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Corporate Emergency Evaluation of the WFP Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis (January 2015-March 2018)

Evaluation Report: Volume I

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Commissioned by the
WFP Office of Evaluation

October 2018



World Food
Programme

Acknowledgements

The evaluation team offer our sincerest thanks to all who contributed to this evaluation. In particular, we are grateful to those who shared their experience of the regional crisis, from many different perspectives. We hope they see their voices reflected in these pages.

We express our gratitude also to the WFP regional bureau Cairo, sub-regional office and six involved country offices, particularly WFP Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, for being willing to host an evaluation team amid intensive and fast-moving operational responses; and to the WFP Office of Evaluation, for their constant guidance and support.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Evaluation features

1. The WFP Office of Evaluation commissioned an independent evaluation of WFP's response to the Syrian regional crisis between January 2015 and March 2018. The evaluation addressed the WFP response to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic and in five regionally-affected countries: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. It followed a previous evaluation covering the period from 2011 to 2014.¹
2. The evaluation was conducted between December 2017 and June 2018. It asked four main questions:
 - To what extent did WFP maximize the use of partnerships and synergies to improve its response?
 - How well did the response align with needs?
 - How efficient was the response?
 - What results were delivered?
3. Given the fluidity and fast pace of the crisis, as well as its politically-sensitive nature, a highly systematic approach was adopted. Evidence at the country and regional levels was collected through:
 - Review of over 1,500 documents;
 - Interviews and consultations with 377 stakeholders, including 232 internal interviewees (WFP staff and management) and 145 external interviewees (representatives of partner governments, United Nations and donor agencies, cooperating partners and financial service providers, the WFP Executive Board and the Red Cross/Crescent movement);
 - 35 single-sex and mixed focus groups including: 9 groups in Lebanon, 13 in Jordan and 13 in the Syrian Arab Republic, speaking with over 300 beneficiaries of WFP interventions;
 - Interviews with 33 retailers;
 - Observation of activities and visits to WFP-contracted shops, camps and activity sites in Lebanon, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic; and
 - Analysis of the supply chain, gender, protection and cost efficiency and effectiveness.
4. Fieldwork was carried out in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Missions to Turkey and the WFP regional bureau in Cairo were conducted.
5. A gender-sensitive approach was applied to data gathering and analysis, and ethical issues were taken into account. Data from different sources were triangulated to confirm the validity of findings and conclusions. A validation meeting with WFP staff involved in the response was conducted in June 2018.

¹ The evaluation was also timed to support the development of the programme of work for the Syrian Arab Republic for 2019–2020, including the interim country strategic plan.

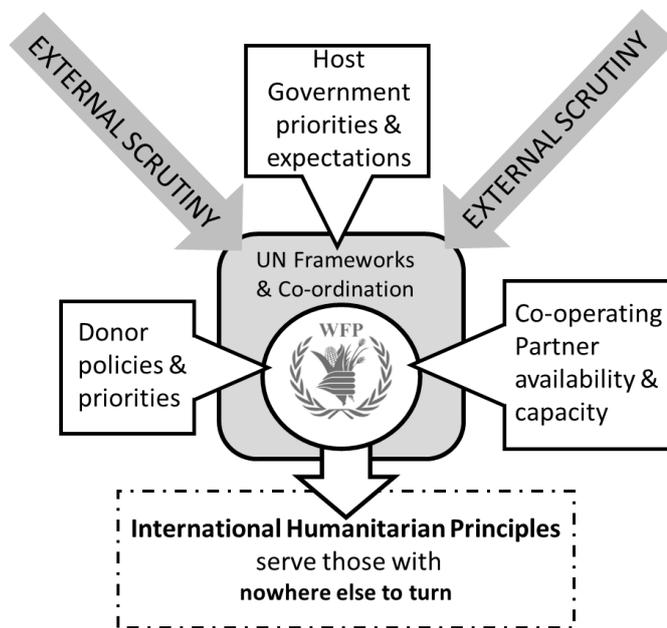
6. The evaluation had learning and accountability aims. While focused on the needs, interests and priorities of affected populations and the wider humanitarian community, its main direct intended users are WFP country offices, the regional bureau in Cairo and WFP management.
7. Limitations included the lack of available data to permit robust analysis of cost-effectiveness and the use of a desk study alone in Iraq and Egypt owing to time and resource constraints and the relatively small caseloads in those countries.

Context

8. The regional crisis is taking place in a middle-income setting and is marked by large-scale armed conflict and massive refugee flows. It comprises events inside the Syrian Arab Republic, and regionally-experienced effects.
9. **Inside the Syrian Arab Republic**, hostilities continue in 2018. Despite increasing humanitarian access, the situation remains extremely volatile, with large-scale internal displacement ongoing. Food and nutrition insecurity are widespread: the number of people who require food assistance has risen from 9 million in 2017 to 10.5 million in 2018, including 6.5 million facing acute food insecurity.²
10. **Regional effects:** 5.6 million registered refugees reside mainly in five host countries, where caseloads have been largely stable since 2015. Eight percent of Syrian refugees live in organized camps in Turkey, Jordan and Iraq; the remainder live in urban or peri-urban areas. The poverty rate among Syrian refugees is exceptionally high;³ they also face diverse legislative and policy environments in host countries.
11. The crisis has been characterized as a protection crisis, both inside the Syrian Arab Republic and in the wider region.⁴ Gender inequalities also feature prominently.

The WFP response

12. The WFP response has been high-pressure and high-stakes. Under fluid, fast-moving and politically-charged operating conditions, WFP has had to act upon its mandate to serve humanitarian needs while adhering to humanitarian principles and United Nations Security Council resolutions; responding to host government expectations; addressing diverse donor priorities; and cohering with the wider United Nations response – all amidst the intense scrutiny that accompanies a high-profile crisis (figure 1).



Source: Evaluation team

13. WFP's arrangements for implementing its response have evolved since

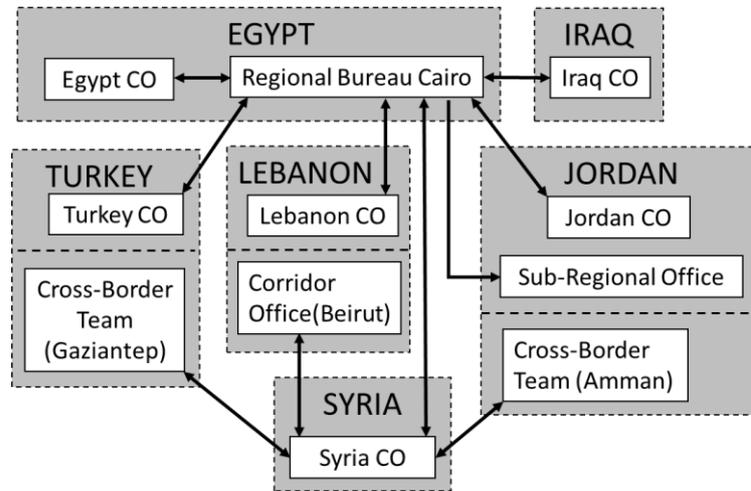
² 2018 humanitarian needs overview.

³ Inter-agency information sharing portal for the Syria regional refugee response, available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

⁴ European Union/United Nations (2018) Brussels II Conference on 'Supporting the future of Syria and the region' (24-25 April 2018) – Document annex – Situation inside Syria.

2015. It is the only United Nations agency to have implemented the Whole of Syria⁵ organizational model. The WFP offices currently involved in the response and the flow of cooperation between them are depicted in figure 2.

Figure 2: Implementing architecture



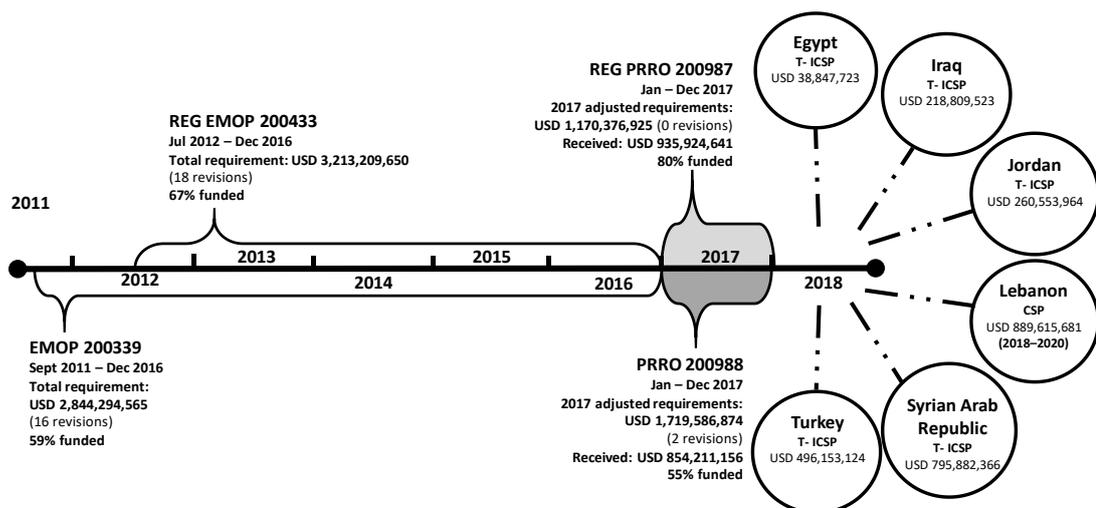
Source: Evaluation team, reconstructed from WFP project documents and fieldwork

Abbreviations: CO = country office

14. The regional emergency response, as illustrated in figure 3, included two programmatic components:

- **Syrian Arab Republic:** Emergency operation (EMOP) 200339 (2011), expanded through 16 revisions, targeting 4.5 million beneficiaries in 2016. Protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) 200988 targeted 5.74 million beneficiaries from January 2017 onwards.
- **Refugee-hosting countries:** Regional emergency operation (EMOP) 200433 (2012) passed through 18 budget revisions and targeted 2.4 million beneficiaries in 2016. Subsequently, regional PRRO 200987 targeted 3.54 million beneficiaries.⁶

Figure 3: Syria +5 WFP operations portfolio timeline



⁵ The Whole of Syria model for the response involves coordination hubs in Damascus, Amman and Gaziantep (see explanation and figure 11 in annex 7 of the full evaluation report).

⁶ From January 2018, under the WFP Integrated Road Map, the country offices moved to country strategic plans (in the case of Lebanon) and transitional interim country strategic plans (all other countries, including the Syrian Arab Republic). The plans for Egypt and Iraq include Syrian refugee responses.

Source: Evaluation team, reconstructed from WFP project documents and country strategy papers

Abbreviation: BR = budget revision

15. The response is extremely large-scale. During the period evaluated it comprised 18 percent of total WFP requirements in its programme of work for 2015–2017, with aggregate needs across operations funded at 65 percent over the three years. The bulk of funding came from five donors: Canada, the European Union, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Average annual expenditure was USD 1 billion per year. The combined operations targeted the food assistance needs of an average of 7 million beneficiaries per year between 2015 and 2017. Over 9 million people were targeted in 2018.
16. The main activity was general food assistance (including basic needs assistance in Lebanon and Turkey), which constituted 82 percent of the total assistance from 2015 to 2017 across all six countries of the response.⁷ In the Syrian Arab Republic 98 percent of general food assistance took the form of in-kind rations, while in the five refugee-hosting countries 98 percent was provided as cash-based transfers. Resilience,⁸ school feeding and nutrition activities in the Syrian Arab Republic expanded after 2017 under the PRRO but remain a small part of the overall portfolio.
17. In the Syrian Arab Republic WFP delivered assistance through three separate mechanisms: regular programming (wholly inside the Syrian Arab Republic), cross-(conflict) line operations and cross-border operations.

Evaluation findings

Partnerships and synergies

18. The evaluation found that, overall, WFP acted as a conscientious humanitarian partner in the collective response to the crisis.
19. **United Nations partnerships.** WFP aligned closely with strategic frameworks⁹ for the response, particularly on life-saving. It implemented its cross-border and cross-line deliveries for hard-to-reach and besieged areas of the Syrian Arab Republic within the framework of relevant United Nations resolutions.¹⁰
20. WFP played a critical and leading role in the United Nations Whole of Syria mechanism, particularly the food security and logistics clusters. It also made significant contributions to country and regional coordination forums such as food security working groups and sectors in refugee-hosting countries and the Access Working Group in the Syrian Arab Republic led by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Operational partnerships for school feeding, nutrition and resilience had scope for expansion.
21. Relations with some agencies were tested, notably with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and particularly in 2016 following donor selection of WFP as the main partner for cash-based delivery. This impeded the spirit of partnership for several months. The evaluation found that relationships were however continuing to heal.

⁷ Calculated for planned beneficiaries 2015–2017, using WFP standard project report data. Annual percentages: 85 percent (2015), 84 percent (2016) and 77 percent (2017).

⁸ Referred to in the evaluation as food for assets, food for training and other livelihoods activities, as reflected in the WFP categorization in its corporate reporting and programming documentation and by staff and donors interviewed for the evaluation. However, the concept of resilience is being developed more broadly in the region.

⁹ Such as the humanitarian response plans for the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq and the regional refugee and resilience plans for refugee-hosting countries.

¹⁰ Namely, Security Council resolution 2165 of 14 July 2014 (reaffirmed in part and renewed in part in resolution 2393 of 19 December 2017).

22. **Government partnerships.** Despite needing to clarify its role and comparative advantages in the collective response, WFP earned mutual respect from partner governments over time. This was supported by alignment with national response strategies and increased operational coordination since 2017 (see box 1).

Box 1: Joint implementation in Turkey

In Turkey, the emergency social safety net programme is jointly implemented between the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, the Directorate General of Migration Management, the Directorate General of Population and Citizenship, the Turkish Red Crescent and WFP. It is coordinated by the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency. A joint management cell is operated by the Turkish Red Crescent and WFP.

23. Government stakeholders perceived WFP as a capable and professional partner, although they noted challenges in its adaptation to the middle-income context of the crisis and were critical of high staff turnover.
24. **Cooperating partner relationships.** The range of WFP cooperating partners expanded over time, particularly with regard to resilience activities.¹¹ WFP also partnered with more local organizations. In the Syrian Arab Republic it gradually reduced its previous dependency on the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. However, the use of cash-based transfers delivered through banks, retailers and shops in refugee-hosting countries curtailed the frequency, duration and quality of cooperating partners' face-to-face contact with beneficiaries. Although partly necessitated by the mass scale of the response, cooperating partners were dissatisfied with this shift.
25. **Private sector engagement.** WFP made strong use of the private sector and invested in retailer capacities and in networks to increase the purchasing power of beneficiaries. Arrangements varied from country to country, for example with different fees paid as part of cash-based transfers.
26. **Internal synergies.** The evaluation found the "Syria+5" programmatic model appropriate for the period 2015–2018. It distinguished the Syrian Arab Republic strategically and operationally and provided a compelling vehicle for regional-level advocacy and coordination. However, it did not act effectively as a driver for regional synergies, with limited knowledge transfer across countries. The role of the regional bureau and its subregional office in Amman in providing programmatic guidance and advice to country offices was unclear.

Aligning with needs

27. The evaluation found that the response mostly aligned with the needs of affected populations. Key features included:
28. **Evidence base.** Following the previous evaluation of the regional response,¹² WFP strengthened the evidence base for its interventions. Its high-quality and technically-sophisticated food security analyses provided a major asset to the collective humanitarian response. However, gender, protection and vulnerable group analyses were inconsistent, and there were gaps in consultations with affected populations. The use of evidence to inform programming was also unsystematic.
29. **Targeting.** As recommended by the 2014–2015 evaluation, WFP increased the use of vulnerability-based targeting, with rigorous and appropriate methodologies for general food and basic needs assistance. Other activities applied geographic and population-based

¹¹ WFP. 2015. An evaluation of WFP's Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis, 2011–2014: Evaluation Report.

¹² *Ibid.*

targeting. In some countries, for different reasons,¹³ WFP had limited direct visibility to individual beneficiaries. Vulnerable host populations were included in Jordan and Lebanon, in line with national government requests.

30. **Caseload prioritization.** Funding shortages meant that beneficiaries had to be prioritized. Rationales were explicit and vulnerability-focused. In Lebanon, for example, WFP switched to a desk-based proxy means testing formula in 2016, enabling transfer values to be maintained while prioritizing beneficiaries according to vulnerability categories.
31. **Activity relevance.** Most WFP activities were relevant to needs. A lack of alternative forms of support for affected populations merited the use of general food assistance. The basic needs approach model applied in Turkey diverged from standard WFP rationales for interventions but was validated by poverty data. Poor nutrition indicators justified the nutrition focus of school-feeding activities. However, resilience activities were less relevant to needs, due to unsuited designs, short design and implementation timeframes, the late arrival of funding and tight disbursement timelines. Some country offices developed more context-appropriate models, but these were not fully concept-tested.
32. **Modality relevance.** Modalities were appropriate for the context. In refugee-hosting countries, conditions were suitable for cash-based transfers, including access to functioning markets, available technical capacity, regulated banking services and suitable infrastructure. In the Syrian Arab Republic, evidence of feasibility was still required, and expansion of cash-based approaches likely to be incremental.
33. The response provided a testing ground for new ways of delivering cash-based assistance at scale. Modalities included restricted e-vouchers, unrestricted cash and a 'choice' of both. The choice modality supported beneficiary preferences while protecting their dignity and allowing WFP to achieve its food security aims.
34. **Corporate guidance.** Some corporate guidance, notably on resilience, was unsuited to the middle-income context of the response. No guidance was available on large-scale cash-based responses or basic needs approaches, and in these areas lessons from the response have informed the concurrent development of WFP corporate guidance. Conceptual refinement for resilience was under way, led by the regional bureau with support from headquarters.

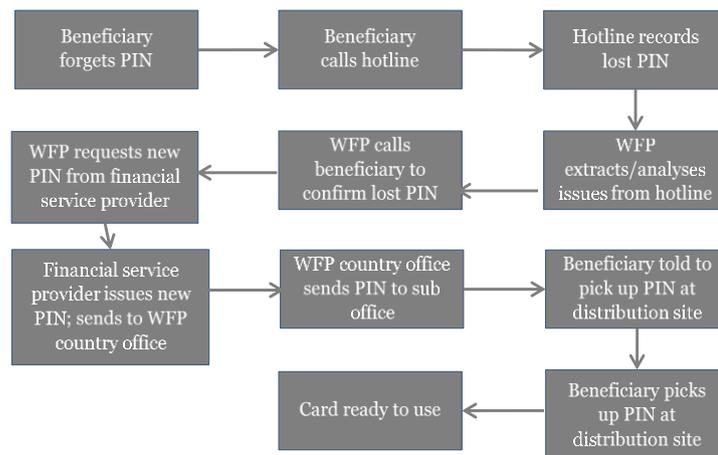
Efficiency

35. The response was highly time and cost efficient overall.
36. **Timeliness.** Despite the challenging operating terrain inside the Syrian Arab Republic, no major (total) pipeline breaks arose. WFP reduced delivery lead times from nearly 4 months to just 40 days over the evaluation period. It also successfully managed pipeline cessation from Turkey in December 2017 without affecting lead times.

¹³ These include for example stringent data protection laws and limited access to cooperating partner lists

37. For cash-based responses in refugee-hosting countries, most registered beneficiaries received timely monthly uploads. A minority of beneficiaries experienced routine card issues¹⁴ in Lebanon and Jordan, losing access to assistance for 1-3 months (figure 4).

Figure 4: Process of obtaining a new PIN in Lebanon



Source: Evaluation team, based on interviews with WFP staff and cooperating partners

38. Other activities faced delays caused by contextual and operational challenges. For example, WFP found it difficult to identify capacitated partners for resilience activities in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

39. **Cost-efficiency**¹⁵ was high for both in-kind and cash delivery. For the Syrian Arab Republic, key cost items for in-kind delivery were kept low. For refugee-hosting countries, WFP gradually achieved cost savings in the amount transferred to beneficiaries. This was accomplished in part through cost-efficient partnerships with private sector providers; savings in field level agreements with cooperating partners; and the scale and duration of WFP operations, which facilitated cost savings over time.

40. **Operational improvements and innovations** A professionalized supply chain in the Syrian Arab Republic and technological innovations in cash-based transfers to refugees helped keep delivery to beneficiaries consistent and reliable. The lessons generated can serve the wider humanitarian community, as well as WFP (boxes 2 and 3).

Box 2: Syrian Arab Republic in-kind supply chain: operational improvements

Using food supply agreements, which involved purchasing specific food volumes at an agreed price, with commodities drawn directly from suppliers' factories or warehouses

Using long-term agreements with suppliers to keep costs low

Packaging inside the Syrian Arab Republic, close to beneficiaries

Diversifying the market for ground transport through a tariff system

Investing in food quality assurance systems at source

Improving internal management through a supply chain working group with weekly conference calls; a supply chain dashboard providing real-time oversight; and internal systems linking upstream and downstream supply systems

¹⁴ Such as a forgotten PIN code, a lost or damaged card, etc.

¹⁵ The evaluation explores cost-efficiency through unit cost indicators for amounts distributed (whether amounts of money transferred or amounts of in-kind food). Annex X to the main Evaluation Report provides a full explanation of the methodology applied.

Box 3: Innovations in cash-based transfers

Using at-scale iris scan technology in camps (jointly with UNHCR) to verify beneficiaries identities for each transaction (Jordan)

Working through a multi-agency platform and common e-cards (Lebanon)

Producing retail strategies to enable at-scale purchasing (Lebanon)

Piloting blockchain technology (Jordan)

Using technology to generate near-real-time transaction data, allowing WFP to monitor purchasing and retail patterns closely (Jordan, Lebanon)

Results

41. General food and basic needs assistance met or exceeded internal targets and maintained the food security levels of beneficiaries, even though intended transfer values of entitlements were not always achieved. Other activity areas also showed some emerging improvements.
42. The evaluation found more systematic and rigorous results monitoring in the response than had been found during the 2014–2015 evaluation. In particular, food security outcome monitoring permitted regular and consistent insights into the effects of WFP interventions.
43. **Food security.** WFP consistently reached or exceeded its planned number of beneficiaries (table 1).

TABLE 1: AGGREGATED ACTUAL BENEFICIARIES AND IN-KIND AND CASH-BASED TRANSFERS TO BENEFICIARIES, 2015–2017, FOR THE SIX COUNTRIES, AS A PERCENTAGE OF PLANNED BENEFICIARIES AND VALUES

	Actual vs planned beneficiaries			Actual vs planned transfers	
	Male	Female	Overall	In kind (mt)	Cash-based transfers (USD)
2015	103%	104%	104%	64%	55%
2016	96%	108%	102%	80%	77%
2017	96%	105%	100%	56%	81%

Source: Standard project reports, 2015–2017

44. Because of funding shortages, however, WFP could not fully realize its planned transfers to beneficiaries. Instead, it delivered approximately two-thirds of the intended quantity of in-kind transfers between 2015 and 2017 (achieving higher volumes when funding permitted) and a similar proportion of cash-based transfers.
45. Food consumption scores and dietary diversity scores among WFP beneficiaries were also maintained, in contrast to those of non-beneficiaries, while the use of negative coping strategies was reduced. Food security indicators showed marked declines when assistance was cut, for instance because of insufficient funding.
46. Gains were more tentative in other activity areas. However, in 2017, resilience activities helped ensure food security improvements in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, as did school-feeding activities in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

47. **Additional results.** The evaluation found evidence of achievements in expanding humanitarian access, generating economic benefits for host countries and sharing technical expertise with partner governments. For example:
- WFP leveraged its relationship of mutual respect with the national authorities to help open up humanitarian access to different areas of the Syrian Arab Republic. It was considered generous in sharing convoy and air delivery space to enable the delivery of humanitarian supplies from other United Nations agencies.
 - For refugee-hosting countries, high volumes of cash-based transfers and other WFP expenditure translated into considerable economic contributions. Nearly USD 1 billion¹⁶ was injected into local economies in 2017, with concomitant multiplier effects.
 - Particularly in the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon and Turkey, WFP shared its expertise in nutrition, needs assessment and monitoring with national partners.
48. Contributions to social cohesion were variable. Sometimes WFP activities helped to reduce tensions, for example when host communities were included in resilience activities. Sometimes the provision of cash assistance exacerbated existing social tensions between refugee and host communities.
49. **International humanitarian principles.** Despite the challenging operating terrain, WFP assistance adhered to international humanitarian principles. This was accomplished largely by applying needs-based targeting; expanding the range of cooperating partners; adhering to United Nations resolutions to cross conflict lines; applying rigorous vulnerability assessments; and prioritizing vulnerable groups. In the Syrian Arab Republic, WFP struck an appropriate balance between maintaining relationships to facilitate delivery while advocating to maximize humanitarian access. However, the mass scale of the response challenged the ability of WFP to track and ensure full adherence to neutrality and operational independence at local level.
50. The response highlighted the complex operational choices faced by staff, such as how to balance donor priorities, national government requirements and adherence to the WFP mandate under high-pressure operating conditions. Such choices were sometimes challenging for technical staff who lacked experience in delivering a politically sensitive response in middle-income contexts, where governments took strong national leadership over the international assistance delivered on their territories. They were also demanding for cooperating partners, who were not always familiar with the humanitarian principles. The evaluation observed a 'knowledge gap' for WFP staff and partners on applying the principles in the practical humanitarian action of the response.
51. **Gender.** The evaluation found that the "shift in gear" promised by the WFP Gender Policy (2015-2020) and Gender Action Plan had not materialized in the response. This was reflected in gender action plans of varying depth and quality; insufficient human and financial resources; inconsistent gender results networks; and limited management attention. Despite the gender policy commitment to achieving gender parity in staffing, including in senior management, the senior management cohort for the response was largely male-based.

¹⁶ Based on internal WFP data sources, with figures including transfer values to beneficiaries; local and regional food procurement; and other expenditures made by WFP within the response.

52. Indicators showed that female-headed households¹⁷ benefitting from WFP assistance were more food-insecure than male-headed households and a widening gap was evident. However, the response had not moved to adjust transfer values to female-headed households, nor taken any other actions to narrow this gap.

53. **Protection** WFP's 2012 humanitarian protection policy¹⁸ commits it to "[d]esigning and carrying out food and livelihood assistance activities that do not increase the protection risks faced by the crisis-affected populations receiving assistance." Operations in the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey paid greater recent attention to protection concerns than those in the other affected countries. Overall, however, staffing for protection – as for gender – was limited, and planning documents paid little attention to the issue. Instead, it was addressed programmatically, mainly through UNHCR referral systems.

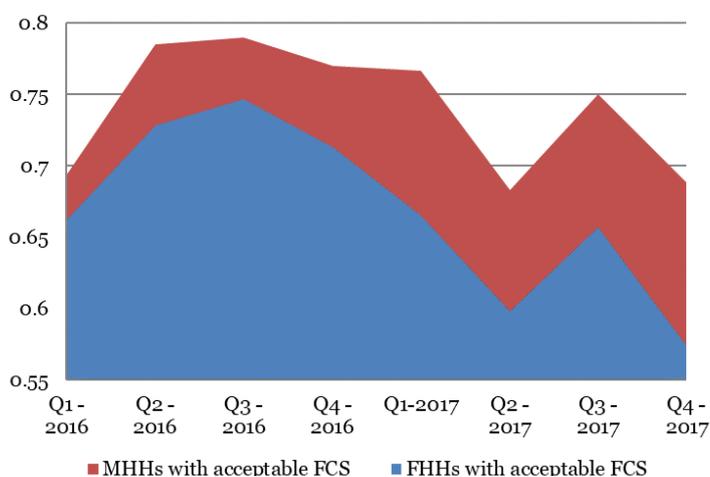
54. Standard WFP corporate data showed few protection concerns. Beneficiaries, however, described experiencing a range of protection challenges. Local-level WFP staff acknowledged that they had limited insight into these challenges.

55. **Accountability to affected populations.** The 2016 AAP strategy commits WFP to "ensuring that programme design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation processes and decisions are informed by and reflect the views of affected people".¹⁹ However, few staff were dedicated to AAP, and feedback mechanisms in place did not provide an adequate channel for beneficiaries to express their concerns. Combined with limited face-to-face contact with cooperating partners, this resulted in the incomplete protection of beneficiaries' dignity, and the AAP elements of "do no harm" not being fully upheld.

56. Specifically, communication weaknesses included the following:

- Uncommunicated duration of assistance (given funding uncertainties), which created anxiety among beneficiaries and a fear of being cut off;
- Poorly communicated reasons for prioritization and targeting, which caused frustration among cooperating partners and distress to beneficiaries;
- Withholding eligibility criteria in Iraq, Turkey and Lebanon, due to concerns about potential misuse; and
- Impersonalized communication and inadequate beneficiary feedback mechanisms arising from the mass scale of the response, which drove WFP towards methods such as SMS and WhatsApp messages and hotlines in refugee-hosting countries. These proved unsatisfactory for beneficiaries, who found hotlines difficult to navigate and

Figure 5: Food insecurity indicators for female-headed households



Source: Regional monitoring and evaluation; food security outcome monitoring reports

Abbreviations: FCS = food consumption score; FHH = female-headed households; MHH = male-headed households

¹⁷ Data based on WFP minimum monitoring requirements; head of household is indicative only because of a lack of representative sampling.

¹⁸ WFP Humanitarian Protection Policy (WFP/EB.1/2012/5-B/Rev.1).

¹⁹ WFP. 2017. *WFP's Strategy for Accountability to Affected Populations*.

who experienced decisions on prioritization communicated through these methods as traumatic.

57. **Sustainable gains.** Although its general food and basic needs assistance was focused on maintaining and improving beneficiary food security, WFP resilience activities also sought to reduce dependency on humanitarian assistance and increase self-reliance. However, these activities did not lead to sustainable livelihoods or self-reliance, as intended by PRROs. Integration into local social safety nets faced practical and political barriers.
58. WFP adopted mature and robust risk management, reflected in rigorous procedures and extensive internal and external auditing. However, contingency plans for potential financing shortfalls were not comprehensively in place, even at the regional bureau level.
59. Vision 2020, the main regional strategic framework for the response, sets out operationally-oriented objectives rather than clear strategic guidance. It was also not comprehensively institutionally 'owned' by staff. WFP has, however, begun to plan for the future, for example by holding meetings on organizing for potential returnees.

Conclusions

60. Overall, the evaluation found that WFP executed a high-powered, professionally adept and technically-sophisticated response to the Syrian regional crisis from January 2015 to March 2018. The response was hard-fought, facing humanitarian needs on an unprecedented scale, in politically-sensitive environments. In the absence of contextually-appropriate corporate guidance, or any comparable experience, the response largely forged its own path through the crisis.
61. Despite some challenges along the way, WFP acted overall as a conscientious humanitarian partner within the collective response. It successfully navigated some politically sensitive operating terrain to earn relations of mutual respect with host governments.
62. Through its general food and basic needs assistance, WFP served millions in need by innovating and adapting; piloting new approaches and, where necessary, leading on behalf of the humanitarian community. WFP operations, particularly in its cash-based approaches, also achieved a scale and technological complexity unprecedented in the humanitarian community's experience around the world, while being highly time- and cost-efficient.
63. Donor partners placed considerable trust in WFP to implement a complex humanitarian response. However, in some areas such as resilience and cash-based transfers, WFP did not benefit from fully cohesive support.
64. In its own terms, therefore, and also in those of many of its funders, WFP rose to meet the challenges of the crisis. Its achievements are a measure of its technical abilities under highly complex emergency conditions. However, the evaluation found that, in addressing needs on a mass scale, WFP resources and institutional energy were largely focused on the supply side of the response – that is, geared to delivery. This reduced attention to some demand-side concerns and created some 'blind spots', including a reduced 'line of sight' to beneficiaries.
65. Such blind spots included gender, protection and AAP, all of which lacked adequate staffing as well as management and programmatic attention, particularly in terms of communicating with beneficiary populations. The complex operational choices faced by staff in the response would benefit from a more consistently politically-astute approach. Going forward, the response can also be improved through stronger learning and knowledge transfer and a clear articulation of the WFP regional-level vision of success.
66. The evaluation findings raise a central question for WFP and for the humanitarian system more broadly. In trying to balance scale and sensitivity in massive humanitarian responses,

what defines success? For WFP, the evidence suggests that beneficiaries' needs, concerns and expectations should be placed more centrally within its future response. This indicates stronger communication channels, improved two-way feedback mechanisms and ensuring a clear 'line of sight' to beneficiary needs and concerns through partners.

Recommendations

67. The recommendations aim to improve the qualitative dimensions of the WFP response, mindful of the need to place beneficiaries at the centre. They also propose some steps for the next phase of the response, as the crisis continues to evolve.

Immediate: Prioritize demand-side issues			
What?	How? (operationalization)	Who? (responsible)	By when? (completion)
	<p>1. Strengthen AAP capacity and systems <i>Regional Bureau Cairo (RBC) (supported by headquarters)</i></p> <p>a) Designate (and capacitate where appropriate) dedicated staff for AAP, allocating resources specifically for capacity strengthening and/or mainstreaming.</p> <p>b) Review current AAP mechanisms within country offices to inform strategization, and make proposals for improvement.</p> <p><i>Country offices</i></p> <p>a) Allocate staff and resources for dedicated AAP mainstreaming and capacitate them to set-up and support a network of field focal points;</p> <p>b) Provide a clear strategic statement that sets out intended actions to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) beneficiaries are sufficiently informed of their entitlements and of complaint and feedback mechanisms; and ii) channels of communication with affected populations are improved based on best practices. <p>This may include regular documented feedback meetings with cooperating partners; two-way communication and beneficiary feedback mechanisms within beneficiary contact monitoring systems and protocols; and robust links to ensure the trickle-up of monitoring findings to programme decision-making functions.</p>	<p>RBC</p> <p>Support from the Human Resources Division (HRM); Policy and Programme Division (OSZ) and Emergencies and Transitions Unit (OSZPH)</p> <p>All country offices</p> <p>Support from RBC, HRM, OSZ, including OSZPH</p>	<p>By the end of second quarter 2019</p> <p>By the end of second quarter 2019</p>

Immediate: Prioritize demand-side issues			
What?	How? (operationalization)	Who? (responsible)	By when? (completion)
2. Centralize gender in the response			
	<p><i>RBC</i></p> <p>a) Allocate dedicated staff and resources at the RBC level to mainstream gender within the response.</p> <p>b) Conduct/continue conducting regular mandatory gender training for all RBC staff and management.</p> <p><i>Country offices</i></p> <p>a) Designate (and capacitate where appropriate) dedicated staff and resources at the country office level to ensure gender mainstreaming.</p> <p>b) Conduct gender training for WFP country office and suboffice staff to ensure that gender issues are recognized and addressed.</p> <p>c) Update country office gender action plans so they meet the standards required by the Gender Policy (2015–2020) and the WFP Gender Action Plan.²⁰</p> <p>d) Analyse available data on gender issues in the response and use the results to develop gender-sensitive programmatic responses.</p> <p><i>Headquarters/RBC</i></p> <p>a) At the next opportunity for reassignment, consider gender balance in staff selection.</p>	<p>RBC Support from the Gender Office (GEN)</p> <p><i>All country offices</i> Support from RBC and the Gender Office</p> <p>Reassignment Committee and Executive Director, with support from HRM</p>	<p>By the end of second quarter 2019</p> <p>By the end of second quarter 2019</p> <p>By the end of first quarter 2019</p>
3. Reinforce protection			
	<p><i>Headquarters</i></p> <p>a) Given the limited nature of WFP's corporate indicators for protection, consider revision, drawing on existing resources such as the global protection cluster indicators.</p> <p><i>RBC</i></p> <p>a) Designate (and capacitate where appropriate) dedicated staff and resources at the RBC level to protection mainstreaming.</p> <p>b) Conduct regular protection training for all RBC staff and management.</p> <p><i>Country offices</i></p> <p>a) Designate (and capacitate where appropriate) dedicated staff and resources to ensure that protection is mainstreamed in each country office.</p> <p>b) Conduct protection training for WFP country office and suboffice staff to ensure that protection issues are recognized and addressed.</p> <p>c) Prepare country office protection statements that include a clear vision and strategies.</p>	<p>Performance Management and Monitoring Division (RMP)</p> <p>RBC Support from OSZ and HRM</p> <p>All country offices Support from OSZ and OSZPH</p>	<p>By the end of first quarter 2019</p> <p>By the end of second quarter 2019</p> <p>By the end of second quarter 2019</p>

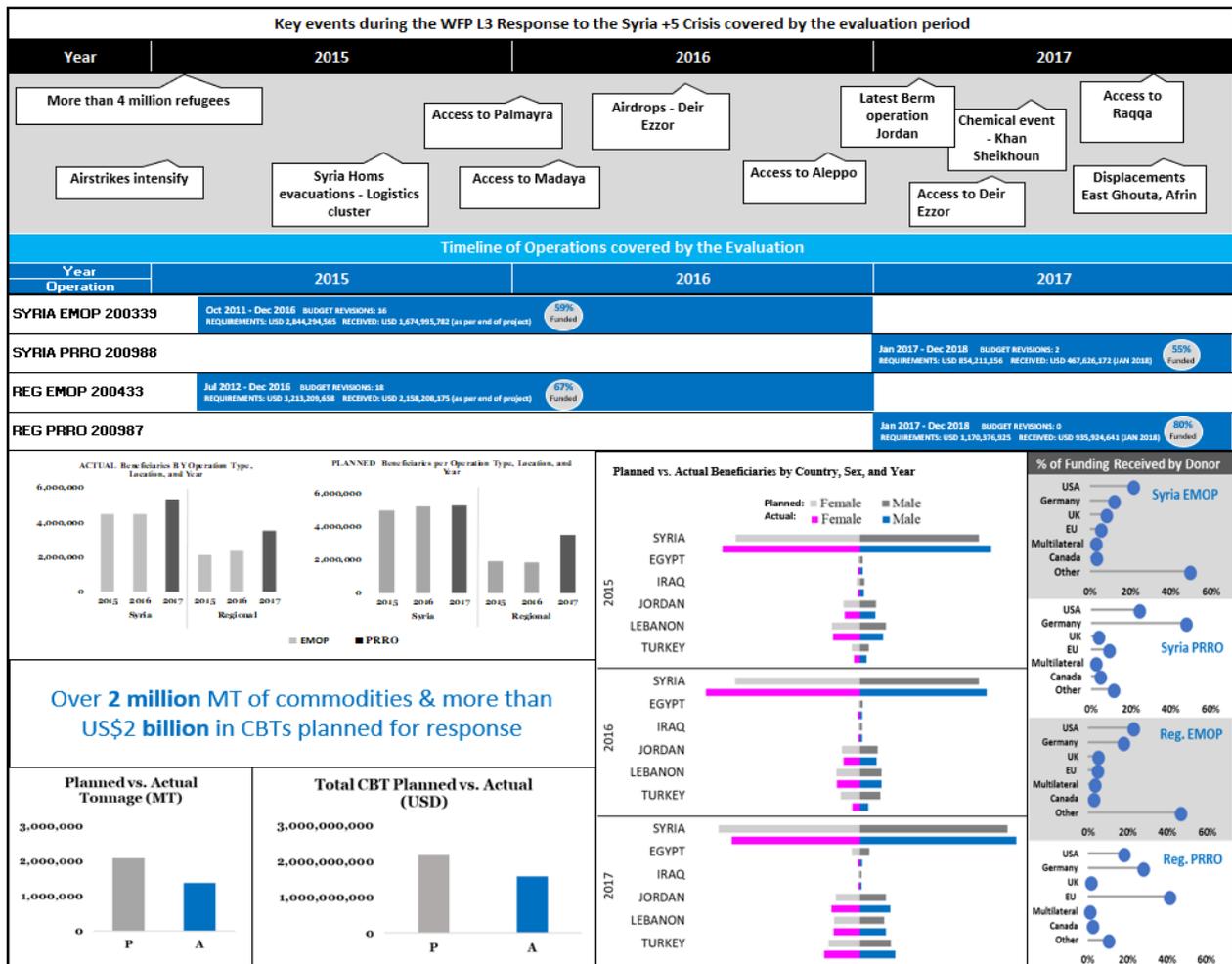
²⁰ Gender Action Plan: *Walking the Talk* (WFP/EB.1/2016/4-B).

Immediate: Prioritize demand-side issues			
What?	How? (operationalization)	Who? (responsible)	By when? (completion)
d) Analyse available data on protection issues within the response, and use this to develop appropriate programmatic responses.			
Immediate: Enhance adherence to humanitarian principles			
4. Build capacity to improve adherence to humanitarian principles <i>Country offices</i>			
a) Ensure training for all staff on the humanitarian principles, protection and decision-making in complex (and highly politicized) operating environments, particularly at the local level.		All country offices Support from RBC, OSZ, the Supply Chain Division (OSC), the Emergency Preparedness and Support Response Division (OSE) and HRM	By the end of second quarter 2019 (and ongoing thereafter)
b) Conduct situation-based feedback sessions with staff on lessons learned from experience in the response.			
c) Provide focused and context-specific orientation to all incoming staff and consultants, including information on local political dynamics.			
d) Train cooperating partners and financial service providers in adherence to humanitarian principles in the local context.			
Planning for the future			
What?	How? (operationalization)	Who? (responsible)	By when? (completion)
5. Improve knowledge management Develop an RBC-led learning and knowledge transfer strategy for the response. Key areas should include:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical approaches to cash-based transfers • Targeting and prioritization • Resilience 		RBC Support from OSZ and all country offices and the subregional office	By the end of 2018
6. Define success – build a clear intended vision To better package the regional dimension of the response within the CSP environment, build on Vision 2020 and individual CSP objectives to develop an overarching strategic statement of ‘where to from here’. The statement should:			
a) Clearly articulate the WFP regional-level vision of success for the response.		RBC with contributions from country offices and the subregional office; support from OSE and OSZ, including the Direct Implementation Programme Service and units including the Asset Creation and Livelihoods Unit, OSZPH, the Safety	By the end of first quarter 2019
b) Locate the beneficiary at the centre of the response, responding to diverse situations, needs and priorities.			
c) Include – beyond the operationally focused objectives of CSPs – the strategic intentions of the response at the regional level, such as the management of returnees; support for strengthened national social protection and safety net systems; future intended coordination and partnerships; intentions for resilience programming			

Immediate: Prioritize demand-side issues			
What?	How? (operationalization)	Who? (responsible)	By when? (completion)
	<p>at scale; planned internal coordination mechanisms; and the intended role of AAP, gender equality and protection.</p> <p>d) Map potential scenarios and identify response options.</p> <p>e) Be linked to realistic resource planning and associated financing contingency plans.</p> <p>f) Be accompanied by an advocacy plan for donors, focused on the costs of adjusting the response from scale to depth, including the cost implications of resilience activities and the integration of AAP/gender/protection.</p>	<p>Nets and Social Protection Unit and the School Feeding Service</p>	

1. Introduction

Figure 1:
Key events during the WFP L3 Response to the Syria +5 Crisis covered by the evaluation period



1. The Syrian civil war began in 2011. Eight years on, its volatile geopolitics, and evidence of extreme violence and brutality on all sides, have led the international community into uncharted political and operational terrain.
2. Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, the suffering of an exhausted population continues in a 'marathon of pain.'²¹ Outside the country, the patience and generosity of governments and communities, hosting a refugee exodus of millions, have been stretched to the limit. In 2018, borders are closed to Syrians seeking refuge outside their own frontiers.
3. The unfolding of a vast humanitarian crisis amid a complex vortex of power, politics and military action has posed extreme dilemmas for the humanitarian community. Standard approaches have been found wanting, with new ways of working needed.
4. Under these difficult, volatile and politically charged conditions, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) launched a massive operational response. Extending from the 'heart of the matter', the Syrian Arab Republic, into five regionally affected countries, it is one of the largest and most complex humanitarian responses ever undertaken.
5. This report examines how WFP, from January 2015 to March 2018, navigated the challenging operating terrain of the Syrian regional crisis. It holds up a mirror to three years of operational action: assessing

²¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/25/top-un-officials-voice-fears-of-new-aleppo-in-syrias-idlib-province> accessed 02.05.18.

performance, highlighting strengths, and indicating areas of potential improvement, to help inform the organization's future choices.

1.1 Purpose and Objectives

6. This report comprises an independent evaluation of WFP assistance to the Syrian regional crisis from January 2015 to March 2018. It addresses the WFP response to the crisis inside the Syrian Arab Republic, and in five regionally affected countries, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. It follows a previous evaluation covering the period 2011-2014, which concluded in 2015.
7. The evaluation asked four main questions:²²
 - Q1. To what extent did WFP maximize the use of partnerships and synergies to improve its response?
 - Q2. How well did the response align to needs?
 - Q3. How efficient was the response?
 - Q4. What results were delivered?
8. The evaluation has both learning and accountability aims, seeking to capture experience and innovations that may be useful for future regional emergencies. It also aims to support strategic planning for involved WFP offices.²³
9. As a matter of principle, this report is focused on the interests, needs and priorities of populations affected by the crisis. It also hopes to inform the wider humanitarian community. More directly, its main intended users are WFP country offices, the Regional Bureau for the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Europe (RBC) and WFP management; and external stakeholders such as governments, United Nations partner agencies, the many cooperating partners of WFP and other local actors, and Executive Board members.

1.2 Evaluation Methodology

10. The evaluation's full methodology is described in Annex II. Enquiry was guided by seven contextualized criteria: relevance/appropriateness, coverage, coherence, complementarity, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Given the sensitivity of the evaluation object and its regional nature, a highly systematic approach was adopted, applying an evaluation matrix (Annex III) and associated structured tools (Annex XIV).
11. The evaluation design sought a contextually sensitive model for a complex crisis, which also spoke to the WFP operating model and culture. To achieve this, it combined theory-based evaluation with elements of contribution analysis and a utilization-focused approach. It reconstructed an overarching conceptual framework and intervention logic for the response, to inform data gathering and analysis and applied a mixed methods approach. The methodology was gender sensitive, and ethical standards were tailored to the evaluation's context.
12. Key data-collection mechanisms included: documentation review (Annex XVII, Bibliography); interviews and consultations with 377 stakeholders from inside and outside WFP (Table 1 and Annex XVI); 35 focus groups (ensuring attention to gender)²⁴ comprising 9 in Lebanon, 13 in Jordan and 13 in the Syrian Arab Republic, speaking with over 300 beneficiaries of WFP interventions, including ex-beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in Lebanon and Jordan; additional interviews with 33 retailers; and observation of activities/visits to WFP-contracted shops. Dedicated analysis on gender/protection and cost efficiency/effectiveness was also conducted (Annex X).

²² Revised at inception stage – see Annex I: Summary ToR and Annex II: Methodology, Table 3 for full revised evaluation questions.

²³ Including the development of the the Syrian Arab Republic -specific programme of work 2019-2020, including its interim country strategic plan.

²⁴ In total, 5 focus groups were men-only; 17 were women-only; and 13 were mixed (see Annex II for full breakdown).

Table 1: Categories of interviewees

Internal	Country office	140
	HQ, regional bureau, sub-regional bureau	92
External	United Nations	45
	Government	25
	Cooperating partners	41
	Donors/member states	21
	Red Cross/Crescent movement	5
	Other	8
Total		377

13. An inception mission to Rome was conducted in December 2017 and continued to Jordan, Lebanon and the regional bureau in January 2018. A dedicated supply chain mission to Rome was also conducted in February 2018. Fieldwork – including a mission continuing the specific supply chain focus - was conducted in four countries: Jordan (two weeks), Lebanon (two weeks), the Syrian Arab Republic (nineteen days) and Turkey (three days). Egypt and Iraq, given smaller caseloads, were studied through desk-based review and telephone interviews with WFP staff (Annex II, Table 10). A workshop was held with WFP stakeholders in Amman in June 2018, to validate findings and help shape the recommendations.

14. Limitations included:

- WFP corporate data systems did not permit robust analysis of cost-effectiveness (Annex X).
- Iraq and Egypt, with relatively small caseloads, were analysed through desk study.
- Areas, such as the international humanitarian principles, gender and protection, could merit a separate evaluation in themselves. This exercise aimed to do them justice but could not be comprehensive.
- Given the speed of the response, the findings presented here risk swift outdated. This report therefore simply aims to capture the main narrative of the response from January 2015 to March 2018.²⁵

15. Finally, this is not a country-specific evaluation. As such it does not provide detailed examination of specific activities. Rather, it adopts a regional and strategic approach. Given highly differentiated responses across involved countries, it aims to contextualize findings, and to calibrate them to the strength of the evidence at hand.

1.3 Context of the Response

16. The context of the Syrian regional crisis has been extensively documented.²⁶ This report does not repeat these descriptions, but highlights relevant key features in 2018.

1.3.1 Inside the Syrian Arab Republic

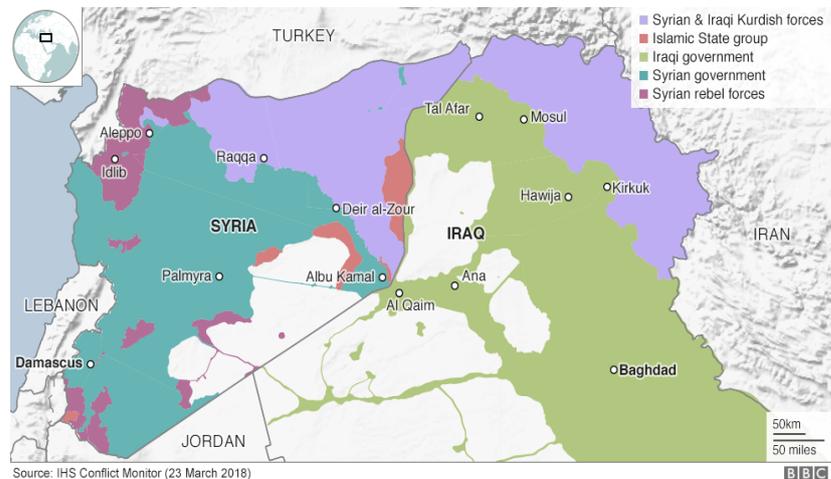
17. Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, at the heart of the crisis, key dynamics include:

²⁵ Quantitative analysis of results has taken place over the period 2015-2017; qualitative analysis includes data until 31 March 2018.

²⁶ See Annex IV for an overview of humanitarian needs and legislative frameworks for refugees in host countries. See also the updated Syria Common Context Analysis, which provides a full narrative account of political events, available at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/syria-call-cca-update-august-2015.pdf>

- **Continued volatility and unpredictability:** Hostilities in 2018 continue to fuel large-scale displacement, with 6.6 million people displaced by the crisis overall.²⁷ In 2017, 2.9 million people were internally displaced, an average rate of 6,550 each day (Figure 2).²⁸ Of the 13.1 million people requiring humanitarian assistance,²⁹ nearly 3 million live in “hard-to-reach” areas. Prior to April 2018, 419,000 resided in besieged areas.³⁰ Large-scale displacements occurred in Afrin and East Ghouta in early 2018; and further displacements are anticipated elsewhere in the country later in the same year.

Figure 2: Areas of Control, March 2018



- **Expanding (but still constrained) humanitarian space:** In 2018, humanitarian access has expanded across the country.³¹ In the remaining territory, access is shaped by shifting frontlines, violence along access routes and security concerns, especially in areas controlled by terrorist groups. Despite increased stabilization, and four de-escalation” zones formed in May 2017,³² humanitarian actors continue to function in an environment of very considerable danger.
- **Continued acute humanitarian needs:** The proportion of Syrians living in extreme poverty increased from 34 percent before the crisis to 69 percent in 2018.³³ The conflict, along with international financial and economic sanctions, have reduced the cumulative gross domestic product (GDP) by an estimated USD 254 billion. A “war economy”³⁴ competes with the pre-existing socialist economic model, including subsidized basic goods.³⁵ Geographical areas are marked by

²⁷ <https://www.unocha.org/syria> accessed 28-04-18.

²⁸ *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018*; Slim, H., Sida, L. and Trombetta, L. (2015) *Syria Crisis Common Context Analysis*. Update. Co-ordinated Accountability and Lessons Learning (CALL) Initiative. IASC Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations Steering Group, New York, September 2015.

²⁹ <https://www.unocha.org/syria> accessed 27-04-18.

³⁰ United Nations declared besieged areas - An area surrounded by armed actors with the sustained effect that humanitarian assistance cannot regularly enter, and civilians, the sick and wounded cannot regularly exit. Hard-to-reach areas - An area not regularly accessible to humanitarian actors for the purpose of sustained humanitarian programming due to the denial of access, the continual need to secure access, or due to restrictions such as active conflict, multiple security checkpoints or failure of the authorities to provide timely approval. (*Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018 Syria*).

³¹ WFP Syria (2015-2018) Maps of control and WFP activities.

³² Agreed by the governments of Russia, Turkey, and Iran (Astana talks, May 2017). De-escalation zones encompass most of the remaining areas of the Syrian Arab Republic still held by armed opposition groups (not including Islamic State)

<https://www.sida.se/globalassets/sida/sve/sa-arbetar-vi/humanitart-bistand/humanitarian-crisis-analysis-2018---syria-crisis-.pdf> accessed 03-05-18.

³³ 2018 HNO. Note, further sex- and age-disaggregated data (SADD) is not available.

³⁴ Turkmani, R, et al (2015) *Countering the Logic of the War Economy in Syria*, Civil Society and Human Security Research Unit Department of International Development London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), London, July 2015 (www.securityintransition.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Countering-war-economy-Syria2.pdf); Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Food Insecurity in War-Torn Syria: From Decades of Self Sufficiency to Food Dependence*, June 2015; European Union, Save The Children, Shafak Organization, Market Assessment Report: Agricultural and Livestock Inputs. Aleppo, Idlib, and North Hama, Syria, March 2017 (<https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/33881/building-resilience-and-protecting-livelihoods-conflict-affected-population-syria-1t>).

³⁵ Aita, S (2017) op.cit; Turkmani, R. et al (2015) op.cit.

socio-economic disparities³⁶ and the unemployment rate stands at 75 percent among youth (higher for women).³⁷ Public infrastructure has been severely damaged.³⁸

- **Widespread food and nutrition insecurity:** Recent years have seen sharply reduced food production.³⁹ By December 2016, food prices had increased tenfold since the start of the conflict;⁴⁰ although decreasing in 2018, they remain highly volatile. Despite increased stabilization, 10.5 million people require food assistance in 2018 (up from 9 million in 2017), including 6.5 million acutely food insecure. Four million in 2018 are at risk of becoming food insecure, double the amount in 2017.⁴¹ Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees are among the most vulnerable, in addition to female-headed households, children and people living with disabilities, poor rural households and families living in besieged areas. Chronic malnutrition in 2017 for under-five children stood at 12.7 percent; and acute malnutrition amongst women and girls of child-bearing age at 7.8 percent.⁴² Anaemia prevalence amongst children and women is at 25.9 percent and 24.5 percent respectively.⁴³

Table 2: Distribution of Syrian refugees and persons-of-concern by country (April 2018)

	caseload registered	% of total caseload
Egypt	128,507	2.3
Iraq	248,382	4.4
Jordan	661,859	11.7
Lebanon	991,165	17.6
Turkey	3,584,179	63.5
Other	33,545	0.5
Totals	5,647,637	100

Source: Inter-Agency Information Sharing Portal for the Syria Regional Refugee Response

1.3.2 Regional effects

18. **Massive refugee caseloads:** Facing an outflow of millions since 2012, regional countries responded generously to host Syrian refugees.⁴⁴ With borders now closed,⁴⁵ 5.6 million registered refugees reside mainly in five host countries (Table 2), with caseloads largely stable since 2015.⁴⁶ Syrian refugees are concentrated in urban and peri-urban centres, with 8 percent living in organized camps in Turkey, Jordan and Iraq.⁴⁷

19. **Policy and legislative environments:** Refugees experience diverse legislative and policy environments in host countries. These are described in detail in Annex IV. Officially, refugees now have expanded employment opportunities, following agreements at the London Supporting Syria Conference of 2016. However, in countries such as Jordan and Egypt, challenging economic conditions render unemployment rates for refugees far higher than for host nationals.⁴⁸

20. **Humanitarian needs:** Poverty levels among Syrian refugees are exceptionally high. 93 percent of off-camp refugees in Jordan live below the poverty line; as do more than 70 percent in Lebanon; 65

³⁶ See for example Butter, D (2015) Syria's Economy: Picking up the Pieces, Research Paper, London: Chatham House, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/document/20150623SyriaEconomyButter.pdf>.

³⁷ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS?locations=SY> accessed 05-06-18.

³⁸ World Bank, *The Toll of War: The Economic and Social Consequences of the Conflict in Syria*, 10 July 2017.

³⁹ For example, a 55 percent decrease of wheat production from 2010 to 2016 - Aita, S. (2017) op.cit.

⁴⁰ WFP VAM price monitoring.

⁴¹ As reported in the 2018 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) based on the WFP 2017 Food Security Assessment; HNO 2017.

⁴² 10 percent global acute malnutrition (GAM) is usually considered as a public health emergency, and is interpreted alongside aggravating factors including mortality and morbidity rates, as well as contextual factors. The Integrated Phase Classification is the most comprehensive method for classifying food insecurity and includes nutrition status.

http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Global-Brief_AcuteMalnutrition_2017.pdf.

⁴³ WFP Syria (2017) Transitional Interim Strategic Plan.

⁴⁴ For example, the Turkish Government has contributed over USD 35 billion in support of Syrians in Turkey since 2012 (T-ICSP Turkey).

⁴⁵ Borders were closed from Jordan in 2016; Government of Lebanon requested the suspension of Syrian refugees by UNHCR in 2015; since 2015, Turkey has prioritized access for those with emergency needs and authorized cases. In Egypt and Iraq, borders are not officially closed but volumes of Syrian refugees are much lower (see Table 2).

⁴⁶ In addition to 75,000 Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic.

⁴⁷ Source: Inter-Agency Information Sharing Portal for the Syria Regional Refugee Response, available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>, accessed 27-04-18.

⁴⁸ Regional Strategic Overview, 3RP, 2017-18.

percent in Egypt; and 37 percent in Iraq.⁴⁹ Table 3 lists the main food security conditions (see Annex IV for more detail).

Table 3: Food insecurity in refugee-hosting countries

Egypt	Refugees face rising inflation and food prices, with national safety nets overstretched after more than two years of economic slowdown ⁵⁰
Iraq	The Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where the vast majority of Syrian refugees reside, faces major challenges in food security and a struggling public distribution system ⁵¹
Jordan	Over 70 percent of Syrian refugee households in host communities are either food insecure or vulnerable to food insecurity and are almost completely dependent on food assistance ⁵²
Lebanon	Currently, 91 percent of the Syrian refugee population is food insecure. Two-thirds have adopted crisis or emergency coping strategies such as begging or reducing non-food essential expenditure ⁵³
Turkey	In 2016, 64 percent of off-camp refugees were below the World Bank poverty line. ⁵⁴ Average refugee household earnings are lower than the minimum expenditure basket. Households struggle to meet essential needs such as fuel, utilities, hygiene and clothing ⁵⁵

1.3.3 Protection and gender features of the crisis

21. The crisis has been characterized as a “protection crisis”, both inside the Syrian Arab Republic and in the region.⁵⁶ Gender inequalities also feature prominently. Table 4 provides the main features.⁵⁷

Table 4: Gender and protection concerns

Protection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing/land and property issues • Child labour preventing school attendance • Vulnerability to economic exploitation/financial abuse • Lack of physical safety and risks of violence • Lack/loss of civil documentation/residence documents • Threat of eviction • [In the Syrian Arab Republic]: Risk of explosive hazards; destruction of civilian infrastructure, particularly health facilities, schools, water networks, markets etc; kidnapping/abduction; child recruitment
Gender
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific vulnerabilities faced by women and girls as a result of forced displacement, including risk of gender-based violence and lack of gender-sensitive services • Higher risks of violence in the home, given the psychosocial toll of conflict/displacement • Early marriages for girls, survival sex • Challenges accessing basic services due to a lack of clear information, and a lack of time and privacy • Divorce-related discrimination and stigmatization • [In the Syrian Arab Republic] Serial temporary marriages

1.3.4 Milestones of the International Response

22. The crisis has given rise to a wide range of international discussions, commitments and agreements. Figure 3 indicates some of the main milestones on the road to 2018.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Egypt 3RP 2017-2018.

⁵¹ 3RP Iraq 2017-2018.

⁵² Jordan Crisis Response Plan 2018-2020.

⁵³ Vulnerability Analysis of Syrian Refugees, Lebanon, 2017.

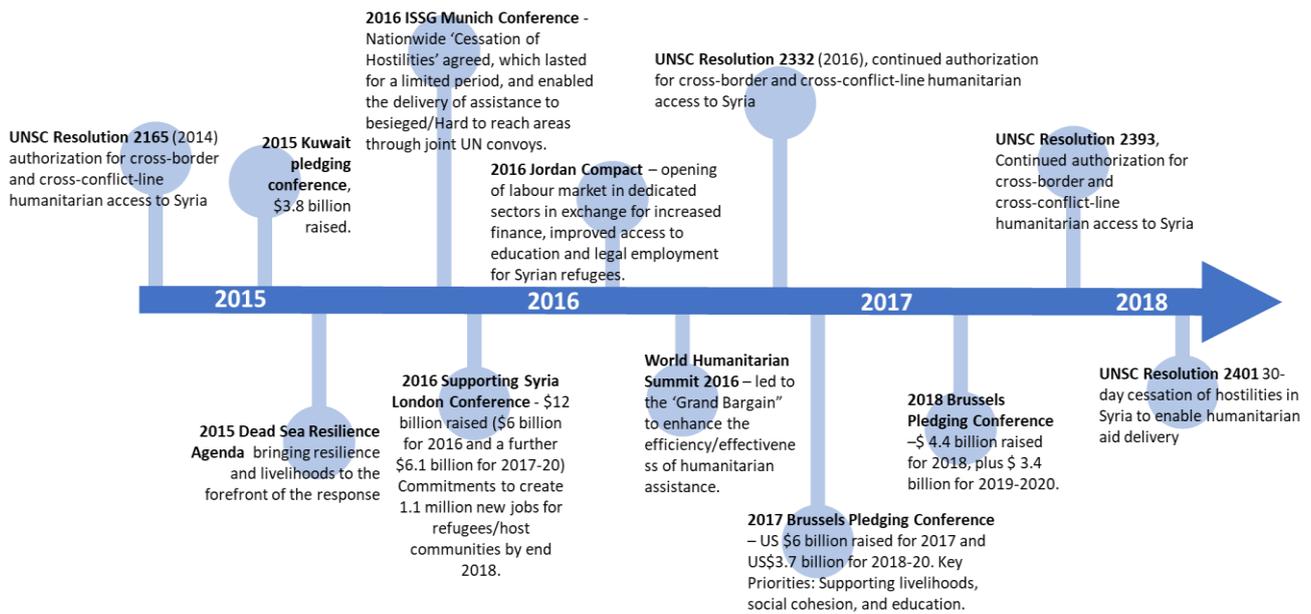
⁵⁴ WFP (2016) Pre-Assistance Baseline, Emergency Social Safety Nets programme.

⁵⁵ 3RP Regional Strategic Overview 2017-2018.

⁵⁶ See European Union/United Nations (2018) Brussels II Conference - Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region (24-25 April 2018) - Document Annex - Situation inside Syria.

⁵⁷ See Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) Basic Needs Sector (2017) Gender Analysis Report; May 2017; Protection sector (2017) 2018 Whole of Syria Protection Needs Overview (October 2017); Global Protection Cluster, Whole of Syria Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (2017) Voices, Assessment Findings of the Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017; HNO 2018; UNHCR/Universalia, Evaluation of UNHCR’s Emergency Response to the influx of Syrian Refugees into Turkey (January 2014–June 2015) – ES/2016/03.

Figure 3: International milestones in the response



Source: Reconstructed by Evaluation Team

1.3.4 A complex operating landscape

23. More operationally, the landscape is highly complex for humanitarian actors. These complexities include:

- **Politically-charged terrain:** Factional divisions, the role of jihadist groups, and broader geopolitical alliances and ambitions all define the crisis at national, regional and international levels. The United Nations Security Council, International Syria Support Group, regional powers and other interested parties are strongly engaged in political dialogue at multiple levels. More locally, the crisis has challenged the intricate and sometimes delicate political balances of refugee-hosting countries.
- **Middle income settings:** The middle income status of affected countries means that international actors must deliver their response through established pillars of the state, including relevant policy frameworks, institutions and sector plans. A mature private sector has meant that banks, telecommunication companies, retailers and others have been available to engage in the response.
- **Strong national leadership:** Concerned governments have adopted increasingly directive approaches to the international assistance delivered on their territories. Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, humanitarian access is contingent on facilitation and access by the Government of Syria; externally, refugee-hosting countries have framed international actors' engagement on, for example, food security assessments and cash and voucher modalities.
- **A steep learning curve:** Many of the governments have long experience in hosting vulnerable populations. Yet, other than in Iraq, they lacked recent familiarity with the complex systems, structures and modalities which accompany a massive United Nations-led Level 3 response. For their part, United Nations agencies, accustomed to considerable freedom of movement under the humanitarian imperative, have at times struggled to adjust to directive partner government leadership.⁵⁸

24. Assumptions have therefore been sharply tested, and expectations have had to be tempered, on all sides. It is amid these politically and operationally testing conditions that WFP has implemented its

⁵⁸ See Darcy, J. (2016) *Evaluation Synthesis and Gap Analysis*. Syria Coordinated Accountability and Lessons Learning (CALL) Initiative. Report commissioned by the Steering Group for Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations, New York.

humanitarian response since 2015.

1.4 The WFP Response January 2015 to March 2018

1.4.1 WFP – a high pressure and high-stakes response

25. Within the Syria regional response, WFP sits at the centre of a complex confluence of pressures. It must somehow balance its mandate to serve those with “nowhere else to turn” with: adhering to the humanitarian principles; responding to host government expectations; addressing diverse donor priorities; and cohering with the wider United Nations response – all amid the intense scrutiny that a high-profile crisis incurs (Figure 4).

1.4.2 Strategic frameworks for the response

26. Corporately, the WFP response has been implemented over two strategic plans (2014-2017 and 2017-2021). Since 2017, it has further been implemented under the organization’s Integrated Roadmap corporate change initiative. At regional level, the Vision 2020⁵⁹ document provides an overarching framework for the response; this contains a set of four strategic objectives for the response but no clear theory of change (hence the evaluation’s reconstruction of the intervention logic in Annex II).

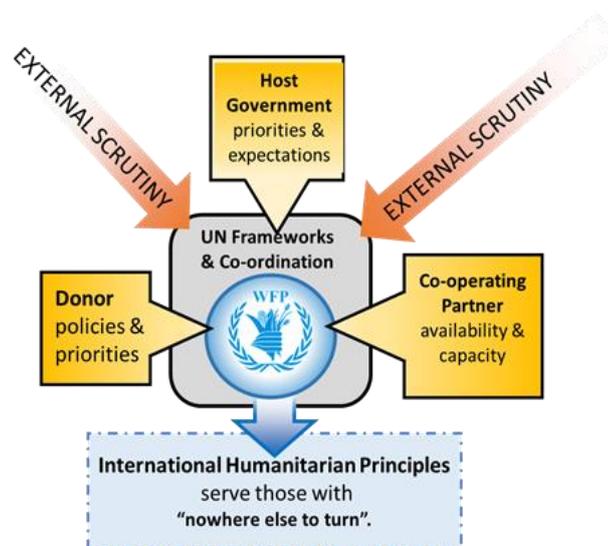
1.4.3 Operational response

27. Operationally, WFP employed two discrete programmatic vehicles to respond to the “cause and effect” nature of the crisis (see Annex V for a description of the WFP response in relation to key events occurring):

- The “inside the Syrian Arab Republic” response was launched with Emergency Operation (EMOP) 200339, approved in October 2011. Initially targeting 50,000 beneficiaries, it subsequently expanded through 16 budget revisions, reflecting the rapid evolution of the crisis, finally targeting 4.5 million beneficiaries in 2016. The subsequent Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) 200988 began in January 2017, targeting 5.74 million beneficiaries.
- For refugee-hosting countries, Regional Emergency Operation (EMOP) 200433 was approved in July 2012. It sought to assist 120,000 Syrians affected by conflict in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. It similarly passed through 18 budget revisions, targeting 2.4 million beneficiaries in 2016, and was succeeded by Regional PRRO 200987, which also began in 2017, targeting 3.5 million beneficiaries.

28. As of January 2018, and under the WFP Integrated Roadmap, country offices made an effective transition to a country strategic plan (Lebanon) and a transitional interim country strategic plan ((T-I)-CSP) (all other countries including the Syrian Arab Republic).⁶⁰ There is currently no mechanism under the Integrated Roadmap for regional-level strategic planning. Aggregate needs across operations were funded at 65 percent over the 2015-2017 period. Figure 5 presents the main timeline of the portfolio, along with specific funding levels:

Figure 4: Surrounding pressures

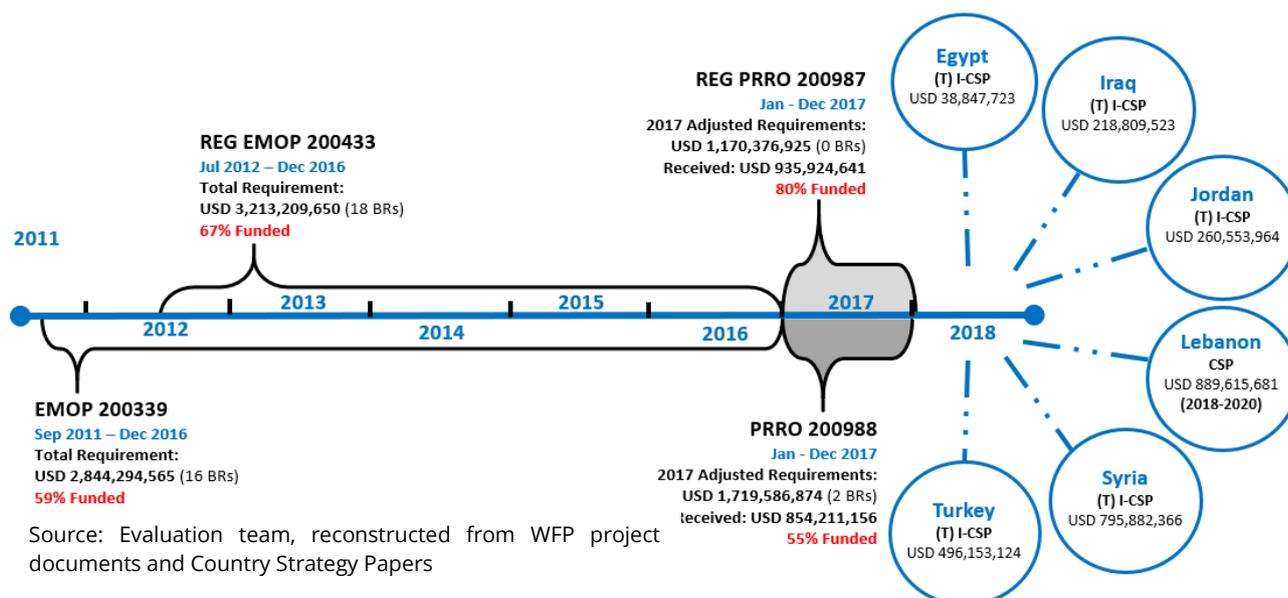


Source: Evaluation team

⁵⁹ Regional Bureau Cairo (2016) Vision 2020 Donor Brochure, May 2016.

⁶⁰ (T-I) CSPs for Egypt and Iraq include, but are not limited to, Syrian refugee responses.

Figure 5: Portfolio timeline



29. Donors were concentrated throughout the period, with the top five comprising Canada, the European Union, Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

30. The response was extremely large scale:

- Overall, the requirements for the Syrian regional response constituted 18 percent of total WFP requirements as per its Programme of Work 2015-2017.⁶¹
- As of October 2017, total contributions received for the entire WFP response 2011-2017 amounted to USD 5.2 billion,⁶² with an annual average expenditure of approximately USD 1 billion.⁶³
- Combined, operations targeted the food assistance needs of approximately 7 million beneficiaries (annual average) 2015-2017, with over 9 million targeted in 2018, the main increase occurring in the Syrian Arab Republic.
- In the five refugee-hosting countries, WFP provided over USD 1 billion in cash-based transfers (CBTs) in 2017 alone, targeting 1.3 million beneficiaries - 30 percent of the organization's cash-based transfer portfolio globally.⁶⁴

31. General food assistance (GFA), including basic needs assistance in Lebanon and Turkey, formed the main activity, comprising 82 percent of the total caseload in the period 2015-2017 across all six countries of the response.⁶⁵ The activity was delivered using 98 percent in-kind rations for the Syrian Arab Republic (and also for the "Berm" operations in Jordan),⁶⁶ and the same proportion for cash-based transfers in refugee-hosting countries.⁶⁷ For cash-based transfers, most refugee beneficiaries were provided with a monthly electronic voucher, which they could use to purchase commodities at

⁶¹ Data from WFP WINGS system. Annually, the Syrian regional operation required 17 percent (2015), 16 percent (2016) and 20 percent (2017) of total WFP requirements of its programme of work for the respective years.

⁶² WFP Resource Updates provided for the four operations January 2011-December 2017

⁶³ SPRs for 2015, 2016 and 2017 for EMOPs 200433 & 200339, and PRROs 200987 & 200988

⁶⁴ <http://www1.wfp.org/cash-transfers> accessed 11-05-18.

⁶⁵ Applying planned beneficiaries 2015-2017, using WFP SPR data. Annual percentages: 85 percent (2015), 84 percent (2016) and 77 percent (2017).

⁶⁶ Under the "Berm" operations in Jordan, WFP provided in-kind food assistance to over 78,000 vulnerable Syrians residing in two settlements located on the north-eastern Jordanian border, commonly referred to as "the Berm". WFP distributed this assistance directly in 2016 through two 70-metre cranes; and in 2017 through partners.

⁶⁷ Expenditure reporting within SPRs: the Syrian Arab Republic PRRO (2017) and Regional PRRO (2017).

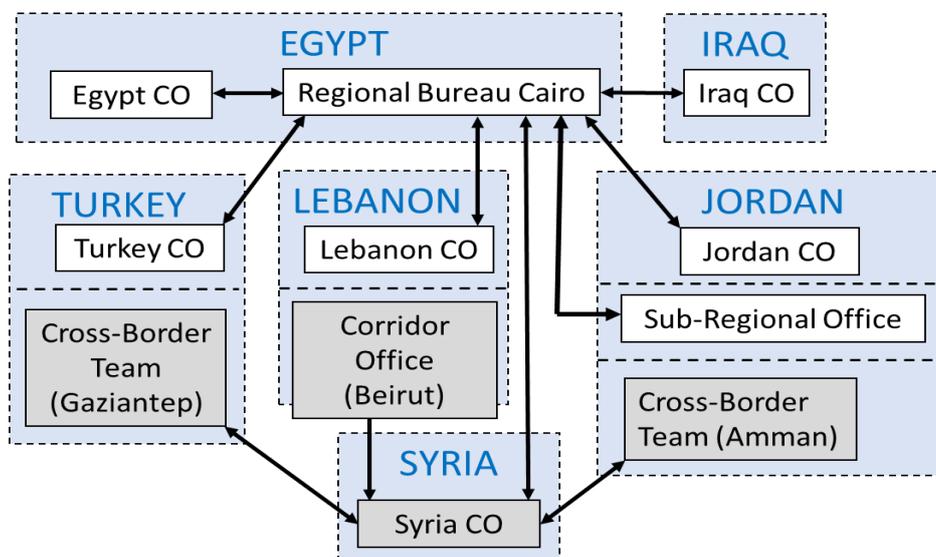
designated retailers or automated teller machines (ATM). Other activities, namely resilience,⁶⁸ school feeding and some nutrition programming in the Syrian Arab Republic, however, have expanded since 2017 under the PRRO.

32. For the Syrian Arab Republic, WFP delivered assistance through three separate mechanisms – “regular programming” (within the country), cross-(conflict) line; and cross-border, under relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. Two special operations, not included as part of this evaluation, also provided support to logistics and telecommunications, and air deliveries to besieged and hard-to-reach areas.⁶⁹

1.4.4 Implementing architecture

33. Institutional arrangements to implement the response have evolved since 2015, when the Amman-based Regional Emergency Coordination office (REC) formed the main operational hub. Arrangements in 2018 are specified in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Implementing architecture



Source: Evaluation team, reconstructed from WFP project documents and from evaluation fieldwork

34. More specifically:

- For the Syrian Arab Republic, WFP has implemented the Whole of Syria⁷⁰ model organizationally. It is the only United Nations agency to do so. Cross-border teams organize delivery into the country from hubs in Amman and Gaziantep, with a corridor office in Beirut. These work under the direction of, and report to, the Syria country office. In Amman, the sub-regional office retains liaison and coordination functions with some external actors (for example, those donors and United Nations actors with regional bases in Amman).⁷¹
- For the five refugee-hosting countries, the regional PRRO and EMOP are implemented by country offices.
- Country offices and the sub-regional office report to Regional Bureau Cairo (RBC).

35. These arrangements have driven forward the response described in this report.

⁶⁸ Referred to here as food assistance for assets, food assistance for training and other livelihoods activities, as reflected in WFP categorization in its corporate reporting and programming documentation and by staff and donors interviewed for the evaluation. However, the concept of resilience is being developed more broadly in the region, as reflected in this evaluation report.

⁶⁹ Special operations 200788 and 200950 respectively.

⁷⁰ The United Nation's Whole of Syria model for the response involves coordination “hubs” established in Damascus and mirrored in Amman and Gaziantep (see explanation and Figure 11 at Annex VII).

⁷¹ The food security cluster and the cross-border hub in Amman also report to the Syria country office and to RBC, further illustrating the Whole of Syria architecture implementation by WFP.

2. Findings

2.1 To What Extent Did WFP Maximize the Use of Partnerships and Synergies in its Response?

Summary

Despite challenges along the way, WFP acted overall as a conscientious and generous humanitarian partner in the collective response to the crisis. Its interventions aligned with key strategic frameworks and United Nations Resolutions, and tensions on cash-based responses with some United Nations partners are gradually resolving. Partnerships with national governments took time to mature, with complex contextual dynamics to navigate, but strong strategic alignment with national responses and a committed approach earned WFP relationships of mutual respect.

WFP has diversified its base of cooperating partners since 2015, though the mass scale of the response, combined with the cash-based modality and centrally-managed, technologized information management and monitoring systems, reduced their direct contact with beneficiaries. Extensive engagement with the private sector took different forms across countries. Greater autonomy at country level since 2015 was substantively appropriate, but limited knowledge transfer occurred across the response.

2.1.1 How well did WFP align with collective strategic frameworks for the response?

36. WFP aligned closely with key strategic frameworks for the response in the following ways:

- **Strong alignment on lifesaving:** The main collective strategic frameworks for the response include successive humanitarian response plans (HRPs) for the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq⁷² and regional refugee and resilience plans (3RPs) for the refugee-hosting countries. These present a broad menu of strategic and operational options; it would be challenging for WFP to intervene outside their parameters. A full analysis is presented in Annex VI, but in summary, the WFP response fully aligned with, and was a major contributor to, the realization of HRP/3RP lifesaving objectives at regional and country level from March 2015 to January 2018.⁷³ The response also aligned with resilience objectives of successive HRP/ 3RPs;⁷⁴ though these did not become strategically or operationally prominent until 2016/2017.⁷⁵
- **Full coherence with the Syrian Arab Republic-specific United Nations Resolutions:** WFP also implemented its cross-border and cross-line deliveries for hard-to-reach and besieged areas of the Syrian Arab Republic within the framework of relevant United Nations Resolutions.⁷⁶ These allowed United Nations humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners to deliver assistance via agreed routes. WFP was a leading member of the Whole of Syria model (Box 1).

2.1.2 How well did WFP engage with the United Nation system's response?

37. WFP acted as a conscientious humanitarian partner in the collective response to the crisis as follows:

- **A leading member of the Whole of Syria approach:** WFP plays a critical role in the United Nation's Whole of Syria mechanism (see diagram in Annex VII).⁷⁷ It performs this role through (i)

⁷² For Iraq, HRPs 2015-2017 address wider humanitarian crisis in the country, with Syrian refugees as a sub-group in need.

⁷³ See successive objectives in HRPs 2015-2018 e.g. HRP 2017 "Objective 1: Provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable people."

⁷⁴ See e.g. HRP 2015 "Objective 3: Strengthen resilience, livelihoods and early recovery through communities and institutions."

⁷⁵ For example, Regional EMOP Budget Revision 14 (Jan 2015) prioritizes humanitarian responses rather than livelihoods; it was not until EMOP budget revision 16 (in February 2016) and 18 (in October 2016) that livelihoods activities were proposed in Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt in line with Vision 2020.

⁷⁶ Namely Resolution 2165 of 2014 (renewed in December 2017 as Resolution 2393).

⁷⁷ <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/whole-of-syria/document/coordination-arrangements-whole-syria> accessed 20-04-17.

acting as one of six cluster lead agency representatives on the high-level strategic steering group; (ii) co-leading, with FAO, the food security cluster; and (iii) leading the emergency telecommunications and logistics clusters. The WFP role in these fora was widely praised by all external partners,⁷⁸ with particular commendation for its leadership of the food security and logistics clusters (Box 1).

Box 1: Leadership in the Whole of Syria

The WFP co-led food security cluster was considered by external partners as the best coordinated at Whole of Syria level. Its work in analysis, planning and information management was considered to have widely benefited the humanitarian response. It was observed that: "(Cluster members) have a strong operational role and are forward thinking. They are far more consistent and professional than other clusters for the response."

WFP leadership of the logistics cluster was also highly praised by partners as the critical vehicle for enabling humanitarian delivery into the Syrian Arab Republic. Partners particularly praised WFP flexibility and strong management regarding cross-border trans-shipment operations; and agreed that WFP successfully balances its triple role as user, service provider, and cluster lead. Its "generous" approach to space allocation in inter-agency convoys was especially highly valued; as was its provision of space in airdrops for partner agencies.

- **An engaged contributor to country and regional co-ordination fora:** As well as in United Nations country teams/humanitarian country teams, WFP participates in a wide range of country- and regional-level coordination fora as part of the response. These are mapped in Annex VI, but include co-leading the food security working group/sector in all countries,⁷⁹ and co-chairing/participating in the basic needs working group in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. WFP is also a leading actor in the UNOCHA-led access working group in the Syrian Arab Republic and heavily engaged in sub-regional coordination mechanisms such as the 3RP process and interagency foras operating from the Amman regional hub. All external stakeholders characterized WFP engagement in these fora as "sincere and committed", with praise for its professionalism and technical expertise.⁸⁰

38. **Challenges with United Nations partners on cash-based approaches:** However, relations with United Nations agencies were tested at times. Although WFP coordinates closely with UNHCR on, for example, caseload data and protection issues, tensions arose in Lebanon and Turkey in 2016 following donor selection of WFP as its main partner for cash-based delivery. The resulting sense of "competition for resources" impeded the spirit of partnership for a period of several months.⁸¹ Relationships are continuing to heal, however, and all stakeholders agreed that WFP plays a central role in country-level partnerships for the refugee response (Box 2).⁸²

Box 2: Working in partnerships for general food assistance/basic needs in Lebanon and Jordan

In Lebanon, WFP has been an active collaborator in the multi-agency Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organizational System for E-Cards (LOUISE) platform and other associated processes, as well as the adoption of the Common Card. Joint targeting and validation also takes place with UNHCR. In Jordan, WFP manages the OneCard platform for the cash-based transfer community, providing cash-based transfer services for interested partners.

39. **Scope for expansion in partnerships for other activities:** Partnerships for other activities mostly reflect their comparatively smaller scale in the portfolio: for example, school feeding (with UNICEF in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic and also UNRWA in the Syrian Arab Republic) and resilience (with FAO/UNIDO in Lebanon and FAO/UNDP in the Syrian Arab Republic). As activities

⁷⁸ Key informant interviews – 11/14 partners inside the Syrian Arab Republic, and all eight relevant interviewees in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey (see Annex XI and Annex XVI).

⁷⁹ See Annex VI table 28.

⁸⁰ Interviews with 39 UN partners in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

⁸¹ See Overseas Development Institute (2017) *The DFID/ECHO approach to cash assistance for refugees in Lebanon: Documenting the Process*. Working Paper 525.

⁸² Interviews with 35 United Nations partners in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, and three relevant NGO partners in Jordan, two in Lebanon.

continue to diversify under (T-I) CSPs,⁸³ these partnerships could be expanded.

2.1.3 How well has WFP worked in partnership with governments?

40. **A new narrative:** Except in Iraq, where it has a longstanding presence as a large-scale emergency actor, WFP had limited presence in affected countries prior to the crisis. Its previous engagement in the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan was small scale and it had opened new offices in Turkey and Lebanon in 2012. Its role and comparative advantages were not therefore immediately evident to all partner governments. Effectively, it had to define these in a new narrative for engagement.
41. **Mutual respect earned with partner governments:** Alongside this new narrative, the highly politicized dynamics of the crisis require a delicate balancing act. External actors must navigate the often complex territory between the United Nation's principle of sovereignty, which requires alignment with host governments' policies and strategies (without assuming political endorsement), and the humanitarian imperative to address suffering "wherever it is found". Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, all United Nations actors are required to align with the October 2017 *Parameters and Principles of UN Assistance in Syria*.⁸⁴ Over time, WFP earned relationships of mutual respect with its government partners.
42. **Strategic alignment with national strategies and plans:** Respecting the principle of sovereignty, WFP strategically aligned its operations and activities with relevant host government strategies for the response. This included: the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic's 2017 "Syria after the Crisis" programme; successive iterations of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan and the Jordan Response Plan; and the national social assistance policy and institutions of Turkey (see Annex VIII for a full mapping). Such strategic positioning, combined with a committed approach over time, generated considerable trust in WFP as a strategic partner in the response.⁸⁵
43. **Expanding co-ordination with governments:** As WFP operational activities diversified since 2017, its partnerships with line ministries concurrently expanded. In summary (see Annex VIII):
- In the Syrian Arab Republic, WFP is required to coordinate with the Syrian authorities on strategic, planning and access issues. Partners include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Ministry of Local Administration, Ministry of Social Affairs and the Planning and International Cooperation Commission. Other partners include the Ministries of Education, Health, Agriculture and Agrarian reform and, on food security data, the Central Bureau of Statistics.
 - In Lebanon and Jordan, partner line ministries include the Ministries of Agriculture, Education and Social Affairs; in Jordan specifically, the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Ministry of the Interior, Department of Statistics; and in Lebanon the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.
 - In Egypt and Iraq, where caseloads of refugees are fewer, WFP engages mainly with (and through) UNHCR, which is the main interlocutor with governments for refugee assistance in the two countries.
44. In Turkey, the bulk of the WFP response is jointly implemented with national partners under the Emergency Social Safety Net programme (ESSN) (Box 3).

Box 3: Joint implementation in the Emergency Social Safety Net programme (ESSN)

In Turkey, the ESSN is jointly implemented between the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, the Directorate General of Migration Management, the Directorate General of Population and Citizenship, the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) and WFP. It is coordinated by the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD). A joint management cell has been established between the TRC and WFP. Despite differences in business practice and culture, operational coordination is close and consistent, with twice-monthly meetings between WFP, TRC and the government on the ESSN.

⁸³ (Transitional Interim) Country Plans for all six involved countries.

⁸⁴See <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/brussels-ii-conference-supporting-future-syria-and-region-co-chairs> accessed 14.04.2018.

⁸⁵ Interviews with 25 national government partners.

45. **Positive partner perceptions:** Government stakeholders perceived WFP as a capable and professional partner – though they also noted challenges in adapting to context. Key perceptions included:

- **A capable professional:** WFP was repeatedly described by all 25 government partners interviewed in the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey as a highly professional partner, commended for its strong technical expertise.
- **Challenges in adapting to context:** At the same time, a majority of the same 25 stakeholders voiced frustrations regarding WFP adaptation to the middle-income contextual conditions surrounding its emergency responses. These particularly concerned adjustment to national procedures and requirements. By early 2018, efforts to build trust had mostly overcome these challenges, as one interlocutor said: “We are a family in this crisis... Families sometimes argue, but we stay loyal to each other and work through the problems.”
- **“Mutual respect” in the Syrian Arab Republic:** All eight Government of the Syria representatives characterized relationships with WFP as those of “mutual respect”, praising the organization’s capability and efficiency. However, they also voiced a wish for stronger insight into WFP strategic planning “after the crisis”, along with a concern that WFP had not yet adequately embraced the transition from relief to recovery.
- **Frustrations with staff turnover:** Across countries, 11 out of 25 government stakeholders voiced frustration with the high turnover of WFP staff for the response, describing high burdens in having to brief “yet again” incoming WFP personnel who were unfamiliar with the context; inexperienced in the operating conditions of middle income settings; and on short-term contracts.

2.1.4 How did WFP relationships with cooperating partners (excluding the private sector) evolve?

46. **An increasingly diversified partner base:** Since 2015, WFP has evolved its cooperating partner base for the response. Key features in 2018 include:

- **Reduced dependency on the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC):** The high proportion of assistance delivered in the Syrian Arab Republic through SARC, a critique of the previous 2015 evaluation, declined from over 50 percent in 2015 to 35 percent in May 2018.⁸⁶ WFP also expanded its cooperating partner base in the the country, from 33 cooperating partners in 2015 to 59 in early 2018.⁸⁷ However, WFP must still work through a government-approved list.⁸⁸
- **Expansion of resilience partners:** The diversification of activities under the regional PRRO expanded the WFP partner base, with six new partners added in Lebanon in 2017; four in Jordan; and ten in the Syrian Arab Republic since 2016.
- **More locally-based cooperating partners:** The number of locally-based cooperating partners increased since the advent of the PRROs: notably in the Syrian Arab Republic (from 30 in 2015 to 41 in 2017);⁸⁹ and Lebanon (from 3 in 2015 to 6 in 2017).⁹⁰

47. **Reduced frequency of beneficiary contact for cooperating partners on cash-based assistance:**

For general food /basic needs assistance delivered through cash-based transfers in Jordan and Lebanon, the use of the cash-based transfer modality for a mass-scale response combined with its delivery through banks, retailers and shops and the use of centrally-managed and highly technologized information management and monitoring mechanisms (see section 2.3.v), has reduced the frequency and quality of cooperating partners’ face-to-face contact with beneficiaries. The majority of beneficiaries see the cooperating partner once to receive their cards, and then only again if they need a new card or PIN. Some cooperating partners are also involved in assessments and monitoring,

⁸⁶ Based on beneficiaries served, though the 2015 evaluation referred to “per cent of metric tons delivered”. Source: Lists of cooperating partners supplied by WFP Country Office 2015-2017; figures verified with country office staff.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Except for cross-border delivery, where WFP delivers under UNSC resolutions. Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, in common with all its country offices, WFP conducts robust due diligence assessments on cooperating partners, observed through annual assessments.

⁸⁹ Of the remaining 18 international NGOs in 2017, 14 were partners for cross-border activities.

⁹⁰ List of cooperating partners supplied by WFP country offices, triangulated with SPR data.

but these only cover a small proportion of beneficiaries.⁹¹

48. Cooperating partner and beneficiary interviewees⁹² voiced considerable dissatisfaction with this role as functional sub-contractors of WFP, delivering partial elements of a highly technologized approach. The effects of this reduced “line of sight” direct to WFP beneficiaries are discussed in the Conclusions of this report.

2.1.5 How did WFP engage with private sector actors?

49. **Strong use of the private sector but with variations across countries:** The well-developed private sector in the sub-region has played a major role in the crisis response. For the Syrian Arab Republic, WFP relies upon food suppliers, logistics and food inspection companies to ensure the delivery of its operations. In refugee-hosting countries, WFP engages with financial service providers (FSPs) that provide the platform for cash-based transfer programming, and networks of retailers to sell commodities to beneficiaries.

50. For cash-based responses, arrangements with financial service providers are diverse:⁹³

- **Variations in financial service providers’ fees:** In Jordan, bank fees are low and only apply to un-spent money that is “swept back” off cards already loaded. In Turkey the state-owned financial service provider does not charge fees to WFP.
- **Differing costs for cash assistance:** The shift to cash – whether for food, as in Jordan, for basic needs, as in Turkey, and/or “multi-purpose” as in some locations in Lebanon – led to different ATM options for use/costs across countries. In Lebanon, beneficiaries can withdraw cash from any ATM in the country, without incurring transaction fees, which are paid by the bank from fees charged to WFP and other agencies. In Turkey, the majority state-owned Halkbank allows beneficiaries to use other banks’ ATMs – but, for some banks, any fees are withdrawn from the beneficiary’s entitlement.⁹⁴ In Jordan, beneficiaries can only withdraw their entitlement from ATMs operated by the WFP partner bank.

51. **Investing in retailer capacities and networking to increase beneficiary purchasing power:** WFP invested considerably in developing retailer networks in refugee-hosting countries, helping retailers to improve cleanliness, lighting, shelving, signage and other elements of their businesses.⁹⁵ It expanded the number of retailers in the e-voucher scheme (see Annex IX) and worked to increase competition/improve beneficiaries’ purchasing power and ensure quality of products – for example, through collective “Buying Clubs” in Lebanon (described in paragraph 119). It also worked with retailers on issues such as protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), for example, in Lebanon and Jordan.⁹⁶

2.1.6 How did the choice of a regional ‘Syria plus five’ model support synergies?

52. **An appropriate operational vehicle:** The choice of a ‘Syria plus five’ model was appropriate for the period January 2015 to March 2018. It distinguished the Syrian Arab Republic strategically and operationally, and provided compelling regional-level packaging for financing purposes; important given the external politics of the conflict and the WFP voluntary-funded basis. The regional EMOP/PRRO also provided a single vehicle for collective advocacy and regional-level coordination for the crisis, as well as for budgeting/financing/reporting. This was key for reducing burdens on overstretched WFP country offices, but also for donors, who appreciated the single entry-point (and

⁹¹ The remainder of the caseload being covered by alternative monitoring systems by WFP and third party monitoring systems.

⁹² Interviews with a majority of 24 GFA cooperating partners in Lebanon and Jordan, and discussions with all 16 GFA FGDs.

⁹³ All information contained here was provided by interviewees at the FSPs and at United Nations humanitarian agencies.

⁹⁴ In May 2018, Halkbank established an agreement with two other banks, so beneficiaries can now withdraw their money with no fee.

⁹⁵ Based on interviews with WFP staff in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. See also WFP (2017) *WFP and the Retail Sector: Applying Business Solutions in Local Markets*.

⁹⁶ For example, in Jordan, retailer training on protection and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse was held in September 2017.

coordinated updates provided by the sub-regional office) to the refugee response.⁹⁷ Administrative support from the regional bureau on financing issues particularly was also highly appreciated by country office staff.⁹⁸

53. **Not a driver for regional synergies:** Following the integration of the Regional Emergency Coordination (REC) office into the Regional Bureau Cairo in 2015, and the stabilization of caseloads since 2015, country offices⁹⁹ were granted considerable autonomy to develop operational responses for “their” caseload as required – or, to “work on their own battles”, as one interlocutor put it. This resulted in the varied approaches and solutions reflected in countries throughout this report. The shift was substantively appropriate in terms of the unfolding of the crisis; but potential conceptual and operational synergies for the response, such as technological solutions, targeting and other areas (Sections 2.2 and 2.3), were not fully exploited. The lack of a regional strategic planning vehicle within the WFP CSP environment compounds this challenge.
54. **Limited knowledge transfer:** The 2014-2015 evaluation reported that programmatic support had not met the main needs of staff involved in the response.¹⁰⁰ This 2018 evaluation finds similarly: although all the refugee-hosting countries are engaged in cash responses, as well as livelihoods in the later period, there was no coherent or formalized push on knowledge management across the response. Efforts in areas such as protection¹⁰¹ occurred rather on an ad-hoc basis, arising from staff’s individual relationships with colleagues across the region.¹⁰²
55. **Limited technical advice:** The role of Regional Bureau Cairo in providing programmatic guidance or advice to country offices involved in the response remains unclear. Staff in all six country offices involved reported that, other than for monitoring and evaluation and the recent work on resilience/protection, engagement was “willing but passive”.¹⁰³ The response also suffered gaps in the ability of Regional Bureau Cairo to supply dedicated technical support to the response, including in nutrition (there was one nutritionist available for the entire region), gender and protection (Section 2.4.4).
56. **Regional Bureau Cairo resource restrictions versus scale of portfolio:** With the highest resource demands of all six WFP regions,¹⁰⁴ the limited financing available under WFP internal mechanism for project support and administrative budget (PSA) resource allocations to regional bureaux¹⁰⁵ has placed a significant financial strain on Regional Bureau Cairo in recent years.¹⁰⁶ Cairo-based staff in 2018 also served 17 country assignments¹⁰⁷ – leaving them little time to dedicate to any individual country office, or group of country offices engaged in the response.

2.2 How Well Did the Response Align to Needs?

⁹⁷ Interviews with 140 WFP staff in the six concerned country offices; interviews with/written feedback from seven Executive Board Member State representatives.

⁹⁸ Interviews with 140 WFP staff in the six concerned country offices.

⁹⁹ Interviews with management of six country offices/the regional bureau.

¹⁰⁰ The 2015 evaluation reported that the REC had provided effective administrative support to country operations, particularly on finance issues, but that support to programming and operations did not meet staff’s main needs. WFP (2015) op.cit.

¹⁰¹ For example a workshop in June 2017 on protection (see the 2017 RBC Protection Analysis Framework).

¹⁰² Interviews with a majority of 140 WFP current/former staff in all six involved Country Offices.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ RBC requirements were the highest of six WFP regional bureaux 2015-2017, consuming 36 percent of the WFP overall programme of work requirements for 2015-2017, with the Syrian regional response requiring 18 percent overall. For comparison, the aggregate needs of five other WFP regional bureaux needs against the programme of work requirements for 2015-2017 were 28 percent in Central and Eastern Africa; 15 percent in West and Central Africa; 9 percent in Southern Africa; and 3 percent in Central and Latin America (data from WFP WINGS system).

¹⁰⁵ This comprises a somewhat “flat rate” allocation approach/practice by HQ across all regional bureaux, regardless of scale of operations. It is then complemented by additional WFP internal sources - such as funding from the PSA equalization account, direct support costs, etc. plus direct support cost recovery from the relevant operations.

¹⁰⁶ WFP internal communications, 20-05-2018; see also WFP Management Plan (2016-2018), which provides a broadly equal allocation of PSA resources across six WFP regional bureaux (between USD 10 and USD 12 million for 2016 for all bureaux other than the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, allocated just over USD 8 million, with RBC allocated USD 11.2 million).

¹⁰⁷ As per WFP Global Presence Map 2017; also WFP Operations Management Organigram as of 1.6.18.

Summary

The response mostly aligned with the needs of affected populations. Since 2015, WFP has strengthened the evidence base, developing a particular comparative advantage for food security analysis (though with gaps on gender/vulnerable groups and protection, as well as resilience). The response increased its vulnerability-based targeting and adopted clear, also vulnerability-based, rationales for reducing caseloads through prioritization.

Activities diversified over time, but remained mostly relevant to affected populations, with the exception of some resilience interventions. Cash-based transfers and in-kind modalities respectively were appropriate as applied. Some corporate guidance was ill-adapted or unavailable for the context, requiring staff to either remodel existing guidance or design new operational procedures.

2.2.1 How well did WFP identify the needs of affected populations in design?

57. **An improved evidence basis:** The 2014-2015 evaluation recommended a strengthened evidence basis, particularly on cash and vouchers, gender, host community relations and conflict, and food security data.¹⁰⁸ WFP responded by addressing most of these gaps, as the following shows.

58. **Detailed and sophisticated needs analysis:** Food security/basic needs analyses conducted by WFP were a major strength of its January 2015 to March 2018 response, producing high quality and technically-sophisticated products whilst navigating some national sensitivities on assessments. Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, for example, where access constraints restrict the direct “line of sight” to beneficiary needs, vulnerability assessment and mapping (VAM) efforts were particularly comprehensive (Box 4):

Box 4: Vulnerability assessment and mapping (VAM) in the Syrian Arab Republic

Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, despite access challenges, WFP has made considerable effort to shed light on the food security landscape. It collects data on a frequent basis to map food security and nutrition patterns and deficits across the country, applying a wide range of tools including food security assessments (FSAs), crop and food security assessment missions (CFSAMs), rapid food security data and market assessments, cash-based transfer market assessments, plus monthly VAM food price monitoring. The mobile VAM (mVAM) system, implemented from Amman, collects household food security data by phone, including from hard-to-reach and besieged areas.

The consensus from external actors, was that WFP VAM analysis was a “well oiled machine”, and a major contributor to creating the clearest picture of food insecurity and nutrition to date in the country - whilst recognizing that significant information gaps remained.¹⁰⁹

59. In refugee-hosting countries, WFP analyses were similarly extensive (Table 5).

Table 5: Food security analysis conducted

Egypt	2016 Egypt Vulnerability Assessment of Refugees (EVAR) - developed by UNHCR WFP, UNICEF, and Caritas. WFP contributes to the food security analysis.
Iraq	2014 Food Security Assessment (conducted with REACH); Comprehensive Vulnerability Analysis and Food Security Assessment 2016; contributing to Joint Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in 2017.
Jordan	Jordan Comprehensive Food Security Monitoring Exercise (CFSME) for Registered Refugees in Jordan (jointly conducted annually with REACH); Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) conducted (jointly with UNHCR) 2014 and 2016; market analyses
Lebanon	Annual Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR), conducted with UNHCR and UNICEF; a 2017 Rapid Poverty Assessment conducted with the Ministry of Social Affairs, UNDP and UNICEF. 2016 Strategic Review of Food and Nutrition Security in Lebanon, with ESCWA.
Turkey	2016 Emergency Food Security Assessment for off-camp refugees; 2016 Pre-Assistance Baseline for off-camp refugees; Comprehensive Vulnerability Monitoring Exercise twice per year; quarterly market bulletins; social cohesion online surveys.

¹⁰⁸ WFP (2015) Evaluation of WFP's Response to the Syria Regional Crisis (2011-2014) WFP: Office of Evaluation.

¹⁰⁹ Key informants in the Syrian Arab Republic.

60. WFP partners, including partner government and United Nations stakeholders, consistently praised the organization's contributions to mapping the food security landscape as one of its major comparative advantages.¹¹⁰
61. **Studies and reviews:** WFP commissioned, or jointly commissioned, a range of studies and reviews to inform the wider response since 2015. These included: modality assessments (such as the influential Boston Consulting Group's (BCG) study "Is Cash Better than Vouchers for Syrian Refugees?"¹¹¹ in Jordan and Lebanon and a 2017 feasibility study on cash-based programming responses in the Syrian Arab Republic);¹¹² economic impact assessments, such as a WFP Lebanon-commissioned review on the effects of voucher-based assistance on the food supply chain;¹¹³ and thematic reviews such as the joint WFP, ILO and UNDP "Jobs Make the Difference" study,¹¹⁴ assessing the expansion of economic opportunities for refugees and host communities in affected countries;¹¹⁵ a WFP-UNDP Recovery Context Analysis in Lebanon;¹¹⁶ a WFP Egypt-commissioned social cohesion study¹¹⁷ in the country; and a Gender, Risks and Urban Livelihoods Study in the Syrian Arab Republic in June 2017.
62. **Limited analysis of gender, protection and/or vulnerable groups:** Gender and protection analyses however, were inconsistent at best, as follows:
- **Gender:** Regional Bureau Cairo's Gender Policy Implementation Plan (2016-2020) contains a detailed analysis of gender issues in the region, including for the six involved countries. In Lebanon, a partnership with an external provider also led to a 2016 country-specific gender analysis. Elsewhere, however, analyses were either recent (for example, late 2017 reviews in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic to inform (T-I) CSP preparation) or absent (though planned in Turkey for 2018).
 - **Protection:** Despite a 2017 Protection Needs Analysis Framework prepared by Regional Bureau Cairo, country-level protection analysis was inconsistent. In Turkey, a detailed analysis was conducted in the first two quarters of 2018 and protection concerns are identified within gender analyses in the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan.¹¹⁸ In other countries, protection was generally addressed as part of wider vulnerability analyses such as in the EVAR in Egypt¹¹⁹ and the VASyR in Lebanon¹²⁰ but issues raised are not food-security specific. In Iraq, even multisectoral needs assessments included little analysis of protection concerns.
 - **Vulnerable groups:** Food security assessments quantitatively identified some vulnerable groups, for example, numbers of people with disabilities or female-headed households by women.¹²¹ However, they did not enquire more qualitatively on the differential barriers to food security experienced by these groups.
63. **Inconsistent use of evidence in design:** Despite efforts to increase the evidence base, not all country responses comprehensively applied this in design. For example, due to strict national regulations on assessments, and a resulting lack of nationwide refugee data, the ESSN was based on limited

¹¹⁰ Of 69 government and UN partners interviewed across countries, 35 explicitly cited WFP comparative advantage in this area.

¹¹¹ Uekermann, F, Schuler, F and Taki, M (2017) Food Restricted Voucher or Unrestricted Cash? Boston Consulting Group.

¹¹² Lyles, E, Tappis, H and Doocy, S (2017) Stakeholders Analysis and Feedback on Cash Based Response Programming in South and Central Syria John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

¹¹³ See for example: WFP Lebanon (2015) Exploring Food Assistance Programme Evidence 2015.

¹¹⁴ UNDP, ILO and WFP (2017) Jobs Make the Difference: Expanding Economic Opportunities for Syrian Refugees and Host Communities.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. WFP and UNHCR (2014) Joint Assessment Mission Kurdistan Region Iraq; 6 WFP key informant interviews in Iraq.

¹¹⁶ WFP, UNDP and Ministry of Social Affairs (2018) Recovery Context Analysis Lebanon.

¹¹⁷ WFP Egypt (2017) Social Cohesion among Syrian Refugees and Host Community.

¹¹⁸ WFP Syria (2017) *Secondary Gender Analysis & Programme Review to support Implementation of the Transitional Interim Country Strategy Paper*; WFP Jordan (2017) *Gender Analysis & Programme Review for the Transitional Interim Country Strategy Paper*.

¹¹⁹ UNHCR (2016) *Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Egypt*.

¹²⁰ UNDP, WFP and Government of Lebanon Ministry of Social Affairs, Lebanon Recovery Context Analysis, 2017.

¹²¹ For example, in VAM tools, the FSOM methodology and country-specific vulnerability tools screened.

vulnerability data from Syrian refugees in the South East of Turkey (though as additional data became available, the programme was adapted and refined).¹²² In Iraq, design was based on a 2015 food security assessment with recognized limitations.¹²³ Resilience designs across the response also suffered from short design and implementation timeframes, in part due to tight funding timescales, which limited scope to conduct relevant analysis.¹²⁴

64. **Gaps in consultation with affected populations:** Finally, too few design-stage consultations with affected populations took place to adequately assess their needs and preferences. This was particularly in the case in resilience activities, despite its requirement in WFP corporate guidance.¹²⁵ The need for WFP to develop a new approach to engagement with affected populations and vulnerable groups, based on strengthened community feedback mechanisms, has been recognized in other recent WFP evaluations.¹²⁶

2.2.2 How well did WFP target the needs of affected populations?

65. **Increasing vulnerability-based targeting over time:** The 2014-2015 evaluation recommended increased vulnerability-based targeting.¹²⁷ WFP addressed this concern.

66. For general food/basic needs assistance, WFP applied household targeting models, increasing its use of vulnerability-based models over time. Methodologies were rigorous and appropriate in relation to needs; they included indicators to track vulnerability status and identify factors such as asset depletion (Table 6 and Box 5).

Table 6: General food assistance/basic needs targeting¹²⁸

Syrian Arab Republic	Beneficiary categorization implemented since 2015, with households placed into three vulnerability groups. Parameters included household status demographic indicators; vulnerability, accommodation and displacement status (including female-headed households by women); and access to income. ¹²⁹
Egypt	Targeting and vulnerability analysis carried out jointly with UNHCR through the EVAR. Tiered targeting not applied.
Iraq	Targeting based on the 2015 household food security assessment, which took place during summer when generally more food was available, did not provide sufficiently disaggregated data for more precise targeting. To address these limitations, WFP advocated for a comprehensive vulnerability assessment, which only took place in 2017. ¹³⁰
Jordan	Blanket targeting for refugees in camps and those on the Berm. For refugees in host communities, three dimensions of food security status were analysed through the VAF: i) current (short-term) food security situation of households, measured by food consumption scores; ii) estimated future food security status, determined by food expenditure share and coping strategies; and iii) household social vulnerability (proxy indicators linked to food insecurity). Proxy-means test formula applied utilizing indicators linked to food security to project household expenditure levels and categorize households as (i) in need of full assistance (extremely vulnerable); (ii) in need of partial assistance (vulnerable); or (iii) not in need of assistance (non-beneficiary). Targeting of host communities through the national Takyet Um Ali safety nets programme.
Lebanon	For refugees, household-based scoring system applied until 2016, including eight vulnerabilities (food security, economic vulnerability, education, health, non-food items, protection, shelter, and WASH). Households classified into five vulnerability levels. Since 2016, a desk-based formula applies indicators on food consumption, share of total expenditure on food, and coping strategies. For host communities, participants are identified through the National Poverty Targeting Programme.
Turkey	Eligibility criteria for the ESSN apply six demographic criteria as proxy indicators for vulnerability. These are: 1. dependency ratio equal to or above 1.5; 2. households with four or more children; 3. households with at least one disabled member; 4. single parent households; 5. elderly headed households; and 6. single women.

¹²² The response applied a pre-assistance baseline sample of 1,562 off-camp households. WFP Turkey (2016) *Basic Needs Targeting in Turkey; Establishing Targeting Criteria and a Minimum Expenditure Basket*.

¹²³ See Table 6.

¹²⁴ Review of programme documentation in the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon and Jordan: Interviews with 13 technical staff in WFP country offices in Lebanon, Jordan and at the regional bureau.

¹²⁵ WFP (2016) *Food Assistance for Assets Guidance Manual*.

¹²⁶ WFP (2018) *Summary evaluation report on WFP Humanitarian Protection Policy (2012-2017)*.

¹²⁷ WFP (2015) *Evaluation of WFP's Response to the Syria Regional Crisis (2011-2014)* WFP: Office of Evaluation.

¹²⁸ Project documents and interviews with 140 WFP staff in country offices.

¹²⁹ Beneficiary Selection Tool: *Cooperating Partner Implementation Guideline 2018 in the Syrian Arab Republic*.

¹³⁰ Interviews with four WFP staff in Iraq.

Box 5: Distribution of assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic

The geographical distribution of WFP assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic aligned with areas of food insecurity as mapped by the food security working group.¹³¹ It was delivered by road (cross-border and cross-line modalities); an air bridge to the eastern part of the country (until 2017); and airdrops into besieged areas. Assistance was delivered into areas of control as follows:

- In January 2018, assistance was delivered in 11/14 governorates, with 30 percent delivered to opposition-held areas through cross-border deliveries from Jordan and Turkey. This included four hard-to-reach locations in Aleppo, Hama, and Quneitra governorates.¹³²
- Maps of control and WFP coverage 2016-2017¹³³ reflect efforts to ensure countrywide delivery, both in opposition- and government-held areas, following improvements in access, especially in the north-east where road access became available in the second half of 2017. In Deir Ezzor, Ar-Raqqa and Al-Hasakeh, in the north east of the country, delivery primarily concerned general food assistance and nutrition activities, delivered in Q'amishli and Deir Ezzor during 2016-2017 through airdrops.

67. Nuances to the vulnerability-based approaches are:

- **Refugee registration:** In all refugee-hosting countries, general food/basic needs assistance only applies to registered (or recorded)¹³⁴ refugees – excluding vulnerable unregistered individuals, who are reached by other means.¹³⁵
- **Data challenges:** In most refugee-hosting countries, WFP is dependent on caseload information provided by UNHCR.¹³⁶ Data quality and regularity were a constant concern in Lebanon and Jordan particularly, leading to concerns about the validity of caseload numbers and accuracy of the caseload profiles in terms of household size and living location.¹³⁷ UNHCR introduced more regular verification systems in 2017/2018, however, and the signing of a global data-sharing agreement between WFP and UNHCR was under negotiation at the time of writing, in order to provide greater accuracy in future.¹³⁸
- **Limited caseload visibility in some countries:** In some countries, WFP has limited, direct visibility to individual beneficiaries – though for different reasons. In Turkey, for example, stringent data protection laws mean that WFP does not have sight of personal identity information of individual cases. Conversely, in the Syrian Arab Republic, WFP lacks full access to its cooperating partner beneficiary lists, though this was improving in early 2018.¹³⁹
- **Host population inclusion:** In Lebanon and Jordan, since 2015, governments require the inclusion of vulnerable host populations in targeting. In Lebanon, ratios set are 50:50 for resilience projects and in Jordan, 30 (host nationals):70 (Syrian) for refugee projects and the converse for resilience.¹⁴⁰
- **Beneficiary rotation in the Syrian Arab Republic:** Given fluid conditions inside the Syrian Arab Republic, with new mass displacements occurring, for example, in the first quarter of 2018, beneficiary rotation is an acknowledged factor affecting targeting.¹⁴¹

68. **Geographical/population-based targeting for other activities:** Other activities combined

¹³¹ See *Food Security Sector Whole of Syria Outcome Monitoring Reports Rounds 1-3* (2016 and 2017).

¹³² WFP Syria, *Situation Report #1, January 2018*.

¹³³ Maps of control and WFP activities 2016-2017.

¹³⁴ For example, those arriving in Lebanon after 2015 do not qualify for “registered” refugee status, but are still “recorded” and qualify for WFP assistance.

¹³⁵ Including non-governmental organizations and local charities, which complement the response.

¹³⁶ The exception is Turkey, where the Government's Directorate General of Migration Management is responsible for refugee registration.

¹³⁷ Interviews with 13 WFP management and staff in Jordan and Lebanon.

¹³⁸ WFP and UNHCR in Jordan signed a data-sharing agreement in March 2018; until November 2017 WFP and UNHCR Lebanon shared data, and are currently negotiating on a data-sharing agreement.

¹³⁹ In May 2018, the main WFP cooperating partner inside the Syrian Arab Republic, SARC, had agreed to share its list of beneficiaries, but at the time of writing had not yet done so.

¹⁴⁰ Renegotiated by one donor in Jordan for resilience projects in 2017 to 50:50.

¹⁴¹ See for example UNOCHA (2018) *The Humanitarian Crisis in Syria*, April 2018, which records some of the highest levels of displacement since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, with the “convergence of crises” in northwest Syria, Afrin and East Ghouta as well as returns to Ar-Raqqa and Deir Ezzor. Corroborated by interviews with all humanitarian partners in the Syrian Arab Republic, including WFP staff.

geographical targeting of areas with high levels of food insecurity/vulnerability with population-based approaches, such as identifying areas with higher densities of refugee (or, inside the Syrian Arab Republic, food-insecure) populations. In addition WFP factored in feasibility concerns, in particular humanitarian access inside the Syrian Arab Republic.

- **Resilience:** In, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, WFP applied geographical targeting, combining food security indicators, refugee/internally displaced person density, household food security indicators and feasibility concerns, particularly the availability of capacitated cooperating partners. Coverage was broad despite lower numbers of beneficiaries – in early 2018, WFP was implementing resilience activities in 9/14 governorates of the Syrian Arab Republic;¹⁴² in all governorates of Jordan;¹⁴³ and was operating 111 projects in Lebanon across diverse areas of the country.¹⁴⁴ Below the geographical level, participants were identified through cooperating partner vulnerability assessments.
- **School feeding:** In Jordan and Lebanon, WFP applied geographical targeting (locations with high proportions of refugees) and guidance from Ministries of Education.¹⁴⁵ In the Syrian Arab Republic, schools were identified through a partnership with UNICEF and the Ministry of Education.
- **Nutrition:** The only country to implement nutrition-specific interventions, the Syrian Arab Republic, targeted assistance to locations with high internally displaced person numbers and low food security indicators, and subsequently according to individual or categories of nutrition status, for example, pregnant and lactating women and girls.¹⁴⁶ Despite low beneficiary numbers compared to general food assistance, projects were implemented in all areas of the country.¹⁴⁷

69. **Reducing caseloads (prioritization):** Funding shortages over time required caseload prioritization in several countries (see Section 2.3, Efficiency). Rationales for prioritization were explicit and focused on vulnerability. For example, the 2017 prioritization strategy¹⁴⁸ of WFP Syria combined VAM data for geographical prioritization with household food security indicators and context factors such as increased stability and improved access. Applying the strategy led to major caseload reductions, from 4.5 million to 3.8 million in September 2017 and further gradual and phased monthly reductions to 2.8 million by January 2018. In Jordan, prioritization applied successive targeting revisions, in 2015, 2017 and early 2018, using proxy indicators and data from multiple sources.¹⁴⁹ In Lebanon, the switch to a desk-based proxy means-testing formula in 2016 enabled WFP to retain transfer values whilst prioritizing caseloads according to vulnerability categorization.¹⁵⁰ (The effects of these cuts on beneficiary populations are discussed in Section 2.4.6).

70. **Keeping targeting under review:** In its main countries of operation, WFP kept its targeting approaches under constant review. Examples include a 2016 review of the household targeting model in Lebanon, which led ultimately to the development of the desk-based formula;¹⁵¹ and in Jordan, a 2017 review of the targeting mechanism which provided guidance on further nuancing.¹⁵² In addition, data from food security outcome monitoring (Section 2.4.1) supported country offices to consider targeting issues in the light of inclusion/exclusion issues identified.

¹⁴² SPR (the Syrian Arab Republic PRRO) 2017; key informant interviews.

¹⁴³ WFP Jordan (2017) *Livelihoods and Resilience Activities*.

¹⁴⁴ WFP Lebanon (2017) Livelihoods Project Map dated 21.1.2018.

¹⁴⁵ For example, in Jordan, WFP targets its school feeding programmes to areas referenced as poverty pockets in the 2013-2014 *Household Income and Expenditure Survey* (HIES) (Jordan (T-I) CSP 2017. Validated by interviews with WFP programming staff in relevant countries.

¹⁴⁶ WFP Syria (2017) PRRO SPR 2017.

¹⁴⁷ WFP Syria (2018) Map of Control and WFP Coverage, November 2017.

¹⁴⁸ WFP Syria (2017) Prioritization Strategy, 26.9.17.

¹⁴⁹ Such as the VAF baseline, the 2014 WFP CFSME, UNHCR registration and household visit data, as well as World Bank models.

¹⁵⁰ WFP Lebanon Targeting Strategy 2017.

¹⁵¹ Jad Chaaban, et al. AUB for UNHCR June 2017 *Review and Refinement of Targeting Mechanisms for Cash and Food Assistance to Syrian Refugees in Lebanon Technical Report*. Targeting in Lebanon is jointly annually reviewed with UNHCR (2018 is the third collaboration).

¹⁵² M. Lovon August (2017): *Review of the World Food Programme's Targeting Approach to Select Syrian Refugees living in Jordan for its Cash-Based Transfer Programme*.

2.2.3 How relevant were WFP activities and modalities to needs?

71. **Increased activity diversification over time:** WFP diversified its activity portfolio from March 2015 to January 2018 with PRROs in 2017, which sought to expand livelihoods, nutrition and school feeding programmes. This is reflected in increased numbers of beneficiaries targeted in these areas from 2015 to 2017 - though still dwarfed by general food/basic needs assistance.¹⁵³ In 2018, (T-I) CSPs (and the country strategic plan in Lebanon) continue this diversification.¹⁵⁴
72. With increasing access (though continued volatility) inside the Syrian Arab Republic, and with caseloads in refugee-hosting countries mostly stabilized by 2015, this diversification was an appropriate shift, though not without its implementation challenges (see section 2.4)..
73. **Mostly appropriate activities for needs:** WFP activities were mostly appropriate for the needs of affected populations and the demands of the context, though with challenges in resilience activities (paragraph 78):
74. **General food assistance:** The appropriateness of general food assistance is indicated by food security indicators in target populations (Section 1.3), as well as contextual conditions in countries. Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, widespread food insecurity, continued volatility and mass population movement made general food assistance the only feasible response under emergency conditions. In refugee-hosting countries, the absence of formal access to labour markets until the 2016 agreements reached at the London Supporting Syria Conference, and constrained economies in several countries, limited economic/labour opportunities for refugees. The need for protracted and predictable support, which could not be addressed through short-duration resilience programmes, also validates the choice of general food assistance over the period. In both the Syrian Arab Republic and refugee-hosting countries, beneficiaries in all 20 general food assistance focus groups indicated the centrality of the assistance to their food security.
75. **School feeding:** School feeding activities in Jordan and Lebanon were mainly geared to enhancing nutritional outcomes,¹⁵⁵ which was a valid rationale given poor nutritional indicators among refugee populations, in particular¹⁵⁶ (and high enrolment and retention rates given the middle-income contexts of the crisis).¹⁵⁷ In the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as supporting nutrition objectives, interventions were also (appropriately) designed within the framework of an emergency response to support enrolment and retention.¹⁵⁸ In all three countries, interventions were highly valued by national Ministries of Education and school principals,¹⁵⁹ though their small scale was generally perceived as a major constraint.
76. **Nutrition:** Low levels of global acute malnutrition in the Syrian Arab Republic but high rates of chronic malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies justified the use of supplementary feeding programmes to prevent moderate acute malnutrition, and to increase the micronutrient content of foods.¹⁶⁰ Given the incidence of under-nutrition in refugee populations,¹⁶¹ nutrition-sensitive approaches also have

¹⁵³ In the Syrian Arab Republic, an average of 4.5 million beneficiaries were targeted annually for GFA 2015-2017, compared to an average of 1.4 million annually for all other activities combined; in the refugee-hosting countries, an average of 3.3 million beneficiaries were targeted annually for GFA 2015-2017, compared to an average of 317,000 annually for all other activities. Figures do not take into account potential overlaps of caseloads between different activities. Source: SPR data 2015-2017.

¹⁵⁴ Resilience-building comprises two out of three strategic objectives in Jordan and Lebanon, for example, and two out of four in the Syrian Arab Republic

¹⁵⁵ Regional PRRO/ the Syrian Arab Republic PRRO project documents, 2017.

¹⁵⁶ Government of Jordan, WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR, and Save the Children (2016) interagency nutrition surveys amongst Syrian refugees in Jordan: Final Report, November 2016; IMC (2016) *Cost of the Diet Analysis among Syrian Refugees in Azraq Camp, Jordan; Barrier Analysis of Nutrition Behaviours Among Syrian Refugees* (Lebanon, Jordan & Turkey) – GNC 2016.

¹⁵⁷ See UNESCO (2017) Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/2018.

¹⁵⁸ The Syrian Arab Republic EMOP Budget Revision 16 and PRRO Project Document (2017).

¹⁵⁹ Interviews with Ministries of Education in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic; and school principals in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

¹⁶⁰ Such as widespread micronutrient deficiencies. Stunting rates in 2017 were 25.9 percent in the lowest income levels and 18.5 percent in the upper income levels (the Syrian Arab Republic PRRO Project Document 2017).

¹⁶¹ Government of Jordan, WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR, and Save the Children, op.cit. IMC (2016) op.cit.

potential for use in refugee-hosting countries. However, as of early 2018, these had only been applied in Lebanon.

77. **Resilience:** Resilience activities, however, were less relevant to needs. Prevailing WFP corporate models and guidance¹⁶² are heavily based on rural livelihoods and asset-rehabilitation models. These present very different conditions to the developed economies and labour markets of countries affected by the Syrian regional crisis. The difficulty was compounded in refugee-hosting countries by the complex politics and regulatory frameworks around refugees' right to work; and by diverse national and international partner understandings of, and approaches to, "resilience" – and its inter-relationships with equally undefined concepts such as "self-reliance", "recovery", "rehabilitation" and "reconstruction".
78. A conceptual development of "resilience" for WFP was underway in mid 2018, led by Regional Bureau Cairo and supported by WFP Headquarters.¹⁶³ Meanwhile, however, programmatic application during the evaluation time period mostly reflected standard corporate tools. Particularly in the Syrian Arab Republic, WFP adopted an ambitious approach, reflected in high planned beneficiary targets in its 2017 PRRO.¹⁶⁴ Planned activities across the response were diverse, including construction and rehabilitation of assets, environmental protection and income generation activities, plus specific activities such as bakery rehabilitation inside the Syrian Arab Republic. These cohered with the legal frameworks for refugee engagement in the labour market, as reflected in Annex IV.
79. However, short design and implementation timeframes, plus the use of short-term labour provision (for example, 10-15 days/month or less, for a period of four months), restricted the relevance of many activities for both refugees and host populations. For training activities, links to labour markets were few (see Section 2.4.9, Sustainability). Donor pressure to maximize employment opportunities, combined with late arrival of funding/tight disbursement timelines, compounded the challenges.¹⁶⁵ In Lebanon and Jordan, WFP cooperating partners voiced concern at the pressure to design activities that lacked sufficient understanding of contextual nuances, such as the need for economically sustainable activities. Beneficiaries consulted in all eight resilience focus groups appreciated the transfers provided, but saw the activities as little more than a 'stop-gap' or short-term means of receiving food assistance.
80. In Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, WFP staff sought to extend the corporate resilience toolkit - for example, in "Food for Tech"/"Tech for Food" initiatives in Iraq and Lebanon, and a digital pilot in Jordan. However, these exercises had not been fully concept-tested, nor their scope for scaling up assessed.
81. **Basic needs:** The basic-needs approach model of the ESSN programme in Turkey diverted from standard WFP rationales for intervention, as it was designed to address a broad spectrum of basic needs among Syrian refugees. The relevance of the approach is validated by the poverty data presented in Section 1.3 and at Annex IV, with high proportions of Syrian refugees unable to meet basic expenditure in food, shelter, utilities and other items.
82. **Modalities appropriate for context:** The split in modalities, with 98 percent of expenditure for the the Syrian Arab Republic country response applying in-kind approaches, and 98 percent of that in refugee-hosting countries applying cash-based transfer modalities,¹⁶⁶ was appropriate for country conditions. In the five refugee-hosting countries, the conditions for cash-based approaches were met. These included access to functioning markets, available technical capacity, regulated banking services and suitable infrastructure.¹⁶⁷ In these contexts, therefore, and excepting specific assistance to targeted populations, such as welcome meals to new arrivals in camps in Iraq, and the Berm operation

¹⁶² See WFP (2015) *Policy on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition: 2016 Food Assistance for Asset Guidance Manual*.

¹⁶³ As noted by RBC and indicated by e.g. the outcome document of the regional meeting on resilience in the Syria Crisis Response Amman, 11-12 October 2017.

¹⁶⁴ For example 500,000 beneficiaries targeted in the Syrian Arab Republic in 2015 and 2016, and 400,000 in 2017.

¹⁶⁵ Interviews with WFP staff and partners in Lebanon and Jordan.

¹⁶⁶ SPR (2017) the Syrian Arab Republic PRRO and SPR (2017) Regional PRRO.

¹⁶⁷ *WFP Cash and Voucher Policy Update (2011)* and *Cash and Voucher Manual Edition 2 (2014)*.

in Jordan, cash-based approaches were contextually appropriate.

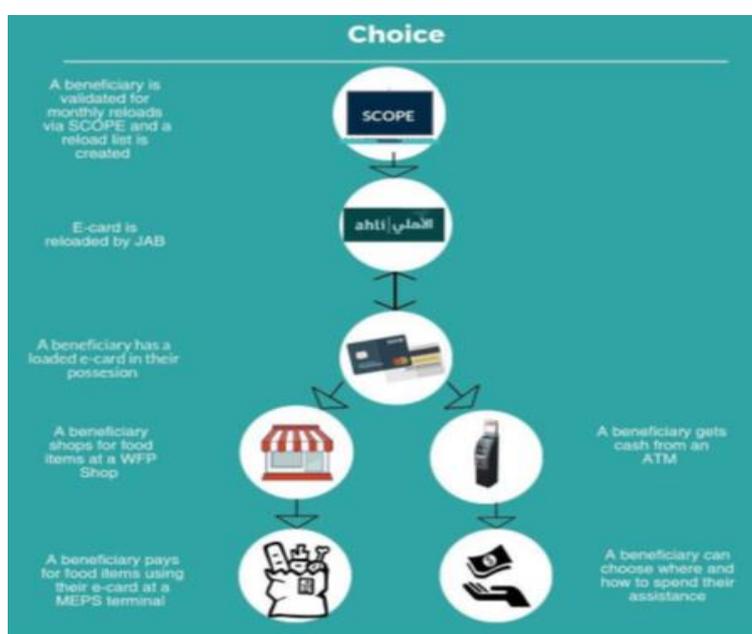
83. However, conditions for the large-scale use of the cash-based transfer modality were not fully conducive in the Syrian Arab Republic in early 2018. Despite increased stabilization and market functioning in some areas, outstanding challenges included political sensitivities, central controls, international sanctions, challenges with the banking system and limited availability of working ATMs outside Damascus, as well as constrained retailer capacity.¹⁶⁸ Despite significant interest in scaling up cash-based approaches inside the country, there was widespread agreement that evidence on feasibility was still required and that expansion of this modality would be incremental.¹⁶⁹

84. **Breaking new ground in cash-based transfers:** The mass scale of the response has become the testing ground for new ways of delivering cash-based assistance at scale, particularly in Jordan and Lebanon. This followed the 2016 Boston Consulting Group study that found that Syrian refugees given access to unrestricted cash (rather than restricted vouchers) had improved household socio-economic security, with their dignity preserved.

85. Subsequently, donor partners provided WFP with the means to experiment with different modalities. In Lebanon, in 2017, three modalities were implemented: restricted e-vouchers, unrestricted cash covering food and basic needs, and a “choice” of both.¹⁷⁰ In Jordan, e-vouchers, cash or choice were also implemented in 2017. Figure 7 presents the choice modality in Jordan.

86. WFP research¹⁷¹ found that beneficiaries praised the choice modality used in Jordan for the flexibility and dignity it provides. Indications were that the choice modality allowed beneficiary preference in using cash whilst achieving WFP food security aims - as over 90 percent of people spent most of the assistance on food.¹⁷²

Figure 7:
Modality choice in Jordan



Source: WFP Jordan 2018

87. **Retailer exploitation:** A major rationale for a beneficiary preference for cash, as expressed by those consulted in this evaluation, was to escape the reportedly higher prices charged by WFP-contracted retailers. These were referenced, along with a strong sense of the power and control of WFP-contracted retailers, by all 20 general food assistance focus groups conducted in Lebanon and Jordan. Although a very small proportion of the overall WFP caseload, the frequency of concern expressed by those consulted suggests this is an issue worth noting. In part due to the scale of its operations, WFP in both countries applied highly technologized systems to monitor prices (see Section 2.3, Efficiency). However, their use had seemingly not trickled down to programmatic actions to shield beneficiaries from such exploitation, which was commonly articulated by those consulted as a “refugee cost”, or tax.

88. **Diverse donor policies and priorities:** Since 2017, WFP has faced a complex balancing act in responding to specific donor preferences on cash-based transfers, with some donors preferring unrestricted cash, others e-vouchers only, and others willing to support choice, as well as stipulations on timeframes for disbursement and target populations. This occurred most prominently in Jordan

¹⁶⁸ See *ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ <http://foodsecuritycluster.net/syria/workinggroup/cash-based-feasibility-study-advisory> accessed 17-05-18.

¹⁷⁰ Labelled as “Food e-card, Cash for food e-card and Multipurpose cash for essential needs ecard”.

¹⁷¹ WFP Jordan (2018) Presentation on GFA.

¹⁷² Focus groups plus WFP Jordan (2018) Jordan CHOICE Report January 2018.

and Lebanon. A “cash mission” with donor visits to both countries, organized by WFP in March 2018, resulted in more flexible approaches by some of its top donors - though the overall dilemma had not yet been fully overcome.

2.2.4 How well was the response influenced/served by corporate guidance?

89. **Some corporate guidance unsuited for context:** The evaluation identified a wide range of corporate resources available to support the response. However, several of these were either too broad to be useful, or lacked relevance to middle-income contexts with highly engaged government institutions.
90. Positively, the WFP toolkit on food security analysis¹⁷³ was extensively applied across involved countries, as the many VAM assessments in Table 5/Box 4 (Section 2.2.1) reflect. The WFP Nutrition Policy (2017-2021) was also applied to inform nutrition-specific activities in the Syrian Arab Republic and nutrition-sensitive approaches in Lebanon. The Corporate Partnerships Strategy (2014-2017) also provided a vehicle for alignment, if not a directive strategic steer.¹⁷⁴
91. But guidance on resilience¹⁷⁵ had a very different conceptual basis from the demands of the middle income/urbanized contexts of the crisis – and did not provide WFP staff with badly needed direction on appropriate solutions.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, the 2013 School Feeding Policy promotes a social protection approach – relevant inside the Syrian Arab Republic, but less so in refugee-hosting countries. The WFP Gender Policy (2015-2020) gained little traction (Section 2.4.5); its 2013 peacebuilding policy in transition settings was also little referenced, though some efforts were made on social cohesion (Section 2.4.4).¹⁷⁷ No corporate guidance on large-scale cash-based interventions or basic-need approaches was available to the response.
92. Rather than directly informing the response, some corporate guidance was influenced by learning acquired during its implementation. For example, the unfolding experience of cash-based approaches in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey informed the concurrent development of WFP corporate guidance on cash-based transfers and their monitoring.¹⁷⁸ Implementation of the basic needs approach in Turkey and in Lebanon also contributed significantly to newly developed corporate guidance, including minimum expenditure baskets, basic-needs assessment and monitoring, and forthcoming joint targeting guidance. But overall, in some key programmatic areas, many programme-level staff described themselves as having felt “daunted” when trying to devise and implement appropriate programmatic responses to needs - without prior experience/knowledge of a comparable crisis; undergoing in real time the context-related learning curve described in Section 1.3.4; lacking at times sufficient support from Regional Bureau Cairo and Headquarters; and with some corporate guidance unavailable or unsuited to help shape contextually sensitive approaches.

¹⁷³ See <http://vam.wfp.org/> - as reflected in the use of the 2009 EFSA handbook and CFSVA guidelines, and 2009 CFSAM guidelines in food security assessments in the response.

¹⁷⁴ Key informant interviews with WFP staff in the concerned country offices.

¹⁷⁵ *The 2015 Policy on Building Resilience for Food Security & Nutrition* and the *2016 Food Assistance for Asset Guidance Manual*.

¹⁷⁶ *Regional Bureau Cairo (2017) Resilience in the Syria Crisis Response*, Amman, 11-12 October 2017, workshop report.

¹⁷⁷ Strategic and operational documents such as the EMOP and PRRO documents, as well as other programmatic documentation, do not make reference to the policy. Triangulated by interviews with WFP staff in the concerned country offices.

¹⁷⁸ Namely the *Cash & Voucher Manual Edition 2 (2014)* and *2017 Interim Guidance for CBT Reconciliation & Transaction Monitoring*; RBC has also developed a *Monitoring Multi Purpose Cash Assistance Guide* (February 2018) based on experience in Turkey but with wider potential use across WFP.

2.3 How efficient was the response?

Summary

The response was characterized by very high levels of efficiency, both in time and cost terms. Through an agile approach, WFP supplied assistance to millions of targeted beneficiaries, whether in commodities or cash, with a frequency and regularity that defied extremely challenging operating conditions. Consequently, most beneficiaries received a reliable flow of essential assistance.

The regularity of delivery arose from a highly professionalized approach to the supply chain in the Syrian Arab Republic, and technological innovations in cash-based delivery in refugee-hosting countries. Both have generated lessons that can serve the wider humanitarian community, as well as WFP.

However, due to funding shortages, transfer values of entitlements to beneficiaries did not always correspond to assessed needs. Reductions were required in both in-kind and cash-based transfers. Moreover, beneficiaries experiencing card issues faced long delays. Non-general food assistance activities also experienced weaker timeliness.

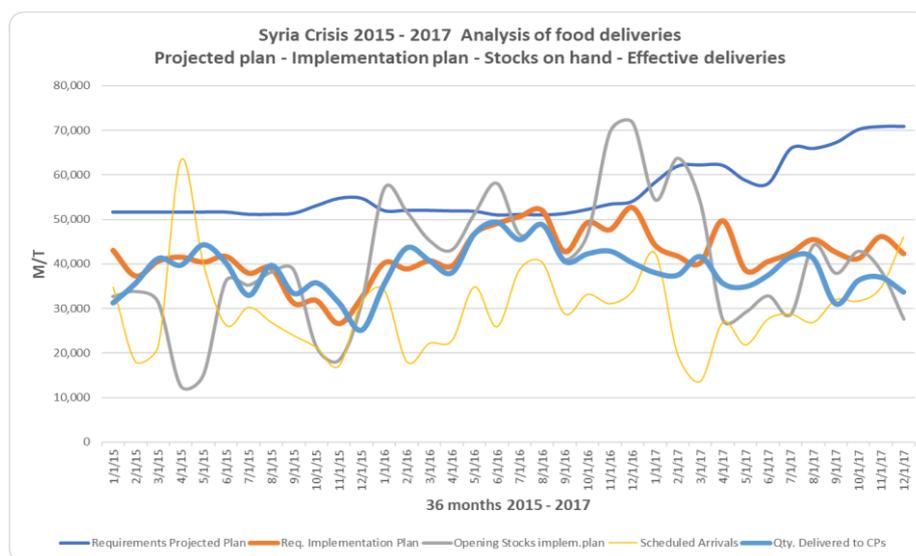
Cost-efficiency was high, with innovations applied to maximize performance and reduce costs. It has not been feasible to assess cost-effectiveness.

2.3.1 Timeliness

93. **An extremely timely at-scale General food assistance and basic needs response:** The response is characterized by its agility, with timely and regular general food assistance and basic needs delivery for beneficiaries (see Annex XI for more detail).

94. **In-kind:** The vast bulk of in-kind general food assistance deliveries were made for the Syrian Arab Republic, where timeliness was extremely high. Close monitoring along all the stages of the supply chain alongside a shift towards regional procurement, enabled a substantial reduction of the lead times from nearly four months to just 40 days.¹⁷⁹ Despite exceptionally challenging operating terrain, no major (total) pipeline breaks arose (Figure 8).¹⁸⁰ WFP also successfully managed pipeline cessation from Turkey in December 2017, with no noticeable effects from March 2018 in lead times.

Figure 8: Food deliveries in the Syrian Arab Republic



Source: COMPAS/LESS data

¹⁷⁹ Overall lead times from SPR, reduction to 40 day lead time refers to shipments via Mersin port.

¹⁸⁰ Validated by interviews with 9 United Nations and cooperating partners in Turkey (Gaziantep) and Jordan.

95. This timeliness is reflected in high achievements of 72-hour responses for urgent needs inside the Syrian Arab Republic, which stood at 80 percent in 2015; 85 percent in 2016; and 79 percent in 2017.¹⁸¹ In regionally-affected countries, evidence from WFP internal data¹⁸² and interviews indicate that the smaller proportions of in-kind delivery were also delivered in a timely way, helped by the established logistics infrastructure and developed road system in Jordan for example, supporting delivery for the complex Berm operation.
96. Participants in all general food assistance-related focus groups inside the Syrian Arab Republic confirmed that delivery had mostly been timely, with few gaps in supply. However, as Figure 8 and WFP corporate reporting¹⁸³ also reflect, the quantity of available supplies as required by the project plan¹⁸⁴ were, due to funding limitations, insufficient to allow WFP to consistently deliver a full ration to beneficiaries. Planning and actual delivery figures differed significantly, with quantities provided to cooperating partners falling short of initial planning figures by 31 percent in 2015, 17 percent in 2016, and 42 percent in 2017.¹⁸⁵ These shortfalls were managed through food-basket reductions with WFP seeking to maintain a minimum level of support to vulnerable families without reducing beneficiary numbers (Section 2.4.2). The food basket was further trimmed to a lower calorific value in 2017.¹⁸⁶
97. **Cash-based transfers:** Registered cash-based transfer beneficiaries received timely card uploads. Those who experienced card issues encountered delays, as explained in paragraphs 98-102 below.
98. **Timely card uploads:** For the majority of registered beneficiaries, who did not experience any difficulties with their cards, partnerships with financial service providers allowed for timely monthly uploads. This was confirmed by beneficiaries in all relevant focus groups, who praised the system for its consistency and reliability.
99. **Few challenges for new beneficiaries:** The 2014-2015 evaluation found that WFP assistance to refugees had at times been delayed due to UNHCR registration procedures. With refugee numbers broadly stabilized since 2015, no such challenges were identified in 2018, though challenges of data accuracy remained.¹⁸⁷
100. **Delays for those encountering card issues:** For the minority of registered beneficiaries experiencing card issues, however, some significant challenges were reported. Routine difficulties – such as forgetting a PIN code, or a card being lost or damaged – commonly resulted in loss of access for one to three months in both Lebanon and Jordan. In Lebanon, a sample of hotline reports from the second half of 2017 showed an average of 1,312 separate card-related issues reported per month¹⁸⁸ (or nearly 16,000 card-related issues in annual terms).¹⁸⁹ Extrapolating from these figures, approximately 7 percent of households in Lebanon reported a card issue each year on average.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸¹ Annual performance plan data 2016-2018; figure for 2017 updated by the country office (from 76 percent).

¹⁸² Regional EMOP and PRRO SPRs 2015-2017.

¹⁸³ The Syrian Arab Republic PRRO SPRs 2015, 2016 and 2017.

¹⁸⁴ Volumes as per project documents for the Syrian Arab Republic EMOP and PRRO and subsequent budget revisions.

¹⁸⁵ Difference between projected requirements and quantities delivered to cooperating partners, data extracted from COMPAS and LESS delivery data.

¹⁸⁶ Caloric values were 1,646 kcal per person per day in 2015, 1,700 kcal per person per day in 2016, and 1,500 kcal per person per day in 2017 (SPRs 2015-2017 for the Syrian Arab Republic EMOP/PRRO).

¹⁸⁷ Though some delays did occur in Turkey, where the ESSN programme set ambitious enrolment targets and then encountered start-up challenges/backlogs; and focus group participants in Jordan reported challenges getting new children added to their assistance.

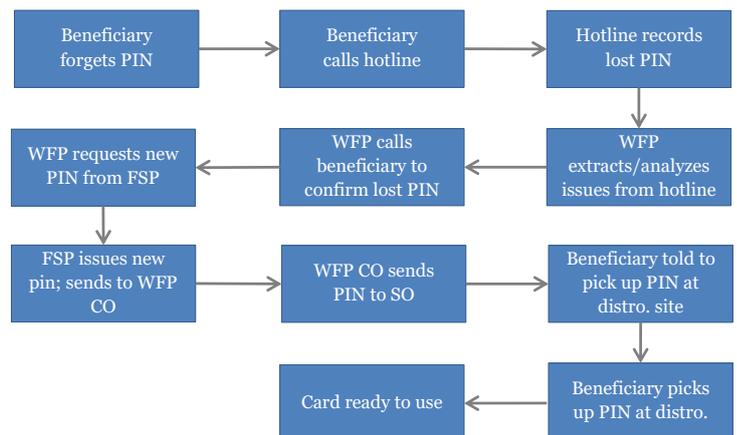
¹⁸⁸ The number of reported card issues ranged from a low of 736 to 2,682 per month.

¹⁸⁹ These include the narrative hotline reports from July to November 2017, provided by WFP Lebanon to the evaluation team.

¹⁹⁰ However, it is important to note that WFP deemed that many of the reported card issues (from 23 percent to 67 percent depending on the month in question) represented misunderstandings among beneficiaries and did not merit a response. This text also refers only to those card issues brought to the official WFP-UNHCR hotline; it does not capture any issues that may have been brought directly to WFP, CP or FSP personnel. Also, these figures do not reflect people who wished to report card issues but who were unable to provide sufficient information to confirm their identity to the call centre operators. While specific figures are unavailable, call centre personnel noted in Lebanon that a large number of calls fall into this category given the level of information required to verify a caller's identity (e.g. exact spelling of names, dates of births reported upon UNHCR registration, etc.).

101. This difficulty arose primarily from the mass nature of the response and the associated balance of costs and timeliness. Under the current model, beneficiaries' main point of contact with the supply of cash is through a beneficiary hotline (Section 2.4.6). With a caseload of hundreds of thousands in both countries, WFP consolidates identified issues arising on a monthly basis. Several other actors, including banks, the cooperating partner and WFP sub-office, then must also play their role in the chain of events. The ensuing process, reflected in Figure 9 – an example of the process of losing a PIN number in Lebanon - has a duration of several weeks at least.

**Figure 9:
Process of obtaining a new PIN in Lebanon**



Source: The evaluation team, based on interviews with WFP staff and CPs.

102. In the meanwhile, WFP monitoring reports and beneficiaries described adopting negative coping strategies.¹⁹¹ Notably, this issue did not occur in Turkey, where beneficiaries could simply visit a bank branch to pick up a replacement card (rather than waiting for it to be passed from the financial service provider to WFP and onward).

103. Similarly to in-kind transfers, WFP experienced a tension throughout the evaluation period between assessed needs – in terms of numbers of beneficiaries and the transfer levels they required – and available funding to meet needs. Consequently, cash-based transfer entitlements required adjustment during funding shortfalls. A particular crunch point occurred in 2015, when a funding crisis required reduced transfer values:¹⁹²

- In Jordan, for example, values for “vulnerable” beneficiaries outside camps were temporarily reduced from 10 Jordanian Dinars (JD) per person per month (pppm) in April-July to JD 5 ppm in August 2015. Support was completely cut in September 2015, before being restored (at JD 10 ppm) in October 2015. “Extremely vulnerable” refugees in communities experienced cuts from JD 20 ppm to JD 10 ppm from September 2015, before returning to – and remaining at – JD 20 ppm since January 2016.¹⁹³
- In Lebanon, the transfer value was cut from USD 19 per person per month to USD 13.50 ppm in July 2015. With funding restored, transfer values were raised to USD 21.60 ppm in October 2015.¹⁹⁴

104. The effects of these cuts are discussed in Section 2.4.2.

105. **Other activities - Mixed timeliness:** Contextual challenges formed the main barriers to timeliness in other activities. Nutrition activities encountered operational difficulties making the transition to e-vouchers as well as intermittent (though small-scale) pipeline breaks in the Syrian Arab Republic,¹⁹⁵ and could not be implemented as planned in Egypt, due to challenges identifying suitable cooperating partners.¹⁹⁶ School feeding programmes also experienced security and access-related blockages in the Syrian Arab Republic.¹⁹⁷ Resilience activities faced consistent challenges, including: delays in the receipt of funding and tight disbursement schedules; difficulties in identifying capacitated and

¹⁹¹ All 16 GFA FGDs in Lebanon and Jordan.

¹⁹² The impact of these cuts are further discussed in Section 2.4 and particularly in Box 10.

¹⁹³ WFP. 2015. *M&E JORDAN Brief - Impact of WFP cuts on Syrian Refugees in host community*. Internal report, unpublished.

¹⁹⁴ WFP Lebanon, *Impact of WFP Reductions in Assistance on Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*, January 2016.

¹⁹⁵ The Syrian Arab Republic PRRO SPR 2017.

¹⁹⁶ Regional PRRO SPR 2017.

¹⁹⁷ The Syrian Arab Republic PRRO SPR 2017.

interested partners; problems in meeting the required quotas of host communities to refugee participants in Lebanon and Jordan; and challenges with legal frameworks in Egypt.

2.3.2 Cost-efficiency

106. The evaluation set out to assess both the cost-efficiency¹⁹⁸ and cost-effectiveness¹⁹⁹ of WFP interventions in the regional response, applying a systematic approach. It has been feasible to develop some findings on cost-efficiency. However, a robust analysis of cost-effectiveness has not been possible under current WFP data systems (see Annex X for an explanation).

107. Cost-efficiency is assessed separately for the Syrian Arab Republic and for the refugee-hosting countries, due to the various modalities (in-kind/cash) applied. Diverse contextual conditions mean comparison between countries is not appropriate; no comparative analysis is therefore presented.

2.3.3 Cost-efficient in-kind delivery

108. The costs of in-kind delivery are affected by many factors, including security and access conditions, operating costs and the ability to purchase locally. For the Syrian Arab Republic, where the bulk of delivery was in-kind, major efforts were made to keep costs low. The proportion of the actual WFP budget consumed by commodities overall decreased very slightly over the evaluation period, to 66 percent for the period 2015-2017 from 69 percent in the period 2013-2014 (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Distribution of overall actual budget response inside the Syrian Arab Republic by budget line – 2013-2015 and 2015-2017



109. Overall, with respectively 73 percent (EMOP) and 68 percent (PRRO) of the total project costs allotted for the purchase of food commodities (2011-2017), cost components were efficiently distributed (Figures 11 and 12).

Figure 11: Funds Consumption report EMOP 200339 as at 31/12/2017

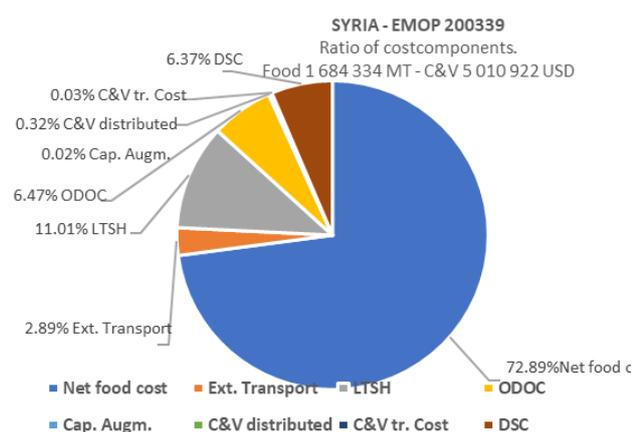
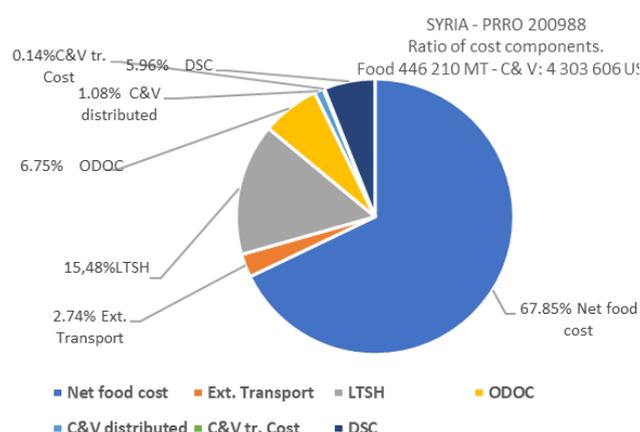


Figure 12: Funds Consumption report PRRO 200988 as at 31/12/2017



110. Annexes X (Cost-Efficiency and Cost-Effectiveness) and XI (Supply Chain) contain full analyses of the cost dimensions of the response. In summary, however, food transfer costs, net average prices for food, levels of direct support and other direct operational costs were retained at levels indicating a high degree of internal efficiency, with a 20 percent reduction in direct operational costs excluding commodity costs. Land, transport handling and storage (LTSH) costs were retained at USD 100-120

¹⁹⁸ Cost-efficiency is explored through unit cost indicators for amounts distributed (whether amounts of money transferred or amounts of in-kind food). See Annex X for a full explanation of the methodology applied.

¹⁹⁹ Assessed as cost per outcome produced.

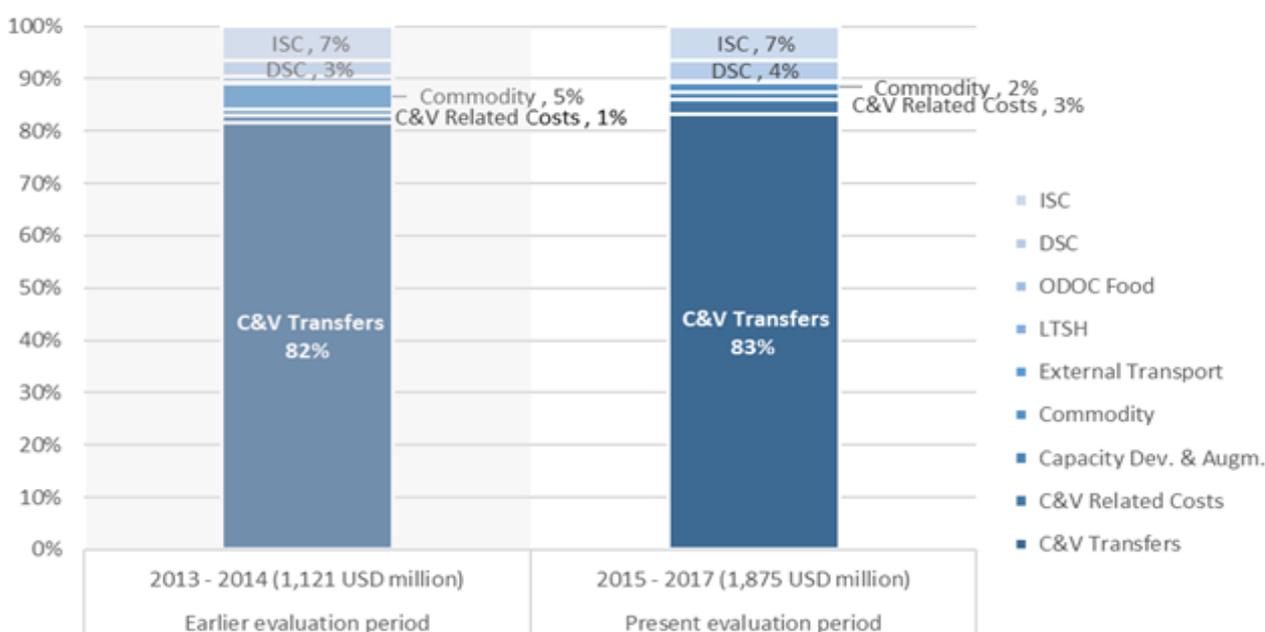
per metric ton; costs for surface transport steadily decreased over the period.²⁰⁰

111. **Maximizing local purchase:** Across the response, the use of local purchase for commodities in the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon and Jordan supported improved cost-efficiency and reduced lead times for commodity procurement. For example, in Jordan in 2017, WFP pursued local procurement for 100 percent of commodity requirements.²⁰¹ In the Syrian Arab Republic, WFP worked with a local food manufacturer to produce date bars for school feeding to required standards.²⁰²

2.3.4 Cost-efficient cash-based transfer delivery in refugee-hosting countries

112. The cash and voucher response in the refugee-hosting countries demonstrated a similar level of cost-efficiency (Figure 13). Overall, 83 percent of the aggregate available budget for the response was transferred to beneficiaries in cash and vouchers in the period 2015-2017.

Figure 13: Distribution of overall actual budget for the outside the Syrian Arab Republic response by budget line, periods 2013-2014 and 2015-2017



113. These aggregated figures naturally mask variations between countries, depending on specific operating costs and conditions. Annex X contains relevant data, but in summary: costs per USD transferred to beneficiaries declined in all countries over time. Reduced costs as systems (such as the use of the electronic SCOPE CARD in Iraq) and programmes (such as ESSN in Turkey) became established appear to have supported these reductions.

114. In Turkey, as part of the agreement between WFP and its European Union donors, a minimum of 85 percent of the total ESSN programme costs was required to reach beneficiaries. Actual expenditure until December 2017 indicates that WFP achieved a transfer ratio of 86 percent for the period 2016-2017.²⁰³

115. Other efforts to maximise cost-efficiency in the cash-based transfer response included:

²⁰⁰ Logistics expenditure trends for years 2013 to 2017, provided by WFP in February 2018; interviews with WFP staff; SPRs for 2015, 2016, and 2017.

²⁰¹ Regional EMOP SPR 2017; interviews with WFP Jordan staff. For example, local procurement in Jordan allowed for reduced costs of

bread by 19 percent, saving over USD 220,000 in the first quarter of 2017, and for date bars by 6.25 percent per metric ton.

²⁰² The Syrian Arab Republic PRRO SPR 2017; interviews with WFP country office staff. Local procurement and FSAs allowed for a 15 percent drop in the price of locally procured date bars.

²⁰³ Source: WFP Turkey. This figure includes indirect support costs (ISC). If ISC were excluded from the total programme costs, the ESSN transfer ratio would be of 92 percent, close to the 91 percent obtained through this evaluation's methodology 2015-2017.

- Engagement with private sector providers in some countries on cost-efficient terms, for example, in Turkey, where Halkbank provided services on a cost-neutral basis to WFP (though these are varied across countries, as noted in section 2.1.5)
- Reducing field level agreement (FLA) costs with cooperating partners - for example, in Lebanon, efforts to ensure efficiencies through cost-sharing and the potential for complementarities of activities (including those beyond general food assistance) resulted in a reduction of overall budgeted costs from USD 6.6 million in 2016 to USD 3.2 million in 2017.²⁰⁴

116. Reflecting findings from other studies,²⁰⁵ a key driver of cost-efficiency in WFP cash-based transfer interventions in this response was their scale. Duration is also likely to be a factor, with learning and investments made over seven years of crisis bearing fruit in terms of greater efficiencies.

2.3.5 Operational improvements and innovations for agility

117. The response was marked by a considerable number of operational improvements and innovations. These helped ensure the agility of the response – and consequently its timeliness and cost-efficiency.

118. **A highly professionalized supply chain in the Syrian Arab Republic:** In-kind delivery into the Syrian Arab Republic was characterized by a highly professionalized approach to the supply chain, where meticulous planning and ongoing operational improvement has set the standard for complex supply chains worldwide. Annex XI presents a full analysis; Box 6 contains a summary.

