



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

Executive Board
Second regular session
Rome, 13–16 November 2023

Distribution: General	Agenda item 6
Date: 25 September 2023	WFP/EB.2/2023/6-A/4*
Original: English	Evaluation reports
* Reissued for technical reasons on 5 October 2023	For consideration

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

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

Executive summary

An evaluation of the country strategic plan for the Dominican Republic (2019–2023) was conducted between April and December 2022 to serve the dual purpose of accountability and learning to inform the design of the next country strategic plan.

The evaluation found the focus of the country strategic plan to be relevant to the country context, particularly as it relates to strengthening national capacity to address various dimensions of nutrition security, including new malnutrition-related health challenges such as obesity, diabetes, anaemia and hypertension; strengthening social protection; providing quick and efficient emergency response; and developing a conducive policy and programmatic environment. WFP was instrumental in promoting and supporting South–South and triangular cooperation and technological innovation including software, digitization, drone applications and cash-based transfer tools. Its contribution to strengthening national partner capacity was significant, to the extent that those partners can now operate autonomously, although they still need specific specialized services from WFP. While bilateral partnerships with government institutions are well developed and consolidated, inter-institutional coordination mechanisms and public–private and multi-stakeholder partnerships are less developed, and challenges remain in enhancing coordination among the Rome-based agencies.

WFP was generally agile in responding to emergencies, particularly due to its high supply chain management and logistics support capacity. While the mobilization of additional resources was

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timely, budget utilization was slow, in part owing to delayed disbursements and slow recruitment processes, particularly during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic. The country office is relatively small, with limited financial and operational capacity and limited experience in key intervention modalities such as cash-based transfers.

The least progress was made in combining humanitarian assistance with socioeconomic development and linking social protection to emergency response. WFP does not have a sufficiently developed strategy for transitioning smoothly from humanitarian interventions to development and ensuring continued support for beneficiaries, particularly the most vulnerable. This is due in part to the short-term nature of funding windows and the alignment of interventions with humanitarian donors' priorities.

WFP consistently factored gender and other inclusion aspects into the targeting of its interventions and ensured participation of the most vulnerable groups in its activities; however, principles related to gender equality and women's empowerment and accountability to affected populations were insufficiently integrated during implementation and were not systematically addressed and analysed in monitoring and reporting, which made it difficult to obtain a deep understanding of differential outcomes in those areas.

The country strategic plan was implemented with a strong focus on five separate strategic outcomes, some of which had specific theories of change, but a lack of overarching logic at the aggregate level limited coherence and internal synergies. Monitoring and evaluation processes and systems have not been well developed and embedded in the organizational structure of the country office. As a result, there are limitations in generating information for management decisions during implementation.

Overall, the evaluation concluded that the country strategic plan was relevant to needs in the Dominican Republic and performed well in its implementation, particularly in terms of contributing to a conducive policy and programmatic framework for food and nutrition security. WFP played a brokering role to facilitate national institutions' access to relevant technical knowledge and expertise and complement government crisis response. Challenges remain in strengthening United Nations system-wide coherence and the humanitarian–development nexus.

The evaluation led to six recommendations focused on further adapting WFP's role with the context of an upper-middle-income country; strengthening internal and external coherence in country strategic plan design and implementation; developing a strategy for transitioning to demand-based service delivery for partners; strengthening the humanitarian–development nexus; continuing to engage in humanitarian response on both sides of the border; and increasing attention to gender equality, inclusion and accountability to affected populations.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for the Dominican Republic (2019–2023) (WFP/EB.2/2023/6-A/4) and management response (WFP/EB.2/2023/6-A/4/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 country strategic plan (CSP) for the Dominican Republic for 2019–2023 covered WFP interventions between 2018 and 2022. Its main users are the WFP country office and national stakeholders, WFP headquarters divisions, the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean and the WFP Executive Board.
2. The evaluation was conducted by an independent external team between June and December 2022, with data collection taking place in November and December 2022. Findings, conclusions and recommendations were discussed with internal and external stakeholders in Santo Domingo in February 2023.
3. The evaluation adopted a theory-based mixed-methods, gender-sensitive approach, drawing on monitoring data, a literature review, key informant interviews and focus group discussions.

Context

4. The Dominican Republic is the second-largest country in the Caribbean, with a population of 11.1 million people, 27 percent of whom are between 0 and 14 years of age.¹ The Dominican Republic is now an upper-middle-income country, with extreme poverty having generally declined since the early 2000s. In 2021, 24 percent of the population were not able to meet their basic needs, up slightly from 2019 due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.² The country ranks 80 out of 191 countries on the Human Development Index, with a score of 0.767, above the regional average.
5. Despite progress in reducing wasting and stunting among children under 5, the prevalence of anaemia and obesity is still high. Obesity in children and adolescents age 5–19 has steadily increased since 2000, accounting for 33 percent of the school-age population in 2016.³ The cost of the double burden of malnutrition was 2.6 percent of gross domestic product in 2017.⁴
6. In 2021, an estimated 847,979 migrants were in the Dominican Republic, 48 percent more than in 2020, accounting for 8.3 percent of the total population.⁵ A total of 88.5 percent of migrants are of Haitian origin and many are vulnerable and at risk of social exclusion, although they are part of the labour force, particularly in the agricultural sector.
7. The Dominican Republic is continuously exposed to natural disasters, in particular floods and hurricanes, and is at a high risk of seismic activity due to its geographical location.
8. Gender inequality is an important concern in the Dominican Republic, particularly with regard to gender-based (domestic) violence and early marriage; 36 percent of women age 20 to 24 are married before the age of 18.⁶

