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Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Uganda (2018–2025)

Executive summary

The evaluation of WFP's country strategic plan for Uganda for 2018–2025 was conducted between November 2023 and November 2024, with the dual objective of serving both accountability and learning purposes. The evaluation used a mixed-methods and theory-based approach to assess WFP's strategic positioning, contribution to strategic outcomes and efficiency in implementation, the sustainability of the plan's results and the factors explaining WFP's performance.

Uganda is a lower-middle-income country of 45.9 million people¹ that hosts 1.7 million refugees and asylum seekers,² mainly from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.³ The prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population for 2021–2023 is estimated at 71.2 percent, with severe food insecurity estimated at 23 percent for the same period.⁴

WFP's country strategic plan for Uganda is aimed at maintaining WFP's emergency response capacity and supporting the Government in disaster preparedness and in hosting the growing number of refugees. The plan has six strategic outcomes, with two focusing on crisis response and

¹ Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS). 2024. *National Population and Housing Census 2024*.

² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Uganda Office of the Prime Minister. 2024. *Uganda Comprehensive Refugee Response Portal*.

³ WFP. 2023. *Evaluation of Uganda WFP country strategic plan 2018–2023: Summary terms of reference*.

⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and others. 2024. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024 – Financing to end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms*.

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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the others addressing aspects of resilience building along with malnutrition and some of the root causes of food insecurity.

The country strategic plan is evidenced-based, aligned with national priorities and adapted to evolving circumstances. Its design and implementation reflect WFP's traditional comparative advantages in emergency response and logistics, food security and nutrition, but integration among strategic outcomes and activities was fragmented during the period under review.

WFP's ability to achieve and sustain improved food security and nutrition outcomes was hampered by the funding modalities used, funding shortfalls and increases in the needs of refugees and other vulnerable people.

WFP demonstrated effectiveness and the prospect of sustainability in its work on strengthening national and local capacity relevant to shock-responsive social protection systems. However, WFP is still learning how to be an enabler of action and programmes as well as an implementer of its own activities.

WFP made efforts to address cross-cutting issues such as those related to gender, environment and accountability to affected people, but a more systematic approach is required.

The evaluation resulted in six recommendations aimed at enhancing WFP's ability to design and implement its next country strategic plan for Uganda. Strategically, WFP should enhance programmatic integration and coherence among activities; clearly define and strengthen its role as an enabler of sustainable government capacity and systems; develop a more strategic and sustainable approach to partnerships; and enhance its leadership and catalytic role in food systems transformation. Operationally, WFP should improve the design and sustainability of resilience-building and self-reliance interventions; and strengthen the advancement of cross-cutting priorities.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Uganda (2018–2025), (WFP/EB.2/2025/6-C/10) and the management response (WFP/EB.2/2025/6-C/10/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 of WFP's country strategic plan (CSP) for Uganda for the period 2018–2025 was conducted between November 2023 and November 2024. The evaluation covered WFP's operations in Uganda from 2017 to mid-2024, with the main purpose of providing evaluation evidence for institutional accountability for CSP results, and learning that will inform the development of a new CSP. Operations that took place in 2017 were considered in the evaluation in order to facilitate an examination of the development of the CSP, including the drivers of its design, focus and shifts from the previous country programme.
2. The evaluation assessed WFP's strategic positioning, contribution to strategic outcomes and efficiency in implementation, the sustainability of CSP results, and the factors explaining WFP's performance under the CSP, using a mixed-methods and theory-based approach and both primary and secondary, as well as qualitative and quantitative, data. Data collection methods consisted of a document review, 224 key informant interviews, 45 focus group discussions and direct observation.
3. Workshops and discussions were held with internal and external stakeholders to ensure their ownership and understanding of the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.
4. The primary intended users of the evaluation are the Uganda country office and other internal and external stakeholders.

Context

5. Uganda has high rates of poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition and illiteracy. About 42 percent of the population lives below the international poverty line of USD 2.15 a day,⁵ and 20.3 percent lives below the national poverty line of USD 1 a day.⁶ The prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity is estimated at 71.2 percent, and severe food insecurity is estimated at 23 percent for the 2021–2023 period.⁷ The highest rates of malnutrition and food insecurity are concentrated in the eastern and northern regions.⁸ Karamoja has the highest rates of child malnutrition in Uganda, with 41.1 percent of children of ages 0–59 months being stunted and 11.9 percent wasted.^{9,10}

⁵ World Bank. 2022. *Uganda Poverty Assessment: Strengthening Resilience to Accelerate Poverty Reduction*.

⁶ Uganda Bureau of Statistics. 2023. *The National Standard Indicators (NSI) Framework – Level 1 2023*. Data is from 2020 and 2021.

⁷ FAO and others. 2024. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024 – Financing to end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms*.

⁸ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. 2024. *Uganda: Acute Food Insecurity Situation March - July 2024 and Projection for August 2024 - February 2025 - Partial analysis in Karamoja*.

⁹ Compared with the national averages of 24.4 for stunting and 3.2 percent for wasting.

¹⁰ Uganda Bureau of Statistics. 2023. *Demographic and Health Survey 2022*.

6. The country hosts 1,702,278 refugees and asylum seekers,¹¹ of whom 85 percent are from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 79 percent are women and children.¹²
7. Uganda has achieved, or is on track to achieving, 26 percent of its Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets; has made limited progress on 54 percent and backtracked on 19 percent.^{13,14} Major challenges remain with regard to meeting SDG 2 on zero hunger, and SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals, with scores for both either stagnating or increasing at less than half of the required rate.

Overview of the country strategic plan

8. WFP has been present in Uganda since 1964. The first CSP for the country, covering 2018-2025, was preceded by WFP's country programme for 2016-2020, an emergency operation in July 2016, and a protracted relief and recovery operation for 2016-2018.¹⁵
9. The CSP for 2018-2025 is focused on Karamoja and the refugee-hosting districts of West Nile and those in southwest Uganda, including Ankole, Bunyoro and Tooro. The country office has implemented the CSP in the context of existing national policy instruments, including Uganda's third national development plan,¹⁶ parish development model, host population empowerment framework, comprehensive refugee response framework, refugee response plan and Uganda Vision 2040.

¹¹ UNHCR and Uganda Office of the Prime Minister. 2024. [Uganda Comprehensive Refugee Response Portal](#).

¹² *Ibid.*

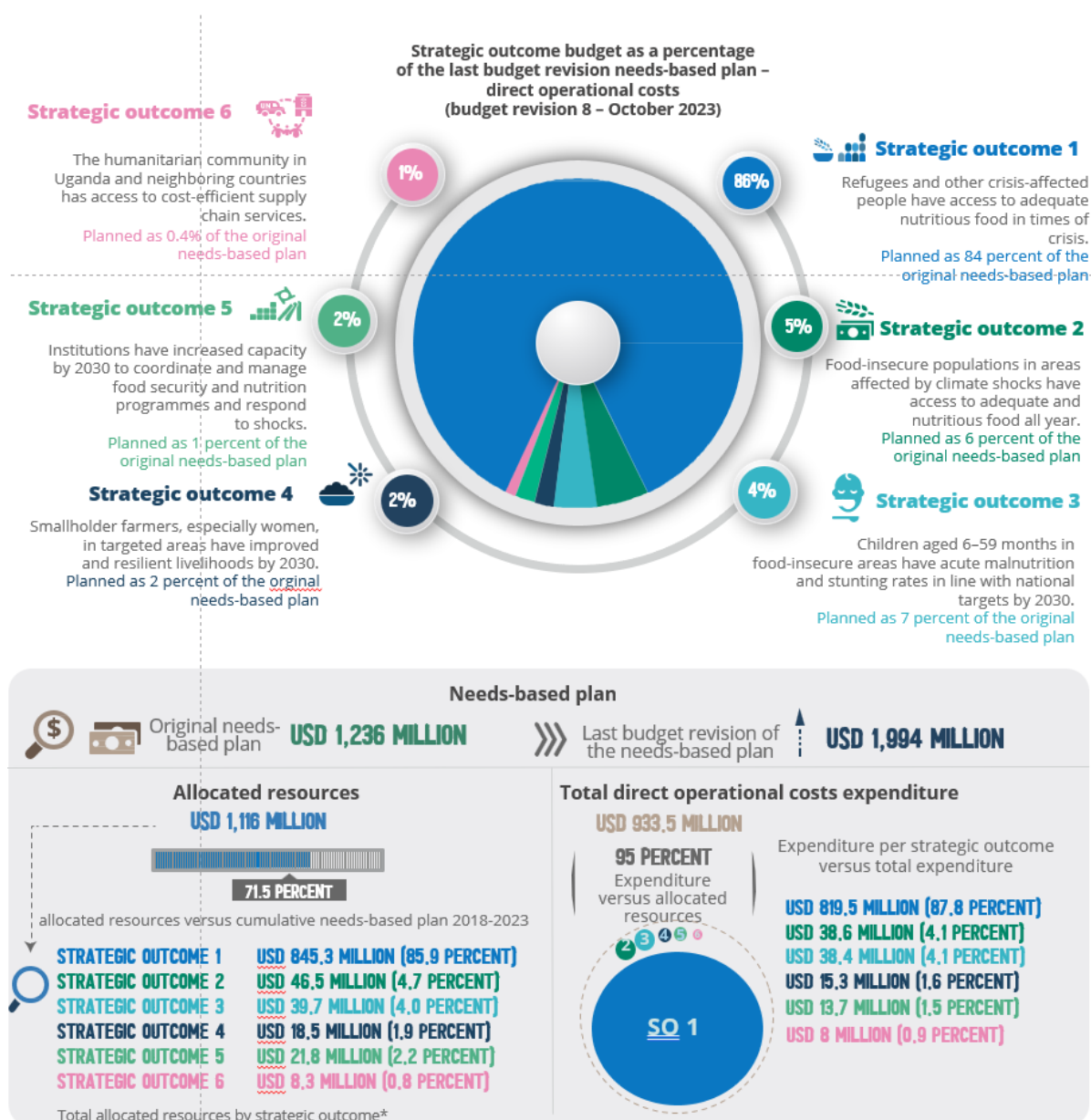
¹³ Sustainable Development Report. 2023. [Sub-Saharan Africa: Uganda](#). Data from Sachs, J.D. and others. 2023. [Sustainable Development Report 2023. Implementing the SDG Stimulus](#).

¹⁴ According to the Uganda voluntary national reviews for 2016, 2020 and 2024.

¹⁵ Note that the emergency operation and protracted relief and recovery operation were rolled into this CSP.

¹⁶ For fiscal years 2020/21-2024/25.

**Figure 1: Uganda country strategic plan needs-based plan as of October 2023
(excluding direct and indirect support costs)**



*All percentages are calculated excluding direct and indirect support costs. The percentages of allocated resources by strategic outcome do not add up to 100 percent because some resources are not allocated to specific strategic outcomes.

10. The original CSP for Uganda, covering 2018–2022, comprised ten activities under six strategic outcomes. The CSP aimed to maintain WFP's emergency response capacity and support the Government in disaster preparedness and in hosting the growing number of refugees, with two strategic outcomes focusing on crisis response. Other strategic outcomes focused on aspects of resilience building and malnutrition, addressing some of the root causes of food insecurity. The CSP and its budget underwent eight CSP revisions between 2018 and 2023. The revisions did not introduce changes in the strategic orientation of the CSP, but rather changes to the duration, scope and focus of activities, as well as the numbers of beneficiaries and the costs of implementation.
11. Key strategic shifts intended under the 2018–2025 CSP include a transition to national ownership of the country's fight against hunger through the sharing of analyses and evidence and the provision of technical assistance; the promotion of a shift from providing food

assistance to supporting self-reliance in refugee-hosting areas; the use of cash-based transfers (CBTs) where markets are functioning; the introduction of nutrition, HIV and gender-responsive or -sensitive programming; and engagement with private sector organizations to address the root causes of malnutrition.

12. The initial expected cost¹⁷ of the CSP was USD 1.24 billion, and the CSP targeted 3.34 million beneficiaries. Following CSP revisions between 2018 and 2023, the estimated cost increased to USD 1.99 billion and the number of targeted beneficiaries decreased to 2.85 million. Overall, 71 percent of the cumulative needs-based plan for 2018–2023 was resourced, with differences in the level of resourcing between strategic outcomes and activities.
13. The United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland accounted for more than a third of contributions to the needs-based plan, followed by the European Union, Germany, Sweden and the Republic of Korea. Other bilateral and private donors each contributed less than 1 percent.¹⁸ Earmarked contributions fluctuated between 2018 and 2023, increasing from USD 78.9 million in 2017 to a high of USD 194.8 million in 2019, before decreasing to USD 48.7 million in 2023.¹⁹

Key conclusions and evaluation findings

The CSP was evidenced-based, aligned with national priorities and adapted to evolving contexts. However, integration among strategic outcomes and activities was fragmented.

Strategic relevance and coherence

14. The initial design and subsequent revisions of the CSP²⁰ were informed by available evidence, including a 2017 strategic review of progress towards SDG 2,²¹ vulnerability analyses, value chain analyses, market monitoring reports, baseline studies and protection and gender assessments. However, the evidence base for the CSP lacked the necessary analysis to inform a more responsive approach to social inclusion.
15. The CSP is aligned with the United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework for Uganda, under which WFP has engaged in relevant activities, leading pillar 2 on shared prosperity in a healthy environment,^{22, 23} participating in United Nations country team working groups, and establishing strategic and technical engagement with United Nations partners. The CSP is also well aligned with national and subnational priorities, as outlined in national development plans and refugee response frameworks, and with district-level development policies, and emergency and humanitarian response plans.
16. Over time, WFP demonstrated a shift towards evidence- and vulnerability-based targeting for the general food assistance for refugees programme, NutriCash,²⁴ lean season responses

¹⁷ Based on its original needs-based plan.

¹⁸ Country portfolio budget resource situation as at 8 April 2024.

¹⁹ FACTory contribution and forecast statistics as at 8 April 2024.

²⁰ CSP revisions introduced a shift to CBTs, expansion of a food systems approach and the roll-out of a self-reliance model for the refugee response.

²¹ Government of Uganda. 2017. *Towards Zero Hunger: A Strategic Review of Sustainable Development Goal 2 in Uganda* (page 16).

²² On shared prosperity in a healthy environment and contributing to the pillar's results group on natural resources, environment and climate change.

²³ United Nations Uganda. 2024. *United Nations Cooperation Framework 2021-2025: Management Guide*.

²⁴ NutriCash is a programme through which food and nutrition assistance is provided to refugee and host community beneficiaries through cash transfers.

and school meal activities. However, there was some variance in the consistency and precision of targeting among programmes; for example, the criteria for selecting beneficiaries of asset creation and livelihood, and agriculture and market support activities were less clearly defined than those for other programmes.

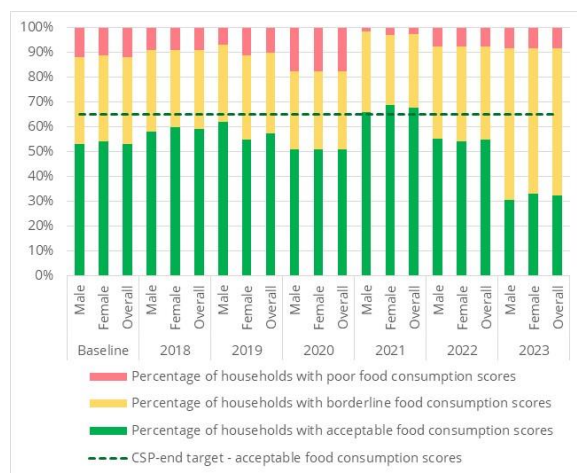
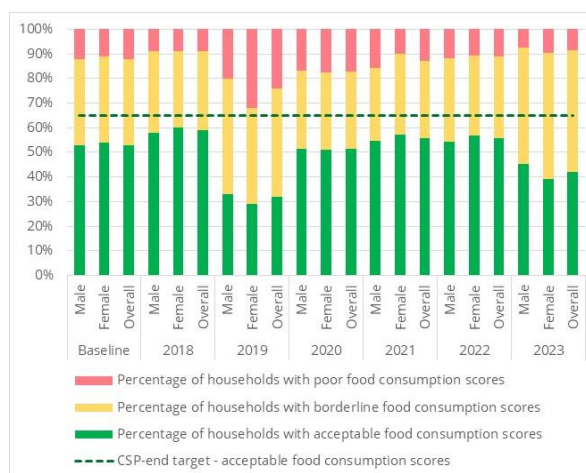
17. Despite WFP's efforts to increase synergies among workstreams, integration among strategic outcomes and activities was fragmented. For example, there were no intentional links between crisis response (strategic outcome 1), support for the Government on disaster preparedness (strategic outcome 5) and supply chains and logistics (strategic outcome 6). Recently, however, WFP made efforts to enhance coherence, including by developing an approach to crisis response, revising the CSP in 2021 and 2023 to emphasize food systems and nutrition-sensitive interventions, and developing an integrated nutrition strategy in 2024.
18. The CSP design and implementation reflect WFP's traditional comparative advantages in emergency response and logistics and food security and nutrition. Support for national social protection systems constituted a new area of work for WFP as it leveraged its expertise in issues such as beneficiary information systems to position itself as a partner of choice for the Government and other actors in this area.
19. WFP adapted its operations in response to food distribution and safety incidents, such as food poisoning and related deaths in the Karamoja and Palabek refugee settlement due to contamination of the corn soya blend used in WFP-supported nutrition programmes, shocks, the arrival of large numbers of refugees and changes in the resourcing environment. For example, WFP introduced a biometric registration system for general food assistance for refugees; adjusted general food assistance rations and extended the duration of blanket feeding for refugees; and provided additional support to the Government in public health emergencies such as the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and outbreaks of Ebola virus disease. Most of these adaptations did not compromise the original focus of the CSP.

Effectiveness and sustainability

WFP's ability to achieve and sustain improved food security and nutrition outcomes was hampered by the funding modalities used, funding shortfalls, and increases in the needs of refugees and other vulnerable people.

20. WFP provided direct and indirect (via government programmes) food and nutrition assistance to refugees, but food security and nutrition outcomes – such as access to food and the coping strategies adopted – among refugees in the west Nile and southwest regions declined between 2018 and 2023; this is attributable in large part to external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, food price volatility and reductions in rations due to funding constraints²⁵ (strategic outcome 1).

²⁵ Unless otherwise indicated, outcome monitoring data are from WFP's country office tool for managing effectively (COMET). At the time of writing, COMET did not have 2024 data. WFP. 2024. *Post-Distribution Monitoring of General Food Assistance – Results of the third round of data collection: April 2024* (internal document).

Figure 2: Food consumption scores among refugees, west Nile**Figure 3: Food consumption scores among refugees, southwest**

Source: CM-R010b_Outcome Indicators UG01 2018–2023.

21. WFP's lean season responses in Karamoja contributed to improvements in food security and nutrition outcomes – such as food consumption scores, and consumption-based and livelihood coping strategies²⁶ – among supported vulnerable households. Overall, however, the conditions for food security in Karamoja remain precarious (strategic outcome 1).
22. WFP's shift to CBTs had positive direct and indirect effects for refugees and host communities, including increased incomes, livelihood opportunities and flexibility of spending on food and non-food items, such as for medical and education purposes.^{27,28} In addition, food security outcomes were better for the beneficiaries who received CBTs than for those who received only in-kind food (strategic outcome 1).
23. Vulnerable women and children in Karamoja were provided specialized nutritious foods to treat moderate acute malnutrition. However, the recovery rate after moderate acute malnutrition treatment decreased between 2018 and 2023, and both the non-response and default rates increased owing to restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, intensified cattle raids and insecurity from 2021 to 2023, flooding in 2021,²⁹ poor childcare practices, poor ration utilization due to the sale and sharing of rations, and inadequate dietary intake due to the depletion of household food stocks and increased market prices³⁰ (strategic outcome 3).
24. WFP's nutrition-sensitive interventions such as NutriCash and social and behaviour change contributed to improved knowledge and practices in dietary diversity, backyard gardening and financial literacy, especially among refugee women and girls and host communities in west Nile and southwest regions, and affected people in Karamoja. School meals also fostered better nutrition and dietary diversity as parents benefited from the knowledge of

²⁶ Data from internal documents: [WFP annual country reports for 2019 and 2020](#) and WFP Karamoja lean season response reports for 2022 and 2023.

²⁷ WFP. 2024. *Draft v1: Decentralized evaluation of promoting self-reliance with livelihood, asset creation and resilience interventions in Uganda 2020-2023* (not published).

²⁸ WFP. 2023. *Direct and indirect benefits of food and cash assistance in Uganda* (not published).

²⁹ [WFP annual country reports for Uganda for 2021, 2022 and 2023](#).

³⁰ Andre Foods International. 2023. *Community-based supplementary feeding programme monthly progress report, June 2023* (not published). The sharing of corn-soya blend ++ was also reported in some focus group discussions.

gardening and dietary diversity acquired by their children through young farmers' clubs in schools³¹ (strategic outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 5).

25. WFP's provision of school meals contributed to increased enrolment and attendance rates among school-aged children in WFP-assisted schools. However, retention rates decreased owing to sociocultural factors. In addition, WFP-supported schools and learners faced challenges owing to the reduced size and number of meals and the growing numbers of children eligible for childhood development initiatives attending school to eat (strategic outcome 2).

TABLE 1: EDUCATION OUTCOME INDICATORS IN WFP-ASSISTED SCHOOLS (%)						
Outcome indicators	2018			2023		
	Boys	Girls	Overall	Boys	Girls	Overall
Annual increase in enrolment rate	8	5	7	21	27	24
Annual attendance rate	64	63	63	72	72	72
Annual retention rate	72	87	78	73	71	72

Source: WFP annual country reports for Uganda for 2018 and 2023.

26. Asset creation and livelihood interventions were small-scale and short-term. They had positive effects in filling the consumption gaps of supported beneficiaries but there is less evidence that they contributed to improved or diversified incomes for women and men. In the southwest region, the food consumption scores of targeted beneficiaries improved between 2021 and 2023 (strategic outcome 2).

WFP's Uganda country office began to explore a food systems approach, but there is potential for greater effectiveness through enhanced multisectoral engagement, innovative solutions, and strategic partnerships that support the development of market systems.

27. Training and onsite technical support provided by WFP contributed to improvements in the knowledge and practices of smallholder farmers in relation to post-harvest management and village saving and loan associations. The rate of post-harvest losses decreased from 17.9 percent in 2018 to 12.1 percent in 2023.³² However, smallholders still face challenges in obtaining access to markets (strategic outcome 4).
28. The local procurement of food under the home-grown school feeding programme is beginning to bring economic benefits to smallholder farmers and farmer organizations in Karamoja region. Since 2019, WFP has invested USD 2.5 million in purchasing 3,505 mt of food from smallholder farmers in Karamoja,³³ resulting in improved institutional and food supply capacity of farmer organizations³⁴ (strategic outcome 4).

³¹ Some of the young farmers' clubs and school gardens were supported by WFP's development partners.

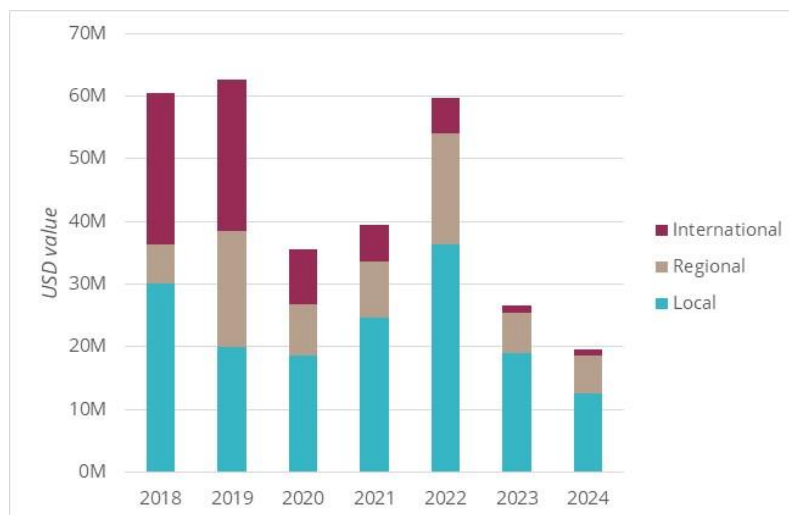
³² CM-R010b_Outcome indicators UG01 2023.

³³ WFP. 2024. *June 2024, Local and regional food procurement policy Uganda implementation plan (final)* (not published).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

29. WFP procured 621,400 mt of food through its Global Commodity Management Facility, increasingly from local and regional suppliers. WFP's purchases of food for Uganda have made it the largest purchaser of food in East Africa in terms of volume, but challenges in local procurement, such as traceability, remain (strategic outcome 6).

Figure 3: Country office food procurement by source, 2018–2024*



* Data for 2024 are for the period from January to May.

Source: Data on food procurement by the Government of Uganda and WFP's Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa in 2018–2024.

30. WFP made limited contributions to market linkages for supported smallholder farmers, and its support did not bring about widespread improvements in the capacity of private sector actors to adopt pro-smallholder farmer business models, engage in sustainable agriculture or produce safe and nutritious foods (strategic outcome 4).

WFP demonstrated effectiveness and potential sustainability in strengthening national and local capacity relevant to shock-responsive social protection systems. However, WFP is still learning how to be an enabler as well as an implementer.

31. WFP contributed to strengthened collaboration among national and subnational actors on social protection and the planning of resilience activities. At the national level, WFP helped to strengthen national social protection systems by supporting the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development in efforts to enhance the national identification card system and establish a national single registry. At the district level, WFP supported the roll-out of the Ministry of Local Government's digital village directory; the establishment of district social protection coordination committees; the development of district social protection investment plans; and the development of district-level contingency plans for disaster preparedness in nine districts (strategic outcome 5).
32. The positive effects of WFP's capacity strengthening interventions for social protection and shock-response systems are likely to be sustained, as evidenced by increased ownership of those systems by national and subnational social actors; the national social protection strategy for 2023–2028 includes shock-responsive social protection, school meal programmes, and the provision of social protection to refugees, all of which had previously been absent from the government agenda. The exception is the mechanisms for coordinating decentralized social protection, which still rely on external funding (strategic outcome 5).

33. There are, however, gaps in the sustainability of some initiatives, including agricultural market support activities in Karamoja and school meal programmes; WFP supported the Ugandan Government in joining the Global School Meals Coalition in 2022, but WFP and the Government have different visions for school meal programmes, the nature and evolution of the partnership between WFP and the Ministry of Education and Sports, and the extent to which the provision of school meals in Karamoja through the home-grown school feeding model – which is dependent on external funding and for which WFP is the sole implementer³⁵ – is a valid pilot for a country-wide scheme (strategic outcomes 2 and 4).
34. WFP's programming approaches recognized and supported the coexistence of refugee and host communities. In 2023, the country office designed a holistic package of support for self-reliance that enables refugees and the members of host communities to move from dependency on humanitarian assistance towards meeting their own essential needs. The model builds on the government-led expansion of an inclusive social protection system for refugees as they shift to self-reliance, in line with the humanitarian–development nexus approach (strategic outcomes 1, 2, 4 and 5).
35. WFP's inter-agency on-demand services provided valuable operational support to partners. Its transport and storage facilities for emergency response ³⁶ were used by partner United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on a cost-recovery basis and by the national Government free of charge. The country office provided crucial services for regional humanitarian corridors such as transport, handling, storage and customs clearance for food and non-food items for the East Africa region, including WFP operations in neighbouring countries (strategic outcome 6).

While WFP made efforts under the CSP to address cross-cutting issues such as those related to gender, environment and accountability to affected people, a more systematic approach is required.

36. Most CSP activities were **gender**-sensitive and promoted equal participation and a role in decision-making for women, but they rarely addressed social relations in ways that addressed the root causes of gender inequality. WFP contributed to a shift in gender dynamics in decision-making, with increasing numbers of refugee households reporting joint decision-making by women and men. Women were empowered through increased agricultural knowledge, financial literacy and enhanced decision-making capacity.
37. WFP maintained a community feedback mechanism, but its coverage across geographic locations and CSP activities was uneven, and the slow resolution of cases undermined beneficiaries' confidence in the mechanism. In 2023, WFP enhanced its strategy for community engagement in order to improve **accountability to affected people** by establishing a helpline and a help desk to create a more holistic community engagement and feedback mechanism.³⁷
38. Affected people had safe access to assistance and services, without barriers. However, changes in transfer modality, ration cuts and prioritization increased the **protection** risks for affected people. In 2024, as a result of the ration cuts, there were increases in intra-household conflict and division, and in abandonment by household heads. The

³⁵ Republic of Uganda, Ministry of Education and Sports. 2021. *SABER Report on School Feeding, Health and Nutrition in Uganda*, page 22 (not available online).

³⁶ Such as during the COVID-19 pandemic.

³⁷ In 2023, the community feedback mechanism was integrated with a stronger community engagement role for the country office as part of the research, assessment and monitoring team.

prioritization exercise reduced the number of people receiving WFP assistance, resulting in increased concern in communities regarding crime, theft, sexual and gender-based violence, child labour, transactional sex and teenage pregnancy.

39. The CSP addressed **environment and climate**-related shocks in some programme activities. For example, a pro-resilience action project strengthened shock-responsive systems and early warning and anticipatory action in Karamoja, and WFP supported beneficiaries in their efforts to adopt environmentally friendly livelihood practices. Other measures taken by WFP included screening for environmental and social risks in field-level agreements, memorandums of understanding and contracts. However, WFP did not systematically track or assess the results of its environmental sustainability efforts.
40. WFP adhered to **humanitarian principles** and employed its operational capacity to meet people's immediate needs and protect the ability of individuals and communities to live in safety and dignity. WFP adhered to the principle of impartiality and gave priority to the people with the greatest food security needs through interventions that targeted Ugandan and refugee women. However, WFP's ability to fully adhere to the principle of humanity was limited by circumstances, including a protracted crisis characterized by growing needs and limited resources.³⁸

Efficiency

Most CSP activities were implemented in a timely way, and their expenditures were in line with annual targets. However, there were delays in the implementation of some activities.

41. Most CSP activities were implemented in a timely way, but NutriCash, school meals, and asset creation and livelihood activities experienced some issues with timeliness. NutriCash beneficiaries experienced delays in receiving transfers, often due to operational challenges related to the use of banking agents. Asset creation and livelihood activities were affected by delays in seed deliveries, particularly after the rainy season, and WFP's lengthy procurement processes for purchasing beneficiaries' produce. These delays caused produce spoilage and loss, and poor food quality.
42. Expenditures on most CSP activities were in line with annual targets. By July 2024, at least 89 percent of the resources allocated for 2018–2024 for five of the nine CSP activities had been spent; for the remainder, the delays discussed in the previous paragraph led to reduced expenditure rates. Lower expenditure rates for activities 8 and 9 were attributed to the flexible scheduling of institutional capacity strengthening in child-sensitive social protection and a project for strengthening shock-responsive systems in Karamoja, and to the slow implementation of planned activities by government ministries, departments and agencies.

The shift to CBTs contributed to cost reductions and the optimization of resource use.

43. The shift to CBTs, despite operational challenges related to the use of banking agents and mobile money, enhanced the cost efficiency of the refugee response. The use of CBTs reduced transfer costs per beneficiary compared with in-kind assistance. For example, the average transfer cost per beneficiary for CBTs was lower than for in-kind food assistance in 11 months in 2023. CBTs also enhanced WFP's operational efficiency in providing food

³⁸ WFP. 2023. *Impacts of the Cost of Inaction on WFP Food Assistance in Uganda (2021 & 2022)*.

assistance and reducing the time that beneficiaries spent at food distribution points, thus limiting their risk of exposure to COVID-19.

44. Retail market engagement initiated in 2023 and 2024 began to provide options for market development and a more cost-efficient means of providing assistance in refugee settlements. Engagement in WFP's activities helped retailers to connect to banks and mobile money services, enhancing digital inclusion and business opportunities, such as with wholesalers, resulting in improved markets in refugee-hosting districts.
45. WFP's post-delivery losses remained well below the 2 percent target from 2020 to July 2024, except in December 2020. However, pipeline breaks, which lasted until 2023, were sometimes aggravated by funding shortfalls. While some breaks were mitigated by cash top-ups, others led to cuts in general food assistance rations, which had negative effects on food and nutrition security outcomes, community social cohesion, household relations and gender-based violence.

Internal and external factors critical to CSP implementation and results

CSP implementation was affected by a sharp decline in donor contributions in 2022 and 2023 and dependence on short-term funding.

46. All the strategic outcomes of the CSP, except for outcomes 4 and 5, were under-resourced compared with the needs-based plan, receiving less than 60 percent of the planned funds at a time when 82 percent of the CSP had been implemented. Faced with this, WFP opted to reduce rations rather than beneficiary numbers, meaning that beneficiaries received insufficient food assistance and to cut back programmatic activity. Several factors influenced the availability of adequate resources, including uncertainty in the timing of the confirmation of funding for strategic outcome 1 and shifting priorities among traditional donors. Multi-year funding represented only 7.9 percent of contributions from 2018 to 2024, with the majority of these funds being allocated to capacity strengthening and social protection work.
47. The introduction of new non-traditional donors, such as the Mastercard Foundation and Novo Nordisk, fostered innovative approaches, including those resulting in new opportunities for young people's employment and more sustainable food systems to support the home-grown school feeding programme.
48. Most donor contributions – 81.9 percent – were earmarked at the activity level throughout the CSP period. Earmarking posed challenges to the layering of activities among strategic outcomes because the timelines for implementation and the geographic priorities varied among outcomes.

WFP established strategic partnerships with government ministries, departments and agencies and with other United Nations entities, but engagement with the private sector was limited.

49. WFP strategically partnered with key government ministries, departments and agencies, which contributed to improvements in the capacity of national and subnational actors in relation to social protection, shock-responsive systems and community-driven planning of resilience activities. Partnerships with key ministries were characterized by multi-level engagement, clear terms of engagement, alignment with and use of government systems, and the secondment of staff for technical coordination. However, relationships with other relevant ministries were largely activity-based and ad hoc in nature, which impeded the potential for broader results.

50. WFP adopted a new long-term partnership approach to NGO partnerships to facilitate the development of local capacity. This allowed cooperating partners to plan with a longer time horizon and to have more stable staffing over the CSP period; nevertheless, challenges arose in working with WFP's corporate systems and requirements, particularly for local NGOs.
51. WFP did not draw on private sector partners to enhance performance in the early years of the CSP. However, WFP's recent shifts to more strategic engagement with the private sector shows promise for improving support for the development and transformation of food systems, including through collaboration on CBTs, young people's employment³⁹ and local procurement.
52. WFP's relationships with United Nations partners at the strategic and technical levels have been critical to the implementation of the CSP. Most of these partnerships had clear terms of engagement and reflected recognition of each partner's comparative advantage. Some gaps existed, however; for example, WFP has a memorandum of understanding with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), but collaboration remained primarily at the technical level.

The country office's organizational structure and gaps in its human resources capacity impeded programme integration and implementation.

53. Despite organizational realignment, the human resources capacity of the country office was not fully aligned with the strategic demands of the CSP over the period under review. Gaps in capacity and skills that affected CSP implementation included insufficient expertise in gender equality and women's empowerment; a lack of assessment of the staff skills needed for a shift towards capacity strengthening; and limited staffing for home-grown school feeding activities. In addition, an integrated programmatic approach was impeded by the country office's organizational structure, which perpetuated the "silo-ization" of activities.

The use of monitoring information to inform evidence-based management decisions was limited by the lack of validity of some indicators, inadequate staffing and limited knowledge management capacity.

54. Although WFP has strengthened its monitoring and assessment functions, the wealth of data generated is often not analysed or used to support CSP performance owing to limited human resources and knowledge management capacity. Corporate monitoring indicators did not facilitate the tracking of all CSP effects, including those related to strategic shifts towards food systems and institutional capacity strengthening.

Recommendations

55. The evaluation offers four strategic and two operational recommendations.

³⁹ Funded by the Mastercard Foundation

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP office and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
Recommendation 1: Enhance programmatic integration and coherence among activities in order to maximize synergies and effectiveness.	Strategic	Country office management		High	December 2025
1.1 Develop an overarching CSP theory of change that is linked to the “nested” theories of change for Karamoja activities and the refugee response and that reflects various contexts and needs; review and update the theory of change during CSP implementation.		Country office research, assessment and monitoring unit	Country office programme and supply chain units	High	March 2025
1.2 Adopt a more integrated approach to activity planning and implementation, including through supply chain and programme integration and thematic integration, for example. Other examples include the integration of activities under the concepts of self-reliance and social protection		Country office programme unit	Country office human resources (given that workforce considerations must be factored in) and supply chain units	High	November 2025
1.3 Develop a country office monitoring and evaluation, or a research, assessment and monitoring, plan that integrates monitoring and evaluation into all activities; prioritizes methods, reporting formats, visualizations and timing that facilitate the use of data in decision-making and advocacy; and outlines a knowledge management framework, including procedures for capturing and sharing learning among activities.		Country office research, assessment and monitoring unit	Country office management and programme and supply chain units	Medium	January 2026
Recommendation 2: Clearly define and strengthen WFP's role as an enabler of sustainable government capacity and systems, particularly in the areas of self-reliance, social protection – including school meals and shock-responsive systems – nutrition, and food systems transformation.	Strategic	Country office management	Eastern and Southern Africa regional office and headquarters divisions Country office supply chain, nutrition, agriculture market support, social protection and human resources units	High	November 2025 (for definition) and end of CSP (for strengthening)

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP office and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
2.1 Develop comprehensive transition strategies for each key programme area that include clear milestones and timelines for transferring ownership to the Government; the Government's resource commitments, including dedicated budget allocations; capacity strengthening plans at the national and subnational levels; measurable indicators for monitoring progress towards full transition; and explicit exit strategies tied to the achievement of capacity-related benchmarks.		Country office programme unit and strategic outcome managers	Country office social protection (includes school feeding) and other units	High	March 2026
2.2 Strengthen government systems and operational capacity by supporting data collection, analysis and utilization capability; building technical capacity for the measurement of self-reliance; and exploring the use of the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers for social protection programmes, including school meals, at the district level.		Country office programme unit and strategic outcome managers	Country office finance unit Headquarters (requires greater clarity regarding the corporate guidance on the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers)	High	End of CSP
2.3. Establish a clear framework for WFP's role in emergency preparedness and response that clarifies internal roles and responsibilities regarding support for government shock-responsive social protection systems and operational preparedness; includes concrete plans for handover as government capacity increases; specifies triggers for WFP's service provision in emergencies; and outlines WFP's responsibilities as logistics provider of last resort.		Country office programme unit and strategic outcome managers	Country office supply chain and programme units	High	November 2025
Recommendation 3: Develop a more strategic and sustainable approach to partnerships, especially with government ministries, private sector entities and local organizations.	Strategic	Country office management		High	January 2026

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP office and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
3.1 The country office should prioritize and establish more formalized, strategic partnerships with key government ministries beyond the office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, including, for example, a revised partnership with the Ministry of Education and Sports that clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the Government, WFP and school-based actors.		Country office programme unit	Country office partnerships unit	High	January 2026
3.2 Develop a clear and resourced action plan for engaging local NGOs and building their capacity as strategic, advocacy and implementation partners.		Country office programme unit	Headquarters Operational Partners Unit	Medium	November 2025
3.3 Develop a clear and resourced action plan for engaging private sector actors and building their capacity in transforming food systems.		Country office partnerships unit	Country office supply chain and programme units	Medium	November 2025
Recommendation 4: Improve the design and sustainability of resilience-building and self-reliance interventions for refugees and vulnerable people.	Operational	Country office programme unit	Country office research, assessment and monitoring unit	High	January 2026
4.1 Refine and scale up, if warranted, the self-reliance model as the main strategy for the “changing lives” agenda, integrating agriculture and market support, asset creation and livelihood, and nutrition-sensitive activities, retail market development, and other activities in refugee and host communities, from the design and proposal stage. Refinements could include harmonizing targeting criteria with government social protection systems; defining specific outcome indicators and related monitoring systems based on the self-reliance index; setting evidence-based criteria for geographical expansion; and revising entry and graduation criteria for participating households.		Country office programme unit	Country office research, assessment and monitoring, and supply chain units	High	January 2026

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP office and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
4.2 Strengthen the design of asset creation and livelihood interventions through extended timeframes aligned with realistic self-reliance milestones; tailored packages of complementary activities based on household capacity; the continued integration of digital financial services and literacy training; progression pathways from basic to advanced livelihood activities; regular market assessments and linkages with retail market development activities aimed at ensuring the relevance of interventions; and the systematic monitoring of income diversification outcomes.		Country office programme unit	Country office research, assessment and monitoring, partnerships and supply chain units	High	January 2026
4.3 Enhance support for smallholder farmer groups through an emphasis on value addition; access to markets; clear targets for increased market participation and incomes; and enhanced partnerships with the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives and private sector actors.		Country office programme unit	Country office supply chain unit	High	January 2026
Recommendation 5: Strengthen the advancement of cross-cutting priorities by establishing systematic approaches to gender responsiveness, environmental sustainability and accountability to affected people across all CSP activities.	Operational	Country office programme unit	Country office research, assessment and monitoring unit	High	January 2026
5.1 Implement a gender-responsive approach by allocating appropriate dedicated budgets for gender-specific interventions; establishing clear gender-responsive indicators for each programme area; creating activity-specific gender action plans with milestones and targets, required technical expertise, including for partners, and advocacy strategies to influence the enabling environment; and developing a gender knowledge management system that captures and shares good practices, documents evidence of gender-responsive changes, and informs programmatic adjustments.		Country office programme unit	Country office gender and protection, research, assessment and monitoring, and knowledge management units	High	January 2026

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP office and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
5.2 Strengthen the environmental sustainability of WFP's programming by conducting systematic environmental impact assessments for all activities; developing activity-specific environmental mitigation plans; and integrating nature-based solutions into programming and mapping opportunities across activities.		Country office programme unit	Country office research, assessment and monitoring, and supply chain units	High	January 2026
5.3 Continue to enhance accountability through a robust community feedback mechanism and meaningful participation under all activities and in all locations, especially activities not related to general food assistance.		Country office programme unit	Country office research, assessment and monitoring, and gender and protection units	High	January 2026
Recommendation 6. Enhance WFP's thought leadership and catalytic role in food systems transformation through multisectoral engagement and innovative solutions.	Strategic	Country office programme unit	Country office supply chain and partnerships units Regional office	Medium	June 2028
6.1 Scale up innovative private sector partnerships and market-based solutions to address food security and nutrition challenges. This could include establishing a structured private sector engagement strategy; creating innovative financing mechanisms that leverage private sector investments and support scalable market solutions; and developing specific value chain interventions to address key market inefficiencies.		Country office programme unit	Country office supply chain and partnerships units Regional office	Medium	June 2027
6.2 Strengthen and expand strategic engagement with relevant ministries, United Nations partners, especially FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), academia, local organizations and others to promote an integrated approach to food systems transformation. This could include continuing to strengthen formal coordination mechanisms and thematic working groups; continuing and expanding joint initiatives with other United Nations entities, especially FAO and IFAD, academia, and local organizations; and tracking collective progress and gaps in coordination.		Country office programme unit	Country office supply chain and partnerships units	Medium	June 2027

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP office and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
6.3 Build the evidence base for food systems transformation, including by strengthening government capacity in data collection and analysis and evidence-based policy-making, and adopting a stronger knowledge management and knowledge sharing function.		Country office programme unit	Country office research, assessment and monitoring, and communications units	Medium	November 2026

Acronyms

CBT	cash-based transfer
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CSP	country strategic plan
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
NGO	non-governmental organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal