



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES  
CHANGING LIVES

# Evaluation of State of Palestine WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018-2022

## CONTEXT

The State of Palestine is a lower-middle-income country with low rates of severe multidimensional poverty. The coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic and a sharp reduction in the government's financial resources in 2020 led to a sharp increase in the severity of humanitarian needs. Food insecurity remains high, caused by limited economic access to food resulting from high poverty and unemployment rates and an overstretched government safety net.

## SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The CSP made a strategic change to target only severely food-insecure non-refugee populations, giving priority to food-insecure households headed by women. It also committed to moving from in-kind food assistance to cash-based transfers (CBT), using existing market infrastructure. Strategic Outcome 1 aimed to improve dietary diversity of non-refugees, poor and severely food insecure Palestinians; Strategic Outcome 2 aimed to enhance capacities of national institutions and systems; and through Strategic Outcome 3, WFP aimed to provide its CBT platform to multi-sectoral partners and government.

The total budget for the CSP was USD 506.4 million, of which 68 percent was funded by February 2022 (with variations across the three strategic outcomes).

## OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was commissioned by the Independent Office of Evaluation to provide evaluative evidence for accountability and learning to inform the design of the next WFP CSP in the State of Palestine. It covers WFP activities implemented from 2018 to February 2022.

It was conducted between September 2021 and June 2022 to assess WFP's strategic positioning and role and the extent to which WFP made the strategic shift expected by the CSP; WFP's contributions to strategic outcomes; efficiency and factors that explained WFP performance.

The main users for this evaluation are the WFP Palestine Country Office, the Regional Bureau in Cairo, WFP headquarters technical divisions and a range of external stakeholders.

## KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

**WFP's strategic position, role and specific contribution based on country priorities and people's needs as well as WFP's strengths**

The CSP was developed in consultation with central ministries and appropriately aligned with national policies and strategies and plans related to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 1, 2 and 7.

The CSP was coherent and aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and included appropriate strategic partnerships.

Targeting was informed by food security and nutrition analysis supported by WFP and was effective at reaching the most vulnerable. The government's targeting, which WFP uses was being revised but a lack of resources meant that it risked being outdated. However, WFP undertook regular robust post-distribution monitoring.

WFP adapted its strategic positioning effectively throughout the CSP implementation so that it remained relevant to the context, government policies and changing needs.

**Extent and quality of WFP's specific contribution to CSP strategic outcomes in the State of Palestine**

Under Strategic Outcome 1, WFP made a strong contribution toward the dietary diversity of severely food insecure people. CBT and in-kind food assistance had positive effects particularly on those under the poverty line. Although, funding constraints forced WFP to reduce the number of beneficiaries, women headed households and other most vulnerable groups were prioritized. Moving from predominately in-kind to CBT support yielded benefits. As nutrition interventions were adapted during the course of the CSP implementation, there was no strong evidence yet available of their effectiveness.

Under Strategic Outcome 2, WFP helped enhance the capacities of national institutions and systems to identify, target and assist food insecure vulnerable households. The first phase of piloting agriculture-based approaches aimed at resilience-building in Gaza had a positive effect on participants' Food Consumption Score.

Under Strategic Outcome 3, WFP's service delivery platform was effective, and its expansion indicated that it was highly valued by partners. WFP calculated that in 2021 cross-sectoral assistance amounting to USD 44 million was delivered using its platform to 743,700 people.

### Cross cutting aims

WFP raised awareness and its systems to uphold humanitarian principles were working effectively. It engaged with beneficiaries and stakeholders through multiple channels and in 'real time'.

There was a good gender balance among beneficiaries reached. WFP started putting an emphasis on gender transformative interventions and was testing approaches with its livelihoods and resilience work.

WFP worked closely with government to frame its new climate resilience activities and applied environmental and social safeguards to its programmes.

Some of WFP's support to government institutions were leading to sustained improvements but due primarily to the Government's fiscal crisis, these advances were fragile. For WFP's achievements to be sustained it will require continued engagement and investments.

WFP's contribution to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus was in terms of the contribution CBTs and in-kind food made to stability; the contribution to local markets and economic stability, and the role of its recent resilience interventions.

### WFP's efficient use of resources in contributing to CSP outputs and strategic outcomes

Overall, outputs, including CBT payments, were delivered within the intended timeframe, including during COVID-19.

WFP's coverage was largely appropriate; actual beneficiaries reached for in-kind and CBT support were consistently close to planned values. WFP was at times unable to reach all severely food-insecure non-refugee populations because the proxy means testing formula that informed Ministry of Social Development's targeting did not capture poverty changes caused by shocks.

WFP largely procured in-kind food inputs using the most cost-efficient options. The move to electronic vouchers and a single platform delivered efficiencies.

### Factors that explain WFP performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected by the CSP

Funding was unpredictable and resources dropped following the unexpected loss of funding from WFP's largest donor in 2018-2020. WFP was also confronted with a high level of earmarking by donors. Yet, WFP mobilized additional resources from existing and new donors and was allocated corporate loans.

WFP worked in close collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders and developed strong partnerships with the Government, donors, UN agencies, international finance institutions, civil society and the private sector.

WFP's was able to flex to rapidly changing circumstances using clear leadership and decision-making. The CSP structure and the use of the CBT system platform allowed WFP to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and the May Gaza escalation of hostilities, swiftly increasing the number of beneficiaries, covering new geographic areas, and channelling funding in a streamlined way.

The CSP design and implementation were based on robust evidence from multiple studies, including evaluations. WFP's monitoring and the analysis it produced allowed WFP to be responsive and adjust its support.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Overall Assessment

WFP achieved strong results in a challenging context and made progress towards achieving the CSP strategic outcomes in terms of output and outcome delivery. Its monitoring and analysis helped WFP to make the strategic shifts set out in the CSP and to adapt to the changing context.

WFP's choice to move most of its support to e-vouchers was useful as it created efficiencies. The country office operated effectively within a range of collaborative partnerships with UN agencies and civil society organizations. Its service delivery platform helped UN agencies 'Deliver as One', facilitating complementarity, cost-effectiveness, and results.

WFP played a role in stabilizing and supporting conditions for peace, particularly in Gaza. WFP's support to basic needs contributed to social stability. Gender and protection were integrated within the CSP and were effectively mainstreamed operationally.

Whilst the cessation of funding from WFP's largest donor had a dramatic impact, to its credit, WFP responded rapidly and was able to mitigate the impact on beneficiaries.

Few of WFP's achievements to date will be sustained without continued engagement and investment. Donor fatigue is increasing, and the economic downturn due to COVID-19 in donor countries and new humanitarian crises will also limit resource availability.

### Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** Ensure the new CSP and all its strategic outcomes are appropriate to the breadth of possible scenarios facing the State of Palestine - from the status quo to a sharp deterioration in conditions

**Recommendation 2:** Set out a range of issues in the CSP, at strategic and operational levels (WFP's core mandate, sustainability, climate change, nexus and feedback mechanisms)

**Recommendation 3:** Enhance the effectiveness and targeting of unconditional assistance in line with, but not limited to, commitments made in the management response to the 2020 decentralized evaluation.

**Recommendation 4:** Enhance the social protection system with stronger coordination and support the development of the Government's referral system

**Recommendation 5:** Enhance WFP's approach to supporting resilience and livelihoods.