



WFP EVALUATION



WFP
World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Evaluation of China

WFP Country Strategic Plan

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Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation features

1. The evaluation of the WFP country strategic plan (CSP) for China covered the period from 2017 to 2020. It assessed WFP's strategic positioning and role in China, WFP's contributions to CSP strategic outcomes, efficiency and the factors that explain WFP's performance and the extent to which WFP made the strategic shift expected from the CSP. The evaluation served the dual objective of enhancing accountability and learning and informing strategic decision making for the development of the next CSP. Commissioned by WFP's independent Office of Evaluation, the evaluation was conducted by an external team from August to December 2020, with fieldwork conducted by national consultants in China between 9 November and 8 December 2020.

2. The evaluation used a mixed method, gender-sensitive approach, which included a desk review of secondary data; 103 key informant interviews with WFP staff in Rome and China, the Government of China, other national partners – including from the private sector – and international partners; and discussions and direct observations with farmer community members and in preschools. As a result of restrictions on international travel due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the international evaluation team could not travel to China and conducted interviews remotely; national consultants were allowed to travel in China. Many interviews were followed up by email communications that deepened and clarified the information collected. To assess the quality of support provided by WFP's China office through the WFP-China Centre of Excellence for Rural Transformation through South-South cooperation and the mobilization of funding from China, the evaluation conducted an online survey of a sample of 13 WFP country offices.

Context

3. China's population of 1.395 billion people¹ is the largest in the world and grew by 0.5 percent in 2018.² Over the last 20 years, China has experienced substantial progress in poverty reduction and social development. Its per capita gross domestic product for 2018 was estimated at USD 9,015.³ In 2017, as an upper-middle-income country, China's Human Development Index of 0.758 made it 85th out of 189 countries.⁴ Its achievement of the 2015 Millennium Development Goal target of halving the proportion of its people suffering from hunger accounted for two-thirds of the reduction in global hunger.

4. Challenges remain in reducing residual poverty and inequality and extending successful national programmes to marginalized communities. In 2018, there were still 30.5 million people in China living below the national poverty line.⁵ China's Gini index of 38.5 reflects high inequality in the distribution of social gains among wealth groups.⁶ Rural poverty and its consequences for food security and nutrition are largely concentrated in specific population groups in remote and mountainous areas. China currently faces a triple burden of malnutrition from undernourishment (or hunger), hidden hunger and obesity/overweight – which are disproportionately concentrated in poor rural regions and among vulnerable groups such as children, rural households headed by single women and elderly people.⁷

5. Through its 13th five-year plan for economic and social development (covering 2016–2020),⁸ the Government of China led a major national effort to eliminate absolute poverty and substantially reduce relative poverty by the end of 2020. The Government is committed to ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment are addressed through efforts to uncover prevailing social and economic drivers of gender inequality.⁹ China is becoming a major development partner and provider of support through South-South and triangular cooperation, drawing on its economic and development experience to help

¹ China Statistics Press. 2019. [China Statistical Yearbook 2019](#).

² World Bank. [Population growth \(annual percentage\) – China](#).

³ China Statistics Press. 2019. [China Statistical Yearbook 2019](#).

⁴ United Nations Development Programme. 2019. [Human Development Report 2019](#).

⁵ WFP. August 2018. [WFP China Country Brief](#).

⁶ World Bank data – most recent value for 2016. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=CN-XT>.

⁷ International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and WFP. February 2015. *China's food security and nutrition under rapid transformation: Enhanced partnership with WFP*. Draft.

⁸ Available at: <https://policy.asiapacificenergy.org/node/2509>.

⁹ United Nations. 2020. [United Nations Sustainable Development Framework for the People's Republic of China \(2021–2025\)](#).

developing countries tackle their challenges in food security, nutrition improvement and poverty reduction.¹⁰

WFP country strategic plan

6. WFP has been operating in China since 1979. In March 2016, WFP and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen the WFP-China partnership to promote the achievement of zero hunger and rural development globally. The China CSP for 2017–2021 was designed as a strategic framework under the memorandum of understanding. Within this framework, the WFP China office supports efforts to ensure domestic food security and nutrition (referred to as the “domestic programme”) while also functioning as the WFP Centre of Excellence for Rural Transformation through South–South Cooperation and as a WFP global office that raises funds and forges partnerships in support of work to achieve global food security and nutrition targets. The strategic outcomes of the CSP are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Strategic outcomes of the China country strategic plan (2017–2021)

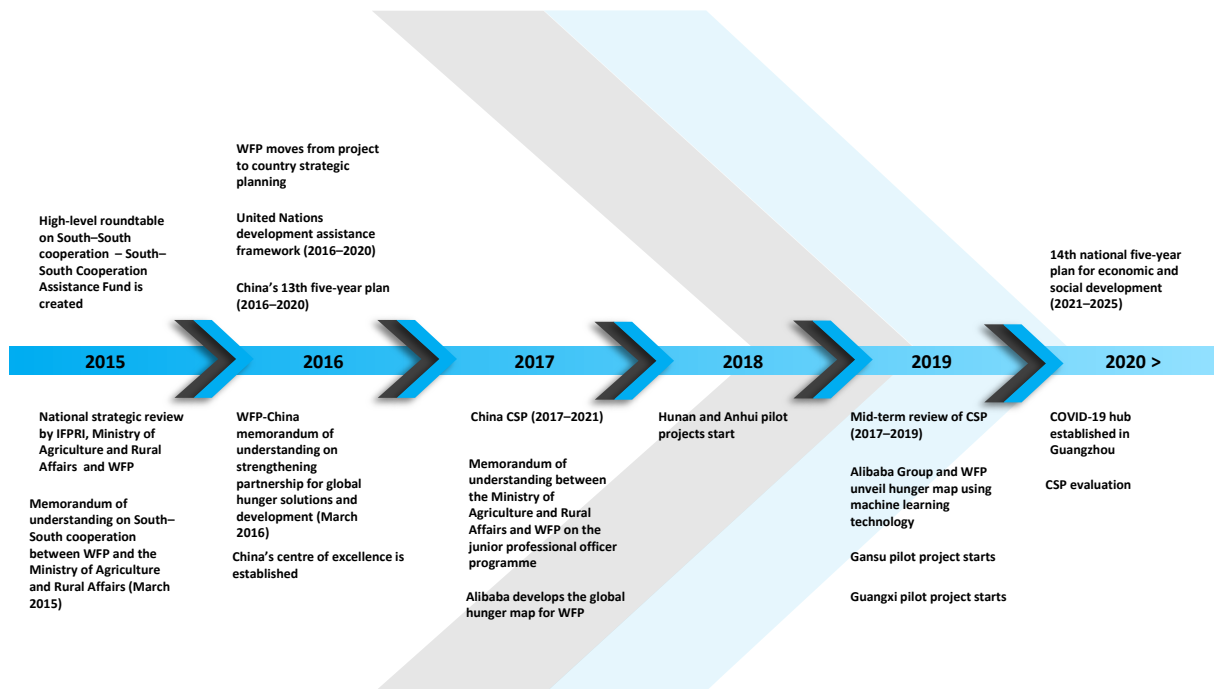
Strategic outcome 1: Malnutrition rates among children in targeted “poverty counties” reduced in line with national norms by 2020.
Strategic outcome 2: Year-round livelihoods among smallholder farmers in frequent need of food assistance in areas such as Anhui, Gansu, Guangxi, Hainan and Hunan provinces enhanced.
Strategic outcome 3: Populations regularly affected by natural disasters in Anhui, Gansu and Guangxi provinces and other poor disaster-prone areas better able to withstand and respond to shocks all year round.
Strategic outcome 4: Selected developing countries assisted in enhancing food security and nutrition in line with their prioritized targets under Sustainable Development Goal 2 by 2030.
Strategic outcome 5: Work to enhance food security and nutrition in targeted “poverty counties” and selected developing countries supported year-round by increased private-sector resources and public-private partnerships.

7. The CSP’s needs-based plan estimated needs at USD 31.25 million. Of the USD 16.97 million (54.31 percent) received by March 2021, 71.3 percent was provided by the Government of China and the rest by Chinese private sector entities, international corporations and the Chinese public. WFP has engaged in partnerships at the national and global levels with private Chinese companies such as the internet giants Alibaba and Tencent.

8. As of mid-2020, the domestic programme comprised four projects in two sectors: two preschool nutrition programmes in kindergartens and preschools in Hunan Province and Guangxi Autonomous Region; and two smallholder agriculture demonstration projects in Gansu and Anhui provinces. The CSP also includes the operation of a designated centre of excellence focusing on South–South cooperation under strategic outcome 4 and the wide range of partnership activities supported under strategic outcome 5. In addition, the WFP China office also assisted in the creation of a new global humanitarian hub in Guangzhou to support the global COVID-19 emergency response. During the preparation and implementation of the CSP, several major policy initiatives in China influenced the focus of CSP activities (see Figure 1).

¹⁰Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2019.[FAO + China: Partnering for sustainable food security](#).

Figure 1. China context and WFP activities



Source: Prepared by the evaluation team based on data provided in the terms of reference for the CSP evaluation.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

To what extent are the strategic position, role and specific contribution of WFP based on country priorities and appropriately aligned with people’s needs and the strengths of WFP?

Relevance to national policies, strategies and goals, including national Sustainable Development Goals

9. Close collaboration on CSP design between the Government and WFP headquarters helped ensure alignment with China’s overarching development strategy, the five-year plan for 2016–2020. Key areas of alignment include expansion of international cooperation in disaster prevention and mitigation and poverty alleviation; acceleration of the development of agriculture-related e-commerce; promotion of Cloud applications in logistics; and improvement of the ways in which foreign aid is offered.¹¹ The CSP contributes to progress in the focus areas for national action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹² by targeting poverty alleviation and promoting sustainable agriculture and resilience initiatives. It is also strongly aligned with China’s national poverty eradication campaign (which was due to end at the same time as the CSP), including through its focus on fundraising from the Chinese public.

10. The domestic programme is particularly well aligned with the Government’s emphasis on reducing childhood stunting, as set out in the national nutrition plan for 2017–2030. That emphasis is evident in strategic outcome 1 of the CSP, which focuses on reducing stunting through the provision of nutritious meals to schoolchildren. The WFP preschool feeding programme complements current Government efforts to supply children with food and micronutrient packages that fill the “gap” in other nutrition interventions for children between 3 and 5 years old and raise the profile of preschool child nutrition on the national agenda. The focus of the two smallholder agriculture demonstration projects under strategic outcome 2 is in line with the Government’s poverty reduction and rural transformation objectives, while the innovative zinc-enriched potato project reflects the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs’ increased attention to nutritional balance.

11. During the CSP period, direct demand from the main partners for capacity strengthening support in disaster preparedness and response, as proposed under strategic outcome 3, was limited because of the Government’s already high capacity in domestic disaster preparedness and response and the time needed to build relationships with relevant partners. Nonetheless, actions under strategic outcome 3 provided a strategic avenue for rapid response when WFP engaged with the Government of China in the COVID-19

¹¹ Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. 2016. *The 13th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of the People’s Republic of China (2016–2020)*.

¹² Jiang, X. 2020. *How China is implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. OECD Development Matters.

pandemic response through the global humanitarian hub in Guangzhou in April 2020. Disaster preparedness still represents an opportunity for collaboration between WFP and the Government of China.

12. The focus of strategic outcome 4 on strengthening agricultural production and marketing in developing countries through South–South and triangular cooperation is clearly aligned with the national priority of contributing to global processes and aid. Early in the CSP period, the WFP China office engaged in extensive dialogue aimed at ensuring that South–South cooperation provided by China was demand-driven. The level of demand from other WFP country offices was assessed with a view to matching that demand with available Chinese expertise. Through the CSP, WFP also sought to take advantage of the emerging role of the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA). CIDCA established the South–South Cooperation Assistance Fund in 2015 to assist developing countries’ implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The fund provides an opportunity for WFP country offices, with support from the WFP China office, to submit development proposals for funding.

Relevance to the needs of the most vulnerable people in China

13. The CSP targets “poverty counties” where food and nutrition deficits have been identified. In addition, the demonstration projects supported by WFP pay close attention to the most vulnerable population groups, including children with poor nutrition outcomes, smallholder farmers living in poverty and women at risk of being left behind because of limited capacity. The most vulnerable households and individuals in these groups are targeted for CSP activities.

Relevance of WFP’s strategic positioning with regard to changing conditions, national capacities and needs

14. WFP’s strategic positioning has been as a global expert with experience in implementing programmes for reducing food insecurity, improving nutrition and responding to humanitarian crises. The WFP China office has positioned itself as a convener of stakeholder groups, negotiating with potential donors and helping to leverage the technical expertise of other organizations. Nonetheless, WFP’s profile in China remains low: WFP’s work in humanitarian contexts is well known (and was recently boosted by its receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize) but given the Government’s own strong ability to set policy, respond to disasters and implement widespread development projects, the added value of engaging with WFP on domestic issues needs to be made clearer and supported with sound evidence of results on the ground.

Partnerships and coherence with the United Nations system in China

15. CSP activities were consistent with the United Nations development assistance framework for 2016–2020, including in the area of “enhanced global engagement”, which includes the establishment of the centre of excellence. WFP coordinates with other United Nations agencies, for example in leading the United Nations agriculture and food security thematic group. The three Rome-based agencies are sharing knowledge effectively, but practical alignment and collaboration in practice are very limited despite apparent opportunities. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)¹³ have developed their own dedicated financial facilities for South–South and triangular cooperation activities, funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs for FAO and the Ministry of Finance for IFAD. The WFP China office has also been actively engaged in the development of the new United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework (UNSDCF) and, together with the other Rome-based agencies, has been instrumental in raising the profile of nutrition and food security in the UNSDCF.

What are the extent and quality of WFP’s specific contributions to country strategic plan strategic outcomes in China?

Delivery of outputs and contribution to country strategic plan strategic outcomes

16. The CSP results framework does not define clear targets for achieved outputs or outcomes. Reporting of results against indicators is largely in qualitative terms. CSP activities have generally generated positive results but on a small scale, as opposed to the highly ambitious beneficiary targets outlined in the CSP document.¹⁴

¹³ IFAD has a substantial portfolio in smallholder agriculture and value chains and supports women’s engagement in agriculture. FAO is engaged in policy-related work.

¹⁴ Strategic outcome 1 targeted 34 million undernourished children, strategic outcome 2 targeted 16 million beneficiaries and strategic outcome 3 aimed to serve 10 million indirect beneficiaries.

17. Under strategic outcome 1, in 2019 the preschool nutrition pilot project in Hunan Province provided meals to 2,552 children in 29 preschools. In the first semester of 2020, with the addition of the pilot project in Guangxi Province, a total of 4,062 children received meals in 47 preschools. The provision of nutritious meals for preschool children has contributed to more varied diets. Kindergarten principals, parents and children demonstrated improved health awareness from nutrition education provided through the projects. However, there were concerns that maintaining enhanced levels of dietary diversity in the school meals without project subsidies would not be affordable for the poorest families. The home-grown school feeding model has potential for sustaining the school meals programme through local management and connections to local producers. However, there is no handover plan yet. Although the translation of project achievements into policy is limited, the pilot projects have built a foundation for further action by the Government.

18. Under strategic outcome 2 the kiwi smallholder farmer value chain project in Anhui Province helped 150 targeted households to participate in the kiwifruit value chain by facilitating their access to employment or supporting their own small orchards. The project reportedly improved farmers' skills and self-confidence and promoted the status of women. The pilot project in Gansu supported 850 smallholder farmers in the planting of zinc-enriched potatoes, focusing mainly on transferring cultivation techniques but also on preparing for the marketing of the produce. The project involved various international, national and provincial technical partners brought together successfully by the WFP China office. The impact of both pilot projects on farmers' livelihoods has still to be demonstrated, and the potential for broad impact is limited by the small scale of the activities.

19. Activities planned under strategic outcome 3 aimed at strengthening vulnerable communities' capacity to withstand and respond to shocks caused by natural disasters were not implemented owing to a lack of funding and the prioritization of other activities. However, in recent years there has been an increasing focus on fundraising for WFP's humanitarian work in other countries and on the multi-stakeholder humanitarian hub established during the COVID-19 global response. There is still potential for strategic outcome 3 activities to be undertaken.

20. Under strategic outcome 4, the centre of excellence built a network of partners that provides access to Chinese experts; mobilized those experts in well-appreciated, demand-driven learning events in which about 70 countries participated; contributed to four WFP South–South and triangular cooperation country pilot projects (with another four under discussion); developed its own preliminary website; and presented the policies of WFP and China at a large number of events in and outside China. Demonstration projects for African and Asian farmers were foreseen but have not been launched owing to limited demand and the need to define appropriate procedures for accessing the South–South Cooperation Assistance Fund.

21. Under strategic outcome 5, WFP headquarters and the WFP China office expanded existing partnerships, in particular with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, and developed new partnerships with public institutions and private enterprises. The latter are mostly in the technology sector, enabling WFP to make use of partners' online fundraising platforms. Most notable is the global multidimensional partnership with the Alibaba Group. The China office continued to raise funds for WFP international programmes, mainly from the Government of China and the Chinese public, and for domestic pilot projects, mainly from the private sector. Contributions from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs have been relatively modest but consistent over the years, while food aid funding through CIDCA declined sharply after a peak in 2017.

22. Potential synergies among strategic outcomes were not well established. Lessons from the domestic programmes were not effectively used or built on to enhance WFP's performance under all strategic outcomes. The pilot activities have the potential to serve as a "living laboratory" for joint innovation, drawing the expertise of WFP and China together. There are substantial opportunities for replicating such experiences in China and sharing them through South–South cooperation. In addition, findings from the activities under strategic outcome 5 indicate the importance of a domestic programme in China as a basis for establishing credibility and trust with current and potential financing partners.

Contribution to cross-cutting aims, including gender equality and women's empowerment

23. The activities reviewed are development rather than humanitarian operations, and little direct reference was made to the application of humanitarian principles in reporting, other than in the arrangements for ensuring accountability to affected populations. Domestic projects used a participatory

approach, with design and management decisions responding to the views of affected communities. Domestic project activities were adapted to the cultural customs of various ethnic groups.

24. Project design was gender-sensitive, encouraging the participation of women, targeting women for specific activities and collecting gender-disaggregated data. Nonetheless, some training reinforced traditional gender roles. The centre of excellence has mobilized diverse experts, including a gender empowerment expert, and the participation of women in learning events has been encouraged, with women accounting for 19.5 percent of participants to date.

Sustainability of achievements

25. Capacity strengthening is embedded in several strategic outcomes of the CSP and should contribute to the sustainability of results. However, the sustainability of domestic project achievements varies and is not guaranteed. Although all of the domestic projects currently have government matching funds in place, future funding for continuing or expanding project operations is not confirmed. The network of Chinese experts built by the centre of excellence has good potential for sustainability, and several partnerships with government agencies and Chinese companies have been formalized.

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

Timeliness

26. In general, the outputs generated through CSP implementation have been delivered within the intended timeframe. CSP implementation was the first stage of strategic engagement with China. In the early stages of the CSP period, time was invested in forging and strengthening operational relationships and preparing for implementation. The domestic projects started gradually and sequentially, and implementation plans have generally been adhered to. Operationalization and formalization of the partnership with CIDCA for funding emergency assistance and South–South and triangular cooperation projects abroad have taken time to mature. WFP’s due diligence processes before formalizing a partnership with a private partner are lengthy and have sometimes affected engagement. The COVID-19 crisis delayed the deployment of experts for South–South and triangular cooperation country pilot projects. Centre of excellence activities swiftly and successfully moved to online delivery.

Coverage and scale-up of interventions

27. The coverage and scale of the operations of the WFP China office are commensurate with current resources. The domestic pilot projects have potential for future scale-up, but there was no clear evidence that this was expected to occur within the period of the CSP as originally intended. Centre of excellence activities cover a large number of highly diverse countries, mostly in Africa but also in Asia and Latin America. Such a global, widely scattered approach is appreciated by partners in China but has made the tailoring of activities to countries’ situations more challenging. In addition, South–South cooperation does not necessarily target the countries in greatest need.

Agility and efficiency

28. Overall, resources were used in line with intended budgets and there was no evidence of inefficiency in the implementation of activities. By having the requesting WFP country office rather than experts from China design [South–South cooperation](#) activities, WFP was able to increase agility and reduce costs but the relevance of the technical assistance provided by experts was also sometimes reduced owing to the experts’ limited knowledge of the local setting. Since 2020, the centre of excellence has explored the provision of online learning events, which are considered significantly more cost-efficient, in combination with face-to-face events, which remain necessary.

Consideration of more cost-effective measures

29. Cost-benefit analyses of the domestic pilot projects were not planned but would be helpful to advocacy for their upscaling. A broad search for new partners in China generated only modest financial returns but placed heavy demands on WFP staff. The China office is therefore considering refocusing its private partnership strategy. Stakeholders also suggested that it might be more cost-effective to work with fewer fundraising platforms through more widely targeted and longer fundraising campaigns.

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

Use of evidence in development of the country strategic plan

30. The CSP is based on findings from a 2016 national food security and nutrition study (the national zero hunger strategic review)¹⁵ conducted with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and other partners. The report provided new evidence of hunger challenges, particularly in China's poverty counties, and influenced the selection and targeting of domestic pilot projects. It also helped raise national interest in preschool nutrition.

Resource mobilization

31. The WFP-China partnership was funded by a variety of donors (see paragraphs 8 and 22) but faced limited funding predictability and strong earmarking at the activity level, which led to funding imbalances. The preschool nutrition programme received more attention through WFP's international partners and more online donations from the Chinese public than did interventions to promote smallholder agriculture and resilience to natural disasters. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs provided stable resources for operating the WFP China office and implementing centre of excellence activities, although the latter are tied to initiatives that are approved by the ministry and employ experts from organizations under it, leaving the CSP with little opportunity for flexible implementation or responsive to additional identified needs. Substantial efforts were made to organize WFP's access to China's South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund managed by CIDCA, but progress in formalizing the financing partnership has been slow.

Partnerships and collaboration

32. The WFP China office is uniquely positioned in China and has engaged actively in the development of partnerships and collaboration (see paragraphs 16 and 22), demonstrating the importance of a country presence for WFP.

Flexibility in a dynamic operational context

33. The CSP provided an overall framework for operations but in general had little influence on the flexibility of activities. The China office has engaged actively within the development context, both through its own mandate and in collaboration with the United Nations country team. Results achieved to date are largely attributable to the China office's management of relationships and to the resources provided by government partners rather than the CSP itself.

Other factors explaining WFP performance and the extent to which WFP has made the strategic shift expected under the CSP

34. The CSP strategic outcomes were vaguely defined and overly ambitious, and the chain of expected results lacked clarity. The CSP's focus on capacity strengthening was weakened by a lack of clear indicators and targets for monitoring progress.

35. The level and expertise of staff in the WFP China office were a major asset, but to grasp the opportunities for expanding the domestic programme and increasing its policy influence, the China office should be strengthened with additional expertise in policy engagement, media, promotion and communications, nutrition and food systems, gender, emergency management, and monitoring and evaluation. For the China office, reporting directly to WFP headquarters in Rome rather than the WFP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific brings the advantage of having a direct strategic link but also the disadvantage of having less support for operational and human resource procedures and less access to technical expertise than other WFP country offices.

CONCLUSIONS

36. Implementation of the first CSP has demonstrated the potential for strong engagement between WFP and China. The CSP is well aligned with Chinese policies and strategies. China recognizes WFP's technical expertise in nutrition and food systems innovation and disaster risk reduction and resilience. It values WFP's mode of engagement, particularly the balance and linkage between domestic and international programming. At the same time, WFP has a relatively low profile in China, and WFP's mobilization of China as a global partner for advocacy under SDG 2 and for financial aid has yet to reach its full potential. So far,

¹⁵ IFPRI, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and WFP. February 2015. *China's food security and nutrition under rapid transformation: Enhanced partnership with WFP*. Draft.

the focus of the China office has been more on operationalizing the CSP than on lesson learning and policy engagement.

37. The CSP was the first stage of a strategic engagement with China, and efforts focused on building and carefully managing relationships with a growing number of increasingly diverse stakeholders with the aim of developing the domestic programme, South–South cooperation and fundraising. There was a consistent need to align ways of working in order to achieve mutual understanding and agreement on operational approaches. That required the investment of time and a respectful approach to listening and understanding the priorities and requirements of WFP headquarters in Rome, the China office, public and private partners in China and other WFP country offices. The China office has only recently established regular contacts with various WFP headquarter divisions, but as it reports directly to WFP headquarters in Rome and not to the regional bureau in Bangkok, it does not benefit from WFP’s regional communication and capacity building network to the same degree as other WFP country offices.

38. There is great potential for finding appropriate global solutions for zero hunger and improved food systems through the blending of the expertise of WFP and China. Countries participating in centre of excellence activities have a dual interest in learning about China’s approaches from the policy to the grassroots levels and in mobilizing proven technology from China to generate locally appropriate solutions. The demand-driven matching process is appreciated but there is room for better adaptation of technical advice to widely diverse country settings. The centre of excellence’s internet platform does not reflect its demand-driven approach.

39. Domestic pilot projects were found relevant at the national level and were delivered in the intended timeframe. Their coverage and scale are limited and more could be done in terms of measuring results, cost–benefit analysis and capturing and disseminating lessons, for both the upscaling of good practices in China and the sharing of experiences internationally through South–South cooperation. The local projects also provide an opportunity for stronger WFP engagement with China on gender-transformative approaches, and protection and accountability to affected populations. WFP’s contributions at high-profile events, workshops and policy discussions are valued.

40. Capitalization on the results achieved to date is constrained by the incomplete range of staff positions engaged in the China CSP. China office staff members are fully occupied with operations and engagement with current international and domestic stakeholders leaving insufficient time for strategic review and detailed strategic engagement. An organizational alignment review conducted in 2020 recommended a restructuring of the China office’s human resources to address these constraints.

