



WFP EVALUATION



World Food Programme

**SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES**

Evaluation of South Sudan WFP Interim Country Strategic Plan 2018–2022

Centralized evaluation report - Volume I

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Executive summary

INTRODUCTION







Evaluation features

1. An evaluation of the South Sudan interim country strategic plan (ICSP) for 2018–2022 was conducted between July 2021 and April 2022 with fieldwork carried out in November 2021. Combining accountability and learning objectives, the evaluation provides evidence of WFP's strategic positioning and results and was timed to inform the design of a new country strategic plan (CSP) for South Sudan.
2. The evaluation covers WFP activities implemented under the ICSP. The main users of the evaluation are the WFP country office, the Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa and headquarters units.
3. The evaluation used mixed methods, drawing on monitoring data, document review, an e-survey, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with 419 individuals representing a range of stakeholders, including 202 beneficiaries and representatives of the Government of South Sudan, United Nations and non-governmental organization partners and donors. Due consideration was given to accountability to affected populations, gender equality and women's empowerment, and inclusion and ethical issues.
4. The evaluation methodology and schedule were developed taking into consideration possible limitations related to evaluability and travel challenges arising from the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and insecurity. Information was triangulated using various sources to validate findings.

Context

5. South Sudan is marked by a long history of conflict. Following independence in 2011 a civil war broke out in 2013 and concluded in 2018 with the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. However, violent conflict has continued since then, despite the formation of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity in February 2020.
6. A low-income country, South Sudan ranks 185th of 189 countries in the 2020 Human Development Index.¹ It is characterized by a high level of inequality, notably for women and girls.

¹ United Nation Development Programme. 2020. [Human Development Report 2020. The next frontier: Human development and the Anthropocene. Briefing note for countries on the 2020 Human Development Report: South Sudan.](#)

TABLE 1: SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS			
	Indicator	Value	Year
	Total population (million) ⁽¹⁾	11.06	2019
	Human Development Index (rank) ⁽²⁾	185 (out of 189)	2020
	People experiencing extreme food insecurity (projected millions) (6)	7.24	2021
	Children <5 affected by acute malnutrition and in need of treatment (million) (4)	1.4	2021
	Global chronic malnutrition, prevalence for <5 (%) (4)	15.6	2021
	Gender Development Index (rank) (5)	169 (out of 188)	2018
	Share of agriculture in gross domestic product (%) (3)	15	2020

Sources: (1) World Bank. 2019. [Data: South Sudan](#); (2) United Nations Development Programme. 2020. [Human Development Report 2020. The next frontier: Human development and the Anthropocene](#); (3) African Development Bank Group. 2022. [South Sudan Economic Outlook](#); (4) United Nations Children's Fund. 2021. [Nutrition in South Sudan: Briefing Note](#); (5) United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. 2018. [UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluation. Final Evaluation Report. South Sudan Strategic Note 2014–2018](#); (6) Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. 2020. [South Sudan IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Analysis October 2020–July 2021](#).

7. South Sudan is experiencing catastrophic food insecurity owing to protracted conflict and repeated extreme droughts and floods, which have led to infrastructure damage, crop loss, asset depletion and population displacement. A weakened economy and high inflation have affected the affordability of food. In addition, the lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the supply chains for commercial goods and humanitarian assistance.

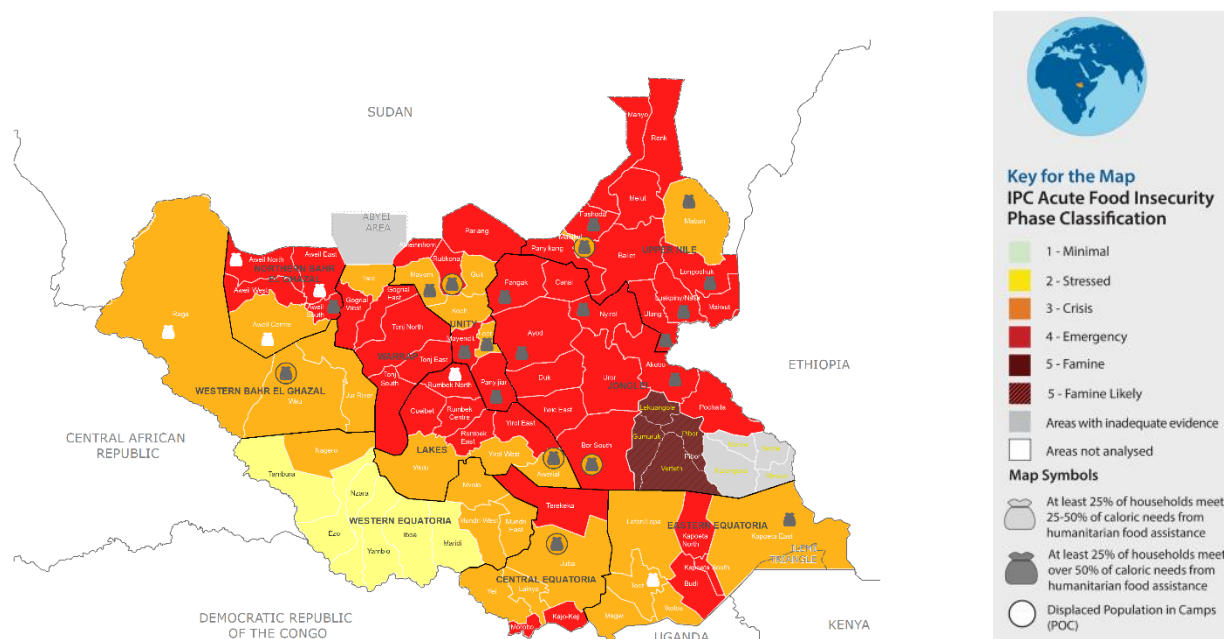
8. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), the number of people experiencing extreme food insecurity was projected to increase to 7.24 million by 2021.² The nutrition situation was critical between 2018 and 2021, with 57 counties projected to be in IPC phase 3 (acute malnutrition) or worse between April and July 2021.³ In 2021, 1.4 million children under 5 were reported to be suffering from acute malnutrition, and 15.6 percent of children were suffering from chronic malnutrition.⁴

² Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. 2020. [South Sudan: IPC Results October 2020–July 2021](#).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ United Nations Children's Fund. 2021. [Nutrition in South Sudan: Briefing note](#).

Figure 1: IPC projected acute food insecurity map April–July 2021



Source: IPC. December 2020. [South Sudan: IPC Results October 2020–July 2021](#).

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9. An estimated 1.3 million people in South Sudan are internally displaced⁵ and more than 2 million have sought refuge in neighbouring countries.⁶ The country also hosts 264,540 refugees, mostly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan.⁷

10. Protracted conflict, localized violence, impassable roads, bureaucratic impediments, operational interference, violence against humanitarian personnel and COVID-19 travel restrictions hamper humanitarian access.

11. The education system lacks adequate infrastructure, human resources and institutional capacity. With 2.8 million children out of school in 2020, predominantly in rural areas, the country has the highest proportion of out-of-school children in the world.⁸

WFP interim country strategic plan

12. The ICSP was developed to provide WFP with a medium-term strategy for responding to a multi-year acute crisis by building on existing synergies between humanitarian and development work to address immediate needs and underlying constraints. The shift from a series of operations to an ICSP encompassing all WFP interventions was expected to facilitate the scale-up of resilience interventions that require long-term planning and execution and to serve as a bridge to a full CSP. The ICSP was designed based on the most likely scenario of increasing countrywide conflict spreading to new areas and population groups, political instability, displacement and economic collapse leading to a worsening of livelihood

⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2022. [Global Focus. South Sudan: Latest updates](#).

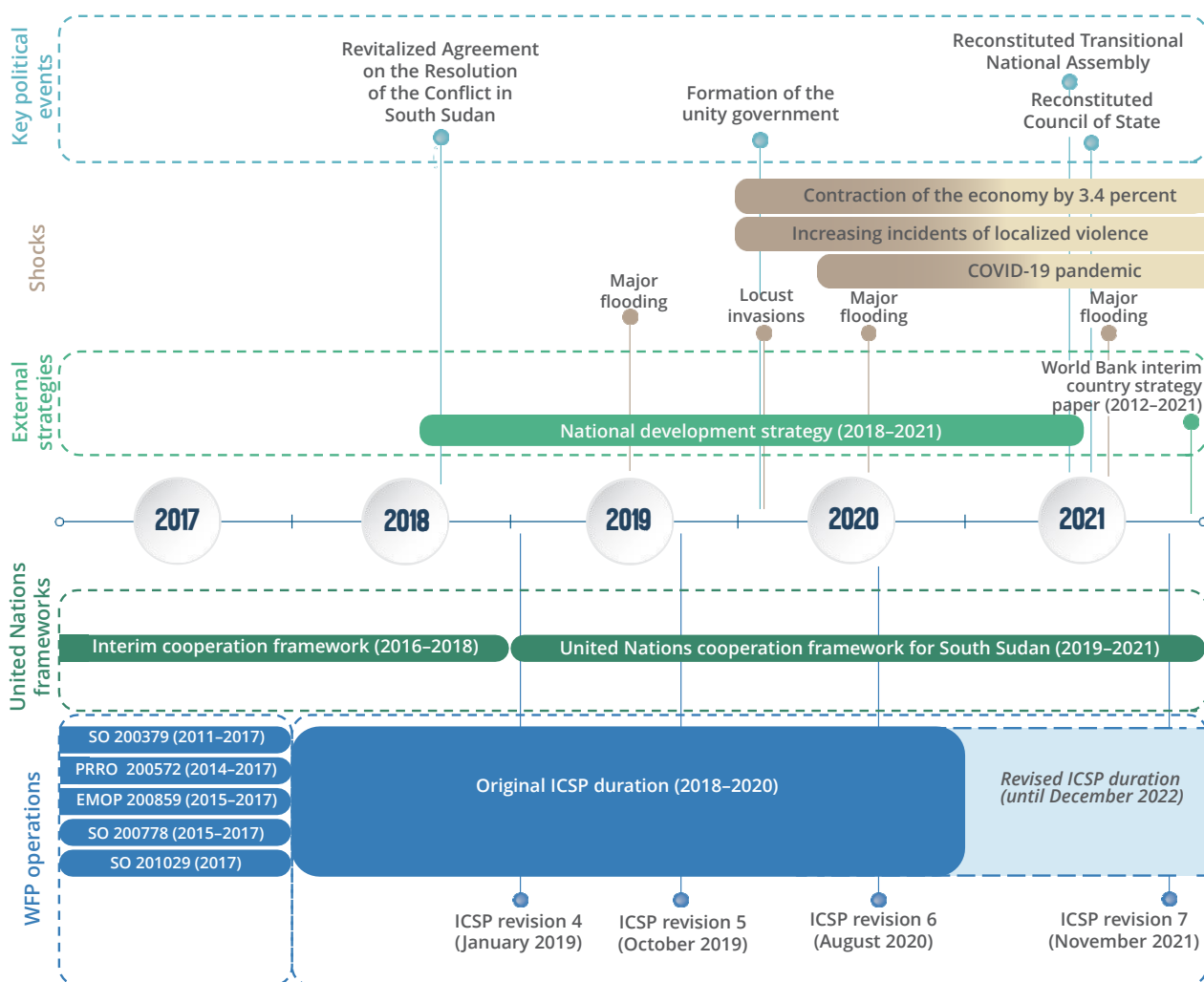
⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2021. [Operational Data Portal: Refugees from South Sudan](#).

⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2022. [Global Focus. South Sudan: Latest updates](#).

⁸ United Nations Children's Fund. 2019. [The State of the World's Children 2019. Children, food and nutrition: Growing well in a changing world](#).

opportunities. Figure 2 illustrates the major changes in the situation in South Sudan, the United Nations cooperation frameworks and WFP’s interventions from 2017 to 2021.

Figure 2: Country context and WFP operational overview, South Sudan, 2017–2021

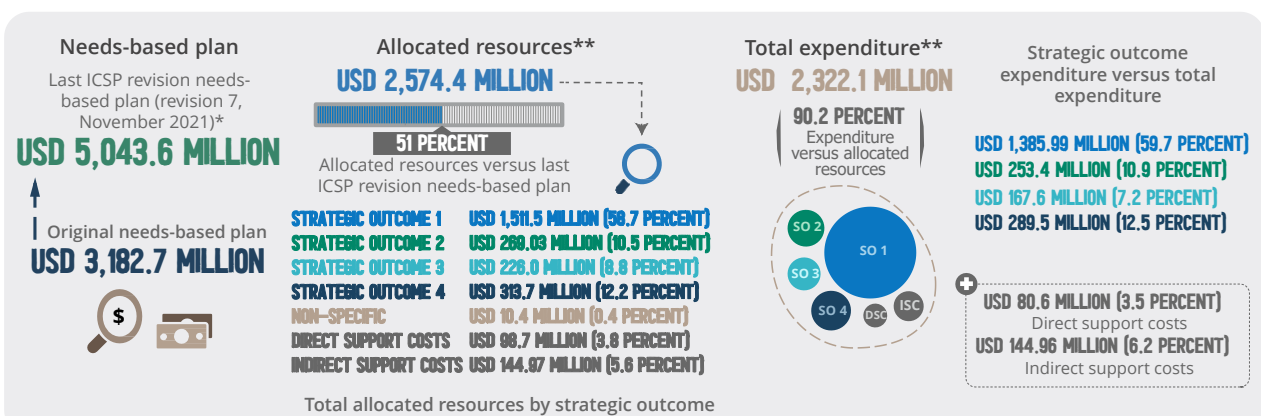
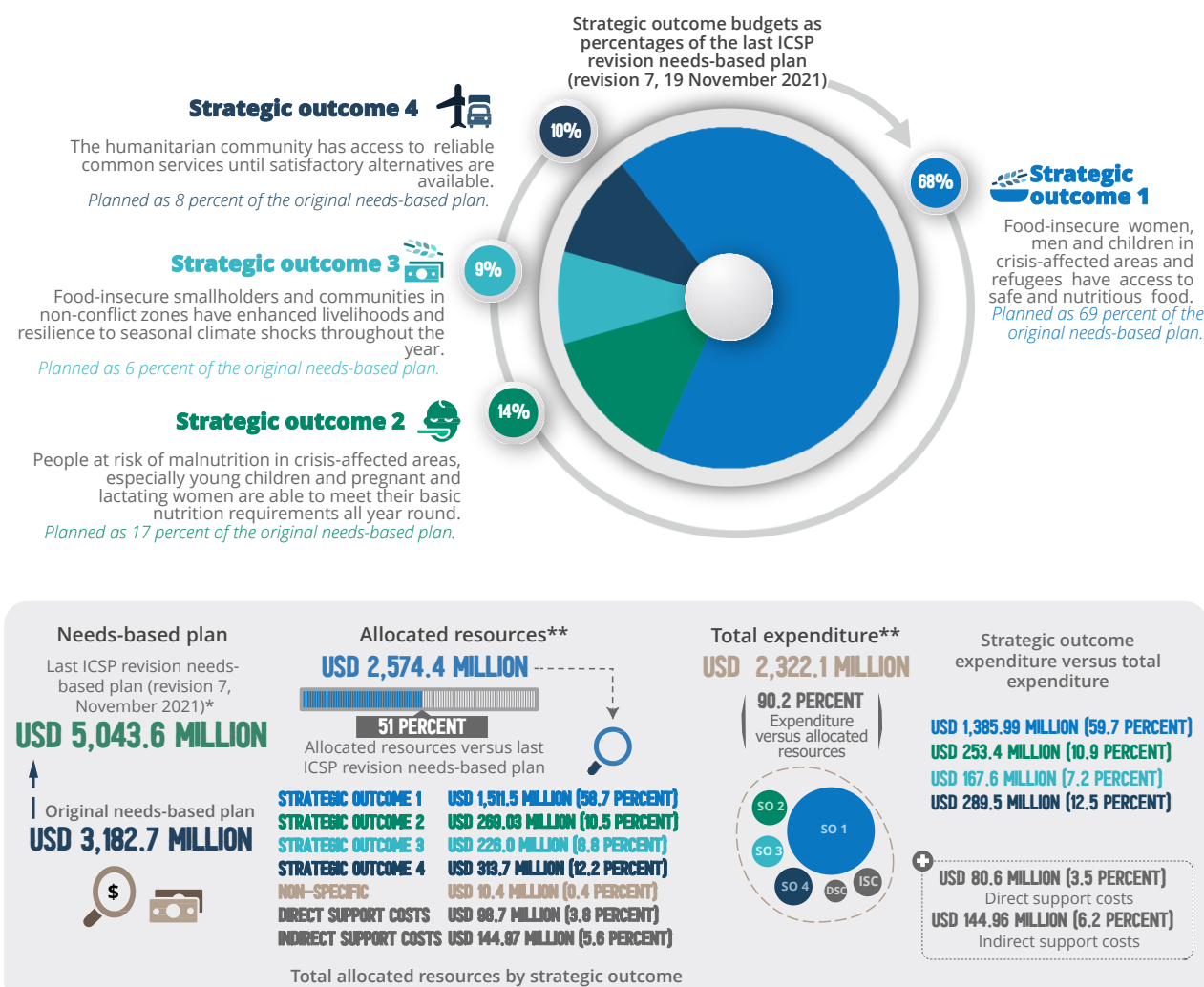


Source: Office of Evaluation, based on the full evaluation report.

Abbreviations: EMOP = emergency operation; PRRO = protracted relief and recovery operation; SO = special operation.

13. Following a series of ICSP revisions (figure 3) the ICSP budget increased from USD 3.18 billion in 2018 to USD 5.04 billion in 2021, and the duration of the ICSP was extended until December 2022 to allow the alignment of the new CSP with the cycle of the United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework starting in 2023. As of December 2021, 66 percent of the ICSP needs-based plan for the period 2018–2021 had been funded and 51 percent for the period 2018–2022.

Figure 3: Resource overview: South Sudan interim country strategic plan (2018–2022)



* The needs-based plan budget percentages by strategic outcome have been calculated at the level of total transfer and implementation costs, excluding direct support costs (USD 204 million in the last ICSP revision and USD 105.7 million in the original budget) and indirect support costs (USD 306.2 million in the last ICSP revision and USD 208.2 in the original budget).

** Allocated resources and expenditures figures are cumulative, covering the period from January 2018 to December 2021.

Sources: Country portfolio budget, seventh ICSP revision and Integrated Road Map analytics from annual country reports.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

To what extent are WFP’s strategic position, role and specific contributions based on country priorities, people’s needs and WFP’s strengths?

Relevance to national policies, plans and strategies

14. WFP opted to develop an interim CSP because it was not possible to conduct a full strategic review of government priorities for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals; such a review is a prerequisite to the adoption of a full CSP, but it was not possible to conduct one owing to ongoing conflict. The ICSP was nevertheless aligned with government policies and priorities, notably on food security, nutrition and resilience; the national development plan;⁹ and relevant sectoral policies on agriculture, education, health and other subjects. In addition, WFP supported the development of other strategies such as the 2019 national home-grown school feeding strategy.

⁹ Government of South Sudan. 2018. *National Development Strategy 2018–2021: Consolidate Peace and Stabilize the Economy*.

15. Given the scale of the humanitarian crisis and the protracted and frequent shocks affecting South Sudan, including COVID-19, the ICSP's greater emphasis on life-saving interventions versus life-changing resilience building was found to be appropriate.

16. The ICSP served as a useful framework for WFP's engagement in South Sudan but as a transitional document it lacked a long-term approach to addressing the root causes of hunger. However, a shift in thinking took place over the duration of the ICSP, with a move to a more forward-looking approach that reflected the Government's growing interest in resilience building.

Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable people and communities

17. The strategic outcomes of the ICSP were relevant to people's needs. With a projected 7.2 million people living in IPC phases 3 and 4 in 2021,¹⁰ strategic outcomes 1 and 2 focused on life-saving assistance for food-insecure households and individuals at risk of malnutrition in crisis-affected areas. Strategic outcome 4 addressed severe infrastructure gaps and provided common transport and logistics services for partners. Given the frequency of seasonal climate shocks, the focus of strategic outcome 3 on improving the resilience of food-insecure households was also appropriate.

18. The design of the ICSP included appropriate consideration of the target groups for each strategic outcome and emphasized addressing the needs of vulnerable women and girls. WFP's targeting strategy prioritized the most vulnerable based on the principle of reaching those "furthest behind". WFP used a range of assessments and deployed rapid monitoring teams to assess the needs arising from new emergencies. IPC classifications were a central driver of WFP's geographic targeting.

19. Despite great efforts to address the needs of the most vulnerable in hard-to-reach locations, targeting was a major challenge owing to the scale of need and funding shortfalls. Although they met the targeting criteria, some vulnerable groups may have been underserved – notably pastoralists, older persons and persons with disabilities – because of delivery challenges. WFP acknowledged the need to continue to improve its delivery approaches in order to reach those groups.

Adaptation

20. The ICSP's four strategic outcomes remained relevant, although protracted crises and funding constraints affected WFP's ability to focus on long-term needs. Nonetheless, WFP actively engaged in joint resilience programmes and is developing a resilience strategy.

21. WFP identified and managed risks appropriately, including those related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and operated in a flexible way, adjusting its activities and delivery approaches through seven ICSP revisions in response to changes in circumstances, including the level of need. During the COVID-19 pandemic WFP and the nutrition cluster developed revised protocols for the distribution of food assistance, and through the logistics cluster WFP addressed supply chain issues. WFP also made programme adaptations, such as the doubling of rations for general food distribution, the introduction of take-home rations in school feeding programmes and the provision of food assistance through the urban safety net programme.

United Nations partnerships

22. WFP's work was fully aligned with the United Nations cooperation framework pillar 3 on improving food security and recovering local economies, which it co-led with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). WFP interventions were also relevant to the empowerment of women and young people, the building of peace and the strengthening of governance priorities. In line with the United Nations cooperation framework and successive humanitarian response plans, which call for integrated multisectoral approaches, partnership was a core feature of WFP's work. In addition to WFP's leadership of the logistics cluster, co-leadership of the food security and livelihoods cluster and engagement in the nutrition cluster, United Nations stakeholders also recognized the advantages of working in partnership with WFP, including WFP's extensive humanitarian reach, large geographic footprint and strong understanding of beneficiary communities.

¹⁰ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. 2020. [South Sudan: IPC Results October 2020–July 2021](#).

What are the extent and quality of WFP's specific contribution to interim country strategic plan outcomes in South Sudan?

Delivery of outputs and contribution to outcomes

23. Under strategic outcome 1, WFP was effective in saving the lives and improving the food security of people and communities in IPC phases 4 and 5. However, the level of assistance provided was not sufficient to reach food security targets. In all years of ICSP implementation, the actual amounts of food and cash-based transfers under strategic outcome 1 were 70 percent and 50 percent below target, respectively. The most food-insecure households were prioritized, and not all beneficiaries received full rations. Food consumption scores improved over time but coping strategy indicators showed a mixed picture. The level of assistance was not sufficient to offset the impact of recurrent shocks and crises including insecurity, flooding, increased food prices, poor infrastructure and restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The school feeding programme made a positive contribution to school enrolment and attendance, but its impact on education outcomes was limited by structural barriers to the provision of high-quality education.

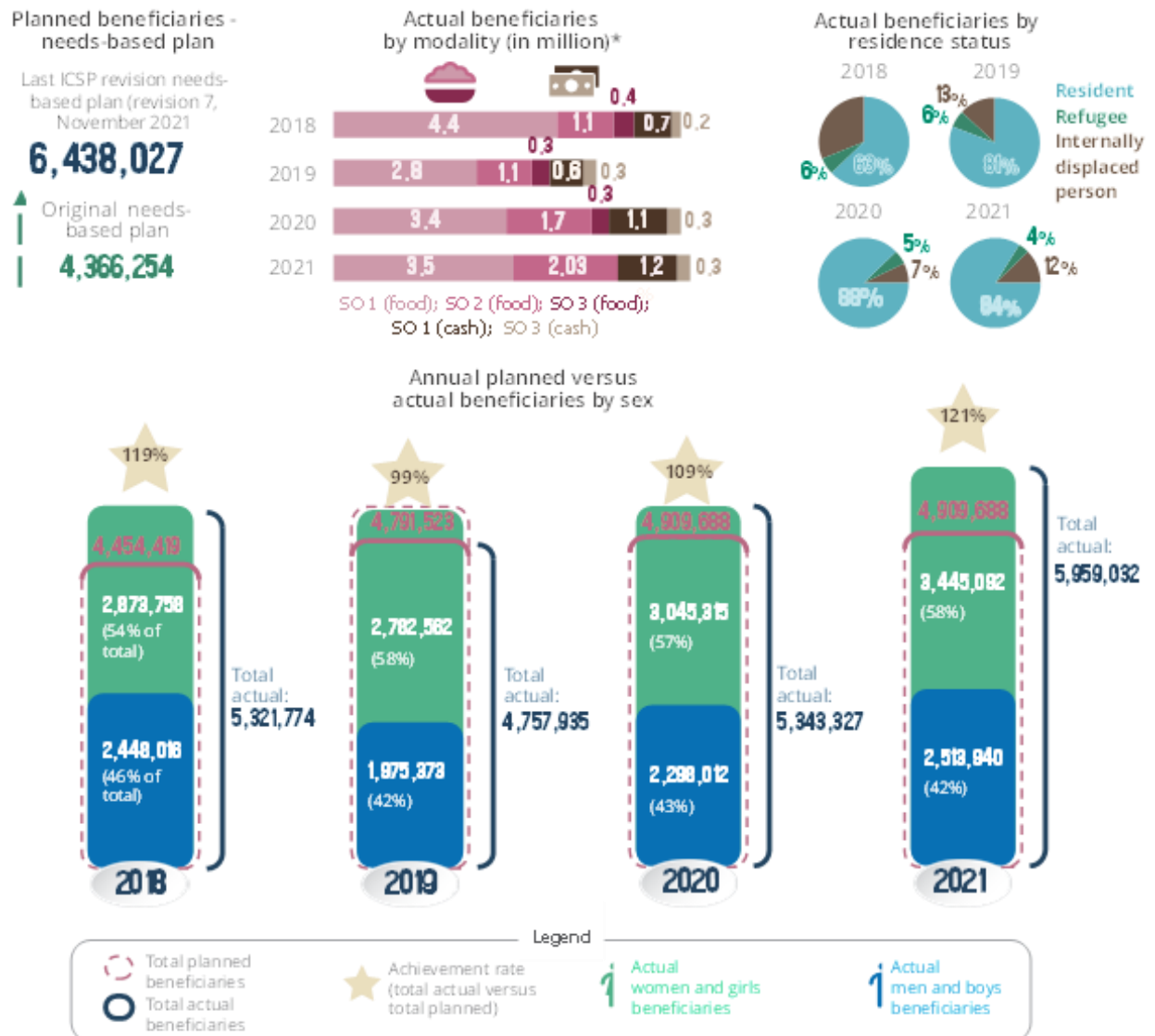
24. Under strategic outcome 2 WFP was effective in the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition and in improving the quality of diets. However, the coverage of the preventive blanket supplementary feeding programme was insufficient owing to security, procurement and logistics challenges and funding constraints. Community nutrition volunteers jointly supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and WFP played a vital role in fostering programme effectiveness and sustainability.

25. Under strategic outcome 3, resilience building activities constituted a small but important and gradually increasing component of WFP's overall support. Performance against targets in terms of outputs was broadly good, although there was some disruption owing to COVID-19. Food assistance for assets activities were effective in improving self-reliance, food security and nutrition and reducing tensions and violence. Evidence on the effectiveness of efforts to build resilience to floods was unclear, with some farmer groups reporting increased self-reliance while others mentioned the devastating impact of flooding on dikes and vegetable gardens.

26. Under strategic outcome 4, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) played a vital role in securing access to, and facilitating emergency response in, remote locations. The logistics cluster was seen as a key enabler for the successful implementation of the collective humanitarian response; strong support for the cluster helped to sustain well-managed and fully funded common logistics services.¹¹ Both air and logistics services operated with flexibility and registered high levels of user satisfaction.

¹¹ Logistics Cluster. 2020. [South Sudan – Lessons Learned Report, February 2020](#).

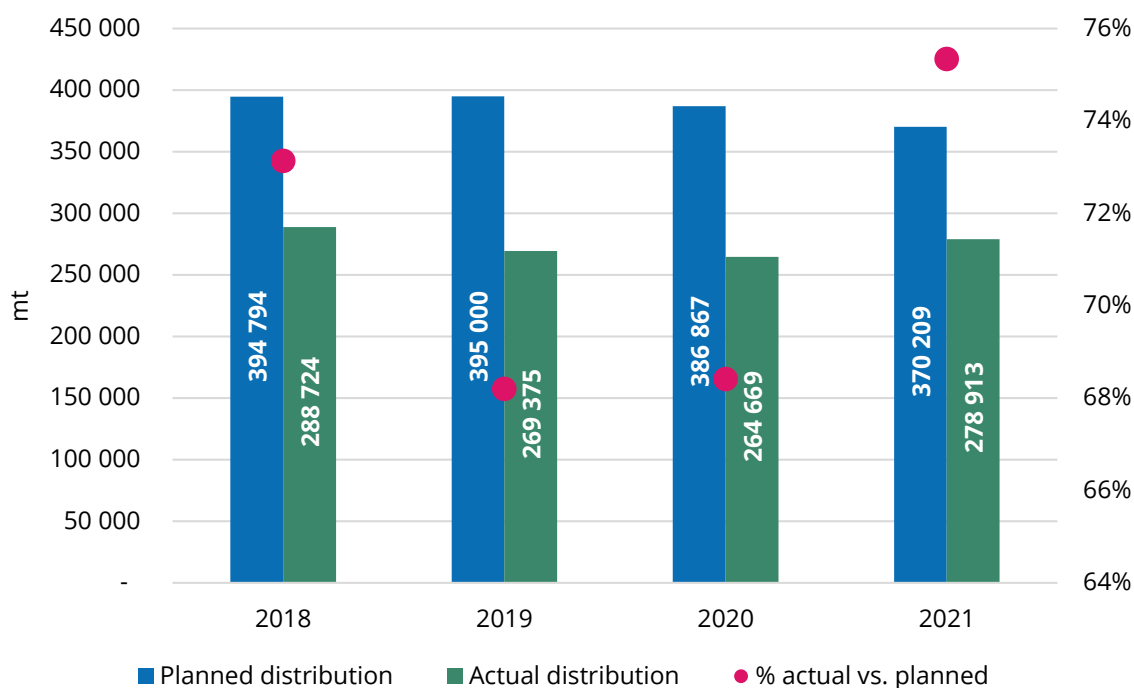
Figure 4: Interim country strategic plan beneficiaries, 2018–2021



* The numbers in this section might contain overlaps because some beneficiaries might receive both food and cash-based transfers and receive transfers under more than one strategic outcome.

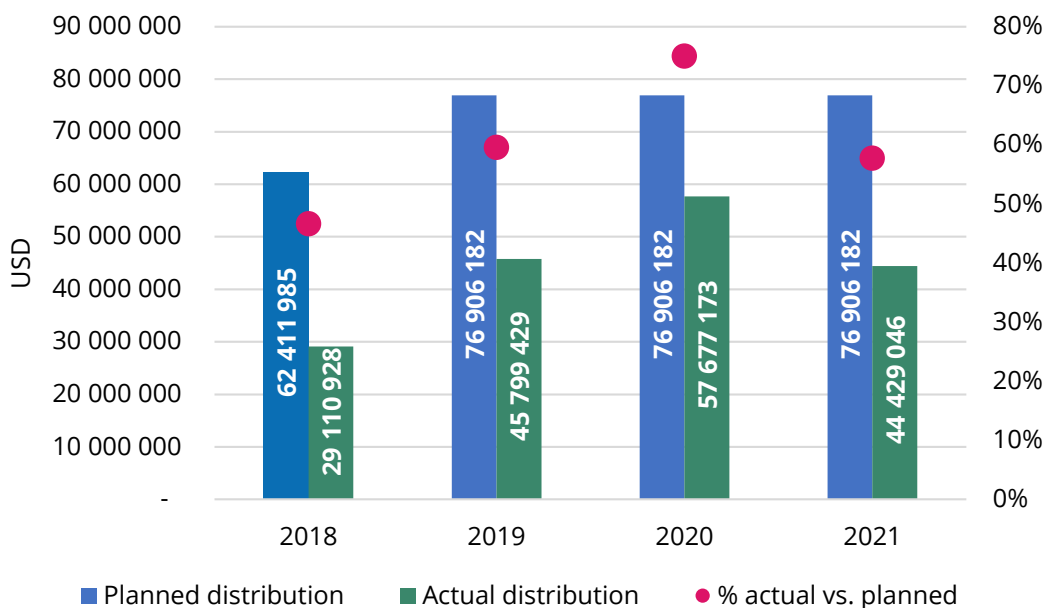
Sources: WFP South Sudan annual country reports, WFP country office tool for managing effectively (COMET) reports CM-R001b and CM-R020, covering 2018–2021.

Figure 5: Interim country strategic plan food transfers, 2018–2021



Source: WFP COMET report CM-R014, covering 2018–2021.

Figure 6: Interim country strategic plan cash-based transfers, 2018–2021



Source: WFP COMET report CM-R014, covering 2018–2021.

Gender and cross-cutting aims

27. WFP was committed to ensuring adherence to humanitarian principles and well positioned to do so thanks to its considerable presence in South Sudan, but staff faced a growing number of operational, security and safety challenges.

28. The South Sudan country office was the first WFP country office to develop a conflict sensitivity action plan, which it did in 2020 in collaboration with the Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility.¹² To address the challenges of conflict-sensitive programme design and delivery, WFP invested considerably in capacity strengthening for its staff.

29. Under the overarching South Sudan humanitarian country team protection strategy,¹³ WFP took steps to identify and mitigate the protection risks related to its activities. About 82 percent of interviewed beneficiaries reported that WFP assistance contributed significantly to ensuring the protection of their rights. WFP made an important contribution to beneficiary protection during the COVID-19 pandemic by supporting the raising of beneficiary awareness of COVID-19-related risks and transporting testing and personal protective equipment.

30. WFP launched and scaled up community feedback mechanisms, including a telephone hotline, helpdesks at distribution centres and community outreach. The staff of WFP and cooperating partners received training, a community feedback mechanism database was set up, and follow up exercises were conducted to facilitate the closure of feedback loops. However, the number of beneficiaries making complaints was small relative to the total number of beneficiaries, with underreporting by cooperating partners and insufficient visibility of the mechanisms among beneficiaries.

31. Gender equality and gender-transformative objectives featured prominently in the ICSP design, which received a gender and age marker code of 4. WFP provided cooperating partners with strong guidance and reached more women than men with its interventions, reflecting the priority given to pregnant and lactating women and girls and the fact that female-headed households are the most vulnerable. Examples of gender mainstreaming included involving male caregivers in nutrition counselling and engaging men and boys as change agents for nutrition improvement. Beneficiary feedback emphasized the positive impact of training men on the importance of women and girls' participation in community projects. WFP undertook a gender-focused situational analysis highlighting good practices. Some challenges were also highlighted, including in mainstreaming gender into every programme and achieving gender balance in WFP and cooperating partner staff.

32. Environmental risks were identified and managed appropriately by, for example, undertaking environmental screening for asset creation projects and reducing the amount of food delivered via airdrop by using road and river transport where possible in order to reduce carbon emissions.

Sustainability

33. The potential for sustainable impact was undermined by the challenging conditions in South Sudan, including extreme levels of acute food insecurity, political instability, violence and poor infrastructure, high dependence on food imports, climate-related crises and the COVID-19 pandemic. WFP's efforts to facilitate people's graduation from food assistance were compromised by new crises that lengthened the lean season. The capacity limitations, high staff turnover and resource constraints faced by the Government also affected the likelihood of sustainability.

34. Conceived as a transitional plan, the ICSP lacked a long-term vision and a road map for the delivery of sustainable results. Most outputs addressed immediate needs, and less effort was devoted to resilience building, sustainability and system strengthening. Such limited consideration of sustainability in the ICSP design was understandable given the prevailing conditions at the time, which made it reasonable to assume that significant food insecurity would last throughout 2018–2022.

35. Despite the challenging environment, over time WFP increased its focus on resilience building. WFP staff suggested that WFP should consider more deeply how it might ensure that its resilience building work produced sustainable results and how it could better target and focus resources to prevent assistance under the ICSP from being "spread too thinly". The frequency of climate-related shocks, leading to widespread displacement and the destruction of livelihoods, requires a long-term approach to climate adaptation. WFP therefore needs to consider a time horizon of 15 years when defining how to promote people's transition away from food assistance.

¹² [Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility: South Sudan](#).

¹³ South Sudan HCT. 2020. [Centrality of Protection: Strategy 2020](#).

36. WFP's experience indicates that some initiatives have the potential to be sustained into the future; these include, among other things, cash assistance, which supports local markets. WFP and cooperating partner staff considered that the conditions necessary for sustainability included deeper community engagement, more government capacity strengthening and more work on the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.

Links between humanitarian and development work

37. Throughout ICSP implementation, WFP took into account the strong interconnections among long-term food security, resilience and peacebuilding. In 2020, WFP sought to strengthen its position as a peacebuilding actor in South Sudan through partnerships. The community violence reduction programme being implemented jointly with other United Nations entities in Jonglei State is an example of how WFP is supporting targeted peacebuilding work with other actors. While the country office expressed the intention of increasing such work in the future, it is fully aware that it will need to work with partners that are more focused on, and have greater expertise in, peacebuilding.

38. WFP faced significant challenges in making progress in its work on the humanitarian-development–peace nexus during ICSP implementation because of weak governance at the national and state levels and the scale of humanitarian need. WFP made a strong contribution to the use of social protection approaches, implementing three of South Sudan's six main non-contributory social protection programmes.

To what extent has WFP used its resources efficiently in contributing to interim country strategic plan outputs and strategic outcomes?

