



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
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FULL REPORT



SUMMARY REPORT



WFP EVALUATION

EVALUATION OF WFP'S CORPORATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO THE SUDAN REGIONAL CRISIS

The evaluation assessed WFP's response to the Sudan regional crisis between April 2023 and August 2025 across Sudan and neighbouring countries (the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Libya, South Sudan and Uganda). It aimed to strengthen accountability and generate lessons to improve the ongoing response and inform future complex emergency responses.

The evaluation asked five questions:

- 1 How appropriate was the WFP response to the food security and nutrition needs of people most affected by the crisis in Sudan?
- 2 How effective was the WFP response to the crisis?
- 3 How efficient was the WFP response ?
- 4 What factors influenced the overall coherence and results of WFP's response?
- 5 To what extent do the conditions and prospects for scale-down of the response exist?

May 2026

KEY MESSAGES



WFP rapidly prioritized assistance for newly displaced populations, but access constraints initially limited support to those in hard-to-reach areas



WFP delivered vital large-scale assistance despite severe constraints, but with mixed food security and nutrition outcomes



Early efficiency was hampered by preparedness gaps and risk aversion but improved gradually over time



The highly politicized aid environment in Sudan and insufficient WFP corporate leadership, hampered adherence to humanitarian principles in Sudan



WFP played a key role in enabling the inter-agency response to the regional crisis



The scale-up of the emergency response lacked coherence as a unified regional response and did not consistently receive the corporate attention it deserved



An overall scale-back of operations in Sudan is not yet appropriate but there is scope for a transition from emergency assistance to resilience activities in some areas



WHAT DID THE EVALUATION FIND?



WFP rapidly prioritized assistance for newly displaced populations, but access constraints initially limited support to those remaining in hard-to-reach areas

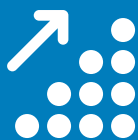
WFP assistance was quickly targeted to reach newly displaced populations seeking refuge in neighbouring countries and fleeing conflict-affected locations inside Sudan. However, those who remained in inaccessible areas were initially underserved.

Over time, WFP sharpened its focus and found creative ways to prioritize the most vulnerable people, including those in persistently inaccessible locations. Pressure to respond quickly and at scale with limited resources affected the quality of WFP's response, resulting in gaps in inclusivity, accountability and conflict sensitivity.



WFP delivered vital large-scale assistance to those in need despite severe constraints, though with mixed food security and nutrition outcomes

In Sudan, dietary diversity scores improved while beneficiaries used fewer consumption-based coping strategies. There were also no deaths from moderate acute malnutrition, and fewer students dropped out of school, where these had reopened. Beneficiaries' household food consumption scores declined significantly, particularly for women, and fewer beneficiaries recovered from moderate acute malnutrition (MAM), while more defaulted MAM treatment.



Early efficiency was hampered by preparedness gaps and risk aversion but improved gradually over time

Neither WFP nor the broader United Nations system anticipated the scale or complexity of the conflict in Sudan. This meant that WFP's early warning and contingency planning for the crisis was not sufficient.

WFP's supply chain preparedness in Sudan, including pre-positioning, was initially limited and reactive, resulting in delays in scaling up the response to the crisis. However, it improved over time.

WFP did not always provide timely delivery of in kind assistance to beneficiaries in Sudan due to constraints such as access, security, logistical and weather-related challenges. WFP used limited cross-border corridors limiting coverage and timely provision of assistance to people in need.

Timely delivery of assistance by WFP improved over time except in hard-to-reach areas. In neighbouring countries, WFP generally provided timely assistance, despite some country-specific issues such as disbursement delays for cash transfers, and security-related access constraints.

The cost-efficient delivery of WFP's assistance to people affected by the conflict in Sudan was hampered by high transport costs and reliance on long supply routes. It could have been improved through more decisive supply chain management, including the use of a wider range of supply corridors, conflict-appropriate transport options and greater reliance on the Global Commodity Management Facility (GCMF).

WFP Sudan Country Office had an unclear risk appetite that constrained agile decision making. This included adopting a risk-averse supply chain approach which increased lead times, resulting in delay in the delivery of assistance to vulnerable populations. Neighbouring country offices managed risks more effectively in the provision of assistance to people affected by the Sudan crisis.



Highly politicized aid environment in Sudan and insufficient WFP corporate leadership hampered adherence to humanitarian principles in Sudan

WFP’s ability to adhere to humanitarian principles in Sudan faced major challenges. These included a highly politicized operating environment and wider erosion of international humanitarian law. WFP’s access to non-Sudanese-Armed-Forces-controlled areas where needs were highest was limited by the recognition of the SAF-led Transitional Sovereignty Council which undermined the perceived neutrality and operational independence of the United Nations.

WFP’s early emergency response efforts prioritized more accessible locations, challenging the principle of impartiality. WFP later accessed hard-to-reach areas by adopting more creative access modalities and strengthened humanitarian diplomacy, including engagement with donors.

WFP delayed engagement with and provided uneven support to local civil society actors leading in the response to the Sudan crisis. This had significant consequences in terms of alleviating human suffering. However, partnerships with local actors improved over time.

Overall, WFP’s operationalization of principled action in the Sudan emergency response was fragmented and inconsistent. It was challenged by limited corporate guidance, weak escalation mechanisms, siloed working practices and insufficient application of lessons learned from other contexts. This was despite staff demonstrating a strong understanding of humanitarian principles.



WFP played a key role in the inter-agency response to the regional crisis

WFP played a critical leadership role across the wider humanitarian architecture, leading the Logistics and Emergency Telecommunications Clusters and co-leading the Food Security Cluster. UNHAS flights, warehousing and other common services were essential lifelines enabling operational continuity for the wider humanitarian system.

WFP was a trusted source of evidence to support its own operations and the broader humanitarian system. For example, WFP’s food security assessments were used to fill food security and nutrition data gaps.

WFP’s unique ability to deliver life-saving assistance and resilience-building activities positioned it as a central actor in the collective humanitarian response in Sudan.



The scale-up of the emergency response lacked coherence as a unified regional response and did not consistently receive the corporate attention it deserved

WFP’s regional corporate scale-up increased resource mobilization efforts for the countries that it covered, including by mobilizing support from global headquarters offices, but it left other countries unsupported.

The response was managed primarily as a series of country office responses with varying degrees of regional and global support and reporting expectations. Overall, the regional dimension of the crisis did not receive sufficient corporate attention.



An overall scale-back of operations in Sudan is not yet appropriate but there is scope for a transition from emergency assistance to resilience activities in some areas

It is too early to scale back emergency assistance across Sudan given the ongoing conflict and worsening food insecurity. However, funding constraints mean that WFP has had to reprioritize assistance toward the most vulnerable populations. In more stable areas, mainly in the east, WFP has scope to plan and implement transition and resilience activities although funding shortages continue to drive overall scale-back decisions.

In neighbouring countries, the lack of sustained funding has driven discussions on prioritization and potential scale-back, including on how to avoid the protracted operation of refugee camps.

WHAT SHOULD WFP DO?

1

Enhance WFP's understanding of the effects of the Sudan crisis and its agility to prepare for and respond to the ongoing emergency as well as other large-scale emergencies

2

Strengthen the way in which WFP manages the inherent dilemmas of delivering a principled humanitarian response in the Sudan context

3

Strengthen approaches to protection, conflict sensitivity, inclusivity and accountability to affected populations within WFP's response to the emergency

4

Reform approaches and systems to enable more meaningful localization of WFP's assistance in Sudan and neighbouring countries

5

Adapt programming and plan for scale-down and a shift towards durable solutions and resilience

