



WFP EVALUATION



World Food Programme

**SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES**

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

Centralized evaluation report – Volume I

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Executive summary

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation features

1. The country strategic plan (CSP) evaluation was timed to provide evidence and lessons for informing the development of the next CSP for the State of Palestine.
2. The evaluation covered all the activities implemented under the CSP from January 2018 to February 2022. It assessed WFP's strategic positioning and the extent to which WFP made the shifts expected under the CSP, WFP's effectiveness in contributing to strategic outcomes, the efficiency with which the CSP was implemented, the appropriateness of the operational modalities used to respond to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, and factors explaining WFP's performance.
3. The evaluation followed a mixed-methods approach using qualitative data from key informants, which was supplemented with quantitative secondary data. Data collection was conducted between early January and mid-February 2022, when COVID-19 restrictions continued to reduce movement and face-to-face interactions. Fieldwork therefore consisted of a combination of remote and face-to-face interviews with 44 beneficiaries and 64 other stakeholders, including WFP staff from headquarters, the Regional Bureau for the Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe and the country office, the Government, donors, other United Nations entities and non-governmental organization cooperating partners. The team leader was based outside the region with two team members based in Gaza and three in the West Bank.
4. Gender and social inclusion were fully integrated into the evaluation's methodological approach. Ethical standards were applied to ensure the dignity and confidentiality of those involved in the evaluation.

Context

5. The State of Palestine comprises the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the non-contiguous Gaza Strip. In 2020, the State of Palestine's population was estimated at 5.1 million people.¹ The State of Palestine is a lower-middle-income economy with an estimated per capita gross national income of USD 3,883 in 2019.² Estimates show that only 0.01 percent of the population lived in severe multidimensional poverty in 2019–2020.³
6. Socioeconomic conditions have been deteriorating, with persisting high rates of poverty and unemployment and declining gross domestic product per capita. The economy of Gaza has been affected by protracted restrictions and more than 80 percent of the population depends on international assistance. Assistance has been insufficient to prevent deep crises of poverty, food insecurity, hygiene and health. The State of Palestine society is predominantly patriarchal, and traditional gender roles cause multiple layers of discrimination and limit overall gender equality.
7. The CSP for 2018–2022 was implemented during a challenging period. In 2020, the State of Palestine witnessed a sharp increase in the severity of humanitarian needs across its territory due to the COVID-19 outbreak and a sharp reduction in the Government's financial resources for providing social assistance to the poorest Palestinians. Food insecurity remains high and is caused by limited economic access to food resulting from high poverty and unemployment rates and an overstretched government safety net. In 2020, 31.2 percent of the population was categorized as moderately (13.6 percent) or severely (17.6 percent) food-insecure.⁴

¹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2019. [World Population Prospects 2019](#).

² *Ibid.*

³ United Nations Development Programme and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. 2021. [2021 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index Report: Unmasking disparities by ethnicity, caste and gender](#).

⁴ Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute. 2021. [Socio-Economic & Food Security Survey 2020: State of Palestine](#).

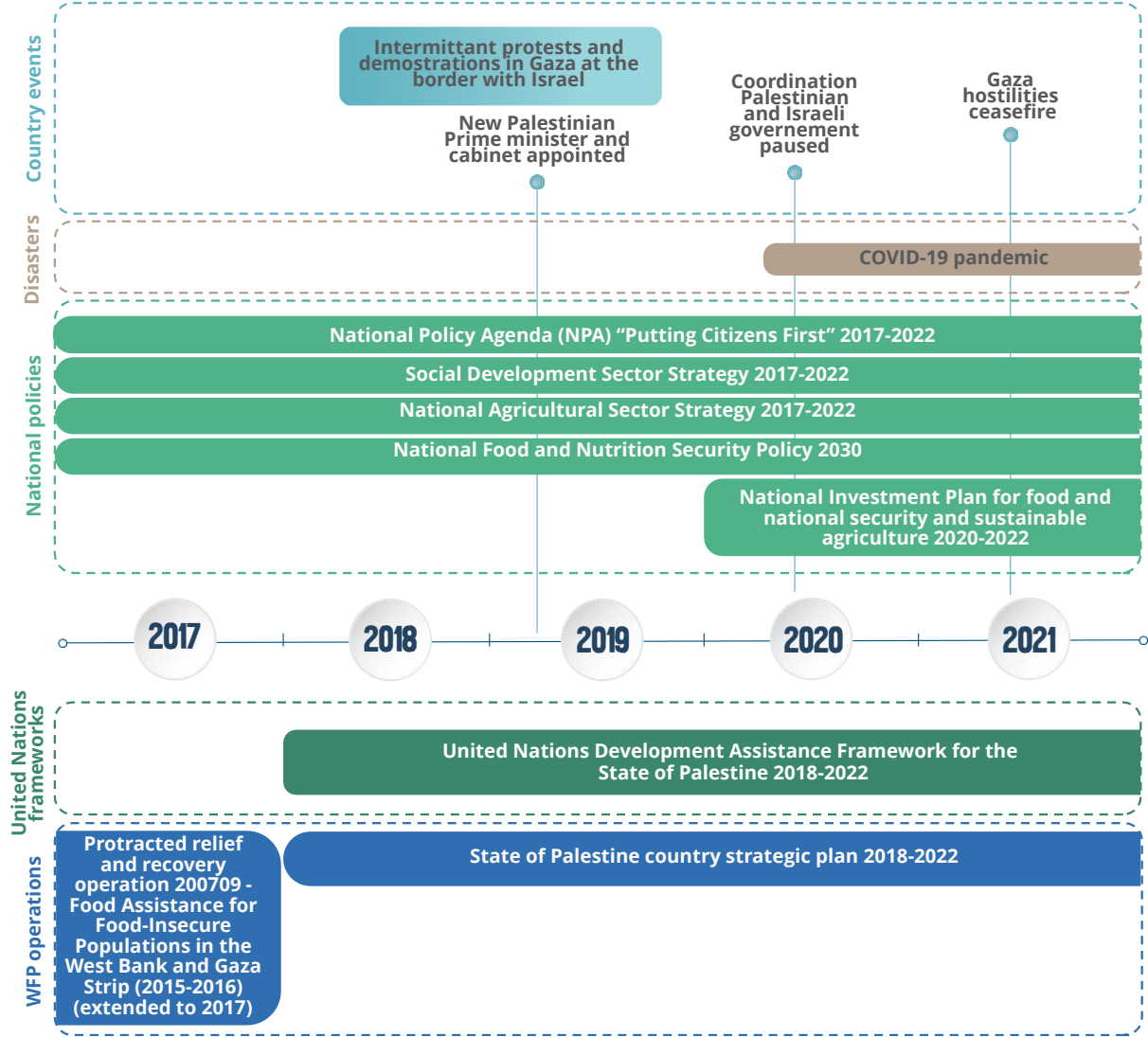
TABLE 1: SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS		
Indicator	Value	Year
Population total (millions) (1)	5.1	2020
Urban population (% of total population) (2)	79.6	2020
Life expectancy at birth (years) (2)	74.5	2020
Human development index (score and rank) (2)	0.71 115 of 189	2020
Population living in severe multidimensional poverty (% of total population) (2)	0.01	2021
Total number of refugees (millions) (3)	2.2	2021
Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the total population (%) (4)	31.2	2021
Prevalence of stunting (height for age) – moderate and severe – in children under 5 years of age (% of total children under 5) (5)	8.7	2020
Prevalence of wasting (weight for height) – moderate and severe – in children under 5 years of age (% of total children under 5) (5)	1.3	2020
Prevalence of overweight in children under 5 years of age (% of total children under 5) (5)	8.6	2020

Sources: (1) United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2019. [World Population Prospects 2019 – Volume I: Comprehensive Tables](#); (2) United Nations Development Programme. 2020. [Human Development Report 2020. The next frontier: Human development and the Anthropocene](#); (3) United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. 2021. [Where we work](#); (4) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Fund for Agricultural Development, United Nations Children's Fund, WFP and World Health Organization. 2022. [The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022. Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable](#); (5) Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2021. [Palestinian Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019–2020, Survey Findings Report](#).

WFP country strategic plan

8. WFP has provided support in the State of Palestine since 1991. The main strategic change WFP made under the CSP was to target only severely food-insecure, non-refugee people and households, giving priority to food-insecure households headed by women. It also committed to moving from in-kind food assistance to cash-based transfers (CBTs), using existing market infrastructure. Figure 1 illustrates the major events in the country context, the United Nations development assistance framework and WFP interventions over the period of CSP implementation.

Figure 1: Country context and WFP operational overview, 2018–2022

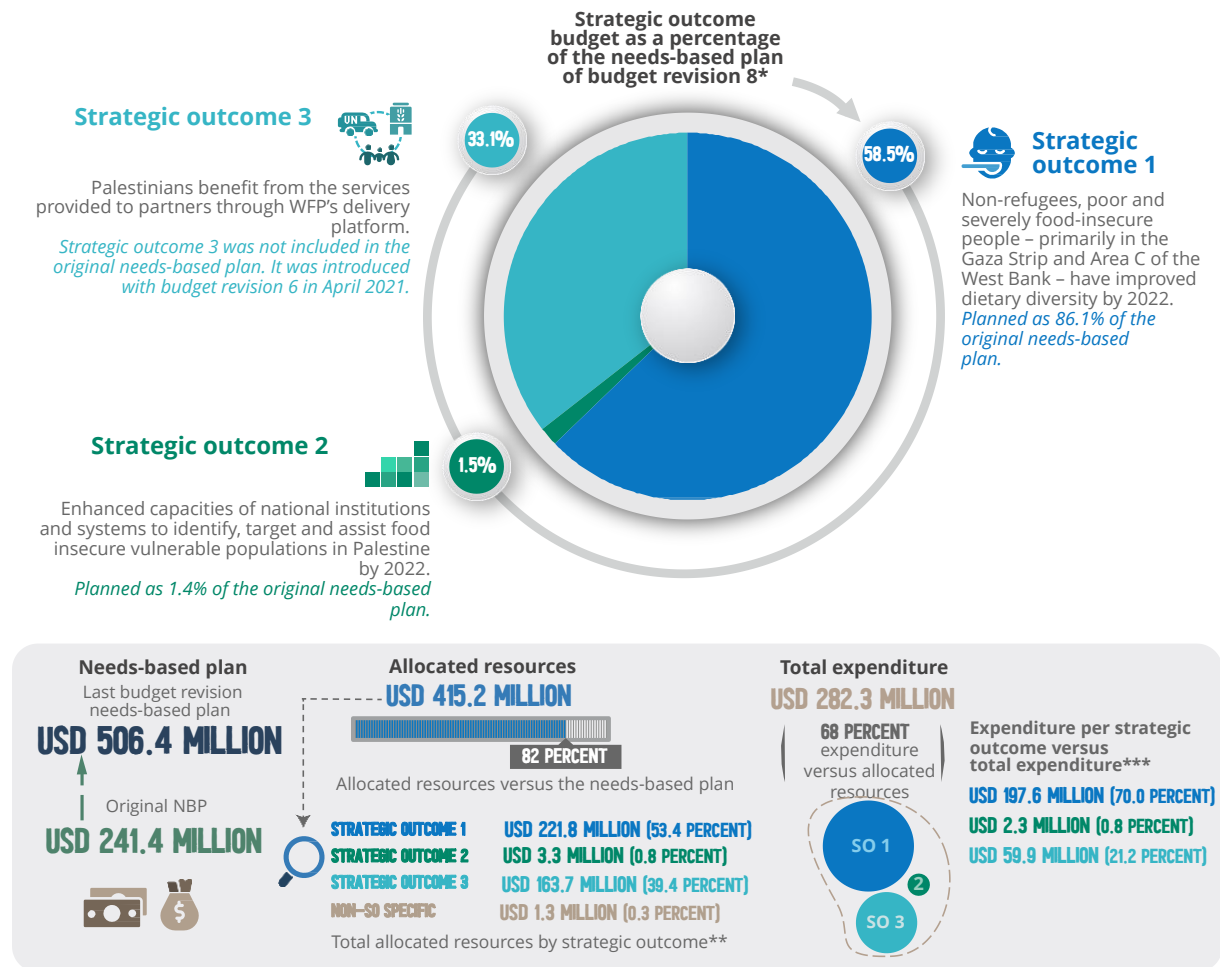


Source: Prepared by the Office of Evaluation based on the full report on the evaluation of the CSP for the State of Palestine for 2018–2022.

9. The original CSP needs-based plan was USD 241.4 million (figure 2). As of January 2022, that figure had risen to USD 506.4 million, reflecting six CSP revisions.⁵ The percentage of expenditure allocated to resources as of February 2022 was 68 percent, with variations across activities and strategic outcomes. Donor contributions were predominantly earmarked at the activity level (67 percent), followed by the strategic outcome level (14 percent of confirmed contributions).

⁵ These amounts include indirect support costs, which are not included in figure 2. Two additional CSP revisions were solely technical in nature: revisions 1 (2017) and 2 (2018) amended the indirect support costs and introduced changes in accordance with a WFP corporate budget simplification exercise.

Figure 2: State of Palestine CSP (2018–2022) strategic outcomes, budget, funding and expenditures



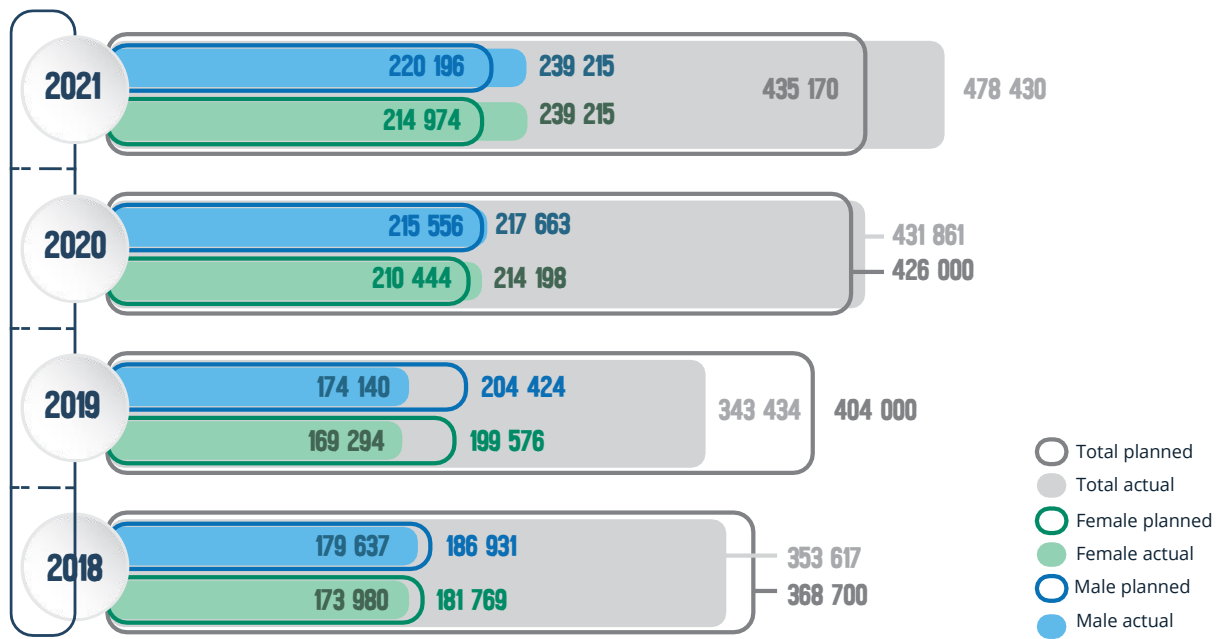
* The needs-based plan budget percentages by strategic outcome have been calculated at the grand total level (USD 506.4 million), including direct support costs (USD 14.4 million) and indirect support costs (USD 20.5 million). This data refers to budget revision 8, approved in January 2022.

** The allocated resources by strategic outcome do not add up to USD 415.2 million as resources were also allocated to direct support costs (USD 11.1 million or 2.7 percent of total allocated resources) and indirect support costs (USD 13.98 million or 3.4 percent of total allocated resources). The allocated resources percentages by strategic outcome have been calculated at the grand total cost level (USD 415.2 million). Allocated resources data is as of February 2022.

*** The expenditures by strategic outcome do not add up to USD 282.3 million as resources were also allocated to direct support costs (USD 8.5 million or 3.02 percent of total expenditures) and indirect support costs (USD 13.98 million or 4.95 percent of total expenditures). The expenditures percentages by strategic outcome have been calculated at the grand total cost level (USD 282.3 million). Expenditures data is as of February 2022.

10. CSP revisions 3, 4 and 5 significantly increased the number of beneficiaries WFP aimed to support, from 314,000 in 2018 to 435,170 by January 2022. After two years (2018 and 2019) of WFP not reaching the planned beneficiary numbers, in 2020 and 2021, a higher proportion of actual beneficiaries were supported than planned, with 2021 showing a large difference. In general, the number of male beneficiaries was slightly higher than that of female beneficiaries, in both planned and actual figures.

Figure 3: Planned versus actual beneficiaries by sex, 2018–2021



Source: Compiled by the Office of Evaluation based on annual country reports for 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

To what extent are WFP’s strategic position, role and specific contributions based on country priorities, people’s needs and WFP’s strengths?

Relevance to national policies, plans and strategies

11. The CSP was relevant to the State of Palestine’s national priorities. It was developed in consultation with central ministries and was appropriately aligned with national policies and strategies. The CSP was also in line with subnational strategies and plans and with government commitments in relation to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 2 and 17. Through the use of cash- and non-cash-based support for the poor, the core interventions of the CSP were aligned with, and contributed to, the Government’s targets for food security and poverty alleviation. The CSP document set out, at a relatively general level, how the CSP would support the Government’s technical capability and capacity. The absence of a commonly agreed comprehensive capacity needs assessment created challenges for assessment of the extent to which the CSP was aligned with the Government’s technical and capacity gaps. However, given that the national food security monitoring systems needed, and continue to need, development, WFP’s intention to increase the focus on improving the national social safety net was appropriate.

Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable people and communities

12. The CSP was designed to address the needs of the most vulnerable people and communities. Targeting was informed by socioeconomic and food security surveys and other food security and nutrition analysis supported by WFP. The effectiveness of WFP’s targeting was evaluated by a decentralized evaluation in 2020, which found that WFP was effective in targeting the most vulnerable. The Government’s targeting list, which WFP used in both the West Bank and Gaza, was being revised, but a lack of resources meant that beneficiary lists risked being outdated. In addition, the selection criteria for the beneficiaries of livelihood activities were not sufficiently aligned with the various needs and capabilities of beneficiaries. However, WFP undertook regular robust post-distribution monitoring. The resulting rolling assessment of the poverty status of beneficiaries gave confidence that support was going to beneficiaries who meet WFP’s criteria.

Adaptation

13. WFP adapted its strategic positioning effectively throughout implementation of the CSP so that it remained relevant to the setting, government policies and changing needs. WFP's response to the escalation of hostilities in Gaza in May 2021 was swift and perceived as highly effective. WFP mobilized rapidly to address emergency needs and, mainly using its electronic voucher system, provided temporary support to about 100,000 new beneficiaries during the hostilities, with an additional 20,000 receiving longer-term support. It also adapted effectively to the operational challenges and increased needs resulting from COVID-19 by scaling up its assistance to distribute CBT payments to additional severely affected households. Thus, in 2020, it assisted more than 84,000 new beneficiaries in governorates where it had not previously provided support. Furthermore, WFP offered its platform for other agencies to use to provide assistance.

United Nations partnerships

14. The CSP was coherent and aligned with the programmes of the wider United Nations system and included appropriate strategic partnerships. There was a high degree of coherence between the CSP and the 2018–2022 United Nations development assistance framework for the State of Palestine. WFP was seen as a leading agency in the United Nations country team. It was an influential partner in efforts to enhance coordination and joint United Nations planning. However, while WFP operated in accordance with its comparative advantages, the CSP did not explicitly define what those advantages were, except in relation to emergency response.

What are the extent and quality of WFP's contribution to country strategic plan strategic outcomes in the State of Palestine?

Delivery of outputs and contribution to outcomes

15. **Strategic outcome 1: Unconditional resource transfers for the severely food-insecure and poorest people.** WFP made a strong contribution towards the dietary diversity of poor and severely food-insecure people. CBTs and in-kind food assistance had positive effects, particularly on people living under the poverty line. Funding constraints forced WFP to reduce the number of beneficiaries, but woman-headed households and others of the most vulnerable groups were prioritized. Moving from predominately in-kind to cash-based support yielded benefits. The single platform for CBTs and electronic vouchers proved to be an effective mechanism and was extremely valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergency responses. WFP's multi-purpose cash pilot was well received by beneficiaries, but some targeting and implementation issues needed to be addressed, including by ensuring the harmonization of the support provided to beneficiaries by multiple providers. Nutrition interventions had been adapted since the original CSP was designed. The interventions being implemented at the time of the evaluation had been recently launched and there was not yet sufficient strong evidence from which to assess their effectiveness. Output targets regarding nutrition and social and behaviour change communication beneficiaries were reached.

16. **Strategic outcome 2: Capacity strengthening and livelihoods and resilience-building activities.** WFP helped to enhance the capacities of national institutions and systems to identify, target and assist food-insecure vulnerable households. Government counterparts appreciated the quality of the support given and their access to internationally proven approaches. WFP was in the third phase of piloting agriculture-based approaches to resilience building at the time of the evaluation. Analysis showed that phase one livelihoods activities in Gaza had a positive effect on participants' food consumption scores. There was potential for some of the livelihoods projects to contribute to the well-being and livelihoods of beneficiaries, but there were also challenges, particularly in sustainability.

17. **Strategic outcome 3: Service provision to partners through WFP's delivery platform.** WFP's service delivery platform was effective, and its increasing expansion (to nine United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations) indicated that it was highly valued by partners. The platform offered a streamlined way of delivering services using proven systems that were subject to strong oversight, fraud control and accountability mechanisms. WFP calculated that in 2021, cross-sectoral assistance amounting to USD 44 million was delivered to 743,700 people using the organization's platform.

Humanitarian principles, protection and accountability to affected populations

18. WFP raised awareness of humanitarian principles and put in place systems for upholding them that worked effectively. WFP engaged with beneficiaries and stakeholders through multiple channels and in real time, thereby ensuring that it was quickly made aware of changing conditions and had the information

needed to respond effectively and rapidly. WFP operated a free hotline and provided complaint boxes in shops, although the latter were used less frequently than the hotline. WFP was able to ensure the protection of people during the delivery of its assistance and activities. To its credit, in several instances WFP attempted to refer to the Government and other partners vulnerable households whose needs were beyond its own mandate. However, there is limited evidence that this was done in a systematic way and in coordination with cooperating partners.

Gender

19. Gender considerations were integrated into the CSP design and implementation and beneficiary analysis was gender- and age-disaggregated. WFP achieved gender parity in its delivery of services, with a good gender balance among beneficiaries targeted and reached. WFP started to emphasize gender-transformative interventions and was testing approaches in its livelihoods and resilience work. WFP also actively focused on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation and abuse by conducting awareness sessions for its staff and cooperating partners and ensuring that its hotline operators re-routed calls related to sexual exploitation and abuse to a dedicated hotline equipped to handle those and other sensitive issues.

Environment

20. The CSP was largely silent on how environmental and climate issues would be addressed. However, in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, WFP piloted resilience-building projects aimed at reducing the impact of severe weather events on poor and food-insecure people and enhancing their capacity to improve their lives. This work included providing families and institutions with solar panels and wastewater treatment units. WFP formed a Green Climate Fund committee with the national environmental authority and the Ministry of Agriculture aimed at helping to frame its new climate resilience activities. Environmental and social safeguard tools and procedures for identifying and managing the risks associated with WFP programmes were applied from 2021 onwards.

Sustainability

21. Few of WFP's achievements to date will be sustained without continued engagement and investment. This is the logical result of the nature of WFP's primary support (CBTs for contributing to dietary diversity) and the deteriorating situation marked by increasing needs. Some of WFP's support for government institutions was leading to sustained improvements but, owing primarily to the Government's fiscal crisis, those advances were fragile. While WFP experimented with sustainable climate-resilient, agriculture-based livelihoods support, those interventions had not run long enough to allow assessment of their sustainability. In addition, interventions of that kind are difficult to make viable in the long term, especially in Gaza, where it can be costly and difficult to obtain replacement inputs.

Linkages between humanitarian and development work

22. While the CSP did not identify how WFP would facilitate strategic linkages at the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, WFP set out its approach to working at the nexus in a separate consolidated document. WFP's contribution was defined in terms of the contribution that CBTs and in-kind food assistance made to stability, the contribution that WFP assistance made to local markets and economic stability and the role of WFP's recent resilience interventions. WFP played a role in stabilizing and providing the conditions for peace, particularly in Gaza. Its service delivery operation, distributing support to vulnerable households in Gaza on behalf of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, was an example of this.

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

Timeliness of delivery

23. Overall, outputs were delivered within the intended timeframes. The evaluation did not identify any systemic weaknesses in WFP's capability to deliver on time. WFP monitoring reports and interviews demonstrated that CBT payments were made without delay. WFP also adapted its response effectively to address the challenges caused by COVID-19 and was able to provide timely support.

Coverage

24. WFP's coverage and targeting of interventions were largely appropriate. Actual beneficiaries reached with in-kind and cash-based support were consistently close to planned numbers. The proxy means testing formula that informed the Ministry of Social Development's targeting did not capture the poverty changes caused by shocks, so the "new poor" would have been excluded from the surveys that used that formula. Thus, WFP was at times unable to reach all severely food-insecure, non-refugee people and households. When faced with funding shortages, WFP chose first to reduce the amount of assistance provided to beneficiaries, and then to reduce the number of people it assisted. However, women-headed households and other of the most vulnerable groups were prioritized.

Cost-efficiency

25. WFP's activities showed clear signs of cost-efficient delivery. There is evidence of measures that drove cost efficiency and value for money and delivered services at less than planned costs. The move to electronic vouchers and the use of a single platform for the delivery of CBT services, which occurred before implementation of the CSP started, delivered efficiencies. WFP's engagement with the commercial platform provider improved the efficiency, reliability and cost-effectiveness of the CBT programme, with the development of an electronic transaction system and online monitoring platform. Those technological advances enabled WFP to reduce implementation costs, provide real-time payments to shopkeepers and carry out timely monitoring of shop sales and beneficiaries' voucher redemption rates and purchasing patterns. An analysis of procurement data showed that WFP procured in-kind food inputs using mainly the most cost-efficient options.

Alternative cost-efficient measures

26. WFP made the strategic decision to move from in-kind food to voucher-based CBTs under the CSP. In response to local conditions, it provided in-kind food in Area C, even though doing so required additional resources; the provision of in-kind food in Gaza ensured that WFP could continue to keep emergency stocks and food delivery systems active. The costs of providing in-kind food or CBTs did not change markedly during the period from 2018 to 2021, so WFP did not need to make adaptations. However, WFP did not conduct value-for-money analysis.

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 existing evidence

27. The CSP design and implementation were based on robust evidence and findings and recommendations from multiple studies, including evaluations. Throughout the implementation of the CSP, WFP supported and produced in-depth studies with partners. For example, it provided technical guidance and financial support to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics for the production of the socioeconomic and food security survey. WFP also commissioned a decentralized evaluation to examine its unconditional assistance under the national social safety net programme: this produced important recommendations that informed WFP's future approach. WFP also produced a participatory gender analysis study in 2020, which informed and guided its gender equality and women's empowerment work.

Resource mobilization

28. Funding was unpredictable during the CSP period: the single most important challenge was the unexpected loss of funding from its largest donor between 2018 and 2020. Compared with 2017, WFP's resources dropped by 35 percent in the first trimester of 2018, forcing it to suspend, delay or reduce assistance in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A high level of earmarking by donors also undermined the efficiency of WFP's operations. However, WFP mobilized additional multilateral donor funding from existing and new donors, accounting for almost a third of total resources received in 2018. WFP also managed the shortfall by using corporate loan allocations. WFP's ability to mobilize additional resources was notable, particularly as there is a general downwards trend in the funding provided for humanitarian and development activities in the State of Palestine.

Partnerships

29. WFP worked in close collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders and developed strong partnerships with the Government, donors, other United Nations entities, international financial institutions, civil society and the private sector. WFP also led and engaged in key coordination groups, including the food security sector, which it co-led with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the logistics cluster. WFP's sharing of its platform with other organizations helped United Nations agencies to "deliver as one", facilitated complementarity and cost-effectiveness and magnified the platform's effects. Interviews indicated that WFP was valued and respected as a reliable, trusted partner. However, there is room for strengthening information-sharing with a broader range of providers.

Flexibility of the country strategic plan

30. WFP's ability to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances was underpinned by clear leadership and decision-making, the adaptability provided by the CSP portfolio, and the strategic choices made in the plan that gave it flexibility in delivery. The CSP structure allowed the country office to respond to emergencies by increasing the number of beneficiaries, covering new geographic areas and channelling funding in a streamlined way. For instance, the decision to move from a mainly in-kind food assistance modality to a voucher system enabled WFP to adapt to changing demands. Furthermore, WFP's commitment to deepening and developing the use of the CBT platform helped it to respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the May 2021 escalation of hostilities in Gaza. In addition, WFP expanded its operation to respond to malnutrition in pregnant and lactating women and girls, and children under 5 years of age, in line with recommendations from the joint analysis carried out by WFP and the United Nations Children's Fund.

Other factors that explain WFP's performance and strategic shift

31. WFP established a robust accountability system to monitor the implementation of the CSP and the delivery of its strategic outcomes. WFP's monitoring and the analysis that it produced helped the country office to make the strategic shifts that the CSP mandated and to be responsive in adjusting its support to changing conditions. They enabled the country office to track delivery during complex and difficult periods and to capture regular feedback from beneficiaries. External stakeholders, other United Nations entities, donors and non-governmental organizations used the data and reports generated by WFP.

CONCLUSIONS

32. WFP achieved strong results in complex and challenging circumstances, including the protracted crisis, ongoing restrictions on the movement of people and trade, complex governance challenges, the May 2021 escalation of hostilities in Gaza and the COVID-19 pandemic. The key role played by WFP in the State of Palestine, its solid capacity, expertise and deep in-country experience positioned it as a leading humanitarian agency meeting the needs of non-refugees.

33. The CSP and strategic outcomes were appropriate for the operating context and aligned with the direction of the Government and the United Nations development assistance framework. The CSP enabled WFP to develop an integrated and coherent approach to programming, which allowed greater flexibility than previous WFP operations.

34. WFP made strong progress towards the achievement of CSP strategic outcomes: it was effective in terms of output and outcome delivery. Under strategic outcome 1, WFP cash-based and in-kind food assistance had positive effects, particularly on the most vulnerable people, and contributed to improving dietary diversity. While the targeting system was reviewed during CSP implementation, there were shortcomings in the proxy means testing, especially from the beneficiaries' point of view. Under strategic outcome 2, WFP helped to enhance the capacities of national institutions and systems in identifying, targeting and assisting food-insecure vulnerable households. Phase one of the piloting of agriculture-based approaches in Gaza had a positive effect on participants' food consumption scores. Under strategic outcome 3, WFP's service delivery platform was effective and the increased usage of the platform indicated that it was highly valued by partners. WFP's monitoring and analysis have consistently provided insight into the situation on the ground, and feedback on the results of WFP support.

