

OPERATION EVALUATIONS SERIES

Regional Synthesis 2013-2017

Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Europe Region

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Policy and Institutional Context

1. Major contextual shifts, including climate change, increasing inequality, more frequent natural disasters and increasingly protracted conflicts, have influenced global policy reforms. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2016, calls for increased partnership and collective action to support country-led efforts in achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2. The WFP Strategic Plan 2014-2017 signalled a major shift from WFP as a “food aid” to “food assistance” agency. The subsequent WFP Strategic Plan 2017-2021 positions WFP firmly in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and particularly in contributing to the achievement of SDG 2: “End Hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”. It focuses on reaching those in greatest need first, while ensuring that no one is left behind.¹

3. To meet the demands of this new environment, WFP has launched the Integrated Road Map (IRM). This redefines the organisation’s architecture as well as its country strategic planning process under the WFP Strategic Plan 2017-2021.

1.2 Operations Evaluations

4. The WFP series of operations evaluations (OpEv) supports its corporate objective of accountability and learning for results. Since mid-2013, the series has generated 58 evaluations of operations across the six region in which WFP operates. The evaluations assess the appropriateness of WFP operations, their results, and the factors explaining these results. The series will close in mid-2017.

5. Within the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Europe (‘Cairo’) region, nine operations were evaluated in eight countries: Armenia, Egypt, Iran, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Ukraine and the Kyrgyz Republic (two social protection-focused operations, one of which was focused on optimizing the national primary school meals programme (SMP) and the other supported the national productive safety nets programme (PSNP))². The nine operations had combined requirements of over USD 1 billion, targeting 8.4 million beneficiaries from 2013-2017.³

- Nine of 43 operations in the Cairo region were evaluated under the 2013-2016 OpEv series (excluding Level 3 emergencies). This corresponds to 21 percent of the regional portfolio of operations and 22 percent of the regional operational budget
- Four of the operations evaluated were development operations (DEV) and three were protracted relief and recovery operations (PRRO). One country programme (CP) and one emergency operation (EMOP) were also evaluated.⁴
- The eight countries in which evaluations were conducted form just under half of the total 18 countries in which WFP is currently active in the region.

¹ WFP Strategic Plan 2017-2021 WFP/EB.2/2016/4-A/Rev.2

² For clarity, the two Kyrgyzstan operations (which ran and were evaluated concurrently) are referred to as the ‘Kyrgyzstan primary school meals programme (SMP) operation’ and the Kyrgyzstan national productive safety nets and long-term community resilience (PSNP) operation’ respectively.

³ Including all budget revisions. Source: operation evaluation factsheets; annual operation evaluation synthesis reports, 2014, 2015, 2016. Specific figures: USD requirements: 1,042,047,482 Beneficiaries targeted 8,401,175

⁴ Source: Operations Evaluations Factsheet; Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Europe Region, March 2017

1.3 Purpose and Objectives

6. This Synthesis of Operations Evaluations for the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Europe Region (Cairo region) brings together the findings of nine operations evaluations, conducted from mid-2013 to mid-2017. The synthesis aims to:

- Enhance efficient and effective use of evaluation evidence and learning in programme development
- Help facilitate the continued country strategic planning process for the regional bureau
- Create a concise, regional-friendly ‘body of evidence’ analysis to inform the upcoming development of the regional evaluation strategy.⁵

1.4 Contexts of the Operations Evaluated

7. The Cairo region presents a complex and diverse set of political, economic, environmental and social contexts. These include: (i) highly unstable and volatile environments, affected by conflict and/or civil unrest (ii) more stable and predictable settings, such as Commonwealth of Independent States countries,⁶ where shocks may still occur but are less frequent and (iii) countries experiencing protracted crises, which often comprise a mix of stable and unstable operating contexts, such as Sudan. The following are examples of this diverse context:

- Conflict, instability and turmoil in countries such as Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen, has led to fifteen million people fleeing their homes and the largest refugee crisis since World War II. Political transition is also taking place in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia, causing periodic unrest and security concerns. Ukraine is experiencing ongoing instability and political uncertainty.
- Protracted crisis countries, such as Palestine, Sudan and Syria, are exposed to recurring outbreaks of violence and conflict, as well as sudden influxes of refugees or other population displacements. Even some stable and relatively wealthy countries in the region are struggling with economic slowdown, youth unemployment and vulnerability to regional instability.
- There is chronic poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition in some middle-income countries arising from structural barriers to food security, including Armenia, Egypt, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Such countries are also vulnerable to economic shocks and global food prices, and particularly to downturns in the Russian economy.
- National social protection systems are in place in some countries (particularly CIS countries and Egypt) but are increasingly perceived as politically and/or financially unsustainable. In conflict affected countries, including Eastern Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen, social protection systems have largely

⁵ Terms of Reference

⁶ The Confederation of Independent States is a confederation of nine member states and two associate members located in Eurasia, formed during the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and which were all former Soviet Republics (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Independent_States). Of those countries with an operation evaluation conducted, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are member states, whilst Ukraine is an associate member.

been disrupted, leaving millions of people with limited or no access to services or social assistance.

- Countries of evaluation have diverse levels of gender inequality, though overall, gender inequality is lower than in other regions evaluated through this series. The eight countries range from a ranking of 55/186 countries in the 2016 Gender Inequality Index (Ukraine) through to 140/186 (Sudan).⁷ However, five of the eight countries (Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Ukraine) have values in the upper half of the index, with only three (Egypt, Iran, Sudan) in the lower half.

1.5 WFP in the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Europe region

8. WFP is operational in eighteen countries in the region in 2017.⁸ In works through one regional PRRO implemented in five countries, six single country PRROs, four single country EMOPs, two CPs, five DEVs, and two special operations (SOs).⁹

9. The highly complex regional context has required WFP to adopt multiple approaches: helping to manage the effects of the Syrian regional crisis, including the displacement of millions of people; addressing longer-term humanitarian needs in countries such as Sudan, which combines stable and unstable environments; and playing a development role in countries such as Egypt, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Tunisia.

1.6 The Evaluated Operations

10. The operations evaluated in this synthesis were implemented under diverse conditions. These include:

- Varied income levels: Four of the evaluated operations were implemented in three low-income countries (Kyrgyzstan, Sudan and Tajikistan) and five in middle income countries (Armenia, Egypt, Iran, Ukraine and Tunisia).
- Fragile/complex operating environments: Operations in Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia and Ukraine were implemented in contexts of instability and/or political uncertainty. In contrast, operations in Armenia, Iran, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan benefited from comparatively stable governance environments.
- Displacement: Operations in Iran, Sudan and Ukraine served refugee/internally displaced person (IDP) populations, being solely focused on these groups in Iran and Ukraine.

11. To address the needs of the almost nine million people targeted by the operations, WFP managed to raise a total of 70.5 percent of the USD 1.04 billion requirements overall, at the time of evaluations being conducted.

12. **Activities/modalities:** The nine evaluated operations comprised a range of activities and modalities:

⁷ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>

⁸ Algeria, Armenia, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, State of Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Yemen.

⁹ Source: Data extracted from COMET.

- In this region, operations evaluated were relatively concentrated. Five out of nine operations were single-activity operations, focused on school feeding (Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tunisia), food assistance for assets/food assistance for training (FFA/FFT) (Kyrgyzstan PSNP operation) and general distribution in the Ukraine.
- The remaining four operations contained two components or more, though remained comparatively concentrated. Operations included just two activity types in Iran, three in Egypt and Tajikistan, and four in Sudan.
- School feeding was the most frequently applied modality in the evaluations, being applied in six out of nine operations evaluated.¹⁰ Three operations were part of a regional school feeding programme (in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tunisia). These operations, as well as the Egypt school feeding activity, aimed to support national programmes and/or planned capacity-building activities aiming at the gradual transition of activities to ministries of education.
- General distribution was designed and implemented in four out of nine operations.¹¹ In three, it was used as an instrument to respond to the needs of vulnerable beneficiaries such as internally displaced populations/refugees and in Tajikistan it targeted chronically vulnerable populations at a critical time of the year.
- Nutrition interventions were planned in three countries – Egypt, Sudan and Tajikistan – but were only implemented in Sudan and Tajikistan.
- Food assistance for assets/food assistance for training was implemented in four operations (Egypt, Kyrgyzstan, Sudan and Tajikistan).¹²
- Capacity strengthening was designed and applied (though to highly varied extents) in seven operations, with exceptions being Iran and Ukraine. The operation in Tunisia was geared to capacity strengthening rather than direct delivery, targeting 100 government officials as beneficiaries.
- In-kind modalities were applied in eight operations (all other than Tunisia), and cash and voucher transfers planned in five (Egypt, Kyrgyzstan PSNP, Sudan, Tajikistan and Ukraine) but only fully implemented in four, with that in Egypt being a small-scale pilot.
- Local purchase of commodities for distribution was implemented in four operations.

13. **Policy frameworks:** WFP engaged in the region with a wide range of policy platforms for food security. These include policies and frameworks on school feeding; nutrition; food security; and disaster management and risk reduction. WFP also engaged with national social protection policies and frameworks (see ‘Findings’, below).

14. **Strategic partnerships:** Operations also formed a wide range of strategic partnerships in the region. These included central ministries (e.g. of education, health, agriculture, social policy, social development and foreign affairs) as well as

¹⁰ All other than Kyrgyzstan PSNP (DEV 200662) Tajikistan, and the Ukraine operation.

¹¹ Tajikistan, Iran, Sudan and Ukraine.

¹² The Armenia and Iran operations also had FFT programmes, but in support to their education programme. As such, they are not listed within this category, whose key objective is livelihoods strengthening and resilience building.

decentralised government functions, national food security and vulnerability assessment mechanisms and disaster management authorities. Other partnerships were formed with a broad spectrum of United Nations agencies and with international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Annex 1 lists the strategic partnerships identified per country within evaluations (though recognising that these date back in some cases to 2014).

15. Table 1 presents the operations' main features.

Table 1: Features of operation

Year of evaluation approval	Country	Category	Operation						Activities ¹³						Modalities	
			No.	Duration	Value (USD million)	% funded at evaluation	% funded overall ¹⁴	Target beneficiaries ¹⁵	General distribution	Nutrition ¹⁶	School feeding	Food assistance for assets/training	Capacity development	Local purchase	Food	Cash-based transfers
2014	Tajikistan	PRRO	200122	2010-2014	59,582,380	29	82.7	444,875	√	√*		√	√	√	√	√
2015	Armenia	DEV	200128	2010-2016	30,313,959	91.1	96.1	75,500			√	□ ¹⁷	√		√	
	Iran	PRRO	200310	2013-2015	16,927,480	55.5	92.5	30,200	√		√	□		√	√	
	Tunisia	DEV	200493	2012-2015	6,500,000	100	24.9	100 ¹⁸			√		√			
2016	Egypt	CP	200238	2013-2018	168,469,594	77	76.6	1,335,000		√◊	√	√	√	√	√	√◊ (pilot)
	Ukraine	EMOP	200765	2014-2016	127,730,614	56	39.6	575,000	√					√	√	√
	Kyrgyzstan	DEV	200176	2012-2016	15,868,001	78.5	80.7	114,000			√		√		√	
	Kyrgyzstan	DEV	200662	2014-2016	26,575,587	100.4	111.1	274,000				√	√		√	√◊
	Sudan	PRRO	200808	2015-2017	732,711,364	70	71	6,107,200	√	√	√	√	√◊		√	√
	Totals				1,042,093,114			8,955,875	4	3	6	4	7	4	8	5

¹³ ◊ denotes planned but not implemented or √◊ denotes implemented to a very limited degree in terms of beneficiary numbers or duration.

¹⁴ As at the time of this synthesis for ongoing operations or as at the end of the operation for already completed operations. Note that some of the operations may have had budget revisions after the evaluation was completed. This information is therefore intended to illustrate the volatility of funding environment. The source of this information is resource updates found in the WFP operations database. (<http://www.wfp.org/operations/database>).

¹⁵ Planned beneficiaries throughout the project's lifetime.

¹⁶ *Denotes HIV/AIDS activities that are analysed/reported under nutrition.

¹⁷ □ Denotes livelihoods support to education, which has an education rather than a livelihoods intent.

¹⁸ Capacity development operation targeting government officials.

1.7 Methodology

16. The individual evaluations analysed here applied mixed-methods approaches, including documentary analysis, review of financial data and statistics, interviews and focus groups with key informants, and other relevant methods. All methodologies were checked for quality and reliability through the operations evaluations process.

17. This regional operations evaluations synthesis applies a structured analytical framework and systematic data extraction. Evidence was rated for validity and reliability on a scale of 1 (low) to 4 (high), with only reliable evidence – scoring at least 2 – included. Findings were checked by the WFP Office of Evaluation and by the regional evaluation officer, and also reviewed by programme staff in the region.

18. Five of the nine evaluations reported in 2016 or 2017 (Egypt, the two Kyrgyzstan operations, Sudan and Ukraine), three in 2015 (Armenia, Iran and Ukraine) and just one in 2014 (Tajikistan). Evidence is therefore concentrated in the latter period of WFP operations in the region.

19. There are limitations to this regional synthesis:

- Six of the nine evaluations were mid-term, limiting final results data available
- The evidence arises from eight countries in the Cairo region. Many operations evaluated in this series were small-scale, concentrated operations, for example, on school feeding, in a region where WFP is engaged in major humanitarian responses, such as to the Syria regional crisis. Although themes identified may have wider relevance, therefore, they are not typical of WFP results in the region, and cannot be extrapolated to the WFP wider portfolio.

20. Nonetheless, the information presented in this synthesis constitutes a relevant, and hopefully useful, evidence base to inform the Integrated Road Map and country strategic planning processes in the Cairo region going forward.

2. FINDINGS

QUESTION 1: How appropriate was the operation's design?

(relevance, strategic positioning and coherence)

Summary findings: relevance/appropriateness

Overall, evaluations found WFP operations relevant to the needs of specific targeted populations in the region. WFP worked closely with government to plan and develop designs, with some operations explicitly focused on an enabling role, often through a single-activity approach such as school feeding. Designs mostly sought out partnerships with other humanitarian and development actors in the country, though some opportunities were missed. Alignment with available social protection policy frameworks was limited and some transfer modalities were not fully appropriate.

Designs were mostly based on sound or the best available evidence, though evaluations found some technical flaws, including weak causal chains and the use of untested assumptions. Targeting was generally appropriate at both geographical and activity level and aligned with national approaches, partly due to the concentrated model adopted in some countries. The majority of operations integrated gender sensitivity, though at times a purely quantitative 'equal numbers' approach prevailed.

2.1 How appropriate was WFP strategic positioning in the region?

Overall, evaluations found WFP operations relevant and appropriate to beneficiary needs. WFP operations covered significant proportions of the vulnerable population and the organisation engaged in close partnerships with governments in design. Some operations were explicitly focused on an enabling role, with capacity development intentions integrated. Designs mostly sought out partnerships with other humanitarian and development actors in the country, though some opportunities were missed. Operations did not consistently maximise opportunities presented by national social protection policy frameworks.

21. Evaluations found WFP operations covering significant proportions of the identified population in need, often through progressively expanding coverage. In Armenia, for example, the pilot school feeding operation expanded over time to cover all provinces, apart from the capital city. In Egypt, the school feeding element of the operation increased during implementation, so that beneficiary targets were doubled by 2015. In Ukraine, WFP began by targeting 28,000 of a million internally displaced persons, but by the time of evaluation was targeting over 575,000.

22. In common with findings identified elsewhere in this series,¹⁹ evaluations found mostly close partnerships in design between WFP and governments in the region, though in this region some opportunities were missed. Seven out of nine operations were designed in direct partnership with government, but 'circumstantial' collaboration in Armenia arose from a funding opportunity, and relationships with the Government in Iran were limited.²⁰ In Egypt, Ukraine and Tunisia, operations arose explicitly from government requests to WFP.

23. Four out of nine operations were also explicitly geared to help implement government programmes, and/or were implemented through national structures.

¹⁹ See Regional Operation Evaluation Syntheses for East and Central Africa; Asia and the Pacific; Southern Africa; Latin America and the Caribbean; and West Africa.

²⁰ In Iran, WFP has limited relationships with government, other than the Bureau for Aliens and Immigration Affairs (on refugees).

These were school feeding programmes in Egypt, Tunisia and Kyrgyzstan; and the nutrition programme in Tajikistan. Additionally, in Iran, WFP was supporting the Government to implement its international commitments to refugees.

24. Also, similar to wider findings from this series, four operations²¹ in the region were particularly geared to enabling, rather than purely delivery roles, with a strong emphasis on technical assistance, capacity development and supporting national ownership. Specifically:

- In Egypt and Tunisia, operations were almost wholly geared to capacity and policy strengthening for school feeding (both operations) and livelihoods and disaster risk reduction (Egypt).
- In Kyrgyzstan, WFP implemented two operations. The PSNP operation sought to enhance the Government's capacity to contribute to sustainable food security, nutrition and resilience among the poorest and most food insecure groups, applying a resilience framework. The SMP operation sought to optimise the Government's existing primary school meals programme.

25. Three operations, both Kyrgyzstan operations and one in Tunisia, also conducted capacity analysis as part of design. However, although four other operations included capacity strengthening within their designs, none of these based designs on capacity analysis or developed an overarching framework, strategy or intended results.²² In Armenia, despite a capacity-strengthening element being included, the underlying vision of the operation was primarily that of a food service.

26. Social protection frameworks offered potentially conducive policy frameworks for eight out of nine operations.²³ However, in contrast to other regions,²⁴ WFP missed opportunities to align with these in six operations,²⁵ though it did align strongly in three.²⁶ Where WFP activities were insufficiently-aligned, evaluations recommend more explicit gearing of activities to social protection frameworks in the country, and designing activities to support them.

27. Finally, evaluations found WFP to be aiming for implementation through the national and international response to country needs. Seven operations actively sought out partnerships at the design stage,²⁷ though in Ukraine WFP intentions were constrained by weaknesses in wider external co-operation. In Armenia and Egypt, designs missed opportunities for integration with the activities of the wider partnership.

2.2 How rigorous was the operation design?

Evaluations found strong use of evidence applied to inform designs and WFP efforts to provide vulnerability analysis and mapping data was praised in some countries. However, evaluations also found some design flaws, including weak causal chains and the use of untested assumptions. Gender was comparatively well-integrated in quantitative terms, with some use of gender analysis and gender-sensitive activities included, though this was not fully consistent across operations.

²¹ Egypt, Kyrgyzstan both operations, Tunisia.

²² All other than Iran and Ukraine.

²³ All other than Armenia.

²⁴ See Regional Syntheses for Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, West Africa and Southern Africa.

²⁵ Armenia, Iran, Kyrgyzstan SMP, Sudan, Tajikistan, Ukraine.

²⁶ Egypt, Kyrgyzstan PSNP, Tunisia.

²⁷ Iran, both Kyrgyzstan operations, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Ukraine.

28. The rigour of the design process was mixed. Seven operations directly succeeded previous WFP operations in the country.²⁸ Four out of seven²⁹ had adequately revisited the previous design to meet current needs, but three largely adopted a continuation model,³⁰ with changes made later through budget revisions, for example in Tajikistan.

29. However, in contrast to wider findings from this series, seven out of nine evaluations in the region found the evidence basis applied generally sufficient or adequate for design.³¹ Five operations, for example, explicitly applied evidence from evaluations and reviews to inform design.³² Sources applied are listed in Box 1.

Box 1: Sources of evidence applied for operation design

- Evidence from evaluations and reviews
- Baseline studies
- Vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) including comprehensive food security and vulnerability assessment (CFSVA), food security needs assessments, household food security assessments, etc.
- National statistics and data on food security and nutrition
- Joint assessments with partner United Nation agencies
- Integrated phase classification data
- Evidence from the System Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) workshop.

Example: In Egypt, WFP operation design applied findings from: evaluations, baseline studies, detailed situation analyses for target villages, food security and poverty data jointly collected by WFP and the Government of Egypt, and a range of vulnerability analysis and mapping studies

30. Vulnerability analysis and mapping data to inform design was particularly praised in five evaluations³³ in the region, for providing detailed and specific insights into population needs. Box 2 provides examples.

Box 2: Vulnerability analysis and mapping in the Cairo region

- In Kyrgyzstan, WFP vulnerability analysis and mapping data identified vulnerability to the district level on six different dimensions, creating a composite vulnerability score. WFP food security assessments were assessed as highly reliable by the evaluation
- In Ukraine, WFP made major efforts to conduct needs assessments, appointing a regional institute as a third-party monitor to collect and analyse information on the ground
- In Sudan, WFP conducted a wide range of food security assessments through the food security monitoring system. Specific assessments included: a comprehensive

²⁸ All other than Tunisia and Ukraine.

²⁹ Egypt, both the Kyrgyzstan operations, Sudan.

³⁰ Armenia, Iran, Tajikistan.

³¹ In Iran, the joint assessment mission recommended carrying out a food security assessment in settlements prior to the establishment of the targeting approach to refine the vulnerability analysis. This was delayed several times and finally not undertaken. In Ukraine, conducting needs assessments was challenging due to external factors.

³² Egypt, both the Kyrgyzstan operations, Sudan, Tunisia.

³³ Egypt, both the Kyrgyzstan operations, Sudan, Tajikistan.

food security and vulnerability assessment (CFSVA); nutrition surveys in Darfur; findings from joint assessment missions and generated mass mid upper arm circumference screening data

31. The operation evaluations series has consistently identified weaknesses in the quality of operation designs, including weak causal chains and the use of untested assumptions.³⁴ Cairo region evaluations reflect similarly, with four out of nine evaluations finding gaps in the internal logic and/or the use of untested assumptions - for example, related to government involvement in the operation (Armenia), which did not subsequently materialise and concerning WFP relevancy and role in Ukraine. By contrast, in Tunisia, the evaluations and studies conducted during implementation were intended to help explore the assumptions implicit in school feeding interventions.

32. Internal synergies in design are less relevant in this region, with only four operations (as per Section 1) including more than one activity.³⁵ Only evaluations in Egypt and Sudan report here, with synergies limited in Egypt but more extensive in Sudan.

33. Finally, evaluations in this series have consistently found limited gender analysis and sensitivity in design. However, designs in the Cairo region showed slightly more consistent use of gender analysis than in other regions (four out of nine operations³⁶ though of varying depths), also more consistent gender sensitivity (six out of nine operations).³⁷ However, in several countries,³⁸ this was limited to a focus on parity in numbers.

2.3 How responsive were operations to needs?

Overall, WFP operations in the region were well-designed to respond to target population needs, with some specific weaknesses at activity level. Targeting was generally appropriate at geographical level, supported by strong vulnerability analysis and mapping and fewer activity-level targeting concerns arose than in other regions. Transfer modalities in the region suffered from relevance concerns, partly linked to a weak evidence base and partly to donor contributions provided.

34. In line with findings from across this series, WFP operation types in the Cairo region were largely fit for context. Only the Ukraine evaluation questioned the relevance of the WFP operation in a middle-income setting experiencing a political crisis. Designs were informed by a final or draft country strategy in three countries of later evaluation cohorts.³⁹

35. All nine evaluations found WFP intended coverage appropriate to needs, based on data available at the time. All nine – including in Ukraine - also found operations' overall objectives and intent well-aligned with the needs of targeted populations in the country.

36. Evaluations in this series have, however, found consistent concerns regarding activity-level relevance. Findings from the Cairo region differ here, with activities mostly assessed as appropriate for needs, with concerns arising in three evaluations:

³⁴ Operations Evaluations Syntheses 2014, 2015 and 2016.

³⁵ Egypt, Iran, Sudan and Tajikistan.

³⁶ Egypt, Iran, Kyrgyzstan safety nets operation, Sudan.

³⁷ Egypt, Iran, both Kyrgyzstan operations, Sudan, Tajikistan.

³⁸ Iran, Kyrgyzstan SMP, Tajikistan.

³⁹ Egypt, Kyrgyzstan and Sudan.

- Two evaluations, in Iran and Ukraine, raised concerns about general distribution. In Ukraine, this was related to the process of identifying and supporting patients in hospitals lacking sufficient food resources, which could be interpreted as taking over or duplicating an official responsibility. In Iran, the bulk of the assistance had a “care and maintenance” profile, with insufficient attention to refugee livelihoods.
- In Sudan, income generating activities were sometimes selected on the basis of availability of funds rather than demand for goods produced.

37. In common with findings from across the series, evaluations identified generally appropriate operation-level geographical targeting, supported by strong vulnerability analysis and mapping data, (the exception being Ukraine, where geographical targeting was constrained by contextual factors). However, linked to more concentrated operations fewer concerns than in other regions are raised in relation to activity level targeting. These arose in just four evaluations:⁴⁰

- Three evaluations, in Iran, Sudan and Ukraine, noted concerns about general distribution targeting. These were related to data limitations in Iran and Ukraine. In Sudan, an ambitious re-targeting exercise resulted in 1.4 million beneficiaries (until then targeted based on their internally displaced person status) being assigned to vulnerability categories, reducing the overall caseload. However, the exercise made assumptions on household labour availability – which the evaluation found not to hold true.
- Two evaluations found concerns with targeting in FFA/FFT. In Tajikistan, the food assistance for assets selection process favoured communities with higher levels of awareness and stronger governance, and/or WFP prioritised areas where technical quality assurance was available. In Sudan, only refugees and internally displaced persons were eligible to participate in FFA/FFT activities, rather than members of host communities – missing an opportunity to reduce tensions.

38. Targeting modalities aligned with national guidelines or approaches in six operations.⁴¹ Gaps included: limited alignment with government objectives and priorities in Armenia; partial alignment with official social assistance programmes in the Kyrgyzstan PSNP operation; and targeting criteria applied differently when selecting beneficiaries in Ukraine.

39. Finally, the WFP choice of transfer modalities in the region suffered from some specific relevance concerns, in common with one other region in the series.⁴² Modalities were assessed as fully appropriate in just two out of eight relevant evaluations.⁴³ Concerns raised in the remaining six operations⁴⁴ related to: a lack of evidence for the choice of transfer modality in Armenia and the Ukraine;⁴⁵ the need in Kyrgyzstan to consider the use of cash for stronger alignment with government social assistance modalities in the PSNP operation; and the need to broaden the transfer base for refugees in Iran, from in-kind distributions only, through to a

⁴⁰ Iran, Sudan, Tajikistan, Ukraine.

⁴¹ All other than Armenia, Kyrgyzstan PSNP operation, Ukraine.

⁴² See Regional Operations Evaluation Synthesis for West and Central Africa.

⁴³ Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan SMP.

⁴⁴ Armenia, Egypt, Iran, Kyrgyzstan PSNP operation, Sudan, Ukraine.

⁴⁵ In the Ukraine, WFP used both food and cash, but the evaluation found that decisions on choice of modality were based on feasibility and practicality rather than an evidence base which is more appropriate. WFP preferred choice of transfer appears to be an electronic voucher, but this position was not supported by any detailed documented analysis of the comparative advantages of vouchers in achieving project objectives and outcomes.

combination of modalities in future. In Kyrgyzstan and Sudan, WFP was restricted in the choice of transfer modality through in-kind donor contributions.

QUESTION 2: What were the results of the operations?

Summary findings: results

Several monitoring systems in the evaluated operations showed weaknesses, particularly in terms of outcome-data availability and data quality/reliability. Evaluations also signalled limitations in data analysis and use. However, targets were generally robustly set. Programme performance was variable across activity areas in the region and influenced by the single-activity nature of five operations. Limited outcome data significantly hindered the demonstration of results.

Evaluations also identified additional results in line with the “enabling” role of WFP in some countries in the region. These included: improved policy environments, enhanced national capacities and results in social protection and resilience. WFP had also applied its convening power in specific operations to improve results within the country partnership and emphasised local purchase. Results in gender were weak and mostly reflected the quantitative approach identified within designs.

Evaluations found mixed relationships with governments in the region, with some strong and collaborative relationships, but some operations suffering from challenging national governance environments. Relationships with partner United Nations agencies were mostly positive but some opportunities for co-ordination were missed.

The majority of operations in the region experienced challenges in timeliness, mostly due to external constraints. The proactive approach of WFP to adapt to changing conditions was praised, for example in terms of adjustments in caseloads or responding to government requests for expansion.

Finally, most operations had not sufficiently developed or implemented transition strategies, even where there was scope to do so at the time. Three operations - all focused on capacity strengthening and policy development - had high potential for sustainability, but all others were unlikely to be sustainable.

2.4 What evidence of results is available?

Evaluations in the region found weaknesses in monitoring systems, with limitations particularly in outcome data, including quality and reliability concerns, and weak data analysis and use. However, output data was increasingly available and targets were generally robustly set.

40. Operation evaluations in this series have consistently found shortcomings in WFP monitoring systems being gradually addressed over time. Operations evaluated in the Cairo region reflect these findings, with four operations - mostly in the later period of operation - having generally strong monitoring systems,⁴⁶ but four⁴⁷ - mostly in the earlier period – identifying weaknesses. The operation in Tunisia lacked any monitoring system at all. The evaluation in Sudan, conducted in 2017, identified improvements underway, including a Country office Monitoring and Evaluation strategy (2016-2021).

⁴⁶ Egypt, Kyrgyzstan both operations, Ukraine.

⁴⁷ Armenia, Iran, Tajikistan and Sudan.

Box 3: Good practice in monitoring systems

In Kyrgyzstan, within the two operations being implemented concurrently, WFP dedicated significant effort to ensuring that monitoring systems were robust. Within the PSNP operation, the country office established a food security outcome monitoring system which applied a combination of six indicators to measure changes in resilience over time. Within the school meals programme, the country office was at the forefront in developing new indicators adapted to the country context, including mechanisms for capturing and incorporating feedback on national policy change in relation to operation implementation.

41. Within the Cairo region, evaluations consistently identified limitations in outcome data collection (five evaluations)⁴⁸ and in data analysis and use (five evaluations).⁴⁹ For example:

- In Egypt, although challenges with outcome data remained, significant progress was made in improving monitoring systems. However, the evaluation found little evidence that products generated had been integrated into programming and operational decision support.
- In Tajikistan, the monitoring data system was based on discrete Excel spreadsheets designed and managed by the programme staff. This manual process made data prone to errors and limited availability to stakeholders.

42. Five evaluations⁵⁰ also raised concerns about the relevance of corporate indicators available at the time to capture operations' results. In Kyrgyzstan, this was addressed by developing tailored indicators.

43. In terms of data availability, no evaluations found gaps in output data in the region – in contrast with other regions assessed through this series. However, in line with wider findings, gaps or insufficiencies in outcome data were noted in six out of nine evaluations⁵¹ and, in Kyrgyzstan, where the school meals programme had only recently begun to measure contributions to ameliorating child undernutrition or vitamin deficiency.

44. In common with wider findings from this series, data quality and reliability issues are raised in seven out of nine evaluations.⁵² Concerns include:

- The robust attribution of outcome improvements to WFP intervention, particularly for single-activity operations (Armenia)
- Insufficiently evidence-based data (Armenia, Iran)
- Collection of 'point in time' data which risked portraying an inaccurate/unrepresentative picture of food security in the target population (Ukraine)
- Potential errors in data recording (Tajikistan).

45. Target-setting in the Cairo region was more robust than in other regions, likely due to the specific nature of the operations evaluated. Operations with a significant refugee/internally displaced person focus (Iran, Sudan and Ukraine) appropriately based targets on partner-supplied information (through in Iran and Ukraine,

⁴⁸ Armenia, Egypt, Iran, Sudan, Tajikistan.

⁴⁹ Armenia, Egypt, Sudan, Tajikistan, Ukraine.

⁵⁰ Armenia, Egypt, both operations in Kyrgyzstan and Sudan.

⁵¹ Armenia, Egypt, Iran, Sudan, Tajikistan, Ukraine.

