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

Executive Board
Second regular session
Rome, 16–20 November 2026

Distribution: General
Date: 8 September 2026
Original: English

Agenda item 6
WFP/EB.2/2026/6-B/4
Oversight functions
For decision

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

Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Zimbabwe (2022–2026)

Executive summary

The evaluation of the country strategic plan for Zimbabwe for 2022–2026 is intended to account for the results achieved under the plan to WFP's management and Executive Board, the Government of Zimbabwe, donors, the United Nations country team for Zimbabwe, cooperating partners and affected people. It is also intended to generate evidence and learning to inform the design of the next country strategic plan for Zimbabwe.

Commissioned by the WFP Office of Evaluation, the evaluation was carried out by a team of independent consultants between April 2025 and March 2026; it covers the period from mid-2021 to mid-2025, when data collection ended, and used a theory-based and mixed-methods approach.

The evaluation found that WFP was strategically positioned in Zimbabwe as a key enabler of humanitarian assistance, with its role in direct delivery becoming increasingly complementary as the scaling up of government-led assistance progressed. WFP is well positioned to support the strengthening of national systems and provide enabling services that facilitate the wider humanitarian response. Looking ahead, WFP's added value will be increasingly focused on working through and supporting national systems.

Amid funding shortfalls, humanitarian assistance delivered by WFP contributed to mitigating the effects of crisis on food security and dietary diversity, particularly in rural areas, although refugees remained particularly vulnerable.

This is a summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Zimbabwe. The full evaluation report and related documents are available on WFP's website at https://www.wfp.org/publications/zimbabwe-wfp-country-strategic-plan-2022-2026-evaluation.

In line with WFP's 2022 evaluation policy (WFP/EB.1/2022/4-C), to respect the integrity and independence of evaluation findings the editing of this report has been limited. As a result, some of the language in it may not be fully consistent with WFP'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

Ms C. Perch
Evaluation Officer
email: catrina.perch@wfp.org

WFP's resilience programming contributed to improvements in livelihoods and food security. However, results were uneven and short term, mostly due to the inconsistent application of integrated approaches to programming that limited the effectiveness of comprehensive livelihood packages. WFP had an obvious niche in urban resilience activities, where it played an early role in responding to increasing urban vulnerability, but its comparative advantage in the crowded field of rural resilience was not always clear to partners.

WFP integrated protection and accountability measures that improved beneficiary safety, dignity and participation, although there was scope for a more nuanced approach to targeting and more consistent approaches to equality between women and men. Reconciling vulnerability-based targeting, access to highly complex settings and operational independence was sometimes challenging.

Despite some recent progress towards more strategic partnerships, WFP did not fully capitalize on partnership opportunities during the term of the country strategic plan, with partnership structures largely ad hoc or donor-driven. Insufficient funding and extensive earmarking of contributions constrained the possibility for WFP to strategically reallocate resources as needs evolved and to generate more sustainable results.

The evaluation makes three main recommendations:

- shift WFP's crisis response role away from large-scale humanitarian delivery during predictable seasonal emergencies to a focus on strengthening nationally led systems for social protection and crisis response, while retaining the ability to deliver direct assistance during extreme emergencies that exceed government response capacity;
- concentrate rural and urban resilience programming on interventions with demonstrated effectiveness and sustainability, supported by proactive integration with partner and government systems; and
- support the institutionalization of evidence-based targeting and social protection systems within government frameworks while ensuring that WFP maintains the operational independence to determine and deliver needs-based assistance.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Zimbabwe (2022–2026) (WFP/EB.2/2026/6-B/4) and the management response (WFP/EB.2/2026/6-B/4/Add.1).

* 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

Why and how was the evaluation conducted?

1. The evaluation of the country strategic plan (CSP) for Zimbabwe for 2022–2026 was commissioned by the WFP Office of Evaluation and carried out by a team of independent consultants. Its purpose was twofold: to account for results to WFP, the Government of Zimbabwe, donors, members of the United Nations country team, cooperating partners and affected people, and to generate evidence and learning to inform the design of the next CSP.

2. The evaluation was conducted between April 2025 and March 2026 and covered the period from mid-2021 (when data collection for the evaluation of the previous CSP ended[1]) to mid-2025, when data collection for this evaluation ceased. The evaluation employed a theory-based and mixed-methods approach. Contribution analysis was used to assess CSP outcomes, and "outcome harvesting"[2] was used to assess WFP's role in capacity strengthening results. A stakeholder workshop was held in February 2026 to discuss findings and recommendations.

What was evaluated?

3. The Zimbabwe CSP was organized around five strategic outcomes and eight activities spanning humanitarian assistance, resilience building in both rural and urban areas, and system strengthening.

   - *Crisis response (strategic outcomes 1 and 5)*. WFP provided lean season assistance for vulnerable rural households, continuous cash and food support for refugees facing protracted displacement and cash for vulnerable urban households. It also provided humanitarian actors in the country with logistics and cluster coordination services during shocks.

   - *Resilience building (strategic outcomes 2 and 3)*. The rural resilience portfolio combined activities linking short-, medium- and long-term protection against shocks through food for assets activities, insurance schemes, climate services, climate-resilient agriculture, risk management activities and anticipatory action. Urban resilience programming targeted vulnerable households supported under strategic outcome 1 and comprised a mix of livelihood interventions.

   - *Capacity strengthening (strategic outcome 4)*. Capacity-strengthening activities aimed at building stronger national systems and coordination mechanisms capable of adapting to recurring and protracted crises.

4. The original needs-based plan (NBP) budget was approved at USD 593.5 million. The CSP and its budget were revised twice, to reflect reduced need for lean season assistance in 2023 and slightly increased need for logistical support during the response to El Niño-driven drought in 2025. The revised NBP budget was USD 573.7 million at the time of data collection for this evaluation (August 2025).

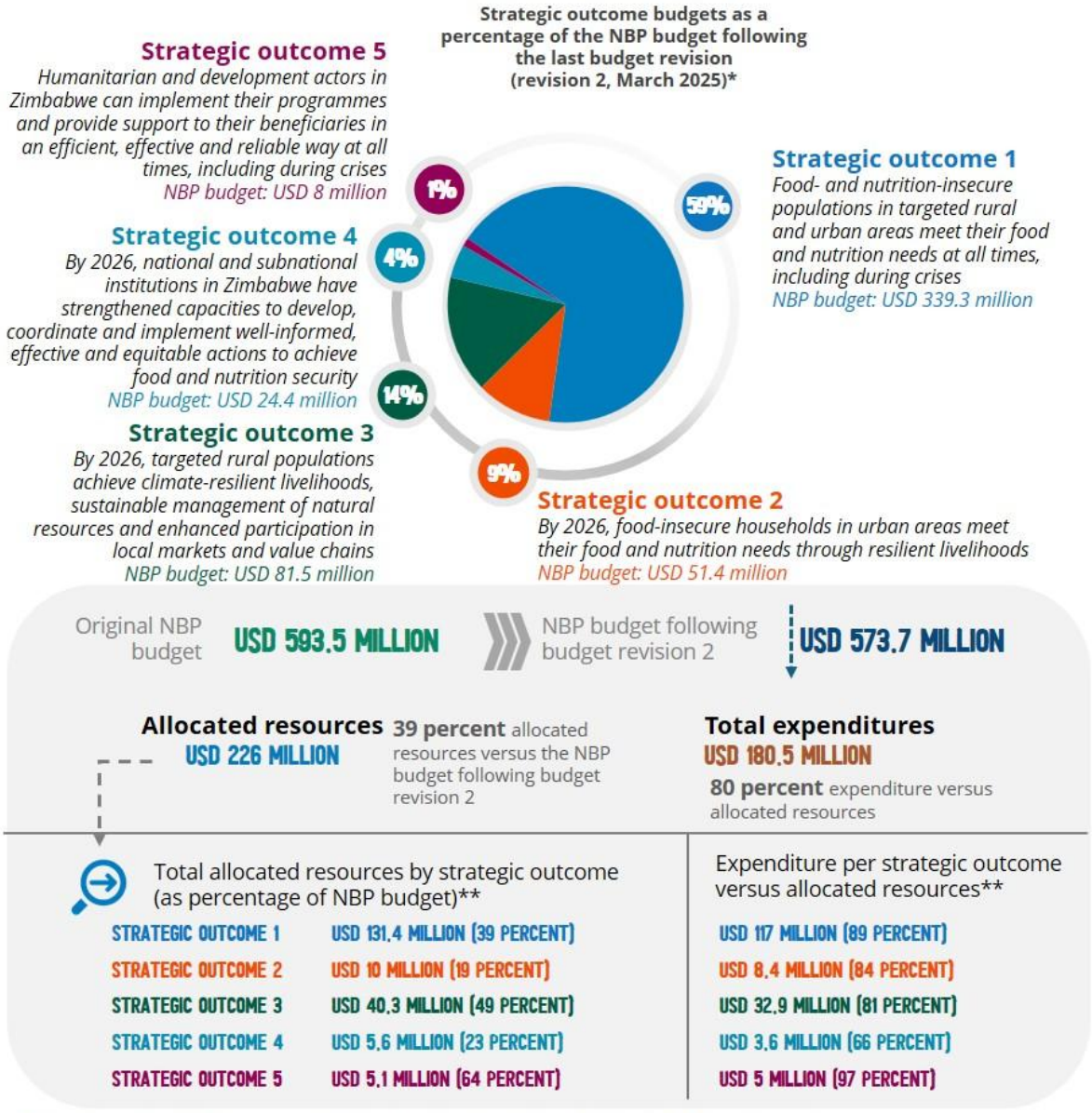
5. As of August 2025, the CSP was funded at 39 percent (USD 226 million). Crisis response (strategic outcome 1) represented 59 percent of the NBP budget and was funded at

[1] While both CSPs included emergency response, resilience building and country capacity strengthening, findings from the 2017–2021 CSP evaluation were integrated into the CSP design, particularly with regard to the need to address rising vulnerability among urban populations and strengthen system capacity support.

[2] Outcome harvesting is a method for evaluating interventions where outcomes are often complex and not well captured by preset indicators. This approach collects ("harvests") evidence of what has changed ("outcomes") and then, working backwards, determines whether and how an intervention has contributed to those changes (United Nations Evaluation Group. 2024. *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations – Guidance Document*).

39 percent. Of the remainder, rural resilience activities under strategic outcome 3 achieved a higher level of funding, at 49 percent, compared to urban resilience, at 19 percent. Logistics services under strategic outcome 5 represented 1 percent of the NBP budget but were funded almost entirely, at 97 percent.

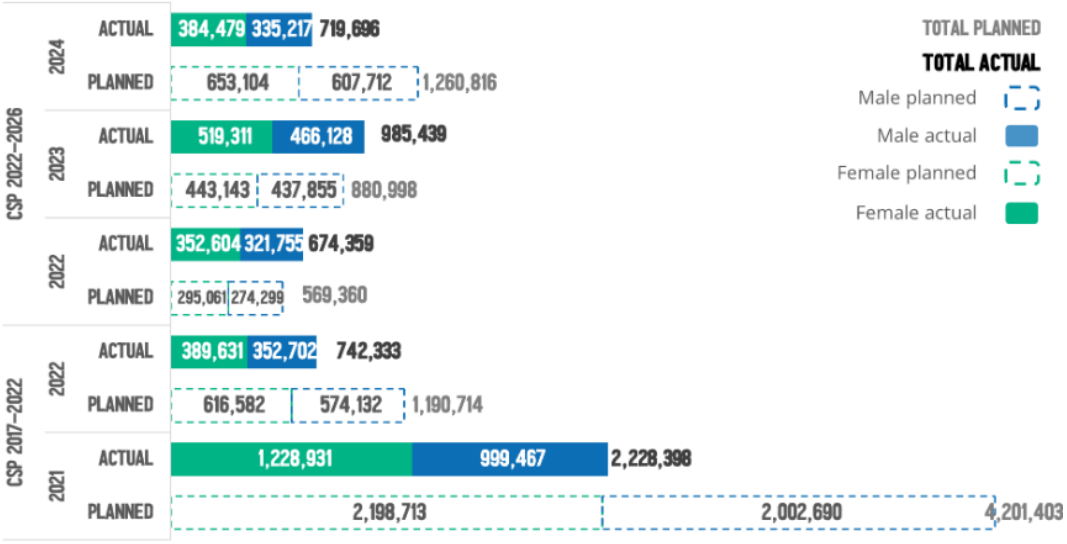
Figure 1: Zimbabwe country strategic plan (2022–2026) strategic outcomes, budget, funding and expenditure, as of August 2025



* Percentages do not add to 100 percent because the figure does not include direct and indirect support costs.
** Breakdown by strategic outcome does not include direct and indirect support costs.

6. In contrast to 2021, when WFP reached 2.2 million beneficiaries, from 2022 to 2024 WFP assisted between 674,359 and 958,439 beneficiaries annually. This reflected both a reduced budget and WFP's strategic shift in Zimbabwe towards capacity strengthening and systems support under the 2022–2026 CSP. WFP exceeded beneficiary targets in the second half of 2022 and in 2023, but from 2024 beneficiary reach declined as a result of funding constraints.

Figure 2: Planned and actual beneficiaries by year, 2021–2024



In what context was the evaluation conducted?

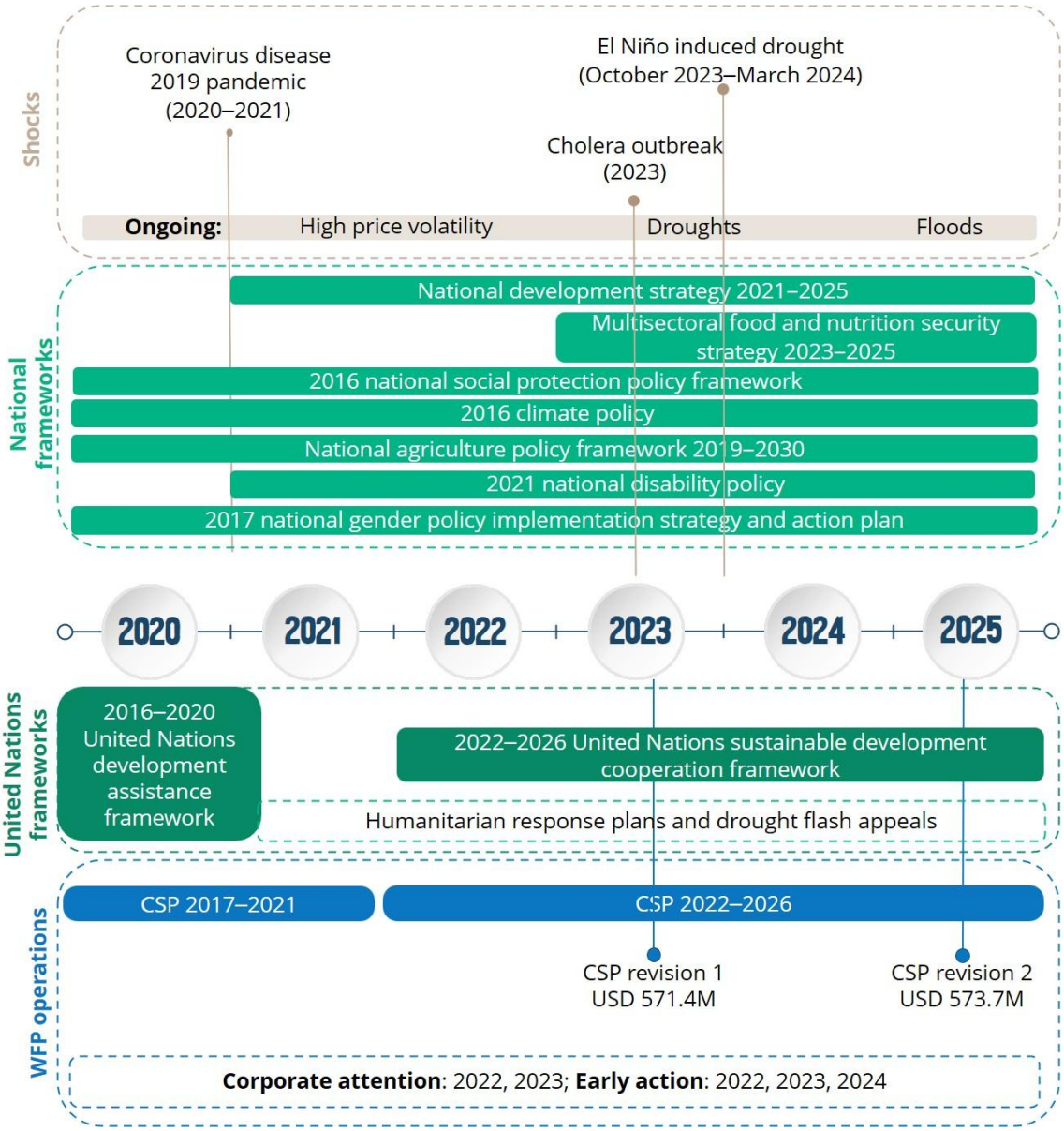
7. On the Human Development Index, Zimbabwe ranks 159 of 193 countries; the country has high levels of poverty and inequality, deepened by macroeconomic instability including inflation, exchange rate volatility and the pressures of a multi-currency system. This instability has prevented the country from receiving financial support from the International Monetary Fund, and recent reductions in official development assistance (ODA) from the United States of America (which provided 40 percent of ODA in 2023) and the Global Fund (which provided 22 percent of ODA in 2023) have affected overall funding for development and WFP operations.

8. Food and nutrition insecurity rose over the CSP period, notably in urban areas (increasing from 29 percent in 2023 to 35 percent in 2024) and especially within the most vulnerable households. This trend was driven by the effects of climate variability, prolonged economic instability, the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic and a constrained social protection system dominated by non-contributory social assistance, much of which is delivered through donor-funded humanitarian programmes.

9. Agriculture remains central to Zimbabwe's economy, contributing up to 20 percent of gross domestic product and 40 percent of export earnings and employing 70 percent of the population – primarily smallholder farmers, many of whom are women. However, women encounter particular challenges rooted in cultural, religious and socioeconomic norms that limit their access to resources, decision-making and economic opportunities. Meanwhile, environmental and climate variability threaten productivity. For instance, maize yields during the 2024 El Niño event declined by 60 percent from the five-year average.

10. Zimbabwe hosts 22,000 refugees and asylum seekers from southern and eastern Africa, including 13,000 residing in the Tongogara Refugee Settlement. Refugees remain highly dependent on food assistance due to legal restrictions on their movement and employment, making the humanitarian support provided by WFP, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Government of Zimbabwe and partners critical.

Figure 3: Country context and WFP operational overview



Key messages

WFP is strategically positioned in Zimbabwe as a key enabler and complementary deliverer of humanitarian assistance. With the national Government taking on a greater share of crisis response over the term of the CSP, WFP adopted an increasingly complementary approach to its humanitarian assistance. As its role shifted away from direct delivery, and amid funding constraints, WFP's comparative advantages in Zimbabwe evolved towards more upstream technical functions, where it contributed to gains in nationally led anticipatory action and shock-responsive social protection, including with regard to data systems.

11. The number of food-insecure people in Zimbabwe fluctuated between 2.9 million people in 2021 and 5.9 million in 2025. WFP's role in meeting needs in this context evolved over the duration of the CSP.

12. In terms of humanitarian assistance, over the term of the CSP WFP's lean season support reached between 17 and 22 percent of rural households, or approximately one fifth of those in need. WFP covered 12 of 60 rural districts at the start of the CSP, but amid funding shortfalls in 2024 and 2025 ultimately focused on the nine hardest-hit districts (table 1) as the Government progressively scaled up its own assistance to cover 51 districts.

TABLE 1: COMPLEMENTARITY BETWEEN ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY WFP AND THE GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE DURING LEAN SEASONS

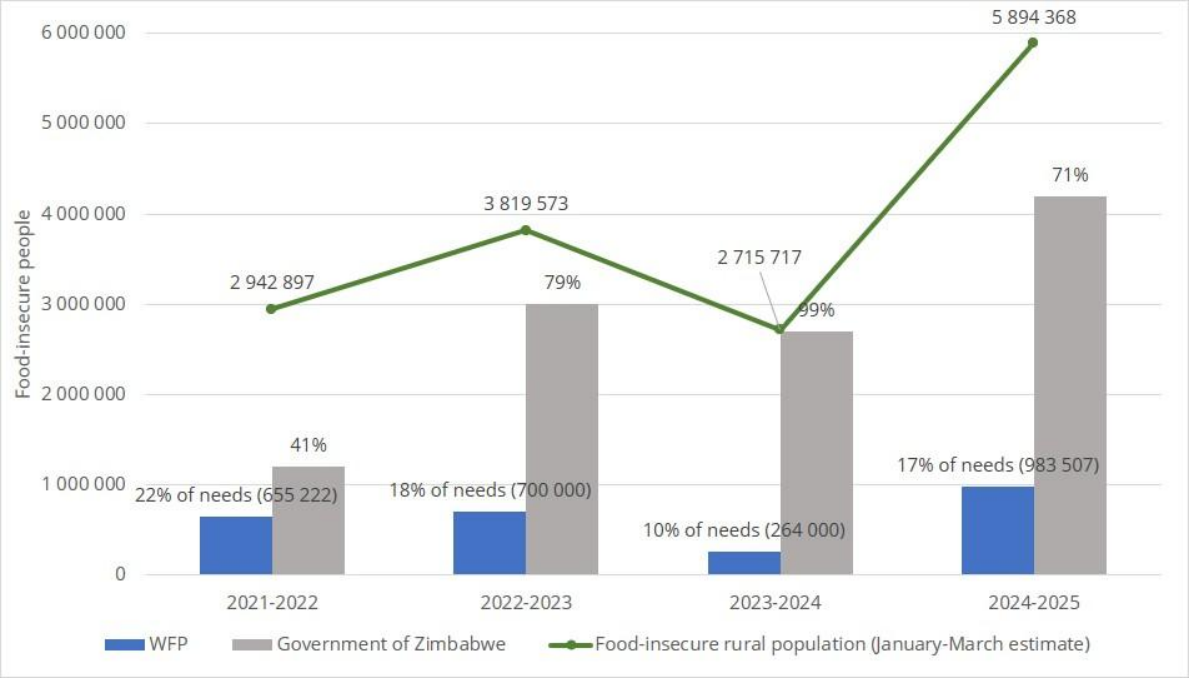
	2021–2022	2022–2023	2023–2024	2024–2025*
WFP	12 districts	8 districts	4 districts	9 districts
Government of Zimbabwe	20 districts	52 districts	56 districts	51 districts
Overlap	2 districts, Oct–Dec			1 district (twinning arrangement)

* The figures for 2024 and 2025 cover the El Niño response period.

Source: Country office, Food Deficit Mitigation Strategy Response Plan: 2022–2023 and correspondence with the country office.

13. Overall, the Government's food assistance increased over time despite growing needs caused by the El Niño induced drought in 2024 and 2025. Its assistance met between 41 percent and 99 percent of needs between 2021 and 2025. This included covering the El Niño induced caseload of 4.2 million people in 2024 and 2025.

Figure 4: Coverage of needs during the lean season, 2021–2025



Note: In 2024 the Government of Zimbabwe expanded its assistance to populations affected by El Niño. The revised level of needs is reflected in the number of food-insecure people in rural areas in 2024–2025, but not in the figures for 2023–2024. The number of WFP beneficiaries for 2024–2025 also reflects the El Niño-induced caseload.

Sources: Zimbabwe Livelihoods Assessment Committee Rural livelihoods assessment reports for 2021–2024; annual country reports for 2021–2024; Zimbabwe country office; WFP. 2024. "USAID and WFP Join to Mitigate Food Insecurity Ahead of Zimbabwe Lean Season".

14. Even during this evolution, WFP's capacity to deliver humanitarian assistance at scale through its supply chain and last-mile services remained a key comparative advantage. WFP's common services ensured the continuity of its own and partners' assistance (including that of the Government and the international community) during periods of peak demand, including through transportation, storage, fleet management, fuel supply and coordination of supply. The largest share of common services was provided to the United Nations country team (USD 2.7 million) and the Government (USD 1.99 million), particularly during the 2024 crisis surge. The reliability, timeliness and quality assurance of WFP's common services were found to be high.

15. Collaboration with the Government was a defining aspect of WFP's operating model in Zimbabwe over the CSP period. As its role in direct delivery decreased in relation to that of the Government, WFP's technical assistance prepared the ground for a nationally owned, shock-responsive social protection system. Specifically, WFP played a key role in developing the *2022 Road Map for Shock Responsive Social Protection* and a food deficit mitigation strategy manual that helped to clarify institutional responsibilities, promote coherence in crisis response mechanisms and enhance early warning and contingency planning processes. WFP also advanced national shock responsiveness by supporting the integration of the Zimbabwe social registry and digital systems and piloted the rollout of the social registry by providing tablets and training to strengthen digital data collection, thereby improving coverage and the accuracy of beneficiary identification in social protection interventions.

Amid the Government's progressive expansion of food assistance coverage and funding shortfalls, WFP's humanitarian assistance helped to improve food consumption for targeted populations, particularly in rural areas in the short term, although refugees remained more vulnerable than other population groups.

16. While funding shortfalls constrained coverage, WFP's food and cash assistance contributed to improved food security and dietary diversity across target populations, with broader coverage in rural areas where lean season assistance was delivered.

17. For urban and rural beneficiaries, transfer values remained mostly stable during the CSP period, representing an estimated 62 percent of monthly household food requirements; assistance typically lasted only three or four weeks each month, however, after which households returned to eating one meal a day. Beneficiaries expressed high overall levels of satisfaction with the delivery and quality of in-kind rations, while urban recipients of cash assistance appreciated the freedom to purchase staple and nutritious foods and to cover essential non-food needs.

18. Beneficiaries of lean season assistance and urban cash support experienced positive effects on food consumption overall, being able to meet their immediate consumption needs with the transfers provided (table 2).

TABLE 2: FOOD CONSUMPTION SCORES AMONG STRATEGIC OUTCOME 1 BENEFICIARIES					
	2023		2024		
	Baseline	Follow-up	Follow-up	Follow-up	CSP target
Food consumption score – refugees (% acceptable)	81.6	47.9	59.5 (March)	67.3 (November)	>81.6
Food consumption score – rural (% acceptable)	45.6	52	22.3 (new baseline)	73.3	>45.6
Food consumption score – urban (% acceptable)	50.3	97.7	85.7 (April)	93.5	>50.3

Sources: Annual country reports for 2023 and 2024, 2024 lean season assistance monitoring update January–March endline; 2024 refugee support monitoring; monitoring update urban resilience update, April 2024.

19. Cash assistance enabled food-insecure people to eat more frequently, from one meal a day to two. Dietary diversity also improved, with assistance allowing beneficiaries to add pulses, beans and oil to the staple maize meal. However, refugees had worse outcomes than urban and rural beneficiaries, reflecting their greater vulnerability and fewer options for alternative livelihoods; as a result, even modest reductions in assistance had a significant impact on their food security.

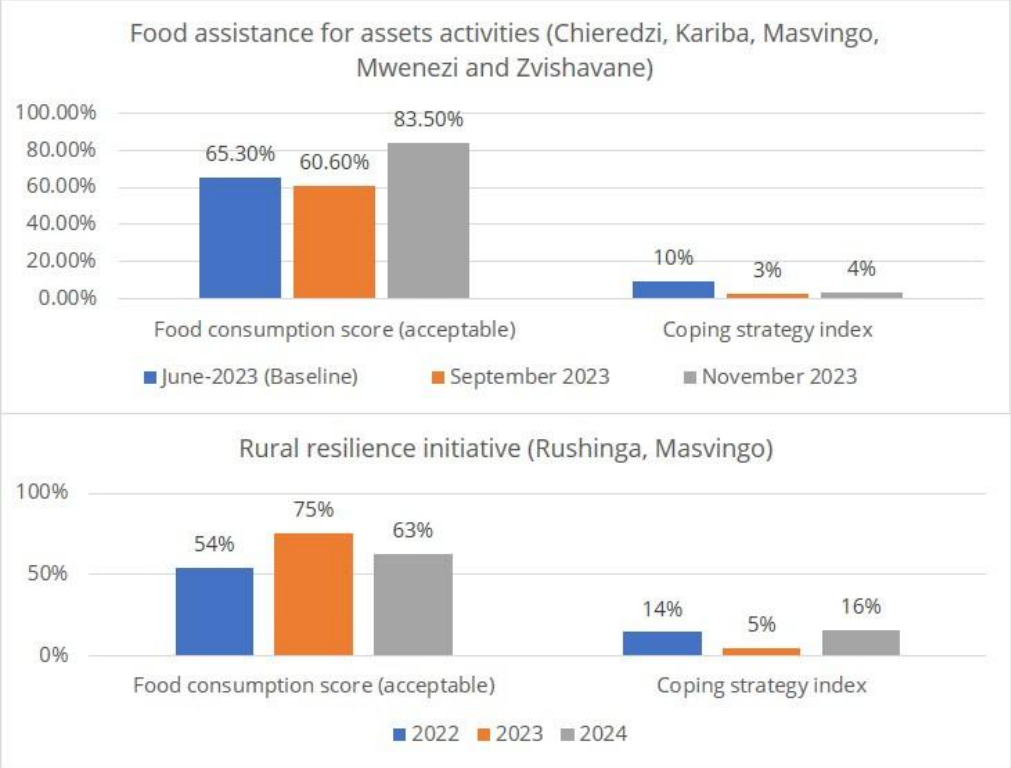
20. Refugee cash support decreased in value over time, from USD 15 per person per month in 2022 to USD 7. Inflation reduced transfer values, and entitlements were often spent quickly to repay food merchants for debt already incurred. There was consequently little scope for diversifying refugee diets or addressing their non-food needs.

WFP's resilience programming contributed to improvements in livelihoods and food security. However, extensive earmarking of contributions by donors led to uneven and short-term results, and the lack of a coherent and well-defined design model – together with inconsistent layering and sequencing of activities – constrained programme quality, learning and scalability. WFP's role in urban resilience activities was clear, but its comparative advantage in the crowded field of rural resilience was not always evident to partners.

21. **Rural resilience.** The scale of WFP's rural resilience activities remained modest relative to the level of vulnerability and exposure to shocks faced by people in Zimbabwe. In 2025 resilience activities were implemented in only 10 of the country's 60 rural districts. Overall, coverage fluctuated and many high-risk districts received no sustained support. This limited geographic scope weakened the potential for cumulative or large-scale resilience outcomes.

22. Overall, the evaluation found that interventions contributed to short-term improvements in 2023 but for some projects, gains could not be sustained through the shock caused by the El Niño drought. Moreover, as shown in figure 5, the share of households with acceptable food consumption declined in 2024, and coping strategy indicators deteriorated that year. However, the evaluation found that, during the period under review , food security outcomes could have deteriorated further without WFP's rural resilience support. In some districts, rural resilience initiatives sustained production and consumption despite widespread crop failures. Functioning boreholes enabled dry season gardening and livestock watering, while savings schemes enabled the use of shared funds for food and input purchases. Small livestock provided a buffer against income shocks.

Figure 5: Food consumption and coping strategies among strategic outcome 3 beneficiaries



Note: The coping strategy index scores show the percentage of households using negative coping strategies because of food shortages.

Sources: Monitoring reports for the food assistance for assets activities (baseline and endline); R4 outcome monitoring reports for 2022, 2023 and 2024.

23. The evaluation found that the most reliable gains from rural resilience activities arose where multiple components were layered, with asset creation serving as a cornerstone of the model supported by training in climate and conservation agriculture, climate services (e.g. localized weather forecasts and practical guidance on how to prepare and respond), and savings and lending groups. In two districts, for example, households participating in integrated food assistance for assets activities, climate services and livelihood diversification activities reported increased food production and income stability, with some able to pay school fees and invest in livestock or small-scale trade. This layered approach strengthened households' capacity to absorb and adapt to shocks.

24. Overall, however, CSP implementation did not consistently reflect the integrated approach envisioned for rural resilience programming. In practice, WFP's portfolio evolved through multiple project-specific models rather than a unified framework guiding the design, layering and sequencing of rural resilience activities across projects. Some districts received only single-component interventions, and this narrow scope limited the portfolio's cumulative effect and constrained its ability to generate area-wide or systemic resilience outcomes. Likewise, integration with humanitarian assistance remained limited despite some overlapping geographic areas, mainly due to differences in schedules, design and targeting criteria. Such portfolio inconsistency stemmed largely from donor-driven project design and short-term funding cycles, resulting in varied implementation approaches.

25. **Urban resilience.** The evaluation found that WFP had a clearer leadership position in urban resilience, where it played an early and visible role in addressing and drawing attention to growing urban vulnerability and supporting the Zimbabwe Livelihoods Assessment Committee, establishing it as one of the first actors to engage in this area.

26. The coverage and scale of interventions, however, was limited due to funding constraints. In 2025 WFP carried out urban resilience activities in just three districts, down from nine in 2023 and seven in 2024.

27. The evaluation found that urban resilience programming resulted in improved business and technical skills, short-term income gains and greater financial independence for beneficiaries. This enabled households to cover essential expenses such as food, school fees, rent and healthcare, while in some cases allowing for investment in activities that enhanced economic independence and social empowerment. However, the quality of intervention design and implementation varied considerably.

28. Moreover, while these gains enhanced short-term food security and reduced negative coping strategies, urban resilience interventions showed limited progress in building long-term resilience. Enterprises such as small-scale food processing and poultry farming showed strong sustainability potential. Many other enterprises struggled with market saturation, limited start-up inputs, regulatory constraints and weak market links, as well as a need for stronger institutionalization and follow-up support mechanisms.

Reconciling vulnerability-based targeting, access in highly politically complex settings, and operational independence was sometimes challenging.

29. The targeting approach used by the Zimbabwe country office evolved from relying on relatively subjective stakeholder and community-led identification of vulnerability to more data-driven approaches. Under WFP's global assurance project, WFP strengthened the transparency and integrity of its targeting processes in Zimbabwe by introducing a multilayered vulnerability-based system and defining clearer roles, verification mechanisms and coordinated oversight. The evaluation found that this approach, coupled with the continued involvement of communities in validating targeting results, produced a more objective and accurate basis for selection.

30. When prioritizing districts for lean season assistance, however, WFP at times had to balance its own evidence-based approaches with government preferences in relation to targeting, data use and modality. This resulted in compromises that enabled continued collaboration but limited WFP's ability to advance vulnerability-based targeting consistently or advocate the use of modalities that were proving to be more efficient, such as cash. These dynamics reflect the broader trade-offs between maintaining access in a politically sensitive environment and preserving operational independence.

Transitioning beneficiaries from humanitarian assistance to resilience support proved challenging because many households faced high levels of structural vulnerability that limited their ability to sustain livelihoods once external support ended. Layered interventions – providing humanitarian support alongside livelihood and empowerment activities – proved effective in fostering self-reliance.

31. Integration between rural resilience building and humanitarian assistance was limited. Although these activities were implemented in overlapping geographic areas, the evaluation found little systematic linking of beneficiaries through sequencing or layering; in addition the targeting criteria for the two areas were distinct, with the former focused on the most food-insecure households and the latter on labour-capable households, thus limiting overlap

between beneficiary groups. As a result, interventions did not form a coherent pathway from relief to recovery.

32. The evaluation did find some evidence of stronger results among households receiving both resilience and food security and nutrition assistance, including stronger food consumption scores (94.1 percent of such households had acceptable scores, compared with 76.4 percent of households receiving only resilience support),[3] greater access to diversified and nutritious foods and decreased use of coping strategies. In addition, where humanitarian assistance and urban resilience activities were delivered together over multiple cycles with layered urban interventions, there were improvements in income stability and food intake as well as women's economic participation. Overall, however, integration of resilience building and humanitarian assistance was limited.

WFP integrated protection and accountability measures that improved beneficiary safety, dignity and participation, the key elements of which included clear entitlements, safe and accessible distribution arrangements and a functioning community feedback mechanism. Nevertheless, some vulnerable groups, including older persons and persons with disabilities, continued to face barriers to access, and efforts to address equality between women and men were not consistent.

33. WFP generally met its aim in Zimbabwe of providing safe and accessible assistance, which protected beneficiaries' dignity. A safe and respectful operating environment was achieved by the integration of protection and accountability to affected people principles across programme design and delivery. Beneficiaries were systematically informed of their entitlements, targeting criteria and transfer values through a range of communication channels, including public meetings, posters, megaphone announcements, SMS messages and suggestion boxes. This multi-pronged communication approach contributed to enhanced transparency, improved awareness and increased trust in programme processes.

34. WFP also sensitized communities and trained its staff, cooperating partners, government staff and third-party service providers on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and included related clauses in its partnership agreements.

35. Feedback and complaint mechanisms constituted a critical component of the protection and accountability to affected people framework. At lean season assistance sites, beneficiaries had access to multiple reporting channels, including toll-free hotlines, help desks and on-site suggestion boxes.

36. Despite these efforts, gaps remained, particularly regarding the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Specific barriers included difficulties in physical access to distribution sites and the limited adaptation of communications through measures such as braille and sign language. Some targeted activities integrated opportunities for economic empowerment with efforts to address social norms and led to improved intra-household communication, but measures to achieve more equitable distribution of domestic roles and reduce exposure to gender-based violence were limited in scale, although women's overall participation in resilience activities did increase.

[3] WFP. 2024. Monitoring Update: Urban Cash Transfers and Resilience Outcome Survey, February 2024 (internal report).

WFP made important progress in strengthening national systems and technical capacity, supporting the Government's growing leadership in food assistance delivery. While financial and logistical constraints still limit full national ownership and the implementation of transition strategies, the trajectory reflects increasing government capability and commitment to sustainable, nationally led response mechanisms.

37. The evaluation found that WFP helped to strengthen national institutional capacity and operational readiness for large-scale response, in part by providing logistics and technical support for government systems. WFP's capacity-strengthening activities significantly enhanced nationally owned data and technical systems, contributing to more coherent evidence-based planning and locally tailored responses to food insecurity and malnutrition. Support for the Zimbabwe Livelihoods Assessment Committee and government institutions resulted in the institutionalization of digital tools and adaptive practices, although operational bottlenecks remained. The national budget for 2025 reflects WFP's engagement through allocations for food security and social protection programmes such as the cash transfer schemes under the food deficit mitigation strategy, although these schemes still rely heavily on WFP's technical and operational capacity for effective implementation.

38. WFP also reinforced government capacity to guide the institutionalization of social protection delivery systems. Transition road maps were developed with the Government and partners but lacked clear milestones, timelines and costed implementation plans.

WFP's partnership model anchored programming in national systems, with examples of meaningful collaboration with the Government, other United Nations entities and other partners. However, the depth and strategic use of partnerships varied considerably. Recent steps towards more deliberate, structured partnerships signal a shift towards a more strategic approach that WFP can build on in the next CSP for Zimbabwe.

39. The evaluation found that WFP's collaboration with sectoral ministries enabled coordinated, government-led humanitarian and resilience responses. By channelling support through these structures, WFP reinforced national leadership and embedded resilience investments within existing systems, although the depth of institutional integration varied across sectors.

40. The evaluation also found that WFP was viewed as a facilitator of multisectoral collaboration, bringing together ministries, donors and United Nations partners around shared frameworks; this convening role, however, was not utilized to its full potential for broader advocacy on evidenced-based targeting and assistance modalities.

41. Strategic partnerships with other United Nations entities enhanced programme complementarity in various areas. With UNHCR, WFP led food and cash assistance design, logistics and monitoring in refugee settings; with the United Nations Children's Fund, it collaborated under UN-Nutrition and joint resilience programmes to integrate nutrition, social protection and health activities; with the United Nations Development Programme WFP has served as co-lead of the United Nations country team resilience technical working group since 2020; and with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, WFP contributed to food security coordination, anticipatory action planning and smallholder resilience initiatives. WFP recently began to make progress through more strategic partnerships – such as emerging joint programming and resource mobilization with FAO – positioning it to strengthen strategic collaboration for the next CSP for Zimbabwe. Overall, however, the CSP did not fully capitalize on partnerships with entities whose mandates closely align with WFP's core

programme areas. Partnership structures were mostly limited to ad hoc or donor-driven initiatives rather than the result of a strategic joint approach.

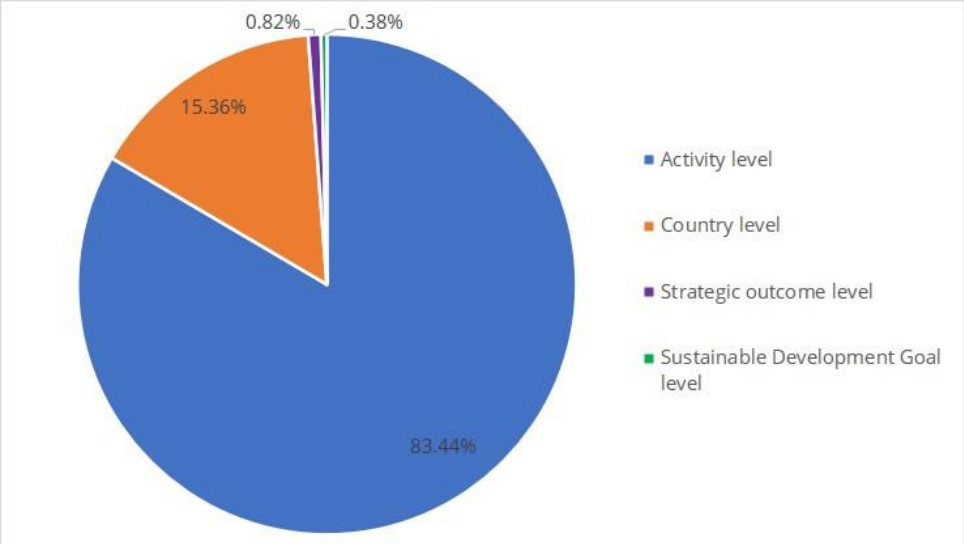
42. WFP cooperating partners also brought specialized technical skills (in areas such as agricultural extension services, climate-resilient farming, vocational and entrepreneurship training and gender equality and protection mainstreaming) that complemented WFP's comparative advantages, while collaboration with universities supported evidence generation and youth programming. Private sector engagement played a specific role in input supply, transport, storage and value chain developments but is not yet systematic.

Fluctuating resource availability, coupled with heavy reliance on a single donor, led to under-resourcing of the strategic outcomes of the CSP. WFP's recent shift towards a more diversified and partnership-oriented resourcing strategy, alongside recent increased funding from other major donors, are positive trends, but the future remains uncertain. Extensive earmarking of contributions and short-term funding significantly constrained the scope for achieving durable results in resilience.

43. WFP's funding environment over the CSP term has been marked by cyclical surges and contractions and uneven resourcing across activities. Heavy reliance on a single donor, the United States of America, which accounted for 64 percent of the CSP's crisis response funding and 70 percent of rural resilience funding, raises concerns about potentially significant resource gaps in the future. The evaluation found that WFP had been proactive in seeking alternatives, securing contributions from new sources and engaging the private sector.

44. WFP's ability to allocate resources strategically was constrained by extensive earmarking at the activity level and a high proportion of short-term funding, which reduced the likelihood of achieving durable, scalable resilience outcomes.

Figure 6: Level of earmarking of contributions, 2022–2025



Note: data accessed in August 2025.

45. The evaluation notes that WFP's implementation capacity is increasingly at risk as humanitarian funding declines and becomes more unpredictable. WFP will need to shift from large-scale implementation to more targeted, cost-efficient interventions that draw on its core expertise and remain viable under tight budgets.

Recommendations

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Priority	Deadline for completion
Recommendation 1: Shift WFP's crisis response role away from large-scale humanitarian delivery during predictable seasonal emergencies to a focus on strengthening nationally led systems for social protection and crisis response while retaining the ability to deliver direct assistance during extreme emergencies that exceed government response capacity.	Strategic	Country office	High	January 2028
1.1 Shift from large-scale, protracted delivery of lean season assistance towards a support model centred on providing technical and common services (including logistics, warehousing and transport coordination). Tailor assistance to the specific vulnerabilities and structural constraints of refugee populations while retaining the capacity to scale up direct delivery of humanitarian assistance when shocks exceed government response capacity.				
1.2 In collaboration with selected partners, support the rollout of the national social registry through technical work on system design and data governance, digital integration and financing frameworks to ensure coverage of the groups most at risk of food insecurity.				
1.3 Strengthen national anticipatory action systems by continuously enhancing triggers and thresholds as well as helping the Government to operationalize contingency planning, linking preparedness measures to dedicated flexible financing windows and streamlined procurement and supply chain processes so that resources can be released rapidly when triggers are met.				

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Priority	Deadline for completion
Recommendation 2: Concentrate rural and urban resilience programming on interventions with demonstrated effectiveness and sustainability, supported by proactive integration with partner and government systems.	Operational	Country office	High	July 2028
2.1 Strengthen the generation of evidence on urban and rural resilience programming to consolidate lessons and standardize models (clarifying core components across food systems while allowing for context-specific adaptation), including through cross-country or regional evaluations that can inform future programme design, advocacy, resource mobilization and strategic partnerships.				
Recommendation 3: Support the institutionalization of evidence-based targeting and social protection systems within government frameworks while ensuring that WFP maintains the operational independence to determine and deliver needs-based assistance.	Strategic	Country office	Medium	January 2027
3.1 Ensure alignment between WFP and government programme objectives and targeting frameworks through joint planning and harmonized vulnerability criteria while systematically monitoring and documenting operational independence to identify and manage potential trade-offs constraining effective and equitable outcomes.				
3.2 Strengthen national food security and social protection data systems by addressing gaps in data integration, analysis and use. This should be done by linking vulnerability assessments, beneficiary registries and early warning systems and by enhancing data visualization tools with the aim of supporting evidence-based targeting, planning and budgeting and ultimately, reinforcing operational independence.				

Acronyms

CSP	country strategic plan
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
NBP	needs-based plan
ODA	official development assistance
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees