digital Services Branch (Technology Division)</p> <p>Digital Transformation and Business Development Branch (Management Services Division)</p> <p>Global Privacy Office</p> <p>Deadline: End of 2026</p>

No.	Recommendation	Priority, responsibility, deadline
4	<p><i>Protection and risk identification and mitigation</i></p> <p>Ensure that all of WFP's support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants is based on comprehensive analysis of status in relation to the risks faced by women, girls, men and boys, and risks arising from protection on contextual issues, and that it includes robust mechanisms for ensuring accountability to affected people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance and apply guidance for ensuring that WFP's employees and partners have an increased understanding of the specific protection-related vulnerabilities of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, including those facing women, girls, men and boys or arising from other concerns, and the importance of conflict sensitivity. • Ensure that a comprehensive, documented analysis of the risks related to protection, including from sexual exploitation and abuse, social cohesion and other issues affecting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants is conducted, jointly with other agencies where feasible, and is integrated systematically into programme design and decision-making on targeting and prioritization. • Continue to strengthen the systematic engagement of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in programme design and implementation; the review of and response to complaints and feedback; and the management of protection referrals, including cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, to the appropriate systems of mandated agencies, government departments or cooperating partners, as relevant. • Review and systematize WFP's approach to the identification and management of risks, including cross-cutting and protection risks, in settings where humanitarian access is limited and WFP relies on its cooperating partners or other non-state actors for outreach in the field. 	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Responsibility: Emergency Preparedness and Response Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Support: Gender, Protection and Inclusion Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Unit (Office of the Executive Director)</p> <p>Regional and country directors</p> <p>Regional and country gender and protection advisors</p> <p>Risk and Accountability Branch (Risk Management Division)</p> <p>Deadline: Mid-2026</p>

No.	Recommendation	Priority, responsibility, deadline
5	<p><i>WFP partnerships with the legally mandated agencies</i></p> <p>Strengthen strategic and operational partnerships with agencies that have displacement and migration mandates, and address gaps in analysis, data and information sharing, and the coordination of assistance and solutions for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify WFP's role with respect to mandated refugee agencies in coordinating and prioritizing inter-agency responses to the immediate needs of forcibly displaced people, adjusting support in protracted settings and jointly facilitating shifts towards self-reliance and durable solutions. Continue to consolidate engagement with UNHCR and mobilize partnerships in fundraising for further strengthening the Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub as a critical service that reinforces WFP's strategic and operational relationship with UNHCR at the corporate, regional and country levels. Review and identify entry points through which to strengthen WFP's relationship with IOM, including on the action agenda for internally displaced persons and as part of efforts to establish a coherent inter-agency position on, and response to, irregular migration in different settings. 	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Responsibility: Emergency Preparedness and Response Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Support: Regional and country directors</p> <p>Analysis Planning and Performance Division</p> <p>Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division</p> <p>Digital Services Branch (Technology Division)</p> <p>School Meals and Social Protection Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Deadline: End of 2026</p>

No.	Recommendation	Priority, responsibility, deadline
6	<p><i>Financial resources</i></p> <p>Strengthen WFP's focus on resource mobilization during rapid-onset and protracted crises in order to more effectively meet the immediate humanitarian needs of refugees, internally displaced persons, irregular migrants and host populations, and better support the transition towards longer-term solutions from the outset of crisis responses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance high-level advocacy with donors – bilaterally, jointly with WFP's United Nations partners and through relevant global platforms and forums, such as the Global Refugee Forum – so as to improve funding for addressing immediate needs, building self-reliance and implementing durable solutions for refugees, internally displaced persons, irregular migrants, host communities and returnees. Adopt an explicit advocacy position for WFP's engagement with international financial institutions and development actors in all areas of strategic engagement relevant to the food security and nutrition of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, including their inclusion in national safety net systems. Strengthen the visibility of funding allocations for supporting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants within WFP's financial systems in order to support targeted resource mobilization efforts. Review the potential role of flexible funding in supporting interventions that demonstrate how meeting immediate needs can be successfully linked programmatically to self-reliance and durable solutions. 	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Responsibility: Partnership Coordination Services (Partnerships and Innovation Department)</p> <p>Support: Regional and Global Offices; Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division</p> <p>Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service; Programme Budget Management Service (Analysis, Planning and Performance Division)</p> <p>Regional and country directors</p> <p>Emergency Preparedness and Response Service; Nutrition and Food Quality Service; School Meals and Social Protection Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Deadline: End of 2026</p>

Acronyms

CSP	country strategic plan
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MoU	memorandum of understanding
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees