



WFP EVALUATION

Strategic evaluation of WFP's Approaches to Targeting and Prioritization for Food and Nutrition Assistance

Centralized evaluation report

OEV/2024/022
January 2026



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Key personnel for the evaluation

OFFICE OF EVALUATION

Anne-Claire Luzot, Director of Evaluation

Julia Betts, Deputy Director of Evaluation

Julie Thoulouzan, Senior Evaluation Officer (Evaluation Manager)

Lia Carboni, Research Analyst

EXTERNAL EVALUATION TEAM

Dr. Julia Steets, Team Leader

Dr. Alexander Gaus, Senior Evaluator and Co-Team Leader

Dr. Elias Sagmeister, Senior Evaluator

Patrice Chataigner, Senior Expert

Karla Kröner, Junior Evaluator

Research partners in case study countries

Nigeria: Talatu Onkala Adiwu, PhD

South Sudan: Diana Androga, Isaiah Bagaboine, James Mapour, Kemish Kenneth Alier, Kur Kur Dut, Samuel Lolos Iriama, Sule Ismail, Xavier Ndyanabo (Juba Strategic Consulting)

Sri Lanka: Chanduni Bandara, Gayani Hurulle, Isuru Samaratunga, Iyanthi Kulatilaka, Nadarajah Pasdevan, Vishmila Fernando, Yaseer Arashath (LIRNEasia)

Jordan: Rama Alyadi, Hamza Buqaileh, Lee Rasheed (Salma Consulting)

DRC: Alexis Ombeni, Confiance Kazozo, Bienvenue Mbula, Alexandre Mwisha, Didier Upoki, Joseph Amini, Monsengwo Bengheya, Laurence Mwinja, Lea Amori, Fidèle Kansime, Cecile Malosi (Développement Sans Frontière)

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Executive summary

Introduction

Evaluation features

1. This strategic evaluation assessed the relevance, appropriateness and effectiveness of WFP's approaches to targeting and prioritization for food and nutrition assistance. It examined whether WFP has suitable frameworks, systems and practices for identifying and reaching those most in need in a context of rising humanitarian needs and tightening resources. The evaluation also aimed to generate learning to inform future policy, guidance and operational decision-making. It addressed four questions:
 - a) How relevant and appropriate are WFP's approaches to targeting and prioritization?
 - b) What are the effects of those approaches on the people WFP serves?
 - c) How effectively does WFP engage and collaborate with others on targeting and prioritization?
 - d) What factors affect WFP's performance on targeting and prioritization?
2. The evaluation covered the period from January 2019 to May 2025 and was global in scope, encompassing all regions and WFP organizational levels.
3. A theory-based, mixed-methods approach combined document and data review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and an online staff survey. Evidence was drawn from global headquarters, including regional offices, and seven country offices. Case studies were conducted in the country offices for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Jordan, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and South Sudan, and two further case studies were conducted remotely for the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Data was triangulated across levels and sources. In total, the team conducted 301 key informant interviews and focus group discussions with 423 participants and consulted 91 employees from 52 country offices via an online survey.

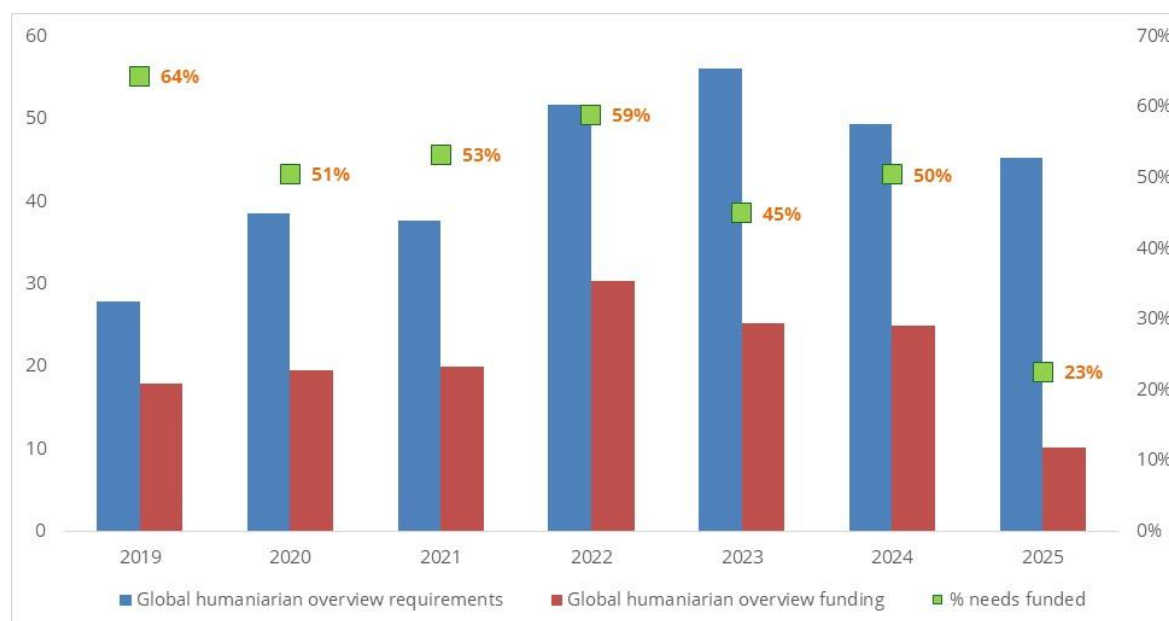
Context

4. Humanitarian needs have risen sharply due to conflict, climate shocks, economic instability and the effects of the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic. The number of people facing acute food insecurity in countries supported by WFP more than doubled between 2019 and 2025, from 135 million to over 319 million.¹ Global humanitarian requirements as summarized in United Nations global humanitarian overviews grew from USD 28 billion in 2019 to almost USD 45 billion in 2025. Although donor funding grew until 2022, it has not kept pace with the rising needs.² Following recent reductions by key donors, the overall funding level for humanitarian operations halved in 2025 (figure 1).

¹ WFP Global Operational Response Plan reports from 2020 to June 2025. Figures are based on countries where WFP operates and where data are currently available. For 2025, the analysis covers 67 countries.

² Global humanitarian overview reports from 2019 to 2025, available on the [website of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#).

Figure 1: Global humanitarian requirements and resources (2019–2025)



Source: Office of Evaluation, based on October 2025 data from the financial tracking service of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

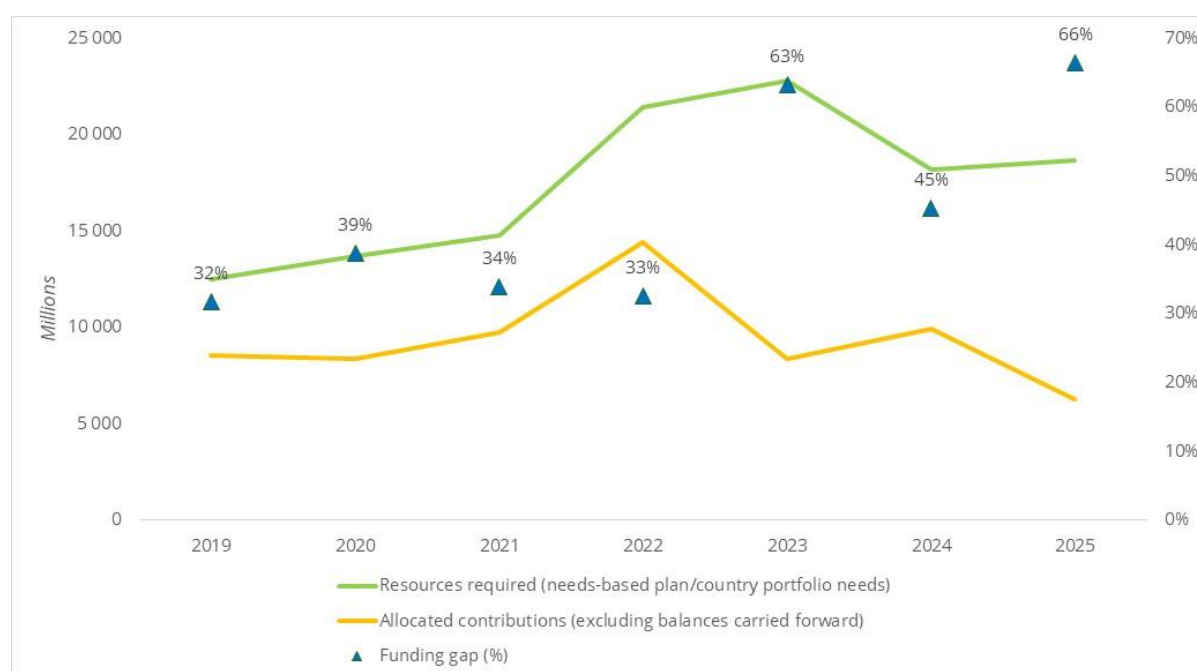
5. In 2024 WFP began an organizational realignment aimed at providing more efficient and effective services to country offices. Under subsequent efficiency measures required by the constrained funding environment, it has scaled back its workforce and undertaken budget cuts. In 2024, WFP reviewed its approach to the design of country strategic plans, requesting country offices to establish realistic country portfolio needs and budgets that are resource-informed.³ Although these plans no longer represent the full scale of needs, the funding gap still stood at 66 percent as of October 2025 (figure 2). This has led many country offices to drastically reduce their programmatic coverage and, in the case of direct food assistance, to reduce rations, including in some contexts for households classified as being in “emergency” or “humanitarian catastrophe” situations (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) phases 4 and 5). In some countries, WFP has also adopted “hyper-prioritization”, providing assistance only to those identified as the most vulnerable among all those experiencing food insecurity. Such measures illustrate how WFP’s ability to act in accordance with humanitarian principles, including humanity – the imperative to address human suffering wherever it is found, is increasingly challenged.

6. These dynamics, as well as some documented cases of aid diversion, such as in Ethiopia, have intensified scrutiny of WFP’s targeting and prioritization practices. In response, reforms such as WFP’s global assurance project⁴ initiated in 2023 have focused on several priority areas including targeting, with the objective of providing greater assurance that WFP safely and effectively reaches the right people with its assistance.

³ WFP. 2024. *Calibrating our ambition: guidelines to formulate focused Country Strategic Plans and develop realistic Country Portfolio Needs and Budgets* (internal document).

⁴ The project was subsequently mainstreamed as the global assurance framework. WFP. 2024. *Executive Director’s circular: WFP Global Assurance Framework (OED2024/004)*.

Figure 2: WFP resource requirements and allocated contributions, 2018–2025



Source: Factory platform (data retrieved in May 2025 based on forecast and confirmed contributions between January and October 2025).

Subject

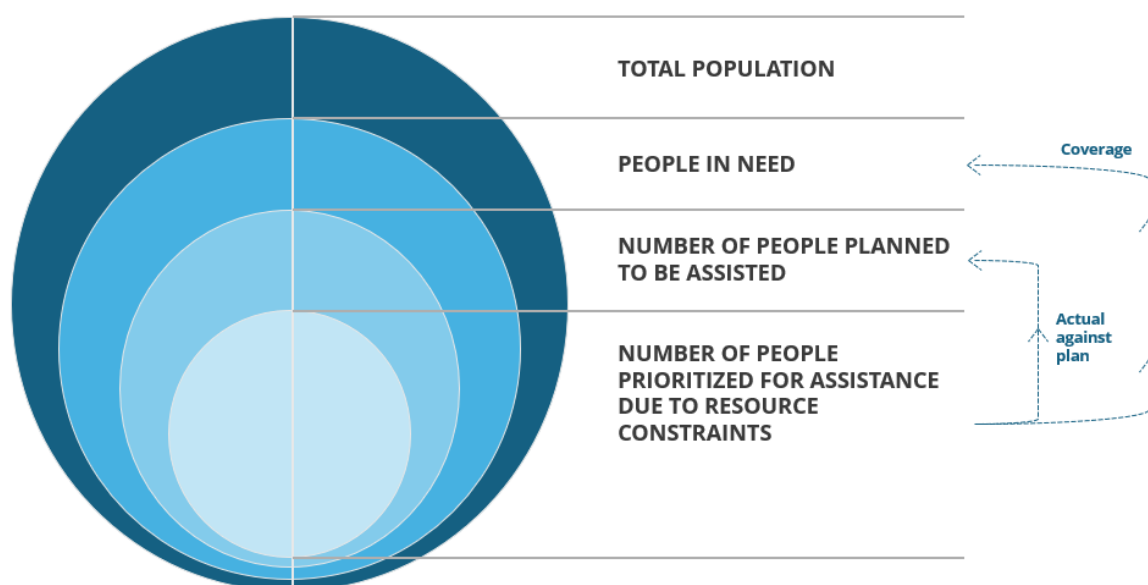
7. The evaluation distinguished between targeting and prioritization following definitions from WFP's normative framework (see box1).

Box 1: Definitions of targeting and prioritization⁵

- 1 **Targeting** refers to the process of selecting communities, households and/or individuals for assistance, based on programme objectives and needs assessments and with the participation of communities.
- 2 **Prioritization** refers to deciding which people within a targeted population receive assistance when overall identified needs cannot be met or when entitlements are reduced due to resource constraints.

⁵ *Executive Director's circular: Management of Targeting Processes by WFP Offices (OED2022/026).*

Figure 3: The targeting–prioritization pathway: from people in need to people assisted



Source: WFP. 2021. [Targeting and prioritization: Operational Guidance Note](#). Adapted by the evaluation team.

8. The evaluation analysed how targeting and prioritization approaches were defined, guided and implemented across WFP during the period under review, drawing on the organization’s normative framework, institutional arrangements and field practices. It assessed both the strategic underpinnings and the operational application of targeting and prioritization, focusing on their contribution to WFP’s efforts to reach the most vulnerable people.

9. Targeting and prioritization were examined within WFP’s broader programme cycle, focusing on activities that delivered direct food, cash and nutrition assistance, including unconditional resource transfers (URT), malnutrition prevention and treatment, asset creation and livelihoods, anticipatory action and school-based programmes. The evaluation did not assess the prioritization of resources allocated at the corporate level across countries.

Evaluation conclusions and supporting findings

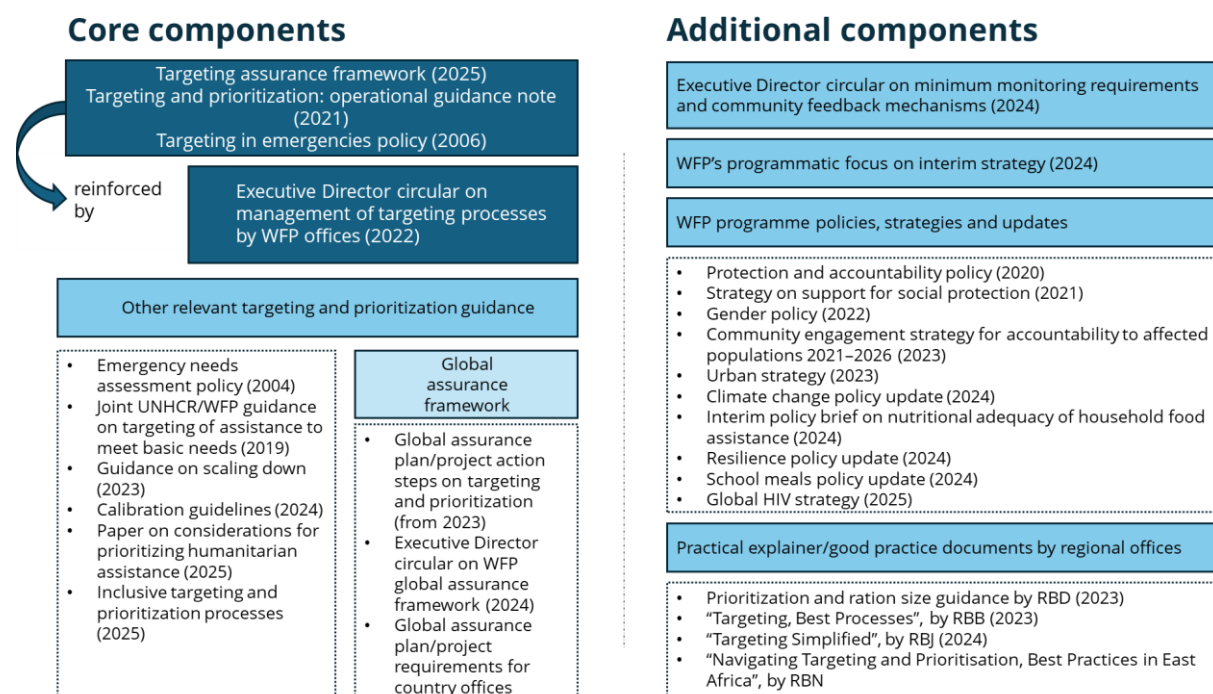
Conclusion 1: WFP’s normative framework and support structures for targeting and prioritization have evolved considerably over the past years and largely serve their purpose well, although country offices are asking for clearer strategic guidance in an era of unprecedented budget cuts.

10. Since the internal audit of beneficiary targeting in WFP conducted in 2020,⁶ the organization has substantially improved its guidance and support structures related to targeting and prioritization. The audit found WFP’s approaches to targeting and prioritization only partially satisfactory and called for major improvements. WFP has taken a range of pragmatic steps to address the shortcomings found. The global assurance framework, established in 2023 in response to donor demands for greater assurance and accountability, accelerated progress. The targeting assurance framework adopted in 2025 defines measures for strengthening targeting and prioritization practices; country office teams are expected to follow these practices in all operations and are held accountable for doing so. In addition, WFP’s enterprise risk management policy guides practice by requiring that risk be **actively assessed and incorporated** into decisions about who receives assistance and when and how they receive it. As a result, WFP now has a suite of guidance materials and formal requirements related to targeting and prioritization (as shown in figure 4) and continues to fill priority gaps.

⁶ WFP. 2020. *Internal Audit of Beneficiary Targeting in WFP*. Internal audit report AR/20/07.

11. Overall, WFP's normative framework strikes an appropriate balance between guiding and prescribing. It provides clear definitions, formal guidelines on gender and inclusion and a variety of examples based on lessons learned, while leaving country offices flexibility to adapt to local circumstances.

Figure 4: Overview of the normative framework for targeting and prioritization



Source: Evaluation team.

Abbreviations: RBB = Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific; RBD = Regional Bureau for Western Africa; RBJ = Regional Bureau for Southern Africa; RBN = Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa; UNHCR = Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

12. However, the normative framework is disjointed and has gaps. Above all, there has so far been only a limited focus on prioritization. WFP has recently started to address this with a paper on prioritizing humanitarian assistance.⁷ Country offices appreciate this paper but note that it deals primarily with URT for crisis response. Country offices seek clearer guidance on targeting for resilience and livelihoods interventions and in development-focused settings, as well as greater clarity regarding WFP's overall strategic direction in rapidly changing circumstances. Finally, the many separate guidance documents that constitute the normative framework for targeting and prioritization are not readily available from one source and are therefore difficult to use.

13. Support structures within global headquarters, including regional offices, have proven instrumental in strengthening targeting practices at the field level. These structures include regional targeting advisers as well as a headquarters-based cross-functional working group on targeting and prioritization established in 2024. They have supported knowledge transfer and learning and helped country offices to improve their targeting strategies and to verify compliance with the assurance steps required by the global assurance framework. Increasingly working in close cooperation with other relevant functional areas, the Needs Assessment and Targeting Service, the Emergency Preparedness and Response Service and regional targeting advisers have been effective in serving as an institutional "home" for this crucial topic. Yet, as a result of the substantial funding cuts, several targeting advisor positions at global headquarters will have to be abolished in 2026. In addition, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)/WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub will be phased out. This will reduce critical targeting and prioritization technical capacity within WFP.

⁷ WFP. 2025. *Considerations for prioritising humanitarian assistance*.

Conclusion 2: WFP has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of various targeting and prioritization approaches and increasingly takes into account vulnerabilities in the way it targets and prioritizes. Selected approaches were found to be largely appropriate for their specific contexts but evidence related to the costs of various approaches is inconclusive. In addition, WFP's targeting and prioritization practices were found to be insufficiently agile and cooperative.

Appropriateness

14. WFP's scope for making decisions on targeting and prioritization is constrained by donor earmarking of contributions, host government positions and other circumstances. The evaluation found that the choices made within those constraints were largely appropriate. More specifically, WFP uses a variety of targeting and prioritization approaches that often combine different methods, as shown below. When census data are available and household surveys are possible, WFP often opts for highly data-driven approaches to determine household vulnerability. When few data are available, the means to conduct large-scale household surveys are limited or humanitarian access is constrained, WFP frequently adopts a community-based targeting approach. For livelihood programmes, community consultations are central both for selecting participants and for choosing projects or assets for rehabilitation. WFP has demonstrated a high degree of flexibility in selecting targeting approaches that suit the demands of specific situations. That said, the rationale for opting for a given targeting or prioritization approach is rarely documented.

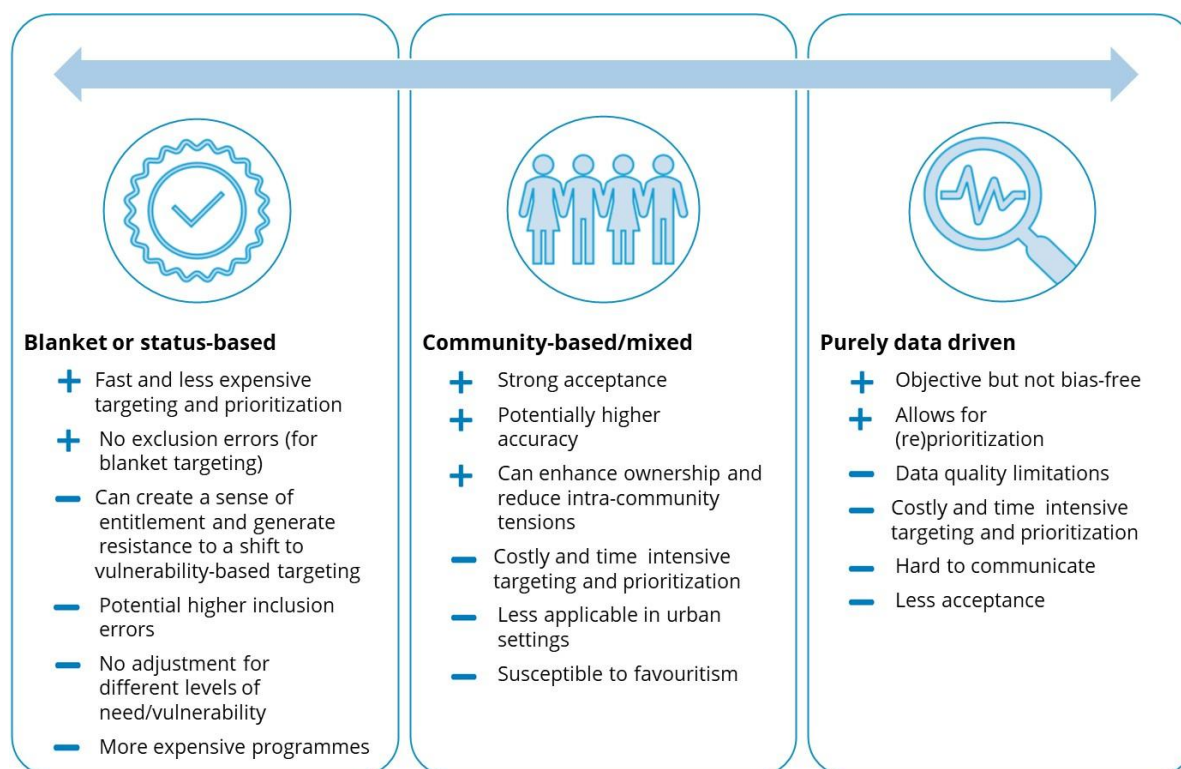
| TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF TARGETING AND PRIORITIZATION APPROACHES USED | |
|--|--|
| Programme type | Targeting and prioritization approaches (summary) |
| Unconditional resource transfers (URT) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-based targeting most common; then categorical household-level targeting, status-based or a mix of methods • Blanket targeting at times • Prioritization mainly through geographic focus or reducing size of population assisted; also adjustments to duration, ration size or transfer value |
| Nutrition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention: geographic targeting and prioritization based on malnutrition prevalence; individual targeting linked to URT targeting and based on demographic criteria (e.g. young children, pregnant and breastfeeding women) • Treatment: referrals through health centres or community mobilizers using demographic and anthropometric indicators (e.g. mid-upper-arm circumference) |
| School meal programmes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographic targeting and prioritization often determined by or with the participation of governments in stable contexts, and informed by education and food security indicators. • Selection of schools based on a number of factors including community capacity to prepare meals |
| Resilience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less standardized; driven by project-specific objectives • Geographic targeting focused on chronically food-insecure and/or shock-prone areas • Household targeting considering vulnerability and labour capacity, sometimes self-targeting |

Source: Evaluation team.

15. Each targeting and prioritization approach has its own distinct strengths and weaknesses (figure 5). Blanket and status-based approaches, for example, can be relatively fast to implement and involve limited or no exclusion errors, while data-driven approaches allow for re-prioritization according to vulnerability when needed, and community-based approaches are typically better accepted.

16. WFP employees at all levels demonstrated a clear understanding of these strengths and weaknesses, even though systematic evidence about the performance and costs of the various approaches is lacking. Most personnel consulted for this evaluation deemed their country offices' approaches to targeting and prioritization as either completely or mostly fitting the context in which they were operating.

Figure 5: Overview of strengths and weaknesses of various targeting and prioritization approaches



Source: Evaluation team.

17. In recent years, WFP has shifted to more refined vulnerability-based targeting for a growing number of programmes. For example, instead of providing blanket assistance in certain areas or status-based assistance for certain population groups, country offices are applying more focused criteria to identify those in greatest need. This shift is not yet complete, however; some country offices select only small proportions of targeted households through vulnerability analysis, and these more refined approaches have not yet been scaled up.

18. Most vulnerability-based targeting is community-based, although data-driven and hybrid approaches are becoming more common. The evaluation found that community-based approaches vary greatly and often lack clear documentation or rationale for their specific configurations. Hybrid models, combining community input with data analysis, are increasingly applied to mitigate the limitations of single-method approaches. Recent examples include vulnerability scorecards in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, integration of social registry data with community validation in Haiti and a data-driven proxy means test developed jointly with UNHCR and the World Bank in Jordan.

19. Across a range of operating environments, country offices reported combining different sources of information to define approaches to prioritization, including data-driven methods relying on WFP food security assessments, IPC or multi-sector assessments and community consultations. Less common sources reported included conflict sensitivity assessments, poverty and nutrition assessments, integrated context analyses, government data sources, including municipalities, disaster risk information, rapid needs assessments, SMART⁸ surveys and Geographic Information System data and satellite imagery.

20. WFP has also made progress in integrating gender, disability and inclusion into its targeting work. Most country offices use criteria such as households headed by women or older people and households with members with disabilities in order to estimate vulnerability. However, the evaluation found that these categories are at times applied too generically and without enough triangulation of contextualized food security, nutrition and/or poverty indicators. Community-based targeting mechanisms are also not always sufficiently gender-responsive, and women and other excluded demographic groups at times lack real influence in targeting decisions.

Agility

21. While WFP has the required flexibility to choose targeting and prioritization approaches that fit different situations, its planning is often insufficiently agile. In many cases WFP lacks the ability to adapt and adjust its responses to changing circumstances. Once the overall number of people to be assisted is defined, often during the initial geographic targeting, incentives are stacked against revising it. Budgets are set, in-kind assistance is procured or cash transfers arranged and agreements with cooperating partners are signed, and little or no contingency is made available to respond to valid appeals brought forward through community feedback mechanisms or monitoring findings. The WFP strategic plan for 2026–2029 also acknowledges this by stating that “WFP must strive for greater agility,”⁹ a conclusion that applies to targeting and prioritization as well as to other aspects of WFP operations.

Cooperation

22. WFP has formally institutionalized the early involvement of both management and programme personnel in targeting decisions through its targeting assurance framework and the establishment of targeting working groups. Practices vary, however. A cross-functional approach, where responsibilities are shared between vulnerability assessment and mapping and programme teams and informed by monitoring and evaluation, has proven effective in countries such as Jordan. The evaluation found evidence from the countries studied that engaging WFP cooperating partners from the outset had facilitated the alignment of technical approaches with political realities and fostered stronger ownership at the field level, for example in Nigeria.

23. Since WFP is the world’s largest humanitarian organization, its targeting and prioritization practices have important implications for other humanitarian actors. Other agencies commonly refer individuals and households in need of food assistance to WFP – an example of good practice. In recent years, WFP has strengthened its cooperation with UNHCR in refugee settings and with the United Nations Children’s Fund on nutrition-related targeting and prioritization. Meaningful engagement among stakeholders on targeting and prioritization through humanitarian coordination structures such as the food security cluster or cash working groups, however, remains an important gap. The potential benefits of partners jointly designing targeting criteria, validating beneficiary lists when data sharing agreements are in place and adapting targeting frameworks in response to changing needs are not being fully realized.

24. WFP has been supporting governments in strengthening national social protection systems, including with regard to social registries. This is a key objective in its own right, in particular in order to fully transfer to governments the responsibility to assist their own populations. The expected additional benefits of using national social registries for WFP’s own targeting and prioritization, however, have so far rarely materialized. Depending on circumstances, WFP therefore needs to complement social registry data with systematic eligibility verification, community-based processes and effective appeal mechanisms.

⁸ SMART stands for standardized monitoring and assessment of relief and transitions.

⁹ “WFP strategic plan (2026–2029)” (WFP/EB.2/2025/3-B/1/Rev.1).

Conclusion 3: WFP's targeting and prioritization approaches enable the organization to reach food-insecure people, but assistance has been spread too thinly and programme integration is insufficient.

Effectiveness

25. WFP does not systematically collect data on inclusion and exclusion errors. This is not a new issue and has been identified in previous audit reports and reviews. It continues to impede the assessment of WFP's targeting effectiveness.

26. WFP commonly selects geographic areas classified as IPC phase 3 or above (i.e. areas in crisis, emergency or catastrophe food insecurity) for assistance. When forced to prioritize further, WFP focuses on areas classified as IPC phase 4 or 5 only to avert famine or famine-like situations. WFP employees reported a high level of trust in IPC results. Yet the use of IPC classifications for geographic targeting and prioritization can result in significant exclusion errors, largely because IPC data classifies geographic units in a way that obscures differences between varying levels of vulnerability within geographic areas, as well as because of broader data limitations. In practice, WFP country offices usually complement IPC data with other context-specific information in order to refine geographic targeting and prioritization.

27. Of the seven countries reviewed for this evaluation, only in Jordan did WFP compare the effects of its assistance on targeted groups by using a food security outcome monitoring system assessing levels of food insecurity among sample beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. In Haiti, WFP used subjective questions in a post-distribution monitoring questionnaire to understand people's perceptions of inclusion and exclusion errors. In other countries, monitoring tools included general questions on targeting (e.g. knowledge of selection criteria or of the organization in charge of the selection in Nigeria) but the samples and questions were not designed to estimate inclusion or exclusion errors.

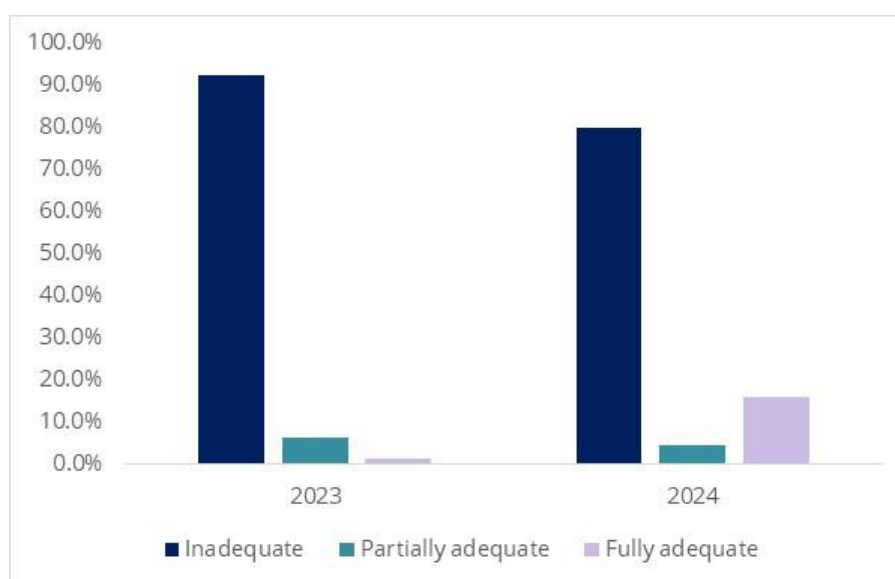
28. The evaluation found that targeting approaches employed in the countries examined were largely appropriate in terms of identifying and reaching the most vulnerable. Where stakeholders did voice criticism, it stemmed more from a lack of knowledge about WFP practices than from opposition to the specific approaches taken. This highlights the importance of communicating both the targeting and the prioritization approaches adopted and the rationales for them.

Breadth versus depth

29. When forced to prioritize, WFP, taking other stakeholders' priorities and operational constraints into account, has generally opted to reduce rations and/or the duration of assistance instead of or in addition to reducing the number of people assisted. This, along with corresponding programme design decisions, has led to assistance often being spread too thinly.

30. WFP's corporate data show that over 90 percent of WFP's URT in-kind assistance in 2023 did not meet nutritional needs, raising questions about whether WFP assistance could realistically hope to improve food security outcomes. Although the situation improved slightly in 2024, 80 percent of URT rations were found to be nutritionally inadequate (figure 6). This trend was visible in the countries studied for this evaluation and has been highlighted in audits and evaluations for other country offices. Moreover, even when WFP maintains the level of assistance to fewer beneficiaries (i.e. prioritizes depth over breadth), the actual value of transfers received by beneficiaries may be diluted when beneficiaries share their assistance with family members and others.

Figure 6: Nutritional adequacy of WFP in-kind food rations (actual URT rations), 2023–2024



Source: WFP Nutrition and Food Quality Service.

31. Balancing breadth and depth of assistance presents an important ethical dilemma. The principle of humanity calls for serving all those in need. Yet when resources are limited, it is necessary to choose between reaching as many beneficiaries as possible with assistance too limited to make a real difference to their food security and reaching only a subset of the most vulnerable people with a greater level of assistance that can have a meaningful impact.

32. This evaluation found emerging efforts to resolve this tension, largely focused on ensuring a reasonable depth of assistance. WFP guidance documents emphasize the need to avoid transfers falling below 70 percent of daily nutritional requirements, taking into account the extent to which supported households can meet their own needs.¹⁰ WFP's strategic plan for 2026–2029 reinforces this approach, stating that WFP will “aim to reach fewer people with higher-quality and better tailored assistance.”¹¹ New practices for measuring and reporting on the nutritional adequacy or intensity of assistance through WFP annual performance reports also support this approach by helping to counter a longstanding focus on the number of people assisted as the key corporate success indicator.

Programme integration

33. WFP's goal of programme integration is clearly stated in corporate documents. In practice, evidence shows that WFP has fallen short of its ambition to better layer, sequence and integrate life-saving assistance and resilience assistance. This has direct consequences for WFP's targeting and prioritization practices. Until recently, WFP's “saving lives” and “changing lives” pillars followed discrete strategic directions, which often led to diverse programme and targeting logics. URT is designed for rapid, flexible responses intended to reach the most vulnerable in dynamic crisis situations and highly food-insecure locations, relying on updated vulnerability assessments to adapt interventions to changing needs. In contrast, resilience programmes are typically implemented in areas affected by recurrent shocks but with greater potential to recover and maintain food security, sometimes in line with donor or government preferences. Within such areas, households are selected through community-based planning or self-targeting and are expected to be supported for a longer period in order to facilitate graduation from assistance. Resilience activities are often physically demanding and may exclude households that are among the most vulnerable.

34. This practice may change in accordance with the recent update of WFP's resilience policy, which calls for the targeting of areas at high risk of experiencing shocks with integrated programming. WFP's strategic

¹⁰ WFP. 2025. *Considerations for prioritising humanitarian assistance*; WFP. 2025. *Prioritization Guidance for Emergency Response* (unpublished internal document).

¹¹ “WFP strategic plan (2026–2029)” (WFP/EB.2/2025/3-B/1/Rev.1).

plan for 2026–2029 reinforces this by stating that “resilience work will focus on geographic areas and communities that experience protracted or recurrent acute food insecurity, prioritizing people whose food security and nutrition are most impacted by shocks”.¹²

Conclusion 4: There is a disconnect between WFP’s clear standards on targeting and prioritization and its practice, which leaves the organization exposed to several risks and requires stronger compliance with minimum standards as well as improvements in data systems.

35. The evaluation found that the way in which targeting approaches are implemented often matters more than which approach is selected. One of WFP’s core challenges lies at the “last mile” in ensuring consistent, high-quality execution of targeting and prioritization processes closest to the people served. Where execution was not in line with standards, the evaluation found inclusion and exclusion errors and erosion of community trust. In some instances, this was compounded by an overreliance on cooperating partners who had uneven capacity for targeting and prioritization and/or by the use of outdated or incomplete vulnerability data. Especially in politically sensitive situations, such shortcomings can expose WFP to significant operational, reputational and accountability risks.

36. While WFP’s global assurance and targeting assurance frameworks cover many of the critical issues identified, the targeting assurance framework in particular is still very recent. WFP practices observed by this evaluation often fall short of the standards outlined in these frameworks. Monitoring, above all, has not been a reliable source of information on targeting effectiveness, and the way operations are monitored frequently do not fully meet WFP’s own minimum standards.

37. Another issue noted by the evaluation is the risk of inadequate or inconsistent partner capacity, which is identified in WFP’s enterprise risk management policy and country risk registers. WFP has made progress in guiding cooperating partners to adhere to its corporate standards. Yet the evaluation found instances in which partners operated with limited support and oversight, increasing risks for WFP and creating potential for inaccurate targeting. In particular, while practices vary widely, there is frequently insufficient engagement with cooperating partners on the implementation of community-based targeting. This created situations where community consultations lacked safeguards against elite capture, social bias and targeting errors.

38. Community members consulted for this evaluation highlighted both the potential positive effects of assistance on social cohesion and some frictions that could be caused by targeting and prioritization. They generally understood and appreciated WFP’s intention to reach those most vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition. However, they often did not understand the details of the targeting and prioritization processes or rationales, which left them concerned about whether implementation was fair and equitable. The level of transparency and information sharing with affected people emerged as a key factor influencing the acceptability of WFP’s targeting and prioritization practices. While WFP has generally made progress in communicating with affected people, it still restricts information on targeting and prioritization in several contexts, with adverse effects on social cohesion.

39. Finally, verification systems could be strengthened. Most standard operating procedures require checks to ensure that people assisted meet eligibility criteria, but there is little evidence of whether these are systematically implemented at the level required to address inclusion errors. The use of de-duplication processes remains limited because digital registration systems are not consistently used and the interoperability of WFP’s relevant information technology systems is weak. In addition, community feedback mechanisms rarely translate into effective appeals mechanisms in the absence of a way to adjust caseloads more readily. As a result, WFP in many instances still lacks the feedback and control mechanisms needed to refine and improve its targeting and prioritization in real time and to effectively mitigate the related risks to its programmes and reputation.

Conclusion 5: Humanitarian funding cuts are forcing WFP to make tough choices about where and how it provides assistance and to whom and for how long. These pressures expose unresolved dilemmas in targeting and prioritization, making it urgent for WFP to clearly define its principles and strategic direction.

¹² *Ibid.*

40. Most major donors are currently reducing their contributions to the humanitarian system, reversing more than a decade of growth. This creates significant dilemmas for WFP and the broader sector, especially in relation to targeting and prioritization. WFP is being forced to prioritize more sharply, facing ethical dilemmas about whom to assist and whom to leave out. At the same time, shifting from status-based targeting to vulnerability-based targeting to enable fair and just prioritization increases targeting costs. With shrinking budgets and rising targeting costs, the value and feasibility of rigorous targeting is likely to be questioned. Meanwhile, potential broader shifts in the humanitarian architecture are being discussed, ranging from the merger of United Nations bodies and a reduction in the number of humanitarian clusters to the localization of humanitarian assistance and the entry of new actors, often from the private sector. These developments require WFP to more clearly define its position on targeting and prioritization.

41. Which targeting and prioritization approaches are most appropriate depends on WFP's intended aims. WFP thus needs more clarity regarding its strategy. If WFP primarily wants to be a humanitarian provider of last resort that reaches the most vulnerable in the most difficult locations, then it must be able to bear the costs of identifying those most in need with accuracy, alongside the often higher costs of operating in such locations. If, on the other hand, WFP primarily wants to save and improve the lives of the greatest number of people affected by food insecurity, it needs to focus more on cost effectiveness and on providing integrated live-saving and resilience or livelihood activities in highly food-insecure areas.

42. The evidence reviewed for this evaluation shows that WFP has begun to articulate its stance on some critical issues. Yet many fundamental questions remain unaddressed and trade-offs stand unacknowledged. The recent commitment signalled in the strategic plan for 2026–2029 provides some clarity on WFP's positioning: to focus on those most in need and affected by crises; to ensure meaningful levels of assistance, in an integrated way; and to focus livelihood activities on areas most affected by shocks and food insecurity.¹³ Yet WFP has been less clear about which activities it will scale back or cease altogether. Should it focus more strictly on areas facing acute food insecurity only, reducing its footprint in middle-income countries such as Sri Lanka or Ukraine? Should it phase out predictable lean season assistance, as recommended in the February 2025 prioritization guidance issued by WFP's Western and Central Africa Regional Office? While the strategic plan for 2026–2029 discusses WFP's position and comparative advantages, it takes a relatively cautious stance on areas where it will cease to engage.¹⁴

43. Donor direction is a key determinant in WFP choices, but this evaluation concluded that the strategic questions related to targeting and prioritization described above need to be discussed and addressed more openly by WFP's senior management. Doing so will help to optimize targeting and prioritization approaches and support WFP country offices in prioritization decisions – as this evaluation suggests in its first recommendation below.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsibility WFP offices and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|---|---------------------|--|---|----------|-------------------------|
| <p>Recommendation 1: Support country offices in prioritization decisions by more clearly articulating WFP's strategic focus and positioning in order to strengthen their targeting and prioritization rationales.</p> <p>Faced with unprecedented budget cuts, country offices need more support in navigating the trade-offs inherent in targeting and prioritization. As WFP implements its new strategic plan , it should provide clear strategic guidance on the matters central to programme design and targeting and prioritization discussed below. It should also advocate with donors for space to follow these directions.</p> | Strategic | Programme Division | Cross-functional working group on targeting and prioritization Supply Chain and Delivery Division (Planning and GCMF Unit) | High | June 2026 |
| <p>1.1 Reinforce WFP's commitment to providing high-quality assistance by defining and upholding minimum levels of emergency assistance, strengthening reporting about and accountability for the nutritional adequacy of emergency assistance (for example through a more systematic use of the Optimus analytical tool), and supporting the integration of emergency and resilience programmes in areas affected by recurrent shocks (including by advocating with donors).</p> | | Programme Division | Supply Chain and Delivery Division (Planning and GCMF Unit) | | June 2026 |
| <p>1.2 Building on the paper "Considerations for prioritizing humanitarian assistance", encourage country offices to give greater consideration to the cost-effectiveness of emergency interventions among the many issues to be considered when deciding whom to target and prioritize among groups of people facing the same severity of need.</p> | | Programme Division | Cross-functional working group on targeting and prioritization | | June 2026 |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsibility WFP offices and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|---|---------------------|---|--|----------|-------------------------|
| <p>Recommendation 2: Uphold targeting and prioritization standards by making guidance and tools more accessible, enforcing compliance with minimum standards, and safeguarding capacity.</p> <p>The evaluation team suggests that WFP employ the measures discussed below in its efforts to maintain its targeting and prioritization standards during this period of diminishing financial and human resources</p> | Strategic | Programme Division | | High | December 2026 |
| <p>2.1 Rather than develop a new policy, make existing guidance more accessible by better consolidating and streamlining key documents in one location that is easily accessible to all functions and complementing them with practical tools, training materials and examples of good practice (especially for targeting and prioritization for resilience). As part of these efforts, ensure that targeting and prioritization processes are clear and integrated (see recommendation 4).</p> | | Programme Division | Supply Chain and Delivery Division (Delivery Assurance Service) | | December 2026 |
| <p>2.2 Maintain adequate staffing and expertise at global headquarters (including regional offices) and in country offices to enable a cross-functional approach to targeting and prioritization as well as sufficient capacity for data collection and analysis and the design of adaptable targeting and prioritization approaches.</p> | | Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer Department Assistant Executive Director, Programme Operations Department | Programme Cycle, Quality, and Budgeting Service Programme Operations, Staffing Coordination and Capacity Service, Programme Division (Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service) | | December 2026 |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsibility WFP offices and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|---|---------------------|--|---|----------|-------------------------|
| 2.3 To uphold minimum standards, hold country offices accountable for consistently verifying lists of people to be assisted and ensuring inclusive targeting and community engagement practices. Strengthen oversight of cooperating partners in order to mitigate risks of bias, favouritism, sexual exploitation and abuse, and exclusion. Ensure that the resources required to meet minimum standards are adequately reflected and supported in country portfolio needs budgets. | | Programme Monitoring and Reporting Service | Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service Supply Chain and Delivery Division (Delivery Assurance Service) | | December 2026 |
| Recommendation 3: Support country offices in adopting more transparent, more agile and more cost-effective targeting and prioritization approaches. WFP can take the steps described below to help its country offices become more transparent, agile and cost-effective in their targeting and prioritization practices. This is important to address existing weaknesses in targeting and prioritization practices and to adapt to a more volatile and resource-scarce environment. | Operational | Programme Division | Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer Department | High | |
| 3.1 Require country offices to monitor targeting effectiveness (inclusion and exclusion errors disaggregated by sex, age and other characteristics relevant to the context) across programmes, ideally through outcome monitoring among WFP beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries and at a minimum through standardized questions included in post-distribution monitoring as well as the analysis of community feedback data. | | Programme Monitoring and Reporting Service | | | December 2026 |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsibility WFP offices and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|---|---------------------|--|---|----------|-------------------------|
| 3.2 Require country offices to transparently share WFP's targeting and prioritization rationales and criteria with affected people and to communicate the planned duration of assistance from the outset. Where WFP provides blanket or status-based assistance during the initial phase of a response, require country offices to define explicit criteria and, if possible, timelines for the phase-out of assistance or transition to more targeted assistance and to communicate the criteria and timeline transparently to affected people and partners. | | Assistant Executive Director Programme Operations Department (Gender, Inclusion and Protection Unit) | Emergency Preparedness and Response Service Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service | | December 2026 |
| 3.3 Improve the tracking of targeting costs and encourage country offices to increase the cost-effectiveness of targeting and prioritization processes by accepting higher error rates in the initial phases of a response (and in short-term responses) and increasing accuracy over time. | | Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service | Chief Financial Officer Division | | December 2026 |
| 3.4 Require country offices to turn existing community feedback mechanisms into more functional appeals processes by ensuring some flexibility to adjust lists of people to be assisted based on appeals. | | Programme Monitoring and Reporting Service | Gender, Inclusion and Protection Unit | | December 2026 |
| 3.5 Encourage country offices to use their engagement with food security and nutrition clusters and cash working groups to create more transparency about targeting and prioritization strategies and, where possible, align approaches to avoid fragmentation. | | Programme Division (global food security cluster) | Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service | | December 2026 |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsibility WFP offices and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|--|---------------------|--|--|----------|-------------------------|
| <p>Recommendation 4: Strengthen the interoperability of WFP's own data systems and common data systems or data sharing with other humanitarian agencies for targeting and prioritization.</p> <p>Effective targeting and prioritization hinges on the availability of accurate data. Collecting and updating such data requires a major investment of resources. In a very resource-constrained environment, WFP should therefore adopt more cooperative and more efficient approaches to data collection and management. Depending on context, this can entail one or several of the approaches described below.</p> | Strategic | Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service | | High | December 2027 |
| <p>4.1 Prioritize the necessary financial and human resources needed to accelerate the modernization and interoperability or integration of WFP's own digital data systems (e.g. SCOPE, SugarCRM, MoDa and CODA), together with reliable and secure data management practices, in order to enable a more comprehensive collection and storage of vulnerability data for prioritization and support effective de-duplication. This requires clear and integrated processes for targeting and prioritization (see recommendation 2).</p> | | Technology Division | Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service Programme Monitoring and Reporting Service Supply Chain and Delivery Division (Delivery Assurance Service, Logistics Service) | | December 2027 |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsibility WFP offices and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|--|---------------------|---|--|----------|-------------------------|
| 4.2 Strengthen WFP's role in making data a humanitarian public good by expanding and operationalizing global data-sharing agreements with key humanitarian partners and establish clear governance frameworks for data access, protection and use. | | Assistant Executive Director, Programme Operations Department (including Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service and Delivery Assurance Service) | Global Privacy Office Legal Office | | December 2027 |
| 4.3 Advance local data sharing practices by identifying pilot countries to assess and address common challenges to establishing local data sharing agreements, including legal, ethical and technical barriers. Based on these insights, define concrete steps for expediting local data sharing agreements. | | Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service | Country offices Global Privacy Office | | December 2027 |

1 Introduction

1. The Office of Evaluation (OEV) of the World Food Programme (WFP) contracted the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) to conduct a strategic evaluation of WFP's Approaches to Targeting and Prioritization for Food and Nutrition Assistance. This independent evaluation was carried out between September 2024 and October 2025, with data collection taking place between January and May 2025.

1.1 Evaluation features

2. **Rationale:** At the time of this evaluation, the humanitarian sector is experiencing the largest funding drop ever recorded, abruptly ending more than a decade of substantial annual growth. Against this backdrop, WFP and other humanitarian actors seek to provide assistance to people in need and, as needs outweigh resources, have to prioritize those who are most vulnerable to food insecurity. WFP country offices (COs) must routinely decide on the type of assistance, who receives it and for how long – factors now requiring, oftentimes, extreme levels of prioritization due to the current funding environment. This evaluation examines whether WFP has the relevant and appropriate targeting and prioritization (T&P) approaches set up to reach those most in need. It complements WFP's internal reviews and developments on strengthening its targeting and prioritization practices, such as the Global Assurance Framework, and provides an independent assessment to further advance WFP's practices in this core area of work.

3. **Objectives:** This strategic evaluation serves two objectives: accountability and learning (with a focus on the latter). It examines WFP's targeting and prioritization practices, including the relevance of its normative framework, institutional arrangements and implementation measures. It assesses both the intended and unintended effects of these practices and explores factors that influence their effectiveness. The evaluation also identifies promising examples and key lessons, with attention to cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, disability inclusion and other drivers of vulnerability, food insecurity and malnutrition. Insights are intended to inform improvements to policy and operational guidance and to support ongoing refinement of WFP's approaches.

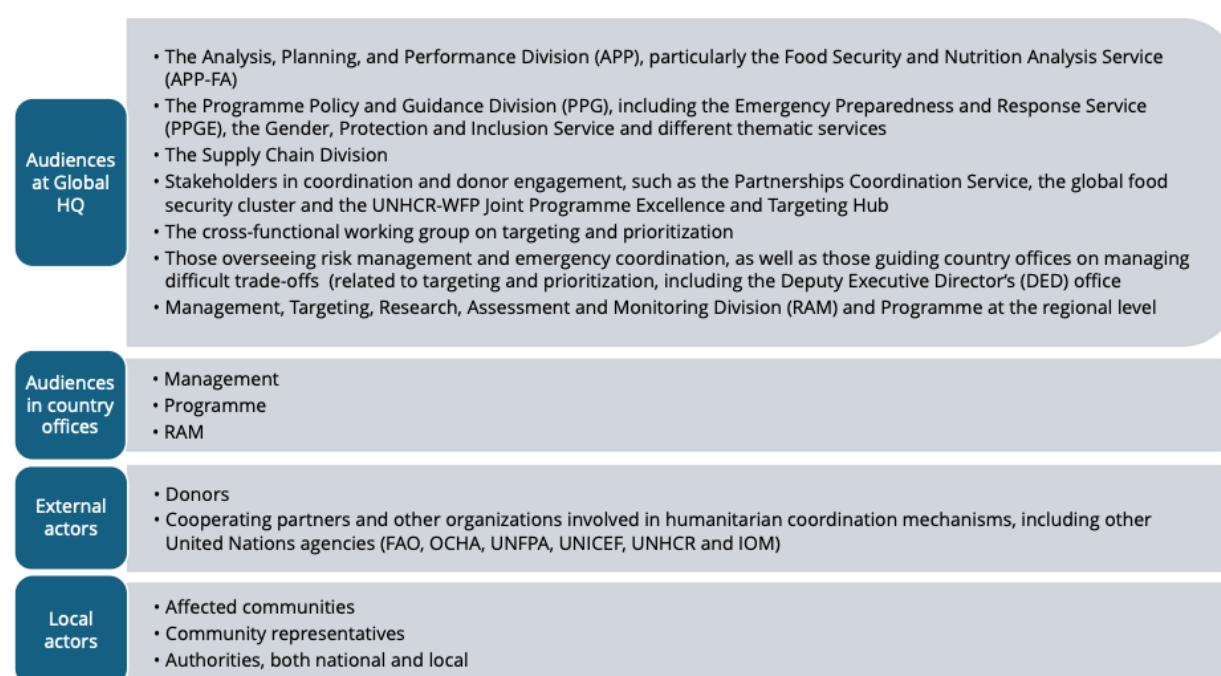
4. **Scope:** The evaluation is global in scope. It encompasses WFP's approach to targeting and prioritization as reflected in its normative framework, including associated support mechanisms provided by Global Headquarters (HQ), including regional offices, and its operationalization at the country level. In greater detail, this means:

- **Geographic scope:** The evaluation covers all regions where WFP operates and gathers evidence from all organizational levels: Global Headquarters, regional offices and country offices. It includes insights from five full case studies and two remote case studies, reflecting the diversity of WFP's operational contexts.
- **Temporal scope:** The evaluation covers the period from January 2019 to May 2025, with a particular focus on recent practices. It takes 2019 as its starting point, because this marks the establishment of the Needs Assessment and Targeting Unit in Global Headquarters. May 2025 was the endpoint of the data collection period of this evaluation.
- **Thematic scope:** The evaluation covers both targeting and prioritization based on their distinct definitions (see Section 1.2). The focus is on WFP's targeting and prioritization approaches in interventions providing direct food or cash assistance to people; due to their large presence within the WFP portfolio, the evaluation paid particular attention to unconditional resource transfers (URT). Targeting and prioritization for nutrition interventions, asset creation and livelihoods (ACL), anticipatory action and school-based programmes are also evaluated. Institutional capacity-strengthening activities are not covered. The evaluation scope also excludes how WFP prioritizes the allocation of flexible financial and corporate resources across different country offices.

- **Coverage of effects:** In addition to identifying different targeting and prioritization approaches, processes and any influencing factors, the evaluation provides insights into the effects and the impact of current targeting and prioritization practices on WFP's ability to identify and serve intended people, as well as the broader societal effects these practices have. However, analysing how different targeting and prioritization approaches impact programme outcomes is beyond the scope of the evaluation.

5. **Stakeholders and intended users:** Targeting and prioritization are a central element of WFP's work, making this evaluation relevant to multiple stakeholders across various functions at Global Headquarters and country levels. The evaluation identifies five main stakeholder groups (Figure 1):

Figure 1. Main stakeholder groups



Source: Evaluation team.

6. **Timing and duration of fieldwork:** Data collection for the evaluation took place between January and May 2025 and was carried out by a core team of five evaluators. Five full case studies were undertaken in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Jordan, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and South Sudan (during the inception phase). These missions – each lasting around 10 working days – focused on assessing targeting and prioritization practices, challenges, trade-offs and coordination efforts.

7. In all countries, local research partners led interviews or focus group discussions with affected populations. In Latin America, the evaluation team conducted remote case studies on the Dominican Republic and Haiti, based on document reviews and interviews with a limited number of key stakeholders. An exemplary fieldwork agenda is provided in Annex VIII.

1.2 Context

1.2.1 Increasing need to prioritize due to the growing gap between needs and resources

8. In recent years, humanitarian needs, as reported by humanitarian actors, have increased rapidly. Reported acute food insecurity in WFP-supported countries in both humanitarian and development settings has more than doubled between 2019 and 2025 (from 135 million to over 319 million people). Similarly, between 2020 and June 2024, the number of countries with a certain population in “Emergency” or worse levels of acute food insecurity has increased from 39 to 48.¹⁵ Countries affected by emergencies have experienced a rise in the severity and complexity of crises, driven by a convergence of factors such as conflict, climate-related shocks, economic instability and the socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

9. In response, humanitarian requirements to meet these needs have soared. While the global humanitarian requirements, as summarized in the 2019 Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO), were at nearly USD 28 billion, they have risen to almost USD 45 billion for 2025.¹⁶ Donor funding has not kept pace with growing needs and requirements, leading to record-high funding gaps – 50 percent in 2024¹⁷ – forcing aid actors to make difficult decisions about whom to assist and how to allocate limited resources.

10. This global trend is mirrored by developments at WFP. As shown in Figure 2, WFP’s financial requirements based on needs-based plans and country portfolio needs increased by 82 percent, rising from USD 12.5 to 22.7 billion between 2019 and 2023. Until 2022, the gap between financial requirements and allocated contributions remained relatively stable at 30-40 percent, before widening sharply in 2023 to a record high of 63 percent. In 2024, WFP issued the “calibration guidelines”, requesting country operations to shift to more resource-informed country portfolio needs.¹⁸ With this adjustment, which means that WFP’s country portfolio needs no longer represent the full scale of needs, the funding gap in 2024 still stood at 45 percent.¹⁹ The forecasts for 2025 paint an even more dramatic picture. As of October 2025, the funding gap was projected to reach USD 12.4 billion, equivalent to 66 percent of requirements as stated in WFP’s plans.²⁰ The shift from needs-based country strategic plans (CSPs) to more resource-informed country portfolio needs, as well as the growing funding gap against those plans illustrate how WFP’s ability to act in accordance with its humanitarian principles, including the imperative to address human suffering wherever it is found (the principle of humanity), is increasingly challenged. According to a study conducted by WFP in 2025 on the implications of the funding crisis, “programme coverage has been slashed and rations cut. Life-saving assistance to households in “Catastrophe” (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 5) is at risk, while preparedness for future shocks has dropped drastically”.²¹ While such “hyper-prioritization” is forced upon WFP in this heavily resource-constrained environment, increasingly elaborate targeting mechanisms also bring their own costs and require continued investments to be effective (Section 2.1.5.3).

¹⁵ WFP global operational response plan reports from 2020 to June 2025. For 2025, the analysis covers 67 countries

¹⁶ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) global humanitarian overview reports from 2019 to 2025.

¹⁷ United Nations Financial Tracking Service. Snapshot of Total Humanitarian Funding (referring to GHO overview figures, excluding outside GHO funding), data extracted in October 2025.

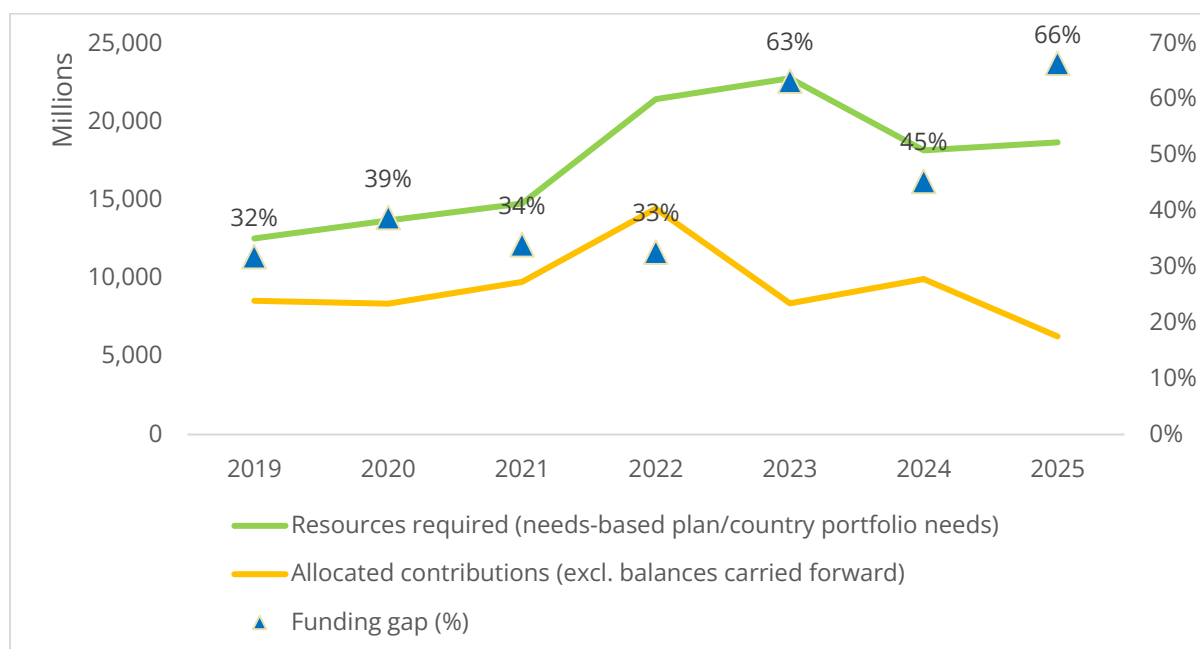
¹⁸ WFP (2024) Calibrating our ambition: guidelines to formulate focused Country Strategic Plans and develop realistic Country Portfolio Needs and Budgets.

¹⁹ In 2024, 17 CSPs were calibrated retroactively resulting in a reduction of the needs by USD 4.7 billion contributing to a reduction of the funding gap. See [Management Plan 2024-2026](#). When annual balances carried forward from the previous year are included, the funding gap decreases to 29 percent in 2023 and 13 percent in 2024.

²⁰ Factory Shop, retrieved in October 2025.

²¹ WFP (2025) A lifeline at risk: food assistance at a breaking point. Global brief.

Figure 2. Resources required and allocated contributions, 2018–2025



Source: Factory platform (data retrieved in May 2025; 2025 based on forecasts and confirmed contributions between January and October 2025).

11. The significant shortfalls stem from a shift in crucial donors' spending on foreign aid. Donors, both large and small, have been reducing or planning to reduce their humanitarian contributions. The German Government, for example, reduced its humanitarian budget by 20 percent in 2024 and is planning a further reduction of over 50 percent for 2025.²² This trend, then, was further exacerbated when the Government of the United States of America (USA) announced it was freezing foreign aid funding in February 2025. As the USA was the world's largest donor of humanitarian assistance, contributing approximately 40 percent of the global aid system's total funding²³ and nearly 46 percent of WFP's contributions in 2024,²⁴ this decision significantly deepened the gap between WFP's financial requirements and the available funding.

12. The funding cuts have not only affected how much assistance WFP can provide but have also provoked institutional changes that were being rolled out as this evaluation was underway, including substantial staff reductions, restructuring and the suspension of most international travel.²⁵ Further consolidation and cost-cutting measures are planned.

13. In addition, several other highly visible events and dynamics contributed to the high level of scrutiny aimed at targeting and prioritization within WFP:

- An internal audit of WFP's targeting practices (2020) highlighted structural and operational gaps and concluded that major improvements are needed.
- Separate audits of country offices in the past years highlighted a range of problematic issues related to targeting and prioritization.
- Severe allegations of aid diversions, including in the humanitarian responses in Ethiopia, Somalia

²² German Federal Ministry of Finance (2025). "[Bundeshaushalt digital](#)", 2025 based on the budget draft published in June 2025.

²³ UN Financial Tracking Service. Snapshot of Total Humanitarian Funding, data extracted 5 June 2025.

²⁴ Factory Shop, Earmarking Distribution Contribution and Forecast Stats (retrieved in May 2025).

²⁵ WFP Executive Board, 20 June 2025: [Update to the WFP Management Plan](#).

and Sudan, led to the launch of the Global Assurance Project in 2023 focusing on five functions, including targeting,²⁶ with the objective of providing greater assurance that WFP safely and effectively reaches the right people with its assistance.

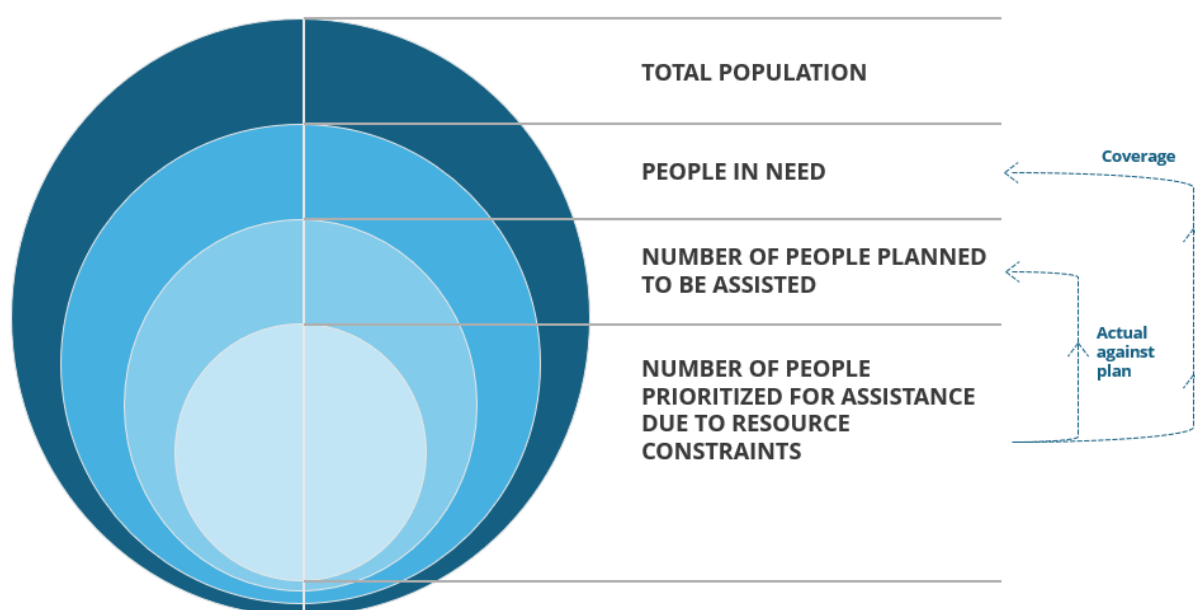
1.2.2 Defining targeting and prioritization

14. While targeting and prioritization are often used interchangeably, this evaluation distinguishes between the two, following definitions from WFP’s normative framework (Figure 3).

15. **Targeting** refers to the process of selecting communities, households and individuals for assistance, based on programme objectives and needs assessments and with the participation of communities.²⁷

16. **Prioritization**, by contrast, refers to deciding which people within a targeted population receive assistance when overall identified needs cannot be met, or when entitlements are reduced due to resource constraints.²⁸ In recent months, agencies have also started using the term “hyper prioritization” referring to the extreme narrowing of aid efforts to focus only on the most urgent, life-saving needs due to severe funding constraints.

Figure 3. The targeting-prioritization pathway: from people in need to people assisted



Source: WFP (2021) Targeting and Prioritization; Operational Guidance Note. WFP Research, Assessment and Monitoring Division. Adapted by the evaluation team.

²⁶ The other four focus area were: (i) identity management, (ii) monitoring and community feedback mechanism, (iii) cooperating partners’ management, and (iv) the supply chain.

²⁷ See WFP (2022) ED Circular Management of Targeting Processes by WFP Offices.

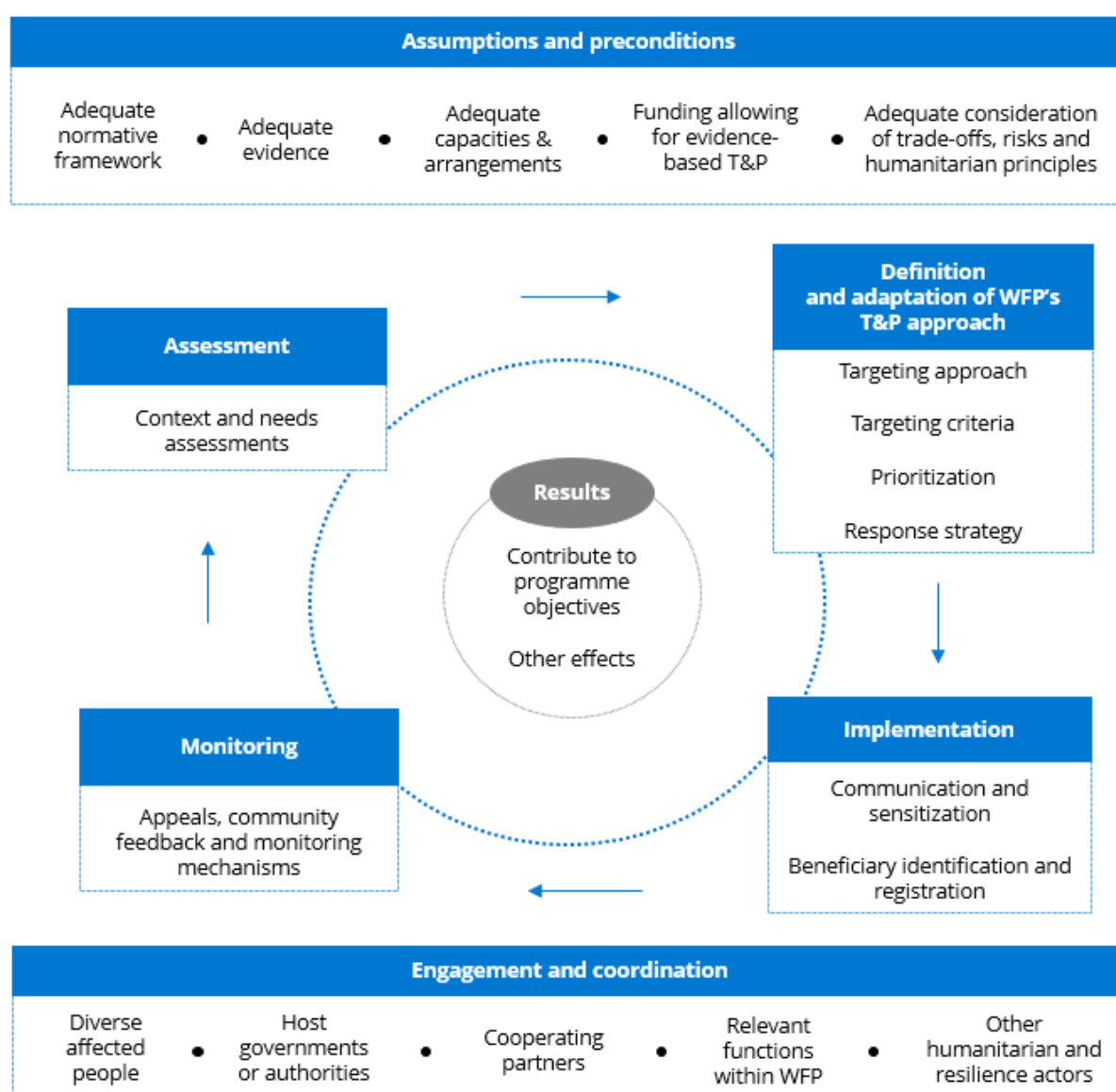
²⁸ Ibid.

1.3 Subject being evaluated

1.3.1 Conceptual framework

17. Targeting and prioritization typically happen at separate stages within WFP's planning and implementation cycle. Targeting and prioritization themselves involve several distinct steps and processes, which are summarized in Figure 4. The targeting and prioritization cycle also makes assumptions and preconditions explicit and situates WFP's targeting and prioritization practices within other relevant stakeholders. Successful targeting and prioritization should allow WFP and its partners to meet programme objectives.

Figure 4. Targeting and prioritization cycle

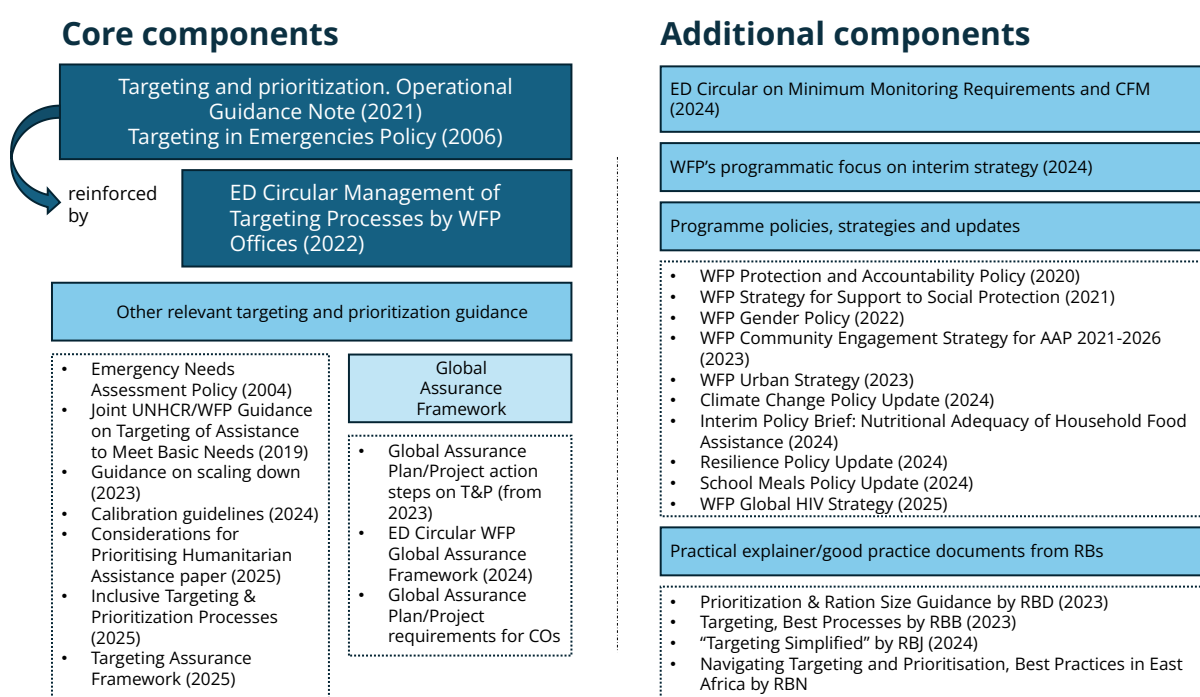


Source: Evaluation team.

1.3.2 Strategic direction and normative framework

18. WFP's institutional approach to targeting and prioritization is defined by an evolving normative framework. This framework is made up of different elements that define targeting and prioritization and provide lessons on how to define and implement targeting and prioritization approaches; these sources also offer guidance on how to document, monitor or adapt these approaches. The evaluation team broadly distinguishes two parts of the normative framework: (1) a set of core documents directly related to targeting and prioritization; and (2) additional components that either indirectly provide guidance covering aspects that are more loosely linked to targeting and prioritization, or that provide direction on targeting and prioritization for specific activities (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Overview of the normative framework for targeting and prioritization



Source: Evaluation team.

Abbreviations: RBB = Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific; RBD = Regional Bureau for Western Africa; RBJ = Regional Bureau for Southern Africa; RBN = Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa.

1.3.3 Staff capacity and coordination

19. In addition to developing further guidance, WFP invested in developing staff capacity, building on its strong capacity for data collection and analysis. At the headquarters level, this included the creation of the Needs Assessment and Targeting Unit in 2019, which by May 2025 had six staff members dedicated solely to targeting and prioritization. For 2026, the team is expected to be reduced to four staff members due to funding cuts and WFP's restructuring. In late 2024, WFP also created a headquarters cross-functional working group on targeting and prioritization. This group brings together staff from several divisions relevant to targeting and prioritization and has already delivered relevant outputs, such as its June 2025 guidance paper, "Considerations for Prioritizing Humanitarian Assistance."²⁹

²⁹ WFP (2025) [Considerations for Prioritising Humanitarian Assistance](#).

20. At the global level, WFP intensified its coordination with other agencies, most prominently through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub (set up in 2020). Building on the UNHCR-WFP Joint Targeting Principles (2018)³⁰ and Guidance (2019),³¹ the Joint Hub provides trainings, webinars and support to WFP and UNHCR country offices. It is supported by WFP's Needs Assessment and Targeting Unit and has four additional WFP staff (at the time this report was written, the Joint Hub was set to be dismantled in 2026 as part of restructuring).

21. Regional-level expertise was also strengthened, through the Targeting Strengthening Initiative (2020 onward) that introduced regional targeting advisor positions across all regional offices. In addition, WFP strengthened country-level capacity for targeting and prioritization by organizing targeting training weeks across different regions, attended by country offices, to familiarize them with the new guidance launched in 2021. At the time of writing, regional capacity for targeting was set to be reduced in 2026.

1.4 Methodology, limitations and ethical considerations

22. This evaluation was guided by four main questions:

EQ 1: How relevant and appropriate are WFP's approaches to targeting and prioritization? (Relevance)

EQ 2: What are the effects of WFP's targeting and prioritization practices on the people it serves? (Effectiveness)

EQ 3: How effectively does WFP engage and collaborate with others on targeting and prioritization? (Coordination, connectedness)

EQ 4: What factors affect WFP's performance on targeting and prioritization? (Effectiveness, appropriateness)

23. Annex III presents the evaluation matrix, including the main evaluation questions and more detailed subquestions, along with indicators or lines of inquiry and the sources of information used for each subquestion.

24. Annex IV provides a detailed description of the methods used for this evaluation. The evaluation employed a theory-based and utilization-focused approach, grounded in the targeting and prioritization cycle presented above. The team used a mixed-methods design, combining qualitative and quantitative data from key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), an online survey and a document and data review. Triangulation across data sources and methods strengthened the credibility of findings and ensured they reflected both institutional and community perspectives.

25. Five in-country case studies (on DRC, Jordan, Nigeria, South Sudan and Sri Lanka) provided in-depth insights into WFP's practices, complemented by two remote case studies (on the Dominican Republic and Haiti). The in-country case studies included direct engagement with affected people, community leaders and local officials to ensure that diverse views (particularly from marginalized groups) were reflected. Data collection in countries was supported by local research partners and allowed gauging feedback from affected communities in 117 key informant interviews and focus group discussions, including 423 participants.

26. All country offices delivering general food assistance (71 countries in total) were invited to participate in an online survey; among those, 91 staff members from 52 country offices responded to the survey. Their feedback, along with regional interviews, offered broader perspectives. Interviews were conducted at country, regional and headquarters levels, engaging staff across programme, vulnerability analysis and

³⁰ [UNHCR-WFP \(2017\) Joint Principles on Targeting Assistance to Meet Food and Other Basic Needs.](#)

³¹ [UNHCR-WFP \(2019\) Joint Guidance on Targeting Assistance to Meet Basic Needs.](#)

mapping (VAM) and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) functions, policy and operational roles, as well as donors, partners and other external experts. The evaluation also analysed a wide range of WFP documents, financial and operational data, as well as audit reports.

27. Gender, equity, inclusion and disability considerations were integrated into the evaluation design. These principles guided both data collection and analysis, with special efforts made to capture the voices of women and vulnerable groups. Gender, protection and inclusion officers at country and headquarters levels were considered as key stakeholders for the evaluation.

28. Despite challenges, including ethical concerns during a time of funding cuts and limited availability of cost-related data, the evaluation team upheld ethical standards throughout. The methodology allowed for a robust and balanced analysis of how targeting and prioritization are implemented and experienced across WFP's operations. While the rapidly deteriorating funding context means that conditions in some country offices have changed since the fieldwork was conducted, this does not, overall and in line with various validation and quality assurance processes, undermine the validity of the findings.

2 Evaluation findings

EQ1

2.1 How relevant and appropriate are WFP's approaches to targeting and prioritization?

29. There is no single approach to targeting and prioritization that would fit all programmes and contexts. To understand how relevant and appropriate WFP's approaches to targeting and prioritization are, this chapter discusses WFP's normative framework and support structures for targeting and prioritization and explores what patterns and trends exist in WFP's use of different targeting and prioritization approaches, which strengths and weaknesses the different approaches have, and how WFP decides on which approach to use.

EQ4.1

2.1.1 WFP's normative framework and support structures for targeting and prioritization provide a broad and relevant operational foundation

WFP has made substantial investments in its normative framework for targeting and prioritization. The framework has clarified key aspects of the process, defining, among other things, minimum standards and providing operational guidance. However, the normative framework is fragmented and has some gaps, particularly regarding strategic guidance on how to navigate the trade-offs involved in prioritization. WFP has also strengthened support capacities at Global Headquarters over the past years, which have played an important role in strengthening targeting and prioritization practices. Due to budget cuts, these capacities had started to be reduced at the time this evaluation report was written.

2.1.1.1 WFP's normative framework on targeting and prioritization has clarified key aspects of the process

30. WFP has made substantial investments in strengthening targeting and prioritization, including its 2021 Guidance Note on Targeting and Prioritization, and its various risk management and corporate assurance actions (partially linked to targeting and prioritization). These constitute a solid framework for country offices, which provides:

- **Clear definitions:** Although the terms “targeting” and “prioritization” are often used interchangeably, the guidance materials provide clear and distinct definitions for each term, highlighting the needs-based nature of targeting and the resource-based focus of prioritization.
- **A clearly defined set of minimum standards:** The current normative framework also defines clear minimum standards. The 2022 Executive Director (ED) circular on targeting, for example, requires country directors to ensure that operations conduct regular needs assessments, include affected populations in the design of the targeting approach, verify households eligible for assistance and establish regular monitoring of targeting processes and outcomes.³² The Global Assurance Framework ED circular additionally requires operations to maintain a digitized list of people assisted, verify the list annually and ensure that targeting and prioritization decisions are well justified and documented.³³ A recent ED circular on minimum monitoring requirements has defined minimum frequency and coverage of monitoring activities.³⁴ Another recent ED circular on personal data protection has set the standards on data collection from affected people.³⁵ All of

³² WFP (2022) ED Circular on Management of Targeting Processes by WFP Offices. OED2022/026. WFP, Rome.

³³ WFP (2024) ED Circular WFP Global Assurance Framework. OED2024/004. WFP, Rome.

³⁴ WFP (2024) ED Circular Minimum Monitoring Requirements (MMRs) and Community Feedback Mechanism (CFM) Standards in WFP Country Offices. OED2024/006. WFP, Rome.

³⁵ WFP (2024) ED Circular Personal Data Protection and Privacy Framework. ED2024/002. WFP, Rome.

these are critical guardrails within which country offices can define their specific approaches to targeting and prioritization.

- **Operational guidance:** The Targeting Assurance Framework is a recent addition to WFP's suite of guidance materials and serves to operationalize the principles laid out in the 2022 ED circular on targeting.³⁶ The Targeting Assurance Framework includes 16 key benchmarks (with additional concrete requirements for each benchmark) to support consistent, transparent and evidence-based targeting, and to control country-level targeting and prioritization frameworks. It includes new elements, especially around quality assurance and risk management related to targeting, mandating, for instance, that country offices develop targeting strategies linked to the broader humanitarian context.
- **Incipient support on prioritization challenges:** The normative framework is evolving to address the pressing challenge of prioritization. WFP's latest guidance on country strategic plan budgeting now requires a planning process that is, from the outset, informed by available resources, forcing country offices to make difficult decisions on prioritization early on (at the country strategic plan design stage).³⁷ The recent guidance *Considerations for Prioritizing Humanitarian Assistance* (June 2025) offers reflections on how to navigate the dilemma of "depth versus breadth" when making prioritization decisions. The paper establishes a benchmark for nutritional adequacy and the intensity of assistance in situations where prioritization is unavoidable.³⁸ This effectively requires WFP's assistance not to be spread too thinly. The WFP Strategic Plan (2026-2029) reinforces this direction by stating that WFP will reach fewer people with higher-quality and better-tailored assistance.³⁹
- **Strengthened thematic policies without prescribing "one-size-fits-all" approaches:** WFP's increasing organization-wide focus on targeting and prioritization has shaped the content of newer thematic strategies and recent policy updates, reinforcing clear process standards while allowing the flexibility necessary to adapt to specific contexts. The 2024 Resilience Policy Update, for example, encourages the use of collaborative targeting tools involving local communities in planning efforts at different levels, promotes greater engagement with social registries and requires resilience programmes to work with the same people, communities and geographic areas over multiple years.⁴⁰ Similarly, the 2024 School Meals Policy Update prioritizes schools serving children who are vulnerable to food insecurity and other intersecting dimensions of poverty and exclusion. In cases of resource constraints, it calls for a flexible process where both vulnerability assessment tools and community input are used to identify schools.⁴¹ The 2024 Strategy to Improve Diets and Address Malnutrition underscores the need to "optimize the use of data and analytics in our targeting".⁴² Finally, the 2023 Urban Strategy identifies "people-centred targeting" as one of four core shifts, highlighting the importance of involving partners, referral systems and community engagement to reach the most vulnerable in urban responses.⁴³
- **Strong integration of gender, disability and inclusion:** WFP's evolving set of guidance and standards on targeting and prioritization has continuously integrated gender, disability and other inclusion considerations. The initial 2021 targeting guidance emphasized the use of "easily observable categories such as gender, age, [and] disability" and stressed the importance of ensuring that community-based targeting is inclusive of gender dynamics, as well as minority groups.⁴⁴ Other pieces of recent guidance have further strengthened these commitments. The ED

³⁶ WFP (2025) Targeting Assurance Framework. Standard Definitions, Quality Assurance and Risk Management. WFP, Rome.

³⁷ WFP (2024) Calibrating our ambition: guidelines to formulate focused Country Strategic Plans and develop realistic Country Portfolio Needs and Budgets. WFP, Rome.

³⁸ WFP (2025) [Considerations for Prioritising Humanitarian Assistance](#).

³⁹ WFP (2025). WFP Strategic Plan (2026-2029). WFP/EB.2/2025/3-B/1/Rev.1.

⁴⁰ WFP (2024) Resilience Policy Update. WFP, Rome.

⁴¹ WFP (2024) School Meals Policy Update. WFP, Rome.

⁴² WFP (2024) WFP Strategy to Improve Diets and Address Malnutrition (2024–2030). WFP, Rome.

⁴³ WFP (2023) WFP Urban Strategy. Achieving zero hunger in an urbanising world. WFP, Rome.

⁴⁴ WFP (2021) Targeting and Prioritization. Operational Guidance Note. WFP, Rome.

circular on targeting processes, for example, holds country directors accountable for complementing needs assessments with thematic gender, protection and conflict-sensitive analyses to better inform vulnerability profiling. Similarly, the ED circular on minimum monitoring requirements and community feedback mechanism (CFM) standards mandates that community feedback mechanisms be accessible to everyone, “in particular women and girls, people with disabilities, and minority groups”.⁴⁵ The Resilience Policy Update highlights the importance of addressing the specific capacities, needs and priorities of “women and girls, young people, and marginalized groups such as people with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, and forcibly displaced populations”.⁴⁶ A guidance from July 2025 on inclusive targeting and prioritization practices complements these ongoing efforts of better integrating gender, disability and inclusion in targeting and prioritization.⁴⁷

- **Consideration of risks in all decisions:** The 2018 Enterprise Risk Management Policy shapes how WFP operates in dynamic, complex environments where needs and capacities evolve rapidly. Risks must be considered in all decisions, from strategic to operational, and should also inform the prioritization of resources.⁴⁸ WFP’s risk register template has long included the risk of “suboptimal beneficiary targeting”. Country offices are held to systematically evaluate the risks associated with targeting approaches (for example, reliance on cooperating partners (CPs), diversion or reputational risks) and weigh them against the benefits of engaging vulnerable populations. The policy requires decisions about who gets assistance to be framed with an explicit awareness of these risks.

31. The evaluation has found progress on the transparency and accountability of targeting and prioritization practices at the country level linked to risk management and assurance processes. Most of the 52 country offices that responded to the survey reported having dedicated standard operating procedures (SOPs) that set out their specific approaches to targeting and prioritization. Of the respondents surveyed for this evaluation, 82 percent (that is, respondents from 47 country offices) reported that their country office had a dedicated SOP (or similar strategy document) specifically focused on targeting and prioritization. Since 2024, the questionnaire for the annual ED risk assurance exercise includes a section on targeting and prioritization, which requires country offices among others to conduct needs assessments to inform targeting and prioritization and to have a documented targeting and prioritization methodology.⁴⁹ Under the benchmark “Targeting approach well-justified & documented,” the global assurance standards further require country offices to have targeting strategies and activity-level SOPs in place. An internal report dated May 2025 indicates that this requirement has been only partially fulfilled, with 23 out of 30 country offices reporting having activity-level SOPs in place and 20 out of 30 targeting strategies in place.⁵⁰ Information from WFP’s Office of the Inspector General on ongoing audits of five high-risk country offices also pointed to gaps between those accountability mechanisms and what is actually implemented and functioning. While the existence of these SOPs generally helps to strengthen transparency and accountability on targeting and prioritization, their increasing presence does not speak to the quality of their content or how effectively they are implemented.

⁴⁵ WFP (2024) ED Circular Minimum Monitoring Requirements (MMRs) and Community Feedback Mechanism (CFM) Standards in WFP Country Offices. OED2024/006. WFP, Rome.

⁴⁶ The revised resilience also highlights that targeting will focus on areas where high levels of recurring food insecurity and malnutrition intersect with repeated exposure to shocks and limited capacity to cope with them, which is intended to align resilience programming more closely with emergency response. See WFP (2024) Resilience Policy Update. WFP, Rome.

⁴⁷ WFP Assessment and Targeting Unit (2025) Inclusive targeting and prioritization processes. WFP, Rome.

⁴⁸ WFP (2018) Enterprise Risk Management Policy. WFP, Rome.

⁴⁹ For 2024, 27 percent of country offices reported themselves as “strong” for implementing a well-justified and documented approach to targeting and prioritization that is evidence based, guided by clear programme objectives and formed through active engagement with affected communities. A total of 60 percent reported themselves as “adequate”, and 13 percent as “needs strengthening”.

⁵⁰ WFP (2025) Status_Global Assurance Standards_by CO and Focus Area_for OEV.xls. Last modified: May 2025.

32. WFP also strengthened support capacities at Global Headquarters, including regional offices, which received positive feedback. The Needs Assessment and Targeting Unit in Rome has become a knowledge hub for targeting and is actively participating in the cross-functional working group that is driving many of the recent targeting refinements and leading the development of new knowledge products.⁵¹ The development of additional guidance on prioritization was coordinated by the Emergency Preparedness and Response Service. WFP's regional targeting advisors have frequently conducted missions within their regions, providing tailored advice to country offices on their targeting approaches. The targeting advisors have also played a role in assessing progress related to the Global Assurance Framework, in developing documents on the lessons learned on targeting and in highlighting trade-offs and operational considerations. Collectively, these advisors have contributed to the systematic uptake of improved targeting practices, strengthened internal accountability and advanced learning across operations. Ongoing workforce reductions are reducing such critical capacity, with four out of six regional targeting advisors and two out of six headquarters positions within the Analysis, Planning and Performance Division (APP) expected to be abolished in 2026.

33. WFP's efforts to strengthen knowledge and guidance on targeting and prioritization are continuous. In the first quarter of 2025, new monitoring SOPs for operations sought to further strengthen oversight on how targeting and prioritization are applied.⁵² Shortly after, a new approach to integrating gender and inclusion dimensions in targeting and prioritization was published⁵³ and a new guidance note on targeting in emergencies was expected to be published at the time of writing this report. In parallel, the Analysis, Planning and Performance Division Food Security and Analysis Service (APP-FA) and the division's Monitoring and Feedback Service (APP-MF) are rolling out tools and training to integrate targeting into routine monitoring and strengthen the use of appeal mechanisms. These developments highlight WFP's efforts to fill important gaps and further support country offices in refining their approaches.

EQ4.5

2.1.1.2 While it continues to be developed, the normative framework still has some gaps and is overly fragmented

34. Despite the various positive dynamics linked to the normative framework outlined above, there are still gaps and areas for further development:

- **The Global Assurance Framework and minimum standards for targeting are largely process-oriented:** The Global Assurance Framework and minimum standards for targeting focus heavily on accountability and compliance, emphasizing whether procedures like SOPs or required monitoring frequencies are in place. While this is important, it risks becoming a box-ticking exercise that does not focus on the real outcomes and challenges involved in practically implementing targeting and prioritization. The more recent Targeting Assurance Framework seeks to address this by including more indicators focused on quality.
- **Gaps in verifying the implementation of benchmarks:** Guidance related to the Global Assurance Framework and standards, such as the Targeting Assurance Framework benchmarks, allow space for interpretation and therefore do not constitute defined controls. In addition, WFP's global and regional capacities remain insufficient to effectively check whether country offices are fully implementing the practices outlined in their SOPs and activity reports. This shortcoming limits the ability to ensure that targeting standards are not just documented but are actually put into practice. The existing, limited support on advancing targeting implementation will be further weakened by ongoing workforce reductions.
- **Limited focus on prioritization:** Guidance on prioritization has only recently been strengthened. The June 2023 note, Navigating Humanitarian Scale-Downs, focuses on minimizing the effects that

⁵¹ WFP (no date) Terms of reference. HQ Targeting and Prioritization Cross Functional Working Group; interviews.

⁵² WFP (2025) WFP Programme Monitoring Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Country Offices.

⁵³ WFP (2025) Inclusive Targeting and Prioritization Processes. WFP, Rome.

deprioritization has on those who are no longer receiving assistance. In the absence of an organization-wide course of action on prioritization when funding is constrained, several regional offices developed their own set of guidance.⁵⁴ In June 2025, the WFP Cross Functional Targeting and Prioritization Working Group launched a paper on considerations for prioritization, outlining options and discussing trade-offs.⁵⁵ However, country offices are asking for clearer strategic guidance on how to navigate these trade-offs.

- **Limited focus on resilience interventions:** The normative framework provides less guidance on how to conduct targeting in more resilience-, livelihood-, or development-focused settings. Many interviewees and survey respondents commented that the current set of guiding documents was most relevant for URT in crisis response. This narrow focus makes the guidance less useful for other types of humanitarian responses or for contexts where more development-oriented interventions are planned.
- **A fragmented normative framework:** Finally, WFP's normative framework on targeting and prioritization is currently highly fragmented, not easily retrievable in one place and difficult to process, given the large number of relevant documents containing each specific technical aspect.⁵⁶ Important practical information is not readily available, but scattered across different documents.

EQ1.1

2.1.2 WFP is using a broad variety of targeting and prioritization approaches

In line with the 2021 Operational Guidance Note, WFP employs a wide range of targeting and prioritization approaches. These approaches differ in the extent to which they are based on vulnerability, the degree to which they involve local communities and the nature of the evidence they use. They provide WFP with flexibility to select targeting and prioritization approaches suitable for different operational contexts.

35. WFP uses a broad variety of targeting and prioritization approaches across the case studies examined for this evaluation. A more detailed description of these approaches and the differences in terms of their focus on vulnerability, the involvement of local communities and the nature of evidence used is presented in Annex V. Table 1 provides an overview of these approaches by three key activity areas.

Table 1. Overview of targeting and prioritization approaches used

| Programme type | Targeting and prioritization approaches |
|--|--|
| Unconditional resource transfers (URT) | <p>Targeting: Community-based targeting is most frequent, followed by categorical household-level targeting, status-based targeting or a mix of multiple targeting methods. Blanket targeting is also employed in some instances.</p> <p>Prioritization: Most country offices use several approaches, the most frequent being prioritizing geographic areas and reducing the number of people assisted. Other methods include reducing the duration of assistance, ration size or cash transfer value.</p> |

⁵⁴ WFP (2025) Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBB) Internal Interim Guidance Note: Considerations for Scenario Planning, Prioritization and Operational Adjustments. Internal Draft; WFP (2023) Targeting Best Processes; WFP (2023) Prioritization & Ration Size Guidance Regional Bureau for Western Africa (RBD); WFP (2024) Targeting Simplified. A Do-it-yourself (DIY) Practical Guide. Developed by Regional Bureau for Southern Africa (RBJ); WFP (2025) WFP Western Africa 2025 Prioritization Guidance for Emergency Response. February 2025; WFP (no date) Navigating Targeting and Prioritization. WFP Targeting and Prioritization Best Practices in East Africa.

⁵⁵ WFP (2025) [Considerations for Prioritising Humanitarian Assistance](#).

⁵⁶ At the time of writing this report, APP-FA is planning to develop a global targeting enhancement strategy to leverage the insights generated by the Global Assurance Project, which ended in June 2025, and this Strategic Evaluation.

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Nutrition | <p>Malnutrition prevention: Geographic targeting and prioritization based on malnutrition prevalence is used. Individual targeting is based on demographic indicators (young children, pregnant and breastfeeding women), typically among the households targeted for URT.</p> <p>Nutrition treatment: Referrals come through health centres, community mobilizers or other agencies (for example, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), based on demographic criteria (young children, pregnant and breastfeeding women) and anthropometric indicators such as measuring mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC).</p> |
| School meal programmes | <p>In stable (non-emergency) contexts, WFP typically implements school meal programmes in close cooperation with the host government. Which schools are targeted and prioritized is therefore often determined by or jointly with the government, based on a broad geographic prioritization that is stable over time and informed by education-related and food security indicators. Which schools are selected also often depends on pragmatic considerations, especially regarding the communities' capacity to prepare and deliver school meals.</p> |
| Resilience | <p>In comparison to targeting for URT and nutrition, targeting for resilience is less standardized overall and is primarily shaped by project-specific objectives.</p> <p>Geographic targeting for resilience activities often focuses on chronically food-insecure and shock-prone areas.</p> <p>Household targeting considers vulnerability as well as demographic characteristics, with some interventions oriented to vulnerable households with labour capacity, identified through community-based targeting or self-targeting.</p> |

EQ1.1

2.1.3 Vulnerability-based targeting and prioritization are a recognized priority; practice has started to reflect this

WFP has committed to shift from providing blanket or status-based assistance to more targeted approaches (commonly referred to as "vulnerability-based targeting (VBT)", even though other approaches can also be chosen based on vulnerability considerations). Evidence collected for this evaluation shows that this shift is underway in practice but remains partial and uneven.

36. Donors, among other actors, have been pushing WFP and other humanitarian organizations to shift from blanket or status-based targeting to more targeted approaches (commonly referred to as "vulnerability-based targeting", even though blanket or status-based approaches can also be chosen based on vulnerability considerations). The push for vulnerability-based targeting and prioritization has not been linear or evenly spread across donors over the past years, but increased needs to prioritize aid, as well as high-profile cases of aid diversion linked to targeting (like the case of Ethiopia) have led to key donors pressuring the humanitarian system to shift toward vulnerability-based targeting.

37. Both WFP's rhetoric and its policies show a formal commitment to strengthening vulnerability-based targeting and prioritization, which is beginning to lead to an incipient change of practice and increasing standardization. The Global Assurance Project and subsequent definition of global assurance standards are the most visible initiatives in this respect, acknowledging the importance of vulnerability-based targeting as a central component of its strategy.

38. The country cases conducted for this evaluation prove that a move toward vulnerability-based targeting (and away from blanket or status-based assistance) is underway in practice, albeit to varying degrees:

- In **South Sudan**, for example, WFP had transitioned to vulnerability-based targeting for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees by 2024. However, WFP faced challenges related to displaced person identity verification, authentication and “deduplications,” as well as to scaling up vulnerability-based targeting for one million people residing in locations with physical access constraints.⁵⁷
- The operation in **Sri Lanka** used categorical targeting as a simple way to identify vulnerable population groups for all its URTs.
- **DRC** used status-based targeting for internally displaced people in camps, vulnerability-based targeting for residents and internally displaced people out of camps and is moving toward vulnerability-based targeting for refugees.
- In **Nigeria**, WFP provided status-based assistance for internally displaced people in camp-like situations, who account for two thirds of the total number of people served, and categorical targeting for other situations.
- Already in 2014-2015, WFP introduced vulnerability-based targeting in **Jordan** for more than 80 percent of registered refugees who lived outside of camps. Within camps, assistance remained blanket until early 2025.
- **Haiti** country office used vulnerability-based targeting for all its emergency programmes.

39. The WFP 2023 Annual Evaluation Report,⁵⁸ as well as a 2025 summary of evaluation evidence on prioritization⁵⁹ suggest that this is mostly driven by resource constraints: where funding pressure called for reducing the number of people served, country offices have deliberately moved toward vulnerability-based targeting. The shift is also linked to the recent trend of UNHCR increasingly cooperating with the World Bank to develop proxy-means testing (PMT) models for refugee operations, WFP – in collaboration with UNHCR – also seems to use proxy-means testing approaches more frequently in refugee operations (such as Jordan and Lebanon).

40. Country office internal audit reports reviewed for this evaluation also show increasing efforts to transition from status-based to vulnerability-based targeting.⁶⁰ These audit reports, however, note that status-based targeting has been a common practice up until recently, including for populations displaced a long time ago (Table 2). Audits conclude that the changes in practices on the ground have so far remained incremental, uneven and significantly constrained by several factors such as limited resources, operational challenges and a heavy reliance on government and partner capacities. Withdrawing assistance from long-term assisted people can also increase security risks for WFP.

Table 2: Country examples of the ongoing but incomplete shift from status- to vulnerability-based targeting (from WFP country internal audits)

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Angola | In 2022, the country and regional offices drafted a targeting strategy for refugees, which underlined the need for a transition from status-based to vulnerability-based assistance. The 2024 audit notes that this transition has started for fewer than 1000 beneficiaries. |
| Burkina Faso | In April 2024, the country office released its new targeting strategy, which underlined the need for a transition from status-based to vulnerability-based targeting. At the time of the audit in late 2024, its results could not yet be assessed. |

⁵⁷ WFP (2024) Internal Audit Report AR/24/25: Internal Audit of WFP Operations in South Sudan. Office of the Inspector General, December 2024.

⁵⁸ <https://publications.wfp.org/2023/evaluation-report/>

⁵⁹ WFP (2025) [Summary of Evaluation Evidence: Prioritization](#).

⁶⁰ The evaluation team reviewed 42 available country office internal audit reports, covering audits from 2022 up until March 2025. See Annex XII. for a list of all country office internal audit reports reviewed.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Chad | In August 2023, “WFP [had] yet to implement all the targeting and prioritization recommendations from their 2021 joint assessment mission in a consistent and effective manner, which are needed to collect updated information on refugees and ensure only the most vulnerable refugees are assisted”. |
| Kenya | The 2022 audit notes several shortcomings of the targeting process and recommends the high-priority action to “develop measurable vulnerability-based metrics to guide targeting and prioritization decisions”. |
| Mozambique | In February 2025, the audit noted limited progress in the roll-out of vulnerability-based targeting. As of 2024, targeting based on vulnerability was limited, “resulting in around 67 percent of the assisted beneficiaries coming from government lists. The limited use of finalized VBT beneficiary lists affected the effectiveness of the initiative.” |
| Myanmar | In September 2024, targeting “had not yet entirely transitioned from status-based to vulnerability-based even in camps assisting protracted IDPs”. |
| Somalia | The 2023 audit noted “insufficient evidence of robust vulnerability-based beneficiary selection” and the need for the country office to “reassess and enhance its targeting process (...), adopting an improved household targeting mechanism and ensuring evidence-based, vulnerability-based targeting and prioritization”. |

Sources: Audit reports: Angola (April 2024), Burkina Faso (September 2024), Chad (August 2023), Myanmar (September 2024), Somalia (December 2023), Mozambique (February 2025), Kenya (May 2022).

EQ1.1
EQ3.1
EQ4.2

2.1.4 Most vulnerability-based targeting is community-based, although data-driven and hybrid approaches are increasingly common

Community-based targeting is widely adopted and valued across WFP. Related practices vary significantly across contexts. Hybrid approaches to targeting and prioritization, which combine data-driven and community-based elements, have increasingly emerged as good practice.

2.1.4.1 Community-based targeting is common and takes many different forms

41. Community-based targeting is particularly central to asset creation and livelihoods interventions, which benefit from participatory planning when adequate time and resources are available. Community-based targeting has also long served as the default approach for WFP country offices when providing unconditional resource transfers in protracted crises and lean season responses. In the West Africa region, protracted crises and lean season responses represent the majority of WFP’s activities, accounting for around 80 percent of assistance provided in 2024.⁶¹ Despite a trend to introduce more standardized data-driven approaches in recent years, community-based targeting remains widely adopted and valued across WFP. Nearly two thirds of the country offices that responded to the survey indicated that households eligible for URT are commonly identified through community-based processes. That said, community-based targeting is often combined with data-driven elements and should therefore not be understood as opposite to data-driven approaches.

42. Guidance and examples of good practices on how to use community consultations to inform targeting and prioritization are available through the WFP and UNHCR Joint Programme Excellence and

⁶¹ Powerpoint from the Regional Bureau for West Africa’s (RBD) emergency preparedness and response (EPR) workshop, 11-14 February 2025.

Targeting Hub.⁶² Some WFP country offices have also developed their own guidance on community-based targeting.⁶³ In practice, the implementation of community-based targeting varies significantly across the different reviewed contexts. Many interviewees valued that community-based targeting offered the option of adjusting the depth of engagement to the context. Key differences in the implementation of community-based targeting relate to the responsibilities of community committees, their composition and the level of verification by WFP:

- **Level of responsibility:** Some WFP country offices engage communities to actively define or refine eligibility criteria based on WFP guidelines. The Nigeria country office, for example, relies heavily on communities to refine the criteria used to determine eligibility and to identify eligible households. In other contexts (like Haiti), community committees primarily apply eligibility criteria (determined by WFP) to identify people within their communities who meet them and to propose lists of people to be assisted based on WFP criteria.
- **Committee composition** also exhibits some variability, although many WFP country offices prescribe a specific gender composition for community targeting committees. In Haiti, WFP works with designated representatives for smaller areas within villages or areas (so-called blocks); in DRC, the committees are composed of local leaders and representatives of target groups, for example, cooperatives or farmer groups. In South Sudan, targeting committees also include local leaders (village chiefs), as well as representatives of other demographic groups. In other countries, such as Nigeria, committees consist of representatives of various demographic groups, but not of community leaders, yet the community leaders end up having considerable sway over committee decisions.
- **Verification** procedures also vary considerably, ranging from publishing lists of people to be assisted for public scrutiny (a practice that has become less common due to the risks this can entail) to performing targeted spot-checks to complete WFP verification of proposed lists of people to be assisted.

43. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to community-based targeting, this evaluation did not find comprehensive documentation or clear rationales underpinning the selection of particular community-based targeting configurations in each context.

2.1.4.2 Hybrid approaches, combining data-driven and community-based elements, are increasingly common

44. Data-driven approaches to targeting – both when defining eligibility criteria and identifying households that match these criteria – have long been considered the main alternative to community-based targeting. In practice, this juxtaposition has not proven useful, as both approaches have limitations that can best be addressed by combining them. The 2021 Operational Guidance on Targeting and Prioritization recognizes this by stating that “as a general rule, combining different methods using a multimethod approach yields the best results as potential risks can be mitigated”.⁶⁴

45. The reviewed evidence and the conducted interviews suggest that WFP has increased its use of data-driven and hybrid targeting approaches in recent years. Examples of such hybrid approaches include:

- Before 2024, WFP employed an improved proxy-means testing model in **DRC** for out-of-camp populations. Since then, most WFP suboffices in DRC have used vulnerability scorecards to identify eligible households. The vulnerability criteria are derived from a statistical analysis of food insecurity drivers from the latest annual food security assessment. Those data-driven criteria are

⁶² WFP and UNHCR Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub (Date unknown) [Community consultations to inform targeting and prioritization](#).

⁶³ See WFP Kenya (2015) [Community-Based Targeting Guide](#).

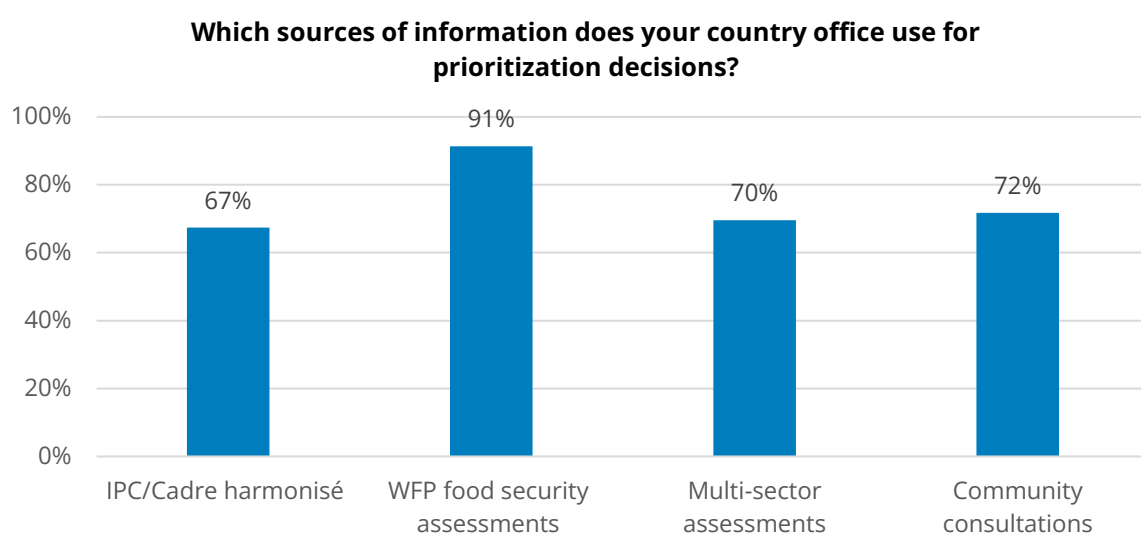
⁶⁴ WFP (2021) Targeting and Prioritization Guidance Note.

discussed with the targeted communities and complemented when relevant with community-specific and locally adapted criteria.

- In **Haiti**, WFP uses a different way of combining data-driven and community-based processes. Where recent data are available, WFP uses the national social registry and its vulnerability classification to identify eligible households. Where social registry data are older, the community can complement the list with additional households based on WFP eligibility criteria.
- WFP **Jordan** uses a highly data-driven approach based on proxy-means testing, developed with UNHCR and the World Bank and derived from the 2021 Vulnerability Assessment Framework population survey. The country office also complemented this with additional inclusion criteria, informed by community consultations and statistical analysis before and right after the targeting implementation.

46. Many country offices also combine different information sources for prioritization. As shown in Figure 6, country offices reported using a variety of information sources. Most country offices indicate that they use both data-driven methods relying on WFP food security assessments, IPC and Cadre Harmonisé (CH) or other multi-sector assessments, as well as community consultations for prioritizing assistance.

Figure 6. Information sources used for prioritization decisions



Source: Online survey with 66 respondents from 46 country offices and responses from each country office counting as one.

47. Other, less common sources reported by country offices include conflict sensitivity assessments, poverty and nutrition assessments, integrated context analyses, government and municipality data sources, disaster risk information, rapid needs assessments and SMART surveys, as well as Geographic Information System (GIS) data and satellite imagery.

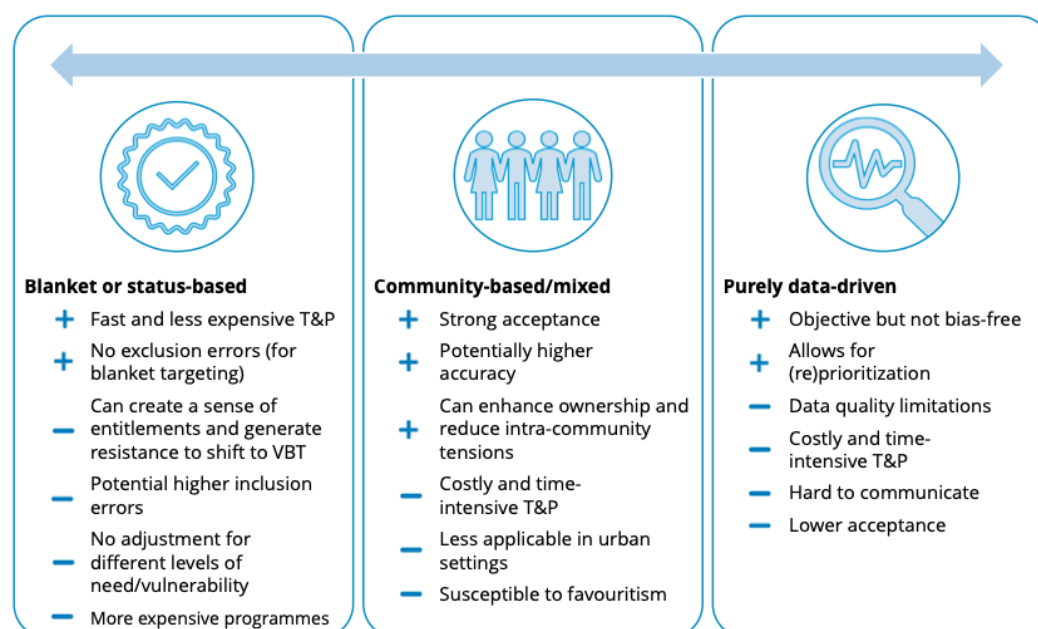
EQ1.1

2.1.5 WFP has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of different targeting and prioritization approaches

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to targeting and prioritization. Each approach has its own distinct strengths and weaknesses. Blanket and status-based approaches, for example, can be relatively swift to implement and do not involve any exclusion errors, while data-driven approaches allow for reprioritization when needed; community-based approaches are typically more easily accepted by the community in question. WFP staff at all levels demonstrated a clear understanding of these strengths and weaknesses, even though systematic evidence about the performance and costs of the different approaches is lacking.

48. Findings from the case studies conducted for this evaluation highlight that the way in which targeting approaches are implemented often matters more than the choice of the approach itself. Each targeting and prioritization approach, whether based on status, geography, community processes or vulnerability data, carries its own set of strengths and limitations (see Figure 7 for an overview). During the evaluation interviews, WFP staff at country office, regional and headquarters levels all demonstrated a clear and shared understanding of these respective strengths and weaknesses.

Figure 7. Overview of strengths and weaknesses of different targeting and prioritization approaches



Source: Evaluation team.

2.1.5.1 Blanket and status-based approaches

49. The evaluation found that blanket and status-based targeting, while sometimes described as blunt approaches, were reported to offer advantages in specific contexts, particularly where vulnerability was widespread or data availability limited. Country case studies and interviews highlighted that these approaches often involved lower costs than more complex methods and were appreciated for their simplicity and speed. Because they provide assistance to all households or individuals within a defined group or location, stakeholders noted that blanket and status-based targeting can help reduce tensions within communities by avoiding the need to prioritize among similarly vulnerable households (although they can also create tensions between groups of differing status).

50. Communication with affected people was reported to be more straightforward, as eligibility rules were seen as simple and inclusive. Several interviewees emphasized their usefulness in rapid-onset emergencies (for example, climate shocks, sudden displacement, extreme food insecurity situations, IPC 5), where timeliness was more critical than precision, and in contexts where needs were relatively uniform (in which case, blanket or status-based approaches are also “vulnerability-based,” even though this term usually refers to the targeted approaches discussed below) or where the number of non-vulnerable households was considered too small to justify the cost of more targeted approaches.

51. At the same time, evidence from the case studies pointed to significant limitations. Blanket targeting does not enable prioritization and may set expectations or create patterns of assistance that are difficult to adjust later. In mixed-vulnerability environments, it was reported as less efficient, since some assistance reached households that were not as food insecure as others. Over time, this was found to create sustainability challenges: in DRC, for instance, blanket support to refugees has been scaled back in favour of vulnerability-based targeting due to reduced funding, a trend also evident in Nigeria. However,

the drawbacks were not consistent across all contexts. In Jordan, for example, continued blanket targeting in camps remained a government priority and was seen by interviewees as not creating disincentives for greater self-reliance, as people could develop small businesses or engage in informal work without losing their assistance. The evaluation therefore finds that the appropriateness of blanket or status-based approaches depends heavily on operational context and on whether they are adapted as circumstances evolve.

2.1.5.2 Targeted approaches

52. While some interlocutors assume approaches targeting specific households within a given area or group should always be aspired to and are particularly relevant in the current environment of forced “hyper-prioritization”,⁶⁵ this evaluation shows that there are contexts in which status-based or blanket approaches are equally or even more appropriate, particularly where vulnerability is widespread, acute or difficult to differentiate across households. In Haiti, for example, interviewees accepted approaches targeting individual households based on their vulnerability as appropriate in most cases. However, some interviewees argued that food insecurity in some slum areas in Port-au-Prince was so high that blanket distribution would be warranted, because it was neither practical nor ethical to (attempt to) distinguish between vulnerability levels. Similarly, acute vulnerability among internally displaced people in certain areas in DRC is estimated to be between 80 percent and 90 percent, prompting some interviewees to say that blanket targeting in these areas would be appropriate. Furthermore, targeted approaches can be data- and resource-intensive and may face challenges regarding community acceptance.

53. **Community-based targeting:** Community-based targeting showed both strengths and limitations in the contexts reviewed. Across several case studies and focus group discussions, community-based targeting was perceived as enhancing community ownership by involving local actors in decision making and by increasing transparency. Participants in focus groups, in particular, highlighted that this made targeting decisions feel fairer and improved their relationship with WFP and partners. Evidence from these discussions also suggested that people were more likely to accept difficult targeting decisions when they had been part of defining the selection criteria or had seen the rationale behind them. At the same time, survey respondents and interviewees noted that community-based targeting does not always achieve these outcomes. In some contexts, community awareness of how targeting choices were made remained limited, and misunderstandings of principles such as vulnerability thresholds led to tensions and resentment. These mixed experiences suggest that, while community-based targeting can contribute to acceptance and reduce reputational risks, its effectiveness depends heavily on how it is implemented and the extent to which communities are genuinely engaged in the process.

54. Initially, the evaluation team had pursued a hypothesis that key stakeholders in WFP would see community-based targeting as less rigorous than more quantitative methods. As discussed above, however, the evidence from dedicated comparative studies on this subject is inconclusive. Interviews did not uncover fundamental opposition or doubts concerning the reliability or validity of community-based targeting. Interviewees across WFP’s Global Headquarters, including regional offices, and country offices, as well as donors and partners, broadly regarded community-based targeting as an essential component of effective targeting methodologies. Interviewees pointed out that a key advantage of community-based targeting (compared to more data-driven approaches) is the fact that communities usually have up-to-date knowledge on any changes in their community.

55. However, the evaluation also found that community-based targeting presents notable shortcomings and trade-offs, which were observed across the case studies and raised by interviewees and survey respondents:

- **Navigating power dynamics:** Elite capture is a well-documented risk in community-based targeting, especially in contexts with long-standing humanitarian assistance. Community leaders often play a key role in community-based processes. Even where they are not formally part of targeting committees, as in Nigeria, they can influence outcomes. The focus group discussions and

⁶⁵ WFP (2025) A lifeline at risk: food assistance at a breaking point. Global brief.

interviews with affected people conducted for this evaluation show that concerns about favouritism and community leaders' allies receiving aid exist to various degrees across all case study countries. They are especially pronounced in protracted humanitarian situations and in IDP camps where the same committees or individuals have been involved in targeting over a long period of time. WFP's corporate guidance explicitly recognizes elite capture as a risk; several country evaluations echo this issue. They recommend that WFP strengthen monitoring and verification, as well as enforce training and segregation mechanisms for community-led processes.⁶⁶

- **Managing real gender inclusivity:** WFP guidance requires community committees to have gender parity. Despite this, marginalized groups, including women, are often excluded from real decision making. This was highlighted in the Synthesis of evidence and lessons on WFP's cooperating partners from centralized and decentralized evaluations (2024)⁶⁷ and was raised as an issue in the country case studies on Nigeria and Haiti. While women were represented in targeting committees in Nigeria, for example, focus group participants highlighted that their real influence on decisions was limited. Similarly, community leaders who were not part of the official targeting committees still influenced who was ultimately selected for assistance. Focus group participants also felt they had to go through community leaders if they wanted to be heard when providing feedback or trying to appeal.
- **Speed and scalability:** In several country cases, community-based targeting was reported to face challenges in terms of speed and coverage. In Sri Lanka, delays in defining lists of people to be assisted through community committees slowed down the emergency response. Due to a lack of experience with such processes, the initial lists had inclusion and exclusion errors of a magnitude that required retargeting. In DRC, according to the comparative evaluation mentioned above,⁶⁸ the community-based targeting approach resulted in a better understanding of the selection process, but lower satisfaction with implementation (mostly due to its slower pace) and signs of increased tensions, as well as reduced social cohesion in the community.
- **Community decision making versus firm principles:** Interviewees valued community-based targeting for drawing on community knowledge and giving community members some influence over the targeting process. Yet, WFP also has a clearly defined mandate and corporate understanding of vulnerability. Where community preferences and suggestions conflict with such basic tenets and are not accepted by WFP and its cooperating partners, backlash or resistance by communities can occur. In Nigeria, for example, a group of people not receiving WFP assistance during a focus group discussion for this evaluation, suggested sharing aid openly so that everyone would get something without any rigorous targeting. They argued that public distributions to everyone in the community would ensure "people will understand that the food is finished" once it's shared, rather than feeling bitter at being registered, but not selected for distribution. Other grassroots suggestions included dividing aid into multiple tiers (for the most vulnerable, for the "less vulnerable," such as young healthy women, and for men) to ensure everyone gets at least something. Others advocated for a rotation system where the set of people assisted changes by cycle, so that those excluded now would get priority next time. In Jordan, the preferences of some community members conflicted with the basic principles of cooperation between UNHCR and WFP. By introducing targeting systems with similar components, UNHCR and WFP attempted to target a more similar group of refugees with their respective cash assistance programmes. Some affected people, however, would have preferred the two organizations to aim for complementarity, so that more people would receive some aid and individual households would either be supported by WFP or by UNHCR. In practice, these differences sometimes resulted in tensions. In camps in Nigeria,

⁶⁶ WFP (2024). Summary of Evidence on Targeting States: Community-based targeting "may reinforce existing power imbalances and discrimination within the community, bringing risks of abuse of power."

⁶⁷ WFP (2024). Synthesis of evidence and lessons on WFP's cooperating partners from centralized and decentralized evaluations: Synthesis Report – Volume I. OEI/2023/022. WFP, Rome.

⁶⁸ WFP, DIME (2024) Optimizing Targeting for Humanitarian Programming, Impact Evaluation - Preliminary Findings The Democratic Republic of the Congo.

for example, several community representatives refused to take part in vulnerability ranking for prioritization. WFP had to abort the exercise in a few locations. Similarly, a respondent to the online survey talked of communities refusing to receive any aid if only some get it. Several interviewees anticipated that these risks would intensify as resources shrink and aid must be prioritized more rigorously. They also anticipated that it will be particularly challenging to apply community-based targeting in the growing number of urban humanitarian settings.

56. While WFP staff seem to be aware of these risks and tensions, they have not been addressing them systematically. In Nigeria, for example, a targeting review conducted by the regional office in 2021 warned that WFP may be “exceeding the good will” of community representatives to be involved in targeting and prioritization.⁶⁹ However, the approach was not adjusted; similar concerns were still palpable in the consultations and interviews conducted for this evaluation. WFP, therefore, needs to focus more on ensuring that the implementation challenges and dilemmas of community-based targeting are adequately addressed to guarantee that this approach to targeting and prioritization works effectively.

57. **Data-driven approaches:** Interviewees from donor agencies, partners, local authorities and, in some cases, communities described data-driven approaches as more objective, since vulnerability criteria were derived from statistical models. In Haiti, the use of social registry data and its vulnerability classification was well received by local authorities and the population. In Burkina Faso, external partners criticized the recent shift back from data-driven approaches to a fully community-based approach; they argued it made the process too dependent on local dynamics and that it was a step back in terms of targeting quality.

58. In several contexts, data-driven approaches were reported to enable a (re)prioritization of the most vulnerable households when relevant data had been collected at the registration stage. In DRC, scorecards group households into five levels of vulnerability. According to staff interviewed in DRC, this scoring allowed them to focus on the most vulnerable households when prioritization became necessary. Similarly, in Haiti, the Government’s social registry (SIMAST)⁷⁰ vulnerability classification was used to adapt assistance levels to available resources.

59. Finally, evidence from DRC and Jordan suggests that data-driven approaches reduced the pressure on community committees when making difficult prioritization decisions. In DRC, it was the local targeting committees who particularly appreciated the scorecards, because they could refer to clear criteria to defend their inclusion or exclusion decisions. In Jordan, reliance on a proxy-means testing model meant that community committees did not have to make the difficult decision of who should be excluded from assistance.

60. Interviewees and document reviews highlighted that data-driven approaches also had limitations and risks, observed across systems regardless of methodology:

- **Design errors:** Data-driven models, like other targeting methods, can have significant design errors, misclassifying households as eligible or ineligible for assistance due to the use of imperfect proxies, narrow thresholds or data errors. In Jordan, the lower the poverty threshold used, the less accurate the proxy-means testing model was for identifying people at risk of food insecurity. In DRC, the country office has recently started to disaggregate food security data for internally displaced people and resident populations, enabling the development of different vulnerability criteria for these two groups in the future.
- **Outdated data:** Evidence from Haiti and other contexts showed that static models or outdated data sometimes missed sudden vulnerability shifts caused by displacement, conflict or natural disasters. In Haiti, social registry data provided by the Government to target vulnerable households only reflects those newly displaced people once the dataset is updated. It also does not consider whether vulnerable households have received assistance from other humanitarian actors. In DRC, a round of assistance generally covers six months. Vulnerability data are collected before each

⁶⁹ WFP internal document (July 2021) Nigeria Budget Revision 2 Targeting Review.

⁷⁰ Système d’information du Ministère des Affaires Sociales et du Travail (SIMAST).

round to include new arrivals in the list and to consider recent changes in the environment. However, data cannot be updated between assistance rounds. In Jordan, some criteria and filters used to calculate eligibility are time sensitive (for example, those on employment potential). Frequent data updates are not possible with the available resources, making eligibility decisions progressively less reliable as time progresses.

- **Complexity:** Across case studies, stakeholders noted that the complexity of proxy-means testing models or scoring systems made them difficult for communities, staff and local authorities to understand, which in some cases reduced trust and acceptance. In Jordan, the proxy-means testing formula was developed by the World Bank and is even difficult for some humanitarians to comprehend. Most community leaders consulted for this evaluation feel they know how WFP decides who receives assistance or not, but their understanding is rooted in knowledge of categorical criteria such as family size, dependency ratio, disability and ability to work, not an appropriate understanding of the proxy-means testing model. The use of proxy-means testing models has been widely criticized for their inherent complexity in the available literature, both by affected communities and partners.

2.1.5.3 Evidence about comparative performance and costs of different approaches to targeting and prioritization is inconclusive or incomplete

61. Other available evidence echoes the case study findings that each approach has its own distinct strengths and weaknesses, which play out differently depending on the context. WFP has commissioned a small number of studies comparing the performance of different targeting and prioritization approaches in a given context, but no common pattern emerges from the results of these studies.

62. A forthcoming WFP impact evaluation in the DRC compared the “proxy-means testing plus (PMT+)” approach and community-based targeting in food assistance programmes.⁷¹ It found that community-based targeting resulted in lower coverage and a higher exclusion error, while PMT+ over-targeted households, leading to a higher inclusion error. Community-based targeting involved potentially lower costs and communities reported the same level of acceptance for both approaches. A study from Somalia,⁷² by contrast, found that data-driven vulnerability-based targeting outperformed community-based targeting in identifying food-insecure households and households engaging in emergency coping strategies, indicating stronger results in reaching the most vulnerable. Earlier evidence from social protection programmes⁷³ highlighted the risks associated with community-based targeting, such as elite capture, and emphasized the importance of context-specific implementation. Preliminary findings from a forthcoming impact evaluation in Lebanon suggest that different targeting methods used in this context do not lead to significant differences in targeting accuracy.⁷⁴ The study also finds limited evidence that specific subgroups benefit disproportionately from any single targeting method. However, evidence from the study indicates that greater targeting accuracy may be achieved by using multiple targeting methods (prediction models based on the same underlying data) and prioritizing households that are consistently selected as vulnerable across methods.

63. In addition to the performance of different targeting and prioritization approaches, costs are another crucial consideration. However, very little reliable and comparable data are available on targeting and prioritization costs, despite long-standing recognition of its importance. The 2006 targeting review already flagged this lack of data.⁷⁵ In theory, WFP country offices are supposed to track relevant costs in the

⁷¹ WFP (2023) [Optimizing targeting of humanitarian food assistance in the DRC: Precision and coverage](#). Medium.

⁷² The Cash Learning Partnership (CALP). (2024, May). “Review paper on targeting shift in humanitarian cash assistance: Som Cash Consortium, Somalia” [Report]. CALP Network.

⁷³ McCord, A. (2013). [Community-based targeting in the Social Protection sector](#) (ODI Working Paper). Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

⁷⁴ WFP (May 2025) When Humanitarian Assistance Fades Out: Experimental Evidence from a Nation-Wide Programme in Lebanon. Interim, internal presentation; WFP (2025) Targeting Humanitarian Aid in Crisis: Experimental Evaluation Evidence from the Reduction of WFP Assistance in Lebanon. Draft Report.

⁷⁵ WFP (2006) Targeting in Emergencies. WFP/EB.1/2006/5-A. WFP, Rome.

assessment, monitoring and evaluation cost simulation tool but it was not possible to extract relevant data for this evaluation. In 2024, APP-FA made a cost template available through the VAM resource centre⁷⁶ to help standardize budgeting for targeting and prioritization activities, but uptake has been very limited. During the current evaluation, none of the case study country offices had filled out this template; a separate form shared by the Office of Evaluation as part of the evaluation did not produce any meaningful information either.⁷⁷

64. Interviews and a review of existing documentation⁷⁸ show that numerous challenges stand in the way of accurate cost estimates for targeting and prioritization, which can limit the efficient use of resources by country offices: WFP's financial tracking systems do not specify costs for targeting and prioritization, but include them in broader budgets covering registration, verification, delivery or implementation costs. Relevant assessments like emergency food security assessments (EFSAs) or food security outcome monitoring (FSOM) serve multiple functions, such as monitoring, targeting, coordination or advocacy; this complicates cost attribution. The value of contributions from cooperating partners, communities or government actors (like sharing data or facilitating local consultations) is rarely estimated or recorded. Shared targeting approaches involving other United Nations agencies (like UNHCR) or national systems obscure additional costs not borne by WFP. In addition, costs can vary significantly depending on context (between urban and rural areas, between sudden-onset and protracted emergencies and depending on the available access and physical infrastructure in countries).

65. Despite these difficulties in calculating and comparing costs accurately, interviews and other available evidence suggest that there are some broader cost patterns for the different approaches:

- **Hybrid approaches.** Combined data and community-based components seem to be the most resource-intensive. They require both large-scale household data collection, such as emergency food security assessments that enable the development of statistical models, and active engagement with communities (focus group discussions or validation exercises). In DRC, the PMT+ system was around 10 percent more expensive than community-based targeting, excluding EFSA costs; if the costs for conducting the EFSA are included, the difference is even greater.⁷⁹
- **Data-driven approaches.** While typically less expensive than hybrid approaches, data-driven approaches are still among the costliest methods, especially if the survey costs that the data are derived from are included in the total tally. They typically involve statistically rigorous methods, household-level interviews, sophisticated data cleaning and modelling. The annual emergency food security assessment in DRC, for example, which is used, among other things, to identify vulnerability criteria and their respective weights, is estimated to cost around USD 1.5 million. Other examples include proxy-means testing-based targeting in Jordan and DRC, which demanded significant technical expertise, time and logistics (although the proxy-means testing model in Jordan was developed by the World Bank, it requires ongoing maintenance and adaptation by UNHCR, WFP and the World Bank). The Haiti country office chose to draw on existing government social registries, as this was cheaper than setting up new databases (if the costs for the government-led system and for strengthening it are not considered). In Nigeria, on the other hand, the country office did not see a cost advantage in using the national social registry. It concluded that the verification and re-targeting required when using government databases was as costly as starting data collection from scratch.
- **Community-based approaches.** These approaches, where the country offices rely on local knowledge to determine vulnerability, seem slightly less costly. In Mozambique, for instance, community-based targeting was significantly cheaper than more data-heavy methods introduced

⁷⁶ WFP (2025) [VAM resource centre on Targeting and Prioritization](#).

⁷⁷ The template was filled in by three country offices and in some instances the data were incomplete.

⁷⁸ This includes country office budgets; see also Gassmann, F., Hunns, A., Morais, J., & Vanore, M. (2025) Targeting humanitarian assistance in refugee operations: a qualitative exploration of costs and benefits in three country case studies. Final Report. UNU-MERIT, Maastricht.

⁷⁹ WFP, DIME (2024) Optimizing Targeting for Humanitarian Programming, Impact Evaluation - Preliminary Findings Democratic Republic of the Congo.

later.⁸⁰ That said, it can be difficult to accurately rate the costs incurred through consultations, committee formation, training and validation, not to speak of the time local stakeholders invest in the process.

66. Naturally, status-based and blanket targeting are by far the least expensive option in terms of targeting, as they do not require household-level vulnerability assessments (though they typically involve higher programme costs since more people receive assistance). That said, they still rely on vulnerability assessments to gauge whether the decision to go for blanket or status-based targeting is justified in light of needs.

67. Of the WFP staff who took part in the evaluation survey, 80 percent deemed the current cost and effort invested in targeting and prioritization to be appropriate. However, it is noteworthy that multiple country offices reported increasing pressure from donors to adopt data-intensive vulnerability-based targeting, without (the adequate amount of) corresponding increases in funding. Interviewees also reported concerns that leadership within WFP sometimes expected more sophisticated and data-driven targeting but was not always willing to accept the associated costs.

68. Faced with budget constraints, country offices have adopted a variety of strategies to manage and reduce targeting costs, which could (negatively) affect the effectiveness or accuracy of the approaches employed. For instance, in countries like South Sudan and DRC, spot checks and monitoring exercises are sometimes reduced or skipped. There is a risk that this mismatch between targeting and prioritization expectations on the one hand and available resources on the other becomes more severe as the political pressure from donors to demonstrate vulnerability-based targeting remains high, while funding is drastically reduced. Staff shortages are already constraining research, assessment and monitoring (RAM) units in some country offices. For example, the RAM team in DRC's Ituri province was operating at 50 percent capacity at the time of this evaluation; in past years, the head of RAM position in Nigeria has been vacant for critical periods of time. Further cuts will likely make it impossible to scale up or even sustain current targeting practices and standards. Additional reductions of Global Headquarters workforce will inevitably limit the support available to country offices in designing and implementing their targeting and prioritization approaches.

EQ1.1
EQ3.3
EQ4.4

2.1.6 Although WFP's decisions on which targeting and prioritization approaches to use are constrained by external factors, they are mostly appropriate. Nevertheless, they would benefit from more agility and cross-functional collaboration.

The space in which WFP can take decisions on targeting and prioritization is affected by donor earmarking, host government positions and other context-related conditions. The evaluation found that the choices made within that space were largely appropriate. However, WFP is not always agile enough in adapting its targeting and prioritization approaches to changing conditions. This is related to the fact that WFP does not approach targeting and prioritization systematically enough as a cross-functional task or use more adaptive planning processes, which would allow for greater agility.

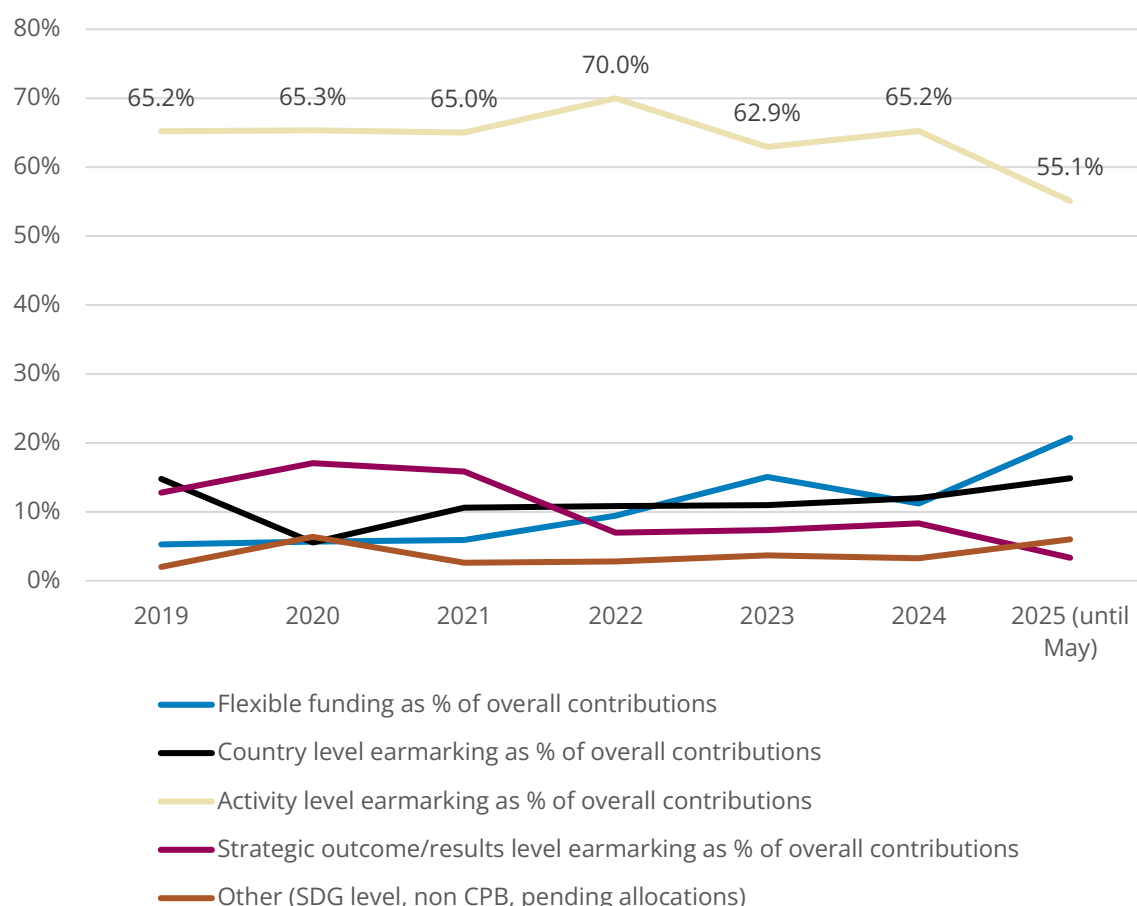
2.1.6.1 Donor earmarking, host government positions and other contextual conditions shape the space in which WFP can make decisions on targeting and prioritization

69. Targeting and prioritization decisions do not happen in a vacuum, but in a space that is defined by several factors shaping such technical targeting or prioritization decisions. It is important to highlight these factors; they impact who WFP can or cannot assist and affect the type of targeting and prioritization approach chosen. The most important factors are donor earmarking practices and other expectations, host government positions, time considerations and access conditions.

⁸⁰ WFP (2024) Targeting Simplified. A Do-it-yourself (DIY) Practical Guide. Developed by the Regional Bureau for Southern Africa (RBJ).

70. **Donor earmarking:** WFP is funded by voluntary contributions and receives no assessed contributions. The vast majority of the organization's resources (64 percent on average since 2019) is earmarked at the activity level (Figure 8). Some signatories to the so-called Grand Bargain, such as Germany, have recently increased their flexible contributions to WFP. Overall, both the share and the absolute amount of flexible funding that WFP has at its disposal have therefore increased. While the amount stood at around USD 400 to 500 million (or around 5 percent of WFP's overall budget) before 2021, it increased to over USD 1 billion (or between 9 and 15 percent of WFP's overall budget) between 2022 and 2024.⁸¹ As of May 2025, the upward trend continues, with flexible funding accounting for 21 percent of total contributions⁸² but at a time of significantly decreasing contributions overall.

Figure 8. Earmarking level of overall confirmed contributions (all donors)



Source: Factory Shop, 5 May 2025.⁸³

⁸¹ WFP annual reports on flexible funding, available at <https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-annual-report-flexible-funding>.

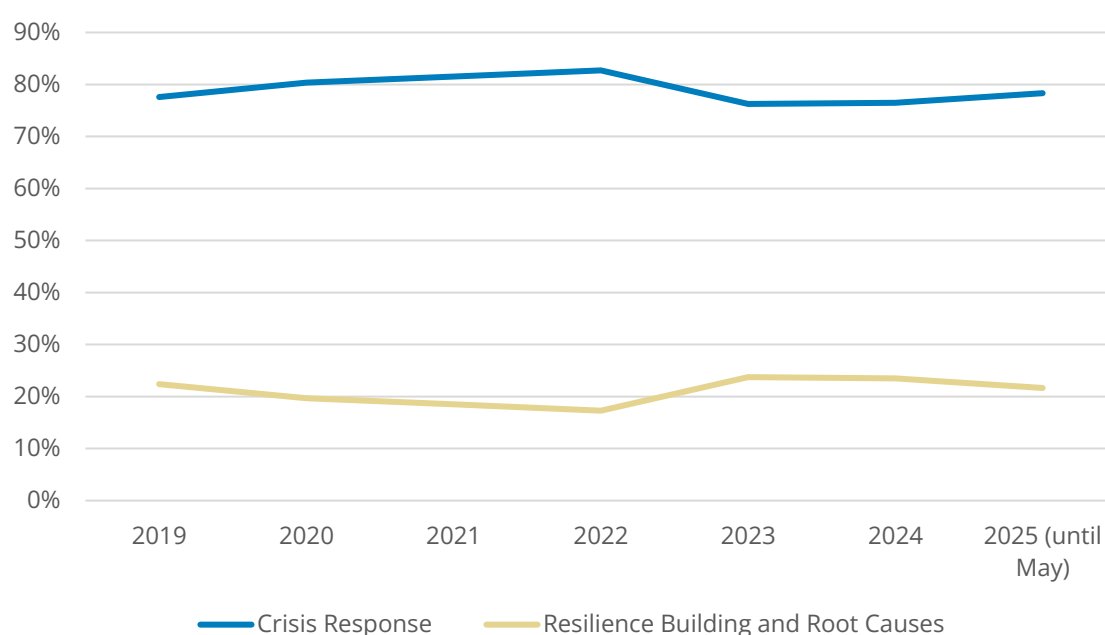
⁸² As of September 2025, flexible funding accounted for 13 percent of WFP's total confirmed contributions, in line with the value recorded at the end of 2024. Also, the increase in flexible funding recorded since 2022 might be explained by the new corporate definition of "flexible funding" adopted in the same year (Decision Memo 16 March 2022), whereby the "flexible funding" category includes not only the unearmarked funding, but also the "softly earmarked" funding.

⁸³ "Other" in the legend refers to: SDG level - Sustainable Development Goal level earmarking; Non CPB - non-country portfolio budget earmarking level, that is, contributions that are not directed to a CSP, but part of, for example, trust funds or special account funding managed by headquarters; pending allocations: registered allocations but not yet earmarked by the donor.

71. Although the share of flexible funding has grown overall (albeit within a shrinking envelope), WFP has limited room to prioritize among different country offices or between the activities it implements in those countries. Neither the allocation of unearmarked multilateral contributions through the Multilateral Budget Committee and other mechanisms nor the allocation of other corporate resources through the Global Commodity Management Facility is covered by this evaluation.

72. Donor earmarking is especially palpable when striking the balance between WFP's humanitarian and development mandates, that is, when prioritizing between emergency and resilience activities. For example, feedback from affected communities consistently shows a demand for more long-term solutions and livelihoods.⁸⁴ Yet, how much weight is given to lifesaving assistance, as compared to resilience, is to a large extent defined by donor earmarking, not by internal WFP decisions, with activities focusing on resilience and root causes fluctuating at around 20 percent of WFP's overall budget (Figure 9). At times, donor earmarking also defines where WFP can implement resilience and address root causes of food insecurity. In South Sudan, for example, a development donor earmarked contributions for areas that were relatively less food insecure where they felt that the context was more conducive to achieving the intended programme outcomes.

Figure 9. Expenditure by focus area in percent of total expenditure, 2019-2025⁸⁵



Source: CPB expenditures by year and Commitment Items report (wings) (May 2025).

73. Timing also plays a role. When funding arrives late in the programme cycle or is subject to conditionalities, this leaves limited choices to prioritize and target. For example, when funding is earmarked for in-kind assistance and it needs to be distributed within a short timeframe, WFP has no choice but to use existing targeting methods. If prioritization is necessary, its only option is to reduce the duration of assistance.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Ground Truth Solutions (GTS), 2025: What crisis affected communities need from a humanitarian reset. Global Analysis Report. [Online](#).

⁸⁵ Expenditures for direct support costs are not included in this graph.

74. **Other donor requirements and demands:** In addition to earmarking most of their contributions, some donors also make specific demands regarding the targeting and prioritization of WFP's assistance. Respondents to the survey noted that it can be a challenge to align with government and donor requirements, especially where the two contradict each other. As documented in other evaluations,⁸⁶ this can result in a difficult balancing act for WFP; on the one hand, it is trying to protect its operational independence and impartiality, while needing to come to agreements with both donors and host governments on the other hand.

75. The challenges reported in the country case studies conducted for this evaluation were less acute. Interviewees from both WFP and donor organizations reported that the main demands from donors on targeting and prioritization are about transparency. The increased documentation, which has been reinforced through the Global Assurance Framework is appreciated, as were recent consultations on targeting held with selected donors in Rome in December 2024. However, some donors perceive the related reporting as too process-oriented and are pushing for more honest and open discussions with WFP on the dilemmas and practical challenges it faces and how it addresses them. Some mentioned that WFP still has a tendency to evade questions around targeting and prioritization and that it could be more transparent.

76. Additionally, as discussed above, key donors have a general preference for vulnerability-based targeting (instead of blanket or status-based targeting). In general, this position is in line with WFP's principles and policies. It only raises questions in some specific situations, such as in the context of refugee camps (where vulnerability can be so widespread that status-based targeting can be more appropriate) or in regions where a majority of the population faces food insecurity. In several instances, donors have supported the introduction or refinement of vulnerability-based targeting by funding data collection – especially where existing data were perceived to be influenced by authorities. In Sri Lanka, for example, a key donor questioned the reliability of social registry data and supported WFP in conducting community-based targeting instead. In Afghanistan, a key donor supports the assessment process that enables targeting independent of IPC data. In Mozambique, a donor supported the registration of over one million people with the intention of using these data to support targeting.

77. Interviewees from WFP perceived other donor requests related to targeting and prioritization as similarly understandable. This includes donor preferences in some countries to prioritize people affected by acute shocks over those who face structural vulnerability, as well as the earmarking of funds for geographic areas that are hard to reach and affected by high levels of food insecurity.

78. **Host governments** also play a decisive role, since WFP provides assistance on the invitation of a government. In general, some interviewees perceived a lack of guidance on how to engage or collaborate with governments and flagged that this has been a long-standing challenge for WFP. With regards to targeting and prioritization, governments may invite WFP to work in their country only once a certain threshold of food insecurity has been reached; they also might ask WFP to address food insecurity caused by one set of problems, but not by another. In Nigeria, for example, WFP only addresses conflict-induced food insecurity, not food insecurity *per se*. Governments can choose to request assistance only in certain parts of their territory or seek to influence what assistance modality WFP uses, which groups it serves or where surveys are conducted. In Jordan, for example, WFP and other humanitarian actors only assist registered refugees, not unregistered refugees. The Evaluation of WFP Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access (2018) cast a light on WFP's ways of dealing with such situations, particularly where they interfered with WFP's humanitarian principles.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ WFP (2018) Evaluation of WFP Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access in Humanitarian Contexts. Office of Evaluation. WFP, Rome. In Yemen, for example, some donors have restricted their funding to specific geographical areas (See WFP, 2024. Corporate Emergency Evaluation of WFP's Response in Yemen 2019-2024).

⁸⁷ WFP (2018) [Evaluation of WFP Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access in Humanitarian Contexts](#). WFP, Rome.

79. The cases covered by this evaluation provide several examples of how the political positions of host governments influence WFP's room to manoeuvre on targeting and prioritization. They revealed:

- resistance against prioritizing via reducing the number of people served or via selecting certain locations (counties or village clusters) over others (as opposed to giving every location and household a reduced ration or transfer value);
- resistance against introducing vulnerability-based targeting in camp settings;
- pressure to provide assistance to host communities, alongside displaced people;
- reluctance to support or acknowledge support to population groups considered politically sensitive (for example, unregistered migrants or refugees);
- a ban on cash assistance (humanitarian assistance as a whole) in certain parts of the country; and
- indirect constraints in the form of bureaucratic or administrative hurdles, procurement rules and more.

80. The evaluation found that issues such as the host government's position and the drive for operational independence strongly influenced WFP's decisions on targeting and prioritization. However, these issues rarely figured centrally in the interviews conducted, where most stakeholders tended to treat targeting and prioritization as a largely technical question, rather than a political one.

81. **Other context factors** such as access constraints, resource availability and time limitations also significantly shape WFP's practical ability to implement its intended targeting and prioritization approaches. In areas affected by conflict or insecurity, WFP must rely on its security risk management protocols; it cooperates with the United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) to conduct security assessments and decide on movement restrictions or other risk mitigation measures. In some cases, the required security arrangements to ensure duty of care for WFP staff and partners mean that areas with significant needs may be excluded from the range of possible locations to be targeted. Moreover, in highly insecure settings (such as parts of South Sudan, Haiti or north-eastern Nigeria, in the case of this evaluation's case studies), access for monitoring is often limited or only possible through third parties, requiring the use of different targeting methodologies and reducing WFP's ability to verify targeting outcomes or adjust course.⁸⁸

82. Similarly, infrastructure limitations can reduce the geographic space where targeting can be rolled out; they can also rule out targeting efforts that rely on digital tools, network access or frequent monitoring. In DRC, cooperating partners conducting SCOPE registration in remote areas without connectivity require specific equipment and offline servers to operate. In South Sudan, for instance, physical access to many locations is severely limited (or not possible at all) during the rainy season (typically between May and September), requiring extensive prepositioning of food supplies and giving WFP and cooperating partners only a small time-window to manage assessments, conduct targeting exercises and organize food distributions. Beyond physical access, the cooperating partner's availability and capacity can be another critical constraint, which is being aggravated by the current reduction in humanitarian funding. WFP's targeting and prioritization processes often depend on the presence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or other partners that carry out data collection, community engagement, registration and distribution. In contexts where partners are few, overstretched or lacking technical expertise, WFP's options for conducting more elaborate targeting are limited.

83. Finally, time constraints determine the feasibility of certain targeting options. These could be imposed by the urgency of providing life-saving assistance, following a sudden-onset emergency, but could

⁸⁸ In other cases where access was severely constrained, WFP has used a self-registration tool. In Sudan, a self-registration exercise was conducted to enable direct digital cash transfers through a banking app. In Palestine, WFP used a self-registration platform that it had advertised through SMS, social media, and local authorities and partners to affected communities. See WFP (2024) State of Palestine Annual Country Report 2024; WFP (2024) Sudan Annual Country Report.

also be created by donor funding cycles and seasonal dynamics. As noted above, vulnerability-based targeting typically requires significant preparation time for data collection, analysis and community consultations. Blanket or status-based approaches, on the other hand, can be deployed quickly. When time is short and needs are high, WFP often defaults to faster approaches (while noting the need to transition to more refined targeting in the near future). In practice, however, such transitions are often delayed or deprioritized due to resource or access challenges.

2.1.6.2 Targeting and prioritization approaches applied in countries are largely appropriate

84. While the targeting and prioritization approaches themselves are well documented, especially following the roll-out of the Global Assurance Framework, reasons for choosing the approaches or ways in which external constraints were addressed, are not. This is understandable, given the high level of political sensitivity this would involve in many contexts. Still, some donors and partners would appreciate a better understanding of how WFP addresses related trade-offs and dilemmas.

85. All targeting and prioritization approaches have their strengths and weaknesses; there is usually no “perfect” approach for any given context. In the absence of systematic data on inclusion and exclusion errors (see Section 2.2), the evaluation team conducted a qualitative assessment of the appropriateness of different choices, based on interviews with WFP staff and external partners, document review and context analysis. This included discussing the choices for or against specific approaches, lightly comparing the approaches chosen to those of other organizations and exploring potential alternatives with humanitarian workers and affected people.

86. Although some external global-level observers voiced criticism of WFP’s targeting practices, the evaluation team has found that, on the whole, the approaches applied in the case study countries largely demonstrated appropriate conduct. In most cases, criticism of WFP’s targeting and prioritization approaches seemed to stem more from a lack of knowledge about WFP practices than from an opposition to the specific approaches taken, reinforcing the importance of communicating both approaches and the rationales for them.

87. The evaluation finds, in almost all cases reviewed for this evaluation, that the **targeting** approaches chosen were mostly appropriate, given the constraints outlined above and the conditions, including social and conflict dynamics, in each context. For example:

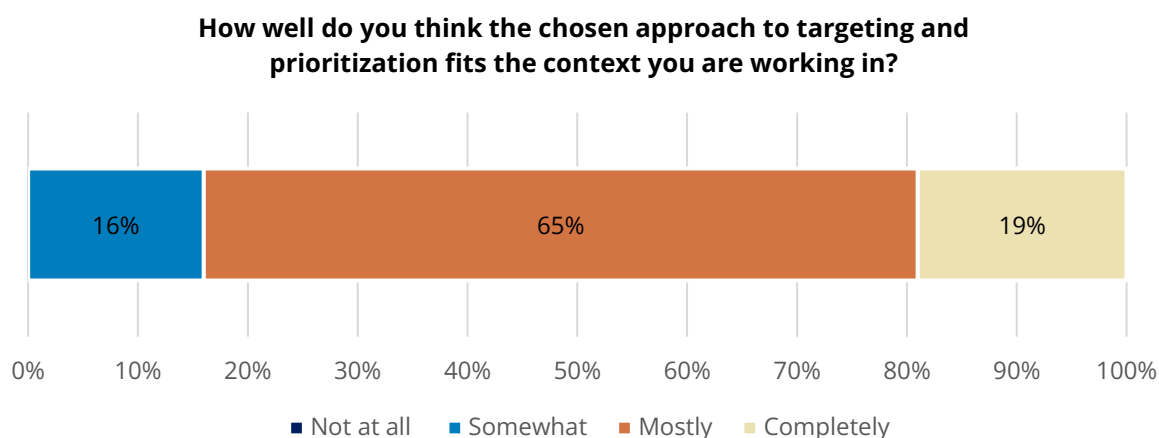
- In **Jordan**, the choice to opt for blanket targeting in camps and for vulnerability-based targeting outside of camps was supported by most stakeholders, citing the facts that livelihood opportunities are more limited in camps and that strong support for the camps is an important priority for the Government (in support of its generous attitude to hosting refugees). The choice of the proxy-means testing model for targeting refugees outside of camps is understandable, considering the advantages of closer collaboration with UNHCR and the desire to strategically align the targeting of refugee assistance with the national social safety net. WFP pragmatically introduced additional inclusion filters to address the practical limitations and problems of the proxy-means testing-based approach.
- In **Haiti**, WFP sensibly employs different targeting approaches depending on whether the area has access constraints and whether there is an acute emergency (where access is severely constrained, WFP relies on referrals, for example, from health centres, which can refer, among others, families with malnourished children, survivors of gender-based violence and persons living with HIV/AIDS). For its regular response in areas that are accessible and not affected by an emergency, the combined use of social registry data and community-based approaches (depending on the age of the social registry data) is plausible. However, the evaluation team agrees with some interviewed stakeholders who commented that the targeting approach could be more considerate of displacement as a factor.
- In the **Dominican Republic**, interviewees raised some questions as to whether the right geographic areas were chosen for anticipatory action. Within those areas, the choice to register all people seemed appropriate to ensure targeting would be based on up-to-date data.

- In **South Sudan**, the country office has fully adopted a community-based targeting approach, following an initial phase of geographical targeting. The geographic prioritization combines findings from the annual IPC assessment with WFP's own data and analysis on shifting patterns of food insecurity. Previously, the country office relied more heavily on blanket assistance, but with the move toward vulnerability-based targeting, there has been a strategic shift toward a more refined and needs-based allocation of assistance. A community-based targeting approach is appropriate given the many constraints to collect data on vulnerability for a more data-driven approach. While the introduction of vulnerability-based targeting for refugees, in collaboration with UNHCR, can be regarded as contentious given the high levels of vulnerability among the refugee population, it is justified against a background of strong needs to prioritize and concerns about potential tensions between host communities and refugees.
- In **Ituri (DRC)**, evidence from December 2024⁸⁹ retrospectively confirmed the choice to provide blanket assistance to internally displaced people in camps, as high levels of acute food insecurity were prevalent there. WFP only continues to provide assistance where food insecurity remains high. Statistical analyses assessing the effect of different durations of assistance on household food security outcomes also justified the chosen duration of food assistance. Available data also confirm that internally displaced people residing in camps are consistently more food insecure than those living in host communities, justifying the use of vulnerability-based targeting for internally displaced people outside of camps. The decision to systematically assist both internally displaced people in camps and surrounding host populations was primarily driven by relevant pragmatic considerations, including the need to preserve social cohesion and prevent tensions or incidents linked to perceived inequities.
- **Nigeria** proves to be an exception, as it shows the difficulty of maintaining appropriateness in targeting and the risk of path dependency, whereby past targeting decision and criteria continued to be applied although conditions have changed. Specifically, internally displaced people in camps and camp-like settings, who make up the bulk of the people served by WFP and were displaced five to ten years ago, are still targeted due to their status as internally displaced people, irrespective of their level of food insecurity. For the targeting of the lean season response and host communities, household-level vulnerability plays a larger role.

88. WFP staff consulted for this evaluation share this overall impression on appropriateness. Among staff who responded to the survey, 19 percent deem their country office's approach to targeting and prioritization as completely fitting the context they are working in, 65 percent see it as mostly fitting, 16 percent as somewhat fitting, and no respondent saw it as not at all fitting (Figure 10).

⁸⁹ WFP Ituri suboffice (Dec 2024), Priorisation des besoins : analyses approfondies et perspectives exploitables pour soutenir la priorisation programmatique de l'assistance alimentaire dans la province de l'Ituri.

Figure 10. Fit of targeting and prioritization approaches to different contexts



Source: Online survey, n=68 respondents (from 46 country offices).

89. Another dimension of appropriateness relates to approaches being adapted to the local cultural context. The case studies highlight some shortcomings in this regard. For example, eligibility criteria were not sufficiently adapted to polygamous families. Thus, the families of second and third wives in Nigeria were categorized as “households headed by women” and classified as highly vulnerable on this basis, irrespective of the socioeconomic status of the family as a whole. The ensuing situation, where assistance was given to some of one husband’s wives, but not others, led to intra-family tensions. In addition, there were a couple of factors that could potentially influence a household’s wealth and food security status that WFP was not able to consider due to cultural and data constraints. In South Sudan, for example, WFP was not able to reflect cattle ownership in the eligibility criteria; in Jordan, it could not consider which refugee families received remittances from abroad.

90. **Prioritization** – deciding which people within a targeted population receive assistance when overall identified needs cannot be met, or when entitlements are reduced due to resource constraints – is a function of the targeting approach used and the funding available. The funding available determines how much prioritization is required, while the targeting approach chosen determines what data are available for prioritization and what role communities play in the process. Much like for the choice of targeting approach, the choice of prioritization approach is mostly context-specific and determined by each country office. Country offices vary in the extent to which they acknowledge and manage the inherent trade-offs within the prioritization process.

91. In the absence of corporate guidance documents (until 2025), many country offices have reduced the amount and duration of assistance when forced to prioritize, often in addition to reducing the number of people receiving assistance.

- In **South Sudan**, WFP introduced for 2024 a staggered approach to prioritizing the amount and duration of assistance, based on levels of food insecurity. At the time the country case study was conducted, areas with the highest levels of food insecurity (IPC Phase 4, with pockets of IPC Phase 5) received food rations that cover 70 percent of their caloric needs (“70 percent food rations”) for eight months. Priority 2 counties (IPC Phase 4, with at least 75 percent of the population in need of humanitarian assistance) got 50 percent rations for six months. Priority 3 counties (IPC Phase 3 or 4, with at least 70 percent of the population in need) were to receive 50 percent rations for five months. In refugee camps, 50 percent rations were to be provided for between 4 and 12 months, depending on the vulnerability of each camp population. In some cases, particularly vulnerable households received additional support.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ WFP (2024) South Sudan 2024 Comp Narrative [internal document].

- In **DRC**, no recent prioritization was identified at the time the country case study was conducted. Standard procedures in the event of resource constraints or pipeline disruptions involved first shifting between food and cash modalities if the constraint was temporary. If constraints persisted, the approach was to emphasize depth over breadth by prioritizing only extremely vulnerable households, rather than covering both extremely and very vulnerable groups.
- In **Nigeria**, all people assisted received the same ration, set at 65 percent of daily caloric needs. When needing to prioritize, WFP shortened the duration of assistance for the lean season response and reduced the number of internally displaced people and host community members who received assistance.
- In **Jordan**, WFP significantly reduced the number of refugees living outside of camps who receive assistance; it also reduced the transfer value of its cash-based assistance.

92. When trying to understand the tendency to reduce rations and transfer values in interviews and documentation reviewed for this evaluation, several factors offer at least partial explanations: interviewees and other evidence indicate that communities, as well as national and local authorities, often prefer the approach of “giving a little to everybody”, and in some instances authorities even pressure WFP to adopt this approach, prioritizing social cohesion over potentially contentious decisions to discontinue assistance for certain groups. WFP’s institutional incentives pull in the same direction, as several interviewees explained: WFP is committed to its humanitarian principles, which include the imperative to address human suffering wherever it is found (“humanity”). WFP also has a self-understanding of being “the world’s largest humanitarian organization”. Some interviewees mentioned that – to prove the organization’s relevance and reach – WFP and its donors therefore have an incentive to show that a large number of people was assisted. Moreover, country offices often use the number of people in need of assistance to advocate for more funding. There is a tension between highlighting the severity of a crisis in terms of a high total number of people in need and then only prioritizing a narrow segment of those identified as in need.

EQ1.2

2.1.6.3 WFP could be more agile in adapting its targeting and prioritization approaches to changing conditions

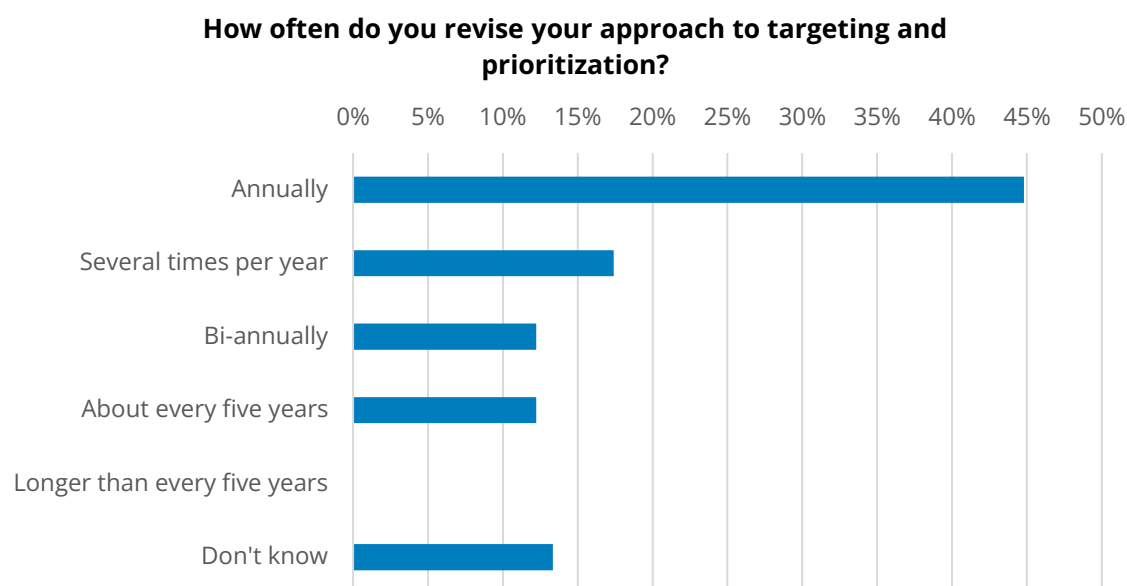
93. As shown above, WFP has a lot of leeway to adopt different targeting and prioritization approaches, opting for approaches based on the specific conditions and country context. Within each country, however, WFP’s agility regarding the adaptation of these approaches over time is limited and shows a lot of signs of path dependency. Once an approach is in place, investments made towards it tend to shape subsequent choices; the approach is rarely altered.

94. Most survey respondents indicated that they revised their targeting and prioritization approaches on an annual basis, if not more frequently. The country case studies found that WFP is often slow to adapt more fundamental aspects of their targeting and prioritization approaches to contextual change, although it is true that some changes are made frequently (for example, to caseload numbers or the locations where assistance is provided). In Haiti, for example, the general targeting approach has not been adapted to any significant degree, even though there has been a strong increase in displacement related to violence since 2023. In Nigeria, WFP has not yet successfully moved to vulnerability-based targeting in camps and camp-like situations, despite several attempts over the past years. It also took several years to find a way to more effectively include new arrivals in camps, with SOPs for new arrivals adopted only in 2025, even though new arrivals have presented important issues for at least five years. In DRC, the targeting SOPs produced in early 2024 were judged to be too rigid by field offices and new versions were being drafted in 2025, taking into account the recommendations from a field visit from headquarters.

95. The Jordan country office, which closely monitors its targeting and prioritization practices and engenders cross-functional collaboration on targeting and prioritization decisions, is an exception among the case studies. In 2023, WFP (in cooperation with UNHCR and the World Bank) introduced a new approach to targeting and prioritization in Jordan at the same time as it reduced transfer values. When community consultations and monitoring results pointed to problems in the approach, WFP swiftly adapted it, adjusting transfer values for non-camp refugees categorized as “priority 2” and introducing additional

filters to reduce the exclusion errors of the proxy-means testing model. In 2024, the country office proved agile again when it used additional available data on the potential of refugee households to gain employment in order to prioritize assistance. Despite the large-scale prioritization (leading to the discontinuation of cash assistance for 100,000 households), levels of acute food insecurity among refugee households did not increase significantly.

Figure 11. Frequency of revision of targeting and prioritization approaches



Source: Online survey with 65 respondents from 45 country offices and weighted responses so that responses from each country office carry the same weight.

96. When assessing the country offices that had to prioritize due to resource shortfalls, the evaluation team found that all had had to act under time pressure when conducting a retargeting exercise or when defining alternative ways of prioritizing assistance. Both WFP staff and cooperating partners interviewed commented frequently that planning horizons did not leave sufficient time to consult communities or to give affected people sufficient advance notice on impending changes. Reasons for this include late or unpredictable donor decisions as well as WFP's tendency to act on budget forecasts late, often in the hope of mobilizing additional funding. Reflecting these dynamics, WFP's implementation plans, which are meant to reflect financial as well as other operational constraints, have recently become overly optimistic.

EQ1.2
EQ4.5

2.1.6.4 A cross-functional approach to targeting and prioritization and adaptive planning support agility, but are currently not used to their full potential

97. Among the elements influencing WFP's targeting and prioritization agility, internal cooperation on related decisions and planning modalities emerged as the most relevant factors. Generally, the recognition that targeting and prioritization should be a cross-functional responsibility within WFP has increased over recent years.⁹¹ As discussed in Section 1.3, a cross-functional working group on targeting and prioritization was created at WFP headquarters to support the development and roll-out of new guidance and good practices. Some country offices have also shifted to setting up a closely integrated and cooperative system connecting their research, analysis and monitoring programme, and management functions for targeting

⁹¹ For example, the cross functional nature of targeting and prioritization is explicitly mentioned in the 2022 ED circular on Management of Targeting Process.

and prioritization. Jordan is a good example of this. Senior management is closely involved in targeting and prioritization (and is involved from the very beginning of any discussions on potential changes to the approach), programme staff actively take part in related discussions, while RAM contributes technical and data expertise, ensuring that monitoring data are used to adapt the approach in an agile way. The 2025 Targeting Assurance Framework requires country offices to establish such practices across all operations, and to establish and document an internal governance structure for targeting and prioritization decision making, for example, through a targeting working group.

98. In several country offices assessed for this evaluation, however, targeting and prioritization continue to be treated largely as a technical task for staff responsible for vulnerability analysis. Both the integration of the monitoring component of RAM and the involvement of programme staff and management could be expanded upon, as could the systematic use of data from community feedback mechanisms in the process. In Nigeria, for example, targeting and prioritization are seen as a RAM responsibility. While programme staff are well informed on the details of targeting and prioritization, other members of the country office team have limited understanding.. In Haiti, limited cooperation with management and programme staff hindered the timely resolution of some key practical issues, such as the requirement for cooperating partners to pre-register at least 125 percent of the planned caseload and the need to exclude the “excess” 25 percent during the verification phase, irrespective of verification findings. In DRC, targeting strategies and standard operating procedures are increasingly developed through collaboration between RAM and programme teams and subsequently validated by management, with technical input from regional targeting officers and headquarters. Similar collaborative models exist in Sri Lanka and South Sudan, where RAM plays a leading role in managing data and analysis for targeting, but does so in close coordination with programme staff, ensuring that decisions are not made in isolation. However, the evaluation found that programme staff had a limited understanding of certain technical aspects underpinning vulnerability classification, such as the selection of criteria, weighting systems and proxy-means testing calculations.

99. Survey findings echo similar situations in other country offices. Several survey respondents working in programme and RAM point out that their suggestions for targeting and prioritization are frequently contested by senior management; they believe they should have stronger independence in these decisions. However, the involvement of senior management in country case studies was essential for ensuring that targeting and prioritization approaches reflect important broader considerations, such as the need to coordinate with other organizations or to take political or conflict-related dynamics into account. Rather than aiming for more independence for RAM and programme staff, pushing for closer internal cooperation from the start when designing targeting and prioritization approaches would be an effective way to address this issue in line with what the Targeting Assurance Framework requests.

100. In addition to these tools, country offices generally utilize a relatively dynamic operations planning approach that has recently been adjusted to encourage country offices to prioritize early on (at the level of strategic planning). The overall planning approach involves establishing high-level objectives within 4-5 year country strategic plans and 2-3 year interim country strategic plans. These plans provide overarching guidance and define the operation’s overall priorities, including annual targets in terms of the number of people planned to be assisted and levels of assistance. The new budgeting guidelines for country strategic plans, effective from 2024 onwards, require country offices to craft more realistic budgets, informed by anticipated donor contributions. Together with the budget revision tool used for emergency response requirements, this marks a notable shift: from a needs-based approach aimed primarily at advocacy and resource mobilization to a more agile strategy that prioritizes resources based on realistic funding expectations.

101. Annual operational plans further refine country strategic plan goals, detailing yearly caseloads, ration sizes and specific interventions across regions and programmes. These annual plans are shaped through vulnerability analyses, such as IPC assessments and WFP’s internal reviews, as well as donor funding outlooks. Some country offices also implement subannual planning, providing flexibility for adaptive management in dynamic environments. A notable example includes South Sudan, which maintains a contingency reserve to adapt rapidly to changing caseloads via monthly distribution plans.

102. Despite the benefits of adaptive planning, the evaluation found limited systematic application of scenario planning and foresight methodologies across country offices in terms of their overall operational planning, and, as a result, also in terms of targeting and prioritization. Notably, there was little evidence of proactive scenario planning, and no reference was made by any interviewee to tools such as the WFP “what-if-planner” (part of “Prisma”). Data for this evaluation were collected in early 2025, when the USA had frozen its humanitarian and development funding and was terminating many grants. Prioritization decisions in 2025, as well as in the preceding years, were therefore largely reactive. This limited WFP’s ability to communicate relevant decisions with appropriate lead times to affected communities and partners.

103. As discussed above, moreover, transitions from blanket or status-based targeting to vulnerability-based targeting to date have been primarily driven by resource shortfalls, rather than strategically planned transitions.

EQ2

2.2 What are the effects of WFP’s targeting and prioritization approaches and practices?

104. WFP has developed sophisticated targeting and prioritization approaches to ensure that assistance reaches those intended: those most affected, at risk of food insecurity or malnutrition and, in the case of programmes meant to enhance resilience and address the root causes of food insecurity, those who are willing and capable to participate in relevant programmes. This chapter on the effects of WFP’s targeting and prioritization discusses available evidence on whether WFP’s assistance reaches those intended. It then explores connections between WFP’s targeting and prioritization approaches and its ability to reach its programmatic objectives. Finally, it covers what effects targeting and prioritization practices have on the social fabric of affected communities.

EQ2.1

2.2.1 Programmes often reach food-insecure people, but WFP does not systematically track targeting errors and does not consistently apply efforts to reduce such errors

WFP does not systematically collect data on inclusion and exclusion errors. This hampers its ability, as well as that of the evaluation team, to assess how well WFP reaches those most in need. That said, it is well known that using the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) for geographic targeting and prioritization results in significant exclusion errors. Within the targeted areas, the fragmented available evidence suggests that WFP has a good record of reaching those intended. However, good practices in reducing targeting errors are unevenly applied – for example, in terms of verifying and de-duplicating lists of people to be assisted. This is related to challenges in implementing WFP’s digital data systems. Gender and diversity criteria are strongly reflected in WFP’s targeting and prioritization approaches, but not always based on evidence and analysis.

105. Since WFP does not systematically measure inclusion and exclusion errors at the corporate level, the evaluation team relied on several proxies to assess the extent to which WFP’s targeting and prioritization approaches enable its assistance to reach the intended people. To gauge the effectiveness of targeting and prioritization approaches, the evaluation has: (1) analysed geographic targeting and prioritization approaches and the inherent exclusion errors they encompass; (2) assessed the dispersed data points on targeting accuracy the evaluation team was able to collect; and (3) examined mechanisms and practices for reducing targeting errors.

2.2.1.1 Inclusion and exclusion errors are not systematically tracked, hampering WFP’s ability to assess how well it reaches those most in need

106. Across the six countries reviewed for this evaluation, only Jordan had a food security outcome monitoring (FSOM) system, assessing on a quarterly basis, levels of food insecurity among samples of both those receiving WFP assistance and those not receiving WFP assistance. These samples provide WFP with an estimate of exclusion and inclusion errors (acknowledging that, in such protracted situations, food-secure

recipients of WFP support could either represent an inclusion error or signal that aid has been effective). In Haiti, WFP used subjective questions in the post-distribution monitoring (PDM) questionnaire to understand perceptions of inclusion and exclusion errors. People assisted by WFP were asked whether any non-vulnerable households were included in the list of people assisted and whether any vulnerable households that should have been on the list had not been selected. In other countries, post-distribution monitoring or food security outcomes tools include general questions on targeting (for example, knowledge of selection criteria or of the organization in charge of the selection in Nigeria) but neither the sample nor the questions were designed to estimate inclusion and exclusion errors.

107. The evaluation team's analysis of audit reports and the online survey confirm that monitoring inclusion and exclusion errors remains the exception rather than the rule. Out of the 42 reviewed audit reports, only Mauritania included a reference to the use of subjective questions like those used in Haiti; Mali was the only country operation that made inclusion and exclusion error rates available. Other audit reports (for example, for Burkina Faso, Cuba and Honduras) also found that there are either no adequately defined outcome indicators or that FSOM is not frequently applied.

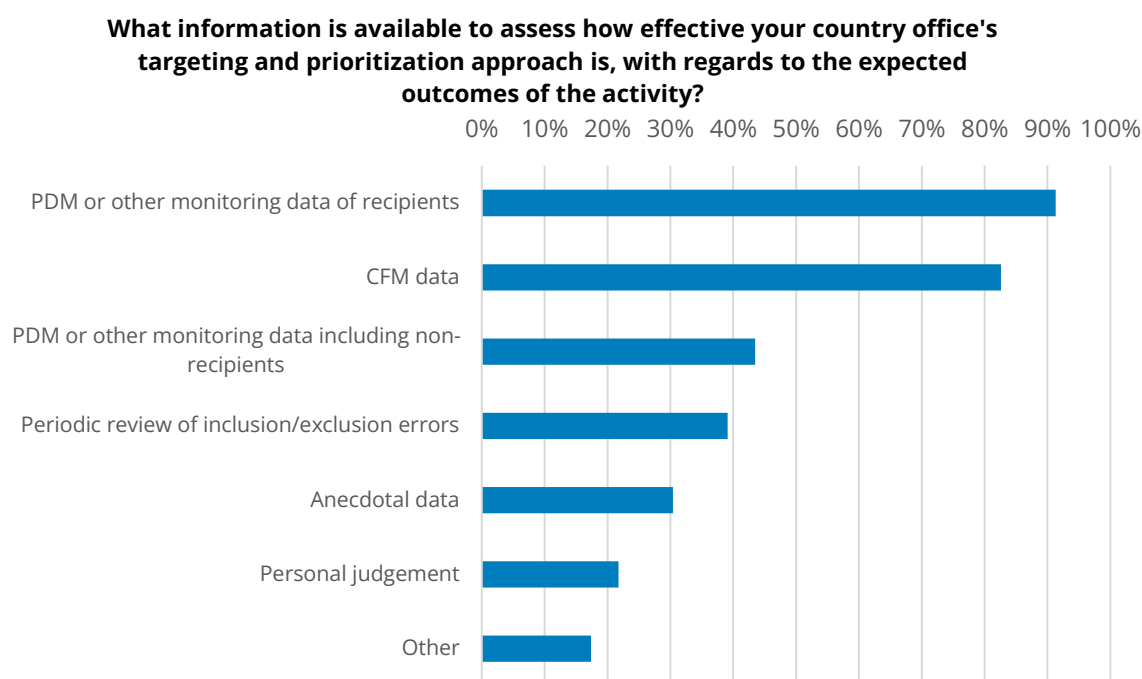
108. This lack of information about inclusion and exclusion errors is not a new issue. Already in 2006, WFP's review of targeting in relief operations highlighted the inability to quantify targeting errors due to a lack of methods and data.⁹² This remains an issue today. The global assurance standards, while providing a framework for monitoring targeting processes, do not specifically require country offices to measure inclusion and exclusion errors. Country offices are expected to "monitor targeting processes and outcomes regularly" – a formulation that remains open to broad interpretation. The Targeting Assurance Framework is also not making the measurement of inclusion and exclusion errors a requirement for operations, but an initiative from mid-2025 by APP seeks to pilot and roll out monitoring methodologies and tools for country offices to regularly monitor targeting errors.⁹³

109. In the absence of direct measurement, most country offices rely on indirect methods to assess the effectiveness of their targeting. While 39 percent of the country offices surveyed reported regularly measuring inclusion or exclusion errors in their operations (Figure 12), these data were not available to the evaluation team, making it impossible for the team to interpret targeting effectiveness and evaluate the appropriateness of the methods used or the frequency with which targeting errors were measured. Most country offices reported using monitoring data from people receiving assistance, followed by community feedback mechanisms. Around 40 percent also included people not receiving WFP assistance in post-distribution monitoring; fewer relied on personal judgment (22 percent) or anecdotal feedback (30 percent). Additional methods mentioned included lessons-learned workshops, programme and impact evaluations, household surveillance systems and oversight missions. These are useful proxies but cannot fully compensate for the absence of robust, systematic and regular measurement of targeting errors. The survey responses indicate that there are also some country offices that conduct post-distribution monitoring with both those receiving WFP assistance and those who do not, but do not use those data to measure inclusion and exclusion errors. Nigeria is one such example: the country office has FSOM data at its disposal but does not distil targeting error measures from them. In these cases, the issue is likely an analytical gap rather than a data gap.

⁹² WFP (2006) Thematic review of targeting in relief operations. Summary Report. WFP/EB.1/2006/7-B. WFP, Rome.

⁹³ WFP (2025) Targeting Advisory - Issue 2, 2025. Methodological Note on Targeting Errors Measurement.

Figure 12. Modalities for monitoring inclusion and exclusion errors according to country offices



Source: Online survey with 68 respondents from 46 country offices and responses from each country office counting as one.

110. In the absence of systematic data on inclusion and exclusion errors, the following sections discuss a range of other indicators that shed light on the extent to which WFP reaches those it intends to reach.

EQ2.1
EQ4.2
EQ4.3

2.2.1.2 Geographic targeting based on IPC results in significant exclusion errors

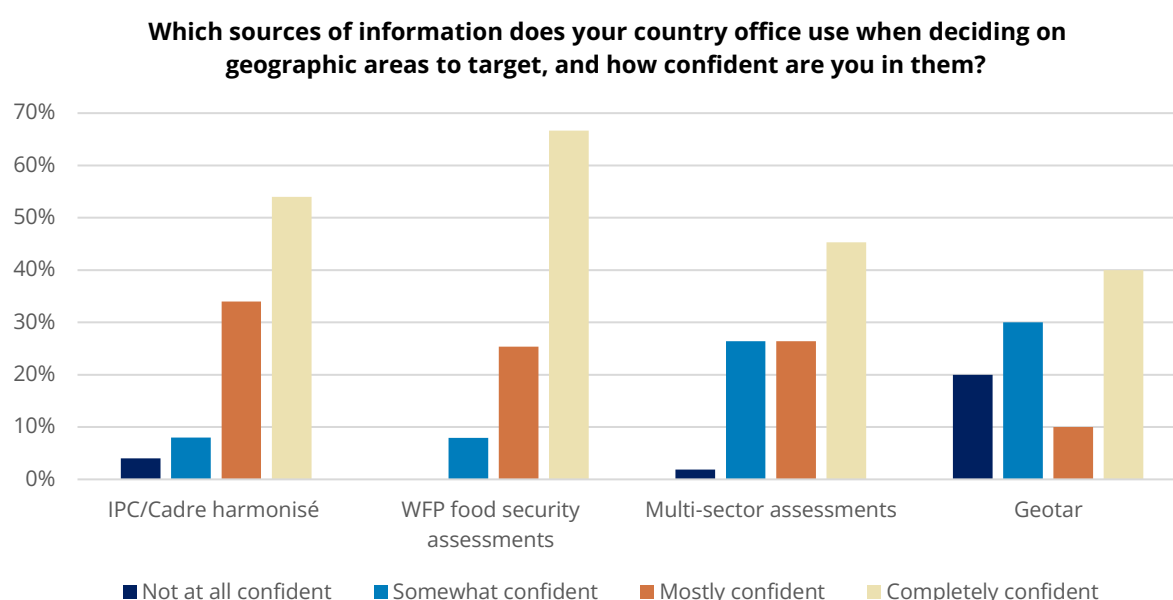
111. In most countries reviewed, geographic targeting based on the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) or Cadre Harmonisé (CH) results constitutes the primary method through which WFP identifies areas for assistance. IPC typically uses WFP food security assessment data as well as data on the prevalence of global acute malnutrition as part of its indicators. However, this approach often results in significant exclusion errors, largely due to the way IPC data classify geographical units and obscure different levels of vulnerability within geographic areas, as well as due to broader data limitations.

112. Geographic targeting prioritizes the most food-insecure areas for intervention. All country offices visited (except for Jordan) use this as their first level of targeting and prioritization. In most cases, geographic targeting and prioritization is informed by IPC data or other food security assessments such as emergency food security assessments (EFSA). The country office in Sri Lanka, for instance, relies on internal food security assessments, as IPC data are not available. In Afghanistan, on the other hand, IPC data are available; yet, WFP has developed a parallel data collection and analysis system to improve geographic targeting precision and overcome certain IPC limitations.

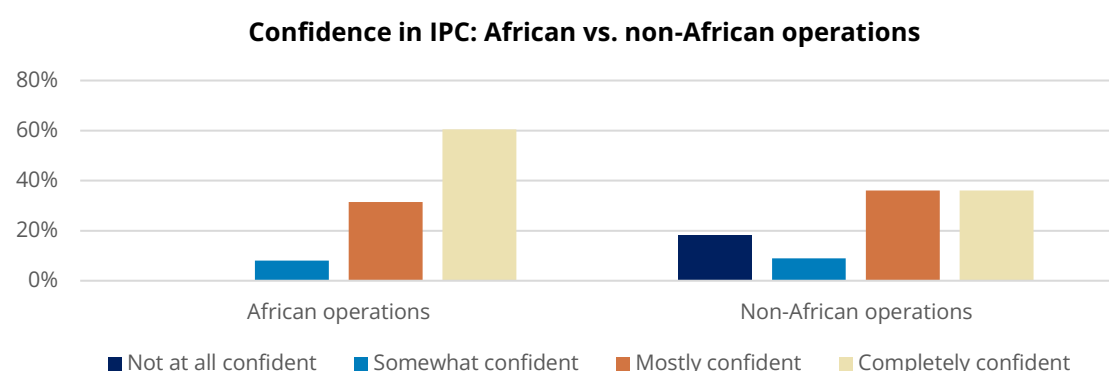
113. Survey respondents report a high level of trust among WFP staff in IPC and EFSA results: 88 percent of respondents expressed confidence in IPC data, and 91 percent in EFSA results. However, regional variation is significant. IPC is less commonly used outside Africa, both due to limited coverage and perceived credibility gaps. Only 72 percent of respondents based outside Africa were confident in IPC results, compared to 92 percent in African operations (Figure 13).⁹⁴

⁹⁴ GeoTar is a geospatial vulnerability profiling and targeting tool for decision makers developed by WFP. It incorporates

Figure 13. Information sources used for targeting decisions



Source: Online survey, n=71 respondents (from 48 country offices)



Source: Online survey, left: n=45 respondents (from 32 African operations); right: n=23 respondents (from 16 non-African operations).

114. In practice, WFP country offices usually complement IPC data with other context-specific information to refine geographic targeting and prioritization. In DRC, IPC is used as a starting point across programmes (URT, resilience, nutrition) but is regularly rounded off with data on shocks and displacements (for URT), integrated context analysis and livelihood surveys (for resilience) and nutrition surveys (for nutrition programming). Country offices responding to the survey report using a broad range of relevant available datasets – ranging from poverty maps to post-distribution monitoring results – to enhance their geographic targeting and prioritization decisions.

115. WFP commonly selects geographic areas classified as IPC Phase 3 and above (that is, at the crisis, emergency or catastrophe levels) for assistance. When forced to prioritize further, WFP focuses on areas

factors such as climate change, agricultural capacity, service utilization and access to generate detailed vulnerability maps. It was piloted in a limited number of countries only; a more comprehensive solution was being developed at the time of this evaluation.

classified as IPC Phase 4 or 5 only to avoid famine(-like) situations. While operationally practical and relevant, this yardstick creates two main problems: pockets of acute needs in lower-classified areas are systematically excluded, while data limitations within IPC curb precision and responsiveness.

116. **Exclusion by design:** IPC classifications indicate an average level of food insecurity in any given area, based on an aggregate of the percentage of people falling into each IPC phase. By design, this masks differences in food insecurity levels within these areas. As a result, vulnerable households in geographical areas classified as IPC Phase 1 or 2 areas usually go unassisted, despite some pockets of those populations being acutely food insecure. The most recent IPC analysis in DRC (January to June 2025) estimates that more than 4 million people in IPC Phase 3 and over 150,000 people in IPC Phase 4 were located in geographical areas classified below IPC Phase 3. In South Sudan, the updated IPC projection for April to July 2025 shows that more than 55,000 people are facing Phase 3 conditions while living in IPC areas classified as Phase 2 (all in the state of Western Equatoria). Due to budget constraints, these individuals were excluded from assistance, despite their high levels of need. While prioritizing areas with the highest concentrations of food insecurity is legitimate, WFP lacks mechanisms to identify and respond to vulnerable populations “hidden” in areas classified as less severely food insecure. This raises concerns about equity and alignment with WFP’s mandate to assist all acutely food-insecure populations – not only those located in IPC Phase 3+ areas. Moreover, some country offices had been asked to restrict assistance to areas in IPC Phase 4 and above due to budget constraints. This further risks undermining the organization’s commitment to providing broad humanitarian coverage. The 2025 Global Assurance Project Lessons Learned report notes that 60 percent of people in IPC Phase 4 are located in areas with an overall rating as IPC Phase 3.⁹⁵ This is a stark reminder of how much geographic targeting and prioritization based on IPC can lead to the exclusion of highly vulnerable population groups.

117. **Insufficient level of data disaggregation:** IPC often focuses on higher administrative levels comprising relatively large geographical areas, which exacerbates the problem of obscuring geographical pockets of food insecurity. In Afghanistan, for instance, IPC assessments are available at the administrative Level 1 (province level). Interviewees reported that each province has IPC Phase 4 or IPC Phase 5 populations, even though the geographical area was classified only as IPC Phase 3 – an effect of taking an average to determine geographical IPC classification. The low-level disaggregation of IPC data is quite widespread. In DRC, IPC covers Levels 1 (provinces) and 2 (territories), whereas finer disaggregation at Levels 3 or 4 is derived from local assessments and expert judgment, which vary in methodology and comparability. In South Sudan, IPC is disaggregated at Level 2 (county), in Haiti at between Level 1 and Level 2 (*zone d’analyse*), while in Nigeria it is disaggregated at Level 2 (local government areas). In contrast to DRC, no deeper classification than the official levels was reported in those countries. WFP’s 2006 review of geographic targeting already highlighted this disaggregation problem in other contexts, including in Malawi and Myanmar.⁹⁶

118. Additionally, IPC usually does not distinguish between different population groups. Given the fact that food (in)security varies significantly along these lines (between internally displaced people, refugees and host communities, respectively), this lack of precision can prove to be quite consequential. In DRC, the March 2025 IPC analysis included group-level disaggregation for the first time, but WFP geographic targeting and prioritization approaches had not yet adjusted to reflect the new data. New IPC data show that 61 percent of internally displaced people are in IPC Phase 3+, compared to 23 percent of the general population, indicating vast discrepancies between affected groups. This justifies the use of separate targeting and prioritization approaches for internally displaced people.

119. In fast-changing environments, the frequency of IPC updates limits its relevance. Due to cost considerations, IPC is typically updated once or twice a year, with only limited subnational updates in between. In DRC, for instance, an early 2025 update was conducted only for the eastern provinces. When

⁹⁵ WFP (2025). Learning Lessons from the Roll-Out of the Global Assurance Project, targeting chapter, final draft.

⁹⁶ WFP (2006) Thematic review of targeting in relief operations. Summary Report. WFP/EB.1/2006/7-B. WFP, Rome.

the situation is very dynamic, WFP and its partners rely on ad hoc provincial alert mechanisms to fill this gap. These mechanisms, however, vary in quality and resourcing.

120. Finally, IPC processes are not immune to political pressures, which limits IPC's utility as a reliable and neutral basis for targeting and prioritization. This can take different forms. In some cases, national authorities may be hesitant to adopt targeting and prioritization decisions based on IPC. In Burkina Faso, for example, national authorities indicated that they would not proceed with the November 2024 Cadre Harmonisé session and the IPC update could not be finalized as a result. In other cases, IPC does not cover all areas. In Nigeria, for example, areas outside of government control are not included in IPC assessments, leading to data gaps in precisely those areas where needs may be highest.

121. While IPC – when available – remains the dominant evidence base for geographic targeting and prioritization, alternatives addressing these limitations are emerging. In Afghanistan, WFP piloted GeoTar and developed a granular, locally-driven vulnerability mapping system that tracks over 3,000 village clusters as an alternative to IPC. Each cluster is assessed using a composite index of food security, socioeconomic conditions and exposure to shocks. Quarterly updates allow WFP to flag emerging “hotspots” and adjust its targeting accordingly. The model applies indicator weights and composite scores to prioritize assistance dynamically. While this approach is resource-intensive and dependent on a robust RAM capacity, it demonstrates that viable alternatives to IPC-based geographic targeting exist and can be appropriate, especially where IPC lacks credibility or granularity. At the same time, country offices face pressure to use IPC, since donors expect WFP to use the established consensus-based, nationally-owned assessment framework. These tensions complicate efforts to adopt more flexible or evidence-driven alternatives.

EQ2.1

2.2.1.3 Within targeted areas, WFP has a good record of reaching those intended, but little is known about exclusion errors

122. While WFP does not systematically measure inclusion and exclusion errors across all contexts, available proxy data – including food insecurity metrics from post-distribution monitoring, food security outcome monitoring (FSOM) and baseline surveys, which are usually disaggregated at least by sex and age – provide indirect evidence that WFP assistance indeed often reaches the food-insecure populations it intends to assist. While such proxy data need careful interpretation and do not compensate for the lack of regular targeting error measurement and analysis, they indicate that recent targeting and prioritization approaches have successfully reduced inclusion errors, although exclusion errors remain a concern.

- In **DRC**, new targeting tools help minimize inclusion errors, but exclusion concerns persist for newly arrived internally displaced people. WFP has been applying a census-based approach in prioritized areas since 2024, collecting data on all households in the area and applying vulnerability scorecards to them. This systematic and comprehensive approach leads to low inclusion errors. Baseline surveys from several locations show that between 88 percent and 99 percent of households receiving WFP assistance were moderately or severely food insecure at the start of assistance, implying inclusion errors ranging from just 1 percent to 12 percent, depending on the site. Feedback related to inclusion errors accounted for only 0.09 percent of all feedback in 2024 across the entire DRC, down from 0.4 percent in 2023 – a strikingly low figure, even when considering known limitations of community feedback mechanisms in detecting inclusion issues. However, exclusion errors remain more visible. Focus group discussions and key informant interviews with affected people reveal dissatisfaction among some households about not being included, because they had been absent for the initial registration or had arrived in displacement sites after the initial targeting exercise was completed. These households are then unable to be registered and access assistance until the next round of assistance starts (typically six months later). Feedback on exclusion errors accounted for 7.7 percent of all feedback in 2024, down from 21.8 percent in 2023, demonstrating significant improvements and better performance of the new targeting system.
- In **Nigeria**, FSOM reports do not make the Consolidated Approach for Reporting Food Security Indicators (CARI) score explicit; additionally, baseline data are unclear, making it difficult to assess potential inclusion errors. The FSOM report from June 2024 indicates that 85 percent of the people

receiving aid have poor or borderline food consumption. This suggests that the inclusion error is lower than 15 percent and that the food consumption scores would likely have been much worse without any assistance being delivered. However, the absence of clear baseline data and CARI scores means that this figure must be interpreted with caution. Qualitative data from focus group discussions with people not receiving WFP assistance reveal persistent concerns about perceived favouritism and corruption in the targeting process, with local leaders reportedly influencing the selection of people to be assisted, leading to inclusion errors. No information is available to assess exclusion errors.

- In **Haiti**, people receiving assistance are asked questions on perceived inclusion and exclusion errors as part of the post-distribution monitoring. In the third quarter of 2023, the perceived inclusion error was only 1.9 percent, while 23.5 percent of people assisted reported some perceived exclusion error.
- In **South Sudan**, baseline outcome monitoring assessments from December 2023 show that only 2 percent of households targeted for unconditional resource transfers were food secure at the start of the programme, demonstrating a very low inclusion error. No information is available on exclusion errors in post-distribution monitoring reports covering unconditional resource transfers. Cooperating partners highlighted the general effectiveness of targeting in reaching the most vulnerable, although systematic and robust measurement of targeting errors is lacking.

123. For resilience activities such as asset creation and livelihood programmes, assessing targeting effectiveness is more challenging. These resilience-oriented interventions often target communities or groups based on broader vulnerability or their recovery potential, rather than acute food insecurity, rendering food security proxies less relevant to judge effectiveness. For instance, in South Sudan, the asset creation and livelihood programme specifically targets households classified as poor or very poor, with an emphasis on households with members capable of contributing to asset creation. The outcome monitoring report from June 2024 shows that 2 percent of selected households were food secure when the programme was launched, indicating a strong ability to include the most vulnerable in resilience programmes. However, 47 percent of surveyed households suggested that they know of people who they think deserve to receive assistance (based on the targeting criteria) but were not targeted for the programme. While the much smaller caseload of asset creation and livelihood programmes increases the likelihood of exclusion by design, the findings from South Sudan point out that these are perceived as exclusion errors.⁹⁷ Focus group discussions and key informant interviews with affected people and cooperating partners in DRC and Sri Lanka generally reflect satisfaction with asset creation and livelihood targeting processes and their transparency, despite isolated reports of exclusion or clientelism.

124. Although they lack formal inclusion and exclusion error tracking, WFP nutrition programmes benefit from surveillance mechanisms. While these may have gaps depending on the quality and capacity of local health facilities and community screening processes, partners, health authorities and community members judged them as effective in the case study countries. In DRC, WFP's partnerships with actors such as UNICEF, Action Contre la Faim and the Congolese Ministry of Health enable robust monitoring of the nutrition status of affected communities and community-based outreach. Referral systems for malnutrition cases are functioning well and nutrition interventions are often integrated with other modalities – for example, chronic malnutrition prevention is linked with resilience activities, while acute malnutrition prevention is paired with unconditional resource transfers. As a result, targeting in nutrition programmes – particularly in zones with good basic health infrastructure – is perceived to be accurate, with limited room for significant inclusion or exclusion errors.

⁹⁷ WFP (2024) WFP South Sudan Country Office 2023 Round 2 Outcome Monitoring Asset Creation and Livelihoods (ACL). June 2024.

2.2.1.4 Good practices in reducing targeting errors are unevenly applied

125. Some level of inclusion and exclusion errors is inevitable in any system that targets and prioritizes assistance. Making an effort to minimize these errors, where possible, is therefore critical. Within WFP, different country offices have developed positive practices to reduce such errors (particularly inclusion errors). However, these good practices are not applied systematically and vary widely across contexts, with notably fewer institutionalized mechanisms to reduce exclusion errors.

126. **Accountability measures:** Several country offices have established good practices to limit inclusion errors by using layered verification and accountability structures. The application of these practices is varied and three issues affecting implementation stand out: (1) the level of implementation of vulnerability verification; (2) the level of separation of responsibilities among cooperating partners; and (3) the use of additional exclusion criteria.

- Vulnerability verification. While eligibility verification is mandatory according to the Targeting Assurance Framework, practices in country offices vary. In DRC, WFP administers door-to-door assessments to assess whether households meet vulnerability criteria in out-of-camp locations. In Haiti, WFP conducts a full verification of lists of people to be assisted, developed through community-based processes, resulting in a significant reduction of the number of people assisted. In DRC, Sri Lanka, South Sudan and Nigeria, WFP recommends spot checks after the initial identification of eligible households to validate whether a sample of selected households meets vulnerability criteria. If discrepancies exceed a 10-20 percent threshold, the vulnerability scoring process is repeated in full – a practice that incentivizes accurate assessments by cooperating partners. The evaluation team could not, however, verify whether spot checks had been implemented as planned.
- Separation of responsibilities and roles among cooperating partners. In DRC, South Sudan and Nigeria, an increased division of responsibilities among cooperating partners – in line with the requirements of the Targeting Assurance Framework – helps mitigate potential conflicts of interest and enhances checks and balances. In practice, this means that one partner handles targeting, another registration and a third manages distribution. This approach reduces operational risks and provides clear accountability for errors. However, this practice has cost implications and is not consistently applied, as also noted in recent audit reports.
- Use of exclusion criteria to refine selection of people to be assisted. Some country offices apply exclusion criteria to curb inclusion errors. In Haiti, households are excluded from food assistance, irrespective of their vulnerability score, if they have electric appliances, a car or a motorbike. In Jordan, a recent prioritization effort led to refugee households with employment potential being excluded from food assistance. This practice, however, still seems to be comparatively rare.

127. **Digital registration systems:** Digital registration systems (such as the software “SCOPE”) are key to reducing the risk of inclusion errors. These systems are still facing significant implementation challenges. Evidence from audit reports and field visits indicates that inclusion errors are higher where SCOPE is not deployed. One of SCOPE’s key advantages is that it allows for the identification of duplicates (it identifies individuals or households who are already receiving WFP assistance, as well as duplicate identities). Deduplication is especially helpful in contexts where the population is highly mobile or where fraudulent practices are common. In DRC, for example, households and their members must be physically present on SCOPE registration day for headcounts. On average, only 70 percent of the originally declared household members are observed during registration. Additional deduplication (the removal of individuals already registered in other locations) further reduces the caseload by 10 to 20 percent, resulting in an overall reduction of at least 40 percent compared to the initial list. These practices reduce inclusion errors and free up resources to assist additional vulnerable populations elsewhere in the country.

128. The roll-out of SCOPE, however, remains limited. SCOPE was designed for emergency programmes (other technologies like Farm2Go and CODA are available for resilience and nutrition programmes). As of late 2024, SCOPE was used by 59 WFP country offices. These do not use SCOPE universally across all activities and suboffices. For instance, 13 countries reported that they were not using SCOPE for cash and voucher activities in 2024. In Nigeria, the use of SCOPE was piloted in 2021 for in-kind transfers and scaled up to cover over 200,000 people by October 2023. Yet, most of the lean season assistance (for over 550,000

people) was managed using manual processes and did not rely on SCOPE. Most country offices roll out SCOPE in stages, depending on context and available resources. Audit reports have highlighted concerns among country offices regarding the costs of using and maintaining SCOPE, as well as regarding the adaptation of SCOPE for in-kind assistance.

129. Field visits and conducted interviews point to persistent challenges in implementation. One such challenge is the recurring issue of time lags when using SCOPE for deduplication. Time lags occur because some parts of the identity management process require manual assessment, which are, in some cases, outsourced to third parties with proprietary biometric reconciliation algorithms. While this enhances accuracy, it often introduces delays, particularly since processing requires staff capacity and must at times be conducted off-site on dedicated servers. A 2023 review of identity management and SCOPE noted widespread concerns about slow performance in background processing and biometric checks.⁹⁸ In DRC, for example, deduplication for one site typically takes three to four days. Since data must be shared externally to be processed, the deduplication cannot be done on-site at the registration table, especially when the registration sites are in remote locations without internet connectivity. Most affected people will learn only at the first distribution that some members of their households have been identified as duplicates and removed from their household member list, leading to incomprehension and frustration. Time lags are being reduced as technology, equipment and internet coverage improve; some level of delays remain inevitable.

130. Hardware and connectivity challenges similarly continue to constrain the use of SCOPE, especially in remote or insecure locations. The SCOPE digital card printer in the DRC province of Ituri, for example, can print only 600 cards per day. Staff would need more than 30 days to print enough cards to cover a DRC displacement site for 20,000 families. Distribution delays were observed in DRC when biometric equipment malfunctioned; specialized WFP staff had to intervene on-site to troubleshoot. While some of these responsibilities have shifted to cooperating partners, their ability to manage and troubleshoot SCOPE tools varies significantly. In South Sudan, for example, WFP has reduced its SCOPE team following recent cost-cutting measures, making the country office more reliant on cooperating partners whose digital capacities often vary.

131. Other challenges include the lack of interoperability between SCOPE and other WFP systems, notably Mobile Operational Data Acquisition (MoDa), The Country Office Monitoring and Evaluation Tool (COMET) and SugarCRM. In DRC, like in many other country offices, MoDa is used to collect vulnerability data; those data, however, cannot be automatically transferred into SCOPE. Instead, lists of people assisted must be manually uploaded without details on vulnerability scores, limiting the use of data for future analysis. Some country offices have developed custom-made ways to integrate the two systems (with headquarters support), but at great cost and without the ability to scale the developed solutions to other contexts. The frequently resulting lack of data integration is not in line with the Executive Director's circular on targeting, which calls for registration systems to include sufficient individual and household-level data to minimize errors and to support prioritization decisions in compliance with WFP's data protection policies.

132. Similar interoperability challenges, compounded by concerns about data protection and limited data sharing practices, persist with external data systems such as UNHCR's PROGRESS. In Jordan, WFP operates a parallel SCOPE database due to the lack of interoperability between systems, hampering joint programming, list reconciliation and coordinated management of assistance. Due to this and other challenges, inter-agency deduplication mechanisms have been reported by few countries and generally remain rare, as also highlighted in audit reports.

133. **Appeals:** The ability to appeal is recognized as one of the most effective tools to reduce exclusion errors. However, this remains inadequate across most WFP operations. While visible efforts have been made to set up community feedback mechanisms where governments do not impose restrictions, these and other available systems rarely function as effective channels for appealing against targeting and prioritization decisions. In addition to the lack of transparency on targeting and prioritization processes

⁹⁸ WFP (2023) IDM & CBT system landscape review.

described further below, reasons for observed shortcomings in the ability to appeal include:⁹⁹

- Unflexible caseloads. Many WFP country offices operate with fixed numbers of people to be assisted for any given area and lack a “buffer caseload” to absorb households identified through appeals. As a result, operations often cannot adjust the lists of people receiving WFP assistance mid-cycle, even when appeals are legitimate. The Haiti country office, for example, lacks a formal, structured feedback mechanism to address exclusion. In DRC, WFP’s centralized feedback system cannot respond to valid inclusion requests that arise between distribution rounds. For instance, displaced families arriving mid-cycle are required to wait until the next targeting process – typically six months later – without an interim solution available. Even in the country operation in Jordan, which had an appeal mechanism that led to the re-inclusion of a number of cases after the targeting mechanism was changed in 2023, no similar flexibility existed following an additional prioritization exercise in 2024.
- Lack of formal integration of appeals via feedback mechanisms. While most country offices have formal community feedback mechanisms, often using sophisticated systems like SugarCRM to combine feedback received through various channels, appeals are not systematically channelled through them. Instead, people who want to appeal or complain often go through more informal structures involving local leaders. This approach risks reinforcing social exclusion and power imbalances, particularly for marginalized groups such as displaced households or minorities, who may not have equal access to these leaders or may fear retaliation. In addition, there is a lack of integration between different data systems, such as SugarCRM and SCOPE.

134. Across the various case study countries, affected communities repeatedly complained about their inability to appeal. Respondents voiced frustration about not knowing who held decision making authority or how they would go about contesting their exclusion. In many cases, there was no visible pathway to seek redress, leading to resignation and mistrust. These challenges represent a broader pattern. Recent audit reports consistently identify weak or absent appeal and verification mechanisms as drivers of inclusion and exclusion errors. Audits in Angola (2024), Afghanistan (2024), Madagascar (2023), Chad (2023), Guinea (2023) and Mauritania (2022) all highlight elevated targeting risks where redress systems are missing or underperforming.¹⁰⁰

EQ2.1

2.2.1.5 Gender and diversity criteria are strongly reflected in targeting and prioritization approaches but not always based on evidence

135. Almost all data-driven targeting and prioritization approaches reviewed for this evaluation determine vulnerability criteria and their respective weights based on a statistical analysis. Additional criteria are often added to the mix, either by the community (as is the case in DRC, Haiti and Nigeria) or by WFP and its partners (for example, in Jordan), frequently based on previous experiences on relevant criteria affecting vulnerability. As a result, gender and other diversity and inclusion criteria consistently feature strongly in the targeting and prioritization mechanisms devised by WFP. Households headed by women, households headed by the elderly, a high dependency ratio and the presence of household members with a disability are consistently used as vulnerability criteria across the evaluated countries. The recently issued guidance on inclusive targeting and prioritization includes additional examples highlighting inclusive practices.¹⁰¹

136. However, a number of evaluation interviewees and a growing body of literature-based evidence suggest that these criteria are often used generically; they are frequently not sufficiently contextualized and validated by evidence. In some cases, the use of generic gender, disability and other protection or inclusion criteria therefore does not help identify those most at risk of food insecurity but may, counter-productively, increase targeting errors. A 2023 Benin study, for instance, found that households headed by women were less likely to experience food insecurity than households headed by men, likely due to women’s income

⁹⁹ At the time of this evaluation, work was ongoing at headquarters level to address these challenges.

¹⁰⁰ See Annex XII for sources.

¹⁰¹ WFP (2025) Inclusive targeting and prioritization processes. WFP, Rome.

contributions and coping strategies in that context.¹⁰² In a comprehensive refugee vulnerability survey in the Kakuma camp in Kenya in 2016, researchers discovered that households with disabled or elderly members were not necessarily worse off and, according to many measures, were actually better off than average.¹⁰³ While these examples may be exceptions, they highlight the need to analyse inclusion issues in each context.

137. In the case studies conducted for this evaluation, the evaluation team found a general lack of documented justification, technical annexes or analytical validation justifying sociodemographic criteria used to determine vulnerability. The Dominican Republic provides an exception to this general pattern by including the results of the statistical analysis in their targeting SOPs. At the same time, interviewees in several contexts felt that the application of certain gender-related criteria was not appropriate to the specific cultural context. One example would be the case of defining what a “household headed by woman” is in the context of polygamy.

EQ2.3

2.2.2 Insufficient levels of assistance and a lack of programme integration linked to different targeting logics undermine WFP’s ability to reach its programmatic objectives

WFP’s targeting and prioritization approaches also affect whether WFP reaches people with the right interventions. WFP has recently started to collect data on the intensity and the nutritional adequacy of the emergency assistance it provides. Both datasets show that WFP assistance has been spread thinly due to prioritization decisions, making it harder to reach positive food security outcomes. Different programme and targeting logics have also hindered the integration of emergency and resilience programmes, limiting WFP’s ability to “graduate” people out of emergency assistance in areas experiencing recurrent shocks.

138. WFP’s targeting and prioritization approaches do not only influence whether WFP reaches the right people but also whether it reaches them with the right interventions and the right level of assistance. This section explores how targeting and prioritization affect the quality of WFP’s programmes and its ability to reach its programmatic objectives. Two aspects emerged as most relevant during this evaluation: (1) the extent to which WFP provides the right level of assistance; and (2) the extent to which WFP delivers integrated programmes to affected people.

2.2.2.1 Levels of assistance are largely inadequate

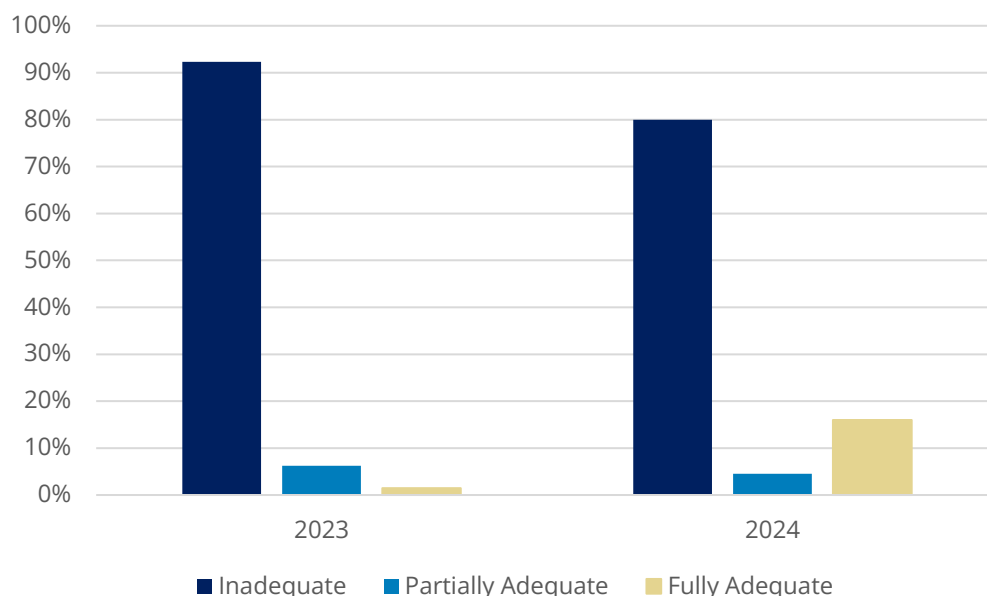
139. “We bring life-saving food to people displaced by conflict and made destitute by disasters” is the standard WFP set for itself in its mission statement.¹⁰⁴ This standard is not about simply reaching people with any level of aid; its aim is to ensure that people are better able to meet their own food needs and other essential needs. However, WFP rarely achieves this objective. WFP’s own data on the nutritional adequacy of its assistance, for example, clearly demonstrate a gap – from a nutrition perspective, over 90 percent of WFP’s in-kind assistance in 2023 was inadequate. Although the situation improved slightly in 2024, the level of nutritional inadequacy still stood at 80 percent (Figure 14).

¹⁰² Zakari, M., & Ying, L. (2023) Eliciting the gender income influences on household's food security in West Africa. *Frontiers in Public Health*.

¹⁰³ Kimetrica (2016) Refugee Household Vulnerability Study: Kakuma Refugee Camp – Final Report. Commissioned by WFP and UNHCR. Kimetrica, Nairobi.

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.wfp.org/who-we-are>

Figure 14. Nutritional adequacy of WFP in-kind food rations (actual unconditional resource transfer rations), 2023-2024



Source: Nutritional adequacy data (shared by WFP Nutrition and Food Quality Service).

140. Global data on the amount of food provided per person per day initially suggest the same trend of slight improvement. Following a decrease between 2022 and 2023, 2024 data show a slight increase in the amount of food provided per day (Figure 15a), while the overall number of people assisted has been scaled back (Figure 15b). At the same time, however, the duration of assistance has decreased (Figure 15c). This means that, although people assisted may have received slightly more food per day, they received it on average for fewer days. As a result, the total amount of food distributed per person over the course of a year shows a downward trend (Figure 15d).

Figure 15. Global intensity of assistance: caseloads, total distributed food (URT), duration of assistance and ration size (URT), 2022-2024

Figure 15a. Average amount of food per person assisted per day (in grams).

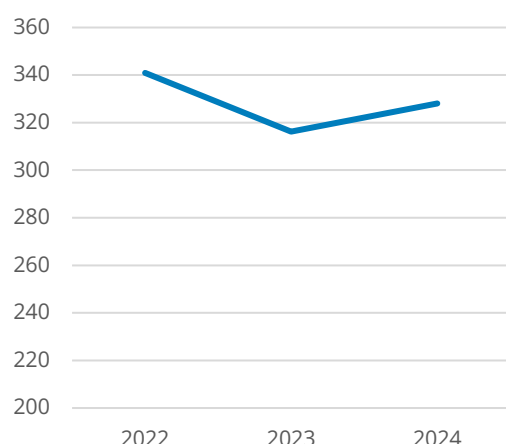


Figure 15b. Number of persons assisted

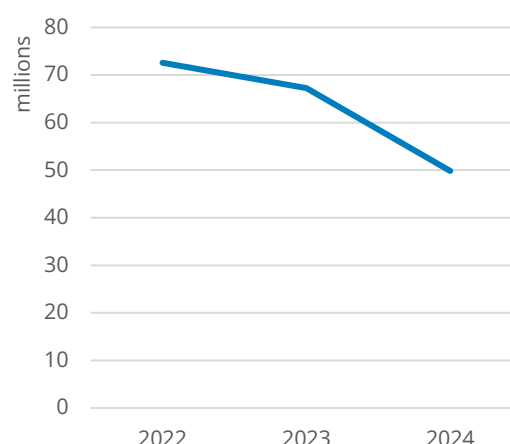


Figure 15c. Average days of food assistance per year

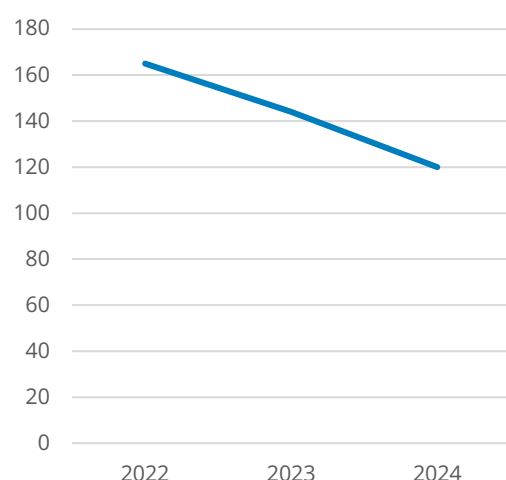
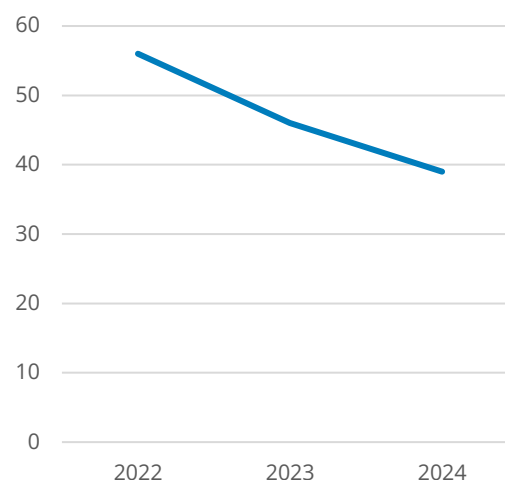


Figure 15d. Average assistance per person per year (in kilograms)



Source: Intensity of assistance data global (shared by WFP Performance Management & Reporting Service).

141. Deciding on breadth versus depth of assistance is a cross-functional task, like other issues related to targeting and prioritization. Management decisions and programme design choices therefore can and should shape such decisions. Available data show that WFP has generally opted to spread its assistance thinly. A range of interviewees questioned whether the assistance provided by WFP is still adequate to improve food security outcomes. This reflects an important ethical dilemma, as it is not immediately clear what the principle of humanity calls for: serving all those in need, even if the level of assistance is so small that it makes little difference or supporting only the most vulnerable among the vulnerable, with a level of assistance that is still impactful. Moreover, even when WFP prioritizes depth, the actual value of transfers received by the intended people may be diluted through informal redistribution, as reported in South Sudan. This does not negate the rationale for pursuing depth, but it highlights a practical limitation.

142. The trend to reduce food rations and cash transfer values is visible in the country case studies conducted for this evaluation (for the full analysis, see Annex VI) and has been highlighted in audit findings for other country offices as well:

- In **Nigeria**, the number of people reached with food assistance increased from 2022 to 2023, while rations per person per day as well as the duration of assistance decreased. In contrast, the duration of cash assistance increased, meaning that affected people received a higher average cash transfer value in 2023 compared to 2022, even though the amount of cash provided per person per day decreased.
- In **Sri Lanka**, daily food rations per person decreased at the same time as the number of people receiving assistance increased. Although the duration of assistance rose, this did not translate into a higher average amount of food per person in 2023 compared to 2022.
- In **Jordan**, WFP decreased the number of people receiving assistance, transfer values and the duration of assistance in 2023.
- In **South Sudan**, funding gaps in 2021 led WFP to halve general rations for many communities. Between 2022 and 2023, the number of people served increased even though the amount of food per person per day stayed the same and the duration of assistance decreased. In 2024, however, transfer values and daily rations per person as well as the duration of assistance increased, as the country office deliberately moved from broad coverage toward deeper, more meaningful support for fewer people. This followed a recommendation made by the country strategic plan evaluation for South Sudan.¹⁰⁵
- Even though both the number of people assisted and cash transfer values per person per day increased between 2022 and 2023 in **DRC**, the number of days of assistance was reduced, resulting in a lower overall transfer value in 2023. For in-kind rations, however, DRC prioritized depth between 2022 and 2023: both daily ration sizes and the duration of assistance increased, while the number of people assisted decreased.

143. Ample evidence for the fact that ration cuts and reductions of transfer values undermine WFP's ability to reach its programmatic objective of addressing food insecurity has motivated WFP's efforts to reverse this way of prioritizing. Recent internal guidance supports the practical implementation of this shift. The guidance documents emphasize the need to avoid falling below 70 percent of daily nutritional requirements, taking into account the extent to which supported households can meet their own needs.¹⁰⁶ The WFP Strategic Plan (2026-2029), highlights WFP's recent efforts to reach fewer people with higher-quality and more meaningful assistance.¹⁰⁷ New practices to measure and report on the nutritional adequacy or intensity of assistance through WFP's annual performance report also support the trend reversal by helping to counter the long-standing focus on number of people assisted as the key corporate success indicator; instead, these practices encourage more impactful programming.

144. The evidence pointing to the negative effects of excessive ration cuts and reductions of transfer values for food security outcomes includes examples from the case studies conducted for this evaluation and beyond:

- In **South Sudan**, rations were halved in many communities in 2021, a change that is clearly reflected in the 2022 food consumption scores of refugees. While 63 percent of households assisted had an acceptable food consumption score in 2020, this figure dropped to just 21 percent in 2022 following the ration cuts. The percentage of households with an acceptable food consumption score rose again in 2023, due to a nationally improving food security outlook.

¹⁰⁵ WFP (2022) Evaluation of WFP's Interim Country Strategic Plan (2018–2022): South Sudan. Centralized evaluation report. Volume I. WFP, Rome.

¹⁰⁶ WFP (2025) [Considerations for Prioritising Humanitarian Assistance](#); WFP Western Africa, February 2025. 2025 Prioritization Guidance for Emergency Response [internal document].

¹⁰⁷ WFP (2025). WFP Strategic Plan (2026-2029). WFP/EB.2/2025/3-B/1/Rev.1

- Similar evidence is available for other country offices. After WFP reduced food rations in **Yemen** to about 50 percent of the minimum daily requirement in 2022, the number of people in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency) climbed in areas where aid was reduced and pockets of famine-like conditions were emerging.¹⁰⁸ When WFP reduced the transfer value for Rohingya refugees in **Bangladesh** by a third, diets were directly affected. An assessment found that 90 percent of refugees had poor or borderline food consumption by November 2023, which represented a deterioration of 10 percentage points compared to just a few months earlier, attributable to the ration cut.¹⁰⁹ The corporate emergency evaluation of WFP's response to protracted crisis in the Sahel and Central Africa found that transfers "did not cover the basic needs of the people targeted" once rations were cut.¹¹⁰
- Following the reduction of cash transfer values for refugees in **Jordan**, the proportion of refugees who received food assistance but were nevertheless found to be severely food insecure rose from 1 percent to around 8 percent in camps and from around 3 percent to over 20 percent outside of camps. Data on food consumption scores paint a similar picture. The share of refugees receiving food assistance with an acceptable food consumption score decreased from around 80 percent (before the ration cuts were implemented) to 53 percent (after they were implemented). When households judged to have good employment potential were subsequently deprioritized in 2024, by contrast, no significant spike in food insecurity among those deprioritized occurred. This example illustrates that prioritization based on a well-informed vulnerability analysis is more effective and less harmful than across-the-board ration cuts or excessive reductions in transfer values.

145. A range of rigorous studies further supports these findings from both the country case studies and other WFP country offices.¹¹¹ The WFP Impact of Cuts pilot study (2023)¹¹² revealed how impacts vary by country, even if they experience similar degrees of prioritization. For example, in refugee contexts, cuts in Malawi and Bangladesh had very diverse impact depending on the people's livelihood opportunities or ability to afford alternative diets. As shown by this and other examples, food ration cuts are consistently associated with harmful coping strategies, such as skipping meals, reducing portion sizes, going entire days without food, adults restricting their own intake in favour of children and shifting to cheaper, less preferred foods with lower nutritional value.¹¹³ Cuts have also been shown to negatively affect nutritional status. For example, a study of refugee children under 5 in Chad found that halving general food rations led to increased stunting in children aged 24–59 months and increased wasting in those aged 6–24 months.¹¹⁴ During ration cuts linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, research on Rohingya and Bangladeshi adolescents in Bangladesh found that 21 percent reported increased hunger and 87 percent were less likely to consume protein-rich foods, with girls more affected than boys.¹¹⁵ In Lebanon, Syrian refugee households saw poor dietary diversity, with a particularly harmful impact on the nutrition of children and pregnant or

¹⁰⁸ WFP (2025). Corporate Emergency Evaluation of WFP's Response in Yemen (2019-2024).

¹⁰⁹ World Vision (2024) Ration cuts: taking from the hungry to feed the starving.

¹¹⁰ WFP (2024) Summary report on the evaluation of WFP's emergency response to the prolonged crisis in the Sahel and other countries of Central Africa (2018–2023). WFP, Rome.

¹¹¹ See Haider, H (2022) Humanitarian ration cuts: impacts on vulnerable groups. K4D.

¹¹² WFP (2023) Impact of Cuts. Outcome of 2023 pilot study: Impact of funding shortfalls on beneficiaries.

¹¹³ Abou-Rizk, Z., et al. (2021). Dietary diversity and nutritional status among Syrian refugee women of reproductive age in Lebanon; UN (2020). Impact of Food Ration Cuts on Refugees; Mohmand, S. (2019). Coping with food insecurity in protracted refugee settings; Weldeyohannis, M. (2018). Impact of ration cuts on household coping strategies in refugee camps.

¹¹⁴ Fenn, B., et al. (2021). Impact of reduced general food distribution on child growth in Chad refugee camps.

¹¹⁵ Guglielmi, S., Seager, J., Mitu, K., Baird, S., & Jones, N. (2020). Exploring the impacts of COVID-19 on Rohingya adolescents in Cox's Bazar: A mixed-methods study; Guglielmi, S., Seager, J., Mitu, K., Baird, S., & Jones, N. (2020). People Won't Die Due to the Disease; They Will Die Due to Hunger": Exploring the Impacts of COVID-19 on Rohingya and Bangladeshi Adolescents in Cox's Bazar.

breastfeeding women.¹¹⁶ Ration cuts can also have broader social implications. For instance, some South Sudanese refugees in Uganda often shared part of their food assistance with struggling relatives back home, a practice undermined when the level of assistance was cut.¹¹⁷

EQ2.3
EQ4.2
EQ4.4

2.2.2.2 Different programme and targeting logics hinder integration between emergency and resilience programmes

146. **Divergence in programme objectives and targeting logics limit programme integration:** Until recently, WFP's "saving lives" and "changing lives" pillars have followed distinct strategic directions, which have led to different programme and targeting logics. The "saving lives" pillar focuses on addressing acute food insecurity through emergency assistance to the most vulnerable households. By contrast, the "changing lives" pillar has focused attention on strengthening the resilience of people through livelihood support and increasingly emphasized transforming food systems, enhancing production capacities, strengthening markets and improving employment opportunities so that people can generate income and purchase food. These differing objectives implied different targeting logics for their achievement.

147. Table 3 shows that the core tenets of unconditional resource transfers and resilience programmes as conceived and implemented until now are largely incompatible. URT is designed for rapid, flexible responses to reach the most vulnerable in dynamic crisis situations and highly food-insecure locations, relying on updated vulnerability assessments to adapt to changing needs. In contrast, resilience programmes focus on households with some productive capacity, using detailed, community-based planning and long-term engagement with the same people, typically in more stable and less food-insecure contexts. Resilience activities are often physically demanding and may exclude households that may be among the most vulnerable. Resilience programmes are also mainly focused on food insecure areas with IPC Phase 3 or lower with greater potential for recovery and measurable outcomes, sometimes in line with donor or government preferences, while emergency programmes target populations in areas of greater severity. As a result, activities aimed at "changing lives" have rarely been integrated with emergency programmes; usually, they were understood and implemented as stand-alone activities.

Table 3: WFP programme and targeting logics for unconditional resource transfer and resilience activities

| Programme and targeting logics for URT | Programme and targeting logics for resilience |
|---|---|
| Focus on the most food insecure areas at a given point in time, e.g. areas in IPC Phase 4 or above, or in camps | <p>Traditionally, a focus on areas with potential to maintain higher levels of food security despite recurrent shocks, e.g. areas in IPC Phase 2 or 3 or lower, or areas with long-term displacement.</p> <p>This practice may change following the request stated in the Resilience Policy Update to target areas at high risk of experiencing shocks with integrated programming. The current draft of the new WFP Strategic Plan reinforces this direction by stating that resilience work will focus on geographical areas and communities that experienced recurrent acute food insecurity, prioritizing people whose food security and nutrition are most impacted by recurring shocks.</p> |

¹¹⁶ Abou-Rizk, Z., et al. (2021). Dietary diversity and nutritional status among Syrian refugee women of reproductive age in Lebanon

¹¹⁷ Stites, E., & Humphrey, A. (2020). The currency of connections: The role of social connectedness among South Sudanese refugees in West Nile, Uganda. Washington, DC: Mercy Corps.

| | |
|--|--|
| Focus on the most vulnerable households or individuals | Focus on vulnerable households or individuals who are food insecure and have productive capacity or the ability to participate in physically demanding activities (especially for food assistance for assets and food assistance for training activities), which often benefit the household as a whole. |
| Adjust targeting dynamically to acute and evolving needs and vulnerabilities | Provide assistance over a longer period of time to the same households or individuals to address chronic and structural drivers of vulnerability. ¹¹⁸ |
| Provide time-critical assistance in emergency situations and operate with no or limited time for targeting | Operate with extended timeframes (several years), with more time for detailed targeting, enabling community-based participatory planning approaches to define eligibility and select participants or enable self-selection. |
| Deal with large volumes of people in need of assistance | Work with smaller caseloads, enabling more intensive community engagement and verification of people assisted. |

148. **Few examples of programme integration with a common targeting approach stand out:** This divergence explains why the evaluation found only few examples of effective programme integration linking emergency and development assistance in a layered or sequenced way that would help make highly vulnerable people more food secure in the long term. The South Sudan country office recently introduced a combination of the lean season response (unconditional resource transfers) with light resilience-building packages. As part of this initiative, households receiving unconditional resource transfers also receive gardening tools, vegetable seeds or basic farming training to support longer-term food security. In 2024, this initiative of “general food distribution plus (GFD+)” assistance has been piloted in a few locations. In line with the Resilience Policy Update, the new resilience strategy in South Sudan also foresees that resilience activities will focus “on marginalized and hard-to-reach areas with a history of IPC 4+ occurrence” and will “assist the same population groups to maximize the opportunities to gradually reduce reliance on unconditional humanitarian assistance over the next six years”.¹¹⁹ WFP’s ability to implement this strategy, however, hinges on donors agreeing to support resilience activities in highly food-insecure areas.

149. In DRC, the new Resilience Strategy (2024–2030) aims to strengthen the linkages across food assistance, cash transfers, resilience-building and nutrition interventions by targeting the same geographic areas and households. It follows a sequenced approach, starting with unconditional assistance during crises, then transitioning to asset creation, livelihoods support and nutrition-sensitive activities. School meals and nutrition messages are linked to interventions addressing local food production to boost both human capital and local markets. The holistic approach aims to strengthen long-term resilience while meeting immediate food and nutrition needs.¹²⁰ Since the new strategy was only recently adopted, it is too soon to judge how effectively it supports programme integration in practice.

¹¹⁸ The Resilience Policy Update reinforces this practice. It states that “the same people, communities and geographic areas will be targeted over multiple years with integrated programming on a scale sufficient to address the challenges”. WFP (2024) Resilience Policy Update.

¹¹⁹ WFP South Sudan (2024) [Resilience Strategy 2024-2030](#).

¹²⁰ It is further complemented by a Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)-UNHCR-WFP resilience strategy from 2024 that seeks to reduce dependence on humanitarian assistance for refugees by strengthening livelihoods; see FAO/UNHCR/WFP (2024) *Stratégie conjointe pour le renforcement des moyens de subsistance et de la résilience des réfugiés en République Démocratique du Congo (2024-2028)*.

150. These examples stand in contrast to the broader pattern observed across the case studies. Where emergency and development programme designs pursue different objectives, targeting approaches diverge accordingly. In Jordan, emergency interventions target refugees, while resilience and climate-related activities target Jordanian nationals, making programme integration impossible. Until late 2024, the South Sudan country office deliberately prioritized areas for its resilience activities that were not considered for URT. This was partially meant to ensure a more equitable distribution of assistance within an area and between different local groups, as a way to maintain social cohesion. The Nigeria country office had a similar approach, targeting internally displaced people with URT and host communities with resilience interventions. Integration has long been planned in Nigeria via “complementary” livelihoods programming where URTs are also provided, but the worsening economic crisis affecting the country has not allowed for this. In effect, this has meant that most livelihood activities were implemented as “core livelihoods” interventions, targeting different geographic locations than URT would. Donors also frequently earmark funding for resilience activities for specific areas or population groups that WFP has not selected for URT.

151. **Funding constraints, risk considerations and data gaps:** This lack of integration between emergency and development programmes is a more universal challenge that extends beyond the countries reviewed. The mid-term evaluation of the WFP Strategic Plan (2022-2025) finds that there has been insufficient support to operationalize programme integration on the ground and that there are tensions between programme integration efforts and WFP’s budget structure, line of sight requirements and management structures. Resilience activities are often time- and resource-intensive both in terms of human and financial resources, which make them challenging to implement at scale. Even in interventions specifically designed to promote programme integration, the same difficulties emerge. Within the Integrated Resilience Programme in Niger, an initiative that was purposefully designed to bring together food assistance for assets, school meals, market support for smallholder farmers and a lean season response, an evaluation found that only in 59 percent of programme sites four (or fewer) of these five components had been integrated. No site integrated all five components.¹²¹

152. Other constraints on programme integration linked to targeting practices include different risk considerations among donors, as well as gaps in the availability of longitudinal data on vulnerabilities. Donors supporting WFP’s efforts to reduce humanitarian needs and enhance resilience often put a premium on the long-term impact of those interventions, which is generally higher in more stable and less risky environments. This, in turn, requires WFP to implement resilience programmes in comparatively less food-insecure areas, as seen in DRC and South Sudan. However, these are not the same areas where WFP provides general food assistance. As the Enterprise Risk Management Policy clearly outlines, “WFP’s mission towards zero hunger requires risk taking and operating in difficult environments, including conflict zones”.¹²² Donors also often prescribe specific participant profiles for resilience and livelihood activities. In South Sudan, for example, a donor requested that WFP excludes the most food-insecure households from food assistance for assets activities, as it would be inappropriate to require acutely food-insecure individuals to engage in physically demanding labour. A rigorous impact evaluation in Niger points to an underlying dilemma: while ethical concerns about enrolling highly vulnerable people in demanding activities need to be taken seriously, the evaluation shows that the most measurable gains in resilience and food security come from targeting the poorest and most food-insecure households for resilience activities.¹²³

153. Another factor linked to targeting that is limiting WFP’s ability to integrate programmes – or signal for the lack of intention to integrate emergency and resilience programmes – is the lack of detailed, longitudinal data on household-level vulnerability. Effective graduation approaches rely on knowing when households have moved from needing unconditional food assistance to being ready for more development-oriented activities. None of the country offices selected as case studies collected such data.

¹²¹ WFP (2024) [Resilience Learning in Niger. Impact Evaluation Endline Report](#).

¹²² WFP (2018) 2018 Enterprise Risk Management Policy. WFP, Rome, p. 6.

¹²³ WFP (2024) Resilience Learning in Niger. Impact evaluation endline report. WFP, Rome, p. 29.

154. **Clear commitment to greater programme integration:** Despite the targeting challenges limiting the integration of different programmes, WFP has the ambition to achieve greater programme integration as outlined in its Strategic Plan (2022–2025), which states that WFP should pursue “integrated, sequenced and layered humanitarian and development activities”.¹²⁴ Sequencing refers to the set of activities that need to be conducted in an ordered way to reach food security stability. The same households may need to be supported over months (and potentially, years) for effective sequencing to follow a graduation logic where people assisted gradually require less support as their food security status improves over time. Layering refers to multiple, simultaneous forms of support flowing to individuals or households within one community – but not necessarily with the same set of people. Integration is the umbrella term for applying either sequencing or layering (or some other form of co-location), which means that one area receives multiple types of interventions while different caseloads across different communities are targeted.

155. Building on this commitment, the Resilience Policy Update (2024)¹²⁵ and the Strategic Plan (2026–2029)¹²⁶ strengthen WFP’s focus on integrating humanitarian and resilience efforts by clarifying that resilience work will concentrate on geographical areas and communities experiencing protracted or recurrent acute food insecurity, prioritizing those most affected by shocks. The forthcoming Corporate Results Framework also includes a new indicator tracking the percentage of beneficiaries under Strategic Outcome 2 who previously received assistance under Strategic Outcome 1, an important step toward monitoring programme integration in practice.

EQ2.2
EQ3.1

2.2.3 Tensions arise where communities don’t sufficiently understand or trust targeting and prioritization decisions

Targeting and prioritization decisions can affect the social relations and conflict dynamics among affected people. Community members consulted for this evaluation highlighted both the potential positive effects of assistance on social cohesion and some frictions that can be caused by targeting and prioritization. They generally understood and appreciated WFP’s intention to reach those most vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition. However, they often did not understand the details of the targeting and prioritization processes, which created concerns about a fair and equitable implementation. The level of transparency and information sharing with affected people emerged as a key factor influencing social cohesion and other social effects of WFP’s targeting and prioritization practices. While WFP has generally made progress in communicating with those affected, it still restricts information on targeting and prioritization in several contexts – with adverse effects.

156. WFP’s decisions on targeting and prioritization have important implications for community acceptance, social cohesion and potential conflict dynamics within affected communities. A core dilemma lies in choosing between explicitly prioritizing the most vulnerable and targeting a smaller number of people, enhancing effectiveness and efficiency but potentially heightening social tensions, and distributing less assistance more broadly to a larger number of people, which may ease social tensions but at the cost of reduced targeting precision and overall impact.¹²⁷ This section explores the existing evidence of targeting and prioritization affecting social relations and examines how WFP is managing related risks and ethical dilemmas.

¹²⁴ WFP (2022) [Strategic Plan \(2022-2025\)](#).

¹²⁵ WFP (2024). [Resilience Policy Update](#).

¹²⁶ WFP (2025). WFP Strategic Plan (2026-2029). WFP/EB.2/2025/3-B/1/Rev.1.

¹²⁷ Paler, L., & Strauss-Kahn, C. (2016). The adverse effects of targeting aid at vulnerable groups within communities. Working Paper.

2.2.3.1 Communities report both positive and negative effects of WFP's targeting and prioritization decisions on social cohesion and other social aspects

157. The primary evidence reviewed for this evaluation, drawing on social media monitoring, community consultations and extensive interviews with local stakeholders, has not uncovered major tensions, conflict dynamics or significant hostility toward WFP in the case study countries, even when WFP had only limited resources to distribute. Some other country offices, however, are reporting rising social tensions linked to reduced assistance as a key challenge.

158. Community consultations in countries covered by this evaluation highlight both the potential positive effects of assistance on community cohesion and the frictions within communities that can be caused by targeting and prioritization processes.

"When priority is given to the most vulnerable during the selection process, it fosters a sense of fairness and justice, leading to peaceful coexistence within the community and beyond." (Male focus group participant in Yobe, Nigeria)

159. In Jordan, 33 of 65 community stakeholders interviewed reported that the manner in which people were selected for assistance created negative effects on community cohesion. In Nigeria, all focus groups mentioned positive as well as negative effects of aid on community cohesion.

"If some individuals keep collecting and you're not, it will cause tension between neighbours and community members. Whenever there is a distribution, many people steal on that day. We have to make holes and keep our assistance while lying on it. If not, it would get stolen." (Female focus group participant in Borno, Nigeria)

160. In DRC, focus group participants consistently cited a lack of understanding regarding how people to be assisted are selected, leading to mistrust and accusations of arbitrariness. In Sri Lanka, where consultations for this evaluation focused on asset creation and livelihood programmes, the feedback from communities was notably more positive. Most groups (people receiving WFP assistance and people not receiving WFP assistance alike) shared a basic understanding of how WFP approached targeting and prioritization, and most considered this largely fair.

161. Perceptions that targeting decisions favour specific ethnic, political or religious groups can further aggravate tensions, which can have serious implications for social cohesion. In South Sudan, some targeting decisions were viewed by groups not receiving assistance as favouring one ethnic or tribal group over another. To mitigate this, additional community consultations were required, delaying the targeting process. In Nigeria, partner organizations reported that host communities were increasingly skeptical of the priority given to displaced people. Similarly, in DRC's Djugu territory in the Ituri province, WFP and partners report that careful management of social dynamics has been required to avoid perceptions of favouritism between ethnic groups, despite the use of neutral vulnerability mapping based on a door-to-door assessment.

162. To mitigate any negative consequences arising from WFP's targeting, several communities proposed alternative strategies to improve WFP's targeting processes. Groups from Nigeria recommended the adoption of tiered systems of support, in which different groups of people receive different levels of assistance based on their degree of vulnerability. They felt that this could expand coverage and ensure more equitable resource distribution within communities. Additionally, communities in DRC strongly advocated for continuous and locally driven targeting committees to promote sustained transparency and accountability across the entire process. They also requested the possibility to assess and register newly arrived internally displaced people or households who were not present on the day of the door-to-door assessment. In Sri Lanka, communities underscored the importance of publicly posting lists of people who receive WFP assistance to enhance transparency and community trust.

"Take into account neighbouring communities to reduce inter-community tensions." "WFP should deploy teams to identify and register households that arrived after the initial targeting, as well as those excluded unfairly." (Multiple focus group participants in Ituri, DRC)

EQ3.1

2.2.3.2 Communities appreciate WFP's intention to reach the most vulnerable populations, but have concerns about fair and equitable implementation

163. In consultations conducted in the case study countries, community members expressed a limited understanding of WFP's efforts to assist the most vulnerable. Many consulted individuals did not understand what specific criteria were used to select who would be assisted, especially where WFP employs quite elaborate systems for determining eligibility, such as in Jordan via proxy-means testing. However, most community members generally recognized that WFP targeting decisions were guided by vulnerability considerations, which they often equated with sociodemographic criteria. This fostered acceptance.

"We all know that the elderly, pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers and people with disabilities have priority." (Female focus group participant in Ituri, DRC)

164. Having a broad understanding of WFP's basic targeting rationale does not mean that people assisted fully understand and trust the targeting and prioritization process. There is insufficient detailed understanding of how WFP tries to reach the most vulnerable; this can lead to mistrust and can exacerbate tensions. An example mentioned across several countries is the confusion between different types of assessments. Households that took part in a census, for example, commonly mistook this experience for being registered with WFP to receive assistance. This happens despite the efforts made by WFP and its cooperating partners to explain the purpose of each stage in the process, especially the verification steps (SCOPE deduplication, for instance). This confusion leads to a perception that many names are "being taken off of lists" ahead of distributions, and breeds suspicion that this happens for unfair reasons. In some countries, this can also be the effect of verification exercises.

"Some people believe that aid workers remove names from the list, which creates mistrust and strains relationships." (Male focus group participant in Yobe, Nigeria)

165. The role of community leaders or other people in power was another frequent cause for concern. Focus group participants in Nigeria recommended that WFP rely less on leaders and be more involved in the selection process themselves.¹²⁸ This is linked to a common perception (especially among people not receiving WFP assistance) that, while WFP aims to be fair and bases its targeting decisions on vulnerability, implementation sometimes suffers from undue influence of community leaders and others in powerful positions. The Targeting Assurance Framework introduces a new benchmark on undue influence.

"Some individuals selected by WFP to receive aid have nice houses and cars, while others who have nothing are excluded." (Female refugee living in host community in Jordan, recently deprioritized)

EQ2.2
EQ3.1

2.2.3.3 Level of transparency and information sharing have a strong effect on social cohesion

166. Over the past years, WFP has made progress in communicating with affected communities and managing social dynamics. Local cooperating partners often play a crucial role in related processes. The inconsistency of their capacity is a risk that WFP is well aware of, as evidenced by risk management matrices reviewed for this evaluation. Where investments in more effective communication with communities have happened, they can contribute significantly to community acceptance and help mitigate reputational

¹²⁸ Technically, community leaders are not part of community targeting committees in Nigeria. In practice, however, leaders themselves and members of their communities reported significant influence over the targeting process by traditional leaders.

risks.¹²⁹ At the same time, considerable gaps remain. The 2023 Annual Evaluation Report and audit findings underscore the need to strengthen transparency and communication, noting inconsistencies in community participation and consultations across local contexts, which hamper overall communication effectiveness.¹³⁰ Similarly, the Summary of Evidence on Community Engagement in West and Central Africa noted: “Evaluations underline communication deficits to partners and affected populations, most notably related to decisions on targeting or ration cuts, while surfacing community concerns around communication flows.”¹³¹ Such deficits can contribute to tensions and grievances within communities.

167. Country offices consulted for this evaluation demonstrated strong awareness of this issue, with many alluding to the challenge of sensitization for maintaining social cohesion. They called for investments in awareness-raising and sensitization but also asked for more guidance on the subject. Interviews with WFP staff in case study countries suggest that the effectiveness of communication strategies depends on a range of factors beyond literacy levels or the specific channels of communication used. In countries reviewed for this evaluation, WFP pointed to unequal partner capacity for sensitization as a key factor explaining communication deficits where they occur.

168. In several contexts, WFP also restricts what information is shared with communities to prevent any potential for manipulation of the information they provide. As numerous interviewees confirmed, however, this practice undermines transparency, reduces the perceived fairness of the system and does not prevent information manipulation. In DRC, WFP does not share the vulnerability scoring methodology with cooperating partners or communities. This opacity leads affected people to make assumptions about eligibility, often modifying their responses in counterproductive ways. In Jordan, the proxy-means testing tool used was so complex that WFP staff and partners were unable to explain results to affected people, creating a barrier to appeals as well as to basic accountability. This inability to explain leads to confusion among the population about how people were chosen for assistance and who selected people to be assisted. In Nigeria, the June 2024 FSOM indicates an extreme sense of confusion among affected people on those two aspects. Similar findings have been highlighted in evaluations conducted years ago.¹³²

169. Country offices also reported dilemmas regarding the sharing of information on upcoming prioritization exercises. Some country offices preferred to delay communication even when prioritization was imminent, out of an understandable but ultimately unhelpful fear of stoking tensions. In other situations, WFP did not share information with communities in a timely manner, due to uncertainties about the supply pipeline and funding. As a result, communities did not know for how long they would receive WFP assistance and were often not informed about changes in a timely manner. FSOM and other surveys indicate that over 90 percent of respondents remain uncertain about programme timelines. When assistance stops, it typically does so unexpectedly, leaving affected people to come up with their own explanations and suspicions, which undermines trust.

170. Additional evidence reviewed confirms that withholding information from communities, intentionally or due to other constraints, has adverse effects. Prior evaluations, such as those in Türkiye,¹³³ Lebanon¹³⁴ and Somalia,¹³⁵ documented, among other things, heightened mistrust and perceived politicization as the results of a lack of transparency. Proxy-means testing and similarly complex quantitative scoring mechanisms have sparked tensions as they are perceived as opaque. Numerical

¹²⁹ UNHCR–WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub (no date) Community Consultations to Inform Targeting and Prioritization.

¹³⁰ WFP (2024) Annual Evaluation Report 2023. Office of Evaluation. WFP, Rome.

¹³¹ WFP (2023) Summary of Evidence. Lessons on Community Engagement in West and Central Africa.

¹³² E.g. WFP (2018) Evaluation of the WFP Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis (2015-2018).

¹³³ Aran et al. (2022). Cash transfers: learning from the EU programme in Turkey. Forced Migration Review.

¹³⁴ de Soye, C., Moati, R., Noun, B., and Karout, F. (2024). The Role of Misinformation on Cash and Voucher Assistance for Social Cohesion in Lebanon. CAMEALEON.

¹³⁵ IAHE (2025) Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Response to the Humanitarian Crisis in Somalia. Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group, New York.

thresholds divide households into eligible and non-eligible for assistance, but differences between households close to either side of the threshold are barely perceptible, as exemplified by the experience in Lebanon and Jordan.¹³⁶ The positive effects of more transparency were also demonstrated: in Sudan,¹³⁷ for example, proactive community engagement and transparent communication about reduced rations due to funding shortages helped to mitigate potential social unrest.

EQ3.2

2.3 How effectively does WFP engage and collaborate with others on targeting and prioritization?

171. In addition to the many factors discussed in the previous sections, the effectiveness of WFP's approaches to targeting and prioritization is strongly influenced by how the organization collaborates with relevant external stakeholders. The influence of donor earmarking and other requirements on targeting and prioritization, as well as host government preferences, are discussed in Section 2.1. This section focuses on cooperating partners¹³⁸ and other humanitarian actors as key stakeholders. It also explores the specific opportunities and challenges of working with government-led social registries for targeting and prioritization.

2.3.1 Cooperating partners are pivotal for WFP's targeting practices, but WFP's reliance on them raises persistent challenges and tensions

Cooperating partners play a central role in implementing targeting and prioritization for WFP. They are valued, among other things, for their context knowledge and community presence, their willingness and ability to absorb risks and their cost efficiency. While the challenges and risks of relying on cooperating partners for key parts of targeting and prioritization processes are well known, they are not always well managed. Guidance and oversight related to community consultation processes, for example, were often lacking.

172. Cooperating partners play a central role in implementing WFP's targeting and prioritization approaches, but persistent challenges and tensions affect how well targeting is carried out when relying on them. The risk of inadequate or inconsistent partner capacity is well covered in WFP's Enterprise Risk Management Policy and country risk registers, and WFP has made progress in guiding cooperating partners to adhere closely to organizational standards. Yet, the evaluation finds instances where partners operate with limited support and oversight, increasing risks for WFP and creating entry points for ineffective targeting.

2.3.1.1 Cooperating partners are central to and valued for implementing WFP's directions on targeting and prioritization

173. Implementing programmes through cooperating partners is WFP's default delivery model. In 2023, NGOs accounted for 83 percent of the total value of food and cash-based transfers (CBT) distributed, with

¹³⁶ For Lebanon, see de Soye, C., Moati, R., Noun, B., and Karout, F. (2024). The Role of Misinformation on Cash and Voucher Assistance for Social Cohesion in Lebanon. CAMEALEON. For Jordan, the CSP Evaluation (2022) notes "shortcomings in communicating with beneficiaries regarding the targeting methodology used"; WFP (2022) Evaluation of the Jordan Country Strategic Plan (2020–2022). Centralized Evaluation Report OEV/2020/019. WFP, Rome.

¹³⁷ WFP (2022) Social Impact Assessment: Sudan Emergency Safety Nets Project (SESNP) (P178989) – Draft Report. Sudan Country Office. WFP, Khartoum.

¹³⁸ WFP defines a cooperating partner as "a non-profit entity that enters into a contractual relationship with WFP to assist in the performance of WFP's work (including government entities, non-governmental organizations and United Nations organizations"; WFP (2024) Synthesis of evidence and lessons on WFP's cooperating partners from centralized and decentralized evaluations. Synthesis Report – Volume I. OEV/2023/022. WFP, Rome.

national NGOs responsible for over half of the value delivered through NGOs.¹³⁹ This underscores the essential role of NGO cooperating partners (especially local partners) in WFP's operations and in targeting and prioritization.

174. Based on interviews and observations in the case study countries, the evaluation finds that three operational and knowledge-related strengths of cooperating partners, in particular, help extend WFP's reach and improve the responsiveness of its targeting and prioritization:

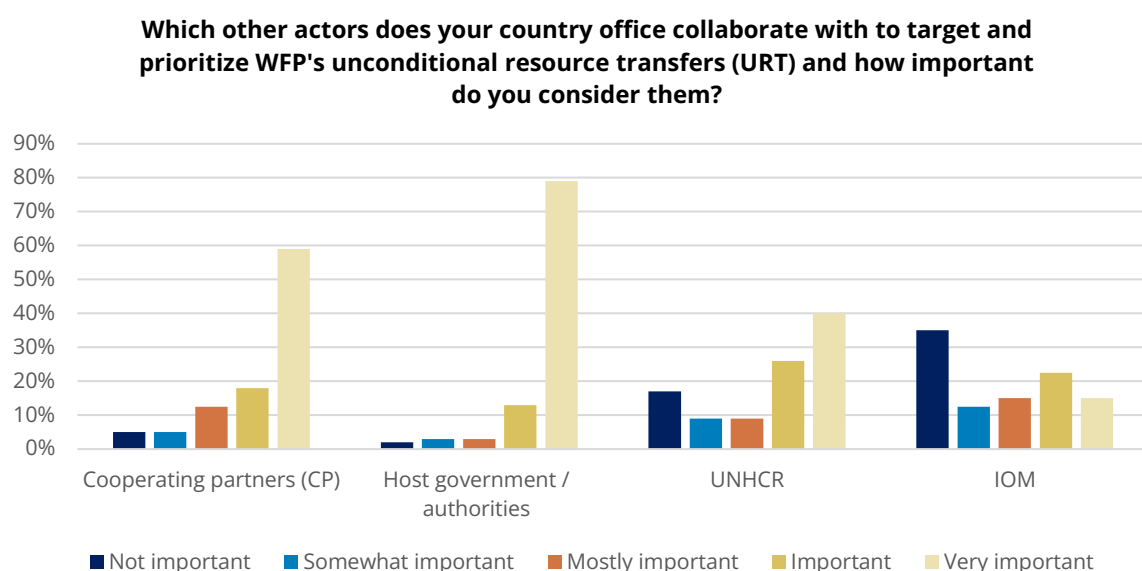
- **Context knowledge and community presence:** Local NGOs cooperating with WFP often have strong community connections, speak local languages, have access to local knowledge and have an understanding of social dynamics and other factors that shape food insecurity and vulnerability. In South Sudan, two of the local partners the evaluation team visited have their facilities next to the communities they support. Local delivery partners in other case study countries were similarly closely located to communities. This can help them detect shifting needs or social tensions more quickly and reliably than WFP operating alone. Their presence at the community level can also enable them to pick up subtle feedback, including informal feedback or concerns that may not be captured through formal channels. Even though various evaluations found that WFP does not always fully leverage this knowledge,¹⁴⁰ it has strong potential to provide valuable insights to inform WFP's programme design and support culturally sensitive targeting. The visibility and relationships of local cooperating partners with communities can also help manage expectations and explain processes directly to people assisted, reducing potential misunderstandings.
- **Risk absorption and risk appetite:** A critical but controversial benefit of working with local delivery partners is their willingness to handle risks inherent to frontline humanitarian operations. Interviewees explicitly noted how local NGO partners often manage sensitive interactions with local actors, handle field-level feedback and carry out verification in politically charged or volatile environments. Local NGOs are also generally not bound by the same strict safety regulations that apply to United Nations personnel, giving them more flexibility to operate in highly insecure environments.
- **Cost efficiency:** Local NGO partners typically have lower salary structures and leaner logistical setups than WFP. Their infrastructure, including local offices, staff and transport networks, can be leveraged to deliver assistance more efficiently and to bring down targeting costs substantially.

175. Reflecting the central role cooperating partners play, country offices indicated local cooperating partners as the second most relevant external actors on targeting and prioritization, after host governments (Figure 16).

¹³⁹ Data shared by the Delivery Assurance Service Operational Partners unit.

¹⁴⁰ WFP (2024) Synthesis of evidence and lessons on WFP's cooperating partners from centralized and decentralized evaluations. Synthesis Report – Volume I. OEV/2023/022, p. 57.

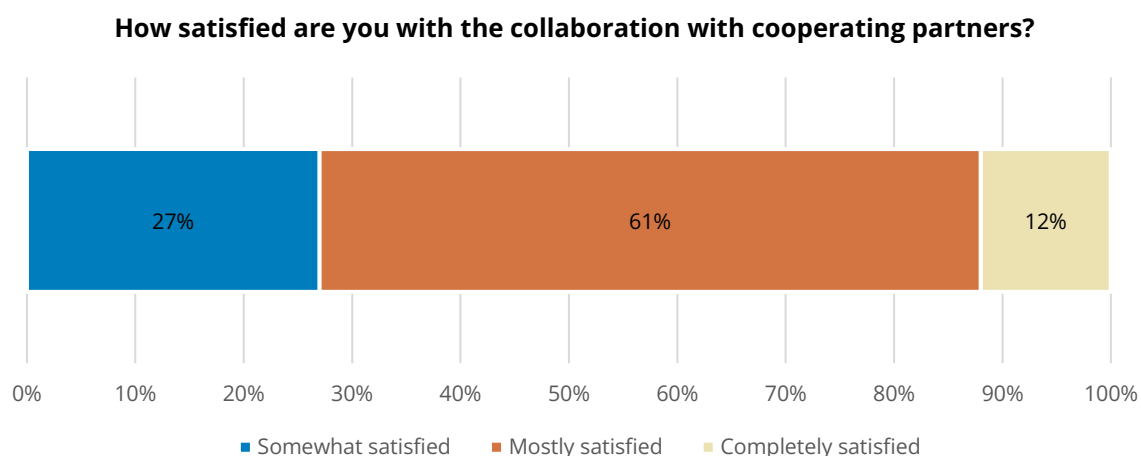
Figure 16. Relevance of external partners for targeting and prioritization



Source: Online survey, n=65 respondents (from 45 country offices).

176. More importantly, most survey respondents expressed general satisfaction with their collaboration with cooperating partners (Figure 17).

Figure 17. Satisfaction with collaboration with WFP cooperating partners



Source: Online survey, n=33 respondents from 26 country offices (filtered for respondents that selected cooperating partners as very important actor).

177. The country case studies confirm the crucial role local cooperating partners play in targeting processes. In Nigeria, for example, the country office's SOPs foresee that cooperating partners play a role across all stages of targeting and prioritization. The role of local partners is particularly critical in contexts where WFP has limited access or operational reach and relies heavily on cooperating partners to register, target, verify, prioritize and assist people. Similar patterns of extensive responsibilities given to cooperating partners are seen in DRC and South Sudan, where WFP relies heavily on community-based targeting approaches and entrusts cooperating partners with almost all community interactions, except for targeted engagements and monitoring by WFP staff.

178. However, NGO cooperating partners do not play such a prominent role across all operations. In Jordan, cooperating partners do not play a direct role in implementing targeting and prioritization and were not involved in the initial design of the new targeting strategy, which was developed in close cooperation between UNHCR and WFP, based on a proxy-means testing model designed by the World Bank. The engagement of cooperating partners only became relevant later, when they were responsible for facilitating focus group discussions and providing input on eligibility filters. Today, their role is primarily centred on managing community feedback mechanisms. In Sri Lanka, WFP relies largely on partnerships with government entities for the design and implementation of resilience and nutrition-related programmes. Country offices also rarely involve local cooperating partners in decisions regarding caseload allocations at the state or district levels linked to the initial geographical targeting or the original design of vulnerability criteria. WFP often takes these strategic decisions, while local cooperating partners tend to focus on implementing the targeting and prioritization approaches and distributing assistance. As discussed above, these responsibilities are increasingly split across several partners to prevent conflicts of interest – although exceptions exist, some of which have been noted as problematic in audit reports (as in the cases of Honduras, Türkiye and Ethiopia, with government entities being responsible for both targeting and registration and, in the case of Ethiopia, distributions).¹⁴¹

179. Regarding the design and implementation of targeting, cooperating partners in South Sudan report being part of discussions with WFP and local authorities on defining caseloads at the village level and, consequently, facilitating community consultations based on set eligibility criteria. Similar patterns were found in DRC, with cooperating partners being given eligibility criteria and being responsible for leading the household-level targeting by either facilitating community consultations or conducting household surveys. The cooperating partner synthesis evaluation found that this arrangement significantly helped WFP in delivering its life-saving assistance under Strategic Outcome 1; feedback from WFP country offices consulted for this evaluation was similarly positive. Where refinement of eligibility or vulnerability criteria is necessary, cooperating partners typically lead consultations and advocacy efforts with communities to capture sentiments on and suggestions for those criteria, while WFP retains the final decision making authority.

180. Once the lists of people to be assisted are finalized, the role of cooperating partners often includes conducting sensitization and communication activities on upcoming distributions and lists of people that will receive WFP assistance and running community feedback systems in the field such as help desks; other partners conduct third-party monitoring. This expands their role to encompass critical aspects of communication, community engagement and accountability. In doing so, they are often required to discuss and explain the targeting approach to communities or react to individual queries about targeting and prioritization decisions made by WFP and other partners.

2.3.1.2 Risks related to local cooperating partners being responsible for implementing targeting are not always well managed

181. While the roles and capacity of local cooperating partners vary strongly by context, the evaluation found a number of challenges and risks stemming from working together with cooperating partners on targeting and prioritization. Selected country case studies show that these are not always managed well, affecting the quality of WFP's targeting and prioritization.

182. **Lack of guidance and oversight on community consultation role:** In many contexts, local cooperating partners are the key interface with affected people, playing a central role in facilitating community dialogue around targeting, explaining targeting and prioritization decisions and receiving

¹⁴¹ WFP (2023) Internal Audit of WFP Operations in Ethiopia. Office of the Inspector General Internal Audit Report AR/23/07. WFP, Rome .WFP (2023) Internal Audit of WFP Operations in Honduras. Office of the Inspector General Internal Audit Report AR/23/13. WFP, Rome; WFP (2022) Internal Audit of WFP Operations in Türkiye. Office of the Inspector General Internal Audit Report AR/22/15. WFP, Rome.

community feedback. The success of this process depends on the capacity of local cooperating partners to navigate local politics, power dynamics and other challenging situations such as potential conflicts of interest or association with specific population or political groups. However, compared to other aspects of targeting and prioritization, there is only limited operational guidance that is specifically focused on managing community participation and navigating these complex situations and trade-offs. While general guidance on community consultations is available (from the UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub), the evaluation team did not find any comprehensive, country-level lessons-learned documentation on community-based targeting in any of the countries reviewed. The broader normative framework also does not place much emphasis on the details of community engagement. Although relevant materials may exist in other workstreams, such as accountability to affected people, participatory planning, gender and protection, these resources are not consistently integrated into operational guidance for community-based targeting that is then shared with cooperating partners. WFP's oversight on this aspect is also limited. WFP's performance assessment tool for cooperating partners, for example, does not evaluate the extent to which cooperating partners engage communities on targeting and prioritization in inclusive, culturally appropriate ways. A 2022 external audit report also found more generally that monitoring of partners' activities was not yet done systematically, and that very little use was made of its results to improve contractual relationships or resulting services.¹⁴² WFP's headquarters has since issued the ED circular on minimum monitoring requirements and enhanced the NGO cooperating partners' spot check guidance.

183. **Proximity versus authority disconnect:** A related issue is that, even where centralized community feedback mechanisms exist, communities often direct their feedback related to targeting and prioritization to local cooperating partners with whom they often have the closest connections. These partners, however, may not have the authority to resolve these issues. This problem is compounded where WFP has limited field presence, such as in areas with access constraints. Interviewed NGO cooperating partners in Nigeria, South Sudan and at the global level have requested more direct involvement from WFP to help address these concerns. Echoing this suggestion, affected people in all country case studies asked for more direct communication with WFP.

184. **Capacity limitations:** Local cooperating partners may have limited technological capacity, including for handling data. Data management standards are frequently not followed, as noted in both the strategic evaluation on the use of technology and a 2023 internal audit of WFP cooperating partners' digital and data processing risks.¹⁴³ The audit concluded that major improvements are necessary to strengthen how cooperating partners manage the data of people receiving assistance. This becomes all the more important as WFP moves towards greater digitization of people data management. A recent evaluation synthesis also finds notable capacity gaps, including a lack of familiarity with WFP's targeting criteria and specific skills,¹⁴⁴ which presents a noteworthy risk to WFP, given the high number of targeting activities currently being handled by partners.

185. More generally, local cooperating partners consulted for this evaluation explained how fluctuating demands from partners like WFP can create capacity challenges. In DRC, for example, local cooperating partners reported that they maintain a regular workforce to cover their commitments to WFP. However, they sometimes need to survey a larger number of households, for which the partner then must rely on daily workers. Even if training or a refresher course is offered to this temporary workforce, it does not compensate for the wealth of experience the core team has, and human errors are frequently reported in household surveys. Challenges like this are likely to be exacerbated, as many WFP partners are forced to close down or reduce their presence due to the reduced humanitarian funding.

¹⁴² WFP (2022) Report of the External Auditor on the Management of Cooperating Partners. Cour de Comptes, France.

¹⁴³ WFP (2023) Internal Audit of WFP Cooperating Partners Digital and Data Processing Risks. Office of the Inspector General Internal Audit Report AR/23/10. WFP, Rome; WFP (2022) Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Use of Technology in Constrained Environments. Office of Evaluation. WFP, Rome.

¹⁴⁴ WFP (2024) Synthesis of Evidence and Lessons on WFP's Cooperating Partners from Centralized and Decentralized Evaluations. Office of Evaluation. WFP, Rome.

186. **Budget and timeline constraints:** In the DRC, Nigeria and South Sudan country case studies, the evaluation team observed that budget pressures and particularly short project timelines create additional strain on cooperating partners, increasing the risk that critical steps may be rushed or overlooked. Some cooperating partners have raised concerns in interviews about the tension between meeting WFP's expectations for targeting and prioritization, monitoring and community engagement, while also needing to remain financially competitive. Because targeting costs are typically included in general staff costs (rather than accounted for separately – the cooperating partner budget template guidance currently under review has not provided clear instructions on this), local cooperating partners in Nigeria, for example, reported that they were struggling to ensure thorough processes. Partners in Nigeria, South Sudan and, in some cases, DRC also noted that implementation can become more complicated when WFP decisions regarding targeting and prioritization are delayed or when WFP does not communicate with them in a timely manner, leaving very little time to identify and register eligible households. In Nigeria, there have been instances where cooperating partners did not have sufficient time to organize community consultations to identify people to be assisted within the timeframe provided, leading to skipping a distribution cycle and reduced duration of assistance.

187. Overall, working with NGO cooperating partners on targeting and prioritization requires a careful and highly context-specific balance of the strengths and limitations they bring to targeting and prioritization processes. The evidence suggests that this balance is not always struck well even though it is a key lever to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of WFP's targeting process.

EQ3.4

2.3.2 WFP is constructively engaging with UNHCR on targeting and prioritization; less so with other humanitarian partners

As the world's largest humanitarian organization, WFP's targeting and prioritization practices have important implications for other humanitarian actors. Referrals of individuals or households in need of food assistance by other agencies to WFP are a common and good practice. Over recent years, WFP has also strengthened its cooperation with UNHCR in refugee settings and with UNICEF on nutrition-related targeting and prioritization. Meaningful engagement with other humanitarian stakeholders on targeting and prioritization through humanitarian coordination structures like the food security cluster (FSC) or cash working groups (CWG), however, remains an important gap.

2.3.2.1 Referrals to WFP are a common good practice

188. Referrals are a common way for WFP to engage with other humanitarian stakeholders. Other organizations frequently refer specific individuals or households to WFP for unconditional resource transfer or nutrition support. Examples from the case study countries include nutrition-related referrals from UNICEF or Action Against Hunger in DRC, displacement-related referrals from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR in Nigeria and Haiti and protection referrals from UNHCR in Jordan. In the latter case, WFP applied an additional inclusion filter to ensure protection cases could be included in assistance lists, even if they did not meet the eligibility threshold set (based on their proxy-means testing score). Referral mechanisms used in Haiti also enabled the inclusion of survivors of gender-based violence and persons living with HIV/AIDS,

189. While referrals are common, they require data-sharing agreements between the involved organizations. Data-sharing agreements are negotiated separately for each country. Interviewees noted that such agreements frequently take months to conclude, with lengthy headquarters approval processes creating delays. Once those barriers are overcome, referrals appear to be effective and seem to help WFP target vulnerable households and individuals. WFP can also refer caseloads to others. In South Sudan, for example, UNICEF agreed to take on nutrition-related caseloads in areas that WFP had deprioritized.

2.3.2.2 The collaboration between WFP and UNHCR is highly relevant for WFP's targeting in refugee settings

190. Refugees and internally displaced people represent a significant portion of the people receiving WFP assistance, approximately 10 percent and 15 percent respectively, making targeted support to these groups an important operational priority.¹⁴⁵ Recognizing the importance of coordinated approaches to avoid gaps in coverage as well as duplications in assistance, WFP and UNHCR established the UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub in 2020. According to a recent external review, the Joint Hub has contributed to more effective collaboration by improving mutual understanding, aligning conceptual approaches and reinforcing country-level targeting mechanisms. The external review further finds that the Joint Hub is a valued and responsive resource for both WFP and UNHCR. It has played a key role in strengthening targeting and prioritization and reinforcing collaboration between the two agencies. Demand for its support has grown, especially in countries facing financial constraints. The Joint Hub has also helped to institutionalize good practices across both organizations and, in smaller country offices, has filled critical technical gaps where internal expertise was limited.¹⁴⁶ A frequently used output is the Joint Analytical Framework, which supports joint needs assessments. The Joint Hub also developed principles and guidance to help country offices coordinate their actions. Despite this, the Joint Hub will be discontinued by the end of 2025 due to resource constraints.

191. Country case studies conducted for this evaluation provide practical examples of how WFP–UNHCR collaboration on targeting works in practice and highlight the relevance and added value of joint efforts in refugee settings. Such examples include:

- **Joint approach on determining refugee vulnerability in Jordan:** Jordan is an example of constructive WFP–UNHCR cooperation on targeting, as confirmed by the 2022 audit of the Jordan country office.¹⁴⁷ As part of the collaboration, both organizations use a proxy-means testing model to determine vulnerability levels. The proxy-means testing model is closely aligned with the model used by the government of Jordan for its national social protection programme, offering a potential pathway for the integration of assistance systems in the longer term. The collaboration has built trust between the two agencies and has unlocked broader cooperation beyond targeting. Donors and other stakeholders view the partnership positively and see joint efforts as a sign of coherence and efficiency.
- **Joint assessment to inform vulnerability-based targeting and shared responsibilities to assist refugees in South Sudan:** In 2023, WFP and UNHCR carried out a joint post-distribution monitoring (JPDM) exercise in South Sudan, using the Joint Analytical Framework to inform a shift from status-based to vulnerability-based targeting for 300,000 refugees. The JPDM found that around 85 percent of refugee households were highly or extremely vulnerable, underscoring both the urgent need for support and the limits of targeting in such contexts. It recommended a layered approach, using geographic, seasonal and household-level targeting, tailored to local realities. Beyond analysis, WFP and UNHCR have adopted a flexible and coordinated approach to assistance delivery. UNHCR handles refugee registration and documentation, which WFP and partners use to verify eligibility, as well as appeals. When targeting issues arise (such as unregistered individuals appearing at distribution sites), WFP's cooperating partners coordinate with UNHCR protection officers and camp managers to resolve them. Joint planning meetings before distributions as well as joint community consultations to verify eligibility criteria ensure shared understanding of eligibility criteria and caseloads. An audit from 2023 noted strong system interoperability, enabling

¹⁴⁵ WFP (2024). Annual Performance Report for 2024.

¹⁴⁶ Visser, M., Fratta, M., Driscoll, Z., & Majewski, B. (2024) External Review of the UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub. Final Report, 30 July 2024. Commissioned by UNHCR and WFP. Mokoro Ltd, Oxford.

¹⁴⁷ WFP (2022) Internal Audit of WFP Operations in Jordan. Office of the Inspector General Internal Audit Report AR/22/08. WFP, Rome.

refugees to redeem WFP cash and food entitlements using UNHCR identity cards.¹⁴⁸

- **Joint targeting approach in DRC:** From 2021 to 2025, WFP and UNHCR in the DRC established a strategic partnership to support refugees through joint assessments conducted in South Kivu, Ituri and North and South Ubangi.¹⁴⁹ These assessments informed the design of a joint targeting methodology, developed with support from the WFP–UNHCR Joint Targeting Hub, to prioritize food and cash assistance based on protection and vulnerability criteria. In 2021, they introduced the biometric Global Distribution Tool in refugee sites to streamline food and cash distributions, reduce duplication and enhance accountability. The agencies also coordinated the roll-out of vulnerability-based targeting in camps such as Lusenda and Mulongwe, aligning assistance with household needs as funding declined. In North and South Ubangi, WFP and UNHCR collaborated on livelihoods and resilience-building programmes, including agricultural and income-generating support for refugees from Central African Republic. Coordination extended to shared communication tools, joint post-distribution monitoring and community feedback systems that improved accountability and protection-sensitive delivery. Across all major refugee-hosting provinces (including Ituri, Haut-Uélé and South Kivu), the partnership reportedly allowed for more harmonized planning, improved targeting and better alignment of humanitarian and development interventions.

192. While the collaboration between WFP and UNHCR through the Joint Hub has brought important benefits, several structural and operational challenges, identified by this evaluation as well as the external review of the Joint Hub and various country audits, continue to limit its overall effectiveness:

- **Different definitions of vulnerability:** UNHCR and WFP diverge in their definition of vulnerability. Although a Joint Analytical Framework was developed, WFP still often uses criteria linked to food insecurity, while UNHCR emphasizes protection needs alongside general poverty. This misalignment can lead to tensions when agreeing on joint eligibility criteria; it also leads to difficulties in measuring the effectiveness of the targeting approach. Implementing a joint targeting approach requires significant political will, sustained management engagement and extensive time and effort from technical teams to reconcile different approaches – resources that are not always readily available. In Jordan, for example, agreeing on a joint targeting approach required significant engagement on both sides. Different subsequent choices by WFP, de-prioritizing households based on skills, still led to divergent practices between the two agencies.
- **Disconnect between institutional logics and community expectations:** UNHCR and WFP have different mandates, leading to different logics for each organization's cash assistance. WFP provides cash for food-related needs, while UNHCR and its partners focus on non-food basic needs. As far as possible, both organizations aim to target the same vulnerable households with their cash assistance. However, affected communities usually see no difference between the various cash programmes and may expect complementary coverage (where households receive support from either WFP or UNHCR) and perceive it as unfair when households receive cash assistance from both organizations.
- **Data and systems misalignment:** Joint WFP-UNHCR targeting comes up against practical and technical hurdles. The two agencies use different units of analysis: UNHCR organizes data by "cases" (often linked to family units), while WFP works with "households." This mismatch complicates alignment and increases the risk of duplication. Even when intentions are aligned, operationalizing joint targeting is difficult. Resource constraints, as evident in Jordan, for example, mean that WFP supports much larger caseloads than UNHCR, making identical targeting lists unworkable. This gap becomes particularly visible when assistance must be prioritized due to funding shortfalls. Underlying these challenges is a recurring issue with data quality. WFP audits in Burkina Faso, Chad and Mauritania flagged outdated or incomplete UNHCR data as a source of

¹⁴⁸ WFP (2024) Internal Audit of WFP Operations in South Sudan. Office of the Inspector General Internal Audit Report AR/24/25. WFP, Rome.

¹⁴⁹ UNHCR-WFP joint programme excellence and targeting hub (2021) [Annual Report 2021](#).

inclusion and exclusion errors, affecting the accuracy of WFP's targeting.¹⁵⁰

- **Institutional limitations:** The external review of the Joint Hub points to additional institutional limitations. The uptake of the Joint Hub's valuable tools and guidance has been constrained by limited dissemination, unclear support roles from UNHCR and WFP regional offices and only modest improvements in operational collaboration. Data interoperability remains a key barrier: as of mid-2025, there is still no automatic integration between SCOPE and PROGRESS lists of people assisted, making manual reconciliation necessary for each update. Despite a global data-sharing agreement between UNHCR and WFP, additional country-specific data-sharing protocols must be negotiated separately for each country, leading to what the Joint Hub review classifies as "significant gaps in data sharing between WFP and UNHCR that impede joint efforts in analysis and targeting at the country level".¹⁵¹

2.3.2.3 Collaboration with UNICEF is relevant for WFP's nutrition-related targeting

193. WFP and UNICEF have a long-standing partnership built on their complementary roles, where WFP focuses on food and nutrition assistance, while UNICEF leads work on child protection, nutrition, health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and education. Their roles intersect as malnutrition is both a health and a food and nutrition issue. In emergencies, they typically divide responsibilities, with WFP seeking to prevent acute malnutrition and treat moderate acute malnutrition (MAM), while UNICEF and other specialized actors focus on the treatment of severe acute malnutrition (SAM). Geographical targeting and prioritization for the moderate acute malnutrition prevention programme are generally based on the prevalence of malnutrition, using data from IPC acute malnutrition analyses or SMART surveys, which guide the selection of priority areas. The DRC case study offers an example where nutrition interventions were geographically targeted through a joint process involving UNICEF, the Congolese Government, WFP and the nutrition cluster. Within the targeted geographical areas, WFP typically links the individual targeting for its moderate acute malnutrition prevention programme to the targeting for unconditional resource transfers: pregnant and breastfeeding women and children aged 6–23 months among the households targeted for URT also benefit from moderate acute malnutrition prevention support.

194. A pathway toward greater collaboration on targeting is currently emerging, as UNICEF and WFP recently launched a joint programme to support national governments in improving nutrition for children and women in humanitarian crises via more effective prevention. The Joint Action to Stop Wasting, which began in 2024, aims to better identify and reach children with moderate wasting in so-called "high-risk contexts".¹⁵² In May 2025, WFP and UNICEF jointly issued new guidance, as part of this initiative, to strengthen targeting in these settings. As the initiative is still new, the evaluation could not yet assess its use, relevance or effectiveness in improving the targeting of WFP's nutrition interventions.

195. Malnutrition can also be an important criterion for targeting and prioritizing vulnerable households for unconditional resource transfers, either through referrals from UNICEF or other partners (as discussed above) or by including the presence of malnourished children in WFP's targeting criteria. In Jordan, for example, refugee children under the age of 5 are screened for malnutrition and all households with a malnourished child are prioritized for cash assistance irrespective of their proxy-means testing score. In South Sudan, which interviewees described as a unique way of working together, WFP and UNICEF work with the same cooperating partner responsible for both severe and moderate acute malnutrition interventions, facilitating effective support for different caseloads and making referrals easier.

196. The evaluation team found that WFP usually does not rely on UNICEF data for identifying vulnerable households for unconditional resource transfers or resilience interventions except for the

¹⁵⁰ See Annex XII for sources.

¹⁵¹ Visser, M., Fratta, M., Driscoll, Z., & Majewski, B. (2024) External Review of the UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub. Final Report, 30 July 2024. Commissioned by UNHCR and WFP. Mokoro Ltd, Oxford.

¹⁵² UNICEF, WFP. Methods to Estimate Caseloads of Children with Moderate Wasting using Individual Risk Factors: A Learning Note. May 2025.

nutrition referrals discussed above. However, there are examples of the two agencies designing integrated service delivery aimed at reaching the same communities with different interventions. In South Sudan, under the WFP–UNICEF Joint Resilience Programme, both agencies target the same schools but each with distinct roles: UNICEF focuses on education infrastructure and general support for education, while WFP provides school meals, nutrition support and asset creation through community-based planning. WFP used a local wealth classification to reach very poor and poor households for the asset creation component of its work. UNICEF, by contrast, focused on schools and pupils, but not households. Schools and sites are selected in close cooperation with the Government, taking both vulnerability and operational considerations into account.

2.3.2.4 Meaningful engagement with other humanitarian stakeholders on targeting and prioritization through humanitarian coordination structures is the exception, not the norm

197. WFP plays a leading role in the food security cluster (FSC), both globally and at the country level. The FSC, in turn, seeks to coordinate targeting and prioritization, in particular focusing on avoiding gaps and duplications in assistance. In DRC, Haiti, Nigeria and South Sudan, for example, the FSC aims to avoid duplication through regular meetings and information sharing. However, while the FSC promotes joint planning on paper, several NGO partners raised concerns about how this plays out in practice. As WFP is the largest food assistance provider in most countries, its decisions on where it provides assistance effectively define the operational space for all other food security actors, who will target those areas not covered by WFP.

198. However, the FSC rarely coordinates or facilitates discussions on household-level targeting approaches. Examples from the Syria cross-border response¹⁵³ and Nigeria¹⁵⁴ seem to be the exception, rather than the norm. At the global level, the FSC issued guidance on targeting in humanitarian response plans¹⁵⁵ and for urban targeting in the context of COVID-19.¹⁵⁶ The potential benefits of cluster partners jointly designing targeting criteria, validating lists of people to be assisted in case of data-sharing agreements in place, and adapting targeting frameworks in response to changing needs thus seems to be underutilized, as the case studies conducted for this evaluation also indicate. Moreover, in multiple contexts, partners raised concerns about WFP's limited transparency regarding its targeting and prioritization methodologies, including the criteria used to select people to be assisted and any changes to caseloads. This lack of information is particularly problematic in settings where adjustments or withdrawal of WFP assistance significantly affect vulnerable populations and where timely information-sharing could support coordinated prioritization by other actors.

199. WFP is also commonly involved in cash working groups (CWGs). CWGs, which bring together different stakeholders with varying mandates and programme objectives, often discuss and sometimes define common standards for cash transfer values. However, CWGs did not appear to be central platforms for coordinating targeting and prioritization decisions in the case studies conducted for this evaluation. In Nigeria, for example, CWGs mainly had an advisory role. WFP typically made independent decisions on locations and caseloads, while CWGs were consulted on delivery methods only afterward. WFP staff in one of the country case studies also expressed frustration with a very rigid approach setting transfer values and targeting standards by the CWG. This was not found to be helpful by WFP, as different cash actors usually pursue different objectives with their interventions, with WFP typically providing cash to address food security needs only.

¹⁵³ Syria Cross-Border HLG (2021) [Guidance Targeting and Prioritization of Beneficiaries](#).

¹⁵⁴ Nigeria Food Security Sector (2023) [Guidance Note: Food Assistance Targeting for Scale Down](#).

¹⁵⁵ Global Food Security Cluster (2024). [Food Security Cluster/Sector HRP Targeting Guidance](#).

¹⁵⁶ Global Food Security Cluster (2020) [gFSC Guidance: Urban Targeting in the Context of COVID-19](#).

2.3.3 WFP frequently supports national social protection systems but the value of using social registries for WFP's own targeting and prioritization is limited

WFP has been supporting governments in strengthening national social protection systems, including social registries. This is a key objective in its own right, in particular with the long-term intention to fully transfer to government actors the responsibility for assisting their own populations. Expected benefits in terms of using these data systems for WFP's own targeting and prioritization, however, have so far rarely materialized. Depending on context, WFP therefore needs to complement social registry data with systematic eligibility verification, community-based processes and effective appeal mechanisms.

200. WFP has the strategic objective clearly articulated in its Strategic Plan (2022-2025) to strengthen national social protection systems, social registries or social safety nets that are designed to address food insecurity in their respective countries.¹⁵⁷ This strategic objective reflects the intention among humanitarian and development actors to build the capabilities of national social protection systems over the longer term to respond to poverty and address social and economic challenges (including shocks). The evaluation explored the extent to which social registries can be used for WFP's own targeting and prioritization and finds that expectations placed on social registries often exceed their actual ability to support effective targeting.¹⁵⁸

2.3.3.1 WFP expects its support for national social protection systems to also benefit targeting and prioritization

201. WFP frequently plays an important role in supporting national authorities in the design and implementation of social protection systems. This was evident in the case studies conducted for this evaluation. In Haiti, WFP seconded staff to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour to help strengthen its capacity and to facilitate data exchanges between the registry and WFP. In Sri Lanka, WFP has worked with the national social protection mechanism over many years, with extensive efforts to strengthen national capacity and the food security sensitivity of poverty indicators used in national systems. Most of the country office budget is dedicated to such capacity strengthening.

202. The general benefits of supporting national social protection systems also create specific potentials for targeting and prioritization:¹⁵⁹

- **Policy alignment and programme integration:** Using national social protection systems as part of WFP's emergency interventions either for identification of people to be assisted or for delivery of assistance helps to reinforce government ownership and leadership. The practice can also strengthen linkages and coherence between short-term assistance and longer-term development programmes, if, for instance, assistance is targeted at communities that are also supported through resilience or livelihood interventions
- **Reduced costs for WFP:** Using existing data systems like social registries that capture detailed data about affected populations and their specific vulnerability characteristics allows WFP to save on creating parallel systems for assessment and registration. Data from Haiti shows that creating and updating the national social registry is costly. Assessing and including a household in the national registry costs an estimated USD 15-20, but these costs are typically borne by governments, donors or other development actors like the World Bank. Using these systems therefore allows WFP to reduce its overhead costs, ensuring that a greater share of its resources reaches people assisted.
- **Reducing duplications and gaps in coverage:** Using social registries or national social protection

¹⁵⁷ WFP (2021) Strategy for Support to Social Protection; SO4 WFP Strategic Plan (2022-2025).

¹⁵⁸ At the time of writing this report, a strategic evaluation on WFP's Support to Social Protection was ongoing.

¹⁵⁹ WFP & UNICEF (2023) All the Right Tracks: Delivering Shock-Responsive Social Protection – Lessons from the COVID-19 Response. WFP, Rome.

systems can also help reduce overlap in service delivery by ensuring that different actors do not support the same set of individuals or households multiple times, while missing others entirely. A policy note on the Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Programme by the World Bank (2023) states that “convergence with national systems can lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian and government interventions, particularly shock responses. Convergence can [...] prevent duplication, [...], increase coverage of programmes.”¹⁶⁰ This evaluation’s case study on Haiti, by contrast, found that using the national registry for identification of people to be assisted did not help reduce duplications, since various aid actors were working with the same list without knowing whether households had already received assistance.

203. In the case study countries, the evaluation finds variations in how WFP uses social protection systems for targeting and prioritization:

- In **Sri Lanka**, the WFP country office used the national social protection mechanism “Samurdhi” to select those who meet pre-defined eligibility criteria for assistance as part of the 2022/2023 emergency response. Although the original intent was to avoid developing a different targeting system, eventually, WFP developed a parallel targeting and delivery approach to mitigate Samurdhi’s well-known shortcomings. In parallel, it continues to invest in strengthening Samurdhi’s successor, “Aswesuma.” WFP also uses enrolment in government programmes as a basis for determining eligibility or exclusion from its own assistance.
- In **Haiti**, WFP’s targeting system draws on both data from the Government’s social registry (SIMAST) and on community-based approaches in areas with stable access and no recent rapid-onset emergency. The age and quality of SIMAST data, which vary across provinces and municipalities, determine to what extent people to be assisted can be selected directly from the registry or need to be identified through additional community engagement. In practice, however, partners often rely fully on either one or the other method, depending on whether the SIMAST data meet a certain recency threshold.
- In **Jordan**, WFP has sought to align its vulnerability assessment with national systems but does not and cannot rely on the national social registry to target people, since the registry only covers Jordanian nationals. To determine whether refugees living outside of camps are eligible for assistance, WFP uses proxy-means testing developed by the World Bank, which is broadly in line with the approach used by the Jordanian Government for the National Aid Fund. While this method lays some groundwork for potential longer-term alignment, the Government has not expressed openness to formally integrating refugee data into national systems.
- In the **Dominican Republic**, WFP initially planned to use the Government’s social registry SIUBEN to pre-identify households for anticipatory action targeting areas at high risk of river-based flooding and high poverty. While SIUBEN data were successfully used as part of geographic prioritization, they proved inadequate for identifying specific households in 2016. The data from 2016 were found to be outdated; locating households listed in the database was too difficult in practice. As a result, WFP conducted its own registration of households in the most flood-prone areas. This was manageable due to the limited number of households foreseen to receive anticipatory action. WFP collected data in a format compatible with SIUBEN, but the Government decided against using it to update the national registry, highlighting challenges with data dynamism and integration. In this particular case, data on vulnerability have improved since 2018.
- In **Nigeria**, WFP piloted the use of the national social registry for targeting of unconditional resource transfers in 2021. In 2024, it was used to deliver assistance to just 15,000 households. However, the country office faced several challenges in working with the registry, such as low quality of the data, which required detailed verification by WFP, and attempted interference by authorities to change lists. It concluded that the verification and re-targeting required when using government databases was as much effort as collecting data from scratch. Nevertheless, WFP

¹⁶⁰ Saidi, M; Ruiz, C. (2023) *Convergence in the Sahel: How to Link Humanitarian Cash Assistance and National Social Protection Systems? SASPP Policy Note Series. POLICY NOTE 10. World Bank.*

interviewees in-country saw the experience as a valuable investment in government collaboration and capacity.

2.3.3.2 The expected benefits of social protection mechanisms for effective targeting and prioritization only rarely materialize

EQ3.3
EQ4.3

204. While WFP frequently uses social registries, the evidence captured for this evaluation indicates that they have limited benefits for WFP's own targeting and prioritization. A global study to assess how to leverage social registries for targeting was recently launched.¹⁶¹ Four main challenges limit the effectiveness of social registries for this purpose and suggest a need to rethink how WFP uses them.

205. **Outdated, incomplete, or politicized data.** A key challenge limiting the effectiveness of national social registries for WFP's targeting is the prevalence of inclusion and exclusion errors. These stem from several common issues. First, many social registries rely on outdated data that may no longer reflect the current socioeconomic status of the individuals or households registered. In crisis-affected or rapidly changing contexts, the common lack of timely updates makes it difficult to capture new or shifting vulnerabilities. Second, coverage is often incomplete. Social registries may only include certain regions or population groups, leaving out displaced people, refugees, undocumented individuals, people with disabilities, minority groups, those in informal settlements, or in areas outside the government's control. Third, possible political interference in registry management can lead to favouritism in enrolment, skewing targeting in favour of well-connected households while excluding others based on political, ethnic or regional factors. These issues are visible across several case study countries:

- **Haiti:** The Government's SIMAST registry suffers from outdated information and limited capacity to improve coverage or accuracy. Where SIMAST data are older, WFP and partners rely more on community-based targeting.
- **Sri Lanka:** The Samurdhi system, in place during WFP's 2022/2023 emergency response, was seen as being potentially politically biased, with high rates of inclusion of non-vulnerable households. WFP responded by establishing a parallel system for more accurate targeting.
- **Dominican Republic:** Challenges include the exclusion of undocumented populations, both nationals and migrants, particularly from Haiti. WFP therefore focuses on complementing the national system, focusing its assistance on people who are not captured by it.

206. Further evidence from WFP's work beyond the case study countries supports these findings. In Mali, audit reports find that certain geographic areas were excluded from the national social registry for political reasons. Similarly, WFP's review of social protection support in the Sahel found that, in some countries, registries were so outdated that large segments of the intended population could no longer be found, rendering the data ineffective for targeting.¹⁶² A recent evaluation of WFP's response to the protracted crisis in the Sahel and Central Africa points out that "the scope for using national tools is limited by their lack of maturity".¹⁶³

207. Another major challenge is the misalignment between the criteria used by national social protection systems and the way WFP defines and targets food-insecure people. Most social registries use indicators selected for their correlation with poverty to establish vulnerability. While the models can include indicators related to food security, they are not specifically designed or optimized to predict food insecurity. While food insecurity and income poverty are closely related, they are not perfectly correlated, especially in high- and middle-income countries. Recent research and reports reveal that significant numbers of people

¹⁶¹ WFP (2025) Global Targeting Bulletin, 1st Quarter 2025.

¹⁶² WFP-UNICEF (2023). The challenge of coordination and inclusion: Use of social registries and broader social protection information systems in West Africa. Regional Synthesis Report. WFP review of social protection support.

¹⁶³ WFP (2024) Summary report on the evaluation of WFP's emergency response to the prolonged crisis in the Sahel and other countries of Central Africa (2018–2023). WFP, Rome.

in developed countries experience food insecurity even without being officially “poor.” In other words, hunger can and does exist independently of income poverty and poverty is considered an important factor, but not the sole cause of food insecurity.¹⁶⁴ As a result, there can be a disconnect between the populations prioritized by national social protection systems and the populations WFP seeks to support. For example, some poor households may not be food insecure, such as smallholder farmers who can produce their own food. Conversely, households with moderate or unstable incomes may still struggle with food access due to price shocks, seasonal gaps or displacement – factors that poverty-based registries may overlook.

208. **Limited ability to verify people assisted or assure last-mile accountability.** Depending on how strongly WFP relies on national social protection systems to identify beneficiaries and deliver assistance, its ability to verify beneficiaries or monitor delivery can be restricted. Where WFP is not involved in key stages such as registration, verification or feedback handling, the transparency and responsiveness of the targeting system at the last mile are limited. Ethiopia presents a key example here. Audit findings showed that the Government frequently handled the entire process of selection and verification of people assisted with minimal WFP oversight. This limited WFP’s ability to assure the integrity of the process and to independently validate who received support.¹⁶⁵ Following reports alleging large-scale food assistance diversion, WFP introduced an independent targeting and registration system incurring considerable costs and is now in control of selection, registration and verification of people to be assisted.¹⁶⁶

209. **Data privacy restrictions and technical barriers to interoperability.** National data protection laws, as well as concerns about WFP’s ability to manage sensitive national data in a secure way, can prevent WFP from accessing detailed registry data required for effective targeting. Even in instances when access has been granted after data-sharing agreements have been reached, technical interoperability between WFP’s systems and government platforms (for example, unique identity document (ID) formats, software compatibility) is often lacking and requires adaptations to utilize the data provided to WFP. As the examples demonstrate, these challenges limit the extent to which WFP can reasonably rely on social registries for its targeting and prioritization processes. While the ambition to use existing data systems and avoid system duplication is well-founded, the evidence collected by this evaluation suggests that the potential for and benefits of using national social registries for WFP’s own targeting is limited. Since the potential added value of national social protection systems goes well beyond the use of social registries for WFP’s targeting, however, this finding should not be used in isolation to draw conclusions about WFP’s support for social protection systems in general.

¹⁶⁴ FAO (2022). Understanding poverty and food insecurity at the household level. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome.

¹⁶⁵ WFP (2023) Internal Audit of WFP Operations in Ethiopia. Office of the Inspector General Internal Audit Report AR/23/07. WFP, Rome.

¹⁶⁶ Interviews and internal WFP documents.

3 Conclusions and recommendations

3.1 Conclusions

210. This strategic evaluation of WFP's approaches to targeting and prioritization takes place at a critical juncture. Over the past two years, WFP has seriously invested in improving how it decides who gets assistance, driven by growing pressure from donors for transparency and assurance. But the need for sharper, more refined targeting and prioritization is not just about accountability and fulfilling expectations. With a growing number of people in need and WFP's budget down by at least 30 to 40 percent, the organization has to make more and more difficult and ethically challenging choices on whom to prioritize and how to target effectively and efficiently. The idea of doing the same as in the past is unrealistic.

211. At the same time, WFP is operating in a rapidly evolving humanitarian system, where mergers among United Nations agencies are being debated, new actors are challenging established roles (including that of WFP), and core services essential to WFP's mission are shrinking or uncertain. In this context, targeting and prioritization are not just technical exercises. They are the most central decisions the organization makes, as they determine who among the many people suffering from hunger and malnutrition will receive food and nutrition assistance and who will not. How WFP navigates these difficult decisions is critical to WFP's self-understanding and how it projects itself to external stakeholders. The conclusions we offer reflect on WFP's targeting and prioritization practices at the end of one of the fastest periods of growth of the humanitarian sector. The recommendations provided in the next section build on these conclusions, while trying to factor in the drastically changed context which sharply limits what is feasible.

Conclusion 1: WFP's normative framework and support structures for targeting and prioritization have evolved considerably over the past years and largely serve their purpose well, although country offices are asking for clearer strategic guidance in an era of unprecedented budget cuts.

212. Since the Internal Audit of Beneficiary Targeting in WFP conducted in 2020,¹⁶⁷ the organization has substantially improved its guidance and support structures related to targeting and prioritization. Five years ago, the audit found WFP's approaches to targeting and prioritization only "partially satisfactory" and called for "major improvements". WFP has taken a range of pragmatic steps to address the shortcomings found. The Global Assurance Project, which was launched in 2023 in reaction to donor pressure for greater assurance and accountability, accelerated progress notably through the definition of global assurance standards. The Targeting Assurance Framework adopted in 2025 defines actions and measures for strengthening targeting and prioritization practices; country office teams are expected to follow these practices in all operations and are held accountable for doing so. In addition, WFP's Enterprise Risk Management Policy guides practice by requiring that risk be actively assessed and incorporated into decisions about who receives assistance and when and how they receive it. As a result, WFP now has a suite of guidance materials and formal requirements related to targeting and prioritization in place and continues to fill gaps identified as a priority during this evaluation. The WFP's normative framework strikes an appropriate balance between guiding and prescribing. It provides guidance, while leaving country offices the flexibility to adapt to local circumstances. It provides clear definitions, has formal guidelines on gender and inclusion and provides a variety of examples based on lessons learned.

213. However, the normative framework is both disjointed and has gaps, that – if closed – will further help operations make difficult decisions with greater confidence and ease. The many different guidance materials related to targeting and prioritization are also not easily retrievable in one place and are difficult

¹⁶⁷ WFP (2020) Internal Audit of Beneficiary Targeting in WFP. Internal Audit Report AR/20/07. WFP, Rome.

to process, given the large number of documents. Above all, there has been only a limited focus on prioritization. WFP has recently started to address this with its Considerations Paper on Prioritizing Humanitarian Assistance. While country offices appreciate the considerations, they are asking for clearer direction and more clarity on WFP's overall strategic direction in a rapidly changing context.

214. Support structures within Global Headquarters, including regional offices, have proven instrumental in strengthening targeting practices at the field level: they have supported knowledge transfer and learning, helped country offices to improve their targeting strategies and to verify compliance with the assurance steps required as part of the Global Assurance Framework. Increasingly working in close cooperation with other relevant functional areas, the Needs Assessment and Targeting Service, the Emergency Preparedness and Response Service and regional targeting advisers have been effective in serving as an institutional "home" for this crucial topic. Yet, in response to the substantial funding cuts, several targeting advisors' positions will have to be abolished in 2026. The UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub will also be phased out. This reduces critical targeting and prioritization capacity.

Conclusion 2: WFP has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of various targeting and prioritization approaches and increasingly takes into account vulnerabilities in the way it targets and prioritizes. Selected approaches were found to be largely appropriate for their specific contexts but evidence related to the costs of various approaches is inconclusive. In addition, WFP's targeting and prioritization practices were found to be insufficiently agile and cooperative.

215. WFP uses a variety of targeting and prioritization approaches that are generally well suited to the context and often combine different methods. When census data are available and household surveys are possible, WFP opts for highly data-driven approaches to determining household vulnerabilities. In other countries, where little data are available, means to conduct large-scale household surveys are limited or humanitarian access is constrained, WFP opts for a community-based targeting approach. For livelihood programmes, community consultations are central, both for selecting participants and for choosing projects or assets for rehabilitation. WFP has demonstrated a high degree of flexibility in selecting targeting approaches that suit the demands of the specific situation at hand. That said, the rationale for opting for a given targeting or prioritization approach is rarely documented.

216. WFP has made progress in integrating gender, disability and inclusion into its targeting work. Most country offices use indicators such as households headed by women or elderly people and households with members with disabilities to estimate vulnerability. However, the evaluation finds that these categories are at times applied too generically and without enough triangulation of contextualized food insecurity, nutrition or poverty indicators. Community-based targeting mechanisms are also not always sufficiently gender-responsive, and women and other excluded demographic groups at times lack real influence in targeting decisions. While WFP has made progress on these, it can do more to ground inclusion in local evidence and improve participation as suggested in the 2025 Inclusive Targeting and Prioritization Processes guidance.¹⁶⁸

217. WFP has shifted to more refined vulnerability-based targeting for a growing number of programmes. Instead of providing blanket assistance in certain areas or status-based assistance for certain population groups, country offices are determining an increasing share of their caseloads based on more refined vulnerability assessments. Still, this shift is incomplete. Several country offices continue to select only small portions of the households they serve through vulnerability analysis, and face challenges in scaling up these approaches.

218. While WFP has the required flexibility to choose targeting and prioritization approaches that fit different contexts, its planning is not agile enough and does not sufficiently involve relevant stakeholders. In many operations, WFP lacks the ability to adapt and adjust its response to changing circumstances. Once the overall number of people to be assisted is defined, often during the initial geographical targeting, incentives are stacked against changing this number. Budgets have been set, in-kind assistance procured or cash transfers arranged, agreements with cooperating partners signed, and little or no contingency is available to respond to valid appeals brought forward through community feedback mechanisms or to

¹⁶⁸ WFP Assessment and Targeting Unit (2025) Inclusive targeting and prioritization processes. WFP, Rome.

findings from monitoring. The WFP Strategic Plan (2026-2029) also acknowledges this and posits that “WFP must strive for greater agility”.¹⁶⁹

219. WFP has formally institutionalized the early involvement of both management and programme staff in targeting decisions through the Targeting Assurance Framework and the establishment of targeting working groups, but practices vary. Engaging these actors from the outset helps align technical approaches with political realities and fosters stronger ownership at the field level. A cross-functional approach, where responsibilities are shared between vulnerability analysis and mapping and programme teams, and informed by monitoring and evaluation, has proven effective in the country case studies where it is applied. WFP is also not consistently engaging with other humanitarian actors on targeting and prioritization decisions. While the partnership with UNHCR has led to more cooperation and vulnerability-based targeting of refugees, inter-agency coordination forums, such as clusters or working groups, tend to have limited engagement on targeting and prioritization. In most cases, WFP therefore largely decides on its own where, to whom and how it provides food assistance.

Conclusion 3: WFP’s targeting and prioritization approaches enable the organization to reach food-insecure people, but assistance has been spread too thinly, and programme integration is insufficient.

220. The evidence available for this evaluation suggests that WFP’s programmes often reach those intended. However, the way WFP designs its programmes and how it targets and prioritizes as a result has led to assistance being spread too thinly and to programmes not being integrated enough to effectively address food insecurity.

221. When forced to prioritize, WFP, taking other stakeholders’ priorities and operational constraints into account, WFP has generally opted to reduce rations or the duration of assistance instead of, or in addition to, reducing the number of people assisted. WFP’s corporate data indicate a staggering level of nutritionally inadequate rations being distributed. Evidence that insufficient assistance is failing those supported by WFP abounds. Some country offices, such as South Sudan, have begun reversing this trend by giving more consideration to the depth, instead of mainly the breadth, of their assistance. The WFP Strategic Plan (2026-2029) makes this a corporate approach by prioritizing the people who are most acutely food insecure and by ensuring that rations are nutritionally adequate as part of its commitment to greater programme quality.¹⁷⁰

222. In part due to the different targeting and prioritization approaches used for conditional and unconditional resource transfers, WFP has also fallen short of its ambition to better layer, sequence or integrate basic life-saving assistance with resilience and livelihood-oriented activities. WFP’s goal of programme integration is clearly stated in corporate documents. But in practice, it is rarely achieved. Revising the targeting and prioritization approaches would require WFP and its donors to accept more risk in delivering livelihood support in areas with weaker development prospects. It would also require stronger local vulnerability analysis to better understand household and individual needs and their development over time. Above all, WFP would need to shift strategically to concentrate both conditional and unconditional assistance in the same places. WFP has recently initiated such a strategic shift.

Conclusion 4: There is a disconnect between WFP’s clear standards on targeting and prioritization and its practice, which leaves the organization exposed to several risks and requires stronger compliance with minimum standards as well as improvements in data systems.

223. The evaluation found that the way in which targeting approaches are implemented often matters more than which approach is selected. One of WFP’s core challenges lies at the last mile, in ensuring consistent, high-quality execution of targeting and prioritization processes closest to the people served. Where targeting and prioritization are not executed in line with standards, this evaluation found suboptimal inclusion and exclusion errors, and erosion of community trust. In some instances, this was compounded by an overreliance on cooperating partners that have uneven capacity for targeting and prioritization, and by outdated or incomplete vulnerability data. Especially in politically sensitive contexts, such shortcomings

¹⁶⁹ WFP (2025). WFP Strategic Plan (2026-2029). WFP/EB.2/2025/3-B/1/Rev.1.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

can expose WFP to significant operational, reputational and accountability risks.

224. While the Global Assurance Framework and the Targeting Assurance Framework cover many of the critical issues identified, the Targeting Assurance Framework particularly is still very recent. WFP practices observed by this evaluation often fall short of the standards outlined in these frameworks. Monitoring, above all, has not been a reliable source of information on targeting effectiveness, and the way operations are monitored frequently do not fully meet WFP's own minimum standards. Often, it does not allow for measuring inclusion and exclusion errors, or for assessing the effects of assistance and the consequences of prioritization.

225. There is also frequently insufficient engagement with cooperating partners on the implementation of community-based targeting. Practices vary widely, with some operations found to be engaging extensively with cooperating partners through trainings, briefings and learning formats and others not. As cooperating partners are instrumental, especially when WFP engages with communities, too little guidance and oversight creates situations where community consultations lack safeguards against elite capture, social bias and targeting errors.

226. Finally, verification systems remain a critical weakness. Most standard operating procedures require checks on whether people assisted meet eligibility criteria but there is little evidence whether these are systematically implemented at the level required to address inclusion errors. The use of deduplication processes remains limited since digital registration systems are not consistently used and the interoperability of WFP's relevant IT systems (SCOPE, MoDa and CODA) remains a weakness. In addition, feedback systems for affected people rarely translate into effective appeals mechanisms in the absence of more flexible caseloads. As a result, WFP still lacks, in many instances, the feedback and control mechanisms needed to refine and improve its targeting and prioritization in real time and to effectively mitigate the related risks to its programmes and reputation.

Conclusion 5: Humanitarian funding cuts are forcing WFP to make tough choices about where and how it provides assistance and to whom and for how long. These pressures expose unresolved dilemmas in targeting and prioritization, making it urgent for WFP to clearly define its principles and strategic direction.

227. Most major donors are currently reducing their contributions to the humanitarian system, reversing more than a decade of growth. This creates significant dilemmas for WFP and the broader sector, especially in relation to targeting and prioritization. WFP is being forced to prioritize more sharply, facing ethical dilemmas about whom to assist and whom to leave out. At the same time, shifting from status-based to vulnerability-based targeting to enable fair and just prioritization increases costs. With shrinking budgets and rising targeting costs, the value and feasibility of rigorous targeting will likely be questioned. Meanwhile potential broader shifts of the humanitarian architecture are being discussed, ranging from the merger of agencies and reduction of clusters to the radical localization of humanitarian assistance or the entry of unprincipled private actors.

228. Navigating the changing humanitarian landscape also requires WFP to have more clarity about its strategy. Which targeting and prioritization approaches are most appropriate depends on what WFP wants to achieve: if WFP primarily wants to be a humanitarian provider of the last resort that reaches the most vulnerable in the most difficult locations, then it needs to be able to bear the costs of identifying those most in need with accuracy and of operating in these areas. If, on the other hand, WFP primarily wants to save and improve the lives of the greatest number of people affected by food insecurity, it needs to focus more on cost effectiveness and provide integrated live-saving and resilience or livelihood activities in highly food-insecure areas.

229. The evidence reviewed for this evaluation shows that WFP has begun to articulate its stance on some critical issues, but many fundamental questions remain unaddressed and trade-offs unacknowledged. For example, WFP has recently signaled its commitment to providing a meaningful level of assistance, shifting away from reaching a larger number of people with minimal support. It also aims to deliver integrated assistance and is considering focusing its livelihood activities on areas most affected by shocks and food insecurity. The WFP Strategic Plan (2026-2029) speaks of a greater focus on meeting urgent needs for people in crisis, on building the self-reliance of food-insecure communities and on helping

governments build their own food security programmes.¹⁷¹ Yet, WFP has been less clear about which activities it will scale back or exit altogether. For example, should WFP focus more strictly on areas facing acute food insecurity only, reducing its footprint in middle-income countries such as Sri Lanka or Ukraine? Should it phase out predictable lean season assistance, as recommended in the February 2025 prioritization guidance issued by the regional office in Dakar? The WFP Strategic Plan (2026-2029) discusses WFP's position and comparative advantages but still only takes a relatively cautious stance on what it will not do anymore.¹⁷² A country presence review took place in 2025, but conclusions were not available at the time this report was finalized.

230. Many WFP staff and management members interviewed deferred these difficult choices to donors, suggesting that as long as funding is available, there is no reason to reduce or stop specific activities. This evaluation concludes that such strategic questions need to be discussed and addressed more openly by WFP's senior management, in order to optimize targeting and prioritization approaches and to support country offices in prioritization decisions – and suggests as much in its first recommendation below.

¹⁷¹ WFP (2025). WFP Strategic Plan (2026-2029). WFP/EB.2/2025/3-B/1/Rev.1.

¹⁷² Ibidem.

3.2 Recommendations

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsibility WFP offices and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|---|---------------------|--|--|----------|-------------------------|
| <p>Recommendation 1: Support country offices in prioritization decisions by more clearly articulating WFP's strategic focus and positioning in order to strengthen their targeting and prioritization rationales.</p> <p>Faced with unprecedented budget cuts, country offices need more support in navigating the trade-offs inherent in targeting and prioritization. As WFP implements its new strategic plan , it should provide clear strategic guidance on the matters central to programme design and targeting and prioritization discussed below. It should also advocate with donors for space to follow these directions.</p> | Strategic | Programme Division | <p>Cross-functional working group on targeting and prioritization</p> <p>Supply Chain and Delivery Division (Planning and GCMF Unit)</p> | High | June 2026 |
| <p>1.1 Reinforce WFP's commitment to providing high-quality assistance by defining and upholding minimum levels of emergency assistance, strengthening reporting about and accountability for the nutritional adequacy of emergency assistance (for example through a more systematic use of the Optimus analytical tool), and supporting the integration of emergency and resilience programmes in areas affected by recurrent shocks (including by advocating with donors).</p> | | Programme Division | Supply Chain and Delivery Division (Planning and GCMF Unit) | | June 2026 |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsibility WFP offices and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|--|---------------------|--|---|----------|-------------------------|
| 1.2 Building on the paper “Considerations for prioritizing humanitarian assistance”, encourage country offices to give greater consideration to the cost-effectiveness of emergency interventions among the many issues to be considered when deciding whom to target and prioritize among groups of people facing the same severity of need. | | Programme Division | Cross-functional working group on targeting and prioritization | | June 2026 |
| Recommendation 2: Uphold targeting and prioritization standards by making guidance and tools more accessible, enforcing compliance with minimum standards, and safeguarding capacity. The evaluation team suggests that WFP employ the measures discussed below in its efforts to maintain its targeting and prioritization standards during this period of diminishing financial and human resources | Strategic | Programme Division | | High | December 2026 |
| 2.1 Rather than develop a new policy, make existing guidance more accessible by better consolidating and streamlining key documents in one location that is easily accessible to all functions and complementing them with practical tools, training materials and examples of good practice (especially for targeting and prioritization for resilience). As part of these efforts, ensure that targeting and prioritization processes are clear and integrated (see recommendation 4). | | Programme Division | Supply Chain and Delivery Division (Delivery Assurance Service) | | December 2026 |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsibility WFP offices and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|--|---------------------|---|--|----------|-------------------------|
| 2.2 Maintain adequate staffing and expertise at global headquarters (including regional offices) and in country offices to enable a cross-functional approach to targeting and prioritization as well as sufficient capacity for data collection and analysis and the design of adaptable targeting and prioritization approaches. | | Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer Department Assistant Executive Director, Programme Operations Department | Programme Cycle, Quality, and Budgeting Service Programme Operations, Staffing Coordination and Capacity Service, Programme Division (Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service) | | December 2026 |
| 2.3 To uphold minimum standards, hold country offices accountable for consistently verifying lists of people to be assisted and ensuring inclusive targeting and community engagement practices. Strengthen oversight of cooperating partners in order to mitigate risks of bias, favouritism, sexual exploitation and abuse, and exclusion. Ensure that the resources required to meet minimum standards are adequately reflected and supported in country portfolio needs budgets. | | Programme Monitoring and Reporting Service | Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service Supply Chain and Delivery Division (Delivery Assurance Service) | | December 2026 |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsibility WFP offices and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|--|---------------------|--|--|----------|-------------------------|
| <p>Recommendation 3: Support country offices in adopting more transparent, more agile and more cost-effective targeting and prioritization approaches.</p> <p>WFP can take the steps described below to help its country offices become more transparent, agile and cost-effective in their targeting and prioritization practices. This is important to address existing weaknesses in targeting and prioritization practices and to adapt to a more volatile and resource-scarce environment.</p> | Operational | Programme Division | Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer Department | High | |
| <p>3.1 Require country offices to monitor targeting effectiveness (inclusion and exclusion errors disaggregated by sex, age and other characteristics relevant to the context) across programmes, ideally through outcome monitoring among WFP beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries and at a minimum through standardized questions included in post-distribution monitoring as well as the analysis of community feedback data.</p> | | Programme Monitoring and Reporting Service | | | December 2026 |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsibility WFP offices and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|---|---------------------|--|---|----------|-------------------------|
| 3.2 Require country offices to transparently share WFP's targeting and prioritization rationales and criteria with affected people and to communicate the planned duration of assistance from the outset. Where WFP provides blanket or status-based assistance during the initial phase of a response, require country offices to define explicit criteria and, if possible, timelines for the phase-out of assistance or transition to more targeted assistance and to communicate the criteria and timeline transparently to affected people and partners. | | Assistant Executive Director Programme Operations Department (Gender, Inclusion and Protection Unit) | Emergency Preparedness and Response Service Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service | | December 2026 |
| 3.3 Improve the tracking of targeting costs and encourage country offices to increase the cost-effectiveness of targeting and prioritization processes by accepting higher error rates in the initial phases of a response (and in short-term responses) and increasing accuracy over time. | | Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service | Chief Financial Officer Division | | December 2026 |
| 3.4 Require country offices to turn existing community feedback mechanisms into more functional appeals processes by ensuring some flexibility to adjust lists of people to be assisted based on appeals. | | Programme Monitoring and Reporting Service | Gender, Inclusion and Protection Unit | | December 2026 |
| 3.5 Encourage country offices to use their engagement with food security and nutrition clusters and cash working groups to create more transparency about targeting and prioritization strategies and, where possible, align approaches to avoid fragmentation. | | Programme Division (global food security cluster) | Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service | | December 2026 |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsibility WFP offices and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|--|---------------------|--|--|----------|-------------------------|
| <p>Recommendation 4: Strengthen the interoperability of WFP's own data systems and common data systems or data sharing with other humanitarian agencies for targeting and prioritization.</p> <p>Effective targeting and prioritization hinges on the availability of accurate data. Collecting and updating such data requires a major investment of resources. In a very resource-constrained environment, WFP should therefore adopt more cooperative and more efficient approaches to data collection and management. Depending on context, this can entail one or several of the approaches described below.</p> | Strategic | Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service | | High | December 2027 |
| <p>4.1 Prioritize the necessary financial and human resources needed to accelerate the modernization and interoperability or integration of WFP's own digital data systems (e.g. SCOPE, SugarCRM, MoDa and CODA), together with reliable and secure data management practices, in order to enable a more comprehensive collection and storage of vulnerability data for prioritization and support effective de-duplication. This requires clear and integrated processes for targeting and prioritization (see recommendation 2).</p> | | Technology Division | Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service Programme Monitoring and Reporting Service Supply Chain and Delivery Division (Delivery Assurance Service, Logistics Service) | | December 2027 |

| Recommendations and sub-recommendations | Recommendation type | Responsibility WFP offices and divisions | Other contributing entities | Priority | Deadline for completion |
|--|---------------------|---|--|----------|-------------------------|
| 4.2 Strengthen WFP's role in making data a humanitarian public good by expanding and operationalizing global data-sharing agreements with key humanitarian partners and establish clear governance frameworks for data access, protection and use. | | Assistant Executive Director, Programme Operations Department (including Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service and Delivery Assurance Service) | Global Privacy Office Legal Office | | December 2027 |
| 4.3 Advance local data sharing practices by identifying pilot countries to assess and address common challenges to establishing local data sharing agreements, including legal, ethical and technical barriers. Based on these insights, define concrete steps for expediting local data sharing agreements. | | Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service | Country offices Global Privacy Office | | December 2027 |

Annex I. Summary terms of reference

The long version of the terms of reference is available at <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000160604/download/>

Strategic evaluation on WFP's approaches to Targeting and Prioritization for Food and Nutrition Assistance

Strategic evaluations in WFP focus on systemic issues of corporate relevance as defined in strategic documents, policies, and directives. The purpose of this evaluation is to meet both accountability and learning needs with a stronger emphasis on learning and forward looking.

Subject, focus and scope of the evaluation

The terms “targeting” and “prioritization” are often used inter-changeably though they are distinct concepts. Targeting is the process by which populations are selected for assistance, informed by needs assessments and programme objectives. Prioritization is the process through which people within a targeted population, who have greater needs and/or are in more vulnerable situations, receive assistance when overall identified needs cannot be met, or when entitlements are reduced due to resource constraints.¹⁷³

Although WFP has always been forced to make targeting and prioritization choices, those decisions are now becoming more challenging than ever as a result of growing humanitarian needs and rising resource pressures. Country offices have been forced to reduce both the number of beneficiaries and the rations or even suspend assistance for a period of time. Such decisions inevitably have repercussions on the food security and nutrition status of targeted communities, leading in some instances to increased protection risks along with the adoption of risky coping strategies.

WFP's approaches to targeting and prioritization have evolved over the years. In response to an internal audit on targeting and to the pressing challenges faced by country offices, WFP launched several initiatives aimed at strengthening the way targeting and prioritization are done across operations, as well as increasing coherence, integrity and transparency in targeting analysis, decision-making and implementation. Several HQ Divisions collaborated on a Targeting Strengthening Initiative and efforts were made to improve regional offices' capacity on targeting. Cross-functional efforts on targeting and prioritization have consisted of: i) Identifying and documenting operational challenges and good practices; ii) Producing or updating guidance; iii) Providing hands-on support to country offices; iv) Tracking and reporting on progress made across the organization and accountability through the Global Assurance Project; v) Facilitating capacity strengthening initiatives and vi) exploring new technologies.

Together with WFP policies on emergency needs assessment and targeting in emergencies which date back to 2004 and 2006, the [ED Circular on Management of Targeting Processes by WFP offices](#) (2022) and the [Targeting and prioritization Operational guidance](#) (2021) provide an overall framework that should be tailored to the specific context and capacities in each country. This was further complemented by an **ED circular on Global Assurance Framework** issued in June 2024 which aims to ensure food assistance reaches the right

¹⁷³ WFP (2021) [Targeting and Prioritization Guidance Note](#)

people safely and effectively.

The evaluation will focus on WFP's approaches to targeting and prioritization for interventions involving direct food/cash assistance to beneficiaries as reflected in its normative framework and as operationalized at country level.

The evaluation will cover all regions where WFP operates and draw from a purposeful sample of five full and three to five remote country case studies, reflecting a range of operational contexts. Though the temporal scope extends from 2019 till April 2025, particular attention will be given to WFP recent and current practices to inform the way forward.

Objectives and users of the evaluation

The evaluation is expected to:

1. document and draw lessons from WFP's current approaches to targeting and prioritization;
2. assess the relevance of its normative framework and institutional arrangements;
3. identify internal and external enablers and barriers to effective targeting and prioritization as well as promising practice.

The evaluation aims to generate evidence to inform ongoing reflections on how WFP could enhance its targeting and prioritization approaches in a severely resource constrained environment. Issues related to gender equality, disability and other factors of vulnerability which influence food insecurity and malnutrition, as they relate to targeting and prioritization, will also be considered.

Primary internal users of the evaluation results include WFP's senior leadership and management as well as staff involved directly in targeting and prioritization work at country office and regional bureau levels. External stakeholders include crisis-affected communities, community leaders and gate-keepers, civil society, host governments, and a wide range of humanitarian and development actors.

Evaluation questions

The evaluation will address the following questions (those were refined during inception phase):

QUESTION 1: How relevant and appropriate are WFP's approaches to targeting and prioritization?

QUESTION 2: What are the effects of WFP's targeting and prioritization practices?

QUESTION 3: How effectively does WFP engage and collaborate with others on targeting and prioritization?

QUESTION 4: What factors affect WFP's performance on targeting and prioritization?

Methodology and ethical considerations

The overall evaluation design will be developed by the evaluation team through a participatory, iterative reflection and learning process. In the absence of an existing explicit Theory of Change and considering that targeting and prioritization are not an end in themselves but rather a necessary process to ensure that WFP assistance reaches those most in need, the evaluation will first develop an analytical framework along with a set of hypotheses that will be subsequently tested.

The methodology is expected to:

- adopt mixed methods (quantitative, qualitative) for data collection and analysis;
- demonstrate attention to impartiality and reduction of bias by relying on different primary and secondary data sources and stakeholders and adopting systematic triangulation;
- mitigate challenges to data availability and validity, and budget and timing constraints, further expanding and validating elements included in the initial evaluability assessment;
- include a desk-based summary of evaluation evidence, expanded with relevant research and evaluations commissioned by others; and
- Review the targeting and prioritization approaches of other humanitarian and development actors.
- collect the views of crisis-affected communities through focus group discussions and analysis of data generated by community feedback mechanisms in each country sampled for the evaluation, paying particular attention to gender, equity and inclusiveness dimensions.

Through a number of country case studies, the evaluation will look at the extent to which country offices have operationalized WFP's targeting and prioritization circular, guidance and tools; as well as how targeting and prioritization decisions are made, monitored and what are their effects.

The evaluation is expected to adhere to the 2020 UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) ethical guidelines. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring informed consent, protecting personal data, confidentiality and anonymity of informants, ensuring cultural sensitivity, respecting the autonomy of participants, ensuring fair recruitment of participants (including women and socially excluded groups) and ensuring that the evaluation cause no harm to participants, their communities, and to WFP operations.

Roles and responsibilities

EVALUATION TEAM: The evaluation will be conducted by a team of independent consultants with strong experience in conducting global strategic evaluations, and organizational performance assessments. All team members must have experience evaluating humanitarian and development programmes and understand the multidimensional constraints under which WFP and its partners operate.

OEV EVALUATION MANAGEMENT: The evaluation will be managed by Julie Thoulouzan, Senior Evaluation Officer with the support of Lia Carboni in a Research Analyst capacity. They will be the main interlocutors between the evaluation team, represented by the team leader, and WFP counterparts, to ensure a smooth implementation process and adherence with OEV quality standards for evaluation process and deliverables.

An **INTERNAL REFERENCE GROUP** will be asked to review and comment on draft evaluation reports, provide feedback during evaluation briefings and be available for interviews with the evaluation team.

An **EXTERNAL ADVISORY GROUP** will provide expert input on key deliverables and/or engage in discussions on key topics during the evaluation process.

The **DIRECTOR OF EVALUATION** will approve the final evaluation products and present the SER to the WFP Executive Board for consideration.

Communication

All WFP strategic evaluation products will be produced in English. As part of the international standards for evaluation, WFP requires that all evaluations are made publicly available. The evaluation team will propose/explore communication/feedback channels to appropriate audiences (including affected populations as relevant) as part of the inception phase.

Timing and key milestones

Inception phase: September -December 2024

Data collection phase: January -April 2025

Reporting phase: May-November 2025

Stakeholder workshop: September 2025

Executive Board: February 2026

Annex II. Evaluation timeline

| Evaluation steps | Responsibilities | Timing / Deadline |
|---|--|----------------------|
| Inception | | |
| Finalize contract | Evaluation manager (EM)/risk assessment (RA)/quality assurance (QA) 2/team leader (TL) | 23 Aug 2024 |
| Team orientation, initial desk review, remote kick-off briefing | Evaluation team (ET)/EM/RA | 5 Sept 2024 |
| Inception mission Rome (3 days incl. travel) | ET | 10-12 Sept 2024 |
| Remote inception interviews / briefings | ET/EM/RA | 16 Sept–27 Sept 2024 |
| Identification of first country case study | EM/RA/QA2/ET | 27 Sept 2024 |
| Prepare first country case study: Develop draft data collection tools; context research; identify local research partner; prepare travel and interviews | ET | 30 Sept–31 Oct 2024 |
| Inception country case study | Deputy team leader (DTL)/EM | 31 Oct–13 Nov 2024 |
| Submit inception report V0 | ET | 19 Nov 2024 |
| Comment on inception report V0 | EM/RA | 20–22 Nov 2024 |
| Develop inception report V1 | ET | 25 Nov–26 Nov 2024 |
| Comment on inception report V1 | EM/RA/QA2 | 27 Nov–29 Nov 2024 |
| Develop inception report V2 | ET | 2 Dec–3 Dec 2024 |
| Clear inception report V2 | QA2 | 4 Dec–5 Dec 2024 |
| Remaining adjustments inception report V2 | ET | 5 Dec 2024 |

| | | |
|---|------------|------------------------|
| Internal reference group (IRG) comment on inception report | IRG | 5 Dec–19 Dec 2024 |
| Develop inception report V3 | ET | 20 Dec 2024–9 Jan 2025 |
| Comment on inception report V3 | EM/RA/QA2 | 9–10 Jan 2025 |
| Develop inception report V4 | ET | 13–14 Jan 2025 |
| Review inception report V4 | EM/RA/QA2 | 15–16 Jan 2025 |
| Review and clear final inception report | QA2 | 20 Jan 2025 |
| Data collection & analysis | | |
| Prepare field visits and conduct desk research | ET | 15 Jan–21 Feb 2025 |
| Conduct and analyse staff survey | ET | 16 Jan–25 April 2025 |
| Remote key informant interviews, document & data review and analysis | ET | 16 Jan–30 April 2025 |
| Country mission Jordan | ET | 9–20 Feb 2025 |
| Country mission Sri Lanka | ET | 10–22 March 2025 |
| Country mission Nigeria | ET | 24 March–4 April 2025 |
| Country mission DRC | ET | 7–20 April 2025 |
| Remote case studies | ET | February–April 2025 |
| Remote learning / peer exchange events based on country case good practices or learnings | ET/EM/RA | TBD |
| Internal analysis workshop on country cases studies and in preparation of evaluation report | ET (EM/RA) | 5–6 May 2025 |
| Reporting | | |
| Preliminary findings debriefing | ET/IRG/OEV | 02 June 2025 |

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|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Preparation of draft evaluation report V0 | ET | 12 May–20 June 2025 |
| Comment on evaluation report V0 | EM/RA/QA2 | 23–27 June 2025 |
| Develop evaluation report V1 | ET | 30 June–13 July 2025 |
| Comment on evaluation report V1 | EM/RA/QA2 | 14–16 July 2025 |
| Develop evaluation report V2 | ET | 17 July–29 Aug 2025 |
| Clear evaluation report V2 | DOE | 30–08 Aug 2025 |
| Comment on evaluation report V2 | IRG/External advisory group (EAG) | 11 Aug–01 Sept 2025 |
| Stakeholder workshop | ET/IRG/OEV | 11 Sept–12 Sept 2025 |
| Develop evaluation report V3 | ET | 13 Sept–19 Sept 2025 |
| Comment on evaluation report V3 | EM/RA/QA2 | 22 Sept–25 Sept 2025 |
| Develop evaluation report V4 | ET | 26 Sept–30 Sept 2025 |
| Comment on evaluation report V4 | EM/RA/QA2 | 01–07 Oct 2025 |
| Develop evaluation report final version | ET | 08–13 Oct 2025 |
| Clear evaluation report final version | QA2 | 14–30 Oct 2025 |
| Develop summary evaluation report (SER) V0 | OEV | 24–26 Sept 2025 |
| Comment on summary evaluation report V0 | QA2 | 29 Sept–03 Oct 2025 |
| Develop summary evaluation report V1 | EM/RA | 06–07 Oct 2025 |
| Validate draft SER | TL | 08–10 Oct 2025 |
| Clear summary evaluation report V1 | Director of Evaluation (DoE) | 13–17 Oct 2025 |
| Comment on summary evaluation report V1 | Policy & Risk Committees | 20–31 Oct 2025 |

| | | |
|---|-------|----------------|
| Develop summary evaluation report V2 | EM/RA | 03–05 Nov 2025 |
| Comment on summary evaluation report V2 | QA2 | 06–11 Nov 2025 |
| Revise summary evaluation report V2 | EM/RA | 12–14 Nov 2025 |
| Approve final summary evaluation report and submit to Executive Board Secretariat (EBS) | DoE | 21 Nov 2025 |
| Additional learning & dissemination of evaluation results | ET/EM | Jan–Feb 2026 |

Annex III. Evaluation matrix

The evaluation matrix specifies evaluation questions and subquestions, the lines of enquiry and analytical focus for each or them, as well as the sources of information and data collection that will be used.

| | Evaluation questions | Lines of inquiry and analytical focus | Sources of information/data collection |
|-------------|--|--|--|
| EQ 1 | How relevant and appropriate are WFP's approaches to targeting and prioritization? | | |
| 1.1 | Based on which considerations does WFP choose its approach to targeting and prioritization and how does it navigate related trade-offs? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Adequacy of who takes relevant decisions # Plausibility of decisions taken # Reasoning behind targeting and prioritization decisions # Identified trade-offs, their management and documentation # Plausibility of organizational narratives influencing targeting and prioritization decisions # Blind spots and information gaps | Interviews with WFP staff and CPs FGDs and interviews with affected people Interviews with external experts Staff survey Analysis of CSPs and (if available) more specific country-level documents on T&P, such as T&P SOPs and strategies and documentation from the country office resource management committee |
| 1.2 | How agile is WFP in adapting its targeting and prioritization approaches to changing circumstances? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Frequency of review of criteria used for T&P # Degree of adaptation of T&P approaches WFP's response to recent episodes of uncertainty or change, including, where applicable, transitions from crisis response to longer-term programming # Suitability and use of evidence (including M&E information) for/in course corrections # Perceptions by WFP staff and CPs | Interviews with WFP staff, CPs and external experts Analysis of CSPs and (if available) more specific country-level documents on T&P; review of CSP budget revisions, CSP mid-term reviews, annual country reports, evaluations Analysis of country-level secondary data on vulnerability and WFP's planned assistance |

| | | | |
|-------------|--|--|---|
| | | and other partners and observers on WFP's agility | |
| EQ 2 | What are the effects of WFP's targeting and prioritization practices on the people it serves? | | |
| 2.1 | To what extent do WFP's targeting and prioritization practices enable it to identify and serve those it intends to serve? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Linkage between programmatic objectives and targeting approaches # Availability of estimates on inclusion/exclusion errors # Availability and effectiveness of mechanisms to address inclusion and exclusion errors # Community perceptions on inclusion/exclusion errors # Responsiveness to inclusion issues (disability, age, gender) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of available evidence on inclusion and exclusion errors and country-level secondary data FGDs with affected people Interviews with staff, CPs, partners, external experts Staff survey Review of annual country reports, evaluations, CSP mid-term reviews and other country-level studies |
| 2.2 | What other societal effects do WFP's targeting and prioritization practices have? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Extent of food sharing # Awareness and consideration of incentives created by T&P decisions # Understanding of cultural norms # Contribution to social tensions # Reinforcement of, or tensions with, other targeting systems (e.g. national targeting systems) # Positive effects / other negative effects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FGDs with affected people Analysis of community feedback mechanisms and PDM data Review of annual country reports, evaluations, CSP mid-term reviews and other country-level studies Review of potentially relevant academic literature (sociological, ethnographic, anthropological, peace & conflict studies) Interviews with WFP staff, partners, with community leaders, external experts |
| 2.3 | How do WFP's targeting and prioritization approaches affect the quality and effectiveness of WFP's programmes? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Ability to implement integrated programmes # Perceptions on the effects of WFP's targeting and prioritization approaches on programme quality and effectiveness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with WFP staff, CPs, external experts FGDs with affected people Review of country office-level data on programme integration (if available) Inclusion/exclusion error documentation Data on the duration of assistance and the nutritional adequacy of rations Review of available evidence of the effects of prioritization on food security outcomes |

| EQ 3 | How effectively does WFP engage and collaborate with others on targeting and prioritization? | | |
|------|---|--|--|
| 3.1 | To what extent do WFP and its partners involve affected people in and inform them about targeting and prioritization decisions and their rationale? | # Quality of communication with affected populations # Quality of community consultations: inclusiveness; considerations of power dynamics and potential manipulation; influence on WFP's T&P decisions # Handling of tensions and trade-off related to the involvement of communities in T&P # Beneficiary perceptions on WFP's T&P approach, communication and effectiveness # Quality and level of functionality of feedback and appeals mechanisms | FGDs with affected people Interviews with CPs, WFP staff and external experts Review of community feedback mechanisms, process monitoring and PDM data Interviews with community targeting committee members |
| 3.2 | To what extent are WFP's cooperating partners contributing to an effective process for targeting and prioritization and to what extent are WFP's practices for selecting, supporting and monitoring cooperating partners adequate in this context? | # Role of CPs in the targeting and prioritization process # Separation of tasks # Quality assurance of the targeting process run by CPs # Knowledge of WFP's targeting approach by CPs # Review of how feedback from CPs is elicited and incorporated into WFP's T&P decisions # CPs' assessment of how they contribute to T&P # Technical and financial support on T&P provided by WFP to CPs | Interviews with WFP staff Interviews with CPs Document review: Review of selected agreements with CPs, review of activity reports and performance assessments of CPs to trace their role in the targeting process; review of annual country reports, evaluations, CSP mid-term reviews and other country-level studies |

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| 3.3 | To what extent does WFP relate appropriately to government-led targeting and prioritization systems and how does it consider possible risks for the humanitarian principles, including impartiality and operational independence? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Strength of government capacity and reliability of government-led targeting and prioritization systems # Degree of attempted interference with independence, neutrality or impartiality of T&P decisions # Adequacy of WFP's ways of handling attempted interference # Adequacy of degree of alignment with and support for government-led systems | <p>Interviews with WFP staff, representatives of governments/authorities, the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)/other partners</p> <p>Interviews with donors</p> <p>Interview with external experts</p> |
| 3.4 | How well does WFP coordinate its targeting and prioritization practices with those of partners in relevant clusters and the Humanitarian Country Team and what role do joint targeting approaches play in this context? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Engagement with cluster and other humanitarian and resilience partners on T&P # Experiences with joint targeting approaches with other UN agencies # Management of disagreements on priorities and targeting # Perceptions of partners of WFP's approach to targeting and coordination of activities # Handling of referrals from other partners | <p>Analysis of CSPs, humanitarian response plans (HRPs) and food security and nutrition planning and strategy documents</p> <p>Interviews with WFP staff, FSC partners, nutrition cluster partners, OCHA/HC; other UN agencies: FAO, UNHCR, UNICEF</p> |
| EQ 4 What factors affect WFP's performance on targeting and prioritization? | | | |
| 4.1 | How useful and appropriate is WFP's normative framework on targeting and prioritization? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Perceptions on the relevance and usefulness of the normative framework on targeting and prioritization for different types of activities # Perceptions on the relevance and usefulness of the normative framework on prioritization # Usefulness to navigate trade-offs # Missing aspects and suggested changes to the normative framework # Extent of follow-up to audit recommendations # Extent to which normative framework reflects relevant gender, equity and inclusion considerations | <p>Document analysis of relevant corporate policies, strategies, circulars, guidance documents issued by Global HQ including regional offices</p> <p>Interviews with WFP Global HQ including regional office staff providing guidance and support on T&P</p> <p>Interviews with WFP staff</p> <p>Review of country-level strategies and SOPs for targeting and prioritization</p> <p>Staff survey</p> <p>Review of data relevant to targeting and prioritization in risk management systems</p> |

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|-----|--|---|--|
| 4.2 | To what extent do the targeting and prioritization approaches draw on adequate qualitative and quantitative evidence? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Quality of engagement with affected people # Depth, quality, timeliness, comprehensiveness, granularity of the data and information used for targeting and prioritization decisions (incl. needs/vulnerability assessments) # Adequacy of combination of qualitative and quantitative data # Relevance of monitoring data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of country-level secondary data (vulnerability and needs assessments, household surveys) Interviews with WFP staff Interviews with needs assessment and external experts Interviews with targeting committee members FGDs with affected people Staff survey Review of annual country reports, evaluations, CSP mid-term reviews and other country-level studies |
| 4.3 | Does WFP have adequate capacities and arrangements (e.g. on data, analysis, budgeting, inter-functional cooperation) to support appropriate and timely targeting and prioritization practices and how useful are the support and implementation measures for the spectrum of WFP programmes and operating contexts? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Relevant staffing capacity # Timeliness of targeting and prioritization decisions and related processes # Quality of monitoring # Effectiveness of inter-functional collaboration at country level # Relevance and usefulness of technical support provided by Global HQ including regional offices # Adequacy of technical and IT tools for targeting and prioritization # Effectiveness of identity management and registration processes # Extent of follow-up to audit recommendations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with WFP staff at country, regional and headquarters level Staff survey Review of country portfolio budgets, expenditure reports and data on duration of grants Review of annual country reports, evaluations, CSP mid-term reviews and other country-level studies Review of country-level data on staffing capacity |
| 4.4 | To what extent does the earmarking of funding or donor preference influence targeting and prioritization results? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Influence of donor earmarking # Influence of donor preferences or requirements on targeting and prioritization # Willingness of donors to fund targeting costs in the past and now | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with WFP staff and donors Interviews with WFP Global HQ including regional offices Review of global- and country-level secondary data on donor earmarking Review of available donor strategies/instructions/funding requirements Review of country office expenditures to estimate targeting and prioritization costs |

| | | | |
|-----|---|--|---|
| 4.5 | What other factors affect WFP's performance on targeting and prioritization? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Registration process and timeliness of beneficiary data # Access constraints # Technology gaps and IT systems integration # Path dependencies informing prioritization # Types of institutional incentives shaping decisions on prioritization # Potential frequency of T&P adjustments depending on planning horizons for programmes # System-wide guidance on boundary setting | <p>Interviews with WFP Global HQ including regional office staff providing guidance and support on T&P</p> <p>Interviews with WFP staff</p> <p>Interviews with CPs</p> <p>Review of annual country reports, evaluations, CSP mid-term reviews and other country-level studies</p> |
|-----|---|--|---|

Annex IV: Evaluation

methodological approach

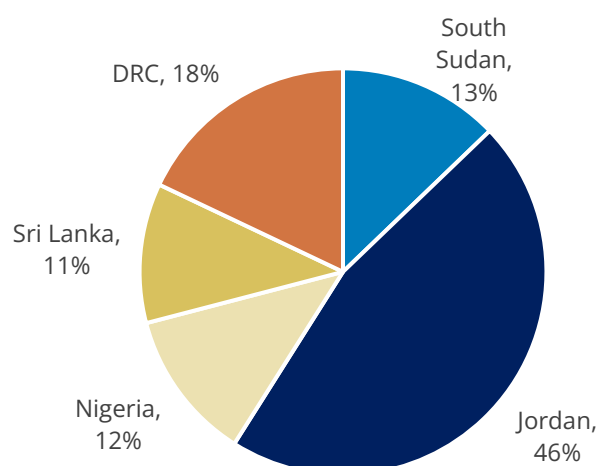
Data collection and sampling

232. Data collection tools used in the evaluation include key informant interviews, a survey among WFP country office staff, focus group discussions and key informant interviews with affected populations, as well as an analysis of documents and secondary data. The data collection tools can be found in Annex VII.

233. **Key informant interviews** with WFP staff and partners: The evaluation conducted interviews with key stakeholders across the country case studies, at regional and global levels. In-country interviews were mostly conducted in-person, while remote case study interviews and the Global Headquarters interviews were mainly conducted remotely; all are by default confidential and not for attribution. Annex X provides a detailed breakdown of the interviewed informants.

234. **Semi-structured interviews with key community members and local officials:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key community members and local officials, including targeting committee members, community leaders, elders, and civil society organization representatives. Local research partners, in collaboration with WFP and community leaders, identified interviewees with the express purpose of ensuring a diverse range of perspectives (including those of marginalized groups), while maintaining respect for local authority structures. The interviews provided crucial information on sensitive topics, drawing on each participant's specific roles, experiences and insights, and covered themes such as the rationale and process of targeting, satisfaction with the process, and its potential impacts. Figure 18 shows the distribution of interviews across the country case studies. Most interviews have been conducted in Jordan because focus group discussions were not possible due to contextual factors.

Figure 18. Interviewees: community members and local officials (total = 117)

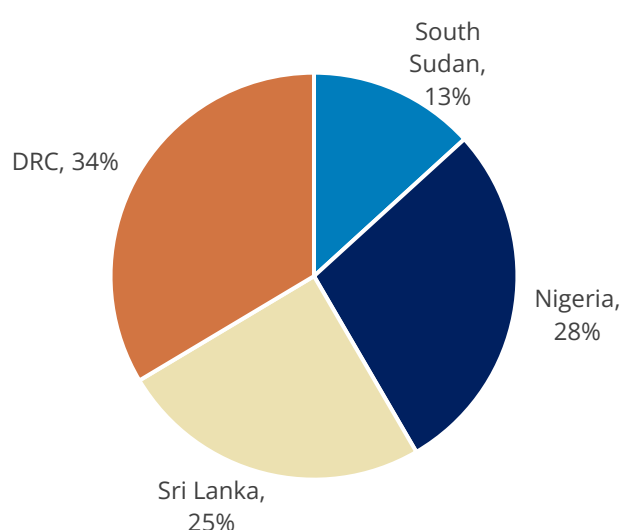


Source: Evaluation team.

235. **Focus group discussions** with affected people: Focus group discussions with affected communities were conducted to explore targeting and prioritization processes from the communities'

perspectives, with a focus on fairness, impact on the community, appeals mechanisms and recommendations for improvement. These discussions allowed participants to engage with and respond to different viewpoints, enabling the broader inclusion of diverse voices. Although the evaluation team initially planned to include targeting and prioritization decision making simulations, these were ultimately omitted (in agreement with the Office of Evaluation) due to the changing context of severe funding cuts and their effects on affected communities. All focus group discussions were facilitated by local research partners trained by the evaluation team. Both the evaluation team and local partners took care to address sensitive topics thoughtfully, specifically when discussing negative and unintended effects (see the section on limitations, risks and ethical considerations). Figure 19 presents an overview of participants across the country case studies. The evaluation engaged three distinct groups within the same communities: people receiving unconditional resource transfers, people receiving asset creation and livelihoods, and people who were deprioritized and no longer received unconditional resource transfers. A more detailed breakdown is available in Annex X. The evaluation team relied largely on convenience sampling and referral to identify participants.

Figure 19. Participants of the focus group discussions by country (total = 423)¹⁷⁴

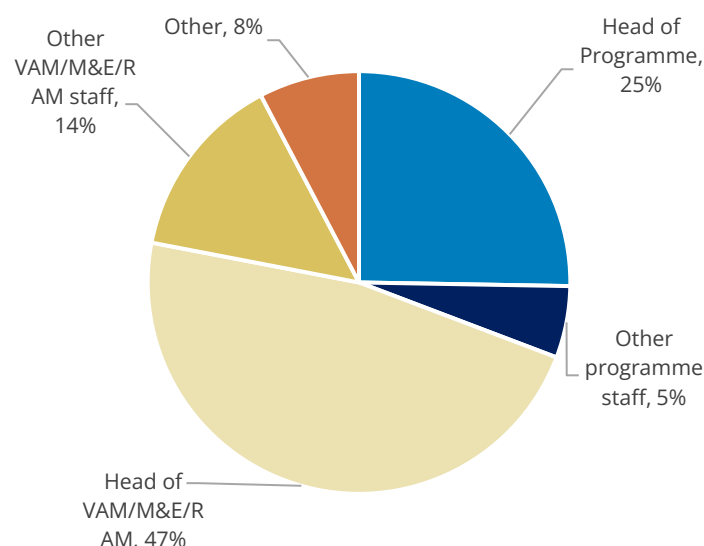


Source: Evaluation team.

236. **Online survey with WFP staff:** To gather insights beyond the country case studies, an online survey was conducted, targeting heads of programme and heads of RAM, VAM and M&E from WFP country offices who implemented unconditional resource transfers in 2024 (see breakdown in Figure 20). The survey received 91 responses across 52 countries; it primarily focused on targeting and prioritization approaches, decision making processes and the relevance of the normative framework, as well as support structures, challenges in managing targeting and prioritization and collaboration with partners.

¹⁷⁴ Focus group discussions were not conducted in remote case study locations and Jordan.

Figure 20. Survey respondents by position (n=91)



Source: Evaluation team.

237. **Documents and secondary data:** Documents and secondary data were provided by the Office of Evaluation and relevant units across WFP. Relevant datasets shared include financial data (needs, expenditures, funding), intensity of assistance (number of people assisted, number of rations, duration of assistance), food insecurity, nutrition adequacy and outcome monitoring data, as well as community feedback mechanism data and process monitoring data. The evaluation team drew on relevant documents including WFP corporate documents, studies, regional and country documents, previous evaluations and audit reports covering targeting and prioritization or similar issues. The evaluation team reviewed all publicly available audit reports of WFP operations covering the period from 2022 to February 2025 (see Annex XII). Audit reports were manually reviewed to extract information relevant to targeting and prioritization; they were then analysed with the support of artificial intelligence to detect recurring challenges and patterns. These were validated manually by the team. The team also reviewed planning documents and strategies relevant for prioritization and targeting at the country level (targeting standard operating procedures, implementation plans, data and information on cooperating partners in the full country case studies).

238. To address limitations in the availability, accessibility, or consistency of data across countries and sources, the evaluation team adopted several mitigation strategies. These included triangulating information across multiple data sources and stakeholder groups, using both qualitative and quantitative evidence to validate findings (see below). In contexts where recent or disaggregated data were unavailable, the team prioritized interviews with staff and partners. Local research partners played a critical role in ensuring access to community-level insights. Additionally, targeted follow-ups were conducted where initial data proved incomplete or contradictory, and care was taken to ensure geographic and programmatic coverage through appropriate sampling.

Data analysis and triangulation of findings

239. Data analysis for this evaluation was structured around the evaluation questions and their associated subquestions and followed the lines of inquiry outlined in the evaluation matrix.

240. Quantitative data from the survey were reviewed and cleaned in accordance with the 2016 Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) data cleaning procedures; this involved the screening, diagnosing, treating, and documenting of any data issues. For qualitative data (including key informant interviews and focus group discussions), the team applied manual analysis, triangulating the analysis of the different team members.

241. The manual analysis followed a three-step approach:

- Descriptive analysis: This step focused on identifying what happened (When? Where? For whom? How many?). Data were grouped, compared and summarized to highlight main characteristics, to identify patterns and detect anomalies.
- Explanatory analysis: This phase examined the underlying reasons for observed outcomes, exploring what factors and mechanisms might have driven specific results. Investigating associations and causal processes enables the refinement of hypotheses and theories about causes and effects.
- Interpretive analysis: The final step focused on deriving actionable insights from the gathered information, filtering out the “noise” and answering the core evaluation questions. This stage produced evidence-based judgments and well-supported conclusions.

242. The evaluation team used the following detailed analysis approaches for the various data collection tools. The data from the quantitative surveys were analysed using descriptive statistics, such as means, frequencies and standard deviations. The team analysed open answers by following the three-step approach outlined above. Focus group discussions and key informant interviews with affected communities were analysed using a mixed approach: local field teams conducted an initial analysis, which was then discussed with the evaluation team and cross-checked and complemented by going through the original data. The analysis of evidence, documents and secondary data was assessed against an ideal-typical targeting and prioritization process developed by the evaluation team. This approach enabled a systematic review of the completeness, robustness and quality of targeting processes in different contexts.

243. The evaluation team employed triangulation to ensure the credibility of findings by comparing insights from different data sources. The team triangulated across several dimensions to enhance the robustness of the analysis. This included triangulation of data sources – drawing on evidence from different country contexts, Global Headquarters including regional offices, as well as from a broad spectrum of stakeholders (including WFP staff, partners and affected populations). Methodologically, the team cross-validated findings generated through document review, secondary data analysis, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and the online survey. Interpretive triangulation was applied by comparing the perspectives of field researchers with those of evaluation team members, and by systematically contrasting the interpretations of different evaluators. Furthermore, the evaluation team validated key interpretations through debriefings with the respective country offices and interviews with WFP senior management, ensuring that findings reflected both local realities and institutional perspectives. Finally, the team presented its preliminary findings and sought feedback on said findings.

Limitations, risks and ethical considerations

244. The evaluation team encountered several challenges in the process of conducting this evaluation. Due to the adaptations and mitigation measures put in place, these limitations do not undermine the robustness or credibility of the evaluation findings.

245. The extreme pressure on the humanitarian system, resulting from the changes in funding structures, significantly affected the evaluation, both methodologically and operationally:

- First, some methodological components had to be revised. The evaluation team initially planned to conduct targeting and prioritization decision making simulations during the focus group discussions with affected communities. These simulations were designed to explore local preferences and how people from the affected communities perceived fairness by asking participants to make hypothetical decisions about targeting and prioritization in a resource-constrained context. However, given the scale of recent funding cuts and the resulting reduction in assistance for many people, the team identified ethical concerns. There was a significant risk that participants might associate the simulations with actual aid reductions, potentially causing distress or misinterpretation. In the end, the team decided to exclude the simulation component from the methodology. In Jordan, the country office advised against conducting focus group discussions given the sensitivities. However, a number of interviews with affected people were conducted instead. In addition, the approach for the global stakeholder workshop in September 2025 was revised to enable the remote (rather than only in-person) participation of country and regional

stakeholders to save costs.

- Second, the broader impacts of the funding crisis constrained data collection. In some countries, logistical limitations, such as a diminished presence of key stakeholders, impacted data collection. This included limited access to external interlocutors such as donors or cooperating partners, many of whom were no longer active or available for consultation.
- Finally, the ongoing reset of the humanitarian architecture in response to the current crisis has introduced a high degree of uncertainty. Conditions are evolving rapidly, with significant changes occurring every week. As a result, some of the findings or recommendations risk becoming outdated soon after formulation, depending on the trajectory of the crisis and corresponding shifts in operational realities.

246. A key limitation of the evaluation was the lack of robust and comprehensive data on several aspects essential for deeper analysis. Most notably, the evaluation could not draw conclusions on the cost-effectiveness of different targeting and prioritization approaches. Although this topic was explicitly included in the data request and was discussed with country offices, the necessary cost data were not available in most cases, preventing a detailed assessment of financial efficiency. As expected, this resulted in the data linking programme effectiveness to specific approaches being insufficient. This gap limited the ability to assess whether certain approaches led to better outcomes or were more appropriate in specific contexts. Finally, there was no systematic data available on inclusion and exclusion errors; this was particularly the case across operations. Thus, the evaluation could not reliably assess the accuracy or fairness of targeting practices across different settings.

247. The evaluation was conducted in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines (2020) and the WFP Code of Conduct (2014). The evaluation team was responsible for ensuring ethical standards throughout the evaluation. This included ensuring informed consent, protecting the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of stakeholders, ensuring cultural sensitivity, respecting the autonomy of participants, and promoting fair and inclusive participation and representation (particularly for and of women and marginalized groups). The team followed the “do no harm” principle and took special care when engaging with vulnerable populations. Across all stages, the evaluation upheld integrity, accountability and respect.

Gender, equity, inclusion and disability

248. Throughout this evaluation, the team paid careful attention to the topics of gender, equity, inclusion and disability – both in its inception (reviewing the evaluation’s focus) and throughout the process of conducting the evaluation. Recognizing that targeting and prioritization are crucial for WFP to make sure that assistance reaches the most vulnerable, the evaluation critically assessed the extent to which these processes either enabled or constrained WFP in reaching those most in need. This included examining whether WFP had sufficient data and analysis on gender and other drivers of vulnerability, whether this evidence was effectively reflected in targeting criteria, and whether existing monitoring processes allowed WFP to track the evolution of food security, nutrition outcomes, inclusion and exclusion errors and broader patterns of inclusion among marginalized groups. The team paid special attention to community processes and assessed whether vulnerable groups were included and how targeting and prioritization affected them.

249. Considerations around gender, equity, inclusion and disability were systematically integrated into data collection and analysis. Separate focus group discussions were conducted exclusively with women to ensure that their perspectives were directly captured and not influenced by a male presence in the room. In addition, particular attention was given to other groups considered to be highly vulnerable, depending on the context of each country case study. This included exploring vulnerabilities related to disability, displacement status, ethnic identity, or clan affiliation. Where possible, any significant differences in perceptions or outcomes across these groups were identified in the stage of data analysis. This approach ensured that the evaluation did not merely theoretically account for gender, equity, inclusion and disability, but actively and consistently applied these principles throughout the evaluation process.

Annex V. Targeting and prioritization approaches used

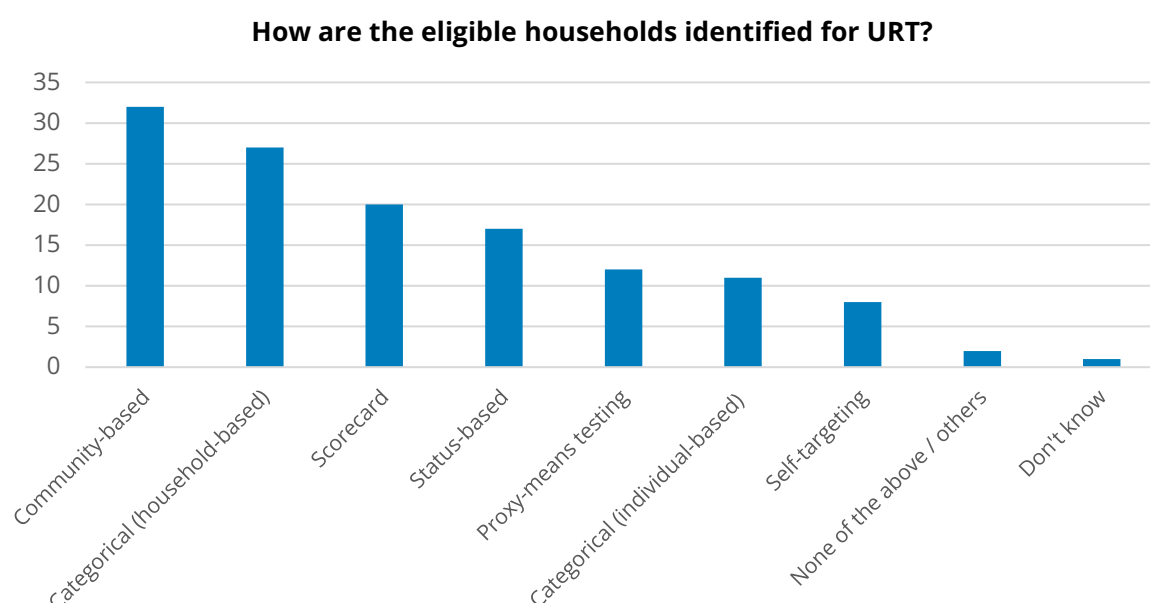
Key definitions of targeting approaches

| Targeting approach | Definition |
|--|--|
| Blanket targeting | All households in a defined area or affected population are eligible for assistance. |
| Categorical targeting (household-based) | Households that meet one or more (most often demographic or socioeconomic) criteria are considered eligible for assistance. |
| Categorical targeting (individual-based) | Individuals that meet one or more (most often demographic or socioeconomic) criteria are considered eligible for assistance. |
| Community-based targeting | Community committee(s) identify households considered eligible for assistance, either informed by criteria set by WFP or not. |
| Proxy-means testing | A statistical model that, similarly to the scorecard is applied to a registry, but instead of a score it generates a predicted value of a certain variable. |
| Scorecard | A combination of criteria with different weights created on the basis of a needs assessment and other quantitative or qualitative data sources, that when applied to a registry assigns a score to each entity and allows the ranking of them on the basis of vulnerability. |
| Self-targeting | A process by which households make themselves and their interest in receiving assistance known to WFP, by for example, showing up at a registration site, and WFP selects the most appropriate participants for the activity. |
| Status-based targeting | Eligibility is solely determined on basis of status (for example, as registered refugee or residing in an area affected by a recent emergency), and not on an evidenced link between this characteristic and the vulnerability that WFP's response aims to address. |

Targeting and prioritization for unconditional resource transfers (URT)

250. The most commonly used approaches for the targeting of URT are community-based, followed by categorical household-level targeting and status-based targeting (Figure 21). Of the surveyed country offices 79 percent reported using multiple targeting methods.

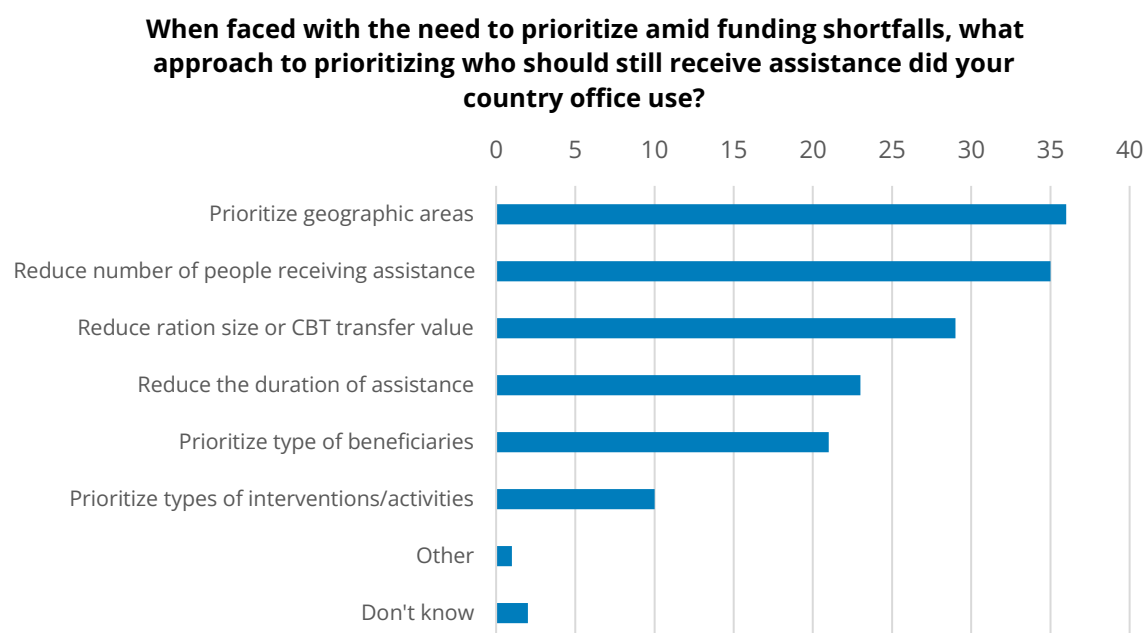
Figure 21. Targeting approaches used for unconditional resource transfer



Source: Online survey with 71 respondents from 47 country offices and responses from each country office counting as one.

251. WFP also employs a wide range of prioritization approaches. Most country offices use several approaches, the most frequent being prioritizing geographic areas and reducing the number of people assisted. Other methods include reducing the duration of assistance, ration size, or cash transfer value (Figure 22). Prioritizing certain types of activities, by contrast, is less common.

Figure 22. Prioritization approaches used by country offices



Source: Online survey with 69 respondents from 47 country offices and responses from each country office counting as one.

252. The case studies conducted for this evaluation confirm that a range of targeting and prioritization approaches are used for URT. All assessed country offices had targeting strategies or standard operating procedures in place, which applied to at least part of their activities. Table 4 provides an overview of the approaches used in each country.

Table 4: Country overview of targeting and prioritization approaches used for unconditional resource transfers

| Country | Target group | Financial needs funded ¹⁷⁵ | Targeting approaches | Prioritization approaches |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Haiti | Residents, IDPs | 2023: 21 percent 2024: 72 percent | Hybrid targeting approach using data from the government registry, complemented with community-based targeting, depending on the recency of the government data. | Geographic prioritization based on IPC and secondary context data |
| South Sudan | Residents, refugees, IDPs | 2023: 53 percent 2024: 63 percent | Blanket for sudden onset emergency and areas of extreme food insecurity (IPC 5); in areas below IPC 5, vulnerability-based targeting through community-based approach (for lean season response). | Shift from broad to more focused prioritization, using a staggered approach tailoring food basket value and duration to local needs (following recommendation of 2021 CSP evaluation). |
| Sri Lanka | Residents | 2023: 85 percent 2024: 45 percent | Small-scale categorical targeting at first, then expansion to supporting government's social welfare system; afterwards, a shift to community-based targeting to reduce the risk of bias and exclusion. | Ranking informs prioritization ("most eligible approach"). |
| Jordan | Refugees | 2023: 73 percent 2024: 61 percent | Blanket targeting for refugees living in camps; poverty-based targeting using a joint PMT with UNHCR and additional inclusion criteria for registered refugees living in host communities. | Reduction of transfer value; reduction of caseload through introduction of PMT approach; additional prioritization by excluding households with employment potential and without demographic vulnerabilities. |
| DRC | IDPs, refugees, returnees residents | 2023: 104 percent 2024: 41 percent | Status-based/blanket targeting for IDPs in camps. Vulnerability scorecard combined with community | Mostly geographical prioritization while maintaining full rations. For households, use of |

¹⁷⁵ Allocated contributions. Data source: Factory shop, May 2025.

| | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| | | | criteria for residents and IDPs out of camps. Status-based/blanket targeting for refugees, moving toward vulnerability-based targeting. | vulnerability classification to identify targets. |
| Nigeria | IDPs, resident | 2023: 73 percent 2024: 49 percent | Status-based for IDPs in camps. Community-based categorical targeting for lean season response. | Reduced duration of assistance and reduced caseload for lean season response, with constant transfer value (at relatively low level). |
| Dominican Republic | Residents, migrants | 2023: 7 percent 2024: 64 percent | Anticipatory action is targeted based on context analysis and hydro-meteorological modelling. Households in identified communities are ranked based on vulnerability criteria, derived from WFP food security assessments and regional experience. | Potential prioritization of households would use the vulnerability ranking |

Targeting and prioritization for nutrition

253. WFP's approach to targeting nutrition assistance varies across countries, but generally nutrition prevention assistance is based on integration with URT, while nutrition treatment relies mostly on referral-based mechanisms through health centres or community mobilizers. Exclusion risks exist in particular when screening systems are insufficient or when measurements of nutritional status are not rigorous. Across the countries covered by this evaluation, WFP often collaborates closely with UNICEF. Targeting approaches reflect a blend of demographic-based targeting (young children, pregnant and breastfeeding women), referrals using anthropometric indicators such as measuring mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) and geographic prioritization based on malnutrition prevalence and the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC). Targeting based on nutrition or health referrals can also be an important mechanism to ensure people living with HIV are supported without explicitly having to disclose their HIV status. Integration with unconditional transfers is common in protracted settings and where the same households require both food and nutrition support:

- In **Nigeria**, moderate acute malnutrition treatment targeting relies on MUAC screening and referrals from health clinics and community volunteers. Prevention services for children under the age of 2 and pregnant and breastfeeding women are typically delivered as part of URT in food-insecure areas, with geographic targeting based on malnutrition rates and IPC data.
- In **South Sudan**, geographic targeting for nutrition-specific interventions is informed by the IPC acute malnutrition classification and by calculations of the average global acute malnutrition (GAM) rate per county. Nutrition programme priority counties are those with an average GAM rate equal or above 10 percent, which follows the World Health Organization (WHO) classification of a GAM rate of 10 percent or higher for instances considered a serious emergency. People assisted are screened at the community level through community nutrition volunteers using MUAC and enrolled in treatment through health facilities or mobile outreach teams. Prevention services for children under the age of 2 and pregnant and breastfeeding women are typically delivered as part

of URT if households with such characteristics have been selected through the community-led targeting process.

- In **DRC**, geographic targeting for nutrition builds on IPC and nutrition assessment data. The identification of malnourished children relies on both facility-based referrals and nutrition surveillance through partners and community health workers. WFP collaborates with UNICEF, cooperating partners and health centres to identify eligible people for targeted supplementary feeding programmes. Children with moderate acute malnutrition and pregnant or breastfeeding women are enrolled based on anthropometric criteria and health status, often recorded and verified at health facilities or WFP distribution sites.

Targeting and prioritization for school meal programmes

254. In stable (non-emergency) contexts, WFP typically implements school meal programmes in close cooperation with the host government. Which schools are targeted and prioritized is therefore often determined by or jointly with the government, based on a broad geographic prioritization that is stable over time. Which schools are selected also often depends on pragmatic considerations, especially regarding the capacity to prepare and deliver school meals:

- In **Jordan**, the school meal programme targets geographic poverty pockets identified based on data from 2010. Which schools receive so-called healthy meals and which ones receive fortified date bars or biscuits depends on the schools' proximity to kitchens preparing healthy meals. Outside of camps, the school meal programme focuses on the morning shift, which is mostly attended by Jordanian children. Based on a government decision, afternoon shifts, which are mainly attended by refugee children, are not included in school meals.
- In **South Sudan**, WFP's school meal programme follows a similar targeting approach as general food distributions during the lean season. Broad geographic areas are selected based on assessments such as IPC data, with priority given to locations classified as IPC Phase 3 or higher. Within these areas, WFP targets the most vulnerable communities, those facing high food insecurity, limited access to education and high rates of dropout and absenteeism. Additional factors also influence which schools are selected. These include recommendations from government partners, school size, existing infrastructure and accessibility. This creates a practical trade-off: some schools in greatest need may be excluded due to lack of facilities or poor access, while better-equipped schools in less food-insecure areas may be prioritized for operational reasons. An evaluation nevertheless found the overall targeting approach sound but highlighted two gaps: the lack of clear prioritization among eligible schools when WFP has been facing funding constraints and the failure to specifically target children with disabilities.¹⁷⁶
- WFP's home-grown school feeding programme in **Sri Lanka** seeks to incorporate more nutritious food in school meals by supporting smallholder farmers to grow and sell nutritious foods to schools. Schools were identified based on a combination of factors, including their capacity to implement the programme effectively.

Targeting and prioritization for resilience

255. Resilience programmes are a lot more varied in the types of activities or benefits they provide for affected people. This can include food assistance for assets or training activities, and infrastructure or market-oriented development, but also preparedness and protection-oriented elements such as disaster risk reduction, nutrition interventions, unconditional lean season transfers and school meals. Targeting for resilience activities is often based on geographic considerations, focusing on chronically food-insecure or shock-prone areas, as well as demographic ones, identifying households that are vulnerable and with labour capacity, sometimes through self-targeting. In comparison to targeting for URT and nutrition, targeting for resilience is less standardized overall, and is primarily shaped by project-specific objectives:

¹⁷⁶ WFP (2025) Evaluation of School Feeding Programme in South Sudan, 2018 to 2023. Decentralized Evaluation Final Report WFP South Sudan Country Office. DE/SSCO/2022/026.

- In **Nigeria**, targeting for resilience activities is done in coordination with partners, community leaders and local authorities. Generic selection criteria exist and are adapted to programme objectives (like focusing on women or youth). Cooperating partners are trained and guided to implement targeting accordingly, together with community targeting committees.
- In **Jordan**, WFP follows a self-targeting approach for new programmes, providing training and (potential) interest-free loans with an agricultural financing institution. Eligibility criteria include the nationality of applicants and geographic location, vulnerability of the location to climate-related shocks and farm set-up, and the relevance of the planned intervention and potential for success.
- In **DRC**, WFP combines emergency assistance with long-term support through four pathways: livelihoods, disaster risk reduction, human capital development and innovation. Activities include asset creation, nutrition education, school meals, early warning systems and support to smallholder farmers. These are layered and sequenced to strengthen household capacities over time, especially in areas facing chronic food insecurity and frequent shocks. Geographic targeting focuses on provinces with high IPC levels (Phase 3 and 4), vulnerability and exposure to climate or conflict risks. Within these, WFP concentrates interventions in communities where multiple activities can overlap. Planning is based on IPC data, government priorities and local consultations. Community-level targeting uses participatory planning to select interventions and ensure inclusion of vulnerable groups (for example, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples) when relevant. Households may transition from unconditional assistance to livelihoods and market-oriented support, depending on capacity, ensuring sustainability and impact.
- In **Sri Lanka**, WFP assists smallholder farmers to be more climate resilient, through a food assistance for assets programme implemented with and via the government. For the geographical targeting, five districts were selected based on food insecurity, climate impact and existing government activities. Subsequent governmental and community consultations led to a selection of divisions targeted for assistance within districts. At the village level, needs and priorities were determined via a community-based planning approach, before households considered poor or very poor could then opt into the programme and apply for assistance based on pre-set eligibility criteria and subsequent verification of their eligibility.
- In **South Sudan**, WFP's current approach to targeting for resilience is outlined in its South Sudan Resilience Strategy (2024-2030): Starting with the IPC classification, WFP provides light supplementary resilience activities in addition to URT in high incidence IPC 4+ locations, and standalone resilience programmes such as food assistance for assets or other livelihood interventions in low incidence IPC 4+ or IPC 3+ locations. Targeted are vulnerable households or communities with context-specific eligibility criteria, depending also on programme objectives. Some resilience programming is linked to gender empowerment initiatives, such as connecting school-based programmes with livelihoods activities of smallholder farmers, targeting especially women, to grow surplus food for school meals.¹⁷⁷ Prior to 2024, the country office approached resilience programming more separately from URT, targeting primarily IPC 3 locations and areas not receiving unconditional resource transfers. The selection of locations was informed by results of integrated context analyses, IPC data and WFP's own food security and nutrition monitoring survey (FSNMS) results. Through community consultations led by partners, WFP then identified both community needs and eligibility criteria.¹⁷⁸
- In **Haiti**, WFP's resilience activities prioritize communities most affected by food insecurity and exposed to risks, which are also prioritized for other activities, such as climate-smart solutions and school meals.

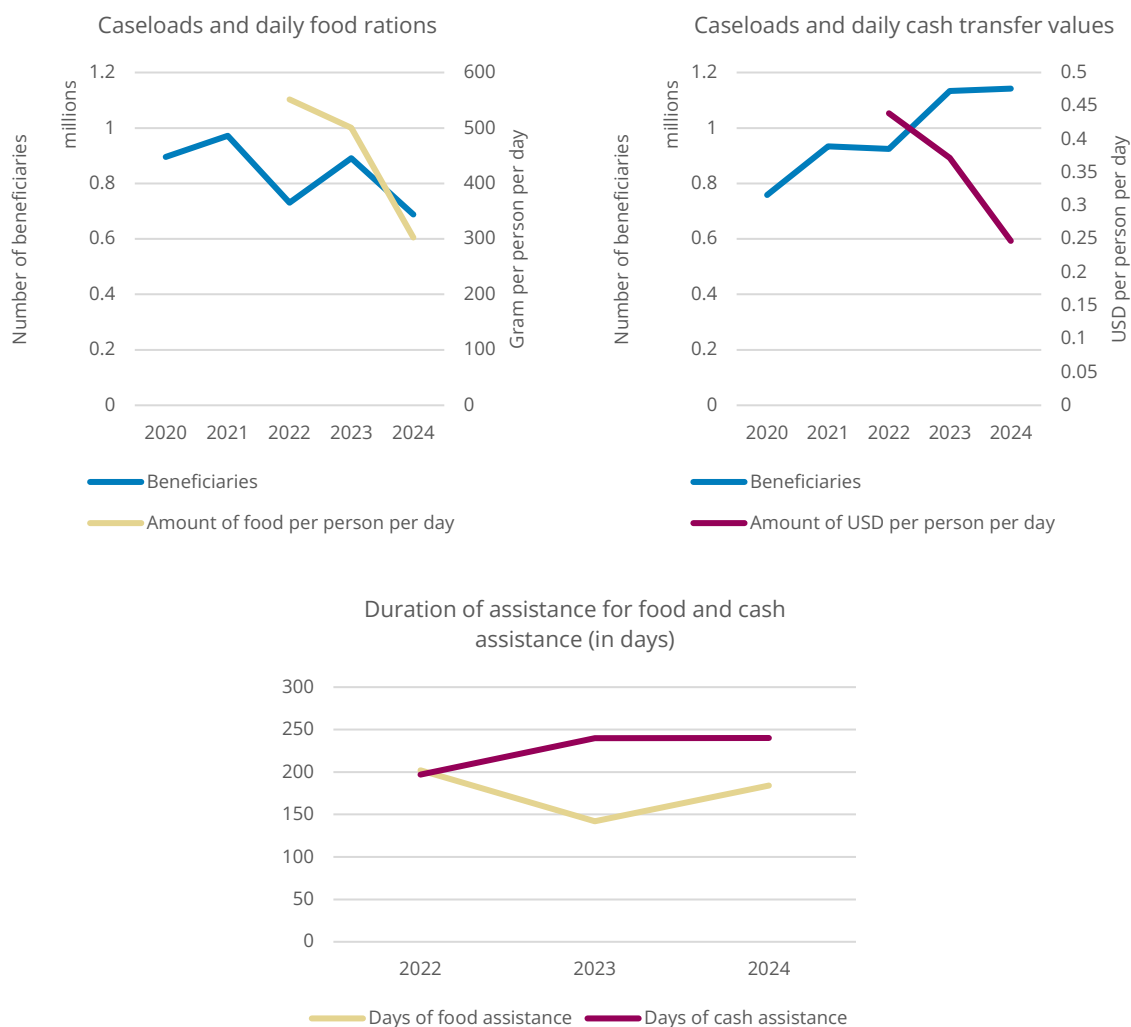
¹⁷⁷ WFP (2024) Resilience Strategy (2024-2030). Scaling up Resilience Building in Hotspots of Hunger, Conflict and Climate Shocks in South Sudan.

¹⁷⁸ WFP (2021) Programme Activity Evaluation of Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) Project in South Sudan. March 2016 to December 2019. Evaluation Report. The Konterra Group.

Annex VI. Intensity of assistance analysis

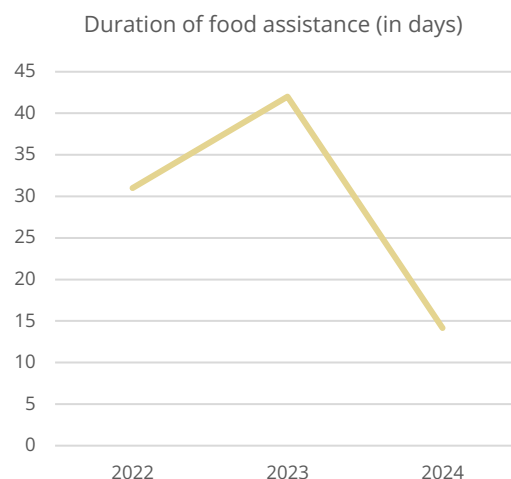
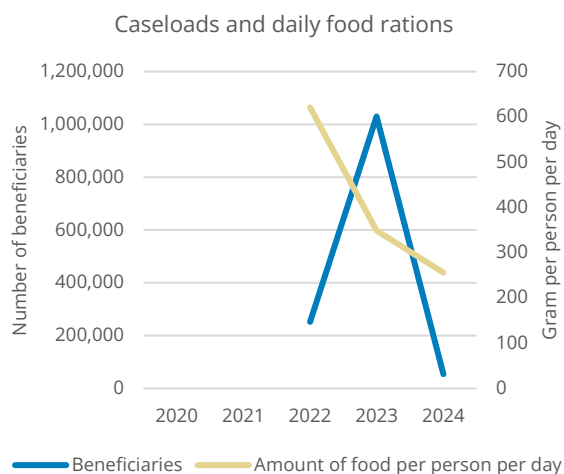
Number of people assisted, transfer values and duration of assistance in selected case-study countries¹⁷⁹

Nigeria

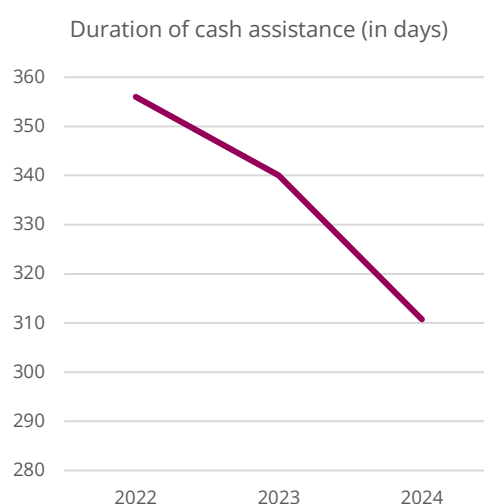
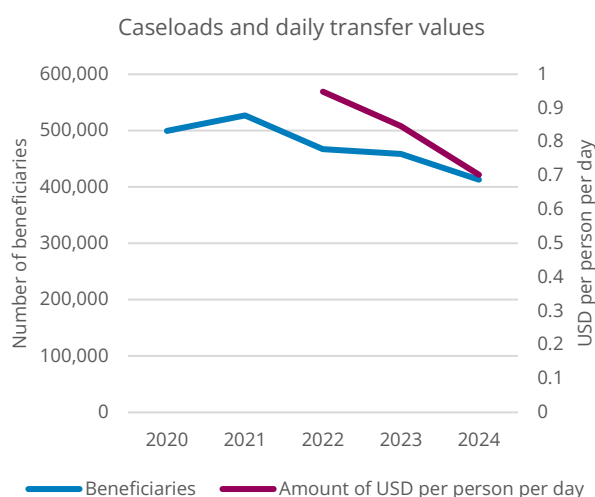


¹⁷⁹ Data relate to unconditional resource transfers only.

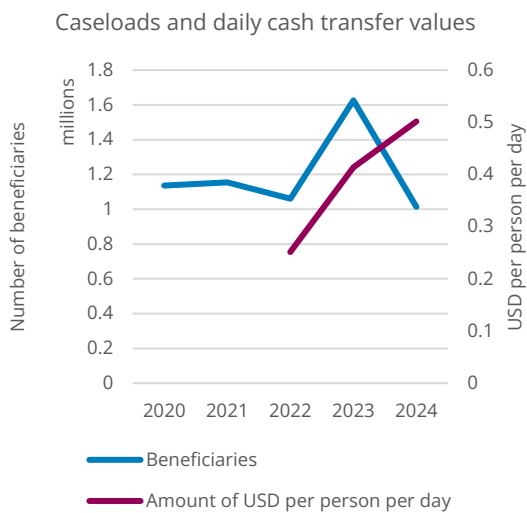
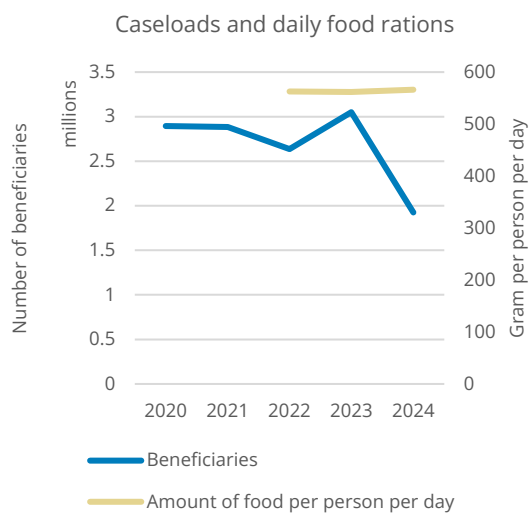
Sri Lanka

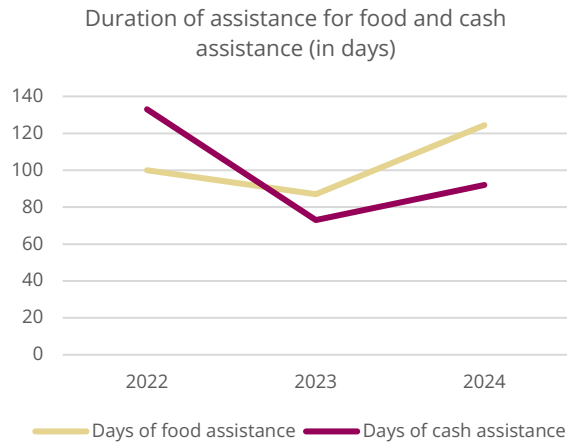


Jordan

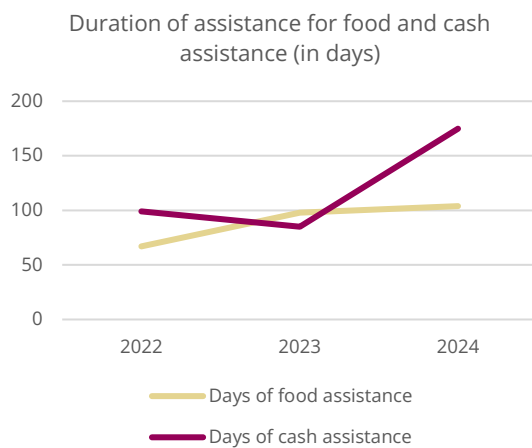
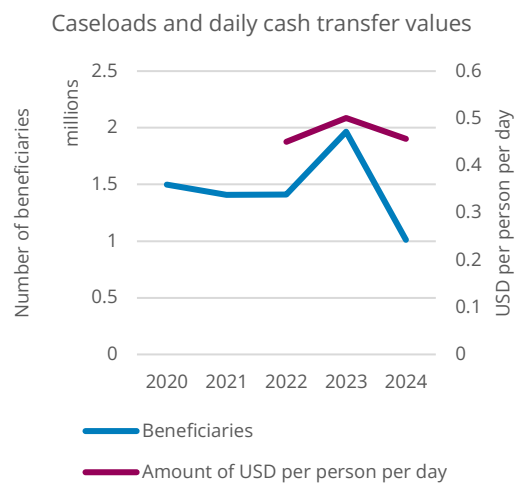
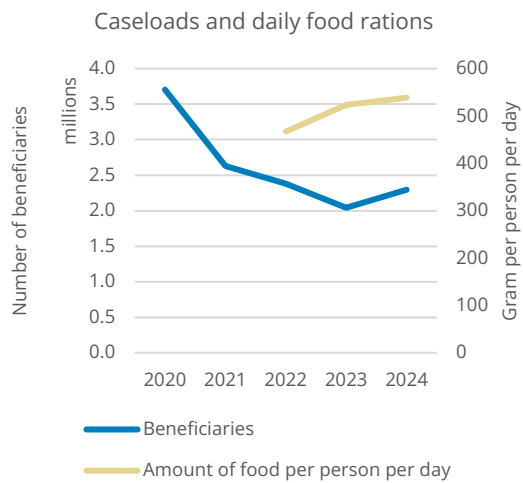


South Sudan





DRC



Source: Intensity of assistance data by country shared by the Performance Management & Reporting Service (APP-MP).

Annex VII. Data collection tools

Key informant interview guides

Interview guide WFP

| Theme | Interview questions | Stakeholder |
|--|--|---|
| Introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions (with a focus on how position is connected to targeting and prioritization) • Background of evaluation • Clarification of targeting and prioritization definitions to ensure common understanding • Purpose of the interview • Confidentiality and use of information | |
| WFP's Approaches to Targeting and Prioritization | <p>Can you walk me through how it is decided who gets assistance [for URT, ACL, nutrition, school feeding]? What's the process for figuring out which groups or areas need help the most? Who decides what and what is the level of input from CPs and other stakeholders? [These more general questions will be based on our draft ideal typical process guide and will only be asked up until saturation in each country]</p> <p>How is this documented? Can you point us to / share relevant documentation on this process and the results of it? If this is not documented: Why not?</p> <p><i>Follow-up: What are the main challenges in implementing this approach? Can you give an example?</i></p> <p>What were the main trade-offs and how did you deal with them?</p> <p>How has the general approach to targeting and prioritization in WFP changed over the past 5 years? Why?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country office management • Head RAM • Head Programme |
| | <p>Which factors shape targeting and prioritization decisions the most? (ask openly, prompt for vulnerability data (e.g., income, food security), geographical location of affected populations, local capacity (e.g., infrastructure, resources), community feedback/preferences, influence of authorities/non-state armed actors, conflict sensitivity considerations, partner priorities, donor priorities/earmarking, management/CO leadership priorities, timelines)</p> <p>Have you done a context/gender, equity, inclusion/conflict sensitivity analyses before taking</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WFP RAM (VAM and MEAL) experts • WFP programme leads • WFP thematic experts |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | <p>decisions on targeting and prioritization and how have these influenced your decisions?</p> <p>Has your targeting and prioritization changed over time? If so, what have been the decisive factors driving changes?</p> <p>What data do you have / can you use to inform your targeting and prioritization?</p> <p>How reliable do you find this data? Why?</p> <p>What would you need to make the targeting and prioritization process more effective? (from inside WFP or external input)?</p> | |
| | <p>What steps are taken to ensure that targeting and prioritization reflects other important WFP policies and areas of focus?</p> <p>Can you give concrete examples how this happens with [nutrition, gender, disability inclusion, protection, conflict sensitivity]? Or examples of where it did not work?</p> <p><i>Follow-up: What is required to change this?</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WFP programme leads • WFP thematic experts |
| | <p>How well do you think WFP coordinates with other organizations on targeting and prioritization – for instance through the relevant clusters (where they are active)? Do stakeholders align with what WFP is doing, what are there disconnects?</p> <p><i>Follow-up: Have there been any instances where poor coordination led to inconsistencies in the targeting and prioritization approaches used and/or gaps or duplication in assistance? How did you address this?</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country office management • WFP VAM/MEAL (or RAM) experts • WFP programme leads |
| Effects of Targeting and Prioritization Practices | <p>In your experience, do you think WFP is able to reach the most vulnerable people? Why/why not?</p> <p>To what extent are gender, equity and inclusion considerations reflected in the way you target and prioritize?</p> <p>Are you able to target well for non-emergency programs? Why / why not?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country office management • WFP VAM/MEAL (or RAM) experts • WFP programme leads |
| | <p>How do you know if the most vulnerable are actually getting the help they need? How do you know if WFP achieves its objectives?</p> <p>What monitoring data is there; is there process and/or outcome monitoring (incl. non-beneficiaries) and can you share this for your analysis?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country office management • WFP VAM/MEAL (or RAM) experts • WFP programme leads |
| | <p>Have you noticed any unintended societal effects, positive or negative, that can be linked to WFP's</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country office management |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | <p>targeting and prioritization practices?</p> <p><i>Follow-up: How has WFP mitigated these / what could be done to mitigate these?</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WFP VAM/MEAL (or RAM) experts • WFP programme leads • WFP thematic experts |
| | <p>What linkages do you observe between targeting and prioritization and programme quality? Does the way you target has a positive or negative effect on programme quality?</p> <p>To what extent is the way you target and prioritize affecting the way you can deliver integrated programs?</p> <p>Overall, how is the way you target and prioritize affecting your ability to achieve programme objectives [i.e. SOs]?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country office management • WFP VAM/MEAL (or RAM) experts • WFP programme leads • WFP thematic experts |
| Collaboration and Engagement with Others | <p>How do you work with CP's when making these decisions? To what extent are they involved in the targeting and prioritization processes and can you detail their role across the different targeting and prioritization steps? Is this level and form of CP involvement appropriate? What are the strengths of this arrangement, what are its main challenges?</p> <p><i>Follow-up: Have you had situations where partners disagreed with WFP's priorities? How did you handle that?</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country office management • WFP programme leads • WFP thematic experts |
| | <p>How involved are the communities WFP supports in decisions about who gets assistance?</p> <p><i>Follow-up: In your view, what has worked well in validating and explaining targeting and prioritization criteria to affected populations? What hasn't? Should WFP be more transparent or inclusive in this process?</i></p> <p><i>Follow-up: Have you encountered situations where the community disagreed with WFP's targeting and prioritization decisions? How did you respond to that feedback?</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WFP VAM/MEAL (or RAM) experts • WFP programme leads • WFP thematic experts |
| | <p>How relevant are local authorities when it comes to targeting and prioritization? Have you ever faced pressure from governments or other powerful stakeholders to target specific areas or populations?</p> <p><i>Follow-up: How do you balance WFP's principles with these kinds of pressures? Can you share an example of a time when this was a challenge?</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WFP VAM/MEAL (or RAM) experts • WFP programme leads • WFP thematic experts |
| Factors Affecting WFP's Performance | <p>What is your view on the different policies and guidance documents on targeting and prioritization?</p> <p>Has it had an effect on how you target and</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country office management • WFP VAM/MEAL (or RAM) experts • WFP programme leads |

| | | |
|-----|---|---|
| | <p>prioritize in your country?</p> <p>Is it useful, what is missing?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WFP thematic experts |
| | <p>What are the main mechanisms or actions taken to minimize inclusion/exclusion errors? Are they effective? What should be done to make them more effective?</p> <p>How effectively is monitoring data used to adjust targeting and prioritization decisions over time? Do you feel that WFP has enough monitoring data to make necessary adjustments when conditions change?</p> <p><i>Follow-up: Can you share an example where monitoring data led to a significant change in targeting or prioritization? Or, conversely, a time when the lack of data made it difficult to adapt?</i></p> <p><i>Follow-up: What are the biggest challenges in collecting and using real-time monitoring data to refine targeting and prioritization? How could the process be strengthened?</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WP VAM/MEAL (or RAM) experts • WFP programme leads |
| | <p>What has been the biggest factor influencing WFP's ability to target and prioritize effectively? What hinders WFP the most from targeting and prioritizing effectively?</p> <p><i>Follow-up: Can you go through internal capacity, data, donor demands, use of technology and how this affects targeting and prioritization. Any other critical factors? Has there been a time when donor preferences made it harder to target effectively?</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country office management • WFP VAM/MEAL (or RAM) experts • WFP programme leads • WFP thematic experts |
| | <p>When it comes to targeting and prioritization, there are often trade-offs—like balancing speed with accuracy or deciding between reaching more people versus focusing on the most vulnerable. How do you handle those kinds of trade-offs in practice?</p> <p><i>Follow-up: Can you think of a situation where you had to make a tough call between these competing priorities? How do you concretely manage those trade-offs between what's needed and what's funded? What were the consequences, and looking back, would you have done anything differently?</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country office management • WFP VAM/MEAL (or RAM) experts • WFP programme leads |
| End | <p>We've covered a lot, but is there anything else related to targeting, prioritization, or WFP's overall approach that you think is important to mention?</p> <p>Are there any issues or challenges that we haven't touched on but that you feel strongly about?</p> | |

Interview guide cooperating partners (CPs)

The evaluation team conducted interviews with representatives from cooperating partners with different degrees of involvement in the targeting and prioritization process – ranging from “full-service providers” who are responsible for most steps in the targeting and prioritization process to CPs who are working on very specific targeting and prioritization aspects, such as facilitating community consultations or conducting verification exercises.

Depending on the involvement of the CP, the interviewer selected and tailored the interview questions according to their respective experiences.

| Theme | Interview questions |
|--|---|
| Introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Background of evaluation • Clarification of targeting and prioritization definitions to ensure common understanding • Purpose of the interview • Confidentiality and use of information |
| Involvement in WFP's targeting and prioritization decisions | <p>Can you walk me through how it is decided who gets assistance [for URT, ACL, nutrition, school feeding]?</p> <p>What is your level of involvement (e.g., are you making the decisions, are you involved in the decision, are you consulted, informed, or not at all?) How satisfied are you with your involvement?</p> <p>(Depending on involvement: How well does WFP coordinate its targeting and prioritization practices with you? Do you receive enough guidance from WFP on how to do targeting and prioritization?)</p> <p>What are the main challenges of this process, what could be improved?</p> |
| Reflections on targeting & prioritization approaches in WFP programs | <p>Which approaches have you seen WFP take / have you used when implementing programs on behalf of WFP?</p> <p>How have these approaches changed in the past 5 years? (What was the most important change?)</p> <p>What information does WFP / do you use to inform targeting & prioritization decisions? How adequate is this, in your view?</p> |
| Effectiveness of targeting & prioritization | <p>Do you think WFP programs focus on the right (sub-group of) people with their assistance? Why / why not? Who is left out? To what extent are gender, equity and inclusion considerations reflected in the way you target and prioritize?</p> <p>Do you think the approach to targeting and prioritization allows it to reach those it wants to reach? Why / why not?</p> <p>Do you think the approach to targeting and prioritization helps to reach WFP's programme objectives? Why / why not?</p> <p>Do you think the approach to targeting and prioritization helps WFP to deliver high quality support programmes? Why / why not?</p> <p>Do you think WFP navigates the trade-off between investing in targeting and prioritization and helping as many people as possible in an effective way? Why / why not? Do you have an example?</p> |
| Implementation | To what extent are you able to implement the targeting and prioritization |

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| | <p>approaches for WFP programs in practice? What are the main barriers to this?</p> <p>Do you have sufficient information to explain the targeting and prioritization decisions to communities you work with? If not, what is missing? If yes, do you think communities understand this information? (why not?)</p> <p><i>Follow-up question: In your experience, what are the main concerns that communities have with regards to the targeting & prioritization of WFP programs? What are their most common questions / misconceptions?</i></p> <p>What are the main mechanisms or actions WFP requires you to take to minimize inclusion/exclusion errors? Are they effective? What should be done to make them more effective?</p> |
| Societal effects | <p>What effects does the approach to targeting & prioritization of WFP programs have on communities? Are there unintended effects? How have you / has WFP tried to address negative effects?</p> <p><i>Follow-up question: How do those effects impact your work? What can you do to mitigate them? What could WFP do to mitigate those effects?</i></p> |
| Way forward? | <p>Do you have any other suggestions to WFP and its partners for how to improve their targeting and prioritization?</p> <p>What should WFP do differently when it works with partners on targeting and prioritization? What could CPs do differently?</p> |
| End | <p>We've covered a lot, but is there anything else related to WFP and targeting and prioritization that you think is important to mention? Are there any issues we haven't touched on but that you feel strongly about?</p> |

Interview guide coordination partners

The evaluation team conducted interviews with representatives from organizations participating in the food security cluster (partners and non-partners of WFP; UN and INGO partners), the nutrition cluster and who are part of HCT, HC/RC and OCHA.

| Theme | Interview questions |
|---|---|
| Introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Background of evaluation • Clarification of targeting and prioritization definitions to ensure common understanding • Purpose of the interview • Confidentiality and use of information |
| Collaboration within the cluster system | <p>What is your view on the way WFP collaborates with other humanitarian actors within the food security and nutrition clusters on targeting and prioritization?</p> <p>Is WFP sufficiently present at the cluster with the right capacity and knowledge to effectively coordinate on targeting and prioritization?</p> <p>In your view, does WFP support finding a coordinated / harmonized approach to targeting and prioritization in the cluster? Do you have an example showing how this is the case (or not)?</p> <p>To what extent is WFP's own approach to targeting and prioritization aligned with the approach of cluster members, cluster guidance and the Boundary Setting and</p> |

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| | <p>Prioritization Initiative led by OCHA?</p> <p><i>Are there specific examples where WFP's targeting or prioritization has complemented or conflicted with the efforts of the cluster / of other cluster members?</i></p> <p>Did you notice a difference in how WFP approaches targeting and prioritization over the past 5 years? What was the main change you observed?</p> |
| Targeting / prioritization and data sharing across cluster stakeholders | <p>In your experience, how well does WFP share data and information with other actors in the cluster to ensure effective and coordinated targeting and prioritization? What are the main gaps?</p> <p><i>Follow-up: What could be done to enhance information-sharing mechanisms between WFP and other stakeholders to ensure a more coordinated approach?</i></p> |
| Local context and agile targeting and prioritization | <p>To what extent is WFP coordinating with other stakeholders beyond the cluster system – if relevant for specific programmatic activities?</p> <p>From your perspective, how well does WFP's targeting and prioritization approach take into account the local context and the specific vulnerabilities that other actors in the cluster may have identified?</p> <p>How agile is WFP? How quick and capable to change its targeting and prioritization due to changing circumstances? Do you have a specific example illustrating this?</p> <p>In what ways could WFP further engage with local actors at community-level to ensure its targeting and prioritization approach is more responsive to local realities?</p> |
| Effective targeting and prioritization | <p>Do you think the approach to targeting and prioritization helps WFP to deliver high quality support programs? Why / why not?</p> <p>Do you think WFP is reaching the most vulnerable effectively? Why / why not?</p> <p>Are there specific populations or geographic areas that you feel may be underserved by WFP's current targeting and prioritization practices despite their vulnerabilities? What could be done to address these gaps?</p> <p>What negative effects of WFP's targeting and prioritization do you see in the communities you serve? What could WFP do to mitigate / address those?</p> |
| Way forward? | <p>Looking forward, what do you see as the key opportunities for WFP and the cluster to work more closely together on improving targeting and prioritization practice?</p> <p>What should WFP do to contribute more effectively to a coordinated approach through the cluster system?</p> |
| End | <p>We've covered a lot, but is there anything else you think is important to mention?</p> <p>Are there any issues we haven't touched on but that you feel strongly about?</p> |

Interview guide donors

The evaluation team conducted interviews with key donors at country level (where possible due to the funding crisis and following humanitarian reset) with the intention to capture their views on WFP's targeting and prioritization practices and also to better understand expectations and possible constraints that affect WFP's targeting and prioritization practices.

| Theme | Interview questions |
|--|---|
| Introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Background of evaluation • Clarification of targeting and prioritization definitions to ensure common understanding • Purpose of the interview • Confidentiality and use of information |
| Reflections on WFP's targeting and prioritization approach | <p>Which approaches have you seen WFP take? How have WFP's approaches changed in the past 5 years? (What was the most important change?)</p> <p>Do you feel sufficiently informed about how WFP makes decisions on targeting and prioritization? If now, what information would you need?</p> <p>What information does WFP use to inform its targeting & prioritization decisions? How adequate is this, in your view? (prompt on reliability of IPC and other food insecurity/vulnerability data)</p> <p>What do you think influences WFP's targeting and prioritization decisions the most?</p> <p>How important do you think the following factors are to WFP in making decisions on targeting and prioritization? (vulnerability data; geographic location of affected populations; local capacity; community preferences and feedback; partner priorities; donor priorities; management/leadership priorities)</p> |
| Effective targeting and prioritization | <p>Do you think the approach to targeting and prioritization helps WFP to deliver high quality support programs? Why / why not?</p> <p>Overall, do you feel that WFP effectively targets the most vulnerable populations in this crisis? Why / why not? Do you have an example?</p> <p>Can you think of examples where your understanding of who should receive assistance / what kind of assistance has clashed with those of WFP? How did you navigate / address this?</p> <p>Do you feel that WFP invests appropriately in effective targeting and prioritization? Why / why not? Do you have an example?</p> <p>What additional effort / investments would be needed to target more effectively? Do you have any policies or instructions for WFP on how to target and prioritize? If so, what is their main direction?</p> <p>Is there a point / can you think of situations where too much was invested in the targeting or prioritization? Please explain.</p> <p>Is your organization moving towards more or less earmarking of funds provided to WFP? Why?</p> <p>When it comes to prioritization, what strategy (reducing numbers of targeted or reducing rations) do you prefer and want WFP to implement?</p> |
| Blind spots and challenges | <p>What steps in the targeting and prioritization processes are most important to you? Where in the targeting and prioritization processes do you see WFP having the most challenges?</p> <p><i>Follow-up questions: Communication with the donor, documentation and reporting, greater transparency on how WFP targets?</i></p> |
| Way forward? | Looking forward, what do you see as the key opportunities for WFP to strengthen |

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| | its targeting and prioritization practice? |
| End | We've covered a lot, but is there anything else related to WFP, targeting or prioritization and your own expectations as a donor that you think is important to mention? Are there any issues we haven't touched on but that you feel strongly about? |

Interview guide national authorities (where possible due to the funding crisis and following humanitarian reset)

Depending on knowledge and background of the interviewee, the interview will focus on certain aspects over others, drawing from the list of interview questions below:

| Theme | Interview questions |
|--|--|
| Introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions (with a focus on how position is connected to targeting and prioritization) • Background of evaluation • Clarification of targeting and prioritization definitions to ensure common understanding • Purpose of the interview • Confidentiality and use of information |
| Government-WFP collaboration on targeting and prioritization | <p>How would you describe the collaboration between the government and WFP when it comes to targeting and prioritizing beneficiaries?</p> <p>What works well and what does not in this collaboration?</p> |
| Feedback on WFP's targeting and prioritization practices | <p>Which approaches have you seen WFP take? How have WFP's approaches changed in the past 5 years? (What was the most important change?)</p> <p>Do you feel sufficiently informed about how WFP makes decisions on targeting and prioritization? If now, what information would you need?</p> <p>What information does WFP use to inform its targeting & prioritization decisions? How adequate is this, in your view?</p> <p>What do you think influences WFP's targeting and prioritization decisions the most?</p> <p>How important do you think the following factors are to WFP in making decisions on targeting and prioritization? (vulnerability data; geographic location of affected populations; local capacity; community preferences and feedback; partner priorities; donor priorities; management/leadership priorities)</p> <p>Are there any changes you would suggest for WFP to improve its prioritization, particularly in terms of how it prioritizes different groups or regions?</p> |
| Effectiveness of WFP targeting and prioritization | <p>Overall, do you feel that WFP effectively targets the most vulnerable populations in this crisis? Why / why not? Do you have an example?</p> <p>What unintended effects does WFP's targeting and prioritization have on the communities it serves? How has WFP mitigated this? What else should it do to address these effects?</p> <p>Can you think of examples where your understanding of who should receive assistance / what kind of assistance has clashed with those of WFP? How did you</p> |

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| | <p>navigate / address this?</p> <p>Do you feel that WFP invests appropriately in effective targeting and prioritization? Why / why not? Do you have an example?</p> |
| Future practices | <p>As the situation in the country evolves—whether through economic shifts, climate change, or other factors—how do you think WFP should adapt its targeting and prioritization approaches to remain effective?</p> <p>Looking ahead, what do you see as the key areas where WFP and the government could work more closely together to improve the targeting and prioritization of assistance?</p> <p>Are there specific initiatives, platforms, or data-sharing mechanisms that could enhance collaboration between WFP and government actors?</p> |
| End | <p>We've covered a lot, but is there anything else related to the role and priorities of the national government that you think is important to mention? Are there any issues we haven't touched on but that you feel strongly about?</p> |

Interview guide country experts

Interviews with country experts – including the local research partners - provided additional insights into the local context such as cultural settings, social norms, or conflict dynamics in a country where WFP operates. Depending on knowledge and background of the interviewee, the interview focused on certain aspects over others, drawing from the list of interview questions below:

| Theme | Interview questions |
|--|---|
| Introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Background of evaluation • Clarification of targeting and prioritization definitions to ensure common understanding • Purpose of the interview • Confidentiality and use of information |
| Potential experience with/knowledge of WFP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which approaches have you seen WFP take to identify / target the most vulnerable people in this crisis? • How have WFP's approaches changed in the past 5 years? (What was the most important change?) • Overall, do you feel that WFP effectively targets the most vulnerable populations in this crisis? Why / why not? Do you have an example? • What unintended effects does WFP's targeting and prioritization have on the communities it serves? How has WFP mitigated this? What else should it do to address these effects? • Can you think of examples where your understanding of who should receive assistance / what kind of assistance has clashed with those of WFP? How did you navigate / address this? • Do you feel that WFP invests appropriately in effective targeting and prioritization? Why / why not? Do you have an example? |
| Cultural sensitivity | <p>Are there specific cultural norms or practices around food, family structures, or community interactions that are critical to know and consider when providing assistance here in this country?</p> <p>With WFP staff, we have discussed trade-offs related to different targeting and prioritization approaches [explain what they are in this context]. How do you see</p> |

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| | these trade-offs / how would you decide? Do you know of any research on community perspectives on these questions? |
| Social dynamics and vulnerabilities | <p>How do social structures, gender roles, or ethnic divisions shape vulnerability?</p> <p>Are there specific ethnic, religious, or political groups that might feel excluded or marginalized by how aid is typically distributed?</p> <p>What are important aspects to consider in this country when using community consultations to determine who receives assistance?</p> <p>What could external organizations such as WFP do to ensure more inclusive decision-making when targeting and prioritizing assistance?</p> <p>Are there any examples where the presence of aid has shifted power dynamics in communities, for better or worse? How can organizations avoid these pitfalls?</p> |
| Conflict sensitive practices | <p>How does the way humanitarian assistance (especially food assistance) is targeted and prioritized influence conflict dynamics and drivers of conflict in this country?</p> <p>From your perspective, do WFP and its partners seem to be aware of the dynamics and risks and are they factoring them into their decisions?</p> |
| Good practices | <p>From your perspective, what are good practices that humanitarian organizations could adopt to be more culturally appropriate when targeting and prioritizing assistance in this context?</p> <p>How can organizations better engage with local communities and support traditional systems without disrupting social dynamics.</p> |
| End | We've covered a lot, but is there anything else related to the specific context of this country that you think is important to mention? Are there any issues we haven't touched on but that you feel strongly about? |

Interview guides for community representatives

The evaluation team's local research partners conducted a small number of interviews with community leaders and members of community targeting committees or community members involved in validating targeting and prioritization criteria (if relevant within each country case study).

| Theme | Interview questions |
|--|---|
| Introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Purpose of the interview • Confidentiality and use of information • Expectation management on future WFP assistance |
| Understanding how WFP decides who receives aid | <p>WFP and its partners have been implementing programme xx [name the programme / type of assistance provided in the location]. Do you know how WFP or their partners decide who gets help and who doesn't? If you do know, can you explain how it works?</p> <p>How do you know about this? Who told you about it?</p> <p>Was there a committee or group from the community that helped choose who would get aid? If yes, are you satisfied with how the committee worked?</p> <p>For targeting committee members: As a member of a community committee, how do you decide who receives assistance and how does WFP work with this decision?</p> |

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| Fairness and communications | <p>Do you think the way WFP decides who gets help is fair? If you think it's not fair or only somewhat fair, can you share any ideas on how to make it better?</p> <p>How well do you think WFP explains to the community who will receive aid and why?</p> <p>Have there been any misunderstandings or confusion about WFP's decisions? If so, can you explain what happened?</p> <p>What do you think of mechanisms to appeal or complain about WFP's decisions on who receives assistance? Are they in place and functioning? Are they used and do communities receive a response from WFP or CPs when people complained?</p> |
| People left out of receiving aid | <p>Are there people in your community who didn't receive any support?</p> <p>Why do you think these people were left out? Is it justified that they were left out?</p> |
| Social effects | <p>Has the way WFP and its partners choose people to get aid has any positive effects in the community, like ensuring those most in need get assistance?</p> <p>Has the way WFP chooses people to get aid caused any problems in the community, like disagreements, tensions between households or outright conflict? If yes, can you explain what happened? If yes, have you raised this with WFP and what happened then?</p> <p>After WFP gives out food or cash, do people in the community usually share what they receive with others who didn't get anything?</p> <p>Is WFP's assistance broadly reinforcing ways members of the community support each other or is disrupting those lived social practices of support and solidarity?</p> |
| End | <p>Are there any other issues related to WFP we haven't touched on but that you feel strongly about?</p> |

Focus Group Discussion guide

Introductory remarks

Introduction: Hello and thank you all for coming today. My name is [Name], and I am working with [Org]. We are here today to talk about how aid agencies can provide assistance to communities in the fairest and most effective way possible.

We conduct this study on behalf of the World Food Programme (WFP). But this study will **not** affect who receives aid in your specific community. It is intended to inform how WFP and other aid agencies work in general, in countries all around the world. It is important to understand that we are not WFP, and we are not here to provide any aid or implement any aid projects. We are here only as researchers, who ask similar questions to people in five countries around the world.

We want to hear your ideas and experiences. Your voices are very important, and that's why we are asking you to participate in this discussion. We should normally have completed the discussion over the next hour and a half or a bit more if you want to take a break at some point.

Purpose: In today's meeting, we will talk about ways in which to choose who should get aid, when funding is limited. I'll ask you some questions to understand what you think about these decisions.

Your answers will help us understand what's most important to you, so aid agencies like the WFP can make better decisions in the future.

There are no right or wrong answers, and you can share anything you feel is important. The discussion is anonymous: We will not write down your name, and we will not share the details of what you told us with anyone here. In the report we write, we will only state what people together – not as individuals – have told us. Please feel free to talk to us openly. Please keep our discussion confidential. Do not tell people outside this group what specific participants said.

Consent: Before we start, I want to make sure you understand that this discussion is voluntary. You don't have to answer any questions if you don't want to, and you are free to leave at any time without any problem. Everything you say here will be kept confidential, and your names will not be shared with anyone outside of this room.

We would like to record the discussion to make sure we don't miss any of your important ideas. The recording will only be used for this research and will not be shared outside of our team. It will be deleted as soon as our work has ended. Is it okay with everyone if we record the discussion?

[consent – yes | no; recording – yes | no]

Do you have any questions?

If everything is clear, we can begin. Once again, thank you for taking part in this important conversation.

If you have any questions or concerns, or if you find anything wrong with my behavior, you can call the number on the leaflet [tbc].

Questions for discussion

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| <p><i>“Now, let us go through some questions together. We would like to understand what you think about how WFP and its partners decide who gets aid. Let me remind you that this discussion is purely for research purposes. Our work will not affect the aid you or your community receives. It will help WFP in all countries to improve its work.”</i></p> |
| <p>1. Do you know how WFP (or partner) decides who receives aid and who does not? [note whether the majority knows or not].</p> <p>If yes, please explain:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>If yes, who told you about this:</p> |
| <p>2. Do you think this is fair?</p> <p>a) Why / why not?</p> |
| <p>3. What effects does the way in which WFP selects people to receive assistance have on your community?</p> <p>a) What positive effects can you observe?</p> <p>b) Are there any negative effects? If yes, please explain.</p> <p>c) If yes, how could these negative effects be avoided?</p> |
| <p>4. Is there a way for people in your community to appeal WFP's decisions on who receives aid and who doesn't?</p> <p>a) If yes, please explain</p> <p>b) Have you used it?</p> <p>c) Did you receive a response?</p> |
| <p>5. Do you have any suggestions to WFP and / or its partners for how to improve the way they select who receives aid [In case people ask for more food, ask what WFP should do if there is not enough food. “What should WFP do if there is not enough food to give to everyone that needs it here?”]</p> |
| <p>Thank you. See if there is any other feedback / questions and end the meeting.</p> |

Staff survey

Target and dissemination: The survey targeted Heads of RAM/VAM/M&E as well as Heads of Programme in all country offices with General Food Assistance (GFA). It was disseminated via Email by OEV.

Purpose: The survey aimed to collect information on targeting and prioritization approaches currently used by COs for unconditional resource transfers / GFA for their main recipient groups and to collect perceptions on WFP's practice, available guidance/support and main challenges and enabling factors.

Scope: The survey focused on unconditional resource transfers / general food distribution for the biggest recipient group.

Testing: The evaluation team programmed the survey in SurveyMonkey. The questionnaire was tested with RAM/VAM colleagues and Heads of Programme before the survey was disseminated.

The final survey questionnaire:

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to support the strategic evaluation on targeting and prioritization. Your responses will be treated confidentially and will remain within the evaluation team. We will delete your data after the evaluation.

Please note that while your country office may implement a range of activities, this survey is focused on **unconditional resource transfers (food, vouchers, cash) only.**

This survey takes about 30-40 minutes to complete.

First some general questions...

1. What is your position?
 - a. Head of VAM/M&E/RAM
 - b. Head of Programme
 - c. Other (please specify):
2. In which country do you work?
3. What is the main beneficiary group for unconditional resource transfers (URT) in your country operation? (single choice)
 - a. Residents
 - b. IDPs
 - c. Refugees
 - d. Returnees
 - e. Migrants

Please consider these definitions when answering the following questions of this survey.

Among WFP staff members and external partners as well as in everyday usage, the concepts of targeting and prioritization are often used interchangeably. To distinguish between them, this evaluation will use the definitions provided as part of WFP's normative framework on targeting and prioritization:

Targeting is a cross-functional process through which populations are selected for assistance. It is informed by needs and context analyses, programme objectives, assessment of risks, and with the participation of affected communities. Targeting outcomes are continuously monitored and processes refined as appropriate.

Prioritization is the process through which people within a targeted population, who have greater needs and/or are in more vulnerable situations, receive assistance when overall identified needs cannot be met, usually due to a lack of resources. This can include reducing rations or transfer amounts, limiting the duration for which assistance is provided, tightening eligibility criteria or a combination of these approaches.

4. Does your Country Office have a dedicated strategy document detailing its distinct approach to targeting and prioritization, or standard operating procedures or something similar focusing specifically on targeting and prioritization? (single choice)
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know

4.1. Since when is this strategy/procedure in place?

5. Do you currently use the same approach and criteria for targeting and prioritization across the country, or do you currently use different approaches and criteria for different locations and/or population groups? (single choice)
- a. The same
 - b. Different

Can you explain?

Now, some questions specifically about targeting...

6. Which sources of information does your Country Office use when deciding on geographic areas to target, and how confident are you in them? (single choice)
- a. IPC/Cadre harmonisé
 - i. Not at all confident
 - ii. Somewhat confident
 - iii. Mostly confident
 - iv. Completely confident
 - v. We don't use this source of information
 - vi. Don't know
 - b. WFP food security assessments
 - i. Not at all confident
 - ii. Somewhat confident
 - iii. Mostly confident
 - iv. Completely confident
 - v. We don't use this source of information

- vi. Don't know
 - c. Multi-sectoral needs assessments
 - i. Not at all confident
 - ii. Somewhat confident
 - iii. Mostly confident
 - iv. Completely confident
 - v. We don't use this source of information
 - d. Geotar
 - i. Not at all confident
 - ii. Somewhat confident
 - iii. Mostly confident
 - iv. Completely confident
 - v. We don't use this source of information
 - vi. Don't know
 - e. Please specify here in case you use other sources of information:
7. What is the biggest challenge your Country Office faces when choosing areas or groups to target?
- 7.1. How do you address this challenge?
8. How are the household eligibility criteria *defined* for unconditional resource transfers (URT)? (single choice)
- a. Defined by communities themselves
 - b. Defined using needs assessments and profiling of vulnerable households
 - c. Defined using both results of needs assessments and community consultations
 - d. Defined using results of needs assessments, community consultations and expert/partner consultations
 - e. Mainly defined by host government / authorities
 - f. Don't know
 - g. Mainly defined by others (please specify here):
9. How are the eligible households *identified* for unconditional resource transfers (URT)? (multiple choice)
- a. Community-based: Community committee(s) identify households considered eligible for assistance, either informed by criteria set by WFP or not.
 - b. Scorecard: A combination of criteria with different weights created on basis of a needs assessment and other quantitative or qualitative data sources, that when applied to a registry assigns a score to each entity and allows the ranking of them on basis of vulnerability.
 - c. Proxy-means testing: A statistical model that similarly to the scorecard is applied to a registry, but instead of a score generates a predicted value of a certain variable.
 - d. Categorical (household-based): Households that meet one or more (most often demographic or socio-economic) criteria are considered eligible for assistance.
 - e. Categorical (individual-based): Individuals that meet one or more (most often demographic or socio-economic) criteria are considered eligible for assistance.

- f. Status-based: Eligibility is solely determined on basis of status (e.g. as registered refugee or residing in an area affected by a recent emergency), and not on an evidenced link between this characteristic and the vulnerability that WFP's response aims to address.
- g. Self-targeting: A process by which households make themselves and their interest in receiving assistance known to WFP, by e.g., showing up at a registration site; and WFP selects the most appropriate participants for the activity.
- h. Don't know
- i. None of the above / others (please specify here):

Now, tell us more about your Country Office's approach to prioritization...

Among WFP staff members and external partners as well as in everyday usage, the concepts of targeting and prioritization are often used interchangeably. To distinguish between them, this evaluation will use the definitions provided as part of WFP's normative framework on targeting and prioritization:

Targeting is a cross-functional process through which populations are selected for assistance. It is informed by needs and context analyses, programme objectives, assessment of risks, and with the participation of affected communities. Targeting outcomes are continuously monitored and processes refined as appropriate.

Prioritization is the process through which people within a targeted population, who have greater needs and/or are in more vulnerable situations, receive assistance when overall identified needs cannot be met, usually due to a lack of resources. This can include reducing rations or transfer amounts, limiting the duration for which assistance is provided, tightening eligibility criteria or a combination of these approaches.

10. When faced with the need to prioritize amidst funding shortfalls, what approach to prioritizing who should still receive assistance did your Country Office use? (multiple choice)
 - a. Reduce ration size or CBT transfer value
 - b. Reduce the duration of assistance
 - c. Reduce number of people receiving assistance
 - d. Prioritize geographic areas
 - e. Prioritize types of interventions/activities
 - f. Prioritize type of beneficiaries
 - g. Don't know
 - h. Other (please specify here):

11. Which sources of information does your Country Office use for prioritization decisions, and how confident are you in them? (single choice)
 - a. IPC/Cadre harmonisé
 - i. Not at all confident
 - ii. Somewhat confident
 - iii. Mostly confident
 - iv. Completely confident
 - v. We don't use this source of information
 - vi. Don't know
 - b. WFP food security assessments

- i. Not at all confident
 - ii. Somewhat confident
 - iii. Mostly confident
 - iv. Completely confident
 - v. We don't use this source of information
 - vi. Don't know
- c. Multi-sectoral needs assessments
 - i. Not at all confident
 - ii. Somewhat confident
 - iii. Mostly confident
 - iv. Completely confident
 - v. We don't use this source of information
- d. Community consultations
 - i. Not at all confident
 - ii. Somewhat confident
 - iii. Mostly confident
 - iv. Completely confident
 - v. We don't use this source of information
 - vi. Don't know
- e. Please specify here in case you use other sources of information:

12. What is the biggest challenge your Country Office faces when prioritizing people to receive assistance?

12.1. How do you address this challenge?

Tell us about your perspective on your Country Office's approach to targeting and prioritization.

13. How well do you think the chosen approach to targeting and prioritization fits the context you are working in? (single choice)
- a. Not at all
 - b. Somewhat
 - c. Mostly
 - d. Completely

Please specify why here:

14. What information is available to assess how effective your Country Office's targeting and prioritization approach is, with regards to the expected outcomes of the activity? (multiple choice)
- a. Personal judgement
 - b. Anecdotal data
 - c. PDM or other monitoring data of recipients
 - d. PDM or other monitoring data including non-recipients
 - e. CFM data
 - f. Periodic review of inclusion/exclusion errors
 - g. Other (please specify here):

15. How often do you revise your approach to targeting and prioritization? (single choice)

- a. Several times per year
- b. Annually
- c. Bi-annually
- d. About every five years
- e. Longer than every five years
- f. Don't know

16. Do you think the effort invested in your approach to targeting and prioritization is appropriate?
(single choice)

- a. Yes
- b. No

Please explain why here:

Now, we would like to hear about your collaboration with others around targeting and prioritization.

17. Which other actors does your Country Office collaborate with to target and prioritize WFP's unconditional resource transfers (URT)? Please rank them by importance. (single choice)

- a. Cooperating partners
 - i. Not important (1)
 - ii. Somewhat important (2)
 - iii. Fairly important (3)
 - iv. Mostly important (4)
 - v. Very important (5)
- b. Host government / authorities
 - i. Not important (1)
 - ii. Somewhat important (2)
 - iii. Fairly important (3)
 - iv. Mostly important (4)
 - v. Very important (5)
- c. UNHCR
 - i. Not important (1)
 - ii. Somewhat important (2)
 - iii. Fairly important (3)
 - iv. Mostly important (4)
 - v. Very important (5)
- d. IOM
 - i. Not important (1)
 - ii. Somewhat important (2)
 - iii. Fairly important (3)
 - iv. Mostly important (4)
 - v. Very important (5)
- e. Other actors (please specify here):

18. Can you tell us more about the responsibility of the most important actor above for targeting and prioritization?

19. How satisfied are you with the collaboration with the most important actor above? (single choice)
- a. Not at all satisfied
 - b. Somewhat satisfied
 - c. Mostly satisfied
 - d. Completely satisfied
20. What could be improved in your collaboration with them?
- a. Add your answer here:

To conclude, some more general questions about your approach and the guidance/support received...

21. What was the most useful guidance document for informing your approach to targeting and prioritization?
22. What additional support (and from whom) would you need to make more effective targeting and prioritization decisions?
23. Is there any feedback you would like to share?

Annex VIII. Fieldwork agenda

Country case study data collection focus

The direction and approach to data collection in the full country case studies were determined by the evaluation questions and focused on:

- an assessment of past and current targeting and prioritization practices at the country level (general overview before and after ED circular on Targeting and Global Assurance Framework);
- a deep dive into targeting and prioritization strategies for different programmatic objectives: how are targeting and prioritization done, what is the evidence that was used to inform targeting and prioritization approaches, how good was the targeting and prioritization from an outcome perspective? Any challenges linked to the chosen targeting strategy? Any good practices and useful lessons learned related to targeting and prioritization? Costs associated with targeting approaches as well as monitoring activities;
- an assessment of challenges with targeting and prioritization, why they exist and how they are dealt with;
- a review of trade-offs the country office encounters in relation to targeting and prioritization, how they are dealt with and the underlying rationales;
- an assessment of how WFP coordinates with others (donors, the humanitarian country team, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, partners, government) and how this affects WFP's targeting approach; collecting views on the WFP normative framework on targeting and prioritization: What's good, what is missing?

Remote country case studies covered the regional context of Latin America and the Caribbean (Haiti) and focused on additional aspects of interest not sufficiently covered through the full country case studies, for example on targeting and prioritization practices in anticipatory humanitarian action (Dominican Republic).

Country case study stakeholders

- WFP country office management: country director, deputy country director, heads of programmes and operations; head of emergencies, selected heads of field offices;
- WFP vulnerability analysis and mapping and monitoring, accountability and learning (or research, assessment and monitoring) experts: head of vulnerability analysis and mapping, food security and vulnerability analysts, monitoring and evaluation experts;
- WFP programme leads on general food assistance, asset creation and livelihoods, nutrition and school feeding and cross-cutting themes (gender, inclusion, protection, conflict-sensitivity);
- WFP thematic staff working on protection, access, conflict sensitivity, cooperating partner management, cash, accountability to affected people, communications, donor and government relations;
- donors: representatives of WFP's main donors supporting WFP in-country (likely to be the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) or the State Department, The European Union (EU) Delegation or the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), Germany, United Kingdom, Canada, Nordic states);
- partners: representatives of cooperating partners involved in programming activities (international as well as national and local covering different types of programmes and different in terms of size and capacity);
- representatives from organizations participating in the food security cluster (partners and non-partners of WFP; United Nations and international non-governmental organization partners), the nutrition cluster, humanitarian country teams; ideally also engagement with the Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator;
- government: representatives of national and subnational authorities relevant to targeting
- external experts: key informants with knowledge on the cultural aspects, social norms and political dynamics within the country (such as anthropologists, sociologists, political observers); and

- people not receiving WFP's assistance and community representatives, perceptions from whom were also collected by the evaluation team through focus group discussions and key informant interviews led by the local research partners.

For remote country case studies, the evaluation team interviewed three to five key stakeholders per context, focusing on WFP staff, and, where relevant, partners, who have been involved in designing and implementing the targeting and prioritization approach.

Training of research partners

The qualitative data collection was led by local research partners, who selected suitable facilitators in coordination with the evaluation team. Research partners and facilitators have not been involved in developing or implementing WFP's targeting or prioritization. The evaluation team trained the facilitators on the specifics of the focus group discussion approach to ensure adherence to quality standards and consistency across countries. The training took place either in-person in-country or remotely ahead of the country mission and included the following components: 1) Validation of key deliverables and expectations towards field researchers. This includes defining the role and tasks of the facilitators in focus group discussions and establishing a code of conduct that includes clear messages on informed consent, doing no harm and managing expectations. 2) Sampling of participants and informants. The focus was on explaining the sampling approach and which groups will be included in focus group discussions. Open questions on identifying and contacting participants were clarified. 3) Explanation of research tools. This includes going through focus group discussion scripts, translations (prepared before the training), to ensure common understanding of all questions and answer any remaining questions. More, the different answer options and scales were explained to ensure common understanding of how they are asked and how answers are recorded. 4) Familiarization through role play. As the most critical component of the training, facilitators practiced introducing themselves, the evaluation, and simulate the focus group discussion according to the script with their peers. The evaluation team jointly reviewed the role play and made potential adjustments to scripts and instructions. 5) Next steps and reporting back. The training concluded with expectations on data analysis, planned debriefings after the first set of focus group discussions, as well as means and schedule of communication.

Country case study overview

| Time | Field mission |
|--------------------|--|
| 31 Oct–13 Nov 2024 | Inception case study: South Sudan |
| 9–20 Feb 2025 | Jordan |
| 10–22 Mar 2025 | Sri Lanka |
| 24 Mar–4 Apr 2025 | Nigeria |
| 7–20 Apr 2025 | The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) |

Country case study debriefs and learning webinars

At the end of each full country case study visit, the designated case study lead provided the WFP country office with a debriefing on the preliminary findings. The debrief shared emerging findings and invited the country office to comment and provide feedback, as well as to clarify remaining open questions. Debriefings for remote country case studies were conducted online.

In addition, the evaluation team organized learning webinars to foster deeper discussions on emerging findings and to provide a platform for exchange in a context where prioritization became more critical than ever.

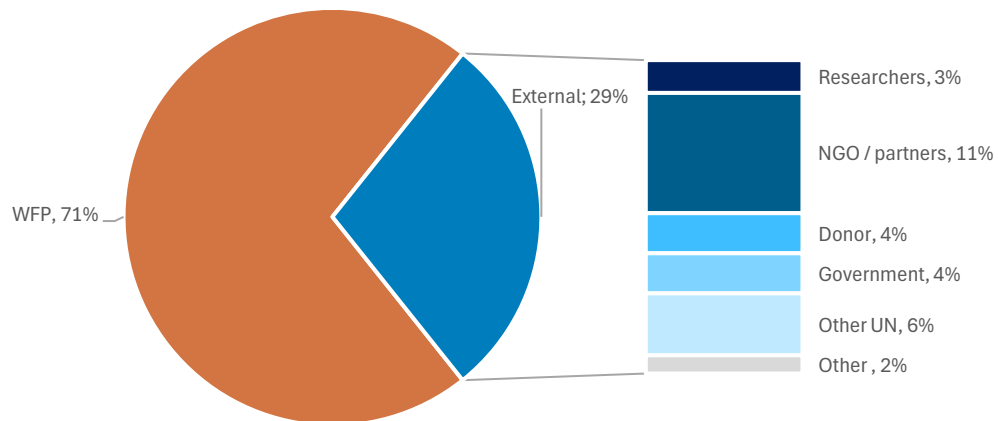
Annex IX. Mapping of findings, conclusions and recommendations

| Recommendation | Conclusions | Findings |
|--|--------------|---|
| Recommendation 1: Support country offices in prioritization decisions by providing a clearer articulation of WFP's strategic focus and positioning to strengthen their targeting and prioritization rationales. | Conclusion 3 | 2.2.1.1; 2.2.2 |
| | Conclusion 5 | 1.2.1, 2.1.6 |
| Recommendation 2: Uphold targeting and prioritization standards by making guidance and tools more accessible, enforcing compliance with minimum standards and safeguarding capacity. | Conclusion 1 | 1.3.2; 2.1.1 |
| | Conclusion 4 | 2.1.3, 2.2.1, 2.3.1.2 |
| Recommendation 3: Support country offices in adopting more transparent, more agile, and more cost-effective targeting and prioritization approaches. | Conclusion 2 | 2.1.5.3, 2.1.6.3, 2.1.6.4 |
| | Conclusion 4 | 2.2.3 |
| | Conclusion 5 | 2.1.6 |
| Recommendation 4: Strengthen the interoperability of WFP's own data systems and common data systems or data sharing with other humanitarian agencies for targeting and prioritization. | Conclusion 4 | 2.1.5.2, 2.2.1.1, 2.2.1.2, 2.3.2 |

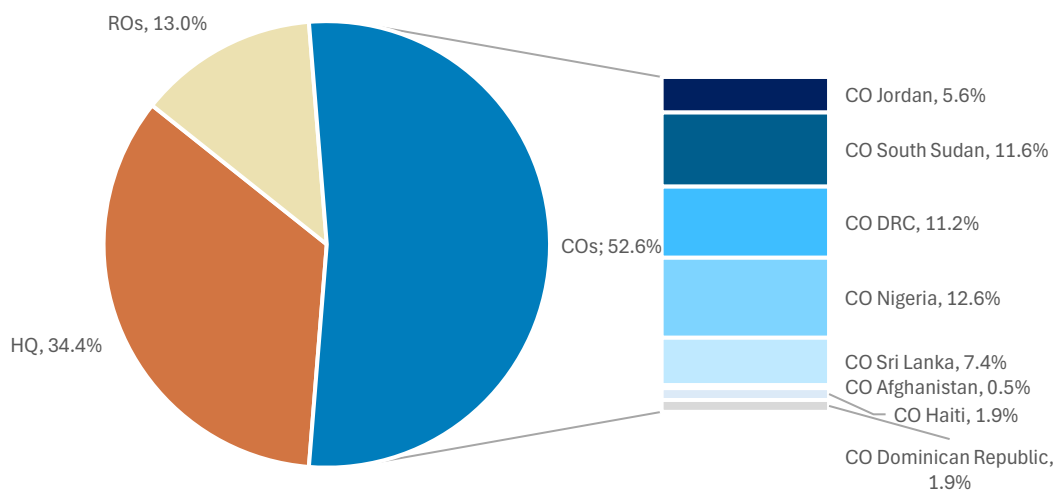
Annex X. Key informants - overview

Key informant interviews (n = 301)¹⁸⁰

Interviewees: WFP staff (n=215) and external interviewees (n=88)

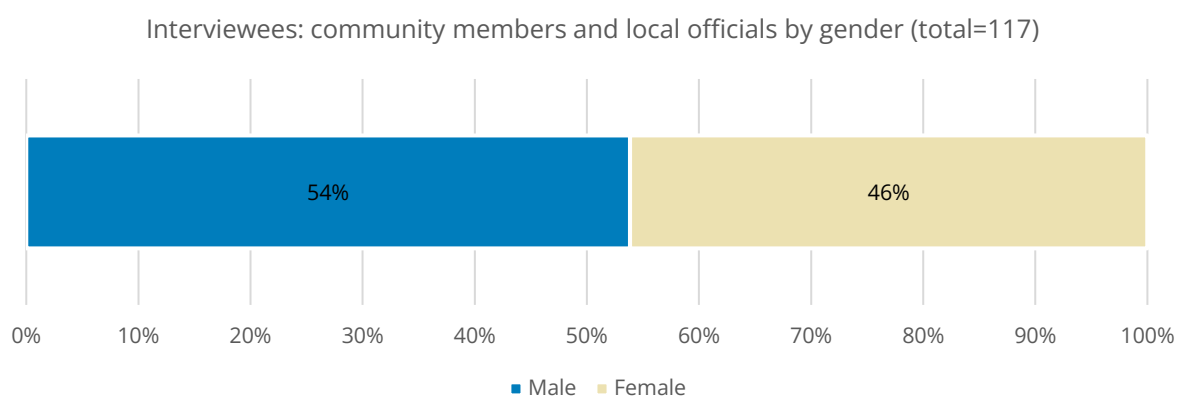
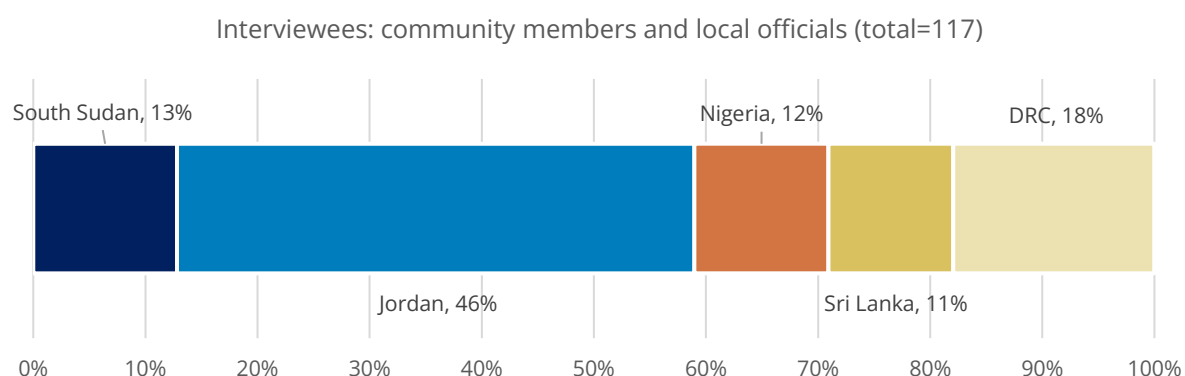


Interviewees: WFP staff by location (n=215)

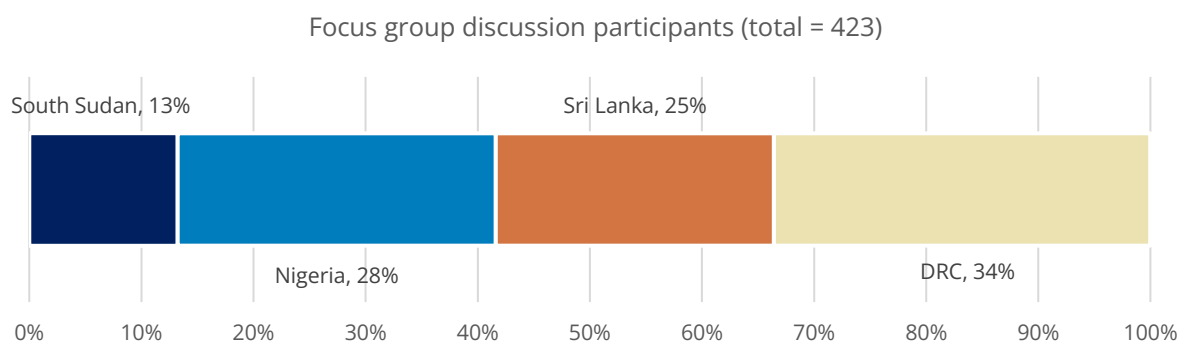


¹⁸⁰ While Afghanistan was not a case study for this evaluation, the evaluation team conducted an interview to learn about the innovative approaches to geographic targeting and prioritization used there.

Semi-structured interviews with community members and local officials¹⁸¹



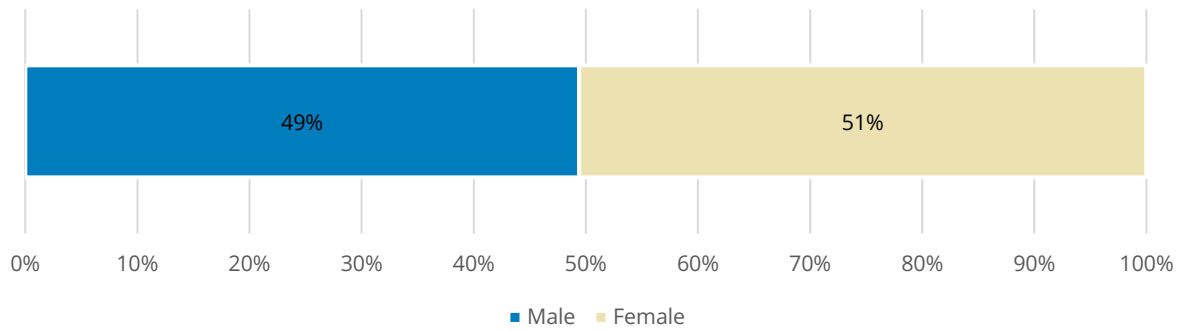
Focus group discussions¹⁸²



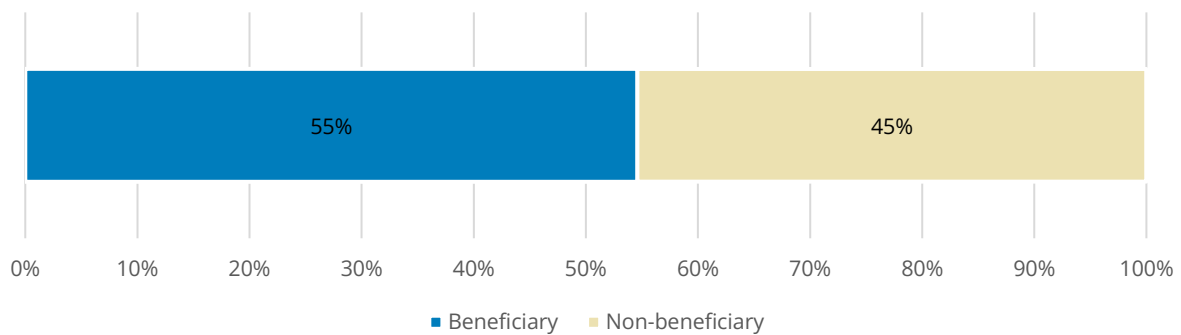
¹⁸¹ Interviews with community members and local officials were not conducted in remote case study locations.

¹⁸² Focus group discussions were not conducted in remote case study locations and Jordan (see Limitations in Annex IV).

Focus group discussion participants by gender (total = 423)

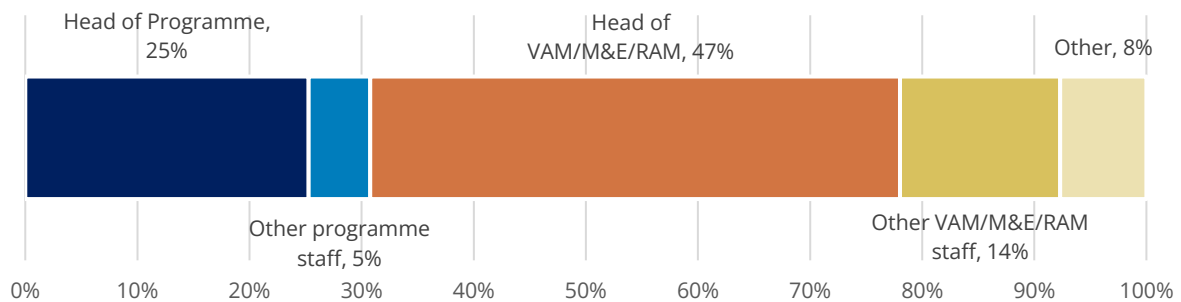


Focus group participants by beneficiary status (total = 423)

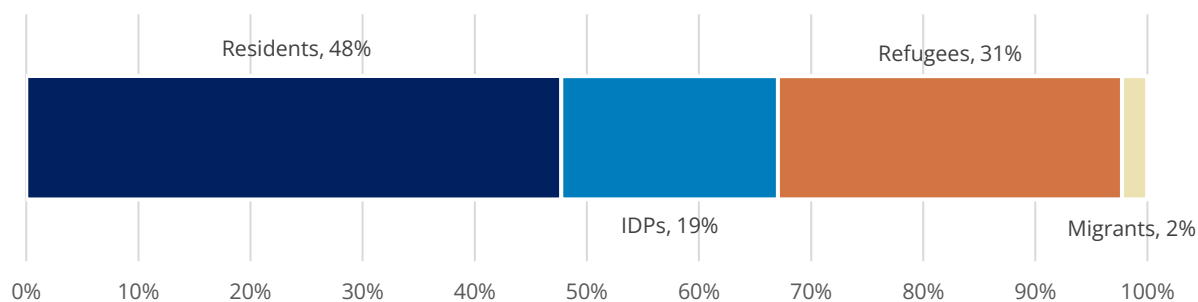


Online survey among WFP country offices implementing unconditional resource transfers

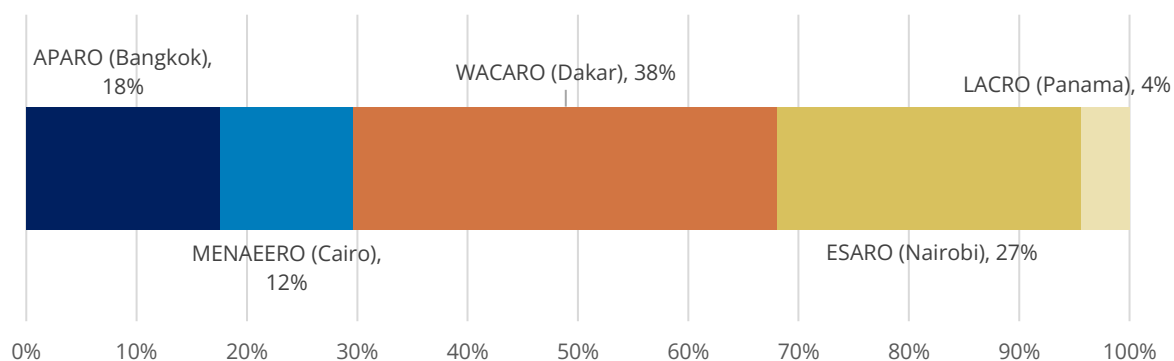
Survey: Respondents' positions (n=91)



Survey: Respondents' country office main beneficiary group for URTs (n=88)



Survey: Respondents' location (n=91)



Note : APARO=Asia and Pacific Regional Office ; MENAEERO= Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe Regional Office ; WACARO=Western and Central Africa Regional Office ; ESARO= Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office ; LACRO=Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office.

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Annex XIII. Acronyms and abbreviations

| | |
|----------------|---|
| ACL | Asset Creation and Livelihoods |
| APARO | Asia and Pacific Regional Office |
| APP | Analysis, Planning and Performance Division |
| APP-FA | Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Service |
| APP-MF | Monitoring and Feedback Service |
| APP-MP | Performance Management & Reporting Service |
| CARI | Consolidated Approach for Reporting Food Security Indicators |
| CBT | Cash-based transfer |
| CD | Country Director |
| CFM | Community Feedback Mechanism |
| CH | Cadre Harmonisé |
| CO | Country Office |
| COMET | Country Office Monitoring and Evaluation Tool |
| CP | Cooperating Partner |
| CSP | Country Strategic Plan |
| CWG | Cash Working Group |
| DCD | Deputy Country Director |
| DED | Deputy Executive Director |
| DG ECHO | Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations |
| DOE | Director of Evaluation |
| DRC | Democratic Republic of the Congo |
| DTL | Deputy Team Leader |
| ED | Executive Director |
| EFSA | Emergency Food Security Assessment |
| EM | Evaluation Manager |
| EQ | Evaluation Question |
| EQAS | Evaluation Quality Assurance System |
| ESARO | Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office |
| ET | Evaluation Team |
| EU | European Union |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization |
| FFA | Food Assistance for Assets |

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| FSC | Food Security Cluster |
| FSNMS | Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring Survey |
| FSOM | Food Security Outcome Monitoring |
| GAM | Global Acute Malnutrition |
| GFD | General Food Distribution |
| GHO | Global Humanitarian Overview |
| GPPI | Global Public Policy Institute |
| HC/RC | Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator |
| HCT | Humanitarian Country Team |
| HQ | Headquarters |
| HRP | Humanitarian Response Plan |
| IDP | Internally Displaced Person or People |
| INGO | International Non-Governmental Organization |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| IPC | Integrated Food Security Phase Classification |
| IRG | Internal Reference Group |
| JPDM | Joint Post-Distribution Monitoring |
| KII | Key Informant Interview |
| LACRO | Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office |
| MAM | Moderate acute malnutrition |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MEAL | Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning |
| MENAEERO | Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe Regional Office |
| MoDa | Mobile Operational Data Acquisition |
| MUAC | Mid-Upper Arm Circumference |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| OCHA | Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| OEV | Office of Evaluation |
| PDM | Post-Distribution Monitoring |
| PMT | Proxy-Means Testing |
| PMT+ | Proxy-Means Testing Plus |
| PPG | Programme Policy and Guidance Division |
| PPGE | Emergency Preparedness and Response Service |
| PWD | Persons with Disabilities |
| QA2 | Quality Assurance Two |
| RAM | Research, Assessment, and Monitoring |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| REACH | Humanitarian initiative providing data, information and analysis from contexts of crisis, disaster and displacement |
| RMD | Risk Management Division |
| RO | Regional Office |
| SAM | Severe Acute Malnutrition |
| SCOPE | WFP's beneficiary information and transfer management platform |
| SIMAST | Système d'information du Ministère des Affaires Sociales et du Travail |
| SOP | Standard Operating Procedure |
| T&P | Targeting and Prioritization |
| TL | Team Leader |
| TOR | Terms of Reference |
| T/P | Targeting / Prioritization |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDSS | United Nations Department for Safety and Security |
| UNEG | United Nations Evaluation Group |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| URT | Unconditional Resource Transfer |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| VAM | Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping |
| VBT | Vulnerability-Based Targeting |
| WACARO | Western and Central Africa Regional Office |
| WFP | World Food Programme |

Office of Evaluation

World Food Programme

Via Cesare Giulio Viola 68/70,
00148 Rome, Italy - T +39 06 65131

wfp.org/independent-evaluation