¹ United Nations Population Fund. 2022. *State of World Population 2022. Seeing the Unseen: The case for action in the neglected crisis of unintended pregnancy.*

² Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development. 2022. *Boletín de estadísticas oficiales de pobreza monetaria en República Dominicana 2021 (N° 9/Año 7).*

³ United Nations Children's Fund. 2021. *The State of the World's Children 2021: On My Mind – Promoting, protecting and caring for children's mental health.*

⁴ WFP and others. 2019. *El Costo de la Doble Carga de la Malnutrición. Impacto social y económico en República Dominicana.*

⁵ United Nations Dominican Republic. 2022. *Informe Anual de Resultados 2021.*

⁶ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). *Women Count country fact sheet for the Dominican Republic.*

9. Certain groups are particularly vulnerable in the country, including Haitian migrants, women, children, older adults, people with disabilities, persons living with HIV/AIDS and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. In 2016, the Government established the *Equipo Consultivo de Protección, Género y Edad*, a protection, gender and age advisory group aimed at ensuring the protection of people affected and displaced by disasters.⁷

TABLE 1: SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS			
	Indicator	Value	Year
	Total population (million) (1)	11.1	2022
	Human Development Index (rank and score) (2)	80 of 191 0.767	2021
	Monetary poverty ratio (%) (3)	24	2021
	Stunting, prevalence in children under 5 (%) (4)	6	2020
	Obesity and overweight, prevalence in children age 5–19 (%) (4)	33	2016
	Immigrants (5)	847 979	2021
	Global Gender Gap Index (rank and score) (6)	84 of 146 0.703	2021

Sources: (1) United Nations Population Fund. 2022. *State of World Population 2022. Seeing the Unseen: The case for action in the neglected crisis of unintended pregnancy*; (2) United Nations Development Programme. 2022. *Human Development Report 2021/2022. Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World*; (3) Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development. 2022. *Boletín de estadísticas oficiales de pobreza monetaria en República Dominicana 2021 (N° 9/Año 7)*; (4) United Nations Children's Fund. 2021. *The State of the World's Children 2021: On My Mind – Promoting, protecting and caring for children's mental health*; (5) United Nations Dominican Republic. 2022. *Informe Anual de Resultados 2021*; (6) World Economic Forum. 2022. *Global Gender Gap Report 2022*.

WFP country strategic plan

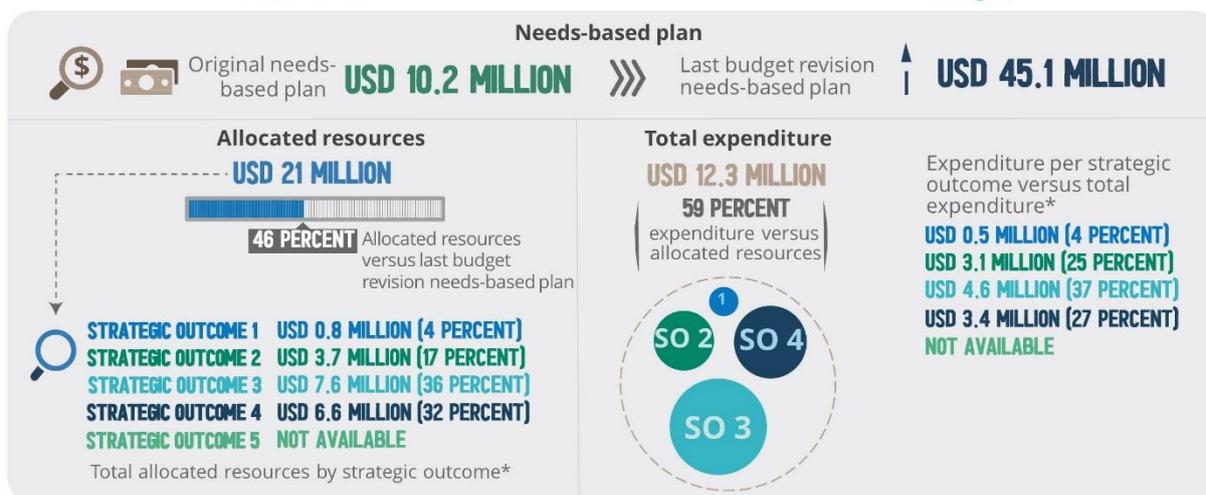
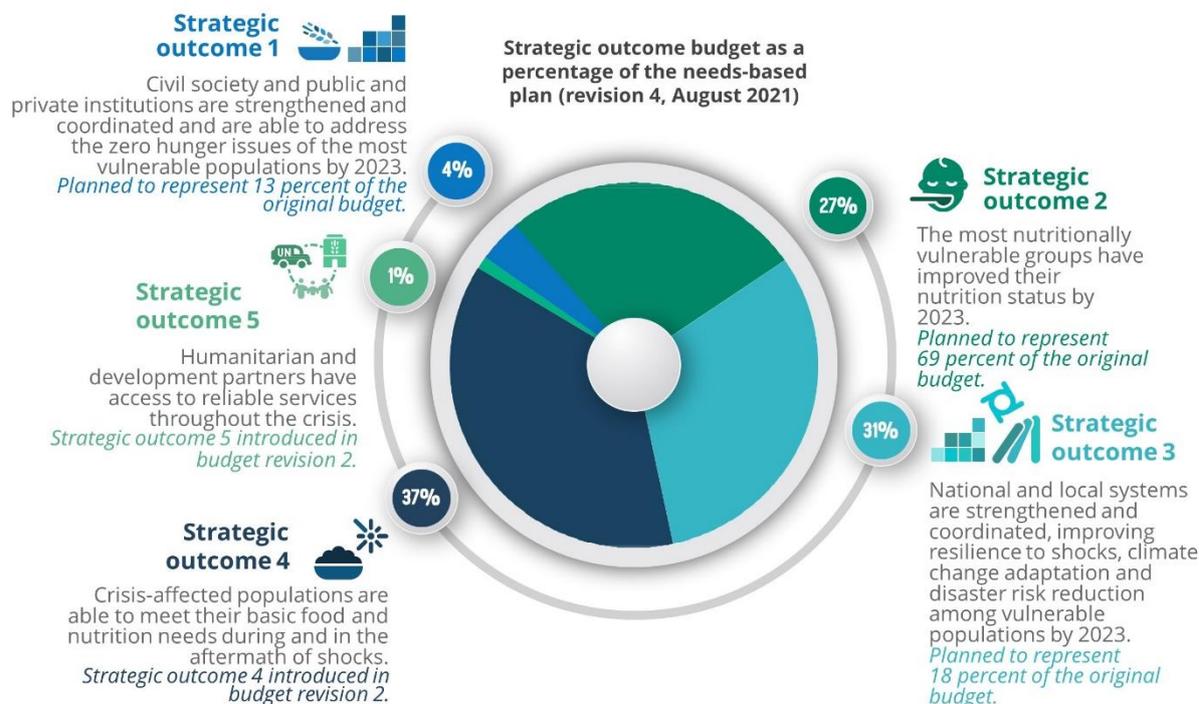
10. The CSP for 2019–2023 was preceded by a transitional interim CSP for 2018, which supported the Government's flagship social protection programme, *Supérate*,⁸ and contributed to the formulation of national policies to achieve zero hunger.
11. The CSP was designed to continue WFP's shift from direct implementation to strengthening national capacity and developing scalable programme models. The original needs-based plan aimed to serve 300,000 beneficiaries at a cost of USD 10,174,911. During the evaluation period, the budget was revised four times, increasing to USD 45,149,802 to reach 510,400 beneficiaries, with two additional strategic outcomes (4 and 5) introduced in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
12. As of December 2022, 46 percent of the budget was funded. The main contributions came from the Government of the Dominican Republic, the European Commission and the

⁷ Oxford Famine Relief Organization. 2017. *Institutionalizing protection in disaster risk reduction. A case study for the Dominican Republic*.

⁸ National social protection programme formerly known as *Progresando con Solidaridad*, or PROSOLI.

Government of the United States of America, and 83 percent of the funding was earmarked at the activity level. Figure 1 illustrates the details of the budget, funding and expenditures.

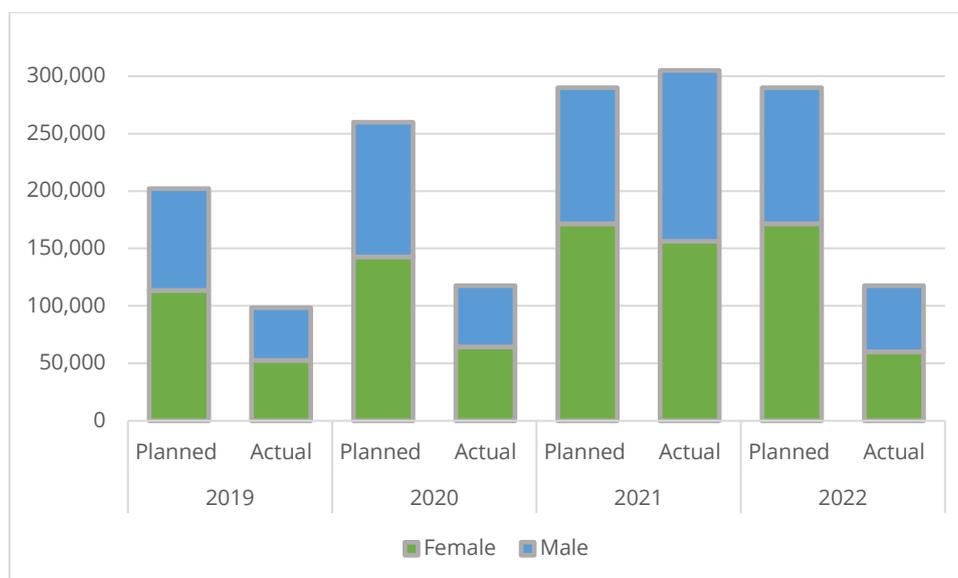
Figure 1: Dominican Republic country strategic plan (2019–2023) strategic outcomes, budget, funding and expenditures



* Percentages of allocated resources and expenditures by strategic outcome do not add up to 100 percent because resources were also allocated and spent for non-strategic outcome purposes.

Sources: Dominican Republic CSP (2019–2023) budget revision 4; WFP Integrated Road Map Analytics, EV_CPB Resources Overview (accessed 14 December 2022).

- As illustrated in figure 2, WFP reached 105 percent of planned beneficiaries in 2021, while in 2022 it reached 41 percent of the target, representing 117,525 women, men, girls and boys, including 8,259 people with disabilities.

Figure 2: Actual versus planned beneficiaries by sex, 2019–2022

Source: Annual country reports for 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022.

14. WFP introduced the distribution of cash and vouchers in 2020. Adoption of this modality increased steadily throughout the CSP implementation period, and in 2022, WFP distributed more vouchers than planned. Food distribution, on the contrary, spiked in 2020 and 2021, achieving roughly one third of its planned level. Distributions were mostly made in response to the COVID-19 crisis and to hurricanes; marginal use was made of food distributions in 2019 and 2022.

Evaluation findings

To what extent is the country strategic plan evidence-based and strategically focused to address the needs of the most vulnerable?

Relevance and evidence base of the country strategic plan design

15. The CSP design was relevant to the country context and informed by thorough analyses using multiple sources related to food security and nutrition issues. The design process involved a range of stakeholders from civil society and Government. These analyses were not regularly updated, however, and there was less stakeholder participation in the subsequent budget revisions and the planning of specific interventions at the local level.
16. The CSP had a clear focus on the inclusion of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, with particular attention to women, Haitian migrants and children, though many interventions lacked a specific approach for these target groups in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse or accountability to affected populations. Targeted actions for people with disabilities were not part of the CSP design or implementation.

Alignment with national policies and the Sustainable Development Goals

17. The CSP objectives were well aligned with national policies, strategies and plans, particularly as they related to working in key areas of cooperation such as national health and social protection systems and policies, food security and nutrition, and emergency preparedness and response. WFP aligned its nutrition and food security approach with the upper-middle-income status of the Dominican Republic, focusing on feeding practices and multiple dimensions of malnutrition including anaemia, diabetes and hypertension.

18. With respect to emergency assistance for the humanitarian crisis in Haiti and bi-national planning across borders, the CSP was aligned with shared priorities for island-level action by the United Nations and the Government in the area of climate change preparedness, mitigation and resilience.
19. The CSP objectives were well aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 2. Strategies related to SDG 17 were well developed with government partners but less so with civil society and the private sector.

External coordination, partnerships and comparative advantage

20. CSP objectives and programmes were aligned with the United Nations development assistance framework (UNDAF) and the United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework (UNSDCF), although the CSP cycle was not yet harmonized with the UNSDCF cycle.
21. Programmatic alignment within the United Nations did not always translate into optimal operational coordination on the ground. WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations collaborated in providing technical assistance to the Government for preparing road maps for achieving zero hunger and conducted joint projects such as the pro-rural project. However, evidence also shows considerable overlap of activities and competencies among the various United Nations partners, particularly the Rome-based agencies in food security-related actions. For example, the feeding programmes of the national institutes for student welfare and early childhood care are supported by FAO and WFP, respectively, but the first promotes local procurement and the latter, national procurement.
22. WFP demonstrated a clear comparative advantage in logistical support during emergency response and in nutrition-related interventions, where its leadership is exemplary. WFP's expertise in food fortification and micronutrient provision and its technological experience and expertise in data management, risk assessments and surveys and emergency supply chain methods and tools are widely recognized, but most national partners did not consider WFP to be the leading agency on food security, particularly food production in the Dominican Republic. WFP's experience and expertise in adaptive social protection is also widely recognized, although there is scope for further engagement on the topic.

Quality of country strategic plan intervention logic and internal coherence

23. The CSP logic of intervention is coherent in that the first three strategic outcomes are directly related to strengthening national capacity to achieve SDG 2, while strategic outcomes 4 and 5 are designed to support the achievement of the first three strategic outcomes by focusing on transfers during emergencies and on-demand service delivery to partners. While clear intervention logics and theories of change were developed for the first three strategic outcomes, there was no overarching logic to the CSP, and implementation was managed with a siloed approach for each strategic outcome that limited the potential for internal synergies.

Strategic positioning and continued relevance

24. WFP remained relevant throughout CSP implementation. It ensured timely partnership realignment or development in response to context dynamics, including political and institutional changes and the COVID-19 pandemic.
25. WFP is appreciated as a broker for South-South and triangular cooperation with Central and South America. However, the potential for positioning in the Caribbean region for greater cooperation in disaster prevention and response could be more fully exploited, although it was noted that the Dominican Republic is a member of the Central American Integration System but only has observer status in the Caribbean Community.

What are the extent and quality of WFP's contribution to country strategic plan strategic outcomes in the Dominican Republic?⁹

26. Overall, through its capacity strengthening work, WFP made a notable contribution to the work of its United Nations and government partners related to zero hunger and enhanced emergency response capacity, albeit with some challenges in achieving the targets. Key contributions identified by the evaluation are presented below.

Support for policies, systems and programmes

27. Through services and technical assistance provided under strategic outcomes 1 to 4, including through South–South and triangular cooperation, WFP made important contributions to strengthening the capacity of national and local health institutes to provide country-wide nutritional assistance, though challenges remain for inter-institutional coordination on efforts to improve resilience, support climate change adaptation and reduce disaster risks. Strategic outcome 5 was not funded; therefore, its activities were not implemented.

National capacity for awareness-raising and behaviour change campaigns to address zero hunger and improve nutrition quality (strategic outcomes 1 and 2)

28. With WFP support, health, food security, nutrition and social protection communication messages have been well established and coordinated by national entities. Moreover, WFP's brokering role led to strategic partnerships with the private sector, such as MasterCard Caribbean and Royal DSM, generating additional financial and technical support.
29. The Ministry of Public Health is making progress with the rollout of the *Ruta de la Salud: Cambia tu Estilo de Vida* (the way to health: change your lifestyle) campaign, and WFP has provided valuable technical assistance to address the triple burden of malnutrition. Ministry staff and health units across the country are also trained in appropriate messaging and counselling. Systematic measurement of the impact of the digital behaviour change campaigns has not yet been conducted, however, which will become an increasingly important gap as the programme progresses.

Improved nutrition status of key target groups (strategic outcomes 2 and 4)

30. Through advocacy and technical assistance, WFP contributed to a conducive policy environment and enhanced the technical capacity of national partners to improve the targeting and nutritional value of national feeding programmes. The impact of these interventions is reflected in improvements in household nutrition scores, although to a lesser extent among shock-affected populations (table 2).