Box 6: Operational improvements to the supply chain in the Syrian Arab Republic

Operational improvement to ensure efficient delivery into the Syrian Arab Republic included the following:

- The drive to procure food commodities within the region, which helped to reduce external transport costs
- The three-ports model (Latakia, Beirut and Tartous), which allowed for flexibility and re-routing if pipeline breaks occurred. Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, the use of several warehouses also allowed for flexibility in transport corridors, with the ability to adapt as needs changed
- Needs-driven approach to procurement, with food supply agreements applied, where WFP negotiated agreements with suppliers to purchase specific food volumes over a period, at an agreed price (instead of the traditional model of buying food in bulk and storing it in warehousing). This ensured that commodities were drawn directly from suppliers' factories or warehouses, reducing risk and storage costs to WFP
- The use of long-term agreements with suppliers, which helped WFP reduce the lead time of new food arrivals from four months to 40 days
- Packaging inside the Syrian Arab Republic, and as close to the beneficiaries as possible, which speeded up delivery and created local employment
- Maximizing the efficiency of ground transport by market diversification. The implementation of a tariff system allowed smaller transporters to work at an established tariff, and to operate on routes that were previously only feasible for the largest competitors. This introduction of greater competition brought prices down while allowing smaller firms to grow and compete
- Paying strong attention to food quality in the Syrian Arab Republic, which has strict regulations and robust systems for inspection, avoiding costly delays and returns of cargo by maintaining an up-to-date knowledge base of import regulations. Whilst the Turkey pipeline was operational, WFP dedicated investment to ensuring a strong inspection routine at source, which meant that commodities could later enter the Syrian Arab Republic swiftly and within minimum delay.

Internal management improvements included:

- Implementing a supply chain working group, comprising high-level staff from the country office, regional bureau and HQ, with weekly conference calls enabling a live overview of the entire chain, so that adaptation could happen swiftly and as needs required
- Creating a supply chain dashboard, which provided continual and real-time oversight of status. This has now become the standard for all WFP corporate Level3 responses
- Developing and applying procedural systems, such as the use of the OPTIMUS and the "Concept of Operations" (CONOPS) visual planning system, to link upstream and downstream supply systems, and improve efficiency and oversight.

119. **Innovations in cash-based transfers:** Cash based transfer responses in refugee-hosting countries were also characterized by an extensive range of innovations. Like the improvements to the supply

²⁰⁴ Field level agreements; interviews with WFP Lebanon country office staff and management.

²⁰⁵ Maunder et al. (2016) Evaluation of the Use of Different Transfer Modalities in ECHO Humanitarian Aid Actions 2011–2014, ECHO, Brussels.

chain in the Syrian Arab Republic, many of these initiatives have the potential to inform future responses. They are centred on the development and use of digitalized safety net management systems, in Lebanon and Jordan particularly, and include:

- The use of at-scale iris scan technology in camps in Jordan (jointly with UNHCR) to verify the identity of beneficiaries for each transaction
- The multi-agency LOUISE platform and use of common e-cards, along with an online e-card management application, in Lebanon
- The use of retail strategies, creating for example collective Buying Clubs in Lebanon, which enabled at-scale purchasing, with consequent decreases in shelf prices; and using “open book contracts”, such as in Zaatari camp in Jordan, which gave WFP close visibility into how retailers manage their shops (though, as noted in Section 2.2.3, this did not necessarily translate into programmatic actions to address price-hiking).

120. Specific examples with scope for replication include the use of technology to generate real-time transaction data in Lebanon and Jordan, allowing for WFP to closely monitor purchasing and retail patterns (Box 7).

Box 7: Innovations in monitoring and information management

Transaction analysis in Lebanon: In 2016, in cooperation with the Centre for Innovation 4 at Leiden University, WFP Lebanon developed an automated real-time information feed tool to support the USD 20 million a month cash transfer programme. The information feed conducts rapid, advanced analysis of near real-time transaction of WFP-contracted retailers and triangulates the information against a number of data fields.

With improved speed and quality of transaction data analysis, WFP has advanced information on monitored shops, which enables the organization to take action on any anomalies and to work with retailers for improved quality of delivery.

Triangulation Database in Jordan (right): The Triangulation Database in Jordan combines data from banks, the WFP distribution list and its shops to enable close management of retailers and financial service providers. It provides real-time information on purchase patterns, retailer behaviour and card uploads.

Category	Sub-Category	Value (JOD)	Notes
Opening Balance		639,749.02	Residual balances from previous periods
Total Credit	Pre-Paid Reload	8,635,540.00	Funds loaded for 134,263 households selected for assistance in March
	Credit Voucher	0	
	Credit Voucher (Sale)	507.95	Credit voucher (Sales) are refunds credited to respective beneficiary accounts for erroneous transactions
	Pre-Paid Miscellaneous Credit	15.00	
Total Debit	Sales	8,594,098.12	Sales in the WFP contracted shops
	Pre-Paid Miscellaneous Debit	0	
	Pre-Paid Redemption	21,195.15	Pre-paid redemption is the money recovered by WFP e.g from unused accounts for 60 days and above
	Cash ATM	450.00	Cashed by beneficiaries on cash comparative study
Closing Balance		660,068.71	

121. Additionally, WFP Jordan pioneered the use of “blockchain” technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness in cash-based transfers (Box 8).

Box 8: Blockchain piloting in Jordan

The WFP blockchain pilot in Jordan set out to address some common challenges with the use of cash-based transfers in humanitarian response, namely:

- Reducing costs by aggregating thousands of individual transactions into a few bulk payments
- Reducing financial risk by not advancing funds to financial service providers
- Better protecting beneficiary privacy by not sharing details with third parties
- Enhancing reconciliation by basing activities on WFP-generated data as opposed to vendor invoices
- Improving control by reducing the need to channel instructions through other entities.

As of 30 September 2017, 10,500 beneficiaries had successfully redeemed USD 1.4 million of entitlements through 170,000 transactions using the blockchain pilot. No beneficiary data was shared outside of WFP; no funds were advanced to the financial service providers; and bank fees were reduced by 98 percent.²⁰⁶ As of March 2018, over 106,000 beneficiaries were on blockchain technology in camps.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ WFP Jordan (2017) WFP “CBT Innovation – Blockchain Project Document” (V20171016).

²⁰⁷ WFP Jordan (2018) Presentation on GFA.

122. These innovations are standout features of the response; they offer lessons for WFP corporately but also for the wider humanitarian community.

2.4 What results were delivered?

Summary

WFP general food/basic needs assistance met or exceeded internal targets and maintained food security levels of beneficiaries, despite not realizing intended transfer values in entitlements. Other activity areas also showed some emerging improvements. Additionally, WFP helped open up humanitarian access in the Syrian Arab Republic, and delivered significant economic benefits for, and shared technical knowledge with, host countries, though activities had mixed effects on social cohesion.

Assistance adhered to the humanitarian principles, though the mass scale of the response challenged rigour at local level. Across the response, despite progress in some locations, gender and protection concerns experienced insufficient mainstreaming. Mechanisms for accountability to affected populations (AAP) did not adequately meet beneficiary concerns, needs or expectations. Some efforts were made at graduation, or self-reliance, mainly through resilience programmes, and planning for the future was underway.

2.4.1 Performance monitoring

123. **Improved performance monitoring:** WFP had improved its approach to results monitoring in the response since the 2014-2015 evaluation, which found weaknesses.²⁰⁸ Figure 14 maps the main changes.

Figure 14: Changes in monitoring and evaluation since 2015



Source: WFP, Regional Monitoring Overview: Syria Refugee Response, 5 October 2017.²⁰⁹

124. Key developments included:

- A Regional Bureau Cairo-produced Emergency Monitoring and Evaluation Package,²¹⁰ which introduced food security outcome monitoring (FSOM). Despite some reservations with regards to sampling,²¹¹ quarterly FSOM products permit regular and consistent insights into the effects of WFP interventions, including counterfactual data and focus groups with beneficiaries
- The use of the GRASP application,²¹² which enables mobile data collection. This was applied across the region starting in 2016-2017 for monitoring and evaluation and/or vulnerability assessments,

²⁰⁸ These included varied monitoring approaches between countries and counterfactuals which were either lacking or unsound. *Evaluation of WFP's Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis, (2011-2014)*, p. 22.

²⁰⁹ The evaluation team has, with WFP input, slightly amended this WFP-created figure in the interest of clarity and accuracy.

²¹⁰ WFP Regional Bureau Cairo, Emergency M&E Package, January 2016. This is reportedly due to be made a corporate document.

²¹¹ These include sampling strata, with between 2 and 11 sampling strata considered in each country, with quarterly sample sizes of beneficiaries ranging from 175 in Iraq to 3,595 in Turkey; and the 90 percent confidence interval, implemented in line with WFP corporate Minimum Monitoring Requirements. See Regional Monitoring Overview: Syria Refugee Response, 5 October 2017.

²¹² See: <https://resources.vam.wfp.org/taxonomy/term/40>.

depending on location

- The 2017 piloting of social cohesion indicators and monitoring systems²¹³
- In Lebanon, an independent, ECHO-funded monitoring and evaluation system (CaMEALeON) related to the WFP multi-purpose cash programme had been designed, and, once fully operational, will supplement the evidence base for cash-based transfer modality selection.²¹⁴

125. **Rigorous approaches inside the Syrian Arab Republic:** In the Syrian Arab Republic, where WFP faced both high levels of scrutiny of its operation and limited visibility across the operating terrain, the organization invested considerably in developing its internal monitoring systems (Box 9).

Box 9: Monitoring and evaluation in the Syrian Arab Republic

Investments in WFP Syria's performance monitoring since 2016 included:

- Country-specific monitoring strategy developed in 2016²¹⁵
- Full roll-out of the corporate mobile data collection and analytics (MDCA) inside the country and in cross-border areas in 2018
- Monitoring targets set high, at 80 percent coverage of regular programming and 100 percent coverage of cross-border activities
 - ✓ Cross-border monitoring wholly conducted through third party monitors, divided into cross-border North and South. Coverage targets in 2017 were met in the North, but not in the South, due to security conditions
 - ✓ In 2016, 80 percent of regular programme monitoring was conducted by third party monitors; this had been reduced to 68 percent by the last quarter of 2017.²¹⁶

2.4.2 Delivering results – general food/basic needs assistance²¹⁷

126. Overall, general food/basic needs assistance met or exceeded its targets for caseload delivery and maintained beneficiaries' food security levels. Output targets, in terms of beneficiaries served, were either met or exceeded, and food consumption and dietary diversity scores (DDS) maintained, with use of coping strategies reduced.

127. **Beneficiary targets met or exceeded:** Corporate monitoring data²¹⁸ indicate that, overall for the six countries, across activities, WFP consistently reached (and in several cases exceeded) the planned number of beneficiaries for 2015-2017 (Table 7).

Table 7: Aggregated planned versus actual beneficiaries, 2015-2017, for the six countries²¹⁹

Type	Planned			Actual			Actual/Planned			
	Sex	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Overall
2015		3,251,086	3,396,142	6,647,228	3,343,583	3,542,139	6,885,722	102.8%	104.3%	103.6%
2016		3,366,111	3,513,581	6,879,692	3,238,187	3,800,151	7,038,338	96.2%	108.2%	102.3%
2017		4,328,708	4,415,207	8,743,915	4,139,602	4,633,494	8,773,096	95.6%	104.9%	100.3%

Source: SPRs, 2015-2017.

128. These aggregated figures mask variations between countries, with achievements in the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan and Lebanon (who all achieved or exceeded 100 percent of planned beneficiaries)

²¹³ *Regional Monitoring Overview: Syria Refugee Response*, 5 October 2017, Regional Bureau Cairo.

²¹⁴ CaMEALeON is an independent M&E consortium. For further information, see: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/61722>.

²¹⁵ WFP Syria, *Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy*, 28 February 2016.

²¹⁶ WFP Syria, *Third Party Monitoring Review - Syria*, September 2017.

²¹⁷ Data on results are based on WFP corporate reporting systems, particularly SPR and financial data, to make aggregate assessments of achievements on results. Activities are disaggregated where feasible, but where not, given the weight of GFA in the portfolio (see Section 1.4), data on GFA are applied as a proxy for overall achievement.

²¹⁸ These include standard project reports (SPRs) as well as extracted SPR data provided by WFP.

²¹⁹ Aggregation of total beneficiary of EMOP/PRRO from SPRs: The WFP "Guidance Note on Beneficiary Definition and Counting" indicates that beneficiaries are counted once regardless of the number of activities with which they are involved. However, due to operating conditions and challenges facing beneficiary identification and tracking, the possibility of double-counting cannot be excluded. See: WFP, *Guidance Note on Beneficiary Definition and Counting*, 2012; and WFP, *Counting Beneficiaries in WFP*, 5 October 2012.

helping to offset lower numbers for Egypt, Iraq and Turkey until 2017, when ESSN upscaled.

129. However, as stated in Section 2.3.1, given funding shortages, WFP did not manage to realize its full intended transfers to beneficiaries (Tables 8 and 9). It delivered just over half the intended tonnage in 2015 and 2017 respectively (though with higher volumes in 2016, when funding permitted).²²⁰ A similar proportion of cash-based transfers was delivered:

Table 8: Planned versus actual food distribution (MT), 2015-2017

	2015			2016			2017			Total 2015 -2017		
	Planned Total (MT)	Actual Total (MT)	% Actual v. Planned	Planned Total (MT)	Actual Total (MT)	% Actual v. Planned	Planned Total (MT)	Actual Total (MT)	% Actual v. Planned	Planned Total (MT)	Actual Total (MT)	% Actual v. Planned
Refugee-Hosting	5,955	9,787	164%	28,677	15,230	53%	33,515	12,110	36%	68,147	37,127	54%
Syria	626,339	393,959	63%	619,484	502,580	81%	764,594	438,812	57%	2,010,417	1,335,351	66%
Overall Total	632,294	403,746	64%	648,161	517,810	80%	798,109	450,922	56%	2,078,564	1,372,478	66%

* Totals comprise the aggregation of actual v. planned MT across the EMOP/PRRO

Table 9: Planned versus actual cash-based transfer and voucher distribution (USD) 2015-2017

	2015			2016			2017			Total 2015 -2017		
	Planned Total (USD)	Actual Total (USD)	% Actual v. Planned	Planned Total (USD)	Actual Total (USD)	% Actual v. Planned	Planned Total (USD)	Actual Total (USD)	% Actual v. Planned	Planned Total (USD)	Actual Total (USD)	% Actual v. Planned
Refugee-Hosting	639,238,900	354,423,237	55%	543,904,961	437,778,928	80%	922,646,389	773,616,230	84%	2,105,790,250	1,565,818,395	74%
Syria	5,760,000	1,193,257	21%	28,712,500	3,047,746	11%	33,015,000	4,870,728	15%	67,487,500	9,111,731	14%
Overall Total	644,998,900	355,616,494	55%	572,617,461	440,826,674	77%	955,661,389	778,486,958	81%	2,173,277,750	1,574,930,126	72%

* Totals comprise the aggregation of actual v. planned USD across the EMOP/PRRO, using both cash and voucher modalities.

130. Thus, although WFP reached the intended number of beneficiaries on average across the region, it served them with less food assistance than planned.

131. **Maintaining food consumption scores in beneficiaries:** A rising gap between the proportion of WFP beneficiaries to non-beneficiaries with acceptable food consumption scores²²¹ indicates that WFP assistance – even if less than full transfer values - helped to maintain food consumption among beneficiaries. At the same time, perhaps due to asset depletion and other factors, food consumption scores declined markedly among non-beneficiaries. For example, in quarter one of 2016, the gap stood at 9.2 percent.²²² By quarter three of 2017, it had grown to 24.3 percent (Table 10).

Table 10: Gap in acceptable food consumption scores between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries (average across Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon)²²³

	Q1 2016	Q2 2016	Q3 2016	Q4 2016	Q1 2017	Q2 2017	Q3 2017
Beneficiaries with acceptable FCS	70.5%	75.3%	79.3%	73.5%	74.3%	67.3%	75.5%
Non-beneficiaries with acceptable FCS	61.3%	68.3%	64.0%	58.8%	57.3%	50.3%	51.3%
Gap between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries	9.2%	6.9%	15.3%	14.8%	17.0%	17.0%	24.3%

Source: WFP Regional Refugee M&E/FSOM reports

132. However, FSOM data, while capturing data from some former beneficiaries, does not provide specific insights into those beneficiaries who have been cut from WFP assistance – and for whom, according to WFP staff and cooperating partners,²²⁴ food consumption scores may well have declined markedly since being removed from the WFP beneficiary lists.

²²⁰ SPR data: the Syrian Arab Republic -specific EMOP/PRRO 2015-2017 and Regional EMOP/PRRO 2015-2017.

²²¹ Country-specific and regional FSOM reports for 2016 and 2017.

²²² I.e., 70.5 percent of beneficiaries had an acceptable FCS as opposed to 61.3 percent of non-beneficiaries.

²²³ Information on non-beneficiaries is not collected in Turkey.

²²⁴ Interviews with a majority of 140 WFP programme staff and 41 cooperating partners (excluding Red Cross/Red Crescent movement partners) in the six concerned countries.

133. **Higher dietary diversity scores and reduced coping strategies among beneficiaries:** WFP beneficiaries in refugee-hosting countries also had higher dietary diversity scores relative to non-beneficiaries (Figure 15)²²⁵ and reduced use of coping strategies (Figure 16) (though the same caveat as above applies to those who have been cut from WFP assistance).²²⁶

Figure 15: Dietary diversity scores, average of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, 2015-2017²²⁷

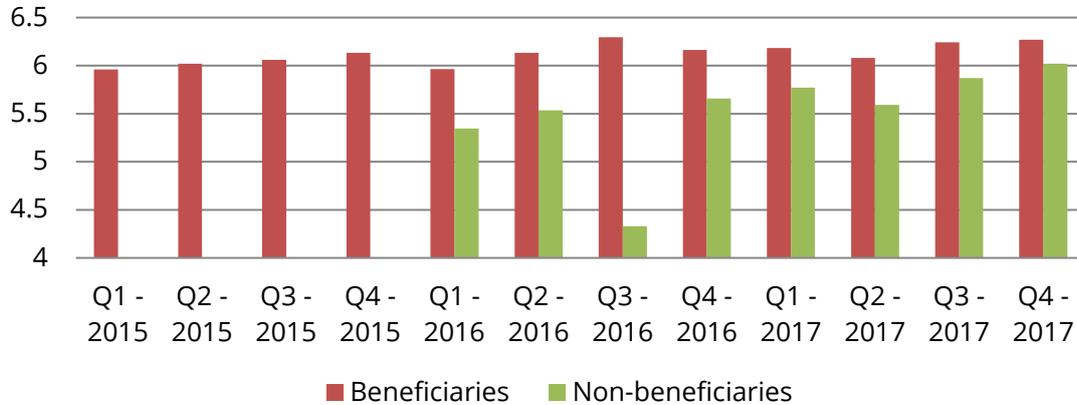
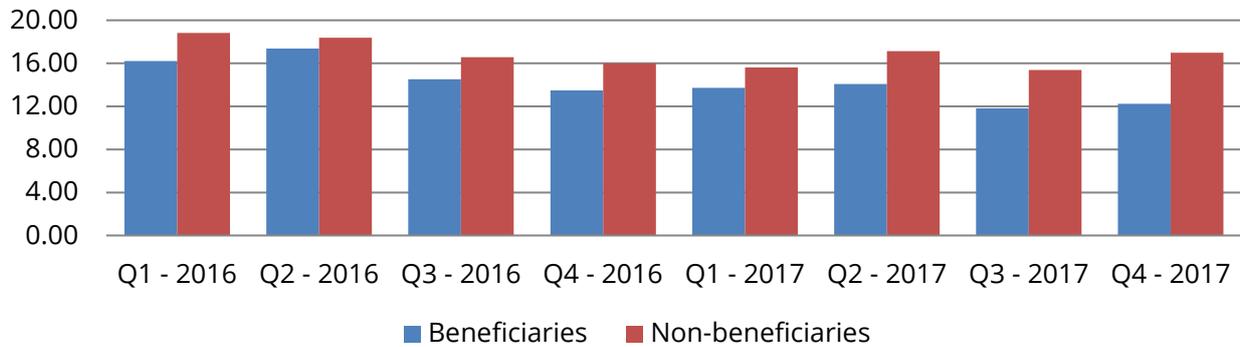


Figure 16: Coping strategy index, average of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, 2016-2017



Note: Higher CSI scores reflect the greater use of coping strategies and are, thus, negative. Lower scores reflect less reliance on coping strategies.

Source: WFP regional M&E/FSOM reports for Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon

134. A majority of beneficiaries consulted for this evaluation via 35 focus groups in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic corroborated coping strategies identified through WFP outcome monitoring, including: borrowing money or buying food on credit, relying on less preferred food, reducing the number of meals, reducing the portion size of meals, reducing food quantities and, lastly, borrowing food.²²⁸ According to WFP FSOM reports, whilst men preferred to build up debts at retailers to cover food needs, women more commonly indicated giving up meals in order to allow children to eat more.²²⁹

135. **Cuts in assistance led to declines in food security:** There is clear evidence that when WFP assistance was cut, for example due to limited funding, food security indicators suffered (see examples from Jordan and Lebanon in Box 10).²³⁰ In Jordan, WFP data indicated that cuts in voucher values in September 2015 led to a range of non-food-related coping strategies, including: (i) 34 percent more

²²⁵ M&E/FSOM data from RBC, provided to the evaluation team.

²²⁶ The data in Figures 15 and 16 does not reflect Turkey or the Syrian Arab Republic due to different approaches to data collection for non-beneficiaries; and the average scores reflected in the figures mask differences between countries.

²²⁷ M&E/FSOM data from RBC, provided to the evaluation team. Data not available for the Syrian Arab Republic. This reflects data only for Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. The figures for non-beneficiaries in Q3 2016 decline markedly – the reasons for this are unclear.

²²⁸ See regional and country-specific M&E/FSOM reports; validated by focus group data for the evaluation.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Further details about the timing and extent of these cuts (in terms of changes in assistance levels) can be found in paragraph 104.

families withdrew their children from school; (ii) 29 percent of families sent under-age children to work compared with only 5 percent before; (iii) nearly 80 percent of families borrowed money to pay for basic food needs; and (iv) 13 percent of families sent at least one family member to beg in order to meet their basic food needs compared with only 4 percent before.²³¹

Box 10: The impact of voucher value cuts

WFP-commissioned studies in 2015 (Jordan) and 2016 (Lebanon)²³² found clear evidence of worsening food security when voucher values were cut following the 2015 funding crisis. In Jordan for example:

- The proportion of beneficiaries with acceptable food consumption scores declined from 82 percent before the cuts to 39 percent afterwards, while the number of “borderline” cases nearly doubled
- 27 percent of beneficiary households were rated as having poor food consumption scores after the cuts (as opposed to nil in this category previously)
- Consumption fell across all food groups except for pulses; average daily consumption of cereals dropped by one third, and meat consumption was cut in half.

It was not until quarter 2 of 2016 in Jordan that the food consumption scores among assisted individuals returned to the pre-cut levels; and in Lebanon the levels of acceptable food consumption score never fully returned to the pre-cut values.²³³

2.4.3 Early gains in other activity results

136. Identifying results for resilience, school feeding and nutrition programmes was challenging, given WFP corporate reporting formats and short timeframes for implementation (since 2017). Nonetheless, a number of results were identified.

137. **Resilience:** The emphasis on resilience activities in the region on a “public works” model geared to increasing transfers to beneficiaries (rather than creating sustainable livelihoods), means that it is assessed here on its contribution to food security. In Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic over 2017, resilience participants’ consumption-based coping strategy index scores decreased slightly, while food consumption scores slightly increased (Table 11 - though the opposite was true in Lebanon, where coping strategy index scores increased slightly overall, and notably so for women, and acceptable food consumption score levels declined slightly overall but increased considerably for women).

Table 11: Effects of resilience activities, 2017²³⁴

	Acceptable FCS		DDS		Consumption-based CSI	
	Base	Follow-up	Base	Follow-up	Base	Follow-up
Syrian Arab Republic (overall)	80.90	87.00	6.26	6.56	10.26	6.47
Women	84.90	89.60	6.26	6.69	12.00	5.93
Men	80.30	86.60	6.26	6.54	10.01	6.59
Jordan (overall)	89.40	93.00	na	na	7.46	3.90
Women	88.70	90.90	na	na	7.86	4.02
Men	89.70	94.20	na	na	7.26	3.92
Lebanon (overall)	65.10	62.40	na	na	15.81	16.94
Women	47.20	50.90	na	na	14.54	23.55
Men	68.00	64.40	na	na	16.01	15.78

Source: 2017 SPRs for the Syrian Arab Republic PRRO and the Regional PRRO

138. **School feeding:** The cash-for-education (Min Ila) programme in Lebanon, which WFP implemented jointly with UNICEF, led to stable food consumption scores and reduced food-related coping strategies.²³⁵ Enrolment increased in schools implementing the WFP school meals programme in the Syrian Arab Republic (Table 12):

Table 12: Enrolment rates in the Syrian Arab Republic

²³¹ WFP Jordan, Impact of WFP cuts on vulnerable Syrian refugees in Jordanian communities, October 2015.

²³² WFP Jordan, *Impact of WFP Cuts on Vulnerable Syrian Refugees in Jordanian Communities*, October 2015; WFP Lebanon, *Impact of WFP Reductions in Assistance on Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*, January 2016.

²³³ According to data provided to the evaluation team by WFP. See: *Trend Analysis Syria Refugee Q4 2017*. Internal report, unpublished.

²³⁴ Results for Jordan reported against asset creation and livelihoods beneficiaries (Regional PRRO SPR 2017); for Lebanon under Strategic Results 3: ‘Smallholders have improved food security and nutrition’ (ibid) and for the Syrian Arab Republic under FFA (the Syrian Arab Republic PRRO SPR 2017).

²³⁵ UNICEF, Main Preliminary Results: *No Lost Generation: “Min Ila” Child-Focused Cash Transfer Pilot Programme*, May 2017.

	December 2016	December 2017
Girls	14.33	16.08
Boys	14.03	22.31
Overall	14.30	18.03

Source: SPR 2017

139. **Nutrition:** Results for nutrition programmes in the Syrian Arab Republic (Table 13) showed decreased mortality and non-response rates, but poorer than hoped for recovery and higher default rates, due to internal population movements.²³⁶

Table 13: Nutrition outcome indicators, the Syrian Arab Republic

Outcome	December 2016	December 2017
MAM treatment recovery rate, overall (%)	83.42	70.81
Women	83.55	70.53
Men	83.27	71.19
MAM treatment mortality rate, overall (%)	0.07	0.0
Women	0.14	0.0
Men	0.0	0.0
MAM treatment default rate, overall (%)	14.36	27.39
Women	14.08	27.56
Men	14.69	27.15
MAM treatment non-response rate, overall (%)	1.22	0.42
Women	1.39	0.48
Men	1.02	0.33

Source: 2017 SPR for the Syrian Arab Republic PRRO

2.4.iv Additional results identified

140. **Opening up humanitarian access in the Syrian Arab Republic:** The reliance of international actors on the Syrian authorities for humanitarian access in the country requires a delicate balancing act, with agencies needing to walk a fine line between maintaining relationships to facilitate delivery whilst pursuing opportunities for humanitarian advocacy. Given the mutual respect earned with the Syrian authorities, WFP frequently played a major role in access negotiations as part of the humanitarian community,²³⁷ resulting in tangible effects in increased access. Box 11 provides examples.

Box 11: Opening up humanitarian access in the Syrian Arab Republic ²³⁸

Syria-based stakeholders reported that, during cross-line convoys, which operated on a weekly basis until 2017, WFP often led humanitarian convoys, which allowed transfer of humanitarian relief into besieged and hard-to-reach areas. WFP also played a key role, alongside its United Nations partners, in access-related discussions.

During the siege of Deir Ezzor, which lasted from July 2014 to September 2017, WFP implemented humanitarian airdrops. When the siege lifted, in September 2017, and following United Nations negotiations on the use of access routes, WFP was the first agency allowed to enter by road. It conducted a trial delivery, which was then followed by an inter-agency delivery headed by the (WFP-led) logistics cluster.

In the North East of the country, where access was restricted by parties to the conflict, in January 2017, WFP participated in advocacy for humanitarian access. Access to WFP alone was granted from Aleppo to Manbij, with a trial convoy of three WFP trucks

²³⁶ SPRs 2016 and 2017, triangulated with three key informant interviews in the Syrian Arab Republic.

²³⁷ Interviews with 61 WFP, United Nations and Government of the Syrian Arab Republic respondents inside the Syrian Arab Republic and 19 in regional coordination mechanisms; the Syrian Arab Republic EMOP SPR 2016.

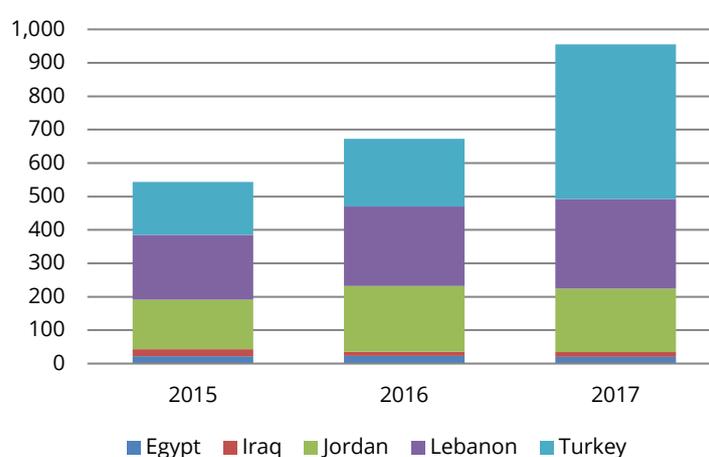
²³⁸ Ibid.

initially. On their successful arrival, subsequent deliveries began to Qamishli, following which inter-agency convoys were permitted.

141. Careful WFP positioning vis-à-vis the Syrian authorities also helped facilitate access for the humanitarian community as a whole. Between January 2015 and December 2017, the average rejection rate for regular WFP general food assistance convoy facilitation letters was just 0.7 per cent.²³⁹ Partner United Nations agencies and cooperating partners consistently referenced WFP “generosity” in sharing convoy or air delivery space to enable delivery of other agencies’ humanitarian supplies.²⁴⁰

142. **Economic contributions to host countries:** The high volumes of cash transfers, as well as other expenditure by WFP, translated into very considerable economic benefits for host countries. Overall, in 2017, for example, WFP injected nearly USD 1 billion into the local economies of the main refugee-hosting countries (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Contribution of WFP to host country economies (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey) via programmatic activities and procurement²⁴¹



Source: Data based on WFP WINGS and COMPAS systems

143. Contributions to national economies are significant. For example, the USD 238 million injected into the Lebanese economy in 2016 was equivalent to 0.5 percent of the country’s gross domestic product that year.²⁴² Cash transfers also have economic multiplier effects which WFP had previously documented in major VAM studies in 2014.²⁴³ These found that, in Lebanon, WFP cash-based transfer programming had a multiplier effect of 1.51 on the local economy; specifically, that every USD 1 spent by WFP in the country would generate an additional USD 1.51 of economic activity. These studies have not been replicated more recently.

144. **Mixed effects on social cohesion:** WFP contributions to social cohesion were mixed, sometimes helping promote it – and sometimes exacerbating existing tensions:

- **Maintaining the political and social balance:** Positively, government-led directives to include

²³⁹ As per an exhaustive list of facilitation letters from 2015 to 2017, dated February 2018, shared with the evaluation team by WFP Syria.

²⁴⁰ Interviews with nine United Nation partners in the Syrian Arab Republic and seven in regional coordination mechanisms; and with eight cooperating partners involved in cross-border activities.

²⁴¹ Data provided by country offices and the regional bureau; triangulated with data from WFP systems including WINGS/COMPAS and includes: transfer values to beneficiaries; local/regional procurement of food; and other expenditure made by WFP within the response.

²⁴² GDP for Lebanon was reported as USD 47.54 billion in 2016. Data on the WFP economic contribution was provided to the evaluation team by WFP and is dated 8 January 2018.

²⁴³ See WFP VAM, *Economic Impact Study: Direct and Indirect Effects fo the WFP Value-Based Food Voucher Programme in Lebanon*, July 2014. WFP VAM, *Economic Impact Study: Direct and Indirect Impact of the WFP Food Voucher Programme*, April 2014; and <http://www1.wfp.org/cash-transfers>.

host communities in livelihood activities in Jordan and Lebanon, despite challenges in realizing relevant quotas,²⁴⁴ contributed to reducing tensions, according to focus groups participants and a majority of cooperating partners.²⁴⁵ Government officials reported that active WFP engagement in Lebanon with the National Poverty Targeting Programme, in particular, by supporting 10,000 vulnerable Lebanese households with cash-based transfers, also helped reassure host communities.²⁴⁶

- **Exacerbating existing social tensions:** At the same time, WFP cash-based assistance in Lebanon and Jordan – as other studies have recognized²⁴⁷ – exacerbated pre-existing social tensions. Beneficiaries consulted in 15 out of 20 cash-based transfer-based focus groups reported being harassed by local community members while waiting in line at ATMs to withdraw their WFP assistance.

145. In other contexts, such as Egypt, Syrian refugees were not seen as having a major impact on social cohesion and integration was reported as relatively fluid.²⁴⁸

146. **Sharing technical expertise:** Given the middle-income governance environments in which the response operated, WFP efforts mostly focused on sharing technical expertise with government agencies and cooperating partners rather than “capacity strengthening” in its traditional sense.²⁴⁹ Results included:

- In the Syrian Arab Republic, WFP shared its expertise on nutrition, VAM and social safety nets, particularly on monitoring and evaluation, with technical staff in line ministries.²⁵⁰
- In Lebanon, WFP worked with government technical staff on the Emergency National Poverty Targeting Programme (NPTP), to develop expertise in needs assessments and food security monitoring.²⁵¹
- In Turkey, skills transfer to Turkish Red Crescent took place in monitoring and evaluation, food security analysis, cash-based transfers and business transformation through the close collaboration facilitated by the joint management cell.²⁵²

2.4.5 How well did WFP adhere to the humanitarian principles in its response?

147. The concepts underlying humanitarian principles are complex and open to diverse interpretation.²⁵³ Additional challenges can arise when host governments and donors have different political priorities – often leaving humanitarian agencies caught in the middle.

148. The 2018 WFP evaluation of its Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access in Humanitarian Contexts (2004-2017)²⁵⁴ found that: neutrality, impartiality and operational independence required prioritized strengthening relative to access and humanity; staff capacities to understand and implement the principles needed to be built; and engagement with cooperating partners required increased attention to the principles. Findings from this evaluation mostly cohere with this list.

149. **Adherence to humanitarian principles:** Assessing WFP observance of humanitarian principles in the response could support a full evaluation on its own. In summary, however, this evaluation finds that WFP assistance has adhered to the principles, though risks exist at local level. Box 12 contains a summary, Annex XII a more detailed account.

Box 12: Humanitarian principles

²⁴⁴ For example, in Lebanon, data on past FFA/FFT projects provided by WFP indicates that they have had 2,845 Lebanese participants (34 percent) and 5,539 Syrian refugee participants (66 percent).

²⁴⁵ Raised by participants in 6/6 focus groups and 13 relevant cooperating partners.

²⁴⁶ Interviews with three government officials in Lebanon; supported by data from seven GFA focus groups.

²⁴⁷ See World Vision, *Social Cohesion between Syrian Refugees and Urban Host Communities in Lebanon and Jordan*, 2015.

²⁴⁸ WFP Egypt, *Social Cohesion among Syrian refugees and Host community*, 2017.

²⁴⁹ Based on interviews with WFP staff and government officials in the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

²⁵⁰ Interviews with WFP and government personnel.

²⁵¹ Interviews with WFP, Ministry of Social Affairs and technical staff of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

²⁵² Interviews with WFP and TRC personnel.

²⁵³ See for example WFP (2016) *Evaluation of WFP's Portfolio in Sri Lanka 2011-2015*.

²⁵⁴ WFP (2018) *Evaluation of WFP's Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access in Humanitarian Contexts (2004-2017)*.

Humanity
This was addressed through general food assistance/basic needs support in all six concerned countries. Limited financial resourcing, and access restrictions inside the Syrian Arab Republic, constrained WFP in being able to address suffering “wherever it is found”. Shortcomings in accountability to affected populations (Section 2.4.6 below), also prevented assistance being delivered in ways that fully respect the dignity of beneficiaries.
Neutrality
Consistent commitment to a needs-based approach across countries ensured a neutral approach. WFP also advocated for principled engagement inside the Syrian Arab Republic, and targeted beneficiaries in both government and opposition-held areas, utilizing United Nations Resolutions to reach across conflict lines. Efforts to expand the cooperating partner base in all countries also reflect efforts to ensure neutrality, though systems were not consistently in place to track and ensure full adherence by cooperating partners at local level.
Impartiality
A wide range of vulnerability assessments helped ensure that the differential needs of men, women and children were identified, so that assistance could be delivered impartially. Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, WFP prioritized vulnerable groups including internally displaced persons, out-of-school children and pregnant and lactating women. In refugee-hosting countries, it targeted those with no other evident means of support, including vulnerable host populations, refugee school children and vulnerable families.
Operational independence
This was the most difficult to navigate humanitarian principle in the response, given WFP dependence on a comparatively small pool of donors for its response and strong leadership by involved governments over humanitarian assistance being delivered on their territories. Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, WFP struck an appropriate balance between maintaining relationships to facilitate delivery, whilst seeking out opportunities for humanitarian advocacy. Across all involved countries, engaging at governorate level, and through cooperating partners, helped ensure operational independence, as did the use of independent monitoring. However, as for neutrality, tracking and ensuring full operational independence at local level encountered challenges.

150. **“Trade-offs” and complex choices:** The 2018 policy evaluation reported that WFP organizational culture often gives precedence to humanity and access over, and at times at a trade-off against, other longer-term considerations, including the perceived neutrality, operational independence and impartiality of WFP.²⁵⁵ This evaluation finds that the complex balancing act required by the Syrian regional crisis rendered the response less characterized by such explicit “trade-offs” between the humanitarian principles,²⁵⁶ and more by complex operational choices. Of many encountered during the course of this evaluation, examples include:

- Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, during frequent cross-line convoys at night, and under difficult conditions, WFP management and staff²⁵⁷ consistently reported facing decisions of whether to (i) accede to local demands to remove convoy items (mainly medical supplies) and risk violating United Nations agreements on collective delivery; (ii) persist in attempting delivery, potentially endangering staff; or (iii) withdraw, and fail to deliver at all.
- In refugee-hosting countries, WFP had to make operational decisions that balanced donor priorities, the strong leadership of national government over humanitarian assistance being delivered on their territories, and adherence to the WFP mandate – for example, in relation to choice of delivery modalities, or institutional arrangements for delivery.²⁵⁸
- Programme staff across Lebanon, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic described many difficult immediate choices when caught between contextual complexities, operational needs and external pressures to deliver; for example, regarding specific distribution/activity locations and types.²⁵⁹

151. There are no straightforward answers to these exceptionally difficult choices. But at senior level, all

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ This was particularly noted by a majority of 145 external stakeholders interviewed, and by all eight United Nations stakeholders inside the Syrian Arab Republic.

²⁵⁷ Reported by 17/34 WFP staff inside the Syrian Arab Republic and also by all eight stakeholders interviewed from other United Nations agencies. Issue also reported in outcomes from the Brussels Conference Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region 24-25/04/returnee2018 <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/34172/inside-syria-en.pdf> accessed 04-06-2018.

²⁵⁸ Interviews with 90 WFP staff and managers in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey.

²⁵⁹ Interviews with a majority of 232 WFP programme staff across the response.

WFP country and regional management interviewed articulated clear decision rationales,²⁶⁰ which encompassed deep understanding of the humanitarian principles; the ability to weigh up and balance many complex factors; and the experience to interpret and apply them amid complex contextual (especially political) dynamics.

152. At a more operational level, however, and as reflected elsewhere,²⁶¹ the majority of technical staff interviewed across the six country offices²⁶² voiced more instinctual choices, largely guided by trying to “do the right thing” and by management input where available, rather than by systematic interpretation of the principles. They were less consistently confident in recognizing or understanding the complex balance faced, often being accustomed to more technicized, and less politicized, operating conditions. This was exacerbated by the high turnover of staff, many of whom were relatively new to the response, and lacked experience of politically complex middle-income contexts. For local staff, the challenges were balancing the often competing pressures of; delivery on the humanitarian principles; adhering to WFP requirements; and applying their own deep knowledge of the intricacies of context.
153. Moreover, interviews²⁶³ found that few WFP cooperating partners overall had full awareness of the humanitarian principles or the concepts behind them, either explicitly or implicitly. WFP had no systems in place to monitor adherence to the principles in delivery, particularly at local level.
154. This evaluation did not encounter any direct violations of the humanitarian principles. However, the above does illustrate the complexities, at all levels, of humanitarian decision-making in intricate and politically sensitive environments. The centrifugal force of the humanitarian imperative and commitment to “do the right thing” shaped operational choices in the WFP Syrian regional response; but these were not systematically informed by structured information sources, operational guidance or technical support²⁶⁴ - leaving a “knowledge gap” on applying the principles in the practical, contextualized humanitarian action of the response.

2.4.6 Gender equality, protection and accountability to affected populations (AAP)

155. **Gender equality:** The WFP Gender Policy and Action Plan (2015-2020) commits WFP to: “A shift in gear ... to meet its global and institutional commitments to addressing gender issues, and implement its mandate fully and equitably.”²⁶⁵ Regional Bureau Cairo’s own Gender Policy Implementation Plan²⁶⁶ sets out the programming priorities and organizational requirements for delivering gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE) outcomes for the period 2016 to 2020. This “shift in gear” had not, as of mid-2018, yet taken place in the WFP Syrian regional response.
156. Although successive EMOP, PRRO and (T-I) CSP documents for the response make increased reference to gender, country gender action plans (GAPs) were of variable depth and quality, with some perfunctory at best.²⁶⁷ Institutional support for gender equality mainstreaming was insufficient, as follows:

²⁶⁰ Interviews with WFP Country and Regional Directors and Deputy Directors and Heads of Programmes in the six countries of the response and at the regional bureau.

²⁶¹ WFP (2018) *Summary Evaluation Report on WFP’s Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access in Humanitarian Contexts during the Period 2004–2017*.

²⁶² 129 technical staff interviewed in total.

²⁶³ 41 cooperating partners interviewed in total.

²⁶⁴ Such as information on humanitarian law and principles, accountability to affected populations and protection concerns. Also identified in the evaluation of *WFP’s Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access in Humanitarian Contexts (2004–2017)* (WFP (2018) op.cit.).

²⁶⁵ WFP Gender Policy (2015-2020).

²⁶⁶ RBC (2016) Gender Policy Implementation Plan (2016-2020).

²⁶⁷ In Jordan, the 2017 Gender Action Plan (GAP) presents a comprehensive list of programmatic actions with intended dates for achievement. But in Lebanon, the GAP was developed at the end of 2017 and reflected past actions rather than providing guidance on future intent. In Turkey, the GAP (developed in early 2018) contains a limited set of activities focused on staff actions (e.g. celebrating International Women’s Day) rather than a comprehensive plan for mainstreaming.

- **Insufficient human resourcing:** Full-time gender advisers were in place only in Turkey, the Syrian Arab Republic and Regional Bureau Cairo as of March 2018, and were secondees/on short term contracts. (Prior to this, advisers were focal points and/or part-time.) Other country offices had part-time gender focal points, who lacked dedicated time in their workplans/budgets. Staffing gaps, of several months to a year in Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey and Regional Bureau Cairo, were covered by part-time focal points.
- **Inconsistent Gender Results Networks (GRNs):** A gender results network was formed in Turkey under the ESSN in early 2018 after the arrival of a new gender adviser and a comparable structure established in Lebanon. A gender results network has also been in place in the Syrian Arab Republic since August 2017. However, these were the exceptions, and the “sharpened and professionalized” network promised by WFP in its 2015 gender policy, was not evident in the response.
- **Insufficient financial resourcing:** Financial commitments to gender action plans were mostly insufficient across the response. That for the Syria country office for 2017 was comparatively well resourced, at USD 459,000. However, also in 2017, the commitment to the Lebanon country office gender action plan was USD 79,998; for Jordan, USD 10,000; and for Turkey, which lacked a gender action plan in 2017, the only budget available in March 2018 was USD 3,500 for gender training.²⁶⁸
- **Limited senior management attention:** Despite senior management assertions across country offices that they prioritized gender, staff members²⁶⁹ in five of six country offices (Jordan being the exception) indicated that gender equality had largely been siloed (that is delegated to an individual) rather than treated as a strategic priority.
- **Gender parity in staffing:** Finally, although the WFP Gender Policy (2015) commits to gender parity in staffing, particularly at senior management level,²⁷⁰ the gender balance of senior management for the response was notably male-based. Figures provided at Annex XIII indicate that as of 31 March 2018 (and following a pattern in previous years), three of four senior managers at regional level and five of six involved Country Directors were men, as were four of seven Deputy Country Directors. This reflects a wider and striking gender imbalance in senior management staffing in the region as a whole.²⁷¹

157. **Insufficient attention in programming:** WFP data revealed strikingly higher food insecurity indicators among female-headed households who benefit from WFP assistance (as well as non-beneficiaries) – and, critically, a widening gap (Figure 18).²⁷²

²⁶⁸ Source: Gender action plans supplied by country offices, verified by interviews with gender advisers/focal points.

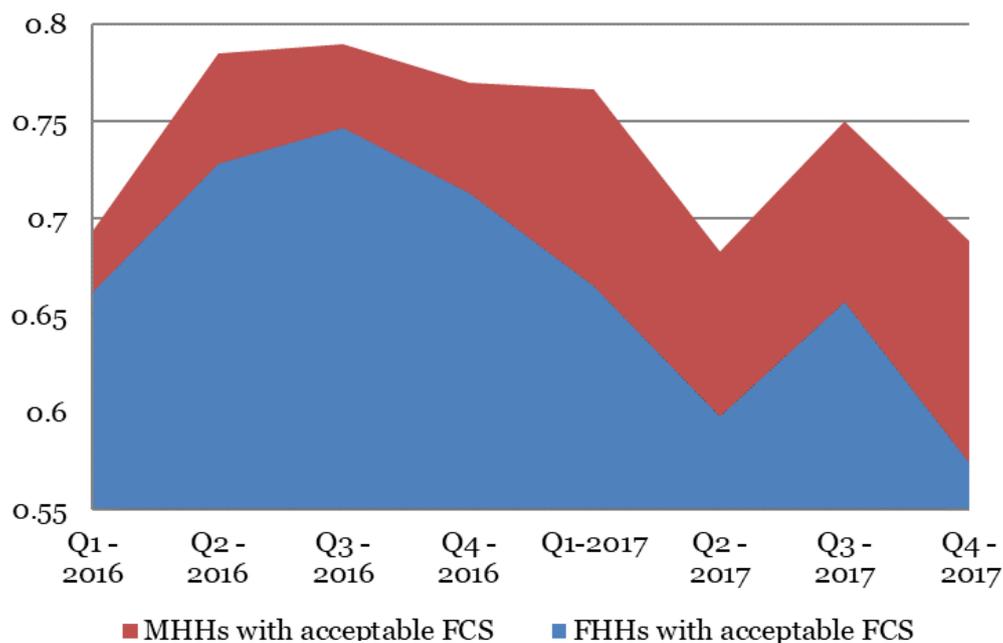
²⁶⁹ Amongst 129 WFP technical staff interviewed, including six gender advisers/focal points.

²⁷⁰ WFP Gender Policy (2015) Para 52: “WFP has equal representation of women...at P4 level and above, including at senior levels of field offices, committees and funds, irrespective of budgetary source” (referencing indicator 10cii the United Nations System Wide Action Plan for Gender).

²⁷¹ As of March 2018, 12/15 Country Directors and 8/14 Deputy Country Directors in the RBC region were men. See Human Resource statistics at Annex XIII, but in comparison: four out of five other WFP regions reflect a gender balance at Regional Director/Deputy Regional Director level (exception: RBN); and four out of five reflect a gender balance at Country Director level (exception: RBJ).

²⁷² Note that there is no random representative sampling to cover both household sexes as separate strata; data provided here reflects an acceptable approach based on WFP minimum monitoring requirements, but can be considered as indicative only.

Figure 18: Food insecurity indicators for female-headed households



Source: Regional M&E/FSOM reports

158. Despite this evident differential, the response had not moved to adjust transfer values to female-headed households, nor taken any other actions to narrow the gap.²⁷³ Some resilience activities had been differentiated; food-for-training activities, for example, specifically targeted women. But these were small-scale initiatives with design challenges.

159. **Limited progress in corporate indicators:** Although it cannot be definitively linked to weak programmatic attention, the corporate indicator of “the proportion of households in which women make decisions over WFP assistance or where men and women jointly make decisions” had risen only in the Syrian Arab Republic and Egypt (and in camps in Turkey) during 2015-2017. It declined or stayed largely stable in other affected countries (Table 14).

Table 14: Percentage of households in which women make decisions over food assistance or where men and women jointly make decisions

Context	2015	2016	2017	Target
Syrian Arab Republic	73.7	72.9	92	80
Egypt	69	88.2	91.7	75
Iraq	88	98	74.8	90
Jordan	78	74.6	74	80
Lebanon	77	80	79	75
Turkey - In camp	72	88.8	88	75
Turkey - Out of camp	-	91.6	66.5	75

Source: SPR data; this indicator reflects the main gender reporting in SPRs.

2.4.7 Protection

160. WFP is not a protection-mandated agency, unlike UNHCR. However, its 2012 Humanitarian Protection Policy adopts a pragmatic approach. WFP should be: “Designing and carrying out food and livelihood assistance activities that do not increase the protection risks faced by the crisis-affected

²⁷³ Focus group discussions conducted for the evaluation did not record any notable difference between the responses of men and those of women to questions asked – other than the use of coping mechanisms, reported in para 136.

populations receiving assistance. Rather, food assistance should contribute to the safety, dignity and integrity of vulnerable people.”²⁷⁴ The 2018 WFP Evaluation of the Humanitarian Protection Policy identified significant gaps in both the policy and its implementation. It recommended that WFP formally affirm protection of, and accountability to, affected populations as a core responsibility, and improve partnerships, leadership and stakeholder dialogue on the issue - including with affected populations.²⁷⁵

161. **Insufficient attention to, and staffing for, protection concerns:** Attention to protection in the response was even less consistent than for gender. The two 2017 PRRO documents²⁷⁶ reference the issues (see Annex VI), but only the Turkey (T-I) CSP subsequently comment on them.²⁷⁷ Like gender, protection also suffered from limited staffing, with protection advisers (at Regional Bureau Cairo and in WFP Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon) all secondees/on short-term contracts, and with intermittent gaps in staffing over the period. Staff also generally covered a broad range of protection, gender and accountability to affected population issues. The exception was Turkey, where protection forms part of the contractual arrangements, and where a team of two protection officers was in place, and a network of focal points established.²⁷⁸
162. Programmatically, protection issues, linked to WFP corporate indicators, featured in monitoring templates including FSOM reports for the response (though these necessarily had only limited coverage of the beneficiary population).²⁷⁹ Hotlines could also identify protection issues, where these were raised by beneficiaries. The main system for addressing protection actions within the response was the application of referral mechanisms (mostly into UNHCR protection systems). In the Syrian Arab Republic, attention to protection improved from 2017, with a protection-focused workshop held in June of that year; trainings conducted with cooperating partners on protection measures; and a statement of intent issued on programmatic mainstreaming.²⁸⁰ In Turkey, protection was comparatively well mainstreamed within the ESSN (Box 13).

Box 13: Protection in the Emergency Social Safety Net

Integration of protection concerns into the ESSN included:

- A "protection package" with a draft protection risk analysis, terms of reference for protection focal points, referrals tools and other materials that cover the full range of protection issues
- A strategy to ensure that people "stuck" in the application process, which can include people with disabilities (people with disabilities, the elderly and other vulnerable individuals, receive direct assistance from WFP and TRC in navigating paperwork requirements
- A separate individual protection assistance initiative, funded by the EU, in which NGOs receive support to ensure that particularly vulnerable refugees are identified, referred to the ESSN and supported to adhere to all application processes and requirements.

163. **Protection concerns unreported in corporate data:** Corporate reporting against the standard WFP indicator "Numbers of beneficiaries facing safety issues on the way to project sites" did not indicate prevalence of protection concerns.²⁸¹ However, fieldwork for this evaluation identified a number of protection challenges in the beneficiary experience, reflective of other evidence gathered

²⁷⁴ WFP (2012) Humanitarian Protection Policy.

²⁷⁵ WFP (2018) *Evaluation of WFP's Humanitarian Protection Policy 2012-2017*.

²⁷⁶ The Syrian Arab Republic PRRO identifies specific protection challenges and responses; the Regional PRRO includes focused discussions of protection challenges, family separation, SGBV, legal issues and documentation, restricted movement and early marriage.

²⁷⁷ Turkey Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan (Year 2018).

²⁷⁸ A network of protection focal points also exists in the Lebanon country office, which, as of June 2018, had also formed an accountability to affected populations and protection team in the country office.

²⁷⁹ Monitoring templates: WFP Turkey, the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon and Jordan.

²⁸⁰ WFP Syria (2017) Protection in the Syrian Arab Republic PRRO 200988, November 2014 (reviewed April 2017).

²⁸¹ According to SPR data 2015-2017, 98-100 percent of beneficiaries across the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey have not experienced any such protection issues.

on the crisis (Box 14).²⁸²

Box 14: Beneficiary experience of protection issues

Focus groups conducted for the evaluation reported the following protection issues arising:

- Syrian men in four out of nine relevant focus groups in Lebanon reported facing harassment on the way to banks, shops or resilience locations
- Women and men in seven out of nine relevant focus groups in Lebanon reported facing harassment from local communities while waiting in lines at ATMs
- Beneficiaries in 3 out of 14 relevant focus groups in Lebanon and Jordan reported instances of fraud and abuse (particularly when beneficiaries were not literate) and some retailer threatening of beneficiaries
- Cooperating partners in both Lebanon and Jordan²⁸³ reported that people with disabilities faced particular challenges in collecting cards and PINs and in accessing shops and other project locations, or having their cards stolen to prevent them from using another retail outlet.

164. There is evidence that protection concerns arise, therefore; yet WFP staff including at sub office level in Lebanon and Jordan, acknowledged their limited direct insight into these issues.²⁸⁴ This reflects a wider lack of insight into beneficiary experience, discussed under accountability to affected populations (Section 2.4.8).

2.4.8 Accountability to affected populations (AAP)

165. WFP is committed to accountability to affected population requirements under a wide range of corporate commitments (Box 15).

Box 15:

Accountability to affected population commitments

The WFP approach to accountability to affected populations is informed by the five IASC commitments on accountability to affected populations and other key inter-agency standards on accountability to affected populations, including the Core Humanitarian Standards.

According to the 2016 Strategy for Accountability to Affected Populations,²⁸⁵ the objective of WFP accountability to affected populations commitments is to facilitate participation of affected people in WFP programmes by ensuring that programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes and decisions are informed by and reflect the views of affected people.

166. Similar to gender and protection (Section 2.4.4), the response did not benefit from dedicated accountability to affected populations (including Do No Harm) expertise.²⁸⁶ Instead, accountability to affected populations was frequently combined with gender/protection responsibilities, often by a focal point rather than a full-time staff member.²⁸⁷ The exception was Turkey, where a dedicated team of three had been in place since mid 2016, all working closely with an even larger accountability to affected population team from TRC. Iraq and Lebanon country offices had recently hired accountability to affected population advisers, but as of mid-2018, these were not yet in place.

167. **Low beneficiary awareness:** Under accountability to affected population commitments, WFP is required to ensure beneficiary awareness of their entitlements and feedback mechanisms. Yet its own corporate data showed low performance (Table 15).

²⁸² See for example: Protection Sector (2017) *2018 Whole of Syria Protection Needs Overview* (October 2017); Global Protection Cluster, *Whole of Syria Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility* (2017) *Voices, Assessment Findings of the Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017; Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018*.

²⁸³ Fourteen out of 14 relevant (conducting GFA/basic needs activities) CPs interviewed.

²⁸⁴ Interviews with sub-office staff in Lebanon and Jordan.

²⁸⁵ WFP (2016) *Strategy for Accountability to Affected Populations*.

²⁸⁶ Based on a review of CO organigrammes provided by WFP to the evaluation team.

²⁸⁷ This also reflects the findings of the WFP *2018 Evaluation of the Humanitarian Protection Policy (2012–2017)*, which noted the conflation of gender issues with protection.

Table 15: Proportion of assisted people informed about the programme by country²⁸⁸

Country	Q3/4 2014 (M/F)	Q3/4 2015 (M/F)	Q3/4 2016 (M/F)	Q4 2017 (M/F)
Syrian Arab Republic	-	72 / 67.4	54 / 47	37.59 / 32.49
Egypt	96 / 97	72 / 69	59.3 / 58	-
Iraq	84 / 77 ²⁸⁹	66 / 48	23.8 / 11	-
Jordan	70 / 55	43 / 41	35.8 / 31.6	-
Lebanon	96 / 95	53 / 60	58.5 / 40.3	-
Turkey (in-camp)	98 / 99	69 / 82	66.5 / 62.3	-
Turkey (out-of-camp)	-	-	57 / 57	-

Source: WFP SPR data

168. Focus groups for the evaluation reinforced these findings, which have been reported elsewhere in WFP evaluations.²⁹⁰ Participants in 15 out of 20 general food assistance focus groups voiced confusion about who had been selected, and on what basis (with concerns expressed about incorrect application of criteria).

169. **Poor communication:** Numbers alone however mask the effects of poor communication on beneficiaries. The evaluation finds evidence of this in three areas.

170. **(i) Uncommunicated duration of assistance:** Standard project reports consistently reported that, given funding uncertainties, the availability of assistance and/or its duration had not been communicated to beneficiaries.²⁹¹ Focus groups – mainly in Lebanon and Jordan – reflected this, with individuals unclear on the duration of WFP assistance and/or whether they would be removed from the beneficiary lists due to prioritization. The resulting uncertainty created considerable anxiety and fear of being “cut off”. Examples include:

- In Lebanon, participants in three out of nine focus groups²⁹² expressed severe anxiety about the possible end of their assistance, saying that they never know when it might be cut off. They had witnessed their friends and neighbours receiving a text message stating that this would be the last month they would receive assistance
- In Jordan, participants in a group of ex-beneficiaries communicated, amid some distress, that their assistance had been cut, and they did not know why
- Beneficiaries’ concerns were compounded by the centrality of WFP assistance to their food security. Those in all 20 general food assistance focus groups stated that they were dependent on the assistance, and would find replacing it difficult or impossible.

171. **(ii) Poorly communicated reasons for prioritization:** With funding cuts requiring prioritization, some communications to beneficiaries were late or absent. For example, in the Syrian Arab Republic, prioritization began in September 2017; but the communication strategy to inform beneficiaries was not developed until early 2018 and was not circulated to field offices until March 2018 (in time for the

²⁸⁸ Figures are not reported on a quarterly basis; the SPRs indicate in which months data was collected each year. This table takes the relevant figure from the latter half of each year (or for December/Q4 2017 for the Syrian Arab Republic). Where the SPR indicates that data was collected twice during the second half of the year, this table reflects the higher value for each man (M) and woman (F). Data for the Regional PRRO was not available for 2017. In 2017, as the corporate Strategic Results Framework (SRF) changed to the Corporate Results Framework (CRF) the calculation to measure/report on the “informed” indicator changed. Under the SRF, a beneficiary was considered as being “informed” when the three following questions were answered positively: know how they are selected, know how much they are entitled to receive, and know where they can complain (or ask questions). The CRF changed the third indicator to “know how long assistance is expected to continue”.

²⁸⁹ This figure is for Q1 2015 given that no figure was reported for Q3 or Q4 2014.

²⁹⁰ WFP (2018) *Evaluation of WFP’s Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access in Humanitarian Contexts (2004–2017)*.

²⁹¹ SPRs for the Regional Response (2015, 2016 and 2017) and for the the Syrian Arab Republic Response (2015, 2016 and 2017).

²⁹² The issue of fear was not raised within interview protocols; it was voluntarily raised by beneficiaries in three of nine focus groups and, in those focus groups, was supported by a wide swath of participants. WFP partners and call centre staff further noted that beneficiaries commonly raised this issue and expressed their severe anxiety at being cut or potentially being cut in the future.

second round of cuts). All 12 cooperating partners interviewed in the Syrian Arab Republic²⁹³ expressed considerable frustration about this, given their frontline interactions with beneficiaries. The evaluation team during fieldwork observed at least three occasions on which beneficiaries only learned on arrival at distributions that their assistance had been reduced or cut altogether. These situations caused evident distress.

172. **(iii) Withholding of eligibility criteria:** Even more concerning, in Iraq, Turkey and Lebanon, eligibility criteria were deliberately withheld for an initial period – for example, until May 2017 in Turkey, when the ESSN had already begun in late 2016. In Lebanon, eligibility criteria were not initially communicated to beneficiaries after the switch to the desk-based targeting formula - according to WFP staff and partners, due to the complex nature of the formula and to avoid potential misuse.²⁹⁴ However, the resulting information gap proved controversial, with rumours and misinformation spreading through beneficiaries' informal social networks. WFP and its partners decided after several months to publish the criteria, but such a lack of transparency contradicts its own accountability to affected population commitments.²⁹⁵ Beneficiary mistrust of general food assistance/basic needs targeting criteria, arising from a lack of clarity on targeting rationales, was stated in all 20 general food assistance focus groups conducted for this evaluation, and was reinforced by most interviewed cooperating partners in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.²⁹⁶
173. **Impersonalized communications:** These difficulties were compounded by the mass scale of the response, which drove WFP towards large-scale methods for communicating with massive caseloads. Such methods took the form of SMS/WhatsApp messages and, for queries and complaints, hotlines in the refugee-hosting countries. Yet evidence from focus groups and cooperating partners for this evaluation indicated their limitations.
174. In Lebanon and Jordan, for example, standard operating procedures and scripts to guide operators' responses often proved difficult for refugees to navigate. In Jordan, despite a sophisticated ticketing system to ensure that WFP staff responded to beneficiary feedback, slow or absent responses were raised and widely criticized in 11 out of 13 focus groups. In Lebanon, concerns about the joint UNHCR-WFP hotline (or "coldline" as it was dubbed by refugees) was raised in eight out of nine focus groups (Box 16).

Box 16: WFP-UNHCR hotline in Lebanon (the "coldline")

In Lebanon, the joint UNHCR-WFP hotline is a highly professionalized system, responding to several thousand calls per day. Issues with e-cards and confusion regarding targeting/exclusion are the most common reasons for calls, according to WFP hotline records. In October 2017, for instance, 1,180 calls regarding card issues were received; 58 percent of these concerned problems with PINs (including multiple attempts with the incorrect PIN).²⁹⁷ The online system guides operators on what to ask or say when a beneficiary calls.

Whilst all nine focus groups in Lebanon found beneficiaries aware of the hotline, it was characterized as highly unsatisfactory in all but two. Challenges included:

- Calls regularly unanswered
- Being put on hold for extended time periods
- Receiving unhelpful support from operators
- Opening hours of 08:00 to 17:00, with a queueing system in place for call-back, but without a recorded message to indicate re-opening times, or directing callers to other hotlines (e.g. that were operated by the financial service provider)
- A verification/identification system which beneficiaries found difficult to navigate.

²⁹³ This categorization excludes SARC, also a major cooperating partner of WFP, but categorized by the evaluation as part of the Red Cross-Red Crescent movement.

²⁹⁴ Interviews with WFP programme staff in Iraq, Turkey and Lebanon; verified by interviews with United Nations partners in all three countries.

²⁹⁵ WFP (2016) Strategy on Accountability to Affected Populations.

²⁹⁶ 41 cooperating partners (excluding SARC in the Syrian Arab Republic as part of the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement) interviewed in total.

²⁹⁷ WFP Lebanon, Narrative report – hotline, November 2017.

When cards are re-loaded early in the month, the call centre receives around 4,000 calls per day according to the hotline staff/management. Other times of the month approximately 2,000 calls are received per day.²⁹⁸ At the time of the evaluation team's visit to the hotline in March 2018, there were 11,910 calls the operators had yet to return.

175. **Text/WhatsApp messages:** The use of text messages to communicate sensitive decisions, for example, on targeting or prioritization – a choice shaped by the mass scale of the response - presented a major concern. These really did communicate cut-offs in many cases, realizing beneficiaries' fears as described. Focus group participants in Lebanon and Jordan who had received such messages described this experience as traumatic, particularly given that they had no opportunity to understand the reasons from an informed individual; standard explanations offered by hotline operators, for instance, were considered inadequate by both beneficiaries and by operators.

176. **Uncertainty and fear as a communication deterrent:** Finally, but critically, fear of retribution – by shopkeepers, by cooperating partners, and by WFP – was voiced by beneficiaries consulted as a major deterrent in raising complaints.²⁹⁹ Even where beneficiaries had been informed of confidentiality, either through visual information materials or hotline operators, their dependency on WFP assistance meant that beneficiaries were often unwilling to test whether confidentiality would be applied in practice. Examples include:

- In Lebanon, beneficiaries across six out of seven general food assistance focus groups stated that they had wished to lodge complaints against shopkeepers for issues such as abusive treatment or fraud, but would not call the hotline given that they did not know or trust the hotline's rules on anonymity and non-retaliation
- Beneficiaries in 19 out of 35 focus groups stated that they were hesitant to call the hotline, for fear that, in doing so, they would draw attention to themselves and risk contradicting targeting criteria that they did not understand
- Similarly, beneficiaries across 21 out of 35 focus groups expressed concern that "making a complaint" would risk jeopardizing their future entitlements to assistance.

177. **Do No Harm commitments not fully upheld:**

Like all humanitarian actors, WFP is committed to Do No Harm in its humanitarian assistance, through its commitment to the Humanitarian Charter and the Sphere Standards (Box 17).

Box 17: Do No Harm

Preventing and minimizing any unintended negative effects of activities that can increase people's vulnerability to physical and psychosocial risks (*Humanitarian Charter, Sphere standards*)

178. Evidence from beneficiaries and cooperating partners consulted for this evaluation suggests that the highly systematized, technologically based mechanisms for accountability to affected population applied in the response did not provide an adequate channel for beneficiaries to express their concerns. Combined with limited face-to-face contact with cooperating partners (Section 2.1.4), a strong sense of powerlessness and frustration arose: beneficiaries could not access informed individuals or decision-makers; were subjected to one-way communications such as SMS messages; and were unable to gain informed clarification about issues affecting their wellbeing. Thus, a concern arises that beneficiaries' dignity was not fully protected, and the accountability to affected population elements of Do No Harm commitments not completely upheld.

179. Such observations on accountability to affected population are far from new, with similar concerns raised back to 2014.³⁰⁰ Yet, despite efforts made, as of mid-2018, they had not been comprehensively addressed.

2.4.9 Looking to the future

180. This final Section of the evaluation considers WFP "future-proofing" of the response from three perspectives: (a) Sustainable gains for communities, (b) Analysis of risks to ensure continuity of

²⁹⁸ Data supplied by hotline staff in interviews. This figure was also documented by the evaluation team during the evaluation inception phase.

²⁹⁹ Also validated by a majority of 41 CP interviews in Lebanon, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic.

³⁰⁰ See OIG, *Internal Audit of WFP Operations in Syria and Neighbouring Countries*, Internal Audit Report AR/14/22; and 2015 *Operational Peer Review (OPR) of Syria cited in the Whole of Syria Mission Report (2016) on Gender, Age and AAP in the Food Security sector*.

programming and (c) Planning for the future.

a) **Sustainable gains for communities**

181. The bulk of the response, namely general food/basic needs assistance, was focused on maintaining or improving food security among beneficiary populations. However, WFP had identified and implemented various approaches to “transition” or “graduation”, geared to reducing dependency on humanitarian assistance and increasing self-reliance. These were reflected in the resilience dimensions of the response, described above.

182. Overall, however, there is little indication that these activities had contributed to sustainable livelihoods as intended by the PRROs. The conceptual dissonance between the WFP model of resilience, and the contextual conditions outlined above lay at the heart of the problem. Most activities were described, even by WFP staff, as cash for work or training, with few capacity-building components or linkages with employers. There were exceptions – in Jordan, food for training implemented through the National Alliance Against Hunger and Malnutrition, had a placement rate of 92 percent, due to securing jobs for participants prior to training. But this activity was small scale, and the results are far from the norm.

183. The most obvious route for general food assistance sustainability is the scope for integration into local social safety nets. Yet this is equally complex. In Turkey, with the ESSN aligned with the government’s social safety net system, an element of sustainability was built in ex-ante. In Jordan, WFP supports the national *Takyet Um Ali* social safety net with food commodities. In Lebanon, however, while WFP is providing valuable technical assistance to the National Poverty Targeting Programme, the political and financial challenges it confronts pose challenges to the integration of refugees in its caseload.

b) **Risk management**

184. The very specific features of the crisis meant that WFP faced a wide variety of risks in its response. More detailed analysis is available at Annex XV, but in summary, the response adopted mature and robust risk management, reflected in rigorous procedures and extensive internal (and external) auditing. However, concerns arose in one key area: contingency plans for potential financing shortfalls. As of early 2018, such plans– despite robust resource pipeline management systems in involved country offices and in Regional Bureau Cairo – were not comprehensively in place, even at regional bureau level. Specifically, beyond fundraising intentions, plans were not available setting out (i) how such financial shortfalls would be managed; (ii) how the effects of shortfalls would be communicated to beneficiaries, government officials, partners and retailers (beyond the current vulnerability-based prioritization strategies); and (iii) how their wider effects would be mitigated for beneficiaries, for retailers and also for WFP and its cooperating partners’ reputations.³⁰¹

c) **Planning ahead**

185. With the crisis still ongoing, what does the future hold for the WFP response? And, more pertinently, to what extent is WFP, to the extent feasible, planning ahead?

186. In May 2018, the divisions and tensions of the crisis were, if anything, intensifying. Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, at the same time as humanitarian access was expanding, major displacements required responses in Afrin and East Ghouta. Massive disruption was also anticipated elsewhere in the country later in 2018. Meanwhile, in some refugee-hosting countries, pressure for Syrians to return home permeates political rhetoric at all levels.³⁰² Yet whilst the international community engage in relevant

³⁰¹ Contingency plans that set out risk mitigation strategies beyond fundraising were sought, but were not available (see Annex XV). These issues are not specifically addressed in the WFP Emergency Preparedness and Response Package (EPRP) but could build up from some of the checklists, processes and simulations that the EPRP aims to strengthen across WFP. See: WFP, *Emergency Preparedness and Response Package: Second Edition*, December 2016.

³⁰² For example, in Lebanon, a refugee policy is being prepared by the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs promoting a transfer from refugee to “commuter” status, with deportation for border infringement <https://www.sida.se/globalassets/sida/sve/sa-arbetar-vi/humanitart-bistand/humanitarian-crisis-analysis-2018--syria-crisis-.pdf> accessed 03-05-18.

dialogue, there is agreement that safe conditions for returns to the Syrian Arab Republic are not yet in place.³⁰³

187. Vision 2020, the main WFP strategic framework for the response, does not offer clear strategic guidance for the future, nor a means of communicating clearly WFP intent to its partners. Instead, it sets out a series of operationally oriented objectives. This evaluation also found that Vision 2020 was far from institutionally “owned” by staff, with many staff members reporting unfamiliarity with its content, or that “it was relevant at the time, but not now”.³⁰⁴ (T-I) CSPs, in line with corporate guidance, articulate clear country-level plans, but neither individually nor collectively articulate a “whole of response” intent.
188. Nonetheless, amid the surrounding complexities, WFP has begun to plan for the future. Regional-level discussions, driven by country offices and supported by Regional Bureau Cairo, were held in early 2018 on organizing for potential returnees, should conditions eventually prove conducive. Individual country planning is reflected in (T-I) CSPs for 2018 and concept notes for 2019. In the Syrian Arab Republic, given the volatile conditions, the focus on programmatic diversification has intensified. In Jordan and Lebanon, resilience partnerships beyond livelihood activities are under discussion with partner agencies. In Turkey, WFP is working closely with the TRC on a delegation strategy for relevant workstream of the ESN; this includes milestones which, if met, will trigger TRC taking the lead over relevant workstreams.
189. Overall, therefore, the challenges ahead are vast. But the WFP response, as of March 2018, had demonstrated an ability to move swiftly and at scale. With the major comparative advantage of agility, alongside a forward-looking approach, WFP is positioned as well as any humanitarian actor can be for an uncertain future, under the difficult, complex and volatile conditions that the Syrian regional crisis presents.

³⁰³ See https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria_durable_solutions accessed 20-05-18.

³⁰⁴ Interviews with a majority of 232 WFP staff in Rome, at the regional bureau and in the six country offices of the response.

3. Conclusions

“Faced with such hardship, there is no option but to act. This is the essence of humanitarianism: the readiness to respond to human suffering and assist fellow human beings when they have nowhere else to turn.”³⁰⁵

190. This evaluation summarizes findings against its required evaluation criteria as follows:

Relevance/ Appropriateness	WFP general food assistance/basic needs response was highly relevant to food assistance/basic needs, enhanced by its consistent and reliable delivery to beneficiaries. Nutrition and school feeding activities were both relevant in principle but constrained by their small scale. The relevance of certain resilience activities was weak.
Coverage	The response mostly achieved coverage intentions as far as resources permitted, with beneficiary targets met, though shortfalls in transfer values occurred. Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, WFP deployed all available resources, including relevant United Nations resolutions, to reach those in need regardless of area of control.
Coherence	The WFP response aligned with collective regional strategic frameworks for the crisis, and with those of the United Nations, including resolutions for cross-line and cross-border delivery into the Syrian Arab Republic. It also aligned with national responses and frameworks including on the inclusion of host populations.
Complementarity	Despite challenges in partnerships along the way, WFP acted as a conscientious humanitarian partner in the overall response. Operational partnerships had scope for broadening, particularly in resilience, school feeding and nutrition interventions. Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, complementarity was notable, with WFP a leading and generous actor in the collective humanitarian response.
Effectiveness	The response met and exceeded the majority of its beneficiary targets for general food assistance, including basic needs, though it was not able to provide full entitlements across its caseload. Nonetheless, WFP food and basic needs assistance prevented declines among food security in beneficiary populations and reduced the use of coping strategies (though effects on those “cut” from assistance remain unclear). Resilience activities suffered weak design and short timeframes but, along with nutrition and school feeding interventions, demonstrated some early gains.
Efficiency	The WFP response was marked by high levels of efficiency, both in terms of timeliness (providing reliable and consistent (if not full transfer value) delivery for beneficiaries even under highly adverse conditions) and cost-efficiency. The use of innovations and a highly professionalized supply chain in the Syrian Arab Republic contributed to these efficiencies.
Sustainability	Interventions were less designed for sustainability and more for maintaining or improving food security and addressing basic needs among beneficiary populations. However, WFP identified and implemented various approaches to “transition” or “graduation” to reduce dependency on humanitarian assistance. It had also begun planning for the future.

Summary message

Overall, this evaluation finds that WFP executed a high-powered, professionally adept and technically sophisticated response to the Syrian regional crisis from January 2015 to March 2018. The response was hard-fought, facing unfamiliar and complex demands, amid highly pressurized conditions.

Despite challenges around the use of cash-based approaches, WFP acted overall as a conscientious and generous humanitarian partner within the collective response - particularly inside the Syrian Arab Republic. Following a steep learning curve amid the sharply politicized conditions of crisis, it carved out relations of mutual respect with host governments. It mostly succeeded in navigating the politically sensitive operating terrain, guided by the humanitarian instinct and imperative.

Under conditions of considerable extremity, WFP delivered a reliable and consistent (if not fully complete) supply of general food and basic needs assistance to millions of beneficiaries in need. Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, a professionalized supply chain kept delivery regular and frequent. In the five refugee-hosting countries, technological innovations ensured reliable and swift delivery to affected populations. The response was both highly time- and cost-efficient.

³⁰⁵ WFP (2004) Policy Statement on Humanitarian Principles.

For an organization that prides itself on its ability to “stay and deliver”, therefore, the response more than delivered on its aims. In these terms, it achieved success. But along the way, the mass-scale nature of the response reduced attention to some demand-side concerns and led to some unintentional blind spots. Gender and protection were insufficiently addressed; and approaches to Accountability to Affected Populations did not fully meet beneficiary needs, concerns and expectations.

This raises wider issues for the humanitarian system beyond WFP. Fundamentally, for mass scale responses, particularly in middle-income settings: What defines success? In purely technicist terms, the agile, innovative and at-scale WFP response to the Syrian regional crisis has set the standard in many ways. But from the perspective of affected populations, the picture is more mixed.

This evaluation does not claim to have answers to such challenging questions. But amid the continuation of a highly complex and protracted crisis, these questions raise some fundamental concerns.

191. This evaluation has held up a mirror to over three years of a massive humanitarian response, conducted under conditions of great extremity. It finds that, over the period January 2015 to March 2018, WFP executed a high-powered, professionally adept and technically sophisticated humanitarian response. In politically charged, fluid and fast-moving operating terrain, and against very considerable odds, it delivered a regular and consistent supply of assistance (if not full intended transfer values) for affected populations.
192. The response was hard fought in many ways. Facing vast humanitarian needs on an unprecedented scale, in politically sensitive territories, whose governments took a directive lead in the management of international assistance, but who mostly lacked recent experience of a massive United Nations-led humanitarian response; caught in the middle of competing political demands and lacking contextually-appropriate corporate guidance, or any comparable experience, the response had to forge its own path through the crisis.
193. In its own terms – and indeed in those of many of its funders - WFP more than rose to the challenge. Its response provided millions with food assistance, with a regularity - if not with full entitlements - that, under such adverse conditions, might have previously appeared unfeasible. Its general food assistance/basic needs approaches innovated and adapted, piloted and, where necessary, led. Its operations achieved a scale and technological complexity new to the humanitarian community's experience around the world, whilst being highly time- and cost-efficient.
194. These gains were not achieved without strains on partnerships, most notably in cash-based responses. Donor selection of WFP as a “preferred partner” for at-scale delivery, placed pressure on United Nations coherence in concerned countries. Relationships are gradually recovering, however, and overall, WFP acted as a conscientious and generous humanitarian partner within the collective response, particularly inside the Syrian Arab Republic. Following a steep learning curve amid the sharply politicized conditions of the crisis, it also carved out relations of mutual respect with host governments; navigating the politically sensitive operating terrain to balance delivery with humanitarian advocacy.
195. Across all countries, WFP successfully diversified its partnership base. In particular, whether in cash-based transfers or for an in-kind supply chain, it maximised the private sector assets available in a middle-income setting to develop genuinely new approaches to serve humanitarian needs. In the process, it also helped broaden the collective response to the humanitarian crisis. The resulting technological innovations have the potential to serve the wider humanitarian community as well as other WFP future responses, particularly in middle-income settings.
196. Given very high levels of poverty and food insecurity, the relevance of WFP activities was generally strong. Activity choice was justified by the available evidence base, and demonstrably responded to beneficiaries' food security and basic needs. The response also sharpened and became more nuanced over time. The portfolio increasingly diversified after 2017, with a stronger focus on resilience and expanded nutrition and school feeding interventions. In the face of funding shortages, vulnerability-

based targeting increased, and clear rationales for prioritization were applied. Monitoring – if at times remotely conducted - became increasingly rigorous and systematized over time.

197. The response also became increasingly evidence-based. It prioritized analysis, and generated and applied a diverse range of studies and research. Some of these more influential exercises have informed the collective response to the regional crisis, as well as the evidence base on humanitarian action more broadly.

198. Even under highly testing operating conditions, the response adhered to the international humanitarian principles. This is no small achievement, given the delicate balancing act required for their implementation. Risks remain at local level, given the challenges of adherence within complex, highly sensitive and sharply politicized contexts. A more readily available knowledge base, stronger operational guidance and technical support would underpin their practical application at a specific, localized level.

199. Overall, therefore, the achievements have been significant. They are a measure of the technical abilities of WFP under highly complex emergency conditions. Yet in their large-scale realisation, there has been a price to pay. The challenges of a mass-scale response, combined with WFP commitment to stay and deliver, meant that almost all of the organization's resources and institutional energy were focused on the "supply side" of the response. This reduced attention to some demand-side concerns and created some "blind spots". Specifically:

- **Line of sight to beneficiaries:** Despite the major use of technology for innovation, the role of cooperating partners was limited to the technical functions implied by a highly automated response. In this, a critical channel of communication was lost. Combined with corporate monitoring systems focused mostly on supply-side results and accountability to affected population commitments addressed mainly through mass hotlines - that did not provide an adequate channel to capture beneficiaries' concerns – this left WFP comparatively unsighted on beneficiaries' experience of its assistance. In this, more distanced, model, WFP had a reduced "line of sight" to those it serves.
- **Resilience:** Corporate resilience tools were insufficiently sensitized to the needs of urban populations in middle-income settings. Conceptual re-thinking is underway within Regional Bureau Cairo, with headquarter support, and some country managers have sought to step beyond the corporate boundaries, to develop more contextually-sensitive approaches. But these are conceptually untested; far from comprehensive or systematic; and have lacked the sort of intensive design and embedding in national frameworks that could improve their relevance and effectiveness. The dilemmas and challenges of implementing relatively cost-intensive resilience programming at scale have not yet been sufficiently explored.
- **Knowledge transfer:** Despite the increased focus on evidence generation and use, and notwithstanding diverse country contexts, more could have been done on knowledge transfer. In the five refugee-hosting countries particularly, conceptual and operational synergies do exist, such as on targeting, prioritization and accountability to affected populations. These have not yet been shared or exploited. There is also scope for replicating some of the many innovative solutions developed.
- **Gender equality, protection and accountability to affected populations:** These central aspects of the response lacked adequate consideration. The "shift in gear" envisaged by the WFP Gender Policy (2015) did not materialize, with the issue receiving insufficient financial and human resourcing and inadequate programmatic attention. With some exceptions, such as Turkey, even the corporately pragmatic approach to protection was insufficiently integrated. Accountability to affected population mechanisms did not fully meet beneficiary needs, concerns and expectations. These are not 'side elements' of humanitarian response, but foundations of equitable delivery, mandated by international frameworks and commitments. In their absence a key link between the supply and demand side is missing.
- **Complex humanitarian choices:** Linked to the humanitarian principles, the complex operational choices faced by WFP – and indeed by all humanitarian actors working on the Syrian regional crisis

– are clearly indicated in the evidence presented here. They reflect the harsh and immediate dilemmas of humanitarian action under complex operating conditions. Going forward, evidence suggests that the response would benefit from a more consistently politically-astute approach. Learning from development and other international cooperation organizations may be valuable here, with staff skills professionally developed to: identify and navigate political shifts; interpret the nuances of policy dialogue; assess governance frameworks; and walk the delicate line between preserving relationships, influencing and advocacy. Many WFP staff have developed these abilities through their continued work on the crisis, or from hard experience elsewhere. But they are not systematically available, and would benefit from stronger institutional support.

- **Strategic planning:** WFP has begun to prepare for the future, with forward planning for potential returnees initiated; operational activities expanded; and innovations being further developed. More strategically, however, WFP cannot yet coherently voice its intended forward direction for the response. With the current strategic statement, Vision 2020, not fully institutionally owned, and the country strategic plan environment lacking a regional planning vehicle, a more directive statement of overarching strategic intent is required.

200. Finally, donor partners, as reflected to date by comparatively high levels of funding, placed considerable trust in WFP. They recognized its ability not just to implement a complex humanitarian response but to model, innovate and lead. Working in such complex settings required a good deal of donor understanding, and not-inconsiderable tolerance of risk. Yet in some areas, such as resilience, WFP did not benefit from the cohesive support it so badly needed. In others, such as cash-based transfers, divided donor views placed considerable pressure on operational delivery.

Looking to the future

201. Notwithstanding the major achievements of the response, the findings of this evaluation raise a central question - not only for WFP, but for the wider humanitarian system. Fundamentally, for mass-scale responses, particularly in middle-income settings: What defines success? For the Syrian regional crisis, the agile, innovative and at-scale WFP response has, in purely technicist terms, set the standard in many ways. Yet from the perspective of affected populations, the picture is more mixed.

202. This report does not suggest that the WFP response to the crisis has failed to adequately “put the beneficiary at the centre”. Indeed, the commitment to serve humanitarian needs is strongly reflected in the response’s implemented commitment to ‘stay and deliver’ (at scale). But it does reflect a central challenge: namely, the tension between scale and sensitivity in massive humanitarian responses; and the resulting need to ensure balance in demand- and supply-side concerns – particularly concerning gender, protection and accountability to affected populations.

203. The evidence gathered by this evaluation suggests a need to link the beneficiary experience much more closely into the WFP “field of vision”. Going forward, this implies stronger communication channels and two-way feedback mechanisms with beneficiary populations (not limited to mass hotlines). It indicates building strong partnerships with those closest to beneficiaries, who have the scope and proximity to gather and transmit information on the lived experience of support received. It suggests a process of re-centring; staying to deliver whilst placing the needs, concerns and expectations of those with “nowhere else to turn” firmly at the heart of the humanitarian response.

4. Recommendations

204. Despite the challenges of the regional crisis, the demonstrated comparative advantages of WFP position it well for even a highly uncertain, but undoubtedly complex, road ahead. Given the uncertainties of the future, the recommendations for this evaluation do not aim to provide a clear or directive “path forward” for WFP. Instead, they are geared to help centralize the beneficiary experience within the future humanitarian response, and to improve its qualitative dimensions. They also propose some steps for the next phase of the response, as the crisis continues to evolve.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁶ Several of the following recommendations echo recommendations made within recent Policy Evaluations on Humanitarian Principles and Access and on Humanitarian Protection. Although some of these were only partially accepted by WFP Management, the below recommendations, as they reference a regional response specifically, remain valid.

IMMEDIATE : Prioritize demand-side issues			
What?	How? (operationalization)	Who? (responsible)	By when? (completion)
<p>1. Strengthen accountability to affected population capacity and systems</p> <p><u>Regional Bureau Cairo (supported by Headquarters)</u></p> <p>a) Designate (and capacitate where appropriate) dedicated staff for AAP, allocating resources specifically for capacity strengthening and/or mainstreaming</p> <p>b) Review current AAP mechanisms within country offices to inform strategization and make proposals for improvement</p> <p><u>Country offices</u></p> <p>a) Allocate staff and resources for dedicated AAP mainstreaming and capacitate them to set up and support a network of field focal points</p> <p>b) Provide a clear strategic statement that sets out intended actions to ensure that:</p> <p>(i) beneficiaries are sufficiently informed of their entitlements and complaints and feedback mechanisms</p> <p>(ii) channels of communication with affected populations are improved based on best practices</p> <p>This may include: regular documented feedback meetings with cooperating partners; two-way communication and beneficiary feedback mechanisms within beneficiary contact monitoring systems and protocols; and robust links to ensure the trickle-up of monitoring findings to programme decision-making functions</p>			
<p>2. Centralize gender equality in the response</p> <p><u>RBC</u></p> <p>a) Allocate dedicated staff and resources at the RBC level to gender mainstreaming within the response</p> <p>b) Conduct/continue conducting regular mandatory gender equality training for all RBC staff and management, as a mandatory requirement</p> <p><u>Country offices</u></p> <p>a) Designate (and capacitate where appropriate) dedicated staff and resources at CO level to ensure gender mainstreaming</p> <p>b) Conduct gender equality training for WFP country office and sub-office staff, to ensure that gender issues are recognized and addressed.</p> <p>c) Update country office gender action plans so they meet the standards required by the WFP Gender Policy (2015-2020) and the WFP Gender Action Plan.</p>			

<p>d) Analyse available data gathered on gender equality issues in the response and use the results to develop gender-sensitive programmatic responses</p> <p><u>HQ/RBC</u></p> <p>a) At the next opportunity for reassignment, consider gender balance in staff selection</p>	<p>Reassignment Committee and Executive Director, with support from HRM</p>	
<p>3. Reinforce protection</p> <p><u>HQ</u></p> <p>a) Given the limited nature of WFP corporate indicators for protection, consider revision, drawing on existing resources such as the global protection cluster indicators</p> <p><u>RBC</u></p> <p>a) Designate (and capacitate where appropriate) dedicated staff and resources at the RBC level to protection mainstreaming</p> <p>b) Conduct (regular) protection training for all RBC staff and management</p> <p><u>Country offices</u></p> <p>a) Designate (and capacitate where appropriate) dedicated staff and resources to ensure that protection mainstreamed in each country office</p> <p>b) Conduct protection training for WFP country office and sub-office staff to ensure that protection issues are recognized and addressed.</p> <p>c) Prepare country office protection statements that include a clear vision and strategies.</p> <p>d) Analyse available data gathered on protection issues within the response, and use this to develop appropriate programmatic responses.</p>	<p>Peromance Management and Monitoring Division (RMP)</p> <p>RBC Support from OSZ and HRM</p> <p>All country offices Support from OSZ and OSZPH</p>	<p>By the end of first quarter 2019</p> <p>By the end of second quarter 2019</p> <p>By the end of second quarter 2019</p>
<p>IMMEDIATE: Enhance adherence to the humanitarian principles</p>		
<p>4. Build capacity to improve adherence to the humanitarian principles</p> <p><u>Country offices</u></p> <p>a) Ensure training for all staff on the humanitarian principles, protection and decision-making in complex (and highly politicized) operating environments, particularly at the local level.</p> <p>b) Conduct situation-based feedback sessions with staff on lessons learned from experience in the response.</p> <p>c) Provide focused and context-specific orientation to all incoming staff and consultants, including information on local political dynamics.</p> <p>d) Train cooperating partners and financial service providers on adherence to the humanitarian principles in the local context.</p>	<p>All country offices Support from RBC, OSZ, Emergency Preparedness and Support Response Division (OSE), Supply Chain Division (OSC) and HRM.</p>	<p>By the end of second quarter 2019 (and ongoing thereafter)</p>

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

What?	How? (operationalization)	Who? (responsible)	By when? (completion)
<p>5. Improve knowledge management</p> <p>Develop an RBC-led learning and knowledge transfer strategy for the response. Key areas should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Technical approaches to cash-based transfers b) Targeting and prioritization c) Resilience 		<p>RBC Support from OSZ and all country offices and Sub-regional office (SRO)</p>	<p>By the end of 2018</p>
	<p>6. Define success – build a clear intended vision</p> <p>To better package the regional dimension of the response within the CSP environment, build on Vision 2020 and individual CSP objectives to develop an overarching strategic statement of “where to from here”. The statement should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Clearly articulate the WFP regional-level vision of success for the response b) Locate the beneficiary at the centre of the response, responding to diverse situations, needs and priorities c) Include – beyond the operationally focused objectives stated within CSPs - the strategic intentions of the response at regional level, such as: the management of returnees; support for strengthened national social protection and safety net systems; future intended coordination and partnerships; intentions for resilience programming at scale; planned internal coordination mechanisms; and the intended role of AAP, gender equality and protection d) Map potential scenarios and identify response options e) Be linked to realistic resource planning and associated financing contingency plans f) Be accompanied by an advocacy plan for donors, focused on the costs of adjusting the response from scale to depth; including the cost implications of resilience activities and the integration of AAP/gender/protection. 	<p>RBC with contributions from country offices; SRO: Support from OSE, OSZ including Direct Implementation Programme Services (OSZP) and units including: Asset Creation and Livelihoods Unit (OSZPR), OSZPH, Safety Nets and Social Protection Unit (OSZIS) and School Feeding Service (OSF)</p>	<p>By the end of first quarter 2019</p>

Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
APP	Annual Performance Plan
APR	Annual Performance Report
ATM	Automated Teller Machine
BCG	Boston Consulting Group
BR	Budget Revision
C&V	Cash and Voucher
CALL	Coordinated Accountability and Lessons Learning Initiative for Syria (Syria-CALL)
CBT	Cash-Based Transfer
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CFSME	Comprehensive Food Security Monitoring Exercise
CFSVA	Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis
CO	Country Office
COMPAS	Common Performance Assessment System
CP	Cooperating Partner
CSI	Coping Strategy Index
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
DDS	Diet Diversity Scores
DNH	Do No Harm
EGP	Egyptian Pound
EMOP	Emergency Operation
ESSN	Emergency Social Safety Nets programme
EVAR	Egypt Vulnerability Assessment of Refugees
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FCS	Food Consumption Score
FDP	Food Distribution Point
FFA/T	Food Assistance for Assets/Training
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSA	Food Security Assessment
FSOM	Food Security and Outcome Monitoring
FSP	Financial Service Providers
FSWG	Food Security Working Group
GAP	Gender Action Plan

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFA	General Food Assistance
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HQ	Headquarters
HRL	Human Rights Law
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IHP	International Humanitarian Principles
INGO	International Non-Government Organization
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
IQD	Iraqi Dinar
ISC	Indirect Support Costs
ISSG	International Syria Support Group
(I-T) CSP	(Interim-Transitional) Country Strategic Plan
JD	Jordanian Dinar
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
L3	Level 3
LBP	Lebanese Pound
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
LOUISE	Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organizational System for E-Cards
LTSH	Land Transport, Handling and Storage
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
mVAM	mobile Vulnerability Assessment and Monitoring
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPTP	Emergency National Poverty Targeting Programme
ODOC	Other Direct Operational Costs
OEV	Office of Evaluation (WFP)
PDM	Post Distribution Monitoring
PLW	Pregnant and Lactating Women
PLWG	Pregnant and Lactating Women and Girls
PRRO	Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation

PRS	Palestinian Refugees from Syria
PSA	Project Support and Administrative budget
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
PWD	People with Disabilities
RB	Regional Bureau
RBC	Regional Bureau Cairo
REACH	Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and undernutrition
REC	Regional Emergency Coordination
RHC	Regional Humanitarian Coordinator
3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
SARC	Syrian Arab Red Crescent
SPR	Standard Project Report
SYP	Syrian Pound
ToR	Terms of Reference
TRC	Turkish Red Crescent
TRY	Turkish Lira
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSF	United Nations Strategic Framework
USD	United States Dollar
VAF	Vulnerability Assessment Framework
VAM	Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping
VASyr	Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme
WINGS	World Food Programme Information Network and Global System
WoS	Whole of Syria

Photo Credit

Cover Photo: WFP/Deniz Akkus

Rome, October 2018, OEV/2017/016

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