



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

**Executive Board**  
Second regular session  
Rome, 18–21 November 2024

---

Distribution: General	Agenda item 6
Date: 11 October 2024	WFP/EB.2/2024/6-A*
Original: English	Evaluation reports
* Reissued for technical reasons on 25 October 2024	For consideration

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

---

## Summary evaluation report on the mid-term evaluation of the WFP strategic plan (2022–2025)

### Executive summary

The mid-term evaluation of WFP's strategic plan for 2022–2025 focused on assessing the plan's relevance and utility as a strategic road map, and the degree to which WFP is equipped to deliver on the plan's ambitions. The key issues highlighted by the evaluation are presented in the following.

The strategic plan for 2022–2025 builds on its predecessor, following an incremental approach and allowing for the continuity and consolidation of ongoing initiatives, although the transition from the previous plan implied transaction costs for country offices in aligning with the new one.

The strategic plan clarifies and gives legitimacy to WFP's ambitions in the "changing lives" and "saving lives" agendas but does not elaborate on the organization's comparative advantages in diverse roles and operating environments, resulting in a lack of strategic guidance on the prioritization of interventions at the country level, and eventually leading to a proliferation of activities with limited internal coherence. WFP's policy framework and related guidance have also not clarified organizational priorities, and there is a demand for more simplified, consolidated and practical guidelines.

The implementation of the strategic plan is supported by institutional mechanisms and structures aimed at improving WFP's ability to act rapidly and effectively, but the limited agility of budget revision processes remains a challenge, and the division of labour between central headquarters and the regional bureaux in supporting country offices has been suboptimal. In addition, WFP's skill set does not yet fully match its ambitions.

*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.*

---

#### Focal points:

Ms A.-C. Luzot  
Director of Evaluation  
email: [anneclaire.luzot@wfp.org](mailto:anneclaire.luzot@wfp.org)

Mr S. Lenci  
Senior Evaluation Officer  
email: [sergio.lenci@wfp.org](mailto:sergio.lenci@wfp.org)

---

There has been progress towards more integrated programming, but tension remains between integration efforts and WFP's budget structure requirements related to the "line of sight", and the corresponding management structure. There is also tension between the incentives for innovation and the need for risk management. The strategic plan has emphasized the use of evidence in supporting accountability and learning, but evidence is still insufficiently used in decision-making.

WFP has made progress towards the strategic plan's ambitions regarding the "People" enabler, but financial sustainability is challenging, and there are issues with staffing levels and staff profiles.

There has been good progress in diversifying funding sources, notably with international financial institutions, but WFP remains heavily dependent on earmarked, short-term funding from bilateral donors, which hampers the medium-term integrated programming that is critical in reducing recipient countries' dependency on aid. Funding gaps continue to be a major obstacle to the achievement of the goals of the strategic plan.

Partnerships with governments and international financial institutions have been expanded and strengthened during the strategic plan period. However, WFP's comparative advantages in specific thematic areas and settings are not clearly articulated, affecting the organization's strategic positioning. Operational coordination with other United Nations entities remains challenging and relations with civil society are mainly transactional. Overall, WFP's approach to partnerships is driven by the pursuit of funding opportunities for the organization, with limited engagement in other kinds of strategic partnership that could enhance the complementarity and effectiveness of interventions.

Based on available data, it is not possible to make a conclusive judgement on progress towards the strategic objectives. Management indicators show progress in all areas other than funding, and evidence and learning, and good progress has been made in cross-cutting priorities, although indicators may not fully capture the changes, especially in matters related to gender, disability, access and community engagement.

The evaluation recommendations address the need to strengthen WFP's medium- to long-term vision, enhance its strategic focus and guidance on prioritization, streamline internal systems and processes, and secure adequate human and financial resources to deliver on its ambitions.

## **Draft decision\***

The Board takes note of the summary evaluation report on the mid-term evaluation of the WFP strategic plan (2022–2025) (WFP/EB.2/2024/6-A) and management response (WFP/EB.2/2024/6-A/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.

---

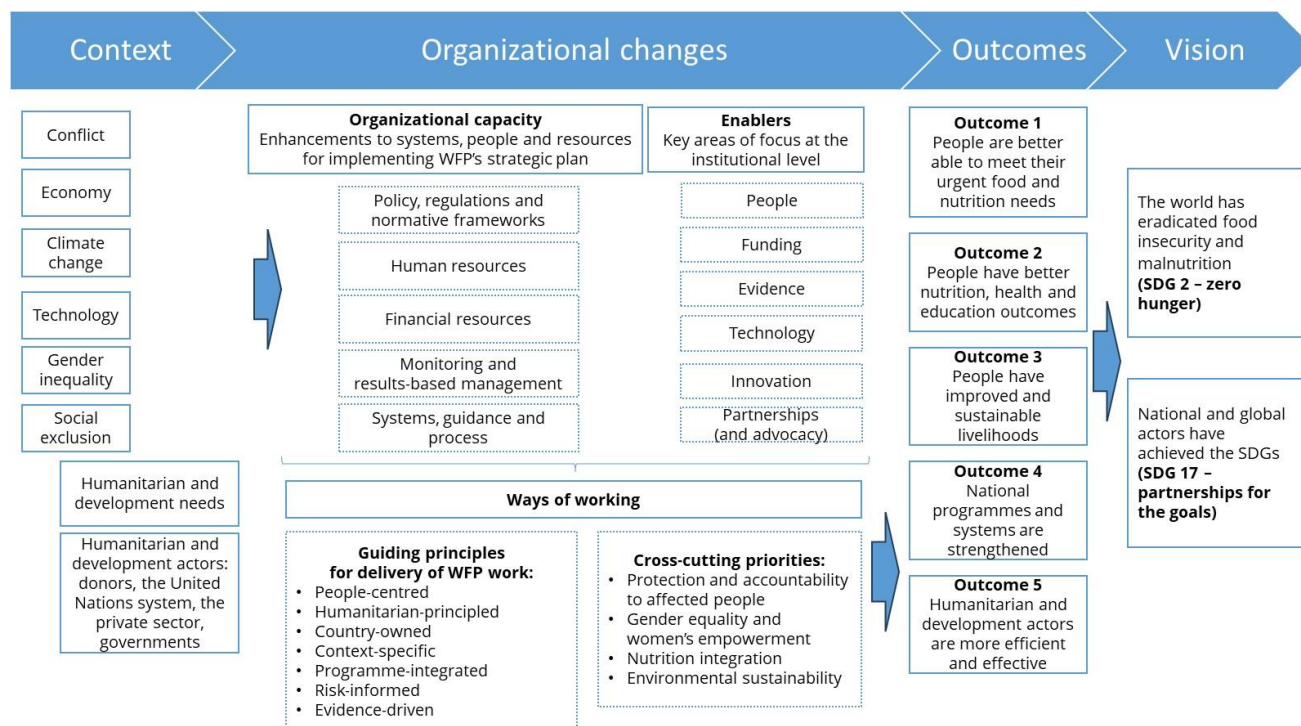
\* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the decisions and recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

## Introduction

### What was evaluated?

1. The strategic plan for 2022–2025 was developed in 2021. Figure 1 captures the key features of the plan, including the organizational capacities and enablers to be deployed in its implementation, and the planned ways of working.

**Figure 1: Key features of the WFP strategic plan (2022–2025)**



Source: Evaluation team.

Abbreviation: SDG = Sustainable Development Goal.

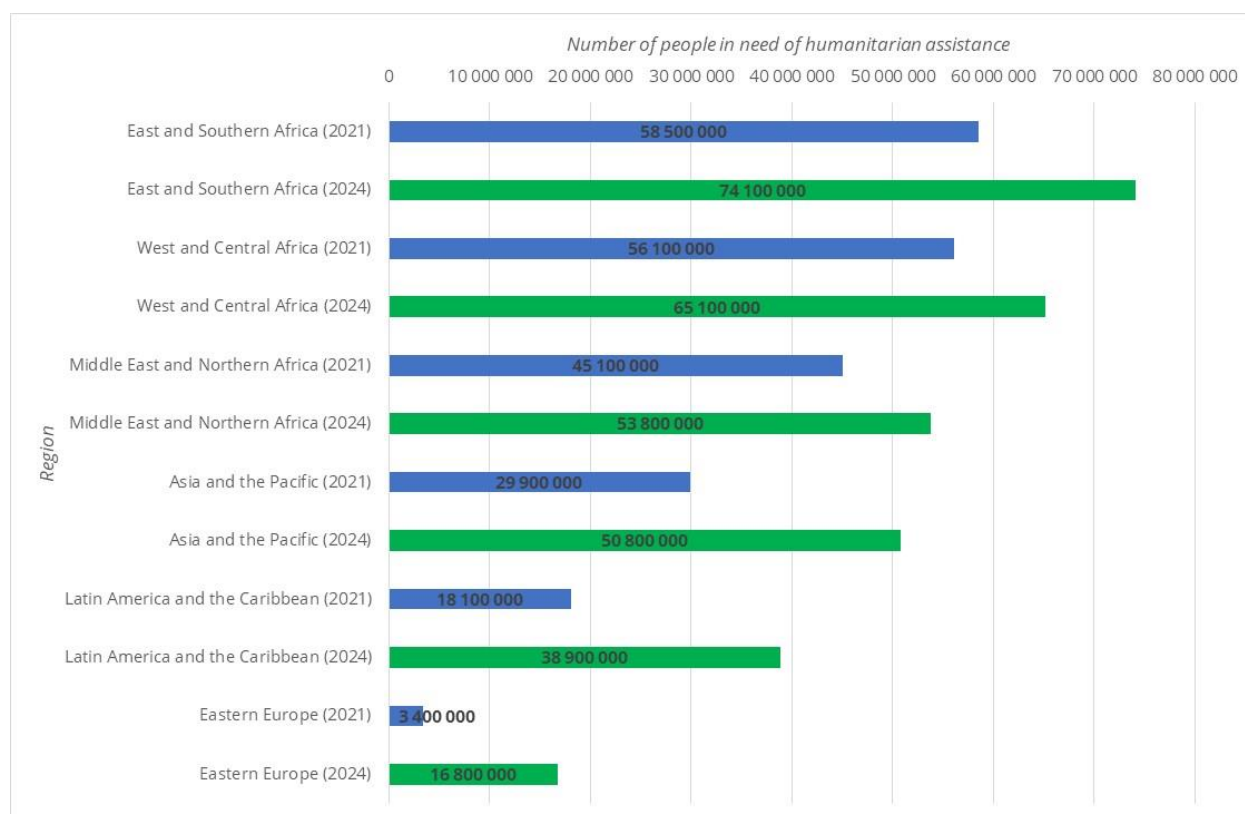
2. The main vehicle for implementation of the strategic plan is the country strategic plan (CSP) through which the strategic plan's priorities are translated into country-specific plans that are informed by national priorities and developed in consultation with governments and in line with United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks. At the time of this evaluation, all the countries where WFP operates had a CSP or an interim CSP, with 46 country offices having moved to second-generation CSPs. A total of 36 CSPs have been designed after the strategic plan was approved.

### Why was the evaluation conducted and in which context?

3. The mid-term evaluation of the strategic plan for 2022–2025 was conducted between September 2023 and August 2024 and covered the period from January 2022 to the end of 2023. The evaluation provided an opportunity to take stock of the implementation of the strategic plan so far, and to identify key issues to be addressed during the remaining period of the plan's cycle and in the design of the next strategic plan, which will be presented to the Executive Board for approval in November 2025.
4. Over the strategic plan implementation period, WFP's corporate structure has undergone significant changes. In 2023, WFP welcomed a new Executive Director, prompting a shift in senior leadership. Also in 2023, WFP launched the business operation and organization strategic transformation project, which aims to review WFP's organizational structure with a view to enhancing institutional efficiency and effectiveness.

5. The global context has also evolved considerably over the strategic plan period. Economic pressures arising from the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic have adversely affected food production and food security, and continue to disproportionately affect certain regions, notably sub-Saharan Africa. Prolonged conflicts such as those in the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and Ethiopia, the war in Ukraine, the conflict in Gaza and extreme weather events continue to create significant humanitarian needs. In 2024, nearly 300 million people require humanitarian assistance and protection.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 2: Humanitarian needs by region, 2021 and 2024**



Sources: Humanitarian Action. 2024. *Global Humanitarian Overview 2024*; Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2021. *Global Humanitarian Overview 2021*.

6. The ongoing reform of the United Nations development system has seen WFP expand its services in order to function as a “partner of choice” in support of other humanitarian and development actors. Within the United Nations development system, WFP has also committed to strengthening its role as a system-wide service provider beyond its cluster responsibilities.
7. In 2023, WFP launched the global assurance project aimed at strengthening specific areas of the organization’s assurance systems. While still ongoing, the project has identified key areas requiring improvement, including monitoring, identity management and supply chains in high-risk WFP operations, and has incorporated assurance initiatives into WFP’s 2024 implementation plans.

#### How was the evaluation conducted?

8. The mid-term evaluation adopted a mixed-methods, participatory approach, analysing quantitative and qualitative data from primary and secondary sources. These included data on WFP’s performance and financing, previous evaluations, audits and other internal

<sup>1</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2024. *Global Humanitarian Overview 2024*.

documents, a survey of country office staff, round table discussions on specific themes involving the six regional bureaux and country offices, focus group discussions with Board representatives (one for each list) and semi-structured interviews with key informants. Overall, 384 informants were consulted, 46 percent of whom were women and 54 percent men.

9. In recognition of the limitations associated with assessing progress towards the strategic outcomes after only two years of implementation, and with performance data available for only one year (2023), the mid-term evaluation focused mainly on understanding how WFP has equipped itself to deliver on the strategic plan, explicitly considering the implications for the remaining implementation period and for the design of next strategic plan. Shifts in the external environment and internal organizational changes provide the backdrop for the findings and guide consideration of the priorities to be brought forward.

## Findings

### ***Relevance and strategic focus of the design of the strategic plan***

The strategic plan for 2022–2025 is well aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other relevant normative frameworks, including those related to the strengthening of the United Nations development system. Building on its predecessor, which covered the period from 2017 to 2021, the strategic plan for 2022–2025 has introduced some important shifts, such as greater integration of the changing lives and saving lives agendas through the adoption of an incremental approach that allows for the continuity and consolidation of ongoing initiatives, rather than the sudden introduction of significant change.

10. Adopting an incremental model of change, the strategic plan for 2022–2025 introduced the following key shifts:
  - the reframing and streamlining of the strategic outcomes and strategic results of the previous strategic plan into five strategic outcomes that are mapped on to and aligned with the SDGs and related targets;
  - the introduction of seven guiding principles for the design and implementation of WFP's work;<sup>2</sup>
  - the recognition of six essential enablers<sup>3</sup> of the strategic plan's results and ambitions;
  - the inclusion, for the first time, of nutrition integration as a cross-cutting priority, as reflected in the corporate results framework (CRF) for 2022–2025, joining the cross-cutting issues that were included in the previous strategic plan; and
  - an ambitious shift in positioning, with a focus on partnerships that advance WFP's work and provide funding for activities that address the root causes of food insecurity and build resilience.
11. Alignment with the new results architecture and revised indicators for the strategic plan implied transaction costs for WFP's country offices, diverting resources from the implementation of the plan. These alignment efforts were sometimes in tension with approaches and priorities already agreed with national governments prior to the submission of CSPs for quality assurance and clearance from central headquarters.

