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Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Lebanon (2018–2021)

Executive summary

An evaluation of the country strategic plan for Lebanon was conducted between January 2020 and April 2021. It assessed the strategic and operational continuity of WFP activities implemented between 2016 and mid-2020. Taking a utilization-focused consultative approach, it served the dual purpose of accountability and learning to inform the next country strategic plan.

Home to 6.8 million people, Lebanon is a densely populated, upper-middle-income country. It is experiencing a protracted refugee crisis and has the world's highest refugee per capita ratio, with over 2 million refugees, mainly from the Syrian Arab Republic and the State of Palestine. Social protection remains nascent, and the country is undergoing a deepening political, financial and economic crisis.

The evaluation found that during the period evaluated WFP had achieved strong results in a complex and challenging environment. Its strategic outcomes were consistent with national development policies and refugee response plans. WFP demonstrated strong leadership and has been widely commended by the international community for its role in the refugee response, during which it has adapted to meet evolving needs in a timely and effective way.

WFP made progress towards achieving its strategic outcomes. Its strength has been the targeting of the most vulnerable through cash-based transfers. It has consistently exceeded its targets for maintaining food security, improving food consumption and dietary diversity and reducing engagement in negative coping strategies.

WFP expanded its resilience building activities by complementing cash-based transfers with livelihood support. Positive results were achieved in supporting livelihoods and restoring

In line with the Evaluation Policy (2016–2021) (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-A/Rev.1), 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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community assets. WFP is exploring the potential to support sustainable livelihoods through the identification of employment opportunities and asset creation linked to economic development plans developed by local governments.

WFP made a strategic shift to national capacity strengthening through support for the development of social safety nets, mainly the national poverty targeting programme. The scale-up of these efforts depends on the availability of financial resources and the Government's readiness to commit to an inclusive social protection system. Broader institutional strengthening has not yet been achieved; however, WFP is coordinating efforts and joint programming with other key actors.

Gender and protection were integrated in WFP operations, but there is scope for a more gender-transformative approach to programming. WFP's systematic collection and analysis of gender and age-disaggregated data provides a good basis for inclusive programming.

The evaluation team concludes that WFP has effective and efficient response mechanisms and is well placed to continue its dual role as a humanitarian and development actor. WFP interventions mitigate the long-term impact of the protracted refugee crisis and the deepening economic crisis on the most vulnerable.

The evaluation generated two strategic and four operational recommendations that address key issues for Lebanon's next country strategic plan. The strategic recommendations are to build on WFP's dual mandate and strengthen the effectiveness of its operations through more joined-up strategies for its interventions. The operational recommendations focus on establishing a flexible funding base for national priorities, boosting emergency preparedness, improving performance management and ensuring sufficient human resources for responding to the increased challenges.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Lebanon (2018–2021) (WFP/EB.2/2021/6-F) and management response (WFP/EB.2/2021/6-F/Add.1) and encourages further action on the recommendations set out in the report, taking into account the considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

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

Introduction

Evaluation features

1. The evaluation covered WFP activities in Lebanon under the country strategic plan (CSP) from 2018 to mid-2020. It also examined operations under regional emergency operation (EMOP) 200433 and protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) 200987. The strategic focus and purpose of the evaluation were to provide an independent assessment of WFP's performance, opportunities and challenges; to inform the design of the next CSP for Lebanon; to improve current programming; and to facilitate accountability for results to WFP stakeholders.
2. The independent evaluation team conducted a comprehensive desk review of documentation and quantitative data sets. This was complemented by key informant interviews with 89 stakeholders. An initial in-country mission took place from 5 to 12 February 2020. Due to instability in the country and COVID-19-related travel restrictions, a remote evaluation mission was conducted from 22 June to 16 July 2020.

Context

3. Lebanon is a densely populated country of 6.82 million people, over 2 million of whom are refugees and migrants, mainly from the Syrian Arab Republic and the State of Palestine. The country is facing a dire economic situation, which triggered civil unrest in October 2019. More than half of the Lebanese population¹ lives in poverty and 88 percent of Syrian refugees live on less than the survival minimum expenditure basket (SMEB).² The situation has been exacerbated by the spread of COVID-19 and the Beirut port explosions in 2020.
4. Lebanon's debt burden has surpassed 150 percent of its gross domestic product³ and its first debt default was in March 2020.⁴ A lack of economic diversity has resulted in the informal economy providing the majority of jobs. Agriculture is an important sector for the Lebanese economy, but its vulnerability to climate change and low productivity are of concern.
5. Social protection is still nascent in Lebanon, which has one of the lowest rates of women's labour market participation in the world.⁵ The pandemic has also harmed women's employment conditions.⁶ Institutional weakness is reflected in the country's difficulty in managing economic and political challenges. A review of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2018 showed that while targets had been met in health and primary education, mixed results had been achieved in poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.

¹ World Bank. 2020. Lebanon Economic Monitor. *The Deliberate Depression*.

² USD 87/person/month USD 435/household/month, i.e. LBP 652,694 at an exchange rate of LBP 1,500/USD, (assuming a household of five members). Source: WFP. 2020. *Review of the Survival and Minimum Expenditure Baskets in Lebanon*.

³ Amer Bisat, L.C. 2020. *Should Lebanon Default? Restructuring Is Inevitable: The Sooner, the Better*.

⁴ Reuters. 2020. *Declaring it cannot pay debts, Lebanon sets stage for default*.

