WFP EVALUATION

Evaluation synthesis on WFP's engagement in middle-income countries (2019–2024)

Centralized evaluation report

OEV/2025/011
April 2025

World Food Programme

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Acknowledgements

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Photo credit: WFP/Samantha Reinders
Kailali, Sudurpashchim Province, Nepal.
In this photo, Chitra, a smallholder farmer, poses in her mustard fields near her home. She joined WFP's "Women in Value Chain" programme and now successfully runs a small business selling vegetables and chicken eggs, primarily to local schools.

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Introduction

Synthesis features

1. Globally, of every five people in extreme poverty, more than three live in middle-income countries (MICs).[1] Seventy percent of the countries where WFP operates, 63 of 89, are classified by the World Bank as middle-income.

2. This synthesis of WFP's engagement in MICs was conducted by the Office of Evaluation between June 2024 and February 2025. As WFP prepares its next strategic plan, for 2026–2030, the synthesis brings together evidence from 73 centralized[2] and decentralized[3] evaluations in 25 MICs, conducted between 2019 and 2024, to ask:

    ➤ What characterizes WFP's strategic positioning in MICs, and how has this evolved since 2019?

    ➤ How have partnerships in MICs worked, and how have they evolved?

    ➤ What results were generated in MICs between 2019 and 2024?

    ➤ Which factors affected WFP's results in MICs?

    ➤ How does WFP approach sustainability in MICs and with what results?

3. The intended users of this synthesis include WFP's senior management; staff at central headquarters, regional bureaux, and country offices in MICs; the Executive Board; and partners, including government counterparts, cooperating partners and other United Nations entities.

Context

4. The World Bank uses per capita gross national income to assign countries to four groups with regard to income: low; lower-middle; upper-middle; and high.[4] Currently, 70 percent of the countries (63 in total) where WFP operates are MICs, of which 44 are lower-middle-income and 19 are upper-middle-income.

5. While country income status alone cannot be used to predict the features and conditions in a given country or setting – particularly in the settings in which WFP is engaged – many MICs have common features, including:

    ➤ often relatively strong governance, legal systems and institutional arrangements;

    ➤ defined public policy and other normative frameworks on subjects such as food security and nutrition;

    ➤ established national capacity in key governance and policy areas.[5]

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[1] World Bank. 2024. *World Development Report 2024: The Middle-Income Trap*.

[2] Centralized evaluations are commissioned and managed by the Office of Evaluation and presented to the Executive Board for consideration.

[3] Decentralized evaluations are commissioned and managed by country offices, regional bureaux and headquarters divisions other than the Office of Evaluation. They are not presented to the Board.

[4] In 2024, 105 countries were classified as middle-income. Of those, 51 are categorized as lower-middle-income and 54 as upper-middle-income. See World Bank. World Bank Country and Lending Groups.

[5] Khan, M. S. 2022. "Absorptive capacities and economic growth in low- and middle-income economies" in *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics*. Vol. 62, pp. 156–188.

6. WFP's current strategic plan, covering 2022–2025, recognizes the particular conditions and characteristics of MICs and frames its planned engagement in those countries to pursue "a growing enabling agenda [...] focused on technical assistance, policy advice, evidence generation and system strengthening." It sets out WFP's intentions in this regard as stated in box 1.

> **Box 1: WFP strategic statement on middle-income countries**
>
> *WFP will engage with MICs at the request of governments, supporting them in the sharing of expertise, technology and resources with other developing countries to fight hunger and malnutrition. [...] WFP's activities will be adapted according to need, especially in MICs characterized by unfinished development agendas and with high levels of inequality, social exclusion and post-harvest food losses. [...] WFP will continue to contribute to inclusive and sustainable growth in MICs.*

Source: "WFP strategic plan (2022–2025)" (WFP/EB.2/2021/4-A/1/Rev.2), box 9.

7. Although MICs comprise the majority of the countries in which WFP engages, WFP's activities in those countries accounted for only 33 percent of its total needs-based plan budget and 34 percent of the allocated budget from 2019 to 2024. Of this, the bulk of resources were consumed by the lower middle-income group. Overall, WFP programmes in low-income countries and those in MICs are resourced at similar levels, with around 57 percent of their needs-based plans funded in 2024.

Methodology

8. The synthesis systematically analysed 39 centralized and 34 decentralized evaluations issued between 2019 and 2024 pertaining to 25 MICs[6] across all regions (as shown in table 1). Countries were selected for the synthesis if the weighted average of WFP's needs-based plan allocation and actual expenditure for activities targeting national governments, actors, systems and institutions was above the overall average. Moreover, the sample also included MICs where WFP had implemented a rapid scale-up or / and scale-down of operations. Only evaluations satisfactorily meeting independently assessed quality requirements were considered (see annex II).

TABLE 1: SAMPLED COUNTRIES		
Reporting to	**Income classification**	**Country**
Central headquarters	Upper-middle	China
Asia and the Pacific	Lower-middle	Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Timor-Leste
	Upper-middle	Indonesia

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[6] Countries have been included in the final sample if classified for a minimum of three (fiscal) years in the World Bank MICs listing between 2019 and 2024 to ensure that the synthesis takes an expansive approach to sampling, while accounting for possible fluctuations in/out of the MICs grouping.

TABLE 1: SAMPLED COUNTRIES		
Reporting to	**Income classification**	**Country**
Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe	Lower-middle	Egypt, Tunisia
	Upper-middle	Armenia, Iraq, Türkiye
Western Africa	Lower-middle	Ghana
Southern Africa	Lower-middle	Eswatini, Lesotho, Zambia, Zimbabwe
	Upper-middle	Namibia
Eastern Africa	Lower-middle	Kenya
Latin America and the Caribbean	Upper-middle	Colombia, Dominican Republic, Peru

TABLE 2: EVALUATIONS INCLUDED IN THE SYNTHESIS, BY TYPE							
Centralized evaluations (CEs)				**Decentralized evaluations (DEs)**			**Total**
Corporate emergency response	Country strategic plan	Policy	Strategic	Activity	Thematic	Pilot	**73** 39 CEs 34 DEs
1	22	8	8	27	6	1	

9. The systematic analysis of evaluation evidence was complemented by:

   ➢ an analysis of the programme portfolio and resourcing flows in MICs compared with those for low-income countries;

   ➢ triangulation with WFP global evaluations and other secondary data; and

   ➢ an analysis of evaluation recommendations and management response data.

10. In addition, stakeholder consultations were held and feedback was gathered throughout the process to probe and refine emerging themes and the recommendations derived from the analysis.

11. *Limitations:* The evidence is based on retrospective evaluations of a sample of the MICs where WFP operates, which may not reflect the most recent developments in WFP across the full set of those MICs; it should also be noted that the depth of evidence available for each question varies. *Mitigation*

measures included extensive data extraction pilots during the synthesis inception phase; a systematic effort to analyse data from both global and country-specific evaluations; the calibration of findings based on the strength of the evidence; and the use of stakeholder feedback to help refine and nuance the findings.

Synthesis conclusions and supporting findings

12.   This section presents the seven key conclusions of the synthesis, and the findings that support them.

Conclusion 1: Relevance and limits of country income categorization

The MICs category is too broad to inform programming and masks distinct features and challenges, although upper-middle-income countries have some key distinguishing features. WFP accordingly needs to better articulate its rationale and related strategies and programme offer, particularly in MICs hosting refugees and internally displaced persons and assisting irregular migrants;[7] upper-middle-income countries where WFP does not target direct beneficiaries;[8] and countries transitioning out of crisis.[9]

MICs often provide an environment conducive to innovation and expansion beyond WFP's standard toolkit, and the absence of a clearly articulated rationale for WFP's engagement in MICs – beyond a brief reference in the strategic plan for 2022–2025 – constrains the ability of country offices to articulate their programme offer in such countries.

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13.   MICs represent a critical arena for WFP's current and future engagement. However, they differ considerably from one another.

14.   There are significant variations in socioeconomic development and multi-dimensional poverty indicators among MICs, and some lower-middle-income countries fare more poorly in socioeconomic development than some low-income countries, as shown in annex I.[10]

15.   Evaluation evidence and country-level portfolio analysis highlight key distinguishing features of MICs, including:

➢   the transition from low- to middle-income status often reduces donors' interest and leads to unfulfilled expectations of domestic resource mobilization – particularly in upper-MICs transitioning out of crisis, where WFP struggles to secure funding for emergency preparedness;

➢   a growing trend in host governments of MICs funding WFP's work in their own countries (figure 1);

➢   distinctive programme offerings, including relatively high levels of service provision and platforms and of activities related to school meals, social protection, adaptation to extreme weather events

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[7] Examples of MICs in this grouping include Colombia, Kenya and Peru.

[8] Examples include Indonesia.

[9] Examples include Iraq and Nepal.

[10] See World Bank. 2024. *World Development Report 2024: The Middle-Income Trap*, cit. box 1.1 pp. 37-39. Also, the middle-income grouping includes 12 countries ranked as having a "very high" Human Development Index rank, 44 countries ranked as "high", 42 as "medium" and 9 as "low". United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Index. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2023. *Policy Brief No. 155: Accelerating middle-income countries' progress towards sustainable development.*

and the management of weather-related risks; and lower rates of nutrition treatment and prevention activities (figure 2);

➢ well-documented challenges in mobilizing resources for capacity strengthening activities, a difficulty not limited to MICs but noted especially where WFP's engagement is focused on supporting the delivery of government-led food and nutrition insecurity solutions; and

➢ diversified partnerships, particularly in upper-middle-income countries where WFP enters in closer partnerships with national governments and in more diversified partnerships, particularly with academia and the private sector.

Figure 1: Host government contributions to the WFP programmes, in their countries (by generation of country strategic plan (CSP); showing only those contributions exceeding 20 percent of the programme budgets)
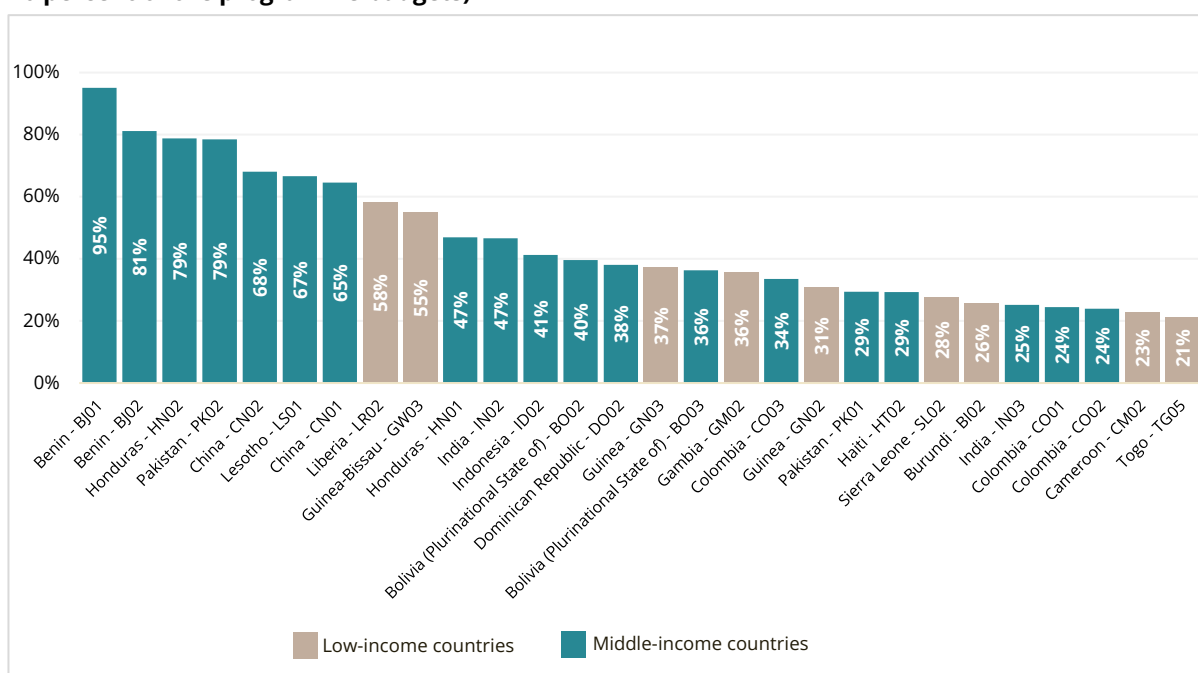
Source: Weekly contribution and forecast report, Office of Evaluation compiled data (data as at 20 February 2025). The generation of CSP is indicated by the code following the country name.

16. WFP's resourcing and engagement in MICs share several similarities with its experience in low-income countries:

➢ WFP programmes in low-income countries and MICs are resourced at similar levels, receiving about 57 percent of their needs-based plan budgets in 2024. They also face similar earmarking challenges with about 73 percent of the funds received being earmarked at the activity level in both categories.

➢ Private donors' support for WFP programmes in MICs is comparable to that for programmes in low-income countries.

➢ A comparable proportion of programme budgets in both MICs and low-income countries is allocated to unconditional resource transfers, asset creation and livelihoods and institutional capacity strengthening activities.

17. Moreover, two thirds of the budgets in MICs are allocated to unconditional resource transfers, a proportion that is similar to that in low-income countries and is targeted largely to meet the needs of displaced persons (figure 2). This reflects:

➢ the ongoing volatility of global food insecurity, regardless of country income status; and

> the use of unconditional resource transfers in WFP's food assistance for displaced people, the direct assistance distributed through WFP-led programmes, and WFP's support for distributions undertaken by or on behalf of governments as part of national social protection systems.

Figure 2: Needs-based plan cumulative budget allocation by activity category, comparing low-, lower-middle- and upper-middle-income countries (2019–2024)
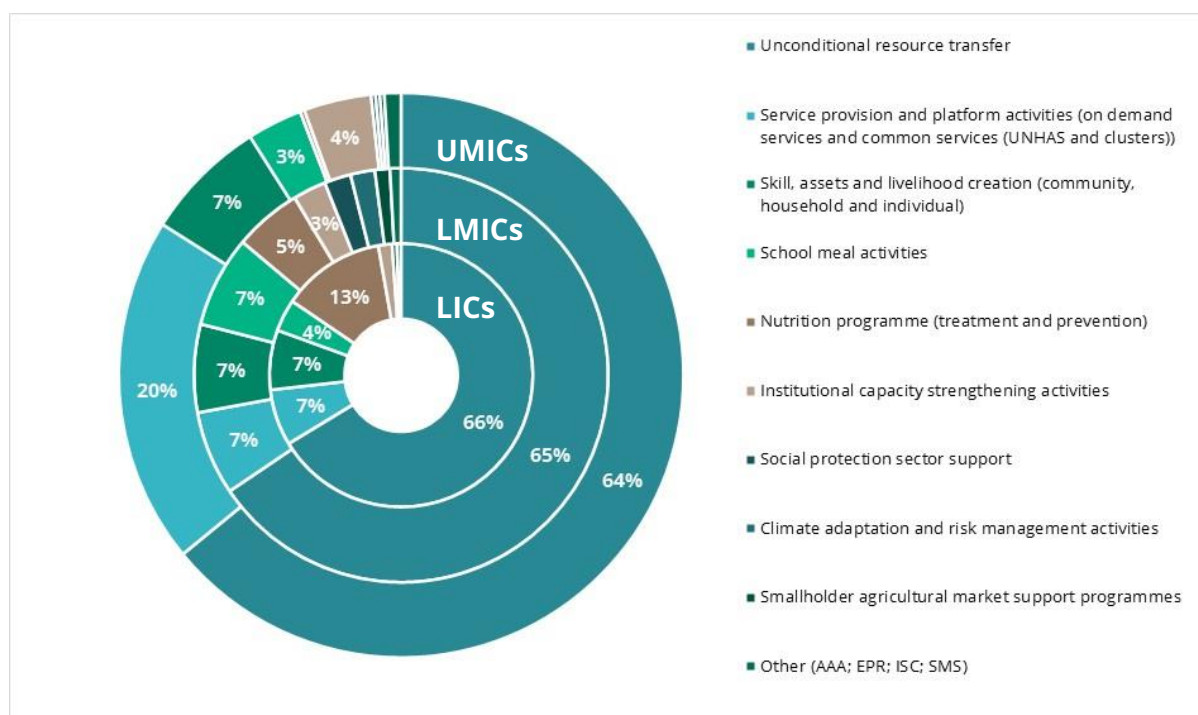
Source: IRM analytics, EV_CPB_Resources_Overview (data as at 14 January 2025).

Abbreviations: AAA = anticipatory action; EPR = emergency preparedness and response; ISC = indirect support cost; LICs = low-income countries; LMICs = lower-middle-income countries; SMS = smallholder market support; UMICs = upper-middle-income countries; UNHAS = United Nations Humanitarian Air Service.

Conclusion 2: Evidence shows that, where conditions permit, the intended strategic shift in WFP's engagement in MICs, articulated in the strategic plan for 2022–2025, has largely been realized. WFP has undertaken *increasingly diversified roles* in MICs, while maintaining a well-consolidated role in service delivery and emergency response.

A distinctive area of strength that enabled WFP to broadly realize the shift lies in its *adaptive capacity* to seize opportunities for engagement in response to governments' requests, to effectively adapt its programme offer to changes in circumstances, and to pivot towards crisis response when shocks occur.

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18.   Evaluations describe how WFP has envisioned and broadly realized three main strategic shifts in its work in MICs, alongside maintaining its main crisis response role in support of government-led interventions. Specifically, in MICs WFP has worked towards:

> shifting – albeit usually non-linearly – from direct delivery of assistance to capacity strengthening for national institutions and support for food security and nutrition-related policy and legislative frameworks;

> ➤ diversifying and expanding its programme offer in less traditional areas, such as adaptation to the impacts of extreme weather events, value chain development and innovation, including by piloting new interventions; and

> ➤ supporting the inclusion of displaced and other vulnerable people in national social protection systems.

19. Such shifts are part of WFP's wider trajectory of institutional change[11] and are therefore not limited to its work in MICs.[12] However, the particular features of many MICs have provided entry points for, and shaped the form of, WFP's strategic shifts in those countries. For example, more clearly established public policy and other normative frameworks in areas such as social protection, combined with comparatively mature institutional arrangements, systems and processes, have enabled WFP to expand its programme offer in this and other areas.

20. In terms of the specific roles played by WFP in MICs, evaluations note that WFP successfully positioned itself as:

> ➤ a provider of specialized expertise and analytics to support policy formulation and advocacy;

> ➤ a provider of on-demand services for governments, particularly as part of national social protection systems and to fill gaps in government-led programmes;

> ➤ a pilot tester and catalyst of innovation; and

> ➤ a knowledge broker and partnership convenor.

21. At the same time, evaluations highlight how WFP effectively and swiftly adapted its role to respond to a wide range of shocks and contextual changes (table 3), often working through national systems, where possible, to fill gaps or provide on-demand services as needed.

TABLE 3: DRIVERS OF ADAPTATION AND EXAMPLES OF RELATED ACTIONS TAKEN		
Type of shock or change experienced	**Type of response adopted**	**Selected examples of actions taken**
External shock, e.g. the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic, extreme weather-related events	Programmatic adaptations to respond to urgent needs	Shifts in transfer modality, such as from school meals to take-home rations (Cambodia) or from food to cash-based assistance (Egypt, Pakistan) or from cash to mobile money (Colombia, Peru). Programme expansion, such as the reintroduction of in-kind food assistance and cash for assets in the Philippines following typhoon Rai. Horizontal expansion of social protection systems to cover vulnerable people in urban areas (Iraq, Kenya, Lesotho, Türkiye, Zimbabwe).
Country-specific legislative and regulatory changes	Adjustments in programme focus and/or modalities	In Kenya, WFP adapted its approach to support the Government in refugee integration, focusing on improving access to education and livelihoods.

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[11] These shifts were first articulated in "WFP strategic plan (2008–2011)" (EB.A/2008/5-A/1/Rev.1) and continued thereafter in successive strategic plans.

[12] This is reflected in, for example, the relatively similar proportions of resources allocated to institutional capacity strengthening in MICs and low-income countries (see conclusion 1).

TABLE 3: DRIVERS OF ADAPTATION AND EXAMPLES OF RELATED ACTIONS TAKEN		
Type of shock or change experienced	Type of response adopted	Selected examples of actions taken
		In Zimbabwe, WFP reversed its commitment to increasing cash-based transfers and adjusted transfer modalities in 2020 in response to new government regulations.
Specific government requests arising from new national needs	Horizontal and vertical programmatic adaptations	In Colombia, WFP adapted its programming to provide large-scale food assistance and cash-based transfers at the Government's request, including to address the needs of groups such migrants in transit, not initially covered as priorities in the CSP. In Iraq, to fill a gap in an important mechanism for addressing food insecurity and ensuring the sustainable return of refugees WFP supported, and then worked towards the handover of, rural development activities in the period following conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

Conclusion 3: Overall the evidence synthesized shows that WFP made significant contributions to results in the MICs where it was engaged. Evaluations reported contributions made in all the areas of engagement and results as envisaged in the strategic plan for 2022–2025, with an expanding programme offer focused on *technical assistance, policy advice, evidence generation* and *systems strengthening*.

Challenges and missed opportunities were noted when expanding the scale and reach from individual initiatives; in ensuring a strategic approach to capacity strengthening; and in adopting a coherent rather than a fragmented approach, particularly when donor funding was piecemeal. WFP's narrative on its value and achievements in MICs – especially when supporting government-led actions – was not always clearly articulated.

22.   Key contributions recorded by evaluations in the 25 MICs covered by this synthesis include:

➤ improved reach of social protection systems during shocks and emergencies, alongside enhanced stability of, or improvement in, food security measures for affected people and communities;

➤ improved policy and strategic frameworks for food security and nutrition, and strengthened institutions to help implement them;

➤ enhanced national systems for food security and nutrition, including monitoring, supply chain and social protection systems, and early warning and disaster preparedness;

➤ inputs to the development of new, or the improvement of existing, policy and normative frameworks, leading to improved food security and nutrition gains;

➤ inputs for strengthening key systems, such as national supply chains and frameworks for school meal programmes, disaster management and preparedness, in support of government-led action in these areas;

> ➢ gap-filling engagement and expansion into less traditional areas such as climate risk management, climate adaptation and smallholder agricultural market support;

> ➢ improved economic opportunities for women, such as through participation in local food procurement and supply chains, particularly in connection with school meal programmes; and

> ➢ enhanced prospects for socioeconomic integration and social cohesion among communities through the use of conflict sensitivity assessments and the promotion of refugees' self-reliance and integration into host communities.

23. The main challenges encountered arose in the context of:

> ➢ the move "upstream" from small-scale, fragmented initiatives, particularly in the context of piecemeal donor funding;

> ➢ underestimation of the scale, depth, quality and duration of the programmes, and the WFP capacity, required for sustained national capacity strengthening and for ensuring a fully strategic and systems-oriented approach;

> ➢ matching of the CSP's vision and ambition with adequate resources; and

> ➢ the need for a compelling narrative about results and achievements in settings where WFP's ability to reach direct beneficiaries is limited and often decreasing.

Conclusion 4: A trend is noted towards the *diversification of WFP's partnerships in MICs*, but they lack a coherent and overarching framework.

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24. Evaluations indicate that WFP's role in MICs has evolved over time, reflecting changing national circumstances and operational needs. However, evidence shows that WFP's approach to partnerships in MICs is not consistently informed by a coherent and *comprehensive partnership framework* for the country level that supports the envisioned shifts in strategic positioning that WFP aims to pursue in MICs (see box 1).

25. In its engagement with national governments in MICs, WFP typically blends three main roles as: a strategic partner in policy and advocacy work; a technical partner in providing expertise and capacity support to national actors; and an operational partner supporting implementation within national social protection systems.

26. Evaluations report that WFP's partnerships in MICs have diversified over time:

> ➢ In upper-middle-income countries WFP engages more frequently with national governments and a broader range of partners, such as academia and the private sector.

> ➢ In lower-middle-income countries, as in low-income countries, WFP partners more often with international non-governmental organizations.

27. While evaluations found that governments valued WFP's roles, capacity and expertise highly – as reflected in their direct financial commitments (figure 1) – work in areas such as policy support, technical advice and capacity strengthening requires sustained approaches alongside sound analysis, technical support and relationship-building. Evaluations noted common challenges such as the need for clearer roles and responsibilities, well-defined entry points within national systems, and stronger engagement at the decentralized level, particularly in federal governance systems.

28. With regard to WFP's engagement with partners beyond host governments, evidence highlights that WFP's relationships with other United Nations entities revolves primarily around strategic coordination, although challenges remain in aligning technical assistance and policy support efforts.

Engagement with the private sector, although still mostly transactional, is shifting towards more strategic partnerships in upper-middle-income countries,[13] where WFP has been more effective in leveraging private sector collaboration to address food and nutrition challenges.

Conclusion 5: *Pilot initiatives* form a major part of WFP's portfolio in MICs, but planning for scale-up, where relevant, has *often lacked a systematic approach,* and learning and review processes were not always sufficient.

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29.   Evaluations noted different uses and purposes of the pilot activities undertaken in MICs – from demonstrating WFP's potential added value, such as in the use of data and analytics capability to support national social protection systems, to showcasing and documenting innovative solutions, such as for local procurement or agriculture value chains.

30.   Evaluations identified some valuable work undertaken, but planning for scale-up, where relevant, and for learning has often been insufficient, compounding the risk of fragmentation. Evidence generation efforts have been individually important but have often failed to trigger change. Similarly, planning for sustainability has been inconsistent, with the trajectory from innovation to sustainable change often not clearly mapped out or operationally planned for.

Conclusion 6: WFP effectively realized the full *handover of programmes to national actors* in MICs, especially school meal programmes. However, evaluations reported gaps in planning for financial sustainability, for the structured transfer of responsibilities, and for preparing for a transition from WFP-led activities to activities led by governments, supported by WFP and geared to the achievement of sustainable results.

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31.   Evaluations noted significant progress in some MICs[14] in the development and implementation of strategies for handover and transition – mainly for school meal programmes. However, shortcomings were also noted, with gaps including a need for realistic timelines, clarity regarding roles and responsibilities, a risk-informed approach, and engagement with various governance systems, including at the decentralized level, in preparation for handover.

32.   Evaluations noted that where handover was either non-optimal or infeasible, WFP's role might evolve to a different form of partnership, with greater emphasis on strategic or technical advice.

Conclusion 7: The main factors identified as affecting WFP's achievement of results and strategic shifts in MICs included uncertain financing prospects; gaps in the available framework and guidance for WFP's engagement in MICs; and challenges in using existing corporate indicators to capture and convey WFP's added value and contributions to national systems and capacity.

Employees have not always had the relevant skills, capacity and contract durations to align with the specific needs and objectives of WFP in MIC settings, where relationship-building and skills in political economy are required.

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[13] Examples are found in India, Namibia and Peru.

[14] Evidence on this point comes from Cambodia, Ghana and Kenya.

33.	Many factors affecting WFP's achievement of results in MICs are also common in countries in other income categories; these factors include resourcing – human and financial – measurement of the results of capacity-strengthening activities,[15] and overoptimistic assessments of national capacity.[16] However, elements emerging as more specific to MICs than other countries include:

➢	reduced donor interest when countries move from low- to middle-income status,[17] and often unrealized expectations with regard to domestic resource mobilization amid uncertainty about the potential for innovative financing opportunities;

➢	the absence of an overarching corporate vision and rationale for engagement in MICs, and dissonance between WFP's view of itself as being focused primarily on humanitarian emergency response and the strategic repositioning of country offices embarked on a shift from the direct delivery of programmes to a capacity support and gap-filling model;

➢	external perceptions of WFP as a specialist humanitarian-response agency, which has sometimes constrained willingness to engage with WFP as a partner of choice beyond humanitarian crisis response;[18]

➢	the adequate capture of, and reporting on, WFP's contributions to, for example, the strengthening of national systems and capacity; and

➢	the risk of fragmentation and lack of internal coherence in CSP implementation in MICs, often arising from a combination of responsiveness to requests from governments or donors, small-scale interventions and pilot or testing components.

34.	With an increasing degree of complexity in the global environment, needs in MICs can be expected to grow. The synthesis finds that in many places WFP has succeeded in making itself a partner of choice in MICs but lacks a clear narrative regarding its strengths in these countries. The synthesis makes four recommendations to support WFP in identifying a way forward for the future.

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[15] WFP. 2021. *Evaluation Synthesis of evidence and lessons on country capacity strengthening from decentralized evaluations*.

[16] See for example WFP annual evaluation report for 2024 (*forthcoming*).

[17] WFP. 2021. *Joint evaluation of collaboration among the United Nations Rome-Based Agencies*.

[18] Examples include Pakistan.

#	Recommendation	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline
1	**Set out a clearer rationale for WFP's presence, positioning and resourcing in middle-income countries and, in particular, in upper-middle-income countries.**	**Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer**			
	WFP should articulate a clear rationale for its engagement in MICs, recognizing in particular the conditions of upper-middle-income countries, with a view to ensuring focused and effective engagement. Specifically, this should include the following: • Within the framework of the CSP as the instrument guiding WFP's country-level work,[19] and building on WFP's demonstrated strengths in MICs, clearly articulate the strategic rationale for WFP's engagement in MICs, including upper-middle-income countries in particular, with an emphasis on technical support and national systems-strengthening. • Assess and articulate the rationale for WFP maintaining its presence and response capacity in MICs so that it can pivot swiftly to crisis response if needed. Ensure that relevant systems and capacity to deal with contingencies are in place, such as "dormant" or contingent CSP objectives, and staff with appropriate skills. • State a clear intention to seek funding from diverse sources, including global funding mechanisms, host governments and private sector partners.	Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer	Assistant Executive Director, Programme Operations Department Assistant Executive Director, Partnerships and Innovation Department Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division Human Resources Division	High	September 2025, in conjunction with the development of the new strategic plan

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[19] This is in line with the Executive Director's Decision Memo. 2024. "One Global Team supporting empowered country offices - Country Office-Focused Organizational Alignment". OED 1360 Rev.1 of 25 October 2024.

2	**Clarify and strengthen the development and use of partnership strategies in MICs**.	**Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division**			
	Revise existing or prepare new guidance for country offices on strengthening the development and use of strategic and operational partnership strategies for WFP's engagement in MICs. This guidance should include the following: • Define the specific areas in which, and partners with whom, WFP will engage while remaining flexible so that it can respond to new opportunities as they emerge. • Clearly position WFP vis-à-vis other entities, taking into account WFP's areas of demonstrated strength and comparative advantage. • Clarify the requisite staffing profile, including the seniority and continuity of employees, for engaging in and sustaining strategic partnerships at the country level. • Provide for the monitoring and, as needed, reassessment of partnership engagement.	Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division	Human Resources Division	High	December 2026
3	**Strengthen planning for programme handover and transition, where relevant and the path to WFP's exit from the country, where appropriate.**	**Programme Policy and Guidance Division**			
	Set clear guidance for programme handover and transition, and/or country exit, as appropriate, including by providing relevant guidance to country offices. This guidance should cover: • agreement with national counterparts of realistic timeframes for handover, transition and exit, with clear agreed pathways and milestones; • assessment and consideration of national capacity at the central and local levels; • consideration of risk throughout the process, with clear allocation of roles and responsibilities for WFP and its counterparts; • analysis of any administrative, data-related and legal requirements at the central and local levels; and • articulation of the role envisaged for WFP before, during and after handover, transition and exit, as appropriate.	Programme Policy and Guidance Division	Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer	High	December 2026

4	**Enhance the generation of evidence from pilot activities to inform decisions regarding potential scale-up.**	**Programme Policy and Guidance Division**			
	Provide clear guidance on the assessment of results from pilot initiatives, which should include the following: • Define the specific features and mechanisms at play that affect scalability and sustainability, and clarify that strategies for addressing these will need to be built into the design of initiatives. • Clarify in advance the potential for, and pathways to, scale-up, where relevant. • Prepare strategies and implementation plans for scale-up, as appropriate. • Clarify monitoring, review, assessment and evaluation expectations.	Programme Policy and Guidance Division	Analysis, Planning and Performance Division Office of Evaluation Other concerned headquarters divisions	Medium	December 2026

1. Introduction

1.1. Rationale, objectives and questions

1. Globally, more than three out of every five people in extreme poverty live in middle-income countries (MICs).[20] Of the countries where World Food Programme (WFP) operates, 70 percent (63/89) are classified by the World Bank as MIC.[21]

2. Although no dedicated evaluation of WFP's work in MICs has taken place, WFP's portfolio of centralized and decentralized evaluations contains extensive evidence on its engagement and results in middle-income contexts. Also, as WFP embarks on preparation for its next Strategic Plan (2026–2030), the specific needs and characteristics of MICs form a major dimension of its strategic considerations.

3. Accordingly, this synthesis brings together evidence from 73 independent evaluations in 25 MICs to ask:[22]

   - What characterizes WFP's strategic positioning in MICs, and how has this evolved over time since 2019?
   - How have partnerships in MICs worked, and how have they evolved?
   - What results were generated in MICs in the 2019–2024 period?
   - Which factors affected WFP's results in MICs?
   - How does WFP approach sustainability in MICs and with which results?

4. The intended audiences for this analysis include: WFP senior management; staff in headquarters, regional bureaux and country offices engaged in MICs; its Executive Board; and partners including government counterparts, cooperating partners and sister United Nations agencies. The analysis was conducted by WFP's Office of Evaluation between June 2024 and February 2025.

1.2. Context

5. World Bank country income classifications apply gross national income (GNI) per capital to assign countries to four groups: low; lower-middle; upper-middle; and high-income countries. In 2024, the World Bank classified 105 countries as middle-income (see Table 1). Of those, 51 are categorized as lower-MICs and 54 upper-MICs.[23]

6. However, **these categories mask wide disparities**. Income differentials in MICs in 2024 range from USD 1,146 to USD 14,005 in GNI per capita. Within that range, lower-middle-income countries (LMICs) have a range of USD 1,146 to USD 4,515, and upper-middle-income countries (UMICs) from USD 4,516 to USD 14,005.[24]

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[20] World Bank. 2024. *World Development Report (WDR) 2024: The Middle-Income Trap*. Washington, DC: World Bank, p. 31.

[21] World Bank data (July 2024) World Bank country classifications by income level for 2024-2025

[22] A two-page summary terms of reference (ToR) for the synthesis is in Annex I, while the full ToR is available in the report WFP's Engagement in Middle-Income Countries (2019-2024): Evaluation Synthesis.

[23] This refers to the latest World Bank data available (July 2024).

[24] Ibid.

7. Socioeconomic development indicators vary considerably within the 'middle-income' category; [25] some LMICs fare more poorly on these measures than some low-income contexts (as show in figure 1, for example, Benin, Mauritania and Senegal). [26]

8. Figure 1 maps multidimensional poverty indicators (MDPI) against country income status for contexts where WFP is engaged, as of 2024. It shows significant overlap between the low and lower-middle income categories, with some countries with similar MDPI scores belonging to different income categories.

Figure 1: Multidimensional Poverty Index by income classification
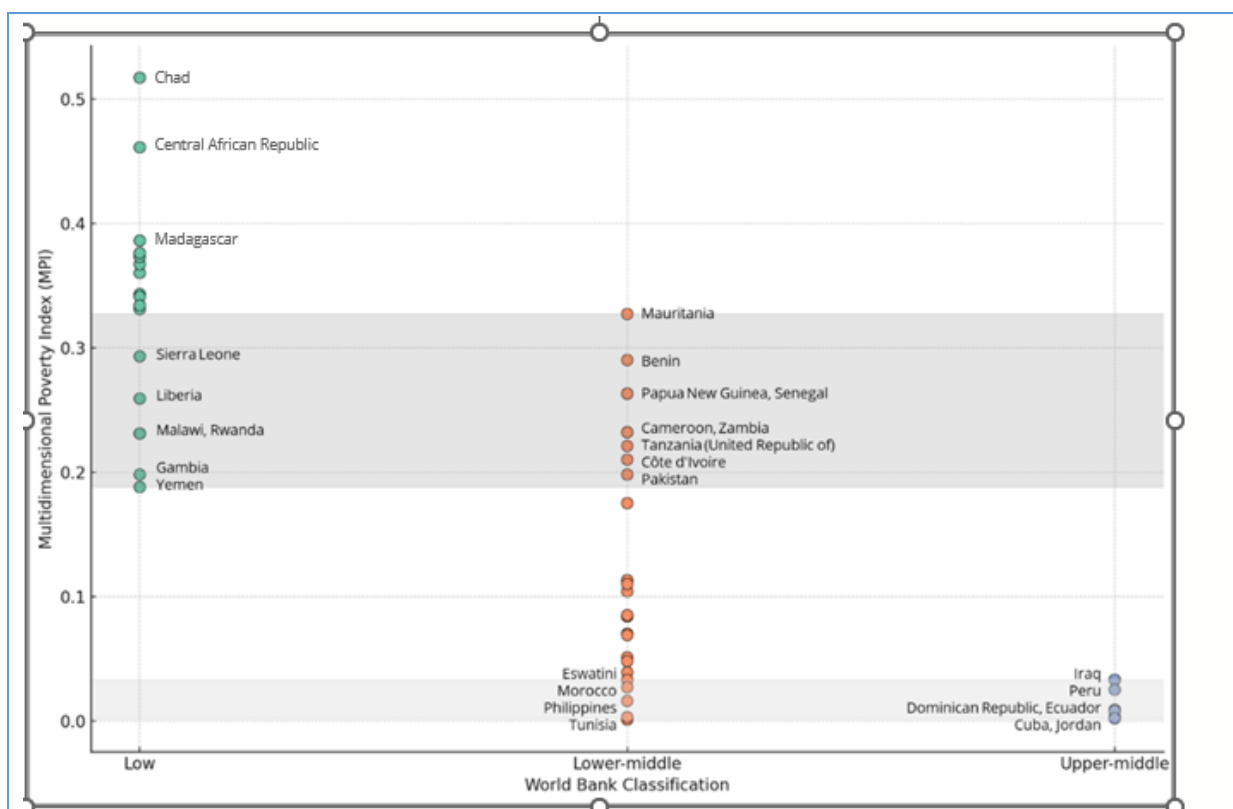
Note: The list of countries for each income category that are not named in the figure, organized by income group is as follows:
Low-income: Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique
Lower-middle income: Algeria, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Comoros, Eswatini, Ghana, Honduras, India, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Palestine, Philippines, São Tomé and Príncipe, Tunisia, Zimbabwe
Upper-middle income: All countries are listed in the figure.
Source: UNDP. 2024. 2024 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).

9. Trends in global food insecurity also reflect similarities between LMICs and low-income countries (LICs). In both these categories, food insecurity indicators rose in the period 2019–2023. Conversely, in UMICs, food insecurity declined over the period (from 357 million people affected globally, to 341 million in 2023). [27]

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[25] As of July 2024, according to the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI), the MICs grouping include: 22 least developed countries, 20 landlocked developing countries and 27 small island developing states. MICs include 12 countries ranked with a 'very high' HDI, 44 countries ranked as 'high', 42 as 'medium' and nine as 'low'. UNDP. Human Development Index, (accessed on 14 July 2024). Note that the HDI does not cover all countries categorized as MICs.

[26] UNDP. 2024. 2024 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).

[27] Source: FAOSTAT (accessed on 20 January 2025)

Figure 2: Number and prevalence of moderately or severely food-insecure people 2019–2023

Figure 2 data labels:

Year	LICs	LMICs	UMICs	LICs %	LMICs %	UMICs %
2019	379	1,102	357	58%	36%	13%
2020	406	1,334	406	61%	43%	15%
2021	433	1,375	385	63%	44%	14%
2022	462	1,363	364	66%	43%	13%
2023	467	1,392	341	65%	43%	12%
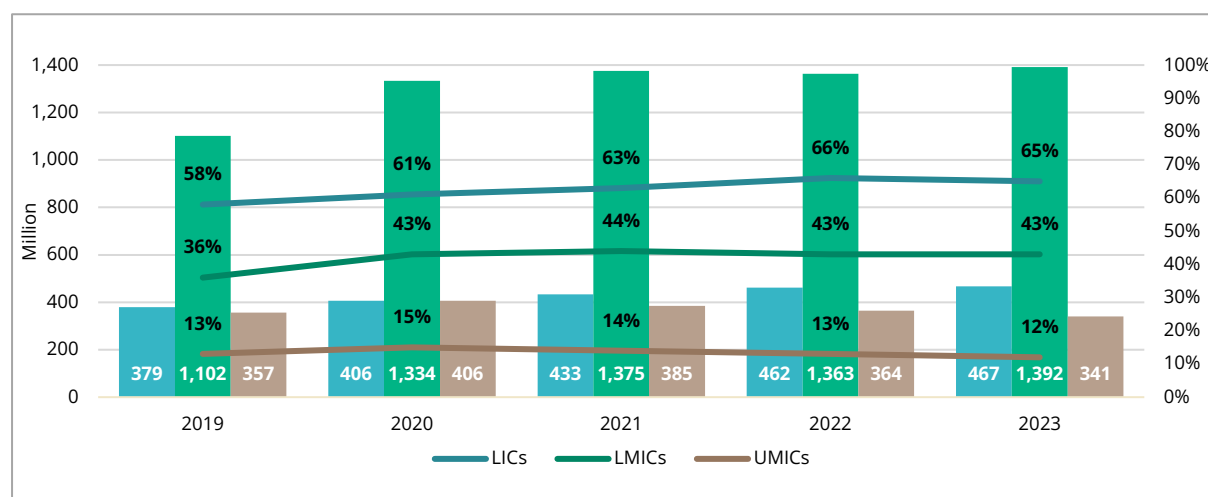
*2024 data not available
Source: FAOSTAT (Consulted on 20 January 2025)

10. Thus, any analysis focused on MICs , needs to recognize that **country income status alone cannot be used to predict the features and conditions in a given country of setting**[28] particularly for the kinds of settings in which WFP is engaged**.**

11. Nonetheless, many middle-income countries do manifest **certain common features** – as WFP's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 highlights (see Box 1 below). Such features include:

- often relatively strong governance and legal systems;
- defined public policy and other normative frameworks, for example, for food security and nutrition;
- comparatively mature institutional arrangements, systems and processes, including at decentralized level; and
- established national capacities across key governance and policy areas.[29]

12. Therefore, notwithstanding the need for emergency response in situations of conflict and natural disaster, the forms and types of engagement needed in MICs by international actors such as WFP can be very different – e.g. depending on whether countries are resource poor, experience chronic crisis, or face major governance gaps.

13. Moreover, as countries 'graduate' through income categories, their access to sources of external financial support changes. When a country 'graduates' from low- to middle-income status, its access to international financing instruments such as grants and/or concessional loans reduces accordingly,[30] leaving it more dependent on either traditional Official Development Assistance (ODA) or other sources of financing. Meanwhile, ODA declines in the higher-income bracket. UMICs, for example, received USD 19.38 billion in 2021, while LMICs received USD 60.97 billion – though this is comparable to LICs, which received USD 52.79 billion.[31]

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[28] See World Bank. 2024. World Development Report 2024, cit. Box 1 pp. 37–40.

[29] Khan, M. S. 2022. Absorptive Capacities and Economic Growth in Low- and Middle-income Economies. *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics*. Vol. 62, pp. 156-188.

[30] For example, eligibility to receive grants or concessional loans from the World Bank's International Development Association – though other sorts of investment may become available. See for instance UNDP. 2020. *Evaluation of UNDP Development Cooperation in Middle-Income Countries*, IEO UNDP.

[31] World Bank. Net Official Development Assistance and Official Aid Received (current US$), (accessed on 28 January 2025)

14. This **changing financial profile** affects the national resource envelope available to invest in social and human development. This can contribute to the risk of economic slowdown or stagnation – often referred to as the 'middle income trap[32] (see paragraph 90).

WFP engagement in MICs

15. Rather than country income status, WFP uses humanitarian needs and its ability to support frameworks for enabling longer-term development as its basis for resource-raising and allocations.[13] However, its current Strategic Plan 2022–2025 recognizes the particular conditions and characteristics of middle-income environments. It frames WFP's planned engagement in these countries as "a growing enabling agenda… focused on technical assistance, policy advice, evidence generation and system strengthening". It sets out WFP's intentions in these contexts as follows (Box 1):

> **Box 1: WFP strategic statement in middle-income countries (MICs)**
>
> WFP will engage with MICs at the request of governments, supporting them in the sharing of expertise, technology and resources with other developing countries to fight hunger and malnutrition…WFP's activities will be adapted according to need, especially in MICs characterized by unfinished development agendas and with high levels of inequality, social exclusion and post-harvest food losses… WFP will continue to contribute to inclusive and sustainable growth in MICs.
>
> Source: WFP Strategic Plan (2022–2025) Box 9

16. Currently, **70 percent of the countries (63 in total) where WFP operates**[33] **are MICs,** according to the World Bank classifications. Of these, 44 are LMICs, and 19 are UMICs. Table categorizes these by region, highlighting the 25 countries with evaluations included in this synthesis (see section 1.3 for a description of the criteria applied).

Table 1: Synthesis coverage by evaluations in MICs (2019–2024)

Reporting to	Income classification	Evaluation included in synthesis	WFP presence/activity but no evaluation available for inclusion in synthesis
Central headquarters	**Upper-middle**	**China**	
Asia and the Pacific	**Low**		Afghanistan Democratic People's Republic of Korea
	Lower-middle	**Bhutan Cambodia India Kyrgyz Republic Nepal Pakistan Philippines Timor-Leste**	Bangladesh Lao People's Democratic Republic Myanmar Sri Lanka Tajikistan
	Upper-middle	**Indonesia**	Pacific Islands **
Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe	**Low**		Syrian Arab Republic Yemen
	Lower-middle	**Egypt Tunisia**	State of Palestine Ukraine Algeria Morocco
	Upper-middle	**Armenia Iraq Republic of Türkiye**	Iran (Islamic Republic of) Jordan Lebanon Libya Moldova
Western Africa	**Low**		Burkina Faso Central African Republic Chad Gambia Guinea Guinea-Bissau Liberia Mali Niger Sierra Leone Togo
	Lower-middle	**Ghana**	Benin Cape Verde Mauritania Nigeria

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[32] See for example World Bank. 2024. World Development Report. 2024, cit. p. 78 and Alonso, A. & Ocampo, A. 2020. *Trapped in the Middle? Developmental Challenges for Middle-Income Countries.* Oxford University Press.

[33] WFP currently operates in 89 countries.

Region	Income level			
			Cameroon Côte d'Ivoire	São Tomé and Príncipe Senegal
	Upper-middle	---		
Southern Africa	**Low**		Democratic Republic of the Congo Madagascar Malawi Mozambique	
	Lower-middle	**Eswatini** **Lesotho** **Zambia** **Zimbabwe**	Angola Comoros Congo United Republic of Tanzania	
	Upper-middle	**Namibia**		
Eastern Africa	**Low**		Burundi Ethiopia Rwanda Somalia	South Sudan Sudan Uganda
	Lower-middle	**Kenya**	Djibouti	
	Upper-middle	---		
Latin America and the Caribbean (*)	**Low**	---		
	Lower-middle		Bolivia (Plurinational State of) El Salvador Haiti	Honduras Nicaragua
	Upper-middle	**Colombia** **Dominican Republic** **Peru**	Ecuador Caribbean Community** Cuba Guatemala	

Notes:
* Venezuela could not be classified by the World Bank due to missing country-level data since 2020
** The Pacific and the Caribbean Communities are comprised of upper-middle-income and high-income countries

Source: Office of Evaluation compilation from World Bank data and WFP programme data

People targeted and reached by WFP

17. **Increasing numbers and proportion of people reached in MICs:** From 2019 to 2023, the total beneficiaries reached by WFP in countries categorized as MICs rose from 22 million in 2019 (or 23 percent of the total number of WFP beneficiaries globally) to a peak of nearly 47 million in 2022, before decreasing to 42.8 million in 2023 (28 percent of the total). Thus, the share of WFP total beneficiaries in MICs has grown over time.

18. Beneficiaries in LMICs consistently accounted for the majority, though their share decreased from 89 percent in 2019 to 76 percent in 2023. In contrast, UMICs saw a steady increase in the proportion of beneficiaries served, from 11 percent in 2019 to 24 percent in 2023. The most notable shift took place between 2021 and 2022, reflecting heightened needs in UMICs, possibly linked to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, increased conflict around the world, the war in Ukraine, and the subsequent impact on global food security.

Figure 3: Proportion of total WFP beneficiaries by income group
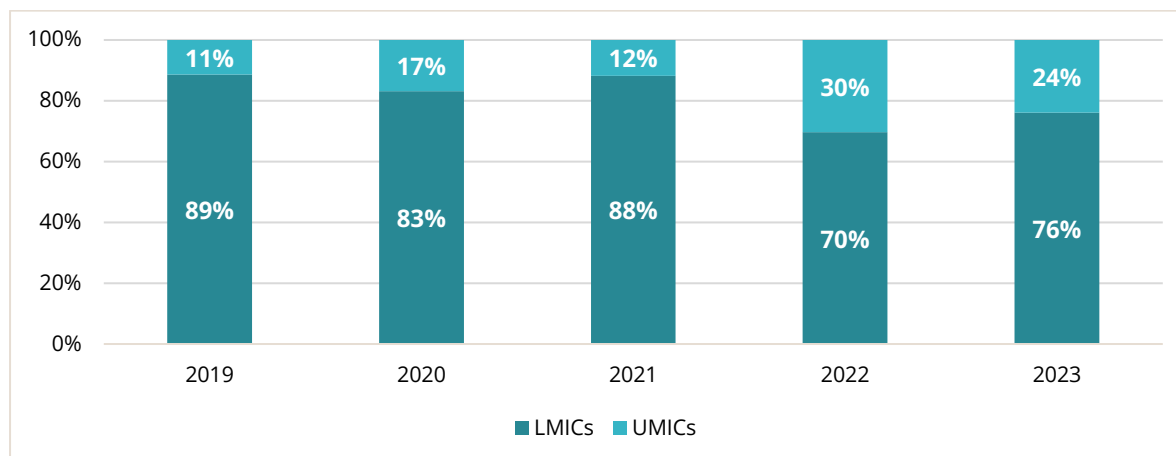
Source: Office of Evaluation compilation based on Annual Country Report data

19. **Refugees, internally displaced people and irregular migrants** reflected the bulk of beneficiary volumes in MICs. However, the proportion remained relatively steady, with a slight recent decline. Of those reached in 2019, 13 million were refugee, internally displaced people and irregular migrant populations, or 59 percent of total beneficiaries served, rising to a peak of 27.3 million in 2022, representing 58 percent of the total, before declining to 22.1 million in 2023, or 52 percent.

20. For the 63 MICs where WFP operates, the following features apply:

    - In 22 countries, WFP's interventions include addressing the needs of refugee, internally displaced people and irregular migrant populations – e.g. Colombia[34], Egypt, Ghana, Iraq, Nepal, Türkiye, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

   - In 36 countries, WFP's interventions target both direct[35] and indirect beneficiaries[36] – for example, Armenia, Cambodia, Dominican Republic, Eswatini, Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho, Libya, Namibia, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Tunisia.

    - In five countries WFP does not target direct beneficiaries – such as in India and China.

Resourcing profile in MICs

21. Despite comprising the majority of countries where WFP engages, MICs accounted for only 33 percent of WFP's total Needs Based Plan (NBP) over the period 2019–2024, and 34 percent of programmed budget.[37] The bulk of resources were consumed by the lower middle-income group (see Figure).

Figure 4: Evolution of WFP's Needs Based Plan (NBP) and programmed budget absorbed by MICs (2019–2024)
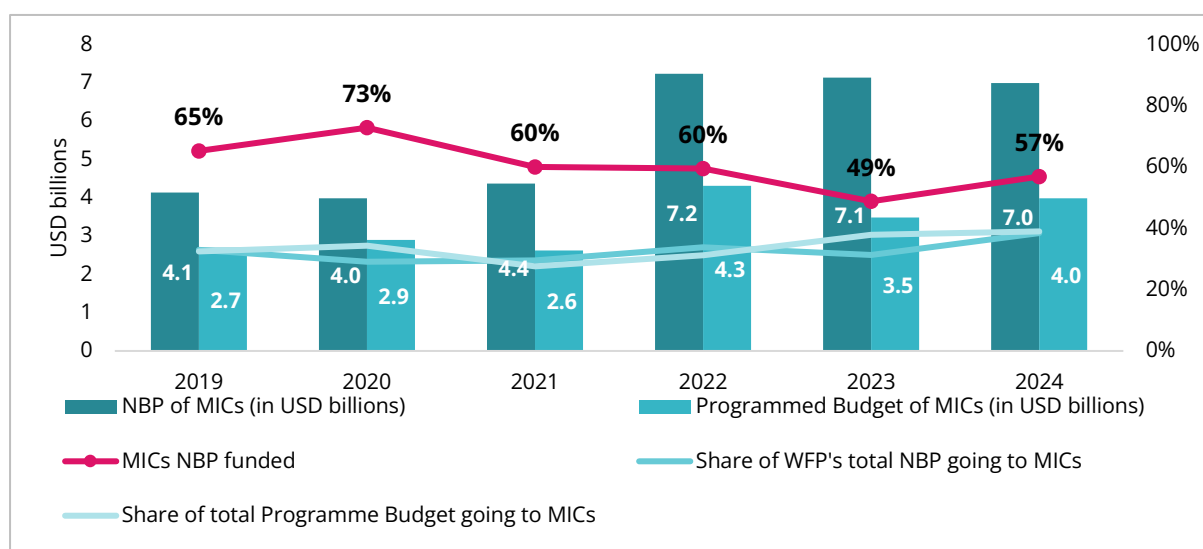
Source: IRM analytics, EV_CPB_Resources_Overview (data consulted on 14 January 2025)

22. Overall, low-income and middle-income countries are proportionally resourced at similar levels (57 percent in 2024). They also experience similar **earmarking challenges**: with around 73 percent of contributions earmarked at activity level overall in both context types. Operationally, or WFP, this limits

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[34] Colombia also reports targeting indirect (tier 2 and tier 3) beneficiaries (see the following footnotes for definitions).

[35] **Tier 1** direct beneficiaries are defined as "identifiable and recorded individuals who receive direct transfers from WFP or from a Cooperating Partner], to improve their food security and nutrition status". WFP. 2021. Guidance note on Estimating Tier 2 and Tier 3 Beneficiaries. Section 2.1, p. 5.

[36] **Tier 2** indirect beneficiaries are defined as "individuals who have access to assets, knowledge and capacity, commodities and services delivered or transferred in their communities or catchment area as a result of, but not directly through, WFP support". WFP. 2021. Guidance note on Estimating Tier 2 and Tier 3 Beneficiaries. Section 2.2, p. 6.

Tier 3 beneficiaries are defined as the "wider population impacted that could indirectly benefit from technical assistance, advocacy and support provided by WFP to enhance and improve national policies, systems and programmes. When reaching Tier 3 beneficiaries, the main entry point is WFPs work with national government systems and policies".

[37] Resources available to the country office, which have been committed to a specific activity.

flexibility in resource allocation and use (see section 2). Private donor support to MICs occurs at approximately the same levels as in LICs, being in the top six to nine donors and providing approximately around USD 500–600 million annually in both categories.[38]

23. However, a key differentiator within MICs is a growing trend in **host governments funding WFP's work in their own countries.**[39] In 15 percent of MICs, or nine countries,[40] the host government funds between one-third and half of WFP's portfolio (Figure 5). Such national financing is more evident where WFP provides services for the host governments and supports government-led national programmes – particularly through resource transfers supporting national social protection programmes (see section 2).

Figure 5: Host government contributions to own national WFP programme (contributing more than 20 percent)
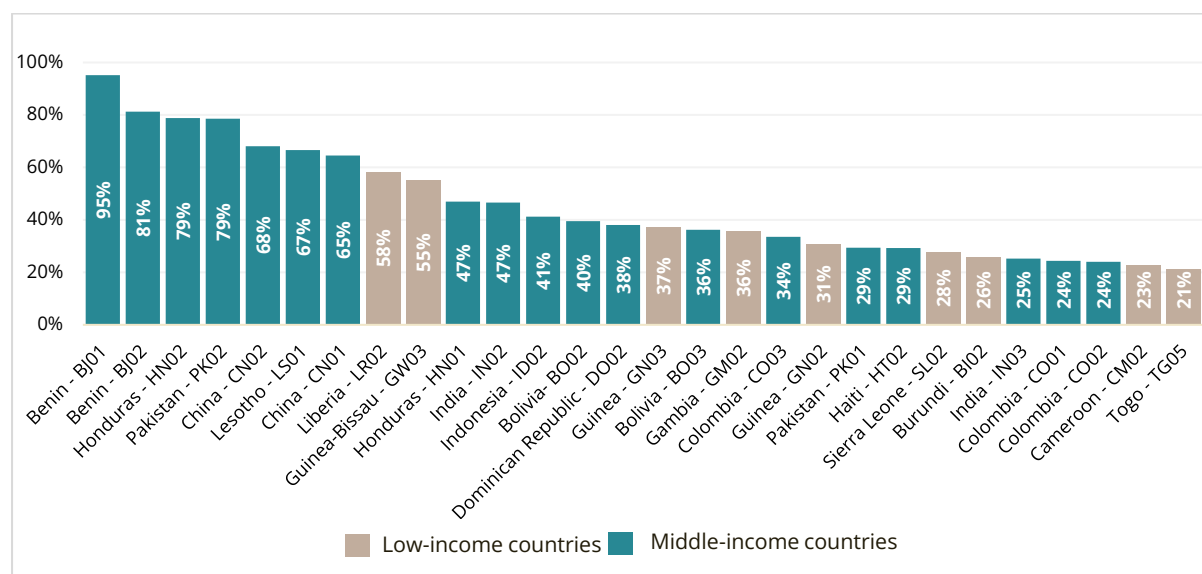
Source: Weekly Contribution and Forecast Report, OEV compiled data (data as at 20 February 2025)

> **Box 2: Host government contributions to WFP**
> - In **Benin**, government contributions account for 95 percent of WFP resources received, with the majority for school meal programmes.
> - In **Bhutan**, government contributions account for 88 percent of resources received, with the majority for adaptation to extreme weather events and management of weather-related risks, social protection sector support, and school meal programmes.
> - In **Pakistan**, government contributions account for 79 percent of resources received, with the majority for malnutrition prevention programmes, community and household asset creation, and unconditional resource transfers.

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[38] Private donors are among the top six contributors to MICs and top nine to LICs, donating USD 532 million to MICs and USD 612 million to LICs between 2019 and 2024.

[39] These figures may include financing from international financial institutions, which often channel their funding through host governments – but nonetheless, represent significant budgetary contributions by MICs host governments to supporting WFP's work in their countries.

[40] Benin, Bhutan, Pakistan, Honduras, China, Lesotho, Indonesia, Bolivia, Dominican Republic.

Programmatic profiles and resource allocations

24.   Figure 6 shows WFP's cumulative allocations by activity category, comparing MICs and LICs, (2019–2024).

Figure 6: Needs Based Plan (NBP) cumulative allocation by activity category comparing MICs and LICs (2019–2024).[41]
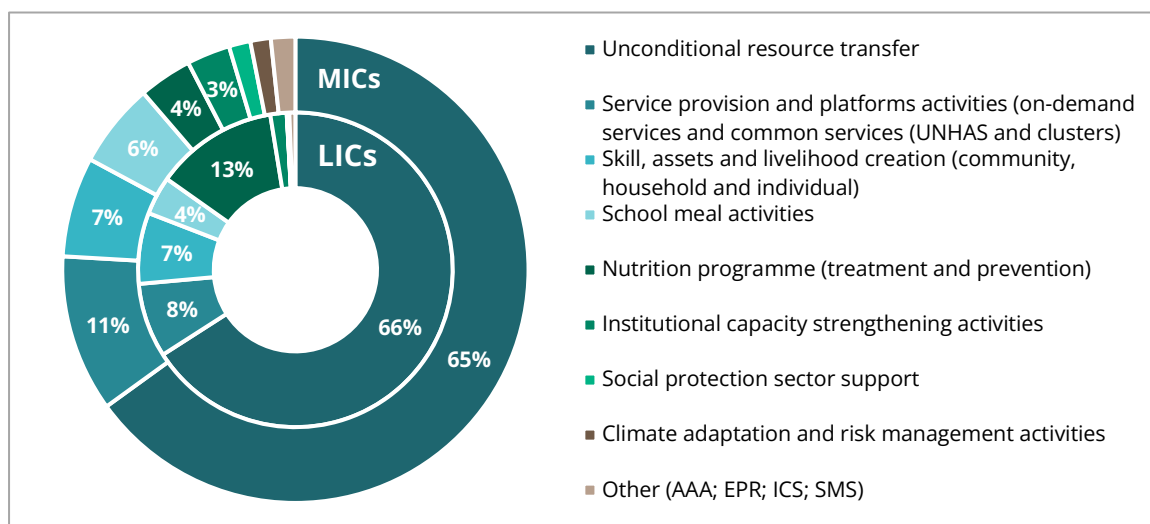
Source: IRM analytics, EV_CPB_Resources_Overview (data consulted on 14 January 2025)
Abbreviations*: AAA = anticipatory action; EPR = emergency preparedness and response; ICS = indirect support cost; LICs = low-income countries; LMICs = lower-middle-income countries; SMS = smallholder market support; UMICs = upper-middle-income countries; UNHAS = United Nations Humanitarian Air Service.

25. **Unconditional resource transfers (URTs):** The bulk of expenditures in MICs is accordingly allocated to URTs, or food assistance, in kind or as cash, which absorb nearly two-thirds of its portfolio in these contexts. This is similar proportionally to in low-income contexts, though URTs have doubled in absolute terms over the period (Figure), from 1.8 billion in 2019 to 4 billion in 2024, with a peak in 2022. The increase is aligned with rising food insecurity globally over the period – for example, arising from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing global conflicts, and the effects of the war in Ukraine on food prices.[42] Earmarking is also higher in low-income contexts (67 percent) when compared to MICs (53 percent). URTs in MICs include WFP's food assistance to displaced populations, such as in Kenya and Peru; direct assistance distributed through WFP-led programmes; and support for distributions undertaken by, or on behalf of, governments as part of national social protection systems, such as in Colombia, Iraq, and Pakistan.

Figure 7: Proportion of the budget allocated to unconditional resource transfers in MICs
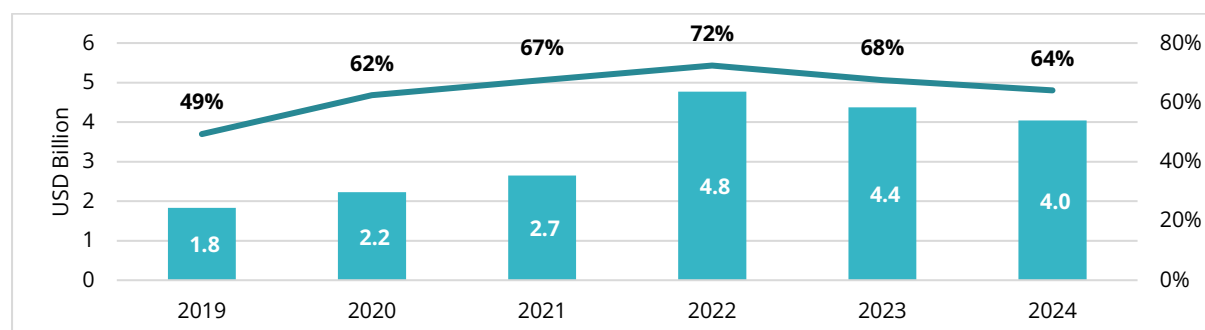
Source: IRM analytics, EV_CPB_Resources_Overview (data consulted on 14 January 2025)

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[41] Some activity categories have been merged to improve the graph's readability.

[42] WFP. 2024. Global Hunger Explainer – June 2024 and WFP. 2024 Global Food Security Situation – April 2024.

26. **Other programming areas**: In terms of areas of WFP engagement in MICs:

- **Service provision and platforms activities** (which includes on-demand services and common services (United Nations Humanitarian Air Service and clusters) consumed the second highest volume of resources in MICs over the period, with close to 11 percent NBP allocation cumulatively (compared to 8 percent in LICs).
- **Skills development, assets and livelihood creation** activities consume roughly equal proportions of the budget, with 7 percent in both LICs and MICs).
- **School meals** activities consumed 6 percent of the budget in MICs, and only 4 percent in LICs.

27. **Nutrition treatment and prevention** programmes receive significantly lower allocations in MICs than in LICs (4 percent in MICs compared to 13 percent in LICs):

- **Institutional capacity strengthening** receives a comparable share of resources in both MICs and LICs (3 percent in MICs and 2 percent in LICs);
- Allocations tagged explicitly as **social protection programming** (as opposed to URTs which may be delivered as part of social protection systems) consumed 2 percent of the budget in MICs, higher than the 0.2 percent in LICs;
- WFP's less traditional areas, such as programming for **climate shock adaptation, climate risk management**, and **smallholder agricultural market value chain and support programmes,** absorbed 2 percent of the NBP in MICs, and only 0.8 percent in LICs.

28. **Differences between LMICs and UMICs country categories:** Analysis of WFP programming and resourcing profiles in LMICs and UMICs (see Figure 8) showed that:

- there is no difference between the proportions of budgetary allocations for unconditional resource transfers, skills assets and livelihood creation activities and institutional capacity strengthening, with both UMICs and LMICs allocating similar proportions of resources to these areas;[43]
- UMICs dedicate three times as much to service provision and platform activities (on-demand services and common services (United Nations Humanitarian Air Service and clusters) as LMICs (20 percent in UMICs compared to 7 percent in LMICs); and
- budgetary allocations to nutrition, social protection, climate risk management, and smallholder-focused activities all occurred in LMICs, rather than UMICs, where there were no such allocations.

Figure 8: Needs Based Plan cumulative allocation by activity category comparing LMICs and UMICs, (2019–2024)
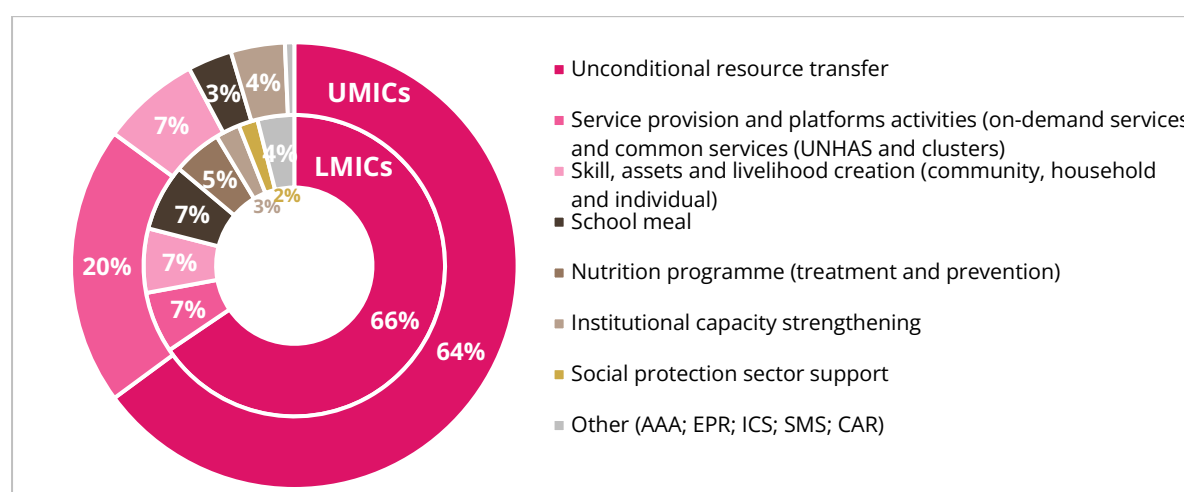
Notes: Some activity categories have been merged to improve the graph's readability;
Abbreviations*:* AAA = anticipatory action; CAR = climate adaptation and risk management; EPR = emergency preparedness and response; ICS = indirect support cost; LICs = low-income countries; LMICs = lower-middle-income countries; SMS = smallholder market support; UMICs = upper-middle-income countries; UNHAS = United Nations Humanitarian Air Service.
Source: IRM analytics, EV_CPB_Resources_Overview (data consulted on 14 January 2025)

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[43] Unconditional resource transfers – 65 percent in LMICs and UMICs; skills, assets and livelihood creation activities (7 percent in LMICs and UMICs); institutional capacity strengthening (3 percent in LMICs and 4 percent in UMICs).

29. The programmatic profiles of activities in the 25 MICs evaluated indicate a strong use of **pilot initiatives**. Although no robust quantitative data is available on the volumes of pilot interventions in MICs – and therefore no comparison with LICs is feasible – more than half of the countries with evaluations included in this synthesis (14) implement pilot activities, many in the area of school meals and nutrition. Section 2.2 discusses the role and results of pilot interventions in these contexts.

1.3. Methodology

Evidence base and sampling

30. To generate the findings recorded in this synthesis, evaluations were selected for inclusion according to the following parameters (see Annex VIII):

- **Geographic coverage** – evaluations of MICs[44] that, in the period 2019–2024 – as per commitments in WFP's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 (see para 15 and Box 1) – **(a)** have shown an above-average NBP allocation to/expended on activities targeting national governments, national actors, systems and institutions;[45] and/or (b) experienced a rapid scale-up and scale-down for emergency response.[46]
- **Timeframe** – evaluations completed between 2019 and 2024 to cover the current and previous Strategic Plan.
- **Evaluation type** – including all WFP-commissioned evaluations (centralized[47] and decentralized[48]) including country strategic plan (CSP), policy, strategic and corporate emergency evaluations, as well as activity, operation and thematic evaluations at decentralized level.
- **Evaluation quality** – evaluations scored through an external quality assessment[49] with minimum satisfactory quality (60 percent score).

31. Applying these criteria resulted in **73 evaluations** from **25 countries** for analysis[50], as shown in Table 2. The sample reflects:

- geographic diversity and representation of all regions where WFP operates;
- inclusion of both LMIC and UMIC contexts;
- diversity of WFP's country office size, and size of operation; and
- the distribution of evaluations by region and by country (Table) and by evaluation type (
- Table).

Table 2: Evaluation locations in middle-income countries by region (total number of countries = 25)

Region / reporting to	Lower-MICs included in the synthesis (n=15)	Upper-MICs included in the synthesis n=10)
Reporting to central headquarters		China
Asia and the Pacific	Bhutan, Cambodia, Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Timor-Leste	India, Indonesia
Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe	Egypt, Tunisia	Armenia, Iraq, Republic of Türkiye
Western Africa	Ghana	
Southern Africa	Eswatini, Lesotho, Zambia, Zimbabwe	Namibia
Eastern Africa	Kenya	

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[44] Based on OEV e-MIS data, total of 163 evaluations have been completed between 2019 and 2024 focusing on MICs.

[45] This criterion has been applied using a weighted average.

[46] As indicated in WFP's operational data on emergency activation and de-activation in the 2019–2024 period.

[47] **Centralized evaluations (CEs)** are commissioned and managed by OEV and presented to the Executive Board and comprise policy evaluations, strategic evaluations, country strategic plan evaluations, and impact evaluations.

[48] **Decentralized evaluations (DEs)** are commissioned and managed by country offices, regional offices, or HQ-based divisions other than OEV. They are not presented to the EB and can cover, activities, pilots, themes, transfer modalities.

[49] Office of Evaluation externally managed post-hoc quality assessment.

[50] Countries were included in the final sample if classified for a minimum of three (fiscal) years in the World Bank MICs listing between 2019 and 2024 to ensure the synthesis takes an expansive approach to sampling, while accounting for possible fluctuations in/out of the MICs grouping.

Latin America and the Caribbean		Colombia, Dominican Republic, Peru

Table 3: Evaluations included in the synthesis, by type (total number of evaluations =73)

Centralized evaluations (CE)				Decentralized evaluations (DE)			TOTAL
Corporate emergency response	Country strategic plan	Policy	Strategic	Activity	Thematic	Pilot	**73** 39 CEs 34 DEs
1	22	8	8	27	6	1	

Source: Office of Evaluation compilation from e-MIS data

Methodology and limitations

32. This exercise is not an evaluation. Its primary data source is evidence from completed evaluations. The methods applied to generate the findings were:

- **systematic analysis of 73 evaluation reports** based on a structured analytical framework and using NVivo 15 software;
- **analysis of the programme porfolio and resourcing in MICs**, complemented by: (i) a comparison with LICs; and (ii) an analysis within MICs of the sub-group of UMICs and LMICs;
- **analysis of WFP global-scope policies and strategic evaluations[51]** to further expand a comparison between low- and middle-income countries;
- **analysis of secondary data** to triangulate emerging findings;[52]
- **analysis of evaluation recommendations and management response data** to better understand recurring issues and uptake of recommended actions; and
- **consultation and feedback with stakeholders** and main intended users of the synthesis on draft emerging themes through workshop discussions in February 2025.

Risks, limitations and mitigating measures

33. The main challenges and limitations are: (i) the evidence generated is limited to that contained in the evaluations, which are retrospective. They therefore may not include the latest information on WFP approaches in MICs; (ii) the sample of evaluations means that, while covering 25 countries, this synthesis does not claim to provide fully global coverage of WFP engagement in MICs; and (iii) variable evidence coverage against synthesis questions means that not all findings could be analysed in equal depth. To mitigate these challenges, the synthesis has:

- applied a systematic approach to mining data and evidence from evaluations;
- calibrated findings throughout, to the strength of the evidence;
- used evidence from global-scope/centralized evaluations to help triangulate, compare and constrast
- compared low-income and middle-income contexts to identify relevant trends and differences; and
- used stakeholder consultation to probe and refine findings.

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[51] Country-level data and evidence generated through WFP policies and strategic evaluations cut across contexts and consider countries from different income brackets.

[52] Examples of sources used include the WFP's Annual Evaluation Reports, Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)-commissioned Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations, thematic evaluations and synthesis on engagement in MICs by United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and some of the regional development banks. See Annex XII for the complete bibliography.

2. Synthesis findings

Q1. What characterizes WFP's strategic positioning in MICs, and how has this evolved over time (2019–2024 period)?

SUMMARY

Where conditions permit, WFP's intended strategic shift for MIC engagement, as articulated in the WFP Strategic Plan 2022–2025, has largely been realized – that is, emphasising technical assistance, policy advice, evidence generation and system strengthening alongside its traditional service delivery and emergency response roles.

WFP has successfully positioned itself in the MICs evaluated as a provider of specialized technical expertise and analytics in food security and nutrition, as a pilot tester and catalyst for innovation, and as a knowledge broker and partnership convener while directing emergency responses for sudden-onset crises frequently through national systems. It demonstrated strong adaptive capacity when shocks arose.

34. This section draws together the evidence from evaluations on WFP's strategic intentions in MICs, the roles WFP has assumed, and the adaptive capacity WFP has demonstrated in MICs.

2.1. What strategic shifts did WFP undertake in MICs?

35. **Evaluations highlight three main strategic shifts** – both envisioned and realized – in WFP's engagement in MICs, alongside its ongoing crisis response role (see section 2.3).

   - Shift (albeit usually non-linear) from direct delivery to capacity strengthening of national institutions and supporting food security and nutrition-related policy and legislative frameworks.
   - Diversification and expansion of WFP's programme offer in 'less traditional' areas, including piloting new interventions.
   - Supporting the inclusion of displaced and other vulnerable populations into national social protection systems.

36. Such shifts are part of WFP's wider trajectory of institutional change,[53] and therefore are not limited to the middle-income category of countries – as reflected in the relatively similar proportions of resources allocated to institutional capacity strengthening in MICs and LICs (see section 1.2). However, the particular features of many middle-income contexts have provided entry points and shaped the form of WFP's strategic shifts in these settings. Table provides examples.

Table 4: Examples of strategic shifts made by WFP in MICs

Envisioned strategic shifts	Countries
Emphasis on strengthening capacities to support the delivery of national strategies and programmes	In 11 countries (44%) three UMICs (China, Indonesia and Iraq) and eight LMICs (Egypt, Cambodia, Ghana, Kenya, Philippines, Timor-Leste, Lesotho and Nepal), evaluations record comprehensive national frameworks, policies and institutional arrangements which WFP could engage in to support capacity strengthening for their delivery. For example: - In Cambodia and Kenya, the existence of well-developed national school meals programmes meant that WFP could direct capacity strengthening and other efforts towards a successive journey of handover to national governments. - In Ghana, WFP provided technical support to the national school feeding programme, enhancing policy implementation, monitoring, and connections to smallholder farmers.

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[53] As set out in 'From food aid to food assistance strategic intent' (WFP. 2008. WFP Strategic Plan 2008–2011. EB.2/2008/5-A/1/Rev.1. Rome) and continued thereafter in successive strategic plans.

	➤ In Iraq, WFP, along with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and International Labour Organization, worked with the government to advance social protection reforms and capacities, including supporting evidence-based approaches to strengthen safety nets.
Diversifying and expanding WFP's programme offer into less-traditional areas to address specific national needs	In six countries (three UMICs (Armenia, China, Iraq) and three LMICs (Cambodia, Egypt, Lesotho), WFP responded to highly specific areas of national need. Examples include: ➤ Adaptation to extreme weather events and climate risk management, resilience-building, food value chain development (Armenia); ➤ livelihoods and income diversification, partnerships for agricultural modernization and South–South cooperation (China, Egypt); and ➤ Information and communications technology innovations aimed at modernizing the Public Distribution System (Iraq).
Supporting integration into national social protection systems, particularly for displaced and other vulnerable populations	The existence of relatively comprehensive national social protection systems provided an entry point to support the inclusion of displaced populations in at least four countries. Examples include: ➤ In Colombia, WFP supported migrants' registration for the Temporary Protection Permit, a key document for accessing employment and enabling connection to Colombia's social protection framework. ➤ In Egypt, WFP integrated cash-based transfers into the government's Takaful and Karama social protection programmes, extending coverage to reach more vulnerable populations. ➤ In Türkiye, the Country Strategic Plan 2023–2025 emphasized resilience-building and livelihood opportunities for refugees and crisis-affected populations, alongside coordination and logistics support to enhance humanitarian assistance in partnership with the government.

37. Factors that influenced the degree to which WFP could realize its intended strategic shifts were:

- The capacity to attract and sustain resourcing in contexts transitioning out of crisis – particularly in UMICs, for example, Iraq, where WFP faced challenges in securing funding for emergency preparedness, partly due to its classification as UMIC (see section 1).

38. Wider and well-documented[54] challenges in mobilizing resources for capacity strengthening activities, a difficulty not limited to MICs, but posing particular challenges where WFP's engagement is heavily focused on supporting the delivery of nationally-led food and nutrition insecurity solutions, including:

- adequacy of WFP's strategic partnership frameworks in MICs (see section 3); and
- availability of capacity and resources to sustain expansion and diversification into new activity areas beyond pilot activities/use of seed funding (see section 3).

2.2. What roles did WFP adopt in MICs?

39. The evaluations highlight some specific roles that WFP assumes in MICs. While not exclusive to MIC contexts, evaluations also indicate that the way they are applied has specific dimensions in the MIC environment. The five roles identified, and the way they are applied in MICs, are as follows:

Emergency responder

40. In 24 out of 25 countries covered by evaluations,[55] emergencies occurred, resulting in WFP assuming a crisis responder role. However, in these MIC contexts, WFP often directed its response through national systems, or supported government to fill gaps in the national response, rather than implementing immediate response directly. For example, in Colombia, the school meals programme as a national social protection programme is extensive and mature, meaning that when expansion was required to provide assistance to irregular migrants arising from the Venezuela regional crisis, WFP was able to deliver its emergency response assistance through the existing national framework and system.

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[54] See for example Annual Evaluation Report 2023.

[55] With the exception of WFP's engagement in China.

41. Evaluations also highlight WFP's ability to pivot to scale-up (and then scale-down) to respond to sudden-onset natural disasters in otherwise stable environments, such as typhoons in the Philippines and tsunamis in Indonesia. This required a different model and approach than, for example implementing a consistent response over time to chronic or prolonged crises[56] – though evaluations also highlight some challenges in adaptivity here (see section 2.3).

Provider of specialized expertise and analytics for food security and nutrition to support policy formulation and advocacy

42. In line with the role envisaged in the Strategic Plan 2022–2025, evaluations found that WFP provided governments in MIC contexts with specialist analysis and technical expertise in food security and nutrition, to support policy development and/or to engage in policy advocacy. Although not limited to MICs,[57] the evaluations reported that WFP's distinct technical specialisms and policy-level entry points with governments enabled it to effectively inform specific areas of policy formulation. For example:

- In Namibia and Armenia, WFP's strategic planning expertise and technical capacities enabled it to act as a key technical partner to the government in the development of national School Feeding Policy/strategies, providing, capacity building support, and facilitating the integration of home-grown approaches, such as connecting local farmers to school meal programmes to enhance sustainability.
- In Nepal and Zimbabwe, WFP provided technical guidance to governments to help take nutrition and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) interventions to scale by contributing to the development of updated nutrition policies and strategies, building a stronger evidence base and supporting surveys and assesments.
- In India, WFP used advanced analytics to help government improve the efficiency and targeting of the Targeted Public Distribution System. Real-time monitoring systems tracked prices of essential commodities across 161 locations, enabling market stability interventions when needed, and providing farmers with access to 'live' price data.

Pilot-tester and catalyst for innovation

43. Evaluations reported that, in MIC settings, governments often expressed interest in learning from WFP innovation and piloting of new activities (see section 3.3).

- In Bhutan, for example, WFP-supported innovations and digital solutions contributed to the development of an integrated rural natural resource statistical management and reporting information system and support to supply chain logistics (storage and transport) and stock visibility in school meals services. WFP digital activities also helped government begin to address concerns over data gaps that it recognized as a major challenge to evidence-based policy decision making and the monitoring of national policy impacts.
- In Lesotho, WFP provided support to the Prime Minister's Office to pilot a geospatial platform for territorial planning, aiming to enhance planning across different ministries and generate evidence to inform decision making across the government.
- In the Dominican Republic, WFP introduced new digital and information and communications technologies, such as drones and software for risk analysis and forecast-based financing, improving cost-effectiveness and earning government recognition for expertise in applying technology to cash-based transfers.
- In the Philippines, WFP deployed the Artificial-Intelligence-powered tool, Automated Livelihood Information Assistant (ALIA), to support anticipatory action and resilience-building. ALIA data sets were crucial in the vulnerability analysis following Typhoon Kammuri (2019). With the backing of the WFP Innovation Accelerator, WFP prototyped comprehensive predictive analytics to enhance Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR).

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[56] WFP OPweb portal Emergency Response Timeline (2013–2024).

[57] For example, the Strategic Evaluation of the Contribution of School Feeding Activities to the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals provides evidence on WFP's effective provision of specialized policy inputs on school feeding in several contexts – including in LICs such as Haiti, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire. (Finding 32).

Provider of on-demand services to governments,[58] particularly in national social protection systems

44. In close to 70 percent of MICs evaluated,[59] WFP was contracted by governments to deliver specific activities and services on demand, often as part of their delivery of national social protection mechanisms for vulnerable groups. Government needs ranged from support for displaced people, to crisis responses, (for example, during the COVID-19 pandemic), to cover for national funding gaps. Examples include:

- In Colombia WFP is contracted by the government to provide food procurement and logistics support for the school meals programme in areas where large numbers of migrants are present.
- In Egypt, at the request of the government, WFP supported non-community schools, to cover a two-year gap in government funding.
- In Kenya, Pakistan and Zimbabwe as part of COVID-19 response, at the request of the government, WFP provided assistance to food-insecure people in urban areas, in support of national social protection systems.

Knowledge broker and partnership convenor

45. A particular feature of WFP's work in MICs, arising in 60 percent of countries evaluated, is its engagement in convening partnerships, or brokering knowledge, including at different levels of governance and through South-South and Triangular cooperation. For example:

- In India, China and Peru, WFP worked to form strategic collaborations in nutrition, bringing together government and the private sector to work on issues such as integrating nutrition into the school curriculum.
- In Kenya, WFP worked to support existing inter-sectoral committees at county government level, and supported inter-ministerial coordination to strengthen links between health, nutrition, agriculture, education, and water.
- In China, WFP mobilized more than USD 141 million through partnerships with the government, private enterprises, and public donations via digital platforms, to fund food security initiatives domestically and internationally.
- In Nepal and Timor-Leste, South-South cooperation brokered by WFP included knowledge exchanges with Cambodia, China and India on rice fortification.

2.3 Adaptive capacity in MICs

46. In common with findings elsewhere,[60] evaluations report that, in all contexts except China, shocks arose which required WFP to pivot and adapt to support emergency response. Evaluations find mostly positively in terms of WFP's adaptive capacity, with its widely documented flexibility and agility praised for enabling swift emergency responses.[61]

47. However, the evaluations noted two challenges:

- Where WFP had focused exclusively on an 'enabling' model, as per the strategic plan framing of its role in middle-income settings in para 15 and Box 1, and lacked a strategic objective for emergency response, it took longer to pivot according to need. This required the establishment of new structures and systems, and filling capacity gaps.[62] For example, in the Philippines, where the CSP focused mainly on technical assistance rather than direct distribution, WFP planned to move

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[58] This is in line with the Executive Director's Circular on Service provision activities under the Country Strategic Plan Framework. OED2023/006. The circular clarifies that the provision of services by WFP can be divided into *mandated* and *on-demand services* (para 8) and that, as part of the latter, WFP may agree to carry out a range of component services as part of a programme that is owned and financed by the requesting government. (para 13).

[59] 17 countries: six UMICs (Armenia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Iraq, Peru and Türkiye) and 11 LMICs (Cambodia, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, Timor-Leste, Zambia and Zimbabwe).

[60] WFP Annual Evaluation Report. 2023.

[61] Ibid.; see also the evaluation of the Evaluation of WFP's Emergency Preparedness Policy (2017), which positively highlights the speed of WFP in making available funding for immediate life-saving response within days from the onset of an emergency.

[62] See also WFP. Annual Evaluation Report. 2023.

emergency preparedness staff to humanitarian assistance if needed. However, when Typhoon Rai occurred and WFP had to pivot to crisis response, it became apparent that there were capacity gaps in the humanitarian response expertise needed to manage the large-scale response. In turn, this impeded the efficiency and effectiveness of the response.[63]

- Where emergency response absorbed a country office energy and capacities, evaluations note the challenges posed by disrupting ongoing development-focused interventions. For example, in Pakistan, despite an intended move towards emphasizing resilience and root causes, the need to switch to crisis response management and address immediate emergency needs disrupted ongoing resilience programmes.

48. Conversely, evaluations reported that emergency response can allow WFP to demonstrate its capacities and expertise to government . In Armenia, for example, although it started as emergency response, WFP's expertise in cash transfers and its piloting of a cash card modality was subsequently adopted and scaled up by the government as part of the national social protection programme. In Namibia, WFP moved beyond the provision of assistance and strategically used shock response mechanisms to build national supply chain capacity.

49. The evaluations recorded other contextual changes which WFP had to adapt to. These included national legislative and/or regulatory changes, for example, in relation to displaced populations or transfer modalities, and/or government requests in response to specific national needs arising, which WFP had not necessarily planned to address in its CSPs. Table provides examples of shocks experienced, and adaptations made in response:

Table 5: Drivers of adaptation and related examples of actions taken

Type of shock or change experienced	Type of response adopted	Selected examples
External shock e.g. COVID-19, extreme weather and climate-related events, etc.	Programmatic adaptations to respond to urgent needs	**Programmatic adaptations** included: ➤ Transfer modality shifts, e.g. in school feeding, shifting to take-home rations (Cambodia) or switching from food to cash-based assistance (e.g. Egypt; Pakistan) or from physical cash to mobile money (Colombia; Peru) ➤ Programmatic expansion, e.g. reintroduction of in-kind food assistance/ Cash for Assets programmes in the Philippines following Typhoon Rai ➤ Pivoting to provide governments with analyses of the pandemic's impact on food security levels and needs (Colombia, Zambia, Philippines) ➤ Horizontal expansion of social protection systems, e.g. to encompass vulnerable urban populations (Iraq, Kenya, Lesotho, Türkiye, Zimbabwe)
Country-specific legislative and regulatory changes	Adjustments in focus and/or modalities to programming	➤ In Kenya, following the passing of the Refugee Bill in 2021, WFP adapted its approach to support the government in the area of refugee integration, focusing on improving access to education and livelihoods. ➤ In Zimbabwe in 2020, WFP reversed its commitment to increasing cash-based transfers and adjusted transfer modalities in response to new government regulations.
Specific government requests arising from new national needs	Horizontal and vertical programmatic adaptations	➤ In Colombia, WFP adapted its programming to provide large-scale food assistance and cash-based transfers at the government's request. This included addressing the needs of unique groups such as *caminantes* (migrants in transit), not initially included in the country strategic plan priorities. ➤ In Iraq, WFP supported (and then worked towards handover) of rural development activities, particularly in the post-ISIL conflict period, as this was identified as a gap in an important mechanism to address food insecurity and ensure sustainable return of displaced people.

50. Overall, the evaluations analysed here confirm that WFP has a challenge to balance the need to engage within the context of often comparatively stable national policy frameworks and systems to support

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[63] Philippines Country Strategic Plan Evaluation, 2023.

food security and nutrition, with the agility to support emergency response and changed national directives.

Q2. How has WFP's partnership engagement in MICs worked, and how has it evolved over time?

SUMMARY

Evaluations report that WFP's partnerships in MICs have diversified over time, particularly in support of emergency response. In UMIC contexts, WFP has more frequent partnerships with national governments, while in LMICs, partnerships with international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) occur more frequently. WFP's approach to partnerships in MICs is not consistently informed by coherent country-level framing to support the envisioned shifts that characterize WFP's strategic positioning in these countries. Governments highly value WFP's roles, capacities and expertise in areas such as policy support and capacity strengthening, which requires sustained approaches alongside sound analysis, technical support and relationship building.

51. Figure 9 shows that, within WFP's overall global partnership profile, based on formal partnership agreements, upper-MICs have the most partnerships with national governments and more diversified partnerships overall (e.g. with academia and private sector). Low-income countries, and lower-middle-income countries have a similar partnership profile, with a higher volume of partnerships with international NGOs. Specifically:

- **partnerships with government** are higher in UMICs (13 percent) compared to LMICs (7 percent) and LICs (4 percent);
- **partnerships with international NGOs** are higher in LMICs (34 percent) and LICs (35 percent) compared to UMICs (17 percent);
- **local NGOs** partners represent a consistently high group (49–56 percent) regardless of country income status;
- **engagement with academia and the private sector** is more frequent in UMICs (3 percent each);
- **partnerships with community-based organisations and Red Cross** are slightly higher in UMICs (8 percent and 3 percent) than LMICs/LICs; and
- **formal partnership agreements with United Nations agencies** are comparable across all contexts at 3 percent in UMICs and LMICs, 1 percent in LICs.

Figure 9: WFP partnerships LMICs, UMICs and LICs
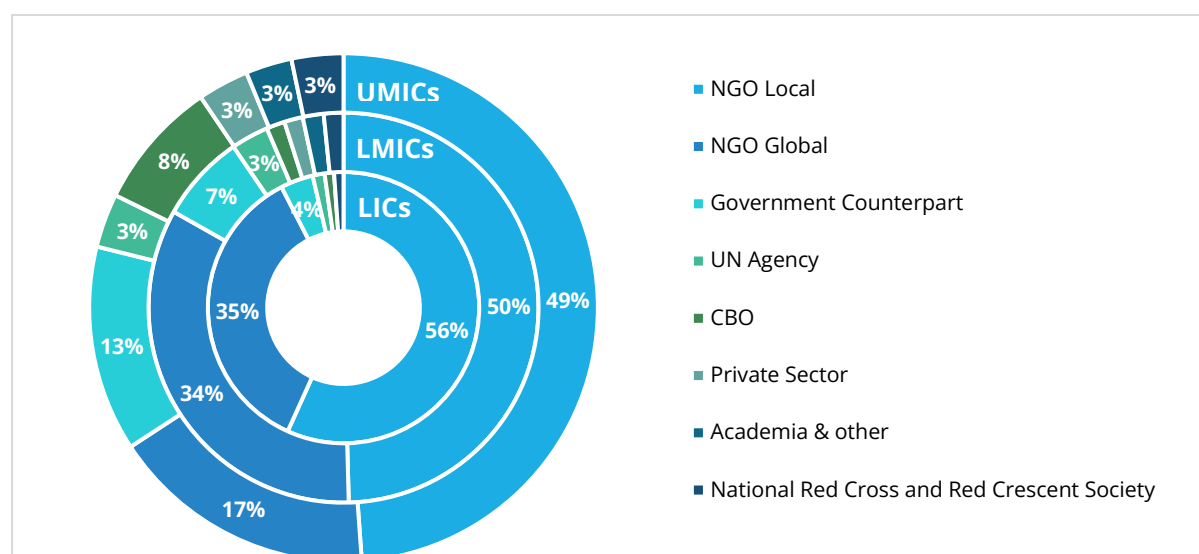
Source: Comet report. CM-S010_Mapping of Partnerships.

52. For the specific 25 MICs evaluated, WFP has formal partnership agreements with government counterparts in all 25 countries. Of these, 20 WFP country programmes have formal agreements with local and international NGOs, while WFP collaborates with the private sector in 12 countries. Nine country programmes have formal partnership agreements with other United Nations agencies, and one (the Philippines) has a partnership agreement with an international financial institution.[64]

53. **Overall,** the evaluations report that, for these middle-income contexts:

- there has been a **diversification in the types of partnerships** WFP established between 2019 and 2024, particularly where WFP needed to expand its pool of available partners to support emergency response activities (as noted in Namibia and Nepal);
- reflecting the wider patterns in Figure 9, in UMICs, WFP has more frequent partnerships with national governments and more diversified partnerships (e.g. with academia and private sector), while LMICs have more frequent partnerships with international NGOs, in common with LICs, also as per Figure 9; and
- there was little information in the evaluations on partnerships with international financial institutions.

54. **Partnerships with governments:** Overall, evaluations report successful collaborations between governments and WFP in the 25 MICs evaluated, with relationships largely characterized by trust and mutual respect. Evaluation findings reflect the intended strategic shift in MICs highlighted in para 15 and Box 1, to move towards an increasing 'enabling' role in support of national actors, systems, and institutions, and providing technical support in specialized areas.

55. WFP engaged with national governments in three main ways, often concurrently:

- **As a strategic partner** directly engaged in policy support, design, and advocacy. In Kenya, for example, WFP supported policy design, coordination, implementation and monitoring processes for food systems, nutrition, and school meals programming. In Peru, WFP supported the government in policy development and advocacy to help address malnutrition, anaemia, and food security. In Nepal, WFP engaged with development partners in nutrition and school feeding, which helped enabled transformative capacity strengthening outcomes in these areas. In China and Peru, both upper-middle-income contexts, WFP identified partnership-building as a strategic outcome for the CSP.
- **As a technical partner**, to deliver specialized knowledge, tools, and capacity support to strengthen national systems and programmes ranging from school-based programming to disaster management response. For example, in Namibia, WFP provided technical support to the government in the design and implementation of national social protection programmes, including capacity strengthening technical support for food, nutrition security initiatives. WFP also provided technical expertise and generated evidence for social safety nets. In Eswatini, WFP provided technical assistance to the national school feeding programme in procurement, monitoring and evaluation, and advised on the integrated home-grown school feeding (HGSF) models to link local farmers to school markets.
- **As an operational partner** with a continued direct implementation role, often for national social protection systems. In Bhutan, for example, WFP engaged in delivering school feeding programmes through direct implementation to support nutrition and education outcomes. In Iraq, WFP directly implemented school feeding programmes, including piloting the initiative in 13 governorates.

56. The main gaps highlighted in evaluations regarding government partnerships were:

- the need for clarity on respective roles and responsibilities and clear entry points within national systems. For example, in Indonesia, despite WFP's efforts in providing technical training and establishing logistics hubs, unclear role definitions and weak integration with government priorities caused inefficiencies;
- the need for further engagement at decentralized level, particularly in some federalized governance settings. For example, in Kenya, Nepal and the Philippines, evaluations report varying

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[64] Data sourced from COMET: CM-S010_Partnership_Info_-_by_SO_and_Activity_and_SO_and_Ben_Group (accessed on 30 December 2024).

levels of exposure to, and benefit from, WFP support cascading from the central level – which also has important consequences for handover and sustainability of results (see Q5); and

- coordination challenges, also at the sub-national/decentralized level, such as in Cambodia, where coordination issues within decentralized governance structures constrained efforts to implement shock-responsive social protection systems.

57. **Partnerships with other United Nations agencies**: The main challenges identified in evaluations – and well-documented elsewhere[65] – highlight difficulties in operational coordination between WFP and sister United Nations agencies. However, evaluations find this to be particularly acute where WFP and other agency activities are oriented to the kind of technical assistance, policy advice, evidence-generation and system-strengthening agenda for middle-income contexts, as in Box 1. For example, in Namibia, the country strategic plan evaluation (CSPE) found gaps in United Nations agencies' policy alignment and complementarity, resulting in missed opportunities for inter-agency and inter-sector collaboration to support national policy and strategy formulation. In Lesotho, joint proposals to provide technical support to government often lack integrated design, instead reflecting the individual outputs of respective agencies' agendas.

58. **Partnerships with cooperating partners:** The main challenge highlighted in evaluations, linked to localization, is the short-term, sometimes transactional nature of partnerships[66] in contexts where WFP is pursuing the 'enabling' agenda for MICs indicated in the WFP Strategic Plan 2022–2025. This requires longer-term and more capacity strengthening-oriented partnerships. Evaluations in Kenya, for example, emphasized the need for long-term partnerships and sustained investments, particularly in the school meals programme, to ensure institutional capacity and programme sustainability. The Nepal CSPE notes how short-term field-level agreements with Cooperating Partners proved inadequate for the long-term time horizon implied by capacity strengthening work. This underscores the need for enduring, mutually beneficial agreements that extend beyond basic service provision.

59. Also, two evaluations noted missed opportunities to engage more strategically with civil society partners. In the Dominican Republic, the evaluation noted that WFP had not adequately maximized the potential to fully tap into the potential of civil society partners to bring context-relevant development expertise and to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus in programming. In Eswatini, WFP missed opportunities to effectively integrate national partners (in resilience programming and link them with target farmers, and to leverage their support to home-grown school feeding beyond acting as 'stop gap institutions'.

60. **Partnerships with the private sector:** WFP's partnership with the private sector is mentioned in around half of the sampled evaluations.[67] In 40 percent of the 25 countries (ten countries), the engagement with the private sector is characterized as primarily contractual, where a private sector actor is engaged solely as a service provider in support of WFP activities.[68] For example, private sector partners delivered training activities (in Indonesia, Namibia, Zambia), provided commodity vouchers (Lesotho), supported rice fortification processes (Dominican Republic), and produced key supplementary feeding products (Timor-Leste).

61. Elsewhere, in three countries (12 percent of the sample), WFP engaged with the private sector as a strategic partner (India, Namibia, Peru), working jointly towards innovative solutions to address food and nutrition challenges. For example, in India, where the private sector was one of the primary funders of the country strategic plan, WFP worked to leverage corporate social responsibility. In Peru, WFP worked with major companies and private social funds on nutrition and rice fortification activities. Evaluations report that, overall, these partnerships were built on trust and mutual accountability, with WFP's flexible and adaptive approach supporting collaboration.

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[65] See for example WFP. Annual Evaluation Report (AER) 2023 in review and also WFP. 2025. Summary of Evaluation Evidence on Partnership with Governments in Southern Africa.

[66] This is also highlighted in WFP. 2023. Synthesis of evidence and lessons on WFP's cooperating partners from centralized and decentralized evaluations.

[67] Armenia, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ghana, India, Kenya, Peru, Philippines, Türkiye and Zimbabwe. According to COMET. See CM-S010_Partnership_Info_-_by_SO_and_Activity_and_SO_and_Ben_Group (accessed on 30 December 2024).

[68] Bhutan, China, Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Lesotho, Namibia, Philippines, Türkiye, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

62. **Across all partnership types,** a key challenge for WFP in MICs – reported by evaluations in seven countries[69] – is the **lack of a comprehensive partnership framework**. Evaluations linked this to limited understanding of the central role that partnership work plays in many MICs. It also highlights undervaluing the importance of a comprehensive partnership framework to guide WFP's work in-country. For example, in Bhutan, the absence of a partnership strategy constrained WFP from establishing a clear focus and direction for its engagements with government, United Nations, and country strategy counterparts beyond specific projects. This compromised formal and informal aspects of relationships. In Cambodia, partnerships evolved organically under different strategic outcomes rather than within a comprehensive partnership framework. This impeded alignment and coordination across pillars and with diverse partners, including the private sector. In the Dominican Republic, the lack of a partnership strategy constrained progress in advancing the humanitarian-development nexus.

Q3. What results were reported relating to WFP's engagement in MICs in the 2019–2024 period?

> **SUMMARY**
>
> Key contributions made by WFP in MICs, as identified in this cohort of evaluations, included:
>
> - improved reach of social protection systems during shocks and emergencies, alongside enhanced stability of, or improvement in, food security measures for affected populations;
>
> - improved policy and strategic frameworks for food security and nutrition, and strengthened institutions to help deliver these;
>
> - enhanced national systems for food security and nutrition, including monitoring, supply chain and social protection systems, and early warning/disaster preparedness.
>
> Evaluations identified missed opportunities to advance broader gender and inclusion-related objectives, and positive contributions to peace and stability achieved in particular through social cohesion. Finally, evaluations noted how pilot initiatives form a major part of WFP's portfolio in MICs, yet planning for scale-up, (where relevant), has often lacked a systematic approach, and learning and review processes are not always sufficient.

63. Results generated in the sample of MICs covered in evaluations are presented by the areas of expected engagement and results as identified by the WFP Strategic Plan 2022–2025 (see para 15 and box 1):[70]

    - emergency response;
    - policy and institutional support;
    - systems strengthening;
    - evidence generation; and
    - gender equality and empowerment of women.

64. Analysis is presented in these categories rather than by the standard WFP strategic outcomes because activities in these five areas are implemented within and across different outcomes, leading to a risk of duplication and overlap when assessing results.

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[69] Namibia, Nepal, Timor-Leste, Bhutan, Cambodia, Namibia and Dominican Republic.

[70] The results presented contribute to more than one WFP strategic plan outcomes. Therefore, it was not feasible to present the results by strategic outcome (SO). This is because, as noted in the portfolio analysis, WFP programming in different countries does not follow consistently the structure by strategic plan outcomes. This variability limits the utility of presenting aggregated performance information and results by SO across countries. For example, emergency response activities are not only planned under SO1, and resilience is not consistently under SO3, but can be found in different SOs, in different countries.

2.4 Results

(a) Emergency response

65. Evidence from 24 MICs evaluated[71] highlights contributions to results in this area.

66. As per section 2.2, evaluations highlight WFP's **strong performance in emergency response**. WFP responded quickly and effectively to different types of shocks (e.g. in Colombia, Pakistan, Namibia and Zimbabwe), demonstrating its ability to adapt to changing circumstances by integrating emergency responses into existing strategic outcomes[72] or scaling up ongoing existing operations, often within existing national systems or to support national responses. Evaluations reported that this contributed to improved reach of social protection systems, such as extending assistance to urban beneficiaries (e.g., Zimbabwe, Kenya and Iraq) and to enhanced stability of, or improvement in, food security measures for affected populations (e.g. Iraq and Namibia).

67. Also, WFP's provision of common services and air transport allowed partners to deliver assistance in a timely and cost-effective manner, further enhancing the overall emergency response (e.g. Zimbabwe). However, evaluations in Lesotho and Namibia found that, while crisis response activities improved short-term food security outcomes, these benefits were not sustained once the crisis interventions concluded.

(b) Policy and institutional support

68. Evidence of WFP's engagement in support for policy and strategy formulation, as well as its institutional strengthening in MICs is recorded in 32 percent or 8 countries, namely six UMICs (Armenia, China, Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Iraq, Peru) and two LMICs (Cambodia, Ghana).

69. Evaluations record that WFPs' engagement in MICs helped inform the development of new, or improvement of existing, policy and normative frameworks for food security and nutrition. In some cases, evaluations present evidence of food security and nutrition-related outcomes, or outcomes relating to the broader institutional changes and systems strengthening[73] that WFP contributed to (see Table 6). This also included by providing technical guidance on normative issues (e.g. on food fortification and disaster management legislation).

Table 6: Evidence of results in policy and institutional support

Policy and institutional level achievements	Evidence and examples
Food security, nutrition and school feeding	➢ **Development/improvement of national strategies, policies** for scaled-up nutrition interventions (Peru) for school feeding and nutrition – Armenia, Bhutan Lesotho, Cambodia, Zambia. ➢ **Improved decentralized planning processes and guidance** on integrating food security and nutrition (Cambodia).
Nutrition and food fortification	➢ **Adoption of new or improved policies, legal frameworks and standard for food fortification** (Bhutan, India, Timor-Leste, Peru, Lesotho, Nepal) which WFP contributed to; pilot studies to show the public acceptability of fortification, development and roll-out of operational guidance and Social Behaviour Change Communication campaigns. ➢ **Promotion of rice fortification** through collaboration with national actors to facilitate its integration into the food supply chain and aligning with national nutrition goals (Peru). ➢ **Improved nutritional quality of school meals** which WFP contributed to, e.g. in Armenia through enhanced nutrition curriculum, home-grown school feeding, and work on value chains for healthier meals at school.

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[71] Only China is excluded.

[72] The evaluations note that the emergency response could be aligned with any of the existing SOs in each of the sampled countries (e.g. SO1 and SO4 in the Philippines, SO2 in Zimbabwe, SO3 in Namibia and China, and SO5 in Ghana).

[73] This is also in line with the 2022 Policy Update on Country Capacity Strengthening which identifies policy and institutional support as two of the pathways to achieve system strengthening.

	➢ **Improved nutritional quality of take-home rations** (India) which WFP contributed to by raising awareness about the benefits of rice fortification, providing technical assistance, and advocating for mainstreaming use of fortified rice into government safety nets.
Social protection	➢ Development/improvement of **policy framework for social safety nets and shock-responsive social protection systems** (Cambodia, Namibia). ➢ National protocols/implementation modalities informed by guidance on **nutrition-sensitive social protection guidelines** (Zambia). ➢ Supporting the implementation of the **national social protection policy,** including through the development of a single data registry to enhance targeting and monitoring (Kenya).
Food systems	➢ Improved **policy and multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms** to support the integration of a food systems approach into government policies – including through pilot activities on local food production and market linkages aiming at enhancing food systems sustainability (Namibia). ➢ **Improved food security and nutrition results** which WFP contributed to through enhancing the shift from food assistance to nutrition-sensitive food systems, and by demonstrating market-based approaches to strengthening food systems and the livelihood programme involving cultivation of nutritious foods by vulnerable households (Ghana).
Equal access to resource allocation	➢ **Stronger government focus on rural women**, fostered by WFP's targeted advocacy for increased resource allocation to the newly created Ministry of Equality and Equity, and support to the women-focused initiatives connected to the Comprehensive Rural Reform policy (Colombia).
Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRR/M)	➢ **Improvements in national DDR/M capacities** (Cambodia, Ghana, Namibia, Peru, Zambia) which WFP contributed to through development of strategies and institutional mechanisms for preparedness, information systems, and analysis to inform decision making and coordination among humanitarian partners in the context of disaster management.[74]

70. Gaps and or missed opportunities for results included:

- Gaps in WFP's capacity strengthening efforts beyond the initial stage of approval of a given policy or legislation into the early phases of policy implementation – which is where national actors often face most political and financial challenges (Kenya).
- Insufficient resources and infrastructure to support the recommended policy changes (Namibia).
- Turnover of governement officials resulting in institutional capacity gaps (Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho, Peru, Iraq, India).
- Coordination challenges within government impacting multilateral coperation efforts (Dominican Republic).

(c) Systems strengthening

71. Evaluations report evidence from different countries that WFP contributed to strengthening national systems, across different sectors.[75]

Table 7: Selected evidence on WFP's contribution to system strengthening

System strengthening achievement	Evidence and examples
School nutrition and food fortification	In Bhutan, WFP support resulted in strong systems for school feeding, achieved through a combination of support for policymaking and coordination processes, systems-building activities, staff training and improvements to school infrastructure.

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[74] This is consistent with emerging findings from the WFP evaluation of the Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) Policy Evaluation (EPR) (2025) where specific examples from Zambia are highlighted where WFP supported the government to pass a Disaster Management Act as well as to develop a Disaster Management Framework.

[75] Evidence and examples draw from country-specific CSPEs and also from policy evaluations – e.g. the Policy Evaluation South-South and Triangular Cooperation (2021) and the Policy Evaluation on Emergency Preparedness and Response (2025).

Agri-business / agriculture value chain and markets	➢ In Armenia and Bhutan, WFP contributed to expanding access to international agri-food companies by linking government agencies with counterparts in India and some international agri-food companies.
Nutrition monitoring systems	➢ In Peru, WFP helped enhance national institutions' access to nutrition-related data through the creation of a multi-stakeholder platform to monitor and assess public policies focusing on anaemia and child malnutrition.
National supply chain systems	➢ In Timor-Leste, WFP contributed to the enhanced set-up and performance of the supply chain system for medical supplies through system and procedural enhancements. ➢ In India, WFP introduced technology improvements to streamline supply chain optimization and increase the efficiency of implementation of the three national food-based safety net programmes.
Early warning and disaster preparedness systems	In Pakistan, the Philippines, Zambia and Nepal, WFP contributed to developing/improving systems for national planning and management instruments for early warning and disaster preparedness systems.
Climate and anticipatory action	In Iraq, the Philippines and Zambia, WFP helped strengthen national governments' Emergency Preparedness and Response capacities, e.g. by helping integrate adaptation to extreme weather events and climate risk management into planning at provincial/local levels (e.g. in the Philippines) and supporting efforts to access funding from the Green Climate Fund for multi-hazard impact-based forecasting to support anticipatory action.
National social protection systems	WFP support for digitalization helped enhance data management capacities and efficiency in national social protection systems in Namibia, Iraq and Zambia.

72. **Missed opportunities for results mainly related to the need to move upstream from individualized initiatives**. For example, the Safety Nets policy evaluation noted that WFP did not sufficiently seize the opportunities presented by its engagement in social protection systems to help support national government's shift towards addressing food security and nutrition needs at scale; while in Kenya and Pakistan, evaluations found that WFP had more scope to become a 'systems enabler', working at scale to help tackle medium-term food insecurity and nutrition challenges in social protection. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, there was room to help strengthen government technical capacities to use e-vouchers/electronic transfer modalities in emergencies.

73. A major challenge identified as affecting results was the underestimation of the **scale, depth, quality, duration and WFP capacities** required for sustained national capacity strengthening. For example, in Bhutan, WFP did not adequately anticipate the required time horizon needed to build national capacities; in Timor Leste, despite efforts to transition from direct delivery of assistance to national systems strengthening, the underestimation of the skills required, depth and duration of the engagement needed to manage the interface between WFP and government constrained the achievement of results. In Kenya, the evaluation found a mismatch between the ambitious objectives of capacity strengthening and staffing skillset profile. In Türkiye the CSPE reported that WFP expanded its engagement in resilience-building and livelihoods, starting with small pilots focused on vocational training. However, challenges emerged in adapting to the more complex context and diverse needs of a larger population, which were compounded by some misaligned skillsets and limited engagement with relevant government ministries.

74. Such challenges are not unique to middle-income contexts,[76] but can present a gap, even in relatively stable environments, since capacity strengthening is a medium- to long-term process. Matching ambitions with sustained levels of adequate resources is key: in Bhutan, Lesotho and Pakistan, evaluations highlight the relatively small scale of WFP's involvement in specific capacity strengthening initiatives if compared to the higher level of ambition and objectives put forward by WFP around strengthening national systems. There are also challenges in encouraging donor partners to recognize the value of, and give support to, capacity strengthening initiatives. This is a major constraint, with evaluations documenting widespread challenges in raising resources for this sort of activity (see Q4

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[76] See for example WFP. 2025. (*forthcoming*) Summary of Evidence – Country Capacity Strengthening.

below).[77] Difficulties in assessing and reporting on results in capacity strengthening are a longstanding and well-documented gap[78] that constrain WFP in the narrative it can present on achievements.

(d) Evidence generation

75. In this area, evaluations report that WFP contributed to enhanced food security and nutrition (FSN)-related government decision-making through high-quality and actionable analytical products. Results are evidenced in two-thirds of the MICs evaluated,[79] with WFP evidence-generation products and FSN analytics used to:

   - inform future food and nutrition policies and strategies (Zambia, Namibia, India);
   - inform – including joint collaboration between Rome-based agencies – national food systems strategies and renewable natural resources strategies (Timor-Leste);
   - contribute to raising awareness on the benefits of food fortification, supporting innovation, and scaling up pilots in this area (India);
   - enhance the national emergency preparedness and response system (Nepal, Zambia[80]); and
   - enhance technical government capacities in food security and nutrition data collection, analysis and data visualization (Kyrgyz Republic).

76. In India, the evaluation finds that the relevance and quality of FSN analyses enhanced WFP's credibility as a trusted government partner in this area. It also motivated national institutions to invest in their internal capacities for food security evidence generation. Evidence generated by WFP also contributed to enhancing national evaluation capacities, supported by the secondment of a WFP staff to relevant government departments.

77. In terms of challenges, several evaluations (e.g. in Ghana, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Pakistan) discuss the **limited use of WFP's evidence products**, highlighting the challenges of a more effective dissemination to improve the prospect of their use. In India for example, some WFP evidence products were not adequately disseminated and did not connect in a timely manner with issues of growing prominence such as urban food insecurity linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.

> **Box 3: Collaboration for evidence generation and policy support**
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> In **Bhutan**, WFP, in close collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, successfully mobilized support and lobbied the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests to participate in the 2021 Food Systems Summit dialogues. This engagement led to the formulation of eight Bhutan food system-related national pathways that were then translated into national renewable natural resources strategies.

(e) Gender and inclusion

78. The **main contextual challenges** noted in the evaluations affecting progress for gender equality and women empowerment (GEWE) and inclusion relate to:

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[77] The Strategic Evaluation of the Contribution of School Feeding Activities to the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals notes that '[d]onors have been mostly reluctant to pay for country capacity strengthening on the scale that is required for the enabling role. Funding for middle-income countries has been difficult to mobilize, even at the level of seed funding. (Concl. 2, page79).

[78] Assessing results of WFP's engagement in national system strengthening at intermediate/longer-term outcome level were noted as challenges considering the longer time horizon for results to emerge for activities in this area (e.g. Indonesia, Bhutan and Zambia). See also WFP. 2021. Evaluation synthesis of evidence and lessons on country capacity strengthening from decentralized evaluations.

[79] Ghana, India, Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho, Namibia, Nepal, Philippines, Peru and Zambia.

[80] For example, the Evaluation of WFP's Emergency Preparedness Policy includes a finding noting that WFP's work on emergency preparedness and capacity strengthening of governments included food security information systems, early warning systems and support to studies, as well as provision of hardware for data collection. In Zambia, WFP supported rain gauge installation for improved climate information, and the use of technology for assessments, including the piloting of drones and digitalizing data collection and analysis.

- limited progress in implementation of national commitments to advance gender equality and women's empowerment[81]; and
- unequal access of women and men to food and nutrition, health services, resources, education, income-generation and livelihoods opportunities.

79. All evaluations note that COVID-19 had a disproportionally higher impact on women and girls and other groups that are particularly vulnerable to shocks and risks, including children, people with disabilities, the elderly, rural populations, youth, the unemployed and people in vulnerable employment.

80. The main results around gender and social inclusion (Table 8) are about improved access to economic empowerment, livelihood opportunities and skills-development opportunities in support of income-generating activities. In all contexts (where the WFP portfolio includes a school feeding component/HGSF e.g. Bhutan, India, Cambodia, Iraq, Namibia), this offered an entry point for supporting potential women's empowerment through economic opportunities and inclusion in school-based programme supply chains. However, evidence for more ambitious objectives, such as around power relations, was much more limited across evaluations.

Table 8: Evidence and examples of GEWE and inclusion-related achievements

Gender equality and inclusion-related	Evidence and examples of GEWE and inclusion-related achievements
Women farmers have lower access to credit, extension services and technology compared to men	Enhanced digital inclusion of rural women which WFP contributed to by delivering targeted digital training opportunities targeting women (Ghana) Expanded presence and role of women leaders in different nutrition and food systems activities which WFP contributed to by supporting women taking-leadership roles in small-scale food production and processing units, in farmer-based organizations (Cambodia; India)
Exclusion of women from livelihoods and economic empowerment opportunities	Enhanced access to economic empowerment opportunities for women which WFP contributed to through: ➢ including a women's empowerment component in a government supported and women-led take-home rations programme (India); ➢ using the school feeding programme/home-grown school feeding (HGSF) as an entry point for providing opportunities for women's empowerment given that women play several roles in the programme (Cambodia; Tunisia); and ➢ delivering training on agricultural practices, inputs and equipment to enhance the agricultural productivity of women farmers (Bhutan).
Some components of national social protection programmes do not consider the different needs of men and women, boys and girls	Enhanced requirements in social protection programmes which WFP contributed to, promoting access by girls and other marginalized groups, to address the nutrition challenges of school-age children (Bhutan)

81. The evaluations recorded that the missed opportunities for positive results mainly in relation to:
- expanding the scope of organizational capacity strengthening activities, such as those targeting farmers' groups and cooperatives in the agricultural sector, to help leverage collective action for change (Bhutan);
- using entry points for economic empowerment, such as including women traders in procurement activities (Zimbabwe) and within the supply chain in the delivery of HGSF (Cambodia and Tunisia); and
- addressing discriminatory practices that constrain equal access by men and women to programme interventions on the ground (Ghana).

82. Reasons included: failure to tap the potential of partnerships for advancing the GEEW agenda (Bhutan, India,[82] and Iraq); insufficient sex and age disaggregated data constraining the possibility to conduct

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[81] Such commitments are outlined in international and regional treaties, in national legislation, policies and programmes.

[82] WFP leveraged supportive gender-focused policies, such as Odisha's Mission Shakti and Uttar Pradesh's Rural Livelihood Mission, but missed opportunities to strengthen partnerships and systematically work to strengthen government capacity to focus on gender equality and social inclusion.

more in-depth analysis of the differential effects of interventions on men and women involved in economic activities supported by WFP (Armenia); and limited technical expertise on, and resourcing for, gender and social inclusion concerns (India and Namibia).

2.5. Other results

83. Evaluations found some evidence that WFP has contributed in MICs to two main other results areas: contribution to peace[83] (particularly through social cohesion) and – with more limited evidence and examples – to climate shock adaptation (Table 9).

Table 9: Contribution to other results

Areas of result	Evidence and examples
Contribution to peace and stability including through social cohesion	WFP contributed to enhanced prospect for socioeconomic integration among communities, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence through: ➤ social cohesion and socioeconomic integration in WFP's activities and closer alignment with national efforts to promote integrated local development and peace,[84] which helped promote peacebuilding in Colombia. This emerged as a valuable by-product of the country strategic plan's activities combining humanitarian action and development assistance. However, in Colombia, the evaluation noted the need for an explicit strategy to promote social cohesion and peace; ➤ efforts to improve refugee self-reliance and integration into host communities, which supported social cohesion, though progress remain partial and not at scale (Kenya); ➤ adopting a humanitarian–development–peace nexus approach in its activities in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, and rolling out associated tools, such as conflict-sensitivity assessments, which supported the wider peacebuilding agenda in the context (Philippines); and ➤ facilitating linkages between humanitarian action and development cooperation by laying the framework for a transition from emergency to resilience, which helped support national efforts on peacebuilding (Iraq).
Contribution to climate shock adaptation through facilitation national climate financing actions	Improved climate financing prospects for national governments, through: ➤ WFP support to national government to access Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund to realize the priorities outlined in their national climate policies (Nepal); and ➤ strengthening governments' capacities to conduct climate risk analysis and develop programmes that incorporate gender and sustainability considerations in the context of climate-related shocks (Nepal).

84. In these result areas, the main challenges noted in the evaluations relate to limitations in the current corporate framework for measuring and assessing results, as also documented elsewhere.[85] Evaluations observe that this constrains WFP from being able to 'tell the full story' of its contribution and of the results achieved.

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[83] This is consistent with evidence from the 2023 WFP Evaluation of the Policy on WFP's Role in Peacebuilding in Transition Settings.

[84] As noted in the CSPE: *El PMA ha contribuido al fortalecimiento de la cohesión social a través de la mejora de las relaciones entre comunidades (poblaciones migrantes y de acogida, poblaciones vecinas y firmantes de la paz, tanto hombres como mujeres), el fortalecimiento de la solidaridad grupal (y entre grupos de mujeres) y la mejora de las relaciones intrafamiliares. Esta es la dimensión cuyos resultados son más "invisibles".* [WFP contributed to strengthening social cohesion by improving relationships between different communities - migrant and host populations, neighbouring groups, and signatories of peace agreements (both men and women). It has also helped build group solidarity (including among women's groups) and strengthen intra-family relationships. These results are often the hardest to see.]

[85] A challenge noted in the WFP Evaluation of the Policy on WFP's Role in Peacebuilding in Transition Settings, and also in country-level evaluations – such as the Philippines CSPE which points toward limited corporate guidance and indicators for these areas.

2.6. Pilot activities in MICs

85. As noted in paragraph 29, pilot initiatives are a frequent intervention in the 25 MICs sampled for this analysis. Evaluations record their purpose as:

- demonstrating WFP's potential value-added in areas such as supporting national social protection, including through its data and analytics capacities (e.g. Colombia and Iraq);
- showcasing and documenting innovative solutions to enhance the knowledge base around specific issues such as agricultural value chains (Bhutan and China[86]), HGSF models (Cambodia and Indonesia) and Food Assistance for Assets actions (Zimbabwe);
- mapping and identifying the most cost-efficient local procurement options for school meals (Bhutan) and rice fortification (India);
- highlighting the use of new or different approaches to enhance existing national frameworks and systems such as community empowerment approaches, and use of direct cash transfers in support of anticipatory action (Dominican Republic[87]); and
- providing a transition stage as WFP moves towards a technical advisory role (e.g. Indonesia).

86. Evaluations do not systematically document the results of pilot initiatives, but some examples follow. In all cases, evaluations noted caveats to the achievement of results.

- By piloting different HGSF models in Cambodia, WFP helped the government decide which aspects they would like to continue in a nationally owned programme. In turn, this supported national decisions, and WFP subsequently worked to transition schools to an HGSF model aligned with the government's preference, and in line with the national transition plan. The evaluations note, however, that WFP did not sufficiently take advantage of the space to pilot multiple diverse approaches to HGSF, which might have allowed for further differentiation by context.
- By demonstrating the viability of pilot projects to scale up rice fortification in India, WFP helped strengthen the capacities of rice millers, and provided valuable information to state authorities, though the emphasis on nutrition was limited.
- In Türkiye, insights from pilot projects offered a general understanding of the need for vocational education and potential areas of support, and achieved some successes in training and securing employment for individuals in some areas. However, they did not sufficiently specify the needs of WFP's targeted beneficiary groups, including refugees and vulnerable host communities.
- In Pakistan, WFP's piloting of community-level integrated climate risk management made some inroads in relation to resilience-building (particularly through Food Assistance for Assets). However, results were impeded by the small scale and fragmented nature of the pilot activities, plus the lack of clear plans to draw lessons to inform a potential roll-out by the government. This also perpetuated unclear views on WFP's role in the country.

87. Factors that had helped support the scale-up of interventions, where relevant, were:

- preparing and planning for scale-up well in advance, with a clear roadmap and close engagement with national actors (Cambodia); and
- nurturing strong working relationship between WFP and relevant line ministries (Lesotho).

88. The main challenges highlighted in evaluations relate mainly to the potential for scale-up, where appropriate. Evaluations in at least six countries[88] point to the absence of planning to prepare for, and sustain, implementation at scale following handover to national actors; and/or the insufficient scale and scope of the pilot to generate the evidence needed to advocate more convincingly to secure funding and support for scale-up (Türkiye). Other challenges included:

- unrealistic timelines for planning for scale-up (China, Iraq, Kenya);

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[86] This is related to two pilot smallholder agriculture projects on zinc-rich potato production in Gansu Province and on the kiwi fruit value chain in Anhui Province.

[87] This is related to WFP pilot of an early warning system in Puerto Plata characterized by work with community networks (volunteers) to empower local actors in early warning mechanisms and in emergency prevention actions.

[88] China, Lesotho, Türkiye, Dominican Republic, Eswatini and China.

- unclear understanding of the different roles and expected engagement between WFP and national actors in pilot and scale-up (Pakistan);
- limited consideration of the potential catalytic effects of pilots (Pakistan) and how disparities at the sub-national level (regional/provincial, etc.) can pose a barrier to scale-up, diffusion and transfer of lessons (China; Iraq);
- insufficient or ineffective use of advocacy in support of pilot scale-up, and diffusion of evidence and lessons learned (India);
- insufficient attention to synergies between pilot activities and other WFP activities targeting the same communities (e.g. linking food systems pilots to ongoing EPR work in Namibia);
- limited openness to experiment, through pilots, with different approaches particularly in light of potential frictions with donor preferences (e.g. around programming and targeting in urban areas in Zimbabwe); and
- insufficient mapping of future pathways from a pilot to sustainable change (e.g. in economic empowerment in Türkiye).

Q4. Which internal and external factors affected WFP's results in MICs over the 2019–2024 period?

SUMMARY

According to this cohort of evaluations, the main challenges in achieving results included: resourcing levels; lack of a clear framework and guidance for WFP engagement in middle-income settings, which constrained external perceptions of WFP's role in these contexts; and corporate indicators that do not adequately convey WFP's contributions to the national system and capacities.

Staffing profiles have not always had the relevant skills, capacities and contract durations to align with the specific needs of many middle-income settings, which require, for example, relationship-building and political economy skills.

89. Many factors affecting WFP's achievement of results in MICs are common across country contexts, including: resourcing (human and financial); challenges with measuring capacity strengthening; and over-optimistic assessments of national capacities.[89] Elements emerging as more specific to MICs include: sustaining resourcing levels in a consistent way; navigating the absence of an overarching corporate vision and rationale for MIC engagement; addressing external perceptions of WFP's added value in these environments; and adequately capturing and reporting WFP's contributions, for example, to national system and capacity strengthening.

90. **Financial resourcing:** Financial resourcing challenges that are specific to MICs reflect two main issues:

- **The "middle income trap"** – evaluations note that countries moving from low- to middle-income status face reduced donor interest, and often-unrealized expectations of domestic resource-raising.[90] For example, the joint evaluation of collaboration among Rome-based agencies (2021) noted that, with scant domestic financing, assumptions of increased collaboration among United Nations agencies for resource-raising did not materialize, and competitive approaches prevailed. In Iraq, the CSPE noted that WFP's inability to raise resources for emergency preparedness reflects the particular challenges for resource-raising in UMICs transitioning out of crises.
- **Uncertainty around the potential for 'innovative financing' opportunities** – this was found in the Strategic Evaluation of Funding WFP's work (2020)[91] and in the CSPE Egypt, where WFP has supported the government to find innovative funding modalities such as debt swaps. However, the extent to which the government will allocate sufficient resources to sustain these benefits

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[89] See for example WFP. 2025. (*forthcoming*) Annual Evaluation Report for 2024.

[90] See for example Zambia CSPE, Nepal CSPE and the Joint evaluation of collaboration among Rome-based agencies.

[91] The strategic evaluation on funding WFP's work notes challenges in estimating the potential value of 'innovative financing' opportunities and the Egypt CSPE discusses that, while WFP innovative funding modalities such as debt swaps were explored, the extent to which the government is willing to allocate the necessary resources to sustain these benefits remains uncertain.

remains unclear. This underscores the need for greater financial commitment and long-term planning.

91. **Human resourcing:** The value for WFP of building a high-performing and stable workforce is not unique to middle-income contexts.[92] The reviewed evaluations highlight the medium- and longer-term nature of WFP's aims in MIC contexts. This also points to the value of continuity in relationships and the importance of staffing which is also highlighted in the evaluations. Here, WFP has made positive progress in recent years,[93] increasing the recruitment of national staff under long-term contracts,[94] in line with WFP's commitment outlined in the WFP People Policy of 2021. In 2019, 39 percent of national staff in the MICs analysed were on long-term contracts, increasing to 48 percent by 2023. While these long-term national staff primarily fill general staff roles, there has also been a notable increase in the number of national officers. This is particularly important for environments where WFP is undertaking policy advocacy and systems strengthening work, as is common in MICs. Overall, evaluations highlight the need in MICs for continuity of relationships and skills and expertise to focus on policy analysis and support.[95] For example, positively, in Peru, an upper-middle-income context, evaluations found that the skillset profile in the office well aligned with the ambition of the CSP to include Social Behavioural Change Communication, fundraising, private sector partnership and South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

92. **WFP reputation and external perceptions:** Evaluations record that national authorities' perceptions of WFP as a humanitarian response agency sometimes constrained their willingness to engage with WFP as a partner of choice beyond humanitarian crisis response. For example, in Pakistan, the evaluation found that WFP is regarded by government officials primarily as an implementor of activities rather than a strategic partner to support the broader development or refinement of government programmes. In Kenya, where WFP is perceived as having primarily 'saving lives' expertise (particularly in connection with the refugee situation), the CSPE notes extensive efforts to reposition WFP as an agency that brings value in different areas – from social protection to resilience, climate shock adaptation and capacity strengthening focused use of the supply chain function.

93. Evaluations also highlight the **lack of corporate vision and rationale, and related results indicators to guide WFP's strategic role in MICs** as an impediment to results. This emerged as a gap particularly for:

    - UMICs, given their ineligibility for conventional ODA (see section 1), and where <u>WFP's engagement is often focused on response to cyclical climate-related emergencies</u> (e.g. Indonesia; Philippines);
    - <u>UMICs where WFP may have very limited to no engagement in the direct delivery of national programmes</u>, and/or where the challenge is capturing the results of WFP's efforts to build alliances and coalitions, provide policy input, and support policy and regulatory change (Indonesia, Peru; Timor Leste);
    - <u>MICs in post-conflict or transition situations</u> (e.g. Iraq; Nepal), where evaluations report a dissonance between the corporate narrative primarily focused on humanitarian emergencies, and the strategic repositioning of country offices, which have shifted to a model that is more focused on policy, advocacy and technical solutions, leaving a gap in the corporate strategic support for such contexts.[96]

94. Evaluations report that current corporate results indicators do not always enable WFP to capture less tangible achievements in contexts – often (though not always) MICs – where WFP works primarily through national governments (see Box 4a).

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[92] It is clearly highlighted in WFP. 2025 (*forthcoming*) Summary of Evidence – Country Capacity Strengthening.

[93] The change in LICs is even more pronounced. While in MICs, both long-term and short-term national staff increase over time, with the number of long-term staff eventually matching that of short-term staff (48 percent in 2023), in LICs, the number of long-term national staff surpasses that of short-term national staff (56 percent of national staff have long-term contracts in 2023).

[94] National Professional Officer and General Service.

[95] Evidence from Cambodia, Colombia, Philippines, Kenya, Philippines, Ghana, and from the DE Regional WFP's Contribution to Shock-Responsive Social Protection.

[96] South-South and Triangular Cooperation Policy Evaluation, (para 115).

> **Box 4a: Measuring results and progress in Indonesia**
>
> The **Indonesia** Country Strategic Plan Evaluation notes that limitations in WFP knowledge management and existing corporate indicator frameworks hamper the potential for reporting on achievements in analysis and partnership-building to inform national policy discussions. Positive benefits delivered by WFP in this context consequently went unrecorded.

95. The **under-use of the supply chain function potential** in service of capacity strengthening objectives is also found by evaluations to be a constraint, with scope to unlock government engagement with WFP in pursuing social sector objectives (e.g. when WFP is outsourced by government to support national supply chain and distribution systems). Namibia is an example where WFP's supply chain support was under-used to help resolve national supply chain management challenges – particularly in relation to structural delays in supply deliveries for the school meals programme.

96. Evaluations note **a risk of fragmentation and lack of internal coherence** with implementing CSPs in MICs. This often arises from a combination of responsiveness to government or donor requests, small-scale interventions and pilot or testing components. Termed 'projectization' in the Colombia CSPE (see Box 4b) and compounded by diverse donor contributions (often in small amounts), this sometimes diminished the role and utility of the CSP as a strategic foundation instrument to orient WFP's engagement (Armenia; Colombia) and impeded the scale of results[97] (Namibia; Colombia).

> **Box 4b: Challenges to programme cohesion in Colombia and Namibia**
>
> The **Colombia** Country Strategic Plan Evaluation (CSPE) notes that the general orientation of WFP has been to respond to government requests, while also aligning to bilateral donors' priorities around thematic and geographic areas. This is acknowledged positively by the government – which views WFP as a highly receptive and agile actor, demonstrating availability to take up any opportunity for engagement. However, this is viewed more critically by partners, who note the risk of projectization, and fragmentation without clear strategic direction.
>
> In **Namibia**, the CSPE found that the strategic objectives and activities expanded over the course of the course of the CSP to adjust to context and evolving government priorities. This resulted in some loss of internal coherence between interventions and impeded the scale of results.

Q5. How well has WFP prepared for transition and handover?

> **SUMMARY**
>
> Financial planning for sustainability has been inconsistent, with the trajectory from innovation to sustainable change often not clearly mapped out. Gaps were evident in planning for handover and transition, including from a model of WFP-led activities to nationally-led and WFP-supported activities, geared to sustainable results.

97. Evaluations mainly discuss sustainability in relation to handover, transition and sustainability of programming, particularly in relation to school meals.[98]

98. Positively, in some contexts, WFP made significant progress in developing and implementing relevant strategies for handover and transition, noting that WFP's role evolves in such cases. For example, in Cambodia, WFP, the government and other partners jointly developed a roadmap for transition of the school meals programme. This was spread over several years and incorporated clear and agreed milestones. However, the CSPE also found that assumptions made on capacities, particularly at the decentralized level, had not been adequately identified or addressed. Also, expectations on timelines

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[97] In Namibia, the expansion in SOs and activities over the course of the CSP to adjust to context and evolving government priorities resulted in some loss of internal coherence between interventions, impeding the scale of results.

[98] For most cases where a discussion on handover is featured and detailed (14 countries) this is in relation to school feeding activities – 11 countries (Armenia, Bhutan, Cambodia, Eswatini, Ghana, Iraq, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Nepal and Timor-Leste).

were initially misaligned, but the multi-partner Joint Transition Strategy helped realign expectations and facilitated gradual progress toward full handover.

99. Other examples include:

- **Agriculture** – In Bhutan, WFP prepared and implemented a transition plan to integrate the national school feeding and nutrition programme into government structures.
- **Cash assistance** – In Kenya, the handover process was carefully sequenced, and (since 2018) the government is fully responsible for providing cash or in-kind assistance to beneficiaries since as part of national social protection systems.
- **School feeding** – In Ghana, WFP developed and implemented a strategy to transition the school meals programme to government ownership in 2016.
- **Nutrition** – In Peru, WFP worked to integrate strategies to fight anaemia and malnutrition into national systems.

100. Evaluations in nine countries[99] describe transition approaches for school meals, moving from traditional and hybrid models[100] to government-owned, government-funded, and government-run HGSF programmes.

101. Elsewhere, also in nine countries,[101] evaluations identified shortcomings in transition planning for specific programmatic areas, such as:

- the absence of a transition plan or handover strategy (e.g. nutrition programmes in Egypt, school meals in Lesotho);
- inadequately detailed or specific handover plans (e.g. resilience programming in Iraq);
- the lack of adequate institutionalization of handover plans (e.g. for food security monitoring in Nepal);
- insufficient capacity strengthening efforts or a structured transfer of responsibilities to accompany a transition strategy, leaving handover incomplete (e.g. Zimbabwe); and
- over-optimstic timelines and/or misunderstandings with national partners regarding timelines for handover (e.g. school feeding in Cambodia and Iraq).

102. External shocks (see section 1.2) such as COVID-19 frequently impeded handover plans. For example, evaluations of country responses during the **COVID-19 pandemic** highlight how the global crisis sometimes eroded the confidence and readiness of governments to progress with transition. In Iraq, the timeline for handing over the school feeding programme to the Ministry of Education was delayed by COVID-19 and compounded by government instability and capacity gaps. Political instability was also a factor in some contexts, such as Timor Leste.

103. Government-related factors are also highlighted as impeding handover, including gaps in national budgets, systems and capacities, including personnel turnover. However, evaluations found that WFP did not always adequately identify or analyse such risks in advance, and mitigation strategies were not always prepared and implemented accordingly. For example:

- In Indonesia, high government personnel turnover disrupted the continuity of engagement around nutrition policies due to the relational nature of negotiations.
- In Nepal, although the federal government recognized the Nepal Food Security Monitoring System's utility and expressed commitment, handover efforts were hampered by dwindling funding, varying capacities, and insufficient prioritization in financial and budgetary management.
- In Timor-Leste, obstacles to government commitment to fund WFP's activities in-country, along with political instability following the handover, posed a critical barrier to sustainability.
- In Bhutan, the 72-hour rapid assessment approach system was handed over to the Department of Disaster Management, but the department faced challenges in integrating the WFP database

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[99] Cambodia CSPE 2023, Lesotho CSPE 2023, Colombia School Feeding DE 2022, Iraq CSPE 2024, Nepal CSPE 2023, Timor Leste CSPE 2020, Eswatini HGSF-DE_2023, Ghana DE 2021, Kyrgyzstan CSPE 2022.

[100] For example, this is discussed in the Indonesia CSPE.

[101] Bhutan, China, Colombia, Egypt, Iraq, Lesotho, Namibia, Nepal and Zimbabwe.

in its own national systems, and in updating and maintaining it due to capacity and resourcing issues.

- In Kyrgyzstan, data management and analysis systems for vulnerability analysis and mapping were handed over to the government, but turnover of technical staff led to institutional 'memory loss' and challenges in sustaining the systems.

104. Evaluations in Nepal, Eswatini, Indonesia and Timor-Leste note the challenges of adequately considering **decentralization** in the planning and processes of handover – particularly in terms of varying levels of capacities and access to communication flows at central to decentralized levels. For example, in Nepal, despite successful prospective of handover for some activities, the federalization process posed a significant challenge for full handover due to different levels of readiness and capacities among government counterparts. In Indonesia, the ongoing decentralization process complicated subnational programme implementation in terms of allocating district- and provincial-level budgets to programmes, and for cascading the effects of national capacity strengthening to sub-national stakeholders. In Timor-Leste, incomplete communication lines from national government to decentralized levels, such as municipalities, hindered the handover process of the targeted supplementary feeding programme.

2.7. How sustainable are WFP's activities in MICs?

105. Recognising that handover is not always optimal or feasible in some contexts, evaluations in five countries (20 percent of the sample) find promising long-term sustainability prospects. Here, evaluations[102] underscore the importance of the alignment of WFP's activities with national frameworks and priorities, to ensure sustainability. Examples include school feeding in Cambodia, where school feeding effectively transitioned into a nationally owned social protection mechanism, and in Kenya, where capacity and system strengthening of government officials at both capital and county levels helped enhance national social protection systems.

106. The Namibia CSPE identifies country exit as a consideration for WFP. However, the evaluation notes that a prolonged drought, combined with COVID-19, reversed a well-advanced plan for handover to national government and put on hold the prospect for WFP to exit the country.

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[102] CSPEs in Cambodia, Bhutan and Kenya,

3. What did evaluations in MICs recommend?

107. Cumulatively, between 2019 and 2024, evaluations in MICs have suggested a total of 1.011 sub-recommendations and recommendations (Figure 10), which mostly call for WFP to address:

- capacity strengthening (15 percent of the evaluation recommendations);
- monitoring and evaluation (10 percent);
- partnerships (9 percent); and
- advocacy and communication (7 percent).

108. Other themes concern technical assistance and support, funding and resource mobilization, and policy support, constituting 5 percent each of the total recommendations (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Number and percentage of evaluation recommendations in MICs grouped and categorized per theme
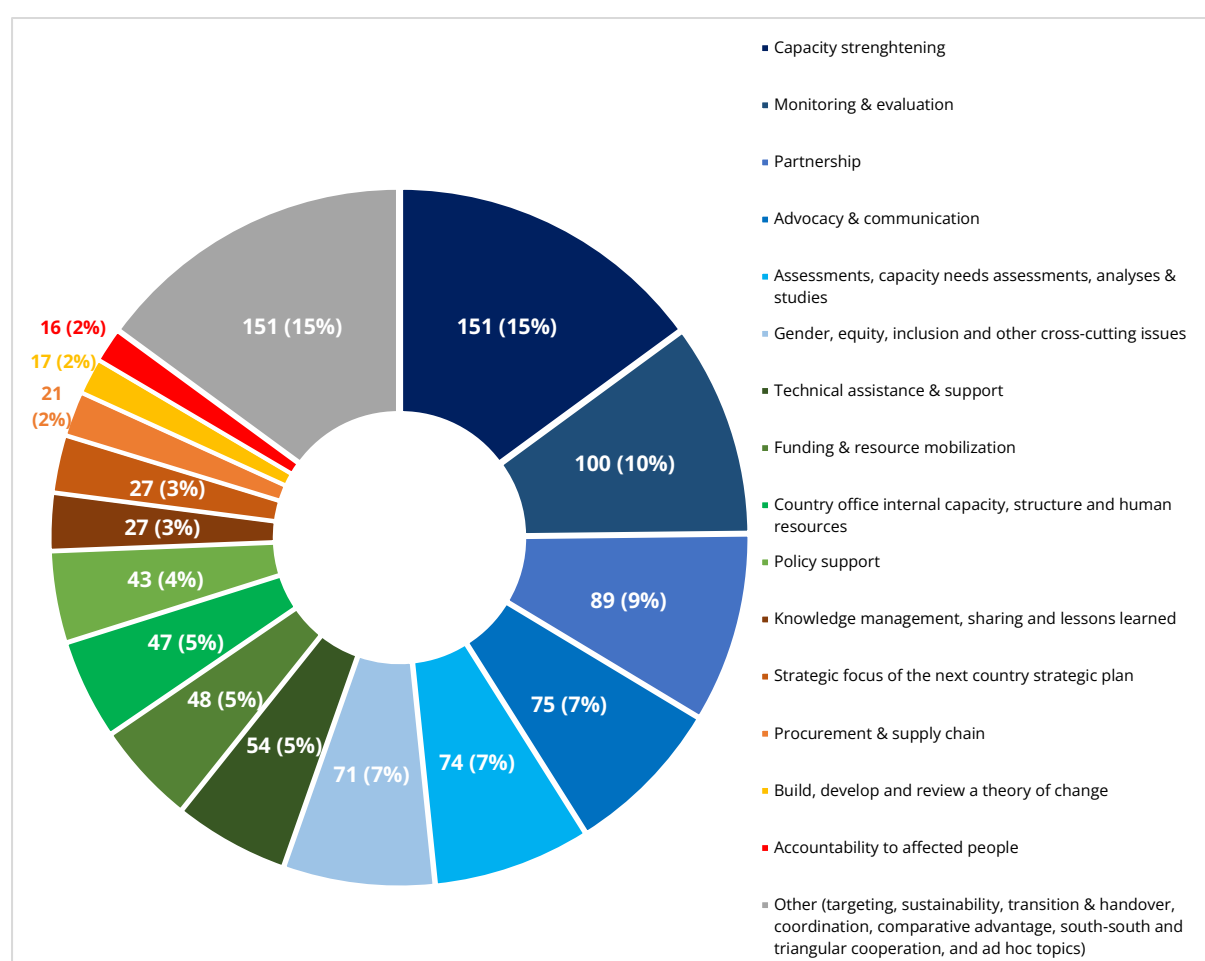
Note: The analysis has been conducted on a sample of 49 country-focused evaluations as reported in the Risk and Recommendation (R2) management system. Global evaluations (e.g. strategic evaluations and policy evaluations) have not been included in the analysis as they refer to multiple countries. Some of the emerging themes that were identified in a few recommendations (e.g. < 2 percent) have been merged to improve the graph's readability.
Source: Evaluation recommendations and actions extracted from the R2 system on 31 October 2024

109. WFP management agreed with 86 percent of the evaluation recommendations (a total of 865 recommendations), while 13 percent (137) were only partially agreed on.[103] Among the partially agreed

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[103] Source: Evaluation recommendations and actions extracted from the R2 system on 31 October 2024.

recommendations, the most common themes were monitoring and evaluation (17 percent),[104] gender equality, equity of access, inclusion, and other cross-cutting issues (15 percent), and capacity strengthening (13 percent) (Figure 11). As of end of October 2024, 67 percent of the recommendations (675) have been actioned and closed.

Figure 11: Number and percentage of evaluation recommendations partially agreed in MICs grouped and categorized per theme
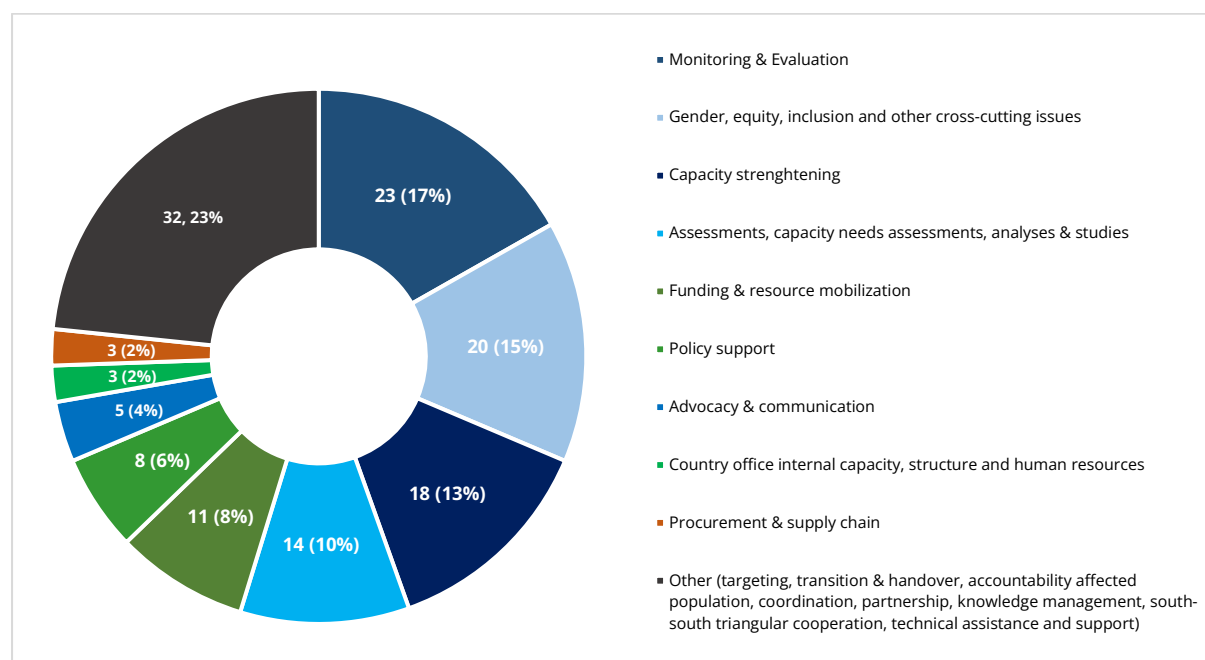
Source: Evaluation recommendations and actions extracted from the R2 System on 31 October 2024

110. The specific issues of MICs contexts are not directly referenced in the recommendations in the 25 sampled MICs for this synthesis. Only five recommendations from Colombia, Egypt, India, Dominican Republic and Pakistan directly address how the middle-income status of the country should inform WFP strategic positioning and actions:

- **On strategic framing**: the Colombia CSPE[105] recommends developing a strategic and conceptual framework that clearly defines WFP's role in MICs for each thematic area of intervention. It also recommends formulating a national capacity strengthening strategy that defines WFP's role in a middle-income context such as Colombia.
- **On resourcing modalities**: the India CSPE[106] recommends using a matching grant option from the fund that has replaced Emerging Donor Matching Fund, and exploring the possibility of extending financial support from the new fund to a unique middle-income context such as India.
- **On strategic positioning**: the Pakistan CSPE[107] recommends positioning WFP as a key development actor (beyond humanitarian response) and ensuring clear and coherent messaging on WFP's strengths and value propositions. The Egypt CSPE[108] calls for WFP to identify the interventions where it has a unique value-add and capacity in the Egypt context, and to prioritize those where there is a conducive enabling environment that can be realistically implemented within the CSP timeframe.

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[104] Issues related to monitoring and evaluation refer to design elements of monitoring systems, reviewing monitoring templates, result and outcome indicators, and advancing work around gender and disability disaggregation.

[105] CSPE Colombia. Recommendation 2.

[106] CSPE India. Recommendation 3.

[107] CSPE Pakistan. Recommendation 2.1.

[108] CSPE Egypt. Recommendation 1.2.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1. Conclusions

111. Overall, this synthesis highlights the prominent role of MIC contexts in WFP's global programming profile. With 70 percent of the countries where WFP operates currently middle-income, they form a critical arena for current and future engagement.

112. **Categorization**: The evidence analysed here highlights the challenges of using the MIC status as category for WFP to distinguish approaches for interventions in these operating contexts. Based on the evaluations analysed, upper middle-income countries show more clearly distinctive features, for example in terms of their partnerships profile, whereas the WFP's programming portfolio and resourcing in lower middle-income countries has much in common with that in low-income settings. Two-thirds of the budget in MICs is allocated to unconditional resource transfers – a similar proportion to that in low income countries, and targeted largely to the needs of forcibly displaced persons. This reflects the ongoing volatility of global food insecurity, regardless of country income status.

113. **Strategic shift and roles:** Where conditions permit, WFP's intended strategic shift for MIC engagement, as articulated in the WFP Strategic Plan 2022–2025, has largely been realized – that is, combining technical assistance, policy advice, evidence generation and system strengthening in support of inclusive growth. A wide range of interventions has taken place in these areas, informed by WFP's conscious effort to strategically shift upstream, shaping programming and approaches, while recognizing the non-linear nature of change. Defined public policy and other normative frameworks, such as for social protection, combined with comparatively mature institutional arrangements, systems and processes, have enabled WFP to expand its service offer in the areas indicated by the WFP Strategic Plan 2022–2025 in many countries. In some contexts, WFP has carved out valued roles as provider of specialized expertise and analytics, for example: to support policy formulation and advocacy; to fill gaps in national service provision and on-demand services, (e.g. social protection); and to broker knowledge and convene partnerships – often with a view to learning across contexts. At the same time, it has retained a central and needed role as emergency responder, particularly for sudden-onset crises, and sustained core service delivery where required.

114. **Results:** Overall, the evidence synthesized finds that WFP has made significant contributions in the countries that fall into the 'middle-income' category. It has capably, and with agility, adapted to provide emergency response to a wide range of shocks. This has often been through national systems (where these permit), or to fill gaps, or provide on-demand services as needed. WFP has contributed to the development of new, or improved, policy and normative frameworks, with some, demonstrating tangibly improved food security and nutrition gains. WFP has helped strengthen important systems, such as national supply chains, and frameworks for school feeding and disaster preparedness, to enable governments to deliver to their citizens. The organization's role in evidence generation has informed a wide range of national processes, and demonstrably contributed to enhancing the enabling environment. It has expanded into less traditional areas such as climate risk management, adaptation to climate-related shocks, and smallholder agricultural market support activities to fill national gaps.

115. **Gaps and challenges:** There have been challenges and trade-offs. Institutional readiness for emergency response in MICs has not always been optimal in contexts where WFP had expected, and planned for, a stable operating environment. This means that swiftness was not always optimal. Efforts at country capacity strengthening sometimes lacked the relevant scale, depth, quality and duration to ensure future sustainability in middle-income contexts. And a 'projectized' – and sometimes fragmented – approach, compounded (and sometimes driven) by vulnerability to piecemeal donor funding, and the impetus to be responsive to specific government requests, have sometimes impeded a fully coherent approach, and constrained the potential for results. Staffing profiles have not always included the relevant skills, capacities and contract duration to align with the needs of relationship-building and political economy analysis that engagement in policy and institutional support needs. Gender and social

inclusion approaches have been patchy, and have not always adopted a sufficiently transformational approach for their context.

116. **Pilot initiatives** are a major part of WFP's portfolio in MICs settings, often intended to show WFP's role as catalyst for innovation and tester of programme solutions. While some valuable work has been conducted, planning for scale-up (where relevant), and learning from pilot activities, has often been insufficient – and this compounded the risk of fragmentation. Evidence-generation efforts have been important for single pilot initiatives but often failed to be adequately catalytic to support broader change. Similarly, planning for sustainability has been inconsistent, with the trajectory from innovation to sustainable change often not clearly mapped out, and far less operationally planned for. Greater depth, detail, and recognition of time and capacities are required.

117. Perhaps most fundamentally, beyond the statements in the Strategic Plan 2022-2025, this synthesis has clearly highlighted the absence of a **clear rationale** or **articulated programme offer** to guide its current engagement in middle-income settings, whose conditions and contexts often provide a conducive environment for innovation and expansion beyond its standard toolkit. This gap currently constrains country offices in being able to externally articulate their strategic positioning and related programme offer in these settings.

118. **Partnerships:** WFP's approach to partnerships in middle-income contexts has lacked coherent and overarching framing – and has sometimes constrained WFP's wider role. While governments highly value WFP's roles, capacities and expertise – reflected in their direct financial commitments – areas such as policy support, technical advice and capacity strengthening require sustained approaches, alongside sound analysis, technical support, partnerships and relationship-building. In this area, WFP has a potentially valuable role to play in supporting governments in MICs to identify and strategically prioritize national food security and nutrition needs.

119. **Handover to national actors and changing roles:** To pursue the aims of handover (where relevant and feasible), carefully designed, realistic and mutually formulated handover strategies with national actors are important. It is also crucial to have clarity on respective roles and responsibilities, and willingness to engage with different governance systems, including at the decentralized level. Evaluations have shown some shortcomings here. Where handover is either non-optimal or unfeasible, WFP's role may evolve to a different form of partnership, with greater emphasis on strategic or technical advice.

120. **In future:** Going forward, needs in MICs can be expected to grow, especially with an increasing degree of complexity in the global environment. WFP has worked hard, and in many places succeeded, to make itself a partner of choice in MIC environments, but its rationale and narrative on its strengths in these contexts is not yet clear. Capitalizing on progress to date will enable WFP to maximize achievements and strengthen its position moving forward. Accordingly, the recommendations that close this synthesis propose some ways forward for the future.

4.2. Recommendations

#	Recommendation	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline
1	**Set out a clearer rationale for WFP's presence, positioning and resourcing in middle-income countries and, in particular, in upper-middle-income countries.**	**Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer**			
	WFP should articulate a clear rationale for its engagement in MICs, recognizing in particular the conditions of upper-middle-income countries, with a view to ensuring focused and effective engagement. Specifically, this should include the following: • Within the framework of the CSP as the instrument guiding WFP's country-level work,[109] and building on WFP's demonstrated strengths in MICs, clearly articulate the strategic rationale for WFP's engagement in MICs, including upper-middle-income countries in particular, with an emphasis on technical support and national systems-strengthening. • Assess and articulate the rationale for WFP maintaining its presence and response capacity in MICs so that it can pivot swiftly to crisis response if needed. Ensure that relevant systems and capacity to deal with contingencies are in place, such as "dormant" or contingent CSP objectives, and staff with appropriate skills. • State a clear intention to seek funding from diverse sources, including global funding mechanisms, host governments and private sector partners.	Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer	Assistant Executive Director, Programme Operations Department Assistant Executive Director, Partnerships and Innovation Department Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division Human Resources Division	High	September 2025, in conjunction with the development of the new strategic plan

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[109] This is in line with the Executive Director's Decision Memo. 2024. "One Global Team supporting empowered country offices - Country Office-Focused Organizational Alignment". OED 1360 Rev.1 of 25 October 2024.

2	**Clarify and strengthen the development and use of partnership strategies in MICs**.	**Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division**			
	Revise existing or prepare new guidance for country offices on strengthening the development and use of strategic and operational partnership strategies for WFP's engagement in MICs. This guidance should include the following: • Define the specific areas in which, and partners with whom, WFP will engage while remaining flexible so that it can respond to new opportunities as they emerge. • Clearly position WFP vis-à-vis other entities, taking into account WFP's areas of demonstrated strength and comparative advantage. • Clarify the requisite staffing profile, including the seniority and continuity of employees, for engaging in and sustaining strategic partnerships at the country level. • Provide for the monitoring and, as needed, reassessment of partnership engagement.	Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division	Human Resources Division	High	December 2026
3	**Strengthen planning for programme handover and transition, where relevant and the path to WFP's exit from the country, where appropriate.**	**Programme Policy and Guidance Division**			
	Set clear guidance for programme handover and transition, and/or country exit, as appropriate, including by providing relevant guidance to country offices. This guidance should cover: • agreement with national counterparts of realistic timeframes for handover, transition and exit, with clear agreed pathways and milestones; • assessment and consideration of national capacity at the central and local levels; • consideration of risk throughout the process, with clear allocation of roles and responsibilities for WFP and its counterparts; • analysis of any administrative, data-related and legal requirements at the central and local levels; and • articulation of the role envisaged for WFP before, during and after handover, transition and exit, as appropriate.	Programme Policy and Guidance Division	Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer	High	December 2026

4	Enhance the generation of evidence from pilot activities to inform decisions regarding potential scale-up.	Programme Policy and Guidance Division			
	Provide clear guidance on the assessment of results from pilot initiatives, which should include the following: • Define the specific features and mechanisms at play that affect scalability and sustainability, and clarify that strategies for addressing these will need to be built into the design of initiatives. • Clarify in advance the potential for, and pathways to, scale-up, where relevant. • Prepare strategies and implementation plans for scale-up, as appropriate. • Clarify monitoring, review, assessment and evaluation expectations.	Programme Policy and Guidance Division	Analysis, Planning and Performance Division Office of Evaluation Other concerned headquarters divisions	Medium	December 2026	

Annex I
Summary terms of reference

Evaluation syntheses are part of the WFP 'toolkit' in support of its commitment to evidence-based decision-making.[110] An evaluation synthesis is: "A combination and integration of findings from quality-assessed evaluations to develop higher-level or more comprehensive knowledge and inform policy and strategic decisions.[111]"

Objectives and intended users of the Synthesis

Evaluation syntheses serve the dual objectives of accountability and learning.
The main purpose of the synthesis is to better understand what features characterise WFP's work in middle-income countries (MICs). Specifically, the synthesis looks at whether, how, and with which results WFP has pursued – in line with Strategic Plan (2022-2025). – namely, an agenda in MICs focused on technical assistance, policy advice, evidence generation and system strengthening, while retaining an emergency response role. At the same time, the synthesis will examine the evidence of how, and with which results WFP has been able to preserve and roll-out its emergency response capacity to pivot and respond to a crisis in MIC settings.

The synthesis aims to contribute to WFP's global and regional evidence base and support key ongoing corporate strategic discussions. It is relevant to both internal and external stakeholders of WFP.

- Internally, it targets departments at Headquarters and regional and country offices involved in MIC contexts.
- Externally, stakeholders include WFP government counterparts in MICs, and other national cooperating partners, donor government agencies, Executive Board members, other UN resident agencies in MICs and WFP counterparts in different International Financial Institutions.

The evaluation synthesis report will be presented at the Executive Board session in **June 2025.**

Synthesis questions

This synthesis will answer the following questions:

- *What characterizes WFP's strategic positioning in MICs, and how has this evolved since 2019?*
- *How have partnerships in MICs worked, and how have they evolved?*
- *What results were generated in MICs in the 2019-2024 period?*
- *Which factors affected WFP's results in MICs?*
- *How does WFP approach sustainability in MICs and with which results?*

Scope

The synthesis is global, focusing on independent evaluative evidence from WFP-commissioned evaluations in middle-income countries from 2019 to 2024. Evaluations were included based on criteria such as:

- *Geographic coverage* – evaluations focused on those MICs that in the period 2019-2024 have shown an above average Needs Based Plan allocation to/expended on activities aimed at supporting national governments in their food security and nutrition work, national actors, systems, and institutions; and/or experienced a rapid scale-up and scale down.
- *Timeframe*: evaluations completed in the 2019-2024 period
- *Evaluation type* – including all WFP-commissioned centralised and decentralised evaluations.
- *Evaluation quality* – evaluations scored through an external quality assessment with minimum satisfactory quality (60 percent score).

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[110] WFP Strategic Plan 2022-2025

[111] WFP. 2021. Evaluation Synthesis, Guidance for Process and Content, WFP Office of Evaluation.

From 163 evaluations, 73 were selected, covering 25 middle-income countries across all regions where WFP operates as shown in the following table.

RB	Evaluations consulted in the following 25 MICs have been included in the synthesis
Reporting to HQ	China
RBB	Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Kyrgyz Rep, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Timor-Leste
RBC	Armenia, Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia, Türkiye (Rep. of)
RBD	Ghana
RBJ	Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe
RBN	Kenya
RBP	Colombia, Dominican Republic, Peru

Synthesis methodology

This is exercise is not an evaluation. Its primary data source is evidence contained in completed evaluations.

The synthesis will be conducted internally by OEV, adhering to a rigorous methodological approach as per the Evaluation Quality Assurance System (EQAS) requirements. The methodology will focus on the comprehensive and systematic extraction, compilation, and analysis of evaluation data to address the synthesis questions and sub-questions. The main proposed features are:

- Development and systematic application of an **analytical framework** to structure and systematize data extraction.
- Iterative refinement of analytical fields through **pilot data extraction** to adhere to the synthesis themes while capturing emerging and unforeseen themes and relevant evidence.
- **Combination of software-assisted data extraction (using NVIVO-15)** with manual data extraction for cross-validation purposes.

To enhance the relevance of the synthesis and its recommendations, the approach will also include:

- **Analysis of the programme portfolio** and resourcing flows in MICs comparing it with low-income countries
- **Analysis of secondary sources** to triangulate emerging findings.
- **Review of recommendations and management responses data** to better understand recurring issues and the uptake of recommended actions.
- **Consultation and feedback with stakeholders** on the draft emerging themes and findings from the synthesis.

Roles and responsibilities

A synthesis team from OEV comprising Francesca Bonino, Arianna Spacca, Isabella Decesaris and Michele Gerli has been assigned to conduct the synthesis.

Julia Betts, Deputy Director for Centralised Evaluations in OEV will provide second level quality assurance. The Director of Evaluation, Anne-Claire Luzot, will approve the final synthesis report and present the summary synthesis report to the Executive Board for consideration.

An internal reference group (IRG) composed of selected WFP stakeholders will be established and asked to review and comment on draft synthesis reports, provide feedback during briefings and be available for interviews with the synthesis team.

Communication

WFP synthesis products will be produced in English. The synthesis report, its summary report, and management response to the synthesis recommendations will be presented to the WFP Executive Board in June 2025. The final synthesis report will be posted on the public WFP website and OEV will ensure dissemination of lessons through the annual evaluation report.

The relevant Headquarter divisions and the Regional Evaluation Units will be encouraged to circulate the final synthesis report with their staff, with WFP country offices and relevant WFP external stakeholders, including cooperating partners.

Timing and key milestones

Inception Phase: June - August 2024
Inception: August – October 2024
Data Extraction: November 2024
Analysis and reporting: December 2024 – March 2025
Executive Board: June 2025

Annex II
Detailed synthesis timeline

	Key actions	By whom	Dates
Phase 1 – Preparation			
	Rapid scoping paper	DDoE	20 May 2024
	Development of Analytical Framework (AF) based on rapid scoping, and proposed identification of synthesis universe and revision of synthesis questions accordingly	Synthesis Team	24 May–10 June
	Screening process to identify evaluation sample	EM/RA/ DDoE	10–19 June
	Pilot data extraction on small evaluation sample to probe, and inform the proposed SQs	Team	24 June–12 July
	Discussion on emerging results of pilot data extraction and refinement of SQs and AF as needed	EM/RA/DDoE	15–18 July
	Submission to DDoE of draft Concept Note and Analytical Framework for review	EM	22 July
	DDoE review of draft CN	**DDoE**	**22–26 July**
	Synthesis Team revision of draft CN to address DDoE comments	Synthesis Team	By 30 July
	Submission of revised CN for DoE review **DoE review window**	**DoE**	**31 July–4 Aug**
	Synthesis Team addresses DoE comment and seek final DDoE approval to share draft CN for comments	Synthesis Team	By 9 Aug
	Parallel work to continue pilot data extraction, develop code book and test it on a small set of evaluations	Team	31 July–30 Aug
	Draft CN shared for **Internal Reference Group (IRG)/stakeholders' comments**	IRG	**12–30 Aug** *Deadline extension requested by stakeholders*
	Synthesis Team's revision to address IRG comments and expand the CN to meet the content element of a full synthesis terms of reference (ToR)	EM and Synthesis Team	By 20 Sept *Considering extension needed to review synthesis scope*
	DDoE review of revised ToR reflecting IRG comments **DDoE review window**	**DDoE**	**27 Sept–4 Oct**
	Final adjustment by Synthesis Team as needed and final ToR approval	DDoE	7 Oct
	Final ToR shared with stakeholders for information and posted online	EM	8 Oct
Phase 2 – Data extraction and early analysis			
	Continued work to read/review the evaluation reports (review in batches and calibration of coding among Synthesis Team members)	Team	w-c 1 Oct
	Desk review of secondary data	Team	By 10 Oct
	Submission of Inception Note outlining the synthesis methodology and limitations	Team	By 18 Oct
	DDoE comment window on the Inception Note followed by revision and submission to DoE for review	DDoE and DoE	w-c 21 Oct
	Extraction, compilation and early analysis including the Risk and Recommendation (R2) system data	Team	Starting w-c 21 Oct
	Synthesis Team to incorporate DoE and DDoE feedback on the inception note and resubmit	EM/RA	w-c 25 Nov
Phase 3 – Desk review of secondary data, content analysis and interviews			

	In-depth review of relevant information across evaluations; data extraction and coding	Team	w-c 18 Nov
	Selected interviews with stakeholders (max. 5)	Team	Between Dec 2024 and mid-Jan 2025
Phase 4 – Reporting			
D1	Fully-fledged content analysis on the entire synthesis universe	Team	By 6 Dec
	Internal data analysis workshop with DDoE	DDoE and Team	10 Dec
	Synthesis Team revision to address DDoE comments	Team	By 17 Dec 2024
	DDoE review to check if comments are adequately addressed and subsequent round(s) of Synthesis Team review as needed	DDoE and Team	by 7 Jan 2025
	Additional round of comments/review by DDoE, and changes	DDoE and Team	7–9 Jan 2025
	DDoE clearance to **share draft report with Office of Evaluation EMs** (who have managed the CEs included in the synthesis) for comments	EM/DDoE	10–15 Jan
	Adjustments to the synthesis report to reflect EM comments received	Team	16–17 Jan
	DDoE and DoE tightly coordinated comment window on D1	**DoE and DDoE**	**17–23 Jan**
	DoE clearance to circulate synthesis report (D1) to WFP stakeholders	DoE	By Wed 29 Jan
	IRG and WFP stakeholders comment window	IRG/ stakeholders	29 Jan–10 Feb
	Stakeholder workshop		**Thu 6 Feb**
D2	Submit to DDoE **revised draft (D2)** synthesis based on WFP's comments, with responses on the matrix of comments	Team	Wed 12 Feb
SER	**Start work on Summary Evaluation Report (SER)**	**EM**	**Wed 12 Feb**
	DDoE and DoE tightly coordinated review of D2	**DDoE**	**By Tue 18 Feb**
SER D2 ER D3	Submission to DDoE of draft SER for a round comments and revisions before submitting to DoE	Team	Friday 21 Feb
	DDoE and DoE tightly coordinated comment window on the final draft SER	**DDoE**	**24–27 Feb**
	Team addresses DDoE and DoE comments and **submits D3**	Team	Mon 13 March
	EM addresses DoE comments on the draft SER and resubmits	Team	Fri 7 March
	Seek final approval by DoE to share SER with Policy Committee	Team	By 11 March
	e-consultation with the Policy Committee on the draft SER		11–20 March
	Submission of revised SER to reflect comments received	Team	By 26 March
	Seek final approval of SER and Synthesis Report by DDoE following any alignment with SER (in line with table of clearance for synthesis)	Team	By 28 March
Phase 5 – Follow-up and dissemination			
	Submit SER/recommendations to RMD for management response + Synthesis to EB Secretariat for editing and translation	EM	By 4 April
	Tail end actions, OEV websites posting, EB Round Table, etc.	EM	15 May 2025
	Presentation of Synthesis to the EB	DoE	June 2025
	Presentation of management response to the EB	Management	June 2025

Annex III
Internal Reference Group composition (as of July 2024)

Headquarters departments	
Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships	Shannon Howard
POCC, Social Protection Unit and Changing Lives Transformation Fund	Nicolas Bidault
PPGS, Social Protection Unit	Andres Chamba
PPGS, Regional and Government Networks/Country Capacity Strengthening	Soha Haky
PPGR, Policy and Programme Design/Resilience	Delphine Dechaux
PPGE, Emergency Preparedness (urban programming)	Isis Ferrera
Regional bureaux and country offices	
RBC	Tobias Flaemig and Negar Gerami
RBJ/Country Office Namibia	Tiwonge Machiwenyika
RBP	Patrick Foley
RBB	David Thomas and Daniel Charles Kavan Longhurst

Annex IV
Synthesis questions and sub-questions

Synthesis questions and sub-questions
SQ1: What characterizes WFP's strategic positioning in middle-income countries (MICs), and how has this evolved over time (2019–2024 period)?
1.1: How do evaluations characterize WFP's role and comparative advantage in MICs in relation to both its 'enabling' role and emergency response role, and how has this evolved since 2019? Were any opportunities for strategic positioning missed?
1.2: To what extent do evaluations find that WFP has been able to adapt to, and respond to changes in the external environment in MICs, particularly in relation to crisis response?
1.3: To what extent do evaluations find that WFP's partnership approaches and strategies (government, United Nations, cooperating partners, and others) in MICs have been appropriate over the period, and were any opportunities missed?
SQ2: Which factors internal and external to WFP have supported or constrained WFP's strategic positioning in MICs over the period?
2.1: What contextual factors shaped WFP's strategic positioning in MICs? (e.g. economic development levels, government priorities, existing social protection systems)
2.2: What internal factors facilitated or hindered its strategic positioning in MICs? (e.g. risk management, resourcing (human and financial), resource mobilisation, etc., management and institutional arrangements, etc.)
SQ3: What results were reported relating to WFP's engagement in MICs in the 2019–2024 period?
3.1: What results were reported in the evaluations in relation to WFP's roles in emergency response, technical assistance, policy advice, evidence generation and system strengthening (as intended in the current Strategic Plan) including from a gender equality, women empowerment and inclusion perspective?
3.2: What other results were reported in relation to WFP's engagement in MICs beyond those intended in the current Strategic Plan (around strengthening national systems and capacities)?
3.3: What opportunities for results were missed, if any?
SQ4: How does WFP approach sustainability in MICs and with which results?
4.1: According to evaluations, what characterizes WFP's efforts to plan and prepare for handover, exit strategies and sustainability of results in MICs? (e.g. appropriateness, evidence-informed, localization-aware)
4.2: What evidence is available of actual or prospective sustainability of WFP's activities in MICs, e.g. when exit strategies, or handover to national actors have been implemented? What are the challenges and opportunities, and how do these vary across different contexts?

Annex V
Risk and mitigation table

Risk matrix – high (H), medium (M), low (L)

Potential challenges and limitations	Risk	Potential mitigation actions	Residual risk
Limited conceptual clarity around some of the themes underpinning the synthesis questions (e.g. around strategic positioning, sustainability and exit strategies) can complicate the analysis and the identification of clear pattern and themes, and tightly scoped recommendations	M	Extensive use of: (i) desk review of secondary data to help inform the identification of more specific analytical fields; and (ii) primary data gathered through Key Informant Interviews and Internal Reference Group (IRG) members to help validate and tighten as feasible, the emerging themes from the data extraction. Sufficient time allocated at the stakeholder workshop planned towards the conclusion of analysis and reporting stages, to identify broader areas from which recommendations should be identified.	L
Thematic scope of the synthesis is too broad. This risks expanding and diluting the data extraction process across too many variables which are difficult to reconcile at data analysis and reporting phases	M	Iterative process (on a sub-set of evaluations), during inception phase, to identify, refine and validate the different analytical fields (and related codes in NVivo 15 software). Detailed analysis of how different analytical fields relate to each other and how closely they speak to different synthesis questions.	L
Extremely variable depth of evidence around key themes and relevance against the synthesis sub-questions	M	The data extraction process is expected to return variable results in terms of depth of evidence available to answer each synthesis question. This will require greater use of secondary sources and inputs from stakeholders to inform triangulation needed to answer some of the synthesis questions.	L
Limitations in how far a gender equality and empowerment of women - and inclusion- sensitive approach can be applied to the design and conduct of this synthesis	H	Considering that syntheses do not engage in primary data collection activities, a gender/GEWE-sensitive lens will only be applicable in data extraction process and analysis of results. Extent and depth of the analysis will depend on depth and quality of GEWE analysis in the evaluations in the sample.	M
Very few evaluations discuss some specific themes (e.g. around exit strategies)	H	Report with full transparency the density and frequency of evidence around specific themes and allow readers to trace back (through detailed referencing) the evidence sources in the evaluation sample.	L

Annex VI
Expanded overview reference to middle-income countries (MICs) in WFP's corporate policies and guidance

121.A review of corporate policies, strategies and guidance found that:

- different markers – other than the one linked to income – are more commonly used in WFP (e.g. countries with L2, L3 situations (up until 2023) countries in situations of corporate attention or scale-up; countries with larger/smaller offices and operations);[112]
- whenever policies and corporate guidance refer to country income classifications,[113] it is mostly only in the context section, and with limited differentiation – for example, between upper-middle and lower middle-income countries; and
- there is little explanation of why and how WFP's strategic positioning and programmatic offer and approaches should be adjusted or refocused in MIC contexts. The policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response,[114] the WFP's School Feeding Strategy (2020–2030), and the recent corporate strategy on urban programming[115] are examples where a distinction between approaches more relevant and applicable to middle-income versus low-income contexts are identified.

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[112] See Audit on Decentralization and 2019 WFP review of country office presence (internal).

[113] Reference to MICs is mostly included the 'context sections' of the Nutrition & HIV Guidance, in the Youth Focused Programming Guidance, in School Based Programming Guidance, in the Social Protection Manual, in the Energy for Food Security Manual.

[114] WFP. 2017. Emergency preparedness policy. WFP/EB.2/2017/4-B/Rev.1 "As many countries move from low- to lower- and upper-middle-income status, WFP will shift its support towards strengthening the capacity of national stakeholders and institutions to improve national early warning systems, analysis and data dissemination and use for improved decision-making and early action and to enhance coordination, information management and efficiency in responses to food and nutrition emergencies. Depending on the operating environment, WFP's engagement with national partners ranges from service delivery to capacity augmentation and operational and policy advice" (para 37).

[115] WFP. 2023 WFP Urban Strategy – Achieving zero hunger in an urbanizing world.

Annex VII
Countries changing status across years

Despite most countries maintaining a stable income classification, some changed their classification in the considered period. The ones that changed where WFP operates are shown in the graphic below.
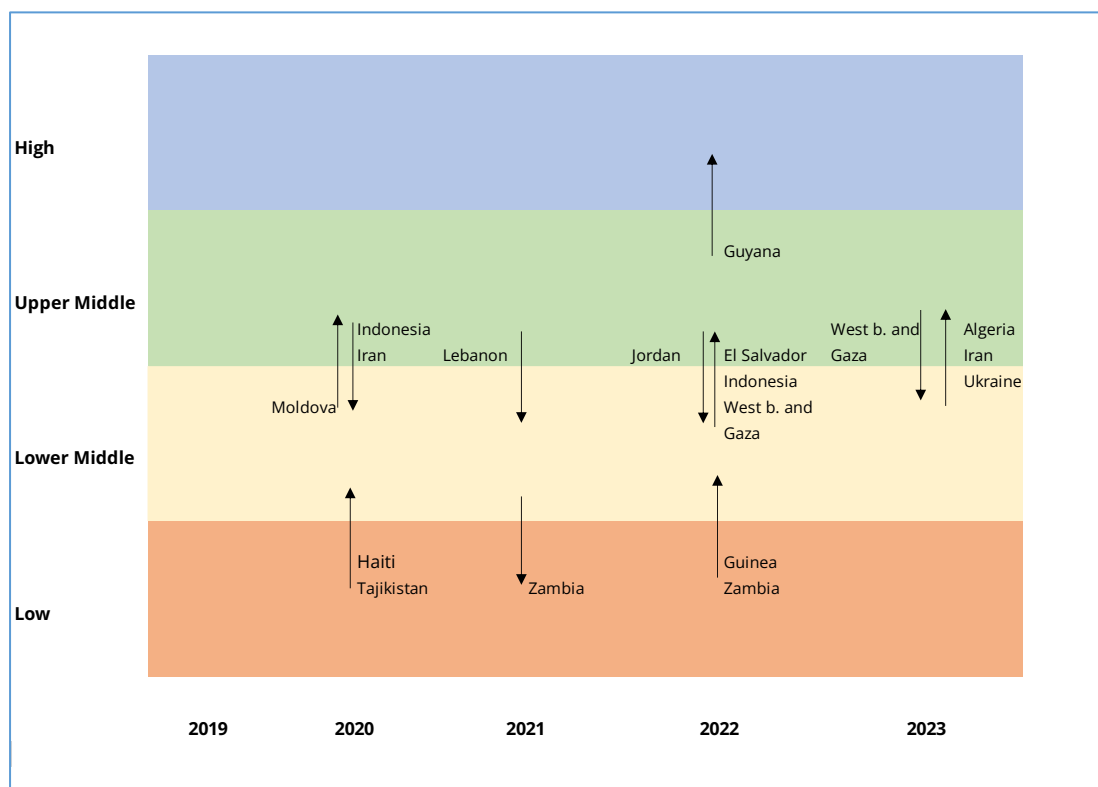
2020:

- Haiti, Tajikistan: Moved from low- to lower-middle-income.
- Moldova: Progressed from lower-middle to upper-middle-income.
- Indonesia, Iran: Moved from upper-middle to lower-middle-income.

2021:

- Lebanon: Moved from upper-middle to lower-middle-income.
- Zambia: Dropped from lower-middle to low-income but returned to lower-middle-income in 2022.

2022:

- Guinea, Zambia: Moved from low- to lower-middle-income.
- Jordan: Dropped from upper-middle to lower-middle-income.
- El Salvador, Indonesia, and West Bank and Gaza: Moved from lower-middle to upper-middle-income.
- Guyana: Moved from upper-middle-income to high-income.

2023:

- Algeria, Iran, Ukraine: Advanced from lower-middle to upper-middle-income.
- West Bank and Gaza: Moved back to lower-middle-income.

Annex VIII
Protocol to determine middle-income countries (MICs) inclusion in the synthesis sample

The protocol developed to guide the inclusion/exclusion in the synthesis of MICs where WFP operates is detailed below:

Criteria	Application of the protocol
Geographic and income-related	✓ Countries have been included in the final sample if classified for a minimum of three (fiscal) years in the World Bank MICs listing between 2019 and 2024 to ensure the synthesis takes an expansive approach to sampling, while accounting for possible fluctuations in/out of the MICs grouping.
Timeframe-related	✓ Evaluations relating to MICs are considered if covering the 2019–2024 period to ensure both the current and previous Strategic Plan cycles are comprised in the analysis.
Programming-specific	✓ WFP operations have been included if, in the 2019–2024 period, they have shown an above average Needs Based Plan allocation to/expanded on activities targeting national governments, national actors, systems, and institutions; and/or have experience a rapid scale-up/scale-down.
Evaluation-specific	✓ All centralized and decentralized evaluations relating to MICs that have been scored through an external quality assessment with minimum satisfactory quality (60 percent score) have been included. ✓ Evaluations relating to MICs where a centralized or decentralized evaluation is currently underway are exceptionally considered in the sample if the final evaluation report has been approved by December 2024. ✓ MICs for which no centralized and no decentralized evaluation has been conducted in the 2019–2024 period were excluded (e.g. Fiji, Papua New Guinea). ✓ Evaluations with global scope (i.e. strategic, and policy evaluations) are all included to support systematic triangulation of findings and help frame wider themes emerging from the synthesis.

Annex IX
Final list of countries (n=25) included in the synthesis showing selected context and programming features

Table 10 gives an overview on the main characteristics of the middle-income countries (MICs) included in the sample, while Table 7 offers some details on the proposed approach to map the country strategic plan (CSP) portfolio to identify specific activities relating to the 'enabling' agenda. Compared to the terms of reference (ToR) stage, the list has been finalized to exclude those countries that did not meet the scoping criteria for inclusion in the synthesis (e.g. no evaluations completed in the 2019–2024 period).

Table 10: Overview on MICs included in the synthesis universe (n=25)

Region	World Bank classification	Country	Latest CSP	Size of operation	Scale-up/Scale-down	Refugee operation	Institutional and social fragility	Conflict	Natural Hazard Index	Inclusion in Global Assurance Project as high-risk operation
Reporting to HQ	UM	China	CN02 (2022–2025)	34,780,956		-	-	-	7.8	-
Asia and the Pacific	LM	Bhutan	BT02 (2019–2024)	9,532,726		-	-	-	2.9	-
		Cambodia	KH02 (2019–2023)	87,921,370		-	-	-	4.6	-
		India	IN02 (2019–2022)	16,540,369		-	-	-	7.9	-
		Kyrgyz Republic	KG02 (2023–2027)	100,131,324		-	-	-	4.1	-
		Nepal	NP02 (2019–2023)	169,922,974		-	-	-	5.1	-
		Pakistan	PK02 (2023–2027)	787,335,907	Q4 2022 – Q3 2023: CA*	-	-	-	7.5	-
		Philippines	PH02 (2018–2024)	115,857,206	Q1 2022: CA	-	-	-	8.3	Yes
		Timor-Leste	TL02 (2023–2025)	21,178,773		-	Yes	-	3.4	-
	UM	Indonesia	ID02 (2021–2025)	15,828,623		-	-	-	7.4	-
Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe	LM	Egypt	EG02 (2018–2023)	589,046,872		Yes	-	-	6.2	Yes
		Tunisia	TN02 (2022–2025)	11,550,785		-	-	-	4.3	-
	UM	Armenia	AM02 (2019–2025)	84,191,636		-	-	Yes***	3.8	-

Region	World Bank classification	Country	Latest CSP	Size of operation	Scale-up/Scale-down	Refugee operation	Institutional and social fragility	Conflict	Natural Hazard Index	Inclusion in Global Assurance Project as high-risk operation
		Iraq	IQ02 (2020–2025)	668,448,993	Q4 2017–Q4 2021: L2 Q2 and Q4 2022: CA	Yes	-	Yes	5.9	
		Republic of Türkiye	TR03 (2023–2025)	186,876,802	Q1 2023: CA	Yes	-	-	5.5	
Western Africa		*Ghana*	GH02 (2019–2023)	94,110,883		-	-	-	3.3	-
Southern Africa	LM	*Eswatini*	SZ02 (2020–2025)	76,838,626		-	-	-	1.8	-
	LM	*Lesotho*	LS02 (2019–2024)	168,097,417		-	-	-	2.1	-
		Zambia	ZM03 (2023–2028)	176,763,238		Yes			3	
		Zimbabwe	ZW02 (2022–2026)	571,353,219	Q2–Q3 2019: L2 Q4 2022–Q1 2023: CA		Yes	-	4	Yes
	UM	*Namibia*	NA01 (2017–2023)	51,187,510		-	-	-	4.1	-
Eastern Africa	LM	*Kenya*	KE02 (2023 –2027)	1,433,999,462	Q1 2022–Q3 2023: CA	Yes			4.2	
Latin America and the Caribbean	UM	*Colombia*	CO02 (2021–2024)	795,730,186	Q1 2022, Q3 2022 – Q1 2023 and Q3 2023: CA	-	-	-	6.4	Yes
		Dominican Republic	DO02 (2019–2023)	45,149,802		-	-	-	6.6	-
		Peru	PE02 (2023–2026)	73,821,586		-	-	-	6.4	-

LEGEND:

Countries marked with:

- White: Selected based on a weighted average of Needs Based Plan (NBP) and expenditures allocated to the enabling agenda.
- Light blue: Selected for a scale-up and scale-down of emergency response between 2018 and 2024.
- Light red: Meet both criteria: selected based on NBP and enabling agenda expenditures, as well as the scale-up/scale-down of emergency response during 2018–2024.

* Corporate Attention (CA)

**Maximum value across Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu

*** Countries affected by violent conflict, identified based on a threshold number of conflict-related deaths relative to the population. Armenia is not on the list, however, given the conflict relevance within Armenia CSP Budget revision 2, it has been inserted in the table.

Source: Compiled by Office of Evaluation, reflecting data as at September 2024[116]

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[116] Institutional Fragility and Conflict: World Bank FY25 List of Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations; Natural Hazard: European Commission Inform Risk Index; WFP Global Assurance Project – high risk countries

Table 11: Excerpt of the mapping of the country strategic plan (CSP) portfolio focused on the enabling agenda (pilot data extraction phase)

Country	CSP enabling agenda portfolio
China	WFP's commitment in both the current (2022–2025) and past China CSP (2017–2021) to support the government through: • **enabling South-South cooperation:** Through the WFP Centre of Excellence Against Hunger in Brazil, WFP supports the government in improving the implementation of nutrition-sensitive school feeding programmes (*Activity 1 CSP 2017–2021 and Activity 2 CSP 2022–2025*); • **integrating into national food supply chains:** Providing advice and assistance to integrate into national food supply chains (*Activity 2 CSP 2017–2021 and Activity 1 CSP 2022–2025*); • **disaster preparedness and mitigation:** Offering advice and assistance in disaster preparedness and mitigation strategies (*Activity 3 CSP 2017–2021*); • **policy consultation and support:** Cooperating with the government to provide advice and policy consultation, supporting other developing countries in improving food security and nutrition (*Activity 4 CSP 2017–2021*); • **knowledge sharing:** Facilitating the sharing of China's experience with other developing countries through institutional-level knowledge-sharing (*Activity 5 CSP 2017–2021*); and • **partnerships and fundraising:** Assisting the government in facilitating public-private partnerships and fundraising with government-recognized foundations, private sector, and civil society organizations (*Activity 7 and 8 CSP 2017–2021 and Activity 5 CSP 2022–2025*).
Namibia	WFP's commitments in the current Namibia CSP (2017–2024), to support the government through: • **shock-responsive safety nets:** Technical assistance to the government entities responsible for national shock-responsive safety net programmes, including through South-South knowledge exchanges, and strengthening the urban food safety net initiative (Activity 1 CSP (2017–2024)); • **school meals: T**echnical assistance to the government entities responsible for school feeding, including through the finalization and dissemination of the school feeding policy (Activity 2 CSP (2017–2024)); • **food security monitoring and analysis:** Technical assistance to the government entities that manage and use food security monitoring and analysis (Activity 3 CSP (2017–2024)); • **food security:** Technical assistance to the government on raising awareness on food security challenges, and contributing to the development of food and nutrition security policies (Activity 4 CSP (2017–2024)); and **nutrition:** Technical support to the government entities responsible for nutrition programmes, and directing an anti-stunting campaign (Activity 6 CSP (2017–2024), BR05) • **food systems:** Work with the government to provide capacity strengthening relevant to addressing impediments in national food systems. (Activity 7 CSP (2017–2024), BR05).
Peru	WFP's commitments in both the current (2023–2026) and previous Peru CSP (2018–2022), to support the government through: • **alliance to achieve SDG2**: Assistance to build an alliance to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2), establishing targets and allocating resources and commitments towards the zero hunger goal (Activity 1 CSP (2018–2022)); • **nutrition:** Capacity strengthening and technical assistance – including through South–South cooperation and technology transfer – to implement innovative nutrition intervention models. (Activity 2 CSP (2018–2022) and Activity 2 CSP (2023–2026)); and • **disaster risk management and climate resilience:** Capacity strengthening and technical assistance to improve the integration and efficiency of social protection and disaster risk management programmes (Activity 3 CSP (2018–2022) and Activity 3 CSP (2023–2026).

Source: Office of Evaluation compilation based on countries' CSPs and Budget Revisions

Annex X
Expanded evidence on diversity and breadth of WFP's engagement in partnerships in middle-income countries (MICs)

Diversity and breadth of WFP's engagement in partnerships in MICs	Evidence and examples
WFP's partnership with the main government bodies and ministries at the **national level**	WFP is identified and explicitly described as a "partner of choice" in the Kenya, Egypt, India, and the Dominican Republic evaluations (16% of the sample). Partnerships with specific ministries at the national level vary depending on the focus of each country strategic plan (CSP), with key collaborations including: ➢ Ministry of Education for school feeding and education programmes (Kenya, Cambodia and Egypt) ➢ Ministry of Agriculture for enhancing food security and agricultural resilience (Bhutan and Zimbabwe) ➢ Ministry of Health and Social Welfare for strengthening social protection systems and addressing nutrition challenges (Zimbabwe). In Zimbabwe, for example, WFP works closely with the government through partnerships with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare. With the Ministry of Agriculture, WFP supports programmes such as the R4 Rural Resilience Initiative and Food Assistance for Assets to boost agricultural productivity, build community resilience, and address climate challenges. With the Ministry of Public Service, WFP strengthens social protection systems by supporting social safety nets, improving food and nutrition security, and enhancing disaster response through cash and in-kind transfers.
WFP's partnership with the main government bodies and ministries at the **sub-national level**	Specific collaboration at provincial and district level, as mentioned in China, Egypt, Indonesia, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho, Namibia, Nepal, Philippines, Zambia and Zimbabwe (44% the sample) where WFP collaborates with provincial and district authorities to strengthen local government and partners, and provide targeted policy support. These initiatives are aimed at complementing national efforts with region-specific actions. Specific partnerships at the sub-national level are also mentioned in Bhutan and Cambodia where WFP supported the localization of the FSN strategy.
WFP's partnership with United Nations agencies and other development partners	In 32% of the sample (two upper-middle-income countries (UMICs) – Dominican Republic and Iraq – and six lower-middle-income countries (LMICs) – Bhutan, Cambodia, Kenya, Lesotho, Tunisia and Zimbabwe), WFP collaborates with United Nations agencies and development partners on joint advocacy, policy development support, coordination roles, joint fundraising

	efforts, and occasionally providing on-demand services. In contrast, its collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations is primarily focused on the implementation of activities, such as cash-based transfers and food-related programmes. ➤ In Bhutan, for example, WFP engaged in joint advocacy, policy development support, and joint fundraising with UNICEF and United Nations Development Programme. ➤ In Cambodia, WFP led efforts on shock-responsive social protection and worked with the government in coordination with the German development agency (GiZ), focusing on social protection systems while also partnering with NGOs to support cash-based transfer and food-related activities. ➤ In Lesotho, WFP co-chaired the United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction Team with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), supporting the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee and the Disaster Management Authority.
WFP's partnership with the private sector	WFP's collaboration with the private sector is widely documented. In 48% of the sample countries (six UMIC – Dominican Republic, China, India, Indonesia, Peru and Türkiye) – and seven LMICs – Bhutan, Cambodia, Lesotho, Namibia, Philippines, Zimbabwe and Zambia) the evidence reports on WFP's collaboration with the private sector. In 40% of the sampled MICs, the engagement with the private sector is merely contractual where WFP is engaged solely as a **service provider in partnership with the private sector** (Bhutan, China, Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Lesotho, Namibia, Philippines, Türkiye, Zambia and Zimbabwe). For example, in partnership with the private sector, WFP is involved in delivering training activities (in Indonesia, Namibia, Zambia), handling specific mechanisms, such as commodity vouchers (Lesotho), supporting rice fortification processes (Dominican Republic), and producing key supplementary feeding products (Timor-Leste). In 12% of the sample countries, WFP engages with the private sector as a **strategic partner** (India, Namibia and Peru), allowing the partnership to play a key role in mobilizing resources and fostering innovative solutions to address food and nutrition challenges. For example, in India, WFP works as a strategic partner to leverage corporate social responsibility, given that the private sector is one of the primary funders of the country's CSP. In Peru, WFP worked with major companies such as Antamina, Repsol, and FOSPIBAY, which provided substantial financial support for national programmes. These partnerships were built on trust and accountability, with WFP showcasing its effectiveness through evidence-based strategies and transparent reporting. The contributions were focused on initiatives such as promoting fortified rice and enhancing food security, aligning closely with national priorities and WFP's goals.

Annex XI
Evaluations included in the synthesis (covering 25 middle-income countries (MICs))

Reporting to	Country	Evaluations included in the synthesis (final sample)
Central headquarters	China	WFP. 2021. Evaluation of China WFP Country Strategic Plan 2017–2021
Asia and the Pacific	Bhutan	WFP. 2022. Evaluation of Bhutan WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019–2023 WFP. 2022. Evaluation of WFP's support to smallholder farmers and expanded portfolio across the agriculture value chain in Bhutan: January 2019 to June2021
	Cambodia	WFP. 2020. Endline Evaluation of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) McGovern Dole Grant Food for Education Programme for WFP Cambodia: FY 2017–2019 WFP. 2023. Endline Activity Evaluation of USDA McGovern Dole Grants FFE-442-2019-013-00 in Cambodia, 2019-2023 WFP. 2023. Evaluation of Cambodia WFP Country Strategic Plan: 2019-2023 WFP. 2024. Endline Evaluation of USDA Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement Grant (LRP-442-2019-011-00) for WFP School Feeding in Cambodia: 1 November 2019 to 30 September 2024
	India	WFP. 2019. Endline Evaluation of the Target Public Distribution (TPDS) Reforms Project in Bhubaneswar (Odisha): 2014–2019 WFP. 2020. Endline Assessment of Fortification of Mid-day Meal Project in Dhenkanal, Odisha WFP. 2022. Evaluation of India WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019–2023
	Indonesia	WFP. 2020. Evaluation of Indonesia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2017–2020
	Kyrgyzstan	WFP. 2022. Evaluation of the Kyrgyz Republic WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018–2022
	Nepal	WFP. 2019. Decentralized evaluation: USDA McGovern Dole Food for Education Program in Nepal 2014–2017, end-line evaluation report combined with baseline (2017–2020) WFP. 2019. End-term evaluation of Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) in Dhading, Gorkha and Nuwakot districts of Nepal WFP. 2022. Endline evaluation of USDA McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Programme in Nepal FY17 WFP. 2023. Adapting to Climate Induced Threats to Food Production and Food Security in the Karnali Region of Nepal (2018–2022) WFP. 2023. Evaluation of Nepal WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019–2023
	Pakistan	WFP. 2022. Evaluation of Humanitarian Response Facilities Network in Pakistan from January 2014 to September 2020 WFP. 2022. Evaluation of Pakistan WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018–2022
	Philippines	WFP. 2022. Thematic Evaluation of WFP Philippines' Country Capacity Strengthening Activities July 2018–June 2022 WFP. 2023. Evaluation of the Philippines WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018–2023
	Timor-Leste	WFP. 2020. Evaluation of Timor-Leste WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018–2020
	Armenia	WFP. 2025. Evaluation of Armenia WFP Country Strategic Plan, 2019-2025

Reporting to	Country	Evaluations included in the synthesis (final sample)
Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe	Egypt	WFP. 2022. Evaluation of the First 1000 Days Programme in Egypt 2017 to 2021 WFP. 2023. Evaluation of Egypt WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018–2023
	Iraq	WFP. 2023. Evaluation of WFP livelihood support, asset creation and climate adaptation activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021 WFP. 2024. Evaluation of Iraq WFP Transitional Interim and Country Strategic Plans, 2018–2024
	Tunisia	WFP. 2019. Evaluation of WFP's activities to strengthen capacity for the improvement of the school meals programme from 2016 to 2018 in Tunisia
	Türkiye	WFP. 2022. Final Evaluation Report of WFP Turkey Decentralized Evaluation WFP. (*forthcoming*). Evaluation of Türkiye country strategic plan for 2023–2025
Western Africa	Ghana	WFP. 2021. Final Evaluation of Enhanced Nutrition and Value Chains (ENVAC) project 2016–2021 WFP. 2023. Evaluation of Ghana WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019–2023
Southern Africa	Eswatini	WFP. 2019. Evaluation of National School Feeding Programme in Eswatini 2010–2018 WFP. 2023. Evaluation of linking Eswatini Smallholder Farmers to the Home-grown School Feeding Market (HGSF) in Eswatini from 2019 to 2021
	Lesotho	WFP. 2022. Evaluation of Asset Creation and Public Works Activities in Lesotho 2015–2019 WFP. 2023. Evaluation of Lesotho WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019–2024 WFP. 2023. Thematic Evaluation of WFP's Country Capacity Strengthening Activities in Lesotho 2019 to 2023
	Namibia	WFP. 2020. Evaluation of Namibia National School Feeding Programme 2012-–018 WFP. 2023. Evaluation of Namibia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2017–2023
	Zambia	WFP. 2023. Evaluation of Zambia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019–2023
	Zimbabwe	WFP. 2021. Evaluation of Zimbabwe WFP Country Strategic Plan 2017–2021 WFP. 2022. Evaluation of R4 Rural Resilience Initiative in Masvingo and Rushinga Districts in Zimbabwe January 2018–June 2021
Eastern Africa	Kenya	WFP. 2020. Final evaluation of the USDA-supported Local and Regional Procurement (LRP) project in Kenya FY 2017–2020 WFP. 2023. Kenya USDA McGovern -Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Programme – Final Evaluation: 2016 to 2022 WFP. 2023. Final evaluation of the Joint UN SDG Funded Programme for Social Protection in Kenya 2020–2022 WFP. 2023. Evaluation of Kenya WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018–2023
	Regional	WFP. 2021. WFP Contribution to Market Development and Food Systems in Southern Africa: A thematic Evaluation (2018 to 2021) WFP. 2022. Thematic Evaluation of Supply Chain outcomes in the Food System in Eastern Africa from 2016 to 2021
Latin America and the Caribbean	Colombia	WFP. 2022. Evaluación final conjunta de piloto de protección social reactiva a emergencias en Arauca, Colombia Maya 2020 a Febrero 2021 WFP. 2022. Evaluación final del Proyecto School Feeding Response Activity 2019-2021 Colombia desde 2018 hasta 2021 WFP. 2024. Evaluación del Plan estratégico para Colombia 2021–2024
	Dominican Republic	WFP. 2021. Evaluación conjunta de la actividad articulada de Progresando con Solidaridad y el Servicio Nacional de Salud, con apoyo del Programa Mundial de Alimentos, para la prevención de la desnutrición y la anemia en población nutricionalmente vulnerable de la República Dominicana 2014–2020 WFP. 2023. Evaluation of Dominican Republic WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019–2023
	Peru	WFP. 2022. Evaluación del Efecto Estratégico 1 hacia los objetivos Hambre Cero a través de la abogacía, comunicación y movilización, del Plan Estratégico de País-Perú (2017–2021)

Reporting to	Country	Evaluations included in the synthesis (final sample)
		WFP. 2022. Evaluación de Plan Estratégico País de PMA para el Peru para 2018–2022
	Regional	WFP. 2024. Flexible Systems-Effective Responses? Regional Evaluation of WFP's contribution to Shock-Responsive Social Protection in Latin America and the Caribbean (2015–2022)
		WFP. 2024. Final Evaluation of the binational climate change adaptation project in Colombia and Ecuador (2016–2024)
Global-scope evaluations (policy evaluations and strategic evaluations)		
Global	Global	WFP. 2019. Evaluation of the WFP People Strategy (2014–2017)
		WFP. 2019. Strategic Evaluation of WFP Support for Enhanced Resilience
		WFP. 2019. Evaluation of the Update of WFP's Safety Nets Policy
		WFP. 2019. Evaluation of WFP's Capacity to Respond to Emergencies
		WFP. 2020. Strategic Evaluation of Funding WFP's Work
		WFP. 2020. Evaluation of the Gender Policy (2015–2020)
		WFP. 2020. Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls
		WFP. 2021. Evaluation of the WFP South-South and Triangular Cooperation Policy
		WFP. 2021. Global End-term Evaluation of the Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda from 2014 to 2020
		WFP. 2021. Joint evaluation of collaboration among the United Nations Rome-Based Agencies
		WFP. 2021. Strategic evaluation of the contribution of school feeding activities to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals
		WFP. 2022. Evaluation of the WFP Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic
		WFP. 2022. Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Covid-19 Humanitarian response
		WFP. 2022. Strategic Evaluation of WFP's work on Nutrition and HIV/AIDS
		WFP. 2022. Evaluation of the Policy on WFP's Role in Peacebuilding in Transition Settings
		WFP. 2022. Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Use of Technology in Constrained Environments
		WFP. 2023. Evaluation of WFP's Disaster Risk Reduction and Management and Climate Change Policies
		WFP. 2023. Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition
		WFP. 2023. Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Country Strategic Plans
		UNAIDS. 2023. An evaluation of the work of the Joint Programme on HIV and Social Protection
		WFP. 2024. Evaluation of WFP's Environmental Policy
		WFP. 2024. Evaluation of WFP's Emergency Preparedness Policy
		WFP. 2024. Mid-term evaluation of the WFP Strategic Plan 2022–2025
		WFP. 2024. Mid-term Evaluation of WFP's Private Sector Partnerships and Fundraising Strategy 2020–2025
		WFP. 2024. Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
		WFP.2025. Strategic Evaluation on WFP's support to refugees, internally displaced persons, and migrants
Evaluation syntheses, summaries of evaluation evidence (SEE), annual evaluation reports		
	Global/regional scope	WFP. 2021. Evaluation synthesis of evidence and lessons on country capacity strengthening from decentralized evaluations.
		WFP. 2023. Synthesis of evidence and lessons on WFP's cooperating partners from centralized and decentralized evaluations
		WFP. 2024. Annual evaluation report: 2023 in review

Reporting to	Country	Evaluations included in the synthesis (final sample)
		WFP. 2025. Summary of Evaluation Evidence on Partnership with Governments in Southern Africa
		WFP. 2025 (*forthcoming*). Summary of evidence: country capacity strengthening

Annex XII
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Annex XII
Abbreviations

AF	Analytical Framework
ALIA	Automated Livelihood Information Assistant
CCS	Country Capacity Strengthening
CE	centralized evaluation
CRF	WFP's Corporate Results Framework
CSP	country strategic plan
CSPE	country strategic plan evaluation
DE	decentralized evaluation
DRR/M	Disaster Risk Reduction/Management
EPR	Emergency Preparedness and Response
GNI	gross national income
HGSF	home-grown school feeding
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IRG	Internal Reference Group
KII	Key Informant Interview
LICs	low-income countries
LMICs	lower-middle-income countries
MDPI	multidimensional poverty indicators
MICs	middle-income countries
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NBP	Needs Based Plan
NGO	non-governmental organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
R2	Risk and Recommendation management system
RBB	Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific
RBC	Regional Bureau for the Middle East and Northern Africa
RBD	Regional Bureau for Western Africa
RBJ	Regional Bureau for Southern Africa
RBN	Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa
RNP	Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
SO	strategic outcome
SP	strategic plan
ToC	theory of change

ToR	terms of reference
UMICs	upper-middle-income countries
URT	unconditional resource transfer
WFP	World Food Programme