



World Food Programme
Programme Alimentaire Mondial
Programa Mundial de Alimentos
برنامج الأغذية العالمي

Executive Board

First regular session

Rome, 27 February–2 March 2023

Distribution: General

Agenda item 5

Date: 30 January 2023

WFP/EB.1/2023/5-D/1/Rev.1

Original: English

Evaluation reports

For consideration

Executive Board documents are available on WFP's website (<https://executiveboard.wfp.org>).

Summary report on the evaluation of the interim country strategic plan for Algeria (2019–2022)

Executive summary

The evaluation of the interim country strategic plan for Algeria covers the implementation period of the transitional interim country strategic plan for January 2018 to June 2019 and the implementation of the interim plan between July 2019 and April 2021. It assesses WFP's relevance and strategic positioning, WFP's contribution to strategic outcomes and any unintended consequences resulting from its activities, the timeliness, coverage and cost-efficiency of WFP operations, and the factors explaining performance.

WFP has provided assistance to Sahrawi refugees in Algeria since 1986, mainly through general food assistance, school feeding and nutrition activities. The introduction of the interim country strategic plan marked an attempt to improve WFP's programming strategy to better meet the needs of those refugees. The most visible changes brought in by the plan include the extension of school feeding to preschools and special needs centres, the gradual addition of programming for livelihoods and the introduction of a new delivery modality – vouchers – to promote access to fresh products and reduce the prevalence of anaemia among pregnant and lactating women.

The design and implementation of the interim country strategic plan was informed by a series of evaluations and reviews. Many partners and donors cited WFP as a good example of an agency commissioning research and applying learning.

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

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The transitional interim country strategic plan and the interim plan were consistent with and complementary to the strategies and interventions of other United Nations partners working in the camps. WFP has maintained a strong presence in clusters and other United Nations working groups and plays a central and active role in the humanitarian donors' group. It has established a working relationship with the main partner of the Algerian Red Crescent in the camps, a critical counterpart for programme implementation.

WFP programming demonstrated a strong appreciation of vulnerability based on gender, age or disability. Activities either target specific beneficiary profiles or use self-targeting mechanisms. Regarding the targeting for the general food assistance component, there is no evidence that WFP targets only, or mainly, the most food-insecure refugees, nor that community-based targeting is used. Despite significant efforts by WFP to expand monitoring activities through training, the recruitment of new staff and collaboration with partners, these actions have not led to improvements in the monitoring of targeting processes and outcomes.

Overall, refugees met their basic food and nutrition needs all year round through receiving general food assistance, and they unanimously spoke of the importance of the rations in their daily lives. The contribution of nutrition-sensitive school feeding to the overall nutrition-related objectives of the interim country strategic plan is uncertain given that school feeding was limited to a snack. Beneficiaries were somewhat dissatisfied with the monotony of the food provided.

The effects of complementary activities have been limited so far, although positive results were achieved with the introduction of Waterboxxes in 2020. The implementation of those activities faced challenges, and output achievements varied, while the activities also involved only a very small number of refugees.

While it is too early to see conclusive results, the combination of increased coverage by prevention and treatment of moderate acute malnutrition activities, the provision of fortified food and the increased investment in social and behaviour change communication have the potential to address the worrying long-term trends in anaemia. The vouchers and food transfers have been an incentive for pregnant and lactating women to visit dispensaries, which has led to more systematic medical screenings and an increased exposure to sensitization activities promoting healthy diets.

WFP has learned to navigate rapidly evolving challenges and funding shortages. However, the late arrival of funding and the resulting pipeline management issues cause constant concerns for WFP and the refugees. Funding has been inconsistent and unpredictable, and most donors continue to earmark their contributions to specific activities, which hampers the sustained delivery of all activities.

The political circumstances that determine the situation of the refugees are a major factor influencing WFP and partner performance. Until an internationally agreed long-term solution is secured, it is not realistic to expect any fundamental improvement in the quality of life of the refugees.

The evaluation makes five recommendations. Three strategic recommendations concern the need to address funding challenges, clarify WFP's strategic position regarding accountability constraints, and enhance needs-based targeting. The two operational recommendations relate to strengthening the effectiveness of complementary activities, and improving the design and implementation of activities and strengthening their integration.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the interim country strategic plan for Algeria (2019–2022) (WFP/EB.1/2023/5-D/1/Rev.1) and management response (WFP/EB.1/2023/5-D/1/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 Algeria interim country strategic plan (ICSP) for 2019–2022 was conducted between January 2021 and March 2022 and is the first evaluation that covers the entire portfolio of WFP activities in the country. It provides evidence and lessons to inform the adjustment of programming under the current ICSP, which is being extended to 2024, and the development of the next country strategic plan (CSP). While the evaluation considered the opportunities explored by WFP to have broadened the geographical scope of WFP operations in Algeria, it is focused on operations in support of the Sahrawi refugees living in five camps near Tindouf.
2. The evaluation covers the implementation period of the transitional interim country strategic plan (T-ICSP) for January 2018 to June 2019 and the implementation of the ICSP between July 2019 and April 2021 in order to assess the transition and strategic shift envisaged by the ICSP. It assesses WFP's relevance and strategic positioning, WFP's contribution to strategic outcomes, the timeliness, coverage and cost-efficiency of WFP operations, and the factors explaining performance. The evaluation also looks at WFP's response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.
3. An independent external evaluation team conducted the evaluation using a theory-based, mixed-methods approach, drawing on monitoring data and document review and engaging through photovoice, semi-structured interviews with key informants, home visits and focus group discussions with more than 200 stakeholders. Primary and secondary data were systematically triangulated to ensure the validity of findings. Gender and social inclusion were fully integrated into the methodological approach and ethical standards were applied to ensure the dignity and confidentiality of the people involved in the evaluation. Findings, conclusions and recommendations were discussed in two workshops, with internal stakeholders in November 2021 and with external stakeholders in March 2022.
4. An evaluability challenge was that all the participants in interviews, focus group discussions and home visits were selected by the camp authorities. As a consequence, the evaluation team could not ensure that the perspectives of all refugee groups were included. Approaches used to mitigate this shortcoming were an in-depth literature review, the use of home visits to capture the household context and the systematic triangulation of sources to ensure the overall validity of the findings presented in the report.
5. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "the Sahrawi refugee situation is one of the most protracted refugee situations in the world. Refugees from Western Sahara have been living in camps near Tindouf in southwest Algeria since 1975. The Government of Algeria recognized them as prima facie refugees, and has been hosting them in five camps, enabling access to public services, and providing infrastructure such as roads and electricity"¹.
6. The Sahrawi refugees in Algeria live in five camps near the town of Tindouf, 2,000 km southwest of Algiers. The five camps are located in a remote and arid landscape characterized by extreme temperatures and very low rainfall. Social and humanitarian services are delivered and managed by the camp leadership through the Sahrawi Red Crescent, the main partner of the Algerian Red Crescent on the ground, with support from international and civil society organizations.

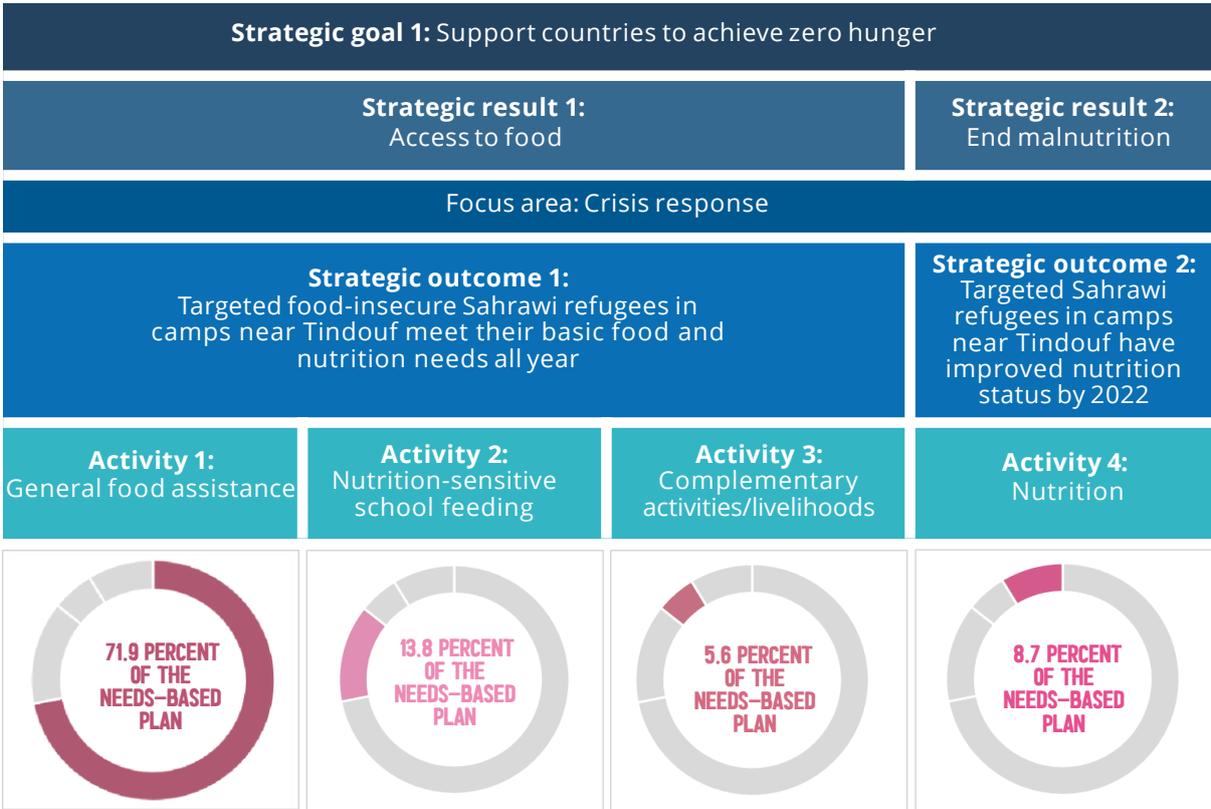
¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2016. *Humanitarian needs of Sahrawi refugees in Algeria 2016–2017*.

7. The harsh agroecological environment, infertile soils and scarce, heavily mineralized water resources make life and agricultural production conditions difficult in the camps. For the past 45 years, the population living in the camps has continued to suffer food insecurity and malnutrition, with high rates of anaemia due to the scarcity of fresh and diverse food and the limited access to water, and therefore continues to depend on external food assistance.

WFP interim country strategic plan

- 8. WFP has provided assistance to Sahrawi refugees in Algeria since 1986, mainly through general food assistance, school feeding and nutrition activities. The WFP ICSP for Algeria for 2019–2022 identified two strategic outcomes aimed at ensuring food security for Sahrawi refugees through general food assistance, nutrition-sensitive school feeding and complementary livelihood activities, and improving nutrition status through the treatment and prevention of moderate acute malnutrition (figure 1).
- 9. Innovations under the ICSP were the introduction of cash-based transfers, the distribution of specialized nutritious foods for pregnant and lactating women and children of 6–59 months of age, and additional complementary pilot livelihood activities.
- 10. The period covered by the ICSP was extended for eight months, from July 2022 to February 2023, through a budget revision approved in June 2022. Another budget revision was to further extend the ICSP to December 2024, aligning it with an envisioned United Nations-wide refugee response plan or humanitarian response plan, expected to be elaborated by the United Nations country team in 2023 and to start in 2024.

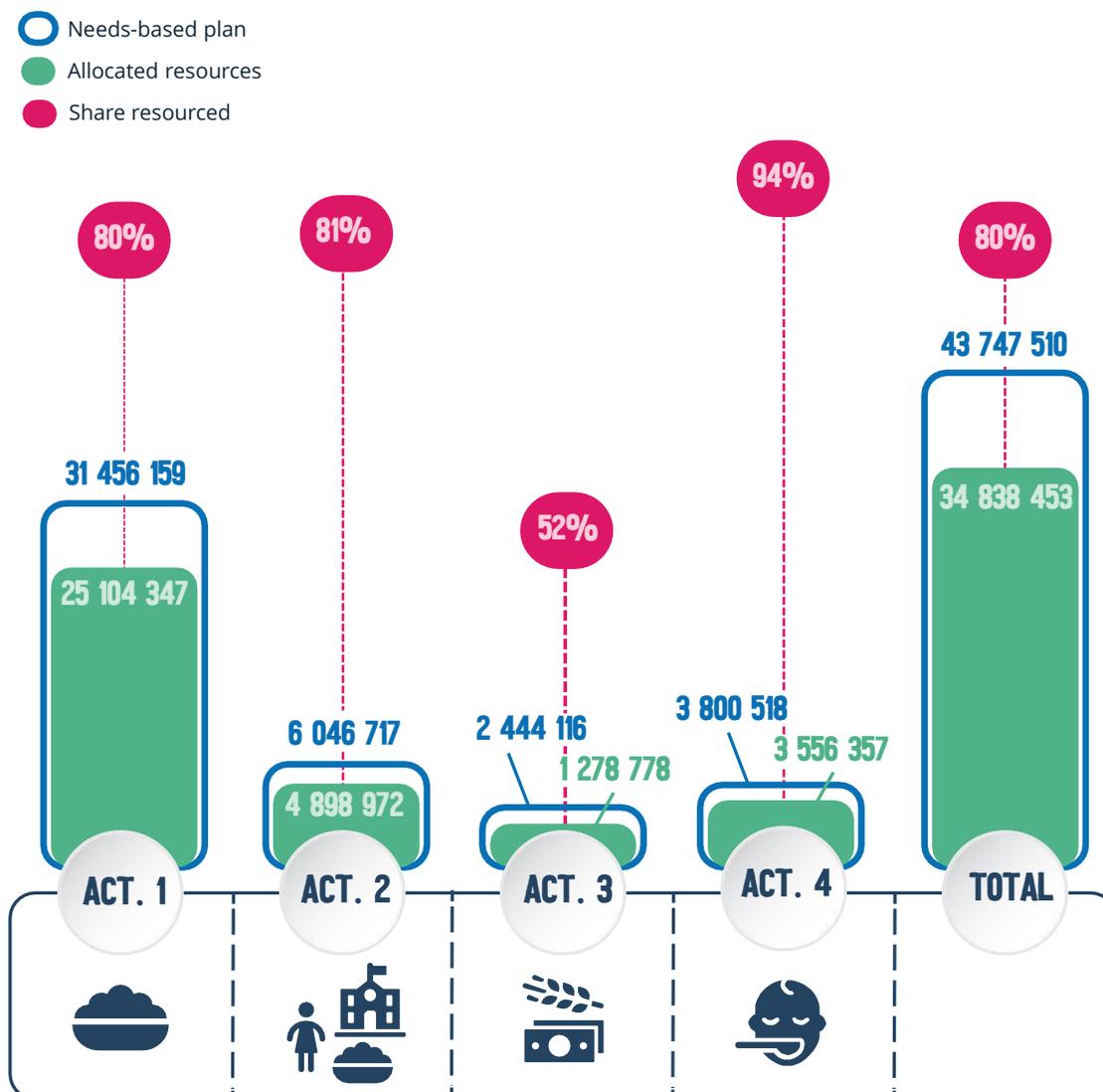
Figure 1: Interim country strategic plan line of sight



Source: Algeria ICSP line of sight and ICSP (2019–2022) document.

11. The total cumulative operational requirements under the needs-based plan for the original ICSP period (July 2019 through May 2021) was USD 43.7 million, with the bulk – USD 39.9 million – for strategic outcome 1 and USD 3.8 million for strategic outcome 2 (see details by activity in figure 2). As of June 2021, 68.5 percent of the entire four-year ICSP needs-based plan had been funded, leaving a shortfall of USD 18.5 million.

Figure 2: Allocated resources by activity, 2018–2021



Source: Integrated Road Map analytics, annual country report 1, cumulative financial overview as of 7 May 2021.

Notes:

- Needs-based plan and allocated resource figures are cumulative, covering the period from 2018 to 2021. The needs-based plan for the period 2018 to 2021 is USD 43.7 million and for the whole ICSP period it is USD 58.97 million.
- Allocated resources by activity do not add up to USD 34.8 million because resources were also allocated to non-activity-specific purposes (USD 0.002 million). The percentages of resources allocated compared with the needs-based plan have been calculated at the activity level and exclude direct support costs (USD 1.9 million) and indirect support costs (USD 2.1 million).

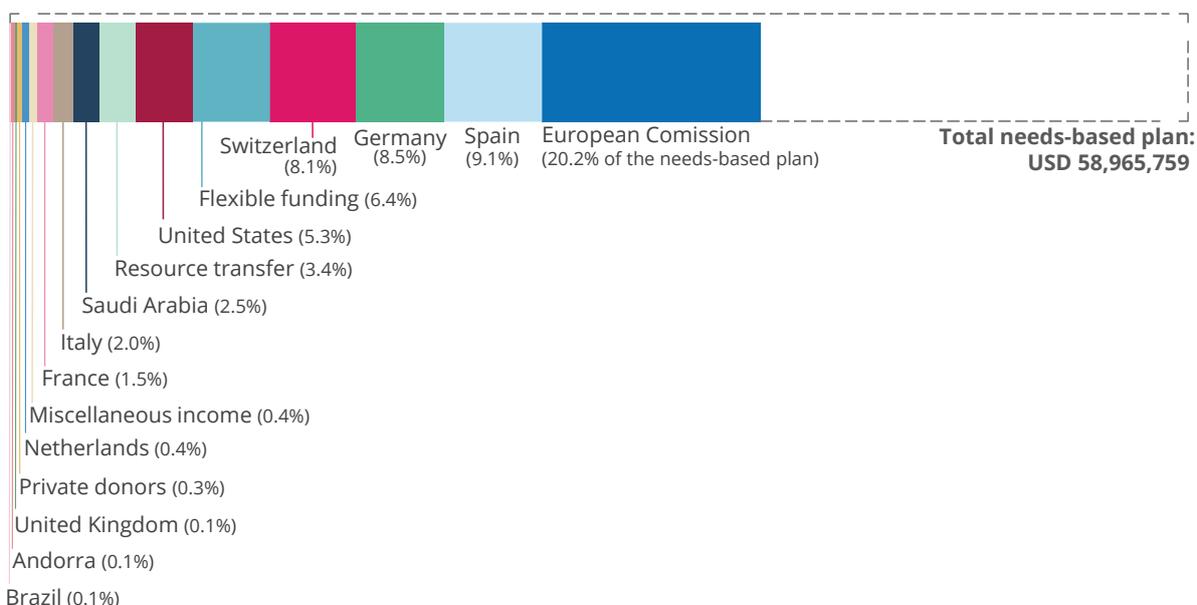
12. WFP operations in Algeria have relied on 12 donors. The funding of activities has varied each year, and multi-year funding has been provided by only Germany and the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. The European Commission is by far the largest donor with contributions from the start of the ICSP period until June 2021 accounting for 20 percent of the needs-based plan of USD 58.97 million. Spain, Switzerland, Germany and the United States of America are the

four next largest donors, together accounting for another 31 percent of the needs-based plan. Activities under the ICSP have also benefited from a carry-over of funds from the preceding T-ICSP, ensuring the timely distribution of food assistance at the start of ICSP implementation. Most donors have allocated funds at the activity level in support of food transfers and nutrition activities (activities 1, 2 and 4).

Figure 3: Main donors to the interim country strategic plan, July 2019–June 2021

Funding sources of the ICSP Algeria (2019-2022) (as of 21 June 2021)

68.49 percent of the needs-based plan funded (USD 40,386,289 out of USD 58,965,759)



Source: WFP The Factory, data accessed on 21 June 2021.

Evaluation findings

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

Relevance

13. The introduction of the ICSP marks an attempt to improve WFP's programming strategy to better meet the needs of refugees and combine humanitarian assistance with resilience building and nutrition sensitization activities. The ICSP builds directly on the T-ICSP with the two strategic outcomes unchanged and new activities added to the strategic outcomes. The most visible changes include the extension of school feeding to preschools and special needs centres, the gradual addition of programming for livelihoods and the introduction of a new delivery modality – vouchers – to promote access to fresh products and reduce the prevalence of anaemia among pregnant and lactating women.
14. The strategic relevance of the current WFP programme relies heavily on the official status of the refugee camps as a "humanitarian emergency". The year 2021 is the 45th since the first camp started to receive humanitarian aid from Algeria in 1976 and the 35th year since WFP started to provide support in 1986. The focus of the ICSP is on "crisis response, which provides relief" to conflict-affected people as part of a coordinated humanitarian response. While humanitarian logic holds that WFP should provide food for all vulnerable refugees, WFP has not been in a position to design operations as a generational solution that tackles the root causes of food insecurity.

Identifying needs

15. WFP has actively sought to understand and address certain aspects of the needs of refugees living in the camps. Through food security assessments, nutrition surveys, a gender analysis and other assessments WFP identified refugees who are food-insecure, vulnerable, disabled, older or in one of the gender and age groups most likely to be malnourished.
16. The design and implementation of the ICSP was informed by a series of evaluations and reviews. Many partners and donors cited WFP as a good example of an agency commissioning research and applying learning.
17. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic WFP participated in several joint surveys and assessments to monitor the food security situation and its impact on food consumption in the camps. This allowed WFP and its United Nations and non-governmental organization partners to collectively define a strategy for responding to emerging health needs triggered by the pandemic.

Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable

18. WFP programming demonstrated a strong appreciation of vulnerability based on gender, age or disability. Based on the assessments discussed in the previous subsection, activities implemented by WFP either target specific beneficiary profiles (based on visible traits such as age, gender or pregnancy status) or use self-targeting mechanisms such as interest in a complementary activity. The targeting of vulnerable children for school feeding has been enhanced through the inclusion of preschools and special needs centres in school feeding programmes. While complementary activities are very pertinent in enhancing access to less available fresh foods, they do not target, nor do they directly reach, the most food-insecure people.
19. On the other hand, WFP targeting based on food security status is less well documented. There is no evidence that WFP targets only, or mainly, the most food-insecure refugees, nor that community-based targeting is used as intended. Instead, it appeared that general food assistance was distributed to all refugees, independently of their food security status.
20. While WFP holds regular discussions with the Algerian Red Crescent and its main partner in the camps, especially following food security assessments, there was no indication that WFP has insisted on rations being provided only to a specific subset of refugees according to their assessed food security status. Furthermore, no community-based targeting materials for publicizing entitlements were found in the camps. The blanket distribution of food assistance results in the inclusion of households that are not food-insecure or are much less food-insecure than others. This possibly explains the widely voiced concern of refugees about the insufficient ration size.

Alignment and partnerships

21. The T-ICSP and ICSP are consistent and complementary with the strategies and interventions of other United Nations partners working in the camps. WFP, UNHCR and the United Nations Children's Fund are the only three United Nations agencies operating in the camps, and there is evidence of strong collaboration between WFP and both of the others, while no duplication of work has been noted. WFP and UNHCR have been collaborating on joint food security assessments, joint nutrition surveys and rapid assessments. The United Nations consolidated evidence in support of vulnerability-based targeting puts WFP in a strategic position to work with partners on nutrition and gender issues.
22. WFP has maintained a strong presence in clusters and other United Nations working groups and plays a central and active role in the humanitarian donors' group. It has managed to establish a working relationship with the main partner of the Algerian Red Crescent on the ground, the Sahrawi Red Crescent, a critical actor in programme implementation as it

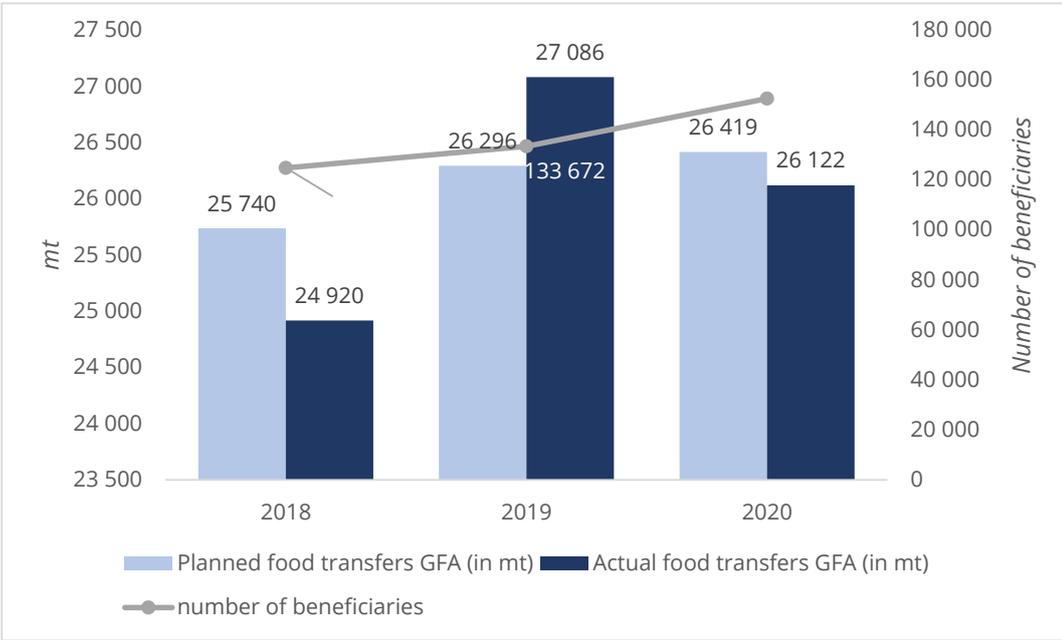
organizes the food distribution in the camps on behalf of WFP’s partner the Algerian Red Crescent. WFP has struggled to build a strong relationship with the Algerian Red Crescent, when it comes to the transport of commodities from the port of Oran to the camps.

What are the extent and quality of WFP’s specific contribution to interim country strategic plan strategic outcomes in the refugee camps?

Delivery of outputs and contribution to outcomes

- 23. **Under strategic outcome 1, activity 1, general food assistance**, WFP ensured that basic food and nutrition needs were met all year round by providing general food assistance to the planned number of beneficiaries. Planned quantities of food were slightly higher than actual quantities distributed in 2018 and 2020 (see figure 4). In 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, WFP distributed an additional 19,097 rations during the months of May, June and July. Despite this, the percentage of households with acceptable food consumption scores never rose beyond 63.3 percent, while the ICSP target was 80 percent. Nevertheless, there was a marked favourable shift in most food security indicators between 2019 and 2020. Data show that the average number of consumption-based coping strategies applied by households decreased from more than 8 to an average of 1.3 in 2019–2020.
- 24. The beneficiaries interviewed unanimously mentioned the importance of the rations in their daily lives. Rations were designed to provide between 2,100 kcal and 2,200 kcal per day per beneficiary. However, a large share of beneficiaries perceived the distributed rations as too small. From a nutritional perspective the rations provided a very high proportion of carbohydrates, but did not address daily requirements in vitamins, vegetable-based fibres, proteins and iron.

Figure 4: Planned versus actual food distributed under activity 1 - general food assistance (mt/year)



Source: WFP Algeria annual country reports for 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Abbreviation: GFA = general food assistance.

25. Beneficiaries have appreciated the range of commodities included in the rations provided but expressed a desire to receive fresh foods such as dairy products, meat, eggs, fresh or canned fish and vegetables. Vegetables have been provided for many years by other partners, but in steadily diminishing quantities.
26. **Under strategic outcome 1, activity 2, nutrition-sensitive school feeding**, WFP provided snacks (milk and high-energy biscuits) to schoolchildren of 5–17 years of age, with the objective of improving nutrition and reducing anaemia. The contribution of this activity to the overall nutrition-related objectives of the ICSP is uncertain given that school feeding was limited to a snack and beneficiaries highlighted the variety and choice of snacks as areas for improvement. Enrolment and retention rates have remained high during the period under review, but it was difficult for the evaluation to assess the extent to which school feeding contributed to those results. The snacks may be most valuable to the poorest families for whom breakfast is not affordable.
27. Beneficiary targets were exceeded in 2018 but not fully met in 2019 and 2020. All targeted schools were reached with snacks, but interruptions in the delivery of high-energy biscuits occurred from January to June 2018 and in November 2019, owing to the late confirmation of donor funding, and during the closure of schools from March to May 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the interruptions, WFP distributed only 19.6 percent of the high-energy biscuits planned in 2018 while school feeding activities occurred on only 72 percent of school days in 2019 and 56 percent in 2020.
28. **Under strategic outcome 1, activity 3, complementary activities** to facilitate the production of fresh food, WFP implemented livelihood-focused activities that included hydroponics, fish farming and Waterboxxes. The effects of complementary activities have been limited so far, although the positive results in terms of the production of fruits and vegetables achieved by the introduction of Waterboxxes in 2020 should be acknowledged. The implementation of those activities faced challenges, and output achievements varied, while the activities involved only a very small number of refugees. Despite the absence of conclusive evidence, the complementary activities present high potential to improve the nutrition situation in the camps as they were designed to produce food items missing from the refugees' diet.
29. **Under strategic outcome 2, activity 4**, WFP sought to address moderate acute malnutrition by providing special nutritious foods through feeding programmes targeting pregnant and lactating women and children of 6–59 months of age, and by promoting access to fresh food from local markets through value vouchers.
30. While it is too early to see conclusive results, the combination of increased coverage by prevention and treatment of moderate acute malnutrition activities, the provision of fortified food and increased investment in social and behaviour change communication could have the potential to address the worrying long-term trends in anaemia. The vouchers and food transfers have been an incentive for pregnant and lactating women to visit dispensaries, which has led to more systematic medical screenings and an increased exposure to sensitization promoting healthy diets. Social and behaviour change communication is likely to positively influence dietary choices, which could help reduce anaemia, obesity and malnutrition in the long term. This activity has been the most affected by pipeline breaks caused by funding shortfalls, and the quantities of food distributed have varied substantially over the period but increased in 2020.

Cross-cutting themes

31. WFP has made solid investments in the achievement of the cross-cutting aims of protection and accountability to affected populations. The evaluation found no evidence of beneficiaries being put at risk as a result of WFP activities and no protection concerns have

been linked to WFP activities while the radio show “Cooking with Dignity” has been a laudable effort to reduce the stigma of receiving assistance. A complaints and feedback mechanism has been under development since 2018 and in 2020 the Algerian authorities granted permission to launch a toll-free anonymous hotline. This critical instrument is expected to ensure greater accountability for activities and to provide a channel for refugees to voice their concerns directly with WFP. There is little evidence of refugees’ participation in the design of WFP programmes.

32. WFP has specifically targeted women through the introduction of a voucher programme aimed at improving the nutrition and health status of pregnant and lactating women and their children. WFP has inherited and continues to support the strong inclusion of women in many aspects of programme implementation, such as through their role as “*jefe de barrio*” (“neighbourhood leaders”) leading food distributions, helping with school feeding and as monitors coordinated by the Italian International Committee for the Development of Peoples (*Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli*).
33. Inclusion is promoted through the targeting of women, children and the disabled. Gender and diversity assessments conducted by, or with the involvement of, WFP have been somewhat superficial and have explored existing gender dynamics to only a limited extent. Findings appear to have been only partially applied in the implementation of activities, and WFP programming was found to have insufficient insight into gender dynamics for programming to be gender transformative.

The humanitarian–development–peace nexus

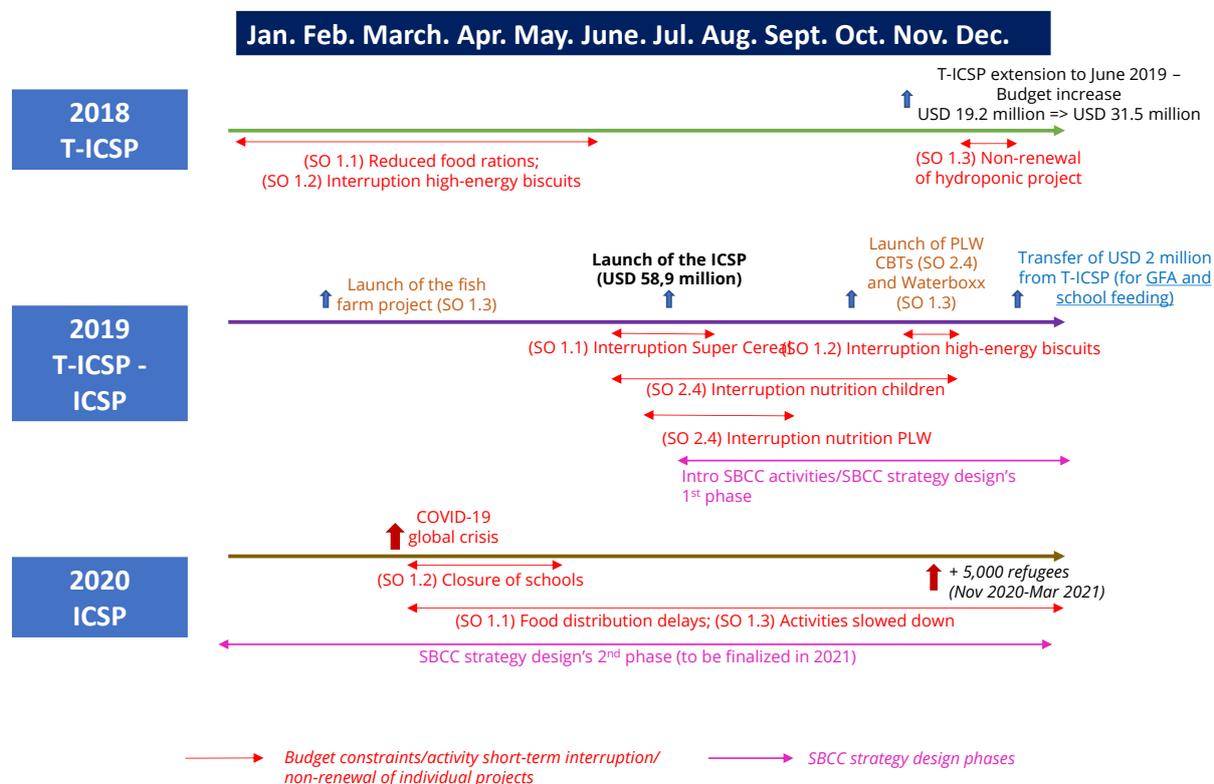
34. Complementary activities, such as fish farming, hydroponics and Waterboxxes, had the aim of providing a coherent link between humanitarian action and development and – after initial resistance from camp leaders, who were wary about location-specific activities, the high initial investment costs and a perceived risk of the diversion of resources from general food assistance – WFP was able to introduce a set of activities focused on resilience building and aimed at responding to identified needs for fresh and protein-rich foods to enhance refugees’ diets. Challenges faced in following this approach included the limited availability of funds and donor scepticism and heavy reliance on partners for the quality of implementation. Local environmental conditions were another constraint to the development of sustainable resilience building activities strengthening the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.
35. An ongoing challenge is the view of some donors and United Nations entities that WFP should limit its assistance to general food distributions as other activities distract WFP and donor funding from the priority needs of the refugees.

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

Timeliness

36. The delivery of outputs was frequently interrupted, mainly owing to a lack of funding, but WFP managed to resume activities relatively quickly and pipeline breaks were short-lived (figure 5). General food assistance faced no major interruptions, but WFP faced challenges in adhering to distribution schedules owing to delays in the delivery of commodities and inefficient logistics arrangements with partners.
37. The COVID-19 pandemic affected the whole portfolio, in particular the school feeding activity. The pandemic also slowed down complementary activities, postponing training and coordination meetings and creating challenges for the procurement of inputs for fish farming. It also delayed the development of the five-year social and behaviour change communication strategy.

Figure 5: Overview of the main changes and implementation challenges under the transitional interim country strategic plan and the interim country strategic plan, 2018–2020



Source: Elaborated by the evaluation team based on information from the country office.

Abbreviations: CBTs = cash-based transfers; GFA = general food assistance; PLW = pregnant and lactating women; SBCC = social and behaviour change communication; SO = strategic outcome

Efficiency and cost-effectiveness

38. High expenditure rates indicate that resources have been used efficiently, especially considering the volatile funding situation. Despite significant context-specific limitations, WFP made efforts to improve the efficiency of activities, for example, by moving from paper vouchers to an e-voucher programme for pregnant and lactating women.
39. WFP has used existing resources effectively, but the complementary activities (except for the Waterboxxes) have yet to prove their cost-effectiveness. Those activities have been characterized by high start-up costs and a considerable time lag before measurable outcomes are generated. As pilot projects, the continuation of the activities relied on tangible results that often did not materialize within the anticipated time frame.

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

Human resources

40. WFP staff were found to be highly appreciated by partners at all levels. Strong progress was made in programming despite understaffing at the sub-office in Tindouf, where it was difficult to attract qualified staff. An organizational alignment exercise in 2020 led to an increase in the number of positions in both the Algiers and Tindouf offices. While some human resource challenges persist, the current situation offers significant opportunities to enhance the mobilization of dedicated expertise in the future. In particular, the recruitment of vulnerability analysis and mapping and monitoring and evaluation staff for the Tindouf

sub-office is likely to spark innovation and knowledge, further boosting WFP's role as a leader in assessments that benefit the refugees and the entire humanitarian community.

Resource mobilization

41. Funding has been inconsistent and unpredictable and there is evidence that donors do not all abide by the principles of good humanitarian donorship. Most donors continue to earmark their contributions to specific activities, which hampers the sustained delivery of all activities while also imposing specific spending rules and reporting requirements. In 2018 and 2020 donor resources did not meet the WFP needs-based plan and WFP had to contact partners to advance the funds or commodities needed to sustain operations.
42. Donors had differing views on WFP's role in the camps. While some donors want WFP to focus solely on general food assistance, others have deliberately wound down their support for general assistance either over concerns about targeting or to encourage innovation and enhancements in programming. Nonetheless, donor expectations towards WFP are high and multiple donors voiced the opinion that WFP should increase its efforts to coordinate, advocate and share its vision with donors and United Nations partners in order to find solutions.

Monitoring

43. The ICSP had the aim of improving the monitoring of operations, but WFP's monitoring arrangements do not allow for the identification of inclusion and exclusion errors. WFP monitoring is designed to confirm output achievement but does not seek to monitor targeting processes and outcomes or assess gaps.
44. WFP has been implementing monitoring activities for the four ICSP activities in close collaboration with its partners (UNHCR, the Italian International Committee for the Development of Peoples, the Algerian Red Crescent and Oxfam). Despite WFP's significant efforts to strengthen monitoring activities through training, the recruitment of new staff and collaboration with partners, there have not yet been improvements in the monitoring of targeting processes and outcomes. The sources of income and purchasing power of households are not assessed, and households with poor or borderline food consumption are not tracked and provided with more tailored assistance.

Other factors

45. The political setting that determines the situation of the refugees is a major factor influencing the performance of WFP and partners. Until an internationally agreed long-term solution is secured for the Sahrawi refugees in Algeria, it is not realistic to expect that the humanitarian actors mandated to serve them can bring about any fundamental improvement in that situation.
46. Nutrition outcomes are strongly influenced by the health status of the targeted population group, which is in turn affected by limitations in the health services in the camps and insufficient access to drinking-water of adequate quality.

Conclusions

47. The situation of Sahrawi refugees has not fundamentally evolved over the last 45 years. On one hand, camp leaders want to improve the lives of the refugees, but on the other hand, they do not want the refugees to engage in activities that could be perceived as an acceptance of the status quo. In this context, humanitarian entities (United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations) are mandated to provide life-saving assistance in a context that still lacks an internationally agreed long-term solution.

48. **Overall, WFP operations have demonstrated numerous strengths.** WFP has built strong partnerships, is a leader in assessments and actively seeks to enhance monitoring capacity and mechanisms. Innovations are encouraging and include the introduction of cash-based transfers and livelihoods programming. Local food fortification and more efficient processes for distribution monitoring are currently being explored. WFP's United Nations partners recognize the organization's leadership role in clusters and working groups, its advocacy for a focus on nutrition and its sustained efforts to assess, monitor and learn. WFP has established a working relationship with the main partner of the Algerian Red Crescent in the camps that merits further attention so as to ensure that WFP assistance genuinely benefits the most vulnerable refugees.
49. WFP has made considerable efforts to assess and understand the needs of the refugees but has sidestepped the important element of targeting refugees based on level of food insecurity. General food assistance appears to be distributed to all refugees, which results in smaller rations affecting, in particular, those most in need. Complementary activities lack a clear strategy for addressing the needs of the most food-insecure. Where feasible WFP has adapted its programming strategy in response to evolving needs, thereby ensuring continued relevance in assisting refugees. Additional activities have been designed to meet specific gaps identified in prior assessments. WFP also anticipated the need for additional rations due to the COVID-19 pandemic and retained a presence in the Tindouf sub-office throughout the pandemic.
50. Overall, the T-ICSP and ICSP have not succeeded in attracting stable funding and this has directly affected ICSP implementation. The need for WFP constantly to advocate resources for the forgotten emergency has been to the detriment of more impactful work, including efforts to consolidate partner positions that would enable more sustainable programming. WFP has learned to navigate rapidly evolving challenges and funding shortages, but the late arrival of funding, and pipeline management issues cause constant concerns for WFP and the refugees.
51. **In the face of funding challenges WFP has used its limited resources carefully.** It has sought to reduce costs and explore efficiencies, for example by considering e-voucher and community distributions as a way of reducing the transfer costs related to general food assistance. Complementary activities are insufficiently funded and have yet to prove to be cost-effective.
52. **Outputs achievement vary widely across activities.** General food assistance has been delivered to the planned number of beneficiaries, providing a varied basket of commodities with substitutes as needed. School feeding activities have been interrupted several times owing to funding shortfalls and school closures at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Complementary activities have been carried out as innovative pilots with strong potential, but most have faced crippling challenges, with the exception of the Waterboxx intervention. Food quantities and cash-based transfer values provided under nutrition activities have fluctuated, with output achievements below planned targets. The voucher programme for pregnant and lactating women is a highly valued activity and its introduction has been a major success for WFP.
53. **Contributions to strategic outcomes are less visible and mixed.** The limited size and composition of rations (resulting in part from the use of blanket distribution) affect the impact on the food security and nutrition status of the most vulnerable refugees. A positive trend in food security indicators did not start to be observed until 2020. Although it is still too early to assess results, the combination of an increased coverage of the cash-based transfer programme for pregnant and lactating women, the provision of fortified food and the introduction of awareness campaigns may be helping to curb the trends in anaemia among children and pregnant and lactating women. School feeding outcomes may be more

