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Evaluation reports

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Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for India (2019–2023)

Executive summary

The evaluation of the India country strategic plan for 2019–2023 covered the period between January 2019 and November 2021 and examined WFP's strategic positioning, contribution to outcomes and efficiency in implementation, as well as the factors explaining its performance. Using a mixed-methods approach, the evaluation aimed at informing the preparation of the next country strategic plan.

India has the sixth largest economy in the worldwide yet faces persistent disparities in human development and food and nutrition insecurity. National food safety net programmes offer subsidized grain; midday school meals for children age 6–14; and support services for children under 6 and pregnant and lactating women.

The country strategic plan for 2019–2023 focused on enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of government food-based safety nets and supporting national and state-level policy and decision making. It cast WFP in an enabling role and applied a comprehensive approach to country capacity strengthening.

The country strategic plan was aligned with national goals and strategies thanks to continual dialogue with institutional partners, which also enabled WFP to adapt the plan during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic. Due to insufficient resources, however, the geographic reach of the plan was limited to a few states and although the plan integrated gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches, WFP's advocacy for the most vulnerable was strongest during the pandemic-related lockdowns and could have been more effective at other times.

During the period under review the country strategic plan capitalized on the Government's push for evidence-based decision making and made distinct contributions to capacity strengthening

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

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across all three of its strategic outcomes. It contributed to the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the targeted public distribution systems; demonstrated the viability of rice fortification, paving the way for its integration into public distribution schemes rolled out in five states; and supported the scale-up of fortified rice production by women-led groups in some states. WFP analysis and capacity strengthening promoted the use of food security and nutrition evidence for decision and policy making, although further support for state-level evidence generation is needed. WFP sought to foster women's empowerment through its interventions but could have more strongly advocated the incorporation of gender and inclusion considerations into national programmes and policies.

WFP's positive contributions were facilitated by its strategic partnerships with national and state governments and research and private sector partners. Support from the latter was important but future private sector contributions are uncertain. WFP could increase its reach and influence by collaborating with organizations that work with the most vulnerable groups in order to ensure no one is left behind.

A more systematic consideration of state partner interest in investing in evidence generation and funding for food security has the potential to further amplify WFP's contribution to addressing the most important food and nutrition security needs in India.

The evaluation produced three strategic recommendations and three operational recommendations, which build on current strategies and approaches. They include expanding the reach of country capacity strengthening initiatives based on capacity needs assessments; increasing advocacy on inclusive approaches; furthering efforts to mobilize resources; and developing outcome indicators to assess WFP's contribution to country capacity strengthening.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for India (2019–2023) (WFP/EB.2/2022/6-D) and management response (WFP/EB.2/2022/6-D/Add.1) and encourages further action on the recommendations set out in the report, taking into account the considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

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

Introduction

Evaluation features

1. The evaluation of the India country strategic plan (CSP) for 2019–2023 was conducted between August 2021 and April 2022 in order to inform the design of the next CSP, to cover the period 2023–2027. It covered the design phase of the current CSP and its implementation from January 2019 to November 2021 and examined WFP activities at the national level and in the states of Kerala, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. The evaluation analysed WFP's strategic positioning, contribution to strategic outcomes and implementation efficiency and factors underpinning performance.
2. Mixed methods were used to collect and analyse evidence from primary and secondary sources, including a desk review of WFP documents and datasets, quantitative data analysis, key informant interviews and a focus group discussion. Personal stories, direct observations and case studies were used to deepen the understanding of the institutional or regulatory changes generated by WFP interventions.
3. While the evaluation sought the views of a broad range of internal and external stakeholders, it was hindered by the unavailability of certain stakeholders during data collection and the high turnover of staff within national institutions. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic caused other constraints for the team of independent experts during data collection and analysis. Information was triangulated across various sources to validate the findings presented in the report.

Context

4. The world's second most populous country,¹ India has the world's sixth largest economy. It is classified as a lower-middle-income country² and has persistent disparities in human development.³
5. Under the National Food Security Act of 2013⁴ three large food safety net programmes offer legal entitlements to the population: the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) provides subsidized food grains;⁵ the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM-POSHAN) provides midday school meals to children age 6–14;⁶ and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme supports children under 6 and pregnant and lactating women.⁷ The Government allocated USD 44.95 billion for these safety net programmes for 2021–2022.⁸
6. Despite the coverage of government safety nets, access to a nutritious diet remains a challenge for many in India.⁹ Food prices are generally low¹⁰ but so are wages in urban and rural areas – particularly in the informal sector. The COVID-19 pandemic took a toll on livelihoods, with close to 122 million workers, 75 percent of whom were migrant workers in

¹ National Commission on Population. 2020. *Population Projections for India and States 2011–2036*.

² World Bank. 2021. [India country page: Gross domestic product](#).

³ United Nations and NITI Aayog. 2021. *SDG India: Index and Dashboard 2020–21 – Partnerships in the Decade of Action*.

⁴ Government of India. 2021. [National Food Security Portal](#).

⁵ Department of Food and Public Distribution. 2022. [Targeted Public Distribution System \(TPDS\)](#).

⁶ Department of School Education and Literacy. 2021. [PM-POSHAN](#).

⁷ Ministry of Women and Child Development. 2009. [Integrated Child Development Services \(ICDS\) Scheme](#).

⁸ WFP India country office. 2021. *Budget for NFSA-TPDS-ICDS-MDM* (unpublished).

⁹ United Nations Children's Fund. 2021. [Nutrition: India profile](#).

¹⁰ Sood, A. 2021. [Retail prices & food basket price dashboard India](#).

the informal sector, losing their jobs in 2020.¹¹ Unemployment had reverted to pre-2020 levels by January 2022.¹²

7. Food insecurity is higher among women and girls,¹³ who face many types of discrimination.¹⁴ Intersecting factors such as disability, caste and tribal identity, marital status and age exacerbate vulnerabilities. Women represent 74 percent of the agricultural workforce but only 13 percent of them own land, and their work is mostly treated as an extension of unpaid household and care work.¹⁵
8. India has become self-sufficient in food grains, but their production puts pressure on water resources and has degraded 30 percent of the land.¹⁶ Climate variability and extremes and economic setbacks are major drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition.¹⁷
9. India received yearly averages of USD 5.9 billion in international development assistance between 2016 and 2019 and USD 9.5 million in humanitarian assistance between 2016 and 2021.¹⁸ The country is also an aid donor, with a direct overseas aid budget of USD 2.4 billion in 2020–2021, mainly spent in the region.¹⁹

TABLE 1: KEY SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS

	Indicator	Value	Year
	Population total (million) (1)	1.36 billion people	2019
	Human Development Index (rank) (2)	131 of 189 countries	2019
	Gross national income per capita (current USD) (3)	(USD) 1,920	2020
	Population living in multidimensional poverty (%) (4)	25.01	2021
	Height-for-age (stunting – moderate and severe), (0–5 years of age) (%) (5)	35.5	2019–2021
	Weight-for-age (wasting – moderate and severe), (0–5 years of age) (%) (5)	19.3 (moderate) 7.7 (severe)	2019–2021

¹¹ Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy. 2021. [Economic Outlook](#).

¹² Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy. 2021–2022. [CMIE Series of Unemployment: Unemployment rate in India](#).

¹³ WFP India country office. 2020. [Information Note 3: Understanding Food Insecurity Among Women and Children from Poor Households in Two Locations in Uttar Pradesh](#).

¹⁴ Guilmoto, C.Z., Saikia, N. 2018. [Excess under-5 female mortality across India: a spatial analysis using 2011 census data](#); Ram, U. & Ram, F. 2018. [To be born and to be alive: the struggle of girl children in subregions of India](#).

¹⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2018. [India at a glance](#).

¹⁶ Government of India. 2016. [Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India](#).

¹⁷ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and others. 2020. [The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020: Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets](#).

¹⁸ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2019–2020. [Aid at a glance charts: India](#); Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Financial Tracking Service. [2019–2022. India](#).

¹⁹ Ministry of Finance. 2021. [Union Budget 2021–2022](#).

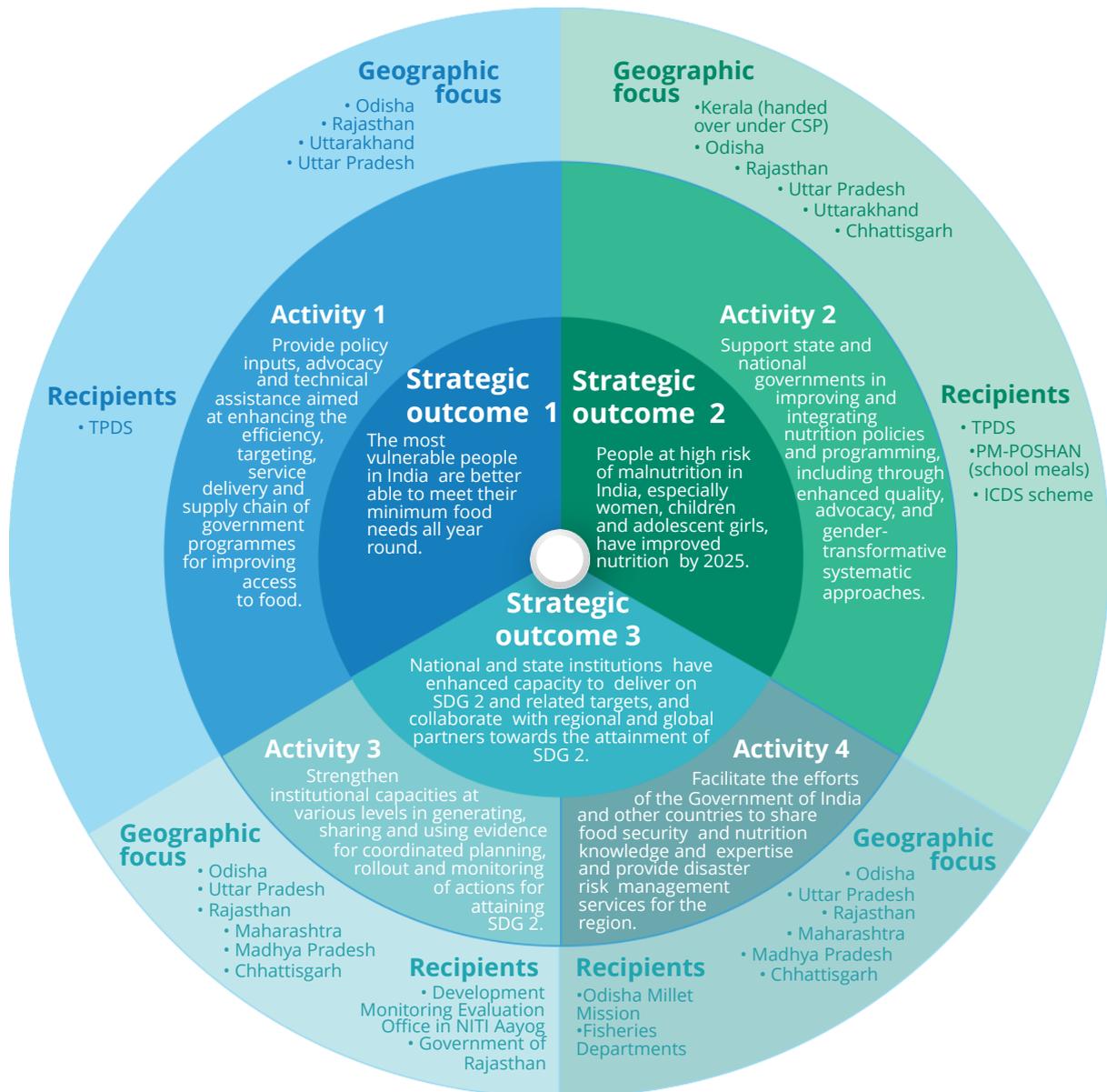
TABLE 1: KEY SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS			
	Indicator	Value	Year
	Children under 6 months exclusively breastfeeding (%) (5)	63.7	2019–2021
	Children 6–23 months of age receiving an adequate diet (%) (5)	11.3	2019–2021
	Gender Inequality Index (rank) (2)	123 out of 162 countries	2019
	Female employment in agriculture (% of total agriculture sector employment) (6)	74	2018
	Global Climate Risk Index (7)	7	2021

Sources: (1) National Commission on Population. 2019. *Population Projections for India and States 2011–2036*; (2) United Nations Development Programme. 2020. *Human Development Report 2020: The next frontier – Human development and the Anthropocene*; (3) World Bank. 2020. *GNI per capita, Atlas method (current US\$)*; (4) NITI Aayog. 2021. *India National Multidimensional Poverty Index: Baseline Report*; (5) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. 2021. *National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 2019–21: India*; (6) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2018. *India country profile*; (7) GermanWatch. 2021. *Global Climate Risk Index 2021*.

WFP country strategic plan

10. The work of WFP in India has evolved since its inception in 1963 from direct assistance to a more enabling role. The CSP for 2019–2022 focuses on providing technical assistance and strengthening capacities to support the Government of India's achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2 and 17 through three strategic outcomes and four activities connected to eight outputs, initially covering the period 2019–2023 and later shortened by one year to align with the United Nations sustainable development framework for 2018–2022 (UNSDF) (figure 1).

Figure 1: Overview of India CSP for 2019–2023

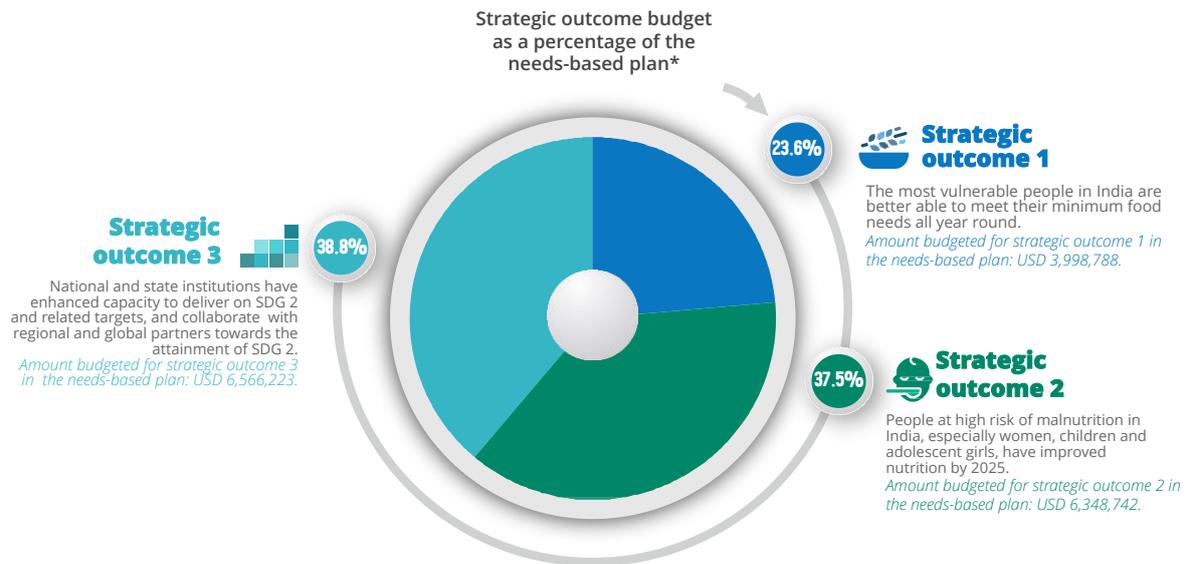


Source: CSP and line of sight.

- WFP aims to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the three government food-based safety nets through capacity and systems strengthening involving supply chain optimization; support for smallholders; food fortification and technology; inclusion of appropriate and good quality foods for young children and pregnant and lactating women; food security analysis; social and behaviour change communication (SBCC); women’s empowerment and gender transformative approaches; and support for disaster preparedness and response and climate change adaptation. The CSP advocates inclusion and recognizes that gender, caste, religion, age and other individual attributes may be the basis for exclusion and may intersect to intensify it. As the CSP positioned WFP in an enabling role rather than a provider of direct assistance, it did not identify vulnerable groups to be targeted nor define the number of beneficiaries to be reached.
- WFP sought to connect the evidence it had helped to generate through analytical work, mostly conducted in partnership with the Government of India, with food security and nutrition policy and programme formulation at the national and state levels.

13. As the evaluation team worked with the country office to establish the implicit theory of change underpinning the CSP, it identified two important causal accelerators underpinning the CSP expected change pathways: technological innovations supporting supply chain optimization; and country capacity strengthening (CCS) drivers, derived from WFP’s CCS framework and cutting across the domains of capacity strengthening.
14. The CSP for 2019–2022 was approved with a total budget of USD 20,024,321. By 31 December 2021, total funding amounted to USD 15,623,760, corresponding to 78 percent of the needs-based plan. Most of the resources raised went to strategic outcomes 1 and 2, but none of the strategic outcomes received 100 percent of the funding set out in the needs-based plan; activity 4 under strategic outcome 3 faced the greatest shortfall, with funding at just 36 percent (figure 2).

Figure 2: India CSP cumulative financial overview (2019–2021)



* The needs-based plan budget percentages by strategic outcome have been calculated at the transfer and implementation cost level (USD 16.9 million), excluding direct (USD 1.9 million) and indirect (USD 1.2 million) support costs. This data refers to the original needs-based plan because there have been no CSP revisions.

** The allocated resources by strategic outcome do not add up to USD 15.6 million because resources were also allocated to direct (USD 1.7 million) and indirect (USD 0.6 million) support costs. The allocated resource percentages by strategic outcome, non-strategic-outcome-specific funds and HQ/RBB/PSA funds have been calculated at the transfer and implementation cost level (USD 13.3 million).

*** The expenditures by strategic outcome have been calculated at the transfer and implementation cost level (USD 8.2 million), excluding direct (USD 1.2 million) and indirect (USD 0.6 million) support costs and global support service recovered costs (USD 0.6 million).

Sources: Country portfolio budget and Integrated Road Map Analytics, ACR-1 report. Funds provided as support for the country office by WFP headquarters, the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBB) and programme support and administrative (PSA) fund codes are not reflected in the Integrated Road Map reports and were retrieved from the WFP Information Network and Global System.

Abbreviation: HQ = headquarters.

Evaluation findings

To what extent are WFP's strategic position, role and specific contributions based on country priorities, people's needs and WFP's strengths?

Relevance

15. Based on extensive consultations with national and state governments, civil society, the private sector and research and development partners, the CSP is designed to contribute to progress towards national goals and is aligned with key national policies, strategies and laws including the National Food Security Act of 2013, and SDG-related commitments. However, funding constraints led WFP to focus on a few states, which limited its contributions to national capacity strengthening related to SDG 2.
16. The CSP has maintained its strategic relevance by building on technical capacity strengthening activities under the previous CSP, expanding them to new thematic areas and locations. The CSP also remained relevant thanks to continued dialogue with institutional partners, which facilitated its adaptation to government needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. WFP supported the Government's monitoring of supply chains during the national lockdown and engaged in multi-partner initiatives aimed at expanding outreach by Government safety nets and capacity-strengthening programmes, in collaboration with civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Coherence and alignment

17. WFP established its comparative advantage among United Nations entities by focusing on capacity strengthening related to food-based safety net programmes, and the CSP was consistent with the UNSDF, especially with regard to food security and nutrition priorities.

Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable

18. A programme that is mainly directed at CCS implies an enabling role for WFP rather than a role as a provider of direct assistance to the most vulnerable. Nevertheless, CSP activities were developed keeping in mind the need to reach disadvantaged communities. WFP support for supply chain management, data analytics and post-harvest loss management (under strategic outcome 1); rice fortification (under strategic outcome 2); and research (under strategic outcome 3) contributed to improving food delivery and the quality of take-home rations targeted at the poor and drew attention to issues of exclusion and social inequity.
19. Although the CSP promotes inclusion, there has been no systematic assessment of the extent to which CCS efforts have benefitted the poorest communities, nor has the CSP sufficiently promoted approaches that reflect the risk of exclusion based on class, gender, caste, age, sexual identity or disability.
20. WFP support for the Government's response to COVID-19 paid special attention to ensuring access to food for the poorest and most food-insecure households, including those with persons with disabilities, especially during the lockdown period.

What are the extent and quality of WFP's contribution to country strategic plan strategic outcomes in India?

Output and outcome delivery under strategic outcome 1: The most vulnerable people in India are better able to meet their minimum food needs all year round

21. Under strategic outcome 1, WFP's partnership with national and state governments positively contributed to improving the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the TPDS. WFP offered technical capacity strengthening to facilitate increased digitalization, automation and analytics capacities. Stakeholders confirmed that this support led to analysis, decision making and strategy development that improved the efficiency of the TPDS in six states.

WFP technical support also led to improved supply chain management and targeting. Ultimately, improvements benefitted more than half a million fair price shops, contributing to better food access for the most vulnerable populations.

22. Stakeholders also said that policy dialogue and regular engagement with national and state governments helped maintain the visibility of food security and nutrition issues and maximize the effects of WFP technical contributions to CCS. However, WFP did not systematically advocate state-level investment in the scale-up of some of the technical innovations, which could have further advanced the SDG 2 agenda.

Outputs and outcomes delivery under strategic outcome 2: People at high risk of malnutrition in India, especially women, children and adolescent girls, have improved nutrition by 2025

23. Under strategic outcome 2, WFP demonstrated the viability of rice fortification through pilot projects; sensitized the private sector to fortified rice production and used SBCC to raise awareness of the benefits of consuming fortified rice; supported the development of rice fortification standards; piloted and scaled up the production of take-home rations; supported the national school feeding programme by strengthening staff capacity; and advocated with government stakeholders the mainstreaming of fortified rice in all three food-based safety nets.
24. Through assessments, evaluative evidence, SBCC and training, WFP contributed to raising awareness of the benefits of rice fortification and encouraged greater use of fortified rice in some states. These efforts led to the scale-up of take-home rations and fortified rice in the ICDS in Kerala and the inclusion of fortified rice in Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Uttarakhand, thereby improving the nutritional quality of take-home rations. WFP made a case for mainstreaming fortified rice in government safety nets in 2019, which led to the development of a centre sector scheme for distributing fortified rice through the Public Distribution System under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution. WFP developed operational guidelines for states and was a technical partner for the rollout of the scheme in Odisha, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh. Supporting the assessment of rice mills, technical assistance for millers and the development of standard operating procedures for fortified rice procurement, with accompanying capacity building for civil servants, contributed to the state-level rollout of fortified rice under the ICDS and PM-POSHAN schemes. Lastly, WFP support for strengthening the capacity of women self-help groups to operate take-home rations production units led some state governments to scale up production and promoted the empowerment of women.
25. By the time of the evaluation, WFP had generally achieved outcome indicators related to influencing national food security and nutrition policies, programmes and system components; influencing investments; and establishing effective partnerships.
26. Challenges to achieving strategic outcome 2 included the fact that per beneficiary costs under the ICDS scheme are not indexed to inflation, which can threaten the financial viability of take-home rations production units. WFP could draw the attention of the Government to this issue, together with the need to promote a balanced diet in take-home rations over a focus on protein and calories. Lastly, WFP's financial and human resources are insufficient to support the women's self-help groups that operate the take-home rations production units.

Output and outcome delivery under strategic outcome 3: National and state institutions have enhanced capacity to deliver on SDG 2 and related targets, and collaborate with regional and global partners towards the attainment of SDG 2.

27. WFP analysis and evidence generation have informed policy formulation and programme design, supported innovation and the scale-up of pilot projects and contributed to enhancing national evaluation capacity. Over the past 20 years, WFP food security and

nutrition analyses have established the organization's credibility in this field across India and demonstrated the utility of these analyses to national and state institutions, thus providing incentives for such institutions to invest in food security evidence generation. Well-established research organizations that partner with WFP also acknowledge WFP's contribution to enhancing government capacity for food security and nutrition analysis.

28. If they had been more widely disseminated, WFP analyses could have had greater impact on decisions and better facilitated the replication of successful policies and programmes across states. They would also have been more relevant if they had had a greater focus on urban food insecurity, which gained prominence due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Food security and nutrition analyses were often one-off in nature, with limited follow-up from one exercise to another. This was a missed opportunity to build comprehensive sets of information for policymakers.
29. The secondment of WFP staff to government departments to strengthen evaluation capacity yielded positive results, judging by the quality of deliverables produced. However, there are still gaps in state government capacity to gather disaggregated and specialized real-time data, which hampers the tracking of the benefits of social schemes and efforts to improve gender-transformative and inclusive programming.
30. WFP leveraged its expertise to strengthen government capacity for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and facilitated collaboration with regional and global partners under South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) for the exchange of knowledge and expertise. However, efforts to facilitate strategic SSTC partnerships in India to support programmes in other countries where WFP operates were limited, mainly because of reprioritization related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Contributions to cross-cutting priorities

31. Protection and accountability to affected populations are critical when engaging directly with beneficiaries. These cross-cutting priorities are also relevant to the implementation of CCS activities. The country office sought to strengthen government protection and accountability mechanisms related to food safety nets and the related capacity of civil society organizations partnering with the Government on food distribution during the initial period of the lockdown from March to June 2020. It also indirectly enhanced the capacity of affected people to hold the Government accountable by raising awareness of their entitlements.
32. WFP integrated gender equality and women's empowerment into the CSP, most prominently by promoting take-home rations production units entirely operated and managed by women in Odisha and Uttar Pradesh; the women involved reported feeling a sense of power as individuals and as members of the collective in a usually male-dominated area of work. More generally, gender- and inclusion-sensitive approaches and gender analysis informed WFP research and analysis and the establishment of a gender unit in the country office demonstrated WFP's commitment to institutionalizing a gender-transformative agenda.
33. There is scope for more systematically integrating gender analysis at the programmatic and organizational levels, introducing gender-transformative approaches in SBCC and making better use of studies and assessments on gender and inclusion through better dissemination and an advocacy strategy. Although WFP leveraged the positive policy environment for gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) created by the national and state governments, it did not tap the potential to establish partnerships with stakeholders to advance the GEWE agenda.
34. The country office sought to maximize the environmental benefits of its programmes while ensuring that its activities did not harm the environment.

Sustainability of results

35. The integration of WFP activities with government programmes from the beginning ensured government ownership and fostered the sustainability of CCS work. The country office leveraged substantial government funding but the scale-up of pilots and sustainability of results and innovation depended largely on the financial resources allocated to the food safety net programmes. The ability of various levels of Government to absorb CCS activities affected the potential for sustainability, notably with regard to activities under strategic outcome 3.

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

Timeliness of delivery

36. The CSP delivered outputs according to plan, to the extent possible considering the severe disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and related capacity issues faced by partners. WFP institutional partners at the state and national levels said that collaboration with the WFP team was effective and open. The country office reported that the pandemic led to new opportunities for implementation even when other planned activities were delayed; the office mitigated the disruption caused by the national slowdown by increasing engagement and communication with partners. Delays and disruptions were observed in the implementation of the country office gender action plan, with several studies not conducted owing to lack of stakeholder engagement or funding.

Cost efficiency and consideration of cost-effective modalities

37. By and large, the evaluation found that technology-based innovative solutions, the pilot approach and the secondment of full-time staff to government departments were cost-efficient ways to reach indirect beneficiaries and achieve impact at scale. Furthermore, the rationalization of costs and proposed cost-saving measures for the Government were an integral feature of most of the technical CCS activities undertaken under the CSP. This is reflected in the technological innovations that WFP promoted.

What factors explain WFP's performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift envisaged in the country strategic plan?

Use of data and results-based management

38. The CSP drew extensively on studies, food security and nutrition assessments and various operational reviews and evaluations. However, if WFP had conducted analyses at the state level, the organization could have been better placed to advocate measures to address food security and nutrition needs where they were highest.

Predictability, adequacy and flexibility of the resources

39. The country office's atypical financial management system, which accommodates multi-year funding, is not well suited to WFP's corporate accrual accounting practices. This made it difficult to analyse annual planned versus actual resources. The country office raised financial resources equivalent to 78 percent of the needs-based plan, and expenditures were mostly below implementation plan forecasts. Contributions allowed limited flexibility to move resources between strategic outcomes and tended to support interventions with tangible outputs under strategic outcomes 1 and 2; funding for studies, assessments and evaluations (under strategic outcome 3) was the least forthcoming. Most of the funds mobilized from the private sector, the second largest source of funding, were provided through one-off agreements with no guarantee of continuity or renewal.

Partnerships

40. WFP forged solid and strategic partnerships with the national and state governments as well as research institutions and other partners for capacity strengthening. Strong political commitment to ending malnutrition and the trust established between the Government and WFP helped to enhance the impact of CSP interventions. However, discussions with government stakeholders revealed that WFP did not tap into the full potential of partnerships with some departments and ministries, including the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Ministry of Education.
41. As part of its support for India's response to COVID-19, WFP also established new partnerships with NGOs to reach vulnerable populations during the lockdown. However, WFP's partnership approach was better suited to capacity strengthening than to ensuring that assistance reached the most vulnerable populations. A broader coalition of partnerships could have amplified results across the country.

Adaptive capacity

42. The CSP provided continuity and flexibility adequate to allow WFP to respond to changes in the operational environment and to adapt to the requirements of new activities. WFP's well-coordinated adaptation to the COVID-19 crisis, supporting NGOs and civil society organizations, is strong evidence of the CSP's flexible and dynamic nature.
43. Internal factors such as strong leadership, technical expertise and political acumen enabled WFP to leverage its comparative advantage in food security and nutrition. These were countered by challenges arising from external factors, including high staff turnover in national institutions and uncertainty regarding national and state government resource allocations for nutrition support, food security and gender-transformative interventions.

Conclusions

Relevance and strategic positioning

44. WFP maintained its strategic relevance during the implementation of the CSP. It will continue to have a role to play in tackling food security and nutrition challenges in India, where the prevalence of malnutrition is still above acceptable levels, and progress in reducing undernutrition among children, adolescents and pregnant women is being hindered by the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising food prices and the global impacts of the conflict in Ukraine.
45. WFP established itself in India as a long-standing trusted partner of the central and state governments in support of food and nutrition security. It positioned itself strategically as a source of technical assistance and capacity strengthening that supports government food security systems and programmes.
46. The CSP had an appropriate focus on increasing the efficiency of supply chains and systems for the three food-based safety net programmes and exploring technology-based solutions, particularly for state governments. The nutritional benefits of rice fortification also make this support very appropriate, and it could be built on further with a focus on improving diets. Support for evidence-based policymaking was relevant, but the reach of capacity strengthening efforts was insufficient given the magnitude of needs.
47. Given its expertise, WFP could potentially contribute more significantly to the achievement of SDG 2 targets in India by expanding its engagement in central and state government priority areas such as climate change adaptation and resilience building. Similarly, there is potential for WFP to magnify its contributions through a more systematic consideration of food and nutrition security needs across India; it could also support the replication of

interventions that have been successful in other states and expand its support for evidence generation to facilitate more disaggregated decision making, based on capacity needs assessment.

Results and performance

48. Working closely with national and state governments to identify strategic opportunities for CCS enabled WFP to make positive contributions to the achievement of SDG 2 in India. WFP used its expertise to influence the supply of and demand for quality foods and to address institutional challenges and capacity gaps. WFP leveraged the Government's push for evidence-based decision making and highlighted the importance of rigorous evidence and evaluation. WFP also facilitated the exchange of knowledge and expertise through SSTC projects.
49. The CSP benefitted from a comprehensive approach to CCS, good organizational support, strong country office leadership on strengthening collaboration with the Government and a readiness to be flexible and adaptive. However, the country office could have been a stronger advocate of investment in food security, building on the clear commitments of the central and state governments to SDG 2.
50. Because of the need to refine performance indicators, it was difficult for the evaluation team to assess the performance of a country programme consisting entirely of CCS. The country office could take part in the pilot process for the new indicators that will be defined under WFP's new corporate results framework.

Gender, inclusion and "no one left behind"

51. Although WFP integrated GEWE considerations into its interventions, the organization could further sensitize and strengthen the capacity of government officials on gender and inclusion concerns at various administrative levels and harness the growing recognition by national institutions that there is a need to tackle the specific challenges faced by the most disadvantaged populations. This could be achieved through more systematic dissemination of evidence and strategies that promote gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation systems better able to track the effectiveness of targeting for the most vulnerable.
52. More can be done to understand the challenges faced by disadvantaged groups in accessing their entitlements under government programmes in order to improve the reach of food-based safety net schemes for the most vulnerable populations.

Partnerships

53. Maintaining close links with counterparts in the central and state governments has been critical to ensuring effective CSP implementation. This has required considerable and continuous investment by WFP, and progress has been hampered to some extent by staff turnover among senior management. Re-establishing close links, particularly with the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, could offer new avenues for advancing the SDG 2 agenda and supporting coordination with other ministries and departments relevant to the CSP.
54. National advocacy through strategic partnerships is critical to enhancing India's efforts to achieve SDG 2. More targeted efforts to support public policy at the national level and in the states where WFP operates can amplify WFP's impact on the ground and further galvanize support. WFP could also improve results under the new UNSDF by playing a more proactive role in mobilizing programme cooperation with other United Nations entities to advance the SDG 2 agenda.

55. WFP did not fully tap the potential to amplify its reach by entering into new long-term strategic CCS partnerships and collaborating with civil society organizations and women-led organizations. This could increase progress towards SDG 2 and on issues related to GEWE, inclusion and vulnerability.
56. WFP support for SSTC helped share Indian good practices in other countries in the region but work was constrained by COVID-19. WFP could broker SSTC and extend food assistance to other countries, and India could also benefit from exchanging with other countries knowledge and practices on climate adaptation, social protection systems, resilience building and food fortification.

Resource mobilization and its efficient use

57. The country office has mobilized sufficient funds for the current level of operations in India. It has appropriate strategies for other potential funders, including exploring new cost-sharing modalities, especially with state governments, and seeking to mobilize financial resources from sources such as the Adaptation Fund. Mobilization of additional financial resources is needed to expand support for the Government to accelerate the attainment of SDG 2 targets.
58. Even with modest resources, WFP can contribute further to national and state-level outcomes by proactively sharing lessons learned, convening stakeholders and advocating greater visibility of food security and nutrition challenges at the national and state levels.

Recommendations

#	Recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1	<p>Consolidate, build on successes and develop medium-term strategies and approaches based on capacity needs assessments for each country strategic plan outcome in the new country strategic plan, integrating innovation and South-South and triangular cooperation into all country strategic plan outcomes.</p> <p>1.1 Remain focused on the three food-based safety nets (Targeted Public Distribution System, the midday meals programme and Integrated Child Development Services).</p> <p>1.2 Explore further engagement in the new thematic areas initiated under the country strategic plan by responding to emerging needs for country capacity strengthening in climate change adaptation and resilience building.</p> <p>1.3 Undertake a more systematic exploration and prioritization of technology-based innovations to strengthen government systems.</p> <p>1.4 Continue to explore South-South and triangular cooperation as a modality for country capacity strengthening in India and help expand country capacity strengthening and technical assistance to the Government.</p>	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, headquarters Technical Assistance and Country Capacity Strengthening Service	High	Second quarter 2023
2	<p>Expand country capacity strengthening initiatives across India for greater impact on the Sustainable Development Goal 2 agenda.</p> <p>2.1 Explore and expand WFP engagement in a comprehensive manner in states confronted with food security and nutrition challenges in order to promote government replication and scale-up of successful best practices and innovative models for achieving food security and nutrition.</p> <p>2.2 Capture the experience and lessons learned from states such as Odisha and Kerala and share them through inter-regional exchanges within India and with international partners through South-South and triangular cooperation.</p> <p>2.3 Identify a small set of core activities backed up by resources and advocacy that can be replicated across other states.</p>	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	Fourth quarter 2023

#	Recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
3	<p>Step up efforts to integrate and strengthen gender equality, women's empowerment and inclusive approaches.</p> <p>3.1 Conduct a systematic analysis through all phases of the intervention cycle to identify and anticipate gender and inclusion issues and measures for mitigating them.</p> <p>3.2 Develop a plan to ensure the systematic involvement of the gender unit in all country strategic plan outcome activity planning, design and implementation as well as in the production of social and behaviour change communication and communication materials.</p> <p>3.3 Fully integrate and communicate gender and inclusion considerations throughout engagement with government entities at all levels and other partners in order to identify and advocate ways to support the inclusion of eligible marginalized and vulnerable groups in food-based government safety net programmes.</p> <p>3.4 Strengthen capacity to design, implement and monitor gender equality and social inclusion and ensure marginalized groups benefit so that no one is left behind.</p>	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, regional gender advisor; disability and inclusion advisor; headquarters Gender Office	High	Fourth quarter 2022
4	<p>Develop long-term strategic collaboration with stakeholders to support efforts to address food security and nutrition challenges and "leave no one behind".</p> <p>4.1 Strengthen collaboration with the central and state governments. In particular, develop a long-term cooperation plan with the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, which serves as the lead ministry for the implementation of the country strategic plan; explore and expand direct cooperation with ministries at the national level, including the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Ministry of Education; and finalize with state governments state-specific partnership strategies for the new country strategic plan.</p> <p>4.2 Strengthen and expand strategic partnerships with non-governmental stakeholders.</p>	Operational	Country office		Medium	First quarter 2023

#	Recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
	<p>4.3 Engage more proactively with other United Nations entities to promote more integrated strategies, enhanced complementary programming and joint fundraising for advancing the Sustainable Development Goal 2 agenda.</p> <p>4.4 Build on experience to expand alliances for advocacy and sustained action to better address food insecurity and malnutrition, drawing on WFP-generated evidence, best practices and global experiences.</p>					
5	<p>Actively pursue existing strategies for mobilizing additional resources to further WFP's work in other geographic and thematic areas.</p> <p>5.1 Pursue further opportunities to mobilize additional funding from central government ministries other than the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare and to negotiate cost-sharing modalities with state governments.</p> <p>5.2 Continue to expand work with the private sector to gain access to corporate social responsibility funds and increase work to obtain grants from international foundations and funds such as the Adaptation Fund, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.</p> <p>5.3 If possible, under the next country strategic plan use matching grants from the new fund replacing the Emerging Donor Matching Fund, as has been the practice under the Emerging Donor Matching Fund and the current country strategic plan and explore the possibility of opening new windows to extend financial support from the new fund to lower-middle-income countries like India.</p>	Operational	Country office	Support from regional bureau and headquarters Public Partnerships and Resourcing Division, Private Partnerships and Fundraising Division, Corporate Planning and Performance Division and Finance Division	High	Second quarter 2023

#	Recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
	<p>5.4 The country office and headquarters should collaborate to adapt the country office financial system to the specific circumstances of WFP operations in India and to ensure that the country office uses resources more efficiently. The circumstances include that most of the funds allocated are obtained through multi-year contributions; the existence of a revolving fund used by the country office to fund its activities subject to replenishment upon the receipt of contributions; the practice of charging a service fee for global support services, which affects the reliability of reported expenditures; and the fact that headquarters, regional bureau and programme support and administrative funds allocated to the country office are currently reflected in the accounting systems of headquarters and the regional bureau.</p>					
6	<p>The country office, in collaboration with the regional bureau and headquarters, should support the development of immediate and intermediate country capacity strengthening outcome-level indicators for assessing WFP's contribution to country capacity strengthening.</p> <p>6.1 Develop country-specific immediate and intermediate outcome indicators that better fit the needs of the country office's unique country capacity strengthening portfolio (including South-South and triangular cooperation), with normative guidelines and systems led by headquarters, and remain abreast of the country capacity strengthening indicators that will be developed and piloted as part of the new corporate results framework.</p>	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau, headquarters Technical Assistance and Country Capacity Strengthening Service	High	Second quarter 2023

Acronyms

CCS	country capacity strengthening
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CSP	country strategic plan
GEWE	gender equality and women's empowerment
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
NGO	non-governmental organization
PM-POSHAN	Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman
SBCC	social and behaviour change communication
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSTC	South-South and triangular cooperation
TPDS	Targeted Public Distribution System
UNSDF	United Nations sustainable development framework