



## WFP EVALUATION

# SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

## WFP's emergency response

As WFP's Emergency Preparedness and Response Service prepared to review its humanitarian policy agenda and normative efforts to advance the quality of WFP's emergency response, it sought to take stock of key messages generated by evaluations regarding the design, implementation, and outcomes of its global emergency responses, including its efforts to transition out of emergency programming.

WFP defines emergencies broadly as *"urgent situations in which there is clear evidence that an event or series of events has occurred which causes human suffering or imminently threatens human lives or livelihoods and which the government concerned has not the means to remedy; and it is a demonstrably abnormal event or series of events which produces dislocation in the life of a community on an exceptional scale."*\*

There are no clear criteria within WFP for what constitutes emergency response compared to transition programming; and WFP's dual mandate focused on 'changing lives while saving lives' has further blurred this distinction. WFP recognizes the increasingly protracted nature of crises, requiring strong contextual analysis and a multilayered response and its humanitarian work is closely connected to its "transition programming".

\* 'Definition of Emergencies', WFP/EB.1/2005/4-A/Rev.1.

## 4 KEY MESSAGES

**1 Design and relevance.** WFP's emergency response is generally relevant, and well-coordinated at strategic level with national plans and other UN humanitarian actors. Furthermore, WFP is recognized for its organisational agility and flexibility in adapting programmes in response to contextual changes.

However, response is not typically designed in consultation with crisis-affected people. Evaluations often highlight the lack of tailored responses to beneficiaries' specific needs as a limitation in effectively addressing food and nutrition requirements.

Integration of cross-cutting priorities is improving, particularly concerning gender mainstreaming, although gaps in knowledge of intra-family dynamics may be a particular barrier to enhancing women empowerment. Community feedback mechanisms (CFM) are often in place but not well-known or easily accessible to the diverse communities that need them. In addition, insufficient resources are dedicated to partner protection capacities.

**2 Performance in emergency response.** WFP's geographical targeting is generally strong, though its ability to prioritize the most vulnerable is constrained by poor data quality. A lack of consensus between WFP and other actors over targeting, reliance on government systems where data is not sufficiently available and/or updated, and lags in key targeting processes contribute to data quality issues. Community-level involvement is inconsistent resulting in negative outcomes in some cases.

Emergency responses often fall short of coverage targets and outcome-level objectives due to a range of factors, many external to WFP. Available data is not sufficient to fully analyse the causes for this. Evaluations are generally positive about general food assistance as a buffer against deteriorating food insecurity, particularly praising the provision of Common Services for their contribution to strengthening the effectiveness of emergency responses.

**3 Efficient delivery of emergency response.** Although measurement is not consistent, evaluations show that WFP has achieved cost-efficiencies in various ways. The most commonly cited factors include the switch from in-kind assistance to cash-based transfers or vouchers, WFP's capacity to deliver at scale, and its long-term experience in managing emergency operations. However, the timeliness of response is consistently and adversely affected by external challenges such as insecurity, weather, COVID-19 or supply chain disruptions, highlighting the complexities of the operating environment of its emergency responses.

**4 Coordination.** While the strategic coherence of WFP's humanitarian action with its partners is often found appropriate, actual coordination with government entities or with the broader humanitarian system at an operational level, tends to be qualified as "weak". WFP's leadership of the clusters is generally considered to play an important support role for humanitarian response, although some evaluations point to the untapped potential in influencing this fully. Limited evidence on WFP's role in cluster coordination limits deeper analysis.



## ENABLERS



**Institutional readiness** is primarily identified as an enabler, with advance financing and prepositioning mechanisms highlighted as central features of corporate support for the delivery of emergency response.



**Cooperating partners** are a key enabler of coverage and offer specialized technical advice. However, partners can lack capacity, and WFP often misses opportunities to engage at a strategic level.



While WFP is an important **data source** to inform/improve the broader humanitarian response, data is not systematically used to inform internal response strategies.



## GAPS



Evaluations highlight gaps in **conflict sensitivity** and **mixed results on performance** against core humanitarian principles.



**Insufficient funding**, compounded by rising needs triggered by contextual deterioration, is the greatest barrier to adequate emergency response delivery. Supply chain interruptions, mainly due to external factors, are also significant challenges. Internally, evaluations raise capacity gaps, notably regarding WFP's cross-cutting programming elements, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and the frequent turnover of staff, as factors that reduce WFP's emergency response. Preparedness capacities, highly variable across country offices, are noted as an important variable of success.

**Evaluations surface WFP's potential contributions to enable transition.** These relate to supporting economic stability, peace and social cohesion, institutional capacity and resilience to shocks. **Few also highlight potential unintended negative outcomes**, on migration, social cohesion, or food availability. Finally, when discussed, results of WFP's support to national capacities for emergency response are reported as mixed. However, limited internal M&E systems and a lack of defined strategies to operationalise the nexus, limits measuring the results of this transition programming.

## FACTORS AFFECTING WFP'S EFFECTIVENESS TO SUPPORT TRANSITION

- **Insufficient corporate guidance** to support transition programming, often connected to the unsuitability of corporate indicators to evidence WFP's contributions beyond emergency programming.
- **Human resources capacity gaps** connected to transition-related programming modalities.
- **Limited linkages or layering** between emergency response and transition programming, seen as key to the relevance and effectiveness in transitioning out of emergency programming. This is compounded by a tendency to work in siloes, and by the absence of an overarching strategic vision or exit strategy to operationalize these linkages effectively.
- **Missed opportunities to engage at a strategic level** and to coordinate actions with Governments, including owing to external factors such as instability, or national capacity issues. Coordination with the broader humanitarian system, essential to enable transition outcomes, remains a frequently identified gap in the evaluation universe.
- **Limited funding and short funding cycles**, making it extremely difficult for WFP to plan and deliver transitional programming, coupled with a lack of clarity about WFP's role outside of humanitarian response, as possible contributing factors to funding challenges.

## BREADTH OF EVIDENCE

This summary of evaluation evidence brings together findings from 23 evaluations commissioned by WFP and published between 2022 and 2024. It surfaces evidence about the relevance and design of WFP's global emergency responses, their effectiveness and the enablers and barriers explaining results, as well as the appropriateness of WFP's support to transition programming. It also sought to examine WFP's role as cluster lead, albeit with limited available evidence.

The summary has global coverage of WFP's interventions in 20 different countries, covering some with a regional lens. The reviewed universe was composed of corporate emergency evaluations, country strategic plan evaluations and decentralised evaluations; all rated 'satisfactory' or above by WFP's external Post-hoc Quality Assessment.

This summary applied the approach and methods set out in WFP's technical note on summaries of evaluation evidence, namely:

- A universe of 23 WFP independent evaluations was collected, all including evidence on emergency and transition programmes
- Evidence was systematically extracted from the evaluations according to key lines of inquiry identified at framing stage
- Evidence was analyzed and clustered around analytical themes, with key patterns and findings identified
- The resulting report was drafted and commented upon by stakeholders, being finalised in January 2025.



*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*

# ANNEX ■ LIST OF EVALUATIONS CONSULTED

- [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of WFP's Response in Myanmar, 2018-2022](#)
- [Évaluation du Plan Stratégique de Pays du PAM pour Haïti, 2018-2022](#)
- [Regional Evaluation of WFP's Contribution to Shock-Responsive Social Protection in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2015-2022](#)
- [Thematic Evaluation of WFP's Contribution to Market Systems in South Sudan and Bangladesh, 2018-2022](#)
- [Evaluation of South Sudan WFP Interim Country Strategic Plan, 2018-2022](#)
- [Evaluation of Afghanistan WFP Country Strategic Plan, 2018-2022](#)
- [Evaluation of Iraq WFP Country Strategic Plan, 2018-2019 and 2020-2024](#)
- [Évaluation du Plan Stratégique de Pays du PAM Mali, 2020-2024](#)
- [Évaluation du Plan Stratégique de Pays du PAM Burkina Faso, 2019-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of State of Palestine WFP Country Strategic Plan, 2018-2022](#)
- [Evaluation of Nigeria WFP Country Strategic Plan, 2019-2022](#)
- [Évaluation du Plan Stratégique de Pays du PAM au Tchad, 2019-2023](#)
- [Évaluation du Plan Stratégique de Pays provisoire du PAM en République centrafricaine, 2018-2022](#)
- [Evaluation of Syrian Arab Republic WFP Interim Country Strategic Plan, 2018-2025](#)
- [Évaluation de la réponse d'urgence du PAM aux crises prolongées au Sahel et dans d'autres pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest et centrale, 2018-2023](#)
- [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of WFP's Response in Ukraine, 2022-2024](#)
- [Evaluation of WFP's Capacity to Respond to Emergencies, 2011-2018](#)
- [Evaluation of Malawi WFP Country Strategic Plan, 2019-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of Madagascar WFP Country Strategic Plan, 2019-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of Lesotho WFP Country Strategic Plan, 2019-2024](#)
- [Evaluación del Plan Estratégico para Colombia, 2017-2021 y 2021-2024](#)
- [Evaluation of Kenya WFP Country Strategic Plan, 2018-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of Joint Resilience Programme in South-Central Somalia, 2018-2022](#)

## WFP EVALUATION

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