

Evaluation of Türkiye country strategic plans (2018-2025)

SAVING LIVES CHANGING LIVES

CONTEXT

Türkiye is a G20 member and upper-middle-income country, which has experienced continuous economic growth and made significant progress in reducing hunger of the past two decades.

Since 2014, Türkiye has hosted the world's largest refugee population, with 3.3 million refugees as of September 2024. Refugees face food insecurity due to limited employment, low incomes, and rising food prices.

Twin earthquakes struck southern Türkiye on 6 February 2023, directly affecting 9.1 million people across 11 provinces. The disaster claimed over 50,000 lives, injured over 100,000 and displaced 3 million individuals.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The Türkiye T-ICSP, Türkiye ICSP and Türkiye CSP were approved by the WFP Executive Board in February 2018, November 2019 and November 2022, respectively. These consecutive programming documents reflected strategic shifts aimed at adapting to the evolving needs of vulnerable populations, including Syrian refugees, host communities, and victims of the February 2023 earthquakes.

Under the T-ICSP, the original Needs-Based Plan increased to USD 1.67 billion following the third budget revision, with 1.1 billion allocated and over 1.7 million beneficiaries reached. Under the ICSP, the plan increased from USD 225 million to USD 250 million following the second budget revision and allocated resources reached 80 percent. Under the CSP, the plan increased from USD 95 million to USD 187 million following the second budget revision. As of September 2024, allocated resources were 63 percent, and over 2.2 million beneficiaries have been reached, most of them as part of the earthquake response.

OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The main purpose of the evaluation was to provide evaluative evidence for accountability and learning to inform

the design of the next CSP for Türkiye. The evaluation covered interventions implemented under the three country strategic plans between January 2018 to mid-2024.

The evaluation assessed: WFP's strategic positioning and the extent to which the organization made the shifts expected under the CSP; WFP's effectiveness in contributing to strategic outcomes; the efficiency with which the CSP was implemented; and factors explaining WFP's performance.

The main intended users of the evaluation are the WFP country office, and technical divisions at headquarters, the Government of Türkiye, the WFP Executive Board, partner United Nations entities, and donors.

SUMMARY OF KEY INSIGHTS

1. Strategic Relevance and Coherence

WFP's work in Türkiye has been largely responsive to national priorities, notably through serving immediate needs through cash-based transfer assistance for refugees and the earthquake response. It also adopted a strongly evidence-based approach. However, its transition to development-oriented interventions following the handover of the emergency social safety net (ESSN) to partners faced challenges due to inconsistent strategic planning, and external socio-economic and political factors. The country strategic plans aligned well with Türkiye's migration strategies, laying a strong foundation. With greater strategic focus and deeper programme integration into national systems, WFP is well positioned to amplify its comparative advantages and contribute more meaningfully to Türkiye's development space.

2. Evidence-based and adaptive planning

WFP remained aligned with its mandate by employing an evidence-based approach under all three country strategic plans. The organization adapted its programmes through timely adjustments and budget revisions in response to evolving needs and major shocks such as the economic

downturn, COVID-19 pandemic, and the February 2023 earthquakes, demonstrating contextual sensitivity and flexibility in its humanitarian approach.

3. Results and sustainability of emergency programmes

WFP's humanitarian and emergency responses were generally effective, meeting immediate needs and managing crises successfully. WFP's refugee and emergency programmes helped stabilize living conditions and improved access to essential needs and services. For example, the evoucher programme in camps enhanced autonomy, dignity and psychosocial well-being, though the assistance amount could not always meet basic needs, especially for vulnerable groups such as refugees with disabilities, elderly individuals, and single-headed households. In addition, the earthquake response stood out for its rapid and large-scale delivery.

Efforts such as capacity strengthening of the Turkish Red Crescent for the management of the Emergency social safety net (ESSN) helped embed progress toward sustainability.

4. Results of livelihoods and development programmes

Development-oriented activities such as livelihoods support and technical assistance yielded individual short-term gains, particularly in beneficiary employability and social cohesion by including vulnerable host populations. However, inconsistent integration with national frameworks hindered their potential for expansion and sustainable outcomes at scale. Contributing factors included legal and social barriers for refugees, economic shocks, and internal planning gaps that limited WFP's ability to bridge the gap between short-term relief and long-term development.

Early recovery interventions after the earthquake response showed mixed results due to limited scale, funding constraints, and resource-intensive design.

5. Cross-cutting themes: inclusion, accountability to affected people, gender, and environment

WFP's programmes consistently upheld humanitarian principles, delivering impartial and needs-based support to vulnerable groups. At the same time, the evaluation identified areas where performance could be strengthened. Limited direct engagement with affected populations, intermittent functionality of feedback and complaints mechanisms, and insufficient integration of environmental considerations constrained the overall effectiveness of the response.

WFP made notable efforts and progress on disability inclusion and gender equity, though systemic barriers persisted, and efforts were not always even across activity areas.

6. Resourcing and efficiency

WFP effectively used flexible donor funding and advance financing to sustain critical operations like the ESSN and earthquake responses. Nevertheless, the absence of a resource mobilization strategy, over-reliance on short-term funding, and the high cost per beneficiary in livelihood programmes restricted scalability and cost-efficiency in

interventions. The ESSN programme utilized 99 percent of its budget and adapted quickly to inflation.

7. Factors affecting performance: partnerships, human resources, and monitoring

Strong partnerships, including notable collaboration with the private sector and a diversified network of co-operating partners, enabled robust delivery in key areas such as ESSN and earthquake response. However, limited strategic engagement and low visibility reduced the potential for WFP to fully capitalize on these partnerships for broader programme effectiveness.

Internally, WFP struggled to align human resources with evolving programmatic needs. Several workforce reductions over the years further weakened institutional capacity. Nonetheless, WFP Türkiye maintained a strong monitoring system, adhered to corporate monitoring standards and produced quality, disaggregated data, though its knowledge management system remained underdeveloped, limiting organizational learning.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Integrating humanitarian programmes into national social protection systems boosts scalability, efficiency, and sustainability;
- Cash transfers yield higher benefits if better tailored to individual needs of beneficiaries (e.g. women, persons with disabilities, etc);
- A proactive integration of protection into cash-based assistance programmes enhances their capacity to identify and address vulnerabilities among beneficiaries;
- For broader results in a development-oriented programme in a middle-income context, a stronger integration in government-led processes is essential;
- Flexible overhead rates may make WFP more competitive to secure funding in development-focused settings;
- Economic competition between host communities and refugees can intensify social tensions, making it critical to design livelihoods programmes that emphasise mutual benefits.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Strategically reposition WFP in Türkiye considering WFP's recognised global comparative advantages and establish contingency plans to ensure programme viability under the low-funding context.

Recommendation 2: WFP should develop a strategic framework for its support to community resilience in alignment with national priorities.

Recommendation 3: Support the government's efforts to enhance emergency preparedness and response capacities in areas prone to shocks and stressors, particularly at subnational level.