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Evaluation reports

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Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Pakistan (2018–2022)

Executive summary

The evaluation of the Pakistan country strategic plan for 2018–2022 was conducted between July 2021 and February 2022. It assessed WFP's strategic positioning and its contribution to outcomes, the efficiency with which the plan was implemented and the factors explaining WFP's performance. It served the dual purpose of accountability and learning and informed the preparation of the new country strategic plan.

The plan sets out WFP's increasing focus on providing technical assistance for Government-led programmes and policies through five strategic outcomes focused on access to food and nutrition in the aftermath of shocks; social protection; nutrition; resilient food systems and disaster risk reduction; and capacity strengthening.

The evaluation found that the country strategic plan was aligned with the Government's priorities and the United Nations sustainable development framework for Pakistan for 2018–2022. However, operations did not fully meet provincial expectations. While geographic targeting was appropriate, more could be done to address the needs of people in vulnerable situations in each province. WFP adapted to a number of shocks including the COVID-19 pandemic. However, resources were insufficient to allow for adaptation to changes in government climate change policies.

WFP made progress in several areas, albeit unevenly across the strategic outcomes. Unconditional food transfers under strategic outcome 1 contributed to better, more stable food security for temporarily displaced people. While food assistance for asset activities supported dietary diversity and better economic standing, they offered insufficient support for beneficiaries in the face of shocks of the type experienced during CSP implementation. Under strategic outcome 2 WFP played an important role supporting the Government's social protection programme,

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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Ehsaas Nashonuma, although its engagement was largely operational. Through support for policy development under strategic outcome 3, WFP worked with the Government to broaden the scope of its nutrition interventions from the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition to a multisectoral integrated programme addressing the root causes of chronic and acute malnutrition in a holistic and sustainable way. Through strategic outcome 4, WFP supported emergency response capacity at the provincial level. Such support holds considerable promise, but pilot projects need to be scaled up to deliver greater results. Under strategic outcome 5 the support provided in training and infrastructure handover was relevant and well received, but a comprehensive plan for strengthening the capacity of national institutions was lacking.

Progress was made in integrating gender considerations into activities; this work should continue to involve key actors, including men, in order to foster an environment that favours gender equality.

WFP made good use of resources across all activities. However, a number of activities focusing on country capacity strengthening were halted due to the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic, which affected cost efficiency.

Funding declined during the term of the country strategic plan, with a large part of it earmarked for crisis response, thus limiting the flexibility of implementation.

Overall, WFP continued its shift from a largely humanitarian role to one focused on providing advice and capacity strengthening. This is a long-term project, and the period covered by this evaluation included only the first steps. The results of the country strategic plan reflect this transition, and many of the operational structures, procedures, staffing and skills continue to be shaped by both the circumstances of the past and new systems. As a result, WFP was an effective emergency response agent but was less agile at demonstrating its comparative advantage in the resilience building and root cause focus areas, although important gains were made.

The evaluation generated four recommendations. Two strategic recommendations identify ways for WFP to optimize its efforts to address food insecurity, by supporting the Government in developing strategies for enhancing food and nutrition security while maintaining a crisis response capacity and by reviewing its fundraising, partnership and advocacy plan. The two operational recommendations relate to partnerships and the promotion of gender equality, accountability to affected populations and protection.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Pakistan (2018–2022) (WFP/EB.2/2022/6-G) and management response (WFP/EB.2/2022/6-G/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. An evaluation of the Pakistan country strategic plan (CSP) for 2018–2022 was conducted between July 2021 and February 2022 to inform the design of the next CSP. It covered WFP's activities between 2018 and September 2021 and assessed the quality of the CSP design, WFP's strategic positioning, progress towards the strategic changes introduced in the CSP and results. Combining accountability and learning objectives, its main users are the WFP Pakistan country office and internal and external stakeholders, including beneficiaries.
2. It adopted a theory-based mixed-methods approach. Gender was taken into account throughout the process. Because of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the inception phase was conducted remotely, with data collected through remote interviews and an in-country field mission. Findings, conclusions and recommendations were discussed with internal and external stakeholders during two online workshops in March 2022.

Context

3. Home to 221 million people, Pakistan covers 796,100 km² and has six federal units comprising the four provinces of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,¹ Punjab and Sindh; and two territories – Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan, in addition to the federal capital, Islamabad.
4. Pakistan is a lower-middle-income country with a per capita gross national income of USD 1,270 in 2020.² Recently, the economy has been weakened by natural disasters and a locust outbreak, which affected agricultural production, the COVID-19 pandemic and political instability. The Gender Gap Index³ ranks Pakistan 153 of 156 countries.
5. In 2020, 16.4 percent of the population was estimated to be moderately or severely food insecure.⁴ A 2018 national nutrition survey reported that four of ten children under 5 were stunted. The double burden of malnutrition is increasingly apparent, with almost one in three children underweight alongside a high prevalence of overweight in the same age group. All malnutrition indicators are worse in rural areas.⁵
6. Pakistan hosts 1.3 million refugees from Afghanistan,⁶ and the border region is currently affected by the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, which has been intensifying since August 2021.

¹ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa includes seven districts that have been recently merged into the province from an earlier arrangement of federally administrated tribal areas.

² World Bank. 2021. [GNI per capita, Atlas method \(current US\\$\)](#).

³ World Economic Forum. 2021. [Global Gender Gap Report 2021](#).

⁴ Government of Pakistan. 2021. [Pakistan social and living standards measurement survey \(2019–20\)](#).

⁵ Government of Pakistan. 2018. [Pakistan National Nutrition Survey 2018](#).

⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2022. [Operational Data Portal: Country View: Pakistan \(Islamic Republic of\)](#)

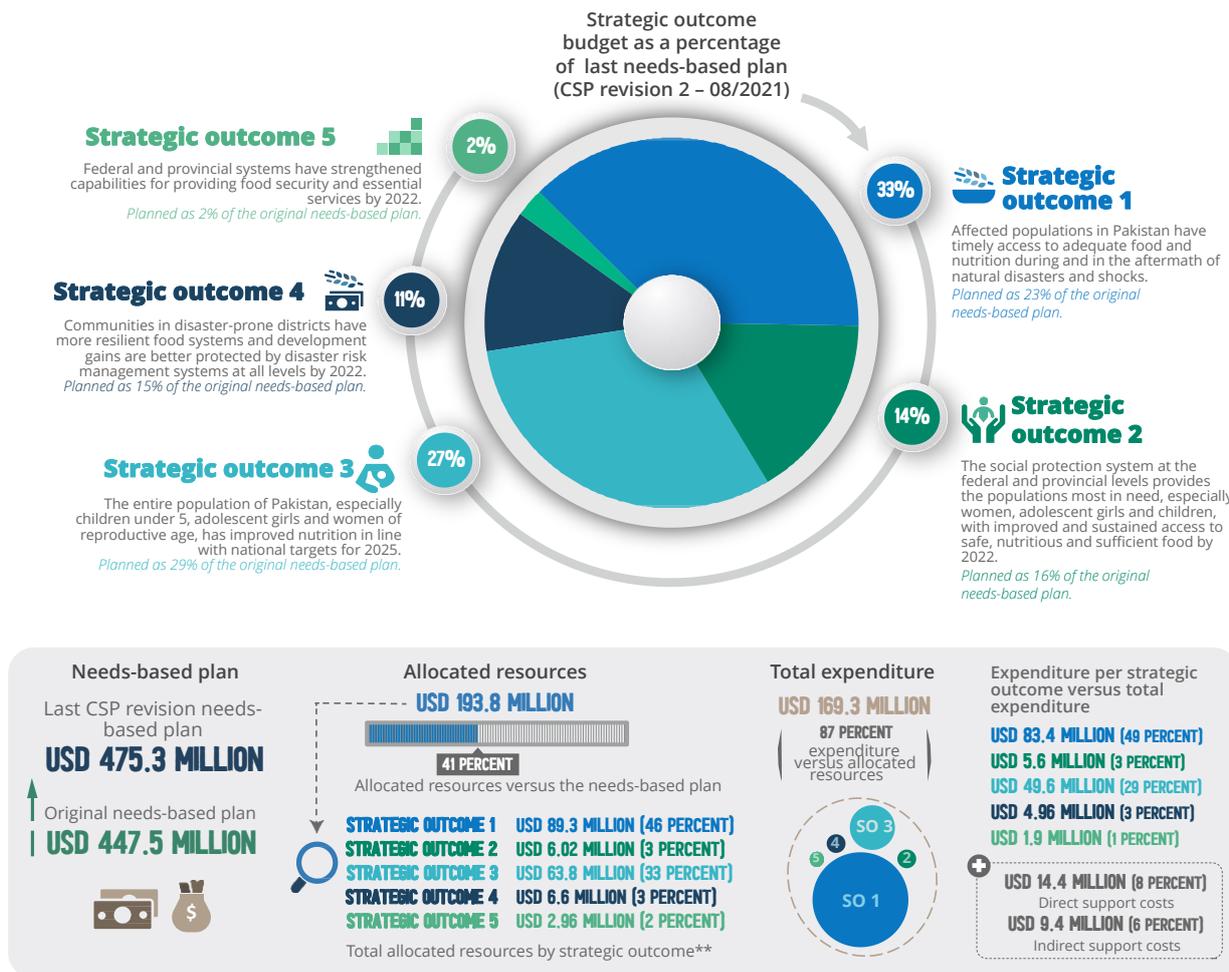
TABLE 1: SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS			
	Indicator	Value	Year
	Population total (million) (1)	221	2020
	Human Development Index (rank) (2)	154 (of 188)	2020
	Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty line (%) (1)	21.9	2018
	Global Hunger Index (score and rank) (3)	Score: 24.7 Rank: 92 (of 116)	2021
	Height-for-age (stunting – moderate and severe), prevalence for <5 (%) (4)	40.2	2018
	Weight-for-height (wasting – moderate and severe), <5 (%) (4)	17.7	2018
	Weight-for-age (overweight – moderate and severe), <5 (%) (4)	9.5	2018
	Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the total population (%) (5)	16.4	2020
	Gender Gap Index (rank) (6)	153 (of 156)	2021

Sources: (1) World Bank. 2022. [Pakistan country page](#); (2) United Nations Development Programme. 2020. [Human Development Report 2020: The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene: Briefing note for countries on the 2020 Human Development Report: Pakistan](#); (3) [Global Hunger Index: Pakistan](#); (4) Government of Pakistan. 2018. [Pakistan National Nutrition Survey 2018](#); (5) Government of Pakistan. 2021. [Pakistan social and living standards measurement survey \(2019–20\)](#); (6) World Economic Forum. 2021. [Global Gender Gap Report 2021](#).

WFP country strategic plan

7. The CSP for 2018–2022 is founded on two major developments: Pakistan's improved economic growth and security after a long period of turmoil; and persistent malnutrition, high vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change and declining smallholder productivity, which have led to uneven socioeconomic progress. The CSP comprises five strategic outcomes, eight activities and sixteen outputs (figure 1).
8. The original needs-based plan of USD 447.5 million was revised twice, reaching USD 475.3 million. As of November 2021 the revised needs-based plan was 41 percent funded, with USD 193.8 million (figure 1). Strategic outcome 1, dealing with emergency response, received 46 percent of allocated resources.

Figure 1: Pakistan country strategic plan (2018–2022) strategic outcomes, budget, funding and expenditures



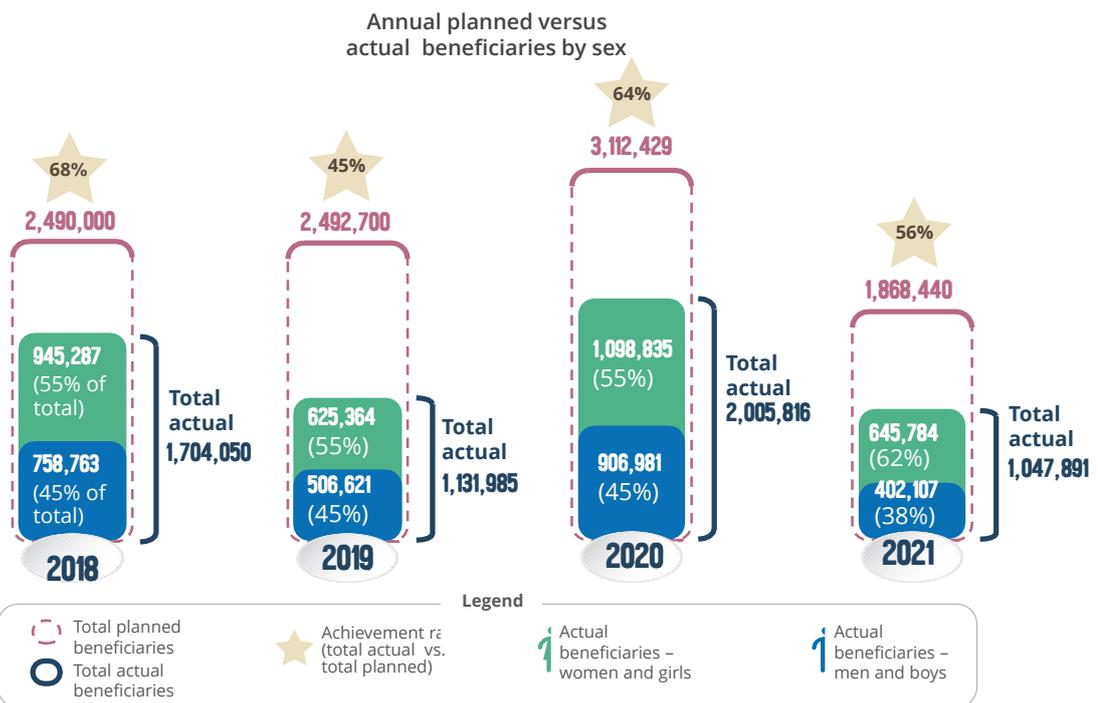
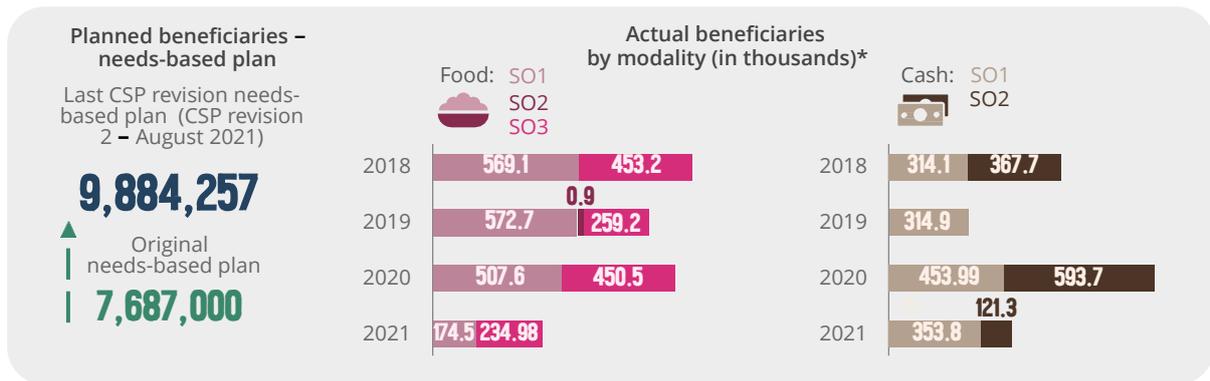
* The needs-based plan budget percentages by strategic outcome have been calculated at the grand total costs level, including direct (USD 35 million) and indirect (USD 29 million) support costs. This data refers to CSP revision 2, approved in August 2021.

** The percentages of allocated resources by strategic outcome do not add up to USD 193.8 million because resources were also allocated to non-activity specific purposes (USD 0.3 million) as well as to direct (USD 15.4 million) and indirect (USD 9.4 million) support costs.

Sources: Country portfolio budget; CSP revision 2; and Integrated Road Map Analytics ACR-1 report.

- Initially intended to reach 7.7 million beneficiaries, the revised CSP targeted 9.9 million. However, WFP consistently reached fewer beneficiaries than planned. Looking at absolute numbers over the years, the highest number of beneficiaries was for activities under strategic outcome 1 (figure 2).

Figure 2: Annual actual versus planned beneficiaries by sex (2018–2021)

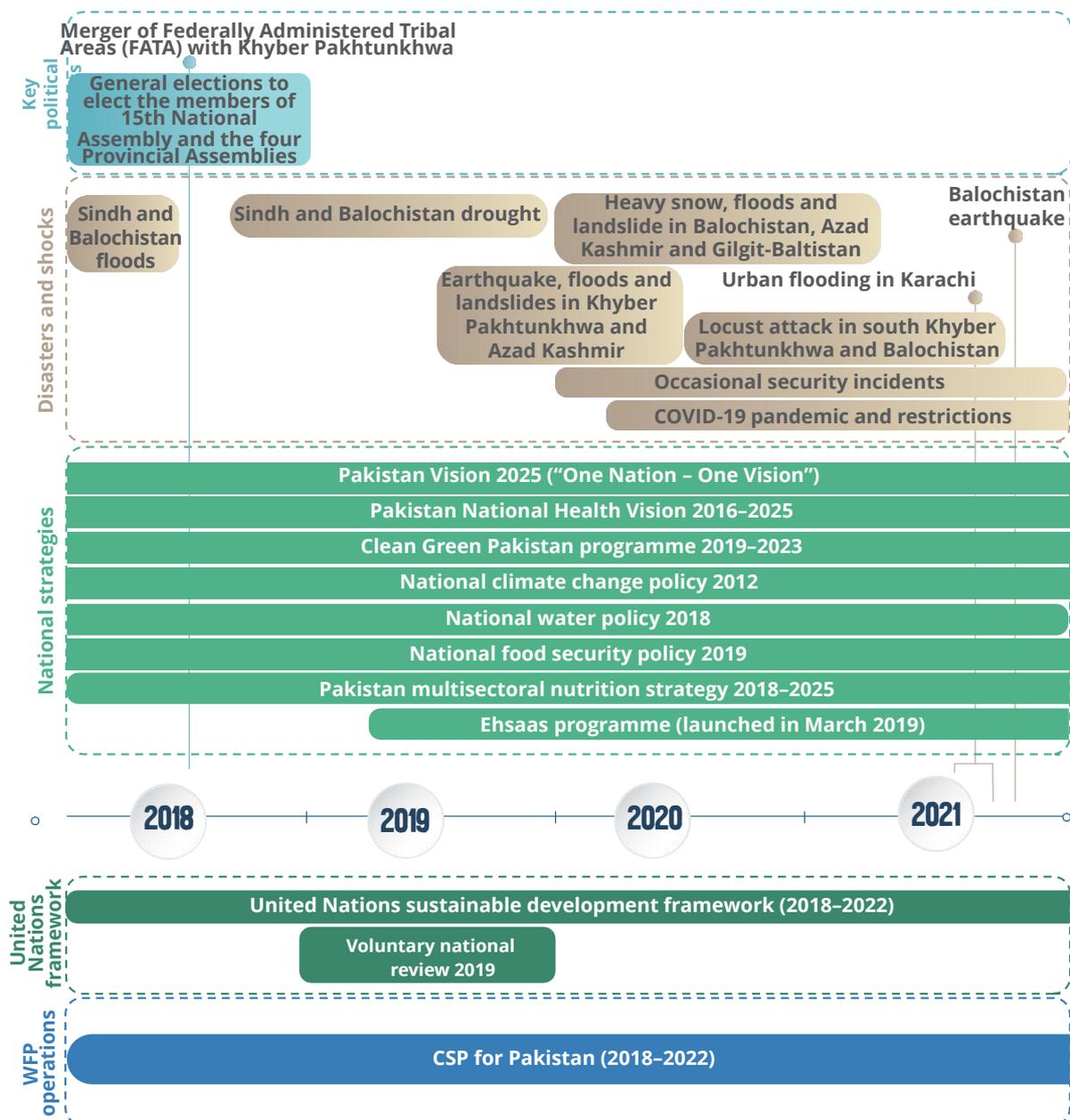


* The numbers in this section could contain overlaps as some beneficiaries might receive both food and CBTs and be assisted under more than one strategic outcome.

Sources: Annual country reports for 2018–2021.

- The CSP was implemented during a period marked by several shocks, including natural disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic and political instability (figure 3). These led WFP to increase its engagement in crisis response activities to the detriment of activities with long-term goals.

Figure 3: Country context and WFP operational overview Pakistan (2018–2021)



Source: Evaluation team

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 and alignment

- The CSP was well aligned with the Government's priorities on nutrition, social protection and capacity strengthening. However, it was challenging to ensure alignment between provincial expectations and what WFP intended to or could deliver. Although WFP undertook consultations at the federal and provincial levels, the CSP was not particularly well adapted to the specific needs of provinces nor fully aligned with the process of devolution. The support provided to all provinces was drawn from a single set of sub-activities and was insufficiently tailored to the needs of each province.

Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable

12. WFP's focus on the provinces of Balochistan, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was appropriate considering the acute problems that populations face in those areas. WFP developed targeting approaches to reach the most vulnerable, which were adapted to the activities under the various strategic outcomes. WFP was most effective when it combined its own assessment tools with those of the Government. For example, under strategic outcome 3 (nutrition), the Stunting Prevention and Rehabilitation Integrated Nutrition Gain (SPRING) programme was implemented in the poorest villages, which were identified through national surveys, while WFP used its own data to identify children under 2 and pregnant and lactating women. Overall, the systems effectively identified those in most need; however, criteria such as age, gender and disability were not systematically used as key parameters in the identification of the most vulnerable.

Strategic position and responsiveness to a dynamic context

13. WFP operations were affected by natural and human-induced shocks during the CSP period, including extreme climate events such as floods, droughts, heavy snow, earthquakes and shocks associated with insecurity in the border areas. The formulation of strategic outcome 1 was sufficiently flexible to enable WFP to respond effectively to these shocks. The CSP also provided for support to temporarily displaced people and a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, although activities related to climate change were planned under strategic outcome 4, available resources and capacity were inadequate to enable a focus on climate change or the adaptation of activities to policy changes such as the adoption of a national water policy in 2018 and the launch of the "Clean Green" programme in 2019.

Coherence with the United Nations cooperation framework

14. The CSP objectives are fully aligned with the United Nations sustainable development framework (UNSDF)⁷. WFP was the largest contributor to the objectives for nutrition, food security and resilience and contributed to achieving the education and social protection objectives. At the provincial level, it is difficult for the United Nations to be perceived as a single actor with multiple areas of competence, and government staff tend to treat each United Nations agency as a single independent partner.
15. The design of the new United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework (UNSDCF), to which WFP substantially contributed, provides an opportunity to overcome some of these challenges. Multiple respondents said that donors influenced coordination between United Nations entities depending on their funding approaches.

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

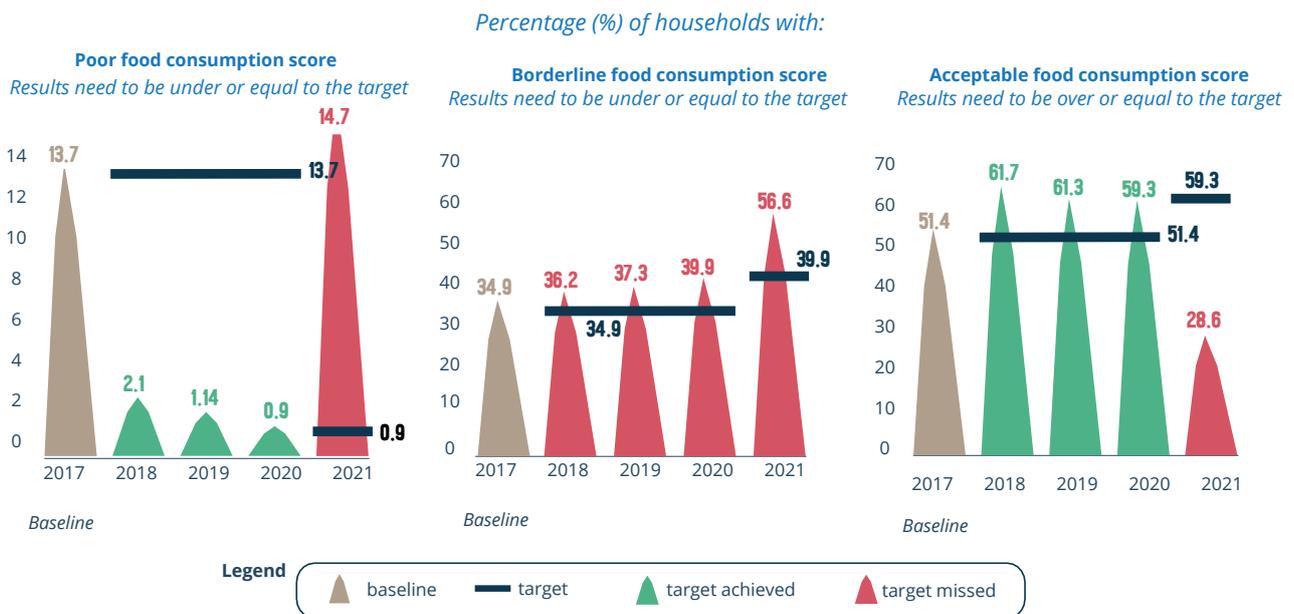
Strategic outcome 1: Affected populations in Pakistan have timely access to adequate food and nutrition during and in the aftermath of natural disasters and shocks

16. Strategic outcome 1 was pursued through two distinct activities: unconditional food assistance (activity 1) and food assistance for assets (FFA) (activity 2), which both involved in-kind food assistance and cash-based transfers (CBTs). Under activity 1, WFP exceeded its targets for quantities of food distributed, helping to stabilize and improve the food security of temporarily displaced people. The use of CBTs was complicated by Government restrictions and logistical issues, although it expanded during the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁷ United Nations Pakistan. 2018. *United Nations Sustainable Development Framework for Pakistan: One United Nations Programme III 2018-2022*.

17. There was some evidence that the dietary diversity and economic standing of FFA beneficiaries improved as a result of activity 2. Moreover, as shown in figure 4, the proportion of beneficiaries with poor food consumption scores decreased and those with acceptable scores increased until 2020. However, the proportion of households whose scores moved from “poor” to “borderline” was greater than the proportion of those moving from “borderline” to “acceptable”. The obstacles to reaching “acceptable” need to be better understood if results are to further improve. The indicators also highlight considerable deterioration in food consumption scores in 2021, which suggests that in the face of shocks such as COVID-19 beneficiaries have limited resilience.

Figure 4: Food security indicators linked to strategic outcome 1, activity 2



Strategic outcome 2: The social protection system at the federal and provincial levels provides the populations most in need, especially women, adolescent girls and children, with improved and sustained access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food by 2022

18. Under activity 3, WFP sought to work upstream, by providing institutional and policy support, and downstream, by supporting catalytic activities. Several pilot projects were developed to support the implementation of *Ehsaas Nashonuma*, a large Government-led social protection programme. For example, WFP provided unconditional cash top-ups to drought-affected households and supported pregnant and lactating women and children age 6–23 months with a comprehensive package of interventions focused on health and nutrition. WFP’s engagement with the *Ehsaas* programme under the CSP shows strategic foresight. Over the last couple of years, WFP focused more on implementing activities than gathering lessons learned to inform the development of sustainable mechanisms for expanding government systems. Several factors explain this: the engagement was relatively new, interaction was infrequent during the COVID-19 pandemic, and expectations on both sides were not fully aligned. For example, in all provinces the Government had high expectations of WFP as an implementing partner that would propose initiatives that were already funded.
19. Under activity 4 WFP provided technical assistance for the development of the Government-led school meals and education support programme and implemented an education pilot project for adolescent girls. However, major funding shortfalls for this activity, COVID-19 and the subsequent closure of schools led WFP to reach far fewer beneficiaries with CBTs compared with its targets.

Strategic outcome 3: The entire population of Pakistan, especially children under 5, adolescent girls and women of reproductive age, has improved nutrition in line with national targets for 2025

20. WFP worked with the Government to develop a multisectoral strategy, policy and programme to address malnutrition. WFP was effective in treating acute malnutrition, with all outcome indicators surpassing targets. However, the coverage of moderate acute malnutrition treatment and malnutrition prevention programmes was below targets.
21. Stunting prevention activities were initially affected by limited awareness on the part of donors, WFP staff and the Government of Pakistan of the potential impact of strategic support for stunting prevention. However, through the implementation of the *Ehsaas Nashonuma* and SPRING programmes, WFP improved its approach and reach.
22. WFP also provided social and behaviour change communication on infant and young child feeding practices and hygiene, although it did not regularly monitor results apart from the number of beneficiaries reached. Cooperating partners noted that targeted households were making nutrition-related decisions in favour of the most disadvantaged family members and allocating a proportion of CBTs to improving nutrition. However, there was a need to address social and behaviour change communication more comprehensively. This could be supported by a comprehensive multisectoral communication strategy with better coordination, particularly between the Ministry of Health, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization and WFP.

Strategic outcome 4: Communities in disaster prone districts have more resilient food systems and development gains are better protected by disaster risk management systems at all levels by 2022

23. WFP showcased its experience with small-scale interventions at the community and school levels, seeking to increase emergency response capacity and encourage the Government to scale up activities. Pilot projects were highly localized because of limited funding – they received just 3 percent of total allocated resources between 2018 and 2021 – and their contribution to building community resilience appeared to be marginal.
24. WFP supported the emergency response capacity of the provinces, including through the establishment of humanitarian response facilities that were used in recent emergencies. Other activities in communities and schools were aimed at increasing emergency response capacity. While this type of support has considerable promise, its full impact will only be visible when activities are scaled up.

Strategic objective 5: Federal and provincial systems have strengthened capabilities for providing food security and essential services by 2022

25. Capacity strengthening work focused on increasing technical and logistical competence in nutrition and stunting, CBTs, social protection and disaster risk reduction. Examples included the training of 35 staff from *Ehsaas Nashonuma* facilitation centres in Balochistan on social mobilization, the use of the Android app, protocols and seasonal calendars; and the restoration of silos to enhance wheat storage capacity in Balochistan.
26. WFP's engagement falls within the "define and design" category of the country capacity strengthening (CCS) framework. While WFP did identify capacity development needs for specific activities, the absence of a comprehensive capacity gap assessment to inform CCS activities was a challenge. Although somewhat fragmented, training was relevant and appropriately targeted and enabled operational change. CCS efforts at the organizational level only started recently, and the results are not yet visible.

Gender, protection and accountability to affected populations

27. The country office has made progress in integrating gender considerations into its operations. Current activities address women's economic inclusion through FFA and stunting and malnutrition through SPRING and *Ehsaas Nashonuma* in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The country office has signed up to the WFP gender transformation programme, which provides an opportunity to address structural issues. There is also a need to explore ways to foster the participation of key actors, including men, so that they help to strengthen the enabling environment.
28. Protection indicators collected by WFP showed positive results, but field data from the evaluation revealed that cooperating partners struggled to operationalize protection principles because of a lack of awareness of the principles or knowledge of how to apply them. The short-term nature of projects and high turnover among cooperating partner staff suggest that there is a need to further invest in enhancing the protection capacity of cooperating partners and that more analysis of indicators may be needed.
29. Indicators of WFP's accountability to affected populations improved and feedback mechanisms are in place, but the latter do not always work due to cultural and access issues. For example, it was noted that in Pakistani culture, concerns are more easily voiced face to face than by phone or email.

Sustainability

30. The Government values the activities conducted under the CSP and currently drives the implementation of SPRING (under strategic outcome 3) and *Ehsaas Nashonuma* (under strategic outcome 2). As these activities are already part of the provincial and federal government response, they are likely to continue. Although other activities led by WFP are appreciated, there is limited indication that they will be sustained. The support for disaster risk reduction provided under strategic outcome 4 was limited, and data showed that in-kind support was unlikely to be sustained. On the positive side, the humanitarian response facilities are being integrated into Government emergency response structures. It is now for the Government to allocate the resources needed to ensure that they are maintained effectively.

Humanitarian-development-peace nexus

31. WFP is continually, and flexibly, operating in all three areas of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, which often overlap. However, there is limited evidence that WFP has been able to fully capitalize on its role as an active contributor to the three nexus elements. WFP needs to ensure that its efforts are firmly grounded across the nexus and linked with the efforts of others.

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

Timeliness

32. WFP has generally conducted crisis response operations on time, thanks to its ability to mobilize resources and respond operationally to new crises very efficiently. In some instances support was delayed due to administrative procedures, including limitations imposed by the Government and initial restrictions on the use of CBTs. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic WFP supported the Government in the management of rapid emergency CBT schemes.

33. Support for activities that addressed the root causes of food insecurity and built resilience could not always be provided as expected due to insufficient funding and the earmarking of donations for crisis response; limited in-house competence and a lack of networks through which to conduct planned activities were also constraining factors. In some instances, timeliness was undermined by delays in contracting with cooperating partners.

Appropriateness of the coverage

34. Coverage in terms of total beneficiaries reached by activities under each strategic outcome was consistently lower than planned. The highest number of beneficiaries was for crisis response (strategic outcome 1). Coverage under the other strategic outcomes, although significant, was constrained by limited funding.
35. A number of activities were extremely small scale, in many instances limited to a single village or school or small group of beneficiaries, and there were no clear plans for drawing key lessons to inform their replication or scale-up by the Government.

Cost efficiency

36. Overall, the CSP design was cost-efficient. A large percentage of the operational budgets was delivered to beneficiaries as either in-kind food or CBTs, with an average of 78 percent for in-kind food and 91 percent for CBTs. The use of resources was efficient across all activities. The COVID-19 pandemic halted and limited some CCS activities, and resources were not fully utilized as intended. Direct support costs as a proportion of total costs therefore increased over time, reducing overall cost efficiency.

Alternative cost-effectiveness measures

37. There is limited evidence of WFP seeking to identify more cost-effective alternatives. The choice of transfer modality (CBTs, food or vouchers) was driven by regulatory and logistical feasibility considerations rather than cost-effectiveness.

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

Evidence-based programming

38. The CSP was informed by nutrition and food security analysis. Although basic monitoring requirements were met, there was limited evidence that the data collected were used to monitor progress for all outcomes or inform strategic decision making.

Adequate, predictable and flexible resources

39. Since 2013, with the progressive transition towards resilience building and CCS, the budget for WFP activities in Pakistan has been falling. Funding levels have followed a similar pattern, falling from over 85 percent under the protracted relief and recovery operation (2013–2015) to 41 percent under the CSP (2018–2022) as of November 2021 (table 2).

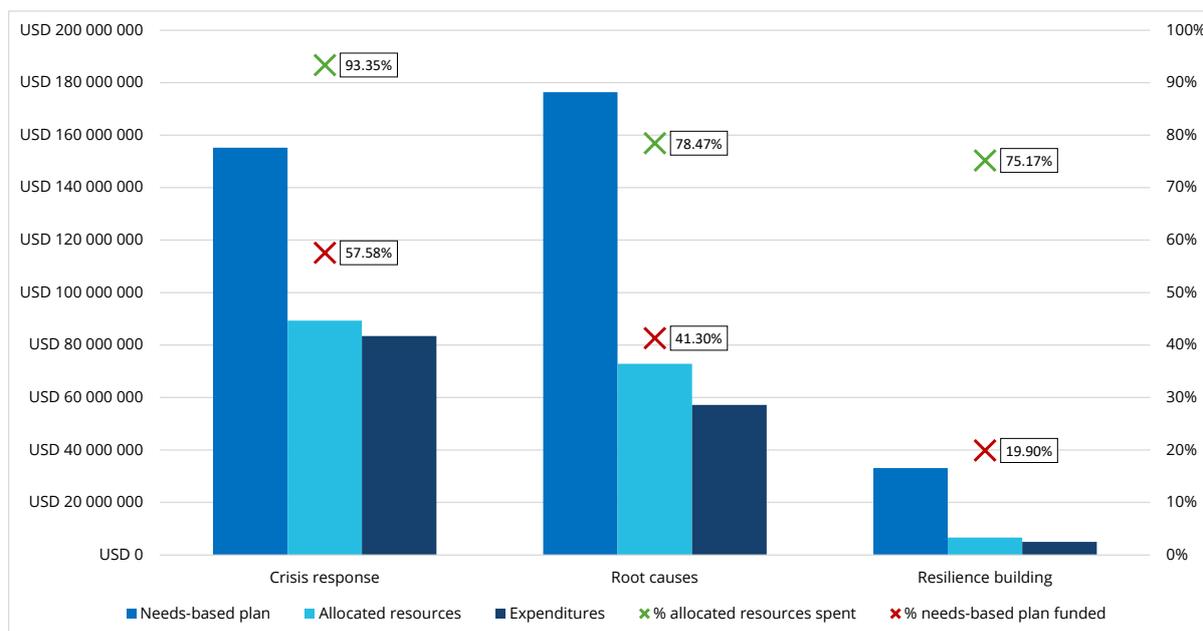
TABLE 2: PRE-CSP AND CSP FINANCIAL SITUATION						
Period	Years	Programme	Recipients	Budget (USD)	Funding (USD)	% budget funded
Pre-CSP	January 2013– December 2015	<u>Protracted relief and recovery operation 200250</u> : Enhancing Food and Nutrition Security and Rebuilding Social Cohesion	Pakistan	676 125 674	578 361 292	85.54
	July 2014– June 2016	<u>Special operation 200707</u> : Logistics Capacity Development in Support of the National Disaster Management Authority	Pakistan	9 666 690	642 000	6.64
	January 2016– December 2017	<u>Protracted relief and recovery operation 200867</u> : Transition Towards Resilience and Food Security in Pakistan	Pakistan	349 705 324	222 867 739	63.73
CSP	January 2018– December 2022	Pakistan country strategic plan	Pakistan	475 334 050	193 850 711	40.78

Source: WFP operations database (standard project reports and resource situation report for pre-CSP programmes, and CSP document and resource situation report for the CSP).

40. During CSP implementation most donors earmarked their funding at the activity level for crisis response,⁸ thereby reducing WFP's flexibility. Figure 5 shows that although the CSP was clearly focused on root causes (as seen in the needs-based plan for each focus area), allocations were concentrated on crisis response. Resilience building activities were the least funded, at 19.9 percent of needs. The data also suggests that WFP was slightly better equipped to utilize resources in the crisis response focus area, where the rate of expenditure was 93 percent compared with 75 percent for resilience building and 78 percent for root causes. Clearly, different tasks require different forms of investment, and crisis response includes activities that are far more cost-intensive than training, for example.

⁸ This earmarked funding accounted for 83 percent of all funding.

Figure 5 Comparative funding distribution - needs-based plan compared with allocated resources and expenditures by focus area, 2018–2021



Sources: Pakistan CSP (PK01) revision 3; revision 1 budget plan; 2018–2021 cumulative financial overview on 4/11/21. Figures for 2021 are provisional and not validated by WFP headquarters.

41. Overall, the donor pool has been stable, making funding relatively predictable; Pakistan and the United States of America have consistently been the biggest donors, while others have steadily decreased their contributions.
42. The challenges experienced in securing resources for some of the activities suggest that even though the CSP was drafted in close consultation with the national Government its implications were not fully embraced at the national and provincial levels. This suggests that engagement at the central and provincial levels during CSP design and continued engagement during implementation are critical to ensuring a common vision of how the CSP should be put into practice.

Partnerships

43. The CSP set the stage for a broader partnership framework and for strengthening partnership primarily with the Government but also with international and local actors. While strong collaboration existed at the operational level, strategic engagement was more limited.
44. The diversity of partners increased, in particular to include more international NGOs. This reduced the risks associated with investing in just one type of partner and allowed WFP to benefit from varied knowledge sets. By and large, cooperating partners operated as implementers of activities despite many of them having partnered with WFP for ten years or more. This suggests that there are opportunities to share lessons with cooperating partners with the aim of jointly developing innovative programmes.

Flexibility of the CSP

45. WFP is to be commended for its flexibility and responsiveness to emerging needs, notably during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite a greater focus on work to build resilience and root causes, WFP has consistently used a crisis response management approach, including short implementation timeframes, for all activities, which has curbed the

effectiveness of some interventions. Addressing root causes and building resilience require consistent long-term support with multi-year funding.

Other factors that explain WFP performance and its strategic shift

46. Two elements that might have facilitated the operationalization of the strategic shifts envisaged by the CSP appeared to be missing: a partnership strategy clarifying WFP's strategic niche in relation to other partners such as the Government and other United Nations entities; and an assessment of WFP's internal capacity and the expertise required to implement the CSP.

Conclusions

47. **The CSP was well positioned with regard to national policies and was aligned with the UNSDF.** The intention to move towards more strategic support, including a focus on capacity strengthening, resilience building and the root causes of food insecurity, fit well within the Government's policy priorities.
48. The CSP remained highly relevant despite changes in circumstance including natural and human-induced shocks and an evolving policy landscape. During the COVID-19 pandemic WFP demonstrated its ability to adjust its programmes and scale up social protection responses to address new and emerging needs. However, the support it provided was relatively small in scale, and WFP was not able to build on its COVID-19 response to take on the role of systems enabler that, in partnership with the Government, could address more medium-term food insecurity and nutrition challenges in social protection beyond providing support for cash-based transfers. WFP support was in line with what could be reasonably expected, however, given the resources at its disposal.
49. Although the CSP was aligned with the UNSDF, inter-agency engagement was limited. This is largely because United Nations entities do not follow a unified or holistic approach. In addition, because each United Nations entity tends to take a siloed approach, Government entities – particularly at the provincial level – tend to consider each entity to be a distinct independent partner. This is compounded by the fact that several United Nations entities have a narrow view of WFP's work. The participation of WFP in the design of the UNSDCF for 2023–2027 provides an opportunity to overcome some of these challenges.
50. **WFP has made progress in several areas but progress has been uneven across the strategic outcomes.** Under strategic outcome 1 unconditional food transfers helped stabilize and improve the food security of temporarily displaced people. There were challenges in CBT delivery because of Government restrictions and logistical issues but CBT use was expanded during the COVID-19 pandemic. Under strategic outcome 2, several social protection pilots were developed, but WFP engagement remained largely operational. Under strategic outcome 3, WFP supported the Government in moving from short-term emergency treatment of moderate acute malnutrition to multisectoral integrated programming, which is positive given the aim of preventing stunting and addressing nutrition in a more holistic and sustainable way. Although activities under strategic outcome 3 sought to improve the nutrition of the entire population, the programme focused on providing nutritious food through relatively small-scale projects. The treatment of moderate acute malnutrition received more resources than planned and was effective. Under strategic outcome 4, multiple small-scale efforts were conducted to achieve resilient food systems, but these require upscaling to lead to broader results. Under strategic outcome 5 the support provided in training and infrastructure handover was relevant and well received, but a comprehensive plan for strengthening the capacity of national institutions was lacking.

51. The CSP focused on supporting women and girls as more vulnerable people within larger target groups. However, this alone is not a demonstration of a gendered approach. A deeper analysis of the underlying causes of vulnerability is necessary to promote gender equality. The country office has signed up to the gender transformation programme, which is a step in the right direction
52. **The partnership with the Government has been more operational than strategic.** The CSP signalled a shift away from implementation to strategic support. The partnership with the Government was more focused on operations (the implementation of initiatives as they are) rather than strategic shifts seeking to adapt and improve system-wide responses to known challenges. However, WFP did support the development of support studies or assessments that played, or could continue to play, an important role in the development and design of interventions in the nutrition sector.
53. There are also opportunities for more strategic partnerships with civil society organizations, which have largely served as implementing service providers rather than partners who can share lessons learned and contribute to the joint development of innovative programmes.
54. **The CSP envisioned a move away from crisis response towards a greater focus on resilience and root causes.** WFP was an effective emergency response agent but was less adept at demonstrating its comparative advantage in the resilience and root causes focus areas. This was due to three factors. First, WFP is better known by the Government as a humanitarian agency, which hampered its ability to present long-term approaches that can be scaled up and sustained by the Government. One exception to this was in the area of nutrition, where WFP has a more visible and established reputation as a partner that can contribute strategically to activities that can be sustained by a government. Second, WFP was not successful in highlighting the value of its strategic role to donors. Third, a shortage of staff with the skills required to meet the demands of the CSP was also a challenge.
55. The process of decentralization and considerable variation between and within provinces requires WFP to tailor its support to ensure that it meets local needs. The process of devolution in Pakistan means that, while they have equal responsibilities, provinces' needs, institutional structures and local capacities vary considerably. Activities therefore need to be tailored to the needs of the provinces, and in some cases to the needs of various groups within the provinces. This requires consistent and in-depth engagement between WFP and the central and provincial governments. The country office has already embarked on this type of engagement in designing the CSP for 2023–2027.
56. When used, the nuanced beneficiary targeting approach that combined Government and WFP targeting mechanisms served to ensure that the most vulnerable were reached. In cases where WFP relied solely on Government targeting mechanisms, however, there were questions regarding the accuracy of targeting and whether the most vulnerable were identified.

Recommendations

#	Recommendation	Level/nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
1	<p>WFP should ensure that the next country strategic plan primarily focuses on supporting the Government in developing strategies to enhance food and nutrition security while maintaining the ability to respond to crises.⁹ Country capacity strengthening needs should be jointly identified with the Government taking into consideration the decentralized nature of the government system in Pakistan and clearly distinguishing efforts that must be addressed at the national level from those that must be addressed at the provincial level. In addition, it will be important to ensure that the country strategic plan reflects the fact that Pakistan is a very diverse country whose provinces have diverse set of needs and capacities and that different provinces will therefore require different types of support. This approach should be embedded in the following steps:</p>	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, headquarters Partnerships and Advocacy Department	High	December 2023
	<p>1.1 Carry out an in-depth and iterative consultation process with the Government at the central and provincial levels (taking into account the process of devolution and regional diversity) to identify needs and existing capacities at both levels and design national and provincial country capacity strengthening interventions accordingly.</p>					December 2023
	<p>1.2 Develop a detailed theory of change that outlines the change pathways and strengthened linkages and synergies between focus areas, strategic outcomes and activities and how these can be achieved. Integrate country capacity strengthening into the various strategic outcomes so that it organically supports specific thematic areas. The country office could use the strategic outcomes as the starting point and develop a storyline that allows the goals to be reached. Depending on the complexity of the strategic outcomes under the next country strategic plan, the country office could develop a single overarching theory of change or multiple ones.</p>					December 2023

⁹ While the CSP evaluation was being finalized, WFP was engaging in a consultative process to identify specific needs at the federal and provincial levels as part of the development of the new CSP.

#	Recommendation	Level/nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
	1.3 Embed WFP interventions within government systems and structures to ensure that effective interventions can be scaled up and sustained. This work includes strengthening emergency response capacity and leveraging collaboration with the Government of Pakistan at the policy and strategy levels in areas including stunting prevention and the consolidation and expansion of nutrition support as part of <i>Ehsaas Nashonuma</i> and resilience building.					December 2023
	1.4 WFP should develop an operational plan for the next country strategic plan focused on its core areas of competence. This requires the identification of a clear implementation road map that facilitates the shift required to implement activities and deliver the country strategic plan strategic outcomes. A key activity for this recommendation is a self-assessment or staffing review to ensure that staff have the capacity and expertise needed to implement the country strategic plan effectively.					March 2023
2	<p>The country office should review its fundraising, partnerships and advocacy plan with a view to exploring new funding sources and further leveraging domestic financing. This may entail identifying new financing mechanisms with support from headquarters.</p> <p>2.1 Position WFP as a key development actor (beyond the humanitarian sphere) and ensure clear and coherent messaging on WFP's comparative advantages and value propositions. This will entail communicating the impact of upstream capacity strengthening work and promoting a shift from "implementing" to "enabling", working to become a catalyst and the go-to partner for development priorities.</p> <p>2.2 Contribute to and inform the engagement between the Government and international financial institutions by leveraging data, analysis and other tools; convening dialogue; and subsequently, where appropriate, playing a role in assisting with the implementation of government-led projects financed by international financial institutions.</p>	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau and headquarters	High	<p>December 2023</p> <p>December 2023</p> <p>December 2023</p>

#	Recommendation	Level/nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
	2.3 Work with for-profit organizations and the Government to explore opportunities for technical partnerships with the private sector in selected programmes, with a particular focus on the development of nutritious foods. The country office should also explore the Scaling Up Nutrition Business Network as a key platform for private sector engagement.					December 2023
3	Deepen WFP's strategic and operational partnership with government partners and civil society organizations.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau	Medium	December 2023
	3.1 It is important to introduce regular strategic interaction with government partners, at the national and provincial levels, to exchange ideas and information on opportunities, country strategic plan plans, gaps, country capacity strengthening needs and future expectations. This will serve to ensure effective and continual communication. WFP should select entities to engage with based on their capacities and the activities to be conducted. In some instances, particularly at the provincial level, multiple government partners may need to be engaged to support single initiatives.					December 2023
	3.2 WFP should more actively engage with civil society organizations to benefit from their field knowledge. This should go beyond the collection of monitoring data and include learning through dialogue, which may be used by WFP to inform its strategic objectives and improve its understanding of field realities. Specific areas where focused attention is needed are social protection, identification of the most vulnerable groups and gender transformation.					December 2023

#	Recommendation	Level/nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
4	WFP should increase its efforts to promote gender equality, accountability to affected populations and protection.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau	Medium	December 2023
	4.1 WFP should explore ways to contribute to shifts in gender construction and reducing gender inequality. This must go beyond the inclusion of women or gender minorities in activities, and WFP should engage with partners who focus on gender equality to ensure that its activities are based on the most current knowledge and practice.					December 2023
	4.2 WFP should continue its efforts to achieve greater gender balance among its staff, noting the structural challenges					December 2023
	4.3 To promote their effective implementation, WFP should ensure that accountability to affected populations and protection mechanisms are aligned with local cultural traditions and norms and are fully understood by cooperating partners.					December 2023

Acronyms

CBT	cash-based transfer
CCS	country capacity strengthening
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CSP	country strategic plan
FFA	food assistance for assets
SPRING	Stunting Prevention and Rehabilitation Integrated Nutrition Gain
UNSDCF	United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework
UNSDF	United Nations sustainable development framework