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Summary report on the evaluation of WFP's corporate emergency response to the Sudan regional crisis (2023–2025)

Executive summary

The evaluation of WFP's corporate emergency response to the Sudan regional crisis (2023–2025) covers WFP's strategy and operations related to the crisis between April 2023 and August 2025 in the Sudan, the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan and Uganda. To achieve the evaluation's dual objectives of accountability and learning, a theory-based and mixed-methods approach was used to assess WFP's performance and generate evidence that could be used to improve WFP's ongoing response in the Sudan and other complex emergency responses.

The Sudan has struggled with persistent poverty, economic challenges and political instability. Since 2019, a series of events in the Sudan led to a severe humanitarian crisis, with 30.4 million people in need of assistance as of December 2024, and the world's largest displacement crisis, with 11.3 million people internally displaced and 4.3 million displaced to neighbouring countries.

WFP's early understanding of the impact of the crisis was limited, but it progressively filled in data gaps and thus improved its ability to determine priority needs and locations. WFP assistance was quickly targeted to reach newly displaced populations seeking refuge in neighbouring countries and fleeing conflict-affected locations inside the Sudan, but those who remained in inaccessible areas were initially underserved. Over time, WFP sharpened its focus and found creative ways to prioritize reaching the most vulnerable people, including those in persistently inaccessible locations.

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

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WFP delivered vital, large-scale humanitarian assistance to millions of people, despite extraordinary security and operational challenges that led to the death of several WFP personnel and contractors. However, the pace of the programmatic scale-up and the selection of assistance modalities were constrained by external and internal challenges. Pressure to respond quickly and at scale with limited resources affected the quality of WFP's response, resulting in shortcomings in inclusivity, accountability and conflict-sensitivity. WFP's adherence to humanitarian principles in the Sudan was challenged by the highly politicized aid environment and was hampered by insufficient corporate leadership and learning from other complex humanitarian situations.

The efficiency of WFP's early response in the Sudan was constrained by gaps in preparedness and risk aversion, yet positive improvements were achieved over time. Country offices in neighbouring countries successfully managed risk during the response. Despite initiatives designed to strengthen risk management, however, a lack of clarity on corporate risk appetite left the Sudan country office exposed and uncertain as to what constituted acceptable levels of risk.

WFP played a key role in the inter-agency response to the regional crisis, leveraging its strengths for the benefit of the wider humanitarian system. Despite the fact that a significant amount of funding was channelled through local organizations, however, genuine localization as envisaged in WFP's 2025 localization policy was limited.

WFP's corporate scale-up and response to the Sudan crisis lacked coherence as a unified regional response and did not consistently receive the corporate attention it deserved. The response came at a time when WFP faced competing demands for resources, putting country offices in the difficult position of scaling up their responses while simultaneously cutting personnel and managing funding gaps.

While there was no indication of a return to peace in the Sudan at the time of the evaluation, country offices were already looking ahead to scale back operations and transition, driven in large part by dwindling humanitarian funding. WFP's continued portfolio of resilience initiatives can support a future transition from emergency to recovery and resilience activities.

The evaluation presents five recommendations, which address WFP's response to the Sudan regional crisis and include corporate-level actions to improve other future responses. WFP should:

- (i) enhance its understanding of the effects of the Sudan crisis and its ability to prepare for and further respond to the ongoing emergency as well as other large-scale emergencies;
- (ii) strengthen the way in which it manages the inherent dilemmas involved in implementing a principled humanitarian response in circumstances like those in the Sudan;
- (iii) ensure that protection, conflict sensitivity, population groups experiencing greater access barriers and accountability to affected people are central to the design, implementation, monitoring and oversight of activities;
- (iv) reform approaches and systems to enable more meaningful localization of its assistance in the Sudan and neighbouring countries; and
- (v) adapt programming and planning for scale-down and a shift towards durable solutions and resilience initiatives.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of WFP's corporate emergency response to the Sudan regional crisis (2023–2025) (WFP/EB.A/2026/7-G/3) and the management response (WFP/EB.A/2026/7-G/3/Add.1).

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

Introduction

Evaluation features

1. The evaluation of WFP's response to the Sudan regional crisis from 2023 to 2025¹ was conducted from November 2024 to August 2025, covering WFP strategy and operations between April 2023 and August 2025 in the Sudan, the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan and Uganda. The evaluation had the dual purpose of supporting accountability to WFP stakeholders and providing learning about WFP's performance during the emergency operation with the aim of improving WFP's ongoing response to the Sudan crisis as well as its response to other future complex emergencies.
2. The evaluation assessed the appropriateness of WFP's response to the food security and nutrition needs of the people most affected by the crisis; the effectiveness and efficiency of the response in the Sudan and in neighbouring countries affected by the crisis; the internal and external factors influencing the overall coherence and results of WFP's response; and the prospects for a gradual scale-down of the response.
3. The evaluation used a theory-based and mixed methods approach as well as contribution analysis to answer the evaluation questions. It used evidence from sources including document review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and surveys. Three thematic workshops were organized on findings related to internal coordination, the humanitarian principles and duty of care. Two stakeholder workshops (one internal and one external) yielded inputs that informed the conclusions of the evaluation and the formulation of its recommendations.

Context

4. Despite its regional significance, the Sudan has struggled with persistent poverty, economic challenges and political instability.² Since 2019, a series of events in the Sudan led to a severe humanitarian crisis, with 30.4 million people in need of assistance as of December 2024, and the world's largest displacement crisis, with 11.3 million people displaced internally and 4.3 million displaced to neighbouring countries. Women and girls make up 54 percent of those displaced and have been disproportionately affected by the conflict.³
5. Although the Sudan has long faced food security issues, they intensified with the onset of the conflict. As of December 2024, 24.6 million people were expected to face acute food insecurity (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) phase 3 or higher) in the first half of 2025.⁴ Moreover, famine was confirmed in North Darfur in August 2024, and subsequent assessments have revealed that five additional areas are experiencing famine and that 17 others are at risk of famine.⁵ The economy has also been severely disrupted, with livelihoods, healthcare access and public health all affected. As for healthcare, only 16 percent of primary care facilities are operational, and the system is overwhelmed by recurring disease outbreaks, including outbreaks of cholera, dengue and malaria.⁶

¹ The present document is a summary report on the evaluation. The full evaluation report and all related documents are available on WFP's website.

² Fragile States Index. 2025. [Country Dashboard](#).

³ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. 2024. [Initial Gender Assessment: Sudan](#).

⁴ Noting the Government of the Sudan's reservations regarding the use of IPC data.

⁵ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. 2024. [Sudan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation – Updated Projections and FRC conclusions for October 2024 to May 2025](#).

⁶ World Health Organization. 2025. [Health Cluster Bulletin: Sudan, October – November 2024](#).

6. Access to humanitarian assistance has been impeded throughout the response due to insecurity, including attacks on aid workers and convoys, bureaucratic and administrative impediments and logistical and environmental challenges. Additional operational challenges include poor network connectivity, limited cash liquidity and insufficient technical and humanitarian staff on the ground. Funding is another critical challenge. The humanitarian response plan for the Sudan regional crisis was only 51.5 percent funded in 2023, 70.1 percent funded in 2024 and 25 percent funded as of September 2025.⁷
7. The conflict has had far-reaching consequences beyond the borders of the Sudan, affecting surrounding countries including the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan and Uganda. The crisis has led to high levels of cross-border displacement, including influxes of both refugees and returnees into countries already hosting large numbers of refugees and suffering from their own food insecurity and displacement stemming from conflict and natural disasters.

⁷ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Financial Tracking Service: Sudan 2023; country snapshots for [2023](#), [2024](#) and [2025](#).

TABLE 1. SUDAN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN, PEOPLE IN NEED: OVERALL, FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS AND NUTRITION								
	Total	Internally displaced persons	Host community	Non-hosting community	Refugees	Sex	Age	Persons with disabilities
Overall	30.4 million	8.9 million	6.4 million	14.3 million	892 000	Female: 57.7% Male: 42.3%	Children: 51.4% Adults: 43.3% Older persons: 5.3%	4.6 million
Food security and livelihoods	25.1 million	7.5 million	5.4 million	12.1 million		Female: 57.7% Male: 42.3%	Children: 50% Adults: 44% Older persons: 6%	3.8 million
Nutrition	3.7 million	984 400	618 500	2.2 million		Female: 57.7% Male: 42.3%	Children: 86.32% Adults: 13.68%	

Source: The Sudan humanitarian response plan.

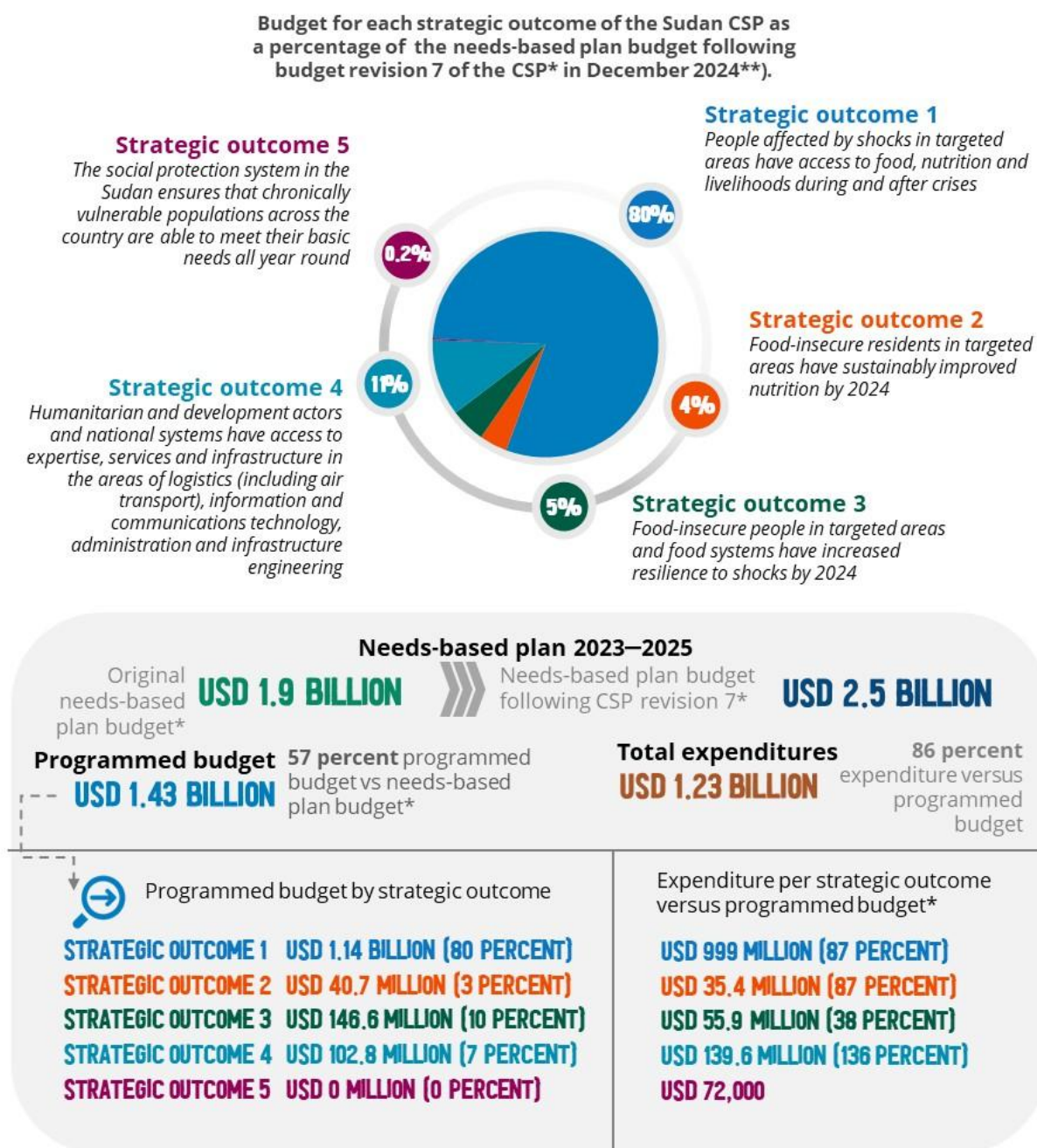
TABLE 2. EFFECT OF THE SUDAN REGIONAL CRISIS		
Country	Refugees from the Sudan since 2023	Sudanese refugees prior to the crisis
Central African Republic	45 386	282
Chad	878 002	409 819
Egypt	1 500 000	60 799
Ethiopia	76 085	48 964
Libya	337 000	20 000
South Sudan	400 648	289 797
Uganda	86 947	3 431

Source: WFP country office annual country reports.

Overview of the Sudan country strategic plan and the response in neighbouring countries

8. WFP's country strategic plan (CSP) for the Sudan for 2019–2026, approved in 2018 with a budget of USD 2.27 billion for assisting 6.25 million people, underwent significant expansion over the course of its implementation. By April 2023 the plan had already been revised four times, increasing the budget to USD 3.42 billion. Following the onset of the conflict, it was further revised, extending it to February 2026 and scaling it up to reach 27.68 million people with a budget increased to nearly USD 6 billion.
9. The original CSP strategic outcomes focused on responding to emergencies; reducing malnutrition and its root causes by building the resilience of food-insecure households and strengthening food systems; strengthening systems and structures in the provision of common humanitarian and development services; and making humanitarian and development actors more efficient and effective. Due to the escalating conflict and humanitarian crisis, however, the focus of the CSP shifted from development-oriented goals to urgent crisis response, with the latter accounting for approximately 90 percent of country portfolio needs, programmed budget and expenditure.

Figure 1: Budget and financial dashboard of the Sudan country strategic plan during the Sudan corporate scale-up (2023–2025)^{8, 9}

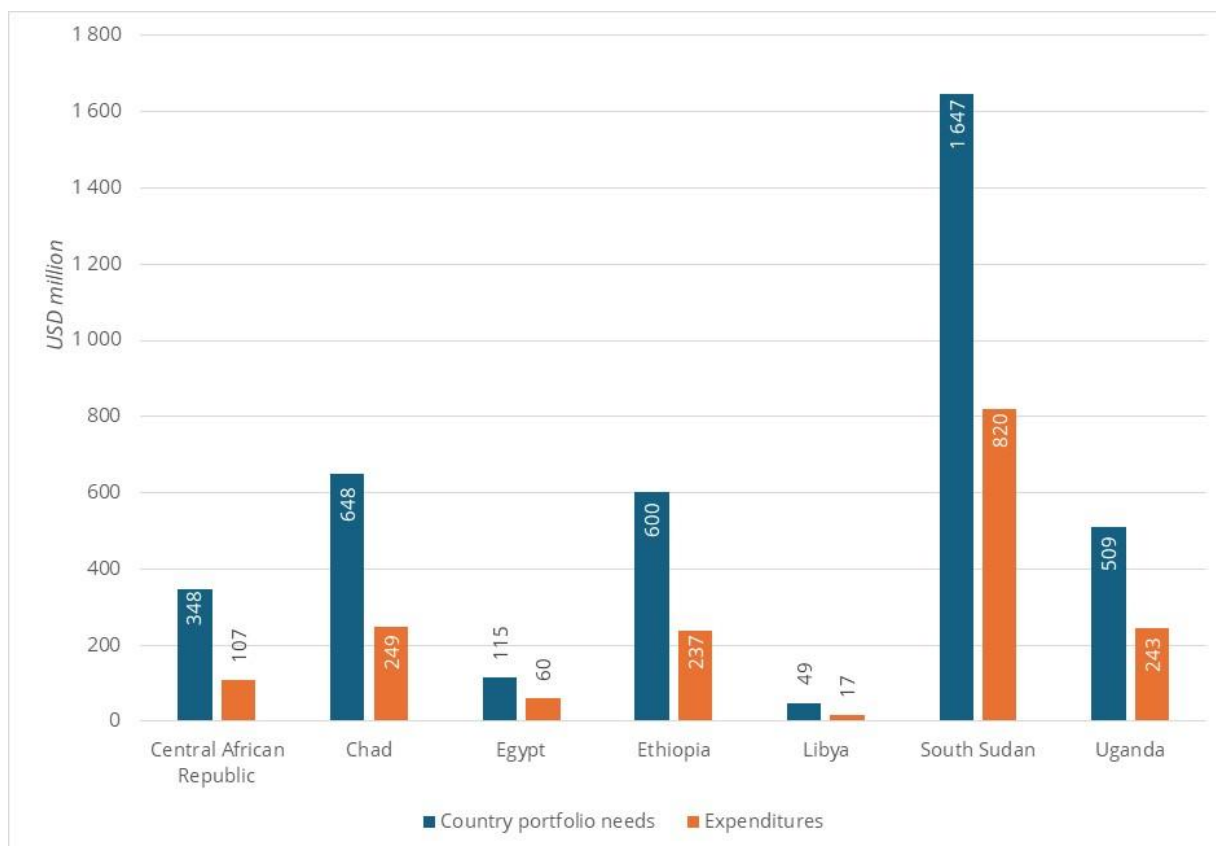


Source: EV_CPB_Resources_Overview, extracted on 25 September 2025.

⁸ All values are as they were following the seventh revision of the plan in December 2024; they include total transfer and implementation costs but exclude direct and indirect support costs.

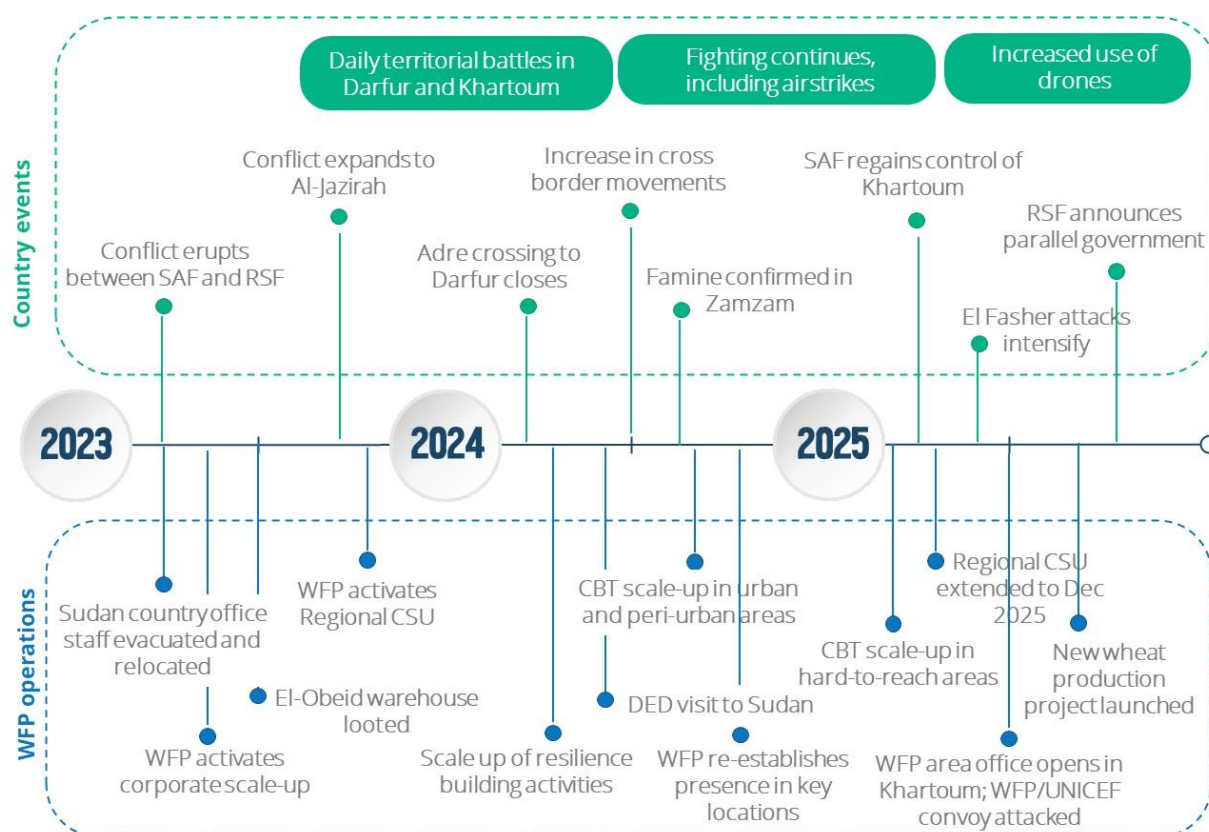
⁹ Two additional budget revisions were approved subsequent to the end of data collection for the evaluation, in July 2025 and February 2026.

Figure 2: Estimated budget and expenditures for the Sudan corporate scale-up in countries neighbouring the Sudan, from 2023 to August 2025¹⁰



Source: WFP Chief Financial Officer funds management reports – country portfolio budgets vs. actual expenditures 2023–2025 (by country).

¹⁰ Country portfolio needs and expenditures for the unconditional resource transfer activity under each country's country strategic plan from 2023 to August 2025.

Figure 3: Sudan country context and WFP operational overview

Abbreviations: CBT = cash-based transfer; CSU = corporate scale-up; DED = Deputy Executive Director; RSF = Rapid Support Forces; SAF = Sudanese Armed Forces; UNICEF = United Nations Children's Fund.

10. The countries neighbouring the Sudan hosted refugees and returnees and provided supply corridors into the Sudan. Under strategic outcome 1 of their respective CSPs, the WFP country offices in the neighbouring countries delivered food, nutrition assistance, cash transfers and school meals to refugees fleeing the crisis; they also provided air services and capacity support under strategic outcome 4. All the neighbouring countries enacted substantial CSP budget revisions during the period 2023–2025. These budget revisions were mainly to adjust caseloads and integrate Sudanese refugees into existing country frameworks. The number of people assisted in relation to the Sudan response varied widely between the country offices in the neighbouring countries, ranging from 2 percent to 100 percent of the number of people planned to receive assistance under strategic outcome 1 of their CSPs.
11. Funding needs, implementation plans and actual expenditures for the regional response varied across the Sudan and its neighbouring countries. The United States of America was the leading donor in all countries. In all countries, WFP experienced increasing funding challenges. In the Sudan, for example, only 54 percent of the funding required for the CSP between 2022 and 2025 was received, and the funding received was highly earmarked at the activity level (76 percent on average, and up to 84 percent in 2025).

Key evaluation messages and conclusions

Conclusion 1: WFP's early understanding of the impact of the crisis was limited, but it progressively filled data gaps and thus improved its ability to determine priority needs and locations.

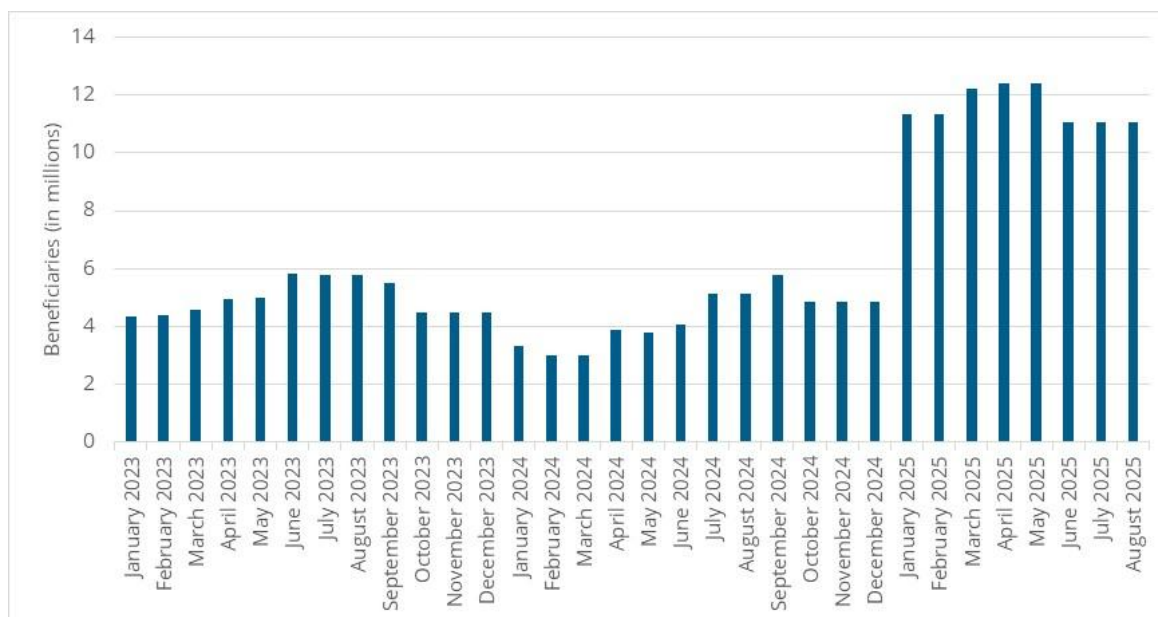
12. **Gaps in up-to-date assessment data, initially significant, were mostly addressed over time.** The outbreak of conflict in the Sudan quickly rendered existing needs assessments obsolete, and access constraints left gaps in WFP's early understanding of food security needs in affected areas. Rapid population movements and insecurity hindered data collection, resulting in substantial information gaps. These gaps were filled over time through several emergency food security assessments, although gaps remained in some insecure locations. In the seven neighbouring countries, WFP quickly assessed the immediate needs of new Sudanese refugees and returnees and incorporated those populations into periodic food security and nutrition vulnerability assessments.
13. WFP used its assessment data and analysis to inform its own responses in the Sudan and its neighbouring countries and to support a shared understanding of food insecurity across the humanitarian system. In 2025, WFP introduced new approaches designed to enhance the timeliness and usability of its assessment data in the Sudan. WFP assessments and surveys were well regarded and used by other stakeholders, although there were requests for more consistent and timely sharing of information.
14. The suspension of the IPC process in the Sudan in 2024 left a considerable gap in system-wide analysis and advocacy on food insecurity. While WFP continued to engage in global IPC processes, it kept some distance from country-level IPC work in order to protect its operational space. Instead, under WFP's leadership, the food security and livelihoods cluster conducted country-level analysis to determine which localities were in most urgent need of food security assistance; WFP also engaged in a multisector needs assessment led by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.
15. In the countries neighbouring the Sudan, **assessments were used to inform geographic prioritization but did not always sufficiently inform the adaptation of programmes to the profiles of refugees and returnees.** Rapid assessments supported targeting or prioritizing geographic areas where relevant (e.g. in the Central African Republic, Chad, Libya and South Sudan).¹¹ However, while assessments determined that refugees and returnees in the Sudan were generally more professional and urban or peri-urban than other refugee populations (e.g. in Uganda) or host populations (e.g. in Chad and South Sudan), resilience building programming was limited because it was primarily designed for those from a farming background (e.g. in Uganda). Assessments in neighbouring countries informed assistance modality choices for the Sudan response in Chad, the Central African Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Uganda. In Libya, however, government policies restricted the use of cash-based transfers (CBT) to host communities only. In the Sudan, early assessments of the feasibility of CBT did not result in their rapid scale-up.

Conclusion 2: WFP assistance was quickly targeted to reach newly displaced populations seeking refuge in neighbouring countries and fleeing conflict-affected locations inside the Sudan, but those who remained in inaccessible areas were initially underserved. Over time, WFP sharpened its focus and found creative ways to prioritize the most vulnerable people, including those in persistently inaccessible locations. Pressure to respond quickly and at scale with limited resources affected the quality of WFP's response, resulting in shortcomings in inclusivity, accountability and conflict sensitivity.

¹¹ Country offices responding in government-designated areas (e.g. in Uganda and Ethiopia) and highly mobile populations (e.g. in Egypt) did not have the same need for assessment-informed geographic targeting.

16. **WFP employed a multi-layered targeting approach in line with corporate guidance.** All country offices defined clear targeting strategies in line with corporate guidance, and in the neighbouring countries, new arrivals from the Sudan were included in pre-existing emergency response targeting strategies.
17. **Targeting became increasingly granular as the crisis evolved.** In the Sudan, geographic targeting initially focused on relatively accessible parts of the country in the east but progressively shifted to areas of active conflict where affected people were the most food insecure; some hard-to-reach areas nevertheless remained underserved. From November 2024, the concept of self-targeting and registration was introduced; this resulted in more detailed targeting but also heightened the risk of inclusion and exclusion errors, particularly in hard-to-reach areas.
18. **WFP operations in neighbouring countries consistently targeted new arrivals.** New Sudanese arrivals in neighbouring countries were consistently targeted for assistance using pre-existing targeting strategies focused on refugees and returnees, although reliance on registration as a prerequisite for the receipt of WFP assistance increased exclusion risks. In response to the influx of refugees from the Sudan, country offices in neighbouring countries targeted geographic areas with refugees and returnees, starting with cross-border or transit centre assistance and following up with assistance in settlements, camps and host communities, depending on the context and available registration information.
19. **Prioritization efforts in the Sudan saw numbers vary considerably over time.** With the number of people in severe need increasing from April 2023 onwards, and constrained by internal and external factors such as limited access and lack of flexible funding, the Sudan country office was faced with difficult prioritization decisions, including the reduction of ration sizes in line with available resources. Prioritization was also reflected in overall targeting numbers, which varied considerably over time and only stabilized and began to steadily increase in line with needs from January 2025 onwards, as shown in figure 4.¹²

Figure 4. Numbers of people planned to receive assistance in the Sudan, 2023–2025



Source: WFP's COMET system (January 2023 to August 2025) - Data on country strategic plan beneficiaries extracted on 6 October 2025.

¹² These shifts illustrate WFP's approach to prioritization in other countries, as highlighted in a [January 2026 strategic evaluation of WFP's approach to targeting and prioritization](#).

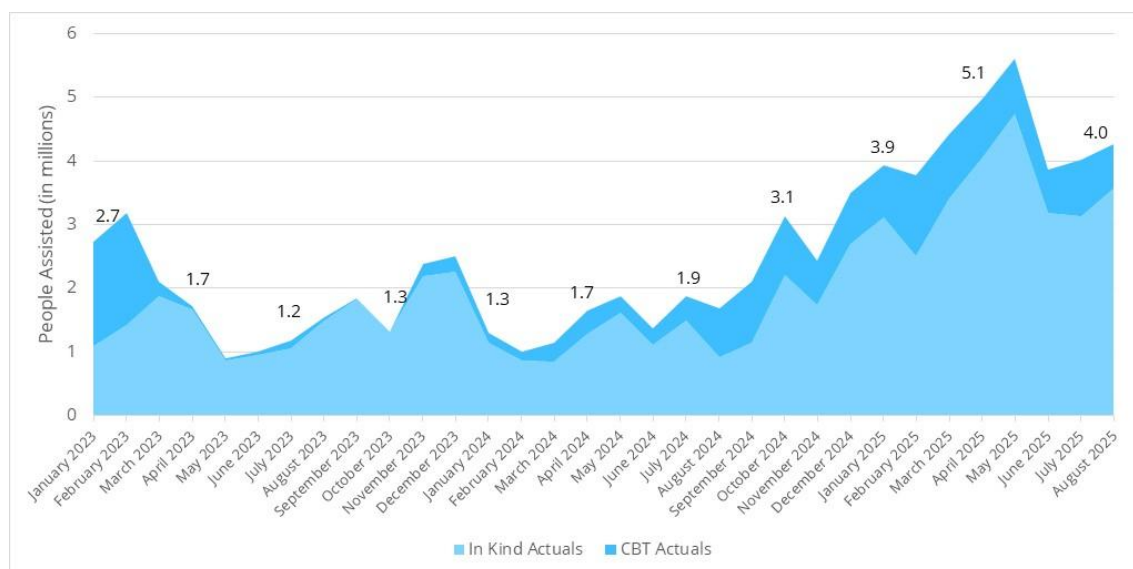
20. Driven by funding shortfalls, country offices engaged in prioritization exercises during the period under evaluation, initially in order to achieve breadth over depth (e.g. reducing ration sizes to reach more individuals) but later reducing both breadth and depth. The Uganda country office, for example, reduced the number of refugees it assisted by approximately 1 million. Most Sudanese refugees, however, were largely insulated from these prioritization processes as they were classified as new arrivals, receiving either full rations or the maximum possible rations (e.g. in Chad, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Uganda) and/or retaining the status of people assisted by WFP in cases where long-term refugee status became an exclusion criterion (e.g. in Uganda).
21. **Prioritization rationales were not always understood.** Despite efforts to communicate prioritization decisions to affected people, many communities did not seem to understand WFP's rationale for deciding who should receive assistance. The evaluation revealed that in the Sudan some affected people felt that such decisions were unfair. Complaints regarding exclusion from assistance accounted for 48 percent of all recorded communications with the community feedback mechanism in the Sudan in 2023.
22. **Considerable efforts were made to ensure protection but uptake of conflict analysis was limited.** Early in its response, across the Sudan and its neighbouring countries, WFP established measures to ensure the protection of people receiving its assistance and later introduced a more systematic strategy for integrating protection and conflict sensitivity into its operations. However, there was limited uptake of the conflict analysis that was conducted, primarily because of capacity constraints and time pressure.
23. **Equality considerations were integrated.** Despite the lack of a dedicated gender strategy in the Sudan, WFP factored equality between women and men into its targeting and mainstreamed it into its protection and conflict sensitivity strategy. Women accounted for more than half of all planned and actual people reached in the Sudan in 2023 and 2024. Persons with disabilities were underrepresented among the people that WFP assisted, and while there were examples of WFP tailoring its assistance to and reaching particularly vulnerable groups, the organization did not systematically incorporate broader inclusivity into its activities. In Chad and Egypt, special considerations and flexible arrangements for older adults and persons with disabilities in connection with general food assistance were lacking.
24. **Accountability mechanisms were in place but there was a lack of community awareness about how to use them.** Community feedback mechanisms were in place and operational in all countries, including in the Sudan following a period of disruption caused by the conflict. However, people were often unaware of how to get information on or complain about WFP assistance, and processes for managing feedback were lacking in some cases.

Conclusion 3: WFP delivered vital humanitarian assistance to millions of people, with some food security benefits realized despite extraordinary operational challenges in the Sudan and neighbouring countries.

25. **Assistance was delivered on a large scale despite operational challenges.** WFP faced significant barriers in the delivery of its humanitarian assistance inside the Sudan, including resource shortages, pipeline breaks, logistical challenges and security constraints. In some neighbouring countries, refugees receiving WFP assistance experienced delays due to supply chain, insecurity and funding constraints (e.g. in Chad, Ethiopia and Libya), but WFP and cooperating partner staff described immediate blanket in-kind emergency assistance as vital for new arrivals.

26. In the Sudan, the number of people reached with general food assistance fluctuated considerably but increased significantly overall, from 0.9 million people in May 2023 to 5.6 million people in May 2025 (figure 5). Despite its increased reach, however, WFP did not provide general food assistance or in-kind or CBTs to as many people as it intended. Food security and nutrition outcomes also fluctuated, including a decline in food consumption scores, particularly for women; improvement in dietary diversity scores; and a decline in the use of consumption-based coping strategies.

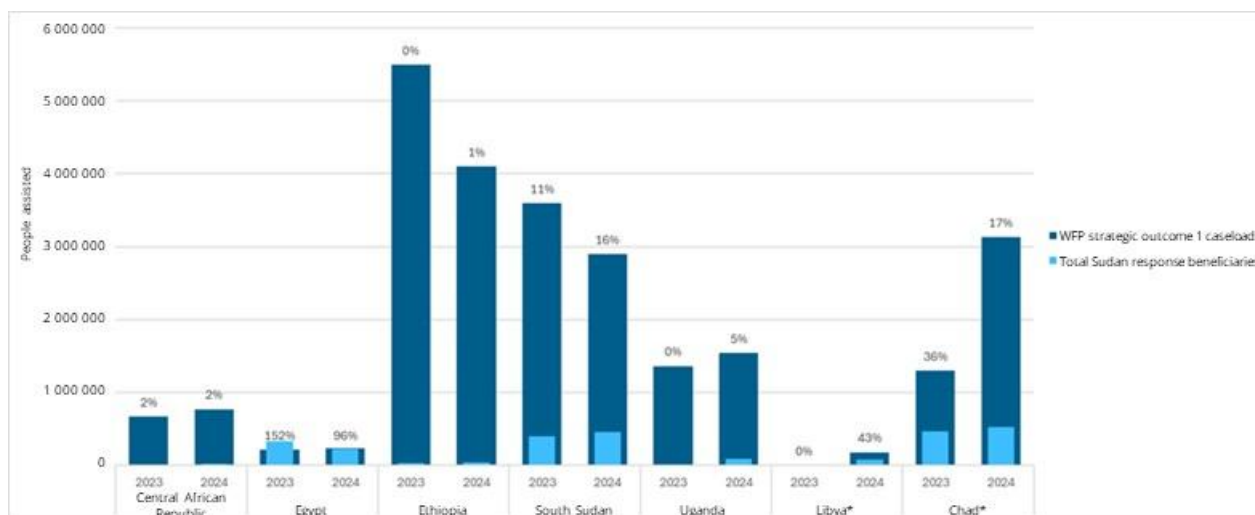
Figure 5. Number of people assisted in the Sudan with in-kind and cash-based transfers, January 2023–August 2025



Source: WFP COMET system-Jan 2022-Aug 2025 – Data on country strategic plan beneficiaries extracted on October 6 2025.

27. WFP caseloads in the countries neighbouring the Sudan varied, and the respective country offices addressed emergency response needs by providing unconditional resource transfers (in-kind and/or CBT). The most common example of such assistance was blanket in-kind support provided through ready-to-eat rations in border areas (e.g. in Chad, Egypt, Libya and South Sudan), followed by in-kind, CBT and hybrid assistance for subsequent support as appropriate. The number of people receiving such assistance, and their proportions relative to overall caseloads under strategic outcome 1 of the respective CSP for those countries (i.e. including beneficiaries not related to the Sudan response), varied considerably among the country offices (figure 6).

Figure 6. Number of people assisted by WFP through the Sudan response compared to total caseloads under strategic outcome 1, in countries neighbouring the Sudan, 2023–2024



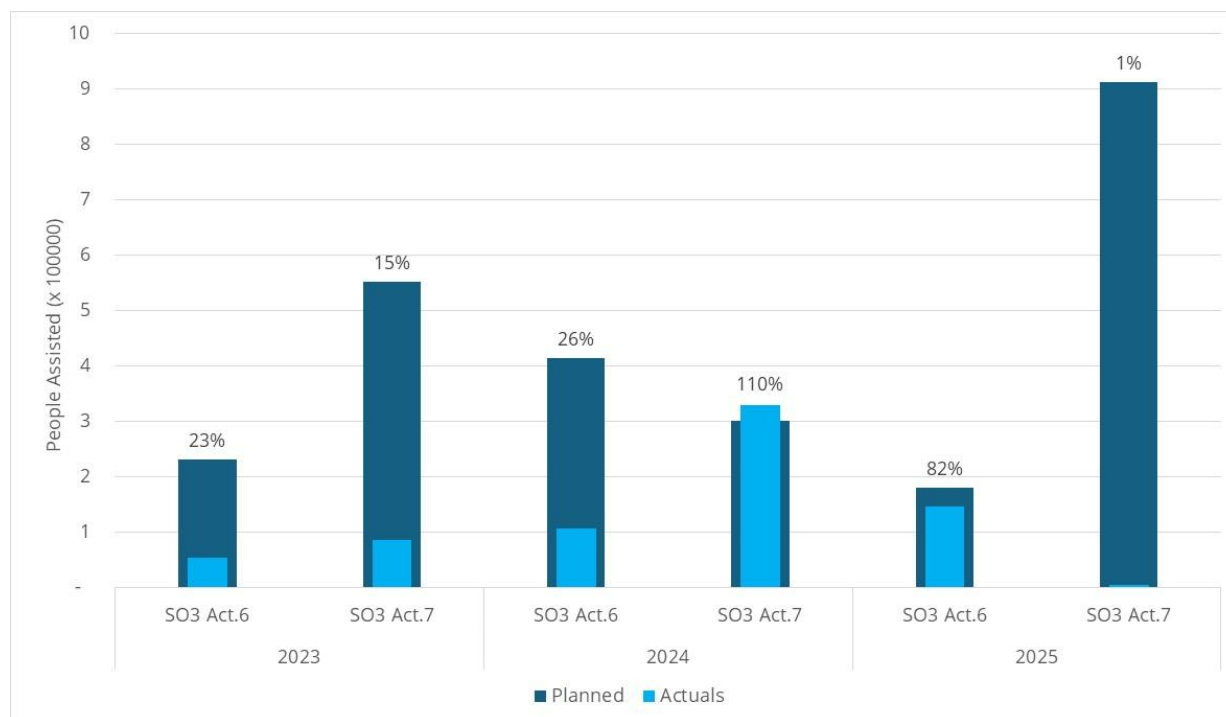
Source: Country office data on people receiving assistance through WFP's Sudan response, by year.

*Libya data include host communities; Chad data include host communities and returnees.

28. **Nutrition.** In 2023 WFP reached more people inside the Sudan with nutrition activities than planned, but in 2024 it reached just 37 percent of those targeted and in the first half of 2025, just 18 percent. **While moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) mortality rates remained at zero and MAM treatment rates reached close to the original CSP target, MAM treatment default rates were poorer than hoped for and MAM recovery rates declined over the period.** There were considerable external constraints (resource gaps, insecurity and harsh climatic conditions), and WFP's own planning and prioritization were insufficient to mitigate their impact; this led to pipeline breaks in 2024 and early 2025 and ultimately to unused stocks in mid-2025. This had a negative knock-on effect on other organizations' supply chain planning, on WFP's reputation and ultimately on vulnerable people urgently in need of nutrition support.
29. **School feeding. School closures following the conflict disrupted WFP's school feeding activities in some areas of the Sudan, leading to a reduced number of feeding days and the number of children WFP assisted falling short of targets.** Take-home rations resumed in March 2024 in more stable parts of the country, and the programme shifted to a home-grown school feeding model, thus supporting smallholder farmers with local procurement. Although formal outcome monitoring data on school enrolment, attendance and retention rates were not available after 2022, discussions with communities in areas where schools had reopened suggested that there were fewer school dropouts in areas where school feeding had resumed.
30. **Resilience.** Despite fewer people being reached in the Sudan than planned (figure 7), mainly due to the suspension of some activities following the conflict, **WFP's resilience programming enhanced smallholder productivity and national food systems, even during the ongoing crisis.** This was achieved notably through the continuation and expansion of large-scale agricultural support, which significantly boosted local production and provided immediate economic relief to affected communities and internally displaced persons. Due to the nature of the work and the preferences of donors, however, resilience activities tended to be concentrated in more stable locations in the east of the country. Women's food consumption scores increased among those participating in resilience activities, although men's did not.

31. Some country offices in neighbouring countries (e.g. Chad, Ethiopia and South Sudan) leveraged emergency nutrition and/or emergency school feeding activities to complement general food assistance. In Egypt, people benefited from food assistance for training and food assistance for assets activities as well as innovative approaches to vocational training, with positive impacts on living conditions.

Figure 7. Sudan planned vs. actual number of people assisted through food assistance for assets and smallholder agricultural market support activities, 2023–2025



Source: WFP COMET system – January 2022 – August 2025 country strategic plan beneficiaries_06-10-2025.

Abbreviations: SO = strategic outcome.

Note: Activity 6 relates to asset creation and technical assistance through safety nets and activity 7 to capacity strengthening relevant to agricultural value chains.

