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## Summary report on the evaluation of WFP's emergency preparedness policy

### Executive summary

The evaluation of WFP's 2017 emergency preparedness policy assessed the quality and results of the policy and related approaches to emergency preparedness in the organization, along with the factors that enabled or hindered the achievement of those results. The evaluation aimed to support accountability and learning and to inform WFP's decisions on the future direction of the policy.

The evaluation concluded that the policy effectively framed WFP's preparedness initiatives, was grounded in evidence, was widely consulted upon and was aligned with WFP's strategic plans and international agreements. Policy results, however, have been hampered by the absence of a resourced strategy for implementation and learning, which has limited WFP's ability to guide, monitor and learn from preparedness initiatives at all levels.

Emergency preparedness remains a strategic priority for the organization and responsibilities for emergency preparedness as outlined in the policy have been duly met across WFP. Gaps in internal coordination have led to the fragmentation of efforts, but a "preparedness cell" established in 2022 shows promise for improved collaboration and support for country offices.

WFP's performance in emergency preparedness stems from its extensive knowledge of logistical infrastructure, improvements to early warning systems and anticipatory action, and diverse approaches to risk management. The organization's expertise in supply chain management and

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*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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relationships with governments are distinct advantages, contributing significantly to its preparedness efforts and ability to work with countries to develop their own preparedness capacity.

Preparedness investments at the global, regional, national and subnational levels have contributed to more timely and cost-effective responses, but in many cases there are gaps that cause delays. Multi-level scenario planning and a systems approach to preparedness are needed to foresee and address such gaps.

WFP has also made significant efforts to enhance government capacity for emergency preparedness, with tangible results in policy development, contingency planning, logistics, early warning systems, anticipatory action and shock-responsive social protection. Initiatives to enhance community preparedness were implemented in some countries but were sometimes indistinguishable from resilience programming. Generating evidence on outcome-level results in this area remains a challenge due to the inconsistent application of corporate indicators. The evaluation revealed that factors such as conflict, instability and changing government priorities can undermine the sustainability of country capacity strengthening efforts in preparedness, which require long-term commitments from both WFP and government partners.

Insufficient operational guidance and barriers to participation by vulnerable population groups were among key challenges to the adequate integration of gender and disability inclusion in emergency preparedness. There are some successful examples where inclusive practices have enhanced local preparedness, but more concerted efforts and understanding of underlying inequality are necessary for widespread integration.

Partnerships have played a crucial role in WFP's approach to emergency preparedness, but their effectiveness varies. Existing partnerships have been opportunistic, and WFP lacks an overarching strategy for strengthening preparedness in the context of existing or new corporate partnerships. There are examples of successful collaborative effort, particularly within inter-agency clusters, although resource constraints and intermittent activation of clusters have hindered preparedness and response in some cases.

While WFP has increased spending on preparedness, the overall financial and human resources allocated to preparedness are fragmented and overstretched. WFP's advance financing mechanisms and Global Commodity Management Facility have contributed to timely responses, but funding and stocks dedicated specifically to preparedness are insufficient, limiting capacity for long-term preparedness investments.

In recent years WFP has increased staffing for emergency response, but gaps remain. Surge capacity effectiveness varies, and better coordination and gender balance are needed. Training for preparedness is disjointed, lacking a strategic approach, and staffing policies and practices have not sufficiently prioritized emergency preparedness.

To scale up preparedness, WFP requires more flexible funding and needs to make context-specific investments organization-wide. It also needs knowledge management systems that can demonstrate and communicate the impact of investments in preparedness on the speed, efficiency and quality of emergency responses and generate learning to guide improvements.

In summary, the evaluation highlights significant strengths and areas for enhancement in WFP's emergency preparedness policy. The organization will need to address funding, internal coordination and partnership approaches, among other matters, to optimize its preparedness for future emergencies.

The evaluation generated five recommendations, pointing to the need for WFP to focus on the following: update its policy on emergency preparedness with clear accountability mechanisms and produce a strategy for implementation; maximize available financial resources for emergency preparedness by improving the accessibility of funding mechanisms for preparedness and strengthening the visibility of its preparedness investments; enhance and monitor surge

mechanisms (while improving the gender balance of deployments) and invest in staff capacity development; strengthen governments' preparedness through coordinated support for all relevant entities; and prioritize monitoring and learning about the efficiency, timeliness and effectiveness of emergency preparedness efforts and address gaps in the evidence base to make a stronger case for the benefits of investing early.

### **Draft decision\***

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of WFP's emergency preparedness policy (WFP/EB.1/2025/7-A/2) and management response (WFP/EB.1/2025/7-A/2/Add.1) and encourages further action on the recommendations set out in the report, taking into account the considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

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

## Introduction

### Evaluation features

1. This evaluation assesses WFP's 2017 emergency preparedness policy,<sup>1</sup> focusing on WFP's performance, challenges and opportunities with regard to emergency preparedness. Its main goal is to guide future policy directions and uphold accountability to stakeholders.
2. The evaluation asked three key questions:
  - How good is the WFP emergency preparedness policy?
  - What results has WFP achieved in the area of emergency preparedness (within and beyond the policy framework)?
  - What has enabled or hindered the achievement of results from the emergency preparedness policy and related practices?
3. These questions reflect the evaluation criteria of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee,<sup>2</sup> integrating an equity perspective. The evaluation covers the period from the policy's introduction in November 2017 to mid-2024, focusing on its quality and implementation mechanisms, including guidance and tools developed since its inception.
4. The evaluation addresses actions at the corporate and country levels and considers preparedness for various disasters, including large and small-scale events, sudden and protracted crises, and recurring events. It encompasses initiatives such as anticipatory action plans, which, although not specified in the original policy document, play a crucial role in WFP and national preparedness. The evidence generated will inform future decisions regarding the emergency preparedness policy and WFP's contributions to international commitments in this field.

#### Box 1: Evaluation data collection and analysis

- Retrospective construction of a theory of change in consultation with key internal stakeholders.
- Document and literature review.
- Data collection missions in Cuba, Pakistan, Togo, Ukraine and Zambia, as well as remote data collection in the Sudan.
- Desk reviews covering Burundi, the Central African Republic, Iraq, Peru, the Philippines and Zimbabwe.<sup>3</sup>
- Key informant interviews with WFP employees at headquarters, regional bureaux and country offices and with representatives of host governments, donors, United Nations entities and cooperating partners.
- Review of comparable organizations: the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Children's Fund.
- In-depth analysis drawing on data collection and follow-up interviews.

<sup>1</sup> "Emergency preparedness policy: Strengthening WFP emergency preparedness for effective response" (WFP/EB.2/2017/4-B/Rev.1).

<sup>2</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee Network on Development Evaluation. 2019. [Better Criteria for Better Evaluation: Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Better Use](#).

<sup>3</sup> WFP's Burundi and Philippines country offices also hosted inception missions at the start of the evaluation.

## Context

5. International disaster preparedness initiatives began in the 1970s, gaining momentum with the 1990 launch of the [International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction](#). WFP's 2017 emergency preparedness policy emerged alongside global frameworks such as the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) and the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), emphasizing proactive disaster risk management and local ownership.
6. Internally, WFP's strategic plans from 2004 onwards progressively integrated emergency preparedness. Its current strategic plan, covering 2022–2025,<sup>4</sup> emphasizes strengthening early warning systems and partnerships for enhanced disaster resilience and response capabilities. WFP aims to improve the effectiveness of its responses by being "risk-informed", i.e., by assessing threats and risks in its planning and programming.

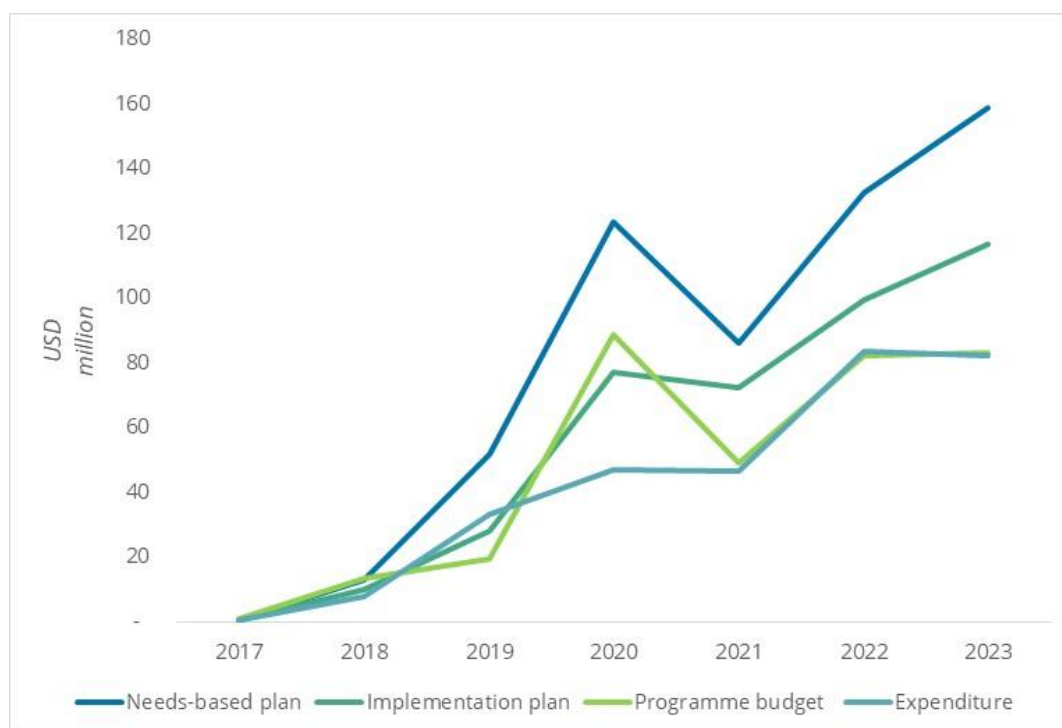
## Subject of the evaluation

7. WFP's 2017 emergency preparedness policy was its first dedicated policy on emergency preparedness, aligning with global and United Nations' initiatives to enhance disaster preparedness. It aims to anticipate and prepare for emergencies caused by natural hazards, disease, conflicts and economic crises, ensuring timely and effective responses to those in need.
8. The policy has three primary objectives: to serve as a framework for emergency preparedness in all of WFP's work and at all levels; to inform WFP's work with national and local governments, regional bodies and local communities, at their request and driven by their priorities; and to consolidate and expand mutually beneficial partnerships, including with international and national civil society and private sector entities, in order to reduce the need for operational inputs from WFP and other actors.
9. The policy clarifies that preparedness is an integrated, ongoing approach rather than a single initiative, and it defines WFP's roles in both operational and support capacities. It emphasizes a shift towards supporting national ownership and takes into account broader frameworks related to climate change and resilience. Recent initiatives, such as the 2022 renewal of WFP's preparedness approach and the establishment of an internal "preparedness cell", reflect ongoing efforts to improve cross-divisional coordination on emergency preparedness.
10. Between 2017 and 2023 WFP's needs-based plans and expenditures for activities related to preparedness increased significantly, indicating financial readiness to undertake rapid responses, although specific investments in preparedness are not tracked systematically.

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<sup>4</sup> "WFP strategic plan (2022–2025)". (WFP/EB.2/2021/4-A/1/Rev.2).

**Figure 1: WFP financial resources for activities related to emergency preparedness, 2017–2023<sup>5</sup>**



Source: Office of Evaluation analysis, based on internal reporting (EV\_CPB Overview report and the country office tool for managing effectively [COMET]).

## Evaluation conclusions and supporting findings

- The following section presents the eight key conclusions of the evaluation, accompanied by the findings that support them.

### Conclusion 1: Policy quality

**The emergency preparedness policy is of moderately good quality and has framed and guided the development of WFP's various emergency preparedness workstreams. It is evidence-based, was widely consulted upon and is coherent with WFP's strategy and commitments as well as key international agreements. Its results, however, have been hampered by the absence of a resourced strategy for implementation and learning.**

- The emergency preparedness policy provides a valuable vision for WFP and its objectives and scope have provided a broad framework enabling various parts of the organization to develop and continue preparedness-related initiatives. It was built on a robust, multi-stakeholder consultation process and analysis of changes in the external environment, including increasingly frequent and complex emergencies and the impact of climate change on food insecurity, which highlighted the need for increased investment in emergency preparedness.
- The policy is coherent with WFP's strategic plans as well as with commitments to national and local leadership and ownership of risk management, proactive data-driven planning, early warning and early action, and gender equity and inclusion under the 2030 Agenda for

<sup>5</sup> The analysis reflects financial resources for activities recorded in COMET with the following activity tag: "Emergency Preparedness activities", "Emergency Preparedness activities\_Climate adaptation and risk management activities" and "Emergency Preparedness activities\_Institutional capacity strengthening activities". The data are approximate because the identification and tracking of budgeting and spending on emergency preparedness activities has been inconsistent at times.

Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework and from the World Humanitarian Summit.

14. However, the limited conceptual clarity of the policy has hindered alignment with other WFP work in disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and resilience. More broadly, the policy also lacks focus on bridging humanitarian and development efforts and integrating recovery strategies. It does not include provisions for updates related to innovations like anticipatory action or other disaster risk financing mechanisms such as macro insurance for early response.
15. Moreover, major gaps in provisions for implementing the policy, including the lack of a clear implementation strategy, have curtailed operational progress. In particular, the policy does not include commitments to substantially increasing resources for preparedness or determining how they should be utilized. It also does not articulate how internal and external coordination of efforts should take place. Clear commitments to generating evidence about the effectiveness of emergency preparedness are also missing, and WFP's ability to monitor progress is curtailed by the absence of indicators that can be adapted to different operating environments.

## **Conclusion 2: Responsibilities and leadership**

**Responsibilities for emergency preparedness stipulated in the policy have been duly met across WFP, reflecting the cross-functional nature of emergency preparedness. However, progress has been limited by insufficient senior management leadership and accountability for emergency preparedness investments and results, and a lack of coordination and guidance has led to fragmentation.**

16. Emergency preparedness has consistently featured among the strategic priorities established by senior management at headquarters, but oversight and accountability for results have been weak. The work of a dedicated team on emergency preparedness at headquarters has helped to catalyse progress, although a gap in the leadership and management of the Emergency Preparedness Unit during a reorganization process between 2021 and 2023 probably constrained progress in the implementation of the policy.
17. Responsibility for emergency preparedness has been appropriately spread across WFP, at various levels and within various divisions and teams, as outlined by the policy. However, policy implementation was hampered by a lack of guidance on coordination across the organization, leading to fragmentation. The recently established preparedness cell – composed of members from various headquarters divisions and chaired by the Emergency Preparedness and Response Service – has shown promise in bringing together disparate parts of the organization in support of a limited number of country offices while improving coordination.
18. For much of the period covered by this evaluation, WFP lacked key tools for guiding and improving country-level preparedness for early action and timely responses. In particular, the emergency preparedness response package, the main corporate tool for strengthening country office preparedness, has been under revision since 2020, leaving an important gap. WFP also has tools for cash-based transfer preparedness, developing anticipatory action and shock-responsive social protection, among other things, but their application depends on country office priorities and access to resources, including technical support. As observed in other organizations of similar complexity and with a mandate for emergency preparedness and response,<sup>6</sup> coherent and practical guidance for stakeholders who implement preparedness policies and strategies is crucial.

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<sup>6</sup> The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Children's Fund.

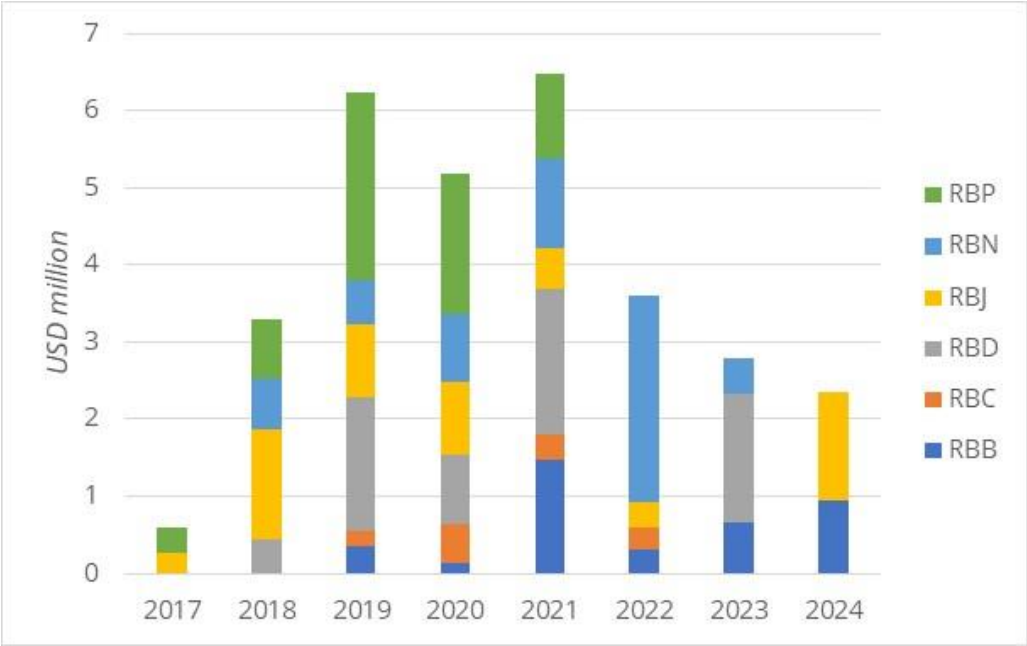
### Conclusion 3: Resources

**Inadequate funding and staffing have hindered implementation of the emergency preparedness policy. Access to adequate resources for preparedness activities was identified as a challenge within the policy itself. Seven years on, despite progress, overstretched and fragmented financial and human resources have continued to limit the ability of the organization to implement the policy. Diverse mechanisms for accessing additional funding, stocks and surge personnel for emergency preparedness have enabled WFP to act quickly and flexibly but have also resulted in a lack of coherence and oversight. Insufficient evidence base for why WFP and its partners should invest in emergency preparedness perpetuates the resourcing challenge, in the context of the growing gap between resources and needs.**

19. WFP has spent considerably more on preparedness since the policy was approved than it did previously. Examples include the increased strategic pre-positioning of food stocks, mainly through the Global Commodity Management Facility (GCMF), and greater use of advance financing mechanisms. The Immediate Response Account (IRA), internal project lending and the GCMF are strong assets for WFP, and the evaluation shows that they have improved the timeliness and efficiency of emergency responses.
20. WFP's corporate alert system has enabled it to prioritize resource allocations and prompted country offices to start urgent preparedness actions. Funding from the IRA and internal project lending have increased since 2017, and this has enabled country offices to initiate emergency responses before contributions are received from donors, thus averting or minimizing pipeline breaks. However, advance financing specifically dedicated to emergency preparedness (through the IRA for Preparedness facility, or IR-PREP) has decreased since 2021 (see figure 2), and constraints on the volume and accessibility of such resources have disincentivized country offices from investing in preparedness initiatives at scale and hampered their ability to do so. The evaluation also found that country offices had difficulty in understanding and meeting the eligibility criteria for IRA funding.



Figure 2: IR-PREP allocations (2017-June 2024)

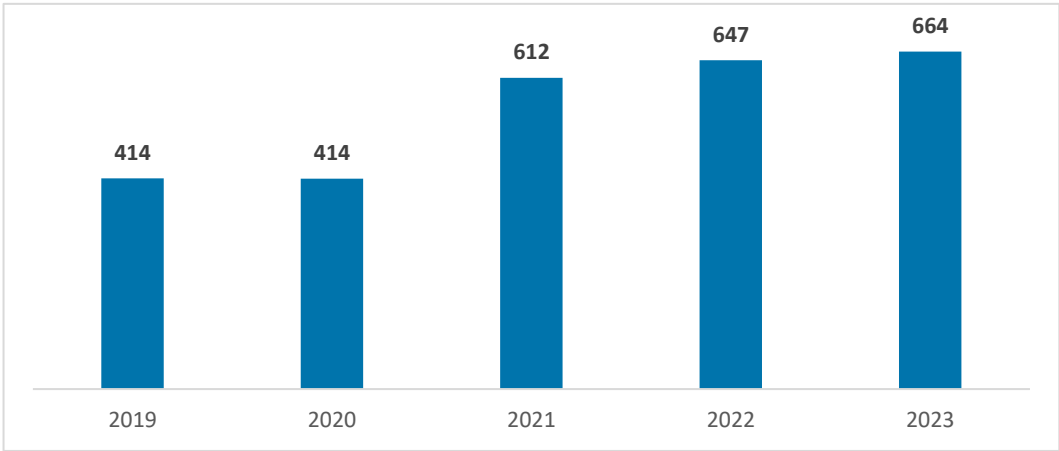


Abbreviations: RBB = Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific; RBC = Regional Bureau for the Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe; RBD = Regional Bureau for Western Africa; RBJ = Regional Bureau for Southern Africa; RBN = Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa; RBP = Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Source: WFP internal reporting (APPBP Planning and Prioritization, CPB\_Advance\_Finance\_Report\_Internal).

21. While WFP’s emergency preparedness has also been enhanced through increased pre-positioning of food stocks using the GCMF, with potential for more strategic pre-positioning in the future (see figure 3), local pre-positioning of non-GCMF food stocks is decreasing, replaced to some extent by pre-emergency agreements with local food suppliers and financial service providers. This supports the organization’s commitment to strengthening the existing supply chain capacity of national actors and local markets.

Figure 3: Global Commodity Management Fund average annual inventory (thousands of metric tons)



Source: WFP. Former Strategic Financing Unit, now Supply Chain Planning and Optimization Branch.

22. Overall, the lack of adequate financial resources for emergency preparedness remains one of the most significant factors hindering implementation of the policy, particularly at the country level, and more could be done to build strategic stocks for sudden onset emergencies and in case of major surges in demand or disruption of supply.

23. Despite promising practices in some areas, such as disaster risk financing and fundraising for anticipatory action, the organization has struggled to mobilize enough flexible and multi-year funding to enable it to invest in strengthening capacity for emergency preparedness over time, either for itself or for its partners.
24. The organization will need to make better use of its existing funding for emergency preparedness and step up its efforts to generate new resources and improve access to various funding instruments, including non-humanitarian resource streams. This means finding compelling ways to make the case for preparedness.
25. In terms of human resources WFP has increased the capacity of its personnel for emergency preparedness, early action and response, although gaps still exist. The effectiveness of surge capacity mechanisms is mixed, and their diversity and flexibility need to be balanced against calls for stronger coordination and oversight of deployments. Short-term deployments have enabled WFP to scale up quickly when needed, but it would be preferable to build a stable workforce with emergency expertise at the country level.
26. Many staff training resources include emergency preparedness content, but they are disjointed. Preparedness is not visible as a strong organizational priority in WFP's training resources, and an overall strategic approach to developing staff capacity in this area is lacking, including incentives for personnel to prioritize their own learning in this area. Other than improved attention to staff wellness in emergency contexts, staffing policies and practices overall have not paid sufficient attention to emergency preparedness.

#### **Conclusion 4: Country capacity strengthening**

**WFP has made substantial efforts to strengthen governments' and communities' capacity for emergency preparedness. Where long-term commitments are made by both parties, WFP has enabled governments to improve their emergency preparedness skills and capacity considerably, including in early warning, pre-positioning, supply chains, anticipatory action, macro risk insurance, shock-responsive social protection and other areas. Limited use of the Emergency Preparedness Capacity Index, one of the key tools for measuring and supporting capacity strengthening in emergency preparedness designed by WFP, and a lack of consolidated information about the use of other tools with similar purposes, prevents a more complete assessment of WFP's efforts. Successes in emergency preparedness capacity strengthening at the community level exist but are often components of resilience building efforts and are not usually described in terms of preparedness. Emergency preparedness capacity at the government and community levels faces sustainability challenges.**

27. In line with the emphasis in the emergency preparedness policy on national ownership and leadership of preparedness, WFP has made substantial efforts to strengthen government and community capacity for emergency preparedness in some countries. It does not always, however, present those efforts as something pertaining to preparedness. More successful investments have combined upstream policy support with downstream government-led initiatives such as shock-responsive social protection.
28. WFP has contributed to the enhancement of governments' emergency preparedness through a diverse range of activities, including support for policy development and national social protection systems; technical assistance on early warning, meteorological and food security information systems; use of risk transfer and risk financing tools; efforts to bolster governments' logistics and supply chain capacity; and simulations and training of personnel. The results achieved through many of WFP's activities are not yet visible at the outcome level. In middle-income countries with increasing capacity for disaster risk management, WFP has adapted its role to provide specific technical inputs as needed and

to ensure back-up for large emergencies; these efforts have faced various challenges and achieved mixed results.

29. The country strategic plan framework has allowed WFP to shift from short- to medium- and long-term planning, and WFP recognizes that some of its tools and processes require sustained commitments to strengthening country capacity over time. However, the level and timing of resourcing – both internal and external – have hindered predictable long-term engagement, which is a prerequisite for the sustainability of emergency preparedness. In addition, preparedness partnerships are still being developed. The success of WFP efforts to strengthen country capacity in emergency preparedness is also heavily reliant on governments prioritizing this area of work and committing both time and resources to it. Governments have sometimes faced challenges in sustaining their commitment or capacity to resource emergency preparedness, rendering WFP efforts unsustainable. Instability and conflict also take their toll, with initially successful efforts to strengthen governments' emergency preparedness capacity undermined by increasing fragility and violence.
30. There are relatively few examples where WFP's capacity strengthening activities have been tested in emergencies.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, inconsistent use of the Emergency Preparedness Capacity Index by country office,<sup>8</sup> as the corporate tool for measuring progress on capacity strengthening of government emergency preparedness, has prevented an overall assessment of WFP contributions in this area.
31. WFP's efforts to enhance community emergency preparedness are mostly small-scale across the twelve countries studied. There is some evidence of successful community-level emergency preparedness in the form of early warning and aspects of resilience programmes, often implemented by cooperating partners. Community-focused anticipatory actions, such as the provision of timely information for disasters, have proven effective in enabling better preparedness.

#### **Conclusion 5: WFP's comparative advantage**

**WFP's demonstrated achievements in emergency preparedness are the result of deep knowledge and experience of the infrastructure, distribution systems and technology required for responding to emergencies; understanding of contextual risks and potential emergency scenarios; trusting and trusted partners; solution-driven staff focused on enhancing the capacity of others; and dedicated flexible funding.<sup>9</sup> To scale up emergency preparedness, WFP needs to expand all these components, with more dedicated flexible funding and stronger internal prioritization of emergency preparedness across the organization at all levels.**

32. The diversity of WFP interventions in emergency preparedness is both an advantage and a burden. It allows WFP to tailor emergency preparedness interventions to needs based on context but it does not allow the organization to focus where it excels. At the level of support services, WFP has a clear comparative advantage in two areas of emergency preparedness that are appreciated by governments and partners alike: supply chain management and the provision of common services.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, during the Typhoon Rai response in the Philippines, mobile communications platforms previously developed by WFP in collaboration with the Government were successfully deployed.

<sup>8</sup> In 2023, 12 WFP country offices reported on the Emergency Preparedness Capacity Index in their annual country reports, including baseline, follow-up and target values in accordance with the methodology, out of 24 countries that at some point have made use of the index.

<sup>9</sup> See conclusions 3 and 4.

33. In particular, the significant growth in WFP's supply chain infrastructure and distribution systems has contributed indirectly and directly to emergency preparedness, complementing corporate investments in field-based logistics preparedness through the logistics cluster that benefit emergency response operations.
34. Moreover, WFP's investments in digital transformation and technology have also been gradually enhancing preparedness by enabling more agile, efficient, effective and accountable emergency responses. Challenges remain as new tools are implemented, but recent efforts to improve preparedness support related to information technology are promising.
35. WFP has also made significant progress in supporting risk analysis and early warning systems that inform preparedness and early action, internally and for governments, clusters and other partners. Advances are largely related to climate-related hazards, while analysis and early warning systems for conflict have been less effective so far. Recent efforts by WFP to integrate conflict, climate and economic analyses through an early warning working group are making conflict early warning more visible and systematic and promoting a multi-hazard approach to preparing for increasingly connected and cascading disasters.
36. Looking ahead, WFP efforts at the intersection between government and community preparedness such as shock-responsive social protection and anticipatory action, where it has demonstrated success, may provide an opportunity to focus, reach scale, garner greater donor support and build a more strategic approach to emergency preparedness based on WFP's recognized advantage in early warning, vulnerability analysis and operational capacity. In addition, such an approach would more clearly demonstrate WFP's contribution to the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.

#### **Conclusion 6: Efficiency and effectiveness**

**Preparedness has contributed to more efficient responses and early action by WFP, but disjointed efforts, funding gaps and delays and a weak evidence base have prevented the organization from achieving more.**

37. The evaluation found that WFP's investments in emergency preparedness at the corporate, regional, national and subnational levels enabled more timely responses, both in its own operations and by governments. Use of the GCMF reduced lead times, on average, from 129 to 92 days between 2019 and 2023. Furthermore, WFP investments in anticipatory action have saved time where conditions have triggered payouts, preventing further deterioration of affected people's food security, health and livelihoods. Strategic advance contracts and agreements – such as resource-sharing agreements with governments, standby and long-term agreements with suppliers, food supply agreements and rapid field-level agreements – also helped to enhance WFP emergency preparedness.
38. Nevertheless, there is ample room for improvement, as most emergency responses involve delays caused by critical gaps in preparedness. Time saved by preparedness at the corporate level was often counteracted by gaps in preparedness at the national or subnational levels. Similarly, preparedness at the national and subnational levels was sometimes squandered by the absence or tardiness of donor resources and corporate-level advance financing. Failure to secure funds for anticipatory action calls into question the value of investing in early warning systems if these are not adequately heeded. Early warning systems for conflict in particular have been less effective than those for natural hazards, with limited preparedness observed in Ukraine and the Sudan prior to the breakout of conflict.

39. Trade-offs between time and cost efficiency and other effects have been made but, with the exception of anticipatory action, are not sufficiently well analysed or shared for WFP to make informed decisions about them. Preparedness for local procurement, for example, has reduced lead times through supplier agreements and avoided delays related to customs clearance, thus helping local economies and contributing to early recovery; decisions on local procurement also, however, require consideration of other criteria such as food quantity and quality. Decisions related to the use of non-GCMF pre-positioning (at the national and subnational levels) has also saved time but must take into account storage conditions, expiration dates and security. Among various hindering factors, country strategic plan revision processes have caused bottlenecks in some cases, affecting the ability of country offices to respond quickly to changing needs.
40. The limited evidence available suggests that WFP's preparedness measures in responses to diverse types of emergencies have been effective, and recent studies<sup>10</sup> of WFP's support for anticipatory action and shock-responsive social protection have found them to be effective preparedness interventions. Overall, however, in WFP's narratives about preparedness, the link between preparedness, efficiency and effectiveness is assumed rather than analysed or explicitly validated. Internal and external reporting rarely highlights the contribution of preparedness to protecting food security or nutrition. More robust evidence would strengthen the case for greater internal and external investments in emergency preparedness and early action, which could in turn support resource mobilization for emergency preparedness.

#### **Box 2 – Evidence on anticipatory action**

In 2023, of the 36 countries with anticipatory action investments, nine activated anticipatory measures, enabling 638,960 people to receive cash assistance to reduce the effects of forecasted disasters before they fully unfold and the magnitude of humanitarian needs.

In Pakistan, prior to Cyclone Biparjoy in 2023, WFP had prepared lists of vulnerable people from over 200,000 households, together with their bank account numbers, and shared this data with a financial services provider as part of preparedness measures. When the cyclone approached, WFP transferred cash to vulnerable households enabling them to take early action to prepare for the storm.

41. Finally, WFP has achieved mixed results in terms of institutionalization and community ownership of emergency preparedness efforts. More successful efforts have combined upstream policy and strategy support with interventions in government-led initiatives. However, at times efforts have been hampered by circumstance, including a lack of dedicated government financing and recurrent turnover in government personnel in many countries.

#### **Conclusion 7: Inclusiveness**

**While the evaluation identified some good practices in relation to the integration of gender and disability inclusion into emergency preparedness, there is limited evidence of systematic and coordinated efforts and results in those areas.**

42. Despite commitments in the emergency preparedness policy, WFP has made limited efforts to systematically integrate gender and disability inclusion into its emergency preparedness activities. There are several key challenges in this regard. In many territories prone to conflict or disasters, women and girls as well as persons with disabilities are rendered less

<sup>10</sup> WFP. 2023. *Regional Evaluation of WFP's Contribution to Shock-Responsive Social Protection in Latin America and the Caribbean (2015–2022)*; WFP, 2025 (forthcoming). *Impact Evaluation of Anticipatory Action in Nepal*.

visible by barriers that prevent their participation in emergency preparedness processes. National emergency preparedness policies and programmes are rarely gender sensitive and government counterparts often lack gender expertise in this area. Operational guidance and tools for integrating gender and disability inclusion into regional and country-level preparedness strategies have been limited. Emergency preparedness and response teams are not always gender-balanced and do not always have the skills and expertise needed to integrate gender and disability inclusion in their work.

43. Nevertheless, good practices and operational guides have been supported and documented by headquarters and regional bureaux and show that the engagement of women and women's organizations in preparedness activities is catalytic and contributes to the design of inclusive response strategies; they also show that disability-inclusive early warning increases the likelihood that persons with disabilities can take preventive action, evacuate and make risk-informed decisions.
44. For WFP to fully integrate a gender-sensitive approach and disability inclusion in preparedness work, a better understanding of the underlying inequalities that make certain groups more vulnerable to disaster and conflict-related emergencies is required as well as stronger partnerships with women's organizations.

#### **Conclusion 8: Partnerships**

**Partnerships are central to WFP's approach to emergency preparedness, and the organization has made considerable contributions to collective preparedness efforts, particularly through partnerships with national governments and through the work of global clusters. However, partnerships have often been disparate and opportunistic, with partnerships aimed at strengthening preparedness with private sector entities, cooperating partners and development actors lacking any clear direction or rationale.**

45. Partnership is one of the overarching principles of the emergency preparedness policy, demonstrating WFP's commitment to combining forces with others and building on its strengths alongside other key partners to build preparedness capacity. National governments are primarily responsible for preparing for and responding to emergencies, and WFP has demonstrated its willingness to support governments in their lead role with a flexible approach depending on the level of existing government capacity, even if in some cases, there is a lack of clarity over the ownership and sustainability of preparedness capacity. Local partnerships to strengthen community-level preparedness, including within WFP's extensive network of local cooperating partners, have received less strategic attention at the corporate level. Key opportunities include increased support for community-focused elements of anticipatory action, in collaboration with governments and partners.
46. WFP-led global inter-agency humanitarian clusters have contributed to emergency preparedness, and WFP's leadership has been instrumental in catalysing collective preparedness in some instances, particularly within the global logistics and emergency telecommunications clusters. These clusters have dedicated significant resources to preparedness, designed adaptable preparedness tools, developed partnerships with private sector entities for additional ad-hoc capacity in emergencies and delivered strong outputs, including in the areas of logistics capacity assessments, information communications and technology training, contingency planning and natural hazard risk analysis.
47. The work of the WFP-led global clusters is, however, hampered by overstretched resources and inconsistent prioritization of preparedness, both at the global and country levels. The deactivation of clusters at the country level in periods between emergencies has also been

a constraining factor in some cases. WFP has engaged in Inter-Agency Standing Committee working groups on early warning and emergency preparedness, but there are few demonstrable results as yet.

48. WFP's common and on-demand services are highly appreciated both internally and externally and are seen as a valuable contribution to system-wide emergency preparedness – globally and at the country level. External stakeholders at the country level provided strong positive feedback in appreciation of system-wide services provided by WFP to support preparedness, including logistical support to partners for health-related emergency preparedness and response; shared warehousing, mobile storage units and storage facilities; infrastructure repair and upgrading; and provision and maintenance of equipment to support common security telecommunications, transport, storage and connectivity.
49. Overall, where WFP has engaged in building stronger collective capacity on early warning and emergency preparedness – through the clusters and other inter-agency coordination mechanisms and in partnership with other organizations and initiatives – it has made contributions that are valuable in their own right and complement the work of others. However, partnerships have often been disparate, country-driven and opportunistic, and there has been no clear underlying corporate strategy or rationale for prioritizing some partnership initiatives over others, making it difficult to draw conclusions on their effectiveness. This same lack of clarity may have hindered WFP's proactivity in seeking out new partnerships aimed at jointly strengthening preparedness capacity, including with development donors and organizations.
50. In conclusion, quality partnerships clearly emerged as an enabling external factor for the achievement of results in the area of emergency preparedness. The evaluation stresses the importance of strong support from other United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations and private sector actors, both within and beyond the clusters, in the co-design and co-financing of emergency preparedness initiatives.

## **Recommendations**

51. The table below presents the recommendations stemming from the evaluation of WFP's emergency preparedness policy, along with the proposed WFP entities responsible for implementing the recommendations, the priority of each recommendation and a target date by which each recommendation should be addressed.

## Recommendations

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
<p><b>Recommendation 1: Policy revision and implementation</b>  <b>Conduct a participatory policy revision process, with the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, to update the policy and produce a strategy for implementing it, including with partners. Include a theory of change, develop a comprehensive toolkit and a plan to establish an evidence base and assign clear organization-wide responsibilities for emergency preparedness.</b></p>	Strategic Short-term	Programme Policy and Guidance Division (PPG)	Analysis, Planning and Performance Division (APP), Supply Chain and Delivery Division (SCD), Programme Operations Department (PO), Emergency Coordination Service (COOE), Human Resources Division (HRM), regional bureaux		
<p>1.1 Update the WFP emergency preparedness policy on the basis of a thorough consultative process with external and internal stakeholders to reflect recent contextual changes and evolutions in thinking, practice and evidence in the area of emergency preparedness, including financing and partnerships approaches. As an integral part of the process, refine the definition of emergency preparedness, develop an emergency preparedness theory of change that incorporates conflict-sensitivity and links to resilience strengthening, gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches and other cross-cutting issues.</p>		PPG	APP, SCD, COOE, HRM, regional bureaux	High	2026



Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
<p>1.2 Consolidate a coherent package of tools for emergency preparedness encompassing key approaches such as the preparedness of WFP, sustainable capacity strengthening of governments and other partners, early warning, anticipatory action, shock-responsive social protection and insurance. Include guidance on conceptual and operational connections and differences between preparedness and other areas of work (e.g. resilience, climate change, disaster risk reduction, business continuity management, shock-responsive social protection, insurance) and how to integrate them. Incorporate practical operational guidance and share good practices on integrating conflict-sensitivity, gender and disability inclusion across the wide range of emergency preparedness work.</p>		PPG	APP, SCD	High	2026
<p>1.3 Among the priorities of the updated emergency preparedness policy, include the development of a compelling evidence base for all elements of WFP's emergency preparedness portfolio to inform advocacy for donor, government and other stakeholder investment in emergency preparedness.</p>		PPG	APP, SCD	High	2026
<p>1.4 Ensure that the updated policy is supported by an implementation strategy, with mechanisms for monitoring and reporting, that establishes clear responsibilities and accountability for emergency preparedness, especially at the senior management level but also at other levels and across functions. A mechanism for ensuring interdepartmental coordination led by senior management (at the Deputy Executive Director or Assistant Executive Director level) should be explored.</p>		PPG	APP, SCD, PO, COOE, regional bureaux	High	2026

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
<b>Recommendation 2: Financial resources</b> <b>Maximize available financial resources in order to increase overall access to funding and supplies for emergency preparedness.</b>	Strategic Short-term	PPG	APP, SCD, COOE		
2.1 Develop a multi-year strategy that prioritizes access to multi-year, flexible, unearmarked funding as well as strategic stocks, striking a balance between proactive and coordinated resourcing for preparedness and acceptable levels of financial risk for the organization. This should be supported by a communication campaign aimed at improving country office understanding of available financial opportunities and related obligations and accompanied by better tracking of preparedness investments, including through existing trust funds, to ensure full visibility of WFP's funding for preparedness.		PPG	APP, SCD, COOE	High	2026
2.2 Review IR-PREP and revisit criteria for accessing IR-PREP funding to make it more accessible to country offices that require advance financing.		APP	PPG, SCD, COOE	High	2026
<b>Recommendation 3: Staffing</b> <b>Optimize emergency staffing by enhancing existing surge mechanisms and addressing the need for sustainable capacity development for staff in relation to emergency preparedness.<sup>11</sup></b>	Operational Medium-term	COOE	Staffing Coordination and Capacity Service, HRM, PPG, APP, SCD, regional bureaux, other concerned headquarters divisions		

<sup>11</sup> An internal WFP audit on staffing in emergencies included high priority agreed actions to address emergency preparedness staffing gaps. This recommendation aligns with those actions.

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
<p>3.1 Review emergency preparedness and response training models, systems and resources to ensure that emergency preparedness is a clear priority and that all staff (international and national) have incentives to pursue it; that the scope of emergency preparedness training reflects the scope of the updated emergency preparedness policy; that training reflects WFP commitments to people-centred and high quality programming; , and that in-person and virtual training opportunities are available. Develop additional emergency preparedness training resources and opportunities as necessary. Consider involving inter-agency and external partners in simulation exercises and training.</p>		<p>Staffing Coordination and Capacity Service</p>	<p>HRM, PPG, APP, SCD, regional bureaux, other concerned headquarters divisions</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>2027</p>
<p>3.2 Take steps to improve the gender balance of emergency surge deployments at the global level, underpinned by an analysis of the factors behind women’s lower applications for and deployments from emergency rosters.</p>		<p>COOE</p>	<p>PPG, HRM, regional bureaux</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>2027</p>
<p>3.3 Review, strengthen and clarify the process, responsibilities, tools and mechanisms related to emergency surge deployments. Once clarified, develop and maintain a tracking system for all surge requests and deployments, consolidating various mechanisms (formal and informal) to improve the understanding, oversight and management of WFP’s emergency preparedness staffing needs while retaining the flexibility of informal surge channels.</p>		<p>COOE</p>	<p>PPG, HRM, regional bureaux</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>2026</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4: Country capacity strengthening and support</b> <b>Support regional bureaux and country offices in strengthening government and national stakeholder capacity for emergency preparedness through effective engagement with key entities, increasing the potential for sustainability by leveraging partnerships and combining downstream and upstream interventions and appropriate transition strategies.</b></p>	<p>Operational Long-term</p>	<p>PPG</p>	<p>Regional bureaux, PO</p>		

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
4.1 Support regional bureaux and the country offices they prioritize in efforts to develop, implement, test and improve models of engagement that support and promote coordination between government entities across all relevant thematic areas (including those responsible for climate information, analysis and early warning, emergency preparedness and response, food security, social protection, gender equality and disability inclusion, and finance) and with other partners.		PPG	Regional bureaux, PO	High	2027
4.2 Support regional bureaux and the country offices they prioritize in efforts to pilot advocacy strategies to obtain the commitment of governments to long-term capacity strengthening through the allocation of their resources (monetary and in kind) to joint efforts, leveraging partnerships and supporting the institutionalization of funding resources for governments wherever possible.		PPG	Regional bureaux, PO	Medium	2028
4.3 Support regional bureaux and the country offices they prioritize in efforts to expand emergency preparedness country capacity-strengthening work at the intersection between government and community interventions, specifically shock-responsive social protection and anticipatory action, building on the use of relevant emergency preparedness country capacity-strengthening tools and leveraging relationships with cooperating partners.		PPG	Regional bureaux, PO	High	2028
4.4 Support regional bureaux and country offices in middle income countries with high risk of emergencies prioritized by regional bureaux in efforts to develop models of engagement and transition that focus on strategic partnership with governments on emergency preparedness, while maintaining the rapid response capacity of WFP for specific emergency scenarios.		PPG	Regional bureaux, PO	Medium	2028

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
<p><b>Recommendation 5: Increase effectiveness through learning</b>  <b>Continue to apply WFP’s strengths and comparative advantages to emergency preparedness, seeking out and maximizing opportunities for learning, identifying and addressing gaps in the evidence base, generating new evidence and increasing effectiveness.</b></p>	Operational Medium-term	PPG	APP, SCD, CFO, Office of Evaluation (OEV), regional bureaux		
5.1 Revise emergency preparedness monitoring indicators to align them with the theory of change and ensure that they can be tailored to context, enabling WFP to track key metrics for emergency preparedness and its contribution to achieving WFP’s objectives.		PPG	APP	High	2027
5.2 Promote the use of simulations, after-action reviews, lessons learned exercises, evaluations and return on investment studies to increase understanding of how emergency preparedness affects the effectiveness and efficiency of responses, including in partnership with other organizations and Inter-Agency Standing Committee groups. Explore missed opportunities for early action, including the benefits that it would have yielded and what would have made early action possible.		PPG	APP, SCD, Chief Financial Officer Division, OEV, regional bureaux	High	2027
5.3 Ensure that the results of and learning on emergency preparedness are systematized and disseminated internally and externally, including through Inter-Agency Standing Committee working groups, with a focus on strengthening joint preparedness. Create and manage a repository of evidence and learning on emergency preparedness.		PPG	APP, OEV, regional bureaux	High	2027