



WFP EVALUATION



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Evaluation of Sierra Leone WFP country strategic plan 2020–2025

Centralized evaluation report

**OEV/2023/009
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Executive summary

Introduction

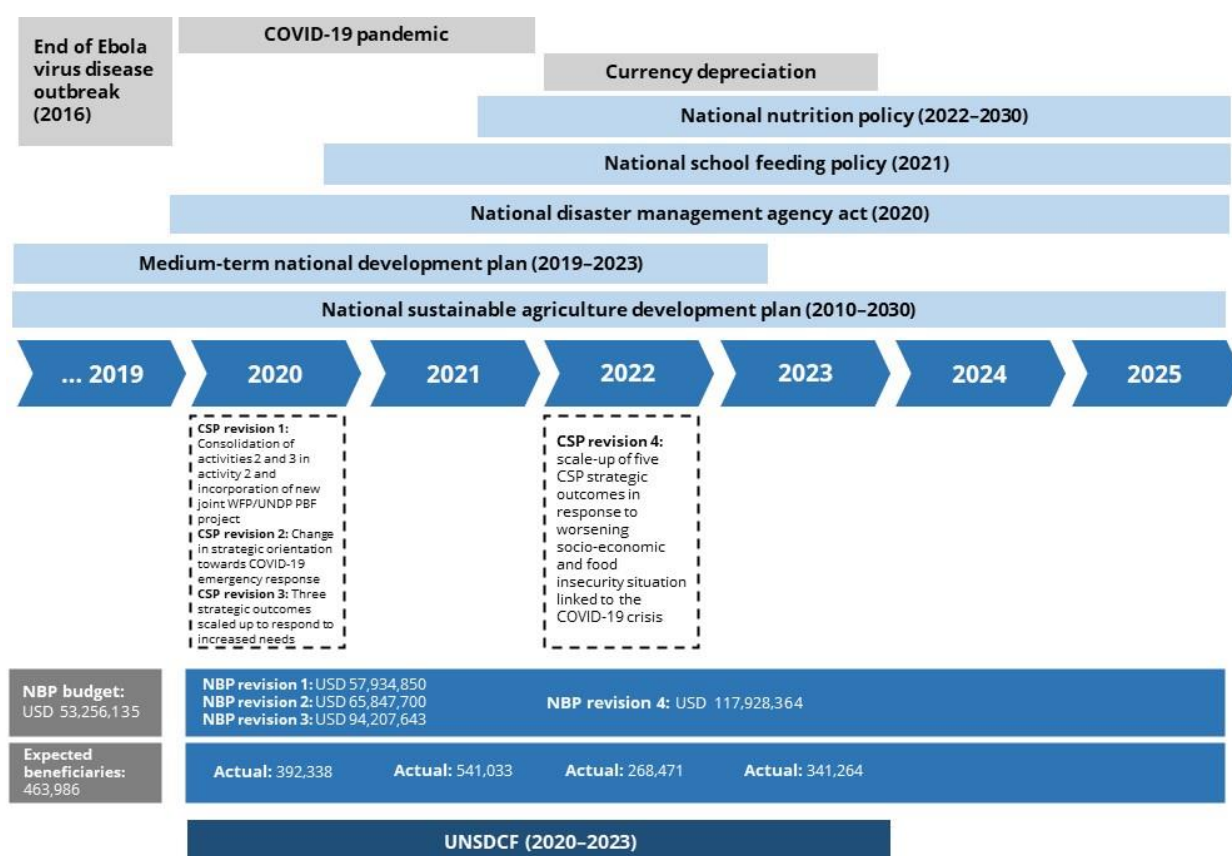
Evaluation features

1. The WFP Office of Evaluation commissioned and managed the evaluation of the country strategic plan (CSP) for Sierra Leone for 2020–2025. The evaluation serves both accountability and learning objectives, and its findings, conclusions and recommendations are intended to inform the design of the next CSP for Sierra Leone.
2. The primary users of the evaluation are WFP's Sierra Leone country office, the Western and Central Africa regional office, relevant divisions at headquarters in Rome, and the Executive Board. External users include the Government of Sierra Leone and its various ministries and agencies collaborating with WFP, the United Nations country team, and cooperating partners. The beneficiaries of CSP activities are also key stakeholders in this evaluation.

Context

3. Sierra Leone, a low-income West African country, has made considerable economic and social progress since its civil war ended in 2002, but economic recovery has been hindered by external shocks such as the 2015 Ebola virus disease outbreak, the 2020 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and inflation. About 26 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, and 59.2 percent is multidimensionally poor. With a young population and moderate-income inequality, Sierra Leone faces challenges such as teenage childbearing and a relatively low life expectancy.
4. Food insecurity in Sierra Leone has significantly worsened, with the proportion of food-insecure households rising from 53 percent in 2018 to 82 percent in 2024, largely owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, chronic and acute undernutrition rates remain concerning, with stagnating or increasing rates of stunting, reaching 26.3 percent in 2021, and wasting, at 5.2 percent in 2024. While there has been some progress in maternal and child feeding, anaemia rates remain high, and child nutrition indicators such as meal frequency and dietary diversity have not improved.
5. Agriculture is the backbone of Sierra Leone's economy, contributing 57.5 percent of gross domestic product in 2022 and employing half of the labour force. Although 74 percent of the land is suitable for cultivation, less than 10 percent is cropped; most farmers are smallholders, and women perform 75 percent of the labour. The Government's national priorities include improved productivity and commercialization in the agriculture sector, rice intensification and agricultural diversification.
6. Sierra Leone has one of the world's lowest literacy rates, with 49 percent of people of 15 years and above being literate in 2022. While primary school enrolment and completion rates are somewhat higher, secondary school completion is low, at 21.7 percent. Education remains a priority for the Government, with increased spending – at 33.4 percent of total government spending in 2021, up from 15.2 percent in 2013 – and school meal programmes to promote attendance.

Figure 1: Country context and WFP operational overview, 2020–2025



Abbreviations: NBP = needs-based plan; PBF = peacebuilding fund; UNDP = United Nations Development Programme; UNSDCF = United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

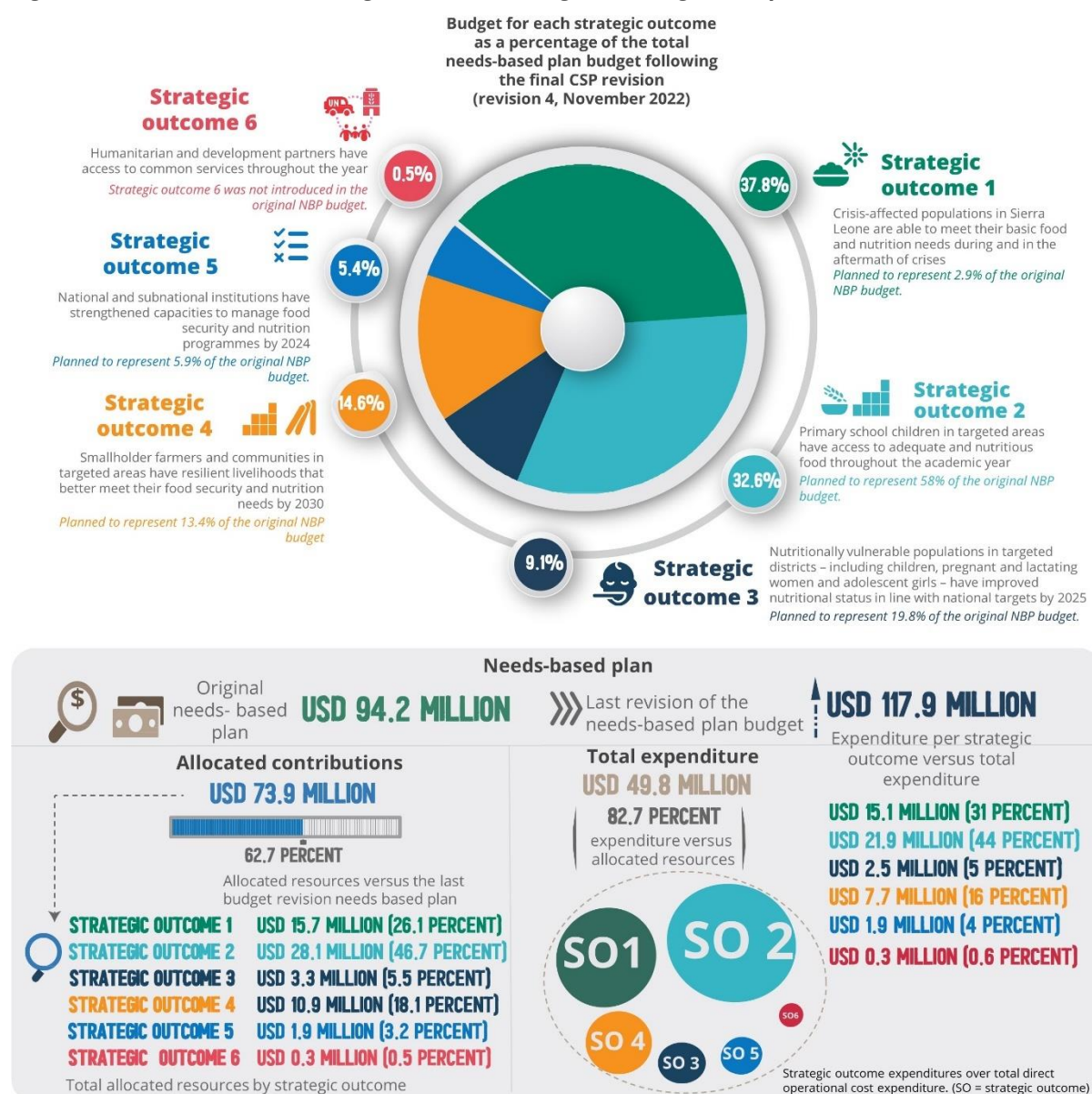
Source: Evaluation team.

Country strategic plans

- The transitional interim CSP for Sierra Leone for 2018–2019 focused on recovery from the impact of the Ebola virus disease outbreak, aligning with the Government's priorities and building on the previous WFP recovery operation, and was in line with the United Nations development assistance framework for Sierra Leone. The current CSP – originally for 2020–2024 but subsequently extended to 2025 – has a similar focus but with strategic adjustments, including to enhance crisis response capacity, support government-led school meal programmes, assist smallholder farmers, and facilitate a transition to a home-grown school feeding (HGSF) model. It also emphasizes strengthening social protection, shifting from malnutrition treatment to prevention, and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Developed in consultation with the Government and stakeholders, the CSP was informed by needs assessments and the 2019 national zero hunger strategic review. It aims to contribute to the Government's priorities and the United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework for 2020–2023, primarily supporting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2 on zero hunger and 17 on partnerships.

9. The CSP has six strategic outcomes: strategic outcome 1 was designed to ensure that crisis-affected people in Sierra Leone met their basic food and nutrition needs. Strategic outcome 2 was aimed at providing primary schoolchildren with consistent access to nutritious food. Strategic outcome 3 was intended to improve the nutrition status of vulnerable population groups. Strategic outcome 4 was focused on strengthening the resilience of smallholder farmers and communities. Strategic outcome 5 was intended to build the institutional capacity needed to manage food security and nutrition programmes, and cuts across all other outcomes. Supporting the operationalization of the National Disaster Management Agency has been one of WFP's priorities under strategic outcome 5, particularly in view of the increasing risks associated with natural disasters induced by climate change. Strategic outcome 6 was aimed at ensuring that humanitarian and development partners had access to common services. It was introduced in July 2020 to enable WFP to undertake service provision activities in support of national disaster preparedness and response, particularly in the areas of supply chains and emergency telecommunications.
10. The original CSP needs-based plan was USD 53.2 million over five years but the CSP and its budget were revised four times, largely in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and WFP's declaration of a global Level 3 emergency. With the fourth revision, in 2022, the total needs-based plan reached USD 117.9 million, with the largest share allocated to strategic outcome 1, at 32.9 percent, followed by strategic outcome 2, at 28.4 percent, and strategic outcome 4, at 12.7 percent; this contrasts with the original needs-based plan, of which the largest share – 45.2 percent – was allocated to strategic outcome 2. As of August 2024, the CSP was funded at 70.6 percent of the needs-based plan, up from 62.7 percent in December 2023. Beneficiary numbers increased steadily throughout the term of the CSP, rising from 463,986 at its start to 1,191,831 by its end, an overall increase of 156.9 percent.

Figure 2: Sierra Leone CSP strategic outcomes, budget, funding and expenditures



Note: Allocated resources and expenditures by strategic outcome exclude direct and indirect support costs.

Sources: System for Project Approval Plus for the needs-based plan, FACTory for allocated contributions, and IRM analytics for allocated resources and expenditures, as of 31 December 2023.

Key evaluation messages

Relevance, coherence and adaptive capacity

The CSP was effectively targeted, aligning with national priorities and adapting to changing circumstances. It was well coordinated with the activities of the United Nations country team in Sierra Leone and aligned with WFP's global strategies, capitalizing on the organization's comparative advantages in an increasingly integrated portfolio of programmes.

11. The CSP was developed based on a thorough analysis of the prevailing hunger challenges facing key population groups, addressing critical food security and nutrition issues in Sierra Leone at the time of its design. It drew on multiple relevant data sources, including a comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis, national nutrition surveys, reports from the food security monitoring system, an evaluation of WFP's protracted relief and recovery operation in the country, and the 2019 zero hunger strategic review.
12. The CSP is closely aligned with Sierra Leone's national policies, strategies and programmes in the areas of food security and nutrition, social protection, disaster management, school meals and resilience building. Among other initiatives, the CSP is aligned with the "Feed Salone" programme, a flagship initiative of the Government aimed at boosting agricultural productivity to fuel inclusive growth, increase local food production, reduce hunger and build resilient food systems.
13. The CSP strategic outcomes and activities are aligned with and reflect sector-specific strategies and plans aimed at achieving SDG 2, zero hunger, while also having strong links to SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 13, 15 and 17. The CSP is closely aligned with and informed by Sierra Leone's United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework for 2020–2023. WFP's comparative advantages in Sierra Leone stem from its expertise in food security and school meal programmes and its extensive field presence and robust supply chain capacity. These strengths are strategically aligned so as to maximize WFP's contributions to the broader United Nations system's strategies and plans in the country.
14. The CSP is aligned with WFP's broader policy frameworks, including its strategic plan for 2022-2025 and its policies on procurement, nutrition and school meals. Areas for improvement remain, however, such as increasing the proportion of local procurement, allocating more resources to nutrition activities, expanding programming for adolescent girls, and developing plans and timelines for the hand-over of school meal activities to the Government.
15. Under the CSP, WFP facilitated links at the humanitarian–development nexus. While the design of the CSP did not fully prioritize integration among development activities, WFP made significant progress in maximizing its comparative advantages through greater geographic and programmatic integration of its activities throughout the CSP period. Programmatic linkages were established, such as by clustering programming geographically or connecting WFP-supported agricultural producers to HGSEF initiatives, creating multiplier effects. WFP also fostered links at the humanitarian–development–peacebuilding nexus, notably by successfully convening two joint peacebuilding projects.
16. Overall, the CSP maintained its relevance as a strategic and flexible programming framework, particularly in disaster response, school meal and nutrition activities, despite the evolving conditions during the implementation period. Guided by the CSP, WFP aimed to adapt to changing circumstances and resource constraints, shifting from the direct implementation of activities to the provision of policy support and strengthening of the capacity of national interventions.
17. The increased focus on preventing malnutrition and producing local complementary foods in Sierra Leone, while maintaining a contingency component for the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) in emergencies, remained relevant to the country's nutrition challenges throughout the CSP period. WFP activated the contingency component in response to critical malnutrition levels during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. However, the CSP design lacked a clear strategy for shifting from MAM treatment to prevention, and the evaluation found no evidence of plans to provide MAM treatment to address the critical malnutrition levels reported in 2024.

Effectiveness of the CSP in Sierra Leone: overall performance and key contributions to change

18. While food and cash-based transfers provided under the crisis response during the COVID-19 pandemic saved lives, the key strength of the CSP was its focus on promoting resilience and addressing the root causes of hunger through initiatives such as school meals, social and behaviour change, and asset creation and livelihood activities. School meals boosted enrolment and attendance, while social and behaviour change campaigns positively influenced children's diets.

Asset creation and livelihood initiatives improved agricultural production for smallholder farmers, strengthened value chains and farmer-based organizations, and helped to increase incomes for vulnerable farmers. Nonetheless, these same activities also faced notable challenges, including inadequate food supplies for school students, payment delays and cash flow constraints affecting smallholder farmers.

19. The contributions of strategic outcome 5 are reflected under the relevant outcomes from strategic outcomes 1–4, particularly where they have contributed to change. As activities under strategic outcome 6 focused primarily on support for the National Disaster Management Agency, strategic outcome 6 is discussed together with strategic outcome 1.

Meeting basic food and nutrition needs for crisis-affected populations – strategic outcome 1

The evaluation highlights the effectiveness of specialized nutritious foods in reducing malnutrition during critical periods, and improving food security for vulnerable groups, with potential long-term benefits. Food assistance and cash-based transfers improved short-term food security for vulnerable groups. WFP's efforts to strengthen logistics and coordination capacity for crisis response were valuable, but challenges in managing non-localized emergencies affecting multiple districts or provinces remain.

20. The evaluation found that specialized nutritious foods distributed during the COVID-19 pandemic were effective in reducing malnutrition during critical periods of children's growth and provided potential long-term benefits. Targeted distributions of specialized nutritious foods for vulnerable groups played a crucial role in addressing malnutrition sustainably, reinforcing the importance of nutrition-sensitive activities under the CSP.
21. Food assistance and cash-based transfers provided during the CSP period contributed to short-term improvements in food security, particularly for vulnerable people. However, the effect was limited by the short duration of assistance and the timing of payments, which were not synchronized with the lean season. While unconditional food assistance and cash-based transfers primarily delivered immediate life-saving outcomes, their effectiveness in achieving sustained food security outcomes was limited.
22. WFP's support for the National Disaster Management Agency has been instrumental in strengthening logistics and coordination capacity for crisis response, with WFP playing a leading role among United Nations entities in this area. Through its country capacity strengthening efforts, WFP has contributed to the building of national capacity in key areas of emergency response, including policy, organizational and institutional frameworks, and individual capacity strengthening.
23. While WFP's support has led to significantly enhanced national leadership and coordination in disaster response, there remain opportunities to further strengthen institutions, particularly in managing and coordinating the response to non-localized emergencies affecting multiple districts or provinces outside of Freetown.

Providing consistent access to nutritious food for primary schoolchildren – strategic outcome 2

School meal programmes increased enrolment and attendance in school, but rapid expansion led to reduction in the frequency of school meals or the size of school meal rations, and strained school capacity, including that of teachers and infrastructure.

24. Using its global comparative advantages in school meal activities, WFP worked with the Government to implement the latter's policy of expanding the national school meal programmes. There is widespread qualitative evidence that school meals contributed to increased school enrolment and attendance, with activities meeting CSP targets for attendance while also generating educational, nutritional and social benefits, including improved food consumption, reduced financial burden on parents, higher retention rates, and enhanced attention and academic performance among students. However, it is unclear how much of the attendance gains resulted from increased access

for previously out-of-school children and how much from the relocation of students previously attending non-feeding schools.

25. Primary data collection revealed that actual school enrolment consistently exceeded estimates. While the school meal programme delivered significant benefits, its rapid expansion outpaced schools' capacity for effective implementation. The underestimation of school enrolment and the corresponding shortage of food forced some schools to reduce the frequency of meals or the ration sizes. In addition, logistics challenges contributed to delays. The transportation companies contracted to deliver food often lacked the capacity to deliver on time and to the required destinations, resulting in frequent delays. Compounding these issues, there was no increase in educational resources – such as teachers, classrooms or water, sanitation and hygiene facilities – to accommodate the growing numbers of students, placing increased strain on both teachers and school infrastructure.
26. WFP took the lead nationally in rolling out the HGSP programme. School meal programmes are increasingly creating opportunities for local farmers, including farmer-based organizations supported by asset creation and livelihood activities, by procuring agricultural commodities such as rice, pulses, orange-fleshed sweet potatoes and vegetables from them. Local procurement for HGSP establishes vital market linkages for farmers, creating incentives for higher productivity by providing a stable market for their produce. However, reliance on private sector transportation partners, many of whom lacked the capacity to deliver food on time and to designated locations, led to frequent delays in deliveries of food for school meals.
27. In addition, WFP supported the Government by providing equipment and training for school meal monitors, contributing to the strengthening of school meal monitoring capacity. While staffing and knowledge gaps remain, better-trained school meal monitors have enhanced oversight, ensuring that food was received, stored and accounted for, reducing wastage, and helping to meet feeding targets in pursuit of enrolment outcomes.

Improving the nutrition status of vulnerable groups – strategic outcome 3

WFP's efforts to reduce malnutrition showed positive results, but the effect on stunting was limited because activities were short term. Social and behaviour change improved children's nutrition, although challenges in community involvement remained. Local food production holds potential, and greater focus on nutrition for pregnant women and girls, and young children could strengthen long-term outcomes.

28. MAM treatment programmes supported by WFP contributed to reductions in malnutrition owing to their broad reach and long duration. While the shift in focus to stunting prevention was appropriate, its effect on stunting rates was limited, owing primarily to the short duration and reach of the activities.
29. Social and behavioural change efforts over several years have positively influenced children's diets, probably contributing to improved nutrition. However, this has placed the responsibility for implementing community- and household-level programmes on unpaid mothers. Qualitative reports suggest an increase in men's participation in and support for maternal, infant and young child feeding activities, but a quantitative survey found limited evidence of this. In addition, despite the significant cultural influence of older women on such activities in Sierra Leone, the evaluation found no intentional inclusion of older women in mother support groups or social and behaviour change activities. To further enhance the programme's effect, opportunities to engage older women as change agents, leveraging their traditional roles, should be seized.
30. Introducing the production of local complementary foods in three districts has proven to be a complex and challenging undertaking for local mother support groups. Key challenges in establishing a manufacturing unit include the acquisition of land, the securing of a reliable electricity supply, issues with substandard equipment and frequent breakdowns, irregular remuneration, and the need for on-the-job learning in areas such as management, procurement and marketing. However, if

successful as a sustainable enterprise, and in reaching vulnerable people, the production of local complementary foods could make a significant contribution to improving nutrition.

31. Despite WFP's considerable progress in building the capacity of community-based organizations during the CSP period, some such organizations may face challenges in sustaining themselves without continued support and monitoring from WFP. For instance, past experience indicates that the mobilization of mother support groups relies on ongoing engagement and oversight.
32. There are additional opportunities to maximize development outcomes by allocating more resources to nutrition programmes targeting pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls, and children under 2. Strengthening activities that support infants and children during the critical first 1,000 days of life is essential for achieving long-term effects. Aligning these efforts with school meal activities for primary-school-age children could further reinforce nutrition gains and support broader development objectives.

Strengthening the resilience of smallholder farmers and communities – strategic outcome 4

The food assistance for assets model helped smallholder farmers improve their productivity and rehabilitate agricultural assets, particularly for the production of rice, vegetables and orange-fleshed sweet potatoes. While incomes increased, challenges such as food-price inflation, delayed payments, and market price fluctuations affected food security and profits.

33. The evaluation found that WFP's food assistance for assets model provided effective incentives for community participation in the rehabilitation of unproductive agricultural assets, notably inland valley swamps. Asset rehabilitation targets were consistently met, contributing to increased productivity and facilitating multi-cropping. Through asset creation and livelihood activities, smallholder farmers benefited from enhanced rice production, improved agricultural inputs, training in climate-smart practices, and better water and post-harvest management.
34. Asset creation and livelihood activities enhanced the agricultural productivity of smallholders by promoting improved practices, strengthening farmer-based organizations and reinforcing local rice value chains. Mechanization and the introduction of improved rice varieties have reduced labour demands and boosted yields, while training in post-harvest management, processing, marketing and organizational skills has improved the performance of farmer-based organizations. Support from local authorities and community-based organizations contributed further to effective implementation and monitoring.
35. Rice was the primary focus of asset creation and livelihood activities, but the cultivation of vegetables and orange-fleshed sweet potatoes gained significance in recent years, particularly in supporting the HGSP programme. These crops, produced and marketed mainly by women, play an increasingly important role in strengthening local food systems.
36. There is evidence of improved incomes for vulnerable farmers, although outcomes related to food security and nutrition have shown less progress, probably owing to rising food-price inflation in Sierra Leone. WFP's purchases of rice from smallholder farmers increased significantly during the CSP period, in both volume and sales. Agricultural producers selling to WFP reported several benefits, such as bulk sales, premium prices, reduced transport costs and lower wastage compared with sales through local markets.

| TABLE 1: SMALLHOLDER FARMERS' SALES THROUGH WFP-SUPPORTED AGGREGATION SYSTEMS | | | | | | |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|----------------------|------------|
| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | CSP target |
| Value of smallholder sales through WFP-supported aggregation systems (USD) | 34 752 | 45 707 | 98 831 | 92 840 | 840 085 ¹ | ≥ 420 000 |
| Sales volume by smallholder farmers through WFP-supported aggregation (mt) | 50 | 70.45 | 125.9 | 125.15 | 1 015.6 ² | ≥ 600 |

Source: Country office monitoring data.

¹ Rice: USD 530,264; pulses: USD 309,821.

² Rice: 616 mt; pulses: 399.6 mt.

37. WFP's local procurement supports the development of food production value chains, creating stable markets for smallholder farmers and contributing to important outcomes in local agricultural value chains and food systems. However, the procurement process is lengthy, and smallholder farmers reported cash flow challenges due to payment delays, leading to the adoption of negative coping strategies. In addition, some farmers noted that fluctuations in market prices, exacerbated by inflation, risked undercutting the profits generated from agreements to supply agricultural products for WFP's HGSF programmes at prices below prevailing market rates. In this regard, the evaluation team observed that contracting modalities sometimes lacked sufficient flexibility to account for such price fluctuations.

WFP's performance on cross-cutting issues in Sierra Leone

WFP adhered to humanitarian principles and ensured accountability, but the integration of environmental considerations and gender-related outcomes was limited. Beneficiary women and girls faced increased workloads without adequate compensation, affecting their livelihoods. Accountability to affected people was not consistently operationalized.

38. The evaluation found that WFP largely adhered to **humanitarian principles** throughout the implementation of the CSP and effectively upheld its commitments to providing accountability to affected people. All CSP activities, including those related to humanitarian and crisis response, were generally in line with relevant humanitarian principles. Beneficiaries were able to participate in WFP programmes without concerns related to safety, dignity or integrity. Most beneficiaries were aware that there was a community feedback mechanism, but many were reluctant to use it. Nevertheless, the evaluation found that accountability to affected people was not consistently operationalized throughout WFP programming, which made it impossible to compile complete data on beneficiary feedback and to meet related targets.
39. With regard to **environmental and climate issues**, while they were to a degree integrated into the CSP, they were not systematically embedded in the design of all programme activities. This limitation stemmed from a lack of the technical expertise and other human resources needed at the country office to conduct thorough environmental and climate analyses. Although there are examples of climate-related activities, such as the incorporation of environmental factors into specific initiatives, more can be done to proactively address environmental and social risks in all programming. There is a need for more comprehensive assessments to ensure that environmental and climate issues are fully integrated into the programme design process.
40. **Efforts to address gender inequality and promote the economic empowerment of women and girls** have made tangible progress under the CSP, with numerous examples illustrating efforts to

integrate gender-related concerns into key activities. Initiatives such as the distribution of “wonder stoves” to smallholder farmers, the prioritization of women in the targeting of activities related to village savings and loan associations, and the gender parity observed within farmer-based organizations provide evidence of these efforts. However, the CSP has not achieved outcomes related to the equal sharing of power between women and men, with the notable exception of women’s increased participation in decision-making in farmer-based organizations.

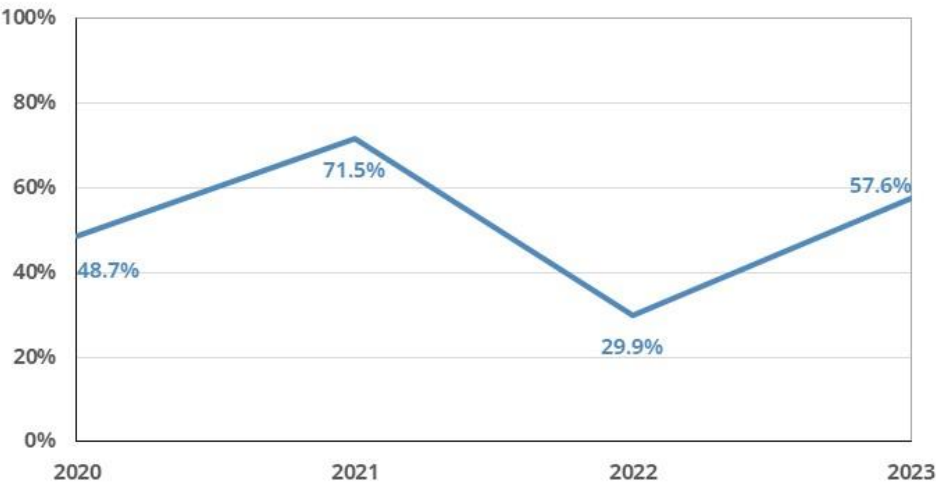
41. There were unintended negative consequences for beneficiary women and girls, particularly under strategic outcome 3, on nutrition. Women, especially those running local complementary food production sites supported by WFP, experienced increased workloads without adequate remuneration. Slow start-ups and repeated equipment failures at these sites exacerbated the situation, further burdening women. Time spent at these sites also limited women’s ability to engage in local farming, undermining their opportunities to engage in sustainable livelihoods and their capacity to support their families. Systematic gender analyses could help to address these challenges by identifying specific areas where women’s needs and the potential risks they face can be more effectively addressed and mitigated.

Efficiency and timeliness

CSP implementation faced delays, particularly in respect of school meal activities, but achieved cost-efficiencies through streamlined supply chains and local purchases.

42. The utilization of CSP financial resources was uneven owing to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and other implementation constraints, particularly delays in school meal initiatives. Various factors affected operational efficiency, with school meal activities experiencing significant delays. Despite these challenges, WFP achieved key cost efficiencies by expanding its school meal programme, which had the lowest expenditure per beneficiary among WFP activities. In addition, the country office took strategic steps to streamline the supply chain, notably by eliminating operational redundancies through the closure of the Freetown port warehouse in 2021 and the Makeni logistics base in 2022, resulting in considerable cost savings.

Figure 3: Total annual utilization rate of available resources



Source: IRM Analytics (ACR5-A Annual financial overview, 2018–2023).

43. In implementing activities under the CSP, WFP generally employed cost-efficient modalities. In cases where relatively high-cost programming approaches were used, they were justified by their contributions to broader development outcomes. For example, while local purchases from smallholder farmers for the HGSP programme were often more expensive than imported food commodities, they played a crucial role in strengthening local value chains and markets.

44. Fewer than 60 percent of activities were implemented as scheduled. Delays were particularly notable under strategic outcome 2, including setbacks in signing agreements with the Government of Sierra Leone and delivering food to schools. Similar challenges affected strategic outcome 3, with delays in establishing local complementary food production sites, and strategic outcome 4, where delays in the delivery of agricultural inputs hindered progress.

Key factors underpinning WFP's performance in Sierra Leone

WFP's performance in Sierra Leone was supported by strong funding, although donors' limited interest in crisis response and malnutrition prevention created challenges. Financial constraints and donors' short-term priorities hindered progress towards CSP outcomes, while WFP's monitoring systems remained a key strength for the targeting of food security activities.

45. The CSP was largely well-funded, benefiting from an increasingly diversified donor base. As of August 2024 – the end of the data collection period – 70.6 percent of the needs-based plan had been funded. However, most funding shortfalls stemmed from a lack of donor interest in crisis response following the Ebola virus disease outbreak and in nutrition prevention and country capacity strengthening activities. School meal programmes remain the highest priority for WFP's donors in Sierra Leone and are a core component of WFP's operations in the country.
46. Despite the relatively strong funding base, a large share of CSP resources was allocated on a year-to-year basis, creating challenges for programme planning. Most donors prioritized short-term interventions, such as food distribution – including school meals, MAM treatment, and the response to the COVID-19 pandemic – rather than the multi-year, community-based approaches needed to prevent malnutrition. In addition, most funding was earmarked, limiting the country office's flexibility to adapt to shifting needs.
47. Financial constraints combined with external challenges hindered progress towards CSP outcomes. Key contextual factors – including the COVID-19 pandemic, structural issues such as poverty and the rising cost of living, and a limited donor pool – negatively affected WFP's performance. Specifically, donors' reluctance to fund malnutrition prevention activities limited WFP's shift from MAM treatment to a more preventive approach. These financial limitations restricted the scope of nutrition activities under the CSP, with donors favouring short-term outcomes over sustainable, long-term activities such as MAM prevention.
48. Most outcome indicators for measuring progress were effective, except for those related to country capacity strengthening activities. Overall, WFP's monitoring and reporting systems tracked inputs and activity coverage effectively but were less robust in demonstrating progress toward expected outcomes. Data generated externally through the comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis, the food security monitoring system, and price monitoring, which the Government and other agencies use to design and target food security interventions more effectively, constituted a key comparative advantage for WFP.

Effectiveness and contributions to aid coordination of WFP's partnerships

WFP formed strong partnerships with the Government of Sierra Leone and key United Nations entities, focusing on short-term outcomes and national priorities. Collaboration with non-governmental and international organizations also played a key role in reaching vulnerable communities and enhancing programme effects.

49. WFP established strong partnerships with the Government, focusing on complementary programme activities aligned with national priorities. Key government ministries and agencies, such as the National Disaster Management Agency, the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the Ministry of Health, were integral to the implementation of CSP activities. This collaboration was essential for delivering results at both the

national and subnational levels, although it mainly emphasized short-term outcomes rather than fostering long-term strategic partnerships.

50. WFP also engaged in the United Nations country team and with specialized agencies of the United Nations to implement the CSP. Collaboration with other country team members was essential, particularly with the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Development Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on jointly implemented peacebuilding projects. WFP also worked alongside the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development in providing up-to-date vulnerability assessments such as a food security and welfare survey and a comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis. However, there are untapped opportunities for strategic cross-sector collaboration, such as partnering the United Nations Population Fund to address adolescent girls' nutrition through mother support groups.
51. Relationships with cooperating partners were crucial throughout implementation of the CSP. WFP worked successfully with cooperating partners in leveraging their national reach and capacity to reach the most vulnerable communities.
52. WFP also engaged in various other partnerships, including with the Sierra Leone agricultural research institute. An emerging strategic partnership on water, sanitation and hygiene holds significant potential for future collaboration. Further partnerships could also strengthen efforts in teacher training and enhance nutrition awareness programmes in schools.

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsible WFP office and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|--|---------------------|--|--|----------|-----------------------------|
| Recommendation 1: Address slow-onset emergencies through a targeted and increasingly integrated portfolio of programming that builds resilience and addresses the root causes of hunger, while maintaining flexible emergency response capacity to work at the humanitarian-development nexus. | Strategic | Country office (crisis response, nutrition, asset creation and livelihoods, and research, assessment and monitoring (RAM) units) | National Disaster Management Agency, Western and Central Africa regional office/Office of Evaluation, UNICEF, Ministry of Health, including the Food and Nutrition Directorate, Scaling Up Nutrition secretariat | Medium | For the next CSP |
| 1.1 Maximize outcomes by increasing integration throughout WFP's programming portfolio by, for example, working from geographic hubs using the linkages among programmes to deliver critical elements of resilience building in various combinations, starting with key activities and progressively integrating and layering other programmes – including HGSF and nutrition – based on local conditions, livelihoods and capacity. | Strategic | Country office (school feeding, nutrition, and asset creation and livelihoods units) | N/A | Medium | For the next CSP |
| 1.2 Expand capacity strengthening support for the National Disaster Management Agency, focusing on its capacity to implement and coordinate disaster response outside of Freetown. | Operational | Country office (crisis response unit) | National Disaster Management Agency | Medium | From 2024 into the next CSP |
| 1.3 Develop and use indicators that better measure the contributions made in the different domains of WFP's country capacity strengthening activities, such as policy and technical support, organizational and institutional support, and individual support. | Operational | Country office (crisis response and RAM units) | Regional office and Office of Evaluation | Medium | For the next CSP |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsible WFP office and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|---|---------------------|---|--|----------|-----------------------------|
| 1.4 Develop and maintain a contingency plan for the treatment of MAM when MAM rates reach critical levels, in partnership with agencies treating severe acute malnutrition. | Operational | Country office (crisis response and nutrition units) | Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, National School Feeding Secretariat (NSFS), UNICEF, World Vision, and other cooperating partners (including partners such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security) | Medium | For the next CSP |
| Recommendation 2: Strengthen support for the national school meal programme through improved partnership and collaboration. | Strategic | Country office (school feeding and procurement units) | Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, NSFS, UNICEF, World Vision and other cooperating partners | Medium | From 2024 into the next CSP |
| 2.1 Pursue greater strategic collaboration with partners, with WFP serving in a facilitation role – alongside the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and in relevant technical working groups – to help promote partnerships based on its own comparative advantages to deliver holistic multisectoral school meal programmes with better connections to work on nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, education and other areas. | Strategic | Country office (school feeding unit) | NSFS, UNICEF, World Vision and other cooperating partners (including partners such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security) | Medium | From 2024 into the next CSP |
| 2.2 Revise long-term agreements with high-performing private transporters, refining the vendor pool to promote vendors that possess the capacity to engage in contracts with WFP. These efforts might be supported by secondary bidding processes aimed at ensuring competition and | Operational | Country office (school feeding and procurement units) | N/A | Low | For the next CSP |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsible WFP office and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|---|---------------------|---|---|-------------|-----------------------------|
| helping to provide access to newly qualified potential partners. | | | | | |
| Recommendation 3: Increase investment in nutrition programming for the first 1,000 days of life in order to provide the foundation for a continuum of development activities that change the lives of Sierra Leoneans throughout their lifespans, with nutrition programming for the first 1,000 days of life targeting pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls and children under 2, and, for the next 4,000 days, targeting schoolchildren for school meal programmes, and young people for asset creation and livelihood activities. | Strategic | Country office (nutrition unit, Country Director and Deputy Country Director and partnerships unit) | Ministry of Health, including the Food and Nutrition Directorate, donors and others | High/medium | For the next CSP |
| 3.1 Budget and plan for a significantly scaled up portfolio of malnutrition prevention programming, advocating with donors for more multi-year funds to increase nutrition programming aimed at achieving gains in the first 1,000 days of life, and reinforcing other funding investments for later in life, such as school meal programmes for children, and asset creation and livelihood activities for young people and adults. | Strategic | Country office (nutrition unit, Country Director and Deputy Country Director and partnerships unit) | Ministry of Health, including the Food and Nutrition Directorate and donors | High | From 2024 into the next CSP |
| 3.2 Expand nutrition programming to include adolescent girls, stepping up community advocacy to overcome any cultural barriers that may impede their participation in mother support groups, either directly through WFP activities or indirectly through strategic partnerships, and – where culturally appropriate – target older women as | Operational | Country office (nutrition unit) | N/A | Medium | For the next CSP |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsible WFP office and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|---|---------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| change agents and key members of mother support groups. | | | | | |
| 3.3 Develop a clear plan for moving from the start-up phase of local complementary food production to the profitability phase, which includes sharing and consolidating early experiences across production sites, including with regard to standards for profitability such as break-even points, labour such as fair and living wages, capacity strengthening and training on organizational governance, financial and business management ¹ and other issues. "Do-no-harm" and sustainability issues should also be considered, including through analysis of potential negative impacts. | Operational | Country office (nutrition unit) | | High | For the next CSP |
| 3.4 Leveraging WFP's strengths in supply chains, expand the distribution networks for local complementary foods beyond production sites by including income-generating opportunities for mother support groups that enable them to serve as intermediaries in reselling the foods to other communities, family members, neighbours, markets, etc.; and by exploring the production options for using smaller packages in quantities and at prices that are affordable to vulnerable households in the areas where WFP is working. | Operational | Country office (nutrition unit) | Private sector | Medium | For the next CSP |

¹ The activities under recommendation 3.3 can be pursued in collaboration with partners such as private sector entities that can provide business and management training to mother support group members; cooperating partners with a track record in developing local complementary foods (e.g., Helen Keller International and World Vision); and research institutions that can promote and evaluate good local complementary food production practices (e.g., the International Food Policy Research Institute, Emory University, McGill University, the University of Toronto and others).

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsible WFP office and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|--|---------------------|---|--|------------|----------------------------|
| Recommendation 4: Continued asset creation and livelihood support for farmer-based organizations should include links to market linkages through procurement processes and systems that match the needs of smallholders with limited financial and other resources. | Operational | Country office (school feeding, asset creation and livelihoods, and procurement units) | Regional office and headquarters in Rome | Medium/low | By the end of the next CSP |
| 4.1 Conduct regular, such as annual, assessments of systemic issues related to identifying inefficiencies and bottlenecks in existing procurement processes. | Operational | Country office (procurement unit) and regional office | N/A | Medium/low | For the next CSP |
| 4.2 Continue to make local procurement contracting processes more efficient within existing WFP guidelines, aiming to continue to decrease the length of the local procurement process from the point of delivery to the payment of smallholder farmers. | Operational | Regional office and country office (school feeding, asset creation and livelihoods, and procurement units) | Headquarters in Rome | Medium | By the end of the next CSP |
| 4.3 Develop flexible pricing and contracting mechanisms that foster a “do-no-harm” approach and prioritize the profits of smallholder farmers in case of market volatility, especially when prices increase dramatically. | Operational | Country office (procurement unit) | Regional office and headquarters in Rome | Medium | By the end of the next CSP |
| Recommendation 5: Expand efforts to promote gender equality, women’s economic empowerment and environmental sustainability throughout the next CSP. | Strategic | Country office (crisis response, school feeding, nutrition, asset creation and livelihoods, and RAM units) and headquarters in Rome | Regional office and headquarters in Rome | Medium | By the end of the next CSP |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsible WFP office and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|---|---------------------|---|--|----------|----------------------------|
| 5.1 Apply the WFP environmental and social sustainability framework to all programming to ensure that environmental dimensions are appropriately recognized and addressed and better identify opportunities for promoting equality and women's empowerment. | Strategic | Country office | Regional office and headquarters in Rome | Medium | By the end of the next CSP |
| 5.2 Conduct assessments of the participation of women volunteers in WFP programming, including the members of mother support groups and the cooks of school meals, in order to determine the options for women's economic empowerment and their participation in WFP's programmes such as those for village savings and loan associations, agricultural support, market linkages to local complementary food production sites and HGSE. | Operational | Country office (school feeding, nutrition and RAM units) | Regional office and headquarters in Rome | Medium | By the end of the next CSP |
| 5.3 Better incorporate indicators related to gender equality and women's empowerment, environment and climate throughout the portfolio of activities to encourage monitoring, reporting and progress in both areas, with appropriate support from headquarters in Rome to fill capacity gaps in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment and in environmental screening, identify the most appropriate indicators, and support continuous monitoring and data collection. | Strategic | Country office (crisis response, school feeding, nutrition, asset creation and livelihoods, and RAM units) and headquarters in Rome | Regional office | Medium | For the next CSP |

1. Introduction

1. In line with the World Food Programme (WFP) policy on country strategic plans (CSPs) and the *WFP Evaluation Policy 2022*,² the Office of Evaluation commissioned this evaluation of *WFP Sierra Leone's CSP 2020-2024*. Based on the evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR), this evaluation report (ER) has been prepared by the evaluation team from SALASAN Consulting Inc. based on evaluation activities carried out between December 2023 and February 2025, including data collection in Sierra Leone in June 2024.

1.1 Evaluation features

2. The purpose of this country strategic plan evaluation (CSPE) is twofold: learning and accountability. The CSPE was timed so that the findings, conclusions and recommendations could inform the design of the next WFP CSP for Sierra Leone (2026–2030). The evaluation was conducted in accordance with international guidelines.³ Gender considerations and principles of inclusion, participation and non-discrimination were included at each stage of the evaluation. The evaluation team ensured ethical conduct at all stages of the evaluation, including adhering to detailed protocols for interviews and field visits. The primary users of the evaluation will be the WFP Sierra Leone Country Office, the regional bureau in Dakar, the Office of Evaluation, relevant headquarters divisions and the Executive Board. External users include the Government of Sierra Leone and its various ministries and agencies collaborating with WFP, the United Nations country team and cooperating partners (CPs). The beneficiaries of the CSP interventions are key stakeholders of this evaluation.

1.2 Context

General overview

3. Sierra Leone is a low-income country in West Africa, with the majority of its estimated 8.7 million⁴ people living in rural areas (55 percent) and 15 distinct ethnic groups.⁵ After ending its 11-year civil war in 2002, Sierra Leone made considerable economic and social progress. However, various external and internal shocks, including the outbreak of Ebola virus disease (EVD) in 2014–2016, the COVID-19 pandemic, war in Ukraine,⁶ and increasing inflation rates and devaluation of the Sierra Leonean currency, have slowed recovery, with a 2022 per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of USD 393.⁷

4. In Sierra Leone, 26 percent of the population lives below the international poverty line.⁸ Further, as of 2021, an estimated 59.2 percent of the population in Sierra Leone (4,987,000 people) is

² "WFP Evaluation Policy 2022" (WFP/EB.1/2022/4-C).

³ UNEG. 2020. *United Nations Evaluation Group Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct and Guidance on Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation*.

⁴ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2018. *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2022 Revision*, custom data acquired via website (2024 estimates).

⁵ Government of Sierra Leone. 2015. *Sierra Leone 2015 Population and Housing Census: Thematic Report on Population Structure and Population Distribution*, https://sierraleone.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Population%20structure%20Report_1.pdf (accessed on 9 July 2025).

⁶ World Bank: Sierra Leone. *Macro Poverty Outlook 2023*, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099537204132355832/pdf/IDU0016b03aa06a7a046f00be250e3b933a65a43.pdf> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

⁷ Government of Sierra Leone. 2022. *Report on the 2022 and 2023 Real Gross Domestic Product Figures at 2006 Prices*, https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/gdp/gdp_2022/GDP_Report_2022_2023.pdf (accessed on 9 July 2025).

⁸ UNDP. 2023. *Sierra Leone Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023. Briefing Notes*, <https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/MPI/SLE.pdf> (accessed on 9 July 2025); (2018 data, below USD 2.15 per person/day at 2017 PPP).

multidimensionally poor, while an additional 21.3 percent is classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty (1,790,000 people).⁹ The most recently available Gini coefficient data for Sierra Leone (2018) indicates that the country is characterized by moderate income inequality, with a Gini coefficient of 0.357.¹⁰ The country has a very youthful population – 58 percent of Sierra Leoneans are aged 15–64 years, 39 percent are 0–14 years, and just 3 percent are aged 65 years and above.¹¹ Teenage childbearing¹² was 21 percent in 2019,¹³ with a total fertility rate of 4.2.¹⁴ Sierra Leone's life expectancy at birth (years) in 2021 is 62 for females and 60 for males.¹⁵

National policies and the Sustainable Development Goals

5. In 2016, 2019 and 2021, Sierra Leone completed and reported on three voluntary national reviews (VNRs).¹⁶ The Sierra Leone VNR covered 11 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 1 (ending poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 3 (health) and SDG 5 (gender) – summarizing initiatives, progress, gaps, trends and challenges, and ways forward. There are a number of key national policies¹⁷ developed by the Government of Sierra Leone to illustrate progress towards achieving SDGs and support Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP).

6. Sierra Leone's vision and policies align with the SDGs, as reflected in its long-term *Vision 2035* and its medium-term vision, plans and budgets, including the MTNDP (2019–2023).^{18,19}

Food and nutrition security

7. Figure 3 maps the severity of food insecurity in Sierra Leone, showing that 'crisis'-level food insecurity is largely concentrated in the north of the country.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ World Bank: Sierra Leone. *Macro Poverty Outlook 2023*, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099537204132355832/pdf/IDU0016b03aa06a7a046f00be250e3b933a65a43.pdf> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Percentage of women aged 15–19 who have given birth or are pregnant with their first child.

¹³ Statistics Sierra Leone (Stats SL) and ICF. 2020. *Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2019*. Freetown, Sierra Leone, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: Stats SL and ICF.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ WHO. 2021. *Data Estimates*, <https://data.who.int/countries/694> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

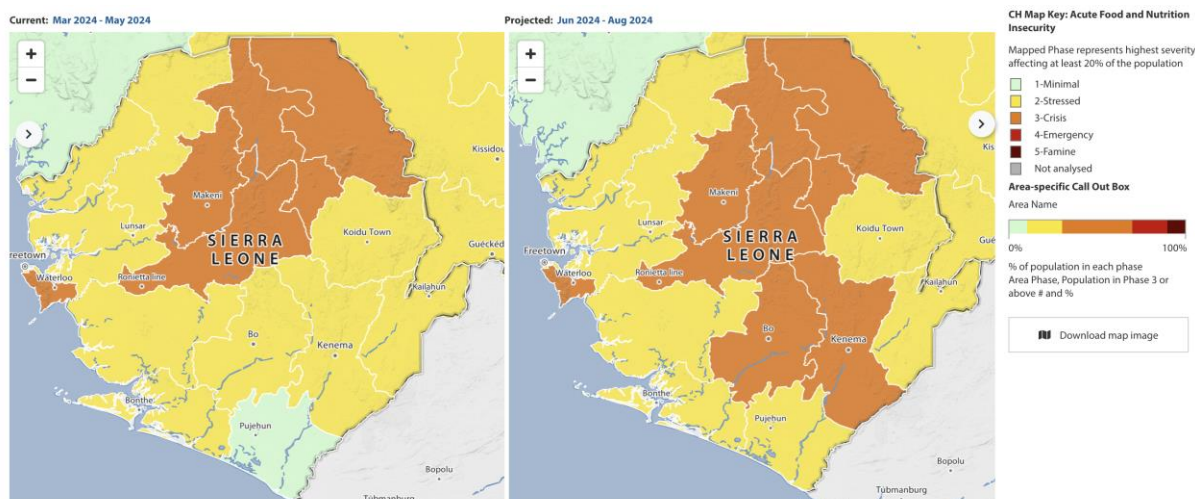
¹⁶ Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, Government of Sierra Leone. 2021. *2021 Voluntary National Report on Sustainable Development Goals in Sierra Leone*.

¹⁷ Sierra Leone Education Plan (2022–2026); National School Feeding Policy (2021); National Agricultural Transformation Policy 2019–2023 (NAT 2023); Sierra Leone National Nutrition Policy (2022–2030); National Sustainable Agriculture Development Plan (2010–2030); Multi-Sectoral Strategic Plan for the Reduction of Malnutrition in Sierra Leone (2019–2025); National Health Strategic Plan (2017–2021); National Social Protection Policy (2017–2022); and the National Gender Strategic Plan (2013–2018).

¹⁸ Government of Sierra Leone. 2019. *Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019–2023)*, <http://moped.gov.sl/mtndp> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

¹⁹ Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, Government of Sierra Leone. 2021. *2021 Voluntary National Report on Sustainable Development Goals in Sierra Leone*.

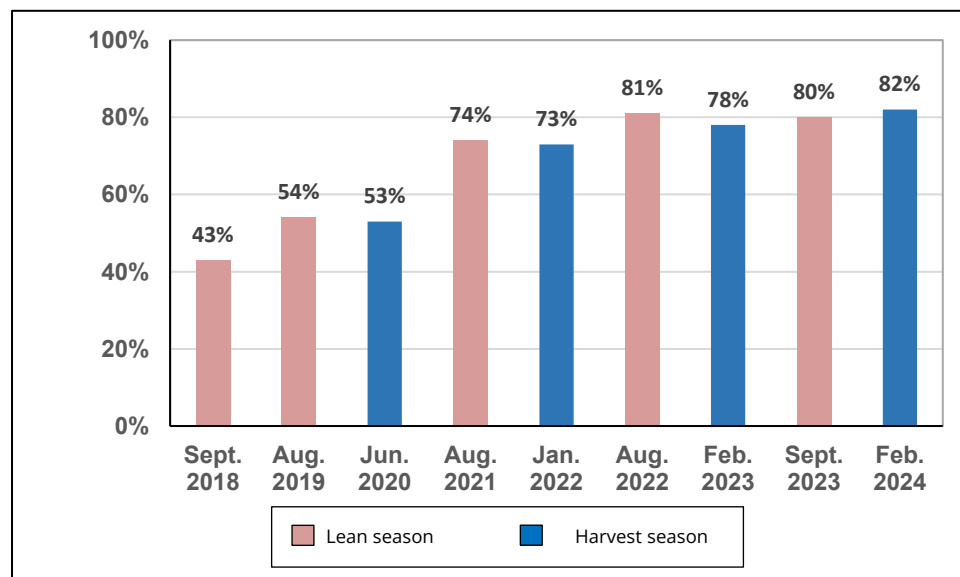
Figure 3: Acute food insecurity classifications in Sierra Leone (current and projected)



Source: *Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (April 2024).*

8. Food insecurity in Sierra Leone increased from 53 percent in 2018 to 82 percent in 2024, as shown in Figure 4. There was a noticeable jump in moderately and severely food-insecure households in 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁰ Those categorized as severely food insecure jumped from 1 in 20 households in 2019 (5 percent) to just under one in five in 2024 (18 percent), with the highest proportion reported in Kenema (40.6 percent), Tonkolili (31.5 percent) and Falaba (31.0 percent) – with higher rates in rural than in urban areas.

Figure 4: Trends of moderately and severely food-insecure households in Sierra Leone (2018–2024)



Source: *WFP, February 2024; Food Security Monitoring System Report.*

²⁰ In March 2020, the GoSL placed a ban on all gatherings of more than 100 people. Gatherings of up to 100 people were allowed again, and restaurants and bars were allowed to resume operations until April 2021.

9. Both chronic (stunting) and acute (wasting) undernutrition rates²¹ have recently stagnated or increased,²² at 26.3 and 5.2 percent, respectively,^{23,24} indicating a poor nutrition situation in Sierra Leone (based on World Health Organization (WHO) prevalence classifications).

10. While Sierra Leone is on course to meet one²⁵ of the targets on maternal infant and young child feeding, no progress has been made in the last two decades on reducing anaemia in children, pregnant women or adolescent girls (over 50 percent with anaemia).²⁶ The low proportion of children aged 6 to 23 months achieving minimum meal frequency (MMF), minimum dietary diversity (MDD) and minimum adequate diet (MAD) in August/September 2021 (33, 23 and 5, respectively)²⁷ is also a concern in Sierra Leone, having stagnated from previous years.²⁸

Agriculture

11. Agriculture (including livestock, forestry and fishing) is the backbone of Sierra Leone's economy, accounting for 57.5 percent of GDP in 2022²⁹ and employing one half of the national labour force (54 percent of women and 49 percent of men).³⁰ Sierra Leone's favourable agricultural environment is suitable for the cultivation of a wide range of crops including rice, oil palm, cocoa, coffee, cassava, groundnut, vegetables, fruits and livestock.

12. An estimated 74 percent of Sierra Leone's area is considered suitable for cultivation, but less than 10 percent is cropped; this is mainly done by smallholder subsistence farmers, with women providing 75 percent of the labour.³¹ The Government of Sierra Leone's national priorities include improving productivity and commercialization of the agricultural sector,³² rice intensification and agricultural diversification.³³

Climate change and vulnerability

13. In 2023, districts reporting the highest proportion of households spending more than 75 percent of total expenditures on food during the lean season³⁴ were also some of the poorest and most vulnerable districts in Sierra Leone. These same districts rely mainly on subsistence crop production and are prone to climatic and economic shocks.³⁵ Heavily reliant on consistent rainfall, such areas are negatively affected by erratic weather patterns resulting in late rain onset, early cessation and/or below-average precipitation. These areas are prone to floods, landslides, tropical storms, coastal erosion and droughts, and the resulting economic damage and loss of lives disproportionately affect the poorest and most vulnerable.

²¹ The World Health Organization classifies thresholds as follows: wasting (%): 'very low' (<2.5), 'low' (2.5–<5), 'medium' (5–<10), 'high' (10–<15) and 'very high' (≥15); stunting (%): 'very low' (<2.5), 'low' (2.5–<10), 'medium' (10–<20), 'high' (20–<30) and 'very high' (≥30).

²² WFP Sierra Leone. 2024. *Food Security Monitoring Systems Report, February 2024*.

²³ Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Government of Sierra Leone. 2021. *Sierra Leone National Nutrition Survey 2021*. Data was collected in August 2021 (peak hunger gap).

²⁴ WFP Sierra Leone. 2024. *Food Security Monitoring System Report, February 2024*.

²⁵ That is, 53 percent of infants were exclusively breastfed (to 6 months) in 2021.

²⁶ Global Nutrition Report. 2019. *Sierra Leone. Anemia Rates 2019*, <https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/africa/western-africa/sierra-leone> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

²⁷ Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Government of Sierra Leone. 2021. *Sierra Leone National Nutrition Survey 2021*.

²⁸ Statistics Sierra Leone (Stats SL) and ICF. 2020. *Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2019*. Freetown, Sierra Leone, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: Stats SL and ICF.

²⁹ Statistics Sierra Leone (Stats SL). 2022. National Accounts and Economic Statistics Division 2022. *Report on the 2021 and 2022 Real Gross Domestic Product (RGDP) Figures at 2006 Prices*. Freetown, Sierra Leone: Stats SL.

³⁰ Statistics Sierra Leone (Stats SL) and ICF. 2020. *Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2019*. Freetown, Sierra Leone, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: Stats SL and ICF.

³¹ FAO. 2018. *Country Gender Assessment Series. National Gender Profile of Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods*. Sierra Leone. 2018.

³² Government of Sierra Leone. 2019. *Sierra Leone Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019–2023)*.

³³ Ministry of Agriculture. 2023. "Our Priority Areas", 7 February, <https://maf.gov.sl> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

³⁴ For example, Karene (94 percent), Moyamba (94 percent), Pujehun (90 percent) and Port Loko (88 percent).

³⁵ WFP Sierra Leone. 2023. *Food Security Monitoring System Report*.

Education

14. Sierra Leone's literacy rate for young people aged 15 years and older was 49 percent in 2022, one of the world's lowest literacy rates. According to the latest available Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey data (2017), the percentage of children of primary school entry age entering Grade 1 was 62.7 percent (62.2 percent for girls and 63.1 percent for boys), with a primary school completion rate of 64.2 percent (65.1 percent for girls and 63.3 percent for boys).³⁶ Secondary school completion rates are only 21.7 percent, and higher among boys (27.4 percent) than girls (17.5 percent).³⁷ Education continues to be a priority for the Government of Sierra Leone,³⁸ with a share of 33.4 percent of total government spending in 2021 compared with 15.2 percent in 2013.³⁹ The provision of regular school meals – through school feeding (SF) – has been instituted to encourage continuous school attendance among primary school children.

Gender, equity and inclusion

15. In 2021, Sierra Leone was ranked 162nd out of 191 countries in the Gender Inequality Index. There is limited progress seen in the percentage of women employed for cash in non-agricultural activities (45 percent of the total in 2021 compared with 41 percent in 2013),⁴⁰ meaning that most women do not earn an income. Women are twice as likely to do unpaid work as men.⁴¹

16. Women play a prominent role across Sierra Leone's agricultural economy, but lack access to and control of productive resources to fully participate in different facets of major agricultural value chains.⁴² Despite the passage of a national Gender in Agriculture Policy in 2020,⁴³ the country's first Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy in 2020⁴⁴ and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act,⁴⁵ discriminatory social norms around the appropriate roles and responsibilities for women and men still create considerable barriers that limit the participation of females in Sierra Leonean society, contributing to serious protection issues like gender-based violence.⁴⁶

Humanitarian protection

17. Food insecurity is a key driver of humanitarian risk in Sierra Leone: in November 2023, 1,172,222

³⁶ UNICEF and Government of Sierra Leone. 2017. *Sierra Leone Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017, Survey Findings Report*.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Government of Sierra Leone. 2019. *Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019–2023)* and Free Quality School Education (FQSE) programme at <https://mbsse.gov.sl/fqse>.

³⁹ World Bank. 2023. *Government Expenditure on Education, Total (% of Government Expenditure) – Sierra Leone*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GB.ZS?locations=SL> (accessed on 20 December 2023).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ DHS. 2019. *Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2019*.

⁴² Lima de Faria, M. 2023. *Women's Role in Agricultural Value Chains – Lessons Learnt From VCA4D – Gender Equality Analysis*, Paper for the VCA4D Conference: Value Chain Analysis for Development: providing evidence for better policies and operations in agricultural value chains, 18–19 January, https://agritrop.cirad.fr/607262/13/607262_communication.pdf (accessed on 9 July 2025).

⁴³ Government of Sierra Leone. 2020. *Gender in Agriculture Policy 2020*, https://bafs.org.sl/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Final-MAF-Gender-in-Agriculture-Policy_v_Jul2020.pdf (accessed on 9 July 2025).

⁴⁴ The State House, Office of the President. 2020. *Sierra Leone's President Julius Maada Bio Launches Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy, Says Happy Women Make a Happy Nation*, <https://statehouse.gov.sl/sierra-leones-president-julius-maada-bio-launches-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-policy-says-happy-women-make-a-happy-nation> (accessed on 20 December 2023).

⁴⁵ NDI. 2023. *Sierra Leone: A Groundbreaking Gender Equality Bill Passes (1 February 2023)*, <https://www.ndi.org/our-stories/sierra-leone-groundbreaking-gender-equality-bill-passes> (accessed on 20 December 2023).

⁴⁶ Of women aged 15–49, 60.7 percent say they have experienced physical violence since age 15, 7.4 percent have experienced sexual violence (see DHS 2019; Sierra Leone DHS 2019) and there are 776,00 child brides in Sierra Leone, 253,600 of whom were married before the age of 15 (see UNFPA and UNICEF, 2021, Country Profile 2021, UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage – Sierra Leone).

people were in 'crisis'-level food and nutrition situations.⁴⁷ Moreover, 89 percent of Sierra Leonean households cannot meet their essential needs, while 80 percent cannot afford a 2,100 Kcal diet due to the high (and rising) cost of nutritious food in the country.⁴⁸

International development assistance

18. Top sources of official development assistance (ODA) and humanitarian aid to Sierra Leone in 2020–2024 were donors such as European Union institutions, the United Kingdom, the United States, the African Development Fund, the Global Fund, Germany, Ireland and Japan, as well as the International Development Association⁴⁹ and International Monetary Fund.⁵⁰ The top sectors receiving ODA from bilateral donors (30 percent of ODA) between 2020 and 2021 were health and population (55 percent), other social infrastructure and services (14 percent), education (8 percent) and economic infrastructure (7 percent).⁵¹

1.3 Subject being evaluated

Strategic focus of the country strategic plan

19. A Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan (T-ICSP) was introduced (January 2018–December 2019), which built on WFP's EVD recovery operation, reflected the government's priorities and aligned with the Sierra Leone United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The Sierra Leone CSP (2020–2024), which has been extended until 2025, maintained a similar combination of focus areas to the T-ICSP, with some important strategic changes; see Table A6 in Annex V for an overview of CSP strategic outcomes, activities and focus areas.

20. The CSP was developed in consultation with the Government of Sierra Leone and other stakeholders; it was informed by contextual needs, gap analyses and recommendations from the 2019 national Zero Hunger Strategic Review (ZHSR). It aims to contribute to the national government's priorities and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).⁵² The primary CSP link with SDGs is SDG 2 (zero hunger), with country capacity strengthening (CCS) and service provision activities also supporting SDG 17. Figure 5 provides an overview of WFP operations, national policies and key contextual events that occurred during the time of the CSP, as well as an overview of key elements of the CSP itself as it evolved since 2020.

⁴⁷ RPCA. 2024. Analysis: Explore CH, 28 February, <https://www.food-security.net/analysis-and-response?Country=&Level1=&Level2=> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

⁴⁸ WFP. 2023. *Sierra Leone Food Security Monitoring System Report*, September 2023.

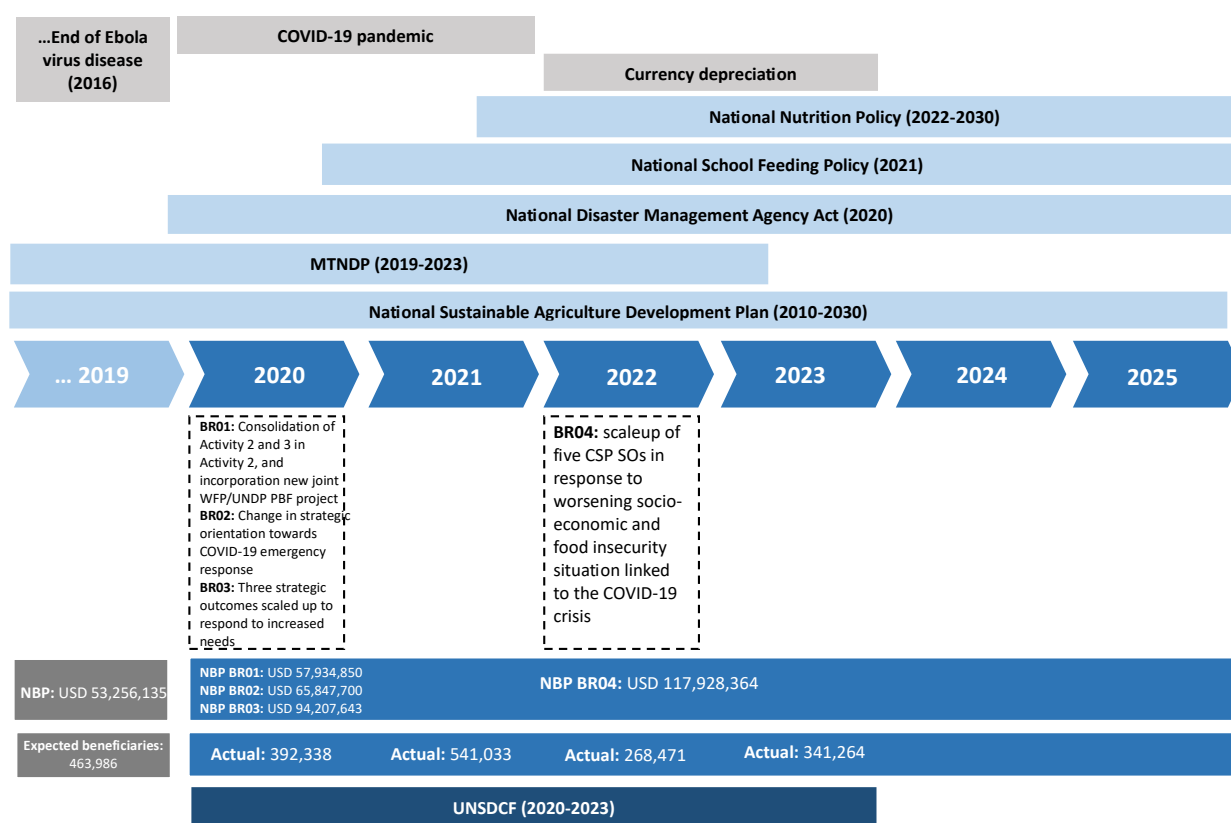
⁴⁹ The International Development Association is a part of the World Bank Group.

⁵⁰ OECD. 2024. *Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows to Developing Countries 2024*. OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/fbd9569c-en-fr> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

⁵¹ OECD (2024), *Aid at a Glance*, <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/insights/data-explainers/2024/05/aid-at-a-glance.html> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

⁵² UN. 2019. *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Sierra Leone (2020–2023)*, <https://sierraleone.un.org/en/100608-united-nations-sustainable-development-cooperation-framework-sierra-leone-2020-2023>.

Figure 5: CSP timeline relative to key national policies and contextual factors



Source: Evaluation team.

21. The CSP had a line of sight and results framework but did not have an explicit theory of change (ToC) at the time of design. During the inception phase, the evaluation team developed a reconstructed ToC (in consultation with the WFP Country Office and Office of Evaluation) with critical assumptions. A detailed ToC narrative is presented in Annex VIII, which outlines the reconstruction logic and process.

Financial overview

22. As of August 2024, the CSP was funded at 70.6 percent of its needs-based plan (NBP),⁵³ which was up from 62.7 percent as of December 2023.⁵⁴

⁵³ As of 1 August 2024, the revised NBP was: USD 117,928,364; total allocated resource was: USD 83,311,231; percentage of NBP funded was: 70.6 percent; and shortfall of NBP was: USD 34,617,133; Source: The FACTory, retrieved 1 August 2024.

⁵⁴ As of 31 December 2023, the revised NBP was: USD 117,928,364; total allocated resources were: USD 73,906,084; percentage of NBP funded was: 62.7 percent; and the shortfall of NBP was: USD 44,022,279; Source: The FACTory, retrieved 1 August 2024; Source: The FACTory retrieved 1 January 2024.

23. Table 2 shows funding by strategic outcome up to 2023 (disaggregated data per strategic outcome will not be available in time for the drafting of the report).

Table 2: Cumulative financial overview as of 31 December 2023 (amount in USD)*

| Focus areas | Strategic outcomes | Activities | Cumulative NBP (2020–2025) (USD) | | | | Confirmed allocated resources (USD) | % funded |
|------------------------------|--------------------|------------|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| | | | Original NPB | % of total | Revised NBP (BR04) | % of total | | |
| <i>Crisis Response</i> | SO1 | Activity 1 | 1,194,791 | 2.2% | 38,792,391 | 32.9% | 15.7 million | 35.5% |
| <i>Resilience Building</i> | SO2 | Activity 2 | 24,070,089 | 45.2% | 33,450,458 | 28.4% | 28.1 million | 73.0% |
| <i>Root Causes</i> | SO3 | Activity 4 | 8,229,467 | 15.5% | 9,299,314 | 7.9% | 3.3 million | 30.6% |
| <i>Resilience Building</i> | SO4 | Activity 5 | 5,573,395 | 10.5% | 15,007,722 | 12.7% | 10.9 million | 63.0% |
| <i>Resilience Building</i> | SO5 | Activity 6 | 2,429,113 | 4.6% | 5,562,123 | 4.7% | 1.9 million | 29.2% |
| <i>Crisis Response</i> | SO6 | Activity 7 | 0 | 0.0% | 547,500 | 0.5% | 0.3 million | 50.0% |
| Direct Operating Cost | | | 41,496,855 | 77.9% | 102,659,508 | 87.0% | 60.2 million | 58.6% |
| Direct Support Cost (DSC) | | | 8,508,905 | 16% | 8,107,976 | 6.9% | | |
| Total Direct Cost | | | 50,005,760 | 93.9% | 110,767,484 | 93.9% | | |
| Indirect Support Cost (ISC) | | | 3,250,374 | 6.1% | 7,160,880 | 6.1% | | |
| Total WFP Cost | | | 53,256,134 | | 117,928,364 | | | |

Source: IRM Analytics (ACR1-A SL02 2018–2023). The allocated resources and expenditure figures do not include activities not specific to strategic outcomes.

The original CSP NBP was USD 53.2 million over five years (see

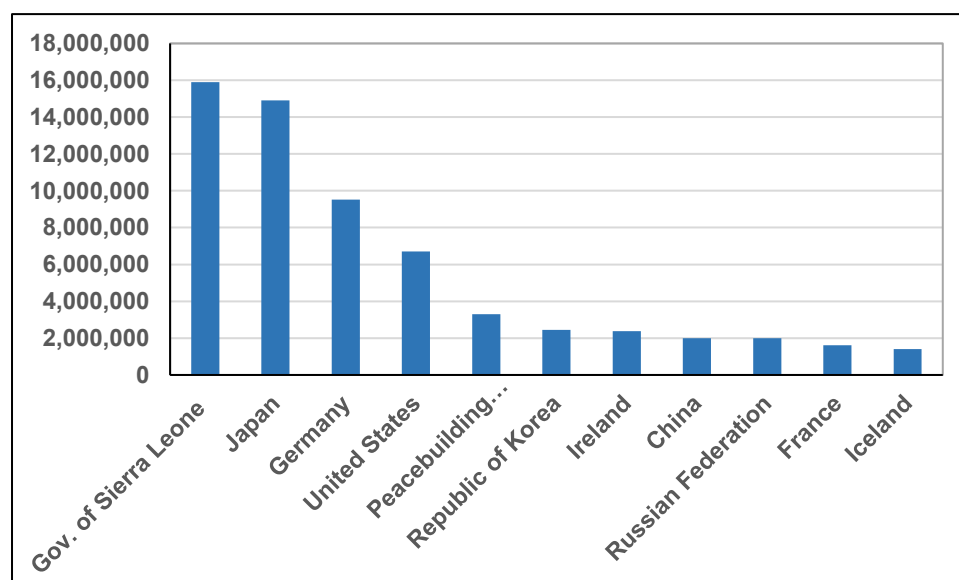
24. Table 2). The first three budget revisions (BR01, BR02 and BR03) were in March, July and September of 2020, followed by a fourth (BR04) in 2022, and were largely in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and WFP's global Level 3 emergency declaration with increased budgets mainly for in-kind transfers and cash-based transfers (CBTs) under SO1, SO2 and SO4.⁵⁵ Following BR04, the total NBP was USD 117.9 million. In the original NBP, SO2 represented the largest share of the NBP (45.2 percent), followed by SO3 (15.5 percent) and SO4 (10.5 percent). However, following BR04, SO1 represents the largest share of the revised NBP (32.9 percent), followed by SO2 (28.4 percent) and SO4 (12.7 percent).

Contributions to WFP Sierra Leone CSP

25. The top donor over the CSP period is the Government of Sierra Leone, which provides USD 15,904,309 (13.5 percent of the NBP, for SF). In terms of ODA, Figure 4 shows contributions to the CSP by donor country. ODA accounts for 37.3 percent of total CSP funding. Japan is the largest contributor of ODA to the Sierra Leone CSP (12.6 percent), with Germany being second (8.1 percent) and the United States third (providing 5.7 percent).

⁵⁵ A Level 3 emergency is the classification for a severe, large-scale, sudden-onset humanitarian crisis that requires system-wide mobilization to scale up a humanitarian response and improve overall assistance.

Figure 6: Top ODA contributions by donor (1 January 2020 to 31 December 2025) (USD)



Source: WFP FACTory, Sierra Leone resource situation as of 1 August 2024.

26. In addition to the funding noted above, private funding for the CSP was USD 4,039,137 (3.4 percent). Finally, another key donor is the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), with USD 3,299,559 provided over the course of the CSP (2.8 percent).

Overview of beneficiaries

27. Table 3 shows that beneficiary numbers steadily increased over the course of the CSP – from 463,986 at its start, to 1,191,831 total beneficiaries by its end. This was an overall increase of 156.9 percent in beneficiaries.

Table 3: Planned number of beneficiaries in original NBP and BRs

| | Original CSP | BR01 | BR02 | BR03 | BR04 |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| Beneficiary numbers | 463,986 | 478,504 | 598,708 | 1,164,388 | 1,191,831 |
| Change | N/A | 16,650 | 108,389 | 567,680 | 196,540 |
| Percent increase (from previous BR) | N/A | 3.6% | 22.7% | 94.8% | 16.9% |

Source: Original NBP, BR01, 02, 03 and 04 narratives.

28. Table 4 indicates that female beneficiaries outnumber male beneficiaries in all years (2020–2023) both in planned and actual numbers. WFP reached fewer beneficiaries than planned each year, with the exception of 2023.

Table 4: Summary of planned and actual beneficiaries disaggregated by sex

| | Planned | | | Actual | | | % actual vs planned |
|------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------------|
| | F | M | Total | F | M | Total | |
| 2020 | 282,603 | 229,401 | 512,004 | 214,461 | 175,857 | 390,318 | 76.2% |
| 2021 | 481,904 | 414,099 | 896,003 | 292,058 | 246,954 | 539,012 | 60.2% |
| 2022 | 356,906 | 321,339 | 678,245 | 139,548 | 126,901 | 266,449 | 39.3% |
| 2023 | 180,030 | 158,396 | 338,426 | 178,317 | 160,924 | 339,241 | 101.7% |

Source: COMET report CM-R001b.

29. Table 4 indicates that, in all years, children (5–17/18) years are the largest group of actual beneficiaries reached. This reflects the substantial size of WFP's SF programmes, which had by far the largest number of beneficiaries, followed by recipients of food/cash transfers, with nutrition the lowest.

Table 5: Actual total beneficiaries by age group

| Age disaggregation | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Children (0–23 months) | 15,916 | 28,158 | 4,008 | 6,856 | 15,916 |
| Children (24–59 months) | 16,984 | 30,351 | 4,509 | 7,831 | 16,984 |
| Children (5–17/18) | 308,993 | 385,127 | 230,852 | 265,640 | 308,993 |
| Adults (18 years plus) | 48,423 | 95,373 | 27,081 | 58,914 | 48,423 |

Source: Original NBP, BR01, 02, 03, 04 and 05 narratives.

1.4 Methodology and ethical considerations

Evaluation questions

30. The evaluation covers WFP's Sierra Leone CSP (activities from January 2020 to the end of June 2024),⁵⁶ and involves an evaluation of strategic outcomes, cross-cutting outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs that were included in the CSP document approved by the WFP Executive Board, including BR01 to BR05. The evaluation addressed four evaluation questions (EQs) common to all WFP CSPEs related to relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability:

- EQ1: To what extent is the CSP evidence based and strategically focused to address the needs of the most vulnerable?
- EQ2: What is the extent and quality of WFP's specific contribution to CSP strategic outcomes and the UNSDCF in Sierra Leone?
- EQ3: To what extent has WFP used its resources efficiently in contributing to CSP outputs and strategic outcomes?
- EQ4: What are the factors that explain WFP performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected by the CSP?

31. The evaluation team tailored the standard EQs (and 23 sub-questions) to reflect the CSP and Sierra Leone context. To answer the EQs, the evaluation team assessed adherence to humanitarian principles (where relevant and/or possible), protection issues, accountability to affected populations (AAP), the environmental impact of WFP activities, and the differential effects on men, women, girls, boys and other relevant socioeconomic groups.

⁵⁶ The time the data collection of this CSPE ended.

Methodological approach

32. Drawing on the evaluability assessment conducted during the evaluation's inception phase (see Annex VII), the evaluation team adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches and using deductive and inductive cycles of inquiry. The evaluation method relied on qualitative data from key informants, supplemented with quantitative primary data (beneficiary household survey) and quantitative secondary data, which was primarily descriptive (e.g. financial, number of beneficiaries, quantity of transfers, geographic coverage and timelines).

Data collection and analysis

33. Quantitative sources of secondary data from the e-library were complemented by qualitative data from primary research largely centred on key informant interviews (KIIs) in Freetown (as well as remote interviews with former senior management). Outside of Freetown, the evaluation team conducted KIIs with WFP staff at sub-offices in Makeni and Kenema, as well as KIIs and focus group discussions (FGDs) in three districts – Port Loko, Kambia and Pujehun – which represented a cross-section of WFP programmes under the CSP. Further, quantitative primary data was collected through a beneficiary survey implemented in the districts of Kambia and Pujehun. The main data collection methods are listed in Table 5 and described in detail in Annex IV, including the main limitations of the evaluation and the mitigation measures taken to address these limitations.

Table 6: Description of methods used

| | Sample description | Sample size |
|---|---|---|
| <i>Review of secondary data (document review and data analysis)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reports of WFP interventions; project endlines/evaluation• Decentralized evaluations• WFP annual country reports• CSP monitoring and financial data• Relevant external documents• United Nations documents• CFSVA and FSMS• Government of Sierra Leone policies, strategies, plans, etc. | N/A |
| <i>KIIs</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interviews with 26 different stakeholder groups in Freetown, Bo, Kambia, Port Loko and Pujehun• See Annex XII for a further breakdown of KIIs | 90 key informants (62 males and 28 females) |
| <i>FGDs</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 23 FGDs in Kambia, Port Loko and Pujehun• See Annex XII for a further breakdown of FGDs | 195 participants (69 males and 126 females) |
| <i>Beneficiary survey</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Primary quantitative data collected by a survey team of eight members, who surveyed beneficiaries of WFP nutrition programming in Kambia and Pujehun• See Annex VI for more on the beneficiary survey | 960 female survey respondents |

Source: Evaluation team.

34. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used, allowing the evaluation team to triangulate findings and compare data across different methods and sources to check for consistency. For qualitative data, the evaluation team used content analysis to identify key themes in responses between interviews and focus groups to give meaning to the data, based on coding important issues and using this to determine qualitative trends. All quantitative data was interpreted using mostly descriptive statistics (frequencies, cross-tabulations, central tendencies, etc.) to determine the performance and efficiencies of available quantitative indicators related to strategic outcomes, as well as to analyse key elements of WFP's nutritional programming based on a beneficiary survey. Data analysis and reporting were all further enriched by stakeholder feedback provided during an exit debriefing and a learning workshop oriented towards presenting the findings of the evaluation. Only validated findings are presented in the report.

35. All aspects of the evaluation were carried out in a gender-responsive manner, with the aim of assessing the quality of the gender analysis that was undertaken before the CSP was designed and whether the results of the gender-responsive programming were properly integrated into the CSP implementation,

including a discussion on the intended and unintended effects the intervention had had on gender equity and gender transformation.

Ethical considerations

36. All aspects of the evaluation conformed to the 2020 UNEG Ethical Guidelines. As such, ethical considerations were embedded throughout the evaluation's implementation. The evaluation team adhered to the WFP confidentiality statement and ethical safeguards. Interviews and focus groups with all participants were based on informed prior consent, and data management protocols ensured interviewee anonymity and confidentiality in line with WFP data protection standards. The evaluation team also used translators, allowing beneficiaries to express themselves in their local language. Stakeholders were informed of their right to participate and of their prerogative to terminate an interview at any point.

2. Evaluation findings

37. This findings section is systematically organized around the evaluation matrix and presents the responses to each evaluation question (EQ) and sub-question (sub-EQ), along with a summary of findings per sub-EQ.

2.1 EQ1: To what extent is WFP's strategic position, role and specific contribution based on country priorities and people's needs as well as WFP's strengths?

EQ1.1: To what extent was the CSP informed by existing evidence on the hunger challenges, food security and nutrition issues prevailing in Sierra Leone to ensure its relevance at the design stage?

Summary of findings: The CSP was informed by in-depth analysis of prevailing hunger challenges across important groups and addressed relevant food security and nutrition issues in Sierra Leone at the time of design. The shift to increasing focus on prevention of malnutrition was relevant to nutritional challenges present in Sierra Leone over the CSP period, though it could have benefited from a transition strategy.

Finding 1: The CSP, strategic outcomes and activities were relevant and addressed the food security and nutrition situation in Sierra Leone at the time of design, being informed by an in-depth review and analysis of prevailing hunger challenges of vulnerable groups.

38. KIIs indicated that the CSP was informed by multiple relevant data sources, including the Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA),⁵⁷ the national nutrition surveys,^{58,59} the Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) reports,⁶⁰ the evaluation of WFP's protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO),⁶¹ five-year trend analyses for Integrated Context Analysis (see Annex V food security / risk analysis map),⁶² and the ZHSR.⁶³ The ZHSR notes that Sierra Leone is a "low income" "food deficit" country that is "vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate changes", and cites the "importance of agriculture as the economic backbone" and the "indispensable role of nutrition" in achieving SDG 2.⁶⁴

39. WFP's CSP was designed to integrate humanitarian and development actions by direct implementation and by strengthening government capacity to reduce the risk of increased food insecurity, malnutrition and hunger. Broadly speaking, SO1, SO3 and SO6 focused on humanitarian assistance through

⁵⁷ WFP. 2015. *State of Food Security in Sierra Leone 2015: Comprehensive Food Security and vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA)*, <https://www.wfp.org/publications/sierra-leone-comprehensive-food-security-and-vulnerability-analysis-december-2015>.

⁵⁸ Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Government of Sierra Leone and UNICEF Sierra Leone. 2014. *Sierra Leone National Nutrition Survey 2014*. Freetown, Sierra Leone, <https://www.medbox.org/document/sierra-leone-national-nutrition-survey-2014> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

⁵⁹ Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Government of Sierra Leone. 2017. *Sierra Leone National Nutrition Survey 2017*, <https://reliefweb.int/report/sierra-leone/sierra-leone-national-nutrition-survey-2017-august-28-october-10-2017> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

⁶⁰ WFP. 2018. *Sierra Leone Food Security Monitoring System Report (FSMS)*, September 2018.

⁶¹ WFP. 2018. *Decentralized Evaluation. Final Evaluation of Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation 200938: 'Rebuilding Food and Nutrition Security and Strengthening Disaster Management Capabilities in Sierra Leone' June 2016 to December 2017 Evaluation Report*.

⁶² An Integrated Context Analysis for Sierra Leone was awaiting validation at the time the CSP was being drafted.

⁶³ Government of Sierra Leone. 2019. *Sierra Leone Zero Hunger Strategic Review*.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

food and cash transfers, and SO2, SO3, SO4 and SO5 focused on development approaches targeted at improving nutrition and agriculture.

40. Activities under each strategic outcome were then, in most instances, targeted at districts with high food insecurity and malnutrition levels according to CFSVA and FSMS data.⁶⁵ Four of the five districts targeted for SF (SO2) had high levels of food insecurity, high malnutrition rates or both. Nutrition interventions (SO3) were well targeted, as all three districts (Kambia, Moyamba and Pujehun) had high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition; the seven districts targeted for livelihoods interventions (SO4)⁶⁶ had the highest rates of severe food insecurity⁶⁷ and/or malnutrition.⁶⁸

41. The CSP continued the shift from relief to recovery – expanding on PRRO efforts to improve food security and protect livelihoods in the most vulnerable populations.⁶⁹ Targeting smallholder farmers (SHFs) aims to address gaps identified in the national ZHSR and CFSVA, including low agricultural productivity due to technology and equipment limitations, limited food diversity and extension services, lack of affordable financing and poor access to markets, as well as prevalent gender inequalities that inhibit women's access to productive assets (e.g. land ownership and financing).^{70,71} Importantly, women and youth are vulnerable population groups in Sierra Leone, and as the majority of agriculture work is done by women, targeting these groups through smallholder support is important to achieve the desired CSP outcomes.

42. The evaluation team notes that the CSP has targeted the correct group for the highest returns (cost-effective),⁷² as the large body of international scientific evidence shows that poor nutrition during the critical 1,000-day window (i.e. the period from conception to a child's second birthday) can cause irreversible damage to cognitive development⁷³ and has educational,⁷⁴ income and productivity⁷⁵ consequences reaching adolescents (8,000 days) and into adulthood. The economic costs of undernutrition are huge, costing African economies between 3 and 16 percent of GDP annually.⁷⁶ Thus, using WFP nutrition programming to target pregnant and breastfeeding women (PBW) and children under two is in line with current evidence to improve hunger gaps.

⁶⁵ KIs with WFP Country Office and partners.

⁶⁶ Tonkolili, Koinadugu, Kambia, Bombali, Bonthe, Pujehun and Moyamba.

⁶⁷ Ibid. Overall food insecurity (combining moderate and severely food insecure households) was highest in Tonkolili (62.7 percent) and Koinadugu (62.5 percent).

⁶⁸ Statistics Sierra Leone (Stats SL) and ICF. 2020. *Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2019*. Freetown, Sierra Leone, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: Stats SL and ICF.

⁶⁹ WFP. 2016. *Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation – Sierra Leone 200938 "Rebuilding food and nutrition security and strengthening disaster management capabilities in Sierra Leone"*.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.7.

⁷¹ Examples of CSP activities that specifically addressed the identified gaps and which were all well-received include ACL activities to increase SHF's rice production and diversity of foods, creation of markets for rice and vegetables through HGSP, production of LCFs, increasing representation and building capacity of women farmers' groups.

⁷² Larsen, B., Hoddinott, J. and Razvi, S. 2023. Investing in Nutrition: A Global Best Investment Case. *Journal of Benefit-Cost Analysis*, 14(S1): 235–54, <https://doi.org/10.1017/bca.2023.22>. See also: <https://copenhagenconsensus.com/publication/halftime-sdgs-nutrition>.

⁷³ Martorell, R. et al. 2010. Weight Gain in the First Two Years of Life Is an Important Predictor of Schooling Outcomes in Pooled Analysis from 5 Birth Cohorts from Low- and Middle-Income Countries. *Journal of Nutrition*, 140: 348–54.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Hoddinott, J. et al. 2011. *The Consequences of Early Childhood Growth Failure Over the Life Course, Discussion Paper 1073*. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute.

⁷⁶ WFP. 2019. *The Cost of Hunger in Africa Series*, <https://www.wfp.org/publications/cost-hunger-africa-series> (accessed on 9 July 2025). See also: Global Panel. 2016. *The Cost of Malnutrition. Why Policy Action Is Urgent*. London, UK: Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition, <https://glopan.org/cost-of-malnutrition> (accessed on 9 July 2025); Hoddinott, J. 2016. *The Economics of Reducing Malnutrition in Sub-Saharan Africa, Global Panel Working Paper*. London: Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition, <https://www.gov.uk/research-for-development-outputs/the-economics-of-reducing-malnutrition-in-sub-saharan-africa> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

Finding 2: The shift towards an increasing focus on prevention of malnutrition and production of local complementary foods (LCFs) in Sierra Leone, while maintaining a ‘contingency component’ for emergency response for treatment of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM), was relevant to nutritional challenges present in Sierra Leone over the CSP period. Indeed, WFP implemented the ‘contingency component’ of MAM treatment during COVID-19 (2020–2021) based on critical levels of malnutrition. However, the CSP design did not include a transition strategy from treatment to prevention of MAM, and the evaluation team did not learn of plans to address subsequent (2024) critical levels of malnutrition with MAM treatment.

43. Given that, globally, WFP is the lead United Nations agency for MAM⁷⁷ and has committed to playing a central role in the Global Action Plan on child wasting to decrease wasting to less than 5 percent by 2025,⁷⁸ and that Sierra Leone has set a national goal of reducing wasting levels from 4 percent in 2017 to 3 percent by 2025,⁷⁹ the continued focus on prevention and treatment of wasting is relevant.

44. At the time of the CSP design (2019), wasting levels ranged between 4.3 and 9.7 percent, averaging 6.6 percent in WFP’s seven food security and nutrition targeted districts,⁸⁰ indicating a significant need for prevention interventions and justifying a contingency component for shifting from prevention to treatment should the situation deteriorate.

45. In 2020, as a result of COVID-19, the situation deteriorated, and from 2020 to 2021 WFP shifted to its contingency plan to treat MAM as requested by the Government of Sierra Leone, which was noted by key informants to be effective. In 2022, WFP discontinued its support for MAM treatment programmes based on improved global acute malnutrition (GAM) rates, but without a transition phase or an exit strategy for MAM treatment activities.

46. KIIs anticipated that the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and other partners would cover the treatment of MAM along with severe acute malnutrition (SAM), to address any gaps from the cessation of treatment-oriented programming by WFP. However, KIIs with United Nations country team partners working in nutrition suggested that organizational resources were insufficient to meet the burden of both the MAM and SAM treatment.⁸¹

47. However, the 2024 prevalence of GAM as measured by the proxy mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC)⁸² in Sierra Leone was almost double (5.2 percent)⁸³ that of 2021 (2.7 percent),⁸⁴ when WFP rightly phased out its treatment of MAM,⁸⁵ and parallels a similar deterioration in food security.⁸⁶ The 2024 GAM based on the proxy MUAC is classified by Cadre Harmonisé and IPC at Phase 3 (serious) level.⁸⁷ While WFP’s prevention activities (including social and behaviour change communication, or SBCC) had the highest annual reach in 2022 (Table A6 in Annex V), that same year mother support groups (MSGs) identified 6,572

⁷⁷ Global Nutrition Cluster. 2017. *Moderate Acute Malnutrition: A Decision Tool for Emergencies*.

⁷⁸ UNICEF, FAO, UNHCR, WFP and WHO. 2021. *Global Action Plan on Child Wasting: A Framework for Action to Accelerate Progress in Preventing and Managing Child Wasting and the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals*, <https://www.childwasting.org/media/1126/file/GAP-Framework-AII-FINAL-2021-11-15.pdf> (accessed on 5 July 2025).

⁷⁹ Government of Sierra Leone. 2019. *Multi-Sector Strategic Plan to Reduce Malnutrition in Sierra Leone 2019–2025*.

⁸⁰ Statistics Sierra Leone (Stats SL) and ICF. 2020. *Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2019*. Freetown, Sierra Leone, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: Stats SL and ICF.

⁸¹ KIIs.

⁸² MUAC measurement of GAM appears to identify about one-half the prevalence of GAM when compared with the standard weight for height Z scores (WHZ) measurements. See comparisons of GAM as measured by MUAC and WHZ in Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Government of Sierra Leone. 2021. *Sierra Leone National Nutrition Survey 2021*. Freetown, Sierra Leone.

⁸³ WFP Sierra Leone Country Office. 2024. *Food Security Monitoring System Report, Sierra Leone*.

⁸⁴ Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Government of Sierra Leone. 2021. *Sierra Leone National Nutrition Survey 2021*.

⁸⁵ Endorsed by the WFP Executive Board.

⁸⁶ Percent of severely food insecure increased from 12 (2021) to 28 (2023) percent and overall food insecure from 74 (2021) to 80 (2023) percent.

⁸⁷ https://fscluster.org/handbook/Section_three_proxy.html; <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ch>; https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/manual/IPC_Technical_Manual_3_Final.pdf.

acutely malnourished children in WFP's three operational districts,⁸⁸ indicating that WFP's prevention activities have not been able to prevent the deterioration in nutrition. The high 2022 GAM numbers also parallel the rising food and fuel prices, depreciating local currency and March 2022 Cadre Harmonisé finding that over 1.2 million people were found to need emergency food assistance.⁸⁹

48. Despite the WFP findings of recent (2024) GAM and food security deterioration⁹⁰ and the risk of mortality among MAM children being three times that of well-nourished children, the evaluation team did not learn of plans by WFP or partners to treat MAM in response to this deterioration or in the event of further deterioration.

EQ1.2a: To what extent does the CSP reflect and respond to the needs of national policies and plans and to the SDGs?

Summary of findings: The CSP reflected and responded to key national priorities and the SDGs, and remained as a strategic, flexible programming framework, even given a shifting context over the implementation period.

Finding 3: The CSP strategic outcomes and activities reflected and responded to key national policies, strategies and programmes, as well as to the SDGs.

49. The WFP CSP strategic outcomes and activities aligned with and reflected the sector-specific strategies and plans related to achieving zero hunger (SDG 2), and strongly linked with SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 13, 15 and 17.⁹¹

50. SO1 aligns with Sierra Leone's National Disaster Management and Risk Reduction Policy evidenced by responding to the Government of Sierra Leone's request to assist vulnerable households in hard-to-reach border areas as a mitigation measure against the spread of COVID-19.⁹² It further supported the national COVID-19 response plans, responding to the increased food and nutrition needs by scaling up cash-based and food transfers to affected populations and children in schools, and reinstating the treatment of MAM.⁹³

51. The CSP's SO2 aligns with the goal of Cluster One of Sierra Leone's MTNDP (developing human capital) through the Free Quality School Education Programme and the policy to "expand school feeding programmes in all government and government-assisted schools".⁹⁴ A national policy on SF developed with WFP's assistance in 2018 was under review at the time of the CSP design; the ratified policy aims to promote the holistic development of children, local farmers, and communities with a particular emphasis on a "home-grown model" of SF.⁹⁵ This is in line with CSP plans for supporting the implementation of a government-led SF programme funded from the national budget, including piloting projects to inform the Government of Sierra Leone's efforts towards home-grown school feeding (HGSF).

52. Improving nutrition among PBW and children under two (SO3) through the provision of specialized nutritious foods (SNFs) (during the COVID-19 pandemic), production and distribution of LCFs, roll-out of SBCC, and screening for malnutrition (SO3) reflects the needs of national policies, programmes and social safety nets, including the Multi-Sectoral Strategic Plan for the Reduction of Malnutrition in Sierra Leone

⁸⁸ ACR 2022.

⁸⁹ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, "Sierra Leone: March–August 2022", <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ch/September-2024>.

⁹⁰ Percent of severely food insecure increased from 12 (2021) to 28 (2023) percent and overall food insecure from 74 (2021) to 80 (2023) percent.

⁹¹ WFP. 2019. *Sierra Leone Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)*, p.6.

⁹² ACR 2020.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Government of Sierra Leone. 2019. *Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019–2023)*, <http://moped.gov.sl/mtndp/>, p.45.

⁹⁵ Government of Sierra Leone. 2021. *National School Feeding Policy*, May, p.11.

(2019–2025),⁹⁶ the National Health Strategic Plan (2017–2021) and the National Social Protection Policy (2017–2022).

53. Asset creation and livelihood (ACL) activities (under SO4) are connected to the Government of Sierra Leone's MTNDP 2019–2023, contributing to Cluster Two (diversifying the economy and promoting growth) and Cluster Seven (addressing vulnerabilities and building resilience).⁹⁷ ACL is also aligned with the Government of Sierra Leone's flagship programme, Feed Salone, which aims to boost agriculture productivity to fuel inclusive growth, increase local food production, reduce hunger and build resilient food systems.⁹⁸ Under the umbrella of Feed Salone, support given to farmers through the project is being implemented in accordance with the core mandate of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS): rice intensification and livestock development.⁹⁹

54. Importantly, the CSP consciously responded to the priorities in the government's 2018 'New Direction' agenda, whose priorities and programmes are detailed in the MTNDP 2019–2023.¹⁰⁰ In addition, directly contributing to key clusters identified within the MTNDP, WFP's integration of CCS through SO5 across its activity areas helps mitigate two key risks explicitly identified within the plan as threatening its successful implementation by: (i) improving "inadequate capacities of government ministries, departments, and agencies"; and (ii) strengthening "data and information availability" across the various sectors in order to make them credible and relevant.¹⁰¹

55. Moreover, one of the eight thematic clusters of the MTNDP 2019–2023 was "addressing vulnerabilities and building resilience", including "improving disaster management governance".¹⁰² Further, following deadly floods and landslides in 2017, the Government of Sierra Leone noted that the Office of National Security (ONS) – responsible for emergency and disaster management – had capacity gaps in dealing with disasters.¹⁰³

56. In response, the Government of Sierra Leone enacted the National Disaster Management Agency Act in 2020, which led to the creation of the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA). Supporting the operationalization of the agency has been a WFP priority under SO5, particularly given the increasing risk of climate change-induced natural disasters. Overall, the evaluation team finds that WFP's institutional capacity building was instrumental in helping ONS transition to the NDMA. Under SO6, work was done to build up the capacities of the agency in several areas¹⁰⁴ (see EQ2.1).

EQ1.2b: To what extent has WFP's strategic positioning remained relevant throughout the implementation of the CSP considering the changing national capacities and needs and in response to changing contextual factors (e.g. COVID-19, the cost-of-living crisis, exchange rate fluctuations)?

Finding 4: Overall, the CSP has remained relevant as a strategic, flexible programming framework, even given a shifting context over the implementation period, in key areas of disaster response, SF and nutrition.

57. The 2020–2024 CSP, the first of its kind for WFP Sierra Leone, provided a framework to improve strategic and programmatic planning at the country level,¹⁰⁵ build on lessons learned, develop new

⁹⁶ Government of Sierra Leone. 2019. *Multi-Sector Strategic Plan to Reduce Malnutrition in Sierra Leone 2019–2025*.

⁹⁷ Government of Sierra Leone. 2019. *Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019–2023)*.

⁹⁸ Government of Sierra Leone. 2024. "Feed Salone", 23 June, <https://feedsalome.gov.sl> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

⁹⁹ MAFS. 2024. "Our Core Mandate", 23 June, <https://maf.gov.sl> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

¹⁰⁰ Government of Sierra Leone. 2019. *Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019–2023)*, <http://moped.gov.sl/mtndp/>.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.xii.

¹⁰² Ibid., p.45.

¹⁰³ Government of Sierra Leone. 2024. "NDMA Meeting with WFP CSP Evaluation Team on Key Activities Including Successes, Challenges and Key Priorities of Government of Sierra Leone", briefing given as part of meeting with NDMA, 11 January.

¹⁰⁴ KIIs.

¹⁰⁵ WFP. 2016. "Policy on Country Strategic Plans" (WFP/EB.2/2016/4-C/1/Rev.1), <https://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/eb/wfp286746.pdf> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships.¹⁰⁶ Guided by the CSP, WFP aspired to adapt to contextual changes and limited resources and to shift from direct implementation of activities to policy support and capacity strengthening (CS) of nationally owned interventions.

58. The CSP has remained both relevant and flexible, as evidenced by the WFP responding to the government's request for support in establishing institutional coordination and management of disaster response through CS while also supporting the government and partners with the provision of cash transfers when needed. Further, in response to the government's increased focus on local production for the SFP, WFP increased resources¹⁰⁷ to the HGSP programme by launching the HGSP pilot in January 2022 in order to contribute to the government's strategy.¹⁰⁸

59. WFP modified SO3, providing treatment of MAM at the request of the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS) based on increasing rates of malnutrition during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was seen as effective in reducing levels of malnutrition by donors,¹⁰⁹ partners and beneficiaries (Table A13 in Annex VI).¹¹⁰ All WFP Country Office staff agreed that CS of WFP partner line ministries could potentially add the most value, and that CS is more relevant than ever. One example has been WFP's support in building the NDMA capacities in accordance with the Disaster Management Agency Act.

EQ1.3a: To what extent does the CSP design have internal coherence, as well as alignment with WFP's Strategic Plan (2022–2025), articulating WFP's role and contributions in a realistic manner based on its comparative advantages in Sierra Leone?

Summary of findings: In terms of coherence, the CSP is largely coherent with the wider policy frameworks of WFP and facilitated links along the humanitarian-development nexus. However, its design was not attentive to building integration across interventions, although the country office made notable progress towards increasing harmonization of programming as the CSP progressed.

Finding 5: The CSP aligned with the wider policy frameworks of WFP, including WFP's corporate Strategic Plan 2022–2025 and broadly with other global policies on procurement, nutrition and SF, even if areas of improvement still exist, including increasing the proportion of local procurement, increasing the proportion of resources to nutrition, adding programming for adolescent girls, and developing plans and timelines for the transition of responsibility for implementing school feeding activities to the government.

60. The evaluation team found that the CSP activities aligned with the WFP Strategic Plan 2022–2025¹¹¹ in principle, although the placement of activities under strategic outcomes differed, as the CSP was designed in 2019. For example, under Strategic Plan 2017–2021, SO2 was in the same strategic outcome category as SO1 (Improved consumption of high-quality, nutrient-dense foods among targeted individuals), but under the new Strategic Plan 2022–2025, it is grouped with SO3 under Outcome Category 2: People have better nutrition, health and education outcomes, while SO1 is under Outcome Category 1: People are better able to meet their urgent food and nutrition needs.

61. According to the WFP Country Office, by 2023, approximately 2 percent of food for SF was procured in Sierra Leone, leaving ample room for improvement. The country office is making significant efforts to increase its local food production, as reflected in the ambitious target of increasing local rice procurement from 120 mt in 2023 to 1,000 mt in 2024. While this still represents a relatively small portion

¹⁰⁶ WFP. 2019. *Sierra Leone Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)*, p.8.

¹⁰⁷ Available resources increased from 8.8 to 11.9 million USD from 2021 to 2022 (ACRs 2021/22).

¹⁰⁸ KIIs with WFP Country Office.

¹⁰⁹ KIIs.

¹¹⁰ Quantitative survey results.

¹¹¹ WFP. 2022. *World Food Programme Strategic Plan 2022–2025*, <https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-strategic-plan-2022-25> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

(18 percent) of food bought for school meals (SF accounts for 48 percent of the budget¹¹²), the rapid scaling-up of HGSF is in line with WFP's Local and Regional Food Procurement Policy.¹¹³ The CSP also aligns with WFP's global School Feeding Strategy 2020–2030,¹¹⁴ targeting pre-primary and primary school children, supporting the scale-up of national SF programmes and promoting the HGSF model while working to increase the capacities of the government. Overall, the CSP also aligns with the WFP's global nutrition policy,¹¹⁵ including prioritizing the most vulnerable groups of PBW, children under two years of age and integrating nutrition in all activities, but, as noted previously, lacks programming for adolescent girls. While we acknowledge efforts to increase funding for SO3, we note that the relatively small proportion of resources the Sierra Leone CSP has put towards ensuring good nutrition during the first 1,000 days to encourage adequate cognitive development and therefore ability to learn in school, in comparison to the much larger amount allocated for primary school aged children, appears to be an imbalance in resource targeting. There is room for increasing resources to SO3, as adequate nutrition in this group is necessary for education achievements under SO2.

EQ1.3b: How coherent was the integration across various strategic outcomes – including humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work – in terms of its potential to generate synergies and multiplier effects in terms of outcomes?

Finding 6: The CSP facilitated links along the humanitarian–development nexus. Though the CSP design was less attentive to building integration across interventions, the country office made notable progress towards increasing harmonization of interventions over the course of the CSP, while two projects convened by WFP during the CSP built organizational capacities in the area of peacebuilding.

62. In line with Sierra's Leone transition from the EVD crisis, WFP Country Office and government partners noted that the design of the CSP also made a relevant shift from a focus on humanitarian work to development programming, while maintaining relevant interlinkages along the humanitarian–development nexus. In particular, key informants pointed to WFP's key role in Sierra Leone as being to provide surveillance data on food security, nutrition and market analysis, helping WFP and its partners to establish data target programming at different points along the humanitarian–development nexus. An analysis of WFP programming carried out by the evaluation team notes that WFP's attention to the humanitarian–development nexus is reflected in a portfolio of activities that spans humanitarian work carried out under SO1 (supported by SO6, which relates to the provision of CCS for national institutions working to prevent and respond to emergencies) and development programming across SO2–SO5. A specific example of the CSP bringing together humanitarian relief while also addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity was WFP's incorporation of cash for work in its asset creation modalities through its ACL. A further example was working with MoHS in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, where WFP provided treatment for MAM in addition to malnutrition prevention programme support, strategically linking relief, social protection and development efforts to improve nutrition.

63. The evaluation team found that integration was not well articulated in the original CSP. Strategic outcomes were designed largely in isolation from each other. Despite this, the evaluation team found that internal coherence through integration of programmes has increased throughout the life of the CSP, with strong programmatic and geographic integration creating multiplier effects in areas where projects could generate synergies.

64. Two specific projects which focused on the development–peace nexus during the CSP period were funded by the PBF with WFP as the lead agency and implemented jointly with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). As part of the first project (2020–2022), WFP and UNDP worked to promote peace and social cohesion in two districts

¹¹² Of total confirmed allocated resources for all years as of 31 December 2023.

¹¹³ WFP. 2019. "WFP Local and Regional Procurement Policy" (WFP/EB.2/2019/4-C).

¹¹⁴ WFP. 2020. *WFP School Feeding Strategy 2020–2030. A Chance for Every School Child. Partnering to Scale Up School Health and Nutrition for Human Capital.*

¹¹⁵ WFP. 2017. "WFP Nutrition Policy" (WFP/EB.1/2017/4-C).

characterized by social unrest and land conflicts between communities and multinational companies investing in the large-scale agriculture and mining sectors in these communities. The second project (2022–2024) worked with IOM to support the Government of Sierra Leone to strengthen civil institutions and evidence-based policies and promote conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence between cattle herders and crop farmers in Sierra Leone and Guinea.

2.2 EQ2: What is the extent and quality of WFP’s specific contribution to country strategic plan strategic outcomes in Sierra Leone?

Summary of findings: Food/CBTs provided in crisis response saved lives in the short run. SF helped increase school enrolment/attendance, although rapid expansion of the SF programme placed a heavy burden on capacities to implement SF. The shift from malnutrition treatment to prevention was appropriate, and WFP-supported SBCC contributed to positive outcomes in nutrition, though the initiation of local production of LCFs proved a complex and challenging undertaking in its initial stages. ACL activities helped strengthen agricultural value chains, with WFP local purchases creating important incentives for sustained production, even if lengthy procurement processes resulted in payment delays. Achievements in CCS are clear across CSP activities (especially capacities created in disaster response) even if progress is not well articulated across CSP indicators.

EQ2.1: To what extent did WFP activities and outputs contribute to the expected outcomes of the CSP?

SO1: Crisis-affected populations in Sierra Leone are able to meet their basic food and nutrition requirements during and in the aftermath of crises

Finding 7: While unconditional food assistance/CBTs provided during the CSP period contributed to outcomes that saved lives only in the short run, findings suggest that SNFs targeted at vulnerable groups were effective in reducing malnutrition during critical growth periods and thus would have longer-term effects.

65. During the CSP, WFP’s crisis response activities primarily focused on providing unconditional food/CBT assistance to households facing slow-onset food insecurity, as well as providing unconditional CBT to households affected by sudden shocks.

Due to time constraints, the evaluation team was unable to access information about the recipients of WFP assistance during sudden-onset crises (see Annex V for a description of WFP assistance in this area). WFP assistance for slow-onset food insecurity took place through the general distribution of cash and food transfers, including in the direct aftermath of COVID-19, to support the recovery of vulnerable households from the effects of the pandemic.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ In areas without well-functioning food markets, WFP provided in-kind food assistance. In locations with well-functioning food markets, assistance was given as a CBT through mobile money (and cash in hard-to-reach areas).

66. Table 7 shows the declining trends in the provision of in-kind food assistance from 2020 to 2021 as WFP was moving away from food assistance in favour of cash transfers. By 2023, WFP had totally shifted away from food assistance and was providing a social safety net in the form of unconditional cash assistance to people who could not access the nutritious food they needed every day in the districts of Pujehun, Port Loko and Tonkolili. That year, WFP made two cash disbursements – one in March 2023 and one in July 2023 – both for USD 93.60 to each of 8,571 households across the three districts.

Table 7: Output delivery of unconditional food/cash assistance by year

| | 2020 | | 2021 | | 2022 | | 2023 | |
|--|-----------|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual |
| Quantity of fortified food provided (mt) | N/A | 427 | 56.5 | 25.8 | 56.5 | 0.1 | N/A | N/A |
| Quantity of SNFs (mt) | N/A | 468 | 1,086 | 692 | 1,086 | 0 | N/A | N/A |
| Total cash transfers SO1 (USD) | 1,280,797 | 0 | 2,808,748 | 2,808,748 | 3,480,000 | 902,617 | 3,480,000 | 1,763,651 |

Source: COMET report CM-R008b.

67. In addition to the general distribution of unconditional food and cash transfers, WFP supported the treatment of MAM with SNFs (i.e. super cereal plus, super cereal and fortified vegetable oil) complemented by other nutrition activities in 15 districts in 2020, reducing to ten districts in 2021 (due to funding constraints), which contributed to reductions in malnutrition among the targeted population, as discussed below.

68. Outcome monitoring data presented in Table 7 shows uneven progress towards beneficiary food security. On the positive side, the consumption-based coping strategy index (CSI) showed a decrease from 11.1 in 2021 to 8.3 in 2023. Though it failed to meet the overall CSP target, the overall decrease in reliance on negative coping strategies is a positive trend. However, looking at the percentage of households with an acceptable food consumption score (FCS), there was fluctuation, with a significant increase in 2021 (44 percent) but a drop back to 29 percent in 2023, well below the CSP target. Both CSI and FCS data were considerably higher in 2022 than in the other years in which data was collected. KIIs with WFP indicate that the differences in outcomes are likely to do with variances in the duration of assistance given to each. In 2021 and 2023, households received two months of food assistance, whereas in 2022 they received three months, likely resulting in improved CSI and FCS outcomes that year.

Table 8: CSI and FCS outcomes for SO1¹¹⁷

| Outcome indicators | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | CSP target |
|----------------------------------|------|------|------|------------|
| CSI | 11.1 | 5 | 8.3 | <5 |
| % households with acceptable FCS | 25% | 44% | 29% | >76% |

Source: COMET report CM-R010b.

69. Despite the uneven progress towards outcomes shown in Table 8, there was consensus among the FGDs with CBT beneficiaries¹¹⁸ that the funds they received provide them with considerable assistance at a time of high food insecurity (Figure 4 confirms high overall food insecurity in Sierra Leone in 2023). Many recipients indicated that the assistance helped them 'survive' or 'get through' when they otherwise would have had to go hungry or resort to negative coping strategies to get by. During FGDs, SO1 beneficiaries indicated primarily using funds to purchase food, pay school-related expenses and health expenses, and repay debts incurred during COVID-19, among other things.

Finding 8: WFP support at the policy, organizational/institutional and individual levels has helped build up national capacities in leading and coordinating disaster response, though opportunities still exist for WFP to continue to strengthen national institutions in the area of disaster response and

¹¹⁷ FCS and CSI both revised in the *WFP Indicator Compendium (2022–2025)*.

¹¹⁸ The evaluation team carried out FGDs with recipients of 2023 CBT in Port Loko and Pujehun districts in primary research for this evaluation. Beneficiaries in Port Loko received two payments in April and July 2023, while those in Pujehun received CBT in February and April of the same year.

coordination, especially in responding to and coordinating non-localized emergencies.

70. A key outcome of the CSP was WFP's work to establish and build the capacities of the NDMA through SO6. This is a dedicated aspect of the CCS portfolio that has played a vital role in promoting effective and timely crisis response in Sierra Leone in support of the Government of Sierra Leone's aim to establish and capacitate a dedicated national agency that can "advocate, plan, advise and promote the implementation of the framework for action to prevent or mitigate disaster"¹¹⁹ under the 2020 National Disaster Management Agency Act. A comprehensive assessment of the NDMA soon after its creation – in the first year of the CSP – noted that the agency was severely constrained by low funding, insufficient disaster plans, lack of standard operating procedures, poor coordination and a lack of training to respond effectively to emergencies.¹²⁰

71. WFP support has helped build up NDMA capacities in each of these areas, with CCS activities in the area of crisis response not only acting as a strategic enabler (reconstructed ToC in Annex VIII) by supporting SO1 but also contributing to improving overall crisis response capacities and outcomes through a strengthened NDMA. Now, in its fourth year of existence, KIIs with WFP and partners indicate that the NDMA can better provide strategic leadership in emergencies, better prepare for, monitor, coordinate and respond to natural hazards and disasters, and ensure effective information management and communication with key stakeholders. The Government of Sierra Leone funds NDMA and receives support from different international partners. However, WFP's contribution to the agency in key areas is clear in the analysis below.

72. The evaluation team has found evidence of a number of effects arising from the support WF gave to the NDMA during the CSP period (Table A9 in Annex V). To start, NDMA key informants indicate that WFP has been involved in the formulation of all NDMA institutional documents, providing a rich source of expertise and experience. WFP also helped build and coordinate emergency response logistics capacities – both at the national level and regionally – and helped create and consolidate a coordinated approach to supply chain activities in emergency response. As a result, NDMA can now take leadership in incident management during numerous sudden-onset emergencies, while WFP provides technical backstopping – for example, during the 2021 fuel tanker explosion in Wellington.

73. WFP also assisted NDMA in developing platforms to effectively coordinate disaster management, including rolling out Sierra Leone's multi-agency Incident Management System (SLIMS), an incident management system used by the agency and its partners to coordinate responses before, during and after disaster incidents. Notably, NDMA now has the capacity to lead SLIMS and facilitate the training of other government counterparts. WFP support for the NDMA monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team to develop digitized data assessment and beneficiary targeting tools, hazard profiling, community surveys and incident reporting has also helped the agency generate quality data, which is an integral need to ensure a timely response to disasters. Since 2022, NDMA has been able to independently collect and analyse data, producing a disaster assessment report within 48 hours of an emergency. This is a notable achievement given data analysis limitations noted by other key government partners (see EQ2.1a analysis under SO5).

74. KIIs with internal and external stakeholders indicated that in the event of larger complex emergencies, NDMA still requires additional capacity to effectively lead and/or coordinate disaster response. This is especially the case in the event of a non-localized emergency occurring outside of Freetown, where international partners still need to lead in coordinating responses. Notably, the agency has limited transportation support for conducting assessments, collecting data, mobilizing relief support and ensuring effective responses in remote communities.

75. In addition, KIIs indicated that NDMA staff have limited supply chain management skills. While such capacity gaps did not affect outcomes for integrated crisis response during the CSP period because major

¹¹⁹ Government of Sierra Leone. 2020. The National Disaster Management Agency Act, 2020, <https://www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2020-03.pdf>, p.2, Section 1.

¹²⁰ Government of Sierra Leone. 2021. *After Action Review Susan's Bay Fire*, <https://cdn.logcluster.org/public/2021-05/After%20Action%20Review%20Susan%27s%20Bay%20Fire.pdf> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

disasters have been close to Freetown, they do indicate areas where WFP can continue to work with NDMA to strengthen national institutions, building on the achievements of this CSP.

SO2: Primary school children in targeted areas have access to adequate and nutritious food throughout the year

Finding 9: There is widespread qualitative evidence that SF has helped increase school enrolment and attendance (meeting CSP targets for attendance), resulting in other educational, nutritional and social outcomes (e.g. improved food consumption, lower financial burden on parents by providing free meals, increased retention, improved attention and academic performance of learners). However, enrolment/attendance rates do not fully represent increased access to schooling by previously out-of-school children, as data collected does not capture whether or not new enrollees/attendees moved from other schools to access SF.

76. Over the course of the CSP period, the SF programme was regularly able to assist over 1,000 schools. Initially, WFP was working in nine districts. Starting from the 2021/22 school year, its scope was reduced to five districts, following a reallocation of SF districts by the Government of Sierra Leone among international partners.¹²¹ As shown by Table 8, the SF programme generally met or came close to meeting its planned targets for a number of schools assisted. However, in 2022 and 2023, WFP was unable to fulfil its planned output of average school days per month due to delays noted below under EQ3.1.

Table 9: SF programme output indicators by year

| Output indicators | 2020 | 2021 | | 2022 | | 2023 | |
|---|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| | 2020 | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual |
| Number of schools assisted | No data | 1,149 | 1,149 | 918 | 1,020 | 1,074 | 1,067 |
| Average school days (per month) with multi-fortified food | No data | 19 | 19 | 21 | 15 | 15 | 14 |

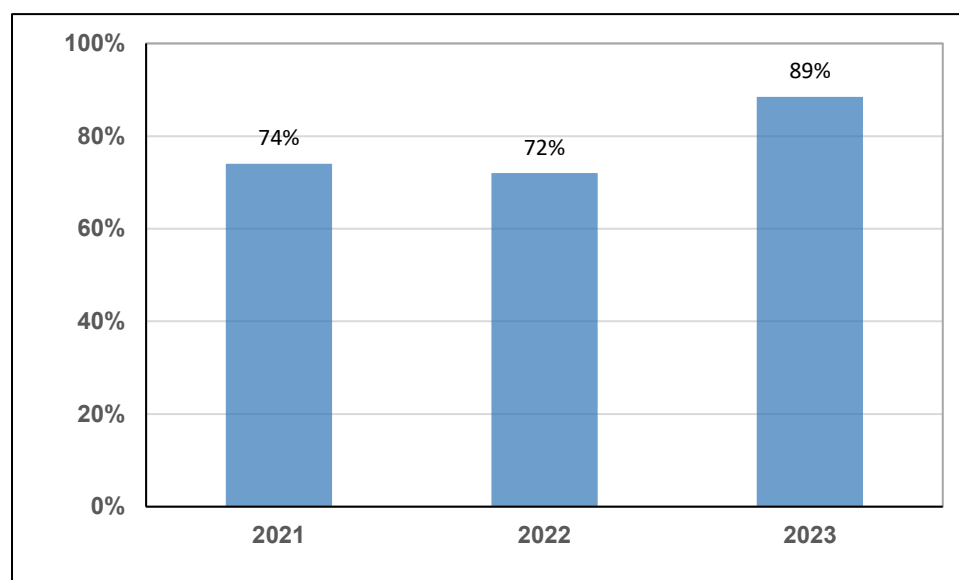
Source: COMET report CM-R008b.

77. The evaluation team also found that the Government of Sierra Leone institutions have integrated – and are utilizing – the systems and standards established with WFP support, such as technical and financial support to the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) for the development and validation of the National School Feeding Policy, support for an SF investment and financing plan, development of a standardized SF operations training manual and assistance in developing a national SF menu. These are examples of CCS support that help harmonize and improve activities undertaken in SF across Sierra Leone. As an example, the evaluation team notes that government partners' WFP-supported provision of hardware/equipment and training to SF monitors played a role in strengthening monitoring capacities in the area of SF, even though gaps in staffing and knowledge still existed. Training on proper provision of monitoring support, along with the provision of motorbikes and reimbursements for maintenance and fuelling, were important in getting SF monitors to schools to provide oversight for storage, management and accounting of food, its preparation and distribution, and other key components of the SF model. This offered oversight and backstopping that supported the implementation of SF activities during the CSP. The evaluation team found that SF monitors were able to provide monitoring and guidance on food stock management being done by school management committees (SMCs) based on WFP training. This helped ensure that food was received, stored and accounted for, helping to reduce wastage so that feeding targets could be met in pursuit of enrolment/attendance outcomes.

78. Figure 7 indicates that attendance rates at WFP-supported primary schools remained steady in 2021 and 2022 before increasing in 2023.

¹²¹ In the 2020–2021 school year, WFP was responsible for nine districts (with 329,671 SF beneficiaries), which dropped by more than 100,000 to 216,269 in 2022 following the government reallocation of SF districts (after which WFP was responsible for only five).

Figure 7: Attendance rates for SO2



Source: COMET report CM-R009b.

79. Further, FGDs at the school level indicated that SF was associated with increased school enrolment and attendance during the CSP period. Even though WFP supports all government-approved schools in a chiefdom to mitigate the creation of ‘magnet schools’ through SF, qualitative research did indicate that SF is attracting many pupils from other schools that do not provide school meals (even some students coming from as far as Liberia), rather than only out-of-school children.¹²² This shows that while school-level enrolment and attendance data is essential for process monitoring of SO2 programming, it does not necessarily reflect the expected outcomes of increasing enrolment from the total population of out-of-school children in a given district.

80. Qualitative data indicates additional positive results of SF activities, including improved food consumption, lower financial burden on parents by providing free meals, increased retention, increased attention and improved academic performance of learners. While it is not possible to quantify the extent of these outcomes, they were consistently mentioned across interviews and focus groups, and such outcomes are broadly consistent with the findings of other SF evaluations.¹²³

81. Since HGSF activities commenced in the 2021–2022 school year, home-grown meals have increased to a sizeable – though still relatively small – part of WFP’s SF portfolio. As part of a pilot project that started in 2022, WFP implemented nutrition-sensitive HGSF in 17 schools, seven months after Sierra Leone adopted the National School Feeding Policy in 2021. Table 9 indicates that HGSF schools now account for 29 percent of all schools supported by WFP SF, the largest increase occurring in 2024, limiting the possibility of comparing outcomes between HGSF and non-HGSF modalities. As part of HGSF, WFP provides locally produced rice, pigeon peas (or konsho beans), orange fleshed sweet potato (OFSP) and vegetables.

¹²² FGDs with SMCs.

¹²³ WFP. 2021. “Summary Report on the Strategic Evaluation of the Contribution of School Feeding Activities to the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals” (WFP/EB.A/2021/7-B), 21–25 June, https://executiveboard.wfp.org/document_download/WFP-0000127518 (accessed on 9 July 2025).

Table 10: Breakdown of SF versus HGSF schools supported by WFP

| Schools | HGSF | Regular SF | Total |
|----------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| <i>Kenema</i> | 16 | 337 | 353 |
| <i>Bonthe</i> | 136 | 48 | 184 |
| <i>Pujehun</i> | 38 | 223 | 261 |
| <i>Kambia</i> | 33 | 190 | 223 |
| <i>Karene</i> | 115 | 21 | 136 |
| Total | 338 | 819 | 1,157 |

Source: WFP Country Office.

82. Nevertheless, the outcomes related to enrolment and attendance that were presented above are consistent across SF modalities. Where the evaluation team could look at HGSF specifically, qualitative data indicated additional outcomes: improved dietary diversity among learners, infusions of cash into local agricultural economies and even some indication that children at schools where HGSF is being supplied may be healthier. For instance, SF monitors in Kambia district indicated that many teachers are requesting HGSF in their schools, as they view it as a way of improving the dietary diversity of learners.

Finding 10: WFP's global comparative advantages in SF responded to the government's policy to expand national school meals. WFP took the lead in the national roll-out of HGSF, although the rapid expansion of the SF programme required considerable assistance from private transportation partners. However, the transportation companies commissioned to provide school meals frequently lacked the capacity to deliver food commodities in a timely manner and to the destinations required, which caused delays in SF deliveries.

83. Notwithstanding the notable achievements of WFP in providing daily meals in aid of the Government of Sierra Leone's efforts to attract children to schools and retain them, SO2 experienced several management and logistical challenges over the CSP. There were two key areas where the evaluation team found that capacities were especially overstretched. Firstly, initial 'growing pains' from private sector transportation partnerships have led to delivery delays and inconsistencies in timing and end-point services. As WFP has shifted its reliance over the course of the CSP from transporting SF production via its fleet of vehicles, it is attempting to build up the capacity and interest of private sector transporters in moving food commodities for school meals. KIIs and FGDs with stakeholders knowledgeable about SF operations indicated that the quality of service provided by transporters was extremely variable.

84. Some food deliveries were made on schedule and to their designated drop-off points. Other deliveries were delayed or not delivered directly to schools – especially hard-to-reach schools. Instead, food was dropped partway to the destination with the expectation that school authorities would pick up deliveries and transport them over the 'last mile'. In response to these issues, the country office notes that it now sends an SMS to headteachers informing them of upcoming food deliveries, reaffirming the schedules and the obligation of the transporters to deliver food commodities on time all the way to the required destinations. Also, a food delivery module is now part of the SF training for all headteachers and SMCs, who are encouraged to call the complaints and feedback mechanism (CFM) in case of delivery issues with the transporters.

85. While the inclination to engage private transportation partners has the potential to boost local economies, initial engagement in these partnerships did not allow sufficient time to vet transporters for quality. It is noted that at the time of the evaluation, the country office had already started taking steps to use its early experiences to make future private transportation hires more effective. After initially signing agreements with approximately 40 such transporters to allow the opportunity to as many companies as possible, the pool of possible transporters has since been reduced to around 15 'reliable' companies.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ KIIs with WFP Country Office.

SMCs have also been broadly sensitized to their contractual obligations to fully complete deliveries to school premises; all SMCs engaged in FGDs for the evaluation were aware of this.

SO3: Nutritionally vulnerable populations in targeted districts – including children, pregnant and lactating women and girls and adolescents – have improved nutritional status by 2025, in line with national targets

Finding 11: WFP-supported treatment of MAM in 2020/21 was likely to have significantly contributed to reductions in malnutrition due to wide reach and programme duration. While WFP’s shift to focus on stunting prevention was appropriate, it is unlikely to have made a significant contribution to 2021 improvements due to limited intervention duration and reach. However, WFP’s subsequent longer-term focus on SBCC and developing affordable LCFs is likely to contribute to improved nutrition. Overall, multiple shifts in nutrition programming make it difficult to determine the extent of WFP’s contributions to reducing malnutrition.

86. In evaluating expected outcomes for SO3 (see Table A6 in Annex V), the evaluation team has included nutrition-specific interventions implemented as part of the emergency response under SO1 in the analysis (Table A7 in Annex V), as they contribute directly to SO3’s outcomes of improving nutrition among the vulnerable. Nutrition programming activities shifted from primary treatment of MAM through food assistance (2020/21), to the prevention of stunting through food assistance (2020), to SBCC through CCS (2021–2024), and then to SBCC and manufacturing (2022 and onwards) (Annex V). The evaluation team noted that each of these programming approaches requires different sets of technical expertise, staffing, delivery approaches, M&E systems, and indicators – the latter of which are inconsistent (Table A6 in Annex V). Programme scope varied, covering 15 districts in 2020 and narrowing to two districts in 2021 (reaching one-quarter of the number of beneficiaries reached in 2020); from 2022 onwards, activities targeted three districts¹²⁵ reaching 10 percent of 2020 MAM beneficiaries (Table A6 in Annex V). The frequent shifts in approaches to nutrition programming (see paragraph 93) and programme scope and geographic locations (see paragraph 94) could have impeded the overall achievement of expected SO3 outcomes. Therefore, to elucidate the extent to which SO1 and SO3 have improved the nutritional status of vulnerable populations, the evidence was analysed by specific programme approaches in chronological order.

MAM treatment programme (2020–2021)

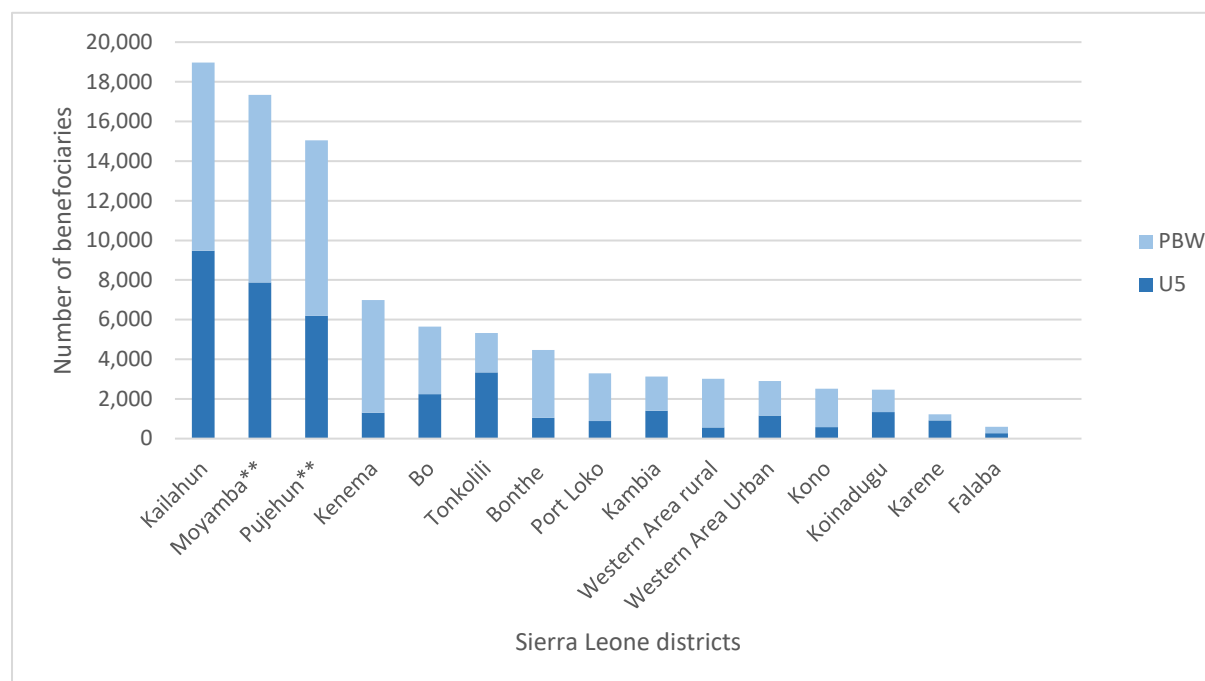
87. The MAM treatment programme approach implemented in 2020 and 2021, at the Government of Sierra Leone’s request based on deteriorating GAM rates (see Finding 2), had an extensive reach covering a significant proportion of the malnourished population¹²⁶ (Figure 9 and Table A7 in Annex V), including a variety of nutrition activities implemented during the lean season when malnutrition rates are highest. Further, the programme followed government and international protocols and was reported by participating beneficiaries to have reduced malnutrition. Thus, the programme was likely a significant contributor to district-level stabilization and/or reductions in GAM¹²⁷ between 2019 and 2021 (see Figure 8 in this report and Table A8 in Annex V) despite significant increases in food insecurity from 53 to 75 percent over that same time period (Figure 10). It is most notable for the districts targeted by WFP with multiple interventions (Moyamba and Pujehun).

¹²⁵ Kambia, Pujehun and Moyamba.

¹²⁶ For example, the population of Pujehun district was 429,574 in 2021, and an estimated 20 percent (85,915) of total population are under 5 years of age. Of the under-five population, 9.7 percent (8,335) presented with GAM – including both moderate (MAM) and severe (SAM) malnutrition. Since WFP treated 6,191 (74 percent) children under the age of 5 for MAM, this would represent a significant component of those children needing MAM treatment.

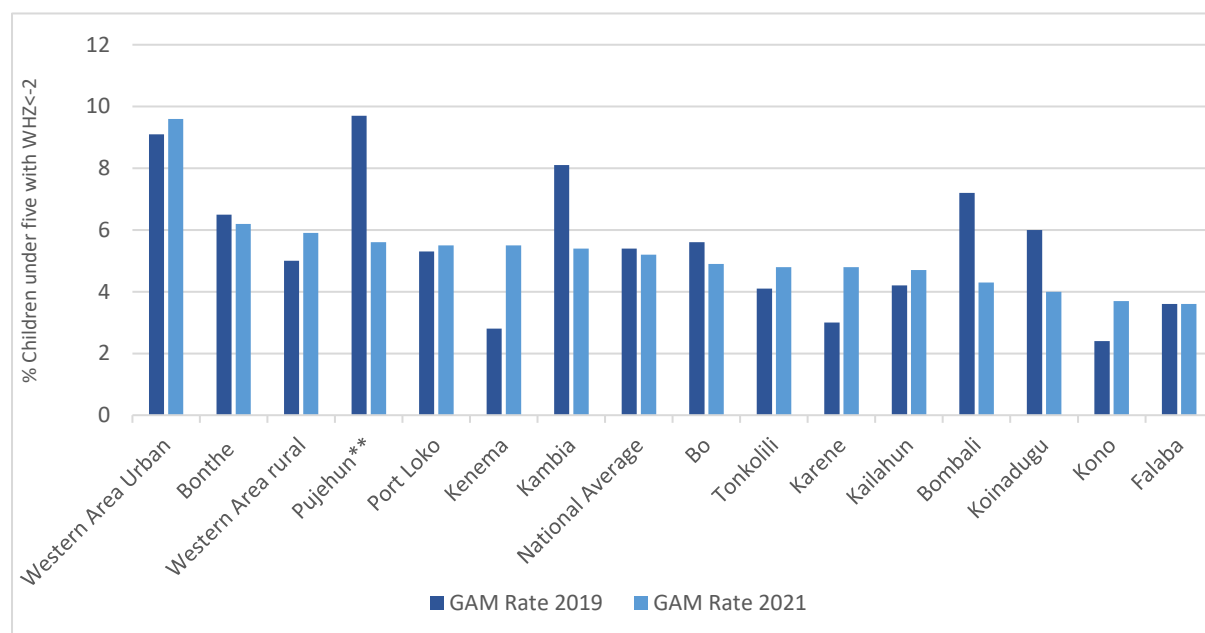
¹²⁷ Global acute malnutrition is a short-term indicator of undernutrition in children under five years of age, based on appropriate weight for age or thinness as measured by weight for height Z Score (WHZ) and/or MUAC, which can be affected in the short term by either deficiencies or inadequate food availability.

Figure 9: Number of beneficiaries reached with WFP-supported SNFs through MAM treatment and stunting prevention programmes (2020–2021) in Sierra Leone



Source: WFP Sierra Leone 2020-21 National MAM dataset Excel spreadsheet; ** districts receiving both SNFs through MAM treatment and stunting prevention programmes.

Figure 10: National Survey trends in GAM between 2019 and 2021 by district (representative sampling)



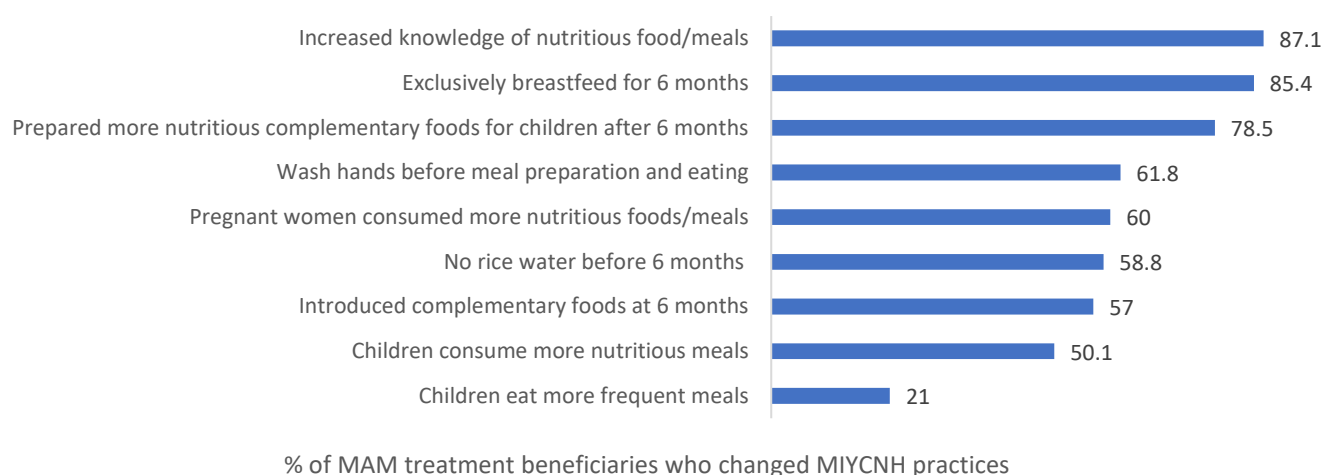
Source: Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2019 and Sierra Leone National Nutrition Survey (2021); ** districts receiving both SNFs through MAM treatment and stunting prevention programmes.

88. The wide reach is reflected in WFP's nationwide MAM treatment coverage, with SNFs¹²⁸ in 15 of the 16 districts in 2020 and 10 districts in 2021 targeted. The wide reach within districts is evidenced by the significant numbers of malnourished children and PBW treated in at least 13 of these districts and the additional SNF¹²⁹ targeting all PBW and children aged 6 to 23 months in two districts (Figure 9). Further, WFP appropriately complemented the distribution of SNFs with health worker CCS, provision of equipment for malnutrition screening and nutrition SBCC for increased effectiveness.

89. In addition, the evaluation team found that the delivery mechanism through MoHS and the Directorate of Food and Nutrition, using the national Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition (I-MAM) protocol, was appropriate. However, key informants noted limited collaboration with other United Nations agencies and partners addressing SAM, limiting efficiencies as well as the effectiveness of monitoring systems and outcomes; this was flagged in previous WFP evaluations.¹³⁰ For example, the evaluation team could not verify the outcomes against SPHERE standards based on the existing monitoring systems, as discharge criteria and length of treatment were not clearly defined in reports.

90. About one-quarter of those responding to the evaluation team's beneficiary survey in Pujehun and Kambia reported themselves or a family member having received MAM treatment in 2020/21, which suggests an appropriate and wide reach. Further, the majority (>85 percent) of those who received treatment strongly agreed that the activity targeted the most vulnerable and that, as a result of the activity, there were fewer malnourished children (Table A13 in Annex VI). Further, the majority of those who received MAM treatment reported making positive changes in maternal, infant and young child nutrition and health (MIYCNH) practices with the exception of increasing meal frequency (Figure 11), which also correlates with the improvements in GAM rates seen at the district level and suggests that these changes, if they represent the broader WFP operational area, may also have contributed to the improvements.

Figure 11: Beneficiary survey reported changes made in maternal, infant and young child feeding practices resulting from WFP-supported MAM treatment (2020–2021) in Kambia and Pujehun districts



Source: WFP Beneficiary Survey, 2024.

91. Overall, in reviewing multiple sources of evidence (i.e. WFP beneficiary data, qualitative data collected through key informants and FGDs, external quantitative data (Figure 10) and the beneficiary survey (Figure 3)), it is likely that the WFP-supported MAM treatment programme was effective in treating

¹²⁸ Supercereal Plus to malnourished PBW and ready-to-use supplementary food to MAM children under 5 years of age.

¹²⁹ Lipid Nutrient Supplements to PBW and Supercereal Plus to children 6 to 23 months of age.

¹³⁰ WFP. 2018. *Impact Evaluations Synthesis. Four Evaluations of the Impact of WFP Programmes on Nutrition in the Humanitarian Context of the Sahel*, <https://www.wfp.org/publications/four-evaluations-impact-wfp-programmes-nutrition-humanitarian-contexts-sahel-synthesis> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

MAM and contributed to preventing the deterioration of nutrition among the most vulnerable groups (moderately malnourished children under five years and PBW) within the context of increasing food insecurity.

Stunting prevention programme (2020)

92. While WFP's treatment of MAM covered 15 districts over multiple years, the 2020/21 stunting prevention programme (SPP) was implemented in only two districts for one year, thus limiting its reach (Table A6 in Annex V). However, within the two targeted districts, the reach of distribution of SNPs to the most vulnerable (children under two years of age and PBW) was significant, and therefore the SPP may plausibly have slowed stunting among the limited number of beneficiaries who received the SNF, assuming that the quantity and duration of intervention was adequate and the targeted individuals consumed the SNF. For example, according to WFP outcome data, households had not consumed protein-rich foods in the previous week (Table A7 in Annex V), and SNF provided appropriate levels of protein for targeted beneficiaries.

93. However, most 2020 WFP nutrition and food security outcome indicators deteriorated from 2019 baseline levels (e.g. MDD-W and reduced CSI) (Table A6 in Annex V), suggesting that the reach, quantity and/or duration of the SPP were insufficient to counteract the contextual factors. Stunting is a downstream indicator of changes in nutrition requiring continuous effective SBCC interventions over three to five years, and therefore not only the limited reach but also the short duration of the WFP intervention means that it could only make a limited contribution to reductions in local stunting levels.

Social behaviour change communication programme (2021–2024)

94. Significant improvements in selected young child dietary indicators ¹³¹—from the 2021 national baseline to 2023 and 2024 levels in WFP-supported programme areas (Table 10)—provide evidence of the effectiveness of WFP's 2021–2024 Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) approach in enhancing certain MIYCNH behaviours. The beneficiary survey is neither a national survey nor a representative sample of the district or of all WFP-supported SBCC programmes, and therefore cannot be extrapolated to all WFP-supported SBCC programmes or the entire district or country. However, in the districts surveyed, both child diet diversity and meal frequency are significantly higher than national averages, hence WFP has achieved its targets. The large difference between the 'baseline' and the 2024 beneficiary survey will be due not only to the people sampled, but also to the season, as the latter was carried out at the beginning of lean season (June), while the baseline survey was carried out at the height of the lean season (i.e. August), when food is scarce.

95. As with the baseline survey and the 2023 survey, the 2024 beneficiary survey found that a higher percentage of boys than girls achieved the MAD (Table 11).

¹³¹ Child minimum dietary diversity, minimum meal frequency and minimum adequate diet.

Table 11: Trends in young child dietary indicators (2020–2024)

| % Meeting IYCF Indicators | 2021 Baseline | 2020 | | 2021 | | 2022 | | 2023 | | 2024 |
|--|------------------|---------------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|-----------------------|---------|
| | | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual ¹³² | |
| MDD – children 6–23 months | 23 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | >23 | 28 | 54 |
| (% meeting) | | | | | | | | | | |
| MFF – children 6–23 months | 33 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | >33 | 53 | 70 |
| (% meeting) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Children 6–23 months achieving MAD [1] (%) (F/M) | 5 | >15 for M & F | 8 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | >10 | 16 | 37 |
| | | | (5/10) | | | | | | (13/18) | (48/53) |

Source: Baseline: National Nutrition Survey (2021); ACR 2020–2023; Beneficiary survey 2024 Kambia and Pujehun.

96. The 2024 beneficiary survey found that the majority (>90 percent) (Table A13 in Annex VI) of those interviewed were aware of the WFP-supported SBCC preventive activities, and that the interviewees themselves or a household member had participated in them,¹³³ further suggesting that these activities did contribute to higher than average levels of MDD, MFF and MAD for those districts (Table 12). If those surveyed had not participated in the WFP-supported activities, then one could not attribute WFP activities to the observed levels. Furthermore, those beneficiaries also reported that they had made positive changes in IYCF practices as a result of all four SBCC activities, two of which are illustrated in Figure 12. These changes (Figure 12) correlate with and would be required for improvements in the MDD, MFF and MAD, and therefore support the likelihood that the SBCC programme had contributed to the improvements.

Table 12: Feeding practices among infants and young children aged 0–23 months and MMF, MDD and MAD in children aged 6–23 months, by district

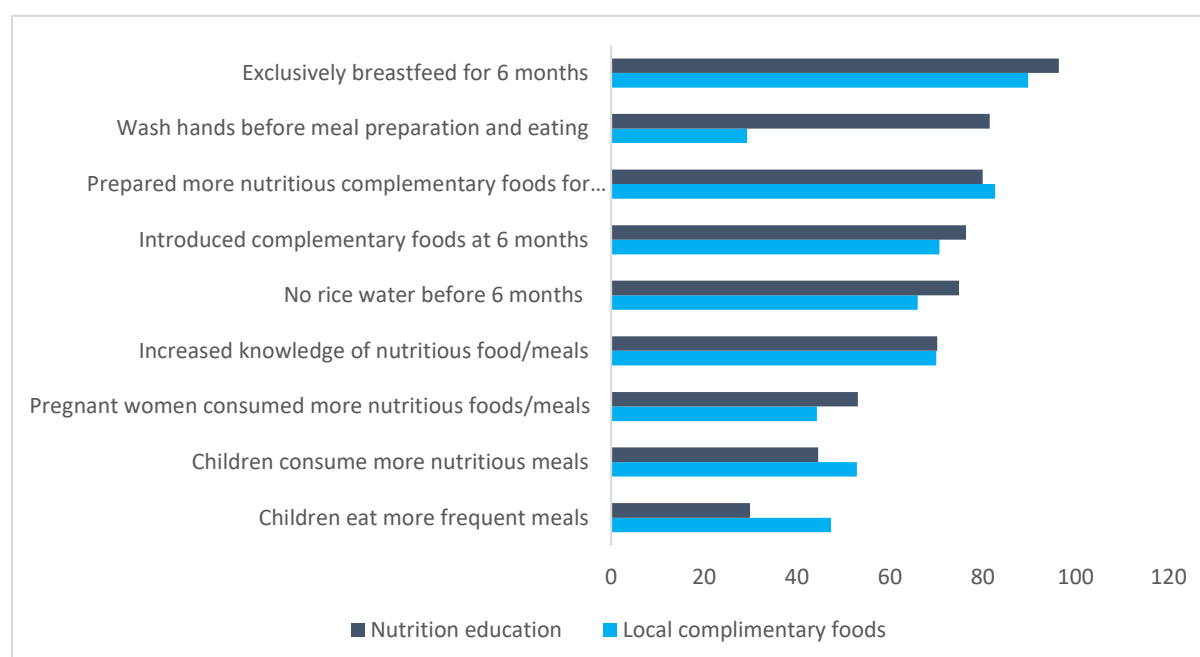
| | Beneficiary survey of WFP-supported nutrition activities (2024) | | | National Nutrition Survey (2021) | | |
|---|---|---------|---------|----------------------------------|---------|---------|
| | Kambia | Pujehun | Average | Kambia | Pujehun | Average |
| Ever breastfed (%) | 89 | 92 | 90 | 98 | 98 | 98 |
| Breastfeeding (past 24 hours) (%) | 68 | 51 | 66 | 77 | 78 | 78 |
| Bottle feeding (%) (previous 24 hours) | 9 | 44 | 27 | 8.9 | 6.7 | 9.7 |
| Feeding/meal frequency (average number/previous 24 hours) | | | 3.5 | 2.2 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| Minimum meal frequency (% meeting) | 59 | 41 | 70 | 37 | 29 | 33 |
| Minimum dietary diversity (% meeting) | 52 | 48 | 54 | 9.7 | 21 | 23 |
| Minimum acceptable diet (% achieving) | 75 | 25 | 36 | 0.6 | 2.1 | 4.9 |

Source: National Nutrition Survey (2021) and evaluation team beneficiary survey 2024.

¹³² To be clarified with the country office.

¹³³ SBCC preventive activities included: (i) use of LCFs (including 'Nyam Nyam Pap'); (ii) nutrition education; (iii) food demonstrations; and (iv) screening for malnutrition.

Figure 12: Reported changes made in maternal, infant and young child nutrition and health practices resulting from WFP-supported SBCC activities (2021–2024) in Kambia and Pujehun districts



Source: Beneficiary survey 2024.

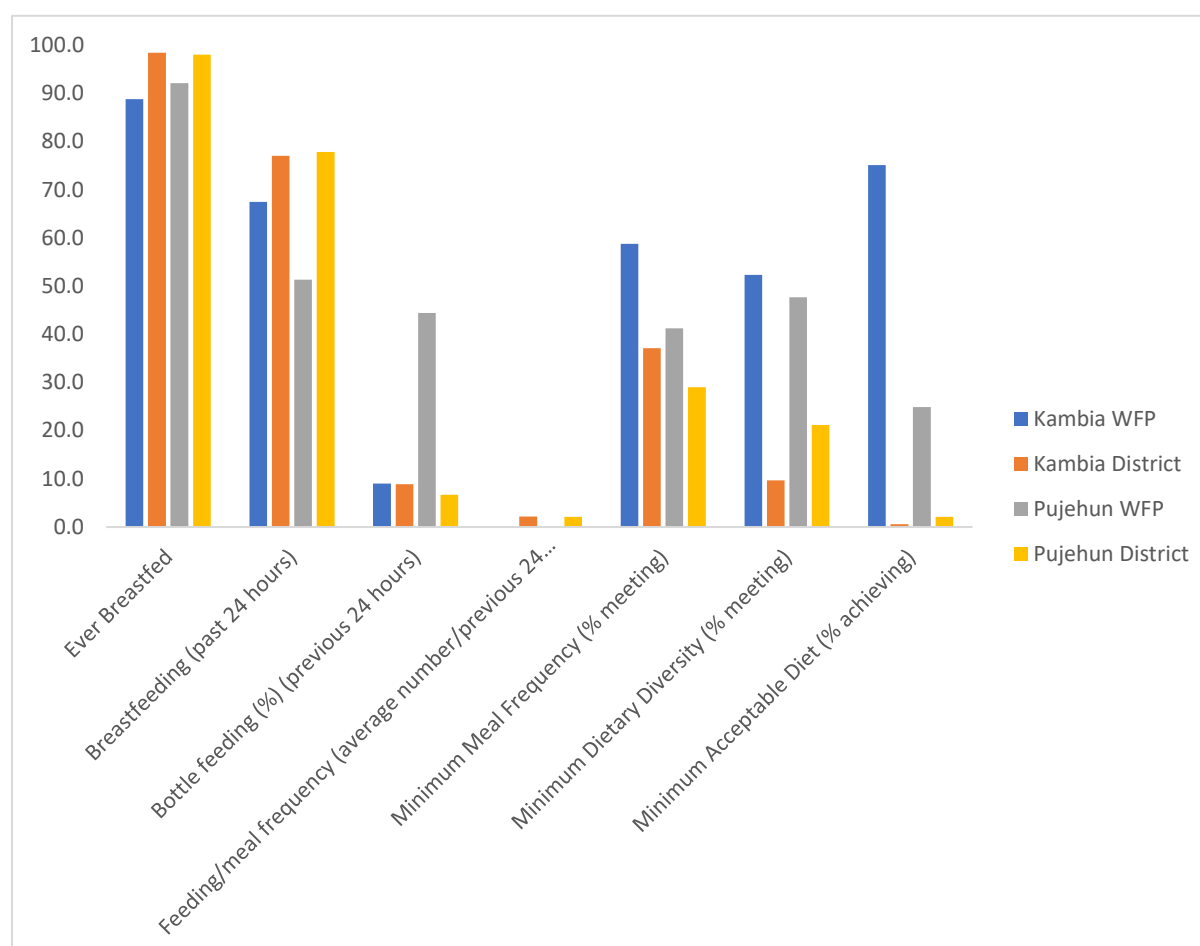
97. Notably, while actual practices in MDD, MMF and MAD were considerably ‘improved’ and were higher than district averages, only about one-half or less of women reported that their children consume more nutritious meals based on the various SBCC activities, and less than one-third reported that their children ate more frequent meals because of a change in practices, despite the majority indicating that they now prepare more nutritious complementary foods for their children (Figure 12). In actual practice, almost three-quarters of the children of those surveyed met the MMF, and over one-half met MDD. These potentially conflicting findings indicate the importance of collecting data on actual MIYCNH practices on the same populations over time and at the same time of year.

98. Certain, but not all, child dietary indicators (i.e. MDD, MMF and MAD) were higher than district-level representative samples (see Table 12 and

99. Figure 13), which was to be expected from the small sample of those who participated in the beneficiary survey within WFP operational areas if the SBBC activities were effective in improving diets and were particularly focused on complementary feeding practices. In addition, both qualitative data from KIIs, FGDs and post-distribution monitoring (PDM)¹³⁴ data indicated that WFP-supported activities improved MIYCNH practices among target communities.

¹³⁴ WFP, n.d., Focus Group Discussions on Mother Support Groups and Local Complementary Food.

Figure 13: Comparison of IYCF indicators of beneficiaries surveyed (2024) with Kambia and Pujehun district-level averages (2021)



Source: National Nutrition Survey 2021 and evaluation team beneficiary survey 2024.

100. However, while the qualitative data reported that SBCC was a positive influence on all MIYCNH practices, the quantitative data from both the beneficiary survey and WFP's surveys identifies several critically important areas for improvement for both women and children. A large decrease in the percentage of women achieving minimum dietary diversity (MDD-W) from 45 percent in 2020 to 18 percent in 2023 (Table 30) suggests deteriorating nutritional outcomes for women in WFP operational areas.

101. Among children, the evaluation team beneficiary survey found breastfeeding rates to be lower than district averages and bottle feeding to be six times higher in WFP operational areas in Pujehun compared with the district average in 2021 (Table 12). These findings are concerning, as bottle feeding is known to contribute to increased malnutrition and mortality in areas of high poverty, accompanied by limited water and sanitation. Additionally, optimal breastfeeding significantly reduces neonatal and child mortality, as it protects the nutritional status of children, prevents stunting and wasting, guards against infections and supports recovery from illness.^{135,136,137}

¹³⁵ Black, R.E. et al. 2008. Maternal and Child Undernutrition: Global and Regional Exposures and Health Consequences. *The Lancet*, 371(9608): 243–60.

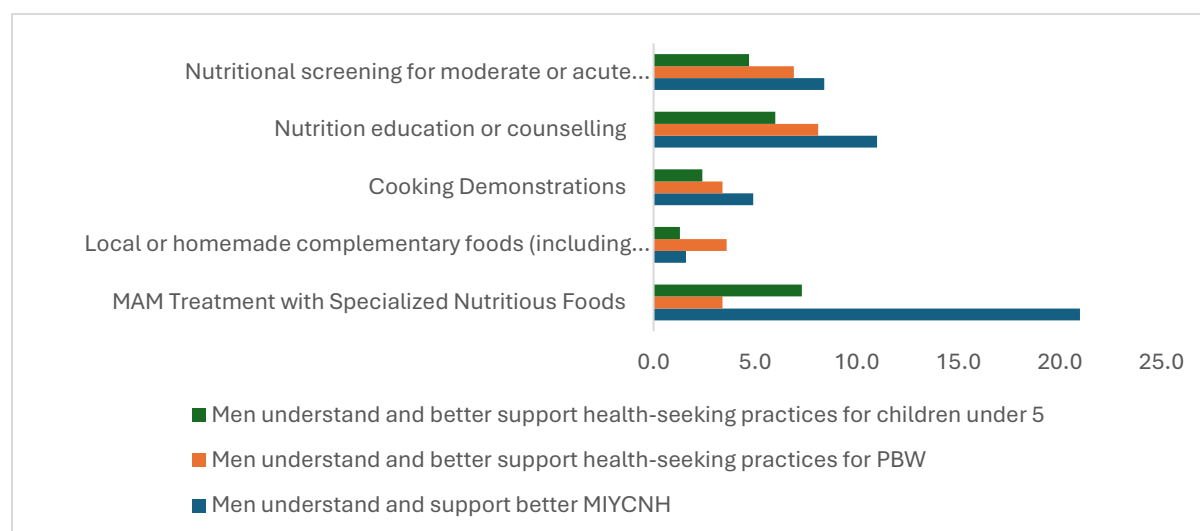
¹³⁶ Lamberti, L.M. et al. 2011. Breastfeeding and the Risk for Diarrhea Morbidity and Mortality. *BMC Public Health*, 11(S3): S15.

¹³⁷ Debes, A.K. et al. 2013. Time to Initiation of Breastfeeding and Neonatal Mortality and Morbidity: A Systematic Review. *BMC Public Health*, 13(S3): S19.

Finding 12: Qualitative reports indicated an increase in men’s participation in and support for MIYCF activities, but the quantitative survey found limited evidence of men’s support. Conversely, although older women are the most culturally influential in MIYCF practices in Sierra Leone, the evaluation team did not find intentional inclusion of older women in MSGs or SBCC activities.

102. Several key informants and FGDs with MSGs indicated a perception that the inclusion of men in MSGs is important in improving nutrition outcomes. While this may be the case in broad terms, the beneficiary survey indicated very limited understanding of and support for MIYCNH by men (Figure 14) despite increased participation. Further, only 25 percent of those surveyed reported that their husband accompanied them to antenatal care visits during their most recent pregnancy.

Figure 14: Beneficiary survey reported support and understanding of MIYCNH, PBW and health-seeking practice by men



Source: Beneficiary survey 2024.

103. On the other hand, the cultural role of older women (particularly mothers-in-law) in providing guidance and support to younger women on MIYCNH practices was noted by key informants, in reports and in published research from Sierra Leone¹³⁸ to be the most influential. While key informants reported that a few members of the MSGs are older women, the evaluation team did not find evidence of WFP leveraging their traditional roles or intentionally including older women in MSG activities, thus missing an opportunity to target older women as change agents for improving feeding practices. Rather, WFP reported that older women were barriers to improvements in feeding practices.¹³⁹

Further, key informants with some MSGs identified that grandmothers have more ‘free time’ than their daughters for participation in MSG activities. Given older women’s cultural role, time availability, existing training tools for grandmothers and evidence of the successes of grandmothers in improving MYICNH practices in Sierra Leone,¹⁴⁰ the evaluation team found that WFP underutilized rather than leveraged grandmothers – instead overburdening younger women of childbearing age.

¹³⁸ MacDonald, C.A., Aubel, J., Aidam, B.A., Webb-Girard, A. 2019. Grandmothers as Change Agents: Developing a Culturally Appropriate Programme to Improve Maternal and Child Nutrition in Sierra Leone. *Curr Dev Nutr.*, 4(1): nzz141, [https://cdn.nutrition.org/article/S2475-2991\(22\)11963-3/pdf](https://cdn.nutrition.org/article/S2475-2991(22)11963-3/pdf).

¹³⁹ ACR 2020.

¹⁴⁰ Aidam, B.A., MacDonald, C.A., Wee, R., Simba, J., Aubel, J., Reinsma, K.R., Webb Girard, A. 2020. An Innovative Grandmother-Inclusive Approach for Addressing Suboptimal Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices in Sierra Leone. *Curr Dev Nutr.*, 4(12): nzaa174, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdn/nzaa174>.

Manufacturing of local complementary foods (2022–2024)

Finding 13: The initiation of local production of local complementary foods (LCFs) in three districts is a complex and challenging undertaking for local MSGs. Some challenges associated with the start-up of a manufacturing unit include acquiring land for building, sourcing electricity, substandard equipment, frequent breakdowns, irregular remuneration and on-the-job learning across multiple disciplines, including management, procurement and marketing. However, if successful both as a business and in reaching vulnerable groups, it will be an important contribution to improving nutrition. Currently, the initiative is in the early stages of development and has not yet collected monitoring indicators for evaluation.

104. KIs indicated that an inexpensive, nutritious complementary food produced with local ingredients is an important contribution to improving the nutrition of young children in Sierra Leone, given the plethora of cheap, non-nutritious ‘baby foods’ marketed throughout the country. Indeed, the beneficiary survey found that more than one-half (Annex VI) of those surveyed had fed their child a purchased LCF with a low nutritional value in the previous 24 hours, indicating both a market and a need for such products. Key informants indicated that the nutritional composition of the WFP-supported LCF (*Nyam Nyam Pap* in a local language) is of “very good quality” compared with most LCF products available in the local markets and less expensive than a comparable LCF (Bennimix).

105. Examples of the successes and challenges associated with the start-up of the complex business managed by MSGs are detailed in Annex V. Overall, the evaluation team understands that the production sites are in the early stages of implementation and that the current focus is on the short-term objectives of ‘start-up’ and not on the medium-term objective of ‘profitability’ (or the long-term objective of ‘sustainability’). Given the early stages of development and limited information on medium-term profitability, it is not possible for the evaluation team to evaluate the potential for positive outcomes.

SO4: SHFs and communities in targeted areas have resilient livelihoods that better meet their food security and nutrition needs by 2030

Finding 14: ACL activities helped smallholders achieve improved production and strengthened value chains and farmer-based organizations (FBOs), with some evidence of improved incomes for vulnerable farmers, even if outcomes in the area of food security and nutrition showed less progress (likely due to rising food inflation in Sierra Leone).

The evaluation team found that the food for assets (FFA) model has been effective in providing incentives for SHF to collectively participate in the labour-intensive task of rehabilitating unproductive agricultural assets (especially inland valley swamps (IVSs)). The number of assets built met targets over the course of the CSP – both in terms of funds disbursed and the number of assets rehabilitated (as shown in

Table 13). According to KIs with WFP, the number of assets built by communities in 2022 and 2023 increased due to increased funding.

Table 13: FFA output indicators by year

| | 2020 | | 2021 | | 2022 | | 2023 | |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual |
| Cash transferred to SHFs (USD) | 287,100 | 323,504 | 260,000 | 125,000 | 200,000 | 174,348 | 87,000 | 681,959 |
| Number of assets built by communities (e.g. IVS, community pastures) | N/A | 111 | 113 | 113 | 113 | 282 | 138 | 139 |

Source: COMET report CM-R008.

106. FGDs indicate that prior to support from WFP to develop productive IVSs, many farmers were working less sustainable upland plots.^{141,142} For example, most farmers' groups reported second – and sometimes third – harvests of rice, consistent with previous project assessments.¹⁴³ The evaluation team found that the FFA model was effective in incentivizing community-based asset development and maintenance, leading to the rehabilitation of productive IVSs that offer the potential for multiple cropping every year, as did the 2024 decentralized evaluation of ACL activities.¹⁴⁴ Government partners also cited the success of the FFA modalities which are being mainstreamed into important Government of Sierra Leone initiatives such as the Agricultural Value Chain Development Project.¹⁴⁵

Asset rehabilitation was supported by CCS and FBOs.¹⁴⁶ FGDs with FBOs indicated a number of important benefits¹⁴⁷ from these CCS activities that were in line with other evaluations that noted similar findings.¹⁴⁸ Overall, the evaluation team found that integrated agricultural support across the rice value chain built the capacities of SHFs to produce, process and sell high-quality rice – in particular for HGSP – and has created important market incentives for producing rice (and other agricultural commodities). As a result, FGDs with SHFs indicated that farmers previously producing at or near subsistence levels were able to generate and sell surplus rice in as little as one or two seasons, consistent with previous ACL evaluations.¹⁴⁹

107. Table 14 illustrates the productivity gains made through ACL; overall average yields of WFP farmers

¹⁴¹ The non-perennial upland plots most farmers were cultivating are usually limited to a single harvest during the rainy season, while the IVS model is based on perennial developed/rehabilitated swamps that offer potentially two to three harvests.

¹⁴² The evaluation team notes that there are challenges in quantitatively measuring asset creation outcomes. Percentage of the population in targeted communities reporting benefits from an enhanced livelihood asset base was difficult to measure with monitoring data; the percentage rose to 96.1 percent in 2021 but dropped back to 43 percent in 2022 due to a change in the methodology by which this indicator was measured; Asset Benefit Indicator revised in the *WFP Indicator Compendium (2022–2025)*.

¹⁴³ See WFP, UNDP and PBF. 2022. *Endline Evaluation Report Prepared for the Project: Mitigating Localised Resource-Based Conflicts and Increasing Community Resilience in Pujehun and Moyamba Districts of Sierra Leone, September*; and see WFP, IOM and PBF. 2024. *Endline Assessment Report Prepared for the Project: Building Cross-Border Peace and Strengthening Sustainable Livelihoods of Cattle Herders and Crop Farmers in Sierra Leone and Guinea, June*.

¹⁴⁴ WFP. 2024. *Evaluation of Asset Creation and Livelihood Activities in Sierra Leone from January 2020 to December 2023, August*.

¹⁴⁵ The Agricultural Value Chain Development Project is a nation-wide six-year project with the objective of increasing incomes for smallholders through the promotion of agriculture as a business.

¹⁴⁶ This included: the provision of improved agricultural inputs (especially short-duration rice varieties), training in the application climate-smart agriculture practices, training in using improved water management practices and training in the application of post-harvest techniques, as well as the provision of agricultural equipment (e.g. threshers, power tillers and rice mills).

¹⁴⁷ Firstly, improved agricultural practices and rice varieties enhanced productivity. Secondly, power tillers and threshers reduced the amount of time required for farming and processing. In the time saved, farmers could engage in work on their personal plots or on other income-generating activities. Thirdly, milling machines saved FBOs money on processing costs and served as a source of revenue; FBOs provided milling services to other farmers while saving on expenses that they would otherwise have had to pay for the milling of their own rice.

¹⁴⁸ For instance, workers in the WFP-supported FBO in Lensenia (supported as part of the PBF cross-border project) earns one cup of rice that for every seven cups that they mill, which allows the group to earn approximately seven 150 kg sacks per season. Half of the proceeds from these rice sales are divided among the group, while half are reinvested for the maintenance of the machine and other FBO activities; see WFP, IOM and PBF. 2024. *Endline Assessment Report Prepared for the Project: Building Cross-Border Peace and Strengthening Sustainable Livelihoods of Cattle Herders and Crop Farmers in Sierra Leone and Guinea, June*.

¹⁴⁹ See WFP, UNDP and PBF. 2022. *Endline Evaluation Report Prepared for the Project: Mitigating Localised Resource-Based Conflicts and Increasing Community Resilience in Pujehun and Moyamba Districts of Sierra Leone, September*; WFP, IOM and PBF. 2024. *Endline Assessment Report Prepared for the Project: Building Cross-Border Peace and Strengthening Sustainable Livelihoods of Cattle Herders and Crop Farmers in Sierra Leone and Guinea, June*; and WFP. 2024. *Evaluation of Asset Creation and Livelihood Activities in Sierra Leone from January 2020–December 2023, August*.

were much higher than the national average.

Table 14: Average annual rice yields per hectare of WFP-supported SHFs compared with national averages

| | Average annual yields (mt/ha) | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| <i>Pujehun</i> | 2.2 | No data | 2.4 | 2.1 |
| <i>Koinadugu</i> | No data | No data | No data | 3.2 |
| <i>Falaba</i> | No data | No data | 5.7 | 4.8 |
| <i>Kenema</i> | No data | No data | No data | 1.8 |
| <i>Kambia</i> | No data | 2.1 | No data | 2.3 |
| <i>Moyamba</i> | 2.7 | No data | No data | 2.2 |
| <i>Tonkolili</i> | No data | 1.3 | No data | 3.0 |
| Overall average | 2.5 | 1.7 | 4.1 | 2.8 |
| | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 |
| <i>National average</i> | 1.8 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 1.9 |

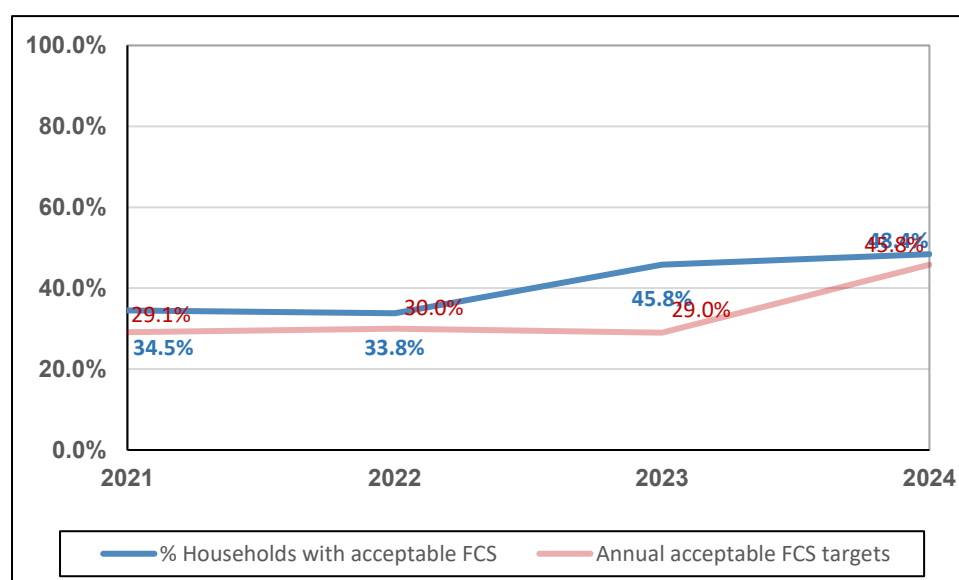
Source: WFP Sierra Leone Yield Reports 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023, and USDA.¹⁵⁰

108. Overall, the evaluation team found that the CCS provided to government partners and key community stakeholders was also underpinning the agricultural outputs and food security outcomes of ACL activities. Partners indicated that motorbikes and training provided by WFP were being used to provide monitoring support by MAFS block extension officers and WFP youth contractors supporting the monitoring and technical backstopping of support provided to farmers. This support was essential – especially in the early years of ACL projects – to ensure proper implementation of the key components of ACL projects by supported SHFs/FBOs. The evaluation team noted, based on FGDs with SHFs/FBOs, that monitoring by MAFS block extension officers and WFP youth contractors helped assist farmers in adhering to the IVS rice production model and Technical Package on Rice Production (developed in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency), both of which were key to contributing to improved agricultural productivity, food security, incomes and nutrition. Focus groups indicated that in-field support from MAFS and youth contractors was also important for troubleshooting implementation issues as these arose – for example, getting updates on delays in delivery of inputs, seeking assistance in pest control, fixing faulty equipment – and for facilitating communication between farmers, WFP and MAFS when such issues did arise.

¹⁵⁰ USDA (United States Department of Agriculture). 2024. "Country Summary: Sierra Leone", 18 September, <https://ipad.fas.usda.gov/countrysummary/Default.aspx?id=SL&crop=Rice> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

110. Figure 15 indicates that improved production has helped increase food security among WFP beneficiaries, suggesting positive contributions to food security outcomes via greater access to food through improved agricultural production (as indicated in the ToC in Annex VIII). The percentage of households with an acceptable FCS increased steadily over the CSP period, from 29.1 percent in 2020 to 48.4 percent in 2023, showing progress but falling short of the CSP target of 76 percent, suggesting that a significant proportion of vulnerable households still face food insecurity.

Figure 15: FCS outcomes and targets for SO4¹⁵¹



Source: COMET report CM-R010b.

111. In 2023, 45.2 percent of beneficiary households had a borderline FCS and a troubling 6.4 percent had a poor FCS, even with the benefit of WFP agricultural support. KIIs suggested that progress in food security measures could be even higher if not for how individual/household outcomes in food security were mediated by external factors, and in particular, the worsening food inflation in the country. For example, WFP's *Market Prices Bulletin* for Quarter 2 shows that prices of a kilogram of imported and local rice increased by 15 percent and 13 percent respectively when compared with the previous quarter (January–March 2024) and increased by 30 percent and 22 percent respectively year-on-year.¹⁵² Monitoring data on food expenditure (as a share of income) showed that in 2022 food expenditure as a share of income was very high, at 83.6 percent,¹⁵³ far exceeding the target of 45 percent.¹⁵⁴ National data from the February 2024 FSMS also indicates an overall worsening of food expenditure indicators.¹⁵⁵ This suggests that while some improvements in food consumption outcomes may have occurred, the vast majority of households remained economically vulnerable to socioeconomic shocks that could leave them struggling to meet essential needs.

Table 15: CSI data for SO4¹⁵⁶

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | CSP target |
|-----|------|------|------|------|------------|
| CSI | 11.2 | 7.9 | 1.7 | 5.4 | <5 |

Source: COMET report CM-R009b.

112. Looking at CSI among SO4 beneficiaries shows decrease from 11.2 in 2020 to 1.7 in 2022, showing significant improvement and meeting the CSP target of 9.9 in 2022 – even if coping strategies again increased in 2023 and the overall CSP target was unmet.

¹⁵¹ FCS revised in the *WFP Indicator Compendium (2022–2025)*.

¹⁵² WFP. *Market Prices Bulletin Sierra Leone*. Quarter 2, 2024.

¹⁵³ Over the CSP target that year of 45 percent.

¹⁵⁴ 2023 monitoring data was not available.

¹⁵⁵ 68 percent of people reported spending more than 75 percent of their total expenditure on food and 25 percent on all other essential needs. When compared with the same time last year, this shows a deterioration of 7 percentage points, from 61 percent in February 2023 to 68 percent; see WFP. 2024. *Food Security Monitoring System Report*, February.

¹⁵⁶ CSI revised in the *WFP Indicator Compendium (2022–2025)*.

Finding 15: WFP purchases of rice from SHFs increased considerably over the CSP period, both in terms of value and volume. In addition, agricultural producers selling to WFP reported a number of important benefits (e.g. bulk sales, a premium price, reduced transport costs, lower wastage) over selling in local markets.

113. Table 16 indicates that the value of smallholder sales through WFP-supported aggregation systems increased steadily from 2020 to 2023, reflecting a positive trend towards the CSP target, with a large increase in 2024 to a total sales volume of 1,015.6 mt that was valued at USD 840,085 – exceeding CSP targets for both volume and sales. The volume of sales to SHFs through WFP-supported aggregation systems increased from 2020 to 2023, again showing substantial progress towards the overall CSP target.

Table 16: SHF sales through WFP-supported aggregation systems

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | CSP target |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| <i>Value of smallholder sales through WFP-supported aggregation systems</i> | USD 34,752 | USD 45,707 | USD 98,831 | USD 92,840 | USD 840,085 ¹⁵⁷ | ≥ USD 420,000 |
| <i>Sales volume by smallholder farmers through WFP-supported aggregation</i> | 50 mt | 70.45 mt | 125.9 mt | 125.15 mt | 1,015.6 mt ¹⁵⁸ | ≥ 600 mt |

Source: COMET report CM-R010b.

114. Agricultural producers selling to WFP report a number of important benefits over selling in local markets. For example, WFP generally offers a premium price for goods (though market fluctuations can undercut this, as noted under EQ2.1a), increasing the incomes of vulnerable smallholders. Bulk buying by WFP lowers the time investment needed to sell daily in markets – without the need to travel to market, sellers avoid transport and wastage costs, and thus save time.

115. With the expansion of HGSF, ACL activities are increasingly leveraged for school meals. Thus, WFP has successfully leveraged pro-smallholder food procurement to catalyse smallholder participation in the quality-oriented formal agricultural market. FGDs with WFP-supported farmers reported that a ready market for their agricultural produce is an important incentive for stimulating production, consolidating the organizational strength of their FBOs, building experience in collective sales, and improving overall yields and incomes.

Finding 16: Production of agricultural commodities other than rice have played a secondary role in ACL activities, though the production of vegetables and OFSP has grown in importance in recent years in order to supply HGSF. Importantly, the production and sale of these two crops are generally controlled by female farmers in Sierra Leone.

116. The provision of inputs and training for growing vegetables (including OFSP) is also a component of SO4 programming. Importantly, the integration of a nutrition-sensitive approach to ACL interventions has led to diversification of crops among smallholder farmers, a finding noted by FGDs and the decentralized ACL evaluation.¹⁵⁹ Planting of vegetables on swampland was widely reported among project beneficiaries, who indicated that they provided micronutrient-rich vegetables which were not otherwise accessible through existing markets in many remote areas (e.g. ACL programming in areas that lie on the border of Falaba district). In addition, in 2023, the ACL programming model was expanded to support female farmers to grow OFSP, for HGSF; unlike in rice production in Sierra Leone, females typically control the income generated from the sales of such crops.¹⁶⁰ Early indications are that these female farmers are growing and selling their produce to WFP's SF programme, thus generating important farming incomes. However, this

¹⁵⁷ Rice: USD 530,264; pulses: USD 309,821.

¹⁵⁸ Rice: 616 mt; pulses: 399.6 mt.

¹⁵⁹ WFP. 2024. *Evaluation of Asset Creation and Livelihood Activities in Sierra Leone from January 2020 to December 2023*, August.

¹⁶⁰ WFP. 2021. Home-Grown School Feeding Value Chain Assessment.

aspect of ACL is only in its nascent stages, making it difficult to fully assess its outcomes.

Finding 17: While WFP purchases from ACL-supported farmers through HGSF help to support local agricultural value chains by creating stable markets for SHFs, WFP local procurement processes can be lengthy and not well aligned with the needs of poor SHFs, who report resorting to a number of negative coping strategies as a result of cash flow shortages caused by payment delays.

117. FBOs across fieldwork sites also indicated that the onerous and lengthy administrative and procurement processes are misaligned with the needs of cash-strapped SHFs, who often prefer payment immediately. Typically, the time from when farmers deliver their produce to when they receive payment is two to three months or, in some instances, longer. The 2024 ACL decentralized evaluation similarly found that delays in product pick-up and payment persist, with FBOs frustrated because of the lengthy quality control and the administrative processes that WFP undertakes.¹⁶¹ The evaluation team does note that the country office stated that payment delays were “much reduced” in 2024, and that it is working with headquarters and the regional bureau in Dakar on improving corporate systems to facilitate timely payments to farmers.

118. KIIs with government partners suggest that due to the late payment to farmers, a percentage of the produce earmarked for sale to WFP is being diverted to other buyers offering quick payment, rather than farmers waiting for the potential of a premium price while WFP carries out its procurement procedures. KIIs noted instances when such diversion cut into expected sales volumes for HGSF. Thus, longer processing times by WFP act as an incentive for smallholders to sell more of their product to the many middlemen that do not pay for quality grains but provide ‘cash in hand’.

119. Aggregators also indicated that delayed purchase created cash flow shortages that impeded business expenses (e.g. finances for inputs, processing, transport), as well as tensions with the farmers they were sourcing commodities from (who were demanding payment).

120. Smallholders themselves reported that in waiting for payment from WFP they experienced cash flow shortages negatively affecting their ability to pay for necessities like healthcare, schooling, food and other household expenditures – prompting the use of negative coping strategies in some cases. Coping strategies included: consuming less/less preferred food, borrowing money or food from neighbours and selling rice from their own individual plots.

EQ2.1a: Were there any unintended outcomes, positive or negative?

Finding 18: Primary data collection found that actual enrolment is consistently higher than enrolment estimates. There were no corresponding increases in educational resources – for example, the number of teachers and classrooms or the availability of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities – to counterbalance growing student populations, placing a heavier burden on teachers and school infrastructure. Actual enrolment also outstripped projections for SF supplies, leading to insufficient food for students. Schools coped either by reducing feeding ratios or by reducing the period of food assistance provided to students, which is likely to reduce the effectiveness of SF on food consumption, nutrition and other related outcomes.

121. FGDs with SMCs indicate that increases in enrolment of students meant that some schools lacked sufficient supplies of food commodities to feed all students across an entire term.¹⁶² While it is not possible to estimate the scale of this issue, each of the schools visited during fieldwork indicated that actual enrolment was consistently higher than the estimated/expected enrolment estimates. Firstly, it was noted during discussions with SMCs that national measures of enrolment and attendance can underestimate actual rates, because rates are often calculated based on previous terms of attendance/enrolment or are

¹⁶¹ WFP. 2024. *Evaluation of Asset Creation and Livelihood Activities in Sierra Leone from January 2020 to December 2023*, August.

¹⁶² Adjustments are made for every term and for each new academic year. In addition, WFP has recently piloted a simple mobile phone reporting platform for school attendance which may assist in addressing some of the inconsistencies in terms of student numbers for those schools in the SF programme.

conducted at times when not all students are present. Secondly, even though it was noted that WFP supports all government-approved schools in a chiefdom to avoid creating 'magnet schools' through SF, fieldwork also showed widespread reporting of children leaving other schools and coming to the schools where there are WFP-resourced SF programmes, which further increased actual enrolment/attendance versus estimates.

122. Fieldwork found that schools cope with higher-than-expected enrolment in one of two ways. Some schools provide standard ration sizes to students, but not for the entirety of the term, instead stopping feeding as food supplies run out one to three weeks before the end of the term. Teachers indicated that schools experience a drop-off in attendance when food runs out. To keep attendance steady throughout the term, other schools opt to cut the size of rations so that they are able to feed children throughout the duration of the term; but the smaller rations negatively affect the food consumption outcomes of students. How these compromises – as pupils take in less food – affect per-child nutritional outcomes is unclear.

123. Because increased enrolment cannot be met with corresponding increases in teaching staff – especially trained and qualified government teachers, of which there is a shortage in Sierra Leone¹⁶³ – the result is increased student-teacher ratios and overcrowding of classes (e.g. there were over 100 students in some classrooms in schools included in fieldwork), both of which could very likely contribute to lowered learning outcomes. While WFP does not undertake teacher training or carry out other similar 'educational' programming, there may be a missed opportunity to act in a convening/coordinating role with other governmental and non-governmental partners to pursue strategic partnerships for a more systemic approach to SF (see EQ4.3) for improved learning outcomes.

Finding 19: The evaluation team noted cases where contracting modalities did not allow for sufficient pricing flexibility to account for fluctuations in market prices, undercutting the profits of some SHFs supplying WFP HGSF programmes.

124. FGDs, with some suppliers of agricultural commodities to WFP-supported schools, indicated that high food inflation¹⁶⁴ increased market prices to the point that they were selling below market prices based on the agreements they had negotiated with WFP. It is unclear how widespread this was, as most FBOs indicate that local procurement by WFP has acted as an incentive for agricultural production. Nevertheless, cases were noted during fieldwork where contracting did not appropriately account for market fluctuations, undercutting the profits of SHFs. One example of this is WFP's agreement with the aggregator Takoreki ABC to buy konshu beans (2,000 50 kg bags) for HGSF at a school in Kambia. The agreement was made with ABC for Le 1,000 per bag of beans at the previous market price in December 2023. At the time of fieldwork in July 2024, the market price was Le 1,120 in the market. There were other suppliers that also indicated similar issues. The evidence presented suggests that instability should be expected in the food systems/markets that WFP operates in, and its procurement systems should be designed as such. Without a better accounting for the risk of price inflation, in particular, WFP risks unintentionally undercutting the profitability of local farmers.

EQ2.2a: To what extent did WFP contribute to the achievement of cross-cutting aims (humanitarian principles, protection, AAP, gender, equity and inclusion, environment, climate change and other relevant issues)?

Summary of findings: Humanitarian principles were broadly adhered to and WFP is perceived as effectively upholding its commitments to AAP; considerable – if not systematic – efforts were made to address climate and environmental issues, along with gender inclusion.

¹⁶³ Beoku-Betts, I. 2023. Teacher Deployment in Sierra Leone: Lessons Learnt and Going Forward, *EdTechHub Policy Brief*.

¹⁶⁴ As noted for instance in the: WFP. 2024. *Market Prices Bulletin Sierra Leone*, Quarter 2.

Finding 20: All CSP activities, including activities in humanitarian/crisis response, broadly adhere to relevant humanitarian principles.

125. Relevant humanitarian principles – humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence – underpin all WFP operations. In terms of the humanity principle, WFP work aims to give attention to the populations that are most susceptible to food insecurity. As explained in greater detail under EQ3.2, all programming is targeted using thorough data and other assessments that target the most food-insecure populations. This included work during the CSP period when Sierra Leone was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as several other natural and manmade disasters. Proactive targeting of vulnerable groups also helped ensure that programming was provided impartially, solely based on need and without discrimination. Further, while Sierra Leone was not affected by conflict during the CSP period, WFP's participation projects with peacebuilding aims were carried out based on the principle of neutrality that did not favour any side (e.g. in disputes between farmers and herders in Falaba, or farming communities and multinational companies in Pujehun and Moyamba). Finally, there was no indication that any WFP operations in Sierra Leone violated principles of independence – all maintained humanitarian objectives that remained independent of political, economic, military or other objectives.

Finding 21: The evaluation team finds that most beneficiaries are accessing WFP programming without concerns related to safety, dignity and integrity. Available data shows that most know about the CFM – even if many are reluctant to utilize it.

126. Where data is collected on safety, access and dignity, it shows that WFP is generally performing well in these areas, as shown in Table 16. Likewise, beneficiaries consulted during fieldwork consistently indicated that they had unhindered access to WFP programmes, that they had received assistance without safety challenges, and that this assistance was received in a manner that upheld their dignity.

Table 17: Proportion of targeted people who benefit from WFP programmes in a manner that ensures and promotes their safety, dignity and integrity

| | Baseline | 2021 | 2022 | 2022 target |
|-----|--|-------|-------|-------------|
| SO1 | Proportion of targeted people receiving assistance without safety challenges | 100% | 100% | =100% |
| SO4 | Proportion of targeted people having unhindered access to WFP programmes | 90% | 98.5% | ≥90% |
| | Proportion of targeted people receiving assistance without safety challenges | 100% | 99.6% | =100% |
| | Proportion of targeted people who report that WFP programmes are dignified | 99.8% | 98.5% | ≥95% |

Source: COMET report CM-R009b.

AAP monitoring data presented in

127. Table 18 shows that data availability on beneficiary feedback (where it is documented, analysed and integrated into programme improvements) varies considerably by strategic outcome and by year. There are notable gaps in the data. It is concerning that where data is available, CSP targets are missed significantly. Along with CFMs (considered below), information provision and consultation with beneficiaries are key commitments that will allow WFP to operationalise its commitments to AAP.¹⁶⁵ The inability to, firstly, generate complete data and, secondly, meet targets in these areas calls into question the extent to which AAP is operationalized across WFP programming.

¹⁶⁵ WFP. 2017. *AAP Guidance Manual Emergencies and Transitions Unit Programme and Policy Division*, January.

Table 18: Proportion of assisted people informed about the programme (who is included, what people will receive, length of assistance)

| | 2022 | 2021 | 2020 | CSP target |
|-----|-------|-------|-------|------------|
| SO1 | 70% | 52.9% | N/A | 100% |
| SO2 | N/A | 39.7% | 21.1% | 100% |
| SO3 | N/A | N/A | 13.7% | 100% |
| SO4 | 43.3% | 59.5% | 57% | 100% |

Source: COMET report CM-R009b.

In contrast to monitoring data, beneficiaries consulted for this evaluation generally reported that they had been informed about programming (who would benefit, what assistance would be provided, length of assistance, etc.) from the early stages of programme design through to its implementation. Also, the beneficiary populations included in this evaluation indicated that they were consulted on programme design and implementation (e.g. through sensitizations, community meetings or discussions with local stakeholders), saying that WFP generally sought adequate buy-in from populations affected by its interventions. At the time of analysis, it was unclear why discrepancies exist – between WFP monitoring data (

128. Table 18) and primary data collected by the evaluation team – in the performance of WFP in informing affected populations. One explanation might be that the FGDs oversampled those beneficiaries with fair or good knowledge of programming.

Table 19: CFM complaints by strategic outcome (2020–2024)

| | Complaints | Actual beneficiaries | Complaints as % of beneficiaries |
|-----|------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| SO1 | 437 | 71,012 | 0.6% |
| SO2 | 160 | 283,789 | 0.1% |
| SO3 | 20 | 19,166 | 0.1% |
| SO4 | 100 | 16,351 | 0.6% |

Source: WFP Country Office.

129. Since 2015, the country office has had a functioning CFM – originally a toll-free number, changed to a WhatsApp number in 2018 – for receiving information from people in communities where WFP operates. CFM is managed by RAM. According to the WFP Country Office, between 2020 and 2022 there were 559 complaints filed through the CFM, which decreased to 121 in 2023 and 37 in 2024. Based on the following table, complaint levels are generally very low – not even reaching 1 percent of beneficiaries for any strategic outcome.¹⁶⁶ A large portion of complaints are connected to resource transfers, and complaints decreased as transfers increased significantly over the final years of the CSP.

130. The 2023 operational audit highlighted that, in some geographic areas, beneficiaries had limited awareness of the beneficiary feedback mechanism and did not use it to raise complaints.¹⁶⁷ While the evaluation team found that beneficiaries were generally aware of the CFM, many chose not to make use of it, preferring to instead informally report issues to WFP staff or implementing partners.¹⁶⁸ The key reason for not reporting through CFM was the belief that filing a formal complaint would reflect badly on them and their community and could jeopardize support from WFP. It is important to note that there are no indications that such beliefs are in any way the product of WFP policies, communications or any other action.

Finding 22: Despite some integration of issues related to climate and the environment into the body text of the CSP and its cross-cutting indicators, environmental/climate assessments are not systematically incorporated as part of programme design under the CSP period. Nevertheless, considerable efforts were still made to include climate/environmental considerations in WFP programming where possible.

131. The country office does not currently collect data on how CSP activities “take into account environmental and social considerations in accordance with the 2017 *WFP Environmental Policy*”.¹⁶⁹ As also mandated by the WFP Environmental Policy, all programme activities that are part of a CSP need to be screened for environmental (and social) risks during the design of the programme activity.¹⁷⁰ KIIs with the country office indicated that proactive environmental screening/assessments are not regularly incorporated into programme design due to a lack of technical skills and human resources (HR) in the area of environmental sustainability.

132. Even still, many activities promoting environmental sustainability and climate change adaptation

¹⁶⁶ Though KIIs at WFP indicated that “all complaints were followed by the relevant unit”, KIIs also indicated that “due to migration of data from MS Access to corporate MoDa system, we have information of the follow ups from 2023 and onwards”.

¹⁶⁷ WFP. 2023. *Internal Audit of WFP Operations in Sierra Leone Office of the Inspector General Internal Audit Report*, AR/23/02.

¹⁶⁸ For example, KIIs and FGDs both noted that digital transfer of funds under SO1 generally resulted in one to two persons per community not receiving funds due to lost or non-functional SIM cards. In such cases, beneficiaries preferred to get in touch with the CP MADAM, foregoing the formal feedback mechanism even though they were aware of it.

¹⁶⁹ WFP. 2020. “Sierra Leone Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)” (WFP/EB.2/2019/7-A/7), p.12, para. 44.

¹⁷⁰ WFP. 2021. *Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework*, Module 1: Overview.

were undertaken during CSP implementation.¹⁷¹ Notably, during the CSP period, WFP worked with NDMA to help mobilize efforts to track and address deforestation in Sierra Leone's Western Area Peninsula National Park. The reporting and media coverage generated by this work drew the attention of the President of Sierra Leone, as well as other government actors, triggering an investigation into deforestation in the park, which is expected to result in conservation strategies/actions.¹⁷²

EQ2.2b: To what extent was gender-transformative programming mainstreamed into the CSP activities?

Finding 23: There are many tangible examples of where the CSP has made inroads in terms of gender inclusion, which provide evidence that gender inclusion has been mainstreamed into key activities. However, the CSP has largely not fostered gender-transformative effects.

133. Cross-cutting indicators are limited to measuring GEWE in SO1 and SO4 where CBT modalities are incorporated into other WFP programmes, as shown in Table 19. Cross-cutting data shows that activities under SO4 have made a more significant contribution to GEWE.

134. The inconsistent and often poor performance in the area of GEWE of activities monitored under SO1 shows that outcomes in the area of GEWE cannot be assumed and must be proactively pursued as part of programming; for example, we will see below that SO4 does explicitly incorporate gender into its programming model, which likely explains the differences in the performance of the GEWE indicators shown in Table 20.

Table 20: Proportion of households where women and men jointly make decisions on the use of food/cash/vouchers

| | 2022 | 2021 | 2020 | End-CSP target |
|-----|-------|-------|------|----------------|
| SO1 | 19% | 56.9% | N/A | =50% |
| SO4 | 74.9% | 62.2% | 63% | ≥75% |

Source: COMET report CM-R009b.

135. Other than the cross-cutting PDM data just presented, data collected on outcome indicators is disaggregated by gender and age, allowing for gender inclusion to be systematically monitored and reported on across WFP's portfolio of interventions in Sierra Leone. Importantly, evidence-generation activities carried out through the CFSVA in 2020 and FSMS (as of 2023) also now produce sex-disaggregated data.

136. That being said, the evaluation team found many examples within the CSP period of gender-inclusive activities that have been implemented as part of WFP programmes, supporting the findings of the 2023 internal audit of WFP operations which found that WFP Sierra Leone promoted the role of women across all programmes.¹⁷³ As mentioned above, ACL activities support the cultivation of vegetables, a type of farming that is much more likely to be carried out by female farmers in Sierra Leone. Further expansion of ACL support for crops such as OFSP, the production and sale of which is typically controlled by female farmers, is also creating opportunities for female farmers. Indeed, female farmers engaged in this evaluation reported benefiting from the extra income earned from selling vegetables and OFSP grown with ACL assistance. In addition, bulk purchases made by WFP directly from farmers have several important benefits. WFP buys at a better price, increasing the incomes of vulnerable female farmers, with female farmers earning additional savings because bulk buying reduces transport and wastage costs. Bulk

¹⁷¹ This includes: sourcing local food through HGSP, supplying fuel-efficient Wonder Stoves for cooking school meals, using solar power for LCF production sites, encouraging IVS rice farming over upland cultivation, sensitizing farmers to climate-smart agriculture, undertaking reforestation around IVS, etc.

¹⁷² Based on these successes, the WFP is expected to support assessments of other national parks, highlighting the links between deforestation and food production.

¹⁷³ WFP. 2023. *Internal Audit of WFP Operations in Sierra Leone Office of the Inspector General Internal Audit Report*, AR/23/02.

purchases also lower the time needed to regularly bring produce to market, which is typically done by women in addition to the many other economic, social and domestic responsibilities that they carry out in Sierra Leonean households. Moreover, all ACL activities implemented since the inception of the CSP require at least 30 percent female participation in FBOs; since 2022, ACL gender composition targets have been raised to require gender parity. This target is typically met and often exceeded.

137. While the above analysis indicates that gender inclusion has been well integrated into the CSP, far less progress has been made in gender-transformative action that seeks “equal sharing of power by women and men”.¹⁷⁴ There are two notable exceptions within WFP programming during the CSP period that demonstrate outcomes that concern the equal sharing of power between males and females. Firstly, considerable efforts have been made through ACL activities to include females within the executives of FBOs – a key domain for decision making in agriculture that is typically dominated by males. Estimates made by ACL staff are that the current female participation in FBO executives reaches 30 percent; this is in line with Sierra Leone’s 2021 Gender Empowerment Act, which requires 30 percent female participation in decision-making positions and structures.¹⁷⁵ As also noted in the ACL decentralized evaluation, ACL interventions have played a significant role in supporting women to become leaders within their communities and fostering gender-transformative work.¹⁷⁶ However, the evaluation team also notes that barriers to women’s inclusion in community decision-making processes persist due to continuing gender inequities within communities, indicating that further efforts are required to foster greater power-sharing. Another area where gender-transformative work was effective was in the promotion of crops such as vegetables and OFSP, which are usually managed by female farmers in Sierra Leone.

138. In addition, nutrition activities attempt to transform traditional gender roles around nutrition and care work within households and communities. Specifically, SBCC carried out by MSGs has gender as a transformative element that has succeeded in encouraging men to take on more responsibility for the health of children and PBWs, and so on, as indicated by data collected during fieldwork.¹⁷⁷ These findings are corroborated by WFP’s own qualitative assessments of nutrition programming, which also found that men now display supportive roles in maternal and childcare practices that have promoted positive health-seeking behaviour by women and caregivers of children aged 0–23 months.¹⁷⁸ Still, as noted above, while this may be the case broadly and/or the expected answer, the beneficiary survey carried out in areas where there is intensive SBCC by MSGs indicated limited understanding and support by men for MIYCNH practices.

139. The above areas show that gender-transformative effects in terms of equal power-sharing are present and possible but could be expanded – for instance, if gender analysis were integrated into WFP programming, which is currently not an organizational practice, in part because the country office does not have sufficient human resource capacities or expertise in the area gender to consistently carry out such analysis.¹⁷⁹

140. Organizational uptake of gender analysis could help increase the gender-transformative effects of WFP’s work under the next CSP and could help flag and mitigate those areas where GEWE might be compromised. For instance, nutrition activities place a heavy time burden on MSG members – who are mostly female – without providing remuneration. In addition, cooks volunteering for SF – another role that

¹⁷⁴ WFP. 2020. “Sierra Leone Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)” (WFP/EB.2/2019/7-A/7), p.11, footnote 32.

¹⁷⁵ Government of Sierra Leone. 2021. The Gender Empowerment Act, 2021, https://www.parliament.gov.sl/uploads/bill_files/The%20Gender%20Empowerment%20Act,%202021.pdf (accessed on 9 July 2025).

¹⁷⁶ WFP. 2024. *Evaluation of Asset Creation and Livelihood Activities in Sierra Leone from January 2020 to December 2023*, August.

¹⁷⁷ KIIs from DHMT and FGDs with MSGs.

¹⁷⁸ WFP. ND. *Focus Group Discussions on Mother Support Groups and Local Complementary Food*.

¹⁷⁹ WFP Sierra Leone Country Office does have a Gender Focal Point that contributes to various working groups and networks in the area of gender. But the responsibilities of the Gender Focal Point are stretched across many other tasks, and the position does not fulfil the experiences and expertise required of a gender specialist.

is dominated by women – are not remunerated either.

EQ2.3: To what extent are the achievements of the CSP likely to be sustainable, in particular from financial, social, institutional and environmental perspectives?

Summary of findings: Some achievements under the CSP have financial sustainability in the short to medium term, while others face financial constraints – particularly community-based structures and efforts around environmental and climate (which were largely activity-based).

Finding 24: Significant donor contributions for SF, market linkages to SHFs created through HGFS, and government allocations from the national budget for the funding of NDMA all contribute to the sustainability of SO2, SO4 and SO6. However, funding constraints due to limited donor interest threaten the CSP in key areas related to SO1 and SO3.

141. A key gain in financial sustainability in the area of crisis response is that – as of 2023 – NDMA is now included in the national budget, which demonstrates the Government of Sierra Leone's commitment to continuing the gains made during the CSP under SO6.¹⁸⁰ KIIs with government partners indicate that WFP contributions to supporting the agency have helped it reach a level where its demonstrable institutional value as a government entity can effectively and with considerable autonomy manage disasters. Further, KIIs indicated that the Government of Sierra Leone is now investing its own finances to maintain its national capacity for emergency response.

142. In addition, SF is a key priority of both the Government of Sierra Leone and the donor community (as will be described in greater detail below). The Government of Sierra Leone's prioritization of free and quality school education in all government-run primary schools indicates the likely continued financing of SF/HGFS in Sierra Leone in the coming years, in particular as HGFS continues to grow within the national SF portfolio, as called for by the national policy on SF.¹⁸¹ Government prioritization of HGFS is indeed sustained as expected; there will be a pool of sustained finances from which to create market linkages to support the local production of agricultural commodities from SHFs, as long as donors continue to fund HGFS.

143. Overall, KIIs report that both WFP and the Government of Sierra Leone are operating in a constrained fiscal space due to several recent shocks (e.g. the global financial crisis, a fall in commodity prices, the aftermath of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine) that make it more difficult to fund CSP priorities in what is already a small donor pool. Direct activities related to SO1 and SO3 are particularly vulnerable to these shrinking financing opportunities, as neither emergency response nor malnutrition prevention is a priority for most donors – and the government does not itself have adequate resources to fund these areas fully.

Finding 25: Despite considerable progress by WFP in building the capacities of community-based structures during the CSP period, some may face challenges sustaining themselves without continued support and monitoring; for example, past experiences show that MSG mobilization depends on continued engagement and monitoring, while FBOs often face considerable difficulties maintaining agricultural processing equipment.

As a sustainability strategy, WFP programmes work through existing community-based social structures (MSGs, SMCs, FBOs, etc.). Thus, anything achieved through the training, supplies, equipment or other assistance that WFP projects provide will stay within the communities they benefit. That being said, a number of challenges may threaten the social sustainability of programmes implemented during the CSP period. For instance, FGDs with beneficiaries indicated that despite improvements in knowledge and awareness from SBCC in nutrition, many vulnerable households are unable to consistently afford nutritious

¹⁸⁰ Previously the agency was being funded by the World Bank.

¹⁸¹ Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, Government of Sierra Leone. 2021. *National School Feeding Policy*. https://mbsse.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/National-School-Feeding-Policy_May2021.pdf (accessed on 9 July 2025).

food, especially with continually escalating food prices. KIs also noted a general lack of incentives for MSGs to stay organized and mobilized in the long term due to the already high burden placed on mothers in Sierra Leone through their many economic, domestic and social obligations. WFP attempted to address this issue in part by providing support for 6 out of the 150 WFP-supported MSGs to establish egg production enterprises for increasing incomes and available protein sources, but this has met with challenges due to the reduced availability of chicken feed (lack of maize). Therefore, the village savings and loan association (VSLA) approach was initiated with these six groups.

144. In addition, there are some indications that achievements in supporting productive agricultural markets – even if supported through the creation of market linkages for SHFs – may not be sustained due to the lack of financial capacity for food processing equipment provided with WFP support, which would impact the ability of FBOs to meet food quality standards. Again, KIs with government and other partners gave examples of many FBOs that had been provided with agricultural equipment but failed to maintain it in the long run.

EQ2.4: How effective was WFP in its position as a lead/convening actor in key areas of humanitarian action (especially co-chairing three pillars of national emergency response) and peacebuilding (especially PBF projects)?

Summary of findings: There is strong evidence of WFP's effective leadership and convening capacities in humanitarian action; WFP's strong field presence and capacities enabled it to play a similar role in peacebuilding programming.

Finding 26: WFP support provided to NDMA was key to establishing the Inter-Pillar Coordination Group (IPCG), within which WFP is currently effectively leading three pillars; WFP is also taking the lead among United Nations agencies in the area of emergency preparedness and response.

145. WFP played a key role in helping to establish NDMA's inter-pillar emergency response structure, the IPCG. In April 2021, following a massive fire in a Freetown slum,¹⁸² an after-action review¹⁸³ co-led by WFP helped consolidate the IPCG with strengthened incident action planning and situation reporting.

146. The review was supported by WFP's Logistics Field-Based Preparedness Project to capture the lessons learned for logistics and the other pillars to guide NDMA's coordination and logistics enhancement priorities. The logistics preparedness action plan has been formulated based on lessons learned from the Susan's Bay fire, as well as a WFP-supported logistics preparedness workshop and WFP field assessment. Such support from the WFP helped contribute to the formation of a National Logistics Preparedness Working Group and sub-working groups that bring stakeholders together before any emergency under the IPCG. The logistics pillar is co-led by WFP and includes key government, humanitarian and private sector partners. In addition to the logistics pillar, WFP co-leads emergency pillars related to assessment/registration and food and nutrition. In addition, WFP is also the lead United Nations agency in Sierra Leone for emergency preparedness and response coordination due to the absence of OCHA and UNDP's limited funds and disaster risk reduction focus. WFP chairs response meetings and the United Nations meetings in the area of emergency preparedness and coordinates United Nations response planning in consultation with the Government of Sierra Leone.

Finding 27: WFP Sierra Leone's large field presence and strong performance in convening jointly implemented peacebuilding projects helped to successfully build valuable capacities and experience supporting peacebuilding programming in Sierra Leone.

147. Although WFP does not typically have the technical mandate within the United Nations country

¹⁸² The fire occurred on 24 March 2021 in Susan's Bay – one of Freetown's poorest slum areas – affecting 7,093 people and 1,597 households.

¹⁸³ Government of Sierra Leone and WFP. 2021. *After-Action Review Susan's Bay Fire*, 12 April, ONS conference room Freetown, Sierra Leone, <https://logcluster.org/en/document/sierra-leone-after-action-review-susans-bay-fire-12-april-2021> (8 August 2024).

team to lead peacebuilding projects, during the CSP period, WFP acted as the convening agency for two peacebuilding initiatives funded by PBF in Sierra Leone. In both projects, WFP provided livelihood support through its ACL project (primarily support for the development of rice value chains) to promote trust, social cohesion and economic collaboration as part of joint-agency responses to peacebuilding. Evaluations of both projects broadly indicated that ACL interventions promoted improved agricultural yields and had positive impacts on agricultural livelihoods and food security¹⁸⁴ towards WFP's aim to promote "social cohesion and by supporting other United Nations entities engaged in sustaining peace".¹⁸⁵

148. KIs with United Nations country team stakeholders close to these projects indicated that WFP's strong performance between 2020 and 2022 in convening a PBF project under the project entitled Mitigating Localized Resource-Based Conflicts and Increasing Community Resilience in Pujehun and Moyamba districts of Sierra Leone resulted in the agency being awarded the convening role in 2022–2024 for the Building Cross-Border Peace and Strengthening Sustainable Livelihoods of Cattle Herders and Crop Farmers in Sierra Leone and Guinea project. KIs cited key organizational comparative advantages, including WFP's larger field presence and strong performance in convening jointly implemented peacebuilding projects. By comparison, other agencies leading PBF-funded interventions in Sierra Leone have experienced significant delays and other issues while implementing peacebuilding projects, which undermined the conflict sensitivity of these projects by creating tensions among beneficiary groups that threatened to subvert any contributions to peace and development in the communities they were working in.¹⁸⁶ This is not to say that WFP's convening role in the aforementioned projects was without challenges, as noted in project endline assessments.^{187,188}

EQ2.5: To what extent was the CSP designed to align with the strategies and plans of the wider United Nations system (esp., the UNSDCF Sierra Leone 2020-2023) based on the comparative advantage of WFP within the United Nations country team in Sierra Leone?

Summary of findings: The CSP is aligned with the UNSDCF – WFP co-leads Outcome 1 and contributes to Outcome 3; WFP's comparative advantages in food security, SF, field presence and supply chain capacities are aligned to support the United Nations country team's plans.

Finding 28: The CSP is closely aligned and informed by Sierra Leone's UNSDCF 2020–2023. WFP is co-leading on Outcome 1 (sustainable agriculture and food and nutrition security) and contributing to Outcome 3.

149. As is shown in Table 20, the vast majority of CSP activities contribute under Outcome 1 of the UNSDCF (agricultural, food security and climate). As with the CSP, the UNSDCF Outcome 1 is oriented towards SDG 2 and targets 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3. WFP is co-leading the UNSDCF's first outcome area, along with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). WFP's SF activities also contribute to Outcome 3 (basic services), and in particular Indicator 3c: primary and junior secondary school completion rate. Of course, providing support to strengthen government capacity in food security and nutrition – including in disaster management and response, SF and nutrition – underpins all these activities. A good

¹⁸⁴ WFP, UNDP and PBF. 2022. *Endline Evaluation Report Prepared for the Project: Mitigating Localised Resource-Based Conflicts and Increasing Community Resilience in Pujehun and Moyamba Districts of Sierra Leone*, September; and WFP, IOM and PBF. 2024. *Endline Assessment Report Prepared for the Project: Building Cross-Border Peace and Strengthening Sustainable Livelihoods of Cattle Herders and Crop Farmers in Sierra Leone and Guinea*, June.

¹⁸⁵ WFP. 2021. "WFP Strategic Plan (2022–2025)" (WFP/EB.2/2021/4-A/1/Rev.2), https://executiveboard.wfp.org/document_download/WFP-0000132205?_ga=2.92393181.1187834204.1723228369-1445863489.1722978825, p.32 (accessed on 9 July 2025).

¹⁸⁶ FAO. 2023. *Evaluation of Project "Empowering Youth at Risk as Resources for Sustaining Peace and Community Resilience in Tonkolili and Kenema Districts in Sierra Leone"* (UNJP/SIL/052/PBF, MPTFO Gateway ID: 00124562).

¹⁸⁷ WFP, UNDP and PBF. 2022. *Endline Evaluation Report Prepared for the Project: Mitigating Localised Resource-Based Conflicts and Increasing Community Resilience in Pujehun and Moyamba Districts of Sierra Leone*, September.

¹⁸⁸ WFP, IOM and PBF. 2024. *Endline Assessment Report Prepared for the Project: Building Cross-Border Peace and Strengthening Sustainable Livelihoods of Cattle Herders and Crop Farmers in Sierra Leone and Guinea*, June.

example of how WFP CCS activities directly contribute to the UNSDCF is that FSMS data – jointly generated by WFP and MAFS – is the main data source used to measure Indicator 1c of the UNSDCF.

Table 21: Summary of key WFP outputs relative to the UNSDCF outcomes

| UNSDCF outcome | UNSDCF results | SDG target | Key WFP outputs |
|---|--|------------|---|
| Outcome 1: Sustainable agriculture, food and nutrition security | Indicator 1a: Proportion of national population in food poverty | SDG 2.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cash transfers to crisis-affected populations, as part of food and nutrition assistance FFA to SHFs, including FBOs and women groups, as part of integrated resilience-building support |
| | Indicator 1b: Proportion of children under 5 who are stunted | SDG 2.2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender-responsive SBCC and information to PBW and adolescent girls, men, and boys, as part of comprehensive malnutrition prevention support LCF to targeted children aged 6–23 months, PBW and girls, as part of comprehensive malnutrition prevention support |
| | Indicator 1c: Proportion of population with moderate or severe food insecurity | SDG 2.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cash transfers to crisis-affected populations, as part of food and nutrition assistance FFA to SHFs, including FBOs and women groups, as part of integrated resilience-building support |
| | Indicator 1d: Prevalence of acute malnutrition | SDG 2.2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nutritious food to crisis-affected populations (including to children aged 6–23 months, PBW and girls), as part of food and nutrition assistance |
| | Indicator 1e: Rate of national food self-sufficiency | SDG 2.3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for farming techniques, post-harvest value addition to SHFs, including FBOs and women groups, as part of integrated resilience-building support Market support to SHFs, including FBOs and women groups, as part of integrated resilience-building support |
| Outcome 3: Access to basic services | Indicator 3c: Primary and junior secondary school completion rate | SDG 4.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nutritious school meals to primary school children, as part of integrated SF programme |

Source: Evaluation team.

Finding 29: WFP’s comparative advantages in Sierra Leone are rooted in its expertise in food security and SF, as well as its extensive field presence and robust supply chain capacities; these comparative advantages are aligned to maximize WFP’s contributions to the strategies and plans of the wider United Nations system in the country.

150. The WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021) clearly elaborated the global comparative advantages upon which the CSP was developed.¹⁸⁹ The areas where WFP can add the most value broadly fall into activities aimed at protecting access to food, improving nutrition, supporting SHFs and food systems sustainability, and providing partner support to implement the SDGs by strengthening national capacities. These areas of comparative advantage are clearly reflected in WFP’s CSP and its contribution to Sierra Leone’s UNSDCF.

151. KILs with the Government of Sierra Leone, the United Nations country team, CPs and donors also indicated that the WFP Country Office in Sierra Leone has key comparative advantages in these areas. MAFS key informants, for instance, stated that WFP holds a comparative advantage in Sierra Leone in programming focused on food insecurity and agricultural development, especially that related to improving rice productivity and value chains. As a result, the Government of Sierra Leone has adopted the ecology-based farming model to IVS in its nationwide Agricultural Value Chain Development Project. In addition, government partners cited WFP’s organizational capacities in SF – and especially HGSP – as a comparative advantage, indicating that WFP is a standard-bearer for many SF activities; WFP’s global comparative

¹⁸⁹ WFP. 2017. *WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021)*, July, https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000019573/download/?_ga=2.91983322.1187834204.1723228369-1445863489.1722978825 (accessed on 9 July 2025).

advantage in school health and nutrition was also recognized in the recent strategic evaluation on SF.¹⁹⁰

152. KIIs noted that WFP can deliver critical elements of its programming portfolio in different combinations to create efficiencies and multiply outcomes, often starting with a few activities and progressively integrating and layering a holistic set of initiatives to fight hunger through integrated food, nutrition and livelihood support. Moreover, KIIs noted that WFP's strong experience and expertise with resilience building is well complemented by a dual mandate to provide emergency preparedness and shock-responsive social protection, creating a flexible portfolio of capacities that can dynamically shift between saving lives and changing lives in a way that few organizations are able to. Programming is, in turn, supported by several important operational comparative advantages. Many KIIs noted that logistics and supply chain capacities provide key logistical services for activities related to SF and crisis response. WFP's considerable field presence – both its field offices and a number of field staff – relative to other United Nations agencies was also mentioned by many KIIs as a key organizational strength.

2.3 EQ3: To what extent has WFP used its resources efficiently in contributing to country strategic plan outputs and strategic outcomes?

EQ3.1: To what extent were outputs delivered within the intended timeframe?

Summary of findings: About half of CSP activities met output targets, while about 60 percent of activities were delivered on schedule. The most significant timeliness challenges affected activities under SO2 (with SF being delivered later or for fewer feeding days than expected), SO3 (with production of LCF starting late as a result) and SO4 (with delays in the provision of agricultural inputs and the creation of assets negatively affecting overall agricultural productivity of WFP beneficiaries).

Finding 30: Under 60 percent of activities were delivered as scheduled. There were considerable delays in the implementation of some activities under SO2 (e.g. delays in signing agreements with the Government of Sierra Leone and delays in delivery of food to schools), SO3 (e.g. delays in setting up LCF production sites) and SO4 (e.g. delays in delivery of inputs).

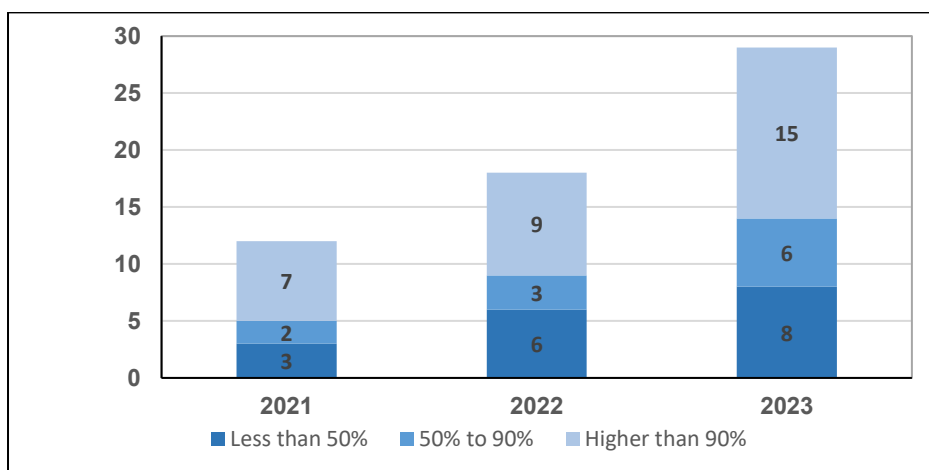
153. As can be seen in

154. Figure 16, in 2021, the number of output indicators that reached or exceeded 90 percent completion increased between 2021 and 2023.¹⁹¹ However, looking at the percentage of output indicators that reached or exceeded 90 percent completion shows that this measure actually decreased from 58.3 percent in 2021 to 50 percent in 2022 and then 51.7 percent in 2023. In both 2022 and 2023, delays in the start of SF affected the achievement of output targets under strategic outcomes. It should also be mentioned that overall output completion rates would have been higher in 2022 if the delivery of fortified/SNF had not been included, as these activities were being phased out that year.

Figure 16: Status of achievement of annual output targets (for outputs with data)

¹⁹⁰ WFP. 2020. *Strategic Evaluation of the Contribution of School Feeding Activities to the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals* (OEV/2019/019), https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000128162/download/?_ga=2.91808474.1187834204.1723228369-1445863489.1722978825.

¹⁹¹ In 2020, 68.4 percent of indicators had no data, due to monitoring issues associated with restricted access to beneficiaries as a result of COVID-19.



Source: COMET report CM-R008b.

155. In 2021, 72 percent of output indicators were delivered according to schedule; this decreased to 58.3 percent in 2023.

Table 22: Activities delivered as per schedule

| | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| SO1 | 100.0% | N/A | 57.1% |
| SO2 | 55.6% | N/A | 71.4% |
| SO3 | 50.0% | N/A | 40.0% |
| SO4 | 78.6% | N/A | 56.3% |
| SO5 | 65.0% | N/A | 61.5% |
| SO6 | 85.7% | N/A | N/A |
| Total | 72% | N/A | 58.3% |

Source: ACR 2021, 2022 and 2023.

156. Under SO1, cash-based and food transfers to vulnerable populations affected by COVID-19 were largely delivered in a timely manner. However, in 2020, delays in funding coupled with the late arrival of some SNFs (due to the limited availability of mixed nutritious products) limited WFP's ability to support nutrition beneficiaries with a full assistance package.¹⁹²

157. Activities under SO2 experienced considerable delays during the CSP. In 2021, for instance, there were fewer SF days than planned due to delays in food deliveries because of COVID-19 supply chain interruptions and delays in signing the implementation agreement between WFP and MBSSE.¹⁹³ In 2022, SF was delayed again, with only two districts (Pujehun and Kambia) targeted with SF due to delays in signing a contribution agreement with MBSSE.¹⁹⁴ Then, in 2023, there was a decrease in the number of feeding days compared with 2022 as a result of the late start of SF.¹⁹⁵

158. Under SO3, KIIs indicated that there were delays in the setup of LCF production sites in 2023. There were delays in the construction of factory buildings, training of MSGs, formulating LCF recipes and ensuring that the LCF adhered to national requirements for complementary foods (in collaboration with the Standards Bureau). Building the capacities of the four MSG groups in the areas of food processing, packaging, marketing and site management also took more time than expected. Significant technical challenges with processing machinery and power generation further delayed the opening of the production

¹⁹² WFP. 2020. *Sierra Leone Annual Country Report 2020, Country Strategic Plan 2020–2024*.

¹⁹³ WFP. 2021. *Sierra Leone Annual Country Report 2021, Country Strategic Plan 2020–2024*.

¹⁹⁴ WFP. 2022. *Sierra Leone Annual Country Report 2022, Country Strategic Plan 2020–2024*.

¹⁹⁵ WFP. 2023. *Sierra Leone Annual Country Report 2023, Country Strategic Plan 2020–2024*.

sites, which were eventually inaugurated at the end of 2023.¹⁹⁶ As a result, the distribution of enriched LCF did not commence until 2024.

159. Activities related to SO4 also experienced delays. Notably, both ACL projects funded by PBF – one in Pujehun/Moyamba and the other in Falaba – required no-cost extensions. Many of the delays related to ACL programming in Pujehun and Moyamba districts were due to challenges caused by COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, as well as issues resulting from delays in disbursing funds as part of the project.¹⁹⁷ For the ACL intervention carried out in Falaba district, delays were the result of procuring agricultural inputs and building key project infrastructure that negatively affected agricultural and agro-pastoral production supported through WFP programming.¹⁹⁸

160. Under SO5 and SO6, COVID-19 created challenges in terms of the programme delivery early in the CSP period. In response, WFP de-emphasized capacity-strengthening activities that involved physical interaction, such as training, and along with its partners shifted attention to the COVID-19 response.

EQ3.2: To what extent does the depth and breadth of coverage ensure that the most vulnerable to food insecurity benefit from the programme?

Summary of findings: Targeting of vulnerable populations was appropriate under the CSP. The generation and use of food security data, along with complementary assessments to identify vulnerable communities and households, helped ensure that WFP targeted and reached vulnerable populations with its programming resources. However, the short duration and timing of CBT limited food security and nutritional outcomes of this modality.

Finding 31: CSP activities targeted populations vulnerable to food insecurity and at risk of malnutrition, though increasing the duration of modalities such as CBT would improve food and nutritional outcomes. MAM treatment made more efficient contributions to outcomes.

161. Across all strategic outcomes, selection criteria were appropriate for geographic and population targeting. Programming districts were generally chosen based on food security and nutrition status (using data from the CFSVA/FSMS).¹⁹⁹ For example, targeted districts Kambia, Karene, Koinadugu, Kenema and Pujehun all have levels of food insecurity above 90 percent,²⁰⁰ while Port Loko, Moyamba, Falaba and Bonthe are all above 80 percent. Of all the districts where WFP worked during the CSP, Tonkolili had the lowest levels of food insecurity, with 70.7 percent of the district's population classified as food insecure. Even there, however, 31.5 percent of the population was classified as severely food insecure – the second-highest proportion of food-insecure people of any district in Sierra Leone. That being said, food security data indicates high levels of food insecurity across Sierra Leone – including in areas where WFP is not present.²⁰¹

162. WFP carried out Chiefdom-level targeting for all strategic outcomes using 2020 CFSVA data – an important WFP-supported data source and the only data source in Sierra Leone that provides chiefdom-level data on food insecurity. WFP then consulted partners to identify the most vulnerable communities. At the community level, WFP undertook beneficiary targeting using a community-driven approach – guided by

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ WFP, UNDP and PBF. 2022. *Endline Evaluation Report Prepared for the Project: Mitigating Localised Resource-Based Conflicts and Increasing Community Resilience in Pujehun and Moyamba Districts of Sierra Leone*, September.

¹⁹⁸ WFP, IOM and PBF. 2024. *Endline Assessment Report Prepared for the Project: Building Cross-Border Peace and Strengthening Sustainable Livelihoods of Cattle Herders and Crop Farmers in Sierra Leone and Guinea*, June.

¹⁹⁹ Districts for SO2 were assigned to WFP based on its partnership with the Government of Sierra Leone.

²⁰⁰ Moderately to severely food insecure.

²⁰¹ WFP. 2024. *Food Security Monitoring System Report, February 2024*, https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000158075/download/?_ga=2.179913508.1009920869.1723580713-1245052241.1723580713&_gac=1.184498388.1723584076.Cj0KCQjwiOy1BhDCARIsADGvQnAs5fxFIRXI5bbpmhH191wGpiPgW_P2VglXoibvcZj01xdlxN_tvxcaAoPWEALw_wcB (accessed on 9 July 2025).

the WFP's *Community-Based Targeting Guide*²⁰² – whereby committees of respected stakeholders are established and tasked with self-identifying the most vulnerable households with vulnerable populations such as females, youth, female-headed households, PWDs and the elderly.

163. On the whole, KIIs and FGDs showed agreement that the targeting of WFP programming largely reaches vulnerable populations. This is true across all strategic outcomes. For example, for CBT modalities (under SO1),²⁰³ KIIs with the WFP Country Office indicate that the elderly, widowed, female-headed households, PWDs and so on were generally incorporated in programmes. That being said, FGDs also revealed that there were instances where some vulnerable individuals in each community were left out of the programme, even if such cases were limited. Thus, there may exist opportunities to further refine targeting practices.

Table 23: Annual cash value transferred per beneficiary via CBT

| | Total cash transfers SO1 (USD) | Beneficiaries | USD per beneficiary household |
|------|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| 2020 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| 2021 | 2,808,748 | 65,480 | 43.00 |
| 2022 | 902,617 | 12,530 | 72.04 |
| 2023 | 1,763,651 | 54,627 | 32.29 |

Source: ACR 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023.

164. The total USD amounts received per beneficiary vary per year (Table 22); KIIs with WFP indicate that this can mostly be accounted for by the duration of assistance. In 2021 and 2023, households received two months of food assistance, whereas in 2022 they received three months.²⁰⁴

165. The evaluation team was able to conduct FGDs with recipients of CBT in 2023 in Port Loko and Pujehun; those in Port Loko received two payments in April and July 2023, while those in Pujehun received CBT in February and April 2023. FGDs with beneficiaries confirmed that each tranche lasted approximately two months before the funds were exhausted. However, at the time of the evaluation, FGDs also confirmed that most beneficiaries were again struggling with food insecurity (especially since continuing food inflation was eroding purchasing power).²⁰⁵ WFP's own PRRO evaluation also found that limited and infrequent CBT only had "a token impact on the targeted communities".²⁰⁶ Further, the evaluation team finds that a two-to-three-month CBT transfer is too short to yield a nutritional impact, and only one of the 2023 payments noted above (July 2023 in Pujehun) was disbursed during the lean season (since this timing was likely to have the greatest impact). From a nutritional perspective, food transfers for the MAM treatment given in 2020–2021 likely had more efficient and more effective contributions to outcomes, as these had: extensive coverage, adequate quantity of transfers, a usual duration of four months (continued until children recovered), appropriate timing (covered lean season) and appropriate targeting of the *most* vulnerable

²⁰² WFP. 2015. *Community-Based Targeting Guide*, <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000110378/download> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

²⁰³ The methodology outlined is for slow-onset emergencies. Targeting for sudden-onset emergencies relies on the Multi Indicator Rapid Assessment (MIRA)/Beneficiary Mapping Tool to determine the populations/households that have been affected by emergencies.

²⁰⁴ Transfer amounts were calculated using current market prices for the WFP food basket (based on 30 feeding days for 60 kg of rice, 9 kg of pulses and 4 kg of vegetable oil). To safeguard purchasing power amid inflation and the depreciation against the national currency, amounts are set in USD, with beneficiaries receiving the equivalent in local currency based on the exchange rate at the time of distribution.

²⁰⁵ The retail price of imported rice increased from Le 16.6 per kilogram in March 2023 to Le 24 per kilogram in June 2024, while local rice increased from Le 17.6 per kilogram to Le 24 per kilogram over the same period; see respective WFP *Market Prices Bulletins* for Sierra Leone.

²⁰⁶ WFP. 2018. *Final Evaluation of Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation 200938: 'Rebuilding food and nutrition security and strengthening disaster management capabilities in Sierra Leone'*, April, p.42.

populations (malnourished children and women).

EQ3.3: To what extent were WFP's activities cost-efficient in delivery of its assistance?

Summary of findings: Contextual factors constrained operational efficiency (especially delays in carrying out SF). Despite this, WFP was able to find important cost efficiencies by expanding its SF programme, which had the lowest expenditure-per-beneficiary ratio of WFP activities. In addition, the CO took important steps to reduce supply chain redundancies (e.g. the 2021 closure of Freetown Port warehouse and the 2022 closure of its Makeni logistics base).

Finding 32: Utilization of CSP financial resources has been uneven due to challenges caused by COVID-19, as well as other implementation challenges, especially delays in carrying out SF (as noted under EQ3.1). Still, the SF programme has the lowest expenditure-per-beneficiary ratio of all strategic outcomes.

166. Table 24 shows that most CSP funds were spent by the end of 2023. The funds utilization rate ranged from almost full utilization under SO1, SO5 and SO6 to about three-quarters utilization for SO2, SO3 and SO4. Explanations for lower utilization of these strategic outcomes included: low levels of staffing in the country office (SO3), long processes in finalizing partner agreements (SO2) and the impact of COVID-19 on CSP implementation (SO2 and SO4).

Table 24: Overall utilization rate during CSP

| | Allocated resources (USD) | Expenditure | Utilization rate |
|--------------|---------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| SO1 | 15,713,817 | 15,456,830 | 98.4% |
| SO2 | 28,082,118 | 21,876,445 | 77.9% |
| SO3 | 3,290,877 | 2,519,805 | 76.6% |
| SO4 | 10,855,679 | 7,685,961 | 70.8% |
| SO5 | 1,882,948 | 1,880,920 | 99.9% |
| SO6 | 322,580 | 314,852 | 97.6% |
| Total | 60,148,019 | 49,734,813 | 82.7% |

Source: IRM Analytics (ACR1-A SL02 2018-2023).

167. Since financial data for allocated resources is not provided annually, the figure below looks at the proportion of yearly expenditure of available resources. It shows considerable fluctuation during the CSP period. USD 10,800,148 was unused in 2020 due to implementation restrictions and other challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and had to be carried over to 2021 – mostly from SO1 (USD 3,310,619) and SO2 (USD 6,417,324). Fewer funds (USD 7,052,905) were carried over between 2021 and 2022 as programme implementation regained momentum following the removal of pandemic restrictions. Even then, however, there was still USD 3,222,036 carried over for SO2, as delivery of SF was impeded due to delays in signing a contribution agreement with MBSSE. The total funds carried over between 2022 and 2023 again went up to around 2020–2021 levels at USD 10,377,300. Again, SO2 had the largest share of unused resources (USD 6,169,767), even though overall expenditures for SF more than doubled year to year.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ From USD 3,697,677 in 2022 to USD 8,401,932 in 2023.

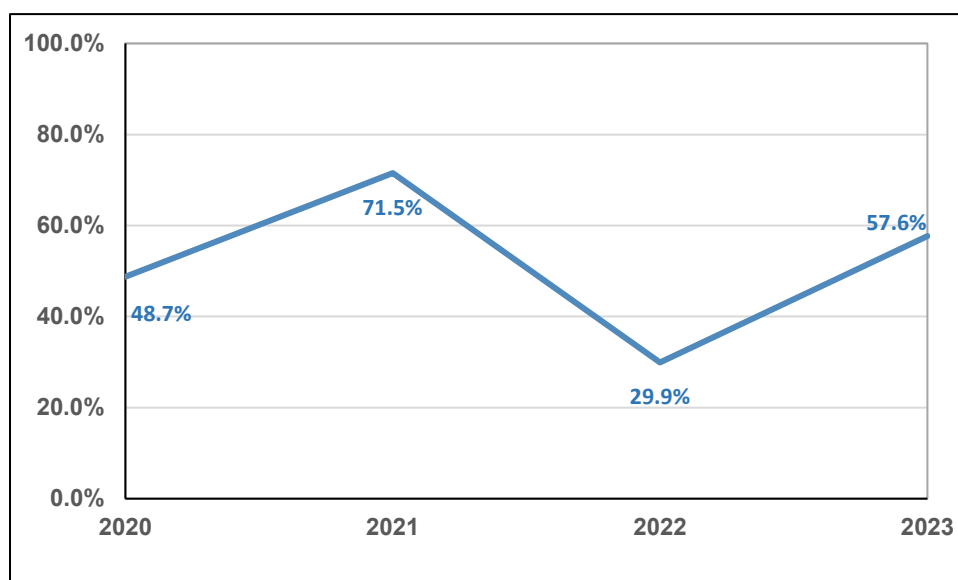
Table 25: Overview of long-duration funding

| Donor | Long-duration funding | Short-duration funding | % share of total long-duration funding | Total contribution | % of long-duration funding over donor contribution | % of long-duration funding over total contribution |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------|--|--------------------|--|--|
| <i>China</i> | | 2,000,000 | 0.0% | 2,000,000 | | |
| <i>European Commission</i> | | 572,248 | 0.0% | 572,248 | | |
| <i>France</i> | 1,094,691 | 541,712 | 1.0% | 1,636,403 | 66.9% | 1.6% |
| <i>Germany</i> | 6,865,870 | 2,627,801 | 6.3% | 9,493,671 | 72.3% | 10.2% |
| <i>Iceland</i> | 1,400,000 | | 1.3% | 1,400,000 | 100.0% | 2.1% |
| <i>Ireland</i> | 2,133,087 | 302,663 | 2.0% | 2,435,750 | 87.6% | 3.2% |
| <i>Japan</i> | 14,775,534 | 21,732 | 13.5% | 14,797,266 | 99.9% | 21.9% |
| <i>Private donors</i> | 3,509,067 | 530,474 | 3.2% | 4,039,541 | 86.9% | 5.2% |
| <i>Republic of Korea</i> | 2,543,326 | | 2.3% | 2,543,326 | 100.0% | 3.8% |
| <i>Russian Federation</i> | 2,000,000 | | 1.8% | 2,000,000 | 100.0% | 3.0% |
| <i>Sierra Leone</i> | 13,829,466 | 2,700,000 | 12.7% | 16,529,466 | 83.7% | 20.5% |
| <i>United Nations Peacebuilding Fund</i> | 3,299,559 | | 3.0% | 3,299,559 | 100.0% | 4.9% |
| <i>USA</i> | 3,200,000 | 3,500,000 | 2.9% | 6,700,000 | 47.8% | 4.7% |
| <i>World Bank</i> | | 50,000 | 0.0% | 50,000 | | |
| Total | 54,650,599 | 12,846,630 | | 67,497,229 | | 81.0% |

Source: WFP FACTory.

168. Table 25 indicates that the CSP relies heavily on long-duration funding, which allows for flexibility in carrying over unspent resources to subsequent years. This funding structure is supportive of continuity and enables the CSP to address ongoing needs beyond the constraints of a single fiscal year. While the flexible nature of long-duration funding supports continuity, its lack of predictable annual disbursement may require more adaptive planning by the country office to ensure that spending aligns with programmatic priorities. The earmarked nature of most funds, regardless of duration, can complicate the immediate reallocation of resources to underfunded areas. While annual expenditure rates provide some insights, they are a limited KPI in the context of long-duration funding, as such funding inherently operates on timelines that extend beyond a single year. Unlike structured multi-year funding – which often includes predictable annual disbursements – long-duration funds may appear to be available but are not fully disbursed until subsequent years, affecting annual expenditure rates and overall spending flexibility.

Figure 17: Total annual utilization rate of available resources



Source: IRM Analytics (ACR1-A SL02 2018–2023).

169. Table 25 provides an analysis of expenditure per beneficiary per year for each strategic outcome.

Table 26: Expenditure-per-beneficiary per year

| | 2020 (USD) | 2021 (USD) | 2022 (USD) | 2023 (USD) | Average per year |
|-----|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------------|
| SO1 | 38.06 | 52.25 | 97.55 | 37.86 | 56.43 |
| SO2 | 13.01 | 18.46 | 17.10 | 35.18 | 20.94 |
| SO3 | 48.69 | N/A | 4054.12 | 390.44 | 1,497.75 |
| SO4 | 84.46 | 51.72 | 56.24 | 61.24 | 63.42 |

Source: ACR5-A reports (2020–2023).

170. The expenditure per beneficiary provides an indication of WFP's cost-efficiency for the CSP period. It shows that expenditure per beneficiary was lowest on average for SO2, which served the largest number of beneficiaries over the course of the CSP, delivering school meals to the more than 200,000 primary school students yearly. Thus, despite the considerable logistical challenges noted above during the implementation of SF across five districts, there are important efficiencies to be gained through SO2, even though food prices continue to rise from the start of the CSP.²⁰⁸ The high expenditure-per-beneficiary value associated with SO3 in years 2022 and 2023 is indicative of expenditures associated with initial investments made in LCF production sites.

EQ3.3a: Were there any efficiencies gained from country office operational practices and efforts (especially as this is related to support functions like supply chain (efforts to remove redundancies)?

Finding 33: The country office proactively helps ensure cost-efficiency and optimization of supply chain activities, most notably by eliminating operational redundancies through the 2021 closure of the Freetown Port warehouse and through the 2022 closure of its Makeni logistics base.

171. The evaluation team found that the country office made several important steps to reduce redundancies in its supply chain activities while still ensuring sufficient capacity to provide logistics support for WFP programming and offer common services to partners. For example, the 2021 closure of the WFP Freetown Port warehouse and operation led to reduced handling and movement of commodities that were

²⁰⁸ See WFP. 2024. *Market Prices Bulletin Sierra Leone*, Quarter 2; and FAO. 2024. "FAO Food Price Index", 3 September, <https://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/foodpricesindex/en> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

previously required, as goods were moved from the quay to the port warehouse and then to the main WFP logistics base in Kissy. In addition, the handover of the Port Loko humanitarian logistics hub – previously operated by WFP in support of NDMA and inter-agency emergency response – provided savings on operating costs. NDMA gradually took responsibility for operating and financing the hub between 2021 and 2022 and is now solely responsible for its operation. Importantly, the 2022 closure of the Makeni logistics base is also estimated to have resulted in considerable cost savings, reflecting the decreases in throughput through 2022, as shown in Table 26.²⁰⁹ The country office carried out an analysis of the districts served by Makeni in 2021, with a comparison of costs if the same districts were served by Kissy, Freetown operation, finding a potential reduction of 28.8 percent in transport and handling costs.²¹⁰

Table 27: Makeni sub-office tonnage throughput

| Year | mt handled |
|----------|------------|
| 2018 | 366.4 |
| 2019 | 720.2 |
| 2020 | 1,677.4 |
| 2021 | 2,308.9 |
| 2022* | 300.5 |
| *Planned | |

Source: WFP Country Office.

172. In 2021–2022, the country office changed its transport contracting modality from a tariff system to traditional contracting. This provides transporters with a fairer price for their work and augments the number of transporters available for operations, increasing uplift and delivery reliability. Further, engaging private transporters creates positive externalities for local economies. Thus, by prioritizing local companies to support resilience-building projects, WFP contributes to local economies and can cut transport costs. This translated to better purchasing power for both beneficiaries and local populations, enabling WFP to buy more food for SF.

173. A number of recent cost-saving measures were also enacted in 2022/23 as part of a logistics staffing review. KIIs with WFP indicated that the review provided better oversight, resulting in greater loss and diversion reduction efficiencies, though it increased overall staffing costs. In addition, in 2023, the country office auctioned surplus logistics assets and stock, which were converted into approximately USD 300,000 for use for other expenses, including the rehabilitation of Kissy main hub. Reducing inventory in WFP warehouses created additional efficiencies by lowering requirements to manage supplies of excessive inventory while also lessening exposure to diversion risks. Finally, the introduction of cocoon bags and other food protective measures in 2024 helped reduce the loss of commodities through infestation caused by humidity.

²⁰⁹ The Makeni logistics base was established in 2014 as an emergency measure in response to the EVD outbreak in West Africa. Following the EVD response, throughput at the base also spiked up in 2020 and 2021, reflecting the COVID-19 increased requirements.

²¹⁰ Given that most supply chain functions previously handled by the Makeni logistics base—such as vehicle maintenance, port operations, and coordination—could be effectively managed from Freetown, where these services are already concentrated, the country office decided to shut down the Makeni base. This move resulted in substantial annual cost savings, while still allowing the office to maintain its ability to carry out supply chain and logistics activities in that region of Sierra Leone.

EQ3.4: To what extent were alternative, more cost-effective measures considered?

Summary of findings: CSP generally utilized cost-efficient modalities. In areas where less cost-efficient programming strategies were pursued, these were justified through their contribution to important development outcomes. For example, local purchases from SHFs made as part of the HGSP – although often more costly compared with imported food commodities – helped to develop local value chains and local markets.

Finding 34: The CSP was generally implemented using programming modalities that maximized cost effectiveness. In the area of HGSP, concessions in cost effectiveness yielded important development outcomes in local agricultural value chains and food systems.

174. In Sierra Leone and globally, WFP has shifted from food aid to food assistance in the form of cash transfers (aside from the temporary provision of food assistance as part of malnutrition treatment carried out during the COVID-19 response). KIIs with Government of Sierra Leone partners working with WFP in crisis response suggest that this shift has yielded gains in efficiency, as CBT requires a lower level of logistical support. Indeed, WFP's own international research supports the finding that, while the effectiveness of cash and in-kind transfers is similar on average, CBT is a more efficient modality in achieving food security and nutrition objectives.²¹¹ During the CSP, WFP has created efficiencies in its provision of emergency assistance by significantly increasing collaboration with the Government of Sierra Leone and other humanitarian actors to expand its digital cash assistance programme, linking with key financial service providers such as Ecobank and Orange Mobile Money for a more efficient model of resource transfers.

175. However, in the area of HGSP some cost-efficiency was sacrificed to yield greater development outcomes. While KIIs indicated that international purchases of commodities are generally cheaper, allowing larger quantities of food to be purchased for HGSP, buying locally may create inefficiencies when it comes to WFP's understandable objective of purchasing the cheapest available agricultural commodities to produce more school meals. However, WFP policies such as the Local Regional Food Procurement Policy (LRFP) make a strong case that higher procurement costs may be justifiable if programmatic objectives can be achieved through such purchases.²¹² Despite the challenges noted above, related to payment delays (EQ2.1) and market price fluctuations (EQ2.1a), the evaluation team found that local purchases of agricultural commodities for HGSP have considerable potential to help strengthen local value chains and to increase market access for SHFs/FBOs. FGDs with FBOs – especially those producing rice – indicated that WFP purchases created a steady demand for their agricultural produce. This was a motivating force for smallholders and farmers' groups to improve – and sustain – their agricultural productivity. FBOs also indicated that they are more likely to continue collective production if they are provided with continued access to stable markets through WFP purchases.

Finding 35: There are additional opportunities to maximize development outcomes by allocating more resources to nutritional programmes focused on PBW and children under two, capitalizing on the critical window of child development that occurs in the first 5,000 days of life, which is necessary for achieving expected longer-term outcomes (e.g. SF activities for primary school aged children).

176. In the area of nutrition, there are opportunities to maximize programming outcomes. Currently, SO3 has the smallest share of finances allocated to SO1–SO4,²¹³ which means that WFP can do more to resource and strengthen programming oriented towards improving nutrition outcomes for a larger number of vulnerable PBW and children aged 6–23 months.

²¹¹ WFP. 2022. *Cash and In-Kind Transfers in Humanitarian Settings: A Review of Evidence and Knowledge Gaps*, March, https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000137553/download/?_ga=2.138496691.1009920869.1723580713-1245052241.1723580713&_gac=1.14143941.1723584076.Cj0KCQjwiOy1BhDCARIsADGvQnAs5fxFIRXI5bbpmhH191wGpipgW_P2VgJXoibvcZj01xdlxN_tvxcaAoPWEALw_wcB (accessed on 9 July 2025).

²¹² WFP. 2019. *Local and Regional Food Procurement Policy* (WFP/EB.2/2019/4-C), p.15.

²¹³ I.e. of financial allocations to all strategic outcomes not focused on CCS (e.g. SO5 and SO6).

177. The WFP Nutrition Policy clearly states that the “first 1,000 days from conception to 2 years of age are the most critical period for intervention ... Compensating later in life for deprivations during this period is difficult.”²¹⁴ International evidence also emphasizes that interventions and actions targeting the first 5,000 days of life require renewed commitment and fast-tracked funding to increase coverage and improve the quality of service delivery.²¹⁵ There are significant, lifelong economic benefits from averting stunting through effective nutrition-specific interventions, which have higher cost-benefit ratios than many other development interventions.²¹⁶ Thus, generating and sustaining broad-based socioeconomic development is more likely if nutritional interventions are scaled up in the first 1,000 days.

2.4 EQ4: What are the factors that explain WFP performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected by the country strategic plan?

EQ4.1: To what extent has WFP been able to mobilize adequate, timely, predictable and flexible resources to finance the CSP?

Summary of findings: The CSP is largely well funded, and is benefiting from an increasingly diversified donor base. However, a large percentage of CSP funds were creating difficulties in the planning of programmes year-to-year. Funding is also generally earmarked, making it more difficult for the country office to adapt to shifting needs. There is notable donor interest in SF (which is well funded, with HGSF contributing to broader food systems results), while long-term funding for areas like MAM prevention is scarce.

Finding 36: Almost two-thirds of the CSP’s revised NBP had been resourced by 31 December 2023. Most of the resource shortfall is due to a lack of donors for crisis response following EVD in Sierra Leone, as well as to a lack of donor appetite for funding nutrition prevention and CCS.

178. In the lead-up to the CSP, former WFP senior management indicated that there was a shift from emergency funding during the EVD crisis – at which time considerable financial resources were available – towards a much more targeted (and resource-constrained) focus on livelihood activities and improving food security and nutrition which has resulted in lower funding levels overall, and that this required a subsequent move to more targeted and in-depth programming focused on resilience in key sectors with key ministries. As already mentioned above, as of August 2024, the CSP was funded at 70.6 percent – up from 62.7 percent as of December 2023. The current funding shortfall is USD 34,617,133.

²¹⁴ WFP. 2017. *Nutrition Policy* (WFP/EB.1/2017/4-C), p. 10.

²¹⁵ Heidkamp, R. et al. 2021. Mobilising Evidence, Data, and Resources to Achieve Global Maternal and Child Undernutrition Targets and The Sustainable Development Goals: An Agenda for Action. *The Lancet, Maternal and Child Undernutrition Progress* 2, 397(10282): 1400–18.

²¹⁶ Research suggests that country-specific benefit-cost ratios for investments that reduce stunting in 17 high-burden countries range from 3.6 (Democratic Republic of Congo) to 48 (Indonesia), with a median value of 18 (Bangladesh); see Hoddinott, J. et al. 2013. The Economic Rationale for Investing in Stunting Reduction. *Maternal and Child Nutrition*, 9(2): 69–82.

Table 28: Allocated contributions for CSP duration by funding source

| Donor | Allocated contributions (USD) | Share of NBP |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Government of Sierra Leone | 15,904,309 | 19.1% |
| Japan | 14,907,274 | 17.9% |
| Flexible funding | 11,746,126 | 14.1% |
| Germany | 9,518,577 | 11.4% |
| USA | 6,700,000 | 8.0% |
| <i>Private donors</i> | 4,039,137 | 4.8% |
| <i>PBF</i> | 3,299,559 | 4.0% |
| <i>Republic of Korea</i> | 2,438,469 | 2.9% |
| <i>Ireland</i> | 2,373,450 | 2.8% |
| <i>China</i> | 2,000,000 | 2.4% |
| <i>Russian Federation</i> | 2,000,000 | 2.4% |
| <i>Other</i> | 8,384,330 | 10.1% |
| Total | 83,311,231 | |

Source: WFP FACTory, Sierra Leone resource situation as of (as of 1 August 2024).

179. Further, as is shown in Table 27, the top five funding sources (Government of Sierra Leone, Japan, flexible funding, Germany and USA) contributed 70.6 percent of the total NBP, primarily to earmarked projects. For example, overall 96 percent of the 2020 CSP NBP was funded, but 81 percent of those funds were earmarked to specific strategic outcomes, such that funds could not be reallocated to other underfunded strategic outcomes.²¹⁷

180. The donor pool in Sierra Leone is small, and the country is not considered a priority compared with many of the Sahel countries apart from specific emergencies (e.g. EVD), but WFP has managed to diversify donors over the period of this CSP.²¹⁸ For example, in 2022, the WFP Country Office mobilized additional resources from two new donors for SF,²¹⁹ and is pursuing additional multi-year funding through international financial institutions. Table A11 in Annex V shows key donor contributions per year.

Overall, the CSP relies significantly on long-duration funding, which allows for flexibility by enabling the carryover of unspent resources across fiscal years. However, this type of funding does not necessarily align with the characteristics of structured multi-year funding, such as predictable annual disbursements or allocations that support sustained, strategic planning. Additionally, most of the funding received is also earmarked, which, as WFP KIIs indicated, makes it more difficult for the country office to adapt to shifting country needs, a challenge highlighted across other WFP evaluations globally.²²⁰

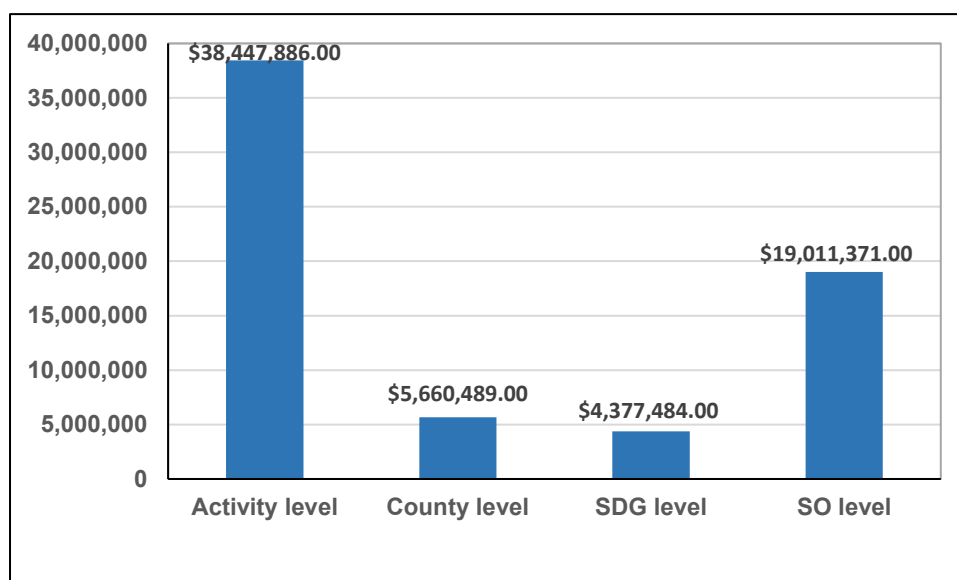
²¹⁷ ACR 2020.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ ACR 2022.

²²⁰ WFP. 2023. *Annual Evaluation Report, 2023 in Review*, <https://www.wfp.org/publications/annual-evaluation-report-2023> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

Figure 18: Earmark level (USD)



Source: Distribution contribution and forecast data, retrieved on 29 July 2024.

181. The majority are earmarked at the activity level, as shown in Table 29, limiting flexibility in their use. In contrast, a significant but smaller portion is allocated at the strategic outcome level, which allows for broader usage aligned with programmatic goals. Contributions at the country level and SDG level are comparatively minimal, offering moderate flexibility tied to geographic or thematic priorities. Overall, the data suggests that while there is some flexibility in the funding, the bulk remains restricted to specific activities.

Table 29: Contribution by donor and earmarking level (USD) as of 29 July 2024

| Donor | Activity level | Country level | SDG level | SO level | Total |
|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| China | 2,000,000 | | | | 2,000,000 |
| European Commission | 572,248 | | | | 572,248 |
| France | 1,636,403 | | | | 1,636,403 |
| Germany | | | | 9,493,671 | 9,493,671 |
| Iceland | 1,400,000 | | | | 1,400,000 |
| Ireland | 1,083,913 | 882,353 | 469,484 | | 2,435,750 |
| Japan | 6,085,169 | | 3,856,495 | 4,855,602 | 14,797,266 |
| Private donors | 1,828,136 | 234,809 | 51,505 | 1,925,091 | 4,039,541 |
| Republic of Korea | | 2,543,326 | | | 2,543,326 |
| Russian Federation | | 2,000,000 | | | 2,000,000 |
| Government of Sierra Leone | 13,792,458 | | | 2,737,008 | 16,529,466 |
| United Nations PBF | 3,299,559 | | | | 3,299,559 |
| USA | 6,700,000 | | | | 6,700,000 |
| World Bank | 50,000 | | | | 50,000 |
| Total | 38,447,886 | 5,660,489 | 4,377,484 | 19,011,371 | 67,497,229 |

Source: Distribution contribution and forecast data, retrieved on 29 July 2024.

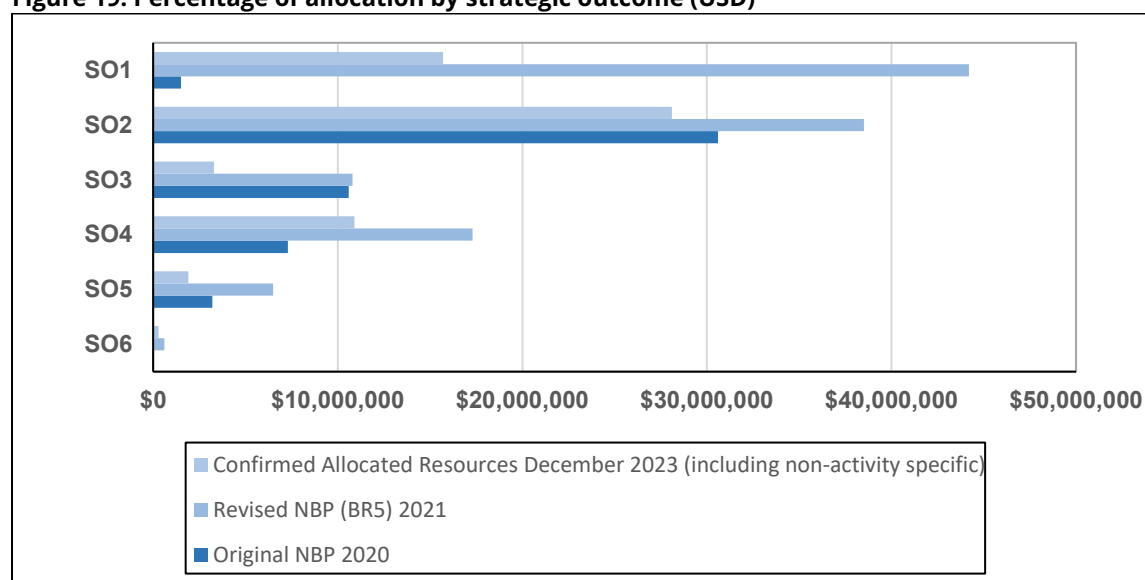
182. Looking at contributions from specific donors, USA, China, Germany and Japan are earmarked at the activity level (Table 29). In addition, funding from the Government of Sierra Leone is also earmarked for SF. Further, donors like Ireland, Japan and private donors provide a mix of contributions across different levels, including country level and SDG level, indicating a moderate level of flexibility. Private donors also provided funds at the country and strategic levels, adding flexibility to their contributions. Finally, funds allocated at the strategic outcome level, such as Germany's funding, are generally more flexible, as they are

tied to broader programmatic outcomes rather than specific activities.

Finding 37: SF – consistently a key area of WFP operations in the country – has been the area of most interest to WFP donors in Sierra Leone, although earmarking and tied aid by some donors somewhat reduced the flexibility of programming models during the CSP. SF programmes are now increasingly providing opportunities for increasing food security through market linkages via local purchases for HGSF.

183. As per Figure 16, SO2 was allocated the largest share (57.5 percent) of the original CSP NBP, followed by SO3 (19.9 percent), SO4 (13.6 percent), SO5 (6 percent) and lastly SO1 (2.9 percent). This reflected the planned shift from providing crisis response to resilience building and addressing root causes. While SF activities were initially estimated to be about one-half of the original CSP NBP, the share of the NBP for this activity decreased to 28.4 percent by BR04 because of the increasing emergency response need. The NBP share of the other activities related to resilience building (Activities 5 and 6) stayed roughly the same throughout the CSP. By comparison, the NBP share of nutrition activities decreased from 15.5 percent to 7.9 percent.

Figure 19: Percentage of allocation by strategic outcome (USD)



Source: IRM Analytics (ACR1-A SL02 2018–2023).

184. A review of the full CSP and the resources mobilized since 2020 shows that programming for SF has been of significant interest to WFP donors. Under SO2, the country office has been the most successful in mobilizing adequate resources against CSP and annual work-planning targets. Almost three-quarters of the revised NBP budget for SO2 has been mobilized. However, the tying of rice purchases has, in some instances, provided challenges to the predictability of commodity delivery for the SF programme by lengthening the delivery of food to Sierra Leone. Almost all (93 percent in 2023) food purchased for SF is through the Global Commodity Management Facility (GCMF), which has helped create predictability in terms of procurement. The remaining 7 percent of commodities (e.g. 250 mt of rice and vegetables) was purchased in Sierra Leone through the WFP ACL programme in 2023,²²¹ with an anticipated increase to 600 mt of rice in 2024.²²²

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² KIIs.

EQ4.1a: How was resource mobilization affected by shifts from treatment to prevention of malnutrition under SO3?

Finding 38: WFP staff noted that most donors prefer short-term outcomes like food distribution (e.g. SF, treatment of MAM, COVID-19 interventions), while multi-year, community-based approaches required for preventing malnutrition are not prioritized.

185. WFP staff noted that the shift from emergency funding during the EVD outbreak and COVID-19 pandemic and from treatment of MAM towards a focus on nutrition prevention activities has resulted in lower SO3 funding levels,²²³ despite the fact that reduction of malnutrition among PBW and children under two years of age is essential to achieve SDG 2 and also has significant downstream educational and economic benefits. Positively, WFP has accessed annual nutrition funding from both Ireland (in 2022) and France (in 2022 and 2023), and has been advocating for further funding of malnutrition prevention from other sources. Importantly, the evaluation team learned that Irish Aid is currently moving to multi-year funding in nutrition, with an emphasis on women's empowerment, climate-smart agriculture and CS, with the additional outcome of supporting value chains of local commodities (increasing access to markets for increasing sustainability). These are all in line with WFP's shift in CSP focus.

EQ4.2 To what extent were the monitoring and reporting systems useful to track and demonstrate progress towards expected outcomes and to inform management decisions?

Summary of findings: While there is sufficient tracking of CSP outcomes, output monitoring reveals gaps in data and in data use; food security and price monitoring data adds value and is used beyond WFP; indicators were found to be weak for CCS and systemic results.

Finding 39: Most outcome indicators were valid with the exception of those for CCS activities. In general, WFP monitoring and reporting were found to be useful for tracking inputs and coverage of activities but limited for demonstrating progress towards expected outcomes for reasons noted below.

186. There were notable gaps in outcome-level data and inconsistencies across strategic outcomes and years. Table 29 also shows the extent to which the WFP Country Office monitoring and reporting system tracked progress towards CSP outcomes varied by year, with about a quarter of outcome indicators collected in 2023. Thus, there are several indicators that cannot be used for meaningful data analysis (especially trend analysis). Also, as SO1 and SO3 programmes and populations, and therefore also indicators, varied from year to year, trend analysis was less meaningful.

Table 30: Overview of outcome indicator data availability

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <i>Indicators with data</i> | 26 | 22 | 18 | 20 |
| <i>Indicators with no data</i> | 1 | 5 | 9 | 7 |
| <i>% of indicators with data</i> | 96.3% | 81.5% | 66.7% | 74.1% |

Source: COMET report CM-R010b.

²²³ KIIs.

187. Table 31 indicates that (based on 2022 and 2023) the output-level data collection captures most indicators. In some instances, where data was not collected in these years, it is because related interventions were not implemented, such as some of the indicators for SO1.

Table 31: Overview of output indicator data availability

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Indicators with data | 10 | 12 | 19 | 29 |
| Indicators with no data | 14 | 12 | 5 | 7 |
| % of indicators with data | 41.7% | 50.0% | 79.2% | 80.6% |

Source: COMET report CM-R008b.

188. KIIs indicated that monitoring data is regularly used for reporting purposes and, to some extent, to make strategic decisions regarding programming (e.g., where possible, to identify where output/outcome targets are not being met to make changes accordingly). However, KIIs indicated that quality issues with some indicators (e.g. enrolment and attendance rates collected for SO2, which rely on national data) are affected by considerable quality issues. Questions also exist regarding the validity of CCS indicators (for SO5 and SO6) and whether these indicators are an effective reflection of WFP's work with government and community structures in providing policy support, technical input, institutional/systems strengthening and training (as mentioned above under EQ2.1). These indicators could not sufficiently measure the performance of CCS and could not measure the different domains in which capacity was built or used. In addition, under EQ2.2, it was noted that the collection of cross-cutting indicators – especially those related to AAP and the environment – had considerable gaps. Finally, the evaluation team noted that for SO4, there are few evaluations/assessments to complement existing monitoring data in informing management decisions about programme performance and direction.

Finding 40: External data generated by CFSVA, FSMS and price monitoring was a key comparative advantage for WFP. Monitoring and surveillance of food security was a well-recognized area of expertise and used by the Government of Sierra Leone and other agencies to better design and target their food insecurity interventions.

189. The country office staff, government and other partners all noted the value and expertise of the WFP CFSVAs, FSMS and market analyses (e.g. the CFSVA is the only survey to generate chiefdom-level data on food security indicators in Sierra Leone). WFP and many of its partners indicated using these for designing and targeting interventions and monitoring progress towards outcomes. The reports from these surveys and analyses were noted as 'invaluable' and used by the government, other United Nations agencies, NGOs, civil society and even donors for appropriate targeting and programming to address gaps in hunger in Sierra Leone.²²⁴ In particular, CFSVA/FSMS carried out during and after the COVID-19 pandemic helped inform crisis response measures.

190. Further, partnering with the Government of Sierra Leone on the FSMS contributes to SO5, and the NDMA noted WFP's support in funding and CS for data collection, while requesting further support in food security analysis of findings to help inform management decisions.

EQ4.3: How did the partnerships and collaborations with other actors influence performance and results?

Summary of findings: WFP built partnerships with the Government of Sierra Leone and CPs in ways that leveraged their capacities but mostly focused on delivering specific results versus strategic partnerships.

Finding 41: During the CSP, WFP prioritized partnerships with the Government of Sierra Leone at national and subnational levels. Where other collaborations were sought out, these focused on providing complementary programme activities to jointly implemented projects (with the United Nations country team) and/or capitalizing on implementing partners' community-level networks and reach (with CPs). While WFP had considerable collaboration across the CSP, most joint work

²²⁴ KIIs.

prioritized short-term operational partnerships rather than long-term strategic partnerships.

191. WFP has leveraged multiple partnerships and collaborations for results (Table 32). KIIs with WFP indicated a strategic shift of the CSP throughout the period towards ensuring that government partnerships are at the core of all programming activities, with a key focus on institutional CS (see CCS analysis included above under EQ2.1); key partnerships with Government of Sierra Leone institutions at national and subnational levels included: NDMA, MBSSE, MAFS and MoHS.²²⁵

192. Overall, WFP held planning meetings with the relevant agencies to ensure activities supported by the WFP were aligned with those of the Government of Sierra Leone. Many activities were implemented in partnership with government staff and often using government systems, while WFP provided financial and technical backstopping; this is especially true in the case of NDMA. Government ministries and agencies were also responsible for joint monitoring and reporting on the activities. It is also important to note that the Government of Sierra Leone is a key donor of WFP, disbursing funds for SF activities.²²⁶ Through these strategic partnerships – formalized during the CSP period through a partnership agreement and then a memorandum of understanding (MoU) – WFP worked with government partners to procure SF supplies, management of monies raised for SF, and strengthening of community participation.

Table 32: Partnerships by CSP strategic outcome

| | Government of Sierra Leone | UNCT | CPs/private sector |
|-----|--|-------------------|--|
| SO1 | Disaster Management Department, Office of National Security (DMD-ONS) transitioned to NDMA, MoSW, Directorate of Food and Nutrition, and MoHS | No partnerships | SLRC, Mankind's Activities for Development & Accredited Movement (MADAM), Pure Heart Foundation (PHF), Orange and Ecobank |
| SO2 | NSFS, MBSSE and MoHS | No partnerships | PHF |
| SO3 | MoHS, District Health Management Teams (DHMT), National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA), National Aids Control Programme (NACP), National Aids Secretariate and SUN Secretariat | UNAIDS | No partnerships |
| SO4 | MAFS, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI) | IOM, UNDP and FAO | Talking Drum Studio (TDS), Helen Keller International (HKI), Barefoot Women, Japan International Development Agency and Orange |
| SO5 | NDMA, MAFS, MoHS, NSFS, and Directorate of Food and Nutrition | No partnerships | No partnerships |

Source: Evaluation team.

193. Partnerships with CPs were also key during the CSP. Partnerships with groups like MADAM and SLRC were instrumental in capitalizing on these CPs' extensive national coverage and ability to access the most vulnerable communities with CPs (e.g. SLRC has 16,527 active volunteers throughout Sierra Leone, a network WFP has leveraged to carry out its crisis response activities). Another important example of where programming partnership created key synergies to positively influence performance and results is work done with TDS. Within this arrangement, WFP was able to pair its traditional comparative advantage of carving out agricultural development via ACL with TDS's peacebuilding capacities²²⁷ to produce impressive reductions in tension and conflict in Falaba district.²²⁸

²²⁵ KIIs with WFP Country Office.

²²⁶ Financing of national SF activities was spearheaded by the Ministry of Finance, with support from MBSSE/NSFS.

²²⁷ TDS. 2024. Talking Drum Studio Sierra Leone, 18 June, <https://www.tds-sierraleone.org> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

²²⁸ WFP, IOM and PBF. 2024. *Endline Assessment Report Prepared for the Project: Building Cross-Border Peace and Strengthening Sustainable Livelihoods of Cattle Herders and Crop Farmers in Sierra Leone and Guinea*, June.

194. The project mentioned above also included a key partnership with IOM. The project model combined WFP livelihood support for communities on the border with Guinea and Sierra Leone with IOM support for border governance and capacity building²²⁹ and with FAO support to revise Sierra Leone's Cattle Settlement Policy as part of a comprehensive programme for cross-border security. This project, along with another successful peacebuilding partnership in 2020–2022 with UNDP,²³⁰ grew the WFP Country Office's portfolio in peacebuilding – not traditionally an organizational strength. Indeed, WFP KIIs suggest that such successes are very likely to be translated into additional PBF funding for cross-border collaboration with IOM, TDS and WFP in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Another important collaboration with United Nations country team partners included work done with FAO, UNICEF and IFAD on WFP's traditional role of providing up-to-date vulnerability assessments (e.g. FSWS and CFSVA), which was highlighted as important for credible food security and nutrition monitoring. In addition, WFP chairs the United Nations Emergency Preparedness and Response meetings and coordinates United Nations response planning in consultation with the Government of Sierra Leone. Work with UNICEF and WHO to enhance the quality of SBCC was highlighted, as well as contributions to strategy and policy through the SUN Movement.

195. However, to date, WFP has few signed strategic partnerships. One important exception to this is an MoU that WFP signed with the Japan International Development Agency (JICA) to develop and implement the Technical Package for Rice Production. Another important MoU signed during the CSP period is that between WFP and World Vision (WV), which was recently developed to leverage each agency's comparative advantages – to enhance outcomes under SO2 – with WV bringing its expertise in WASH to the WFP-supported SF programmes.²³¹ The evaluation team notes that this strategic partnership has yet to be actioned in the area of SF. But collaborative work to improve solar irrigation systems as part of ACL activities in Falaba – where WV brought in specific expertise for the effective drilling of boreholes²³² – has shown the potential for positive outcomes from such collaborative work. This is a good example of how WFP can leverage its strategic partnerships to provide systemic and holistic solutions in its areas of operation: using its enabler and facilitator role will ultimately contribute to improving food security and nutrition outcomes in Sierra Leone. Other MoUs include: Njala University, Helen Keller International and SLARI.

196. Despite the partnerships mentioned above, KIIs specifically noted that there exist untapped opportunities for increased strategic collaboration across sectors (e.g. potential collaborations may exist for targeting improving nutrition for adolescent girls through MSGs by collaborating with UNFPA on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues).²³³

EQ4.4: To what extent did the country office have appropriate HR capacity to deliver on the CSP?

Summary of findings: Turnover of senior country office positions left human resource gaps; otherwise HR was adequate, with an emphasis on extending sub-national capacity.

Finding 42: Overall, HR have been of adequate capacity to deliver on the CSP, and this CSP has focused on hiring more field-based staff to extend capacity subnationally. There were some staffing gaps, however. For example, high turnover of country directors (CDs) made strategic continuity over the course of the CSP somewhat challenging, in addition to notable gap periods in staffing key positions in RAM and partnerships.

²²⁹ IOM. 2024. "Migration Management", 26 August, <https://www.iom.int/countries/sierra-leone> (accessed on 9 July 2025).

²³⁰ WFP, UNDP and PBF. 2022. *Endline Evaluation Report Prepared for the Project: Mitigating Localised Resource-Based Conflicts and Increasing Community Resilience in Pujehun and Moyamba Districts of Sierra Leone*, September.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Rather than hand-dug wells, which would have dried up quickly.

²³³ Ibid.

197. High staff turnover in senior positions during the CSP resulted in issues with institutional knowledge (e.g. there were three different CDs, three different deputy country directors (DCDs) and three different Heads of RAM during the four years of the CSP).²³⁴ The internal audit of WFP operations also noted difficulties created by the rotation of staff in management and most head-of-unit positions.²³⁵ The evaluation team spoke to each CD at WFP during the CSP period; each CD noted that the CSP was an important source of guidance and continuity during the periods of turnover experienced between 2020 and 2024.

198. Other staffing gaps included a vacancy at the Head of RAM position for months while recruiting replacements, which created pressure on the RAM team. KIIs indicated that understaffing negatively affected the delivery of monitoring and evidence generation outputs, as well as decreasing institutional knowledge. Where possible, RAM staff used SharePoint (a knowledge management platform) and corporate platforms to access past data (e.g. historical updates and trends) to fill gaps in institutional knowledge.

199. Also, there was a key six-month gap in staffing in the area of partnerships, which KIIs indicated resulted in some missed opportunities in the acquisition of funding and a lack of capacity for data collection and analysis.²³⁶ While partnerships were under-staffed, the responsibility for partnership work fell to already-overstretched programming colleagues. This created notable gaps in communication with some donors.

200. Otherwise, the staffing structure was organized around the strategic outcomes in the CSP line of sight, with managers essentially responsible for each outcome area.²³⁷ The staffing pre-CSP had humanitarian profiles and thus was appropriate for delivering on SO1, particularly during the COVID-19 response, which is a significant component of SO2. KIIs indicated that staffing of activity areas was generally sufficient, though staffing levels vary between strategic outcomes. SO1 only has one dedicated staff member – at country office level. SO2 and SO4 appear to be the best resourced in terms of staff. SO2 has three country office staff focused on SF and two staff at field level, while SO4 has three at the country office and three at field level. SO3 has two dedicated staff members at the country office and two at the field level.

201. Procurement/supply chain/logistics staffing was noted to also be adequate,²³⁸ with about 25 staff on the supply chain team, though WFP staff did note that there is a need for additional stockkeepers in logistics and, in the future, additional procurement staff due to an increase in local procurement.²³⁹ At the time of the report, the country office was finalizing recruitment to bring on more stockkeepers. Importantly, WFP staff noted that, in 2023, the country office intentionally and substantively increased staff subnationally (e.g. M&E staff were hired at the sub-office level to support local monitoring and data collection and to contribute to reporting). As noted above, WFP's field presence is strong compared with other United Nations agencies and can be considered a comparative advantage.

²³⁴ KIIs WFP Country Office.

²³⁵ WFP. 2023. *Internal Audit of WFP Operations in Sierra Leone Office of the Inspector General Internal Audit Report*, AR/23/02.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ SO1 and SO6 together, and SO5 cuts across all outcome areas.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ KIIs WFP Country Office.

EQ4.5: What are the other factors that can explain WFP performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected by the CSP?

Summary of findings: Several context factors, structural issues and limited donor interest constrained progress towards CSP outcomes.

Finding 43: Key contextual factors, most importantly the COVID-19 pandemic, structural issues (e.g. poverty, rising cost of living) and a limited donor pool, negatively affected WFP performance and slowed progress towards CSP outcomes. Limited donor interest in preventing malnutrition constrained the strategic shift from MAM treatment.

202. The COVID-19 outbreak was a key external factor that affected the CSP. The onset of the pandemic initiated a strategic shift from WFP to help address malnutrition and food insecurity brought on by the crisis, requiring WFP to undertake a budget revision to scale up activities supporting crisis-affected populations, SF and resilience building. For example, WFP reinstated the treatment of MAM activities in the CSP. Given the pressing needs brought on by the COVID-19 outbreak, the evaluation team finds that the adjustments made by WFP to target its programming to the crisis were appropriate.

203. Although it is difficult to estimate the overall impact that the pandemic had on the outcomes of the CSP, all programmes were severely affected. Sierra Leone registered its first COVID-19 case in March 2020, leading to a national state of emergency and restrictions that resulted in the closure of schools and the disruption of WFP supply chains, among other impacts. In total, the country experienced more than a year of various restrictions that necessitated the postponement or modification of many WFP activities.²⁴⁰ Where possible, the country office continued to carry out programming while putting in place COVID-19 mitigation strategies. To ensure that food assistance activities did not contribute towards the spread of COVID-19, food distribution strictly adhered to WFP safety protocols issued during the pandemic, including through the provision of handwashing stations and social distancing. Mitigation measures such as these – enacted across strategic outcomes – mitigated the negative impacts of the pandemic on CSP outcomes; in addition, WFP helped support preparations for an emergency FSMS assessment via telephone to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on food security, to generate data for key stakeholders to guide their interventions in addressing food insecurity.

204. WFP's own work on nutrition also found that barriers to promoting IYCF practices lie in the unaffordability of key ingredients, which are not grown sufficiently to reduce the market price.²⁴¹ However, the evaluation team found that in non-HGSF schools, where vegetables are not part of the provided SF menu, parents still contribute Le 2–3 weekly for vegetables and condiments. Many households are extremely poor and cannot afford even this small weekly expense; this affects the total number of vegetables and condiments that can be purchased, which in turn affects the overall nutritional quality of the food students receive. Concerningly, the evaluation team also found that in some schools, children whose parents were unable to pay for condiments were made to eat later than others.

205. As mentioned previously (see EQ4.1), accessing funding for Sierra Leone for development activities has been an ongoing challenge for WFP, limiting the reach and breadth of programmes, particularly CS and nutrition.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ E.g., for six months, school children could not access school meals and other services from school; see: WFP. 2020. *Sierra Leone Annual Country Report 2020, Country Strategic Plan 2020–2024*.

²⁴¹ WFP. n.d. *Focus Group Discussions on Mother Support Groups and Local Complementary Food*.

²⁴² KIIs.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

3.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1: Food assistance and CBT saved lives during emerging crises, as part of a flexible portfolio that focused on the promotion of resilience and the targeting of root causes of hunger, but which evolved in response to emerging needs.

207. The CSP strategic outcomes and activities reflected and responded to key national policies, strategies and programmes, as well as to the SDGs – targeting the populations most vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition in Sierra Leone based on WFP’s comparative advantages. The generation and use of food security data, along with complementary assessments to identify vulnerable communities and households, helped ensure that WFP programming resources reached the most vulnerable populations.

208. The CSP remained relevant in this shifting context as a strategic, flexible programming framework that focuses on resilience and root causes, but which adapted to humanitarian needs as these emerged. For instance, SNFs distributed during the COVID-19 pandemic were effective in reducing malnutrition during critical growth periods and thus would have longer-term effects. Food assistance and CBT provided during the CSP period contributed to improved food security in the short term – and largely targeted vulnerable populations – but timing of payments (not synchronized with the lean season) and their short duration limited results.

Conclusion 2: Efficiency gains were achieved in targeted areas, though delays and resource constraints and earmarked funding limited operational flexibility, and there are synergies to be gained across WFP’s programming portfolio through early investments in the critical window of child development that occurs in the first 5,000 days.

209. CSP’s efficiency varied across strategic outcomes, with notable gains in resource optimization through CBT and supply chain improvements. There were considerable delays in implementation of some activities under SO2 (e.g. signing agreements with the Government of Sierra Leone and delivery of food to schools), SO3 (e.g. delays in setup of LCF production sites) and SO4 (e.g. delays in delivery of inputs). Further, the utilization of CSP financial resources was uneven due to challenges caused by COVID-19, as well as other implementation challenges. As a result, under 60 percent of activities were delivered as scheduled. Further, earmarked funding restrictions and pipeline breaks constrained flexibility, occasionally leading to inefficiencies in programme delivery. Efficiency gains could be further enhanced through diversified funding and more flexible long-term funding streams.

Conclusion 3: WFP prioritized operational partnerships with the Government of Sierra Leone and collaborated with the United Nations country team and CPs; additional opportunities exist for strategic partnerships, especially across the educational sector.

210. Partnerships with the Government of Sierra Leone at national and subnational levels were key to CSP implementation, with WFP engaging specific government ministries and agencies whose mandates were in line with the CSP activities. This was based on a strategic shift throughout the period of the CSP towards an enabling role, with a focus on institutional partnership (and CCS); for example, CSP contributed to key national initiatives in SF (e.g. a national policy and standardized menu). WFP also supported the government with hardware/equipment and training for SF monitors and played a role in strengthening SF monitoring capacities. Better-capacitated SF monitors provided improved oversight/backstopping of SF activities – helping to ensure that food was received, stored and accounted for (reducing wastage so that feeding targets could be met in pursuit of enrolment outcomes). In addition, WFP support provided to NDMA was key to establishing logistics and coordination capacities in the area of crisis response, with WFP also taking the lead among United Nations agencies in crisis response. Overall, CCS support in different

domains of emergency response – policy, organizational/institutional and individual – has helped build up national capacities in the sector.

211. Partnerships with non-governmental CPs leveraged those partners' programming coverage, community relationships and specialized knowledge in key sectors. There were also key collaborations with the United Nations country team (in the context of the UNDAF and UNSDCF) through jointly implemented peacebuilding projects and in the generation of food security data through regular assessments. WFP has also signed a number of important MoUs, which included a nascent partnership with WV (in WASH) that is an important example of the types of strategic collaborations that can improve synergies across the educational system. Seeking further strategic partnerships could help to ensure adequate teacher training and more robust nutritional awareness messaging in schools, helping to integrate SF activities into a more robust education system (e.g. in teacher training, WASH, nutrition).

Conclusion 4: WFP's global comparative advantages in SF helped increase school enrolment and attendance beyond estimations, through an integrated platform linked to ACL activities that produced improved yields, food security outcomes and livelihoods across key agricultural value chains. But long procurement processes led to cash flow shortages among some SHFs – contracting modalities were not sufficiently flexible to account for price fluctuations.

212. As mentioned, there is evidence that WFP-supported SF has helped increase school enrolment and attendance and contributed to other educational and social outcomes. However, it is unclear the extent to which attendance gains are entirely due to increased access to schooling for previously out-of-school children, or partly due to a pull factor that attracted children from non-feeding schools. Also, reliance on private transportation partners, which frequently lacked the capacity to deliver food in a timely manner and to the destinations required, has caused frequent delays in SF deliveries.

213. WFP was able to take the lead nationally in the roll-out of HGSP. SF programmes are now increasingly providing opportunities to local farmers – including ACL-supported FBOs – producing agricultural commodities that include rice, pulses, OFSP and vegetables. Local procurement for HGSP created important market linkages for farmers, which incentivizes higher productivity by offering a steady market and a source of sustainability for SHFs/FBOs assisted through WFP ACL programming. Programmatic linkages were made (e.g. by geographically clustering programming or linking WFP-supported agricultural producers to HGSP), thus creating multiplier effects.

214. ACL-supported rehabilitation of IVS was combined with the provision of improved agricultural inputs, equipment, and specialized training to enhance agricultural productivity, improve functioning of FBOs and strengthen local rice value chains. Importantly, there is some evidence of improved incomes for vulnerable farmers, even if outcomes in the area of food security and nutrition showed less progress. While the production of agricultural commodities other than rice has played a secondary role in ACL activities, programming aimed at increasing the supply of vegetables and OFSP has grown in importance in recent years in order to supply HGSP.

215. WFP purchases of rice from SHFs/FBOs for HGSP increased considerably over the CSP period (in sales and volume), with farmers reporting several benefits over selling in local markets (e.g. better prices and bulk purchases). Nevertheless, WFP local procurement processes are lengthy. SHFs reported resorting to a number of negative coping strategies as a result of cash flow shortages caused by payment delays. In addition, some farmers noted that fluctuations in market prices due to inflation risk undercutting the profits they expected through the agreements to supply agricultural products to WFP's HGSP programmes at prices below prevailing market prices.

Conclusion 5: The strategic shift from malnutrition treatment to prevention was relevant; SBCC delivered over multiple years contributed to improved child diets, though there are additional opportunities to maximize development outcomes with flexible multi-year funding.

216. WFP's shift towards a focus on stunting prevention was appropriate; yet it is unlikely to have made significant contributions to improved district-level stunting rates due to limited duration and reach. WFP-supported SBCC contributed to positive outcomes in the diets of children, likely leading to improvements in nutrition, though this transfers the burden of community- and household-level programme delivery onto

unpaid mothers. Opportunities exist for greater involvement of grandmothers as change agents, capitalizing on traditional roles. Further, the initiation of local production of LCF in three districts was a complex and challenging undertaking for local MSGs. If successful as a business and in reaching vulnerable groups, it will be an important contribution to improving nutrition (it is too early to assess outcomes at this stage).

217. The scope of the CSP's nutrition activities was financially constrained, including a donor preference for short-term outcomes rather than multi-year community-based approaches. While the country office has accessed donors with specific funding envelopes for nutrition and has been advocating for funding of malnutrition prevention, there are additional opportunities to create synergies across WFP's programming portfolio by increasing early investments in nutritional programmes focused on PBW and children under two. Increasing investments in this area can help capitalize on the critical window of child development that occurs in the first 5,000 days of life necessary for achieving expected longer-term outcomes (e.g. as a precursor to SF activities aimed at primary school children and ACL activities for youth and adults).

Conclusion 6: Humanitarian principles were broadly adhered to, and WFP is perceived as effectively upholding its commitments to AAP, but much more can be done to proactively and systematically incorporate environment/climate and gender issues into the CSP; better gender analysis can help identify and address any unintended negative consequences experienced by female beneficiaries of WFP programmes (e.g. increased workload without adequate remuneration for MSGs running WFP-supported LCF production sites, SF cooks).

218. All CSP activities, including activities in humanitarian/crisis response, broadly adhere to relevant humanitarian principles, and beneficiaries are generally accessing WFP programming without concerns related to safety, dignity and integrity; most know about the CFM – even if many are reluctant to utilize it.

219. Despite some integration of issues related to climate and the environment into the body text of the CSP and its cross-cutting indicators, the environment analyses/assessments were not systematically integrated into the design of programming activities implemented under the CSP due to a lack of HR and technical expertise at the country office in this area. Though there are key examples where issues related to climate and the environment were included in WFP activities, more can be done to ensure that all programme activities are screened for environmental (and social) risks. Similarly, gender analyses/assessments were not mainstreamed as a precursor to programming under the CSP. Nevertheless, there are examples of gender inclusion (e.g. Wonder Stoves provided to SF cooks, VSLA predominately targeting females, gender parity within FBOs). However, the CSP has largely not fostered gender transformation, with the notable exception of increased empowerment through the greater inclusion of females in FBO decision making and the promotion of crops such as OFSP and vegetables.

220. Female beneficiaries also experienced unintended negative consequences under SO3; women are bearing the costs of the slow start-up and repeated equipment failures in the WFP-supported LCF production sites. This increases their daily workload without adequate remuneration. Time spent in the LCF production sites also limits the time beneficiaries have to engage in local farming, which undercuts their access to sustainable livelihoods and their ability to provide for their families.

3.2 Recommendations

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsible WFP office and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|--|---------------------|--|--|----------|-----------------------------|
| Recommendation 1: Address slow-onset emergencies through a targeted and increasingly integrated portfolio of programming that builds resilience and addresses the root causes of hunger, while maintaining flexible emergency response capacity to work at the humanitarian–development nexus. | Strategic | Country office (crisis response, nutrition, asset creation and livelihoods, and research, assessment and monitoring (RAM) units) | National Disaster Management Agency, Western and Central Africa regional office/Office of Evaluation, UNICEF, Ministry of Health, including the Food and Nutrition Directorate, Scaling Up Nutrition secretariat | Medium | For the next CSP |
| 1.1 Maximize outcomes by increasing integration throughout WFP's programming portfolio by, for example, working from geographic hubs using the linkages among programmes to deliver critical elements of resilience building in various combinations, starting with key activities and progressively integrating and layering other programmes – including HGSF and nutrition – based on local conditions, livelihoods and capacity. | Strategic | Country office (school feeding, nutrition, and asset creation and livelihoods units) | N/A | Medium | For the next CSP |
| 1.2 Expand capacity strengthening support for the National Disaster Management Agency, focusing on its capacity to implement and coordinate disaster response outside of Freetown. | Operational | Country office (crisis response unit) | National Disaster Management Agency | Medium | From 2024 into the next CSP |
| 1.3 Develop and use indicators that better measure the contributions made in the different domains of WFP's country capacity strengthening activities, such as policy and technical support, organizational and institutional support, and individual support. | Operational | Country office (crisis response and RAM units) | Regional office and Office of Evaluation | Medium | For the next CSP |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsible WFP office and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|---|---------------------|---|--|----------|-----------------------------|
| 1.4 Develop and maintain a contingency plan for the treatment of MAM when MAM rates reach critical levels, in partnership with agencies treating severe acute malnutrition. | Operational | Country office (crisis response and nutrition units) | Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, National School Feeding Secretariat (NSFS), UNICEF, World Vision, and other cooperating partners (including partners such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security) | Medium | For the next CSP |
| Recommendation 2: Strengthen support for the national school meal programme through improved partnership and collaboration. | Strategic | Country office (school feeding and procurement units) | Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, NSFS, UNICEF, World Vision and other cooperating partners | Medium | From 2024 into the next CSP |
| 2.1 Pursue greater strategic collaboration with partners, with WFP serving in a facilitation role – alongside the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and in relevant technical working groups – to help promote partnerships based on its own comparative advantages to deliver holistic multisectoral school meal programmes with better connections to work on nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, education and other areas. | Strategic | Country office (school feeding unit) | NSFS, UNICEF, World Vision and other cooperating partners (including partners such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security) | Medium | From 2024 into the next CSP |
| 2.2 Revise long-term agreements with high-performing private transporters, refining the vendor pool to promote vendors that possess the capacity to engage in contracts with WFP. These efforts might be supported by secondary bidding processes aimed at ensuring competition and | Operational | Country office (school feeding and procurement units) | N/A | Low | For the next CSP |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsible WFP office and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|---|---------------------|---|---|-------------|-----------------------------|
| helping to provide access to newly qualified potential partners. | | | | | |
| Recommendation 3: Increase investment in nutrition programming for the first 1,000 days of life in order to provide the foundation for a continuum of development activities that change the lives of Sierra Leoneans throughout their lifespans, with nutrition programming for the first 1,000 days of life targeting pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls and children under 2, and, for the next 4,000 days, targeting schoolchildren for school meal programmes, and young people for asset creation and livelihood activities. | Strategic | Country office (nutrition unit, Country Director and Deputy Country Director and partnerships unit) | Ministry of Health, including the Food and Nutrition Directorate, donors and others | High/medium | For the next CSP |
| 3.1 Budget and plan for a significantly scaled up portfolio of malnutrition prevention programming, advocating with donors for more multi-year funds to increase nutrition programming aimed at achieving gains in the first 1,000 days of life, and reinforcing other funding investments for later in life, such as school meal programmes for children, and asset creation and livelihood activities for young people and adults. | Strategic | Country office (nutrition unit, Country Director and Deputy Country Director and partnerships unit) | Ministry of Health, including the Food and Nutrition Directorate and donors | High | From 2024 into the next CSP |
| 3.2 Expand nutrition programming to include adolescent girls, stepping up community advocacy to overcome any cultural barriers that may impede their participation in mother support groups, either directly through WFP activities or indirectly through strategic partnerships, and – where culturally appropriate – target older women as | Operational | Country office (nutrition unit) | N/A | Medium | For the next CSP |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsible WFP office and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|---|---------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| change agents and key members of mother support groups. | | | | | |
| 3.3 Develop a clear plan for moving from the start-up phase of local complementary food production to the profitability phase, which includes sharing and consolidating early experiences across production sites, including with regard to standards for profitability such as break-even points, labour such as fair and living wages, capacity strengthening and training on organizational governance, financial and business management ²⁴³ and other issues. "Do-no-harm" and sustainability issues should also be considered, including through analysis of potential negative impacts. | Operational | Country office (nutrition unit) | | High | For the next CSP |
| 3.4 Leveraging WFP's strengths in supply chains, expand the distribution networks for local complementary foods beyond production sites by including income-generating opportunities for mother support groups that enable them to serve as intermediaries in reselling the foods to other communities, family members, neighbours, markets, etc.; and by exploring the production options for using smaller packages in quantities and at prices that are affordable to vulnerable households in the areas where WFP is working. | Operational | Country office (nutrition unit) | Private sector | Medium | For the next CSP |

²⁴³ The activities under recommendation 3.3 can be pursued in collaboration with partners such as private sector entities that can provide business and management training to mother support group members; cooperating partners with a track record in developing local complementary foods (e.g., Helen Keller International and World Vision); and research institutions that can promote and evaluate good local complementary food production practices (e.g., the International Food Policy Research Institute, Emory University, McGill University, the University of Toronto and others).

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsible WFP office and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|--|---------------------|---|--|------------|----------------------------|
| Recommendation 4: Continued asset creation and livelihood support for farmer-based organizations should include links to market linkages through procurement processes and systems that match the needs of smallholders with limited financial and other resources. | Operational | Country office (school feeding, asset creation and livelihoods, and procurement units) | Regional office and headquarters in Rome | Medium/low | By the end of the next CSP |
| 4.1 Conduct regular, such as annual, assessments of systemic issues related to identifying inefficiencies and bottlenecks in existing procurement processes. | Operational | Country office (procurement unit) and regional office | N/A | Medium/low | For the next CSP |
| 4.2 Continue to make local procurement contracting processes more efficient within existing WFP guidelines, aiming to continue to decrease the length of the local procurement process from the point of delivery to the payment of smallholder farmers. | Operational | Regional office and country office (school feeding, asset creation and livelihoods, and procurement units) | Headquarters in Rome | Medium | By the end of the next CSP |
| 4.3 Develop flexible pricing and contracting mechanisms that foster a “do-no-harm” approach and prioritize the profits of smallholder farmers in case of market volatility, especially when prices increase dramatically. | Operational | Country office (procurement unit) | Regional office and headquarters in Rome | Medium | By the end of the next CSP |
| Recommendation 5: Expand efforts to promote gender equality, women’s economic empowerment and environmental sustainability throughout the next CSP. | Strategic | Country office (crisis response, school feeding, nutrition, asset creation and livelihoods, and RAM units) and headquarters in Rome | Regional office and headquarters in Rome | Medium | By the end of the next CSP |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsible WFP office and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|---|---------------------|---|--|----------|----------------------------|
| 5.1 Apply the WFP environmental and social sustainability framework to all programming to ensure that environmental dimensions are appropriately recognized and addressed and better identify opportunities for promoting equality and women's empowerment. | Strategic | Country office | Regional office and headquarters in Rome | Medium | By the end of the next CSP |
| 5.2 Conduct assessments of the participation of women volunteers in WFP programming, including the members of mother support groups and the cooks of school meals, in order to determine the options for women's economic empowerment and their participation in WFP's programmes such as those for village savings and loan associations, agricultural support, market linkages to local complementary food production sites and HGSE. | Operational | Country office (school feeding, nutrition and RAM units) | Regional office and headquarters in Rome | Medium | By the end of the next CSP |
| 5.3 Better incorporate indicators related to gender equality and women's empowerment, environment and climate throughout the portfolio of activities to encourage monitoring, reporting and progress in both areas, with appropriate support from headquarters in Rome to fill capacity gaps in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment and in environmental screening, identify the most appropriate indicators, and support continuous monitoring and data collection. | Strategic | Country office (crisis response, school feeding, nutrition, asset creation and livelihoods, and RAM units) and headquarters in Rome | Regional office | Medium | For the next CSP |

Office of Evaluation

World Food Programme

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