visible at the level of household economies than measurable among individual students. School closures aimed at controlling the spread of COVID-19 have reduced enrolments in school and it is unlikely that the programme has had a considerable influence on attendance and retention rates during the period 2018–2020. Despite their huge potential, pilot livelihood activities were too short-lived to have produced the intended outcomes; each faced a set of challenges that included the resistance of camp leaders, the targeting of less vulnerable households, a need for high initial investments and results that were unsustainable once the funding ceased.

54. **The gender dynamics within the refugee camps are currently insufficiently understood.** To date, gender-focused studies have failed to provide an in-depth analysis of gender dynamics owing to a lack of free access to the camps. WFP needs to ascertain the actual extent of gender equity in the camps and to strengthen its understanding of gender dynamics in order to implement gender-transformative programmes. The ability of WFP to do so will depend on improved access to the camp population.
55. WFP has made solid investments in the achievement of the cross-cutting aims of protection and accountability to affected populations. Community feedback mechanisms are only starting to be explored and should have huge potential to strengthen accountability. While the dignity of the recipients of assistance was generally respected, there is little evidence of recipients' inclusion in programme design. WFP has limited ability to ensure that humanitarian principles are respected in the absence of direct control over the general food assistance distributions.

Recommendations

56. The suggested steps forward for WFP are mainly strategic in nature. They are underpinned by the need to have reliable funding that enables a long-term focus on key humanitarian and resilience issues. The recommendations focus on seeking greater accountability for the identification of suitable, locally-led solutions that benefit Sahrawi refugees.

Recommendations

Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Supporting entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
<p>Recommendation 1: Address funding challenges.</p> <p>1.1 WFP country office and headquarters should identify a more forceful fundraising strategy and continue to seek long-term flexible donorship and to enlarge the donor base.</p> <p>1.2 WFP should advocate with donors for them to play a stronger role as humanitarian leaders with reliable, multi-year and unearmarked funding.</p>	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau and headquarters	High	End of 2023
<p>Recommendation 2: Clarify WFP's strategic position regarding the accountability constraints posed by the current working relationship with the Algerian Red Crescent and its partners on the ground.</p> <p><i>Coordination of efforts with partners:</i></p> <p>2.1 WFP and partners should develop a harmonized and clear message about priorities, including in particular a position on the need for greater accountability to refugees and the needs-based versus the universal targeting of general food assistance.</p>	Strategic	Country office	Headquarters	High	Before the start of the next CSP
<p>Recommendation 3: Enhance needs-based targeting.</p> <p>3.1 WFP should clarify its position regarding the current universal or blanket targeting versus vulnerability targeting (of the cash-based transfer programme for pregnant and lactating women) versus food insecurity targeting; assess the cost effectiveness and cost-benefit ratio of each; and include young refugees in the assessment.</p> <p>3.2 In tandem with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, WFP should explore, design and conduct a protection assessment with the goal of ensuring that protection, accountability to affected populations and access are comprehensively assessed for all the groups within the camps and that findings are reflected in the design of more tailored activities based on consultations with the refugee community.</p> <p>3.3 WFP should conduct a stronger analysis of the gender dynamics prevailing in the camps in order to inform gender-transformative programming. Until this is achieved, WFP should treat assertions about gender equity with caution.</p>	Strategic	Country office	Headquarters	High	End of 2023

Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Supporting entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
<p>Recommendation 4: Strengthen the effectiveness of complementary activities.</p> <p><i>Targeting:</i></p> <p>4.1 To promote the sustainability of complementary activities and their impact, rethink the targeting approach, foresee an increased role for WFP in the selection of participants, and document more clearly how benefits will trickle down or reach the most food-insecure refugees.</p> <p><i>Synergies:</i></p> <p>4.2 Build more visible synergies between complementary and school feeding and nutrition activities. Adopt a longer-term perspective that enables the realization of outcomes. Seek additional financing opportunities and explore new partnerships with other actors present in the camps with a view to scaling up complementary activities.</p> <p>4.3 Clarify the expectations and explore the options for the handover to refugees of each activity (with the exception of general food assistance).</p>	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau	Medium	End of 2024
<p>Recommendation 5: Improve the design and implementation of activities and strengthen integration among activities.</p> <p>5.1 Explore new opportunities for providing access to fresh foods (such as through the use of the cash-based transfer modality in various programme activities).</p> <p>5.2 <i>School feeding:</i> Rethink the timing and composition of school meals (for example, provide breakfast).</p> <p>5.3 <i>Cash-based transfers:</i> Review the value of vouchers in line with expected nutrition outcomes.</p> <p>5.4 <i>Social and behaviour change communication:</i> Maintain and expand social and behaviour change communication, including advocacy aimed at minimizing the sharing of food items intended for pregnant and lactating women with other household members.</p>	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau	Medium	End of 2023

Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Supporting entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
5.5 Map logistics arrangements from the port to the household, including the responsibilities of the various actors, and assess the risks and cost-efficiency. 5.6 Improve logistic arrangements with the Algerian Red Crescent, streamline contracts and advocate an extended planning time frame with donors and partners along the value chain. 5.7 Consolidate knowledge management, building on the strong position and visibility developed by WFP in recent years.					

Acronyms

COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CSP	country strategic plan
ICSP	interim country strategic plan
T-ICSP	transitional interim country strategic plan
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees