



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP EVALUATION

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

Country capacity strengthening

Capacity strengthening has long been part of the World Food Programme's (WFP's) approach to ending hunger in support of the Millennium Development Goals and the SDGs.¹ The current strategic plan (2022-2025)² emphasizes Country Capacity Strengthening (CCS) with a dedicated strategic outcome on "National programmes and systems are strengthened" (SO 4). The outcome links to SDG 17 ("Partnerships for the Goals"), which contributes to the ability of countries to achieve SDG 2 ("Zero Hunger") along with the other SDGs.

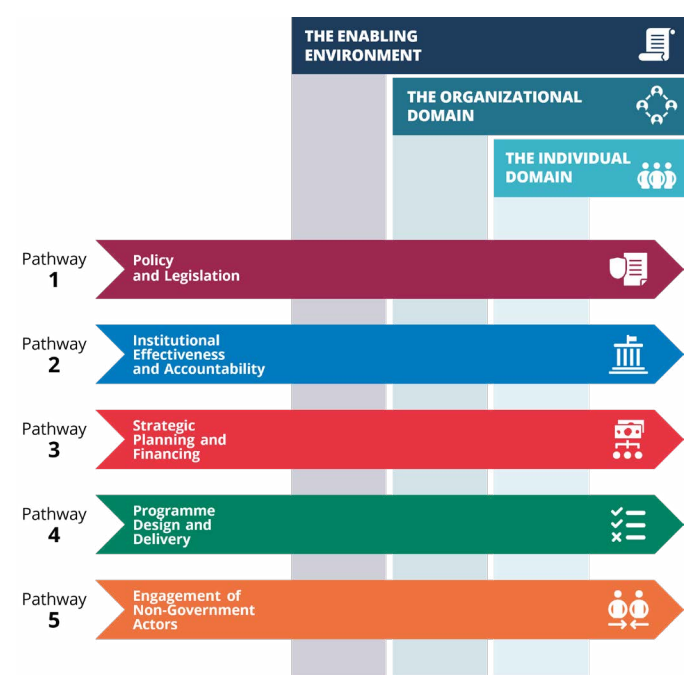
WFP established a corporate CCS framework in 2017³, recognizing that food security and development objectives depend on the transformative capacities of individuals, organizations, and societies. The framework promotes a holistic and systematic approach to supporting national systems and services with CCS, engaging a range of actors across society.

The CCS Policy Update on Country Capacity Strengthening (2022)⁴ integrates these elements into a comprehensive reference document, detailing definitions, objectives, approaches, and actors.

It defines CCS as *activities structured around engagement with national and subnational stakeholder institutions and organizations with the intention of improving the sustainable functioning of systems and programmes that support populations with regard to their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs.*

WFP takes a systemic view of local and national capacities for CCS, identifying complementarities and interdependencies across five different pathways to foster transformative capacity change. Within each of the five pathways, capacity change can occur through interventions in the individual, organizational or enabling environment domain.

Figure 1: WFP's 5 Pathways and 3 Domains for CCS



Commissioned by the Country Capacity Strengthening Cell of the Programme, Policy & Guidance Division

8 KEY FINDINGS

1 WFP's main contributions to strengthening the capacities of state and non-state actors across the five CCS Pathways

■ PATHWAY 1

Most of the evaluations reviewed report that WFP has made contributions to policy and legislation in areas such as school feeding, nutrition, social protection, and disaster management. WFP's efforts included providing technical assistance for development of new policies and laws, advocating to raise interest on policy issues, generating evidence to inform policymaking, and facilitating policy dialogue. For instance, in nutrition, WFP has advocated for the adoption of iron-fortified rice policies and generated evidence to inform policy development in several countries through studies such as Fill the Nutrient Gap. Some evaluations reported that adoption and implementation of policies sometimes faced delays due to limited funding, political issues, or capacity constraints.

■ PATHWAY 2

Nearly all evaluations described WFP interventions to improve institutional effectiveness and accountability, with work especially prominent in social protection, followed by food security monitoring, disaster preparedness, supply chain management, and school feeding. Evaluations highlight WFP interventions to increase social protection system efficiencies by digitalizing beneficiary targeting and payment delivery. WFP also promoted use of digital tools, software and technology to improve transparency and food security monitoring, and strengthened food tracking systems, warehouse management, and logistics infrastructure. In Egypt, WFP's geospatial platform for supply chain monitoring, especially for wheat, became a key asset for the government. In school feeding programmes WFP digitized monitoring to assess schools' adherence to national standards in Colombia and to plan more cost-efficient nutritious meals in Bhutan.

■ PATHWAY 3

Most evaluations provided evidence of WFP contributions to improving strategic planning and strengthening technical capacity for local and national budgeting. WFP supported governments in developing emergency funding plans, advised on formulating relevant laws and policies to enable government financing of programmes, and conducted training for national and sub-national government staff in local food procurement and funds allocation. Additionally, WFP provided technical assistance for budgeting and cost-saving measures, as seen in Cambodia and Laos. Despite progress, WFP recognizes the need for innovative solutions to support national stakeholders in diversifying funding sources and of further aligning its activities, for instance linked to local food procurement and community contributions, with government systems and available resources.

■ PATHWAY 4

WFP's contributions to strengthening capacities in programme design and delivery are evident across most evaluations. WFP has enhanced national school feeding programmes by training school staff on meal preparation, supporting development of operational guidelines and standards for procurement and logistics processes, and providing guidance to government on management and monitoring of school meals. Evaluations reported challenges related to the home-grown school feeding model, including complex bidding processes, lack of credit for suppliers, and restrictive district-level procurement regulations, emphasizing the need for a more systematic approach to engaging smallholder farmers and integrating them into school procurement and other value chains. In nutrition, WFP supported governments to design and deliver communication to improve nutrition practices and increase awareness on healthy diets and developed training modules and technical guidance to improve malnutrition management. Additionally, WFP strengthened national disaster management authorities' capacities in early warning and contingency planning and supported relevant ministries in establishing food security and nutrition monitoring systems in Ghana, Sudan, Zambia and the Philippines.

■ PATHWAY 5

WFP has expanded its collaboration with non-governmental stakeholders, reaching diverse segments of society through capacity strengthening to achieve more sustainable impact. WFP has sensitized and worked with the private sector on production of fortified foods to advance nutrition. WFP has also supported local communities' capacities in emergency preparedness and their active engagement and ownership of school feeding programmes. Studies on nutrition, food security and agricultural technology conducted in collaboration with academic institutions have informed national policies and programmes. WFP also partnered with civil society organizations (CSO) to enhance local capacity in areas such as digital systems, nutrition advocacy, and access to funding. However, several evaluations noted CSO engagement was often limited to implementation roles, and that more effort could be made to consult with these entities given their deep knowledge of local context and culture.

2 Commitment to localization⁵ and investments in the institutional capacities of local authorities

- **Several evaluations noted WFP's collaboration with sub-national authorities and local stakeholders contributed to positive CCS results.** This was achieved by providing on-site training, conducting joint assessments, seconding staff to local offices, supporting decentralized planning processes, facilitating integrated approaches across institutional boundaries and fostering local ownership of interventions. Collaborations at sub-national level notably strengthened disaster management systems to ensure a timely response when localized emergencies strike.
- **Evaluations highlighted the need for greater local engagement to enhance sustainability,** through better integration of programmes into national frameworks, and strengthening local actors' capacity to drive tailored community interventions. Further, decentralization processes sometimes posed challenges to CCS work, as limited resources and, tools and unclear mandates for local authorities may have led to differing priorities and insufficient coordination across central and sub-national levels of government.

3 WFP contributions to sustainable capacities in the enabling environment, organizational, and individual domains

- **Enabling environment:** the sustainability of WFP's contributions to strengthening country capacities in the enabling environment domain is evidenced by establishing effective coordination mechanisms, and integrating the private sector into supply and value chains, all favoured through long-term CCS engagement with national stakeholders. In Namibia WFP's interventions have contributed to expanding the national school feeding programme over three decades and institutionalizing it within government structures and budgets, while in Bhutan, WFP's agriculture activities were implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests and integrated successfully within national, district, and sub-district institutional structures. Additionally, WFP fostered long-term partnerships with private food manufacturers in Zambia, Pakistan, Ghana, and India to scale production of nutritious foods and create sustainable market demand benefiting smallholder farmers.
- **Organizational level:** WFP has strengthened government capacities for food security analyses and vulnerability assessments in Sudan, Mozambique, Namibia, Ghana, Cambodia and Zambia, leading to increased autonomy in these functions. Additionally, WFP has reinforced capacities of government organizations in shock-responsive social protection across regions, enhancing their ability to prepare and respond to small-scale emergencies, expand social protection coverage, and integrate climate and disaster risk considerations. While these improvements show promise, evaluations in Jordan and Tajikistan note that continued technical support may be needed to sustain advances. With WFP support several school feeding programmes have successfully transitioned to government management, but challenges such as financial limitations to sustain activities and gaps in technical skills are common.

- **Individual level:** WFP's capacity strengthening efforts at the individual level have led to significant skills acquisition, with participants in Lesotho, Pakistan, Zambia, Sudan, and Cambodia reporting high application of new knowledge in their work. However, almost half of the evaluations reviewed cite challenges in ensuring skills retention and application due to quality and duration of training, turnover among CCS activity participants, and the limited support and resources dedicated to sustaining capacities beyond the intervention.

4 Coherence between WFP's corporate CCS framework and programming/ CSP structures

- **Half of the evaluations reviewed highlight that country offices have successfully integrated and adapted the CCS framework into their programming, demonstrating its relevance and adaptability across diverse contexts.** However, evidence suggests there is room to further harmonize and strengthen this approach and its related guidance, with some country offices that have approached CCS in an ad hoc, opportunistic manner, lacking a consolidated strategic position and coherence across interventions.
- **The country strategic plan process has increased focus on CCS and its alignment with national needs and priorities.** Evaluations provided evidence of a shift towards greater emphasis on CCS in WFP's work at country level, aligning with WFP's corporate policies and strategic plans, which have increasingly prioritized CCS as a key approach. The country strategic plan process, particularly the Zero Hunger Strategic Reviews, has facilitated better alignment of WFP's CCS efforts with national priorities and policies.
- **Evaluations provided mixed perspectives on optimal placement of CCS in country strategic plans, highlighting cases of team fragmentation, limited coherence and synergy both when CCS was confined under a standalone strategic outcome or integrated under multiple outcomes.** In Kenya, the evaluation noted that the distribution of CCS responsibilities across several strategic outcomes "created management and monitoring challenges that may have diluted potential country capacity strengthening impact". Meanwhile, the Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Country Strategic Plans (2023) observed that the line-of-sight structure, including placement of CCS under a standalone outcome, resulted in siloing and interfered with integration and programme linkages.
- **Several evaluations reported country office challenges in securing dedicated funding for CCS activities, emphasizing the need for stronger strategic articulation of CCS within country strategic plans, coupled with enhanced visibility and stronger advocacy.** In Tajikistan, a separate CCS outcome failed to attract sufficient resources due to limited donor and government understanding of WFP's capacity-strengthening role. In Guinea, the evaluation recommended securing flexible funding dedicated solely to CCS and untied to specific programmes.

5 Internal and external factors contributing to CCS programming effectiveness

- **Partnerships and collaborations were amongst the internal factors reported to have supported successful CCS.** Evaluations also highlighted that technical expertise and appropriate seniority of WFP staff also played a critical role in engaging with government counterparts and influencing national policy and programming effectively.
- **WFP's adaptability and flexibility** allowed it to respond to unforeseen challenges like COVID-19, combining technical assistance with humanitarian response.
- **External factors contributing to successful CCS programming results included government ownership and leadership, supported by political commitment to SDG 2.** This has been evidenced particularly in shock-responsive social protection and school feeding programmes.
- Enabling policy environments, **non-earmarked funding, and political stability** further facilitated positive CCS outcomes.
- **The presence of stable, highly engaged governments at both national and sub-national levels facilitated positive CCS outcomes.** Such contexts led to more accurate needs assessments, comprehensive CCS strategies, and smoother transition of WFP programmes to national ownership, as seen in India, the Philippines, Bhutan, Namibia, Dominican Republic, and Ghana.
- **Investments in innovative solutions enhanced CCS effectiveness and efficiency,** such as a blockchain traceability platform for smallholder farmers in Jordan, which enabled them to track and improve produce value, and increase their income.

6 Internal and external factors hindering CCS programming effectiveness

- **Limitations in monitoring and evaluation were identified in nearly all reviewed evaluations as a key internal factor hindering demonstration of CCS programme results.** Monitoring tends to focus on process (what has been done) and quantitative outputs (number of people reached), which limits insights into the longer-term effectiveness of WFP CCS interventions. Other challenges include the insufficient use of data collected to inform programmatic decisions and strategies, inadequate information management systems, and the lack of baseline information.
- **High turnover of WFP staff, heavy workloads, insufficient capacity to advocate for donor funding, limited use of capacity needs assessments to inform CCS programming, and occasional misalignment with government priorities** were recurring internal challenges identified by evaluations, all of which impeded WFP's ability to effectively engage in CCS programming.

- **Amongst external factors, limited government capacity,** especially at sub-national levels, is reported as hindering absorption and use of WFP CCS support, compounded by high government turnover and insufficient resources.
- **Recurring crises frequently redirected resources and interrupted long-term CCS progress;** first of which, the COVID-19 pandemic that caused delays, shifted priorities, and led to the adoption of online training modalities, which impacted the effectiveness of CCS interventions.
- **Recognition of WFP's humanitarian role can pose challenges to secure funding** for CCS activities.

7 Strengths of WFP in implementing CCS

- **Reported comparative advantages of WFP in CCS include its expertise in advocating for and strengthening social protection systems, implementing school feeding programmes at scale, and conducting data analysis, mapping and information management.** In Jordan, WFP demonstrated its comparative advantage in leading capacity strengthening interventions for national stakeholders on operational aspects of social transfer delivery, resulting in valuable synergies between refugee responses and national systems.

8 WFP's mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment, disability and inclusion and protection and accountability to affected populations through CCS

- **WFP supported gender mainstreaming through capacity strengthening, advocacy, and analysis across various countries.** Efforts include gender analyses in government programmes, sensitization and training in line ministries, promoting women's leadership in management committees, and developing tools to improve compliance with gender policies and good practices amongst governments and cooperating partners. WFP is also collaborating with UN agencies and gender-focused organizations on gender capacity strengthening initiatives.
- **There was limited evidence of disability inclusion in CCS, with most evaluations reporting a lack of systematic consideration and only a few noting inclusion in needs assessments or targeting strategies.** Challenges were also raised on coherence between WFP and government systems and policies on inclusion.
- **WFP strengthened governments' capacity to integrate protection into social assistance policies and programmes** through assessments, dialogues, and strategy development, focusing on inclusive targeting, minority consultations, human rights awareness, and indigenous language adaptations in Nicaragua.
- **Despite examples of progress, evaluations highlight evidence limitations and inconsistent integration of gender, inclusion and protection considerations into CCS activities and outcomes.**

REGIONAL INSIGHTS ON CCS ACTIVITIES



In **Latin America and the Caribbean**, findings from the evaluations reviewed note that policy changes, especially in shock-responsive social protection, have been strongly institutionalized across several countries. Additionally, WFP has focused on strengthening integration of digital

systems, particularly in social protection and emergency preparedness, but political changes and staff rotation in partner institutions have limited consistent application of technical capacities. In programme design and delivery, WFP has successfully adapted its CCS interventions to local demand through flexible design and community-based approaches, with evidence of knowledge and skills developed through training being effectively applied by local actors, especially in terms of targeting and assessments.



In **Eastern Africa**, evaluations report that WFP has influenced development of policies and laws but also experienced difficulties in supporting their adoption and operationalization, due to delays in government processes, resource limitations, and political

turbulence and uncertainty. WFP efforts to improve the effectiveness of government institutions have focused on development of new social protection data management systems and registries, and food security and nutrition surveillance systems. However high government staff turnover and limited resources prevent consistent implementation of new systems.



In **Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe**, evaluations emphasize that WFP's efforts to enhance digitalization of national social protection systems have been affected by gaps in the capacity of national stakeholders to independently manage new digital solutions.

While strong progress has been made in transitioning school feeding programmes to national ownership, government resource limitations remain a challenge. Evaluations in the region also observed structured approaches to WFP's engagement with the private sector, leveraging formal networks, such as large-scale retailer engagement and innovative partnerships with local food distributors.



In **Western Africa**, evaluations note that policy development and operationalization have been constrained by sociopolitical instability and low government prioritization. WFP training packages have led to strong initial knowledge acquisition but have commonly

faced sustainability challenges, particularly in government institutions where staff turnover and limited resources for applying learned skills undermine programme implementation.



In **Asia and the Pacific**, WFP's support on policy and legislation has strongly focused on school feeding and food fortification. While WFP has contributed to establishing comprehensive national policy frameworks, visible challenges remain in their implementation.

WFP has also contributed to important advancements in national digital systems, supporting integration of platforms across disaster management, school feeding, and beneficiary management.



In **Southern Africa**, WFP has strengthened data systems and coordination mechanisms, particularly in social protection and food security monitoring. In terms of engagement with non-state actors, evaluations in the region highlight WFP's focus on local

agricultural value chains, including partnerships with breweries and sorghum schemes and support for community food processors.

BREADTH OF EVIDENCE

This SEE brings together evidence from 47 WFP-commissioned independent evaluations, which cover the period 2022-2024 and were rated 'satisfactory' or above by WFP's external Post-hoc Quality Assessment (PHQA).

It takes stock of WFP's contributions to strengthening national and sub-national capacities across the five pathways and three domains of the CCS framework, factors influencing these contributions, and coherence of WFP's CCS approach with country strategic planning processes. It also examines the cross-cutting themes of gender, disability and inclusion, protection, and accountability to affected population, as well as

CCS programming by WFP regional bureaus, while acknowledging that the evidence base varies by region, with some regions being overrepresented, limiting the generalizability of cross-regional comparisons.

The summary has global coverage, including 29 country strategic plan evaluations, 15 decentralized evaluations, one strategic evaluation and two policy evaluations. Evidence was systematically extracted from the evaluations using an analytical framework reflecting key areas of interest identified at the framing stage. Evidence was analysed and clustered around the main focus areas with key patterns and findings identified.



The designations employed and the presentation of material in the map does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever of WFP concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory or sea area, or concerning the delimitation of frontiers.

ENDNOTES

1 "WFP Strategic Plan (2004-2007)" (WFP/ EB/3/2003/4-A/1); "WFP Strategic Plan (2008- 2011)" (WFP/EB.A/2008/5 A/1/Rev.1) (extended to 2013); "WFP Strategic Plan (2014-2017)" (WFP/ EB.A/2013/5-A/1); "WFP Strategic Plan (2017-2021)" (WFP/ EB.2/2016/4-A/1/Rev.2).

2 WFP strategic plan (2022-2025), WFP/EB.2/2021/4-A/1/Rev.2

3 World Food Programme, "WFP's Strategic Framework for Country Capacity Strengthening." 2017.

4 World Food Programme, "Country Capacity Strengthening (CCS) Policy Update." June 2022.

5 WFP is in the process of developing a localization policy, scheduled to be presented later this year to WFP's Executive Board.

ANNEX ■ LIST OF EVALUATIONS CONSULTED

- [Philippines, Country Capacity Strengthening Activities 2018-2022: Thematic Evaluation](#)
- [Evaluation of WFP's support to smallholder farmers and its expanded portfolio across the agriculture value chain \(2019-2021\) in Bhutan](#)
- [Evaluation of Humanitarian Response Facilities Network in Pakistan from January 2014 to September 2020](#)
- [End-Line Evaluation of USDA McGovern-Dole Grant for WFP School Feeding in Laos from 2017 to 2022](#)
- [Midterm Activity Evaluation of USDA Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement Grant WFP School Feeding in Cambodia](#)
- [Endline Activity Evaluation of USDA McGovern-Dole Grant \(FFE-442-2019-013-00\) for WFP School Feeding in Cambodia, 2019-2023](#)
- [Midterm Activity Evaluation of the KOICA supported Home Grown School Feeding Programme in Cambodia 2020 - 2024](#)
- [Endline Evaluation of USDA McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Programme in Nepal, 2020-2024](#)
- [Evaluation of capacity strengthening activities to government and local communities in Sao Tome and Principe from July 2019 to December 2022](#)
- [Évaluation décentralisée conjointe finale du Programme National d'Alimentation Scolaire Intégré \(PNASI\) au Bénin - 2017 à 2021](#)
- [Thematic Evaluation of Institutional Capacity Strengthening Activities in Guinea, 2021](#)
- [Regional Evaluation of WFP's contribution to Shock-Responsive Social Protection in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023](#)
- [Evaluación Final del Proyecto School Feeding Response Activity 2019 -2021- Colombia desde 2018 hasta 2021](#)
- [Evaluación descentralizada de la contribución del WFP en fortalecimiento de capacidades en Nicaragua de 2019 a 2023](#)
- [Thematic Evaluation of WFP's Country Capacity Strengthening Activities in Lesotho 2019-2023](#)
- [Strategic Evaluation of WFP's work on Nutrition and HIV/AIDS, 2023](#)
- [Evaluation of WFP's Disaster Risk Reduction and Management and Climate Change Policies, 2023](#)
- [Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Country Strategic Plans, 2023](#)
- [Evaluation of Kyrgyz Republic WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018-2022](#)
- [Evaluation of Pakistan WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018-2022](#)
- [Evaluation of Tajikistan WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2024](#)
- [Evaluation of Bhutan WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of Zambia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of Mozambique WFP Country Strategic Plan 2017-2021](#)
- [Evaluation of Malawi WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of Madagascar WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of Namibia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2017-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of Jordan WFP Country Strategic Plan 2020-2022](#)
- [Evaluation of Egypt WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of India WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of Sri Lanka WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018-2022](#)
- [Evaluation of the Philippines WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of Nepal WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of Cambodia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of Kenya WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of Sudan WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of Nigeria WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2022](#)
- [Evaluation of Ghana WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023](#)
- [Évaluation du Plan Stratégique de Pays du PAM pour le Bénin 2019-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of Senegal WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023](#)
- [Évaluation du Plan Stratégique de Pays du PAM Burkina Faso 2019-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of Mauritania WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023](#)
- [Évaluation du Plan Stratégique de Pays du PAM pour Haïti 2018-2022](#)
- [Evaluation of Dominican Republic WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023](#)
- [Evaluación del Plan Estratégico para el Perú \(2018-2022\)](#)
- [Evaluación del Plan Estratégico para el Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia \(2018-2022\)](#)
- [Evaluación del Plan Estratégico para el Ecuador \(2017-2021\)](#)


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 wfp.org/independent-evaluation

 wfp.evaluation@wfp.org

 @WFP_Evaluation

 Via Cesare Giulio Viola 68/70, 00148 Rome, Italy

 T +39 06 65131

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