⁹ The analysis in this section is not structured by strategic outcome due to the fact that the CSP in the Dominican Republic is relatively small and an analysis for each specific strategic outcome would lead to fragmentation rather than a coherent and overall analysis of WFP's contributions to SDG achievement. Additionally, a separate analysis for each strategic outcome does not do justice to the fact that capacity strengthening is an important intervention strategy in the CSP that enables partners under strategic outcomes 1 and 3 to implement activities under strategic outcomes 2 and 4.

TABLE 2: FOOD CONSUMPTION SCORE AS A REFLECTION OF WFP'S PERFORMANCE (STRATEGIC OUTCOMES 2 AND 4)						
	Outcome indicator	2019	2021		End of CSP (2023)	
		Baseline	Target	Actual	Target	As of 2021
Strategic outcome 2	Percentage of households with an acceptable food consumption score	86	≥86	97.25	≥90	Achieved
	Percentage of households with a borderline food consumption score	9.8	≤10	0	<6	Achieved
	Percentage of households with a poor food consumption score	4.1	≤4	2.75	<4	Achieved
Strategic outcome 4	Percentage of households with an acceptable food consumption score	86	≥86	86.1	≥90	Not yet achieved
	Percentage of households with a borderline food consumption score	9.8	≤10	10.9	≤6	Not yet achieved
	Percentage of households with a poor food consumption score	4.1	<4	3	≤4	Achieved

Source: 2021 annual country report.

31. The school-feeding institutional architecture is well established and widely recognized by partners and beneficiary groups. The school feeding programmes have adapted to COVID-19 and more recently have recovered their pre-pandemic levels in reaching target groups at the national level. *Supérate*, with its attention to nutritional challenges, has become a reference in social protection, with wide national coverage. The Government has become the primary funder of these programmes, and WFP's role is evolving towards more specific, on-demand technical assistance and service delivery.

Improved resilience of vulnerable communities to emergencies (strategic outcome 3)

32. WFP's training and technical assistance on early warning and forecast-based drought and flood alerts contributed to enhancing the capacity of regional and local partners to assess and manage climate risks in support of vulnerable communities. WFP's forecast-based financing mechanism is situated in specific regions and has been improved and expanded, generating greater coordination of early warning and anticipatory action by the national system for disaster prevention, mitigation and response and the national social protection system. While emergency mitigation and response are generally embedded in programmes, disaster preparedness and prevention and climate change resilience are less developed, and the national system for disaster prevention, mitigation and response still faces coordination challenges.

Vulnerable groups are more capable of recovering from emergencies (strategic outcomes 3 and 4)

33. WFP technical assistance was instrumental in mainstreaming cash-based transfers as a national emergency response mechanism, although more effort is needed to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus. The introduction of cash-based transfers is still fairly recent, however, and there is still relatively little contextualized knowledge. Shock-responsive social protection is becoming increasingly well-known and appreciated but the approach is still not systematically applied to national emergency responses.

Installed emergency response capacity in the Dominican Republic reaching out to Haiti and beyond (strategic outcome 3)

34. WFP was instrumental in creating operational capacity for a humanitarian corridor between Haiti and the Dominican Republic and establishing a warehouse in Santo Domingo, together with the Red Cross. Continuous donor support is nonetheless required and the potential for this emergency response capacity in the wider Caribbean region is not yet recognized.

Achievement of cross-cutting aims

35. WFP interventions mainstreamed gender equality and women's empowerment and inclusion, though generally only in terms of participation in activities and targeting of beneficiaries. Outcome-level transformational change in gender equality and women's empowerment has not yet been realized or systematically tracked. While direct assistance and emergency response activities reached vulnerable groups, challenges remain in disaster preparedness. Targeting people living with HIV, people with disabilities and young people also remains challenging.
36. WFP showed full commitment to the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality throughout CSP implementation. It also paid attention to protection and accountability to affected populations, albeit not systematically due to limited human resource capacity, especially for people living with HIV, people with disabilities and young people. The country office did not systematically track indicators on the environment, protection or accountability to affected populations.

Prospects for sustainability

37. The Government and other key partners show strong ownership of and commitment to WFP's capacity strengthening interventions. They also show good capacity to continue their work on food security, nutrition and social protection and to expand it without continued support from WFP, though demand for specific WFP services remains. There continue to be challenges in ensuring sustainability in work on disaster prevention, mitigation and response, as in the case of the humanitarian corridor, which is well established but still requires continuous donor support to retain stand-by capacity between emergencies.

Humanitarian-development nexus

38. The CSP did not include a strategy for transitioning from humanitarian to development interventions. The humanitarian-development nexus was poorly developed at both the planning and the implementation levels.

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

39. WFP has experienced delays in implementing planned activities and delivering outputs, particularly those related to COVID-19 responses under strategic outcome 4. CSP implementation rates have accelerated since 2021, indicating improved efficiency following the adjustment of the CSP to address the needs created by COVID-19.
40. Despite initial delays, WFP supported the Government in expanding the *Quédate en casa* (stay home) national social protection programme during the COVID-19 pandemic and complemented the coverage of the national response. In 2022, WFP was able to roll out the response to Hurricane Fiona within one month, reprioritizing its target areas and conducting a rapid market assessment to inform the *Supérate* national social protection programme. While the mobilization of additional resources was timely, however, budget utilization was partially slowed down by delayed disbursements and slow recruitment processes.

41. At the time of the evaluation, the availability of monitoring data on supply chain management performance was limited. However, the indicator “% of mt distributed within planned deadlines” shows overall good performance, with significant improvement in 2021 compared to 2020.

Coverage

42. WFP’s coverage prioritized regions with higher vulnerability to disasters and with a higher concentration of Haitian migrants. Together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other United Nations entities, WFP advocated the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the national social protection strategies. While some of WFP’s activities specifically target women and people living with HIV, limited attention was paid to other vulnerable groups, such as young people and people with disabilities.

Cost-efficiency

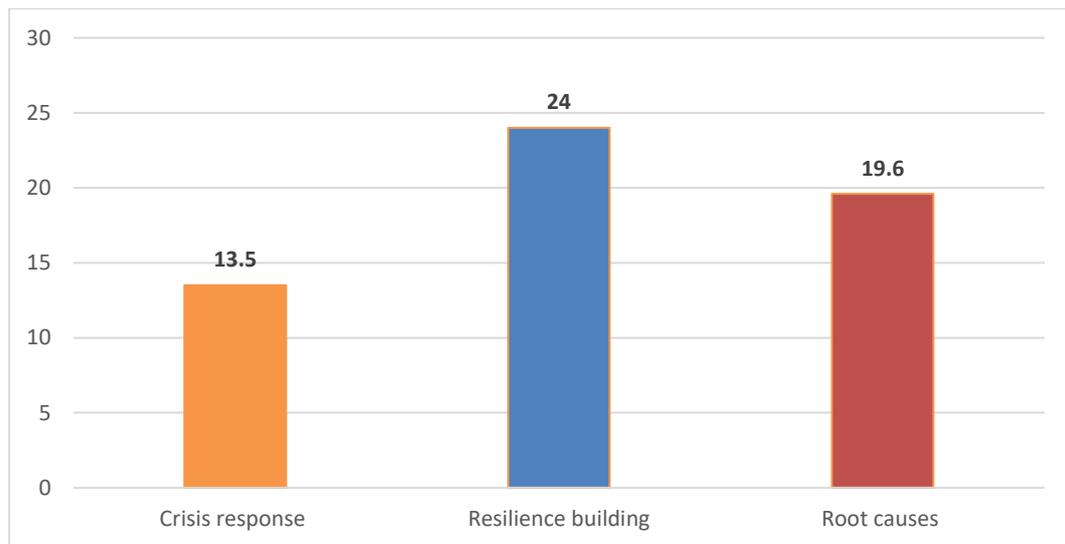
43. The cost per beneficiary in the Dominican Republic is not systematically lower for cash-based transfers than for food distribution, as cash-based transfers were only introduced in the country in 2020 and further investments are needed to make efficient use of the modality. As shown in table 3, the cost of transporting food purchased internationally by WFP (activity 2) is generally volatile, exposed to changes in the global market, whereas the country office has more control over efficiency when food is purchased on local markets (activity 4).

	Cost item	Year			
		2019	2020	2021	2022
Activity 2	Other food-related costs	9	6	No action taken under this activity in 2021	9
	Transport	10	17		47
	Storage	13	17		5
	Port	0	3		6
	Supply chain management	10	7		0
Activity 4	Other food-related costs	-	14	11	6
	Transport	-	0	4	0
	Storage	-	1	4	2
	Supply chain management	-	0	0	0

Source: Country portfolio budget plan vs actuals report_v2.1 D002.

44. The short duration of donors’ grants (figure 3) led to several efficiency challenges. In particular, the design phase and targeting exercise for short-term projects can be costly and time-consuming, sometimes even more resource-intensive than actual project implementation. In addition, short-term projects limit opportunities to strengthen partnerships, especially at the local level, as there is not enough room to adequately nurture the partner relationship.

Figure 3. Average grant duration during country strategic plan implementation (2019–2022) (months)



Source: Country portfolio budget grant balances report v3.0, extracted on 13 December 2022.

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

Financial resources

45. Fundraising efforts generally matched the existing country office implementation capacity. However, funding levels and subsequent adjustments of the implementation plan show considerable gaps compared to the original needs-based budget. Donors’ priorities have influenced the scope and focus of the CSP, with most of the funding being earmarked at the activity level, specifically for disaster risk management activities (strategic outcomes 3 and 4).

Monitoring and reporting

46. The evaluation notes that monitoring and evaluation systems are inadequate for monitoring CSP implementation and progress. Indicators are not consistent over time and data is not analysed and used to inform implementation and adaptation, including on cross-cutting themes such as gender, inclusion, protection and accountability to affected populations. Despite challenges in capturing outcome results, the country office monitors the Emergency Preparedness Capacity Index and other indicators to measure capacity at the institutional and systems levels, but such indicators are not yet used in a consolidated manner because the results are not followed up.

Partnership

47. WFP’s approach to partnering with state institutions is highly appreciated, with the Government particularly valuing the quality of the processes used to deliver the CSP, as well as WFP’s international experience and the access to expertise provided. Civil society organizations, however, have a more varied view on the intensity and quality of cooperation with WFP.

Human resources

48. The WFP country office has limited staff to deliver the ambitious CSP targets and maintain its organizational structure. Due to limited human and financial resources, many employees have more than one functional role and a few positions remain vacant. Several functions, mainly in monitoring and evaluation and cross-cutting workstreams (gender, inclusion, protection/accountability to affected populations) are inadequately staffed or do not exist. While staff competencies are relevant and good, there are still gaps in technical expertise for developing multi-stakeholder partnerships; strengthening linkages between emergency response and social protection; and strengthening the humanitarian–development nexus.

Other factors affecting performance

49. Key enabling factors include strong WFP networks to engage in South–South and triangular cooperation; political stability and quick post-COVID-19 recovery in the country; and robust capacity to respond quickly to the humanitarian crisis in Haiti.
50. Key inhibiting factors include lack of synergy between the Rome-based agencies; coordination challenges within the national system for disaster prevention, mitigation and response; exclusion of Haitian migrants and refugees; and limited integration of the country within the Caribbean region.

Conclusions

51. Overall, the evaluation concluded that the CSP was relevant to needs in the Dominican Republic and well tailored to its status as an upper-middle-income country. WFP contributed to a conducive policy and programmatic environment for food and nutrition security, fulfilling a technical assistance and brokering role to facilitate access to knowledge and expertise in order to enhance the coverage and quality of national programmes, and complementing government crisis response.
52. WFP was generally agile in responding to emergencies, particularly due to its high supply chain management and logistics support capacity, though there were delays in project implementation and the delivery of support, particularly under strategic outcomes 3 and 4. This is explained by the fact that the country office is relatively small and has insufficient human and financial resources.
53. WFP's contribution to strengthening the capacity of its national partners has been significant, with those partners now able to operate autonomously to a large extent. This offers good prospects for sustainability, although specific highly specialized services from WFP will still be needed.
54. Challenges remain in strengthening the humanitarian–development nexus to enhance the resilience of vulnerable groups. WFP does not have a sufficiently developed strategy for transitioning from humanitarian assistance to longer-term development interventions, and there is room for improvement in linking social protection with emergency response. In that connection, it should be noted that WFP activities generally reflect the priorities of humanitarian donors, who tend to strictly earmark their contributions, generally with short-term funding windows.
55. The CSP was aligned with national policies and priorities and WFP is positioned as a trusted partner for government institutions, civil society and the private sector, who recognize its role and competencies in contributing to SDG 2. The CSP was also aligned with United Nations priorities, particularly under the areas of food security, provision of social services and institutional strengthening, although the fact that its programme cycle was not harmonized with the UNDAF and UNSDCF cycles limited opportunities for greater system-wide coherence.

56. The CSP was implemented with a strong focus on five distinct strategic outcomes, some of which had specific theories of change, but the lack of a theory of change at the aggregate level contributed to a siloed approach to implementation, limiting internal synergy.
57. WFP has consistently included gender and other inclusion aspects in targeting its interventions. It has ensured participation by the most vulnerable groups in its activities. However, principles of gender equality and women's empowerment and accountability to affected populations were neither sufficiently integrated during implementation nor systematically addressed and analysed in monitoring and reporting, which hindered enhanced knowledge and understanding of differential outcomes in those areas.
58. WFP established strong and durable partnerships during the CSP implementation period, mainly with line ministries and public institutions, who expressed a high level of satisfaction with the technical assistance and services it provided. While bilateral partnerships with government institutions are well developed and consolidated, inter-institutional coordination mechanisms and public-private and multi-stakeholder partnerships are less developed.
59. Monitoring and evaluation processes and systems are not well developed and embedded in the organizational structure of the Dominican Republic country office. There was inadequate organizational discipline in systematically collecting and analysing monitoring data over time and across the various strategic outcomes, which limited the generation of inputs for management decisions on continuous improvement and innovation in CSP planning and implementation. A particular constraint was the limited staff time allocated to the monitoring and evaluation function in the country office.

Recommendations

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1	<p>WFP's next country strategic plan should more closely reflect the specific political and economic situation of the Dominican Republic as an upper-middle-income country, a Caribbean island State and a country that shares a border with Haiti. WFP should seek stronger alignment with the United Nations planning framework for the Dominican Republic and secure complementarity among the Rome-based agencies. In this alignment, WFP should anticipate a continued trend of declining international support for the Dominican Republic and resources for WFP's work under strategic outcome 1 (partners' capacity to achieve zero hunger) and strategic outcome 2 (improved nutrition status of vulnerable groups) and establish a stronger focus on strategic outcome 3 (emergency preparedness, mitigation and response), considering climate change and natural disaster-related challenges at the national, island and Caribbean regional levels.</p>	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	June 2024
1.1	<p>In developing a stronger focus on strategic outcome 3, WFP should avoid overlaps and promote closer cooperation on the ground in the implementation of its food security-related actions where its mandate overlaps with those of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.</p>					

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1.2	WFP should step up and further diversify its fundraising (including direct fundraising and private sector partnerships) to secure sufficient funding for remaining work under strategic outcomes 1 and 2, while continuing its current fundraising for activities under strategic outcomes 3 and 4 (support for crisis-affected populations). This requires a longer-term pipeline approach and donor diversification to reduce donor earmarking of funds to less than 75 percent, to enable the country office to secure the continuity and coherence of the overall country strategic plan implementation.					
1.3	The next country strategic plan should consider a four-year period in order to align with the other United Nations entities in the country as of the start of the United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework for 2028–2032. This harmonization of planning is required to allow WFP and its United Nations partners to jointly strategize for coming planning periods.	Operational				
2	WFP should strengthen the intervention logic and strategy of its next country strategic plan to enable more synergy in the implementation of activities under different strategic outcomes. This requires the development of a comprehensive theory of change for the entire country strategic plan, for which the reconstructed theory of change drawn up for this evaluation and existing theories of change for strategic outcomes 1, 2 and 3 could serve as references.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau and headquarters	High	End of 2023 (with the publication of the next CSP)

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2.1	A particular area in which more synergy across strategic outcomes is required is in strengthening links between social protection activities (under strategic outcomes 1 and 2) and emergency response (under strategic outcomes 3 and 4). This is also a key area where government partners still have considerable demand for capacity strengthening and technical assistance from WFP, particularly at the policy and systems levels.	Strategic				
2.2	To enhance and facilitate synergy across the various strategic outcomes, the country office could consider reinstalling a programme management function with an overview of all CSP operations and the task of identifying opportunities for synergetic projects that can cut across strategic outcomes.	Operational				
3	WFP should develop a strategy for transitioning from its capacity strengthening support for government partners to providing demand-based technical assistance to some of these partners. This is needed given the clear recognition that the organizational capacity of WFP's partners has been strongly enhanced in previous country strategic plan periods. Capacity strengthening could still be considered at the institutional level, when policies and systems present flaws or coordination challenges, such as those identified in the national system for disaster prevention, mitigation and response.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau and headquarters (country capacity strengthening)	High	By the end of 2024 (before the end of year 1 of the next CSP)

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
3.1	Based on the acknowledgement of strengthened capacity and access to resources of its government partners, the WFP country office may consider further operationalization of its demand-driven service delivery under strategic outcome 5 of the country strategic plan.	Operational				
4	WFP should develop a specific approach and strategy to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus in its work. These should be tailored to the context of the Dominican Republic and to specific vulnerabilities arising from emergencies (such as hurricanes and climate-change-related flooding or droughts) and for specific vulnerable groups (such as Haitian migrants and undocumented people). The country office should acknowledge that its experience and organizational capacity is not sufficient to achieve this nexus alone. It will need to develop partnerships with other development-oriented actors in the United Nations system and civil society to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus structurally in all its humanitarian assistance interventions.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau and headquarters	High	Before 2026
4.1	The country office, with the support of the regional bureau and headquarters, should engage in dialogue and negotiations with key humanitarian donors and possible new donors to acquire longer-term funding for its emergency responses and humanitarian assistance, in order to build in a transition phase for development interventions that foster socioeconomic empowerment of beneficiaries. This requires humanitarian support funding horizons that extend beyond a minimum of two years.	Operational				

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
4.2	The country office should identify potential partners within the Government, the United Nations and civil society to jointly prepare approaches and interventions aimed at establishing and strengthening the humanitarian–development nexus, using complementary competencies, experience, expertise and networks.					
5.	<p>WFP in the Dominican Republic should continue to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Haiti by mobilizing humanitarian assistance for Haiti (humanitarian corridor and WFP’s cross-country work in both countries) and in disaster and emergency-related response on both sides of the border. In doing so, the country office could look for opportunities to increase its relevance at the Caribbean-region level, considering the strategic location of the Dominican Republic and the existing national capacity to mobilize for emergency response to other island States in the region. This may require stronger regional positioning of WFP in the Dominican Republic at the Caribbean-region level.</p>	Strategic		Regional bureau, Barbados country office, headquarters	Medium	Before the end of 2027 (by the publication of the next CSP)
5.1	Based on the recognition that WFP’s work on the humanitarian corridor is of strategic importance to both the Dominican Republic and Haiti and possibly to the Caribbean region as a whole, it is recommended that WFP develop its country office in the Dominican Republic into a more pronounced regional hub, which would also facilitate access to alternative funding sources for WFP in the Dominican Republic and the region.					

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
5.2	WFP should closely align with United Nations efforts in the Dominican Republic and Haiti to strengthen humanitarian and development interventions on both sides of the border and in a cross-border approach, within specific windows to be identified in agreement with the Government. In this connection, WFP could continue its activities related to the Haitian humanitarian-crisis and its natural disaster and emergency-related response activities, for which it has specific knowledge, experience and expertise.					
5.3	The WFP country offices in the Dominican Republic and Barbados and WFP headquarters should engage in a dialogue regarding the extent to which and the specific areas in which WFP in the Dominican Republic could develop a stronger regional profile.	Operational				
6	<p>WFP in the Dominican Republic should increase its focus on gender equality and women’s empowerment, inclusion, and accountability to affected populations/protection in planning, programming and monitoring and evaluation. This will require WFP to consider these aspects at the activity and output levels and to pay more systematic attention to empowerment processes and to achieving differential effects and overall impact for specific target groups.</p> <p>WFP will need to increase its efforts to analyse empowerment and gender and inclusion aspects and ensure they are systematically integrated into its interventions, in order to achieve transformational change in gender equality and women’s empowerment and empowerment of specific vulnerable groups including migrants, refugees, people with disabilities, young people and older people.</p>	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	By the end of 2024 (before the end of year 1 of the next CSP)

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6.1	<p>Haitian migrants and refugees should be included more explicitly in planning, implementation and monitoring. More knowledge about specific effects and the overall impact of WFP interventions on these target groups is needed to improve the quality of WFP's own interventions for these groups and provide evidence to support WFP's policy dialogue and advocacy efforts (and its joint efforts with other United Nations entities) to improve the position of the most vulnerable target groups in Dominican society.</p>					
6.2	<p>The place and role of the monitoring and evaluation function and effort in the country office should be strengthened, along with corresponding capacities, and monitoring and evaluation indicators should be improved, particularly at the outcome level. More effort is required to systematize and analyse monitoring and evaluation data for informing future management decisions and improving and introducing innovation into country strategic plan implementation. This will also require more training for all country office staff and more organizational discipline in the population of and use of data in monitoring and evaluation systems. Furthermore, it is recommended that WFP investigate the potential for alignment and synergy with national efforts coordinated by the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development in monitoring the effects of national food security and social protection service programmes, to allow more joint data mining in that regard.</p>	Operational				

Acronyms

COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CSP	country strategic plan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNDAF	United Nations development assistance framework
UNSDCF	United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework