



WFP EVALUATION

Evaluation synthesis of WFP's engagement in middle-income countries (2019-2024)

23 May 2025 – Round table on evaluation reports



World Food
Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

Context and objectives

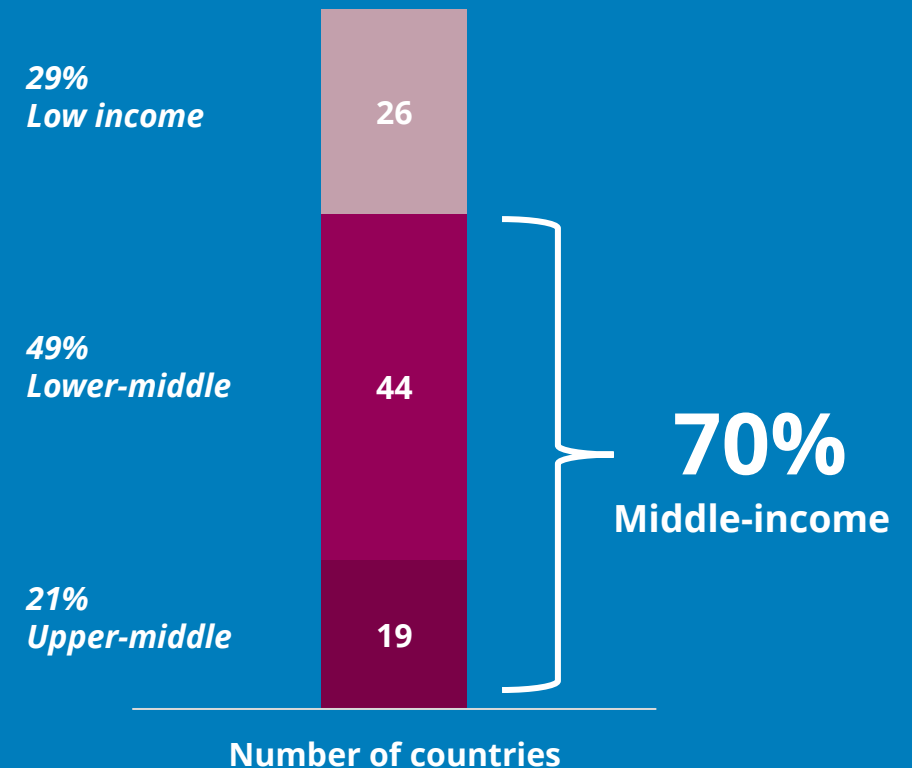
Middle-income countries (MICs)

- Around 30% of WFP's total Needs-Based Plan (NBP) is dedicated to MICs (from 2019-2024).

The synthesis aims to

- Inform the design of the next Strategic Plan.
- Understand WFP's strategic positioning, partnerships, and results in MICs.

% of countries where WFP operates, by income category



Scope and methodology

- **73 evaluations analyzed:**
 - ✓ 39 centralized and 34 decentralized.
- **25 middle-income countries sampled:**
 - ✓ Showing above average NBP allocation and expenditures to strengthen national actors and systems.
 - ✓ Having experienced rapid scale-up/scale-down for emergency response.
- **Analysis complemented by:**
 - ✓ Portfolio analysis; triangulation with global evaluations, analysis of recommendation and management response data.

Reporting to	Income classification	Country
Central headquarters	Upper-middle	China
Asia and the Pacific	Lower-middle	Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Timor-Leste
	Upper-middle	Indonesia
Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe	Lower-middle	Egypt, Tunisia
	Upper-middle	Armenia, Iraq, Türkiye
Western Africa	Lower-middle	Ghana
Southern Africa	Lower-middle	Eswatini, Lesotho, Zambia, Zimbabwe
	Upper-middle	Namibia
Eastern Africa	Lower-middle	Kenya
Latin America and the Caribbean	Upper-middle	Colombia, Dominican Republic, Peru

***Note on income classification:**

To account for year-to-year fluctuations in the income category, countries were selected according to the more frequent classification in the 2019-2024 period.

Evaluation synthesis' conclusions and supporting findings

Conclusion 1:

MICs category too broad to inform programming and mask distinct features and challenges

Evidence points need to better distinguish:

- Upper-MICs;
- MICs hosting refugees, IDPs and assisting irregular migrants;
- MICs in transition settings;
- MICs where WFP does not target direct beneficiaries.

Conclusion 2:

WFP's intended strategic shift broadly realized while retaining central role as emergency responder

- From direct delivery to system strengthening and gap-filling;
- Diversification and expansion of programme offer;
- Pursue integration of displaced population into national systems.

Challenges:

- Resourcing in transition contexts;
- Strategic partnerships;
- Pilots and scalability.

Conclusion 3:

Positive contributions across areas of results articulated in WFP Strategic Plan (2022-2025)

Main areas of results:

- Emergency response;
- Policy advice;
- System strengthening;
- Evidence generation /Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) analytics;
- New areas of programming;
- Some evidence of contribution along the nexus and Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE).

Main strength:

- Adaptive capacity.

Challenges:

- Matching ambition with activities at scale;
- Handover to national actors;
- Limited donor recognition and resourcing of capacity strengthening in MICs.



Conclusion 4:

Trend towards diversification of WFP's partnerships in MICs, but lacking coherent overarching framing

Overall trends:

- More partnerships with Governments;
- Diversification;
- High share of local NGOs partnerships;
- Less with I-NGOs in upper-MICs.

Strengths:

- WFP's role, capacity and expertise well recognized by governments.

Challenges:

- Clarity of entry points in national systems;
- Fragmentation across CSP pillars;
- Coordination national / decentralized levels.



Conclusion 5:

Piloting is a key part of WFP's portfolio in MICs but often lack a systematic approach to learning and planning for scale-up

Different uses:

- Digitization and analytics in support of national social protection programmes;
- Showcasing WFP support and testing innovations.



Conclusion 6:

WFP handed over specific programmes to national actors in MICs but gaps remain in planning for sustainability

Main gaps:

- Planning realistic timelines;
- Clarity on roles and responsibilities;
- Transitioning WFP's role when shifting from WFP-led to government-led activities.

Factors affecting results in MICs



Uncertain financing prospects.



Lack of overarching rationale for engagement in MICs.



WFP reputation solely as lead agency for humanitarian responses.



Mismatch between level of ambition and staffing profile.



Challenges in articulating a narrative on WFP's added value in MICs.

Recommendations

1

Set out a clearer **rationale** for WFP's presence and positioning in middle-income countries (in particular, in upper middle-income countries).

2

Clarify and strengthen the development and use of **partnership strategies** in MICs.

3

Strengthen planning for programmatic **handover** and **transition** where relevant, and the pathway to country **exit where appropriate**.

4

Enhance the generation of evidence from **pilot activities** to inform decisions regarding potential **scale-up**.