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Summary report on the corporate emergency evaluation of WFP's response in Yemen (2019-2024)

Executive summary

The corporate emergency evaluation of WFP's response in Yemen covered the period from January 2019 to October 2024, encompassing operations implemented under two consecutive interim country strategic plans. The evaluation concluded that WFP effectively navigated the complexities of the protracted crisis in Yemen, demonstrating flexibility and adaptability in the delivery of life-saving interventions under one of the largest humanitarian operations in the world. Key factors enabling WFP's performance included proactive supply chain management, the use of advance financing mechanisms, and the effective use of monitoring data to inform decision-making, which significantly enhanced operational responsiveness. However, WFP's adaptive capacity was increasingly constrained during the evaluation period by a deteriorating funding environment, which limited the ability of the country office to plan for the longer term and ultimately forced a scale-down of interventions.

WFP continued its efforts to provide support to a significant proportion of those affected by food and nutrition insecurity. However, the general food assistance programme remained static for a prolonged period, with outdated beneficiary lists leading to the exclusion of certain vulnerable population groups, including newly displaced persons. Although WFP sought to undertake a complex re-targeting exercise – a step towards more principled, needs-based programming – it faced persistent operational barriers. In late 2023, WFP paused general food assistance in the north. The evaluation found that the impact of that prolonged suspension, which has affected millions of people, could have been mitigated more effectively.

In line with WFP evaluation policy (2022) (WFP/EB.1/2022/4-C), to respect the integrity and independence of evaluation findings the editing of this report has been limited and as a result some of the language in it may not be fully consistent with the World Food Programme's standard terminology or editorial practices. Please direct any requests for clarification to the Director of Evaluation.

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Despite operating in a highly challenging environment, WFP was able to address immediate food security and nutrition needs at scale, helping to avert a further deterioration in the food security situation. Effectiveness was nonetheless hampered by insecurity, access constraints, reduced funding, irregular assistance delivery and the reduced duration of assistance. Limited geographic prioritization for resilience-building interventions, coupled with weak linkages among programme components, resulted in several missed opportunities for synergy-building that could have enhanced overall performance. While high operational costs reflected the challenging country context, WFP took steps to improve cost-efficiency where feasible.

Progress on cross-cutting issues was mixed during the evaluation period. WFP made noticeable improvements to its community feedback mechanisms, but more regular in-person engagement with targeted communities, where feasible, would improve understanding of beneficiary perspectives. While gender equality and women's empowerment received limited attention and some opportunities to draw on local knowledge were not fully exploited, the organization increasingly incorporated considerations related to environmental sustainability and climate shocks into its operations. WFP demonstrated strong commitment to conflict sensitivity and humanitarian principles, maintaining a principled response despite bureaucratic challenges and external pressures.

Managing a large-scale humanitarian response in Yemen constrained WFP's ability to adopt a more strategic and integrated approach across its portfolio. Limited progress was made in transitioning to resilience interventions and more sustainable solutions, with efforts hindered by insecurity, political instability and economic fragility. Although WFP has been recognized for its cluster leadership role and has made progress in fostering partnerships, greater emphasis should be placed on strategic engagement, complementary and joint programming, and the strengthening of local capacity. Looking ahead, WFP will need to engage with the relevant coordination structures in Yemen to contribute to cohesive, strategic and effective interventions that bridge humanitarian and long-term development goals.

The evaluation made the following six recommendations for WFP: ensure that future programming retains a strong focus on an agile and scalable humanitarian response in Yemen, while exploiting opportunities to bolster resilience and improve coherence and synergies across activities; strengthen partnerships with local actors and increase direct engagement with communities, where feasible; enhance collaboration with other international actors to maximize synergies and increase access to predictable and flexible funding; more effectively tailor activities to local realities by investing in context analysis and adopting evidence-based approaches; mainstream gender, protection and inclusion principles in all activities; and take action to resolve recurring supply chain challenges related to the procurement and delivery of specialized nutritious food.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the corporate emergency evaluation of WFP's response in Yemen (2019–2024), (WFP/EB.2/2025/6-B/1) and the management response (WFP/EB.2/2025/6-B/1/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. The corporate emergency evaluation of WFP's response in Yemen was conducted by an independent evaluation team between January 2024 and March 2025. It served both accountability and learning purposes and informed the design of the next interim country strategic plan (ICSP).

2. The evaluation covered WFP activities between the start of the Yemen ICSP for 2019–2022 in January 2019 and the conclusion of the data collection phase (October 2024) under the ICSP for 2023–2025.

3. The evaluation employed a theory-based, mixed-methods approach, drawing on document review, analysis of quantitative performance and financial data, key informant interviews (both remote and in-person), focus group discussions and direct observations through field visits. Data collection took place in September and October 2024, prior to the latest escalation in conflict.

4. The evaluation sought the views of a broad range of WFP and external stakeholders, including crisis-affected people. Primary users of the evaluation include WFP staff at headquarters and at country, area and field offices, and members of the United Nations and humanitarian country teams. Other key stakeholders include the internationally recognized Government of Yemen, the Sana'a-based authorities, donors, cooperating partners, private sector actors, and representatives from academic institutions and civil society.

Context

5. Located in the southwestern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen comprises 22 governorates and is home to an estimated 40.6 million people.[1] Women account for 49.5 percent of the population, 41 percent of the population is under the age of 14, and life expectancy stands at 71 years for women and 67 for men.[2]

6. Since the 2014 military takeover of Sana'a and subsequent escalation in armed conflict in 2015, Yemen has faced one of the world's most severe humanitarian crises. In 2024, an estimated 18.2 million people – two thirds of the population – were in need of humanitarian assistance or protection.[3]

7. The protracted conflict has led to the emergence of two distinct economic and political entities with separate governance systems: the areas controlled by the internationally recognized Government of Yemen in the south and the areas controlled by the Sana'a-based authorities in the north. Each has established its own institutions and regulations.[4] Basic infrastructure and services have been severely degraded, and more than 4.5 million children are unable to attend school.

8. Since 2015, the economy has contracted by more than half.[5] The collapse of public services and economic activity has driven a notable increase in extreme poverty levels, with 82.7 percent of the population now living in multidimensional poverty. The humanitarian crisis has been compounded by the impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic and

[1] World Bank. 2023. Population, total - Yemen Rep.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). 2024. *Humanitarian Response Plan Yemen 2024*.

[4] World Bank. 2023. *Yemen Economic Monitor: Peace on the Horizon? Fall 2023*.

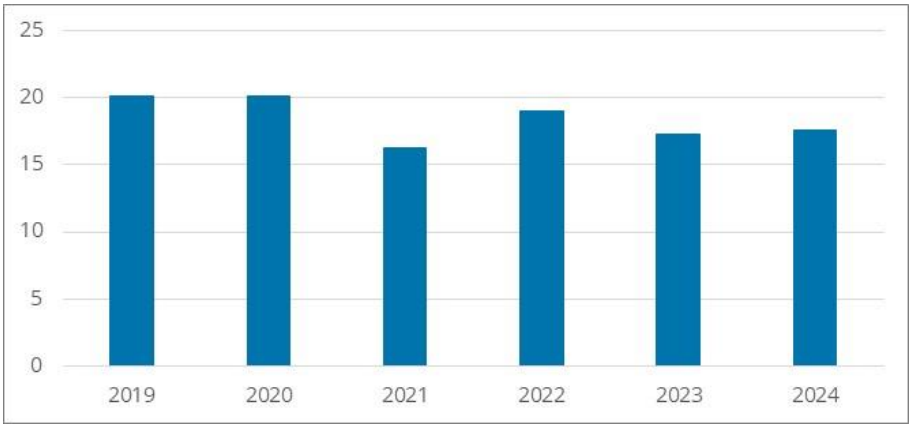
[5] World Bank. 2024. The World Bank in Yemen – Overview (accessed on 2 April 2024).

recurring natural disasters, including floods and droughts, exacerbated by the effects of frequent and increasingly intense climate shocks.

9. Yemen has one of the largest internally displaced populations in the world, with over 4.5 million people forcibly displaced.[6] Women and children account for 80 percent of those displaced within the country.

10. Food insecurity remains widespread, and food security has consistently been the top priority in humanitarian response plans. The number of severely food-insecure people in Yemen presented in the successive annual humanitarian needs overviews stood at 20.1 million in 2019 and 2020, but declined to 17.6 million in 2024 (figure 1).[7] Yemen also faces one of the world's most critical nutrition crises, with nearly half of all children under 5 experiencing stunting, and one in six suffering from wasting.[8]

Figure 1: Number of severely food-insecure people in Yemen, 2019–2024 (*millions*)



Source: Humanitarian needs overview and humanitarian response plan reports, 2019–2024.

11. Humanitarian operations continue to be impeded by access constraints. In the north, stringent administrative procedures and movement restrictions hamper needs assessments, aid delivery and monitoring. Humanitarian personnel face serious risks, including violence, kidnappings, detentions, fatalities and attacks on staff, assets and facilities.[9] In both the north and the south of the country, conflict dynamics and security risks, including the presence of explosive remnants of war, regularly disrupt operations.[10]

12. As shown in figure 2, overall humanitarian funding for Yemen dropped from USD 3.6 billion in 2019 (88 percent of total requirements) to USD 2.0 billion in 2020. Funding increased slightly in 2021 and 2022 before falling sharply in 2024, with only USD 1.3 billion (47 percent of total requirements) received as of October that year.

[6] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2024. *Yemen Fact Sheet, January–December 2023*.

[7] Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC). 2025. The 2025 Yemen FSAC People in Need and Severity Classification.

[8] Central Statistics Organization and United Nations Children's Fund. 2023. *Yemen Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2022–2023, Statistical Snapshot*.

[9] OCHA. 2023. *Humanitarian Response Plan Yemen 2023*.

[10] OCHA. 2024. *Humanitarian Response Plan Yemen 2024*.

Figure 2: Funding of humanitarian assistance response plans against total requirements, 2019–2024 (*USD millions*)



Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). 2019-2024. Financial Tracking Service – Yemen (accessed on 30 October 2024). In line with the OCHA approach to boundary setting[11], the strategic objectives for the 2024 humanitarian response plan reflect shifts in needs and targeting by humanitarian actors, while ensuring a prioritized response approach.

WFP emergency response in Yemen

13. In response to the escalating conflict in 2015, WFP classified its operations in Yemen as a level 3 emergency. In 2022, the classification was revised to "corporate attention" in line with WFP's updated emergency activation protocol.

14. The ICSP for 2019–2022, approved in November 2018 following two consecutive emergency operations, focused on life-saving assistance (strategic outcomes 1 and 2), resilience-building (strategic outcome 3) and the provision of humanitarian services (strategic outcome 4). Initially intended to last for two years, the plan was extended until December 2022 and revised through five budget revisions in the light of evolving needs. The aim of the plan, which had a total budget of USD 8.7 billion, was to provide assistance to 18.2 million people.[12]

15. The subsequent ICSP for 2023–2025, approved in November 2022, retained the previous plan's three-pillar structure: life-saving assistance (ICSP outcomes 1 and 2), localized recovery-oriented efforts (ICSP outcome 3), and humanitarian services (ICSP outcome 4). Under the original 2023–2025 plan, which had a total budget of USD 8.5 billion, WFP aimed to provide assistance to 24.9 million people.[13] Life-saving assistance remained the top

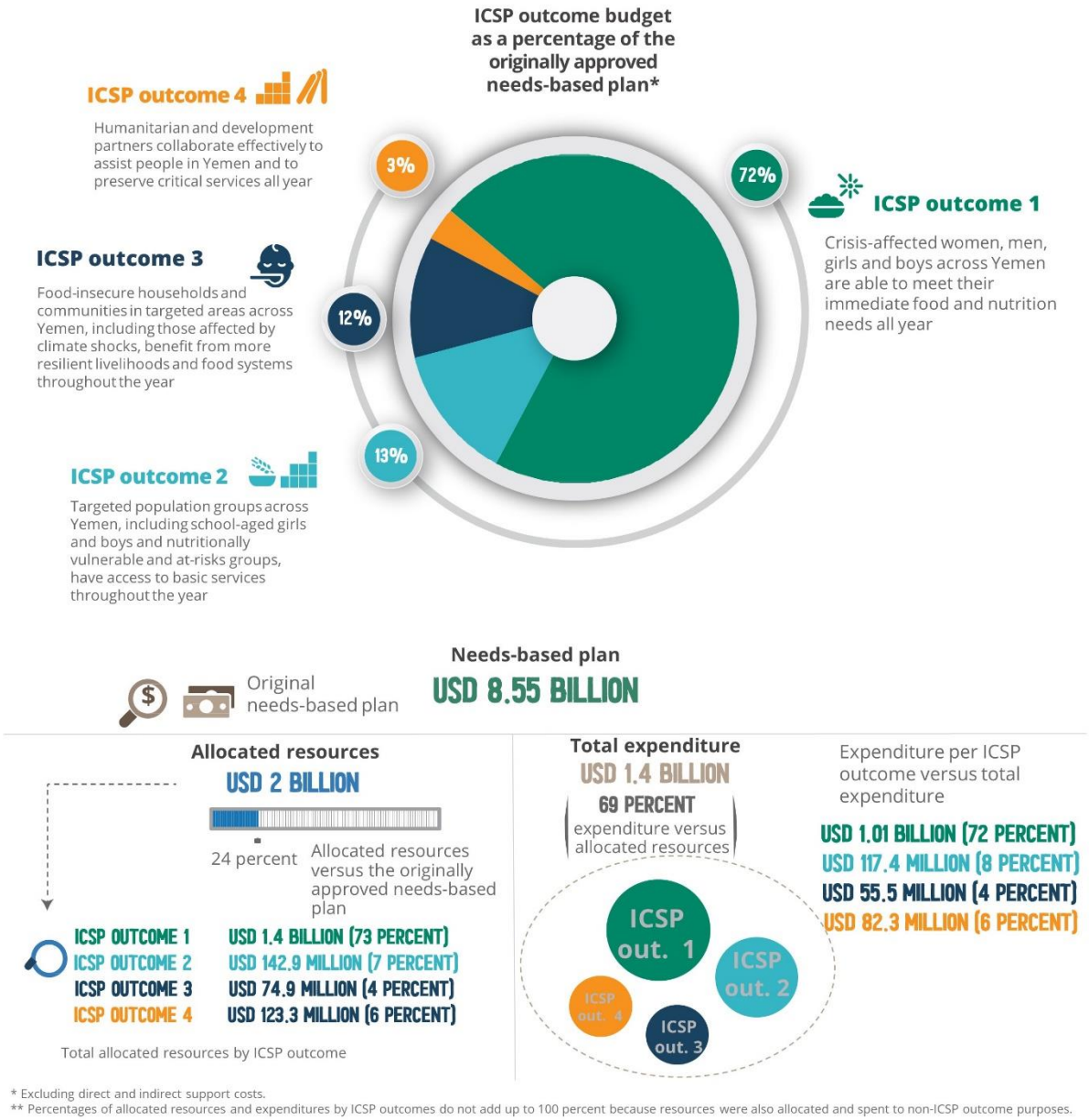
[11] The Boundary-Setting and Prioritization Initiative led by OCHA aims to ensure that limited resources are first directed to where they are most urgently required by including in the humanitarian response plans only life-saving and life-sustaining activities in areas where needs are the most severe.

[12] Taking into consideration the original ICSP and subsequent budget revisions.

[13] In accordance with the plan that was originally approved. The plan was revised in December 2024, reducing the budget by nearly USD 3 billion and lowering the planned beneficiaries for 2024-2025 in line with WFP's corporate shift from

priority in order to prevent a further deterioration in the humanitarian situation. A budgetary and financial overview of the ICSP for 2023–2025, is provided in figure 3.

Figure 3: Budget dashboard for the interim country strategic plan for 2023–2025, as of September 2024

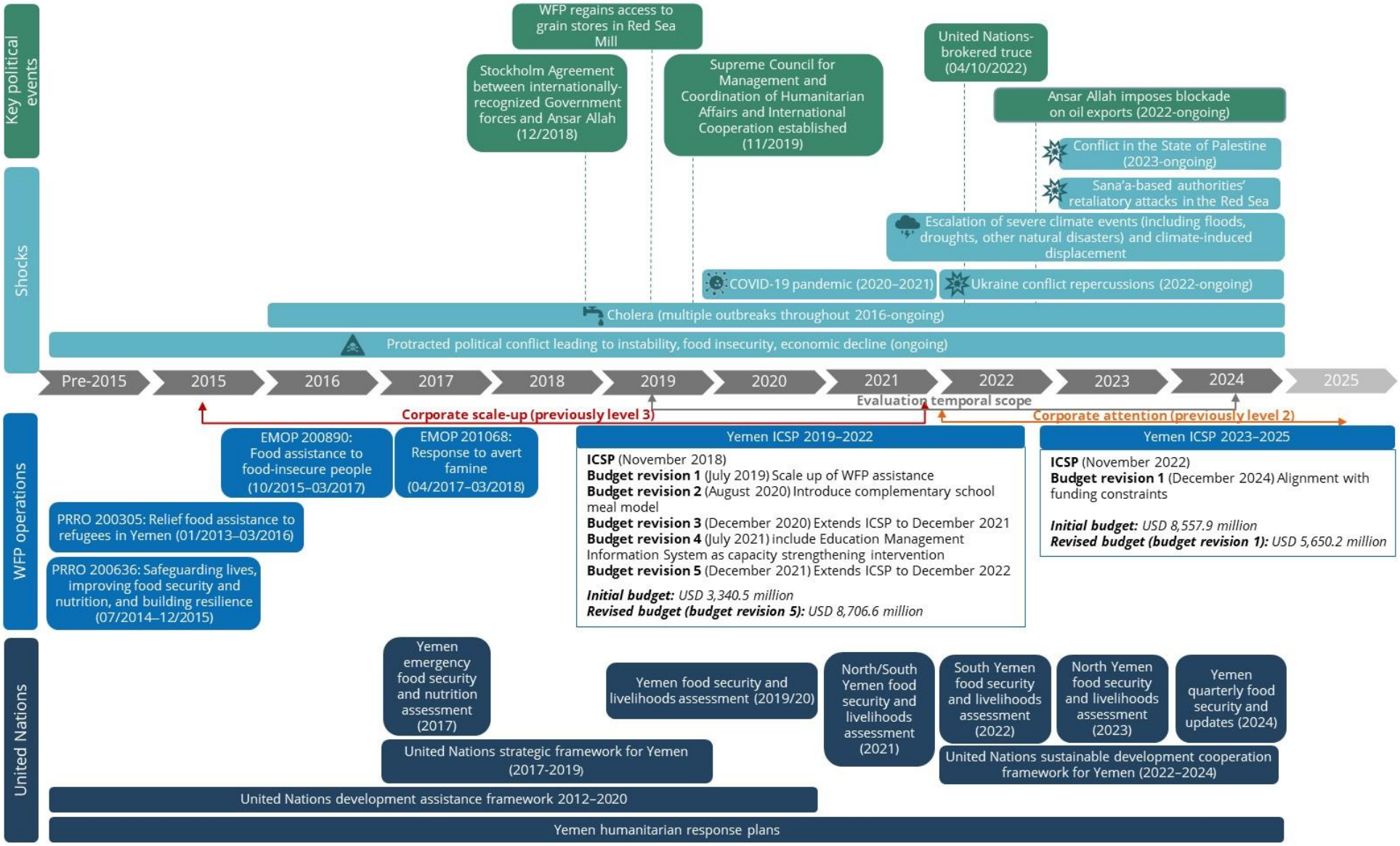


Source: Yemen country portfolio budget: ACR-1 standard country report as of September 2024.

16. Figure 4 provides an overview of the evolution of the situation in Yemen and WFP's response. Events and heightened insecurity observed since October 2024 are not reflected in the present report, as data collection concluded in early October of that year.

needs-based planning to more realistic budgeting. However, since this revision occurred after the data collection phase, it is not reflected in the present report.

Figure 4: Evolution of WFP operations in Yemen, together with relevant shocks and key political events, 2019–2024



Abbreviations: EMOP = emergency operation; PRRO = protracted relief and recovery operation.

Summary of key conclusions and insights from the evaluation

WFP effectively navigated the complexities of the protracted crisis in Yemen, demonstrating flexibility and adaptability in the delivery of life-saving interventions in one of the largest humanitarian operations globally. Key enablers, including proactive supply chain management, the use of advance financing mechanisms, and the effective use of data monitoring mechanisms to inform decision-making, enhanced WFP's operational responsiveness. However, WFP's adaptive capacity was increasingly constrained during the evaluation period by a deteriorating funding environment, which limited the ability of the WFP country office to plan for the longer term and ultimately forced a scale-down of interventions.

Adaptability and timeliness

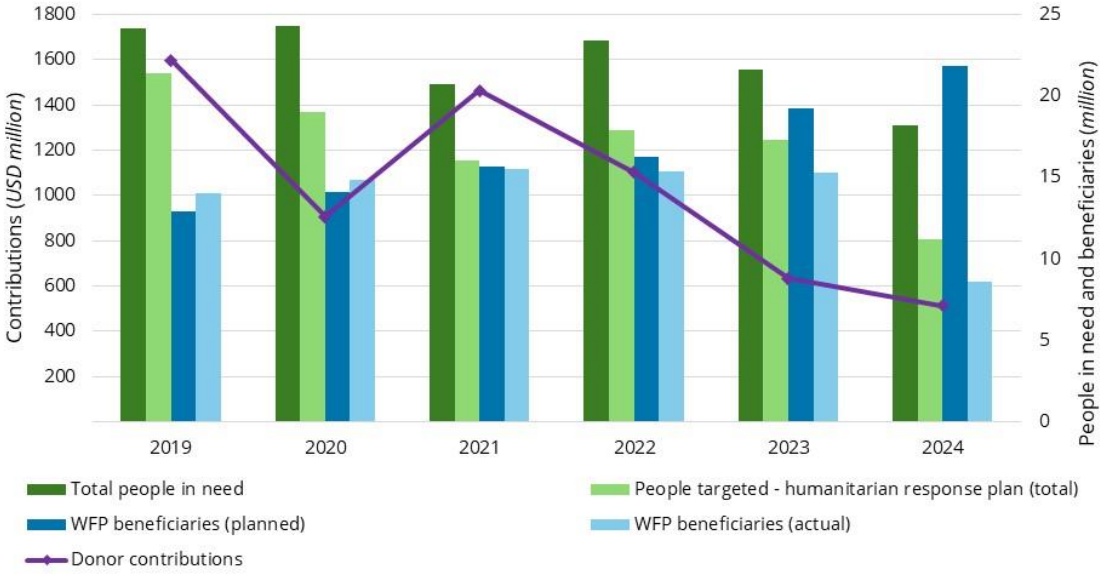
17. In order to navigate a challenging operational environment characterized by protracted conflict, overwhelming humanitarian needs, access restrictions, insecurity and reliance on a limited donor base, **WFP demonstrated considerable flexibility and adaptability in delivering life-saving interventions at scale.** The organization was able to adjust its operations in response to evolving needs and operational constraints, reflecting its strong capacity to adapt to shifting circumstances.

18. A key enabler of the organization's adaptability was its proactive supply chain management, which was supported by the strategic use of internal advance financing mechanisms, including the Global Commodity Management Facility. Those tools and mechanisms enabled WFP to shorten food delivery lead times during the evaluation period and helped to minimize pipeline breaks during the peak of the emergency response. Nonetheless, operational challenges persisted and the overall timeliness of operations was negatively affected by delays in food production and procurement (particularly for specialized nutritious food), food quality inspection issues, insecurity and funding uncertainty as well as bureaucratic impediments such as customs clearance delays.

19. **WFP also strengthened its adaptability through the use of monitoring data and assessments.** The integration of multiple data sources into operational decision-making processes improved operational responsiveness, allowing WFP to scale up assistance in response to shocks, prioritize geographic areas in the light of funding shortfalls and tailor its interventions to emerging needs. However, a number of challenges, including political sensitivities (particularly in the north), restrictions on in-person consultations with beneficiaries in certain areas, and resource constraints, continued to limit the full potential of evidence-based programming to address the specific needs of beneficiaries.

20. Since 2021, WFP's adaptive capacity has been undermined by a deteriorating funding environment and its growing reliance on a limited number of key donors. Increased earmarking of funding for specific activities, transfer modalities or locations, combined with the short-term nature of most grants, has further reduced the organization's flexibility. As a result, WFP has been forced to scale down its general food assistance (GFA), nutrition and livelihood programmes. Long-term planning efforts have also been hindered. Figure 5 illustrates the decline in donor contributions relative to the number of people in need, the number of people targeted under the Yemen humanitarian response plan and the number of planned and actual WFP beneficiaries between 2019 and 2024.

Figure 5: Evolution in donor funding and numbers of people in need, people targeted under the Yemen humanitarian response plan and WFP beneficiaries, 2019-2024



Sources: Humanitarian needs overview and humanitarian response plan reports (2019–2024) for total number of people in need and targeted populations; annual country reports (2019–2023) for WFP planned and actual beneficiaries; CM-C006 and CM-R001b for 2024 planned and actual WFP figures (as of 18 February 2025); and WFP FACtory data (16 September 2024). In 2024, WFP's planned beneficiaries exceeded the total number of people in need due to expanded resilience-building targets, while GFA figures remained unchanged amid the lack of an agreement with the Sana'a-based authorities to reduce caseloads. A budget revision in December 2024 significantly reduced 2024–2025 planning figures (see footnote 13).

Coverage, targeting and prioritization

WFP continued its efforts to support a significant proportion of those affected by food and nutrition insecurity. However, the GFA programme remained static for too long, without updates to beneficiary lists. This led to the exclusion of certain vulnerable groups, including newly displaced persons. WFP engaged in complex negotiations with both the internationally recognized Government and the Sana'a-based authorities to implement a re-targeting exercise aimed at ensuring that assistance reaches those most in need but encountered persistent barriers. In late 2023, WFP paused GFA in northern areas of the country. Although the exercise represented a step towards more principled, needs-based programming, the evaluation found that the impact of that prolonged suspension of assistance, which affected millions of people, could have been mitigated more effectively.

21. WFP is the primary provider of food assistance in Yemen. During the evaluation period, it continued its efforts to support a substantial share of the population affected by food and nutrition insecurity. However, the use of outdated beneficiary lists for GFA across the country has undermined WFP's capacity to prioritize and reach the most vulnerable people. Certain vulnerable groups, including persons newly displaced from the frontlines of the conflict, received only one-off emergency distributions and were not incorporated into longer-term support programmes. At the same time, other households have remained on GFA beneficiary lists for years without being required to demonstrate continued eligibility. The evaluation found that prolonged assistance had created a sense of entitlement among GFA

beneficiaries. As funding gaps widened across all activities beginning in 2023, assistance levels – in terms of both ration size and duration – became insufficient to meet growing needs. The number of people reached fell far short of those requiring support, and newly displaced populations were excluded from sustained assistance.

22. For several years, WFP engaged in complex and protracted negotiations with both the internationally recognized Government and the Sana'a-based authorities with a view to conducting a re-targeting exercise to ensure that assistance reached those most in need. However, progress was impeded by persistent challenges, including political sensitivities, divergent expectations regarding data sharing and control, limited access to conduct needs verification, and difficulties in facilitating meaningful community engagement. Meanwhile, WFP has been under mounting pressure from donors to strengthen accountability and enhance the effectiveness of its assistance in a context of deepening needs and tightening resources.

23. Given that resources were insufficient to maintain the GFA programme at scale, and in the absence of agreement with the Sana'a-based authorities on an overall approach to re-targeting and reprioritization, WFP paused GFA in the north in late 2023. In December 2023, WFP reached a general agreement with the Sana'a-based authorities to reduce the GFA caseload from 9.5 million to 6.5 million beneficiaries. A re-targeting and prioritization exercise, informed by updated vulnerability data and relevant assessments, was successfully piloted in selected areas in 2024. This enabled the resumption of food assistance in those areas in mid-2024. However, subsequent developments prevented WFP from rolling out the exercise to other areas controlled by the Sana'a-based authorities.

24. While the re-targeting and prioritization exercise marked a positive step towards more principled and needs-based programming, the interruption of WFP assistance was unprecedented in scale and duration and affected millions of people. The evaluation found that WFP had not conducted a comprehensive risk analysis to assess the potential impact of reductions in beneficiary numbers on communities, and that WFP's community sensitization efforts had been insufficient to fully address local concerns or build trust. The evaluation underscored the need for improved risk analysis and enhanced stakeholder engagement and communication.

25. The evaluation found that WFP remained responsive to the evolving nutrition situation over time, noting that the organization engaged on an annual basis with partners in the nutrition cluster to review the geographic coverage of moderate acute malnutrition treatment and prevention programmes. WFP achieved significant programmatic reach, in part by integrating its nutrition interventions into the network of local health facilities. Coverage was, however, limited by funding shortfalls, production lead-time constraints and delays in the customs clearance of specialized nutritious food. A major pipeline break in 2024 resulted in limited or no availability of nutritional supplies at most health facilities across the country.

26. Severe funding shortfalls also constrained WFP's ambitions to scale up support for sustainable livelihoods under the ICSP for 2023–2025. Less than 10 percent of the planned 2.5 million beneficiaries were reached in 2024, reflecting a persistent gap between programme aspirations and available resources.

Effectiveness and efficiency

WFP played a critical role in addressing widespread food insecurity and malnutrition in a highly challenging operational context, delivering essential assistance and helping to avert a further deterioration in food security. However, several factors constrained overall effectiveness, including insecurity, restricted humanitarian access, declining funding levels, and the irregular and short-term nature of assistance provided to beneficiaries. The evaluation also found that limited geographic prioritization of resilience interventions and weak integration across activities resulted in missed opportunities for the creation of synergies that could have strengthened programme outcomes. Although operational costs in Yemen were high due to contextual factors, WFP implemented measures to improve cost-efficiency where feasible.

27. **Strategic outcome 1: Large-scale GFA played a critical role in preventing a significant decline in food security among vulnerable populations.** Following the scale-up of GFA between 2017 and 2019, food consumption improved and the use of negative coping strategies declined. However, those indicators worsened in subsequent years due to reduced funding (which resulted in smaller food rations and fewer food distribution cycles) and the country's deepening economic and financial crisis. The suspension of the GFA programme in 2024 further exacerbated severe food deprivation among households. To mitigate those effects, WFP conducted a one-off emergency distribution in priority districts of Hajjah and Hodeidah governorates in May 2024, which resulted in a notable reduction in the prevalence of food insecurity among beneficiary households.[14]

28. **Strategic outcomes 1 and 2: WFP delivered strong results in the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition but faced challenges in sustaining prevention efforts.** While both treatment and prevention interventions yielded positive short-term outcomes, the absence of a strategic, integrated approach has limited the sustainability of those gains. Although WFP took action to make its interventions more nutrition-sensitive and sought to build synergies among moderate acute malnutrition management and other programme activities, the evaluation found that those efforts were insufficient. Collaboration with nutrition cluster partners to address the underlying causes of malnutrition was also deemed insufficient. Moreover, WFP's corporate outcome indicators were not fully suited to capturing progress in that area, hindering a comprehensive understanding of intervention effectiveness and opportunities for improvement.

29. **Strategic outcome 2: The WFP school feeding programme contributed to maintaining attendance and retention rates.** The provision of date bars and high-energy biscuits contributed positively to school enrolment and retention. Acceptability of the distributed products varied across communities, however. The launch of the Healthy Kitchen project in densely populated urban areas showed promise, although further analysis is needed to assess cost-efficiency and determine the feasibility of implementing similar approaches in rural areas. The evaluation identified opportunities to strengthen the transformative potential of school feeding through greater integration with livelihood activities, nutrition education and initiatives designed to promote girls' empowerment.

[14] WFP. 2024. *Assessing the impact of WFP's one-off food distribution in Hajjah and Al Hodeidah, six months after the pause*.

30. **Strategic outcome 3: WFP faced persistent challenges in achieving sustainable livelihood outcomes.** Interventions in that area had mixed success in enhancing household self-reliance and limited effectiveness in strengthening value chains and food systems. Beneficiary targets were not met, primarily because of funding shortfalls, while scattered geographic coverage further reduced the efficiency and effectiveness of WFP interventions. The evaluation found that, while community assets created through those interventions temporarily improved living conditions, there was limited evidence that food assistance for assets led to durable livelihoods or created pathways to longer-term opportunities. Moreover, the labour-intensive nature of food assistance for assets activities limited women's participation, and food for training projects were not always designed in ways that reflected women's needs and preferences, constraining their potential contribution to positive gender outcomes.

31. **Strategic outcome 4: WFP's comparative advantage in logistics and its strong emergency response capacity made a significant contribution to the broader humanitarian response in Yemen.** Despite funding and operational constraints, WFP supported the continuity of critical service delivery, particularly through its leadership in the logistics and emergency telecommunications clusters and its provision of on-demand bilateral services. The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service played a vital role in transporting passengers and facilitating cargo transport and medical and emergency evacuations, including in hard-to-reach areas. The logistics cluster supported humanitarian partners by providing free common services, including logistics gap assessments, warehousing and logistics information management and coordination, and by facilitating maritime and overland transport. In addition, WFP's bilateral service provision addressed fuel shortages with a view to sustaining critical health service operations.

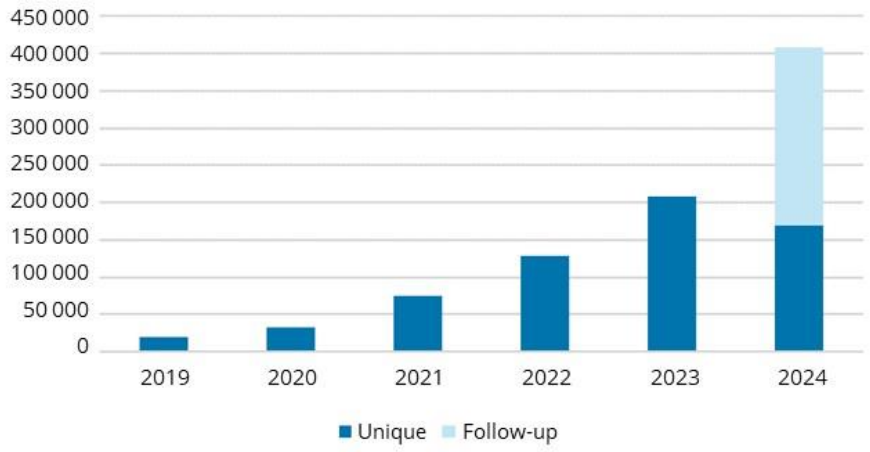
32. **While the operational environment in Yemen resulted in high implementation costs, WFP took steps to enhance cost-efficiency,** notably through the reduction of food losses. However, recent changes in WFP's corporate approach to handling Global Commodity Management Facility unsold stocks have had cost implications. The evaluation found that a more systematic analysis of supply chain adjustments and programme modalities would have provided opportunities for further optimizing programme efficiency and strengthened advocacy for specific transfer modalities.

Cross-cutting areas and humanitarian principles

Progress on cross-cutting issues was mixed during the evaluation period. WFP made noticeable improvements to its community feedback mechanisms, but more regular in-person engagement in targeted communities, where feasible, would improve understanding of beneficiary perspectives. While gender equality and women's empowerment received limited attention and some opportunities to draw on local knowledge were not fully exploited, the organization increasingly incorporated considerations related to environmental sustainability and climate shocks into its operations. WFP demonstrated strong commitment to conflict sensitivity and humanitarian principles, maintaining a principled response despite major bureaucratic challenges and external pressures.

33. **Progress on cross-cutting issues was mixed.** WFP made noticeable improvements in its community feedback mechanisms, thereby strengthening its accountability to affected people. The establishment and increased coverage of a range of feedback channels, which now include a feedback hotline, coupled with the suspension of food assistance and the country's worsening food security situation, led to a sharp increase in the number of community feedback cases, with 400,000 cases received in 2024 (see figure 6).

Figure 6: Evolution in the number of community feedback cases, 2019–2024[15]



Source: Yemen country office.

34. While the hotline and remote surveys have served as important channels for community feedback, particularly given the scale of WFP operations in Yemen and the significant access constraints faced by the organization, they cannot fully substitute for direct in-person engagement. The evaluation noted that, where conditions permit, more regular face-to-face interaction with affected populations would enhance understanding of their concerns and perspectives, thereby enabling programme adjustments that better reflect community needs.

35. Yemeni society is characterized by significant sociocultural barriers that can impede gender equality and women's empowerment. The evaluation found that those considerations received limited attention in WFP's programme design and implementation. While WFP encouraged cooperating partners to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment considerations into their programming, including through small annual budget allocations and training on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and gender-related issues, a number of opportunities in that area have been missed. For example, WFP has not engaged with local women-led organizations to incorporate culturally sensitive, gender-responsive approaches into its livelihood interventions, despite the potential value of their local knowledge.

36. WFP demonstrated a sound understanding of the conflict dynamics in Yemen, leveraging insights from its broad network of partners on the ground. The evaluation found, however, that those insights were not fully consolidated into comprehensive conflict analysis that could inform more nuanced assistance strategies across different areas of the country. It should be noted, however, that WFP has increasingly integrated considerations related to the environment and climate shocks into its operations, particularly in the design of livelihood activities.

[15] In 2024, the Yemen country office started reporting the number of cases logged by counting unique cases only, with follow-up calls classified as updates to previously registered cases.

Humanitarian principles

37. In Yemen's highly restrictive operating environment, WFP's operational independence has been undermined by interference by the authorities, access restrictions, administrative obstructions and donor-imposed geographic earmarking of funds. Despite those challenges, the evaluation found that WFP continued to demonstrate a strong commitment to upholding humanitarian principles, maintaining a principled response despite major bureaucratic challenges and external pressures. The evaluation noted, however, that the pause in WFP's provision of GFA, which had been implemented in the absence of adequate safeguards for particularly vulnerable populations, and the organization's inability to resume distributions due to funding shortfalls during a period of heightened regional instability, had adversely affected perceptions of WFP's neutrality and independence in Yemen.

38. WFP made sustained efforts to engage with relevant authorities in order to secure access to hard-to-reach and conflict-affected areas. The organization continued to advocate for humanitarian access and engaged in dialogue at multiple levels. In parallel, WFP partnered with local cooperating partners and third-party monitors to extend its operational reach. Nonetheless, persistent security risks, staff detentions and access restrictions imposed by the Sana'a-based authorities continued to constrain operations. While WFP provided overall support and guidance, cooperating partners often assumed responsibility for managing risks and conducting access negotiations with local authorities. In practice, the level and consistency of support varied, and training on humanitarian principles was not delivered to cooperating partners on a regular or systematic basis.

Strategic and integrated nexus approach

Managing a large-scale humanitarian response in a highly complex operational environment has limited WFP's ability to adopt a more strategic and integrated approach across its portfolio. Progress in transitioning towards resilience-building and more sustainable solutions has been constrained and further hampered by persistent insecurity, political instability and economic fragility. Looking ahead, WFP will need to engage with the relevant coordination structures in Yemen to contribute to cohesive, strategic and effective interventions that bridge humanitarian and long-term development goals.

39. The intense focus of WFP on the delivery of GFA in a challenging operational environment has required substantial resources, thereby limiting the attention and resources available for longer-term resilience-initiatives. Although WFP aimed to scale up its livelihoods and resilience efforts under the ICSP for 2023–2025, progress was constrained during the evaluation period by limited donor support, overstretched country office capacity and expertise, and administrative challenges in areas under the control of the Sana'a-based authorities. In contrast, in areas under the control of the internationally recognized Government, WFP was able to pilot and develop multi-year resilience initiatives. Those initiatives are still in their initial stages, however, and are not yet supported by a comprehensive strategic framework.

40. WFP provided food assistance for assets within the context of joint programmes with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the International Labour Organization. Those multi-year, multi-partner programmes were intended to deliver a comprehensive package of support to communities, leveraging the comparative advantage of each specialized agency. The evaluation found, however, that the programmes did not, in practice, constitute genuine joint programming and lacked a long-term vision. Instead, different agencies implemented parallel interventions, undermining overall programme effectiveness. Nevertheless, the evaluation observed increasing awareness within the WFP country office that a fully integrated nexus approach would require a more granular understanding of environmental sustainability and climate risks, as well as local agricultural opportunities. A nexus approach must, moreover, be supported through robust planning, the provision of adequate resources and technical expertise and careful implementation so as to simultaneously address immediate needs while laying the groundwork for sustainable recovery and resilience in targeted communities and local food systems.

41. WFP's resilience-building efforts have also been impeded by the absence of a comprehensive United Nations country team-level resilience strategy and the limited resources available to development actors operating in Yemen. Moving forward, WFP will need to engage with the relevant coordination structures in Yemen to contribute to the development of such a strategy in order to ensure that WFP implements cohesive, strategic and effective interventions that address both immediate humanitarian and long-term development objectives. Active engagement in the development of the next United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework could strengthen WFP's role in promoting recovery and resilience in Yemen.

Fostering and strengthening partnerships and localization

Although WFP has been recognized for its cluster leadership role and has made progress in fostering partnerships, greater emphasis should be placed on strategic engagement, complementary and joint programming, and the strengthening of local capacity.

42. Although WFP strengthened its partnerships during the evaluation period, further improvements in communication and coherence are needed to maximize their effectiveness. WFP increasingly prioritized collaboration with other United Nations entities and national responders, recognizing their collective importance in fragile settings characterized by significant humanitarian and early recovery needs and limited resources. For example, WFP coordinated closely with international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (in support of localization, see paragraph 45), UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Public Health and Population, both in areas under the control of the internationally recognized Government and in areas under the control of the Sana'a-based authorities, in order to deliver a continuum of care to address acute malnutrition. That coordination promoted local ownership and facilitated the integration of moderate acute malnutrition treatment into primary healthcare systems – an approach that the evaluation identified as a model of good practice for other countries. The Restoring Education and Learning project, implemented in partnership with UNICEF and Save the Children, provided another positive example, demonstrating the value of integrated, multi-year and well-funded partnerships in supporting education and nutrition outcomes in Yemen.

43. Nevertheless, the evaluation identified further opportunities for leveraging complementarities with other agencies in order to maximize programmatic results and minimize the duplication of resources. For example, WFP and UNICEF operate distinct supply chains for nutrition-related interventions and use separate mechanisms to make incentive payments to health facilities. Similarly, stronger collaboration with FAO on livelihoods and resilience, and with UNDP on early recovery and community asset-building, could enhance the effectiveness of interventions. There is also potential for more strategic engagement among WFP, other United Nations entities and the World Bank on cash-based programming. While WFP can play its part in those areas, the evaluation noted that strengthening alignment is not solely the responsibility of WFP; opportunities also exist for other United Nations entities and international financial institutions to improve coordination in areas such as social protection and cash transfers.

44. **WFP was widely recognized for its leadership of the food security and agriculture cluster, which is co-led by FAO,** and for its substantial contribution to food security analysis, which supported the provision of more focused assistance to particularly vulnerable populations. The evaluation also commended WFP's logistical and emergency telecommunications support to the broader humanitarian community. However, gaps remained in communication and coordination with the humanitarian country team. For example, the lack of clear communication with regard to key operational decisions, such as the suspension of GFA in the north, revealed a need for stronger engagement with partners and for enhanced transparency and information sharing. The evaluation noted that greater emphasis on inclusive coordination, strategic advocacy and alignment with recovery and resilience priorities would enhance WFP's contribution to the collective humanitarian and development response.

45. **Progress has been made in advancing localization, but strategic engagement remains insufficient.** Drawing on its extensive network of cooperating partners, WFP has increasingly prioritized partnerships with local NGOs over international ones (see figure 7). While WFP has taken steps to strengthen the capacity of its cooperating partners, particularly in programme implementation, the evaluation found significant gaps in institutional development, financial support mechanisms and long-term planning, which limit the effectiveness and sustainability of actions taken by local responders. Furthermore, WFP has failed to sufficiently strengthen its duty of care with regard to its local partners, who often face significant security risks as primary interlocutors with affected communities and other stakeholders, particularly during periods of heightened tension.

Figure 7: Evolution in the number of cooperating partners by type and interim country strategic plan, 2019–2024*



* As of November 2024.
Source: CM-S010 "Partnership information".

46. While WFP was able to establish more equitable partnerships in certain geographic areas and sectors, the evaluation identified the need for more systematic strategic engagement with partners, with greater emphasis on shared ownership. Strengthening engagement with both local and central authorities across all sectors would support the development of a more comprehensive and inclusive approach. However, the evaluation acknowledged the potential risks of taking action to that end in Yemen, where local partners are often subject to pressure and to interference in their activities.

Recommendations

47. The evaluation made a total of six recommendations: three strategic and three operational.

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP office and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
Recommendation 1. Considering the fluid operating environment and the unpredictability of funding, ensure that future programming in Yemen retains a strong focus on implementing an agile and scalable humanitarian response while seizing opportunities to support resilience where conditions are favourable. Promote greater coherence and synergies across activities to enhance overall performance and reduce humanitarian needs.	Strategic	Country office	Global headquarters including the Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe Regional Office (MENAEERO) (functions: Programme Policy and Guidance Division (PPG); Analysis, Planning and Performance Division (APP); Partnerships and Innovation Department (PI))	High	November 2026
1.1. Ensure that the GFA programme is delivered with a clear focus on the most vulnerable people, maintaining adequate transfer levels through dynamic targeting and prioritization that adapts to changing needs and funding levels.					
1.2. Develop and implement a comprehensive and localized resilience strategy using area-based approaches that leverage complementarities and the respective comparative advantages of partners (see recommendations 2 and 3).					
1.3. Support greater integration and linkages across programme components to ensure that interventions complement and reinforce each other, contributing to a reduction in humanitarian needs.					
1.4. Improve nutrition integration across programme activities and support joint and context-specific approaches to prevent malnutrition.					
1.5. Adopt a resource-informed approach based on rigorous forecasting and analysis of funding prospects to ensure that future programmes are grounded in realistic ambitions.					

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP office and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
Recommendation 2. Strengthen, where the context allows, partnerships with authorities, including relevant line ministries, and local actors and expand direct engagement with communities in the design and implementation of WFP programmes.	Operational	Country office	Global headquarters including MENAEERO (functions: PPG; APP) and local actors in Yemen	High	June 2026
2.1. Foster more regular engagement with authorities, including relevant line ministries, local actors and community representatives, ensuring the inclusion of marginalized groups in the design of activities to better align with national and local priorities.					
2.2. In line with principled humanitarian action, establish clearer and more transparent and consistent communication with local authorities, communities and cooperating partners about resource constraints, targeting and prioritization decisions, and eligibility criteria.					
2.3. Expand direct community engagement and increase awareness-raising efforts in relation to feedback mechanisms, with a particular focus on women and underrepresented groups, to enhance the inclusivity, responsiveness and effectiveness of the community feedback mechanisms.					
2.4. Continue efforts to ensure that feedback collected from both women and men is systematically analysed and used to inform timely adjustments to programmes.					

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP office and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
Recommendation 3. Foster stronger partnerships with other United Nations entities, the World Bank, donors and other international actors to promote greater complementarity and synergies supported by predictable and flexible funding.	Strategic			Medium	December 2027
3.1. Strengthen and expand partnerships with other United Nations agencies, the World Bank and other international actors to support greater complementarity and synergies across interventions in various sectors and geographical areas (e.g. resilience-building, cash transfers, identity management, shock-responsive social protection, management of malnutrition).		Country office	Other partners at the country level; global headquarters including MENAEERO (functions: PI; Supply Chain and Delivery Division (SCD); PPG))		
3.2. Provide corporate support to WFP Yemen in conducting resource diversification analysis and support donor engagement efforts to broaden the donor base while advocating for predictable, multi-year and flexible donor funding.		Global headquarters including MENAEERO (Function: PI)	Country office		
Recommendation 4. Better tailor activities to local realities by continuously investing in context analysis, including conflict dynamics and the root causes of food insecurity, and adopting evidence-based approaches.	Operational	Country office	Partners at the country and global headquarters levels including MENAEERO (functions: APP, PPG)	High	December 2027
4.1. Complete the re-targeting and registration process and regularly update GFA lists, taking into account operational constraints, prioritizing the inclusion of marginalized groups, and considering local social norms to enhance community acceptance.					

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP office and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
4.2. Deepen WFP's understanding of natural resources, agricultural opportunities and climate risks in order to identify geographic priority areas and design a focused and scalable programme supporting environmental restoration, sustainable local food systems and resilience.					
4.3. Leverage the country office's vulnerability analysis and mapping, monitoring and evaluation capacity to stay responsive to evolving needs and highlight lessons learned and results from the whole portfolio in order to adapt programming accordingly.					
4.4. Work with partners to enhance the joint analysis of malnutrition and food insecurity, promoting shared understanding that informs more targeted, complementary and effective interventions.					
Recommendation 5. Integrate gender equality and women empowerment, protection and inclusion considerations in all activities. Set achievable and context-sensitive objectives for WFP interventions to support the meaningful participation and inclusion of women and other marginalized people.	Strategic	Country office	Global headquarters including MENAEERO (functions: PPG; APP)	High	December 2026
5.1. Strengthen and systematically conduct gender analysis, in collaboration with women organizations, recognizing differences across Yemen, to ensure WFP activities are guided by a comprehensive understanding of the specific needs of men, women, boys and girls, and barriers faced by different population groups.					

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP office and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
5.2. Enhance efforts to empower women and other marginalized groups by increasing their participation in WFP activities, including decision-making processes. Promote their leadership and economic empowerment through specific interventions – e.g. in the areas of malnutrition prevention, school feeding and livelihood support – with clear benchmarks for participation, leadership roles and economic empowerment within each intervention.					
5.3. Ensure proactive and sustained senior management leadership at the country office, area offices and field offices on gender equity, protection, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. Further strengthen WFP staff capacity in this domain and support partners in upholding gender and protection standards.					
Recommendation 6. In collaboration with relevant partners, identify and implement a set of measures to resolve the recurring supply chain challenges that have impacted the timely availability of specialized nutritious foods and disrupted nutrition interventions.	Operational	Specialized nutritious foods working group and country office	Global headquarters including MENAEERO (functions: PPG; Supply Chain Planning and Optimization Unit)	High	June 2026
6.1. Strengthen joint demand/supply planning and align with longer-term funding forecasts for specialized nutritious foods at the country office, regional office and WFP headquarters levels and develop contingency plans to mitigate supply disruptions.					
6.2. Invest in pre-positioning specialized nutritious foods (ideally inside Yemen or else in the region, depending on risks and funding) and ensure robust quality control processes, especially in light of the long lead-times for those foods, while considering regulatory constraints specific to Yemen.					

Acronyms

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GFA	general food assistance
ICSP	interim country strategic plan
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund