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Evaluation Reports

**For consideration**

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## **Summary evaluation report – South Sudan country portfolio (2011–2016)**

### **Executive summary**

This country portfolio evaluation covered the 2014–2017 country strategy and all WFP operations and geographic target areas in South Sudan during 2011–2016. It assessed: WFP's alignment and strategic positioning; the factors and quality of its strategic decision-making; and the performance and results of the portfolio as a whole. WFP's independent Office of Evaluation, together with an external evaluation team, conducted the evaluation from November 2016 to April 2017.

Gaining its independence in 2011, South Sudan is a low-income country<sup>1</sup> that is extremely dependent on external aid, with 51 percent of its population living below the poverty line.<sup>2</sup> Conflicts, political uncertainty, access restrictions and a fragile institutional foundation have significantly constrained the economic recovery that began after 2011. South Sudan was declared a Level 3 emergency in February 2014.<sup>3</sup> About 4.8 million people – 40 percent of the population – remain at emergency or crisis levels of food insecurity. In early 2017, South Sudan had a large and growing structural food deficit – estimated at 500,000 tons<sup>4</sup> – with falling production attributed to rising insecurity.

The evaluation found and concluded high relevance, coherence with national needs and policies, and effectiveness of the portfolio's outputs. WFP assisted an average of 2.9 million people per year in a difficult and complex environment. The evaluation demonstrated WFP's ability to work across the emergency and development spheres, transitioning appropriately from responding to emergency needs to aligning with the state-building agenda and switching back to respond to a large-scale acute emergency. Yet the strategy and portfolio were not adequately adapted to the challenges and

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2015. South Sudan National Human Development Report.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ss.undp.org/content/south\\_sudan/en/home/countryinfo.html](http://www.ss.undp.org/content/south_sudan/en/home/countryinfo.html)

<sup>3</sup> While the United Nations Level 3 designation has been revoked, WFP's corporate level 3 emergency for South Sudan continues.

<sup>4</sup> WFP/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). 2016. South Sudan Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission.

*In line with the Evaluation Policy (2016–2021) (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-A/Rev.1), to respect the integrity and independence of evaluation findings some language contained in this report may not be standard WFP terminology; please direct any requests for clarification to the WFP Director of Evaluation.*

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opportunities of a multi-year acute crisis. At the outcome level, general food assistance including cash-based transfers and nutrition activities helped to prevent precipitous declines in food security. Reaching 300,000 students per year, school feeding was associated with improved enrolment and retention. WFP capitalized on its areas of comparative advantage, using its unrivalled ability to reach scale in conjunction with its partners. WFP displayed good cost awareness, introducing a range of innovations to minimize costs.

However, food distributions were unpredictable as a result of downstream pipeline-management issues. Access restrictions were frequently imposed by the Government and opposition, contravening protection and humanitarian principles. Nevertheless, WFP served beneficiaries based on need in government – and opposition-controlled areas. Purchase for Progress activities and the country office’s experience in building resilience were limited while outcome monitoring was weak. Except in general food distribution and nutrition activities, opportunities to build coherence and connectedness by capitalizing on internal synergies were identified but largely unrealized. The sustainability of feeder roads and the quality of food assistance for assets were limited. While WFP contributed to building national capacities for monitoring and analysis in a range of counterpart ministries, these activities have slowed dramatically since 2014.

The evaluation recommended that WFP should: i) set a strategic vision and design a medium-term strategy for responding to a multi-year acute crisis (the preparation of the interim country strategic plan under the Integrated Road Map provides a good opportunity to do this in 2017); ii) maximize humanitarian–development synergies by developing a strategy to address the underlying constraints to cash-based transfers, supporting the roll-out of nutrition guidelines and the 2015 Boma Health Initiative, in partnership with other actors, refining an inter-agency approach to resilience and strategically promoting school feeding; iii) further increase efficiency, assuming a multi-year approach to emergency response through upfront investments in improved transport infrastructure, developing a strategy for digitally identifying beneficiaries, introducing cost recovery into the Logistics Cluster and strengthening food pipeline management; iv) innovate to improve programme quality through investments in food and nutrition assessments (including in urban areas), strengthening the Scaling Up Nutrition approach, updating outcome and impact indicators for food assistance for assets and special operations, and introducing multi-year field-level agreements; and v) ensure appropriate and timely country office staffing by commissioning a staffing review in line with the new interim country strategic plan, augmenting the country office’s human resources capacity and adjusting the corporate reassignment process to ensure that all staff serve in hardship areas.

### **Draft decision\***

The Board takes note of “Summary Evaluation Report – South Sudan Country Portfolio (2011–2016)” (WFP/EB.2/2017/6-A) and the management response in WFP/EB.2/2017/6-A/Add.1, and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

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

## Introduction

### Evaluation features

1. This country portfolio evaluation (CPE) covered the WFP South Sudan 2014–2017 country strategy and portfolio of operations during 2011–2016. It assessed: WFP's strategic alignment and positioning; the factors and quality of WFP's strategic decision-making; and the performance and results of the portfolio. It was conducted by WFP's independent Office of Evaluation together with an external evaluation team, with field work in January and February 2017. The team augmented available data and document reviews with semi-structured stakeholder interviews, including donor representatives and beneficiaries.
2. There has been no previous evaluation of WFP's portfolio in South Sudan. The CPE was timed to provide evidence to inform the country office's strategic orientation and feed into the design of its 2018–2020 interim country strategic plan.

### Context

3. South Sudan became independent in 2011 following more than 50 years of conflict. The South Sudan Development Plan<sup>5</sup> provides the main policy framework to guide the country's development. Political instability, tribal conflicts, an over-reliance on oil production, poor infrastructure and road network, high logistics costs, an import dependency and low education levels have been structural constraints to economic development. Civil service staff have only been paid intermittently and there have been scarce funds for basic operating expenses. This has limited national ownership, partnerships and the Government's capacity to plan, implement and sustain humanitarian and development initiatives.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Value</b>
2015	Population living below the poverty line	50.60%
2016	Headline inflation	836%
2016	Agricultural share of gross domestic product	15%
2016	Agricultural share in workforce	78%
2016	Arable land	4%
2017	Food deficit	500 000 mt
2016	Population with access to basic sanitation	41%
2016	Primary net enrolment rate	44%
2017	Internally displaced persons (IDPs)	1 880 000
2017	Refugees	1 770 000
2010	National stunting rate	31%
2016	Global acute malnutrition rate	15.2%
2015	Maternal mortality ratio (per live births)*	789/100 000

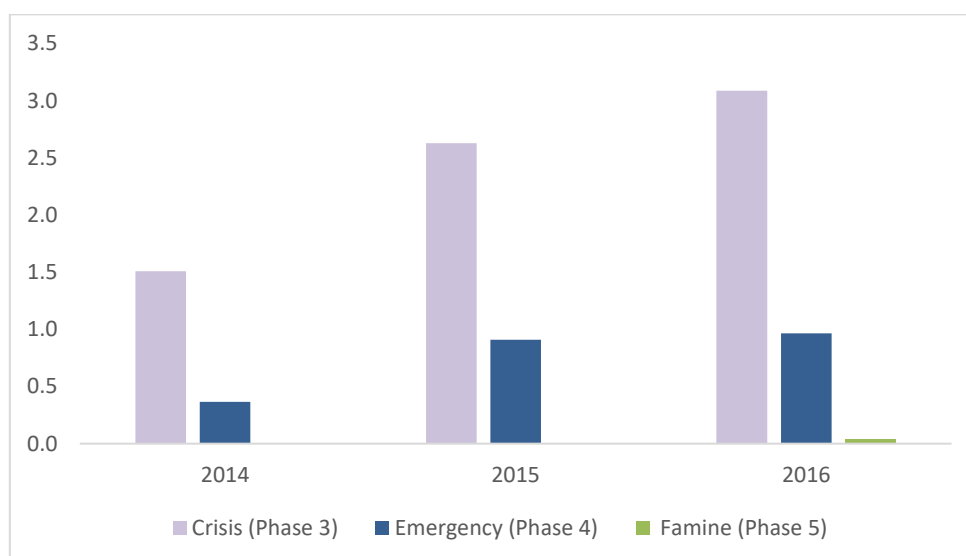
\* [http://www.who.int/gho/maternal\\_health/countries/ssd.pdf](http://www.who.int/gho/maternal_health/countries/ssd.pdf)

4. The number of people estimated to be severely food insecure, as measured by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) phases 3, 4 and 5,<sup>6</sup> increased from 3.5 million to 4 million between 2014 and 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Government of South Sudan. 2011. South Sudan Development Plan (2011–2013): Realizing freedom, equality, justice, peace and prosperity for all.

<sup>6</sup> Phase 3 – crisis; Phase 4 – emergency; Phase 5 – famine.

**Figure 1: Historical food insecurity in South Sudan (2014–2016)  
IPC 3, 4, 5 (in millions of people)**



5. Gender disparities are stark in South Sudan, as measured by a range of economic, health, literacy and asset-ownership indicators;<sup>7</sup> gender-based violence is widespread among more than 50 percent of women aged 15–24 years.

TABLE 2: GENDER INEQUALITIES IN SOUTH SUDAN		
Indicator	Value	
	Women-headed households	Men-headed households
Households living below poverty line	57%	48%
Literacy rate among adult population	Female population	Male population
	16%	40%

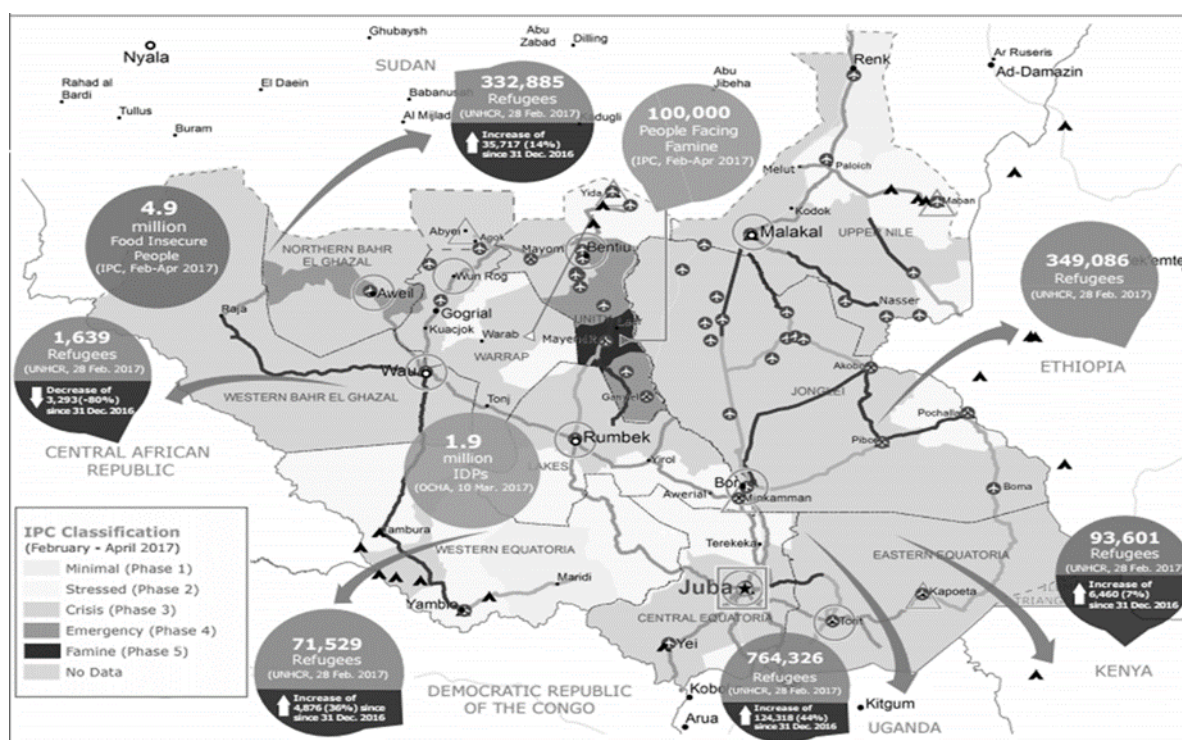
6. In the immediate post-independence period, South Sudan received significant development assistance. But with deteriorating security and governance, official development assistance was almost suspended in 2014. Large flows of humanitarian assistance continued however, peaking at over USD 2 billion in 2014,<sup>8</sup> with the United States of America (34 percent), the United Kingdom (12 percent) and the European Union (11 percent) as the main donors.

<sup>7</sup> South Sudan Comprehensive Country Gender Assessment, April 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Complete data for 2016 are not yet available.

## WFP Portfolio

**Figure 2: Map of WFP operations in South Sudan (February–April 2017)**



7. Following independence, WFP developed a country strategy comprising four pillars to: i) meet the emergency food needs of vulnerable groups; ii) build community resilience and strengthen livelihoods; iii) enhance market access and food value chains; and iv) enhance access to basic services in support of good nutrition and learning. The country strategy also included a cross-cutting approach to strengthening government institutional capacities.
8. The evaluation period (2011–2016) covered three emergency operations (EMOPs), one protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO), 14 special operations and two immediate-response EMOPs (see Figure 2). While the total required funding was over USD 3.8 billion,<sup>9</sup> just USD 2.6 billion – or 65 percent of the requirements – was received. Funding by operation varied from 20 percent to 112 percent of that required.
9. The main thematic components of the EMOPs and the PRRO in WFP's portfolio included:
  - *Emergency preparedness and response*, which comprised assistance for returnees, IDPs<sup>10</sup> and refugees, through general food assistance (GFA) and cash-based transfers (CBTs). GFA was the largest component, covering 64 percent of all beneficiaries.
  - *Health and nutrition*, which encompassed targeted supplementary feeding programmes (TSFPs) and blanket supplementary feeding programmes (BSFPs) for host populations, IDPs and refugees, accounting for 22 percent of beneficiaries.
  - *Food security, livelihoods and resilience*, which comprised school feeding (9 percent) and food assistance for assets (FFA) (2 percent) – food for training and Purchase for Progress (P4P) accounted for less than 0.5 percent.
  - *Capacity development* of government institutions for early warning, food security assessment and nutrition and health policy development.

<sup>9</sup> Of this funding, 19 percent was for special operations.

<sup>10</sup> This includes IDPs in protection-of-civilian camps.

10. Special operations, accounting for 19 percent of the total required funding of USD 3.8 billion, financed common services to support humanitarian operations including cluster operations, air transport services through the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), and support to agricultural development (such as feeder roads and the establishment of a strategic grain reserve).

**Figure 3: Proportion of resources for programming versus special operations (2014–2017)**

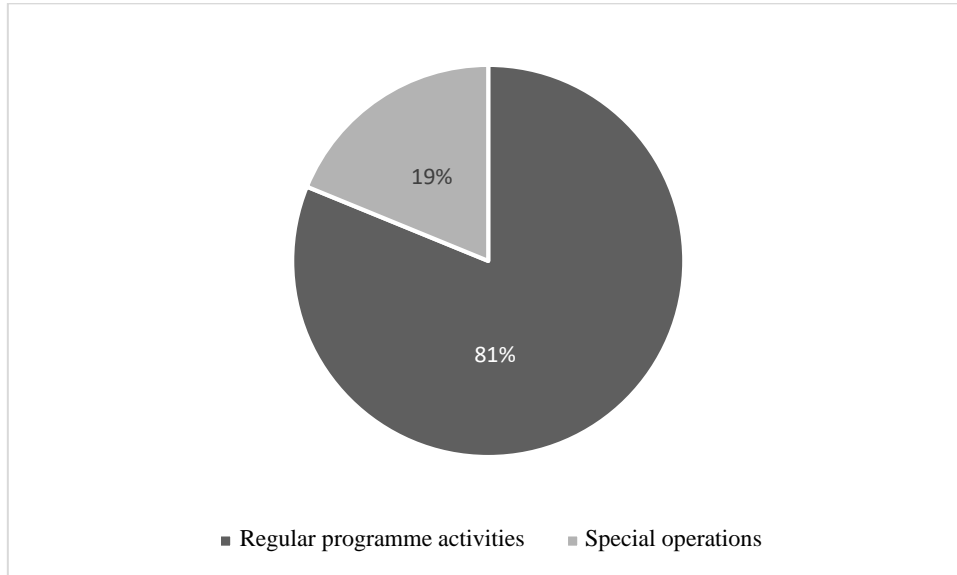
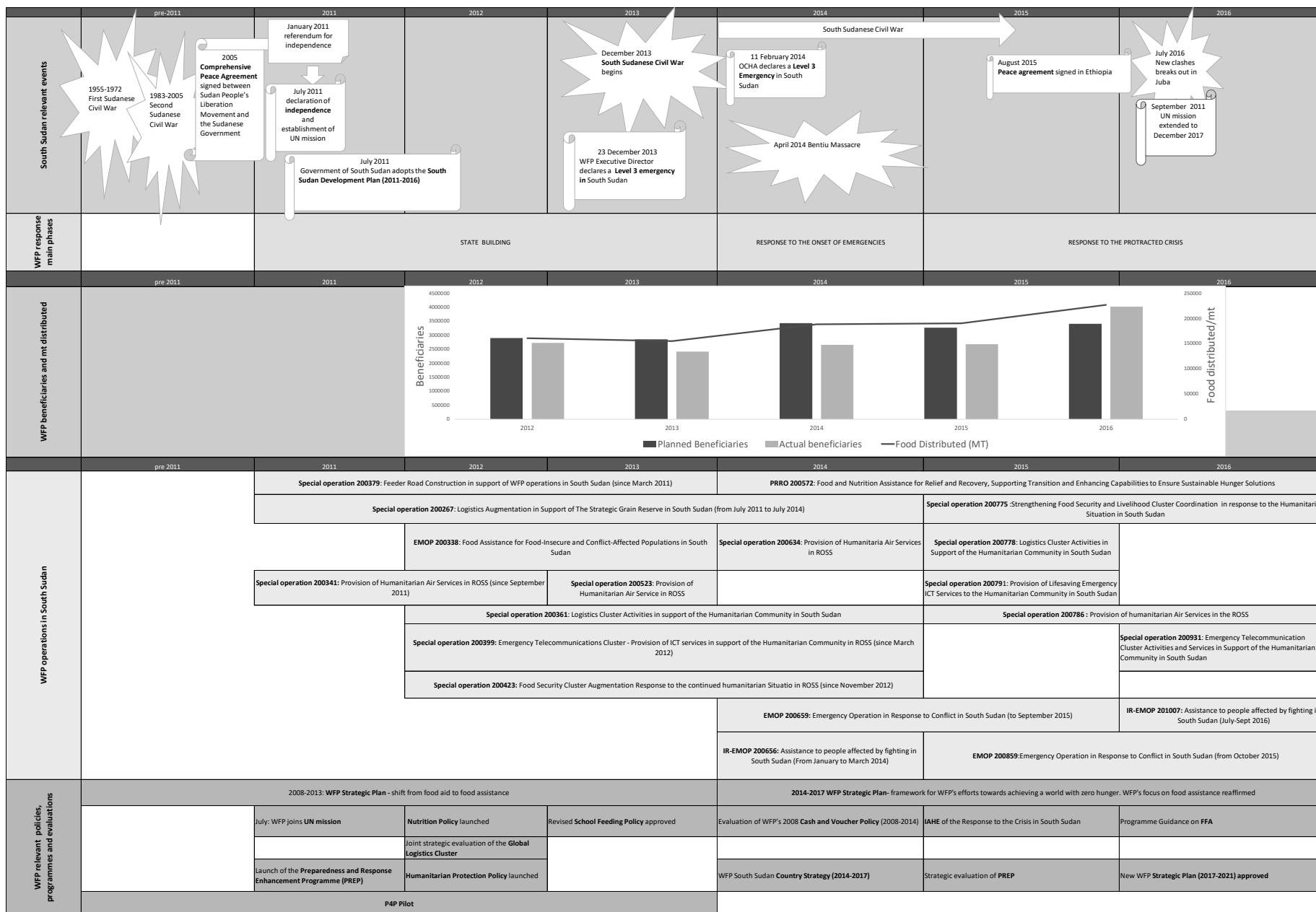


Figure 4: South Sudan WFP portfolio overview (2011–2016)



## Evaluation findings

### *Alignment and strategic positioning of WFP's country strategy and portfolio*

11. Figure 4 shows the three main phases of the evolution of WFP's portfolio. Initially, the portfolio was realigned in the post-independence phase to support state-building objectives. The PRRO introduced in 2014 moved to include sustainable solutions alongside GFA in line with pillars ii, iii, and iv of the country strategy.<sup>11</sup>
12. The resumption of large-scale hostilities in December 2013 created a large increase in the emergency caseload and WFP reoriented its portfolio rapidly and appropriately. The GFA caseload increased from 883,000 in 2012 to over 2.1 million in 2014.

<b>TABLE 3: NUMBERS OF HIGHLY FOOD-INSECURE PEOPLE AND GFA BY YEAR</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>IPC phase 3, 4, 5</b>	<b>IPC phase 4, 5</b>	<b>GFA</b>
2014	3 525 283	1 123 446	2 155 700
2015	3 808 000	911 000	1 822 067
2016	4 093 000	1 013 000	2 266 445

13. The adaptation of nutrition into the portfolio and the introduction of mobile rapid-response mechanisms (RRMs) were relevant in improving outreach to conflict-affected areas. WFP scaled up its support to common services, including the provision of air services through UNHAS and support to the Logistics, Emergency Telecommunications, Food Security and Livelihoods Clusters. WFP also continued its work on rehabilitation and recovery in non-conflict areas.

<b>TABLE 4: WFP/UNHAS AIR OPERATIONS</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Passengers transported</b>	<b>Cargo (mt) airlifted/airdropped</b>
2011	11 698	456
2012	88 224	396
2013	83 841	255
2014	68 286	58 774
2015	84 841	61 651
2016	78 064	68 771

Source: WFP Aviation Unit

14. The acute crisis became protracted, with widespread insecurity and conflict. The number of food-insecure people continued to grow annually, with over half the population in need of humanitarian assistance since 2014. Governance already seriously undermined by conflict was further weakened by the collapse in financing and suspension of donor development funding. However, WFP's strategy and portfolio did not fully adapt to the challenges and opportunities of a multi-year acute crisis.

<sup>11</sup> WFP. 2013. PRRO 200572 project document.



15. WFP's strategy was found to be broadly coherent with the relevant, though limited body of national technical policies, to the satisfaction of WFP's main counterparts: the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, and the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission. Relevant staff from other partner ministries responsible for nutrition, health, agriculture, education and transport also identified this strong alignment. The country office adhered to its commitments to protection and humanitarian principles while maintaining engagement with the Government.
16. The South Sudan Development Plan provided a common reference point for WFP's country strategy and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which ensured a high degree of coherence at the level of United Nations agencies. WFP actively collaborated in the development of the UNDAF, which was used as a vehicle for communication purposes but did not stimulate joint programming or resource mobilization.<sup>12</sup> WFP was an active player in formulating humanitarian response plans; however these provided funding plans rather than strategic frameworks. In evaluating the collective humanitarian response in South Sudan, the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE)<sup>13</sup> found that: i) strategic planning was inadequate, with limited inclusion of affected populations' views; and ii) its use in programme cycle management was minimal since outcomes were not identified or measured. The Nutrition and Emergency Telecommunications Clusters played an important role in inter-agency strategy development. WFP worked bilaterally with other United Nations agencies to develop common strategic approaches, notably on nutrition and building resilience. Other actors such as the Logistics Cluster were focused on short-term tactical and operational coordination.
17. The country strategy identified and capitalized on areas of comparative advantage, including WFP's unrivalled ability to reach scale in conjunction with its partners. It was dominated by the provision of GFA, complemented by the treatment of moderate malnutrition. Emergency response capacity was underpinned by WFP's multi-modal logistics capacity, robust processes for negotiating safe access and a nationwide network of staffed sub-offices and operational field teams. Common logistics services hosted by the country office were critical to the overall success of humanitarian operations, providing flexible and neutral delivery services backed by vigorous safe-access negotiations. The country office aimed to capitalize on WFP's considerable corporate experience in designing and implementing FFA.
18. In some areas however, it was harder to demonstrate a clear comparative advantage. At corporate level, WFP had limited skills and its capacities in road building and administrative procedures were not geared towards managing large infrastructure projects. The country office also had limited experience in longer-term, multi-sector resilience-building.
19. Despite a challenging context, WFP managed to maintain respect for its humanitarian mandate and principles. Well-informed stakeholders did not perceive government restrictions as systematic and WFP was able to serve beneficiaries based on need in both government- and opposition-controlled areas. Avoidance of routine use of force for protection helped to maintain WFP's neutrality.
20. Nevertheless, access restrictions were frequently imposed by the Government and opposition, including the Government's repeated denial of authority for WFP to deliver assistance to beneficiaries outside of Wau town.
21. The risk of the humanitarian response fuelling the conflict was significant given the sheer volume of WFP's food assistance in South Sudan's economy. This risk was especially high when humanitarian resources fell outside of WFP's direct control (for example through an imposition of fees levied on contracted transporters). However, no evidence was found that WFP allowed authorities or militias to manipulate the use of its resources.

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<sup>12</sup> R. Chiwara and P. Ajang. 2015. Evaluation of the UNDAF for South Sudan (2012–2016).

<sup>13</sup> IAHE for South Sudan, 2015.

### *Factors and quality of strategic decision-making*

22. The country office led or supported a range of food and nutrition studies to facilitate strategy development and decision-making, including the inter-agency Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System (FSNMS), IPC, market assessments, refugee livelihoods analyses and ad hoc studies of the causes of food insecurity and malnutrition (such as the Integrated Food and Nutrition Security Causal Analysis).<sup>14</sup> However, the understanding of the underlying drivers of undernutrition in South Sudan was still weak.
23. Monitoring data had limited influence on strategic decision-making, partly because insecurity limited WFP's ability to collect reliable and consistent monitoring data. In 2015, reporting became more regular and standardized, and monitoring and evaluation were mainstreamed. However, guidance on monitoring of resilience-building activities and special operations remained inadequate.
24. Guided by national and WFP policies, the country office developed a gender strategy (2015–2020) which sets targets for recruitment, training, programming and reporting on gender. A strong analysis of protection issues was integrated into strategic decision-making in order to minimize the risk of exposing women beneficiaries to gender-based violence and a protection strategy was established.
25. WFP contributed to building national capacities for monitoring and analysis in a range of counterpart ministries, although this work slowed dramatically after 2014. Relevant initiatives included partnering with the Government on developing monitoring systems (including the FSNMS and IPC), resilience context analysis and the Juba Urban Food Security and Nutrition Assessment. WFP information, analyses and monitoring reports were widely disseminated among national audiences to build consensus on needs and responses.
26. The evaluation identified a complex array of drivers of strategic choices. WFP's own mandate, strategy and policies provided a starting point, along with an analysis of humanitarian and development needs, national capacities and priorities, and reflections on WFP's own comparative advantages. Resource availability was not a major constraint: the declaration of a Level 3 emergency raised the profile of the response and had a positive impact on fundraising.<sup>15</sup> However, activities such as the Food Security and Livelihood Cluster and the feeder road project were constrained by a lack of funds at specific times. Downstream pipeline limitations and logistical constraints affecting air drops and overland transport corridors limited the scale of in-kind distributions.
27. Staffing shortfalls significantly limited WFP's strategic decision-making capacity. Important posts proved problematic to fill through the reassignment process, including leadership positions in programmes, logistics operations and vulnerability analysis and mapping, and WFP relied disproportionately on short-term personnel. While the Level 3 roster helped to temporarily fill several staff positions, it did not work as well for some specific logistics and nutrition functions.
28. The country office identified critical risks to performance and proposed a comprehensive set of mitigation measures in line with organizational procedures. However, there was a lack of monitoring against the mitigation plan. Additional country-based risk assessments and mitigation measures were developed to support more routine operational decision-making. A balance was maintained between managing risks and ensuring the necessary adjustments and risk appetite to facilitate operational flexibility.

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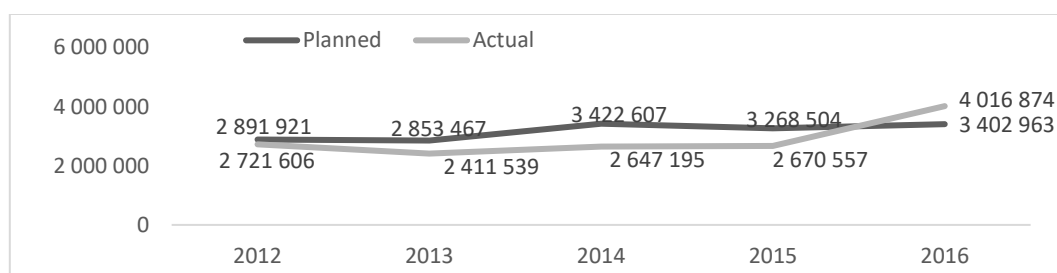
<sup>14</sup> Integrated Food and Nutrition Security Causal Analysis, June 2016.

<sup>15</sup> The 2015 IAHE for South Sudan also noted this effect.

### *Performance and results of the WFP Portfolio*

29. Targeting and prioritization of food assistance were based on IPC and FSNMS analyses, and the severity of food insecurity. This was to assure multi-agency consensus on needs, government leadership and coordinated planning with other United Nations agencies. Yet significant challenges in collecting reliable data created a wide margin of error in the IPC calculations.<sup>16</sup> WFP aimed to provide monthly distributions to beneficiaries in protection-of-civilian camps and IDP camps, and to prioritize distribution to rural populations in 60- or 90-day cycles according to food insecurity. However, the WFP data available to the evaluation team did not allow an independent verification of this plan's achievement.
30. Nutrition caseloads were established jointly with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) based on survey data from Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions, and IPC results. FFA was geographically targeted using FSNMS and IPC data, with household targeting based on community surveys by a cooperating partner and consultations with community leaders.
31. Performance against output targets was generally effective. WFP assisted an average of 2.9 million people per year (Figure 5) – 91 percent of targeted beneficiaries. GFA and CBT accounted for more than 64 percent of beneficiaries, with 22 percent receiving supplementary feeding, 9 percent school feeding and the rest assisted by FFA, food for training and P4P.

**Figure 5: Beneficiaries assisted by year (2012–2016)**

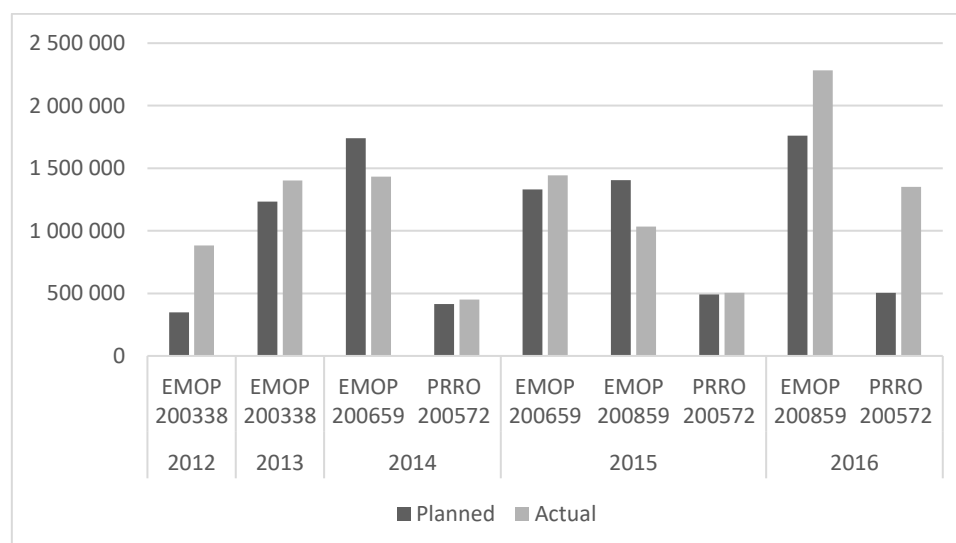


Source: Standard Project Reports (SPRs) 2011–2016

32. GFA under the three EMOPs and the PRRO had an average attainment rate of 117 percent of targeted vulnerable beneficiaries (see Figure 6), but the percentage of targeted quantities of food delivered fell from nearly 80 percent in 2012 to under 45 percent in 2016.<sup>17</sup> The introduction of mobile RRM was important in scaling up emergency operations in areas where non-governmental organization (NGO) partners had withdrawn their presence because of insecurity. However, beneficiary and partner complaints showed that food distributions were unpredictable because of problems in maintaining a reliable food pipeline and full food baskets were not consistently delivered.

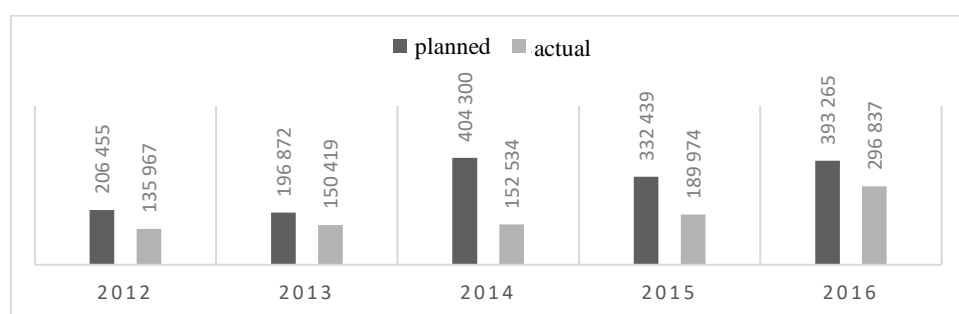
<sup>16</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). 2016. Humanitarian Needs Overview. This was also found in the IAHE report for South Sudan.

<sup>17</sup> SPR 2012–2016.

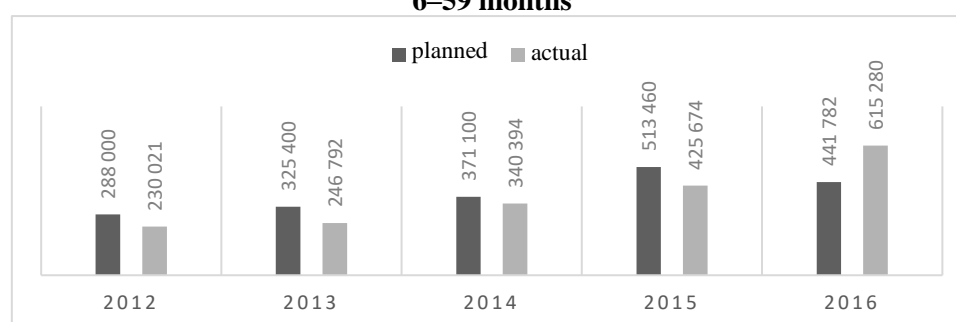
**Figure 6: Number of GFA beneficiaries (actual and planned) by operation**

Source: SPRs

33. Within GFA, the use of CBTs was challenging given widespread insecurity, weak markets, few financial service providers and hyperinflation. Consequently, CBTs in the EMOPs and PRRO reached an average of 70 percent and 20 percent of their targets respectively. CBT beneficiaries remained a minor part of the total caseload: only 152,671 received CBTs in 2016.
34. The total number of children covered by WFP's targeted supplementary feeding programme (TSFP) and blanket supplementary feeding programme (BSFP) grew steadily (see Figures 7 and 8). Scaling up TSFP in 2014 was slow since it required collaborating with additional partners; increasing BSFP coverage proved more straightforward.

**Figure 7: WFP South Sudan TSFP 6–59 months planned vs. actual**

Source: SPRs 2011–2016

**Figure 8: WFP South Sudan BSFP 6–23 months, 6–35 months and 6–59 months**

Source: SPRs 2011–2016

35. On average, FFA reached more than 80,000 beneficiaries per year – ranging from 49 percent to 129 percent of annual targets. Funding constraints, pipeline breaks and insecurity were the main causes of underachievement in this area. Where there was competition for limited resources, life-saving interventions were prioritized.
36. Just one quarter of the planned 800 km of feeder roads were constructed. Lengthy selection processes, security constraints, a lack of WFP engineering staff and poorly adapted procurement procedures contributed to delays. However, the quality of the completed roads was reported to be high.
37. P4P activities supported 136 farmer groups and purchased 462 mt of food from 13 of these groups. This was less than 10 percent of all food procured locally by WFP and less than 1 percent of WFP's food requirements in South Sudan. Although 12 storage warehouses were built, less than 10 percent of this capacity was used by farmer groups.
38. The school feeding programme reached an average of 300,000 children per year – estimated at 20 percent of all primary schoolchildren. Of these children, 44 percent were girls (the national primary school enrolment rate for girls was 39 percent).<sup>18</sup> According to reports, nearly 900 classrooms were rehabilitated, but there was no evidence of related improvements in school sanitation, school gardens or installation of fuel-efficient stoves.
39. Performance outcomes were assessed against the country strategy's four objectives.
40. The emergency GFA, accompanied by a scaled up BSFP, can be partially credited with preventing severe food insecurity from deteriorating further into widespread famine. Common services were a critical component of WFP's emergency effectiveness. Nutrition outcomes – as measured by the recovery rate – were good. The context constrained the roll-out of CBTs in South Sudan. However, where this modality was introduced as an integral part of the emergency response, it was significantly more cost efficient, predictable and timely than in-kind transfers,<sup>19</sup> and had potential secondary benefits for the local economy.
41. There were mixed results in building livelihoods and resilience. While beneficiaries valued the assets built through FFA such as dikes, feeder roads and training, the quality of tertiary roads was limited. Most FFA activities remained short term, with little evidence of the complementarity layering of multi-sector actions over a sustained period needed to build resilience to shocks affecting food security. Delays in FFA activities were caused by the late signing of field-level agreements (FLAs) with more than 80 cooperating partners.
42. Progress in enhancing market access and value chains was limited. Quantitative evidence was missing and anecdotal evidence suggested that the feeder roads had little positive outcome on agricultural production. P4P outcomes have been modest and of uncertain sustainability.
43. WFP significantly contributed to enhancing access to basic services in support of learning. Despite fluctuations in enrolment and retention associated with changing insecurity, the school feeding programme repeatedly showed positive results, particularly with regard to retention rates (99 percent in 2013, 92 percent in 2014, 89 percent in 2015 and 78 percent in 2016). The programme also contributed to gender parity, partly through an initiative of incentives for girls. However, the overall effectiveness of school feeding depended upon a package of complementary interventions and a strong inter-agency strategic framework, which was lacking.
44. Synergies within the WFP portfolio were achieved with the integration of GFA and nutrition activities. But there were missed opportunities for integrating nutrition into FFA and food for education, and little operational synergy between FFA, feeder road and P4P activities.

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<sup>18</sup> Education Cluster Assessment, South Sudan 2016.

<sup>19</sup> In addition, the nutrient cost effectiveness of cash to in-kind transfer value (omega value) was improving in the short period (September 2015–March 2016) for which data was available (WFP vulnerability analysis and mapping, March 2016).

45. Operational synergies were established with a wide range of United Nations agencies, including collaboration with UNICEF (through integrated RRM missions), UNHCR (on refugee operations), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (as operational partner on logistics and biometric registration systems) and FAO (on the Food Security Cluster, food security assessments and resilience-building). However, the country office could have collaborated with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) to leverage its comparative advantage as a specialized infrastructure-project implementer.
46. Findings on the sustainability of assets created through the feeder roads were inconclusive. Maintenance plans assumed government responsibility for long-term upkeep; however the Government has limited credibility in the current fiscal context. In current circumstances, communities' ability to maintain assets built through FFA is also compromised.
47. Given severely constrained government capacity, there is little immediate prospect for the hand-over of WFP-led services to national institutions. Limited but important progress was made in using the private sector to sustain services – for example, transitioning from a free-to-user data service to a cost-sharing model for internet services through the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster.
48. In terms of efficiency, logistics was the dominant cost driver. Land transport, storage and handling components of the EMOP and PRRO accounted for 55 percent of total operational costs during 2013–2016.<sup>20</sup> Logistics costs were driven by the extensive use of air transport and the weak trunk road network. For the route from Juba to Bentiu, the cost was approximately USD 350 per mt on a 40 mt trunk payload<sup>21</sup> – more than double the rate charged<sup>22</sup> in neighbouring countries over a similar distance. WFP explored options for reducing transport costs, such as: increasing the use of cheaper fixed-wing aircraft; pre-positioning commodities by road during the dry season; opening up new overland transport corridors from the Sudan; and maximizing the use of CBTs.
49. The introduction of biometric registration systems – including WFP's SCOPE system for cash operations, WFP's digital beneficiary and transfer-management platform – offered large potential cost efficiency gains through more accurate beneficiary registers. The cost of registration using SCOPE was estimated at USD 5 per household,<sup>23</sup> which compares to the cost of a potential inclusion error of supporting a household in an EMOP for one year of USD 1,000.<sup>24</sup>
50. Yet poor planning and coordination among users contributed to cases of the inefficient use of free-to-user common logistics services. With no financial incentive for organizations to plan effectively, aircraft and other assets were not used efficiently or deployed at very short notice.<sup>25</sup>
51. The Global Commodity Management Facility (GCMF) shortened the average lead time for food delivery from 120 days to 53 days; however frequent pipeline breaks resulted in poor reliability and timeliness of food deliveries. Donor resourcing plans and other constraints contributed to uneven food inflows. The responsibility for the supply chain was split between several management functions, which were understaffed.
52. The country office faced challenges in keeping up with minimum corporate monitoring and reporting requirements, and outcome indicators for monitoring resilience and special operations were weak. Weaknesses in the country office monitoring and evaluation system have been partially rectified since 2015. However, ongoing access limitations have partly constrained the country office's ability to collect adequate outcome data.

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<sup>20</sup> This rises to 58 percent if external transport costs are included.

<sup>21</sup> South Sudan Transport Market Assessment and Logistics Capacity Assessment (2015).

<sup>22</sup> Rates are similar in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

<sup>23</sup> Estimate provided by the WFP country office.

<sup>24</sup> The EMOP supported 253,903 households at a total cost of USD 250,490,565.

<sup>25</sup> Based on information gathered from Logistics Cluster staff.

## Conclusions

53. The assessment of WFP's performance required a clear recognition of the extremely challenging, complex and constantly evolving operating context in South Sudan. This included significant humanitarian needs, fragile governance capacities, rudimentary infrastructure and high insecurity, impacting both humanitarian access and the well-being of communities and WFP staff.
54. WFP's portfolio was highly relevant: it demonstrated an ability to work across both emergency and development spheres, and appropriately transitioned from responding to emergency needs to aligning itself with a state-building agenda – and back to response – in a large-scale acute crisis. A major challenge was positioning WFP to ensure connectedness – the need to ensure that short-term emergency activities were carried out taking into account longer-term development and interconnected problems.
55. The development of the country strategy helped to drive a strategic reorientation that supported the new country and its institutions, but this was swiftly overtaken by events. The country office was not proactive in designing a revised, comprehensive strategic approach to responding in the emerging context of a multi-year acute crisis. This was exacerbated by a combination of factors, including persistent delays in the recruitment of critical staff, which undermined the country office's capacity for strategic planning and programming.
56. WFP ensured strategic coherence with government and other development partners. The UNDAF and Interim Cooperation Framework processes sought to create coherence among United Nations agencies; however they were used for consolidated reporting rather than coordinated inter-agency action. The complexity and scale of the multi-year acute crisis required stronger United Nations leadership to inspire a coordinated inter-agency response. Opportunities to capitalize on internal synergies were identified but largely remained unrealized. There were strong external synergies with several other United Nations agencies, which drew on complementary resources to address a range of beneficiary needs. This is an important avenue to develop since WFP programming needs to balance the need for internal synergies among operations at the household level with the countervailing risk of concentrating resources on a limited number of beneficiaries.
57. WFP's assessment and analysis skills were particularly useful in programme targeting prioritization, and decision-making including the integration of protection and gender analyses. However, deeper analyses of the causes of food and nutrition insecurity could have improved programme design.
58. WFP's emergency food assistance was effective. WFP provided almost all food assistance in the country and was able to scale up quickly in response to needs. RRM allowed WFP to reach beneficiaries in highly insecure locations in the absence of cooperating partners. Nevertheless, the context made it harder to scale up CBTs and feeder road construction fell short of targets. There was good participation of women in WFP activities and significant attention to safeguarding against protection risks.
59. At the outcome level, GFA including CBT and nutrition activities helped to prevent a precipitous decline in food security. School feeding was associated with improved enrolment and retention. Yet livelihood interventions would have benefitted from a more predictable and sustained approach rather than annual agreements with cooperating partners.
60. Commendable progress was made in contributing to national policy development and technical capacities through partnerships with a wide range of ministries. But success was undermined by the deteriorating context. Alternative approaches to sustainability – including building capacity in the private sector – were slow to emerge.

61. Logistics costs for in-kind delivery were crucial to overall cost-efficiency. WFP displayed a solid awareness of the need to manage costs and introduced a range of innovations to minimize them. Given an outlook of declining resources and increasing needs, further cost-saving measures are still required.

## Recommendations

No.	Issue	Rationale	Recommendation	Responsibility and timing
1	Strategic orientation	The country strategy for South Sudan requires to be updated and brought in line with the changed country context. The new strategy should orient WFP to respond to a multi-year acute crisis, with the flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing needs.	<p>1. WFP should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) develop a strategic framework for responding to the needs of South Sudan as a multi-year, acute crisis which acknowledges the limited capacity of the Government to provide leadership to the process; and</li> <li>b) advocate within the United Nations system for developing an inter-agency strategic framework and a common multi-year approach to responding to the multi-year acute crisis.</li> </ul> <p>The Integrated Road Map presents the opportunity to address this in 2017.</p>	Country office, with support from the regional bureau and headquarters: 2017–2018.
2	Humanitarian–development synergies	Whilst recognizing the primacy of life-saving assistance, WFP should position itself to ensure that activities of a short-term emergency nature are carried out in a manner that takes longer-term development and interconnected problems into account.	<p>2. WFP should improve humanitarian–development synergies by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) developing a strategy to address the underlying constraints to the expanded use of CBTs (including strengthening supply chains, advocating for cross-border trade and improved financial and transport infrastructure) that enables timelier, cost-efficient and increased emergency assistance alongside longer-term impacts on strengthened market access and markets for domestic production;</li> <li>b) maintaining the longer-term aim to contribute to the Government Health Sector Development Plan, including capacity development and other support for the roll-out of the community management of acute malnutrition guidelines at national, state and county levels; advocacy and support for the operationalization of the Boma Health Initiative launched in 2015 in close collaboration with UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), and other ‘nutrition-in-health’ partners in South Sudan;</li> </ul>	Country office, with support from the regional bureau and headquarters: 2017–2018.



No.	Issue	Rationale	Recommendation	Responsibility and timing
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c) partnering with other agencies to reinvigorate and refine an inter-agency approach to building resilience that is distinct from FFA activities, that layers multi-annual interventions from different agencies for progressive replication and roll-out as conditions permit, and</li> <li>d) strategically promoting school feeding – within a coordinated inter-agency approach – that contributes to breaking the cycle of war and violence in South Sudan by establishing ‘safe zones’ for protection and provides a platform for multi-sectoral interventions spanning health, nutrition and livelihoods objectives.</li> </ul>	
3	Efficiency	<p>The context in South Sudan makes relief expensive to deliver, and it is difficult to ensure timely deliveries. The primary underlying challenges are constraints in economically transporting food to beneficiaries and managing the food pipeline.</p>	<p>3. WFP should further increase cost-efficiency assuming a multi-year approach to emergency response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) WFP should work with other agencies, including UNOPS, to identify opportunities where targeted investment by donors in transport infrastructure could generate multi-annual cost savings on logistics costs including: cost-benefit analyses of strategic repairs of trunk roads to allow wet season access, investment in improved river transport, and investment in the maintenance of strategic airstrips to allow increased use of fixed wing aircraft.</li> <li>b) On the basis of the results of the cost-benefit analysis, develop a joint advocacy strategy for donors on limited, strategic investment in infrastructure.</li> <li>c) In collaboration with partners (including IOM and UNHCR), develop a strategy for providing all South Sudanese with a digital identity that includes agreement for inter-operability and data-sharing between systems.</li> <li>d) Consider introducing an element of routine cost recovery into the Logistics Cluster to encourage better forward-planning and more efficient use of resources.</li> </ul>	<p>Country office, with support from the regional bureau and headquarters: 2017–2018.</p>

No.	Issue	Rationale	Recommendation	Responsibility and timing
			<p>e) Strengthen the management of the food pipeline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Forming an Integrated Supply Chain Working Group to determine requirements, resources and prioritize operational plans.</li> <li>ii) Reinforcing the staffing of the Budget and Programming Team, in part to increase liaison with donors on food shipments.</li> <li>iii) Given the importance of the GCMF to South Sudan, opportunities to further strengthen its contribution to the South Sudan response should be investigated.</li> </ul>	
4	Programme quality	<p>Limitations in data and analysis continue to constrain the ability of the country office to draw evidence-based conclusions on the most efficient and effective programmatic approaches to adopt. Opportunities to capitalize on internal synergies between activities were identified but largely remained unrealized. Short-term FLAs with cooperating partners do not facilitate sustained programming with beneficiaries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) WFP should further invest in food and nutrition related assessments and analyses by; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Further elaboration of the WFP FSNMS methodology for regular assessment of nutrition status among key nutrition target groups, including the integration of stunting indicators and triangulation of results with the SMART surveys system, and other relevant surveillance mechanisms;</li> <li>ii) Surveillance of food security in urban areas.</li> <li>iii) Further investment in analysis of the underlying reasons for undernutrition in South Sudan, in close collaboration/partnership with other agencies on food security and nutrition, with a particular focus on the more stable areas of the country.</li> </ul> </li> <li>b) Start up and increase nutrition-sensitive programming in line with the Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) approach within the overall WFP portfolio for South Sudan, through the cash for assets (CFA) and food assistance for education (FFE) programmes in particular, but also through general food distributions, e.g. a focus on stunting reduction</li> </ul>	Country office, with support from the regional bureau and headquarters: 2017–2018.

No.	Issue	Rationale	Recommendation	Responsibility and timing
			<p>in tandem with the TSFP and BSFP.</p> <p>c) At corporate level, review indicators used for outcome and impact level monitoring of resilience and special operations.</p> <p>d) Develop multi-year FLAs with cooperating partners – these FLAs could specify multi-year strategic frameworks with annual budget agreements.</p>	
5	Human Resources	<p>Persistent delays in the recruitment of key staff has undermined the capacity of the country office, including the capacity for strategic planning. WFP relied disproportionately on personnel recruited on short-term contracts.</p>	<p>a) The WFP country office should commission and publish a staffing review, based on the staff needed to deliver against the new country strategic plan.</p> <p>b) The capacity of the country office human resources team should be augmented to provide the necessary capacity to support the timely appointment of suitably qualified and experienced staff – including proactively identifying and encouraging suitable staff to apply for key positions on reassignment.</p> <p>c) WFP Headquarters should consider recruiting floating emergency staff who would be available for immediate deployment through the L3 roster.</p> <p>d) While recognizing the measures taken by WFP Headquarters to improve the reassignment process, the relevant Headquarters department should consider further changes to the reassignment process to ensure that all staff serve in hardship postings.</p>	<p>Country office, with support from the regional bureau and headquarters: 2016–2018.</p>

**Acronyms used in the document**

BSFP	blanket supplementary feeding programme
CBT	cash-based transfer
CPE	country portfolio evaluation
EMOP	emergency operation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFA	food assistance for assets
FLA	field-level agreement
FSNMS	Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System
GCMF	Global Commodity Management Facility
GFA	general food assistance
IAHE	Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation
ICT	information and communications technology
IDP	internally displaced person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
P4P	Purchase for Progress
PREP	Preparedness and Response Enhancement Programme
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
RRM	rapid response mechanism
SCOPE	system for cash operations
SMART	Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions
SPR	Standard Project Report
TSFP	targeted supplementary feeding programmes
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WHO	World Health Organization