41. The emergent nature of funding relationships in China results in a degree of uncertainty regarding the future operations of the China office and the centre of excellence. The current financial model for the China office, its interventions in China and its fundraising capacity are not yet fully stable. At present the implementation of activities relies on earmarked funding rather than a strategic funding approach for CSP priorities. The financial model for China as a donor to WFP’s international programmes is also yet to be confirmed. While the overarching objectives of WFP and CIDCA are aligned, **their project modalities are not yet mutually compatible**. After a first CSP focused on investing in the development of long-term partnerships with public institutions and the private sector, it will be critical to confirm strategic alignment and returns from that initial investment during the next CSP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

42. The evaluation makes two strategic and two operational recommendations, presented in the following table.

Recommendations

	Recommendation	Type (strategic/operational)	Recommendation lead and supporting offices and divisions	Level of prioritization	Deadline for completion
1.	WFP should strengthen its strategic engagement with the Government of China on WFP and China’s priorities and areas of expertise as entry points for maximizing the global impact of the WFP–China partnership.	Strategic	WFP China office and centre of excellence with support from the Strategic Partnerships Division (STR), the Public Partnerships and Resourcing Division (PPR), the Communications, Advocacy and Marketing Division (CAM), the Gender Office (GEN) and the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBB)	High	2021 as part of the new CSP
1.1	WFP should further pursue its domestic activities in China, maintaining attention on nutrition and the development of nutrition-related value chains but also sharpening collaboration in the area of disaster risk reduction and resilience.	Strategic	WFP China office and centre of excellence	High	2021
1.2	WFP should strengthen its capacity to engage more fully at the strategic level with China as a donor, promoting global policy dialogue and systems change in food security through a “practice to policy” feedback loop. For this, WFP should broaden the terms of reference of senior staff at headquarters and in the China office to include strategic partnership building with associated performance indicators.	Strategic	WFP China office with support from PPR and STR	Medium	2022
1.3	WFP should intensify efforts to raise its profile in China, especially by promoting its “niche” areas of expertise in nutrition, food systems and humanitarian emergency preparedness and response.	Strategic	WFP China office with support from CAM	Medium	2021–2026

	Recommendation	Type (strategic/operational)	Recommendation lead and supporting offices and divisions	Level of prioritization	Deadline for completion
1.4	WFP should strengthen commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women in all CSP strategic outcomes through dedicated staff with relevant expertise.	Strategic	WFP China office with support from GEN	Medium	2021–2026
2.	WFP should continue to identify effective ways of working with internal and external stakeholder groups.	Operational	WFP China office with support from STR, PPR, CAM, the Private Partnerships and Fundraising Division (PPF), other headquarters divisions and RBB	High	2021 as part of the new CSP
2.1	The WFP Strategic Partnerships Division should facilitate better access to technical capacity from a broad range of WFP divisions for China office staff, with improved frequency and ease of communication, both for the design of activities in the China CSP and to make expertise available to WFP partners in China.	Operational	STR with support from other headquarters divisions and RBB	High	2021–2026
2.2	The WFP China office should find ways to enhance communication in support of the CSP. It should improve targeted sharing of good practices and understanding of WFP global operations with China counterparts and should apply up-to-date approaches and bilingual tools with internal and external stakeholder groups.	Operational	WFP China office with support from CAM	Medium	2021
2.3	WFP should maintain an up-to-date stakeholder map of all WFP-China stakeholders. Based on the private-sector partnerships and fundraising strategy for 2020–2025, WFP should prepare a country partnership plan, identifying whether partners are strategic or technical partners or donors, with relevant stakeholder management, engagement and communication strategies.	Operational	WFP China office with support from STR, PPR and PPF	Medium	2022
2.4	WFP should continue to collaborate with the China International Centre for Economic and Technical Exchanges	Operational	WFP China office with support from STR and PPR	High	2021

	Recommendation	Type (strategic/operational)	Recommendation lead and supporting offices and divisions	Level of prioritization	Deadline for completion
	and CIDCA on identifying compatible processes that can be expedited, addressing bottlenecks and sharing information with partner WFP country offices with a view to improving the quality of proposals.				
3.	WFP should further strengthen processes in its domestic programme and the centre of excellence for capturing, sharing and communicating results and enhancing learning.	Operational	WFP China office with support from the Research, Assessment and Monitoring Division (RAM), the Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division (PRO), the Technology Division (TEC) and CAM	High	2021–2022
3.1	WFP should enhance the monitoring and evaluation of domestic and centre of excellence activities to promote the upscaling and sharing of experiences nationally and internationally.	Operational	WFP China office and centre of excellence with support from RAM	High	2021–2026
3.2	The WFP-China centre of excellence’s matching process should expand from delivery of solutions that work well in China to facilitation of two-way knowledge exchanges on good practices, with a flexible approach (online and face-to-face) across various capacity levels and thematic areas, responding to countries’ demand for appropriate and affordable innovations.	Operational	WFP China office and centre of excellence with support from PRO	Medium	2022–2026
3.3	WFP should consider further improvement of the China centre of excellence’s knowledge-sharing platform in order to respond to the demand of audiences and reflect the WFP approach to knowledge management in South–South and triangular cooperation and then link the platform to international web search engines for improved access.	Operational	WFP China office and centre of excellence with support from CAM and TEC	Medium	2021–2026
4.	WFP should develop a clear plan for securing China’s long-term contributions to WFP.	Strategic	WFP headquarters and China office	High	2021–2022

	Recommendation	Type (strategic/operational)	Recommendation lead and supporting offices and divisions	Level of prioritization	Deadline for completion
4.1	WFP should engage more intensively with the other Rome-based agencies in a joint South-South and triangular cooperation approach regarding China, in terms of both the financing model and the sharing of results.	Strategic	WFP headquarters and China office	Medium	2021-2026
4.2	WFP should consider promoting large-scale South-South and triangular cooperation programmes that are appropriate for financing by China and in line with China's international cooperation priorities. The potential in the long term for grant frameworks or multilateral approaches should be explored.	Strategic	WFP headquarters and China office	High	2022-2026
4.3	WFP should organize annual roundtables for programme reviews with each key government agency focusing on the agency's specific interests and scope of work. The roundtables would be thematic meetings that would be more focused on thematic opportunities and challenges than the multi-stakeholder annual retreats are.	Operational	WFP China office with support from PPR	Medium	2022-2026

1. Introduction

1.1 EVALUATION FEATURES

1. The World Food Programme (WFP) Office of Evaluation (OEV) commissioned the evaluation of the WFP Country Strategic Plan (CSP) in China (2017–2021).¹ A WFP country strategic plan encompasses the entirety of WFP activities within a country during a specific period. A country strategic plan evaluation (CSPE) is mandatory for all country strategic plans and these are carried out in line with the WFP Policy on Country Strategic Plans (2016).²

2. **China CSPE purpose:** The purpose of the CSPE is to: 1) provide evaluation evidence and learning on WFP performance for country-level strategic decisions, specifically for developing the next country strategic plan; and 2) provide accountability for results to WFP stakeholders. This evaluation looked at the strategic aspects of the role of WFP in China to determine the relevance and effectiveness of the organization’s strategic positioning. It aims to present the WFP China country office and its stakeholders with a comprehensive, clear and useful analysis of the operational performance of WFP and its partners in China from 2017 to 2020, assessed against four WFP CSPE questions, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria, and the standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). The evaluation gives appropriate consideration to gender dimensions.³

3. **Evaluation scope:** The evaluation covers: (i) country strategic plan-driven activities in China, and (ii) WFP support to activities driven by the China country strategic plan in selected partner WFP country offices. The country strategic plan has unique features because it is a framework for: the WFP domestic programme in China; the WFP China Centre of Excellence (CoE) in South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC); the development of WFP partnerships with the public and private sector; and related fundraising from China to WFP.⁴ Other WFP activities in China during the country strategic plan period were not initially within the scope of the country strategic plan. In particular the establishment in China of one of the Global Humanitarian Hubs as part of the global COVID-19 response was incorporated into the country strategic plan through an amendment in December 2019.⁵ These activities are managed via WFP headquarters (HQ). Nonetheless, the WFP China country office provides support to headquarters-managed activities and has been engaged in ongoing strategic discussions regarding the potential for their further development.

4. **Evaluation coverage:** The evaluation covers all WFP activities in China (including cross-cutting results) from January 2017 to December 2020. The evaluation addresses four main questions common to all WFP CSPEs.

EQ1 – To what extent is the WFP strategic position, role and specific contribution based on country priorities and appropriately aligned to people’s needs as well as to WFP strengths?

EQ2 – What is the extent and quality of the specific contribution of WFP to country strategic plan strategic outcomes in China?

EQ3 – To what extent has WFP used its resources efficiently in contributing to country strategic plan outputs and strategic outcomes?

EQ4 – What are the factors that explain WFP performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected by the country strategic plan?

¹ China Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021).

² The WFP Policy on CSPs approved by the Executive Board in 2016, states: “under the management of the OEV, all CSPs, other than Interim CSPs, will undergo evaluations towards the end of their implementation period, to assess progress and results against intended CSP outcomes and objectives, including towards gender equity and other cross-cutting corporate results; and to identify lessons for the design of subsequent country-level support”. These evaluations are part of a wide body of evidence expected to feed into CSPs, which includes decentralized evaluations and a mid-term review.

³ Annexes are provided in Volume 2 of the evaluation report. The terms of reference of the evaluation are summarized in Annex 1.

⁴ China Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021), p1

⁵ China Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021), revision 1, December 2019

5. The evaluand is the WFP country strategic plan in China including its strategic outcomes, outputs, activities, inputs and approved budget revisions. The evaluation analyses the WFP partnership approach with China in relation to the WFP Partnership Strategy (2014) and Guidance (2016). The evaluation assesses WFP contributions to country strategic plan strategic outcomes, establishing plausible causal relations among the outputs of WFP activities, the implementation process, the operational environment, and the changes observed at output and outcome levels, including any unintended consequences, positive or negative. The evaluation analyses if, and how, gender equality and women's empowerment were considered in the country strategic plan design and implementation. These conclusions and recommendations are meant to inform the preparation of the next country strategic plan. The summary evaluation report will be presented at the November 2021 session of the WFP Executive Board.

6. **Evaluation methodology:** The evaluation methodology included a document review, key stakeholder interviews, field visits to domestic projects, review of an activity database and performance data and results-based management processes to assess operational performance (Annex 2). The evaluation surveyed a sample of WFP country offices to assess SSTC activities (Annex 3). The evaluation analytical matrix was adjusted to reflect the unique, combined features of the China country strategic plan while remaining fully consistent with Office of Evaluation standards for an evaluation matrix (Annex 4).

7. **Expected users of the China CSPE:** The main users of this evaluation are the WFP China country office and staff in China, the Strategic Partnership Division (STR) and other relevant headquarter divisions, the Executive Board, and the Office of Evaluation. Externally, the country strategic plan evaluation will serve to inform the Government of China (GoC), its ministries and other WFP stakeholders in China.

1.2 COUNTRY CONTEXT

General overview

8. **China has the largest population in the world, with 1.395 billion people,**⁶ (48.9 percent females and 51.1 percent males⁷) – which grew by 0.5 percent in 2018.⁸ China has experienced substantial progress in poverty reduction and social development. Its per capita gross domestic product (GDP) for 2019 was estimated at USD 14,731,⁹ it is an upper middle-income country, and China's Human Development Index (0.761) ranks 85 out of 189 countries.¹⁰ China achieved its 2015 Millennium Development Goal target of halving the proportion of its people suffering from hunger accounting for two-thirds of the reduction globally. Its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) plan includes SDG 1 - combatting poverty for the rural population of over 50 million people currently under the poverty line; and SDG 2 - producing over 600 billion kilograms of national grain by 2020; and limiting the rate of stunting and children who are underweight.¹¹

9. **Challenges remain in reducing residual poverty and inequality,** and in extending successful national programmes to marginalized communities. The China National Bureau of Statistics Yearbook 2020 records a substantial decline in poverty in China between 2018 and 2019. China's Gini index of 38.6 reflects high inequality of social gains.¹² Through its thirteenth Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development (2016-2020), the Government of China is implementing a major national effort to eliminate absolute poverty and substantially reduce relative poverty by the end of 2020.¹³ In 2020, the poverty alleviation funds reached 146.1 billion yuan, supporting targeted poverty alleviation initiatives, developing the agri-food sector for special commodities, relocating the poorest farmers and implementing a social protection policy. National policies stress the principle of development-driven poverty reduction, combining social assistance with sector-specific development, optimizing the roles and functions of central and local government, extending support to vulnerable groups, and continuing to fund poverty-reduction initiatives. China is becoming a major development partner and provider of support through South-South cooperation

⁶ China National Bureau of Statistics Yearbook 2020 [hdr2020.pdf \(undp.org\)](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW?locations=CN)

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW?locations=CN>

⁹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/263770/gross-domestic-product-gdp-of-china/>

¹⁰ UNDP Human Development Report, 2019.

¹¹ <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/china-releases-national-plan-to-implement-sdgs/>

¹² https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=CN&name_desc=false

¹³ [WFP China Country Strategic Plan \(2017-2021\)](#)

(SSC)¹⁴ drawing on its resources and development experience to help developing countries tackle challenges and reduce poverty.¹⁵

Food and nutrition security

10. **Rural poverty and its consequences on food security and nutrition are largely concentrated in specific populations in remote and mountainous areas.** Despite substantial progress in reducing hunger and malnutrition, the Government of China continues its efforts towards its goal of ensuring food security and nutrition across China. The Government continues to prioritize agricultural modernization, despite agriculture's declining contribution to the gross domestic product,¹⁶ reflecting relatively stronger growth in other economic sectors.¹⁷ China's 2018 "Document Number One", the annual policy document on agriculture and rural development, launched a new national focus on the Rural Revitalization Strategy and laid out a path to phased rural revitalization with milestones in 2020, 2035 and 2050.¹⁸ In 2016, the WFP-China Joint Strategic Review¹⁹ identified the triple burden of malnutrition that China currently faces – undernourishment (or hunger), hidden hunger, and obesity/being overweight, which are disproportionately concentrated in poor rural regions and among vulnerable groups such as children, rural households headed by single women (due to migration of men) and the elderly.²⁰

11. **According to national statistics, almost 151 million people in China remain undernourished.** Given the magnitude of the population, malnutrition rates of: 9.4 percent stunting, 19.6 percent anaemia and 25 percent overweight population represent serious national and global burdens.²¹ Rapid economic development and targeted government interventions have reduced the prevalence of underweight people (low weight-for-age) and wasting (low weight-for-height) dramatically. Stunting (low height-for-age) remains problematic, especially in poor rural areas; and the rate of overweight children and childhood obesity (high body mass index or BMI for age) has continued to increase.²²

12. **Malnutrition rates exhibit significant demographic disparities.** Undernutrition among children under 5 remains high in rural areas. Stunting rates for children under 5 are 4.3 percent in urban areas, but 18.7 percent in poor rural areas. Informal data suggests stunting rates in rural areas are 19.5 percent among boys and 17.6 percent among girls; others indicate a significant anaemia issue among women.²³ China's Food and Nutrition Development Plan (2014–2020) sets the targets of reducing stunting among children under 5 to less than 7 percent and reducing anaemia prevalence to less than 10 percent by 2020.²⁴ The National Child Development Plan for Poverty-Stricken Areas (2014–2020) aims to reach 40 million rural children in 680 counties. This plan aims at early intervention to increase child survival and promote healthy child development from birth to the completion of compulsory education.²⁵

Agriculture and rural development

13. **Agriculture, forestry, and fishing account for 7 percent of China's gross domestic product.**²⁶ China has been able to feed its own population - which accounted for 18.3 percent of the global population

¹⁴ In this report, SSC is the broad concept of development cooperation between China and developing countries, used by the Government of China, for example in the South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund (SSCAF). SSTC is the narrow concept of exchanges between China and these countries, which is the scope of work of the WFP Centre of Excellence in China.

¹⁵ FAO, FAO + China Partnering for sustainable food security. 2019.

¹⁶ Agriculture's contribution to GDP fell from 9.3 to 7.2 percent during the period 2015-2018.

¹⁷ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/270325/distribution-of-gross-domestic-product-gdp-across-economic-sectors-china/>

¹⁸ Annual Country Report (ACR) for WFP China 2018.

¹⁹ China's Food Security and Nutrition under Rapid Transformation: Enhanced Partnership with WFP, February 2015 rev. Draft International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Chinese Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), and WFP.

²⁰ ACR for WFP China 2017.

²¹ National trends in stunting, thinness and overweight among Chinese school-aged children, 1985–2014 (2018) Song, Y., Agardh, A., Ma, J. et al.

²² Ibid.

²³ Tian Xu 2013, Global Nutrition Report 2017 and WHO 2020.

²⁴ WFP China Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ World Bank <https://data.worldbank.org/country/china?view=chart>

in 2018²⁷ - with less than 10 percent of global farmland.²⁸ Agriculture contributes substantially to China's food production²⁹ with an estimated national budget in 2019 of USD 220.21 billion.³⁰ Investments in modern technology – machinery, fertilizer and irrigation – and policy changes were credited as drivers of China's agricultural growth.³¹ The National Plan to Promote Modern Agriculture (2016–2020) aims to maintain grain production at 550 million metric tons (mt) and improve capacity to coordinate domestic and foreign markets.³² It highlights the importance of appropriate import policies and structures for diverse products, channels and methods, and promotes international markets to complement China's comparative advantages. Recent policies place stronger emphasis on sustainable agricultural development in recognition of increasing global demographic, environmental and health challenges.³³

14. **China's agricultural sector is still largely dominated by rural smallholder farmers.** In 2016, this totalled approximately 98.1 percent of China's 207 million registered agricultural producers - almost 50 percent of global smallholder farmers.³⁴ Smallholder farming operations are less supported by national policies compared to their large-scale counterparts, and smallholder farms often do not have sustainable access to agricultural technologies to increase production, major markets to increase customer base, or food safety standard knowledge.³⁵ The movement of young, healthy people from rural areas to cities has meant that smallholder farmers tend to be women, ageing, and less educated.³⁶

15. **The 2018 reform of the Government of China resulted in the expansion of scope for the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), a major stakeholder in the country strategic plan and a WFP partner.** The ministry, now the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA), covers agriculture, farmers, and rural areas. The new scope of work of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs is the reflection of the full-scale launch of the rural revitalization strategy. For example the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, together with the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), jointly hosted the 2020 China and Global Agricultural Policy Forum, which launched the China Agricultural Sector Development Report, and the Global Food Policy Report in Beijing.³⁷ These reports include consideration of smallholder agriculture and rural development and current topics such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on agriculture and farmers' income.³⁸

Education

16. With a child population (0-17 years) of 271 million, accounting for approximately 13 percent of the global total,³⁹ China faces the task of educating the world's second-largest child population. China regards education as critical and provides nine years of compulsory education throughout the country, with net enrolment rates among school-age boys and girls exceeding 99 percent since 2008, with a rate of 99.94 percent in 2019.⁴⁰ The national-level illiteracy rate dropped from 4.1 percent in 2014 to 3.2 percent in 2018, while illiteracy among adolescents dropped from 2.8 to 1.0 percent over the same period. There are significant gender disparities among adults; over the age of 25, 75 percent of women and 83 percent of men have at least secondary education.⁴¹

17. China's extensive school feeding programme, where 33.6 million schoolchildren received government-provided school meals in 2015, is seen as important for both education and nutrition. There has been no similar programme for preschools. The preschool stage, between early childhood and entry in primary school, has been identified as a stage in which rural children are more vulnerable, especially in

²⁷ World Bank Open Data, 2018

²⁸ Report on China's Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) July 2015.

²⁹ http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-10/16/c_138475888.htm

³⁰ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/049d4bd3-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/049d4bd3-en>

³¹ From China CSP Evaluation Terms of Reference (not referenced).

³² National Plan to Promote Modern Agriculture (2016–2020).

³³ http://english.gov.cn/policies/latest_releases/2016/10/20/content_281475470945910.htm

³⁴ UN People's Republic of China: Common Country Analysis 2020.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Common Country Analysis.

³⁷ IFPRI. <https://www.ifpri.org/blog/2020-china-and-global-agricultural-policy-forum-building-food-systems-inclusiveness->

³⁸ Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. http://english.moa.gov.cn/cooperation/202006/t20200630_300488.html

³⁹ NWCCW, NBS, UNICEF, 2018.

⁴⁰ Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China,

http://www.moe.gov.cn/s78/A03/moe_560/jytjsj_2019/qg/202006/t20200611_464792.html

⁴¹ UNDP Human Development Report 2019.

families in which both parents work in urban areas, leaving their children in the care of ageing grandparents.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

18. **Recently, China made significant achievements in reducing gender inequalities, and improving women's employment, poverty alleviation, education, health, and social security.** The Government remains committed to continued efforts to uncover prevailing social and economic drivers of gender inequality.⁴² China's Gender Inequality Index in 2017 was 0.152 (the closer to 0, the higher gender equality is), ranking thirtieth of 189 countries.⁴³ In 2018, this index increased to 0.163 and China's ranking fell to thirty-ninth.⁴⁴ Prevalent gender stereotypes and gender preferences in the Chinese society contribute towards China's slow-paced achievement of gender equality.⁴⁵ Whilst the Government of China has made efforts to reduce the skew towards preference for sons through national awareness campaigns, the difference remained significant in 2017 with 111.9 boy births per 100 girl births.⁴⁶ The sex ratio in 2019 was 104.46 boy births per 100 girl births, demonstrating a continuing trend towards parity.⁴⁷

19. In 2018, women's wages were still 64 percent of those of men for similar work. In the same year, labour market participation for women was estimated at 61.3 percent compared to 75.9 percent for men.⁴⁸ Entrenched gender stereotypes often hinder women entering the workforce, whereby an emphasis still remains on women's reproductive and caring roles over their productive roles and reinforces patriarchal norms and practices.⁴⁹

Natural disasters, climate change and vulnerability

20. **China is among the most disaster-prone countries in the world.** Agro-meteorological disasters alone affected 186.2 million people and 21.8 million hectares (ha) of crops in 2015, resulting in USD 39 billion – 0.5 percent of the gross domestic product – of direct economic losses affecting all provinces.⁵⁰ Half the country's population and more than 70 percent of Chinese cities are located in areas prone to earthquake and meteorological, geological and oceanic disasters.⁵¹ Between 1989 and 2018, natural hazards caused the deaths of 195,820 people, and direct physical losses amounted to approximately USD 1.698 billion.⁵²

21. **China's agricultural sector is vulnerable to climate change and natural disaster risks.** Rising global temperatures have uncertain effects on agriculture: while warmer temperatures will increase the growing period and expand areas suitable for cropping, extreme weather events, unpredictable precipitation patterns, and an expanded range of agricultural pests will have negative effects on agriculture. The vulnerability stems in part from the expansion of agricultural production into marginal areas prone to natural disasters.⁵³ In 2019, China's natural disasters were mainly flooding, typhoons, droughts, earthquakes and geological disasters. Forest and grassland fires, wind and hail, low temperature freezing, and snow disasters occur to varying degrees.

22. **China faces emergency situations where citizens may be internally displaced as a result of calamities, encouraging rural-urban migration.** In 2019, 130 million people were affected by various natural disasters, 909 people perished, 5.29 million people were resettled urgently. According to the 2019 statistics of the disasters released, 126,000 houses collapsed, 284,000 were seriously damaged and 984,000 were generally damaged by various natural disasters; the disaster area of crops was 192,569,000 hectares,

⁴² UN Sustainable Development Framework People's Republic of China 2021-2025.

⁴³ UNDP Human Development Report 2019.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ UN People's Republic of China: Common Country Analysis 2020.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ China National Bureau of Statistics Yearbook 2020.

⁴⁸ UNDP Human Development Report 2019.

⁴⁹ UN People's Republic of China: Common Country Analysis 2020.

⁵⁰ WFP China Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021).

⁵¹ World Bank: Natural Disaster Challenges in China: Key Trends and Insights.

⁵² WFP China Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021).

⁵³ Ibid.

including 2,802,000 hectares with no harvest; and the direct economic loss was assessed as 327.09 billion yuan (USD 50 billion).⁵⁴

23. **To combat such challenges, the Government has significantly invested in strengthening national institutions and capacities for emergency management and humanitarian protection.** This includes improving approaches to addressing resettlement after natural disasters. A new Ministry of Emergency Management (MEM) was created and is tasked with addressing disaster reduction and climate change. The Ministry of Emergency Management was established in 2018 following a State Council reform with responsibility for the climate change strategy, coordinating and implementing emergency management plans, organizing rescue and relief for disasters, and the prevention and control of fire, flood, drought, and geographical disasters.⁵⁵

Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals

24. **The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for issues related to the Sustainable Development Goals and coordinating with other ministries on implementation follow up and review.** Submission of a full voluntary national review to the United Nations Assembly is planned in 2021.⁵⁶ China's 2019 Progress Report on Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development states that "the targeted poverty alleviation strategy has produced remarkable results between the years 2015-2018."⁵⁷ According to this report, the number of people living in poverty in rural areas decreased from 55.75 million to 16.6 million,⁵⁸ and the rural poverty incidence dropped from 5.7 percent to 1.7 percent by 2018. The macro-economic performance has been stable. Gross domestic product increased in 2018 by 6.6 percent. A total of 13.61 million new urban jobs were created and the surveyed unemployment rate remained at around 5 percent. China maintains a safe and stable supply of grains. Maternal mortality rate dropped from 20.1 per 100,000 to 18.3 per 100,000 and infant mortality rate from 8.1 percent to 6.1 percent.

International cooperation

25. **Development support to China has recently shifted substantially as national development requirements are addressed through national planning.**⁵⁹ The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2016–2020 that was in effect during country strategic plan design identified three priority areas for continued development collaboration. These are: i) poverty reduction and equitable development; ii) improved and sustainable environment; and iii) enhanced global engagement. In 2020, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) worked with stakeholders to generate a 2021-2025 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) aimed at supporting the Government and the Chinese people to accelerate evidence-informed approaches to sustainable human, social, economic and environmental development both in China and beyond. The UNSDCF prioritizes United Nations system's support for the Government's fourteenth five-year plan in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal targets. The UNSDCF will include an indicator framework for a results matrix and aims to generate baselines and monitor performance regarding Sustainable Development Goal targets.⁶⁰

26. **China's engagement in international aid has evolved, impacting its position as a donor.** Since 2017, China's commitment to international development aid has strengthened and several new institutions were established. In April 2018, China inaugurated the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), a key national entity on development cooperation overseeing the South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund (SSCAF) established in 2015.

27. **China's growing investments, trade and aid reflect its increasingly influential role in the global political economy.** China's latest White Paper on international development cooperation, (January 2021), reported approximately half of the USD 19 billion of China's foreign aid in 2013–2018 was allocated

⁵⁴ http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2020-01/16/c_1125471558.htm

⁵⁵ http://english.www.gov.cn/state_council/ministries/2018/03/13/content_281476076465182.htm

⁵⁶ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=81&menu=3170>

⁵⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019, China's Progress Report on Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

⁵⁸ Approximately 13.3 million of the recorded number of people living below the poverty level live in urban areas in 2018.

⁵⁹ National Thirteenth Five-Year Plan (2016-2020).

⁶⁰ Interview with UNDP during Inception Mission, August 2020.

to Africa.⁶¹ In May 2017, the Government of China announced replenishment of USD 1 billion to the SSCAF and a commitment of USD 300 million in food aid, targeting countries engaged in the Belt and Road Initiative, which was launched in 2013.⁶² The establishment in 2000 of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the country's leading role in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and New Development Bank, and the expansion of the China Development Bank's international scope, marked important steps in the consolidation and stepping up of Chinese development cooperation.

28. **China's role as a donor is evolving rapidly.** Total aid is difficult to quantify, but grants between 2013-2018 were twice those in 2010-2012.⁶³ The OECD reports data provided by the Government of China and these are not listed in the official development aid figures of OECD for non-DAC members.⁶⁴ Chinese contributions to multilateral organizations are better known, totalling USD 2.3 billion, primarily channelled through development banks (51 percent) – especially the AIIB and the World Bank Group (29 percent). Between 2013 and 2019 China received USD 12.5 billion from the World Bank.⁶⁵ The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have resident offices in China, and AIIB is headquartered in China. In 2020, in the COVID-19 context, China announced a commitment of USD 2 billion for international cooperation in this field.⁶⁶

South-South and triangular cooperation

29. **China's participation in global engagement has increased with its commitment to SSTC.**⁶⁷ China has been actively involved with various partners including the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). FAO's SSTC activities began in 1996 with the launch of the FAO-China South-South Cooperation Programme. FAO and China strengthened their SSTC partnerships through the signing of a letter of intent in 2006.⁶⁸ The Government established an SSTC Trust Fund with FAO, amounting to USD 80 million (22 percent of FAO's global SSTC resources).⁶⁹ As of April 2015, China had deployed 1023 experts and technicians in 25 countries and regions of Africa, Asia, the South Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean, all through the FAO-China South-South Cooperation Programme.⁷⁰ IFAD established the China-IFAD SSTC facility in February 2018, the first within IFAD. The facility, funded by China's Ministry of Finance (MoF) with an amount of USD 10 million,⁷¹ focuses on sharing expertise, knowledge, and resources and enhancing partnerships in the fields of smallholder agriculture and rural development, with particular focus on reducing poverty, fighting malnutrition, and promoting rural youth employment in developing countries.⁷²

30. **In 2016, WFP established a WFP Centre of Excellence for Rural Transformation within the WFP China country office.** The Centre of Excellence serves as a knowledge hub to support SSTC with other countries. It was designed to share China's expertise in food security, nutrition improvement and poverty alleviation by facilitating policy dialogue and research, technical training and exchange, and expert advice.⁷³

⁶¹ State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China 2021. China's International Development Cooperation in the New Era.

⁶² Ibid. 1 CNY = USD 0.154

⁶³ The annual amount of grants in the 2010-2012 period was USD1.6 billion (2014 white paper on China's international cooperation).

⁶⁴ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/9789264302075-8-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/9789264302075-8-en>

⁶⁵ The World Bank, 2019, Country Partnership Framework for The People's Republic of China for the Period FY2020-2025.

⁶⁶ 2021 white paper on China's international cooperation.

⁶⁷ The China CSP document uses the term South-South cooperation (SSC). This evaluation uses instead the term South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) to be consistent with WFP strategy. Yet, there is significance in the use of the term SSC in the China CSP which can be considered as a broad concept covering any cooperation between China and a developing country.

⁶⁸ FAO-China South-South Cooperation Programme 2015.

⁶⁹ FAO, 2019, South-South and Triangular Cooperation in FAO: Strengthening Partnership to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ WFP, 2020, Policy Evaluation: WFP South-South and Triangular Cooperation Policy, inception report.

⁷² China-IFAD South-South and Triangular Cooperation Facility 2018.

⁷³ WFP Centre of Excellence in China: South-South & Triangular Cooperation.

COVID-19 pandemic

31. Government efforts were focused on supporting the fight against the pandemic and recovery efforts. A Chinese Yuan (CNY) 4.2 trillion (USD 594 billion) support package was implemented by the Government of China in May 2020 including funds for: epidemic prevention and control; disbursement of unemployment insurance; and tax relief.⁷⁴ The People's Bank of China has provided monetary support to businesses responsible for providing essential goods and services needed for COVID-19 relief.

32. As of 30 April 2021, China has had over 103,500 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and more than 4,857 COVID-19-related deaths.⁷⁵ During the early stages of COVID-19, the Government implemented large-scale restrictions on mobility in an attempt to limit spread. By mid-February 2020, these mobility restrictions had lifted in order to boost essential sectors and the national economy. During the evaluation, restrictions on international travel remained and social distancing and safe hygiene practices were still in place across the country.⁷⁶ According to the China country office, COVID-19 did not significantly impact progress on the country strategic plan workplan.

1.3 THE WFP COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN IN CHINA

33. **The subject of this evaluation is the WFP country strategic plan in China (2017-2021).** Starting in 1979, WFP support to China had focussed on integrated agricultural development programmes targeting food-insecure communities. WFP support to those programmes officially ended in 2005. In March 2016, WFP and the Ministry of Agriculture signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to strengthen partnership for global hunger solutions and development outlining a longer-term partnership between the Government of China and WFP.⁷⁷ The China Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021) was designed as a strategic framework under this memorandum of understanding, covering all country strategic plan activities. It supports the China country office to function as the WFP Centre of Excellence, to facilitate SSTC exchanges and to forge public-private partnerships.

34. **The Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021) is the first country strategic plan for the WFP China country office.** Its design was guided by a 2016 National Zero Hunger Strategic Review⁷⁸ in China and comprehensive country assessments by WFP. The review describes a broad framework for achieving food security and nutrition in China and contributing to SSTC that looks to the future, past the Millennium Development Goal achievement and beyond 2015 towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The country strategic plan covers the period from March 2017 to December 2021. A mid-term review was conducted in November 2019.⁷⁹ A revision to the country strategic plan was completed in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic needs.⁸⁰ The country strategic plan activities are designed to contribute to: SDG 2 (zero hunger) and SDG 17 on partnerships and, at the output level, to SDGs 1 and 8 through increased incomes and strengthened value chains; SDG 4 on national capacity to implement and scale up nutrition programmes; SDG 13 for disaster preparedness and mitigation; and SDG 16 on capacity development and technical support to developing countries.

35. **The country strategic plan is implemented as a set of three interacting pillars regarding the WFP-China memorandum of understanding:**⁸¹ (1) the domestic programme consisting of demonstration projects in China; (2) SSTC exchanges between China and other WFP country offices; and (3) partnerships and private-sector financing. The country strategic plan is organized into five strategic outcomes (SO).⁸²

⁷⁴ FAO GIEWS Country Brief China (Mainland) 2020.

⁷⁵ <https://covid19.who.int/region/wpro/country/cn>

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Agriculture of the People's Republic of China and WFP to Strengthen a Partnership for Global Hunger Solutions and Development (March 2016).

⁷⁸ China's Food Security and Nutrition under Rapid Transformation: Enhanced Partnership with WFP, February 2015 rev. Draft International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Chinese Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), and WFP.

⁷⁹ An internal review of WFP country Strategic Plan in the People's Republic of China, (November 2017).

⁸⁰ CHINA Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021), revision 1, December 2019.

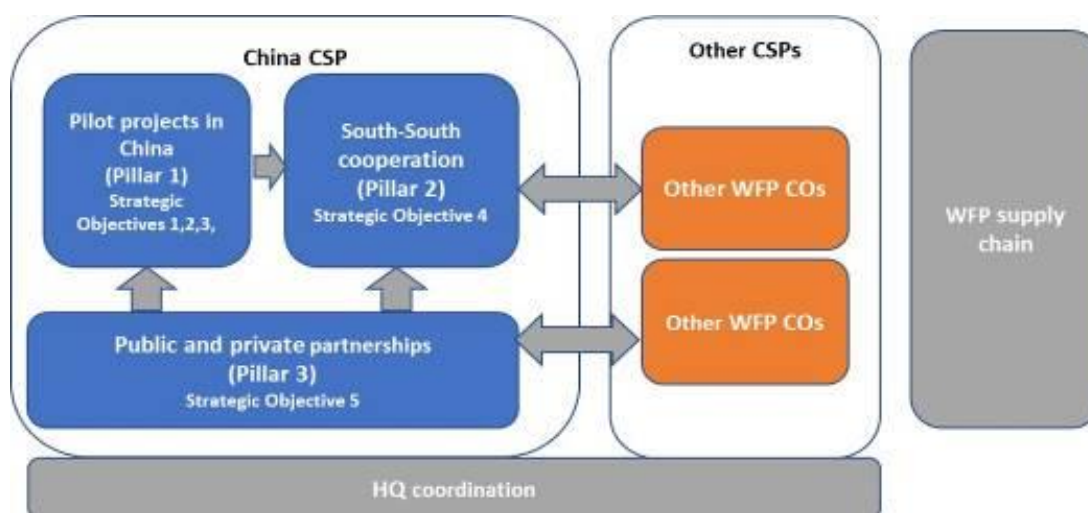
⁸¹ Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Agriculture of the People's Republic of China and WFP to Strengthen a Partnership for Global Hunger Solutions and Development (March 2016).

⁸² China CSP document (2017) Sections 3.2 Strategic Outcomes, Outputs and Activities. Pp 8-13.

Figure 2 shows the intended linkages among the three pillars outlined in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the WFP memorandum of understanding.⁸³

36. **The first pillar (Figure 2) covers the domestic programmes sub-divided into three strategic outcomes:** (i) improve national nutrition programmes, which corresponds with SO1: Malnutrition rates among children in targeted poverty countries reduced in line with national norms by 2020, and (ii) enhance resilience of smallholder farmers, which corresponds to SO2: Year-round livelihoods among smallholder farmers in frequent need of food assistance in areas such as Anhui, Gansu, Guangxi, Hainan and Hunan provinces are enhanced. These initiatives were expected to be demonstration projects to contribute to China’s efforts in rural transformation and to underpin efforts in SSTC. SO3 remained as a responsive approach in the event of a natural disaster in targeted vulnerable areas. SO3 is not specifically captured in the China-WFP memorandum of understanding and did not initially receive direct funding. The December 2019 country strategic plan revision 1,⁸⁴ which led to an amendment of SO3, has been designed to include the provision of relief items for the most affected and vulnerable people in order to minimize the loss of human life and destruction of livelihood. In the medium term, WFP technical expertise and tools would be leveraged to support country-led assessments of the impact of disasters and provide support for recovery. To contribute to enhanced resilience within the population to adapt to future shocks, WFP plans to extend resilience activities and capacity support for vulnerable populations through asset creation and diversifying livelihood opportunities among other activities.

Figure 2: Three pillars of support through the WFP China country strategic plan



Source: China CSPE team analysis (December 2020). Note: arrows show interactions.

37. **The second pillar, which is central to the country strategic plan, encompasses the operations of the China country office as the China Centre of Excellence for Rural Transformation.** The Centre of Excellence facilitates SSTC and forges partnerships. It corresponds to SO4: Assistance provided to enhance food security and nutrition in selected developing countries in line with their prioritized targets under Sustainable Development Goal 2 by 2030.

38. **The third pillar (SO5) relates to public and private-sector resources and partnerships that finance Pillar 1 and Pillar 2, and WFP country strategic plans in other countries.** This pillar is implemented through a WFP global office (formerly called liaison office) located within the China country office that has a facilitation role to mobilize funding from the Government of China to support other WFP country offices (and potentially for SSTC, in addition to funding from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs). Within this office, the private partnership unit mobilizes resources from enterprises and the Chinese public, to support the other pillars and other WFP country offices including for direct activities under the Centre of Excellence or discrete activities facilitated by WFP in other countries.

⁸³ Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Agriculture of the People’s Republic of China and WFP to Strengthen a Partnership for Global Hunger Solutions and Development (March 2016).

⁸⁴ There was no revision to the budget at that time, only to the text of SO3.

39. The WFP supply chain operations are not directly connected to the other components of the country strategic plan, but the activities of the China hub occurring within China are incorporated in the country strategic plan 2019 amendment and require the support of WFP China country office (as illustrated in Figure 2).

40. **Table 2 shows the linkage between the five country strategic plan strategic outcomes and eight proposed activities.** The activities are all classified under the WFP term “capacity strengthening initiatives”: no food or cash transfers were planned under the country strategic plan framework. The country strategic plan states that “capacity strengthening, and SSC are the cornerstones of all five strategic outcomes and their related activities. Policy dialogue and the sharing of best practices for the Government to replicate are central to WFP’s support towards SDGs 2 and 17 in China.”⁸⁵ The country strategic plan monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system was designed to facilitate the drawing of lessons to support subsequent scale-up and replication by the Government and other countries facing similar development challenges.⁸⁶

Table 2: Country strategic plan strategic planned outcomes and key activities

WFP-China MoU pillar	Strategic objective	Activities
Pillar 1: Domestic programmes	SO 1: Malnutrition rates among children in targeted “poverty counties” reduced in line with national norms by 2020 Planned beneficiaries: 34 million	Activity 1: Provide advice and technical assistance (TA) for extending nutrition programmes to hard-to-reach areas
	SO 2: Year-round livelihoods of smallholder farmers in frequent need of food assistance in areas such as Anhui, Gansu, Guangxi, Hainan and Hunan provinces enhanced Planned beneficiaries: 16 million	Activity 2: Provide advice on assistance in integrating into national food supply chains
	SO 3: Populations regularly affected by natural disasters in Anhui, Gansu and Guangxi provinces and other poor disaster-prone areas better able to withstand and respond to shocks all year round Amended 2019: Populations affected by disasters, including natural disasters in poor and disaster-prone areas are more able to withstand and respond to shocks all year round Planned beneficiaries: 10 million	Activity 3: Provide advice and assistance in strengthening response mechanisms for shocks-supply chain interventions, asset creation in drought-affected areas and insurance systems Amended 2019: Material and technical assistance on strengthening response mechanisms for disasters and shocks, including but not limited to humanitarian assistance, service provision, impact assessment and post-shock and resilience-building in risk-affected areas and technical advisory to the institutions
Pillar 2: Centre of Excellence for Rural Transformation – South-South cooperation	SO 4: Assistance provided to enhance food security and nutrition in select developing countries in line with their prioritized targets under Sustainable Development Goal 2 by 2030 Planned beneficiaries: N/A	Activity 4: Provide governments with expert advice and policy support on food security and nutrition issues
		Activity 5: Knowledge sharing through study tours, training, technology transfer and online exchange platforms
		Activity 6: Foster leadership among a new generation of smallholder farmers
Pillar 3: Fund-raising to support the other pillars	SO 5: Work to enhance food security and nutrition in targeted “poverty counties” and selected developing countries supported year-	Activity 7: Development and formalization of partnerships
		Activity 8: Facilitation of enhanced support from the Chinese Government

⁸⁵ China CSP document (2017) Pp 13 p66

⁸⁶ China CSP document (2017) Pp 13 p69

WFP-China MoU pillar	Strategic objective	Activities
	round by increased private-sector resources and public-private partnerships Planned beneficiaries: N/A	

Source: China Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021), pp 8-13 adapted

41. **Through SO1, WFP expected to benefit an estimated 34 million undernourished children in “poverty counties”.** Through SO2, 16 million people were expected to benefit from enhanced income-generation capacity and better organization along the value chain. Through SO3, the provision of advice on, and assistance in, withstanding and responding to shocks was considered to have the potential to bring results for 10 million indirect beneficiaries.⁸⁷ There was no estimated number of beneficiaries for the SSTC activities (SO4) as these were untested. No targets were defined for the partnership work (SO5) although WFP China country office was already raising funds from the public and private sector.

42. **WFP support within China focussed on demonstrating best practices for replication.** WFP intervention, through the provision of advice and technical assistance, is designed to support the Government’s efforts to improve the well-being and nutrition of the population and strengthen national capacities to design and deliver effective anti-hunger solutions. The activities under each strategic outcome were not identified in the original country strategic plan document but developed gradually through dialogue with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and other stakeholders and suitable funding sources were identified (Figure 3). A theory of change (ToC) was devised by the evaluation team to track the expected causal links towards the five strategic outcomes (Annex 5). The evaluation team considered the importance of the linkages between the strategic outcomes such that the pillars mutually reinforce the country strategic plan aims as shown earlier in Figure 2.

Figure 3: China context and WFP activities



Source: WFP CSPE timeline of events

43. **As of mid-2020, the domestic programme includes four projects in two sectors:** two preschool nutrition programmes in kindergartens and preschools in Hunan Province and Guangxi Autonomous Region under SO1, and two pilot smallholder agriculture projects on zinc-rich potato production in Gansu Province and on the kiwi fruit value chain in Anhui Province under SO2 (see Annex 6).

⁸⁷ China CSP (2017-2021), (2017), p13, para 64.

44. **Through the Centre of Excellence, WFP co-facilitated events, capacity-strengthening activities and SSTC demonstration projects.** In 2017, four thematic areas relating to all strategic objectives were identified including: (i) value chain development and market access for smallholders; (ii) supply chain strengthening including post-harvest loss management and storage systems; (iii) climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and resilience; and (iv) implementation of national zero hunger and nutrition strategies. Under SO4, an activity called “Demonstration in Africa (Asia) by Africans (Asians)” was planned, including visits to China of young farmer leaders to observe Chinese expertise along value chains. These individuals were to receive seed money to implement innovative solutions and demonstrate new approaches in food security, nutrition improvement and poverty reduction to their peers in their home country. It was envisioned that 250 smallholder farmers would be directly trained in the first year with 8,405 trained farmers over three years. However, this activity has not yet commenced. Other initiatives include policy dialogue, technical training, expert deployment, policy research, capacity strengthening and other SDG 2 and 17 activities (Annex 7). WFP China country office has organized 20 SSTC activities on policy dialogue, capacity building, and technical exchange for over 220 participants from 30 countries in Africa and Asia.⁸⁸

45. **International assistance:** WFP works closely with other United Nations agencies in China who have indicated interest for a continued dialogue. WFP co-chairs with FAO the thematic group on agriculture and food security and collaborates with IFAD in protocol and administrative services such as procurement. It coordinates with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, and the United Nations Country Team. The Rome-based agencies (WFP, FAO and IFAD) have common stakes (for example in their partnership with the Alibaba Group) and work with the same individuals in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. The upcoming reform of the United Nations system, through which UNDP would have an integrator role, is considered.

46. **Additional initiatives:** Several initiatives were added to the original design of the country strategic plan jointly by the China country office and the Strategic Partnership Division (STR) at headquarters. The Strategic Partnership Division is a major internal stakeholder in the country strategic plan design and implementation because the WFP China country office reports directly to the Strategic Partnership Division instead of to the WFP regional bureau in Bangkok as other WFP country offices do. The Strategic Partnership Division facilitated the development of the WFP strategic partnership with the Alibaba Group. Within headquarters, the Public-Private Partnerships Division (PPR), with engagement by the WFP Executive Director, led dialogue with CIDCA and maintained contacts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its embassies in WFP programme countries for funding applications. The China Centre of Excellence has been in contact with the two other WFP Centres of Excellence in Brazil and Africa for SSTC initiatives. WFP COVID-19 common services facilitated the establishment of the Guangzhou hub under the United Nations global COVID-19 response. WFP China country office had an active facilitation and advisory role in these activities led by WFP headquarters. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, under the country strategic plan, funds a junior professional officer (JPO) programme within WFP, managed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Its main goal is to support the 2030 Agenda, offering young Chinese professionals an opportunity for hands-on experience in multilateral international cooperation. Junior professional officer positions are in Rome and in regional offices.

Funding

47. In 2017, WFP began implementing the country strategic plan with a required total budget of USD 29.1 million covering 2017 to 2021. As of March 2021, the allocated contributions amounted to USD 19.97 million (54 percent) as shown in Table 3.

⁸⁸ http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-11/03/c_137578931.htm

Table 3: China Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021) resourcing as of March 2021

Needs-based plan ⁸⁹ (USD 31,254,152)		
Donor	Allocated contributions ⁹⁰ (USD)	Share of needs-based plan (%)
China	12,102,032	38.7%
Miscellaneous income ⁹¹	82,102	0.3%
Private donors	4,589,498	14.7%
Needs-based plan funded	16,973,632	not applicable
Percent needs-based plan funded	54.31%	not applicable

Source: WFP, 2021, China Resource Situation (data updated from WFP FACTory – extracted on 9.3.2020)

48. Through the country strategic plan, funds were raised from the Government (the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and CIDCA's SSCAF), Chinese enterprises, international enterprises, and the Chinese public through internet platforms for WFP activities within and outside China. WFP developed a global partnership with the Alibaba Group, and continued or started new collaboration with other Chinese enterprises in the information technology sector. The pilot projects in China were funded by Teck Resources Ltd, General Mills, MasterCard, Royal DSM, Meituan.com, Xiangnian, and donations from the Chinese public and Amway Charity. WFP China country office mobilized more than USD 141 million in funding from the Government of China for WFP initiatives in other countries (Table 4).

Table 4: Donations from China to WFP by beneficiary country 1-1-2017 to 31-12-2020

Donor	Recipient (FC)	Amount USD	Recipient (FC)	Amount USD
China	Afghanistan	1,000,000	Mozambique	5,000,000
	Algeria	50,102	Namibia	1,000,000
	Bolivia, (Plurinational State of)	200,000	Niger	1,000,000
	Cameroon	6,000,000	Nigeria	5,000,000
	Central African Republic	2,000,000	Pakistan	1,000,000
	Chad	4,000,000	Peru	1,600,000
	China	7,256,817	Republic of South Sudan	12,500,000
	Congo	8,000,000	Somalia	20,000,000
	Congo, (The Democratic Republic of the)	5,000,000	Syrian Arab Republic	1,000,000
	Dominican Republic	900,000	Timor-Leste	550,000
	Ethiopia	8,000,000	Uganda	5,000,000
	Guinea	2,000,000	WFP (HQ-Rome)	11,364,267
	Iran, (Islamic Republic of)	1,000,000	Yemen	7,000,000
	Kenya	5,000,000	Zimbabwe	15,800,000

⁸⁹ Includes resources made available as of November 2019.

⁹⁰ Indicate the resources that were allocated for the entire project cycle or CSP. Allocated contributions include flexible and directed multilateral contributions (both programmed and unprogrammed portion), exchange rate variations, miscellaneous income, resource transfer, cost recovery, locally generated funds and other financial adjustments (e.g., refinancing). Exclude: internal advances.

⁹¹ Income generated from i) sale of food unfit for human consumption; ii) recoveries made from post-delivery losses; iii) sale of surplus assets and un-serviceable equipment; and iv) sale of other surplus items, for example, sale of packing materials and related items.

Donor	Recipient (FC)	Amount USD	Recipient (FC)	Amount USD
	Lesotho	2,850,000	Grand Total (USD)	141,071,186

Source: WFP the FACTory (data updated on 10.12.2020)

1.4 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY, LIMITATIONS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Evaluation process

49. **The evaluation team:** The evaluation team comprised a team leader, Dorothy Lucks, an international evaluator, Claude Saint-Pierre, national evaluators, Ting Yang (inception phase) and Zhigang Chen (evaluation and reporting phases), a national senior researcher, Xinjie Shi, to conduct provincial level stakeholder consultation, and a national research assistant, Yue Zhan.

50. **The timeline:** The evaluation was conducted between August and December 2020. The evaluation commenced with a remote inception mission (25-28 August 2020) followed by a remote headquarters briefing (2-4 September 2020). The evaluation data collection took place in November and December 2020, including a field data collection from 28 October to 8 November 2020. Interviews with stakeholders in China included site visits to selected project sites from 5 November to 8 December 2020 (Annex 8, Annex 9 and Annex 10 detail the schedule, field visit agenda, and stakeholders contacted, respectively). The CSPE adopted a mixed methods approach to data collection (Annex 2) combining document review and 112 interviews (46 women, 66 men). To help assess activities under SOs 4 and 5, the evaluation conducted an online survey of a limited sample of WFP country offices outside China (Annex 3). The survey provided the evaluation team with qualitative insights into the country office response to SSTC activities (Annex 11).

51. **The evaluation matrix:** The evaluation matrix was a key evaluation tool as it translated the evaluation questions into sub questions and lines of inquiry of more specific interest to this CSPE (Annex 4). The sub questions proposed in the terms of reference (ToR) were adjusted to reflect the unique features of the China CSPE. Several data collection methods were combined to assemble evidence for each sub question, and interviews were planned with each stakeholder category.

52. **Validation of findings:** Information was triangulated across the various sources to validate findings. An internal team workshop followed the evaluation field work for joint analysis. Preliminary findings were discussed at an exit debrief held for the country office and the Office of Evaluation on 9 December 2020 and a debriefing with WFP China country office, headquarters and the Office of Evaluation on 11 December 2020.

53. **Gender-sensitivity:** The WFP gender and age marker was utilized to assess the extent to which gender and age are integrated into the design and monitoring of WFP activities in China as outlined in the country strategic plan, the WFP Office of Evaluation's Technical Note for Gender Integration in WFP Evaluations and the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan 2.0 on mainstreaming gender equality and empowerment of women. The evaluation collected sex- and age-disaggregated data where available and assessed whether the universal standards were applied and whether any differential implementation challenges were addressed. This required field assessment to identify whether or not data have been disaggregated and included a review of gender and age marker reporting in 2020.

54. **Limitations:** The evaluation team encountered challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. International team members were unable to visit China and national team members carefully followed COVID-19 protocols in field work, travel and conducting interviews. The international team members had prior evaluation experience in China and the domestic team played crucial roles in conducting local interviews. Detailed processes to ensure quality in conducting stakeholder consultation remotely were prepared based on the evaluation team's experience

55. Challenges included a change in national consultant and the uneven availability of national stakeholders. Field projects were still at early stages of development creating challenges in being conclusive regarding outcomes. Remote interviews worked well, but required intensive organization to ensure sufficient coverage. No evaluation evidence has been available on WFP interventions in China since 2016.

56. **Ethical norms and standards:** These were considered throughout the evaluation process. All team members were external consultants with no ties to WFP operations in China and no conflicts of

interest. The national consultants were involved in WFP-related activities such as the Zero Hunger study but not in the implementation of country strategic plan programme activities. It is acknowledged that the assurance of full independence of national evaluators is complex. The systematic triangulation and experience of international evaluators helped to reduce potential biases and to ensure independence of the evaluation. The team committed to signing the Confidentiality, Internet and Data Security Statement.

57. Ethical considerations were incorporated in the methodology, which defined risks and appropriate management measures, including issues related to data confidentiality and protection. Consultations were conducted with due care in order to ensure openness. All interviewees were notified that interviews were confidential. The team used the Microsoft Teams platforms wherever practical to ensure a stable platform for discussion.

58. **Quality assurance:** The CSPE team applied the WFP evaluation quality assurance system, the Office of Evaluation's Technical Note for Gender Integration in WFP Evaluations and the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan 2.0 on mainstreaming gender equality and empowerment of women. The CSPE took efforts to gather valid data both from the field and through WFP China country office reports. Where any lack of clarity or data gaps occurred, follow-up communication with the WFP China country office occurred to clarify data. Often, data inconsistencies were due to different time periods of measurement. Given language considerations, the Chinese language documents were reviewed by the national team and summarized in English into the required evaluation reporting format. Where possible, these were cross-referenced with other data.

2. Evaluation Findings

2.1 EQ1: TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE WFP STRATEGIC POSITION, ROLE AND SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTION BASED ON COUNTRY PRIORITIES AND APPROPRIATELY ALIGNED TO PEOPLE'S NEEDS AS WELL AS WFP STRENGTHS?

2.1.1 To what extent is the country strategic plan relevant to China's policies, plans, strategies and goals, including achievement of the national Sustainable Development Goals?

Alignment of country strategic plan design to China's policies, plans and strategies.

59. **The China Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021) is well aligned with China's priorities, including nutrition and agriculture policies, as a result of the good communication between WFP and the Government prior to and during design.** The guidelines for WFP in preparing a country strategic plan⁹² is that the country strategic plan should be a form of partnership agreement and that there should be extensive consultation with partners during its design and implementation. Contribution to WFP international programmes started in 2011 and was already the purpose of the WFP partnership with China's technology sector (i.e. enterprises specialized in internet-based services or information technology) and the China Poverty Alleviation Foundation prior to the development of the country strategic plan. The country strategic plan for China is the product of extensive consultations with the Government of China and other partners.⁹³

60. **The country strategic plan reflects the WFP-China Memorandum of Understanding to Strengthen Partnership for Global Hunger Solutions and Development signed on 2 March 2016.** Under the country strategic plan and the overarching framework provided by the memorandum of understanding and in compliance with the laws, rules and regulations of China and WFP, the WFP China country office functions as a WFP Centre of Excellence for Rural Transformation. WFP cooperation in China is not seen as an agency of assistance to China but as a mutual partnership with a main focus on enhancing South-South cooperation. However, the memorandum of understanding does include an agreement to support China's domestic efforts to promote food security and nutrition and forge public-private partnerships in support of food security and nutrition targets. These domestic efforts are designed to be of benefit to both WFP and China in terms of enhanced knowledge on innovative approaches to address food security and providing demonstration pilots to replicate in China and through SSTC.

61. **The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs participated heavily in the design of the country strategic plan with WFP headquarters, facilitating alignment to China's Five-Year Plan (5YP) (2016-2020).**⁹⁴ The country strategic plan links to the Government's thirteenth Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) and to President Xi Jinping's statement and joint press communiqué issued at the September 2015 High-Level Roundtable on South-South Cooperation.⁹⁵ Strong alignment between China's development plans outlined in the five-year plan and the country strategic plan include: expanding international cooperation in disaster prevention and mitigation; poverty alleviation; accelerating the development of agriculture-related e-commerce and promoting cloud applications in logistics; and improving the way in which foreign aid is offered.⁹⁶ The country strategic plan was strongly aligned with China's national efforts towards poverty eradication, with a national campaign for addressing poverty pockets, which was due to end in 2021. This alignment contributed to a focus on fundraising from the Chinese public. China's 2021 international cooperation list of strategic priorities is consistent with the country strategic plan; agriculture development

⁹² WFP CSP Guidance, June 2018, pg 1 "CSPs can only be truly realized through the systematic and strategic involvement of new and existing partners throughout the CSP process – from the Strategic Review to CSP implementation."

⁹³ Interviews with stakeholders during the evaluation resulting in numerous mentions of the CSP design process and the high level of participation.

⁹⁴ The People's Republic of China, 2016, The Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of The People's Republic of China 2016-2020.

⁹⁵ Government of China, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016).

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpdmgjxgsfwbcxlhgcl70znlxlfh/t1302399.shtml

⁹⁶ The People's Republic of China, 2016, The Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of The People's Republic of China 2016-2020.

and food security are the first priority of the SSCAF, humanitarian aid and disaster risk reduction being other priorities.⁹⁷

62. **Government stakeholders and other partners confirmed the alignment of the country strategic plan with national policies and priorities.** Interviews with government stakeholders at municipal and national levels acknowledged the particular relevance of the country strategic plan activities to the broad government priorities to ensure the well-being and nutrition of people. Most noted that they were involved in dialogue with WFP in preparation for the country strategic plan and felt engaged in developing its strategic focus.

63. **The country strategic plan is linked with SDGs 2 and 17, which were prioritized in China and WFP corporate policies.**⁹⁸ China has outlined three key areas for national Sustainable Development Goal action: i) eradicating extreme poverty; ii) building an “ecological civilization”; and iii) contributing to global climate and sustainability governance.⁹⁹ The country strategic plan contributes to these national Sustainable Development Goal focus areas through: (i) poverty targeting; (ii) promoting sustainable agriculture; and (iii) supporting sustainability and resilience initiatives as well as towards the achievement of other Sustainable Development Goals and WFP strategic objectives. The country strategic plan addresses the identified development issues as illustrated in Annex 7, corresponding to the identified areas for national Sustainable Development Goal action and other Sustainable Development Goals and WFP strategic objectives.

64. **The country strategic plan was based on the findings of a national food security and nutrition study (“Zero Hunger”)**¹⁰⁰ and the design of SO 1-3 activities was based on comprehensive country needs assessments. At the commencement of the country strategic plan, WFP, with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and other partners, supported the “Zero Hunger” study. This study was instrumental in the preparation of the country strategic plan and in collating data and working with stakeholders to identify gaps that informed the selection of the domestic projects. Preschool feeding was identified as a gap and using potatoes as a staple to increase micro-nutrition intake was in line with the Zero Hunger study. Stakeholders interviewed pointed to this study as an important influence in the attention of the Government on preschool nutrition and the interest in investing in the domestic pilot activities. The study and emerging results from the pilot projects have gained interest from national and international stakeholders, as evidenced through the comments from evaluation interviews with national stakeholders.

65. **SO1 is particularly aligned with the Government’s emphasis on reducing childhood stunting.** This focus is evident in the intention to reduce stunting through the provision of nutritious meals to school children. The China National Nutrition Plan (2017-2030) sets goals to reduce the malnutrition rates of children under 5 years old. The WFP preschool feeding programme complements current efforts by the Government of China to supply food and micronutrients packages to children aged between 6 and 24 months and between 6 and 15 years old.

66. **The focus on smallholder agriculture relates to the Government’s interests on poverty reduction and rural transformation.** Government stakeholder feedback indicates that the zinc-enriched potato projects are aligned with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs’ focus on nutritional balance as evidenced by the ministry’s ongoing financial contributions to these activities. Moreover, government stakeholders and partners with an interest in WFP expertise in nutrition, particularly noted the innovation of the zinc-enriched potato applied research. While the agricultural aspects of the pilot are not traditional areas of WFP expertise, the main partner of WFP in China has the necessary expertise. The WFP

⁹⁷ The 2021 White Paper on China’s International Development Cooperation Aid. Other priorities include health care, poverty alleviation, education and training, sustainable industrial development, eco-environmental protection, trade promotion, and investment facilitation.

⁹⁸ China CSP (2017-2021).

⁹⁹ Jiang, X, 2020, *How China is Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, OECD Development Matters, <https://oecd-development-matters.org/2020/02/28/how-china-is-implementing-the-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development/>

¹⁰⁰ China’s Food Security and Nutrition under rapid transformation: Enhanced Partnership with WFP, February 2015 rev. Draft International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Chinese Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and WFP.

contribution relates to the nutritional aspects and how it is converted into dietary benefits for vulnerable communities.

67. **The relevance of country strategic plan SO3, related to emergency preparedness and response, is less evident.** While it was clearly an interest of the partners during design as reported by several senior government and non-government stakeholders, there was less uptake on the design of specific activities. This was partly due to the limited resources of staff to pursue relationships with the necessary stakeholders¹⁰¹ and partly due to lack of clarity on activities to be pursued. This is now being addressed through the growing relationship between the WFP China county office and the Ministry of Emergency Management and National Disaster Reduction Center of China. This has already led to joint webinars and has potential for further initiatives.

Relevance of the country strategic plan approach to South-South and triangular cooperation in line with the demands and interests of recipient countries

68. **The focus of SO4 on strengthening country systems through SSTC to implement Sustainable Development Goal strategies is a clear contribution** to the national priority of contributing to global processes and aid. There was a memorandum of understanding on SSTC signed between Ministry of Agriculture and WFP (March 2015)¹⁰² that outlines a combined approach. SSTC efforts were to be strengthened in alignment with the China-Africa Cooperation Forum, the “One Belt, One Road” initiative, the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Mechanism, the China-Arab Cooperation Forum and the China-Latin American Cooperation Mechanism to improve linkages between recipient countries and China’s existing international policies and commitments. The alignment with these initiatives is carried out through a funding application process and WFP has little direct influence in this regard. The emphasis on strengthening partner countries towards SDG 2 through increased knowledge and leadership of countries engaged in SO4 activities in China is valid. These were specifically related to sharing knowledge from China to the countries to improve their approaches to the Sustainable Development Goals representing a contribution to both Government and WFP priorities.

69. **The country strategic plan states that the WFP network of support is crucial to ensuring that South-South cooperation facilitated by the WFP China country office is demand-driven.** Round table consultations and mapping exercises with WFP offices are used to identify South-South cooperation opportunities. Information from the WFP China county office staff indicates that extensive dialogues occurred early in the country strategic plan to assess the level of demand from other WFP county offices and with the aim of matching demand to available Chinese expertise. The matching process described in stakeholder interviews was an element of WFP added value in SSTC, facilitating concrete exchanges with participating countries. In 2017, the WFP China county office conducted an SSTC needs analysis by contacting participants in an international symposium in China in 2017, which attracted an additional 120 participants, including both international and Chinese experts.¹⁰³

70. The international participants received a survey, and 25 responses were collected. The WFP China county office staff indicated that this survey helped to engage with WFP county offices on potential specific activities in line with their interests. CSPE interviews confirm that the WFP process to match country demand with offers from China is visible and appreciated. In 2020, the Centre of Excellence has again consulted with WFP country offices on their SSTC needs, through an online survey, to prepare its strategy for the upcoming country strategic plan.¹⁰⁴

71. A cloud school has been proposed to expand the function of the South-South Cooperation Knowledge Sharing Platform. Both Chinese SSTC partners and respondents to the online survey have stated preference for a mix between online and face-to-face interaction, for best results in the Centre of

¹⁰¹ The evaluation team noted that staff are allocated to other strategic objectives but not to SO3 and that the 2020 Organizational Alignment Review of the China country office identified partnerships as an opportunity for improvement regarding human resources. Activities supported by MARA had resources that facilitated action that did not occur under SO3.

¹⁰² Memorandum of Understanding on South-South Cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture of the People’s Republic of China and WFP (March 2015).

¹⁰³ WFP. (2017). South-South Cooperation Needs Analysis Report.

¹⁰⁴ The CoE has shared with the evaluation team the survey questionnaire and preliminary findings.

Excellence's activities: out of 13 survey respondents, 6 stated that webinars were an appropriate option for their country, and only 2 stated that they were a very appropriate option.

2.1.2 To what extent did the country strategic plan address appropriately the food security and nutrition needs of the most nutritionally vulnerable people to ensure that no one is left behind?

The country strategic plan's focus on the most vulnerable, marginalized groups in terms of food and nutrition security

72. **The country strategic plan is based on findings from the Zero Hunger study and has specifically targeted "poverty counties" with an identified food and nutrition-deficit profile.** The country strategic plan stipulates that WFP can support China's efforts towards SDGs 2 and 17 in several ways including by supporting the Government in extending national nutrition programmes and implementing nutrition-sensitive programmes more effectively. Moreover, nutrition interventions are needed to close the urban-rural gap in undernourishment, stunting and micronutrient deficiencies. The country strategic plan identifies the need to expand programmes such as school feeding and to better integrate nutrition into the food value chain in order to enhance food security and improve livelihoods for the poor. Stakeholder interviews at both national and field level indicate that there is a perception that WFP has been instrumental in addressing the "gap" of nutrition interventions for children aged 3 to 5 years old and raising the profile of preschool child nutrition on the national agenda. Although the translation of project achievements into policy is limited, it has built a foundation for further actions by the Government.

73. **The China Centre of Excellence events have broad coverage and take an inclusive approach.** The Centre of Excellence events are open to all WFP programme countries including those that have a long history of cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs under its South-South cooperation, and other countries. The Centre of Excellence's partner agencies have encouraged this broad coverage approach: WFP is perceived as a platform facilitating connections to any country. Interviews describe the outreach of the Centre of Excellence activities to Asia and Latin America, not only Africa, as a positive outcome. This diversity, which is the contrary of a targeted approach, has created the challenge of responding through a demand-driven approach to extremely diversified country contexts.

Integration of gender equality and women's empowerment considerations in the country strategic plan

74. **The country strategic plan document calls for a gender-sensitive approach** starting from its broader context analysis that reflects on gender disparities among adults in China and refers to the Gender Inequality Index.¹⁰⁵ The 2017 participatory gender analysis that informed the country strategic plan design found that some of the key gender issues were role definition and reluctance of rural women, particularly ethnic minorities, to become involved in WFP activities that had been ongoing prior to the country strategic plan. This informed the preparation work prior to commencement of the pilot projects in the targeted areas. WFP has taken several key steps to help ensure that the strategic outcomes deliver gender equality results. For example, in the country strategic plan logical framework, a gender-related result is set out – improved gender equality and women's empowerment among WFP-assisted population (C.3).

75. The country strategic plan approach to gender was assessed as a 2 (a) marker, meaning that gender is mainstreamed and likely to contribute significantly to gender equality. At the time of the country strategic plan design, China's Gender Inequality Index was 0.191, ranking it 40th of 188 countries (2014 data at that time). In accordance with WFP corporate requirements, 15 percent of project costs were to be allocated to gender equality and women's empowerment by 2020. At the time of the country strategic plan amendment in 2019, the gender and age marker (GAM) was assessed as 1. The country strategic plan did not provide details of the activities that would be covered regarding gender- and age-specific interventions but based on interviews with the WFP China country office staff and evidenced through the data provided to WFP headquarters to report on the WFP gender and age marker, the guidelines were followed in the design of the pilot projects.

76. The WFP gender and age marker was used to assess the extent to which gender and age are integrated into design and monitoring. Interviews with WFP personnel indicate that 15 percent of project costs are to be dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment by 2020 in accordance with WFP corporate requirements. There has been no specific accounting of the 15 percent allocation, but WFP China

¹⁰⁵ UNDP, 2014, Gender Inequality Index for 2014. Available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>

country office has prioritized the selection of women to participate in specific capacity strengthening activities. WFP China country office staff note that they have been active in promoting support for rural women in particular in the UNCT activities. The evaluation finds that although gender has been considered in the design of some activities - through the participation of women and gender-disaggregated data - further integration of gender into implementation and outcome measurement is required (see Section 2.2.2 for more gender-related results).

2.1.3 To what extent has THE WFP strategic positioning remained relevant, appropriate and coherent throughout the implementation of the country strategic plan considering the national context, capacities and needs in China and in other countries in which China is a WFP donor through the country strategic plan?

77. Over the course of the country strategic plan, the operating context has not changed significantly. The national institutional capacities and interest in finding solutions to food insecurity and malnutrition has remained high. WFP strategic positioning has therefore remained relevant.

78. WFP work in humanitarian contexts is well known and its knowledge and experience are in demand. The demonstrated strategic positioning of WFP for the country strategic plan has been as a global expert with implementation experience in reducing food insecurity, improving nutrition, and responding as a humanitarian actor. Stakeholders mentioned that the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to WFP contributes to the credibility of WFP within China and this can be capitalized. A common thread of feedback from the interviews was that the profile of WFP is low and that its added value in the development context in China could be enhanced, suggesting that WFP should be clear and consistent about its key messages within China and pursue approaches that would promote its expertise and knowledge more widely.

79. The internal coherence of WFP work is evident but with potential for strengthening. Coherence among country strategic plan-supported activities can be analysed in terms of eight focus areas – a term proposed by this evaluation, subdividing the Centre of Excellence’s broad thematic areas into more concrete areas. Table 5 shows the priority focus areas (++) and other focus areas (+). There was strong coherence among the three pillars on school nutrition, and e-commerce in agriculture. There is coherence among two of the three pillars on smallholders in value chains, and post-harvest loss management (PHLM) and supply chain logistics. National stakeholders confirmed that they had worked collaboratively on an ongoing basis with the Centre of Excellence to identify these key areas of interest. There were gaps in coherence between the focus of school meals donations and the country strategic plan funding needs for the Centre of Excellence. There was interest from stakeholders during CSPE interviews to understand the emerging evidence from the domestic programmes and how these lessons will be more clearly connected to the SSTC and fundraising work. Several government and United Nations stakeholders indicated an interest in receiving more regular and complete updates on the progress. While the brief updates during the UNCT thematic meetings were mentioned, these were considered to be too brief for effective sharing of lessons learned. Suggestions included more technical short briefs and audio-visual aids on different aspects of the lessons learned.

Table 5: Thematic coherence between country strategic plan activities under the three pillars

Focus areas	Pillar 1 Pilot projects in China	Pillar 2 SSTC		Pillar 3 Public and private partnerships	
	Pilot projects	CoE solutions (a)	CoE courses (b)	Private partnerships (c)	SSCAF priorities (d)
1a Smallholder in value chains	++	++	+		+
1b E-commerce in agriculture	+	++	++	++	+
2a Post-harvest loss management		++	++		+
2b Supply chain logistics		+	+	++	+
3a Disaster risk reduction		+	+		++
3b Climate		++	++		++
4a Zero hunger, food security		+	+		+
4b School nutrition	++	++		++	+

Sources: (a) Centre of Excellence website; (b) evaluation activity database; (c) interviews; (d) desk review and interviews

80. **Field interviews in Gansu particularly noted the WFP strategic advantage in food fortification.** The Gansu project is innovative primarily on developing nutrition standards for zinc-enriched potatoes, which are yet to be established in China. The organization's main advantage lies in leveraging WFP expertise and pooling resources of partners, rather than experience in food fortification. Technical support in this project is provided by the National Agricultural Technology Extension and Service Center (NATESC). Key China stakeholders noted that the Gansu project was innovative and advanced in its contribution to staple food fortification. Key informants from the zinc-enriched potato project reported that they have extensive knowledge and experience in food fortification. Zinc supplementation is seen as having substantial potential to improve health and to assist the Government to influence the agriculture sector regarding nutritionally sound products. The provincial government allocates funding for potato production each year, with the detailed design, including cross-cutting objectives of the project, being developed with WFP support. Several senior government, United Nations and other partner stakeholders noted the potential of this project for expansion into other forms of staple food fortification.

2.1.4. To what extent is the country strategic plan coherent and aligned with the wider United Nations stakeholders in China and to what extent does it include appropriate strategic and operational partnerships based on the comparative advantage of WFP?

81. **The national Government, particularly the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, is the principal partner of WFP.** Requests for WFP intervention in emergencies or development projects are coursed through either the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs or CIDCA. Partnerships in the domestic programme operations include provincial and county governments, non-government organizations (NGOs), the private sector, United Nations agencies and international institutions, clusters and multi-stakeholder partnerships, academia and think tanks. The country strategic plan acknowledges that multi-stakeholder partnerships are a key opportunity to learn from other actors and to advance the zero hunger goal by harnessing the creative power of different actors and leveraging their respective experience and expertise. In China, the organizations WFP collaborates with include the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, European Centre for Mid-Range Weather Forecasts and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).¹⁰⁶ WFP aims to develop private-sector relationships that combine technical assistance and knowledge transfer with financial contributions to solve global problems and create measurable business outcomes. Pursuing value for money, WFP seed money, provided by private partners only, is invested in domestic programmes apart from several initiatives to support international WFP work in other countries.

82. **Stakeholders within China interviewed during the evaluation recognize the comparative advantage of WFP as an international organization with global experience and expertise, especially in nutrition.** Research through the Zero Hunger study supported by WFP promoted the nutrition-oriented food security concept in China, which has contributed to an increased focus on nutrition-oriented food security by Chinese institutions, compared to the previous focus on food self-sufficiency. National

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.wfp.org/academia-and-think-tanks>

stakeholders affirmed the positive policy influence that the China country office already has with national partners, which in turn holds potential for the future. This perceived comparative advantage is somewhat undermined by weaknesses in knowledge management and communication, and a lack of strategic linkages of knowledge and policy, which can inhibit the translation of new and innovative practices to important policy actions.

83. **Another aspect of the comparative advantage of WFP in China is as a convener or negotiator among and between stakeholder groups.** WFP China country office has operated as a negotiator for potential donors, advocating for the mobilization of resources, and leveraging other organizations' comparative advantages. WFP leveraged knowledge resources from partners including the International Potato Center, the Food and Nutrition Development Institute and NATESC for improved project implementation. For example, NATESC provides guidance and technical support to the establishment of a zinc-enriched potato cultivation system in Gansu and to the production of potatoes by smallholder farmers contributing to project implementation. That expertise is greatly appreciated at the local level. They reported having few opportunities to communicate with national experts in the past, and the project was viewed as a unique opportunity for them to learn frontier ideas and technologies.

Country strategic plan alignment with the UNDAF and the new UNSDCF

84. **At the time of design, the country strategic plan was clearly aligned with respective UNDAF outcomes incorporated into the country strategic plan logical framework.** The evaluation team reviewed alignment between the country strategic plan implementation and the UNDAF and found that the country strategic plan activities are consistent with the UNDAF (2016-2020) particularly in the areas of "Poverty Reduction and Equitable Development" and "Improved and Sustainable Environment". The third priority area of "Enhanced Global Engagement" is of particular interest given that it was a stated enhanced priority of the Government at the time and aligned with the establishment and operations of the Centre of Excellence. Interviews with United Nations and government stakeholders confirmed the importance of the WFP focus on South-South cooperation as unique in China given the link between the domestic and strategic programmes. WFP coordinates with other United Nations agencies. It leads the United Nations Agriculture and Food Security Thematic Group, aligned with the work of the other Rome-based agencies (RBA) regarding a focus on nutritionally vulnerable populations.¹⁰⁷ The work implemented under SO3 aligns with UNDAF priorities related to vulnerability: Outcome 1: More people, particularly the vulnerable and disadvantaged, enjoy improved living conditions and increased opportunities for economic, social and cultural development.

85. **WFP has been actively engaged in the development of the new UNSDCF.** WFP China country office staff report that they contributed to drafting the UNSDCF and other United Nations actors confirm the strong role of WFP in this regard. The UNSDCF uses four of the five "P"s of the 2030 Agenda as a framework: Priority 1: People and Prosperity, Priority 2: Planet, and Priority 3: Partnership.¹⁰⁸ The support for health and nutrition services is recognized as important and innovative in strengthening livelihoods in nutrition-sensitive agriculture and inclusive food chain development. Outcome 6 focuses on the importance of South-South cooperation and humanitarian cooperation. The role of WFP in the dialogue, together with the other Rome-based agencies, has been instrumental in raising the profile of nutrition and food security in the UNSDCF.

Extent to which the country strategic plan design specifies and applies strategic partnerships

86. **The Rome-based agency collaboration is active in knowledge generation, but practical alignment is difficult.** The country strategic plan states that the Rome-based agencies prioritize collaboration in China within the United Nations Country Team framework.¹⁰⁹ FAO and IFAD have developed a dedicated financial facility for their SSTC activities, respectively funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the Ministry of Finance. IFAD has a substantial portfolio in smallholder agriculture and value chains and is seen by interview respondents as active in supporting women's engagement in agriculture. FAO is known for conducting policy-related work. The three agencies are effectively sharing knowledge, but the outcomes of this are unclear. There is an opportunity for WFP to

¹⁰⁷ United Nations Development Assistance Framework China 2016-2020.

¹⁰⁸ United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework People's Republic of China 2021-2025 (August 2020)

¹⁰⁹ China CSP (2017-2021), p1, para 67.

work with IFAD on two SSTC pilot projects, which may allow the Centre of Excellence to mobilize the IFAD SSTC fund.

87. **Building reputational capital and knowledge networks with partners is likely to yield positive and long-term results.** The establishment of the WFP country office in China has strengthened relationships across government, donors, non-governmental organizations and private-sector partners. This includes sharing data and information that can be incorporated into the learning agenda of both WFP and other partners. This is a positive step in building collaborations that have potential for substantial benefits in future. The management of these stakeholder relationships is still at an early stage but signals potential for the next country strategic plan.

2.2 EQ2: WHAT IS THE EXTENT AND QUALITY OF THE WFP SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTION TO COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN STRATEGIC OUTCOMES?

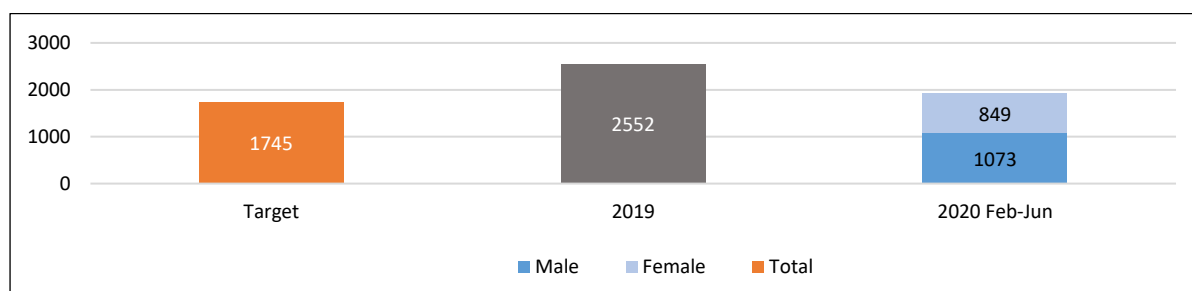
2.2.1 To what extent did WFP deliver expected outputs and contribute to each of the expected country strategic plan strategic outcomes and establish synergies between them?

88. The following sections provide evaluation findings about the quality of WFP performance regarding the country strategic plan strategic outcomes and the link to the respective planned outputs. It notes the WFP category of outcome or output for reference. For each activity identified in the country strategic plan, the status of implementation is provided by the WFP China country office from the country office monitoring and evaluation tool (COMET) database as of November 2020 for each target identified in the country strategic plan logframe. Additional achievements are provided as reported through the project offices or by the China country office.

Strategic outcome 1: Malnutrition rates among children in targeted “poverty counties” reduced in line with national norms by 2020

89. **WFP work under SO1 consists of two preschool nutrition pilot projects in Hunan and Guangxi.** In 2019, the Hunan project provided lunches to 2,552 children (Figure 4) in 29 kindergartens and preschools.¹¹⁰ According to the statistics, 1,848 children received lunches in the spring semester and 1,792 in the autumn semester. This adds up to 3,640 children (comprising 1,995 boys and 1,645 girls). This exceeded the planned 1,745 beneficiaries. The Hunan project fed more than the planned numbers of children in both 2019 and 2020. In 2020, the data has been disaggregated by gender (56 percent boys and 44 percent girls).

Figure 4: School feeding beneficiaries of the preschool nutrition project in Xiangxi, Hunan.



Source: China country office project data, October 2020

90. In November 2019, the second preschool nutrition project was launched with school meals provided, starting from December 2019, to 2,006 children in 22 kindergartens and preschools in Guangxi Province. During January to July 2020, 2,140 children received meals (1,113 boys and 1,127 girls) and 21 kindergartens in Guangxi participated in the project.¹¹¹ Annex 12 contains more details of the progress of the preschool nutrition improvement projects.

91. **Both projects demonstrate positive results but the link to improving malnutrition rates is not yet clearly demonstrated** (Table 6). A baseline study was conducted for the preschool nutrition pilot

¹¹⁰ Twenty-nine preschools (kindergartens) in Yongshun Country and Longshan County, Xiangxi Prefecture of Hunan participated in the pilot project.

¹¹¹ Progress Report January – July 2020 Preschool Nutrition Improvement Project in Guangxi, China.

in Hunan in February 2018. Output targets were achieved (Annex 17). CSPE stakeholder group interviews indicate that while the project has proceeded as planned, it is too early to determine whether any nutritional outcomes were achieved.

Table 6: SO1- Reported outcome achievements

Outcome indicator	Base value	Latest follow up	Year end target	CSP end target
Zero Hunger Capacity Scorecard / % process milestones completed along Pathway 4 (National programme design and delivery) ¹¹²	0 (August 2018, baseline survey)	1 (December 2018, WFP records). No data recorded 2019 or 2020	1 (Achieved in 2018)	None set
Number of national food security and nutrition policies, programmes and system components enhanced as a result of WFP capacity strengthening	2	2 (2020 CRF)	More than 2 (2020 ACR draft)	3 (2020 ACR draft)
Value and volume of smallholder sales through WFP-supported aggregation systems	0	844,263.4 (2020 CRF)	800,000 (2020 CRF)	

Source: COMET December 7, 2020 and SPRING Data 2020

92. **Preschool nutrition improvement pilot projects contributed to improved nutritional status of preschool children and increased health awareness.** The provision of nutritious meals to preschool children has contributed to more varied diets. This increase in nutritional value has not increased the price of school meals and so does not represent an economic trade-off for parents in the face of rising prices. Similar results are being seen in Hunan where output targets were achieved. Kindergarten principals, parents and children demonstrated improved health awareness from nutrition education provided through the project. This is evident through changes to school menu designs, new nutrition class demonstrations by teachers, and cooking skill contests. The kitchen facilities of most kindergartens have been upgraded, including refrigerators and disinfection cabinets, among other improvements (Annex 12).

93. **The Guangxi project generated positive nutritional and knowledge improvements.** The changes to knowledge prompted by this project are evident now that project activities are coming to an end. The WFP-supported pilot projects can offer opportunities for useful policy interventions. However, there needs to be a clear mechanism for raising the profile of the pilots towards replication and scaling up. There is evidence that the training provided by the project to principals is being shared with teachers and parents through formal events such as lectures or informal mechanisms such as WeChat groups. Kindergarten principals, teachers, and parents expressed the view that nutrition knowledge has been improved to varying degrees.

94. **Feedback from project beneficiaries indicated a hope that project activities would continue.** Concerns were expressed that maintaining the higher levels of dietary diversity in the school meals, without project assistance, would mean an increase in kindergarten prices, which would not be affordable for families living below the poverty line. The home-grown school meals model has a potential for sustaining the school meals programme through local management and connections to local producers, but there is no hand-over plan yet.

¹¹² This indicator has been deactivated after CRF revision and was no longer in use in 2019 and 2020.

Strategic outcome 2: Year-round livelihoods among smallholder farmers in frequent need of food assistance in areas such as Anhui, Gansu, Guangxi, Hainan and Hunan provinces are enhanced

95. Capacity development and technical assistance activities were organized to enhance income-generating capacity among targeted farmers and improve a nutrition-sensitive value chain approach. WFP work under SO2 has consisted of a kiwi smallholder farmer value chain project in Anhui province and a zinc-enriched potato project in Gansu province. These include the establishment of pro-poor cooperatives, trainings and on-site demonstrations on production, storage, disease control, and e-commerce, and nutritional behavioural change communications. Both projects implemented under SO2 face uncertainties in terms of future planning, including how to implement the projects smoothly without the support of WFP. There is limited reporting on project outcomes (Table 7).

Table 7: Strategic outcome 2 – Reported outcome achievements

Outcome indicator	Base value	Latest follow up	Year-end target	CSP end target
Proportion of the population in targeted communities reporting benefits from an enhanced asset base ¹¹³	33,000 (December 2018, baseline survey)	No data recorded 2019 or 2020	None	None
Number of national food security and nutrition policies, programmes and system components enhanced as a result of WFP capacity strengthening	2	2 (2020 CRF)	2	More than 2
Value and volume of smallholder sales through WFP-supported aggregation systems (kiwi + potato)	0.45 MT/USD 464	0.45 MT/USD 464	0.45MT/USD 464	5,147MT/USD 11,400,000

Source: COMET, December 7, 2020, 2020 CRF, SPRING platform March 2021

96. **Project stakeholders reported positive results for their beneficiaries thanks to sound design, timely implementation and qualified project teams.** There are no results reported on the two outputs mentioned in the country strategic plan logframe. Rather, several other outputs were reported with limited value for determining a quantitative change in the income-generating capacity (Output 2.1) and organization of farmers throughout the value chain (Output 2.2). Several outputs are reported in a narrative format, making it difficult to see progress over time.

Kiwi smallholder farmers value chain project in Jinzhai, Anhui Province

97. **The kiwi smallholder farmers value chain project in Anhui Province made significant progress towards increased active participation of more than 100 target families in the development process of the kiwifruit industry chain project.** Project training activities included topics such as kiwifruit planting and cultivation, agricultural product storage, rural e-commerce, ulcer disease prevention, and control technology, disease sampling and detection and effective cooperation management including special training for women practitioners. Interviews with stakeholders in Jinzhai, Anhui were uniformly positive regarding the impact of the kiwi project. The main reported positive results of the project include: (i) an increase of household income and poverty alleviation; (ii) an improvement in farmers' capacity and self-confidence; and (iii) the promotion of women's status.

98. Progress is being achieved but the benefits are not yet available because the trees are only just beginning to bear fruit. The project organized shares in local land to construct kiwi orchards with support from WFP, the Government of China, and large investors (orchard managers who are members of a local cooperative) with half of the shares allocated for poor households. As of December 2019, 85 percent of the shares had been raised, which will last from 2019 to 2033, 15 years in total. According to the cooperative investment system's design, each mu of kiwi orchard is associated with an investment of 30,000 yuan in the

¹¹³ This indicator has been deactivated after CRF revision and was no longer in use in 2019 and 2020.

first three years: the Government provides support of 9,000 yuan, the large investor investors 10,000 yuan, WFP, through national fundraising activities, provides support amounting to 10,000 yuan, and poor smallholder farmers contribute 1,000 yuan. Profits are split between the lower income farmer households and the orchard manager, a member of the local cooperative. According to project data in 2019, the cooperative provided stable employment opportunities for 48 poorer households as part of the 100 included in the project, with an average monthly income increase of 1,800 yuan.¹¹⁴ However, there is not a clear indication of the extent of increase from previous levels of income and whether the feasibility of the project compared to alternative land uses or safeguards for previous landholders had been considered (Annex 13).

Smallholder farmers growing zinc-enriched potatoes pilot project in Gansu

99. **The zinc-enriched potatoes pilot in Gansu met most project targets in a timely manner in terms of both target beneficiaries and progress in planned activities** (Annex 14), but the impacts of these activities are likely to take time to emerge. The project mainly focused on adopting new cultivation systems and technologies in the first year (2019). The production volume is yet to be seen but is expected to increase, based on the personal judgements of interviewees. Hence, results on farmers' income will be seen early in 2021. Project results will not be seen until the impacts of the first stages of the project are seen over several seasons, especially market uptake of the improved product and increases in income, prompting wider adoption.

100. The project team has started working on marketing strategies and partnered with IFENG.COM on package design, but they have to wait for the test results on the zinc density of the potatoes. The extent of zinc uptake by the tubers is not yet known and continued assessment is required. The project has found that it takes a longer time than expected for farmers to adopt this variety and new technologies, after they see income increases and nutritional improvements, with the support of social behaviour change communications on nutrition and health. Given that behaviour change is the primary objective of this project, results are more likely to emerge and strengthen with time. Therefore, the production volume and impact on smallholder farmers' income and livelihoods is yet to be seen.

101. **There is interest amongst provincial and national stakeholders in the process of experimentation and community engagement in in-field trials and consumer uptake of the product.** This process could be considered for replication with other development partners and for other forms of fortified staple food, although a process for replication and upscaling has not yet been defined and will not be identified until results are more advanced. A more detailed case study relating to this project is available in Annex 15. Triangulation of interviews confirms the close alignment of WFP with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and its networks in the provincial- and grassroot-level government counterparts under SO2 activities. Innovation and partnership are central to the project, but these are not yet being adequately capitalized on to prepare for replication and scale-up.

102. To date, WFP has pooled resources by extensive collaboration with knowledge partners, research institutes and academia including the International Potato Center, Food and Nutrition Development Institute, Gansu Academy of Agricultural Sciences, Gansu Agricultural University and Lanzhou University. WFP China country office will document the results of this project once these have been demonstrated and develop plans for replication and scale-up at provincial and national scale through the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and/or SSTC activities. They will leverage WFP partnership with the business sector to help promote sales of zinc-enriched potatoes.

103. **At the national level, the National Agricultural Technology Extension and Service Center (NATESC) provides guidance and technical support to the establishment of the zinc-enriched potato cultivation system in Gansu and to the production of potatoes by smallholder farmers.** Since 2011, NATESC has implemented a series of projects to demonstrate and promote zinc fertilizer in China, in cooperation with Teck Resources of Canada. The primary purpose is likely to be enhancing zinc content in food crops although this is not explicit, since NATESC conducts crop trials, including zinc-enriched potato experiments, in another county of Gansu province. Guidance from NATESC is greatly appreciated at the

¹¹⁴ 2019 Annual Progress Report for Jinzhai Kiwi Project. There is no data of previous income available to calculate a percentage change in income.

local level. They reported having few opportunities to communicate with national experts in the past, and the project was viewed as a unique opportunity for them to learn frontier ideas and technologies.

Strategic outcome 3: Populations regularly affected by natural disasters in Anhui, Gansu, and Guangxi provinces and other poor disaster-prone areas are better able to withstand and respond to shocks all year round

104. The country strategic plan intended that WFP would provide the Government and targeted farmers with advice and assistance in disaster preparedness and mitigation strategies and would share lessons from appropriate demonstration projects. WFP advice and assistance in this regard was intended to complement the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation and Development, focusing on strengthening farmers' disaster preparedness and reduction capacities. There was potential for WFP to help farmers participate in risk transfer tools, such as agricultural insurance. To facilitate access to insurance protection for the poorest farmers, WFP intended to advise the Government on putting in place systems to enable farmers to obtain insurance coverage in exchange for labour on building, renovating or conserving rural community assets such as soil, water, trees, markets, schools, health centres and storage units. This insurance-for-assets system has been tested and applied through the R4 Rural Resilience Initiative. Apart from these activities, few results were achieved for SO3 as envisaged (Table 8). This is not due to lack of demand, as discussed in the section on relevance, but rather due to the extent of focus and targeting of activities.

Table 8: Progress on strategic outcome 3

Outcome indicator: Proportion of targeted communities where there is evidence of improved capacity to manage climate shocks and risks	
Output 3.1: Increased capacity to implement disaster preparedness and mitigation strategies among targeted populations	
Output 3.2: Government policies and programmes related to disaster risk reduction and mitigation informed by WFP technical advice and demonstration projects	
Activity 3: Advice on and assistance in strengthening response mechanisms for shocks – supply chain interventions asset creation in drought-affected areas and insurance systems	
Amended 2019: Material and technical assistance on strengthening response mechanisms for disasters and shocks, including but not limited to humanitarian assistance, service provision, impact assessment and post-shock and resilience-building in risk-affected areas and technical advisory to the institutions	
Number of people trained in disaster preparedness and mitigation strategies	No results reported due to no activities
Number of technical support activities provided	No results reported due to no activities

105. **Despite the interest shown in this strategic outcome during interviews with stakeholders, government and other partners, the China country office was unable to pursue the proposed activities.** This was mainly due to a lack of direct demand from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs or other agencies for this capacity strengthening support because of the Government's already high capacity in domestic disaster preparedness and response. Consequently, none of the potential activities under SO3 were implemented. Further, the Government of China handled all the required emergency responses during the country strategic plan without requesting external support. There were few allocated resources for activities; consequently, the WFP China country office resources were applied where there was stronger demand from partners. Yet given the interest, it suggests that the area of capacity strengthening for emergency management is still valid, but the mechanisms and funding sources require further attention.

106. **Nonetheless, SO3 provided a strategic avenue for rapid response when WFP engaged with the Government of China regarding the COVID-19 pandemic response through the Global**

Humanitarian Hub in Guangzhou in April 2020. WFP China country office played facilitative and advocacy roles in getting the China hub quickly off the ground, including through a revision to the country strategic plan in December 2019. The revision included the provision of relief items for vulnerable people affected by disaster in order to minimize the loss of human life and destruction of livelihood. Products such as protective equipment and other response supplies are shipped to other United Nations hubs worldwide, and directly to affected countries and regions. The hub is supporting the global COVID-19 emergency response for the international community, including the United Nations, national governments and other humanitarian partners. The hub is designed to provide strategic sourcing, stock consolidation services and to facilitate movement of life-saving humanitarian cargo to countries during the pandemic. The hub operates aviation services to transport humanitarian workers. The hub is part of a network of global humanitarian hubs being established in Liege (Belgium) and Dubai (United Arab Emirates) where supplies are being manufactured and regional hubs in Ethiopia, Ghana, South Africa, Malaysia, Panama and Dubai. The WFP global partner, the Alibaba Group, has been competitively selected to provide commercial hub services through the Alibaba Cainiao logistics network.¹¹⁵

Strategic outcome 4: Selected developing countries assisted in enhancing food security and nutrition in line with their prioritized Sustainable Development Goal 2 targets by 2030

107. The country strategic plan document phrased the statement of outcome for SO4 (enhanced knowledge in other countries) at output level, and the statement of outputs (assistance to developing countries) at outcome level. The evaluation looks at the logical chain from activity to output (using number of participants as a proxy indicator) and to outcome (combining various qualitative sources to assess results).

108. WFP China country office, through the establishment of the WFP Centre of Excellence has successfully set up operational processes and mobilized experts for learning events to respond to demand from WFP country offices. There were three types of activities: policy dialogue, knowledge sharing through technical training and deployment of experts, and in-field technical demonstrations including a Demonstration in Africa for Africans programme. Opportunities for SSTC were to be identified through a demand-driven approach, and in alignment with China's existing international policies and commitments, progressing towards effective knowledge sharing. However, the brokering process, (two-way facilitation between China and other WFP country offices) required to enhance access to China's wide skills base is not yet fully in place and can be further developed through the demand-driven approach.

109. The evaluation found that the Centre of Excellence has actively undertaken four activities: learning events, of all types and sizes; participation in WFP SSTC country pilot projects; the development of the Centre of Excellence's own internet site; and attendance and delivery of speeches at a broad number of events.¹¹⁶ These activities were supported by advocacy communication from the WFP China country office in Chinese media, both traditional ones and social media.¹¹⁷ This was achieved despite serious budget limitations. From this information, the evaluation has identified several areas of progress towards SO4 and also scope for improvement.

110. During the country strategic plan review period, a large number of learning events were organized or co-organized, providing opportunity for policy-level exchanges. The WFP China country office, through its Country Director, attended a large number of conferences in China and outside China to present WFP and China policies. The large number of participating countries is a positive indicator for the first output (Table 9 The full table of achievements under SO4 can be found in Annex 18.) but interviews with stakeholders and participants suggested that the WFP China country office does not have in-house cross-cultural expertise and has not made use of consultants with related skills (other than for the 2015 strategic review). This finding is aligned with a recommendation of the August 2020 organizational review of the China country office that identified a potential for short-term contracts for South-South cooperation experts to assess South-South cooperation proposals to address the specialization required for such activities.

¹¹⁵ WFP Media Centre, April 2020, <https://www.wfp.org/news/wfp-launches-global-humanitarian-hub-china-support-efforts-against-covid-19>

¹¹⁶ Source: Activity database created during the China CSP evaluation (Annex 16).

¹¹⁷ The communications, advocacy and media team presented its activities at the 2020 WFP China retreat, which the evaluation team attended.

111. Overall, the evaluation found that almost all the outputs and activities under SO4 had been completed by 2020, with the exception of output 4.2 (increasing the leadership capacity of farmers) since this activity was delayed. The full table of achievements under SO4 can be found in Annex 18.

Table 9: Strategic outcome 4 – status

Level	Status (October 2020)
China CSP strategic outcome 4: Selected developing countries assisted in enhancing food security and nutrition in line with their prioritized SDG 2 targets by 2030	No indicator available, qualitative assessment Participants in the CoE training events fill in evaluation sheets at the end of the event; based on interviews, information from the evaluation sheets was not mobilized during the China CSP. The CO survey during the evaluation indicates high satisfaction on the new knowledge gained by participants, and that participants have started to disseminate the new knowledge in the partner countries. (Annex 11)
Output 4.1: Enhanced knowledge in selected countries regarding China's experience in addressing food security and nutrition	70 countries have participated at least once in the learning events, of which 40 countries are in more regular contact with the China CoE More than 2700 participants ¹¹⁸ (Annex 16)
Output 4.2: Targeted participants in the farmer leaders' programme have increased knowledge and leadership capacity and receive support in becoming productive smallholders	Not started ¹¹⁹
Activity 4: Provide governments with expert advice and policy support on food security and nutrition issues	The China CO has attended 50 events (49 conferences within and outside of China and participated in 1 global call for innovative poverty reduction initiatives) The CoE has organized 13 learning events that were fully or partly at national policy level
Activity 5: Knowledge-sharing through study tours, training, technology transfer and online exchange platforms	The China CoE has organized one international conference and organized or co-organized 31 learning events, including 13 webinars in 2020
Activity 6: Foster leadership among a new generation of smallholder farmers	The China CoE has called for DAA projects from WFP COs. 1 project (Zimbabwe) was shortlisted. No project was approved or started

112. **To respond to the demand, the Centre of Excellence has built a network of partners allowing mobilization of Chinese experts.** The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, other ministries and government agencies, universities and schools at national level and in several provinces including provinces with country strategic plan pilot projects, and the Alibaba Group are all part of this network. This network is continuing to grow. Regular exchanges take place between the Centre of Excellence and its experts. The Centre of Excellence's map of partners includes 9 strategic partners (including other United Nations agencies), 18 existing technical partners, and 10 potential partners.¹²⁰ The Centre of Excellence has

¹¹⁸ During the stakeholder feedback session on the draft evaluation report in April 2020, updated data provided by the CO indicate that during 2020, approximately, 1,700 webinar participants from 40 countries joined 13 webinars organized through the CoE.

¹¹⁹ The DAA activity has not started. The China CoE participates in six WFP SSTC country pilot projects, which include grassroots learning events. The SSTC strategy evaluation (upcoming) describes the outcome of these projects through case studies. Interviews with the evaluation team indicate that the outcome results from joint efforts from the three WFP CoEs.

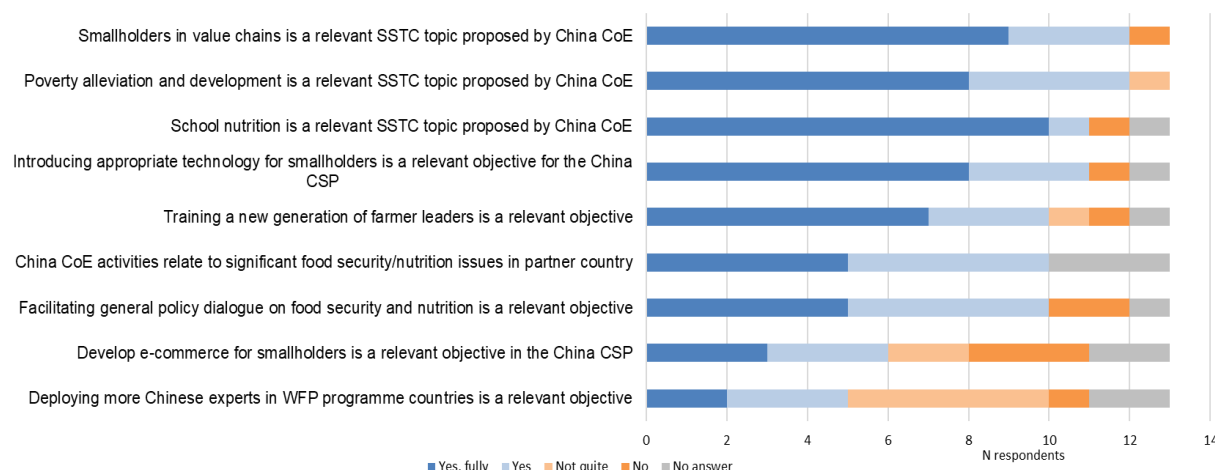
¹²⁰ The CoE has shared with the evaluation team a file listing partners, by category. See summary in Annex 16: activity database.

reported in interviews having observed cases of other WFP country offices establishing contact with a new university. The experts consulted during the evaluation have mostly taken part in learning events so far and are expecting to participate in WFP SSTC demonstration projects in the form of missions.

113. **Potential projects have been in the preparation stage since 2017 but progress has been limited.** The delay in launching the Demonstration in Africa for Africans activity (which the Centre of Excellence has renamed as Demonstrations in Africa (Asia) for Africans (Asians) to reflect a broader geographical scope) is largely due to difficulties in defining procedures to access the SCAF for these activities, which are described below. Only one proposal from Zimbabwe is still being considered.¹²¹ The 2015 strategic review explained the strong focus of China's cooperation in Africa on enterprise-led demonstrations in the past and identified a need to improve the effectiveness of this approach.¹²² However, the WFP China county office online survey indicates that demand from other WFP country offices and their own partner countries were lower than initially foreseen. There is a contrast between those respondents with a preference for a more traditional cooperation mode, based on demonstrations and dispatch of Chinese experts, and those prioritizing access to information to understand the factors that explain the success of China's solutions, such as e-commerce, and evidence from pilot projects. The former are more likely to be from least developed countries (LDC) although the small number of survey respondents does not allow comparison with non-least developed countries. The evaluation notes that all SSTC demonstration projects - except one - are in non-least developed countries.¹²³

114. **The evaluation process has highlighted a demand for more adaptation of the Centre of Excellence activities to local contexts.** Out of ten respondents informed on Centre of Excellence activities, only three perceive that the Centre of Excellence has been effective in responding to demand from other country offices, and none that it has been highly effective. Country offices appreciate all thematic areas and expect combined thematic areas and exchange levels, rather than having to choose only one theme. There is a high level of perception that the Centre of Excellence's focus on nutrition, specifically school nutrition initiatives, is relevant (Figure 5). Overall, the survey respondents stated that Centre of Excellence activities were highly relevant or relevant for food security and nutrition in their countries. There were contrasting views on the relevance of deploying more experts, and of the development of e-commerce for smallholders - consistent with the SSTC strategy evaluation team feedback.¹²⁴

Figure 5: WFP country offices' perception of the relevance of the Centre of Excellence's thematic areas and country strategic plan objectives



Source: WFP (2020) online survey results from 13 respondents¹²⁵

¹²¹ WFP Zimbabwe country office. (2018). Zimbabwe Final Concept Note for SCAF Application.

¹²² Background Paper N°8: South-South Cooperation and Global Food Security and Nutrition: Implications for China-WFP Partnership.

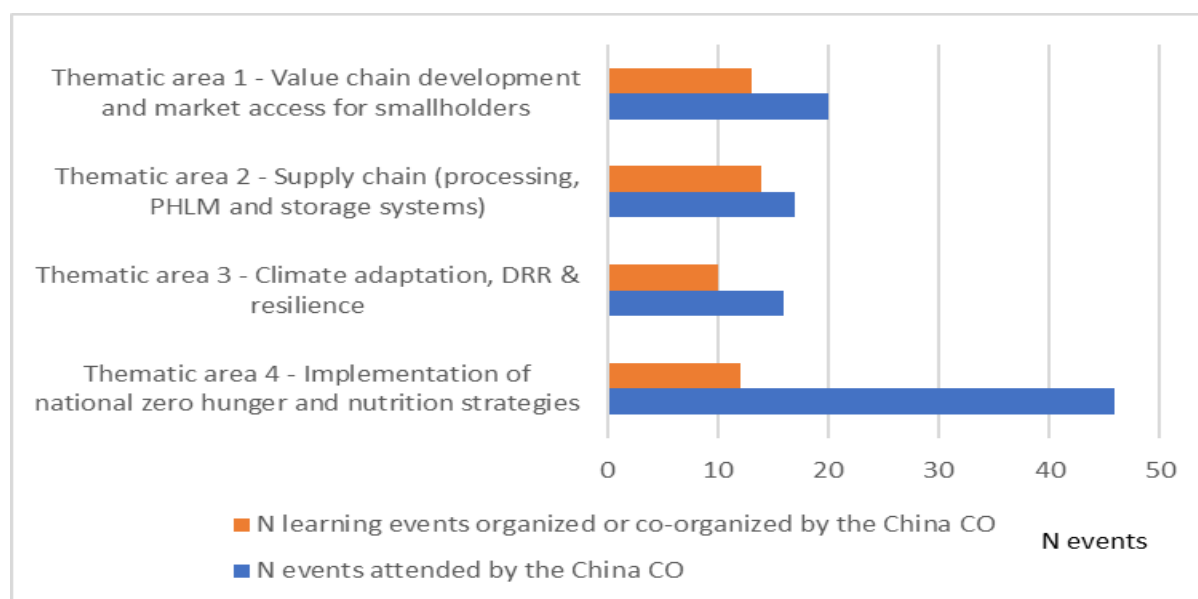
¹²³ Kenya, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Sri Lanka, Bolivia and Cuba are lower middle-income countries. Only one country, Ethiopia, is a least-developed country as of December 2020.

¹²⁴ Findings from the SSTC strategy evaluation were not available in written form when this report was prepared.

¹²⁵ See Annex 11.

115. **To respond to the diversified demand identified in the 2017 needs analysis, the Centre of Excellence has adopted a matrix structure of four thematic areas and three levels of knowledge exchange (policy, institutional and grassroots).** The SSTC strategy evaluation case studies, as discussed with the evaluation team, observe that it is the combination of all levels of exchange and multiple thematic areas that drive successful innovation in the country pilot projects. This was apparent from the survey conducted as part of this CSPE. Chinese experts interviewed found that country visits that combine sharing on both policies and field activities were more useful. In practice the Centre of Excellence’s learning events have often combined the different levels and the thematic areas: half of the learning events have combined at least two thematic areas (Figure 6). Some have combined all four thematic areas. Five learning events have combined several levels of exchanges. This approach is not currently clearly documented or tracked.

Figure 6: Current thematic spread of events organized or co-organized by the China Centre of Excellence



Source: Activity database – SSTC (Annex 16)

116. **The China Centre of Excellence does not clearly differentiate between affordable and sophisticated solutions.** County offices’ demands are for appropriate technology from China for smallholders. The Centre of Excellence’s partners explained in interviews that balancing more advanced solutions in use in China, which are often mainly digital solutions, and low-technology solutions require care to be appropriate to needs. The Centre of Excellence has mobilized partners in both fields, ranging from a provincial agricultural school to a high-tech company selling integrated solutions for agribusinesses. However, Centre of Excellence interviews and communication tools do not clearly explain which of the digital solutions presented are low cost and have low maintenance needs, or differentiate between end users of digital solutions and more low-tech solutions.

117. WFP headquarters have expressed a strong interest in digital solutions applied to supply chain logistics and described how such an interest is at the core of the partnership with the Alibaba Group. The SSTC stakeholders interviewed in China proposed instead more focus on non-digital solutions, in order to tailor proposed solutions to the conditions of beneficiary countries. Further, the China Centre of Excellence’s communication tools focus on “China’s solutions” rather than on exchanges of experience.¹²⁶ These tools include a document designed for other WFP country offices, and the Centre of Excellence’s website. The Centre of Excellence is matching demand from other country offices with existing “Chinese solutions”. These solutions are mostly in terms of “what to do” (technology, institutions) rather than “how to do” (i.e., the path to introduce technology or set up other institutions’ successful experience). The latter may have been shared in learning events but is less present in communication. It is not clear who is in charge of screening the relevance of the proposed solutions.

¹²⁶ The WFP CoE presents its approach in a two-page leaflet in English: six steps for SSC engagement with China Centre of Excellence for Rural Transformation. The CoE’s website is available, also in English, at <http://en.wfp.bjszhl.cn/home.html>.

118. **The Centre of Excellence’s internet platform, in its current format, provides only a limited reflection of the Centre of Excellence’s work.** The platform has been actively promoted by the Centre of Excellence and its experts in various forums as a knowledge exchange platform on China’s experience, especially a large number (125) of Chinese “solutions”. However, the evaluation team observes that out of the 36 solutions listed on the first pages by thematic area, 25 are direct excerpts from the China Daily newspaper, and only one is a case study from the Centre of Excellence. Although the list of solutions has recently been updated, the list of frequently asked questions has not. There are 48 expert profiles presented on the website, but there is a gap between this list of experts and the organizations the Centre of Excellence is actually working with, as preparation of the activity database has demonstrated. Further, the South-South cooperation activity section does not give justice to the large number of events organized. The Centre of Excellence is aware of the limited international visibility of its website. The domain name cannot be identified on an international web-search engine unless one already knows the website address. The Technology Division in WFP headquarters, in charge of data management, is currently reviewing the possibility of defining a more operational domain name or linking this site to the main WFP website.

Strategic outcome 5: Work to ensure food security and nutrition in targeted “poverty counties” and selected developing countries are supported year-round by increased private-sector resources and public-private partnerships

119. **Under SO5, WFP China country office was to continue fundraising for WFP international programmes, and to raise funds from the private sector and the Chinese public for the country strategic plan’s domestic pilot projects.** Beyond WFP Strategic Result 7, calling for WFP donors, the development of partnerships, both with the Government and with enterprises, was to contribute to SDG 17, through which partners cooperate to ensure food security and nutrition in China, in developing countries and globally.

120. Overall, the country strategic plan is effective under SO5 for technical partnerships, but uncertain in terms of financial contributions.¹²⁷ WFP headquarters and the WFP China country office have jointly invested in a sustained effort to develop a partnership with one global Chinese corporation, the Alibaba Group, and with CIDCA. These two partnerships are about to be formalized. The upcoming period will be critical to confirm the effectiveness of the partnerships.

121. Progress towards outcomes (Table 10) is best described using indicators other than those listed in the country strategic plan document, as explained below (Annex 18 has a quantitative report against country strategic plan indicators). A single score of partnership quality may not reflect the differentiated stage of partnerships with the different donors, and the high score provided at the end of 2018 does not reflect evaluation findings.

Table 10: Strategic outcome 5 – outcome achievements

China CSP SO5: Work to ensure food security and nutrition in targeted “poverty counties” and selected developing countries are supported year-round by increased private-sector resources and public-private partnerships ¹²⁸	Scoring of partnership quality by the China CO increased from 8 (early 2018) to 10 (late 2018)
Output 5.1: Existing partnerships between the private sector and the Government strengthened and new partnerships established	Existing partnership with MARA confirmed and broadened in scope. Government partnerships established with MEM and NAFRA. Development of global strategic partnership between WFP and the Alibaba Group
Output 5.2: New fundraising platforms for public fundraising established	4 large fundraising platforms including: 1 platform maintained (Tencent)

¹²⁷ Activity database created during the China CSP evaluation (Annex 16).

¹²⁸ As noted under relevance, public-private partnerships were outside the scope of the CSP. Instead of output 5.1, the CSP has been strengthening existing partnerships between WFP and the Government of China, or between WFP and the private sector, and developing new ones.

	2 new platforms mobilized (Meituan and Kuaishou) 1 platform under confirmation as of end 2020 (Alibaba Group)
Activity 7: Development and formalization of partnerships	MoUs signed with MEM and NAFRA, foreseen with CIDCA. Partnership between WFP and the Alibaba Group under formalization as of end 2020. 40 other private stakeholders contacted (Chinese and international enterprises, NGOs). Seventeen have led to at least one partner activity (cash or in-kind donation or fundraising from the public). Four signed agreements in 2020. None is formalized
Activity 8: Facilitation of enhanced support from the Government of China	The China CO and HQ have jointly held a dialogue with CIDCA, seen as a long-term investment with no immediate financial returns

Source: Interviews and China CO data, November and December 2020

122. **Under the country strategic plan, the Government of China's partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs has been sustained. A partnership with CIDCA has been developed but not formalized yet. Partnership agreements with the Ministry of Emergency Management and NAFRA were formalized.** The partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, which was already strong when the country strategic plan started, as reflected in the memorandums of understanding, was stable in financial terms during the country strategic plan period (see WINGS data below) but has been expanding in scope as highlighted in the interviews and in the focus group discussion between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the WFP China country office: the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs is participating in the WFP SSTC demonstration projects in terms of funding and expert deployment; and it has taken part in coordinating the COVID-19 response hub. The relationship between WFP and CIDCA is described by both sides as a growing engagement into a long-term partnership, covering emergency aid and development projects.¹²⁹ WFP has continued to work with the China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges (CICETE), a historical partner of WFP in China, whose role was described during evaluation interviews as equally important. CICETE is in charge of preliminary appraisal of development project applications to the SSCAF.¹³⁰ This engagement is consistent with the perception of other WFP country offices: out of 13 respondents in the online survey, 11 stated they might apply for funding in the next few years, regardless of whether they are already a beneficiary, or were unsuccessful in their applications one or several times.

123. **The Alibaba Group has been a global partner of WFP since 2019,** as confirmed by the Strategic Partnership Division and the China country office. The activity database shows that the Alibaba Group is cooperating with WFP through modalities other than corporate financial support.¹³¹ WFP and the Alibaba Group have built a relationship on the basis of aligned strategic interests in global supply chains and smallholder access to modern value chains. Its e-commerce subsidiary, Taobao, first signed a letter of intent to cooperate with WFP on one of the pilot projects (the kiwifruit value chain).¹³² A range of interviews show that the group was a vendor for several major services, including the creation of the WFP hunger map, the digitalization of WFP country offices (for which a formal global partnership agreement was signed with Alicloud in 2019), and the operation of the COVID-19 response hub through its affiliated logistics group, Cainiao, in 2020. In 2020, WFP is in the process of formalizing its partnership with the Alibaba Group itself, including an agreement to raise funds for WFP programmes from one of its platforms.

¹²⁹ This was confirmed through interviews with WFP headquarters and the China CO. CIDCA was not available for an interview but provided a statement of confirmation directly to the China CO during the evaluation.

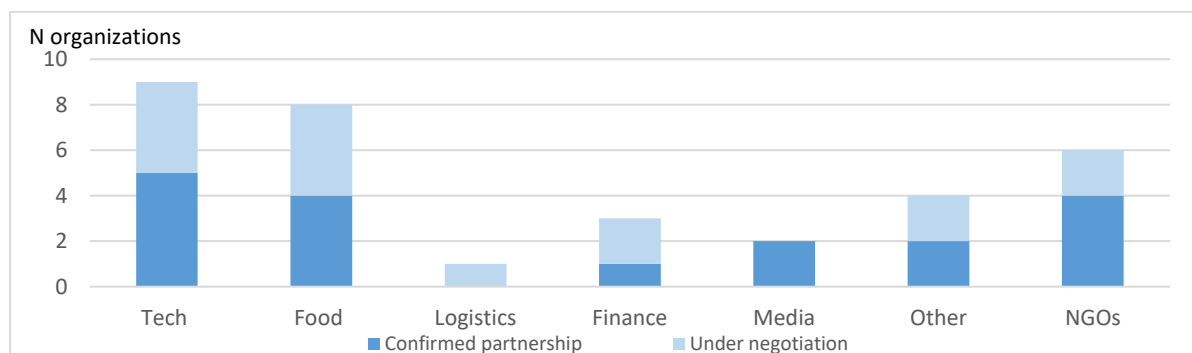
¹³⁰ The China country office maintains connections with both MARA and MoFCOM under which CICETE and CIDCA were established. In its 2018 mission to China, WFP Acting Assistant Executive Director of the Partnerships and Governance Department held meetings with MoFA, CIDCA, CICETE and MARA.

¹³¹ Although the Alibaba Group is listed as a donor to WFP in WFP communications, the activity database only indicates as of end 2020 a foreseen mobilization of a fundraising platform, in the process of being confirmed. Information was collected through various interviews. The legal agreement was just under finalization when the evaluation took place and was not accessible.

¹³² Letter of Intent with Alibaba for Jinzhai Project.

124. **During the 2017-2020 period, a total of 40 other enterprises and non-governmental organizations were in contact with WFP China country office as existing or candidate partners.** The activity database shows that a “deal”, an agreement to contribute as technical partner, or donor, or both, was made with 18 of them (44 percent), and negotiations were still ongoing with 15 other organizations. The evaluation has analysed partners by activity sector. The partner and candidate partner enterprises are overwhelmingly from two sectors of activity, the information technology (tech) sector and the food sector (Figure 7). All international partners except one are active in the field of food and nutrition and through their corporate social responsibility (CSR) arms wish to contribute to improved food security and poverty reduction. WFP has established contact with 12 technology sector companies, all, except one, being Chinese.¹³³ Other sectors include finance, media and logistics.

Figure 7: Private partnerships: activity sectors and current status



Source: activity database – private partnerships. Confirmed partnership (or “deal”) means the company has agreed to contribute in-cash, or in-kind, or as visibility partner, or to forward public donations

125. **Chinese and international enterprise partners differ in terms of sectors and cooperation modalities.** The activity database shows that international partners have a formal legal agreement between the enterprise and WFP. The enterprise is a WFP donor, fulfilling its corporate social responsibility commitment to improve food security and nutrition, a field of strategic importance for food sector corporations, while gaining on-the-ground information about food security, nutrition and consumers in China. In contrast, the activity database shows that the relationship with Chinese enterprises is diversified. The connection with WFP takes place through their corporate social responsibility division, or their corporate philanthropic foundation. As of end 2020, out of four technology sector partners with a confirmed financial contribution, one mobilizes its public fundraising platforms only, two are corporate donors and mobilize their platforms, and one provided internet traffic. Some technology enterprises have proposed to go further and establish brand partnerships. Only one enterprise from the technology sector, active in food delivery, appears to have a strategic interest in food and nutrition. The Chinese enterprises have not signed a formal partnership agreement with WFP.

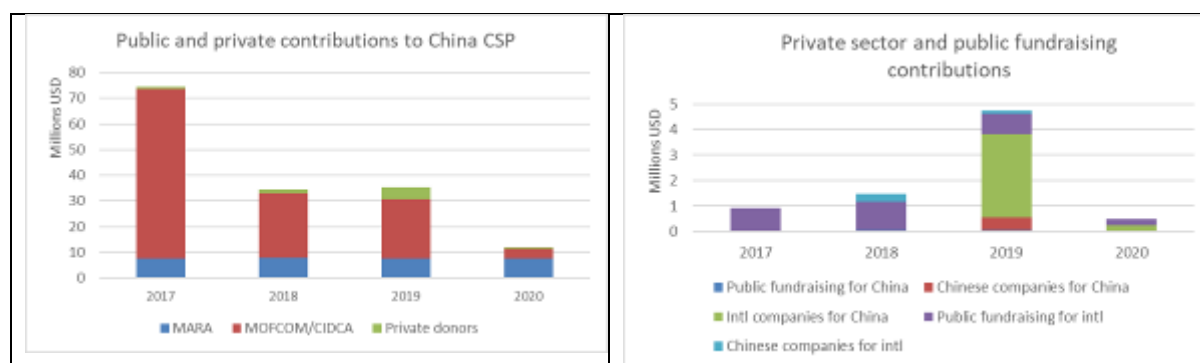
126. **The evaluation finds that the decision of the WFP China country office to focus on the technology sector in private partnerships has advantages and disadvantages.** This decision, as explained in interviews and in the country strategic plan document, was based on the dynamic development of fundraising platforms when the country strategic plan started, and on their potential to raise funds both for domestic projects in China and for WFP international programmes. The development of fundraising for domestic projects was to be connected to China’s poverty eradication campaign. Fundraising for WFP international programmes started in 2011 through cooperation with the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation and the Tencent platform. Information technology companies, as indicated in interviews, are interested in mobilizing their platforms and in making corporate donations for nutrition programmes under their corporate social responsibility commitment. On the other hand, it was stressed in interviews that the rapid development pace of information technology companies does not match the WFP partnership formalization process. The evaluation team notes that working with China’s two internet giants, the Alibaba Group and Tencent, is challenging: as of the end of 2020, the WFP partnership is

¹³³ The analysis is based on the enterprises’ main sector in China, based on an observation of their websites. Mastercard is included in the technology sector companies in this analysis since the company explains in its website that its presence in China is mostly related to information technology development. Meituan is a technology sector company, although its activity is centred on the food sector.

with the Alibaba Group, while Tencent is contributing through its platforms but much less so than before to the country strategic plan. WFP headquarters and the China country office have indicated in interviews that they are working on the definition of a new strategy for private partnerships.

127. **The effectiveness of the country strategic plan under SO5 in resource leverage is modest in financial terms.** Figure 8 demonstrates the extent of financial contribution per source during the period of the country strategic plan. In 2017, the Government of China's efforts to address global hunger through contributions to WFP increased four-fold, from USD 18.5 million in 2016 to USD 73.6 million. With that increase, China became among the top ten government donors to WFP. The effectiveness section describes how this funding level declined after 2017. It was only USD 30.5 million in 2019. An important evaluation finding is that the funding from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs has been relatively small but consistent, whilst food aid funding through the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) was high in 2017 and has not recovered that level since the creation of CIDCA in 2018. CIDCA's contribution in 2020, USD 4 million, was especially low. One of the contributing factors was that in November 2020 CIDCA launched negotiations with WFP to increase and predetermine the proportion of food aid in their contribution. CIDCA refocused it. The impact of the 2020 pandemic is unconfirmed.

Figure 8. Public and private financial contributions through the China Country Strategic Plan (2017-2020)



Sources: WFP WINGS corporate system, Jan 1, 2020 to Dec 1, 2020; MARA 2020 letter to WFP

128. **Further, the number of beneficiary countries is uneven across the period under review.** This finding from the activity database confirms differences in the relationship between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, a flexible but small donor, and CIDCA, for which the relationship was under development during the country strategic plan. The activity database further shows clearly differentiated channels for each of these two main partners: CIDCA emergency aid and projects, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs flexible funding and SSTC projects (Table 11). Although the management of donations as a single key account in WFP headquarters does not reflect these differences, interviews demonstrate that attention is given to these differences to resolve the difficulties encountered in mobilizing China as a donor.

Table 11: Number of WFP country offices having received a contribution through the China country strategic plan

Year	Total countries	MOFCOM/CIDCA emergency aid	MOFCOM/CIDCA development/ CICEE projects	MARA flexible funding	MARA SSTC pilot projects
2017	18	18		2	
2018	6	5	0	2	
2019	14	10	0	2	4
2020	9	4(2)	0	2	5

Source: activity database – public partnerships (Annex 16). Note: in 2017, before the creation of CIDCA, emergency aid was through MOFCOM

129. **The diverse sources and uses of private contributions have limited visibility.** According to the WFP corporate monitoring system WINGS, private donations for the domestic pilot projects have mostly been from Teck Resources, the mining company from Canada promoting zinc in nutrition (USD 3 million), and mostly in 2019. The Chinese public donations appear to have been mostly mobilized for WFP international programmes. The WINGS system reports that 94 percent of these donations during the country strategic plan period were directed to WFP international school feeding projects. The China country office has focused its reporting on partner enterprises rather than on the allocation of donations to national or international programmes.

130. There are positive achievements under SO5 that were not clearly reported during the country strategic plan period in progress documentation. Two factors contributing to this lack of clarity were identified through interviews, preparation of the activity database and observation of WFP communication tools. First, WFP China country office carefully monitors the diversity of “deals” with the information technology sector. However, interviews with WFP headquarters indicate that this information from WFP China country office is not fully accessed or made use of, while WFP China country office has limited interaction with the international donors to the China country strategic plan. Second, information on donors reported on the WFP corporate website and monthly country briefs for China does not match the list of donors tracked by WINGS.

131. **The future effectiveness of the country strategic plan on public and private partnerships will depend on how these various public and private organizations sustain their participation in the upcoming period.** Altogether, the analysis concludes that there is alignment in the country strategic plan between WFP and all public partners, and with technical contributors to the Centre of Excellence. An alignment of goals is present with enterprises, as indicated in interviews with the enterprises and observed on their websites. The evaluation team notes that such alignment is likely to allow sustained partnerships. The food sector enterprises have an obvious stake in nutrition projects in the country strategic plan. The technology sector has a strategic interest to work with WFP for logistics and value chains, as is the case with the Alibaba Group, and for the big data market. The mobilization by WFP of a large range of platforms provides more technology companies with access to new valuable data.¹³⁴ In contrast the preparation of the activity database showed how WFP China country office describes the relationship with enterprises in terms of “deals” only, in continuity with the pre-2017 period, before the country strategic plan started, and not in terms of alignment of WFP goals and corporate strategies.¹³⁵ WFP China country office is in the process of calling on large state-owned enterprises as corporate donors from their corporate social responsibility point of view.¹³⁶ The evaluation team notes there is no mention of the enterprises that would have a strategic interest to partner with WFP going beyond improving their image through donating to a United Nations organization.

Extent to which planned contribution to country strategic plan strategic outcomes were achieved to date

132. **The country strategic plan results framework was high level, with strategic result areas identified rather than clear activity targets for outputs or outcomes.** At the commencement of the country strategic plan in China, the dialogue was at the strategic level and the agreements were indicative of areas of focus. Specific interventions were designed and implemented, however, reporting against indicators, outputs and outcomes has not been consistent, with several areas of work being under-represented and under-reported in COMET and in reports. Qualitative evaluation interviews have helped ascertain the breadth of results achieved through the country strategic plan.

133. **Country strategic plan activities have generally generated positive results but on a small-scale, as opposed to the broader national- and global-level results outlined in the country strategic plan.** The country strategic plan nominated expansive and ambitious targets for number of beneficiaries.¹³⁷ “Through Strategic Outcome 1, WFP will provide advice and technical assistance with a view to helping the Government implement and extend nutrition programmes, ultimately benefiting an estimated 34 million undernourished children in “poverty counties”. To date, 5,562 children have received meals. Through SO2,

¹³⁴ Based on interviews with three IT companies.

¹³⁵ The China CO shared a presentation of private partnerships before the CSP.

¹³⁶ This was explained during the focus group discussion between WFP and MARA.

¹³⁷ WFP China CSP, 2017, P13

smallholder farmers will ultimately benefit from enhanced income generation capacity and better organization along the value chain. Sixteen million people are expected to benefit as a result of the provision of technical advice to the Government and farmers. Through SO3, the provision of advice on and assistance in withstanding and responding to shocks has the potential to bring results for 10 million indirect beneficiaries.”

134. **As a country strategic plan that focuses on capacity strengthening, the effect on the project level for individuals and institutions is clear. While the country strategic plan is coherent and aligned with the wider United Nations context in China, the extent to which WFP exerts its influence in the enabling environment could be stronger. Current project achievements are not enough to push policies at local or provincial levels.** The transfer of lessons learned from the pilots is as yet insufficient to create momentum between and among provinces. The disparities among provinces mean that there are policy and practical constraints for scaling up pilot projects to other provinces. Evidence-based advocacy is therefore a crucial programme need for the health and nutrition sector to upscale the lessons emerging from the field demonstration projects. The budget of central government is now relatively tight and there are competing considerations that act as a barrier to upscaling and WFP China county office does not currently have a senior policy adviser who could focus on this contribution to capacity strengthening.

Quality of synergies and unintended results

135. **A positive result of the Centre of Excellence’s activities, not reflected in the WFP system of corporate indicators or on the Centre of Excellence’s website, is its current engagement in WFP country SSTC projects, together with other WFP Centres of Excellence.** As of October 2020, engagement had started on four projects (with Kenya, Sri Lanka, Ecuador and the Democratic Republic of the Congo), and upcoming projects with another four countries were announced.¹³⁸ The ongoing projects were reviewed during the SSTC policy evaluation. One case of successful transfer and scaling up of a cassava processing technology is confirmed in that evaluation.¹³⁹

2.2.2 To what extent, and through which processes, did WFP take into account cross-cutting aims (humanitarian principles, protection, accountability to targeted populations, gender equality and other equity considerations), both in resource mobilization and South-South Cooperation from China in programme countries, and within the domestic programme?

136. **The domestic country strategic plan activities have targeted counties with high levels of poverty and the more vulnerable populations within those counties.** Minority communities were also included, with project approaches adapted to meet their needs. For example, during the pre-project testing for the zinc-enriched potato project’s baseline in Gansu, the Dongxiang people refused blood sampling, so the team changed to hair sampling to determine nutritional status. There is no evidence that selection of participants in demonstration projects would have discriminated against any groups or types of individuals. Stakeholders indicated understanding that WFP is an impartial agency, aiming to assist populations in need and with no bias in service support. SSTC activities are largely based on demand, in line with the country strategic plan priorities in the respective country. Therefore, the extent of attention to cross-cutting issues is in alignment with the partner countries approach.

Humanitarian principles and access

137. **There were no apparent concerns in applying humanitarian principles during the review period.** The core principles in question are humanity, neutrality and impartiality.¹⁴⁰ WFP considers the foundations of effective humanitarian action to be respect, self-reliance, participation, capacity building, coordination, accountability and professionalism.¹⁴¹ The activities under review comprise development rather than humanitarian operations, with the exception of the humanitarian hub activities. As noted in earlier sections regarding SO3, there is still demand for partnership and knowledge sharing with WFP on

¹³⁸ MARA has announced a financial contribution for a pilot project in Peru in November 2020 in addition to the four ongoing projects. The CoE has listed three pipeline projects: Cuba and Bolivia (in connection with the IFAD facility) and Ethiopia.

¹³⁹ Interview with WFP SSTC strategy evaluation team (upcoming).

¹⁴⁰ WFP, 2004. “Humanitarian Principles.” Rome: (WFP/EB.A/2004/5-C, p. 7.)

¹⁴¹ WFP, 2004. “Humanitarian Principles.” Rome: (WFP/EB.A/2004/5-C, p. 7.)

humanitarian approaches in emergency response and management. Standard project reports (SPRs) make little direct reference to the application of humanitarian principles, other than arrangements for accountability to the affected populations, which led to arrangements for a review by CARE International “with the intention of gathering feedback from the beneficiaries on the nutrition services provided and on how to improve service delivery in future intervention”.

138. The commitments from the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability are applied in the domestic programmes by ensuring that an effective process for participation and feedback is in place and that programme design and management decisions are responsive to the views of affected communities and people. Based on the field visit and discussions with beneficiaries and implementers, there was active dialogue observed in all project areas. Most of the feedback concerned the desire to continue school feeding rather than any concern about the application of humanitarian principles by WFP during the operation.

Protection

139. **Compliance with protection principles and the contribution to achievement of protection objectives were taken during the implementation of the kiwi and potato production projects.** The access to land was the most important aspect and this was addressed by issuing shares to the participants through a participatory approach. No concerns regarding this allocation were raised during the field visits. The WFP Strategy for Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) seeks to “facilitate participation of affected people in WFP programmes by ensuring that programme design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation processes and decisions are informed by and reflect the views of affected people”.¹⁴² It does so by providing information to beneficiaries on the assistance that it provides and by seeking their feedback throughout the project cycle. Additionally, it establishes complaints and feedback mechanisms through which beneficiaries can safely provide feedback and make comment.

Accountability to affected populations

140. **WFP implemented its activities in accordance with accountability to affected populations principles.** For the school feeding, WFP China country office staff held sessions with nutrition focal points and other school staff to inform them of the project’s objectives and monitoring tools that would be used, and shared information regarding the programme with village leaders. WFP sought feedback from beneficiaries on the acceptability of food items and challenges in preparing nutritious food. In the development operation, it supported the Government to implement accountability to affected populations mechanisms. There were efforts to engage with communities and in particular women in a more structured and intense manner than is standard for China. The project and China country office staff explained how there was interest at the local and provincial levels amongst government officials on how WFP implemented participatory approaches and engaged with vulnerable households and communities.

141. **WFP activities comply with principles and achievements of objectives regarding accountability to the environment.** The country office survey indicates (although based on a very small number of answers) that environmental concerns and social protection of vulnerable beneficiaries are taken into account in SSTC activities. On the other hand, responses indicated that information about the source of China aid is not fully available to WFP beneficiaries and that clearer information on the process and requirements would be helpful to improve the submission of proposals in relation to environmental requirements.

Gender equity and women’s empowerment

142. **Gender is technically mentioned and considered in the design of some activities, but its inclusion is superficial in nature and does not translate into the implementation of activities.** For example, the Evaluation of the Preschool Nutrition Pilot in Selected Counties of China Report¹⁴³ highlighted an emphasis on selection of smallholder farmer households headed by women identified at design for producing food for school feeding but during implementation these households accounted for a small proportion of the targeted beneficiaries (See paragraph 744).

¹⁴² WFP, The WFP Strategy for Accountability to Affected Populations. Rome: WFP, p. 1.

¹⁴³ WFP, 2019, Evaluation of Preschool Nutrition Pilot in Selected Counties of China: An Evaluation from baseline to Impact.

143. There were attempts to address gender issues through gender-sensitive design of project activities and gender-disaggregated data capture. For example, women are the main targeting group in the SBCC component in the Gansu project. They are expected to be the main participants in the planned cooking demonstration activities in the future, featuring the cooking of zinc-enriched potatoes and the preparation of healthy meals. The participation of women in these activities is recorded. While this could be considered as reinforcing traditional gender roles, it does enhance the knowledge and engagement of women beyond just basic cooking duties.

144. In the Hunan project, women are the main beneficiary of an income-increasing activity by providing home-grown food for kindergartens and employment in the kitchen of kindergartens. For the kiwi project, in 2019, four training sessions aiming to improve women's skills were held throughout the year (210 women participated). Kiwi fruit thinning, bagging and fruit-picking skills competitions were organized for poor women, which was stated to raise their status in the community and encourage participation in other activities. In the first quarter of 2020, the winter pruning technology training (women's capacity improvement training) was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To support a more comprehensive gender approach, the Centre of Excellence has mobilized diversified experts, including a gender empowerment expert. Women participants accounted for 19.5 percent of all participants in the Centre of Excellence events. This is a positive initial result since most of these events were international. The Centre of Excellence invitations encouraged the participation of women. South-South cooperation topics are perceived in partner countries as especially gender sensitive: in the country survey, five out of six respondents to this question state they are highly relevant for women, implying that five out of ten felt that it was less relevant. The WFP China country office has encouraged attention to women in WFP county offices' applications to the SSCAF.

145. **More could be done to mainstream gender in a more integrated way**, going beyond simply counting the number of women among beneficiaries, by analysing the roles of and opportunities for women and the impact of project activities on them, beyond just reporting on the number of women trained. This is not just about equality, but about straightforward pragmatism. For example, in nutrition improvement projects, the role of women and their social status is important in determining their children's nutritional health.

2.2.3 To what extent is the country strategic plan adding value to existing activities, and are its achievements likely to be sustainable?

146. **The Government of China shows ownership of the country strategic plan objectives largely because they are compatible with the memorandum of understanding, which is the primary mechanism of WFP-Government of China engagement.** WFP China country office operations are reliant on funding from the Government and the leveraged private-sector funding. Consequently, the activities are designed and implemented with direct involvement of the respective Chinese stakeholders. This demonstrates strong alignment and commitment, which is positive for ongoing support, but provides WFP China country office with little flexibility as it requires to tie operations closely to available funds.

147. **Positive aspects of sustainability of WFP activities include capacity and knowledge building and an emphasis on behaviour change.** Education forms a strong basis of several strategic outcomes of the country strategic plan. For example, the delivery of nutrition education through the preschool nutrition project is contributing to thinking shifts related to child nutrition and the learning events delivered by the Centre of Excellence are popular and appreciated. The approach adopted by the zinc-enriched potatoes project for sustainable behaviour change of farmers towards the practices required for micronutrient uptake, and in the community towards purchase of zinc-enriched potatoes was based on demonstrable results. A clear handover plan to national stakeholders is yet to be prepared for the domestic projects, therefore sustainability is not yet ensured despite good intentions from both WFP and local governments. This indicates that government capacity building, particularly at the provincial level should constitute a larger portion of WFP domestic projects.

148. **The sustainability of project achievements varies by context and is not guaranteed even though all the projects have matching government funding in place.** In the Hunan school feeding project, government capacity to implement the WFP activities going forward is limited due to lack of available budget. Local governments are less likely to continue implementation without WFP support. The Jinzhai project is the project most likely to be sustained as kiwi fruit technology is already well advanced and the expected yields are likely to be attained, although the future sales are still uncertain.

2.2.4 To what extent did the country strategic plan facilitate more strategic linkages within the elements of the humanitarian action and development (dual) nexus?

149. **There has been limited scope to form strategic links between WFP development and humanitarian actions.** According to senior government stakeholders, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (the triple nexus) is not yet a familiar concept, yet WFP expertise in humanitarian work globally is highly respected. The majority of the China country strategic plan is development work, with only one activity for supporting emergency responses as required. The memorandum of understanding between WFP and the Government of China is primarily regarding SSTC and the focus is on rural transformation in general and nutrition and smallholder value chains specifically. Consequently, there has not been a strong focus on the nexus between humanitarian and development assistance.

150. **The main work on the humanitarian-development nexus has been regarding SO4 and SO5 and the support for the Global Humanitarian Hub, which was not part of the original country strategic plan design.** In the domestic context, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is not a familiar concept, primarily due to the self-resilience approach in China and the internal capacity to respond to any humanitarian requirements. The activities regarding the Global Humanitarian Hub are therefore managed through WFP headquarters and hence at present not directly facilitated or reported under the country strategic plan.

151. **The positioning of the Centre of Excellence work has largely been on poverty reduction and nutrition initiatives rather than on humanitarian support.** However, there were several engagements of the China country office in webinars and events on emergency response methodologies and the feedback from government stakeholders is that there is potential to expand this area of engagement.

2.3 EQ3: TO WHAT EXTENT HAS WFP USED ITS RESOURCES EFFICIENTLY IN CONTRIBUTING TO COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN OUTPUTS AND STRATEGIC OUTCOMES?

2.3.1 To what extent were outputs delivered within the intended timeframe?

152. **The outputs generated through the country strategic plan implementation were delivered efficiently in terms of the intended timeframe.** The country strategic plan implementation was the first stage of a strategic engagement with China. Time was invested in the early stages of the country strategic plan to forge and strengthen operational relationships and prepare for on-ground implementation. The commencement of the domestic programme has occurred gradually and sequentially, but operational timeframes, once established, were adhered to. Resources were used in line with intended budgets and there is no evidence of any inefficiency.

153. **Under SO4, the Centre of Excellence rapidly analysed demand from other countries and set up a network of experts.** Learning events started in 2017 and have steadily grown every year. Although there were delays in identifying a stable funding source for SSTC activities, the Centre of Excellence has participated in the first group of WFP SSTC demonstration projects that were started in 2018. Interviews indicated that the delay in starting the Demonstrations in Africa (Asia) for Africans (Asians) activity was largely due to the need to align funding procedures among WFP, CICETE and CIDCA.

154. **The WFP relationship with CIDCA and CICETE is critical but its operationalization and formalization have taken time to mature.** Evaluation interviews with WFP headquarters suggest that WFP has managed the relationship with CIDCA and the connections with the Alibaba Group as long-term strategic investments, with no expectation of immediate, short-term returns in terms of financial contribution. As of the end of 2020, the formal agreement with CIDCA was being prepared. Activities have progressed even without a formal agreement, but the progress has been slow due to the need to align procedures. CIDCA published draft measures in 2018 and has announced a requirement for a high degree of audit compliance, whereas WFP is more accustomed to working with framework agreements and the use of United Nations credibility rather than the level of detail required by CICETE and CIDCA.¹⁴⁴ Of the proposals submitted in 2018, four have progressed through the shortlisting process. Two projects were

¹⁴⁴ CIDCA 2018, Draft Measures for the Administration of Foreign Aid, issued 13 November 2018. CICETE has new rules on programming and budgeting, for development projects that require a high degree of legal, financial, programming, and reporting details.

signed (approved) in September 2020. Seven projects are still under review as of March 2021. CICETE meeting minutes explained how the application was not adequately aligned with CICETE requirements.¹⁴⁵ During the final evaluation workshops, the China country office confirmed that workshops with CIDCA had been planned to explore in more detail how the partnership can be facilitated. The allocated funding as per the activity database was USD 2 million for each of the two approved projects.

155. **The due diligence process for WFP before formalizing a partnership with a private partner is lengthy. This has sometimes affected engagement.** Stakeholder interviews indicated that the time required to complete the due diligence process for WFP was prohibitive in terms of level of effort and time required compared to other corporate social responsibility opportunities. Several technology companies have declined to become a formal partner when the manager in charge changed before the due diligence was completed. At the same time, key government and WFP stakeholders noted the importance of due diligence as an important risk-management process to protect the credibility of WFP in China. The activity database indicates that WFP and the Alibaba Group have first engaged in service provision agreements, before moving on to prepare a formal partnership agreement. As of December 2020, a partnership agreement between the Alibaba Group and WFP was being finalized.

2.3.2 To what extent were coverage and targeting of interventions under each strategic outcome appropriate?

156. **For the domestic projects, the small scale, project-level nature of country strategic plan interventions means that upscaling of successful projects through national resources is critical to achieving the scale of impact projected in the country strategic plan.** While there are examples of scale-up, such as the expansion of the school feeding programme from Hunan Province to Guangxi Province, these are isolated and still small-scale projects compared with many other WFP country offices. The project has not yet been scaled up in any of the five identified provinces in the country strategic plan. This seems to be largely due to the early stage of development and the lack of local government resources in financial and human terms for scaling up. While the country office is clear that scaling up the pilot activities is the long-term plan, there was no clear evidence that scale-up is expected to occur in the near future, and clearly not within the period of the country strategic plan as originally intended. Informants believe the domestic pilot projects could be more effectively utilized as demonstration projects, promoting technologies and systems to be transferred to other local areas. This would provide opportunities for a catalytic effect, however there is not yet sufficient evidence that this is occurring.

157. **The Centre of Excellence activities under SO4 are still at an early stage and have substantial potential to increase coverage.** The initial Centre of Excellence activities were successful but are at this stage exploratory. The reliance on a demand-driven approach is positive. The survey indicates qualitatively that there is more potential to offer a standard menu of capacity building support as well as the customized projects. This has potential to increase the coverage and impact. A range of internet platforms for public fundraising were successfully mobilized. This contrasts with the pre-country strategic plan period during which WFP China country office only mobilized one major technology company for online donations, and for international projects only. A relevant question to ask is: why maximize the number of participating enterprises instead of selecting a small number of more strategic partners and optimizing the number of donation days with them? The big data market, which is an important part of the corporate value of fundraising for technology enterprises, calls for maximizing the number of fundraising platforms and pooling data. WFP China country office is aware of that issue and is currently engaged in redesigning its approach to private donors. The WFP division in charge of data governance is reviewing the implications of this big data market.

Effectiveness of targeting

158. **Targeting smallholder farmers through the value chain interventions has been effective.** The WFP approach to targeting has been guided through China's targeting of poverty counties, and areas where needs assessments were carried out. The partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs as the lead ministry for implementation led to the identification of appropriate crops for smallholder support to improve local nutrition and reduce vulnerability. Consultation with local government was used in the

¹⁴⁵ The institutional relationship between CICETE and CIDCA was a context element which added to the challenges of defining operational procedures. Since 2018, CIDCA is an agency directly under the State Council (2021 White Paper on International Development Cooperation).

identification of vulnerable participant farmers below the national poverty line to ensure effective targeting. Other considerations in the selection of participating farmers included the farmers' level of knowledge relating to kiwi cultivation and the willingness of farmers to transform their land into kiwi orchards.

2.3.3 To what extent were WFP activities agile and cost-efficient in delivery of the country strategic plan activities?

159. **Chinese experts are mobilized during the implementation of WFP projects while project design is carried out by partner WFP country offices.** This is an "agile" approach compared to a more traditional approach starting from formulation missions by Chinese experts, which is still used by FAO and IFAD. This approach is appropriate when the identified need is simply affordable technology from China, as was the case for the cassava processing project. However, the SSTC experts interviewed have highlighted the need for more interaction between Chinese experts and those at the field level in beneficiary countries, which probably contributed to the expectation of more adaptation to the country context, a point which was reflected in the online survey.

160. **The cost-effectiveness of the country strategic plan in mobilizing online fundraising platforms is questionable.** The representatives of information technology companies that WFP has engaged with in fundraising campaign efforts observed that WFP mobilization of fewer information technology platforms for a higher number of days would have been a more cost-effective fundraising approach. This approach, combined with the targeting of different categories of consumers on a small number of platforms, would likely have generated a higher financial contribution for the WFP international school feeding programmes and reduced the workload of WFP China country office staff as noted in the 2020 Organizational Alignment Review. Yet, WFP mobilized multiple internet platforms for only one or a few days every year. Overall, the additional funds raised through internet platforms was valuable and sufficient to complement the corporate donation of funds to cover the required budget for the pilot projects.

Cost benefit analysis has not been given particular attention, and tools such as a value for money analysis have not been used as foreseen. The evaluation was unable to find any assessments of overall cost efficiency. Cost accounting of the preschool nutrition improvement project in Xiangxi (Hunan) was well carried out, and the expenditure during the operation of the project was tracked in detail. Some points in the local implementation process are worthy of more attention, such as better recording of management costs.

2.3.4 To what extent were alternative, more cost effective, intervention modes or working methods considered?

161. **A strong shift to digital solutions was initiated in 2020.** Under SO4, the shift to e-learning, initiated in 2020 and expected to continue and expand from webinars to massive open online courses (MOOCs), is an important means to increase cost effectiveness, both by reducing travel costs and increasing the audience reached and the diversity of contributors, as mentioned in interviews and confirmed in the activity database.

162. **Alternatives to individual small applications to the SCAF have started to be considered.** WFP country office applications are for small amounts of funding from CIDCA. In contrast CIDCA has strict regulations to manage the project cycle, from appraisal to auditing. Auditing individual small projects generates high costs. Finding ways to make the process timely and more cost efficient has not yet been resolved. High quality proposals are required, with well-defined target areas and numbers of beneficiaries, and no flexibility in implementation is expected. As of the end of 2020, according to interviews, a framework financing agreement was under discussion to develop a programmatic approach, allowing access of WFP to the SCAF, and minimizing project management costs.

163. **The China country office has participated in a large range of forums and events that provide a valuable and cost effective means of supporting capacity strengthening activities and an avenue for broader engagement for future activities.** The Centre of Excellence, which is facilitating this participation, lists 50 events attended during the 2017-2020 period, ranging from exhibitions and forums in China's agricultural sector to international conferences. The activity database shows that all of these events were at policy level. Almost all of them (46) related to food nutrition and hunger. Interviews with all

stakeholder groups indicated that the WFP China country office is a sought-after resource for presentations and expertise. Continued engagement in these events is warranted for ongoing partnerships and knowledge sharing. Country stakeholders provided examples of where the knowledge that WFP provided contributed towards direct results including learning from the WFP approach to gender in rural communities, WFP fundraising activities for SDG 2 and WFP methods to support school feeding.

2.4 EQ4: WHAT ARE THE FACTORS THAT EXPLAIN WFP PERFORMANCE AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT HAS MADE THE STRATEGIC SHIFT EXPECTED BY THE COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN?

2.4.1 To what extent did WFP analyse or use existing or new evidence on the hunger challenges and the food security and nutrition issues in China to develop and implement the country strategic plan?

164. **The results of the 2016 "Zero Hunger" study¹⁴⁶ were used in the formulation of the country strategic plan and provided substantial baseline data for the establishment of the preschool feeding projects.** The work carried out by WFP and partners in preparing the Zero Hunger study provided new evidence on the hunger challenges, particularly in China's poverty counties.¹⁴⁷ The country strategic plan provided a mechanism for WFP and the Government to explore ways to make nutrition a joint priority.

165. **The specific China country office activities during country strategic plan implementation have included elements of capacity needs assessment.** The SSTC activities have included surveys and interviews with other country office representatives to assess demand for certain activities. Each of the pilot projects have incorporated needs assessment as part of the design and included gender analysis and consultation with local stakeholders. What is less clear is how the capacity development needs and capacity development support is being documented to assist in the expected replication and scale-up of activities.

2.4.2 To what extent has WFP been able to mobilize adequate, predictable and flexible resources to finance the China country strategic plan? How has the country strategic plan been used to assist in mobilizing finances for WFP activities outside China?

166. **By the end of November 2020, the China country strategic plan was 54 percent funded against the needs-based plan.**¹⁴⁸ WFP has effectively mobilized funds from a variety of partners but in many cases, these are single agreements with potential for, but no security of, continuing finance flows. Resources are low for the interventions initially planned under SO3. WFP China country office does not have predictable funding for all of its activities. This creates uncertainty in planning and does affect the scope of operations and longer-term planning.

167. The country strategic plan budget presented financial requirements based on a needs-based plan across the five strategic outcomes. The leverage of funding for activities was shown in Figure 8. The funding raised is tied to specific initiatives. Consequently, the WFP project portfolio regarding the country strategic plan is heavily dependent on the funding available. For WFP support costs, funding has been allocated and expended as shown in Table 12. This shows that where funds are available, they were well utilized. However, the level of resources between strategic outcomes varies, particularly for SO3, which was still noted by stakeholders as an important priority, but of necessity received less attention early in country strategic plan implementation due to a lack of specific interventions and associated resources. This could lead to challenges in mobilizing resources for longer term development interventions and certain imbalances in the next China country strategic plan. Should this funding gap continue, WFP might miss opportunities to engage in the longer term with China in areas where it has had a comparative advantage, such as in disaster management under SO3.

¹⁴⁶ China's Food Security and Nutrition under Rapid Transformation: Enhanced Partnership with WFP, February 2015 rev. Draft International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Chinese Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), and WFP.

¹⁴⁷ China's Food Security and Nutrition under Rapid Transformation: Enhanced Partnership with WFP, February 2015 rev. Draft International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Chinese Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), and WFP.

¹⁴⁸ World Food Programme, 2019, China Annual Country Report 2019.

Table 12: China country strategic plan budget cumulative financial overview (1-1-2017 to 1-12-2020)

Strategic Outcome		CSP Budget (USD)	Commitments (USD)	Expenditures (USD)	Available Budget (USD)	% Utilized Budget
SO1	Malnutrition	\$1,681,820	\$45,725	\$1,438,901	\$197,194	83%
SO2	Livelihoods for small holders enhanced	\$2,956,232	\$469,114	\$1,699,528	\$787,590	50%
SO3	Withstand and respond to shocks	\$944,977	\$126,097	\$808,977	\$9,904	76%
SO4	SSTC	\$2,579,922	\$138,800	\$2,057,767	\$383,255	76%
SO5	Increased resources	\$1,384,000	\$25,697	\$1,279,995	\$78,308	91%
	Non-SO specific	\$6,070,917	\$38,209	\$1,511,252	\$4,521,244	25%
Grand Total		15,617,868	843,642	8,796,420	5,977,495	53%

Source: WFP the FACTory (data updated on 10.12.2020)

168. **The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, as agreed under the memorandum of understanding, has provided stable annual funding to WFP** of CNY 1 million (around USD 144,000) to WFP China country office for its operational costs. Financial support for country offices is flexible, earmarked at WFP country level. WFP and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs have worked together to retain this allocation in 2020 despite the COVID-19 crisis context. Allocation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs envelope to Centre of Excellence activities is tied to specific initiatives. Other activities such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs' junior professional officer (JPO) programme in WFP takes place on an ad hoc basis. The contributions from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs to SSTC allow financing for the appointment of Chinese experts, hired through organizations under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, to engage in SSTC activities as approved by the ministry. In this respect, the resources are applied in positive collaboration, but the reality is that funding is tied to the initiatives that are approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, leaving the country strategic plan implementation with little opportunity for flexibility and responsiveness to other identified needs.

169. **Substantial efforts were made to organize WFP access to China's SSCAF under CIDCA management, with limited success.** During the country strategic plan, efforts have focused on the operational management of emergency China aid channelled through CIDCA. Emergency aid was delivered every year, with WFP facilitation. In 2020, the WFP-CIDCA dialogue has been centred on the question of the percentage of food in emergency aid. The dialogue between WFP and CIDCA through the country strategic plan may have contributed to a shift in China's food aid from in-kind (rice shipped from China) to cash donations to WFP, as indicated by CSPE interviews and confirmed in the activity database. Another contributing factor to this shift is the increased cost of rice in China's markets.

170. WFP is in the process of producing guidelines to help its country offices apply for China aid. During evaluation interviews CIDCA expressed a strong preference for project-based financing, not flexible financing, especially for development work. There is not yet a common understanding and approach on what types of projects are consistent both with China aid regulations and with WFP priorities and procedures. This will require strategic and ongoing dialogue with both CIDCA and WFP. The evaluation survey respondents indicated a demand for more agile, clearer procedures: out of 13 respondents, only 3 perceive China aid to be available for emergency needs (which is actually incorporated in the SSCAF as an option). CIDCA states that programmes supported have included food safety, post-disaster reconstruction, refugee relief, medical treatment and public health, maternal and child health, poverty alleviation, education and training, and trade and investment facilitation, and have benefitted about 5 million people in developing countries.¹⁴⁹ However, only three country office respondents stated that application procedures are clear.

171. **The country strategic plan implementation period has seen a gradual expansion in the way WFP interacts with government agencies other than the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.** Initially, the country strategic plan was designed in close collaboration with the then Ministry of Agriculture, which was a WFP partner both in Rome and in Beijing. The Ministry of Commerce was not directly involved. Over the course of the country strategic plan, WFP senior managers directly engaged with CIDCA and WFP to overcome difficulties in SSCAF access modalities. At the end of the country strategic plan, during

¹⁴⁹ http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2018-08/20/c_264437.htm

the evaluation, there were proposals for the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and CIDCA to communicate directly in order to help resolve these difficulties.

172. **China's Ministry of Finance has maintained a flexible grant system to fund small rural infrastructure and training in targeted countries.** During the country strategic plan period, one project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has mobilized food aid for targeted interventions in poorer areas, funding small rural infrastructure. CICETE has expressed strongly positive views on this project, which has delivered target results, with quantifiable outputs. This approach does not appear to be mobilized in other country office proposals. In the long period of WFP presence in China since 2005, WFP aid has been consistently directed to funding small rural infrastructure and training, first providing in-kind food aid (food assistance for work), then cash assistance for work, and later grants to local governments. This is still remembered by some stakeholders during the evaluation and seen as a potential learning area for further discussion.

173. **Future coordination needs with the Ministry of Emergency Management through the humanitarian hub and through the National Disaster Reduction Centre of China (NDRCC) on practical matters of humanitarian work and disaster risk reduction are at an early stage but require careful and well-coordinated management.** The growing relationship and the high potential of these initiatives will unfold during the coming country strategic plan but will require careful management both in headquarters and in-country to maintain the WFP credibility and coherent approach in the country. In this respect, there needs to be a clear articulation of working roles and responsibilities within WFP so that these are presented in a clear manner to Chinese counterparts.

2.4.3. To what extent did the country strategic plan lead to various types of partnerships and collaborations with other actors that positively influenced performance and results?

174. **WFP China country office is uniquely positioned to the specific context of China and has heavily engaged in development of partnerships and collaborations.** Under the country strategic plan, WFP China country office had separate staff and activities, respectively in charge of government partnerships and private partnerships. The 2020 Organizational Alignment Review of the country office found that one officer overseeing all partnership activities could increase cohesion and effectiveness of partnership activities. Allocation of specific resources to enhance government partnerships was aligned with the creation of CIDCA. However, alignment of expectations from WFP and CIDCA relating to the scope and format of applications to the SSCAF could be improved. The Rome-based agencies were effectively sharing knowledge, the outcomes of which are still unclear. Their collaboration is an option to be explored for bridging the Centre of Excellence's budget gap. WFP is planning to work jointly with IFAD on the two upcoming SSTC country pilot projects, allowing the Centre of Excellence to mobilize the IFAD SSTC fund.

175. **The country strategic plan has led to the establishment of a broad range of effective partnerships.** WFP, since 2016, has established new cooperation, as explained under EQ2, with other United Nations agencies, national ministries, private-sector organizations, non-governmental agencies, and research institutions, demonstrating the importance of a country presence for WFP. The preparation of the country strategic plan in consultation with relevant stakeholders helped to forge and strengthen relationships that have been of value during implementation. The country strategic plan was a successful tool to develop partnerships with China's technology sector. The development by WFP of a global partnership with the Alibaba Group was facilitated through WFP China country office and the Alibaba Group's corporate social responsibility office. The inclusion in the country strategic plan of a pilot project in line with the Alibaba Group's corporate strategy in value chains was a successful entry point.

176. **This stable partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and WFP builds on a long history of collaboration.** Smooth communications are taking place in Rome (where the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs has an office) and Beijing. Some WFP senior officers are previous managers from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. The country strategic plan allows joint articulation of the domestic programme between WFP and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. An important next step will be to set up improved joint monitoring of the other pillars of the country strategic plan, for example, as suggested through stakeholder feedback during the evaluation, improved field reporting and annual review meetings and specific field visits. These activities already occur to some extent but there is interest in strengthening the approaches to be more evidence-based.

177. **CSPE interviews with partners highlighted the importance of nutrition, poverty reduction and emergency management innovation.** The zinc-enriched potato project funded by Teck Resources is part of a global innovative programme for the micronutrient fortification of various staple foods. Producing results-based evidence, through the pilot projects and at a larger scale, has significant global interest for knowledge sharing and finding global solutions to improve child nutrition, address hunger and increase resilience.

2.4.4. To what extent did the country strategic plan provide greater flexibility in the dynamic operational context and how did it affect results?

178. **The context was dynamic during the process of country strategic plan implementation but there were no major shifts in the context that necessitated significant changes in direction.** The preparation of the country strategic plan included engagement with stakeholders and deep consideration of the context at the time of its design. While the country strategic plan document in its own right has little bearing on the flexibility of the programme, the effort made to prepare the country strategic plan in partnerships with relevant stakeholders helped to forge and strengthen relationships that were of value during its implementation.

179. **Communications were a significant challenge in the implementation of the country strategic plan.** Much time in WFP China country office is devoted to translating written documents between English and Chinese. Translation is both time-consuming and expensive. Clarity in translation is a continuing issue as WFP key concepts cannot always be translated in a clear manner. Translation therefore requires dual expertise with both languages and familiarity with WFP terms and concepts. For example, in the Zimbabwe project concept note, “affordable and applicable technology” is translated as “applicable technology”. This, and other examples, have reduced the extent to which project proposals are convincing after translation. Further, the English and Chinese versions of global WFP websites provide different lists of public and private partners and donors and were not updated during the course of the evaluation.

180. **The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the implementation of the activities for several months as restrictions on movement and meetings were responded to.** The COVID-19 crisis had an initial impact on implementation of the country strategic plan. Delayed activities include the finalization of a revised memorandum of understanding with CIDCA; and dispatching experts for the SSTC country pilot projects. Both the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and CIDCA redirected budget resources to contribute to the COVID-19 effort within China and to support the establishment of the Guangzhou hub.¹⁵⁰ the contribution from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs to WFP remained unchanged.¹⁵¹ One main effect was to create a shift in working arrangements to online mode. This has been effectively managed and has resulted in a series of online trainings and workshops, in cooperation with the Centre of Excellence experts and several Chinese ministries. Feedback from stakeholders is that these were conducted well and that WFP has been able to continue operations. The Centre of Excellence’s first webinars took place in 2020 because of the crisis, but this may have accelerated a trend of change in the demand for Chinese expertise, from expert missions to a mix of missions and other modes of access to Chinese solutions. A “cloud school” approach is proposed in connection with WFP partners in China’s technology sector. This would allow the delivery of MOOCs, prepared with a professional service provider, virtual tours of Chinese experience, and potentially other information technology-based innovations.

181. **The establishment of the Global Humanitarian Hub with other United Nations partners and the Government of China has created an added dimension to the work of WFP China country office and to the relationships with United Nations partners and within the Government of China.** While much of the work is driven from WFP headquarters, there is still substantial engagement of WFP China country office on operational matters. The hub mobilized one staff member in addition to headquarters staff from the supply chain division. CIDCA and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs redirected part of their support to the establishment of the hub as a liaison function given that WFP China country office does not have permanent staff from WFP Supply Chain Operations (SCO) Division, as shown in the activity

¹⁵⁰ From interviews and the activity database.

¹⁵¹ Contribution confirmed to be USD 4 million by China CO team

database. This raises the question of how WFP China country office should be more fully engaged in the process if WFP participation in China's long-term humanitarian hub is confirmed.¹⁵²

2.4.5. What are the other factors that can explain WFP performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected by the country strategic plan?

182. **The architecture of the country strategic plan was aligned with China's efforts to develop results-based management but the definition of the strategic outcomes and the chain of expected results lacked clarity to fulfil this role.** The objectives and outcomes outlined under SO4 contribute to a broad goal of enhancing food security and nutrition but are otherwise relatively vague. For example, the outcome of the Centre of Excellence to "assist selected developing countries" did not provide adequate direction for activities since it did not state the expected outcome. The Centre of Excellence would have benefitted from a clearer purpose for assistance, beyond "to promote South-South cooperation, so that other countries can learn from China's experiences."¹⁵³ Similarly, the phrasing of SO5 was vague without a clearly defined purpose for partnerships.

183. **The level and expertise of staff within WFP China country office were a major asset but there are gaps to be filled.** The feedback on the professional approach being taken and the high quality of communication and implementation of activities was uniformly praised. Yet, as mentioned earlier, the anecdotal feedback, particularly from senior stakeholders is that there is still much potential to extend WFP-China cooperation in areas of mutual benefit in seeking to identify solutions to hunger and food systems, transferring knowledge to countries that need support through SSTC and in fundraising for priority activities. As recommended in the 2020 WFP Organizational Alignment Review, regular workforce planning should be undertaken to identify these opportunities. The WFP China country office could be strengthened with high-level expertise in policy engagement, media, promotion and communications, nutrition and food systems, gender, emergency management and monitoring and evaluation. It is possible that such expertise could be supplemented to support current staff through external contracting, apart from integral management such as monitoring and evaluation or senior functions such as a policy-based role as also recommended in the 2020 Organizational Alignment Review.

184. **The country strategic plan's focus on capacity strengthening is weakened by a lack of clear indicators and targets to monitor progress.** The country strategic plan notes that the approach to its implementation is through capacity strengthening. At the field level, capacity strengthening has been effective for beneficiaries: teachers and smallholder farmers reported being able to use their new knowledge. Knowledge transfer is less evident for the Government and other institutions. There is potential for upscaling but at present this is not occurring and indeed activities are being implemented at a lower scale than envisioned at design, hindering the sustainability of activities and benefits. There are isolated positive signs such as phase II of the Nutrition Improvement Project in Hunan that is under consideration.

185. **The contribution of the country strategic plan to the WFP strategic plan has relied on effective strategic and operational relationships in China and with other partner-WFP country offices.** WFP interviewees and minutes of meetings repeatedly stated how CIDCA and WFP need to strengthen respective strategic relationships with other government donors. WFP, through its headquarters and China country office, could have exchanged more information on existing procedures in the Government's system and in WFP, and could have done so earlier. WFP has successfully developed attention within its network of country offices to the strong connections between CIDCA and China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Country offices are encouraged to communicate with the local Chinese embassy, the Public-Private Partnership Division maintains a close connection with the Chinese embassy in Rome, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs has successfully tested positioning a junior professional officer at regional level in East Africa.

¹⁵² "WFP Organizational Alignment Review, China CO July 2020 "The opportunity to establish a Humanitarian Logistics Hub in China as part of UNHRD, responding to medical evacuation requests, and setting up bilateral supply chain services with the National Health Commission; has great opportunities to WFP to reduce supply chain costs." "There is a need to clarify with UNHRD on the Humanitarian Logistics Hub operating modality in China –would it be an independent office structure or a structure relying on admin support from China CO. If the choice is to rely on support from China office, then there is a need to understand the size of the hub and assess the workload for staffing requirements."

¹⁵³ World Food Programme, 2020, Centre of Excellence in China, <https://www.wfp.org/centre-of-excellence-in-china>

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1. OVERALL ASSESSMENT

186. **Through the China Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021), WFP has established and strengthened three pillars in its relationship with China.** Pillar 1 supports China's efforts in pursuing its Sustainable Development Goal objectives regarding nutrition and rural development. Domestic projects provide an opportunity to work with China on innovative approaches to improve nutrition of preschool children and to address rural vulnerability in targeted areas. While these activities have not been as extensive in terms of direct benefits as targeted in the country strategic plan, they have provided a positive and credible profile for WFP in China that underpins other joint activities in SSTC and fundraising. Under Pillar 2, WFP has found new ways of working with China in SSTC through the Centre of Excellence. During the period of country strategic plan implementation, WFP has assisted China in SSTC activities through other WFP country offices and other Centre of Excellence activities. Pillar 3 has been a mutual learning experience between WFP and China for establishing different fundraising channels and approaches. Overall, the three pillars have combined to successfully build an extensive network of partners and build mutual systems. During the next country strategic plan period, WFP can build on the solid foundation that it has created, including advancing its approach to capacity strengthening and capitalizing further on the organization's core areas of expertise.

187. The country office is growing as each of the pillars evolve and require different expertise. The direct reporting relationship of China country office to headquarters rather than to a WFP regional bureau brings advantages in that there is a direct strategic link, but disadvantages in that there is less support to operational and human resource procedures and technical expertise to which other country offices have access.

EQ1 – TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE WFP STRATEGIC POSITION, ROLE AND SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTION BASED ON COUNTRY PRIORITIES AND APPROPRIATELY ALIGNED TO PEOPLE'S NEEDS AS WELL AS WFP STRENGTHS?

188. **WFP has a positive but still evolving position within China with the potential to achieve more.** The WFP profile in China is still relatively low but has demonstrated potential for strong engagement with China through the country strategic plan. The historical goodwill that WFP has in China as a result of previous direct implementation (i.e. food assistance for work activities), is a critical success factor in its credibility.

189. The memorandum of understanding between WFP and China captures the collegial nature of the partnership, where each partner brings benefit to the other. Sharing of knowledge and experience is captured through the SSTC activities. Evaluation interviews provided positive feedback on WFP expertise and mode of engagement, particularly the balance and linkages between domestic and international programming. The feedback from stakeholders was that the domestic programme brings strategic advantages with national fundraising initiatives and practical demonstrations to complement SSC activities.

190. The WFP niche and its added value is consistently perceived by Chinese stakeholders to be in nutrition-related food systems innovations (in support of the National Nutrition Plan and Guidelines), and in disaster risk reduction and resilience, as demonstrated through the COVID-19 response hub. However, the focus for the country strategic plan has been on developing operational solutions to the strategic outcomes rather than on considering how the lessons being learned from operations feed into policy discussions with China on technical innovation, SSTC and wider development issues. At the same time, the potential for fundraising with China in the public and private sectors has progressed. Valuable experience is being gained on how WFP can work effectively with China on joint funding of relevant initiatives in SSTC. The joint domestic activities provide a demonstration effect of WFP and its expertise, and signal its commitment to working in partnership.

191. **WFP can capitalize on its international and domestic credibility and contribute more to strategic policy processes in nutrition-related areas and emergency response.** The WFP Communications Unit has been active in raising the profile of WFP, but greater engagement has the

potential to leverage knowledge for more transformational results. Results achieved to date are positive but were constricted by the incomplete range of staff positions engaging on the China country strategic plan. WFP contributions at high profile events, workshops and policy discussions are valued. WFP personnel are fully occupied with operations and engagement with current stakeholders, both international and domestic. This leaves insufficient time and resources for strategic review and fine-tuned strategic engagement. As such, the Organizational Alignment Review conducted in 2020 recommended restructuring the country office's human resources to address these constraints.

192. Overall, the evaluation finds the country strategic plan relevant and well aligned to a wide range of China's policies, plans, strategies and goals, including achievement of the national Sustainable Development Goals, but with a need to maintain a focus on its core capacities, while expanding partnerships where it has less expertise.

EQ2 – WHAT IS THE EXTENT AND QUALITY OF THE SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTION OF WFP TO COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN STRATEGIC OUTCOMES IN CHINA?

193. **WFP support has progressed towards country strategic plan aims but work is still at an early stage as the Centre of Excellence's profile is still growing. Domestic projects have the potential to generate experience and share good practice with South countries, but the monitoring and learning aspects are underexplored and dissemination opportunities are not yet fully exploited.** Domestic projects are appreciated at the national level and have a large potential to generate experiences and share good practices with South countries. There is demand by local stakeholders for WFP to share emerging information on processes and outcomes. This demand is already being partly met through the WFP communications activities, but the appreciation of these activities and the demand expressed by stakeholders point to the need to enhance these activities.

194. Meaningful lessons and data from pilot initiatives are underexplored and currently constrained by limited human and budget resources. WFP study and advocacy efforts have helped raise the policy profile of health and nutrition, for example, through events and information dissemination, but insufficient documentation of these efforts hinders opportunities for broader learning. There is an interest from stakeholders for WFP to take a more evidence-based approach to its offerings for future funding. This relates to funding partners that wish to gain regular updates on performance at the operational level, and progress towards outcomes. This was raised by other stakeholders that are interested in the work that WFP carries out and are interested in learning more of how WFP achieves its results. There are also partners that already see the value of WFP work and are interested in assisting with learning and disseminating knowledge to their specific audiences. There is potential for strengthening knowledge and sharing experience with other countries.

195. The country strategic plan results framework should include clear targets for outputs or outcomes, along with output and outcome indicators. Without these, it is difficult to assess results for each strategic outcome and consequently determine the outcome level achievements of the country strategic plan.

196. There was no explanation for the measurement of planned and actual beneficiaries. There is little attention to WFP processes for humanitarian principles and access, protection and accountability to affected populations where appropriate, although there are national processes that clearly focus on vulnerable populations. There is an opportunity for further constructive collaboration and dialogue on these points, particularly from the learning of the domestic pilot projects. Gender considerations are integrated in domestic projects and Centre of Excellence activities but more could be done to progress beyond quantitative aspects of gender balance towards substantive transformational action.

EQ3: TO WHAT EXTENT HAS WFP USED ITS RESOURCES EFFICIENTLY IN CONTRIBUTING TO COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN OUTPUTS AND STRATEGIC OUTCOMES?

197. **As a new country strategic plan, there were new challenges and requirements to align ways of working with government and other partners to achieve mutual understanding of, and agreement on, operational approaches.** The country strategic plan has attracted a large number of information technology companies, each with their own definition of how to establish positive relationships

but with limited financial returns to date. This requires time investment and a respectful approach to listening and understanding respective priorities and requirements. The China country office has only recently established regular contacts with various headquarters divisions but is not a part of the WFP regional communication and capacity building network. This requires either restructuring or more intensive relationship building in order to ensure a more functional approach to technical and administrative backstopping.

198. **The WFP-CIDCA project modalities are not yet mutually compatible. This has reduced the potential to leverage resources efficiently.** There is significant potential for positive engagement because overarching objectives are aligned. The China aid procedures require a high degree of detailed accountability that is different from the WFP standard procedures. This has slowed down approval and funding of projects. This created challenges for country offices that wished to seek China aid and submitted applications that were either delayed or not approved. Clearer information is required on how WFP and China aid procedures can be aligned. Due diligence processes are necessary but lengthy, often with different approaches by WFP and by the companies that require resolution. There is an interest in finding appropriate global solutions for hunger and improved food systems and solutions derived through blending the expertise of WFP and China have the potential to be many and varied.

199. **The country strategic plan's financial model for the Centre of Excellence remains to be confirmed. Donor partnerships are still under construction. There is a structural deficit of funding for the Centre of Excellence and other China country office projects.** Continuing commitment to joint priorities between WFP and the Government will be required to sustain alignment within the changing national context post-2020, where relative poverty and urban rural inequality will be more prominent. This will be particularly important in the design of the next country strategic plan to ensure alignment with the new China five-year plan. Relationships with partners are in the early stages, and WFP is still learning the appropriate ways of working with different partners (internal and external). This has resulted in some implementation delays as understanding and alignment is being developed. There is a gap between SSCAF focus and regulations and the large number of small projects submitted by WFP country offices.

200. **There has been little attention paid to analysing the cost-effectiveness of the country strategic plan activities.** Gradual progress has been made to address the gap between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the WFP partners in Rome, and CIDCA, which approves emergency aid and projects in Beijing. Yet there has been little analysis of the investments in each strategic outcome and the cost-effectiveness of each initiative. Over time, there is likely to be a stronger track record for the China country office that will enable better financial planning, but the current approach to the viability and feasibility of different options for operational approaches is not systematic.

EQ4 – WHAT ARE THE FACTORS THAT EXPLAIN WFP PERFORMANCE AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT HAS MADE THE STRATEGIC SHIFT EXPECTED BY THE COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN?

201. **WFP China country office has been effective in building relationships with different stakeholders, WFP headquarters, the Government of China, both the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and other ministries, partner WFP country offices, the private sector and the Chinese public.** These relationships all require careful stakeholder management, a role largely performed well by WFP China country office, to ensure that relationships result in mutual understanding and benefit. The role of WFP China country office in brokering solutions to national, bilateral and global solutions is unique. The gradual increase in staff allows WFP China country office to engage on a range of important topics, at both an operational and a strategic level. Overall, the evaluation finds the country strategic plan to be coherent and aligned with the wider United Nations stakeholders in China, including several partnerships that are specifically based on the various perceived comparative advantages of WFP.

202. **The country strategic plan has resulted in the addition of a Domestic Programme Division and the creation of the Centre of Excellence.** When the country strategic plan was established, WFP China country office already had staff in charge of public and private partnerships. The country strategic plan has substantially contributed to the articulation of a long-term engagement for WFP in China and as such, investment in human resources is important to build and maintain relationships. At the end of this first country strategic plan, there is a need for creating positions for other WFP categories of staff

(programme staff, supply chain staff) to facilitate further development of the Centre of Excellence and interaction with China's new Humanitarian Hub.¹⁵⁴

203. **The Centre of Excellence addresses demand from other WFP partner countries for appropriate technology solutions from China. Opportunities for cross-visits and staff exchanges are seen as potential ways of working to strengthen and share capacity on different themes related to priority areas.** Another key area of interest is in cutting-edge approaches to practical concepts to address nutritional or food systems issues and the generation and applications of local innovations to generate appropriate solutions. The area of focus on e-commerce is of interest but not a priority demand.

204. **WFP approaches to humanitarian principles and access, protection and accountability to affected populations have not yet received significant attention, but opportunities are arising for deeper understanding.** The focus of demand from stakeholders strongly includes the more technical aspects of strengthening approaches to nutrition in resource-poor areas, to strengthening supply chains and practical solutions to improve food systems at the policy and applied level. This includes aspects of targeting of appropriate interventions to specific communities and conducting baseline surveys and designing appropriate consultation processes. The domestic projects provide an opportunity to engage with China on WFP approaches to support gender mainstreaming, transformation and other cross-cutting issues.

205. **In China, the WFP demand-driven platform and matching process is visible and appreciated.** This process differs from the two-way facilitation process that would enhance access of WFP country offices to China's experience of relevance to partner countries. There is an expectation for more adaptation of activities to country contexts. Online Centre of Excellence events are likely to be a long-term trend due to COVID-19. However, the Centre of Excellence's internet platform does not reflect the Centre of Excellence's demand-driven approach.

206. The recommendations arising from these conclusions are presented in the following table (see also Annex 19).

¹⁵⁴ See the Organizational Alignment Review conducted in 2020 for detailed HR recommendations.

3.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

	Recommendation	Type (strategic/operational)	Recommendation lead and supporting offices and divisions	Level of prioritization	Deadline for completion
1.	WFP should strengthen its strategic engagement with the Government of China on WFP and China's priorities and areas of expertise as entry points for maximizing the global impact of the WFP-China partnership.	Strategic	WFP China office and centre of excellence with support from the Strategic Partnerships Division (STR), the Public Partnerships and Resourcing Division (PPR), the Communications, Advocacy and Marketing Division (CAM), the Gender Office (GEN) and the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBB)	High	2021 as part of the new CSP
1.1	WFP should further pursue its domestic activities in China, maintaining attention on nutrition and the development of nutrition-related value chains but also sharpening collaboration in the area of disaster risk reduction and resilience.	Strategic	WFP China office and centre of excellence	High	2021
1.2	WFP should strengthen its capacity to engage more fully at the strategic level with China as a donor, promoting global policy dialogue and systems change in food security through a "practice to policy" feedback loop. For this, WFP should broaden the terms of reference of senior staff at headquarters and in the China office to include strategic partnership building with associated performance indicators.	Strategic	WFP China office with support from PPR and STR	Medium	2022
1.3	WFP should intensify efforts to raise its profile in China, especially by promoting its "niche" areas of expertise in nutrition, food systems and humanitarian emergency preparedness and response.	Strategic	WFP China office with support from CAM	Medium	2021-2026

	Recommendation	Type (strategic/operational)	Recommendation lead and supporting offices and divisions	Level of prioritization	Deadline for completion
1.4	WFP should strengthen commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women in all CSP strategic outcomes through dedicated staff with relevant expertise.	Strategic	WFP China office with support from GEN	Medium	2021–2026
2.	WFP should continue to identify effective ways of working with internal and external stakeholder groups.	Operational	WFP China office with support from STR, PPR, CAM, the Private Partnerships and Fundraising Division (PPF), other headquarters divisions and RBB	High	2021 as part of the new CSP
2.1	The WFP Strategic Partnerships Division should facilitate better access to technical capacity from a broad range of WFP divisions for China office staff, with improved frequency and ease of communication, both for the design of activities in the China CSP and to make expertise available to WFP partners in China.	Operational	STR with support from other headquarters divisions and RBB	High	2021–2026
2.2	The WFP China office should find ways to enhance communication in support of the CSP. It should improve targeted sharing of good practices and understanding of WFP global operations with China counterparts and should apply up-to-date approaches and bilingual tools with internal and external stakeholder groups.	Operational	WFP China office with support from CAM	Medium	2021
2.3	WFP should maintain an up-to-date stakeholder map of all WFP-China stakeholders. Based on the private-sector partnerships and fundraising strategy for 2020–2025, WFP should prepare a country partnership plan, identifying whether partners are strategic or technical partners or donors, with relevant stakeholder management, engagement and communication strategies.	Operational	WFP China office with support from STR, PPR and PPF	Medium	2022
2.4	WFP should continue to collaborate with the China International Centre for Economic and Technical Exchanges	Operational	WFP China office with support from STR and PPR	High	2021

	Recommendation	Type (strategic/operational)	Recommendation lead and supporting offices and divisions	Level of prioritization	Deadline for completion
	and CIDCA on identifying compatible processes that can be expedited, addressing bottlenecks and sharing information with partner WFP country offices with a view to improving the quality of proposals.				
3.	WFP should further strengthen processes in its domestic programme and the centre of excellence for capturing, sharing and communicating results and enhancing learning.	Operational	WFP China office with support from the Research, Assessment and Monitoring Division (RAM), the Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division (PRO), the Technology Division (TEC) and CAM	High	2021–2022
3.1	WFP should enhance the monitoring and evaluation of domestic and centre of excellence activities to promote the upscaling and sharing of experiences nationally and internationally.	Operational	WFP China office and centre of excellence with support from RAM	High	2021–2026
3.2	The WFP-China centre of excellence’s matching process should expand from delivery of solutions that work well in China to facilitation of two-way knowledge exchanges on good practices, with a flexible approach (online and face-to-face) across various capacity levels and thematic areas, responding to countries’ demand for appropriate and affordable innovations.	Operational	WFP China office and centre of excellence with support from PRO	Medium	2022–2026
3.3	WFP should consider further improvement of the China centre of excellence’s knowledge-sharing platform in order to respond to the demand of audiences and reflect the WFP approach to knowledge management in South–South and triangular cooperation and then link the platform to international web search engines for improved access.	Operational	WFP China office and centre of excellence with support from CAM and TEC	Medium	2021–2026
4.	WFP should develop a clear plan for securing China’s long-term contributions to WFP.	Strategic	WFP headquarters and China office	High	2021–2022

	Recommendation	Type (strategic/operational)	Recommendation lead and supporting offices and divisions	Level of prioritization	Deadline for completion
4.1	WFP should engage more intensively with the other Rome-based agencies in a joint South-South and triangular cooperation approach regarding China, in terms of both the financing model and the sharing of results.	Strategic	WFP headquarters and China office	Medium	2021-2026
4.2	WFP should consider promoting large-scale South-South and triangular cooperation programmes that are appropriate for financing by China and in line with China's international cooperation priorities. The potential in the long term for grant frameworks or multilateral approaches should be explored.	Strategic	WFP headquarters and China office	High	2022-2026
4.3	WFP should organize annual roundtables for programme reviews with each key government agency focusing on the agency's specific interests and scope of work. The roundtables would be thematic meetings that would be more focused on thematic opportunities and challenges than the multi-stakeholder annual retreats are.	Operational	WFP China office with support from PPR	Medium	2022-2026

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full
5YP	China's Five-Year Development Plan
AIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
CAAS	Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences
CDRF	China Development Research Foundation
CICETE	China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges
CIDCA	China International Development Cooperation Agency
CNY	Chinese Yuan
CO	Country Office (WFP)
CoE	Centre Of Excellence (WFP)
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CRF	Corporate Results Framework
CSAM	Center for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (ESCAP)
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
CSPE	Country Strategic Plan Evaluation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DARA	Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs
DSM	Dutch State Mines Corporation
ED	Executive Director (WFP)
EM	Evaluation Manager (WFP)
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FOCAC	China-Africa Cooperation Forum
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoC	Government of China
HQ	Headquarters (WFP)

Acronym	Full
IDRC	International Development Research Centre (Canada)
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFND	Institute of Food and Nutrition Development
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IPRCC	International Poverty Reduction Center of China
IRG	Internal Reference Group (WFP)
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MARA	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs
MEE	Ministry of Ecology and Environment
MEM	Ministry of Emergency Management
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NAFRA	National Food and Strategic Reserve Administration
NATESC	National Agricultural Technology Extension and Service Center
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
NDRCC	National Disaster Reduction Centre of China
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OEV	Office of Evaluation (WFP)
PMO	Project Management Office
PPF	Private Sector Partnership and Fundraising

Acronym	Full
PPR	Public-Private Partnerships Division (WFP)
RBA	Rome-Based Agency
RBB	Regional Bureau in Bangkok
RBM	Results-Based Management
SBCC	Social and Behaviour Change Communication
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SO	Strategic Outcome
SSC	South-South Cooperation
SSCAF	South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund
SSTC	South-South and Triangular Cooperation
STR	Strategic Partnerships Division (WFP)
TA	Technical Assistance
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
USD	United States Dollar
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

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