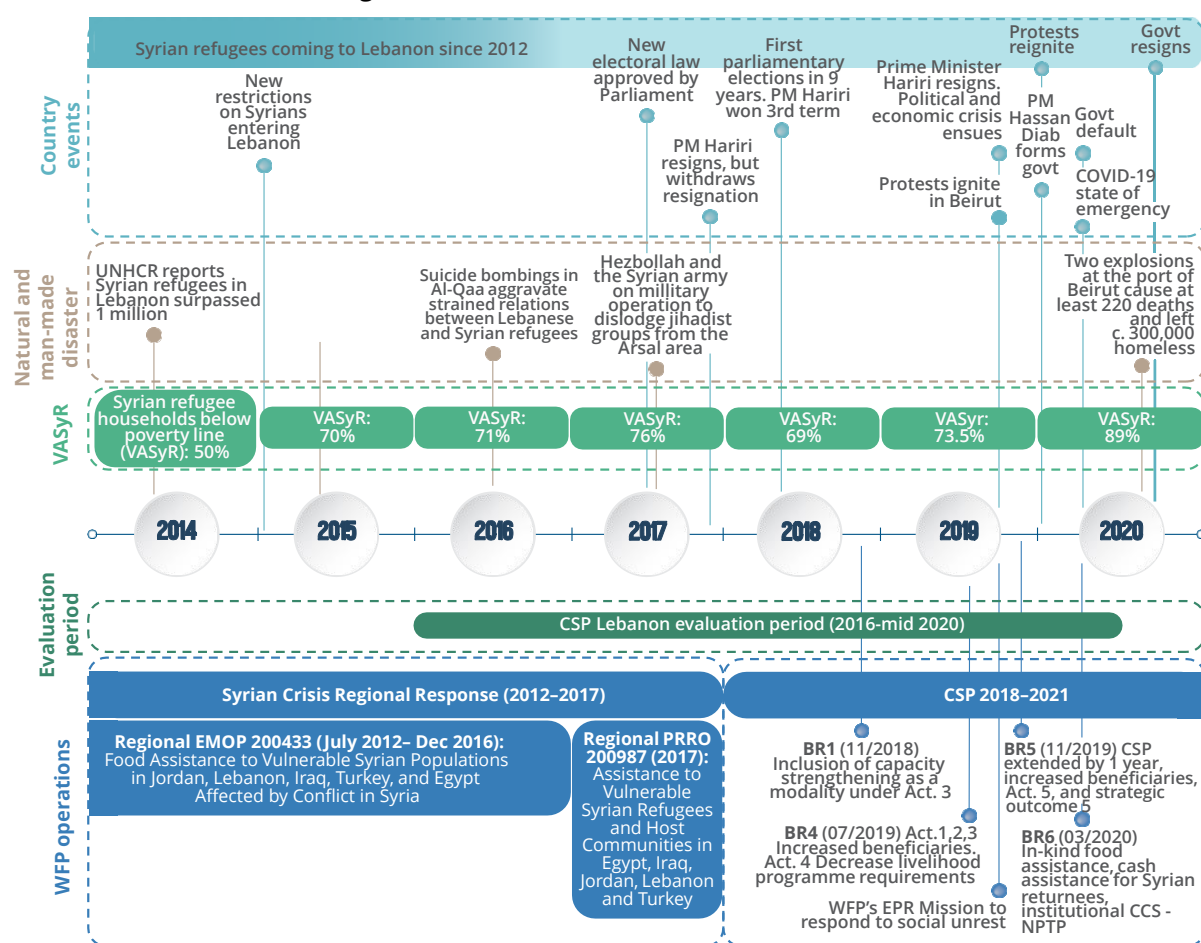
⁵ World Economic Forum. 2020. *Global Gender Gap Report 2020*.

⁶ WFP. 2020. *Assessing the Impact of the Economic and COVID-19 Crises in Lebanon*.

Country strategic plan

6. WFP has been operating in Lebanon since 2012, responding to the needs of Syrian refugees. Figure 1 presents a summary of WFP operations in Lebanon and key events that occurred before and during the evaluation period. The regional approach to the emergency response to the Syrian refugee crisis was built on developing the first CSP for Lebanon, which has been implemented in response to a complex protracted emergency resulting in a fragile situation.
7. The CSP, covering the period 2018–2021 has four strategic outcomes that are related to the ongoing humanitarian crisis and WFP's strategic partnership with the Government for the achievement of SDGs 2 and 17 (figure 2). Under the CSP, social protection and capacity strengthening for national government counterparts gained prominence. WFP also adjusted its programme to include in-kind food assistance as a contingency measure, extending support to vulnerable Lebanese.

Figure 1: Lebanon context and WFP activities



Abbreviations: BR = budget revision; CCS = country capacity strengthening; EPR = emergency preparedness and response; NPTP = national poverty targeting programme; VASyR = vulnerability assessment of Syrian refugees.

Source: Evaluation team.

Figure 2: CSP strategic outcomes and activities⁷

<p>Strategic outcome 1. Food-insecure refugees – including school-age children – and crisis-affected host populations have access to life-saving, nutritious and affordable food throughout the year.</p>	<p>Activity 1: Unconditional resource transfers to support access to food (cash-based transfers [CBTs]). Unconditional food assistance for 12 months each year through CBTs to Syrian refugee households and Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic.</p> <p>Activity 2: School meal activities (cash and in-kind). Conditional food assistance for education in the form of cash for education and school meals.</p>
<p>Strategic outcome 2. Vulnerable women and men in targeted refugee and Lebanese communities sustainably improve their skills, capacities and livelihood opportunities by 2020.</p>	<p>Activity 3: Individual capacity strengthening activities (CBTs). Conditional food assistance to support training of Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese people and enhance their livelihoods and income opportunities.</p> <p>Activity 4: Asset creation and livelihood support activities (CBTs). Conditional food assistance for assets to strengthen cohesion between Syrian and Lebanese communities, improve living conditions and stimulate local economic opportunities.</p>
<p>Strategic outcome 3. Vulnerable populations in Lebanon are enabled to meet their basic food needs all year long.</p>	<p>Activity 5: Unconditional resource transfers to support access to food (CBT). Unconditional food assistance for 12 months each year through CBTs for vulnerable Lebanese households.</p>
<p>Strategic outcome 5. National institutions and national and international humanitarian actors are supported in their efforts to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their assistance.</p>	<p>Activity 7: Institutional capacity strengthening activities. Enhanced use of the WFP cash platform to support the broader humanitarian community and support to strengthen the capacities of national ministries to design and implement efficient and effective programmes.</p>

Source: Evaluation team.

8. The Lebanon country office is supported by a variety of donors, including most prominently Germany, the United States of America, the European Commission, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Canada and Norway.

Evaluation findings

To what extent are WFP's strategic position, role and contribution based on country priorities and people's needs and rights, as well as WFP's strengths?

Relevance and strategic positioning

9. The design of the CSP was relevant to government priorities and national commitments to SDGs 2 and 17. WFP supported the Ministry of Agriculture's strategy by focusing on food security and agricultural productivity through strategic outcomes 1 and 2. The CSP supported the implementation of the national social development strategy by supporting the national poverty targeting programme (NPTP) and opportunities for safe employment through strategic outcomes 3 and 4. The CSP assisted the Government in achieving SDG 2 by reducing hunger and poverty. Operational interventions were complemented with government capacity strengthening, although this was not based on a clear road map.
10. The CSP was aligned with the objectives set out in the Lebanon crisis response plan, providing comparable support to Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese households and

⁷ Under the fifth revision of the CSP, strategic outcome 4 became strategic outcome 5, with a shift from crisis response to addressing root causes. Activity 6 was replaced with activity 7, which focuses on strengthening the capacity of the national poverty targeting programme.