⁵² All other than Kyrgyzstan PSNP operation and Sudan.

caseloads later proved underestimated). In Tunisia, targets for capacity development were also robustly set, based on SABER workshop data.⁵³ The gradual expansion of operations over time also meant that target setting and adjustment – often in conjunction with government – was appropriate in Armenia, Egypt and the PSNP operation in Kyrgyzstan. The two exceptions were the school meals programme operation in Kyrgyzstan, where targets lacked a rational basis, and Tajikistan, where few targets were set at all.

2.5 What output and outcome results have been achieved, per theme/sector?

Performance was variable across activity areas and influenced by the single-activity nature of five operations. Outcome data particularly was limited in availability and reliability.

- **General distribution:** General distribution was used in the region to target specific vulnerable populations. Planned output targets were reached or almost reached in three operations, including one large-scale operation in Sudan, but not in Ukraine, where a fluid operating context created challenges. Outcome data was only available for three operations and targets were met or improvement noted in two (Tajikistan and Ukraine).
- **Nutrition:** Nutrition interventions were planned in only three operations and implemented in just two. Neither operation achieved output targets. No outcome data was available for blanket supplementary feeding programmes in either country, though in both countries, targeted supplementary feeding achieved high recovery rates from moderate acute malnutrition, meeting Sphere standards.
- **Education:** Six operations out of nine implemented school feeding initiatives, including three single-activity operations with one (in Tunisia) entirely focused on capacity strengthening and policy development. Output-level achievement was mostly positive, often linked to joint planning and implementation with government. Outcome data was patchy, with operations reporting variably on enrolment, attendance and retention rates. Results were mixed, with two operations achieving high attendance rates, two meeting targets on retention rates, and neither operation that set targets on enrolment meeting these.
- **Livelihoods:** Four operations implemented food assistance for asset activities with a livelihoods support objective. Data for food assistance for assets activities was scant and results were mixed, with only one operation meeting its participant targets. Results were again mixed, with community asset scores increased in two cases, the two operations targeting food consumption scores reporting mixed achievement against target and one operation reporting improved dietary diversity scores.

46. Achievement against target in the Cairo region was influenced by the single-component nature of five operations as well as coverage expansions in five operations,⁵⁴ with WFP making use of the budget revision tool to adapt caseloads.

Box 4: Activity expansion during implementation

In Armenia, beneficiaries and geographic targets were progressively increased from 12,000 to 67,000 primary schoolchildren; from two districts to all provinces except the capital Yerevan

⁵³ SABER exercises also took place in Armenia, Egypt, Kyrgyzstan, Sudan and Tajikistan.

⁵⁴ Armenia, Egypt, Kyrgyzstan both operations, Ukraine.

In Kyrgyzstan:

- Over the course of the PSNP operation's implementation, multiple new projects were added under the programme's umbrella. These projects helped to expand WFP donor base, as well as the geographic reach and scope of the PSNP
- More beneficiaries than planned were covered by the school meals programme operation, with food requirements 280 percent greater. The budget increased by 393 percent and beneficiary numbers were up by 456 percent on the original figures in response to government request

47. In the remaining four evaluations, beneficiary coverage was implemented broadly as planned in Iran and Tunisia and to a lower extent than planned in Sudan and Tajikistan.

48. Results against activity areas were as follows:

General distribution

49. Four operations (three PRROs and one EMOP) implemented general distribution activities over the evaluation period. General distribution targeted specific populations, including refugees/internally displaced persons in Iran, Sudan, Ukraine and chronically food-insecure populations at critical times of the year in Tajikistan. The main two operations with large-scale caseloads were Sudan, which targeted over 2.3 million beneficiaries annually for 2015 and 2016, and Ukraine, which targeted just over 500,000 beneficiaries in 2015.

50. **Output results:** The realisation of general distribution targets is highly dependent on contextual factors, particularly in fluid operating contexts where refugee/internally displaced persons flows change. In Iran and Tajikistan, smaller operations where caseloads were relatively stable and predictable, WFP met or almost met targets. In Sudan, despite caseload increases, WFP reached 90 percent and 97.8 percent of its planned beneficiaries in 2015 and 2016 respectively. In Ukraine, however, under fluid operating conditions, WFP faced implementation challenges and reached only 62 percent of planned beneficiaries, though with variations among cash recipients (100 percent of planned) and food (52 percent).

51. **Outcome results:** All four evaluations reported shortcomings in outcome data, with no data available at all in Iran. However:

- Food consumption scores improved in Tajikistan and Ukraine and dietary diversity scores also improved in Tajikistan – though monitoring was not carried out in Ukraine to assess coping strategies after WFP assistance was completed.
- Targets for increased food consumption and dietary diversity (other than for households headed by a woman) were missed in Sudan, mostly due to resource limitations which affected ration sizes, but the activity did contribute to saving lives.

Nutrition

52. Only three of the evaluated operations planned nutrition interventions (in Egypt, Sudan and Tajikistan), and these were not implemented in Egypt due to changes in government positions. Sudan was again the major operation here, targeting 440,000 people through targeted supplementary feeding initiatives and

100,000 through blanket supplementary feeding programmes in 2016. In Tajikistan, nutrition interventions targeted 51,322 people over the operation's period.

53. **Output results:** The two operations both under-achieved against targets. In Tajikistan, WFP met just over 44 percent of targets for nutrition interventions overall, including blanket and targeted supplementary feeding. In Sudan, nutrition programming did not reach the planned targets for either blanket or targeted supplementary feeding, though coverage in the smaller-scale targeted supplementary feeding fared better, with targets over-achieved in 2015 (111 percent) and 60.7 percent achieved in 2016.

54. **Outcome results:** Data for nutrition outcomes was extremely scant. No outcome data was available against blanket supplementary feeding programmes in either country. In both countries, targeted supplementary feeding achieved high recovery rates from moderate acute malnutrition, meeting Sphere standards, though the activity was small scale in Tajikistan.

Education (school feeding)

55. Six operations out of nine⁵⁵ implemented school feeding initiatives, including three single-activity operations. Operations in Egypt and Kyrgyzstan supported government programmes, whilst in Tunisia the whole operation was geared to strengthening government capacity and improving policy and strategy frameworks. The largest scale activities which directly targeted beneficiaries were in Egypt, targeting over a million children in 2015, and Sudan, which targeted just under a million beneficiaries in 2015 and 2016 respectively.

56. **Output results:** Output-level achievement at evaluation stage was mostly positive, often linked to joint planning and implementation with government. In all five relevant operations WFP met or almost met planned beneficiary targets over the reference period, helped by the single-activity focus of the operation in three cases. In Iran, whilst targets for girls in primary school were over-achieved, girls in secondary school under-achieved (68 percent) due to government reforms in schooling structures.

57. **Outcome results:** Outcome data was available for the five relevant school feeding interventions, though operations reported variably on enrolment, attendance and retention rates. In Armenia and Iran, only attendance data was available. In Tunisia, with no specific outcome and outcome targets set, achievements are reported under 'building enabling environments' and 'capacity strengthening'. In particular:

- Three evaluations found high attendance rates in WFP-assisted primary schools (Armenia, Egypt and Iran), though attribution challenges are noted in Armenia.
- For the two operations (Egypt and Sudan) reporting on retention rates, both met or exceeded targets, but the evaluation questions the relevance/validity of the corporate indicators in Egypt, which it considers to inadequately reflect the achievements of school feeding interventions in Egypt.

⁵⁵ Armenia, Egypt, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Sudan, Tunisia.

- Two operations (Egypt and Kyrgyzstan) reported on targets on enrolment; these were not met in either case, though Kyrgyzstan cites weak target-setting, and notes that improvement had taken place.
- In Kyrgyzstan, national capacity assessments found improving government capacity to manage an optimised national school meals programme framework.

Livelihoods (food assistance for assets/food assistance for training)

58. Four operations⁵⁶ implemented food assistance for assets activities. The most significant in terms of participant volumes was Sudan, targeting just under half a million participants in two regions during 2016. The remaining interventions were smaller scale, targeting 24,000 participants in Tajikistan, 28,000 in Kyrgyzstan PSNP operation, and 8,000 in Egypt respectively.

59. **Output results:** Data for food assistance for assets activities was scant. Participant data was available for three operations⁵⁷ whilst only wider beneficiary data was available for Egypt. Only the operation in Kyrgyzstan reported on both participant and beneficiary targets. Results were mixed:

- Only the operation in Kyrgyzstan met participant targets, with operations in Tajikistan and Sudan achieving 84 percent and 75 percent of targets respectively.
- Wider beneficiary targets were available in Egypt and Kyrgyzstan. In Egypt, the operation exceeded planned targets, whilst in Kyrgyzstan the operation met only 51 percent of targets due to smaller household sizes than originally estimated.

60. **Outcome results:** Data was scant at outcome level, with variable outcome indicators used (as for nutrition) and many results being qualitatively reported (captured under resilience below). The PSNP operation in Kyrgyzstan also developed its own indicators, given concerns about the relevance of corporate indicators,. Results were:

- Of the two operations reporting on community asset scores, both improved in Egypt and Tajikistan.
- Proportion of households with poor food consumption scores met target in Kyrgyzstan but was not achieved in Sudan.
- Dietary diversity scores improved in Kyrgyzstan.
- For Kyrgyzstan, wider achievements, not collected by corporate indicators, included: increased crop production; diversified income sources; and reduced use of negative coping strategies.

61. Concerns about the quality and sustainability of assets created by food assistance for assets activities have been repeatedly raised within the operation evaluations series. The limited evidence available from the Cairo region finds assets maintained and used in Tajikistan, due to their link with improved livelihoods and concerns about community capacity to regularly maintain community assets or restore them after disasters in Kyrgyzstan.

⁵⁶ Egypt, Kyrgyzstan Sudan and Tajikistan

⁵⁷ Kyrgyzstan, Sudan and Tajikistan

2.6 What other results have been generated, beyond outputs and outcomes?

Evaluations also report results which were not consistently captured in corporate reporting at the time, but which arose from the “enabling” role of WFP in some countries in the region. They include: improved policy environments, enhanced national capacities, and results in social protection and resilience.

2.6.1 Improved policy environments

62. Evaluations identify contributions made to improved national policy environments in education and nutrition particularly. Not all these results were captured in corporate reporting, particularly since operations were implemented over two strategic plan periods (2008-2013 and 2014-2017) with very different reporting frameworks. Table 2 provides results.

Table 2: Policy environment results

<i>Education</i>	Supporting the development of policy/legislative frameworks and national systems for school feeding (Armenia Kyrgyzstan, Tunisia) Development of operational guidelines, standards and other approaches for school feeding (Kyrgyzstan, Tunisia)
<i>Nutrition</i>	Supporting the development of food security and nutrition policies (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan) Supporting the inclusion of nutrition in policies, frameworks and development interventions (Tajikistan)

63. Box 5 highlights examples of policy frameworks developed in school feeding.

Box 5: Policy frameworks – school feeding

In Kyrgyzstan, WFP contributed to the development of an extensive policy framework at the central level with the establishment of more than twenty policies, strategies and decrees to support the implementation of optimised school meals. All policies were prepared in consultation with the Ministry of Education and Science and technical guidance materials were endorsed by the lead ministries

In Tunisia, WFP helped the government to develop a plan of action to improve school feeding in Tunisia, a strategy paper on its sustainability, a cost analysis of school feeding and various other strategies and guidelines.

2.6.2 Enhanced national capacities

64. Several evaluations also record significant improvements in national capacities arising from WFP support to governments in the region. Table 3 provides examples.

Table 3: Capacity development results

<i>Food security and nutrition monitoring / analytical capacity</i>	Strengthening local/national capacity for vulnerability, food insecurity and other mapping and analysis (Egypt, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan)
<i>Education</i>	Strengthening centralised and decentralised capacity for the implementation of school feeding, including training on the roles and responsibilities of government staff at different levels

	and in different ministries, and capacity development for NGOs (Kyrgyzstan, Tunisia)
<i>Nutrition</i>	Strengthening capacities among local and national actors on enhanced nutrition to enable balanced and healthy eating habits (Kyrgyzstan Republic)
<i>Emergency responses</i>	Capacity strengthening of local authorities for emergency assessment and response (Tajikistan, Ukraine)

65. Although capacity strengthening efforts were a significant focus of effort in the region, particularly in school feeding programmes, evaluations still found limited analytical bases and weak strategic approaches. For example, although WFP made major contributions to building government ability to implement national school feeding programmes in Kyrgyzstan, capacity strengthening/technical assistance components lacked a clear roadmap/plan, associated indicators and outcome measures geared to transition into national ownership.

2.6.3 Results in social protection

66. Five⁵⁸ of eight⁵⁹ evaluations commenting found that WFP successfully contributed to the implementation of social protection/safety net frameworks in the region. Box 6 provides examples.

Box 6: Contributions to social protection in the Cairo region

- In Egypt, work on enabling national institutions to better monitor and respond to food security risks, and to gather and apply evidence to food security policy positioned WFP to support the Government in reforms of food-based safety nets
- In Kyrgyzstan, WFP tapped into a niche working on social protection through its PSNP operation, supporting the Government with the development of policy instruments and programmatic tools
- Also in t Kyrgyzstan, WFP was instrumental in ensuring the inclusion of the school meals programme in the Government's social protection programme 2015-2017
- In Tajikistan, WFP operation supported the implementation of the Government social safety nets through vulnerable group feeding
- In Tunisia, WFP operation enabled the expansion of school feeding aims to include a social protection perspective

67. Evaluations in Armenia, Sudan and Ukraine recommend that WFP explore further links with social protection programmes in the country. In Kyrgyzstan, evaluations recommend increased strategic attention to human resourcing for social protection.

2.6.4 Results in resilience

68. All four evaluations⁶⁰ commenting on WFP contributions to resilience in the region found positive results, mostly focused on improved community level resilience to shocks by using disaster risk reduction approaches. Such results were not

⁵⁸ Egypt, Kyrgyzstan (both operations), Tajikistan, Tunisia

⁵⁹ All operations other than Iran

⁶⁰ Egypt, Kyrgyzstan PSNP, Sudan, Tajikistan.

generally reflected by corporate indicators, but reflected in qualitative evaluation findings. They included:

- Improved proportions of community assets which were now functioning, leading to expanded cultivation areas (Kyrgyzstan, Sudan)
- An enhanced physical/natural capital asset base to improve agricultural practice (Kyrgyzstan)
- Increased social cohesion (Kyrgyzstan)
- Reduced work burdens for women through efforts on water access (Sudan)
- Improved livelihoods through the conversion of FFA/FFT activities into micro-level social insurance mechanisms (Sudan)
- Improved disaster mitigation ability (Tajikistan).

2.6.5 Food security data in the region

69. Within the Cairo region, six evaluations⁶¹ praised the WFP comparative advantage in producing food security information and data to serve both national authorities and the wider country humanitarian and development partnership. Box 7 provides examples.

Box 7: Food security and nutrition data

- **Kyrgyzstan:** technical assistance provided by the WFP vulnerability analysis and mapping unit provided the Government with evidence and a visual picture of the food security situation in the country. This included aspects of poverty and food access not previously recognised as drivers of food insecurity
- **Sudan:** The quality of information provided by the vulnerability analysis and mapping unit gave WFP ‘a strong strategic advantage’. Without this data, the quality of support provided to the Government of Sudan and other humanitarian actors would have been significantly weaker.
- **Tajikistan:** WFP food security monitoring tools became an integral part of the operational design and targeting, and provided information which enhanced the relevance of operations among WFP partners

2.6.6 Applying convening power and leverage for results

70. Within the Cairo region, evaluations also found WFP deploying significant convening power and leverage within country partnerships to improve planning for food security and nutrition among the country partnership and to maximise wider contributions to implementation. Six evaluations⁶² record such activities, reflected in Table 4.

Table 4: Convening power and leverage

Convening power	<p>In Egypt, WFP was characterised by partners as capable of bringing together different actors around strategic issues</p> <p>In Kyrgyzstan PSNP programme, WFP facilitated coordination among</p>
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⁶¹ All other than Armenia, Iran and Kyrgyzstan school feeding.

⁶² All other than Iran, Sudan and Ukraine.

	<p>ministries and civil society actors, resulting in multiple ministries working together towards common objectives</p> <p>In Tajikistan, WFP led the food security and nutrition sectoral group which enabled development and humanitarian partners to exchange information on food security and nutrition in the country</p> <p>In Tunisia, WFP initiated a dynamic in eight governorates to integrate Tunisia into the global reflection on school feeding. It also brought other actors into the school feeding agenda, including the private sector</p>
Leverage	<p>In Egypt, the country office leveraged its capacity-development ability through using connections to find technical supports for the Government</p> <p>In Kyrgyzstan, the school meals programme operation leveraged local contributions from parents in excess of expectations</p> <p>In Tajikistan, the majority of activities under the PRRO leveraged partnerships to ensure that programme objectives were implemented appropriately, building on local interests and capacity</p>

2.7 Gender, protection and accountability to affected populations

A slight majority of operations mainstreamed gender into implementation, though results mostly focused on corporate targets of “including women”. No evaluations reported more qualitative or strategic results for gender. Evidence on protection concerns was limited, with just three evaluations reporting and only two finding positively. No operation of the five reporting met accountability to affected populations targets, though complaints processes were established or being set up in three countries.

71. **Gender:** Five out of nine evaluations⁶³ found gender-sensitive implementation modalities in practice, though in common with wider findings from the series, these were mostly focused on “including women” rather than more strategic intentions to addressing gender equality needs.

Box 8: Gender mainstreaming in Sudan and Tajikistan

In Sudan, WFP developed an in-country gender strategy to support gender mainstreaming into the needs assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of food assistance in all field and area offices. The evaluation praised WFP Sudan’s recognition of the gendered nature of food insecurity and vulnerability and its attempts to address this through programme design features

In Tajikistan, gender was mainstreamed across all activities, though mostly in relation to corporate targets. Women were encouraged to take leadership positions in local food management committees and made the food entitlement holder where possible. Outputs of some of the food assistance for assets projects, such as installing water sources closer to home and the provision of local income generating opportunities such as orchards, were expected to ease the workload of women in the long term. However, the evaluation also notes that future activities should take into account the workload and their preferences for receiving food assistance through cash

72. Four operations⁶⁴ lacked sufficient attention to gender in implementation. For example, in Egypt, although climate change activities planned to include women, due

⁶³ Iran, Kyrgyzstan both operations, Sudan, Tajikistan.

⁶⁴ Armenia, Egypt, Tunisia, Ukraine

to cultural and logistical barriers they were re-oriented during implementation to focus on men. In Tunisia, the "school feeding strategy", developed as part of the operation, did not include the broader objective of strengthening women's involvement in the management of school feeding, rather seeing them solely as producers of commodities.

73. Results achieved were mostly quantitative against corporate targets, such as ratios of girls to boys in school feeding. Targets were achieved or mostly achieved in five operations⁶⁵ but missed in at least one activity in four operations.⁶⁶ No evaluations reported more qualitative or strategic results for gender, with the quantitative approach prevailing.

74. Several evaluations critiqued the corporate indicators available and the effects that these can have on shaping programmatic approaches. The evaluation of the Armenia operation points out that "the achievement of gender equality in the project was mostly demonstrated by the equal coverage of boys and girls in school feeding activities. This, however, did not produce a tangible effect of better economic or social opportunities for women at household and community levels."

75. **Protection:** Only three evaluations, all emergency-focused operations, reported on protection.⁶⁷ Results were limited: targets were met in both Sudan and Iran, but the evaluations reported protection issues identified which were not reflected in corporate indicators, namely refugee-host community tensions in Sudan, and access and human rights violations in Ukraine.

76. **Accountability to affected populations:** No operation of the five reporting⁶⁸ met accountability to affected populations targets on the proportion of beneficiaries aware of their entitlements and/or of access to the programme. However, complaints processes (whether hotlines or through WFP staff) were established in Ukraine and Sudan and were in the process of being established in Kyrgyzstan. Insufficient communication with beneficiaries related to ration reductions/re-targeting were particularly noted in Iran and Sudan. In Ukraine, results were constrained by the recent arrival of WFP in the country and local authorities' resistance to allowing WFP to carry out an awareness campaign.

2.8 WFP partnerships in the Cairo region

Evaluations found mixed relationships with governments in the region, with some strong and collaborative relationships, but others suffering from challenging governance environments. Relationships with partner United Nations agencies were mostly positive but with some opportunities for coordination missed.

77. **Government partners:** Evaluations in this series have consistently highlighted WFP strong relationships with government. However, evaluations in the Cairo region are more mixed, reflecting some of the challenging governance environments in the region.

78. Five out of nine evaluations,⁶⁹ all smaller operations, focused on capacity development and policy strengthening, praised the strength and collaborative nature of WFP relationships with partner governments. Partnership with government is

⁶⁵ Armenia, Egypt, Kyrgyzstan SMP, Sudan, Ukraine, Sudan

⁶⁶ Iran, Kyrgyzstan safety PSNP, Tajikistan, Tunisia

⁶⁷ Iran, Sudan, Ukraine

⁶⁸ Iran, Kyrgyzstan Republic both operations, Sudan and Ukraine

⁶⁹ Egypt, the two Kyrgyzstan operations, Tajikistan and Tunisia.

described as the “critical success factor” in Egypt and in both operations in Kyrgyzstan, and is highly praised in Tunisia and Tajikistan. Relationships with local authorities are also particularly praised in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Box 9: Relationships with government

- In Egypt, the evaluation found that the ability of the country office to partner with government ministries has been a key success factor, allowing the implementation of programme activities in school feeding, climate change and capacity building. For areas lacking a strong partnership, activities lagged and affected implementation
- In Kyrgyzstan, the main external factor in the success of both the PSNP and school meals programme operations was the relationship between WFP and the Government
 - For resilience-building activities, the model of implementing these activities in partnership with the Government was considered ‘excellent’
 - In the school meal programme operation, the Government was open to technical support from WFP, and supportive and appreciative of the WFP contributions towards policy formulation and programme development
- In Tajikistan, WFP had significant collaboration and partnerships across all the PRRO activities including with government ministries, local authorities and community organizations
- In Tunisia, a solid partnership was developed with the different ministries through establishing a steering committee for the operation

79. The four operations in which relations were more constrained highlight some of the challenging governance environments in the region, which affect country partnerships:

- In Iran, WFP only has direct relationships with the Bureau of Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs in relation to refugee support, rather than with wider government, for example, on school feeding.
- In the Ukraine, the Government’s limited experience of engaging in international humanitarian response made establishing relationships with government partners challenging.
- In Sudan, whilst WFP developed strong relationships with key government counterparts at state level, challenges were encountered in formulating partnerships with the federal authorities.
- In Armenia, the Government had limited involvement in the school feeding operation, despite WFP efforts to secure engagement during implementation.

80. **United Nations partners:** Whilst wider findings from this series have found inconsistent relationships with partner United Nation agencies, these were mostly positive in the operations evaluated in the Cairo region. However, some opportunities were missed. Eight evaluations found strategic alignment with the main United Nations policy frameworks at country level, such as United Nation Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF)⁷⁰ and six evaluations found positive operational coordination.⁷¹ However, opportunities were missed in Armenia, Egypt

⁷⁰ Armenia, Egypt, Iran, the two Kyrgyzstan operations, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tunisia. In Ukraine, no UNDAF was in place.

⁷¹ The Iran, the two Kyrgyzstan operations, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tunisia.

and Ukraine. For example, in Egypt, WFP used the training materials of other United Nations agencies as tools but engaged in little partnership beyond this.

81. Two evaluations – in Egypt and Sudan – point to the need for a shift in the WFP approach to partnerships:

- “In Egypt, the success of WFP’s mission at the national strategy level depends on creating and enhancing strategic relations with government offices, United Nations partners, NGOs and programme participants.... WFP can be an advocate for an integrated and multisector approach to food security only if it can perform a strategic role bringing actors together to work closely to solve a common problem; and WFP has the evidence base and experience to do so.”
- In Sudan (particularly regarding relationships with cooperating partners) one of lessons for the future is that the approach to partnership must be improved. “WFP must demonstrate that it can add real value to local level organisations so that they can gradually own and implement the solutions to food insecurity.”

2.9 Efficiency and agility in implementation

Most operations in the region experienced delays, partly due to external constraints. The proactive approach of WFP in adapting to changing conditions was praised, for example by adjusting caseloads or responding to government requests for expansion.

82. **Timeliness:** Delays or interruptions were experienced in six evaluations,⁷² partly arising from external constraints (see factors, below), for example in Sudan and Ukraine. Other reasons for delay included slow arrival of internationally purchased commodities in Armenia; delays in the centrally-managed funding mechanism in Iran; and longer than expected procurement times/agreement formulation with co-operating partners in Ukraine.

83. Reporting on cost-efficiency is limited, but three evaluations⁷³ found explicit efforts to reduce costs. Measures included:

- Using local expertise/leveraging partnerships
- A pilot project on decentralised procurement
- Cash contributions from parents in school feeding activities
- Co-financing with local authorities on equipment costs.

84. Two evaluations, in Iran and Ukraine, point to missed opportunities for cost-efficiency, including scope for savings in transfer modality and ration content in Ukraine; and the need to balance effectiveness and efficiency concerns more strategically in Iran. In the Sudan, scope for improved cost-efficiency was constrained by the in-kind nature of the PRRO’s funding.

85. **Adaptive capacity:** The proactive approach of WFP to adapt to changing conditions was praised in eight evaluations,⁷⁴ with caseloads scaled up or down in relation to need; projects expanded in response to national requests; and new initiatives added as opportunities arose. Specifically:

⁷² Armenia, Iran, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Ukraine.

⁷³ Both the Kyrgyzstan operations, Tajikistan.

⁷⁴ All other than Ukraine.

- Five evaluations praise WFP responsiveness to national government circumstances, including inability to deliver on funding arrangements (Armenia), political changes (Egypt), and expansion/new initiative requests (Armenia, Kyrgyzstan both operations, Tunisia).
- Targeting revisions, for a more vulnerability-based approach, took place in Sudan and Iran.
- Partnerships in Tajikistan were leveraged in vulnerable group feeding, to enable the scaling down of WFP activities.

86. However, bureaucratic delays constrained agility in Ukraine. In Sudan, after decades of emergency programming, some staff remained in a relief mind-set, constraining the scope to move forward in areas such as resilience.

87. Internal synergies concerned only the four operations in the region which implemented more than one activity type.⁷⁵ However, only two evaluations, in Sudan and Egypt, comment. Synergies were strong in Sudan, through cooperating partners ensuring that PRRO activities were clustered together; and weak in Egypt, where programme components were insufficiently integrated. Although it was single-activity, the PSNP operation in Kyrgyzstan also finds weak synergies, with new projects added over time, making it difficult to maintain focus on the operation's main objective.

88. **Beneficiary entitlements:** All nine evaluations found WFP delivering less food or cash than intended to beneficiaries, and/or carrying out transfers for a shorter duration or with less frequency than planned. For example, in Ukraine, the calorific value of the rations was reduced, which was also low in micronutrients.

89. **Transfer modalities:** Cash and voucher modalities were planned in five operations⁷⁶ but only applied in four.⁷⁷ Effects were mixed, with improved food consumption scores and dietary diversity in Tajikistan, but doubtful effectiveness in terms of dietary diversity in Egypt. Cash and vouchers were appropriate for market conditions, and preferred by beneficiaries in Sudan and Tajikistan, because of their flexibility. However, they were applied in Ukraine primarily for feasibility/expediency reasons, rather than as an evidence-based choice.

90. For in-kind transfers, of four evaluations reporting,⁷⁸ three (Kyrgyzstan PSNP, Tajikistan and Ukraine) found food items well-accepted by beneficiaries. In Sudan, sorghum was tolerated, but was not the preferred staple food partly because of the costs involved in grinding. The in-kind transfer's lack of diversity and the lack of a cash component results in beneficiaries selling a portion of the ration to buy different food types and to cover milling costs.

91. Local purchase was limited across the nine operations. Three operations, in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, purchased all their commodities from Russia, via an agreement with the donor. Some local procurement took place in four operations, ranging from 100 percent in Egypt and Ukraine, to purchase of specific commodities where conditions permitted (Iran and Tajikistan).

⁷⁵ Egypt, Iran, Sudan and Tajikistan

⁷⁶ Egypt, the Kyrgyzstan PSNP, Sudan, Tajikistan, Ukraine

⁷⁷ Egypt, Sudan, Tajikistan, Ukraine

⁷⁸ The Kyrgyzstan PSNP, Tajikistan, Sudan and Ukraine

Box 10: Local procurement

In Egypt, WFP purchased all commodities from local providers under delivered-at-place terms to ensure delivery in good condition, on time, and with no or minimal losses. Over 19,273mt of date bars, rice, fortified vegetable oil and fortified wheat flour (valued at more than USD 15.87 million) had been purchased in-country at the time of the evaluation

2.10 Sustainability/transition

Most operations had not sufficiently developed or implemented transition strategies even where conditions permitted. The potential for sustainability was variable, with high potential in three operations, all focused on capacity strengthening and policy development, and more limited potential in others.

92. All nine evaluations reported on sustainability and transition. In line with wider inconsistencies identified through this series, only three operations implemented transition strategies effectively (including self-reliance for vulnerable groups),⁷⁹ but six others had limited or no transition strategies in place,⁸⁰ including a lack of strategizing for handover and/or limited attention to ensuring progression to self-reliance for vulnerable groups.

93. The potential for sustainability was high in the three operations which had implemented transition strategies - all of which were focused on capacity strengthening and policy development. In three more operations, some components had potential for sustainability, though requiring further development⁸¹ and two humanitarian operations, in Iran and Sudan, were unlikely to become sustainable. Constraints to sustainability were mostly linked to government capacity (human and financial) levels, and policy constraints (e.g. on refugee self-reliance in Iran) but also to the need for concrete transition plans. In Ukraine, where assistance was deliberately short-term, long-term sustainability was not a central consideration to the design of the intervention.

94. Box 11 presents examples where WFP activities had strong potential for sustainability.

Box 11: Sustainability

- In Egypt, with CP activities highly coherent and connected with government policies and strategies, the evaluation found many examples where activities implemented or prompted by WFP had become day-to-day practices across various government institutions, partners and participants: for example, climate-smart agriculture practices.
- In the Kyrgyzstan PSNP operation, the evaluation found examples of high sustainability potential, such as resilience-building activities, which were implemented in partnership with the Government.
- In Tunisia, strong stakeholder engagement in and national ownership of the process was noted as supporting actions in the future operationalization of the school feeding strategy. This stemmed from the multi-sectoral and participatory nature of the process.

⁷⁹ Egypt, the Kyrgyzstan safety nets, Tunisia,

⁸⁰ Armenia, Iran, the Kyrgyzstan SMP, Sudan, Tajikistan, Ukraine

⁸¹ Armenia, the Kyrgyzstan SMP, Tajikistan

QUESTION 3: What factors affected the results?

Summary findings: factors

External factors affecting results included: political and governance uncertainty; access challenges related to conflict; policy challenges in the surrounding environment for example, in relation to refugees; challenges in government's management of international actors/responses; and climate related challenge.

Positively in the region, conducive policy frameworks, for example, for social protection or school feeding, supported implementation in several countries, though national capacity limitations constrained effectiveness.

Internally, the strong reputation of WFP and its credibility with governments supported effectiveness, as did its partnerships with other humanitarian and development actors and its willingness to innovate. The regional bureau support provided valuable backstopping support. However, targeting weaknesses, limited human resources and some poor internal communication hindered effective delivery.

2.11 Internal and external factors

95. Evaluations identified a combination of internal and external factors which affected results. External factors included:

- External environment challenges including political and governance uncertainty (for example in Egypt, Tunisia and Ukraine); access challenges related to conflict (in Sudan and Ukraine); policy challenges in the surrounding environment, for example in relation to refugees (Iran); challenges in the Government's management of international actors/responses (Iran, Sudan and Ukraine); and climate-related challenges (Sudan). Positively, conducive policy frameworks, for example, for social protection or school feeding, supported implementation in five countries.⁸² National capacity limitations proved to be a barrier in five countries (Armenia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tunisia and Ukraine – the latter specifically related to international emergency response management).
- Funding-related challenges. Funding volumes were comparatively high for some of the region's operations, with several single-donor funded to a high level. Volumes ranged from 29 percent in Tajikistan at final evaluation stage, to over 90 percent in three single-donor operations⁸³ (see Table 1). However, six evaluations raised funding-related challenges,⁸⁴ including: the requirement to procure in-kind commodities from a single donor in three operations; in-kind contributions restricting the ability to provide more appropriate transfer modalities in one operation; and earmarking for specific activities.

96. A number of internal factors were identified:

- WFP reputation and credibility with government was a strong enabling factor in six operations.⁸⁵ Key aspects included: respect for WFP technical expertise and professionalism; a perception of WFP as a 'trusted partner' in whose work partners have confidence; appreciation for WFP contributions towards policy

⁸² Egypt, Kyrgyzstan both operations, Tajikistan, Tunisia.

⁸³ Armenia, the Kyrgyzstan PSNP, Tunisia.

⁸⁴ Armenia, Iran, Kyrgyzstan both operations, Sudan, Tajikistan.

⁸⁵ Egypt, both Kyrgyzstan operations, Tajikistan and Tunisia, Ukraine.

formulation and programme development; and a recognition of WFP as the lead United Nations agency in the social protection and food security sectors.

- Partnerships with government, United Nation agencies and other partners were a major contributory factor across evaluations though engagement with government was limited in Armenia. Specifically, external communication efforts with governments, donors and other humanitarian actors were praised in eight operations⁸⁶ though with national-level challenges in Iran, Sudan and Ukraine. However, room for improvement/expansion was found in Armenia.
- Regional bureau support, including for operations in the regional school feeding initiative, was praised in five evaluations.⁸⁷ Such backstopping included: the preparation of budget revisions; technical assistance, for example, for nutrition; and advice and technical support for the development of indicators and monitoring tools. Regional learning across country offices also took place for operations involved in the regional school feeding initiative. The regional bureau's preparedness activities in Ukraine facilitated the early phases of WFP response as well as the later design of emergency interventions.
- Willingness to innovate was praised in four evaluations⁸⁸ – for example, the development of geospatial systems to help monitor food security in Egypt, and innovations under the resilience activities in Kyrgyzstan.
- Targeting weaknesses was noted in four operations.⁸⁹ These included: poor implementation of targeting approaches, sometimes by cooperating partners; selection criteria which did not sufficiently consider whole-family circumstances; limited beneficiary representation in targeting approaches; and assumptions around livelihoods capacity made in re-targeting exercises.
- Human resources – particularly for monitoring and evaluation – was identified as a constraint in four operations,⁹⁰ especially for small country offices attempting to monitor geographically-dispersed activities (for example in Armenia and Iran). However, the quality and commitment of staff are explicitly cited as supporting factors in five operations.⁹¹
- Internal communication within WFP offices was identified as a barrier in three evaluations,⁹² including centralised decision-making in Egypt and delays in communication between the country office and field offices in Sudan.

⁸⁶ Egypt, Iran, Kyrgyzstan both operations, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Ukraine.

⁸⁷ Armenia, the Kyrgyzstan PSNP, Tajikistan, Tunisia and Ukraine.

⁸⁸ Egypt, the two Kyrgyzstan operations, Sudan

⁸⁹ Iran, Sudan, Tajikistan, Ukraine

⁹⁰ Armenia, Iran, Ukraine, Sudan

⁹¹ Egypt, Kyrgyzstan both operations, Tajikistan, Tunisia

⁹² Egypt, Sudan, Ukraine

3. EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS

97. Over the period 2013 to 2017, the nine evaluations conducted in the Cairo region presented WFP country offices in the region with a series of recommendations for improvement. The most frequently-occurring themes are set out in table 5 (all occurring in three evaluations or more). All recommendations in the region's operations evaluations were accepted or partially accepted by country offices, with only one (in Egypt)⁹³ not accepted.

Table 5: Evaluation recommendations

1. Improve partnership/synergies, both at national and decentralised level, for example through the establishment of multi-stakeholder steering or management groups for activities	7 operations ⁹⁴
2. Intensify attention to, and improve technical approaches to, gender across analysis, activities and monitoring and reporting	6 operations ⁹⁵
3. Improve approaches to capacity strengthening, through more defined and explicit strategies, approaches and intended results, based on stronger and more comprehensive capacity analysis	5 operations ⁹⁶
4. Review (and potentially improve) the internal structures and capacities of WFP country offices, supplementing technical capacities where required	5 operations ⁹⁷
5. Improve the evidence base through strengthened monitoring and evaluation systems, particularly focusing on strengthening the use of data to support decision-making	5 operations ⁹⁸
6. Review or adapt transfer modalities, supported by a stronger evidence base	4 operations ⁹⁹
7. Apply experience from the country (for example from pilot initiatives, or from adapted monitoring systems) to generate, disseminate and showcase wider learning in WFP	3 operations ¹⁰⁰
8. Create and implement a handover plan as part of the transfer of responsibilities to partners	3 operations ¹⁰¹
9. Develop a fundraising strategy, including broader outreach to	3 operations ¹⁰²

⁹³ Recommendation 5d (regarding the climate change project): "The project should NOT expand geographically in more villages in response to beneficiaries or official requests (in the last months, four villages that were not included in the project document have been added to the target area). Taking into consideration the managerial capacity and the fact that various planned activities in the original project area are behind schedule, geographical expansion in the remaining project duration (even if extended) would negatively affect the quality and quantity of the project's targeted results." In response, the country office indicated that the project needed to expand to neighbouring villages because: 1) the capacity to absorb more activities/beneficiaries in many villages of the project have already been reached. To reach the targets, the project would thus have to extend some of its services to other villages; 2) This area of activity aimed to upscale and replicate the successful activities of a previous component throughout the Southern Zone.

⁹⁴ All other than the Kyrgyzstan c PSNP and Tajikistan.

⁹⁵ Armenia, Egypt, Iran, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tunisia.

⁹⁶ Armenia, Egypt, Kyrgyzstan both operations, Tunisia.

⁹⁷ Egypt, Iran, Kyrgyzstan both operations, Ukraine.

⁹⁸ Armenia, Egypt, Iran, Tunisia, Ukraine.

⁹⁹ The Kyrgyzstan PSNP, Sudan, Tajikistan, Ukraine.

¹⁰⁰ Kyrgyzstan both operations, Ukraine.

¹⁰¹ Armenia, the Kyrgyzstan SMP, Tunisia.

newer partners/donors	
10. Continue/expand/improve approaches to food assistance for assets/training	3 operations ¹⁰³

98. The most frequently-occurring recommendations therefore related to WFP approaches to partnerships in the region, reflecting the concentrated nature of the operations evaluated in the region. They emphasise particularly improving outreach to different types of partners and/or building multi-stakeholder groups to oversee and manage different areas of intervention. The need to refine and develop approaches to gender – reflected in Section 2 – is also identified in evaluation recommendations, as is the need to improve approaches to capacity strengthening. Ensuring that WFP country offices are ‘fit for purpose’ in their resources and structures to deliver results in often complex operating environments is also a frequently-occurring recommendation.

99. The need to improve the evidence base in this region particularly through improved monitoring data, especially at outcome level, is also signalled as a priority in evaluations, as is making explicit and well-evidenced choices on transfer modality. The evaluations also signalled as having room for improvement: generating and sharing learning from initiatives undertaken in the region; the need to plan for transition; the search for funding; and developing/refining approaches to FFA/FFT.”

¹⁰² Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia.

¹⁰³ The Kyrgyzstan PSNP, Sudan, Tajikistan.

4. CONCLUSIONS

100. The nine operations evaluations undertaken in the Cairo region have provided some valuable insights and lessons from four years of operational implementation in the region. Overall, conclusions can be drawn as follows:

101. In a complex region, WFP has needed to adopt a wide range of roles to respond to needs. Evaluations synthesised here are of highly specific, development-focused operations in at least five cases, in a region where WFP is responding to some of the world's largest humanitarian crises. Evidence from these nine operations finds that, where conditions permit, WFP has been able to shift to a more upstream role, focused on policy development, capacity enhancement and technical advice, but that its ability to do so (where conditions permit) is fully contingent on external partners recognising this capability and being willing to support it.

102. Variable models of partnerships have been applied. Partnerships with governments in the region are progressive in several countries, reflecting a strongly mutual approach. Designs have been developed jointly, with WFP contributions geared to the delivery of national initiatives, and ongoing collaborative working has shaped adaptation in practice. Some governments have requested the expansion/continuation of WFP activities. However, other partnerships with national authorities have been challenging and/or limited, reflecting the complex governance environments WFP has needed to navigate to ensure continued partnership and delivery.

103. WFP convening power and leverage have been deployed. In some countries – again, where conditions permit - WFP has successfully applied its convening power as a comparative advantage; deploying its technical capability, influence and credibility with government to bring together country actors around a common theme. It has successfully leveraged additional contributions to ensure operational delivery in several cases. The ability to convene and to leverage is however highly dependent not just on the governance and partnership environment in the country, but also on the capability of WFP to recognise and subsequently deploy this comparative advantage where appropriate.

104. Social protection frameworks have influenced design. The availability in some countries of well-developed social protection and safety nets frameworks for different vulnerable groups has provided a cohesive framework on which WFP has been able to 'hang' its operation designs in some countries. However, opportunities have been missed in some cases, and evaluations signal the greater advantages that can be achieved by applying these as the central framework for design.

105. Monitoring systems reflect continued weakness, showing highly limited outcome level data and weak analysis and use of data to inform programmatic decision-making. Such shortcomings have prevented operations revealing their full results, though some country offices, such as in Kyrgyzstan, have worked hard to broaden out from corporate indicators to provide a more 'true to country' view. The advent of the new strategic plan may provide an opportunity to better capture WFP policy support and capacity-strengthening results.

106. Gender has been more systematically addressed in analysis and design than in some other regions, but remains highly focused on quantitative 'including women' approaches. No evaluations report any qualitative, or more strategic, approaches to gender in design and accordingly no results. This approach might well be characterised as 'hitting the target' (of equal numbers) but 'missing the point.'

107. There is evidence of strong immediate adaptive capacity but a limited medium-term perspective. In a volatile region, WFP agility and adaptive capacity is highly praised

in evaluations, whether in relation to changing caseloads, project expansion in response to national requests, or new initiatives being added as opportunities arose. However, planning for transition and sustainability is a weakness, even where conditions permit. The Integrated Road Map process, and associated production of country strategic plans, provides an opportunity to adopt more clear-sighted views of the intended road to transition.

108. For individual activity areas:

- General Distribution was implemented in less than half the evaluated operations, though it remained a critical instrument for humanitarian support for vulnerable groups. Where caseloads were relatively predictable, output data was mostly positive. Outcome data, where available, was mostly positive.
- Nutrition interventions were only implemented in two operations, and performance in these was mixed. Targeted supplementary feeding initiatives showed positive results, but no data was available for blanket supplementary feeding programmes.
- School feeding was the most frequently-implemented education intervention, often linked to social protection frameworks in the region. WFP interventions were frequently geared to support national programmes. Activities generally performed well in meeting output targets, but data on outcomes was unsystematically collected, with performance mixed, and particular weakness on enrolment targets.
- The principal livelihoods activity, (food assistance for assets) was often (though not always) geared to resilience objectives in the region, and implemented at a smaller scale than other activity areas. Data on outcomes was scant, and unsystematically collected, and results - including on the potential sustainability of assets - were mixed.

109. Finally, in a region where the potential in some countries for mutual accompaniment to governments is high, evaluations also signal the need for more mature and strategic approaches to capacity strengthening. WFP ability to influence and shape policy at the national level is high, as evidenced in the evaluations analysed here; yet capacity strengthening has often lacked a sound analytical underpinning, and, although responsive to opportunity, has been piecemeal and unsystematic rather than proactive in nature. In planning for the future, this is a key area for attention.

5. LESSONS

110. Lessons arising from these nine evaluations may inform future planning in the Cairo region and are as follows:¹⁰⁴

1. **Review the context of partnerships to better define the role of WFP.** In countries where conditions permit, strategic partnerships are a strength (whether actual or potential) of WFP in the region. However, they are also highly varied, being embedded within diverse governance, political and political economy systems. Moreover, in this specific region, the country no longer serves as a single unit of analysis for conflict. Reviewing WFP partnership from a regional perspective is therefore key. As part of the country strategic planning process, explicitly analysing, and seeking to understand the political and strategic contexts of partnership at country level will help WFP better define its own intended role in the region and country. Within each diverse context – even down to activity level – how can WFP comparative advantages in the region best be deployed? Where and how can it usefully build capacity, help shape the national policy agenda and act as advocate? What space exists to align with national programmes, for example in nutrition and school feeding? Where (and with what justification) does it need to retain a core delivery capacity to serve humanitarian needs? Where can it best apply its convening power; generate food security and nutrition data through innovative approaches to support governments; and seize opportunities for innovation? Such analysis will also help WFP identify and avoid untested assumptions, such as for government ownership of a process, or on national capacities to deliver.
2. **Analyse and confirm ‘implementer and enabler’ roles and plan for both.** In a volatile region, and even within a relatively small sample of operations, the need for a mix of roles in ‘implementing’ food assistance to serve humanitarian needs, and ‘enabling’ governments to take ownership of their own hunger solutions, is paramount. In such a volatile region, any WFP activities may need to retain flexibility for emergency response at any given point. Country strategic plans may therefore benefit from identifying – again, even down to activity level – the scope for applying an enabling role, where conditions permit, whilst balancing this with a realistic analysis of the need to retain direct delivery capacity as and when required. This means building scope for contingency planning into country strategic plans to facilitate quick adjustment when need arises.
3. **Prioritise social protection from a systems perspective.** Within the Cairo region, many countries have comparatively mature social protection systems in place, though these are in variable states of implementation. Where countries are stable, and such frameworks confront the need to adapt, WFP can play a highly valuable role in supporting such adaptation. Embracing this challenge requires less of an ‘activity’ or even ‘operation’ mind-set, however, and more of a systems approach. As part of its ongoing country strategic planning process, therefore, WFP may find it useful to review the status and role of social protection frameworks within the country context: their political dimensions, current strategic priorities, national capacities and financing.

¹⁰⁴ Although the nine operations selected for evaluation by the operations evaluations series do not reflect the full portfolio of particularly emergency-focused operations in the Cairo region, many of the lessons presented here are relevant to operations of all types, under implementation under diverse conditions.

WFP country-level role in social protection and safety nets, where relevant, can then be defined accordingly, and activities geared to support it.

4. **Improve approaches to capacity strengthening.** As for social protection and safety nets, the scope in some countries for WFP to support governments to build their own capacities to develop and implement national hunger and nutrition solutions is high. However, capacity strengthening as reflected in these evaluations has suffered from weak approaches including limited forward-thinking, piecemeal planning and few intended results. The WFP Strategic Plan 2017-2021 and its associated results framework offers an opportunity for more mature and coherent approaches, underpinned by stronger analysis and including more defined and explicit strategies, approaches and intended results.
5. **Redefine focus on gender issues.** The WFP approach to gender in the region has taken up corporate directives, but remains heavily focused on a quantitative ‘including women’ model. Yet the addressing of gender needs goes far beyond numbers; it requires operations and activity areas to fully understand the gender needs which relate to WFP intended areas of action in the country (the gender-related causes of food insecurity). With that in place, it requires gender to be mainstreamed into target group selection, programme design, implementation and monitoring and reporting. WFP country plans in the Cairo region may benefit from a clear articulation of ‘what gender means’ to the region, which expresses a clear conceptual understanding in tune with current approaches to gender equality and the empowerment of women, and which addresses men and women’s strategic as well as practical needs.
6. **Improve monitoring and information management systems.** Despite enhancements in the recent period, limitations in the quality, availability, reliability and/or use of data persist – as reflected in evaluation recommendations. Improvements in outcome data particularly, as well as in information management, should be a critical priority in the coming country strategic planning period - in order that WFP in the region can make its results more visible and better inform programme implementation in practice.
7. **Plan for the medium term and eventual transition.** In tune with the volatile nature of the region, many WFP operations evaluated here have lagged on planning for transition – even where conditions permit, and even within individual activities. Yet preparing jointly for transition is a key dimension of partnership, even though conditions for exit may, in some countries, seem far from immediate. The country strategic planning process offers an opportunity for WFP country offices to envision, and start to work towards, the process of transition, whether that takes place within a single country strategic planning period, or whether capabilities require gradual building over many years. A medium-term view, however, even in volatile and conflict-prone countries, will serve WFP well in mapping its own future directions within the Cairo region.

Annex 1. Partnerships per country¹⁰⁵

Country	Government	United Nations Agencies/ Multilatera	NGOs/other
Tajikistan (200122)	Ministry of Health Ministry of Agriculture State Agency on Forestry and Hunting Rapid Emergency Assessment and Contingency Team (REACT) Local and Regional Authorities	FAO IFAD UNDP UNICEF WHO World Bank	<i>International NGOs</i> ACTED Save the Children CESVI Mercy Corps Focus Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP) GIZ Project Hope Operation Mercy. <i>National NGOs and Social Organizations</i> <i>Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan</i> <i>National TB Center</i> NGO Habib" NGO Chorvodor NGO Binokor NGO Bonu NGO Faizi Kuhsor

¹⁰⁵ Source: Operational Factsheet of each operation Evaluation Report

			NGO Guli Surkh NGO Javoni Asri NGO Mohi Munir NGO Nuri Shavkat NGO Habib NGO Rudaki NGO Sayor NGO Shahidi Bobokhon SO Nuri Khatlon SO Sangdarai bolo
Tunisia (200493)	Ministry of Education	FAO UNDP UNICEF World Bank	Social and Industrial Foodservice Institute (SIFI)
Iran	Ministry of Interior, Bureau of Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA)	UNHCR	N/A
Armenia (200128)	Ministry of Education and Science (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture through an inter-ministerial working group)	N/A	Save the Children Social and Industrial Food Services Institute (SIFI)
Egypt (200238)	Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (MALR) Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MOMM) Ministry of Health and Population Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade Ministry of Social Solidarity (MOSS) National Nutrition Institute Ministry of Education (MOE) Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) Information and Decision Support Centre (IDSC)	FAO UNICEF ILO WHO UN Women	One international NGO Terre des hommes, TDH Seven national NGOs Sohag Community Development Association for Women and Children's Situations Improvement Coptic Evangelical Organisation for Social

			<p>Services (CEOSS)</p> <p>Bena Association for Development</p> <p>Women's Association for Development in Assiut University</p> <p>Women's Health Improvement Association</p> <p>Women and Society Association</p> <p>Family and Environment Development Association in eleven governorates</p> <p>Private sector:</p> <p>PepsiCo</p> <p>Vodafone</p> <p>CEMEX</p> <p>Bank of Alexandria</p> <p>MBC Hope</p> <p>Mercedes</p> <p>ASEC Cement</p> <p>Banque du Caire (BDC)</p> <p>Banque Misr</p> <p>ESRI</p>
Ukraine (200765)	Ministry of Social Policy (MoSP) State Emergency Services (SES)	UNDP UNHCR UNICEF	<p>International Relief and Development (IRD)</p> <p>People in Need (PIN)</p> <p>Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)</p>

			<p>Save the Children</p> <p>Mercy Corps</p> <p>Rinat Akhmetov Foundation (RAF)</p> <p>International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)</p>
Kyrgyzstan 200176	<p>Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance Ministry of Agriculture Ministry of Social Development Inter-Ministerial Working Committee (chaired by Ministry of Education and Science).</p>	<p>UNICEF FAO</p>	<p>Social and Industrial Food Services Institute (SIFI)</p> <p>Public Association “Centre of Activation of Rural Development Initiatives” (CADRI)</p> <p>International Public Foundation “Initiative of Roza Otunbaeva”</p> <p>Public Foundation “Agency for Development Initiatives” (ADI)</p>
Kyrgyzstan 200176	<p>Ministry of Agriculture Ministry of Emergency Situations, Ministry of Social Development State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry</p>	<p>FAO IFAD UNDP UN-Women OCHA UNICEF UNFPA</p>	<p>Kyrgyz Association of Forest & Land Users (KAFLU)</p> <p>Community Development Alliance (CDA)</p> <p>Public Association “Centre of Activation of Rural Development Initiatives” (CADRI)</p> <p>NGO Bilek”</p> <p>NGO Ak-Niet</p> <p>Water Users Association (WUA)</p> <p>GIZ</p>

Sudan (200808)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Health Ministry of Agriculture Ministry of Education Ministry of Social Welfare and Social Security Central Bank of Sudan State level Line Ministries	UNICEF UNHCR IFAD FAO	72 NGOs (unlisted)
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Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
CO	Country Office
CP	Country Programme
CFSVA	Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment
DEV	Development Programme
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EMOP	Emergency operation
FFA	Food Assistance for Assets
FFT	Food Assistance for Training
FSMS	Food Security Monitoring Systems
OEV	Office of Evaluation
PRRO	Protracted Relief and Recovery operation
SABER	System Approach for Better Education Results
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
VAM	Vulnerability Assessment Mapping
WFP	World Food Programme

Office of Evaluation
www.wfp.org/evaluation



World Food Programme