35. Funding shortfalls limited the extent to which the CSP was able to benefit the most vulnerable people. The potential trade-off between focusing WFP resources on the most vulnerable people versus

maximizing the number of beneficiaries assisted will be an important topic for discussion during the development of the new CSP.

36. Initially, the CSP did not focus on resilience, but WFP experimented with various approaches. Its interventions delivered positive results, but it is too early to comment on the sustained effectiveness of those results. If WFP intends to broaden its livelihoods programme, it will need to consider how and when beneficiaries move from CBT programmes.

37. WFP helped to enhance the capacities of national institutions and systems in identifying, targeting and assisting food-insecure vulnerable people and households in the State of Palestine. However, while partnerships with national institutions were strategic, the strengthening of capacity faced challenges.

38. WFP operated effectively within a range of collaborative partnerships with other United Nations entities and civil society organizations. Its service delivery platform helped United Nations agencies to “deliver as one”, facilitating complementarity, cost-effectiveness and impact.

39. Through its service delivery for the United Nations system, WFP demonstrated to an important regional non-traditional donor that there are benefits to using WFP systems to deliver bilateral assistance. From its monitoring systems, it generated evidence of the value-added that its support provides, which could encourage the donor to use WFP systems in other contexts. WFP’s service delivery in Gaza could also have a broader effect through demonstration, encouraging other non-traditional donors to use United Nations systems in other contexts.

40. WFP played a role in stabilizing and supporting the conditions for peace, particularly in Gaza. WFP’s support for addressing basic needs contribute to social stability, and its CBT assistance helped to support local markets and economic stability. Its recent service delivery for the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process is an impressive example of WFP stepping in to alleviate a source of tension and the potential for an escalation of hostilities.

41. Gender and protection were integrated into the CSP and were treated as cross-cutting issues that were effectively mainstreamed into operations. There was systematic collection and analysis of gender- and age-disaggregated data, recently including data on disability. WFP is beginning to push gender-transformative approaches and will need to place more emphasis on those approaches in the next CSP.

42. While WFP established robust accountability mechanisms, there are indications that beneficiaries’ voices were not sufficiently heard in relation to intervention design. In terms of its treatment of the environment, WFP piloted some innovative approaches to supporting households in the development of climate-resilient livelihoods.

43. Although the cessation of funding from WFP’s biggest donor had a dramatic impact, WFP – to its credit – responded rapidly and was able to mitigate the impact on beneficiaries. Donors earmarked contributions to a relatively high degree but WFP was able to balance donors’ conditions so as to continue to deliver – although it faces real difficulty in raising funds to support country capacity strengthening.

44. Few of WFP’s achievements to date will be sustained without continued engagement and investment. This situation is simply the result of the nature of WFP’s primary support (CBTs for contributing to dietary diversity) and the deteriorating situation in which needs are increasing rather than decreasing. Donor fatigue regarding the Palestine crisis is increasing, and the economic downturn due to the COVID-19 pandemic in donor countries and new humanitarian crises such as the Ukraine conflict will also affect resource availability.

45. WFP used its resources efficiently during the CSP period. Outputs were delivered mostly within the intended timeframe, coverage and targeting were largely appropriate. WFP’s decision to move most of its support to electronic vouchers resulted in a more efficient delivery modality. WFP payment processes were cost-effective, accessible and well-received by beneficiaries, making them the most appropriate channel for delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

#	Recommendation (specific steps for implementing the recommendations are outlined in the sub-recommendations following each recommendation)	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Supporting entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1	<p>Ensure that the new country strategic plan and all of its outcomes are appropriate to the various possible scenarios facing the State of Palestine, which range from the status quo to a sharp deterioration in conditions.</p> <p>1.1 Use political economy analysis and scenario planning to inform the design of the country strategic plan.</p> <p>1.2 Plan for the retention of WFP capacity to scale up crisis response support for food-insecure households in the event of an interruption in the State’s capability, or renewed hostilities.</p> <p>1.3 Factor in the implications of reduced funding on social protection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure that plans for providing cash-based transfers to people on the Ministry of Social Development’s lists take into account the possibility that cash-based transfers will not be distributed for extended periods. ➤ Consider the implications for WFP of a reduction in social protection support for refugees. <p>1.4 When defining the new country strategic plan’s institutional capacity strengthening objectives, factor in the likelihood that the fiscal crisis will be extended, and focus on strengthening functions that the Government can realistically deploy with its constrained resources.</p>	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	December 2022
2	<p>In designing the new country strategic plan, set out the following range of issues, at the strategic and operational levels, some of which were not comprehensively addressed in the current country strategic plan.</p> <p>2.1 Define WFP’s core mandate and comparative advantage in the State of Palestine.</p>	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, headquarters Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division and	Medium	December 2022

#	Recommendation (specific steps for implementing the recommendations are outlined in the sub-recommendations following each recommendation)	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Supporting entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
	<p>2.2 Analyse the sustainability issues related to future activities and outcomes, and identify actions that will help to make the impact of investments sustainable.</p> <p>2.3 Set out a strategic approach to addressing environmental issues and climate change.</p> <p>2.4 Advocate the joint development of a coherent framework for the humanitarian–development–peace nexus with other humanitarian and development actors in the State of Palestine, and within that framework identify how WFP will facilitate strategic linkages at the nexus.</p> <p>2.5 Ensure that the future results framework is comprehensive and reflects all of WFP’s activities, including service delivery.</p> <p>2.6 Strengthen the integration of beneficiary feedback into programme design and revision.</p>			Research, Assessment and Monitoring Division		
3	<p>Enhance the effectiveness and targeting of unconditional resource transfers in line with, but not limited to, commitments made in the management response to the 2020 decentralized evaluation.</p> <p>3.1 The present evaluation highlights two of the decentralized evaluation’s recommendations that would enhance food security for the most vulnerable people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ recommendation 2 “Explore tiered and targeted assistance using varied voucher values based on need”; and ➤ recommendation 3 “Consider increasing the voucher value for households composed of below-average members”. <p>WFP agreed to both of these recommendations and to the action deadline of September 2022, and will need to reflect any change in approach in its future programming. Other agreed recommendations are also important.</p>	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau	Medium	December 2023

#	Recommendation (specific steps for implementing the recommendations are outlined in the sub-recommendations following each recommendation)	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Supporting entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
	<p>3.2 Based on the findings of the ongoing evaluation of WFP's multi-purpose cash assistance pilot, define WFP's future approach to the use of multi-purpose cash in the new country strategic plan, in consultation with key partners.</p> <p>3.3 Based on a careful study of the feasibility and potential impact (especially on gender relations), consider offering households a choice of modality for the support that they receive (multi-purpose cash, food vouchers or in-kind food) and advocate with donors for greater flexibility in funding.</p>					
4	<p>Enhance the social protection system with stronger coordination, and support the development of the Government's referral system.</p> <p>4.1 To reduce duplication and promote equity, continue to promote coordination with other agencies providing social protection services; explore opportunities for improving data sharing.</p> <p>4.2 To address the non-food social protection needs of WFP beneficiaries, support the development of the Government's referral system, with other partners.</p>	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau, headquarters Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division	Medium	December 2023
5	<p>Enhance WFP's approach to supporting resilience and livelihoods.</p> <p>5.1 Develop a strategy and theory of change for WFP's resilience and livelihoods programming.</p> <p>5.2 Adopt an adaptive and iterative approach to resilience and livelihoods programming, and commission periodic external reviews of WFP's interventions for informing significant next steps.</p> <p>5.3 Seek to enhance the degree of choice that beneficiaries have in the resilience and livelihoods support that they receive, and enhance WFP's monitoring systems so they assess the extent to which programming is responsive to beneficiaries' preferences.</p>	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau, headquarters Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division and Gender Office	Medium	December 2023

#	Recommendation (specific steps for implementing the recommendations are outlined in the sub-recommendations following each recommendation)	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Supporting entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
	<p>5.4 Continue to experiment with gender-transformative interventions for resilience and livelihoods, ensuring that they are based on strong gender analysis.</p> <p>5.5 Consider piloting a way of linking other providers of resilience and livelihood interventions to WFP beneficiaries who could benefit from support for resilience and livelihoods development.</p> <p>5.6 Consider enhancing WFP's capacity with specialist livelihoods and resilience expertise.</p>					

1. Introduction

1.1. EVALUATION FEATURES

1. The World Food Programme (WFP) Office of Evaluation (OEV) commissioned Landell-Mills International to evaluate the WFP Country Strategic Plan (CSP) (2018–2022) in the State of Palestine.⁶ The evaluation covers all activities under the CSP between 2018 and 2021. It assesses whether the WFP Country Office (CO) implemented the strategic changes set out in the CSP. The evaluation was conducted under COVID-19 restrictions, so the fieldwork combined remote and face-to-face interviews. Fieldwork was conducted between 10 January and 2 February 2022. The team leader was based outside the region, whilst two team members were based in Gaza and three in the West Bank. Details of the evaluation are set out in Annex 2: Methodology.

Rationale, objective, scope and users of the evaluation

2. WFP policy requires every Country Strategic Plans to undergo a CSP evaluation (CSPE) to assess progress and results against intended outcomes and objectives.⁷ This CSPE provides an independent assessment of WFP performance, opportunities and challenges in the State of Palestine. It is expected that it will inform the design of the next CSP, improve ongoing programming and performance-level strategic decisions, and facilitate accountability for results to WFP stakeholders.

3. This evaluation is structured around four overarching evaluation questions, which are applied to all CSPs. These relate to relevance, effectiveness and sustainability; efficiency; factors explaining WFP's performance; and the extent to which WFP has made any intended strategic shifts. It also covers cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and women's empowerment, humanitarian principles, accountability to affected populations, protection and capacity strengthening (Annex 1. Summary Terms of Reference).

4. The principal intended users of the evaluation are the WFP CO in the State of Palestine, the regional bureau in Cairo (RBC), headquarters divisions, the WFP Executive Board (EB), government ministries, donors, other United Nations (UN) agencies, service providers, cooperating partners (CPs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

1.2. CONTEXT

Political context

5. The State of Palestine comprises the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the non-contiguous Gaza Strip. The protracted protection crisis in the State of Palestine is characterized by prolonged occupation, and recurrent escalations of hostilities between Israel's military and Palestinian armed groups,⁸ primarily in Gaza. Israel's sustained restrictions of the Gaza Strip have persisted since the de facto authorities took control of Gaza in 2007.

6. The WFP CSP (2018-2022) was implemented during a challenging period. The year 2020 witnessed a sharp increase in the severity of humanitarian needs across the territory. This was due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a reduction in government funding for social assistance. These and other factors continued to drive vulnerability and humanitarian needs in 2021. They were compounded by an intense escalation of hostilities between Israel and armed groups in Gaza in May 2021.⁹ An unofficial ceasefire came into force on 21 May 2021 in the Gaza Strip, and has remained fragile through to the time of writing this report (August 2022).

7. The fiscal position of the Government has been challenging throughout the CSP period. It deteriorated in 2020, mainly due to the economic slowdown caused by the pandemic, a loss in tax revenues and a decline in overseas development aid. In 2020, the Government lost 80 percent of its income, reducing

⁶ WFP. November 2017, Rome, State of Palestine Country Strategic Plan (2018–2022)

⁷ WFP. 2016. "Policy on Country Strategic Plans" (WFP/EB.2/2016/4-C/1/Rev.1*)

⁸ OCHA. 2021. Humanitarian Response Plan OPT, page 10

⁹ OCHA. 2021. Humanitarian Bulletin for Occupied Palestinian Territory: Gaza After the May Escalation – November 2021

its capacity to pay salaries, deliver services and maintain social safety nets. The payment of salaries for civil servants based in the West Bank and Gaza was delayed, and social safety net contributions have stopped since May 2021. The next two to three years look particularly difficult for the Palestinian Authority as it will have a sustained fiscal gap even if it receives clearance revenue in full and regularly from the Government of Israel.

General overview

8. The State of Palestine is a lower-middle-income economy with an estimated 2019 Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of USD 3,883 (USD 2,045 for females and USD 10,666 for males).¹⁰ Human Development Index (HDI) indicators increased by 4.4 percent between 2005 and 2015, but remained the same between 2018 and 2019. The State of Palestine is in the high human development category (at 115 out of 189 countries and territories). The 2021 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report on Global Multidimensional Poverty Index show that 0.01 percent of the population lived in severe multidimensional poverty in 2019/20.¹¹

9. In 2020, the State of Palestine's population was estimated at 5.1 million (49.3 percent females),¹² with an annual growth rate of 2.4 percent.¹³ Of this population, 79.6 percent lived in urban areas; 13.5 percent were children under the age of 5, 38.3 percent under the age of 14 and 3.2 percent over the age of 65. In 2019, the total fertility rate – live births at birth per woman – was 3.91. Life expectancy was 72.9 years for males and 76 years for females.

10. In 2020, socio-economic conditions deteriorated for the third consecutive year, with high rates of poverty and unemployment, and declining gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. COVID-19 and associated disruption exacerbated conditions. The unemployment rate was 24.2 percent at the end of the fourth quarter of 2021. In Gaza, 44.7 percent of the labour force was unemployed in the fourth quarter of 2021, while the West Bank recorded an unemployment rate of 13.2 percent.¹⁴

11. The economy of Gaza has been significantly affected by the sustained restrictions in place since 2007. More than 80 percent of the population are dependent on international support. Assistance has been insufficient to prevent deep crises of poverty, food insecurity, hygiene and health. The Gaza Strip suffers from persistent electricity and water shortages, and drinking water is unsafe.¹⁵ In Gaza, nearly seven out of ten people are poor. Before the May 2021 hostilities, more than 80 percent of wage employees in the Gazan private sector earned less than the minimum wage.¹⁶

National policies and the Sustainable Development Goals

12. The Government adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through its National Policy Agenda (NPA) "Putting Citizens First", approved for 2017-2022.¹⁷ The NPA defines the strategic direction of the Government around three pillars: Path to Independence; Government Reform; and Sustainable Development.

13. Poverty reduction is the first objective of the Social Development Sector Strategy (2017–2022), linking poverty reduction to food security improvements. The national poverty reduction programme is intended to support poor, food-insecure and vulnerable households to ensure that their basic needs are met. The Government's limited financial resources constitute a major challenge to reaching all vulnerable groups and implementing an effective national programme. The National Agricultural Sector Strategy 2017-2022 (NASS) is intended to establish a sustainable and competitive agricultural sector and contribute to

¹⁰ United Nations Population Division. 2019. World Population Prospects.

¹¹ UNDP. 2021. Global Multidimensional Poverty index 2021. Unmasking disparities by ethnicity, caste and gender.

¹² United Nations Population Division. World Population Prospects: 2019 Revision.

¹³ UNDP. Human Development Report 2020.

¹⁴ World Bank. 2022. Palestinian Territories' Economic Monitoring Report — 10 May 2022.

¹⁵ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, August 2020. Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people: Developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

¹⁶ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. 2021. Press Release on the Results of the Labour Force Survey First Quarter (January – March 2021).

¹⁷ State of Palestine. 2016, National Policy Agenda 2017-2022.

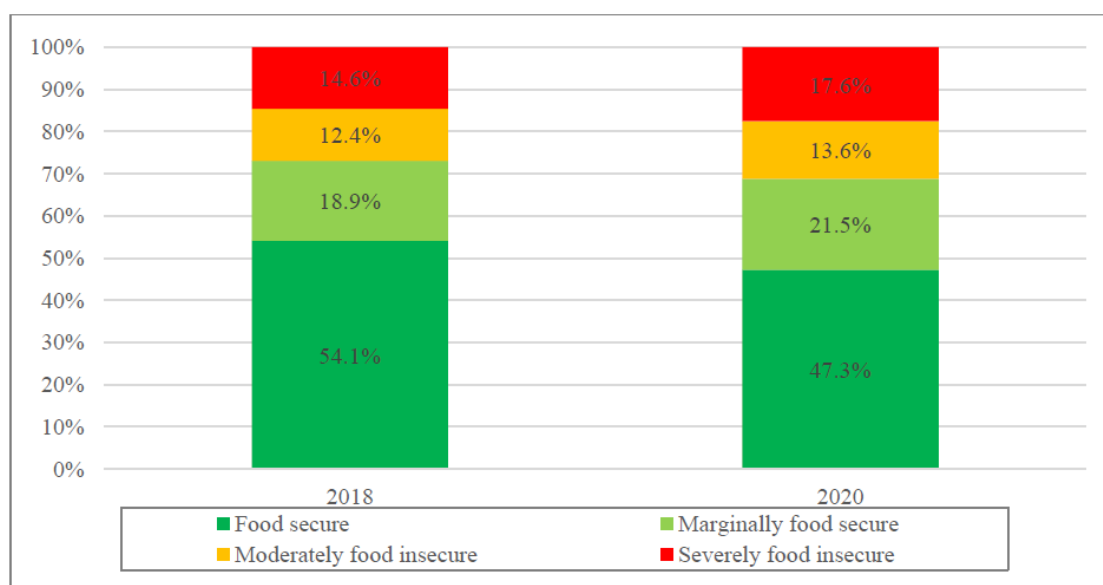
national food security.¹⁸ The Government produced its 'National Food and Nutrition Security Policy 2030' (its first such policy) in 2019, setting out its high-level policy. With support from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Ministry of Agriculture then produced a 'National Investment Plan for food and national security and sustainable agriculture (NIP 2020-2022)¹⁹ to operationalize the policy – with prioritized interventions and a division of labour.

Food and nutrition security

14. Food insecurity remains high, caused by limited economic access to food resulting from high poverty and unemployment rates, and an overstretched government safety net. According to the latest Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey, in 2020, 327,839 households (31.2 percent of the population) were categorized as either moderately (13.6 percent) or severely (17.6 percent) food insecure.²⁰ Levels of food insecurity were vastly different between regions: the proportion of households that were severely food insecure was 20 times more in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank (40.7 percent and 2 percent respectively) in 2020.²¹ Food insecurity was higher among families headed by women (32 percent overall, and 54 percent in the Gaza Strip).²²

15. High food insecurity has also contributed to rising levels of malnutrition. About 8.7 percent of children under the age of 5 years suffer from stunting, 1.3 percent from wasting, 2.1 percent from underweight, and 8.6 percent from overweight.²³ According to the United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN-IGME), under-5 child mortality was 19.4 percent in 2019, down from 23.2 percent in 2010.

Figure 1: Household food security levels in 2018 and 2020



Source: Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey 2020: State of Palestine

¹⁸ State of Palestine. 2018. National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

¹⁹ Ministry of Agriculture. 2019. National Investment Plan for food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture 2020- 2022 (NIP 2020-22). State of Palestine, Ministry of Agriculture, Final Draft November 2019.

²⁰ Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), 2021, Socio-Economic & Food Security Survey 2020: State of Palestine

²¹ Ibid

²² FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2021. Rome. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021. Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all.

²³ Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics. 2021. The Palestinian Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019-2020, Survey Findings Report, January 2021.

Livelihoods

16. In both the West Bank and Gaza, restricted access to sea, land and markets for inputs and exports inhibit agricultural activities, eroding the livelihoods and resilience of vulnerable families.²⁴ In the Gaza Strip, up to 35 percent of agricultural land is inaccessible due to Israeli military restrictions. The situation deteriorated after the 2014 escalation, when almost a third of agricultural land was damaged, and much of the most fertile land was left contaminated by explosive remnants. After the May 2021 hostilities, around 160 hectares of agricultural land were reported to have sustained damage.²⁵ The combination of shocks and restrictions has resulted in output and employment loss in Gaza's agricultural sector.²⁶ In the West Bank, agriculture-dependent communities – particularly Bedouins and herders in Area C – face challenges accessing water, grazing land and animal health services.

Climate change and vulnerability

17. The State of Palestine is characterized by high bio-physical and socio-economic vulnerability to climate change, combined with limited capacity to respond to projected and current effects of climate change.²⁷ Temperatures will rise in the area, resulting in increased water shortages and flooding which will further challenge food security. The capacity of Palestinians to cope with and adapt to these challenges is constrained due to their limited control over natural resources, especially land and water.

18. The State of Palestine adopted a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Programme of Action in 2010.²⁸ This outlines a roadmap with adaptation and mitigation measures. The State of Palestine also joined the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 2015, and signed the Paris Agreement in April 2016.

Education

19. Education is highly valued among Palestinians. In 2019, 97 percent of both girls and boys were enrolled in primary education, while 95 percent of boys and 87 percent of girls were enrolled in secondary education.²⁹ However, by the age of 15, nearly 25 percent of boys and 7 percent of girls who have enrolled have dropped out of school. Adolescent boys and children with disabilities are vulnerable to dropping out of school. Of children aged 6-15 years with disabilities, around a fifth of boys and 30 percent of girls have never been enrolled in school.³⁰

Gender

20. Palestinian society is predominantly patriarchal, and traditional gender roles cause multiple layers of discrimination and limit overall gender equality. Implementation of gender-related laws and policy commitments has been limited although the Palestinian Council of Ministers issued a general instruction that gender should be considered in planning and budgeting.³¹ In 2018, women-headed households made up 11 percent of all households in the State of Palestine,³² but accounted for almost 20 percent of families suffering from extreme poverty.

21. Average family monthly income for food-insecure households headed by women was equivalent to USD 548 in 2018 – below the average of USD 567 for food-insecure households headed by men and below the “deep” poverty line set at USD 553 per month per family. From 2011 to 2018, the unemployment rate among households headed by women increased from 28 to 47 percent, while for households headed by men it increased from 19 to 22 percent.³³

²⁴ FAO 2020. Humanitarian Response Plan.

²⁵ Damage was of the following kinds: footprint (44 percent), burned (41 percent) and crater (15 percent). FAO, 2021. Impact of the May escalation of hostilities on the agricultural area in the Gaza Strip

²⁶ Palestine Authority 2018. Palestinian National Voluntary Review on The Implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

²⁷ Feitselson, E., Tamimi, A. & Rosenthal, G. (2012). Climate change and security in the Israeli-Palestinian context.

²⁸ UNDP. 2010. Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Programme of Action

²⁹ UNESCO. 2021. Palestine Country Profile.

³⁰ UNICEF. 2021. Education and adolescents Programme Brief in Palestine.

³¹ State of Palestine. 2018. Palestinian National Voluntary Review On The Implementation Of The 2030 Agenda.

³² Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. 2018. Press release on the situation of women in Palestine.

³³ *ibid*

22. Overall participation of females in the labour force is lower than that of males, including in the civil service. For example, in 2018, in the public civil sector, just 11.3 percent of director generals were women.²² The unemployment rate for females aged 15 and over is 43 percent, as opposed to 22 percent for males.³⁴ Possibly reflecting a lack of comprehensive data, the State of Palestine is not given a rank or value in the United Nations' Gender Inequality Index.

23. There has been a decline in the number of currently or ever married women who have experienced gender-based violence from their husbands, from 37 percent in 2011 to 27 percent in 2019. However, psychological violence remains high for this category (57 percent in 2019). Psychological violence among unmarried women increased from 25 percent in 2011 to 39 percent in 2019.³⁵ Recent research found that the longstanding blockade of Gaza disproportionately affects women and girls.³⁶ The COVID-19 pandemic has also exposed women and girls to greater risks of abuse and violence.

Youth

24. Youth in the State of Palestine (females and males aged 15–29) constitute roughly a third of the population. Around 36 percent of youth have low levels of wellbeing, measured according to World Health Organization (WHO) criteria.³⁷ Palestinian youth face significant difficulties, including high rates of unemployment, poor living conditions, and heightened insecurity stemming from the occupation.³⁸ Before the pandemic, youth already faced bleak labour market prospects. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), less than one in five youth aged 15 to 24 were employed, and of those, 83 percent were employed only informally, compared with 47 percent of adults. Young workers have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, in terms loss of both of employment and of working-hours.³⁹

Migration, refugees and internally displaced people

25. The humanitarian response in the State of Palestine categorizes the population as “refugee” and “non-refugee”.⁴⁰ The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in the Near East is mandated to support the needs of Palestinian refugees⁴¹ while the non-refugee population is supported by the government, other United Nations agencies, including WFP,⁴² and NGOs. The West Bank hosts 871,537 registered refugees, around a quarter of whom live in 19 camps. The Gaza Strip is home to 1.4 million Palestinian refugees; of these, almost 600,000 live in eight recognized refugee camps managed by UNRWA. As their needs are addressed by UNRWA, with some exceptions, WFP does not provide services to State of Palestine refugees.

Humanitarian protection

26. Key protection concerns include forced displacements, recurrent conflict-related violence (mostly in Gaza), and settler violence in the West Bank. There are also severe restrictions on freedom of movement in both territories, and violations against children. The 15-year closure of the Gaza Strip continues to limit the population's access to basic social services and social assistance. The May 2021 escalation caused the deaths of civilians, displacement, damage to vital infrastructure, and shortages of water, food and other basic supplies in Gaza.

27. The 2022 Global Humanitarian Overview identified 2.1 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection.⁴³ It also found that prolonged stresses have left Palestinians less able to cope

³⁴ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. 2022. Briefing prepared for International Women's Day 8 March 2022

³⁵ Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics. 2019. Violence Survey in the Palestinian Society.

³⁶ Islamic Relief 2020. Gender-based violence against women and girls in Gaza, Protection and Inclusion framework

³⁷ Oxfam. 2021. Youth Wellbeing in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Oxfam Briefing Paper

³⁸ Ibid. p. 4

³⁹ ILO. 2021. The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, Report of the Director-General, p.17.

⁴⁰ Refugees are defined as the descendants of fathers who lost both home and means of livelihoods because of the declaration of Israel as an independent state in Palestine under British colonial rule; non-refugees are those who continued living in their original areas of residence after the 1948 conflict.

⁴¹ UNRWA. 2021. Where we work in Gaza.

⁴² WFP generally targets non-refugees, with the exception to providing in-kind assistance to refugees in area C in the West Bank who are jointly identified with UNRWA.

⁴³ OCHA. 2022. Global Humanitarian Overview 2022.

with sudden shocks, such as spikes in conflict, demolitions and natural or environmental hazards, climate change and effects of inadequate water, sanitation services and electricity. The Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) was developed to protect the rights of Palestinians living under occupation,⁴⁴ provide access to basic services for those who are vulnerable, and support the ability of Palestinians to cope with and overcome the effects of the protracted crisis, while more sustainable solutions are sought.

COVID-19 Pandemic

28. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the loss of livelihoods, and severely affected an already fragile public health system. The first local transmission cases were reported in August 2020, with numbers increasing rapidly. Schools closed for long periods, and remote learning modalities were activated to ensure continuity of education. The World Bank estimates that the pandemic led to a 2.2-percentage-point increase in the poverty rate in the West Bank and Gaza, to 35.6 percent. The increase was apparent in both the West Bank (from 16.4 percent to 19.1 percent) and Gaza (from 59.4 percent to 61.1 percent). It also considers that the newly poor are more likely to live in a women-headed household.⁴⁵ By the end of June 2022, almost 660,000 COVID-19 cases and over 5,600 deaths had been recorded.⁴⁶

29. The Ministry of Finance secured some support for its COVID-19 response and to maintain public services. UNRWA also received additional support to help it cope with the pandemic. In April 2020, the Humanitarian Country Team released an Inter-Agency COVID-19 Response Plan that sought to mobilize USD 41.9 million to implement the most urgent and critical activities.⁴⁷

International assistance

30. International development assistance to the State of Palestine has been decreasing over the last decade, and it fell acutely in 2018, reflecting the impact of a change in United States policy towards Palestine. Over the last two years Gulf donors also reduced their support as they formed strategic alliances with Israel under the 'Abraham Accords'. This affected both bilateral and multilateral development and humanitarian funding – and it hit the State of Palestine's budget hardest. As a share of GDP, aid to the State of Palestine's budget fell from 27 percent in 2008 to 1.8 percent in 2021.⁴⁸ UNRWA has operated in financial crisis since 2010, and in October 2021 UNRWA's High Commissioner stated that the agency was so short of funds that it may have to curtail some of its services to refugees.⁴⁹

31. The largest official development assistance funding donors between 2017 and 2020 are European Union (EU) institutions, Qatar, the United States and Germany.⁵⁰ The main humanitarian donors comprise the United Arab Emirates, Japan, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), the United States and Germany. There has long been a significant gap between humanitarian appeals and funds committed to the State of Palestine (see Figure 2 below).

⁴⁴ OCHA. 2021. Humanitarian Response Plan OPT

⁴⁵ World Bank. 2022. Palestinian Territories' Economic Monitoring Report — 10th May 2022, p.22

⁴⁶ WHO. 2022. Covid-19 Dashboard for Occupied Palestinian Territories.

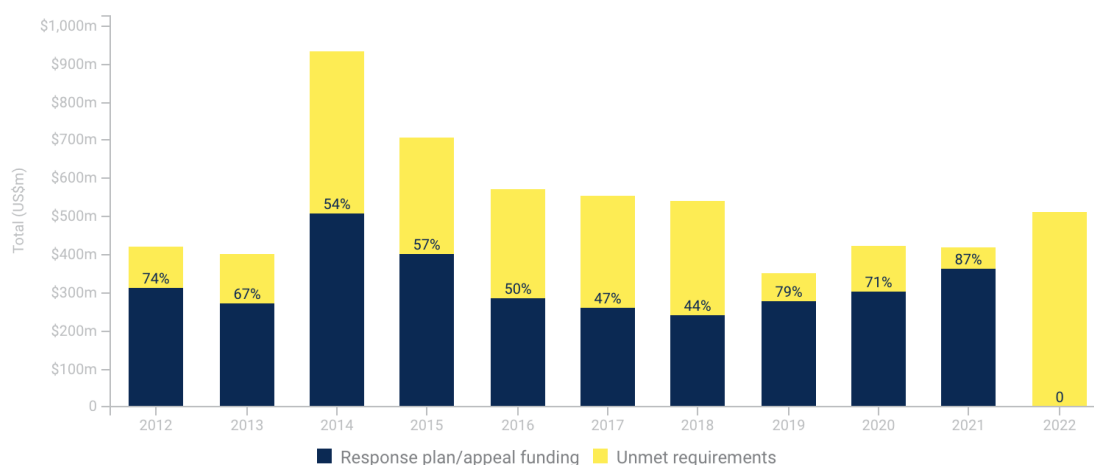
⁴⁷ UNCT. 2021. Occupied Palestinian Territories Covid 19 Response Plan.

⁴⁸ World Bank. 2021. Press release. May 9, 2022

⁴⁹ UNRWA. 2021. Evaluation of the UNRWA Medium-Term Strategy 2016-2022, Statement by UNRWA Commissioner-General, Mr Philippe Lazzarini, to the United Nations General Assembly's Fourth Committee

⁵⁰ United Nations agencies, including UNRWA, are not included in the top four official development assistance funding sources.

Figure 2: State of Palestine: funding against response plans and appeals (2011- 2021)



Amounts shown for the current year (far right bar) are for the year to date. No data is shown in years where there was no plan/appeal.

Source: OCHA FTS website, data extracted on 4 March 2022. The 2020 Appeal includes funding of USD 4.5 million for the COVID-19 response.

United Nations Development Assistance Framework

32. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) covers the period 2018-2022, and has a total budget of USD 1.26 billion. The UNDAF sets out how the expertise, capacity and resources of United Nations agencies support the implementation of the State of Palestine’s National Policy Agenda and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

33. The UNDAF’s priorities are: i) supporting the Palestinian path to statehood; ii) supporting equal access to accountable effective and responsive democratic governance for all Palestinians; iii) supporting sustainable and inclusive economic development; and iv) leaving no one behind – social development and protection. The UNDAF will be replaced by a new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) in 2023.

1.3. SUBJECT BEING EVALUATED

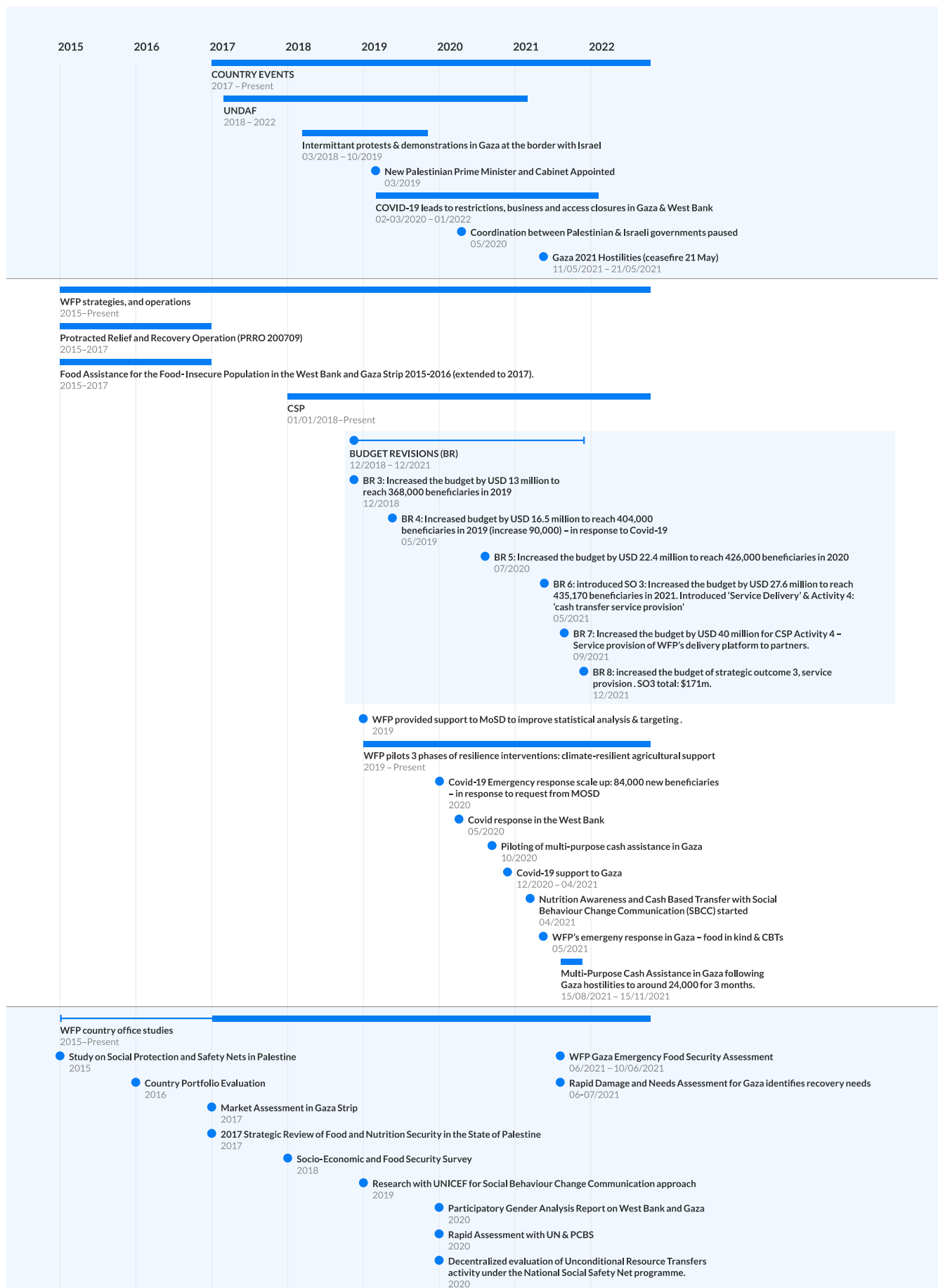
The evolution of WFP’s programme in the State of Palestine

34. WFP has provided support in the State of Palestine since 1991. Its first country strategy was designed for the period 2014-2016.⁵¹ With the goal of building food security in sustainable ways, the 2014-2016 strategy focused on three pillars: i) relief – meeting urgent food needs; ii) resilience – supporting resilient livelihoods and economic activity; and iii) preparedness – improving national capacity for emergency response. Key elements were: expanding the voucher modality; rolling out a conditional voucher programme to support agriculture and tree planting; scaling up national capacity development for emergency preparedness; and deploying cost-effective productive safety nets. During 2014-2017, the CO implemented several emergency operations (EMOPs), protracted relief and recovery operations (PRROs) and special operations.⁵² Figure 3 below depicts the Palestinian context and WFP’s operational overview from 2015 to 2022.

⁵¹ WFP. 2013. WFP Strategy in the State of Palestine, 2014-2016.

⁵² An outline of WFP’s programming between 2015 and 2017, including its strategic framework, beneficiaries, and donor base is presented in Annex 11, Overview of WFP’s programme 2015-2017.

Figure 3: State of Palestine context and operational overview



35. The strategic direction of the current CSP reflects lessons and recommendations from evaluations and studies commissioned by WFP. WFP's performance under its country portfolio between 2011 and mid-2015 was evaluated in 2016 and the findings informed the 2018-2022 CSP.⁵³ Acting on the Country Portfolio Evaluation recommendations, WFP discontinued its prior school feeding activity and its resilience-building interventions involving food assistance for assets and food assistance for training. It continued to expand its nutrition awareness activities, and supported the national social safety net. WFP also addressed evaluation recommendations related to human resources, partnerships and monitoring of livelihood indicators as part of its work with the Ministry of Social Development. It committed to continuing to seek opportunities to link with livelihood activities.⁵⁴ In 2016, the CO commissioned a National Strategic Review of Food and Nutrition Security to inform its future approach.⁵⁵ The study made recommendations for improving programme design and implementation, several of which WFP took forward in the 2018-2022 CSP.

36. The strategic shifts the CO committed to making in the current CSP were: a) targeting only severely food-insecure non-refugee populations; and b) moving to direct cash-based transfers (CBTs) and away from in-kind assistance. Reflecting its new more focused approach, the original CSP presented to the Executive Board in November 2017 set just two strategic outcomes (SO), namely:

- **SO 1:** Non-refugees, poor and severely food insecure Palestinians (primarily in Gaza and Area C in the West Bank) have improved dietary diversity by 2022.
- **SO 2:** Enhanced capacities of national institutions and systems to identify, target and assist food insecure vulnerable populations in the State of Palestine by 2022.

37. A third SO – 'Palestinians benefit from the services provided to partners through WFP's delivery platform' – was added through budget revision (BR) 6 in 2021, and with this Activity 4, 'Service provision of WFP's delivery platform to partners' was added (see Table 1). Activity 4 is similar in nature to Activity 3 of SO 2 but was added under a distinct outcome as it corresponds to a bilateral service to provide financial management and delivery of cash-based assistance to humanitarian and development partners in the State of Palestine. Corporate regulations require WFP to report separately on both resources received and activities implemented through such agreements. In line with WFP monitoring systems, recipients under activity 4 are not reported as WFP beneficiaries.

38. WFP uses three transfer modalities to deliver general food assistance: CBT, multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) and in-kind food parcels. Most is provided through CBT in the form of electronic vouchers.

39. Table 1 below provides an overview of the four activities and, in brief, how they have changed during the CSP period.

⁵³ WFP. 2016. Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) State of Palestine: An evaluation of WFP's Portfolio (2011 – mid 2015) Evaluation Report measuring results, sharing lessons January 2016. See para 33 of the State of Palestine Country Strategic Plan (2018–2022).

⁵⁴ CPE 2016 Para 33

⁵⁵ Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute. 2017. Strategic Review of Food and Nutrition Security in Palestine. page 85.

Box 1: Overview of State of Palestine CSP strategic outcomes and changes in activities (2018-2022)

SO 1: Non-refugees, poor and severely food insecure Palestinians (primarily in Gaza and Area C in the West Bank) have improved dietary diversity by 2022

Activity 1: Provision of unconditional food assistance (including through CBT and in-kind modalities) and nutrition information to poor and food –insecure households

Unconditional food assistance: CBT are delivered using electronic food vouchers topped up with cash and redeemable in a network of local retail shops. In October 2020, a multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) pilot was launched for families living below the deep poverty line in Gaza. WFP continued partnering with UNRWA to distribute food to Bedouins and herders in Area C of the West Bank (began in 2009).

Nutrition: In 2018, WFP provided nutritional counselling, which it paused in 2019 to then adopt a social and behavioural change communication (SBCC) approach.

SO 2: Enhanced capacities of national institutions and systems to identify, target and assist food insecure vulnerable populations in the State of Palestine by 2022.

Activity 2: Provision of technical support to national ministries and institutions for food security strategy implementation and National Social Safety Net reform

Support to state capacity: WFP supported the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) with sex- and age-disaggregated data collection and gender-sensitive food security assessments. It supported the capacity of the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) with technical assistance for implementation of the Social Development Sector Strategy and strengthening of the national social safety net programme.

Resilience: WFP expanded Activity 2 to include an initiative to strengthen the resilience of its CBT beneficiaries, providing families with climate-resilient agricultural assets and training to help them increase the production of fresh vegetables and fodder for livestock.

Activity 3: Provision of a CBT platform to multi-sectoral partners and the Government: WFP provided a platform for the United Nations and international NGOs to deliver their humanitarian supplies in Gaza and the West Bank through vouchers. This was scaled up during the COVID-19 lockdown.

SO 3: Palestinians benefit from the services provided to partners through WFP's delivery platform

Activity 4: Service provision of WFP's delivery platform to partners: SO 3, Activity 4 was added in BR06 and further expanded through BR07 and BR08. It is similar to the provision of services to multi-sectoral partners under Activity 3. WFP facilitated the distribution of cash in Gaza on behalf of the United Nations, which acted on behalf of a non-traditional donor.

Sources: WFP's annual country reports (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021) and evaluation interviews

40. The CSP contains expectations on cross-cutting issues with indicators. Annual reports consistently report against seven cross-cutting indicators, which equate to 'ways of working', and are underpinned by the following four aims:

- Affected populations can hold WFP and partners accountable for meeting their hunger needs in a manner that reflects their views and preferences.
- Affected populations can benefit from WFP programmes in a manner that ensures and promotes their safety, dignity and integrity
- Improved gender equality and women's empowerment among WFP-assisted population
- Targeted communities benefit from WFP programmes in a manner that does not harm the environment.

The intervention logic of the CSP

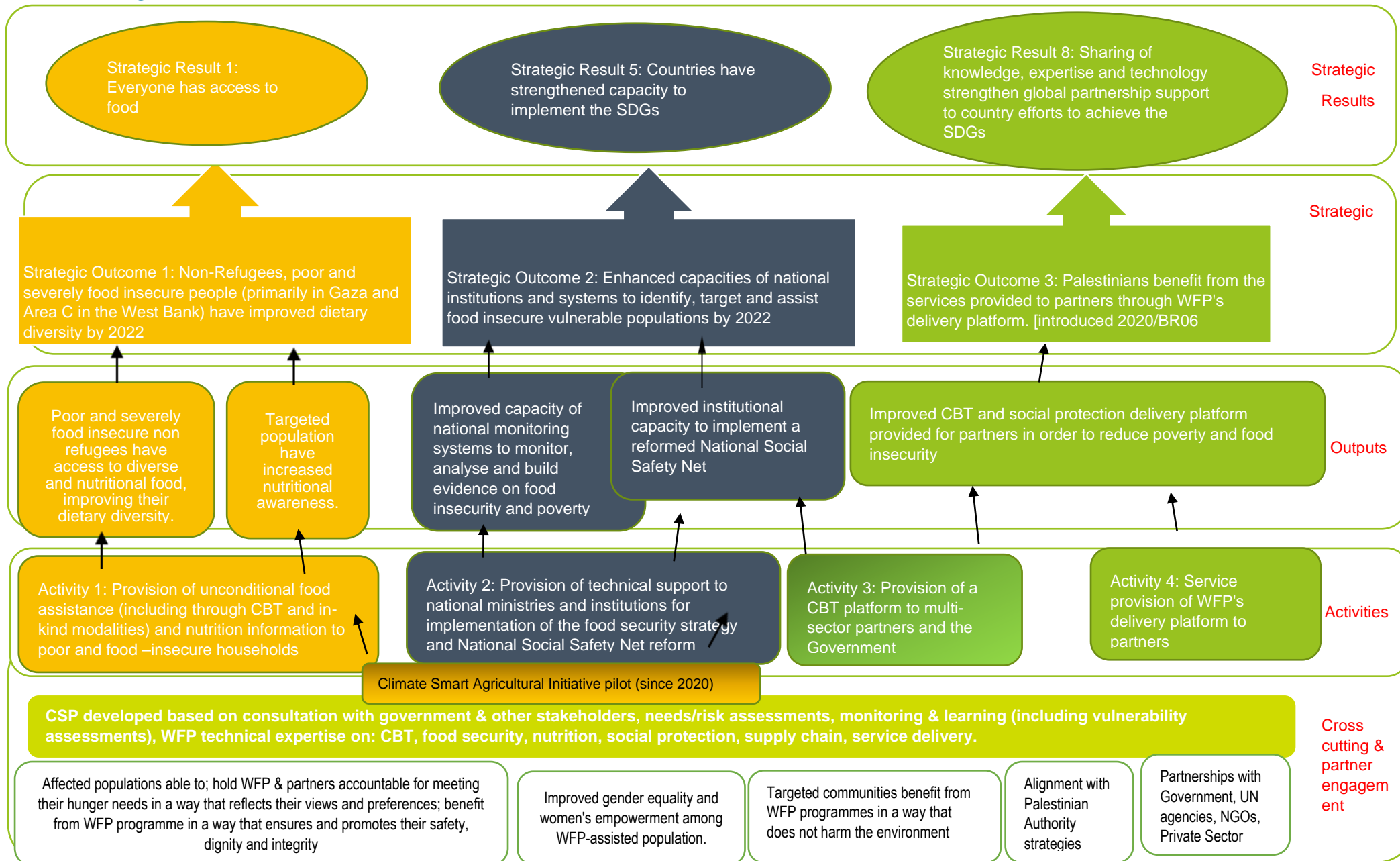
41. The intervention logic of the CSP is set out in the original and updated logframes and a Line of Sight (LoS). The CSP did not include an overarching theory of change (ToC) or individual ToC for each of the outcomes, as this was not a recommended tool when the CSP was formulated. In collaboration with the CO, the evaluation team reconstructed an overarching ToC for the whole CSP (Figure 4), which maps the main causal pathways from inputs and activities to outputs, strategic outcomes and impact.⁵⁶

42. The CSP made a series of assumptions relating to each strategic objective:

- SO 1. The political and security environments remain relatively stable. Beneficiaries will use cash saved from food/voucher assistance to supplement their diets; targeting of beneficiaries is effective; the distribution system reaches beneficiaries; food prices remain relatively stable; the implementation of the CSP is flexible to adapt to changes in conditions brought about by external events; there is no sudden change in funding activity of donors.
- SO 2: National institutions are engaged and willing and able to work. National institutions are willing to dedicate technical staff to actively participate – and the Government can provide services/support in line with its policies.
- SO 3: Signed agreements are respected. The platform meets the needs of different stakeholders for delivery of different types of assistance using one platform and one card.

⁵⁶ This is based on the latest versions of the CSP logframe, Line of Sight, the TOC for SO 1 and consultation with the CO.

Figure 4: Overarching Reconstructed TOC for the CSP



Budget and levels of funding by outcome area

43. The original CSP budget approved by the Executive Board in November 2017 was USD 241,418,015. As of January 2022, it had risen to USD 506,396,446, reflecting six BRs (two additional BRs did not affect the CSP Needs Based Plan).⁵⁷

44. Table 1 shows the CSP cumulative financial overview by strategic outcome and activity as of February 2022. The operational requirements for Activity 1 under SO 1 constituted 92 percent of the original Needs Based Plan (NBP) and 61 percent of the revised NBP. Activity 1 accounts for 55 percent of the resources allocated to the CSP. The needs for Activity 2 under SO 2 remained the same, with 0.1 percent in the CSP's original and revised NBPs. SO 3, introduced by BR 6, accounts for 34.5 percent of the revised NBP. The percentage of expenditure to allocated resources as of February 2022 was 51 percent, with variations across activities and SOs.

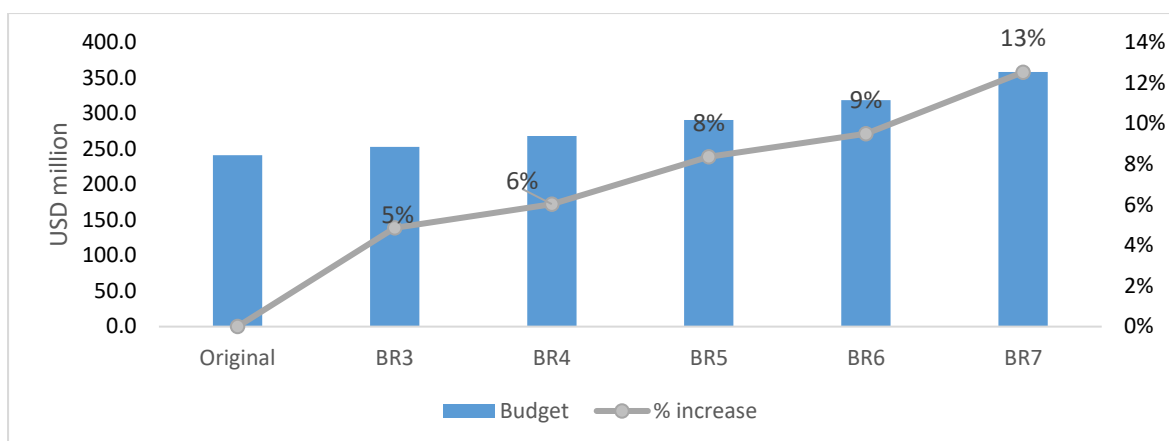
Table 1: Cumulative financial overview by SO/activity (USD) from 2018 to February 2022 (excluding indirect support costs)

SO	Activity	Original NBP (2018-2022)	% over total	Current NBP [entire CSP cycle]	% over total	Allocated contribution [as of February 2022]	% over total	Expenditure [as of February 2022]	% over allocated contribution
SO 1	1	207,809,514	92%	296,190,538	61%	272,651,812	55%	191,606,996	70%
SO 2	2	250,000	0%	250,000	0%	134,760	0%	69,568	0%
	3	3,074,406	1%	7,288,732	1%	4,684,206	1%	2,245,773	1%
SO 3	4	-	0%	167,822,500	35%	167,641,375	34%	49,613,709	18%
Non SO-specific		-	0%	-	0%	27,280,502	6%	-	0%
DSC		14,490,393	6%	14,374,616	3%	20,207,073	4%	8,321,406	3%
Grand total		225,624,313	100%	485,926,386	100%	492,599,728	100%	251,857,452	92%

Source: WFP, 2021 State of Palestine Annual Country Report

Figure 5: CSP financial needs (USD million) from original NBP to BR 8

⁵⁷ These amounts include indirect support costs, while Table 2 does not include ISC. BR01 (2017) and BR02 (2018) amended the ISC and introduced changes as per a WFP corporate budget simplification exercise.



Source: WFP Original CSP and BRs compiled by Evaluation Team

Beneficiaries' data

45. The table below shows how the number of beneficiaries reached by WFP activities differed over the CSP period, and the extent to which WFP provided support to the planned number of beneficiaries.

Table 2 Planned and actual beneficiaries by SO from 2018-2021

Strategic Outcome 1: Non-refugees, poor and severely food insecure people in the State of Palestine (primarily in Gaza and Area C in the West Bank) have improved dietary diversity by 2022				
Activity 01: Provision of unconditional food assistance (including through CBT and in-kind modalities) and nutrition information for poor and food-insecure households ⁵⁸				
Year	Modality	Planned	Actual	% Actual vs planned
2018	CBT and in-kind	368,700	353,616	95.90%
	Number of men receiving WFP-supported nutrition counselling	2,800	2,724	97%
	Number of women receiving WFP-supported nutrition counselling	10,000	10,422	104%
2019	CBT and in-kind	404,000	343,434	85%
	Nutrition counselling interventions	5,000	N/A	N/A
2020	CBT and in-kind	426,000	431,862	101.40%
	Tailored SBCC interventions (all women)	265	264	99.60%
2021	CBT and in-kind	435170	478431	110%
	SBCC	665	775	116.50%

⁵⁸ Participants of nutrition sessions are CBT or In-kind food assistance beneficiaries.

Strategic Outcome 2: Enhanced capacities of national institutions and systems to identify, target and assist food insecure vulnerable populations in the State of Palestine

Activity 2: Provision of technical support to national ministries and institutions for food security strategy implementation and National Social Safety Net reform

2018	Number of government staff members trained in food security monitoring systems	30	30	100%
2019		20	20	100%
2020		30	30	100%
2021		45	45	100%

Activity 3: Provision of a CBT platform to multi-sectoral partners and Government

2018	Number of agencies using common cash-based transfer platform	2	2	100%
2019		1	3	300%
2020		1	7	700%
2021		3	9	300%

Strategic Outcome 3: Palestinians benefit from the services provided to partners through WFP's delivery platform.

Activity 4 Service provision of WFP's delivery platform to partners

2021	Number of services provided	3	9	300%
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Source: WFP ACRs 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021

46. BRs 3, 4 and 5 significantly increased the number of beneficiaries WFP aimed to support, increasing from 314,000 in 2018 to 435,170 as of January 2022 (see Table 3). BR 6 introduced the CSP's third strategic outcome and Activity 4 – for the provision of 'on-demand cash transfer services'. It also increased the budget for SBCC interventions. The 7th BR (September 2021) increased the budget for SO 3 (Activity 4) to enable WFP to provide humanitarian assistance to vulnerable households in Gaza through its cash transfer platform. BR 7 did not change the number of WFP beneficiaries as it relates to service provision. BR 8 primarily increased the budget for strategic outcome 3 (service provision) to enable WFP to continue facilitating the provision of humanitarian assistance to vulnerable households in Gaza in 2022 through its cash transfer platform, and it did not entail any strategic changes in operations, though it entailed an overall budgetary increase of 40 percent. Further details on beneficiary numbers by modality and year can be found in Annex 5.

Table 3 Planned beneficiaries for the entire CSP cycle, by BR

BR 3 Increase of 54,700		BR 4 Increase of 90,000		BR 5 Increase of 22,000		BR 6 Increase of 9,170		BR 7 No change		BR 8 No change	
Planned beneficiaries	Amended After BR	Planned beneficiaries	Amended After BR	Planned beneficiaries	Amended After BR	Planned beneficiaries	Amended After BR	Planned beneficiaries	Amended After BR	Planned beneficiaries	Amended After BR
314,000	368,000	314,000	404,000	404,000	426,000	426,000	435,170	435,170	435,170	435,170	435,170

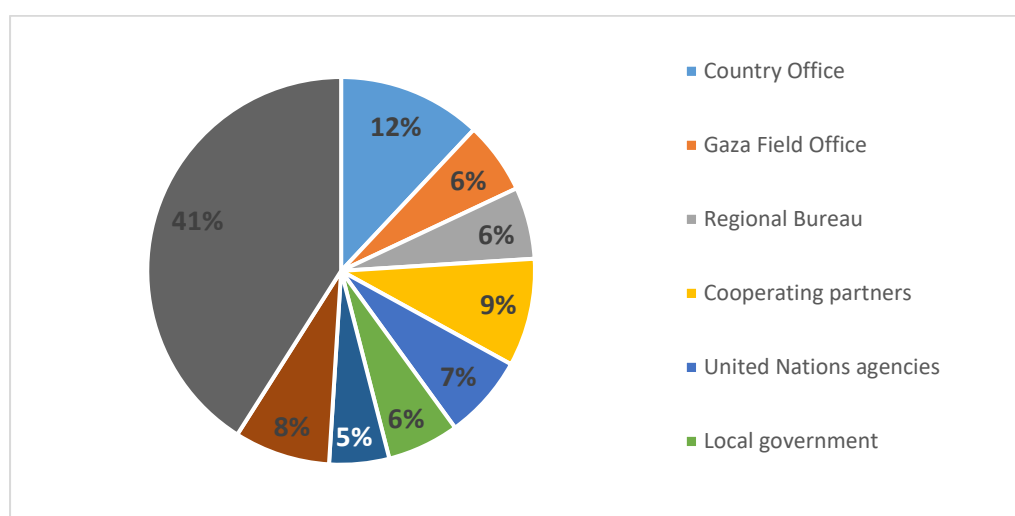
Source: CSP Budget Revisions 03, 04, 05, 06, 07 and 08

1.4. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY, LIMITATIONS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

47. The general methodological approach followed OEV's framework for CSPEs, in line with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) framework and quality standards for evaluation. The evaluation team developed an evaluation matrix (see Annex 3) based on the common set of evaluation questions applied to all CSPEs and covering the following evaluation criteria: relevance; efficiency; effectiveness; coherence; and sustainability; as well as connectedness and coverage. The evaluation used a mixed method theory-based approach relying on contribution analysis principles. The team adopted an iterative, consultative approach with regular exchanges with OEV and the CO throughout the design, data collection and analysis phases, to ensure most relevant and recent sources of data were included in the analysis.

48. Following the approval of the inception report, the evaluation team refined the methodology and analytical framework and began desk research and analysis, followed by primary data collection from 10 January to 2 February 2022. Remote in-depth interviews were conducted with 64 representatives from WFP at country, regional and headquarters level, and with CPs, the Government, donors, and United Nations family stakeholders (See Annex 4 for a list of stakeholders interviewed). The in-country evaluation team carried out in-depth and on-site interviews and observations with 44 beneficiaries and shop owners between 24 January and 2 February. The selection of sites was based on three criteria: representation of activities and modalities; geography, and gender (See Annex 2 for sample). The evaluation team carried out a fieldwork exit debrief with the CO on 2 February, and a workshop with preliminary conclusions and recommendations on 21 February. The findings were further substantiated and developed based on the evaluation matrix and presented in this report.

Figure 6: Number and type of stakeholders interviewed



Source: Evaluation Team compilation

49. The evaluation team ensured that the evaluation process and deliverables complied with the requirements of WFP Centralized Evaluation Quality Assurance System (CEQAS). The Landell-Mills International quality assurer ensured the quality of all deliverables, in compliance with both WFP and Landell-Mills standards.

Limitations

50. The COVID-19 pandemic and the wave of infections due to the Omicron variant disrupted primary data collection, including the ability of team members to work and of the stakeholders to be interviewed. Some interviews were re-scheduled several times. Focus group discussions were substituted by in-depth interviews with a smaller number of beneficiaries. These were complemented with raw primary qualitative data provided by the CO, and in-depth analysis of studies carried out by the CO and other stakeholders in the sector.

51. The current WFP logframe does not reflect all the activities carried out by the CO, particularly the resilience activities. This limited the evaluation's ability to comprehensively assess the contributions of some activities and outputs to higher-level and longer-term results. That said, the CO's monitoring unit collects and reports on such data separately, which enabled assessment of their performance.

52. The evaluation team conducted an evaluability assessment at inception phase, and in consultation with the CO and OEV proposed some mitigating measures to overcome challenges. Limitations are further described in Annex 2. Some information remains limited because some activities were recently launched (such as the cash transfers under Activity 4 and the SBCC interventions under Activity 1). Additionally, documentation around the capacity strengthening interventions with national institutions was limited, as the interventions were based on continuous discussions with the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), and a large part of the support was provided on demand.

Ethical Considerations

53. The evaluation conformed to the United Nations Evaluation Group's (UNEG's) ethical guidelines. This included, but was not limited to, ensuring informed consent prior to data collection; protecting the privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of participants; ensuring cultural sensitivity (including dedicating an interviewer of the same gender to interview a beneficiary); ensuring fair recruitment of participants (including women); and ensuring that the evaluation results would do no harm to participants or their communities.

54. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the planning, timing, and management of the evaluation took account of the safety needs of team members and participants. The evaluation did not request any team

member or participant to travel or engage in any activity that was in contravention of national/international guidance relating to COVID-19.

2. Evaluation findings

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

EQ 1.1 To what extent is the CSP relevant to national policies, plans, strategies, and goals, including achievement of the national Sustainable Development Goals?

Summary

The CSP is relevant to the State of Palestine's national priorities. It was developed in consultation with central ministries and is appropriately aligned with national policies and strategies. The CSP is also aligned with subnational strategies and plans and is well aligned with government commitments to the SDGs 1, 2 and 17.

55. WFP's CSP is in alignment with key policies and strategies in the State of Palestine. WFP supports or co-leads the development of some of these policies as well as their implementation. More specifically, the CSP – through its cash, voucher and in-kind support to the poor – contributes to the government's targets for food security and poverty. The National Policy Agenda (NPA) identified the policy intervention 'Ensure Food Security' as contributing towards the National Policy of 'Meeting Basic Needs of our Communities' (NPA 2017-2022).⁵⁹ SO 1 Activity 1 directly contributes to this policy by providing unconditional food assistance and nutrition interventions. Through SO 2 Activity 2, WFP also indirectly contributes to the policy by supporting the Government to better target the poor through its livelihoods activities.

56. The CSP also contributes to sector-specific strategy objectives. For example, the CSP appears to be well aligned with the Social Development Sector Strategy (SDSS) (2017-22).⁶⁰ WFP made a strategic choice to support the Government and the social development sector with a focus on the following two objectives:

- *First strategic objective:* 'Poverty Reduction, contributing to sectoral policy: (1) organize and coordinate cash and non-cash social assistance through systems; and (2) institutionalize and develop an economic empowerment programme for poor families through financial resources but also legislation'.
- *Fifth strategic objective:* 'strengthening the governance of the social protection sector and developing institutional arrangements' by supporting 'follow up and evaluation for the social protection sector'.

57. A central feature of CSP Strategic Outcome 2 and its Activity 2, is improving the Government's institutional capacity. For example, WFP recruited (along with the United Nations Children's Fund – UNICEF) a team of experts to support the Budget and Planning Group for the strategy itself. It also supported the Government to deliver the national social safety net. This is in line with WFP's corporate commitment to help strengthen national capability and ownership,⁶¹ and is critical given the State of Palestine Government's unique status, and its state-building agenda.

58. The Government's strategy also mandates a shift from relief and protection into social development.⁶² WFP is aligned with this shift, by piloting livelihoods activities with its partners (SO 2- Activity 2), as well as supporting the implementation of projects through the Palestinian National Institution for Economic Empowerment.⁶³

⁵⁹ State of Palestine. 2016. National Policy Agenda (2017-2022) Putting Citizens First

⁶⁰ Ministry of Social Development. 2017. Social Development Sector Strategy (2017-22). 2017. Social Development Sector Strategy (2017-22)

⁶¹ WFP. 2016. WFP Strategic Plan 2017-2021

⁶² The SDSS (2017-22) states "consolidating transformative social protection programs, through the approach of empowerment and complementarity in the policies among all sustainable development stakeholders and strengthening sustainability of livelihood for households and social education" (page 9)

⁶³ Ministry of Social Development. The Updated Social Development Sector Strategy 2021-2023- (page 40).

59. The CSP is aligned with the National Nutrition Policy, Strategies and Action Plan (NNPSAP) (2017-2022)⁶⁴ and particularly to priority 2 “Prevention and treatment of micronutrient deficiencies”. This is mainly through SO 1 – Activity 1 by means of direct provision of food assistance, as well as by supporting nutrition interventions and awareness raising campaigns.

60. The CSP is aligned with National Policy 18, “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment” under National Priority 7 of the NPA (2017-2022). The two main aims are to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against girls and women, and to remove barriers that prevent the full participation of women. There is no CO gender strategy or action plan that specifically identifies gender entry points for the various activities, but there is evidence that the CO contributes to the national policies concerning gender equality and empowerment: this is further discussed under EQ 2.2.

61. During the development of the CSP the CO consulted with central ministries and relevant public bodies to ensure broad alignment of the CSP with government objectives. Interviews with WFP and representatives of central government confirm that such consultations took place.

62. WFP continued to engage with the Government as a new prime minister and cabinet, appointed in April 2019, introduced new policies on economic development and agriculture. Most engagement between WFP and the Government has been with sectoral ministries. Memoranda of understanding signed by both parties formalize their agreements. This has helped ensure that all support and engagement is underpinned by explicit expectations and commitments.

63. It is challenging to assess the extent to which the CSP is aligned with the Government’s technical and capacity gaps, as there was no commonly agreed comprehensive capacity needs assessment. The CSP sets out at a relatively general level how it will enhance the Government’s technical capability and capacity. It states that WFP will enhance ‘the capacities of national institutions and systems to identify, target and assist severely food-insecure vulnerable populations by working with the Government to improve the NSSN and strengthen national food security monitoring capacity.’⁶⁵ Given that these systems required – and continue to require – development, WFP’s intention to focus attention on improving the national social safety net are appropriate and aligned. Other development partners have been active in the sector, and it would have been appropriate for WFP to conduct a capacity needs assessment to determine priority capacity gaps. This said, all WFP’s technical capacity strengthening activities responded to specific government requests.

64. The CSP is well aligned with the Government’s SDG commitments and priorities. The CSP commits WFP to focusing its activities on achieving SDG 2, either by directly targeting severely food-insecure and vulnerable populations for assistance or by enhancing the capacities of national institutions and systems to identify, target and assist severely food-insecure vulnerable populations. Through its contribution to the national social safety net, WFP also contributes to SDG 1. Finally, CSP strategic outcomes 2 and 3 also contribute to SDG 17. The Government reports on SDG progress. And WFP helps the State of Palestine to ensure that the data it submits are appropriate.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Ministry of Health. 2016. Palestinian National Nutrition Policy, Strategies & Action Plan (NNPSAP).

⁶⁵ WFP. 2018. Country Strategic Plan, p10

⁶⁶ State of Palestine. 2018. Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the implementation of the 2030 *Agenda*

EQ 1.2 To what extent did the CSP address the needs of the most vulnerable people in the country to ensure that no one is left behind?

Summary

The CSP is designed to address the needs of the most vulnerable. Targeting is informed by successive Socio-Economic and Food Security Surveys, and other food security and nutrition analysis supported by WFP. The effectiveness of WFP's targeting was evaluated by a decentralized evaluation using statistically valid sampling in 2020, which found that WFP was effective at targeting the most vulnerable. The Government's targeting, which WFP uses in both the West Bank and Gaza, is being revised but a lack of resources means that its lists risk being outdated. That said, the CO undertakes regular robust post-distribution monitoring. These rolling assessments of the poverty status of beneficiaries give confidence that support is going to beneficiaries who meet WFP's criteria.

65. For SO 1 Activity 1 (the largest in the portfolio providing direct assistance to beneficiaries), WFP uses status (refugee and non-refugee) and vulnerability-based targeting. WFP generally targets non-refugees, with the exception of providing in-kind assistance to refugees in area C in the West Bank, who are identified with UNRWA. With that exception, WFP uses the national Socio-Economic and Food Security Surveys (conducted every two years) to assess the situation of vulnerable geographic areas and groups to guide its targeting.

66. Once geographic locations are identified, WFP identifies beneficiary households either through the Government or its partners. The MoSD uses the proxy means testing (PMT) formula (developed and updated with World Bank support) to qualify households to receive assistance under the national social safety net programme, and this is now supplemented by a Food Consumption Score (FCS) index, developed with WFP support. The means testing considers the severity and vulnerability of the MoSD caseload, by using a food consumption score and demographic vulnerability criteria (disability, gender of head of household and age).⁶⁷ WFP's partners in Gaza apply WFP's vulnerability and food security criteria.⁶⁸

67. WFP's targeting approach is appropriate. The decentralized evaluation conducted a review of MoSD data for all 34,318 household beneficiaries and found that 87 percent of them are indeed in deep poverty. WFP receives the potential list of beneficiaries from the MoSD, UNRWA and other partners, verifies the list by cross-checking with them, and conducts post-distribution monitoring (PDM) for a representative sample on a rolling basis. WFP conducts its own surveys to identify potential beneficiaries in Gaza not on the MoSD list.

68. Stakeholders interviewed noted that while the targeting approach is designed to identify the most in need, it does not guarantee that no one is left behind or that needs are fully addressed. This is due to several factors, some of which are outside WFP's control (such as insufficient resources), while others could be influenced by WFP, particularly the targeting approach of the Government and the mechanism/tools used (which ultimately affect WFP's targeting). Interviews with stakeholders noted that **registering people** onto the system can take a very long time (sometimes months) due to government shortages of human and financial resources and inefficiencies (for example, data collection is largely still paper-based).⁶⁹ The result is that government targeting systems may exclude some of the most vulnerable – especially as their status has changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. CP and United Nations interviews indicate that the 'new poor', aware that the Government has ceased payment since April 2021, have not tried to register with the MoSD as they know they will not receive social safety net payments. This means that the MoSD list, from which WFP draws its non-Area C West Bank beneficiaries and some of its Gaza beneficiaries, will become progressively more outdated. Hence, the poor are left to be identified through different agencies such as WFP. These problems, as a stakeholder noted, inevitably leave some people behind. However, it is worth noting that work has been ongoing since 2020 to strengthen the Government's system for identifying the

⁶⁷ WFP. 2021. Palestine Country Brief September 2021 and November 2021

⁶⁸ WFP's Gaza partners during the CSP period are Oxfam and Maan for in-kind support and Global Communities for CBT vouchers.

⁶⁹ Key informant interview with cooperating partner

poor, with assistance from the World Bank. The PMT formula is being updated to reflect new consumption patterns. The MoSD is planning to combine the updated PMT formula with a multi-dimensional poverty index, and so aims to factor in shocks at household level. Beneficiary eligibility committee meetings are held regularly to review lists. Once such improvements to the targeting systems are fully implemented, these shortcomings should be addressed.

69. While more than 70 percent of Gazans receive assistance in the form of CBTs, it is also the case that WFP chose to focus (due to resources constraints) on providing CBT support to the most deprived governorates of the West Bank.⁷⁰ By virtue of the fact that **some of the most vulnerable will also live in areas of the West Bank not covered by WFP**, some will have not received support. Following recent discussions with the MoSD, the CO is reviewing this geographical focus and is looking to provide CBTs to additional beneficiaries on the MoSD list who reside in other parts of the West Bank. This will involve the accrediting of new partner shops.

70. **The CO undertakes regular and robust PDM. This is normally carried out through field visits, although in 2020 WFP shifted to remote monitoring due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.** WFP conducts rolling assessments of the poverty status of beneficiaries, and these systems give confidence to the targeting approach. Laudably, the CO has also sought support from other agencies to meet the beneficiaries' non-food needs – including housing for those who lost their homes in the May 2021 Gaza hostilities; and the special needs of deaf children who lacked any access to specialized support.

71. Nutrition or SBCC interventions and livelihoods/resilience interventions currently target CBT beneficiaries, with additional criteria. WFP relies on Activity 1 beneficiaries to identify beneficiaries that fit within the criteria for each of the specific interventions. For example, the SBCC intervention targets CBT beneficiaries who are pregnant women, lactating mothers or mothers of children aged 0–5-years. Similarly, the livelihoods intervention also targets CBT beneficiaries (non-refugees who are registered with the MoSD) who have basic assets and are willing to participate in the project. Within this group, women-headed households are prioritized.⁷¹ Evidence suggests that these criteria are not sufficiently tailored to the different needs and capabilities of the different beneficiary groups, particularly for the livelihoods activities, nor that consultations took place to decide on the modality of assistance under Activity 1 (CBT, in-kind, MPC) or the type of livelihoods project. This is further explored under EQ2.2.

72. For the capacity strengthening intervention under SO 2, WFP works closely with partners including ILO and UNICEF to support the Government to improve its social protection system, particularly for the disabled and the elderly. Under this activity WFP supported the development of a comprehensive database of persons with disabilities for the MoSD, which will be used to enable better targeting and provision of assistance to these groups.

73. For SO 3, WFP is a service provider and does not play any role in relation to targeting.

EQ 1.3 To what extent has WFP's strategic positioning remained relevant throughout the implementation of the CSP in light of changing context, national capacities, and needs?

Summary

WFP adapted its strategic positioning effectively throughout CSP implementation so that it remained relevant to the context, government policies and changing needs. It adapted effectively to the operational challenges and increased needs caused by COVID-19. WFP's partners praised the speed and comprehensiveness of its response to the Gaza hostilities in May 2021, and the aftermath.

74. **WFP has shown its ability to adapt and deliver effectively in rapidly changing contexts in the State of Palestine.** WFP's response to the May 2021 Gaza hostilities was swift and perceived as highly effective. WFP mobilized rapidly to address emergency needs. Largely using its electronic voucher system,

⁷⁰ There is an exception, during COVID-19 corporate funding enabled WFP to provide support to all governorates.

⁷¹ WFP. 2020. Food Security and Climate Resilience in Palestine, Overview and conclusions of a first round of experiments.

WFP increased the transfer value to its existing beneficiaries, temporarily supported approximately 100,000 new people during the escalation, and added 20,000 individuals for longer-term support. Furthermore, as part of its emergency preparedness efforts WFP had already signed contracts with bakeries in all the governorates of the Gaza Strip, ensuring that bread was available throughout the conflict to those taking shelter in assigned locations. In the Palestinian context, the evaluation found that the CBT platform is an excellent emergency response tool, provided shops have access to food stocks.

75. **From the second day of the May escalation, WFP provided internally displaced people taking shelter in UNRWA schools with ready-to-eat rations**, deploying its Gazan emergency food stocks. It subsequently added many of those affected particularly severely to its multi-purpose cash pilot, enabling them to access larger sums to rebuild their lives. In interviews, WFP's partners commented: "they were impressive", and that WFP was "quick, efficient, responsive and dynamic – they were the first with UNRWA able to support those in Gaza". They were also praised for the way they shared information and kept the broader humanitarian and donor community informed about the food security situation.

76. **WFP adapted its response effectively to address the challenges caused by COVID-19.** It adjusted its systems so that all its support continued without interruption, while reducing face-to-face contact through remote monitoring. Those with food vouchers continued to be able to redeem their food entitlements from shops in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; distribution of in-kind food also continued uninterrupted.⁷² WFP also created WhatsApp groups to help beneficiaries communicate with each other and with WFP throughout the pandemic-19. These adaptations were perceived positively by stakeholders and beneficiaries, and enabled the assistance to continue.

77. **Responding to a government request, WFP scaled up its assistance to make CBT payments to new households severely affected by the economic impact of COVID-19.** In 2020 it added over 84,000 new people in governorates where it had not previously provided support; it also gave some beneficiaries additional money each month.⁷³ Furthermore, WFP offered its platform to others to use to provide assistance. One donor interviewee noted of WFP: "they were among the first partners to respond to COVID-19, ahead of other agencies".

78. **WFP also adapted to changes in policy priorities and government requests.** For example, through its climate-resilient agriculture initiative, it is seeking to align with the Ministry of Agriculture's sectoral strategy for agriculture (2020-2022) which encourages a shift to a 'cluster approach'.⁷⁴

79. **In terms of nutrition, there is evidence that WFP is partially fulfilling its commitment to the Government's plan, with support to two of three areas identified by the Government.** Through its recent National Implementation Plan for food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture (NIP 2020-2022), the Government identified three main areas for contributions from United Nations agencies, including WFP.⁷⁵ These are supporting national laboratory capacities; promoting a holistic school nutrition initiative; and SBCC. In line with its core mandate, WFP opted to support the second and third contribution areas.

⁷² To reduce the need for contact, in September and October 2020 food was delivered directly to households when restrictions were most severe in the Gaza Strip.

⁷³ WFP. 2020. Annual Country Report 2020

⁷⁴ Ministry of Agriculture. 2016. Agriculture Sector Strategy 2020-22

⁷⁵ This is part of the Ministry of Agriculture's 2019 'National Food and Nutrition Security Policy 2030', prepared by the SDG 2 Working Group.

EQ 1.4 To what extent is the CSP coherent and aligned with the wider UN and include appropriate strategic partnerships based on the comparative advantage of WFP in the country?

Summary

The CSP is coherent and aligned with the wider United Nations. It includes appropriate strategic partnerships. Whilst WFP's comparative advantage in the State of Palestine is only partially identified, it has operated within its areas of strength. WFP is a key agency within the United Nations family in the State of Palestine and is a leading agency for humanitarian response. The CO operates in alignment with WFP's relevant policies.

80. There is a **high degree of coherence between the CSP and the 2018-2022 UNDAF for the State of Palestine**. The CSP is focused primarily on contributing to the UNDAF's fourth strategic priority: 'iv) leaving no one behind: social development and protection' and it contributes to the third, 'supporting sustainable and inclusive economic development'.⁷⁶ Illustrating its commitment to United Nations alignment, WFP extended its PRRO 2007/09 until 2017, so that the CSP would start to correspond with that of the UNDAF. This decision also increased alignment with the Palestinian Policy Agenda and Sectoral Strategies, which have a 2017-2022 timeframe. WFP is jointly responsible for delivery and reporting of relevant UNDAF common country analysis (CCA) priorities. For example, it is accountable – with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and FAO – for reporting on the number of food insecure households.

81. Interviews with WFP's partners and donors indicate that WFP is seen as a leading agency in the United Nations Country Team (UNCT). It is an influential partner in efforts to enhance coordination and joint United Nations planning. WFP co-leads, with FAO, the food security sector, which is intended to strengthen food security analysis and response. It is also a core partner in the Cash Working Group, the Minimum Expenditure Basket task force, and the United Nations data group. The first is intended to coordinate activities related to emergency, medium-term and long-term cash programming. WFP is also a principal member of the social protection working group: this was set up to support the national social welfare system, to identify government capacity needs and to improve coordination on programme implementation. It partners with the World Bank, ILO, UNICEF and the European Union in this.

82. Whilst WFP has operated in accordance with its **comparative advantages, its current CSP does not explicitly define what these are, except in relation to emergency response**. For example, it did not position the organization in relation to supporting the Government to strengthen its social safety net. This observation was also made by the CPE which noted that the "justification of the WFP country strategy (2014-2016) in terms of comparative advantage was implicit rather than explicit".⁷⁷

83. Overall, **the CSP adheres well to WFP corporate policies**. The CSP strategic outcomes are aligned with the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021), and the CSP logframe incorporates the indicators from the Corporate Strategic Framework (CRF). The CSP is also aligned with WFP's specialized policies on cash-based transfers, nutrition, emergency preparedness, and gender. The CO's piloting of resilience interventions also responds to a Regional Bureau Cairo Resilience Framework, encouraging countries to work across the humanitarian and development nexus.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) State of Palestine 2018-2022

⁷⁷ WFP. 2016. Country Portfolio Evaluation State of Palestine: An evaluation of WFP's Portfolio.

⁷⁸ WFP Regional Bureau Cairo. 2019. *Resilience Framework*

2.2. EQ2: WHAT IS THE EXTENT AND QUALITY OF WFP'S SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTION TO CSP STRATEGIC OUTCOMES IN THE STATE OF PALESTINE?

EQ 2.1 To what extent did WFP deliver expected outputs and contribute to the expected CSP strategic outcomes?

Summary

Strategic objective 1: unconditional resource transfers to the severely food insecure and the poorest

The evaluation shows that WFP made a strong contribution toward improving the dietary diversity of poor and severely food insecure people (non-refugees, primarily in Gaza and Area C in the West Bank). It made strong progress in achieving output indicators and contributing to the achievement of outcome indicators. Cash-based transfers and in-kind assistance had positive effects, particularly on the most vulnerable: those under the poverty line. Funding constraints forced WFP to cut the number of beneficiaries, inevitably excluding some of the most vulnerable people, but women-headed households and other most vulnerable groups were still prioritized. Moving from predominately in-kind to CBT support has yielded benefits. The CBT, e-voucher single platform has proved an effective mechanism and it proved extremely valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergency responses. There is evidence that WFP's multi-purpose cash pilot was well received by beneficiaries, but lessons still need to be learned from the pilot and follow ups. In-kind assistance is positively perceived, albeit with some challenges. Nutrition interventions have been adapted since the CSP's design. Current interventions were recently launched and there is not yet sufficient strong evidence to assess their effectiveness. Output targets regarding nutrition and SBCC beneficiaries were also reached.

Strategic objective 2: capacity strengthening and livelihoods/resilience building activities

WFP has helped to enhance the capacities of national institutions and systems to identify, target and assist food insecure vulnerable households. It has provided important support to the Ministry of Social Development and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. While partnership is strategic with national institutions, developing capacity, particularly of the MoSD, faced challenges due to issues outside WFP's control. WFP is experimenting with sustainable climate-resilient agriculture-based livelihoods support, and it is beginning some non-agricultural resilience projects (it was in the third phase of piloting agriculture-based approaches at the time of the evaluation). Analysis shows that phase one livelihoods activities in Gaza had a positive effect on participants' Food Consumption Scores. There is potential for some livelihoods projects to contribute to the wellbeing and livelihoods of beneficiaries, and some are innovative, but there are also challenges, particularly in sustainability.

Strategic objective 3

WFP's service delivery platform is effective, and its increasing expansion (nine United Nations agencies and NGOs) indicates that it is highly valued by partners. WFP calculates that in 2021 cross-sectoral assistance delivered using its platform allowed 743,700 people to receive USD 44 million. Because of WFP corporate regulations, the added value WFP creates through its service delivery is not captured by its systems, as the services are provided on behalf of others.

Strategic Outcome 1: Non-refugees, poor and severely food insecure people in the State of Palestine (primarily in Gaza and Area C in the West Bank) have improved dietary diversity by 2022

Strategic Outcome 1: *The overall objective of this outcome is to improve the dietary diversity of the poor and severely food insecure – ensuring they have access to diverse and nutritional food. Target households are concentrated in Gaza, and parts of the West Bank, particularly Area C. SO 1 includes several activities: CBTs; multi-purpose cash (MPC); in-kind food parcels; and a nutrition-sensitive SBCC activity targeting pregnant and lactating women and mothers of children aged 2-5 years. The largest component is the distribution of CBTs in the form of electronic vouchers, to the value of USD 10.3 per person per month. These vouchers are redeemable at specific WFP-contracted retail shops (about 230) in exchange for food.*

SO 1- Key Output Findings

85. WFP has achieved high overall performance in terms of output indicators and contributions to the achievement of outcome indicators. Strategic Outcome 1, which is the largest CSP component, contributed significantly to this positive result. Intentionally this CSPE has not duplicated the decentralized evaluation's research that focused entirely on this outcome.⁷⁹ The decentralized evaluation's findings were based on statistically valid sampling methods and are authoritative. Many of the qualitative findings from interviews conducted for this evaluation echo those of the decentralized evaluation. This report largely therefore highlights the need for the CO to continue following up on the decentralized evaluation's recommendations noting that some actions to which the CO agreed in its management response have already been initiated.

86. Output targets contributing to SO 1 have been largely achieved for this CSP, demonstrating that activity implementation has been effective. The output indicators are concerned with beneficiaries receiving food assistance, as well as beneficiaries reached through nutrition/SBCC approaches. There is consistently close parity between 'planned' and 'actual' targets for the beneficiaries targeted with CBT and in-kind food assistance throughout the lifetime of the CSP (Figure 7). The exception is 2019 and this was due to funding shortages. During 2019, WFP was forced to suspend food voucher assistance to 25,000 people in the West Bank and to reduce the monthly voucher value by 20 percent (USD 8 instead of USD 10 per person) for 165,000 people in Gaza and the West Bank.⁸⁰

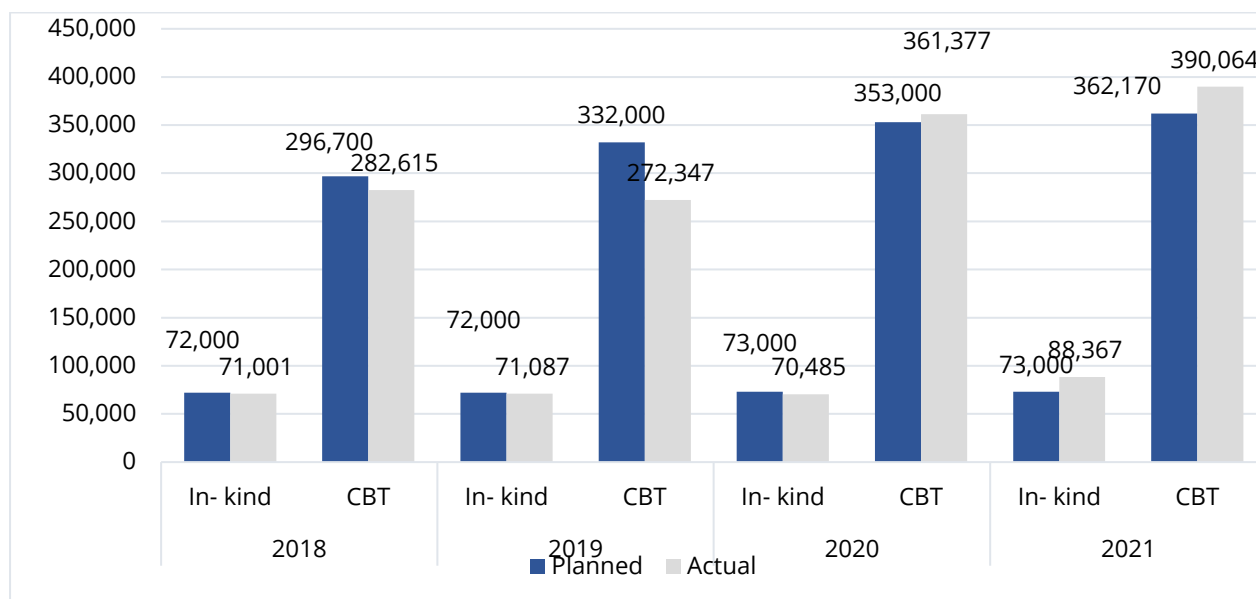
87. WFP was also able to achieve its gender targets by ensuring that 50 percent of beneficiaries were women, every year. This shows that WFP prioritized women-headed households in the selection of beneficiaries. WFP started monitoring people with disabilities receiving assistance in 2019 and had an annual ratio of 4-6 percent of beneficiaries with disabilities.⁸¹ For more disaggregated data by gender, age, residence status and disability see Annex 6.

⁷⁹ WFP. 2020. Evaluation of WFP's Unconditional Resource Transfer Activity under the National Social Safety Net Programme (NSSNP) in Palestine; and WFP Management Response 2020.

⁸⁰ WFP. 2019. Annual Country Report 2019.

⁸¹ Data retrieved from WFP ACRs 2019-2020; data for 2021 received from WFP.

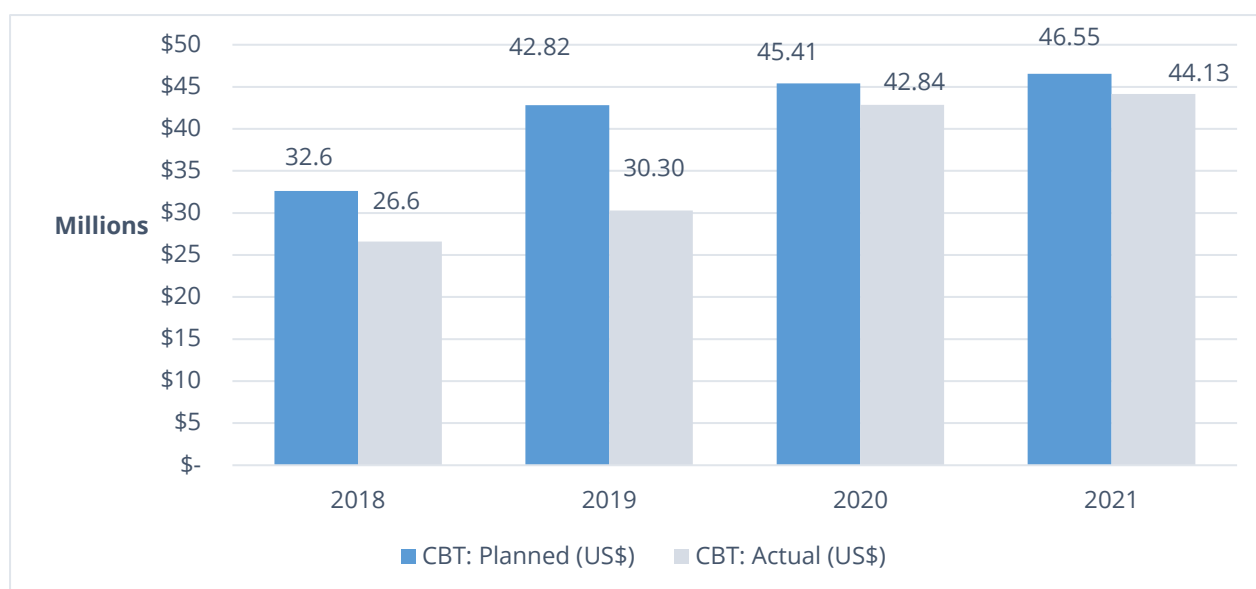
Figure 7 Planned and actual beneficiaries for CBT and in-kind assistance under SO 1, Activity 1 (2018-2021)



Source: Annual country reports (ACRs) from 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021

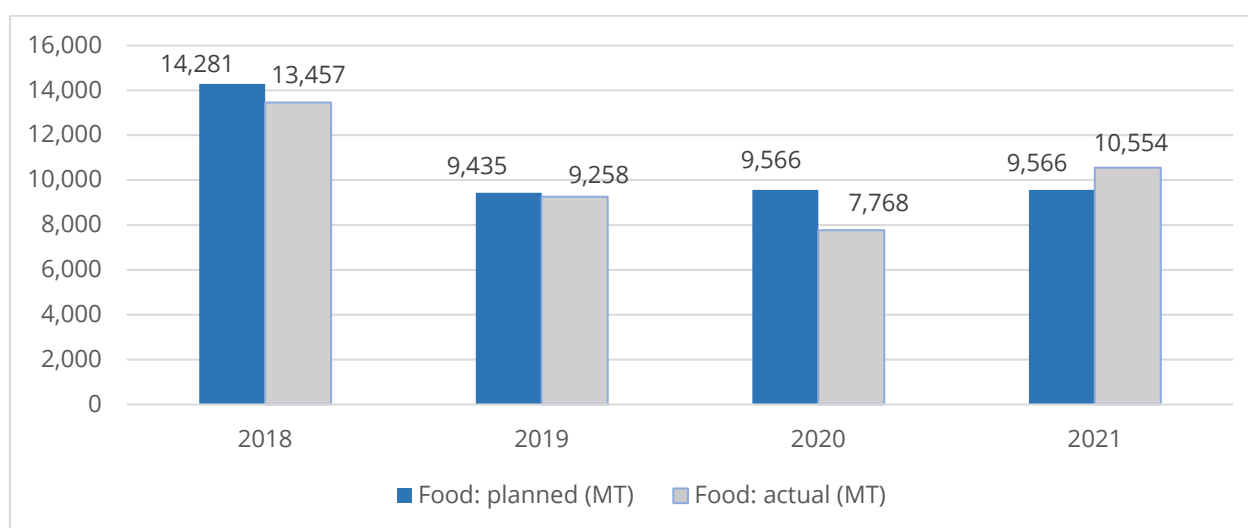
88. **Cash-based transfers and in-kind assistance have been well resourced under the CSP.** WFP achieved its targets in terms of overall amounts of CBT and quantities of in-kind food distributed with an underachievement for CBT in 2019 (see Figure 8) and for food in 2020 (See figure 9).

Figure 8: Planned and actual CBT amounts transferred (USD) (2018-2021)



Source: ACRs 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 (compiled by Evaluation Team)

Figure 9 Planned and actual amounts of food delivered (MT) (2018-2021)



Source: ACRs 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 (compiled by Evaluation Team)

89. **CBT and in-kind assistance were positively perceived by beneficiaries, albeit with demands for increased amounts.** The evaluation qualitative research, as well as WFP monitoring data, indicate that beneficiaries have high levels of satisfaction and appreciation for the assistance.⁸² In 2021, WFP surveyed over 3,600 CBT beneficiaries through its PDM system. This constituted a representative sample of all WFP CBT beneficiaries.⁸³ The vast majority ranked the importance of WFP assistance as ‘important’ to ‘very important’. They ranked the quality of the food in shops as ‘very good’ to ‘good’ (only three respondents ranked it as ‘moderate’).

90. WFP’s monitoring data for in-kind assistance found similar results for 2021.⁸⁴ The data shows that all but 9 of over 2,000 surveyed beneficiaries ranked the importance of the assistance between ‘important’ and ‘very important’. Beneficiaries’ most common request was for an increase in the quantity and diversity of the foods – to include items such as rice and sugar.

91. **Many interviewees indicated that the value of the voucher received was insufficient to meet their food needs.** The flat rate of support per capita for each household does not currently differentiate between absolute needs in households (such as the degree of poverty, if the household includes members with disabilities, or elderly, or if the number of household members is below the national average), nor the regional differences and disparities defining poverty and food security in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. WFP’s current approach of giving a uniform amount on a per capita basis is straightforward to administer as it does not rely on collecting and verifying intra-household information. However, the disadvantages of taking a uniform approach were identified in the 2020 decentralized evaluation, as well as in the evaluation team’s interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries. Recommendations in the decentralized evaluation relate to: the need to review vulnerability and targeting criteria and assess whether they remain relevant to the context, especially the Gaza Strip (particularly the new poor); and improving the targeting of households with members with disabilities and considering whether to tier support on broader factors including geographic location, need, disability status, and if the number of household members is below the national average.

92. If the CO chooses to introduce greater differentiation in its payments, as the 2020 decentralized evaluation recommended, and as this study endorses, the CO will need to adapt its data collection. The CO committed to addressing these recommendations – with action due between January 2022 and September

⁸² WFP. 2021. Beneficiary satisfaction monitoring data for 2021 (collected over the whole year), received from CO in February 2022.

⁸³ Lists of beneficiaries are derived from MoSD, or identified by Global Communities, or Maan.

⁸⁴ Data received from CO,

2022.⁸⁵ The CO was reviewing these issues at the time of writing this report, and considering some of them for the design of its next CSP.

93. **Moving from predominately in-kind to CBT support has yielded benefits, although in-kind assistance is also positively perceived and unavoidable, as in the case of Bedouins.** WFP's move from in-kind to a CBT voucher system provides more choice for people and supports the local economy. WFP's 2018 'Secondary Impact of the Cash Based Transfer-Voucher Modality in Palestine' assessment shows that the proportion of household recipients of CBT with acceptable food consumption (78.3 percent) is 11 percent higher than for those that receive in-kind food assistance (67.3 percent).⁸⁶ When moving the majority of its operations from in-kind to CBTs, WFP noted that affected populations are more able to diversify their diet, improve their nutritional intake of vitamin A and proteins, and are economically empowered: it provides men and women with increased purchasing power, autonomy and choice in the selection of food commodities.⁸⁷

94. **In-kind assistance is positively perceived, albeit with some challenges.** In-kind assistance enables Bedouin in remote areas, all within Israeli-controlled Area C, to access much-needed food, without having to travel. While this was widely observed, some of the beneficiaries are nomadic, leaving their place of residence depending on season. This means that delivering the in-kind assistance is delayed and sometimes complicated as only the beneficiaries are entitled to collect the assistance, and not their relatives. However, in-kind assistance is the only feasible way of providing them with food assistance as there are few shops in these areas.

95. **Some beneficiaries considered that the shops where they could redeem their vouchers were too far away and that they had to spend significant sums on transport.** WFP noted that shops must meet its standards to register as CBT shops. They also need to be formally registered with the Government and to pay tax. If there are not enough beneficiaries redeeming vouchers in the catchment (a minimum of 50 households), shops are unwilling to go through this process. WFP temporarily expanded the number of shops in the West Bank during the COVID-19 pandemic and is looking to expand it again ahead of an expansion of the geographical spread of eligible MoSD-list beneficiaries.

96. The CBT e-voucher single platform is an effective mechanism to transfer value, and proved extremely valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic and in an emergency conflict context. The single platform voucher system is a convenient and effective system for transferring money for food for all stakeholders. Beneficiaries consider the voucher to be effective, giving them choice but ensuring it contributes food for the family. WFP staff also noted the effectiveness of the system in implementing functions such as topping up values, transferring money, but also providing 'real-time' monitoring data. Shops were also satisfied with the system, and the monitoring and follow up by WFP and partners in providing information, including notifications through WhatsApp groups, and following up during WFP monitoring visits.

97. During emergencies, such as the May 2021 Gaza hostilities and as a response to the pandemic, WFP was able to swiftly top up value vouchers for existing beneficiaries and to reach new beneficiaries. It was able to activate changes simply by making an electronic transfer to the selected beneficiaries, and then notifying them through SMS messages; and by notifying partner shops through a WhatsApp group. It also provided beneficiaries with access to non-food items on behalf of partners using its e-voucher 'wallet'. Some interviewed beneficiaries wanted WFP to include non-food items, including cleaning products, in the list of eligible purchases.

98. **There is evidence that multi-purpose cash has been well received by stakeholders including beneficiaries, but that lessons learned from the pilot and follow ups are still needed.** A pilot MPCA programme was launched by WFP in October 2020 to help families living below the deep poverty line in Gaza, with each family receiving the equivalent of USD 336 per month.⁸⁸ The assistance was intended to

⁸⁵ WFP Management Response to Decentralized Evaluation 2020. Recommendation 2 is to 'Explore tiered and targeted assistance using varied voucher values based on need' and Recommendation 3 is to 'Consider increasing the voucher value for households composed of below-average members'. The CO agreed to both these recommendations and to the 'Action Deadline' for both of September 2022.

⁸⁶ WFP. 2018. Secondary Impact of the cash key findings of 4th round of impact measurement-based transfer-voucher.

⁸⁷ WFP. 2018. Annual Country Report 2018.

⁸⁸ WFP. 2020. Annual Country Report 2020

provide sufficient cash to cover essential household needs, such as food, water, sanitation, education, clothing, shelter and health.⁸⁹ The modality was used again for three months following the May 2021 Gaza hostilities.⁹⁰ Stakeholders, including WFP, perceive multi-purpose cash assistance to be an effective and empowering tool for vulnerable populations, but there are still targeting and implementation issues to be addressed by the broader humanitarian community. These include ensuring there is equity in the provision of support from different providers.⁹¹

99. Some of WFP's donors would like WFP to clearly set out its future strategy in relation to use of MPCA. They consider that, due to its flexibility, it helps beneficiaries deepen their resilience. An evaluation of the MPCA pilot had been commissioned by the donors behind the pilot, but it was not available at the time of writing this report. Even if WFP decides that MPCA is the best modality to use, some donors' restrictions around the use of their funding, particularly on the provision of cash in Gaza will limit the potential of the modality in Gaza.

100. **WFP's provision of in-kind food is key to emergency preparedness in Gaza**, as WFP keeps its supply and delivery systems functional and maintains stocks. The need to ensure that WFP can deliver in-kind assistance during a time of emergency or in case of lack of liquidity and financial crisis (as it is the case of Lebanon and Iraq) means that in-kind food contributes to WFP's emergency preparedness and risk mitigation.

Nutrition

101. **Nutrition interventions have changed in their design. Output targets regarding nutrition and SBCC beneficiaries were also reached.** This activity is relatively small-scale compared to CBTs and in-kind support. WFP's approach to nutrition has changed over the course of the CSP period. It initially focused on delivering nutrition and health awareness campaigns to mainly women, but also involved men and children with a view to sensitizing all family members on healthy eating habits and nutritional practices.⁹² This was replaced with a new SBCC approach in November 2021 to address levels of micronutrient deficiencies.⁹³ The change was based on research conducted jointly with UNICEF, which was finalized in 2020 and identified barriers and motivators for six key behaviours.⁹⁴ WFP focused on how to encourage two of the behaviours, relating to iron deficiencies and how to increase iron-rich food consumption among children (2-5 years old) and pregnant and lactating women.⁹⁵ UNICEF focused on four other behaviours. While WFP and UNICEF envisaged these interventions to be complementary, they did not intend to implement them jointly.

⁸⁹ ibid

⁹⁰ WFP key informant interviews.

⁹¹ MPCA Advisory Board Meeting 17 August 2021. Interviewees indicated that some beneficiaries received support from several agencies, whilst others missed out, sometimes referring to this as "layering".

⁹² WFP. 2018. Country Brief October 2018.

⁹³ WFP, UNICEF. 2020. Barrier Analysis and In-depth Qualitative Interviews Report; WFP SBCC Implementation Plan: Improving Nutrition & Health in the State of Palestine

⁹⁴ The six behaviours explored were: 1) Exclusive Breastfeeding, 2) Continued Breastfeeding, 3) Minimum Dietary Diversity, 4) Feeding Frequency, and 5) & 6) Consumption of high-iron foods by pregnant and lactating women, and children 2-5 years old. Behaviours 1-4 were selected by UNICEF and behaviours 5-6 by WFP.

⁹⁵ WFP. 2020. SBCC Implementation Plan: Improving Nutrition and Health in the State of Palestine. (Internal Document)

Table 4: Output indicator – Nutrition – counselling 2018 and SBCC 2020 and 2021

Year – Description	M/F	Planned	Actual	Percentage
2018 – Nutrition and health awareness raising activities	Male	2,800	2724	97%
	Female	10,000	10,422	104%
2019 – No activities implemented, WFP conducted research and redesigned its approach	Male	NA	NA	NA
	Female	5,000	NA	NA
2020 – Top up CBT vouchers and shared messages and managed discussions through WhatsApp, focusing on COVID-19, detection and prevention of breast cancer and other topics, including healthy nutrition for lactating women, pregnant mothers and children aged 24-59 months.	Male	NA	NA	NA
	Female	265	264	100%
2021 - # reached through interpersonal SBCC, including those reached from previous phase (until April 2021) in addition to those under the current phaser (until December 2021).	Male	100	100	100%
	Female	656	675	103%

Source: WFP Annual Country Reports 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021

102. **WFP has been working with several partners to launch SBCC interventions.** WFP contracts two partners to carry out the interventions: Juzoor for Health and Social Development to carry out sessions with women, including cooking sessions and lectures on how cooking and eating habits that enrich the diet with iron and other micronutrients; and Zoom Advertising, which was commissioned to launch a social-media campaign through a dedicated Facebook page,⁹⁶ including promoting messaging with other social media influencers, and printed publications.⁹⁷ In response to WFP’s request, Juzoor conducted a baseline assessment and Zoom pre-tested approaches for communication material.⁹⁸ WFP also entered a partnership with the Ministry of Health and some private sector entities to advocate for better nutrition, disseminating messages on public billboards. At the time of the evaluation field work, Juzoor was still carrying out sessions, and Zoom had only partially launched its campaign. Therefore, only indicative findings can be drawn from the evaluation team’s qualitative research. These are:

- Women interviewed and participants of the face-to-face sessions noted that they enjoyed the nutrition sessions, stating that they “enjoy leaving the house” and “learning new tips”. However, they reported difficulties financing the commute to the sessions and wanted WFP to reimburse their transportation costs. They also noted the need to limit the number of sessions to no more than two a month.⁹⁹
- The media campaign was only partially launched, with the Facebook page and some printed material disseminating WFP-approved health and nutrition tips and information with the objective

⁹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/dearmamapal>

⁹⁷ Including a cookbook and a seasonal wall calendar

⁹⁸ <http://www.juzoor.org/> and <http://www.zoom.ps/>

⁹⁹ WFP reported that it began reimbursing transport costs shortly after the fieldwork phase of this evaluation.

to change behaviour. The Facebook page appears to be receiving good traction, with a reported 18,000 followers during the first three months, exceeding the target by about 100 percent.¹⁰⁰

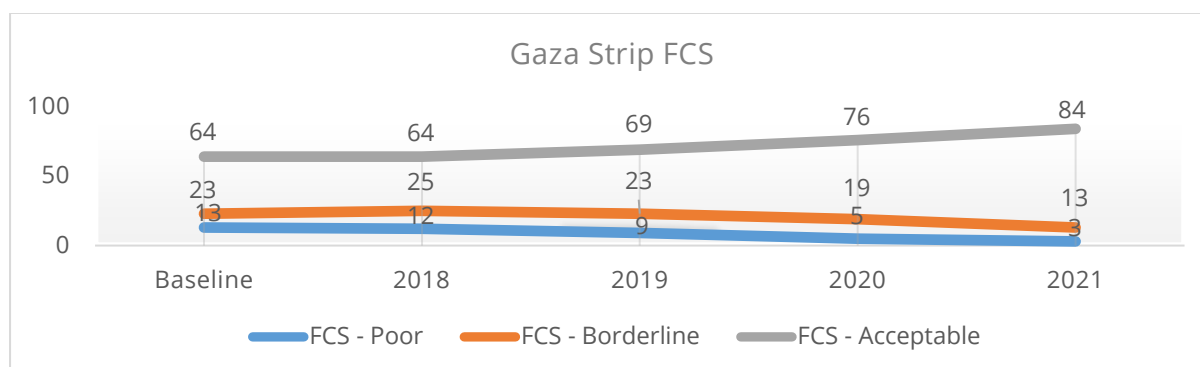
103. While the interventions appear to be having a positive effect, the two components are not effectively linked with each other yet. This finding is only based on the evaluation team’s research with women. The evidence suggests that while the women interviewed had smartphones and Facebook accounts, none of them knew about the Facebook page.

SO 1- Key Outcome Findings

104. **Cash-based transfers and in-kind assistance had positive effects, particularly on the most vulnerable.** The performance of outcome indicators for SO 1 reveal that WFP support contributed to improvements in food consumption scores and dietary diversity scores, and reduced negative coping strategies, particularly for the most vulnerable. This is an important achievement and demonstrates WFP’s ability to contribute to preventing harm in the face of repeated shocks for the most vulnerable (during this CSP these were the pandemic and the hostilities in Gaza). This finding is aligned with the conclusion of the decentralized evaluation that focused on SO 1. It noted that the CO “was effective at meeting its targets. Monitoring data shows that outputs were largely achieved”.¹⁰¹

105. Results for 2018-2021 showed positive trends in the food consumption scores (FCS) in each year in both the West Bank and Gaza, although some end targets were not reached. Quantitative data show that the ‘poor’ score was significantly reduced and reached the target, indicating an improvement in food consumption for the most vulnerable. But while an increase in consumption scores was achieved across the board, targets were not all fully achieved for ‘borderline’ and ‘acceptable’ categories.¹⁰² Figures 10 and 11 show FCS trends in Gaza and the West Bank.

Figure 10 Household Food Consumption Score in Gaza (2018- 2021)



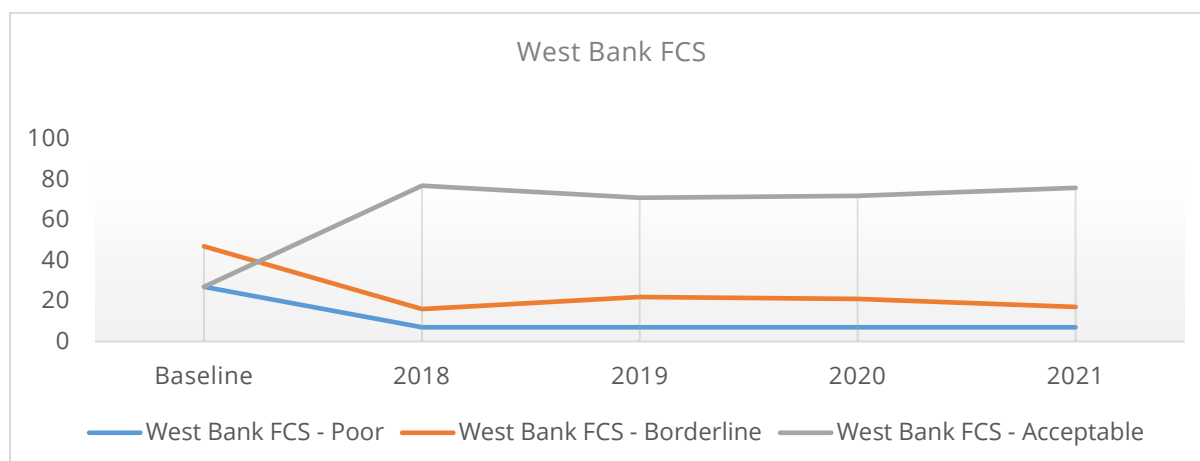
Source: WFP ACRs 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

¹⁰⁰ Key informant interview with media company

¹⁰¹ WFP. 2020. Evaluation of WFP’s Unconditional Resource Transfer Activity under the National Social Safety Net Programme (NSSNP) in Palestine; and WFP Management response 2020.

¹⁰² CSP end targets for FCS in West Bank are ≤10, ≤10 and ≥80 for poor, borderline and acceptable respectively. CSP end targets for FCS in Gaza Strip are: ≤10, ≤15 and ≥75 for poor, borderline and acceptable respectively

Figure 11 Household Food Consumption Score in West Bank (2018- 2021)



Source: WFP ACRs 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021.

106. Similar results were also observed with respect to dietary diversity indicators (FCS-N). Results show that better outcomes were observed in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. The target was to increase the percentage of households who consumed heme iron rich food, vitamin A rich food and protein rich food every day to ≥ 5 , ≥ 72 and ≥ 80 respectively, and to reduce the percentage of households that sometimes or never consumed them. WFP was able to achieve its CSP end targets in the Gaza Strip with regard to the consumption of Vitamin A and protein rich foods, and to reduce the percentage of households who ‘sometimes’ consumed heme iron rich food. Meanwhile, in the West Bank WFP was able to reduce the percentage of households that never consumed heme iron rich food, hence achieving its CSP target. But it did not increase the percentage of households that consumed heme iron rich food every day or reduce the percentage of households that ‘sometimes’ consumed that nutrient. WFP has not also achieved its targets with regard to the consumption of Vitamin A. However, WFP targets for consumption of protein were achieved for all three subgroups. See Annex 6 (Outcome Achievements: Table 1 Food Consumption Score-Nutrition).

107. WFP had a positive effect on households’ ability to feed themselves without incurring debt. Analysis of the Coping Strategy Index shows that over the CSP period there was a decrease in the use of negative coping strategies, indicating that WFP’s assistance to targeted households had made a positive contribution. However, the CSP targets were not fully achieved, and targeted households have continued to resort to negative coping strategies, such as increased debt, purchasing food on credit, borrowing food, or relying on help from relatives or friends, and consuming low-quality food (see Annex 6). In 2019, the funding shortage had a negative effect on households’ food consumption levels, and led to a significant increase in the percentage of families resorting to negative coping mechanisms, compared to when they received assistance. WFP’s monitoring data showed a substantive deterioration in the nutrition and food security status of affected families, particularly among those who no longer received any assistance. The CO reported that as result of the suspension of CBT assistance “the percentage of families with poor consumption scores dramatically increased from 7 percent to 36 percent and the percentage of families who presented acceptable consumption scores dropped from 70 to 29.”¹⁰³

108. **There is no strong evidence yet relating to recently launched SBCC interventions.** WFP has developed a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan for the SBCC interventions and started its implementation with a baseline survey in November/December 2021, and a endline survey is planned for mid-2022 to measure the change in the two outcome indicators: improved awareness to adopt healthy behaviours and increased consumption of iron-rich food groups. Given the early stage of implementation of the SBCC interventions at the time of the evaluation data collection, there is not yet sufficient strong evidence to assess their effectiveness.

¹⁰³ WFP. 2019. Annual Country Report 2019

109. **WFP's cash transfers and local food purchases for in-kind support contributed to wider positive effects by providing an important injection into the local economy, particularly in Gaza.** A WFP study showed that CBTs have positive effects on the local economy.¹⁰⁴ The shops participating in the CBT programme reported an average increase of almost 40 percent in their monthly sales, thereby sustaining their businesses compared to non-participating shops, which at the same time reported a significant decrease in their monthly sales (of more than 35 percent). Local producers who supply products that CBT beneficiaries can buy reported a 36 percent increase in sales, compared to an 8 percent increase in sales among non-participating producers. As WFP's corporate minimum monitoring requirements are focused primarily on quantitative data collection against WFP corporate indicators, they do not help in identifying any of these or other unintended effects of the programme, whether positive or negative. However, the CO undertakes periodic studies on its own initiative, either by itself or in collaboration with partners to document such effects.

Strategic Outcome 2: Enhanced capacities of national institutions and systems to identify, target and assist food insecure vulnerable populations in the State of Palestine

Strategic Outcome 2 is intended to foster the implementation of a Sectoral Food Security Strategy and reform of the National Social Safety Net (NSSN) through two major activities. It was designed to contribute to the capacity of national institutions to implement a reformed social safety net that protects the poor and vulnerable (under activity 2).

WFP recently began an initiative intended to strengthen the resilience of its CBT beneficiaries through climate-resilient agricultural assets to help them curb food insecurity and improve their livelihoods. These livelihoods activities have not been included in the CSP logframe, and therefore were reported on separately in annual country reports. This report therefore also assesses their performance outside the formal assessment of the CSP outcomes.

In the original CSP, the provision of a platform for other stakeholders was listed under Strategic Outcome 2-Activity 3. In 2021, service provision was shifted to a new SO (SO 3). This activity is therefore discussed under SO 3.

SO 2: Key Output Findings

Country capacity strengthening interventions under SO 2

110. **Output targets contributing to SO 2 were achieved with WFP providing important support to MoSD and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS).** Over the CSP period, WFP identified annual targets for assistance, mainly for the MoSD and the PCBS, and it largely achieved those targets. These include: developing and establishing a comprehensive database on persons with disabilities (through a joint initiative with ILO and UNICEF, and in partnership with PCBS); supporting the PCBS to conduct national socio-economic and food security surveys; facilitating training to improve statistical analysis; targeting food-insecure people; and the creation of a unified social data portal.¹⁰⁵ The former activity, funded under an SDG joint project, feeds into a World Bank project that is helping the MoSD to create a national social register that draws on multidimensional poverty data. These forms of assistance were perceived as very valuable and effective and responded to counterparts' needs. Interviews indicate that government counterparts appreciated the quality of support given and their access to internationally proven approaches. PCBS, for instance, indicated that they have successfully built the capacities of their staff to form indicators, develop data collection tools and analysis skills related to food security indicators and relevant SDG indicators. MoSD staff noted the value of support given in developing the database of persons with disabilities and the elderly.

111. Several agencies provide technical support and capacity strengthening to the Government, and this does not appear to be well coordinated, with some evidence of overlap. This results mainly from a lack of a clear strategy by the Government on capacity strengthening needs, and its difficulty coordinating capacity strengthening support from different stakeholders. This was mentioned by several interviewees.

¹⁰⁴ WFP. 2019. Secondary Impact of the Cash Based Transfer-Voucher: Key findings of 4th round of impact measurement

¹⁰⁵ ACRs, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

112. The fiscal crisis, and the Government’s inability since April 2021 to make social safety net transfers, means that the Government cannot meet its obligation to provide a nationwide social safety net. This undermines the state’s accountability to its own citizens for these services. WFP’s support continues to be needed outside the Government’s system. This constrains the ability of WFP to plan strategically with partners to strengthen the capacity of the MoSD to fulfil its obligations to the vulnerable and poor.

113. WFP tried to mainstream gender through its support to national institutions. But it did not explicitly identify specific gender capacity issues within national institutions, nor gender specific outputs within its logframe. When conducting training for MoSD in 2019 on in-depth inventory and data analysis, 60 percent of the trainees were women.¹⁰⁶ In 2018, it also trained the PCBS on sex- and age-disaggregated data collection and gender-sensitive food security assessments.¹⁰⁷

114. **While there is no clear strategic plan that lays out the capacity strengthening results and interventions, there is communication with ministries and other state institutions (mainly PCBS) to identify needs.** For instance, PCBS considers WFP to be their main interlocutor when they need technical support or capacity strengthening in food security-related areas.¹⁰⁸ WFP was also able to secure resources and expertise to support the MoSD to develop policies, strengthen staff capacity and develop systems.

Table 5: SO 2 Outcome Indicator

Strategic Outcome 2: Enhanced capacities of national institutions and systems to identify, target and assist food insecure vulnerable populations in the State of Palestine					
Activity 2: Provision of technical support to national ministries and institutions for food security strategy implementation and National Social Safety Net reform					
Indicator	Baseline	2019	2020	2021	CSP Target
Number of national food security and nutrition policies, programmes and system components enhanced as a result of WFP capacity strengthening	0	2	3	2	≥1

Source: WFP ACRs 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021

115. **This strategic outcome has one outcome indicator related to strengthening the capacity of national institutions, which has been met. While significant, it does not allow WFP to demonstrate its medium- and long-term achievements.** The capacity strengthening component has one outcome statement: ‘provision of technical support to national ministries and institutions for food security strategy implementation and National Social Safety Net reform’. WFP contributed support to the Social Safety Net database, the Socio-Economic and Food Security (SEFSec) data collection tools and the actual data collection exercise. This component has one outcome target for the CSP, which is to provide at least one input of technical assistance to the national institutions. This has been met.

116. Having one outcome indicator (namely, ‘more than one’ instance) without meaningful CSP ‘end targets’ gives flexibility for WFP to be responsive and adaptive to counterparts’ needs. However, it also limits the ability of WFP to think and plan for medium- and long-term capacity strengthening objectives, and at the same time limits the evaluation team’s ability to assess the long-term effect of capacity strengthening. That said, the commissioning of an evaluation of the SDG joint project was underway in the second quarter of 2022. Furthermore, interviews indicate wide recognition amongst WFP’s partners and donors that WFP is effective in responding to national capacity needs.

117. Overall, WFP is seen as a close partner to the MoSD and PCBS, where it provides or facilitates the provision of technical expertise to strengthen capacity, but also to develop the systems and databases needed to ensure more effective and efficient targeting and assistance to vulnerable people. WFP’s

¹⁰⁶ ACR 2019

¹⁰⁷ ACR 2018

¹⁰⁸ Key informant interview with stakeholders

partnership and support for the Government is widely appreciated by stakeholders, including the Government itself.

118. While partnership with national institutions is strategic, stakeholders mentioned challenges that hinder the work of WFP and others in strengthening the capacity of national institutions, particularly the MoSD. These related to fiscal challenges: the MoSD lacks funds, and activities are often dependent on a donor or partner contributing; but this also means that there have been extended periods when government staff received only partial salaries, with an impact on their ability to dedicate full attention to their government positions. There has also been high turnover of staff in the MoSD. These factors, while outside the control of WFP, mean that capacity is hard to sustain and that the MoSD cannot perform to its full potential. Furthermore, WFP itself had difficulty raising funds from donors to support its capacity strengthening work with the Government: donor conditions limited its ability to use funds to engage with the Government, and WFP had to fund these activities from internal budgets.

WFP's livelihoods and resilience interventions under Strategic Outcome 2

119. From July 2019 to March 2020 the CO began the first round of climate resilience interventions by providing some of the poorest and severely food insecure households across the West Bank and Gaza with a range of climate-resilient agricultural assets. The pilot aimed to improve resilience and help to increase the self-reliance of vulnerable people and communities in the face of climate-generated shocks.

120. Beneficiaries are also recipients of WFP CBT assistance under SO 1. WFP carries out these interventions with CPs: Arij in the West Bank; Oxfam with Maan in Gaza Strip for the first two phases, and Global Communities for phase three. Beneficiaries receive animal or plant production assets, training and continuous follow up and technical support to implement these activities. Supported projects include: sheep production, green houses, home gardens, poultry units, hydroponics, aquaponics and beehives. Women-headed households are prioritized.

Table 6: Climate Resilience Pilot participants and activities¹⁰⁹

PHASE	Gaza Strip					West Bank				
	Number of participants			Number and type of activities		Number of participants			Number and type of activities	
	Male	Female	Total	Animal production	Plant production	Male	Female	Total	Animal production	Plant production
Phase 1: Jul 2019 – Mar 2020	69	23	92	59	33	68	32	100	57	43
Phase 2: Jun 2020 – Mar 2021	75	25	100	30	70	126	44	170	22	148
Phase 3	160	42	202	65	144	128	53	181	56	125

Source: Evaluation Team based on CO data

¹⁰⁹ Phase three had started during this evaluation, and so this report will not address effects of that phase. The total number of participants under phases 2 and 3 include participants from previous phases.

121. **Outputs for the livelihood/resilience component are not defined within the CSP logframe,** but their activities are listed under SO 2. Therefore, data is not captured in WFP's systems for recording output or outcome results. They are reported when WFP and CPs carry out studies and collect monitoring and learning data to assess performance and impact. Following each phase, the cooperating partner submitted a final report to WFP, and WFP has also published an annual report on its resilience work. The evaluation team has drawn on these data and triangulated them with interviews, including with beneficiaries from each of the three phases.

122. **Some positive effects can be observed.** During the three phases of the resilience / livelihoods activities, WFP and partners targeted 614 distinct beneficiary households in the West Bank and Gaza.¹¹⁰ WFP reports that phase one livelihoods activities in Gaza had a positive effect on participants' Food Consumption Score,¹¹¹ but did not have a very positive overall effect on their Consumption-based Coping Strategies and the Livelihood Coping Strategies. The activities also did not contribute to a positive impact on the beneficiaries' debt. This was in the context of a deteriorating situation in the Gaza Strip, so it is possible that results would have been stronger had the context had not been so challenging. WFP also reports that the West Bank results show some positive effects on the Food Consumption Score, and Consumption-based Coping Strategies, while livelihood coping strategies and debt patterns remain generally without an observable positive effect.¹¹²

123. Relying on WFP's reporting, the evaluation found comparable results for phase two.¹¹³ Results in Gaza show some positive effects on the Food Consumption Score, and Consumption-based Coping Strategies (although the comparison group – those not receiving livelihoods activities – also observed some positive results, albeit less than the livelihoods beneficiaries). The livelihoods projects in Gaza did not have positive effect on debts of the beneficiaries. In the West Bank, the livelihoods activities had positive effects on the Food Consumption score and some positive effect on the Consumption-based Coping Strategies. Activities did not have a positive impact on debt in comparison to those who did not receive livelihoods activities.

124. There is potential for some of the livelihood's projects to contribute to the wellbeing and livelihoods of beneficiaries but there are also challenges. The partnership with expert organisations in the field enabled the effective implementation and follow up with beneficiaries.¹¹⁴ Most beneficiaries surveyed by CPs at the end of the project reported high levels of satisfaction with the implementation of their projects.¹¹⁵ CPs' reports indicate the projects increased participants' income and food production. However, these findings have not been independently verified. WFP's monitoring data and our interviews with phases 1 and 2 beneficiaries suggest that some challenges limited their ability to sustain themselves. These include the inability to control disease, high fodder costs, medicine, and treatment costs for sheep, and having to sell assets because of shocks.¹¹⁶

125. Corporately, WFP is still developing its approach to resilience and livelihoods activities, limiting the CO's ability to draw on corporate guidance and frameworks for design and implementation. A strategic evaluation of WFP's support for enhanced resilience (2019) found that "there is no clear, coherent framework for advancing work on resilience enhancement from the concept stage to the design and implementation of integrated programming and the measurement of results."¹¹⁷ This was echoed by some interviewed stakeholders, with evidence that there is limited guidance on implementing and measuring the performance of livelihood and resilience programmes (including the absence of an approach to transitioning from relief to social development). This, as WFP's strategic evaluation noted, compromises the importance of having a unified set of objectives and an implementation strategy (including considering the

¹¹⁰ WFP data provided by CO, 8 March 2022.

¹¹¹ WFP Resilience Building Livelihood Activities, West Bank and Gaza Strip, Phase One Analysis (February 2021).

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ WFP Resilience Building Livelihood Activities, West Bank and Gaza Strip, Phase Two Analysis (October 2021).

¹¹⁴ WFP introduced a WhatsApp group in Phase 2, which connects beneficiaries in groups related to their projects, and to ensure sustainability they were linked to subject matter experts from the local community to provide assistance on a voluntary basis.

¹¹⁵ See final reports Oxfam and Maan Development Center (2020), Arij (2020), with a less straightforward assessment Arij (2021)

¹¹⁶ WFP presentations Phase 1 February 2021, WFP presentation Phase 2 October 2021

¹¹⁷ WFP 2019, "Strategic evaluation of WFP's support for enhanced resilience"

required resources of such interventions) within WFP but also with CPs.¹¹⁸ For example, when identifying project objectives for livelihoods resilience projects, some stakeholders stated that ‘income generation’ is the primary goal, whilst others stated it is ‘food security’. This is a recurring challenge that was noted in the previous country portfolio evaluation.¹¹⁹

126. Resilience/livelihoods activities are supported by national institutions, increasing potential for ownership and effectiveness. WFP conducted the resilience activity in collaboration with the National Environmental Quality Authority, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the MoSD. Three CPs implemented activities.¹²⁰ WFP also formalized its partnership with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education through the signing of memoranda of understanding (MoUs) to focus on innovative community-based nutrition initiatives and advocate for healthy eating behaviours.¹²¹ It intends to provide schools with smart agricultural assets, such as hydroponic and wicking beds, knowledge and skill-building. These, however, are yet to be provided, and therefore, cannot be assessed within this evaluation, but the endorsement by local national institutions is enabling effective implementation. The partnerships that the livelihoods/resilience component has been able to create demonstrate the commitment of WFP and local policy makers to strengthening the nexus approach for sustainable solutions to food insecurity in the State of Palestine.

127. **Targeting criteria limit effective implementation of the projects.** For example, while the criteria for selecting beneficiaries includes households having basic assets and willingness to participate in the projects, there is some qualitative evidence that other capacity (mainly experience, skills and time) and poverty criteria (against the basic resilience level) are not sufficiently accounted for.¹²² This results in CPs having to then spend time identifying potential beneficiaries.¹²³ It is difficult for CPs to match beneficiaries with the appropriate type of livelihood activity/package and balance this with the need to ensure some economies of scale are achieved across the projects.¹²⁴ This can limit the choices available to beneficiaries in the form of the support they receive, and some choices may prove to be inappropriate.

SO 3: Activities 3 and 4: Palestinians benefit from the services provided to partners through WFP’s delivery platform

As mentioned earlier, the provision of a platform for other stakeholders was previously included under Strategic Outcome 2: Activity 3. In 2021, it was shifted to a new SO (SO 3): Activity 4. Under **SO 3**, WFP provides a platform for the United Nations and international NGOs to deliver humanitarian supplies in Gaza and the West Bank through vouchers. This was scaled up during the COVID-19 lockdown. WFP is now also facilitating the distribution of cash in Gaza on behalf of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

Table 7 SO 3 outcome indicators

Strategic Outcome 3: Palestinians benefit from the services provided to partners through WFP’s delivery platform.					
Activity 4: Service provision through WFP’s delivery platform to partners					
Indicator	Baseline	2019	2020	2021	CSP Target
User satisfaction rate	0	NA	NA	100	100

Source: WFP ACRs 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021

128. **The outcome indicator related to agencies using the single cash-based transfer platform has been attained.** The platform is effective, and its increasing use indicates that it is highly valuable to WFP’s

¹¹⁸ Ibid

¹¹⁹ WFP, 2016, Country Portfolio Evaluation State of Palestine: An evaluation of WFP’s Portfolio (2011 – mid 2015), p.127

¹²⁰ ACR 2021, WFP interviews

¹²¹ ACR 2021

¹²² WFP (2020) Food Security and Climate Resilience in Palestine: Overview and conclusions of a first round of experiments, Oct 2020

¹²³ Beneficiary and stakeholders’ interviews and evaluation team observations

¹²⁴ Arij 2021

partners. The platform WFP developed with its commercial partner is perceived to be a very effective and efficient service delivery platform, that enables agencies to transfer money swiftly and efficiently to targeted beneficiaries. WFP's humanitarian and development agency partners enter a contract agreement with WFP, providing a list of beneficiaries, the amount to be transferred per beneficiary and the type of commodity to be redeemed from WFP shops. WFP transfers the amount, ensures the shops are stocked with essential items (ensuring the quality and quantity of these items), and solves any issues with beneficiaries and shops. The platform is attractive to partners partly because it offers a streamlined way of delivering services using proven systems over which there is strong oversight, fraud-control and accountability mechanisms.

129. In 2018, two partners used WFP's CBT service delivery platforms: UNICEF and UNRWA delivered their humanitarian supplies in Gaza and the West Bank through vouchers. UNICEF used the platform to enable 15,000 poor families to receive one-off credits of USD 55 to obtain water, sanitation and hygiene products, on top of WFP food entitlements. WFP's platform continued to expand in 2021, supporting nine United Nations agencies and NGOs.¹²⁵ WFP also facilitated use of its hotline to provide an Inter-Agency Common Feedback Mechanism during and after the Gaza hostilities.¹²⁶

130. WFP has ensured that its system is highly responsive, even during emergency situations or when rapid adaptation is needed. Under a contract with the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) WFP adapted the platform to enable beneficiaries to access cash from a broader range of points in Gaza. Partners who used the platform commented that WFP is "super-responsive and delivers" and that WFP is "very flexible" when responding to users changing requests.

131. Because of WFP corporate regulations, the added value WFP creates through its service delivery is not fully captured by WFP's systems. Beneficiaries served through the system are not considered to be WFP beneficiaries although WFP counts the resources that pass through service agreements on its budget sheets. The CO reports on the benefits delivered through its service delivery in its narrative annual reports, but can do so only in terms of the inputs it helped people access. For example, WFP calculated that in 2021 cross-sectoral assistance delivered using its platform allowed 743,700 people to receive USD 44 million. This included the post-escalation response to the May 2021 hostilities in Gaza. As a result, the 'added value' that the CO generates is under-reported.

¹²⁵ Users included Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development Action Against Hunger, Global Communities, Islamic Relief Worldwide, SOS, Terre des Hommes, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNSCO.

¹²⁶ WFP, 2022, Annual Country Report 2021. Since 2018, WFP has sent 23 million SMS messages and received over 135,000 calls.

EQ 2.2 To what extent did WFP contribute to the achievement of cross-cutting aims: humanitarian principles, protection, accountability to affected populations, gender and other equity considerations and environmental issues?

Summary

The CO has put in place systems to uphold humanitarian principles which are working effectively. WFP engages with beneficiaries and stakeholders through multiple channels and in 'real time': this ensures that it is aware of changing conditions quickly and has the information needed to respond effectively and rapidly. It operates a free hotline that is effective and widely used, providing accountability to affected populations (AAP). It also provides complaint boxes in shops, but these are used less. WFP is able to ensure the protection of people during the delivery of its assistance and activities. It also ensures that staff and partners are aware of and apply humanitarian principles.

Gender and protection have been integrated in the CSP and are treated as cross-cutting issues to be mainstreamed operationally. WFP has driven gender parity in its delivery of services: between 2018 and 2021, there has been full gender balance of beneficiaries targeted and reached. It is now starting to emphasise gender-transformative interventions, and is testing approaches with its livelihoods and resilience work.

There is limited evidence of a process for WFP to refer identified vulnerable people in the field though the CO does informally refer vulnerable beneficiaries to other agencies. The MoSD and the World Bank are seeking to establish a robust referral system, and WFP can support this initiative. There are some indications that voices are not sufficiently heard in relation to intervention design. WFP is piloting some innovative approaches to supporting households to develop climate-resilient livelihoods, even though the original country strategic plan was largely silent on how the CO would contribute to the environment.

132. The evidence from analysis of WFP data and triangulated from evaluation interviews shows that **WFP has focused attention on cross-cutting issues, and has achieved most of its indicator targets** (See Annex 7 on performance against cross-cutting indicators).

Humanitarian principles, protection and accountability to affected populations

133. **WFP is committed to humanitarian principles and has adopted several mechanisms to uphold them. These are working effectively.** WFP is guided by the core humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and operational independence. Stakeholders agree that WFP was able to protect these principles and translate them into practice through a variety of mechanisms and activities. This is done through identifying safety and protection-related risks and challenges through several mechanisms including: direct interactions with beneficiaries through on-site observations during monitoring missions and text and WhatsApp messaging; feedback mechanisms (including the hotline and the complaint boxes); and cooperating partners' assessments.¹²⁷ WFP facilitates the entry of food and other goods, in particular to Gaza. WFP continues to coordinate with the Israeli Civil Administration, which contributes to the relatively streamlined access and entry of WFP supplies.

134. **WFP ensures that staff and partners are aware of and apply humanitarian principles.** Partner organisations sign legally binding documents (such as MoUs and field-level agreements) that embody these principles, and WFP and cooperating partner staff use either WFP or partners' humanitarian training packages. Global Communities, WFP's partner on CBTs in Gaza, has its own robust capacity strengthening packages and ensures that all staff attend annual refresher courses.

135. **WFP engages with beneficiaries and their stakeholders through multiple channels and in 'real time': this ensures it is aware of changing conditions quickly and has the information needed to respond effectively and rapidly.** This capability underpins WFP's responsiveness. WFP engages with

¹²⁷ ACR 2018

beneficiaries during monitoring visits, conducts periodic assessments and ad-hoc studies to develop in-depth understanding of key issues, and utilizes SMS messaging and WhatsApp groups. Most interviewed stakeholders describe these systems as effective at enabling direct communication and effective monitoring. For example, shops contracted by WFP have WhatsApp groups to receive notifications, to keep up to date, or discuss certain issues or challenges amongst themselves and with WFP representatives. Similarly, beneficiaries of the livelihoods/resilience and nutrition components also perceived WhatsApp groups as useful for exchanging information, discussing challenges, and receiving remote assistance and advice from WFP or CP experts. WFP's in-depth studies, often with partners, on an ad-hoc basis also ensure that the CO can quickly develop detailed knowledge of an issue or concern. The barrier analysis for the nutrition behavioural change with UNICEF is a good example of this.¹²⁸

136. The free hotline is an effective and widely used system ensuring AAP. The hotline is outsourced and has been operated by Reach Call Center since 2017. WFP offers partners who use its CBT platform access to the system.¹²⁹ All calls are recorded and logged on a system WFP has access to. The number is toll-free and is listed on posters in every WFP contracted shop, and on beneficiary voucher cards. All new beneficiaries who were added as CBT recipients following the COVID-19 pandemic and the May 2021 hostilities in Gaza also had access to the hotline. Every year, WFP sends an SMS to all beneficiaries to inform them about the hotline and complaints mechanisms.¹³⁰ The call centre / hotline received over 90,000 calls in 2021. More than half of these calls were from non-beneficiaries, most of them requesting assistance.¹³¹ Interviews with both Reach and WFP indicate that most enquiries are addressed by Reach, but it refers those enquiries it cannot address to WFP for resolution. In turn, WFP discusses those enquiries in a committee that meets once a month and follows up as needed.¹³² The service provider also submits periodic reports to WFP summarizing common issues that WFP should be aware of. WFP's partners perceive the system to be well structured, effective and efficient. However, many beneficiaries interviewed did not know about the hotline but stated they would go to the shop owner for enquiries and assistance. None of the interviewed beneficiaries had used the hotline so they did not provide feedback on it. Several beneficiaries indicated that they would have liked more communication when WFP support ended.¹³³

137. Less used by beneficiaries are the complaint boxes, which are available at WFP contracted shops. WFP representatives do open these during monitoring visits to the shops. The boxes, while not used widely, do guarantee that people with no access to phones can communicate with WFP.

138. **While these accountability mechanisms exist and are functional, there are some indications that voices are not sufficiently heard in relation to intervention design.** WFP data shows that most assisted people are informed about the programme, with Gaza scoring better than the West Bank (93 percent in Gaza and 77 percent in the West Bank).¹³⁴

139. WFP's cross-cutting indicator states that 'project activities for which beneficiary feedback is documented, analysed and integrated into programme improvements' has an overall score of 100 percent for both West Bank and Gaza across the reporting years. However, the evaluation qualitative research indicates that in some areas beneficiary voices could have more influence. Some CBT and in-kind beneficiaries, as well as livelihoods/resilience beneficiaries, felt they were not sufficiently consulted on the design of activities, or the choices offered. This suggests that beneficiaries, while they can communicate complaints, feel their voices are not adequately heard during design of activities. The fact that this is not reflected in the scoring of the indicator indicates that WFP should review how it collects data.

140. WFP is able to ensure the protection of people during the delivery of its assistance and activities. WFP data as well as interviews with beneficiaries, CPs and shops indicated that WFP was able to secure

¹²⁸ WFP and UNICEF, Barrier Analysis behavioural change, 2020.

¹²⁹ WFP interview.

¹³⁰ WFP interview,

¹³¹ Complaint and Feedback Mechanism (CFM) data received from WFP- Summary: Jan-Oct 2021.

¹³² For example, if a complaint is made by a caller that his WFP beneficiary neighbour is a refugee, WFP will then cross-check the name with UNRWA and takes necessary measures (WFP interview).

¹³³ For example, one divorcee with 5 children received MPCA assistance, and then stopped to her surprise. She said she did not know how to complain or seek information.

¹³⁴ WFP data on Cross-Cutting Outcomes Indicator: C.1.1 Proportion of assisted people informed about the programme (who is included, what people will receive, length of assistance).

beneficiaries' access to assistance without any safety challenges and while protecting their dignity (see Annex 2), and that when issues are identified, WFP and partners address them. For example, one in-kind beneficiary stated that the flour delivered was bad/inedible: WFP field staff went back to the site and checked the quality, and the beneficiary felt that their voice was heard after a complaint was made. Similarly, WFP – while outsourcing the service it provides to CPs and platform users (including private companies) – ensures compliance with data privacy policies.

141. **There is limited evidence of a systematic process for WFP to refer identified vulnerable people in the field.** In the absence of an effective and holistic platform for referring and tracking the delivery of assistance to vulnerable people across sectors, WFP has attempted in several instances to refer vulnerable households whose needs were beyond WFP's mandate to the Government and other partners. Examples given included WFP referring the homeless for shelter and deaf children for specialized support.¹³⁵ However, there is limited evidence that this has been done in a systematic way and in coordination with cooperating partners. The MoSD, with the World Bank, is seeking to establish a stronger referral system, and this is something that WFP can help to support and develop in the future.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

142. **Gender considerations were integrated within the CSP design and implementation.** The CSP is underpinned by WFP's Gender Policy (2015–2020), Gender Action Plan, and the 2016-2020 Regional Gender Strategy. The latter states that gender considerations will be integrated throughout implementation of the CSP to drive gender-transformative programmes and policies. In addition, there was systematic collection and analysis of gender- and age-disaggregated data, including data on disability. These aspects are crucial for inclusive programming. As a result, the CSP has scored a 3 out of 4 on the corporate Gender and Age Marker.¹³⁶

143. **In terms of reach, WFP has been able to ensure a good gender balance across its interventions.** Between 2018 and 2021, there has been full gender balance in targeted and reached beneficiaries (see Annex 6). Similarly, WFP achieved gender balance across its capacity strengthening interventions. For example, 60 percent of trainees in its 'in-depth inventory and data analysis' training for public servants in 2019 were women.¹³⁷ In the livelihoods/resilience activities, approximately 50 percent of families targeted were women-headed households.¹³⁸ The training participation rate of women, around a third, was also significant.¹³⁹ WFP encouraged participation of women in the training, but made sure they are not overburdened, so did not make participation compulsory. In 2021, WFP trained around 30 women with special needs on food production to develop their capacity and support their employment status.¹⁴⁰ An FAO 'gender in agriculture' assessment confirmed that women farmers are ready to adopt new practices, which highlights that targeting and supporting women with livelihood activities is a good approach to gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE).¹⁴¹

144. **In terms of gendered analysis, beneficiaries' analysis is gender and age disaggregated.**¹⁴² Throughout 2020 under COVID-19, WFP applied a gender-responsive monitoring system to prioritize the most vulnerable people, including households headed by women. Participatory gender analysis was conducted in 2020 in the West Bank and Gaza to address the needs and challenges of men and women.¹⁴³ WFP responded to this proactively by issuing new voucher cards with the names of both the woman and the man in the household in a 2021 pilot project.

¹³⁵ For example, after learning of 100 households living in a rubbish collection area in Gaza, WFP initiated a rapid assessment and shared the results with relevant agencies with a mandate to provide water and shelter, and assistance was provided immediately.

¹³⁶ WFP Palestine, Annual Country Report 2018. P 11; WFP, Gender and Age Marker. P 1.

¹³⁷ WFP, ACR 2019.

¹³⁸ WFP, ACR 2021.

¹³⁹ WFP CO data (See Annex 6 Livelihoods Resilience Beneficiaries) 90 females in the Gaza Strip, 251 females in West Bank, 304 males in the Gaza Strip, 200 males in the West Bank.

¹⁴⁰ WFP ACR 2021

¹⁴¹ FAO. 2021. Country Gender Assessment of the Agriculture and Rural Sector – Palestine. Rome.

¹⁴² WFP State of Palestine, Country Strategic Plan, revision |4|, 2018

¹⁴³ WFP, Participatory Gender Analysis Report (West Bank & Gaza Strip), April 2020

145. **WFP is now starting to emphasise gender-transformative interventions, and some innovative livelihood projects show signs of disrupting gender stereotypes.** Corporate guidelines require WFP to use gender-transformative programming to deliver gender equality outcomes in food security and nutrition.¹⁴⁴ As mentioned previously, the CO is experimenting with gender-transformative activities under its livelihoods and resilience work. These include training women, who are also reached with food support, in mobile workshops and in carpentry training to produce wooden pallets that are used for food transport. These activities were due to start in earnest in March 2022. Interviews indicate that the inclusion of girls in this initiative was treated with surprise by some families, with anecdotal evidence of resistance from their families.¹⁴⁵ But these same families started appreciating the intervention and noted the potential for these girls, changing their attitudes towards gendered roles and professions. WFP also needs to measure potential gender-transformative effects and whether engagement in these resilience activities adds to women's workloads in a negative way, and to avoid doing so.¹⁴⁶ If interventions are to drive gender equity, it is important they are built on an understanding of the specific needs and challenges that women and girls face. Interventions need to be based on detailed gender analysis and monitored closely, and lessons need to be learned and fed back into new practices. The CO has commissioned research precisely on these issues and the work was getting underway during the evaluation field work.¹⁴⁷

146. **WFP's cash-based interventions were also useful in promoting GEWE.** A multi-country study found that cash-based interventions, if well designed, can help promote GEWE.¹⁴⁸ This is relevant for the State of Palestine CO, given its extensive use of CBT. WFP's tracking of decisions on the use of MPCA reveal that the proportion of households where women and men independently make decisions on using cash assistance was 5 percent and 7 percent respectively, and 88 percent of households decide jointly.¹⁴⁹ As for using vouchers, in Gaza, in 29 percent of cases women go to the shops to redeem their vouchers;¹⁵⁰ in the West Bank women going to the shops account for 71 percent.¹⁵¹ Regional Bureau respondents flagged that the CO should monitor this closely, as men often allow women to decide on food expenses, whereas changing social norms is WFP's mandate under the previous and new Gender Policies.¹⁵²

147. **Some of WFP's activities were specifically intended to support GEWE.** WFP convened several staff GEWE training sessions. Positively, the CO has successfully 'graduated' from WFP's Gender Transformation Programme, a corporate programme that supports WFP COs to deliver gender equality outcomes in food security and nutrition.¹⁵³ Also, with Oxfam and the national NGO Culture and Free Thought Association, gender awareness messages were placed on public buses across Gaza. It also organized interactive community-led sessions to discuss the impact of cultural norms on gender behaviours and roles.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, WFP integrated gender-related messages into nutrition-sensitive activities for 250 pregnant and lactating women in the West Bank.¹⁵⁵

148. **WFP actively focused on sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation and abuse.** During the joint United Nations '16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence' campaign, the CO distributed banners and shared information with participating stores in its cash programme.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, online awareness sessions were conducted for staff and CPs about sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and these and other protection issues are part of the induction package for new cooperating partners and

¹⁴⁴ WFP Gender Transformation Programme: Office Guide.

¹⁴⁵ WFP interview.

¹⁴⁶ WFP Palestine, Livelihoods & Resilience Annual Report 2021.

¹⁴⁷ Pushkar Sharma, Prevailing Gender Dynamics and Power Relations in WFP Beneficiary Households, Inception Report, 11 February 2022 (Commissioned by WFP CO).

¹⁴⁸ WFP, The Potential of Cash-Based Interventions to Promote Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, 2018. Conducted in Bangladesh, Egypt, El Salvador, Jordan, Mali, and Rwanda.

¹⁴⁹ WFP Palestine, Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance Pilot in the Gaza Strip, Final Report, Nov 2020 – July 2021.

¹⁵⁰ WFP Palestine, Monitoring Report CSP-PS01 Q2/2021.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² WFP, Gender Policy (2015-2020), May 2015 and WFP, Gender Policy 2022.

¹⁵³ WFP, WFP's Gender Transformation Programme: Office Guide (internal document). No date. The assessment is set out in 'Gender Transformation Programme Assessment Mission: Palestine Country Office – Summary Report', November 2021 – internal document.

¹⁵⁴ WFP Palestine, Annual Country Report 2019. p.18.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ WFP Palestine, Country Brief. November 2021.

staff.¹⁵⁷ Since 2020, UNFPA has been using WFP's existing cash-transfer platform to provide vulnerable women with food and non-food assistance. Many are at risk of SGBV, and the assistance is expected to contribute to ensuring greater protection and dignity.¹⁵⁸ WFP reports that it has trained its hotline operators on how to handle calls related to SGBV and sexual exploitation and that they have been instructed to re-route them to a dedicated hotline (Sawa) that is equipped to handle sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and other sensitive issues. This hotline uses community-based complaint mechanism standard operating procedures. WFP is a member of the United Nations' gender-based violence (GBV) working group and the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) network.

Environmental cross-cutting objectives

149. WFP is piloting some innovative approaches to supporting households to develop climate-resilient livelihoods, even though its original CSP was largely silent on how to address environmental or climate issues. It does include a cross-cutting environmental objective but without any accompanying narrative. The objective relates to 'doing no harm', not taking progressive action.¹⁵⁹ Performance is measured by the proportion of activities for which environmental risks have been screened and whether mitigation actions are identified, if relevant. Whilst the programme did not have direct engagement on the environment in the early stages of the CSP, since 2019, the CO has begun to support climate-resilient livelihoods activities and support strategic discussions.

150. WFP has been piloting resilience-enhancing projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 2019. The objective is to reduce the impact of weather events on poor and food-insecure people and to enhance their capacity to improve their lives. The first round of the pilot was informed in part by WFP's experience with climate-resilient agricultural projects in other countries, and aimed to identify options best suited for the Palestinian context. WFP gave households assets, including hydroponic food and green fodder production, wicking beds, home gardens, floating beds and greenhouses. In 2021, WFP also reported providing selected families and institutions with solar panels and wastewater treatment units to improve environmental health and mitigate the effects of climate change. WFP's resilience activity is conducted in coordination with the National Environmental Quality Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture and through three CPs.

151. WFP formed a Green Climate Fund Committee with the National Environmental Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture to help frame its new climate resilience activities. It submitted a funding application to the Green Climate Fund in December 2021 to conduct a cost-benefit analysis on its climate-resilient agricultural production projects to inform future scaling up decisions.¹⁶⁰

152. Environmental and Social Safeguards tools and procedures to identify and manage risks associated with WFP's programmes were applied from 2021, retrospectively, after agreements were signed. The CO indicated that from 2022 all activities will be screened before agreements are signed.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ WFP Palestine, Annual Country Report 2020.

¹⁵⁸ WFP 2021 'WFP and UNFPA to support gender-based violence survivors in Palestine' (WFP website, June 2021).

¹⁵⁹ It states that 'targeted communities benefit from WFP programmes in a manner that does not harm the environment'. Country Strategic Plan, p.20

¹⁶⁰ WFP, 2022, Annual Country Report, 2021, p.18.

¹⁶¹ WFP 2022, Annual Country Report 2021.p.25

EQ 2.3 To what extent are the achievements of the CSP likely to be sustained?

Summary

Few of WFP's achievements to date will be sustained without continued engagement and investment. This is the logical result of the nature of WFP's primary support (CBTs to contribute to dietary diversity) and the deteriorating context in which needs are increasing rather than decreasing. Some of WFP's support to government institutions are leading to sustained improvements but due primarily to the Government's fiscal crisis, these advances are also fragile. Whilst WFP is experimenting with establishing sustainable climate-resilient agriculture-based livelihoods support, they have not been running long enough to assess their sustainability. However, these kinds of interventions are difficult to make viable in the long term, especially in Gaza. Cooperating partners will need to continuously adapt and review their approaches to encourage the sustainability of these projects.

153. **The current CSP document does not analyse the intended sustainability of its outputs, activities or strategic outcomes.¹⁶² Therefore it is hard to assess whether achievements have been sustained in the way WFP anticipated. WFP's next CSP will need to explicitly analyse sustainability issues related to its future activities and outcomes and identify mitigating measures.**

154. The restricted trade, movement and access to resources combined with recurrent conflict prevent sustainable economic growth. While there is more space for growth in the West Bank, it is fragile and easily reversed. The context in Gaza has steadily deteriorated with COVID-19 and recurrent escalation, deepening needs. These **conditions make it challenging for households to transition out of poverty**. Therefore, there is greater dependency on WFP food assistance (Activity 1); and there are few viable pathways that households can take to become self-reliant.

155. Thus, the **gains in food security and nutrition to which WFP contributes are not sustainable without continued support**. The 'improved dietary diversity' that constitutes the main strategic outcome for 2022 would reverse as soon as financial support ends. If there is greater stability and a political framework that relaxes the controls imposed and gives more space for economic growth, then fewer households would need WFP's support. But there is no indication of this positive trajectory developing soon.

156. WFP does position its support to government institutions, so they have 'enhanced capacities and systems to identify, target and assist food-insecure vulnerable populations by 2022' as a contribution to resilience. The implication is that these will lead to sustained improvements. In many ways they have already done so. The **national social safety net that WFP has helped to strengthen is well established and fully managed and owned by the Government**. WFP's technical support to the Government and to the PCBS has led to sustained improvements in vulnerability assessments and targeting systems. One current intervention that should have long-term implications is WFP's ongoing support to the World Bank-facilitated technical team developing the MoSD's new Social Register, so it routinely includes vulnerable groups (the elderly and persons with disabilities). However, the sustainability of capacity strengthening to government counterparts has been somewhat fragile: there has been high staff turnover in the MoSD in recent years. This implies a need for ongoing support.

157. A key constraint on the sustainability of government social protection systems, and therefore of WFP's support, is the Government's fiscal situation.¹⁶³ The Government has not made transfers through the system since April 2021 due to its fiscal constraints. If this continues through 2022 and beyond, then the systems the MoSD has developed will lose their relevance: interviews indicated that poor households consider there is no point in registering with the MoSD because they will not receive benefits. The MoSD

¹⁶² The only substantive reference to sustainability in the country strategic plan document is: 'Restricted trade and access to resources, especially in the Gaza Strip combined with the impact of civil unrest and conflict and continued trade and access restrictions, present challenges to sustainable recovery and economic growth.' WFP, 2017, Country Strategic Plan, p.3.

¹⁶³ World Bank 2021, Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison-Committee, 17 November 2021.

lists also risk becoming more outdated. The expectation that the state (rather than external agencies) is responsible for providing social protection support will likely further weaken as a result. A further risk to sustainability is government inability to pay salaries to public servants, undermining the management of the social protection system and the collection of data.

158. WFP is still experimenting with establishing sustainable climate-resilient agriculture-based livelihoods support. The activities have not been operational long enough to assess their sustainability, though they do explicitly state how they seek to encourage sustainability.¹⁶⁴ The projects are intended to both supplement households' own food needs and to generate income. If they are effective in generating income, which interviews indicate is what beneficiaries want, households will continue to sustain them. This evaluation notes that it is difficult to make agriculture-based interventions sustainable in the State of Palestine, particularly in Gaza where it can be costly and/or difficult to obtain replacement inputs. The sustainability of non-agricultural resilience projects, which the CO is also experimenting with, may be easier to secure. The CO will need to carefully monitor the sustainability of its agricultural support and learn and adapt what it offers to households as it scales up the approach.

159. It is also too early to assess the sustainability of WFP's nutrition programme. It is still in a pilot phase, and it is not clear if the Government will take it up on completion.

160. The CBT platform is operated on a commercial contract. It is effective and was designed together with WFP. The system is owned and run by a private company that has the needed financial, security and technological capacity. There are no plans to sustain the platform beyond the contract-by-contract partnership. WFP has outsourced the service it provides to CPs and platform users to the same private company.

EQ 2.4 In humanitarian contexts, to what extent did the CSP facilitate more strategic linkages between humanitarian, development, and (where appropriate) peace work?

Summary

Whilst the Country Strategic Plan document does not identify how WFP will facilitate strategic linkages across the nexus, in April 2021 the CO did set out its approach to the nexus in a consolidated document. This identifies WFP's contribution in terms of the contribution CBTs and in-kind food make to stability, the contribution its assistance makes to local markets and economic stability, and the role of its recent resilience interventions. WFP plays a role in stabilizing and providing conditions for peace, particularly in Gaza. Its current service delivery operation, distributing support for vulnerable households in Gaza under contract to UNSCO, is an example of this. Humanitarian and development actors in the State of Palestine have yet to define a coherent framework within which WFP can work.

161. The 2016 World Humanitarian Forum called for stronger cohesion and collaboration across humanitarian, development and peace interventions – the triple nexus.¹⁶⁵ **The original CSP document does not set out how WFP will facilitate strategic linkages across the nexus.** It states at a very general level that it will link humanitarian food security interventions with the government's 'longer-term efforts' but lacks further detail.¹⁶⁶ This is probably because, following the CPE, it stepped back from livelihoods interventions. However, in its 2019 reporting, the CO positioned its new pilot to support resilience through livelihoods interventions as 'working within' the nexus, and this ambition has been repeated in WFP's reporting since it began this pilot.¹⁶⁷ **In April 2021 the CO sought to formally set out its approach to the**

¹⁶⁴ See, for example, WFP 2021, Project Description: Scaling up Climate Resilient Agriculture (CRA) to enhance the resilience and food security of climate vulnerable smallholder farmers in the State of Palestine (internal document). And ARIJ 2020, Building the Resilience of Vulnerable Men and Women in the West Bank through providing them with Productive Agricultural Systems Final Technical Report Project Period July 2019 - April 2020.

¹⁶⁵ UN Secretary General, 2016, Chair's Summary: World Humanitarian Summit, Istanbul May 2016.

¹⁶⁶ In full: "WFP will work with cooperating partners at the humanitarian-development nexus to maximize impact, linking humanitarian food security interventions to longer-term efforts by Palestinian authorities". CSP, p.20.

¹⁶⁷ WFP, 2019, August 2019 Country Brief and repeated in successive Country Briefs, including September 2021.

nexus in a consolidated document.¹⁶⁸ This highlights WFP's existing contribution across the humanitarian-development and peace nexus in a coherent way. For example, WFP draws on the contribution its provision to basic needs makes to stability, and the economic contribution its CBT assistance makes to local markets and economic stability. The evidence below draws on some of the examples highlighted in this document but also identifies other contributions and issues identified by the evaluation.

162. **There is a need for effective, systematic synergy between humanitarian, development, and peace interventions in the State of Palestine.** There is a need for all three kinds of support in the State of Palestine due to the protracted nature of the conflict and differing conditions in Gaza and the West Bank – from ‘active conflict’ to those of a middle-income country. However, there is no common nexus framework in the State of Palestine which WFP can align to: interviews indicate **weak basic coordination between humanitarian and development actors in the State of Palestine; and that delivering strategic linkages between the two is a distant goal.** There is a tendency for agencies to operate in silos. Donors and United Nations agencies are seeking – so far in parallel-- to develop a strategic approach to working across the nexus. The EU was leading discussions among donors and commissioned an initial scoping mission to identify opportunities for greater synergy between humanitarian cash assistance and social protection programmes.¹⁶⁹ Whilst the UNCT reports that it formally adopted a ‘nexus approach’ in 2020, this was not evident in practice. It committed to aligning its Cooperation Framework and Human Response Plans through 2021 and 2022.¹⁷⁰ WFP is engaged in these discussions and in mid-2022 was recruiting a ‘nexus advisor’ to strengthen its capability.

Contribution to resilience

163. Most WFP partners interviewed consider that WFP should work across the humanitarian-development nexus, and should help build resilience and help transition beneficiaries out from support. However, there was little commonality in what they considered WFP should do beyond going in this general direction.

164. The CO noted that until the May 2021 Gaza hostilities there was strong donor interest in supporting resilience interventions and in helping WFP to try new approaches. Donors’ funding priority has subsequently been on humanitarian aid: some donors have indicated that assistance for development will only increase if the prospects for political stability improve. This lack of consistency in donor interest and funding makes it difficult for the CO to chart and fund a clear strategy.

165. WFP positions the climate-resilient agriculture support projects as “part of a new resilience-building pilot in the framework of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus”.¹⁷¹ The logic is in line with WFP’s Regional Resilience Framework.¹⁷² WFP aims to help beneficiaries transition from support. However, **the numbers WFP can support are small, and developing sustainable, agriculture-based livelihoods is objectively difficult, particularly in Gaza.** The CO is also experimenting with non-agricultural livelihoods interventions – including supporting skills development for youth. The evaluation notes that WFP will continue experimenting and learning from these approaches.

166. In addition to direct implementation, WFP could consider piloting a way of linking some of its beneficiaries with other agencies/partners providing resilience/livelihoods development support. This would allow WFP and partners to reach more beneficiaries.

WFP’s contribution to peace and stabilization

167. There is evidence that **WFP does contribute to peace and stabilization in the State of Palestine.** As the triple nexus approach is still evolving, practitioners are still trying to conceptualize what the ‘peace’ element means for agencies. A position paper by a humanitarian expert working group differentiates between activities that contribute to peace with a lower-case (i.e., ‘p’) and an upper-case (i.e.,

¹⁶⁸ WFP, April 2021, WFP’s Nexus Approach in Palestine: operationalizing the nexus.

¹⁶⁹ EU, October 2021, Operationalising the HDP Nexus in Palestine: Joint Analysis and Proposed Approach 2021- 2024 for Social assistance

¹⁷⁰ United Nations, 2021, 2020 UN Country Results Report: State of Palestine, p.28

¹⁷¹ August 2019 Country Brief

¹⁷² WFP RBC Resilience Framework - 2019

'P'), referred to as 'little p' and 'Big P'.¹⁷³ 'Little p' activities can constitute long-term investments in accountable institutions and can include the equitable provision of social services and livelihood opportunities. 'Big P' interventions are related to activities that are "more directly aimed at a political solution or a securitized response to violent conflict". 'Big P' interventions are clearly not within WFP's mandate, while some of WFP's activities do contribute to 'little p' peace/stabilization.

168. It is hard to assess WFP's general contribution to 'little p' peace and stability without a focused qualitative study, like those which some WFP country portfolios have benefited from.¹⁷⁴ However, there is evidence that WFP makes a strong contribution to 'little p'. WFP's CBT provision delivers benefits to the local economy and helps to underpin social cohesion and stability. WFP interventions to improve food security and protect households in poverty help to reduce tension in Gaza in particular. Poverty and food insecurity fosters desperation, which has contributed to recurrent conflict.¹⁷⁵ The WFP contribution to food security thus has a direct effect on preventing conflict, and supports social cohesion at the community level. WFP's support to the Government's social protection systems is also a contribution to 'little p'.

169. There are three additional contributions WFP makes to peace and stability:

- WFP's service provision, which began in September 2021 to implement **cash transfers to vulnerable households in Gaza** (using its established mechanisms under Activity 4, Service Provision) under a contract with the United Nations. In the aftermath of the May Gaza hostilities the Government of Israel prevented these funds from entering Gaza in cash. This stopped around 100,000 families from receiving the support they had previously received. The tension surrounding this threatened to reignite the escalation of hostilities that erupted in May. Rapidly WFP arranged a transparent and accountable transfer system that enabled significant sums to go to vulnerable households. The transfers played a significant role in helping to stabilize a volatile situation.
- WFP's provision of **food to Bedouins and herding communities in Area C** of the West Bank, in partnership with UNRWA, makes an important contribution to stabilization and peace, and prospects for a future lasting political settlement.¹⁷⁶
- In 2020 during the cessation of coordination between the Israeli and Palestinian governments, the WFP-led **logistics cluster "assumed the liaison role on behalf of the humanitarian community** to ensure continuity of humanitarian assistance".¹⁷⁷ Without WFP stepping into this role, essential supplies into Gaza could have been disrupted, with a knock-on effect on increasing tensions. WFP also provided essential logistical support following the May escalation of hostilities, supporting 28 partners and responding to 390 requests.

¹⁷³ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2020), Issue Paper- Exploring Peace Within the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN). IASC Results Group 4 on Humanitarian-Development Collaboration, October 2020.

¹⁷⁴ Under an agreement between WFP and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, several countries were selected for case studies to investigate the contribution WFP makes to peace. Palestine is not a case study country, but the Lebanon report has relevant findings that would be applicable to Palestine. With respect to CBTs, it notes: 'CBTs have a stabilizing effect.'. Kristina Tschunkert September 2021, 'The World Food Programme's Contribution to Improving the Prospects for Peace in Lebanon'.

¹⁷⁵ For example, increased hardship could lead to popular protests such as the 'Great March of Return' protests of 2018/19, which can lead to spiralling hostilities (see Amnesty International, Six months on: Gaza's Great March of Return).

¹⁷⁶ Area C is under the control of the Israeli Civil Administration. Movement and access restrictions, and the spread of settlement infrastructure, makes it hard for residents to sustain themselves without external support. Under the Oslo Accords, Area C is seen as part of the future territory of a Palestinian state.

¹⁷⁷ WFP, 2021 WFP's Nexus Approach in Palestine'

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

EQ 3.1 To what extent were outputs delivered within the intended timeframe?

Summary

Overall outputs were delivered within the intended timeframe. The evaluation did not identify any systemic weaknesses in WFP's capability to deliver on time. WFP also adapted its response effectively to address the challenges caused by COVID-19 and was able to provide timely support.

170. WFP's electronic system for transferring value to **CBT vouchers** has facilitated the timely distribution of assistance. Monitoring reports and interviews demonstrated that generally payments have been timely. Furthermore, when beneficiary households faced individual delays, they used the hotline to seek resolution. Interviews with WFP's platform users indicated they find the platform delivers support in a timely way.

171. Some quarterly monitoring reports cited some beneficiaries expressing dissatisfaction with delays in the **distribution cycles of food** to collection points in Gaza.¹⁷⁸ Interviews indicated that these delays related to short-term logistical problems – mostly at the point of import to Israel or entry to Gaza, due to border controls. Prior to the current programme, WFP improved how it engages with the Israeli Civil Administration, which controls access to both Gaza and the West Bank, to streamline the entry of food and goods. Interviews confirmed that it has continued to do this, and this has contributed to the relatively streamlined access and entry of WFP supplies.¹⁷⁹

172. The nutrition and livelihoods projects have also been implemented in line with their intended timeframes.

173. To ensure timely delivery of assistance in 2020, the CO bought wheat locally, which was above the import parity price. This was done to avoid delays in the fourth cycle distribution, due to a delay in internationally procured wheat.

EQ 3.2 To what extent was coverage and targeting of interventions appropriate?

Summary

WFP's coverage and targeting of interventions was largely appropriate. For the period 2018-2021, actual beneficiaries reached for in-kind and CBT support were consistently close to planned values. During the CSP period the gap between food security needs and available resources varied according to WFP's available budget but also according to the degree of need: needs changed largely because of COVID-19, the cessation of government national safety net support in April 2021, and the May 2021 Gaza hostilities. WFP was thus unable to reach all severely food-insecure non-refugee populations.

When faced with funding shortages, WFP chose first to reduce the amount of assistance to beneficiaries; and only then to reduce the number of people it assists. It had to do this once during the Country Strategic Plan period. The current proxy means testing formula that informs MoSD targeting has not captured poverty changes caused by recent shocks, so some of the 'new poor' may have been excluded from MoSD lists that WFP has used.

174. **For the period 2018-2021, actual beneficiaries reached for in-kind and CBT support were consistently close to planned values** (see Table 8 below). The mean proportion of planned expenditure actual spent in all the years for in-kind distributions was 98 percent and the median was 99 percent and for

¹⁷⁸ For example, WFP Monitoring Reports CSP S01 Q1 2018, Q2 2018, Q3 2019, Q4 2019.

¹⁷⁹ WFP 2017, PRRO 200709 Standard Project Report 2016

CBT the mean was 97 percent, and the median was 99 percent. There are two notable exceptions: 2019 and 2021. Some assistance (USD 65.5 million) was delayed in 2019 when WFP was managing the unanticipated funding shortfall resulting from the suspension of support from the United States. This forced WFP to resort to mitigation measures which included temporary reductions in assistance and prioritizing the most vulnerable. These mitigation measures resulted in 25,000 people in the West Bank being removed from its beneficiary lists and 165,000 people in Gaza and the West Bank receiving vouchers worth 20 percent less than the amount received in the first quarter of the year. WFP chose first to reduce the amount of assistance to beneficiaries; and only then, as a last resort, to reduce the number of people it assisted.¹⁸⁰

175. In 2021, the actual numbers of beneficiaries reached exceeded the planned numbers across both modalities. Assistance was scaled up to respond to the emergency needs in Gaza in May 2021, when WFP maintained its regular food assistance to 260,000 people while also scaling up temporary emergency electronic food voucher assistance in coordination with the MoSD. This ability to quickly scale up in response to an emergency highlighted the efficient mechanisms in place.

176. **Women-headed households and other most vulnerable groups were still prioritized when services were reduced.** WFP staff noted that when funding cuts require ending or reducing assistance to beneficiaries, WFP maintained a 50 percent ratio of women- to men-headed household beneficiaries. WFP used common targeting instruments and devised a gender-responsive monitoring system to ensure the most vulnerable cases, including households headed by women, families with high-dependency ratios or dependants living with disabilities, were identified and prioritized for WFP's assistance.

Table 8: Planned versus actual number of beneficiaries by modality (2018-2021)

Year	Modality	Planned	Actual	Percentage of actual over planned
2018	In-kind	72,000	71,001	99%
	CBT	296,700	282,615	95%
2019	In-kind	72,000	71,087	99%
	CBT	332,000	272,347	82%
2020	In-kind	73,000	70,485	97%
	CBT	353,000	361,377	102%
2021	In-kind	73,000	88,367	121%
	CBT	362,170	390,064	108%

Source: ACRs 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021

177. WFP's targeting mechanism has been effective, but the targeting method used by the MoSD is not responsive to rapidly changing poverty levels. WFP identifies its target beneficiaries in collaboration with MoSD, UNRWA (for in-kind assistance) or through its CPs (Global Communities for CBT and Oxfam/Maan for in-kind in the Gaza Strip; and in the West Bank, through MoSD for CBT and UNRWA for in-kind support). The current proxy means testing formula that informs MoSD targeting does not capture poverty changes caused by shocks, so the 'new poor' will have been excluded from surveys that use this. The formula is based on material possessions, levels of income and the productive role of different groups.¹⁸¹ New groups can become poor and may not be captured by the proxy means testing formula. This is particularly the case in Gaza where changes in the sustained restrictions can impact livelihoods in different ways. COVID-19 had a significant impact creating 'new poor' in both the West Bank and Gaza. One recent study recommends a

¹⁸⁰ WFP key informant interview, WFP, 2019, Palestine Annual Country Report 2019

¹⁸¹ *ibid*

review of the vulnerability and targeting criteria to assess their relevance in Gaza.¹⁸² WFP has recently worked with the MoSD to collect data based on a new proxy means testing formula and survey but it is not clear whether the revised formula is based on a thorough review of shifting vulnerabilities, or to what extent or when this will be applied and will determine eligibility.¹⁸³ WFP reported that re-targeting was completed in Gaza in the first quarter of 2022.

178. There is likely to be some duplication of assistance when other providers are active, but the extent to which this is the case is not known. The same households can sometimes receive cash, in-kind, humanitarian and development assistance from multiple providers, whilst others miss out. This, as suggested by a recent study and by interviewed stakeholders, is a consequence of a lack of cooperation and information sharing among the many humanitarian, development and governmental agencies.¹⁸⁴ WFP is engaged in coordinating with other agencies and needs to continue playing a role in harmonizing assistance.

179. WFP's targeting does account for vulnerability criteria to ensure inclusion, such as prioritizing women-headed households and people with disabilities. But there needs to be further research and targeting considerations in a way that does not burden or do harm to these groups. This is because families tend to push these groups to seek assistance from both formal and informal sources, and they are also encouraged by formal providers to apply for assistance, as they are perceived to be more eligible for receiving assistance.¹⁸⁵

180. Under the current CSP, beneficiaries of resilience/livelihoods and nutrition SBCC activities are recipients of CBT assistance who meet certain eligibility criteria. This approach is sound and ensures greater potential for a positive effect. WFP indicated that in future livelihoods interventions will not necessarily target CBT beneficiaries.

EQ 3.3 To what extent were WFP's activities cost-efficient in delivery of its assistance?

Summary

The evaluation found that WFP's activities show clear signs of cost-efficient delivery. There is evidence of measures to drive cost efficiency and value for money, and to deliver services under planned costs. The move to electronic vouchers and the use of a single platform before the current country strategic plan led to efficiencies. The platform has also delivered further efficiencies over the duration of the CSP. The CO has not undertaken or commissioned any value for money analysis.

181. The evaluation team looked at various measures of efficiency, outlined below. Overall, activities have been implemented in a cost-efficient way. The CO's move to electronic vouchers and a single platform before the current CSP delivered efficiencies. WFP's continuous engagement with the commercial platform provider has improved the efficiency, reliability, and cost-effectiveness of the CBT programme, with the development of an electronic transaction system and online monitoring platform.

182. These technological advances have enabled WFP to reduce implementation costs, provide real-time payment to shopkeepers, and enabled timely monitoring of shop sales and beneficiaries' voucher redemption rates and purchasing patterns. WFP's CommonCard is also used by the United Nations, international and local NGO partners to deliver humanitarian supplies across sectors in the State of Palestine, fostering cost-effectiveness and helping the United Nations to 'deliver as one'. It facilitated integration of the safety net mechanisms of WFP, the Government and other agencies, while enabling separate identification and monitoring of different beneficiaries within the system. WFP continues to upgrade and expand its e-voucher system.

¹⁸² Decentralised evaluation, Oxfam & AWRAD.

¹⁸³ WFP key informant interview.

¹⁸⁴ Oxfam, 2020, Responsiveness of the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme to Shifting Vulnerabilities in the Gaza Strip.

¹⁸⁵ AWRAD & OXFAM.

183. WFP's use of the CBT platform has delivered significant efficiencies over the last four years. In 2018, the transfer cost per beneficiary was USD 7.4 but has since dropped to between USD 4.6 and USD 5.8 per beneficiary in 2020 and 2021. This indicates that as the platform was streamlined, the cost of the service has been reduced (see Table 9 below).

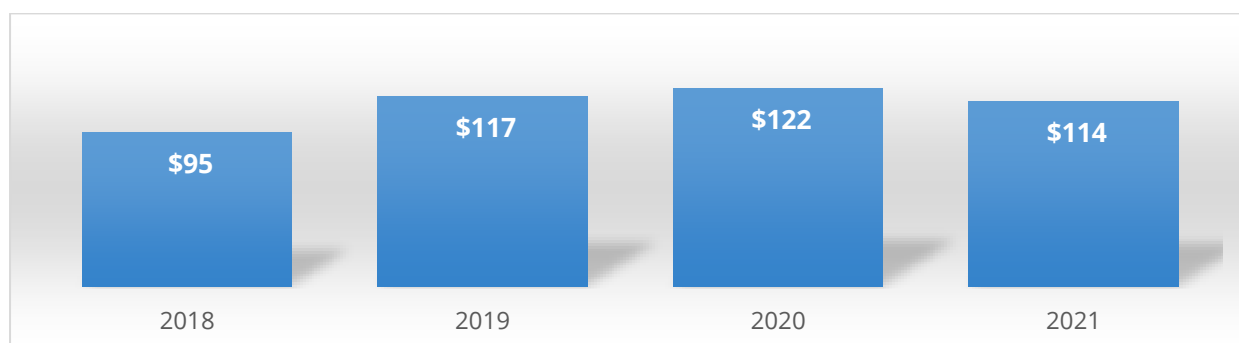
Table 9: Transfer cost CBT per beneficiary per year (USD)

Year	CBT Value	Transfer Cost	Beneficiaries	Transfer cost per beneficiary
2018	26,718,782	2,098,690	282,615	7.4
2019	30,254,333	1,588,274	272,347	5.8
2020	42,572,928	1,689,227	361,377	4.6
2021	44,332,514	2,251,682	390,064	5.7

Source: Evaluation Team based on Country Portfolio Budget and ACRs

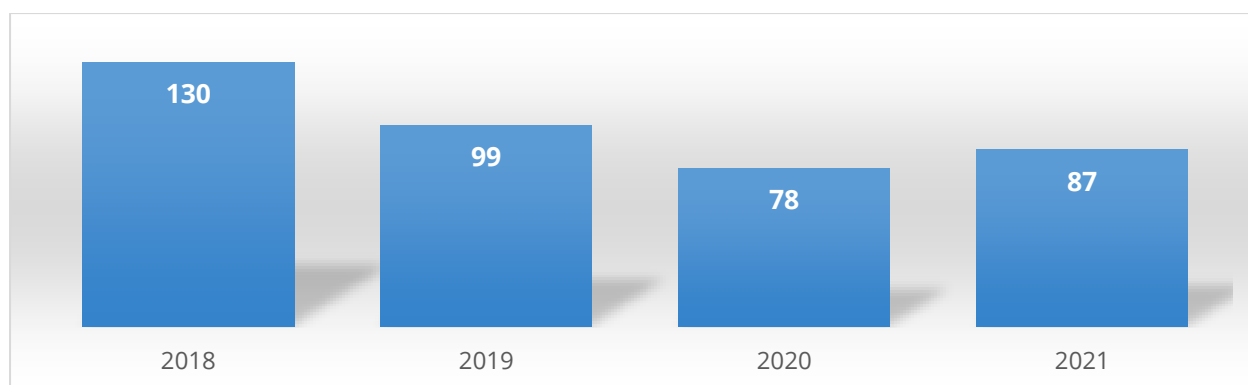
184. The total cost per beneficiary for CBTs has remained stable during the CSP, indicating that the CO has managed to contain its overhead costs. The total cost of providing in-kind support has varied. This is largely due to differences in the cost of transport. The planned transport costs per metric ton of food was higher than planned in 2018, but significantly lower than planned in 2019, 2020 and 2021.

Figure 12: Cost per beneficiary per annum for CBT (2018-2021) (USD)



Source: Evaluation Team based on Palestine Country Portfolio Budget

Figure 13: Cost per beneficiary per annum for in-kind support (2018-2021) (USD)



Source: Evaluation Team based on Palestine Country Portfolio Budget

185. The CO managed to come in under its planned transport cost every year except 2018, again indicating consistent cost control and attention to value for money. Table 10 below shows that actual transport costs were significantly lower from 2019 to 2021.

Table 10: Planned and actual transport cost per metric ton of food 2018- 2021 (USD)

Year	Planned Transport	Actual
2018	207	223
2019	208	140
2020	202	141
2021	199	171

Source: Evaluation Team based on Palestine Country Portfolio Budget

186. Food procurement in the State of Palestine continues to follow standard WFP procurement procedures from “the most cost-effective markets whether international, regional or local, while supporting local production and market structures.”¹⁸⁶ WFP’s policy on local food procurement gives COs some flexibility on when to buy internationally and when locally.¹⁸⁷ While the ‘import parity price’ continues to be a parameter for guiding procurement decisions, this policy gives flexibility to the procurement authority to consider local purchase prices up to 20 percent above the import parity price.

187. The **evaluation team’s analysis** of procurement data for 2020 and 2021 shows the CO has largely procured in-kind food inputs using the most cost-efficient options: **data were not available for 2018 or 2019**. When the CO had to procure food above the import party price or IPP, this was either due to a tied contribution or to avoid delays in delivery.

188. Interviews indicate that other indicators of cost-efficient practices include:

- WFP delivers economies of scale in the provision of its service delivery: offering its platform to multiple organizations to deliver services. WFP also has an incentive to keep its costs and overheads down so it remains attractive to partners.
- The 2018 funding shortfall drove the CO to cut costs (including staff) and look for cost efficiencies.
- Internal procurement procedures (such as for third parties to provide services) drive value for money (benchmarking costs, reverting to bidders to lower service cost).
- Procurement of in-kind food uses WFP systems, except ‘tied’ aid.

EQ 3.4 To what extent were alternative, more cost-effective measures considered?

189. As mentioned above, the CO made the strategic decision to move from in-kind to voucher-based CBTs in the current CSP. This was a major commitment, and it has been fully implemented. Interviews with the CO indicate that even though providing in-kind food incurs additional expenses, it is needed in Area C; and providing it in Gaza ensures that WFP can continue to keep emergency stocks and food delivery systems active. The costs of providing in-kind food or CBTs have not changed markedly during the period 2018-2021; the CO has therefore not needed to make adaptations.

190. The evaluation team asked for evidence of decision-making on cost efficiency, but analysis was not available. The CO does not have any explicit value for money analysis that it conducted or commissioned itself. The CO may want to explore the value of conducting one to inform its future programme choices.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ PRRO 200709 Budget revision 5, p.6; 2019 WFP Local and regional food procurement policy.

¹⁸⁷ WFP, 2019, Local and regional food procurement policy (internal document).

¹⁸⁸ The Lebanon CO commissioned such a study in 2020: CAMEALEON. 2020. VfM (value for money) Analysis: The World Food Programme’s MPC (multi-purpose cash) Assistance Programme in Lebanon. Internal report, unpublished.

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 CSP?

EQ 4.1 To what extent did WFP analyse or use existing evidence on the hunger challenges and on the food security and nutrition issues in the country to develop the CSP?

Summary

WFP's use of evidence has been particularly strong. The CSP was based on robust evidence and implementation has been guided by findings and recommendations of specialist studies, including evaluations WFP commissioned. Throughout the lifetime of the CSP, WFP has supported and produced in-depth studies with partners.

191. The CSP was based on robust evidence, and implementation has been guided by the findings and recommendations of specialist studies, namely: the 2017 Strategic Review of Food and Nutrition Security in the State of Palestine; the Country Portfolio Evaluation (2016); and a study of Social Protection and Safety Nets in the State of Palestine.¹⁸⁹ These studies are the backbone of the CSP design and drivers for the shift towards the CBT modality.

192. Throughout the lifetime of the CSP, WFP has supported and produced in-depth studies with partners. For example, it provided technical guidance and financial support to the PCBS and the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) to produce bi-annually the Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey, which guides WFP's strategic planning, operational response and prioritization of assistance.¹⁹⁰

193. Additionally, through a market assessment, WFP investigated whether the food commodity market in the Gaza Strip could support the scaling up of cash-based transfers. The analysis was extremely rigorous and drew on a survey of 859 food shops.¹⁹¹ As cited, WFP commissioned a decentralized evaluation to examine its unconditional resource transfer activity under the national social safety net programme: this produced key recommendations that will inform WFP's future approach.¹⁹² It also produced a participatory Gender Analysis study in 2020 to inform and guide its GEWE work.¹⁹³ WFP also carried out a Barrier Analysis and in-depth Qualitative Report together with UNICEF in order to develop the SBCC design.¹⁹⁴ The livelihoods / resilience activities have been informed mainly by testing pilots and evaluating them (although not independently), as well as a technical support mission from a cooperating partner's global advisor (Oxfam).¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁹ MAS, 2017, Strategic Review of Food and Nutrition Security in Palestine, WFP, 2016, Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) State of Palestine: An evaluation of WFP's Portfolio (2011 – mid 2015). Deepthi Ameta, 2015, Social Protection and Safety Nets in Palestine, IDS, Centre for Social Protection, WFP.

¹⁹⁰ WFP, 2018, ACR.

¹⁹¹ WFP, 2017, Market Assessment in Gaza Strip.

¹⁹² AWRAD, 2021, Decentralised Evaluation: Evaluation of WFP's Unconditional Resource Transfer Activity under the Social Safety Net Programme in Palestine.

¹⁹³ WFP, 2020, Gender Analysis Report, West Bank and Gaza.

¹⁹⁴ UNICEF AND WFP, SBCC.

¹⁹⁵ Oxfam, 2019, Mission Report Technical Support to Oxfam / WFP pilot livelihood project

EQ 4.2 To what extent has WFP been able to mobilize adequate, predictable and flexible resources to finance the CSP

Summary

Funding was unpredictable during the CSP period: the single most important challenge was the unexpected loss of United States funding between 2018 and 2020. WFP managed this shortfall effectively using corporate loans and allocations. The CO is effective at raising financial resources, notable as there is a downwards trend in funding for humanitarian and development activities to the State of Palestine. Restrictions on the flexibility of funds did not prove as problematic in practice as anticipated when the CSP was designed, except in relation to supporting state capability. Donor conditionalities also undermine WFP's ability to introduce efficiencies.

194. The CSP document identifies 'donor restrictions' as one of three contextual risks that could have an impact on strategic outcome achievement, noting the potential impact on implementation in terms of scope and transfer modalities.¹⁹⁶

195. Funding was unpredictable during the plan period. The single most important challenge was the unexpected loss of United States funding between 2018 and 2020. Compared to 2017, the WFP's resources dropped by 35 percent, forcing WFP to suspend, delay and/or reduce assistance to the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the first trimester of 2018. To mitigate the decrease in donor resources, WFP mobilized additional multilateral donor funding from existing and new donors – accounting for almost a third of total resources received in 2018. WFP also managed the shortfall by using loans from WFP's Immediate Response Account and allocations from the Strategic Resource Allocation Committee, from multilateral funds. Interviews with WFP staff and its partners indicate the value of the contingency systems that WFP has established at corporate level. With respect to the State of Palestine, they proved extremely valuable and functioned as planned.

196. Stable donor funding in 2020 and the internal loan (USD 10.3 million) ensured uninterrupted food assistance throughout 2020 and a scaling up of unconditional resource transfer/CBT/voucher assistance as part of WFP's COVID-19 response allowed WFP to maintain payments to existing beneficiaries, increase their transfer values, and widen their coverage. CBTs were scaled up to the households most affected by COVID-19 and those most vulnerable to food insecurity. The total USD 70.9 million annual funding requirements was 93 percent funded in 2020 (USD 66 million), the majority of which was committed to unconditional food assistance under Strategic Outcome 1.

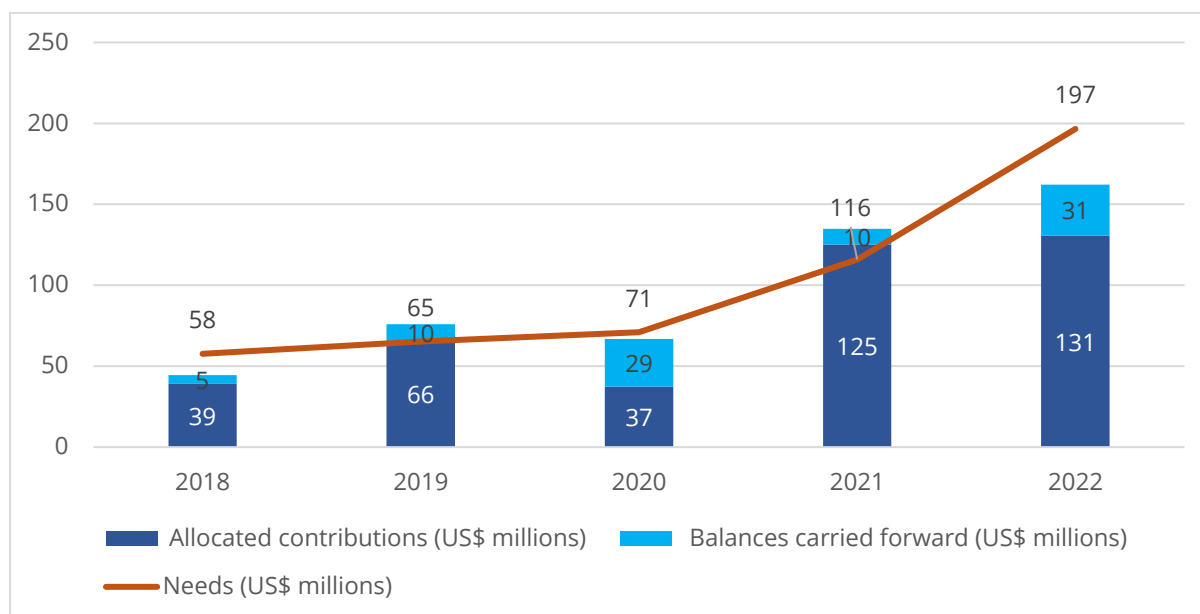
197. The CO's ability to mobilize additional resources is notable particularly as there is a general downwards trend in funding for humanitarian and development activities to the State of Palestine. Donors interviewed for the evaluation appreciated the clarity and transparency of WFP's briefings and written communications. The CO raised additional funds in response to the May 2021 escalation of hostilities in Gaza. WFP has also used innovative methods to raise funds. A 2021 Ramadan campaign for individual donations for vulnerable Palestinians through WFP's 'Share the Meal' platform secured more than USD 0.5 million.¹⁹⁷

198. Figure 14 below shows the funding gap in 2018, how WFP had largely filled it by 2019, and how it enhanced resource mobilization in 2021. To ensure it can finance key initiatives, WFP has successfully applied for funding from specialized funding opportunities. For example, WFP successfully applied to the Joint United Nations SDG Fund and received USD 2 million for a Joint Programme on Social Protection with UNICEF and the ILO.

¹⁹⁶ CSP paragraphs 47 and 90.

¹⁹⁷ WFP Palestine Country Brief, April 2021

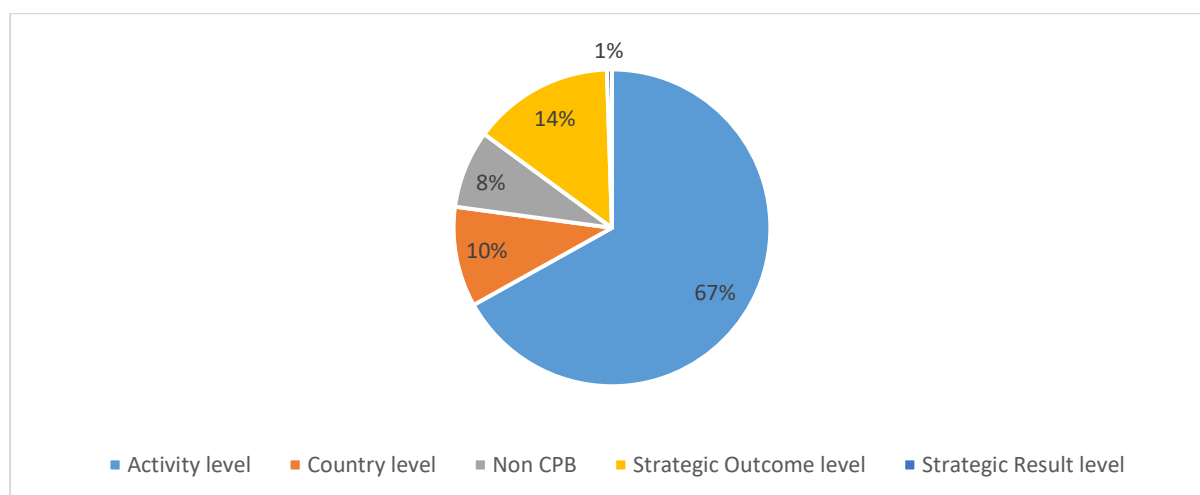
Figure 14: CSP resource situation overview (2018-2022)



Source: WFP FACTory, CSP Country Historical report, data extracted on 17 February 2022

199. WFP advocates for donors to earmark contributions only at CSP level, to give it flexibility. For a variety of reasons donors earmark their support to a high degree: and not just to either crisis or resilience activities. WFP’s corporate data do not capture the full degree of earmarking donors apply: some donors stipulate their funds can only be used in certain geographic areas (such as Gaza only), some that it has to go through specific modalities (such as through vouchers and not cash transfers), that it must be distributed to beneficiaries following use of WFP’s rather than the Government’s targeting system, or that it cannot be used to finance government activities. Two donors require some or all their contributions to be spent on their nations’ products. This high degree of earmarking undermines WFP’s ability to drive efficiencies (for example WFP has had to hire two staff specifically to verify on a monthly basis that shops used are not on the donors’ banned list). Nevertheless, interviews with CO staff indicate that it has largely been able to manage programme funds effectively within the current earmarking constraints. The programming exception relates to government capacity strengthening, which WFP has had to resort to internal funds to finance. WFP interviewees noted that the CO would struggle to direct resources to where they are needed if donors further increased the degree of earmarking. As Figure 15 below shows, 14 percent of confirmed contributions are earmarked at strategic outcome level, while 67 percent are allocated to activity level.

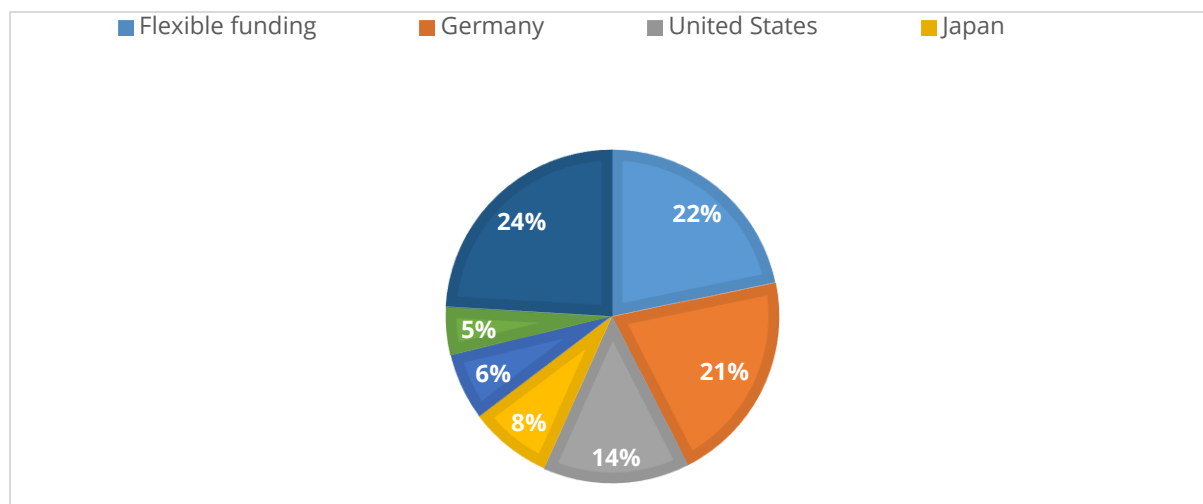
Figure 15: State of Palestine CSP (2018-2022) multilateral directed contributions by earmarking level



Source: WFP factory, Distribution Contribution and Forecast Stats on earmarking (including United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund). Data extracted on 13 February 2022

200. WFP's five largest donors are Germany, USA, Japan, Switzerland and the European Commission (Figure 16). They account for 27.7 percent of total resources received between January 2018 and March 2022.

Figure 16: WFP Top 6 donors (January 2018 – March 2022)



Source: WFP Factory, Resource Situation Report, extracted on 25 March 2022

EQ 4.3 TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE CSP LEAD TO PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS WITH OTHER ACTORS THAT POSITIVELY INFLUENCED PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS?

Summary

WFP works in close and collaborative partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders in the State of Palestine. The CO has developed strong partnerships with the Government, donors, United Nations agencies, international finance institutions, civil society and the private sector. The CO also leads and engages in key coordination groups including the food security sector, which it co-leads with FAO, and the logistics cluster. WFP's provision of its platform to other organizations magnifies its effects: WFP calculates that in 2021 cross-sectoral assistance delivered using its platform allowed 743,700 people to receive support to the value of USD 44 million. Interviews indicate that WFP is valued and respected as a reliable, trusted partner.

201. **WFP has developed a strong and broad-based relations with the Government.** Throughout the CSP period, WFP has worked in close partnership with the Government. Its focus has been on engagement to strengthen the efficiency of cash transfers under the national social safety net programme. It has also worked closely with the PCBS and the MoSD on needs assessments, to measure the effects of COVID-19 and the Gaza hostilities on food security.

202. **Throughout the CSP period, WFP has operated in a range of collaborative partnerships with United Nations agencies.** Some of these have been mentioned in the context of the discussion of WFP's interventions. WFP's collaboration with UNRWA in the provision of food assistance to Bedouin and herding communities in Area C of the West Bank is important. During the Gaza hostilities WFP worked alongside UNRWA to ensure that both refugees and non-refugees accessed support and protection where possible. There may be scope for UNRWA and WFP to collaborate further in future – with potential opportunities for cost savings. Both provide in-kind food and electronic vouchers, but they use separate systems.

203. With UNICEF, WFP enhanced national protection systems and nutrition projects. WFP is working closely with UN Women to support the Government with gender equality and women's empowerment through gender-transformative programming, signing an MoU in 2021.

204. WFP leads the national logistics sector. In 2021 it supported 21 organizations with over 300 requests for the movement of humanitarian aid to Gaza.¹⁹⁸ WFP built a multisectoral digital data collection platform to support the 'efficiency of the logistics response in Gaza'. It helps the humanitarian community to identify gaps and bottlenecks, leading to efficiencies.

205. WFP works closely with the inter-agency Cash Working Group in Gaza, which aims to strengthen the use of cash assistance to address different needs, from emergency to national social protection needs. WFP contributes its expertise in technical discussions, assessments, national guidance for the minimum expenditure basket, food price monitoring and identification of vulnerable groups. WFP and the Gaza Protection Consortium collaborated on the launch, implementation, and evaluation of a pilot multi-purpose cash assistance project in the Gaza Strip, which started in 2020 and ended in mid-2021.

206. **There is room to strengthen information-sharing with a broader range of providers to improve equity.** Whilst WFP does cross-check beneficiary lists with MoSD and UNRWA, which are the main providers of food assistance, they do not do this with other agencies and service providers to ensure there is a degree of equity in the distribution of assistance. This issue was mentioned by various stakeholders. As minimal cross checking happens, there is risk that households receive similar assistance from different providers, while others who do not appear on key lists miss out. Solving this issue requires the cooperation of all humanitarian providers under the leadership of the MoSD, and with support from the food security sector or the Cash Working Group – and potentially the use of a single unified system. Solving this poses a challenge as WFP and UNRWA's privacy policies limit the sharing of data. Some donors were particularly keen to see this issue addressed.

207. **WFP's platform allows WFP to help United Nations agencies to 'Deliver as One': facilitating complementarity, cost-effectiveness and impact.** WFP has 'lent' its CBT platform and associated services to other humanitarian stakeholders since 2014.¹⁹⁹ As detailed in the discussion of EQ 2.1. WFP calculates that in 2021 cross-sectoral assistance delivered using its platform allowed 743,700 people to receive USD 44 million.²⁰⁰ WFP does not charge local NGOs to use its platform to deliver support.

208. **WFP works collaboratively with NGOs.** Global Communities supports delivery of CBTs in Gaza, and Maan supports delivery of in-kind food in Gaza. WFP delivers its resilience support through specialized NGOs. Interviewees indicate that WFP is perceived as a supportive and flexible partner, with one stating that 'the flexibility of WFP was really impressive'. One NGO expressed interest to be able to engage WFP in more strategic discussions outside the immediate area of operation they are engaged and contracted for. It is hard to identify if this a more broadly felt concern. However, WFP may want to consider whether it can have broader and richer engagement with its CPs.²⁰¹

209. WFP also works collaboratively with shops used by its CBT recipients. Its creation of networks of shop owners was valued by business owners. WFP's engagement and process of accreditation helped them to deliver better services to customers.

¹⁹⁸ WFP, 2022, Annual Country Report 2021

¹⁹⁹ WFP, 2019, Annual Country Report 2018.

²⁰⁰ WFP, 2022, Annual Country Report 2021.

²⁰¹ In keeping with WFP's 2017 Guidance on Capacity Strengthening of Civil Society document.

EQ 4.4 TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE CSP PROVIDE GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN DYNAMIC OPERATIONAL CONTEXTS AND HOW DID IT AFFECT RESULTS?

Summary

WFP's flexibility and adaptability during the CSP period is a strength. Its ability to flex to rapidly changing circumstances is underpinned by clear leadership and decision-making, by the adaptability provided by the CSP envelope, and by strategic choices made in the plan that give it flexibility in delivery. As a strategic planning 'envelope', the CSP and all its associated planning and budgeting tools have allowed the CO to respond rapidly to changing needs.

210. CO staff noted that before the CSP structure, WFP's protracted relief and recovery operations and emergency operations were conceived as one-to-two-year plans rather than five-year envelopes. Making changes to the programmatic approach or budget and transferring resources from one closing operation to the next one was complex and time consuming, slowing down the Country Office in its efforts to respond quickly to an evolving context. Interviews and documentary evidence show that the current CSP structure allows the CO to respond to emergencies by increasing the number of beneficiaries, covering new geographic areas, or channelling funding in a streamlined way. The CO has also made a series of strategically important changes to adapt to the changing context. As detailed elsewhere in this report, it was able to respond to a financing crisis, escalating needs due to COVID-19, the May 2021 Gaza hostilities and their aftermath, and most recently the need to facilitate payments on behalf of UNSCO. It has processed several budget revisions to gain authorization for the necessary changes, but all within the same strategic envelope.

211. The strategic CSP decision to move from a largely in-kind food assistance modality to a voucher system enabled WFP to adjust to changing demands. WFP's commitment to deepen and develop the use of the CBT system platform was key to its ability to respond to the impact of COVID-19 and the May Gaza crisis. Instead of it taking two months to print out and distribute cards for vouchers, WFP sent codes by SMS: beneficiaries could immediately redeem the value in accredited shops. As well as allowing WFP to quickly add new beneficiaries, electronic vouchers also enable WFP to increase the value rapidly (including during the COVID-19 pandemic). Adding funds to electronic vouchers also ensures that beneficiaries could buy food in Gaza during the May 2021 escalation, as shops had stocks. When Israel closes its border crossing with Gaza thus preventing the entry of supplies, WFP can ensure that those in need can access money with which to buy food, as long as food stocks are available.

212. It is also the case that the CO made strategic choices to respond to needs as they emerged – using the flexibility the CSP platform gives. The discussion on financing (EQ 4.2) showed how WFP mobilized resources to try to limit the impact on beneficiaries of the loss of funding from its major donor in 2018/2019, and its response to COVID-19. Thanks to flexible funding, WFP was able to respond quickly to the Government's COVID-19 humanitarian response appeal, scaling up its support. Contributions through WFP's internal funding mechanism helped WFP to swiftly respond to government requests for additional assistance.

213. By developing its CBT service provision (SO 3), WFP has created a highly responsive and flexible platform. It has enabled WFP's partners to deliver complementary multi-sectoral programmes so that they can support non-food needs swiftly and efficiently. Following the May 2021 escalation of hostilities in Gaza, WFP's service provision allowed the humanitarian community to respond rapidly to affected households. There is nothing else like this in the State of Palestine.

214. WFP is well prepared for emergency situations and, as external partners commented, it has very high capacity to respond during a humanitarian crisis, particularly in comparison to other actors. Interviewees consider it has the human resources and financial resources to respond quickly.

215. Interviews indicated that, at the time of writing, WFP's Emergency Division was discussing introducing new emergency preparedness requirements. The annual requirement for COs to report their annual 'minimum preparedness arrangements' to the Emergency Division ended in December 2021, on the basis that they tended to deliver businesses continuity assurance more than effective emergency

preparedness. Discussions were ongoing at headquarters for new corporate requirements to encourage COs to map potential emergency scenarios and to ensure they had contingency plans in place to provide services in conditions predicated by the likely scenarios. WFP's annual Executive Director's Assurance Exercise requires COs to have coordinated and monitored emergency preparedness and response plans, so this obligation exists. The Palestine CO has developed internal 'concept of operations' (CONOPS) plans to map how it would deal with different emergency scenarios.²⁰² Those reviewed are informed by strong political economy analysis, and contain detailed and realistic scenario planning. In January 2021, just a few months before the May 2021 hostilities, the CO prepared a comprehensive 'concept of operations' on the potential of escalation of hostilities in Gaza. This explored all aspects of the potential repercussions and, in detail, defined how WFP would need to respond. This high-quality emergency planning provided the foundations for WFP's strong response to the May Gaza hostilities.

216. Given the political context, the question is 'when' the next conflict-based emergency will be and what form it will take, rather than whether there will be one. There are also other severe risks, particularly relating to the capability of the state and the funding available to support refugees in the State of Palestine. Developments over 2021 make the next few years particularly precarious. The Palestine CO will need to continue to map out possible scenarios for emergencies and develop response plans accordingly. This mapping should also inform its future CSP.

217. WFP has also shown its ability to adapt through its response to nutrition and its more recent work to develop an effective response to supporting resilience. WFP expanded its operation to respond to malnutrition in pregnant and lactating women and children under the age of five, in line with recommendations of the joint analysis by WFP and UNICEF. And WFP has taken a considered approach to seeking to identify what works in terms of resilience interventions.

EQ 4.5 WHAT ARE THE OTHER FACTORS THAT CAN EXPLAIN WFP PERFORMANCE AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH IS HAS MADE THE STRATEGIC SHIFT EXPECTED BY THE CSP?

218. The evaluation found that the CO has established a robust accountability system to monitor the implementation of the CSP and the delivery of its strategic outcomes. The monitoring system is based on corporate requirements, but the CO further developed and tailored it to meet its own needs. The CO's monitoring and the analysis it has produced have given it insight into the situation on the ground and provided feedback on the impact of its support.²⁰³ These systems have helped the office to make the strategic shifts the CSP mandated. But they also underpinned the CO's ability to be responsive and adjust its support to changing conditions. They enabled the CO to track delivery during complex and difficult periods; and to capture regular feedback from beneficiaries. External stakeholders, United Nations agencies, donors and NGOs use the data and reports generated by WFP. The decentralized evaluation the CO commissioned on its most important activity – its CBTs – has given the office insight into where it is effective and areas WFP can adjust.

²⁰² For example 'concepts of operations' seen – that were developed between August 2020 and January 2021 – addressed scenario planning for: the escalation of hostilities in Gaza, earthquake, annexation of West Bank, and the pandemic.

²⁰³ For instance, WFP uses its digital platform and GPS coordinated data collection system to ensure proper monitoring and feedback internally to programme and supply chain attention.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

3.1 CONCLUSIONS

219. **WFP has achieved strong results in a complex and challenging context.** It has achieved these results in the context of a protracted crisis, ongoing restrictions on movement of people and trade, complex governance challenges, recurrent conflict in Gaza, and the COVID-19 pandemic. WFP in the State of Palestine is operationally very effective and efficient. Its operations, especially in providing platform services, are adaptive, flexible and reliable. The key role played by WFP in the State of Palestine, its solid capacity, expertise and profound in-country experience have positioned it as a leading humanitarian agency meeting the needs of non-refugees. WFP has been able to contribute to dietary diversity and food security for vulnerable groups in Gaza and the West Bank that it targeted. WFP also responded rapidly and effectively to the challenges of COVID-19 and the escalation of hostilities in Gaza in May 2021.

220. **The CSP and strategic outcomes are appropriate for the operating context, and are aligned with the direction of the Government as well as the UNDAF.** The design was appropriately informed by robust food security analysis and the lessons of an evaluation of its previous programmes. The CSP enabled WFP to develop an integrated and coherent approach to programming, which allows for greater flexibility than previous WFP's operations.

221. **The CSP sought to make two strategic shifts, and it has been successful in this.** It sought to a) target only severely food-insecure non-refugee populations, and b) move to direct CBTs and away from in-kind assistance. **Some of the explicit assumptions made in the CSP were well grounded, but some were over-optimistic.** In relation to its SO 1, the CSP assumed that the political and security environments would remain 'relatively stable'. They were not, and given the political context in the State of Palestine it is highly unlikely that in any five-year period they would be. Looking forward, the CO should assume that there will be continued political instability and that recurrent conflict will occur during the next CSP period. The future CSP should be designed so that it factors in this likelihood (see Recommendation 1).

222. The CSP document states that implementation would be "flexible to adapt to changes in conditions brought about by external events" and the CO has done this – to the highest degree. The CSP provided the space for WFP to adapt its operations and to respond to requests to support the government's response to COVID-19 and to respond to the humanitarian and protection emergency caused by the May 2021 Gaza hostilities. Whilst the CO could not anticipate COVID-19, and the impact it had on health and livelihoods, future CSPs should factor in the risk of pandemic-related events.

223. The CSP's other assumptions in relation to its first strategic objective were warranted. The CSP assumed that beneficiaries would use food vouchers and food assistance to support their nutrition status. This assumption turned out to be justified, because the support has been used as intended. WFP's targeting was effective, and its distribution system reached beneficiaries.

224. In relation to SO 2, the CSP assumed that national institutions would be "engaged and willing and able to work", that they would dedicate technical staff to participate, and that the Government would be able to provide services/support in line with its policies. Broadly the Government has been receptive to WFP's support; and it has been engaged. However, due to the fiscal crisis since early 2021 the Government has not been able to provide support to citizens in line with its policies: state-provided social protection has stalled. This possibility was not anticipated but has significant implications for WFP. First, it leaves WFP as the primary remaining provider of social protection support for non-refugees. Second, it threatens the relevance and sustainability of the government social protection systems that WFP is supporting. The fiscal crisis also resulted in challenges paying salaries. Looking to its next CSP, WFP needs to factor in the likelihood that the fiscal crisis will be extended. This should also be reflected in how it plans technical assistance to the Government. WFP could prioritize support to only those areas where the Government continues its activities, or WFP could choose to support the Government's systems until social protection payments resume. Recommendations 1.3 and 1.4 ask WFP to consider these concerns in its next CSP.

225. **The CO made strong progress towards achieving the CSP strategic outcomes: it was effective in terms of output and outcome delivery.** Under SO 1, WFP cash-based transfers and in-kind assistance had positive effects, particularly on the most vulnerable, and contributed to improve their dietary diversity. While the targeting system has been reviewed, there were shortcomings in the proxy means testing, especially from the beneficiaries' point of view. Under SO 2, WFP helped enhance the capacities of national institutions and systems to identify, target and assist food-insecure vulnerable households. Phase one of piloting agriculture-based approaches in Gaza had a positive effect on participants' Food Consumption Scores. Finally, regarding SO 3, WFP's service delivery platform was effective, and its increasing use indicated that it was highly valued by partners.

226. **The CSP defined the most vulnerable groups that were targeted by its primary outcome.** Funding limited the extent to which the CSP was able to benefit the most vulnerable people. The potential trade-off between focusing WFP resources on the most vulnerable and maximizing the number of beneficiaries will be an important discussion in the development of the new CSP (see Recommendation 3).

227. **The CSP did not focus on resilience initially, but the CO is experimenting with different approaches.** Its interventions are delivering positive results, though it is too early to comment on their sustained effectiveness. If the CO intends to broaden the livelihoods programme, it will need to consider how and when beneficiaries transition from CBTs. It should develop a theory of change and clear objectives (Recommendation 5).

228. **WFP has helped to enhance the capacities of national institutions and systems to identify, target and assist food insecure vulnerable populations in the State of Palestine.** It has provided important support to the Ministry of Social Development and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. While partnership is strategic with national institutions, strengthening capacity faced challenges.

229. **WFP has operated effectively within a range of collaborative partnerships with United Nations agencies and with NGOs.** Its service delivery platform helps United Nations agencies to 'Deliver as One', facilitating complementarity, cost-effectiveness, and impact. It works collaboratively with NGO partners.

230. Through its service delivery for the United Nations following the May 2021 Gaza hostilities, **WFP is demonstrating to an important regional non-traditional donor that there are benefits to using WFP systems to deliver bilateral assistance.** It is doing this by showing that funds can be delivered efficiently, reliably and transparently. It is generating evidence of the value its support adds, with evidence from its monitoring systems. This could encourage the donor to use WFP's systems in other contexts. WFP's service delivery in Gaza could also have a broader demonstration effect and encourage other non-traditional donors to use United Nations systems in other contexts.

231. **WFP plays a role in stabilizing and supporting conditions for peace, particularly in Gaza.** WFP's support for basic needs contributes to social stability, and its CBT assistance helps support local markets and economic stability. Its recent service delivery for UNSCO is an impressive example of WFP stepping in to alleviate a source of tension and potential conflict.

232. **Gender and protection were integrated within the CSP** and were treated as cross-cutting issues that were effectively mainstreamed operationally. There was systematic collection and analysis of gender- and age-disaggregated data, including, more recently, data on disability. These are crucial for inclusive programming where no one is left behind. WFP is beginning to push gender-transformative approaches and will need to place more emphasis on this in the next CSP (Recommendation 5.4). Reflecting the extent to which the CO has mainstreamed gender throughout its work, in late 2021 it successfully 'graduated' WFP's corporate Gender Transformation Programme.

233. Whilst the CO has **established robust accountability mechanisms**, there are some indications that voices are not sufficiently heard in relation to intervention design (Recommendation 2.6). In terms of its treatment of the environment, WFP is piloting some innovative approaches to supporting households to develop climate-resilient livelihoods, but its original CSP was largely silent on how it would **address environmental or climate issues** (Recommendation 2.3).

234. The CSP assumed there would be 'no sudden change in **funding** activity of donors'. However, whilst the cessation of funding from WFP's biggest donor had a dramatic impact, to its credit, **WFP responded rapidly and was able to mitigate the impact on beneficiaries.** When deciding what support

to cut, the CO prioritized support for the most vulnerable and women-headed households. Donors earmark contributions to a relatively high degree, but the CO has been able to balance donor conditionality to continue to deliver – though it faces real difficulty raising funds to support country capacity strengthening.

235. **The sustainability of WFP food assistance is challenging.** By definition, unconditional food/cash assistance is dependent on continued funding. Few of WFP's achievements to date will be sustained without continued engagement and investment. This is simply the result of the nature of WFP's primary support (CBTs to contribute to dietary diversity) and the deteriorating context in which needs are increasing rather than decreasing. Donor fatigue with the Palestine crisis is increasing, and the economic downturn due to COVID-19 in donor countries and new humanitarian crises such as Ukraine will also limit resource availability.

236. **WFP has used its resources efficiently during the CSP period.** Outputs were mostly delivered within the intended timeframe, and coverage and targeting were largely appropriate. WFP's choice to move most of its support to e-vouchers in this CSP created efficiencies in the delivery modality. WFP payment processes were cost-effective, accessible and well-liked by beneficiaries. They were the most appropriate channel for delivery. The evaluation found that the CO carefully considers cost efficiency and there is evidence that there are efforts to drive cost efficiency and value for money.

237. **The CO's monitoring and analysis have consistently given it insight into the situation on the ground, and feedback on the results of its support.** These systems have helped the office to make the strategic shifts the CSP mandated. They also underpinned its ability to be responsive and adjust its support to changing conditions.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

#	Recommendation (specific steps for implementing the recommendations are outlined in the sub-recommendations following each recommendation)	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Supporting entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1	<p>Ensure that the new country strategic plan and all of its outcomes are appropriate to the various possible scenarios facing the State of Palestine, which range from the status quo to a sharp deterioration in conditions.</p> <p>1.1 Use political economy analysis and scenario planning to inform the design of the country strategic plan.</p> <p>1.2 Plan for the retention of WFP capacity to scale up crisis response support for food-insecure households in the event of an interruption in the State's capability, or renewed hostilities.</p> <p>1.3 Factor in the implications of reduced funding on social protection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure that plans for providing cash-based transfers to people on the Ministry of Social Development's lists take into account the possibility that cash-based transfers will not be distributed for extended periods. ➤ Consider the implications for WFP of a reduction in social protection support for refugees. <p>1.4 When defining the new country strategic plan's institutional capacity strengthening objectives, factor in the likelihood that the fiscal crisis will be extended, and focus on strengthening functions that the Government can realistically deploy with its constrained resources.</p>	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	December 2022
2	<p>In designing the new country strategic plan, set out the following range of issues, at the strategic and operational levels, some of which were not comprehensively addressed in the current country strategic plan.</p> <p>2.1 Define WFP's core mandate and comparative advantage in the State of Palestine.</p>	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, headquarters Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division and	Medium	December 2022

#	Recommendation (specific steps for implementing the recommendations are outlined in the sub-recommendations following each recommendation)	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Supporting entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
	<p>2.2 Analyse the sustainability issues related to future activities and outcomes, and identify actions that will help to make the impact of investments sustainable.</p> <p>2.3 Set out a strategic approach to addressing environmental issues and climate change.</p> <p>2.4 Advocate the joint development of a coherent framework for the humanitarian–development–peace nexus with other humanitarian and development actors in the State of Palestine, and within that framework identify how WFP will facilitate strategic linkages at the nexus.</p> <p>2.5 Ensure that the future results framework is comprehensive and reflects all of WFP’s activities, including service delivery.</p> <p>2.6 Strengthen the integration of beneficiary feedback into programme design and revision.</p>			Research, Assessment and Monitoring Division		
3	<p>Enhance the effectiveness and targeting of unconditional resource transfers in line with, but not limited to, commitments made in the management response to the 2020 decentralized evaluation.</p> <p>3.1 The present evaluation highlights two of the decentralized evaluation’s recommendations that would enhance food security for the most vulnerable people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ recommendation 2 “Explore tiered and targeted assistance using varied voucher values based on need”; and ➤ recommendation 3 “Consider increasing the voucher value for households composed of below-average members”. <p>WFP agreed to both of these recommendations and to the action deadline of September 2022, and will need to reflect any change in approach in its future programming. Other agreed recommendations are also important.</p>	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau	Medium	December 2023

#	Recommendation (specific steps for implementing the recommendations are outlined in the sub-recommendations following each recommendation)	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Supporting entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
	<p>3.2 Based on the findings of the ongoing evaluation of WFP's multi-purpose cash assistance pilot, define WFP's future approach to the use of multi-purpose cash in the new country strategic plan, in consultation with key partners.</p> <p>3.3 Based on a careful study of the feasibility and potential impact (especially on gender relations), consider offering households a choice of modality for the support that they receive (multi-purpose cash, food vouchers or in-kind food) and advocate with donors for greater flexibility in funding.</p>					
4	<p>Enhance the social protection system with stronger coordination, and support the development of the Government's referral system.</p> <p>4.1 To reduce duplication and promote equity, continue to promote coordination with other agencies providing social protection services; explore opportunities for improving data sharing.</p> <p>4.2 To address the non-food social protection needs of WFP beneficiaries, support the development of the Government's referral system, with other partners.</p>	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau, headquarters Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division	Medium	December 2023
5	<p>Enhance WFP's approach to supporting resilience and livelihoods.</p> <p>5.1 Develop a strategy and theory of change for WFP's resilience and livelihoods programming.</p> <p>5.2 Adopt an adaptive and iterative approach to resilience and livelihoods programming, and commission periodic external reviews of WFP's interventions for informing significant next steps.</p> <p>5.3 Seek to enhance the degree of choice that beneficiaries have in the resilience and livelihoods support that they receive, and enhance WFP's monitoring systems so they assess the extent to which programming is responsive to beneficiaries' preferences.</p>	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau, headquarters Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division and Gender Office	Medium	December 2023

#	Recommendation (specific steps for implementing the recommendations are outlined in the sub-recommendations following each recommendation)	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Supporting entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
	<p>5.4 Continue to experiment with gender-transformative interventions for resilience and livelihoods, ensuring that they are based on strong gender analysis.</p> <p>5.5 Consider piloting a way of linking other providers of resilience and livelihood interventions to WFP beneficiaries who could benefit from support for resilience and livelihoods development.</p> <p>5.6 Consider enhancing WFP's capacity with specialist livelihoods and resilience expertise.</p>					

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