



**WFP EVALUATION**



**World Food  
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# **Strategic evaluation of WFP's support to refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants**

**Centralized evaluation report**

**OEV/2023/021  
May 2025**

# Acknowledgements

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# Executive summary

## Introduction

### Evaluation features

1. This strategic evaluation was commissioned by WFP's Office of Evaluation and examines WFP's support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants over the period from January 2017 to July 2024. The evaluation assesses the performance of WFP's interventions in support of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, examines WFP's strategic partnerships, and reviews the organization's engagement with displaced people and irregular migrants with respect to gender equality and women's empowerment, conflict sensitivity, disability, protection, accountability to affected people, and adherence to humanitarian principles. While aiming to meet WFP's accountability requirements, the evaluation report puts strong emphasis on learning and good practice as part of a forward-looking, formative analysis from which to generate evidence that will inform the policies, strategies and approaches that affect WFP's future support for displaced people<sup>1</sup> and irregular migrants.<sup>2</sup>
2. The primary audience of this evaluation includes WFP's leadership and the technical teams in the Programme Operations Department, the Partnerships and Innovation Department, regional bureaux and country offices that oversee and manage WFP's operations for assisting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, and the Executive Board. Key external audiences include strategic partners, members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and other relevant country- and regional level partners, including host governments.
3. The evaluation aims to answer the five main questions presented in table 1.

**Table 1: Main evaluation questions**

	Evaluation question
1	In what ways, and to what extent, is WFP's support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants coherent with the external environment?
2	How effective is WFP's operational and advocacy support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in meeting their short- and long-term food security and nutrition needs?
3	How appropriate and contextualized are WFP's assistance modalities and programming approaches in supporting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in different circumstances and settings?
4	To what extent does WFP create an appropriate internal enabling environment for supporting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants?
5	How effectively does WFP leverage and add value to its partnerships and coordination arrangements in support of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants?

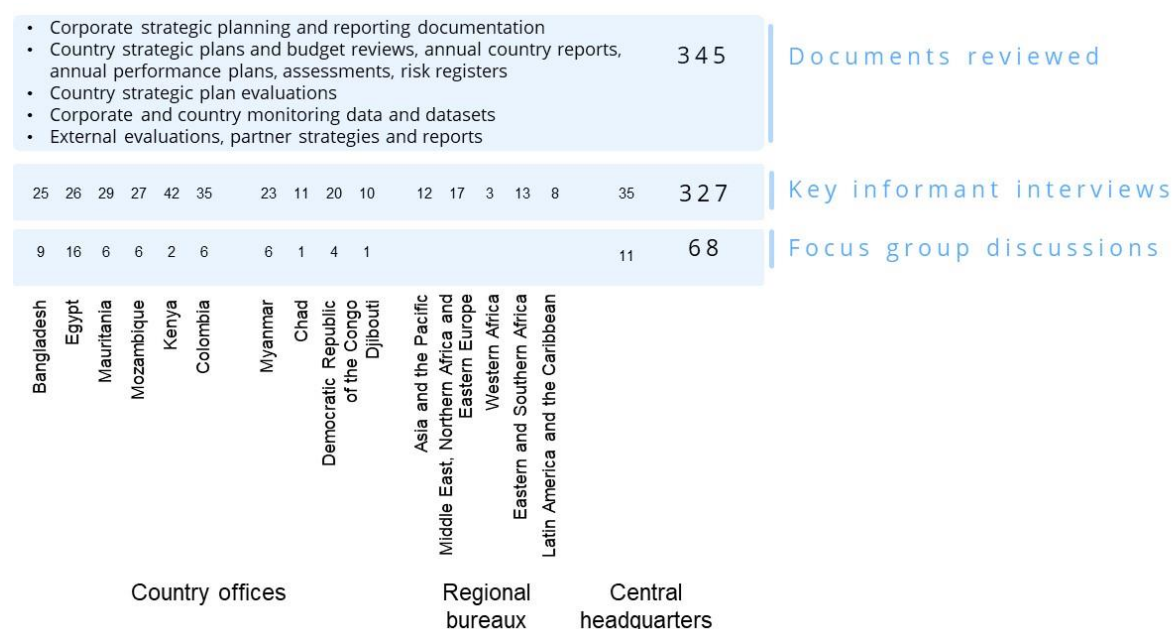
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<sup>1</sup> For this evaluation, the term "displaced people" encompasses refugees and internally displaced persons. Host populations and returnees were a secondary focus of the evaluation.

<sup>2</sup> The evaluation examined WFP's support specifically for irregular migrants. This term is used throughout the report unless direct reference is made to WFP documentation that uses the broader term "migration".

4. The evaluation relied on various data collection methods (figure 1) and was grounded on ten country case studies<sup>3</sup> and three thematic studies covering the corporate, regional and country levels, respectively. It applied an approach centred on the facilitation of community-wide participation and the empowerment of women and took into consideration the ways in which the specific vulnerabilities affecting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants intersect with other characteristics.

**Figure 1: Data collection methods and coverage**



Source: Evaluation team.

## Context

5. At the end of June 2024, approximately 122.6 million individuals around the globe had been forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence and human rights abuses. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that there were about 68.3 million internally displaced persons, 38 million refugees, 8 million asylum seekers and 5.8 million other people in need of international protection.<sup>4</sup>
6. A complex range of drivers – including conflict, unexpected weather-related events and the increasing numbers of people engaging in irregular migration – continue to shape displacement and migration within countries and across borders. As these challenges persist and intensify, UNHCR forecasts that the number of forcibly displaced persons and stateless persons requiring protection will reach 139.3 million worldwide in 2025.<sup>5</sup>
7. In 2023, 75 percent of refugees and other people in need of international protection were hosted by low- and middle-income countries, and 80 percent of the world's total refugee population was hosted by countries that together secure less than 20 percent of the world's income.<sup>6</sup> Nearly three in five

<sup>3</sup> The evaluation team visited Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritania, Mozambique, Kenya and Colombia. Remote case studies were conducted for Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti and Myanmar.

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR. 2024. [Mid-Year Trends 2024](#).

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR. 2024. [Global Appeal 2025: Executive Summary](#).

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR. 2023. [2023 Global Compact on Refugees Indicator Report](#).

refugees and internally displaced persons reside in urban areas, where they have limited livelihood opportunities or access to services.<sup>7</sup> Globally, up to 80 percent of refugees suffer from food insecurity and live in territories facing hunger crises.<sup>8</sup>

8. UNHCR holds the mandate to protect refugees and coordinate inter-agency support for them under the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol,<sup>9</sup> while the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is tasked with coordinating responses for migrants;<sup>10</sup> there are no legally binding international instruments that ensure the protection of internally displaced persons or irregular migrants. The adoption of international agreements, legal frameworks and humanitarian coordination models for displaced persons varies widely among countries and population groups. This complexity poses significant challenges to United Nations entities in developing and implementing effective, adaptable and targeted responses, particularly when working with governments that may not officially recognize the existence or needs of all displaced people or irregular migrants.
9. In 2016, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly,<sup>11</sup> leading to a comprehensive refugee response framework that aims to support an inclusive and holistic response for refugees, host governments and communities that host large populations of refugees for protracted periods.<sup>12</sup> The Global Compact on Refugees<sup>13</sup> and the Global Compact for Migration<sup>14</sup> were introduced in 2018 to improve international cooperation on the safe and orderly movement of people, and to promote socioeconomic rights and self-reliance for refugees and migrants, regardless of their legal status. Led by the United Nations Secretary-General, a high-level panel on internal displacement was established in 2019 to facilitate collective action,<sup>15</sup> resulting in a draft action agenda on internal displacement.<sup>16</sup>
10. Despite the escalating global displacement crisis, the estimated funding shortfall for supporting refugees in 2023 approached 70 percent,<sup>17</sup> exacerbated by a shift in donor funding from addressing protracted displacement crises and working in transition settings to responding to emerging crises.<sup>18</sup> Cuts in aid and food provision disproportionately affect forcibly displaced people, intensifying their fragility and increasing their risks of facing violence and exploitation.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> UNHCR. 2024. [Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2023](#).

<sup>8</sup> Nisbet, C., Lestrat, K.E. and Vatanparast, H. 2022. [Food Security Interventions among Refugees around the Globe: A Scoping Review](#). *Nutrients*, 14:3, 522.

<sup>9</sup> UNHCR. [About UNHCR. The 1951 Refugee Convention](#).

<sup>10</sup> IOM. [About us. Who we are](#).

<sup>11</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. [The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#).

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR. [Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework](#).

<sup>13</sup> United Nations. 2018. [Global Compact on Refugees](#).

<sup>14</sup> IOM. 2019. [Global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration](#).

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement. 2021. [Shining a Light on Internal Displacement: A Vision for the Future – Report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement](#).

<sup>16</sup> Office of the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement. 2022. [Action Agenda on Internal Displacement: Core Commitments](#).

<sup>17</sup> Source: [Refugee Funding Tracker](#) (accessed 30 September 2024). This platform was developed by UNHCR and rolled out in 2019 as a “one stop shop” for financial data related to refugee programmes.

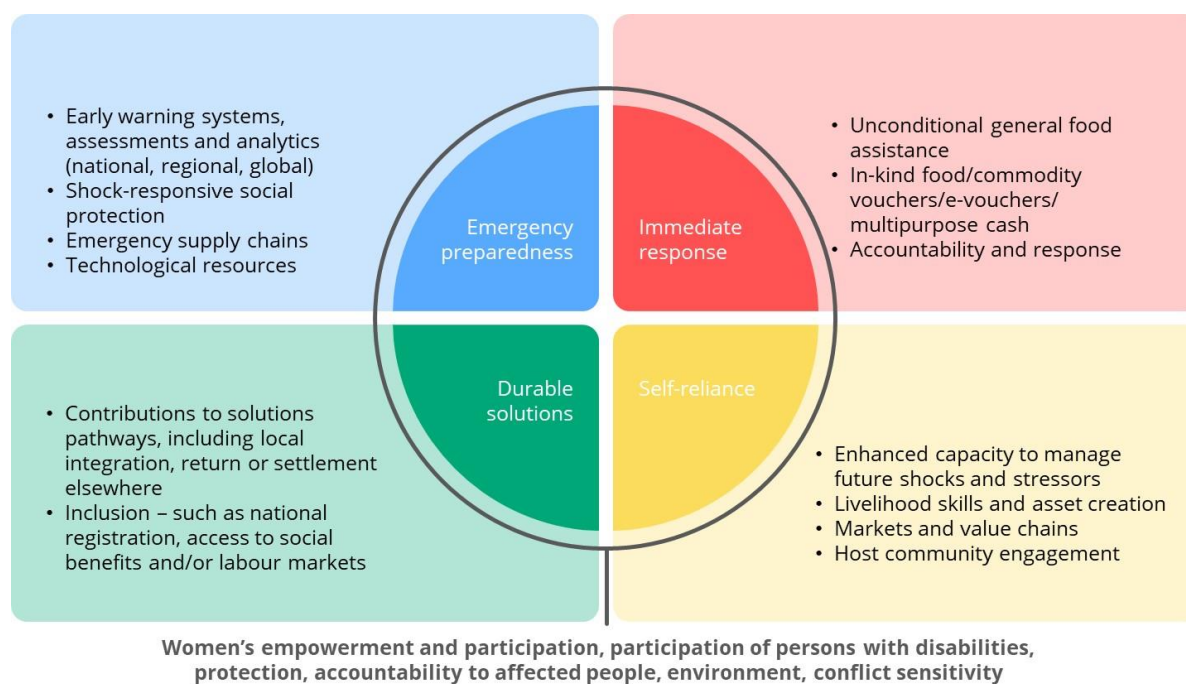
<sup>18</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2024. [Financial Tracking Service](#).

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR. 2022. [Food shortages and aid cuts put more displaced women at risk of gender-based violence](#).

## Subject of the evaluation

11. WFP seeks “to meet refugee and other emergency and protracted relief food needs”. The strategic plan for 2022–2025 makes specific, but limited, reference to refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, emphasizing the intersection between conflict, weather-related disasters and other risks, and the immediate and longer-term needs of these population groups. Despite references to refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in WFP’s policy framework, the organization has no corporate-level policy for explicitly addressing their needs, and there is no specific guidance on support for irregular migrants, while corporate and joint WFP-UNHCR guidance on support for refugees and internally displaced persons is available.<sup>20, 21</sup>
12. In its efforts to align with the international policy environment for supporting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, WFP has assumed a critical role in providing services that help to meet the immediate needs of these population groups. Where possible, it shifts its support to focus on building self-reliance, contributing to durable solutions, mitigating the impact on host communities, and building the preparedness and response capacities of governments and local actors (figure 2). WFP’s assistance for displaced people and irregular migrants spans all programmatic and functional areas, including general food assistance, the prevention and treatment of malnutrition, food assistance for assets and training, school meals, food security and nutrition assessments, analysis and monitoring, supply chains and logistics, country capacity strengthening and advocacy. The assistance varies in nature and purpose, depending on the specific circumstances and needs of the affected people, and takes into account cross-cutting concerns related to the support and empowerment of women and girls, community-wide participation, protection, accountability to affected people, the environment, and conflict sensitivity.

**Figure 2: Range of WFP’s programming for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants**



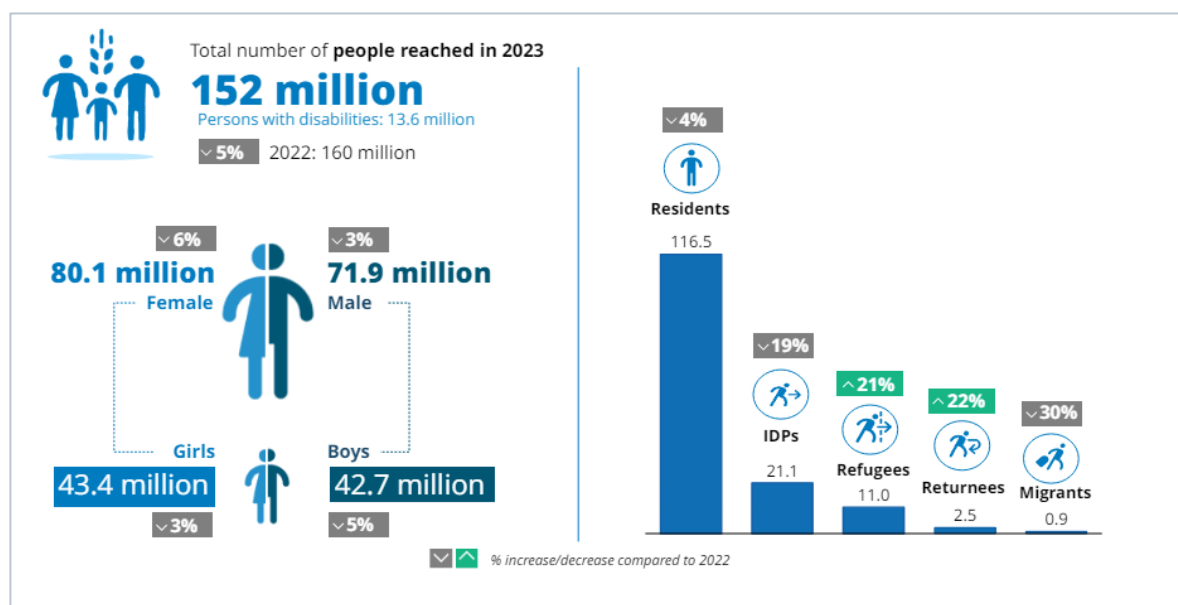
Source: Evaluation team.

<sup>20</sup> WFP. 2017. [Refugee Assistance Guidance Manual](#).

<sup>21</sup> UNHCR and WFP. 2023. [Joint Guidance: Targeting of Assistance to Meet Basic Needs](#).

13. Unlike UNHCR and IOM, WFP holds no formal mandate for the protection of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants. WFP provides support for these groups through its 2011 memorandum of understanding (MoU) with UNHCR,<sup>22</sup> country- or regional level MoUs and technical agreements with IOM, and partnerships with national governments. In 2020, WFP and UNHCR co-created the Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub aimed at strengthening joint programming and implementing organizational policies and guidance effectively.<sup>23</sup>
14. Over the last ten years, the number of internally displaced persons, refugees, returnees and irregular migrants assisted by WFP has steadily increased, peaking in 2022 at 38.6 million and declining slightly to 35.5 million in 2023. The proportion of displaced beneficiaries<sup>24</sup> within the total number of people assisted by WFP has, however, declined from 37 percent in 2018 to 23 percent in 2023.

**Figure 3: People assisted by WFP by sex, age and residence status, 2023**



Source: "Annual performance report for 2023" (WFP/EB.A/2024/4-A/Rev.1).

Abbreviation: IDPs = internally displaced persons.

15. In 2023, 60 percent of multilateral resources were allocated to crisis response activities, and particular attention was paid to refugees and the people facing the highest levels of vulnerability.<sup>25</sup> While no specific funding data by status are available, an aggregate picture of WFP's funding for its work with displaced people and irregular migrants can be roughly estimated by multiplying overall corporate funding by the proportion of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in WFP's overall beneficiary population (figure 4).

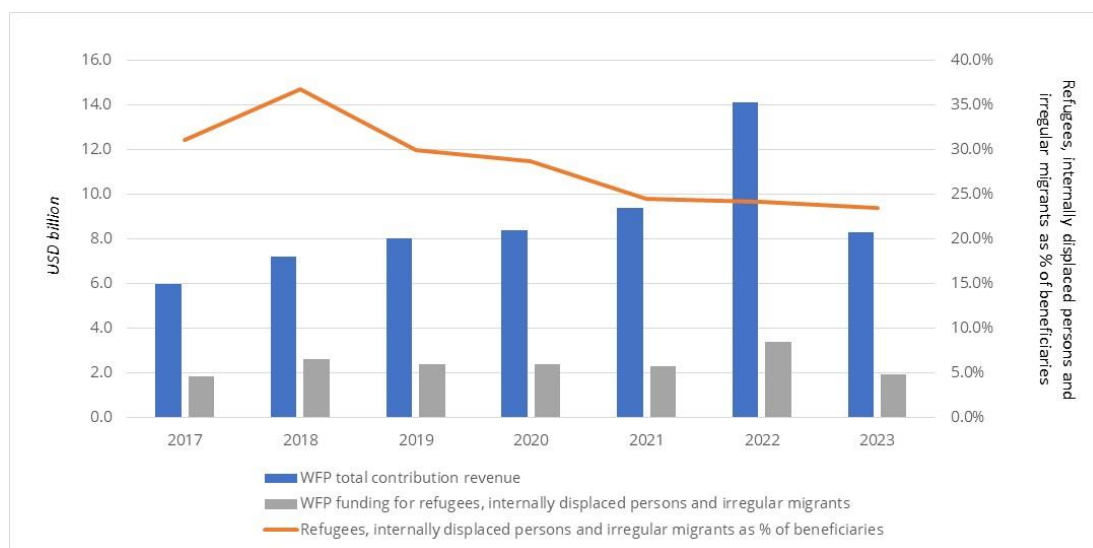
<sup>22</sup> WFP and UNHCR. 2011. [Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and WFP](#).

<sup>23</sup> UNHCR and WFP. 2024. [Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub](#).

<sup>24</sup> These figures do not include irregular migrants for whom data have been available since only 2022.

<sup>25</sup> "Annual performance report for 2022" (WFP/EB.A/2023/4-A/Rev.1). The people experiencing the highest levels of vulnerability are considered to be those facing levels 4 and 5 in the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification.

**Figure 4: Approximate trends in funding for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants relative to overall direct funding, 2017–2023\***



\* Funding for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants is estimated from the percentage of WFP beneficiaries, assuming that the cost per beneficiary for displaced people and irregular migrants is the same as for residents.

Source: Factory distribution contribution and forecast stats, 2024-06-24.

## Evaluation conclusions and key findings

### Strategic relevance

WFP has enhanced its responsiveness at the global, regional and country levels to increasingly dynamic and complex displacement environments, but its strategic vision and position regarding food-insecure refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants remain unclear. The approaches that WFP adopts are inconsistent among regions and countries, and corporate guidance is insufficient.

16. WFP's policies are broadly aligned with the Global Compact on Refugees and the United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. The integration of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants into WFP's corporate strategies is variable and reveals weaknesses in the organization's work with internally displaced persons and irregular migrants. WFP responds to irregular migration and is aligned with the Global Compact on Migration in only the Latin America and the Caribbean region, despite the high levels of vulnerability associated with irregular migration in other regions. Joint strategies with UNHCR, and WFP's recently developed institutional plan and programmes for responding to internal displacement have not been translated into clear guidance that helps country offices to identify and support locally appropriate pathways for a transition from addressing the immediate needs of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants to building their self-reliance.
17. The extent to which displacement and migration matters are covered in country strategic plan (CSP) documents, and the manner of that coverage are contingent on whether and how populations of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants are recognized and prioritized by governments. WFP's support for displaced people and irregular migrants has consistently operated within national legal frameworks. In CSPs and annual country reports refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants tend to be bundled together with other crisis-affected people, often without explicit recognition in CSP outcomes. WFP's focus on the country level, and its shift away from regional

programmes, has created gaps in the monitoring and analysis required for anticipating and responding to the multi-country and cross-border drivers and effects of displacement and migration.

18. Except in the few countries where WFP has developed an explicit focus on urban environments, refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants living in urban areas are usually not included in WFP's support which is predominantly focused on rural settings. This can create a "pull" factor through which household members seeking to maintain their eligibility for transfers must travel back and forth between urban centres and camps for displaced people.
19. While WFP consistently strives to adhere to humanitarian principles in providing assistance to refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, it is aware of possible trade-offs in applying those principles in certain circumstances, such as when seeking agreements with governments or non-state armed groups in order to maintain humanitarian access. The fact that limited or no assistance is provided to sizeable populations of irregular migrants outside Latin America, or to refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants residing in urban areas, despite their possibly very high levels of food and nutrition insecurity, could be seen as a lack of adherence to the principles of humanity and impartiality.

## Effectiveness

WFP's programmatic responses to the needs of refugees and internally displaced persons reflect its traditional strengths in addressing people's immediate needs. There is considerable room for WFP to enhance and improve its approaches to building self-reliance and improving nutrition, and its assistance for irregular migrants is very limited. In some countries, WFP has made important contributions to the integration of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants into national systems, but it has yet to give full consideration to the programme areas where it could deliver longer-term support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants at scale, such as through systems-level contributions to safety nets, school meal programmes, food markets and environmental rehabilitation.

20. WFP is widely recognized as the primary humanitarian food and nutrition agency able to scale up its responses quickly during major displacement crises, and providing leadership in securing humanitarian access to forcibly displaced people.
21. WFP makes important contributions to addressing the immediate food security needs of refugees and internally displaced persons, but the emergency assistance provided to irregular migrants is extremely limited compared with their needs. The provision of cash assistance grants refugees and internally displaced persons greater autonomy. However, refugees in situations of protracted displacement were found to be highly sensitive to reductions in cash assistance, which led to negative coping mechanisms, demonstrating that the refugees continued to depend on transfers. Strategies for enhancing the self-reliance of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants are highly dependent on the economic and security environment, and the willingness and capacity of host governments to extend rights, entitlements or support to displaced people and irregular migrants. While examples of WFP's vocational training and other support for self-reliance were identified, the organization's contributions to self-reliance and the long-term food security and nutrition needs of displaced people and irregular migrants were usually constrained by their short-term and small-scale nature, and often lacked coherence. WFP does not provide support for building the self-reliance of irregular migrants. While the evaluation found occasional evidence of the consideration of environmental matters in WFP's immediate support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, these cases appear to have emerged largely in response to governments' concerns regarding environmental protection and ecosystem rehabilitation in protracted displacement settings.
22. The growing use of cash transfers has enabled WFP to reduce supply chain risks, and allows greater autonomy for the recipient refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants where they have access to local food markets. Local procurement in settings such as those in Bangladesh and Kenya has helped to promote social cohesion and accelerate the transition of programmes from a

focus on addressing immediate needs to interventions aimed at building self-reliance. Investments in local supply chains that support displaced people provided WFP with a tool to help governments recognize the benefits of supporting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in order to secure investments in infrastructure and emergency preparedness and response capacity.

23. WFP's interventions for addressing malnutrition among refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants have largely been inadequate in terms of volume and coverage, except in limited camp-based settings such as Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh. When facing funding shortfalls, WFP does not have a clear position on whether to target the most nutritionally vulnerable people on the move with high-quality nutrition assistance or to reach larger numbers of people with lower-quality assistance. Blanket in-kind food or cash distributions have failed to meet nutrition requirements or prevent malnutrition among vulnerable people. "Top-up" assistance and priority access to diversified fresh foods for the population groups most vulnerable to malnutrition have helped to mitigate some of the consequences of significant cuts in general food assistance.
24. Where displaced children have access to schools, there is clear evidence that WFP's provision of daily school meals has helped to decrease the prevalence of short-term hunger. School meal programmes have also provided a stabilizing factor for vulnerable refugee households and appear to have contributed to social cohesion when children from host communities also benefited from school meals, or schools were supplied from local markets.
25. While WFP offers a range of activities aimed at meeting the immediate needs and building the self-reliance of displaced people, it has yet to adopt a coherent and systematic humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach to its provision of support. WFP has made efforts to integrate social cohesion and peacebuilding into its support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, but in many countries, there are gaps in the design of conflict-sensitive programme approaches and the use of context and conflict analysis to inform programme adaptations. WFP's partnerships for ensuring the application of a coherent nexus approach to address the needs of people on the move are limited.
26. In some countries, WFP has made important contributions to the integration of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants into national systems, notably by supporting their inclusion in social registries. Participation in national systems is contingent on governments' recognition of the rights and needs of different categories of people on the move. A common barrier to the participation of refugees is the capacity of host governments to meet additional costs. Many internally displaced persons may also face barriers in obtaining access to national systems, and the evaluation found a gap in WFP's attention to this matter.
27. WFP's contributions to durable solutions are limited in scope and focused on integration into national systems. WFP does not yet play a significant role in advocating or supporting durable solutions in partnership with other agencies. The organization's primary role in advocacy is in addressing the structural factors that constrain the delivery of assistance to refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants. WFP's contributions to joint advocacy that helps to ensure that displaced people are recognized, economically active and self-reliant are highly variable.
28. WFP's use of digital services has helped to improve operational effectiveness and had a positive effect on its interventions for meeting the immediate needs of displaced people. However, its digital and monitoring systems need to become more flexible, mobile and interoperable in order to provide end-to-end support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, from addressing their immediate needs to building their self-reliance. As a result, some country offices have developed bespoke solutions (table 2).

**Table 2: Examples of bespoke digital platforms and tools**

Example	Benefit
Digital oversight of supply chain warehouses in Kenya	Improves stock visibility and supply chain efficiency in country-level preparedness and response initiatives
Displacement tracking matrix and data sharing agreement in Mozambique (2023)	Supports the sharing of real-time data between WFP, IOM and the United Nations Children's Fund for a joint response to displacement
Introduction of Building Blocks in Bangladesh developed with the WFP Innovation Accelerator	Supports data privacy, inter-agency data sharing and the reduced duplication of services among agencies
Incorporation of biometric identity and data privacy using Building Blocks in Jordan	Data sharing supports transfer management and beneficiary tracking among agencies
SMS texting in the Gaza Strip	Beneficiaries share updates on the shops where nutritious food products are available
Introduction of a multi-purpose cash platform operated through the Government of Türkiye	Introduces the potential to link cash transfers for refugees to national safety net systems
Introduction of the Mauritania Tekavoul social transfer programme	Integrates social safety nets to promote participation in the economy by host and refugee households

### **Understanding and integrating the specific vulnerabilities of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants**

The intersecting vulnerabilities of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants are poorly integrated into relevant policy and guidance and there are significant gaps in WFP's understanding and monitoring of the specific vulnerabilities of displaced people and irregular migrants in their different, evolving circumstances. While WFP considers people's gender, age and disability in targeting its assistance, and needs-based targeting helps to prioritize assistance for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, it is rare for assistance to be tailored to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of different categories of persons on the move.

29. WFP has relevant, general policies and guidance for targeting assistance in ways that facilitate the participation of all social groups, including women and girls and persons with disabilities and is paying increasing attention to the empowerment of women and the participation of all social groups among refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants. However, there are gaps in WFP's understanding of how the specific vulnerabilities of beneficiaries intersect with their displacement or migration status. This is compounded by the lack of disaggregated corporate data within WFP.
30. Although WFP undertakes a range of assessments and analyses, these are not currently designed to build a comprehensive understanding of the vulnerabilities associated with displacement or irregular migration, or the ways in which displacement and migration intersect with wider risks related to gender, age, disability and protection. Partners consistently agreed that WFP assessments add value but emphasized that, in dynamic displacement settings, WFP needs to focus on providing its partners with actionable advice when, or before, events occur.
31. Needs-based targeting provides WFP with an important tool that supports the tailoring of assistance to different displacement or irregular migration settings, and the associated opportunities and

constraints that exist for different categories of displaced people and irregular migrants. However, the introduction of needs-based targeting has rarely been associated with the provision of support for building the self-reliance of deprioritized households, resulting in some households falling back into a higher vulnerability status. WFP also needs to consider the costs of introducing targeting procedures that require regular updates in dynamic settings.

32. WFP's monitoring systems are not designed to disaggregate data on beneficiaries according to displacement or migration status and in relation to the specific activities that they participate in. They do not allow WFP to track changes in the vulnerabilities that result from shifts in WFP's assistance, nor are they able to track the movement of beneficiaries between CSP activities or across borders. As a result, WFP's ability to analyse its contributions to specific results for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, to compare data among countries, or to build a line of sight that is focused on the beneficiary – such as when programmes facilitate the transition of individuals and households from interventions that address their immediate needs to activities that build their self-reliance – is very limited. WFP's activity-focused approach is also at odds with the systems of UNHCR and IOM, whose mandates require them to understand how status affects vulnerability, creating a barrier to effective data sharing and collaboration.
33. While WFP's interventions for refugees, internally displaced persons, irregular migrants and resident communities are targeted to promote the empowerment and participation of women and girls, they do not address the root causes of inequality, cultural norms, values or power structures, and WFP does not make a meaningful contribution to outcomes related to women's empowerment and the participation of all social groups among displaced people and irregular migrants. There is also little evidence of tailored support for displaced people and irregular migrants who are living with disabilities or are older, suggesting that insufficient consideration is given to how WFP's support for meeting immediate needs should be tailored to address the specific vulnerabilities in households of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants.

### **Managing risks and the protection of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants**

WFP identifies and manages the risks related to its support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants primarily in relation to its access to, and ability to assist, these population groups. WFP takes into adequate account the protection risks faced by displaced people and irregular migrants during its food assistance interventions, and has made significant progress in developing feedback mechanisms in displacement settings. However, its limited capacity to respond to feedback from targeted people, and the protection risks faced by displaced people outside food assistance distribution sites call for more effective collaboration with other agencies.

34. In CSP documents and internal risk registers, country offices identify the risks associated with interventions for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants mainly in relation to humanitarian access, and CSPs are aligned with the rights and entitlements afforded to displaced people by governments. This pragmatic approach can result in the vulnerable displaced or irregular migrant groups that governments do not recognize being overlooked, or can force WFP to find alternative ways of reaching these groups in difficult operational environments. It is unclear how WFP manages risks in these situations.
35. In line with corporate policy, WFP takes protection issues into account in the targeting and delivery of assistance for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, and demonstrates appropriate understanding of protection issues in relation to the provision of food and cash transfers to displaced people and irregular migrants. However, WFP does not sufficiently consider the protection risks that refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants face beyond the immediate vicinity of distribution sites, or how reductions in assistance may lead to negative coping strategies. WFP's cooperating partners need more support in strengthening their capacity to mainstream protection, including in displacement and migration settings.

36. WFP has made significant progress in introducing community feedback mechanisms, which were in place in all the countries covered by the evaluation. Although these mechanisms help to improve beneficiaries' engagement and the management of transfers, WFP has faced challenges with acting on the feedback received, including with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse, and is yet to use this feedback consistently to improve its responsiveness to the concerns of displaced people and irregular migrants. There is room for strengthening partnerships with other actors for more effective referral and resolution of the protection concerns of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, including in regard to sexual exploitation and abuse.

### **Partnerships in support of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants**

Partners perceive WFP's main comparative advantages in supporting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in relation to its ability to mobilize, adapt and scale up its operations quickly in response to emergencies, and its ability to negotiate access to sensitive locations. While WFP capitalizes on a range of strategic and operational partnerships that support country offices in addressing the increasingly complex challenges faced by displaced people and irregular migrants, greater leadership, collaboration and clarity regarding roles and responsibilities are required, and there is significant scope for improving engagement with governments, regional institutions, international financial institutions, other United Nations entities and cooperating partners in helping refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants progress towards self-reliance.

37. WFP is regarded by external actors as a critical partner to their responses in both rapid-onset emergencies and protracted crises. Key elements of WFP's value addition that are widely recognized by partners include:
- its wide presence in displacement settings and along migration routes, which allows it to reach new arrivals in a timely manner;
  - its supply chain and humanitarian services, including advance financing and rapid response mechanisms, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service and emergency telecommunications;
  - its operational capacity and tools, which provide the flexibility to adapt interventions in dynamic settings, such as transnational displacement situations; and
  - its flexibility and dynamism, supported by its innovation hubs in Colombia, Germany and Kenya.
38. Partners also see WFP's ability to engage governments in negotiating access to vulnerable, displaced people and communities in sensitive locations as a critical contribution to humanitarian work, building on WFP's food security and nutrition mandate.
39. There has been a positive trajectory in WFP's engagement with partners at all levels. A global MoU formalizes the organization's partnership with UNHCR on working with displaced people, and commits both organizations to clarifying their strengths and responsibilities, supporting technical exchange and information sharing, and strengthening joint advocacy, resource mobilization and data sharing. The WFP-UNHCR joint hub provides country offices with strategic and technical support for strategic planning and programme design, joint assessments and analysis, data-driven targeting and prioritization, accountability to affected people, and data sharing and knowledge management. A recent external review of the joint hub emphasized the hub's important contributions but expressed concerns regarding limited capacity transfer, modest progress on interoperability and the sharing of data, and insufficient high-level support.
40. WFP's partnership with IOM follows a different model based on the case-by-case identification of areas for strategic collaboration at the corporate and country levels. WFP and IOM developed a joint workplan in 2023, and a joint statement of partnership is due to be signed in 2025. It remains unclear how this collaboration will be operationalized at the regional or country level.
41. Through its regional bureaux, WFP participates extensively in regional level coordination mechanisms that support refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants. While most regional

partnerships that support displaced people focus on a common humanitarian response to displacement – and irregular migration in Latin America and the Caribbean – there are few examples of WFP supporting joint regional solutions for meeting the longer-term needs of displaced or migrating people.

42. WFP's country offices play a key role in the inter-agency coordination of assistance to support refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants through humanitarian coordination structures, thematic working groups and clusters. Areas in which country-level coordination continues to face challenges include the inter-agency sharing of data on displaced people and irregular migrants, engagement in strategic advocacy with governments, and engagement with development partners – other United Nations entities, international financial institutions and cooperating partners – in developing common strategies to support long-term programming for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, and their transition towards self-reliance.

### **Resourcing of support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants**

Despite the growing numbers of forcibly displaced people and irregular migrants, funding for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants has likely fallen relative to that for resident populations, and has been dominated by short-term, earmarked funding focused on addressing immediate needs, thereby limiting WFP's ability to support self-reliance at scale. There is also a gap in employees' capacity in the areas of displacement and migration, particularly in relation to self-reliance programming and interventions that address the specific vulnerabilities and protection risks of displaced people and irregular migrants.

43. Corporate data on the proportion of direct funding allocated to supporting displaced people and irregular migrants relative to total contributions are not available, and gaps in WFP's data and monitoring systems limit the organization's ability to aggregate and analyse the funding allocated to refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants as distinct beneficiary categories. However, the overall proportion has likely fallen since 2018, in line with the proportion of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants within WFP's overall beneficiary population. A reduction in donor funding relative to needs, including in protracted displacement settings, has led to fewer refugees and internally displaced persons being targeted for WFP support and sometimes halted WFP's provision of targeted support for the prevention of malnutrition among displaced pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls, and children. In countries outside the Latin America and the Caribbean region, the evaluation team was unable to identify instances of WFP's country offices exploring funding opportunities for supporting irregular migrants.
44. The short-term nature of funding for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants has limited WFP's ability to provide long-term support for displaced people. Donors' priorities and earmarking also limit the ability of WFP to shift its strategic response for displaced people and irregular migrants towards the building of self-reliance. While donors with a history of supporting long-term programming indicated their willingness to explore the integration of different population groups into their contribution portfolios, the evaluation identified few instances where donors had earmarked funds for resilience building interventions that supported refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants.<sup>26</sup>
45. An historical focus on grant funding for meeting immediate needs, and the lack of a clear business proposition appear to have hampered WFP's ability to build the long-term strategic partnerships needed to move refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants towards self-reliance interventions at scale, or to broaden the funding base through, for example, development finance

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<sup>26</sup> WFP typically classifies self-reliance activities for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants as resilience building, but there are clear distinctions between the two concepts.

instruments that support long-term solutions for displaced people and irregular migrants alongside resident communities. While the levels of flexible funding received by WFP remain modest relative to other forms of funding they do offer an opportunity to explore efficiency gains in the organization's emergency response and joint efforts to accelerate transitions towards self-reliance.

46. In cases of large-scale displacement, WFP's central headquarters and regional bureaux have provided effective support to country offices for recruiting employees. However, even in protracted crises, difficulties have been apparent in WFP's recruitment of employees who are experienced in displacement and migration issues and have the skill-sets needed to facilitate the transition from interventions that address immediate needs towards longer-term solutions, or to provide refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants with support for the empowerment and participation of women and persons with disabilities, and for protection.

## **Recommendations**

47. The aim of the recommendations is not to introduce new policy but to guide the updating and shaping of existing policies, institutional arrangements and programme support in ways that may enhance WFP's support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants alongside host communities and governments.

