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Evaluation reports

**For consideration**

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## **Synthesis report of operation evaluations (2016–2017)**

### *Optimizing performance*

#### **Executive summary**

This report synthesizes the findings of 15 WFP operation evaluations, conducted between mid-2016 and mid-2017. It is the fourth and final Synthesis in the operation evaluations series. Operations had combined requirements of over USD 2 billion, directly targeted over 19 million beneficiaries and were implemented in vulnerable and volatile contexts.

This final Synthesis in the series finds a step-change in WFP's organizational evolution since 2014. WFP has reshaped its operating model, away from a *deliverer of food* and towards a *broker of hunger and nutrition solutions*. Following this transformation, WFP is generally better positioned to serve humanitarian and development needs.

Evidence from these 15 evaluations finds WFP prioritizing a more partnership-oriented approach. It has engaged in upstream policy spaces and helped deliver country-led results by generating evidence, transferring knowledge and applying innovation. In some countries, management have moved beyond WFP's traditional toolkit, using a systems-oriented view to provide more strategic responses to needs.

However, this final Synthesis in this series finds these changes are still not universal. Opportunities for policy- and capacity-strengthening have not been seized consistently and alignment with social-protection and resilience frameworks is uneven. Programme implementation is not sufficiently informed by performance data. Planning for transition receives limited attention whilst some partnerships remain transactional.

WFP's operations showed increased gender sensitivity in numerical terms. However, approaches remain focused on including women rather than effecting gender-transformative change. This contrasts with the progressive and dynamic approaches to hunger solutions observed in this cohort of evaluations.

The evidence also finds WFP constrained by its external contributions. Funding shortfalls have hindered its ability to innovate; to strengthen capacities; and to ensure linkages across the humanitarian-development nexus. Earmarked funding has restricted room to manoeuvre, especially in

*In line with the Evaluation Policy (2016–2021) (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-A/Rev.1), to respect the integrity and independence of evaluation findings some language contained in this report may not be standard WFP terminology; please direct any requests for clarification to the WFP Director of Evaluation.*

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vulnerable and volatile contexts. In-kind contributions at times restricted efficiency and constrained alignment with national preferences.

The operation evaluation series has held up a mirror to four years of operational practice. This final synthesis report finds that WFP's technical capacity and assets, entrepreneurial approach and service-mindedness have been galvanized by recent organizational reforms. Achieving zero hunger and mitigating future risks, however, will require sustained attention to implementing these changes. Going forward, six lessons are presented to help optimize WFP's future performance in the context of the Integrated Road Map.

### **Draft decision\***

The Board takes note of "Synthesis Report of Operation Evaluations (2016–2017)" (WFP/EB.2/2017/6-B) taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

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\* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

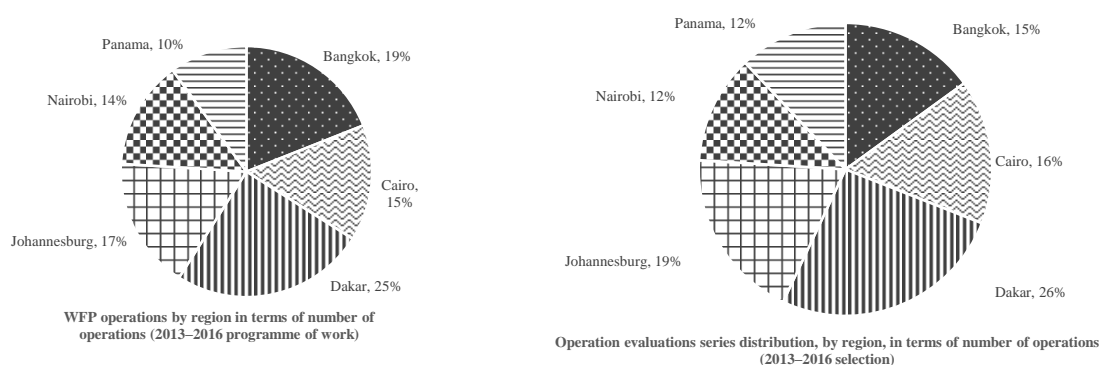
## Introduction

1. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Zero Hunger Challenge call for united partnership to tackle hunger and undernutrition. Ensuring that food for all is “sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious”<sup>1</sup> requires large-scale collective action.
2. WFP is the world’s largest humanitarian organization, fighting hunger worldwide. Its operations serve the hungry poor, in often complex and fast-moving settings.
3. This Synthesis analyses the findings of 15 WFP operation evaluations conducted between mid-2016 and mid-2017. It is the fourth and final annual Synthesis in this series. It describes performance and extracts lessons, to help WFP meet the needs of the people it serves.

## Operation evaluations

4. The operation evaluations series was launched by WFP’s Office of Evaluation in 2013. Figure 1 shows the regional distribution of the operations evaluated (2013–2016) in relation to WFP’s programme of work for the same years in terms of number of operations.

**Figure 1: WFP operations and operation evaluations (2013–2016)**



## Operations evaluated 2016–2017

5. The 15 operations evaluated in 2016–2017 targeted over 19 million people from 2012 to 2018, with combined requirements of over USD 2 billion. Table 1 describes their key features.

<sup>1</sup> Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1), para.7.

TABLE 1: OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

	Regional <sup>a)</sup>	Cameroon	Chad	Djibouti	Haiti	Madagascar	Malawi	Myanmar	Sudan	Cuba	Nepal	Rwanda	Kyrgyzstan	Kyrgyzstan	Swaziland
Programme type	EMOP	PRRO <sup>b)</sup>	PRRO	PRRO	PRRO	PRRO	PRRO	PRRO	PRRO	CP	CP	CP	DEV	DEV	DEV
Income status <sup>c)</sup>	Lower-middle	Lower-middle	Low	Lower-middle	Low	Low	Low	Lower-middle	Low	Upper-middle	Low	Low	Lower-middle	Lower-middle	Lower-middle
Fragile situation <sup>d)</sup>	√ (Chad)		√	√	√	√		√	√						
Affected by recurrent natural disasters <sup>e)</sup>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Refugee/IDP-focused	√	√	(√)	(√)				√	(√)						
Country office size <sup>f)</sup>	N/A	Large	Very large	Small	Large	Med.	Large	Large	Very large	Very small	Very large	Med.	Med.	Med.	Very small

<sup>a)</sup> The regional emergency operation (EMOP) covers Cameroon, Chad and Niger. It is implemented from the Regional Bureau Dakar.

<sup>b)</sup> Protracted relief and recovery operation

<sup>c)</sup> As of 2017. <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>

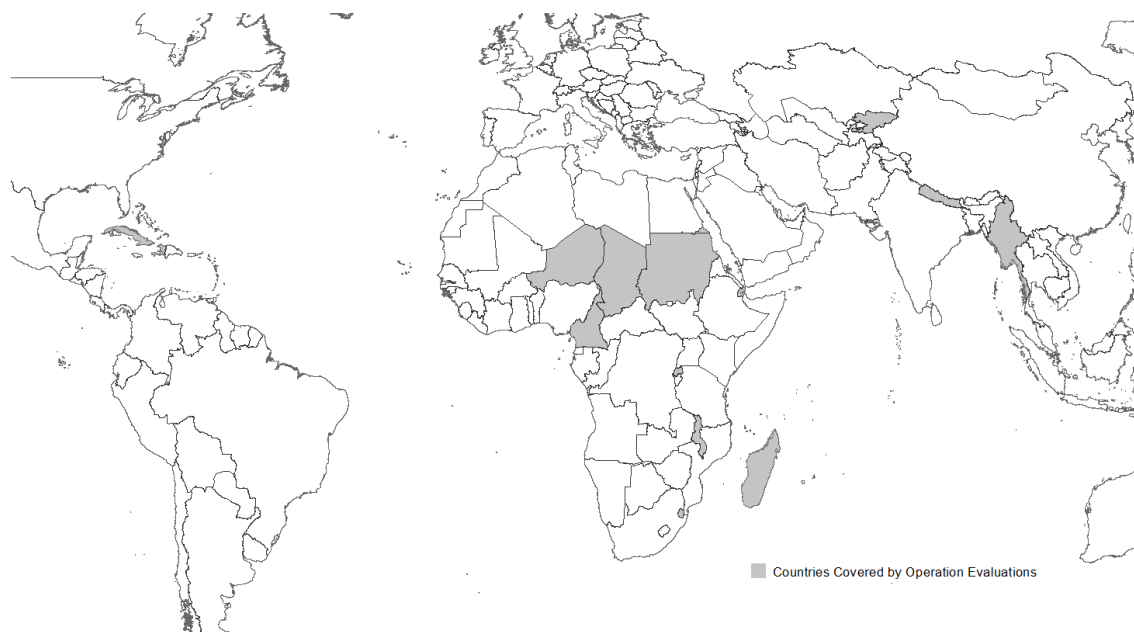
<sup>d)</sup> 2017 World Bank Harmonized List of Fragile Situations (FY 2017).

<sup>e)</sup> Very high, high or medium exposure to natural hazards. World Risk Report 2016. <http://weltrisikobericht.de/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/WorldRiskReport2016.pdf>

<sup>f)</sup> WFP Resource Management Department classification 2016.

6. The 15 operations were implemented in vulnerable and volatile environments. All were exposed to natural hazards; five faced insecurity and three political fragility/uncertainty. Six included refugee or internally displaced persons (IDP) populations, with two targeting these populations exclusively. Figure 2 shows their locations.

**Figure 2: Location of operations evaluated 2016–2017**



The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the World Food Programme (WFP) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its frontiers or boundaries.

Data sources: WFP/UNGIWG

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Source: WFP Emergency Preparedness Branch Geospatial Support Unit

7. Details regarding the activities and modalities employed can be found in the Annex. Of the 15 operations:
- thirteen were multi-component, employing at least two of WFP's four standard activities.<sup>2</sup> Only two provided direct assistance through a single activity (school feeding in the Kyrgyzstan and nutrition in Swaziland);
  - thirteen designed and implemented nutrition activities; eight, school feeding; and nine (including the three refugee-focused operations) general food distribution. Food assistance for assets/food assistance for training (FFA/FFT) was designed in 12 operations but implemented in only 10;
  - capacity strengthening was planned for 13 operations but was not implemented in the Sudan or Haiti due to resource constraints; and
  - eleven applied mixed modalities (cash/voucher/in-kind), although cash transfers were not implemented as planned in Kyrgyzstan.

## Methodology

8. The 2016–2017 synthesis applied the same standard methods as its precursors, including a structured analytical framework and systematic data extraction. Evidence was rated for validity and reliability on a scale from 1 (low) to 4 (high), with only that scoring at least 2 included.

<sup>2</sup> General food distribution, school feeding, nutrition and food assistance for assets/training (FFA/FFT).

Findings were triangulated with standard project reports, where appropriate, and validated by WFP's Office of Evaluation.

9. Limitations include the report's dependence on its component studies. Results data were generated from standard project reports, triangulated with evaluations. Since 13 of the 15 evaluations were mid-term, final outcome data for the full cohort were not available.

## Quality of design

### Strategic Positioning

#### *Strategic partnering in design*

10. Operations in this cohort reflect continued close partnership with national actors in design. Thirteen were developed jointly or in close consultation with governments (compared to 6 out of 15 in 2015–2016), while four arose from explicit government requests for WFP services.
11. **Gearing to national priorities:** Operations in this cohort were closely geared to support national policy frameworks for food security and nutrition:
- all designs were *well-aligned with national priorities* (though in Nepal, WFP did not keep abreast of national strategic changes, limiting relevance over time);
  - activities in ten operations were *implemented through national programmes*, including 6 out of 15 nutrition interventions and school feeding in Kyrgyzstan;
  - operations in Cuba and Rwanda were wholly geared to *enhancing national food security and nutrition programmes*; and
  - eight designs were geared to support *national social protection/safety nets frameworks or objectives* (though four missed opportunities for alignment).

#### *Upstream support for hunger solutions*

12. This series has progressively documented WFP's transition from an *implementing* to an *enabling actor* at country level.<sup>3</sup> The 2016–2017 synthesis finds designs increasingly focused on upstream engagement in partnerships, for example by prioritizing policy and capacity strengthening (see Table 2).

<b>TABLE 2: UPSTREAM SUPPORT FOR HUNGER SOLUTIONS</b>
<b><i>Capacity strengthening</i></b>
Thirteen operations planned capacity-strengthening activities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ In Nepal, the operation aimed to support government on food security monitoring, public works programmes, school feeding, food fortification, nutrition education and emergency logistics/food management; and</li> <li>➤ in Swaziland, the operation was geared to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Health to address the nutrition elements of national responses to HIV and tuberculosis (TB).</li> </ul>
<b><i>Policy and strategy formulation</i></b>
Nine designs included support for policy/strategy strengthening, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ in Chad, where WFP planned to work with the Government and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to define a programme for refugee and host population self-reliance; and</li> <li>➤ in Kyrgyzstan, where WFP aimed to redefine the conceptual framework for social protection, integrating concepts of food access, food stability and resilience.</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Operation evaluations syntheses 2013–2014, 2014–2015, 2015–2016.

13. However, evaluations identified continued shortcomings in capacity-development designs, including the lack of a comprehensive diagnostic and systems overview; the absence of a clear strategy or implementation plan; and few clear objectives, targets or intended results.

### Using evidence

#### *Increasingly evidence-based designs*

14. Investment in evidence generation has begun to yield results. Of the 15 evaluations, 13 found the evidence base sufficiently sound to validate the operation's intended approach and scale. Six operations applied findings from evaluations and reviews to inform design. Linked to the stronger evidence base, *untested assumptions* were only reported in five evaluations, compared to eight in 2016.

#### **Box 1: Evidence-based designs**

- In Myanmar, the operation drew on a solid evidence base from assessments and evaluations conducted by WFP, cooperating partners and United Nations partners.
- In the Sudan, operational design was informed by evidence from sources including the Food Security Assessment, mass nutritional screening and data generated by WFP, joint assessment mission findings and annual crop and food supply assessments by the Government.

### Responding to needs

#### *Appropriate ambition levels*

15. This series has previously found over-ambitious operation designs. Despite high intended coverage levels of vulnerable populations, however, 11 evaluations in this cohort assessed the proposed scale as appropriate for humanitarian needs (Box 2).

#### **Box 2: Planning for coverage**

In Malawi, geographical coverage of the relief component of the operation was based on evidence gathered and reviewed by humanitarian and development partners, including WFP, through the Food Security Cluster.

16. In Cameroon, Haiti and Nepal, however, more realistic designs and stronger prioritization were needed. In Madagascar, the number of people affected by severe food insecurity each year far exceeded the number of planned beneficiaries, due to deteriorating conditions in the country.

#### *More relevant activities*

17. This synthesis sees continued relevance of operational objectives, and improvements at the activity level. Concerns, identified in five evaluations (compared to eight in 2015–2016), related to:
- nutrition in Cameroon and Madagascar, with prevention activities insufficiently prioritized; and
  - FFA/FFT activities in Chad, Haiti, Madagascar and the Sudan, which suffered design flaws.

#### *Appropriate geographical targeting but continued weaknesses within activities*

18. Linked to the stronger evidence base (see paragraph 14), planned geographical targeting was appropriate in all operations except those in Haiti and Madagascar. Activity-level targeting, however, exhibited continued weaknesses, with ten evaluations finding shortcomings, particularly within nutrition and FFA/FFT. Three operations undertook ambitious retargeting exercises for refugees and IDPs.
19. WFP's selection of transfer modalities remained largely appropriate but, as in previous years, choices were sometimes restricted by donor preferences (see section on Partnerships for results).

## Gender

### *Increased gender sensitivity but a focus on “including women”*

20. Previous syntheses have found persistent limitations in the gender sensitivity of designs. This year shows progress but with greater efforts required: while seven operations included gender analysis to inform design, this was at times shallow and/or lacking insight into structural gender barriers. Moreover, five operations conducted little to no gender analysis at all.
21. Nine designs (compared to three in 2015–2016) planned to address gender issues in implementation. However, approaches still focused on “including women” rather than addressing strategic gender concerns such as women’s participation in decision-making, management of resources and leadership roles.

## External and internal coherence

### *Continued weak internal coherence but improved approaches to partnership*

22. Weak internal synergies in design, identified throughout this series, persist, with cross-activity links included in only three of the thirteen multi-component operations evaluated. Attention to external partnerships improved, however, with 13 operations having planned activities within coordinated approaches (see Box 3).

#### **Box 3: Planning for coordination**

- The regional emergency operation was designed to fit into government and United Nations strategic crisis response plans and the regional response plans for refugees.
- In Rwanda, WFP was thorough in seeking to ensure its operational objectives, targeting and activities complemented the interventions of other relevant actors in the country.

## Partnerships for results

### **Working in partnership**

23. The strong partnerships with host governments identified throughout this series continue, with relationships characterized as “open” and “trust-based” and many activities implemented jointly. Increasing demand for WFP services also arose where governments perceived comparative advantage, for example in Myanmar and Rwanda. A tendency for transactional partnerships persisted in Cameroon and the Sudan, however, while strong operational coordination in Nepal was compromised by limited strategic engagement.
24. Previously inconsistent or transactional relationships with United Nations agencies and cooperating partners were described more positively in 2016–2017, with seven evaluations finding strong coordination with United Nations agencies (compared to three in 2015–2016) and nine reporting more strategic approaches to cooperating partnerships. While missed opportunities and weaknesses in coordination arose, they were less frequent than in previous years.

## Results

25. Previous syntheses in this series noted progressive improvements in the availability of data, particularly at the output level. While systemic improvements continued in 2016–2017, gaps in outcome data remained, and concerns regarding quality and reliability persisted.

## Monitoring Systems

### *Ongoing improvements in monitoring systems*

26. Eight evaluations found improvements in monitoring systems, continuing a trajectory of progress noted in previous syntheses. Enhancements included data quality systems, contextualized indicators and innovative approaches such as the use of mobile vulnerability analysis and mapping.



**Box 4: Monitoring systems**

In Kyrgyzstan, two operations were implemented concurrently. Investments in monitoring systems included a food security outcome monitoring system to measure resilience over time within the safety-nets operation and the adaptation of corporate indicators to context in the school-meals operation.

***Continued weaknesses in outcome data***

27. Despite improvements in monitoring systems, 12 evaluations found continued weaknesses in the availability, quality and reliability of outcome data (see Table 3). Eight evaluations also raised concerns about limited corporate indicators preventing reporting on operations' actual achievements. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, contributions to nutrition, hygiene and sanitation, community engagement, social protection and safety net results were masked by a requirement to report on education outcome indicators.

<b>TABLE 3: OUTCOME DATA LIMITATIONS</b>	
<i>Data availability</i>	
➤	Lack of baselines or unreliable baselines (seven operations)
➤	Absence of data collection, often due to limited resources of country offices to fully implement WFP's monitoring requirements (nine operations)
➤	Limited disaggregation (three operations)
<i>Quality and reliability</i>	
➤	Targets disconnected from baselines and/or lacking clear rationale (eight operations)
➤	Non-representative sample bases extrapolated to wider programme components or different populations (six operations)
➤	Collection of "point-in-time" data risking an inaccurate or unrepresentative picture (four operations)
➤	Attribution challenges in linking observed changes to WFP interventions (three operations)

***Variable analysis and use of data***

28. Five evaluations commended WFP's use of data to inform implementation. Ten, however, found data underutilized, often due to resource constraints, delayed data supply or weak information flows between WFP and partners.

***Emerging alignment with national systems***

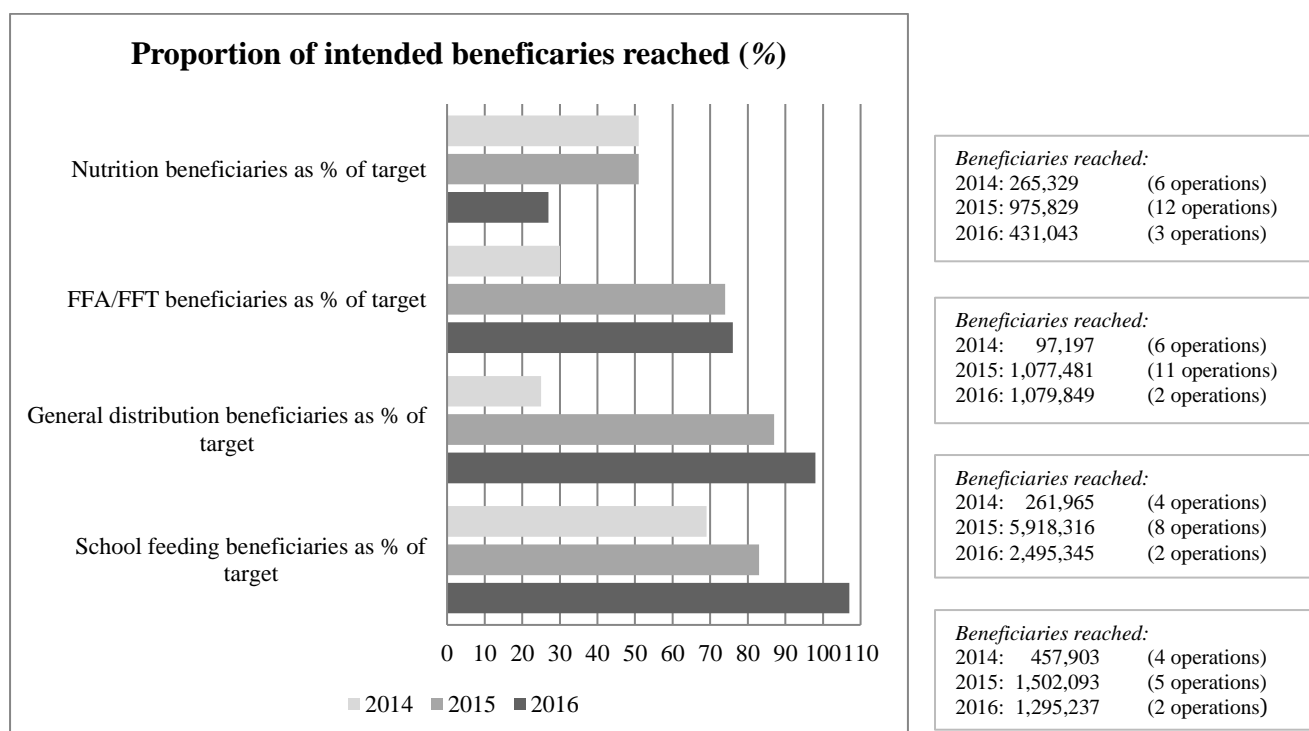
29. An emerging trend within this cohort is actual or planned alignment with national monitoring systems, as in Cuba, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Swaziland.

**Box 5: Aligning with national monitoring systems**

In Nepal, WFP's cooperating partners report through an online database linked to government management information systems. WFP's monitoring unit conducts data analysis and triangulation.

**Output results**

30. For directly targeted beneficiaries, Figure 3 shows the absolute numbers and percentage of beneficiaries reached against targets for general distribution, school feeding, nutrition and FFA/FFT in 2014–2016 (period under review). Caseloads varied significantly against plan in thirteen operations, due to changing refugee or IDP flows, government requests for expansion; natural disasters; and funding changes. WFP made extensive use of the budget revision tool to facilitate required changes.

**Figure 3: Beneficiaries per activity in the operations evaluated**

31. School feeding and general distribution were closest to reaching planned targets, largely due to expanded caseloads. FFA/FFT fared better than in previous years, possibly due to fewer funding constraints than faced previously. The largest shortfall was in nutrition activities, also largely due to funding constraints, although some operations, such as in Rwanda, exceeded planned targets.

#### ***Delivering less food than planned***

32. As consistently reported in this series, the quantity of commodities distributed was lower than expected, at 65 percent of the intended total over the reference period. All 15 operations experienced reduced duration, frequency, quantity and/or calorific value of rations.

#### ***Variable commodity suitability***

33. Also in keeping with previous years, beneficiaries in six operations found the quality and content of food baskets to be satisfactory. However, at least one commodity was not aligned with local consumption preferences in six other operations.

#### ***Appropriate transfer modality choices but constrained by contributions***




34. Twelve operations applied appropriate transfer modalities in implementation. The expansion of cash-based approaches continued, with USD 76 million disbursed over the reference period, representing 51 percent of planned distribution (increased from 35 percent in 2014–2015 and 47 percent in 2015–2016). WFP's rigorous approach to assessing the appropriateness and feasibility of this modality, requiring validation by systematic studies, was commended in three evaluations. Six found potentially conducive conditions and local preferences for cash, but WFP was restricted to in-kind modalities by donor contributions.
35. Identified effects were among those previously identified in this series, including greater flexibility of purchasing power and local economy stimulation. The need for regular review of food prices was highlighted in Malawi and Myanmar, where cash transfer values were lower than equivalent food basket costs.

## Outcome results

36. The timing of mid-term evaluations meant that final outcome data was not available for 13 operations. This specifically related to outcomes linked to institutional emergency preparedness, access to basic services and assets, undernutrition and capacity strengthening.
37. Figure 4 compares the performance of the 15 evaluated operations, recognizing their diverse contexts and different reporting periods, with achievements against WFP-wide performance as reported in the annual performance report for 2016. The same methodology as for the annual performance report was applied.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 4: Outcome performance for the 15 operations compared to 2016 corporate performance**

Strategic Objective/Outcome	Relevant operations (of 15)	Operations with sufficient data to report progress	Cohort performance rating	Corporate performance (2015 APR)
Strategic Objective 1: Save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies				
Outcome 1.1: Stabilized or reduced undernutrition	4	3		
Outcome 1.2: Stabilized/improved food consumption	8	8		
Outcome 1.3: Access to basic services/community assets	1	1		
Outcome 1.4: Institutions prepared for emergencies	3	0		
Strategic Objective 2: Support or restore food security and nutrition and establish or rebuild livelihoods in fragile settings and following emergencies				
Outcome 2.1: Adequate food consumption reached	5	4		
Outcome 2.2: Access to assets/basic services,	4	2		
Outcome 2.3: Stabilized or reduced undernutrition	2	1		
Outcome 2.4: Capacity to meet national food insecurity needs	0	0		
Strategic Objective 3: Reduce risk and enable people, communities and countries to meet their own food and nutrition needs				
Outcome 3.1: Improved access to livelihood assets	8	7		
Outcome 3.2: Increased marketing opportunities for producers and traders	2	2		
Outcome 3.3: Risk reduction capacity strengthened	3	1		
Strategic Objective 4: Reduce undernutrition and break the intergenerational cycle of hunger				
Outcome 4.1: Reduced undernutrition	7	7		
Outcome 4.2: Increased access to education	3	3		
Outcome 4.3: Capacity to reduce undernutrition/access to education	5	1		

	Achieved target or on track to achieve target
	Evidence of some progress but targets have not been met or progress towards targets is slow
	Insufficient data available

<sup>4</sup> This methodology involves a four-step process, described at <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/eb/wfp291465.pdf>

38. Performance broadly mirrored WFP-wide achievement as reported in the 2016 annual performance report.
39. Despite continued limitations on the availability and quality of outcome data (see paragraphs 26 to 29), performance against targets under Strategic Objectives 1 and 2 was good. Achievements under outcome 2.1, for example, were helped by improved dietary diversity and food consumption scores in relevant operations. Performance under Strategic Objectives 3 and 4, although less assured, was still positive. Gains under outcome 3.1 were supported by increased performance of FFA/FFT activities (see paragraphs 30 to 35), although evaluations signalled persistent concerns about sustainability (see paragraphs 55 and 56). Improvements under outcome 4.1 were helped by successful treatment rates for moderate acute malnutrition and high coverage rates for eligible populations. Outcome 4.2 showed mixed results on school enrolment and retention.

### **Additional results**

#### ***Contributions to Sustainable Development Goal and Zero Hunger Challenge targets***

40. WFP seeks to contribute directly to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2 (“End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”) and 17 (“Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”). In keeping with previous syntheses in this series, evaluations recorded results contributing to other SDGs but not captured in WFP’s corporate results frameworks (see Table 4).

<b>TABLE 4: ADDITIONAL OUTCOME RESULTS</b>	
<i>SDG 1: No poverty Zero Hunger Challenge: 100 percent increase in smallholder productivity/income</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Strengthened livelihood capacity/increased options, including expansion of cultivated areas (Cuba, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Myanmar, Sudan)</li> <li>➤ Increased/diversified agricultural production (Cuba, Sudan)</li> <li>➤ Increased/diversified household incomes and/or reduced indebtedness (Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Sudan)</li> <li>➤ Improved resilience through environmental/climate protection measures (Cuba, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar)</li> </ul>
<i>SDG 3: Good health and well-being</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Increased health gains, contributing to reduced deaths from HIV and AIDS (Malawi)</li> <li>➤ Increased health-seeking behaviour (Kyrgyzstan)</li> </ul>
<i>SDG 4: Quality education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Increased school attendance (Djibouti, Myanmar, Nepal, Sudan)</li> </ul>
<i>Other</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Improved social cohesion (Haiti, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar)</li> <li>➤ Social mobilization (Haiti, Kyrgyzstan)</li> </ul>

#### ***Improved national policy and accountability environments***

41. Reflecting WFP’s greater engagement in upstream country partnerships (see paragraphs 10 to 13), eight operations contributed to enhanced national policy environments (see Table 5).

<b>Area</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Example</b>
Disaster preparedness/ risk reduction	Development of emergency preparedness and response policies (Madagascar, Myanmar, Rwanda)	In Rwanda, WFP supported the development of the national contingency plan.
Education	Development of policy and programmatic instruments for school feeding (Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Rwanda)  Mainstreaming of school feeding into the national social protection programmes (Kyrgyzstan)	In Kyrgyzstan, WFP helped develop an extensive school feeding policy framework, including more than 20 policies, strategies and decrees.
Nutrition	Development of nutrition policies and guidelines (Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Myanmar, Nepal, Rwanda, Swaziland,)  Mainstreaming of nutrition concerns into wider policies, frameworks and development interventions (Rwanda, Swaziland)  Building/enhancing national partnerships for nutrition (Myanmar, Rwanda)	In Swaziland, WFP supported policy development in respect of the Extended National Multi-sectoral HIV and AIDS Framework, the TB National Strategic Plan and the National Health Sector Strategic Plan.

***Capacities strengthened but opportunities missed***

42. Despite design weaknesses, capacities were strengthened (see Table 6), although some opportunities were also missed. These included in Chad, where the protracted relief and recovery operation lacked a capacity-building objective for nutrition as part of its design, and Malawi, where partnerships and capacity strengthening were focused on centralized rather than decentralized functions.

<b>Area</b>	<b>Number of countries</b>	<b>Example</b>
Emergency preparedness/ management	six	In Myanmar, WFP helped build sustainable government emergency preparedness and response measures.
Food security monitoring and analysis	seven	In Haiti, WFP trained counterparts in integrated phase classification methodologies and helped build vulnerability targeting systems and databases.
Nutrition	eight	In Cameroon, WFP trained national and regional staff in technical nutrition approaches.
School feeding	three	In Kyrgyzstan, WFP supported SABER* and National Capacity Index exercises and strengthened the capacities of national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in school feeding.

\* World Bank System Assessment and Benchmarking for Education Results (SABER).

**Enhanced social protection/safety net systems**

43. Despite uneven alignment, social protection and safety net frameworks were improved (see Table 7).

<b>Area</b>	<b>Total countries</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Developing and implementing <b>policy frameworks</b> for social protection and safety nets	ten	In Djibouti, WFP played a critical role in directly implementing the Government's social protection strategy.
<b>Capacity strengthening</b> for national social-protection frameworks	five	In Cuba, WFP trained counterparts on disaster risk management, health and education programmes to support decentralized delivery of national social-protection programmes.

**Variable scale of results and clearer framing required on resilience<sup>5</sup>**

44. Eleven operations employed an explicit resilience framework but three noted missed opportunities or a need for clearer strategic definition. Results, attained to varying degrees in eight operations, included increased resilience or self-reliance at the community level.

**Gender, protection and accountability to affected populations****Gender sensitivity improved but focused on “including women”**

45. Gender results were largely reported against corporate indicators, with operations “reaching women” but devoted limited attention to underlying power imbalances. Evaluations continue to critique the limitations of WFP’s corporate performance indicators. Some early transformative changes noted in the 2015–2016 synthesis continued, although on a limited scale, and programmatic gaps continued to occur (see Table 8).

<b>Early transformative gains</b>	<b>Gaps</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Improved women’s authority over household food management or ability to participate in decision-making (Djibouti, Malawi, Myanmar, Sudan)</li> <li>➤ Increased representation or voices of women in communities or schools (Malawi, Myanmar, Nepal, Sudan)</li> <li>➤ Reduced workloads and increased incomes through access to markets (Rwanda)</li> <li>➤ Expanded social space opportunities to communicate (Sudan)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Viewing gender equality as equal male-to-female membership rather than equal influence, or with respect to power or rights (Malawi)</li> <li>➤ Inadvertently reinforcing male interests by failing to take into account gender power relations in the control of productive infrastructure or resources (Cameroon)</li> <li>➤ Not recognizing or addressing women’s work burdens and priorities within FFA/FFT activities (Nepal)</li> <li>➤ Adopting a women-only, rather than a gender, approach in nutrition behaviour change messaging (Cameroon, Nepal, Rwanda)</li> <li>➤ Insufficient recognition of gender barriers in local structures and decision-making processes applied in project implementation (Kyrgyzstan, Rwanda)</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> The term “resilience” is applied as in the operations.

***Protection targets largely met***

46. Ten evaluations reported on protection. While protection targets were met or exceeded in seven operations, some issues were not fully addressed (gender-based violence in Djibouti and the Sudan and refugee-host community tensions in the Sudan). Insufficient attention was paid to protection concerns in the regional emergency operation.

***Mixed performance on accountability to affected populations***

47. Of the 13 evaluations reporting on accountability to affected populations, seven recorded targets met, with beneficiaries well informed about entitlements and complaints processes established. Six found targets not met and/or complaints mechanisms not in place or functioning.

**Box 6: Accountability to affected populations**

- In Cameroon, relationships with communities were managed with a high level of transparency and frequent communication, increasing trust.
- In Myanmar, WFP was among the few agencies with a formal complaints system covering all beneficiaries.

**Brokering Solutions**

48. The evaluations in 2016–2017 reveal an increasing role for WFP as **solutions broker**<sup>6</sup> for food and nutrition security. This is reflected in a more systems-level view adopted by some country office management, beyond the conventional unit of the “operation”. It manifests in three key capabilities: evidence generation/knowledge transfer; innovation; and convening power.

***Evidence generation/knowledge transfer***

49. Table 9 illustrates how WFP used evidence generation and knowledge transfer to help identify food security and nutrition solutions.

<b>TABLE 9: EVIDENCE GENERATION/KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER</b>	
<i>Providing high-quality food security and nutrition data</i>	
All 15 countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ In the Kyrgyzstan, WFP’s development of the National Food Security Atlas highlighted aspects of poverty and food access not previously recognized as drivers of food insecurity.</li> <li>➤ In Nepal, WFP partnered with the Government and other actors to produce the NeKSAP (Nepal Khadya Surakshya Anugaman Pranali) food security monitoring system database, described as “a key public good” and “the best go-to information on the real-time food security situation”.</li> </ul>
<i>Conducting/commissioning technical research and studies</i>	
8 countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ In Cuba, WFP supported a national household survey on food consumption to inform improved targeting and development of national social protection programmes.</li> <li>➤ In Swaziland, WFP provided technical studies on nutrition, HIV and stunting prevention.</li> </ul>
<i>Knowledge transfer</i>	
8 countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ In Nepal, WFP supported government participation in the Global Child Nutrition Forum to facilitate the exchange of ideas and best practices on cash-based school feeding.</li> <li>➤ In Rwanda, WFP supported knowledge exchanges for agricultural cooperatives to share experience and good practices.</li> </ul>

<sup>6</sup> See Synthesis Report of 2014–2015 Operation Evaluations (WFP/EB.2/2015/6-E).

**Testing innovations**

50. Eight evaluations highlighted WFP's willingness and ability to test innovations, in particular by applying technology.

**Box 7: Innovation**

- In the regional emergency operation, the mobile vulnerability analysis and mapping innovation was highly promising as a means of assessing trends in food consumption, leading to its planned roll-out in Cameroon and Chad.
- In Kyrgyzstan and Rwanda, government and other partners praised WFP's role in modelling innovations, such as by piloting information and communications technology solutions for disaster risk reduction.

**Convening power in partnerships**

51. Six evaluations identified WFP's use of convening power to bring actors together around a common problem and drive the collective search for solutions (Box 8):

**Box 8: Convening power**

- In Cameroon, the country office's convening power for the mobilization of political, technical and funding support for food security and nutrition solutions was well respected.
- In Kyrgyzstan, WFP's coordination of ministries and civil society resulted in multiple actors working together towards common objectives.

**Agility and efficiency in partnerships**

52. WFP's agility in volatile operating environments continued to receive praise, with its swift and flexible adaptation welcomed by partners in 11 operations. Inflexibility persisted in Nepal and Sudan, however, linked in Nepal to a lack of responsiveness to external change and in Sudan to a relief mindset entrenched following decades of emergency programming.
53. As in previous years, timeliness was mixed, with mostly uninterrupted food and cash assistance to beneficiaries in seven operations, reflecting efficient logistics operations, while interruptions or delays occurred in eight (see paragraphs 57 to 64).
54. Eight operations made efforts to reduce costs, including retargeting based on vulnerability criteria, changing transfer modalities (in particular from in-kind to cash) or commodity types, changing procurement sources and introducing local contributions (e.g. to school feeding).

**Transition and sustainability*****Continued weakness in preparing for transition and sustainability***

55. Only six operations (compared to four in 2015–2016) developed and implemented transition strategies, including self-reliance for IDPs and refugees. In three others, transition planning was partial, while six lacked adequate transition strategies.
56. Five evaluations rated the likelihood of sustainability across the operations as strong. Ten evaluations raised concerns about the sustainability of assets created through FFA, sometimes for reasons beyond WFP's control. Six more found some likelihood but significant external constraints (see paragraphs 57 to 64). Sustainability was most likely in operations anchored in national programmes or where capacity-strengthening activities had delivered results.



**Box 9: Transition**

- In Kyrgyzstan, the implementation of resilience activities in partnership with the Government improved the potential for sustainability.
- In Nepal, the NeKSAP food security database was successfully handed over to Government and was being maintained.

**Explanatory factors****External factors**

57. As documented throughout this series of evaluations, external crises arising from vulnerable and volatile operating contexts posed challenges to implementation. Natural disasters, including El Niño, affected nine operations, while four experienced conflict, violence and insecurity.
58. Several operations benefited from conducive national policy and programming frameworks, in particular in social protection. Implementation through national systems or budgets supported efficiency and effectiveness in some countries, as did strong United Nations coordination in others.
59. Strong national capacities supported results in three operations, while eleven other operations encountered capacity gaps. Challenges included insufficient staffing in government departments or divisions, lack of strategic direction and limited technical expertise. Five operations encountered challenges in cooperating partner capacity, reinforcing the need for continual capacity strengthening.
60. Low funding constrained performance in 13 operations, 5 of which were funded at less than 50 percent at mid-term. Effects included curtailed activities, pipeline breaks, and reduced geographical and population coverage and frequency of assistance. Opportunities to pilot-test innovations, implement capacity-strengthening activities and undertake transition-focused activities were also constrained.
61. Persistent difficulties with short-term, fragmented or poorly aligned funding recurred in 12 of the operations covered by this synthesis. Challenges included earmarked and short-term contributions, delayed release of funds and slow delivery of in-kind donations and high transaction costs. In-kind contributions presented specific challenges in six operations, restricting efficiency, including the ability to optimize transfer modalities, and at times preventing WFP from meeting government or population preferences.

**Internal factors**

62. Supporting internal factors included WFP's comparative advantages, identified in evaluations as:
  - professional credibility with government, especially in relation to technical expertise and logistical capabilities (reported in seven operations);
  - willingness to innovate and try new approaches (reported in eight operations);
  - agility, adaptive capacity and ability to seize opportunities (reported in eleven operations, although this cohort also included instances of limited adaptation to changing conditions); and
  - good communication with donors and governments, with openness and transparency demonstrably supporting partnership (reported in eleven operations).
63. Additionally, ten operations (compared to six in 2015–2016) benefited from regional bureau support in such areas as activity design, gender, monitoring and evaluation and transfer modalities.
64. Constraining internal factors included some experienced in previous years such as design flaws in 9 operations, weak attention to internal synergies in 13 and targeting weaknesses in 6.

Eight operations suffered from limited human resources, with effects including reduced technical expertise on nutrition, protection, gender and resilience and restricted ability to monitor performance, especially where operations were geographically dispersed.

## Conclusions

65. This fourth and final operation evaluation synthesis finds a step-change since 2014 in WFP's organizational evolution since 2014. Less a *deliverer of food* and more a *broker of hunger and nutrition solutions*, less "go-it-alone" and more partnership-centred, WFP has reshaped its operating model to better serve humanitarian and development needs.
66. Evaluations analysed here find WFP's specialized capabilities and technical assets increasingly deployed to improve country-led results. Supplying evidence, transferring knowledge and experimenting with innovation have positioned WFP as a partner of choice for many governments. Increasingly, WFP occupies upstream spaces, engaging in national-level policy and capacity reforms and applying evidence-based advocacy for change.
67. This synthesis finds WFP prioritizing the pursuit of joint responses to food security and nutrition goals. Its enduring and committed country presence, professional credibility and service-mindedness towards those in need, alongside its close engagement with national stakeholders, have been highlighted throughout this series. More recently, a broader ethos of partnership appears to be permeating, with WFP deploying its convening power, and where appropriate, assuming the strategic lead, to support the collective realization of results.
68. In many ways, WFP's ability to seize opportunities, willingness to try new approaches and high risk-tolerance might characterize it as "entrepreneurial". However, this mindset is still not universal. Opportunities for policy and capacity strengthening have been inconsistently seized and some partnerships remain transactional. Alignment with social-protection and resilience frameworks is uneven. Investments in evidence generation are producing results, but programme implementation is insufficiently shaped by performance data. Planning for transition receives limited attention.
69. While WFP's operations show increased gender sensitivity, approaches remain largely focused on "including women" rather than effecting gender-transformative change. This stands in contrast with the more progressive and dynamic approaches to hunger solutions reflected in the operations evaluated here.
70. The 2016–2017 synthesis reveals the increasing limitations of the "operation" and "activity" as primary units for planning. To provide more strategic responses to needs, WFP management has moved beyond the boundaries of these conventional concepts in some countries, extending WFP's traditional toolkit to adopt a broader systems view. However, such approaches have been opportunity-based, rather than steered through a coherent corporate direction. Since 2016, WFP's Integrated Road Map has provided a more systematic framework to guide future change.
71. Finally, but critically, WFP remains constrained – even in the era of the 2030 Agenda – by its external contributions. Funding shortfalls restricted the majority of the operations evaluated here, not only in their ability to fully meet assessed needs, but also in their scope to innovate, strengthen capacities and ensure linkages across the humanitarian–development nexus.
72. More specifically, earmarked funding continues to restrict WFP's room to manoeuvre, especially in vulnerable and volatile contexts where flexibility is paramount. In-kind contributions have at times restricted efficiency and constrained alignment with national preferences.
73. The operation evaluation series has held up a mirror to four years of operational practice. This final synthesis in the series finds WFP generally better positioned to deliver for the future; with its technical capacity and assets, entrepreneurial approach and service-mindedness galvanized through recent organizational reforms. Realizing Zero Hunger and mitigating risk in an increasingly complex world, however, require not just effective and efficient humanitarian action but sustained attention by WFP to implementing these reforms. The fundamentals include a firm

evidence base, strong adaptive capacity; a solutions focus; political astuteness and a partnership ethos. These qualities are amply demonstrated, though not always systematically applied, in the operations evaluated in this series.

74. Going forward, The Integrated Road Map offers WFP the opportunity more firmly to harness its capabilities for the future. Doing so will help the organization realize its full potential, as a key contributor to the realization of the 2030 Agenda and meeting the Zero Hunger Challenge.

## Lessons

75. The key lessons detailed below from four years of operation evaluations aim to support WFP as it continues to optimize performance for the future.
76. **Lesson 1: From food delivery to strategic solutions.** WFP can successfully broker strategic solutions to food security and nutrition only by playing a more upstream role in country partnerships. In response to national strategic reviews, WFP should ensure that it identifies explicit entry points for the deployment of its assets and capabilities – whether policy engagement, advocacy, convening power, the supplying of evidence or innovation. In short, where and how can WFP’s entrepreneurial qualities be maximized to best contribute to Zero Hunger? Such choices need to be accompanied by clear communication on WFP’s shift from “emergency responder” to “strategic partner for hunger solutions” within country strategic planning processes.
77. **Lesson 2: Adopt a systems perspective.** To further strengthen corporate change and add momentum where required, WFP’s country strategic plans should fully integrate a systems focus, gearing intended action to localized mechanisms which determine safe, accessible and nutritious food to populations. This includes national social protection and resilience frameworks, as critical policy vehicles for changing lives; and which require a sharper and more directive corporate drive.
78. **Lesson 3: Define the milestones to transition.** In the light of the needs identified consistently throughout this series, and to reflect the priorities of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, WFP requires continued preparation for transition. In some locations, this may be many years away, while others may require reversion to emergency response. Preparations for transition should span the humanitarian–development divide and require a collectively agreed and consistent line of sight, not only from resources to corporate results, but also from results to exit.
79. **Lesson 4: From producing data to managing performance:** Raised in four successive years of this series, and despite corporate investment and new tools introduced, WFP’s internal performance management has not yet fully delivered its potential. Outcome data, information quality and utility, and alignment with national systems remain significant challenges. Both a systemic and a culture change are needed; from ‘producing data’ as an end in itself, to ‘managing performance’ as core business of the organization, in support of operational excellence.
80. **Lesson 5: From including women to gender transformation.** Throughout this series, evaluations have revealed insufficiently progressive approaches to gender equity. WFP should develop and communicate clear corporate messages: that gender is more than ‘including women’; that equal numbers alone do not give rise to equal rights; and that delivering gender-transformative change is not an option but rather a critical humanitarian and development priority. Much can be learned from other global organizations on best practices for delivering gender-transformative results.
81. **Lesson 6: Advocate for enabling support.** WFP’s organizational evolution is well recognized in its country partnerships. Yet its external contributions do not yet provide the flexibility required for the increasingly complex and sophisticated hunger solutions that evaluations have found WFP generally well-positioned to deliver.

82. At central, regional and country levels, WFP requires intensified advocacy to ensure full support for operations in line with its corporate shift. Such advocacy should focus not just on 'more' but on '*more enabling*' and '*more flexible*' financial contributions, framed by existing international commitments to humanitarian and development financing. Such investments, which underpin the shared agenda of the SDGs, are crucial for WFP to optimize its performance for the future and fulfil its potential as a strategic broker of hunger solutions.

## ANNEX

KEY FEATURES OF THE EVALUATED OPERATIONS														
Operation							Activities <sup>a)</sup>						Modalities	
Country	Category	No.	Duration	Value (USD million)	% funded	Target beneficiaries <sup>b)</sup>	General distribu- tion	Nutrition <sup>c)</sup>	School feeding	FFA/ FFT	Capacity strengthening	Local purchase	Food	Cash & vouchers
Cameroon	PRRO	200552	2013–2016	28 333 919	37	143 173	√	√		√			√	
Chad	PRRO	200713	2015–2016	262 099 891	56	2 257 050	√	√		√	√ <sup>a)</sup>	√	√	√
Cuba	CP	200703	2015–2018	17 532 831	76	896 500		√	√		√	√ <sup>a)</sup>	√	
Djibouti	PRRO	200824	2015–2016	42 827 434	38.1	80 600	√	√	√	√	√		√	√
Haiti	PRRO	200618	2014–2017	118 561 950	50.1	2 030 000	√	√ <sup>c)</sup>		√	√ <sup>a)</sup>		√	√
Kyrgyzstan	DEV	200662	2014–2016	19 764 901	100.4	274 000				√	√		√	√ <sup>a)</sup>
Kyrgyzstan	DEV	200176	2013–2017	15 869 932	78.5	114 000			√		√		√	
Madagascar	PRRO	200735	2015–2017	30 102 427	40.2	449 000	√	√		√	√	√	√	√
Malawi	PRRO	200692	2014–2017	250 018 962	58.1	2 888 390	√	√ <sup>c)</sup>		√		√	√	√
Myanmar	PRRO	200299	2013–2017	343 056 450	56.1	2 916 320	√	√ <sup>c)</sup>	√	√	√	√	√	√
Nepal	CP	200319	2013–2017	216 275 282	27	492 909		√	√	√ <sup>a)</sup>	√	√	√	√
Rwanda	CP	200539	2013–2018	51 852 984	85	197 450		√	√	√	√	√ <sup>a)</sup>	√	√
Regional (Cameroon, Chad, Niger)	EMOP	200777	2015–2016	196 580 200	50	668 574	√	√	√	√ <sup>a)</sup>	√		√	√
Sudan	PRRO	200808	2015–2017	732 711 363	70	6 107 200	√	√	√	√	√ <sup>a)</sup>	√ <sup>a)</sup>	√	√
Swaziland	DEV	200353	2012–2017	10 748 648	40.7	203 163		√			√		√	
<b>Planned</b>				<b>2 336 337 174</b>		<b>19 718 329</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>

a) Denotes activities that were planned but not implemented or, implemented to a very limited degree in terms of number of beneficiaries or duration.

b) Planned beneficiaries over project life cycle.

c) Denotes HIV/AIDS activities, analysed/reported undernutrition.

## Acronyms used in the document

CP	country programme
DEV	development project
EMOP	emergency operation
FFA	food assistance for assets
FFT	food assistance for training
IDP	internally displaced person
NeKSAP	Nepal Khadya Surakshya Anugaman Pranali
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TB	tuberculosis