



# Mid-Term Evaluation of WFP Strategic Plan 2022-2025

## CONTEXT

The implementation period for the WFP Strategic Plan 2022-2025 has been characterized by increased economic pressures arising from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, prolonged conflicts and extreme weather events. In 2024, nearly 300 million people require humanitarian assistance and protection. The ongoing reform of the United Nations Development System has also influenced WFP's ways of working, at all levels.

## EVALUATION SCOPE AND PURPOSE

This mid-term evaluation covered the first two years of its implementation. It focused on assessing its relevance and utility to strategically steer the organization, as well as the extent to which WFP is institutionally equipped to deliver on the plan's ambitions.

The key objective of the evaluation was to inform management decisions on implementation and future programming. In particular, it was timed to inform the design of the next strategic plan that will be presented to the WFP Executive Board for approval in June 2025.

## KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

### Relevance and strategic focus

The evaluation found that the Strategic Plan was well aligned with the SDGs and with other relevant normative frameworks including those related to strengthening of the United Nations system. Building on its predecessor (2017-2021), the plan introduced some important shifts, such as greater integration of the Changing Lives and Saving Lives agenda, adopting an incremental rather than step-change approach that allowed for continuity and consolidation of ongoing initiatives.

The Strategic Plan helped clarify WFP's ambitions in the Saving Lives and Changing Lives agenda, but was less helpful for prioritizing interventions at the country level,

inadvertently encouraging proliferation of activities with limited internal coherence. This gap in strategic direction increased the risk of stretching WFP too thinly and rendering the organisation more reactive to funding opportunities than being strategically driven.

### Policy architecture and guidance to support implementation

WFP policy framework and related guidance are aligned to the Strategic Plan and largely provide the tools to implement it through Country Strategic Plans, but they have not helped clarify organizational priorities. The volume and complexity of current policies, strategies and guidance are difficult for users (especially country offices) to absorb. There is a demand for simplified, consolidated and more practical guidance. There are signs that this is being recognised in more recent policy formulation.

### Evidence-based integrated programming

There has been progress towards more integrated programme design but insufficient organizational support to operationalizing integration on the ground. There is tension between integration efforts and WFP's budget structure, line of sight requirements and corresponding management structure

Under the Strategic Plan there has been growing emphasis on the use of evidence for accountability and learning. Resources for gathering evidence have, however, been heavily weighted towards monitoring for ostensibly aggregable reporting based on corporate requirements that have become increasingly cumbersome. However, knowledge management remains a weakness, with evidence insufficiently linked to decision-making, including for scaling up innovations.

## Institutional mechanisms supporting implementation

The implementation of the Strategic Plan has been supported by several mechanisms and processes aiming to improve WFP ability to do the right thing at the right time, but the agility of the budget revision process remains a challenge. Complementarity in the division of labour between headquarters and regional bureaux to support country offices for programme design and implementation has been less than optimal and the organization is now reconsidering the remit and responsibilities between headquarters and regional bureaux.

## Human and financial resources

WFP has made progress towards the Strategic Plan's ambition on adequate human resources as one of the necessary conditions for successful implementation. However, some gaps remain, including insufficient staffing in some areas or a mismatch between staff profiles and the Strategic Plan ambitions.

The expansion in staffing and the relative increase in fixed term contracts has contributed to expanding WFP's operational capacity and to attracting and retaining talent. However, considering the current funding landscape, it has also left the organization with an unsustainable level of core operating costs. Relatedly, the evaluation notes that while ambitions on the funding landscape were realistic when the Strategic Plan was adopted, contribution levels rose far above WFP's expectations in 2021 and 2022, reaching, respectively, USD 9.6 billion and USD 14.2 billion, but dropped back to USD 8.3 billion in 2023 (WFP. 2024. [Annual performance report for 2023](#)).

To address the funding decline (compared to 2021 and 2022), significant cuts in staffing are being made, but with insufficient strategic guidance and inadequate internal communication, creating the risk of losing important technical skills and having negative effects on staff morale and motivation.

Overall, WFP has made progress in diversifying its funding sources, notably with international financial institutions (IFIs), but remains heavily dependent on earmarked, short-term funding from bilateral donors, hampering its medium-term integrated programming and its flexibility and responsiveness in programme implementation.

## Strategic positioning and external coherence

Partnerships with governments, the private sector and IFIs have been strengthened during the period, and WFP's global comparative advantages in emergency response are widely acknowledged. However, the organization's comparative advantages in specific thematic areas and environments are less clear, and this has negative effects on its strategic positioning in the Changing Lives agenda. Operational coordination with other UN entities remains challenging and the relationship with civil society and cooperating partners mainly transactional. Overall, WFP's

partnering approach is largely focused on mobilizing resources for the organization, with relatively limited emphasis on strategic partnerships that could enhance the complementarity and effectiveness of interventions.

## Progress towards strategic plan targets

Based on available performance data (2023), the evaluation notes that WFP largely reached or exceeded its beneficiaries' targets, but too often at the cost of reducing rations and/or the duration of assistance, which inevitably has consequences on food security and nutritional outcomes.

There has been good progress across all management results, except for funding and evidence and learning where only half, or less, of the targets were met. On the other hand, expenditure targets were almost met or exceeded, reflecting the limited correlation between expenditure and performance as measured by WFP's internal performance management systems.

## RECOMMENDATION

### Recommendation 1

The next strategic plan should clearly set out WFP's strategic vision for the future. It should reaffirm the centrality of humanitarian assistance, building resilience and addressing the root causes of food insecurity as the heart of WFP's mission and mandate, and clearly define the organization's comparative advantages.

### Recommendation 2

To operationalize the strategic vision, provide a more sharply defined programme framework, leaving flexibility for adaptation to changing circumstances on the ground.

### Recommendation 3

Ensure that WFP's processes, systems and incentives for management and staff provide the agility and responsiveness required to make the organization an effective player in increasingly complex and dynamic settings.

### Recommendation 4

WFP should strengthen its efforts to secure predictable and flexible funding by engaging in a structured dialogue on funding with Member States and documenting and reporting good practices and challenges in multi-year programming.