



**WFP EVALUATION**



**World Food  
Programme**

SAVING  
LIVES  
CHANGING  
LIVES

# **WFP's Corporate Emergency Response in Ukraine: Corporate Emergency Evaluation**

Centralized evaluation report – Volume I

OEV/2023/025  
February 2025

# Acknowledgements

Any evaluation exercise is the result of contributions of many individuals. The external evaluation team is grateful for all the assistance provided by Alexandra Chambel, Senior Evaluation Officer; Silvia Pennazzi Catalani, Research Analyst; Julia Betts, Deputy Director and Anne-Claire Luzot, Director of Evaluation of the World Food Programme (WFP); Richard Ragan, Country Director of WFP Ukraine; Marianne Ward, Former Deputy Country Director of WFP Ukraine; Nynne WARRING, Head of RAM and the evaluation focal point in the WFP Ukraine Country Office; and the many colleagues in the country office and at headquarters, regional bureaux office including former colleagues. The WFP staff generously contributed their time to support the evaluation team with planning and logistics and to provide relevant information.

We acknowledge with thanks the contribution of the numerous stakeholders – government, multilateral, bilateral, and non-governmental organization representatives – who participated in the evaluation and generously gave their time and advice during the evaluation process. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the cooperation and support from those citizens who participated in WFP supported interventions in Ukraine and who provided their advice and observations.

## Disclaimer

The opinions expressed are those of the evaluation team, and do not necessarily reflect those of the World Food Programme. Responsibility for the opinions expressed in this report rests solely with the authors. Publication of this document does not imply endorsement by WFP of the opinions expressed.

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

**Photo credit:** WFP/Serhii Poliakov

# Key personnel for the evaluation

## **OFFICE OF EVALUATION**

Anne-Claire Luzot – Director of Evaluation

Julia Betts – Deputy Director for Centralized Evaluations, Evaluation Quality Assurance

Alexandra Chambel – Senior Evaluation Officer, Evaluation Manager

Silvia Pennazzi Catalani – Research Analyst (January 2024–June 2025)

Arianna Spacca – Research Analyst (May–Dec 2023); Shadow Evaluation Manager (Sep 2024–Nov 2024)

## **EXTERNAL EVALUATION TEAM**

Nick Maunder – Team Leader

Anna Cervi and Charlotte Lattimer – Senior Evaluators

Georgia Plank – Medium Evaluator

Larysa Pylgun and Lyubov Margolina – National Experts

Marc Du Bois – Humanitarian Principles Expert

Zsolt Kiss and Jeroen Peers – Data Analysts

Théo Mercadal – Research Assistant

# Contents

<b>Executive summary .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Evaluation features.....	1
1.2 Context.....	2
1.3 Subject being evaluated .....	8
1.4 Evaluation methodology, limitations and ethical considerations .....	17
<b>2 Evaluation findings .....</b>	<b>20</b>
2.1 EQ1 – Relevance.....	20
2.1.1 Alignment to needs.....	20
2.1.2 Humanitarian alignment and partnerships .....	24
2.1.3 Alignment with national development plans.....	26
2.1.4 Application of humanitarian principles.....	28
2.2 EQ2 – Results .....	31
2.2.1 Effectiveness.....	31
2.2.2 Adaptation to the needs of highly vulnerable groups and coverage of assistance .....	41
2.2.3 Linkages along the triple nexus .....	46
2.2.4 How well is WFP envisioning transition and exit, tailored to local capacities and context? .....	47
2.3 EQ3 – Cross-cutting issues.....	51
2.3.1 Protection and accountability to crisis-affected people.....	51
2.3.2 Gender equality, disability and inclusion .....	53
2.4 EQ4 – Efficiency .....	54
2.4.1 Funding profile .....	54
2.4.2 Human resources .....	57
2.4.3 Timeliness .....	62
2.4.4 Cost efficiency .....	67
2.5 EQ5 – Good practices and lessons learned .....	69
2.5.1 Crisis preparedness .....	69
2.5.2 Support to food systems.....	72
<b>3 Conclusions and recommendations.....</b>	<b>74</b>
3.1 Conclusions .....	74
3.2 Recommendations.....	79

# List of figures

Figure 1 – Evaluation objectives, scope, users and framework.....	2
Figure 2 – Evolution of the areas affected by the war in Ukraine from February 2022 to February 2023.....	3
Figure 3 – GDP growth and GDP per capita in Ukraine 1991-2023.....	5
Figure 4 – Evolution of people in need per oblast (Jan 2022-2024) .....	6
Figure 5 – Humanitarian funds to Ukraine (2022- July 2024).....	7
Figure 6 – Timeline of WFP operations since 2014 .....	9
Figure 7 – Activity mapping: Ukraine LEO and T-ICSP .....	110
Figure 8 – Theory of change .....	12
Figure 9 – Beneficiaries (planned and actual) by month and sex (March 2022-May 2024) .....	15
Figure 10 – Beneficiaries (planned and actual) by month and transfer modality (March 2022-May 2024).....	16
Figure 11 – Beneficiaries (planned and actual) by month and residence status (March 2022-May 2024).....	17
Figure 12 – Evaluation data collection tools .....	18
Figure 13 – Map of areas visited by the evaluation team during the data collection visit.....	18
Figure 14 – Four-year trends in food crisis countries with 2-5 million internally displaced people in 2023....	21
Figure 15 – Internally displaced people in Ukraine.....	22
Figure 16 – Share of respondents reporting that they adopted a specific food-based coping strategy at least once during 7 days prior to the data collection, by period of data collection.....	32
Figure 17 – Percentage of actual commodities transferred versus needs-based plan (by mt/USD) .....	33
Figure 18 – WFP resources for coordination and common services (2022-2023).....	39
Figure 19 – WFP Ukraine targeting strategy.....	44
Figure 20 – Number and proportion of international and national WFP NGO cooperating partners, 2022-2024.....	49
Figure 21 – Contributions received by WFP country office in Ukraine 2022-2024 (in USD).....	55
Figure 22 – Type of advanced instrument (IPL) used per activity/monthly (in USD).....	55
Figure 23 – Main donors' contribution to LEO and T-ICSP .....	56
Figure 24 – LEO and T-ICSP Ukraine earmarking levels.....	56
Figure 25 – WFP headcount by employee group and month, and Ukraine response unique employee totals .....	57
Figure 26 – WFP staff tenure Ukraine May 2024.....	59
Figure 27 – WFP Ukraine headcount by functional area 2022-2024 (in percentage).....	59
Figure 28 – Headcount – seniority of staff WFP Ukraine 2024 .....	60
Figure 29 – WFP Ukraine – overall gender parity 2022-2024.....	61
Figure 30 – Gender parity per duty station – WFP Ukraine response 2024, May 2024 .....	61
Figure 31 – Gender parity functional area – WFP Ukraine response 2024, May 2024.....	62
Figure 32 – WFP output delivery (first 65 days post crisis).....	63
Figure 33 – Lead time of WFP in-kind assistance in Ukraine (2022-2024).....	64
Figure 34 – Metric tons of food commodities dispatched to cooperating partners in Ukraine (2022-2024)....	65
Figure 35 – Price trend in USD/mt of top four food products per mt delivered (2022-2024).....	68
Figure 36 – Post-delivery food losses in USD and mt (2022-2024).....	69

# List of tables

Table 1 – LEO and T-ICSP expenditure as percent of allocated resources by activity (February 2022–2024).....	144
Table 2 – Directed multilateral contributions by share of earmarking levels – LEO (Feb-Dec 2022) and T-ICSP (2023-2024).....	15
Table 3 – Proportion of various types of assistance needed, as reported by population groups in 2023 .....	22
Table 4 –Food Consumption Score for in-kind, multi-purpose cash assistance transfers and sectoral cash (2022, 2023, 2024).....	32
Table 5 – Strategic Outcome 2, Activity 02 – Actual versus planned output targets.....	34

Table 6 – WFP contributions to Government of Ukraine capacity strengthening through the digitization of the social protection system.....	37
Table 7 – Key performance indicator related to timeliness .....	63
Table 8 – Execution rate per activity .....	66
Table 9 – Transfer cost per WFP activity.....	69

## List of boxes

Box 1 – Grain from Ukraine Initiative .....	11
Box 2 – Gender and disability considerations in the evaluation process .....	19
Box 3 – Setting the transfer value for multi-purpose cash assistance .....	25
Box 4 – Collaboration with the Government of Ukraine on multi-purpose cash assistance .....	45



# Executive Summary

## Introduction

### Evaluation features

1. The corporate emergency evaluation of WFP's response in Ukraine aimed to provide evidence and learning on the performance of WFP in the emergency response in Ukraine during the period 2022–2024, as well as accountability for results to stakeholders. The evaluation covered crisis preparedness and contingency planning as well as subsequent WFP interventions in Ukraine from the start of the war in February 2022, including the limited emergency operation (LEO) that was implemented from February to December 2022<sup>1</sup> and the subsequent transitional interim country strategic plan (T-ICSP) for 2023–2024.
2. The evaluation employed a theory-based, mixed-methods approach, incorporating monitoring data, a comprehensive literature review, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions with beneficiaries and site visits. Gender and inclusion considerations were systematically integrated throughout the evaluation process. Data collection was conducted in Ukraine in May 2024, followed by debriefing sessions. In January 2025, a stakeholder workshop was held in Kyiv to review the key insights of the evaluation and refine the draft recommendations. Ethical standards were rigorously upheld to safeguard the dignity of all consulted stakeholders and the confidentiality of their input.
3. The main intended users of the evaluation are the WFP country office in Ukraine, the Regional Bureau for the Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe, senior management and relevant technical units at headquarters, the WFP Executive Board, donors, members of the United Nations country team, cooperating partners and beneficiaries.

### Context

4. Over the last decade Ukraine has experienced escalations in civil unrest and conflict. In March 2014, the Russian Federation took control of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, while the Ukrainian authorities lost control of major parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions after protracted fighting against separatist groups in these areas.<sup>2</sup>
5. On 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine, which led to a full-scale war.

---

<sup>1</sup> Recognizing the large-scale flow of refugees from Ukraine, the first budget revision of the LEO, in March 2023, added assistance for Ukrainian refugees in Hungary, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia and other countries in addition to those in Ukraine itself. However, it quickly became apparent that most refugees abroad received adequate support from host governments, and the vision was revised to focus support on war-affected internally displaced persons in Ukraine. A separate LEO was developed to support refugees in the Republic of Moldova.

<sup>2</sup> WFP. 2014. [Emergency Operation Ukraine 200765](#).

6. Following the escalation of the conflict the number of people estimated to need assistance surged to 14.6 million in 2024, with 7.3 million in need of food assistance.<sup>3</sup> Highly vulnerable people included those living close to the frontlines or along Ukraine's border with the Russian Federation, families with at least one member with disability, returnees and displaced persons. In 2024 the number of internally displaced persons was estimated at 3,665,000,<sup>4</sup> while the number of refugees reached 6,906,500 in 2025.<sup>5</sup> Prior to the war, Ukraine benefitted from a diversified economy, with major mining, manufacturing, agriculture and information technology sectors. In 2022 Ukraine's gross domestic product fell by 29 percent.<sup>6</sup>

## WFP's emergency response

7. WFP was operationally present in Ukraine from 2014 until it closed its country office in 2018. As tensions between Ukraine and the Russian Federation increased in 2021, WFP conducted scoping missions in Ukraine in May 2021 and early February 2022 to assess Ukraine's humanitarian response capacity.
8. In February 2022, as the war escalated, WFP launched a LEO, initially planned to last three months<sup>7</sup> and comprising two strategic outcomes focusing on crisis response. The LEO was originally based on a needs-based plan budget of USD 49,998,846, targeting 200,000 beneficiaries.
9. The LEO was subsequently revised through four budget revisions that extended its duration to December 2022, increased the needs-based plan budget to USD 1,946,462,396 and expanded the planned number of beneficiaries to 4.7 million.
10. In January 2023, as the war continued, WFP put in place a T-ICSP initially planned to last from January 2023 to June 2024, with a needs-based plan budget amounting to USD 1,904,078,061 and 4.9 million planned beneficiaries. The T-ICSP had three outcomes, two relating to crisis response (T-ICSP outcomes 1 and 3) and one to resilience building (T-ICSP outcome 2).
11. The T-ICSP and its budget underwent two revisions that extended its duration to December 2024<sup>8</sup> and adjusted the number of planned beneficiaries, with a final needs-based plan budget amounting to USD 2.07 billion and 4.8 million planned beneficiaries (see figure 1).<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2023. [Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan: Ukraine](#).

<sup>4</sup> International Organization for Migration. [Displacement Tracking Matrix](#). Consulted on 4 December 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. [Operational Data Portal: Ukrainian Refugee Situation](#). Consulted on 19 February 2025.

<sup>6</sup> World Bank. [GDP growth \(annual %\) - Ukraine](#). Consulted on 4 July 2024.

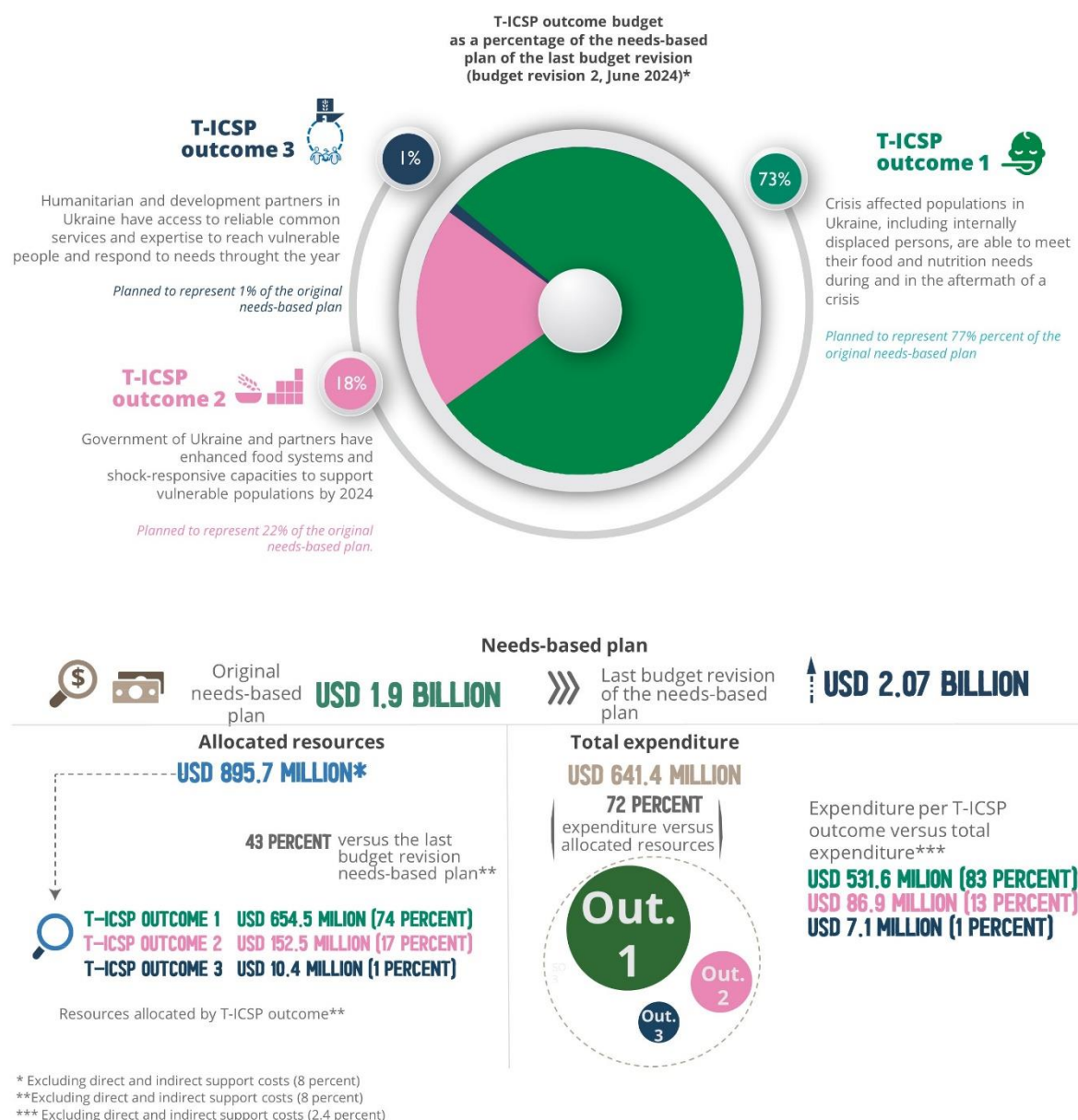
<sup>7</sup> The LEO focused on two strategic outcomes: ensuring access to food for crisis-affected populations through a combination of cash-based and in-kind modalities; and enhancing the broader humanitarian response through support to logistics coordination and emergency telecommunications, as well as on-demand services.

<sup>8</sup> WFP. 2023. [Crisis response revision of Ukraine transitional interim country strategic plan \(January 2023–June 2024\) and corresponding budget increase](#).

<sup>9</sup> WFP. 2024. [Ukraine transitional interim country strategic plan revision, budget revision 2](#).



**Figure 1: Ukraine transitional interim country strategic plan (2023–2024)  
T-ICSP outcomes, budget and expenditures**

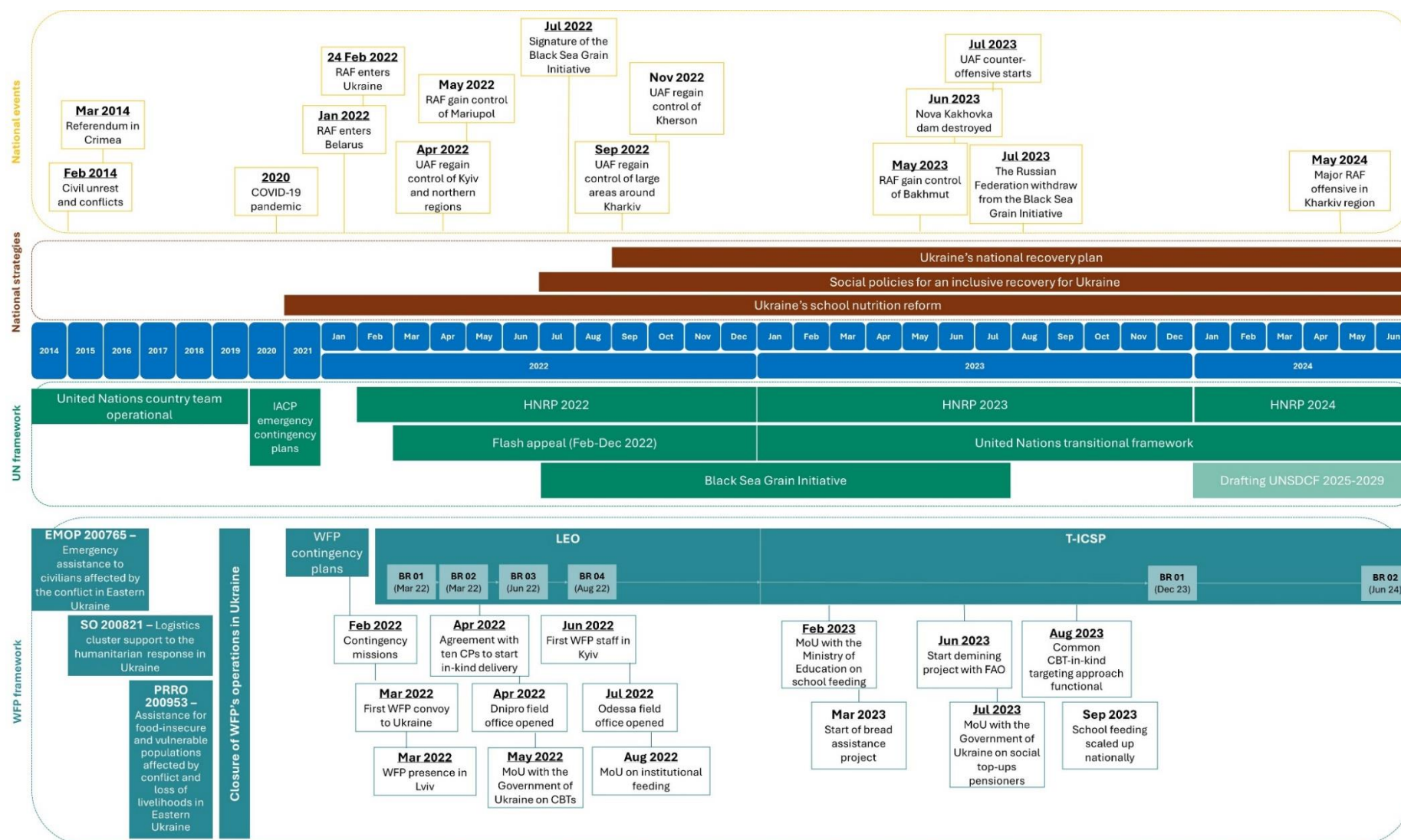


*Note:* Data extracted on 30 June 2024. (Percentages by outcome do not include direct and indirect support costs.)  
*Sources:* Revision 2 of the Ukraine T-ICSP and its budget (June 2024).

12. The United States of America was the largest donor to WFP operations in Ukraine during the period under review, providing 48.3 percent of the total funding received for the LEO and 41.2 percent of that received for the T-ICSP.<sup>10</sup> Figure 2 summarizes the evolution of WFP operations in Ukraine and key events.

<sup>10</sup> WFP. 2023. LEO resource situation report; WFP. 2024. T-ICSP resource situation report (internal reports).  
 OEV/2023/025

Figure 2: Timeline of WFP operations since 2014



**Abbreviations:** BR = budget revision; COVID-19 = coronavirus disease 2019; CPs = cooperating partners; EMOP = emergency operation; HNRP = humanitarian needs and response plan; IACP = Inter-Agency Contingency Plan; PRRO = protracted relief and recovery operation; RAF = Russian Armed Forces; SO = special operation; UAF = Ukrainian Armed Forces; UNSDCF = United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework.

## Summary of key conclusions and insights from the evaluation

**1. Despite very challenging circumstances, WFP rapidly implemented a large-scale response, demonstrating a unique comparative advantage – although key lessons emerged on improving preparedness for and response to future crises. Given the ongoing war and uncertain situation, WFP’s flexibility and capacity to scale up rapidly remain critical to the humanitarian response in Ukraine.**

13. The evaluation found that even though WFP had not been present in Ukraine since 2018, the organization demonstrated remarkable speed and effectiveness in scaling up its operations under emergency conditions in 2022. It swiftly established logistical and supply chain capabilities, enabling large-scale food assistance deliveries less than two months after the start of the war. The evaluation found that WFP’s operational effectiveness was particularly commendable given circumstances that made it extremely challenging to prepare for and implement a humanitarian response amid a rapidly evolving conflict, large-scale displacement and shifting access conditions.
14. To support preparedness, WFP conducted a number of emergency preparedness missions prior to the outbreak of hostilities, which effectively lay the groundwork for its later operational response. However, the scale, speed, severity and complexity of the crisis surpassed WFP’s preparedness efforts – as they did for the humanitarian system more broadly. A swifter elevation of Ukraine as a country of greater concern in WFP’s corporate alert system might have saved valuable weeks early in the mobilization of WFP’s response.
15. WFP, with key partners, played an important role in assessing crisis-related food security needs in a timely way, amid a chaotic situation. This analysis underpinned a nimble strategic response, with WFP adopting a succession of important and appropriate shifts in its approach to adapt to evolving circumstances. WFP also facilitated the system-level humanitarian response through significant contributions to security assessments and access and the rapid establishment of common services. Nonetheless, the relatively moderate nature of food insecurity in Ukraine raised questions about whether the scale of the response was justified compared with other global crises.
16. The evaluation found that WFP had mobilized its resources well to respond quickly to the emerging crisis and compensate for its lack of presence in Ukraine. The “whole of house” approach adopted – mobilizing resources, expertise and staff capacities from across the organization from the outset – supported rapid scale-up. However, the unusually significant role of WFP headquarters in the initial phase of the response, particularly in relation to supply chain functions, both supported scale-up and hindered operations. For example, corporate systems were not set up to enable headquarters to lead procurement on behalf of the country office.
17. WFP’s “no regrets” approach facilitated quick decision making, for example by simplifying procedures, but was inconsistently understood and applied across the organization, resulting in considerable post-hoc administrative work, for example to document decisions and activities.
18. Rapid and extensive corporate-led surge staffing was critical to the initial response, but it was particularly challenging because WFP had to build a country office from scratch, with no existing presence or national staff roster available, as a result of which it took considerable time to build a full complement of national staff. The evaluation notes important lessons on striking the appropriate balance in the deployment of strategic and administrative staff during the surge phase, ensuring that surge deployments consistently support operations without adding to country office workload.
19. The lapse of the basic agreement with the Government of Ukraine after WFP’s exit from the country in 2018 also created challenges, particularly given the ongoing conflict. The evaluation reports that the absence of this agreement led to considerable administrative delays and bureaucratic hurdles.
20. Although WFP was able to swiftly scale up its operations, delays in receiving official approvals delayed the start-up of school feeding activities and social assistance top-ups. The planning and initiation of livelihood recovery activities was also slower than beneficiaries desired. Once activities began, however, delays in delivering outputs were unusual.
21. The evaluation concludes that WFP continues to hold a unique comparative advantage in delivering emergency response in Ukraine rapidly and at scale given its resources and expertise. In particular, given the ongoing war, WFP’s capacity to rapidly scale its logistical capacity in response to possible further escalations of displacement and emergency needs remains critical to the humanitarian mission in the country.

**2. Corporate monitoring and reporting systems struggled to present compelling evidence of results. The core food security indicators were not sufficiently sensitive given the circumstances and made WFP's contribution to food security hard to demonstrate. However, evidence of results for food security and nutrition was starting to emerge.**

22. Corporate outcome indicators had limited explanatory power in isolating the contribution of WFP assistance to food security outcomes in Ukraine. It was therefore challenging for the evaluation team to demonstrate a strong link between WFP assistance and changes in the food security status of beneficiaries given the relatively modest rates of severe food insecurity at the baseline and the large number of overlapping response actors including humanitarian, government, private and other sources of assistance.
23. WFP narratives on the benefits of activities went beyond short-term objectives of improving food consumption and associated benefits, including improvements in food systems, employment, institutional support and bridging to livelihood support and recovery. However, there was little attempt to define targets for these various outcomes or monitor progress towards their achievement. Nonetheless, some key results were highlighted by the evaluation:
  - In-kind and cash transfers for households plausibly contributed to improvements in the food security of beneficiaries, although it was challenging to isolate WFP's specific contributions to outcome-level results. The outcomes associated with institutional feeding programmes, while not monitored, plausibly helped to ease the pressure on the government budget.
  - For school feeding, WFP made limited progress against quantitative distribution targets due to unanticipated delays and constraints, many of which were outside its direct control. There is early evidence of positive perceptions of the benefits among beneficiaries, including increased school attendance, improved quality of meals and alleviation of the time pressure faced by parents.
  - WFP's approach to topping up social benefits has been strongly welcomed by the Government. Relevant activities were not only aimed at tackling food insecurity, and early results on intended sectoral benefits related to food security and nutrition from the top-ups were promising; nevertheless, conclusive trends had yet to emerge. The strengthening of the national social protection system could plausibly facilitate emergency response operations for affected populations by both government and international partners".

**3. The advantages of using a cash transfer modality across various response activities were only partially realized. Understanding the full range of factors that contributed to the results in this area could help to promote more appropriate use of modalities in future crises.**

24. The evaluation found that despite WFP's efforts to respond to the needs of beneficiaries, transfer modalities used were not always fully aligned with the operating environment and beneficiary needs and preferences.
25. There was strong evidence from an early point in the crisis that a cash-based response was broadly appropriate for the setting, that it was well aligned with beneficiary preferences and that it would facilitate a potential transition from crisis assistance to government-led social transfers, which were successfully distributed in cash across the country, including frontline areas.
26. Despite this evidence, however, most WFP assistance was in-kind. Reasons included logistical ease, for example the absence of a requirement for the detailed registration information needed to enable cash transfers, and the avoidance of long lead times in setting up cash top-ups for pensions and disability grants.
27. The evaluation reports that the use of in-kind transfers was justified where markets failed due to the war but also notes that markets proved to be resilient and were often reestablished rapidly where they were disrupted. Thus, it might have been appropriate for WFP to make greater use of cash assistance. Moreover, challenges emerged in ensuring that food aid did not negatively affect local food systems and in adapting in-kind rations to meet local preferences.
28. At the same time the evaluation notes that WFP has not yet fully developed the potential of cash transfers to go beyond meeting short-term consumption needs and help households reestablish their livelihoods.

**4. WFP was conscious of minimizing perceptions of the politicization of humanitarian assistance and advocated the adoption of a principled humanitarian approach. At the same time a more explicit and**

**earlier acknowledgement of the specific trade-offs and compromises necessitated by the circumstances would have been helpful.**

29. The complex situation in Ukraine, involving an international armed conflict in which several major WFP donors have also provided political and military support to the Government, raised concerns about the perception of humanitarian aid being influenced by political dynamics. At the country level WFP navigated these sensitivities by maintaining a strong focus on upholding humanitarian principles across its operations.
30. The evaluation found that WFP's Ukraine country office actively sought to promote a neutral, impartial and operationally independent response, for example by trying to identify and respond to the needs of populations at high risk across the country, although some geographic areas remained inaccessible. There was overall strong attention to the selection and training of partners to promote a neutral and impartial response, while food security assessments sought to ensure a fully needs-based response where WFP had access.
31. The politically sensitive situation in Ukraine, however, sparked tension between principles that required trade-offs and compromises by WFP. For example, although WFP manifested a deep concern for impartiality, neutrality and independence in the selection and training of cooperating partners, its ability to remain neutral throughout its operations was challenged by the lack of Ukrainian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society or volunteer groups with sufficient familiarity or experience with humanitarian action and hence its fundamental principles.
32. Similarly, WFP engagement with national authorities, for example on social protection, while operationally appropriate, risked creating the perception that the United Nations was not impartial. Moreover, the humanitarian principles, and the anticipated key trade-offs and compromises necessitated by context-specific tensions between them, were not explicitly adapted in Ukraine-specific programmatic guidance; the evaluation identifies this as a missed opportunity.
33. The evaluation notes that the potential consequences of the level of support given to Ukraine by resource partners relative to other global crises were not clearly considered at the corporate level. The implications for global equity were not explicitly monitored, nor was effort made to advocate a more impartial spread of donor resources among competing global crises.

**5. WFP contributed to leading coordination efforts and forged important partnerships that were key contributors to an effective humanitarian response. However, significant gaps in the coordination system remained and WFP maintained a degree of independence from coordination on the use of multipurpose cash assistance.**

34. The evaluation found strong and effective partnerships spanning WFP stakeholder groups, including the Government (to support institutional feeding, school feeding and social transfer top-ups), other United Nations entities (with the United Nations Population Fund and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) providing examples of good practice), private sector partners, and international NGOs and civil society groups. Such partnerships supported operational effectiveness by facilitating the direct delivery of assistance, enabling collaborative assessments, enhancing alignment with national systems and enabling WFP to leverage complementary skills.
35. Regarding United Nations partnerships, WFP made important contributions to United Nations strategy, coordination and the provision of common services in Ukraine, which the evaluation found as particularly creditworthy given that WFP only reestablished its presence in the country in 2022. WFP not only led key clusters but also took up a leading role in other cluster coordination mechanisms, for example introducing Building Blocks as a tool for the coordination of multipurpose cash assistance under the umbrella of the cash working group. This proved a model of good practice that reduced unintended overlaps in multipurpose cash assistance and led to significant cost savings.
36. Challenges included the emergence of several non-traditional, large-scale food security actors, some of whom operated outside the established coordination framework rather than engaging more deeply with stakeholders in the analysis process, which could have enhanced collective understanding.
37. WFP decisions on the coverage of crisis assistance were evidence-based and mostly coordinated with humanitarian partners. However, despite targeting approaches becoming more tailored over time, the evaluation found evidence of overlaps and oversupply of food assistance. Contributory factors included limited coordination between the established humanitarian actors and the Government, and new large-scale food providers who did not participate in established

coordination frameworks. Other missed coordination opportunities included the failure to adopt a single, coordinated community feedback mechanism and to work towards better harmonized registration systems and targeting criteria. Coordination of multi-purpose cash efforts also proved challenging, with WFP's independent action raising questions among partners on its commitment to the new Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) cash coordination model. While WFP supported the use of a unified cash transfer to meet a variety of needs flexibly, other agencies had different views. The evaluation considers this a missed opportunity to create a stronger strategic alignment of agencies in the use of multipurpose cash assistance.

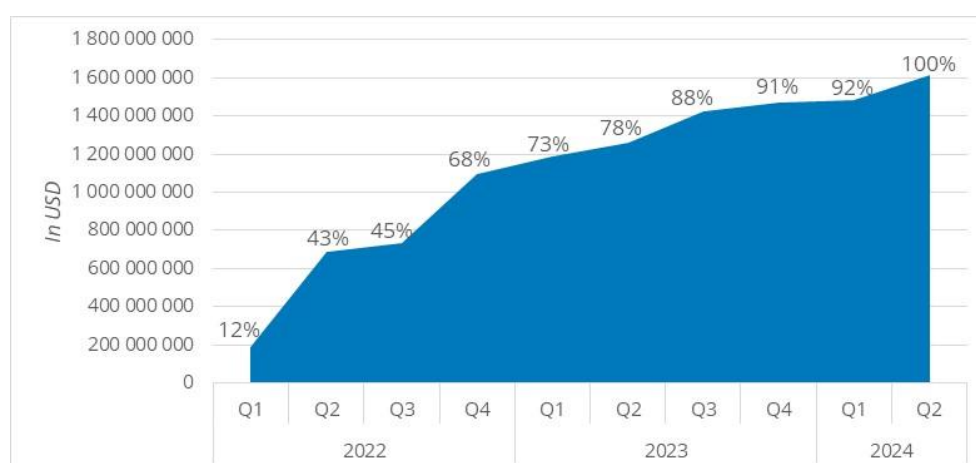
**6. While WFP demonstrated a commitment to inclusion and protection it paid insufficient attention to adapting programmes to the needs of women and men, mainstreaming approaches to gender equality and extending beneficiary participation in core programming decisions.**

38. Initial attempts to assess the specific needs of highly vulnerable population groups were very limited. That gap was compounded by a failure to adapt corporate assessment tools and methodologies to Ukraine's middle-income economy. Efforts intensified over time, however, with WFP increasingly tailoring its assistance to ensure accessibility for marginalized groups, particularly older people and people with disabilities, who comprise the majority of the target population and face access issues due to restricted mobility or isolation.
39. Overall, however, the evaluation found limited attention to gender equality in WFP-supported interventions. In-depth, comprehensive analysis of gender and other sociodemographic characteristics was only undertaken late in the response. The main activities were not adequately adapted to encourage female participation and address the needs and intersecting vulnerabilities of women, including women with disabilities, women living in rural communities, older women and Roma women. The evaluation also notes that assumptions and perceptions by WFP and partner staff tended to treat gender inequality as a low priority issue in the Ukrainian context and that further scope existed for transforming approaches to gender equality and social inclusion.
40. An effective community feedback mechanism was put in place, but the evaluation notes a missed opportunity to establish a shared community feedback mechanism for the entire humanitarian response. Furthermore, the feedback mechanism addresses only part of WFP's commitment to accountability to crisis-affected populations, and beneficiaries are not involved in core programming decisions or decisions that affect their lives. Protection activities appropriately focused on ensuring physical safety and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse.
41. While commitments to greater shared accountability remained largely unmet, with affected people having little or no decision making power, WFP made efforts to enhance participation, particularly through investments in livelihood pilots aimed at fostering greater inclusion and community engagement.

**7. The situation in Ukraine is uncertain in terms of the course of the war, the level of need and prospects for future humanitarian funding. This has implications for adjusting ongoing interventions, pursuing innovative opportunities and planning for transition and exit.**

42. In the early stages of the response WFP's funding profile, flexibility and timeliness, supported by donor willingness to allow the organization to carry over funding from one year to the next, were all instrumental in enabling a swift emergency response. While most funds were earmarked for immediate needs, the availability of flexible resources also facilitated the piloting of additional initiatives, enhancing overall programme effectiveness.
43. While total pledges fell short of the amount called for in the needs-based plan budget, sufficient funds were nonetheless available to meet pressing needs. However, the evaluation reports that, in the absence of major new population displacements, humanitarian funding for Ukraine is likely to shrink. Figure 3 highlights the contributions received by WFP since the start of the crisis response. Almost 70 percent of its resources were first allocated in 2022, highlighting a significant donor commitment over the first months of the response, while the remaining 30 percent was received between January 2023 and June 2024.

**Figure 3: Contributions received by WFP's Ukraine country office 2022–2024**



Source: WFP, FACTory, extracted on 24 June 2024.

44. With the need for prioritization accordingly paramount, WFP worked to sharpen targeting, developing a targeting framework with which to codify geographic and categorical targeting criteria by activity. Examples include transitioning from blanket coverage in frontline areas to using categorical approaches, and refining geographic targeting, with distributions focused on frontline areas. However, the evaluation found clear opportunities for further improvement, questioning for example whether institutional feeding, while a valuable channel for reaching a large number of beneficiaries early in the response, remained the optimal mechanism going forward.
45. The evaluation also noted the potential of some programmatic innovations, such as a pilot collaboration with FAO to bring mine-affected agricultural land back into production, which could provide long-term benefits, including for food security. The importance of Ukraine to global food supply and prices is also considered to justify WFP's consideration of support for national food systems, including through the facilitation of exports to mitigate the effects of the crisis on international food markets.
46. Elsewhere, since WFP's pathway to transition and eventual exit from Ukraine is closely linked to the shock responsiveness of government systems, the evaluation observes that key areas for future engagement might include incorporating a development perspective into school feeding activities, and strengthening the capacity of the social protection system to respond to crises rather than using it simply as a delivery channel.



## Recommendations

47. The evaluation makes five recommendations that are based on the key findings and conclusions.

Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsibility (with contributing entity in brackets)	Priority	By when	Rationale
<b>Recommendation 1: To support the implementation of the recommendations of the evaluation of WFP's 2024 emergency preparedness policy, WFP should draw on lessons learned from Ukraine to strengthen preparedness for future corporate emergencies.</b>					Linked to conclusions 1 and 2. While the overall performance of WFP in scaling up the response in Ukraine was good, there are important lessons to be considered at the corporate level in relation to preparedness and surge deployments.
1.1 WFP should review and strengthen contingency arrangements to quickly scale up in war-affected countries and countries where it does not have a presence, including by strengthening agreements to operate under the umbrella of a sister United Nations entity in the absence of a basic agreement with a host government and contingency arrangements to enable headquarters to support countries with procurement and administrative functions directly.	Strategic	Headquarters Programme Policy and Guidance Division	High	End 2026	Corporate systems were not set up to enable headquarters to lead procurement on behalf of the country office. WFP's "no regrets" approach was not consistently understood or applied.
1.2 Review, strengthen and clarify the process, responsibilities, tools and mechanisms related to surge deployments, including standardizing pre-mobilization training on security and the "no regrets" approach; adapting the composition and gender balance of surge teams to the specific context; and improving handover arrangements between surged staff.	Operational	Headquarters Programme Policy and Guidance Division	High	End 2026	WFP should have elevated Ukraine more rapidly in its corporate alert system as a country of greater corporate concern, a failure that may have contributed to losing valuable weeks in mobilizing the response.
1.3 WFP should include lessons learned from its operations in Ukraine in its review of the corporate alert system to improve the timeliness of future responses in conflict-affected countries and in countries where it does not have a presence.	Strategic	Headquarters Programme Policy and Guidance Division	High	End 2025	It is important for WFP to be able to piggyback on the agreements of other United Nations entities with governments until it can put its own agreements in place.

Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsibility (with contributing entity in brackets)	Priority	By when	Rationale
1.4 WFP should capture lessons learned in relation to adherence to the humanitarian principles in the complex operating environment in Ukraine to inform future guidance to WFP staff and partners in similarly challenging settings.	Strategic	Headquarters Programme Policy and Guidance Division	High	Mid 2026	In a complex environment WFP paid strong attention to humanitarian principles. However, the tensions between principles that involved trade-offs and compromises could have been more explicitly recognized.
<b>Recommendation 2: Drawing on its experience in Ukraine, WFP should utilize existing global engagement platforms to strengthen coordinated approaches to the provision of food assistance.</b>					<p>Linked to conclusions 2 and 3. Increasingly prominent non-traditional food actors need to be systematically brought into coordination structures to reduce overlaps.</p> <p>Given the strong arguments in favour of using a unified cash transfer to flexibly meet a variety of needs, it is important to understand and collectively address the constraints on the coordinated use of multipurpose cash assistance.</p> <p>The implications of inadequate coordination at the global level for world-wide equity were not explicitly monitored, nor were concrete attempts made to advocate a more impartial spread of donor resources among competing global crises.</p>
2.1 In conjunction with the global food security cluster, WFP headquarters should engage with emerging major new food assistance actors to seek agreement on improved operational coordination and participation in the cluster system.	Strategic		Medium	End 2026	
2.2 WFP headquarters should embark on a process of dialogue within the IASC cash advisory group to promote improved inter-agency alignment on the objectives and use of multipurpose cash assistance.	Strategic	Headquarters Emergency Coordination Service	Medium	Mid 2026	
2.3 WFP should work in the IASC Emergency Directors Group to promote equitable humanitarian response at the global level.	Strategic	Headquarters Emergency Coordination Service	Medium	End 2026	

Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsibility (with contributing entity in brackets)	Priority	By when	Rationale
<b>Recommendation 3: WFP should enhance the relevance and utility of its assessment, targeting and measurement of results in Ukraine.</b>					<p>Linked to conclusions 1, 3, 4, 6 and 7. Donors are clear that, in the absence of major new population displacements, the amount of humanitarian funding for Ukraine will decrease. This will have implications for the scale of food assistance and the need to give priority to meeting the most pressing needs.</p> <p>Building a consensus on food assistance needs has been challenging in Ukraine and more could have been done to strengthen understanding through a deeper engagement of stakeholders in the analysis process.</p> <p>While WFP worked to sharpen targeting, there are clear opportunities for further improvement. The advantages of using cash transfer modalities across response activities were only partially realized. The relevance of certain activities – such as institutional feeding – in meeting needs changed over time.</p> <p>The objectives of WFP support for food and social protection systems lacked clarity, with limited monitoring and reporting of outcomes.</p>
3.1 WFP, in conjunction with the food security and livelihoods cluster, should increase transparency and participation in the analysis of food needs and improve the dissemination of results.	Operational	Country office research, assessment and monitoring unit	High	Mid 2026	
3.2 As resources for operations in Ukraine are likely to decline, WFP should continue to update and refine its targeting and prioritization strategy, delivery modalities and programme activities.	Operational	Country office programme unit	High	End 2025	
3.3 The country office should clarify the objectives of its support for food systems and social protection as a basis for collaboration with headquarters in defining and reporting on relevant outcomes in Ukraine.	Operational	Country office programme unit (headquarters Analysis, Planning and Performance Division)	High	Mid 2026	

Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsibility (with contributing entity in brackets)	Priority	By when	Rationale
<b>Recommendation 4: WFP should further explore and develop support for recovery activities in Ukraine alongside a primary focus on emergency assistance.</b>					<p>Linked to conclusions 1, 3, 5 and 6. WFP's flexibility and capacity to rapidly scale up remain critical to the humanitarian response in Ukraine. Donors would rely on WFP to scale up again and funds would be forthcoming to support them if the humanitarian crisis were to intensify. Opportunities for WFP to support recovery activities emerged but the organization's comparative advantages need to be carefully assessed against those of other development actors.</p> <p>The mine action pilot has potential for good, particularly where the focus for WFP rests on restoring agricultural productivity rather than mine clearance.</p> <p>A cash-based response was broadly appropriate for the operating environment. The fungibility of cash gives the potential to bridge the dual objectives of relief and recovery.</p> <p>There was insufficient attention to adapting programmes to the needs of women and men and to mainstreaming approaches to gender equality and women's empowerment.</p>
4.1 WFP should better communicate that the objective of its agricultural activities is to enable the resumption of agriculture on land that has been cleared of or is otherwise free from explosive ordnance and provide reassurance that appropriate long-term partnerships are in place to ensure the continuation of these activities after WFP exits Ukraine.	Operational	Country office programme unit and management	High	End 2025	
4.2 WFP should explore the use of cash transfers to support livelihood recovery.	Operational	Country office programme unit	High	End 2026	
4.3 In line with an increasing focus on transitional activities, WFP should expand its use of gender and social inclusion analysis to improve age sensitivity and gender mainstreaming, with greater attention to capacity strengthening for cooperating partners.	Operational	Country office programme unit	High	Mid 2026	

Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsibility (with contributing entity in brackets)	Priority	By when	Rationale
<b>Recommendation 5: WFP should adapt its programme in Ukraine to facilitate its transition and exit from the country at an appropriate time.</b>					<p>Linked to conclusion 6.</p> <p>WFP's presence in Ukraine is short-term, but the conditions under which the country office would close are yet to be made explicit.</p> <p>Careful consideration is also required regarding whether there may be a justification for some form of continued country-level engagement in areas such as procurement and school feeding. Given the ongoing conflict WFP's withdrawal from Ukraine is not imminent. However, the groundwork to enable a smooth transition to government and civil society partners should be pursued in the short term.</p> <p>WFP's pathway to transition and exit is closely married to strengthening the shock responsiveness of government systems. Supporting referrals of excluded groups, or those with protection needs, to specialist government services and civil society partners is a further important opportunity.</p>
5.1 WFP should define criteria that would trigger the cessation of its emergency food assistance operations in Ukraine.	Strategic	Country office management (regional bureau, headquarters)	High	End 2025	
5.2 WFP should explore and define the scope of any continuing country engagement, such as support for the Grain from Ukraine facility and school feeding, and consider how they can best be managed, whether by a country office, the regional bureau or headquarters.	Strategic	Country office management (regional bureau, headquarters)	High	End 2025	
5.3 To facilitate transition WFP, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, should further develop engagement with, and capacity strengthening for, the national social protection system.	Operational	Country office programme unit	High	End 2026	
5.4 To further facilitate transition, WFP should strengthen its work with civil society groups to support their capacity to complement and support the national social protection system, for example as part of a referral system.	Operational	Country office programme unit	Medium	End 2026	
5.5 WFP should engage with the resident coordinator/ humanitarian coordinator to advocate the progressive transition from a cluster coordination model to government-led sectoral coordination.	Strategic	Country office programme unit	Medium	End 2025	

# Introduction

## 1.1 Evaluation features

1. The purpose of the Corporate Emergency Evaluation (CEE) of the World Food Programme (WFP) response in Ukraine is twofold: (i) to provide evaluation evidence and accountability for results to WFP stakeholders; and (ii) to provide learning on WFP performance during the emergency operation in order to enhance the operation and for broader learning on WFP complex emergency responses.
2. The evaluation scope encompasses preparedness and contingency planning for this crisis and the WFP interventions in Ukraine<sup>11</sup> from the escalation of the war in February 2022, until the end of June 2024. This includes the limited emergency operation (LEO) framework and the transitional interim country strategic plan (T-ICSP), along with their subsequent budget revisions and, additionally, participation in the Grain from Ukraine (GFU) initiative.
3. As specified in the terms of reference (ToRs), the evaluation adopted the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) standard Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria of coherence, relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, and additional humanitarian-related criteria, namely coverage, appropriateness and connectedness. These criteria were explored through five evaluation questions (EQs) and associated sub-questions (see Annex 3).
4. The evaluation inception phase started in January 2024, with an inception mission in Kyiv from 22-26 January 2024. This was followed by a data collection mission from 6-30 May 2024 and additional desk-based data collection activities running through June 2024. A detailed timeline of the evaluation is presented in Annex 2.
5. Principal users of the evaluation include the WFP country office (CO), the regional bureau in Cairo (RBC), headquarters (HQ) senior management and relevant technical units, the WFP Executive Board, donors, members of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), cooperating partners and beneficiaries. Stakeholders were engaged throughout the evaluation to promote ownership of the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.
6. An overview of the evaluation objectives, scope, users and the evaluation framework is presented in Figure 1 below.

---

<sup>11</sup> Recognizing the large-scale flow of refugees from Ukraine, the first budget revision to the limited emergency operation (LEO) in March 2023 added assisting Ukrainian refugees in neighbouring countries (Poland, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, other countries) in addition to Ukraine itself. However, as it quickly became apparent that most refugees abroad received adequate support from the host governments, the vision was revised to focus support on the war-affected internally displaced people (IDPs) in Ukraine. A separate LEO was developed to support refugees in Moldova.

**Figure 1 – Evaluation objectives, scope, users and framework**

Evaluation Objectives	Evaluation Scope		Users of the Evaluation
<b>Accountability</b> - Provide accountability for results to WFP stakeholders  <b>Learning</b> - Provide learning on WFP's performance in the Ukraine emergency context, specifically for developing WFP's future engagement in Ukraine and for broader learning on WFP complex emergency responses.	<b>Spatial</b>	<b>Ukraine</b> + effects of WFP's response 'outside Ukraine' as appropriate	<b>Principal users</b> - WFP Ukraine CO - WFP Regional Bureau in Cairo - WFP Executive Board and senior management and HQ relevant Divisions and Units - Donors - UN country team and international organizations - Cooperating Partners -NGOs  <b>Other secondary users</b> - Private sector partners - Research institutions, Academia and Civil society - Beneficiaries
	<b>Temporal</b>	<b>Feb 2022 – Jun 2024</b> + pre-war period preparedness activities	
	<b>Thematic</b>	Limited Emergency Operation (LEO) Feb-Dec 22 and Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan (T-ICSP) 2023-2024 + <b>Grain from Ukraine</b> Initiative	
Evaluation Framework			
<b>OECD/DAC Criteria:</b> coherence, relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency + coverage, appropriateness and connectedness	A set of <b>5 Evaluation Questions</b> with 16 subquestions covering a range of evaluation criteria		<b>Cross-cutting:</b> Humanitarian principles, people with disabilities, protection, AAP, gender age, socio-economic status and environment

Source: ADE, based on the ToR for the Corporate Emergency Evaluation of WFP's response in Ukraine.

## 1.2 Context

### 1.2.1 Conflict and displacement

7. Over the last decade, Ukraine has suffered escalating civil unrest and conflict. In March 2014, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea was taken under the control of the Russian Federation, while Ukrainian authorities lost control of major parts of the Donestka and Luhanska *oblasts* (regions)<sup>12</sup> with protracted fighting against separatist groups in these areas.<sup>13</sup>
8. In late 2021, tensions among the Ukrainian authorities, separatist groups, the Russian Federation and Belarus increased, leading to a full-scale war. From 24 February 2022, the areas surrounding Kyiv, along with southern eastern and northern regions, experienced intense combat as Russia conducted military operations. In April 2022, the Russian Armed Forces withdrew from the Kyivska, Chernihivska and Sumska oblasts, while military operations continued along a 1,200-kilometer-long front line spanning Kharkivska, Luhanska, Donestka, Zaporiska, and Khersonska oblasts (see Figure 2 and 3). Since November 2022 the position of this front line has been relatively stable with approximately a fifth of the Ukrainian territory under Russian control.<sup>14</sup> However, hostilities remain active, with changes in the lines of control. Almost 22,000 reported civilians have been killed or injured and more than 11,000 fatalities have been recorded since February 2022.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> 'Oblast' is the higher administrative division in Ukraine and could be translated in English as governorates or regions.

<sup>13</sup> WFP (2014). Emergency Operation Ukraine 200765.

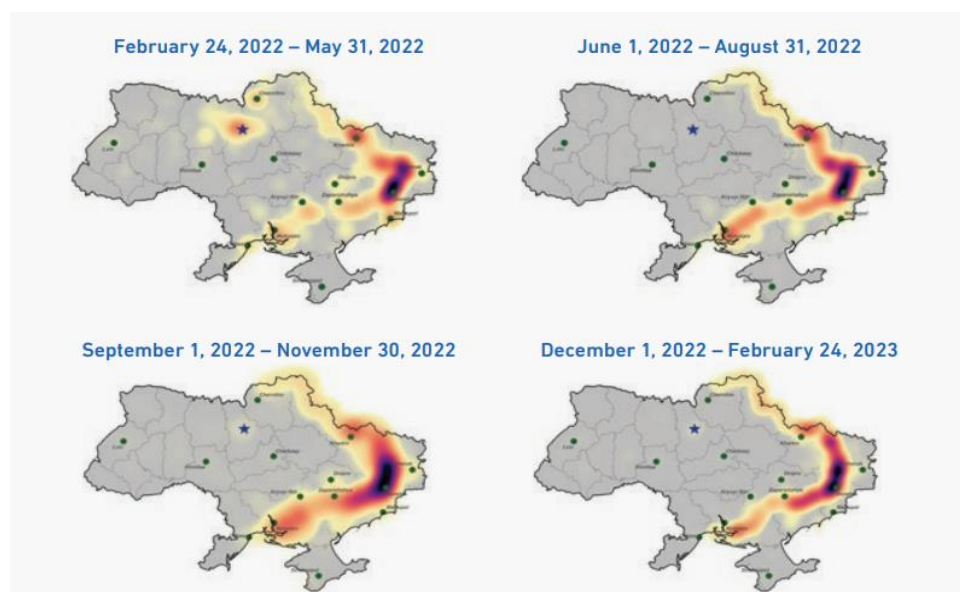
<sup>14</sup> Institute for the Study of War, Critical Threats, Interactive Map of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine.

<sup>15</sup> OHCHR (2024). Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 March 2024

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15580.doc.htm#:~:text=Since%20February%202022%2C%20the%20Office,people%20injured%2C%20including%201%2C285%20children/-> 31 May 2024.

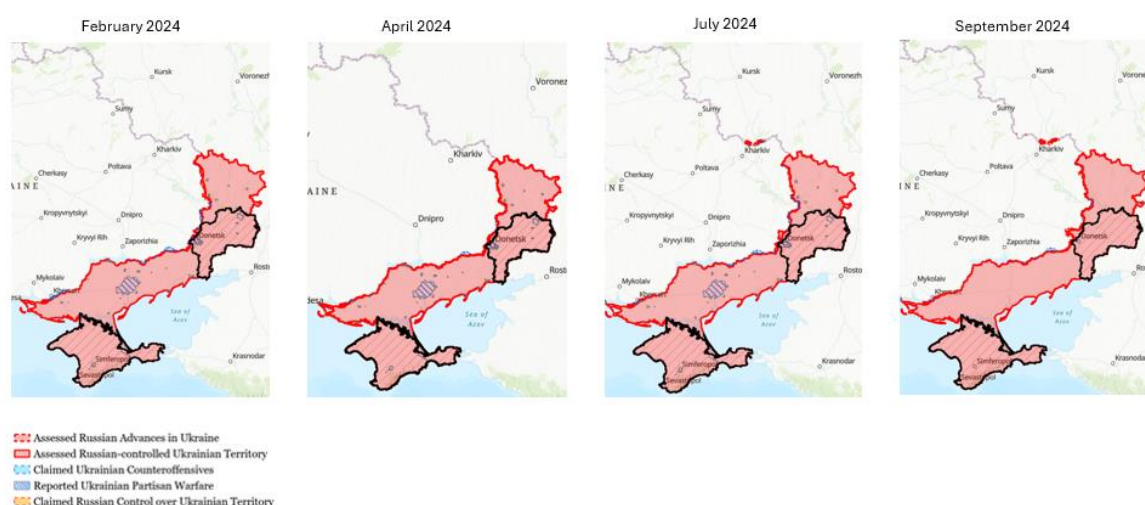


**Figure 2 – Evolution of the areas affected by the war in Ukraine from February 2022 to February 2023**



Source: Ukraine Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment 2023, World Bank, based on Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project data.

**Figure 3 – Evolution of the areas affected by the war in Ukraine from February 2024 to September 2024**



Source: Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project, Interactive Time-lapse: Russia's War in Ukraine.

9. As result of the war, more than 6.5 million Ukrainians became refugees<sup>16</sup> and 3.55 million are internally displaced people (IDPs).<sup>17</sup> People were initially displaced from Kyiv, and the northern and eastern regions, towards western areas of the country and as refugees to neighbouring countries. A significant number of displaced people experienced multiple displacements. These numbers dropped as the Government of Ukraine (GoU) regained control of these regions, paving the way for a limited return of displaced people and refugees. Refugee numbers fell from 9 million in March

<sup>16</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) data (<https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>), consulted on 4 July 2024.

<sup>17</sup> IOM (2024). Ukraine Internal Displacement Report – Round 16. April 2024.

2022, to 7.7 million in December 2022 and 6.5 million in June 2024.<sup>18</sup> After an initial surge in the number of displaced people in spring 2022, numbers have remained relatively stable at around 3 million people.<sup>19</sup> Internally displaced people have spread throughout Ukrainian territory, with large concentrations in the Kyivska, Dnipropetrovska and Kharkivska oblasts (see Figure 15, Finding 1). While most displaced people have been progressively absorbed into local communities, several collective centres have also been opened by the camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) cluster to host recently displaced people.<sup>20</sup>

## 1.2.2 Effects on the economy, agriculture and education

10. The war has taken a significant toll on the economy. Ukraine is a lower middle-income country, ranking 77 of 191 countries in the Human Development Index<sup>21</sup> with a gross domestic product (GDP) of United States Dollar (USD) 5,181.4 per capita.<sup>22</sup> Ukraine benefited from a diversified economy, with important mining, manufacturing, agriculture and information technology sectors. Positive GDP growth over the last decade<sup>23</sup> was interrupted by the effects of the 2014 crisis in Donbass and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (see Figure 3). Following the start of the conflict, Ukraine's GDP fell by 29 percent in 2022.<sup>24</sup> Damage to buildings, productive assets and infrastructure was estimated at USD 135 billion and the percentage of the population living below the poverty line increased from 5.5 percent in 2021, to 24 percent in 2022.<sup>25</sup>
11. Prior to the escalation of the war, the agricultural sector contributed to 10 percent of Ukrainian GDP, employing 14 percent of the labour force, and accounted for 41 percent of exports.<sup>26</sup> In 2021, Ukraine was ranked among the top ten producers and exporters of corn, wheat, sunflower, barley and rapeseed worldwide.<sup>27</sup> The war has had major impact on Ukrainian agricultural production, through reduced access to agricultural land and inputs<sup>28</sup> and shipping restrictions placed on Black Sea commercial ports.<sup>29</sup> According to Ukraine's Ministry of Internal Affairs, about 30 percent of Ukraine's lands, or approximately 174,000 square kilometres has been exposed to conflict and will require surveying and, if necessary, demining.<sup>30</sup>
12. Ukraine has been a key supplier of food commodities globally, particularly to low-income food-deficit countries, and the interruption of exports has posed a substantial threat to food security in other countries, notably in North Africa, and Western and Central Asia.<sup>31</sup> Ukraine was the third largest source of food commodities to WFP global operations prior to the escalation of the war,<sup>32</sup> and the largest source in 2023.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, the Black Sea Grain initiative was negotiated in July 2022, while the Grain from Ukraine initiative was launched in September 2022 by the Ukrainian

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> IOM data Displacement Tracking Matrix (<https://dtm.iom.int/ukraine>), consulted on 4 July 2024.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.cccmcluster.org/where-we-work/ukraine>

<sup>21</sup> UNDP (2022). Human Development Report 2021-22: Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World. New York.

<sup>22</sup> World Bank data (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>) consulted on 04/07/2024.

<sup>23</sup> From 2016 to 2019 and in 2021, Ukrainian GDP growth was included between 2.4 and 3.5 percent. World Bank data (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=UA>). Consulted on 04/07/2024.

<sup>24</sup> World Bank data (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=UA>). Consulted on 04/07/2024.

<sup>25</sup> World Bank, Government of Ukraine, European Union and United Nations. 2023. Ukraine Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment: February 2022-February 2023.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> USDA (2022). Ukraine Agricultural Production and Trade, April 2022. (<https://fas.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-04/Ukraine-Factsheet-April2022.pdf>).

<sup>28</sup> FAO. (2022). Note on Impact of the War on Food Security in Ukraine.

<sup>29</sup> OCHA. (2022). Humanitarian Needs Overview Ukraine. December 2022.

<sup>30</sup> Centre for Strategic and International Studies. From the Ground Up: Demining Farmland and Improving Access to Fertilizer to Restore Ukraine's Agricultural Production. This includes land affected by previous conflicts, including the second world war. December 2023.

<sup>31</sup> FAO. Biannual Report on Global Food Markets. November 2021

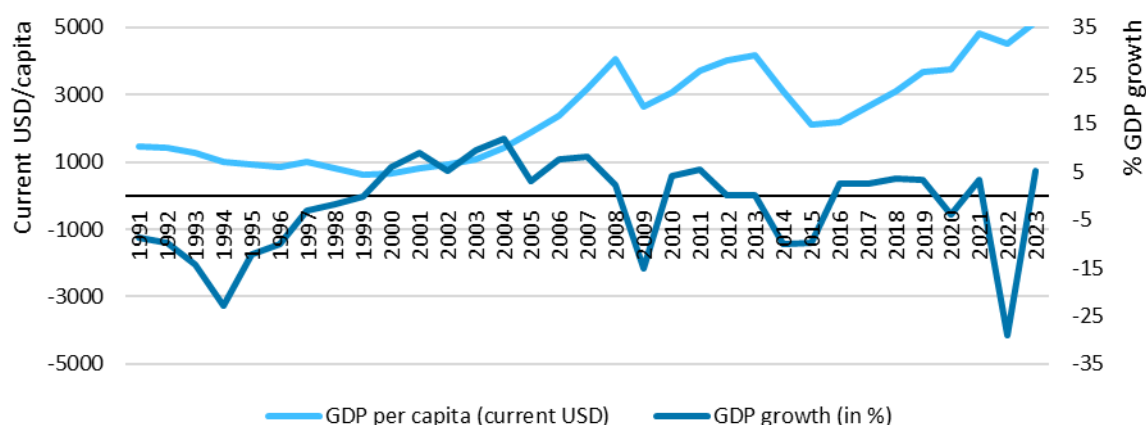
<sup>32</sup> WFP (2021). Update on food procurement

<sup>33</sup> WFP (2023). Update on food procurement.

Government with support from donor governments and technical assistance from the WFP (see Box 1). These initiatives have the objective of maintaining access to Ukrainian food exports and stabilizing global food prices.

13. Significant external support, coupled with political, economic and fiscal reforms, have helped maintain macroeconomic stability. Delivery of key social services has continued, although impacted by a lack of fiscal space to cover pensions and other social benefits, which have not kept pace with inflation. In 2022, Ukraine's economy suffered a massive GDP drop of 29 percent, followed by a slight increase of 5 percent in 2023. However, the prospects for long-term recovery remain extremely uncertain, with widespread destruction of the Ukrainian energy infrastructure hindering economic recovery. Continued significant support from donors is needed.<sup>34</sup>

**Figure 3 – Gross domestic product growth and gross domestic product per capita in Ukraine 1991-2023**



Source: World Bank data. Database consulted on 4 July 2024.

14. The education system was also deeply affected as schools were temporarily closed. Electricity shortages during the winter of 2022 caused massive challenges for schools regarding online attendance.<sup>35</sup> Schools gradually resumed in-person education, but students' attendance has been significantly impacted by the security situation. In eastern regions closer to the front line, most schools remained closed or continued offering online education. The Ministry of Education authorized in-person learning only if, among other features, schools are equipped with bunkers deemed safe and suitable for students. As of May 2024, more than 1,300 educational facilities have been damaged or destroyed, and around 4.6 million children face obstacles to education, including 2 million affected by school and kindergarten closures.<sup>36</sup> Conflict-induced damages on education infrastructure have resulted in damages to schools estimated at USD 5.6 billion as of December 2023.<sup>37</sup>

### 1.2.3 Food security and nutrition

15. In 2021, prior to the escalation of the war, approximately 1.5 million people were assessed as needing multisectoral assistance, with 94 percent of those people located in the Donestka and

<sup>34</sup> IMF. 2023. Article IV Report – Ukraine.

<sup>35</sup> UNICEF, Ukraine war disrupts education for more than 5 million children.

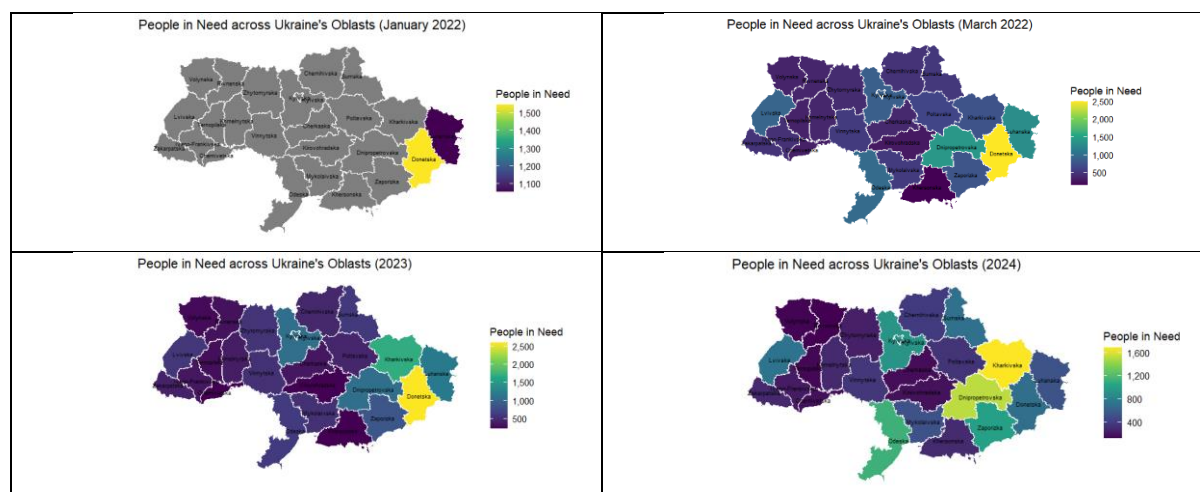
(<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/01/1132757>), consulted on 07/03/2024.

<sup>36</sup> UNICEF, First day of school in Ukraine marred by attacks (<https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/en/press-releases/first-day-school-ukraine-marred-attacks>) consulted on 13/09/2024.

<sup>37</sup> World Bank, Government of Ukraine, European Union and United Nations. 2023. Ukraine Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment: February 2022 - February 2023.

Luhanska oblasts, and concentrated in areas affected by military operations since 2014.<sup>38</sup> After February 2022, the number of people assessed as needing assistance surged to 14.6 million in 2024, with 7.3 million people specifically in need of food assistance.<sup>39</sup> Highly vulnerable people include those living close to the front line or along the Russia border, families with at least one member with a disability and people who are returnees or displaced.<sup>40</sup> The proportion of older people in areas closer to the front line is also disproportionately high.

**Figure 4 – Evolution of people in need per oblast (Jan 2022-2024)**



Source: OCHA, Humanitarian Response Overview (Jan 2022-2024).

16. Analysis by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) found that “Ukraine’s food security is related to food access and not to food availability”, with a lack of economic and physical access to markets and food purchasing places being the main drivers of food insecurity.<sup>41</sup> The war has disrupted supply chains in and outside Ukraine and reduced productivity and farm incomes.
17. Women, along with children and people with disabilities, were heavily affected by the war, especially in cases of intersectional vulnerabilities.<sup>42</sup> Women and children constituted 90 percent of the refugees, with men prohibited from leaving the country under martial law, resulting in protracted family separations and worsening families’ socioeconomic conditions.<sup>43</sup> The war also exacerbated gender-based violence (GBV), pre-existing inequalities, discrimination and human trafficking, particularly affecting marginalized groups such as Roma.<sup>44</sup>
18. There were an estimated 2.7 million people with disabilities in the country in 2021<sup>45</sup> and the number has increased to 3 million due to the war, as of early 2024.<sup>46</sup> Many people who remained closer to the front line and in areas affected by military operations are older, a majority of whom

<sup>38</sup> OCHA (2021). Humanitarian Response Plan – Ukraine.

<sup>39</sup> OCHA (2023). Humanitarian Response Plan – Ukraine. February 2023.

<sup>40</sup> REACH and WFP (2024). Multisectoral Needs Assessment 2023: Economic and livelihoods situation overview. May 2024.

<sup>41</sup> FAO (2022). Note on Impact of the War on Food Security in Ukraine.

<sup>42</sup> UN Women (2022). Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine.

<sup>43</sup> UN Women, Factsheet Ukraine (<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/ukraine#:~:text=The%202021%20Gender%20Inequality%20Index,priority%20for%20the%20Ukrainian%20Government.>), consulted on 04/07/2024.

<sup>44</sup> UN Women (2022). Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine; CARE International and UN Women. 2022. Regional Gender Task Force. Making the Invisible: An evidence-based analysis of gender in the regional response to the war in Ukraine.

<sup>45</sup> State Statistics Service of Ukraine (2021). Social Protection of the Population of Ukraine.

<sup>46</sup> State Statistics Service of Ukraine (2021). Social Protection of the Population of Ukraine.

<sup>46</sup> UNDP (2024). UNDP in Ukraine advocates for disability inclusion at UN event – 10 June 2024. (<https://www.undp.org/ukraine/press-releases/undp-ukraine-advocates-disability-inclusion-un-event>), consulted on 13/09/2024.

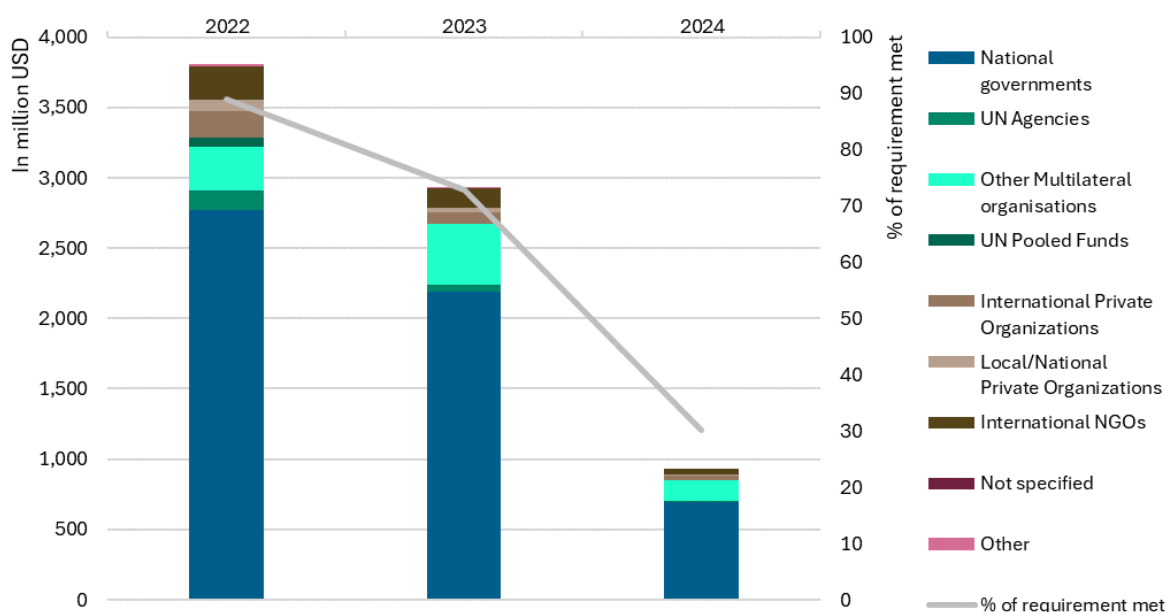
have disabilities.<sup>47</sup>

19. Pre-crisis stunting and acute malnutrition rates were low with substantial variations across oblasts, with some poor infant and young child feeding practices. Access to medicines, health and nutrition services have deteriorated with conflict-related damage to health infrastructure and facilities, the loss of staff through displacement and conscription, and a lack of transportation, particularly in rural areas, which has limited the ability of many to access primary and secondary healthcare services.<sup>48</sup>

## 1.2.4 International assistance

20. Emergency assistance scaled up after the start of the war in 2022, as the humanitarian community received USD 7,667 million from 2022 to July 2024 (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5 – Humanitarian funds to Ukraine (2022- July 2024)**



Source: OCHA, Financial Tracking Service database, extracted on 04 July 2024.

21. The top five humanitarian donors from 2022 to 2024 were the United States of America (USA) (25 percent of the total funds), Germany (10 percent), the European Commission (10 percent), Japan (4 percent), and France (4 percent).<sup>49</sup> Funding of the United Nations inter-agency coordinated plans was close to requirements in 2022 and 2023.
22. The main framework for the Government of Ukraine crisis response is the Ukraine's National Recovery Plan, which came into force in July 2022. This plan aims to reinforce Ukraine's: (i) economic, social and environmental resilience; (ii) ability to recover from the shocks produced by the war; and (iii) longer-term modernization and growth. As part of this plan, 24 ministry-led working groups and 15 national programmes were created, some of which target thematic areas in which WFP is involved, including collecting emergency funding and strengthening targeted and effective social policy.<sup>50</sup>
23. The United Nations Transitional Framework for Support to the Government for an 18-month period, from September 2022 to December 2023, was built around two strategic priorities, namely

<sup>47</sup> International Disability Alliance (2023). The situation of persons with disabilities in the context of the war of aggression by Russia against Ukraine.

<sup>48</sup> OCHA. Humanitarian Needs Overview Ukraine. December 2022.

<sup>49</sup> OCHA, Financial Tracking Service database, extracted on 4 July 2024

<sup>50</sup> Government of Ukraine (2022). National Recovery Council, Ukraine's National Recovery Plan.



strengthening systems and building resilience.<sup>51</sup> A new four-year United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework is currently being drafted. Ukraine has received USD 2.2 billion in official development assistance in 2021 and USD 30.2 billion in 2022, accounting for respectively 1 percent and 17 percent of Ukraine's gross national income<sup>52</sup>. The main donors are the United States, Germany, the European Union (EU) institutions, the Global Fund and the United Kingdom.<sup>53</sup>

## 1.3 Subject being evaluated

### 1.3.1 Evolution of WFP support

24. The first operational presence of WFP in Ukraine spanned the period 2014 to 2018. Based on contextual improvements, WFP closed its country office (CO) in 2018. As tensions between Ukraine and Russia increased in the course of 2021, scoping missions were conducted in Ukraine in May 2021 and early February 2022 to understand the humanitarian response capacity, and to undertake preparedness activities in case of an escalation of the conflict in Ukraine.<sup>54</sup> These missions conducted a number of preparedness activities and renewed contact with other stakeholders operating in the country. More information on preparedness can be found in Finding 21.
25. **A limited emergency operation (LEO)** was launched by WFP in February 2022,<sup>55</sup> initially planned to last three months. The primary objective was to address gaps in the provision of basic assistance to crisis-affected people, in cooperation with the UNCT and other relevant stakeholders. It focused on two strategic outcomes (SO), namely: (i) ensuring access to food for crisis-affected people through a combination of cash-based and in-kind modalities; and (ii) enhancing the broader humanitarian response through support to logistics coordination and emergency telecommunications, as well as on-demand services. The LEO subsequently underwent four budget revisions (BR), resulting in significant changes to WFP operations (see Annex 8).
26. Over the first weeks of the scale-up, WFP operations were managed from Krakow, Poland, under supervision of a WFP emergency coordinator appointed on 5 March 2022. WFP progressively increased its operational presence in Ukraine with the opening of an office in Lviv in March 2022. Country office functions were transferred to the Kyiv office after its opening in June 2022, while two other field offices were created in Dnipro and Odessa, respectively in April and July 2022.
27. To follow the LEO, WFP adopted the Ukraine Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan (T-ICSP) for an initial duration of one and a half years up to June 2024.<sup>56</sup> The T-ICSP is aligned to the WFP Strategic Plan (2022-2025), the Humanitarian Response Plan for Ukraine 2023 and the United Nations Transitional Framework 2022. It was structured around three outcomes, and seven initial activities (see Figure 7). The T-ICSP was revised in December 2023 to: (i) extend the T-ICSP timeframe until December 2024; (ii) reduce the beneficiaries targeted under SO1 balanced by a parallel increase in the beneficiaries targeted under SO2; (iii) add a new activity under SO1 to initiate demining operations; and (iv) increase the transfer value for multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) and revise composition of the in-kind food basket.<sup>57</sup> Another budget revision was approved in June 2024 to: (i) add cash as a transfer modality for Activity 4; and (ii) bring in a minor adaptation of beneficiary caseloads for activities 1 and 4.
28. The timeline of WFP activities and contextual changes in Ukraine is presented in Figure 6.

<sup>51</sup> UNCT (2022). Results Report – Ukraine 2021.

<sup>52</sup> OECD. Official development assistance at a glance dashboard. [Official development assistance at a glance | OECD](#)

<sup>53</sup> OECD Stats dashboard, consulted on 12/02/2024.

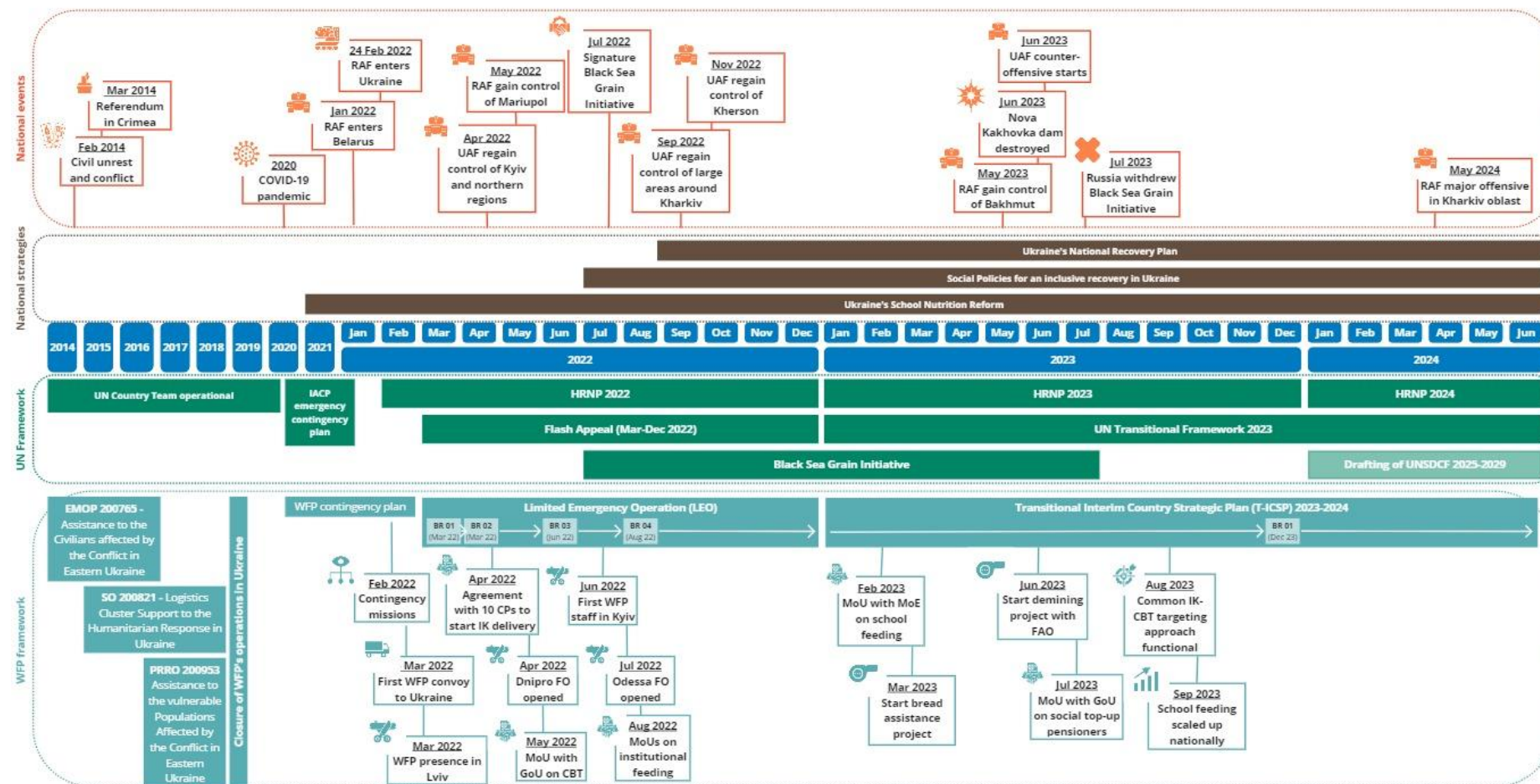
<sup>54</sup> Evaluation ToR – Annex A.

<sup>55</sup> WFP (2022). Limited Emergency Operation – Ukraine: narrative.

<sup>56</sup> WFP. Ukraine Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan (2023–2024). 13 December 2022.

<sup>57</sup> WFP (2023). T-ICSP BR 01 Narrative.

Figure 6 – Timeline of WFP operations since 2014



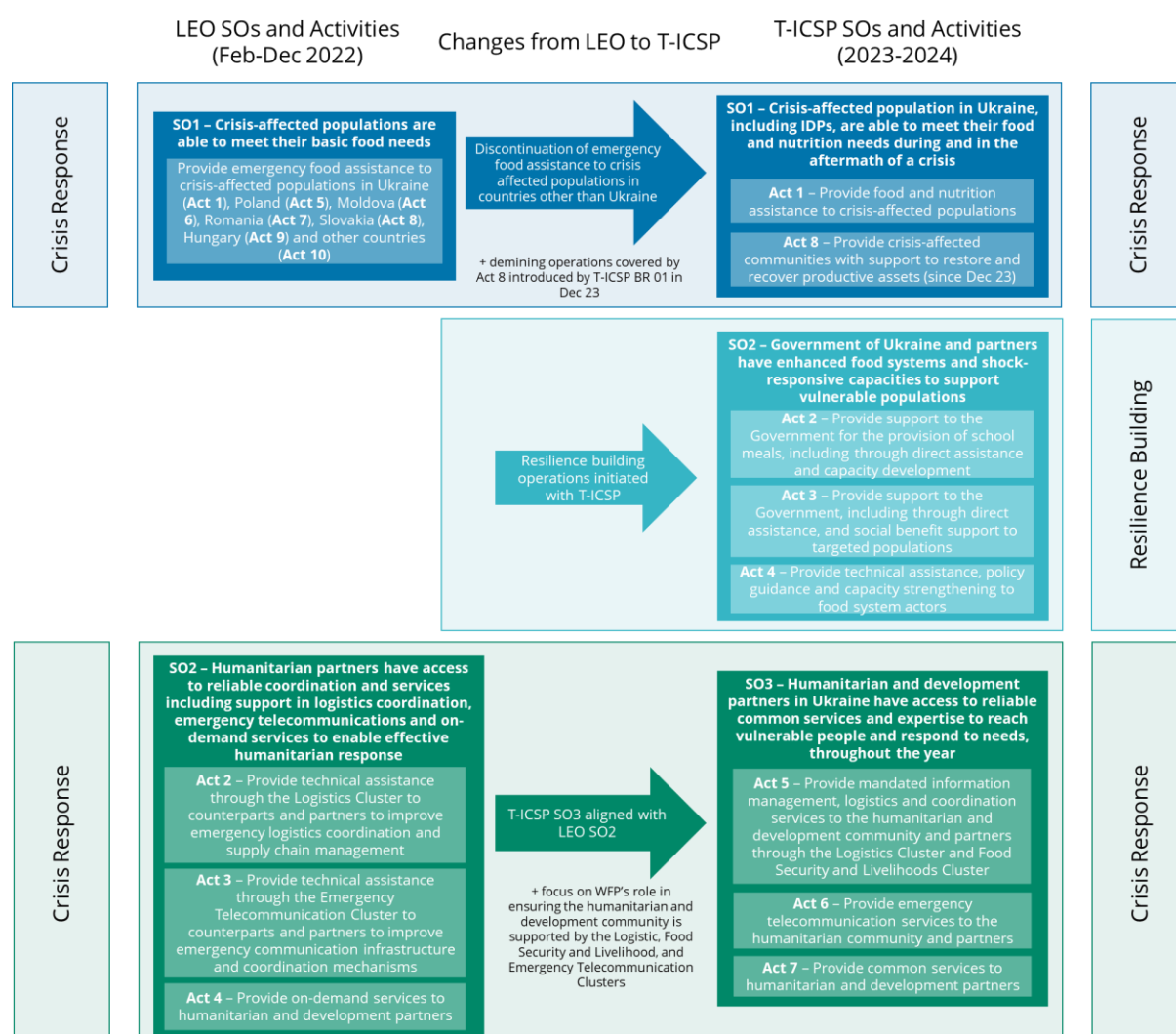
Source: Evaluation terms of reference, internal situation reports 2022-2023, inception mission key informant interviews (KIs).



29. The scope of the LEO and T-ICSP are compared in Figure 7 with key changes including:

- The T-ICSP SO1 incorporates crisis response-related interventions covered by the LEO SO1, unconditional resource transfer activities to crisis-affected people with the objective of meeting their food and nutrition needs. Support to Ukrainian refugees in neighbouring countries under the LEO was discontinued.
- The T-ICSP SO3 is aligned with the LEO SO2, which aims to support partners' access to reliable coordination services. LEO support to the logistics cluster and the emergency telecommunications cluster was expanded under the T-ICSP to include support to the food security and livelihoods cluster and the provision of common services.
- The T-ICSP added a strategic outcome on resilience building activities, aiming to enhance food systems and government shock-responsiveness capacities. SO2 includes activities providing support to the Government of Ukraine to implement school meals, to reinforce social assistance and to strengthen Ukrainian food systems.

**Figure 7 – Activity mapping: Ukraine LEO and T-ICSP**



Source: Evaluation teams, based on LEO and T-ICSP operation documents.

30. WFP partnered with the Government of Ukraine in the Grain from Ukraine initiative, adopted in November 2022, which aims to facilitate food commodities exports outside of Ukraine, in other areas where WFP operates (see Box 1). This initiative is considered as part of the evaluation scope, although not part of the LEO or T-ICSP.

### Box 1 – Grain from Ukraine initiative

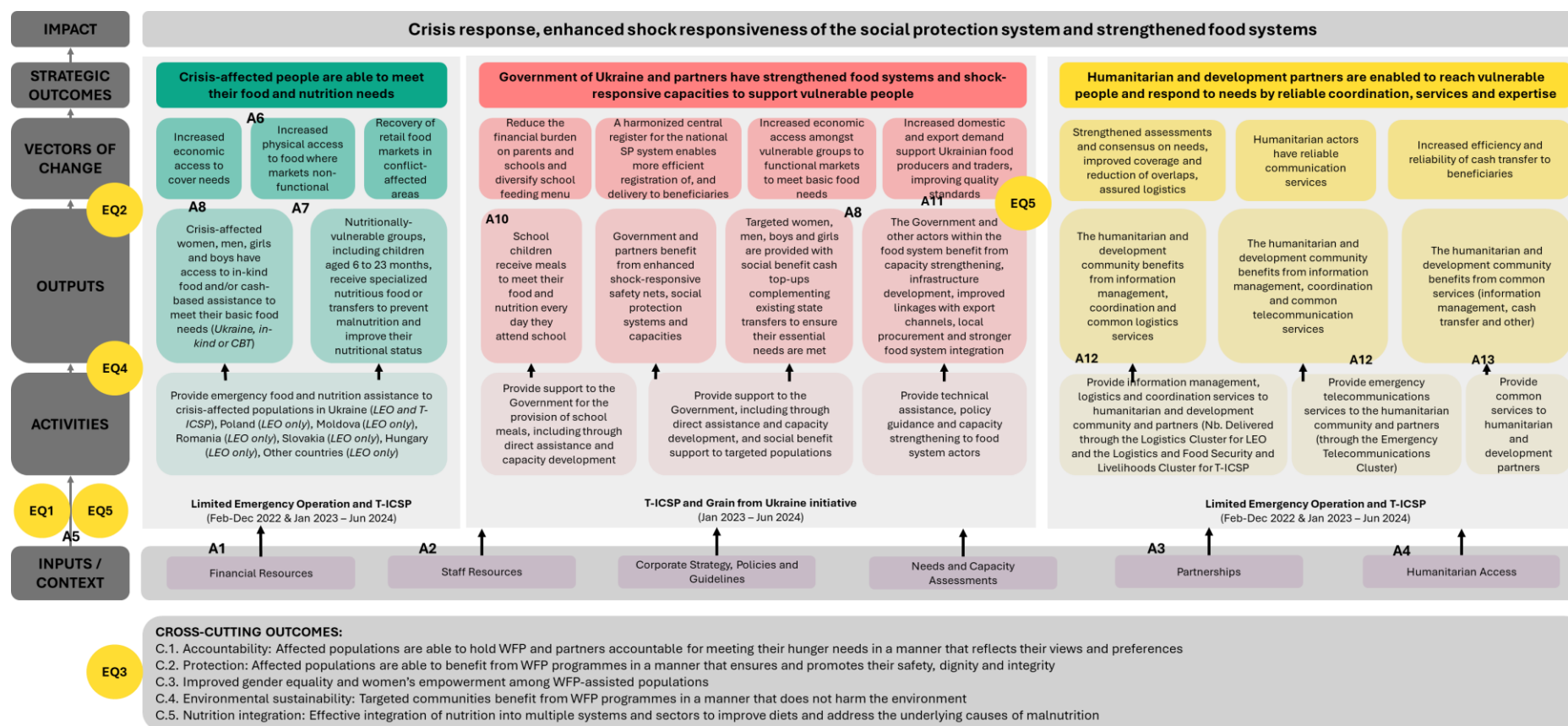
“Grain from Ukraine” was launched by President Volodymyr Zelensky on 26 November 2022. Under the programme, Ukraine, partner countries and private sector donors aim to supply Ukrainian grain to countries in Africa and Asia facing malnutrition and hunger. The programme is based on donor contributions to WFP, which then undertakes regular procurement of agricultural products directly from Ukrainian producers and distributes them to beneficiary countries identified for WFP operations.

Since the beginning of the initiative, Ukraine, with the participation of WFP, has sent 207,000 mt of food commodities (whole wheat, vegetable oil, yellow split peas and maize) to countries including Djibouti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nigeria, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Yemen and Zambia. Donors have so far provided approximately USD 290 million to finance these purchases.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 17 January 2024 (<https://mfa.gov.ua/en/grain-ukraine>).

31. The LEO and the T-ICSP do include logframes with indicators at output and outcome levels and an accompanying narrative document for the T-ICSP where the logic of intervention is explained and assumptions by strategic outcome are provided. However, neither the LEO nor the T-ICSP include a full theory of change (ToC), as this was not required at the time of the design. Based on desk review and consultations with the country office, the evaluation team developed a reconstructed theory of change during the inception phase as a key tool for this evaluation (Figure 8), which was discussed during an in-country workshop with country office senior management and validated as part of the inception report. This theory of change includes assumptions (factors beyond the control of WFP) that are necessary for the results to be achieved. The assumptions (see Annex 4) are formulated as hypotheses and helped to formulate the questions that were assessed by the evaluation during the data collection phase.

Figure 8 – Theory of change



Source: Evaluation team.

### 1.3.2 Resource mobilization

32. The first version of the LEO approved in February 2022 included a needs-based plan (NBP) amounting to USD 49,998,846 and 200,000 planned beneficiaries for three months. As the duration of the LEO was extended<sup>58</sup> and the scale of the response expanded<sup>59</sup> these figures increased dramatically. In the last LEO budget revision in August 2022, the needs-based plan amounted to USD 1,946,462,396, almost 40 times the initial amount, and the number of planned beneficiaries was 4,705,000 people, more than 20 times higher than the initial beneficiary caseload. This surge was decided based on the deepened knowledge of the conflict settings and operational context, ensuring a response better tailored to identified needs.
33. The T-ICSP was initially planned to last from January 2023 to June 2024, with a needs-based plan amounting to USD 1,904,078,061 and 4,901,200 planned beneficiaries. As BR01 extended the duration to December 2024 and added a new activity under SO1, the needs-based plan slightly increased to USD 2,079,056,768. In parallel, this budget revision also decreased the total planned beneficiaries to 4,800,000 – with a reduction in SO1 crisis beneficiaries and slight increase in SO2 resilience building beneficiaries. BR02 introduced minor changes with a new needs-based plan decrease of 0.4 percent and an increase of beneficiary caseload up to 7,100. While funds allocated to Activity 1<sup>60</sup> represented the bulk of financial resources channeled by WFP to Ukraine in 2023 and 2024, its proportional weight within the T-ICSP portfolio decreased from almost 80 percent in 2023 to 58 percent in 2024. Allocations to activities 3<sup>61</sup> and 8,<sup>62</sup> that respectively targeted support to the Government of Ukraine, including social top-up and demining activities, increased (see

---

<sup>58</sup> BR01 extended LEO's duration until June 2022, BR03 until August 2022 and BR04 to December 2022.

<sup>59</sup> Budget revisions 01, 03 and 04 included an increase of planned beneficiaries.

<sup>60</sup> T-ICSP Activity 1: "Provide food and nutrition assistance to crisis-affected populations."

<sup>61</sup> T-ICSP Activity 3: "Provide support to the Government, including through direct assistance and capacity development, and social benefit support to targeted populations".

<sup>62</sup> T-ICSP Activity 8: "Provide crisis-affected populations benefit from efforts to restore and recover productive assets".

35. **Table 1).**

**Table 1 – LEO and T-ICSP expenditure as percent of allocated resources by Activity (2022–2024)**

Focus Area	Activity	Strategic Objective	Original NBP	Latest NBP	Allocated resources	Expenditures	Expenditure as percent of allocated resource	Coverage rate (Allocated resource as % of current NBP)	Expenditure as % of current NBP)
Limited Emergency Operation (Feb-Dec 22)									
Crisis Response	Act 1	SO1	39 992 042	1 708 435 814	779 909 276	681 644 154	87%	46%	40%
	Act 2	SO2	2 608 242	10 019 924	6 979 381	4 452 746	64%	70%	44%
	Act 3		652 061	3 250 858	3 038 797	1 405 830	46%	93%	43%
	Act 4		231 481	7 024 132	1 445 535	1 321 256	91%	21%	19%
	Act 5	SO1	0	6 772 473	0	0	0%	0%	0%
	Act 6		0	25 371 647	6 135 320	6 085 665	99%	24%	24%
	Act 7		0	6 772 473	0	0	0%	0%	0%
	Act 8		0	6 772 473	0	0	0%	0%	0%
	Act 9		0	6 772 473	0	0	0%	0%	0%
	Act 10		0	6 772 473	0	0	0%	0%	0%
Non Activity Specific				6 969 719					
Direct and Indirect Costs			6 515 021	158 497 655	76 523 293	65 863 537	86%	48%	42%
Total			49 998 847	1 946 462 395	881 001 321	760 773 188	86%	45%	39%
Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan (2023-2024)									
2023									
Crisis Response	Act 1	SO1	920 008 129	860 558 072	617 910 628	460 119 476	74%	72%	53%
	Non Activity Specific		0	0	2 694 284	0			
Resilience Building	Act 2	SO2	36 567 121	26 070 129	8 402 428	732 279	9%	32%	3%
	Act 3		184 524 418	140 114 613	85 318 822	25 591 816	30%	61%	18%
	Act 4		3 293 765	3 509 631	11 750 302	5 124 817	44%	335%	146%
	Non Activity Specific		0	0	601 516	0			
Crisis Response	Act 5	SO3	4 637 598	4 635 056	5 269 414	3 130 880	59%	114%	68%
	Act 6		1 620 083	1 761 308	3 612 184	1 331 877	37%	205%	76%
	Act 7		4 639 800	4 639 800	630 468	602 216	96%	14%	13%
	Act 8		0	0	9 844 511	0			
Non SO Specific					2 836 724				
Direct and Indirect Costs			102 023 553	94 456 834	59 490 493	55 882 982	94%	63%	59%
Total			1 257 314 467	1 135 745 443	808 361 774	552 516 343	68%	71%	49%
2024									
Crisis Response	Act 1	SO1	430 354 933	563 159 171	26 340 717	2 394 581	9%	5%	0%
Resilience Building	Act 2	SO2	30 851 761	17 758 141	0	135 143		0%	1%
	Act 3		126 437 216	182 175 099	9 303 550	0	0%	5%	0%
	Act 4		1 649 210	1 215 267	303 425	152 968	50%	25%	13%
Crisis Response	Act 5	SO3	2 162 199	4 330 846	489 661	136	0%	11%	0%
	Act 6		810 041	2 051 794	0	5 560		0%	0%
	Act 7		2,299,00	4 598 000	0	0		0%	0%
	Act 8		0	91 780 027	1 116 917	45	0%	1%	0%
Direct and Indirect Costs			77 774 733	101 672 112	12 636 367	10 684 405	85%	12%	11%
Total			670 040 093	968 740 457	50 190 637	13 372 838	27%	5%	1%

Source: WFP, annual country reports (ACRs) (2022-2023), country portfolio budget (CPB) resource overview (2024), extracted on 24 June 2024.

36. Allocated resources of the LEO represented 41 percent of the needs-based plan, with 63 percent for the T-ICSP (as of June 2024).<sup>63</sup> Most funding was earmarked at the activity level (63 percent for the LEO and 66 percent for the T-ICSP) (see

<sup>63</sup> WFP, CPB database, extracted on 24 June 2024.

37. Table 2). The main LEO donors were the USA (48.3 percent of funded needs-based plan), private donors (12.6 percent) Germany (9.7 percent) and Canada (8.7 percent),<sup>64</sup> while for the T-ICSP, those were the USA (41.2 percent), Germany (15.5 percent), and the European Commission (8.3 percent).<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> WFP (2023). LEO resource situation report.

<sup>65</sup> WFP, T-ICSP resource situation report, extracted in February 2023.



**Table 2 – Directed multilateral contributions by share of earmarking levels – LEO (Feb-Dec 2022) and T-ICSP (2023-2024)**

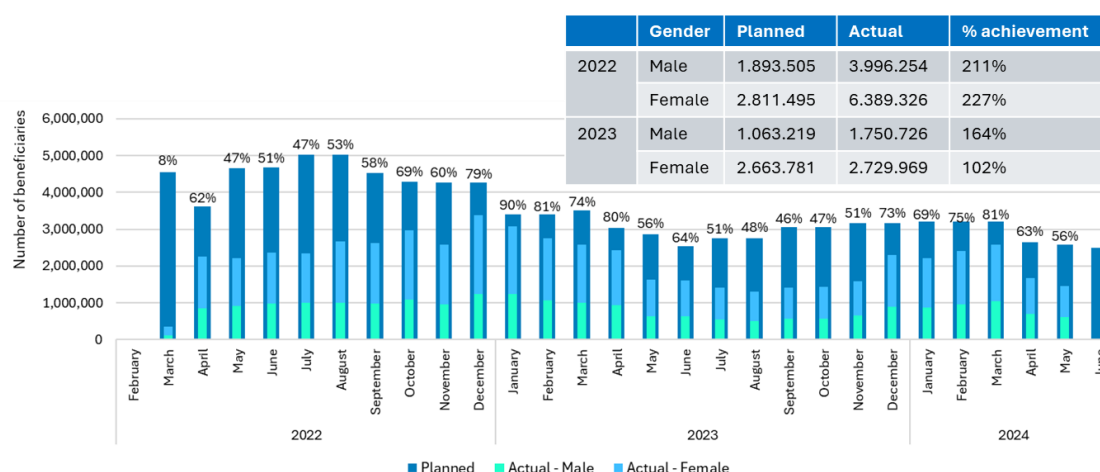
	LEO (Feb-Dec 2022)	T-ICSP (2023-2024)
Country level	29.30%	18.66%
Strategic outcome level	0%	10.21%
Activity level	62.58%	50.18%
Flexible funding	8.12%	20.41%
Direct support costs level	-	-
Sustainable Development Goal level		0.53%

Source: WFP, FACTory, extracted on 24 June 2024.

### 1.3.3 Beneficiaries

38. WFP was able to scale up delivery of food assistance to a large number of beneficiaries from April 2022. After the initial scale-up, the WFP operation followed a cyclical pattern with a higher volume of beneficiaries assisted in winter, when the needs were higher, and a lower volume in summer. Overall, the number of beneficiaries assisted by unconditional resource transfers<sup>66</sup> has fallen consistently below monthly targets (see Finding 1), although largely overcoming yearly targets. WFP has continuously planned to reach more than two times more females than males, while in practice both genders have been reached at a similar scale (see Figure 9).

**Figure 9 – Beneficiaries (planned and actual) by month and sex (March 2022-May 2024)<sup>67</sup>**



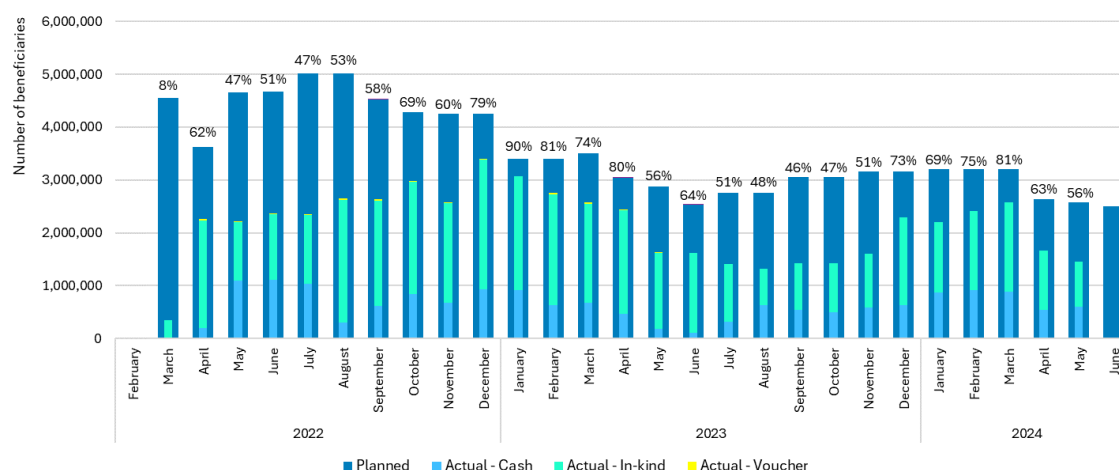
Source: WFP, COMET, extracted on 24 June 2024 / ACRs 2022-2022.

<sup>66</sup> This analysis covers LEO Act 1 and T-ICSP Act 1 and 8.

<sup>67</sup> Percentages indicated in this graph and the following ones represent the ratio between actual versus planned number of total beneficiaries. Please note that data for the last months of 2024 might be preliminary and should be considered cautiously. Please note that the graph shows monthly assistance, with actuals figures often appearing lower than planned, while the table presents annual totals, where actuals figures exceed planned figures because they account for all unique beneficiaries assisted throughout the year, including overlapping individuals across months. The evaluation team's interpretation is that this reflects the cumulative impact of short-term, one-month assistance provided to different groups each month.

39. In-kind food transfers were the most used modality, reaching on average 70 percent of both LEO and T-ICSP beneficiaries.<sup>68</sup> The share of in-kind assistance varied considerably by month, from more than 91 percent in April 2022, to 53 percent in June 2022, then progressively rising again until reaching 93 percent of WFP assistance in June 2023 and decreasing again in autumn 2023. Cash transfers accounted for 30 percent of the beneficiaries reached under both the LEO and T-ICSP. The use of vouchers was minimal (Figure 10).

**Figure 10 – Beneficiaries (planned and actual) by month and transfer modality (March 2022-May 2024)<sup>69</sup>**



Source: WFP, COMET, Extracted on 24 June 2024.

40. Under the LEO, 49 percent of beneficiaries were displaced people, 50 percent were residents and the remaining percent were either refugees or returnees, while under the T-ICSP, displaced people were only 15 percent of the beneficiaries, with 81 percent being residents with a stronger focus on families living close to the front line (

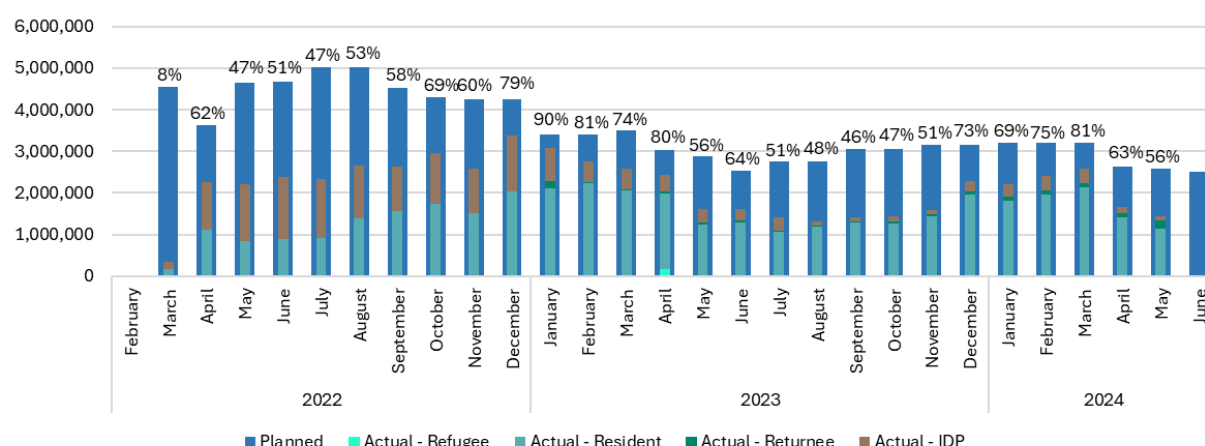
<sup>68</sup> As the figures reported in this data set are registered on a monthly basis, it may include overlaps in counting the beneficiaries from one month to another and within a month, and thus should be used cautiously.

<sup>69</sup> To produce Figure 10 and

Figure 11, the following methodology was followed: (i) total actual and planned monthly beneficiaries were extracted from CM-C007; (ii) proportion of actual monthly beneficiaries per transfer modality type were calculated based on CM-A003; and (iii) the columns representing total actual monthly beneficiaries were broken down per transfer modality based on proportions calculated in (ii). This methodology was used to mitigate possible overlaps in counting monthly beneficiaries per different categories in CM-A003. However, values of beneficiaries actually reached through one specific transfer modality should not be extracted from this graph as those are proportions calculated by the evaluation team, that might not exactly match with WFP exact performance.

41. Figure 11).

**Figure 11 – Beneficiaries (planned and actual) by month and residence status (March 2022-May 2024)<sup>70</sup>**



Source: WFP, COMET. Extracted on 24 June 2024.

## 1.4 Evaluation methodology, limitations and ethical considerations

42. As specified in the terms of reference, the evaluation adopted standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria including coherence, relevance, effectiveness and efficiency and additional humanitarian-related criteria, namely coverage, appropriateness and connectedness (see Annex 3). The evaluation followed a theory-based approach, reconstructing a theory of change during the inception phase (see Figure 8). The theory of change places the logic of the LEO and T-ICSP objectives and activities within a broader context, and highlights the pathways to higher-level results.
43. The evaluation drew from multiple sources of evidence including:
  - (i) a desk review of key internal and external documents, also using Natural Language Processing tools to extract and analyse data (Annex 4);
  - (ii) key informant interviews both face-to-face and remote (49 men, 48 women) and additional field-level interviews (41 men, 48 women), with a wide range of key stakeholders in Kyiv and outside Ukraine<sup>71</sup> (see Annex 7);
  - (iii) a perception survey disseminated through staff of 13 cooperating partners (CPs), with 6 respondents.<sup>72</sup> The low response rate to the survey of cooperating partners meant that the evidence was only used qualitatively;<sup>73</sup>
  - (iv) focus group discussions (FGDs) with 142 people (118 women and girl beneficiaries, 34 men and boy beneficiaries) covering all type of WFP operations implemented in Ukraine over the period under review; and
  - (v) a secondary data analysis covering WFP monitoring and reporting data, as well as financial and supply chain data, complemented by external datasets (see Figure 12).

<sup>70</sup> See previous footnote. Similar methodology was used with residence status values.

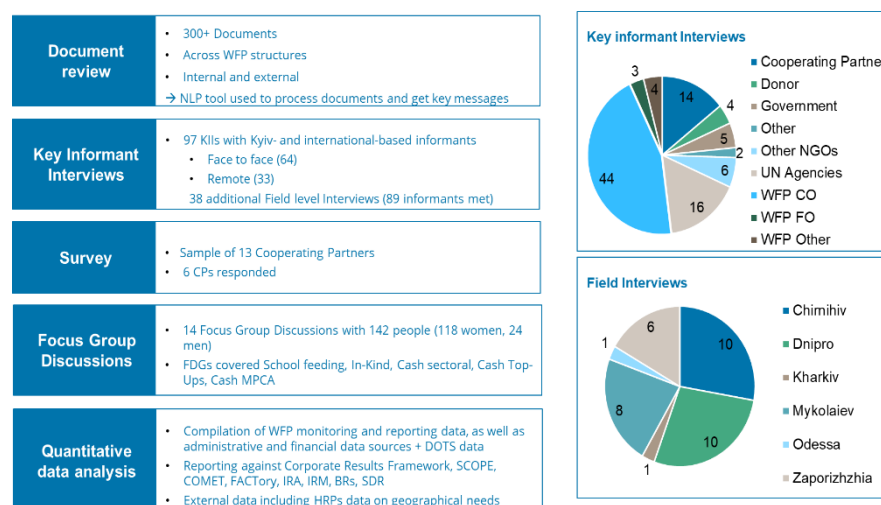
<sup>71</sup> Key stakeholder groups included: the WFP staff who currently or previously supported the Ukraine operation, key donors, Ukrainian government ministries, UN and international organization partner agencies, cooperating partners and other technical and private sector partners.

<sup>72</sup> The response rate should take account of the fact that CPs were invited to submit up to 3 individual responses, rather than one organizational response.

<sup>73</sup> Efforts was made to minimize survey fatigue among respondents by keeping the survey concise (10-15 minutes), relevant, and available in multiple languages. The survey was administered online, and reminders sent periodically to improve the response rate. Yet, the low response rate to data was compensated by 12 in-person interviews with CPs including a mix of international and local NGOs – out of approximately 20 current and past field-level agreement (FLA) holders in total.

44. Overall, the evaluation team engaged with 328 people as part of data collection activities, including 214 women and 114 men.

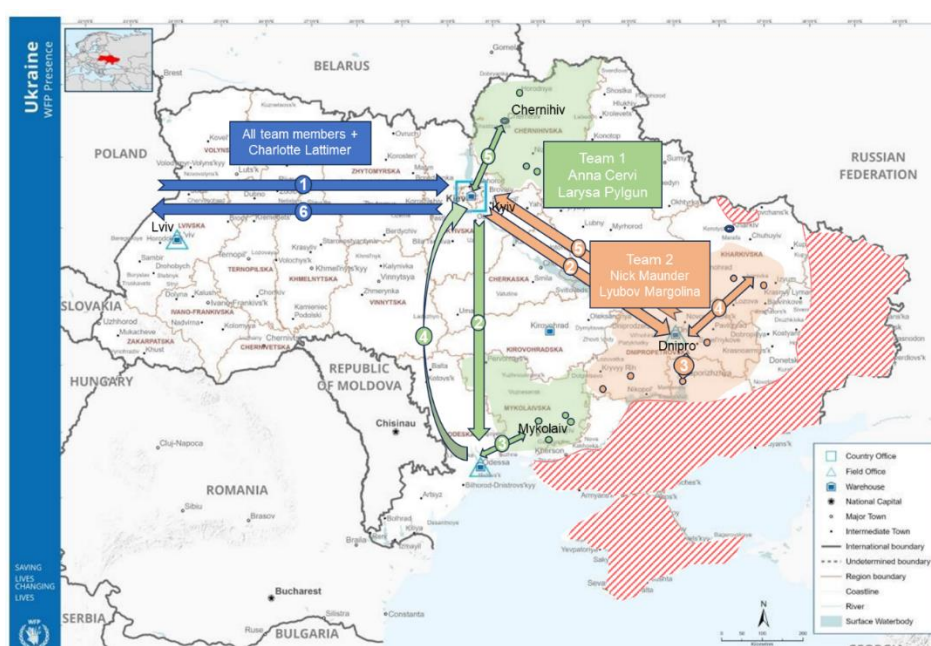
**Figure 12 – Evaluation data collection tools**



Source: Evaluation team

45. During the data collection mission, the evaluation team spent one week in the regions to collect evidence from current beneficiaries of WFP activities and from regional and district level stakeholders (see Annex 6). The location for those missions is presented on Figure 13 below. These missions covered the central and eastern regions where most WFP activities were located. The site selection spanned the full range of ongoing WFP activities, including in-kind distributions, sectoral cash assistance, pension top-ups, school feeding, institutional feeding and agricultural demining. Given the significant logistical and security challenges, a random sampling of project sites was neither logistically feasible nor advisable. Locations were identified and agreed on shortly before the mission considering security advice. Access to certain conflict-affected areas was limited due to security concerns, especially in the Kharkiv oblast. Mitigation measures included conducting additional remote interviews and adapting the location of site visits.

**Figure 13 – Map of areas visited by the evaluation team during the data collection visit**



Source: Evaluation team.

46. As noted in Section 1.1, given that support to Ukrainian refugees outside of the country was quickly excluded from the operation, the evaluation scope was deliberately limited to the territorial boundaries of Ukraine. The only LEO allocation of funds for activities outside of Ukraine was USD 6 million to support refugees in Moldova in 2022 (0.75 percent of the total LEO allocated resources). As of August 2022, WFP support to refugees in Moldova was transferred to a separate T-ICSP for Moldova.
47. There were significant constraints to the evaluation coverage of areas under Russian control in Ukraine. No direct humanitarian access, including by the evaluation team, was possible. Furthermore, access to relevant stakeholders was extremely limited, with unsuccessful efforts to secure interviews with senior United Nations actors based outside of Ukraine, Russian representatives or civil society actors operating in these areas.

## **Box 2 – Gender and disability considerations in the evaluation process**

A gender and inclusion lens was applied to each stage of the evaluation process, including: recruiting a gender-balanced evaluation team (including dedicated gender and inclusion expertise); guaranteeing, during consultations with stakeholders, a gender balance in both the evaluation team and the interviewees involved; ensuring that focus group discussions were conducted in safe, accessible and socially acceptable locations; and applying the same gender and inclusion lens to consideration of evaluation questions. In addition to dedicated consideration of gender under EQ3 (and sub-EQ3.2), the evaluation matrix (see Annex 3) applied gender consideration to other (sub) evaluation questions through relevant indicators.

The team applied a gender and disability consideration also to data collection and analysis, ensuring that equal consideration was given to women, men and people with a disability and their organizations. This involved gender disaggregation of data sources where appropriate (for example, survey responses), as well as careful indication of specific sources of data during triangulation sessions to ensure representation of the viewpoints of marginalized groups, as well as identification of any differentiation of findings by group. This triangulation analysis was carried out by the team members during multiple data analysis sessions after the completion of the in-country mission and remote key informant interviews.

48. At the end of the data collection phase, the evaluation team carried out a triangulation exercise to interpret patterns across the evidence into main findings, using a content analysis of the data collection. The evidence was assessed against a modified contribution analysis framework (see Annex 4 – Box 1) to seek to identify which WFP action could plausibly have contributed to the strategic outcomes and results identified in the reconstructed theory of change and to identify any other factors – internal or external – that could have impacted on observed results.
49. Ethical considerations were taken into account in the design and implementation phases, including issues related to data confidentiality and protection issues, protecting vulnerable respondents and ensuring that the evaluation team avoided causing harm. No conflict of interest has been identified. Further details of the evaluation methodology can be found in Annexes 4 and 5.

# Evaluation findings

## 2.1 EQ1 – RELEVANCE

### 2.1.1 Alignment to needs

**Summary Finding 1:** WFP rapidly collected, analysed and shared information on food insecurity and needs that filled a void and supported key strategic decisions, which were then discussed with cluster partners. However, the relatively moderate nature of food insecurity in Ukraine raised questions as to whether the scale of the response was sufficiently justified compared to other global crises. Despite efforts by WFP to be responsive to the needs of beneficiaries, the transfer modalities used were not fully aligned with context, needs and preferences.

50. **WFP played an important role in building the understanding of crisis-related food security needs.** At the onset of the war, WFP had to contend with a near absence of food security information to support planning. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) had conducted a food security and livelihoods assessment in the areas under the military control of the Russian Federation of Luhansk and Donetsk in 2021<sup>74</sup> but this was largely redundant given the changes in context.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, conducting assessments proved challenging given the ongoing conflict and large-scale population movements.
51. WFP adapted well to address this information void. Based on two web-based surveys, WFP was able to publish a first national food security report by March 2022.<sup>76</sup> A strong partnership was established with the Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger (REACH) initiative, and formalized through yearly framework agreements renewed from 2022 to 2024, to conduct a multi-sector needs assessment (MSNA) at the request of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), in coordination with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the cluster lead agencies. The MSNA analysed the demographics, multisectoral humanitarian needs, service access and displacement dynamics of the people living in Ukraine to inform the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP). The first multisector needs assessment was published in June,<sup>77</sup> with a second in 2023.<sup>78</sup>
52. However, as noted in interviews, MSNAs were not designed to substitute for more detailed sectoral assessments, but were instead meant to provide a complementary intersectoral comparison. Consequently, a decision was taken to design and implement more detailed food security assessments. WFP-REACH multisectoral assessments were conducted in 2022, 2023 and 2024 and a further food and livelihoods assessment with FAO was planned in 2024. Importantly WFP and REACH also conducted a remote assessment of multisectoral needs in the areas under the military control of the Russian Federation in order to position itself to respond when and if access was granted.
53. **WFP used a variety of additional information sources to inform strategic and operational decisions.** Judged on the number of displaced people alone, Ukraine was clearly a major global emergency and a large-scale corporate response was imperative (Figure 14). The evaluation found that operational decisions were linked to the assessments with a clear line to beneficiary targets. As improved information on needs became available this was integrated into the successive

<sup>74</sup> FAO (2021). Biannual Report on Global Food Markets November 2021.

<sup>75</sup> This study found that there was 2.5 percent severe, and 15.8 percent moderate, food insecurity and that beneficiaries identified priority needs as fuel (28 percent), healthcare and medicines (23 percent), housing repair (5 percent) and food (2 percent).

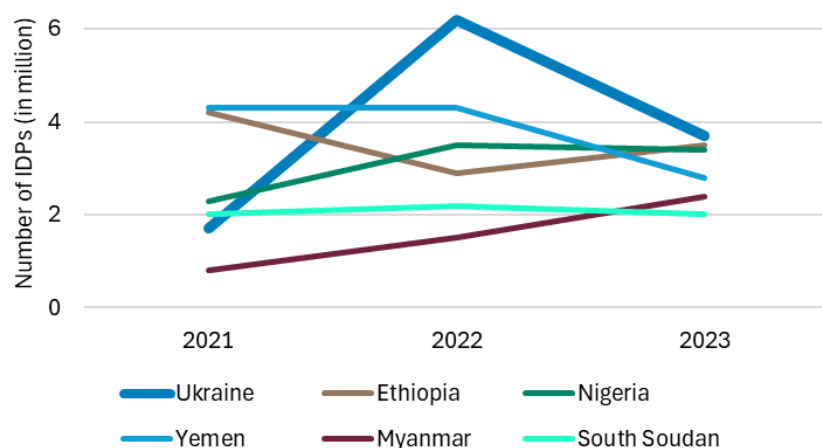
<sup>76</sup> FAO (2021). Biannual Report on Global Food Markets November 2021.

<sup>77</sup> WFP. Ukraine Needs Assessment – Food Security and Essential Needs – Analysis of data from the 2022 Ukraine Need Assessment.

<sup>78</sup> REACH and WFP. Needs Assessment – Gender, Age and Disability Situation Overview – Ukraine January 2024.

budget revisions.<sup>79</sup> There was a clear alignment between assessment findings and global standards for determining the number of people in need.

**Figure 14 – Four-year trends in food crisis countries with 2-5 million internally displaced people in 2023**



Colombia, with 6.9 million IDPs in 2023, is not included in this graph because no data were available for 2021-2022

Source: Food Security Information Network (FSIN) and Global Network Against Food Crises. 2023. GRFC 2023. Rome.

54. While the estimation of needs followed international established protocols in aiming to target both moderately and severely food insecure people as needing assistance, Ukraine demonstrated lower levels of severe food insecurity than other major global crises. Nationally the proportion assessed as severely food insecure in Ukraine was assessed at 2 percent in 2023.<sup>80</sup> This can be compared to an average of 4.1 percent<sup>81</sup> across 19 countries providing disaggregated data in 2023 to the Global Food Crisis Report and four countries that have had more than 10 percent of their analysed populations in an emergency phase (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 4) since 2020 – Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Haiti and South Sudan.
55. There is a global technical agreement to use IPC as a preferred standard in assessment where possible.<sup>82</sup> Due to competing priorities, the Government of Ukraine declined to host an IPC food security analysis. Consequently, WFP made a pragmatic decision to base the assessment on the WFP Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators (CARI) methodology. However, while WFP collaborated with REACH in data collection, this analysis lacked the same level of authority that comes with wider consensus-based assessments and created space for other agencies to develop internal estimates.<sup>83</sup>
56. Important strategic shifts in the WFP strategic approach complemented the assessment findings with sound judgement. An initial focus on the large number of refugees in neighbouring European Union countries (as witnessed by the initial scope of the LEO), was dropped as it became clear that needs would be better met through hosting governments.<sup>84</sup> This strategic approach was replaced

<sup>79</sup> For example, the 2023 budget revision reduced the number targeted by WFP for crisis response on the basis of assessed food security improvements.

<sup>80</sup> FSIN and Global Network Against Food Crises (2023). Global Report against Food Crises.

<sup>81</sup> FSIN and Global Network Against Food Crises (2024). Global Report against Food Crises.

<sup>82</sup> As reported in the methodology used by the Global Food Crisis Report (see technical notes <https://www.fsinplatform.org/report/global-report-food-crises-2024/>).

<sup>83</sup> Information from key informant – alternative assessments remained confidential.

<sup>84</sup> Some resources of the Ukraine LEO were spent in Moldova for Ukrainian refugees, before a separated T-ICSP Moldova was adopted in summer 2022.



by an evidence-based shift to supporting internally displaced people countrywide, with a further transition to focusing on families in front-line areas.<sup>85</sup> The data continues to show that the needs of resident people closest to the front line and internally displaced people are greatest, followed by returnees and finally resident people in other areas of the country (see

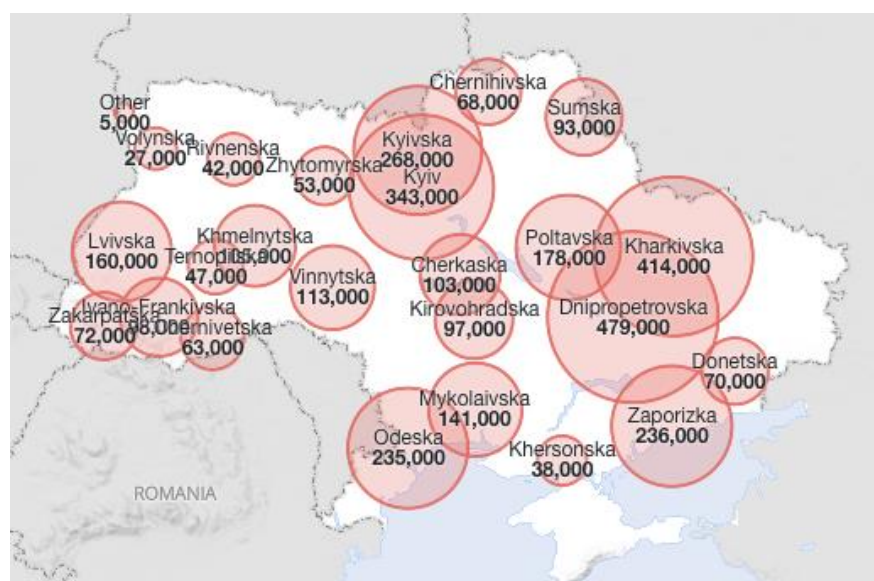
57. Table 3), but stakeholders widely concurred that the Government and other agencies are well placed to cover needs in the central and western areas of the country. Furthermore, large numbers of internally displaced people and returnees continue to reside in the front-line regions, including Dnipro and Kharkiv, and are included in the WFP caseload (Figure 15).

**Table 3 – Proportion of various types of assistance needed, as reported by population groups in 2023**

Type of assistance	Non-IDPs	IDPs	Returnees
Cash	54%	80%	58%
Medicine and health services	22%	36%	23%
Repair materials	25%	27%	27%
Food	13%	29%	17%
Access to money	6%	10%	8%
Clothes, shoes, and other non-food items	10%	30%	12%
Hygiene items	10%	29%	12%
Accommodation	3%	24%	6%

Source: United Nations Ukraine (2023) Common Country Analysis 2023.

**Figure 15 – Internally displaced people in Ukraine**



Source: UNHCR <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/ukr> (downloaded 03/08/2024).

58. While beneficiaries' preference for cash has increased over time, the majority of WFP assistance was provided through in-kind transfers. Cash transfers have been extensively used by WFP from the outset, including providing multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) to reach more than 800,000 beneficiaries by May 2022. However, the proportion of beneficiaries reached through in-kind transfers remained consistently higher over the period evaluated and, as noted in Section 1.3, in-

<sup>85</sup> WFP broadly targets communities living within 50 km of the front line (see Figure 20). However, this is applied with some discretion. For example, a large city such as Kharkiv, which is less than 50 km from the front-line is not covered.

kind food transfers were used to reach 70 percent of the LEO and T-ICSP beneficiaries.<sup>86</sup> There was no clear trend in the proportion of different modalities used over time. The share of in-kind assistance varied considerably by month, from more than 91 percent in April 2022, to 53 percent in June 2022, then progressively rising again until reaching 93 percent of WFP assistance in June 2023 and decreasing again in autumn 2023 (Figure 10).

59. The WFP post-distribution monitoring reports (PDMs) in 2022 reported that beneficiaries preferred in-kind transfers, while the subsequent post-distribution monitoring reports published in 2023 and 2024 indicated a strong beneficiary preference for cash – regardless of whether they were actually receiving cash or food in-kind. Further evidence from post-distribution monitoring<sup>87</sup> and stakeholder interviews all confirmed a strong preference of beneficiaries for cash transfers over in-kind food assistance at the time of the data collection mission. The focus group discussions and interviews also indicated that affected people were seeking more livelihood support over continued emergency assistance, and cash transfers were potentially better aligned with this objective given their flexibility.
60. The use of in-kind transfers was primarily explained by WFP, in interviews and reporting, as responding in contexts where markets had failed due to the war. Kherson city was widely cited as an example by WFP and other stakeholders where much of the retail network collapsed after the withdrawal of Russian forces and in-kind food assistance was well justified. Ready-to-eat (RtE) rations were also used throughout the period to assist newly displaced families across Ukraine.
61. However, it is not clear that the conflict has in fact led to a widespread failure of markets. A WFP assessment<sup>88</sup> of markets close to the front line or the border with the Russian Federation from March to May 2023 found that “even though most visited locations have volatile security situations and suffer from shellings, at the time of assessment all worked properly and were able to satisfy local demand.” Where markets have been disrupted, stakeholders suggested that they often recovered relatively quickly. The evaluation also witnessed several in-kind distributions in locations within 30 km of the front line<sup>89</sup> where in each distribution location shops were open, well stocked and offered competitive prices with the main towns. Furthermore, these retail outlets had not been disrupted during the war. However, this can be balanced by a finding from the MSNA 2024 that access to market was mixed, depending on locations and type of goods, when entering into areas within 30 km of the front line.<sup>90</sup>
62. In practice, stakeholders identified other operational considerations that made the use of cash transfers difficult, particularly during the start-up phase. First, WFP staff noted that it was quicker to mobilize in-kind food distributions as these required minimal registration data from beneficiaries. Conversely, cash distributions required the collection of significantly more personal data to enable payments and minimize risks of misappropriation and data protection issues. Secondly, stakeholders reported that during the early “no-regret” phase, significant amounts of food were procured, which then needed to be distributed. Thirdly, WFP staff reported that they relied heavily on in-kind transfers in the period where they were seeking agreement with other agencies on establishing a common cash transfer value (see Finding 2). However, these challenges were not insurmountable with MPCA delivered at scale as of May 2022, albeit used to a lesser extent to reach beneficiaries than in-kind modalities.
63. WFP made a strategic decision to shift from in-kind distributions to cash transfers in front-line areas in 2023, which was sped up in 2024. Figure 10 illustrates the evolution of beneficiary figures by transfer modality. At the time of the evaluation, WFP was starting to shift from providing in-kind assistance to beneficiaries to sectoral cash transfers, but WFP staff and external stakeholders questioned why this transition did not happen earlier and faster.
64. All food assistance to institutions was provided through in-kind assistance. The three institutions visited by the evaluation all indicated a strong preference for cash, rather than in-kind, support as

<sup>86</sup> As the figures reported in this data set are registered on a monthly basis, it may include overlaps in counting the beneficiaries from one month to another and within a month, and thus should be used cautiously.

<sup>87</sup> In one FGD a preference for in-kind assistance was cited by some group members as the relative value of the transfer was seen as higher.

<sup>88</sup> WFP (2023). Market Functionality Index Quarterly Report.

<sup>89</sup> Distribution was observed in conjunction with FGDs at several locations.

<sup>90</sup> WFP, REACH. MSNA 2024.

it would allow flexibility to purchase commodities adapted to their needs including fresh produce. WFP staff were aware of these preferences and indicated that they were planning to pilot a cash or voucher transfer. However, the highly fragmented decentralized management of these institutions has represented a major challenge for implementing cash modality and severely complicated the negotiation of necessary memorandums of understanding. As memorandums of understanding could not be negotiated at a central level, WFP was effectively facing the prospect of negotiating with each individual institution.

65. Despite repeated efforts to adapt the food basket, beneficiaries felt that the commodities provided still did not fully match their preferences. Consistent complaints were received from beneficiaries in focus group discussions on the composition and amounts of basic commodities included in the food boxes. At various points food boxes included large quantities of pasta, beans and, currently, wheat flour. While these commodities may be part of the diet in Ukraine, they were not the typical staples, nor were they always easy to prepare in situations of displacement. The evaluation witnessed beneficiaries selectively removing commodities from food boxes – in particular the large 5 kg bags of wheat – and leaving them for “onward donation” by the cooperating partners. Focus group discussion participants also noted that while stewed canned meat was appropriate to local preferences, processed meat was not.
66. WFP staff noted that they had been responsive to beneficiary feedback (including post-distribution monitoring) and changed the ration composition seven times over the course of the response. Most recent changes in June 2024 included a reduction in the amount of flour in the basket from 5 kg to 2 kg and the addition of millet and buckwheat. While aware of beneficiary preferences for alternative commodities – such as buckwheat and millet – WFP staff reported that they had struggled to source the more preferred commodities in quantity, at affordable prices and changes to the rations take time to work through the supply chain.

## 2.1.2 Humanitarian alignment and partnerships

**Summary Finding 2:** Based on well-defined comparative advantages, WFP has played a central role in developing and coordinating the overall humanitarian strategy. Good operational partnerships have been forged and the appropriateness of cooperating partners has improved over time. WFP played a leading role in cash coordination and made a significant contribution to overall efficiency through making the “Building Blocks” tool available to cash partners. However, the coordinated provision of multi-purpose cash assistance has proven challenging to maintain, with the WFP approach perceived as undermining the collective approach.

67. Even although WFP only re-established its presence in 2022, it was **credited with playing a prominent role in the overall United Nations strategy and operations**. Senior UN staff in the country relied heavily on WFP in key coordination groups including the UNCT, the Humanitarian Country Team and various supporting coordination structures including the Programme Management Team, Operations Management Team and the Security Management Team.<sup>91</sup> WFP also provided leadership to several of these groups, often beyond normal expectations. WFP is credited with important contributions to the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the forthcoming United Nations Cooperation Framework for 2025-2029.
68. **WFP has effectively positioned itself as a key provider of emergency assistance in front-line areas**. Here it has leveraged its expertise and comparative advantages to support the wider humanitarian response. UN agencies acknowledged that they had drawn heavily on WFP security

<sup>91</sup> The UNCT ensures inter-agency coordination and decision making at the country level, enabling individual agencies to plan and work together, as part of the Resident Coordinator system, to ensure the delivery of tangible results in support of the development agenda of the Government. The Programme Management Team provides advisory support to the UN Country Team on inter-agency programmatic issues, while the Operations Management Team provides guidance, recommendations and management support to the UNCT on operational matters. The HCT aims to provide common strategic and policy guidance for the overall humanitarian response with responsibilities including setting common objectives and priorities, developing overall strategic plans and activating resource mobilization mechanisms. The Security Management Team is responsible for the safety and security of UN personnel, premises and assets.

expertise and capacity, including providing access updates and assessments, coordination and partner training. WFP leads the coordination of the food security and livelihoods (FSL) cluster with FAO, and leads the logistics and emergency telecommunication (ETC) clusters (see Finding 8) and through these clusters it provides common services across the humanitarian system, including support to inter-agency convoys.<sup>92</sup>

69. **WFP also took up a leading role in other coordination mechanisms**, including cash coordination and security, at both the national and the subnational levels. WFP played an important role in the Cash Working Group (CWG),<sup>93</sup> where it made available its data management system, Building Blocks.<sup>94</sup> This innovative system has been used since 2022 by the Ukrainian humanitarian community to coordinate a collective response by preventing unintended assistance overlap among participating organizations. As a dozen organizations have used this tool as part of food security and shelter clusters, it is estimated that more than USD 170 million has been saved between April 2022 and December 2023, with continuing weekly savings estimated at USD 500,000 (see also Finding 20). However, due to the emergency nature of the Ukraine response, Building Blocks is being offered to the participating organizations with direct support from WFP. In the long run, if they see the value in Building Blocks, the vision is for the participating organizations to become full Building Block members, set up their own independent infrastructure and run their operations on Building Block directly.<sup>95</sup> Other contributions to coordination included: participating in the education and protection clusters; taking a leading role in the Humanitarian Operations Planning Cell in Dnipro; and acting as alternate area security coordinator in Odessa.
70. WFP has established several highly relevant and good operational partnerships with other UN agencies and some civil society actors. The partnership with FAO included joint work on food security assessments and the demining pilot project (see Finding 21). The partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to address gender-based violence was acknowledged by stakeholders (see Finding 15). Important partnerships were also established to conduct assessments including with REACH, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology and the Kyiv School of Economics.
71. **However, cash coordination has proved particularly problematic**, and piloting the new global coordination arrangements for the use of multi-purpose cash has faced significant challenges. In 2022, and for much of 2023, WFP was a successful leading actor in the delivery of MPCA, coordinated under the auspices of the Cash Working Group. However, following a failure to reach agreement on the MPCA transfer value to meet protracted needs with other Cash Working Group members in 2023, WFP has increasingly used “sectoral cash assistance” (see Box 3).

### Box 3 – Setting the transfer value for multi-purpose cash assistance

In the 2023 the Cash Working Group reviewed the transfer value and subsequently increased the MPCA from Ukraine Hryvnia (UAH) 2,220 (USD 67) to UAH 3,600 (USD 93) per person effective from 1 October 2023.<sup>96</sup> WFP argued that this transfer level was unrealistic for all cash transfers to the targeted food-insecure people given funding constraints and consequently decided that it would limit the use of MPCA at these higher values to people who suffered a sudden shock such as a sudden loss of income, damaged homes, sudden displacement, or the war-related death of a family breadwinner. While other Cash Working Group members provided MPCA at the increased rate to all other vulnerable families to

<sup>92</sup> Under the TICSP Activity 7, WFP made allowance for providing common services for cash delivery.

<sup>93</sup> The Ukraine Cash Working Group (CWG) was established in 2016 and was co-chaired by UN OCHA, IOM and the Ukrainian Red Cross at the time of the evaluation. It is a technical working group within the inter-cluster coordination group (ICCG) under the overall strategic and programmatic direction of the HCT. The CWG focuses on the operational coordination of multi-purpose cash programming and support to the coherence of the use of cash as a modality in the wider humanitarian response. Its memberships include UN agencies and NGOs involved in the cash response.

<sup>94</sup> Building Blocks is a neutral humanitarian blockchain network 100 percent equally owned, operated and governed by its members.

<sup>95</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/building-blocks-ukraine-interorganizational-assistance-coordination-user-management-form#:~:text=Since%20May%202022%2C%20the%20Ukraine,unintended%20assistance%20overlap%20among%20them.>

<sup>96</sup> OCHA (2024). Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan – Ukraine 2024.

meet basic needs,<sup>97</sup> WFP used a market-based transitional support programme (also referred to as sectoral cash assistance) to provide a monthly cash transfer at a lower rate of UAH 1,500 (USD 40) to help other war-affected people to specifically cover their food needs.<sup>98</sup>

72. While acknowledging the arguments and concerns of WFP, particularly over the affordability of the revised MPCA transfer amounts, external stakeholders emphasized the repercussions of this decision. Fragmenting the response into different sectoral grants was seen to be more complex and difficult for beneficiaries to access. While sectoral grants are used to meet specific needs of targeted groups (including shelter and protection) meeting food needs is at the heart of MPCA. Multiple transfers are also expected to increase the overhead costs of the response, as well as risks of overlaps in assistance. While MPCA was effectively deduplicated through Building Blocks<sup>99</sup> across agencies, there is no coordination and deduplication between the sectoral cash provided under the food security and livelihoods cluster and MPCA under the Cash Working Group. Furthermore, the sectoral fragmentation of the humanitarian transfers was seen to significantly complicate the eventual transition from humanitarian assistance to government-led social transfers.
73. The prolonged disagreements between WFP and the majority of the Cash Working Group members left many non-government organizations (NGOs), UN agencies and donors viewing WFP as disruptive to the Cash Working Group model, as consistently reported in interviews with stakeholders representing all these stakeholder groups. Some donors suggested that WFP could have been more flexible in considering trade-offs between the size of the cash transfers and the size of the caseload.

### 2.1.3 Alignment with national development plans

**Summary Finding 3:** WFP support was seen as responsive to the priorities of the national Government. Direct alignment with the Government is most evident in areas of social protection, school feeding and food exports. There was increasing consultation with government counterparts over time, although decentralization has made achieving full alignment across all levels of the Government challenging.

74. WFP partners with a wide range of ministries at the national level including the Ministry of Social Policy (MoSP) and Pension Fund of Ukraine (PFU) (on cash transfers and social protection), MoSP and the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) (on school feeding), the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food (MoAPF) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (on the Grain from Ukraine initiative).
75. **Government counterparts describe WFP support as being well aligned with, and responsive to, their priorities.** According to WFP, the LEO did not account explicitly for the views of the Government at either central or local levels, given the need for rapid response, while the T-ICSP introduced direct support to the Government of Ukraine as part of SO2, materialized by further alignment and cooperation with PFU for school feeding and MoSP's "e-dopomoga" system<sup>100</sup> with MPCA. The ICSP development has followed a different process, being presented to the Government both centrally and locally. In practice, WFP staff reported that requests were formulated by the Government of Ukraine during consultations, such as placing greater emphasis on local procurement and supply chains and MoSP counterparts also reported WFP having been open to integrating suggestions.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> This corresponds to the two categories of beneficiaries defined by the CWG: (i) to meet immediate needs of affected people after a war-related shock; and (ii) for war-affected vulnerable people to ensure that their basic needs are met (OCHA 2024).

<sup>99</sup> See Finding 2.

<sup>100</sup> The Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine Maryna created a platform called e-dopomoga to receive and consolidate applications for food, clothing, medicine and other emergency assistance. Data from this platform were shared with state, business, NGOs, charitable foundations and volunteers to target the provision of humanitarian assistance. This system was used by international organizations until September 2022 when applications for financial assistance from e-dopomoga were replaced by alternative registration systems.

76. The multiple layers of decentralized government across ministries and local government have complicated WFP engagement and alignment. Many of the social services are delivered through complex decentralized structures that require WFP to communicate with authorities in a coordinated way at multiple levels. However, consistency between the WFP country office and field offices could have been improved. Communication with local government counterparts appears to have been driven by the individual leading the relevant WFP field office rather than guided by a central communications strategy. Some WFP field staff and local authorities report being insufficiently informed about WFP interventions such as the pension top-up programme. As a result, levels of engagement are variable, and at times messages shared were inconsistent.
77. **WFP began exploring alignment with national social protection systems as early as March 2022.** With support from the regional bureau, WFP deployed a member of staff (before the country office was re-established) to conduct an in-depth scoping of the social protection context in Ukraine and neighbouring countries.<sup>101</sup> The analysis explored existing coverage of the government system and the potential for building on existing mechanisms, which had already identified the poorest and most vulnerable people, by overlaying onto those mechanisms the people who had been affected by conflict in order to quickly scale up and expand reach.
78. Subsequently, WFP did capitalize on alignment with government systems, where feasible and appropriate. Initially WFP assisted the Government's emergency support to internally displaced people by coordinating multi-purpose cash to support government grants for displaced people, together with other humanitarian organizations. Later cash top-ups were delivered to government-registered pensioners. MoSP officials ranked cooperation with WFP highly (in interviews) and pointed to examples of WFP having adjusted its approaches in response to their priorities – for example, supporting its announced intention to increase pensions, setting transfer values at a level that could feasibly be maintained by the Government. Support to the Unified Information System of the Social Sphere (UISSS) – a unified central registry – continued the digital transformation begun by the Government during the COVID-19 pandemic, in line with the expressed priorities of government counterparts.
79. However, **formal agreement to work through government systems at times proved slow and hard to reach.** The Government was unable to share beneficiary lists until a formal agreement was put in place in May 2022. Consequently, at the beginning of the response, WFP and other agencies had little choice but to establish parallel registration processes. The WFP social top-ups needed to be facilitated by a formal decree – which took a year to put in place.
80. UN agencies and donors suggested in interviews that WFP has not always acted in a manner that recognizes the importance of coordinating support to the Government, and in some cases has entered into agreements with the Government without prior consultation with the wider donor community or other humanitarian actors. While WFP did engage with the multi-agency “Perekhid Initiative”,<sup>102</sup> earlier bilateral engagement with MoSP were necessary as this initiative was slow to establish. External stakeholders emphasized the need to avoid perceptions of competitive behaviour and the importance of working cooperatively across the United Nations. Clearly there is a difficult trade-off to be achieved between speed – of reaching people in need – and the often-cumbersome nature of a collective agreement process and some compromises were necessary.
81. Documents and interviews suggest that the design of the WFP school feeding activity was closely aligned with the Government of Ukraine's pre-war flagship initiative on national nutritional reform,<sup>103</sup> under the leadership of the Office of the First Lady<sup>104</sup> and more broadly with the National Recovery Plan of the Government.<sup>105</sup> Interviewees described how WFP was asked to coordinate with the Government's reform initiative and help fill the gap between its ambition to provide nutritious menus on the one hand and a lack of resources on the other. The modality of the initiative was also designed to align with government priorities – using a cash modality and partnering directly with the Government rather than working through cooperating partners.

<sup>101</sup> Document was not available to the evaluation.

<sup>102</sup> See 2.2.3 and <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/national-social-protection-system-support-ukraine>.

<sup>103</sup> The GoU also adopted the “Strategy for reforming the school nutrition system” (2023-2027) that aims to reinforce school meals in Ukraine and to set a functional framework for cooperation with civil society organizations (CSOs) and international actors such as WFP.

<sup>104</sup> Ministry of Education and Science & Office of the First Lady. 2021. Ukraine's School Nutrition Reforms.

<sup>105</sup> WFP (2023). Ukraine Annual Country Report 2022.

82. WFP worked closely with the Ministry of Education and Science, the Office of the First Lady and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to undertake an initial scoping mission in July 2022 and collaboratively design a pilot school feeding initiative to commence in 2023.<sup>106</sup> Thereafter, expansion of and adaptations to the school feeding activity continued to be agreed jointly with government ministries. Lengthy negotiations led to delays in programme implementation but were ultimately important for alignment with national and local priorities for recovery and development, and for embedding WFP assistance within existing government systems.<sup>107</sup>
83. **Beyond safety nets, WFP support to government priorities was more limited.** Collaboration with the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food (MoAPF) was strong on the Grain from Ukraine initiative. The Grain from Ukraine was fully owned as a government initiative, with the participation of WFP critical to making it work. But the wider strategic alignment was weak, as the main strategic priority of the MoAPF was to maximize commercial agricultural productivity, which overlapped weakly with the WFP goal of improving household food security. Interviewees indicated that the work of the food security and livelihoods cluster is not well linked to MoAPF.

## 2.1.4 Application of humanitarian principles

**Summary Finding 4** The politically highly sensitive international armed conflict context in Ukraine posed significant challenges to applying a principled approach. WFP progressively invested in the selection and training of local partners to promote a principled approach. However, key contextual trade-offs and dilemmas between humanitarian principles were not explicitly identified to guide staff on managing compromises during implementation. WFP efforts to promote an impartial response were undercut by a lack of humanitarian access in areas under the military control of the Russian Federation. This was beyond the control of the WFP country office, which demonstrated preparedness to respond across the country as conditions allowed.

84. The Ukraine context significantly challenged the performance of principled humanitarian action by WFP – as well as that of other main humanitarian actors. Key informant interviews with senior WFP, United Nations and donor staff consistently expressed concern over the degree to which humanitarian action was being implemented in a highly politicized and scrutinized environment. Factors identified by interviewees included: (i) the direct economic, political and military involvement of the majority of Western governments and WFP donors (impartiality, neutrality and independence); (ii) the role of Russia as a party to the conflict and member of the WFP Executive Board, and permanent member of the UN Security Council; (iii) the rejection of neutrality by many Ukrainian people and local or front-line groups and organizations; and (iv) the irreconcilable requirements insisted upon by the Ukrainian and Russian governments in relation to humanitarian access to the areas under the military control of the Russian Federation (impartiality).
85. **The WFP country office actively sought to promote an impartial response at the national level.** Needs assessment,<sup>108</sup> documentation and key informant interviews consistently highlighted WFP efforts to identify and respond to the needs of high-risk populations across the country. However, significant areas of the country remained inaccessible to WFP, compromising its ability to reach some of the most urgent cases of distress. The inability of the United Nations and other major humanitarian actors to negotiate access into the areas under the military control of the Russian Federation after the February 2022 escalation of the conflict has affected the entire international intervention. Interviews with senior representatives of WFP, the United Nations and donor agencies underscored the exceptional political sensitivity of the issue. This is being handled at the highest level, meaning that advocating to end the access impasse became the responsibility of WFP headquarters, the headquarters' Emergency Coordination Unit, and the headquarters of other agencies, and not the Ukraine country teams. Interviews with WFP and UN stakeholders expressed considerable frustration at the lack of progress.
86. In compliance with the humanitarian principle of impartiality and in efforts to safeguard it going

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> WFP (2024). Ukraine Country Office Annual Performance Plan 2023.

<sup>108</sup> OCHA (2023). Humanitarian Response Plan – Ukraine – February 2023. .



forward, at the operational level, WFP took practical steps to enable a response in the areas under the military control of the Russian Federation when and if this political impasse to gaining access was resolved. Specifically, it conducted remote multisectoral assessments encompassing food security needs in the areas under the military control of the Russian Federation in 2022, 2023 and 2024. This provided critical contingency planning information that could have been used to design a rapid response in case these areas became accessible to WFP assistance.

87. WFP programming in accessible areas was demonstrably guided by an active assessment of need (see Finding 1) with attention to high-risk groups (see Finding 16). However, interviews with senior WFP staff indicated that, given the political attention on the Ukraine crisis, they were aware of the **risk that the Ukraine response might unintentionally draw donor resources away from other global crises and affect equity in addressing global needs**. The number of severely food insecure people in Ukraine – estimated in the order of 750,000,<sup>109</sup> were a relatively small proportion of the global caseload. Worldwide, 36.4 million people were classified in IPC Phase 4 (the equivalent of CARI severely food insecure) in 2023 with 6.3 million in Sudan alone. Reference was made by senior WFP staff to this risk being discussed within the Humanitarian Country Team, although it was unclear what actions could be taken at this level to address these concerns.
88. WFP manifested a strong concern for impartiality, neutrality and independence in the selection and training of cooperating partners. WFP promoted the definition of principles to staff and partners. Regarding neutrality, particular attention was paid to maintaining a clear separation of its civilian efforts from military personnel, facilities, or assistance. Interviewees consistently confirmed that WFP required cooperating partners to receive training in the humanitarian principles. Key informants, including cooperating partners, broadly recognized the risks of mixing aid to civilians and either direct support to military personnel or military involvement in the delivery, storage or distribution of aid. All six cooperating partner responses to the survey agreed that WFP made effective efforts to ensure that the organization understand, adapt and apply humanitarian principles, including training sessions. The evaluation team's field observation and review of information made available for this evaluation confirm that cooperating partners had complied with the WFP policy towards impartiality, neutrality, or independence. In parallel, WFP consistently monitored compliance of its operations with humanitarian principles, as part of post-distribution and food distribution point (FDP) monitoring.<sup>110</sup> Additionally, the WFP communication team has been monitoring the Ukrainian media to detect any potential misuse of WFP work in the country.
89. One weakness in this general attention to the principles, was that partnership field-level agreements (FLAs) (which are corporately standardized documents) do not refer to the core humanitarian principles as defined by the sector or WFP policy.<sup>111</sup> Based on an examination of 5 field-level agreements out of 31 signed over the period evaluated, the agreement obligates the cooperating partner to act in accordance with the WFP Protection and Accountability Policy, and to "be guided by" the SPHERE Humanitarian Charter - codes that reinforce principled action but do not enunciate the principles as set forth in the WFP policy. The field-level agreements do convey more explicit obligations in relation to programmatic policies related to accountability to affected people, gender, inclusion and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). A previous high-level evaluation of multiple WFP interventions found that WFP did not adequately distinguish or prioritize among principles, standards and policies, or their various types, which "risks diluting" the importance of the humanitarian principles.<sup>112</sup>
90. A second area of concern is that, despite its general efforts, the capacity of WFP to maintain its neutrality through the full chain of its operations has been challenged by a lack of Ukrainian NGOs, civil society or volunteer groups with prior familiarity in, or experience with, humanitarian action and its fundamental principles, and by the explicit rejection of the principle of neutrality by many

<sup>109</sup> Extrapolated from the reference to 2 percent of the Ukraine population being severely food insecure in 2023 – FSIN and Global Network Against Food Crises, 2023.

<sup>110</sup> For instance, WFP monitoring checklist in Ukraine includes questions encompassing presence of militaries during distribution, misuses of WFP logo for political purpose, and language requirement to receive assistance.

<sup>111</sup> WFP. Humanitarian principles. WFP/EB.1/2004/5-C

<sup>112</sup> WFP OEV (2018). Evaluation of WFP Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access in Humanitarian Context. OEV/2016/014.

Ukrainian aid non-governmental and civil society organizations and volunteer groups.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, some key informants questioned whether it was possible for WFP to know the final destination of its aid in areas inaccessible to international agencies. As described in Finding 14 much of the “last-mile” delivery was carried out by subpartners monitored to a lesser extent by WFP, even though the situation progressively improved after 2022.

91. Most importantly, concerning the capacity of WFP to adopt humanitarian principles, there is very limited evidence of WFP contextualizing these into Ukraine-specific programmatic practice, or of explicitly identifying the key trade-offs and compromises necessitated by context-specific tensions between the principles, or delineating its principled red lines. The After-Action Review, drafted by the Emergencies division, recommended that “reflection on WFP’s role and stance in conflict contexts is required, to be followed by guidance and support provided to senior management, Regional and Country Directors”.<sup>114</sup> However, the evaluation team saw scant documentary evidence of this guidance and support, or of the definitions of the principles being translated into the Ukraine context or applied to operational measures by WFP.<sup>115</sup> There was a further lack of evidence of frequent engagement with the principles, or of exchanges on the importance of deliberating the specific trade-offs inherent in principled humanitarian action in Ukraine, or of providing guidance to the mission on permissible or necessary compromises in specific situations. For example, there is a lack of documentation on the necessary trade-offs in selecting partners (both in civil society and within the Government) that did not identify themselves as humanitarian actors yet were able to deliver aid to target populations in areas where access was challenged.
92. Related to neutrality, guidance has been produced on management of proximity to military actors, actions and red lines related to maintaining a distinction between humanitarian assistance and other support, protocols for dealing with government authorities during martial law, and principles and rules of engagement with sub-contracted organizations and volunteer groups, as well as trainings on humanitarian principles provided to cooperating partners on a yearly basis covering neutrality concerns. An example of good practice is the expression by WFP of a clear red line that prohibits any visible association with the military, or the provision of WFP-supported assistance to the military (neutrality).
93. In relation to the principle of humanity, the evaluation team found no documentation or other evidence demonstrating recognition, deliberation, explanation, or periodic revisitation of the trade-off between humanity and impartiality. The LEO calls for adherence to the four core principles of humanitarian action and clarified that this “implies, inter alia, a commitment to doing everything possible to reach and assist all populations in need”.<sup>116</sup> This directive represents a prioritization of humanity (to prevent and alleviate human suffering) without recognizing the potential trade-off with impartiality, which directs humanitarian organizations to deliver assistance in proportion to need, prioritizing the most urgent cases of distress. WFP has previously been found to harbour an organizational culture “that often gave precedence to humanity and access over, and at times in trade-off of, other longer-term considerations, including WFP’s perceived neutrality, independence and impartiality”.<sup>117</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup> See for example an open letter from Ukrainian civil society organizations stating “We do not want to remain ‘neutral’ ...it should be up to local civil society in these circumstances to determine our own approaches and priorities.” (accessed 1 July 2024, <https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/news/an-open-letter-to-international-donors-and-ngos-who-want-to-genuinely-help-ukraine/>). No WFP CP is included in the list of the NGOs signatories of this open letter.

<sup>114</sup> WFP. After Action Review: Ukraine. Key Priorities, Lessons Learned, and Recommendations. 20 July 2022.

<sup>115</sup> On a limited basis, one protection, gender and accountability to affected population (PGAAP) document added some useful contextualization in defining the four core principles, and the presentations used to train CPs on the work of WFP monitoring teams highlighted the “red lines” of discrimination and the presence of “political parties/military” – with still unclear meaning about whom these categories clearly encompass – and listed adherence to the humanitarian principles among other standards that must be met.

<sup>116</sup> WFP (2022). Limited Emergency Operation – Ukraine Narrative.

<sup>117</sup> WFP OEV (2018). Evaluation of WFP Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access in Humanitarian Context. OEV/2016/014.

## 2.2 EQ2 – Results

### 2.2.1 Effectiveness

94. The results of the WFP operations in Ukraine are presented below. The analysis covers relevant activities conducted under both the T-ICSP and LEO (see Figure 7 in Section 1.3). The T-ICSP Activity 8 - to restore and recover productive assets – was added later and it is too early to assess these results. It is therefore discussed as part of the WFP contribution to national food systems (Finding 22).

#### 2.2.1.1 Crisis response

**Summary Finding 5:** Family-level in-kind and cash transfers plausibly contributed to improvements in the food security of beneficiaries, although it was challenging to isolate the specific contributions of WFP to outcome-level results. The outcomes associated with institutional feeding were not monitored, although it has plausibly helped to ease the pressure on the government budget.

95. Both the T-ICSP and LEO centred on the core activity of directly meeting the food and nutrition needs of crisis-affected people in Ukraine. Assistance was delivered through a mix of modalities: in-kind food assistance (including 30-day dry rations to families and institutions,<sup>118</sup> fresh bread and ready-to-eat rations for newly displaced families); cash transfers (including multi-purpose cash and sectoral cash transfers);<sup>119</sup> and, to a limited extent, vouchers.<sup>120</sup> A supplementary feeding programme, which complemented 30-day rations for families with children aged 6-24 months, was concluded in 2023 with the introduction of fortified wheat flour and vegetable oil in the food boxes. Stakeholders indicated that assessments showed no specific malnutrition risks in this age group and the cost of importing nutritional supplements was not justified.
96. WFP monitoring data indicated that both in-kind and multi-purpose cash distributions were associated with improving food consumption scores and consumption-based coping strategy indices (see

---

<sup>118</sup> Institutional feeding was carried out in partnership with local authorities in institutions such as hospitals, orphanages and displacement centres. A large proportion of the total in-kind beneficiaries received assistance through institutional feeding - by the end of 2023, WFP assisted more than 1,200 institutions in 23 out of 24 oblasts.

<sup>119</sup> Also referred to as the market-based transitional support programme.

<sup>120</sup> See Figure 9.

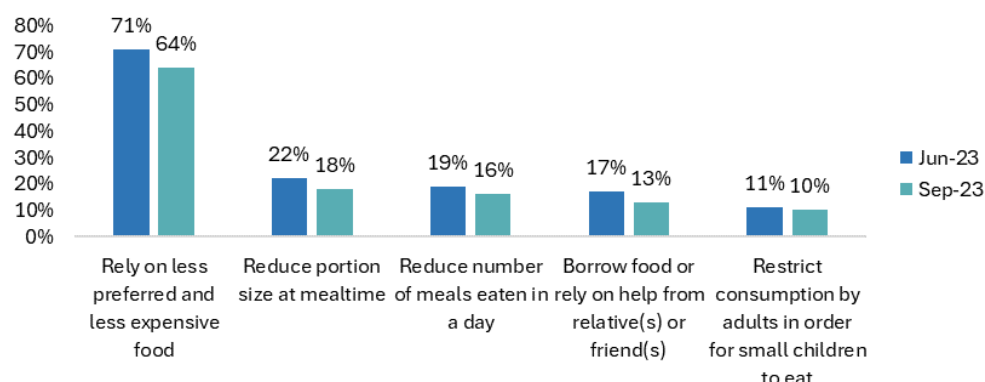
97. Table 4). As the use of sectoral cash was a relatively recent innovation, post-distribution monitoring results on this modality were only available for 2024, although post-distribution monitoring also highlighted an improvement of food consumption and coping strategy indicators compared to the 2023 baseline.

**Table 4 – Food consumption scores for in-kind, MPCA transfers and sectoral cash (2022,2023, 2024)**

			Acceptable	Borderline	Poor
In-Kind (2022)	Baseline	Mar-May-22	79%	12%	9%
	Post dist.	Jun-Aug-22	74%	17%	9%
MPCA (2022)	Baseline		N/A	N/A	N/A
	Post dist.	Oct-22	77%	16%	7%
In-Kind (2023)	Baseline	Oct-22	66%	26%	8%
	Post dist.	Jun-23	73%	19%	8%
	Baseline	Jun-23	73%	19%	8%
	Post dist.	Sep-23	78%	16%	6%
MPCA (2023)	Baseline		N/A	N/A	N/A
	Post dist.	Mar-23	69%	24%	7%
	Baseline	Mar-Apr-23	65%	23%	12%
	Post dist.	Jul-23	72%	21%	7%
In-Kind (2024)	Baseline	Jan-24	81%	15%	4%
	Post dist.	Jun-24	82%	15%	3%
Sectoral cash (2024)	Baseline	Nov-23	78%	18%	4%
	Post dist.	Mar-24	86%	12%	2%

Source: WFP, ACRs 2022 and 2023, PDMs 2022, 2023 and 2024.

**Figure 16 – Share of respondents reporting that they adopted a specific food-based coping strategy at least once during 7 days prior to the data collection, by period of data collection<sup>121</sup>**



Source: WFP, PDM of in-kind distributions (December 2023).

98. While the findings are strongly indicative of WFP assistance helping to stabilize food and nutrition security in vulnerable groups, **it is not possible to isolate the specific contribution of WFP assistance from other channels of assistance, or the effect of contextual improvements.**

WFP monitoring found that a high proportion of cash was spent on food, however the proportion did not change pre- and post-distribution.<sup>122</sup>

99. Focus group discussions with food assistance beneficiaries provided largely positive feedback, reinforcing post-distribution monitoring results.<sup>123</sup> The food assistance was appreciated in helping

<sup>121</sup> Coping strategies are shown in increasing order of severity and frequency of strategies adopted, with the first three being the least severe and the last one being the most extreme.

<sup>122</sup> See WFP MPCA PDM, November 2023.

<sup>123</sup> For example, the August 2023 PDM report found 90 percent of respondents stated that overall, they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the quantity of in-kind assistance.

to meet a range of needs as the in-kind food assistance released cash for other food and non-food expenditures. Beneficiaries appreciated the regularity, predictability and accessibility of in-kind assistance, with no significant complaints reported. The quality of in-kind food assistance was generally high, with some complaints over the quality of imported meat and beans. However, as discussed in Finding 1, the food assistance did not fully meet local food preferences.

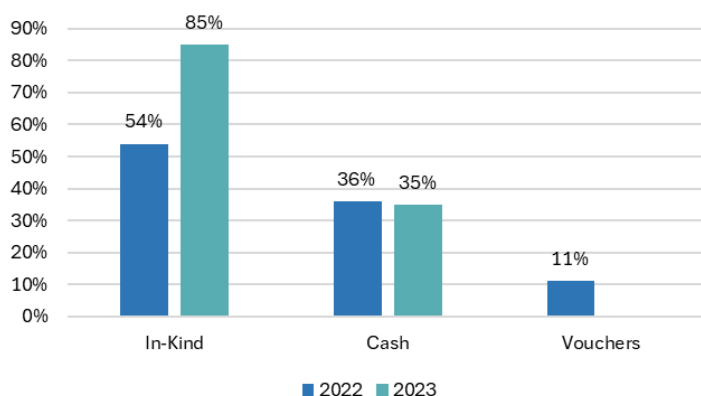
**100. Food assistance transfers were provided through a variety of modalities and mechanisms.**

**Cash transfers were found to work well**, however, some beneficiaries transitioning from in-kind to cash transfers perceived that the value of the cash transfer was lower than the equivalent food supplied, which limited its effectiveness in meeting needs. However, according to the country office's estimate, cash transfers value remained higher than the value of the in-kind basket, respectively amounting to 1,500 and 1,000 UAH.

**101. The food security impacts of institutional feeding were not directly monitored by WFP and the associated strategy suggests that the objective was to help local institutions cope with already stretched budgets, rather than directly addressing poor nutrition of institutional beneficiaries.**<sup>124</sup> For ethical reasons, no focus group discussions were conducted with patients at medical facilities served by WFP. Evaluation interviews with staff of beneficiary institutions appreciated the regularity and quality of WFP food donations, while echoing reservations on the composition of the basket. In all cases the institutions used WFP dry rations to supplement the purchase of vegetables, meat and other fresh foods funded through government budgets. **Institutional feeding was reported to have eased pressure on their overall budgets, enabling a higher quality of overall health services.** If WFP stopped food assistance, managers anticipated that feeding would continue, funded through savings elsewhere in the budget, although quality and diversity might be affected.

**102. Delivery against targets for volumes of delivery improved over time but were better for in-kind food assistance (to families and institutions) than cash and vouchers (Figure 17).** Various factors contributed to shortfalls in distributions, including challenges in local procurement and imports and energy cuts, which affected the ability of local suppliers to deliver against contracts. Challenges in procuring local financial service providers (including the Ukrainian Post Office) to deliver cash transfers were also reported to have contributed to delays in scaling up sectoral cash transfers (see also Finding 1).

**Figure 17 – Percentage of actual commodities transferred versus needs-based plan (by mt/USD)**



Source: WFP, 2022 and 2023 ACRs.

**103. An innovative case was made for the use of vouchers in encouraging the re-establishment of retail markets.** A voucher scheme was agreed with two national retailers and it was designed to encourage supermarkets to reopen in Kherson and Sumyi after the Russian withdrawal. However, informants referred to a lengthy and cumbersome process in negotiating with retailers and vouchers were eventually only used at a small scale. It is hard to quantitatively assess the contribution of WFP vouchers in rebuilding market confidence, but stakeholder perceptions were that that shops would have reopened anyway.

<sup>124</sup> WFP, WFP Institutional Feeding Strategy, undated document.

104. Over the first months of the response, an unintended effect of activities was that the quantity of in-kind food supplied generated concerns over the effects on local retailers and producers. WFP stakeholders reported representations had been made by regional governors to encourage WFP to adapt its approach. Similar concerns were expressed by national government staff to the evaluation team. This was implicitly recognized in WFP reporting of efforts to maximize its contribution to the rehabilitation of Ukraine's economy through local sourcing and in interviews with WFP staff.<sup>125</sup> While most food commodities were procured internationally over the first months of the WFP operation in Ukraine – mainly due to the absence of a national office, existing supply chain structures and contracts with local suppliers – shifting towards local procurement happened relatively quickly as 80 percent of the in-kind basket was procured locally as of August 2022. An additional adaptation in the case of bread included shifting procurement to producers near the areas of distribution (see Finding 21). These adaptations were generally well appreciated by government stakeholders.

### 2.2.1.2 School feeding programme

**Summary Finding 6:** WFP made limited progress against quantitative distribution targets for its school feeding activity due to unanticipated delays and constraints, many of which were outside its direct control. There is early evidence of positive perceptions of the benefits among beneficiaries, including increased school attendance, improved quality of meals and alleviating time pressures on parents.

105. School feeding started as a pilot programme implemented in Kyivska oblast as part of emergency response under the LEO SO1, but shifted to SO2 (to improve the shock-responsiveness of the Government's social protection system) under the T-ICSP as it was scaled up to across ten other oblasts.<sup>126</sup> Over time, various specific outcomes were mentioned, including: 1) improving school attendance, reducing drop-out rates and boosting educational outcomes (pilot programme only); 2) protecting children affected by the war (pilot programme only); 3) improving the health and nutrition security of school-age children; and 4) alleviating economic pressure on local authorities and parents by reducing their spending on school meals.<sup>127</sup>

**Table 5 – Strategic Outcome 2, Activity 02 – Actual versus planned output targets**

Indicator	Planned	Actual	% of planned vs actual achieved
Number of schools or institutional sites reached through school-based programming	420	421	100%
Number of national institutions engaged in WFP capacity strengthening activities at national and subnational levels	1	2	200%
Number of girls and boys receiving food/cash-based transfers/commodity vouchers/capacity strengthening transfers through school-based programmes	200,000	49,001	25%
Total value of cash transferred to family members of girls and boys benefiting from school-based programmes	USD 23,998,000	USD 260,733	1%
Feeding days as percentage of total school days	100%	100%	100%

Source: Evaluation team based on ACR 2023.

106. Given the recent start, monitoring data on progress towards outcomes for school feeding are currently limited, while different output indicators are available, as summarized in Table 5.

<sup>125</sup> WFP (2023). Ukraine Annual Country Report 2023.

<sup>126</sup> WFP (2023). Ukraine Country Office Annual Performance Plan 2023.

<sup>127</sup> WFP, Ukraine Annual Country Report 2022 – Country Strategic Plan 2022; WFP, Concept Note: School feeding in Ukraine. September to December 2022.



Subnationally, by the end of 2023, WFP reported that over 400 schools had participated in sensitization meetings (Table 5), though no reporting on the outcomes of those meetings was shared. At the time of the evaluation WFP was conducting a monitoring exercise, the results of which were not yet available. The exercise includes focus group discussions with school staff and parents, and a review of documentation related to the initiative to understand how the schools have used the WFP cash top-up – whether to improve the quality of school meals, or to reduce fees for parents, or both. Results were not yet available.

107. Interviews with local authorities and school staff and focus group discussions with parents, while limited in number, generated largely encouraging feedback.<sup>128</sup> Positive messages emerging from the interviews are summarized in the bullet points below:

- **Improved school attendance:** The reduced price of meals has encouraged families to let their children eat at school, including those who were previously unable to afford school meals, with the secondary benefit of reducing social stigma for poorer families.
- **Improved quality of meals:** Larger budgets for school canteens have allowed them to purchase better quality and more nutritious foods, including fruit and yoghurt. Improvements in the quality, quantity and variety of school meals have led to an increased number of children eating in school canteens. When feasible, dealing with local producers directly has given schools more choice and allowed them to adapt the purchase of commodities to suit their needs, including in response to the specific dietary needs of different children.
- **Alleviated time pressure on families:** WFP top-ups have reduced pressure on parents who no longer need to prepare lunches for their children while working.

108. WFP supported elements of capacity strengthening, which has helped schools and local authorities to comply with its financial procedures and reporting requirements. WFP facilitated government participation in the Global Summit of the School Meals Coalition in Paris in October 2023;<sup>129</sup> and WFP also worked with the Ministry of Education and Science to incorporate school feeding data into the nationally owned reporting platform (AIKOM). This work was at an early stage with developers at the time of the evaluation and evidence of results was not yet available. Some level of capacity strengthening at national and local levels had been achieved, with an emphasis on clarifying and communicating the rationale and the reimbursement mechanism for WFP engagement in school feeding. School personnel and the Ministry of Education and Science at the oblast level confirmed that training and regular support from WFP had resulted in clear financial disbursement processes and reporting procedures.

109. The WFP school feeding pilot aimed to reach an initial 100,000 vulnerable school-age children.<sup>130</sup> However, WFP did not begin implementing school feeding activities until 2023, and **did not attain its key quantitative targets for planned activities and outputs on school feeding** that year, when WFP planned to target 315 schools and reach 200,000 students annually with daily school meals.<sup>131</sup> WFP only reached 25 percent of its target 200,000 students in 2023; and the total value of cash transferred to the families of students was only 1 percent of the planned amount (see Table 5).<sup>132</sup> There were several challenges that compromised the achievement of planned results, including the reduced capacity of local authorities to sustain school meals and limitations on the extent to which families could contribute.<sup>133</sup> Key stakeholders noted that continued extensive school closures, particularly in front-line areas, and attendance limited by laws requiring schools to have bomb shelters in place, caused further delays.

<sup>128</sup> Note that the information should be treated with caution, given the small sample of authorities, schools and families who were asked for feedback on the WFP school feeding initiative through the evaluation.

<sup>129</sup> WFP (2024). Ukraine Annual Performance Plan 2023.

<sup>130</sup> WFP (2022). Ukraine Limited Emergency Operation, BR 04.

<sup>131</sup> WFP (2022). Ukraine Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan.

<sup>132</sup> The reason for the difference between progress against these two indicators is not fully clear, but is potentially explained by a proportion of schools opting to use the WFP top-up to improve the quality of school meals rather than reducing fees for parents.

<sup>133</sup> WFP (2024). Annual Country Report 2023.

### 2.2.1.3 Social protection

**Summary Finding 7:** The approach to topping up social benefits has been strongly welcomed by the Government. Even although this programme was not aimed solely at tackling food security, initial monitoring data reported promising early results on intended sectoral benefits related to food security and nutrition from social top-ups, although conclusive trends had yet to emerge. Support to the development of the UISSS has strengthened the national social protection system by plausibly enabling emergency response for affected people by both government and international actors.

110. While the social top-up programme is aimed at reinforcing beneficiaries' multisectoral resilience,<sup>134</sup> initial monitoring data found that it still has to demonstrate its specific contribution to improvement of the food security of beneficiaries. The rationale for the WFP social top-up was evidenced by a baseline finding that 50 percent of beneficiaries were moderately or severely food insecure, compared to 20 percent nationally in the 2023 MSNA.<sup>135</sup> A first post-distribution monitoring report of the social assistance top-ups was published in June 2024.<sup>136</sup> This found marginal improvements in the overall level of food insecurity – with 52 percent of families being food-insecure (defined by severely food insecure and moderately food insecure status) in October 2023 to 48 percent being food-insecure in April 2024. This was attributed in the post-distribution monitoring report to the modest amount of additional top-up in relation to needs. The WFP rationale – that setting transfers at a minimum value may enable the Government to maintain them – was welcomed by the Government but other external stakeholders argued that it had not fully met the needs of the target people.
111. Qualitative data collected in evaluation focus group discussions also indicated that, while beneficiaries appreciated the additional transfer, it was insufficient to significantly improve their financial situation and compensate for the effects of recent inflation. Beneficiaries reported that the additional cash was used for necessities, such as medication, while food requirements may have been met through in-kind support from a range of organizations. While beneficiaries were not exclusively located in front-line areas, access to markets and shops was not reported as an issue.
112. **The WFP approach was strongly welcomed by the Government of Ukraine.** WFP funding for top-ups to state transfers enabled the Government to fulfil its announced intention to increase pensions – pending, according to government counterparts, since 2022. Government counterparts noted that this was one of the first examples of direct cooperation between the United Nations and the Government and they perceived that it was effective in targeting those in need and the mechanism should not be changed or reconsidered at present.
113. WFP became the primary supporter of the development of the UISSS, a harmonized central digital register for the national social protection system. Prior to digitization, the existing Ukrainian system involved handling 7 million paper applications, with 20,000 users, 15 subsystems and 40 registers. It served 20 million recipients and engaged 2,000 social sector institutions.<sup>137</sup> Tracking the correct use of funds and ensuring targeted distribution posed significant challenges and inefficiencies for the Government and beneficiaries.<sup>138</sup>
114. Applications were only accepted at the place of registration, necessitating personal presence and paper documents. Registration information was then transferred multiple times between different institutions, leading to a waiting time of up to one and a half months for case resolution.<sup>139</sup> Though digitization was well underway pre-war, in the early stages of the war other funding fell away, with WFP becoming the primary source of funding and technical assistance. Key features of the digitized system include the ability to assess eligibility, process payments and facilitate data sharing across social services, ensuring that benefits reach those in need. It should be noted though that the

<sup>134</sup> The social top-up programme was meant to contribute to the enhancement of local food systems and multisectoral shock-responsive capacities, thus it was not only targeting food security-related outcomes.

<sup>135</sup> Reach and WFP (2023). Multisectoral Needs Assessment 2023.

<sup>136</sup> WFP (2024). Post-Distribution Monitoring. National Social Protection System Support in Ukraine Complementary Cash Assistance. June 2024.

<sup>137</sup> WFP (2022). Limited Emergency Operation Ukraine – Narrative.

<sup>138</sup> Data from the Ministry of Finance indicates that 10-12 percent of all social payments involve corruption.

<sup>139</sup> WFP (2022). WFP Ukraine Operational Task Force – Key Discussions and Action Points.

digital infrastructure continues to be refined to address evolving needs arising from displacement and economic disruption.

115. The UISSS has played a key enabling role in the emergency response by the Government, WFP and other agencies, for internally displaced people as well as in response to specific sub-emergencies. Critically, by centralizing the management of social benefits, the UISSS facilitated the provision of assistance to internally displaced people. The system enabled displaced people to apply for assistance online, regardless of their location, and receive payments through various channels in a manner that the previously decentralized and fragmented systems would not have been able to. Table 6 outlines systems improvements to which WFP claims to have contributed through its support to the UISSS. A detailed assessment of these benefits was beyond the capacity of the evaluation, however, interviews confirmed the general benefits of this capacity strengthening support. According to counterparts and other agencies, in addition to improving system efficiency, the UISSS has enabled the Government to respond to specific emergency situations – notably, the destruction of the Kakhovka dam – by quickly identifying and assisting affected people. Other UN agencies, such as UNICEF, have supported other government ministries to draw on the system to provide assistance to vulnerable populations – for example, to simplify the process of obtaining social services for children.

**Table 6 – WFP contributions to the Government of Ukraine’s capacity strengthening through the digitization of the social protection system**

	Area of contribution	Scope/implementation	Benefits
1	Centralized technology for automating social protection processes for internally displaced people (IDPs)	All aid disbursements and support payments for IDPs (approx. 2.5 million individuals) are now conducted through the Unified Information System for Social Sphere (UISSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rapid and convenient application submission without queuing</li> <li>▪ Automatic assignment of social assistance</li> <li>▪ Streamlined documentation process</li> <li>▪ Centralized payment processing and verification with other government registers</li> <li>▪ Extraterritorial servicing enabling operations in areas under Russian control in Ukraine</li> <li>▪ Reduced assistance delivery time from 1.5 months to 1-2 days</li> </ul>
2	Software for facilitating international organizations in providing additional cash assistance	A centralized system created using the Unified Social Register and data from the “e-dopomora” platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Allows international organizations to distribute additional cash assistance</li> <li>▪ Ensures transparency and convenience with verification mechanisms</li> <li>▪ Several million Ukrainians have received cash assistance</li> </ul>
3	Software for the functioning of the unified state automated register of persons eligible for benefits and the unified state register of recipients of housing subsidies	Decentralized software for organizing information exchange and preventing double subsidy allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduced application processing times</li> <li>▪ Extraterritorial application procedures</li> <li>▪ Integrated data transfer to the Pension Fund of Ukraine (PFU)</li> </ul>
4	Software for the centralized database of disability issues (enhancement and support)	Developed software to automate the provision of rehabilitation tools and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Integration with citizen service centres for application reception</li> <li>▪ Integration with UISSS and other databases</li> <li>▪ Improved access to services for persons with disabilities</li> </ul>
5	Support for the industrial operation and maintenance of the UISSS software	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ State social aid to low-income families</li> <li>▪ Aid to individuals with disabilities and children with disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Efficient and automated aid allocation and processing</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aid for single mothers, children under guardianship, caretakers of sick children, and child adoption</li> </ul>	
6	Software for the UISSS subsystem of remote information dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of a remote information dissemination subsystem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Automated communication via email and other electronic channels</li> <li>Improved information delivery to citizens on social protection issues</li> </ul>
7	Software for UISSS to automate ten types of aid/monetary assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assistance related to pregnancy and childbirth for various categories of women</li> <li>Support for children in large families, foster parents, guardians and orphans</li> <li>State social assistance for orphaned children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Simplified application submission</li> <li>Automatic assignment and verification of aids</li> <li>Integration with other state information resources</li> </ul>
8	Software for UISSS regarding the "bank cabinet" of the social web portal of the Ministry of Social Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Automatic generation and secure transfer of payment documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Efficient and secure disbursement of aid through banks and <i>Ukrposhta</i> (national postal service)</li> </ul>
9	Web-oriented service software for the provision of social services "case management"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Automated delivery of social services and maintenance of the Register of Service Providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Streamlined case management</li> <li>Improved coordination and delivery of social services</li> </ul>

Source: WFP (2023). WFP Ukraine Country Office's Efforts in Capacity Strengthening through the Digitalization of the Social Protection System in Ukraine (Progress Report for the Years 2022–2023).

116. Technical assistance to the Government may have missed other opportunities to strengthen government capacity, particularly around monitoring. WFP is continuing to provide technical assistance to improve the UISSS, including: ensuring security of personal data and protection against potential breaches; staff capacity and retention, particularly in remote areas with limited resources and low salaries; and putting in place effective systems for verification and correction in instances of human error (incorrect data entry). Additionally in 2023, WFP started to engage with the Pension Fund Ukraine on strengthening its call centre through monitoring capacities for the top-up programme, but this initiative did not materialize. In parallel, in interviews, government counterparts pointed to unmet capacity strengthening needs. Specifically, counterparts pointed to a need for knowledge and skills to establish and operate monitoring mechanisms, including to measure the performance of the digitized systems.

#### 2.2.1.4 Coordination and common services

**Summary Finding 8:** WFP support to logistics and emergency telecommunications common services contributed to the collective emergency response in a timely and effective manner. Early investment of resources by WFP and continuity of staffing were key to effectiveness.

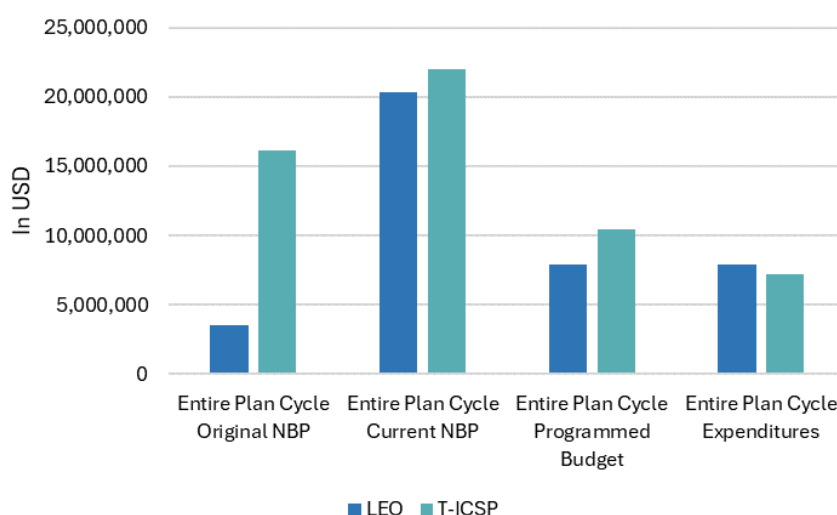
117. WFP support to cluster coordination and the facilitation of common services started with the LEO in 2022 and continued under the T-ICSP.<sup>140</sup> The LEO focused on WFP support to logistics coordination (through the logistics cluster), emergency telecommunications (through the emergency telecommunications cluster) and on-demand services. In the T-ICSP, WFP stepped up its commitment by adding support to the food security and livelihoods cluster,<sup>141</sup> common information management and other services and expertise, and on-demand cash transfer services. In addition, the T-ICSP was more specific on the type of assistance to coordination it aimed to

<sup>140</sup> In the LEO: Strategic Outcome 2 (outputs 2 to 4); in the T-ICSP: Outcome 3 (output 5.1 to 7.2).

<sup>141</sup> Even if WFP strategic prioritization was not included in the LEO, WFP started to co-lead the FSL cluster already in 2022.

provide, from “technical assistance and common services” in the LEO to “information management, coordination, and common services” in the T-ICSP. The allocation of resources to these functions (Figure 18) was approximately equal to one percent of the total WFP resources for the response in Ukraine.<sup>142</sup> This section discusses the facilitation of common services, while cluster coordination is discussed under Finding 9.

**Figure 18 – WFP resources for coordination and common services (2022-2023)**



Source: WFP, FACTory, extracted on 24 June 2024.

118. The WFP support was viewed as substantial, timely and effective for achieving the objectives of the clusters that WFP led or co-led (logistics, emergency telecommunications and food security and livelihoods). The 2023 annual country report (ACR) reported user satisfaction rates for the logistics cluster of 87 percent and for the emergency telecommunications cluster of 99 percent. Common storage capacity was made available to partners in Dnipro, Kyiv, Kropyvnytsky, and Odesa, and road transport was facilitated, (including support to inter-agency convoys) planned and coordinated by the logistics cluster.<sup>143</sup> Data connectivity and security communication services were established and radio infrastructure operationalized in Odesa, Dnipro and Kyiv, as a back-up means of telecommunications.<sup>144</sup>

119. User surveys, reported in the WFP annual country reports, were very positive and the common services perceived as fit for purpose. Stakeholders reported that these clusters offered key services to users in a timely fashion and found innovative solutions to internet connectivity challenges across the country.<sup>145</sup> Examples of this included the use of Starlink technology to enable continuous and reliable connectivity during WFP work in the country; the “Remote Site on Vehicle” project, essential for the security of inter-agency convoys (“a pilot mobile VHF radio solution for UN armoured vehicles on mission in high-risk areas”. After modifying a Starlink kit with a local telecommunications company, the emergency telecommunications cluster was assisted by a vehicle workshop to install and configure telecommunications equipment in the armoured vehicle<sup>146</sup>); and the use of an emergency telecommunications cluster “Chatbot” to publicly give access to information related to humanitarian assistance. This was operational in March 2022, but discontinued in June 2023.

<sup>142</sup> WFP funds allocation to coordination and common services has been on average equal to 1.1 percent of the total resources of WFP in Ukraine in each phase of internal budgeting (NBPs, both the original versions and the current ones, the IP, the programmed budget and the expenditures). The figure reported in the narrative shows the trend line for both periods under examination (2022; 2023-2024) between the initial NBPs and the cycles’ expenditures.

<sup>143</sup> WFP. Annual Country Reports 2022 and 2023.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid

<sup>145</sup> ETC. Ukraine ETC Situation Report #22. 2023.

<sup>146</sup> see [https://etcluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/ETC%20Ukraine%20SitRep%20-%202023-04-30-%2322\\_0.pdf](https://etcluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/ETC%20Ukraine%20SitRep%20-%202023-04-30-%2322_0.pdf)).

120. Inter-agency convoys were made available to all humanitarian organizations, as more than 20 organizations participated in these convoys over the period evaluated, with the majority of them being NGOs. However, during stakeholders' interviews, the perception was that they were predominantly used by the United Nations agencies.
121. Several factors emerged as important drivers of the effectiveness of WFP common services. **Key to effectiveness of the three clusters was early investment of resources in them by WFP**, which enabled the clusters not to be constrained by financial resources while operationalizing their priorities. While, as noted above, only a small proportion of the WFP budget was used to support the provision of common services, in absolute terms this was still a significant amount. No stakeholder identified the lack of resources as a constraint.
122. The logistics cluster conducted a gaps and needs analysis in September 2023 to reassess humanitarian partners' common logistical needs and constraints, which helped ensure the relevance of these services. This spans information management and coordination services, storage services available to humanitarian partners across the country and transport services, including supporting inter-agency convoys to high-risk areas.
123. Another element that influenced the clusters' performance was stability and continuity in terms of human resources. The logistics and emergency telecommunications clusters experienced an overall continuity in terms of human resources, at least at the national level.
124. Throughout the period under consideration, the clusters often lacked NGO co-facilitators, which is considered a positive practice to ensure broad participation and accountability.<sup>147</sup> The logistics and emergency telecommunications clusters have remained solely led by WFP across all areas,<sup>148</sup> consistent with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) designation of WFP as the global lead agency for the logistics cluster due to its expertise in humanitarian logistics. To date, WFP stakeholders indicated that no international or national non-governmental organizations, or national counterparts, such as civil protection or relevant ministry, have requested to co-facilitate the logistics cluster in Ukraine.

### 2.2.1.5 Coordination leadership

**Summary Finding 9:** Using T-ICSP resources, WFP-recruited staff enabled sectoral coordination through co-leadership of the food security and livelihoods cluster. Coordinating across the large and complex food security and livelihoods subsectors proved challenging. Plans are not yet in place for the transition from humanitarian coordination to government-led sectoral coordination.

125. **WFP channeled resources to the food security and livelihoods cluster that supported its structure, staffing and performance.** The cluster also implemented an area-based coordination model and subnational level clusters were rolled out. However, this roll-out was not always timely, mostly due to difficulties in identifying and securing national human resources to cover the function and overall deficiencies of the cluster system as a whole.<sup>149</sup> In addition to its involvement in national-level coordination structures, WFP also strengthened its contribution to local coordination structures, notably by appointing subcluster coordinators based in Odessa and Dnipro as of mid-2023.
126. **Food security and livelihoods cluster coordination at both national and subnational levels has been challenging.** Firstly, the intrinsic "duality" spanning food security and livelihoods has proved challenging to bridge. As the focus of humanitarian community progressively shifted from pure food security emergency context to livelihoods concerns, dedicated working groups were progressively set up to adequately cover different issues under the food security and livelihoods thematic scope, with a food assistance working group, chaired by WFP; a livelihoods technical working group, chaired by an NGO; and the agricultural technical working group, chaired by FAO. Nonetheless, it has been difficult to strike the right balance between food assistance and

<sup>147</sup> IASC (2022). "Statement by Principals of the IASC on Accountability to Affected People in Humanitarian Action".

<sup>148</sup> Within the scope of this evaluation, it has not been possible to establish whether NGOs and INGOs requested in the past to co-chair these sectors, nor whether this is perceived as a need by the wider humanitarian community.

<sup>149</sup> IASC 2023 - of particular relevance are observations #3 and #4.

127. Harmonizing and coordinating a cluster whose scope and partners are both wide and diverse has been an ongoing challenge. The food security and livelihoods cluster serves hundreds of national and international responders in Ukraine, whose mandates, operation modalities and objectives greatly vary. New “unconventional” yet significant food security actors have emerged strongly in the Ukraine response and have only engaged inconsistently with the food security and livelihood cluster. For example, both Global Empowerment Mission (GEM) and the World Central Kitchen (WCK) have countrywide coverage in Ukraine, but have initially not routinely coordinated activities with the food security and livelihoods cluster. This has required additional efforts on consensus building, coordination and technical guidance. However, WFP stakeholders reported that coordination between the food security and livelihoods cluster and these NGOs has significantly improved over the period under review, as they were ultimately reporting their response activities on a monthly basis in compliance with food security and livelihoods cluster guidance.

128. Food security data were available, shared with food security and livelihoods cluster members and publicly available on the food security and livelihoods website. An overview of the people in need is available for 2023 and 2024 and disaggregated per oblast and *raion* (district),<sup>150</sup> while the food assistance working group published its minutes and assessments.<sup>151</sup> However, those cluster members met by the evaluation team reported frustration on the volume of data made available to them for coordination, especially concerning its geographic coverage. For example, in the first half of 2024, food security and livelihoods cluster partners have responded with food assistance in 24 oblasts and 122 raions<sup>152</sup> across the whole country,<sup>153</sup> while data for people in need and targets are available for only less than half of those areas, concentrated along the front line.<sup>154</sup>

129. The food security and livelihoods cluster experienced a higher turnover rate, with limited or no overlap and handovers between incoming and outgoing national-level coordinators. The increased stabilization of the food security and livelihoods cluster leadership, particularly from 2024 onwards, contributed to consolidating the regularity of the occurrence of coordination meetings, to relaunching the building of synergies with other clusters and to strengthening the information management system. Active NGO co-leadership arrangements in different hubs were reported by cluster partners. During the evaluation, among some of the interviewees, there was a growing recognition of the importance of transitioning from a cluster coordination model to government-led sectoral coordination, especially in the comparatively stable western and central regions.<sup>155</sup>



130. An in-depth, comprehensive analysis of need by gender and other sociodemographic characteristics is being undertaken late in the response. The 2023 MSNA report did point to the prevalence and locations of groups experiencing higher levels of needs (most frequently, the elderly, people with disabilities and people with chronic illness and serious medical conditions which affect quality of life), as well as barriers to their accessing aid. However, stakeholders criticized the methodology for failing to analyse the needs of families headed by women or with child protection needs.<sup>156</sup> Some country office staff felt that the greater involvement of the protection, gender and accountability to affected populations (PGAAP) team could have improved early versions of the MSNA and other needs assessments.
131. **Some WFP and partner staff described gender as not being a priority issue in the Ukrainian context.** According to assessments carried out by WFP partners, gendered impacts of the war include women often bearing sole responsibility for providing for their families while grappling with income loss, family separation and disruptions in essential services.<sup>157</sup> Meanwhile, unemployed men not serving in the military faced increased difficulties accessing social support, often due to efforts to evade conscription. Similarly, LGBTQI+ respondents highlighted the challenges of staying outside official systems and securing stable livelihood opportunities. While PGAAP clearly understand these dynamics, some WFP staff and cooperating partners tended to downplay gendered impacts, instead making generalized statements to the effect that gender inequalities are less severe in Ukraine than elsewhere.
132. Key informants also noted the incompatibility with WFP tools and approaches to understanding and responding to gender and exclusion dynamics in the specific context of Ukraine. Some interviewees considered that WFP tools were not flexible or adequately nuanced enough to identify less obvious indicators of gender inequality in the Ukraine context, nor to support the design of context appropriate actions to mitigate gender-related protection risks.
133. **The WFP PGAAP team is now making considerable efforts to address this gap.** Consideration of gender and other dimensions of exclusion is mainstreamed within the framework of the planned Integrated Cross-Cutting Context Analysis and Risk Assessment (ICARA), designed to evaluate and understand various risks and contexts that could impact food security and humanitarian efforts. The ICARA will not be completed in time to inform the development of the new ICSP, but should be available to guide its implementation.
134. **Despite these analytical gaps, WFP is tailoring its assistance to ensure accessibility for marginalized groups.** Interviews and focus group discussions consistently pointed to the appropriateness and accessibility of distribution measures for elderly people and people with disabilities, who comprise the majority of the target population and face access issues due to restricted mobility or isolation. Foremost among these measures were the decentralization of distribution points, and options for distribution to caregivers and at-home distribution. These approaches were reported to have been carried out routinely – for both in-kind and cash distributions – in concert with cooperating partners, financial service providers and social services. For example, the pension top-up is delivered through the Ukrainian postal service, which continues to deliver cash to beneficiaries even very close to the front line. This is consistent with post-distribution monitoring findings, where no respondents reported having encountered barriers to accessing assistance. Furthermore, the second round of social top-ups has been specifically targeted at people with disabilities. As of 2023, WFP has reached 310,000 people with disabilities and 400,000 pensioners, particularly those residing in regions experiencing active hostilities.<sup>158</sup>
135. **WFP has encountered difficulties in adapting food packages to people with specific nutritional needs, including older people.** Interviewees also pointed to people with diabetes and people with disabilities as groups whose specific dietary needs had not been fully accounted for. WFP staff indicated that, as part of their efforts in adapting food box composition, they also aimed to improve its content based on disaggregated need.
136. **WFP has designed “add-on” initiatives to reach the most vulnerable in its school feeding**

<sup>156</sup> REACH did publish a Gender, Age and Disability Situation Overview in January 2024, but the methodological limitations of the MSNA to assessing gender still apply.

<sup>157</sup> CARE (2023). Rapid Gender Analysis – Ukraine.

<sup>158</sup> WFP Ukraine Annual Country Report 2023.

**activity.** For example, WFP has piloted school feeding support in *hromadas* (settlements)<sup>159</sup> with high numbers of Roma children. Reaching children with disabilities has been compromised by the fact that schools for children with disabilities do not fall under the remit of the Ministry of Education and Science, with whom WFP works closely on school feeding. Currently, WFP assistance is only reaching one dedicated school for children with disabilities and efforts to identify further schools have not yet demonstrated results.

137. **WFP distribution through the national social protection system is subjected to limitations in eligibility and access.** Interviews and focus group discussions suggest that proving entitlements for social assistance can be challenging. For example, proving eligibility for disability grants can be complex given decentralized administrative structures, while disability or ill health can compromise access to public offices required to gather the requisite documentation. The ongoing digitization of the registration systems risks excluding those without internet access and complementary offline channels for information dissemination are needed. Existing transfer levels are also sometimes at odds with inclusion principles. For example, pensions for people with disabilities are lower than those for other pensioners, and fail to account for additional costs incurred by people with disabilities. Collaboration to address these structural challenges has yet to be developed.

### 2.2.2.2 Coverage

**Summary Finding 11:** WFP decisions on coverage of crisis assistance were evidence-based and coordinated with humanitarian partners. However, despite targeting approaches becoming more tailored over time there was evidence of overlaps and oversupply of food assistance. Contributory factors included limited coordination among the established humanitarian actors, new large-scale food providers and the Government in providing food assistance. School closures near to the front line and lack of capacity meant that the most vulnerable caseloads of children were not necessarily reached.

138. **WFP coverage of food assistance needs was framed and coordinated as part of the Humanitarian Response Plan.** Overall needs were informed by the MSNA assessments and the contributions of individual actors coordinated through the food security and livelihoods cluster (for in-kind and sectoral cash assistance) and through the Cash Working Group (for MPCA). Coordination of coverage has been helped through a geographic division of responsibilities. WFP focused on food insecure people close to the front lines, while other agencies focused on internally displaced people in other parts of the country.<sup>160</sup>

139. **The WFP approach to targeting has evolved and improved over time.** The early approach was focused on quickly reaching as many people in need as possible. The initial challenge was to scale up assistance and identify beneficiaries' locations – with the use of self-registration systems<sup>161</sup> and distributions through institutions managed by local authorities. However, over time this approach has been adapted to reduce inclusion and exclusion errors. In parallel, collaboration with the Ministry of Social Policy over the first months of operation was instrumental in designing an adequate targeting approach for MPCA, further tailored with the use of e-dopomoga. Geographical targeting became more refined, with distributions focused on the front-line areas and away from national coverage.

140. A targeting framework issued by the country office helped to codify the geographical and categorical targeting criteria by activity (Figure 19). Blanket approaches are being progressively replaced by categorical targeting criteria. The development of the targeting approach drew on an analysis of correlations between target groups and levels of food insecurity. The WFP categorical approach provided a pragmatic solution, compared to proxy means test approaches often favoured by the World Bank, which require large amounts of data that could not be easily collected

<sup>159</sup> The most basic unit of local territorial administration in Ukraine, formed voluntarily as amalgamation of settlements.

<sup>160</sup> This was not a strict division as WFP support through government institutions, schools and disability top-ups extended throughout the whole territory.

<sup>161</sup> Initially WFP operated its own self registration system, then used the government-run e-dopomoga platform along with other agencies to identify beneficiaries until this list became outdated.

in the midst of a sudden onset emergency.

**Figure 19 – WFP Ukraine targeting strategy**

TARGETING SCHEMA for UNCONDITIONAL RESOURCE TRANSFERS		IK blanket	IK targeted	Sectoral cash-based assistance	Social benefit top up	E-MPCA
Location characteristics		Hromadas @ FL or intl. border (<30km to FL)	Hromadas 30-50km from FL/intl. border	Prev. IK location w/functioning markets where cash-based assistance is feasible	All conflict affected hromadas according to Ministry of Reintegration list	Caseload driven
Entitlement		GFD box, bread, rapid rations	GFD box	1,500 UAH/m (cash or voucher)	Individual top-up (=3,250 UAH minus ind. gov't benefit)	3,600 UAH/m
Duration		4 months (initial duration)	4 months (initial duration)	4 months (initial duration)	4 months (initial duration)	3 months
Registration		CP registration	CP registration	LA mobilisation // CP registration	Lists from PFU/MOSP	LA mobilisation // CP registration
TARGET GROUPS						
PFU and MOSP categories	Pension Fund recipients - Old-age - Loss of breadwinner - PwD (multiple categories)	X			< 3,250UAH	
	MOSP recipients - Old-age w/o right to pension - PwD (multiple categories)	X			< 3,250UAH	
Food insecure social categories	HH w/member with disability	X	X	X		
	Single parent HH	X	X	X		
	Low-income HH (GMI – social category)	X	X	X		
	HH w/unemployed member	X	X	X		
	HH registered in territorial center (Bedridden/social case)	X	X	X		
	Older person (60+) living alone	X	X	X		
	HH w/+3 children	X	X	X		
Sudden onset categories	(near) total loss of income/sudden unemployment	X				X
	Damaged house	X				X
	Evacuation/sudden displacement	X				X
	Civilian casualty in the family	X				X
	'Other groups at risk'	X	X	X		

Source: WFP Ukraine, Targeting Strategy (2024).

141. WFP and other agency stakeholders noted that the WFP targeting criteria were not always harmonized with other humanitarian actors or widely shared. While WFP targeting criteria were aligned with the Cash Working Group for rapid MPCA, for other transfer modalities and programmes, each agency has registered beneficiaries according to its own criteria. Cooperating partners reported in interviews that they required training to support the shift to a targeted approach.
142. Despite these targeting efforts, consultation with beneficiaries during the evaluation team's visit to distribution points suggested evidence of overlaps and an oversupply of food assistance. Focus group discussions and visits to front-line blanket distribution sites found evidence that the supply of food assistance provided by WFP appeared to exceed need. Cooperating partners reported to the evaluation team that several families opted not to collect their entitlements in whole or part – choosing not to attend, not collect all the boxes they were entitled to or selectively remove commodities. Other agencies also reported receiving reports of distributed food stocks accumulating at the family level. However, post-distribution monitoring consistently reported that a high proportion of beneficiaries were either satisfied or highly satisfied with the quantity of food delivered, albeit with a slight decline from 96 percent in June 2022 to 87 percent in June 2024.
143. Especially in late 2023 and 2024, there was a deliberate strategy by WFP to provide families with double entitlements in one distribution round, to anticipate cases where access to vulnerable people would be compromised in the near future. However, other factors were also at play. First, until the first months of the T-ICSP implementation, **the blanket distributions of food boxes within 30 km of the front line did not take into account very different contexts and needs.** WFP staff acknowledged that circumstances varied very considerably over the 1,200 km front line, and areas targeted by blanket distribution were progressively reduced in the course of 2023, to better take into account differentiation between areas of active fighting where needs were reportedly high, and many other areas that had remained relatively stable and comparatively food secure, despite being within 30 km from the front line.
144. Secondly, **new “unconventional” food security actors have distributed significant amounts of poorly coordinated assistance.** These actors include GEM (with a Ukraine budget of almost USD

270 million)<sup>162</sup> and WCK, which has served 260 million meals in Ukraine since 2022.<sup>163</sup> Both these organizations have covered areas under government control that are also assisted by WFP and, even although WFP stakeholders indicated coordination efforts with these organizations to avoid duplication of assistance, the evaluation found ongoing, uncoordinated distributions by these actors in areas visited that were simultaneously served by WFP. Large overlaps in distributions were also found in the hospitals and other institutions visited by the evaluation team, where people they spoke to reported receiving assistance from a wide range of private and civil society sources that fell outside the cluster coordination efforts.

**145. Furthermore, intersectoral coordination remained weak.** Multiple agencies and types of assistance created the potential for significant duplication of efforts. Although preparatory steps were underway at the time of the data collection mission, systemwide agreements on which transfers were considered overlapping and which could be received concurrently appeared to be absent. Critically there was still a lack of coordination between the food security and livelihoods cluster (responsible for sectoral cash transfers) and the Cash Working Group (where MPCA transfers resided). Building Blocks (see Finding 2) provided a good solution for deduplication of MPCA but did not extend to deduplication with sectoral cash.

**146. The cluster system has not consistently engaged the Government of Ukraine** and remained focused on coordination between humanitarian actors. The Government appointed a humanitarian coordinator to interact with the different agencies operating in Ukraine, who facilitated some high-level meetings with clusters, but other government actors did not co-chair clusters (as is common practice in other crises) or even regularly attend cluster meetings. Stakeholders, including in the Government, reported that systems and staff were overstretched and therefore preferred to allow humanitarian actors to organize themselves. This was an important limitation as it was estimated that the Government of Ukraine provided over two thirds of the crisis assistance.<sup>164</sup> Food assistance boxes, sectoral cash and MPCA were not deduplicated with government social transfers. That said, there were good practice examples of WFP aligning on a bilateral basis with the national social protection system, for example early coordination with the Government on MPCA (see Box 4). However, it is possible that, in some instances, aligning with the preferences of government counterparts has undermined this aim – with, for instance, disability top-ups distributed nationally rather than targeted to front-line areas.

#### Box 4 – Collaboration with the Government of Ukraine on MPCA

“Starting in August 2022, WFP collaborated with MoSP to serve people who had registered for humanitarian assistance through the e-dopomoga platform. For its second round of MPCA, WFP in collaboration with MoSP focused on assisting a group of people who had registered for assistance on e-dopomoga but are without an official social status. This means that they are not able to receive government social allowances, despite being in need. Only those residing in the war-affected hromadas by the time of application or who were displaced from these hromadas or areas beyond the control of the Government of Ukraine, were included.”<sup>165</sup>

**147.** The design of the WFP school feeding activity evolved to align with the organization’s ambition to reach the most food insecure and vulnerable populations. The initial design envisaged targeting functioning schools in areas with high school-going populations, including displaced children, and schools less likely to be interrupted by the conflict.<sup>166</sup> Later documents describe a two-tiered targeting process at oblast and school levels to focus on areas with the highest number of internally displaced children, large numbers of schools with offline education, and areas with the highest levels of food insecurity.<sup>167</sup> Within these parameters, key stakeholders clarified that WFP

<sup>162</sup> GEM, “Russia-Ukraine War”.

<sup>163</sup> WCK (2024). From the analysis of the FSL cluster data, in June 2024 WCK response in terms of general food distributions was equal to the 8 percent of the overall general food distribution response (WFP 41 percent). Data elaboration from the author.

<sup>164</sup> Estimate from key informant.

<sup>165</sup> WFP. PDM - Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA), November 2023.

<sup>166</sup> WFP (2022). Concept Note: School feeding in Ukraine. September to December 2022.

<sup>167</sup> WFP (2024). Annual Country Report 2023.

intended to support schools to provide blanket school meals to select categories of children, for example, all children in grades one to four, thereby benefiting both resident and displaced communities, minimizing the risk of social tensions as well as the possible stigmatization of vulnerable children.

148. Concerning school feeding assistance, WFP concentrated its targeting in schools providing in-person education. As the Government authorizes the reopening of schools only if a bunker and a safe environment are provided, most of the education facilities closer to the front line remained closed and used online education tools (see Context section). Consequently, this programme focused mainly on schools in areas that have been less disrupted by conflict.
149. Similar considerations apply to the targeting of institutions for feeding. While institutions close to the front line were prioritized, institutions were considered for inclusion across the country if they hosted a minimum of 15 percent internally displaced people with up to 85 percent of beneficiaries who may not be directly affected by war.
150. **The WFP approach to providing social top-ups was strongly welcomed by the Government of Ukraine.** WFP funding for top-ups to state transfers enabled the Government to fulfil its announced intention to increase pensions – pending since 2022. The target population for the top-ups was started in the first round with pensioners living in front-line areas. However, during the second round it expanded to include people with disabilities nationally. While it can be argued that the war has increased the number of people with disabilities nationally, it potentially included large numbers not specifically linked to additional war-related needs.

### 2.2.3 Linkages along the triple nexus

**Summary Finding 12:** As WFP scaled up its operations in Ukraine after February 2022, it has increasingly contributed to bridging the humanitarian-development nexus in its programmes, and in partnership with the Government, on social protection, and piloting livelihood interventions at the community level. WFP is still in the process of exploring its comparative advantage against other developmental actors in Ukraine. Limited progress has been made in working across the humanitarian-development-peace (triple) nexus and WFP lacks a well-developed strategy to mainstream conflict sensitivity in its programming.

151. Although the overall portfolio of activities has remained heavily focused on emergency response, WFP made progress in addressing the humanitarian-development nexus. WFP made increasing efforts to work across the nexus by taking a food systems approach, piloting agricultural interventions (see Finding 22) that have the potential for WFP to undertake emergency response in ways that have long-term benefit across the nexus. WFP has also worked consistently with the Government to strengthen shock-responsive social protection, notably through the top-up programme, as well as in its contribution to the Perekhid initiative (see Finding 13).
152. While the Ukraine context was viewed as conducive for conducting recovery activities, donors indicated a limited appetite for funding WFP livelihoods and recovery activities given the presence of other development actors working with the Government of Ukraine – with international financial institutions and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) leading the durable solution pilots. The commitment of WFP to link its presence in Ukraine to the end of the conflict is poorly aligned with development timeframes, as it remains hardly predictable for donors and partners, even although the new ICSP is intended to cover a three-year additional cycle of operations. Opportunities exist for WFP (however, stakeholders saw these as niche) in particular supporting agricultural recovery among very small-scale producers. There has been relatively little consideration of the triple nexus.<sup>168</sup> However, it is appreciated that establishing strategic linkages across the humanitarian response, recovery and peace has been challenging given the complexities and sensitivities needed to navigate in the Ukrainian context and the intended short-

<sup>168</sup> WFP has articulated its global position on social cohesion and peacebuilding activities as part of larger UN efforts: WFP (2023). Conflict Sensitivity Mainstreaming Strategy. / WFP. 2023. Evaluation of WFP's Role in Peacebuilding in Transition Settings. / WFP. 2013. WFP's Role in Peacebuilding in Transition Settings.

term presence of WFP in-country.<sup>169</sup>

153. There is general evidence showing that aid can undermine social cohesion, for example, in terms of perceived unequal access to assistance whether in cash or in-kind.<sup>170</sup> This resonated with the evaluation findings, particularly since the beginning of 2024, with the level of funding dwindling, sharper beneficiary targeting and increasing economic challenges in the country.<sup>171</sup> Focus group discussions reported exacerbated tensions between those excluded from assistance and others, with a perceived suspicion of favouritism by local authorities. Even although local administration was not directly involved in beneficiary targeting, thus not responsible for inclusion or exclusion decisions, such beliefs, reported multiple times during focus group discussions, suggested that modification of caseload and targeting criteria without sufficiently clear communication with beneficiaries could have impacted community cohesion as well as trust towards authorities. While communication efforts were implemented, including press releases on WFP<sup>172</sup> and Ukrainian authorities' webpages, online FAQ, and an X (formerly Twitter) campaign, these measures may not have been adequately clear or comprehensive to fully prevent social tensions and misunderstandings among affected people.
154. Social cohesion has remained an implicit goal in both the LEO and the T-ICSP, and conflict sensitivity is referenced but not specifically elaborated upon in relevant country office documents.<sup>173</sup> WFP lacked in-house dedicated conflict sensitivity analytical capacity, which could have helped devise a country-specific approach to social cohesion and peacebuilding and apply conflict sensitivity lenses to the implementation of the response.
155. WFP staff and partners have not received training or structured guidance on how to work by applying a conflict-sensitive approach or systematically considering social cohesion in programmes, for which there is no WFP operational definition.<sup>174</sup> A conflict-sensitive risk assessment was drafted during the scoping mission prior to the escalation of the war and a conflict sensitivity advisor appointed during the first three months of the operation. However, there was limited evidence that a conflict sensitivity analysis was used to devise a country-specific approach to mainstreaming social cohesion in the implementation of the response.
156. The lack of a more strategic and structured approach on social cohesion has translated into different understandings among staff and WFP partners on how to devise conflict-sensitive programmes or communicate changes in targeting assistance. Social cohesion and peacebuilding were not mentioned as factors shaping future livelihood activities nor in how to programme activities in areas currently outside of the control of the Government, which may become accessible in future. Finally, there is no traceable coordination with peacebuilding actors and Ukrainian civil society on conflict-sensitive programming.

## 2.2.4 How well is WFP envisioning transition and exit, tailored to local capacities and context?

### 2.2.4.1 Transition to government ownership

**Summary Finding 13:** WFP made clear commitments from the outset to exit from Ukraine as soon as conditions allowed, with a planned exit strategy of transitioning responsibility to national social protection systems. WFP has supported strengthening the shock responsiveness of the national social protection system, including developing the Central Digital Registry, which has enabled the Government and agencies to provide more efficient assistance. However, the transition is taking longer than expected

<sup>169</sup> Jethro Norman, Humanitarian Principles are under Fire in Ukraine. DIIS. 2024.

<sup>170</sup> IOM (2023). Ukraine Thematic Brief – Social Cohesion and Public Trust – General Population Survey Round 14.

<sup>171</sup> IOM (2024). Ukraine Thematic Brief – Social Cohesion and Public Trust – General Population Survey Round 14. 2023 / UNDP. Social Cohesion in Ukraine.

<sup>172</sup> For example : <https://www.wfp.org/news/wfp-distributes-complementary-cash-assistance-pensioners-ukraine-thanks-european-union-and#:~:text=Through%20this%20new%20initiative%2C%20WFP,March%201%2C%202023%20>.

<sup>173</sup> WFP (2022). Ukraine Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan. / WFP (2022). Limited Emergency Operation Narrative.

<sup>174</sup> WFP does not have a common definition for social cohesion – the definition WFP staff at country office level commonly rely on is “social cohesion is the level of trust in government, humanitarian/development actors and within the community/society and their readiness to jointly participate in sustainable peace and development goals”.

due to the time required to reach consensus among stakeholders and the limited fiscal space within the Government.

157. **WFP was clear from the outset that it intended to exit from Ukraine as soon as circumstances permitted.** The WFP country office leadership clearly communicated with all partners that it did not intend to establish a permanent presence in Ukraine and the response was strictly tied to responding to acute war-related needs. This stance was strongly endorsed by other UN agency key informants in interviews, who did not see WFP assuming a longer-term developmental role in Ukraine. However, no specific target date was set for a WFP exit, nor were the criteria for its eventual disengagement articulated.
158. There is an implicit assumption in the T-ICSP plan, reiterated in interviews, that the principal exit strategy lies in government-led provision through social protection mechanisms. The T-ICSP sets out an intention to invest in the capacity strengthening of government partners – critically to enhance the shock-responsiveness of the social protection system – and “pave the way for a smooth transition and eventual handover of humanitarian assistance to the Government”.<sup>175</sup>
159. As noted in Finding 7, WFP has integrated a social protection lens relatively early on and provided direct support to and through the government social protection system, most notably through pension and disability top-ups. WFP is also providing support to the development of the UISSS (central digital registry) that has enabled the Government and agencies to provide assistance to internally displaced people, as well as to respond to covariate shocks in specific locations (Finding 7). The Perekhid initiative – a joint UN-NGO-donor-Government initiative to support the sustainable transition and absorption of humanitarian caseloads into an inclusive shock-responsive national social protection system – is now front and centre in facilitating the transition of humanitarian caseloads to a more shock-responsive national social protection system supported through international assistance. WFP is seen to have been involved by other participants, contributing a pragmatic perspective and contributing resources to support the initiative. This included bringing in a consultant from WFP headquarters to work in Perekhid, with a focus on data management interoperability.
160. **However, the speed of transition to government systems may not align well with a short- or medium-term exit.** So far, efforts have been relatively slow and focused on coalition building and detailed research, as well as analysis on alignment options for humanitarian cash with the national social protection system in order to increase capacity, adaptivity and shock responsiveness, for example as part of the Perekhid initiative. Whilst interviewees report that a shift to implementation is now underway, neither an agreed set of policy recommendations for implementation by the Government nor a roadmap for their implementation are yet in place.
161. As long as the security situation is not stabilized, government capacity and willingness to take budgetary responsibility in the short-term is expected to be limited, as the Government will prioritize the bulk of its resources on military and war-related expenses. For instance, interviews with the Government indicated there is little likelihood that the Government will absorb full responsibility for school feeding in the short- to medium-term. Initial plans developed in 2022 envisaged only short-term engagement for WFP, transitioning to absorption by the Government once the situation had stabilized.<sup>176</sup> The T-ICSP reiterated the temporary and gap-filling nature of WFP support, with a reversion to a fully government-run school feeding system once humanitarian support is no longer required.<sup>177</sup> Similarly, while the design and intent of the initiative is sound – aligning with national strategies and work within government structures and systems to enable transition at a later date, once the war is over – interviews with key stakeholders in Ukraine suggest that the Government is unlikely to absorb the WFP top-up support while the conflict is ongoing due to constrained budgets; nor in the immediate or medium-term future once the conflict has ended.
162. Moreover, the school feeding initiative is still scaling up, making absorption a more significant future undertaking for the Government. While the WFP school feeding activity has the backing of a supportive, but small, group of government and private donors, the prospect of longer-term funding is uncertain, according to WFP key informants, raising questions about the future of the

<sup>175</sup> WFP (2023). Ukraine Country Office Annual Performance Plan 2023.

<sup>176</sup> WFP (2022). Concept Note – School feeding in Ukraine – September to December 2022.

<sup>177</sup> WFP (2022). Ukraine Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan.



initiative (see Finding 17). At the time of data collection, the lack of any obvious other organization to co-sponsor and support school feeding – either United Nations or civil society – leaves WFP isolated with the responsibility for school feeding top-ups, at least in the medium-term.

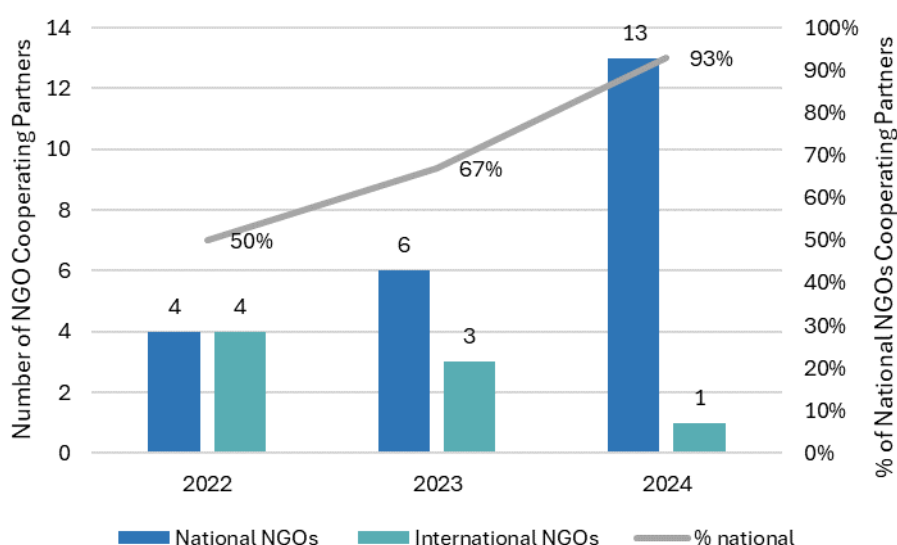
163. There were no plans to attempt to continue and transition the direct crisis response transfers provided by WFP and the expectation is that these would be discontinued once the war is over. The strong partnerships established to deliver the agricultural livelihoods pilots offer a possible handover pathway in the event of WFP exiting rapidly from Ukraine (Finding 22).

#### 2.2.4.2 Localization

**Summary Finding 14:** WFP has appropriately shifted from working directly with international to national NGOs and has contributed to strengthening the capacity of its local partners. However, the emphasis has been on increasing capacities for compliance with contracted responsibilities. The WFP approach to working with national and local civil society organizations does not appear to include consideration of their role after the exit of WFP. The transfer of security risks to cooperating partners was considerable and WFP co-ownership of risks could be improved.

164. WFP has increasingly shifted from working directly with international to national NGOs during the period covered by the evaluation, as shown in Figure 20.

**Figure 20 – Number and proportion of international and national WFP non-governmental organization cooperating partners, 2022-2024**



Sources: WFP 2022j, WFP 2023c, WFP 2024b, FLAs 2024.

**165. The context is suitable for a progressive shift from international to national partners.**

Background documents and key informants among WFP staff and their cooperating partners made strong arguments for the rationale for such a shift, including: better access in hard-to-reach areas for local and national organizations;<sup>178</sup> better quality of programming, given contextual knowledge, language and pre-existing links into community networks, leading to more inclusive outreach;<sup>179</sup> and cost efficiency, given the generally smaller budgets of national NGOs compared with international organizations.

**166. WFP has contributed to the capacity strengthening of its local NGO partners.** While there is undoubtedly a high level of capacity already within Ukrainian civil society, much of which existed

<sup>178</sup> WFP (2024). Ukraine Annual Country Report 2023.

<sup>179</sup> WFP (2022). Ukraine Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan.

prior to the conflict,<sup>180</sup> expertise and resources related to the humanitarian assistance field were lacking. WFP identified capacity gaps within its national cooperating partners and sought to address them through trainings. WFP staff referenced topics including: security, gender equality, protection, complaints and feedback mechanisms (CFM) and quality aspects of in-kind distribution processes, such as the identification and maintenance of storage facilities and humanitarian principles.

167. Because of the requirement from WFP for cooperating partners to include mandatory positions (with budget attached) for protection, complaints and feedback mechanisms and monitoring were noted as important for strengthening the institutional capacities of NGO partners. Financial spot checks, and mid- and end-point performance evaluation by WFP flagged capacity gaps to be addressed, followed up by improvement plans.<sup>181</sup> The majority of cooperating partner informants who participated in the perception survey conducted for this evaluation said that their collaboration with WFP had improved their capacity to assist populations in need after the exit of WFP from Ukraine.<sup>182</sup>
168. There are gaps in investments in the security of national cooperating partners, despite the significant security risks often taken by local organizations. WFP allows an allocation for the security costs of its cooperating partners, though this is generally limited to covering the costs of personal protective equipment and some security-related training. Some NGO key informants suggested room for improvement in WFP co-ownership of security risks with its national partners and a strengthened duty of care for those organizations working in front-line areas.
169. In 2022, WFP had issues with identifying and monitoring subpartners, an issue which has been progressively addressed with the renewal of field-level agreements in 2023. According to key informants, particularly those working at the subnational level, many of the organizations actually delivering WFP in-kind assistance were local organizations subcontracted by the direct cooperating partners of WFP (both international and national) to do “last-mile” delivery, including local volunteer groups.<sup>183</sup> While WFP was aware which subpartners were in charge of the last-mile delivery of assistance in specific areas through monitoring, there was no notable formal relationship between WFP and these subpartners.<sup>184</sup> As a consequence, WFP was initially unaware of the risks those subpartners were exposed to, their levels of capacity, and their adherence to humanitarian principles and good practice throughout the distribution process, including in important areas such as protection, gender mainstreaming and equality, disability inclusion, accountability to affected people and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.
170. **The emphasis of WFP capacity building among cooperating partners has been on compliance with its ways of working.** WFP cooperating partners expressed mixed views on the overall quality of their partnership with WFP but the predominant view was that national NGO partners are viewed as implementing rather than genuine cooperating partners, and their role was to implement pre-designed and prescribed activities as determined by WFP. The overall focus has been on ensuring compliance with WFP ways of working and understanding the international humanitarian system overall. There was little evidence of two-way learning between WFP and its cooperating partners, or of efforts to canvas partners on areas where they would like to receive support or training, beyond those topics of key interest to WFP.
171. WFP consults with its cooperating partners on individual partnerships and its overall portfolio of work, but **civil society actors do not feature prominently in WFP planning for transition.** WFP strategic documents make scant reference to the role of national and local civil society

---

<sup>180</sup> E.g. ICVA (2023). However, it was noted that national and local NGOs in Ukraine are a diverse set of organizations in terms of capacity, scale and experience.

<sup>181</sup> WFP (2024). Ukraine Country Office Annual Performance Plan 2023.

<sup>182</sup> Five out of six cooperating partner informants who participated in the perceptions survey noted that their collaboration with WFP had improved their capacity to continue assisting people in need after the exit of WFP (Evaluation perception survey with WFP's cooperating partners).

<sup>183</sup> Subcontracting is not unique to WFP; a report by the Assessment Capacities Project in 2023 estimates that most international NGO informants who participated in their thematic report on localization in Ukraine noted that local organizations implemented approximately 40 percent of their activities – ACAPS. 2023. Ukraine: Perceptions of localization in the humanitarian response. Thematic report, 16 June 2023.

<sup>184</sup> Only 4 out of 14 field-level agreements (FLAs) with WFP cooperating partners in 2024 reported operating with subpartners; 2 out of 9 in 2023; and 1 out of 8 in 2022. Except from 2022 when 3 CPs were operating through subpartners without notifying WFP, WFP staff reported they were confident all subcontracting were reported to them.

organizations in its transition and exit from Ukraine. Dialogues between the WFP programme team at country office-level and national cooperating partners were generally perceived as positive and constructive, though not necessarily on the topic of exit strategies. The short timeframe of field-level agreements with cooperating partners, limited by the respective timeframes of the LEO and the T-ICSP, may have also hindered meaningful discussions on longer-term planning for the future. The timeframe of field-level agreements is expected to increase toward multi-year coverage with the ICSP. Several of the WFP national cooperating partners had been briefed on the forthcoming WFP ICSP, but there was no evidence that they had been included in the design process.

## 2.3 EQ3 – Cross cutting issues

### 2.3.1 Protection and accountability to crisis-affected people

**Summary Finding 15:** Protection activities appropriately focused on ensuring physical safety and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, including training for delivery partners. However, there has been little attention to protection referrals. WFP has an accessible and well-used complaints and feedback mechanism, though relatively little attention has been paid to broader dimensions of accountability to affected people (beyond the complaints and feedback mechanism) and other means of ensuring the participation of communities and people in the decisions that affected their lives.

172. **There is strong attention from WFP on ensuring the physical safety of staff and beneficiaries and on PSEA.** Strong provisions are in place to ensure the safety of WFP staff. All UN staff, including WFP staff, benefit from the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) support and protocols, with mandatory training in safe and secure approaches in field environments (SSAFE). WFP has also invested heavily in its own security staff in the country and field offices who support not only WFP but other United Nations and NGO partners. WFP also provided security support to cooperating partner personnel, who bear the elevated risks from operating in front-line areas. Field-level agreements provide for the procurement of personal protective equipment such as vests, helmets and first-aid kits for cooperating partner personnel, and a range of safeguarding measures.
173. Significant care was evident in mitigating physical risks to beneficiaries with the selection of distribution sites to minimize travel and security risks. Post-distribution monitoring reports in 2022 and 2023 indicated that 97 percent to 98 percent of respondents have not experienced security challenges related to WFP assistance. Focus group discussions with beneficiaries consistently supported this finding, describing accessing food assistance as safe.
174. WFP provided regular training on key protection issues, including “training of trainers” for its cooperating partners and dedicated sessions for other stakeholders. There was anecdotal evidence of the effectiveness of the training, with WFP staff able to cite specific examples of related changes to partner delivery practices. WFP are mindful of the need to provide regular refreshers to mitigate against staff turnover. Training of food security and livelihoods cluster members has been delivered in collaboration with the protection cluster based on the outcome of a partner survey in which partners identified protection as the area in which they most needed training. The evaluation team still witnessed basic protection shortcomings at distribution points visited during the data collection mission, including shelter, seating or water not being provided. However, WFP process monitoring data nuance these field observations, as most of the indicators that were reported on showed satisfactory variables.<sup>185</sup>
175. PSEA-related provisions set out in field-level agreements with partners are extensive, including: strict measures to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct; emphasizing zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse; prohibition of sexual activity with minors; and banning exchanges for sexual acts. Relationships between staff and beneficiaries are prohibited, and reporting of any misconduct is mandatory. Managers are responsible for creating a protective environment, with investigations required to be reported promptly. In interviews, WFP staff and agency colleagues

<sup>185</sup> WFP (2024). In-Kind Food Assistance Process Monitoring – January-August 2024. This document notably reports that 92 percent of the 795 FDPs visited had waiting facilities during distribution, 88 percent were accessible for people with mobility issues, 92 percent had prioritized waiting lines, and 94 percent had good crowd management.

pointed to the prominent role WFP is playing on PSEA within the UN system by co-chairing the PSEA network.

176. Attention to other dimensions of protection in programme documentation and interviews, both in Kyiv and in the field, was relatively limited. Few interviewees referenced broader dimensions of protection, such as referrals to psychosocial or other services. WFP staff referred to protection in the context of providing assistance to excluded communities. WFP demonstrated good practice in meaningfully integrating consideration of protection, gender and inclusion and accountability to affected people by bringing all these functions together in one protection, gender and accountability to affected people (PGAAP) team. In interviews, the PGAAP team members consistently referred to linkages between their own and other PGAAP colleagues' work as a matter of course.

177. **It is unclear whether WFP is influencing the integration of protection considerations into government systems.** WFP reported communicating protection requirements to government counterparts, but details were not shared with the evaluation team. A post-distribution monitoring report on social top-ups indicates that beneficiaries were overall satisfied with protection considerations included in this programme,<sup>186</sup> although complaints and feedback mechanisms were generally unknown or not sufficiently used.<sup>187</sup>

178. There has been poor communication with communities on social top-ups, with potential for unintended negative outcomes on cohesion. In focus group discussions, nearly all recipients reported being poorly informed about the source, eligibility and purpose of the top-ups. Many reported receiving it with no prior explanation. WFP has made attempts to inform beneficiaries, including printing and distributing booklets and media outreach. However, the ability of WFP to reach and sensitize beneficiaries was challenging, as WFP does not hold the registration data. The Government of Ukraine shared phone numbers of beneficiaries to allow WFP to conduct monitoring data collection, but did not provide full beneficiary lists due to data confidentiality concerns.

179. **WFP has built key strategic partnerships to promote protection.** A partnership with UNFPA (see Finding 2) facilitated access to services for gender-based violence survivors. Under this partnership, leaflets containing information about available services are included in all food boxes. In addition, targeted food boxes are distributed at 50 shelters and crisis rooms. External stakeholders observed that this initiative promoted women's physical and emotional safety and supported them to restore a level of control over their lives. Another positive example cited by internal and external stakeholders concerned referrals to UNICEF on sanitation facilitation in schools (for example, a lack of availability of single sex bathrooms, missing locks on doors) based on information gathered during visits related to school feeding.

180. **The WFP complaints and feedback mechanism phone hotline for information requests and complaints is well-established,** with clear processes in place for its operation and for escalation of complaints. The existing complaints and feedback mechanism telephone line is widely accessible, given widespread mobile phone usage among all age groups. In response to user feedback, WFP has improved accessibility by extending operational hours to outside working hours. A minor limitation was reported to be insufficient operator capacity to handle incoming calls on peak days when SMS messages announcing distributions are sent to beneficiaries.

181. Complaints and feedback mechanism users reflect the target population of WFP, with older people well represented (40 percent of callers) and 80 percent of callers being women.<sup>188</sup> The vast majority of calls to the hotlines were informational requests including registration procedures, eligibility inquiries and assistance coverage in specific areas. Complaints mainly revolve around non-receipt of cash assistance, and technical issues. Cases of suspicions of fraud or corruption and allegations of misconduct were also reported, but represented a minor proportion, around 120 out of the 500,000 calls received by WFP through its complaints and feedback mechanism from April 2022 to March 2024. Protection-related complaints relating to discrimination or PSEA were hardly ever reported.

---

<sup>186</sup> WFP (n.d). PDM report on Complementary Cash Assistance, June 2024. Notably 99 percent of respondents indicated that they did not experience security issue related to WFP assistance.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> WFP, CFM data, April 2022-March 2024.

182. Serious complaints are escalated, with allegations of misconduct, fraud, corruption or theft treated as high priority cases and referred to a task force for handling and closure. WFP staff were able to cite specific examples of acting on feedback – for example, in response to accusations of petty corruption at distribution points, WFP monitored both itself and, through third party monitors, any issues related to distributors requesting money from beneficiaries for fuel or other expenses.
183. **WFP is making efforts to expand communication channels available to beneficiaries.** WFP has recently introduced online complaints forms as an alternative channel, and the development of text-based and email responses is ongoing. WFP has promoted the complaints and feedback mechanism extensively, through posters at registration and distribution points, Facebook posts and, more recently, by printing a QR code for the online form on food assistance boxes.
184. **Early efforts to establish a single cross-agency complaints and feedback mechanism were not followed through.** Stakeholders reported that it proved impractical to agree and implement a joint approach given time sensitivity. Independent information and complaints hotlines challenged coherence and reduced ease of access for beneficiaries. To redress this, WFP has been a proactive member of the dedicated accountability to affected people working group. This convened a forum to bring together hotline operators and managers from different agencies to share experiences and discuss common issues, with participants identifying a need for mental support sessions and training for hotline operators to address the emotional impact of high-sensitivity calls.

## 2.3.2 Gender equality, disability and inclusion

**Summary Finding 16:** WFP demonstrated a commitment to inclusion by encouraging partners to consider a range of marginalized groups through field-level agreements and training. However, inclusion efforts of the most vulnerable people at the point of delivery varied considerably, influenced by staff turnover and subcontracting of delivery responsibilities by cooperating partners. While there was evidence of gender sensitivity in programming, this did not extend to sufficient attention to men or intersectional vulnerabilities.

185. WFP demonstrated a commitment to inclusion. In interviews, PGAAP staff demonstrated awareness and consideration of a wide range of potentially marginalized groups (including people with disabilities, ethnic Russians, Roma and the LGBTQIA+ community), as well as of intersecting vulnerabilities. **A wide range of vulnerable groups was identified for assistance in field-level agreements**, including: pensioners and the elderly, especially those over 60 years old; children, particularly those with disabilities, orphans and foster care children; pregnant and lactating women due to their increased nutritional needs; people with disabilities and those with chronic illnesses, to ensure access to food and basic necessities; families headed by one person and families headed by women with limited or no access to livelihoods or income-generating activities; low-income families, including those with elderly members or children, where the income is below a certain threshold; and minority and marginalized groups, such as the Roma community, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and people living with HIV/AIDS or Tuberculosis.
186. Attention to the needs of men and implications of norms around masculinities for the behaviours of male beneficiaries was limited, in both programme documentation and interviews. While in Kyiv staff noted that men of conscription age may be excluded from assistance due to hesitance to attend distributions, at the operational level, awareness of barriers to access for men was variable, with some stakeholders stating plainly that everyone who met criteria could register and receive assistance, with no difference in access for men and women.
187. WFP has placed strong emphasis on training cooperating partners to mainstream gender and inclusion considerations in delivery. Training has been comprehensive in terms of its subject matter, including practical guidance on ensuring inclusive and accessible registration and distribution. Pre and post training testing indicates changes in participants' knowledge and attitudes, though evidence on resulting changes in behaviours and practices is anecdotal. Cooperating partner field-level agreements also pay good attention to the promotion of gender equality, providing for: gender-sensitive approaches; protection from sexual exploitation and abuse; prioritization of vulnerable groups including pregnant and lactating women for assistance; gender parity in staffing; measures to ensure safe and dignified access to distribution points; and

encouragement of partnership with women-led and women's rights organizations. Provision is also made for collection of sex, age and disability disaggregated data.

188. **However, mainstreaming of gender and inclusion in delivery varied considerably by cooperating partner.** WFP has effectively worked with, and through, certain cooperating partners to reach specific marginalized groups. At the same time, third-party monitoring and PGAAP field visits have identified instances of non-compliance, including a lack of prioritization of particularly vulnerable people at distribution points, while monitoring visits to food distribution points reported 8 percent of distribution points not having prioritization processes in 2023 and 2024.<sup>189</sup> In interviews, when asked about gender mainstreaming, some cooperating partners focused on quantifying numbers of women and girls receiving assistance rather than gender sensitivity and adapted programming. Explanatory factors for the inconsistency of gender and inclusion mainstreaming included the volume of new partners with and through which WFP is working in Ukraine, high levels of staff turnover within cooperating partners and long delivery chains, which limit the reach of training efforts as well as accountability.
189. Data on gendered outcomes are monitored by the country office, but not systematically reported in monitoring documents. WFP staff reported that gender disaggregation is systematically applied when consulting beneficiaries, which is further confirmed by post-distribution monitoring questionnaires the evaluation team has had access to. While the country office indicated that disaggregation by gender is reported for indicators where there is a significant difference, the food consumption score and economic capacity to meet essential needs outcome indicators are generally the only ones that were actually disaggregated by demographic characteristics in post-distribution monitoring reports. The T-ICSP includes indicators on food assistance decision making by gender. While WFP planned to reach over two times more women and girls than men and boys in 2023, in practice, 61 percent of beneficiaries were women and girls<sup>190</sup> (see Figure 9, Section 1.3). This reflected the overall population, as formal targeting criteria did not specifically target women and girls (see Figure 19, Finding 11). This decision is appropriate in view of the gender dynamics of the Ukraine context.
190. While all beneficiaries targeted by WFP are characterized as vulnerable, a key limitation across agencies to targeting marginalized groups has been a lack of detailed registration data. WFP has been advocating for and working with other agencies on improving registration to enable accurate targeting frameworks. WFP staff pointed to the lack of a coordinated approach to targeting and a need to improve registration formats in order to accurately identify and assist those in need. WFP is cognizant of the risk of discrimination against, and resulting exclusion from, assistance of Russian-speaking people, not by design, but in practice at the delivery level and this will be explored by the ICARA.
191. Intersecting vulnerabilities, and their implications for the impartiality of WFP interventions, were considered inconsistent. Some WFP staff referred explicitly to the importance of intersectional approaches in interviews – for example stating that “intersectionality in needs in Ukraine is what makes a person in need. Gender needs to be looked at in these terms.” However, most staff and partners tended to refer to gender in an undifferentiated manner. Whereas other agencies and INGOs pointed to the specific or disproportionate needs of, for example, women with disabilities, women living in rural communities, older women and Roma women – and measures to address them – WFP staff and partners tended to refer to targeting women in general (in planned livelihoods activities, for instance) or the de facto prevalence of women as beneficiaries in the context of men's conscription.

## 2.4 EQ4 – Efficiency

### 2.4.1 Funding profile

**Summary Finding 17:** The funding profile of WFP, its flexibility and timeliness greatly enabled its response, with donors willing to allow a carry-over of funding. While the bulk of funds were earmarked towards the emergency response, there were sufficient flexible funds to enable piloting other activities.

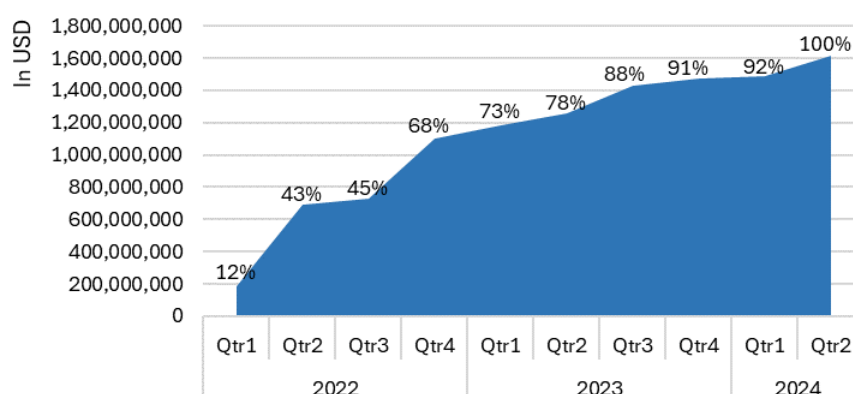
<sup>189</sup> WFP (2023). In-kind food assistance process monitoring – January-August 2024, 2024; - January-December 2023.

<sup>190</sup> WFP ACR 2023

Although total pledges have fallen short of the needs-based plan, sufficient funds were available to meet pressing needs. However an anticipated reduction in funding in 2024 and 2025 may constrain the scale and diversity of future activities.

192. **The WFP funding profile, its flexibility and timeliness greatly enabled the rapid start-up of the WFP response in Ukraine.** A very large amount of funds has been received since the onset of the crisis. Figure 21 highlights the contributions received by WFP by the first allocation date. Almost 70 percent of its resources were first allocated in 2022, highlighting a significant donor commitment over the first months of the response, while the remaining 30 percent were progressively received across 2023 and 2024, reflecting a more gradual pace of contributions over time.

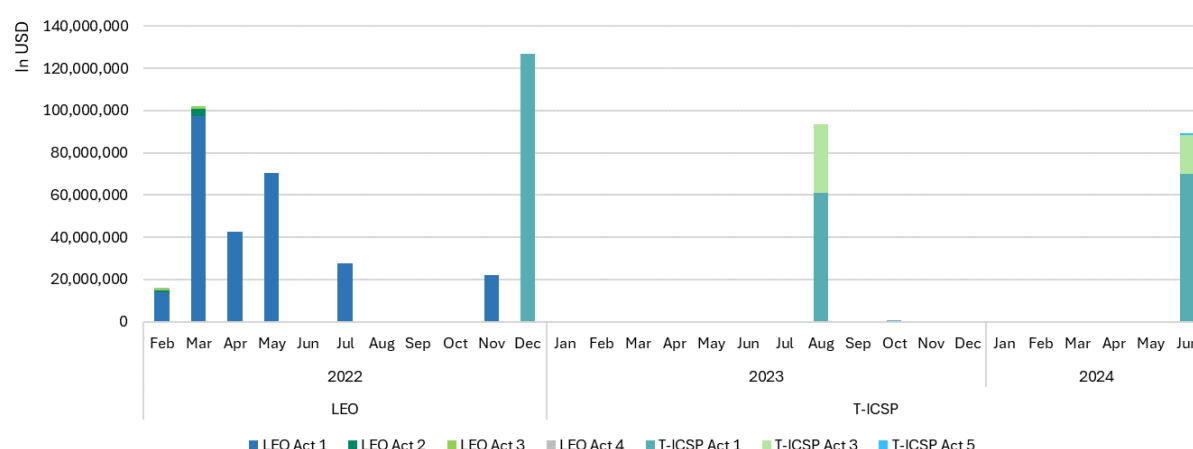
**Figure 21 – Contributions received by WFP country office Ukraine 2022-2024 (in USD)**



Source: WFP, FACTory, extracted on 24 June 2024.

193. **Advance financing was used strategically by WFP at the very start of operations in 2022** to ensure the country office had sufficient resources to start the scale-up over the first months of operation in 2022 while donors' funding was not yet fully available for implementation. Internal project lending (IPL) resource advances began 11 days after the escalation of the conflict, allowing WFP to rapidly establish an emergency operation and start to assist beneficiaries within a few days. IPL funding was also appropriately used to ensure a smooth transition between the LEO and the T-ICSP in December 2022.

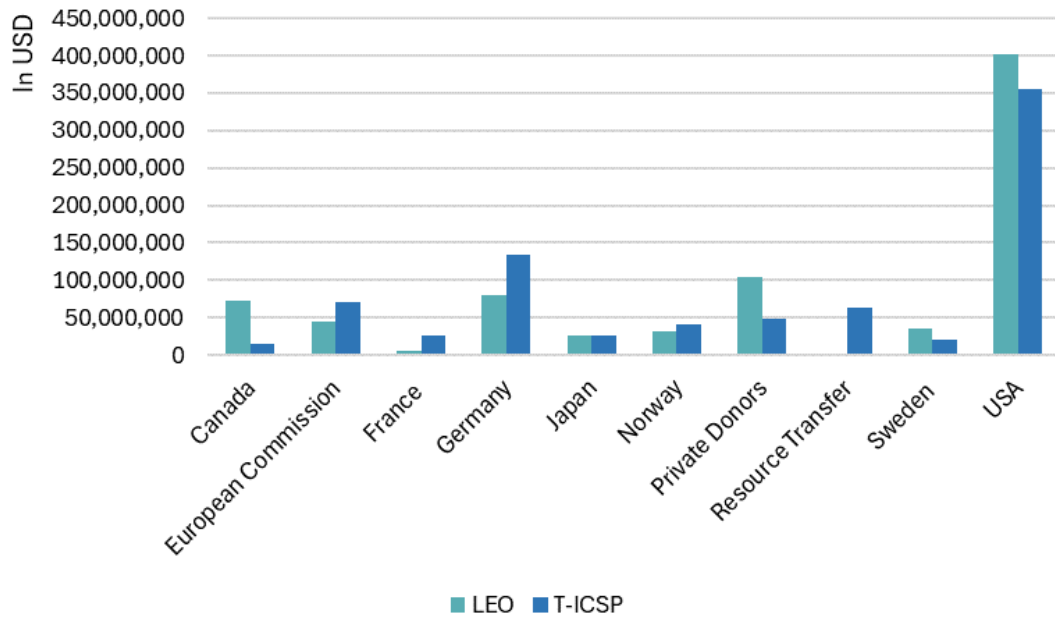
**Figure 22 – Type of advanced instrument (IPL) used per activity/monthly (in USD)**



Source: WFP, 'IRA and IPL' dataset, CPB Advanced Financing Report, extracted on 24 June 2024.

194. WFP relied on a large number of donors (Figure 23), although for the period 2022-2023 nearly half of the response of WFP in Ukraine was funded by the USA. Private donors played a key role in terms of financing of WFP, together with the European Commission, Germany, Canada, Norway and Japan. While the majority of the funding was not multiyear, donor flexibility meant that WFP was able to carry over funds from one fiscal year to another. This was important given the late disbursement of funds by some donors, particularly in 2022.

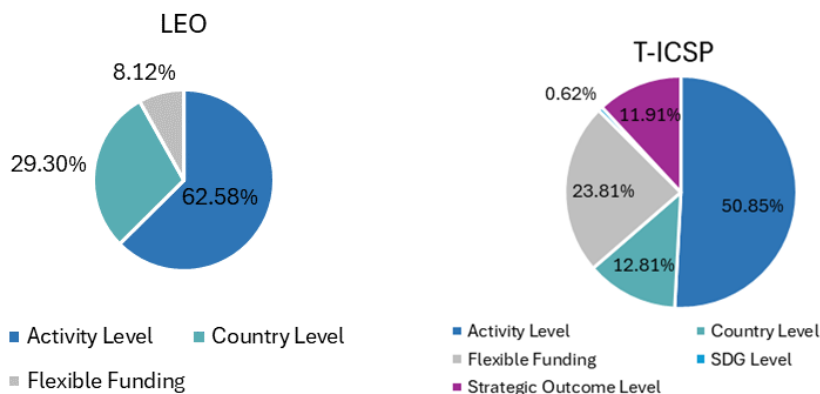
**Figure 23 – Main donors’ contribution to LEO and T-ICSP**



Source : WFP, FACTory, extracted on 24 June 2024.

195. About half of the funding received by WFP has been earmarked at the activity level (respectively 62.5 percent in the LEO and 50.8 percent in the T-ICSP), with most of the earmarking towards crisis response. However, significant levels of flexible funding allowed WFP to engage in other non-earmarked activities including capacity development, social benefit support to targeted populations and piloting resilience building. The level of earmarking in the LEO and the T-ICSP is presented in Figure 24.

**Figure 24 – LEO and T-ICSP Ukraine earmarking levels**



Source: WFP, FACTory, extracted on 24 June.



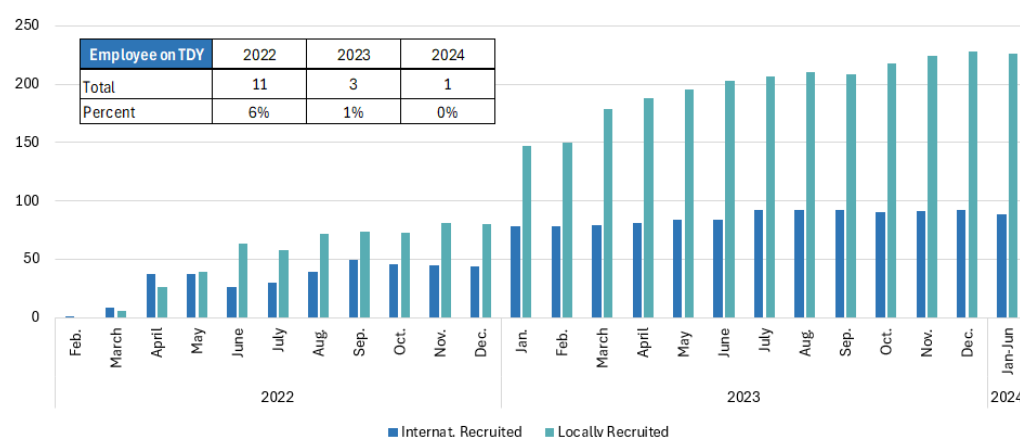
196. **Secured funding and assessed funding prospects for 2025 are relatively constrained, compared to the period 2022-2023.**<sup>191</sup> Since the beginning of 2024, WFP secured USD 142,732,896 from 13 donors.<sup>192</sup> This decrease in funding prospects can be due to several factors beyond the control of WFP, including the broader context of multiple global competing crises, donor fatigue and shifting political priorities in donor capitals. Some major donors, such as Germany, also tend to confirm their contributions towards the end of the year, thus beyond the temporal scope of the evaluation for 2024. With the decrease of overall funding levels, earmarking by donors at the activity level may become an increasing constraint on the ability of WFP to allocate resources to different activities. As stated in several key informant interviews with WFP and external stakeholders, and supported by data,<sup>193</sup> this may prove a particular constraint to scaling up resilience-building pilots.

## 2.4.2 Human resources

**Summary Finding 18:** Rapid and extensive corporate-led surge staffing was critical to the programme start-up, but did not always match requirements in terms of profile, technical skills, seniority, security awareness and previous experience. The initial stage was particularly challenging, as WFP had to build a country office from scratch, with no prior presence and national staff roster available. This explained the high reliance on international staffing, which stabilized relatively quickly. However, it has taken longer than expected to build a full national staff complement because of recruitment and retention challenges. There have been improvements in gender parity and staff care over time.

197. **During the first six months of 2022, WFP rapidly mobilized a large number of professionals in support of the response.** WFP went from zero to 124 staff deployed to the Ukraine response by the end of 2022, 80 of whom were locally recruited.<sup>194</sup> The support to scale up human resources continued throughout 2023. Figure 25 shows the monthly changes of the number of unique staff deployed for the Ukraine response for the years 2022-2023.

**Figure 25 - WFP headcount by employee group and month, and Ukraine response<sup>195</sup> unique employee totals**



Source: WFP, HR data, extracted on 24 June 2024.

<sup>191</sup> The NBP for 2025 is yet to be finalized as part of the new Ukraine CSP.

<sup>192</sup> Data is from CPB Grant Balance Report. Main donors are Norway, Saudi Arabia and Canada. USA contribution is among the lowest ones.

<sup>193</sup> Kiel Institute, Ukraine support Tracker (<https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/>), Action against Hunger USA, "Ukraine: As Needs Grow, Declining Funding Threatens Availability of Live-saving Assistance".

<sup>194</sup> This refers to the number of unique employee totals for the timeframe, as per file named Ukraine country office et al. by gender, workforce and employee group 2022-2023.

<sup>195</sup> Numbers include staff initially posted to Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania & Slovakia.

198. **The initial corporate scale-up in Ukraine was supported primarily through the short-term deployment of international staff** through temporary duty assignment and short-term hires. While impressive in scale, several challenges were noted. In the early phase of the response, WFP experienced a high turnover rate and at times deployments were as short as one week. Over the first months of the operation, most WFP staff were based in Krakow, then progressively relocated into Lviv and finally into Kyiv by the end of summer 2022 (also see Figure 6). There was no system in place to ensure either overlap or handover between incoming and outgoing staff in the same function, which created work discontinuity and at times duplication of efforts. A standardized onboarding process was not put in place until the summer of 2022.<sup>196</sup>
199. It was also reported that surge staffing did not always meet mission requirements, in terms of profile, technical skills, seniority, security awareness (namely SSAFE and basic security in the field (BSAFE) trainings) and previous experience in performing in high-risk areas.<sup>197</sup> Some key technical functions were not covered in the initial stages of the scale-up, and staff deployed did not possess enough operational knowledge of corporate emergency systems and processes. This resulted in additional pressure on the workload, well-being and rest and recuperation cycles of other staff. Moreover, the lack of personnel meeting UNDSS SSAFE requirements contributed to delays the deployment of some key staff to Ukraine in the early phase of the emergency. WFP stakeholders commented that the temporary duty deployments included too many strategic-level staff, with not enough staff to conduct routine administrative tasks. In consequence, country office staff were subsequently preoccupied with reconciling the paperwork with corporate online systems and additional human resources were also deployed.
200. As shown by a human resources (HR) dataset made available to the evaluation team, the reliance on short-term deployments reduced significantly in 2023 compared to 2022. As of the end of May 2024, nearly half of the international staff in Ukraine, and almost all most senior staff in-country, had been working in the mission for over a year and a half.<sup>198</sup> **The overall caliber of key staff who were rapidly deployed and remained in place over the first two years was key for the success of the WFP mission in Ukraine.**
201. **The identification, recruitment and retention of national staff have been more complex** due to a combination of factors. The short cycle planning of the LEO framework did not enable the organization to offer longer-term contracts for national staff, making recruitment challenging in a very competitive job market.<sup>199</sup> Country office staff recounted that candidates identified for recruitment frequently turned down the WFP offer for better alternatives. This also impacted staff retention, as staff tended to leave WFP when they found more stable job opportunities, which often came thanks to having gained an attractive humanitarian experience with WFP.
202. **There was a relatively high turnover rate of national staff.** In May 2024 the majority of national staff (60 percent) had been with WFP for less than a year and a half, as most of positions were created with adoption of the T-ICSP in January 2023 (see Figure 26).<sup>200</sup> However, WFP staff turnover rates reduced in 2024 and most of the vacant positions have now been filled.<sup>201</sup> Conscription of WFP staff has not so far been a major issue, as WFP has worked in close coordination with all other UN agencies and national authorities to manage this, but conscription may compound future staffing challenges. However, cooperating partners were experiencing challenges with staff being conscripted as the exemptions offered to UN staff did not extend to these agencies.

<sup>196</sup> WFP data on HR, further confirmed by several KIIs with WFP stakeholders.

<sup>197</sup> WFP. 2022. After Action Review Ukraine.

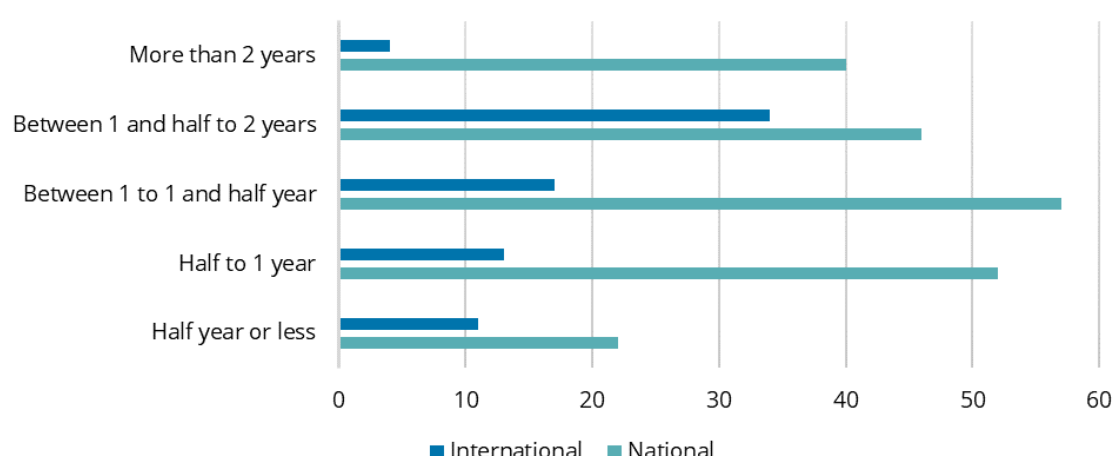
<sup>198</sup> Analysis of WFP, HR data, extracted on 24 June 2024.

<sup>199</sup> High competitiveness was due to both the parallel scale-up of all other humanitarian responders and the presence of a consolidated private sector. In addition, as Ukraine did not have an emergency humanitarian response at scale prior to 2022, the number of national professionals in this field was limited.

<sup>200</sup> WFP, HR data, extracted on 24 June 2024. To be noted that average staff tenure for all WFP Ukraine staff has been 1.56 years in June 2024.

<sup>201</sup> WFP, HR data, extracted on 24 June 2024.

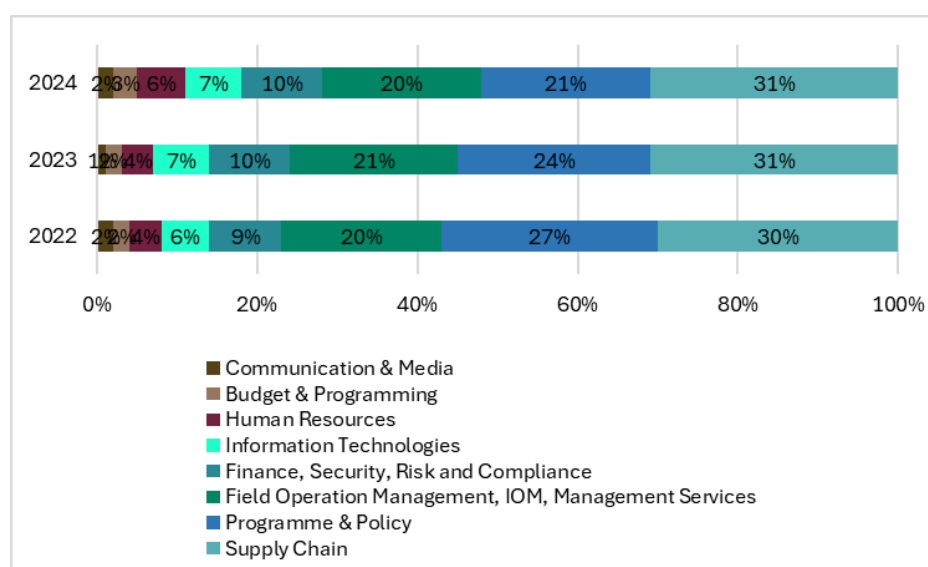
**Figure 26 – WFP staff tenure Ukraine May 2024**



Source: WFP, HR data, extracted on 24 June 2024.

203. The distribution of staff among key functions of supply chain, programme and policy, security, management services, information and technology and human resources, has remained relatively stable as illustrated in Figure 27. The programme and policy functional area took longer than others to get fully resourced, also due to some of the challenges described above. There is a relatively high proportion of international staff, which may be due to the fact that WFP had no operational activity in Ukraine prior to February 2022, hence having to strongly rely on international staff over the first months of the crisis to be able to timely scale up its assistance. Since then, the proportion of national staff has been consistently increased, reaching 74 percent in May 2024 (see Figure 28), although this still need to be further adjusted in line with programming needs and available budget.

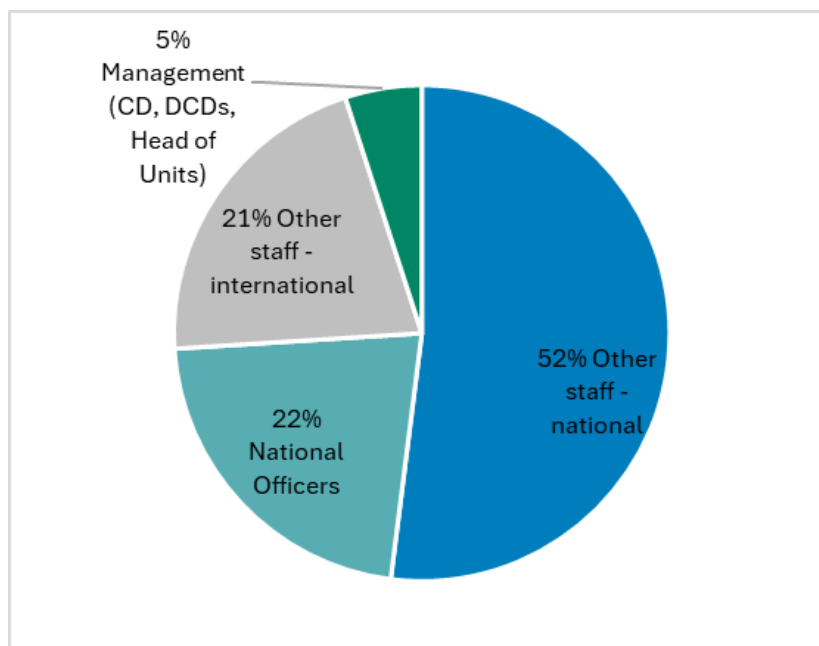
**Figure 27 – WFP Ukraine headcount by functional area 2022-2024 (in percentage)**



Source: Evaluation team diagram based on WFP and other data sources<sup>202</sup>.

202 Analysis of 2022-23 turnover 2022.xlsx, Staff Tenure May 2024.xlsx and the data contained in the email thread dated 18/06/2024, time: 14:17, titled "FW: Turnover rates for 2022 and 2023", confirmed in Key Informants Interviews in May-June 2024.

**Figure 28 – Headcount – seniority of staff WFP Ukraine 2024**



Source: Evaluation team diagram based on WFP and other data sources<sup>203</sup>.

204. The organization has placed increased attention on staff care. Staff surveys have been regularly conducted<sup>204</sup> and identified issues in well-being and safety including: long hours of work; high workload; deficiencies in staff structure; disruptions to the workflow; shifting priorities; and irregular rest and recuperation cycles. WFP has invested in staff care in multiple ways since the start of the mission, including staff security and counselling services. In the 2024 WFP Ukraine staff survey, Ukraine scored higher on almost all counts compared to the WFP global staff survey.<sup>205</sup> The working environment was reported by staff to be positive with a strong sense of belonging to the organization,<sup>206</sup> although stress levels remained high and contractual issues impacted staff morale and motivation.<sup>207</sup>

205. The proportion of women staff is close to parity (see Figure 29). However, gender parity varies widely across field offices (Figure 30), functional areas (Figure 31) and between national staff (women 47 percent and men 53 percent) and international staff (women 38 percent and men 62 percent). WFP is working on recruiting more women and has conducted awareness sessions on gender-related issues for staff in order to strengthen a gender-sensitive culture. This training is highly relevant given some of the misconceptions on gender issues in Ukraine (see Finding 16).

<sup>203</sup> Reference data in figure from: Staff Tenure May 2024.xlsx and the data contained in the email thread dated 18/06/2024, time: 14:17, titled "FW: Turnover rates for 2022 and 2023", confirmed in KIIs in May-June 2024.

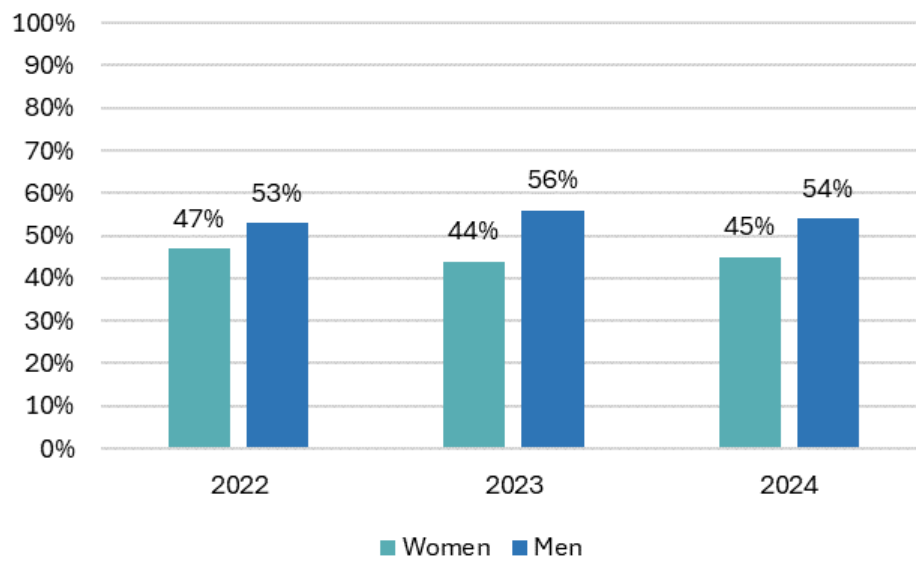
<sup>204</sup> Examples are: Pulse Survey\_results overview\_UACO.pdf, Gender Parity 03 May 2024.pdf, Gender Parity 03 May 2024\_v2.pdf and All-staff Report\_Pulse survey - Ukraine CO 2024 - full Qs.pdf.

<sup>205</sup> WFP Ukraine Pulse Survey.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

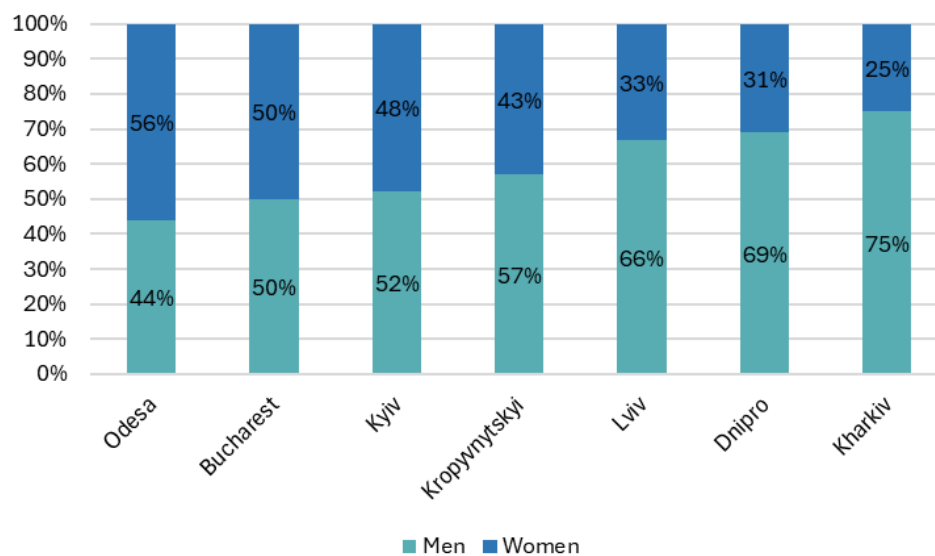
<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 29 – WFP Ukraine – Overall gender parity 2022-2024**



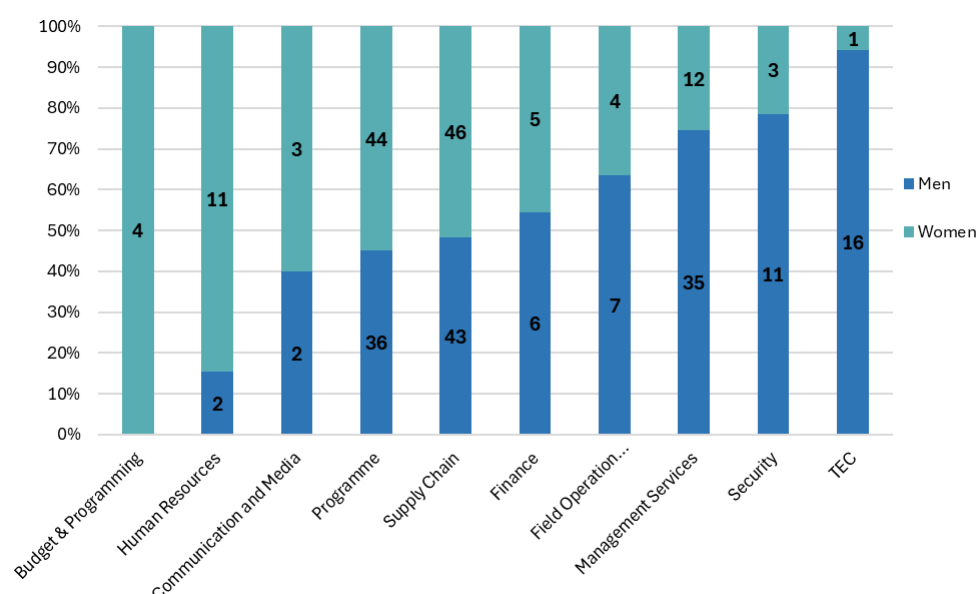
Source: WFP, HR data, extracted on 24 June 2024.

**Figure 30 – Gender parity per duty station – WFP Ukraine response 2024, May 2024**



Source: WFP, HR data, extracted on 24 June 2024.

**Figure 31 – Gender parity functional area – WFP Ukraine response 2024, May 2024**



Source: WFP, Staff Tenure, extracted on 24 June 2024.

### 2.4.3 Timeliness

**Summary Finding 19:** Despite major contextual challenges, WFP was able to swiftly scale up its supply chain and operations to provide large-scale emergency food assistance in a timely way even when there were changes in access. However, delays in receiving official approvals delayed the start-up of school feeding and social assistance top-ups. Planning and initiating livelihood recovery activities have also been slower than beneficiaries desired. Once activities began, delays in delivering outputs were the exception and the timely expenditure of remaining allocated resources is anticipated.

206. In the initial months of WFP operations in Ukraine, the organization faced significant challenges in establishing logistics capabilities for a large-scale response. WFP had to build an entire supply chain from scratch to manage, transport and deliver large quantities of commodities. This situation required addressing numerous issues within a tight timeframe; mobilizing flexible funding resources over the first weeks (see Finding 17), hiring skilled staff, identifying vendors and transporters, signing field-level agreements with cooperating partners, securing approval from the Government of Ukraine to import commodities on Ukrainian territory, dealing with fuel and electricity shortages and a reluctance among contractors to operate in areas near active military operations.<sup>208</sup>

207. Contextual challenges were compounded by an unclear allocation of responsibilities among headquarters, Poland-based and Ukraine-based country office staff on procurement processes. Delays in official approval from the Ukrainian authorities to import food commodities into the country caused large volumes of resources to be blocked at the border and consequently no deliveries were received over the first weeks of March 2022.

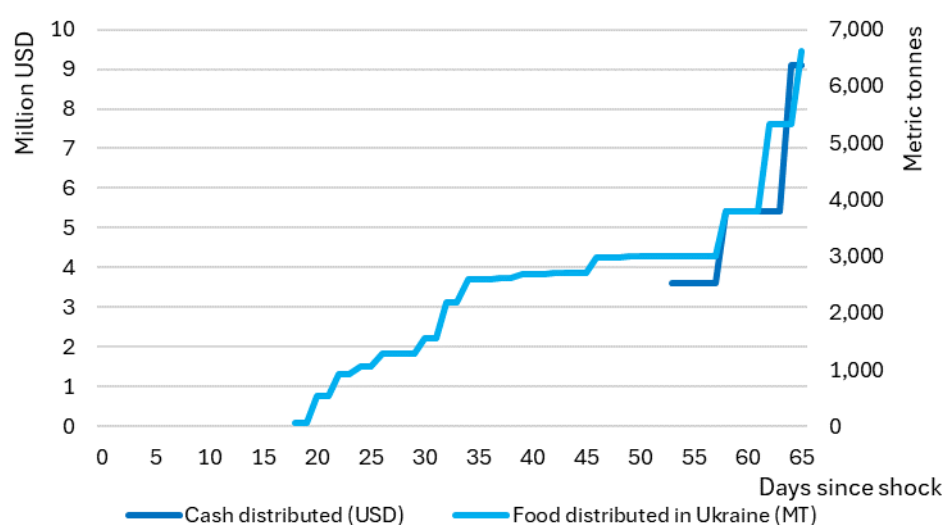
208. **Despite these challenges WFP successfully established logistic capabilities in a timely manner.** By April 2022, WFP was able to assist 2 million beneficiaries monthly.<sup>209</sup>

209. Figure 32 below shows the surge in cash and in-kind transfers after 24 February 2022. This impressive achievement was widely acknowledged and appreciated by the Government of Ukraine, donors and beneficiaries alike.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> WFP COMET, extracted on 24 June 2024.

**Figure 32 – WFP output delivery (first 65 days post-crisis)<sup>210</sup>**



Source: WFP, situation reports February-April 2022.

210. The ability of WFP to respond in a timely way was further demonstrated through its response to subsequent events and changes in access. As testified by internal and external stakeholders, as well as during focus group discussions, WFP was among the first humanitarian organizations to provide assistance to beneficiaries in newly accessible areas in Kherson and Kharkiv oblasts, and in regions affected by flooding following the Kakhovka dam explosion.

211. **Some delays were reported to the start-up of other activities.** The most significant case involved the school feeding programme, which began four to five months later than initially planned. This delay was primarily due to delays in obtaining approvals from the Government, compounded by the decentralized nature of Ukrainian authorities and the need for clearance from several administrative layers (see also Finding 3). The timeliness of other WFP programmes was also affected to a lesser extent by delays in the identification of beneficiaries and getting formal approval from national authorities prior to the start of the assistance, notably for sectoral cash. However, once the activities began, delays in delivering outputs were the exception. Beneficiaries noted that, once transfers were initiated, delays rarely exceeded 1-2 days. Secondary data confirmed the consistent timeliness of WFP in delivering to beneficiaries (see figures 33 and 34). The key performance timeliness-related indicator met targets (see Table 7) and compared well with WFP global 2023 targets.

**Table 7 – Key performance indicator related to timeliness**

Key performance indicator	2023 Target	Mid-2023 value	End-2023 value
% of tonnage uplifted as per agreed date	95%	100%	100%

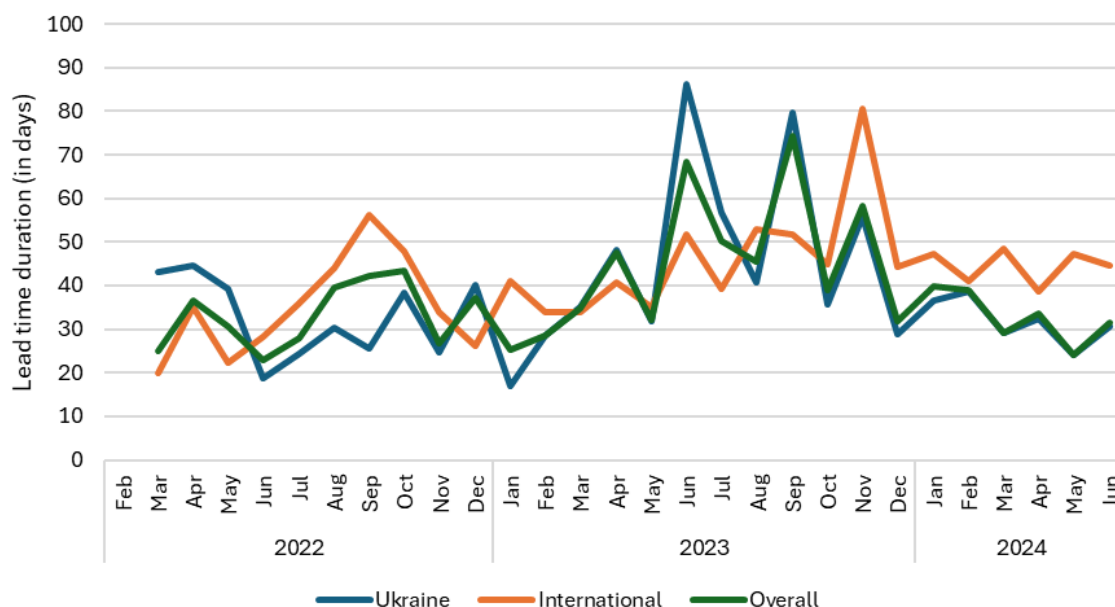
Source: WFP APP 2023.

212. Data from the WFP data and analytics platform DOTS also suggest no significant reduction of lead time and stable quantities of in-kind commodities delivered to cooperating partners since March 2022. WFP staff highlighted that efforts towards the digitization of logistics management resulted in efficiency gains and increased timeliness: capitalization of supply chain data (including DOTS)

<sup>210</sup> Cash delivery was reported only as of day 50 after the escalation of the war in the situation reports, although some cash transfer may have been delivered before.

through Prisma<sup>211</sup> and the Ukraine Control Tower data was cited as a key tool contributing to this improvement.<sup>212</sup> However, the changes in supply chain processes were not reflected in changes in lead time duration (Figure 33),<sup>213</sup> as it remained stable with some significant peaks in June, September and November 2023. Moreover, the switch towards local food procurement in Ukraine has resulted in minor timeliness gains since October 2023 (see Figure 33).

**Figure 33 – Lead time of WFP in-kind assistance in Ukraine (2022-2024)**



Source: WFP, DOTS data, extracted on 24 June 2024.

213. Figure 34 shows that, after a significant scale-up in delivering food commodities to cooperating partners in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2022, there was a continuous dispatch of commodities.

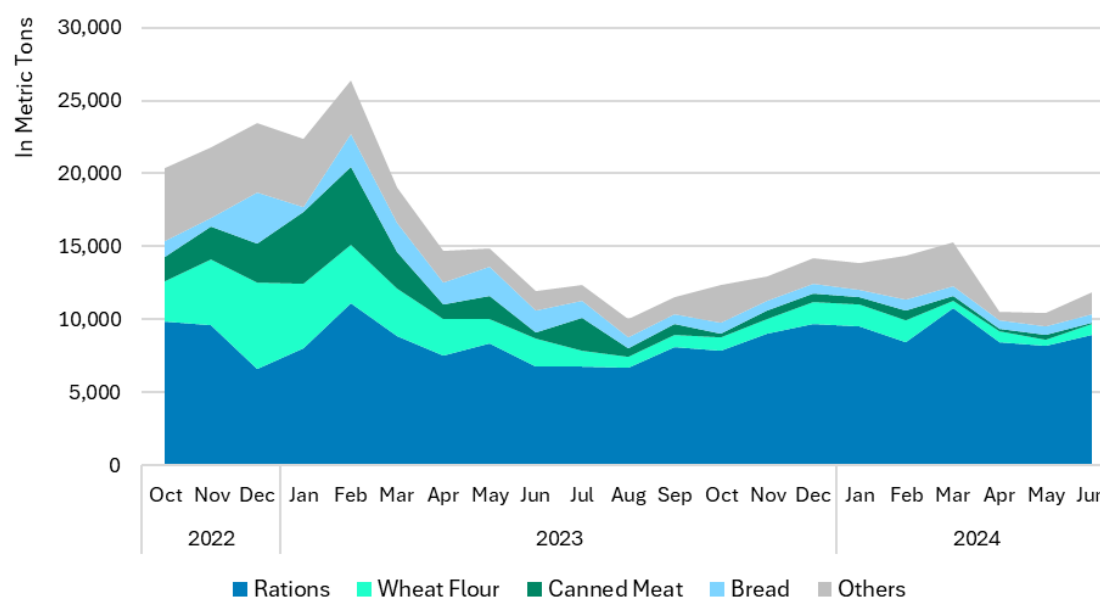
<sup>211</sup>Prisma is an operations control tower designed to enhance supply chain efficiency and decision-making for WFP country offices through advanced analytics. The tool consolidates data available through DOTS (including WINGS, LESS, COMET, pipeline information, etc.), while also allowing the ingestion of specific country office data such as distribution plans.

<sup>212</sup> WFP (2024). Annual Country Report 2023.

<sup>213</sup> DOTS datasets extracted on 3 July 2024.



**Figure 34 – Metric tons of food commodities dispatched to cooperating partners in Ukraine (2022-2024)<sup>214</sup>**



Source: WFP, 'Dispatched to CPs' data, extracted on June 2024.

214. **WFP was able to commence cash transfers two months after the start of its operations in Ukraine** (see

215. Figure 32). The WFP global agreement with Western Union was critical in enabling the initial cash transfers, until the (cheaper) services of PrivatBank could be negotiated.

216. A few exceptions were noted in the timeliness of deliveries. In the case of school feeding, a decentralized approach meant that WFP was requested to make separate agreements and payments with regional authorities at oblast level. The resulting workload for WFP field offices was heavy and there have been several delays to payments reaching schools – up to six months in some cases. Plans to simplify the bureaucratic and financial set-up – through a simplified funding mechanism at the central level – in time for the next school year are well-justified.<sup>215</sup>

217. The budget execution rate suggests that the country office is on track to expend the remaining resources in a timely manner. Five months before the end of the T-ICSP most of the activities have an execution rate ranging from 30 to 60 percent. (

<sup>214</sup> "Rations" refer to ready-to-eat rations. Their composition significantly evolved from the first months of the scale-up until June 2024.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

218. Table 8)<sup>216</sup> Crisis response-related activities had an overall higher execution rate than resilience building-related activities.

---

<sup>216</sup> Activity 7 is an outlier as the proposed common service (cash transfers) that was never utilized. Activity 8 too has demining programmes started in 2024, thus having a one-year shorter timeframe than other T-ICSP activities reported in Table 11.

**Table 8 – Execution rate per activity**

Focus Area	Activity	Strategic Objective	Original NBP	Latest NBP	Allocated resources	Expenditur es	Expenditures as percent of allocated resource
Limited Emergency Operation (Feb-Dec 22)							
Crisis Respons e	Act 1	SO1	39 992 042	1 708 435 814	779 909 276	681 644 154	87%
	Act 2	SO2	2 608 242	10 019 924	6 979 381	4 452 746	64%
	Act 3		652 061	3 250 858	3 038 797	1 405 830	46%
	Act 4		231 481	7 024 132	1 445 535	1 321 256	91%
	Act 5	SO1	0	6 772 473	0	0	0%
	Act 6		0	25 371 647	6 135 320	6 085 665	99%
	Act 7		0	6 772 473	0	0	0%
	Act 8		0	6 772 473	0	0	0%
	Act 9		0	6 772 473	0	0	0%
	Act 10		0	6 772 473	0	0	0%
Non Activity Specific					6 969 719		
Direct and Indirect Costs			6 515 021	158 497 655	76 523 293	65 863 537	86%
Total			49 998 847	1 946 462 395	881 001 321	760 773 188	86%
Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan (2023-2024)							
Crisis Respons e	Act 1	SO1	1 350 363 063	1 415 369 684	654 541 774	527 662 602	81%
Resilienc e Building	Act 2	SO2	67 418 882	43 828 270	8 393 210	2 655 166	32%
	Act 3		310 961 634	312 018 644	128 759 943	76 072 614	59%
	Act 4		4 942 975	15 684 948	15 379 263	8 203 591	53%
Crisis Respons e	Act 5	SO3	6 799 797	8 965 902	6 075 296	4 446 712	73%
	Act 6		2 430 125	3 813 102	3 612 184	1 987 463	55%
	Act 7		6 938 800	9 237 800	773 032	757 828	98%
	Act 8	SO1	0	91 780 027	9 405 410	3 978 099	42,30%
Direct and Indirect Costs			154 222 786	170 053 038	68 801 414	15 685 740	23%
Total			1 904 078 062	2 070 751 415	895 741 526	641 449 815	72%

Source: WFP, FACTory, extracted on 24 June 2024.

**219. Initiating livelihood and recovery activities has been slower than beneficiaries desired.**

Although WFP is gradually shifting its assistance towards more resilience-related programmes, such as the demining programme, which started in March 2023 and gradually ramped up until January 2024, its assistance has remained largely crisis response-driven.<sup>217</sup> While the situation remains volatile, consultations with beneficiaries in focus group discussions and assessments of their needs as reported by cooperating partners indicate significant demand for an earlier switch to livelihood and recovery programming.

<sup>217</sup> WFP expenses on Activity 8 on demining and asset recovery represented only 2 percent of total expenditures in 2024. WFP, FACTory, extracted on 24 June 2024.

## 2.4.4 Cost efficiency

**Summary Finding 20:** WFP actively sought opportunities to reduce costs and improve efficiency, including the use of Building Blocks, local procurement and increased collaboration with national partners. Costs of food commodities were below planned values, the overall transfer costs of all transfer modalities decreased over time and food losses were minimized.

220. **Despite the well-funded context (see Finding 17), WFP committed to improving its efficiency and identifying cost savings.** During the start-up phase WFP operated under a “no regrets” approach<sup>218</sup> with a primary focus on rapidly scaling up operations to address large-scale needs. However, WFP staff flagged during interviews that several subsequent proactive measures were implemented to enhance the cost efficiency of WFP operations:

- The introduction of **Building Blocks** (see Finding 2) by WFP to the Cash Working Group identified duplicate MPCA beneficiaries within and across agencies. WFP staff indicated that an estimated USD 170 million was saved between April 2022 and December 2023, with continuing weekly savings estimated at USD 500,000. While it was primarily used to deduplicate MPCA programmes, attempts were ongoing to extend its use to in-kind transfers and other cash transfers.
- Shifting towards a more **localized approach** helped reduce costs. According to WFP stakeholders and the country office, the increased proportion of local commodities procured for its in-kind delivery supported the continuous reduction of costs witnessed in Figure 35. This was further confirmed by DOTS data made available to the evaluation team, as the proportion of food procured in Ukraine was continuously above 75 percent as of November 2022. Transport costs decreased with the stabilization of the security situation, leading to lower premiums demanded by transporters. Additional cost savings were also made by contracting field-level agreements with local NGOs. Although WFP stakeholders indicated that both Ukrainian and international NGOs had similar overhead costs, overall budgets were reportedly lower when working with Ukrainian partners, with reductions in staff costs. WFP helped cooperating partners to reduce their costs through budget monitoring reviews and specific training.
- Other measures with a more limited impact on cost savings included: sharing field office spaces with other agencies; conducting regular market studies for pricing of logistics services to inform tendering processes; and shifting towards more internal logistics to reduce suppliers and cooperating partner costs.

221. As mentioned during consultation with WFP and UN partners stakeholders and government counterparts, the delayed reimbursement of the 20 percent VAT from the Government of Ukraine to WFP is a major unsolved issue that hampered cost efficiency. While UN aid should be exempted from this tax, the process involved paying VAT up-front and then being reimbursed by the Government of Ukraine. At the time of the data collection mission, this reimbursement was still pending.<sup>219</sup> This delay was attributed to limited budgetary resources from the Government given war-related priorities and the involvement of multiple ministries, which have prolonged negotiations. To compensate WFP, the Government donated 25,000 mt of grain for assistance to beneficiaries. The cost of food purchased by WFP was lower than budgeted with commodity prices 19 percent lower than planned in 2022<sup>220</sup> and 27 percent lower in 2023. Prices decreased for all commodities, including the most significant ones in terms of actual volume delivered since 2022

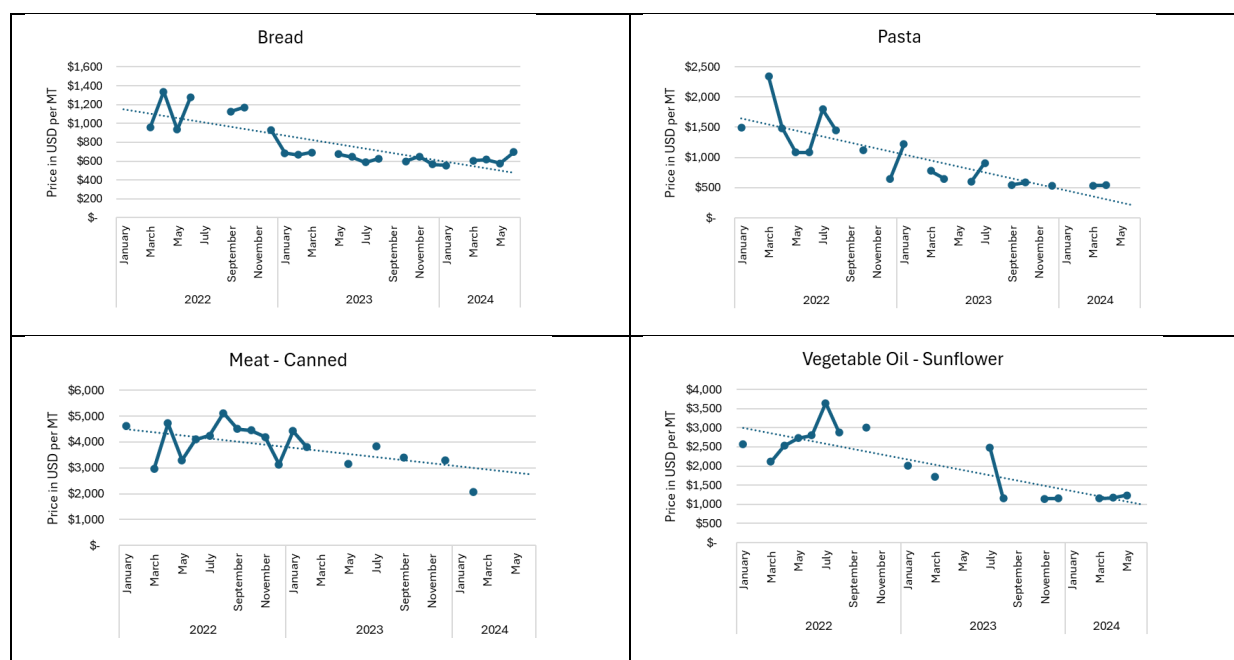
<sup>218</sup> As per WFP Emergency Preparedness Policy, a “no regret approach” consists of the fact that “cost-efficient measures are taken to mitigate an expected threat before the threat occurs. The rationale for doing so is that even if the actual threat is less severe than expected, the measure will have yielded other valuable benefits”.

<sup>219</sup> Interviews mention the amount of USD 30 million.

<sup>220</sup> During LEO design, the price of food commodities was estimated at 3,038 USD/mt, while WFP could purchase it on average at 2,468 USD/mt. Similarly, during T-ICSP, estimation of food commodity prices amounted 1,333 USD/mt and reached finally 976.5 USD/mt.

(see Figure 35), except for canned beans and infant cereals.<sup>221</sup> Two main factors were advanced to explain these savings: (i) increased diversification of suppliers over time as WFP got a better knowledge of the Ukraine food commodity market that contributed to moderation of costs; and (ii) the switch to locally procured commodities. DOTS data confirm a switch to Ukraine-based suppliers at the start of the T-ICSP and that the average price of purchasing a metric ton of food commodity was lower in Ukraine than in any other alternative countries used by WFP.<sup>222</sup>

**Figure 35 – Price trend in USD/mt of top 4 food products per mt delivered (2022-2024)**



Source : WFP, DOTS data, extracted on 24 June 2024.

**222. WFP progressively reduced transfer costs over time.** Transfer costs<sup>223</sup> were higher than anticipated for both cash-based transfers (CBT) and in-kind transfers in 2022, but fell significantly in 2023 (see

<sup>221</sup> DOTS data, extracted on 24 June 2024. Infant cereals have been discontinued as a transfer modality.

<sup>222</sup> One limitation of this analysis is that it could be biased by the type of food commodity purchased in different countries, e.g. WFP could procure a specific commodity in one country that is more expensive than the main type of commodities procured in Ukraine.

<sup>223</sup> Here transfer costs related to any cost reported in the CPB\_Plan\_vs\_Actual\_Report database except the cost of the food transferred.

224. **Table 9** below). Interviews with WFP supply chain staff indicated that savings for in-kind delivery were driven by reduced transportation costs and cooperating partner budgets, which is in line with data on the main drivers of “other food-related costs” (57 percent of the transfer costs), cooperating partners costs (35 percent) and transport costs (34 percent).<sup>224</sup> Concerning cash-based transfers, the same informants and secondary data indicated that most of the savings were made on delivery costs.

---

<sup>224</sup> CPB\_Plan\_vs\_Actual\_Report.

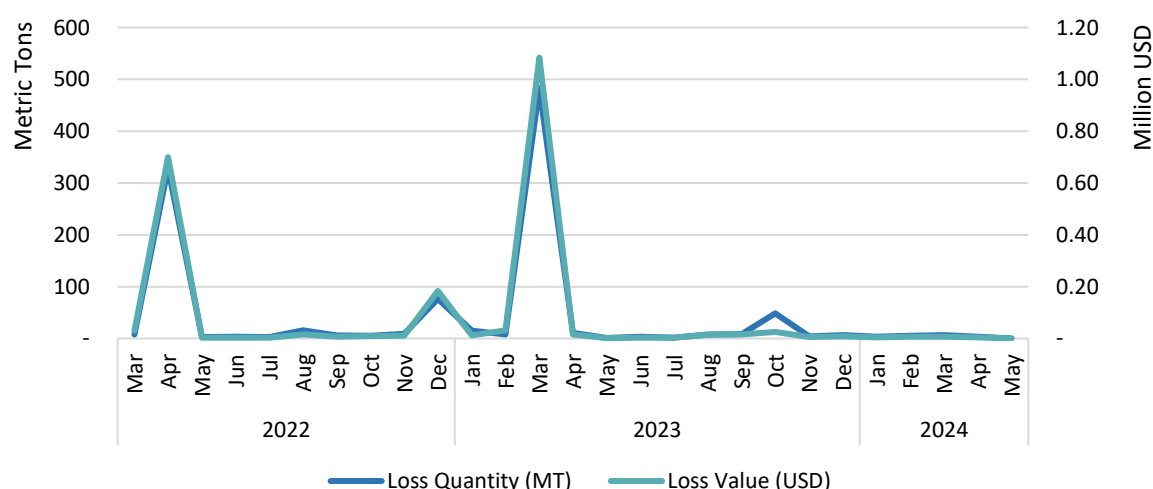
**Table 9 – Transfer cost per WFP activity**

225.	Planned	Actual
LEO Act 1 & 6 – In-kind	USD/MT	378.4 USD/MT
LEO Act 1 & 6 – CBT	1% of CBT value	7% of CBT value
T-ICSP Act 1 – In-kind	350.03 USD/MT	304.61 USD/MT
T-ICSP Act 1 – CBT	2.83% of CBT value	2.25% of CBT value

Source: WFP LEO BR4, FACTory, extracted 24 June 2024.

226. Post-delivery losses remained minimal at 0.76 percent over the period under review, and well below the 2 percent threshold. Losses averaged 40 mt of food, or USD 84,000 per month. More than 75 percent of these losses related to the expiration of specific commodities<sup>225</sup> as shown in Figure 36. Although post-delivery losses are recorded in DOTs, the evaluation team did not find detailed information on this in the situation reports.

**Figure 36 – Post-delivery food losses in USD and mt (2022-2024)**



Source: WFP, DOTs data, extracted on 24 June 2024.

## 2.5 EQ5 – Good practices and lessons learned

### 2.5.1 Crisis preparedness

**Summary Finding 21:** The scale, speed, severity and complexity of the crisis surpassed WFP preparedness efforts – as it did for the humanitarian system more broadly. WFP mobilized its resources well in order to quickly respond to the emerging crisis and compensate for the lack of an established in-country presence or basic agreement with the Government. This was supported by a “whole of house” approach – mobilizing resources, capacities and senior engagement from across the organization from the outset. The WFP no regrets approach facilitated quick decision making and rapid scale-up, but was inconsistently understood and applied, requiring considerable retrospective work on administration.

<sup>225</sup> (i) 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 217MT/531.000 USD of canned goods, rice and pasta expired, (ii) 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 75.9MT/183.000 USD of several food products expired as part of a country wide inventory purge and (iii) 6 March 2023 451.4MT/1.017M USD of canned good expired.

227. The regional bureau in Cairo (RBC) and headquarters analysed the risks in Ukraine and conducted early behind-the-scenes preparedness activities, laying the groundwork for an operational WFP response. Both the regional bureau in Cairo and various units in headquarters undertook early data gathering and analysis on the risks of conflict in Ukraine. These efforts included: an RBC scoping mission and contingency plan in May 2021; participation in an inter-agency contingency plan in December 2021; a market assessment (in-country and globally);<sup>226</sup> a conflict sensitivity risk assessment conducted by headquarters' Emergencies and Transitions Unit;<sup>227</sup> and a scoping mission of the social protection environment. WFP, through RBC, was also invited to provide advice specifically on logistics and telecommunication to the UNCT a few months before the escalation.<sup>228</sup>
228. Critically, a 15-person advance planning team was deployed to Ukraine just one week before the start of the conflict to conduct cross-functional preparedness for WFP operations.<sup>229</sup> Although they had to be quickly evacuated, the advance team helped prepare the LEO and drafted an operational concept of operations (CONOPS) for a six-month operation. It also began scoping local suppliers and partners and pre-identifying surge requirements and availability.<sup>230</sup> While very useful, there were gaps in certain functional areas and limited follow-up on other key areas. The Ukraine After Action Review notes that nutrition, communication and advocacy, social protection and government partnerships specialists were not included in the advance planning mission, and there was some disconnect between preparedness and response, particularly in relation to the choice of modalities and external messaging.<sup>231</sup>
229. There is evidence to suggest that WFP corporately underestimated the rapidity, scale and severity of the emergency in Ukraine, as did the international humanitarian system more broadly. The WFP Corporate Alert System (CAS) was late to identify the risk of a deterioration of the situation in Ukraine. Ukraine was first identified as a country at risk within the CAS only in February 2022.<sup>232</sup> At that time, within the three levels of corporate concern in the CAS, Ukraine was classified as "Early Action (on Watch)" – the lowest level, requiring no corporate action beyond increased preparedness. The lack of corporate action at this time lost valuable weeks that might have been used for initiating WFP presence and preparing for an operational response. It was only between February and March 2022 of CAS releases (on 27 February 2022) that Ukraine was upgraded to the highest level of corporate concern, that of "Corporate Scale-up", recognizing the exceptional seriousness of the situation.<sup>233</sup>
230. Furthermore, the January 2022 contingency plan for Ukraine underestimated the likelihood of a worst-case scenario in Ukraine (which happened) and did not initiate concrete preparedness actions for this eventuality.<sup>234</sup> However, external stakeholder interviews indicated that few individuals and organizations adequately foresaw or prepared for the speed, extent and severity of the conflict in Ukraine.
231. **Without an established organizational presence in Ukraine prior to the onset of the emergency, WFP experienced setbacks and challenges.** The lack of a basic agreement with the Government caused considerable delays and bureaucratic challenges. The WFP exit from Ukraine in 2018 was accompanied by a lapse in its basic agreement to operate in the country. Thanks to a rapid exchange of letters between the former WFP Executive Director and the Ukrainian President, WFP was able to legally operate in the country from the outset. However, without a full legal agreement in place the organization experienced several challenges, including delays with the necessary visas and permissions for international staff to work in Ukraine, demonstrating the

<sup>226</sup> WFP (2022). CAS Overview – A cross-functional global analysis of WFP operations and topics of corporate concerns.

<sup>227</sup> WFP (2022). Ukraine Conflict Brief – Potential Market Impacts. 2022 // WFP. PROP – Conflict Sensitivity Risk Assessment. // WFP. 2022. PROP - WFP Ukraine Scenario Development.

<sup>228</sup> Referenced in the unpublished internal WFP documents.

<sup>229</sup> WFP (2022). Contingency Plan – A major conflict in Ukraine.

<sup>230</sup> WFP (2022). Ukraine scale-up assessment matrix.

<sup>231</sup> WFP (2022). After Action Review.

<sup>232</sup> WFP (2022). CAS Overview – A cross-functional global analysis of WFP operations and topics of corporate concerns.

<sup>233</sup> WFP (2022). Corporate Scale-Up Activation for the WFP response for the escalation of hostilities in Ukraine and refugee hosting countries.

<sup>234</sup> WFP (2022). After Action Review.



limitations of the interim exchange of letters.<sup>235</sup> Opening a bank account to allow for the local purchase of assets and services was problematic and WFP initially relied on the support of other UN agencies already established in the country. The import of supplies was also challenging. Several key informants suggested having corporate “piggy-back” agreements in place and ready to be activated with agencies already present in-country.<sup>236</sup>

232. WFP reliance on Ukrainian personnel surged from within the organization was an asset during scale-up. Very few of the previous WFP national staff in Ukraine were re-hired as the new country office was established,<sup>237</sup> in part due to strong competition for staff from other international and national organizations. There were, however, several instances in which Ukrainian staff from within the organization were surged to Ukraine to support the start-up of WFP operations and were perceived to be a considerable asset, given their language skills and relevant operational experience.

233. WFP headquarters took on an unusually significant role in the initial phase of the response, particularly in relation to supply chain functions, which both helped and hindered WFP operations. The potential scale of the crisis in Ukraine led WFP to take a whole of house approach from the outset – mobilizing resources, capacities and senior engagement from across the organization.<sup>238</sup> WFP headquarters took an initial lead in managing supply chain functions, supported by various country offices. WFP key informants described the situation at the time as “chaotic”, given that WFP headquarters does not typically manage supply chain functions directly, and invoices were not generated, processed or tracked by the country office as would normally be the case. While this enabled WFP to respond quickly and at scale, it was then followed by a lengthy process to retrospectively document actions taken in headquarters and elsewhere.

234. **A lack of pre-identified vendors and partners hindered the initial WFP response.** The country office faced the challenge of operating without pre-qualified local suppliers, logistical arrangements and partnerships in place.<sup>239</sup> The internal After-Action Review in 2022 notes that, “it would have been prudent to identify, shortlist and create more vendors for local suppliers and transporters and to undertake logistics capacity assessments, including a review of import regulations”. However, the different geographic focus and scale of the response in 2022 compared with operations between 2014 and 2018, necessarily limited the relevance of some of its prior vendors.

235. WFP adherence to the IASC no regrets approach facilitated quick decision making and rapid scale-up, but was inconsistently understood and applied<sup>240</sup>. The early adoption by WFP of the no regrets approach was widely cited as an important factor in speeding up the organization’s response to the crisis in Ukraine, simplifying procedures in a number of areas and allowing operational decisions to be made closer to the centre of operations. However, many internal stakeholders highlighted that it was misunderstood to mean that important procedural steps could be skipped or left undocumented.<sup>241</sup> The evaluation heard multiple references to lengthy and frustrating efforts to later “clean up” such undocumented decisions and processes.

236. Given the lack of an established country office prior to the emergency, there were gaps in terms of the standard emergency preparedness and risk management tools that country offices are required to complete and maintain, many of which had lapsed in between WFP operations. This included the business continuity plan, the risk register, the minimum preparedness actions and the logistics capacity assessment, all of which had to be completed at the same time as the organization was responding to the emergency, creating competing priorities and leading staff to feel overstretched and under-resourced.

---

<sup>235</sup> Internal reports indicate that WFP and the WFP Country Director were fully accredited by the GoU on 16 September 2022.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> There is no data on the exact number of national staff re-hired from WFP previous operations in Ukraine, but key informants suggested that only two national staff from the previous WFP country office had been re-hired.

<sup>238</sup> WFP (2022). Ukraine Scale Up Assessment Matrix.

<sup>239</sup> WFP (2023). Internal Audit of WFP Operations in Ukraine.

<sup>240</sup> IASC (2015).

<sup>241</sup> WFP’s Emergency Action Protocol defines a ‘no regrets’ approach to mean: “taking actions that are justifiable from a humanitarian perspective in response to an emergency before having all the facts and before it worsens, preferring to mobilize excess capacity and resources rather than risk failing to meet the most urgent needs of people in crisis” – WFP (2023a).

237. **WFP continually adapted to the evolution of the emergency in Ukraine and prepared to respond to needs.** In Kharkiv in May 2023, WFP ensured contingencies for cash distributions for up to 300,000 people and expanded contracts with bakeries to increase bread production from 150 to 300 metric tons per day in anticipation of increased Russian military activities. Another strong example of the ongoing preparedness of WFP was in the anticipation of the energy crisis and resulting power outages in the winter of 2022. In that instance, WFP purchased additional generators and fuel in advance, pre-booked alternative office space in a nearby hotel in Kyiv in case basic services within the country office failed and took pre-emptive action through the logistics and emergency telecommunications clusters to set up inter-agency crisis coordination centres in WFP operating hubs to provide internet coverage and satellite communications in case of outages.<sup>242</sup> These examples illustrate a strong commitment to preparedness and compliance with the organization's no regrets approach, "whereby WFP is willing to risk mobilizing excess capacity and resources rather than risk failing to respond to urgent needs".<sup>243</sup> In the case of Ukraine, WFP was able to adopt this approach given the extent of funding allocated to the response (see Finding 17).

## 2.5.2 Support to food systems

**Summary Finding 22:** WFP sought to directly support national food systems through local procurement and the use of cash-based transfers. An innovative pilot collaboration with FAO to bring mine-affected agricultural land back into production has the potential for WFP to support long-term benefits. Collaboration with the Government of Ukraine on the Grain from Ukraine initiative supported WFP global operations but required sensitivity given potential implications on perceptions of WFP neutrality.

238. WFP adapted its support to minimize the negative impacts of food aid imports on local existing market and distributions capacities. As noted in Finding 20, WFP shifted from imports to predominantly local procurement of food commodities. At the time of the evaluation, tinned meat was the only remaining significant food import, with negotiations underway to help local suppliers meet quality standards. The use of cash-based transfers avoided the negative impacts of in-kind distributions and brought positive economic benefits to local food systems through the injection of cash.

239. At a local level WFP sought to maintain supply chains and local employment opportunities by shifting contracts for bread production from large bakeries in Kyiv to local bakeries closer to the front lines. However, no evidence was collected to assess whether the economic effects outweighed the additional costs.<sup>244</sup> While the programme supported a certain level of local food production and economic activities, evaluation site visits found bakeries that were unable to expand production due to chronic labour shortages, due to movement of people away from the front lines and the impact of new conscription regulations.<sup>245</sup> The WFP value voucher programme was used in Kherson and Sumyi to incentivize the reopening of local supermarkets (Finding 5).

240. **WFP is supporting the recovery of agricultural production through an agricultural mine action programme.** WFP and FAO embarked on a joint initiative aimed at restoring agricultural livelihoods in Kharkiv oblast, with plans to expand to Mykolaiv oblast. WFP is partnering with Fondation suisse de déminage (FSD) to assess the presence of mines and unexploded ordnance, clearing the lands where required, rehabilitating soils, and providing direct support to small farmers and rural families to help restart food production and restore livelihoods. This demonstrated a way for WFP to move beyond food distribution and undertake emergency response in ways that have long-term benefit across the nexus (Finding 12).

241. A number of useful learnings emerged from the pilot, which started in early 2024. The partnership with FAO is seen as mutually beneficial, with FAO concentrating on mapping and supporting

<sup>242</sup> WFP. WFP Ukraine Operational Task Force – Key Discussions and Action Points.

<sup>243</sup> WFP. WFP Emergency Activation Protocol OED2023/003.

<sup>244</sup> Local bakeries could reportedly be contracted at rates up to 30 percent higher than national suppliers.

<sup>245</sup> Employers now have an obligation to report employees to conscription centres for potential recruitment. This acted as a reported disincentive for men staff to take up available jobs.

commercial farmers, while WFP concentrated on agricultural recovery among small-scale producers. FAO particularly valued WFP fundraising expertise; while FAO alone had reportedly struggled to raise funding, collectively they had raised significant amounts. WFP staff saw their added value lie in restoring production, rather than the very technical area of mine clearance itself.

242. There is a question on the extent to which the beneficiaries are food insecure and aligned with the WFP mandate. To some extent this was addressed by FAO focusing on small scale farmers (with holdings of up to 300 ha), while WFP targeted “household plots”. Site visits also found that household plots in Ukraine were often substantial in size and often commercially farmed. While the potential benefits of the activity in increasing agricultural production are self-evident, the extent to which it addresses family food insecurity is unproven and needs confirmation.

243. **WFP also responded to mitigate the effects of the Ukrainian crisis on international food markets.** The impact of the conflict had significant effects on the global grain market and food-insecure populations worldwide. Prior to 2022, Ukraine was one of the key WFP grain suppliers and the world's fourth largest grain exporter.<sup>246</sup> The restrictions placed on Ukrainian ports by the Black Sea Fleet in the first weeks of the full-scale invasion interrupted grain exports, rapidly increasing global food prices and fuelling food crises, greatly increasing the risk of global food insecurity.

244. WFP provided technical support to the UN-led Black Sea initiative, notably through the appointment of a WFP staff member liaising with Ukrainian port authorities, and the involvement in the Joint Coordination Centre in Istanbul, cochaired by the United Nations, Ukraine, Russia and Türkiye. This international agreement played an important role in reopening access and contributed to global food market stability. This allowed WFP to also resume commercial purchases and export 480,000 mt of Ukrainian wheat and other commodities in 2022 and 345,000 mt in 2023, equating to more than half of pre-war purchases from Ukraine.<sup>247</sup> The Black Sea Initiative was suspended in mid-July 2023 but, with sustained improvements in port access, Ukraine is on track to fully export all available export stocks this year.<sup>248</sup>

245. WFP played a more active role in partnering with the Government from 2022 through the Grain from Ukraine initiative to support exports through the Black Sea ports. This initiative had the dual objective of restoring markets for Ukrainian producers and improving access for food-insecure families in third party countries reliant on food imports. The Grain from Ukraine initiative has been successful in attracting donations of approximately USD 220 million from over 30 donor countries and international organizations. Under the Grain from Ukraine initiative WFP and the Government of Ukraine collaborated to scheduled grain shipments totaling 170,000 mt to countries including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia, Southern Sudan, Sudan and Yemen.<sup>249</sup> Interviews with WFP and government staff indicated that the process of collaboration had been smooth and effective.

246. **The Grain from Ukraine initiative brought significant benefits for WFP global food assistance operations,** providing important contributions to a number of under-resourced programmes. It is unlikely that it supported domestic market prices or lowered global prices, given that Grain from Ukraine exports were dwarfed by the scale of commercial grain exports – estimated at 5 million mt per month in 2023.<sup>250</sup> Government stakeholders were also clear that the Grain from Ukraine initiative had a political goal of demonstrating their commitment as a guarantor of global food security. While Ukraine was far from unique in using its support to WFP to support a political agenda, the context of receiving donations from a country at war did risk compromising perceptions of WFP neutrality. WFP senior management were alert to this risk and there was sensitivity in how communications and publicity regarding the initiative were handled. However, senior managers did not reference any other steps taken to balance trade-offs or manage risks.

247. While perceiving the Grain from Ukraine initiative as successful and confirming financial contributions in the short-term, donors indicated limited appetite for future longer-term financial involvement given competing priorities and the resumption of commercial grain exports from Ukraine.

---

<sup>246</sup> WFP (2021). Update on food procurement.

<sup>247</sup> WFP. (2024). Annual Country Report 2023.

<sup>248</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/ukraine-track-export-all-2023-grain-says-britain-2024-02-13/>

<sup>249</sup> WFP (2024). Annual Country Report 2023.

<sup>250</sup> <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-economy/3847200-ukraine-exports-52m-tonnes-of-grain-leguminous-crops-in-mar-2024.html>.

# Conclusions and recommendations

## 3.1 Conclusions

**Conclusion 1: Despite a very challenging context, WFP rapidly implemented a large-scale response, demonstrating a unique comparative advantage - although key lessons emerged on improving preparedness and response to future crises. Given the ongoing war and uncertain context, the flexibility and capacity of WFP to rapidly scale-up remain critical to the humanitarian response in Ukraine.**

248. WFP deserves credit for the speed and effectiveness of its scale-up in Ukraine, where it successfully established logistic capabilities in a relatively timely manner with large-scale deliveries of food assistance commencing less than two months after the start of the war. The operational effectiveness was particularly commendable given the specific contextual challenges in preparing for, and delivering, a humanitarian response in Ukraine, where there was a rapidly evolving conflict leading to large-scale displacement.
249. WFP managed to identify the risk and mobilize a number of emergency preparedness missions in advance of the outbreak of hostilities, laying the groundwork for an operational response. However, WFP could have more rapidly elevated Ukraine in the Corporate Alert System as a country of higher corporate concern, the delay of which may have contributed to losing valuable weeks in mobilizing the response, and there are important lessons to take from this. However, it is acknowledged that all humanitarian actors underestimated the rapidity, scale and severity of the emergency in Ukraine. The WFP no regrets approach facilitated quick decision making and rapid scale-up, but was not consistently understood or applied, thereby creating significant retrospective administrative burdens.
250. The lack of an established operational presence in-country hampered scaling up the emergency response. WFP found ways to support administration and procurement in the initial stages through WFP headquarters, although corporate systems were not set up to enable headquarters to lead procurement on behalf of the country office. There were important lessons to be learned on striking the balance in the deployment of strategic and administrative staff during the surge phase, and ensuring that back-up from headquarters, as well as surge deployments, consistently support operations and do not create an additional workload. Furthermore, it would have been highly desirable to maintain the basic agreement with the Government after the WFP exit in 2018, and the failure to do this proved to be a mistake, given the ongoing civil unrest and conflict. The absence of this agreement contributed to considerable administrative delays and bureaucratic challenges. This highlighted the importance of being able to effectively piggyback on other UN agency agreements with the Government, until WFP could put its own agreement in place.
251. WFP, with key partners, played an important role in building a timely understanding of food security needs in a chaotic situation – although more could have been done to build an understanding of the food security analysis with other stakeholders. This analysis underpinned a nimble strategic response, with WFP adopting a succession of important and appropriate shifts in its approach. WFP also facilitated the system-level humanitarian response through significant contributions to security assessments and by facilitating access and the rapid provision of common services.
252. A key conclusion is that WFP continues to hold a unique comparative advantage in delivering emergency response rapidly and at scale given its resources and expertise. In particular, given the ongoing war, the capacity of WFP to rapidly scale its logistical capacities in response to possible further escalations of displacement and emergency needs remains critical to the humanitarian mission in Ukraine.

**Conclusion 2: WFP has been conscious of minimizing perceptions of politicization of humanitarian assistance and advocated for adopting a principled humanitarian approach. However, a more explicit and earlier acknowledgement of the specific trade-offs and compromises necessitated by the context would have been helpful.**

253. The Ukraine context is highly sensitive - with an international armed conflict where major donors of WFP also provide political and military support to the Government of Ukraine. This has resulted in concerns over the potential politicization of humanitarian aid. At the country level, WFP has responded to these sensitivities by projecting strong attention on the need to operate in a principled manner. Respect for humanitarian principles was pursued through various actions. Critically, there was strong attention in the selection and training of partners to promote a neutral and impartial response. Food security assessments also sought to underpin an impartial, needs-based response across the entire country, although factors outside of the country office's control ultimately curtailed WFP access to some areas of need.
254. The specific context in Ukraine resulted in tensions between principles that required trade-offs and compromises by WFP. However, the definitions of the humanitarian principles were not explicitly adapted into Ukraine-specific programmatic guidance. Such guidance could have been helpful in assisting decision makers at the country office level to transparently and consistently navigate these tensions.
255. The extent to which WFP engaged with national authorities carried an implicit but relatively unconsidered trade-off. On the one hand, aligning with the Government of Ukraine, including working closely with the national social protection system, provided concrete benefits in terms of the effectiveness and efficiency of responding to needs, as well as a sustainable exit pathway. On the other hand, there is the risk that close engagement with the authorities engaged in the conflict may create perceptions of the partiality of the United Nations – potentially with repercussions on access. It is beyond the scope or capacity of this study to evaluate the decision itself, but it would have been desirable for WFP to explicitly and transparently consider the pros and cons of adopting an explicitly neutral approach from the outset. Similarly, engaging with the Grain from Ukraine initiative helped to address global food assistance needs, while there was a risk that it may also have compromised perceptions of neutrality by some countries.
256. The potential consequences on other global crises of the level of support given to Ukraine by resource partners was not clearly considered. The implications on global equity were not explicitly monitored, nor were concrete attempts made to advocate for a more impartial spread of donor resources among competing global crises. These risks were compounded by insufficient participation of major new providers of food assistance in humanitarian coordination mechanisms.

**Conclusion 3: WFP contributed to leading coordination efforts and forged important partnerships, which were key contributors to enabling an effective humanitarian response. However, significant gaps in the coordination system remained and WFP maintained a degree of independence from collective coordination on the use of multi-purpose cash assistance.**

257. Strong partnerships were clearly instrumental in the effectiveness of WFP operations. The value of these partnerships spanned WFP activities and supported deliveries through cooperating partners, collaborative assessments, alignment with national systems and synergistic partnerships to leverage complementary skills. Strong and effective partnerships were evident across stakeholder groups, including; the Government (to support institutional feeding, school feeding and social transfer top-ups), UN agencies (with UNFPA and FAO providing good practice examples), private sector partners (including financial service providers, monitoring agencies) and international NGOs and civil society. The senior leadership of WFP within the country office played a key role in prioritizing and establishing these partnerships.
258. WFP made important contributions in setting UN strategy, coordination and the provision of common services. This was particularly creditworthy given that WFP only re-established its presence in the country in 2022. WFP not only led key clusters but also took up a leading role in other cluster coordination mechanisms. A particularly good example was WFP introducing Building

Blocks as a tool for the coordination of MPCA under the umbrella of the Cash Working Group. This proved a model of good practice that reduced unintended overlaps in MPCA and led to significant cost savings.

259. At the same time there were still notable gaps in coordination, which compromised the effectiveness of food security coordination. Ukraine was notable for the emergence of a number of non-traditional, large-scale food security actors that did not systematically deliver within the food security and livelihoods cluster coordination system, complicating good programming. While these coordination challenges are not the fault of WFP, it is in its interests to resolve them corporately. Building a consensus on food assistance needs in Ukraine remained challenging and more could have been done to strengthen understanding through a deeper engagement of stakeholders in the analysis process. Other missed coordination opportunities include the failure to adopt a single, coordinated complaints and feedback mechanism, and work towards better harmonized registration systems and targeting criteria.
260. WFP was particularly effective at leading coordination efforts, but found coordination more challenging when it involved compromise or accepting the leadership of others, and at times WFP acted to prioritize the delivery of its own programmes. Cash coordination in the use of MPCA has proved particularly contentious with a lost opportunity to create a stronger strategic alignment in the use of MPCA across agencies. This raised questions among partners on the level of commitment from WFP to the IASC-led new cash coordination model.
261. Given the strong arguments in favour of the principle of using a unified cash transfer to flexibly meet a variety of needs, it is important to understand and collectively address the constraints to the coordinated use of MPCA experienced by WFP that emerged from piloting the new cash coordination model in Ukraine.

**Conclusion 4: The contextual advantages of using cash transfer modalities across response activities were only partially realized. Understanding the full range of factors that contributed to this outcome can help to promote a more appropriate use of modalities in future crises.**

262. It is acknowledged that, given the context, a mixed modality approach in Ukraine was justified. At the same time, the Ukraine context was well suited to a cash-based response. There was an early acknowledgement from the outset, as identified by the preparedness missions, of the appropriateness of cash transfers in Ukraine. A cash-based response was broadly contextually appropriate, aligned well with beneficiary preferences and facilitated a potential transition from crisis assistance to government-led social transfers. Partly in response to this internal analysis, cash assistance was rolled out early and at scale.
263. However, WFP continued to deliver the majority of assistance through in-kind assistance, despite evidence that a higher proportion of cash would have been appropriate from the start of the crisis. Challenges emerged in ensuring food aid did not negatively affect local food systems and adapting in-kind rations to meet local preferences. While the use of in-kind transfers was justified in contexts where markets have failed due to the war, the evidence suggests that markets were resilient and often reestablished rapidly where they were disrupted. It is notable that the Government continued to distribute social assistance as cash across the country – including front-line areas – successfully. Therefore, this rationale should not be over-generalized.
264. In practice a complex set of operational considerations contributed to the choice of modalities. In the initial phases of the response, it was logistically easier to provide food boxes, which did not require detailed registration information to enable cash transfers. A further important factor was the long lead-in times in setting up cash top-ups for pensions and disability grants. Administrative complications also meant that institutional feeding proved hard to switch to cash.
265. WFP needs to acknowledge these various drivers and consider how they might be addressed and mitigated from the start of a response as – once a large-scale in-kind response starts – it may be sustained by its own momentum.

**Conclusion 5: While WFP demonstrated a commitment to inclusion and protection, there was insufficient attention to adapting programmes to the needs of women and men, mainstreaming transformative approaches to social inclusion and extending beneficiary participation in core programming decisions.**

266. WFP has tailored its assistance to the needs of various vulnerable groups. People with disabilities are generally provided with assured access to humanitarian aid. WFP has designed add-on initiatives to reach the most vulnerable in its school feeding activity. However, at the same time important gaps persisted.
267. The evaluation found limited attention to gender in the WFP programmes. An in-depth, comprehensive analysis of gender was only undertaken late in the response and the main activities lack adaptation to encourage the participation of women and girls and meet their needs or contribute to transformative approaches to social inclusion. While WFP has invested in trainings and awareness sessions on gender-related issues for staff, there appears to still be some way to go in establishing a gender-sensitive culture, as assumptions and perceptions by WFP and partner staff tended to downplay concerns of gender inequality in Ukraine. The response also demonstrated limited adaptation to specific needs – such as diet – given a disproportionately elderly caseload.
268. Several of the pre-existing tools of WFP, templates and ways of working in emergencies, were not well adapted to Ukraine and had to be either adapted or entirely reimagined for a technically advanced middle-income country. This was cited in reference to a range of assessment tools and methodologies, but it was particularly noted that tools were not flexible or nuanced enough to identify adequate indicators of gender inequality in the Ukraine context.
269. An effective complaints and feedback mechanism has been put in place and is being further developed, although there was arguably a missed opportunity to put in place a shared complaints and feedback mechanism across the humanitarian response. While the complaints and feedback and monitoring mechanisms contribute to adaptive management, this addresses only part of the commitment by WFP to its accountability to affected people and beneficiaries are not actively involved in core programming decisions, although WFP has recognized this gap and invested in improving participation in livelihood pilots. Commitments that aspire to greater shared accountability are largely unmet, with power largely remaining outside of affected people.

**Conclusion 6: The evolving context in Ukraine is uncertain, not only in the course of the war and the level of needs but also in the prospects for future humanitarian funding. This has implications for adjusting ongoing interventions, pursuing innovative opportunities and planning for transition and exit.**

270. The continuation of ongoing interventions needs to take account of the reality of the declining availability of donor resources. Donors are clear that, in the absence of major new displacements, humanitarian funds for Ukraine will shrink. A better understanding of the level of food insecurity and needs in Ukraine, coupled with overall cuts in global aid budgets and emerging acute needs elsewhere all contribute to this trend. While the downward trend in resourcing has been apparent since 2022, the current outlook is particularly stark. This context will have implications on the scale of food assistance and the need to prioritize meeting the most pressing needs. That said, it is clear that, if there were a renewed intensification of the humanitarian crisis, donors would rely on WFP to scale up again and funds would be forthcoming to support them, so WFP needs to retain a large degree of readiness.
271. While WFP has worked to progressively sharpen targeting, there are clear opportunities to further improve. The transition from blanket feeding in front-line areas to targeted cash transfers is welcome and can be expanded. Furthermore, the relevance of different activities in meeting needs has changed over time. For example, institutional feeding served as a channel to reach a large number of beneficiaries early in the response, its continuing relevance needs to be judged against its ability to meet the most pressing needs in a targeted way. Other development channels may be more appropriate in addressing the implicit objective of institutional feeding in bridging organizational budget shortfalls.

- 272.Despite the funding challenges, there is still room for concurrent programmatic innovation. Many war-affected people were clear on their desire for more support to livelihoods and recovery and some opportunities emerged for WFP to support recovery activities alongside maintaining a primary focus on emergency assistance. However, the comparative advantages of WFP need to be carefully assessed against other development actors present in-country, bearing in mind the commitment of WFP to exit as soon as possible. The mine action pilot has potential, particularly where the focus for WFP rests on restoring agricultural productivity rather than mine clearance, especially if WFP can convincingly evidence improvements in family-level food security. Furthermore, the importance of Ukraine to global food supply and prices also justifies consideration of support to the national food systems, including facilitating exports.
- 273.The potential of cash transfers to not only meet short-term consumption needs but also to enable families to re-establish livelihoods has not yet been fully developed. The fungibility of cash gives the potential to bridge the dual objectives of relief and recovery. However, this has not yet been explicitly considered as an objective for cash transfers by WFP. The effectiveness of cash transfers in this role is dependent on the size, frequency and duration of transfers and would require WFP to consider the trade-offs between the breadth of coverage and the level of assistance provided.
- 274.At the same time there is the recognition that the presence of WFP in Ukraine should only be maintained to address significant war-affected needs. While WFP has publicly stated that it sees its presence in Ukraine as short-term, the conditions under which the country office would close are yet to be made explicit. WFP presence should be scaled down in alignment with the urgency of the needs and in consideration of Ukraine's middle-income country status, and the CSP should avoid embedding longer-term commitments.
- 275.The pathway for WFP to transition and exit is closely married to strengthening the shock responsiveness of government systems. With an eye to its eventual exit, it would benefit WFP to focus more on strengthening the capacity of the social protection system to respond to crises, rather than simply using it as a delivery channel. This would suggest more attention to joint work with the Government on reducing eligibility and access challenges and strengthening monitoring and accountability. Supporting referrals of excluded groups, or those with protection needs, to specialist government services and civil society partners is a further important opportunity.
- 276.While school feeding lacks a strong food security rationale, it is closely aligned with government priorities, receives considerable public support and WFP support has been welcome. It is worth exploring whether this is something that the Government of Ukraine would want WFP to support over the longer-term with a development perspective – even in the absence of a country office.

**Conclusion 7: Better evidence of results is important in supporting fundraising efforts. However, monitoring and reporting struggled to present compelling evidence of results. The core food security indicators lack sufficient sensitivity to the context and made the WFP contribution to food security hard to demonstrate. The objectives of WFP support to food and social protection systems lacked clarity, with limited monitoring and reporting of outcomes.**

- 277.Much of the WFP monitoring efforts were focused on output and process-level indicators, in particular monitoring the delivery of food assistance. The monitoring of outcomes relied heavily on a small number of core corporate indicators, with food consumption scores and changes in livelihood coping strategies being most consistently tracked. However, these indicators had limited explanatory power in isolating the contribution of WFP assistance to food security outcomes. While this methodological issue is a corporate-level challenge, it was particularly difficult to demonstrate a strong link between WFP assistance and changes in food security status in the context of Ukraine given the relatively modest rates of severe food insecurity at the baseline and the large number of overlapping response actors, including humanitarian, government and private, and other miscellaneous sources of assistance.
- 278.Furthermore, WFP narratives on the benefits of activities went beyond short-term objectives of improving food consumption and associated with a much wider range of benefits. This included improvements in food systems (in retail markets and exports), in employment (for example, through the contracts with local bakeries), in institutional support (through institutional feeding,



school feeding and social top-ups) and bridging to livelihood support and recovery. Critically there was little attempt to define targets for these diverse outcomes or monitor progress towards achievement. It did not help that these additional outcomes were inconsistently defined, with different documents articulating different outcomes. Reporting provided to donors and other stakeholders on these points often remained qualitative. While this may have been understandable at the outset of the crisis, a deeper analysis can be expected two years into the response. Better evidence of results could have strengthened adaptive management as well as resource mobilization.

## **3.2 Recommendations**

279. The evaluation report presents recommendations to WFP at various levels below. These address both the ongoing response in Ukraine as well as corporate lessons to inform future responses. Each recommendation traces back to the overall conclusions, which in turn are traceable to evaluation findings (see Annex 11).

Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsibility (with contributing entity in brackets)	Priority	By when	Rationale
<b>Recommendation 1: To support the implementation of the recommendations of the evaluation of WFP's 2024 emergency preparedness policy, WFP should draw on lessons learned from Ukraine to strengthen preparedness for future corporate emergencies.</b>					Linked to conclusions 1 and 2. While the overall performance of WFP in scaling up the response in Ukraine was good, there are important lessons to be considered at the corporate level in relation to preparedness and surge deployments.
1.1 WFP should review and strengthen contingency arrangements to quickly scale up in war-affected countries and countries where it does not have a presence, including by strengthening agreements to operate under the umbrella of a sister United Nations entity in the absence of a basic agreement with a host government and contingency arrangements to enable headquarters to support countries with procurement and administrative functions directly.	Strategic	Headquarters Programme Policy and Guidance Division	High	End 2026	Corporate systems were not set up to enable headquarters to lead procurement on behalf of the country office. WFP's "no regrets" approach was not consistently understood or applied.
1.2 Review, strengthen and clarify the process, responsibilities, tools and mechanisms related to surge deployments, including standardizing pre-mobilization training on security and the "no regrets" approach; adapting the composition and gender balance of surge teams to the specific context; and improving handover arrangements between surged staff.	Operational	Headquarters Programme Policy and Guidance Division	High	End 2026	WFP should have elevated Ukraine more rapidly in its corporate alert system as a country of greater corporate concern, a failure that may have contributed to losing valuable weeks in mobilizing the response.
1.3 WFP should include lessons learned from its operations in Ukraine in its review of the corporate alert system to improve the timeliness of future responses in conflict-affected countries and in countries where it does not have a presence.	Strategic	Headquarters Programme Policy and Guidance Division	High	End 2025	It is important for WFP to be able to piggyback on the agreements of other United Nations entities with governments until it can put its own agreements in place.

Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsibility (with contributing entity in brackets)	Priority	By when	Rationale
1.4 WFP should capture lessons learned in relation to adherence to the humanitarian principles in the complex operating environment in Ukraine to inform future guidance to WFP staff and partners in similarly challenging settings.	Strategic	Headquarters Programme Policy and Guidance Division	High	Mid 2026	In a complex environment WFP paid strong attention to humanitarian principles. However, the tensions between principles that involved trade-offs and compromises could have been more explicitly recognized.
<b>Recommendation 2: Drawing on its experience in Ukraine, WFP should utilize existing global engagement platforms to strengthen coordinated approaches to the provision of food assistance.</b>					Linked to conclusions 2 and 3. Increasingly prominent non-traditional food actors need to be systematically brought into coordination structures to reduce overlaps.
2.1 In conjunction with the global food security cluster, WFP headquarters should engage with emerging major new food assistance actors to seek agreement on improved operational coordination and participation in the cluster system.	Strategic		Medium	End 2026	Given the strong arguments in favour of using a unified cash transfer to flexibly meet a variety of needs, it is important to understand and collectively address the constraints on the coordinated use of multipurpose cash assistance.
2.2 WFP headquarters should embark on a process of dialogue within the IASC cash advisory group to promote improved inter-agency alignment on the objectives and use of multipurpose cash assistance.	Strategic	Headquarters Emergency Coordination Service	Medium	Mid 2026	The implications of inadequate coordination at the global level for world-wide equity were not explicitly monitored, nor were concrete attempts made to advocate a more impartial spread of donor resources among competing global crises.
2.3 WFP should work in the IASC Emergency Directors Group to promote equitable humanitarian response at the global level.	Strategic	Headquarters Emergency Coordination Service	Medium	End 2026	

Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsibility (with contributing entity in brackets)	Priority	By when	Rationale
<b>Recommendation 3: WFP should enhance the relevance and utility of its assessment, targeting and measurement of results in Ukraine.</b>					<p>Linked to conclusions 1, 3, 4, 6 and 7. Donors are clear that, in the absence of major new population displacements, the amount of humanitarian funding for Ukraine will decrease. This will have implications for the scale of food assistance and the need to give priority to meeting the most pressing needs.</p> <p>Building a consensus on food assistance needs has been challenging in Ukraine and more could have been done to strengthen understanding through a deeper engagement of stakeholders in the analysis process.</p> <p>While WFP worked to sharpen targeting, there are clear opportunities for further improvement. The advantages of using cash transfer modalities across response activities were only partially realized. The relevance of certain activities – such as institutional feeding – in meeting needs changed over time.</p> <p>The objectives of WFP support for food and social protection systems lacked clarity, with limited monitoring and reporting of outcomes.</p>
3.1 WFP, in conjunction with the food security and livelihoods cluster, should increase transparency and participation in the analysis of food needs and improve the dissemination of results.	Operational	Country office research, assessment and monitoring unit	High	Mid 2026	
3.2 As resources for operations in Ukraine are likely to decline, WFP should continue to update and refine its targeting and prioritization strategy, delivery modalities and programme activities.	Operational	Country office programme unit	High	End 2025	
3.3 The country office should clarify the objectives of its support for food systems and social protection as a basis for collaboration with headquarters in defining and reporting on relevant outcomes in Ukraine.	Operational	Country office programme unit (headquarters Analysis, Planning and Performance Division)	High	Mid 2026	

Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsibility (with contributing entity in brackets)	Priority	By when	Rationale
<b>Recommendation 4: WFP should further explore and develop support for recovery activities in Ukraine alongside a primary focus on emergency assistance.</b>					Linked to conclusions 1, 3, 5 and 6. WFP's flexibility and capacity to rapidly scale up remain critical to the humanitarian response in Ukraine. Donors would rely on WFP to scale up again and funds would be forthcoming to support them if the humanitarian crisis were to intensify. Opportunities for WFP to support recovery activities emerged but the organization's comparative advantages need to be carefully assessed against those of other development actors.
4.1 WFP should better communicate that the objective of its agricultural activities is to enable the resumption of agriculture on land that has been cleared of or is otherwise free from explosive ordnance and provide reassurance that appropriate long-term partnerships are in place to ensure the continuation of these activities after WFP exits Ukraine.	Operational	Country office programme unit and management	High	End 2025	The mine action pilot has potential for good, particularly where the focus for WFP rests on restoring agricultural productivity rather than mine clearance.
4.2 WFP should explore the use of cash transfers to support livelihood recovery.	Operational	Country office programme unit	High	End 2026	A cash-based response was broadly appropriate for the operating environment. The fungibility of cash gives the potential to bridge the dual objectives of relief and recovery.
4.3 In line with an increasing focus on transitional activities, WFP should expand its use of gender and social inclusion analysis to improve age sensitivity and gender mainstreaming, with greater attention to capacity strengthening for cooperating partners.	Operational	Country office programme unit	High	Mid 2026	There was insufficient attention to adapting programmes to the needs of women and men and to mainstreaming approaches to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsibility (with contributing entity in brackets)	Priority	By when	Rationale
<b>Recommendation 5: WFP should adapt its programme in Ukraine to facilitate its transition and exit from the country at an appropriate time.</b>					<p>Linked to conclusion 6.</p> <p>WFP's presence in Ukraine is short-term, but the conditions under which the country office would close are yet to be made explicit.</p> <p>Careful consideration is also required regarding whether there may be a justification for some form of continued country-level engagement in areas such as procurement and school feeding. Given the ongoing conflict WFP's withdrawal from Ukraine is not imminent. However, the groundwork to enable a smooth transition to government and civil society partners should be pursued in the short term.</p> <p>WFP's pathway to transition and exit is closely married to strengthening the shock responsiveness of government systems. Supporting referrals of excluded groups, or those with protection needs, to specialist government services and civil society partners is a further important opportunity.</p>
5.1 WFP should define criteria that would trigger the cessation of its emergency food assistance operations in Ukraine.	Strategic	Country office management (regional bureau, headquarters)	High	End 2025	
5.2 WFP should explore and define the scope of any continuing country engagement, such as support for the Grain from Ukraine facility and school feeding, and consider how they can best be managed, whether by a country office, the regional bureau or headquarters.	Strategic	Country office management (regional bureau, headquarters)	High	End 2025	
5.3 To facilitate transition WFP, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, should further develop engagement with, and capacity strengthening for, the national social protection system.	Operational	Country office programme unit	High	End 2026	
5.4 To further facilitate transition, WFP should strengthen its work with civil society groups to support their capacity to complement and support the national social protection system, for example as part of a referral system.	Operational	Country office programme unit	Medium	End 2026	
5.5 WFP should engage with the resident coordinator/ humanitarian coordinator to advocate the progressive transition from a cluster coordination model to government-led sectoral coordination.	Strategic	Country office programme unit	Medium	End 2025	

## **Office of Evaluation**

### **World Food Programme**

Via Cesare Giulio Viola 68/70,  
00148 Rome, Italy - T +39 06 65131

**[wfp.org/independent-evaluation](https://wfp.org/independent-evaluation)**