<sup>2</sup> The seven guiding principles are people-centred, humanitarian-principled, country-owned, context-specific, programme-integrated, risk-informed and evidence-driven.

<sup>3</sup> The six strategic plan enablers are people, partnerships, funding, evidence, technology and innovation.

The strategic plan helped to clarify WFP's ambitions in the saving lives and changing lives agendas but was less helpful in prioritizing interventions at the country level, inadvertently encouraging the proliferation of activities with limited internal coherence. There was a missed opportunity to link WFP's receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize to a better articulation of the organization's role in addressing the challenges in peacebuilding.

12. The design of the strategic plan is evidence-based and relevant to the global challenges related to food security and nutrition. The plan gives greater legitimacy to WFP's engagement in development programming, but it does not sufficiently clarify the organization's roles in the changing lives agenda. Among internal and external stakeholders there are concerns about WFP's capacity to deliver across a wide range of activities without clear prioritization, and the evaluation observed an inclination in some country offices to include as many ambitions as possible in their CSPs, so as to avoid limiting potential funding opportunities. In particular, for country offices focused on changing lives, the context-specific features of WFP's comparative advantages are insufficiently clear.
13. The strengthening of national capacities<sup>4</sup> and the provision of administrative and logistics services for national governments are emphasized in the strategic plan as important dimensions of WFP's enabling role. However, the plan's results architecture presents these services as stand-alone strategic outcomes 4 and 5 rather than intervention modalities for delivering strategic outcomes 1, 2 and 3. This results architecture has not helped the linking of service provision and capacity strengthening to food security and nutrition outcomes in programme planning and management at the country level and in reporting to external stakeholders, with implications for the coherence, contribution to lesson learning and funding of WFP's capacity strengthening work.

### ***Policy architecture and guidance***

WFP's policy framework and related guidance are aligned with the strategic plan and largely provide the tools to implement the plan through CSPs, but they have not helped to clarify organizational priorities. The volume and complexity of current policies, strategies and guidance make them difficult for users, especially country offices, to absorb. There is a demand for simplified, consolidated and practical guidance and there are signs that this need is being recognized in recent policy formulation.

14. Policies help to align the design of WFP's programmes with global developments and best practices, and increasingly articulate the theories of change that explain how WFP's activities are intended to contribute to outcomes. While WFP's policy architecture is seen as enabling the implementation of the strategic plan, it has become increasingly elaborate and difficult to absorb, particularly for country offices, and conveys the message that everything is a priority. In addition, the process for commenting and providing feedback on CSPs has resulted in each unit at central headquarters emphasizing the policies and the elements of the strategic plan that are related to its function and requesting the inclusion of additional elements in the plan, with detrimental effects on the strategic focus and prioritization of CSPs.

---

<sup>4</sup> Country capacity strengthening in WFP refers to three domains: an enabling environment, which involves advocacy for conducive policy and regulatory frameworks; the organizational domain, which includes initiatives aimed at enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of state institutions and civil society organizations; and the individual domain, which is related to people's skills and behaviours.

15. The newly reconfigured Programme Policy and Guidance Division has started to consolidate and streamline the technical comments on programmes provided by its services, and the Staffing Coordination and Capacity Service is drafting streamlined processes for CSP development and approval. In addition, policies being developed or updated in 2024 are placing more emphasis on specifically where WFP should and should not engage in different programme areas and circumstances, based on its comparative advantages relevant to the policy area and its mandate.

***Evidence-based programming in the strategic plan period***

There has been progress in the design of more integrated programming but there has been insufficient organizational support for the operationalization of that integration. There is tension between integration efforts and WFP's budget structure, requirements related to the line of sight, and the corresponding management structure.

16. Integrated programme design has been supported by the progressive “bundling” of activities.<sup>5</sup> However, structural limitations remain, linked mainly to the requirement that resources be linked to results through a budget structured around activities and outcomes – rather than outputs and outcomes – which is conducive to increased donor earmarking at the activity level, challenging integration.
17. Other challenges for the design and implementation of integrated programmes derive from the internal fragmentation of country offices' work streams and teams, and gaps in overarching programme management. Notably, programme management in country offices is structured around the budget architecture, with outcome and activity managers but no overarching operational programme coordination function.
18. Lessons on the implementation of layered, sequenced and integrated programmes exist but are not yet being systematically captured and synthesized across WFP. These lessons could be very valuable to programming and should be informing WFP's ongoing organizational changes.

Over the strategic plan period there has been a growing emphasis on the use of evidence for accountability and learning purposes. Resources for evidence gathering have been directed mainly to monitoring activities aimed at informing aggregated reporting based on CRF requirements, which have become increasingly cumbersome. However, knowledge management remains weak, with evidence insufficiently linked to decision-making, including on the scale-up of innovations.

19. The strategic plan emphasizes the use of evidence in decision-making and in demonstrating effectiveness. In this, the plan is supported by the 2022 evaluation policy which prioritizes the production of demand-driven, accessible summaries of evaluation evidence to support decision-making. In 2023, WFP met or exceeded CRF targets related to the use of evidence in CSPs and policies, and the numbers of joint and system-wide evaluations conducted. However, targets for the number of audit recommendations outstanding and the percentage of evaluation recommendations implemented were not met.

<sup>5</sup> WFP. 2023. Strategic Plan (2022–2025) Line of Sight Guidance (Version 1.4) (internal document). According to WFP's guidance on the line of sight, “activity bundling” is the combination of several activities into a single “broad” activity and is usually intended to facilitate programme integration, reduce transaction costs and retain flexibility in the allocation of resources.

20. The recent assessment of WFP carried out by the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network concluded that “WFP is a strong generator of knowledge but does not have effective knowledge management systems to share learning across countries or to present knowledge in a form useful for decision makers at country level”.<sup>6</sup> The mid-term evaluation endorses this finding, observing that much of WFP’s monitoring work is focused on generating data that can be aggregated for reporting to the Board, and that current CRF and corresponding monitoring and reporting requirements are not conducive to the generation of analytical information and its use in management’s decision-making. In addition, important areas of WFP’s work are not being captured.
21. An important aspect of knowledge management involves distilling and leveraging lessons from innovations to inform decisions on the scale-up of operations. In this connection, WFP has enhanced its strategic prioritization of innovation, and systems for promoting innovation have evolved positively. However, the coverage of such systems is limited and there is a continuing tension between innovation and risk aversion. The criteria, methods and procedures for scaling up innovations remain insufficiently systematic or clear.

### ***Institutional mechanisms and organizational structures that support implementation***

The implementation of the strategic plan has been supported by several mechanisms and processes aimed at improving WFP’s ability to “do the right thing at the right time”, but the limited agility of the CSP budget revision process remains a challenge.

22. WFP’s advance financing mechanisms remain a key strength in enabling the organization’s operational responsiveness. Notably, the Immediate Response Account provided USD 385 million in advances to 36 country offices in 2022, and USD 433.5 million to 31 country offices in 2023, although 72 percent of the funds advanced in 2023 were concentrated in five country offices.<sup>7</sup> The Global Commodity Management Facility has also expanded, facilitating shortened procurement lead times, which are three months shorter than under conventional procurement processes, helping to ensure consistent supplies of food to country offices, and accounting for 57 percent of the food purchased for country offices in 2023.
23. Another mechanism for advance financing is internal project lending, which enables country offices to incur commitments and spend money before contributions for their CSP activities are confirmed. In 2023, 64 percent of the amount advanced through internal project lending was concentrated in seven operations.<sup>8</sup>
24. The Changing Lives Transformation Fund provides an important vehicle for investing in key ambitions of the strategic plan, but the implementation of the projects it has funded started only in 2024, making it too soon to assess their success.
25. Budget revisions continue to serve as a key mechanism for country offices adapting to volatile situations, although the overall time required for the approval of budget revisions has not declined, with some categories of delegated authority granting approvals slightly more quickly in 2023 than in 2020, and others more slowly, as shown in figure 3.

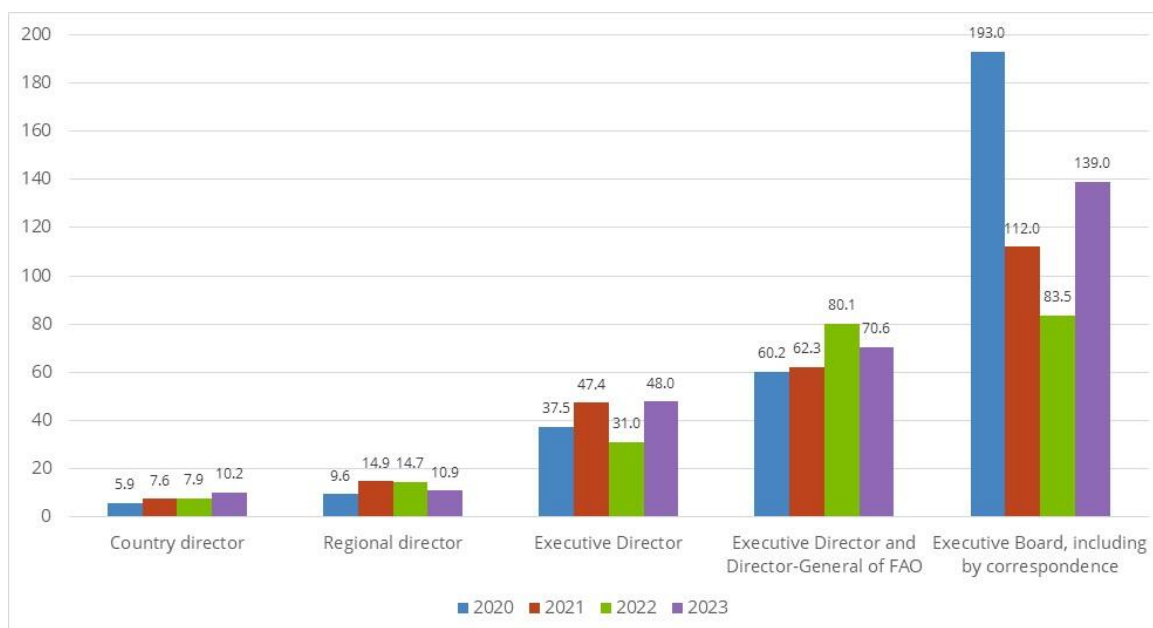
<sup>6</sup> Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network. 2024. [MOPAN Assessment Report, World Food Programme](#).

<sup>7</sup> Democratic Republic of the Congo, State of Palestine, the Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye. “[Report on the utilization of WFP’s strategic financing mechanisms \(1 January–31 December 2023\)](#)” (WFP/EB.A/2024/6-F/1).

<sup>8</sup> Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan, State of Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen. “[Report on the utilization of WFP’s strategic financing mechanisms \(1 January–31 December 2023\)](#)” (WFP/EB.A/2024/6-F/1).



**Figure 3: Average number of days required for a budget revision by level of delegated authority, 2020–2023**



*Source:* Mid-term evaluation analysis of data from WFP's System for Project Approval tracking file (internal report).

*Abbreviation:* FAO = Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Complementarity in the division of labour between central headquarters and regional bureaux in supporting country offices in implementing the strategic plan has been less than optimal.

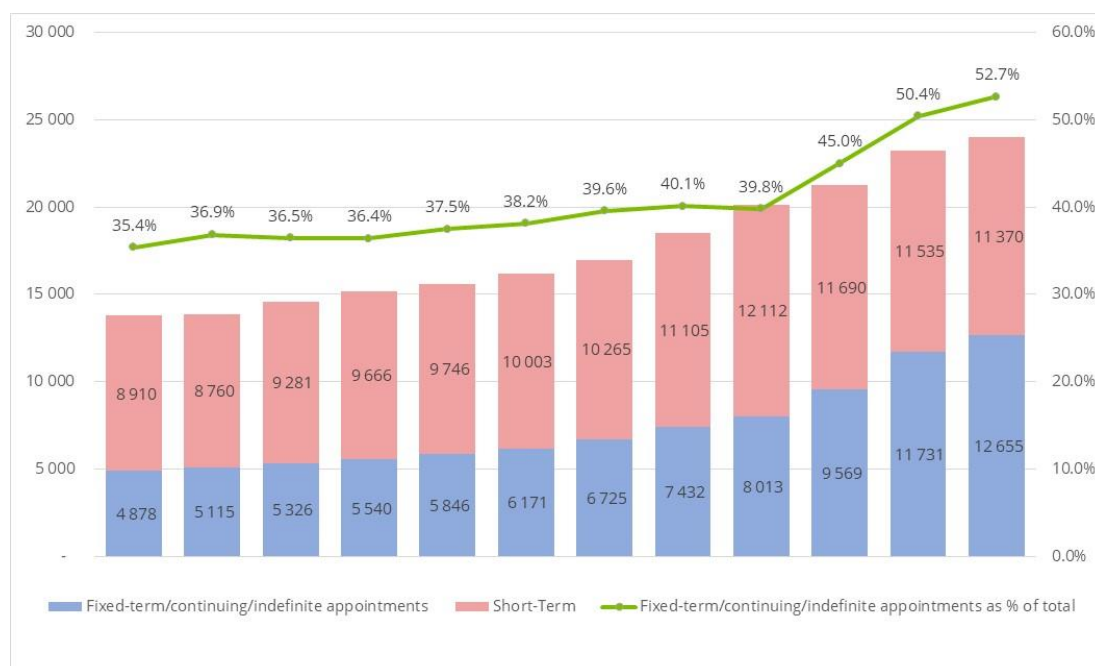
26. In WFP's regions of operation, regional bureaux play a very important role in supporting the implementation of global normative, compliance and reporting requirements by country offices. The mid-term evaluation found that country offices broadly view regional bureau support as useful and conducive to strategic plan implementation. Key areas of support include programme design, strategic partnerships for development financing, donor relations, and thematic expertise. However, the provision of technical expertise and guidance on the ambitious range of topics covered in the strategic plan has been challenging for regional bureaux in a context of reduced resources and insufficient clarity on the division of labour with central headquarters.
27. A review of WFP's organizational structure, commissioned by the Executive Director in August 2023, concluded that there were problems related to fragmentation, unclear roles and responsibilities, increased bureaucracy and a lack of agility, suboptimal allocation of resources, and unclear vision and prioritization of activities. The outcome of the first phase of the organizational review is a reconfigured organizational structure for central headquarters aimed at achieving greater integration of the Emergency Preparedness and Response Service into the Programme Policy and Guidance Division, more coherent grouping of technical programme areas under the Programme Policy and Guidance Division, and full integration of the former country capacity strengthening unit into these new technical programme services. The next phase of the review is looking at the configuration of regional bureaux and the relative roles and responsibilities of central headquarters and regional bureaux, with a view to improving the support and oversight of field operations.
28. While the necessity of this exercise is not questioned, its effectiveness cannot be assessed at this stage as the process is still ongoing. Some of the immediately visible consequences and risks of the review in relation to human resources are discussed in the following section.

## Human resources

WFP has made progress towards the strategic plan's ambitions regarding the "People" enabler, although financial sustainability is challenging and, in some areas, gaps in staffing or mismatches between staff profiles and the ambitions of the strategic plan remain. To address the funding shortage, significant cuts in staffing are being made, but with insufficient strategic guidance and inadequate internal communication, creating the risk of losing important technical skills and having negative effects on staff morale and motivation.

29. WFP has made significant investments in enhancing its human resources systems, wellness policies and workplace culture under the strategic plan. These investments have included the development of a new leadership framework, an induction programme for field leaders, global mentoring, and career development programmes for international and national staff, which are highly appreciated by the stakeholders consulted.
30. WFP has also made steady progress in decreasing the percentage of staff on short-term contracts, which should increase the likelihood of attracting and retaining talent. Since the adoption of the strategic plan, WFP's workforce has increased by 13 percent, growing from 21,259 people in 2021 to 24,025 in 2023. Over the same period, the overall percentage of staff with fixed-term, continuing or indefinite appointments has grown from 45 to 52 percent, continuing a long-term trend as shown in figure 4.<sup>9</sup> The shift to longer-term contracts is an important strategic priority but reduces flexibility and has generated additional fixed costs that in a voluntary funded organization may be difficult to sustain.
31. In terms of staff profiles, qualitative evidence suggests that there has been progress in the recruitment and development of specialized skills in key areas such as gender issues and country capacity strengthening, but gaps remain, particularly in relation to the changing lives agenda.

**Figure 4: WFP total staff by appointment category, 2012–2023**



Source: Mid-term evaluation analysis based on data from WFP's human resources management information system.

<sup>9</sup> The steady growth in overall numbers of WFP employees through 2023 shown in figure 4 does not reflect the effects of the hiring freeze and reduction in positions funded from the programme support and administrative budget that began in late 2023.

32. During the period evaluated, a surge in funding followed by significant shortfalls prompted efforts to bring costs rapidly into line with funding levels, but this initiative was not guided by an overarching strategic direction. This has resulted in a disconnect between the budget and workforce cuts made in regional bureaux and the changes made at central headquarters, reducing organizational readiness. At the time of the evaluation, budget cuts were having negative effects on the implementation of the strategic plan, with the elimination of strategically important technical capacities at various levels, and weak communications fuelling uncertainty among employees and having detrimental effects on their morale.

### **Financial resources**

The ambitions of the strategic plan were realistic in relation to the funding landscape at the time of the plan's adoption. However, the funding landscape has evolved during the strategic plan period, with a dramatic surge in funding followed by a decline leaving the organization with an unsustainable level of core operating costs.

33. Evidence gathered for the mid-term evaluation contradicts a narrative that is emerging at all levels of WFP suggesting that the strategic plan was overly ambitious because WFP's funding levels had become so high. However, while contribution levels rose far above WFP's expectations following the plan's formulation, reaching USD 9.6 billion in 2021 and USD 14.2 billion in 2022, they dropped back to USD 8.3 billion in 2023,<sup>10</sup> which is in line with the projections at the time the strategic plan was designed. The primary challenge arising from the fluctuation in funding is the result of the substantial increases in its core operating costs that WFP made during the period of funding growth, which have proved difficult to sustain.

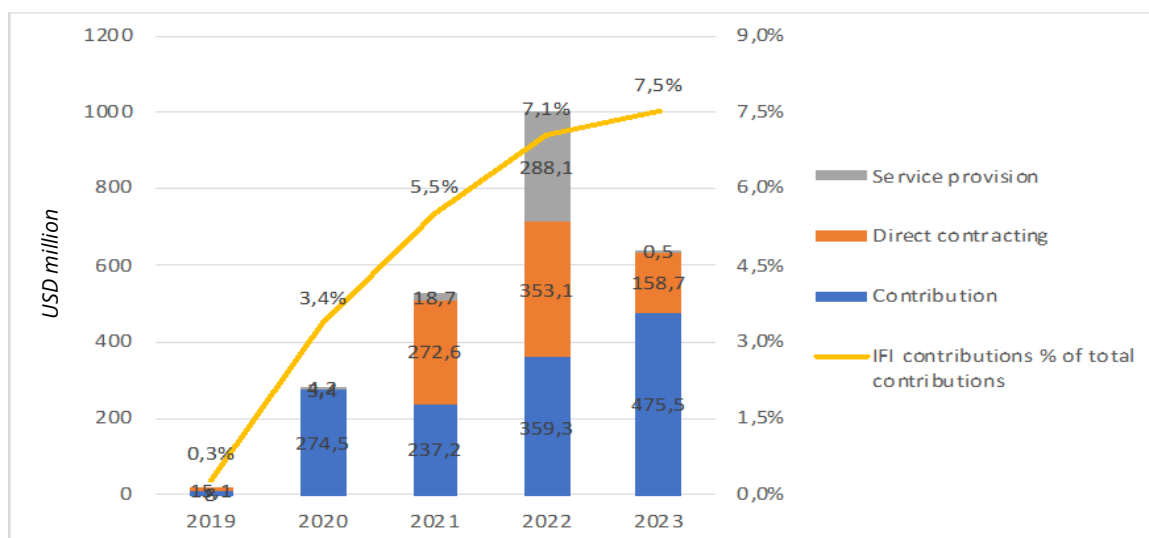
WFP has made progress in diversifying its funding sources, notably with international financial institutions (IFIs), but remains heavily dependent on earmarked, short-term funding from bilateral donors, hampering its medium-term integrated programming and its flexibility and responsiveness in programme implementation.

34. Funding from IFIs grew from USD 23 million in 2019 to USD 1 billion in 2022 before settling back to USD 600 million in 2023 (figure 5). While efforts to engage with IFIs predate the period evaluated, the current strategic plan is credited with raising the profile and importance of those relationships.

---

<sup>10</sup> "Annual performance report for 2023" (WFP/EB.A/2024/4-A/Rev.1).

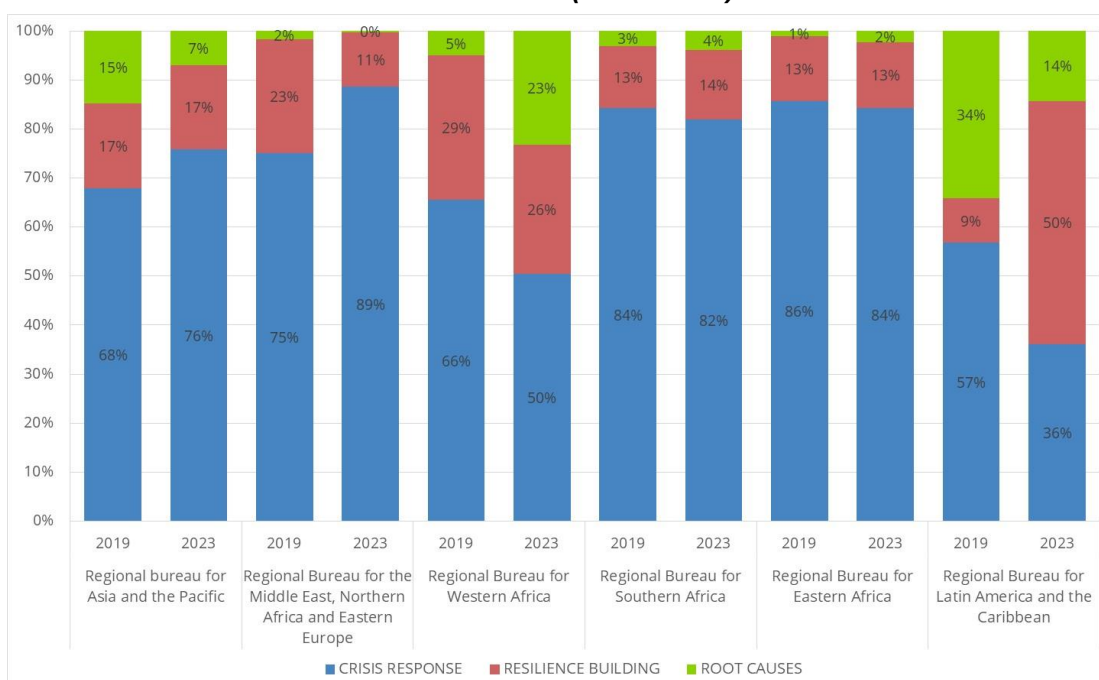
**Figure 5: Funding from international financial institutions by type of contract, 2019–2023**



Source: WFP’s Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division.

- 35. The predictability and flexibility of funding from bilateral donors have not improved during the strategic plan period. Multi-year and flexible funding remain the exception, and this continues to limit WFP’s ability to plan and programme work at the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.
- 36. The regional bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean has seen significant growth in funding for resilience building over the strategic plan period, followed by the regional bureaux for Asia and the Pacific, for Western Africa and for Southern Africa. However, the regional bureaux for the Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe and for Eastern Africa, where most of the large emergencies have occurred, have seen declines in contributions earmarked for resilience building.

**Figure 6: Percentages of total earmarked contributions by focus area and region, 2019 and 2023 (USD million)**



Source: Mid-term evaluation analysis of WFP’s distribution, contribution and forecast statistics, 29 May 2024.

37. Overall, significant gaps between operational requirements and available funding remain. Part of the challenge stems from an aspirational needs-based planning system that sometimes results in overambitious targets that would be beyond WFP's capacity to achieve even if the necessary funding were available. To address this challenge, WFP is introducing measures for calibrating its ambitions regarding the strategic plan and increasing its focus on CSPs and country office budgets. Such efforts include plans to replace the needs-based planning mechanism with a new approach that aims to shift the focus from the quantity to the quality of assistance by making more realistic requests to donors, enhancing confidence in WFP's planning and delivery capacity, and promoting the design of programmes that are more closely aligned with WFP's capacities and strengths, while taking into account the roles, capacities and plans of partners. The feasibility of this approach will depend on country offices' capability to accurately analyse the funding landscape during CSP development, which could include challenges arising from the competition to secure funding in the international aid environment.

### ***Strategic positioning and external coherence***

Partnerships with governments, the private sector and IFIs have been strengthened during the strategic plan period, and WFP's global comparative advantages in emergency response are widely acknowledged. However, the organization's comparative advantages in specific thematic areas and environments are less clear, and this has negative effects on its strategic positioning in the changing lives agenda.

38. WFP is positioned as a trusted partner of governments, and the strategic plan has enhanced the organization's engagement with governments through the recognition of the importance of such relationships and the focus on country capacity strengthening.
39. South-South and triangular cooperation has expanded during the strategic plan period as a key part of WFP's engagement with governments, including through the centres of excellence in Brazil, China and Côte d'Ivoire and the regional bureaux, all of which play an important role in building relationships at the regional level and positioning WFP as a knowledge broker.
40. While WFP has recognized comparative advantages in emergency response – including in telecommunications and analytics, food delivery and supply chains, field presence, cash-based transfers, and school meal programmes – and has been proactive in expanding its range of partners, it has been insufficiently clear in defining how, and in which thematic and geographic areas and contexts, it is best placed to intervene and, eventually, play a leading role, taking into account the fact that WFP may lack the expertise to respond to some requests for support in the strengthening of policy and systems and the building of technical capacity.
41. In addition, WFP's delivery of services for governments risks substituting rather than strengthening national capacities, and creating tensions in relation to the humanitarian principles, particularly perceptions of neutrality. These risks should be carefully assessed and managed when engaging in service provision.

Operational coordination with other United Nations entities remains challenging, and relations with civil society and cooperating partners are mainly transactional. Overall, WFP's partnering approach is focused largely on mobilizing resources for the organization, with relatively limited emphasis on developing strategic partnerships that could enhance the complementarity and effectiveness of interventions.

42. WFP has made a genuine effort to align with United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks and has brought valuable perspectives to joint planning and programming. Nonetheless, there are gaps in WFP's global coordination with key United Nations partners, and competition continues to be strong, including among the Rome-based agencies, challenging operational coordination. There have also been missed opportunities to develop stronger partnerships to complement WFP's expertise in gender issues with that of other United Nations entities such as the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.
43. No shift has been observed in WFP's partnerships with civil society organizations, which have continued to show strong transactional features over the strategic plan period. Although the response to the COVID-19 pandemic brought positive examples of partnerships with civil society, consultation with non-governmental organizations remains uneven and relationships based on joint programming and the leveraging of local knowledge and expertise remain the exception rather than the rule. WFP's annual partnership consultation in 2023 continued to emphasize a critical need for more transparency regarding funding, together with the breaking down of the "silos" between sectors and greater engagement in joint advocacy in an increasingly challenging global environment.<sup>11</sup>
44. WFP's relationships with cooperating partners, and its efforts in localization, have seen the least progress of any area of WFP's partnership-related work and the strategic plan has not specifically advanced WFP's relationships with this important group of actors.
45. At the corporate level, the prime driver for WFP's external engagement continues to be the need to mobilize resources, and this is reflected in the organization's management plan and internal incentives structure, in which successful partnership building is rewarded according to the monetary values accrued to the organization.

#### ***Progress towards the strategic plan's targets***

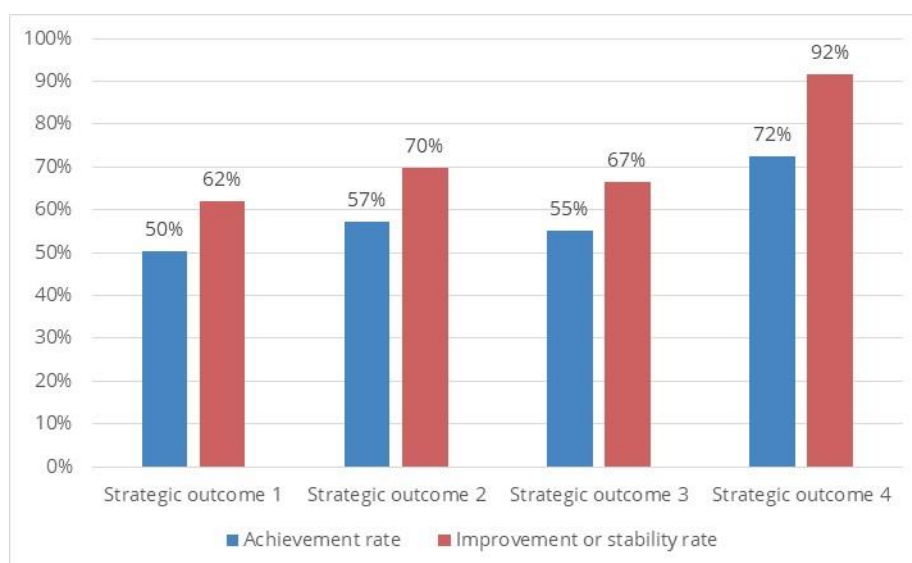
Based on available performance data, WFP largely reached or exceeded the targets of the strategic plan, but the actual effects of doing so have not met expectations. However, with only one year of performance data available, it is not yet possible to make a conclusive judgement.

46. Under strategic outcome 1 on urgent food and nutrition needs, WFP reached more beneficiaries than planned, but with inadequate rations because the funding available did not match the expanding needs. Overall, corporate data show good performance in WFP's efforts to provide access to better nutrition, health and education under strategic outcome 2, but the effects of this success have been less than expected. WFP managed to reach a significant number of people under strategic outcome 3 on strengthening food systems and resilience, but outcome data suggest that the actual effects have been moderate. While targets under strategic outcome 4 have been met or exceeded, evidence collected by the evaluation team suggests that the indicators used for this strategic outcome do not accurately measure the expected changes in national capacities, calling into question the reported achievements (figure 7).

---

<sup>11</sup> As discussed at WFP's 2023 annual partnership consultation with the membership on "the power of partnership in preventing sexual exploitation and abuse".

**Figure 7: Achievement rates and improvement or stability rates for outcome indicators by strategic outcome, 2023\***



\* No outcome indicators reported for strategic outcome 5.

Notes: Improvement or stability rate = the percentage of measurements that improved or remained stable compared with the baseline. Achievement rate = the percentage of measurements that met or exceeded the target.

Source: "Annual performance report for 2023" (WFP/EB.A/2024/4-A/Rev.1), annex III-C.

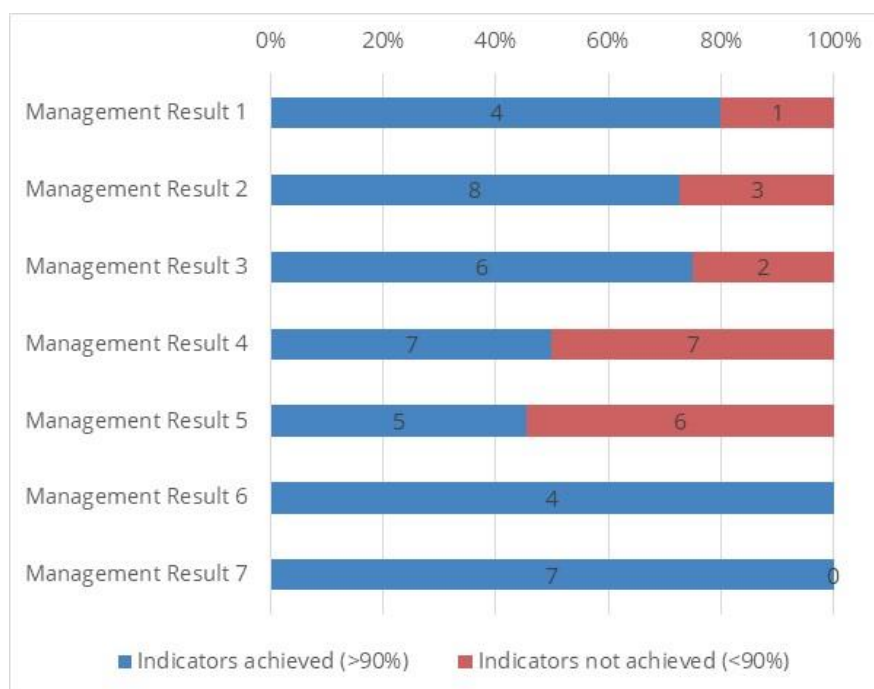
The achievement of key performance indicator (KPI) targets has shown good progress under all management results except for funding and evidence and learning, for which only half or fewer of the targets were met. On the other hand, expenditure targets were almost met, met or exceeded under all management results, reflecting little correlation between expenditure and performance as measured by KPIs.

47. Under management result 4 on effective funding for zero hunger, WFP has met only half of its KPI targets, with likely explanations of the weak performance being funding constraints, insufficient diversification of funding sources, and inadequate growth in flexible and multi-year funding. Performance has also been low under management result 5 on evidence and learning, with only 5 of the 11 KPIs being met or nearly met in 2023. Regarding the KPI that measures the percentage of audit and evaluation recommendations implemented, while the implementation of evaluation recommendations has remained strong,<sup>12</sup> outstanding audit recommendations increased in 2023, in part because more audit reports were issued in 2023 than in 2022.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> "Implementation status of evaluation recommendations" (WFP/EB.A/2024/7-D). Despite a 51 percent increase in the number of evaluation recommendations issued in 2023, WFP implemented a similar percentage of recommendations (65 percent) as in 2022 (66 percent).

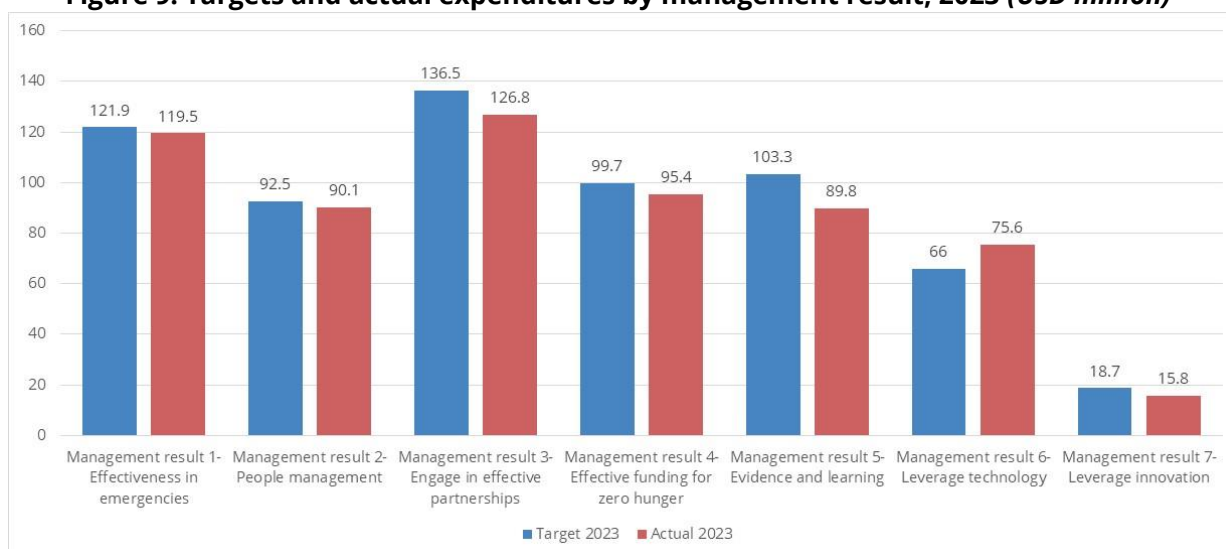
<sup>13</sup> "Annual report of the Inspector General" (WFP/EB.A/2024/6-D/1), table 1, p. 4.

**Figure 8: Numbers and shares of management result indicators achieved, nearly achieved and not achieved in relation to the targets by management result area, 2023**



Source: "Annual performance report for 2023" (WFP/EB.A/2024/4-A/Rev.1), annex IV-A.

**Figure 9: Targets and actual expenditures by management result, 2023 (USD million)**



Source: "Annual performance report for 2023" (WFP/EB.A/2024/4-A/Rev.1), annex IV-A.

48. According to CRF indicators, the implementation of cross-cutting priorities has progressed well in general, but with less progress under the indicators for access for persons with disabilities, and community engagement. However, performance data on cross-cutting issues do not always capture the full scale of the processes involved in bringing change to these issues.



## Overall assessment

49. Overall, the mid-term evaluation found that the strategic plan for 2022–2025 was highly relevant to the global environment at the time of its design and remains so today. Its greatest strength as a global strategic framework has been in clarifying and giving legitimacy to WFP's ambitions as a humanitarian agency that is committed to building resilience and addressing the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition. An incremental approach to change has allowed for continuity with the previous strategic plan.
50. While the flexibility of the strategic plan enabled WFP to adapt to changing circumstances, the plan's lack of a clear articulation of WFP's comparative advantages led to a lack of strategic direction to guide prioritization at the country level, support negotiation with external partners, and better position WFP at the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. This gap in strategic direction enhanced the risk of stretching WFP too thinly and rendering the organization more reactive to funding opportunities than strategically driven. While considerable progress has been made in diversifying funding sources during the strategic plan period, WFP remains heavily dependent on short-term funding earmarked according to donors' priorities, which constitutes a key hindering factor for greater effectiveness in the changing lives agenda.
51. The CRF was another critical factor influencing strategic direction in programme design and implementation: making country capacity strengthening and service provision standalone strategic outcomes did not help country offices to clearly link activities under those outcomes to WFP's mandate and contributions to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and has hindered the organization's ability to mobilize resources for country capacity strengthening.
52. The implementation of the strategic plan has been supported by institutional mechanisms and structures aimed at improving WFP's ability to act rapidly and effectively. However, the complementarity between central headquarters and regional bureaux in supporting country offices has been suboptimal, and some systems and processes still require adaptation and simplification to make WFP's internal institutional environment optimal for ensuring the flexibility and responsiveness necessary to "do the right thing at the right time" in highly dynamic environments. Among the systems and processes requiring improvement are those for the design of CSPs and related budgets, approval and revision processes, and approaches and systems for generating evidence and managing knowledge to inform strategic decision-making, external communications and the scale-up of interventions and initiatives. There are good examples of innovative approaches, but the incentives for innovation are not systematically embedded throughout the organization. The skill sets of WFP's staff also remain insufficiently aligned with the organization's ambitions for effective policy engagement and systems strengthening.
53. While it is still too soon to provide a definitive judgement on progress towards the strategic outcome and management targets of the strategic plan, there is clear evidence that efforts to meet beneficiary coverage targets have too often come at the cost of reduced food assistance rations. This has impeded effectiveness, and calls for a better balance between the breadth and the depth of programme coverage to ensure that food security and nutrition goals are met.

### What did the evaluation recommend?

#	Recommendation	Rationale	Responsibility	Deadline
<b>1</b>	<b>The next strategic plan should clearly set out WFP's strategic vision for the future. It should reaffirm the centrality of humanitarian assistance, building resilience and addressing the root causes of food insecurity as the heart of WFP's mission and mandate, and clearly define the organization's comparative advantages.</b>	One of the strengths of the current plan is that it is sufficiently flexible to allow response to unforeseen events and to legitimize a wide range of interventions; this flexibility should be retained. At the same time, continued diffusion of focus puts WFP's reputation at risk and undermines confidence in the organization's ability to achieve meaningful results at scale. In being forced to "do better with less", WFP should concentrate resources on high-quality programmes, where they have the greatest likelihood of having an impact. The focus on cross-cutting priorities and a people-centred approach is fundamental to WFP's commitments to first supporting the people left furthest behind.	Assistant Executive Director, Programme Operations Department	
1.1	The next strategic plan should be framed with a long-term horizon and provide a clear statement of WFP's intended contributions to global goals for food security and nutrition within a five-year period, in line with the completion of the 2030 Agenda cycle.			November 2025
1.2	Ensure that the next strategic plan includes a clear definition of WFP's core and context-specific comparative advantages in different operating environments and under different modalities of engagement.			November 2025
1.3	To strengthen strategic direction during the remainder of the current strategic plan period, urgently develop a concept paper and related guidance on WFP's comparative advantages that supports the design and implementation of CSPs.			June 2025
<b>2</b>	<b>To operationalize the strategic vision, provide a more sharply defined programme framework, leaving flexibility for adaptation to changing circumstances on the ground.</b>	While maintaining a wide overarching strategic framework that allows the flexibility to navigate across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, the strategic plan should provide more elements to guide country-level prioritization and ability to better link different intervention modalities to WFP's ultimate goals through consistent country and	Assistant Executive Director, Programme Operations Department	
2.1	In the results architecture of the next strategic plan maintain strategic outcomes 1, 2 and 3 while framing capacity strengthening and service provision for governments as modalities of intervention in support of these three strategic outcomes. Services provided under the current strategic outcome 5 could be retained as a separate strategic outcome.			November 2025

#	Recommendation	Rationale	Responsibility	Deadline	
2.2	Relax requirements for the alignment of CSPs with the CRF, focusing on the aggregation of basic food and nutrition outcome indicators at the global level, while leaving country offices full discretion regarding the use of additional context-specific outcome, output and process indicators.	corporate results frameworks. This will entail actions in relation to the strategic plan results architecture, alignment requirements and minimum standards for programme quality.		June 2026	
2.3	State clearly in the strategic plan document that cross-cutting priorities are minimum standards for programme quality, and ensure they are appropriately invested in and budgeted for.			November 2025	
<b>3</b>	<b>Ensure that WFP's processes, systems and incentives for management and staff provide the agility and responsiveness required to make the organization an effective player in increasingly complex and dynamic settings.</b>	While assurance mechanisms are essential for transparent management and accountability, many of WFP's processes are overly complex, time-consuming and inefficient. There is need for systems, management approaches and skill sets that enable the organization to "do the right thing at the right time". The skills needed include soft skills in negotiation and policy engagement, and the ability to find innovative and effective solutions to complex problems, beyond the diligent management of standardized processes.			
3.1	Resolve the current ambiguity between the roles and responsibilities of central headquarters and regional bureaux in supporting country offices.			Assistant Executive Director, Workplace and Management Department	November 2025
3.2	Ensure that the systems and processes for the design, approval and revision of CSPs are strategic rather than process-driven, and appropriately streamlined to avoid unnecessary duplications of efforts and reduce transaction costs. This may also entail expanding the delegation of authority, and corresponding accountability, for granting approval at the regional level.			Assistant Executive Director, Programme Operations Department	November 2025
3.3	Provide incentives for managers and staff to stimulate innovation, including innovative approaches to partnerships, in an environment that is risk-tolerant and willing to learn from mistakes as well as good practices.			Assistant Executive Director, Partnerships and Innovation Department	November 2025

#	Recommendation	Rationale	Responsibility	Deadline
3.4	Strengthen evidence generation and knowledge management systems to support decision-making, enhance internal cross-fertilization, inform the scale-up of interventions, and feed into national policy debates.		Assistant Executive Director, Programme Operations Department	November 2025
3.5	Continue efforts to attract and retain staff with relevant skills and experience in establishing and nurturing effective partnerships for policy engagement and systems strengthening in fragile and relatively stable institutional settings.		Assistant Executive Director, Workplace and Management Department	November 2025
<b>4</b>	<b>WFP should strengthen its efforts to secure predictable and flexible funding.</b>	Funding gaps and a lack of flexible and predictable funding are key factors hindering strategically focused, effective and sustainable interventions at the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. These factors are not under WFP's direct control and depend largely on the choices of Member States and other financial contributors, but there are actions that the organization could take to enhance awareness of the issue.	Assistant Executive Director, Partnerships and Innovation Department	November 2025
4.1	Formally engage in a structured dialogue with relevant Member States to discuss ways of ensuring more predictable and flexible funding.			
4.2	To support efforts in advocating funding, enhance WFP's capacity to document and report good practices and challenges in multi-year programming.			

**Acronyms**

COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CRF	corporate results framework
CSP	country strategic plan
IFI	international financial institution
KPI	key performance indicator
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals