



**WFP EVALUATION**



**World Food Programme**

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# Evaluation of WFP's contributions to social protection 2019–2025

Centralized evaluation report

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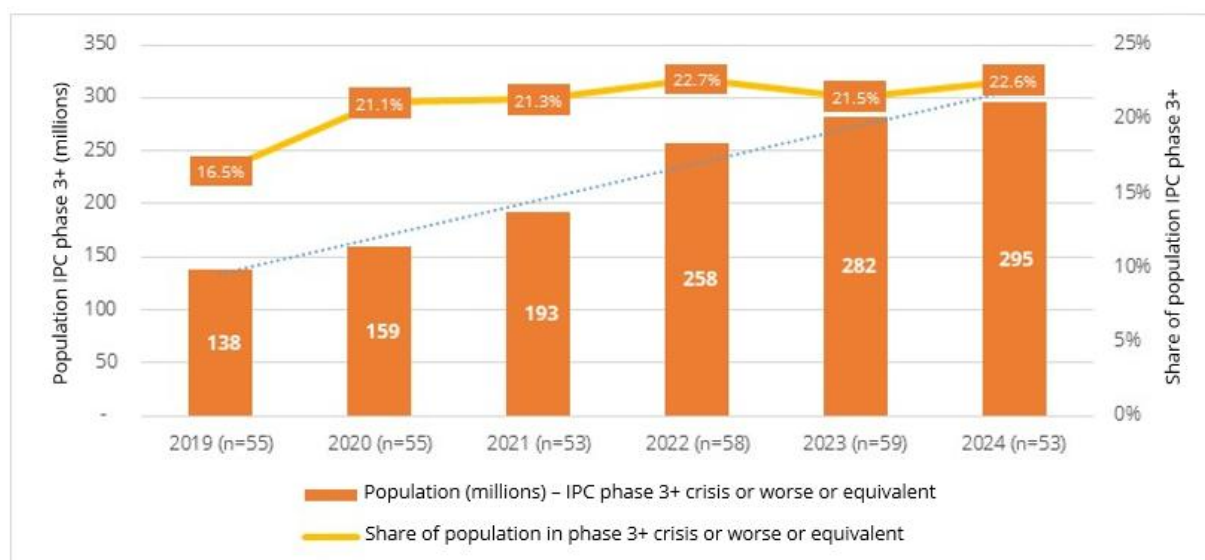
# Executive summary

## Introduction

### Context

1. Global progress in expanding social protection systems has accelerated, with more than half of the world's population covered by at least one form of social protection in 2024.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, substantial gaps persist: 3.8 billion people remain entirely unprotected, and there are significant disparities in coverage and adequacy across regions, genders and age groups.<sup>2</sup>
2. At the same time, the frequency and duration of crises driven by conflict, climate and economic shocks, and pandemics have increased, reinforcing structural inequalities and contributing to rising food insecurity. The number of people facing crisis-level food insecurity more than doubled over the evaluation period, while those experiencing catastrophic hunger increased twenty-three-fold, largely due to crises in the State of Palestine and the Sudan.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1: Acute food insecurity trends, 2019–2024**



Source: Food Security Information Network. 2025. [Global Report on Food Crises 2025](#).

Abbreviations: IPC = Integrated Food Security Phase Classification.

3. In this context, work on strengthening national systems and linking humanitarian assistance with social protection has become increasingly urgent. Evidence shows that strong social protection systems enhance crisis preparedness and support just transitions when paired with broader sectoral investments.<sup>4</sup> However, while global financing for social protection surged temporarily during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, it has since fluctuated,

<sup>1</sup> International Labour Organization. 2024. [World Social Protection Report 2024–2026](#).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

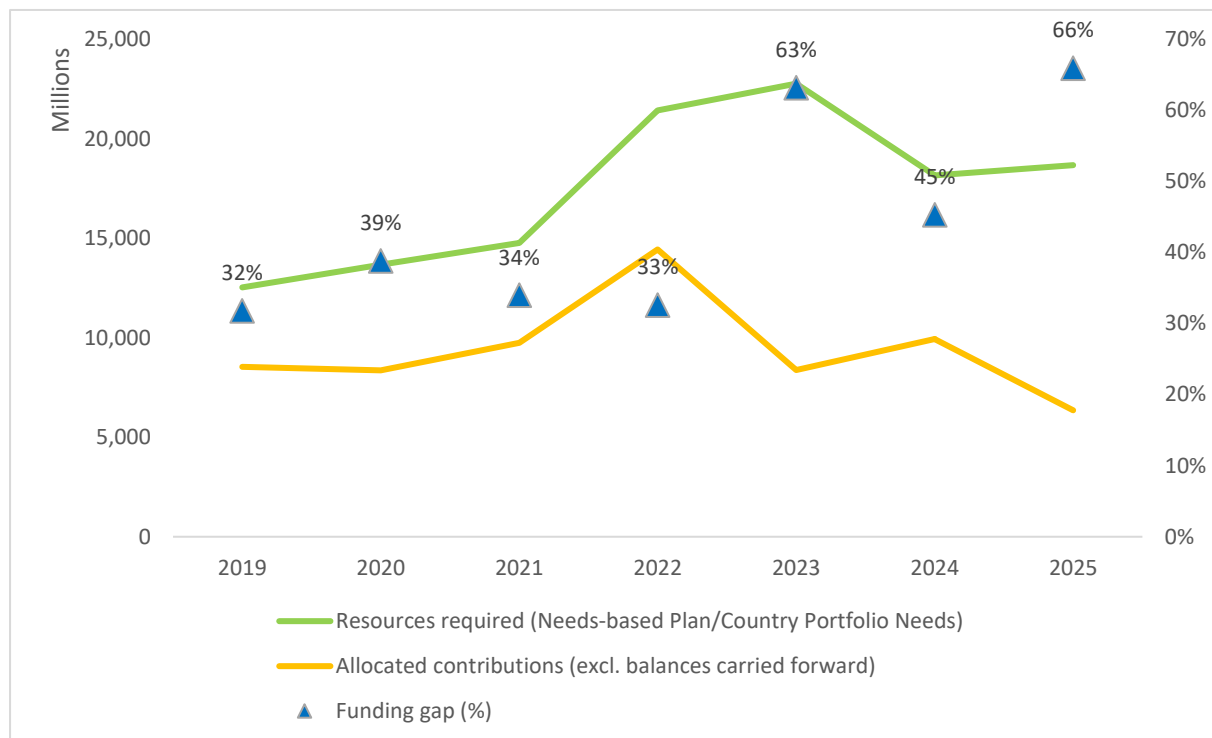
<sup>3</sup> Food Security Information Network and Global Network Against Food Crises. 2025. [Global Report on Food Crises 2025](#). The number of people classified as being in Integrated Food Security Phase Classification phase 5 almost tripled between 2023 and 2024.

<sup>4</sup> International Labour Organization. 2024. [World Social Protection Report 2024–2026](#).

and recent major donor cuts reflect a growing long-term financing gap that threatens progress in expanding social protection in low-income and crisis-affected countries.

4. These global challenges have significantly affected WFP, which is now facing the most severe funding crisis in its history. After a period of increasing resources until 2022, the gap between allocated contributions and assessed needs widened sharply, reaching a record 63 percent in 2023. This trend has persisted, with funding gaps of 45 percent in 2024 and 66 percent in 2025, underscoring the growing mismatch between escalating humanitarian needs and available resources (figure 2).

**Figure 2: WFP’s resource requirements and allocated contributions, 2019–2025**



Source: Internal reporting on the distribution of contribution and forecast statistics, as of 29 December 2025.

5. In 2024 and 2025, WFP initiated a major internal restructuring to improve organizational efficiency and address reduced funding. The reorganization included the adoption of the “one global headquarters” model, which consolidates headquarters and regional bureaux into a single global structure, as well as significant staff reductions. In parallel, technical portfolios were streamlined: the school meal and social protection teams were merged under one director in 2024, and in late 2025, the nutrition, school meal and social protection services were integrated under a single director to align oversight and service delivery.

## Evaluation subject

6. The WFP strategy for support to social protection<sup>5</sup> focused on helping countries to strengthen and expand inclusive and risk-informed social protection systems, with the ultimate aim of strengthening food availability, access and utilization, thereby enabling households to meet other essential needs and reinforcing their overall resilience to shocks.

<sup>5</sup> WFP. 2021. [Strategy for Support to Social Protection](#).

7. WFP pursued these intended results by defining priority areas of work and identifying two main modalities of support, as set out in box 1. Notably, the strategy emphasizes that, for WFP's work to be considered as contributing to social protection, it must be in support of a national social protection system.

#### **Box 1: WFP strategy for support to social protection, 2021**

**Vision:** "By 2030 people will have substantially increased access to national social protection systems that safeguard and foster their ability to meet their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs, and to manage the risks and shocks they face".

The strategy has two distinct but interconnected priorities: social protection that, first, helps people to meet their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs; and second, helps them to manage risks and shocks.

By implementing the strategy, WFP aims to promote the inclusion of people with diverse and often intersecting vulnerabilities and inequalities by recognizing and helping to address the significant barriers and challenges that they face in accessing and benefiting from social protection.

The strategy is organized around two modes of support and four areas of work contributing to 12 building blocks of a national social protection system.

**Modes of support:** The two main modes (which may also be combined) are as follows:

1. Supporting nationally led social protection systems and programmes (e.g. providing advice and guidance to national actors, and/or delivering **social protection** on behalf of national actors).
2. Implementing complementary actions in WFP's own programming that are made with the clear intent to strengthen national systems.

#### **Areas of work:**

- Contribute to strengthening the national social protection system architecture.
- Support enhancements to the quantity and quality of national social protection programming.
- Improve the effectiveness of social protection in the shared space between humanitarian, development and peace actors.
- Build social protection partnerships and evidence globally.<sup>6</sup>

The first two areas of work strengthen the 12 building blocks of a national social protection system.<sup>7</sup>

8. The strategy has a theory of change that sets out WFP's intended pathways towards achieving social protection impact, defining outputs and outcomes at different levels.

9. The evaluation assessed progress towards the intended results set out in the strategy, analysed positive and negative unintended outcomes, and identified the key internal and external factors that enabled or hampered the successful implementation of the strategy. In doing so, it took account of current challenges in the operating environment and identified lessons and priorities to guide WFP's future work in social protection.

## **Rationale**

10. The evaluation was designed to consolidate lessons learned and assess progress made since the 2019 evaluation of WFP's safety nets policy, including the four years since the launch of the strategy. It was conducted in 2025 in the context of the start of a new WFP strategic plan cycle (2026–2029) and the significant changes in the organization's operating and partnership

<sup>6</sup> WFP notes that a vast amount of informal social protection also exists, but this falls outside the scope of the strategy.

<sup>7</sup> The 12 building blocks include issues related to systems architecture: 1) policy and legislation; 2) governance, capacity and coordination; 3) platforms and infrastructure; 4) planning and financing; as well as issues related to knowledge and learning: 5) assessments and analysis; 6) advocacy; 7) engagement and communications; and 8) monitoring, evaluation and learning. The remaining building blocks concern programme features: 9) design of programme parameters; 10) registration and enrolment; 11) benefit delivery; and 12) accountability, protection and assurance.

landscape, which have required WFP to identify and focus on areas that have the greatest potential for results.

11. The evaluation was primarily intended to support institutional learning. It reviewed and consolidated experience gained through WFP's efforts to strengthen national social protection systems and programmes, as well as its broader engagement in the social protection sector. The aim was to generate lessons that can inform and reinforce WFP's approach as it begins implementing the new strategic plan.

12. The evaluation was conducted between February 2025 to February 2026. It adopted a theory-based, mixed-methods approach, collecting data at global, regional and country levels from primary and secondary sources, through desk review, key informant interviews and direct observation. Case studies were conducted in five countries (Burundi, the Niger, Pakistan, Peru and Rwanda) and five additional country offices were engaged through case studies conducted remotely (the Caribbean multi-country office, and country offices in Iraq, Mauritania, the Philippines and Zambia).

## Key evaluation messages

### Quality and relevance of the strategy

The quality of the strategy was high and in line with international thinking, as well as WFP's normative framework. It was based on a clear theory of change that set out the logic of interventions from activities to results, although some important assumptions in relation to WFP's funding structure and internal capacity, as well as national political and economic variables, were missing. The broad menu of potential activities and modalities of engagement envisaged by the strategy is relevant to addressing evolving humanitarian needs and permits adaptation to different operational settings, but the complementary actions modality diluted focus and led to the mis-categorization of activities as social protection.

13. The evaluation found that WFP's strategy for support to social protection is aligned with international discourse on social protection and with social protection priorities set out in Agenda 2030. Its focus on strengthening national social protection systems anchored in national strategies and legislation, including in fragile and humanitarian settings, is valued by external stakeholders that play an important role in the social protection sector and is in line with the principles of other major international agreements promoting universal social protection systems, such as the Social Protection Floor Initiative, Universal Social Protection Initiative (USP2030) and the Grand Bargain.

14. The evidence found that WFP's country-level social protection activities are largely aligned with national priorities and context-specific needs. The strategy included an assumption that WFP would channel support through national systems that can absorb and account for assistance, but it could have more strongly advocated for working with national systems as a default, even in complex settings and sudden-onset crises. This reflects a broader lesson learned among international actors in relation to the response to COVID-19. The strategy is also in line with the WFP localization policy, even though the strategy predates that document.

15. The formulation of the strategy was broadly robust, strongly evidence-based and consistent with WFP strategic plan, policies and programmatic approaches. It was clear in its intent and included a solid theory of change that set out the expected results and the key assumptions underpinning the strategy. The wide range of activities illustrated in the strategy allows country offices to select those most relevant to their setting. It also opened for new pathways for social protection support by endorsing on-demand service provision.

16. The evaluation found that the extent to which the strategy is utilized by country office teams varies considerably. While the strategy provided useful framing for some to develop country strategic plan (CSP) activities linked to social protection, for others it was difficult to engage with because of its length and complexity. The inclusion of the modality of “complementary actions in WFP’s own programming” left space for interpretation by country offices, diluting focus and leading to the mis-categorization of activities as social protection that do not actually support or align with national systems. This mis-categorization hampers WFP’s ability to extract from its reporting systems information that accurately links expenditures to activities and results.

17. Similarly, the results chain did not include a clear pathway for instances where WFP fully manages or implements a social protection programme on behalf of a government – a situation that straddles the two modalities of the strategy. Finally, some important assumptions in relation to WFP’s funding structure and internal capacity, as well as national political and economic variables, were missing.

18. The practical arrangements made to facilitate the implementation of the strategy were also robust. They included an implementation plan that defined baselines and progress indicators, identified financial and human resource requirements and was accompanied by guidance documents.

## **Effectiveness of WFP interventions and sustainability of results**

### **Policy environments and institutional capacity**

WFP is helping to foster conducive policy environments for social protection at the global and country levels. It has made substantial progress towards establishing itself as a credible and valued actor in the social protection sector since 2019 but rarely plays a lead role or makes significant contributions to the development of overarching national social protection policies and strategies, given that other partners are often better positioned to do so.

19. The evaluation found that WFP has contributed to the development of national social protection policies and strategies in different settings, ranging from fragile and crisis situations to more stable environments. Significant contributions were identified in the areas of shock-responsive social protection (SRSP) and school feeding, in fragile and conflict-affected countries, as well as in the incorporation of food fortification in national nutrition policies and programmes. WFP’s evidence generation, advocacy at the national, regional and global levels and technical assistance have been instrumental, but national political commitment and fiscal space are also key variables explaining success.

20. WFP has been actively engaged at the global level in advancing key social protection initiatives, including the global forum on fragility and conflict, which led to the creation of a high-level panel and subsequent catalytic agenda seeking to expand social protection in those settings, and the Global Shield against Climate Risks,<sup>8</sup> which promotes links between disaster risk financing, anticipatory action and social protection.

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<sup>8</sup> An initiative launched by the Vulnerable Twenty Group together with the Group of Seven, see: <https://www.globalshield.org>.

21. Alongside these important contributions to specific social protection schemes, however, the evaluation found that some CSPs state ambitions for WFP to play a lead role in supporting governments with the development of overarching social protection policies or strategies. There are other partners better positioned to engage in overarching social protection policies, including, for example, the World Bank and other international financial institutions (IFIs).

WFP contributes to strengthening institutional capacity for social protection mainly in relation to the development of social registries or other common digital platforms. While acknowledging important contributions by WFP, which are instrumental to the effective functioning of social protection systems, the evaluation found that challenges related to approaches around transferability, sustainability and data sharing still need to be addressed.

22. Some illustrative examples of positive contributions were found in countries such as Somalia, where WFP supported the development of the unified social registry, which serves as the backbone of the Government's social protection delivery system; Jordan, where WFP investments in digital payments filled critical gaps, establishing systems which enabled the national aid fund to scale up in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and India, where WFP support for the targeted public distribution system in the form of digitization and data analytics resulted in improved socioeconomic targeting, fewer inclusion and exclusion errors and streamlined processes.

23. Besides these and other success stories, WFP's experience with digital advisory and solutions services for governments reveals critical lessons about the mismatch between growing demand for such services and organizational readiness. By November 2020, more than 20 governments had asked WFP to share its digital beneficiary information and transfer management platform (SCOPE) for use in social registries, cash transfer programmes and school feeding systems. However, internal audits and strategic reviews conducted between 2021 and 2023 found that SCOPE was not readily transferable to governments and identified fundamental gaps for digital advisory and solutions services in relation to WFP's strategy and value proposition; standardized service delivery models; project management practices; WFP's ability to share data with governments; partner infrastructure and digital literacy required to sustain technologies; planning and funding for the long-term WFP support that is required; and internal coordination of teams working on similar issues. WFP lacked guidance on when to use different approaches and on the use of replicable "digital public goods" and the organization faced significant technical capacity constraints.

24. Risk management concerns raised included missing critical data and privacy safeguards, inadequate "do no harm" frameworks for fragile settings, and significant reputational risks when WFP technologies prove difficult to transfer and sustain. This has led to calls for a fundamental shift in WFP's approach – moving from solution development to advisory services – and for corporate approval for any solution development, accompanied by costed business plans with use cases, capacity requirements and handover strategies.

25. The Technology Division issued interim guidance in October 2025 that emphasized an advisory-only role for WFP, although the guidance did not include input from the Programme and Operations Department, demonstrating continued internal coordination gaps. Stakeholders expressed concerns that overly restrictive guidance may limit WFP's ability to support social registries and digital cash transfers when governments or donors want WFP to play a more direct role, creating tension between risk management and operational relevance. While WFP has significant operational expertise and credibility, the full realization of its potential as a valuable digital transformation partner will require fundamental shifts in approach, with the development

of new mentalities, capabilities, processes and staff profiles suited to long-term capacity strengthening rather than direct implementation.

### **Quantity<sup>9</sup> of social protection programmes: coverage, comprehensiveness and adequacy**

WFP has helped to expand social protection coverage in numerous instances, albeit often on a temporary basis apart from school feeding activities and a few large-scale programmes implemented on behalf of governments. WFP's contributions to the comprehensiveness of social protection assistance are more limited and are hindered by internal factors that often prevent the layering of different types of assistance. There was little evidence of the influence of WFP on the adequacy of social protection programme benefits and transfer values, which is often not feasible given limitations in government fiscal capacity.

26. The evaluation found evidence that WFP has contributed to expanded social protection coverage in numerous instances through training and technical assistance, as well as through supply chain operations, vulnerability analysis and mapping, and particularly the direct delivery of assistance that complemented national programmes. Examples include work in Peru, where WFP technical assistance provided to the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion to establish the social protection and emergency response system led to the vertical and horizontal expansion of social protection programmes and allowed the Government to provide cash-based transfers to more than 5 million households. Meanwhile, in Lebanon the WFP-implemented national poverty targeting programme expanded coverage from 72,000 individuals in early 2019 to 91,200 individuals by the end of that year; the programme was then handed over to Government and by 2024 had been scaled up to reach 413,000 vulnerable Lebanese. In the Dominican Republic, the national social protection programme established to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic expanded from 800,000 to 1.5 million households with WFP technical assistance provided between 2020 and 2021, although it was scaled back in 2022. The evaluation noted, however, that across various settings, such expansions in coverage have often been temporary by design, aside from school feeding and a few large-scale government programmes, such as the national poverty targeting programme in Lebanon.

27. WFP is contributing to increased comprehensiveness of social protection programmes related to nutrition and school feeding. The design and implementation of the Benazir Nashonuma Programme in Pakistan represents a success story: WFP delivery of specialized nutritious foods for pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under 2 complements Government-led cash transfers, behavioural change communication and referrals to health and nutrition services.

28. Despite this and other success stories, programme integration within WFP programmes and activities remains limited, particularly across social protection and resilience, which is a missed opportunity to contribute to comprehensiveness. Social protection work was found to be often isolated structurally, financially and in results architecture, although the evaluation observed that this is a systemic issue going beyond social protection. As also noted in the mid-term evaluation of the WFP strategic plan for 2022–2025, internal competition and the fragmentation of country office work streams and teams, and gaps in overarching programme management can also hamper WFP's ability to implement integrated programmes effectively.

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<sup>9</sup> The quantity of national social protection programming, as included in the strategy and [Universal Social Protection 2030](#), is the combination of the coverage of national social protection programmes; comprehensiveness, intended as the range of needs being addressed by national social protection systems and programmes; and the adequacy of benefits, including transfer values.

29. The adequacy of social protection programme benefits is an area in which the evaluation found WFP to have had limited effectiveness as the level of benefits is dependent on available social development financing and on domestic political considerations. A balance often has to be struck between the adequacy of transfers and the desired coverage level, and such decisions lie outside WFP's direct control.

30. Examples of advocacy aimed at increasing transfer values were found in the Caribbean, where WFP has worked with governments to conduct scenario planning related to potential SRSP transfers, although the effects of this work on adequacy are unclear from the available evidence; Burundi, where the same group of refugees received humanitarian cash transfers and were included in the national MERANKABANDI programme, which contributed to improved overall transfer adequacy; and Rwanda, where WFP engaged with the Government to improve the adequacy of school meals.

#### **Quality of social protection programmes: efficiency, transparency, shock-responsiveness and inclusion**

WFP has contributed to making social protection programmes more shock responsive in many places. It has also made significant contributions to the efficiency, transparency and accountability of national programmes. WFP has also had a strong effect on geographic and refugee inclusion, but WFP could be more strategic when promoting inclusion and empowering women, girls and other marginalized population groups within national programming.

31. WFP has made substantial contributions to the cost efficiency and transparency of national social protection programmes by leveraging its expertise in procurement and logistics. The evaluation found examples of WFP technical assistance resulting in savings in transport costs of national targeted distribution programmes, as well as in the costs per meal of school feeding programmes. Similarly, WFP technical assistance provided to establish community feedback mechanisms for national social protection programmes resulted in enhanced transparency and accountability to affected people.

32. On-demand procurement and logistic services provided by WFP have also resulted in efficiency and transparency gains for national social protection programmes in terms of cheaper food products, faster procurement processes and more systematic use of competitive bidding. However, while on-demand service provision can improve efficiency and transparency, the evaluation observed that such gains are unlikely to be sustainable unless service provision agreements include a capacity strengthening component and a transition plan. Moreover, when these agreements do not include a role for WFP in last-mile distribution and monitoring, the potential risk of WFP being associated with politicized use of food assistance could harm its reputation of impartiality and neutrality.

33. WFP has contributed to making social protection systems more shock responsive in several cases. Its technical capacities in this area and relationships with a range of social protection and disaster risk management actors are seen as important areas of comparative advantage. Examples of concrete contributions include successful advocacy in relation to cash transfers and indicate a shift towards pre-emptive rather than reactive disaster response strategies, as in the Philippines, where WFP supported the Government in developing a bill – which was signed into law as the “Declaration of State of Imminent Disaster Act” (Republic Act No. 12287) on 12 September 2025 – and is now supporting the drafting of accompanying implementation rules and regulations. Similarly, in Belize, WFP piloted mobile money transfers in response to Hurricane Lisa, showcasing the potential for digital transfers in an environment in which social protection transfers are still largely provided in kind.

34. In some cases, WFP has been instrumental to the establishment of new government bodies for SRSP. For example, in Mauritania WFP and the World Bank supported the establishment of the *Dispositif National de Prévention et de Réponse aux Crises Alimentaires et Nutritionnelles*, which in 2021 took over from WFP in leading and coordinating lean season assistance.

35. Successful SRSP requires collaboration between government actors responsible for disaster management and social protection, which can be hindered by institutional silos. In that regard, WFP still has an important role to play bringing social protection and early warning systems to develop inter-institutional SRSP policy and programming.

36. WFP has designed approaches that include or prioritize women in the social protection programmes it implements, but there is room to improve the emphasis on the autonomy and empowerment of women and girls in nationally led programmes supported by WFP. In one country, the evaluation noted the exclusion of some women from a national social protection programme based on their marital status or age at the time of pregnancy, with no WFP strategy to advocate for changes. More broadly, the extent to which corporate commitments are implemented at the country level is highly variable, and this was found to be a relatively weak area in the strategy for support to social protection.

37. WFP has been active in the inclusion of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and migrants. To cite just two examples: in Colombia, WFP facilitated the registration of 900,000 irregular migrants in a single social registry (SISBen), granting them access to all national social protection programmes and the labour market; and in Uganda, the organization supported the digital financial inclusion of refugees and the integration of refugees into government systems.

38. Full integration of refugees, IDPs and migrants into national social protection systems, however, can be challenging, including for political reasons, and evidence suggests that more could be done by WFP to advocate for such integration.

39. WFP advocacy and technical assistance have contributed to making national social protection systems more nutrition-sensitive in several countries, mainly through the introduction of food fortification in school feeding and other social protection programmes, through analytical support and through nutrition-sensitive cash transfer programmes.

40. Despite several positive examples, the evaluation found that WFP is not systematically engaged on nutrition-related aspects of social protection except in school feeding, even though such engagement might be expected given that it is an intended outcome in the strategy.

### **Sustainability of results**

WFP contributions are more likely to be institutionally sustainable when they help to address an issue of priority to national actors and enable those actors to implement a solution that is well-adapted to the context.

WFP effects on the allocation of domestic resources for long-term social protection programming are still rare outside of school feeding, but growing partnerships with IFIs are promising.

41. The sustainability of WFP contributions to national social protection systems and programmes depends mainly on three variables: the degree of political prioritization by national governments; available financing; and explicit transition arrangements.

42. School feeding is the area in which WFP advocacy has been the most effective in fostering conducive policy and financial environments. Notably, WFP contributed to an increase in the number of countries with domestic budget allocations for school feeding from 33 in 2023 to 45 countries in 2024.<sup>10</sup>

43. In the Caribbean, WFP commissioned research on linking disaster risk financing to SRSP and encouraged numerous governments in that region to expand their Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility Segregated Portfolio Company. Since 2025, WFP has been supporting governments in ten countries to create links between microinsurance payouts for climate shocks and social protection programmes.

44. In a more fragile setting such as Haiti, WFP played a key facilitation role bringing together donors including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to create a coalition that made implementation of the previously adopted national social protection and promotion policy a structural benchmark tied to receiving IMF support, thereby strengthening system sustainability.<sup>11</sup>

45. Institutional capacities are where WFP may have the greatest impact. In this regard, evidence suggests that close engagement with national and local counterparts to design and implement technical solutions that match the context and current potential of the institutions concerned, coupled with realistic transition plans, is key to fostering sustainability.

## Factors explaining performance

### Modalities of intervention

WFP's technical assistance for building social protection systems has generally been appreciated by governments and other partners. However, country offices are not consistently looking at this work holistically and ensuring that each year's efforts build on the achievements and lessons learned in previous years, with a view to achieving medium-term strategic goals.

46. The provision of technical assistance to governments was the primary focus of the strategy for support to social protection and has been the most frequent modality of intervention at the country level. This included analytical work, embedded consultants, coaching, facilitation of South-South exchange, and training. This support was highly appreciated by partners, and WFP is seen as responsive to a variety of requests for support. While responsiveness is key to ensuring continued relevance, the evaluation also found that technical assistance activities often lack clear pathways and milestones towards the medium-term goals envisioned in the strategy, which may hinder the effectiveness and sustainability of this work.

WFP's delivery of social protection programmes on behalf of governments has filled important gaps in national social protection systems. However, this role needs to be understood as inherently transitional in nature.

<sup>10</sup> ["Annual performance report for 2024"](#) (WFP/EB.A/2025/4-A/Rev.1)

<sup>11</sup> ["Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Haiti \(2018–2022\)"](#) (WFP/EB.2/2023/6-A/6).

47. WFP's delivery of social protection programmes on behalf of, and contracted by, governments, including a few examples of on-demand services, has filled important gaps in national social protection systems and institutional capacities. The main reasons WFP was chosen to fill these gaps relate closely to its field presence, operational capacity and ability to connect social protection and humanitarian assistance. WFP's role in assuring the efficient and transparent administration of funds is also worth noting, particularly in the interplay between national governments and IFIs. This gap-filling role, however, needs to be understood as inherently transitional, and the evaluation noted that it should be accompanied by a strategy for capacity strengthening and by adequate plans for a sustainable transition of activities to full implementation by national actors.

There are positive examples of pilot projects related to social protection in countries where governments have directly commissioned WFP to undertake them, or where objectives have been clearly defined in advance. However, in other cases, pilot projects have been less effective than other ways of working on social protection.

48. WFP piloting of new social protection programmes and approaches has led to greater quantity and quality of programming when governments are closely engaged. By contrast, pilot projects designed without adequate consideration of government priorities, capacities and potential for uptake had limited effects. The evaluation also found cases of pilot projects that, while not completely disconnected from governments, lacked a clear definition of what was being piloted and why.

#### **External coherence**

The external coherence of WFP's support for social protection has improved in relation to support provided by international partners, and WFP has deepened its relationships with government social protection actors and other key ministries in many countries. WFP is increasingly seen as collaborative and engaged in global and country-level multi-stakeholder platforms.

49. The evaluation found that WFP support for social protection frequently demonstrates complementarity with the work of governments and other development actors, including other United Nations entities and IFIs. Relationships with government social protection actors deepened during the period evaluated, with WFP's alignment with national coordination systems and sectoral leadership arrangements, although the depth and effectiveness of this coherence vary depending on the setting.

50. Engagement with IFIs has also deepened and matured, most notably with the World Bank and regional development banks. The models of WFP collaboration with IFIs vary in different settings, ranging from purely technical collaboration and coordination in more stable contexts to WFP's direct implementation of large-scale transitional programming, with government financing leveraging IFI resources, in more fragile settings.

51. The evaluation also found evidence of structured arrangements within the United Nations system for preventing duplication and promoting synergies between different United Nations entities through clear division of labour, outcome-based responsibilities and joint governance structures, with WFP increasingly participating in joint social protection programmes, often alongside some combination of the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Labour Organization.

52. Some overarching challenges to effective collaboration and external coherence remain. These mainly relate to WFP establishing parallel delivery or data systems that limit alignment with national social protection structures. The rationale for continuing parallel humanitarian response varied in the countries visited for the evaluation and included donor concerns regarding the channelling resources through governments, WFP incentives to deliver quickly through its own delivery systems, concerns regarding the capacity or targeting prioritization of national governments, and lack of prior coordination between country office emergency and social protection functions.

53. Finally, the evaluation found some tensions between, on the one hand WFP's data protection and privacy concerns and adherence to humanitarian principles, and, on the other, the importance of interoperable and efficient data systems to support nationally led social protection systems.

### **Comparative advantage**

Operational capacities, field presence, skills and relationships in disaster risk management and, more broadly, responsiveness and a problem-solving culture, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings, are well recognized comparative advantages of WFP, which is now widely viewed as a key actor in the social protection sector and its support and partnership is increasingly sought.

54. While confirming WFP's comparative advantages, the evaluation nonetheless noted that the organization's ability to provide relevant technical advice to governments on operational issues connected to social protection does not flow automatically from them. It requires WFP to adapt its own operational solutions to the realities faced by a government in a particular context. This is a challenging endeavour and requires WFP to maintain and combine a range of technical and soft skills. Commitments to working through national social protection systems whenever possible require WFP to accept that it needs to sometimes compromise on its ways of working and even the quality and speed of short-term results in order to support sustainable nationally led and sustainable systems.

### **Key internal factors**

Key internal factors affecting the achievement of results included staffing, funding limitations and deficiencies in the WFP corporate approach to performance management, including gaps in knowledge management.

#### *Human resources*

55. The existence of high-quality, long-tenure staff with social protection experience and relationship skills represented the most frequent critical success factor for WFP support in the area of social protection. Conversely, staff turnover and rotation were the most important hindering factors. In some contexts, a lack of specialized social protection capacity among WFP staff continues to hinder success.

#### *Funding*

56. Despite some progress in securing more multi-year funding, short-term project-specific funding for WFP social protection activities is inherently at odds with commitments to long-term systems strengthening. However, the Changing Lives Transformation Fund represents a valuable approach for identifying good models for engaging in support for social protection.

57. During the period evaluated WFP has experienced a dramatic funding shortage leading to significant structural cuts, some of which risk undermining WFP's comparative advantages, particularly in relation to its field presence and technical expertise.

### *Performance and knowledge management*

58. Frequently acknowledged deficiencies in the WFP corporate approach to performance management – particularly weaknesses in measures for capacity strengthening and lack of qualitative results monitoring – hinder learning and adaptive management of WFP support for social protection. Similarly, poor knowledge management across different settings reduces the value of evidence generated.

## Recommendations

Recommendation	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Deadline for completion
<p><b>Recommendation 1: Redouble efforts to implement the strategy, developing and communicating clear criteria for prioritizing social protection engagement, including as follows:</b></p> <p>1.1 Prioritize support for social protection in areas where WFP has demonstrated comparative advantages, using them as entry points for wider engagement at the systems level; deprioritize pilot projects that are not either jointly conceived with/requested by the Government and include a strategy for uptake, or where WFP has a clearly formulated advocacy strategy.</p> <p>1.2 Re-emphasize the importance of working with or through national social protection programmes as the default wherever feasible and appropriate. Where WFP is involved in implementation in an initial phase, explicitly stress the importance of maintaining a long-term perspective with adequate transition planning, including clear metrics and milestones to be agreed with government counterparts.</p> <p>1.3 Support country offices in analysing political economy, and structural and cultural patterns of inequality between men and women and the exclusion of people with disabilities in order to inform the selection of social protection support modalities, level of engagement and feasibility.</p>	Programme Division (PRG)	June 2027
<p><b>Recommendation 2: Further develop the skills of WFP's social protection workforce and facilitate greater sharing of knowledge, experience and lessons between offices.</b></p> <p>2.1 Conduct an updated census of the social protection workforce to assess the impact of recent budget reductions and contraction in staffing capacities to identify critical gaps that require attention based on programme portfolio significance and need for specialized skills.</p> <p>2.2 Develop adequate social protection knowledge and soft skills for WFP employees at all levels and, in particular, leverage the knowledge, expertise and political awareness of senior national staff in country offices. This may include requiring personnel to participate in social protection training and engage in regional and global social protection communities of practice.</p>	PRG in coordination with Human Resources Division (HRM)	June 2027

Recommendation	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Deadline for completion
<b>Recommendation 3: Deepen strategic partnerships for social protection with international financial institutions and other United Nations entities at the global and country levels.</b>	PRG in coordination with HRM	
3.1 Building on lessons learned, develop context-specific strategies for building relationships and engaging with governments and international financial institutions to ensure complementarity and influence social protection sector reforms and financing in order to better address food security, nutrition and resilience to shocks.	Public Partnerships Division (PPD); PRG	
3.2. Prioritize global social protection partnerships with other United Nations entities to deepen mutual appreciation of organizational capacities and strengths and identify opportunities for collaboration and complementarity.	PPD; PRG	
<b>Recommendation 4: Strengthen results-based management for support for social protection</b>	PRG	June 2027
4.1 Consolidate learning gained from the implementation of support for social protection, identifying the most effective approaches and modalities and defining what WFP support for social protection should look like in different settings in order to better clarify priorities – including from WFP’s implementation of social protection programming on behalf of governments, on-demand services, work in fragile settings, and programmes that have linked WFP resilience and social protection activities.	PRG	
4.2 Clarify criteria for what constitute WFP contributions to social protection as opposed to other programme activities, using a clear taxonomy to reduce inconsistent categorization across country offices.	PRG	
4.3 Develop or ensure adequate use of existing qualitative outcome monitoring and reporting tools (or adopt existing tools used in the sector) that meaningfully track progress towards the strengthening of social protection systems and ensure that WFP contributions to the quantity and quality of social protection programmes is systematically tracked.	PRG	

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Evaluation features

1. This report reflects the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Strategic Evaluation of WFP Contributions to Social Protection. The evaluation covers the period from July 2019 to September 2025. Findings will be presented to the June 2026 Executive Board (EB) session.

2. **Background:** WFP has been engaged in aspects of social protection for decades, in particular, through support to school feeding, with a growing engagement in social assistance (social safety nets) from 2012. In 2019, an evaluation of the 2012 WFP Safety Nets Policy Update was completed. Building on the lessons and recommendations of the evaluation, WFP developed their first Strategy for Support to Social Protection (hereinafter referred to in this report as “the Strategy”) in 2021.<sup>12</sup>

3. **Rationale:** In line with its terms of reference (ToR), the evaluation is intended to consolidate lessons and assess progress since the 2019 safety nets evaluation, including the four years since the launch of the Strategy. Stakeholders consulted consider the evaluation timely, given the recent approval of the WFP Strategic Plan (2026-2029) and the significant changes in the organization’s operating and partnership landscape, which require WFP to identify and focus on priorities with the greatest potential for results.

4. **Objectives:** The evaluation is predominantly meant to support institutional learning. It analysed and took stock of experience gained through WFP efforts in support of national social protection systems and programmes, and in the broader social protection sector, to provide lessons that can help strengthen WFP’s approach as it begins implementation of the new strategic plan. Specifically, the evaluation assessed progress towards intended results, as articulated in the Strategy, identified positive and negative unintended outcomes, and identified the key internal and external enabling and hindering factors. In doing so, it took account of current challenges in the external context and identified lessons and priorities to guide WFP work in social protection.

5. **Focus:** The evaluation had five complementary areas of inquiry, each with a dedicated evaluation question (EQ). These covered the relevance of WFP engagement (EQ 1); the effectiveness of WFP engagement (EQ 2); internal and external coherence of WFP approaches (EQ 3); the sustainability of WFP contributions (EQ 4); and internal and context-related factors that may explain progress (EQ 5). The evaluation questions and sub-questions are presented in the evaluation matrix (Annex IV).

6. **Stakeholders and users:** Internal stakeholders for this evaluation include staff at all levels of the organization. The primary expected users of the evaluation are staff directly engaged in social protection issues in country offices and regional offices, as well as managers at these levels, and the Nutrition, School Meals and Social Protection Service at headquarters, and its management by the Programme Policy and Guidance Division and the Programme Operations Department. WFP’s executive management and Executive Board have a key stake in the evaluation, as they consider ways to ensure organizational efficiency and effectiveness amid significant funding shortfalls.<sup>13</sup> Many other WFP units also have an interest in the evaluation as noted in the terms of reference (Annex I). Key external stakeholders include Member States and host governments, particularly those ministries and agencies responsible for social protection, and the affected populations that require their support. Other critical external stakeholders include civil society organizations, regional bodies, other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes,

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<sup>12</sup> WFP. 2021. WFP Strategy for Support to Social Protection.

<sup>13</sup> As of November 17, 2025, WFP had recorded USD 5,247,851,081 in contributions. (<https://www.wfp.org/funding/2025> accessed on November 23, 2025) The update to the WFP management plan (2025-2027) noted projected operational requirements of USD 19.1 billion as of 9 April 2025 and an updated provisional implementation plan of USD 9.6 billion (WFP/EB.A/2025/6-B/1/Rev.1)

international financial institutions (IFIs), private sector partners and research institutions connected to the social protection sector.

## 1.2. Context

### EXTERNAL CONTEXT

7. Significant progress has been achieved globally in expanding social protection. For the first time, in 2024, more than half of the world's population was covered by some form of social protection.<sup>14</sup> However, substantial disparities in coverage and adequacy continue to exist across geographies, gender and age, with 3.8 billion people remaining entirely unprotected.<sup>15</sup>

8. Global poverty has experienced significant volatility over the past years, with the COVID-19 pandemic triggering the first rise in extreme poverty in decades in 2020 (9.7 percent of world population) and progress since then remaining uneven. While poverty levels gradually returned to near pre-pandemic levels in many regions by 2022, low-income and fragile countries continue to face rising poverty driven by inflation, conflict and climate-related shocks.<sup>16</sup> Recent World Bank reports indicate that global extreme poverty remained elevated through 2024, reaching an estimated 10.3 percent of the world population.<sup>17</sup>

9. At the same time, escalating challenges threaten food security and nutrition worldwide. The frequency and intensity of interconnected crises – conflict, climate and economic shocks, and pandemics – are rising and continue to cement and exacerbate existing inequalities. Crises are also becoming increasingly protracted: the number of forcibly displaced people has reached unprecedented levels, and is expected to grow.<sup>18</sup> As Figure 1 below demonstrates, the number of people facing crisis levels of food insecurity or worse has grown steadily, more than doubling between the beginning and the end of the evaluation period. Driven principally by crises in Palestine and Sudan, the number of people facing catastrophic levels of food insecurity (IPC 5) is 23 times higher in 2024 than in 2019 (increasing from 84 thousand to 1.95 million).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO). 2024. World Social Protection Report.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

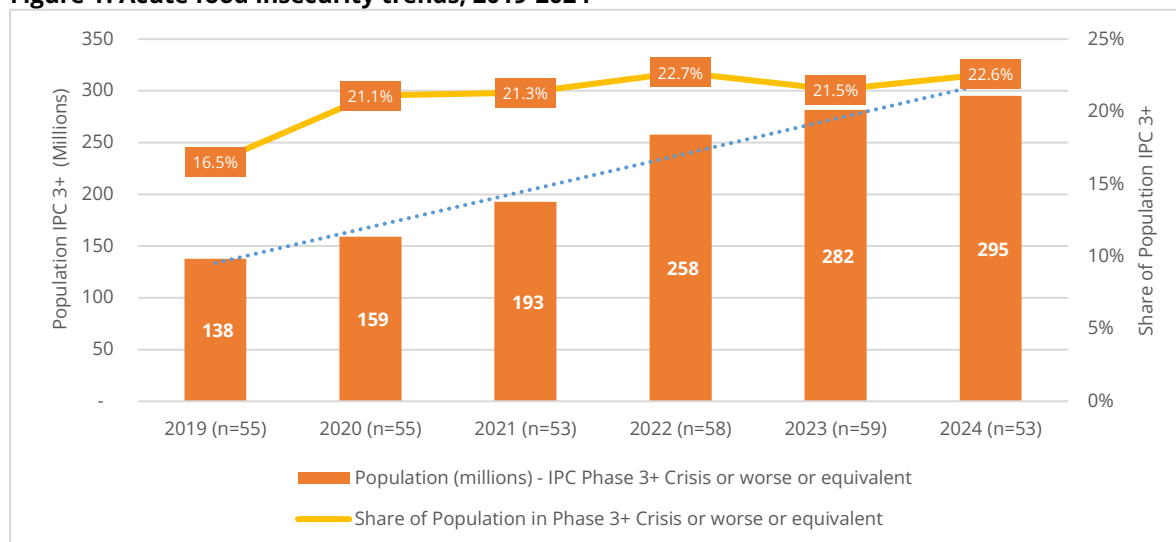
<sup>16</sup> — [SDG Indicators](#).