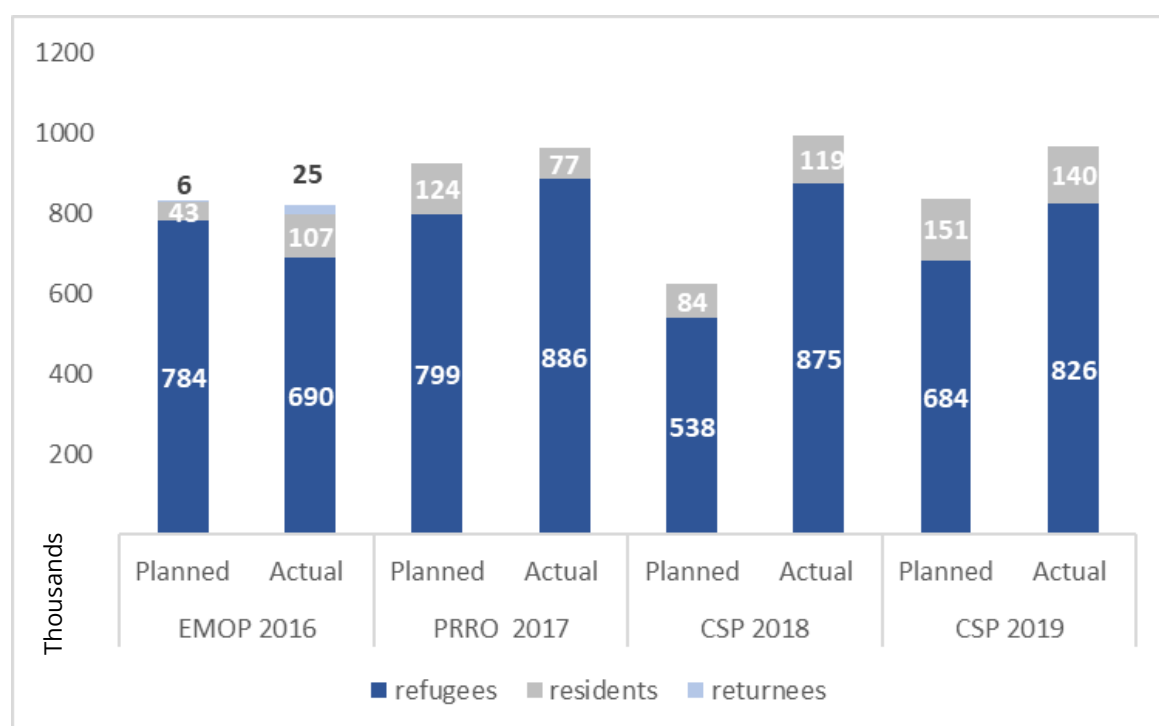
communities. WFP has maintained its relevance by constantly adapting to changing needs. The delivery of cash assistance at scale has increasingly been accompanied by greater emphasis on protection, resilience and social cohesion.

11. Gender inequality was recognized, and the CSP was supported by the 2017 WFP Lebanon gender action plan. While the CSP demonstrated a strong understanding of gender dynamics, it did not reveal how gender-transformative approaches would be operationalized.

Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable

12. The CSP addressed vulnerabilities in the evolving context of the protracted refugee crisis. Vulnerable and marginalized groups were targeted for food assistance, livelihood support and school feeding interventions. Syrian refugees were selected for cash-based transfers (CBTs) through vulnerability-based targeting using an econometric formula and “bottom up” approach used by WFP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Lebanese beneficiaries of WFP e-vouchers were identified through NPTP targeting processes. Figure 3 shows that since 2017 the country office has consistently reached more beneficiaries than planned.

Figure 3: Beneficiaries (planned and actual) by intervention, year and beneficiary category (2016-2019)⁸



Sources: CSP, annual country reports for 2018 and 2019; PRRO, standard project report (SPR) for 2017; EMOP, SPR 2016.

13. The CSP focused on geographical areas with a high concentration of poverty and livelihood vulnerability among Lebanese and Syrian refugee communities. Gender mainstreaming was integrated in WFP operations, but the CSP did not identify which gender barriers would be addressed or how they would be tackled.

⁸ Differences between planned and actual number of beneficiaries were caused by changes in financial resources and context. Needs-based budgets were USD 293 million for the EMOP (2012–2016), USD 312 million for the PRRO (2017) and USD 1,803 million for the CSP (2018–2021).

Coverage and scale-up

14. WFP was able to maintain the number of refugees reached with CBTs during periods of increased vulnerability. Timely adjustments for inflation and other factors were made in response to the escalating economic crisis. During the COVID-19 crisis WFP scaled up support to Lebanese households through the NPTP.
15. In response to growing national vulnerability, WFP revised strategic outcome 4 and developed strategic outcome 5, dedicated to social protection capacity building. The CSP has been filling a gap and positively influencing the development of a national social protection vision during the most critical of times.
16. One limitation of the CSP was a lack of detail on WFP's comparative advantage in emergency preparedness and response (EPR). WFP nevertheless plays a considerable role in EPR because Lebanon remains politically and economically fragile. Natural disasters related to climate change are also a threat.

Coherence and alignment

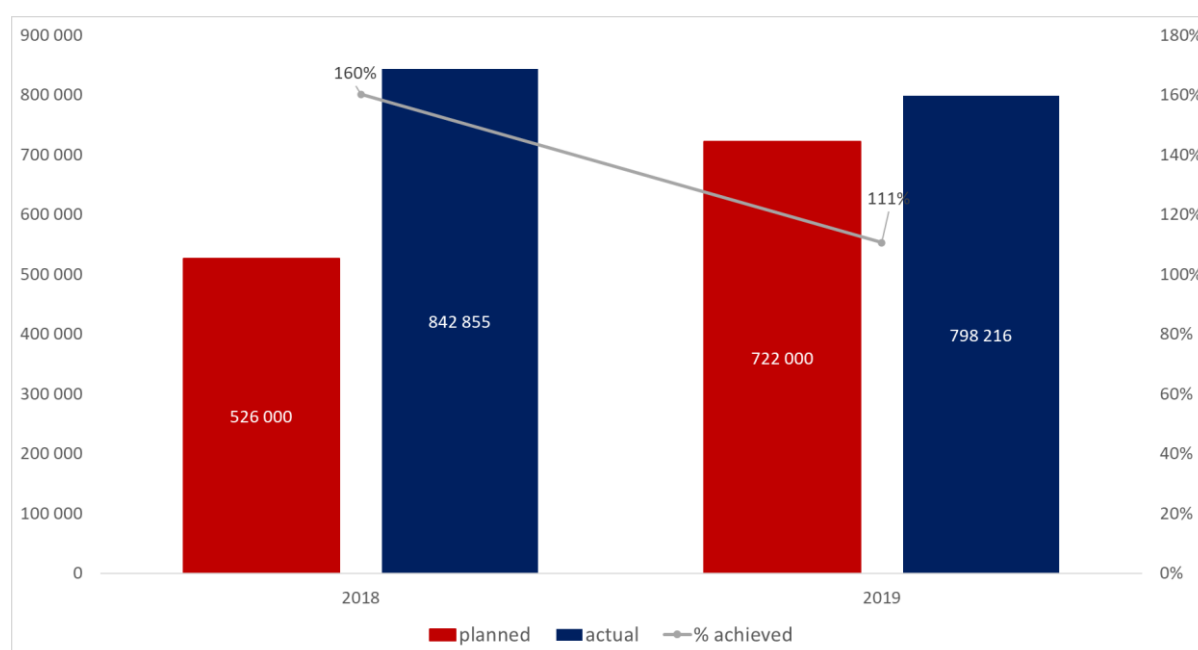
17. The CSP is coherent with the United Nations strategic framework for Lebanon through a "dual track" approach that seeks to mitigate the impact of the Syrian conflict and address pre-existing structural constraints. Alignment is especially strong with the framework's core priority 3, on reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development in a human rights and gender-sensitive manner.

What is the extent and quality of the specific contribution of WFP to CSP strategic outcomes in Lebanon?

Contribution to strategic outcomes

18. Under strategic outcome 1, the target for cash assistance provided to refugees living under the SMEB threshold was consistently achieved or exceeded (figure 4), which contributed to positive food security outcomes. The school feeding programme met its targets for reaching vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian students in public schools (table 1), contributing to higher school retention rates.

Figure 4: Strategic outcome 1 – activity 1: Beneficiaries receiving unconditional resource transfers that support access to food (output targets versus actual)



Source: Evaluation team based on 2018 and 2019 annual country reports.

School year	Number of schools	Target	Students reached	Lebanese children reached during morning shift*	Refugee children reached during afternoon shift
2016/17	13	10 000	16 610	6 644 (50% boys, 50% girls)	9 966 (50% boys, 50% girls)
2017/18	39	17 000	17 456	8 798 (45% boys, 55% girls)	8 658 (54% boys, 46% girls)
2018/19	39	24 000	23 170	9 116 (53% boys, 48% girls)	14 072 (50% boys, 50% girls)
2019/20	59	36 500**	34 530	Target 50% boys, 50% girls	Target 52% boys, 49% girls

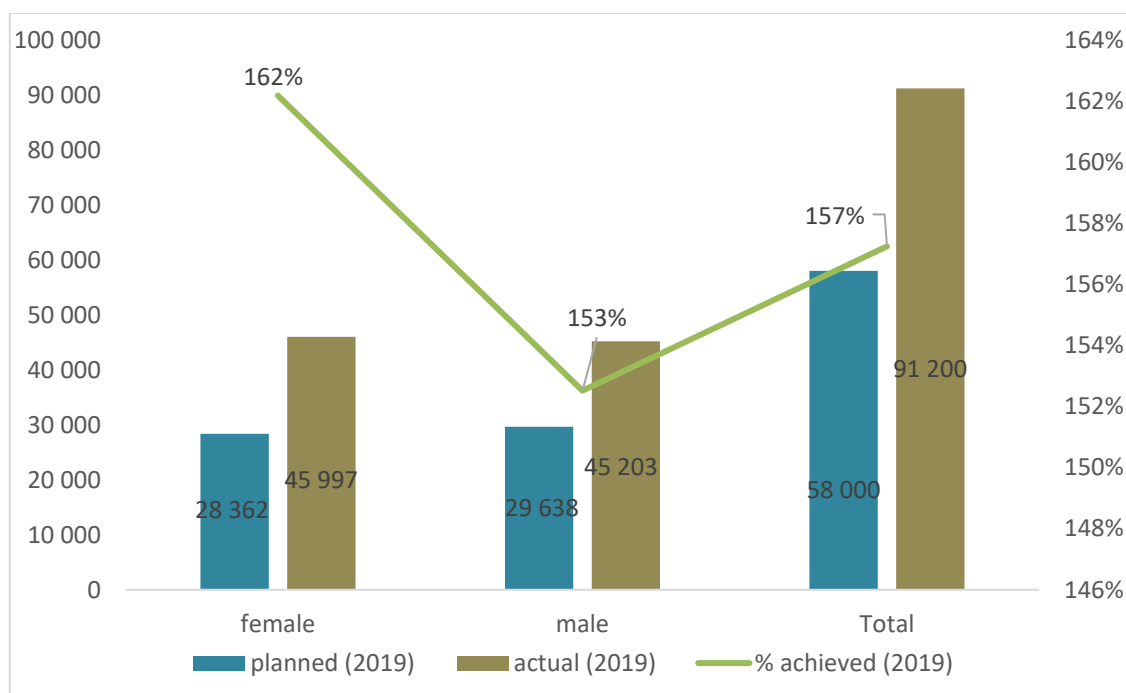
Source: WFP. 2020. *Draft report on the evaluation of WFP emergency school feeding in Lebanon.*

* In some schools up to 30 percent of the children reached during the morning shift are Syrian refugee children.

** Including 34,000 pre-packed snacks and 2,500 kitchen prepared snacks.

19. Strategic outcome 2 supported livelihood interventions using food for assets and food for training modalities, with a positive effect on household food consumption and a reduction in the use of negative coping strategies. The community assets created supported local economic development. Targets under the livelihood support programme were exceeded in 2018 and 2019. Efforts to tailor activities to women's needs to encourage participation were successful.
20. Under strategic outcome 3 vulnerable Lebanese unable to meet basic food needs were assisted with e-vouchers distributed via the NPTP. WFP managed to scale up its beneficiary caseload when needed (figure 5) and contributed to better food consumption and nutrition diversity and reduced engagement in negative coping strategies. With WFP's support, the NPTP food e-card component was expanded.

Figure 5: Beneficiaries (planned and actual) receiving CBTs, by gender (2019)



Source: Evaluation team based on 2019 annual country reports.

21. In 2019 strategic outcome 5 was developed in order to address the root causes of increased vulnerability through support for the development of Lebanon's social protection system.

WFP's positive contributions helped strengthen NPTP operational systems. A capacity building road map supporting the overall institutional set-up is needed and should be developed in coordination with other actors.

Humanitarian principles, protection, accountability to affected populations and gender

22. WFP helped alleviate hunger in a complex protracted crisis, upholding the humanitarian principle of humanity – to prevent and alleviate human suffering – and did so taking into account protection concerns and accountability to affected populations (AAP). The AAP unit improved the mainstreaming of gender and protection into WFP activities, and the establishment of the unit was critical to the processing of beneficiary complaints through a call centre jointly operated with UNHCR. This feedback mechanism facilitated the impartiality of WFP's response and needs-based coverage. There was better dissemination of information to beneficiaries and better follow up on gender and disability concerns. However, the evaluation team found that the criteria for CBT targeting could have been better explained to the refugee population.
23. Protection work consisted of tracking cases initiated through the call centre. Despite the differences in the approaches of WFP and UNHCR, good progress was made in streamlining call centre operations and improving services; however, there was room for improvement in the timely handling of complaints, case tracking and referrals.
24. In a complex political environment WFP was able to balance its operational independence and engagement with relevant government institutions. Its strong data and evidence-based work allowed WFP to maintain its neutrality by basing decisions on needs, rights and priorities. No discrimination was made between different groups or geographical locations in providing assistance. For beneficiary populations and cooperating partners it would have been better if WFP had balanced its remote monitoring and data collection with a stronger field presence, particularly in locations with no field suboffices.
25. The country office made significant progress towards achieving the objectives of the 2017 gender action plan. Monitoring complied with corporate requirements for gender equality and the empowerment of women. There was an increase in the number of female beneficiaries for all CSP activities, which equalled or exceeded the number of male beneficiaries. Gender parity seemed, however, to have overshadowed gender equality and the empowerment of women. The country office is working towards a more gender-transformative approach, identifying the specific needs and barriers faced by women and girls that are to be addressed through WFP interventions.

Sustainability and connectedness

26. The availability of CBTs is necessary to refugees' ability to meet their food and other basic needs. National capacity strengthening and systems development focusing on CBTs will inform the development of the national social protection system. The Government currently lacks the political will and capacity to integrate refugees into this new system, so the prospects for a handover of CBTs for refugees to national management are severely limited. In this sense the potential for sustainable national ownership of CBTs for refugees is limited in the current context.
27. WFP needs to discuss with donors the possibility of securing multi-year funding as a long-term approach to building systems and handing them over to the Government. For now, it is not clear when or how the Government will assume full ownership of social protection systems.
28. WFP's school feeding interventions support the Government of Lebanon in developing a nationally owned, inclusive and sustainable school feeding programme within the

framework of national social protection programmes. In Lebanon, the school feeding institutional set-up allows for strong national ownership. However, the pilot phase has yet to be translated into a road map for developing a large-scale and financially viable framework supported by other national actors. Financing strategies that go beyond regular government budgets will be necessary to address concerns with financial capacity, especially given the current economic and social crises.

29. For livelihood and resilience activities, WFP improved how it assesses which activities contribute to greater income-generating opportunities and stronger resilience. Training could have been better aligned with market needs. Where training was linked with community-level investments or projects – such as infrastructure – the potential for employment was higher.
30. WFP gave effect to its focus on resilience in Lebanon by reinforcing its livelihood support portfolio under the CSP, targeting both Lebanese and refugees. However, it is difficult to link humanitarian and development approaches in a context where legal restrictions prevent the refugee population from accessing employment or other economic opportunities.
31. WFP's resilience building work contributed to a relatively peaceful co-existence between the Lebanese and refugee population groups. The scale of WFP operations – at the community and institutional levels – had a positive effect on the stability of the country at times of increased economic insecurity.

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

Timeliness

32. The activities outlined in the CSP have been implemented on time, despite civil unrest and financial crisis. The share of output indicators that met their targets was 84 percent in 2018 and 64 percent in 2019.⁹ No major delays in programme implementation were recorded in those two years.
33. WFP contingency measures ensured service continuity during the crisis and encompassed worst-case scenarios including a collapse of the banking system.
34. The implementation of some WFP activities supporting social protection was delayed because this field is still at a nascent stage; progress was also hampered by a lack of financial support from donors.
35. While revisions of the CSP did not result in significant delays, the challenging communication pathways, lengthy revision approval processes and arduous financial management procedures consumed staff time and energy to the detriment of other activities.
36. Earmarked contributions present a challenge as they limit flexibility in the allocation of funding, which is essential in a volatile environment. A significant proportion of contributions were earmarked at the modality level within activities, such as cash assistance or vouchers. This created significant challenges for WFP when addressing CBT pipeline breaks. Humanitarian assistance was sustained in such cases mainly due to WFP's internal funding mechanisms.

⁹ WFP. 2018. Lebanon Annual Country Report 2018 and WFP. 2019. Lebanon Annual Country Report 2019.

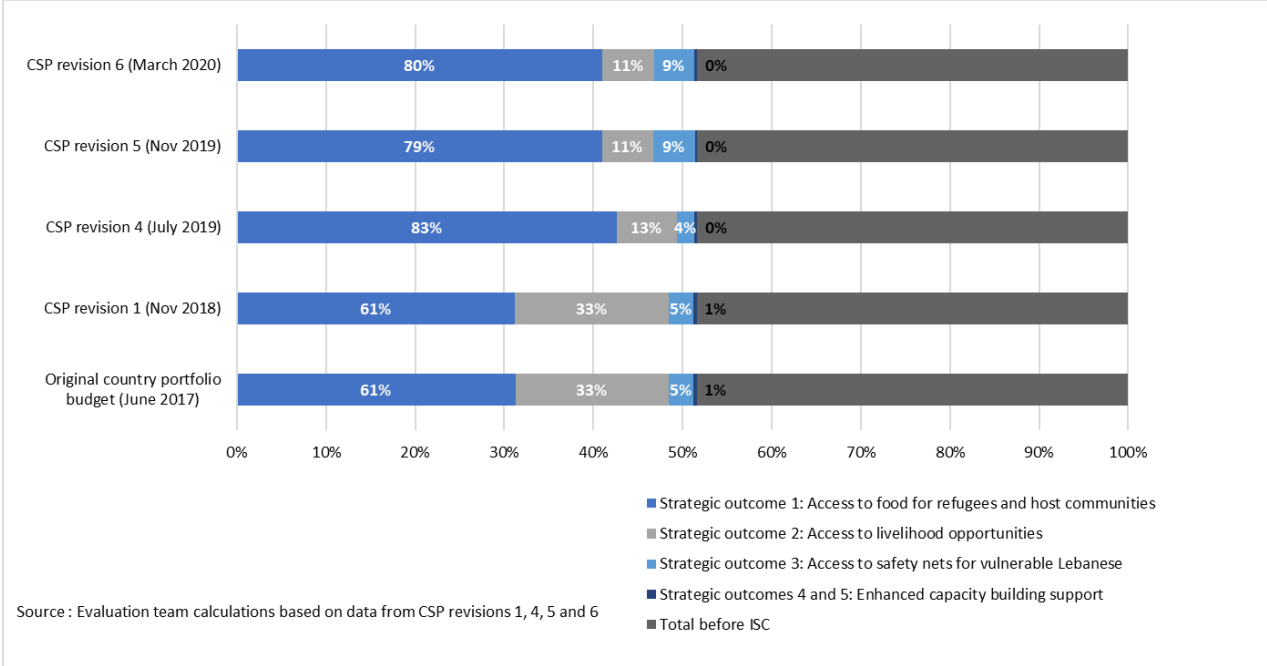
Appropriateness of coverage and targeting

- 37. Vulnerability-based targeting of Syrian refugees was central to WFP’s targeting strategy. The targeting approach for CBTs was harmonized with UNHCR. A “bottom up” nationwide approach enabled WFP to prioritize those in the “severely vulnerable” category.
- 38. The main challenge to reaching households in need is funding limitations. The combined CBT interventions of WFP and UNHCR were unable to support all severely vulnerable households. The economic downturn since 2019 exacerbated this, and the proportion of the Syrian refugee population who met the “severely vulnerable” threshold but did not receive support grew.
- 39. Proxy means testing was deemed to be more efficient, cost effective and accurate at selecting those most in need compared to the previous approach. However, the homogeneity of vulnerability in the refugee population, combined with the complexity in the targeting approach and limited communication of targeting to refugees, led to confusion at the community level regarding why some people received assistance and others did not. These factors undermined the perceived effectiveness of the programme among beneficiaries.¹⁰

Cost efficiency

- 40. Needs-based plan budgets were revised six times in response to evolving needs in the humanitarian and national context (figure 6). Funding for strategic outcome 1 was significantly increased. Nevertheless, the budget has been insufficient for addressing the needs of all “extremely vulnerable” households.

Figure 6: CSP revisions by strategic outcome



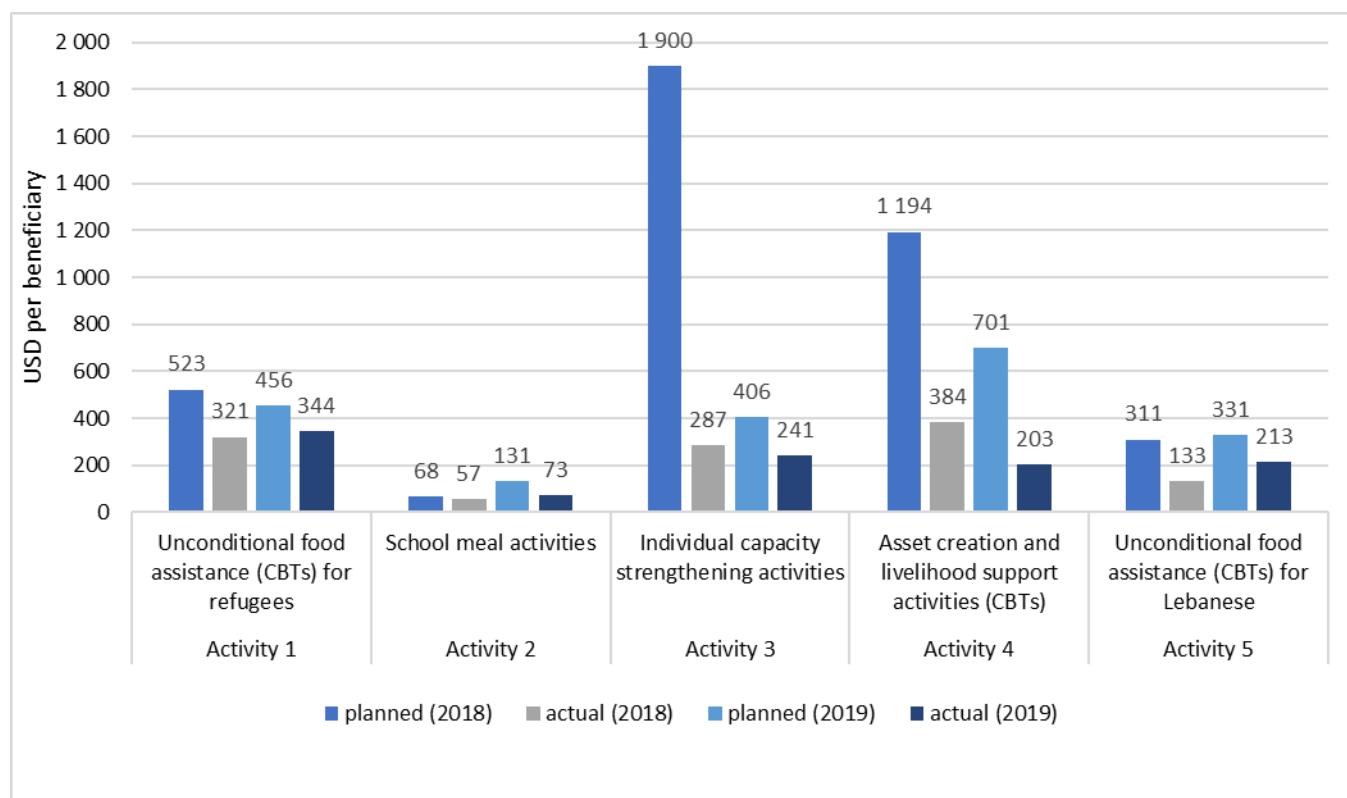
- 41. Solid results for CBTs mean that the overall implementation rate was high because CBTs account for a large share of the total budget. Cost-efficient delivery for activities 1 and 5 was

¹⁰ CAMEALEON. 2020. *VfM (value for money) Analysis: The World Food Programme’s MPC (multi-purpose cash) Assistance Programme in Lebanon*. Internal report, unpublished.

also very strong, with over 90 percent of resources expected to be transferred to beneficiaries.

42. For all activities the actual cost per beneficiary was lower than that planned in 2018 and 2019 (figure 7). The change of budget allocation across activities favoured the most cost-efficient activities (activities 1 and 5).

Figure 7: Planned versus actual cost per beneficiary by activity and year



Source: Evaluation team based on 2018 and 2019 annual country reports and COMET data.

43. The adoption of an econometric desk-based formula for different activities improved the overall efficiency of support provided to refugees and vulnerable Lebanese. Mis-categorization of households based on the desk formula was addressed through complementary mechanisms.
44. Since the implementation of the CSP, WFP has worked with 27 cooperating partners, selected according to their expertise in the fields of intervention. Some partners did not have sufficient capacity to respect stipulated timeframes or scale up activities quickly.

Alternative cost-effectiveness measures

45. Scaling up CBTs improved the cost-effectiveness of WFP operations. However, unlike with e-vouchers, the costs associated with cash transfers are covered by WFP. WFP is committed to increasing the provision of unrestricted CBTs.

What are the factors that explain WFP performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift envisioned in the CSP?

Use of data

46. The CSP was informed by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia/WFP *Strategic Review of Food and Nutrition Security in Lebanon* (2016), which highlighted a lack of poverty data and nationally representative nutrition and food security data. Economic access was identified as the main reason for food insecurity.

47. Together with WFP, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Ministry of Social Affairs conducted a poverty assessment that sought to measure the poverty rate among vulnerable Lebanese. This collaborative effort addressed the gap in reliable information and data on Lebanese poverty.
48. An assessment of the vulnerability of Syrian refugees (VASyR) covering all sectors allowed for the identification of trends in vulnerability among Syrian refugees. Issued jointly by UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, it is an essential resource for planning, decision making and needs-based programme design. The VASyR informed the CSP and annual planning adjustments where needed.

Adequacy, predictability and flexibility of resources

49. Although WFP encouraged donors to earmark contributions only at the CSP level to ensure that funds could be best allocated in the event of pipeline breaks, most contributions were still earmarked at the CSP activity level and, in the case of strategic outcome 1, activity 1, even by modality (vouchers versus cash). This was reported as a challenge to WFP when addressing CBT pipeline breaks. In 2018 a "cash mission" for donors was held with the aim of fostering flexibility by WFP's top donors.

Strategic partnerships

50. The country office pursued partnerships with the Government, donors, United Nations agencies, international financial institutions, civil society and the private sector. To that end the country office developed a partnership action plan that supports the implementation of the CSP.
51. The investments in the targeting model to date have been considerable and have also been made collectively under the Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organizational System for E-cards (LOUISE)¹¹ platform launched in 2016, indicating a change in approach beyond WFP. The LOUISE platform is a concrete example of WFP working in partnership with other organizations to make interventions more effective and improve practices through joint learning.
52. WFP also partnered with the World Bank on the delivery of e-vouchers to NPTP beneficiaries. WFP is a lead partner in the basic assistance working group and the food security sector working group.

Flexibility in dynamic operational contexts

53. The country office's emergency preparedness response strategy allowed for timely responses to changes in the operating environment in Lebanon. Contingency planning was put in place for various response scenarios. In collaboration with partners, several measures for responding to worse-case scenarios were explored.
54. According to the 2018 risk register, high staff turnover and the loss of experienced and trained staff in the country office and field suboffices constituted a serious risk of disruption to WFP activities and programme implementation and caused low staff morale.
55. Flexibility is constrained by the complexity of the budgeting system, with separate budgets for different components, and there has been less progress than anticipated in reducing the level of earmarking under the CSP. While on paper the CSP appears to constitute a more cohesive and integrated approach, in reality the country office still needs to undertake a range of activities while adhering to complex and bureaucratic administrative procedures.

¹¹ UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP and Lebanon Cash Consortium. 2017. [Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organizational System for E-cards](#).

Shift to capacity strengthening

56. Comprehensive monitoring data as a tool for results-based management is a key strength of WFP. The vulnerability analysis, mapping and monitoring and the surveys and reports generated by the monitoring and evaluation unit were of consistently high quality.
57. For certain activities, analysis at the outcome level was limited, for example in the livelihoods and resilience programme. WFP does not disaggregate outcomes for Syrian and Lebanese participants and does not systematically analyse outcomes by gender or by persons with disability.

Conclusions

58. The evaluation found that WFP's overall performance under the CSP was aligned with stated objectives and largely consistent with national policies and the humanitarian refugee response. WFP achieved strong results in a challenging context, responding to changing needs by targeting the most vulnerable Lebanese and refugees.

Leading humanitarian actor

59. WFP provided much-needed humanitarian assistance at scale, contributing to food security and resilience for the targeted beneficiaries. The core comparative advantage of WFP was demonstrated through its ability to adapt programming swiftly in response to evolving circumstances and needs. WFP adhered to the humanitarian principles and integrated a high degree of protection measures, gender equality considerations and AAP.

Strategic shift in WFP's direction

60. The CSP introduced an integrated and coherent approach to addressing the root causes of vulnerability through its response to the protracted Syrian refugee crisis and the growing vulnerability of Lebanese nationals. The CSP was designed to strengthen the links between humanitarian and development interventions.
61. Forging these links often takes a long time and requires new resource mobilization strategies for securing resources. At the operational level, WFP balanced humanitarian and development assistance. However, there was a need to work with partners to achieve better integration and coordination of emergency cash assistance with livelihood interventions. Stronger links between cash assistance and livelihoods support would allow households to make greater progress towards self-reliance and would reduce their vulnerability to shocks.

Vulnerability targeting

62. WFP's response to the need for cash assistance was notable. CBTs maintained the food security of targeted populations. The targeting system was reviewed to reduce errors; however, the approach, based on an econometric formula, was difficult for beneficiaries to comprehend since the differences between eligible and ineligible families were minimal. While the large scale of assistance contributed to stability and cohesion, any deterioration in the financial situation of families might have led to inter-community conflict if the allocation method had not been well understood or accepted.

National capacity strengthening for social protection

63. In coordination with other actors, WFP supported the strengthening of national social protection systems. A clearer road map and framework for the interventions in this area should ensure that WFP resources are used in a complementary and integrated manner with those of other development actors and the Government. This would also help WFP to continue working towards its objective of ensuring government ownership and not setting up a parallel system.

Limited progress on gender mainstreaming at the operational level

64. Gender and protection were integrated within the CSP but were still frequently treated as extra activities rather than as cross-cutting issues to be mainstreamed operationally. There was limited progress on the systematic collection and analysis of gender and age-disaggregated data, including data on disability. Such information is crucial for inclusive programming.

Flexible funding sources

65. Despite WFP efforts, the CSP did not increase flexible or non-earmarked funding. While such an increase is within WFP's remit it will require donor countries to consider changing their funding instruments. It takes time to communicate the strategic changes that WFP hopes to achieve with the introduction of the CSP. Earmarked contributions did not align with the environment in which WFP operated and hindered the provision of timely assistance. WFP's own internal funding mechanisms allowed it to adapt sufficiently to ensure continuity of assistance.

Efficient delivery of operations

66. The country office regularly analysed the efficiency and effectiveness of alternative transfer modalities but lacked a consistent cost-effectiveness analysis to inform decision making. WFP payment processes were cost-effective, accessible and well-liked by beneficiaries. Continuous efforts to improve the targeting methodology and the emphasis on cash-assistance improved cost-effectiveness.
67. Thanks to adequate funding there were no major implementation delays. The country office had sufficient funding to reach its targets, which were based on predicted financial support. WFP budgets, however, were not sufficient to reach all those in need.
68. CSP revision processes were burdensome and resulted in resources being diverted from more efficient uses.

Evidence-based results management

69. Comprehensive monitoring data were generated as a tool for results-based management. The major strengths of WFP's in-country capacity are its vulnerability analysis and mapping and the quality of the surveys and reports generated by the monitoring and evaluation unit and the vulnerability analysis and mapping unit. External stakeholders relied on these data and reports. More progress will need to be made at the level of outcome analysis to allow for assessments of the CSP strategic objectives.

Recommendations

#	Recommendation	Recommendation groupings	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority: high or medium	By when
1	In the design of the next CSP, WFP should clarify its core mandate, added value and strategic approaches and allow for annual updates in order to reflect contextual and programmatic changes.	Strategic				
	1.1. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Develop a more comprehensive country strategic plan document that clarifies the dual core mandate and comparative advantages of WFP and emphasizes its capacity to reach large numbers of vulnerable Lebanese and refugee households in order to respond to their food and nutrition needs (SDG 2, zero hunger). ii. Set out clearly the “dual track” approach of mitigating the impact of the Syrian conflict and addressing pre-existing structural constraints through links with the WFP dual mandate. iii. Set out the long-term vision of WFP and its strategy for resilience and the development of inclusive social protection and nutrition-sensitive programming. iv. Outline the guiding humanitarian principles and elaborate on protection, gender equality and accountability to affected populations. v. Include disaster risk reduction and emergency response preparedness. 		Country office	Regional Bureau for the Middle East and Northern Africa (RBC), Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division (PRO)	High	2021–2022
	1.2. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Combine the line of sight with a country strategic plan theory of change that describes the change process. 		Country office		High	2021–2022

#	Recommendation		Recommendation groupings	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority: high or medium	By when
	1.3.	Review annually and update as required the country strategic plan document, line of sight and theory of change in order to reflect changes in context, priority needs, programmes and financial resources.		Country office	RBC	High	2023–2025
2	Enhance the strategic approaches, effectiveness and integration of cash-based transfers, resilience, social protection and capacity strengthening.		Strategic				
	2.1.	<p><u>Cash-based transfers (CBTs)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Develop a more integrated, joined-up, development-oriented strategy that links cash-based transfers with WFP livelihoods and resilience building activities in order to support households and communities on their journey towards self-reliance. ii. Adjust the duration of cash-based transfers and food distribution cycles to match the needs of the people assisted rather than adopting generic cycles. iii. Critically review the LOUISE model of operations for cash-based transfer delivery and the current targeting approach from an efficiency, effectiveness and accountability to affected populations perspective. iv. Revise the modalities of cash-based transfer provision depending on the approach selected by WFP. Consider revising the frequency of the targeting process. 		Country office	RBC/ Cash-based Transfers Division	Medium	2021–2023