No.	Recommendation	Priority, responsibility, deadline
1	<p><i>WFP's corporate positioning</i></p> <p>Formulate a clear vision and corporate position on WFP's support for food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, and systematically embed this position in relevant WFP strategic and normative frameworks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define the key elements and boundaries of WFP's strategic approach to assisting food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable refugees and internally displaced persons in emergency and protracted displacement settings, in line with the organization's mandate and addressing emergency preparedness, crisis response and transitions to self-reliance and durable solutions.</li> <li>• Clarify WFP's corporate intention regarding the provision of assistance for food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable irregular migrants, and strategic entry points for supporting this category of people in the future.</li> <li>• Embed WFP's corporate position regarding refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in guidance on the formulation of CSPs and relevant thematic and sectoral policies and strategies.</li> <li>• Define WFP's strategic approach to its work in existing and emergent cross-border displacement and migration settings, and the mechanisms required for a coherent and coordinated multi-country response in such settings.</li> </ul>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Responsibility: Emergency Preparedness and Response Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Support: Nutrition and Food Quality Service; Gender, Protection and Inclusion Service; School Meals and Social Protection Service; Climate and Resilience Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Analysis, Planning and Performance Division</p> <p>Regional and country directors</p> <p>Digital Services Branch (Technology Division)</p> <p>Digital Transformation and Business Development Branch (Management Services Division)</p> <p>Deadline: End of 2026</p>

No.	Recommendation	Priority, responsibility, deadline
2	<p><i>WFP programmes and related partnerships</i></p> <p>Specify WFP's programme offer and the partnerships it needs in order to adequately integrate refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants into interventions for emergency preparedness, addressing immediate needs, building self-reliance and implementing durable solutions, and foster the introduction of transition pathways from the outset of the crisis response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide country offices with a coherent programme framework that sets out the options for, and boundaries of, WFP's offer for the different categories of refugee, internally displaced person and irregular migrant, and that considers the specific limitations and opportunities for WFP's operational response in different country settings, such as the legal provisions for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants; security and access considerations; the economic environment; and national and local capacity.</li> <li>• Identify critical gaps in WFP's operational guidance and the tools needed to implement its corporate position and programmes in rural, urban and camp settings, and develop or revise relevant guidance and tools with the support of regional bureaux and country offices.</li> <li>• Identify critical gaps in WFP's internal capacity to implement its programmes for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, including in addressing cross-cutting and protection issues, and the investments required for effective capacity strengthening, guidance, recruitment and support.</li> <li>• Identify and operationalize the broad range of strategic and programmatic partnerships needed to implement and support WFP's programmes for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants with other United Nations entities, international financial institutions, cooperating partners, governments, the private sector, and local stakeholders.</li> <li>• Strengthen WFP's strategic engagement in advocating, together with mandated agencies and other stakeholders, for an enabling environment that supports refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants through the transition of programmes towards building self-reliance and implementing durable solutions in different countries.</li> </ul>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Responsibility: Emergency Preparedness and Response Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Support: Nutrition and Food Quality Service; Gender, Protection and Inclusion Service; School Meals and Social Protection Service; Climate and Resilience Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Analysis, Planning and Performance Division</p> <p>Supply Chain and Delivery Division</p> <p>Regional and country directors</p> <p>Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division</p> <p>Digital Services Branch (Technology Division)</p> <p>Digital Transformation and Business Development Branch (Management Services Division)</p> <p>Deadline: End of 2026</p>

No.	Recommendation	Priority, responsibility, deadline
3	<p><i>WFP data systems, assessment and analysis</i></p> <p>Strengthen WFP's data systems and analytical capacity to improve the organization's understanding of the intersecting vulnerabilities of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, inform programming, facilitate inter-agency coordination, and enable principled data-sharing on refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed data on refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants by category, as well as age, sex and disability, throughout WFP's data and monitoring systems, and in its assessment methodologies, sampling and analysis, so that programme design, targeting and prioritization can take issues related to forced displacement and irregular migration into account.</li> <li>• Ensure that WFP's corporate systems identify and track refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants throughout the programme cycle and budgeting process.</li> <li>• Strengthen attention given to forced displacement, irregular migration and related issues in WFP's contextual analysis and early warning systems for multi-country, cross-border and individual country settings.</li> <li>• In case of an inter-agency response, strengthen beneficiary management systems and align data privacy safeguards in order to optimize the generation of data on beneficiaries, interoperability and principled data sharing.</li> </ul>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Responsibility: Analysis, Planning and Performance Division</p> <p>Support: Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service; Programme Monitoring and Reporting Service (Analysis, Planning and Performance Division)</p> <p>Emergency Preparedness and Response Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Regional and country directors</p> <p>Digital Services Branch (Technology Division)</p> <p>Digital Transformation and Business Development Branch (Management Services Division)</p> <p>Global Privacy Office</p> <p>Deadline: End of 2026</p>

No.	Recommendation	Priority, responsibility, deadline
4	<p><i>Protection and risk identification and mitigation</i></p> <p>Ensure that all of WFP's support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants is based on comprehensive analysis of status in relation to the risks faced by women, girls, men and boys, and risks arising from protection on contextual issues, and that it includes robust mechanisms for ensuring accountability to affected people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance and apply guidance for ensuring that WFP's employees and partners have an increased understanding of the specific protection-related vulnerabilities of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, including those facing women, girls, men and boys or arising from other concerns, and the importance of conflict sensitivity.</li> <li>• Ensure that a comprehensive, documented analysis of the risks related to protection, including from sexual exploitation and abuse, social cohesion and other issues affecting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants is conducted, jointly with other agencies where feasible, and is integrated systematically into programme design and decision-making on targeting and prioritization.</li> <li>• Continue to strengthen the systematic engagement of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in programme design and implementation; the review of and response to complaints and feedback; and the management of protection referrals, including cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, to the appropriate systems of mandated agencies, government departments or cooperating partners, as relevant.</li> <li>• Review and systematize WFP's approach to the identification and management of risks, including cross-cutting and protection risks, in settings where humanitarian access is limited and WFP relies on its cooperating partners or other non-state actors for outreach in the field.</li> </ul>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Responsibility: Emergency Preparedness and Response Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Support: Gender, Protection and Inclusion Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Unit (Office of the Executive Director)</p> <p>Regional and country directors</p> <p>Regional and country gender and protection advisors</p> <p>Risk and Accountability Branch (Risk Management Division)</p> <p>Deadline: Mid-2026</p>

No.	Recommendation	Priority, responsibility, deadline
5	<p><i>WFP partnerships with the legally mandated agencies</i></p> <p>Strengthen strategic and operational partnerships with agencies that have displacement and migration mandates, and address gaps in analysis, data and information sharing, and the coordination of assistance and solutions for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarify WFP's role with respect to mandated refugee agencies in coordinating and prioritizing inter-agency responses to the immediate needs of forcibly displaced people, adjusting support in protracted settings and jointly facilitating shifts towards self-reliance and durable solutions.</li> <li>Continue to consolidate engagement with UNHCR and mobilize partnerships in fundraising for further strengthening the Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub as a critical service that reinforces WFP's strategic and operational relationship with UNHCR at the corporate, regional and country levels.</li> <li>Review and identify entry points through which to strengthen WFP's relationship with IOM, including on the action agenda for internally displaced persons and as part of efforts to establish a coherent inter-agency position on, and response to, irregular migration in different settings.</li> </ul>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Responsibility: Emergency Preparedness and Response Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Support: Regional and country directors</p> <p>Analysis Planning and Performance Division</p> <p>Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division</p> <p>Digital Services Branch (Technology Division)</p> <p>School Meals and Social Protection Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Deadline: End of 2026</p>

No.	Recommendation	Priority, responsibility, deadline
6	<p><i>Financial resources</i></p> <p>Strengthen WFP's focus on resource mobilization during rapid-onset and protracted crises in order to more effectively meet the immediate humanitarian needs of refugees, internally displaced persons, irregular migrants and host populations, and better support the transition towards longer-term solutions from the outset of crisis responses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance high-level advocacy with donors – bilaterally, jointly with WFP's United Nations partners and through relevant global platforms and forums, such as the Global Refugee Forum – so as to improve funding for addressing immediate needs, building self-reliance and implementing durable solutions for refugees, internally displaced persons, irregular migrants, host communities and returnees.</li> <li>Adopt an explicit advocacy position for WFP's engagement with international financial institutions and development actors in all areas of strategic engagement relevant to the food security and nutrition of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, including their inclusion in national safety net systems.</li> <li>Strengthen the visibility of funding allocations for supporting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants within WFP's financial systems in order to support targeted resource mobilization efforts.</li> <li>Review the potential role of flexible funding in supporting interventions that demonstrate how meeting immediate needs can be successfully linked programmatically to self-reliance and durable solutions.</li> </ul>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Responsibility: Partnership Coordination Services (Partnerships and Innovation Department)</p> <p>Support: Regional and Global Offices; Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division</p> <p>Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service; Programme Budget Management Service (Analysis, Planning and Performance Division)</p> <p>Regional and country directors</p> <p>Emergency Preparedness and Response Service; Nutrition and Food Quality Service; School Meals and Social Protection Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Deadline: End of 2026</p>

# 1. Introduction

1. This strategic evaluation assesses World Food Programme (WFP) support to refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs), and irregular migrants, and was commissioned by the WFP Office of Evaluation (OEV). Strategic evaluations in WFP focus on systemic issues of corporate relevance as defined in strategic documents, policies, and directives. The Office of Evaluation contracted IOD PARC to undertake the evaluation. The terms of reference (ToR) are provided in Annex I.

## 1.1. Evaluation features

### 1.1.1 Rationale

2. The WFP Strategic Plan (2022-2025) identifies displacement and migration as closely linked to the drivers of hunger. This strategic evaluation responds to recognition by WFP of the growing scale and complexity of forced displacement and irregular migration, and the heightened vulnerabilities of refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants (RIMs) in terms of food security and malnutrition.<sup>27</sup> WFP is increasingly engaged in assisting refugees, IDPs and migrants, and the organization's commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in key policy areas includes the targeting of displaced and migrant populations.<sup>28</sup>

3. The evaluation rationale responds to the ambition of WFP to generate evidence that will inform relevant policies, strategies and approaches affecting its future support for displaced populations and irregular migrants. The timeframe under review covers the period from January 2017 to July 2024.

4. The purpose of this evaluation is to meet both accountability and learning needs with a stronger emphasis on learning and forward-looking, formative analysis.

### 1.1.2 Objectives, audience and timeline

5. The evaluation objectives include:

- an assessment of the performance of WFP interventions to draw lessons on normative, programmatic and operational dimensions;
- the examination of WFP partnership practices with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM), and other relevant partners;
- identifying gaps or inconsistencies in WFP engagement with, and support for, forcibly displaced and irregular migrant populations, including with respect to gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), conflict sensitivity, disability, protection, accountability to affected populations (AAP) and adherence to humanitarian principles; and
- capturing and documenting learning and good practice that can be integrated across WFP future engagement with refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants.

6. The primary audience of this evaluation includes WFP senior leadership teams in the Programme Operations Department, Partnerships and Innovation Department, regional bureaux (RBs) and country offices (COs), as well as WFP technical staff providing oversight and support to WFP operations. Key external audiences include the critical partners UNHCR and IOM, members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), and other relevant country and regional level partners, including host governments.

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<sup>27</sup> For the purposes of this evaluation only, the term 'RIMs' is used as collective shorthand for refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants.

<sup>28</sup> WFP strategic plan (2022–2025). WFP/EB.2/2021/4-A/1/Rev.2, paragraph.16.

7. The evaluation timeline was from November 2023 to June 2025 (Annex II). The inception phase ran from November 2023 to April 2024, data collection from May to July 2024, data analysis and reporting from July to September 2024, report review and revision from October to December 2024, and discussion and dissemination of evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations is from January to June 2025.

### 1.1.3 Scope of the evaluation

8. The evaluation scope covers nine focus areas. These reflect the scale of the evaluation subject, the different categories of displaced and irregular migrant populations of relevance to the evaluation's objectives, the range of contexts considered, and a broader opportunity for strategic learning. The focus areas include:

- **Population focus:** The primary focus is on refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants. Returnees and host communities constitute a secondary area of focus.<sup>29</sup>
- **Temporal focus:** The evaluation covers the period from January 2017 to July 2024, two strategic plans (2017-2021 and 2022-2025) and the introduction of the Integrated Road Map and country strategic plans (CSPs). The timeframe also includes the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and Global Compact for Migration (GCM) in 2018.
- **Intervention focus:** This focus includes sudden onset crises, protracted displacement situations, mixed migration flows and returns.
- **Programmatic focus:** This focus considers all forms of WFP assistance and engagement of RIMs from immediate humanitarian assistance to longer-term support for self-reliance and country capacity strengthening (CCS) for durable solutions. The focus also considers the approach by WFP to national and international advocacy.
- **Geographic focus:** The evaluation is global and covers the six regions of WFP operations.
- **Contextual focus:** The evaluation assesses how WFP strategic, programmatic and resource decisions respond to policy, sociocultural, security, economic, funding and institutional factors, including government commitments, engagement and capacity.
- **Partnership focus:** Partnerships with UNHCR, IOM and other United Nations agencies, governments, and WFP cooperating partners (CPs) are explored.
- **Cross-cutting themes focus:** The evaluation considers accountability to affected populations, gender equality and women's empowerment, disability inclusion, protection, conflict sensitivity, environmental considerations and the upholding of humanitarian principles. This focus area includes how the specific vulnerabilities of refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants intersect with other cross-cutting themes.
- **Operational focus:** This focus explores the recruitment and allocation of human resources in different settings; adoption of digital platforms and data management approaches; integration of supply chain considerations into the WFP strategic response; and the mobilization and use of earmarked and flexible financial resources.

## 1.2. Context

### 1.2.1 Definitions

9. A list of definitions of relevance to the evaluation, including legally and non-legally binding instruments surrounding forced displacement and irregular migration, is included in Annex VII. For this evaluation, the term "displaced" encompasses refugees, internally displaced people and recent returnees. WFP documentation does not use the term "irregular migration" specified in the terms of reference but refers more broadly to "migration". The evaluation has specifically examined WFP support for irregular

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<sup>29</sup> WFP is mandated to prioritize its assistance based on needs and, more specifically, vulnerability to food insecurity. Hence, the evaluation focuses on the vulnerability of these populations to food insecurity.

migrants and this terminology is used throughout the report unless direct references are made to WFP documentation. The term “returnees” includes those returning to their country or place of origin who are food insecure due to their recent displacement.<sup>30</sup>

### 1.2.2 Institutional mandates and coordination

10. The coordination of inter-agency support for refugees is led by UNHCR and managed under national refugee response plans or as part of humanitarian response plans.<sup>31</sup> UNHCR oversees the Refugee Coordination Model, which encourages host governments to lead coordination with the support of international partners, and interfaces with the IASC cluster system where it is present.<sup>32</sup> IOM is the mandated agency responsible for coordinating migrant responses.<sup>33</sup> The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) holds the mandate for the protection and assistance to Palestine refugees pending a just and lasting solution to their displacement in 1948.<sup>34</sup>

11. One of the purposes of WFP is “to meet refugee and other emergency and protracted relief food needs”.<sup>35</sup> However, unlike UNHCR and IOM, WFP holds no formal mandate for the protection of refugees, IDPs, or irregular migrants. WFP support to these groups is provided through its 2011 memorandum of understanding (MoU) with UNHCR,<sup>36</sup> country- or regional-level agreements with IOM, and partnerships with national governments.

### 1.2.3 Trends and dynamics

12. At the end of June 2024, according to UNHCR, approximately 122.6 million individuals around the globe had been forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence and human rights abuses. UNHCR estimated that there were about 72.1 million IDPs, 38 million refugees and 8 million asylum seekers, plus an additional 5.8 million other people in need of international protection.<sup>37</sup> A disproportionate number were women and children. UNHCR planning figures for 2024 and 2025 put the numbers of forcibly displaced and stateless people at 136.9 and 139.3 million, respectively.<sup>38</sup>

13. A complex range of displacement and migration drivers affect countries both internally and across borders. The IOM 2024 World Migration Report found that irregular migration is an increasingly prominent issue globally, often facilitated by smuggling and trafficking networks.<sup>39</sup> Major new forced displacements in 2022 and 2023, mainly catalysed by conflict, affected populations in Gaza, Sudan and Ukraine, while protracted displacement crises continued to affect the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Myanmar and Syrian Arabic Republic. Countries such as Chad, Colombia and Mozambique faced crises involving refugee populations from neighbouring countries and major internal displacements. Climate-related displacements have also affected multiple countries.

14. Many displacements are regional in scope with displaced groups moving to neighbouring countries. Examples include the Syrian regional crisis, the Ukraine crisis, and mixed migration flows in Latin America. Such complexity poses significant challenges to the design and implementation of appropriate, agile and well-targeted responses among UN agencies, especially when the strategic prerogative is to try to work with and through governments that may not recognize all displaced groups or irregular migrants.

15. Of these forcibly displaced people, 75 percent are hosted by low- and middle-income countries, while 80 percent of the world’s total refugee population is hosted by countries that secure only 19 percent

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<sup>30</sup> For the purpose of the evaluation, the period considered for returns as per the ToR is 2021-2023.

<sup>31</sup> See for example: Global Compact on Refugees. 2015. Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP).

<sup>32</sup> UNHCR. 2013. UNHCR Refugee Coordination Model.

<sup>33</sup> IOM. 2024. “[Who we are](#)”.

<sup>34</sup> UNRWA. 2024. “What is the mandate of UNRWA?”

<sup>35</sup> WFP. 2022. [General Regulations, General Rules and Financial Regulations: Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board](#).

<sup>36</sup> WFP and UNHCR. 2011. UNHCR-WFP Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

<sup>37</sup> UNHCR. 2024. 2024 Mid-Year Trends Report.

<sup>38</sup> UNHCR. 2024. Global Appeal 2025 Executive Summary.

<sup>39</sup> IOM. 2024. [World Migration Report 2024](#).

of the world's income.<sup>40</sup> Many low- and middle-income countries, for example Ethiopia and Mauritania, have developed highly inclusive policies for refugees, which is considered critical to the provision of durable solutions that contribute to reducing dependencies on humanitarian aid. However, the operationalization of such policies can place a strain on host governments and national infrastructure; schools, shelter, health centres, water and sanitation, and hygiene facilities may be unable to support large numbers of new arrivals, placing pressure on resources and host communities, and limiting opportunities for integration or self-reliance. Many other countries have less conducive policy environments. Several countries hosting refugees are not signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention such as Bangladesh, India, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia and Pakistan.<sup>41</sup>

#### **1.2.4 Food security and nutrition**

16. Up to 80 percent of refugees globally face food insecurity, with most displaced individuals residing in areas experiencing severe food insecurity and malnutrition.<sup>42</sup> In 2022, 70 percent of the world's forcibly displaced people lived in countries or territories affected by hunger crises.<sup>43</sup>

17. UNHCR research found that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, cost of living crisis, and war in Ukraine on food commodity flows exacerbated the vulnerability of forcibly displaced people and host communities to food insecurity.<sup>44</sup> Displacement may also lead to unpredictable fluctuations in populations requiring support, making it challenging to forecast demand and adjust supply chains for food and the delivery of cash. Malnutrition can drive increases in communicable diseases and impair early child development.<sup>45</sup> Displaced populations in remote geographical locations, in transit, or wary of being registered due to concerns over protection or legal status, may be especially hard to reach.

#### **1.2.5 Gender and protection**

18. Displacement and migration have complex and far-reaching impacts on gender roles, especially for women, girls and individuals facing intersecting vulnerabilities, such as age or disability. Women and girls in displacement settings often have disproportionate burdens, becoming primary earners or heads of households.<sup>46</sup> While this shift may offer some empowerment, it also increases their labour responsibilities and exposes them to heightened risks of gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking. Additionally, displaced women often encounter barriers in the access to critical services such as healthcare, education and protection, worsening pre-existing inequalities.<sup>47</sup>

19. The intersection of these vulnerabilities increases the need for protection of displaced and irregular migrant populations. Those with intersecting vulnerabilities – such as being young, elderly or having a disability – are at even higher risk. Emerging evidence from UNHCR indicates that cuts to aid and food provision disproportionately affect these groups, amplifying the risks of violence and exploitation.<sup>48</sup>

#### **1.2.6 International policy context**

20. The adoption of international agreements, legal frameworks and humanitarian coordination models for displaced persons and irregular migrants varies according to the population groups of focus to this evaluation. UNHCR was established in 1950 and through the 1951 Refugee Convention, and the 1967

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<sup>40</sup> UNHCR. [2023. Global Compact on Refugees Indicator Report.](#)

<sup>41</sup> Maja Janmyr. 2021. The 1951 Refugee Convention and Non-Signatory States: Charting a Research Agenda, *International Journal of Refugee Law*, Volume 33, Issue 2, Pages 188–213.

<sup>42</sup> Nisbet C., Lestrat K.E., and H. Vatanparast. 2022, *Food Security Interventions among Refugees around the Globe: A Scoping Review.*

<sup>43</sup> WFP. 2023. *Who We Serve – Refugees.*

<sup>44</sup> UNHCR. 2023. *2023: A Moment of Truth for Global Displacement.*

<sup>45</sup> UNHCR. 2023. *Nutrition and Food Security.*

<sup>46</sup> K. Holloway, M. Stavropoulou, and M. Daigle. 2019. *Gender in Displacement: The State of Play.*

<sup>47</sup> UNHCR UK. 2024. *Gender-Based Violence.*

<sup>48</sup> UNHCR. 2022. *Food Shortages and aid cuts put more displaced women at risk of gender-based violence.*

Protocol, holds the mandate for the protection of refugees. For IDPs, the 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement are considered an instrument of soft law.<sup>49</sup> However, there are no legally binding instruments ensuring the protection of either IDPs or irregular migrants.

21. In 2016, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).<sup>50</sup> The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) sets out the New York Declaration's approach. Introduced in 2017, the CRRF aims to support an inclusive and holistic response for refugees, as well as for host governments and communities that host large and protracted refugee populations in low- and middle- income countries.<sup>51</sup> In 2018, the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Migration were introduced to improve international cooperation for safe, orderly movements and promote socioeconomic rights and self-reliance among refugees and migrants, including irregular migrants, regardless of status.<sup>52</sup>

22. More than 1,700 pledges were made as part of the Global Compact on Refugees, involving 133 states and over 550 non-state actors. By the time of the second Global Compact on Refugee indicator report in 2023, one third of the pledges had been fulfilled, reflecting gradual progress but also highlighting the importance of accelerating efforts, especially regarding durable solutions and expanded support for refugee-hosting countries.<sup>53</sup> WFP submitted 20 pledges for the December 2023 Global Refugee Forum focusing on resilience, food systems, social protection, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), data, peacebuilding, accountability to affected populations, funding for refugee operations and self-reliance.<sup>54</sup>

23. Under the leadership of the United Nations Secretary-General, a High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement was established in 2019 to facilitate collective action by governments, civil society, the private sector and the international community.<sup>55</sup> A draft action agenda on internal displacement was developed that sets out three overarching objectives: (i) helping IDPs find a durable solution to their displacement; (ii) preventing new displacement crises from emerging; and, (iii) ensuring that those facing displacement receive effective protection and assistance.<sup>56</sup> Since the launch of the action agenda, UN agencies have worked to make progress across 11 core commitments.<sup>57</sup> By 2024, progress included: the launch of the Leaving No One Behind – Internal Displacement Solutions Fund; the IASC review of humanitarian response to internal displacement;<sup>58</sup> and a proposed data solutions framework that aims to address gaps, standardize analysis and increase national ownership of internal displacement data.<sup>59</sup>

### 1.2.7 Funding and donor commitments

24. Despite the global displacement crisis continuing to escalate, the growing scale and cost of humanitarian assistance, and a clear commitment by bilateral donors and multilateral development banks to share responsibility for refugee protection,<sup>60</sup> the 2023 Refugee Response Financial Tracking platform

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<sup>49</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. 1998. Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

<sup>50</sup> OHCHR. 2016. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

<sup>51</sup> UNHCR. 2024. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.

<sup>52</sup> Paragraph 11 of the GCM.

<sup>53</sup> UNHCR. 2023. Global Compact on Refugees Indicator Report.

<sup>54</sup> UNHCR. 2024. [GCR: Pledges and Contributions](#).

<sup>55</sup> United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement. 2021. [Shining a Light on Internal Displacement: A Vision for the Future – Report of the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Internal Displacement](#).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Office of the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement. 2022. [Action Agenda on Internal Displacement: Core Commitments](#).

<sup>58</sup> Sida, L., Mooney, E., Lough, O. and Fouad, L. et al. 2024. [Independent review of the humanitarian response to internal displacement](#). HPG report. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

<sup>59</sup> United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement. 2023. [Proposal for Improving Data for Solutions to Internal Displacement: Data Solutions for Internal Displacement Taskforce](#). March 2023.

<sup>60</sup> OECD. N.d. [Financing for refugee situations 2018-19 \(oecd.org\)](#).

found only 31 percent of required funds were secured.<sup>61</sup> The funding shortfall seems larger in the first three quarters of 2024, with only 19 percent of the necessary funds secured.<sup>62</sup> A shift of donor funding away from protracted displacement crises and transition settings to emerging crises has heightened funding shortfalls for self-reliance and durable solutions<sup>63</sup>, with some exceptions such as Jordan where this seems to have led to the acceleration of transition efforts.<sup>64</sup>

25. National governments are responsible for safeguarding the protection and well-being of IDPs. In instances where governments are incapable or unwilling to fulfil their obligations, the international community supports and strengthens endeavours to provide protection and assistance to IDPs.<sup>65</sup>

26. Donor funding for addressing irregular migrants is often provided in relation to: countering human trafficking; promoting migrant worker rights; border management; interventions focused on addressing root causes of migration; returning; and reintegrating into countries of origin or integrating into countries of destination. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Union (EU) have funding streams dedicated to addressing the root causes of irregular migration and to the migration management capacity of national institutions.<sup>66</sup>

### 1.3. Subject being evaluated

27. This strategic evaluation examines WFP support for displaced populations and irregular migrants. This section of the report outlines how WFP has incorporated refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants into its policies and strategies. It also deals with their integration into WFP programmatic and operational guidance and modalities; the use by WFP of joint instruments and initiatives. Additionally, there is a summary of planning and resourcing considerations that influence its work on displacement and irregular migration.

28. In the absence of a WFP results framework, logic model or theory of change to map or plan its support for refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants, a retrospective framework was developed by the evaluation team (ET) and the Office of Evaluation to shape the evaluation methodology and approach (Section 1.4).

#### 1.3.1 WFP policies and strategic frameworks

29. The WFP Strategic Plan (2022-2025) aligns with the United Nations Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review guidance on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and includes specific, though limited, reference to RIMs.<sup>67</sup> The strategic plan nevertheless identifies the intersection between conflict, climate disasters and other risks, and the immediate and longer-term needs of refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and returnees. It also recognizes the importance of addressing the longer-term nutrition and food security needs of displaced populations in the WFP humanitarian response.

30. The strategic plan has five strategic outcomes that are incorporated into each country office's CSP. These provide the core of WFP country-level programming and operations. In a review of 21 CSPs sampled based on the contexts of interest relevant to the evaluation subject,<sup>68</sup> the evaluation team found that most WFP country offices identified refugees and crisis-affected populations under Strategic Outcome (SO) 1

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<sup>61</sup> [Platform developed by UNHCR](#) and rolled out in 2019 as a "one stop shop" of financial data related to refugee programmes. [Microsoft Power BI](#) (accessed 30 September 2024).

<sup>62</sup> Refugee Funding Tracker. UNHCR. [Microsoft Power BI](#).

<sup>63</sup> UNOCHA. 2024. [Financial Tracking Service](#).

<sup>64</sup> UNHCR. 2023. [Supporting Refugees in Jordan: What We Achieved in 2023](#).

<sup>65</sup> OCHA. 2024. [Internal displacement](#); and, OCHA.1998. [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#).

<sup>66</sup> See for example: European Union. 2024. [Emergency Trust Fund for Africa](#) which includes subdivisions for the Sahel and Lake Chad, Horn of Africa, and North of Africa.

<sup>67</sup> WFP Strategic Plan (2022-2025), paragraph 16.

<sup>68</sup> CSPs included: Algeria, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

(People are better able to meet their urgent food and nutrition needs), while the majority did not explicitly identify migrants under their crisis response outcome. Targeting by country office CSPs under strategic outcomes 2 (People have better nutrition, health and education), 3 (People have improved and sustainable livelihoods) and 4 (National programmes and systems are strengthened) was generally not explicit about WFP support for displaced or migrant groups, although there were often activities that included these groups.

31. To align with the international policy context for refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants, WFP has come to play a critical role in providing services to meet the immediate needs of displaced populations and, where possible, transition its support to focus on building self-reliance and durable solutions. WFP support may involve the capacity strengthening of host governments, advocating for changes to national policies, or providing programming actions that complement or mitigate gaps in government support.<sup>69</sup> WFP plays a central role in helping to “facilitate access by refugees and host communities to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, and promote increased self-reliance in food security and nutrition, including by women, children, youth and persons with disability and older persons”.<sup>70</sup>

32. Although WFP has a significant policy framework to support implementation of the Strategic Plan (2022-2025), there is no corporate-level policy that specifically targets refugees, IDPs or irregular migrants or a corporate-level position on the WFP programmatic approach for RIMs. Multiple references to RIMs are instead included in over half of WFP policies and corporate strategies, reflecting a broad recognition of the challenges these populations face, and many country offices seek to support the integration of RIMs into policies and standards of host governments. The evolution of WFP policy frameworks also indicates an understanding of displacement dynamics that has deepened over time.

### 1.3.2 Programmatic and operational guidance

33. WFP has introduced a Refugee Assistance Guidance Manual,<sup>71</sup> and Institutional Plan and Programme Offer on Internal Displacement.<sup>72</sup> The UNHCR-WFP Joint Guidance on Targeting of Assistance to Meet Basic Needs is provided to support refugees’ integration into WFP programming. The primary focus of these guidelines and tools is the identification, assessment and targeting of forcibly displaced populations as well as food security, basic needs and nutrition technical considerations. Additional guidance focuses on cross-cutting issues for accountability to affected populations and protection, and conflict sensitivity. Conversely, and consistent with the gap in policy, no clear corporate guidance on WFP support for migrants is available.<sup>73</sup>

34. Gender and disability are important considerations in providing support to displaced people. Both are integrated into WFP guidance for targeting, programming and prioritization.<sup>74</sup> The Refugee Assistance Guidance Manual makes brief reference to paying attention to the additional needs of pregnant and lactating women and to preventing gender-based violence. The Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM) Toolkit, published in 2024, highlights the need for communication channels to be agreed with refugees, IDPs and host communities to ensure their needs are considered. The WFP Institutional Plan and Programme Offer on Internal Displacement is similarly brief, referencing the need to include women’s groups in consultations and the need to include gender as a component of protection. In terms of disability inclusion, the Refugee Assistance Guidance Manual only references that disability should be factored into protection.

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<sup>69</sup> WFP. 2022. Update on WFP’s Role in Collective Humanitarian Response (2021).

<sup>70</sup> United Nations. 2018. The Global Compact on Refugees.

<sup>71</sup> WFP. 2017. Refugee Assistance Guidance Manual.

<sup>72</sup> WFP. 2023. WFP’s Institutional Plan & Programme Offer on Internal Displacement.

<sup>73</sup> WFP & IFPRI. 2023. Addressing Irregular Migration through Principled Programmatic Approaches: Examining the West Africa Route and WFP Operations; WFP. 2020. Hunger and Migration Messages.

<sup>74</sup> WFP & UNHCR. 2019. Joint Guidance: Targeting of Assistance to Meet Basic Needs; WFP. 2021. Targeting and Prioritization: Operational Guidance Note.

### 1.3.3 Areas of support for refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants

35. WFP offers several areas of support for RIMs that are covered by the evaluation subject (Box 1). The balance of these areas of support varies according to the specific displacement or irregular migration setting and the needs of the affected populations. In some instances, WFP also offers host communities assistance to mitigate the impact of hosting displaced or irregular migrant populations and reduce social tensions between different communities in what are often already vulnerable contexts.

#### Box 1: WFP areas of support for refugees, internally displaced peoples, irregular migrants and host communities

- **General food assistance**<sup>75</sup> – WFP aims to address immediate food security needs while also considering the long-term nutritional requirements of RIMs [This assistance can be delivered in various forms, including in-kind food distributions, cash transfers, or vouchers, depending on the context and needs of the affected populations.](#)
- **Ending malnutrition** – WFP seeks to prevent and treat malnutrition among RIMs by addressing immediate and underlying causes, targeting those who are at greatest risk of malnutrition and who have inadequate diets, including young children and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers.
- **Rebuilding livelihoods** – WFP aims to help vulnerable and food-insecure displaced and migrant groups establish new livelihood opportunities by regenerating and safeguarding the natural soil, water, agricultural and forest resources and bolstering agroecological productivity.
- **Food assistance for assets** – WFP may introduce conditional support tied to the establishment or rehabilitation of assets such as transport, water and market infrastructure, schools and latrines, or the provision of sanitation or energy services to rebuild RIM livelihoods.
- **Food assistance for training** – WFP aims to support RIMs through market-driven vocational training and financial and physical capital provision to facilitate access to job or business opportunities. Conditional food assistance is provided as long as minimum attendance requirements are met to provide an immediate boost to food security.
- **School feeding** – WFP seeks to support school-aged RIM children accessing education by ensuring they have access to school meals and are healthy and ready to learn. In some settings this includes the provision of school meals for both RIMs and host community children.
- **Social protection** – In some countries, WFP works with governments and partners to increase RIM access to national social protection systems. These systems help safeguard the food security and nutrition needs of RIMs and foster their ability to explore livelihood opportunities.
- **Protection** – WFP is committed to prevent, reduce, mitigate and respond to the risks and consequences of violence, coercion, deprivation and abuse associated with hunger for individuals, groups and communities in all contexts, including for RIMs.
- **Community engagement and accountability** – WFP seeks to mainstream accountability to the communities it serves, including RIMs, by promoting their engagement through appropriate structures, responding to feedback, and measuring and demonstrating continuous improvement.
- **Data collection and evidence** – Through food security and nutrition assessments, analysis and monitoring, WFP aims to inform its own programming and to provide actionable information to governments, donors, UN partners and non-government organizations (NGOs) on the support they provide to RIMs.
- **Supply chain and logistics** – WFP supply chains manage the purchase, transport, storage and distribution of food and other essential goods to RIM populations in need. WFP leads the logistics sector or cluster in most countries and provides supply chain services to other humanitarian actors assisting RIMs.
- **Country capacity strengthening** – WFP offers technical assistance tailored to the specific needs of governments to build an enabling environment with strengthened national systems and effective

<sup>75</sup> [WFP Food Assistance](#)

institutions capable of integrating RIMs alongside domestic populations.

- **Advocacy** – WFP aims to leverage its policy, research and programmatic expertise across all the above areas of work in order to address the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition for RIMs and improve the national and international enabling environment for their future support.

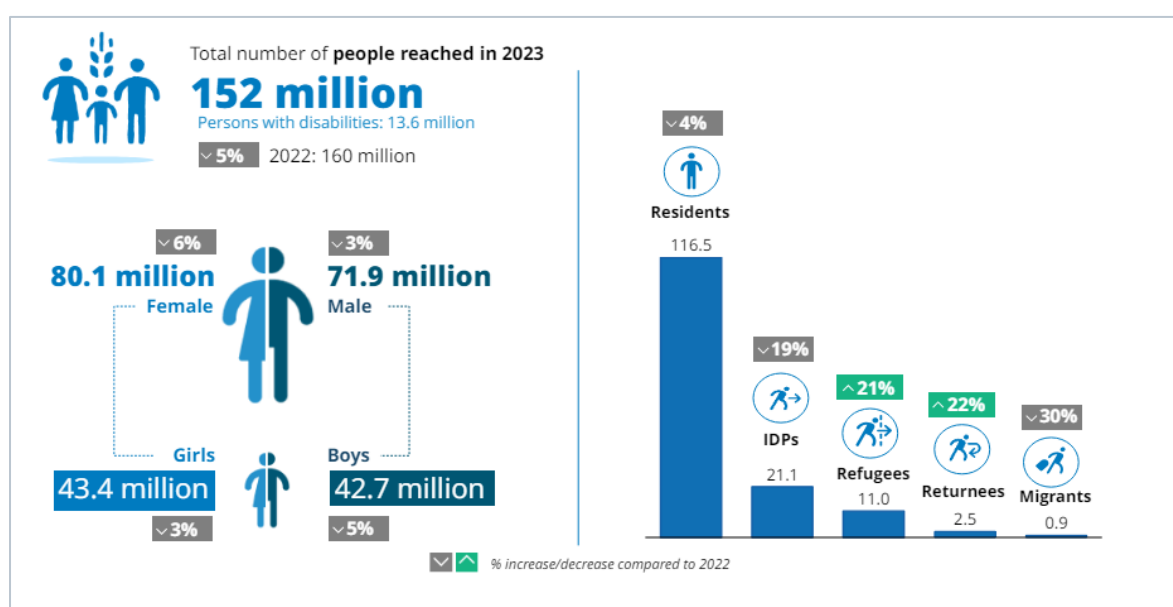
### 1.3.4 Joint instruments and initiatives to support refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants

36. WFP partnerships and coordination range from formalized corporate collaboration with UNHCR, from which a range of programme instruments have been derived, to ad-hoc coordination arrangements that operate at both the country and, occasionally, regional levels.<sup>76</sup> WFP co-created the Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub (Joint Hub) with UNHCR in 2020 to put organizational policies and guidance into practice and support better outcomes for refugees.<sup>77</sup> Joint programming is seen as a critical element of the Joint Hub's support to country offices, and UNHCR and WFP have developed tripartite agreements with cooperating partners providing in-kind food assistance. Country-level memorandums of understanding and technical agreements also provide the basis for the WFP partnership with IOM; and a joint work plan has been prepared to guide strategic collaboration between IOM and WFP on priority areas identified by both organizations.

### 1.3.5 Scale of WFP support for displaced populations and irregular migrants

37. In 2023, WFP assisted 11 million refugees in 43 countries; 21.1 million IDPs in 27 countries, and 900,000 migrants across Colombia, Ecuador and Peru as illustrated in Figure 1 below.<sup>78</sup>

**Figure 5: People assisted by WFP by sex, age and residence status in 2023**



Source: WFP. 2023. Annual Performance Report.

38. While the overall number of displaced beneficiaries indicates a steady increase over the last ten years, the total number of refugees reached by WFP peaked in 2018 at just under 15 million and has since

<sup>76</sup> Examples of current regional coordination arrangement include crisis response arrangements in [Syria](#) and [Sudan](#), and the [Regional Migrant Response Plan for the Horn of Africa to Yemen and Southern Africa](#).

<sup>77</sup> UNHCR and WFP. 2024. [Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub](#).

<sup>78</sup> WFP. 2023. Annual Performance Report.

declined. These figures reflect the response by WFP to five Level 3 and eight Level 2 emergencies<sup>79</sup> by the end of 2018, including Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sahel, Uganda, Yemen and the Syrian regional crisis response.<sup>80</sup> Table 1 below shows the top 20 operations where WFP has reached refugees, IDPs, returnees and migrants in 2023 and the level of funding received for these operations, indicating in green text some of the countries that are covered in this evaluation.

**Table 3: Top 20 operations where WFP reached displaced people in 2023, and level of funding against the overall needs-based plan (NBP)** <sup>81</sup>

No.	Operation	Region	No. of refugees, IDPs, Non-refugees (OPT), returnees and migrants assisted by WFP (million)	NBP of the Operation (entire cycle, USD billion)	Funding since the start of the operation %
1	Sudan	RBN	4.69	\$ 4.18	91%
2	Syria	RBC	3.20	\$ 4.87	44%
3	Yemen	RBC	3.13	\$ 8.56	40%
4	Somalia	RBN	2.37	\$ 4.74	69%
5	DR Congo	RBJ	2.03	\$ 2.34	83%
6	State of Palestine	RBC	1.57	\$ 1.25	162%
7	Nigeria	RBD	1.43	\$ 2.20	67%
8	Uganda	RBN	1.42	\$ 1.99	73%
9	South Sudan	RBN	1.33	\$ 3.77	62%
10	Mozambique	RBJ	1.31	\$ 0.83	96%
11	Lebanon	RBC	1.30	\$ 3.15	40%
12	Burkina Faso	RBD	1.22	\$ 2.28	52%
13	Chad	RBD	1.14	\$ 1.70	53%
14	Ethiopia	RBN	1.06	\$ 6.31	64%
15	Bangladesh	RBB	0.95	\$ 1.62	86%
16	Niger	RBD	0.91	\$ 1.51	78%
17	Ukraine	RBC	0.82	\$ 2.07	61%
18	Myanmar	RBB	0.82	\$ 0.86	52%
19	Colombia	RBP	0.76	\$ 0.80	64%
20	Kenya	RBN	0.64	\$ 1.43	72%
<b>Total</b>			<b>32.08</b> (87% of all displaced reached by WFP)	<b>56.46</b> (69% of global NBP)	

Source: CM-R001b–Annual Country Beneficiaries (CSP), Factory Resource, extracted 09.07.2024.

Note: OPT = Occupied Palestinian Territories

39. With respect to resourcing, the WFP Annual Performance Report (APR) 2023 highlights that 60 percent of multilateral resources were allocated to crisis response activities, with specific attention to refugees and people facing the highest levels of vulnerability.<sup>82</sup> However, no specific funding data are available by status for RIMs, returnees or resident populations in WFP annual performance reports.<sup>83</sup> The Changing Lives Transformation Fund (CLTF) has a focus on supporting transitions to increased self-sufficiency including refugee inclusion in national social protection systems (for example, in Kenya).<sup>84</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Level 2 Response: Emergency Response operations requiring regional augmentation of country-level response capability; Level 3 Response: Emergency Response operations requiring mobilization of WFP global response capabilities in support of the relevant country office(s) and regional bureau, i.e. a Corporate Response. WFP. 2014. [WFP Emergency Response Classifications](#).

<sup>80</sup> WFP. 2019. Annual Performance Report for 2018

<sup>81</sup> Countries in green are covered as case studies in this strategic evaluation.

<sup>82</sup> WFP. 2023. Annual Performance Report 2022. WFP/EB.A/2023/4-A/Rev.1. The highest levels of vulnerability are considered to be those facing International Phase Classification levels 4 and 5.

<sup>83</sup> WFP. 2024. [Annual Performance Report 2023](#). WFP/EB.A/2024/4-A/Rev.1.

<sup>84</sup> WFP. 2022. Update on the Changing Lives Transformation Fund.

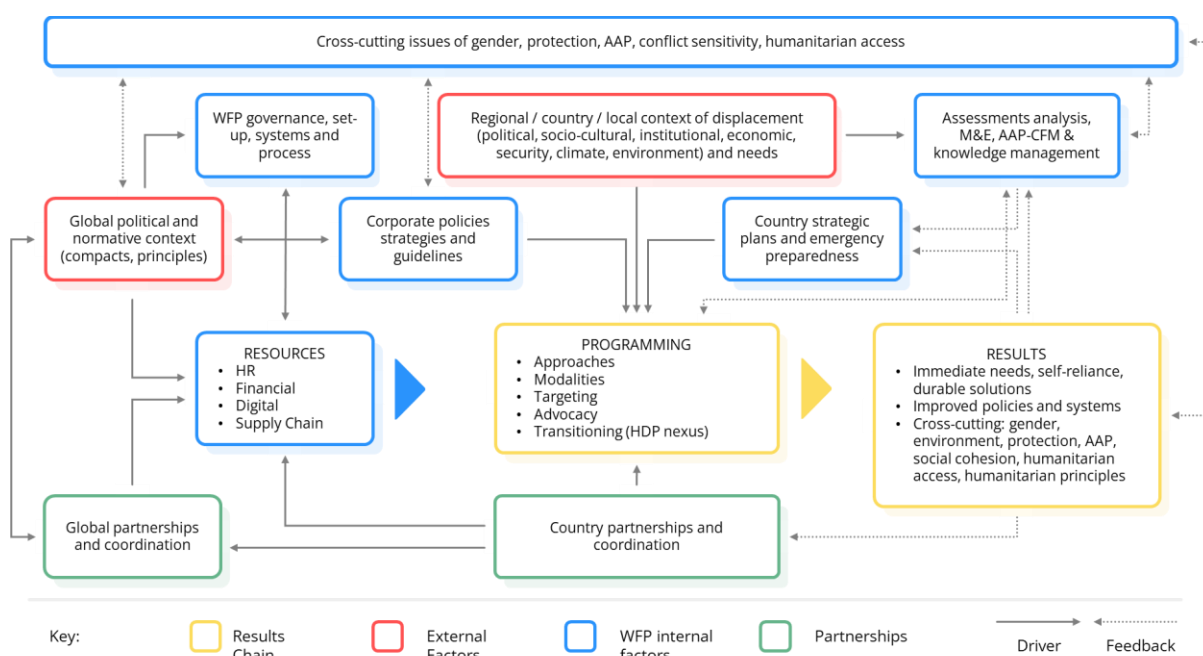
## 1.4. Methodology, limitations and ethical considerations

### 1.4.1 Analytical framework

40. The evaluation developed and applied a systems-based analytical framework that guided the adoption of a mixed methods approach. Presented in Figure 2, the framework is retrospective and reflects on the structure of the evaluation questions (EQs). This framework was discussed with the internal reference group during the inception phase.

41. At the core of the framework is the primary linkage between WFP programming and the achievement of results for refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants along the results chain (in yellow). The WFP operational selection of programming approaches, modalities and targeting relates, in turn, to a series of internal drivers over which it has a level of control (in blue). This includes its corporate policies, strategies and guidance, its mobilization and use of resources (including human resources, funding, digital technologies and supply chains), its CSPs and emergency preparedness, and its adoption of robust assessments, analysis and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to inform its strategic and preparedness, planning, programme design, targeting and implementation. These internal factors allow WFP to respond to its external environment through its interaction with the specific context of operation, and adherence to normative frameworks (red), as well as to its corporate and country-level partnerships and coordination structures (green). Cross-cutting issues of gender, protection, conflict sensitivity, and accountability to affected populations feed across the framework into internal as well as external factors.

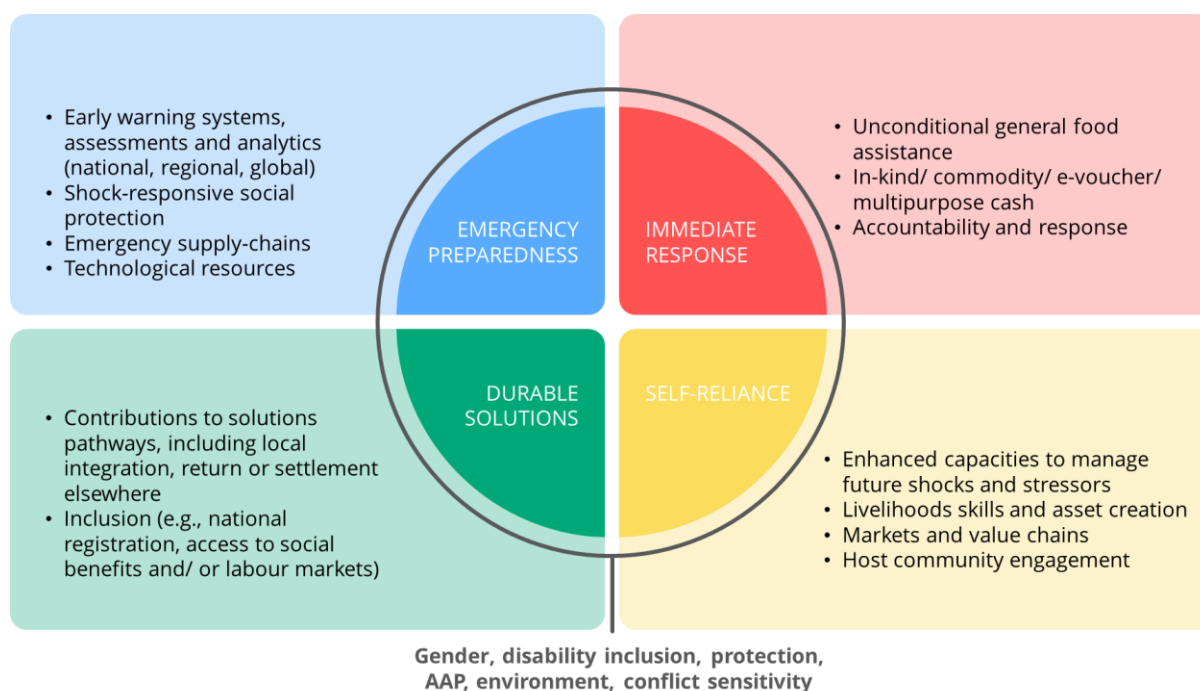
**Figure 6: Strategic evaluation analytical framework**



Source: Evaluation team.

42. To structure the evaluation analysis and findings, the evaluation team employed a programme transition map, nested within the analytical framework, that explored how WFP programming approaches and modalities were designed and used in ways that responded to changes in the external context (Figure 3). The map presents how the WFP programme approach may shift from responding to immediate needs toward support for self-reliance and durable solutions, and take advantage of country offices' experience in building the preparedness and response capacities of governments and local actors in order to better understand and address displacement and migration.

**Figure 7: Programme transition map**



Source: Evaluation team.

### 1.4.2 Evaluation questions

43. The evaluation questions were selected as those most relevant to the evaluation's evidence and learning purpose.<sup>85</sup> Table 2 provides a summary of the overarching evaluation questions and associated criteria in the order presented in the findings.<sup>86</sup> An evaluation matrix mapping the evaluation questions, sub-questions, lines of inquiry, indicators, and data sources is provided in Annex IV.

**Table 4: Evaluation questions**

EQ	Evaluation questions and sub-questions	Evaluation criteria
1	In what ways, and to what extent, is WFP support to refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants coherent with the external environment?	Coherence Relevance
2	How effective is WFP operational and advocacy support for refugees, IDPs, and irregular migrants to meet their short- and long-term food security and nutrition needs?	Effectiveness Coverage
3	How appropriate and contextualized are WFP assistance modalities and programming approaches at supporting refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants in different contexts and settings?	Relevance Appropriateness

<sup>85</sup> Aligned to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee's (OECD DAC) evaluation criteria and associated Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) guidance for relevance, effectiveness, coverage, coherence and appropriateness. OECD-DAC. 2024. [Evaluation criteria](#); ALNAP. 2006. [Evaluating Humanitarian Action using the OECD DAC Criteria](#).

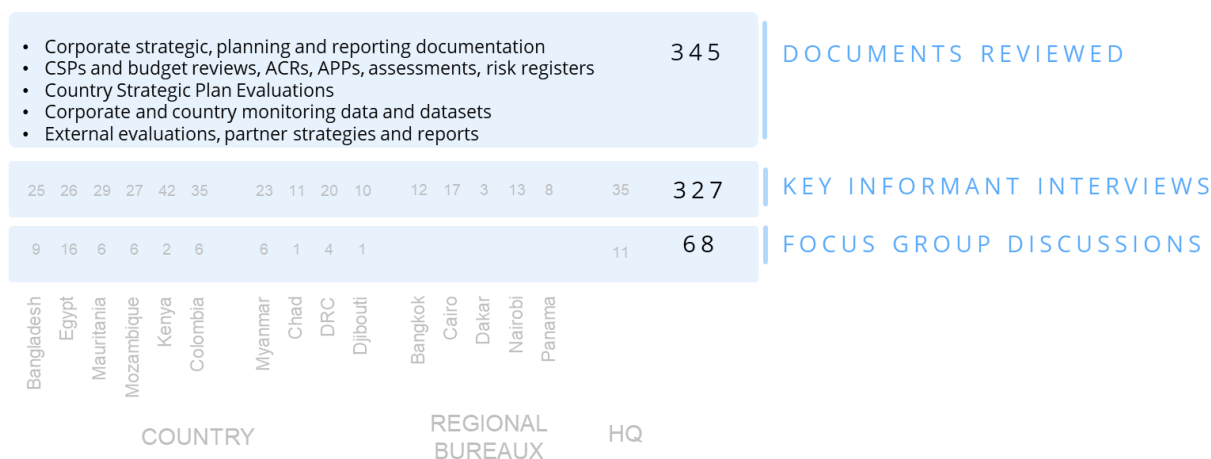
<sup>86</sup> The evaluation questions were reorganized in the presentation of the findings to improve the narrative and respond to the developmental nature of the evaluation subject. A map of the relationship between the evaluation questions, sub-questions, lines of enquiry and findings is presented in Annex IV.

4	To what extent does WFP create an appropriate internal enabling environment for its support to refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants?	Appropriateness
5	How effectively does WFP leverage and add value to its partnerships and coordination arrangements in support of refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants?	Effectiveness Coherence

### 1.4.3 Methodology

44. The evaluation was informed by three key evidence sources: 1) desk review; 2) ten country-based case studies informed by six country visits<sup>87</sup> and four desk-based reviews;<sup>88</sup> and 3) thematic studies at the corporate, regional and country levels (see annexes VIII to X, respectively). The methods applied during the evaluation process are summarized in Figure 4.

**Figure 8: Data collection methods and coverage**



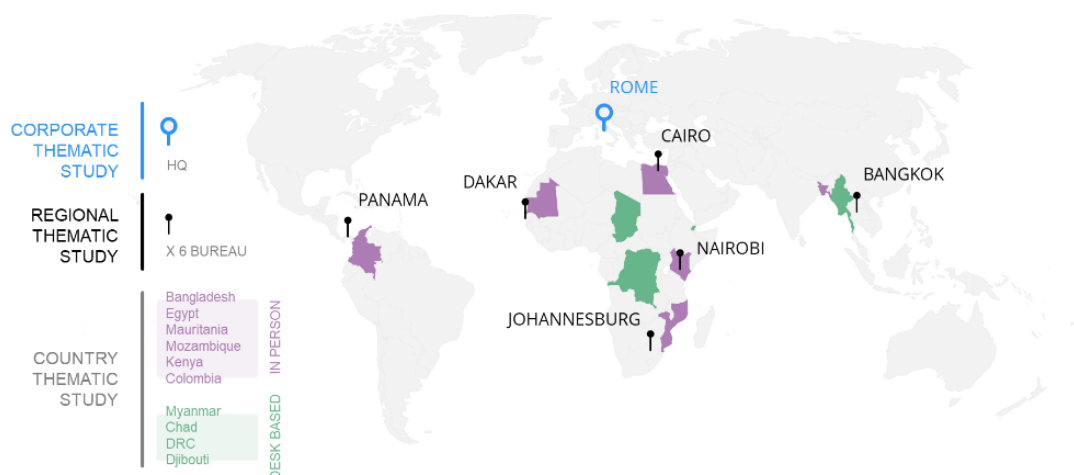
Source: Evaluation team.

45. Over 345 documents were reviewed including 57 independent evaluations as well as quantitative data from WFP annual performance reports, annual country reports, the WFP country office effective management tool (COMET), FACTory distribution, contribution and forecast statistics, and human resources statistics. The case study country sampling, illustrated in Figure 5, includes a range of country contexts that demonstrate different responses covering displaced and irregular migrant populations, and opportunities for learning across WFP operational regions.

<sup>87</sup> Bangladesh, Columbia, Egypt, Kenya, Mauritania, and Mozambique.

<sup>88</sup> Chad, DRC, Djibouti, Myanmar

**Figure 9: Strategic evaluation geographical coverage**



Source: Evaluation team.

### **Integration of gender equality and women's empowerment and inclusion**

46. The evaluation team applied a fully gender- and inclusion-sensitive approach to the evaluation. The evaluation also mainstreamed consideration of how specific vulnerabilities of RIM groups intersect with other characteristics.

47. Purposive sampling was applied during data collection to ensure adequate representation of subgroups of women and men. No children were included in data collection, and data on the experiences of boys and girls were collected through the experiences of their parents and carers. All focus group discussions (FGDs) with WFP beneficiaries were disaggregated by gender and status (refugee, IDP, migrant, host community) where possible, and the evaluation team created safe spaces for women and girls by having women-led interviews and focus group discussions as appropriate. The evaluation team was unable to secure participation of persons with disabilities in data collection with beneficiaries (see Limitations under 1.4.4).

### **Validation and triangulation**

48. To ensure validity and accuracy in its analysis, the evaluation triangulated evidence across methodological, data, investigator, context and respondent sources (see Annex III), and weighed the strength of evidence for each indicator against the evaluation matrix.

49. Findings presented in this report have been validated by stakeholders via several mechanisms: feedback sessions were held with each of the ten country offices; a presentation of preliminary findings was conducted with the evaluation's internal reference group; and a stakeholder workshop was conducted prior to finalization of the evaluation report. These feedback and validation sessions provided a structured process for stakeholders to support the distilling of the evidence base to a set of key insights, learning and recommendations selected to maximize the utility and impact of the evaluation.

#### **1.4.4 Limitations**

50. Three main limitations were encountered in the process of conducting this evaluation:

- The stakeholder mapping conducted during the inception phase identified government stakeholders as key participants in the evaluation process. In five out of ten countries, few or no government stakeholders were available for data collection due to the sensitivity of the political context and of displacement and irregular migration. This represents a gap in national perspectives related to WFP support for immediate needs and contributions to longer-term support for RIMs. To mitigate this limitation, the evaluation team triangulated relevant literature against the views of different external stakeholders on government positioning on RIMs and WFP engagement.

- The lack of WFP corporate-level data disaggregated by RIM categories or the gender or disability status of RIMs represented a limitation in understanding the overarching picture of WFP support to refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants. In addition, inconsistencies in the categorization of displaced populations and a lack of records for some RIM populations posed challenges on understanding WFP support across all RIM groups. (For example, migrants were not recorded by country offices other than in the Latin America and Caribbean region covered by the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean in Panama (RBP)). To mitigate this limitation, the evaluation team engaged RIM beneficiaries through focus group discussions in all countries, and incorporated questions specifically focused on status in interview guides with relevant internal and external stakeholders. The impact of this limitation is discussed in the findings.
- While the data collection process was designed to enable the participation of persons with disabilities, time and access constraints during field visits meant it was not possible to secure an adequate and consistent participation sample across different settings. This represented a gap in the evaluation's ability to incorporate the voices of persons with disabilities and how their specific needs intersect with RIM vulnerabilities. To mitigate this limitation, the evaluation team strived to collect the experiences of beneficiaries with disabilities through engagement with community leaders and beneficiaries who cared for or had household members with disabilities, and explored relevant WFP complaints and feedback examples.

#### **1.4.5 Ethical considerations**

51. The evaluation adheres to the WFP Code of Ethics (2023) and aligns with the Office of Evaluation's Technical Note for Gender Integration in WFP Evaluations. The evaluation team adhered to ethical standards in evaluation practice under the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Code of Conduct for Evaluations in the UN System (2007) and Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Framework Research Ethics Principles (2012), and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines (2020).

52. With the support of the evaluation manager, the evaluation team ensured the ethical conduct of the evaluation at all stages. Integrity was upheld by the evaluation team's commitment to professionalism based on truthfulness, competence, independence, impartiality and incorruptibility in both its communications and its actions. Accountability was recognized through the evaluation team's efforts to meet the evaluation purpose by remaining responsive to suggestions or criticism, by exercising due care, and by guaranteeing that a fair and accurate account of the evaluation process and findings is provided to stakeholders. Respect was supported by meaningful engagement and fair treatment of all stakeholders, including the fair representation of different voices and perspectives. Beneficence was supported by a commitment to maximizing the positive effects and overall contribution of the evaluation process.

## 2. Evaluation findings

### 2.1. In what ways, and to what extent, is WFP support to refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants coherent with the external environment?

#### 2.1.1 WFP alignment with global compacts, legal instruments, humanitarian principles and agreed standards on refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants

##### Global policy alignment

Finding 1. While WFP policies are to some extent aligned to the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, they leave significant gaps in their reference to refugees and IDPs and how they should be mainstreamed and applied in different displacement settings. WFP alignment with the Global Compact on Migration is restricted to its regional and country focus in Latin America.

53. **Several key WFP policies and strategies align with GCR commitments, but there is limited explicit reference in WFP policies and guidance to the GCR, and refugees are still not included in some key corporate and country-level documents.**<sup>89</sup> Looking at the GCR and CRRF, at the Global Refugee Forum in December 2023 WFP made nine corporate pledges, nine country office-level pledges, and co-led the multi-stakeholder pledge on agriculture, food systems and food security with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and UNHCR. The Strategic Plan (2022-2025) and Strategy for Support to Social Protection (2021) recognize the importance of pivoting WFP humanitarian responses to address the longer-term nutrition and food security needs of displaced populations,<sup>90</sup> and the WFP Refugee Assistance Guidance Manual (2017) affirms commitments to support countries with large numbers of refugees across the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus. However, refugees are not yet integrated into key documentation such as the Emergency Preparedness Policy (2018), Country Capacity Strengthening (2022), and Navigating Humanitarian Scale-Downs (2023). Furthermore, although there is a joint UNHCR-WFP Strategy on Enhancing Self Reliance in Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Refugee Situations (2016), there is no associated guidance for WFP programme staff to consider self-reliance options for refugees within their context of operation.<sup>91</sup> While WFP efforts to focus on the protection of refugees are increasingly recognized at the corporate level,<sup>92</sup> country strategies and activities do not clearly reflect on their alignment with these commitments (Finding 5).

54. **Although WFP has responded to the United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement (2022) by developing an Institutional Plan and Programme Offer on Internal Displacement (2023),<sup>93</sup> these commitments require further integration into relevant strategies and country strategic plans to be operationalized.** The United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda called for system-wide efforts to renew and enhance assistance and support solutions for IDPs,<sup>94</sup> and the WFP Institutional Plan reaffirms the responsibility of WFP to assist IDPs as part of the IASC-led cluster

<sup>89</sup> One exception is, WFP. 2018. [WFP and the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus](#).

<sup>90</sup> WFP. [Strategic Plan \(2022-2025\)](#); WFP. 2021. [World Food Programme Strategy for Support to Social Protection](#).

<sup>91</sup> Annex VIII provides an analysis of relevant WFP policies, strategies and guidance.

<sup>92</sup> According to the [UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms](#), protection refers to “creating an environment conducive to respect for human beings, preventing and/or alleviating the immediate effects of a specific pattern of abuse, and restoring dignified conditions of life through reparation, restitution and rehabilitation”. See also the analysis in Section 2.2.4.

<sup>93</sup> This was highlighted in the [World Humanitarian Summit Core Responsibilities](#) and [UNGA Commitments to Enhancing Protection of Refugees](#), as well as in [WFP commitments to the GCR](#).

<sup>94</sup> United Nations Secretary-General. 2022. [Secretary General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement](#).

system.<sup>95</sup> These efforts are essential, given the recent IASC review of the humanitarian response to internal displacement, which highlights the need for a more joined-up approach “from the start” among humanitarian actors that incorporate protection.<sup>96</sup> As highlighted in the headquarters thematic study (see Table 10, Annex VIII) and country case studies, the recent introduction of the commitments and associated guidance means that they require further integration into relevant corporate policies and strategies, as well as relevant CSPs.

**55. The integration of irregular migration into WFP strategies, policies and guidance remains weak, except in Latin America where a regional and country-level focus on migrants was found.<sup>97</sup>**

WFP has integrated migrants into just 8 out of 34 sampled WFP policies and strategies for this evaluation and does not use the terms “irregular” migrants or “irregular” migration in those documents (see paragraph 9 for the working definition used in this report). While migration was mentioned in 10 out of 16 guidance documents reviewed, it is only fully integrated into one of them. The exception is in Latin America, where WFP aligns closely with the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework and the Venezuela Refugee and Migrant Response Plan implemented across 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>98</sup> Outside of Latin America, migrants remain poorly integrated into corporate policies, both at the regional level and in CSPs.

### Humanitarian principles

Finding 2. Relevant WFP corporate policies and strategies are aligned with the humanitarian principles, and this alignment has largely been translated into efforts to ensure adherence to the principles in WFP programmes and operations. WFP is aware of potential trade-offs when applying the principles in some contexts involving RIMs, such as when seeking agreements with governments or non-state armed groups, which may require compromise in order to maintain humanitarian access to these populations. Nonetheless, additional guidance on application of the principles in practice can be strengthened.

56. WFP corporate policies and strategies related to RIMs are aligned with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence and these are largely upheld in its operations concerning RIMs. The WFP Institutional Plan and Programme Offer on Internal Displacement (2023) integrates the humanitarian principles into WFP commitments to meeting the immediate needs of displaced people.<sup>99</sup> While the principles are less prominent in the WFP Refugee Assistance Guidance (2017), the WFP-UNHCR Joint Guidance on Targeting of Assistance to Meet Basic Needs (2019) and multiple other WFP strategies and policies relevant to contexts of displacement and migration do refer explicitly to the humanitarian principles.<sup>100</sup> Although each successfully builds on the earlier WFP Policies on the Humanitarian Principles (2004) and Humanitarian Access (2006), the 2018 Evaluation of WFP Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access in Humanitarian Contexts highlighted how “mixing the core principles with other standards increases the risk of confusion and dilutes their importance”, further stating that the policy “has fostered an understanding of humanitarian principles within WFP that blends a broad set of standards without prioritizing among them”.<sup>101</sup> The country case studies and CSPEs reviewed by the evaluation additionally highlighted how it may not always be possible for WFP to fully adhere to all

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<sup>95</sup> WFP. 2023. Institutional Plan & Programme Offer on Internal Displacement.

<sup>96</sup> ODI. 2024. Independent review of the humanitarian response to internal displacement. Humanitarian Policy Group. London: ODI.

<sup>97</sup> This was highlighted in the UNGA Commitments to Enhancing Protection of Migrants, as well as in WFP commitments to the GCM.

<sup>98</sup> See the headquarters case study in Annex VIII for more detail on integration of migrants in WFP strategy, policy and guidance.

<sup>99</sup> WFP. 2023. [WFP’s Institutional Plan & Programme Offer on Internal Displacement](#).

<sup>100</sup> WFP. 2023. Conflict Sensitivity Mainstreaming Strategy; WFP. 2023. WFP Community Engagement Strategy for Accountability to Affected Populations 2021-2026; WFP. 2021. [World Food Programme Strategy for Support to Social Protection](#).

<sup>101</sup> WFP. 2018. [Evaluation of WFP Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access in Humanitarian Contexts](#), p15.

humanitarian principles when assisting RIMs in certain contexts (see Table 3 below).<sup>102</sup>

**Table 5: Challenges in applying the humanitarian principles in relation to refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants**

Consideration	Details
<b>Maintaining relationships with governments</b>	The ability of WFP to access and support RIMs relies on maintaining positive working relationships with governments that may or may not provide a favourable enabling environment for forcibly displaced and irregular migrant populations (Finding 5). This can create barriers to the ability of WFP to uphold the humanitarian principle of independence. While there is evidence of WFP navigating this balance in most countries, some donors and UN agencies sought clearer communications on WFP positioning for different RIM categories. <sup>103</sup>
<b>Interfacing with military and armed groups</b>	In ensuring access to vulnerable RIM populations, WFP may be required to interface its operations with state militaries or non-state armed groups. This can complicate its ability to uphold the principle of neutrality when accessing RIMs using military escorts in countries such as Ethiopia, Chad, DRC and Mauritania. <sup>104</sup>
<b>Humanitarian funding shortfalls</b>	In the majority of case study countries WFP is facing humanitarian funding shortfalls, leading to delicate prioritization decisions that touch upon the humanitarian principle of humanity. Reductions, pauses or stops in assistance, including in protracted refugee settings like Bangladesh, Kenya and Mauritania, may lead beneficiaries to adopt negative coping strategies (Findings 7 and 16).
<b>Donor prioritization</b>	The evaluation identified significant concerns around impartiality, where donor funding priorities have led to the exclusion of different RIM categories, or changes in funding at short notice. <sup>105</sup> This can lead to a lack of assistance for specific RIM groups leading to protection concerns, especially irregular migrants, which compromises WFP adherence to the humanity principle.
<b>Operating through cooperating partners</b>	The country case studies concurred with several WFP evaluations that noted the difficulty WFP faces in upholding the principles when working with cooperating partners due to organizational capacity weaknesses and inability to oversee adherence. <sup>106</sup>

Source: Evaluation team.

<sup>102</sup> Country studies: DRC, Djibouti; WFP. 2023. Kenya CSPE; WFP. 2020. Cameroon CSPE; WFP. 2021. Lebanon CSPE; WFP. 2022. Mozambique CSPE; WFP. 2022. South Sudan CSPE.

<sup>103</sup> Includes country case studies for Bangladesh, Chad, Egypt and Mauritania; CSP evaluations for Algeria, Nigeria and Syria; WFP. 2018. [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of the WFP Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis](#); and, WFP. 2023. [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of WFP's Response in Myanmar 2018-2022](#).

<sup>104</sup> See also, WFP. 2024. [Évaluation de la réponse d'urgence du PAM aux crises prolongées au Sahel et dans d'autres pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest et centrale 2018 – 2023](#).

<sup>105</sup> See also, WFP. 2018. [Evaluation of WFP Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access in Humanitarian Contexts](#) which concluded WFP independence is exposed to the funding priorities of a small pool of donors. Section 2.3.3 further explores donor preferences and targeting exclusions.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. See also, WFP. 2023. [Algeria CSPE](#); and, WFP. 2018. [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of the WFP Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis](#).

57. **Despite the integration of humanitarian principles into WFP corporate policies and strategies, there were numerous calls for guidance and support among WFP country staff to ensure the application of the humanitarian principles in challenging RIM contexts.** The evaluation found gaps in the provision of guidance and support by WFP regional bureaux and headquarters staff to help WFP country-level staff navigate each context of operation. The Evaluation of WFP Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access in Humanitarian Contexts also noted how WFP policies and guidance fail “to prescribe measures for implementation or provide guidance on how to deal with trade-offs that might be necessary to secure principled access in specific cases”.<sup>107</sup> The WFP Corporate Emergency Evaluation of WFP’s Response in Myanmar also recommended greater involvement of regional bureaux and headquarters to navigate trade-offs.<sup>108</sup> This gap in the provision of support to country offices to navigate country-level decisions was also conveyed in interviews in two case study countries.

## **2.1.2 Coherence of WFP support to refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants with regional and national policies, strategies and programmes**

### **Regional coherence**

Finding 3. The focus of WFP on the country level and a shift away from regional programmes has to some extent led to a gap in the organization’s broader analysis and response to the multi-country drivers and effects of displacement and migration, and how its assistance in individual countries may have cross-border effects.

58. **The introduction by WFP of the Integrated Road Map and CSPs in 2017 refocused WFP at the country level and led to a shift away from a prior interest in regional programmes, which has raised challenges in responding to cross-border movements of people within and across WFP designated regions.** This shift is evident in its approach to context analysis, strategic and programme design, financial oversight and monitoring,<sup>109</sup> and relationships with government, United Nations and donor partners.<sup>110</sup> One consequence has been that WFP has faced new challenges in the development of a coherent response to drivers of displacement and irregular migration that may affect several countries.

59. **Internal and external stakeholders were consistent in their identification of the need for country offices to better understand and respond to the drivers of displacement and migration within and across WFP designated regions (see regional thematic study in Annex IX).** This perspective has been re-emerging with the WFP operational task force to the Sudan crisis across eight country offices, where leadership is provided by the Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa in Nairobi (RBN) with the support of the Regional Bureau for the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe in Cairo (RBC) and the Regional Bureau for Western Africa in Dakar (RBD).<sup>111</sup> Other examples include the coordination of the WFP regional response to the migration crisis under RBP,<sup>112</sup> and the WFP regional response to the Syrian crisis under RBC.<sup>113</sup> However, despite these examples of regional bureau support, several case study countries reported frustration at the lack of intelligence, analysis or decision making support to better anticipate and respond to cross-border displacement, and irregular or circular migration. Both internal and external stakeholders

<sup>107</sup> WFP. 2018. Evaluation of WFP Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access in Humanitarian Contexts.

<sup>108</sup> WFP. 2023. [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of WFP’s Response in Myanmar](#) 2018-2022. See also, WFP. 2024. Engagement with Non-State Armed Groups: Operational Guidelines for a good example of guidance supporting the navigation of trade-offs.

<sup>109</sup> WFP. 2019. [Update on the Integrated Road Map](#). WFP/EB.2/2019/4-D/1.

<sup>110</sup> WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of WFP’s Policy on Country Strategic Plans](#).

<sup>111</sup> These include the Egypt country office under RBC; South Sudan, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda under RBN; and Chad and Central African Republic under RBD.

<sup>112</sup> WFP. 2023. Position Paper on WFP’s Role and Added Value in Addressing Migration in Latin America and the Caribbean.

<sup>113</sup> WFP. 2018. [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of the WFP Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis](#).

at all levels argued for regional bureaux to provide greater strategic leadership and oversight of WFP assessment, analysis and response to the changing needs of displaced populations and irregular migrants in their places of origin, transit and destination.

60. **RBP is a stand-alone case of WFP engagement with irregular migration. A position paper on WFP support to migrants was published in November 2023, which serves as a promising example of appropriate norms, standards and principles (Annex IX).** While the position paper is informed by relevant regional frameworks, including the Cartagena Declaration, Quito Process, South American Conference on Migration (Lima Process), and Regional Conference on Migration (Puebla Process), it remains a unique example of regional efforts by WFP to develop a coordinated response to irregular migration.<sup>114</sup> The paper is too new to derive lessons from it, but it has been adopted by RBP and its country offices and serves as regional guidance when assisting irregular migrants across borders.

### National coherence

Finding 4. The extent and manner of inclusion of displacement and migration in CSP documents is contingent on whether and how RIM populations are recognized and prioritized by governments, which also shapes WFP commitments to policy engagement on RIMs at the country level.

61. **WFP is often limited in the extent to which it can officially integrate RIM populations into country strategies due to the need to align its CSPs with national policies and host governments' recognition and categorization of these populations.** Adherence to national strategic priorities is essential to secure government support, and WFP CSPs are designed to respond to national policy, strategies and programmes.<sup>115</sup> As an example, the Bangladesh CSP aligns with the Government's Five-Year Plan and disaster management plan. Implementation of the latter is the responsibility of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, which oversees UN support for refugees in Cox's Bazar.<sup>116</sup> Displaced Rohingya are categorized as "Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals". The absence of formal recognition as refugees limits their inclusion in self-reliance and resilience interventions.<sup>117</sup> As a result, the range of self-reliance and resilience support for refugees in the Bangladesh CSP is more limited than that targeted towards Bangladeshi nationals. Similarly, the Government of Tanzania's withdrawal from the CRRF and its focus on repatriation constrained the ability of WFP to support livelihoods activities for refugees.<sup>118</sup>

62. **In contrast, in countries where policies are in principle more welcoming to refugees, such as in Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Kenya and Mauritania, WFP has more room to align its CSPs with international frameworks and guidance.**<sup>119</sup> CSPs guide WFP country capacity strengthening for governments to assist RIMs in contexts where refugees (Chad, Kenya, Mauritania) or migrants (Colombia) are supported. The evaluation also identified instances where WFP responded quickly to changes in the context of displacement and irregular migration. For example, in Colombia, a shift in focus towards support for IDPs over irregular migrants emerged with the change in government in 2022; in Chad, the introduction of the 2023 Asylum Law provided refugees with rights to land ownership, employment and movement, which in turn has allowed WFP to introduce longer-term agricultural activities for self-

<sup>114</sup> WFP. 2023. WFP's role and added value in addressing migration in Latin America and the Caribbean.

<sup>115</sup> CSPs examined in this study include, Cameroon 2020, DRC 2020, Bangladesh 2021, Lebanon 2021, Ecuador 2022, Jordan 2022, Mozambique 2022, Pakistan 2022, South Sudan 2022, Sudan 2022, Tanzania 2022, Zimbabwe 2022, Algeria 2023, CAR 2023, Chad 2023, Ghana 2023, Kenya 2023, Nigeria 2023.

<sup>116</sup> WFP. 2021. Evaluation of Bangladesh WFP Country Strategic Plan (2016-2019): Centralized Evaluation Report. Similar examples include WFP. 2022. Evaluation of Tanzania WFP Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021): Centralized Evaluation Report.

<sup>117</sup> While self-reliance and resilience are two distinct concepts, self-reliance programming in WFP is usually categorised under the 'resilience building' activity category. Definitions for self-reliance and resilience are provided in Annex VII.

<sup>118</sup> WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of Tanzania WFP Country Strategic Plan](#) 2017-2021.

<sup>119</sup> See also, WFP. 2024. Evaluation of Uganda WFP Country Strategic Plan (2020-2023) for WFP's refugee response within a constructive national enabling environment.

reliance;<sup>120</sup> while in Kenya, government approval of the Shirika Plan in 2023 has initiated a shift in WFP focus toward socioeconomic inclusion for refugees and the transition of refugee basic service delivery into government systems.<sup>121</sup> However, the ability of WFP to support transitions toward self-reliance may also be constrained by national capacities in areas such as social protection (for example, Mauritania), illustrating how government support and capacities become determining factors in the strategic approach by WFP to RIMs in each country context (Findings 12 to 15).

### 2.1.3 WFP strategies and processes to ensure preparedness and responsiveness to the needs of refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants

#### Country strategies

Finding 5. Inclusion of RIM categories in CSP documents responds to the legal provisions for RIMs set by governments, though some country offices also leave unwritten room to support displaced or migrant groups that are particularly vulnerable or under threat. While this approach is pragmatic, the tendency of CSPs to bundle refugees, IDPs and migrants with crisis-affected populations means they become lost in the CSP line of sight and annual reports. CSPs may also lack reflection on how prioritization or targeting strategies should address cross-cutting nutrition and gender-responsive contributions for RIMs.

63. **The evaluation finds that RIMs are often not explicitly targeted in CSP strategic outcomes, or, when they are, they are largely captured under the strategic outcome on crisis response.** CSPs have supported a reshaping of the strategic focus of country offices through their support for longer-term strategies that respond to the national vulnerability context.<sup>122</sup> CSP design and sign-off involves an extensive review of the CSP's coherence with corporate policies, strategies and guidelines, and the demonstration of alignment to government strategic priorities and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). Depending on the national setting, this may or may not include a response to displacement or migration. Nevertheless, even where displaced or migrant groups are identified as vulnerable in the CSP context analysis, they may not be explicitly targeted under the CSP's strategic outcomes. Where they are, they are mostly captured under a crisis response strategic outcome alongside other at-risk populations (residents, refugees, migrants, returnees) that may or may not be associated with other strategic outcomes supporting longer-term programming, or cross-cutting support (for example, nutrition or gender).

64. **Differentiation of RIMs from other target groups is only possible once the CSP reaches the activity or sub-activity level (activity tagging), where a significant range of focus in the incorporation of RIMs is evident.** Many country offices focus on geographical areas with high concentrations of poverty or vulnerability, irrespective of status, without taking into consideration how vulnerable RIM populations and households may move as part of a dynamic cross-border web of community relationships and livelihood choices.

65. **All CSPs occur within a broader environment of government political support, rejection or ambivalence to the rights and needs of refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants, and CSPs may leave gaps in order to provide room for below-the-radar support.** In four out of ten countries in the evaluation sample, the conditions set by the national political environment led country offices to leave activities adopted to support RIM populations out of their CSPs due to government resistance. While this allowed WFP to meet its humanitarian commitments and adhere to the political positioning of host governments, it carried associated risks. Examples identified by stakeholders included: security risks for cooperating partners managing transfers; potential for aid diversions or sexual exploitation and abuse; and the creation of duplication or exclusion errors due to access limitations for assessments and third-party monitoring.

<sup>120</sup> WFP. 2024. [Update on the implementation of the Changing Lives Transformation Fund](#). WFP/EB.1/2024/4-C.

<sup>121</sup> UNHCR. 2023. [Government of Kenya Shirika Plan: socioeconomic hubs for integrated refugee inclusion in Kenya](#).

<sup>122</sup> See also, MOPAN. 2024. [MOPAN report for WFP \(2024\)](#) which concludes WFP has effectively decentralised its organization to empower country offices.

66. **The inclusion of systematic pathways toward the self-reliance of displaced and host communities in CSPs was largely a reflection of contexts where governments were themselves seeking to reduce the direct provision of relief assistance to RIMs.**<sup>123</sup> This included examples of country offices incorporating RIMs directly or indirectly into their CSP strategic outcomes for country capacity strengthening in support of national priorities.<sup>124</sup>

#### Corporate strategies

Finding 6. The highly variable integration of RIMs across WFP corporate strategies reveals particular weaknesses for IDPs and irregular migrants. Although WFP has developed two corporate strategies outlining its approach to meeting the immediate needs of refugees and transitioning to longer term support, this has not been translated into clear guidance or support.

67. **The integration of RIMs into WFP corporate strategies remains inconsistent for irregular migrants, and to a lesser extent for IDPs. This inconsistency leads to a lack of coherence in the shaping by WFP of strategic operations, programmes and country-level advocacy regarding its support for different RIM populations.**<sup>125</sup> The WFP Strategic Plan (2022-2025), which guides WFP corporate decision making, recognizes that almost a third of WFP beneficiaries are refugees, IDPs or returnees, corresponding to a significant rise in population movements. However, WFP corporate strategies and policies fail to capture the complexity of displacement, migration and associated vulnerabilities, and there is little analysis of irregular migration. For example, while the Emergency Preparedness Checklist (2024) references the importance of context analysis and risk assessments on cross-cutting thematic areas, it does not explore the effects displacement or migration may have on vulnerability.<sup>126</sup> RIMs are missing from the new WFP Nutrition Strategy (2024-2030) and from policies and strategies related to emergency preparedness and response including the FAO-WFP Anticipatory Action Strategy (2023) and Policy on Country Capacity Strengthening (2022) in which emergency preparedness and social protection are key themes.<sup>127</sup> Even although the Emergency Preparedness Policy (2017) also does not include mention of RIMs, the Evaluation of WFP's Emergency Preparedness Policy notes that WFP preparedness measures in several contexts have accounted for expected population movements in relation to hazards and conflict, for instance in the Sahel region and in Pakistan.<sup>128</sup> The WFP Strategic Plan (2022-2025) also recognizes the opportunities of migration flows in bolstering origin countries' economies through skills, technology transfers and remittances.<sup>129</sup> Nonetheless, there is a comparative gap in the extent to which irregular migrants are considered, and irregular migration remains a relatively new area for WFP (Finding 7). The overall result is a case-by-case response to RIMs in WFP corporate-, regional- and country-level decision making processes.

68. **While refugees are better integrated into corporate strategies overall, many internal stakeholders consider discussions on the transition toward self-reliance and durable solutions to be nascent in WFP, and good practice strategies, examples and guidance for programme staff to remain**

<sup>123</sup> Examples included Chad, DRC, Jordan, Mauritania, Niger, Türkiye. See also, Sida, L., E. Mooney, O. Lough, and L. Fouad. 2024. [Independent review of the humanitarian response to internal displacement](#). HPG report. London: Overseas Development Institute.

<sup>124</sup> Examples included Chad, Colombia, Jordan and Türkiye. Note, the UN Security Council report: [UN Transitions in a Fractured Multilateral Environment](#) (2023) recommended UN missions attend to building the capacity of government authorities in planning and implementing transition processes at the central and local levels.

<sup>125</sup> Strategies that do integrate the differing needs of all three RIM groups include, WFP. 2021. [World Food Programme Strategy for Support to Social Protection](#); and, WFP. 2023. [WFP Urban Strategy – Achieving zero hunger in an urbanising world](#). Annex VIII maps the strategic integration of RIMs in WFP policies.

<sup>126</sup> WFP. 2024. Emergency Preparedness Checklist.

<sup>127</sup> WFP. 2017. [Emergency preparedness policy: strengthening WFP emergency preparedness for effective response](#) WFP/EB.2/2017/4-B/Rev.1\*; FAO and WFP. 2023. [FAO-WFP Anticipatory Action Strategy](#); and WFP. 2022. [Country Capacity Strengthening Policy Update](#) – 2022. WFP. 2024. [WFP Strategy to Improve Diets and Address Malnutrition 2024-2030](#).

<sup>128</sup> WFP. 2024. Evaluation of WFP's Emergency Preparedness Policy.

<sup>129</sup> WFP. 2021. WFP Strategic Plan (2022–2025). (WFP/EB.2/2021/4-A/1/Rev.2), Box 1, p.9.

**limited.**<sup>130</sup> The establishment of the Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub with UNHCR in 2020 commits WFP to work towards common outcomes that meet the immediate needs of refugees and contribute to a longer-term transition to self-reliance (Findings 15 and 33).<sup>131</sup> However, programme staff expressed a need for greater guidance and support (as opposed to more policies) to help them navigate locally appropriate pathways that transition from meeting immediate needs to building self-reliance for RIMs. While they are aware of WFP positioning, such as in its Institutional Plan and Programme Offer on Internal Displacement (2023), they remain unclear as to how this should be translated into a clear operational role for WFP relative to UNHCR and IOM. Greater support, they suggest, would help WFP better meet its Action Agenda for Internal Displacement commitments to “lay the foundation for [longer-term] solutions earlier in the response”,<sup>132</sup> and fulfill its the critical need to consider scale in its corporate approach to self-reliance and durable solutions.

## **2.2. How effective is WFP operational and advocacy support for refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants to meet their short- and long-term food security and nutrition needs? How appropriate and contextualized are WFP assistance modalities and programming approaches at supporting refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants in different contexts and settings?**

### **A note on evaluating WFP effectiveness on RIMs**

69. WFP output and outcome level data do not disaggregate WFP beneficiaries by RIM status, and it was therefore not possible for the evaluation to gather and analyse quantitative data on WFP reach with regard to RIM populations for different types of assistance. WFP annual performance reports indicate that displaced and migrant populations represented 23 to 31 percent of total WFP beneficiaries between 2017 and 2023.<sup>133</sup> Among recorded categories of displaced populations, refugees and IDPs represent the highest numbers of beneficiaries reached, with refugees ranging from 9.1 to 14.7 million beneficiaries per year, and IDPs from 13.1 to 26 million (Figure 6).<sup>134</sup> However, WFP data limitations do not allow for the cross analysis of RIM categories against WFP corporate outputs and outcomes as prescribed under the Integrated Road Map and this is only partially possible at the CSP activity level.<sup>135</sup> Consequently, the evaluation of the effectiveness and appropriateness of WFP support to RIMs discussed in the subsequent sections strongly draws on qualitative evidence triangulated across primary and secondary sources.

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<sup>130</sup> WFP, UNHCR. 2016. Joint Strategy: Enhancing Self-Reliance in Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Refugee Situations.

<sup>131</sup> See also, WFP and UNHCR. 2016. [Joint Strategy - Enhancing Self-Reliance in Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Refugee Situations](#).

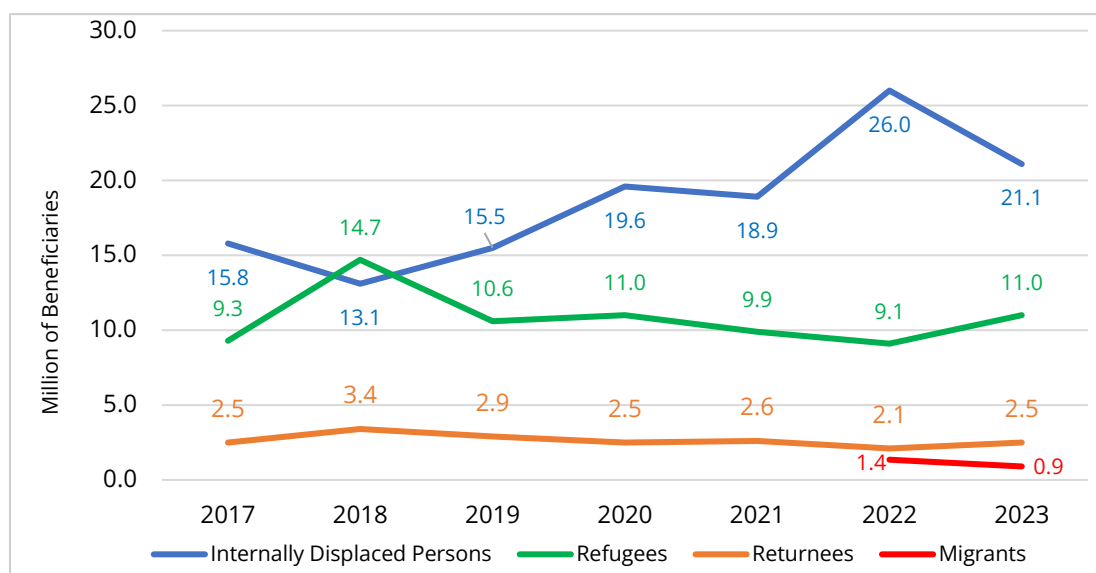
<sup>132</sup> United Nations Secretary-General. 2022. [The United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement](#), p. 23.

<sup>133</sup> WFP. 2017-2023. [Annual performance reports](#) (2017-2023).

<sup>134</sup> Figures for migrants were only introduced in 2022.

<sup>135</sup> A comprehensive analysis of data limitations was provided in the evaluation inception report.

**Figure 10: Number of actual beneficiaries reached by WFP (2017-2023)**



Source: Annual performance reports (2017-2023).

## 2.2.1 WFP contribution to meeting immediate food security and nutrition needs of refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants

### Effectiveness and appropriateness of contributions to meet immediate needs

**Finding 7.** WFP makes important contributions to addressing the immediate food security and nutrition needs of refugees and IDPs. The evaluation found that the greatest strengths of WFP in helping refugees and IDP to meet their immediate food security and nutrition needs lie in two areas. First, WFP is particularly effective at delivering assistance quickly and at scale during emergencies. Second, the provision of cash assistance allows refugees and IDPs to flexibly address their own food security and nutrition needs, even if this assistance is not sufficient to meet all needs. However, there remains a significant gap in WFP attention to the needs of irregular migrants for whom WFP provides extremely limited emergency assistance.

**70. WFP is able to rapidly respond to the needs of refugees and IDPs within humanitarian response contexts.** This capacity to mobilize and scale up its crisis response operations swiftly was confirmed by both primary data collection and documentary evidence.<sup>136</sup> For example, the Myanmar Corporate Emergency Evaluation found that WFP responded quickly to both natural disasters and conflict-related displacement, providing new types of food assistance in new contexts.<sup>137</sup> In Egypt and Chad, WFP mobilized to respond quickly to the 2023 Sudan crisis with assistance for refugees crossing the border. In Egypt and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, stakeholders highlighted how WFP was the first organization on the ground, a theme reflected across all sample countries, confirming the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) (2024) assessment that “WFP has an unparalleled local presence, reaching into remote locations, and an impressive speed of response”.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>136</sup> This position was also reflected in multiple CSP evaluations including, WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of Mozambique WFP Country Strategic Plan](#) (2017-2021); WFP. 2023. [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of WFP's Response in Myanmar](#) (2018-2022); WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of Mauritania WFP Country Strategic Plan](#) (2019-2023); WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of Sudan WFP Country Strategic Plan](#) (2019-2023); WFP. 2024. Evaluation of Ethiopia WFP Country Strategic Plan (2020-2025).

<sup>137</sup> WFP. 2023. [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of WFP's Response in Myanmar \(2018-2022\)](#).

<sup>138</sup> MOPAN. 2024. [MOPAN Assessment Report: World Food Programme](#).

71. **While rapid and agile emergency response is a strength of WFP that benefits refugees and IDPs, the organization's emergency response for irregular migrants remains limited outside Latin America, including in areas of Africa where major migration corridors are widely recognized and where WFP adherence to the principles of humanity and impartiality needs to be considered.**<sup>139</sup>

Among the ten case study countries, WFP only assists migrants in Colombia<sup>140</sup> and, to a minimal level, Djibouti, where irregular migrants are not included in the CSP.<sup>141</sup> No assistance is provided to sizeable irregular migrant populations in Chad, Egypt, Mauritania and Mozambique, countries that lie along major migration corridors, despite these populations' need for assistance. This could arguably be seen as a lack of adherence to the humanity and impartiality principles. This gap was corroborated by interviews at headquarters, regional and country levels for all WFP regions except Latin America, where countries such as Ecuador and Peru also provide assistance to irregular migrants.<sup>142</sup> As an example of good practice, in Colombia, WFP maintains delivery points across the main migration routes to provide irregular migrants with ongoing support on their journey through "ready-to-eat food kits", information brochures about available services along migration routes, including dining halls and communal kitchens. Additionally, WFP links its support to the Government by coordinating access to services for gender-based violence and enabling irregular migrants to contact family members. In Djibouti, WFP provides energy bars to irregular migrants transiting through the country, however this is limited and does not meet their food security and nutrition needs.

72. **The minimal focus on irregular migrants in other contexts stems from several factors.** The political context in several host and transit countries makes it challenging to identify and reach irregular migrant populations (see Finding 5). For example, in Egypt, WFP does not have agreement from the Government to assist the country's significant irregular migrant population, despite high levels of vulnerability within this group. Irregular migration also constitutes a gap in consideration by WFP of different RIM status groups in its strategic focus (Finding 1), and several corporate-level key informants considered the overall strategic integration by WFP of irregular migration to be nascent.

73. **WFP contributes to meeting the immediate food security and nutrition needs of refugees and IDPs through in-kind contributions and cash-based transfers, with cash being perceived by beneficiaries as providing them with greater flexibility to meet their needs.** WFP provided both in-kind and multi-purpose cash assistance in the ten case study countries and largely met or exceeded planned beneficiary targets for specific RIM categories over the 2017-2023 period.<sup>143</sup> Instances of meeting or exceeding targets were also noted in other contexts where WFP operates. For example, the Evaluation of the WFP Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis (2018) highlighted that WFP consistently reached overall beneficiary numbers in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Türkiye.<sup>144</sup> A shift from in-kind assistance to cash transfers was observed across most sample countries. This was generally viewed positively by beneficiaries, who appreciated that cash enabled them to make decisions about the type of food they purchase and consume. WFP cash-based transfers have significant reach across refugee and IDP target populations and grant them greater autonomy within and outside camp settings.

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<sup>139</sup> IOM. 2024. World Migration Report. [Data Snapshot: The World's Largest Migration Corridors](#).

<sup>140</sup> WFP. 2021. [Colombia Country Strategic Plan \(2021-2024\)](#); WFP. 2024. [Evaluación del Plan estratégico para Colombia \(2021-2024\)](#).

<sup>141</sup> WFP. 2019. [Djibouti Country Strategic Plan \(2020-2024\)](#).

<sup>142</sup> WFP. 2022. [Peru Country Strategic Plan \(2023-2026\)](#); WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of Ecuador WFP Country Strategic Plan \(2017-2021\)](#).

<sup>143</sup> WFP. 2017-2023. Democratic Republic of the Congo annual country reports; WFP. 2017-2023. Egypt annual country reports; WFP. 2017-2023. Mozambique annual country reports; WFP. 2017-2023. Colombia annual country reports.

<sup>144</sup> WFP. 2018. [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of the WFP Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis \(January 2015–March 2018\)](#). Other examples where WFP met or exceeded targets included in Algeria (WFP. 2023. [CSPE 2019-2022](#)); Iraq (MOPAN. 2019. [MOPAN Assessment of the World Food Programme 2017-18](#)); and Lebanon and Jordan (WFP. 2021. [Lebanon CSPE 2018-2021](#); WFP. 2022. [Jordan CSPE 2020-2022](#)).

74. **In multiple contexts, refugees noted that, while cash transfers are helpful, they are insufficient to fully enable them to meet their immediate food security and nutrition needs.** In Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, IDPs welcomed cash assistance but considered it to have been largely insufficient to meet their food security and nutrition needs. Common feedback across the displacement contexts sampled by the evaluation suggested that cash assistance is “not enough” to support refugee and IDP families’ basic needs. While it must be recognized that WFP cash assistance is not intended to meet all refugee and IDP needs, the evaluation found that the effectiveness of cash support to these populations was often limited by ration cuts, or a drop in the value of cash assistance relative to the price of nutritious food in local markets. Refugee populations in protracted situations were found to be highly sensitive to reductions in cash assistance, leading to an increase in reports of negative coping mechanisms. For example, in protracted refugee contexts like Bangladesh, Kenya, and Mauritania many women reported selling higher value food items to meet household needs or increasing their debt burden by purchasing food on credit.<sup>145</sup>

75. **The reallocation of WFP assistance to new arrivals of displaced populations in some contexts negatively impacted on other displaced populations, whose assistance was paused or reduced, illustrating their continuing dependence on assistance and vulnerability to WFP targeting and prioritization decisions.** Both Chad and Egypt provided examples of how target groups (IDPs and earlier Sudanese and Syrian refugees, respectively) could be impacted by the reallocation of funding for in-kind and cash assistance during new emergencies as a result of prioritization exercises – in both cases, the 2023 Sudan crisis.<sup>146</sup> While the shift in cash assistance to new arrivals reflected the relatively greater vulnerability of new arrivals as per WFP vulnerability assessments, these reallocations led to reports by pre-existing refugee and IDP groups that they were progressively less able to meet their basic needs due to reduced or terminated cash assistance.

76. **WFP has nevertheless made efforts to maintain minimum levels of in-kind and cash assistance and mitigate the impacts of donor funding and inflation on the vulnerability of refugees and IDPs.** In Egypt, in May 2024 WFP introduced a 30 percent increase in the value of cash assistance to beneficiary households with up to five members as a response to rising inflation and the deterioration of socioeconomic conditions in the country. In Kenya, WFP strived to maintain access to 80 percent of the minimum food basket despite a rise in new arrivals, after it had been reduced to 40 percent from January to May 2024, and increased to 60 percent from June 2024.<sup>147</sup> When rations were cut in Bangladesh, WFP and UNICEF successfully introduced integrated nutrition centres and fresh food corners in Cox’s Bazar to ensure sustained access to nutritious foods for groups at risk of malnutrition.

### **Contributions to the prevention and treatment of malnutrition**

Finding 8. WFP interventions to prevent and treat malnutrition among RIMs have for the most part been inadequate except in limited camp-based examples such as Cox’s Bazar. WFP does not have a clear position on whether to target the most vulnerable RIM groups for the prevention of malnutrition with higher quality nutrition assistance or to reach larger populations with lesser quality assistance. In contexts facing funding shortfalls, this has led to blanket in-kind or cash distributions that fail to meet nutritional requirements, while also failing to prevent the emergence of malnutrition among vulnerable groups.

77. **WFP stakeholders at all levels identified an unresolved tension between the quality of WFP nutrition support and the number of beneficiaries it reaches. This tension is compounded in**

<sup>145</sup> The Algeria and Ethiopia CSP evaluations (WFP. 2023. Algeria [CSPE 2019-2022](#); WFP. 2024. Ethiopia CSPE 2020-2025) highlighted how reduced rations and insufficient frequency of assistance led to negative coping strategies.

<sup>146</sup> WFP. 2024. [Évaluation de la réponse d'urgence du PAM aux crises prolongées au Sahel et dans d'autres pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest et centrale](#) (2018-2023).

<sup>147</sup> WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of Kenya WFP Country Strategic Plan \(2018-2023\)](#).

**displacement settings where there are gaps in responding to the specific vulnerabilities of RIMs in both immediate response and longer-term planning.** While it is not possible to analyse WFP data on nutrition support by RIM category, the evaluation gathered considerable qualitative data suggesting that nutrition support to RIMs has been largely inadequate. In fluid contexts, such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique and Myanmar, there was inadequate support for the prevention or treatment of malnutrition. In Bangladesh, Kenya and Mozambique, reduced food rations and inadequate funding for nutrition have resulted in increased rates of malnutrition for vulnerable camp residents, emphasizing continued dependencies on nutrition support. The lack of support for refugees considered capable of self-reliance in Egypt and Mauritania, and IDPs in Chad, led more resilient households to fall back into continuing dependency on food assistance. In its longer-term planning, WFP recognizes that nutrition services are critical for the resilience of RIMs,<sup>148</sup> and there are examples of excellent nutrition practice in difficult contexts such as in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Nevertheless, nutrition services are not always included in WFP resource prioritization which, in some countries, has led to gaps in the incorporation of nutrition services or support, and a lack of clarity among internal and external stakeholders as to whether or not WFP prioritizes groups at risk of malnutrition.<sup>149</sup>

78. **Internal and external key informant interviews (KIIs) highlighted the lack of a clear position by WFP on nutrition for RIMs and limitations in its ability to deliver nutrition support at scale for displaced and migrant populations, especially in hard-to-reach contexts.** WFP stakeholders reported that implementation of promising activities to prevent malnutrition remains small-scale,<sup>150</sup> and that WFP needs to better understand the implications of not providing the right kind of nutrition assistance or any assistance at all. Anecdotally, some suggested that malnutrition treatment and prevention programmes are considered “development-focused”, resulting in their “deprioritization” in some crisis contexts. In more than half of the countries in the evaluation sample, stakeholders highlighted that the lack of a clear WFP position on nutrition for displaced populations and migrants, including RIMs not being mentioned in the new WFP Nutrition Strategy (2024-2030),<sup>151</sup> impedes the adoption of a clear advocacy position with donors in this respect.

### Contributions to school feeding

Finding 9. In contexts where displaced children have access to schools, school feeding provides a stabilizing factor for vulnerable refugee households and children and can contribute to social cohesion with host communities. The evaluation could not access data on school feeding for IDP and irregular migrant children and therefore cannot assess specific contributions for these populations.

79. **WFP corporate guidance makes clear provision for the inclusion of refugee children in school feeding, and school feeding programmes within refugee settings have significant reach among target populations.** The WFP School Feeding Strategy (2020-2030) includes the provision of school feeding for both refugees and host communities in conjunction with health and nutrition services, and highlights their contribution to higher retention rates, increased enrolment and attendance, and social cohesion.<sup>152</sup> A global mapping of WFP school feeding programmes in refugee settings found that school feeding activities aimed to reach one million refugee school-age children, corresponding to one third of those who attend school, with estimates indicating that 3.4 million refugee children were out of school in 2019.<sup>153</sup> Although the evaluation identified examples of IDP and irregular migrant children also included in

<sup>148</sup> The UNHCR-WFP [Joint Guidance: Targeting of Assistance to Meet Basic Needs](#) (2019) highlights the importance of strengthening nutrition programmes when food resources are limited to avoid exacerbating malnutrition among young children and pregnant and lactating women and girls (p. 12).

<sup>149</sup> See for example, WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of Sudan WFP Country Strategic Plan](#) (2019-2023).

<sup>150</sup> Examples for long-term refugees include WFP-UNICEF Joint Health and Nutrition Centres in Bangladesh, hydroponics in Algeria and horticulture in Kenya and Rwanda.

<sup>151</sup> WFP. 2024. [WFP Strategy to Improve Diets and Address Malnutrition \(2024-2030\)](#).

<sup>152</sup> WFP. 2020. [WFP School Feeding Strategy \(2020-2030\)](#).

<sup>153</sup> UNHCR and WFP. 2022. [Technical Review Considerations for Programming School Feeding Programmes in Refugee Settings](#).

school meals programmes, data disaggregated by status are not yet systematically collected at the school level or aggregated to the corporate level.<sup>154</sup>

80. **The evaluation found clear evidence that the provision of daily meals to refugee boys and girls has led to a decreased prevalence of short-term hunger.** School feeding programmes were positively rated by RIM beneficiaries in the country case studies for providing children with access to nutritious foods and supporting their ongoing access to education. This finding is corroborated by CSP evaluations from Ethiopia, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon and South Sudan.<sup>155</sup> However, patterns of enrolment and attendance depended heavily on physical access to public or in-camp schools,<sup>156</sup> and the nutritional value and coverage of school meals varied, depending on donor funding.<sup>157</sup>

81. **The evaluation also identified instances where school feeding was considered to have contributed to social cohesion.** Promising practices were identified in Mauritania and Bangladesh, where WFP linked school feeding supply chains to local markets, thereby supporting the local economy. Children from host communities around the camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, also benefited from school feeding, which helped improve levels of acceptance by host communities of the large-scale assistance provided to refugees inside the camps. In Kenya, school meals and education acted as a pull factor for host communities, including for nomadic populations, to register as refugees. In Colombia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, school meals were considered important for the protection of boys from recruitment by armed groups and emerged as a stabilizing factor for displaced-host community relationships in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Nevertheless, the evaluation team concurs with the Strategic Evaluation of the Contribution of School Feeding Activities to the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (2021), which noted that additional research is needed on the link between school feeding and social cohesion.<sup>158</sup>

#### Climate and environmental contributions

Finding 10. While the evaluation found occasional evidence of climate and environmental considerations in the immediate support by WFP to RIMs, these appear to have emerged largely in response to the environmental protection and ecosystem rehabilitation concerns of governments in protracted displacement settings. However, the evaluative evidence is insufficient to make an overall judgement of the effectiveness of the overall integration by WFP of climate and environmental considerations for RIMs.

82. **The evaluation identified several protracted refugee settings such as Bangladesh, Kenya and Mauritania where displacement had led to significant environmental impacts resulting primarily from firewood collection.** Despite the introduction of fuel-efficient stoves, deforestation and waste management were identified as a major concern by host governments who, in response, agreed a progressive agenda in environmental regeneration with WFP and UNHCR in each context.

83. **Several interviews with WFP and external stakeholders highlighted how climate shocks exacerbated conflicts and economic emergencies that affected displacement.** Examples included the impact of cattle movements on pasture and water resources as a result of the movement of Malian refugees into Mauritania, and the interplay between climate and displacement in Chad and Kenya. One critical concern among country office and regional bureaux stakeholders was the gap in WFP pastoralist

<sup>154</sup> Country examples of IDP inclusion in school feeding include Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, DRC, Myanmar, Niger and Togo, while irregular migrants are included in Colombia. See also, Inter-American Development Bank and WFP. 2023. [State of School Feeding in Latin America and the Caribbean 2022](#).

<sup>155</sup> WFP. 2021. [Evaluation of Lebanon WFP Country Strategic Plan \(2018-2021\)](#); WFP. 2024. Evaluation of Ethiopia WFP Country Strategic Plan (2020-2025); WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of Jordan Country Strategic Plan Evaluation \(2020-2022\)](#); WFP. 2021. [Libya, General Food Assistance activities: Evaluation](#); WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of South Sudan WFP Interim Country Strategic Plan \(2018-2022\)](#).

<sup>156</sup> This Finding is coherent with: WFP. 2021. [School Feeding in Emergencies: a synthesis evaluation](#).

<sup>157</sup> Examples included in the Mozambique case study and Algeria (WFP. 2023. Algeria [CSPE 2019-2022](#)).

<sup>158</sup> WFP. 2021. [Strategic Evaluation of the Contribution of School Feeding Activities to the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals](#).

and climate-related expertise to support new programming and resource mobilization strategies to anticipate and integrate climate-related displacement considerations.<sup>159</sup>

## 2.2.2 WFP contribution to meeting the longer-term food security and nutrition needs of refugees internally displaced people and irregular migrants

### Contributions to the self-reliance of refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants

Finding 11. Strategies to address the self-reliance of RIMs are highly reliant on the economic and security environment, and the willingness and capacities of host governments to extend rights, entitlements or support to displaced and irregular migrant populations. While relevant examples of WFP vocational training and self-reliance support were identified, WFP contributions to self-reliance and the longer-term food security and nutrition needs of RIMs are limited, lack coherence and give limited attention to the need for scale. WFP does not provide self-reliance support for irregular migrants and this area was not covered by the evaluation.

84. **The evaluation found some evidence that WFP vocational training for employment and skills, and training in food production, has strengthened the self-reliance of a limited number of refugees.** Across the country case studies and CSP evaluation sample, a range of WFP activities sought to build the self-reliance of RIMs. In Kenya, 1,600 refugee and host community beneficiaries took part in agriculture projects that allowed them to supplement food rations and sell produce through local markets.<sup>160</sup> In Algeria, Bangladesh and Mauritania, a limited number of refugees also produced fruits and vegetables to add diversity to their diets.<sup>161</sup>

85. **However, WFP contributions to self-reliance are undermined by the relatively small-scale nature and high implementation costs of projects.** While projects such as those identified above helped improve short-term food security and nutrition for refugees, the scale of support reached a fraction of the displaced population due to limited funding or a lack of access to land, or because production was impacted by water scarcity. In the socioeconomic empowerment and sustainability programme for refugees and host communities in Türkiye, 75 percent of participants generated income, and 398 employment opportunities were created.<sup>162</sup> However, implementation costs were considered high compared with emergency response relative to the number of beneficiaries reached. In addition, WFP faces competition from other actors with greater expertise and the country office is considering discontinuing the programme.<sup>163</sup> Collectively, these interventions do not reach the scope or breadth envisaged by the WFP Refugee Assistance Guidance Manual, which identifies actions and conditions for self-reliance to include skills and market analysis, multi-year timeframes for livelihoods and assets programmes, working with partners and governments to create an enabling legal and policy environment for refugees, and implementing and monitoring self-reliance pathways jointly with UNHCR.<sup>164</sup>

86. **It appears unlikely that WFP self-reliance programming as currently implemented will make a significant contribution to the longer term food security and nutrition needs of RIMs.** It was not possible for the evaluation to quantify the long-term WFP contribution to refugee or IDP self-reliance (Finding 26). However, qualitative evidence triangulated across documents, CSPEs, stakeholder key informant interviews and beneficiary focus group discussions revealed that the limited scope of vocational training, or resources to help beneficiaries establish new businesses, impeded the achievement of self-

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<sup>159</sup> See also, WFP. 2024. [WFP's emergency response to the prolonged crisis in the Sahel and other countries of Central Africa](#) (2018–2023).

<sup>160</sup> WFP. 2023. [Kenya Annual Country Report](#).

<sup>161</sup> WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of Algeria WFP Interim Country Strategic Plan \(2019-2022\)](#).

<sup>162</sup> WFP. 2022. [Final Evaluation Report of WFP Türkiye Decentralized Evaluation](#).

<sup>163</sup> WFP. 2024. Preliminary findings from: Evaluation of Türkiye WFP Country Strategic Plan (2023-2025).

<sup>164</sup> WFP. 2017. WFP Refugee Assistance Guidance Manual.

reliance outcomes.<sup>165</sup> WFP also struggled to reach individuals with self-reliance activities over a substantive period of more than a year, and RIM beneficiaries were often unable to use their skills in labour markets due to economic instability and insecurity.<sup>166</sup> In countries where refugees (Bangladesh, Egypt, Kenya, Mauritania) or irregular migrants (Djibouti, Mauritania, Mozambique) do not have the legal right to work but do find work in the informal economy, the vocational training provided by WFP was considered largely inappropriate as it did not facilitate entry into the informal sector.

87. **Country offices have tended to dichotomize “humanitarian” and “development” work into separate workstreams that focus on “saving lives” and “changing lives”.**<sup>167</sup> Without clear strategic guidance on the comparative advantages of WFP in responding to the specific needs and opportunities of RIMs in different contexts, or prioritizing their engagement focus, most country offices have gravitated toward a dominant operational approach that focuses on immediate needs for RIMs, while both immediate needs and longer-term programming have been provided for domestic populations.<sup>168</sup> This approach has led to gaps in the exploration of transition pathways for RIMs across CSP strategic outcomes and activities, and in the development of WFP partnerships. From the country office perspective, the causes are interlinked. Without operationalizing programme linkages between immediate needs and self-reliance, they have struggled to secure self-reliance funding for RIMs (Finding 29), while without the funding, country offices have found it hard to develop appropriate programme strategies. In Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Sudan country offices, for example, CSP evaluations reported that the lack of consistent multi-year funding had hindered efforts to develop strategies to build the self-reliance of IDPs.<sup>169</sup> In Colombia, despite developing a transition framework for refugees and migrants, the country office has secured just USD 2.5 million of the USD 30 million of the funding sought.<sup>170</sup>

88. **In many countries the evaluation found some donors held a strong view that WFP should “focus on the humanitarian response, [which is what] it is good at and where its mandate is clear”, while in other countries, some donors stated that they were willing to support longer-term strategies, but WFP had not yet explored opportunities to support RIMs towards self-reliance.** In Mauritania for example, WFP has received growing donor support for an integrated approach to resilience building that includes seasonal safety nets. However, the programme remains focused on domestic communities and WFP has yet to engage either camp or out-of-camp refugees. In Uganda, despite WFP providing combined support to host communities and refugees, a lack of a common understanding of the requirements of self-reliance and resilience building among agencies, or adoption of a harmonized set of programming approaches, has limited their effectiveness.<sup>171</sup> Understanding the interplay between the boundaries set for RIMs in national legal frameworks and the strategic interests of donors and partners in each context is critical to the ability of WFP to design and deliver near- and longer-term programme strategies and mobilize funds within the range of financial sources and instruments available.

89. **Without the creation of an enabling environment for RIMs, WFP country offices will continue to face significant barriers to their efforts to transition support from a focus on immediate assistance toward self-reliance.** Multiple factors influence the ability of WFP country offices to develop a coherent self-reliance programming approach that responds effectively to the internal, external and

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<sup>165</sup> WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of Sudan WFP Country Strategic Plan \(2019-2023\)](#). WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of Algeria WFP Interim Country Strategic Plan \(2019-2022\)](#).

<sup>166</sup> See also, WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of Nigeria WFP Country Strategic Plan \(2019-2022\)](#).

<sup>167</sup> WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of WFP’s Policy on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition](#); and WFP. 2024. [Évaluation de la réponse d'urgence du PAM aux crises prolongées au Sahel et dans d'autres pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest et centrale](#) 2018-2023.

<sup>168</sup> See for example, conclusion 3 in, WFP. 2024. [Mid-Term evaluation of the Strategic Plan \(2022-2025\)](#).

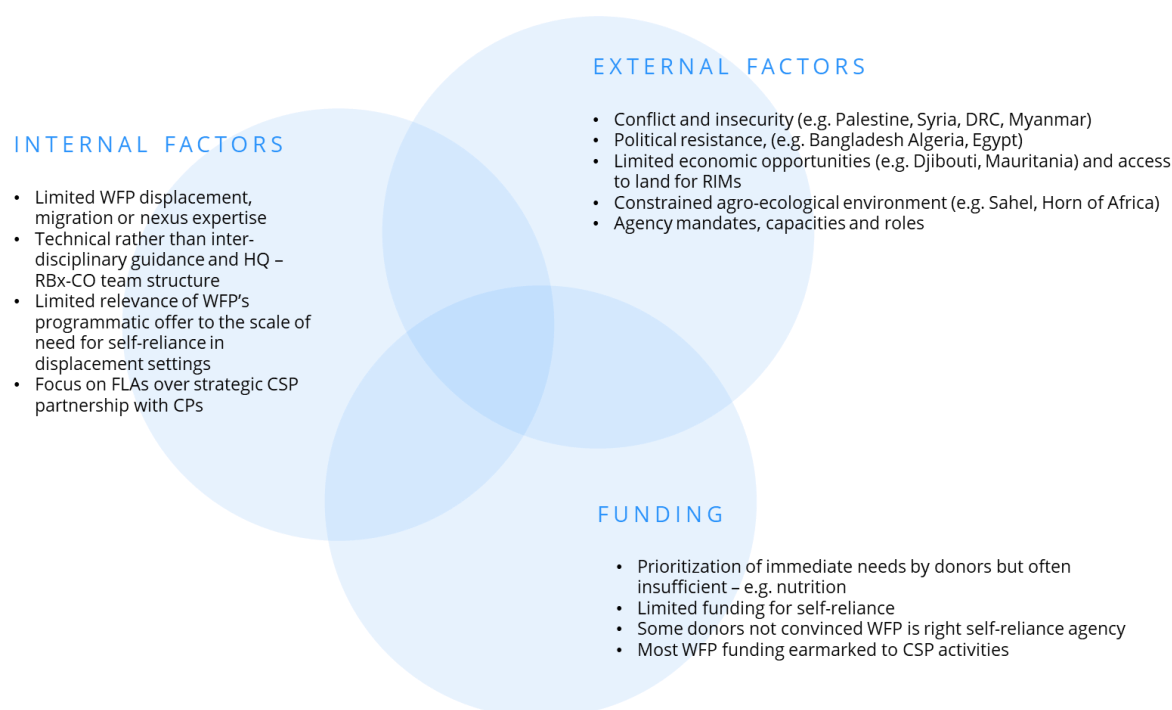
<sup>169</sup> WFP. 2022. ; WFP. 2022. <https://www.wfp.org/publications/evaluation-sudan-wfp-country-strategic-plan-2019-2023>; and WFP. 2022. [South Sudan Interim CSPE 2018-2022](#); and, WFP. 2024. [Évaluation de la réponse d'urgence du PAM aux crises prolongées au Sahel et dans d'autres pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest et centrale](#) (2018-2023).

<sup>170</sup> Similarly, in Pakistan, resilience building activities received less than 20 percent of targeted funding to support longer-term solutions for IDPs. See, WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of Pakistan WFP Country Strategic Plan](#) (2018-2022).

<sup>171</sup> WFP. 2024. Decentralized Evaluation of promoting self-reliance with livelihood, asset creation and resilience interventions in Uganda; and WFP. 2024. [Evaluation of Uganda WFP Country Strategic Plan \(2020-2023\)](#).

funding constraints within the country context. Key determining factors identified by country office staff are presented in Figure 7. In Egypt and Bangladesh refugees do not have the right to work, and in Bangladesh they are confined to the immediate camp setting. In Ethiopia and the Sahel, refugees face legal barriers to acquiring land and accessing formal employment.<sup>172</sup> Even in countries where refugees do have a right to work (Chad, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Kenya, Mauritania and Mozambique),<sup>173</sup> they face barriers accessing work permits or decent employment.<sup>174</sup> This confines them to the informal economy whether in or outside camps, placing them in a potentially precarious position that is not conducive to self-reliance. While WFP could potentially create a stronger enabling environment for its self-reliance programme efforts by supporting other UN agencies to advocate for the rights of refugees and irregular migrants to movement, residence and employment, country offices have tended to leave national-level negotiations to mandated agencies and the Resident Coordinator.<sup>175</sup>

**Figure 11: Factors affecting WFP support to self-reliance programming**



Source: Evaluation team.

### Local integration, social cohesion and the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus

**Finding 12.** Although currently WFP does not systematically adopt a nexus approach in support of RIMs, its ability to apply a range of activities, modalities and programme approaches has supported social cohesion and provides a potential basis for future nexus-related support for RIMs. Similarly, while WFP contributions to local integration remain limited, there may be opportunities for WFP to build on existing country capacity strengthening efforts to include RIMs in national systems and processes.

<sup>172</sup> WFP. 2024. Evaluation of Ethiopia WFP Country Strategic Plan (2020-2025); and WFP. 2024. Évaluation de la réponse d'urgence du PAM aux crises prolongées au Sahel et dans d'autres pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest et centrale (2018-2023).

<sup>173</sup> These countries are signatories to the [Global Compact on Refugees](#).

<sup>174</sup> This was also a broader finding in: WFP. 2024. Évaluation de la réponse d'urgence du PAM aux crises prolongées au Sahel et dans d'autres pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest et centrale (2018-2023).

<sup>175</sup> See also, WFP and UNHCR. 2013. [Synthesis Report of the Joint WFP and UNHCR Impact Evaluation on the Contribution of Food Assistance to Durable Solutions in Protracted Refugee Situations](#); and, WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of Nigeria WFP Country Strategic Plan \(2019-2022\)](#).

90. **Across the countries and displacement settings examined by the evaluation, WFP has yet to adopt a coherent and systematic HDP nexus approach in its support of RIMs.** As evidenced in the preceding sections, WFP does offer a range of programming to support the immediate needs and self-reliance of displaced populations. In contexts such as Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon and Mauritania, the integration of HDP programming options was evident.<sup>176</sup> However, this coherence has yet to be applied systematically to RIMs, and was at best nascent in Bangladesh, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt and Kenya, despite the protracted nature of displacement in these contexts. Examples of factors that have impeded the WFP HDP nexus approach include: limited funding for the development or transitional activities (Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya); constraints on nexus activities imposed by the government (Egypt, Bangladesh); and gaps in country office skills and capacities to holistically and intentionally respond to the transitioning needs of RIMs in each context.<sup>177</sup>

91. **While WFP has made efforts to integrate social cohesion and peacebuilding within its support to RIMs, gaps remain in the design of conflict-sensitive programming approaches in most countries.** Successful examples to support social cohesion include: the WFP response to community tensions over the protection of vulnerable women and girls; preventing the abduction of men and boys by armed groups (see Finding 16); and addressing perceived unfairness in the targeting of assistance.<sup>178</sup> The evaluation identified clear examples of efforts to advance social cohesion through the provision of school meals for both RIM and host community children (Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mauritania) and by linking local producers to WFP supply chains for refugees (Bangladesh, Chad, Kenya). These examples are aligned with WFP corporate guidance including its Institutional Plan and Programme Offer on Internal Displacement, and its Refugee Assistance Guidance Manual. While the evaluation also found significant efforts to engage peacebuilding partners in contexts such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Myanmar,<sup>179</sup> gaps remain in the design of conflict-sensitive approaches in other countries of the evaluation sample, and the use of context and conflict analysis to inform programme adaptations.<sup>180</sup>

92. **More joined-up partnerships are needed to ensure the application of a coherent nexus approach to address the needs of RIMs.** There are emerging examples where WFP has begun leveraging its close relationship with governments to engage in policy and institutional support, for instance in Mauritania, where refugees are being included in the social registry, inputs to the Government of Kenya's Shirika Plan, and contributions to the Durable Solutions Working Group in Mozambique.<sup>181</sup> However, stakeholders recognized that the primary focus of WFP on food security and nutrition can at times lead it to overlook the complexity of a nexus-based response where transitioning RIM populations may require wider rights-based and multisectoral partnerships with other UN agencies.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> See for example, WFP. 2023. [Mauritania CSPE](#) (2019-2023); WFP. 2021. [Bangladesh CSPE](#) (2016-2019); WFP. 2021. [Lebanon CSPE](#) (2018-2021); WFP. 2023. [Algeria CSPE](#) (2019-2022); WFP. 2022. [Jordan CSPE](#) (2020-2022).

<sup>177</sup> WFP. 2020. Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Capacity to Respond to Emergencies.

<sup>178</sup> Several studies included positive findings on WFP support to host communities impacted by the Rohingya crisis (WFP. 2021. [Bangladesh CSPE](#) (2016-2019)). Support for social cohesion was also evident across all country offices in the evaluation sample and in, WFP. 2018. [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of the WFP Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis \(January 2015 – March 2018\)](#).

<sup>179</sup> See also, WFP. 2020. [Evaluation of Democratic Republic of the Congo WFP Interim Country Strategic Plan](#) (2018-2020); WFP. 2023. [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of WFP's Response in Myanmar](#) (2018-2022); and, WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of South Sudan WFP Interim Country Strategic Plan](#) (2018-2022).

<sup>180</sup> See also, WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of the Policy on WFP's Role in Peacebuilding in Transition Settings](#).

<sup>181</sup> IDS. 2024. [WFP's support to strengthening the national social protection system in Mauritania](#). London: Institute of Development Studies; Kenya Department of Refugee Services. 2023. [Shirika Plan](#). Nairobi: Ministry of Interior and National Administration; IOM. 2021. [Mozambique Protection Cluster - Durable Solutions in Northern Mozambique](#).

<sup>182</sup> See for example, WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition](#); WFP. 2024. [Evaluation of promoting self-reliance with livelihood, asset creation and resilience interventions in Uganda](#); and, WFP. 2022. [Pakistan CSPE](#) (2018-2022).

## 2.2.3 WFP operational and advocacy support for refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants to access national systems and durable solutions

### Contributions to national policies

Finding 13. WFP contributes to national policies addressing RIMs in contexts where there is a willingness on the part of the government to engage in discussions and it sees its primary advocacy role as addressing structural factors that constrain the delivery of RIM operations. However, there remain considerable variances in the extent to which WFP is willing or able to contribute to joint advocacy for the right of RIMs to be economically active and self-reliant.

#### 93. **While the evaluation identified encouraging corporate examples of WFP seeking to influence and support national policies in relation to RIMs, these efforts are limited at the national level.**

Globally, WFP participates in an inter-agency initiative on social protection in conflict where displacement is a cross-cutting theme (Box 2). This initiative provides a basis for WFP efforts to influence national social protection systems and their articulation across a range of other government services. At the regional level, RBC contributed to a joint declaration to the Arab Ministerial Forum on Social Protection to promote the inclusion of refugees and vulnerable migrants in national systems. WFP was also recognized by external stakeholders for its regional advocacy in addressing funding cuts for emergency responses in the Middle East and North Africa region and the Horn of Africa and Yemen, as well as its emergency response on irregular migration in Latin America, and its Sahel regional emergency response.<sup>183</sup> However, at the country level, the ability of WFP to influence national policies has been limited by the willingness or ability of governments to recognize or support displaced and irregular migrant groups in national systems. In Chad, Kenya and Türkiye, national stakeholders were concerned about which department would carry the financial costs of including refugees in the national social registry.<sup>184</sup> In Mauritania, although refugees are included in the social registry, the Government remains reluctant to allow refugees or irregular migrants free movement or access to the labour market, and there is no joint WFP-UN advocacy in this area.

#### **Box 2: Inter-agency social protection in conflict initiative**

Three core themes have been identified by the Global Forum on Social Protection in Conflict and Displacement Settings to capture the priorities of governments and partners.<sup>185</sup> These comprise:

- a) protecting and building resilient human capital through contributions to food security and nutrition, while supporting wider multi-dimensional poverty (gender, disability, vulnerability) and human development outcomes (education, skills);
- b) building resilient social protection systems and architecture, including digital payment systems and financing pathways, for social protection in situations of conflict or displacement; and
- c) exploring social protection contributions across the HDP nexus including toward social cohesion.

Three cross-cutting themes comprise:

- a) gender, equity and social inclusion (including people living with disability);
- b) displacement and how social protection can better support and include refugees and IDPs; and
- c) addressing situations where climate is a driver of conflict, or where climate and conflict intersect.

Source: Global Forum representatives.

<sup>183</sup> UN. 2021. [Ministerial Forum Declaration. The future of Social Protection in the Arab Region](#); WFP. 2024. [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of WFP's Response in the Sahel and Other Countries in Western Africa](#) (2018-2023)

<sup>184</sup> WFP. 2019. Evaluation of the Update of WFP's Safety Nets Policy (2012).

<sup>185</sup> The Global Forum on Social Protection in Conflict and Displacement Settings was launched in 2024 with the objective of bringing together a curated group of UN agencies, donors and cooperating partners to discuss good practice models for establishing and maintaining social protection in conflict settings.

94. **In countries where governments are reluctant to support RIM populations, WFP has to balance the need for effective government relationships against the need to improve the rights and entitlements afforded to refugees and irregular migrants.**<sup>186</sup> The evaluation found limited evidence of WFP engaging in policy and advocacy support for RIMs in settings where they are opposed by governments, or of WFP building a common influencing agenda with other UN agencies in these countries. This finding contrasts with the WFP Refugee Assistance Manual, which identifies a role for WFP to “work with governments, humanitarian and development partners to create an enabling legal and policy environment” for refugee self-reliance and integration. Even in countries where governments are non-signatories to international agreements and may not recognize the legal status of refugees, the evaluation found examples where WFP has made efforts to showcase how its investments in procurement, infrastructure development and environmental rehabilitation to support RIMs can contribute to the local economy. This approach has opened up space for WFP to engage national and local administrators in recognizing the economic opportunities that support to RIMs can provide to national development and loosen actual (if not legal) controls over their rights and entitlements.<sup>187</sup>

#### **Incorporation of refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants into national systems**

Finding 14. WFP has made important contributions to the integration of RIMs into national systems, with positive examples in relation to inclusion in social registries. The categories of RIMs that are integrated into national systems, and therefore benefit from these systems, has been dependent on national priorities and capacities in this regard, and recognition of the rights and needs of various groups in each context.

95. **WFP has played a role in contributing to RIM access to national social protection programmes and the labour market by supporting social registry registration efforts, which provide the potential for supporting durable solutions.** In Colombia, WFP played a key role in the registration of 900,000 irregular migrants in a single social registry, which supports access to all social national protection programmes.<sup>188</sup> WFP also supported the integration of refugees into the national social registry in Mauritania, and steps are underway to use the digital payment platform of the Mauritanian Government. In Chad and Djibouti, refugees have been integrated into the national social registry, which has provided them access to lean season support and to national social safety net payments. While these examples provide the potential for WFP to link country capacity strengthening in social protection to durable solutions, this was not found to have been a deliberate part of any durable solutions strategy approach (see Finding 15).

96. **In line with the WFP social protection strategy, and according to the context, WFP was able to provide technical expertise to support governments or to deliver on behalf of governments.**<sup>189</sup> In Uganda, WFP has supported the interlinking of social protection with social empowerment, resilience, livelihoods and digital-financial inclusion initiatives.<sup>190</sup> WFP provided capacity strengthening support to the Government of Jordan to develop national food security and school feeding strategies that include refugees,<sup>191</sup> while during the COVID-19 pandemic, WFP supported the Government of Ecuador in the distribution of coupons for migrants and vulnerable Ecuadorians.<sup>192</sup>

97. **National capacities affect the extent of WFP contributions to the inclusion of different RIM categories in national systems.** A common barrier to the integration of refugees is the capacity of host governments to support the cost and resources required for refugee integration where the addition of

<sup>186</sup> Examples include the exclusion of large migrant populations from Chad, Djibouti, Egypt and Mozambique CSPs.

<sup>187</sup> WFP targets for the local procurement of produce for fresh food corners in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, increased from 5 percent in 2023 to 20 percent in 2024 in recognition of the contributions to social cohesion and value chains.

<sup>188</sup> WFP. 2024. [WFP's support to strengthening the national social protection system in Colombia](#).

<sup>189</sup> WFP. 2021. [World Food Programme Strategy for Support to Social Protection](#).

<sup>190</sup> WFP. 2024. Decentralized Evaluation of promoting self-reliance with livelihood, asset creation and resilience interventions in Uganda. Uganda (2020–2023).

<sup>191</sup> WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of Jordan Country Strategic Plan Evaluation \(2020-2022\)](#).

<sup>192</sup> WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of Ecuador WFP Country Strategic Plan \(2017-2021\)](#).

refugee populations can place severe strain on public services that already struggle to meet domestic needs. In Kenya, WFP efforts have included assisting county governments in their rollout of refugee identity cards, while in Chad, WFP has targeted the integration of support for refugees into government emergency preparedness systems.<sup>193</sup> In Djibouti and Lebanon, weaknesses in national systems remain a barrier to any political agreement for the inclusion of refugees in the public healthcare system, despite efforts to engage in joint advocacy with the World Bank and other UN agencies, and the existence of a unified social registry in which refugees might in theory be registered.<sup>194</sup>

98. **Despite their legal entitlement to access national systems, in all of the contexts explored by the evaluation, IDPs face barriers accessing national systems.**<sup>195</sup> While difficulties relating to lost identity documentation, weak structures and resourcing (the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique), and accessibility in insecure areas (Myanmar) were recognized, the evaluation team found a gap in the attention of WFP to supporting IDP access to national systems. This gap appeared to reflect a focus on strengthening national social protection systems for resident populations rather than the integration of displaced groups, and suggests country offices may feel constrained by the position of some host governments toward their own internally displaced citizens.

#### **WFP support for durable solutions**

Finding 15. While there are examples of WFP contributing to the design and implementation of interventions in support of durable solutions, these are limited in scope and focus on integration. WFP does not yet play a significant role in advocating or partnering with other agencies for durable solutions. Questions remain as to whether or how it might play this role through relevant partnerships.

99. **The legal recognition by governments of RIMs has shaped the scope of WFP engagement in government and UN partnerships on durable solutions. However, there are areas where WFP can draw on its comparative advantage to contribute to more effective durable solutions in partnerships.** As discussed above, the primary durable solutions focus of WFP has been on integration through support to social protection initiatives and access to national systems for RIMs. WFP contributions to the resettlement of refugees were restricted to the single Chad case example, while the issue of people returning had only been addressed through short-term food or cash support for returnees rather than any wider engagement in facilitating national policy or programme-level agreements led by other agencies. Some donors and UN agencies question whether WFP is well placed to engage in durable solutions, but a majority of internal and external stakeholders noted how the comparative advantage of WFP, in terms of reach, scale and its relationship with national ministries, provides it with an opportunity to further explore joint efforts in this respect.<sup>196</sup>

### **2.2.4 WFP contribution to the protection of refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants and its accountability towards them**

#### **Mainstreaming protection for refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants**

Finding 16. WFP takes protection into account in the targeting and delivery of assistance and demonstrates appropriate understanding of protection issues in relation to the provision of food and cash transfers to RIMs in line with its corporate policy. However, there is an identified need to support cooperating partners to strengthen their capacity to mainstream protection, and for WFP to strengthen partnerships with other actors for more effective referral of RIM protection concerns. It is also crucial that WFP more carefully considers how its assistance impacts on the negative coping strategies that RIMs

<sup>193</sup> WFP. 2020. [Evaluation of Democratic Republic of the Congo WFP Interim Country Strategic Plan](#) (2018-2020).

<sup>194</sup> WFP. 2021. [Evaluation of Lebanon WFP Country Strategic Plan](#) (2018-2021).

<sup>195</sup> Includes DRC and Myanmar in the case study sample, and the Sudan and Somalia CSP evaluations.

<sup>196</sup> The Evaluation of WFP's Response to COVID-19 also noted that WFP was frequently requested to leverage its relationship with authorities to advocate for humanitarian access and longer-term partnerships. WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of WFP's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

resort to, and the protection risks that RIMs are vulnerable to, beyond the immediate sphere of distributions.

100. **The WFP Protection and Accountability Policy (2020) was devised to “respond to protection risks associated with hunger in all contexts and to achieving successful protection outcomes for the people it assists”.**<sup>197</sup> This framing integrates protection considerations in relation to beneficiary access into food, data (Finding 28), and the application of do no harm principles to minimize tensions among beneficiaries. Country-specific guidance on the assessment of protection-related issues is available through the WFP-UNHCR Joint Hub,<sup>198</sup> alongside corporate guidelines for targeting and prioritization.<sup>199</sup>

101. **Within the boundaries of the WFP Protection and Accountability Policy (2020), it was evident that WFP country offices have made efforts to take protection into account in the targeting of assistance for RIMs, the choice of assistance modality and the management of aid distributions.** WFP stakeholders at all levels noted the significant improvement in protection capacity at WFP headquarters as well as selected country offices in the past two years.<sup>200</sup> For example, in Myanmar the evaluation team found that protection was adequately considered at the strategic and operational levels, reflecting dedicated investment by the country office in specialized staff. However, there remain significant gaps in the tailoring by WFP of protection support for RIMs to spheres beyond the management of WFP distributions (Findings 18 and 21), and WFP continues to face challenges in securing dedicated resources and staff for protection.<sup>201</sup> The 2018 Evaluation of the WFP Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis also found inconsistent country-level protection analysis and limited staffing, and the case studies for this strategic evaluation revealed difficulties in allocating and securing dedicated protection funding and staff in Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>202</sup>

102. **The limited capacities of many local cooperating partners in multiple contexts have posed challenges to the effective mainstreaming of the protection and accountability policy for RIMs, and country office efforts to strengthen their protection capacities have had varying success.**<sup>203</sup> In Chad there was limited protection-related capacity assessment during partner selection. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, WFP staff reported that cooperating partners struggled to operationalize protection principles due to a lack of awareness and a high turnover of staff, suggesting an ongoing need to invest in capacity strengthening.<sup>204</sup> A particular weakness also stemmed from a lack of clarity as to whether or how cooperating partners should respond to RIM complaints and feedback on protection concerns that are not immediately related to food assistance (Finding 17).<sup>205</sup> Gaps in cooperating partners' integration of protection and cross-cutting issues were also highlighted in the synthesis of evaluation evidence and lessons on WFP cooperating partners.<sup>206</sup>

103. **WFP protection staff recognized that, despite significant progress, many field staff still struggle to understand the underlying interrelationships across food security, displacement and protection.** Despite WFP staff being the recipients of mandatory protection training on their

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<sup>197</sup> WFP. 2020. [WFP Protection and Accountability Policy](#). (WFP/EB.2/2020/4-A/1/Rev.2), p.3.

<sup>198</sup> UNHCR-WFP. 2019. [Joint Guidance: Targeting of Assistance to Meet Basic Needs](#) and UNHCR-WFP. 2023. [Joint Analytical Framework \(JAF\)](#).

<sup>199</sup> For example, UNHCR-WFP. 2022. [Integrating Protection and Accountability to Affected People in Assessments and Monitoring](#); and, WFP. 2024. [Targeting and Prioritization: VAM Resource Centre](#) though the latter lacks guidance to RIMs.

<sup>200</sup> See also, WFP. 2024. Mid-term review of the WFP protection and accountability policy (not yet published).

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> WFP. 2018. [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of the WFP Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis \(January 2015–March 2018\)](#).

<sup>203</sup> In the case of Ethiopia, the issue was that WFP working through government systems meant that WFP were not privy to the protection risks present. See: WFP. 2024. Evaluation of Ethiopia WFP Country Strategic Plan (2020-2025).

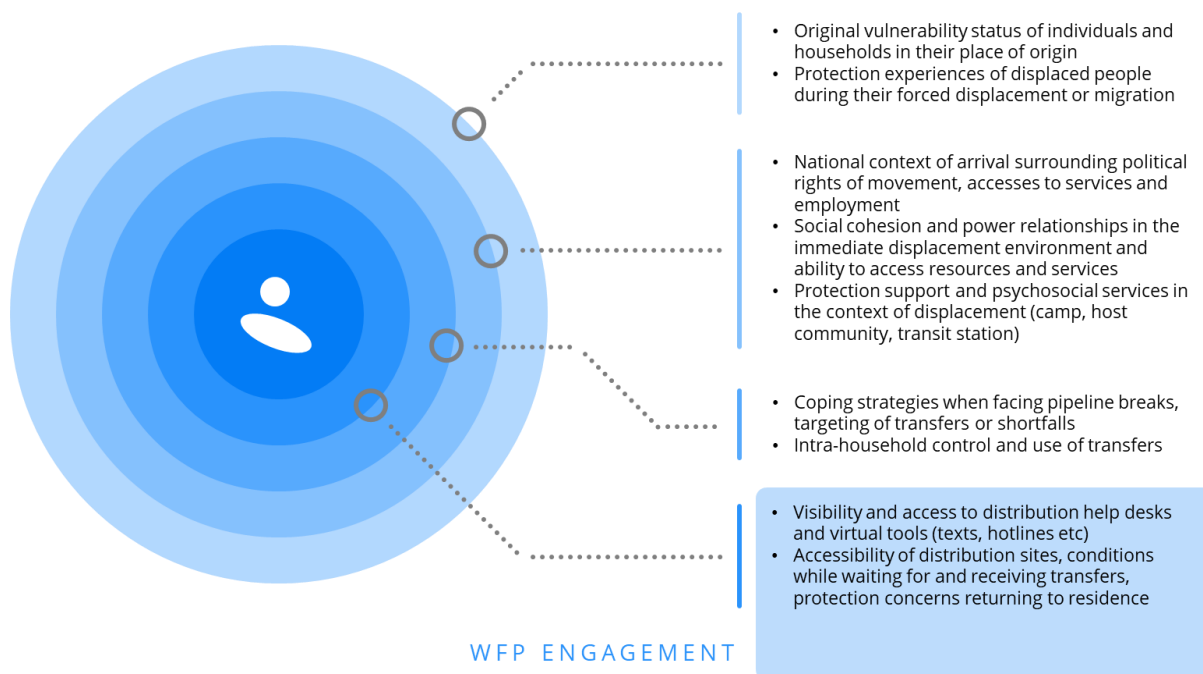
<sup>204</sup> See also, WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of Pakistan WFP Country Strategic Plan](#) (2018-2022).

<sup>205</sup> WFP. 2024. Mid-term review of the WFP protection and accountability policy (not yet published).

<sup>206</sup> WFP. 2024. [Synthesis of evidence and lessons on WFP's cooperating partners from centralized and decentralized evaluations](#).

responsibilities, and being aware of negative coping strategies used by RIMs, the primary protection focus of WFP has focused on mitigating risks related to access to distribution centres and the receipt of transfers, rather than broader responsibilities, which are considered to lie with UNHCR, IOM and governments.<sup>207</sup> The evaluation team found that there is a lack of clarity among WFP field and country office staff about how the cross-cutting vulnerability concerns identified in WFP guidance intersect with the protection risks RIMs faced both before and after distributions; and how WFP should integrate any broader understanding of protection in its provision of support for RIMs (Figure 8).

**Figure 12: Dimensions of protection considerations**



Source: Evaluation team.

104. **Although experiences of gender-based violence and negative sexual coping strategies of RIMs were regularly reported by WFP staff and women and girl beneficiaries, these beneficiaries did not consider WFP to have provided effective follow-up support or to have fully mitigated risks faced by IDPs (the Democratic Republic of the Congo), recent refugee arrivals (Mauritania), refugees in out-of-camp settings (Djibouti, Egypt, Mauritania), or refugees in protracted camp settings (Bangladesh, Kenya).** Protection risks were significantly heightened in contexts where there was a reduction or suspension of assistance to displaced populations, which led to negative coping mechanisms by families, for instance by resorting to child labour, child marriage and prostitution. These negative coping mechanisms, which were reported by WFP country office staff and by beneficiaries themselves, were exacerbated in contexts where displaced or migrant populations were not provided recognition by host governments and faced barriers when seeking to access protection support.

105. **The need for WFP to better address the broader protection concerns of RIMs through more effective partnering with relevant agencies requires further prioritization.** The evaluation found that there is a need to develop an inter-agency approach to collecting beneficiary feedback and to developing triage and referral pathways among agencies and the different assistance and services they provide. An

<sup>207</sup> Some CSP evaluations argue this protection focus relates to the use of a single protection-related indicator in annual country reports that focuses on "the proportion of targeted people accessing cash and/or food-based assistance without experiencing protection challenges". The need for a broad understanding is highlighted in, WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of Tanzania WFP Country Strategic Plan \(2017-2021\)](#); and, WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of Nigeria WFP Country Strategic Plan \(2019-2022\)](#); WFP. 2024. [Evaluation of Ethiopia WFP Country Strategic Plan \(2020-2025\)](#).

improved joint response for the protection of RIMs, as applied in Colombia, has important positive implications for inter-agency relationships, roles and responsibilities for referrals, data sharing and privacy, individual follow-up and psychosocial support.

### Accountability towards refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants

Finding 17. WFP has made significant progress in the introduction of complaints and feedback mechanisms, which were in place in all the countries studied. Although these mechanisms help improve beneficiary engagement and transfer management, WFP has faced challenges to act upon feedback it receives and is yet to consistently use this feedback to improve its responsiveness to RIM concerns.

106. **While the incorporation of accountability to affected population principles has been achieved across WFP policies, frameworks and guidelines, the implementation of accountability mechanisms and guidance to assist RIMs has been challenging.** WFP recently published a Community Engagement Strategy for Accountability to Affected People,<sup>208</sup> and has formulated comprehensive guidance and tools on complaints and feedback mechanisms.<sup>209</sup> The guidelines highlight the need for communication channels to be agreed with IDPs, refugees and host communities (including non-beneficiaries),<sup>210</sup> and for the consideration of vulnerabilities related to social inclusion, gender and age. Many WFP stakeholders considered substantial progress has been made in this area,<sup>211</sup> and verifiable examples of RIM beneficiary engagement, communication and use of hotlines were identified in all countries of the evaluation sample, alongside essential WFP training of cooperating partners.<sup>212</sup> However, while significant investment has been made in strengthening complaints and feedback mechanism systems in Bangladesh and Colombia, for example, other country offices struggle to implement the guidance in relation to RIMs. Most WFP country offices face backlogs and lack the capacity to respond to feedback reports, especially in contexts that face new waves of arrivals or where resource constraints lead to changes in prioritization. In addition, the quality of the practical application of accountability to affected population systems was uneven.<sup>213</sup> As one WFP staff member expressed it, “there is a lot of guidance: the challenge is how it is absorbed at field level”. Country office stakeholders reported having limited time or resources to synthesize and use community feedback in strategic or operational decision making, including in relation to RIMs. Many expressed the need for WFP to simplify its concepts and ensure organizational systems and processes focus on practical solutions, capacity building and support to country and field offices.

107. **Although WFP has put in place complaints and feedback mechanism processes that RIMs use in both camp and out-of-camp settings, and records are maintained, there is room for improvement in referral and resolution procedures on sexual exploitation and abuse for RIMs.** Data from the evaluation country case studies was coherent with the WFP Strategic Evaluation of WFP Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (2024), which found that WFP suffers from limitations in accountability to affected population data monitoring that create barriers to WFP understanding of sexual exploitation and abuse prevalence in its operations. In Bangladesh and Mauritania, stakeholders noted the need for stronger UN-wide referral mechanism and greater transparency over follow-up actions, while in Chad there was no systematic referral mechanism in place. In Mozambique, beneficiaries noted that the Green Line was not an effective channel for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) reporting for RIMs,

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<sup>208</sup> WFP. 2023. [WFP Community Engagement Strategy for Accountability to Affected People \(AAP\) \(2021-2026\)](#).

<sup>209</sup> WFP. 2024. WFP Community Feedback Mechanism: Standards, Guidance and Tools.

<sup>210</sup> This aspect was positively received by stakeholders in Egypt and Kenya as a conduit for more effective communication between RIMs and host communities and WFP.

<sup>211</sup> See, WFP. 2022. [WFP Protection and Accountability Policy](#). WFP/EB.2/2020/4-A/1/Rev.2; WFP. 2022. [WFP Community Engagement Strategy for Accountability to Affected Populations](#).

<sup>212</sup> An important example is Myanmar where WFP relies heavily on cooperating partners for its operations and AAP. WFP. 2023. [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of WFP's Response in Myanmar \(2018-2022\)](#).

<sup>213</sup> The uneven application of AAP was reflected in the results of the mid-term review of the WFP protection and accountability policy that found communication had been directed to protection staff but hadn't led to its prioritization by country offices, and significant financial and human resourcing constraints limited mainstreaming: WFP. 2024. Mid-term review of the WFP protection and accountability policy (not yet published).

and there were instances when callers to the hotline were directed to seek assistance from the individuals they wanted to complain about; while in Mauritania, recently arriving women and girls who had suffered sexual exploitation and abuse were concerned their complaints would not be handled appropriately as a result of community experiences of ineffectiveness of reporting mechanisms. Gaps in feedback and reporting mechanisms extend to broader protection issues faced by RIMs. Rather than address these concerns at the country level, some stakeholders called for an integrated regional approach among UN agencies supporting RIMs.

108. **Stakeholders noted that the lack of community participation in WFP programme design in most contexts had limited the effectiveness of subsequent implementation, and several countries were identified where WFP struggled to engage RIMs in community consultations on targeting and prioritization or address individual complaints.** Although the evaluation found significant recent efforts to improve accountability to the affected population in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, in most countries accountability mechanisms focused primarily on raising awareness and alerting beneficiaries to distribution plans rather than systematically incorporating their views into programmes.<sup>214</sup> Some internal and external stakeholders reported a reluctance to introduce appeals processes where beneficiaries challenged targeting and prioritization decisions over which WFP had little control due to funding availability. However, this was consistently questioned by donors who argued that they sought greater transparency over WFP targeting and prioritization decisions.<sup>215</sup> Nevertheless, a coherent picture across almost all the sample countries was ongoing difficulties in data sharing with UNHCR on up-to-date refugee registers that had led to regular beneficiary exclusion or inclusion errors (Finding 28).

## 2.2.5 Gender, social and disability inclusion

### Integration of refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants into WFP normative guidance on gender, social and disability inclusion

Finding 18. WFP has relevant policies and guidance in place for targeting assistance along gender, social and disability inclusion lines. However, there remain gaps in WFP tailoring its assistance to how the specific vulnerabilities of beneficiaries intersect with their displacement or migration status and the operationalization of research and tools is in its early stages.

109. **While WFP has developed substantial normative standards on gender and social inclusion through the Gender Policy (2022) and associated guidance, these do not include a specific focus on the intersection of gender, social inclusion and the status and vulnerabilities of RIMs.** The WFP Refugee Assistance Guidance Manual (2017) states that “people receiving assistance from WFP have a range of personal characteristics that may affect their access to or ability to benefit from WFP’s assistance”.<sup>216</sup> At a normative level, WFP has policies and guidance in place to support gender equality and disability outcomes. The WFP Gender Policy (2022) seeks to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment.<sup>217</sup> Comprehensive guidance is available to help WFP country offices fulfil these objectives. The WFP Disability Inclusion Road Map (2020-2021) aims to, “support the implementation of the Secretary-General’s 2019 United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) and WFP’s obligations more broadly regarding disability inclusion”.<sup>218</sup> Nonetheless, these normative frameworks do not make specific provisions for beneficiaries with RIM status.

<sup>214</sup> Examples include the Bangladesh CSPE (2021), Algeria ICSPE (2023), and the [Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Yemen Crisis](#) (2021).

<sup>215</sup> Documented examples include WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of Sudan WFP Country Strategic Plan \(2019-2023\)](#); WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of Algeria WFP Interim Country Strategic Plan \(2019-2022\)](#); WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of Jordan Country Strategic Plan Evaluation \(2020-2022\)](#); and WFP. 2018. [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of the WFP Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis \(January 2015 – March 2018\)](#).

<sup>216</sup> WFP. 2017. Refugee Assistance Guidance Manual, p. 25.

<sup>217</sup> WFP. 2022. [Gender Policy](#). See also footnote 35.

<sup>218</sup> WFP. 2020. [WFP Disability Inclusion Road Map \(2020-2021\)](#), p.2.

110. **While the evaluation did find emerging thinking within WFP on the intersecting dimensions of gender, social inclusion and RIM programming, the operationalization of early research and tools remains nascent.** WFP headquarters stakeholders largely recognize the specific challenges faced by vulnerable minorities and women RIMs. WFP has conducted joint research with the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) to better understand the intersections between gender and forced displacement, but the findings of this research are yet to be mainstreamed in WFP planning and programming for RIMs.<sup>219</sup> WFP has also implemented its Integrated Context Analysis (ICA) tool, which provides an opportunity to undertake a holistic analysis of conflict and population demographics. Headquarters-level stakeholders consider that the tool provides the opportunity to explore areas highly pertinent to RIMs, including gender and conflict, and gender and livelihoods needs, however guidance and support has yet to be tailored to forced displacement.

#### **Gender, social and disability inclusion of refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants in programming**

Finding 19. WFP has made some progress toward paying greater attention to gender equality and social inclusion among RIM beneficiaries. However, across the country contexts covered by the evaluation, the limited understanding of the intersections of gender equality and displacement-related vulnerabilities is compounded by the lack of WFP corporate data disaggregation. Little evidence of tailored support for RIMs living with disabilities and the elderly was identified, suggesting insufficient consideration of how WFP support for immediate needs should be tailored to address specific vulnerabilities within RIM households.

111. **WFP gender analysis focuses more on equitable access and less on root causes of inequality, limiting programme choices that promote gender equality.** While WFP conducts gender analysis as part of CSPs, programme design and operations, the focus on equitable access does not fully explore or inform programme choices to address the root causes of inequality or the empowerment of women and girls in line with the WFP Gender Policy.<sup>220</sup> It was also not evident how analyses informed programme choices surrounding gender and displacement, including protection considerations beyond the immediate sphere of WFP distributions (Finding 16). For example, although WFP often supported women to adopt a leadership role in food distributions, and women were predominantly the recipients of WFP food assistance in displacement settings, there were instances where this led to a higher labour burden on some women refugees (for example, in Bangladesh, Kenya, and Mauritania), and limited attention was given to how distributions influenced the role and status of women IDPs and refugees in their household or wider community.<sup>221</sup> The targeting of pregnant and lactating women and girls (PLWG) and children aged 6-59 months with top-up rations in Bangladesh, Egypt, Kenya and Mauritania provide examples of WFP programming support for RIMs that integrated gender and age considerations. However, in line with the conclusions of several CSP evaluations,<sup>222</sup> the country case studies revealed how gender dynamics in both refugee and IDP settings are insufficiently understood, leaving WFP largely unable to leverage its support for immediate needs in ways that contribute to gender equality and social inclusion for RIMs (Findings 16, 17 and 21).<sup>223</sup>

112. **The evaluation found that country offices have struggled to interpret and adopt policies and guidance in programme design and delivery at the intersection of gender and displacement.** Across the country case studies there was a gap in how country offices account for the ways in which gender, age, disability and social inclusion intersect with the vulnerabilities of displaced and irregular migrant persons in

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<sup>219</sup> See for example, Daigle, M. 2022. [Gender, power and principles in humanitarian action](#). London: Overseas Development Institute.

<sup>220</sup> WFP. 2022. [WFP Gender Policy 2022](#).

<sup>221</sup> See also, WFP. 2023. [Unequal Access: Gendered Barriers to Humanitarian Assistance](#).

<sup>222</sup> CSP evaluations include Algeria 2023, Cameroon 2020, DRC 2020, Bangladesh 2021, Lebanon 2021, Ecuador 2022, Jordan 2022, Pakistan 2022, Tanzania 2022, and Zimbabwe 2022.

<sup>223</sup> Also highlighted in WFP. 2023. [Unequal Access: Gendered Barriers to Humanitarian Assistance](#).

the design of their response, or how these may intersect with wider ethnic, legal or sociocultural considerations that affect their protection needs (Finding 21).

113. **Limitations in corporate data disaggregation place limitations on the analysis of WFP support to RIMs with a gender and social inclusion lens.** While WFP corporate data is disaggregated by sex, age and residence status, the primary outcome data focus at the household level limits the ability of WFP to understand and respond to the intra-household gender and disability dynamics and needs of RIMs. It is not possible on the basis of available WFP data to analyse at a corporate level sex disaggregation among RIMs, or, at the individual level, the intersection between residence status, sex and age. The evaluation team considers these analyses essential for WFP in order for it to quantify how effectively it has targeted support for RIMs.

114. **WFP is increasingly taking interest in disability inclusion and aims to adhere to IASC guidelines.**<sup>224</sup> Disability data from post distribution monitoring indicate that a significant proportion of beneficiary refugee households in protracted contexts like Kenya and Bangladesh include members with disabilities.<sup>225</sup> The Mozambique country office supported the Forum for Mozambican Disabled Associations to provide an advisory role in the disability working group under the protection cluster. Many WFP country offices did make specific provisions for aid distribution to ensure people with disabilities were included, but the effectiveness of such measures varied in relation to food and cash distribution sites that cater to RIMs. Some interviewees highlighted that at the field and operational levels this burden usually falls on the same staff member responsible for gender and accountability to affected populations, creating a bandwidth constraint to the systematic operationalization of disability inclusion. It is important to note that, while this was reported by refugees and IDPs included in the evaluation, the finding is likely applicable to WFP more broadly.

#### Gender equality considerations

Finding 20. While WFP interventions for RIMs and resident populations are gender-targeted, they do not address the root causes of inequality, cultural norms, values, or power structures; and WFP does not make a meaningful contribution to potentially transformative social inclusion outcomes among RIMs.

115. **The transformational effects that displacement can have on gender equality is not yet considered within WFP planning and programming for RIMs, despite it being widely recognized in relevant literature.**<sup>226</sup> Headquarters stakeholders recognized the key opportunities and challenges arising from changes in traditional gender roles within displacement settings, but at the time of the evaluation had not determined how far WFP should target its programming to capitalize and embed such changes. In cases where WFP made efforts to support self-reliance, there was a tendency for WFP to engage beneficiaries in accordance with traditional gender roles rather than recognizing how these may have changed as a result of displacement. For example, refugee women who participated in the evaluation did not feel that vocational training offered in more “traditionally female” occupations such as make-up artistry and sewing accounted for their roles as heads of household. In Egypt, educated Sudanese women refugees reported that the vocational training they received did not consider their background or qualifications such as university degrees in engineering and computing.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> IASC. 2019. [Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#). Inter-Agency Standing Committee, Geneva. See also, WFP. 2024. [Inclusive Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Emergency Preparedness and Response Practice Guide](#).

<sup>225</sup> A comprehensive review of WFP support for disability inclusion in Indonesia and the Philippines is also relevant. See, WFP. 2024. [Inclusive Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Emergency Preparedness and Response Practice Guide](#).

<sup>226</sup> Daigle, M. 2022. [Gender, power and principles in humanitarian action](#). London: Overseas Development Institute.

<sup>227</sup> WFP and external KIIs with beneficiaries and partners.

## Responding to vulnerabilities of different categories of refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants

Finding 21. Although WFP considers gender, age and disability in its targeting, it is rare to see assistance tailored to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of different categories of RIMs. There is a gap in WFP consideration of whether the vulnerabilities specific to different RIM categories require a specific response, and how the intersecting vulnerabilities of RIMs are integrated into relevant policy and guidance.

116. **WFP does not currently have corporate-level guidance that responds to the vulnerabilities of RIMs relative to their specific displacement or migration status.** Based on WFP policy mapping (Annex VIII), the evaluation team found that, although policies and guidelines do include references to RIMs, the examination of beneficiary status is not consistently applied in relation to proposed interventions and approaches or how WFP may need to respond to the specific vulnerabilities of different RIM groups. Policy examples where refugees and IDPs are identified for consideration as broad status categories include: the WFP Definition of Emergencies (2005); the Nutrition Policy (2017); and the Strategy for Support to Social Protection (2021). The last is one of only a few policies that identify irregular migrants as a specific status category. Conversely, while migration status is identified as a strand to an intersectional approach to accountability to affected populations, refugees and IDPs are not mentioned in WFP's Community Engagement Strategy for Accountability to Affected People (2021).<sup>228</sup> Neither are RIMs or host communities identified in the School Feeding Policy (2013), the Food Assistance for Assets Policy (2017), or the Disability Inclusion Road Map (2020). While the Gender Policy (2022) refers to refugee law and the importance of strengthening government partnerships to support migrants, it provides no specific analysis of the gender-related vulnerabilities of RIMs or how WFP might approach GEWE among displaced and migrant populations.

117. **This patchy coverage of vulnerabilities specific to the status of RIMs at policy and guidance levels was found to have an adverse impact on the meaningful incorporation of adaptations to the needs of RIM categories in WFP strategic plans and programme approaches, that is to say, consideration of how to tailor assistance to refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants based on vulnerabilities related to their legal status.** Table 4 below illustrates how some of the vulnerabilities of specific RIM categories pose different factors for consideration that are relevant to WFP interventions and to other intersecting criteria, signposting findings across the report for cross-referencing where these factors have been identified and examined in the findings.

**Table 6: Selected examples of factors influencing the specific vulnerabilities of refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants**

Vulnerability	Factors influencing differential vulnerabilities between RIM categories	How well WFP considers vulnerability	Findings where these RIM vulnerabilities are discussed
<b>Access to the labour market</b>	In most contexts, refugees and irregular migrants have limited access to formal labour markets due to their legal status. This can act as a push factor towards informal employment that risks exploitation and abuse.	Variable country response	Self-reliance – 11 RIM vulnerabilities – 21
<b>Access to services (e.g., health, education)</b>	Refugees may be granted access to free or subsidised health and education depending on their entitlements.  Irregular migrants are unlikely to have access to national services due to their legal status.	Limited response	School feeding – 9 Resilience – 11

<sup>228</sup> WFP. 2021. [Community Engagement Strategy for Accountability to Affected People](#) (AAP) (2021-2026).

	IDPs access to national services may be constrained due to national capacity issues, lack of documentation, or lack of support for certain populations.		National systems – 14 Assessment and analysis – 24
<b>Access to protection services</b>	Refugees who are not recognized and irregular migrants are likely to face difficulties in accessing protection services, for example, child protection, GBV services, and birth and civil registrations.  IDPs can also face difficulties in accessing protection services in some contexts.	Variable country response	Protection – 16
<b>Location (camp versus urban or rural)</b>	Sphere standards are expected to be applied in camp settings for IDPs and refugees, although this may not always be possible due to funding challenges. Irregular migrants will not have access to camps.  RIMs in urban settings are obliged to secure basic needs such as shelter and are at risk of exploitation and abuse.  Rural locations may pose challenges in terms of accessing services for all RIM categories.	Effective in camps and rural areas  Limited for urban settings  Limited for irregular migrants	Urban programming and adaptations – 22

Source: Evaluation team.

## 2.2.6 Adapting and leveraging new opportunities to work with refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants in urban settings

Finding 22. Apart from country contexts that have developed an explicit urban focus, there is a tendency not to include RIMs living in urban areas in WFP support, particularly in countries where WFP is responding to large camp-based populations or where there may be challenges in identifying RIMs in urban areas. The lack of disaggregation between rural and urban interventions and of assessment or analysis of urban displaced and migrant populations in most countries reflects the historical operational focus of WFP in rural areas, despite the recent development of appropriate tools. The predominance of transfers tied to rural settings can create a “pull” factor, by which household members seeking to maintain their eligibility for transfers must travel back and forth between urban centres and camps.

118. **The WFP Urban Strategy (2023) highlights how 60 percent of the world’s 26 million refugees and two out of three IDPs reside in urban areas where they face limited livelihood opportunities or access to services.** These barriers arise from stigma, discrimination and a lack of a government-issued identity documentation. The WFP Urban Strategy (2023) identifies the need to engage urban authorities to leverage rural-urban linkages and improve people-centred targeting and data systems.<sup>229</sup>

119. **WFP emergency assistance objectives for urban areas focus on re-establishing market arrangements and revitalizing economic activities that provide employment for the urban and peri-urban poor.** Examples of activities considered appropriate in urban settings include: general and targeted food distributions; short-term food for work or recovery; and institutional feeding.<sup>230</sup> WFP guidance on resilience building approaches in urban settings has been incorporated in the updated Three-Pronged Approach (3PA), which recognizes the need to plan any transitions toward self-reliance at the outset of an

<sup>229</sup> WFP. 2023. [WFP Urban Strategy – Achieving zero hunger in an urbanising world](#). See also, United Nations Secretary-General. 2022. [The United Nations Secretary-General’s Action Agenda on Internal Displacement](#); and, HLPE. 2024. [Strengthening urban and peri-urban food systems to achieve food security and nutrition, in the context of urbanization and rural transformation](#).

<sup>230</sup> WFP. 2020. Emergency Field Operations Pocketbook.

emergency response and provides examples that incorporate RIM considerations.<sup>231</sup>

120. **Of the evaluation's ten country case studies, only Colombia (irregular migrants) and Egypt (refugees) have explicit urban responses for RIMs,<sup>232</sup> while the CSPE review only identified Syria (IDPs).**<sup>233</sup> The exact framework for RIM responses in urban settings (as in other settings) is developed by individual country offices, which is appropriate given the diversity of political, economic, displacement and funding contexts across countries. Among beneficiaries, the ability to access urban areas was seen as critical and dependent on government support to participate in the labour market.

121. **Gaps in the collection of urban data provide little ability to examine WFP support for RIMs beyond the individual country output level.**<sup>234</sup> There are difficulties in capturing WFP operations in urban areas because reporting may not differentiate between rural and urban interventions. In addition, there are challenges in identifying and developing programming tailored to the needs of RIMs in these settings. Several internal stakeholders challenged the lack of support by WFP for urban RIMs by arguing that their effective deprioritization has created a pull factor, keeping RIMs in camps or forcing them to travel back and forth between the city and the camp to maintain their household eligibility.<sup>235</sup> This was compounded by a mismatch between WFP livelihood support that emphasizes food assistance for training in agriculture and rural livelihoods rather than building the capacities of RIMs to enter labour markets in urban settings.<sup>236</sup>

122. **Although WFP rapidly adapted its systems and procedures to respond to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic in ways that led to the greater incorporation of urban refugees and IDPs than before the pandemic, increases in support for urban RIMs do not appear to have been sustained.**<sup>237</sup> The predominant response from WFP has been to focus on out-of-camp or camp-based support for RIMs in rural areas. Even in settings like Djibouti, where both WFP and government staff were concerned about large "floating" urban displaced or irregular migrant populations, the development of any strategic response through a CSP or urban assessment was largely absent. In Mozambique, despite urban refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants being considered more vulnerable than those registered in camps, they remained outside WFP support. This pattern was considered a reflection of the challenges of securing donor interest when funding priorities continued to focus on rural settings.<sup>238</sup>

## 2.2.7 WFP management of risks related to its support to refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants

Finding 23. WFP identifies and manages risks primarily in relation to its ability to access and assist RIM populations. While WFP risk management allows country offices and regional bureaux to adapt to large variances in the national and regional contexts where it operates, risk registers do not yet address the management of risks specific to RIMs posed by the context of displacement or migration or the specific vulnerabilities these populations face.

123. **WFP country offices identify risks related to securing host government support and**

<sup>231</sup> WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition](#); WFP 2022. [WFP's Contribution to Resilient Food Systems in vulnerable and shock-prone settings: A Practical Framework and Orientation Note for WFP Programme Teams](#).

<sup>232</sup> WFP. 2024. [Colombia Annual Country Report 2023](#).

<sup>233</sup> WFP. 2018. [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of the WFP Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis \(January 2015 – March 2018\)](#).

<sup>234</sup> See for example, WFP. 2024. [Colombia Annual Country Report 2023](#).

<sup>235</sup> In Djibouti, Kenya and Mozambique refugees face a choice between trying to be self-reliant in cities or becoming dependent in camps. Men household members indicated they would move to the city to find employment, leaving wives and children in camps to receive education and other support. Also a finding in, WFP. 2024. [Évaluation de la réponse d'urgence du PAM aux crises prolongées au Sahel et dans d'autres pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest et centrale](#) (2018-2023).

<sup>236</sup> See also, WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition](#).

<sup>237</sup> WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of the WFP Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). Country examples included: Afghanistan, Kenya, South Sudan, and Zimbabwe.

<sup>238</sup> Triangulation of donor and WFP country office KIIs.

**maintaining humanitarian access in CSP documents and risk registers.** In the analysis of CSP documents in the evaluation country samples, it was evident that country offices sought to align their CSP activities and strategic outcomes to the rights and entitlements afforded to RIMs by governments. While this approach allowed country offices to build government support through ongoing liaisons with their counterparts and to maintain humanitarian access, it risked WFP overlooking access to displaced or irregular migrant populations that governments do not support. While a broader risk analysis for RIMs may not be appropriate in CSPs for countries where governments may set strict boundaries on the rights of different RIM groups, the evaluation team found no evidence of WFP including risks associated with its support for RIMs in the internal risk registers for these countries.

**124. Clear evidence of regional bureau support to help country offices manage risks associated with displacement and migration was identifiable in contexts facing new population movements.** However, in countries where host governments may not support RIMs, or where internal displacement may have resulted from conflict, regional bureau support tended to rely on case-by-case arrangements, and the evaluation found little evidence that the associated risks had been clearly captured in internal risk registers. As a result, it remained unclear how corporate risk oversight was monitored and maintained in some difficult operational contexts.

**125. The limited understanding or integration of vulnerability considerations specific to RIMs have led to gaps in identifying risks that may be critical to WFP programmatic choices and the targeting of specific groups within displaced and migrant populations.** The evaluation identified gaps in WFP analysis and response to the specific risks facing RIMs, as well as domestic populations. It also identified potential reputational and operational concerns related to the tailored provision of relevant food and nutrition support, and suggests putting in place appropriate social safeguards. Examples of areas where the evaluation identified specific risks associated with RIMs are summarized in Table 5. The so-far limited attention by WFP to building an understanding of how gender, protection and other vulnerabilities intersect with displacement and irregular migration (Finding 18) was apparent in all but one of the country case studies (the exception being Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh). The introduction in 2022 of the integrated context analysis and risk assessment (ICARA) tool, which includes context, gender and protection risk considerations, is a positive step towards strengthening understanding of RIM vulnerabilities and supporting better mitigation of protection risks.

**Table 7: Summary of gaps in identification and management of risks for refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants**

Risk areas where gaps have been identified	How well WFP manages the risk	Associated findings
<b>National context</b> In countries where governments restrict the rights of refugees, country offices risk becoming being locked in to immediate needs support. In countries where refugees have a right to find employment, but where WFP food assistance remains camp-based, a “pull factor” is generated that draws refugees back towards camps. CSP alignment to the legal positioning of host governments risks leaving gaps in WFP support for RIMs, especially irregular migrants. In countries where governments may not prioritize UN support for IDPs, country offices working “under the radar” face operational risks to their working arrangements with host governments.	Limited response Variable country response Limited except RBP WFP response largely effective	Context – 6, 11 to 15, 22 Self-reliance and durable solutions – 11 to 15 CSPs – 4, 5
<b>Regional context</b>	Modest response	Regional – 5,

WFP strategic focus at the country level has led to gaps in its analysis of the cross-border drivers of displacement and irregular migration, leading to limitations in its cross-border preparedness and response.	through regional platforms	15, 16, 24, 34 Regional thematic study (Annex IX)
<b>Vulnerability analysis, targeting and prioritization</b> <p>The focus by WFP on household-level beneficiary analysis and monitoring leads to gaps in its understanding of the effectiveness of its support to the specific sex, age and disability vulnerabilities of RIMs.</p> <p>The exclusion of host communities in targeting and prioritization can lead to social tensions when host communities consider that displaced and irregular migrant populations are prioritized.</p>	<p>WFP aware of the problem but limited response</p> <p>WFP response largely effective</p>	<p>Understanding of vulnerability – 16, 17, 21</p> <p>Analysis – 24</p> <p>Targeting – 25</p> <p>Monitoring – 26</p>
<b>Protection</b> <p>The protection approach by WFP does not yet respond to how displacement and irregular migration may result from protection concerns and may be compounding food insecurity and malnutrition.</p> <p>Ruptures in supply chains and changes in targeting or prioritization impact on the indebtedness of vulnerable households and the adoption of negative coping strategies, leading to heightened protection risks.</p>	<p>WFP protection fits current boundaries</p> <p>Variable country response</p>	<p>Protection – 16</p> <p>Accountability and feedback – 17</p> <p>Vulnerability – 21</p>

Source: Evaluation team.

## 2.3. To what extent does WFP create an appropriate internal enabling environment for its support to refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants?

### 2.3.1 WFP evidence generation and use to support strategic and operational decision making on refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants

#### Assessments and analysis

Finding 24. Although WFP undertakes a range of assessments and analyses, these are not currently designed to build a comprehensive understanding of vulnerabilities associated with displacement or irregular migration. While WFP partners consistently identified WFP assessments as an area of added value, they emphasized that in dynamic displacement settings WFP needs to give greater focus to providing actionable, real-time advice, or advice based on forecasts, to its partners in order to support the prompt introduction or adjustment of activities.

126. **The integration of RIMs into WFP-led and joint assessments of food security and nutrition with other agencies can be seen in both WFP and inter-agency case examples: at national and cross-border levels (for example, for forced displacement in Bangladesh, Kenya, Mauritania and Mozambique); for irregular migration (for example, in Colombia and West Africa);<sup>239</sup> and in response to regional humanitarian crises (for example, in Afghanistan, Sudan, Syria and Venezuela).** While most WFP food security and nutrition assessments for RIMs are led by individual country offices, in many

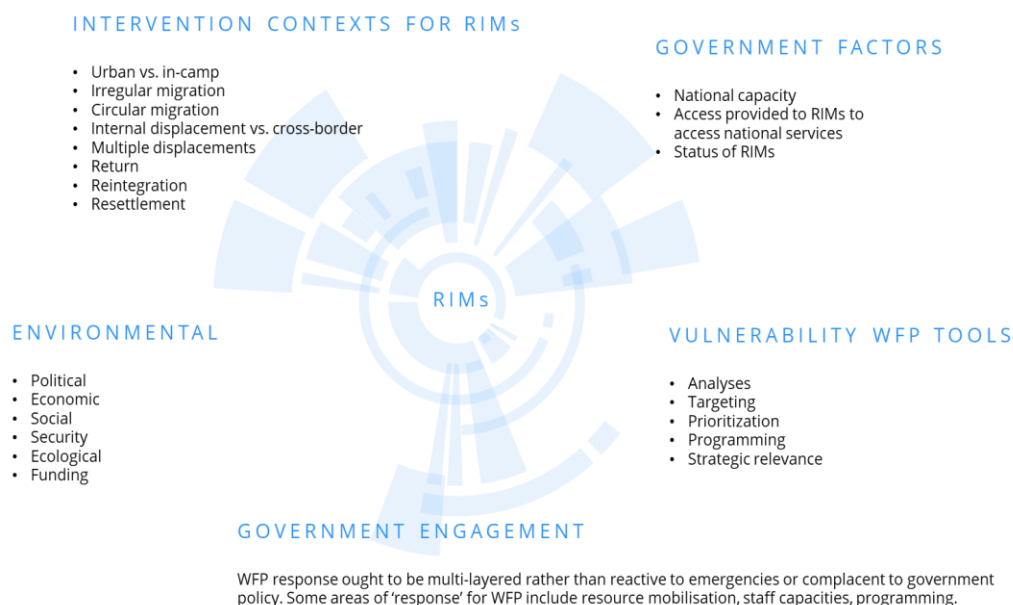
<sup>239</sup> FAO, WFP. 2023. [Hunger Hotspots: FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity, November 2023 to April 2024 outlook](#); WFP. 2023. [Addressing Irregular Migration through Principled Programmatic Approaches: Examining the West Africa Route](#).

cases they may involve strategic partners and be complemented by regional or corporate assessments that collectively support the strategic and operational planning and response of country offices. CSPEs and country office key informant interviews also confirmed that WFP tools and guidance such as the WFP Toolkit on Food Security Analysis are extensively applied across different settings.<sup>240</sup> While this approach is in line with WFP integration of RIM considerations in recent corporate guidance for assessments and analysis,<sup>241</sup> the evaluation found limited evidence of WFP country level food security and nutrition analyses integrating a specific assessment of the differing vulnerabilities of RIMs, thereby leaving an important gap in WFP analysis and understanding of these vulnerabilities.

**127. Gaps in the integration of the differing vulnerabilities of RIMs into assessments and analysis may risk a lack of WFP responsiveness to the specific needs of displaced and migrant populations.**

Effective decision making relies on a dynamic understanding of target populations. Adopting a displacement and irregular migration lens reveals this is often not the case for RIMs in WFP (Finding 21). There is a gap in the current WFP position as to why refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants should merit corporate and CSP attention and how this might affect the different dimensions of WFP data collection and vulnerability analysis (Figure 9). The evaluation finds that WFP vulnerability analyses, targeting, programming and strategic relevance can be strengthened to more clearly identify and categorize RIMs for the design of activities and be more responsive to the shifting context of displacement or irregular migration.

**Figure 13: Dimensions for understanding refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants in relation to the internal and external context**



Source: Evaluation team.

**128. The evaluation also highlights a gap in WFP analysis and support to country offices in anticipating and responding to cross-border displacement and irregular migration, which could be linked to the future formulation of multi-country strategies for anticipatory action, emergency**

<sup>240</sup> For example, WFP. 2018. [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of the WFP Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis \(January 2015 – March 2018\)](#).

<sup>241</sup> For example, the WFP Conflict Analysis and Conflict Sensitivity Risk Assessment Guidance Note (2021), Integrated Cross-Cutting Context Analysis and Risk Assessment - Analysis Framework (2023), and [Protection and AAP Analysis Handbook](#) (2021). Notably, WFP's Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis Guidelines (2021) and [Essential Needs Assessment Guidance Note](#) (2023) identify key data sources and examples for the analysis of population movements.

**preparedness and response, and longer-term programming.** This gap was highlighted by many internal stakeholders and reflected a key finding of the WFP 2024 MOPAN assessment.<sup>242</sup> For example, the WFP country-level food security and nutrition analysis does not integrate the drivers of displacement or anticipatory analysis of displacement or migration. In comparison, the primary focus of external stakeholders was on how WFP food security and nutrition analyses could be formulated to provide more timely information and advice to emergency responders or those seeking to update their programmes when facing new population movements. While some of this information is available at the corporate level, such as through the Hunger Map, it was not apparent that country offices were using WFP information sources to feed into preparedness planning, or to develop a forecast-based analysis of displacement and irregular migration relevant to the local context.

### Needs-based targeting

Finding 25. Needs-based targeting provides WFP with an important tool to support the tailoring of assistance to different displacement or irregular migration settings and the associated opportunities and constraints different RIM categories face. However, targeting ought to consider the subsequent support provided to households that have been deprioritized due to their lower vulnerability status, and the opportunity costs of introducing expensive targeting procedures that require regular updates in dynamic settings.

129. **Although WFP corporate guidance appropriately outlines how targeting should be tailored to the local context and specific needs and preferences of beneficiary households and individuals,<sup>243</sup> the evaluation found significant cases where blanket, rather than needs-based, targeting was used for refugees and IDPs in protracted settings.**<sup>244</sup> The evaluation recognizes that, in many of these cases, the adoption by WFP of a blanket approach and the lack of needs-based targeting was a consequence of difficulties related to inter-agency agreements, collaboration and data-sharing in contexts where WFP targets RIMs (Findings 29, 34 and 36). In addition, in many contexts, vulnerability assessments identified a highly homogenous vulnerability profile in RIM populations and WFP established, jointly with UNHCR, that vulnerability-based targeting would not be appropriate or cost-effective.<sup>245</sup> Even though in some countries WFP conducts food gap analyses to establish the needs of RIMs, the continued use of blanket assistance in several settings, despite an increasing funding gap, has led to frustration among donors, partners and beneficiaries over diminished effectiveness due to decreasing levels of in-kind or cash assistance per household, as available funds are spread over a larger number of people rather than targeted to those most in need.

130. **In cases where the evaluation did identify strong examples of needs-based targeting, particularly in some protracted refugee contexts, it nevertheless found that WFP faces subsequent challenges securing the necessary financial resources to support less vulnerable households that should in theory transition toward self-reliance.** Strong examples of needs-based targeting in refugee contexts that aligned with joint WFP-UNHCR guidance were highlighted in several of the case studies including Mauritania and Chad.<sup>246</sup> However, without support for longer-term solutions, many of the less vulnerable households have no incentive to explore self-reliance opportunities, and both WFP field staff and beneficiaries cited examples where these households had fallen back to a higher vulnerability status (Finding 11). Notwithstanding the challenges WFP faces in securing longer-term funding in displacement contexts, multiple stakeholders argued that the introduction of needs-based targeting must be associated

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<sup>242</sup> MOPAN. 2024. [MOPAN report for WFP \(2024\)](#), p.41.

<sup>243</sup> UNHCR-WFP. 2019. [Joint Guidance: Targeting of Assistance to Meet Basic Needs](#).

<sup>244</sup> Examples include Mozambique and Kenya. WFP introduced targeting in DRC in 2023. See also WFP. 2024. Evaluation of Ethiopia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

<sup>245</sup> The evaluation did not examine the vulnerability analysis conducted to determine the homogeneity of refugee populations and cannot corroborate whether there were any limitations in the vulnerability analysis methodology that led to this conclusion.

<sup>246</sup> WFP. 2021. [Lessons on UNHCR WFP Collaboration in Hub Supported Countries](#).

with the provision of resources and support for a clear transition pathway toward self-reliance (Findings 11 and 30).

**131. The evaluation also found that needs-based targeting assessments used in displacement settings were either out-of-date or incurred considerable costs in order to keep them updated.**

Recurrent population movements require regular data collection, analysis and data sharing to update and re-categorize beneficiary registers across agencies.<sup>247</sup> Due to the dynamic nature of displacement settings, a reliance on outdated assessments was reported in four out of ten countries.<sup>248</sup> In Egypt and Kenya, WFP reliance on UNHCR registration data for needs-based targeting among refugee populations that had not been updated raised concerns over duplication and exclusion errors. Strong arguments were made that WFP should consider the cost effectiveness of needs-based targeting in relation to alternative options such as adding nutrition top-ups for PLWG and children aged 6-59 months over a basic ration.

### Monitoring systems

Finding 26. WFP monitoring systems are not designed to follow individual beneficiaries, or the changes to their vulnerabilities that may have resulted from their targeting and receipt of transfers. WFP monitoring systems are also not able to respond to the movement of beneficiaries between different CSP activities or across borders. As a result, WFP is unable to build a line of sight focused on the beneficiary, such as when programmes transition individuals and households along a pathway from immediate needs to self-reliance.

**132. The evaluation found that the inability of WFP to monitor beneficiaries by RIM status, and in relation to the specific activities they are provided, limits its ability to compare data across countries, or analyse its contributions to specific results for RIM populations.** WFP monitoring systems track distributions or activities, align the CSP logframe to budget and programming systems, and identify the overall number of beneficiary recipients.<sup>249</sup> While CSP logframes also support a combination of mandatory and discretionary output and outcome indicators, the evaluation's analysis of country- and corporate-level monitoring data revealed a lack of alignment between the tracking of beneficiary numbers by status, and whether WFP activities led to specific determinable outputs or outcomes for different groups.<sup>250</sup>

**133. The case studies revealed how country offices aggregate the counting of Tier 1 beneficiaries across a mix of one-off, short- and longer-term interventions, and in many cases bundle the counting of IDPs, returnees, circular migrants or confined groups with the counting of crisis-affected resident populations.** These practices limit data comparability between countries, while gaps in the analysis of intra- and inter-household data make it unclear how individual WFP activities may or may not contribute to output- or outcome-level results at the programme level.<sup>251</sup> These findings echo the Evaluation Synthesis of WFP's Performance Measurement and Monitoring (2023), which found that 69 percent of decentralized evaluations and all centralized evaluations had raised concerns over the WFP monitoring framework, while 34 percent of decentralized evaluations and 52 percent of centralized evaluations noted insufficient data disaggregation for sex, status, disability and age.

**134. Although WFP monitoring systems allow country offices to capture, compile and analyse data for internal reporting, they do not disaggregate vulnerability and status data on beneficiaries at the individual level: this creates a barrier to donor reporting, inter-agency data sharing and collaboration.** In cases where donors request individual-level data for RIM populations, programme staff

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<sup>247</sup> For more on data sharing, see Finding 28.

<sup>248</sup> Includes Chad, DRC, Egypt and Mauritania.

<sup>249</sup> WFP monitoring systems refers to WFP integration of the CRF into the CSP logframe and CO Tool for Managing (programme operations) Effectively (COMET).

<sup>250</sup> WFP. 2024. Évaluation de la réponse d'urgence du PAM aux crises prolongées au Sahel et dans d'autres pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest et centrale (2018-2023).

<sup>251</sup> WFP. 2023. [Evaluation synthesis of WFP's performance measurement and monitoring, \(2018-2021\)](#).

reported maintaining separate spreadsheets to produce bespoke reports, compromising accuracy and limiting efficiency or meaningful aggregation. The activity-focused approach of WFP is also at odds with the systems of key partners such as UNHCR and IOM, whose mandate requires them to understand how status impacts on vulnerability and access to assistance, creating a barrier to effective sharing of data and inter-agency collaboration. Box 3 summarizes examples of the data requirements identified by multiple key informant interviewees and donors that agencies may need in order to achieve clarity over beneficiary identification for RIMs, the management of transfers, and the tracking of targeted support from immediate needs toward self-reliance.

**Box 3: Data requirements of the beneficiary pathway**

- individual and household identification;
- beneficiary status categorization;
- registration for support;
- individual and household vulnerability assessment;
- targeting;
- transfer management;
- receipt of entitlements;
- tracking of individual movements;
- access to employment, financial, social protection, health and other services;
- key self-reliance indicators; and
- durable solutions achievements (repatriation, resettlement, local integration).

Source: Evaluation team elaboration from internal and external KIIs.

135. **The evaluation found that the lack of clarity on monitoring of RIM populations extends to the strategic level in WFP.** The WFP Monitoring Function: Strategic Roadmap (2024-2025) makes no mention of displacement or status-related monitoring and focuses instead on minimum monitoring requirements, tracking monitoring budgets and expenditures.<sup>252</sup> While important, this focus reflects a lack of strategic consideration as to whether host communities, refugees, IDPs or irregular migrants should be treated differently, using programme and monitoring approaches tailored to the different needs of individuals whose characteristics are known; or whether WFP should continue with its more generalizable approach of tracking the provision of activities and services on the basis of a broad understanding of vulnerability to food insecurity and malnutrition, regardless of status.

136. **Programme staff at all levels agreed that a better disaggregation and profiling of vulnerable beneficiary categories, including RIMs, is needed in WFP monitoring systems if country offices are to take a more significant role in responding to displacement and irregular migration.** The ability of WFP to describe numbers by status is of little benefit to learning without these figures being linked to the wider cross-cutting questions of: vulnerability (Finding 21); sex, age and disability (Finding 18); the adoption and adjustment of specific programming approaches with different RIM groups over time; the subsequent changes to the vulnerability or status of households and individuals that WFP helped bring about; and the associated activity costs charged to the donor. Notably, the WFP suite of tools (monitoring, digital, assessment and analysis) offers this opportunity and there are precedents for such a people-centred approach to the targeting and monitoring of specific groups in WFP, including for schoolchildren (with outputs and outcomes linked to school feeding), and PLWG and children aged 6 to 59 months (nutrition services and specialist nutrition foods) through the WFP CODA system.<sup>253</sup>

<sup>252</sup> WFP. 2024. WFP's Monitoring Function: Strategic Roadmap 2024-2025. Available internally on WFPgo. See also, WFP. 2018. Internal Audit of Monitoring in WFP.

<sup>253</sup> CODA (Conditional On Demand Assistance) is a digital solution designed to simplify and streamline nutrition programming by recording individual data. See [WFP Innovation Accelerator – SCOPE CODA](#).

### 2.3.2 The use by WFP of supply chains and technologies to target and support refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants

#### Supply chain services

Finding 27. WFP partners consistently identify logistical and supply chain capacity as the most prominent comparative advantage of WFP. Used well, local procurement can support social cohesion and leverage programme transitions from immediate needs to self-reliance. The move to cash has allowed WFP to reduce supply chain risks and enable greater autonomy among recipients in contexts where they are able to access local food markets. The development of supply chains to support displaced groups can also provide WFP with a tool to advocate to governments the benefits of supporting RIMs in order to secure investments in infrastructure and emergency preparedness and response capacity.

137. **WFP supply chain services are a critical part of the organization's strategic offer and convening power in displacement settings in terms of both immediate and longer-term needs.** WFP has wide geographical presence, access to remote locations including through the UN Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS), logistics capability, and technical oversight of supply chain services and pre-positioning of stocks. These elements enable WFP to effectively lead preparations for, and responses to, sudden onset crises and to navigate humanitarian access in difficult contexts where it assists RIMs. This was consistently recognized as one of the key comparative advantages of WFP in interviews with WFP partners and is widely documented.<sup>254</sup>

138. **Supply chains have also been used as a tool for navigating challenging political contexts by contributing to livelihood opportunities and social cohesion for RIMs.** Good practice examples found in the case studies included: WFP use of RIM investments to support government engagement and support for stock prepositioning, digital supply visibility and quality management (in Chad and Kenya); the development, use and adherence to national food quality guidelines (in Mauritania); and support for the integration of supply chains with local producers for accessing nutritious foods, including associated procurement linkages to WFP-supported host communities (in Bangladesh). Examples of local procurement and value chain development used to support social cohesion include Bangladesh and Kenya, where refugee status is not recognized (Finding 12). The evaluation also identified several examples of WFP provision of cross-border supply chain services that enabled WFP to navigate difficult political and logistics contexts by moving flexibly between different corridors (Libya-Sudan, Cameroon-Chad-Sudan and the Syria three-ports model Latakia, Beirut and Tartous),<sup>255</sup> allowing for adaptation and rerouting in response to pipeline breaks.

139. **These approaches highlight how supply chain investments in displacement and irregular migration settings can be used to help governments recognize the positive impacts on national systems and infrastructure, food security programmes, institutional capacities for emergency preparedness and response, and possibly social cohesion.**<sup>256</sup> These impacts include the benefits of transitioning toward cash-based transfers that have allowed WFP to reduce supply chain risks, invest in national digital systems and contribute to the autonomy and empowerment of beneficiaries in contexts where recipients can access local markets (Findings 11 and 35). Efforts are nevertheless required to address protection considerations when supply chains are disrupted (Finding 16), and large variances in WFP support for groups vulnerable to malnutrition, especially PLWG and children aged 6 to 59 months (Finding 8).

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<sup>254</sup> See for example WFP. 2024. [Annual Evaluation Report 2023](#).

<sup>255</sup> Case study on Chad; WFP. 2018. [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of the WFP Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis \(January 2015 – March 2018\)](#).

<sup>256</sup> WFP. 2024. Emergency Field Operations Pocketbook.

## Digital services

Finding 28. The use by WFP of digital services has helped improve operational effectiveness and has had a positive effect on its support for the immediate needs of displaced people. There remain some fundamental challenges to the use of digital solutions by WFP to support flexible, responsive programming that is capable of tracking and supporting beneficiaries in displacement settings. Key among these challenges are both the compartmentalized development and limited interoperability of digital tools, including with strategic partners, and the unresolved tensions between central technology services and country offices around digital innovation. The recent introduction of a data strategy and efforts to streamline the enterprise architecture of WFP is therefore timely.

140. **The use by WFP of digital technologies has increased its capacity to respond to rapidly changing environments and is widely considered to have had a positive effect for RIMs, especially with respect to immediate needs.**<sup>257</sup> WFP staff, donors and partners identify the use of digital solutions as an essential complement for agile, potentially even “mobile” programming approaches, responsive to new, protracted and rapidly evolving settings. Stakeholders at all levels identified the importance of integrating digital services to support business processes for beneficiary management.<sup>258</sup> The shift toward cash assistance has started to push WFP toward this beneficiary focus,<sup>259</sup> and the evaluation found clear evidence that WFP digital systems have been developed in line with the United Nations principles for responsible digital payments for treating users fairly, prioritizing women and ensuring access to funds.<sup>260</sup>

141. **Comparatively less progress has been made in ensuring that the design focus of systems is on individual users and in promoting user choice through interoperability across different agency platforms.** WFP has been caught by the development of multiple digital systems that service the specific demands of immediate WFP users rather than beneficiaries. Examples include the COMET, SCOPE<sup>261</sup>, LESS<sup>262</sup> and WING<sup>263</sup>S systems (overseeing CSP monitoring, beneficiary and delivery management, supply chain, procurement, finance, travel and human resources). While each provides legitimate digital capacity within their specific design boundaries, WFP stakeholders argued that the platforms had been developed to provide stand-alone services that limited their interoperability, constrained cross-functional business processes, and affected the use of real-time data in operational decision making for RIMs, especially in dynamic displacement settings.<sup>264</sup> WFP staff also expressed concerns over the inability of WFP systems to cross-reference individual and household identification data to avoid duplication and improve targeting.<sup>265</sup>

142. **In response to WFP internal data limitations, the digital support requests of governments,**

<sup>257</sup> See also, WFP. 2022. [Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Use of Technology in Constrained Environments](#).

<sup>258</sup> Examples include the registration, vulnerability and status categorization of beneficiaries; beneficiary targeting; transfer management and associated communications; the monitoring of cash and in-kind services; tracking of household and intra-household movements; and provision of protection services.

<sup>259</sup> See for example, Better Than Cash Alliance. 2024. [Collaborating to scale the responsible digitization of humanitarian payments](#): Alliance Learning Series; and WFP examples including: WFP. 2024. [Assistance to Refugees and Crisis-Affected Populations in Egypt](#); WFP. 2024. [Impact Evaluation of Cash-Based Transfers on Food Security and Gender Equality in Kenya](#); and, WFP. 2023. [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of WFP's Response in Myanmar \(2018-2022\)](#).

<sup>260</sup> For a summary of the Principles see, Better Than Cash Alliance. 2024. [UN Principles for Responsible Digital Payments](#).

<sup>261</sup> SCOPE is WFP's beneficiary information and transfer management platform.

<sup>262</sup> WINGS stands for WFP Information Network and Global Systems. WINGS integrates several elements within WFP's enterprise resource planning system to manage the organisation's critical business functions, including procurement, supply chain, finance, travel and human resources.

<sup>263</sup> The LESS application is WFP's tool for real-time management of commodities in the supply chain, from the point of receipt through to the final delivery point.

<sup>264</sup> This is also reflected in, WFP. 2022. [Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Use of Technology in Constrained Environments](#). An infographic summarizing WFP digital and data systems is provided in Figure 3, piii.

<sup>265</sup> Notably UNHCR have relatively advanced systems and procedures for beneficiary management including their “Population Registration and Identity Management EcoSystem” (PRIMES), which encompasses its digital tools for registration, identity management and caseload management (e.g. ProGres and BIMS). In some countries, WFP has opened cash wallets over the PRIMES platform and sought interoperability with SCOPE for beneficiary management.

and national data requirements, the evaluation found multiple examples of country offices that have developed bespoke platforms and tools related to their RIM response (Table 6).<sup>266</sup> Many WFP stakeholders argued that their development reflected a deep frustration with the slow pace and high costs of securing central support to adapt corporate platforms to local requirements. While most bespoke platforms have provided positive contributions to local operations, they further increase the interoperability challenges and complexities of the organization's enterprise architecture. Conversely, in countries with low connectivity, country offices retain Excel spreadsheets to support beneficiary management, allowing them to sustain operations in remote locations where for example, "phones and tablets can get too hot to function".<sup>267</sup>

**Table 8: Examples of bespoke development and use of digital platforms and tools**

Example	Benefit
Digital oversight of supply chain warehouses in Kenya	Improves stock visibility and supply chain efficiency in county-level preparedness and response
Mozambique displacement tracking matrix and data sharing agreement (2023)	Supports data sharing across WFP, UNICEF and IOM for a joint response to real-time displacements
Introduction of Building Blocks Bangladesh born out of the WFP innovation accelerator	Supports data privacy, inter-agency data sharing and reduced duplication of services across agencies
Incorporation of biometric identity and data privacy in Jordan using Building Blocks	Data sharing has supported transfer management and beneficiary tracking across agencies
<b>Short message service (SMS)</b> texting in Gaza	Beneficiaries are provided with updates on shops where nutritious food products are available
Introduction of multi-purpose cash platform to operate through the Government of Türkiye	Introduces the potential to link cash transfers for refugees with national social protection systems
Introduction of the Mauritania <b>Tekavoul</b> social transfer programme	Integrates social safety nets for economic inclusion for host and refugee households

Source: Evaluation team analysis.

143. **The evaluation did find evidence that WFP is attempting to streamline its enterprise architecture, although developing a people-centred approach as part of this architecture is not yet evident.** Despite efforts to develop a strategic vision for the use of digital technology and data,<sup>268</sup> streamline data privacy arrangements<sup>269</sup> and formulate data architecture and governance arrangements for digital transformation, it is not yet apparent that these are being designed using a people-centred approach that places WFP beneficiaries as a central concern. It is nevertheless appropriate that a test and learn pilot of the revised data architecture was recently introduced in the Syria country office, which seeks to develop a data and analytical thread connecting the country office to RBC and headquarters analytics.

144. **While the WFP data sharing agreement with UNHCR is a promising example of inter-agency**

<sup>266</sup> See also, WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of Sudan WFP Country Strategic Plan \(2019-2023\)](#).

<sup>267</sup> Chad country case study.

<sup>268</sup> WFP. 2024. [WFP Global Data Strategy](#) (2024-2026).

<sup>269</sup> WFP. 2024. WFP Privacy and Data Protection Strategic Journey.

**support for data sharing and the interoperability of data systems,<sup>270</sup> key limitations have led to patchy implementation at the country level.** Despite the Joint Hub engaging with WFP and UNHCR to identify and to pilot interoperability solutions between the WFP SCOPE and SugarCRM data systems with the UNHCR ProGres, progress has been slow. Nine of the ten country samples expressed concerns that differences in the programme focus and data privacy demands of the two agencies had led them to collect data responding to their own needs rather than their combined contributions to beneficiaries. A number of WFP country-level solutions have also relied on the global-level development of data systems that have been slow to complete, leading to repeated bottlenecks for country offices, the deprioritizing of corporate interoperability discussions between WFP and UNHCR, and the loss of a Joint Hub team member focused on country-level interoperability. The evaluation did identify examples where the global data sharing agreement has been replicated by WFP and UNHCR country offices, but country stakeholders from both agencies highlighted concerns over data sharing for accountability to affected populations and the complaints and feedback mechanism, and the need for both agencies to pin down their specific, critical data sharing needs.<sup>271</sup> Stakeholders also argued for interoperability and data sharing to become a priority focus for the Joint Hub and the relevant technical teams of both agencies. The need for a data sharing framework between WFP and IOM was also highlighted.

### **2.3.3 Financial and human resources for WFP support to refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants**

#### **Funding for refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants**

Finding 29. Overall WFP funding for RIMs through crisis response and resilience building activities has likely fallen within the overall funding position and remains dominated by short-term, earmarked grants. There is no shift in funding away from immediate needs. Although donor earmarking limits the ability of country offices to move their strategic response for RIMs towards longer-term solutions, there are examples where country offices have successfully adjusted the strategic use of funds earmarked to specific CSP activities, suggesting more flexible funding arrangements are possible when WFP establishes a strong relationship with its donors.

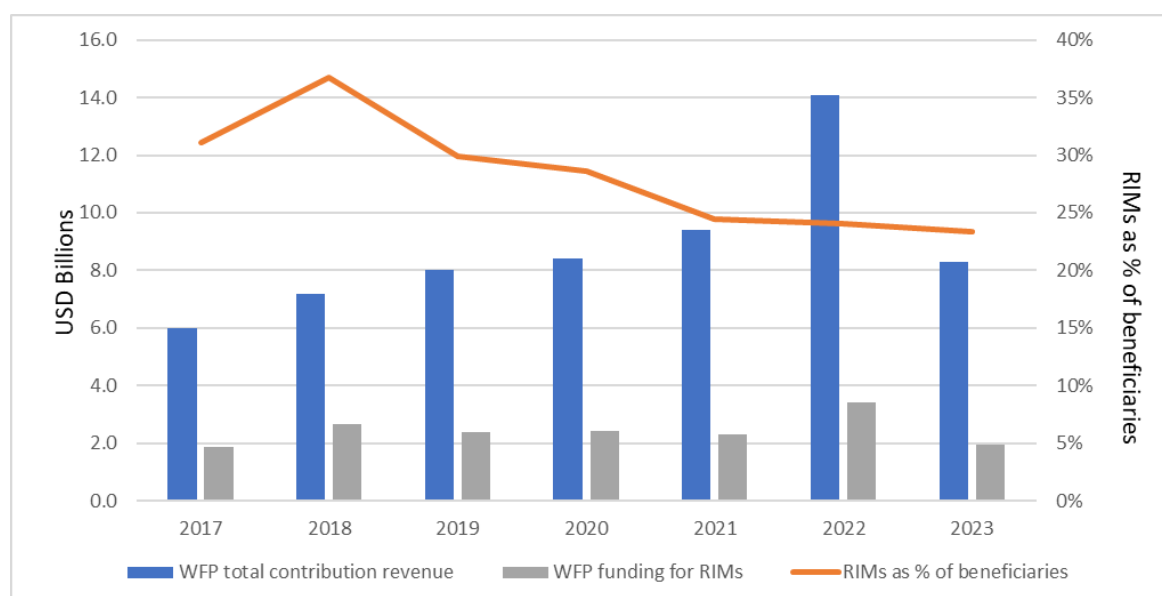
145. **While building a picture of WFP funding for RIMs is difficult due to data limitations, indirect evidence suggests the overall WFP funding position for RIMs may have fallen in respect to total revenue.** At the country office level, there is no disaggregation of funding by displacement category, and funding by activity may cover multiple displaced, migrant and resident groups. At the corporate level, funding data by displacement category are also not available. Figure 10 presents an aggregate view of funding for RIMs as a proportion of overall WFP funding estimated by multiplying overall WFP revenue with the globally estimated percentage of RIMs out of the total WFP beneficiary population.<sup>272</sup>

<sup>270</sup> UNHCR-WFP. 2018. [Addendum on Data Sharing to the January 2011 Memorandum of Understanding between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\) and the World Food Programme \(WFP\)](#). Includes provisions to ensure timely data sharing and security, interoperable systems and joint platforms, and seeks to strengthen accountability for data sharing to reduce data duplication.

<sup>271</sup> These findings are consistent with those of the [Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Use of Technology in Constrained Environments](#) (2022) (WFP/EB.1/2022/6-A\*), which identified gaps in the interoperability of SCOPE with other WFP systems, the interoperability of CFM systems of WFP and its partners, continued reliance on the sharing of Excel spreadsheets over email, unresolved tensions between centralized technology services and the needs of country operations, and limited trust among the agencies.

<sup>272</sup> This analysis assumes the cost per beneficiary for displaced, migrant and resident status groups is similar. It is not possible to prove or disprove this assumption with available WFP data.

**Figure 14: Approximate trends in funding for refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants relative to overall direct funding (2017-2023)<sup>273</sup>**



Source: FACTory distribution contribution and forecast stats, 2024-06-24.

146. **The short-term nature of funding for RIMs was found to limit the ability of WFP to provide coherent longer-term support for displaced populations.** With approximately 80 percent of contribution revenue in 2021 consisting of grants for fewer than two years, WFP stakeholders and CSP evaluations were consistent in arguing that the limited success of WFP in securing multi-year funding has impeded its strategic ambitions and, in some cases, distorted its strategic positioning away from longer-term support for beneficiaries including for RIMs.<sup>274</sup> WFP staff also argue that donor earmarking at the activity level limits their ability to move the WFP strategic response towards longer-term transitions, a perspective supported by multiple evaluations.<sup>275</sup> A concern is that earmarking can lead to the fragmentation of WFP programmes and the promotion of disconnected projects with short implementation periods targeting different target groups in different geographic areas. This position is to some extent corroborated by the analysis of overall direct funding for crisis response activities where RIMs are a significant proportion of WFP beneficiaries. This funding is generally short-term and has remained at around 60 percent of WFP total funding since 2019,<sup>276</sup> as compared to longer-term funding for resilience building (which under WFP classification would include fostering self-reliance), which has remained at between 10 and 15 percent since 2019 (Figure 11) and has been used to support domestic populations rather than RIMs (Findings 11 to 15).

147. **The squeeze in donor funding has also led to the partial targeting of RIM populations, including in protracted displacement settings.** Examples of contexts where funding reductions led to exclusions in beneficiary targeting for refugees and IDPs include in Bangladesh, Chad, Djibouti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Kenya, Mauritania and Mozambique. In three of these countries,

<sup>273</sup> Note: Funding for RIMs is estimated from the percentage of WFP beneficiaries, assuming that the cost per RIM beneficiary is the same as for residents.

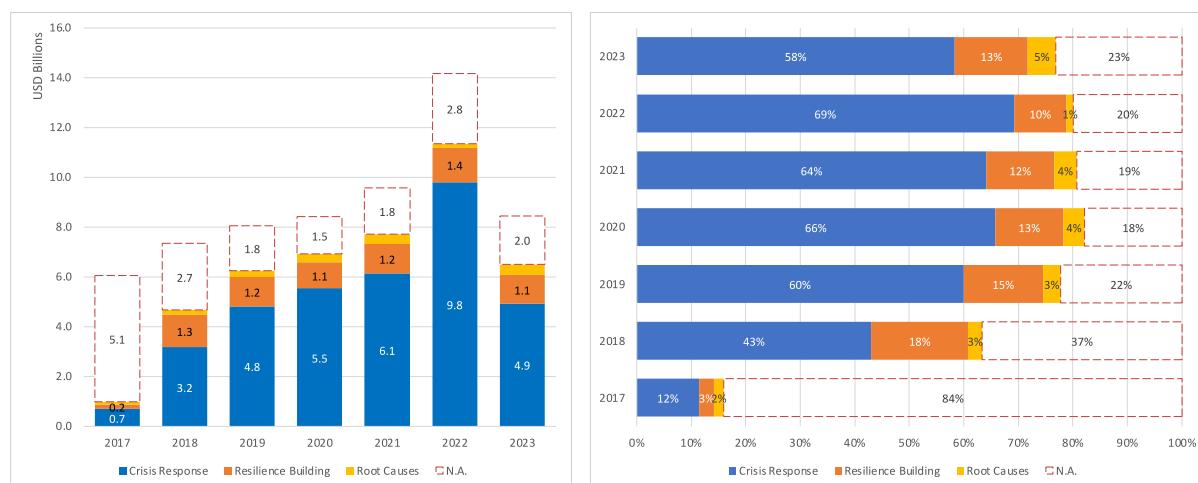
<sup>274</sup> This is supported by several CSP evaluations (see for example, WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of Ghana WFP Country Strategic Plan](#) (2019-2021); WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of Kenya WFP Country Strategic Plan](#) (2018-2023)) and confirmed by half of the countries in the evaluation case study sample.

<sup>275</sup> WFP. 2024. [Summary of Evidence: Earmarked, Flexible and Multi-Year Contributions](#); and WFP. 2024. *Évaluation de la réponse d'urgence du PAM aux crises prolongées au Sahel et dans d'autres pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest et Centrale* (2018-2023).

<sup>276</sup> 2019 correlates with the full roll-out of CSPs across all WFP country offices.

donors expressed frustration at the slowness of WFP in introducing beneficiary targeting in response to advance communications on funding shortfalls. In two country contexts, WFP staff expressed concerns that donor preferences had excluded provision by WFP of targeted support for the prevention of malnutrition among displaced PLWG and children. In countries outside of the Latin America region, the evaluation was unable to identify instances where WFP country offices had begun to explore funding opportunities for support to irregular migrants.

**Figure 15: WFP direct funding by focus area (2017-2023)**

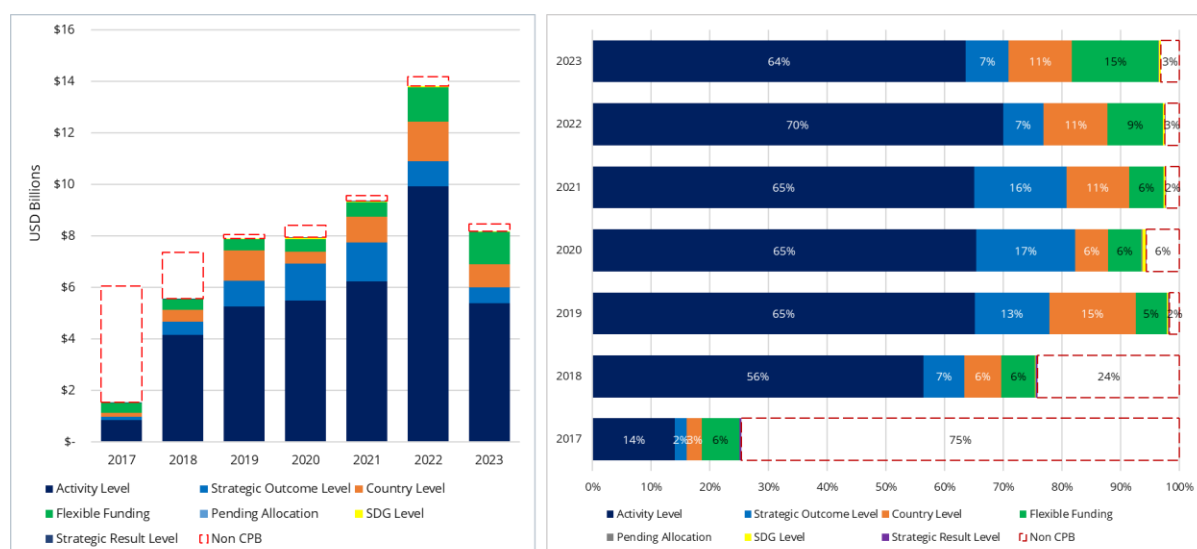


Source: FACTORY distribution contribution and forecast stats, 2024-06-24.

148. **While donor earmarking of funding limits the ability of WFP to implement longer term solutions for RIMs, there may be opportunities for country offices to negotiate the integration of RIMs into more flexible funding arrangements.** In the analysis of CSPs and corporate funding there is clear evidence that donor contributions have been increasingly earmarked at the activity level. Corporately, this has risen from 56 percent in 2018 to 64 percent in 2023 (Figure 12). A squeeze on funds earmarked at the strategic outcome and CSP levels has also emerged. This squeeze has limited the ability of WFP to plan for and fund RIM transitions where flexibility to shifts in the local context is required, and to integrate initiatives focusing on immediate needs and self-reliance within and across CSP activities. While the evaluation did identify examples in four out of the ten sample country offices where donors had earmarked funds for resilience building across a broadly defined CSP activity, these activities did not include RIM beneficiaries.<sup>277</sup> This example suggests there may be room for country offices to negotiate a more nuanced approach to funding that links immediate needs to self-reliance for RIMs, but such arrangements are not yet evident for these populations. Nevertheless, donors with a history of supporting longer-term programming did indicate their openness to explore the integration of different status groups within their portfolio. As one donor summarized it, “all donors earmark funds; we have to. The question is what we earmark it to, and how WFP can work with that”.

<sup>277</sup> Examples include Chad, Colombia, Kenya and Mauritania, where WFP is starting to explore the layering of shock-responsive social protection with resilience building to support a combination of displaced, migrant and host populations (see thematic country study in Annex X).

**Figure 16: Donor earmarking by strategic level (USD: 2017-2023)**



Source: FACTory distribution contribution and forecast stats, 2024-06-24.

## Response to the funding environment

Finding 30. WFP efforts to improve efficiency in response to the tightening funding environment have tended to focus on strengthening the workstreams of different functional areas rather than provide a coordinated response to changes in the funding environment specific to RIMs. Nevertheless, the use of the WFP corporate Immediate Response Account (IRA) and Changing Lives Transformation Fund (CLTF) provide levels of flexible funding that are relevant to, and has been applied in, different displacement and migration settings. Unfortunately, the levels of funding they entail remain a fraction of overall resourcing for immediate needs or self-reliance. Although this limits the ability of WFP to use flexible funds to explore efficiency gains in its emergency response to displacement and migration, or accelerate transitions toward self-reliance, flexible funding does provide an opportunity for WFP to demonstrate learning and thought leadership in these areas.

149. **Although WFP has made efforts to improve the efficiency and cost effectiveness of its support to RIMs and other beneficiary populations, these do not form part of a wider strategy to increase levels of longer-term funding for RIMs.** Earlier sections of the evaluation highlighted how the introduction of digital technologies has been led by the desire to improve workflow efficiencies in different parts of the organization (monitoring, supply chain, finance, human resources – Findings 26 to 29). Clear efficiency gains were also evident in the shift by WFP from in-kind to cash transfers (Finding 27) and introduction of digital services (Finding 28). While these initiatives were not specific to RIMs, they remain relevant to WFP support for displaced and irregular migrant populations.

150. **The Joint Hub has also sought to explore cost effectiveness by aligning and promoting joint WFP-UNHCR processes.** The expanded use of targeting by WFP has been driven by funding shortfalls rather than efforts to achieve cost savings by both agencies.<sup>278</sup> While initiatives have been appropriate within their individual framing, the evaluation team found little evidence that they were part of a wider effort to build a coherent business case for the near- and long-term support by WFP to RIMs, or a response to the changing funding environment. At the time of writing, a study commissioned by the Joint Hub was underway to explore issues around the cost of targeting, including in relation to cost effectiveness.

<sup>278</sup> See Finding 25 and also in Visser, M., Fratta, M., Driscoll, Z., and B. Majewski. 2024. External Review of the UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub. Oxford: Mokoro.

151. **In contrast, the use of flexible funds by WFP has provided the beginnings of an opportunity for WFP to develop its strategic approach to support RIMs.** In 2023, WFP received USD 1.18 billion in flexible funding representing 14 percent of total contributions.<sup>279</sup> Flexible funding for WFP crisis response activities is triggered by the WFP Corporate Alert System (CAS), which provides an early-warning to early-action emergency mechanism linked to funding through the Immediate Response Account.<sup>280</sup> While not specifically focused on support for RIMs, trends in pre-existing crises are monitored on a bimonthly basis, and regional bureaux and country offices are consulted as to country-specific risk outlooks and the existing or forecasted need for funding support for RIMs (Box 4).<sup>281</sup>

**Box 4: Early warning watch list examples in the June–November 2024 Corporate Alert System related to displacement**

- Mozambique – expansion of violence amid the withdrawal of the Southern African Development Community's Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) that has driven increases in internal displacement and food insecurity in Cabo Delgado Province.
- Somalia – The African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) withdrawal amid al-Shabaab threat and internal tensions that have the potential to drive internal displacement.
- Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe – agricultural losses and inflationary pressures driven by severe El Niño-induced drought carrying the potential risk of internal displacements.

Source: WFP. 2024. WFP early warning watch list. June–November 2024 outlook.

152. **On an individual basis, Immediate Response Account funds provide country offices room to respond quickly to changing dynamics within a national context, act as first responder to sudden displacements, or bridge near-term funding gaps.**<sup>282</sup> Immediate Response Account funding has slowly increased as a proportion of the total direct funding for crisis response activities, passing 8 percent in 2023 (Figure 13).<sup>283</sup> The Immediate Response Account provides country offices with flexibility in the early phases of a displacement crisis by providing country offices with opportunities to use the account to leverage crisis-focused funding, and establishing the operational basis for a longer-term programme approach and associated partnerships in order to avoid becoming locked in to short-term emergency funding cycles.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> WFP. 2023. [Annual Performance Report for 2023](#).

<sup>280</sup> WFP. 2023. CAS 3.0: WFP's Corporate Alert System.

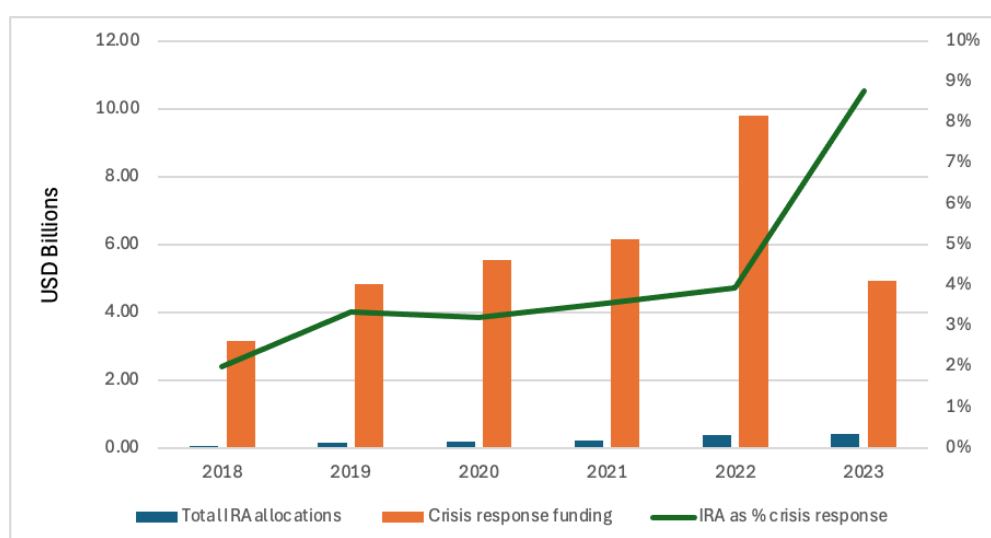
<sup>281</sup> In cases where country offices or regional bureaux anticipate that the scale, complexity, urgency, or reputational risks of a crisis may overwhelm available capacity they may request activation of a Corporate Scale-Up.

<sup>282</sup> WFP. 2023. Emergency Activation Protocol. Executive Director's Circular. OED2023/003.

<sup>283</sup> WFP. 2023. [Annual Performance Report for 2023](#).

<sup>284</sup> Conclusion 4 of the [Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Capacity to Respond to Emergencies \(2020\)](#) highlighted that investments in advance financing and supply chain preparation (under the Global Commodity Management Facility) had helped improve the efficiency of responses but that WFP needed to invest more in emergency preparedness to ensure its responses are relevant.

**Figure 17: Historical funding for the Immediate Response Account relative to funding for WFP crisis response activities (USD, 2018 to 2023)<sup>285</sup>**



Source: WFP. 2024. [Historical funding and allocations \(2018 to 2023\) for the Immediate Response Account.](#)

153. **Although flexible CLTF funding is limited, it offers WFP an opportunity to demonstrate learning and thought leadership in the development of long-term interventions for RIMs and explore different ways of transitioning to longer-term programme approaches.**<sup>286</sup> Introduced in 2022, the overall CLTF allocation of USD 68.3m across ten countries (from 38 country office applicants) over three years constitutes a fraction of WFP direct funding for longer-term programming to transition to self-reliance (USD 1.133 million) or root causes (USD 434 million). Although limited, country programmes applying for the CLTF are scored on their ability to: bring transformative change for beneficiaries; attract catalytic funding; demonstrate sustainability and feasibility through partnerships, learning and research; and meet cross-cutting priorities such as GEWE, protection and disability inclusion. Each element is relevant to WFP support for RIMs, and the CLTF uniquely offers country offices the capability to leverage new partnerships and develop self-reliance pathways for these populations. This is apparent in the Kenya country office's use of CLTF funding to partner with UNHCR in helping the Government expand the social registry to include refugees, and in the Chad country office's use of the CLTF to develop an integrated resilience initiative for refugees and host populations.<sup>287</sup> It is also noted that WFP is seeking to leverage the CLTF to support the World Bank Development Impact Group to prepare an economic inclusion package for host communities in displacement settings and explore the use of climate funding instruments to address climate-related displacement and mitigation.<sup>288</sup>

## Resource mobilization

Finding 31. A historical focus on funding for the immediate needs of RIMs and the lack of a clear business proposition to accelerate the transition toward self-reliance, or the building of long-term strategic partnerships to achieve this, undermines the ability of WFP to broaden its funding base, or link its grant funding for displaced and migrant populations to broader financing instruments.

154. **Mixed views among external stakeholders regarding WFP resource mobilization for RIMs**

<sup>285</sup> The difference between total direct donor contributions of unearmarked funds and total IRA allocations is met by WFP multilateral funds.

<sup>286</sup> WFP. 2024. [Update on the implementation of the Changing Lives Transformation Fund](#). WFP/EB.1/2024/4-C. For an infographic on the CLTF see also, [https://executiveboard.wfp.org/document\\_download/WFP-0000156629](https://executiveboard.wfp.org/document_download/WFP-0000156629).

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> KII data.

**have led to a common demand for greater clarity as to the strategic positioning of WFP over self-reliance.** Interviews with UN partners and donors mostly located WFP in the emergency response area of its mandate and many argued that this should remain the focus of its resource mobilization efforts. However, this position was not universal. A large proportion of donors argued that the WFP crisis response funding shortfalls that emerged in 2023 reflected a lack of strategic adjustment away from its continued focus on supporting immediate needs, especially in protracted settings. Donors on both sides of this observation requested greater clarity on WFP corporate positioning surrounding its dual mandate response to RIMs and support for self-reliance.<sup>289</sup>

155. **The evaluation found that, despite some promising practices, WFP is not yet linking its dual mandate to an integrated package that can attract longer-term funding for RIMs.** The key area where a consistent opinion did emerge was that it remains unclear whether or how WFP seeks to develop a more integrated resource mobilization strategy that links the “saving lives” and “changing lives” areas of its mandate. This analysis reflects a differentiation in the WFP funding environment between its historical reliance on grant funding focused on the immediate food security and nutrition needs of RIMs, and wider opportunities linked to helping governments secure loans from international financial institutions (IFIs) to build national capacities and support resident communities. Notably, this transition is underway whereby government funding for WFP has already reached 10 percent of the overall funding envelope and is growing in areas such as school feeding, social protection and nutrition.<sup>290</sup>

156. **One of the areas in which WFP has effectively advanced resource mobilization for longer-term solutions for displaced populations is in supporting the mobilization of international financial institution funding for RIMs.** The advantage of international financial institution funding arrangements is that they are inherently scalable and long-term. Some donors and internal stakeholders identify the challenge for WFP in terms of finding a way to work with governments to ensure that grant and international financial institution funding “meet in the middle”: for example, by identifying where support for host communities or domestic populations can be linked to incentives that expand the inclusion of displaced and irregular migrant populations in national resilience building or social protection programmes (Figure 14).<sup>291</sup> A core principle is that solutions need to be driven by a clear business case in order to ringfence the policy space and demonstrate to governments and international financial institutions the investment opportunities of converging support for host communities with RIMs.<sup>292</sup>

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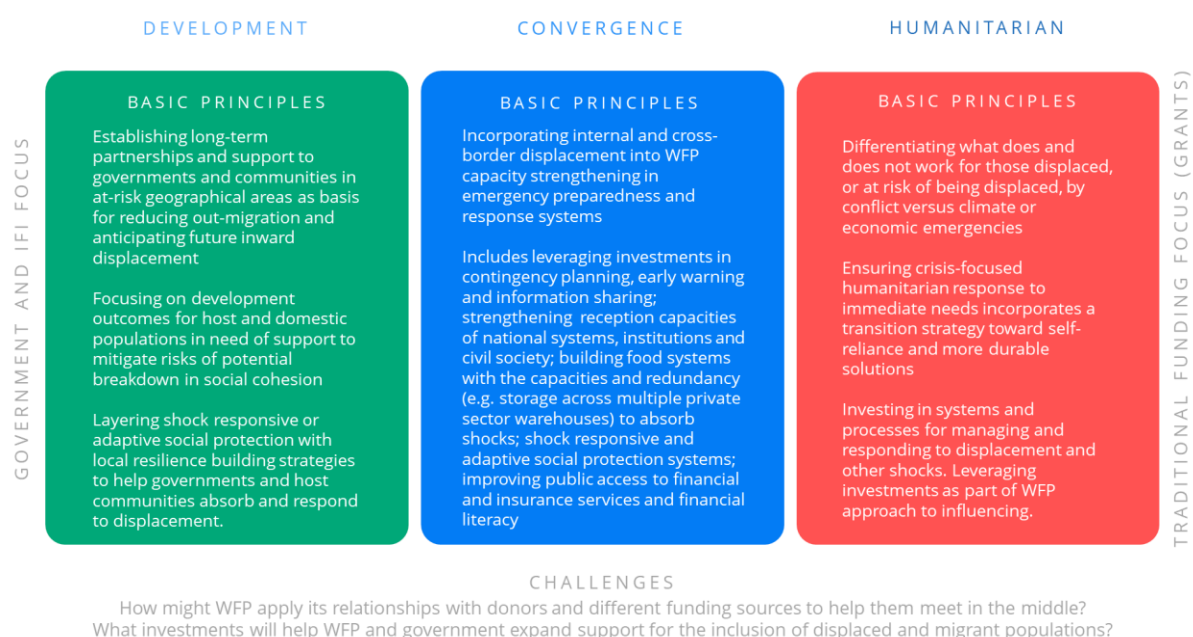
<sup>289</sup> See also key finding 2 in, WFP. 2023. [Summary of evidence: lessons on self-reliance for refugees in the Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe region.](#)

<sup>290</sup> Private communication and KII.

<sup>291</sup> Examples of this approach are evident in Colombia, Mauritania and Uganda. The approach is supported under the World Bank’s Global Concessional Finance Facility. Another example is in Bangladesh, with the implementation of the World Bank-funded Emergency Multi-Sector Rohingya Crisis Response Project. See, also for example, WFP-UNHCR. 2023. [Support to UNHCR and WFP country operations in Mauritania.](#)

<sup>292</sup> For example, in Moldova, WFP and UNHCR have developed a joint business case with the International Monetary Fund and European Union for the prioritization of efforts to tackle poverty that are linked to stabilizing the displacement corridor linking populations between Ukraine and the European Union.

**Figure 18: Convergence of funding principles and approaches to support refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants**



Source: Evaluation team.

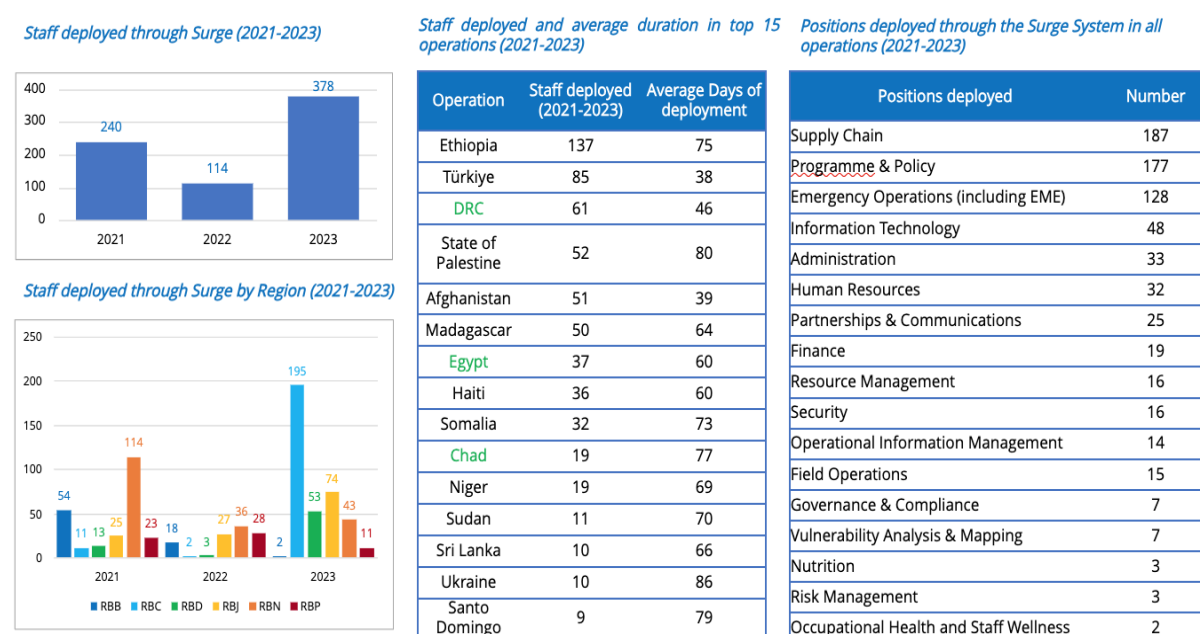
## Human resources

Finding 32. In cases of large-scale displacement, WFP headquarters and regional bureaux have provided effective recruitment support to country offices. However, even in protracted crises, difficulties have been apparent in WFP recruitment of staff who are experienced in displacement and migration, with the skill sets needed to facilitate transitions from immediate needs toward longer-term solutions, or in providing gender, disability inclusion and protection support to RIMs.

157. **Despite the ability of WFP to mobilize staff to support responses for displaced populations, key gaps in technical expertise that would support the transition to the implementation of longer-term solutions often remain.** WFP government, donor and UN partners consistently observed that WFP has demonstrated a strong capacity to respond to the immediate needs of populations affected by large scale displacements, including through its mobilization of staff. However, despite the technical breadth of the WFP surge response (Figure 15), both external and internal stakeholders also reflected on how WFP has faced comparative difficulties recruiting staff with the technical expertise for post-surge adjustments.<sup>293</sup> This highlights a challenge to the ability of WFP to link its surge capacity to the wider protection, self-reliance, resilience and country capacity strengthening adjustments needed in protracted crises.

<sup>293</sup> This was a common reflection in Bangladesh, Chad, DRC, Djibouti, Mozambique and Myanmar.

**Figure 19: WFP human resources surge response (2021 to 2023)** <sup>294</sup>



Source: WFP surge covering the period 2021-2021. Data shared in March 2024. In green are the countries that are case studies for this strategic evaluation.

158. **A consequent lack of consistency by WFP in its understanding or focus on key cross-cutting issues was evident in RIM interventions.** For example, the role of nutrition, gender, protection and accountability to affected populations in relation to displacement and irregular migration leads to wide variation in approaches across WFP country offices.<sup>295</sup> There were also examples where the WFP surge response in displacement contexts led to parallel teams reporting separately to the emergency coordinator or country director (Bangladesh, Colombia, Kenya). Recruitment challenges were especially identified in hardship stations such as in Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique and Myanmar, which highlighted difficulties identifying, hiring and retaining appropriate international and national staff with relevant language and technical skill sets on cross-cutting issues.<sup>296</sup> Amidst this challenging environment, some key lessons from Bangladesh were identified (Box 5).

#### Box 5: Reviewing the surge response in Bangladesh

The Bangladesh case study and the 2021 CSP evaluation provide insights into how country offices may struggle to build the required capacities of staff to implement a CSP during a surge in human resource needs for a crisis response. Following the 2017 Rohingya crisis, staffing in the Cox's Bazar office quickly reached 533 (2020). It was not until the introduction of a new CSP in 2022 that a review of staff structures

<sup>294</sup> Staff deployment through surge in evaluation sample country offices highlighted in green. Surge system data only available from 2021 onwards. March 2024 update precedes incorporation of Sudan surge response data and excludes staff recruitment by the country office.

<sup>295</sup> Results reflected in multiple KILs at regional bureaux, CSPEs outside of the evaluation country sample, the [Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Capacity to Respond to Emergencies](#) (2020), and [Evaluation of the WFP People Strategy](#) (2014-2017).

<sup>296</sup> French-speaking and Portuguese-speaking countries in particular identified problems recruiting and retaining international staff from the WFP pool. High staff turnover and the burden of having to brief incoming personnel on short-term contracts who lacked experienced in difficult displacement settings was reported in the [Corporate Emergency Evaluation of the WFP Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis \(2015-2018\)](#). The [Evaluation of Mozambique WFP Country Strategic Plan](#) (2017-2021) concluded that WFP human resources systems and approaches were not conducive to attracting and retaining staff with the skills WFP needs to perform effectively across the nexus, particularly with respect to government policy-advocacy and capacity strengthening.

and processes was undertaken and staff in Cox's Bazar subsequently fell to 391 (2023). Responding to the 2022 CSP evaluation, there is now strong evidence of staff planning in line with a unitary CSP framework, with a rebalancing of strategic roles across the Dhaka and Cox's Bazar offices and a focus on the recruitment and training of national staff. Stakeholders argued a step-wise approach to the integration of the Cox's Bazar office could have started earlier involving the recruitment of more diverse skill sets (for example, staff with experience of smallholder agricultural markets) by the second year of the surge and a reassessment of structures and roles in the third year.

Source: Bangladesh country office KIIs; WFP HR Statistics

**The evaluation also found that WFP currently lacks technical expertise in several key areas including in implementing long-term solutions for RIMs or in developing responses for irregular migrants.** Only a small number of key informant interviews and focus group discussions reflected on the unique vulnerabilities and challenges of supporting refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants. Country office staff often reported that technical support for their work with RIMs was difficult to find through WFP regional bureaux or headquarters. This limitation was particularly the case for irregular migrants. In Djibouti, for example, despite irregular migration being a major challenge, staff have received no dedicated training or support. Across the country case studies there was also a widespread recognition among internal and external stakeholders that WFP skills in self-reliance are limited at the country and field levels. Many stakeholders highlighted how WFP "needs to learn from other actors and partner with them to bring longer-term solutions to scale" (Findings 35 and 36). Notable efforts to navigate these limitations and build synergies and scale through partnerships were nevertheless apparent in cases such as Mauritania (Box 6).

#### **Box 6: Transitioning toward longer-term solutions for refugees in Mauritania (2023-2024)**

The Mauritania country office has:

- expanded recruitment, onboarding and training of national staff, including women, to address the difficult national context for recruitment, especially for heads of field offices;
- arranged secondments into government agencies and the World Bank to develop common approaches to social protection systems building and integration of refugees;
- shared an economist with UNHCR specialized in beneficiary targeting, which promoted shared understanding;
- recruited a consultant to support the development of an inter-agency approach to self-reliance;
- hired surge support and consultants through the regional bureau in Dakar when required; and
- hired a security advisor as a step towards integrating security analytics into planning.

Source: Mauritania country office KIIs.

## **2.4. How effectively does WFP leverage and add value to its partnerships in support of refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants?**

### **2.4.1 WFP engagement in global and regional partnerships to support refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants**

#### **Global partnerships**

Finding 33. WFP has established key strategic partnerships at the global level, which help to strengthen its support to RIMs. These partnerships help to clarify responsibilities, identify strengths and support technical and information exchange. While these partnerships can help WFP to capitalize on the comparative strengths of its partners, and help its positioning for advocacy, resource mobilization and data sharing, the trickling down of WFP global partnerships to the country level to support work on RIMs remains uneven.

159. **WFP prioritizes complementarity in its global partnerships to support RIMs.** Even although WFP works with a wide range of partners (Figure 16l), evidence from the evaluation indicates that, in the



Level Panel on Internal Displacement.<sup>301</sup> Notably, the panel stressed the need for an effective nexus approach, but WFP was initially excluded from the steering group due to its perceived positioning as a humanitarian organization. After presenting examples of its contributions to resilience building and social protection, WFP was invited to contribute to the panel in 2023 thereby providing an opportunity for WFP to consolidate relationships and understanding of its potential contributions beyond the immediate needs of RIMs.

162. **While the WFP partnership with UNHCR on RIMs has shown promise with the creation of the Joint Hub and the issuance of joint guidance and strategies, the operational success of the Joint Hub has been hindered by difficulties in translating strategic goals into tangible, measurable actions.**

Originally signed in 1985 and most recently revised in 2011, the WFP agreement with UNHCR encompasses strategic guidance and technical support to both agencies' country offices through the Joint Hub (Figure 17).<sup>302</sup> However, despite the Joint Hub being overseen by a high-level steering committee of WFP and UNHCR senior managers, the committee has never been fully functional (as evidenced by its terms of reference remaining in draft form), and both internal and external stakeholders expressed repeated concerns over the need for high-level prioritization in order to build trust, strengthen alignment, develop shared processes and provide investments for the partnership to mature into an effective and sustainable collaboration. These perspectives were consistent with the findings of a concurrent review of the Joint Hub summarized in Table 7.<sup>303</sup>

**Figure 21: Summary of Joint Hub strategic and technical support areas**



Source: UNHCR-WFP Joint Hub.

<sup>301</sup> The Action Agenda on Internal Displacement has three overarching goals: 1) help IDPs find a durable solution to their displacement; 2) better prevent new displacement crises from emerging; and, 3) ensure those facing displacement receive effective protection and assistance. UN. 2021. [UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement](#); UN. 2022. [Follow-Up to the Report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement](#).

<sup>302</sup> This includes guidance for joint assessment missions (JAMs, 2008); a Joint Strategy on Enhancing Self-Reliance in Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Refugee Situations (2016); Joint Principles for Targeting Assistance to Meet Food and other Basic Needs (2017); Joint Guidance for the Targeting of Assistance (2018); a Global Data Sharing Addendum (2018); a Call to Action for Refugees on Sustainable Food and Nutrition Security (2021); Joint Analytical Framework (2023); and Joint Protocol on Information Sharing (2024).

<sup>303</sup> Visser, M., Fratta, M., Driscoll, Z., and B. Majewski. 2024. External Review of the UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub. Oxford: Mokoro.

**Table 9: Summary findings of the external review of the UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub (2024)**

Key finding
<b>Assessment and targeting:</b> Support from the Joint Hub has primarily focused on assessment and targeting while its engagement in self-reliance and national systems strengthening has not been pursued at the country or regional levels. In cases where Joint Hub support has been provided (for example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mauritania and Mozambique), its expertise has been used to fill short-term technical gaps rather than build capacities.
<b>Tools and materials for learning:</b> While the Joint Hub has developed substantial tools and materials to support learning, their use has been limited by a lack of dissemination support within UNHCR and WFP, and relatively limited engagement by regional bureaux. There is also limited evidence that UNHCR-WFP regional partnerships have been strengthened as a result of Joint Hub support.
<b>Data sharing and interoperability:</b> Progress on interoperability and data sharing has been modest (for example in Djibouti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Egypt), due to the absence of global solutions supporting interoperability that have held back country-level efforts to promote data sharing.
<b>Oversight:</b> Although the design of the Joint Hub established a level of independence, the lack of high-level engagement and support in WFP and UNHCR has reduced opportunities to develop joint workplans, and the Joint Hub's own workplan remains separated from those of its supervisory units in both agencies.
<b>Strategic priorities:</b> Despite interest and support among the executive leadership of WFP, a lack of management-level prioritization has contributed to a lack of sustained funding commitments.
<b>Financial constraints:</b> A restricted funding environment is evidenced by the increasing demand for Joint Hub support from country offices, which face financial constraints and therefore seek potential cost savings that align existing processes across the agencies, promote joint approaches and reduce duplication.

Source: External review of the UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub (2024).

163. **The WFP partnership with IOM has taken a different trajectory to the one with UNHCR. The IOM partnership offers an alternative model for the establishment of partnerships on RIMs based on the prior identification of specific areas for collaboration at the corporate and country levels.** While IOM and WFP have developed a Joint Statement of Partnership that identifies areas for strategic collaboration, this has yet to be signed. Despite slow progress, both WFP and IOM stakeholders suggest a desire to strengthen inter-agency collaboration underpinned by requests for support from the country offices of both agencies seeking greater operational complementarity. Examples of priority areas for collaboration include: the provision of support for the immediate food security and nutrition needs and durable solutions for IDPs; common approaches to data collection, analysis and use; emergency response and preparedness; PSEA, protection, and accountability; cash-based assistance; and social protection. It remains unclear how this collaboration will extend to the regional and country levels of either organization, or respond to the specific demands of irregular migrants across different migration corridors or pendular migration settings.<sup>304</sup>

<sup>304</sup> See also, Visser et al. 2024. External Review of the UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub.

## Regional partnerships

Finding 34. WFP demonstrates a high level of engagement in regional inter-agency partnerships and contributes to inter-agency coordination, based primarily on its operational contributions to crisis responses. WFP should nevertheless explore opportunities to build on its saving lives expertise to work with regional governmental structures in order to address the changing lives area of its mandate.

164. **WFP participates extensively in regional level coordination mechanisms to support RIMs across its regional bureaux (regional thematic study, Annex IX).** There is strong evidence of WFP engagement in a wide range of regional coordination mechanisms to support RIMs across all six regions (Box 7).

### Box 7: Examples of WFP regional coordination to support RIMs

- Regional Bureau in Bangkok: WFP is a critical member of the Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya crisis and Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees.
- Regional Bureau in Cairo: WFP is a member of the regional task force for Gaza, the Syria Regional Refugee Resilience Plan (3RP), and the Ukraine Regional Response Plan.
- Regional Bureau in Nairobi: WFP participates in the regional humanitarian coordination team for the Sudan crisis under the Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan, and the South Sudan Regional Humanitarian Response. However, WFP does not currently contribute to the Regional Migrant Response Plan for the Horn of Africa to Yemen and Southern Africa led by IOM.
- Regional Bureau in Johannesburg: WFP participates in the Democratic Republic of the Congo Regional Refugee Response Plan led by UNHCR.
- Regional Bureau in Panama: WFP participates in implementing the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan, and is one of 43 members of the Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela Platform.

Source: Evaluation team.

165. **While most of the WFP regional partnerships for RIMs focus on a common humanitarian response to displacement (or in the case of RBP, irregular migration), there are few examples of WFP support for joint regional solutions to their longer-term needs.** WFP contributes to the 3RP in Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and Türkiye;<sup>305</sup> and participates in knowledge sharing and the development of a common approach with the regional durable solutions working group through RBC. While these illustrate the importance of WFP securing regional contributions for transitioning RIM populations toward self-reliance, external stakeholders considered WFP regional engagement for longer-term solutions to vary. Concerns focused on the lack of a clear and consistent strategic priority, and an associated observation that regional bureaux largely focus on helping WFP country offices meet the immediate needs of RIMs.

166. **The WFP liaison office to the Africa Union is an example of an emerging approach to regional engagement that highlights how regional institutions may allow WFP to engage in broader advocacy surrounding food systems and food security (Box 8).** These advocacy efforts can potentially be linked to a broader model of WFP support to RIMs through governments, in line with their regional commitments and international financing (Finding 31).<sup>306</sup>

<sup>305</sup> UNHCR and UNDP. 2025. [Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan \(3RP\)](#).

<sup>306</sup> While not currently linked to its support for RIMs, RBB also leads the WFP operational and strategic engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and RBP collaborates with regional organizations in the Caribbean and the Pacific in emergency preparedness through its strategic partnership with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency.

#### Box 8: WFP regional support to the African Union

Examples of WFP engagement included support to:

- the drafting and design of the model law on food security and nutrition: WFP helped link food security to African safety to prevent displacement;
- the drafting and design of Africa human law rights, passed in 2023: WFP helped link food security with conflict agenda; and
- the creation of the African Union Humanitarian Agency.

Source: Evaluation team.

### 2.4.2 WFP alignment and engagement with country- and field-based partners on refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants

#### National-level coordination

Finding 35. Across its country offices WFP has demonstrated its active participation and leadership in humanitarian coordination structures, thematic working groups and clusters. Challenges to country-level coordination include barriers in data sharing and gaps in WFP strategic engagement with governments and development partners to draw scalable strategies to transition beneficiaries from immediate needs towards self-reliance.

167. **At the national level, existing participation by WFP in humanitarian coordination structures facilitates its support to RIMs.** WFP engages in humanitarian country teams and cluster coordination mechanisms, such as the food and logistics clusters, which are crucial to humanitarian responses in conflict and crisis settings involving RIMs. Depending on the country context, WFP participation in, and support for, refugee response planning and coordination may follow the cluster model (for example the Syria regional crisis) or a hybrid coordination structure (for example, in Bangladesh). WFP also participates in thematic working groups across various countries, including localization in Myanmar, cash programming in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, protection in Mauritania, and basic needs in countries like Jordan, Lebanon and Türkiye. In Lebanon, WFP is recognized as a leading agency within the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and sectoral working groups.<sup>307</sup> The extensive scale, presence and capabilities of WFP across countries, particularly in areas like food security, nutrition and access to common UN services, make it a critical player in humanitarian efforts to support RIMs. WFP strengths in social protection, integrated resilience programmes, school feeding and nutrition top-ups are also widely recognized.

168. **However, WFP faces challenges in country-level coordination, most notably in its strategic engagement with development partners.** WFP is often seen to lack strategic engagement with development partners at the country level with respect to the joint formulation of self-reliance and durable solutions initiatives (Findings 11, and 13 to 15). Many cooperating partners argued that, while the scale and scope of WFP operations has facilitated a close relationship with governments and facilitated humanitarian access, more could be done to use these relationships to support the development of joint (or at least joined-up) programmes that are capable of reaching scale in the delivery of self-reliance support to RIMs.

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<sup>307</sup> WFP. 2021. Evaluation of Lebanon WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018–2021: Centralized Evaluation Report.

## Field-level coordination

Finding 36. WFP is recognized for its critical contributions to the operational capacities of cooperating partners in challenging displacement settings. Despite these strengths, the tendency of WFP to focus on immediate crisis response activities leads to a limited depth in the development of a more integrated approach to emergency preparedness, crisis response and the transitioning of support for refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants toward longer-term solutions. There also remain gaps in strategic engagement with cooperating partners and addressing risk-sharing concerns.

169. **WFP coordination with field-level partners follows a highly decentralized model that provides extensive geographical access through cooperating partners, which is critical for coverage.** In 2023, WFP partnered with 877 non-government organizations, 82.5 percent of them local actors, and channelled an estimated 31.1 percent of the value of all its confirmed contributions through national and local actors (Figure 18).<sup>308</sup> WFP partnerships with its cooperating partners are critical to WFP operations in hard-to-reach localities by allowing WFP sub-offices to gather information on population needs and achieve coverage through their cooperating partner networks. In some countries, WFP has relied on cooperating partners to access vulnerable populations in areas controlled by non-state armed groups,<sup>309</sup> while in Colombia, WFP identified cooperating partners as critical to its community-level operations.<sup>310</sup>

**Figure 22: WFP collaboration with cooperating partners in 2023**



Source: WFP Annual Performance Report (2023), Annex 5.

170. **WFP has sought to provide support and guidance to cooperating partners in their engagement with RIMs, but gaps remain in longer-term strategic engagement with cooperating partners and in attention to risk-sharing.** Examples of training provided by WFP to cooperating partners have included gender, protection, accountability to affected populations and financial management with commitments systematically included in the annexes of field-level agreements (FLAs). Most national cooperating partners welcomed this support and considered WFP capacity investments to have improved their own programme quality and accountability. However, they also expressed concerns over the largely transactional nature of the relationship with WFP, focused on the delivery of services to RIMs, with the perception that WFP was either unwilling or unable to engage in more collaborative arrangements to help

<sup>308</sup> WFP. 2024. Annual Performance Report (2023), [Annex V WFP Cooperating Partners](#).

<sup>309</sup> WFP. 2020. Evaluation of Cameroon WFP Country Strategic Plan (2018–2020): Centralized Evaluation Report.

<sup>310</sup> WFP and cooperating partner KILs.

develop the cooperating partners' own strategic capacities.<sup>311</sup> There was also a consistent demand from cooperating partners in these contexts that WFP would address risk-sharing, such as by incorporating clearer commitments to support cooperating partner staff, especially frontline workers, when assisting RIMs in sensitive contexts in line with the organization's own duty of care principles. Gaps in WFP support to longer-term strategic planning and consideration of risks is also noted in the synthesis of evaluation on WFP cooperating partners.<sup>312</sup>

171. **There is scope for further WFP engagement with large-scale partners, particularly in developing common preparedness strategies to anticipate and plan for future displacement crises.** Additionally, external stakeholders conveyed to the evaluation team that there were no clear efforts to link WFP CSP strategies to the existing contributions of cooperating partners towards self-reliance, despite those often being better funded.<sup>313</sup> Localization, they argued, required a broader focus on strategic support for cooperating partner and civil society organizations in line with common strategic goals. WFP is currently developing its corporate localization strategy as part of efforts to ensure that its future emergency preparedness and response involves stronger collaboration with cooperating partners and affected communities. An example of good practice was in Mauritania, where cooperating partners welcomed the introduction by WFP of extended partnership agreements under its resilience outcome, under which field-level agreements were updated annually in line with available funding and based on performance.<sup>314</sup>

### 2.4.3. The comparative advantage of WFP for supporting refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants

#### WFP added value

Finding 37. The perceived comparative advantages of WFP in its work with RIMs relate to its ability to mobilize and scale up quickly in response to emergencies. However, its engagement in advocacy to provide significant longer-term contributions to self-reliance or durable solutions is questioned by partners.

172. **WFP is regarded by external actors as a critical partner to their response in both rapid onset emergencies and protracted settings. WFP is also viewed as a critical partner in some specific migration settings, such as in Colombia.** External key informant interviews conducted by the evaluation team highlight some key areas of added value that are widely recognized by partners, including:

- **Wide reach:** The presence of WFP in existing displacement and migration settings allows it to reach new arrivals in a timely manner. Although WFP is often present along migration routes, which could facilitate a route-based coordination approach such as is applied in Colombia, a coordinated cross-border approach is not yet evident in other contexts that can be linked to anticipatory action, emergency preparedness and response, or longer-term programming (Findings 3 and 24).<sup>315</sup>
- **Supply chains and humanitarian services:** WFP uses its Global Commodity Facility and Immediate Response Account to support a rapid response and address supply chain breaks or shortages. WFP oversight of UNHAS and emergency telecommunications is identified as essential to the humanitarian response of other UN agencies, non-government organizations and donors.
- **Operational capacity:** WFP has a wide choice of operational tools to respond to emergencies (Findings

<sup>311</sup> These arguments were also provided by donors and were reflected in, WFP. 2021. [Thematic evaluation of WFP's cooperating partnerships in the Eastern Africa region](#) (2016-2020), and, WFP. 2020. [Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Capacity to Respond to Emergencies](#).

<sup>312</sup> WFP. 2024. [Synthesis of evidence and lessons on WFP's cooperating partners from centralized and decentralized evaluations](#).

<sup>313</sup> Similar concerns were identified in, WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition](#).

<sup>314</sup> WFP, 2023. *Évaluation du plan stratégique de pays du PAM en Mauritanie* (2019-2023).

<sup>315</sup> Examples of WFP cross-border approaches to immediate crisis response include its response to Pakistan's forced repatriation of Afghan citizens in 2023, and the ongoing Rohingya, Sudan and Western Sahel crises.

7 and 11) that include locally developed approaches, such as with its transnational financial support to IDPs and irregular migrants in Latin America.

- **Flexibility and dynamism:** WFP is regularly commended for its ability to respond quickly to new crises and seek new solutions supported by its innovation hubs in Colombia, Germany and Kenya.<sup>316</sup>

173. **By building on its mandated focus on food security and nutrition, external stakeholders consider the ability of WFP to engage governments in negotiating access to vulnerable populations in sensitive locations to be a critical humanitarian contribution.** The non-polemic nature of WFP work is consistently highlighted as facilitating humanitarian access including in areas that are not under government control (Colombia and Sudan). Nevertheless, this aspect was also at times identified as an obstacle to engage in advocacy to create an enabling policy environment for transitioning RIMs toward self-reliance and durable solutions (Findings 11, and 12 to 15).

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<sup>316</sup> WFP. 2024. [WFP Innovation Accelerator](#).

# 3. Conclusions and Recommendations

## 3.1 Conclusions

174. In responding to the scope, complexity and formative nature of the evaluation subject, the conclusions are presented in clusters to help WFP identify opportunities to: (1) respond to the global, regional and national contexts of displacement and irregular migration in its policies and strategies; (2) extend good programme practice across different settings, while rethinking its approach to RIMs in key programme areas; (3) further refine the systems and services that underpin effective programme engagement; and, (4) strengthen the role and function of its partnerships to better support RIMs. A map of the link between the findings, conclusions and recommendations is provided in Annex XI.

### **3.1.1 WFP has enhanced its global, regional and country responsiveness to increasingly dynamic and complex displacement environments, but the approaches it adopts remain diverse and inconsistently adapted to each context, and corporate guidance is insufficient.**

175. The evaluation context analysis outlined how governments are increasingly responding to the growth in mixed migration flows and displacement, (both cross-border and internal) catalysed by conflict and climate change. Many contexts involve displacement dynamics where populations are moving back and forth across borders in areas that already face high levels of food insecurity.

176. The nature and complexity of existing legal provisions for RIMs in different country contexts has posed challenges to the design and implementation of appropriate, agile and targeted WFP policies and strategies that clearly integrate displacement and irregular migration considerations. The focus of the strategic response by WFP has been further complicated by the different positions adopted by host governments on the legal status of refugees and whether they have the resources to support IDPs or the desire to assist irregular migrants. As a consequence, the starting point for WFP has been at the country level, where the ability of country offices to operate within the margins of national legal frameworks, or de facto government practices, has shaped how individual country offices have integrated RIMs into their CSPs. This has led to a large diversity of CSP approaches, ranging from a “holding” position for RIMs in environments where the status of displaced and irregular migrant populations is constrained, to wider efforts to support integration. Each has responded to the rights and entitlements that are afforded to RIMs by the host government, and the capacities, maturity and resourcing of central and local government systems to implement national policies in favourable contexts.

177. The gap in the overall WFP response to this external environment is that it has yet to formulate its corporate policies, strategies and guidance in ways that may help regional bureaux and country offices to systematically navigate an appropriate spectrum of responses to their specific displacement and irregular migration context. Formulating a clearer corporate approach would allow country offices to better respond when governments find it challenging to support RIMs, or in contexts where UN agencies may find it difficult to discharge their responsibilities on the ground. In this respect, three critical areas can be identified where WFP has yet to clarify the purpose and intention of its corporate-level response to RIMs. These comprise:

- How WFP should respond to refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants as distinct categories, and how to clarify the WFP response to irregular migration, which remains a blind spot in WFP operations outside of Latin America, despite high levels of vulnerability in other regions.
- How WFP should formulate a set of programming options that may be systematically adapted to each country context in response to the local political, economic, and institutional environment. This may range from adopting a holding position and examining “entry points” for the engagement

of RIMs, to linking WFP support for immediate needs to self-reliance and durable solutions.

- How WFP should support other mandated UN agencies in advocating with governments for the rights and entitlements of displaced and irregular migrant populations and generate a more favourable enabling environment for the transition of RIMs toward self-reliance.

178. WFP also needs to consider the role and function of regional bureaux in providing leadership and support to country offices in better understanding how cross-border displacement and migration impact on the status and rights of RIM beneficiaries, and their vulnerability to food insecurity, malnutrition and protection risks. While introduction of the Integrated Road Map created an appropriate strategic focus at the country level to navigate the political, economic and funding environment for RIMs, it has left gaps in WFP analysis of the cross-border drivers of displacement and migration, and the ability of WFP to formulate multi-country strategies that involve a portfolio of anticipatory action, emergency preparedness and response, and longer-term programming.

### **3.1.2 WFP programmatic responses to the needs of refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants reflect its traditional strengths in addressing immediate needs, but there remains considerable room for WFP to enhance and improve its approaches towards self-reliance.**

179. When considering the overall effectiveness of its support for the immediate needs of RIMs, a majority of internal and external stakeholders highlighted the capacities of WFP as the primary humanitarian food and nutrition agency, its ability to achieve scale quickly during major displacement crises, and its leadership in providing and maintaining humanitarian access to forcibly displaced populations. Although WFP support for the immediate needs of irregular migrants in countries outside Latin America has been minimal, its operational modalities, use of cash-based transfers, and blending of cash and in-kind support remain relevant for all RIM groups and are widely considered to have improved the choices available to, and agency of, RIM populations. Cash transfers have also opened opportunities for WFP to use social safety nets to target vulnerable RIM groups.

180. Used well, both supply chains and cash transfers have illustrated how humanitarian funding for immediate needs can be used as seed investment for longer-term development outcomes linked to the strengthening of national systems, institutions, infrastructure and skills. Even in contexts where governments are not supportive of the integration of RIMs into national systems, dependency has been mitigated to some extent through local procurement and cash transfers that develop local value chains and may help build social cohesion with host communities. These examples provide entry points through which WFP not only improves the effectiveness of its support to RIMs but may also achieve positive impacts for domestic populations that align with the development priorities of governments. Similar analysis can be applied to WFP efforts to strengthen government school feeding and social protection systems in ways that integrate both host and displaced populations.

181. The key area where the evaluation's effectiveness analysis found WFP programme contributions to have been less well developed was in their ability to link support for the immediate needs of RIMs to a broader strategy that transitions beneficiaries toward self-reliance. Although WFP has developed a range of corporate programme approaches and modalities to support resilience programming, country offices have tended to focus support for RIMs on immediate needs, while exploring resilience building with resident populations. Although cash transfers have allowed some RIM beneficiaries to link WFP assistance to the self-reliance strategies of their own households, these and other modalities remain disconnected from any clear pathways of transitional support toward self-reliance adapted to the national context. As a result, there remain few examples where cash or other modalities have been appropriately integrated into a portfolio of self-reliance options by country offices or linked across the strategic outcomes of CSPs. Even in countries where governments are supportive of displaced or irregular migrant populations, and where WFP has introduced longer-term programming to transition to self-reliance, almost all WFP longer-term outcomes have focused on resilience of resident rather than mixed populations, and the scale of WFP support for longer-term programming for RIMs has reached only a small fraction of displaced populations.

182. WFP has yet to articulate clear pathways to contribute to self-reliance at scale for RIMs, or clarify its potential contributions in urban settings, especially in contexts where significant displaced and migrant

populations are looking to enter urban labour markets. Gaps in WFP analysis of the contextual and partnership requirements of its self-reliance support to RIMs, including the mainstreaming of cross-cutting considerations (gender, age, disability, status), have led to WFP becoming locked into the provision of emergency assistance for refugees and IDPs, which reinforces dependencies in protracted settings. WFP is yet to give full consideration or priority to areas where it can deliver scale in its support for RIMs, such as through systems-level contributions to social protection, school feeding, smallholder agriculture markets, food assistance for assets, or mainstreaming the prevention of malnutrition.

**3.1.3 WFP has yet to develop an adequately nuanced picture of the specific vulnerabilities of refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants in their different contexts, or of how these contexts may shift with WFP support over time, and there remain gaps in the identification and management by WFP of protection risks for refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants.**

183. The ability of WFP to undertake food security and nutrition assessments and vulnerability analyses is widely recognized by the international humanitarian and development communities, governments and donors. Nevertheless, the analysis of evidence generation (EQ4) highlighted how WFP does not currently seek to use assessments to build a comprehensive understanding of the vulnerabilities of RIMs, or the ways in which displacement and irregular migration intersect with wider gender, age, disability and protection related risks. In responding to its mandate, the question for WFP is not whether to prioritize vulnerability over status-based targeting, but how to integrate a better understanding of status into its assessment and analysis of the vulnerability of displaced and irregular migrant women, men, girls and boys. Similarly, WFP needs to clarify the extent to which it adopts a targeting and prioritization approach that focuses on quantity (numbers of RIMs reached) or the quality of support it provides them. This is especially relevant when considering the protection needs of RIMs, and the specific vulnerabilities of displaced and irregular migrant PLWG and children to the lifelong impacts of malnutrition.

184. A critical consideration and key reputational risk for WFP stems from the limited recognition across its frontline operations of how displacement and migration may have heightened the exposure of refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants to protection risks, both during their periods of transit and in their places of arrival. Protection concerns not only prevent RIMs from accessing emergency assistance to meet immediate needs but may also affect intra-household relationships surrounding their use, or the different self-reliance options available to household members. Ruptures in supply chains and changes in targeting or prioritization are linked to the indebtedness of households and their ability to meet the needs of household members. This can lead to drops in school attendance, negative coping strategies such as prostitution, and increases in protection risks among women and girls. Gaps in WFP assistance and protection support resulting from weaknesses in triage and referral to other agencies may exacerbate protection risks. It is essential, therefore, that WFP sustains progress on protection by targeting resources and support to the country level in ways that strengthen inter-agency coordination and adoption of a common approach with other UN agencies and cooperating partners in every context of operation.

185. Gaps in WFP data and monitoring systems limit the ability of WFP to aggregate and analyse the funding allocated, or build a corporate picture of the assistance provided, to refugees, IDPs and irregular migrants as distinct categories. Putting the beneficiary first was a recurrent theme in the analysis of WFP digital and monitoring systems where multiple stakeholders sought more flexible, mobile and interoperable solutions to provide end-to-end support to RIMs from immediate needs to self-reliance. WFP can register households, manage transfers and track the assistance they are provided, but is unable to track this assistance over time. It is therefore unable to build a coherent picture of its contribution to changes in the food and nutrition of individual beneficiaries in relation to their specific vulnerability or status except, to a limited extent, in protracted camp-based settings. Differences in how agencies track their assistance have created data sharing challenges. Bottlenecks in the development of corporate solutions have resulted in some country offices developing bespoke platforms. In reviewing its enterprise architecture and implementing the new data strategy, it is important that WFP considers programme effectiveness in dynamic displacement settings.

**3.1.4 WFP strategic and operational partnerships to address the increasingly complex challenges of refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants would benefit from greater clarity on roles and responsibilities, and there is scope to improve engagement with governments and cooperating partners to help refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants transition towards self-reliance.**

186. Despite a positive trajectory in its engagement with partners at all levels, WFP has been unable to extend its strategic response to the scale and growth in displaced and irregular migrant populations, or the tightening of the funding environment. This has particularly impacted on the effectiveness of longer-term contributions by WFP to RIM self-reliance. When supporting displaced and migrant populations in the short and longer term, WFP has to rely heavily on navigating the overlapping responsibilities of other mandated UN agencies (especially IOM and UNHCR). Across the evaluation this was apparent in: the status categorization of RIMs by relevant partners; the vulnerability assessment and registration of RIMs as beneficiaries; the management of transfers; the monitoring of outcomes; the tracking of movements; and when advocating for improved rights and entitlements to support self-reliance or durable solutions. Despite these critical inter-relationships and the potential impacts on WFP effectiveness, neither WFP or UNHCR have given sufficient priority to the role and function of the Joint Hub.

187. While examples of partnering agreements exist at the corporate level, and areas of strong country and regional collaboration exist, the evaluation found a surprising lack of efforts to develop joint solutions with governments, UN agencies or cooperating partners to help RIMs transition towards self-reliance. This is likely to be a critical requirement of future resource mobilization, with donors seeking to bridge the gap in funding between immediate needs and longer-term support. Nevertheless, a broadening of WFP country-level partnerships is emerging in some countries responding to the duration of each CSP. These partnerships offer WFP the ability to capitalize on its capacity strengthening contributions to governments in displacement and migration contexts by drawing on the resilience and nexus-based contributions of international non-government organizations, specialized UN agencies and national cooperating partners. In contexts where state or non-state actors limit WFP field access, WFP needs to examine how it shares risks with cooperating partners, and how potential duplication or exclusion errors, or fraud, may lead to reputational damage.

## **3.2 Recommendations**

188. The recommendations seek to build upon the examples of positive action that have supported WFP beneficiaries in different displacement and irregular migration settings. The aim is not to introduce new policy but to update and shape policies, institutional arrangements and programme support in ways that may accelerate the contributions of WFP and its support for RIM populations alongside host communities and governments. The recommendations are inter-related and sequenced in an order that is designed to build momentum for change through practical steps that support future implementation.

No.	Recommendation	Priority, responsibility, deadline
1	<p><i>WFP's corporate positioning</i></p> <p>Formulate a clear vision and corporate position on WFP's support for food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, and systematically embed this position in relevant WFP strategic and normative frameworks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define the key elements and boundaries of WFP's strategic approach to assisting food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable refugees and internally displaced persons in emergency and protracted displacement settings, in line with the organization's mandate and addressing emergency preparedness, crisis response and transitions to self-reliance and durable solutions.</li> <li>• Clarify WFP's corporate intention regarding the provision of assistance for food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable irregular migrants, and strategic entry points for supporting this category of people in the future.</li> <li>• Embed WFP's corporate position regarding refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in guidance on the formulation of CSPs and relevant thematic and sectoral policies and strategies.</li> <li>• Define WFP's strategic approach to its work in existing and emergent cross-border displacement and migration settings, and the mechanisms required for a coherent and coordinated multi-country response in such settings.</li> </ul>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Responsibility: Emergency Preparedness and Response Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Support: Nutrition and Food Quality Service; Gender, Protection and Inclusion Service; School Meals and Social Protection Service; Climate and Resilience Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Analysis, Planning and Performance Division</p> <p>Regional and country directors</p> <p>Digital Services Branch (Technology Division)</p> <p>Digital Transformation and Business Development Branch (Management Services Division)</p> <p>Deadline: End of 2026</p>

No.	Recommendation	Priority, responsibility, deadline
2	<p><i>WFP programmes and related partnerships</i></p> <p>Specify WFP's programme offer and the partnerships it needs in order to adequately integrate refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants into interventions for emergency preparedness, addressing immediate needs, building self-reliance and implementing durable solutions, and foster the introduction of transition pathways from the outset of the crisis response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide country offices with a coherent programme framework that sets out the options for, and boundaries of, WFP's offer for the different categories of refugee, internally displaced person and irregular migrant, and that considers the specific limitations and opportunities for WFP's operational response in different country settings, such as the legal provisions for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants; security and access considerations; the economic environment; and national and local capacity.</li> <li>• Identify critical gaps in WFP's operational guidance and the tools needed to implement its corporate position and programmes in rural, urban and camp settings, and develop or revise relevant guidance and tools with the support of regional bureaux and country offices.</li> <li>• Identify critical gaps in WFP's internal capacity to implement its programmes for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, including in addressing cross-cutting and protection issues, and the investments required for effective capacity strengthening, guidance, recruitment and support.</li> <li>• Identify and operationalize the broad range of strategic and programmatic partnerships needed to implement and support WFP's programmes for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants with other United Nations entities, international financial institutions, cooperating partners, governments, the private sector, and local stakeholders.</li> <li>• Strengthen WFP's strategic engagement in advocating, together with mandated agencies and other stakeholders, for an enabling environment that supports refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants through the transition of programmes towards building self-reliance and implementing durable solutions in different countries.</li> </ul>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Responsibility: Emergency Preparedness and Response Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Support: Nutrition and Food Quality Service; Gender, Protection and Inclusion Service; School Meals and Social Protection Service; Climate and Resilience Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Analysis, Planning and Performance Division</p> <p>Supply Chain and Delivery Division</p> <p>Regional and country directors</p> <p>Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division</p> <p>Digital Services Branch (Technology Division)</p> <p>Digital Transformation and Business Development Branch (Management Services Division)</p> <p>Deadline: End of 2026</p>

No.	Recommendation	Priority, responsibility, deadline
3	<p><i>WFP data systems, assessment and analysis</i></p> <p>Strengthen WFP's data systems and analytical capacity to improve the organization's understanding of the intersecting vulnerabilities of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, inform programming, facilitate inter-agency coordination, and enable principled data-sharing on refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed data on refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants by category, as well as age, sex and disability, throughout WFP's data and monitoring systems, and in its assessment methodologies, sampling and analysis, so that programme design, targeting and prioritization can take issues related to forced displacement and irregular migration into account.</li> <li>• Ensure that WFP's corporate systems identify and track refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants throughout the programme cycle and budgeting process.</li> <li>• Strengthen attention given to forced displacement, irregular migration and related issues in WFP's contextual analysis and early warning systems for multi-country, cross-border and individual country settings.</li> <li>• In case of an inter-agency response, strengthen beneficiary management systems and align data privacy safeguards in order to optimize the generation of data on beneficiaries, interoperability and principled data sharing.</li> </ul>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Responsibility: Analysis, Planning and Performance Division</p> <p>Support: Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service; Programme Monitoring and Reporting Service (Analysis, Planning and Performance Division)</p> <p>Emergency Preparedness and Response Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Regional and country directors</p> <p>Digital Services Branch (Technology Division)</p> <p>Digital Transformation and Business Development Branch (Management Services Division)</p> <p>Global Privacy Office</p> <p>Deadline: End of 2026</p>

No.	Recommendation	Priority, responsibility, deadline
4	<p><i>Protection and risk identification and mitigation</i></p> <p>Ensure that all of WFP's support for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants is based on comprehensive analysis of status in relation to the risks faced by women, girls, men and boys, and risks arising from protection on contextual issues, and that it includes robust mechanisms for ensuring accountability to affected people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance and apply guidance for ensuring that WFP's employees and partners have an increased understanding of the specific protection-related vulnerabilities of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, including those facing women, girls, men and boys or arising from other concerns, and the importance of conflict sensitivity.</li> <li>• Ensure that a comprehensive, documented analysis of the risks related to protection, including from sexual exploitation and abuse, social cohesion and other issues affecting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants is conducted, jointly with other agencies where feasible, and is integrated systematically into programme design and decision-making on targeting and prioritization.</li> <li>• Continue to strengthen the systematic engagement of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants in programme design and implementation; the review of and response to complaints and feedback; and the management of protection referrals, including cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, to the appropriate systems of mandated agencies, government departments or cooperating partners, as relevant.</li> <li>• Review and systematize WFP's approach to the identification and management of risks, including cross-cutting and protection risks, in settings where humanitarian access is limited and WFP relies on its cooperating partners or other non-state actors for outreach in the field.</li> </ul>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Responsibility: Emergency Preparedness and Response Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Support: Gender, Protection and Inclusion Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Unit (Office of the Executive Director)</p> <p>Regional and country directors</p> <p>Regional and country gender and protection advisors</p> <p>Risk and Accountability Branch (Risk Management Division)</p> <p>Deadline: Mid-2026</p>

No.	Recommendation	Priority, responsibility, deadline
5	<p><i>WFP partnerships with the legally mandated agencies</i></p> <p>Strengthen strategic and operational partnerships with agencies that have displacement and migration mandates, and address gaps in analysis, data and information sharing, and the coordination of assistance and solutions for refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarify WFP's role with respect to mandated refugee agencies in coordinating and prioritizing inter-agency responses to the immediate needs of forcibly displaced people, adjusting support in protracted settings and jointly facilitating shifts towards self-reliance and durable solutions.</li> <li>Continue to consolidate engagement with UNHCR and mobilize partnerships in fundraising for further strengthening the Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub as a critical service that reinforces WFP's strategic and operational relationship with UNHCR at the corporate, regional and country levels.</li> <li>Review and identify entry points through which to strengthen WFP's relationship with IOM, including on the action agenda for internally displaced persons and as part of efforts to establish a coherent inter-agency position on, and response to, irregular migration in different settings.</li> </ul>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Responsibility: Emergency Preparedness and Response Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Support: Regional and country directors</p> <p>Analysis Planning and Performance Division</p> <p>Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division</p> <p>Digital Services Branch (Technology Division)</p> <p>School Meals and Social Protection Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Deadline: End of 2026</p>

No.	Recommendation	Priority, responsibility, deadline
6	<p><i>Financial resources</i></p> <p>Strengthen WFP's focus on resource mobilization during rapid-onset and protracted crises in order to more effectively meet the immediate humanitarian needs of refugees, internally displaced persons, irregular migrants and host populations, and better support the transition towards longer-term solutions from the outset of crisis responses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance high-level advocacy with donors – bilaterally, jointly with WFP's United Nations partners and through relevant global platforms and forums, such as the Global Refugee Forum – so as to improve funding for addressing immediate needs, building self-reliance and implementing durable solutions for refugees, internally displaced persons, irregular migrants, host communities and returnees.</li> <li>Adopt an explicit advocacy position for WFP's engagement with international financial institutions and development actors in all areas of strategic engagement relevant to the food security and nutrition of refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants, including their inclusion in national safety net systems.</li> <li>Strengthen the visibility of funding allocations for supporting refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants within WFP's financial systems in order to support targeted resource mobilization efforts.</li> <li>Review the potential role of flexible funding in supporting interventions that demonstrate how meeting immediate needs can be successfully linked programmatically to self-reliance and durable solutions.</li> </ul>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Responsibility: Partnership Coordination Services (Partnerships and Innovation Department)</p> <p>Support: Regional and Global Offices; Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division</p> <p>Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service; Programme Budget Management Service (Analysis, Planning and Performance Division)</p> <p>Regional and country directors</p> <p>Emergency Preparedness and Response Service; Nutrition and Food Quality Service; School Meals and Social Protection Service (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)</p> <p>Deadline: End of 2026</p>

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