<sup>17</sup> [September 2025 global poverty update from the World Bank: New data and regional classifications](#).

<sup>18</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). 2025. Figures at a glance (<https://www.unhcr.org/uk/about-unhcr/overview/figures-glance>)

<sup>19</sup> [Global Report on Food Crises](#). 2025. The number of people classified as Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) almost tripled between 2023 (705,000) and 2024.

**Figure 1: Acute food insecurity trends, 2019-2024**



Source: Food Insecurity Information Network, Global Report on Food Crises 2025<sup>20</sup>

10. Against this backdrop, there is an increased urgency to strengthen national social protection systems to better protect against idiosyncratic shocks and for linking humanitarian assistance and social protection to address covariate shocks.<sup>21</sup> As highlighted by COVID-19 and recent climate hazards, countries with strong social protection systems are better prepared when crises hit, and social protection is seen as a critical lever to support a just transition, especially when coordinated with other sectoral investments.<sup>22</sup> However, coverage and adequacy gaps must be addressed for social protection to achieve its potential.<sup>23</sup> The social protection response to COVID-19 exposed gaps in existing social protection systems and coverage, as some population groups most adversely affected by the crisis – women, informal workers, indigenous communities, urban dwellers, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), people with disabilities, among others – were excluded from or underserved by social protection responses.<sup>24</sup>

11. Since 2019, global financing for social protection has fluctuated. The year between 2020 and 2021 saw a spike in social protection funding in low- and middle-income countries, mainly associated with the COVID-19 response. However, expenditure for the rapid expansion of social protection measures was temporary and short-term, with some countries temporarily shifting fiscal resources or increasing borrowing to fund these initiatives.<sup>25</sup> In protracted crisis countries, international financing for social protection was on the rise between 2018 and 2023, the majority of this funding coming from the World Bank.<sup>26</sup> However, significant funding cuts from the United States of America (USA) announced in early 2025

<sup>20</sup> The [Global Report on Food Crises](#) analysis was based on 55 countries for 2019, 55 for 2020, 53 for 2021, 58 in 2022, 59 in 2023, and 53 in 2024. Countries were selected for analysis based on whether food security data requirements were met. The bars in the chart presented represent the population (in millions) facing crisis or worse food insecurity within countries selected that year.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Common-Principles-for-Linking-Humanitarian-Assistance-and-Social-Protection.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> International Labour Office. 2024. World Social Protection Report 2024-2026: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition, Geneva: International Labour Office.

<sup>23</sup> World Bank. 2025. State of Social Protection Report 2025: The 2-Billion-Person Challenge. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-2156-1.

<sup>24</sup> Overseas Development Institute (ODI). 2021. Social protection response to COVID-19 and beyond; Indigenous Navigator (2020) The impact of COVID-19 on indigenous communities; ILO, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNPRPD). 2021. Social protection responses to the COVID-19 crisis for persons with disabilities.

<sup>25</sup> Evans et al. 2023. Financing social assistance in lower income countries post-COVID-19. [https://media.odi.org/documents/ODI\\_Financing\\_social\\_assistance\\_3iGjg6P.pdf](https://media.odi.org/documents/ODI_Financing_social_assistance_3iGjg6P.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> Swithern, S., Lazer, K., Rieger, N. and Carter, B. 2025. Financing Social Protection in Protracted Crises, BASIC Research Working Paper 41, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, DOI: 10.19088/BASIC.2025.010.

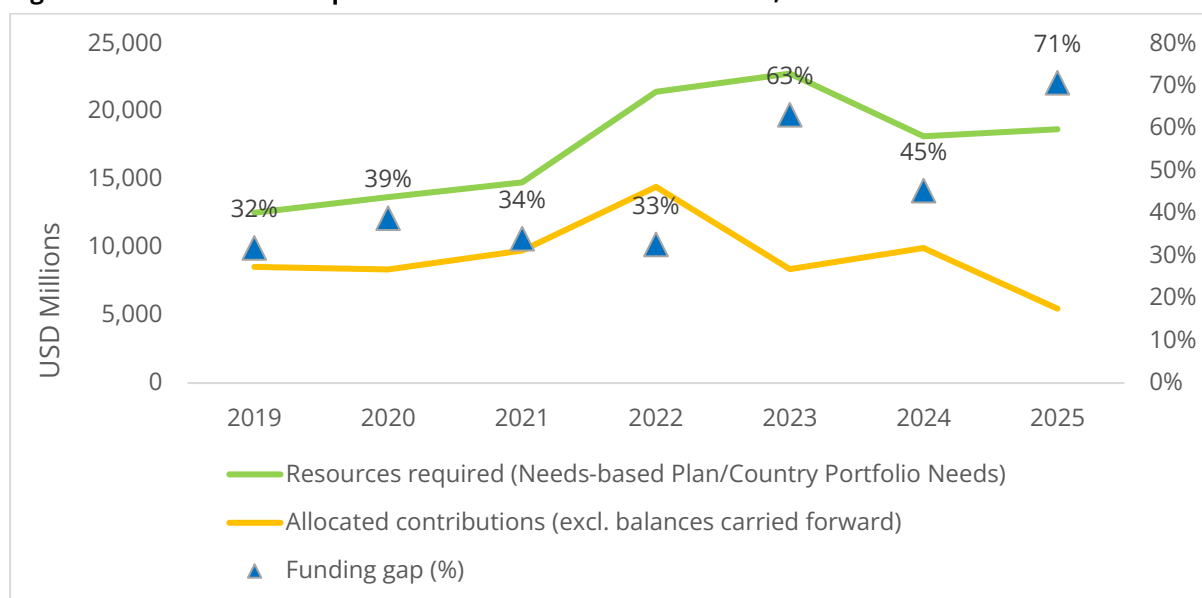
and subsequent donor cuts are set to have severe impacts on resourcing social protection, underlining the longer-term challenge of a continued, large funding gap in lower-income countries that thwarts the expansion of social protection coverage.<sup>27</sup>

### FEATURES OF INTERNAL CONTEXT AT WFP

12. This global environment and, in particular, the current financial landscape, presents many challenges for WFP. When the Strategy was developed, WFP funding was on an upward trajectory.

13. Between 2019 and 2023, WFP’s financial requirements based on needs-based country portfolio plans surged by 82 percent, rising from USD 12.5 billion to USD 22.7 billion. Until 2022, the gap between requirements and allocated contributions remained relatively stable at 30-40 percent. However, in 2023, this gap widened dramatically to a record high of 63 percent, signalling a severe mismatch between needs and available resources. In 2024, following an adjustment of country portfolio needs towards a more resource-based planning, the funding gap still stood at 45 percent. The outlook for 2025 is particularly alarming: as of November, confirmed contributions stand at just USD 5.5 billion, leaving a shortfall of USD 13.1 billion against assessed need (71 per cent of funding gap)<sup>28</sup> (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: WFP resources required versus allocated contributions, 2019-2025**



Source: FACTory Shop Report. Data extracted by Office of Evaluation (November 2025)

14. **Programming:** In 2019, WFP operations directly reached 128 million people, while in 2024 the organization directly reached 124 million people with cash or food support. The volume and reach of WFP technical assistance and capacity strengthening support to governments is not precisely known,<sup>29</sup> though emphasis on these types of activities in country strategic plan (CSP) documents has grown over the period. WFP’s proportional use of cash-based transfers (CBT) has fluctuated over the period, from 38 percent of total assistance (USD 2.1 billion) in 2019 to 35 percent of total assistance (USD 3.3 billion) in 2022, to 39 percent of total assistance (USD 2.9 billion) in 2023.

<sup>27</sup> Evans et al. 2023. Financing social assistance in lower income countries post-COVID-19. [https://media.odi.org/documents/ODI\\_Financing\\_social\\_assistance\\_3iGJg6P.pdf](https://media.odi.org/documents/ODI_Financing_social_assistance_3iGJg6P.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> WFP PI Statistical Weekly Reports on 2025 Contributions. Update as of 24 November 2025.

<sup>29</sup> Reporting on indirect beneficiaries (Tier 3) remains optional and the methods for calculating this reach appear to vary, calling into question data validity.

15. **Institutional context:** In order to adapt to reduced funding and improve efficiency, in 2024 and 2025 WFP underwent a major internal restructuring and substantial staff reductions. Central to this is the implementation of the “one global headquarters” model, which consolidates regional bureaux and headquarters into a single global structure, reducing management layers from three to two. This involved clarifying leadership accountabilities, strengthening strategic coordination, and consolidating functions into global teams to better support country offices (COs).<sup>30</sup> In 2024, the school meals and social protection teams were merged under one director. In late 2025, nutrition, school meals and social protection services were combined under a new single director.

16. **Strengthening of a risk management culture:** In 2023, in response to high-profile aid diversions, WFP also launched the Global Assurance Project (GAP) Reassurance Action Plan. While still ongoing, the project has identified key areas requiring improvement, including monitoring, identity management, cooperating partner management, and supply chain within WFP high-risk operations, and has incorporated assurance initiatives into WFP’s 2024 and 2025 implementation plans. The Evaluation of WFP’s Enterprise Risk Management Policy<sup>31</sup> found that, as a result of these high-profile incidents and the GAP, risk management has risen the corporate agenda, with top-down messaging transitioning from “risk acceptance” to “risk management”.

17. **United Nations reform:** The ongoing United Nations Development System (UNDS) reform, which began in 2017, repositions the United Nations system to be “more strategic, accountable, transparent, collaborative, efficient, effective and results-oriented” in responding to national development needs and priorities in the light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda).<sup>32</sup> In 2025, UNDS reform discussions took the form of the “Humanitarian Reset” and the “UN80” dialogue – both of which include focus on finding ways to reduce overlap in mandates across United Nations funds, programmes and agencies, and underscore the importance of linking humanitarian action with longer-term social protection systems.<sup>33</sup>

### 1.3. Subject being evaluated

#### SOCIAL PROTECTION

18. Social protection is defined as the “policies and programmes aimed at preventing, and protecting people against poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion throughout their life [...with] a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups”.<sup>34</sup> In 2015, all states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which emphasizes social protection as a right. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 1.3 is to “implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable”. The idea underpinning the social protection “floor” is that everyone in need should have access to essential services and basic income security. Social protection is expected to contribute to SDG 2, which aims to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture, as well as to the SDGs related to poverty reduction (SDG 1), gender equality and the empowerment of women (SDG 5), decent work and inclusive growth (SDG 8) and reduced inequality (SDG 10).<sup>35</sup> There is a commitment in the “Grand Bargain” (2016) that “delivering cash should, where possible and appropriate, use, link, or align with local and national mechanisms such as social protection systems”.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> WFP. 2025. Update to the WFP Management Plan, June 2025, WFP/EB.A/2025/6-B/1/Rev.1.

<sup>31</sup> WFP. 2025. Evaluation of WFP’s Enterprise Risk Management Policy.

<sup>32</sup> WFP. 2022. WFP Strategic Plan (2022-2025).

<sup>33</sup> [UN. 2025](#). The UN80 Initiative Action Plan, a coordinated path for reform.

<sup>34</sup> WFP. 2021. Strategy for Support to Social Protection.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>.

<sup>36</sup> Grand Bargain. 2016. page 6. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain/grand-bargain-shared-commitment-better-serve-people-need-2016>.

## **WFP AND SOCIAL PROTECTION**

19. WFP's operational experiences with safety nets date back to the 1960s (reflecting its engagement in school feeding), and documented experiences go back to at least 1998, with a policy paper entitled "Food-based safety net needs".<sup>37</sup> However, WFP's role in social protection was only formalized in 2004 with the development of the policy "WFP and food-based safety nets: Concepts, experiences and future programming opportunities".<sup>38</sup>

20. Since then, several key milestones have been observed in WFP's policy and operational approaches. In 2012 the WFP Executive Board approved a Safety Nets Policy Update.<sup>39</sup> A shift in the terminology from "safety nets" to "social protection" is visible from 2016 in the name of the headquarters unit (Safety Nets and Social Protection Unit) and guidance (the Strategy). This shift reflects WFP's alignment with key global commitments, including the SDGs and the Social Protection Floor Initiative. Furthermore, it complements the increased focus across WFP strategy and practice on supporting policymaking and institutional capacity strengthening for government-led systems, alongside continued support to safety net programmes.

21. In 2019, WFP was supporting some aspect of national social protection systems or programmes (including school feeding) in 72 countries.<sup>40</sup> By 2023, WFP reported social protection support in 97 countries,<sup>41</sup> through technical assistance and delivering social protection programmes on behalf of governments.

## **FUNDING FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION**

22. Analysis from the Social Protection Unit estimates that WFP has received approximately USD 3.6 billion of grants explicitly for social protection cumulatively between 2021 and 2024. Over half of the value of grants for social protection captured by analysis came from government funding while leveraging international financial institution resources between 2021 and 2024.

23. In 2022, USD 1.0 billion of grants were made to WFP for social protection and related activities, over two thirds of which came from governments leveraging international financial institution resources. That year, nearly 70 percent of these grants were designated to just three country offices, Lebanon (USD 241 million), Somalia (USD 132 million) and Sudan (USD 100 million).

24. In 2023, the overall grant value for social protection and related activities almost halved from the previous year. This was driven principally by a significant drop in government funding leveraging international financial institution resources, as well as weaker funding levels direct from host governments. However, according to the dataset, 2023 was the year that received the highest levels of funding for school meals from governments leveraging international financial institution resources and national governments (USD 231 million). Grants to the Benin country office from the national government represented over half of this value (USD 117 million).

25. Donor grants directed to social protection reached their peak in 2024 at USD 1.1 billion. Nearly half of this amount came from governments leveraging international financial institution resources, with more than half of that portion (USD 261 million) allocated to Lebanon.

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<sup>37</sup>WFP. 2019. Summary report on the evaluation of the update of WFP's safety nets policy (2012).

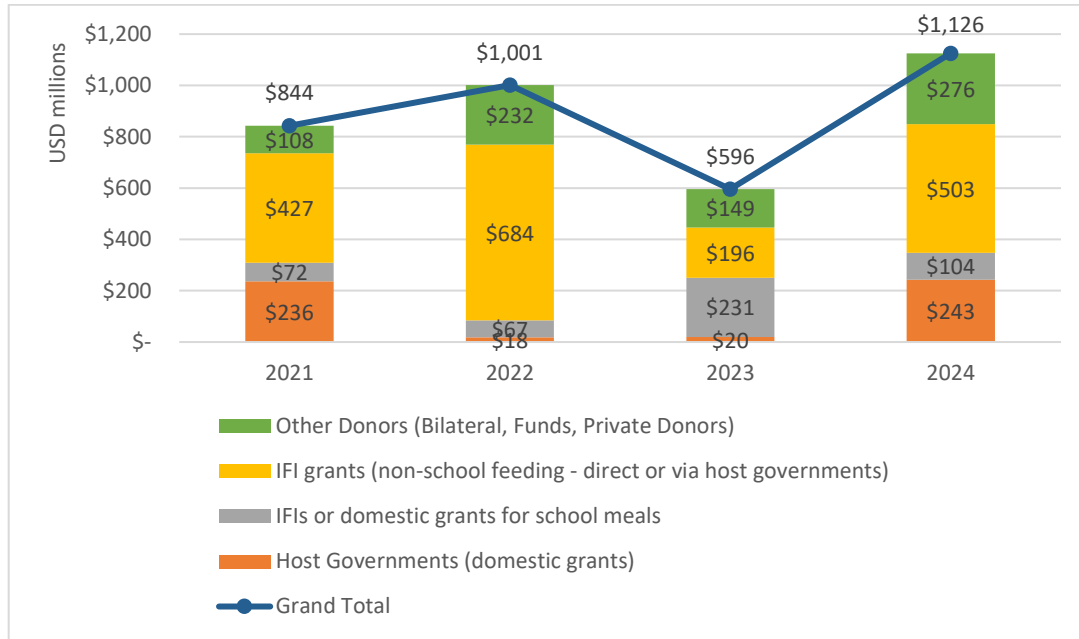
<sup>38</sup> WFP/EB.3/2004/4-A.

<sup>39</sup> WFP/EB.A/2012/5-A.

<sup>40</sup> Evaluation team analysis of COMET data, extracted October 2025.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 3: Grants directed to social protection activities by donor by year<sup>42</sup>**

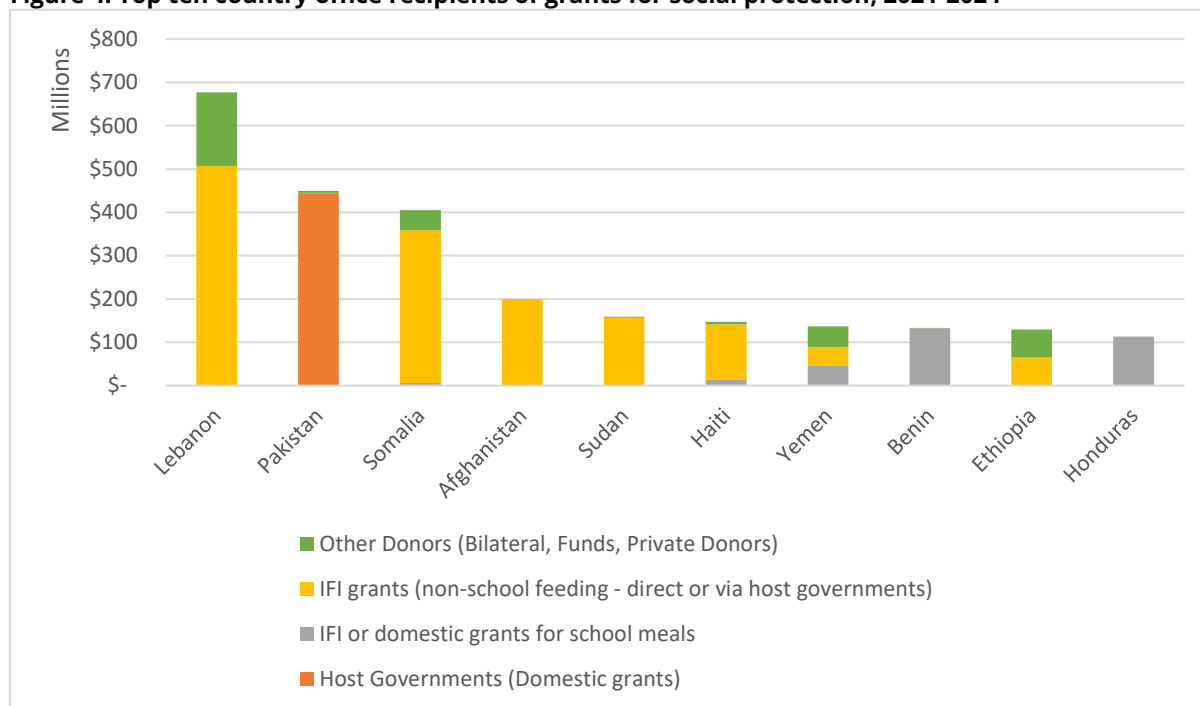


Source: WFP Social Protection Unit Grant Analysis (2021-2024)

26. Between 2021 and 2024, Lebanon received the most funding for social protection and related activities (USD 667 million), almost one fifth of the total grant value for social protection received by WFP. This came principally from the Government leveraging World Bank resources (USD 507 million) and from the European Commission (USD 131 million). This was followed by Pakistan, where 99 percent of grants for social protection came from the national government (USD 444 million) (see Figure 4). Notably, very few WFP country offices received grants directly from respective national governments for non-school feeding social protection activities.

<sup>42</sup> These data have important limitations, relating to methods used to estimate grant values and the inconsistent naming of donors in the database. The data have not yet been verified by WFP regional office staff (see Annex III for more detail on limitations).

**Figure 4: Top ten country office recipients of grants for social protection, 2021-2024**



Source: WFP Social Protection Unit Grant Analysis (2021-2024)

### THE NEEDS-BASED PLAN, ALLOCATED RESOURCES AND EXPENDITURES

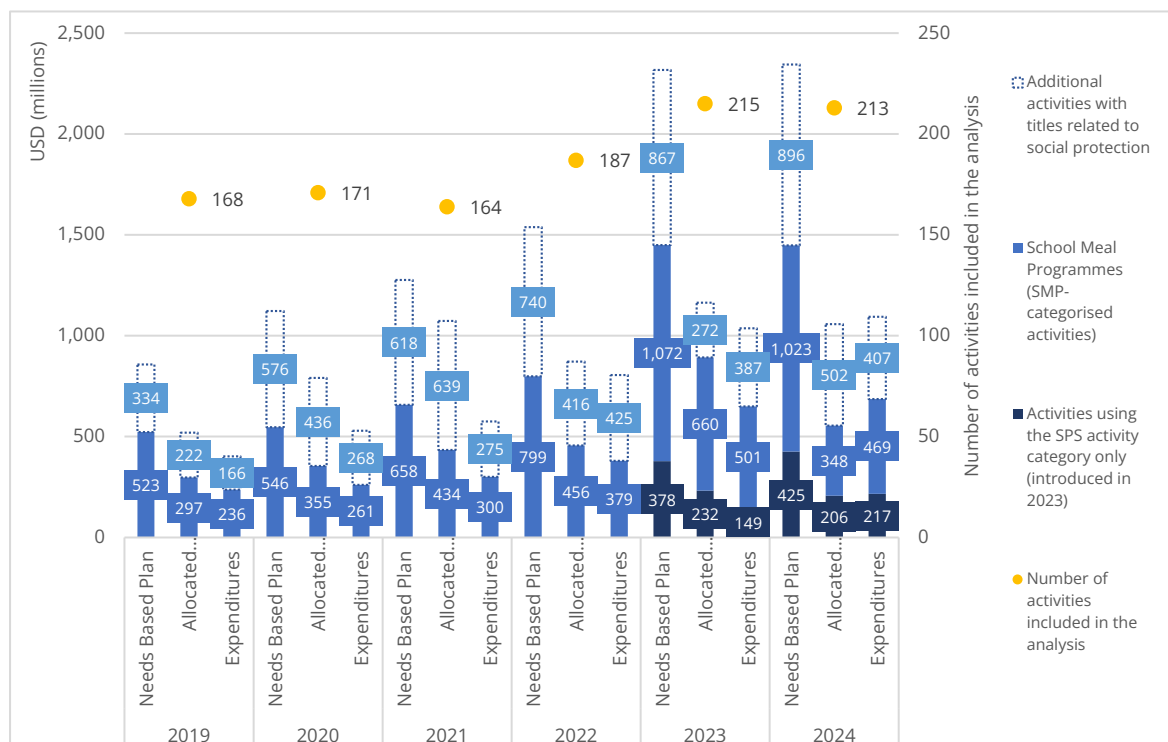
27. The needs-based plan totals for social protection-related activities nearly tripled over the evaluation period, rising from 857 USD million to 2.3 USD billion (Figure 5). This growth was primarily driven by a substantial increase in financial requirements for school meal programmes, which doubled between 2019 and 2024, reaching approximately USD 1 billion.

28. An additional driver was the significant increase in needs-based plans for “activities with titles related to social protections”, which amounted to USD 896 million in 2024 – an increase of 168 percent since 2019.

29. Although allocated contributions increased in absolute terms – from USD 519 million to approximately USD one billion in 2024 – they failed to keep pace with the rising needs. After growing between 2019 and 2021, funding levels stagnated, resulting in the funding level dropping to just 45 percent of the needs-based plan in 2024 (Figure 5).

30. Expenditures as a percentage of allocated contributions were at their lowest in 2021 (54 percent), due to a substantial multi-year contribution from the Government of Pakistan, which accounted for one third of global allocated contributions that year. Since then, this ratio has risen significantly, reaching 92 percent in 2022, 89 percent in 2023, and 103 percent in 2024 (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Estimates of the needs-based plan, allocated contributions and expenditures for social protection-related activities<sup>43</sup>**



Source: Plan and Actual Comparisons v.3.0 report and Available Contributions by Activity report (extracted November 2025)

### DIRECT BENEFICIARIES REACHED BY WFP SOCIAL PROTECTION ACTIVITIES

31. The estimated number of Tier 1 (direct) beneficiaries reached explicitly by social protection-related activities<sup>44</sup> appears to have risen significantly since 2019 (Figure 6). Each year, a majority of beneficiaries are reached by school meals programmes. However, the estimated share of beneficiaries reached by non-school feeding-related activities has increased drastically, from 11 percent in 2019 to 45 percent in 2024. This estimated significant proportional increase witnessed between 2023 and 2024 appeared to stem from three key developments:

<sup>43</sup> This analysis is subject to important limitations, and must be interpreted with the following caveats in mind:

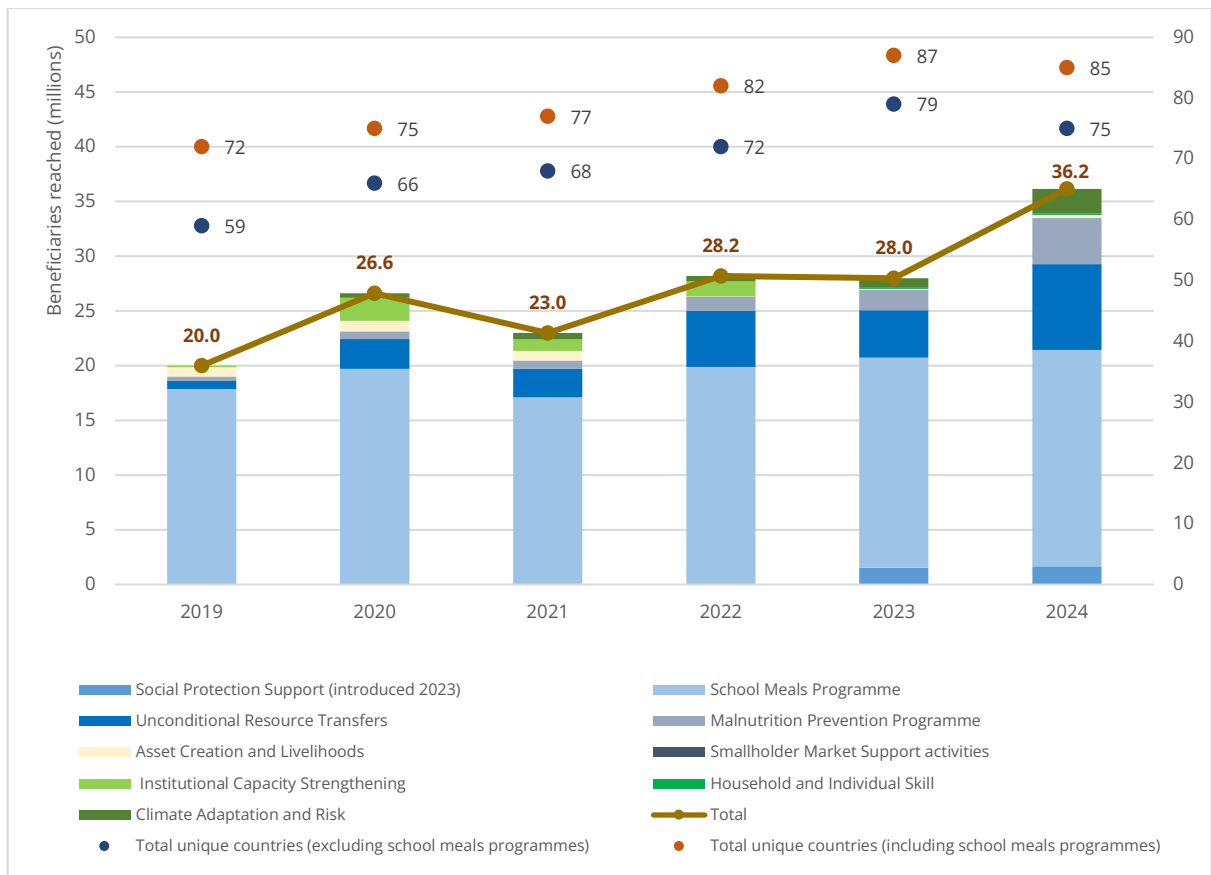
(1) The social protection support (SPS) activity category was only introduced in 2023. The evaluation team has conducted analysis to trace these activities back to their original codes, and these activities were included in the “additional activities” bar for previous years. However, it is not possible to verify whether these activities were social protection-focused in the past.

(2) The “additional activities” bars are intentionally dashed lines to emphasize the uncertainty in calculating figures for this category. Limitations include: (a) activity titles can be aspirational rather than accurate. The fact that a title contains social protection-related terminology does not necessarily mean that the activity has tangibly supported social protection in practice; (b) the analysis inevitably excludes activities that are not categorized as “SPS” and do not have SPS-related terminology in their titles; (c) activities often “bundle” several projects and sub-activities, some or several of which are not social protection focused.

<sup>44</sup> This includes: (1) activities with titles related to social protection; (2) activities categorized as “social protection support” or “school meals programme”; and (3) additional activities verified as entirely social protection-focused during case studies.

- the introduction of large-scale crisis response activities, which explicitly include the intention to align with, or work through, social protection systems in their activity titles (categorized as “unconditional resource transfers” in Figure 6);<sup>45</sup>
- a significant uptick in beneficiaries reached by malnutrition prevention programmes linked to social protection, driven almost entirely by support to the national nutrition-focused social protection programme in Pakistan (an increase of 2.2 million beneficiaries between 2023 and 2024); and
- a notable increase in the number of people reached by “climate adaptation and risk” activities nominally linked to social protection, principally stemming from activities in Ethiopia and Bangladesh.

**Figure 6: Estimate of Tier 1 beneficiaries reached by activities explicitly focused on or related to social protection<sup>46</sup>**



Source: COMET (extracted October 2025)

<sup>45</sup> Large-scale crisis response activities in Malawi and Madagascar (both introduced in 2024) stated an intention to leverage social protection systems in their activity titles. These activities reached 2.4 million beneficiaries and 1.6 million beneficiaries respectively, accounting for the increase witnessed. Explicit mentions of social protection-related terminology in activity titles do not necessarily equate to tangible support to social protection systems in practice.

<sup>46</sup> This analysis is subject to important data limitations and represents an inevitably crude estimate given the inconsistent tagging and categorization of social protection and social protection-related activities. Activities were included based on whether they used relevant activity categories (“social protection support” (SPS) for the solid blue bar, and “school meals programme” for the dotted line bar). Additionally, the analysis also included beneficiaries for activities with social protection-related terminology in their titles. When interpreting this graph, please note that: (1) if an activity title contains social protection-related terminology, this does not necessarily mean that an activity actually has tangibly supported social protection in practice; (2) this analysis inevitably excludes activities that are not categorized as SPS and do not have SPS-related terminology in their titles; (3) activities often “bundle” several projects and sub-activities, some or several of which are not social protection-focused.

## SOCIAL PROTECTION IN WFP NORMATIVE AND PROGRAMME FRAMEWORKS

32. The Strategy is dedicated to assisting countries in developing durable and robust social protection systems (see Box 1). It emphasizes that, for WFP's work to be considered as contributing to social protection, it must be in support of a national social protection system.

### Box 1: WFP's Strategy for Support to Social Protection (2021)

**Vision:** "By 2030 people will have substantially increased access to national social protection systems that safeguard and foster their ability to meet their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs, and to manage the risks and shocks they face".<sup>47</sup> In implementing the Strategy, WFP will promote the inclusion of people with diverse and often intersecting vulnerabilities and inequalities by recognizing and helping to address the significant barriers and challenges they face in accessing and benefiting from social protection. The Strategy is organized around two modes of support and four areas of work contributing to 12 building blocks of a national social protection system.

**Modes of support:** The two main modes (which may also be blended or combined) are:

3. Supporting nationally led social protection systems and programmes (e.g. advice and guidance to national actors, and delivery on behalf of national actors)
4. Complementary actions in WFP's own programming that are made with the clear intent to strengthen national systems

#### Areas of work:

- Contribute to strengthening the national social protection system architecture
- Support enhancements to the quantity and quality of national social protection programming
- Improve the effectiveness of social protection in the shared space between humanitarian, development and peace actors
- Build social protection partnerships and evidence globally<sup>48</sup>

The first two areas of work strengthen the 12 "building blocks" of a national social protection system.<sup>49</sup>

33. Social protection is an integral element of WFP's strategic plans. Under the Strategy, social protection was identified as contributing to all five WFP corporate strategic objectives and was framed as a key mechanism to combat hunger and malnutrition. In the Strategic Plan (2026-2029), social protection is covered by all three strategic outcomes. Social protection is also considered in several WFP policies and programme strategies (as shown in Annex VI).

34. For the first time, the WFP Corporate Results Framework (CRF) (2022-2025) added an activity category for "social protection sector support." One corporate high-level target (HLT) in the corporate results framework relates to social protection: "The number of countries whose social protection systems better contribute to people's food security, healthy diets and ability to meet essential needs and/or manage risks (HLT 4.2)". Output indicators that measure country office work on the building blocks contained in the Strategy were also included. (For analysis on the utility of data derived from reporting against the corporate results framework see Annex III).

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<sup>47</sup> This vision incorporates the two priorities of the Strategy, which are: 1) to help people meet their food security and nutrition needs and; and 2) to help them manage risks and shocks.

<sup>48</sup> WFP notes that a vast amount of informal social protection also exists, but this falls outside the scope of the Strategy.

<sup>49</sup> The 12 building blocks include:

A. Systems architecture: 1) policy and legislation; 2) governance, capacity and coordination; 3) platforms and infrastructure; and 4) planning and financing

B. knowledge and learning: 5) assessments and analysis; 6) advocacy; 7) engagement and communications; 8) monitoring, evaluation and learning

C. Programme features: 9) design of programme parameters; 10) registration and enrolment; 11) benefit delivery; and 12) accountability, protection and assurance.

## THEORY OF CHANGE (TOC) FOR WFP SUPPORT TO SOCIAL PROTECTION

35. The theory of change reconstructed for the evaluation<sup>50</sup> suggests that WFP supports national actors in strengthening and expanding inclusive, risk-informed social protection systems by providing robust evidence, technical assistance and models of effective approaches, while fostering strategic partnerships and working in complementarity with others. These contributions enhance the capacity of national systems and the coordination and quality of programmes, particularly in the shared space between humanitarian, development and peace actors. Over time, these improvements enable households to better meet their food, nutrition and essential needs and to manage risks and shocks more effectively. These change pathways are detailed in Figure 7.

36. The success of each change pathway depends on the validity of assumptions (see Table 1). Risks presented in the Strategy are largely the opposite of the assumptions, and are intended to be mitigated through advocacy, engagement of affected populations, and strategic collaboration. A more detailed narrative on the theory of change is provided in Annex IX.

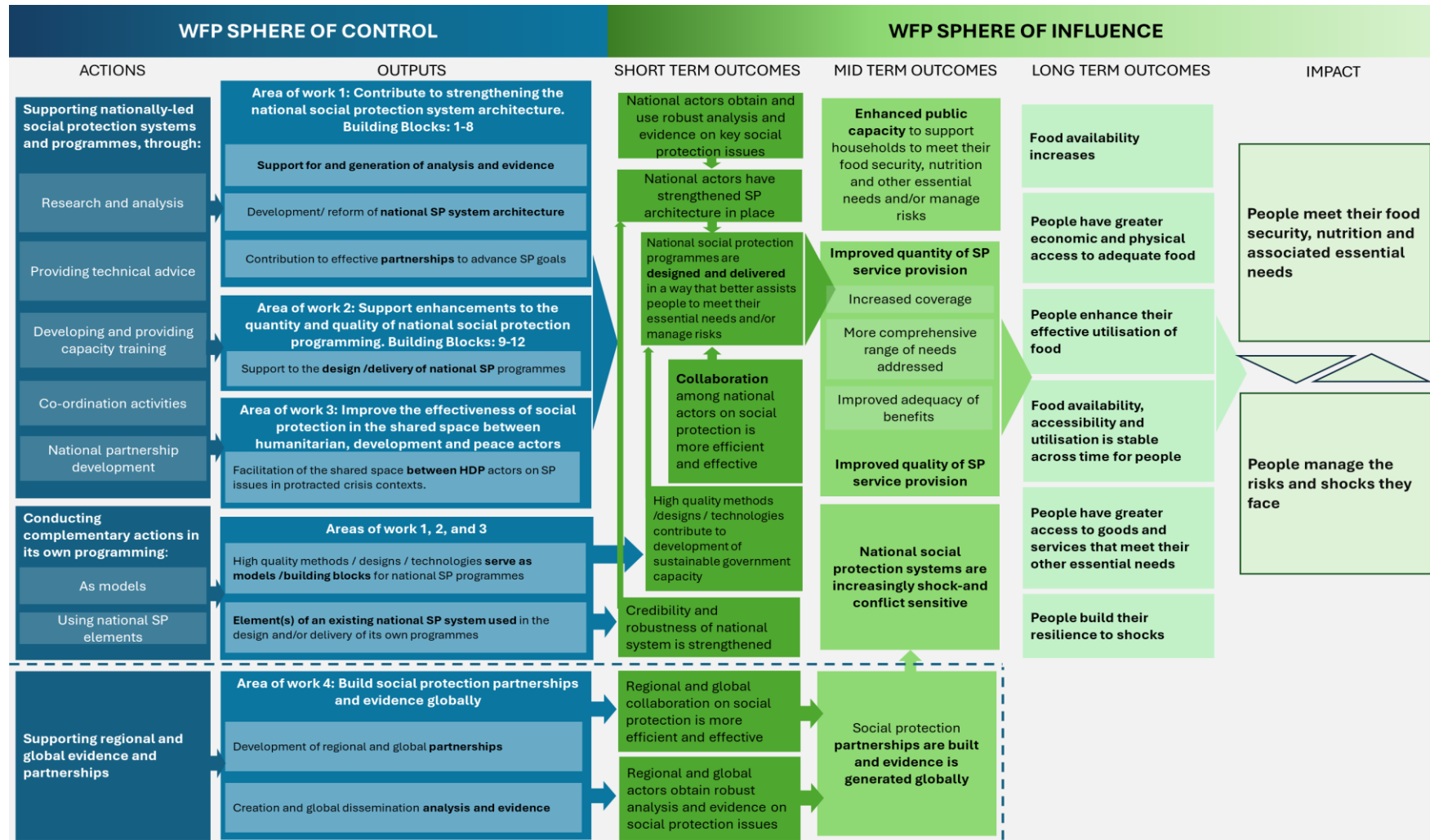
**Table 1: Theory of change assumptions**

	Outputs	Short- and medium-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes and impact
External (national actors, context donors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National actors are committed to strengthening social protection systems and programmes</li> <li>- National actors recognize and call upon WFP's technical capacities relevant to social protection</li> <li>- Funding partners remain committed to investing in WFP's support to social protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National actors value WFP's social protection support and have the capacities to apply any recommendations or findings, adjusting their systems and/or programmes</li> <li>- National actors include among their programme recipients the food insecure and malnourished and/or those facing risks and shocks, directly or indirectly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National actors can accommodate fluctuations in demand for social protection</li> <li>- Producers of food are incentivized and/or able to increase or diversify production as a result of increased demand owing to social protection programmes</li> <li>- Food supply is adequate and nutritious</li> <li>- Economic value of social protection increases, rather than substitutes for, other sources of household income</li> <li>- Markets and food are accessible (economically, physically and socially)</li> <li>- People use assistance to obtain and consume nutritious food</li> <li>- Basic public services are available and used</li> </ul>
Internal to WFP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WFP remains committed to supporting social protection at country, regional and global levels</li> <li>- WFP secures and maintains sufficient resources and internal technical capacities to provide this support where required</li> <li>- WFP implements high quality programmes that comply with corporate standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WFP's own interventions are relevant for national social protection system-building</li> <li>- WFP channels support through national systems that can absorb and account for assistance</li> <li>- WFP remains committed to supporting uptake of its analysis, evidence, recommendations and/or findings in social protection</li> <li>- WFP engages in mutually beneficial partnerships that ensure complementarity and synergies</li> </ul>	

Source: WFP Strategy for Support to Social Protection (2021) and evaluation team

<sup>50</sup> The reconstructed ToC served as a basis for refining the evaluation questions and for informing the detailed evaluation design. The evaluation team used the "pathways to social impact" diagram and the related table of key assumptions in the Strategy (Figure 7, p 70-71) as a basis for a reconstructed ToC.

Figure 7 Adapted theory of change for WFP support to social protection

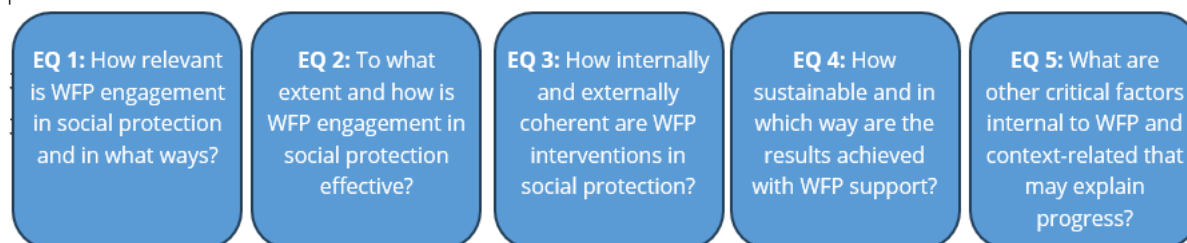


WFP Source: WFP Strategy for Support to Social Protection (2021) and evaluation team

## 1.4. Methodology, ethical considerations and limitations

37. The evaluation took place between June 2025 and March 2026<sup>51</sup> and was guided by five overarching evaluation questions:

**Figure 8 Five overarching evaluation questions**



Source: ToR and evaluation team

### APPROACH

38. **Theory-based:** The evaluation used the theory of change to inform revisions to evaluation sub-questions and to identify specific lines of inquiry. The evaluation matrix (Annex IV) shows how these evaluation questions were divided into sub-questions, supported by specific lines of inquiry, and what data sources were identified for each. In case studies, the theory of change was used to examine how WFP inputs and activities led to different outputs and outcomes, thus testing which pathways led to results and whether key assumptions were confirmed or their related risks mitigated.

39. **Mixed methods approach:** The evaluation employed qualitative and (where feasible) quantitative data collection and analysis. A detailed evaluability assessment at inception guided data collection choices and priorities.

40. **Case studies:** Case studies were purposively selected following extensive consultations during the inception phase. The sample was constructed based on criteria including:

- contextual diversity (coverage of regions, country risk profiles, balance of emergency and development contexts, varying social protection coverage levels);
- thematic diversity (coverage of different modalities and types of support outlined in the Strategy);
- funding diversity (to ensure inclusion of country office work funded by governments leveraging international financial institution resources and other national government grants);
- logistical considerations (flight distances, visa requirements);
- stakeholder recommendations (country offices considered to represent important contexts for learning); and
- country office availability (prioritizing those with no recent, ongoing, or imminent evaluations and audits; country offices known to have sufficient capacity to accommodate the evaluation team; and country office agreement to either host visits or participate remotely).

41. Five in-country case visits were conducted (Burundi, Niger, Pakistan, Peru and Rwanda). Five additional country offices were engaged through remote case studies (Caribbean,<sup>52</sup> Iraq, Mauritania, Philippines and Zambia).

<sup>51</sup> A full evaluation timeline can be found in Annex II.

<sup>52</sup> Based on prior agreement negotiated with the Office of Evaluation, the Caribbean case study made use of synthesized primary data collected by the independent evaluation team concurrently conducting the Multi-Country Strategic Plan. Evaluation of the Caribbean Multi-Country Offices (MCSPE). The MCSPE and social protection evaluation teams agreed during the design phase on questions the MCSPE team would cover that could inform this evaluation.

42. In addition to the case study countries, the evaluation team held group or individual interviews with other relevant country offices (Kenya, India, Lebanon, Madagascar, Namibia and Somalia) to gather data from contexts where the evaluation was unable to more fully engage.

## **DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

43. Data were collected between late August 2025 and October 2025 through key informant interviews (KIIs) and document and data review. Global interviews were conducted with WFP headquarters and regional office staff, United Nations and international financial institution partners, and bilateral donors. In total the evaluation engaged 294 people (44 percent women, 56 percent men) as key informants across global-, regional- and country-level data collection. Of the people engaged, 48 percent worked for WFP. Debriefings at the end of field missions, a preliminary global finding debriefing and a stakeholder workshop in February 2026 all served to enhance participation and allow for sense-making of preliminary analysis and validation of evaluation findings.

44. A global document review was conducted, including external research and literature and WFP policies, strategies, management directives, programme performance reports, audits and social protection guidance and publications. A structured analysis was conducted of secondary data from the large number of CSP evaluations (CSPEs), global thematic evaluations, policy evaluations (PE) and strategic evaluations (SE), corporate emergency evaluations (CEE), and relevant decentralized evaluations (DEs), with data coded for relevance to key lines of inquiry.

45. All case studies involved desk review of CSPEs, programme documents, monitoring and performance reports. In country case visits, interviews were conducted with WFP staff, United Nations and international financial institution partners, host-government officials, and a limited number of WFP cooperating partners (civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)). Remote case studies included a limited number of interviews with WFP staff and partners.

46. Analysis was iterative, beginning during data collection at global and country levels. A structured analysis of secondary data from the large body of evaluative evidence was conducted with data coded and analysed based on relevance to key lines of inquiry. Data collected for country case studies were analysed and triangulated across sources to develop country-specific assessments against the evaluation questions. For each case a contribution analysis was also conducted to explore the observed results of WFP activities in each context against the intended outputs and outcomes in the theory of change with regard to other actors and influencing factors, recognizing that social protection outcomes are shaped by multiple institutional, political and operational dynamics.

47. A cross-case analysis and a comprehensive analysis across all methods and sources were conducted in November and December 2025, beginning with an in-person evaluation team workshop and one day sense-making meeting with the evaluation manager. A “preliminary findings” debriefing with members of the internal reference group allowed the evaluators to table particular issues requiring further input and clarification and receive high-level feedback.

## **CONSIDERATION OF CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND ETHICS**

48. **Equality between men and women, equity, inclusion and disability:** Considerations were integrated into the evaluation through lines of inquiry in the evaluation matrix (Annex IV). Focus on these cross-cutting dimensions related primarily to WFP’s contribution to the elements of the Strategy related to supporting and promoting “the inclusion of people with diverse and often intersecting vulnerabilities and inequalities” (economic, social and geographic domains), a key quality aspect for social protection programmes.

49. **Ethical considerations and safeguards:** The evaluation was designed to ensure informed consent, protect the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of participants, ensure cultural sensitivity,

respect the autonomy of participants, and ensure balanced coverage of diverse stakeholder perspectives. No specific ethical concerns arose during the evaluation.

## LIMITATIONS

50. The evaluation faced a number of limitations, most of which were identified during the inception phase. Interpreting secondary data from evaluation reports, CSPs, annual country reports (ACRs), and WFP monitoring and financial systems was complicated by conceptual ambiguities and the bundling of multiple activities under a single description and code. Many activity descriptions combined WFP work across social protection, resilience, and broader capacity strengthening, while the social protection support (SPS) activity category in monitoring systems was sometimes applied to tags encompassing both social protection and non-social protection work. Consequently, in global analysis, it was not always easy to determine which activities relate to social protection and to what extent.

51. To mitigate this risk, the evaluation adopted an inclusive approach whereby the analysis covered all activities nominally focused on or related to social protection and relevant activity categorizations. Similarly, in case study countries, qualitative data helped in distinguishing the extent to which WFP's work genuinely represented contributions to social protection as defined by the Strategy. This inclusive approach was also adopted for relevant data collection from secondary sources. Finally, triangulation across sources and methods was used to ensure accuracy of the categorization and validity of the findings.

52. The second significant limitation relates to the absence of meaningful systematic monitoring and reporting data regarding the results of WFP technical assistance and capacity strengthening support to national social protection systems and programmes. Corporate monitoring tools remain focused on simplistic output counting and no milestone-oriented results-based management approaches are in place. Therefore, key aspirations of the Strategy and country office CSP outcomes such as enhanced public capacity, improved quantity and quality of social protection programmes and shock responsiveness of national social protection systems are only reported on anecdotally, and often without any reflection on WFP's relative contribution compared to other actors in the sector. Similarly, CSPEs frequently covered social protection support activities very lightly, with more descriptive information on outputs and little detail on the actual approaches employed, relative importance of WFP's role versus other actors, and little documentation of impact.

53. To the extent possible, the evaluation team has tried to make up for this gap with extensive primary data collection through key informant interviews and secondary data analysis. Nevertheless, the breadth of the evaluation and time available for data collection related to any one context limited the evaluation's ability to deeply assess results in some cases.

54. Stakeholder availability and recall also posed limitations. To address availability, the Office of Evaluation extended the data collection phase of the evaluation by one month to allow all case study engagements to be completed. Where possible the evaluators attempted to contact internal and external key informants who had since departed a country but were still familiar with activities conducted in the early period covered by the evaluation.

## 2. Evaluation findings

55. Since 2019, WFP has made significant strides in developing its own capabilities to support the strengthening of national social protection programmes and key systems mechanisms. Overall, the evaluation found that WFP made significant progress to address two key recommendations of the Evaluation of the Safety Nets Policy Update (2019), related to development of the Strategy and investing in the knowledge, skills and expertise of its workforce.

56. WFP is now widely viewed as a key actor in the social protection sector and its support and partnership is increasingly sought. While there is still variability in WFP's social protection approach, capabilities and positioning across contexts, the progress made represents a notable achievement in a short span of time. This section presents the more detailed key findings and supporting analysis of the evaluation.

### 2.1 Relevance of WFP engagement in social protection

#### 2.1.1 The Strategy's alignment with international thinking

**Finding 1.** The Strategy and WFP's engagement in social protection is relevant and mostly aligned with food security goals, the wider 2030 Agenda and national priorities. However, the Strategy preceded the localization agenda and could have gone further in advocating for working through national systems as the default, even in difficult and crisis contexts.

**Finding 2.** The Strategy was aligned with prevailing social protection concepts and practice at the time of its development. It is valued by external stakeholders for its focus on strengthening national social protection systems, including in fragile and humanitarian contexts.

57. The Strategy is aligned with the international social protection discourse and social protection priorities set out in the Agenda 2030. It reflects the principles of major international agreements, such as the SDGs, the Social Protection Floor Initiative, the Universal Social Protection Initiative (USP2030) and the Grand Bargain. These agreements promote universal social protection systems that are anchored in national strategies and legislation, as well as being rights-based, and responsive to people facing discrimination or barriers in accessing assistance. Furthermore, they endorse systems that increase cooperation between humanitarian and development actors, linking humanitarian cash assistance with national social protection systems where possible and appropriate, and those that promote a localized agenda through participation, representation and social dialogue.

58. The Strategy reflects these agreements through its two interrelated principles: (i) social protection helps people to meet their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs; and (ii) social protection helps people manage risks and shocks. Underpinning these priorities, the Strategy mainstreams considerations of social, economic and geographical identity in WFP's social protection work, especially addressing geographical inequalities. A recent evaluation identified the Strategy as one of the few WFP global strategies that adequately includes considerations for refugees, internally displaced people and migrants.<sup>53</sup> WFP's implementation approach further reflects the shift to supporting nationally led social protection systems and programmes and emphasizes that when WFP implements complementary actions through its own programming, it will aim to strengthen national social protection systems where possible.

59. **The Strategy was valued by key external stakeholders who play important roles in the social protection sector.** The evaluation found a common appreciation for the Strategy among key informants from international financial institutions, bilateral donors and other United Nations agencies interviewed for

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<sup>53</sup> Global document review. Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Support the Refugees, IDPs and Migrants (RIMs).

the evaluation. International development partners noted that they value the Strategy's focus on strengthening national social protection systems, its recognition of WFP's work in the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus, and its stronger rights-based approach.<sup>54</sup> Many were consulted during the development of the Strategy and key informants appreciated its alignment with international commitments and conceptual definitions, and its focus on strengthening national social protection systems – including in fragile and humanitarian contexts.

60. **The Strategy is well informed by a robust body of global evidence on social protection concepts and practice.** It is underpinned by a strong conceptual foundation and informed by country experiences. This is reflected in the theory of change, which provides a logical framework for WFP's interventions to support appropriate social protection outcomes. The Strategy draws on relevant peer-reviewed studies from high-quality academic and policy institutions that include conceptual and analytical work, as well as evidence reviews, on social protection. It also draws on its roles in reducing poverty, food and nutrition security, enhancing resilience and reducing inequalities including through a rights-based approach, and its social protection role in crises (COVID-19, climate-related shocks, displacement, humanitarian linkages). The Strategy also illustrates the areas of WFP's work with examples from different countries.

61. **However, there are weak areas and gaps in the Strategy**, including issues that have gained momentum at the global policy level since the Strategy was published. For example, while there is attention to the leaving no-one behind agenda, and to the need to assist people facing discrimination or barriers in accessing assistance, there is a lack of guidance and examples on how WFP can mainstream these principles into its social protection activities to contribute to improved outcomes in this area. Also, **the ways in which WFP works to support the localization agenda is missing from the Strategy, which preceded this agenda.**<sup>55</sup> While the Strategy encouraged engaging with nationally led systems and included an assumption that WFP would channel support through national systems that can absorb and account for assistance, **WFP corporately was not yet in a position to advocate more strongly for working through national systems as a default**, including in difficult contexts and sudden-onset crises.<sup>56</sup> This reflects a lesson more broadly learned among international actors stemming from the response to COVID-19. A joint evaluation from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) of the collective international response to the pandemic highlighted the importance of keeping the longer term in mind in crisis response and investing in, and integrating, national social protection systems into response plans and avoiding the creation of parallel or one-off systems.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Key informant interviews.

<sup>55</sup> The WFP Localization Policy approved in 2025 (WFP/EB.A/2025/5-A) only included three brief reference to social protection – two simple footnotes referencing the Strategy and one sentence related to promoting the leadership and involvement of local and national actors in decision making and policy dialogues.

<sup>56</sup> Key informant interviews, country case studies.

<sup>57</sup> OECD. 2025. Strategic Joint Evaluation of the Collective International Development and Humanitarian Assistance Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/680e2786-en>.

## 2.1.2 Quality<sup>58</sup> of the WFP Strategy in supporting social protection

**Finding 3.** Overall, the quality of the Strategy was high. Its two priorities are focused on WFP's mandate. The wide range of activities illustrated in the Strategy allow country offices to select those most relevant to their context, although the category of complementary actions diluted focus and led to mis-categorizing some activities as social protection. While the Strategy's theory of change was largely sound, it did not fully envision all the modalities of support that have emerged, and some key assumptions were missing.

62. **The Strategy formulation was broadly robust.** It included a strong context analysis based on a well-evidenced analysis of trends and challenges and identified key stakeholders for WFP's support to social protection. The Strategy committed WFP to being externally coherent and complementary, including seeking explicit agreement from governments and partners regarding WFP's intended contributions and approaches to strengthening social protection systems. The Strategy was coherent with WFP strategic plans, policies and programmatic approaches. It was also strongly evidence-based, and its development involved strong internal and external consultations, enhancing ownership and ensuring validation.

63. The thematic priorities articulated by the Strategy were clear and focused on WFP's mandate, while the broad array of potential activities allowed for country offices to select those most relevant to their context. It clearly states that WFP should focus its attention on government-owned social protection that helps improve food security and nutrition, and social protection that helps people to manage risks and shocks. Furthermore, the Strategy explicitly noted that country offices were not expected to pursue every possible area of activity, only those that are needed in the context. However, the inclusion of the modality of complementary actions in WFP's own programming left space for interpretation by country offices, diluted focus and led to mis-categorizing activities as social protection that are not actually supporting or aligning with national systems to the extent possible.

64. The vision and theory of change presented in the Strategy were clear but some key gaps exist and some important assumptions were not explicit. As presented, the pathways do not include a clear results chain for the instances where WFP is fully managing or delivering a social protection programme on behalf of or contracted by the government, which somewhat spans the two modalities of the Strategy. Similarly, the Strategy opened space for new pathways for social protection support by endorsing on-demand service provision. The evaluation also identified a number of important assumptions that were not explicit in the Strategy, including:

- the degree of WFP potential for advocacy in a given context is adequate to achieve its objectives;
- WFP and its funders are willing and able to sequence, layer and integrate its own programme activities with those of other partners for the benefit of the same people to increase combined socially protective effects;
- WFP will collect and learn from evidence on the effectiveness of its work to improve policy, systems tools and programme quantity and quality, including lessons on partnering effectively to achieve complementarity and synergy;
- WFP can adapt its interventions to be relevant to the context, and it responds to priorities of national actors (rather than the existing theory of change assumption that states "WFP's own interventions are relevant for national social protection system-building");
- WFP objectives for supporting social protection in any given context are feasible and clear with understood benchmarks of success;

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<sup>58</sup> WFP. 2017. Top 10 Lessons for Policy Quality in WFP, Office of Evaluation.

- WFP and its national government partners are equally committed to inclusive social protection that seeks to improve the situation of women, girls, persons with disabilities and people facing discrimination; and
- national governments have adequate fiscal space or prospects of securing external financing to incorporate and sustain WFP-supported advice, tools and programme models.

65. **The practical arrangements to facilitate implementation of the Strategy were robust.** An implementation plan for the Strategy, endorsed in November 2022, established a baseline of where WFP capacities stood and benchmarks for the adjustments to practice needed, and knowledge and capacities it expected to develop. The implementation plan included detailed activities, responsibilities and indicators of progress for implementing the Strategy. A number of subsequent guidance documents were also prepared to support implementation of the Strategy, including a manual for incorporating social protection into CSPs. Financial and human resource requirements to implement the Strategy were identified in the implementation plan and an accompanying costing document.

66. Both the Strategy and implementation plan took into account necessary improvements and investments in monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems. A new high-level target, output indicators, and the social protection support activity tag were incorporated into the WFP Corporate Results Framework (2022-2025). A planning, monitoring and evaluation workstream was established in the implementation plan with eight additional action points to support qualitative and quantitative monitoring and reporting, develop a dashboard to track WFP social protection work, support evaluations, and conduct a costing analysis on WFP corporate expenditures on social protection.

### 2.1.3 Utilizing the Strategy to support social protection

**Finding 4.** Internally, the Strategy has been well received although there are significant variations in the extent to which staff are familiar with it and use it to inform country-level social protection work. There remains a lack of clarity and understanding among WFP country office staff on what is or is not categorized as social protection, despite the Strategy's efforts to delineate this.

67. Despite growing WFP workforce knowledge, expertise and experience with social protection, evaluation case studies found **considerable variance in the extent to which the Strategy is utilized by WFP staff.** WFP staff noted that the Strategy is well founded and identifies entry points for WFP's work on social protection in different contexts.<sup>59</sup> However, despite deliberate efforts by the headquarters' Social Protection Unit to build awareness of the Strategy and encourage its use,<sup>60</sup> WFP staff have different levels of familiarity with the Strategy, and it is not uniformly used in country offices.<sup>61</sup> It was also reported that, for non-specialist staff, it was difficult to engage with due to its length and complexity, and in some instances WFP staff are still unclear about what is and is not considered social protection.<sup>62</sup>

68. **There was space for interpretation but inconsistent application of terms.** Key informants noted that the Strategy does well to take into consideration the different contexts in which WFP works on social protection – including avoiding using language that may not align in some contexts – and is not overly prescriptive in the ways WFP should work on social protection.<sup>63</sup> However, this also means that there is space for interpretation. This is most problematic in instances found by the evaluation where country offices design and implement humanitarian activities branded as social protection complementary actions,

<sup>59</sup> Country case studies.

<sup>60</sup> Such as the Social Protection Fundamentals online course, the issuance of a summary version of the Strategy in four languages, and guidance for integrating social protection in CSPs.

<sup>61</sup> Global document review, 4 CSPEs out of 53 highlighted positive alignment – the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Myanmar, Chad, and Iraq.

<sup>62</sup> Key informant interviews, country case studies.

<sup>63</sup> Global document review; The Regional Evaluation of WFP's Contribution to Shock-Responsive Social Protection in Latin America and the Caribbean (2015-2022).

but which are implemented in parallel to existing government systems. The rationale for continuing parallel humanitarian response varied in case studies, including: donor concerns regarding channelling resources through governments; WFP incentives to deliver quickly through its own delivery systems; concerns regarding the capacity or targeting prioritization of national governments; and a lack of prior coordination between country office emergency and social protection functions.<sup>64</sup> The Strategy anticipated this, and stated that emergency support activities only count as social protection if they are part of an “institutionalized, nationally led programme, or one explicitly perceived by a government to be part of its social protection system, not delivered independently or on an ad-hoc basis by an external organization”, but has not fully prevented it.<sup>65</sup>

#### 2.1.4 Alignment of WFP’s support to social protection with national priorities and context

**Finding 5.** WFP’s country-level social protection activities are largely aligned with national priorities and context-specific needs.

**Finding 6.** There are missed opportunities to ensure that WFP’s complementary actions contribute to national system strengthening.

69. **WFP’s activities on social protection are largely aligned with national priorities.** In eight out of ten case study countries, WFP is seen as a strategic partner on social protection, and this is reflected in the way many other CSPs frame WFP’s support to nationally led social protection.<sup>66</sup> Many CSPs refer to national social protection policies and frameworks and embed WFP’s support on social protection within these national social protection priorities.<sup>67</sup> WFP has commissioned or carried out context-specific analytical work and diagnostics to inform social protection activities for the CSPs (Caribbean,<sup>68</sup> Rwanda,<sup>69</sup> Philippines<sup>70</sup>). It has even developed country or regional social protection strategies (Burundi, Peru, Sahel, Latin America and the Caribbean).

70. **WFP has worked on promoting social protection interventions before the conditions allow them to be national priorities,** thereby playing an advocacy role (seven out of ten evaluation case studies). In such cases, WFP is working on areas of social protection that are deemed important based on evidence of national needs and vulnerabilities, priorities related to WFP’s mandate, and relevance to the international social protection agenda, such as shock-responsive social protection (SRSP), and linking anticipatory action to social protection. WFP’s activities on school feeding often include advocating for and piloting home-grown school feeding (HGSF) and fortified foods, which are often not yet part of national priorities. WFP is increasingly working with partners to strengthen national social protection systems even in fragile contexts, such as in the Sahel, Lebanon and Somalia. These examples illustrate ways that WFP has worked to proactively build national commitment to strengthening social protection, which is an important precondition for the success of external support, according to the assumptions in the theory of change. There are various reasons why some WFP activities framed as social protection are not yet priorities for governments, including fiscal constraints, political sensitivities, institutional fragmentation, or weak governance.

71. **WFP has worked to leverage and strengthen the social protection system to respond to climate-related shocks** in a systematic and predictable way, as noted in six out of ten case studies. While in five out of ten evaluation case studies, government ministries have not yet agreed to consider linking

<sup>64</sup> Key informant interviews, country case studies.

<sup>65</sup> WFP. 2021. Strategy for Support to Social Protection, P. 82.

<sup>66</sup> Global document review.

<sup>67</sup> Global document review.

<sup>68</sup> WFP and Oxford Policy Management. 2020. Shock-Responsive Social Protection in the Caribbean Synthesis Report

<sup>69</sup> Institute of Development Studies (IDS). 2018. O’Brien. 2020.

<sup>70</sup> WFP. 2022. Social Protection and the World Food Programme in the Philippines – Scoping Study; WFP. 2024. Leaving No One Behind: Bridging Gaps in Social Protection.

social protection and emergency assistance, WFP has employed a systematic capacity development methodology in 24 countries to bring various government stakeholders together to develop, test, institutionalize and employ SRSP protocols. Yet the evaluation found examples of WFP implementing parallel emergency response in five out of ten cases, with varying degrees of missed opportunities to integrate and complement national social protection systems and programmes. This is particularly problematic in the context of climate-related shocks, where alignment with national systems is essential to address recurrent and structural vulnerabilities. Decisions to operate parallel to government social protection programmes were also identified in CSPEs for Senegal and Cameroon.<sup>71</sup>

72. Annex VII further illustrates the alignment of WFP CSP objectives and activities to national social protection priorities in case study countries.

## 2.2 Effectiveness of WFP engagement in social protection and the sustainability of its contributions

### 2.2.1 Effectiveness of WFP support to social protection policies and systems

#### CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONDUCIVE POLICY ENVIRONMENTS

**Finding 7.** WFP has made contributions to social protection policy development at all levels, particularly the country level, and plays lead roles in school feeding, in fragile and conflict-affected settings, and sometimes in shock-responsive social protection and food fortification. Although an ambition in numerous CSPs, WFP rarely plays a lead role or makes significant contributions in supporting development of overarching national social protection policies and strategies, given that other partners are often better positioned to do so.

73. In line with the expected results of the Strategy, WFP has contributed to **strengthening social protection systems architecture** by supporting the development of national policies and strategies and, in some cases, contributing to national social protection systems being increasingly shock-responsive. WFP has also contributed to results related to the development of regional and global partnerships and evidence generation. Key assumptions underpinning these achievements are that national actors are committed to strengthening social protection systems and programmes. Results have been stronger in contexts like Pakistan, Peru and Mauritania, where this assumption holds true as evidenced by consistent government efforts to establish social protection mandates in law, policies and strategies; and to institutionalize, expand, improve and finance social protection programmes and systems.

74. WFP engagement in the social protection policy space at the country level is widely noted in CSPEs over the evaluation period, though frequently without detail on specific contributions.<sup>72</sup> A few CSPEs note limited engagement, missed opportunities or challenges in positioning WFP to contribute to social protection policy (Cameroon, Cuba, Honduras, Senegal), while Haiti, Kenya<sup>73</sup> and Nigeria highlight that WFP played a lead role in supporting national social protection policy development.

75. The pattern is similar in evaluation case study countries and other country offices interviewed for the evaluation. Governments and other partners commented positively on WFP's engagement and collaboration in social protection policy processes. Rarely has WFP taken the lead role in supporting governments to develop overarching national social protection policies or strategies, and this is unsurprising and unproblematic, given that there are usually other partners better positioned to do this, the World Bank being one such partner.<sup>74</sup> WFP's engagement in these processes is positive because it helps

<sup>71</sup> Global document review.

<sup>72</sup> From comprehensive CSPE review carried out by the evaluation team. All further references in this section to most/many/few CSPEs use the same source.

<sup>73</sup> Clarified in country office KIs.

<sup>74</sup> Given their macroeconomic and social policy expertise and formal dialogue with governments.

consolidate relationships with governmental and international social protection actors (which are critical to other outcomes, as detailed below); and ensures that an understanding of the wider social protection policy context informs WFP's own social protection programming. WFP's approaches to policy processes took different forms in case study countries, ranging from providing technical comments on drafts to more active participation through secondment of staff to government ministries, providing analytical support and information, and deploying national staff with experience in government to participate in policy dialogue. Yet Peru was the only case study where the evaluation found the country office had an explicit strategy around policy engagement.

76. **In line with the Strategy, WFP plays a strong role in influencing policy in its niche areas related to SRSP, school feeding, nutrition, and in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.** In certain countries and regions, WFP has been a thought leader in SRSP. A WFP decentralized regional evaluation of SRSP in Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC)<sup>75</sup> found that WFP played a critical role in supporting the development of comprehensive SRSP frameworks and systems, which it was strategically positioned to do based on its evidence-generation investments, although evidence generated by WFP had varying levels of uptake. The evaluation also noted limited evidence of successful advocacy for social protection budgets.

77. In 24 countries, WFP has been systematically supporting governments to draft and institutionalize SRSP protocols that define ministerial roles, responsibilities and timelines for the use of social protection in disaster response.<sup>76</sup> In five countries (Bangladesh, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Madagascar and Peru), WFP internal reporting shows this to have reached the points of: testing and finalizing protocols; institutionalizing them in policy, operational guidance and national response plans; activating them in response to an emergency; and sharing lessons and experiences with other countries, including through South-South triangular cooperation (SSTC). The evaluation confirmed evidence of this in Peru, where protocols developed across social ministries enabled them to operate during crises and be the first line of defence.

78. Another example of WFP policy engagement on SRSP comes from the Philippines, where WFP advocated for anticipatory cash transfers, aiming to safeguard lives and livelihoods against predictable climatic events through social protection programmes. With WFP support the "Declaration of State of Imminent Disaster Act" (Republic Act No. 12287) was developed and adopted in September 2025. In Mauritania and Burundi WFP advocated for including SRSP in the national social protection strategy and policy.

79. **WFP has continued to take a lead role in supporting the development of national school feeding policies and strategies.** Governments in many of the evaluation's case study countries have made important policy commitments to home-grown school feeding during the evaluation period, and WFP has been a lead partner, resulting in policies and strategies that have been adopted and implemented by governments. In Rwanda, WFP supported the development of national policy, strategy and guidelines on HGSF, now approved by the Government and under implementation. In Zambia, WFP supported the development of the national HGSF strategy and a decentralized procurement strategy. In Iraq, WFP facilitated development of the national school meals policy - pending final Parliamentary approval, although the assumption regarding government commitment has previously delayed policy approval and school meals programmes were defunded in 2024. In Iraq, the Philippines and Pakistan, WFP's advocacy led to governments joining the School Meals Coalition and, in the Philippines, also to committing to universal school feeding. CSPEs flag numerous examples beyond the evaluation's case study countries.

80. The evaluation found successful examples of WFP advocacy related to incorporating food fortification in national nutrition policies and social protection programmes. Incorporating fortified food

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<sup>75</sup> WFP. 2023. Regional Evaluation of WFP's Contribution to Shock-Responsive Social Protection in Latin America and the Caribbean (2015-2022).

<sup>76</sup> WFP. 2025. Introduction and Update: WFP Operational Guidance for the Use of Social Protection in Emergencies.

requirements in social protection policies serves a dual purpose of increasing access to nutritious food for programme participants and stimulating demand for production of such foods to make it commercially viable and to support markets. In Peru, a combination of WFP pilot projects aimed at demonstrating acceptance of fortified food by the population, and support to developing technical specifications contributed to the approval of a rice fortification law, with 2.5 million students and 5,000 other people receiving fortified rice through different social programmes. In the Philippines and Pakistan, WFP has similarly worked to promote the incorporation of fortified foods into social protection and nutrition policies and programmes, although these are at earlier stages of progress, partly due to assumptions related to government commitments (particularly for financing) not yet being in place.

81. CSPEs also detected results related to fortification policies. In India, a WFP pilot project, evidence-generation and advocacy led to the Government deciding to introduce fortified rice into two national social protection programmes. In Sri Lanka, WFP successfully integrated fortification into Cabinet-approved national nutrition policies and strategies (2019) after many years of technical assistance, capacity strengthening and SSTC. However, after a change in government, this decision is being questioned, and the Ministry of Finance has not allocated a budget, showing the importance of undertaking ongoing advocacy and consensus-building across the political spectrum through changes in leadership.

82. WFP's presence and its capacities in fragile and conflict-affected contexts have supported contributions to strengthened social protection policy frameworks. WFP has substantial social protection engagements in almost all conflict-affected countries included in the World Bank's classification of fragile and conflict-affected contexts and is often the lead, or co-lead, for the social protection sector. In countries such as Haiti, Lebanon and Somalia, WFP has substantially supported the establishment or strengthening of national social protection policy frameworks and supported the transition from humanitarian safety nets to government-owned systems and programmes.<sup>77</sup>

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO ENHANCED PUBLIC CAPACITY

**Finding 8.** In many countries, WFP has contributed to the development of social registries or other common digital platforms, in partnership with others, leading to strengthened national social protection architecture and public capacity. While WFP support in this area has matured, approaches around transferability, sustainability and data sharing still need to be addressed.

83. As envisioned in the expected results of the Strategy, WFP has contributed to **strengthened social protection architecture and enhanced public capacity** by helping build social registries and other digital platforms in many countries. In other cases, WFP has used national systems, contributing to their credibility and robustness. Successes have not been due to WFP having ready-made systems to hand over (see Box 2). Rather, they are linked to WFP having relevant technical capacities and being trusted by governments to provide technical services (as per assumptions in the theory of change). Furthermore, successes have often been achieved based on mutually beneficial partnerships (including the presence of soft skills among WFP staff) and the commitment of national governments (also theory of change assumptions), although the evaluation detected a gap in guidance regarding how to proceed when this commitment is lacking.

84. **WFP's engagement in supporting digital platforms and registries** is one of the most frequently referenced social protection activities in CSPEs and other WFP evaluations. Examples of these contributions are shown in Table 2.

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<sup>77</sup> Evaluation key informant interviews and CSPE evidence.

**Table 2: WFP engagement in digital systems and social registries covered in CSPEs and CEEs**

Country	WFP support to digital systems and registries
<b>Bangladesh</b>	Supported Government's management information system for social protection programmes, strengthening digital capacity
<b>Djibouti</b>	Government capacity strengthening for social protection including social registry development and targeting mechanisms
<b>Guatemala</b>	Contributed to strengthening capacities through piloting of household social registry, in collaboration with government and UN partners for 19,800 households in five municipalities, although expansion faces challenges related to fiscal resources
<b>India</b>	Support to targeted public distribution system with digitization and data analytics; dashboards for six states; biometric authentication for 80,000 "fair price" shops; mobile application enabling 10 million citizens to receive food deliveries during COVID-19, resulting in improved socioeconomic targeting, reduction of inclusion and exclusion errors, and streamlining processes
<b>Jordan</b>	WFP investments in digital payments filled critical gaps, establishing systems where none existed, which enabled the National Aid Fund to scale up in response to COVID-19.
<b>Kenya</b>	Enhanced single registry established with support from WFP (within a Joint-SDG fund programme including United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF)) with capabilities to disaggregate data by gender and disability types. Integration with the Kenyan National Hospital Insurance Fund (health coverage) system ongoing
<b>Lesotho</b>	Provided technical support for an integrated management information system, although implementation challenges detected with database becoming outdated, incomplete, poorly aligned with targeting emergency needs
<b>Mauritania</b>	WFP has used the social registry for its own lean season assistance targeting. WFP has partnered with the Government to support updating the registry, and WFP is involved in a study that aims to identify ways of improving the social registry databases with updated procedures and user feedback
<b>Somalia</b>	Development of the unified social registry, which serves as the backbone of the Government's social protection delivery system, and government social protection delivery system (with UNICEF supporting its data infrastructure and WFP supporting data integration and re-registration)
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	Piloted digitizing beneficiary registration and cash-based transfers through Samurdhi Department, with government requesting scale-up due to efficiency gains
<b>Ukraine</b>	Development of the Unified Information System for Social Sphere enabling: automated social protection processes for 2.5 million IDPs; extraterritorial servicing; reduced delivery time; integration with multiple government databases; centralized payment processing and verification
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	WFP technical assistance contributed to strengthening social protection programmes including support to beneficiary database and monitoring systems

Source: CSPE and CEE data

85. In Peru, WFP provided technical assistance to the Government to strengthen the mechanisms in the social registry for identifying populations vulnerable to food insecurity by incorporating food and nutritional security variables into the targeting criteria, developing vulnerability maps, and cross-referencing databases. However, in other case study countries results from WFP's support over many years to establish, digitize and strengthen registries in collaboration with partners is not yet evident (Burundi, Zambia).

86. **The evaluation found gradual but incomplete progress towards developing** clear guidance to country offices regarding how to invest in registries in fragile contexts and countries with weak or heavily fragmented governance. Such guidance could draw on emerging inter-agency thinking under the Digital Convergence Initiative under the Universal Social Protection (USP 2030), in which WFP participates<sup>78</sup> and take into account emerging corporate frameworks such as the Digital Advisory and Solutions Services (DASS 2.0) guidance and corporate initiatives aligned with Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). In Niger, WFP played a role, as part of a collaborative effort, in incorporating food security indicators and questions into the social registry questionnaire, as well as collecting household data that enabled 127,000 households to be added to the social registry. While there is no national social protection programme on the horizon following the coup of July 2023, WFP and UNICEF continue to support modelling of social protection programming, demonstrating a commitment to building a sustainable, government-led system when conditions allow. Yet

<sup>78</sup> Digital Convergence Initiative USP30 <https://spdci.org/> accessed on 28/11/25.

questions remain regarding the utility of the registry, which is still low in coverage, irregularly updated, not consistently used by international actors for targeting their programmes, and lacks guaranteed financing.

87. In Iraq, WFP supported digitalization of government programme records of the near universal national food distribution programme, the Public Distribution System (PDS), between 2018 and 2024, led by the country office's technology unit. This digitalization effort began with the use of SCOPE and then shifted to an open-source product offered by an international vendor when headquarters informed the country office that SCOPE could not be transferred. The project came to an abrupt end when the Government informed WFP it should cease work on digitalization after growing concerned about lengthy delays, system instability, the high cost of customizing the technology, two data breaches and the use of an international rather than a local software vendor. The country office and regional office identified lessons learned, including the need for greater government involvement in specifying requirements and designing solutions, the importance of using systems that are transferable to governments and local vendors that are more likely to be able to provide ongoing support, the risks related to data security, and the need to involve programme as well as technology staff.<sup>79</sup> In 2025, WFP initiated work on the development of a single registry – an integrated beneficiary registry for all social protection programmes, interoperable with other government databases<sup>80</sup> – the building of which is being contracted out to a private company in consultation with the Government, contracted by WFP. Views of partners in Iraq are mixed on the extent to which WFP has a comparative advantage in digital systems but the new approach, with early government engagement, is appreciated.

#### **Box 2: WFP digital advisory and solutions services: Key lessons and ongoing initiatives**

WFP's experience with digital advisory and solutions services (DASS) to governments reveals critical lessons about the mismatch between growing demand and organizational readiness. By November 2020, over 20 governments had requested WFP share its SCOPE platform for use in social registries, cash transfer programmes and school feeding systems. However, internal audits and strategic reviews conducted between 2021 and 2023 found that SCOPE was not readily transferable to governments and identified fundamental gaps for DASS in: WFP's strategy and value proposition; standardized service delivery models; project management practices; ability to share data with governments; partner infrastructure and digital literacy to sustain technologies; planning and funding for the long-term WFP support that is required; and internal coordination of teams working on similar issues. WFP lacked guidance on when to use different approaches and the use of replicable "digital public goods," and faced significant technical capacity constraints. Risk management concerns raised included: missing critical data and privacy safeguards; inadequate "do no harm" frameworks for fragile contexts; and significant reputational risks when WFP technologies proved difficult to transfer and sustain.

This has led to calls for a fundamental shift in WFP's approach – moving from solution development toward advisory services – and corporate approval for any solution development, accompanied by costed business plans with use cases, capacity requirements and handover strategies. The Technology Division issued interim guidance (October 2025) emphasizing an advisory-only role, though without input from the Programme and Operations Division –demonstrating continued internal coordination gaps. Stakeholders expressed concerns that overly restrictive guidance may limit WFP's ability to support social registries and digitalized cash transfers when governments or donors want WFP to play a more direct role, creating tension between risk management and operational relevance. Other follow-up actions stemming from the most recent internal audit were still pending at the close of this evaluation and thus changes in practice could not be assessed.

While WFP has significant operational expertise and credibility positioning it as a valuable digital transformation partner, realizing this will require fundamental shifts in approach, developing new

<sup>79</sup> Key informant interviews, country case study.

<sup>80</sup> World Food Programme. 2024. Iraq Call for Expression of Interest (CEI) Single Registry Project. <https://www.unghm.org/Public/Notice/233225> accessed on 24/11/2025.

mentalities, capabilities, processes, and staff profiles suited to long-term capacity strengthening rather than direct implementation.

Source: Evaluation key informant interviews and document review<sup>81</sup>

88. The evaluation found that WFP has played important supportive roles in using, feeding into, and adding households to social registries via its data collection exercises, as well as providing technical support to improve data quality, thus heightening the credibility of national systems, even when not directly engaged in creating the registry. For example, in Mauritania, WFP was an early user of the social registry and provided valued feedback to the Government enabling it to be progressively strengthened.<sup>82</sup>

89. The strategic evaluation on WFP targeting and prioritization<sup>83</sup> found that WFP has made important contributions to government social registries. **However, the expected benefits of using these for WFP's own targeting and prioritization related to alignment, programme integration, reduced costs for WFP, and reducing duplication and gaps in coverage had rarely materialized.** Issues related to differences in objectives and criteria for targeting (poverty versus food insecurity), coverage, the age and quality of data, the politicization of data, the limited ability of WFP to verify process integrity, and technical barriers related to data privacy restrictions all limited the value of social registries for WFP's own direct delivery of assistance. These issues present a dilemma for WFP's ambition in the Strategy to make use of government systems to contribute to their credibility and suggest this may only be viable in contexts where WFP can layer additional targeting on top of government registry data or wait to use them until it and partners can support governments to enhance registry quality.

## COORDINATION MECHANISMS AND PARTNERSHIPS

**Finding 9.** The external coherence of WFP support to social protection has improved with regards to international partners, and WFP has deepened its relationships with government social protection actors and other key ministries in many countries. WFP is increasingly seen as collaborative and engaged in global- and country-level multi-stakeholder platforms.

90. WFP support to social protection frequently demonstrates complementarity with the work of governments and other development actors, including United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and international financial institutions. The theory of change includes an expected result related to WFP contributing to effective partnerships to advance social protection goals and more efficient and effective collaboration among national actors on social protection. It also noted an assumption that WFP engages in mutually beneficial partnerships that ensure complementarity and synergies. The following paragraphs explain this finding.

91. WFP's engagement with government structures demonstrates a broad pattern of alignment with national coordination systems and sectoral leadership arrangements, but the depth and effectiveness of this coherence vary by context. In most settings, WFP works within government-led social protection committees, technical working groups, formal coordination platforms, or forums that bring together ministries and partners around social protection priorities to promote system-wide approaches.<sup>84</sup> In many

<sup>81</sup> WFP. 2021. Internal Audit of SCOPE, AR/21/08; WFP. 2023. Internal Audit of Digital Advisory and Solutions Services (DASS) Project Management, AR/23/15; and WFP. 2022. Strategic review and assessment: Digital Advisory and Solutions Services, Outcome Document.

<sup>82</sup> Rohwerder, Brigitte; Shafee, Manucheher. 2024. WFP's Support to Strengthening the National Social Protection System in Mauritania. The Institute of Development Studies and Partner Organizations. Report. <https://hdl.handle.net/10779/ids.26880127.v1>.

<sup>83</sup> WFP. 2026. Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Approaches to Targeting and Prioritization for Food and Nutrition Assistance, OEV/2024/022.

<sup>84</sup> Review of CSPEs carried out by the evaluation team.

of the evaluation's case study contexts – Pakistan, Mauritania, Burundi, Rwanda and the Philippines – WFP has taken its turn in leadership or co-chairing roles in social protection-related coordination groups, or sub-groups, that bring together a range of multi-lateral and bilateral social protection partners and are sometimes government-led. In other countries, WFP's role is to serve as a technical contributor to collaborative efforts, especially in relation to SRSP, social registries and other digitalization initiatives.

92. **WFP has deepened its relationships with government social protection actors over the evaluation period.** Technical assistance to the Tanzania Social Action Fund led to better strategic positioning and intentions to broaden cooperation.<sup>85</sup> In El Salvador, WFP's support for an SSTC exchange on nutrition-sensitive social protection with Peru led to a roadmap for collaboration and positioned WFP as a lead on the topic within the United Nations system.<sup>86</sup> In Cuba the CSPE noted progress on positioning WFP on food systems linked to social protection and nutrition under the government's social protection roadmap.<sup>87</sup> In Uganda the CSPE credited WFP's approach to partnering with key government social protection ministries and offices leading to capacity strengthening, including improvements to beneficiary management systems<sup>88</sup> and enhanced technical capacity of national actors to obtain analysis and evidence on social protection.<sup>89</sup>

93. External factors related to country context and government attributes have a strong bearing on the effectiveness of WFP partnerships with national social protection actors. When political will is strong and sustained, institutional partners are capable and fiscal space exists, WFP's technical contributions are more likely to translate into system-level change. When governments already prioritize social protection expansion or reform, institutional entry points are clearer, transaction costs are reduced and reforms are more likely to be financed. In these contexts, WFP's technical support plugs directly into an existing national agenda rather than having to generate momentum on its own, making progress faster.<sup>90</sup> Pakistan, Peru and Mauritania are examples of such contexts in the country cases studies; others include India, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ukraine and Indonesia.<sup>91</sup>

94. Where ministries responsible for social protection are abolished or the institutional home of the social registry is unresolved (Burundi), or political leaders are unconvinced by the evidence of the positive impacts of cash transfers (Niger), challenges are clearly greater. A common challenge faced by WFP in its work on social protection is that in many countries the responsibilities for social protection and disaster risk management are split between different ministries and roles in relation to SRSP (Pakistan, Rwanda), setting up potential tensions. That said, even in the most constrained country contexts, there are committed national actors in social protection ministries, and at subnational level with whom to engage. Where this is coupled with a set of committed, flexible and harmonized international partners, challenges can be overcome, as is the case, for example, in Burundi. In Niger, despite the contextual challenges, it has proven possible to lay the groundwork for future social protection programming by launching a pilot alongside a robust impact evaluation, which together can be expected to generate evidence related to clearly defined advocacy objectives.

95. WFP has also demonstrated a strong ability to support social protection in the most difficult, fragile and conflict-affected contexts, where other international actors have limited presence and WFP's delivery capacities, field presence and experience have enabled it to lead. WFP's social protection support in Afghanistan, Haiti, Lebanon and Somalia each provide strong examples of how WFP, in collaboration with

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<sup>85</sup> WFP. 2022. CSPE Tanzania (2017-2021), p35.

<sup>86</sup> WFP. 2022. CSPE El Salvador (2017-2021), p43.

<sup>87</sup> WFP. 2024. CSPE Cuba (2021-2024) p65-66.

<sup>88</sup> This included support to address widespread errors in national identification cards.

<sup>89</sup> WFP. 2025. CSPE Uganda (2018-2025) p35-37.

<sup>90</sup> This finding resonates with conclusions made by the [Summary of evaluation evidence: Country capacity strengthening \(2025\)](#), which noted that "the presence of stable, highly engaged governments at both national and subnational levels facilitated positive CCS outcomes" (p4).

<sup>91</sup> Review of CSPEs carried out by the evaluation team.

other partners, has been able to establish and substantively strengthen national social protection systems, even where external conditions are not initially supportive. This is an asset and uniquely positions WFP to contribute to important social protection results.

96. This evaluation found **improved WFP coherence of its support to social protection with other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes**. WFP is increasingly participating in joint social protection programmes, often alongside some combination of UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), FAO and the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Iraq, Mauritania, Rwanda, Zambia). In Pakistan, WFP co-implements the Government's "Benazir Nashonuma Programme", alongside UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO). WFP also actively engages in, and sometimes leads or co-leads,<sup>92</sup> sectoral coordination groups related to social protection under the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). CSPEs showed that WFP is playing an active role in United Nations coordination structures specifically focused on social protection, with lead or co-lead roles noted in Cuba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon, Myanmar, Palestine and Syria.

97. Evidence of structured arrangements for preventing duplications and promoting synergies through clear division of labour across partners, clear outcome-based responsibilities and joint governance structures was apparent in the evaluation's case study analysis. UNICEF and WFP have developed clear agreements on operational and policy splits in some areas of work in Pakistan, Rwanda and Niger, and geographical and thematic division of programming in Mauritania. Evidence from CSPEs and other evaluations also contribute additional evidence of WFP developing common approaches and strong coordination arrangements resulting in synergies with other United Nations partners (Cambodia, Guatemala, Lebanon, Uganda and Zimbabwe).

98. United Nations partners interviewed at the country level were mostly positive about the extent and nature of WFP collaboration within the social protection sector and commented that this had improved markedly over the evaluation period. However, in some cases, United Nations agencies or other partners described continued competition for access to funding, mandate tensions and overlapping efforts that undermined complementarities. Some external stakeholders viewed WFP as overly focused on dominating spaces it enters or focused on promoting its own visibility. It should be noted, though, that many key informants saw this as linked to wider issues in the United Nations system, not solely a WFP problem.<sup>93</sup> CSPEs detected weaknesses and missed opportunities in United Nations coordination and alignment on social protection in the Central African Republic, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Mali, Palestine, Senegal and Sri Lanka.

99. **WFP relationships with international financial institutions related to social protection have continued to deepen and mature**, most notably with the World Bank and regional development banks. The models of WFP collaboration with international financial institutions vary in different contexts, from purely technical collaboration and coordination in more stable contexts to large-scale transitional programme delivery by WFP with government financing leveraging international financial institution resources in more fragile contexts. In these instances, WFP is sometimes engaged for a period of time because of its field presence, cash and food capacities and internal assurance mechanisms (for example, in Lebanon and Somalia). In 2024 and 2025, WFP explicitly worked to strengthen its collaboration with the World Bank, with social protection as a key pillar, globally through senior leadership exchanges and regionally through workshops, which has positioned the organization as a partner of choice particularly in fragile and conflict-affected states. In many countries these partnerships are underpinned by memorandums of understanding that define respective roles. For example, in Peru complementarity was sequential and strategic, as WFP helped the Ministry of Social Inclusion in the design of an independent office and the format of a social registry, the implementation of which is intended to be financed by the

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<sup>92</sup> Examples include Philippines: lead roles for all social protection, Pakistan: lead role in cash working group and co-lead roles in the human capital development sub-group with ILO and the adaptive social protection working group with UNICEF and GIZ

<sup>93</sup> Global and national KIIs.

World Bank. WFP has also collaborated effectively with the World Bank to support the Government of Rwanda on disaster risk financing, working with both the Ministry in Charge of Emergency Management (MINEMA), and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN). These arrangements reinforce a pattern in which WFP's technical and delivery capacities complement the financial and policy roles of international financial institutions, enhancing coherence and system-wide alignment.

100. Evidence from CSPEs and other evaluations show weaknesses in WFP's experience in partnering with international financial institutions when WFP had not been intentional in investing in relationship development beyond requests for resources, and relative strengths in contexts where they had done so. In a few countries, WFP had not developed relationships with the World Bank where it could have been mutually beneficial to do so (Cameroon, Malawi, Zambia). By contrast, in other contexts, CSPEs and key informant interviews for this evaluation found that WFP had invested in relationship-building, leading to formalized strategic engagements, joint action plans, and a closer collaboration with the World Bank (Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Lebanon, Somalia and Niger on the national adaptive social protection systems).

101. **WFP has done well in positioning itself in technical niches, such as SRSP**, that take account of gaps in national social protection systems, WFP's strengths and the activities of other partners in the context. For example, in the Caribbean, WFP conducted research to assess the SRSP landscape and identified where it could add value in a crowded United Nations and regional institutional landscape. This was valued by other partners, and enabled WFP to position itself as a complementary actor. This reflects an inclination toward coherence within the ecosystem of institutions and cooperation within the countries. Evidence from CSPEs and other evaluations also references WFP's strong positioning and appreciation for its SRSP contributions in many countries including Cambodia, Dominican Republic, Malawi, the Philippines, Uganda and Zambia. Demonstration of WFP technical expertise on SRSP has also created entry points and demands from governments for broader country capacity strengthening (CCS) and social protection support (for example, in the Caribbean, Dominican Republic, Madagascar, Peru).

102. **Key bilateral donor agencies increasingly perceived WFP as an important actor in social protection** at the global, regional and country levels. These donors play an influential role in social protection – in addition to funding relationships, there is increased technical collaboration, in particular in relation to SRSP and disaster-risk financing, across the evaluation case study countries. Bilateral donors have also explicitly recognized the important role WFP plays in situations of conflict and fragility with substantial financial support for WFP's social protection activities in these settings.

103. **WFP has been actively engaged at the global level with partners in advancing key social protection initiatives.** WFP has actively contributed to high-level global policy events and initiatives, such as the Global Forum on Adaptive Social Protection and the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty. In 2024 WFP leveraged its experience in delivering social protection in fragile contexts to support the Global Forum on Fragility and Conflict, which led to the creation of a High-Level Panel (co-chaired by the United Kingdom and Somalia) and subsequent catalytic agenda, which seeks to expand social protection in these settings. Within the Global Shield against Climate Risks,<sup>94</sup> WFP participates in the coordination hub and has worked to expand adoption of linkages across disaster risk financing, anticipatory action and social protection. WFP also serves as a member of the global coordination team for the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, which has led to increased government commitments to expand social protection.

104. **Some overarching challenges to effective collaboration and external coherence remain.** Some partner key informants highlighted instances where WFP establishes parallel delivery or data systems that limit alignment with national social protection structures and undermine external coherence. This was also detected in two CSPEs where WFP chose parallel humanitarian programmes (Senegal) and prioritized

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<sup>94</sup> An initiative launched by the Vulnerable Twenty (V20) Group together with the Group of Seven (G7), see: <https://www.globalshield.org>.

emergency response delivery rather than an integrated delivery that would have complemented national social protection programmes (Cameroon). This was an impediment to coherence with the governments as well as international partners. One partner commented that the extent of WFP coherence depends a lot on senior staff in the country and highlighted two countries where WFP has unnecessarily set up parallel systems, rather than aligning or delivering through national social protection systems.<sup>95</sup>

105. Some concerns were also voiced in relation to data sharing, stemming from tensions between WFP’s data protection and privacy concerns and adherence to humanitarian principles, versus the core social protection sector’s interests in supporting nationally led systems and the importance of interoperable and efficient data systems. One partner highlighted how maintaining the Sahel twin-track approach<sup>96</sup> will require WFP to focus more on data sharing and promoting open-source digital solutions for data management. New WFP guidance issued in 2025 on how country offices can request waivers for sharing data with governments may alleviate these challenges.

## 2.2.2 Effectiveness of WFP support to social protection programmes

### CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPROVED QUANTITY<sup>97</sup> OF SOCIAL PROTECTION (COVERAGE, COMPREHENSIVENESS, ADEQUACY)

**Finding 10.** WFP has contributed to expanded social protection coverage in numerous instances, although often on a temporary basis aside from school feeding and a few large-scale programmes WFP is implementing on behalf of governments. WFP’s effects on the comprehensiveness of social protection assistance are more limited and are hindered by internal factors that often prevent the layering of different types of assistance. The effectiveness of WFP on the adequacy of social protection programme benefits and transfer values was least evidenced, and the gathering of that evidence is often not feasible given limitations in government fiscal capacity.

106. **Coverage:** WFP support to national social protection has led to expanded social protection coverage in temporary (often by design) or more sustained ways in various countries, as shown in Table 3, although the extent to which WFP’s interventions specifically contributed is not always clear in secondary evidence.

**Table 3: WFP results related to social protection coverage expansion**

Country	Social protection coverage expansion	SP modality	Duration
<b>Bangladesh</b>	National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) programme reached significant scale supporting government social protection programmes. WFP contributed to the expansion of mother and child benefit coverage from 1.2 million in 2023 to 1.5 million and delivered assistance to 2.5 million mother and child and vulnerable women benefit programme beneficiaries in 2024.	Complementary action and technical assistance	sustained
<b>Colombia</b>	Joint WFP Pilot of Emergency-Responsive Social Protection in Arauca covered 15,166 households with cash transfers and food assistance representing 33 percent of households in the region. The pilot laid bare the lack of coverage of migrants of government systems, which reportedly contributed to actions to include these groups in relevant databases.	Complementary action, modeling	temporary
<b>Dominican Republic</b>	WFP technical assistance in design and implementation of the government social protection programme established to	Technical assistance	temporary

<sup>95</sup> Global Kills.

<sup>96</sup> The Sahel twin-track approach is an operational delivery strategy that aims to increase coverage of social protection programmes, in response to shocks or through regular safety nets, delivering as much as possible through government programmes and systems (track 1) and where not possible delivering in parallel but coordinated ways (track 2).

<sup>97</sup> The quantity of national social protection programming, as included in the Strategy and USP 2030, is the combination of: coverage of national social protection programmes; range of needs being addressed by national social protection systems and programmes; and adequacy of benefits including transfer values.

	respond to COVID-19 expanded from 800,000 to 1.5 million households (and from USD 15 to 85 in monthly cash-based transfers). This emergency social protection programme was implemented during 2020-2021 and was scaled back in 2022.		
<b>Egypt</b>	The UNICEF/WFP First 1000 Days programme was integrated into the Government <i>Takaful</i> and <i>Karama</i> (solidarity and dignity) social safety net system when COVID-19 forced a shift from conditional to unconditional cash transfers. Transfers reached 40,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under 2 in 2020. By 2024, this had increased to 74,000.	Complementary action pilot using government SP programmes – integrated into government	sustained
<b>Ethiopia</b>	WFP provided training and capacity strengthening for the Product Safety Net Programme (PSNP) staff on targeting, monitoring and the community feedback mechanism (CFM), which facilitated PSNP V resumption in Tigray following conflict, extending coverage to 325 <i>woredas</i> (districts) with World Bank funding.	Technical assistance	sustained
<b>Haiti</b>	WFP and partners' technical and capacity strengthening support to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour is credited with increasing social coverage of the national social protection from 7 percent in 2017 to 20 percent in 2020. (ILO estimates coverage of 6.6 percent in 2022).	Technical assistance	temporary
<b>Jordan</b>	WFP investments in digital payments, CFM and support to human resources enabled the National Aid Fund to scale up beyond its existing coverage under the cash social assistance programme to provide emergency cash assistance to 200,000 households during COVID-19.	Technical assistance	temporary
<b>Lebanon</b>	WFP implemented the National Poverty Targeting Programme (NPTP) expanding coverage from 72,000 individuals in early 2019 to 91,200 individuals by end of 2019. NPTP merged into the new "AMAN" safety net with SRSP component and transitioned to Government. By 2024, AMAN scaled up to reach 413,000 vulnerable Lebanese.	Deliver on government behalf, transitioned to government	sustained
<b>Malawi</b>	WFP, within an SDG fund joint programme, helped implement a lean season response cash transfer programme to model potential future SRSP, which was credited with horizontal expansion to 6,368 households not registered in the government social cash transfer programme (SCTP) and vertical expansion of top-ups to 5,735 existing SCTP beneficiaries. <sup>98</sup>	Complementary action, modeling using SP programmes	temporary
<b>Pakistan</b>	WFP support to the Benazir Nashonuma Programme in Pakistan may have expanded the coverage of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) based on anecdotal evidence that when women came to enroll and WFP and its local partners found they were not covered by BISP, despite qualifying, they could get registered for BISP onsite. (Not quantified or tracked by WFP).	Deliver on government behalf	sustained
<b>Peru</b>	WFP SRSP support to the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS) to help establish the Social Protection and Emergency Response System (PSRE) led to vertical and horizontal expansion of social protection programmes and allowed the Government to provide exceptional cash-based transfers to more than 5 million households and food to 705,000 people through MIDIS soup kitchens, which MIDIS reports had a temporary effect of reducing poverty by 11.2 percent.	Technical assistance and advocacy	temporary
<b>Rwanda</b>	WFP has supported the government to rapidly expand the coverage of its school feeding programme, reaching 4.5	Technical assistance and	sustained

<sup>98</sup> UNICEF, WFP, ILO Malawi. 2022. Final Evaluation of the SDG Fund Joint Programme Social Protection for the SDGs in Malawi, DE/MWCO/2021/012

	million learners in 2025, representing a 400 percent increase in the government school meals budget since 2021. <sup>99</sup>	complementary action	
<b>Somalia</b>	WFP provided top-ups to over 1.2 million safety net beneficiaries, successfully scaling up the programme utilizing established operational networks and telecom partnerships for mobile money transfers.	Deliver on behalf of government	sustained
<b>Saint Lucia</b>	The Government permanently expanded the number of beneficiaries in its regular social protection transfer system using World Bank funding enabled by WFP.	Technical assistance	sustained
<b>Sudan</b>	WFP SFSP transferred 597 million Sudanese pounds to 304,649 beneficiaries (50,755 families) on behalf of the Government between October 2020 and July 2021.	Deliver on behalf of government	not sustained
<b>Zambia</b>	WFP provided assistance – including training to district staff on decentralized commodity procurement, and advocacy to support high-level government participation in global and regional events – this was associated with an expansion of the government school feeding programme from 8 to 70 districts between 2019 and 2022; and in 2024 the programme benefited 4.3 million primary schoolchildren, up from 2.1 million in 2023. <sup>100</sup>	Technical assistance	sustained

Source: CSPE, DE, ACRs and case study key informant interviews

107. **WFP is contributing to increased comprehensiveness of social protection programmes related to nutrition and school feeding.** Comprehensiveness refers to providing protection for a wide range of risks, through different social protection programmes, or layering transfers with other interventions to ensure that vulnerable people receive more complete support to overcome food insecurity and the risks they face and thus is related to a form of programme integration. WFP’s design and implementation of the Benazir Nashonuma Programme in Pakistan represents a successful form of such layering. Through its delivery of specialized nutritious foods (SNF), WFP strengthens the overall nutrition support provided to pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under 2 years of age. In addition to SNF, these households receive regular cash transfers through BISP, an extra transfer during quarterly Nashonuma Programme facilitation centre visits, and benefit from social and behavioural change communication (SBCC) and referrals to health and nutrition services, as needed. Similarly, the evaluation of the “First 1,000 Days” programme in Egypt<sup>101</sup> found a layered approach with different partners providing a package of cash with social and behavioural change communication and health services for pregnant and breastfeeding women enrolled in the government social assistance programme, however this conditional cash transfer model was shifted to an unconditional cash transfer and fully integrated in the government programme to adapt to restrictions on travel and movement. Other country offices have implemented or supported similar integrated models linked to government-led school feeding and nutrition programmes. In the Philippines, WFP support to school feeding and the *Walang Gutom* (no hunger) social assistance programme are linked to support for smallholder farmers. Similarly, in Peru long-term technical assistance to the Government’s school feeding programme led to incorporating rice fortification and HGSF into the law governing the programme.

108. In Iraq, WFP attempted to develop a graduation or transitions pathways approach to bridge people from social safety nets to economic empowerment. Initial pilot projects developed with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research focused on providing unemployed youth with skills-building and employment advice. The programme was discontinued after funding ran out, and the government chose not to sustain it. The WFP Changing Lives Transformation Fund (CLTF) has provided funding to the Iraq country office to support a next phase of a transitions pathways to work but agreeing on pilots and specific activities with government counterparts has been delayed.

<sup>99</sup> Kills in Rwanda case study.

<sup>100</sup> WFP Zambia ACR 2024.

<sup>101</sup> WFP. 2022. Decentralized Evaluation of The First 1000 Days Programme in Egypt 2017 to 2021.

109. Integration of WFP programmes and activities remains limited, particularly across social protection and resilience, which is a missed opportunity to contribute to comprehensiveness. Outside of WFP, linking cash transfers to resilience support is another common way in which the comprehensiveness of social protection is expanded with support of international partners (variously named “graduation”, “cash+” or “economic inclusion”) and there is much evidence of enhanced effects from such layering.<sup>102</sup> Various headquarters’ documents<sup>103</sup> conceptualize linkages between social protection and resilience. However, the evaluation found only two WFP programmes that demonstrated linkages even where WFP had both social protection and resilience interventions in the same country. With financing from the World Bank, WFP is supporting the Government of Kenya to implement the Kenya Social and Economic Inclusion Programme, which links social protection transfers with resilience building through skill building and access to jobs in green value chains to develop sustainable sources of household income.<sup>104</sup> In Burundi, both social protection and resilience are part of the Government’s *Merankabandi* (be like others) programme, which WFP is contracted to deliver, but only for refugees.

110. Explanations given for the limited linkages between WFP resilience and social protection activities by WFP staff are that: i) targeting logic and criteria are different for the two types of intervention; ii) whereas national government is the main interlocutor for social protection, resilience interventions work directly with communities through non-governmental organizations; and iii) donors have divergent criteria. The parallel social protection and resilience programmes being implemented in the Sahel are one example of this. However, people vulnerable to shocks require both resilience-building support over the medium-term, and protection of their human and physical capital in case of a shock that exceeds their capacity – which equate to the promotion and prevention functions of social protection.<sup>105</sup> This constitutes a missed opportunity for WFP to have greater impact.

111. Similarly, the strategic evaluation of WFP targeting and prioritization found that insufficient “programme integration linked to different [programme and] targeting logics undermine WFP’s ability to reach its programmatic objectives” and in particular “WFP’s ability to ‘graduate’ people out of emergency assistance in areas experiencing recurrent shocks.”<sup>106</sup> That evaluation found only two recent examples of WFP attempts to more effectively link unconditional resource transfers to resilience programming in South Sudan (lean season assistance plus light resilience piloted in a few locations in 2024) and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where a new resilience strategy aims to link cash, food assistance, resilience building and nutrition by targeting the same households and locations.

112. **There are some other internal challenges.** The findings of the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of the Strategic Plan identified a number of other internal factors that hinder integrated programming. That evaluation noted that programme integration “has become a strong feature of programme design”, particularly in terms of the narrative contents of CSPs, which increasingly “describe the inter-relationship between activities and across outcomes”, yet a “lack of organizational support to operationalizing integration”<sup>107</sup> hindered programme integration.

113. More fundamentally, the overall institutional architecture of WFP remains organized around segregating WFP’s work in crisis response, resilience and root causes – with the most emphasis on supporting direct humanitarian assistance at scale and managing related risks. Country offices’

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<sup>102</sup> Arévalo-Sánchez, Inés; Heisey, Janet; Chaudhary, Sarang; Clay, Timothy; Strokova, Victoria; Vasudeva Dutta, Puja; Andrews, Colin. 2024. The State of Economic Inclusion Report 2024: Pathways to Scale. © World Bank. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/42408> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

<sup>103</sup> Some CSPs and the WFP/IDS Social Protection & Resilience Policy Brief Maximizing impact: the intersection of social protection and resilience (2024)

<sup>104</sup> Interview with country office staff and document review.

<sup>105</sup> Devereux, S. & R. Sabates-Wheeler. 2004. Transformative social protection. Working paper series, 232. Brighton: IDS.

<sup>106</sup> WFP. 2026. Strategic Evaluation of WFP Approaches to Targeting and Prioritization for Food and Nutrition Assistance, OEV/2024/022 P. 49.

<sup>107</sup> WFP. 2023. Mid-Term Evaluation of WFP’s Strategic Plan (2022-2025), p21.

organizational, budgetary and results architecture continue to complicate programme integration when attempted and may disincentivize it.<sup>108</sup> The CSP Policy Evaluation and MTE of the Strategic Plan highlighted challenges with line-of-sight requirements linked to the corporate results framework that require vertical alignment of certain indicators, activities and outcomes. Country office organizational structures often parallel the CSP line-of-sight structure, reinforcing silos with dedicated activity or strategic objective managers and budgets. This evaluation found multiple examples showing this problem persists, with social protection support work isolated structurally, financially and in results architecture. As noted in the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Strategic Plan, “internal competition and fragmentation of country office workstreams and teams, and gaps in overarching programme management negatively influence the ability to effectively implement an integrated programme design”.

114. **Adequacy:** Adequacy, as defined in the Strategy and USP 2030, refers to whether social protection benefits, including food and cash transfer values, are of the right type and sufficient to achieve programme aims. **WFP effectiveness on the adequacy of national social protection programme transfers is more limited** and, only a few examples of attempts to advocate for greater adequacy of transfers were identified in case studies. This largely relates to issues of government fiscal capacities and can create conflict between two of the key theory of change assumptions related to WFP’s interventions being relevant for national social protection system-building and that WFP will channel support through national systems. In places where WFP has more adequate funding, it would normally set transfer values based on analysis of a basket of food and sometimes other basic needs to attempt to achieve its food security and nutrition objectives. Yet, in instances where WFP is delivering on behalf of governments or providing technical support to strengthen their programmes WFP must take into account the government’s capacity to finance and sustain a programme. WFP’s delivery of the Somalia social protection programme provides an example of where this required compromise. In that instance, household transfer values were set at USD 20 per month based on sustainability considerations, as opposed to the recommendations of the joint Somalia cash working group and food security cluster to cover 80 percent of the minimum economic basket, which ranged from USD 60 to 100 per month depending on the region.<sup>109</sup>

115. In the Caribbean, WFP has worked with governments to conduct scenario planning related to potential SRSP transfers, although the effects on adequacy are unclear from the materials reviewed. In Burundi, the evaluation found that combining humanitarian cash transfers with inclusion of the same refugees in the national *Merankabandi* programme improved overall transfer adequacy. This occurred despite humanitarian funding constraints reducing transfer values and other limitations<sup>110</sup> keeping *Merankabandi* transfers low. In Rwanda, WFP engaged with the Government to improve the adequacy of school meals.

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<sup>108</sup> Evaluation KIIs and CSPEs.

<sup>109</sup> Somalia CSPE (2022-2025).

<sup>110</sup> These include fiscal constraints and a concern that transfers should not exceed the official minimum wage, which has not been updated for more than 30 years.

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPROVED QUALITY OF SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES (EFFICIENCY, SHOCK-RESPONSIVENESS, INCLUSION, TRANSPARENCY)

**Finding 11.** WFP support to social protection has resulted in improvements to the quality of national social protection programmes. WFP has effectively contributed to increasing SRSP in many places. While WFP has had strong effects on geospatial and refugee inclusion, approaches to promoting inclusion and empowering women, girls and other marginalized groups within national programming can be more strategically addressed. Contributions to efficiency, transparency and accountability to affected populations are well evidenced.

116. Efficiency: WFP has made substantial contributions to the cost efficiency of national social protection programmes by leveraging its supply chain management expertise. Cost efficiency outcomes for government social protection programmes linked to WFP's technical assistance or on-demand services were identified in five countries.

117. In India, WFP supported the Government to improve the efficiency of its targeted public distribution system, which reaches more than 800 million people through a network of 500,000 fair price shops. By mapping more efficient routes between warehouses and distribution points and optimizing supply chains, this support enabled 15 state governments to save USD 15 million in transport costs.<sup>111</sup> There are further positive examples of WFP technical assistance contributing to increased efficiency of government social protection systems. These include Sri Lanka where the Government requested that WFP scale up a pilot project digitizing beneficiary registration and cash-based transfers because of efficiency gains,<sup>112</sup> and Türkiye, where WFP's efforts to integrate the emergency social safety net into existing government structures helped streamline operations and enabled rapid programme expansion.<sup>113</sup>

118. WFP's provision of on-demand procurement services for the Government of Guatemala's national nutrition programme has also demonstrated significant contributions to efficiency, as well as economy and transparency.<sup>114</sup> The CSPE conducted a robust quantitative analysis of government procurement timeliness, cost and competitiveness of procurement tender processes compared to those of WFP. The evaluation found that WFP was able to achieve an average cost reduction of 29 percent on key food products and completed food procurement processes in one third of the time that the Government takes for equivalent competitive processes. While these are remarkable contributions to efficiency, the evaluation cautioned that, because the on-demand service agreements did not include any type of capacity strengthening component or transition plan, these efficiency gains are not likely sustainable without WFP's continued service provision. The CSPE also highlighted the potential reputational risk WFP faced in Guatemala related to perceived impartiality and neutrality because under its service provision agreement with the Government it did not have a role in final distribution or monitoring and the geographic targeting did not always correspond to the districts most affected by chronic and acute malnutrition.

119. In Burundi, in 2022 and 2023, in collaboration with national partners, WFP piloted an innovative commodity voucher procurement model that works with local smallholder farmers' cooperatives to supply food to schools, instead of procuring at the country level. This model was adapted to contextual challenges, which included petrol shortages that constrained transport of food around the country, and parallel exchange rates that made purchases in foreign currency very expensive. A rigorous evaluation was carried out by WFP and the World Bank and found the model to substantially improve cost efficiency. The cost of providing 122 meal days under the new model was USD 40.61 per child (compared to USD 46.85 for the previous WFP-led in-kind model). In other words, for the same budget 15 percent more children could receive school meals. This was judged to offset the slight reduction in nutritional value of the school meal,

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<sup>111</sup> WFP Annual Performance Review, 2024; evaluation KIIs.

<sup>112</sup> Sri Lanka CSPE (2018-2022).

<sup>113</sup> Türkiye CSPE (2018-2025).

<sup>114</sup> Guatemala CSPE (2021-2025).

and the model has been scaled up by Government of Burundi, with technical assistance from WFP. As of 2024, the Government was using this model to provide meals to 204,000 students in 262 schools.<sup>115</sup>

120. However, in Iraq there were serious cost efficiency questions raised about WFP's support to digitalization of the records of the Public Distribution System (PDS – national food safety net). Due to massive time and cost overruns, total accumulated costs were estimated to be USD 30 million, the project took five years, and in the end only one site was running before the Government assumed control and brought in an outside vendor to improve and scale it further.

121. **Shock-responsiveness: WFP has contributed to the intended result that national social protection systems are increasingly shock- and conflict-sensitive.** WFP's technical capacities in this area and relationships across social protection and disaster risk management actors are seen as important areas of comparative advantage by external stakeholders. The systematic WFP SRSP methodology being employed in 24 countries, covered previously, demonstrates how WFP can operationalize these advantages through technical assistance. All the broader systems-strengthening work undertaken by WFP to address other aspects of routine social protection quality and quantity also strongly contribute to helping governments respond to the existence of shocks (as covered previously).

122. In the Philippines, WFP has advocated for anticipatory cash transfers, showcasing a shift towards pre-emptive rather than reactive disaster response strategies, aiming to safeguard lives and livelihoods against predictable climatic events through social protection programmes. WFP supported the Government to develop a bill – which was signed into law as the “Declaration of State of Imminent Disaster Act” (Republic Act No. 12287) on 12 September 2025 – and is now supporting the drafting of accompanying implementation rules and regulations. WFP also leveraged the government “4Ps” flagship social assistance programme to quickly provide cash assistance for typhoon-affected people in 2024. WFP was able to show in real time how the programme can immediately respond to shocks and it used the opportunity to support further strengthening of the programme at the subnational level. Outcome monitoring findings indicate that the assistance contributed to fewer households resorting to negative strategies to cope with food shortages.

123. In Belize, WFP pilots of cash transfers through mobile money in response to Hurricane Lisa were influential in showcasing the potential for digital transfers, in a context where social protection transfers are still largely provided in-kind. In Rwanda, high-quality analytical work carried out by WFP headquarters on SRSP informed country policy engagement at least in the early years of the evaluation period, although no obvious contribution can be identified on the design of a government-led shock-responsive cash transfer pilot (financed by other partners). In the Caribbean, WFP has supported governments to link to macro disaster risk insurance, and this is discussed under “Sustainability”, below.

124. WFP's experience in Mozambique highlights both the potential benefits and remaining challenges of SRSP. A joint capacity assessment between WFP and the Government identified two priority gaps, namely enhanced anticipatory action triggers and flood forecasting models. WFP supported development and implementation of both these priorities in response to floods in 2024, leading to substantial reductions in both emergency response time and lead time for flood warnings. However, several challenges emerged, revealing tensions between humanitarian response and national social protection systems. These included: beneficiary selection (with WFP preferring universal coverage in affected areas versus government focus on those eligible for social assistance); delivery speed (use of government systems added five to seven days to approval processes); data sharing (WFP's concerns about data protection versus government wish for full data access); and transfer modality (government universal mobile money approach, versus WFP's

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<sup>115</sup> Atekou, A., Heirman, J., Jeong, D., Khincha, R., Kondylis, F., La, MP., Lombardini, S., Shastry, V., Uckat, H. 2024. Pilot Impact Evaluation of the Commodity Voucher Procurement Model in Burundi. Rome: World Food Programme. <https://www.wfp.org/publications/burundi-home-grown-school-feeding-programme-impact-evaluation-pilot> accessed on 28/11/25.

preference for in-kind assistance in remote areas).<sup>116</sup> These differences in social protection versus humanitarian approaches illustrate the importance of WFP taking into account the theory of change assumption that WFP interventions are relevant for national social protection system-building when engaging with government social protection actors.

125. Additional examples of WFP's support to SRSP come from the COVID-19 pandemic response. WFP, often in collaboration with other partners, provided support to governments when they adapted their existing national social protection measures in response to COVID-19. Among the evaluation's case studies, WFP provided such support in Peru, the Caribbean and Niger. In Niger a collaborative approach between UNICEF, WFP and the Government resulted in harmonization of cash transfer values across actors, and the extension of coverage to 580,000 COVID-19-affected individuals. Support to enable the shock-responsiveness of national social protection systems during the response to COVID-19 was also provided by WFP in Jordan, India, the Republic of Colombia, Mozambique, Cambodia, Djibouti and Palestine. In Jordan, for example, WFP provided information sessions on how to open and use mobile money wallets for the new beneficiaries of the existing national cash transfer programme, *Takaful*, and emergency cash assistance programmes.<sup>117</sup> In some countries, such as Kenya and Lesotho, WFP complemented government scale-up of social protection by expanding operations to urban areas, addressing the needs of vulnerable populations affected by the pandemic.<sup>118</sup> The evaluation of the WFP response to COVID-19<sup>119</sup> found that, overall, WFP's social protection response to COVID-19 demonstrated flexibility and responsiveness, helping governments to address the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 and to support vulnerable populations. In the LAC region, WFP played a central role in introducing operational innovations for beneficiary identification, registration and enrolment through online platforms, call centres and mobile applications, which enabled large numbers of people outside existing social protection databases to be enrolled, including informal sector workers and migrants.<sup>120</sup>

126. In a few instances, WFP has been a key partner in the establishment of new government bodies for SRSP. For example, in Mauritania, WFP enabled the Government to take over leading and coordinating lean season assistance starting in 2021, a role that was previously performed by WFP. To achieve this, WFP and the World Bank supported the establishment of the *Dispositif National de Prévention et de Réponses aux Crises Alimentaires et Nutritionnelles* (DCAN), which is responsible for early warning and shock response. This clearly contributes to the theory of change outcome and can be expected to be sustained and thus contribute to the intended impact that "people meet their food security... needs".

127. Similarly, in Peru, WFP strengthened "public capacity" and enhanced the prospects of "enabling people to manage the risks and shocks they face", by providing technical assistance for the design and establishment of the Independent Technical Office for the Universal Household Registry, attached to the ministry responsible for social protection (MIDIS). This office is responsible for facilitating vertical and horizontal expansion of MIDIS programmes in response to shocks. In St Vincent and the Grenadines, WFP contributed to public capacity via "national actors obtaining and using robust analysis" when the government established a Beneficiary Management Services Unit with responsibility for quality assurance of social assistance programmes based on learning from WFP post-distribution monitoring (PDM) surveys.

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<sup>116</sup> Mozambique CSPE draft 2025.

<sup>117</sup> WFP. 2020. Supporting national social protection responses to the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 Outline of a WFP offer to governments June 2020 [https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000116686/download/?\\_ga=2.200897062.969602533.1763915972-1733102159.1760910135](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000116686/download/?_ga=2.200897062.969602533.1763915972-1733102159.1760910135) accessed on 24/11/2025.

<sup>118</sup> WFP. 2025. Evaluation of the WFP Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Centralized Evaluation Report – Volume I. OEV/2020/062 Office of Evaluation.

<sup>119</sup> WFP. 2025. Evaluation of the WFP Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Centralized Evaluation Report – Volume I. OEV/2020/062 Office of Evaluation.

<sup>120</sup> WFP. 2023. Regional Evaluation of WFP's Contribution to Shock-Responsive Social Protection in Latin America and the Caribbean (2015-2022).

128. Many of the successful examples of SRSP flagged above require collaboration between governmental actors responsible for disaster management and social protection. In some of the most successful countries, these functions are already found in the same ministry or where coordination between ministries is strong. However, in many countries these functions are found in different ministries. Where this is the case, WFP is perceived by partners to have an important role to play in bringing ministries together to develop common SRSP policy and programming, both linked to national social protection systems and informed by disaster risk management knowledge and tools, like early warning systems. In three of the evaluation's case study countries (Rwanda, Zambia and Iraq), WFP is the main social protection partner maintaining a relationship with the national disaster management agency and is seen by all stakeholders as having a comparative advantage in bridging the divide. However, while inter-ministerial communication has improved, no agreement has yet been reached in any of these countries between the disaster management and social protection ministries on their respective roles around SRSP.

129. **WFP has worked to integrate considerations of conflict-sensitivity into its support to national social protection.** A WFP strategy on conflict-sensitivity mainstreaming issued in 2023 included actions to develop analysis related to WFP social protection support,<sup>121</sup> which led to the development of a dedicated module in the SRSP country capacity assessment tool. Country offices in Iraq and Ethiopia have reportedly used this to guide development of conflict-sensitive approaches for social protection in their CSPs. In East Africa and West Africa, various conflict-sensitivity assessments and scoping missions have been conducted, with support from WFP headquarters, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and the Social Protection Technical Assistance, Advice and Resource Facility (STAAR) and integrated into WFP approaches to social protection.

130. **Inclusion** has many potential elements, taking into account:

- the more limited livelihood options of refugees, migrants and internally displaced people, when setting transfer values;
- the particular nutritional needs and vulnerabilities in pregnancy and early childhood, in the design of nutrition-sensitive social protection programmes;
- women's disproportionate responsibility for care work, when considering the design of work or other conditionalities in transfer programme;
- how women and minority groups are differentially affected by security risks, when designing training sessions or distribution;
- language minorities, in programme communications; and
- how community targeting mechanisms might inadvertently exclude socially marginalized groups of any type.<sup>122</sup>

131. **WFP has been particularly active and effective in refugee inclusion.** The Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Support the Refugees, IDPs and Migrants (RIMs) (2025)<sup>123</sup> found, overall, that registration of refugees into social registries is a key strength of WFP's social protection support. On the other hand, the RIMs evaluation flagged a gap in relation to support to the integration of internally displaced people into national social protection systems. While challenges faced by internally displaced people were recognized (including

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<sup>121</sup> WFP. 2023. WFP Conflict Sensitivity Mainstreaming Strategy.

<sup>122</sup> See for example, Razavi, S., Orton, I., Behrendt, C., Tessier, L., Wodsak, V., Ramaswamy, K., Machiels, A. Making social protection work for gender equality: What does it look like? How do we get there? ILO Working Paper 132. Geneva: International Labour Office. 2024. Lindert, Kathy; Karippacheril, Tina George; Rodriguez Caillava, Inés; Nishikawa Chavez, Kenichi. Lindert, Kathy; Karippacheril, Tina George; Rodriguez Caillava, Inés; Nishikawa Chavez, Kenichi, editors. 2020. Sourcebook on the Foundations of Social Protection Delivery Systems. World Bank. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/34044> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO; UNDESA. 2018. Promoting Inclusion through Social Protection Report on the World Social Situation 2018.

<sup>123</sup> World Food Programme. 2025. Strategic evaluation of WFP's support to refugees, internally displaced persons and irregular migrants (RIMs) (2017-2024).

lost identity documentation and accessibility in insecure areas), the evaluation team found a gap in the attention of WFP to supporting internally displaced people’s access to national systems.

**Table 4: Examples of WFP results on inclusion of refugees and migrants in social protection**

Country	WFP contributions to inclusion of refugees and migrants
<b>Burundi</b>	WFP was contracted by the Government using World Bank funding to extend the national social protection to refugee populations, including school feeding for children.
<b>Colombia</b>	WFP facilitated registration of 900,000 irregular migrants into a single social registry (SISBEN), enabling access to all national social protection programmes and the labour market.
<b>Ecuador</b>	WFP supported the Government in distribution of coupons for migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic.
<b>Iraq</b>	The WFP country office is in the early stages of building a case for inclusion of refugees in government safety nets, with a parallel pilot being implemented by World Bank and UNHCR providing cash-based transfers to refugees.
<b>Jordan</b>	WFP provided capacity strengthening support to the Government to develop national food security and school feeding strategies that include refugees.
<b>Kenya</b>	Through WFP technical support for the enhanced single registry and advocacy, 741,000 refugees and asylum seekers were registered for the first time in 2025 qualifying them for access to national social protection programmes.
<b>Lebanon</b>	WFP implemented a nationwide school feeding programme targeting both Lebanese and Syrian refugee children. Synergies were created between refugee response and national social protection systems.
<b>Mauritania</b>	WFP supported the government to carry out the targeting of refugees in 2021 and 2023 and successfully integrated refugees into national social registry. Refugees can access national safety nets ( <i>Tekavoul</i> programme).
<b>Niger</b>	The joint WFP, UNICEF and UNFPA programme, Scholarships for Schoolgirls, gave preference to those from displaced populations (with WFP responsible for cash transfers and school meals).
<b>Rwanda</b>	WFP's transfers to refugees valued by government social protection actors and support ensured inclusion of refugee children in school feeding.
<b>Uganda</b>	WFP provided support to digital financial inclusion of refugees and integration of refugees in government systems.
<b>Ukraine</b>	WFP technical support to the Unified Information System of the Social Sphere (UISSS) enabled displaced people to apply online regardless of location enabling provision of assistance to 2.5 million internally displaced people.

Source: Systematic review of WFP evaluations and case study work by evaluation team

132. In terms of spatial inclusion, a widely perceived comparative advantage of WFP is that it is often present in remote or insecure areas where other social protection actors are not. In Somalia, this is important for ensuring social protection reaches Somaliland and Puntland. In Djibouti, WFP played an important role in integrating remote rural populations into the social registry, which was otherwise heavily skewed to urban areas. In Niger, partners noted that WFP succeeds in registering beneficiaries into the social registry in highly insecure regions, which was described as impossible for some other partners. WFP also carries out and shares analysis of the food insecurity and malnutrition of populations in these areas, which can help raise awareness of stakeholders without direct access to them and promote their inclusion in social protection systems.

133. WFP has designed approaches that include or prioritize women facing discrimination in the social protection programmes it implements, but its emphasis on including considerations around women's needs in nationally led programmes leaves room for improvement. As for the inclusion of women, people with disabilities and other minority groups, corporate policies promote inclusion in social protection programming. However, as noted in the "Relevance" section, this is a relatively weak area in the Strategy, and the extent to which the corporate commitments feed through to implementation at the country level is highly variable.<sup>124</sup> In one case study country the evaluation noted the exclusion of some women in a national social protection programme due to marital status or age at the time of pregnancy, with no WFP strategy to advocate for changes. In another, WFP piloted on-site childcare to enable women to participate in the programme, but this was not well-adapted to uptake by the government. In designing and implementing WFP social protection support activities, more could be done to leverage the internal expertise of the WFP Gender Unit and external specialized agencies, such as UN Women and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

134. **A strategic approach is required to better support women and girls who face discrimination or barriers in accessing assistance.** For example, transfers might be made to women in an attempt to empower them, but the actual empowerment effect can be contingent on: accompanying messaging and the role of social norms; the administrative burden of accessing the transfers; the extent of conditions with which the recipient has to comply; and how the risks of backlash are managed. Awareness-raising sessions can sometimes explicitly aim to address social norms and structural barriers. Moreover, empowerment can be supported not just in programme design but also implementation. For example, ensuring that women and minority groups are represented in programme governance, providing linkages to complementary programmes such as livelihoods opportunities, supporting financial inclusion and partnering with women's rights organizations. Examples of WFP's efforts to address structural barriers faced by women are provided in Table 5 below.

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<sup>124</sup> Global CSPE review.

**Table 5: Examples of WFP’s efforts to promote the inclusion of women and children into national social protection programmes.**

Country	WFP’s contributions
<b>Bangladesh</b>	WFP supported government social safety net programmes with women as primary beneficiaries, consistent with national social protection’s priorities.
<b>Caribbean</b>	A series of WFP digital financial inclusion studies and subsequent technical support to governments included an emphasis on equality between men and women. A joint SDG fund project with WFP and UN Women in Barbados & St. Lucia addressed domestic violence and digital solutions for financial inclusion of women and other excluded groups.
<b>Cuba</b>	WFP provided extensive support to make food provision in social protection programmes more responsive to the needs of women. This included the support for a strategy in the agricultural sector linked to the short food supply chain model linked to social protection.
<b>Egypt</b>	Joint UNICEF and WFP implementation of the First 1,000 Days programme on behalf of the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity specifically targeted pregnant and breastfeeding women.
<b>Haiti</b>	The WFP SRSP programme (with the Gates Foundation) prioritized adult women to receive cash and provided financial inclusion support, with thousands of women receiving government identification for the first time.
<b>Niger</b>	A WFP pilot project funded by KfW, coupled with an impact evaluation to study the effects of long-term predictable cash transfers (2025-2028), included assessment across five countries to produce in-depth analysis of different implications for men and women and validate or refine planned interventions. The WFP, UNICEF and UNFPA Scholarships for Schoolgirls programme aimed at breaking intergenerational patterns of unintended adolescence pregnancy and malnutrition.
<b>Pakistan</b>	The WFP-designed and -implemented government Benazir Nashonuma Programme focuses on pregnant and breastfeeding women, and children under 2 years of age, and provides additional nutritional supplement for adolescent girls linked to BISP. The country office is running other pilots of cash transfers to incentivize adolescent girls’ attendance at the secondary school level.
<b>Philippines</b>	WFP contributed to addressing access barriers faced by women by conducting relevant research and analysis on equality between men and women, disability and social inclusion and related access gaps to social protection. The <i>Walang Gutom</i> programme developed a gender strategy, targeted populations at risk of exclusion (women, indigenous populations), and used GEDSI assessments and gap analysis to inform skills and nutrition sessions. HGSF aimed to connect women farmers to local markets.
<b>Somalia</b>	The national <i>Baxnaano</i> (uplifting) programme, initially implemented by WFP, ensured transfers went to women, promoted financial inclusion through opening bank accounts. WFP proactively addressed concerns about potential cash diversion by men family members with awareness campaigns, financial literacy support and community engagement.

Source: Systematic review of WFP evaluations and case study work by evaluation team

135. **Transparency and accountability to affected people:** The evaluation team found only one example of improved transparency attributable to WFP, namely related to the on-demand service provision example in Guatemala discussed above. There, WFP carried out competitive procurement processes 87 percent of the time, compared to 20 percent of the time for the Government, providing greater transparency of procurement processes for the national nutrition programme. There is therefore room to emphasize this aspect in WFP’s social protection programming.

136. WFP contributed to accountability to affected people by helping governments establish complaints and feedback mechanisms for their social protection programmes in multiple countries. For example, in Jordan and Somalia, WFP invested in developing government complaints and feedback mechanisms with reported benefits to accountability. In Belize a grievance redress mechanism was developed with support from UNICEF, building on WFP’s work with the Ministry of Human Development and it is now integrated into

the social protection system. In Jamaica, WFP established a community feedback mechanism during its Hurricane Beryl response and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security was reportedly exploring ways of replicating this in its social protection system.

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPROVED NUTRITION

**Finding 12.** In some countries, there is evidence that WFP has contributed to making national social protection systems more nutrition-sensitive through its own work or by influencing governments and other partners through analytical support. WFP also continues to be an effective lead partner on nutrition-sensitive school feeding policies and promoting food fortification in many countries. But, despite being a cross-cutting priority in the Strategy, attention to nutrition is not mainstreamed throughout WFP's social protection programming.

137. WFP has contributed to nutrition-sensitive social protection through support to nutrition-specific and national school feeding programmes and through technical support and advocacy based on nutrition gap analyses, whereby WFP has contributed in many countries to the “enhanced public capacity to support households to meet their...nutrition...needs”. In some cases, WFP has also contributed to this through its support to nutrition-sensitive cash transfer programmes. One lesson learned – of wider relevance beyond nutrition-sensitive programming – is that in highly decentralized contexts it is not enough to satisfy the theory of change assumption about national buy-in and trust, it is also important that this exists at decentralized levels of government.

138. Pakistan is the case study example with the most impressive nutrition-related outcomes. Here, prior to the evaluation period, WFP engaged over many years in analytical work and advocacy to help establish and strengthen a nutrition-sensitive social protection intervention – the Benazir Nashonuma Programme – as one of three components of the Government's flagship social protection programme, the BISP. The Benazir Nashonuma Programme incorporates cash, behavioural change communication, specialized nutritious food and access to pre- and post-natal care services through government health centres. It targets pregnant women and children aged up to 2 years of age and was informed by a WFP-commissioned cluster-randomized trial. The trial found that cash plus specialized nutritious food significantly reduced stunting, whereas the cash transfer alone did not,<sup>125</sup> and that the cost-per-case of stunting averted by this intervention was USD 987.<sup>126</sup> A mid-line evaluation published in 2025<sup>127</sup> found the programme resulted in a 20 percent reduction in stunting at 6 months of age among participating children and a 6.4 percent reduction in the prevalence of stunting among participating children under 2 years of age. It also highlighted that mothers were 7 percent less likely to deliver a child born too small or too early, improvements in antenatal care visit frequency, early initiation of breastfeeding, and a 10 percent reduction in children that had not received any immunizations were also achieved.

139. WFP's current mode of support is delivery: it provides overall programme management, local partner engagement, procurement and delivery of the specialized nutritious food element of the Benazir Nashonuma Programme on behalf of the Government, with finance coming from the Government. In the current phase (covered by the evaluation period) WFP has not layered capacity strengthening activities for the Government onto its other activities.

<sup>125</sup> To note that in both these arms the cash transfer value was the same – it was not increased in the cash-only arm to equalate the cost of the SNF.

<sup>126</sup> Aga Khan Foundation Aga Khan University, World Food Programme and Department of Sindh - Government of Pakistan. 2018. An Impact Evaluation of the Sindh Stunting Prevention Programme. Karachi: Aga Khan University [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342715295\\_An\\_Impact\\_Evaluation\\_of\\_the\\_Sindh\\_Stunting\\_Prevention\\_Programme](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342715295_An_Impact_Evaluation_of_the_Sindh_Stunting_Prevention_Programme).

<sup>127</sup> WFP. 2025. Benazir Nashonuma Programme: Midline Evaluation Results.

140. The Benazir Nashonuma Programme has reached 4 million women and children cumulatively since its start in 2020.<sup>128</sup> However, there are question marks over the sustainability of the specialized nutritious food provision, particularly in the context of potential devolution of the social protection function within the Government of Pakistan. Some parts of government and some partners are yet to be convinced of the long-term affordability of the intervention, or its cost effectiveness compared to other potential uses of the money in the health sector. Thus, long-term outcomes and impacts are uncertain.

141. In a similar programme in Egypt, the CSPE found positive WFP contributions to nutrition linked to national social protection for a period.<sup>129</sup> In the Government's First 1,000 Days programme, WFP developed nutrition materials, disseminated information via social media platforms, and organized high-level ministerial conferences to facilitate policy dialogue on nutrition. The evaluation found that the programme improved the nutritional status of beneficiaries and positioned WFP as a strategic partner for other national nutrition programmes aimed at addressing anaemia, obesity and stunting. As noted under the discussion of comprehensiveness, the direct effects of the programme on nutrition were interrupted following the decision to shift to unconditional cash transfers during COVID-19.

142. Another common WFP contribution to nutrition linked to social protection is the analytical support WFP has provided through "Fill the Nutrient Gap" (FNG) studies conducted in 12 countries to help governments adjust their social protection programmes to be more nutritionally sensitive.<sup>130</sup> WFP has also widely promoted the use of fortified food in social protection programmes. In Peru, an FNG study in collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank demonstrated the cost effectiveness of school meals for households and recommended the use of fortified rice in school meals and procurement from smallholder farmers. In Pakistan, WFP began piloting integrating fortified wheat into a programme linked to a national social protection programme for adolescent girls, which connects small-scale millers that produce this to beneficiaries through a discount voucher. Table 6 provides examples of other WFP results related to improved nutrition through research, advocacy and modelling of food fortification from other WFP evaluations.

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<sup>128</sup> <https://www.wfp.org/countries/pakistan>.

<sup>129</sup> WFP. 2023. Evaluation of Egypt WFP CSP (2018-2023).

<sup>130</sup> WFP. 2024. Mind the Gap: Using diet cost and affordability metrics to inform food security and nutrition-sensitive social protection.

**Table 6: Contributions of WFP to improved nutrition in social protection - food fortification**

Country	Contributions to nutrition in social protection through fortification
<b>India</b>	WFP's formulation, piloting and sustained advocacy contributed to the Government introducing fortified rice social protection. WFP successfully made a case for mainstreaming in 2019, translating to centre sector scheme development. WFP served as the technical partner for roll-out in five states, supporting mill assessment, capacity building, tender development, procedures, positioning staff in government and conducting SBCC campaigns. WFP also facilitated study tours to Costa Rica and brought international delegations to India.
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	WFP achieved cabinet approval for rice fortification in 2019 after years of focused efforts. WFP technical inputs contributed to the National Multi-Sectoral Action Plan for Nutrition, the National Nutrition Information System and the national nutrition policy revisions. However, CSP work almost exclusively targeted primary schoolchildren (11 percent anaemia prevalence) rather than women of reproductive age and children under 5 (35-47 percent anaemia). The new cabinet has asked for additional impact study and the Ministry of Finance has yet to allocate a budget.
<b>Nepal</b>	Rice fortification was well-grounded in the Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan II policy, guided by landscape analysis and Bajura study (WFP-funded) confirming fortified rice acceptability in remote areas where social safety net rice is frequently consumed.
<b>Indonesia</b>	WFP advocated for fortified rice inclusion in social protection. A 2022 strategic policy dialogue brought stakeholders together prioritizing school-age children's nutrition. In 2023, WFP's partnership with Ministry of National Development Planning led to regulatory achievements. In 2024, WFP contributed to the Indonesian Standard for Rice Fortified Kernels formulation, with standardization finalization expected within the year.
<b>Syria</b>	Support for flour fortification and community bakeries restoration was considered part of supporting social safety nets, though further clarity is needed around government engagement and required technical capacity.
<b>Dominican Republic</b>	While a rice fortification regulatory framework was established, still no policy on rice fortification is limiting roll-out. Private sector is not sufficiently on board with insufficient mutual trust to effectively cooperate.

Source: India CSPE (2019-2023); Sri Lanka CSPE (2018-2022); Nepal CSPE (2019-2023); Indonesia CSPE (2021-2025); Syria Transitional and Interim CSPEs (2018-2025); Dominican Republic CSPE (2019-2023).

143. In the Philippines, WFP has provided extensive support to nutrition-sensitive social protection, enhancing public capacity in this area, although no evidence was available on nutrition impacts at the time of this evaluation. WFP assisted the Government with the design and implementation of a nutrition-sensitive e-voucher pilot and provided technical assistance for handover to the government, as well as a full national roll-out to 300,000 households. WFP helped with the programme design in terms of: i) targeting; ii) food basket; iii) transfer value; and iv) implementation guidelines. In facilitating the scale-up, WFP has undertaken a series of assessments related to the digital landscape in the country and business requirements for replacing SCOPE (used in the pilot) with a government-owned interoperable system.

144. In Zambia, Following the 2021 FNG analysis, WFP produced a thematic brief on how social protection systems can address the affordability of nutritious diets<sup>131</sup> and support the development of nutrition-sensitive social protection guidelines for Zambia's new national social protection policy.<sup>132</sup> A second FNG was conducted between 2023 and 2025 with a focus on social protection, which assessed the adequacy of transfer values in social protection benefits and school meals, which in turn has informed government plans to incorporate shock-responsive cash transfers to more efficiently protect households' access to nutritious diets in times of shock.<sup>133</sup> Further positive examples of WFP work on nutrition in school feeding programmes are evident in CSPE evaluations.<sup>134</sup>

145. WFP has had influence via analytical work in Rwanda: it carried out a comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis (2025) in collaboration with the Government, which was shared with partners and used to advocate for the retention of the national Nutrition Sensitive Direct Support (NSDS) programme -

<sup>131</sup> WFP. 2024. Mind the Gap Country Case Study.

<sup>132</sup> WFP. 2023. Zambia CSPE.

<sup>133</sup> Evaluation KII.

<sup>134</sup> Examples include Kenya, Benin, Kyrgyzstan, Ecuador and Colombia.

which offers conditional cash transfers and complementary health and nutrition services to pregnant women and children under 2 years of age, and was under threat. As a result, the NSDS programme continues to provide services.<sup>135</sup>

146. However, WFP has not been as systematically engaged on nutrition dimensions of social protection as might be expected given its central role as an outcome expected in the Strategy – and is less recognized by partners for this than for its work on SRSP. As noted in the Strategy, contribution to food security through increasing food access is intrinsic to social protection, because transfers enhance and smooth income and consumption capacity. However, the link to improved nutrition is less direct and deliberate attention to nutritional effects in programme design is likely to be necessary. This is because these impacts are contingent on reaching the most nutritionally vulnerable age groups and geographical areas (which often diverge from the most food-insecure ones), as well as on programme design features.<sup>136</sup> In this connection, the evaluation of WFP targeting and prioritization identified a number of ongoing changes in WFP strategy and practice, including: i) a shift to more vulnerability-based targeting; ii) measures to calculate and report on the intensity and nutritional adequacy of assistance; and iii) the commitment in the new WFP Strategic Plan (2026-2029) to focus on providing higher quality and more meaningful assistance, even when this means reaching fewer people.<sup>137</sup> If these shifts are more systematically applied to the analytical and technical support WFP provides to national social protection programmes, WFP could better position itself to contribute to the nutrition results envisioned in the Strategy.

### 2.2.3 Sustainability of WFP contributions to social protection

**Finding 13.** WFP contributions are more likely to be institutionally sustainable when they help address an issue or problem of priority to state actors and enable those actors to implement a solution that is well-adapted to the context.

**Finding 14.** WFP's effects on the allocation of domestic resources for long-term social protection programming are still rare, outside of school feeding, but WFP has enabled access to disaster risk financing for SRSP in some countries.

147. Sustainability is the extent to which the net benefits of an intervention continue, or are likely to continue and has various dimensions, of which the most relevant to this evaluation are institutional and financial.<sup>138</sup> For this evaluation's purposes, "institutional sustainability" concerns the extent to which governments and other national actors are better able – now and in the future – to build social protection systems and to design and deliver effective social protection programmes. "Financial sustainability" has to do with the extent to which state social protection actors can access – now and in the future – sufficient resources to deliver adequate and comprehensive social protection at national scale; or, more realistically in low income, fragile and conflict-affected contexts, to progressively scale up the adequacy, coverage and comprehensiveness of their systems (EQ 4.3).

148. The sustainability of WFP contributions to national social protection programmes depends on the degree of national prioritization, government engagement and explicit transition arrangements. Evidence derived from this evaluation provides some insights into the likelihood of sustainability and the factors that drive this. WFP interventions are more likely to be institutionally sustainable when:

<sup>135</sup> Case study interviews.

<sup>136</sup> Manley J, Alderman H, Gentilini U. More evidence on cash transfers and child nutritional outcomes: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMJ Global Health*. 2022; 7:e008233. doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2021-008233.

<sup>137</sup> WFP. 2026. Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Approaches to Targeting and Prioritization for Food and Nutrition Assistance.

<sup>138</sup> OECD DAC. 2019. Better Criteria for Better Evaluation: Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/better-criteria-for-better-evaluation\\_15a9c26b-en.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/better-criteria-for-better-evaluation_15a9c26b-en.html) accessed on 26/11/2025.

- states request, contract and finance WFP to provide technical assistance or to deliver on their behalf. Examples of this delivery model in middle-income stable case study contexts include Peru, the Philippines and Pakistan. Sustainability, however, is not guaranteed, as is evident from the Pakistan case, discussed above, where decentralization and uneven buy-in to an intervention is putting sustainability at risk; AND/OR
- WFP delivers a component of a government programme on behalf of a government, with financing from a government leveraging international financial institution resources, alongside technical assistance (as seen in the delivery of *Merankabandi* to refugees in Burundi with financing from the World Bank, and WFP programmes in Lebanon, Somalia, Mozambique and Lebanon);
- WFP support addresses a problem of high interest to government and models solutions adapted to the realities they face with realistic prospects of financing. This requires that WFP staff have the required combination of technical and relationship-building skills to identify and design such models. The likelihood of sustainability is enhanced if WFP works in collaboration with other partners that can ensure long-term financing to government. Support to the establishment of the DCAN and payment and monitoring platform in the social registry in Mauritania are such examples, as is the piloting of local procurement in school feeding in Burundi; AND/OR
- WFP's complementary actions include a transition plan agreed from the outset with the government and other partners. This requires clarity between the concept of handover (a specific point in time when ownership of a programme is transferred to national actors or partners) and transition (a gradual non-linear process of shifting responsibility for planning, managing, implementing, monitoring and financing good quality programming from external support to national ownership).<sup>139</sup> What seems to be important is clear incremental multi-level capacity-building targets with progressively greater government involvement in the intervention, and, at some point a formal commitment by government to assume responsibility once core capacities are in place. For example, in Somalia the transition of the SRSP, *Baxnaano*, was planned from the outset and sequenced by function, as agreed with the Government, and closely associated with capacity building support, which enabled the Government to take over full programme management and implementation responsibilities within five years. Similarly, in Lebanon WFP support to the Government over more than a decade has systematically contributed to institutional capacities and progressively allowed the transitioning of social assistance delivery. In Burundi, school feeding programmes have been progressively handed over to the Government in line with a transition plan.

149. In low-income, fragile and conflict-affected contexts, the challenges of promoting sustainability are greater and require WFP to build relationships and work in close collaboration with governments and partners to tease out issues, contextualize solutions and find viable funding sources. Complementary actions demonstrate the least potential for sustainability when they remain donor-funded and parallel to state systems.

150. WFP's effects on increasing domestic resource allocation for social protection are still mostly limited to school feeding and linking disaster risk financing to SRSP, but growing partnership with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) provides a promising pathway. Successful advocacy by WFP on domestic financing is most frequent in school feeding support, which has contributed to an increase in the number of countries with domestic budget allocations for school feeding from 33 countries in 2023 to 45 in 2024.<sup>140</sup> In general, other United Nations partners and international financial institutions play a more important role in advocating on issues of fiscal space for social protection (World Bank, IMF, UNDP, ILO); so linking to these

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<sup>139</sup> WFP. 2025. Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Programme Transition and Handover Strategies – Terms of Reference.

<sup>140</sup> WFP. 2025. Annual Performance Report.

actors is important for WFP in its efforts to promote financial sustainability of national social protection systems.

151. In recognition of this, WFP has been working to grow its relationship with the IMF over the past five years. This partnership on social spending has allowed WFP to share its analytics to support IMF efforts to advocate for increasing social spending floors in several countries, including, but not limited to, school feeding, and encourage other reform measures related to food security, adaptive social protection and disaster risk management.<sup>141</sup> For example, in Kenya WFP worked with the IMF to identify benchmarks for social protection and cash-based transfer spending, which contributed to the inclusion of domestic financing requirements in the new national social protection policy.<sup>142</sup>

152. In Haiti the CSPE found evidence that WFP's prolonged engagement in support of the Government had led to more sustainable financing of social protection. WFP played a key facilitation role bringing together donors including the IMF and the World Bank to create a coalition that made implementation of the previously adopted National Social Protection and Promotion Policy a structural benchmark tied to receiving IMF support, thereby strengthening system sustainability.<sup>143</sup>

153. In the Caribbean, WFP commissioned research on linking disaster risk financing to SRSP, and incentivized numerous governments in that region to expand their Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF) insurance policies by paying to top them up on the condition that an equivalent percentage of any payouts would be used to fund direct transfers to individual beneficiaries through social protection programmes in the event that a shock triggered insurance payouts. Grenada received a payout of over USD 4 million after Hurricane Beryl, which it used to fund a new social protection programme that delivered transfers to hurricane-affected households, again contributing to increasing shock- and conflict-sensitive national social protection. Building on this experience, since 2025, WFP has been supporting governments in ten countries to create links between microinsurance payouts for climate-related shocks and social protection programmes.

## 2.2.4 The role of WFP modalities and internal coherence on effectiveness

**Finding 15.** WFP's technical assistance to building social protection systems has generally been appreciated by governments and other partners. However, country offices are not consistently looking at this work holistically and ensuring that each year's efforts build on achievements and lessons learned in previous years, gearing progress towards medium-term goals, despite CSP social protection objectives adopting a medium-term view.

154. Technical assistance to governments was the primary focus of the Strategy and has been a key pathway in WFP's efforts to achieve results in social protection. This has included analytical work, embedded consultancies, coaching, South-South exchange visits and training. According to governments and partners in case study countries, this support is highly appreciated. In particular, WFP is seen as responsive and flexible in responding to requests for support.

155. **However, in case studies technical assistance activities often lacked clear milestones** for the envisioned incremental progress in building towards the higher-order results envisioned in the theory of change. The evaluation also found limited examples of robust country capacity gap assessments and capacity strengthening plans developed with governments that would enable technical assistance support to be effectively prioritized. Across CSPEs only two (Uganda and India) are unequivocally positive about the quality of these assessments and plans. Five other CSPEs that spoke to this found either that none exist or that they need further strengthening.

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<sup>141</sup> Evaluation KII.

<sup>142</sup> Evaluation KII and document review.

<sup>143</sup> WFP. 2023. Evaluation of Haiti WFP CSP (2018-2022).

**Finding 16.** WFP's delivery of social protection programmes on behalf of, and contracted by, governments, including a few examples of on-demand services, has been successful: delivery has filled important gaps in national social protection systems in the short term; and use of or alignment with government delivery systems and capacity building support have contributed to building the national social protection system in the longer term. However, this role needs to be understood as inherently transitional, and there is a risk that reduced field presence and staff reductions could make this modality less attractive to partners.

156. **WFP has played a key role as an implementer of social protection programmes for governments.** In Lebanon, WFP has implemented major elements of the national social programmes at scale on behalf of the Government, with funding from the Government leveraging World Bank and European Union resources, and reached 312,000 individuals with transfers in 2024.<sup>144</sup>

157. In both Somalia and Burundi, there was a concerted effort on the part of WFP to build relationships, to present WFP's experience effectively and to be prepared for any opportunities that might arise. In Burundi, a key lesson learned was the importance of building relationships with both the Government and external partners. In Pakistan, where WFP helped design the Benazir Nashonuma Programme with the Government based on its modelling and evaluative work, and then was asked to implement it, the programme is financed from the Government of Pakistan's own resources.

158. In Mozambique, WFP played an important assurance role jointly with UNICEF by implementing the government response to COVID-19 (under a government-funded project leveraging World Bank resources), in provinces that were experiencing delays in government delivery of transfers. Then, in 2024, the World Bank contracted WFP to be the third-party provider of the long-term government social protection cash transfer programme, for a value of nearly USD 20 million, scaled up to nearly USD 41 million in 2025.<sup>145</sup>

159. **WFP's on-demand service provision has made important contributions to national social protection programmes.** On-demand service provision provides another variation on WFP delivering on behalf of governments and, in a few cases, this is clearly linked to the social protection programmes of governments. The Strategic Evaluation of the Supply Chain Roadmap found that the vast majority of on-demand service requests have been in relation to protracted or sudden-onset crises, but in the case of Guatemala and Honduras on-demand service requests were related to procuring food for the national nutrition and school meals programmes, which are important elements of the national social protection systems.<sup>146</sup> That evaluation contrasted these cases, however, highlighting a key difference. In Guatemala the on-demand service procurement was not inclusive of capacity strengthening to encourage sustainability of the efficiency, economy and transparency gains WFP achieved. In Honduras the on-demand service food procurement was considered a core part of the WFP programme to support capacity strengthening of the school meals programme.

160. The on-demand service has played a significant role in contributing to national social protection programme delivery, but until recently WFP corporate practice has been to firewall the on-demand service from WFP programmes. Thus, WFP monitoring and reporting has not considered whether and how such procurement services might be contributing to social protection. None of the case studies selected for this evaluation featured government requests for the on-demand service to support their social protection programme.

161. **The main reasons WFP was chosen to deliver on behalf of governments relate closely to gaps in domestic capacity and WFP's strengths related to field presence, operational capacity and its ability to connect social protection and humanitarian assistance.** Country office staff in some of the countries where WFP has employed this modality noted that the planned closure of field offices is likely to

<sup>144</sup> Lebanon ACR 2024.

<sup>145</sup> Draft Mozambique CSPE (2025).

<sup>146</sup> WFP. 2026. Strategic Evaluation of the Supply Chain Roadmap.

impact the comparative advantages that positioned WFP to provide this type of support; and WFP's ability to recruit and retain high-quality international and national staff might be under threat due to budget cuts.

**Finding 17.** There are positive examples of pilot projects related to social protection in countries where governments have directly commissioned WFP to undertake them, or where objectives have been clearly defined in advance. However, in other cases, pilot projects have been less effective than other ways of working on social protection.

162. WFP piloting of new social protection programmes and approaches has led to expanded quantity and quality when governments are closely engaged. CSPEs often include descriptions of social protection pilots, and conclude that some were successful and some not, but there is rarely analysis of why, so this finding relies on evidence from case study countries.

163. Pilot programmes that respond to a clear government request or national need have more potential to contribute to social protection. The governments of Peru, Pakistan, the Philippines and India have asked WFP to run or scale up social protection pilots on their behalf, and these have led to positive results. The Pakistan case is described above. In Peru, WFP has run a pilot of electronic cash transfers for the government social protection programme, a voucher scheme, and a programme linking school meals, rice fortification and local producers. Rice fortification pilots have also featured in India, with fortified rice subsequently scaled up in government-led school meals programmes.<sup>147</sup> In the Philippines, WFP's involvement in the design of the pilot food voucher scheme was at the request of the Government. WFP assisted the Department of Social Welfare and Development with the design and implementation and provided technical assistance for handover and roll-out at the country level. Successful school feeding pilots, which had subsequently been handed over to and scaled up by governments were also common across case study countries.

164. In Niger while the small pilot recently launched by WFP was not initiated by the Government, it has government approval and a clear purpose. The pilot, paired with an impact assessment, will randomly assign households to receive transfers for two years, four years, or not at all and then compare outcomes after four years.<sup>148</sup> The Government is not yet fully convinced of the value of cash transfers, and the international community has been supporting lean season assistance that re-targets every year. The pilot thus has a clear focus on generating evidence on the impact of regular, multi-annual cash transfers for advocacy purposes.

165. Pilot programmes designed without adequate consideration of government priorities, capacities and potential for uptake had limited lasting social protection results. On the other hand, some pilot programmes described as social protection in the evaluation's case study countries seem to have lacked a clear definition of what exactly they were piloting and why. The evaluation found multiple examples of such pilots in two case study countries. These pilots are not entirely disconnected from government: there have always been references in the design to the national social protection system (though sometimes aspirational), and formal approval from government and steering committees that involve them. However, from programme documents and interview data,<sup>149</sup> it is unclear in many cases exactly what problem or issue (if any) the government had identified in their national social protection system, and why WFP (or the United Nations consortium in some cases) thought their design might offer a solution to this. Since most pilots were implemented through non-governmental organization partners, the available capacities and resources were never the same as those available in government ministries or agencies, and no explicit account appears to have been taken of this, in terms of evidence generated.

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<sup>147</sup> WFP Peru CSPE (2019-2023).

<sup>148</sup> WFP Centre for Evaluation and Development. 2025. Pre-Analysis Plan: Impact assessment of the "Paradigm shifts for the lean season response in the Sahel".

<sup>149</sup> Multiple sources of data were used in accordance with the principle of triangulation.

166. Unsurprisingly, given these issues, the evaluation team was unable to detect concrete outcomes of these pilots in terms of influence on the national social protection system (whether direct scale-up of the approach piloted or otherwise). This is despite some of these pilots having undergone evaluations that found them to be successful against their own objectives, and it suggests that interventions might have been mislabelled “pilots” when in fact they were small projects with no clear strategy for advocacy or scale-up. In one case, the first ever urban cash transfer was piloted with a government at a cost of USD 10 million, but the intervention was not sustained, nor did WFP seem to have a strategy to promote this. In another case, a joined-up social protection model was tested in one district, again at considerable cost (USD 4 million for WFP as part of a joint United Nations project), but again there were no discernible outcomes for the wider system. The relevant CSPE also highlighted cost efficiency concerns about this project.

167. Because pilots brought extra funding and staffing, when the pilot ended, the country office would experience a sudden reduction in staff capacity, preventing the ability to pursue potential learning and adoption. This meant that whatever learning did emerge – and most pilots had some learning points – staff were overstretched and unable to pursue learnings through to policy dialogue. In some cases, WFP missed opportunities in this way. For example, in one case, a top recommendation from the evaluation of the pilot was to work with the relevant ministry to cost community-level social protection interventions. This could have promoted handover to government but never happened.

### 2.3 WFP’s comparative advantages for support to social protection

**Finding 18.** WFP’s main comparative advantages in support for social protection are its operational capacities, field presence, skills and relationships in disaster risk management and, more broadly, responsiveness and problem-solving culture, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings. However, the ability to provide relevant technical advice to governments on social protection operational issues does not flow automatically from WFP’s comparative advantages. It requires WFP to adapt its own operational solutions to the realities faced by a government in a particular context. This is a challenging endeavour and requires WFP to maintain and combine a range of technical and soft skills. Moreover, each dimension of WFP’s comparative advantage may be at risk due to funding cuts.

168. **The evaluation found that the Strategy correctly identified WFP’s comparative advantages for support to social protection.** The Strategy identified field presence, operational experience, analytical capacities, food security and nutrition expertise, and ability to work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus as the key elements of the WFP value proposition for its work with governments and others in support to social protection. Primary and secondary evidence collected for the evaluation generally confirmed these broad areas, although different combinations were more or less relevant in different contexts.

169. Specific comparative advantages that position WFP to support elements of national social protection should not be confused with an overall unique advantage over other international actors, and the Strategy recognizes this. The Mid-Term Evaluation of WFP’s Strategic Plan<sup>150</sup> found that WFP’s value proposition is clear in some areas, including social protection. The mid-term evaluation found that “WFP’s comparative advantage is not always static but can be context-specific” and that “WFP is rarely the lead agency in country on development themes that require long-term investment and systems development”. The evaluation also noted that social protection external stakeholders “see WFP playing a role in selected domains”, while WFP’s internal narrative about comparative advantages is sometimes “insufficiently focused on sub-areas/specific skills within broader domains where WFP [...] is playing a supportive rather than lead role”.

<sup>150</sup> WFP. 2024. Mid-Term Evaluation of WFP’s Strategic Plan, OEV/2023/019, page 48, paragraphs 142, 143 and 144.

170. In fragile and conflict-affected settings, WFP's ability to quickly activate a full transfer delivery chain to deliver at scale is an important advantage – including vulnerability assessment, targeting, data management, transfer modality and value setting, procurement and delivery, verification and assurance, complaints and feedback mechanisms, and monitoring. In instances where a transition from humanitarian assistance to government-led and owned social protection programmes is possible, WFP's field presence can supplement government capacity until it is sufficient to manage the full delivery chain of a programme. In more stable and higher capacity contexts, these same advantages can also be translated into technical advice related, in particular, to SRSP and data systems. All the above dimensions of comparative advantage might be at risk, due to funding cuts – for example, through closure of field offices (as slated in Burundi and Somalia), and reduction of technical and diverse skills.<sup>151</sup>

171. **WFP's flexibility and responsiveness are appreciated by governments.** This is another element of WFP's operational culture that often goes unmentioned in internal discussions of comparative advantages. The Summary of Evaluative Evidence on Country Capacity Strengthening (2025)<sup>152</sup> also noted that WFP's adaptability and flexibility were key to enabling the organization to adapt and respond to unforeseen challenges, such as those posed by the pandemic. This was characterized as an eagerness to solve problems, an ability to jump in and do whatever necessary to respond to needs and get things done, as well as to bring in technical assistance more quickly than some other partners.<sup>153</sup> The ability of WFP to layer, or switch back and forth between, delivery and technical assistance is another dimension of flexibility that is also valued.

172. WFP's expertise in digital information systems and data management can be a comparative advantage, but this offering needs to be refined. Such capacities were frequently cited as a key comparative advantage for WFP support to social protection in case studies (Caribbean, Philippines, Niger, Iraq) and in multiple CSPEs.<sup>154</sup> However, some external partners question if WFP is always uniquely positioned and capable of this work. Ongoing WFP corporate efforts to define its role in DASS is discussed further in Box 2.

173. WFP has some areas of programmatic and sectoral expertise in relation to social protection. **WFP's unique strengths were widely acknowledged in school feeding, SRSP and food security programming.** WFP is uniquely positioned to support school feeding, is recognized as the global expert in this area, and increasingly seeks to model and advocate for better nutrition-sensitive approaches through HGSF.<sup>155</sup> In SRSP, WFP has leveraged its experience in emergency response, longstanding relationships with national disaster management agencies and relationships with social protection ministries to enable vertical and horizontal expansion of social assistance programmes in times of shock, and to institutionalize SRSP mechanisms. WFP has also demonstrated capabilities to support strengthening the underlying social protection systems, enabling better preparedness and resilience to shocks. WFP's more recent work in disaster risk financing also represents an emerging comparative advantage for SRSP (for example, Caribbean CCRIF). WFP's expertise in food security and nutrition was widely cited externally (with some mandate overlap with UNICEF on nutrition noted).

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<sup>151</sup> Country case study KIIs.

<sup>152</sup> WFP. 2025. Summary of evaluation evidence: Country capacity strengthening.

<https://www.wfp.org/publications/summary-evaluation-evidence-country-capacity-strengthening> accessed on 29/11/25.

<sup>153</sup> National KIIs.

<sup>154</sup> Including CSPEs for Bolivia, Central African Republic, Indonesia, Jordan and the Philippines.

<sup>155</sup> See the [Strategic Evaluation of the Contribution of School Feeding Activities to the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals \(2021\)](#).

## 2.4 Key internal factors influencing WFP social protection results

### 2.4.1 Internal factors influencing results

**Finding 19.** High-quality, long-tenure staff with social protection experience and relationship skills represented the most frequent critical success factor for WFP support to social protection. Conversely, staff turnover and rotation were the most important hindering factors. In some contexts, a lack of specialized social protection capacity among WFP staff continues to hinder.

174. The substantial growth in the WFP workforce for social protection has enabled increased engagement with the social protection sector and contributions to national social protection. From 2019 to 2023, WFP invested in ensuring it can secure and maintain sufficient internal technical capacities to provide social protection support where required, a key assumption underpinning the Strategy's theory of change. To address the findings and recommendations of the 2019 Safety Nets Policy Evaluation, and support development and implementation of the Strategy, the Social Protection Unit (PRO-S) has undertaken many critical initiatives, which have cumulatively resulted in improved WFP internal capabilities and capacity to engage in social protection, in ways that are relevant and aligned to good practice.

175. According to an internal census conducted twice by PRO-S between 2021 and 2023, the scale of the WFP workforce (staff spending at least 50 percent of their time on social protection across all locations, grades and contract types) grew 71 percent, from a cadre of 127 to 217 staff. Across country offices, the social protection workforce grew by 66 percent, with the percentage of national officers almost doubling (from 16 percent of total country office social protection workforce to 31 percent). By 2020, WFP had regional social protection advisors in all six regional bureaux, and by 2023 five of the six regional bureaux had teams of social protection experts. This suggests responsiveness to findings of the Safety Nets Policy Evaluation, and priorities of the WFP People Policy and Strategy, related to the importance of national officers and competitively graded positions. However, as of 2023, WFP still relied heavily on short-term contractual arrangements for social protection roles (45 percent of workforce for social protection in country offices, 35 percent in regional bureaux, and 60 percent in headquarters).

176. WFP has increased the scale and capacity of its social protection workforce through a multipronged effort to "build, borrow and buy" expertise. Efforts to build staff capacity have taken the form of tailored trainings for regional- and country-level people and development of a Social Protection Fundamentals online course hosted on WeLearn, the corporate training platform. Usage statistics from WeLearn show that many participants in the online course are not social protection specialists. Of the 688 people who had taken the training in October 2025, 293 (43 percent) do not work in social protection, 230 (33 percent) work at least half of their time in social protection, and 165 (24 percent) work full-time in social protection. A strong majority (588, 86 percent) who took the training were based in country offices or field and area offices.

177. In 2023, PRO-S engaged in outreach to junior professional officers working in WFP on social protection to identify career interests and training needs and directed them to relevant learning opportunities to bolster the internal talent "pipeline". The unit also hosted a global retreat for 126 WFP people working in social protection in 2022 to share and discuss experiences, challenges and good practices. PRO-S has also generated or commissioned numerous knowledge products that consolidate information on external thinking and practice or illustrate WFP work in social protection through case studies. Until 2024, PRO-S published an annual review of WFP support to social protection. These knowledge products could ostensibly serve to share knowledge across WFP offices, although limited evidence was found of their use internally. A few evaluation interviews suggest that these products are more helpful in positioning WFP externally.

178. Arrangements to "borrow" expertise included establishing long-term agreements with specialized organizations capable of providing social protection research and technical support, first established in

2018 and expanded through a tender in 2024. External expertise was also engaged through a global roster of social protection consultants established by PRO-S in 2021, although the roster is now depleted.<sup>156</sup> In 2022, PRO-S established a Global Learning Facility with support from the University of Wolverhampton and the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) to provide short-term social protection technical support to country and regional offices. This facility ended in early 2024, primarily due to a lack of funding and resources to manage it. In several of the evaluation's case study countries, CSPs or WFP regional or country social protection strategies were informed by analytical work contracted to IDS.

179. In 2022, WFP established the social protection "FITPool" to support the "buy talent" acquisition approach. Established in 2022, this system facilitated recruitment and competitive selection of experts who could serve as candidates for fixed-term and consultant positions in WFP. WFP headquarters, regional offices and country offices have also recruited external expertise through a variety of externally advertised job postings. External WFP partners and key experts in the sector consistently voiced appreciation for the substantive upscaling of WFP's cadre of knowledgeable and experienced social protection staff. They noted that this has enabled WFP to engage more effectively with others in the social protection space and better support governments. However, in 2024, WFP instituted a hiring freeze, which remains in place. This has severely constrained the use of the "buy talent" acquisition approach, particularly for headquarters (including regional offices) and country offices not operating in corporate scale-up or corporate attention emergencies. The majority of the social protection workforce in headquarters continues to be contracted on a short-term consultant basis, thus not benefiting from career growth opportunities.

180. The attributes and scale of WFP's workforce for social protection have not been reassessed since 2023. Anecdotal evidence from evaluation interviews suggests that, in the face of dramatically reduced financial resources, multiple country offices and regional offices have understandably had to reduce staff capacity, including for support to social protection – sometimes through elimination of positions and other times by combining functional coverage ("double and triple hatting").

181. Staff turnover driven by the WFP practice of rotating international staff every few years is another potential hindering factor for work in social protection, although evaluation case studies suggest that this problem has diminished in some places. For example, in Burundi, continuity was cited by partners as a relative strength of WFP compared to others, and in the Caribbean multi-country office (MCO) the previous director and the head of programme each served six-year terms. Short tenures impede relationship development with governments and partners, reduce the depth of understanding about the context and dimensions of government systems, and can lead to changes in direction or prioritization within country offices. Rotation can also lead to a loss of dedicated social protection capacity in instances where an experienced social protection person has no career opportunities elsewhere in WFP related to social protection. In at least one case this could be seen as a long-term enabling factor because the former social protection officer was rotated into a position as head of programme in a different country office – thus potentially feeding social protection experience into the pipeline of WFP leadership talent. National staff are often credited as the greatest source of continuity and contextual understanding, and the growth in this component of the social protection workforces is enabling. Yet key informants noted challenges in providing career growth opportunities for national staff. Even national staff capacities can be lost when there is turnover due to project funding cycles and, as noted earlier, continuity is now also affected by reductions in staff positions.

182. While social protection experience and expertise have improved, internal and external stakeholders stressed that knowledge and understanding of related concepts remains uneven among country office and other senior leadership. This can be particularly problematic where high-level engagement with government and partners is required.

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<sup>156</sup> As per WFP human resources policies, candidates who were competitively selected to be on the roster are only included for a two-year period, after which many found jobs in WFP or other organizations.

**Finding 20.** Poor knowledge management across contexts reduces the value of evidence generated. Critical gaps in results-based management, including the lack of clarity on the key benchmarks for assessing the results of its support to social protection, hinder learning, adaptive management and reporting of progress.

183. Frequently acknowledged deficiencies in the WFP corporate approach to performance management, particularly the weaknesses in measures for capacity strengthening and lack of qualitative results monitoring, hinder learning and adaptive management of WFP support to social protection. This is particularly true because success in social protection is primarily about strengthening national systems and capacities. To do this well requires having clear (qualitative) objectives, indicators of success and milestones to track and review progress, and then to adapt the approach to evidence on progress and identified constraints. Examples of the challenges related to assessing the progress towards results intended in the Strategy and evaluation theory of change primarily relate to the evaluation limitation noted in Section 1 regarding major shortcomings in WFP's ability to track, monitor and report on the results of its country capacity strengthening and technical assistance work. The implications of these shortcomings in results-based management approaches have been detailed in many previous WFP evaluations.<sup>157</sup>

184. The CSP policy evaluation<sup>158</sup> found that knowledge management systems in WFP “inadequately support results-based management” and that the corporate results framework “fails to adequately capture key dimensions of WFP work [...including] country capacity strengthening.”<sup>159</sup> A 2023 synthesis regarding WFP's performance management and monitoring identified “a need to expand qualitative data collection, analysis and reporting to [...] support WFP's ability to learn and adapt using its monitoring information” and the “difficulty of relying solely on quantitative measures [...for] country capacity strengthening”. The 2021 WFP synthesis on country capacity strengthening<sup>160</sup> found that only one third of sampled evaluations (13) in their sample (47) “recorded any data for CCS-related indicators or targets”. While the various findings and recommendations on strengthening results-based management for WFP country capacity strengthening work were incorporated into the 2022 Country Capacity Strengthening Policy Update,<sup>161</sup> and subsequent guidance and tools.

185. Many country offices among the evaluation case studies lacked any specific objectives on social protection-related country capacity strengthening linked to milestones or indicators. Peru was the most well-developed in this regard, organizing WFP's support for SRSP around five types of interventions – sensitization, capacity assessment, capacity development, testing and evaluation, and knowledge management. Each phase is broken down into concrete, time-bound activities with clearly assigned responsibilities across WFP Peru's technical units, focal points and government partners. However, even when country offices advance in these ways, corporate systems seem to constrain results-based management. A key finding on Peru from a previous evaluation was that the corporate indicators do not fit

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<sup>157</sup> In the global document review, 28 evaluations (both centralized and decentralized) were coded as containing evidence of social protection-related CCS monitoring data being inadequate. For example, the Kenya CSPE dedicated a finding to the fact that “there are major difficulties in using WFP corporate outcome and output indicators as a basis for measuring progress in country capacity strengthening. The indexes developed for emergency preparedness and response, and school meals management, have proved to be quite adequate when applied in Kenya. However, this is not the case for social protection”.

<sup>158</sup> WFP. 2023. OEV/2022/022.

<sup>159</sup> Also stressed in WFP. 2021. Evaluation Synthesis of Evidence and Lessons on Country Capacity Strengthening from Decentralized Evaluations, and WFP. 2023. Evaluation Synthesis of WFP's Performance Measurement and Monitoring.

<sup>160</sup> WFP. 2021. Synthesis of Evidence and Lessons on Country Capacity Strengthening from Decentralized Evaluations.

<sup>161</sup> WFP. 2022. Country Capacity Strengthening Policy Update, WFP/EB.A/2022/5-A.

the nature of the approach to social protection, for which reason many achievements are not adequately measured.<sup>162</sup>

186. These challenges are exemplified in one of the evaluation's country case studies. There, five successive annual country reports (ACRs) described WFP's technical assistance to the development of a social registry, with no commentary regarding how the pace of progress compared to expectations, what the constraints were, or whether or how the design of technical assistance had been, or needed to be, modified. Such information gaps make it difficult to determine what has worked and why. More importantly this suggests that programme managers, particularly within the context of high staff turnover, lack the data needed for effective results-based management and course correction, and are less able to stand on the shoulders of previous work to ensure incremental progress.

187. Most WFP reporting is annual (annual country reports and annual performance reports), while technical assistance objectives for social protection system strengthening in CSPs tend to present a medium- to long-term vision of change. Thus, **there is a disjunct between WFP programme design (in CSPs) and performance reporting.**

**Finding 21.** Despite some progress in securing more multi-year funding, short-term project-style funding for WFP social protection activities is inherently at odds with commitments to long-term systems strengthening. However, the CLTF represents a valuable approach for identifying good models for engaging in support to social protection.

188. Organizational changes necessitated by the considerable drop in funding for WFP's work since 2023 have stalled some progress in implementing the Strategy. The dramatic implications of the broader funding environment over the past two years are only beginning to be detected by the evaluation. Restructuring efforts, combining different services under the Programme and Policy Guidance (PPG) department, coupled with the reduction in programme support and administrative budgetary resources for headquarters (now including regional offices), have slowed the progress in implementing aspects of the Strategy's implementation plan, particularly around workforce development.<sup>163</sup>

189. Multi-year<sup>164</sup> predictable funding is important for WFP engagement in social protection to enable medium- and long-term commitments to governments and partners. The CSP policy evaluation<sup>165</sup> found WFP's statutory reliance on voluntary contributions was a hindering factor, resulting in country office portfolios that "continue to reflect funding opportunities that are often short-term and thus not optimally aligned with the ambitions of CSPs." In recent years, WFP has made progress towards securing more multi-year funding, including from governments leveraging international financial institution resources. In 2024, WFP reported USD 1,230 million in multi-year contributions, representing 12.6 percent of total new confirmed contributions, which was a 9.8 percent increase over multi-year contributions confirmed in 2023.<sup>166</sup>

190. WFP's funding model, which relies heavily on the volume of food or cash distributed to generate funding for staffing, also creates challenges for the predictability of WFP support provided to governments and does not adequately facilitate work on country capacity strengthening outside of large operations. The

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<sup>162</sup> Programa Mundial de Alimentos (PMA/WFP). 2021. Perú: Evaluación del Resultado Estratégico 1 (SO1) del Plan Estratégico de País (2017–2021). Evaluación descentralizada encargada por la Oficina de País del PMA en el Perú y realizada por la Oficina Regional para América Latina y el Caribe (PMA–RBP) con el apoyo de evaluadores externos. Septiembre de 2021.

<sup>163</sup> Evaluation key informant interviews.

<sup>164</sup> Until 2025, WFP defined multi-year contributions as funding to WFP for more than one year, while the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Grand Bargain specified multi-year funding as having a duration (or validity period) of at least 24 months. Starting in 2025, WFP has adopted the Grand Bargain definition and will apply this to all reporting moving forward. WFP/EB.A/2025/4-A/Rev.1.

<sup>165</sup> WFP. 2023. OEV/2022/022, page 60.

<sup>166</sup> WFP. 2025. Annual Performance Report for 2024, WFP/EB.A/2025/4-A/Rev.1.

headquarters workforce that supports country office social protection efforts is also funded by primarily extra-budgetary resources rather than the programme support and administration budget.

### **Box 3: WFP strategic investments in social protection**

On a small scale, certain strategic internal investment funds have supported WFP's work in social protection. The WFP 2030 Fund (2019 to 2022) and the CLTF (since 2023) supported some country office work related to social protection. The WFP 2030 Fund provided USD 15 million in seed funding for 41 projects including some related to social protection support. The CLTF expanded and improved upon this strategic internal financing, seeking to identify promising models for WFP's longer-term work that have "potential to be transformative, catalytic and sustainable"<sup>167</sup>. The Mid-Term Evaluation of the Strategic Plan<sup>168</sup> found that the creation of the CLTF provided "an important vehicle for investing in better developing knowledge and evidence of what works in [WFP] longer-term programming." CLTF investments are focused on three areas of WFP's work (transition from humanitarian assistance towards increased self-sufficiency, system strengthening and climate change adaptation).

Out of 38 investment proposals, 10 country office projects were selected and the CLTF allocated a total of USD 63.8 million to them.<sup>169</sup> These included six country office projects related to social protection.<sup>170</sup> CLTF funding is meant to serve as seed funding, and has catalysed an estimated USD 343 million in additional funding<sup>171</sup> based on multi-year plans each project developed in 2024 in cooperation with host-governments, international financial institutions, and other partners. Each CLTF-funded project is required to conduct regular monitoring and develop either impact assessments, research or evaluation plans. The Office of Evaluation will commission an independent evaluation of the CLTF to take place in 2027.<sup>172</sup>

Source: Evaluation key informant interviews and document review

191. The new WFP Strategic Plan (2026-2029)<sup>173</sup> notes that, given the outlook for WFP's funding environment, WFP will need to "do better with less" for the foreseeable future. Given that much of WFP's support to social protection is through technical support, which does not necessarily require large-scale financing, this may also present opportunities for WFP to add greater value to national social protection with a refined and focused offer. The evidence generated by this evaluation will be important for informing decisions about WFP's future direction in its support to national social protection.

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<sup>167</sup> WFP. 2025. Update on the implementation of the Changing Lives Transformation Fund, WFP/EB.1/2025/6-B.

<sup>168</sup> WFP. 2024. Mid-Term Evaluation of WFP's Strategic Plan, OEV/2023/019.

<sup>169</sup> WFP. 2025. Update on the implementation of the Changing Lives Transformation Fund, WFP/EB.1/2025/6-B and evaluation KIIs.

<sup>170</sup> In Bangladesh (SRSP), Iraq (support to Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs for single registry), Kenya (SP policy and legislation, expand coverage of government-led school feeding programme), Niger (lean-season programme, social registry), Peru (HGSF), and the Republic of Tanzania (SRSP).

<sup>171</sup> This includes new funds raised directly as a result of CLTF investments (USD 43.4 million) and funds that were committed or in discussion prior to CLTF investments but have since been pooled or reallocated towards CLTF project objectives (USD 300.3 million). WFP/EB.1/2025/6-B.

<sup>172</sup> WFP. 2024. Evaluation function workplan (2025-2027), WFP/EB.2/2024/5-A/1/Rev.1.

<sup>173</sup> WFP/EB.2/2025/3-B/Rev.1.

# 3. Conclusions and recommendations

## 3.1. Conclusions

192. Conclusion 1: The quality of the Strategy was high, and the broad menu of potential activities it presents allows for adaptation to context, but the complementary actions modality diluted focus and led to mis-categorizing things as social protection. The Strategy remains relevant and appropriate, and its two priorities are focused on WFP's mandate. The Strategy was developed using a strong evidence-base and internal and external consultations. It was relevant, well-aligned to prevailing social protection concepts, and internally and externally coherent. The Strategy demonstrated the many ways WFP can add value to national social protection systems and programmes and provided a sound theory of change, although its modalities and assumptions could be expanded to match more recent WFP practice and lessons learned. The practical arrangements for implementing the Strategy were strong, but implementation of the institutional changes envisioned has slowed since 2023 due to the effects of budget cuts and organizational restructuring, and more effort is needed to fully implement it and develop criteria to prioritize social protection engagements.

193. Conclusion 2: WFP has made substantial progress towards establishing itself as a credible and valued actor in the social protection sector since 2019. The Strategy signalled to WFP internally and partners externally that the organization was committed to strengthening and working through government systems – not simply implementing its own safety-net-like programmes and operations. The rapid development of WFP workforce capabilities and its positioning in support of social protection were accomplished through strategic investments in: expertise at headquarters, regional and country office levels (including technical and soft skills); knowledge generation; relationship-building and partnerships; and participation in global coordination and policy forums. This has strongly contributed to WFP's credibility in this space, coherence with other actors and appreciation for what the organization can contribute.

194. Conclusion 3: WFP's programmatic and delivery strengths related to the Strategy's two priorities position the organization well to play a distinctive and valuable role in the social protection sector, but weakness in connecting resilience activities to social protection activities is a missed opportunity. School feeding remains WFP's flagship social protection area, at both macro and programmatic levels. WFP's success at transitioning school feeding to government ownership while continuing to provide technical assistance and introduce quality enhancements, such as home-grown school feeding, is a success model. WFP has effectively raised the visibility of SRSP and helped leverage its longstanding relationships and experience in disaster management to coordinate SRSP initiatives, although bridging government ministry interests remains challenging in some contexts. Support from WFP reinforces underlying social protection system elements. This, and helping to link disaster risk financing to national social protection systems, are both important ways WFP enhances shock-responsiveness and sustainability. Nutrition-sensitive social protection contributions were less prevalent, but support to nutrition through social protection programmes, nutrition analytical support and efforts to encourage integration of fortified food have demonstrated results. Focusing on these aspects of social protection differentiates WFP from other United Nations partners to a large extent, although sustaining the gains in these areas of somewhat overlapping mandates – in collaboration and complementarity with UNICEF as seen in many evaluation case studies – is essential. WFP could also focus more on how SRSP and contributions to general social protection capacities in a government are contributing to food security outcomes. Across all interventions, success requires WFP

to be ready and able to adapt its programming approaches to match government needs and sustainability concerns. While the theory for social protection contributions to resilience is clear in the Strategy and the resilience policy, in practice there is little evidence of such programme integration, with these activities targeted to different populations and most WFP resilience activities implemented directly with community-level partners.

195. Conclusion 4: WFP's knowledge and the capacity developed for its humanitarian work have enabled its support to social protection in fragile environments, building social registries, and other improvements in the quality and quantity of national social protection. However, there is more work to be done to ensure that individuals experiencing discrimination or obstacles in accessing assistance are adequately considered. Drawing on its strong field presence in fragile and conflict-affected environments and its food security and vulnerability analysis capacities, WFP has a distinct ability to support improvements in the spatial inclusion of social protection systems (coverage in hard-to-reach places) and the inclusion of refugees in school feeding and other national social protection programmes. WFP has designed or advocated for social protection programme approaches that consider women's specific needs, but less effort and effect was detected around promoting women's participation and decision making, or strategies aimed at transforming social and structural barriers faced by women or other individuals. Experience with managing registration processes and related data enabled WFP to contribute frequently to social registry development, although with some mixed results related to digitalization. Longstanding experience in providing food assistance to refugee populations has similarly led WFP in many places to advocate for coverage of refugees in national systems, align its assistance to refugees to national system benefits, or deliver assistance on behalf of the government in a way that mimics social protection coverage. In some cases, this remains a medium- to long-term objective but has motivated WFP to work in partnership with other key actors to develop national capacities, so this could eventually occur.

196. Conclusion 5: There are gaps in systematically considering political variables as well as technical ones, in ensuring well-informed plans for engagement and in the transition to national ownership to enhance the prospects for sustainability. WFP's support to social protection achieved the greatest results where governments are genuinely committed to strengthening their social protection systems, even in contexts where they may not yet have the capacity and resources to fully manage and implement them yet. In more stable and middle-income contexts, WFP may only need to provide evidence generation, technical assistance and capacity strengthening roles to achieve success. In more fragile contexts, well-designed WFP interventions have also demonstrated success through large-scale delivery on behalf of governments in partnership with international financial institutions for a transitional period, when contextual limitations, assumptions and risks are monitored and managed. This is enhanced by having a clear transition plan with milestones and complementary capacity strengthening support from WFP and partners, otherwise WFP is simply fulfilling its humanitarian mandate, not strengthening social protection.

197. Conclusion 6: The short-term projected architecture of WFP is at odds with the long-term nature of systems strengthening. Some activities categorized as complementary actions were tenuously linked to governments without plausible pathways to national uptake. Such examples also perpetuate ambiguity about what WFP considers or labels as social protection work. Systems strengthening is a long-term endeavour that requires sustained relationship-development, engagement and adaptive programming. Progress in securing multi-year funding and innovative internal seed capital financing approaches have shown potential for mitigating this problem. The WFP pilot projects that were successful were government-commissioned or designed with specific, clearly defined objectives related to a problem or priority evident to the government, and had resources dedicated to providing ongoing support. They were also often part of a more coherent multi-partner vision for social protection in a country.

198. Conclusion 7: Commitments to work through national social protection systems whenever possible require WFP to accept that it needs to sometimes compromise on its ways of working and even the quality and speed of short-term results, in order to support nationally led and sustainable systems. WFP's

operational strengths, derived from emergency response and supply chain experience, can simultaneously work for and against the coherence of WFP support to social protection. The evaluation recognizes that WFP's humanitarian mandate means it will likely continue to work in places with no government systems or government systems that are explicitly working at odds with humanitarian principles. However, in many cases, WFP is responding to combinations of climate-related and natural disasters, and to poverty-related food insecurity and malnutrition. In these places, the tendencies detected in the evaluation to continue parallel humanitarian assistance, even while nominally working to strengthen national social protection programmes and their shock-responsiveness, need to be reconsidered. There remain gaps in clarity within the organization about the decision thresholds for working through or separate from governments. Parallel systems – whether in data management, delivery mechanisms, or targeting not only undermine coherence and credibility with governments and partners but also represent missed opportunities for building sustainable national capacities.

199. Conclusion 8: WFP's institutional arrangements for social protection related to internal coherence, results-based management, funding architecture, management knowledge and workforce stability require further attention. These constraints closely relate to the assumptions of the Strategy, suggesting WFP knew at the time of its drafting that success in implementing the Strategy was dependent on the continued corporate change trajectory from "implementing to enabling" and progress in the "changing lives" agenda. Early efforts by the headquarters Social Protection Unit to implement the Strategy related to evidence generation, knowledge, workforce development, and monitoring attempted to mitigate these concerns. Over the period of the evaluation, the momentum for many of these advances seems to have peaked in 2023 – paralleling resourcing trends.

200. **Conclusion 9: Looking forward, the current drastic funding constraints present significant risks, but also some opportunities.** The current massive gap between funds and needs is addressed in the new Strategic Plan (2026-2029) by emphasizing a shift to quality over quantity and reducing dependency of people and countries on recurring support and the new plan calls for focus, prioritization and better integration. More selective engagement could mean WFP reverts to focusing primarily on its own delivery of humanitarian assistance and reduced WFP focus on social protection, thereby undermining the gains it has made in positioning itself to contribute to strengthened social protection systems and programmes. If, on the other hand, it accelerates the shift towards genuine emphasis on working with and through national social protection systems wherever possible, in partnership with the right actors, WFP could contribute to more sustainable food security and nutrition solutions and resilience to shocks.

### 3.2. Recommendations

Recommendation	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Deadline for completion
<p><b>Recommendation 1: Redouble efforts to implement the strategy, developing and communicating clear criteria for prioritizing social protection engagement, including as follows:</b></p>	<p>Programme Division (PRG)</p>	<p>June 2027</p>
<p>1.1 Prioritize support for social protection in areas where WFP has demonstrated comparative advantages, using them as entry points for wider engagement at the systems level; deprioritize pilot projects that are not either jointly conceived with/requested by the Government and include a strategy for uptake, or where WFP has a clearly formulated advocacy strategy.</p>		
<p>1.2 Re-emphasize the importance of working with or through national social protection programmes as the default wherever feasible and appropriate. Where WFP is involved in implementation in an initial phase, explicitly stress the importance of maintaining a long-term perspective with adequate transition planning, including clear metrics and milestones to be agreed with government counterparts.</p>		
<p>1.3 Support country offices in analysing political economy, and structural and cultural patterns of inequality between men and women and the exclusion of people with disabilities in order to inform the selection of social protection support modalities, level of engagement and feasibility.</p>		
<p><b>Recommendation 2: Further develop the skills of WFP's social protection workforce and facilitate greater sharing of knowledge, experience and lessons between offices.</b></p>	<p>PRG in coordination with Human Resources Division (HRM)</p>	<p>June 2027</p>
<p>2.1 Conduct an updated census of the social protection workforce to assess the impact of recent budget reductions and contraction in staffing capacities to identify critical gaps that require attention based on programme portfolio significance and need for specialized skills.</p>		
<p>2.2 Develop adequate social protection knowledge and soft skills for WFP employees at all levels and, in particular, leverage the knowledge, expertise and political awareness of senior national staff in country offices. This may include requiring personnel to participate in social protection training and engage in regional and global social protection communities of practice.</p>		

Recommendation	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Deadline for completion
<b>Recommendation 3: Deepen strategic partnerships for social protection with international financial institutions and other United Nations entities at the global and country levels.</b>	PRG in coordination with HRM	
3.1 Building on lessons learned, develop context-specific strategies for building relationships and engaging with governments and international financial institutions to ensure complementarity and influence social protection sector reforms and financing in order to better address food security, nutrition and resilience to shocks.	Public Partnerships Division (PPD); PRG	
3.2. Prioritize global social protection partnerships with other United Nations entities to deepen mutual appreciation of organizational capacities and strengths and identify opportunities for collaboration and complementarity.	PPD; PRG	
<b>Recommendation 4: Strengthen results-based management for support for social protection</b>	PRG	June 2027
4.1 Consolidate learning gained from the implementation of support for social protection, identifying the most effective approaches and modalities and defining what WFP support for social protection should look like in different settings in order to better clarify priorities – including from WFP’s implementation of social protection programming on behalf of governments, on-demand services, work in fragile settings, and programmes that have linked WFP resilience and social protection activities.	PRG	
4.2 Clarify criteria for what constitute WFP contributions to social protection as opposed to other programme activities, using a clear taxonomy to reduce inconsistent categorization across country offices.	PRG	
4.3 Develop or ensure adequate use of existing qualitative outcome monitoring and reporting tools (or adopt existing tools used in the sector) that meaningfully track progress towards the strengthening of social protection systems and ensure that WFP contributions to the quantity and quality of social protection programmes is systematically tracked.	PRG	

# Annexes

# Annex 1: Summary terms of reference

The Summary Terms of Reference can be found here: <https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-support-social-protection-strategic-evaluation>

# Annex 2: Methodology

1. This annex presents an overview of the methodology for this evaluation. It successively discusses the overall approach, data collection methods and limitations.

## Overall approach

2. The overall approach and methodology as outlined sought to emphasize:

- **Utility** – responsiveness to the needs of the organization, and the interests of its key stakeholders and with a focus on areas where the evaluation can add value. Stakeholders confirmed that the main utility of this report lies in identifying what aspects of WFP work to support national social protection systems add the most value, are most related to its core strengths, and which combination of factors contributes to progress in different types of contexts.
- **Adaptability** – openness, receptiveness and flexibility, and willingness to adapt the evaluation process as relevant and possible within the timeframe based on emergent information and opportunities.
- **An iterative and participatory approach** – close liaison with stakeholders at different levels of the organization and seeking inputs and feedback systematically throughout the evaluation.
- **Forward-looking and solution-oriented** – use of structured and externally facilitated internal reflection moments to identify priorities, barriers and opportunities to be grasped within the broader framework of an evolving context and the SDG horizon.
- **Evidence-based reflection** – encouragement of reflection based on evidence of the extent to which WFP contributions to social protection are leading to sustainable results and where it should focus its attention in the future.
- **Balance of participatory processes with rigour and triangulation across mixed methods, informants and data sources** – to maintain impartiality and minimize bias, ensuring transparent lines of argument from findings to conclusions and recommendations.
- **Efficiency** – by drawing as much as possible from previous evaluations and other secondary sources and building on this for the primary inquiry.
- **High ethical standards** - the evaluation was designed to ensure informed consent, protect the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of participants, ensure cultural sensitivity, respect the autonomy of participants, and ensure balanced coverage of diverse stakeholder perspectives.

3. The evaluation sought to answer five questions, which were presented in the evaluation's terms of reference and refined in consultation with stakeholders at the inception phase:

- **EQ 1:** How **relevant** is WFP engagement in social protection, and in what ways?
- **EQ 2:** To what extent and how is WFP engagement in social protection **effective**?
- **EQ 3:** How **internally and externally coherent** are WFP interventions in social protection?
- **EQ 4:** How **sustainable** and in which ways are the results achieved with WFP support?
- **EQ 5:** What are **other critical factors** internal to WFP and context-related that may explain progress?

4. **Theory-based approach:** Given the clear stakeholder interests identified during the inception phase in understanding better “why” and “how” results have or have not occurred, this evaluation was theory-based. The evaluation matrix (Annex IV) was constructed to ensure that the refined theory of change was closely aligned with evaluation questions and lines of inquiry. It shows how the evaluation questions were divided into sub-questions, supported by specific lines of inquiry, and what sources of evidence were identified for each. The assumptions underpinning the theory of change were also interrogated, to see whether they held true during data collection and analysis.

5. **Mixed methods approach:** The evaluation used a mixed methods approach, employing qualitative and (where feasible) quantitative data collection and analysis. A detailed evaluability assessment at inception guided data collection choices and priorities. Data was collected through key informant interviews, focus group discussions and document and data review. This included a structured analysis of secondary data from the large number of CSP evaluations (CSPEs); global thematic, policy evaluations (PEs), strategic evaluations (SEs) and decentralized evaluations (DEs).

6. **Case study approach:** Case studies were selected following extensive consultation during the inception phase and the deployment of a sampling methodology. The sample was built using a non-probability purposive sampling approach where the team deliberately picked the sample based on criteria such as contextual diversity (in terms of regional coverage, country risk profiles, scale-up within the evaluation period, etc.), logistical considerations (for example, flight distances, visas), diversity and availability. The balance of dimensions ensures variety, with the case studies presented in Table 7.

- **Country office availability:** Country offices that had no recent, ongoing, or imminent evaluations and audits were prioritized for selection, as were country offices known to have sufficient operational capacity to accommodate the evaluation team.<sup>174</sup>
- **Contextual diversity:** Contextual diversity is characterized by balanced regional coverage (at least one in-person visit per region) and a balanced inclusion of income classes and representation of high, medium and low risk profile operations.<sup>175</sup>
- **Representation of emergencies:** The sample accounted for different types of crises, including economic, conflict and climate-related. It also included all classes of emergency level as of January 2025, as well as stable contexts. This dimension ensures a window into support to social protection in ongoing crises at various scales.
- **Various social protection coverage levels:** Using data from the ILOSTAT Social Protection Dashboard, this metric shows the percentage of the population covered by at least one social protection (SP) benefit. The evaluation team has ensured a variety, from the most developed (Iraq, Philippines) to the least (Mauritania, Rwanda).
- **Thematic diversity:** Thematic diversity is characterized by the inclusion of all modes of support: capacity strengthening and complementary actions.
- **Diverse levels of funding from governments leveraging international financial institution (IFI) resources and other national government grants;** This is an important feature of “Sustainability” (EQ 2) related to perceived predictability and consistency of funding for social protection given the retreat of traditional donors.
- **Various scales of complementary action, in terms of funding and Tier 1 beneficiaries reached:** This dimension ensured that the sample is relevant, by including WFP’s largest operations in the sample in terms of both confirmed contributions to social protection support (SPS) activities and the number of beneficiaries reached by complementary actions. It also ensured variety.

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<sup>174</sup> Due to the high volume of recent, ongoing or planned evaluations and audits at WFP, availability was particularly low for large humanitarian contexts. Due to the importance of representing such contexts in the sample to accommodate key lines of enquiry, it was not possible to solely select contexts on the basis of optimal availability.

<sup>175</sup> Country risk profile is determined by the Country Risk Profile Index. This composite measure of contextual risk draws predominantly from WFP internal sources (70 percent) and thus represents a useful proxy for risk from the perspective of WFP, with an emphasis on strategic (e.g., programmatic, funding, contextual) risks. High-risk countries have a country risk profile score of equal to or greater than 50, medium-risk profile countries have a score of equal to or greater than 39 and less than 50, and the low-risk profile countries have a score of less than 39.

**Table 7: Country case studies and key selection dimensions**

Regional Office	Country	In-person mission vs desk review	Categorization in the Corporate Alert System (Jan 2025)	Type of crisis (2024) (ToR criterion)	ILOSTAT SP Coverage (High > 33%, Medium 20% - 33%, Low <20%)	Income status (2023 WB)	Country Risk Profile Index (2024)
APARO	Pakistan	In-person		Economic, Climate, Conflict	20%	LM	57.5
APARO	Philippines	Desk review		Climate (stable)	35%	LM	37.1
ESARO	Zambia	Desk review	Early action and emergency response	Climate, land degradation	30%	LM	28.9
ESARO (joint case)	Rwanda	In-person		Economic (stable)	8%	L	83.4
	Burundi	In-person		Economic, climate (stable)	16%	L	49.9
MENAEERO	Iraq	Desk review		Displacement, Climate	42%	UM	48.1
WACARO	Niger	In-person	Corporate attention	Conflict, Climate, Displacement	21%	L	71.8
WACARO	Mauritania	Desk review	Early action and emergency response	Climate, Displacement	11%	LM	50.2
LACRO	Peru	In-person		Climate (stable)	25%	UM	26.5
LACRO	Caribbean MCO	Desk review		Climate (stable)	Medium-high 32 (Belize)-100% (Guyana)	UM	22.1

Source: Evaluation Team

7. During data collection, the evaluation team maintained sufficient availability and flexibility to allow interviews to “snowball”, as lines of enquiry developed. Rotation of WFP staff and partners meant that key informants had a wealth of relevant experiences from contexts outside of the case study sample. This led to additional interviews with stakeholders outside of selected case study countries (Kenya, India, Lebanon, Madagascar, Namibia and Somalia) enabling additional insights related to specific lines of enquiry.

## Data collection and analysis

8. Data were collected between late August 2025 and October 2025 through key informant interviews and document and data reviews.

9. **Global document review:** The evaluation team conducted an extensive review of evaluative evidence using a semi-automated approach to extract information from already available materials. This was conducted using the AI-powered natural language processing application Atlas.ti. The evaluation team capitalized on the AI capabilities of Atlas.ti in order to ensure that all inflected forms of words or potential synonyms were captured in word searches. No generative AI functions were deployed when conducting this review: the exercise was fully supervised by the evaluation team to maximize control of the relevance of codes applied.

10. In total, 93 evaluations were subjected to review in the global analysis: 63 CSPEs, three CEEs, six global evaluations, six joint or system-wide evaluations, and 15 decentralized evaluations. In the context of limited quantitative data, this review: (1) generated findings at the global level; and (2) helped to test the global validity of findings and conclusions, ensuring insights were not specific to selected case study countries. The methodology was characterized by the following efforts:

- **Alignment with the evaluation matrix:** The methodology of the desk review was centred on a coding framework constructed to capture information in line with the evaluation questions and sub-questions.
- **Maximized temporal coverage:** Evaluations with at least half of their temporal scope after 2019 were selected. For example, an evaluation with a scope of 2017-2021 (for example, the Zimbabwe or Mozambique CSPE) was included in the analysis. This aimed to maximize available qualitative data at the beginning of the evaluated period, to fill in gaps from case studies, which often provide limited insights from 5+ years in the past due to staff turnover and rotation.
- **Conservative coding:** As most evaluations reviewed focused on social protection support and non-SPS activities and themes, the review only captured information that explicitly related to social protection or related terms. When uncertain, the evaluation team conducted a manual readthrough of surrounding text to gain more contextual insights into whether information sufficiently related to social protection support.
- **Inductive coding to capture the breadth of WFP social protection support activities:** To account for the vast thematic breadth of country capacity strengthening activities and complementary actions conducted or implemented by WFP, the evaluation team also coded each activity theme (for example, advocacy, analysis, food fortification, policy support, operational systems). In total, 35 different country capacity strengthening codes were generated in the mapping exercise. Co-occurrence analysis with additional supporting codes (for example, whether an activity was a pilot) further nuanced insights. This enabled a mapping of types of social protection support activities noted in evaluations.
- **Document tagging and code-document analysis:** CSPEs and CEEs were tagged based on dimensions (for example, ILOSTAT Social Protection Coverage, WFP region, income classification, WFP risk profile) to facilitate trend analysis of code frequency in different contexts.

11. Additionally, the evaluation team gathered and analysed non-evaluative evidence from both internal and external sources. This included policies, strategic documents, dashboards and research publications. The list of secondary source categories is presented in Table 8 .

**Table 8: List of secondary sources reviewed**

Sources of secondary evidence
<b>WFP strategic and policy documents:</b> Strategic Plan (2022-2025), CRF (2022-2025), Strategy for Support to Social Protection (2021) and its implementation plan, all other relevant WFP programme policies and strategies (for example, resilience, school feeding, disaster risk reduction, nutrition, etc.)
<b>Corporate policy, strategic, thematic evaluations:</b> Mid-Term Evaluation of the Strategic Plan, CSP PE, School Feeding Contributions to the SDGs SE, Resilience PE, Emergency Preparedness PE, South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) PE, Targeting and Prioritization SE
<b>CSPEs:</b> over 60 CSPEs completed since 2020 or ongoing
<b>Decentralized evaluations:</b> Regional Evaluation of WFP's Contribution to Shock-Responsive Social Protection in Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>Studies and reviews:</b> IDS case studies on WFP support to strengthening social protection systems, annual reviews of WFP support to social protection, various others on links between social protection and resilience, anticipatory action, disaster risk financing, migration and displacement
<b>Summaries of evaluation evidence and syntheses:</b> WFP's engagement in MICs synthesis, summary of evidence on social protection
<b>Corporate emergency evaluations:</b> Ukraine CEE, Myanmar CEE etc.
<b>Audits:</b> Internal audit on service provision, other thematic audits as relevant, country office-specific audits for case study countries
<b>Regional and country-level strategic documents:</b> WFP regional social protection and programme strategies, CSPs adopted since 2022, regional implementation plans for the Strategy
<b>WFP dashboards:</b> For example, the Social Protection Dashboard
<b>Funding data:</b> WFP global grant data, resource utilization data, strategic financing reports, IFI financing data, country office needs-based and results-based plans, and implementation data for case study countries
<b>Monitoring data and reports:</b> COMET, annual country and annual performance report data related to social protection indicators and tags and food security and nutrition outcomes, country office donor reports and monitoring data for case study countries, other country office-specific monitoring tools and data for case study countries, any relevant vulnerability analysis and monitoring or post-distribution monitoring data for case study countries, annual global WFP social protection reports
<b>External country-level documents and data:</b> National social protection policies or strategies for case study countries, relevant national data on social protection systems, social assistance programme documents, and news sources
<b>International partner documents:</b> Reports, studies, evaluations, monitoring and other data from World Bank, ILO, FCDO, GIZ and others
<b>Academic and research publications:</b> Research, reports and articles generated by actors such as the Institute for Development Studies (IDS)

Team Source: Evaluation team

12. **Quantitative data review:** The team also conducted a review of globally aggregated quantitative data produced by WFP. There are, however, severe limitations in these datasets and their coverage. The following analyses were conducted: performance data on social protection indicators regularly tracked over time; data reported against 2023 and 2024 high-level targets; WFP funding data (through Social Protection Unit's grant analysis; and WFP spending data (budget).

13. **Case studies:** Case studies used a contribution analysis approach, as this is the basis of the Strategy, and recognizing that intervention results emerge from complex, multi-causal contexts. Rather than attempting to isolate and measure WFP's specific causal impact through classical attribution analysis (which would imply quasi-experimental methodologies and techniques), the evaluation questions explored the ways in which WFP has plausibly contributed to observed changes in relation to other actors and factors. This approach acknowledges that social protection outcomes are shaped by multiple institutional, political, and operational dynamics and aims to understand WFP's role within that broader landscape, rather than attributing change to any single intervention or actor.

14. Case studies aimed to identify mid-term outcome-level changes, as defined by the reconstructed theory of change, and used interviews with WFP staff, partners and government officials to attempt to attribute identified progress to WFP interventions. The evaluation team sought to map and analyse the factors that enable or impede effectiveness and sustainability. Cross-case analysis was employed to evaluate similarities and differences across country office approaches and contexts, identifying emergent patterns and common factors. These were triangulated with the global document review, to ensure identified patterns were not confined to selected case studies.

15. **Global interviews (WFP headquarters, regional offices and external):** Key informant interviews were organized with key WFP staff and senior leaders at headquarters and in regional offices and built on consultations held during the inception phase. Interviews with regional offices were conducted remotely. Interviews were arranged with key personnel in regional offices including heads of programme and social protection officers. Headquarters covered relevant units and leaders in the Programme Operations Department (Programme Policy and Guidance division; Analysis, Planning and Performance division; Supply Chain and Delivery division; and Strategic Coordination & AED Office), and the Partnerships and Innovation Department (including Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships division and the Global Partner Countries division).

16. External partner interviews were arranged with social protection experts in key international financial institutions; United Nations agencies, programmes and funds; bilateral funding agencies; and academic and research institutions. Specifically, informants were interviewed from UNICEF, FAO, ILO, The World Bank, IDS, UNHCR and the European Commission.

17. **Participatory approach:** In total the evaluation engaged 294 people (46 percent women, 54 percent men as key informants across global-, regional- and country-level data collection. Of the people interviewed, 48 percent worked for WFP. A preliminary global finding debriefing and a stakeholder workshop in January 2026 all served to enhance participation and allow for sense-making of preliminary analysis and validation of evaluation findings.

## Data limitations and Evaluability

18. The evaluation encountered a series of important data limitations related to the availability, comprehensiveness and completeness of quantitative data.<sup>176</sup>

19. The key limitations encountered by the evaluation stem from the following key underlying issues:

- **The identification of social protection support activities:** Due to the inconsistent application of the social protection support activity category, the variable structure of CSPs and their activities (which can bundle social protection support and non- social protection support activities), and the annual country report narratives being pitched at the strategic objective level (which tend to cover a range of intervention types), WFP does not have a consolidated list of isolated social protection support interventions at the activity level. This precludes WFP or the evaluation team from conducting an accurate, global analysis of trends in social protection support expenditures, beneficiary coverage and performance data.
- **Indicator design and quality:** The WFP Indicator Compendium contains few indicators explicitly focused on support to social protection. The related indicators in the compendium appear to prioritize quantifiability at the expense of specificity and relevance, resulting in indicators that “count things”<sup>177</sup> with little discernible utility for: (1) measuring the quality of WFP support to national social protection systems; (2) defining meaningful targets to illustrate progress, or (3) informing programmatic adjustments.
- **Temporal coverage:** Beneficiary and funding datasets did not cover the whole evaluated period (2019-2025). Similarly, certain social protection support-related indicators, such as the “social protection system building blocks supported”, were only introduced in 2023 and the annual country report analysis conducted by the Social Protection Unit covers the years 2020-2023 and was discontinued in 2024. Consequently, beneficiary data, funding data, and social protection support activity mapping are particularly weak at the beginning of the evaluated period.
- **Geographic coverage:** Due to the inconsistent use of the social protection support activity category and the incomplete reporting of Tier 3 beneficiary numbers, beneficiary datasets had low geographic coverage.

20. Building on the evaluability assessment conducted during the inception phase, the following sub-sections outline the key limitations in greater detail by analysis type, including beneficiary data, funding data, procurement data and indicator data.

### **Direct beneficiary data - Poor**

21. The “Tier 1” beneficiary dataset contains data for all activities conducted by WFP country offices tagged as “social protection support” (or “SPS” in the activity WBS element). Tier 1 beneficiaries reached by SPS activities represent those reached by WFP direct support, thus relating exclusively to Mode of Support 2 – Complementary Actions, as defined by the Strategy.

- The dataset only contained data for 19 country offices suggesting SPS tagging is inconsistently applied.<sup>178</sup> The SPS activity category is not used by many country offices apparently implementing complementary actions. The dataset does not capture several activities that: (a) were identified by key stakeholders at the country level as social protection interventions; (b) contained social

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<sup>176</sup> The evaluation team acknowledges the Social Protection Unit's extensive efforts overcome key data limitations, including: creating the SPS activity category; generating a grants database; disseminating guidance for how to report SPS-related interventions in ACRs; and conducting a manual review of all ACRs globally from 2020-2023 to identify probable SPS interventions.

<sup>177</sup> For example, number of tools or products developed or revised to enhance national systems; number of national policies, strategies, programmes and other system components [...] enhanced with WFP capacity strengthening support

<sup>178</sup> The evaluation team analysis found that 36 country offices implemented an activity with direct beneficiaries which contained “social protection” in its title, and 17 country offices implemented an activity with “safety net(s)” in its title, suggesting limited use of the SPS activity category.

protection or closely related terminology in their titles; or (c) evidently fit the Strategy's definition of a complementary action.<sup>179</sup>

- The SPS activity category came into use in 2023; consequently, only the years 2023 and 2024 are covered in the dataset. Data for activities that were migrated to the new corporate results framework (CRF) and classified as SPS prior to 2023 have also been made available, though required thorough validation with qualitative data to ensure that they were indeed related to social protection support prior to migration.

22. The Tier 3 beneficiary dataset contains data on the number of individuals reached through national social protection systems or programmes that received WFP support. Limitations included:

- Data were only provided for 2023 and 2024, which limits the possibility of any form of trend analysis over time.
- Coverage is also an important limiting factor for this dataset. Of the 33 countries listed, only 20 provide actuals, 96.9 percent of which were indirectly reached through programming by the India country office (813 million). This is despite many more country offices evidently contributing to systems and programmes for which they could ostensibly claim to have reached indirect beneficiaries.

### ***Social Protection Unit's database on annual country report narrative analysis - Poor<sup>180</sup>***

23. The Social Protection Unit conducted a thorough, systematic analysis of annual country reports from 2020 to 2023 to identify priority areas, areas of work, modes of support, and the building blocks supported by WFP activities. The annual country reports provide a useful basis for the Social Protection Unit's and the evaluation team's qualitative analysis of high-level characteristics of social protection support by country and by year. However, this source has notable limitations.

- Firstly, as stakeholders noted during the inception mission, given the strict word limit, themes, achievements and contextual developments related to a given strategic objective or activity compete for space. While difficult to verify, this was reported to increase the likelihood of identifiers of complementary actions not being included in the text, or social protection support being omitted to allow space for the country office to describe other, prioritized activity characteristics.
- Secondly, the annual country reports systematically organize narratives by strategic outcome (SO). In the majority of cases, the strategic outcome-level narratives were simply too "high-level" to isolate social protection interventions, containing several non-social protection support activities, which invalidated analysis. To ensure isolation of social protection support interventions, the evaluation team sought to identify social protection interventions at the lowest possible unit of the WBS element (that is, activity, or activity tag or category, if available). This was not possible at the global level: identification was confined to our case studies and a handful of additional operations.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> To expand analyses beyond the subset of SPS activities that applied the SPS activity category, the evaluation team extracted all activities conducted during the evaluation period with "social protection" or closely related language in their activity titles. While acknowledging that many SPS activities likely do not contain these keywords, a comparison between activity titles containing keywords and the original Tier 1 beneficiary dataset further evidenced the high degree of inconsistency with which SPS activity category was applied.

<sup>180</sup> This was ranked "moderate" during the inception phase but has been adjusted to "poor" due to discontinuation in 2024.

<sup>181</sup> In some cases, disaggregation to the sub-activity level was similarly unhelpful in isolating SPS interventions. For example, in Niger, non-school feeding SPS interventions with direct beneficiaries were housed under the resilience strategic outcome and activity (SO4, Activity 4). Consequently, resilience and SPS were mixed together, and no unique identifier or specific sub-activity code enabled isolation of the KfW-funded COVID-19 and cash "secheresse" responses. The evaluation team was therefore unable to isolate performance or expenditures data for these SPS components of these activities.

### ***Funding data - Moderate***

24. The Social Protection Unit has provided a database which lists grants for social protection or social protection-related programmes. Specifically, it includes dimensions for the donor, purposes of the grant, and grant value. This has proven the most comprehensive source of funding data provided. Nonetheless, the database had the following limitations:

- The dataset has limited temporal coverage, only being available for the years 2021-2024. This precludes analysis on funding for social protection support pre- and post-strategy publication.
- The method chosen potentially overstates grant values from traditional donors. The dataset captured all grants which stated “social protection” in the grant description box, potentially inflating grant values.
- The dataset also had some limitations in terms of how data are categorized, such as the lack of disaggregation of donors for school meals (no differentiation between international financial institutions and national governments).

25. To review the data available for lines of inquiry related to sustainability, the evaluation team also requested extractions from “FACTory”, to analyse the proportion of funding from national governments and international financial institutions. The inconsistent use of the SPS tag means that the WBS element could not systematically be used to identify the systematic, global analysis of detailed narrative reporting that was required to enable global, chronological analysis of funding. However, as discussed above, due to the structure of the annual country reports, the Social Protection Unit’s analysis was unable to systematically identify the social protection support interventions at the activity level.

### ***Indicator data quality - Poor***

26. Quantitative indicator data for this evaluation were of limited value in determining – or even to provide supporting evidence for – the effectiveness of WFP support to social protection. The evaluation team’s analysis of the WFP Indicator Compendium (2022-2025) conducted during the inception phase revealed a lack of indicators that measured progress on country capacity strengthening, despite these representing a high proportion of WFP social protection support activities. Several indicators simply count the number of polices supported or adapted, and very few focus specifically on social protection. As noted above, these indicators prioritize quantifiability at the expense of specificity and relevance.

27. In an attempt to institutionalize a more relevant indicator, the Social Protection Unit created the “social protection system building blocks supported”, which was introduced in 2023. It aligned with the “12 building blocks” contained in the Strategy. Data on the building blocks supported previously came from the Social Protection Unit’s annual country report analysis, which was discontinued in 2024. The following issues with the indicator were noted:

- A shift from the annual country report analysis (discontinued in 2024) to country office-led reporting as the source of data for building blocks supported has potentially contributed to a reduction in the number of building blocks reportedly supported (81 country offices were reported to support at least one building block in 2022, 84 country offices in 2023, but only 31 self-reported the indicator in 2024). This change of source creates difficulties in interpreting annual trends in building block reporting.
- Issues regarding how the building blocks were grouped were also seen to limit visibility on the specific social protection support activities and goals were being pursued in respective country offices.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> In particular, the evaluation team deemed building block 2, “Governance, capacity and coordination” to be a particularly broad category, defined by the Strategy (p46) as covering:

- “training, coaching and mentoring in areas of our competence”,
- “supporting communities of practice, exchanges of experience (including South-South cooperation)”,

- The indicator is reported as a binary “completed” versus “not completed”, which is defined at the country office-level. The context-specific nature of what “completed” means, however, is not centrally tracked, as context-specific targets are not supported by the corporate results framework. This means that the ambition of the target may vary, limiting the utility of the indicator for global analysis.<sup>183</sup>

**Procurement data - Poor**

28. In the inception note, the evaluation team stated the intention to conduct an analysis of WFP service provision for national governments’ social protection programmes, to explore potential contributions to efficiency and transparency of procurement. However, this analysis was ultimately not possible, due to the following challenges:

- There was limited alignment between programmes and supply chain functions within the organization, which resulted in supply chain data not specifying the programme or activity or strategic objective associated with service provision. Consequently, the datasets did not allow the evaluation team to clearly distinguish between “on-demand service provision for social protection” and other activities, making analysis using centralized data more challenging. The case study countries, adjusted at the end of the inception phase due to availability issues, offered no opportunity to compare WFP service provision for social protection programmes to government efforts.
- Sufficiently detailed government data on procurement specifically for social protection programmes supported by WFP were seldom available.

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- “the identification of sources of expertise through partnerships with third parties”
  - “participat[ion] in sector working groups and promote coordination—and, where appropriate, alignment—among social protection actors as well as across sectors”
  - “forg[ing] partnerships to strengthen the capacities of national and subnational institutions, formal and informal, with a ‘whole of society’ approach including civil society and communities”

<sup>183</sup> In 2024, the Niger country office stated that they had “completed” all building blocks reports, despite very limited evidence of engagement in areas such as “policy and legislation”.

# Annex 3: Evaluation matrix

#	Revised questions and sub-questions	Main lines of inquiry and indicators	Link to ToC	Data collection methods and data sources	Strength of evidence	Level of analysis
<b>1</b>	<b>How relevant is WFP engagement in social protection, and in what ways?</b>					
1.1.	To what extent is WFP support to national social protection systems and programmes <b>relevant to food and nutrition security goals</b> and to the wider framework of the <b>2030 Agenda</b> ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extent to which the Strategy, other normative tools and CSPs demonstrate a strong theoretical underpinning and evidence of how support to national social protection improves food and nutrition security and contributes to SDGs 1, 2 and 17 as well as leaving no-one behind (LNOB) principles</li> <li>- Extent to which SP sector research and publications demonstrate successful advocacy for social protection systems and programmes to be more food and nutrition sensitive</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP SP activities in CSPs are designed to contribute to these goals</li> <li>- Evidence that WFP support has led to increased attention to food and nutrition security needs in national social protection policies, systems and programmes</li> <li>- WFP, international partner and national government views on the relevance of the SP systems and programmes WFP supports to these goals</li> </ul>	All areas of work, long-term outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Textual analysis of WFP documents and external publications and research, including the Strategy</li> <li>- Structured analysis of CSPEs completed since 2022 and their subsequent CSPs</li> <li>- WFP HQ and RB interviews</li> <li>- Country case study interviews with WFP, international partners and national government officials</li> <li>- Country case study review of CSPs and national social protection policies, strategies and other documents</li> </ul>	High quality relevant secondary literature	Global and country case studies
1.2.	To what extent is the Strategy formulation and implementation <b>aligned with current international thinking and priorities</b> on social protection?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Degree to which contents in the Strategy reflect international thinking and priorities for SP at the time it was written</li> <li>- Extent to which elements of the Strategy are outdated compared to current thinking and priorities</li> <li>- Extent to which stakeholders understand and seek to implement the Strategy in ways that are aligned (or misaligned) with current thinking</li> </ul>	All areas of work, all ToC levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Textual analysis of the Strategy and global SP strategies, publications and research</li> <li>- Global SP partner interviews</li> </ul>	High quality relevant secondary literature, knowledgeable external KIs	Global and country case studies

#	Revised questions and sub-questions	Main lines of inquiry and indicators	Link to ToC	Data collection methods and data sources	Strength of evidence	Level of analysis
1.3.	To what extent has WFP's social protection engagement <b>aligned to relevant national priorities and goals</b> on social protection?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extent that WFP SP activities and support in CSPs are linked to national SP priorities and goals as articulated in national policies and strategies</li> <li>- Degree to which external stakeholders consider WFP contributions to be aligned to the national government's SP priorities and goals</li> </ul>	All areas of work, all ToC levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Structured analysis of CSPEs completed since 2022 and their subsequent CSPs</li> <li>- Country case study review of CSPs and national social protection policies, strategies and other documents</li> <li>- Country case study interviews with WFP, international partners and national government officials</li> </ul>	High quality relevant secondary literature, knowledgeable external KIs	Global and country case studies
<b>2</b>	<b>To what extent and how is WFP engagement in social protection effective?</b>					
2.1.	To what extent and how has WFP contributed to more <b>conducive policy environments</b> for social protection at national, regional and global levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extent to which WFP generated data and evidence are considered in SP legislative, policymaking and strategy setting processes (global, regional, national)</li> <li>- Extent to which and how WFP advocacy, convening, and engagement has contributed to SP legislative, policymaking and strategy setting processes (global, regional, national)</li> <li>- Number of national SP laws and policies that, reportedly, result from WFP advocacy, categorized by type and content changes and inclusion</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP's contributions to legislation, policy and strategy setting have addressed structural and cultural patterns of inequality between men and women and other intersecting inequalities</li> <li>- Stakeholder perceptions of WFP's relative contribution to conducive policy environments (global, regional, national)</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP has helped to bring together development, humanitarian and peace actors and learning and to what end</li> <li>- Extent to which and why WFP has missed any evident opportunities</li> </ul>	Area of work 1, outputs and short-term outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Country case study review of CSPs and ACR data</li> <li>- Country case study interviews with WFP, international partners and national government officials</li> <li>- Global and regional interviews with WFP, international partners and SP sector academic organizations and think tanks</li> <li>- Country case study review of CSPEs, and relevant DEs, external research and evaluations, WFP and IDS case studies</li> </ul>	Medium - expected to be good but dependent on access to knowledgeable KI in addition to available national legislative, policy, and strategy documents	Country case studies

#	Revised questions and sub-questions	Main lines of inquiry and indicators	Link to ToC	Data collection methods and data sources	Strength of evidence	Level of analysis
2.2.	To what extent and how has WFP contributed to <b>strengthening national social protection systems' architecture</b> ?	<p><b>Overall</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of country offices reporting work on building blocks related to system architecture (policy and legislation; governance, capacity and coordination; platforms and infrastructure; planning and financing)</li> <li>- Stakeholder perceptions of WFP's relative contribution to national SP systems strengthening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in relation to other actors and in terms of the significance of changes and observable results</li> <li>- The way in which WFP has contributed to, and which have been the most effective, modalities (for example,, role of South-South triangular cooperation)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Policy and legislation</b> (Covered by EQ 1.1)</p> <p><b>Governance, capacity and coordination</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extent to which WFP support led to improvements in sector-wide steering committees, SP coordination with humanitarian and disaster risk management actors, and other governance and coordination mechanisms</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP support led to improved human resources in relevant ministries (number of staff, knowledge, skills)</li> </ul> <p><b>Platforms and infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extent to which WFP support led to improvements in government social registries and other system-wide management tools, where they exist (digitization, technology, inclusiveness, coverage, reduced inclusion and exclusion errors, data quality, interoperability)</li> </ul> <p><b>Planning and financing</b> (Covered by EQ 1.1 and 2.3)</p>	Area of work 1, short-term outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Country case study review of CSPs and ACR data</li> <li>- Global review of monitoring data on building blocks and policies</li> <li>- Country case study analysis of previous and updated national social protection policies, strategies and budgets</li> <li>- Country case study interviews with WFP, international partners and national government officials</li> <li>- Global and regional interviews with WFP, international partners and SP sector academic organizations and think tanks</li> <li>- Country case study and global review of CSPEs, and relevant DEs, external research and evaluations, WFP and IDS case studies</li> </ul>	Medium - expected to be good but dependent on access to knowledgeable KI in addition to available documented evidence of capacity strengthening activities	Global and country case studies

#	Revised questions and sub-questions	Main lines of inquiry and indicators	Link to ToC	Data collection methods and data sources	Strength of evidence	Level of analysis
2.3.	<p>To what extent and how has WFP contributed to <b>national institutional capacities to design and deliver</b> specific social protection programmes and, when applicable, to <b>coordinate them in the framework of a national social protection system</b>?</p>	<p>As related to identified gaps and priorities for support in a given context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Degree to which WFP support for management information systems led to better programme design and delivery capacity</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP supported improvements in design of national <b>programme parameters</b>, and how</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP supported improvements in national systems of <b>registration and enrolment</b>, and how (vulnerability assessment, management information systems (MIS), targeting, registries)</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP supported improvements in national systems for <b>benefit delivery</b>, and how (payment systems, supply chain, financial inclusion, reliability)</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP supported improvements in national systems of <b>accountability, protection and assurance</b>, and how</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP has supported improved responsiveness of the national social protection system to covariate shocks</li> <li>- (Where relevant) extent to which WFP has supported integration of conflict-sensitivity in the national social protection system (for example taking account of social cohesion in the design of targeting systems, or similar)</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP training and technical support led to stronger national government staff skills in SP programmes</li> <li>- Degree to which WFP technical assistance improved coordination among programmes in a SP system (defining allowed and disallowed overlaps between programmes, etc.)</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP technical assistance helped address structural and cultural patterns of inequality between men and women and other intersecting inequalities</li> <li>- Stakeholder perceptions of WFP's relative contribution to specific national SP programmes - in relation to other actors and in terms of the significance changes and observable results</li> </ul>	<p>Area of work 2, short-term and medium-term outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Structured analysis of CSPEs completed since 2022 and recent global strategic, thematic and policy evaluations</li> <li>- Country case study review of CSPs and ACR data</li> <li>- Country case study interviews with WFP, international partners and national government officials</li> <li>- Country case study review of CSPEs, and relevant DEs, external research and evaluations, WFP and IDS case studies</li> </ul>	<p>High - good visibility of evidence in secondary data and likely knowledgeable KIs</p>	<p>Country case studies complemented by global analysis</p>

#	Revised questions and sub-questions	Main lines of inquiry and indicators	Link to ToC	Data collection methods and data sources	Strength of evidence	Level of analysis
2.4.	To what extent and how has WFP contributed to <b>“quantity”</b> (coverage, adequacy and comprehensiveness) and <b>“quality”</b> (including shock-responsiveness, conflict-sensitivity, inclusion, transparency, and efficiency) of <b>national social protection programmes</b> in stable, transition, and emergency contexts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stakeholder perceptions of WFP's relative contribution to improved quantity and quality of national SP programmes – in relation to other actors and in terms of the significance of changes and observable results</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP relative contributions differ between stable, transition and protracted crisis or conflict-affected contexts</li> </ul> <p><b>Quantity</b></p> <p><b>Coverage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Degree of change since initial WFP engagement in percent of population covered by national social assistance programmes (broken down by sex, disability status and other criteria where available)</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP complementary actions contributed to expanded coverage.</li> </ul> <p><b>Comprehensiveness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Degree of change since initial WFP engagement in number of social assistance beneficiaries receiving complementary assistance from in-country sources (e.g. training, nutrition support, etc.)</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP support has helped national SP systems better address a range of needs</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP complementary actions provided social assistance beneficiaries with other forms of assistance, in close coordination with the SP programme</li> </ul> <p><b>Adequacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extent to which WFP has supported review of transfer adequacy in social assistance programmes, and whether such reviews led to any adjustment</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP complementary actions provided a "top up" for social assistance programme beneficiaries to improve adequacy</li> </ul>	Areas of work 1 and 2, medium-term outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Country case study review of ILO, World Bank, national government or other credible data on social assistance programmes</li> <li>- National government social assistance programme statistics and monitoring (where available)</li> <li>- Structured analysis of CSPEs completed since 2022</li> <li>- Country case study review of CSPs and ACR data</li> <li>- Country case study interviews with WFP, international partners and national government officials</li> <li>- Country case study review of CSPEs, and relevant DEs, external research and evaluations, WFP and IDS case studies</li> <li>- Country case study review of any relevant WFP targeting, supply chain management, and donor reporting data</li> <li>- Efficiency data as available at country level on procurement, transport costs, volume and timeliness</li> </ul>	High for coverage, comprehensiveness, adequacy based on available secondary evidence. Medium to low for efficiency and other dimensions based on expected availability of quantitative government data	Country case studies

#	Revised questions and sub-questions	Main lines of inquiry and indicators	Link to ToC	Data collection methods and data sources	Strength of evidence	Level of analysis
		<p><b>Quality</b></p> <p><b>Efficiency</b> - Evidence that WFP support to social assistance programmes has improved programme efficiency in measurable ways (for example, timeliness of transfers, timeliness of procurement, reduced costs, etc.)</p> <p><b>Shock-responsiveness</b> - Extent of improvement in the shock responsiveness of national social protection programmes (defined expansion triggers, financing mechanisms etc.) - Degree to which WFP support contributed to this</p> <p><b>Conflict-sensitivity</b> Where relevant, degree to which WFP support has led to improvements in conflict-sensitivity of national social protection programmes (targeting mechanisms reviewed to take account of social cohesion risks or similar)</p> <p><b>Inclusion</b> - Extent to which WFP support has helped structural and cultural patterns of inequality between men and women and other intersecting inequalities</p> <p><b>Transparency and other quality issues</b> Extent to which WFP support has contributed to strengthening accountability to affected populations, transparency, and other dimensions of quality, such as timeliness of transfers (as relevant)</p>				

#	Revised questions and sub-questions	Main lines of inquiry and indicators	Link to ToC	Data collection methods and data sources	Strength of evidence	Level of analysis
2.5.	To what extent and how are WFP-supported programmes contributing to <b>enhanced food security and nutrition</b> and to <b>greater resilience to shocks</b> within the targeted population?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extent of change in food security, nutrition and resilience over evaluation period (in case study countries)</li> <li>- Evidence that WFP-supported national social assistance programmes have increased resilience to shocks</li> <li>- Evidence that WFP-supported national social assistance programmes have enhanced food security (availability, accessibility, utilization) and nutrition for recipients</li> <li>- Stakeholder perceptions of WFP's relative contribution to any improvements in food security, nutrition and resilience – in relation to other actors</li> <li>- Degree to which WFP complementary actions have reduced food insecurity and stunting</li> <li>- Degree to which WFP complementary actions have led to increased food consumption, food availability, and dietary diversity</li> </ul>	Areas of work 1 and 2, long-term outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WFP VAM, PDM and CRF or ACR indicator data</li> <li>- National government social assistance programme statistics and monitoring (where available)</li> <li>- Structured analysis of CSPES completed since 2022</li> <li>- Country case study review of CSPs and ACR data</li> <li>- Country case study interviews with WFP, international partners and national government officials</li> <li>- Country case study review of CSPES, and relevant DEs, external research and evaluations, WFP and IDS case studies</li> <li>- Country case study review of any relevant WFP targeting, supply chain management, and donor reporting data</li> </ul>	Medium - high in instances where case studies include WFP complementary actions with Tier 1 beneficiaries, medium to low for government programmes based on expected availability of quantitative data	Country case studies
<b>3</b>	<b>How internally and externally coherent are WFP interventions in social protection?</b>					
3.1.	In what ways, and across which programme areas, have the Strategy and related implementation support promoted and supported an <b>integrated approach to social protection programming?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evidence that the Strategy and related subsequent guidance clearly identifies ways other WFP programme areas intersect with social protection programming (internal and external)</li> <li>- Extent to which and how WFP staff perceive the Strategy and subsequent related guidance and support as supporting an approach to integrating social protection internally and with programmes of other actors</li> <li>- Extent to which international partners and national governments see WFP as contributing to integrated approaches to SP</li> </ul>	Areas of work 1, 2 and 3, short-term outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Textual analysis of the Strategy and guidance documents and the Strategy implementation plan</li> <li>- Interviews with WFP HQ and RB</li> <li>- Country case study interviews with WFP, international partners and national government officials</li> </ul>	High quality relevant secondary literature and knowledgeable KIs	Global and country case studies

#	Revised questions and sub-questions	Main lines of inquiry and indicators	Link to ToC	Data collection methods and data sources	Strength of evidence	Level of analysis
3.2.	Is WFP institutional architecture conducive to implement <b>integrated programming</b> and to create <b>operational synergies</b> across different type of intervention related to social protection?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Degree to which CSPs are designed with clear layering, sequencing or integration of different programme areas within or connected to social protection programming</li> <li>- Degree to which the implementation of WFP social protection activities demonstrate layering, sequencing or integration of WFP's own activities to support national SP systems or programmes</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP convening and facilitation of collaboration has contributed to better cooperation across humanitarian, development and peace actors related to SP in protracted crisis and conflict-affected contexts</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP is working with other partners to implement coordinated or joint SP support in a layered, sequenced or integrated way</li> <li>- Evidence of operational synergies achieved by implementing SP support in an integrated way (within WFP or with partners)</li> </ul>	Areas of work 1, 2 and 3, short-term and medium-term outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Country case study interviews with WFP, international partners and national government officials</li> <li>- Country case study review of ILO, World Bank, national government or other credible data on social assistance programmes</li> <li>- Country case study review of CSPs, and relevant DEs, external research and evaluations, WFP and IDS case studies</li> <li>- Review of recent global strategic, thematic and policy evaluations</li> </ul>	High quality relevant secondary literature and knowledgeable KIs	Country case studies
3.3.	Is WFP approach to <b>partnership with IFI, private sector, national and local governments and other actors</b> contributing to external coherence, synergies and complementarities (including by being flexible to different contextual realities)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extent to which WFP work is complementary to that of others vs. overlapping, duplicating or conflicting efforts</li> <li>- Extent to which the combined and coordinated efforts of partners produce an effect greater than the sum of their individual efforts and such synergies are leveraged</li> <li>- Evidence that the combination of distinct WFP and partner capabilities adds value to a national SP system or programme</li> <li>- Evidence of alignment in WFP advocacy work with partners</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP is a valued partner of government in the SP sector, and with what attributes</li> <li>- Evidence that WFP and partners have effective mechanisms in place to manage disagreements</li> <li>- External stakeholder perceptions of WFP's approach to working in partnership</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP's partnerships and engagement are informed by a contextual analysis</li> </ul>	All areas of work, short-term and medium-term outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Country case study interviews with WFP, international partners and national government officials</li> <li>- Interviews with WFP HQ and RB, global offices of international partners</li> <li>- Country case study review of CSPs, and relevant DEs, external research and evaluations, WFP and IDS case studies</li> </ul>	High - good visibility of evidence in secondary data and likely knowledgeable KIs	Country case studies complemented by global analysis

#	Revised questions and sub-questions	Main lines of inquiry and indicators	Link to ToC	Data collection methods and data sources	Strength of evidence	Level of analysis
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most effective modalities (role of South-South triangular cooperation)</li> </ul>				
3.4.	<p>What are <b>WFP's comparative advantages</b> for supporting social protection and how has the organization leveraged them when engaging with national and international partners?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Degree to which WFP has leveraged its institutional knowledge, capacities, skills, presence, experience, relationships, systems and reputation - within a country, region or globally - to strategically position itself to best support national SP systems or complement them</li> <li>- Evidence that demonstrates the combination of WFP attributes that most contributes to successful achievement of SP outcomes in different types of contexts</li> <li>- Degree to which the WFP SP offer and activities is more or less relevant in relation to that of other organizations in different contexts</li> <li>- External stakeholder perceptions of WFP strengths and value proposition related to national SP systems compared to WFP internal perceptions</li> </ul>	<p>All areas of work, short-term and medium-term outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Country case study interviews with WFP, international partners and national government officials</li> <li>- Interviews with WFP HQ and RB, global offices of international partners</li> <li>- Country case study review of CSPEs, and relevant DEs, external research and evaluations, WFP and IDS case studies</li> <li>- Review of recent global strategic, thematic and policy evaluations</li> </ul>	<p>High - likely knowledgeable KIs with support from available secondary evidence</p>	<p>Country case studies complemented by global analysis</p>

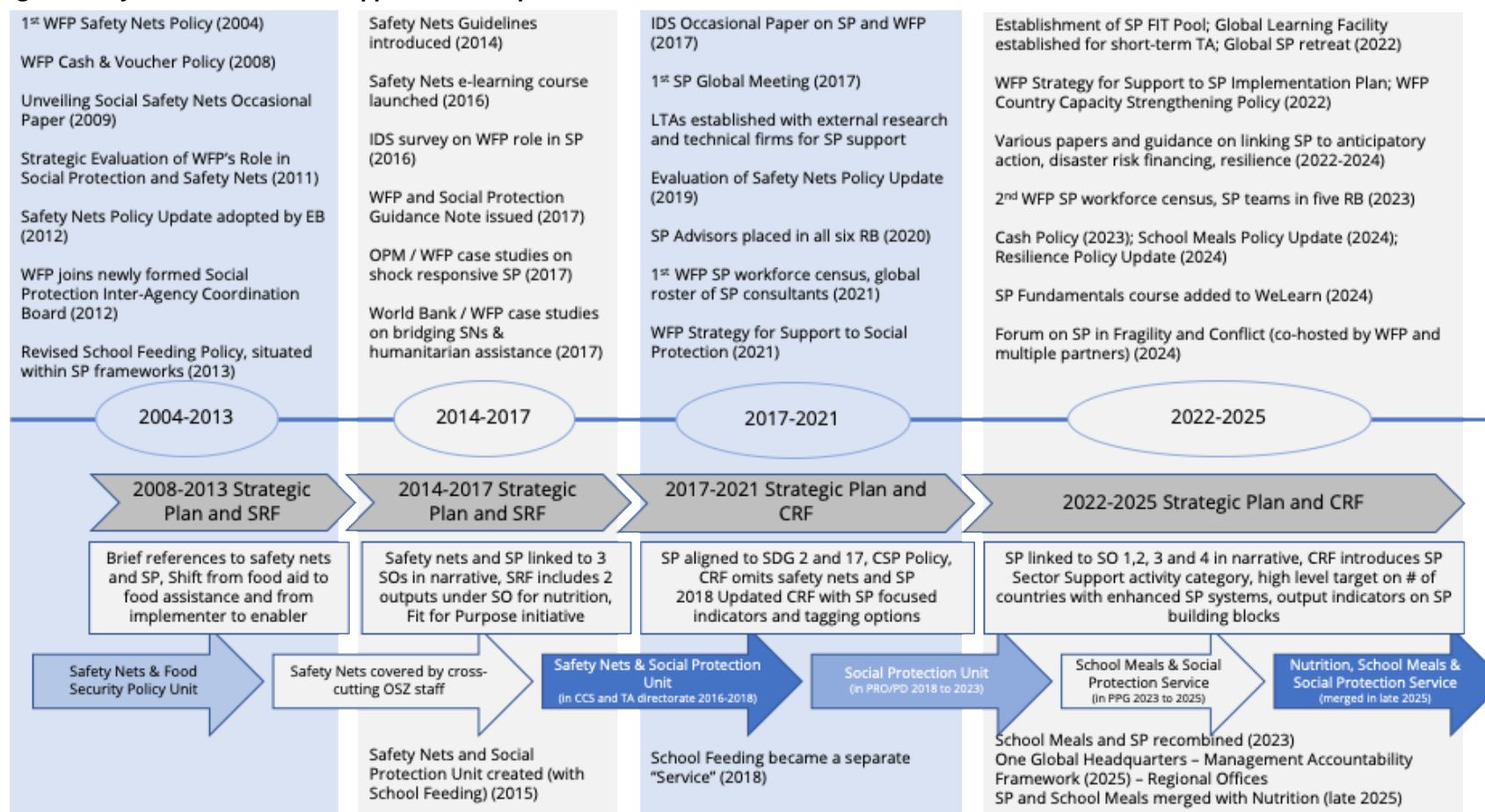
#	Revised questions and sub-questions	Main lines of inquiry and indicators	Link to ToC	Data collection methods and data sources	Strength of evidence	Level of analysis
<b>4</b>	<b>How sustainable and in which way are the results achieved with WFP support?</b>					
4.1.	To what extent and how has WFP contributed to the <b>development of sustainable government capacity in more stable contexts</b> to manage, review and continually update context-adapted social protection systems and programmes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Degree to which WFP technical assistance was based on a sound analysis of long-term financial and institutional sustainability and tailored to the needs and priorities of the national government</li> <li>- Evidence that WFP contributions have been incorporated into national SP systems, sustained and updated over time</li> <li>- External stakeholder perceptions on the sustainability of the aspects of national SP systems and programmes that WFP has worked to strengthen</li> <li>- Extent to which digital solutions proposed by WFP promote interoperability with other relevant in-country systems</li> </ul>	Areas of work 1 and 2, medium term outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Country case study interviews with WFP, international partners and national government officials</li> <li>- Structured review of CSPEs, relevant DEs, summary of evidence</li> <li>- Country case study review of CSPEs, and relevant DEs, external research and evaluations, WFP and IDS case studies</li> </ul>	High - likely knowledgeable KIs with support from available secondary evidence	Country case studies complemented by global analysis

#	Revised questions and sub-questions	Main lines of inquiry and indicators	Link to ToC	Data collection methods and data sources	Strength of evidence	Level of analysis
4.2.	To what extent and how has WFP contributed to the <b>development of long-term social protection systems as part of its humanitarian programming?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extent to which WFP humanitarian assistance has linked to or leveraged existing, nascent or previous national SP systems in the delivery of complementary programmes</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP humanitarian assistance is contributing to building elements of future systems once stable government is in place</li> <li>- Degree to which WFP incorporates capacity strengthening and technical assistance to national SP actors as part of its humanitarian programming</li> <li>- Evidence that WFP humanitarian programmes have supported development of more shock-responsive national social protection systems</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP considered the appropriateness of systems and approaches designed for complementary humanitarian programmes in terms of their potential for eventual transfer to the national government</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP is coordinating its complementary actions with SP actors in the country (where they exist) and what form this takes (geographic split, degree of design alignment)</li> <li>- Extent to which government and other partners perceive WFP to have made the above contributions</li> </ul>	Areas of work 1 and 2, medium term outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Country case study interviews with WFP, international partners and national government officials</li> <li>- Interviews with WFP HQ and RB, global offices of international and regional partners</li> <li>- Structured review of CSPEs, relevant DEs, summary of evidence, external evaluations and research</li> <li>- Country case study review of CSPEs, and relevant DEs, external research and evaluations, WFP and IDS case studies</li> </ul>	High - good visibility of evidence in secondary data and likely knowledgeable KIs	Global and country case studies
4.3.	To what extent and how has WFP contributed to <b>increased allocation of domestic resources</b> for implementing national social protection programmes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Amount or percentage of change (up or down) in domestic resources allocated to national SP systems and programmes over time</li> <li>- Extent to which WFP support led to improvements in SP system financing (new sources, increased levels of funding, stronger systems)</li> <li>- Evidence that WFP advocacy, technical assistance, data, research or evidence contributed to increase the allocation of domestic resources</li> <li>- External stakeholder perceptions of the relative weight of WFP contributions on the increased allocation of domestic resources, regarding that of other partners, compared to WFP perceptions</li> </ul>	Areas of work 1 and 2, medium term outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Country case study interviews with WFP, international partners and national government officials</li> <li>- Country case study review of CSPEs, and relevant DEs, external research and evaluations, WFP and IDS case studies</li> <li>- World Bank, ILO, IDS data and studies on funding for social protection programmes</li> <li>- Analysis of national government budget related to SP</li> </ul>	High - likely availability of financing data, access to knowledgeable KIs	Country case studies complemented by global analysis

#	Revised questions and sub-questions	Main lines of inquiry and indicators	Link to ToC	Data collection methods and data sources	Strength of evidence	Level of analysis
<b>5</b>	<b>What are other critical factors internal to WFP and context related that may explain progress?</b>					
5.1.	What <b>internal factors</b> most influence the progress WFP has or has not made towards contributing to social protection, and how?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extent to which different internal factors influenced WFP SP programming implementation and achievements including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utility and clarity of strategic direction and guidance in WFP strategic frameworks at global, regional and country level for designing WFP programmes</li> <li>Organizational structure</li> <li>Staffing and funding</li> <li>Evidence generation and use and knowledge management</li> <li>Monitoring, reporting and evaluation systems</li> <li>Risk assessment and management</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Evidence related to the different combinations of factors that most positively or negatively influence WFP SP progress, in different types of contexts</li> </ul>	Potential influence on all areas of work, outputs and outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Country case study interviews with WFP, international partners and national government officials</li> <li>- Interviews with WFP HQ and RB, global offices of international partners</li> <li>- Country case study review of CSPEs, and relevant DEs, external research and evaluations, WFP and IDS case studies</li> <li>- Review of recent global strategic, thematic and policy evaluations</li> </ul>	High - good visibility of evidence in secondary data and knowledgeable Kis	Global and country case studies
5.2.	What <b>context related (external) factors</b> most influenced WFP contributions to social protection, and how?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extent to which different external factors influenced WFP SP programming implementation and achievements, with a focus on how well WFP managed to negotiate different types of operating context, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience and capacity within the national government related to SP</li> <li>Cultural beliefs related to social assistance in a country</li> <li>National, regional and global political, legal, policy and institutional environment</li> <li>National fiscal space</li> <li>National and regional shocks</li> <li>Partner capacities, skills and resources</li> <li>External perceptions of WFP</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Evidence related to the different combinations of factors that most positively or negatively influence WFP SP progress, in different types of contexts</li> <li>- Main opportunities and risks now that should shape the forward-looking vision</li> </ul>	Potential influence on all areas of work, outputs and outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Country case study interviews with WFP, international partners and national government officials</li> <li>- Interviews with WFP HQ and RO, global offices of international partners</li> <li>- Country case study review of CSPEs, and relevant DEs, external research and evaluations, WFP and IDS case studies</li> <li>- Review of recent global strategic, thematic and policy evaluations</li> </ul>	High - good visibility of evidence in secondary data and knowledgeable Kis	Global and country case studies

# Annex 4: Key milestones in WFP support to social protection

Figure 9: Key milestones in WFP support to social protection



Source: WFP Evaluation of the Safety Nets Policy Update (2019), updated based on evaluation interviews and document review

# Annex 5: Social protection in WFP policies and strategies

**Table 9: Policies and strategies with reference to social protection**

Policy/Strategy	References
<b>Resilience Policy (2024)</b> <sup>184</sup>	Emphasizes strengthening national systems and people-centred approaches to reduce vulnerability to shocks, explicitly linking resilience-building with the expansion and adaptability of social protection systems.
<b>The School Meals Policy Update (2024)</b> <sup>185</sup>	Positions school meals as a key instrument of social protection. Especially in more stable contexts, WFP will strengthen its partnerships and work with governments, supporting the transition towards nationally owned and sustainable school meal programmes.
<b>WFP Strategy to Improve Diets and Address Malnutrition (2024)</b>	Identifies social protection as a central mechanism for achieving sustainable and equitable nutrition outcomes in development and humanitarian contexts. <sup>186</sup> The Strategy emphasizes integrating nutrition objectives into national social protection systems and programmes (e.g., school feeding, food assistance, and cash-based transfers) to address food insecurity, dietary quality, as well as nutrient diversity.
<b>Emergency Preparedness Policy (2017)</b>	Affirms the central role of national social protection mechanisms in responding to shocks and meeting protracted humanitarian needs.
<b>Country Capacity- Strengthening Policy Update (2022)</b>	Clarifies WFP's approach to supporting countries in building their capacities.
<b>Cash Policy (2023)</b>	Describes how WFP will use the cash delivery capabilities that it has developed to achieve greater impact for more people, while mitigating and preventing potential risks.
<b>WFP Climate Change Policy Update (2024)</b> <sup>187</sup>	Recognizes the role of shock-responsive social protection systems to climate change adaptation, including through the provision of cash transfers to accelerate recovery from loss and damage.
<b>WFP HIV Strategy</b> <sup>188</sup>	Calls on WFP to focus on ensuring action on HIV through the development and revision of social protection programmes and safety nets and strengthen national systems to ensure persons living with HIV can meet their food and nutrition needs, and access essential services.

Source: Evaluation team

<sup>184</sup> WFP/EB.2/2024/4-A.

<sup>185</sup> WFP/EB.2/2024/4-B.

<sup>186</sup> WFP. 2024. WFP Strategy to improve diets and address malnutrition (2024-2030). It does so as by placing social protection within Pathway 3 of the Strategy (Strengthening systems and enabling equitable access to healthy, nutritious diets).

<sup>187</sup> WFP/EB.2/2024/4-C.

<sup>188</sup> WFP. 2025. Feeding health, the last mile on HIV: WFP's Global Strategy (2025-2030).

# Annex 6: WFP alignment with national social protection priorities

**Table 10 WFP alignment with national social protection priorities**

Country case study	National social protection priorities	WFP country strategic plan priorities	WFP social protection activities 2019-2025
<b>Burundi</b>	New national social protection strategy with a focus on resilience. Build social protection delivery systems and capacities, expanding coverage.	Strengthen capacity of Government of Burundi to implement shock-responsive safety nets (Burundi CSP 2020-2024; CSP 2025-2028). Strengthen capacity of Government to implement climate-adaptive SP, enhance programme integration and linkages between humanitarian and development interventions (CSP 2025-2028).	<p><b>Strengthening national social protection systems:</b> Technical assistance to Government of Burundi on the social registry; partnerships to adapt the social registry questionnaire to refugees; updating the common minimum food basket and transfer value; engaging in processes that informed national social protection policy in 2024.</p> <p><b>Complementary actions:</b> Piloting a new commodity voucher procurement model for school feeding working with local small holder farmers cooperatives to supply food to schools; contracted by Government of Burundi to implement refugee component of <i>Merankabandi</i>.</p>
<b>Caribbean (MCO)</b>	Regional interest in managing disaster risk with SRSP linked to disaster risk financing (DRF) and developing capacities for more efficient social assistance.	Strengthen the shock-responsiveness of social protection systems and programmes and their underlying capacity (Interim Multi-Country Strategic Plan (MCSP) 2020-2022 and MCSP 2022-2026)	<p><b>Strengthening national social protection systems:</b> Research and evidence generation on SRSP, digital payments and financial inclusion; technical assistance and support on digitalization of management information systems, funding for Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF) top-ups and scenario planning and protocol development related to DRF payouts; conducting vulnerability analysis, targeting and verification.</p> <p><b>Complementary actions:</b> Channelling assistance through government SP systems (vertical, horizontal expansion and direct delivery utilizing government social protection system elements).</p>
<b>Iraq</b>	Reform of social protection system - improving targeting and strengthening the	Improve nutritional awareness of vulnerable groups, strengthen government capacity to manage fortified food commodities through national safety net programme by the end of 2018 (CSP 2020-2022). Strengthen national and subnational institutions	<p><b>Strengthening national social protection systems:</b> Supporting the development of the school meals policy; supporting Ministry of Trade by digitalizing registration records of Public Distribution System (PDS); developing database and developed mobile applications to help manage PDS supply chain and help beneficiaries update their information; developing a</p>

	effectiveness of social assistance.	capacities and systems for targeting and assisting food-insecure vulnerable people (CSP 2022-2026).	single registry, to provide interoperability across government registries (under EU-funded joint programme). <b>Complementary actions:</b> Implementing emergency school feeding programmes (funded by Government of Iraq).
<b>Mauritania</b>	Commitment to building and maintaining national social protection system.	Support a national adaptive social protection system (CSP 2019-2022, CSP 2024-2028). Strengthen national institutions to enable long-term and nationally driven solutions aimed at enhancing the system's shock-responsive, nutrition-sensitive dimensions as well as promote approaches that address the structural and social barriers faced by women and men. (CSP 2024-2028).	<b>Strengthening national social protection systems:</b> Partnerships to support the institutional framework DCAN (strategic planning and response to food insecurity and nutrition crises caused by recurrent events like drought); supporting the common payment and monitoring platform within the social registry, additional verification of targeting of lean season assistance and provision of unconditional cash transfers to households during the recurrent lean season; technical and financial support to urban cash transfer pilot led by the Food Security Commission. <b>Complementary actions:</b> Nutrition top-up to lean season social assistance programme in geographic areas and piloting an integrated approach to social protection programming in one district (under UN joint SDG pilot project).
<b>Niger</b>	Government was developing a social protection policy, social registry and adaptive social protection prior to the coup d'etat – now mostly dormant.	Integrate emergency assistance into a long-term strategy by strengthening national social protection system to make it more shock-adaptive and responsive to women's needs (Niger CSP 2020-2024 (extended to 2025)).	<b>Strengthening national social protection systems:</b> Supporting the national social registry through joint data collection activities; partnership to support targeting and joint monitoring missions to assess best methods for targeting; provision of analysis and evidence; facilitating South-South knowledge sharing and conferences. <b>Complementary actions:</b> School feeding programmes, scholarships for schoolgirls (Joint programme), COVID-19 response (direct response, parallel to government systems) and pilot cash transfer programmes for drought response.
<b>Pakistan</b>	Social protection enshrined in constitution and policy, priorities related to poverty reduction, education and stunting.	Strengthen national capacities for social protection and emergency response, nutrition support, school feeding and livelihoods (CPS 2018-2022, CSP 2023-2027) and the provision of technical assistance to federal and provincial governments (CSP 2023-2027).	<b>Strengthening national social protection systems:</b> Advocacy, technical advice and implementation of social protection nutrition programme model design; policy advice and soft-aid activities on shock-responsive social protection. <b>Complementary actions:</b> Policy advocacy on school feeding and implementation in two provinces, cash-based assistance for food pilot programme, and a pilot with partners to support adolescent girls (families in BISP) to improve nutrition. Ambitions related to SRSP and linking anticipatory action to social protection.

<b>Peru</b>	Extensive non-contributory social protection system, reforms related to system efficiency, coverage and fragmentation to address high food insecurity, malnutrition, disaster risks and inequalities.	Capacity strengthening, policy advocacy, and technical assistance (CSP 2018-2022). Institutional capacity strengthening, approaches to address social barriers faced by women in accessing the assistance, nutrition-sensitive approaches, and a food system approach to connect humanitarian aid, social protection, and resilience building including on “adaptive and shock-responsive social protection system” (ASRSP) (CSP 2023-2026)	<p><b>Strengthening national social protection systems:</b> Research, policy advice and technical assistance on SP and shock-responsive social protection; technical assistance to improve the SP and household registry, pilot project for tool testing, capacity-building of public officers on resilient food production and drought emergencies.</p> <p><b>Complementary actions:</b> Cash transfer (electronic cards) to collective pots (2020-present) with nutritional education.</p>
<b>Philippines</b>	Comprehensive national social protection system. Adaptive shock-responsive roadmap adopted in 2021.	Partnering with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) on SRSP, promoting the use of fortified rice in SP programmes, support to the national school feeding programme (CSP 2018-2023). Strengthen national and local capacities for shock response; support nutrition-sensitive, shock-responsive and responsive to identified women’s needs SP systems; (CSP 2024-2028).	<p><b>Strengthening national social protection systems:</b> Advocacy and policy support to national school feeding (advocacy, co-funding capacity building exercises); technical assistance on SRSP and nutrition-sensitive SP support to legal framework, systems, capacity and evidence.</p> <p><b>Complementary actions:</b> School feeding pilots and new modalities on HGSF and iron-fortified rice; emergency response to typhoon (leveraging national social assistance programme); technical assistance and implementation of government’s programme <i>Walang Gutom</i> (no hunger, 2027).</p>
<b>Rwanda</b>	National social protection strategy and national school feeding policy and strategy.	Support the design, implementation and scale-up of national food security and nutrition-sensitive SP and engaging more strategically in strengthening the humanitarian–development nexus, the social registry and climate resilient public works (CSPs 2019-2025, originally 2019-2023, extended several times).	<p><b>Strengthening national social protection:</b> Analytical work on food and nutrition security, research and technical assistance on SRSP and strengthening disaster risk management system; introduction of anticipatory action; climate-resilient public works and complaints system; support to policy, strategy and guidelines development and government capacity, through national school feeding programme, including HGSF.</p> <p><b>Complementary actions:</b> Joint SDG fund aiming to support and accelerate the government of Rwanda’s efforts for integrated social protection, and implementation of HGSF in selected areas.</p>
<b>Zambia</b>	National social protection policy updated in 2025 which takes a life-cycle approach and includes nutrition-sensitive social protection, SRSP, HGSF.	Strengthen capacity of Government and partners on social protection and early warning systems and disaster preparedness and response; provide support for system strengthening of the HGSF programme (CSP 2019-2024, CSP 2023-2028). Use knowledge of digital tools to strengthen social protection systems, strengthen links between social protection climate change and disaster risk management (CSP 2023-2028).	<p><b>Strengthening national social protection systems:</b> Support to the home-grown school feeding system architecture (national strategies) and capacity building on technical areas such as procurement and nutrition (e.g. establishing hydroponic gardens); support nutrition-sensitive social protection and digital systems.</p>

Source: Evaluation case study document review and KIIs

# Annex 7: Quantitative analysis

29. This annex presents an analysis of funding trends and approximate global trends in the number and reach of social protection support programming. It outlines the methods and purposes of specific analyses, before presenting detailed lists of limitations to consider for accurate interpretation.

## FUNDING ANALYSIS

30. To understand “how much WFP receives for social protection specifically”,<sup>189</sup> the Social Protection Unit produced an analysis of grants received by WFP for social protection-related activities. The dataset covers the years 2021-2024, and disaggregates funding sources into five categories:

- **Host governments (domestic):** Funding direct from national governments to a WFP country office.
- **Host governments (international financial institutions (IFIs)):** Funding from: (1) national governments leveraging IFI resources to WFP; or (2) direct from IFIs. The dataset does not consistently state which IFI is the funding source, as the listed donor is often the national government via which IFI resources are channelled to WFP.
- **Host governments (IFIs or domestic for school meals):** Money directly from national governments to WFP, or (directly or indirectly) from IFIs specifically for school meals. The dataset does not distinguish between IFI and domestic funding for school meals, precluding an analysis of this dimension.
- **Specific social protection grants:** Funding given by donors (bilateral, private, and UN and non-UN funds) specifically to social protection support (SPS)-coded activities.
- **General social protection grants:** Funding that mentions social protection support specifically in the grant form description box and if the overarching agreement objective supported national social protection systems

31. To simplify presentation in the graphs below, “specific social protection grants” and “general social protection grants” will be merged into the category “other donors (bilateral, funds, private donors)”. This category represents funding for social protection support activities that do not come from IFIs or domestic governments.

32. This dataset has limitations, and a meaningful interpretation must thus consider the following important issues:

- The method chosen may potentially overstate general social protection grant values: as defined above, although the category represents grants that mention social protection in the grant form description box and corresponding agreement. Although the evaluation team has been unable to systematically verify the extent to which these grants are intended for social protection support as well as other areas, the evaluation team notes that ten country offices received general social protection grants earmarked at the country strategic plan level.<sup>190</sup> This suggests that, while donors may suggest that these funds should be destined for social protection, they may ultimately be used by WFP for non-social protection activities. This category represented 68 percent of the other donor category (USD 520 million between 2021 and 2024). Consequently, aggregated figures presented for this category should be treated as upper-bound estimates.
- The dataset does not consistently name donors. As IFIs commonly fund WFP via host governments, the donor column often lists the host government name rather than the IFI name. This precludes analysis of how much specific IFI resources have been channelled through governments to WFP.

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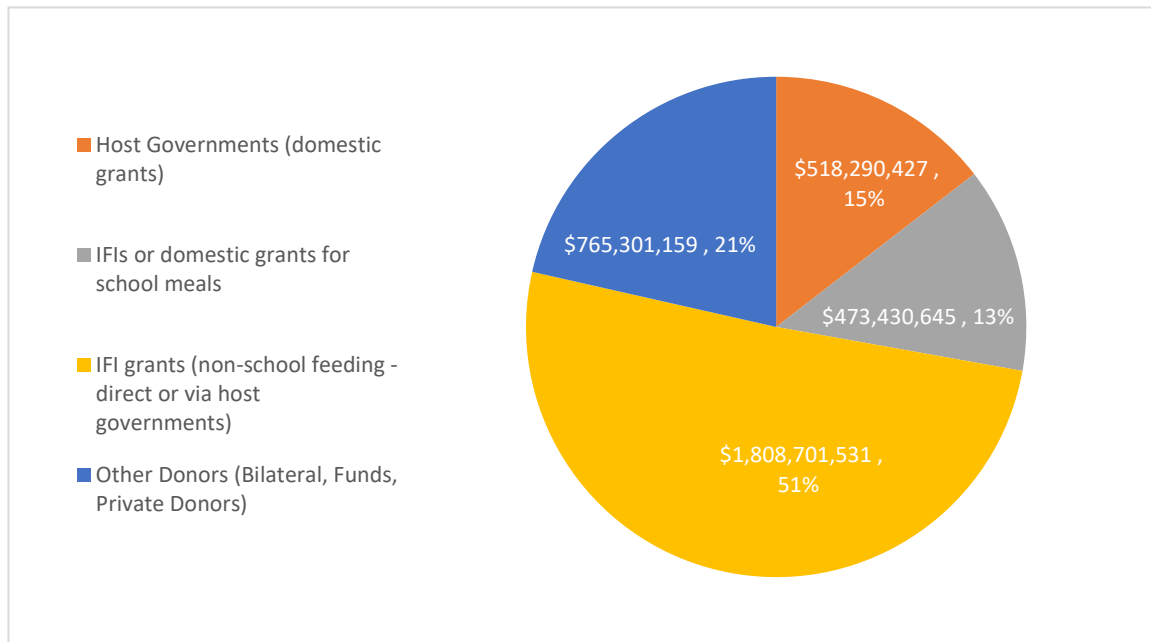
<sup>189</sup> This was the defined purpose of the dataset and analysis by key informants from the Social Protection Unit. It was developed as an advocacy tool to demonstrate the scale of funding WFP received for social protection and related activities.

<sup>190</sup> Cuba, Iraq, Uganda, Lebanon, Haiti, Somalia. Yemen, Caribbean MCO, Tunisia, and Syria (totalling USD 100 million, approximately one fifth of all “general” grants). Grants earmarked at the CSP level can be used across the full portfolio of WFP activities.

- The dataset only contains funding for school feeding activities from IFIs and host governments. No data from bilateral donors, funds, or private donors is included in these figures, suggesting that this may be a significant understatement.
- Data validation with WFP staff at the regional and country levels is still ongoing. Although quantitative figures are not expected to be significantly affected, confidence in the overall robustness of the results will be further strengthened as the process is completed.

33. Over half of the value of grants for social protection captured by analysis came from governments leveraging IFI resources between 2021 and 2024. This was over twice the overall value from other donors (traditional donors, funds, private donors), and over three times more than funding from host governments for non-school meal activities.

**Figure 10: Grants for social protection activities by donor, 2021-2024**

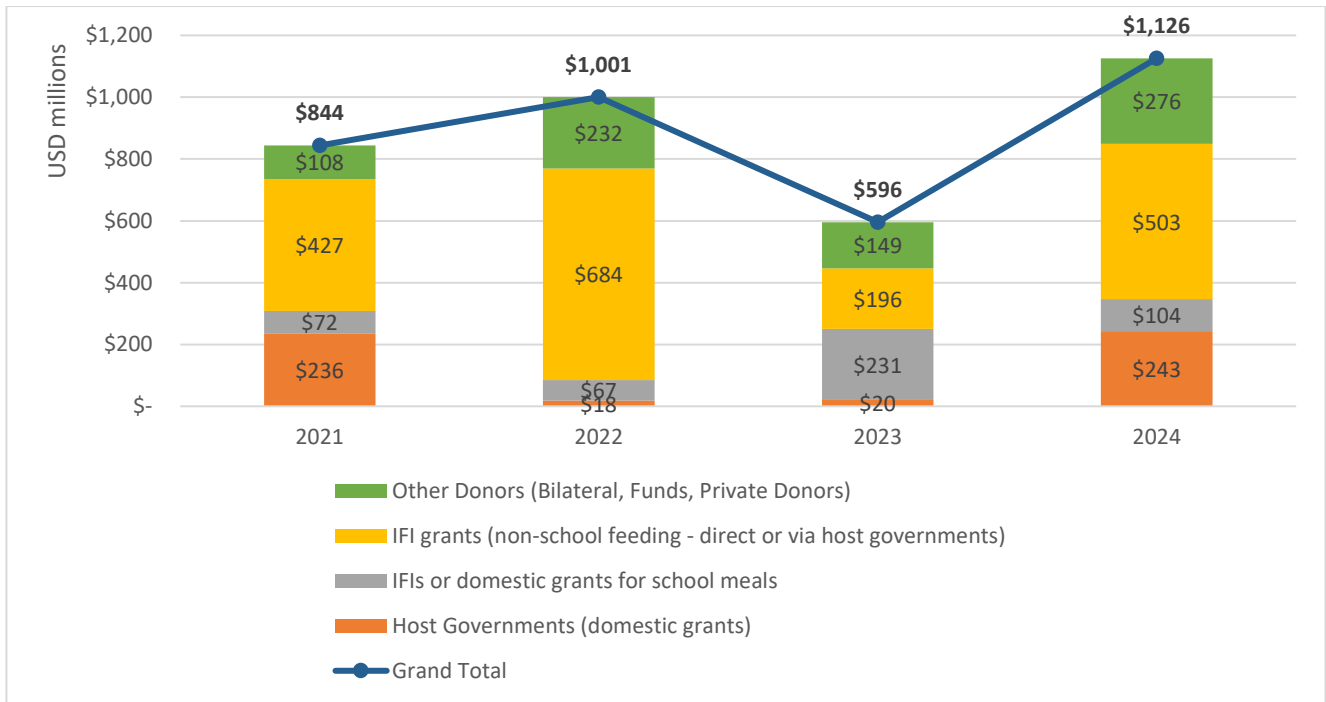


Source: WFP Social Protection Unit Grant Analysis (2021-2024)

34. Grants for Social Protection varied significantly by year. Between 2021 and 2024, overall grant values peaked in 2024 at USD 1.1 billion. Almost half of this value was comprised of funding from governments leveraging IFI resources, over half of which (USD 261 million) was designated to Lebanon. In 2022, USD 1.0 billion of grants were made to WFP social protection or social protection-related activities, over two thirds of which came from governments leveraging IFI resources. That year, nearly 70 per cent of these grants were designated to just three country offices, Lebanon (USD 241 million), Somalia (USD 132 million) and Sudan (USD 100 million).

35. In 2023, the overall grant value for social protection and social protection -related activities almost halved from the previous year. This was driven principally by a significant drop in government funding leveraging IFI resources, as well as weaker funding levels direct from host governments. However, according to the dataset, 2023 was the year that received the highest levels of funding for school meals from governments leveraging IFI resources and national governments (USD 231 million). Grants to the Benin country office from the national government represented over half of this value (USD 117 million).

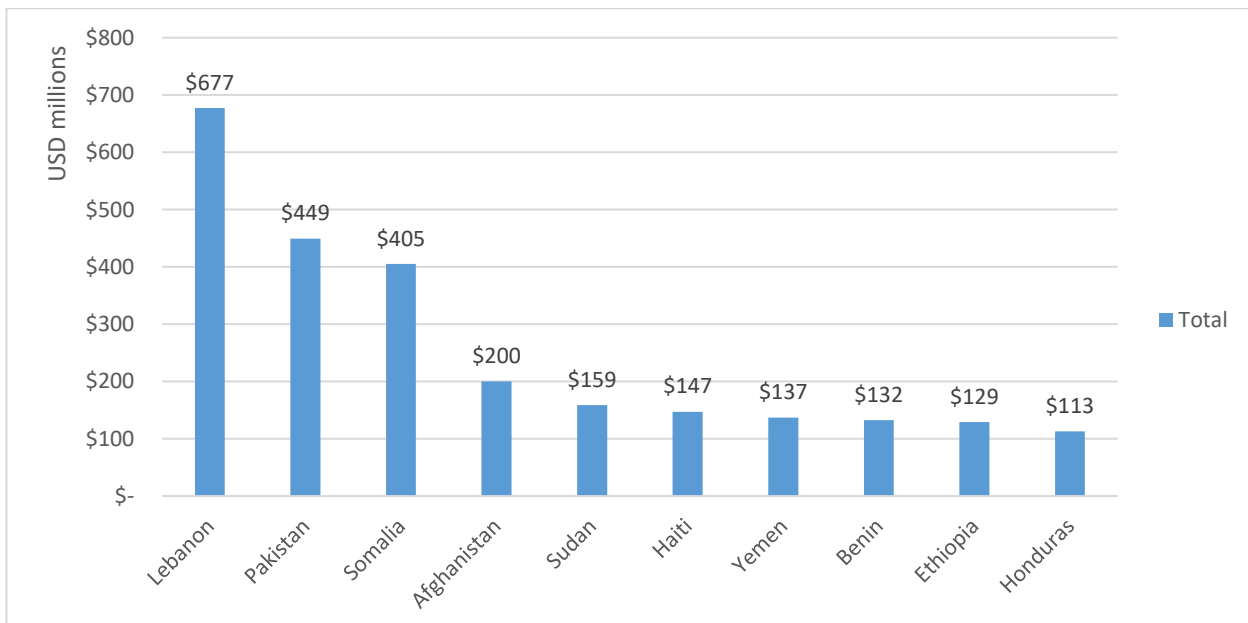
**Figure 11: Grants for social protection activities by donor by year**



Source: WFP Social Protection Unit Grant Analysis (2021-2024)

36. Between 2021 and 2024, Lebanon received the most funding for social protection and social protection-related activities according to the dataset (USD 667 million), almost one fifth of the total grant value received by WFP. This came principally from the World Bank (USD 507 million) and from the European Commission (USD 131 million worth of grants from the EU – USD 62.9 million in 2022 and USD 68.3 million in 2024). This was followed by Pakistan, where 99 per cent of grants for WFP social protection support or social protection support-related activities came from the national government (US 444 million). This represented 86 per cent of total grants from national governments received by WFP over this period. Notably, very few WFP country offices (13) received grants directly from respective national governments for non-school feeding social protection support activities.

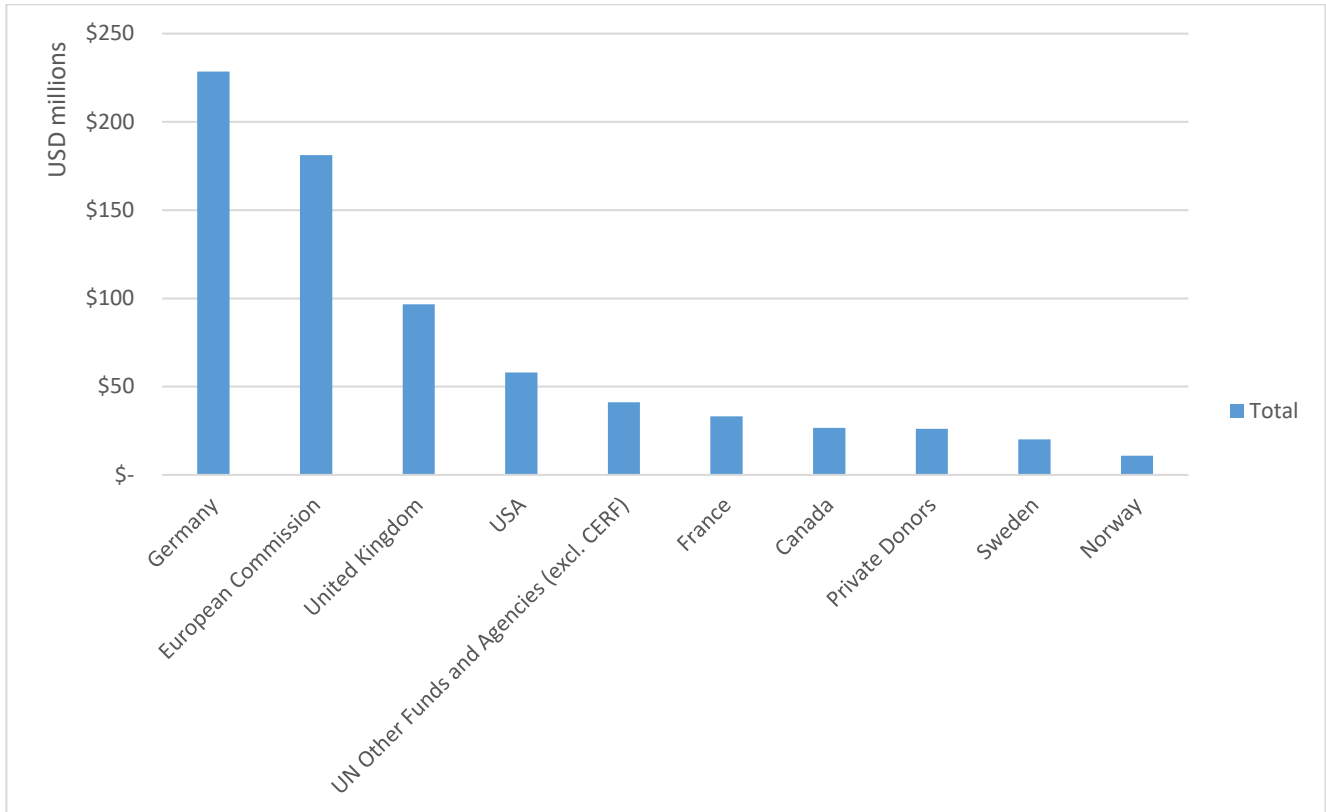
**Figure 12: Top ten country office recipients of grants for social protection, 2019-2024**



Source: WFP Social Protection Unit Grant Analysis (2021-2024)

37. Out of “other donors (bilateral, funds, private)”, Germany granted the most to WFP social protection support activities. Notably, the “other donors” category granted funds to the highest number of WFP country offices (65, 43 of which were granted more the USD 1 million 2021-2024), far more than governments leveraging IFI resources (41, 27 of which were granted more the USD 1 million 2021-2024). Top recipients of German grants were operations in East Africa and the Sahel: Ethiopia (USD 41 million), Mauritania (USD 28 million), and Niger (USD 28 million). Germany granted over USD 20 million to seven countries between 2021 and 2024. By contrast, 84 per cent of the European Commission’s grants between 2021 and 2024 went to Lebanon (USD 68.3 million).

**Figure 13: Top ten “other donors (bilateral, funds, and private)” grants for social protection**



Source: WFP Social Protection Unit Grant Analysis (2021-2024)

**SOCIAL PROTECTION SUPPORT ACTIVITY MAPPING**

38. In the absence of a consistently used activity tag, marker, or category for social protection, visibility on WFP interventions in social protection is not optimal. The Social Protection Unit has conducted an extensive analysis of annual country reports to map the modes of support and “social protection building blocks” supported, to illustrate the breadth of social protection activities implemented by WFP. While proactive, this analysis contended with some serious limitations relating principally to the structure and content of the annual country reports. It was discontinued in 2024 due to a lack of resources (see Annex V).<sup>191</sup>

39. Consequently, using data extracted from COMET, the evaluation team has conducted an analysis of activity titles to uncover broad, approximative trends in WFP’s portfolio of social protection support interventions. Specifically, it explores trends in terminology used in titles as a proxy for the centrality of social protection in programming and programme design. It also explores trends in direct beneficiaries reached by these activities. The evaluation team included all activity titles that included inflected forms of several keywords in the analysis presented below.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>191</sup> KIs stated that country offices have not frequently requested information from this exercise since its discontinuation, suggesting the exercise was of limited operational utility.

<sup>192</sup> These included all inflected forms of social protection, safety net, social assistance, social transfer, government transfer, and government programme.

40. Naturally, this analysis contends with important limitations:

- Social protection activities are not guaranteed to contain related terminology. The evaluation team noted examples of this in case studies. For example, in Niger, the activity (Activity 4 – CSP 2020-2025) with all direct beneficiaries from social protection support complementary actions did not contain any social protection support terminology: “Provide livelihood support to food insecure and at-risk of food insecurity men, women, boys and girls, including the development or rehabilitation of natural and productive assets (FFA), climate risk management measures, and value chains”.<sup>193</sup>
- Conversely, activities that contain social protection-related terminology may only be partially focused on social protection support activities. Some titles suggest multifarious activities that are not entirely social protection-focused, and so corresponding beneficiary numbers may be overstated.<sup>194</sup> Some activity titles imply that complementary actions have a limited, inconsistent, or uncertain connection to social protection by design.<sup>195</sup>

## COMPLEMENTARY ACTIONS

41. The following sub-section focuses on activities with direct beneficiaries.<sup>196</sup> It is based on an extraction from COMET containing all activities with direct beneficiaries between 2019 and 2024.

42. The term “social protection” is increasingly common in complementary action’s activity titles. The number of countries with at least one beneficiary-reaching activity containing the term social protection has doubled since 2019, from 15 to 30. This trend suggests an increasing prominence in the position of social protection within programming and country strategic planning.<sup>197</sup> Despite this, the uptake of the “Social Protection Support” (SPS) activity category has been limited, with less than half of activities with social protection in their titles using the tag. Notably, the use of the term “safety net(s)” in activity titles appear to be on the decline, likely indicative of the shift in approach noted in the Strategy.

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<sup>193</sup> This was likely due to the fact that SPS activities were integrated into Activity 4 as part of a budget revision during the COVID-19 pandemic. Another key example is the Pakistan country office’s Activity 3 (nutrition), which reached 1.3 million children and 865 thousand pregnant and breastfeeding women with assistance to prevent stunting. This did not include SPS-specific terminology: “Provide technical assistance to provincial and federal governments in their efforts to implement effective nutrition interventions and improve the enabling environment while concurrently supporting the private sector in the production of nutritious food”

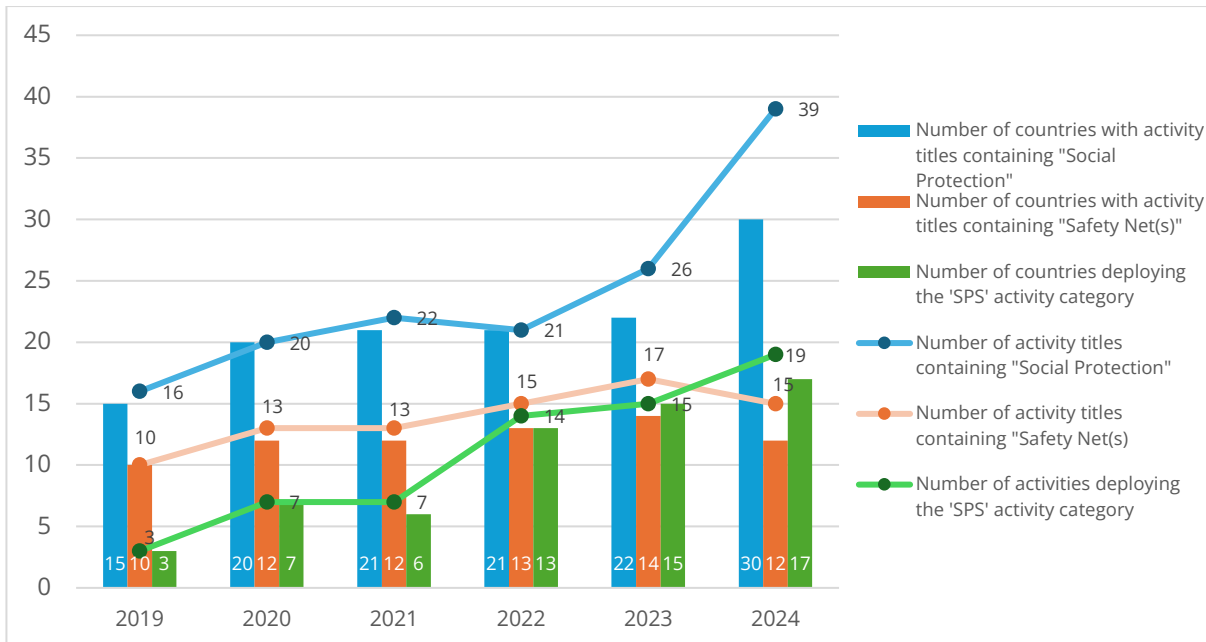
<sup>194</sup> The Ethiopia country office Activity 5 (2024) lists several intervention types and beneficiary types in addition to social protection: “Provide nutrition-sensitive social protection, climate risk management services and capacity strengthening support for smallholder farmers, market actors, pastoralists, refugees and returnees most vulnerable to climate shocks”.

<sup>195</sup> The new Malawi country office CSP’s crisis response intervention (Activity 1) is named “Provide food assistance, nutrition and livelihood support to populations in anticipation of and response to seasonal or other shocks, leveraging national social protection systems where possible”.

<sup>196</sup> This includes beneficiaries that receive cash, vouchers, or in-kind assistance directly from WFP (Tier 1 beneficiaries), as well as beneficiaries who receive training from WFP (Tier 2 beneficiaries).

<sup>197</sup> The uptake of social protection in activity titles is not even by region. In 2024, of the 30 countries with activity titles containing social protection, nine were in LACRO (70 per cent of country offices, the only “majority” region), eight in ESARO, six were in APARO, four in WACARO, and only three in MENA/EURO.

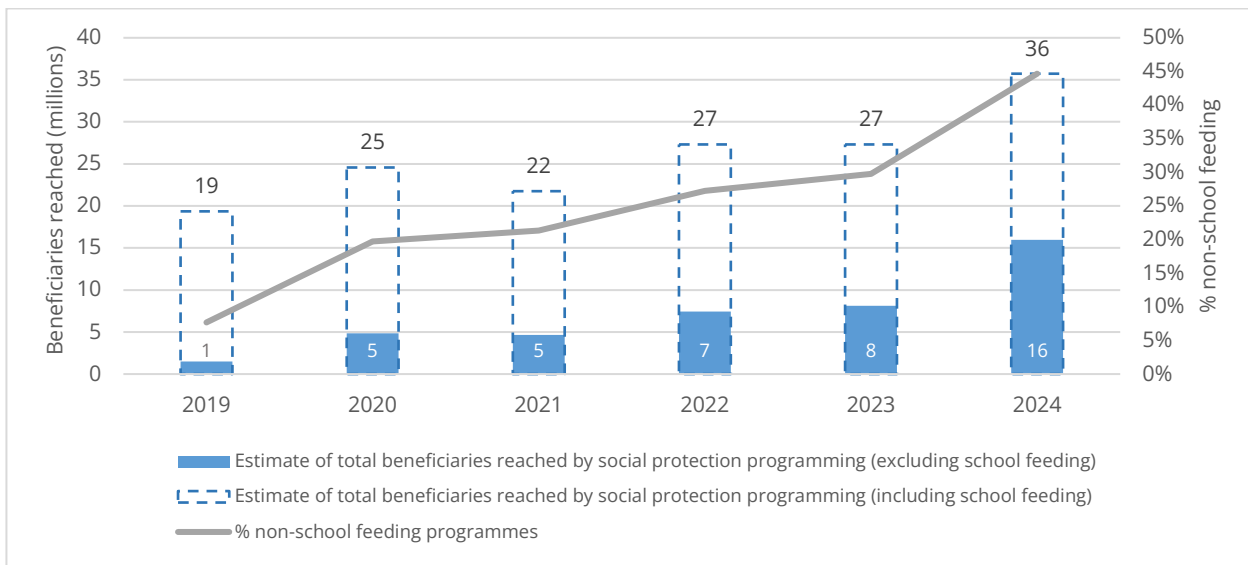
**Figure 14: Number of countries and activities by social protection-related activity title or tag, 2019-2024**



Source: COMET (extracted October 2025)

43. Accounting for overlap to the extent possible, the number of beneficiaries reached by explicitly social protection-related activities, including school feeding has risen from 19 million in 2019 to 35 million in 2024.<sup>198</sup> When adjusted to remove school feeding programmes, we see that the share of beneficiaries reached by non-school feeding-related activities increases drastically, from 8 percent in 2019 to 44 percent in 2024. This suggests a larger, more diversified portfolio of social protection support activities with direct beneficiaries.

**Figure 15: Estimate of beneficiaries reached by activities with titles explicitly focused on social protection**



Source: COMET (extracted October 2025)

<sup>198</sup> These figures include a significant social protection activity in Pakistan (Activity 3 of the current CSP) – the key focus of a case study – that did not contain any included social protection-related keywords. This activity reached 3.8 million beneficiaries in 2024. As stated above, this analysis is subject to important limitations, and represents a crude estimate given the limited tagging of SPS activities.

# Annex 8: Theory of change

## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

44. Since the evaluation used a theory-based approach, consideration of the theory of change (ToC) was an important focus of the evaluation team's work in the inception phase. This annex sets out the evaluation team's conclusions regarding the following questions:

- Can Figure the "pathways to social protection impact for WFP" as set out in the Strategy serve as the theory of change for the purposes of this evaluation?
- If so, what (if any) amendments to it are required?
- What is the resultant change story that will underpin the evaluation?

45. We concluded that the pathways as set out in the strategy provide a clear theory of change and a strong foundation for the evaluation. Its logic largely holds and it is well aligned with the Strategy in setting out how WFP's actions lead to outputs, and, in turn, to short-, medium- and long-term outcomes, and finally impacts. The underpinning assumptions required for the logic to hold are also largely sufficient. However, for the pathways to fully serve this purpose the evaluation team proposed several amendments and additions, which are described in the following sections. These are aimed at addressing some small gaps in the logic and slight divergences between the pathways figure and the text of the Strategy, as well as aiding the evaluation process by providing further clarity.

46. The reconstructed theory of change the evaluation proposed to use is illustrated in Figure 7.

## PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE PATHWAYS TO CONSTRUCT THE THEORY OF CHANGE

The theory of change at the input level

47. Two changes are proposed at the input level:

48. First, the evaluation team added an explicit input relating to WFP's activities on regional and global level partnerships, research and advocacy. This was an identified gap. It was implied by the presence of corresponding outputs and outcomes but not articulated as an input in the pathways figure.

49. Second, under the overarching activities in the pathways, the evaluation categorized the key types of roles and activities that WFP is engaged in for increased clarity, drawing these out from the text in the Strategy.

The theory of change at the output level

50. The output level of the theory of change sets out the immediate results of effective delivery of the inputs and activities. The evaluation team made one clarification here, which was to illustrate the alignment of the outputs in the theory of change to WFP's four areas of work and corresponding building blocks, as detailed in the text of the Strategy. This highlights that outputs are achieved by the combination of different areas of work and building blocks coming together and being mutually supportive.

Assumptions, risks and mitigation strategies at the output level

51. The evaluation found the assumptions articulated in the pathways to be appropriate and sufficient to explain the conditions under which inputs are expected to lead to outputs. The evaluation reflected on how they could be more clearly categorized for the purposes of the evaluation.

The theory of change at the outcome level

52. Outcomes in the theory of change are separated into short-term, medium-term and long-term outcomes. The evaluation made three changes at the outcome levels.

53. First, the evaluation amended the wording on two of the short-term outcomes:

- Edited the wording on the short-term outcome: “National actors obtain robust analysis and evidence on key social protection issues” to: “National actors obtain and use robust analysis and evidence on key social protection issues”. The rationale for this is that “obtain” is simply a direct reflection of the input provided. “Use” is the next step along the pathway and implies that national actors find the analysis and evidence comprehensible and useful to their purposes.
- Amended the wording on the short-term outcome: “WFP methods / designs / technologies are adopted by or transferred to national actors” to: “WFP methods / designs / technologies contribute to the development of sustainable government capacity”. This is in response to the finding during the inception mission that WFP actors now see the WFP contribution as coming about through a context-adapted process of technical assistance, rather than a simple handover of WFP’s methods, designs and technologies.

54. Second, the evaluation moved one long-term outcome to medium-term to give better logic between short-term and long-term outcomes: “Enhanced public capacity to support households to meet their food security, nutrition and other essential needs and/or manage risks”. In the pathways the analysis and evidence and system architecture at country level in the short-term leads to enhanced public capacity in the long term, but with no corresponding medium-term outcome.

55. Third, the evaluation added a medium-term outcome specifically related to WFP’s work on shock-responsive social protection to capture the work that WFP does in the nexus, beyond what would essentially be captured across the other medium-term outcome measures in crises contexts. This is fully articulated in the text of the Strategy, but not clearly visible in the pathways visual. As such, the evaluation added a medium-term outcome: “National social protection systems are increasingly shock-and conflict sensitive”

Assumptions, risks and mitigation strategies at the outcome level

56. Again, the evaluation found that the assumptions described as necessary for outputs to lead to outcomes are broadly sufficient. However, given that the assumptions cover WFP internal factors (and that these are not included in the theory of change inputs) the evaluation identified two key gaps. These are that for outputs to lead to outcomes, WFP needs to: i) maintain appropriate internal technical capacity at all levels; and ii) engage in the social protection sector in a way that is complementary to other international actors and promotes synergies. (The importance of “partnerships” is briefly mentioned in the pathways but not elucidated.)

Change story

57. This section provides a narrative of the reconstructed theory of change diagram, setting out our understanding of how and why the inputs will lead to outcomes and impacts through the change pathways.

**Summary:** WFP supports national actors in strengthening and expanding inclusive, risk-informed social protection systems by providing robust evidence, technical assistance, and models of effective approaches, while fostering strategic partnerships and working in complementarity with others. Recognizing that social protection interventions are embedded in the broader “Universal Social Protection 2030” (USP2030) framework, at the global level, WFP reinforces evidence generation and collaboration at global, regional and country levels. These contributions enhance the capacity, coordination and quality of national systems and programmes – particularly in the shared space between humanitarian, development and peace actors. Over time, these improvements enable households to better meet their food, nutrition and essential needs and to manage risks and shocks more effectively, thereby contributing to greater resilience and sustainable development. The success of this change pathway depends on conditions, external and internal, including national commitment, institutional capacity, strong partnerships and recognition of WFP’s added value. Risks are mitigated through advocacy, engagement of affected populations and strategic collaboration.

58. The Strategy anchors its vision in the USP2030 framework, which emphasizes expanding social protection systems along three key dimensions (coverage, comprehensiveness and adequacy) by 2030. To this it adds an emphasis on improving the quality of national systems and programmes. WFP positions its efforts both as an emergency agency, and as an actor contributing to high-quality national systems, aligning its interventions with the global agenda to progressively realize universal social protection. WFP contributes to strengthening inclusive, risk-informed, food security and nutrition-sensitive social protection systems by supporting national actors through three interconnected streams of work: (1) support to nationally led systems and programmes; (2) complementary actions in its own programming; and (3) global and regional partnerships, research and advocacy. The theory of change is built on a logic of nested contributions, which means that WFP interventions are sequenced to generate successive and interdependent changes over time. This approach distinguishes between outputs, short-, medium- and long-term outcomes, and ultimately, impacts on food security, nutrition and associated essential needs, and people's management of risks and shocks. These efforts are grounded in WFP's four areas of work and span the twelve social protection system building blocks – from governance and legislation to benefit delivery and accountability.

59. In its sphere of control and in terms of outputs, WFP contributes to an enabling policy environment, with ideas, robust evidence and multiple partnerships to put social protection systems and programmes into motion, including those related to risk management and humanitarian response. It initiates change by generating and sharing robust evidence and analysis on social protection, and by providing direct support to national actors in designing, reforming and delivering social protection systems. WFP pilots innovations in its own programmes and uses elements of national systems, modelling how scalable approaches can be embedded into national responses. WFP also creates opportunities for joint work between humanitarian, development and peace actors (double and triple nexus), and contributes technical solutions (for example, high-quality tools and programme designs) that complement national systems. At the global and regional levels, WFP fosters knowledge exchange and strategic alliances to reinforce policy coherence and cooperative learning.

60. In its sphere of influence, in the short-term, WFP contributes at the system and policy design levels, making them evidence-based, credible and robust, with collaboration and alliances that make them effective and efficient. These efforts enable national and global actors to access and use high-quality evidence, apply improved methods and tools, and strengthen coordination. National actors are better equipped with evidence and tools that improve social protection system architecture. They also begin to design and implement social protection programmes more responsive to food security and nutrition, as well as risk management. WFP's complementary actions and embedded innovations that have been adapted to the context in collaboration with national and other international actors, are subsequently taken up by national actors, enhancing trust in national systems. WFP-supported methods enhance the credibility and functionality of national systems, while global and regional partnerships help spread good practices.

61. Over the medium term, national social protection systems become more effective and inclusive due to WFP's contributions to capacity building and direct delivery. Programmes become more comprehensive, better resourced and more capable of reaching a wider and more diverse range of people, with improved adequacy. Importantly, systems become more shock- and conflict-sensitive, especially in crisis-prone contexts. As national capacities to design and deliver social protection interventions are strengthened, more people receive timely, appropriate and sufficient support and can better meet their food, nutrition and essential needs. At the global level, WFP work contributes to better-informed international actors who can support national systems more strategically and sustainably, now that a minimum basis for national action is consolidated.

62. In the long term, WFP's influence strengthens individuals as well as systems: households benefit from improved access to food, essential services and economic resources, enabling them to meet their needs and build resilience. Functional and inclusive social protection systems contribute to greater food availability, access and utilization, and ensure that gains are stable across time and population groups.

Ultimately, the cumulative result of WFP contributions – together with those of national and global partners – is that people are better able to meet their food security, nutrition and essential needs, and manage the risks and shocks they face.

63. This change pathway relies on a set of critical assumptions and enabling conditions. These can usefully be split into internal and external assumptions.

64. Internal assumptions refer to WFP's continued commitment to social protection, capacities, and the quality and relevance of its programming. Arguably these could be integrated as inputs in the theory of change. However, since they are assumptions in the pathways, we consider them as such for the purposes of this evaluation. At the input to output level, internal assumptions relate to strategic commitment to social protection and quality programming. At the output to outcome level, they relate to the relevance of WFP's support, support to national systems, adequate resourcing, appropriate capacities and partnerships that ensure complementarity and synergies.

65. External assumptions relate primarily to national actors – their political will and commitment to inclusive social protection, recognition of WFP's added value and technical expertise, and their resources and institutional capacities to design, implement and adapt social protection programmes. Continued commitment of funding partners to invest in WFP's support to social protection is another critical assumption.

# Annex 9: Mapping of findings, conclusions and recommendations

Recommendation	Conclusions	Findings
<p><b>Recommendation 1</b> Redouble efforts to implement the strategy, developing and communicating clear criteria for prioritizing social protection engagement, including as follows:</p> <p><b>Sub-recommendation 1.1</b> Prioritize support for social protection in areas where WFP has demonstrated comparative advantages, using them as entry points for wider engagement at the systems level; deprioritize pilot projects that are not either jointly conceived with/requested by the Government and include a strategy for uptake, or where WFP has a clearly formulated advocacy strategy.</p> <p><b>Sub-recommendation 1.2</b> Re-emphasize the importance of working with or through national social protection programmes as the default wherever feasible and appropriate. Where WFP is involved in implementation in an initial phase, explicitly stress the importance of maintaining a long-term perspective with adequate transition planning, including clear metrics and milestones to be agreed with government counterparts.</p> <p><b>Sub-recommendation 1.3</b> Support country offices in analysing political economy, and structural and cultural patterns of inequality between men and women and the exclusion of people with disabilities in order to inform the selection of social protection support modalities, level of engagement and feasibility.</p>	<p>Conclusion 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9</p>	<p>Findings 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18</p>

Recommendation	Conclusions	Findings
<p><b>Recommendation 2</b> Further develop the skills of WFP's social protection workforce and facilitate greater sharing of knowledge, experience and lessons between offices.</p> <p><b>Sub-recommendation 2.1</b> Conduct an updated census of the social protection workforce to assess the impact of recent budget reductions and contraction in staffing capacities to identify critical gaps that require attention based on programme portfolio significance and need for specialized skills.</p> <p><b>Sub-recommendation 2.2</b> Develop adequate social protection knowledge and soft skills for WFP employees at all levels and, in particular, leverage the knowledge, expertise and political awareness of senior national staff in country offices. This may include requiring personnel to participate in social protection training and engage in regional and global social protection communities of practice.</p>	<p>Conclusion 2, 4, 8, 9</p>	<p>Findings 16, 19, 21</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b> Deepen strategic partnerships for social protection with international financial institutions and other United Nations entities at the global and country levels.</p> <p><b>Sub-recommendation 3.1</b> Building on lessons learned, develop context-specific strategies for building relationships and engaging with governments and international financial institutions to ensure complementarity and influence social protection sector reforms and financing in order to better address food security, nutrition and resilience to shocks.</p> <p><b>Sub-recommendation 3.2</b> Prioritize global social protection partnerships with other United Nations entities to deepen mutual appreciation of organizational capacities and strengths and identify opportunities for collaboration and complementarity.</p>	<p>Conclusion 3</p>	<p>Finding 9</p>

Recommendation	Conclusions	Findings
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b> Strengthen results-based management for support for social protection</p> <p><b>Sub-recommendation 4.1</b> Consolidate learning gained from the implementation of support for social protection, identifying the most effective approaches and modalities and defining what WFP support for social protection should look like in different settings in order to better clarify priorities – including from WFP’s implementation of social protection programming on behalf of governments, on-demand services, work in fragile settings, and programmes that have linked WFP resilience and social protection activities.</p> <p><b>Sub-recommendation 4.2</b> Clarify criteria for what constitute WFP contributions to social protection as opposed to other programme activities, using a clear taxonomy to reduce inconsistent categorization across country offices.</p> <p><b>Sub-recommendation 4.3</b> Develop or ensure adequate use of existing qualitative outcome monitoring and reporting tools (or adopt existing tools used in the sector) that meaningfully track progress towards the strengthening of social protection systems and ensure that WFP contributions to the quantity and quality of social protection programmes is systematically tracked.</p>	<p>Conclusion 6</p>	<p>Finding 15, 20</p>

# Annex 10: Key informants interviewed

66. This annex presents analysis of key informants interviewed during the evaluation. The evaluation team conducted interviews with 294 key informants over the course of the evaluation. In total, 140 interviewees (48 percent) were WFP internal staff and 154 (52 percent) were external stakeholders, principally consisting of government partners (75, 26 percent of total) and UN agency staff (37, 13 percent). Of the key informants, 44 percent were women, and 56 per cent were men. The following table presents a breakdown of key informants by sex and stakeholder type.

Stakeholder group	Type of stakeholder	Women	Men	Subtotal	Percentage of total
Internal	<b>WFP country office</b>	48	59	107	36%
	<b>WFP regional office</b>	3	3	6	2%
	<b>WFP headquarters</b>	18	9	27	9%
External	<b>Government</b>	26	49	75	26%
	<b>UN agency</b>	13	24	37	13%
	<b>Donor/IFI</b>	12	12	24	8%
	<b>NGO</b>	7	4	11	4%
	<b>Academic institution/independent expert</b>	3	3	6	2%
	<b>Other</b>	0	1	1	0%
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>130</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>294</b>

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# Annex 12: Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>ACR</b>	Annual Country Report
<b>APR</b>	Annual Performance Review
<b>BISP</b>	Benazir Income Support Programme
<b>BOOST</b>	Business Operation and Organization Strategic Transformation
<b>CBT</b>	Cash-Based Transfers
<b>CCRIF</b>	Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility
<b>CCS</b>	Country Capacity Strengthening
<b>CD</b>	Country Director
<b>CFSVA</b>	Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis
<b>CLTF</b>	Changing Lives Transformation Fund
<b>CO</b>	Country Office
<b>COSMOS</b>	Country Office Support Model Optimization and Simplification
<b>CRF</b>	Corporate Results Framework
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>CSP</b>	Country Strategic Plan
<b>CSPE</b>	Country Strategic Plan Evaluation
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DASS</b>	Digital Advisory and Solutions Services
<b>DCAN</b>	Dispositif National de Prévention et de Réponses aux Crises Alimentaires et Nutritionnelles
<b>DCI</b>	Digital Convergence Initiative
<b>EB</b>	Executive Board
<b>EM</b>	Evaluation Manager
<b>EPR</b>	Emergency Preparedness and Response
<b>EQ</b>	Evaluation Question
<b>ET</b>	Evaluation Team
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>FNG</b>	Fill the Nutrient Gap

<b>GAP</b>	Global Assurance Project
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GEDSI</b>	Gender, Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
<b>HDP</b>	Humanitarian-Development-Peace
<b>HGSF</b>	Home-Grown School Feeding
<b>HLT</b>	High-Level Target
<b>HQ</b>	Headquarters
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person or People
<b>IDS</b>	Institute of Development Studies
<b>IFI</b>	International Financial Institution
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>IPC</b>	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>LAC</b>	Latin America and Caribbean
<b>MIDIS</b>	Peru Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>MTE</b>	Mid-Term Evaluation
<b>MTR</b>	Mid-Term Review
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NPTP</b>	National Poverty Targeting Programme
<b>NSDS</b>	Nutrition-Sensitive Direct Support Programme
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>OEV</b>	Office of Evaluation
<b>PDM</b>	Post-Distribution Monitoring
<b>PDS</b>	Public Distribution System
<b>PPG</b>	Programme Policy and Guidance
<b>PRO-S</b>	The Social Protection Unit
<b>RB</b>	Regional Bureau (WFP regional offices until 2025)
<b>RIMs</b>	Refugees, IDPs and Migrants
<b>RO</b>	Regional Office (since 2025)
<b>SBCC</b>	Social and Behavioural Change Communication
<b>SCTP</b>	Social Cash Transfer Programme
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SNF</b>	Specialized Nutritious Foods
<b>SO</b>	Strategic Outcome

<b>SP</b>	Social Protection
<b>SPS</b>	Social Protection Support
<b>SRSP</b>	Shock-Response Social Protection
<b>SSTC</b>	South-South and Triangular Cooperation
<b>ToC</b>	Theory of Change
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNDS</b>	United Nations Development System
<b>UNEG</b>	United Nations Evaluation Group
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children Fund
<b>UNOCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>USP</b>	Universal Social Protection
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

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