#	Recommendation	Recommendation groupings	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority: high or medium	By when
	2.2. <u>Resilience</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Develop integrated community-based packages for resilience and build internal links across strategic outcomes and with activities. ii. Develop a unified and complementary resilience approach with other actors linked to the food security, nutrition and agriculture sectors. iii. Target cash-based transfer beneficiaries in order to support the creation of sustainable livelihoods. iv. Leverage WFP financial assistance to support locally-produced food products where possible while safeguarding food security. v. Ensure that the theory of change for resilience and livelihoods programming is in line with available human and financial resources. vi. Set up a monitoring framework, including SMART indicators at the output and outcome levels, in order to measure gains in employment and increases in income. vii. Increase the number of qualitative and strategic discussions held with cooperating partners, including local non-governmental organizations. 		Country office	RBC	High	2021–2023

#	Recommendation	Recommendation groupings	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority: high or medium	By when
2.3.	<p><u>Social protection system development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Develop a theory of change, in line with available human and financial resources, for WFP's role in strengthening national capacity to implement an inclusive social protection system. ii. Advocate that school feeding be part of social protection. iii. Advocate that nutrition-sensitive approaches be integrated into existing and newly developed social safety net activities. iv. Advocate that social safety nets be scaled up on the basis of need in a manner that prioritizes cash-based transfers. v. Engage with the Ministry of Social Affairs, other United Nations entities, the World Bank and other development partners on the development of a strategic, coordinated and coherent approach to capacity building. 		Country office	RBC/PRO/ Country Capacity Strengthening Unit	Medium	2021–2023
2.4.	<p><u>Capacity strengthening</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Develop a clear vision of WFP's role in national capacity strengthening, prioritizing areas in which WFP has a comparative advantage in Lebanon. ii. Orient capacity building plans towards facilitating government management of nationally-owned processes and systems. 		Country office	PRO	Medium	2021–2023

#	Recommendation	Recommendation groupings	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority: high or medium	By when
3	Focus donor engagement on core funding, flexibility and response to national priorities.	Operational				
	3.1. Continue to advocate unearmarked core funding and multi-year funding, especially for cash-based transfers and food assistance for both Lebanese and refugee population groups.		Country office	Public Partnerships and Resourcing Division	Medium	2021–2023
	3.2. Strengthen resource mobilization for building national capacity to support inclusive social protection systems.					
	3.3. Develop a clear strategy on how best to use savings resulting from changes in exchange rates and inflation.					
	3.4. Invest further in the leading role of WFP in United Nations coordination mechanisms, with an emphasis on donor engagement in support of the United Nations country team in Lebanon.					
	3.5. Anticipate and mobilize supplementary resources for sudden-onset emergencies.					

#	Recommendation	Recommendation groupings	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority: high or medium	By when
4	Expand emergency preparedness and response based on the humanitarian principles in the face of an increasingly fragile operating environment.	Operational				
	4.1. Incorporate the increased uncertainty and deepening vulnerabilities into programming strategies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Contextualize regional and country-level analysis in order to support preparedness and response. ii. Embed emergency preparedness and regularly update contingency planning exercises in programming. iii. Integrate protection concerns and humanitarian principles more firmly and explicitly into future strategies. iv. Set up a fourth suboffice to support WFP operations in southern Lebanon and maintain the Beirut suboffice with a focus on refugees in urban areas. 		Country office with support of RBC	RBC/ Emergency Operations Division/PRO	High	2021–2022
	4.2. Strengthen mechanisms for accountability to affected populations in order to support and reinforce social cohesion and stability at the community level. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Improve the efficiency of the call centre complaints and feedback process to ensure timely follow-up. ii. Revise the cash-based transfer targeting process with the objective of improving its transparency for beneficiaries. iii. Integrate efforts to support social cohesion in the face of deepening vulnerabilities among Lebanese and refugee communities. iv. Translate the triple nexus agenda (for humanitarian, development and peace activities) into operational principles and priorities, drawing on lessons learned on the effects of WFP actions on conflict dynamics at the community level in other parts of the world. 		Country office		High	2021–2022

#	Recommendation	Recommendation groupings	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority: high or medium	By when
5	Strengthen performance management strategy and learning in order to inform decision making.	Operational				
5.1.	Invest in vulnerability analysis and mapping and monitoring and evaluation capacity in order to maintain the quality of work and to be able to respond to the growing requests for high quality data and analysis.		Country office with support of RBC	RBC	Medium	2021–2023
5.2.	Help the programme units to develop contextually relevant SMART output and outcome indicators for results measurement analysis.					
5.3.	Encourage closer integration of the vulnerability analysis and mapping and monitoring and evaluation programme units in order to better capture lessons learned related to CSP strategic outcomes.					
5.4.	Develop learning strategies and knowledge sharing with the Government, other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations regarding triple nexus programming, embedding standards related to the humanitarian principles and gender-transformative approaches.					
5.5.	Work on guidance and instruments for generating evidence on the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of WFP operations.					

#	Recommendation	Recommendation groupings	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority: high or medium	By when
6	Strengthen human resources capacity to implement ongoing programme and management priority actions and prepare for the next country strategic plan.	Operational				
6.1.	<p>Simplify budget revision processes and ensure sufficient human resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ensure that adequate time, systems and support (human resources from the Regional Bureau for the Middle East and Northern Africa or headquarters) are available to country office staff when they prepare country strategic plan revisions. ii. Allow for flexibility in the budget processes to take into account country and intervention circumstances by specifying the elements that are mandatory and those that can be waived when advisable under the circumstances. 		Operations Management Support Office	RBC	High	2021–2022
6.2.	<p>Ensure sufficient human resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ensure that the country office has sufficient human resources, notably in the units dedicated to vulnerability analysis and mapping, monitoring and evaluation, accountability to affected populations and protection, in order to allow for more high-quality analysis, to fill information gaps related to efficiency and cost-effectiveness and to increase learning opportunities for staff and cooperating partners. ii. Strengthen the field suboffices through dedicated gender and accountability to affected populations and protection focal points and increase information dissemination, training and capacity building for staff and cooperating partners. 		Country office	RBC	Medium	2021

Acronyms

AAP	accountability to affected populations
CBT	cash-based transfer
CSP	country strategic plan
EMOP	emergency operation
EPR	emergency preparedness and response
LOUISE	Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organizational System for E-cards
NPTP	national poverty targeting programme
PRO	Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
RBC	Regional Bureau for the Middle East and Northern Africa
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMEB	survival minimum expenditure basket
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
VASyR	vulnerability assessment of Syrian refugees