



WFP EVALUATION



**EVALUATION OF WFP's CONTRIBUTION TO
MARKET SYSTEMS IN SOUTH SUDAN AND
BANGLADESH
2018 TO 2022**

Bangladesh Country Summary Report

WFP Supply Chain CBT, Markets & Retail (SCOLR) Unit

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ACRONYMS USED IN THE REPORT

BDT	Bangladesh Taka (currency)
CBA	Cost-Benefit Analysis
CBT	Cash-Based Transfer
CO	Country Office
COVID	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CRF	Corporate Results Framework
CXB	Cox's Bazar (a district in Bangladesh)
EQ	Evaluation Question
ET	Evaluation Team
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFC	Fresh Food Corner
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender- Based Violence
HQ	Headquarters
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
MDA	Market Development Activities
MFI	Market Functionality Index
MSA	Market Systems Analysis
NGO	Non- Governmental Organization
POS	Point of Sale
QuIP	Qualitative Impact Assessment Protocol
RB	Regional Bureau
REA	Retail Engagement Activities
REVA	Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment
RIC	Resource Integration Centre
RPME	Retailer Performance Monitoring Tool
SCOLR	Supply Chain CBT, Markets and Retail
TDY	Temporary Duty
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USD	U.S. dollar (currency)
VAM	Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping
WFP	World Food Programme

1. Introduction

1. Market development activities (MDA) and retail engagement activities (REA) are any interventions intended to address/improve market functionality (the extent to which a market is functional) along any of the following nine dimensions: availability, price, assortment (trader stock capacity), supply chain resilience, competition, quality, in-store infrastructure, service and access/protection. MDA and REA can be categorized to three main concepts: 1) Supply chain and market solutions, 2) Capacity strengthening of key supply chain actors, and 3) Partnering/engaging with external organizations and local authorities. These MDA/REA, which are led by the WFP Supply Chain teams in the country offices (COs) and implemented with other functions including Programme teams with support of Regional Bureau (RB) and HQ, where applicable, were the subject of this evaluation.

2. The evaluation of WFP's Contribution to Market Systems in South Sudan and Bangladesh, was commissioned by the SCOLR unit, and was carried out from April to October 2023. **This report focuses on the most important findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation for Bangladesh only.** The evaluation scope covered all MDAs, including REAs from January 2018 to December 2022 in Cox's Bazar. For further details on the methodology, and general findings please see the main report.

1.2. CONTEXT

3. Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries, with a population of 166 million. While Bangladesh has experienced significant economic growth in the past decade, the country still faces challenges with nearly one third of the population facing food insecurity and 14.3% of the population estimated to live below the international poverty line of \$1.9 per person per day, with 21.4% experiencing multi-dimensional poverty.¹

4. As a result of the protracted crisis in Myanmar, Cox's Bazar hosted more than 952,000 Rohingya refugees by 2022 (a 3.5% increase over 2021).² The city itself has a population of approximately 2,290,000 and is recognized as one of the country's poorest and most vulnerable districts, with around 33% of its residents living below the poverty line and 17% experiencing extreme poverty.³ Multi-dimensional poverty is even higher. In the host community in Ukhiya Upazila and Teknaf Upazila, the percentage of households experiencing multi-dimensional poverty has steadily increased from 23% in 2019 to 43% in 2021.⁴ An estimated 96% of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are unable to meet basic needs without assistance.⁵ In Cox's Bazar at the time of this evaluation, over 431,000 Rohingya refugees were reported to be facing crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). Within these, approximately 383,000 individuals were experiencing severe levels of acute food insecurity, classified in Crisis (IPC Phase 3), and roughly 47,800 people were identified as experiencing even more extreme levels of acute food insecurity, categorized as Emergency (IPC Phase 4).⁶ Additionally, in the Rohingya refugee population in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char, a greater percentage of women-headed households experienced food insecurity (49%)

¹ World Bank. (2023). Poverty and Equity Brief. Available from: https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext_download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/current/Global_POVEQ_BGD.pdf.

² World Food Programme. (2023). Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment (REVA-6) Report. WFP. Available from: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000150690/download/>

³ Poverty Alleviation Coalition. (2019). Poverty Alleviation Coalition. Poverty Alleviation Coalition. Available from: <https://alleviate-poverty.org/bangladesh>

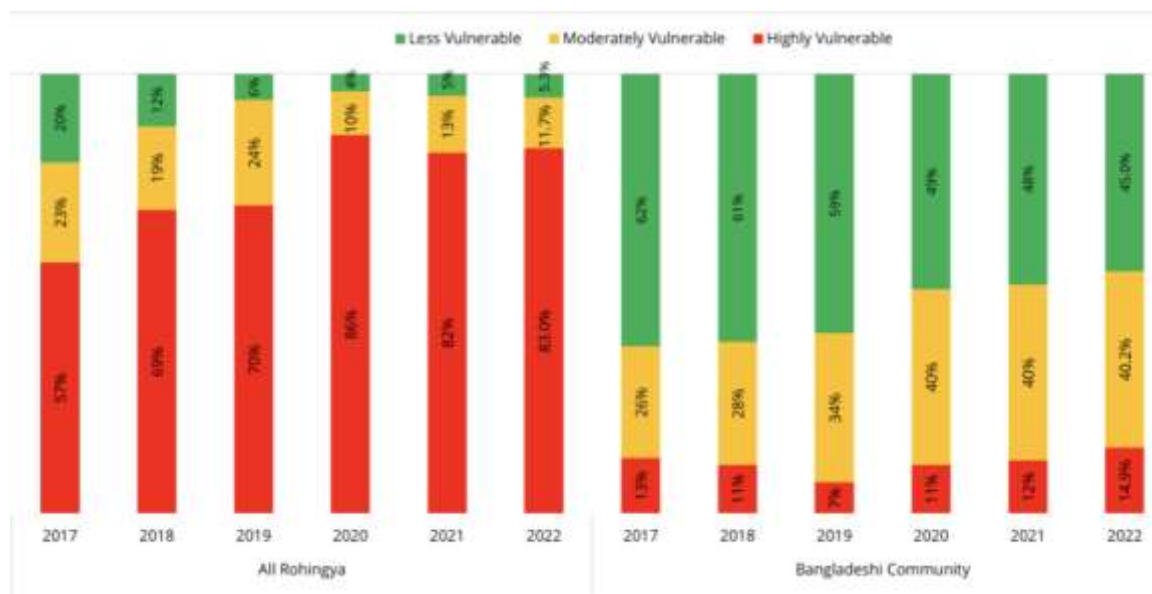
⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Inter Sector Coordination Group. (2021). 2021 Joint Response Plan: Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis (January - December 2021) - Bangladesh. Available from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/2021-joint-response-plan-rohingya-humanitarian-crisis-january-december-2021>

⁶ IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis. (2023). Bangladesh March – September 2023. IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis. Available from: https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Bangladesh_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Mar_Sep2023_Report.pdf

compared to male-headed households (41%) . Figure 1 demonstrates the vulnerability disparity between Rohingya refugees and the host community in Cox's Bazar.⁷

Figure 1. Overall vulnerability between refugees and host community members in Cox's Bazar



Source: WFP REVA-6, Bangladesh

5. In March 2023, WFP was forced to lower the value of their food vouchers from \$12 (estimated to provide 2100 kcal per person per day) to \$10 per person per month in Bangladesh due to funding challenges. Three months later, WFP had to further reduce the voucher value for a second time from \$10 to \$8 beginning on June 1st.⁸ Food insecurity in the refugee camps was reportedly extremely severe.⁹ Prior to the reduction, a significant percentage of children were already suffering from acute (12%) or chronic (41%) malnutrition. These additional cuts to the rations were expected to further increase malnutrition.¹⁰

Gender equality and women's empowerment

6. Due to social norms and gender roles in the Rohingya and host communities, women and girls are highly vulnerable. The crowded living conditions, limited mobility, restricted mobile network access, and lack of income opportunities create a serious predicament for women and girls from the Rohingya refugee population in the camps.¹¹ While Bangladesh has progressed in gender equality, it is ranked 65th in the Global Gender Gap Index¹² and is among the top ten countries in rates of early marriage.¹³ Women and

⁷ WFP Bangladesh. (2023). Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment (REVA-6) Report.

⁸ Catherine Mones et al. (2023). Cox's Bazar: WFP Bangladesh Ration Cuts Alert, May 2023 Update. World Food Programme. Available from: <https://www.wfp.org/publications/coxs-bazar-wfp-bangladesh-ration-cuts-alert-may-2023-update>

⁹ Note that 15% is considered a threshold for an emergency.

¹⁰ Catherine Mones et al. (2023).

¹¹ Khatun, M., & Mia, P. (2020). Updates from UN Women Cox's Bazar. Available from: <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEA/Docs/Publications/2020/05/UN%20Women%20CXB%20Brief%20JanuaryMarch%202020%20KAA%20V5.pdf>

¹² World Economic Forum. (2021). Global Gender Gap Report 2021. World Economic Forum. Available from: <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2021/>

¹³ United Nations Bangladesh. (2021). United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Bangladesh 2022-2026. Available from: https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/Bangladesh_Cooperation_Framework_2022-2026.pdf

children continue to be at risk of all forms of GBV, including intimate partner violence, forced/child marriage, and exploitation as 98% of GBV incidents in 2021 were reported by women and adolescent girls¹⁴.

1.3. SUBJECT BEING EVALUATED

Table 1. Overview of CBT in Bangladesh

7. At the country-level, WFP's work is anchored within a 4- or 5-year country strategic plan (CSP), as such, WFP designs food assistance interventions to address the food insecurity situation within each country context. WFP's work in Bangladesh encompasses various initiatives including unconditional resource transfers, school-based programs, malnutrition treatment programmes, malnutrition prevention programmes, asset creation and livelihood programmes, as well as actions taken to protect against climate shocks. Across Bangladesh, some of the interventions use in-kind food assistance (or commodity vouchers), while others use Cash-Based Transfer (CBT). Food assistance in Cox's Bazar is only provided through CBT¹⁵. The REA and MDAs that have been implemented as part of the CBT interventions are the subject of this evaluation.¹⁶ Table 2 provides an overview of the CBT portfolio in Bangladesh.

CSP Data	Bangladesh
CSP period	CSP 1 (2017 -2022): Revised with one year extension
Original Budget	CSP1: \$969,120,577
Original Beneficiaries	CSP1: 3,853,158 (Girls/Women 55%)
Original % of CBT	37% (\$357,912,233)
Revised Budget	CSP1: \$ 1,367,706,520
Revised Beneficiaries	CSP 1: 5,407,600 (Girls/Women 55%)

8. WFP implemented various interventions to provide food assistance to Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar from 2018 to 2022. Using CBT (mainly e-vouchers), WFP implements market-based approaches for food distribution in refugee camps. This allows households to choose the food they need, while also strengthening local markets and food chains through partnerships with retailers and wholesalers. Table 2 provides a breakdown of electronic voucher (e-voucher) outlets and shops per catchment area in Cox's Bazar. Over the evaluation period, WFP worked with 12 Bangladeshi retailers who manage e-voucher outlets in the camps. Each outlet serves 5,000 to 15,000 households, with 400 to 700 households visiting daily. The number of assorted food items was reduced from 50 to 40 in 2023 due to planned reductions in transfer values. WFP conducts monthly price negotiations with retailers, along with additional weekly negotiations for Fresh Food Corner (FFC) items, which can be more volatile given fresh produce seasonality and associated changes in production. Simultaneously, WFP monitors retailer performance, collects retail and wholesale price information, offering lower prices than the outside market, and payments are reconciled and made to retailers every two weeks.¹⁷ At the time of the evaluation there were 12 contracted retailers, 19 outlets, 39 shops and 18 Fresh Food Corners in place.

¹⁴ Silvia Guglielmi et al. (2022) Gender-based violence. What is working in prevention, response and mitigation across Rohingya refugee camps, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Report. London: Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence. Available from: <https://www.gage.odi.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/GBV-Report.pdf>

¹⁵ Apart from a brief period during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when commodity vouchers were distributed instead.

¹⁶ As retail engagement is a part of market development activities, **the term MDA will be used to encapsulate both REA and MDAs throughout this report** unless the context demands specific mention of retailer engagement.

¹⁷ CBT Retail and Supply Chain Meeting – Inception Mission - Cox's Bazar (01/05/2023)

Table 2. E-voucher outlets and shops in Cox's Bazar¹⁸

Catchment Area	# E-Voucher Outlets locations	# Shops	# FFC
A	6	12	5
B	5	12	6
C	4	8	4
D	6	12	5
Total	21	44	20

9. The other MDA included in the evaluation focuses on enhancing local market linkages. WFP worked with camp retailers, local farmers and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to support local farmer integration through fresh food corners and farmers' linkages to aggregation centres and cooperatives. These centres supported various agricultural activities and aimed to ensure fair prices and prevent exploitation of vulnerable farmer groups.

1.4. METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

10. In Bangladesh, 4 of 12 contracted retailers were unavailable as they no longer operated in the camps at the time of the evaluation, requiring adjusted interviews with 8 retailers per location. Respondents faced challenges recalling details, affecting data reliability and analysis robustness, mitigated by a 75% reduction of assumed employee income when quantifying benefits. Retailer QulP interviews were also lengthy, requiring flexibility. Furthermore, the evaluation team faced obstacles maintaining the double-blind QulP protocol given officials' prior awareness of the evaluation which informed respondents. This was addressed through measures like blind enumerators and excluding officials from interviews. Data gaps and inconsistencies across locations limited findings.

2. Findings

2.1. RELEVANCE

EQ1 – TO WHAT EXTENT ARE MARKET DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AND RELATED RETAIL ENGAGEMENT RELEVANT INTERVENTIONS INFORMED BY COUNTRY CONTEXTS AND MARKET INEFFICIENCIES IDENTIFIED DURING MULTI-SECTOR ASSESSMENTS?

EQ1.1: To what extent are the market and/or retail assessment findings used to design and implement activities, considering the differentiated needs and roles of women, men, and marginalized groups?

Relevance of MDAs for WFPs work

11. Beginning with a pilot in Kenya in 2015¹⁹, WFP has used MDAs to enhance market functionality and strengthen supply chains within the framework of CBT programmes. These activities are aimed at promoting economic inclusion, resilience, and food security among vulnerable populations. Evidence provided by beneficiaries in Cox's Bazar shows that MDAs have been contributing towards these goals. For example, beneficiaries have not only enhanced their food security and dietary diversity through the Fresh Food Corners established as part of MDA programming, but they have also enhanced their economic inclusion by having the opportunity to work as paid volunteers (significant, considering the refugees are not

¹⁸ The outlet in 8W (Catchment B) ceased operations in July 2021, followed by the closure of the facility in Shamlapur, Camp 23 (Catchment D) in December 2021. Data regarding the number of shops in Shamlapur, Camp 23 (Catchment D) was not available in 2022; however, in 2021, there were two operational shops.

¹⁹ World Food Programme (2021). WFP Contribution to Market Development and Food Systems in Southern Africa: A Thematic Evaluation 2018 to 2021. Available from: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000136285/download/?_ga=2.223445727.590117783.1705680611-287098669.1699988849

allowed to work outside the camps). As one refugee who is employed as a cleaner expressed: *"In 2019, I have got a job in this Camp-5,B4. With this salary my financial well-being is getting better."* Another volunteer pointed out their improved diet stating that, *"In 2018 me and my family took only green vegetables and lentils with rice. (In 2019-2022) I can afford different types of nutritious food like egg, fish, chicken etc."*²⁰ Farmers also reported improvements in their overall wellbeing over the course of the evaluation period as they have experienced increased income after receiving training and seeds provided by WFP and NGOs which has improved their crop quality and production.²¹

12. In Cox's Bazar, only outlets created by WFP are allowed to operate within the camps and livelihood activities are heavily restricted by the government therefore it is not as realistic to expect independent markets to evolve independently from the MDAs implemented. Retailers did however benefit from engagement in these activities by gaining access to markets they would not have otherwise had access to and training to improve their retail management and customer service practices.

Contribution of market and retail assessments to MDA design and implementation

13. WFP documentation and staff indicated that market assessments (MFI, MSA) and corporate monitoring tools (RPME, price monitoring) were used to ensure that MDAs respond to market needs and that contracted retailers are operating in compliance with WFP expectations (price, quality, assortment, services and compliance). During the design phase, supply chain experts were brought in to design the retail shops to optimize the space available and to ensure structures and processes were set up to maximize consumer experience for beneficiaries. In 2020 and 2021, Market Functionality Index (MFI) studies were conducted to understand the market situation and establish fair prices when negotiating with retailers (Regular price monitoring also contributes to this understanding). RPME was also conducted once a month to ensure that all retailers met quality standards expected of them and a non-compliance tracker was used daily to monitor retail operations online, enabling effective follow-up where it was required. RPMEs are consistently conducted each month. When market inefficiencies were identified, Market Systems Analyses (MSAs) were carried out to review and optimize supply chains for specific products (e.g., rice, dry chilis, eggs).

Inclusivity considerations

14. In terms of inclusivity considerations in MDA design processes, there was evidence that WFP made significant efforts to respond to the needs of women and marginalized people. In Bangladesh, the retail outlets were set up with special consideration given to vulnerable groups. Women and disabled individuals were given priority in services and inclusive infrastructure was put in place for people with disabilities (ramps, special lines for those with great needs, porter services).²² The market linkages programming also promotes women's participation in the aggregation centres and value chain development trainings. For example, the Farm2Go tool (a digital negotiation space²³), enables women to engage with the market activities without physically going to the market. Women's empowerment is further promoted through the Enhancing Food Security and Nutrition programme where female participants receive an additional allowance, behavior change communication training, income-generation training and the opportunity to participate in women's self-help groups.²⁴

15. However, **the evaluation found minimal evidence of how analysis of consultation with women and marginalized people was used to determine how their needs would best be met through MDAs and inform activity design and processes for measuring specific outcomes for women and marginalized people.** Even though women may have been interviewed during the planning phase (For

²⁰ KII, Female Volunteer

²¹ QuiP FGD with farmers

²² KIIs, WFP staff in Bangladesh

²³ World Food Programme (2022). Innovative Digital Solutions, <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000145598/download/>

²⁴ World Food Programme (n.d.). Enhancing Food Security in Cox's Bazar. Available at: <https://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/communications/wfp279524.pdf>

example, during REVA assessments and FGDs with women during MFI processes), gendered analysis of the information from these interviews could be more specifically addressed in MFI reports, retailer training materials or activity documents/presentations (how MDAs were designed to maximize women's empowerment). The Thematic Evaluation of WFP Contribution to Market Development and Food Systems in Southern Africa²⁵ cited similar findings stating that *"The incorporation of gender dimensions and needs of youth, the disabled, and other groups in MDAs was generally weak in the design of MDAs across all countries."* It pointed out that this might be attributed to the fact that the WFP MDA Guidance did not include steps for these considerations. Also, it would be useful to specifically assess the impact of women's participation in MDAs. Monitoring processes/indicators to assess these changes should be in place from the design phase to assess unique outcomes for women whether as beneficiaries, volunteers, farmers supplying aggregation centres or retailers. This will be included in the recommendations.

16. Due to restrictive cultural norms, women do not traditionally have strong roles in the supply side of market systems (e.g., as retailers or suppliers) and would be less likely to be involved in household decision-making processes involving cash.²⁶ When e-vouchers were introduced, they were registered in the name of female members of the household to promote women's decision-making when it comes to food purchases for their households.

"By entrusting women with the cards, WFP interventions subtly elevated their role in household financial management, allowing them to decide how to utilize the funds, and reinforcing their position as key financial contributors and decision-makers within the family."²⁷

17. According to KIs, efforts were also made to ensure that women had access to the markets and felt safe there. In Cox's Bazar, the retail outlets were set up with special consideration given to vulnerable groups. Women and disabled individuals were given priority in services and inclusive infrastructure was put in place for people with disabilities (ramps, special lines for those with great needs, porter services).²⁸ However it is still important to be mindful of how gender norms affect activity outcomes. For example, the WFP-UNHCR joint assessment in Cox's Bazar¹⁸⁹ found that while women may have possessed e-vouchers, it was male household members deciding what items to re-sell and how to use the cash from the sales possibly leading to disempowerment of women in food security.²⁹ Interviews with beneficiaries supported this finding as the women interviewed frequently mentioned that it was their husbands that make the decisions in the household. Only women who were the heads of households because they did not have a husband present, or their sons had moved out reported being responsible for decisions made in the household. This demonstrates the importance of integrating gender empowerment and equality awareness aspects into any training provided for beneficiaries.

EQ1.2: To what extent are the market development activities and related retail engagement activities linked to the country strategic plan?

18. MDAs were acknowledged by both WFP staff and government representatives as being highly relevant for government strategies; however, the evaluation did not find evidence of government consultation in designing MDAs. In Bangladesh, the government plays a strong role in the way the camps are managed and strictly regulate access and operations therein. As a result of these restrictions, only WFP contracted retailers are allowed to operate shops within the camps thus determining the MDA approach to be implemented. **Government representatives interviewed for the evaluation indicated that while MDAs are aligned with government strategies, they would like to see more government involvement at the design stage of such interventions.** For example, one respondent mentioned, *"The concept of market development matches our country's development priorities, I'm absolutely sure of that. In a way, these Rohingya relief initiatives attracted international funding and created a lot of work opportunities."* They later

²⁵World Food Programme. (2021). WFP Contribution to Market Development and Food Systems in Southern Africa.

²⁶UNHCR-WFP. (2019). UNHCR-WFP Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) Report 2019: Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Available from: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/72273>

²⁷ KII, WFP staff

²⁸ KIIs, WFP staff

²⁹ UNHCR-WFP. (2019).

went on to say, "If the UN organization improves cooperation, develops a plan with more government involvement than it has at present, and plans the programme after a need assessment in the camp, I am convinced that interventions will have lasting beneficial effects and impacts for a very long time after the operation has ended."³⁰

CBT in Bangladesh

19. The evaluation found increasing importance of CBT and value vouchers³¹ as a proportion of CSP budgets and actual distributions, thus emphasizing the increasing relevance of MDAs for optimizing benefits drawn from these transfers. Table 3 shows this increase in the % of CBT in CSP revisions.

Table 3. CSPs in Bangladesh

CSP	Budget M\$	% of CBT	M\$ CBT	CSP Beneficiaries	CSP Beneficiaries by sex
CSP 2017 -2021 and CSP 2022-2026	969	37%	358	3,853,158	Girls/Women 55%
Revised	1,368	42%	576	5,407,600	Girls/Women 55%

20. Also, according to the Annual Country Reports (ACRs) from 2018 to 2022, value vouchers made up a significant proportion of cash transfers, highlighting the relevance of MDA programming.³²

Figure 2. Overall CBT and Commodity Voucher Distribution (USD) 2018-2022



WFP Strategic Planning

21. MDAs made up an important aspect of WFP's efforts to enhanced food security and nutrition given that the vast majority of food assistance provided in Cox's Bazar is provided through the e-voucher system and redeemed with WFP contracted retailers. WFP's engagements with retailers and linkages with local farmers were mentioned in the annual reports each year. However, without indicators to measure the contribution of WFPs efforts towards market development, the ability to demonstrate the impact of these activities is limited. **If the role of WFP in working towards market development was more clearly defined within the corporate level strategy, it would be easier for Bangladesh to explicitly integrate MDAs in its CSP and subsequently include KPIs that would allow the organization to measure the impact of MDAs and report on progress to donors and other relevant stakeholders.**

³⁰ KII with government representative

³¹WFP uses two types of vouchers in its assistance programmes globally, value vouchers which fall under CBT and commodity vouchers which fall under Supply Chain as part of in-kind distribution. The locations targeted for this evaluation mainly used value vouchers except for a brief period from April to November in 2020 in Cox's Bazar when refugees received food assistance in commodity vouchers in order to minimize human contact during the Covid19 pandemic. Therefore, **references to vouchers in this report refer to value vouchers unless otherwise stated.**

³² World Food Programme. (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022). Bangladesh Annual Country Reports 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022. Available from: <https://www.wfp.org/publications/annual-country-reports-bangladesh>

2.2. EFFECTIVENESS

EQ2 – TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE THE IDENTIFIED MDAs AND RETAIL ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED AND ACHIEVED THEIR OBJECTIVES FOR MEN AND WOMEN IN THE TARGET GROUPS AND THEIR WIDER LOCAL COMMUNITIES?

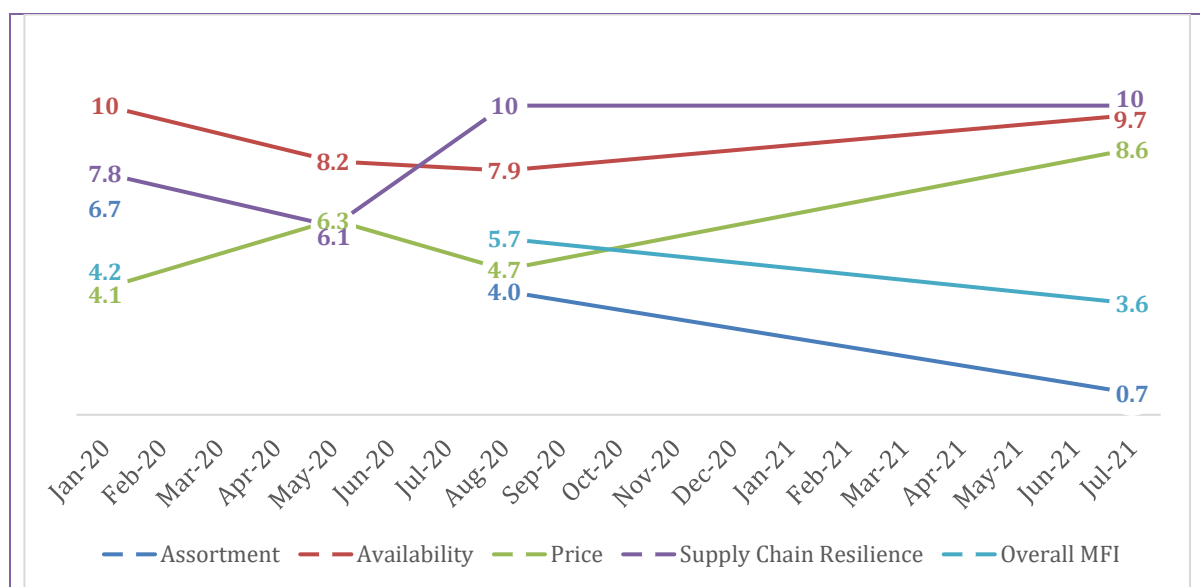
EQ2.1: To what extent have MDAs and retail engagement activities enhanced and impacted the assortment, availability, prices, and quality of food products for the different target groups [e.g. retailers and those receiving CBT] and indirect beneficiaries [e.g. host communities]?

Assortment and availability

22. The **assortment** of essential goods dimension indicates which classes of goods to meet essential needs can be purchased in a marketplace and how much choice is offered.³³ It is measured by increases in the MFI and RPME scores for this dimension over time. The **availability** dimension assesses whether certain products are scarce or likely to get scarcer in the short run, and measured by the percentage of selected food basket that is in stock during monitoring visits. These two indicators were often referred to inter-changeably by retailers and beneficiaries and are therefore presented together.

23. Evidence from the RPME, MFI and Incident Tracking tools reveals variable results for the assortment of essential goods in Cox's Bazar amongst retailers. RPME questions³⁴ centred on the availability of stock for monthly approved fixed commodities, the availability of locally produced items inside the shop, and whether fixed items are neatly displayed at all times (amongst other indicators). Data shows **contracted retailers' relatively consistent ability to maintain well supplied shops with diversified products, quality and brands**, with 91% to 100% receiving a 'very good' or 'good' rating from February 2020 to December 2022. Availability, primarily assessed through the MFI, was also scored consistently high in Cox's Bazar over the one-year period with data available, starting at 10.0 in January 2020 and reducing to 7.9 at lowest in August 2020 to jump back to 9.7 in July 2021. This highlights the functionality of market actors to sufficiently stock and supply goods in accordance with current and future consumer demand of Rohingya refugees.

Figure 3. Available Market Functionality Index Dimensions Over Time in Cox's Bazar



³³ MFI Guidance

³⁴ To note, the questions in the 'Bangladesh - RPME Dashboard' in Tableau under 'assortment' are aligned with 'quality' in the RPME questionnaire, and visa versa, and therefore the ET switched the data on these components assuming this was a data entry mistake.

Note: Analysis based on available Market Functionality Index (MFI) data in VAM Market Monitors for Cox's Bazar from January 2020 to December 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-bangladesh-market-monitor>.

24. However, ratings for assortment within the MFI significantly differed, with Cox's Bazar generally seeing a low rating of 4 out of a possible score of 10 in August 2020 and an exceedingly low score of 0.7 in July 2021, providing a contrasting picture to RPME of limited variety and choice in essential products for consumers. The MFI, in some cases though, is reflective of the overall market situation in and around the camps, thus showing possible differences in consumer demand and/or retailer expectations and capacity to maintain sufficiently varied stocks across markets.³⁵ For example, few retailers and beneficiaries spoke to any changes in the assortment and availability of goods in QuIP interviews and FGDs, with several retailers noting a need for further stocks or experienced stock shortages in response to an increase in demand. However, these responses primarily came from small non-contracted traders who stocked non-essential items such as cigarettes and chocolates in informal markets [who are not included in QuIP maps].

Table 4. Highest frequency counts of causal statements on availability and assortment in Bangladesh

	<i>Positive</i>		<i>Negative</i>	
	<u>Availability</u>	<u>Assortment</u>	<u>Availability</u>	<u>Assortment</u>
WFP-supported market engagement	12	-	-	-
Reduced voucher value and/or humanitarian activity	-	-	4	-

Note: Frequency of cause-effect links drawn / referenced by all beneficiaries (n=51) and retailers (n=8) engaged through 37 interviews and 2 focus groups in Bangladesh.

25. In e-voucher retail outlets, the assortment of goods was primarily dictated by the fixed food basket set by WFP, coded under 'WFP-supported market engagement' in Table 4 and Figure 5, while the MFI looks at a larger assortment of other essential goods, including sanitation items and medicines (explaining some variance between MFI and RPME). In outlets, retailers were typically required to stock 50 fixed and flexible items, including at least 3 fresh items in FFCs; and from April to November 2020, the switch from value to commodity vouchers to minimize COVID-19 contagion risks further influenced the required stocks. Contracted retailers/shop managers noted that food stocks under value vouchers are limited to an average of two days according to contractual arrangements, and fresh foods are intended to be routinely stocked one to two times per day, so this allows retailers to plan, and outlets were rarely without sufficient stocks. Three (of eight) contracted retailers did note that essential, high-demand items with increasing or volatile pricing, such as oils or fresh items like fresh fish, were more difficult to maintain sufficient stock in accordance with WFP requirements.

26. Incident tracking data revealed the same (see

27.

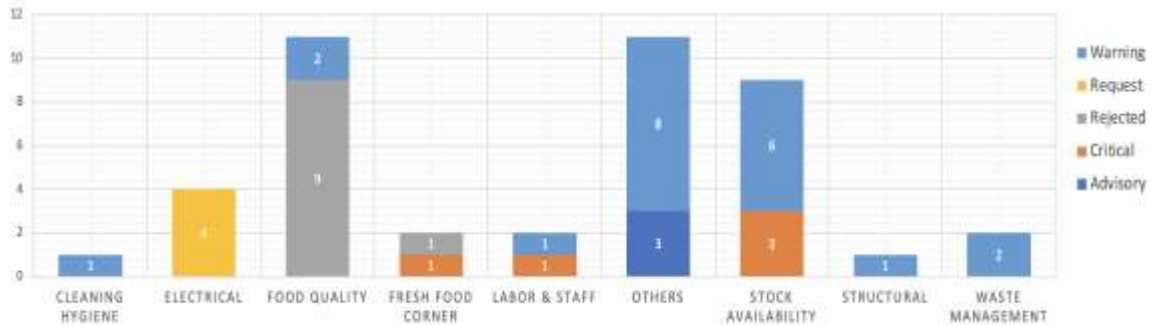
28.

29. **Figure 4**), with a high majority of incidents reported on stock availability in retail shops and warehouses linked to running out of oils or fresh fish early in the day. The latter was resolved to some extent by stocking dried fish. **Increased engagement with new suppliers, FFC and increasing produce supply to markets by local farmers were highlighted as key drivers of increased assortment and availability of goods by retailers and beneficiaries.** In addition, **WFP's monitoring and interventions focused on optimizing commodities have mitigated challenges with fluctuating product availability**

³⁵ The MFI data varied by report for Cox's Bazar, whether it was disaggregated by e-vouchers and informal markets or aggregated to provide one overall score. For example, in January 2020 the MFI analysis disaggregated by e-vouchers specifically, revealing the low score of 1.2, though later data is presented in aggregate for Cox's Bazar. It is therefore still unclear or lacking sufficient evidence for explaining why the MFI for assortment of e-voucher retail outlets jumped from 1.2 of 10 in the MFI in January 2020 to 100% in February 2020 in the RPME data, except that different metrics/questions are used to calculate the scores for these two tools.

and prices and resulted in a more diverse assortment of nutritious food being continuously stocked, according to key informant interviews with WFP staff and CPs.

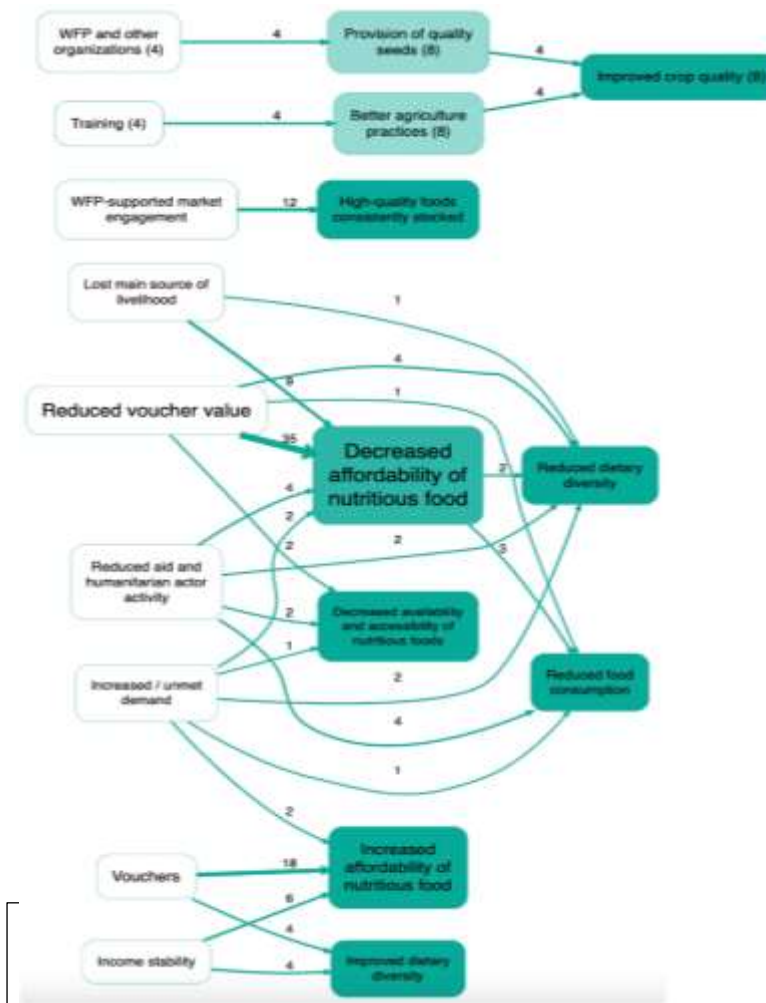
Figure 4. Snapshot of Retail Partner Performance based on Incident Tracking Results – Bangladesh



Note: Extracted from the WFP Bangladesh CO Presentation, Retail Unit, CXB Supply Chain, Retail and Market – May 2023

Quality and Price

Figure 5 Causal Links to Assortment, Availability, Quality and Price Dimensions



30. The **quality** dimension is measured by increases in the food quality score of WFP engaged shops over time from the RPME and a broader sample of shops through the MFI. The **price** dimension assesses price trends and volatility. Both rising prices and excessive volatility show that the market is not functioning well. While there are multiple mechanisms for price monitoring, this evaluation looks at primarily the MFI and RPME data, which measure whether the price of selected food basket in WFP contracted shops are aligned or lower than other stores in the same market, as well as available price monitoring and market systems analysis reports. In QuIP interviews and FGDs, **beneficiaries mostly spoke to the 'affordability' of food items when prompted to discuss the facilitating factors or limits to the availability and consumption of high quality, nutritious foods.** As such, these dimensions are presented together.

31. Given that WFP has high standards for e-voucher outlets, the unavailability of fresh foods was not reported by interviewed beneficiaries

and RPME data on quality rarely fluctuates far below 100%. By March 2022, WFP and FAO interventions for operational aggregation centres had sold 1.76 million kg of vegetables of which 14,000 kg had been supplied for Fresh Food Corners.³⁶ According to QulP (Figure 5), **business support, trainings and provision of seeds, increased engagement with new suppliers and local farmers, and food quality control standards** (coded primarily within WFP-supported market engagement), **improved quality of crops produced and subsequently stocked in FFCs**, as well as increased customer/beneficiary satisfaction with the availability of quality food items. In some cases, given the higher quality standards for WFP products, **food items provided in e-voucher outlets, such as dry and chilled fish, have been found to be more nutritious compared to local market alternatives in host communities.**³⁷

32. However, given refugees' restricted access to employment and opportunities for self-reliance in Bangladesh, beneficiaries frequently emphasized how **changes to the voucher amounts and associated changes in humanitarian activity and opportunities for employment as volunteers directly influenced their purchasing power, bolstering or eroding their ability to afford nutritious food items, regardless of whether items were made available in FFCs.**

33. In terms of price, the experience of market prices is relative to the stakeholder being interviewed. While beneficiaries largely emphasized the diminishing voucher size as affecting the affordability of goods, especially proteins like eggs and fish, retailers emphasized broadly market dynamics, inflation and supply chain disruptions as the primary factors increasing product prices. Price was seen as highly susceptible to external factors, including regulatory measures on imports/exports, climate and health shocks, as well as peace and economic crises such as COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine. The sharp rise in prices from the pandemic and high price volatility for essential food items, such as rice and red lentils, continued to affect overall market functionality through the evaluation period.³⁸

34. A market assessment in Bhasan Char³⁹, an island area where some Rohingya refugees have been relocated, reported general feelings that prices in the e-voucher outlets are high, and should be reduced, as some beneficiaries observe slightly cheaper prices in the local camp markets. WFP's market monitoring of evaluated markets confirms that some items indeed have slightly higher prices in the outlets (such as fish) due to higher quality standards for WFP products compared to public markets, while other items have lower prices in the WFP outlets (such as rice).

35. From the perspective of retailers, available MFI data for Cox's Bazar shows slow increase in scores from January 2020 to July 2021 on price, moving from 4.1 to 8.6 out of 10 respectively, indicating informal and contracted retailers' positive perceptions of the increasing stability of prices in Cox's Bazar markets. KIs with partners and WFP staff highlighted that while prices are highly volatile, they are largely set by the government, and WFP's market monitoring and routine price negotiations with suppliers have at least ensured the most essential items are not cost-prohibitive for beneficiaries. For example, the prices of onions in Bangladesh have been volatile since India's export ban in September 2019,⁴⁰ though were on the

³⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization. (2022). Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Progress Summary (February to April 2022). Available from: <https://www.fao.org/3/cc0257en/cc0257en.pdf>

³⁷ Key informant interviews with suppliers and WFP staff; World Food Programme. (2022). Market Assessment in Bhasan Char, Bangladesh Assessing the functionality of emerging marketplaces serving Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh February 2022

³⁸ World Food Programme. (2020). Market Monitor. Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh – August 2020. WFP. Available from: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000119758/download/?_ga=2.169990818.329501549.1694465385-1104509865.1694198769

³⁹ World Food Programme. (2022). Market Assessment in Bhasan Char, Bangladesh – February 2022. WFP.

⁴⁰ Oscar M. Caccavale et al. (2020). Assessing the functionality of marketplaces serving Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. World Food Programme. Available from: https://rohingyaconference.org/doc/WFP_Marketplace_Functionality_Serving_Rohingya_Bangladesh.pdf

decline by August 2020,⁴¹ and stability of pricing for Rohingya refugees was mitigated through sourcing from China, Turkey and Pakistan (See EQ 3.1).

36. Farmers in FGDs spoke about how the influx of Rohingya refugees from 2017–2018 and humanitarian aid in their community has increased demand for fresh produce and subsequently also prices in their community. In this sense, **rising prices have both positively and negatively affected farmers. While they are receiving higher prices for their goods, and therefore incomes, given the increased market value of produce and reduced need to interface with market intermediaries / brokers through their participation in the market linkages programme, they also perceive negative effects of increased demand on the affordability of fresh produce for host community members.** However, changes in prices, as noted above, are driven by a multitude of external factors, and so it is important to monitor how these perceptions influence social cohesion.

EQ2.2a: To what extent did the MDAs/REAs contribute to enhancing beneficiaries' market interaction experience (purchasing power, choice, dignity, treatment, quality of food presented, and access) outcomes?

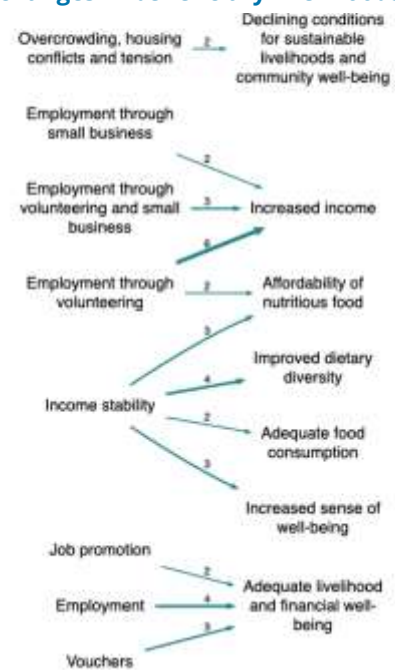
37. Respondents highlighted the important difference in retail experience when moving from in-kind assistance to electronic vouchers, marking a significant shift in beneficiaries' market interaction experience. As remarked in KIIs with WFP, CPs and local authorities, when assistance is provided through market interactions, it facilitates opportunity for displaced persons to be consumers again, contributing to improved financial literacy, choice and flexibility in selecting preferred foods, qualities and brands as they plan and budget for what items to buy to meet the needs of their families and bargain with retailers.

38. **This shift not only empowers communities with improved purchasing power but also incentivizes traders to set up shops in refugee camps, establishing new markets.** As previously highlighted, retailers in Bangladesh are larger national companies which were not previously serving such a large customer-base in Cox's Bazar and sought to satisfy their new customers and maintain their shops by strictly adhering to WFP's contractual terms. According to REVA-6, satisfaction rates among the Rohingya community increased across all service categories between 2021 and 2022, with significant increases in satisfaction with food assistance (77%, up by 20 percentage points from 2021). **These increases were largely attributed to the stabilizing effects of WFP's e-vouchers and associated MDAs insulating beneficiaries from high inflation rates in external commodity markets.** The e-voucher outlets maintained relatively consistent quality, quantity, and pricing for goods, including fresh food items like fish, eggs and chicken, thereby protecting beneficiaries from market volatility and contributing to increased satisfaction levels.

39. Beneficiaries specifically highlighted access to nutritious fresh vegetables, fruits and animal-source proteins as key improvements during the early voucher period, and also opting for fortified rice, high-quality oils and packaged spices when given the choice. For example, a male refugee in Cox's Bazar said, "[i]n 2020, I got a voucher card which includes 1210-1212 BDT...With this I was capable to buy apples, oranges



Figure 6 Combined factors contributing to changes in beneficiary livelihoods



⁴¹ World Food Programme. (2020). Market Monitor. Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh – May 2020. WFP. Available from: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000118100/download/?_ga=2.124449032.329501549.1694465385-1104509865.1694198769

and meat for my children." Economic stability also played a role, as increased income for households with members working as volunteers in retail outlets or in various other humanitarian organizations, further bolstered their purchasing power.

40. However, many reported to have lost this choice again when transfer amounts declined under the voucher modality and/or when humanitarian organization operations slowed. Many beneficiaries reported being unable to maintain previous quantities and varieties of goods accessed. Nearly 60% of the beneficiaries interviewed reported reduced buying power, impacting food consumption patterns and their overall sense of health and well-being, especially among pregnant women, nursing mothers, children and the elderly. Some beneficiaries and key informants highlighted how the additional "burden" of taking care of newly pregnant and/or aging household members impacted the rest of the households' adequate consumption of nutritious food items as transfer values decreased.

Table 5. Direction of changes reported by beneficiaries

	Bangladesh		
	Positive	Negative	Same
Change in Livelihood and financial well-being	7	11	11
Change in household's buying power or purchasing capacity	9	17	3
Change in household's food consumption patterns	11	13	5
Change in overall health and happiness of your household	6	16	7
Change in confidence about the future	13	7	9

Note: Participating beneficiaries were asked to describe openly changes experienced across various domains, and a closed-ended follow-up question was asked to define clearly whether the change was 'positive', 'negative' or 'the same'. "Positive" denotes improved or increased, and "Negative" denotes decreased or got worse. This table shows the frequency of responses for 29 interviewed beneficiaries in Bangladesh. Dark blue represents the highest value and white indicates the lowest value.

41. From QUIP analysis, the driving factors for beneficiaries reporting adequate livelihoods and financial well-being were WFP assistance in the form of value vouchers, increased aid and humanitarian actor activity, and income from new employment. In Cox's Bazar, with vouchers being households' primary source of income given access to livelihood activities and opportunities for self-reliance are restricted and outside their control due to their refugee status, reductions in aid and opportunities to volunteer impacted beneficiaries sense of agency and choice, and their outlook about the future.

EQ2.2b To what extent did the implementation of MDAs/REAs consider and address gender inequalities and promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment, both within the MDAs and in the wider market system?

42. In terms of MDAs, integrating women into retailer activities and market settings was considered outside of cultural norms, where women rarely worked as retailers or traders in the market. The provision of job or volunteer opportunities in camps (a contractual obligation for retailers in Cox's Bazar⁴²), including by operating POS machines, stocking goods and cleaning shops, etc., acted as a catalyst towards economic empowerment of the beneficiaries, in terms of increased income, agency and decision-making power, which seemed to disproportionately benefit women. Government and cooperating partners as well as WFP staff have observed that women now have better access to markets and income generation activities by becoming volunteers in the Cox's Bazar retail shops and aggregation centres. And although systematic and

⁴² Retailer contracts stated "At a very minimum 50% of POS operators should be Rohingya females and at least 50% of total staff must be female."

regular awareness-raising on women’s rights and economic empowerment was not an activity within MDAs, simple participation started to change attitudes and behaviors to a limited extent. One government interviewee mentioned, *“Women are so pious that they obey orders not to go outside from their husbands or guardians. Their husband, however, has also given his consent to participate in these activities because of easy access to the market and the possibility of making money.”*⁴³

43. There was also evidence of consideration for persons with disabilities in the design of the outlet and FFC systems in Cox’s Bazar, as the market areas were designed to ensure accessibility, separate lines were created for those with greater needs, and there was a porter system in place to assist disabled, elderly and female heads of households with the transportation of products to their homes.

EQ3 – WHAT FACTORS ARE AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MDAs AND RETAIL ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES, AND ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES (NEGATIVELY OR POSITIVELY)?

EQ3.1. What are the factors that negatively disrupted WFP’s MDA and retail engagement operations in the targeted markets, and how did it influence the implementation? How did the programme mitigate and cope with these disruptions, including gender-specific or inclusion-related challenges?

44. KIIs identified challenges encompassing a wide range of factors, from supply chain issues to social and environmental challenges, which interact with and reinforce each other and were responded to through further capacity building, market systems analysis, price monitoring and negotiation, and collaboration with local authorities. In Bangladesh, climate change-related factors such as seasonal weather patterns, flash floods, and monsoon rains can disrupt agricultural activities and supply chains. In addition to the inability to farm during extreme weather events, waterlogging also makes it difficult for farmers to cultivate crops and can result in diminished harvests and subsequently increased prices for goods given the low supply. For example, flooding in June and July 2022 impacted harvests and the price of rice in August and September; though rice pricing is regulated by the government, once government introduced imported varieties, WFP switched to imported rice from India during this time to reduce and stabilize costs.

Figure 7 WFP Negotiated Price Trends, 2022-23



Note: Extracted from the WFP Bangladesh CO Presentation, Retail Unit, CXB Supply Chain, Retail and Market – May 2023

45. Relatedly, challenges arise from the harsh climate, limited availability of agricultural land, imbalance of the host-community and refugee populations, and inability of Rohingya refugees to start alternative livelihoods activities given national policy on the temporary status of ‘Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals’.⁴⁴ **Local farmers are only able to provide approximately 20 - 30% of fresh produce to meet demand from the Rohingya population,** with the remaining sourced from other suppliers.⁴⁵

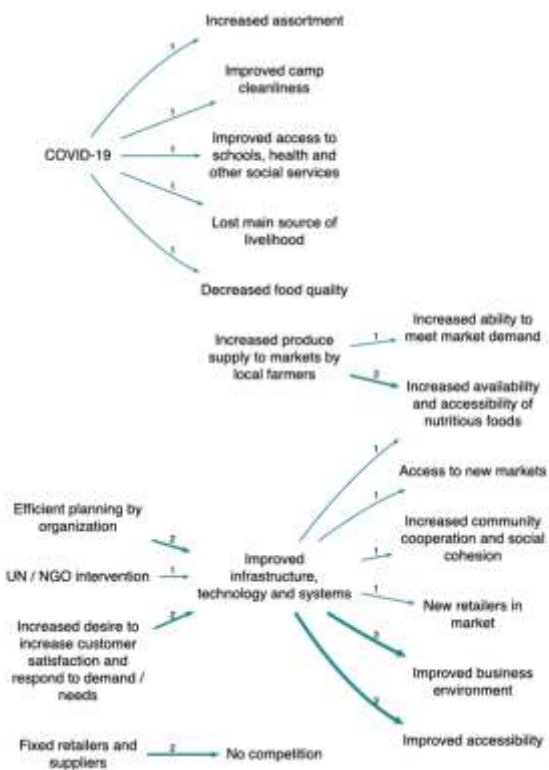
⁴³ KII, local authority, Bangladesh

⁴⁴ Inter Sector Coordination Group. (2021). 2021 Joint Response Plan: Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis (January - December 2021) - Bangladesh. Available from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/2021-joint-response-plan-rohingya-humanitarian-crisis-january-december-2021>

⁴⁵ KII, CP, Bangladesh

Although there is still an over-reliance on external suppliers, market linkages created between local farmers and aggregation centres as well as improved fresh food handling and storage protocols (rolled out through WFP trainings) have helped increase sourcing of local products. The programme has also helped farmers circumvent the challenge of middlemen taking advantage of them (in terms of price). Now they are able to sell directly to the aggregation centres at fair prices and have access to direct negotiation with traders through the Farm2Go App.⁴⁶

Figure 8 Causal links between external factors affecting supply chain and market activities



46. The challenges of fluctuating prices had notable implications for the overall implementation of activities. The uncertainty in pricing occasionally led to inconsistencies in retail operations and could disrupt the regular flow of goods and services in the market. To address this, thresholds were established, setting limits within which retailers couldn't alter the prices, and the introduction of aggregation centres limited the involvement of intermediaries. In addition, WFP actors have worked on improving the social awareness of retailers, emphasizing respectful interactions with the public and understanding beneficiaries' needs and rights.

“Changing retailers’ profit-centric mindset to focus on long-term benefits and sustainable business practices has been a challenge but essential for programme success.”⁴⁷

47. **This approach aimed to stabilize the market, ensure fairness, and minimize disruptions to beneficiaries and other stakeholders, highlighting the importance of having adaptive mechanisms in place to respond to unforeseen challenges in market-based interventions.** QuIP interviews and FGDs highlighted ways retailers adapted as a result of

the social awareness trainings; for example, in the face of more restricted mobility during COVID-19, several retailers highlighted changes in ‘service offerings’ by providing delivery of food baskets to the most vulnerable households, primarily persons with disabilities and pregnant and lactating mothers.

EQ3.2: To what extent did the corporate tools and support provided from the HQ -including short-term missions (TDY)- help the CO to implement and achieve the objectives of the MDAs/REAs?

48. HQ SCOLR provided extensive support for tailoring tools, designing data collection plans and conducting analysis in accordance with needs (e.g. setting up Fresh Food Corners, market linkages activities and conducting MSAs). The RPME, implemented regularly in Cox’s Bazar stood out as a valuable tool, particularly when coupled with the incident tracker. These tools were used as monitoring tools and feedback mechanisms for country team, holding retailers accountable to WFP and WFP accountable to beneficiaries, as well allowing for the collection of actionable data for continuous improvement. These tools were especially crucial in the decision-making process related to contract extensions with the retailers in Cox’s Bazar. The regularity of the monitoring through RPME, and ability to adapt questions based on context and need, ensured that retailers remained aligned with the goals and standards set out by the COs. However, retailers became accustomed to the questions and timing of monitoring visits, and in highly

⁴⁶ KII, WFP Staff, Bangladesh
⁴⁷ KII, WFP Staff, Bangladesh

controlled markets such as in Cox's Bazar, the RPME became less useful over time with consistently high-scoring, and as such the daily incident tracker became more actionable for the COs.

49. The market functionality index, price monitoring and market systems analyses were also vital in understanding market dynamics and providing insights for retail, supply chain and VAM teams responsible for regularly negotiating fair market prices for flexible and mandatory goods. With staff in place with expertise on market systems approaches and the use of corporate tools, these tools were systematically conducted and used as a feedback mechanism, helping to maintain a check on market fluctuations and avoid exploitative pricing, and ensuring that beneficiaries received goods at reasonable rates. However, the ET notes inconsistency on reporting in MFIs in particular, with the level of disaggregation varying by report and making it more difficult to assess change over time in target markets.

EQ3.4: How can the WFP country offices mitigate the negative impact of the upcoming ration cut on the targeted beneficiaries and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the current process?

50. An anticipated reduction in international funding amidst spiraling inflation in prices of goods and services across the world and ongoing disruptions to the supply chain have eroded, and is expected to further erode, the purchasing power of beneficiaries. It was clear from the QuIP discussions that ration cuts are a source of discontent for most beneficiaries, thus, the evaluation examined opportunities for mitigating its anticipated impact at the request of the Bangladesh CO during inception missions.

51. It is worth noting that the CO attempted to mitigate some of these challenges using RPMEs as well as MSAs to monitor and intervene on exploitative and high pricing, as mentioned. However, it has not been easy to address these challenges given the restrictions to how WFP can intervene in the setting of Cox's Bazar camps and settlements.

52. Given that one of the driving factors for beneficiaries' improved livelihoods and financial well-being included income from new employment through volunteer positions, a likely solution is to forge stronger alliances with local governments, NGOs, and the private sector to create a **collaborative ecosystem for supporting alternative income-generating activities**.⁴⁸ Such multi-stakeholder collaborations can facilitate pooled resources, knowledge-sharing, and unified intervention strategies that can further understanding of, and address, declining humanitarian assistance, including declining voucher values, and its impacts on target populations. For instance, understanding how bolstering markets and the financial well-being of host communities, through training on climate resilient agriculture techniques or creating community-led savings groups or cooperatives, can foster a culture of resilience against external economic shocks, and possibly further mitigate negative impacts of shocks on the refugee community through stronger local supply chains. In addition, improved knowledge-sharing and networking could further clarify possible pathways for advocating for increased volunteer activities for refugee populations.

53. **Direct engagement with local communities to gather feedback, understand specific needs, and co-create solutions** is another 'low-hanging fruit' for mitigation. Continuous dialogue with beneficiaries fosters trust and also helps develop better community-driven solutions.⁴⁹ Community feedback mechanisms, awareness campaigns, social behavior change communication, and grievance redressal forums can ensure aid mechanisms facilitate two-way communication for adaptive interventions. Further, such engagement can also assist in identifying local market actors who are more supportive of WFP's MDA endeavors.

⁴⁸ Although it must be noted that involvement of governmental actors by themselves has been shown to be ineffective or even counterproductive. See, Wonkyu Shin et al. (2017). Do Different Implementing Partnerships Lead to Different Project Outcomes? Evidence from the World Bank Project-Level Evaluation Data. *World Development*, 95, 268–284. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2017.02.033>

⁴⁹ See, for example: Seokwoo Kim et al. (2020). Evaluating Participation: Empirical Analysis of Recipient and Beneficiary Engagement with IFAD International Development Projects. *Sustainability*, 12(14), Article 14. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12145862>; Jonathan Isham et al. (1995). Does Participation Improve Performance? Establishing Causality with Subjective Data. *The World Bank Economic Review*, 9(2), 175–200.

54. Another important approach for mitigating the impacts of ration cuts which is directly within SCOLR's sphere of influence is to **continue conducting MSA's wherever market inefficiencies are identified** (e.g., savings gained from changing rice varieties led to significant change in purchasing power). Making appropriate changes in supply chain processes can help stretch transfer values provided and offset to some extent the impact of ration cuts. Investing in and fortifying local supply chains can reduce the dependency on external supplies. This includes continuing to support local agriculture (as noted), offering subsidies or incentives to local producers, and establishing robust storage and distribution facilities. Strengthening local supply chains, by promoting local procurement, which simultaneously boosts farmer associations and cooperatives, could contribute to ensuring a consistent quality and quantity of supplies.

2.3. EFFICIENCY

EQ4 – WAS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MDAs AND RETAIL ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES COST EFFECTIVE?

55. Implementing MDAs demonstrates positive cost-effectiveness, with immediate social benefits in Cox's Bazar. Once established, MDAs proved to be an efficient option, with establishment costs (USD 2,449,480 – which includes the costs for the construction of 13 shops, totaling USD 2,265,680.77, corresponding to 92.5% of the establishment costs) recovered in less than two years (1.68 years, or 20.18 months) and recurrent costs of USD 6,365,152, providing nutritional and social benefits to vulnerable populations and retailers corresponding to USD 1,456,502⁵⁰.

See the main report for further details on CBA findings and methodology.

2.4. IMPACT

EQ5. TO WHAT EXTENT DID WFP CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVING RESILIENCE AND INITIATING BUSINESS EXPANSION OF WFP CONTRACTED SUPPLIERS AND RETAILERS?

Improving resilience through expanded businesses and markets

56. Retailer resilience can be defined as a retailer's capacity to endure and recover from various challenges, such as economic fluctuations, supply chain disruptions, natural disasters, or other external pressures. WFP assesses retailer resilience during MFI's by asking retailers about ability to meet demand/restock and their vulnerability to supply chain disruptions (access to multiple supply sources).⁵¹ In Cox's Bazar MDAs contributed to the resilience of retailers engaging with WFP as the activities led to improved product quality and diversity in markets. The introduction and strengthening of markers and quality checks ensured a consistent supply of nutritious products reaching markets. The presence of retail shops, including the later addition of Fresh Food Corners, had consistently expanded in Cox's Bazar since their introduction in 2018. The denser network of WFP market outlets led to increased competition, diversification, and distribution of products, ensuring that the market can better withstand external shocks and disruptions.⁵² Although the retailers employees interviewed for the evaluation may not have perceived this enhanced density or other changes in the market (see Figure 19 in the main report), these **businesses have expanded their reach by gaining access to new markets and also improved their business practices in order to meet WFPs rigorous quality standards.**

"The emphasis on changing retailers' perspectives – transitioning them from a mere profit-making mindset to one of reinvestment, innovation, quality improvement, and branding – has also cultivated a

⁵⁰ Measurement of monetary benefits to farmers and their workers has not been possible, so total real benefits are greater than the indicated amount (default approximation).

⁵¹World Food Programme. (2021). Market Functionality Index: Technical Guidance.

https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000114503/download/?_ga=2.103914368.1079128731.1704995921-287098669.1699988849

⁵²KII with WFP staff

more sustainable business model. This paradigm shift ensures that the businesses can continue to thrive even after WFP's direct involvement concludes.⁵³

57. Farmers had also been linked with retailers through MDA programming, which enabled them to expand their farms and increase their incomes. Over the evaluation period, the average annual household income for farmers has increased by USD \$236 (+143%) and annual salaries paid by farmers to agricultural workers increased by \$12 (+39%).⁵⁴ Also, during focus group discussions farmers reported a positive impact on their resilience because of training they received from WFP, FAO and cooperating partners. Using new techniques, seeds and fertilizer, they were able to meet the demand for fresh products. One farmer commented, *"the quality is important because customers prefer good quality over the price. If we supply the fresh products regularly the demand also increased gradually."* This emphasis on providing consistent quality benefits both these farmer suppliers and the consumers seeking good value for money.

Enhanced resilience through capacity building

58. A core element of MDAs has been the emphasis on skill enhancement. By equipping market actors with the necessary tools and knowledge, MDAs assisted them to enhance their ability to run their businesses effectively and mitigate the challenges faced in day-to-day business operations. These skill-building exercises were not merely confined to business operations but also incorporated elements of financial literacy, business management, and negotiation tactics.

59. Vendors were trained on WFP procedures, customer service, good practices in food handling and hygiene, stocking, and managing retail operations. Training on respecting and understanding customers' needs also improved positive interactions between market actors and instilled a sense of community responsibility among retailers.⁵⁵ Training was also provided to local farmers on agriculture techniques as well as price negotiation, both contributing to increasing their capacity to meet market demand and profitability.⁵⁶ Farmers reported that they are better able to meet market demand as they have been receiving seeds and training for agriculture technique and fertilizer production.

"The ability increased to meet the local market demands over the past two years as the production rate improved due to the good quality of seeds provided by RIC as well as the training."⁵⁷

Improvements in market linkages

60. MDAs had contributed to developing market linkages with local producers, in particular. The farmer linkage intervention started as a separate section of the market for farmers to sell their products directly to the beneficiaries at pilot farmer's markets. WFP also envisioned to support farmers establish their own shops and connect directly with hotels and other businesses to reduce their dependence on WFP, but these plans were discontinued due to issues with supply. In 2021, the system was streamlined and transitioned into 18 aggregation centres to tackle logistical issues and ensure that the farmers could meet demand collectively. These centres connected the farmers to FFC in the camps through the WFP contracted retailers.⁵⁸ WFP and its partners have also provided training for local farmers which helped them to improve their productivity but equally important was the direct access to retailers that had enabled them to negotiate fair prices collectively, bypassing middlemen who were manipulating pricing when buying products from farmers individually. WFP staff and cooperating partners observed that farmers had increased their resilience through the creation of farmer groups, and they could now maintain accurate accounts, cultivate seasonal crops, negotiate prices and ensure quality food supply. Farmers indicated that

⁵³ KII with WFP staff

⁵⁴ FGDs with farmers

⁵⁵ KIIs with local authorities and WFP

⁵⁶ KIIs, CP and WFP, Bangladesh

⁵⁷ FGD with farmers

⁵⁸

WFP Annual report Bangladesh 2021; WB-WFP joint food assistance brief; KII with WFP staff.

they now work together in groups of 25 to 30 members. One FGD participant mentioned, "Some farmers did not want to share their knowledge but right now, they share everything with each other."

EQ6: ARE THERE UNINTENDED (POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE) EFFECTS OF WFP MARKET DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AND RETAIL ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES IN DIFFERENT COUNTRY CONTEXTS AND FOR DIFFERENT GROUPS?

Spillover Effects

61. Given that the WFP outlets and FFCs are only accessible to refugee populations and only contracted retailers are allowed to operate within the camp, spillover effects for markets in the surrounding community were limited. However, as per KIIs with government officials, CPs and WFP, the most **important spillover effect of MDAs was the income generation opportunities created for refugee beneficiaries** as volunteers working in and supporting the retail, FFC outlets and aggregation centres. Also, the market linkages programme enabled local farmers to supply their products directly to the camps which had a strong impact for farmers' livelihoods and also provided the opportunity for host community members sell their fertilizer directly to buyers and farmers.

Positive and negative unintended effects

62. The unintended positive impact that stood out was the **recognition by market actors of the importance of providing quality products and services**. Farmers realize that higher quality products led to higher demand and profits, suppliers improved their delivery processes to meet WFPs quality and punctuality demands (KIIs with suppliers and WFP), and retailers had come to recognize the importance of customer service, product quality and reinvestment for long-term benefits.⁵⁹ Also, farmers, who previously lacked proper access to markets, gained vital experience and skills. Working with MDA introduced them to collective negotiation dynamics which enhanced their bargaining power and fostered a sense of unity.

63. Some negative unintended effects also emerged during the evaluation. All comments on negative effects were related to the reduction in transfer values. Rather than being unintended effects of the MDAs themselves, evaluation respondents frequently commented on the negative unintended effects the ration cuts had for MDA programming. Although this challenge was beyond the timeframe of the evaluation and sphere of influence of the supply chain team, it had had a strong impact on the demand side of the supply chain. Several beneficiaries commented in FGDs that although fresh and nutritious foods were available in the market, they could no longer afford these. A supplier interviewed also noted a decrease in demand for their products with sales dropping by roughly 60% after the decline in e-voucher value.

64. There were also some unintended effects related to gender. Although **gender participation becomes more balanced when the voucher modality is involved, with both men and women becoming actively engaged in the decision-making process, persistent underlying gender norms and dynamics continue to influence how decisions about food are made within each household**. Interviews showed that men are more likely to be the decision makers in beneficiary households in Cox's Bazar⁶⁰ and the WFP-UNHCR joint assessment⁶¹ found that while women may have possessed e-vouchers, it was male household members deciding what items to re-sell and how to use the cash from the sales possibly leading to disempowerment of women in food security. This demonstrated the importance of accounting for the underlying gender dynamics that might affect women's wellbeing and access to food even when they were the intended recipients of assistance.

⁵⁹ KII with WFP

⁶⁰ QuiP with female beneficiaries

⁶¹ UNHCR-WFP. (2019).

EQ7. HOW DO CBT ACTIVITIES (CASH INJECTION INTO THE LOCAL ECONOMIES AND ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES THAT ENABLE BENEFICIARIES TO ACCESS THE ASSISTANCE) COMBINED WITH SUPPLY SIDE ACTIVITIES (SUPPORTING MARKET ACTORS AND OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY ENGAGING WITH WFP) CONTRIBUTE TO POSITIVE CHANGE AND WHAT COMBINATION OF ACTIVITIES CONTRIBUTE THE MOST?

65. As external retailers were not allowed to operate within the camps and unofficial small-scale beneficiary traders did not have much access to nutritious products beyond selling excess from in-kind distributions, the **supply side activities were vital for providing an enabling market environment that would support the distribution of CBT** in Cox's Bazar through the contracting of retailers as well as through the market linkages programme. As all beneficiaries receive assistance through e-vouchers in Cox's Bazar, comparisons between e-vouchers and unrestricted cash transfers did not come up with respondents in Bangladesh.

2.5. SUSTAINABILITY

EQ8. ARE THE RESULTS OF WFP CONTRIBUTIONS SUSTAINABLE, I.E., LIKELY TO PERSIST AFTER INTERVENTIONS CONCLUDE?

EQ.8.1. What are the COs' exit plan and knowledge transfer strategy to the local communities for the Market Development Activities and related supply chain interventions?

66. National stakeholders in Bangladesh indicated that they were not aware of any MDA exit strategy being in place. A review of corporate and project documents such as the CSPs and ACRs also showcased a lack of exit plan and strategy. This may be due to the fact that the current policy hinges on the assumption that the refugees will be able to go home thus negating the necessity of an exit strategy if the camp markets cease to exist. However, as the refugee situation persists with no viable solution for returning on the horizon, longer term contingency strategies are important. As it stands, it is not clear how WFP envisions its interventions to remain sustainable if and when MDAs come to end. Given that restrictions are likely to continue in the long-term, it appears as though an exit strategy involving independent markets would not be realistic and the most likely exit pathways for WFP will involve transferring food assistance activities over to local government management. Such a transfer would rely on the government's motivation to continue with such programming and may be beyond the scope of the evaluation.

EQ8.2. Are the direct WFP partners likely to continue adopting market development activities and related supply chain interventions?

67. KIIs suggested that MDAs create essential market linkages between different stakeholders. As an illustration, a national stakeholder in Bangladesh elaborated linkages between farmers and wholesalers, which created opportunities for retail at fair value for the produce. Others indicated that the construction and establishment of market-related infrastructure such as physical shops in the refugee camps and engagement of the local workforce volunteers enhanced market's resilience. Most key informants suggested that traders, retailers and suppliers involved in MDAs were using the training imparted to them, including by transferring their learning to others. Further, based on a self-assessment of WFP partners, the likelihood of their continuing to adopt MDAs after the completion of the interventions themselves was rated high. The Government of Bangladesh had reportedly committed to continuing these activities after the conclusion of the intervention, though there was no concrete evidence to assess the likelihood of this.

EQ8.3 Are the market development activities and related supply chain interventions being adopted by market actors who are not directly linked to the programme, taking into consideration marginalized and disadvantaged groups?

68. Limited evidence was available on the adoption of MDAs by those not directly linked to the interventions. KIIs with WFP staff mentioned that local community members involved in the capacity building training were likely to impart what they have learned to others in their community. They expected

these members to continue to positively impact market development and supply chain in target areas, which was in turn expected to build market linkages, structures and opportunities and increase market resilience for stakeholders beyond direct beneficiaries. For example, the sharing of knowledge gained from training provided for farmers on techniques and fertilizer production or the bargaining power and sense of community gained from farmer groups created through MDAs.

EQ9- WHAT FACTORS AFFECT SUSTAINABILITY OF WFP MDAs AND RETAIL ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES, AND DO THESE FACTORS VARY FOR DIFFERENT ACTORS?

EQ9.1 To what extent do different factors affect the sustainability of WFP MDAs and retail engagement activities?

69. The most common factor that could impede market development, as revealed in Bangladesh KIIs, was the lack of consumer independence as the refugee population is totally dependent on e-vouchers and lack avenues for independent income generation. This coupled with diminishing international funding and potential for subsequent social discontent and unrest were of great concern to the respondents. Government partners in the agricultural sector also indicated that the sustainability of MDAs was affected by various factors such as reliance on traditional agricultural practices as well as a lack of widespread commercial farming and agribusinesses. Inflation, climate change and corruption were other factors reported to affect sustainability in Bangladesh.

Uncertainty of long-term funding is a perennial problem faced not only by Bangladesh but all WFP programming across the globe. It is a major challenge to secure funding for long term humanitarian support when new crises and vulnerable populations constantly drain finite funding and resources. Although the first priority is for Rohingya refugees to be able to return home, the avenues for achieving this, do not seem feasible, at least in the foreseeable future resulting in a long-term reliance on support from international aid. The strong impact on livelihoods and wellbeing resulting from ration cuts in Cox's Bazar emphasizes the extent to which the beneficiary population is dependent on CBT and the ongoing need for long-term support from the international community and government stakeholders. However, respondents with any form of income (as volunteers or small shop owners) besides the vouchers had a much more positive outlook for the future.⁶²

" Since I got the volunteer job in 2019, I am able to provide nutritious food to my family gradually my income has been increasing and I can afford quality foods like eggs, fish, meat etc."⁶³

70. Given the importance of volunteer positions emphasized by respondents for their overall sense of wellbeing, it would be useful to create as many of these positions as possible. It is also important to maintain positive relations with the host community and the market linkages programme is an excellent way of achieving this. Continuing to expand this and other livelihood programming with the local community will help greatly in strengthening local market actors and pave the way for the possibility of integrating refugee communities at some point in the future.

71. Despite these numerous factors that could impede sustainability, it was widely acknowledged that the training provided for traders, market actors and other stakeholders was highly relevant for improving retailer operations and farm practices. Participants in both KIIs and farmer FGDs indicate that training participants have been applying new knowledge to improve their businesses and increase the quality of their products. Relationships and market linkages created through MDAs are also strong factors that will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the expected outcomes of these interventions.

⁶² QuIP interviews with beneficiaries in Bangladesh

⁶³ QuIP beneficiary in Bangladesh

2.6. LESSONS LEARNED

EQ10- WHAT LESSONS EMERGED FROM COUNTRY EXPERIENCES AND DIFFERENT APPROACHES AND HOW CAN WFP ENHANCE MDAs AND RETAIL ENGAGEMENT TO INCREASE WFP CONTRIBUTION TO MARKET DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD SYSTEMS?

72. The evaluation found robust evidence for key lessons that WFP can use in future programming relevant to its market development interventions in Cox's Bazar, including:

73. **Maintaining positive relations with the host community:** Beneficiary respondents from Bangladesh reported tension within the community between new arrivals (e.g. the Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar). Local farmers in Bangladesh expressed concern that the arrival of refugees caused an increase in the prices of local produce, but they experienced positive change in their overall wellbeing after receiving training and engaging in the farmer groups created through MDAs. This emphasizes the importance of engaging with the local community through community outreach and also livelihood enhancement programmes to promote peace and social cohesion. Investing in local producers, suppliers, storage, and distribution could reduce reliance on imports and prove effective in stabilizing prices. Building livelihoods for host communities facilitates the ability of local producers to cope with supporting the additional refugee population and prove effective at stabilizing prices thus reducing the concerns local community members might have regarding the pressure placed the increased demand for food. It is also important to monitor and respond to the concerns of the host communities to support social cohesion.

74. **Collaboration, communication and advocacy:** Big intractable political challenges such as those relating to the status of refugees requires working across multiple international organizations including the UN system and non-governmental organizations. The extent of advocacy, communication and collaboration needs are best considered from the outset.

75. **Robust monitoring systems:** The regular RPME monitoring and particularly the incident tracker was found to be a good practice implemented by the Cox's Bazar team. Monthly monitoring helped to ensure retailers complied with the high WFP standards but also provided a regular feedback mechanism for identifying and resolving issues as they come up. It would be beneficial to replicate this approach in other countries.

76. **Incorporating exit strategies:** Lack of exit plans caused uncertainty and operational disruptions. A gradual, community-led transition process should be mapped from onset through localized skills transfer, asset handover plans, and government coordination.

77. **Market systems expertise:** Sustained, long-term engagement and nurturing of market systems is vital. This requires dedicated specialist capacity, not just temporary troubleshooting around emergencies.

3. Conclusions

On the basis of triangulated findings presented above, the evaluation concludes that:

Conclusion 1: Effectiveness and impact on market and beneficiary resilience

78. WFP's MDAs and retail engagement led to expanded assortment, availability and quality of essential goods in Bangladesh. Supporting market linkages with local producers boosted competition, affordability and consumption of nutritious items. Although retailers in Cox's Bazar perceived minimal change in the markets where they operate over the period of the evaluation, capacity building enhanced their operations, product handling, infrastructure and service provision. Although pricing remained a challenge due to external shocks, monitoring and supplier negotiations kept staple and nutritious foods largely accessible, especially in contexts with more market regulations.

79. In Cox's Bazar, climate change, limited availability of agricultural land, and dependence on traditional agricultural techniques are being addressed through the provision of extension services for farmers (access to quality seeds and training on improved techniques) and improved access to markets through the aggregation centres established by WFP and its partners. WFP also ensured fair pricing and maximizing supply chain efficiency by regularly negotiating fair market prices with contracted retailers and conducting MSAs to identify and address any arising market inefficiencies (e.g. switching to a cheaper rice variety).

80. These supply-side improvements, combined with demand driven by CBT (through e-vouchers), enabled beneficiaries to interact with dignity as consumers again, choosing preferred, nutritious items aligned to household needs. Multi-directional spill-over effects were also observed – from farmers profiting through direct market access to non-contracted retailers adopting best practices from WFP trainings. Sustained support enabled gradual transitions toward greater competition and choice.

81. However, gains in access to nutritious foods proved highly sensitive to changes in ration values. For example, beneficiaries and their representatives in Cox's Bazar noted significant drops in their ability to afford nutritious food and strong impacts on negative livelihood outlooks as a result of ration cuts.

82. The results also highlight the importance of parallel gender equality and women's empowerment and socio-economic development activities and programmes (e.g. employment opportunities like the volunteer programme in Fresh Food Corners) given that maintaining transfer values in the long term depends on external factors beyond WFPs control (e.g. funding constraints, new emergencies drawing resources).

Conclusion 2: Advancing gender equality and inclusion

83. Efforts were clearly made to enhance equal gender participation in MDAs and ensure access to the markets regardless of one's sex or disability. Assigning e-vouchers to women aimed to shift household decision-making, aligning with women's caregiving roles. Retailer trainings also consciously integrated women and facilitated entry. However, the evaluation found that consultation with women and marginalized people were poorly reflected in the programming. It was not clear how analysis from consultations with women and vulnerable groups were used to determine how to meet their needs and maximize economic participation through MDAs. Means for measuring the extent of their participation and changes in economic empowerment were also lacking.

84. Restrictive norms still constrain female mobility and market roles. Where gains occurred, women reported increased incomes, confidence and livelihood ambitions - but reductions in transfer values also disproportionately impacted female-headed households and/or microbusinesses. Unintended consequences like domestic disputes over control of food assistance and the disempowering effects of voucher re-selling underscore the need for gender analyses and social protection mechanisms. Persistent barriers around disability inclusion were also noted.

85. Ultimately, while initial steps to facilitate inclusion are promising, transformative change requires systematic application of gender lenses in assessments, monitoring and modalities, alongside meaningful participation, targeted capacity building and multi-sectoral action on root constraints around policy, infrastructure, capacities and attitudes. Sustained resourcing for more specialized market systems expertise would also enable more adaptive, equity-focused programming. If WFP aims to fulfill its commitment to advancing gender equality through food security interventions, then women's voices must guide the design.

Conclusion 3: Delivering efficient and sustainable outcomes

86. The evaluation affirmed the strong relevance of MDAs for enabling cash-based assistance and stabilizing crisis-affected markets, directly aligning with WFP's work towards achieving zero hunger globally. Market assessments and monitoring systems facilitated evidence-based design that was responsive to context-specific constraints and opportunities.

87. Once established, MDAs proved to be a comparatively efficient option, with establishment costs recovered in 1-3 years and lower recurrent costs than equivalent in-kind assistance methods. Each dollar invested generated over USD 1.30 economic value by conservative estimates - excluding wider nutritional impacts. Strengthened market actor capacities and relationships were also expected to outlast interventions to some degree. However, dependence on external funding and a lack of clear exit strategies threaten sustainability.

88. Without concrete plans for a phased, community-managed transition, infrastructure investments and market growth are jeopardized by sudden programming changes or funding shocks. Refugee policies restricting self-reliance poses additional structural barriers. With high dependence on external support, creating an enabling environment for self-reliance among crisis-affected populations is essential for realizing durable solutions towards more lasting and equitable access to nutritious diets through well-functioning local food systems.

89. This requires advocating alongside partners for more adaptable policy frameworks and predictable multi-year financing suited to responsible, community-led transitions. Clearer positioning around WFP's evolving market development role in corporate and country-level strategic frameworks would assist. In addition, developing context-specific pathways for phasing down direct support as local actors assume greater ownership would also mitigate sustainability risks.

4. Areas of Considerations

Several recommendations emerging from the evaluation were relevant for Bangladesh including:

Corporate indicators

- Once HQ has established corporate indicators within the Corporate Results Framework (CRF) to measure MDA outcomes, these indicators can be piloted in Bangladesh and the CO can provide feedback on their utility in the Cox's Bazar context and given existing CO resources and capacity.
- Ensure more systematic use of MFIs for measuring change over time, at least conducting MFIs before and after implementation as well as ensuring tools allow for adequate levels of data disaggregation in order to measure change and assess impact in target markets.

Recommendations for enhancing use of corporate tools

- Review the RPME tool and consult with supporting HQ teams to understand if further customization could be applied to ensure its ongoing utility and to overcome challenges with the tools validity after retailers become more familiarized. Discuss whether / how tools such as the incident tracker can be integrated into RPME scoring. It may also be useful to create a 'light' or abbreviated version of RPME requiring less time and fewer resources to ensure the tools' more frequent use is manageable for an already stretched team managing MDAs. This version could also be used to periodically (e.g. quarterly) monitor non-contracted retailer performance to compare differences between contracted and non-contracted host community retailers or to monitor retailer capacity in markets where WFP uses unconditional cash assistance.
- Devise more targeted gender-related custom questions to be included in retailer monitoring tools and guidance (likely the RPME).

Recommendations for future cost-benefit analysis

- The CO possesses comprehensive financial information necessary to accurately calculate the cost of implementing MDAs, and detailed information on the products acquired by beneficiaries (types, quality, and quantity). However, it lacks data on the social benefits for beneficiaries, retailers/shops, and farmers. Therefore, the evaluation recommends the CO to define and measure the

nutritional, social and economic benefits to the different stakeholders. This will include establishing metrics for their monetization. A starting point for this could be the methodology developed during the inception phase of this evaluation. It is paramount to establish a detailed CBA plan prior to the initiation of any MDA. This plan should outline the monitoring tools to be employed and specify the type of information that needs to be collected.

Invest in the sustainability of market development activities to mitigate the effects of humanitarian funding constraints and ration cuts

- Continue conducting MSA's whenever market inefficiencies are identified to find solutions for addressing them and improve beneficiary purchasing power where possible. By maximizing purchasing power through efficient market systems, beneficiaries can get better value from the assistance available (e.g. using a cheaper variety of rice).
- Considering the emphasis placed on alternative livelihoods activities by both beneficiaries and retailers, it would be beneficial for WFP to expand existing market linkage programmes that connect farmers with local markets and provide training for them for agriculture production, business management and use of digital platforms. This will likely involve increasing linkages and coherence with other WFP strategies, programmes, as well as other agencies operating in same markets/areas to devise contextually relevant partnerships/plans focused on household and market resilience. Continue to build positive relations with the local authorities and communities to identify pathways for unified intervention strategies that ensure the sustainability and resilience of MDAs after shocks or through contextual constraints. Good relations and communication with government representatives will also enable discussions on the value and impacts of MDAs and the importance of functional markets so that they are on board for supporting and continuing with MDAs moving forward. Consider women's market participation and economic empowerment in the design of any such programme.
- Enhance community feedback mechanisms surrounding MDAs. Ensure that beneficiary communities are consulted on contingency plans, their specific feedback on facilitating market and household resilience clearly summarized, and subsequent plans effectively communicated back.

Be more intentional and clearer on the means for mainstreaming gender and inclusion considerations

- In-depth needs assessments and gender analyses focusing on market systems and supply chains should be conducted at the design phase of MDAs and better integrated into market systems analyses and other tools and guidance to ensure that the appropriate measures are in place to assess and address the needs of all intended beneficiaries. Collaborating with local women's organizations and community groups can aid in assessing, crafting and implementing measures to improve the inclusivity of supply chains and market systems. In addition, consulting with internal gender experts to ensure all tools and guidance are gender responsive.
- Informed by above-mentioned gender analyses on market systems and supply chains, integrate culturally-relevant strategies for promoting women's participation and economic empowerment as part of MDAs. For example, discuss and assess risks and opportunities with retailers for requiring some store managers to be females, assess benefits and challenges faced by both female and volunteers to understand possible differences in experiences and outcomes, provide additional training to female volunteers and informal retailers to advance entrepreneurial skills and financial literacy. Once strategies are devised, ensure clear indicators for monitoring progress and results on gender equality are devised.
- Ensure that partnerships established with other external and internal agencies / institutions, including retailers, prioritize gender equality.

Annex 1. Data Collection: Planned and Actual

QuIP Data Collection							KII
Catchment	FGD Farmers	FGD Beneficiaries	Beneficiaries Survey	Small Traders (Beneficiaries)	Retailers	Retailers (planned)	KIIS
A	1		10	1	4	3	1
B	1	2	9	1	4	3	4
C	1		5	1		3	1
D	1	2	5	1	0	3	5
Total Completed	4	4	29	4*	8**		11
Planned	4	4	28	5	12		

*Small traders were interviewed with the retailer survey (more detailed) to capture differences in shop management/profits etc. with the contracted retailers

**Adjustments were made to the number retailers interviewed in each catchment as 4 retailers contracted during the study period were no longer under contract as of the end of 2022 and therefore not present in the camp at the time of data collection

Annex 2. Fieldwork Schedule

Sl#	Date	Day	Activity	With Whom	Where (District)	Specific Location	Conducted By	Coordinated By
1	17.07.2023	Monday	Training of Enumerators	Enumerators and Research Assistants	Cox's Bazar	TBD (At a suitable Place at Ukhia)	Imrul Kayes	Imrul Kayes
			Consultation Meeting: WFP Field Office	WFP FO		WFP FO Cox's Bazar	Imrul Kayes	Imrul Kayes
2	18.07.2023	Tuesday	Training for Enumerators	Enumerators and Research Assistants	Cox's Bazar	TBD (At a suitable Place at Ukhia)	Imrul Kayes	Imrul Kayes
			Mock Practice With Each Other and test data collection tools	Enumerators and Research Assistants	Cox's Bazar	TBD (At a suitable Place at Ukhia)	Imrul Kayes	Imrul Kayes
3	19.07.2023	Wednesday	Interview with Beneficiaries	4 Beneficiaries (Vouchers as only income)	Cox's Bazar	Catchment-A: Lambashia Camp 1-E, Modhurchara 2, Modhurchara Camp 4, D-5 (Camp-2W), Kutupalong Makeshift (KMS), KRS (registered refugees)	Enumerator-1, 2, 3 & 4	Imrul Kayes
			Interview with Contracted Retailers	2 Contracted Retailers			Enumerator- 5 & 6	Imrul Kayes
			Interview with Small Trader	1 Small Traders			Enumerator- 1	Imrul Kayes
4	20.07.2023	Thursday	Interview with Beneficiaries	5 Beneficiaries (3 Volunteers; 2 vouchers only)	Cox's Bazar		Enumerator- 2,3,4, 5 & 6	Imrul Kayes
			Interview with Contracted Retailers	1 Contracted Retailers			Enumerator- 1	Imrul Kayes

			Focus Group with Farmers	1 FGD with at least 5 farmers (confirmed with CO)			Enumerator 2 & 5	Imrul Kayes
			Interview with Small Trader	1 Small Traders			Enumerator- 3	Imrul Kayes
5	23.07.2023	Sunday	Interview with Beneficiaries	4 Beneficiaries (Vouchers as only income)	Cox's Bazar	Catchment-B: TV Tower (Camp-7), 8W, Balukhali Makeshift (BMS), Camp 17, Mainnerghona	Enumerator- 1, 4,5 & 6	Imrul Kayes
			Interview with Contracted Retailers	2 Contracted Retailers			Enumerator- 2 & 3	Imrul Kayes
			Interview with Small Trader	1 Small Traders			Enumerator- 6	Imrul Kayes
			FGD with Beneficiaries	Primary Consumers (Male)			Enumerator- 5 & 6	Imrul Kayes
6	24.07.2023	Monday	Interview with Beneficiaries	5 Beneficiaries (3 Volunteers; 2 vouchers only)	Cox's Bazar		Enumerator- 1, 3,4, 5 & 6	Imrul Kayes
			Interview with Contracted Retailers	1 Contracted Retailers			Enumerator- 2	Imrul Kayes
			Focus Group with Farmers	1 FGD with at least 5 farmers (confirmed with CO)			Enumerator 3 & 6	Imrul Kayes
			FGD with Beneficiaries	Primary Consumers (Female)			Enumerators 1 & 4	Imrul Kayes
7	25.07.2023	Tuesday	Interview with Beneficiaries	2 Beneficiaries (Vouchers as only income)	Cox's Bazar	Catchment-C: Burmapara (Camp-13), Hakim Para (Camp-14), Jamtoli (Camp-15), 20 Extension	Enumerator- 1, 2	Imrul Kayes
			Interview with Contracted Retailers	2 Contracted Retailers			Enumerator- 3, 4	Imrul Kayes
			Focus Group with Farmers	1 FGD with at least 5 farmers (confirmed with CO)			Enumerator 2 & 3	Imrul Kayes

			Interview with Contracted Retailers	1 Contracted Retailers			Enumerator- 4	Imrul Kayes
			Interview with Small Trader	1 Small Trader			Enumerator- 5	Imrul Kayes
8	26.07.2023	Wednesday	Interview with Beneficiaries	3 Beneficiaries (1 Volunteer; 2 vouchers only)	Cox's Bazar	Catchment-D: Chakmarkul (Camp-21), Unchiprang (Camp-22), Leda Makeshift (LMS), Jadimura (Camp-26), Mochoni, NRC (Registered Refugees)	Enumerator- 2, 3 & 5	Imrul Kayes
			Interview with Beneficiaries	2 Beneficiaries (Vouchers as only income)	Cox's Bazar		Enumerator- 2 & 3	Imrul Kayes
			FGD with Beneficiaries (Volunteers)	Primary Consumers (Male)			Enumerator 4 & 5	Imrul Kayes
			Interview with Contracted Traders	2 Contracted Retailers			Enumerator- 1 & 4	Imrul Kayes
9	27.07.2023	Thursday	Interview with Beneficiaries	3 Beneficiaries (1 Volunteer; 2 vouchers only)	Cox's Bazar		Enumerator- 4 & 5	Imrul Kayes
			Interview with Contracted Traders	1 Contracted Retailers			Enumerator- 2	Imrul Kayes
			Focus Group with Farmers	1 FGD with at least 5 farmers (confirmed with CO)			Enumerator 2 & 3	Imrul Kayes
			Interview with Small Trader	1 Small Trader			Enumerator- 1	Imrul Kayes
			FGD with Beneficiaries (Volunteers)	Primary Consumers (Female)			Enumerator- 1 & 4	Imrul Kayes

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