32. **Common services. In the Sudan and neighbouring countries, WFP’s support for common services enabled access to isolated populations, restored emergency connectivity, provided shared logistics services and sustained cross-border aid when in-country access failed.**
33. In the Sudan, United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) airbridges enabled rapid access to isolated populations, restored emergency connectivity and sustained cross-border aid when in-country access failed. Despite clearance challenges and security risks, UNHAS met the critical function of evacuating humanitarian actors from the Sudan, primarily through airbridges connecting Port Sudan with Nairobi and Amman.¹³ The number of passengers, organizations and flights served by UNHAS declined in 2023 and 2024 but rose in 2025 due to increased demand. Internal access for UNHAS was constrained by insecurity, bureaucratic impediments and spiralling costs. The logistics cluster supported system-wide efforts to reach vulnerable people in need. In 2024, for example, it stored more than 27,700 m³ of humanitarian supplies for 22 partners, more than double the amount in 2023. The emergency telecommunications cluster contributed to restoring or maintaining

¹³ In 2024, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service organized 507 flights to transport 8,063 passengers and 31 mt of cargo on behalf of 80 humanitarian organizations: WFP. 2025. [Sudan Annual Country Report 2024](#).

essential communications in locations affected by the conflict, enabling field teams to coordinate distributions and scale assistance.

34. In neighbouring countries such as the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt and Ethiopia, common services added value to the Sudan response by supporting access for the wider humanitarian response. For example, WFP's country office in Chad expanded UNHAS flight provision to meet the surge in humanitarian actors in the country due to the Sudan crisis.

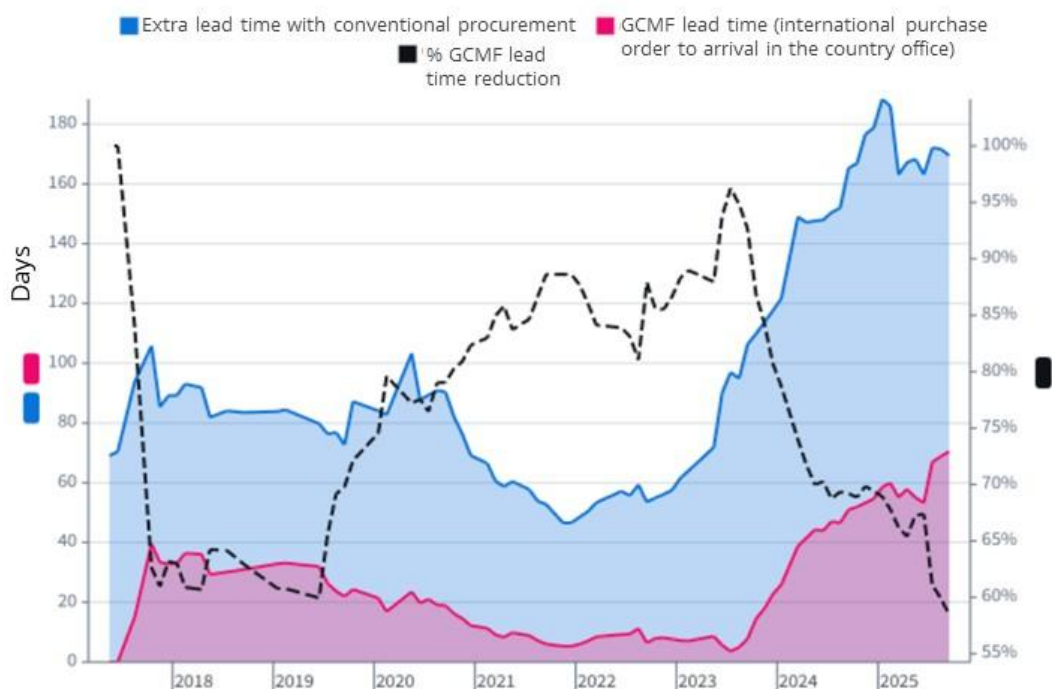
Conclusion 4: WFP's adherence to the humanitarian principles in the Sudan was challenged by the highly politicized aid environment and hampered by insufficient corporate leadership and learning from other complex humanitarian contexts. In neighbouring countries, WFP's commitment to the principles was visible but not specific to the Sudan response.

35. **Wider challenges impeded WFP's efforts to adhere to humanitarian principles.** The Sudan response took place amid global challenges to (and dilution of) the international humanitarian law that underpins the normative framework of the humanitarian principles. This had implications for advocacy for a principled approach.
36. The challenge to the perceived neutrality of the United Nations once it recognized the Transitional Sovereignty Council led by the head of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) as the sovereign authority of the Sudan impeded WFP's ability to negotiate access to areas not controlled by the SAF. Its perceived operational independence was also compromised. This was an especially acute dilemma, given that humanitarian needs were consistently high and, at least in the early phase of the response, poorly met in parts of the country not controlled by the SAF, including in the regions of Darfur and Kordofan.
37. The access constraints and the pressure to reach large numbers of people with WFP assistance meant an initial focus on locations that were relatively easy to reach. This operated against the principle of impartiality. However, WFP gradually found more creative ways of reaching areas not controlled by the SAF. WFP also initially missed opportunities to work more closely with donors to advocate for principled access, although this improved over time as WFP progressively increased its political analysis, engagement and humanitarian diplomacy with high-level representatives of various stakeholders (including donors) to secure access and open corridors.
38. Delayed engagement with and support for local front-line civil society actors leading the response, such as mutual aid groups, compromised the principle of humanity. Moreover, some of WFP's partner requirements limited partners' ability to make their own decisions on the most effective ways of following the principles of humanity and impartiality, for example whether to reduce ration size in order to increase the number of people assisted. With time, however, WFP did find ways to support these local partners, although concerns that national partners were not adequately supported by WFP in negotiating access with armed groups, such as the Rapid Support Forces, persisted.
39. **Greater corporate support and guidance were needed.** Overall, there was a high level of understanding of the humanitarian principles among WFP staff, at both the middle and senior leadership levels. However, translating this knowledge into practice and adhering to the principles in the highly politicized context of the Sudan was extremely challenging. Constraints included a lack of escalation pathways and senior management support when dilemmas arose; unclear strategic guidance, analysis and leadership for country-level staff with regard to the principles; siloed ways of working; and limited application of learning from WFP's experience in other emergency settings. This resulted in a piecemeal approach to applying the principles, particularly on challenging issues such as engagement with the SAF.

Conclusion 5: The early efficiency of the response in the Sudan was hampered by preparedness gaps and risk aversion, yet positive improvements were achieved over time. Country offices in countries neighbouring the Sudan managed risk successfully during the response. However, despite WFP initiatives designed to strengthen risk management, such as the global assurance project, a lack of clarity regarding corporate risk appetite left the Sudan country office exposed and uncertain regarding acceptable levels of risk.

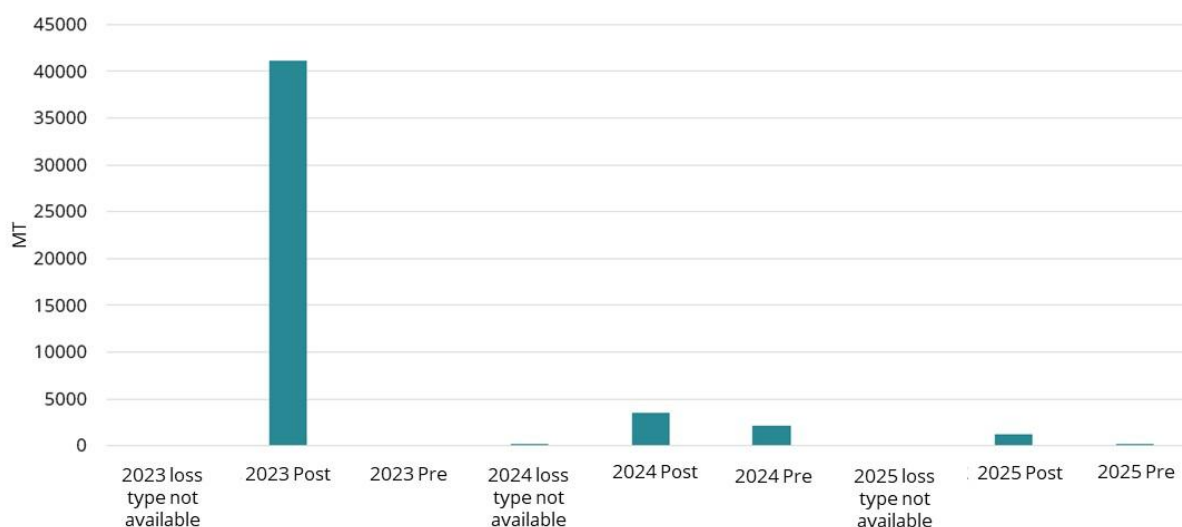
40. **In the Sudan, neither WFP nor the broader United Nations system anticipated the scale or complexity of the conflict, which led to a lack of early warning and contingency planning.** Gaps in pre-crisis preparedness included the late development of a critical staff list, insufficient use of the United Nations warden system, inadequate numbers of drivers and lack of access to emergency rations. WFP did, however, play a key role in the evacuation of United Nations staff from Khartoum, as well as in other measures such as the use of the surge capacity of the WFP-led emergency telecommunications cluster to facilitate the quick resumption of WFP and system-wide humanitarian operations.
41. Supply preparedness actions such as pre-positioning were largely reactive in the Sudan, which delayed the initial scale-up of the response. As the conflict evolved, WFP continued to follow a predominantly responsive supply chain approach. Country offices in neighbouring countries with longstanding emergency experience and capacity for pre-positioning, such as those in Chad and South Sudan, were more readily able to integrate influxes of Sudanese refugees and returnees and respond efficiently than others such as the Libya country office, which was scaling down at the time of the crisis.
42. **Timeliness improved as the crisis evolved.** Timely delivery of in-kind assistance in the Sudan was hampered by factors such as denial of access, security challenges, liquidity shortages for transporters, seasonal inaccessibility and weather-related infrastructure failures. Timeliness improved as the crisis response evolved, however, except in some hard-to-reach areas. The response in neighbouring countries was generally timely, but various country offices faced specific challenges such as CBT disbursement delays in Egypt, security-related access constraints in Ethiopia and bureaucratic impediments in Libya.
43. The use of cross-border corridors to boost WFP's reach in the Sudan was mostly limited to the east and west corridors, which impeded overall response coverage and timeliness. Despite the existence of other corridors with the potential to facilitate a timely response, diversification was limited, resulting in inefficient logistics arrangements and extended dispatch routes. WFP used the Global Commodity Management Facility (GCMF) to support the scale-up of its activities in the Sudan, but optimal utilization of the GCMF was impeded by a range of complex factors such as challenges with demand visibility, management issues, shelf-life restrictions and, in particular, a lack of financial risk appetite; this led to increased lead times and missed opportunities to achieve cost-efficiency (figure 8).

Figure 8. Lead time from international purchase order (via GCMF) and GCMF lead time reduction (as a percentage)



Source: Sudan Lead-Times and Cost Evolution, Supply Chain Planning and Optimization Unit, September 2025.

44. **There was potential to improve cost-efficiency.** High transport costs and dependence on corridors with long supply routes drove up costs in the Sudan until 2025, when lower-cost corridor options were also utilized. Earlier and more decisive supply chain management, including with regard to the use of corridors, conflict-appropriate transport options and the use of the GCMF, could have improved the cost-efficiency of the response in the Sudan.
45. Food losses in the Sudan were significant following the outbreak of conflict, mainly due to looting and violence, with 2023 losses accounting for 79 percent of WFP's global food losses that year. However, the stocks that remained in 2023 were quickly distributed and significant improvements were made from early 2024, with minimal losses reported in 2024 and 2025 (figure 9).

Figure 9. Pre- and post-delivery losses in the Sudan, 2023–2025

Source: Food loss report, accessed on 19 May 2025.

46. The cost efficiency of commodities compared with CBT in the Sudan varied, with high transport costs for commodities affecting their cost-efficiency and the comparatively high cost of commodity vouchers driving up the costs of CBT overall. However, the speed and flexibility of CBTs made them the most appropriate modality in certain areas, while in-kind assistance was considered appropriate in areas at risk of famine, given pipeline availability and weak local markets. In neighbouring countries there was a general shift towards CBTs, including for cost-efficiency reasons.
47. **There were gaps in risk management but also good examples of innovation.** There was considerable pressure on the Sudan country office to scale up in order to maximize the number of people assisted, using a “no regrets” approach, yet a lack of clarity on corporate risk appetite and limited internal capacity on risk management left the office uncertain about acceptable levels of risk. The challenging environment drove innovations such as the “B2B” model, which leveraged the procurement of food from local Sudanese producers and traders, thus supporting the local economy, as well as support for community-led “emergency response rooms”,¹⁴ which proved crucial for gaining access to hard-to-reach areas in the Sudan but also posed additional risk for the organization.
48. **Security risk in the Sudan was high and tools for managing risk were insufficient.** Security risk in the Sudan was acute, and WFP tragically lost six staff members and five contractors over the period covered by the evaluation. It was also forced to suspend operations during times of extreme insecurity. WFP flexibly adapted its operations to address security challenges as they arose, but the Sudan country office lacked reliable tools for assessing security readiness, prioritizing mitigation actions and demonstrating accountability.
49. In countries neighbouring the Sudan, security was likewise a substantial factor in risk management structures and processes, although this was not entirely due to the Sudan crisis. Donor trust and risk sharing regarding the response in the Sudan increased over time thanks to greater transparency and more regular and open communications.

¹⁴ Emergency response rooms were established through a community-led initiative funded by communities and external donors. They played a crucial role in providing humanitarian aid from the outbreak of the conflict in April 2023.

Conclusion 6: WFP played a key role in the inter-agency response to the regional crisis, leveraging its strengths for the benefit of the wider humanitarian system. However, despite the fact that significant funding was channelled through local organizations, genuine localization as envisaged by WFP's 2025 localization policy was limited.

50. **WFP effectively led and participated in clusters and inter-agency forums.** WFP's leadership of clusters and its provision of common services in the Sudan benefited humanitarian actors, as did its active engagement in other inter-agency forums. One exception was work on cash coordination, in which its participation was limited. In the neighbouring countries WFP was viewed as an effective and influential humanitarian partner, and its positive engagement with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration was particularly valued.
51. **There was scope for greater localization with regard to cooperating partners.** Cooperating partners were instrumental to the delivery of WFP assistance in all countries affected by the Sudan crisis. WFP increased partnerships with local and national NGOs, but localization tended to focus on operational delivery rather than the fostering of strategic partnerships, and local partners were particularly negatively affected by operational and bureaucratic processes within WFP.
52. **WFP leveraged the private sector to implement operations.** WFP's engagement with the private sector was also vital to the response, particularly with regard to CBTs and logistics. Engagement with financial service providers enabled WFP to scale up cash assistance in 2024 and shift towards digital cash transfers between 2023 and 2025. In neighbouring countries, WFP private sector engagement included third-party monitoring firms, and the Egypt country office also innovatively engaged with vocational training partners.
53. **Engagement with government actors was mixed.** WFP's engagement with government actors in the Sudan was strained by political tensions. However, WFP maintained technical engagement with various government institutions, including line ministries at the federal, state and local levels. In neighbouring countries, the relationship with host governments regarding the refugee response was largely constructive.

Conclusion 7: The scale-up of the emergency response lacked coherence as a unified regional response and did not consistently receive the corporate attention it deserved. WFP's response came at a time when the organization faced competing demands for resources, putting country offices in the difficult position of scaling up their responses while simultaneously cutting personnel and managing funding gaps. This also negatively affected staff wellness and morale, particularly in the case of national staff, despite WFP's efforts to fulfil its duty of care responsibilities.

54. The Sudan crisis coincided with competing crises elsewhere and internal organizational changes. While the relevant emergency management structures were established to provide oversight for the operational and strategic aspects of the response, corporate attention to the crisis proved difficult to sustain at a strategic level.
55. **Emergency activation (corporate scale-up) yielded benefits for the countries covered.** WFP's regional corporate scale-up increased resource mobilization efforts for the countries that it covered, including by mobilizing support from global headquarters offices, but it left other countries unsupported. Overall, the regional dimension of the crisis did not receive sufficient attention, and WFP's response was managed primarily as a series of country office responses with varying degrees of regional and global support and reporting expectations. There were also several important deviations from emergency activation protocols, including with regard to the level at which decisions were made and the deployment of a large regional

emergency coordination team. The latter yielded several benefits, including strengthened donor liaison, coordination of joint appeals and proposals, stronger advocacy for cross-border operations and more emphasis on protection during the response, but also resulted in unclear accountability and the creation of an additional management and reporting layer.

56. **Human resource gaps impeded the response.** Frequent staff rotations and staffing cuts affected WFP's ability to deliver a strong response at scale in all countries affected by the crisis. In the Sudan, WFP had a vacancy rate of at least 34 percent from January 2022 onwards, rising to 44 percent throughout 2024. Concurrently, realignment exercises in 2024 and 2025 reduced staff capacity at a time when the country office was under pressure to achieve ambitious targets. Short-term deployments in the Sudan added value but undermined the consistency and sustainability of operations.
57. **Events in the Sudan took a severe toll on staff wellness and morale.** The conflict itself and the subsequent evacuation and displacement of staff and families traumatized many staff. WFP acted on its duty of care in accordance with the United Nations staff rules and regulations,¹⁵ but staff questioned their adequacy for national staff, who were particularly affected by the crisis.
58. **Funding was a challenge throughout the response.** Available resources for the Sudan exceeded budgetary requirements in 2023 and 2024, and internal advance financing mechanisms were critical in allowing WFP to initiate and scale up aspects of the response in the Sudan and its neighbouring countries. Resource gaps and strict donor earmarking nevertheless constrained aspects of WFP's response in all countries, limiting its reach – in particular its ability to reach vulnerable populations with CBTs.
59. **Some corporate systems had to be adapted.** In the Sudan the standard field-level agreements for work with cooperating partners had to be adjusted to facilitate work with emergency response rooms. The conflict disrupted WFP's monitoring systems in the Sudan, but monitoring coverage and quality were subsequently strengthened; in neighbouring countries, monitoring data that were not disaggregated by caseload made it difficult to pinpoint progress towards goals for new Sudanese refugees and returnees compared to other people receiving WFP assistance. Lessons were learned, but follow-up on recommendations was not systematically tracked or documented.

Conclusion 8: While there was no indication of an imminent return to peace in the Sudan at the time of the evaluation, country offices were already looking ahead to the scale-back and transition of operations, driven in large part by dwindling humanitarian funding. WFP's ongoing portfolio of resilience activities in the Sudan will be an asset in a future transition, providing that it can be leveraged to also foster stability and offer hope to those in perennially insecure locations.

60. **An overall scale-back of operations in the Sudan is not yet appropriate but there is scope for a transition from emergency assistance to resilience activities in some areas.** Given the ongoing conflict in the Sudan and worsening food insecurity in conflict-affected areas in the west of the country, there is consensus that the time is not yet right to begin

¹⁵ Measures included special arrangements for staff to work remotely, efforts to improve working and living conditions (particularly living conditions for female staff), appointment of a dedicated staff counsellor (with a second, Arabic-speaking staff counsellor due to come on board at the time of the evaluation), creation of a network of trained wellness volunteers for the country office and field offices and the establishment of a medical centre at the country office. Specific actions for national staff included setting up a national staff help desk and the adoption of measures such as termination indemnities for national staff and consistent rules regarding remote working.

scaling back WFP's emergency assistance country-wide. However, dwindling humanitarian funding has driven WFP to reprioritize and conduct retargeting exercises to reach the most vulnerable populations.

61. Where conditions are conducive in more peaceful parts of the Sudan, predominantly in the east, there is scope to begin planning and implementing transition activities and continuing resilience-building efforts where feasible. WFP's pre-conflict resilience portfolio, which is ongoing, provides a solid foundation for transition planning. However, funding shortages remain a key factor driving the scale-back of WFP activities.
62. **There are diverse approaches to the long-term transition of operations in neighbouring countries.** In countries hosting Sudanese refugees and returnees, a lack of sustained funding has been a major driving factor in discussions on prioritization and possible scale-back, including the need to avoid the protracted operation of camps. While some country offices have included newly arrived Sudanese refugees and returnees in resilience activities and transition planning, others have not yet integrated them into long-term programming. Moreover, in some countries, such as Uganda and South Sudan, resilience-oriented work focused on rural livelihoods and was therefore its relevance to predominantly urban Sudanese people was questionable.

Recommendations

63. The evaluation presents five recommendations for WFP's consideration at various levels. They are set out in the table below.

Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
<p>Recommendation 1: Enhance WFP's understanding of the effects of the Sudan crisis and its ability to prepare for and respond to that crisis as well as other large-scale emergencies, including those that affect more than one country or region.</p> <p>Linked to conclusions 1, 2, 5 and 7.</p>				Medium	
<p>1.1. Institutionalize rapid adaptation of assessment and analysis processes and products to ensure that the relevance of the ongoing Sudan regional response is supported by timely data and new vulnerability assessment and mapping tools and methodologies. Ensure that this includes up-to-date market assessment data and cost-efficiency analysis to enable WFP to adapt assistance modalities in a timely and relevant manner.</p>	Operational	Country offices (Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Egypt, Libya, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda) vulnerability assessment and mapping and research, assessment and monitoring units	Programme units in country offices; Emergency Preparedness and Response Service at global headquarters; Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service at global headquarters; Supply Chain and Delivery Division; Delivery Assurance Service	Medium	December 2026
<p>1.2. Institutionalize scenario-planning and simulation exercises at country offices implementing the Sudan response (with the participation of global headquarters) to strengthen country, multi-country and multi-region preparedness as a key part of ongoing readiness for the evolution of the crisis and in anticipation of other emergencies.</p>	Operational	Programme units in country offices (Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda)	Emergency Preparedness and Response Service at global headquarters	Medium	December 2026

Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1.3. Agree on ways to ensure that the country office staff implementing corporate scale-ups have adequate skillsets, particularly for those in key leadership roles, programmatic functions (including nutrition), vulnerability assessment and mapping, supply chain, cash-based transfers and cross-cutting functions such as access, protection, working with vulnerable groups experiencing greater barriers to access, and conflict sensitivity.	Strategic	Workforce Planning and Strategy Branch at global headquarters		Medium	March 2027
<p>Recommendation 2: Strengthen the way in which WFP manages the dilemmas inherent to implementing a principled humanitarian response in the Sudan.</p> <p>Linked to conclusion 4.</p>				High	
2.1. Establish formal escalation pathways for country office and global headquarters staff to assist them in navigating the dilemmas and trade-offs related to humanitarian principles in the Sudan (e.g. neutrality vs. access), preventing reliance on fragmented, localized solutions. Such pathways should be informed by relevant WFP policies, procedures, communications and lessons learned from other comparable settings, adapted to the situation in the Sudan. ¹⁶	Operational	Sudan country office	Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office; Emergency Preparedness and Response Service at global headquarters	High	December 2026

¹⁶ Recommendation 3 resulting from the [evaluation of WFP's emergency response to the prolonged crisis in the Sahel and other countries of Central Africa](#), covering the period from 2018 to 2023, called on WFP to establish a protocol to allow country offices to request support from headquarters in Rome when handling sensitive and high-risk dilemmas. [The management response to that recommendation](#) stated that WFP's senior management would issue a communication on the need to follow already established risk escalation protocols. Recommendation 2.1 here builds on that and seeks to ensure that existing processes and communications are formalized and routinely followed in the Sudan country office.

Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
2.2. Coordinate internally and with the international humanitarian system at the highest level to allow simultaneous corporate support for international processes in the Sudan, such as the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, while protecting the country office from backlash.	Strategic	Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service at global headquarters	Sudan country office	High	April 2027
<p>Recommendation 3: Strengthen approaches to protection, conflict sensitivity, inclusivity and accountability to affected people during WFP’s response to the emergency to ensure that they are central to the design, implementation, monitoring and oversight of activities.</p> <p>Linked to conclusion 3.</p>				High	
3.1. Ensure that protection, including for vulnerable groups, and accountability to affected people move from being secondary tasks to core operational responsibilities. At the same time, ensure that the needs of persons with disabilities are included as a core design element of emergency programming by allocating resources for accessibility.	Operational	Programme units in country offices (Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Libya, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda)	Gender, Protection and Inclusion Unit at global headquarters	High	December 2026
3.2. Collaborate with other United Nations entities on registration processes in countries neighbouring the Sudan to facilitate the active targeting of vulnerable unregistered populations and reduce exclusion risks.	Operational	Programme units in country offices (Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan, Uganda)	Emergency Preparedness and Response Service at global headquarters	High	June 2027

Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
<p>Recommendation 4: Reform approaches and systems to enable more meaningful localization of WFP's assistance in the Sudan and neighbouring countries. Use the Sudan experience of working with emergency response rooms to inform more efficient and effective ways of partnering with community-based organizations in the Sudan and in other contexts.</p> <p>Linked to conclusion 6.</p>				High	
<p>4.1. Reform partnership management processes to reduce administrative burdens, including by shortening the time required to process invoice payments and approve proposals, thereby supporting local actors and enabling localized decision-making. Ensure that partner management processes enable WFP to directly partner with community-based organizations, including through the adaptation of the current field-level agreement delivery model and flexible use of United Nations partnership portals.</p>	Operational	Programme units in country offices (Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda)	Delivery Assurance Service; Operational Partners Unit at global headquarters	High	December 2026
<p>4.2. Schedule discussions with local cooperating partners on risk sharing to address financial risks (e.g. the implications of the slow payment of invoices) and roles and responsibilities related to access negotiations.</p>	Operational	Programme units in country offices (Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda)		High	June 2026

Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
<p>Recommendation 5: Adapt programming and planning for scale-down and a shift towards durable solutions and resilience.</p> <p>Linked to conclusion 8.</p>				Medium	
<p>5.1. Determine the criteria for transitioning from emergency to recovery and resilience activities in the Sudan and neighbouring countries and the scale-up of livelihood and resilience support, maximizing opportunities to layer and sequence life-saving and life-changing activities, including in conflict-prone localities.</p>	Operational	Programme units in country offices (Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda)	Climate and Resilience Service at global headquarters	Medium	December 2026
<p>5.2. Incorporate tailored urban resilience models (e.g. vocational training) into the country strategic plans for the countries neighbouring the Sudan in order to align programming with the predominantly urban profile of the Sudanese refugees, rather than defaulting to rural livelihoods programming.</p>	Operational	Programme units in country offices (Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan, Uganda)	Emergency Preparedness and Response Service at global headquarters	Medium	June 2027

Acronyms

CBT	cash-based transfer
CSP	country strategic plan
GCMF	Global Commodities Management Facility
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
MAM	moderate acute malnutrition
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service