Timeliness of delivery

39. WFP could not fully deliver planned outputs owing to funding constraints and shortfalls. Underfunding forced WFP to reduce the scale of its programmes, particularly those under strategic outcome 3 (resilience building). WFP demonstrated its ability to deliver emergency assistance rapidly. The use of technology, such as the introduction of biometric registration systems through WFP's digital beneficiary information and transfer management platform (SCOPE), facilitated the timely delivery of assistance. However, some delays were reported, particularly in the timing of food assistance for assets support, which was not always optimal.

40. Multiple factors outside the control of WFP affected the timeliness of assistance. Access challenges due to insecurity, flooding and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the pre-positioning of food and gaps in warehousing facilities in remote areas were the most frequently cited factors. In some instances, they led WFP to adjust the frequency of food distributions, which resulted in unintended consequences for beneficiaries and cooperating partners, such as the need to manage large rations and the risk of resale of rations.

Coverage

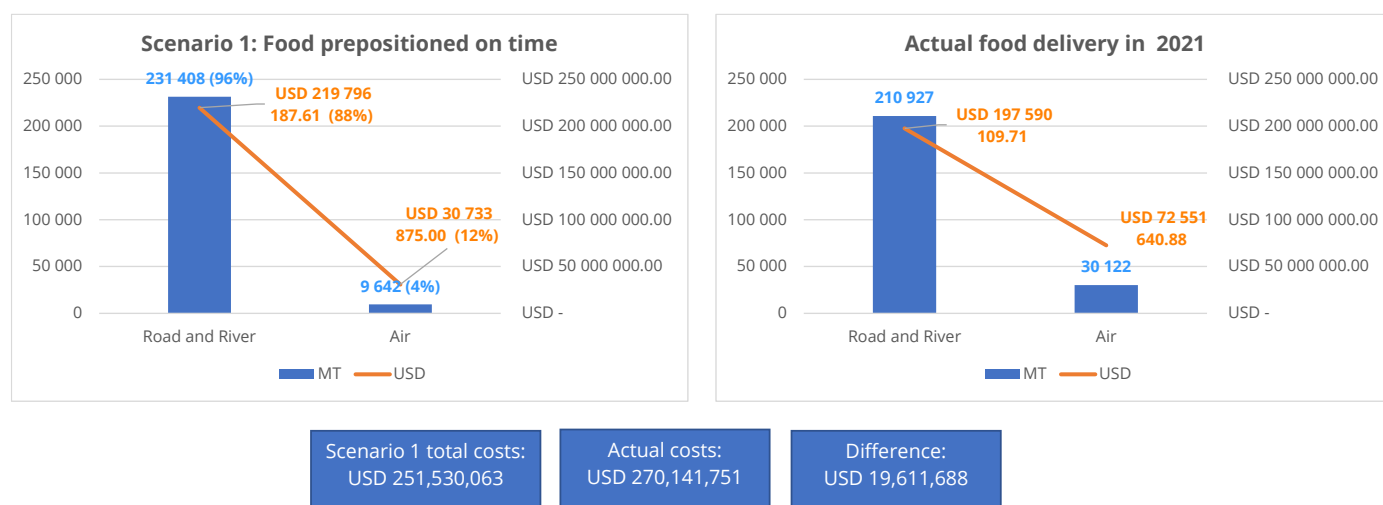
41. Analysis of acute food insecurity and malnutrition carried out through the interagency food security and nutrition monitoring system and from IPC reports was used to inform geographic targeting and resource allocation. Since its resources were insufficient to cover all needs, WFP had to deliver assistance on a reduced scale, including by reducing rations or shortening the duration of the support provided to beneficiaries. Cash-based transfers were in some cases not possible because of donor conditions requiring that donations be used to purchase food. Beneficiaries reported that they were not always appropriately informed when assistance was reprioritized, although the country office reported taking various actions to clarify communications with beneficiaries. WFP's extensive geographic coverage across the country, coupled with funding constraints, led to the perception that WFP support was "spread too thinly".

Cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness

42. Given the funding constraints it was critical for WFP to explore ways to improve cost-efficiency. Cost savings were achieved by reducing the number of airdrops used and expanding river and road transport. WFP also expanded the area in which it pre-positioned supplies through the use of mobile storage structures and innovative transport solutions. However, pre-positioning can only take place during a three month period in the dry season when roads are passable and requires early confirmation of

funding. In 2021, the late confirmation of certain contributions resulted in additional costs of USD 19.6 million (see figure 7).

Figure 7: Financial impact of delayed pre-positioning of food and increased use of airdrops in 2021



Source: WFP South Sudan country office.

43. Changing the type of nutritious food products used also lowered transport and distribution costs. The quantity of locally procured food increased over time but remained relatively low as a result of systemic challenges. The country office regularly monitored market prices and conducted cost-effectiveness comparisons between transfer modalities, using cash rather than food whenever feasible.

44. UNHAS operations in South Sudan were well funded through donor contributions, and UNHAS was able to raise up to 50 percent of its funding through cost recovery mechanisms, making it one of the best performing UNHAS operations worldwide.

What factors explain WFP's performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected under the interim country strategic plan?

Use of existing evidence

45. Significant data were generated by WFP's monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning system, particularly on food assistance for assets activities, but fewer on other programmes. While decisions were made on the basis of available data, additional efforts are required to strengthen the link between evidence generation and decision making.

Resource mobilization

46. WFP faced unprecedented challenges with rising needs and declining funding. To mobilize resources, the country office held regular meetings with donors and improved its reporting on the use of funds. An increase in donor earmarking of contributions limited WFP's flexibility and efficiency. Pipeline sustainability was facilitated by use of the Global Commodity Management Facility, but the funding environment has become more challenging with clear signs of donor fatigue.

Partnerships

47. WFP's engagement with the Government of South Sudan was framed by memoranda of understanding with several ministries, but some key informants suggested that WFP engage more strategically with senior members of the national Government. The decentralized nature of governance and the absence of functional governance structures at the state and national levels limited WFP's ability to engage effectively in country capacity strengthening activities. Nonetheless, WFP was able to make progress by, for example, supporting the Ministry of General Education and Instruction in launching a national home-grown school feeding strategy and by seconding staff to the Ministry of Health's Nutrition Department. WFP

also supported the establishment of resilience platforms that facilitated the engagement of state-level ministries in resilience building programmes in two states.

48. Good collaboration supported delivery and results, particularly with FAO the International Organization for Migration and UNICEF. The Partnership for Recovery and Resilience involving United Nations entities, donors and non-governmental organizations was an example of WFP and other agencies working together to deliver results across sectors. There was also good cooperation on advocacy, the conduct of food and nutrition studies, including for the inter-agency food security and nutrition monitoring system and IPC reports, and the joint emergency response in hard-to-reach areas through an integrated response mechanism with FAO and UNICEF.

Flexibility of the ICSP

49. WFP was adaptive and flexible in its approach to tackling shocks, drawing on its strong emergency response capacity. While WFP was dynamic in targeting and reprioritizing, the country office recognized the need for a more structured approach.

50. WFP's adaptive and innovative approaches were effective drivers of performance despite the highly challenging and complex environment. For example, the use of technology made an important contribution to the maintenance of business continuity and the reduction of health risks during the COVID-19 crisis. WFP field monitors and cooperating partners expressed the view that the use of technology had substantially improved WFP's ability to serve its beneficiaries despite the lack of digital infrastructure in the country.

Other factors that explain WFP's performance and strategic shift

51. Under the ICSP WFP increased its attention to resilience building, but its focus remained mainly on life saving rather than life changing. Resilience building results were also hampered by limited internal staff capacity and expertise.

52. Limited government capacity, combined with a number of other external factors, obstructed WFP's performance in making the strategic shift expected under the ICSP. In addition, WFP was confronted with numerous difficult challenges in implementing the ICSP during a highly turbulent period, which inevitably affected its performance.

CONCLUSIONS

53. WFP is the leading provider of humanitarian assistance in South Sudan, reflecting its strong comparative advantage in that area. The ICSP was well aligned with national priorities and the United Nations cooperation framework, but stronger engagement with national and state government is needed to allow an increased focus on sustainability and country capacity strengthening.

54. The ICSP was a useful transitional framework for WFP interventions that by design did not include a long-term approach to addressing the root causes of hunger. Sustainability was also not sufficiently considered. However, there was a shift in thinking over time, with a move to a more forward-looking approach to sustainable resilience building.

55. Targeting was strongly informed by evidence on the needs of the most vulnerable people and communities, but it was a huge challenge because of the scale of need arising from protracted crises and funding constraints. Given the resources available, WFP assistance was perceived to be spread too thinly and was insufficient to fully address all needs. During ICSP implementation, the launch and scale-up of the SCOPE beneficiary registration system as a common service was a major improvement, although the efficiency of SCOPE needs to be further strengthened.

56. WFP was successful in adapting its activities, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While it collected a strong body of evidence to inform the design and targeting of the ICSP, more work is needed to better integrate research, assessment, monitoring and evaluation systems into decision making processes.

57. WFP's specific contribution to ICSP strategic outcomes was strongest in the case of strategic outcome 2 (nutrition). Assistance provided under strategic outcome 1 was life-saving, particularly in extremely food-insecure areas, but insufficient to achieve the ICSP's planned food security outcomes given the deteriorating food security situation. School feeding programmes were rated as very beneficial in the alleviation of hunger and malnutrition among schoolchildren. Resilience building work under strategic outcome 3 was effective in improving self-reliance, food security and nutrition in communities and in

reducing tensions and violence, but effectiveness in building resilience against seasonal shocks was not clear. The services of UNHAS and the logistics cluster under strategic outcome 4 were essential to supporting collective humanitarian assistance, but the effectiveness of strategic outcome 4 was compromised by movement restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

58. WFP performed well in promoting cross-cutting issues such as protection, adherence to humanitarian principles and the consideration of environmental risks. However, WFP needs to continue to build on its work to mainstream conflict sensitivity into programmes and delivering a gender-transformative approach.

59. Throughout ICSP implementation, WFP took into account the strong interconnections among measures to promote long-term food security, resilience and peacebuilding. WFP faced significant challenges that impeded progress on the triple nexus. Most notable of those challenges were weak governance at the national and state levels, the limited availability of development funding, beneficiaries' dependence on food assistance, and the ICSP's lack of a long-term vision focused on the nexus. WFP has a solid reputation as a rapid emergency responder, but the efficient and timely delivery of planned outputs was hindered by factors that were mostly outside WFP's control, some of which led to unintended consequences for beneficiaries and cooperating partners.

60. Funding shortfalls were a major issue in the implementation of the ICSP and were a key driver of WFP's serious consideration of cost-efficiency in the delivery of assistance, including through cost-sharing with other agencies and significant reductions in the use of air transport.

RECOMMENDATIONS

#	Recommendation	Level/nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
1	In its next country strategic plan for South Sudan, WFP should avoid spreading its resources too thinly.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	November 2022
1.1	To avoid spreading its resources too thinly, WFP should align the ambitions of the country strategic plan with the forecasted level of funding and, going forward, should focus on priority areas where long-term impact can be achieved in coordination with other humanitarian and development actors.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	November 2022
2	WFP should consider a number of opportunities to maximize the long-term and sustainable results of its interventions with a view to ensuring greater coherence throughout its portfolio – including synergies among strategic outcomes – and better supporting the transition of beneficiaries from activities under strategic outcome 1 to activities under other strategic outcomes.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, United Nations country team, Government of South Sudan, headquarters divisions	High	November 2022
2.1	To guide the formulation of an explicit vision of how it will deliver long-term change and impact through its next country strategic plan, WFP should develop a theory of change and a supporting narrative describing how it will deliver sustainable impact during implementation of the country strategic plan and beyond, including in addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	November 2022
2.2	To support progress on the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, in the next country strategic plan WFP should more explicitly set out its framework for supporting that progress and should recruit or deploy from the regional bureau specialists in social protection and peacebuilding who will promote a stronger emphasis on those areas in the country strategic plan.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, Emergencies and Transitions Service	High	December 2023

#	Recommendation	Level/nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
2.3	Given the increasing malnutrition rates in South Sudan WFP should work more proactively with humanitarian and development partners (including the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization) with a view to better understanding the causes and implications of malnutrition and supporting nutrition-related programming in the next country strategic plan.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, United Nations country team, Nutrition Division	High	December 2023
2.4	Building on the findings from political economy analyses and the identification of champions in national, state and local government, WFP should articulate the short-, medium- and long-term objectives of its country capacity strengthening work and set out a plan for that work based on its corporate country capacity strengthening framework and in coordination with other United Nations entities.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, United Nations country team, Government of South Sudan	High	November 2022
2.5	WFP should strengthen advocacy on integrated school-based health and nutrition programmes and place school feeding at the core of those programmes. WFP should work with communities, faith-based organizations, local governments and national and international non-governmental organizations to examine how complementary interventions that better support improved education outcomes and gender equality can be fostered in order to increase the contribution of the school feeding programme to those objectives. WFP should continue to work with the United Nations Children's Fund as a key partner in its education and nutrition activities.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, School-based Programmes unit, Nutrition Division	High	June 2023
2.6	In the next country strategic plan, WFP should give greater consideration to addressing the access constraints faced by some groups (such as older persons, persons with disabilities and	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	Medium	November 2022

#	Recommendation	Level/nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
	pastoralists) with a view to ensuring that their food and nutrition needs are met.					
3	To deliver on its ambition to increase the focus on resilience building in the next country strategic plan, WFP needs to take various steps.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, Resilience and Food Systems Service	High	January 2023
3.1	WFP should give greater consideration to its long-term vision for resilience building work and the approaches (market systems, food systems, community empowerment) that are the most appropriate for various groups and settings.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	January 2023
3.2	To inform strategic insights into, and the scale-up of approaches to, the transition from unconditional food assistance to resilience-oriented activities, and to support the tailoring of WFP interventions to better fit the needs and aspirations of beneficiaries, WFP should conduct research (possibly behavioural insight research) to increase its understanding of behaviours and the underlying objectives, constraints, situations and triggers that drive the transition of beneficiaries from dependence on relief support to self-reliance. Across WFP, there is a need for more sharing of good practices on and positive experiences of beneficiaries' transition from humanitarian to development-oriented support in order to inform the formulation of a strategy in that area.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, Resilience and Food Systems Service	High	June 2023
3.3	WFP should scale up the development of integrated teams with a view to moving from some degree of siloed implementation of activities to fully incorporating a resilience lens into its portfolio of activities in South Sudan and shifting the mindset of WFP and cooperating partner staff from humanitarian to development thinking.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	January 2023

#	Recommendation	Level/nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
4	Beneficiary registration and verification processes need to be made more efficient and research, assessment, monitoring and evaluation data and analyses should be better integrated into decision making structures.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau	Medium	April 2023
4.1	WFP should continue to improve the efficiency of biometric registration and verification processes to reduce the time that they require and the stress they cause for beneficiaries.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau	Medium	April 2023
4.2	WFP should address the gaps in capacity for the assessment of research, assessment and monitoring data in the country office and field offices and conduct a specific diagnostic review of monitoring, evaluation and learning systems with a view to informing better integration of those systems into decision making structures and data use by senior management and to improving knowledge management practices, including the sharing of data and evidence with partners.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau	Medium	January 2023
5	WFP should continue to strengthen approaches to a number of cross-cutting themes, including accountability to affected populations, conflict sensitivity and gender equality.	Operational	Country office	Cooperating partners, regional bureau, headquarters divisions	High	January 2023
5.1	To address beneficiaries' concerns regarding inadequate communication on ration cuts and reprioritization exercises, WFP and cooperating partners should expand the channels they use for sharing information by, for example, recording messages in local languages, broadcasting them at distribution sites and monitoring the effectiveness of communications with the involvement of local government.	Operational	Country office	Cooperating partners	High	June 2023

#	Recommendation	Level/nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
5.2	WFP should work closely with field offices and cooperating partners to ensure that all feedback from beneficiaries (including feedback received via informal channels) is logged and recorded on community feedback mechanisms, and the issues raised are addressed in a timely manner. Furthermore, helpdesks should be reinstated at all distribution sites (where not yet the case). To provide incentives for senior managers (those at head of field office level and above) to pay due attention to accountability to affected populations, the subject should be included in their performance appraisals. Feedback loops and reporting to beneficiaries on the outcomes and programmatic adjustments resulting from their feedback need to be strengthened.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau, Human Resources Division, cooperating partners	High	June 2023
5.3	WFP should take a long-term approach to achieving its aspirations regarding the progressive application of a gender-transformative approach by defining short-term activities that contribute to that long-term goal. Further research on identifying the enabling factors and good practices in the application of a gender-transformative approach is also recommended. WFP should consider investing in gender-related stand-alone projects that can be implemented by partners.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau, Gender Office	High	January 2023
5.4	WFP should build on its work to ensure that conflict sensitivity is mainstreamed into programme design and delivery by continuing to enhance internal capacity to promote consensus on a conflict-sensitive approach to all of its engagement in South Sudan and, in so doing, to contribute to corporate-level learning.	Operational	Country office	Cooperating partners, regional bureau, Emergencies and Transition Service	Medium	Ongoing

#	Recommendation	Level/nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
6	WFP needs to strengthen partnership arrangements in several areas.	Operational	Country office	Headquarters divisions, regional bureau	High	January 2023
6.1	To address funding constraints going forward, the country office should engage with headquarters and the regional bureau on revising the fundraising strategy for South Sudan by proactively exploring and considering new funding streams such as climate funds and international financial institutions and defining a fundraising strategy for its resilience building activities.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau, Private Partnerships and Fundraising Division, Washington Office, Climate and Disaster Risk Reduction Programmes Unit	High	January 2023
6.2	In the light of the annual delays in the procurement of food supplies, the country office and regional bureau should proactively encourage headquarters to more flexibly support pre-financing of food procurement in order to bridge the gap between the confirmation of donor contributions and the deadlines for food procurement and delivery and enable effective pre-positioning of supplies in advance of flooding or rainy seasons.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau, Strategic Resource Allocation Committee, Supply Chain Operations Division	High	January 2023
6.3	Where possible, WFP should sign field-level agreements of three years duration with its cooperating partners and should advocate multi-year funding commitments. The annual funding commitments made by certain donors, and the two-year duration of most field-level agreements, affect the forward planning of WFP activities.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau, Private Partnerships and Fundraising Division	Medium	January 2023

#	Recommendation	Level/nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
6.4	While planning the next country strategic plan WFP should seek to broaden its engagement with South Sudanese stakeholders such as the Ministry of Peacebuilding with regard to peacebuilding interventions and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry for work on climate adaptation.	Operational	Country office	Government of South Sudan	High	November 2022

Introduction

1.1 EVALUATION FEATURES

1. In line with World Food Programme (WFP) policy on country strategic plans (CSPs) and WFP evaluation policy, the Office of Evaluation (OEV) has commissioned a country strategic plan evaluation (CSPE) of the WFP interim CSP (ICSP) in South Sudan.¹⁴ This evaluation is an opportunity for the WFP South Sudan country office to benefit from an independent assessment of its strategy and portfolio. The timing enables the country office to use CSPE evidence to inform the design of the new CSP for South Sudan.
2. The Terms of Reference for this evaluation are presented in Annex 1. The evaluation is designed to:
 - a. provide evaluation evidence and learning on WFP performance for country-level strategic decisions, specifically for developing the future engagement of WFP in South Sudan; and
 - b. provide accountability for results to WFP stakeholders.
3. The evaluation's temporal scope covers most of the lifetime of the ICSP (2018–2022) with the exception of the last year of implementation. It examines changes in the implementation of the strategy in an increasingly volatile and crisis prone context in South Sudan. The evaluation also assesses the building blocks of the strategy in terms of contextual drivers, strategic assessments and studies and analysis of existing data that informed the design of the ICSP in 2017 and its subsequent adaptations.
4. The evaluation covers all WFP activities in South Sudan from 1 January 2018 until December 2021. It also includes cross-cutting results, focusing particularly on gender and accountability to affected populations (AAP), reflecting WFP corporate and country-level commitment to a gender transformative approach and to improving its accountability to the people it serves.
5. The primary users of the evaluation are the WFP South Sudan Country Office, Regional Bureau in Nairobi, headquarters technical units, senior WFP management and the WFP Executive Board. Others include the Government of South Sudan, cooperating partners (CPs), civil society organizations, donors and the United Nations Country Team, who have been engaged throughout the evaluation.
6. The evaluation started at the end of July 2021 with a series of virtual inception briefings conducted with WFP staff and other stakeholders. Field data collection was carried out in South Sudan from 4 to 23 November, and several workshops were held in December 2021, February 2022 and April 2022. The detailed evaluation timeline is available in Annex 2.

1.2 CONTEXT

General overview

7. South Sudan is a land-locked country situated in north-eastern Africa, sharing borders with Sudan, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, Kenya, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Natural forest covers approximately one third of South Sudan¹⁵ (approximately 633,907 square kilometres¹⁶) and the country has one of the largest swamps in the world. South Sudan's ten states, special administrative area and other administrative areas (AAs) are divided into counties, *payams* and *bomas*. The number of states has varied during the lifespan of the ICSP. In October 2015, a presidential decree established 28 states; in January 2017, these were further subdivided to make 32 states. In February 2020 the country returned to the pre-October 2015 original configuration of ten states plus the special AA of Abyei, and two other AAs of Greater Pibor and Ruweng were added.

¹⁴ WFP ● 2016. Policy on Country Strategic Plans. Executive Board Second Regular Session. Rome ●

¹⁵ FAO. 2015. *Country Profile – South Sudan*. FAO AQUASTAT report. UNFPA World Population Dashboard.

¹⁶ Ibid.

8. In the 2021 Fragile State Index, South Sudan is ranked fourth out of 179 countries.¹⁷ This stems partly from the country's long history of armed conflict since the 1960s, mainly between Sudan's government in Khartoum and southern-based insurgencies. South Sudan gained independence from Sudan on 9 July 2011, as an outcome of a 2005 agreement ending Africa's longest-running civil war. Civil war broke out within South Sudan in 2013, continuing until 2018 with the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). However, violent conflicts both among and between communities have carried on, and armed political groups continue to fight the government,¹⁸ particularly the National Salvation Front/Army, which is concentrated in Central Equatoria State. In February 2020, South Sudan formed the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity provided for under the R-ARCSS, with the principal task of implementing the R-ARCSS fully to restore sustainable peace, security and stability in South Sudan.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the political context remains complex, in view of the interplay of ethnicity and local dynamics. There are some contested areas such as Abyei that complicate the ability of humanitarian and development actors to provide support.

9. The country's population of approximately 11.06 million is growing at an annual rate of 0.8 percent.²⁰ The majority of citizens (80 percent) live in rural areas, and the capital of Juba is the most populous city. As one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse countries in Africa, there are more than 60 major ethnic groups, the largest of which (Dinka and Nuer) constitute more than half the population.²¹

10. South Sudan ranks 185th out of 189 countries in the 2020 Human Development Index.²² According to the World Bank, about 82 percent of the population is living below the international poverty line at USD 1.90 per day.²³ With a Gini coefficient of 44.1 in 2016,²⁴ this indicates a high level of inequality.

11. The fertility rate is 4.5 births per woman, and the average life expectancy at birth is about 57.6 years for both sexes. Seventy-two percent of the population are under the age of 30²⁵ and children under 15 constitute the largest proportion of this figure. South Sudan thus has a very high dependency ratio of 83.7 percent overall, with youth dependency at 77.3 percent.²⁶

12. South Sudan's economy largely depends on oil exports, accounting for around 60 percent of gross domestic product and more than 95 percent of government revenues.²⁷ The service sector is concentrated in Juba and consists mainly of small-scale trade and local transport services.

13. Insecurity often disrupts businesses and trading, as do shortages of hard currency, overdependence on imports and high inflation rates.²⁸ Economic activity has slowed further due to COVID-19 restrictions, especially in the informal sector, where an estimated drop of 40 percent of employment has been reported.²⁹

14. The lack of economic opportunities poses significant risks to the country's security, with an increased likelihood of criminality.³⁰ Men often tend to leave the country in search of economic opportunities, and as

¹⁷ OECD. 2020. *States of Fragility 2020*. Paris.

¹⁸ Council on Foreign Relations. 2022. *Global Conflict Tracker*.

¹⁹ ACCORD. 2019. "Examining the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan in Context of the Sudanese Conflict Environment." *Conflict Trends* 2018/4.

²⁰ World Bank. Databank (accessed 15 December 2021).

²¹ Global Security.org. *South Sudan Tribes* (accessed 29 August 2021).

²² UNDP. 2020. Human Development Report: South Sudan.

²³ World Bank. 2022. Country Overview: South Sudan.

²⁴ World Bank. Databank (accessed 15 December 2021). 2016 is the most recent data available for South Sudan.

²⁵ UNOCHA. December 2018. South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan 2019.

²⁶ Ibid and Mayai, Augustino T. October 2020. South Sudan's Demography – Looking to 2050: Better Aid Forum Briefing Paper.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ United Nations South Sudan, 2020. *COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan*. Juba

³⁰ United Nations South Sudan. 2020. *COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan*. Juba, South Sudan.

a result of increasing economic deprivation are easily mobilized into armed groups or criminal enterprises.³¹ Over 84 percent of the working-age population works in unremunerated jobs.

15. From February 2013 to May 2016, the overall situation in South Sudan prompted the emergency relief coordinator to activate the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Level 3 emergency response. WFP continued to classify the situation as a Level 3 emergency until December 2021 owing to the magnitude and protracted nature of the crisis.

National policies and the SDGs

16. In 2017, building on the development of the South Sudan Development Plan (2011–2016), the Government identified its priority Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with its first priority being SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, followed by SDG 2 on zero hunger and SDG 5 on gender equality.

17. The National Development Strategy (NDS), originally covering the period 2018–2021 but being extended until 2024, specifies three main outcomes: the population should feel safe to go about its business; it should enjoy stable prices (food, currency and labour); and it should have access to basic services (health, education and rule of law).³²

18. Other important sector policies and strategies include: (i) the National Health Policy (2016–2026);³³ (ii) the 2019 National Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) Strategy;³⁴ (iii) the General Education Strategic Plan for South Sudan (2017–2022);³⁵ and (iv) the South Sudan National Action Plan 2015–2020 on the United Nations Security Resolution on Women, Peace and Security.³⁶

Food and nutrition security

19. South Sudan is witnessing catastrophic food insecurity, due to compounded shocks and asset depletion (especially livestock) as a result of the conflict, and persistent years of flooding which have led to damage to infrastructure, loss of crops and displacement of people. The country has been classified as a Level 3 emergency since December 2013 and the security situation is still very volatile. A weakened economy and high inflation rates (averaging 35 percent in financial year 2019/2020)³⁷ have impacted the affordability of food. By November 2021, nominal food prices remained at exceptionally high levels following the currency collapse of 2015, with prices of maize and sorghum around 50 times those in July 2015.³⁸ The COVID-19 lockdown has also disrupted the supply chains of both commercial goods and humanitarian assistance.³⁹

20. According to Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) projections, the number of people experiencing extreme food insecurity was expected to increase to 7.24 million people by 2021.⁴⁰ The nutritional situation remained critical between 2018 and 2021, with 57 counties projected to be IPC Acute

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ministry of Finance and Planning. September 2017. South Sudan Inaugural SDG Report: A Roadmap Towards Sustainable Development. Juba, South Sudan.

³³ Ministry of Health. 2016. *National Health Policy 2016–2026*. Juba, South Sudan.

³⁴ Ministry of General Education and Instructions and WFP. 2019. *National Home Grown School Feeding Strategy (NHGSF)*. Juba, South Sudan.

³⁵ Ministry of General Education and Instructions. 2017. *General Education Strategic Plan 2017–2022 South Sudan*. Juba, South Sudan.

³⁶ Republic of South Sudan. 2015. South Sudan National Action Plan 2015–2020 on UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Juba, South Sudan.

³⁷ WFP and UNDP. September 2021. Policy Brief: Analysis of the Implications of Foreign Exchange Reforms on Food Prices in South Sudan.

³⁸ FAO. 2021. Food Price Monitoring and Analysis: South Sudan. Overall inflation has averaged about 75 percent since Independence and changes in food prices have been somewhat lower.

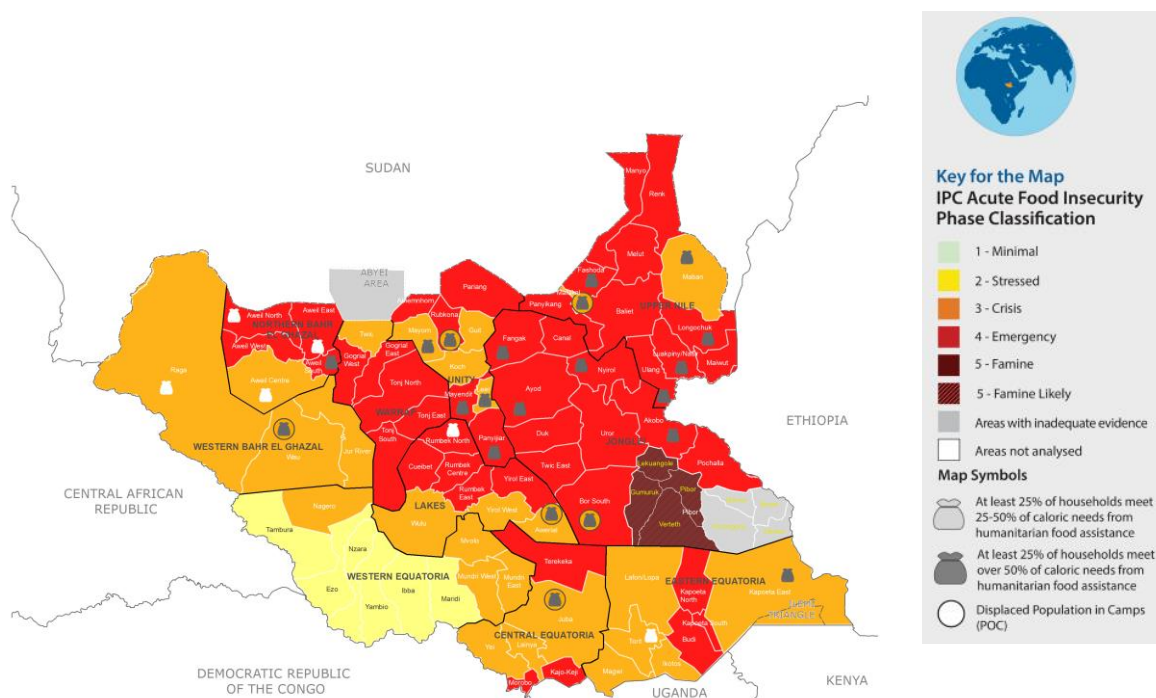
³⁹ Anei, Tong Deng and Paterno, Steve. September 2020. *Analysis on Humanitarian Situation in South Sudan Due to Conflict, Flood and Chronic Food Insecurity*. Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, Juba, South Sudan (unpublished).

⁴⁰ IPC. December 2020. South Sudan: IPC acute food insecurity and acute malnutrition analysis, October 2020–July 2021.

Malnutrition Phase 3 and above between April and July 2021.⁴¹ Around 1.4 million South Sudanese children under age 5 and another 483,000 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) were expected to be acutely malnourished in 2021.⁴² The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) reports that in 2021, 1.4 million children under age 5 were suffering from acute malnutrition, and 15.6 percent of children had chronic malnutrition (stunting).⁴³

21. Lack of access to basic services in South Sudan is a driver of the high levels of malnutrition. Malaria and acute watery diarrhoea are some of the lead causes of malnutrition in children. Years of conflict have resulted in displacement, increasing rates of food insecurity and limited access to quality basic health and nutrition services. Unhygienic environments due to poor access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) continue to impede efforts to reduce malnutrition. Adaptations to nutrition activities during COVID-19 have, however, resulted in a drop of admissions of children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM).⁴⁴

Figure 2: IPC projection acute food insecurity situation map, April-July 2021



Source: IPC. December 2020. South Sudan IPC acute food insecurity and acute malnutrition analysis, October 2020-July 2021 edited by WFP GIS.

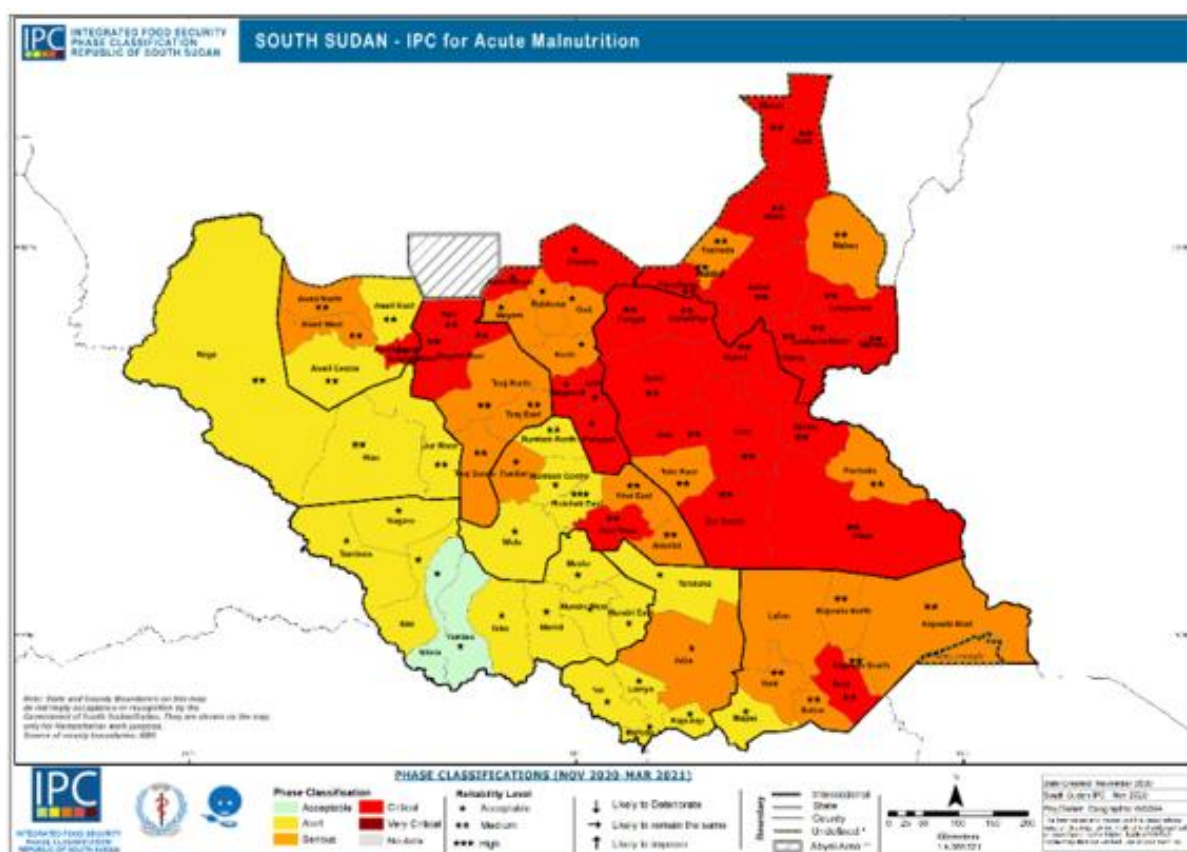
⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² OCHA. January 2021. Humanitarian Needs Overview South Sudan.

⁴³ UNICEF. 2021. Nutrition in South Sudan Briefing Note, July–September 2021.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Figure 3: IPC acute malnutrition situation map, November 2020–March 2021



Source: Ibid.

Agricultural productivity

22. Agriculture generates only 15 percent of gross domestic product, despite providing 80 percent of employment.⁴⁵ Only 4 percent of land is cultivated⁴⁶ due to poor farming practices, the maximum size of farms that can be cultivated by hand labour, lack of access to inputs and financial services, and the substantial pastoral population which uses land as pasturage rather than farmland; restrictions on mobility due to actual and potential conflict with other groups also limit land cultivation. There are high post-harvest losses due to poor infrastructure and lack of a vibrant private sector.⁴⁷

23. Between 2019 and 2020, food production was affected severely by environmental factors, such as extreme flooding and excessive rain in the growth season, and high humidity levels which increased pest numbers.⁴⁸ A third year of widespread flooding in 2021 was reported to have affected over 835,000 people and their livelihoods between May and December.⁴⁹ During the 2020 growing season, 68 percent of households cultivated sorghum, followed by maize (45 percent), groundnuts (39 percent), vegetables (21 percent) and sesame/simsim (16 percent), while other cereals were grown by a relatively small proportion of households.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ African Development Bank Group. 2021. South Sudan Economic Outlook.

⁴⁶ FAO. Country Profile – South Sudan. FAO AQUASTAT reports 2015. World Bank Group. 2013. South Sudan – Interim Strategy Note for FY2013–2014.

⁴⁷ United Nations South Sudan. 2020. *COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan*. Juba, South Sudan.

⁴⁸ ICRC. 2021. Post-Harvest Monitoring Report – High Risk of Food Insecurity.

⁴⁹ UNOCHA. 14 December 2021. South Sudan: Flooding Situation Report No.3. UNOCHA South Sudan on behalf of the Inter-Cluster Coordination group.

⁵⁰ WFP. July 2021. FSNMS Round 26 Food Security and Nutrition South Sudan.

Climate change vulnerability

24. South Sudan is extremely vulnerable to environmental shocks, and the impact of recent floods can be seen in the loss of agricultural yields, damage to infrastructure, limitations to access by road and displacement of communities. Locust invasions also affect South Sudan: according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), by 2020, over 2 million people in the country were expected to be under threat of locust swarm.⁵¹ Ranked as the eighth most affected country in the Global Climate Risk Index of 2021,⁵² South Sudan is also impacted by droughts which are common throughout the country. South Sudan has yet to ratify the Paris Agreement but submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution in 2015.⁵³

Migration, refugees and internally displaced persons

25. An estimated 1.3 million people (mainly women and children)⁵⁴ remain internally displaced in South Sudan due to protracted conflicts, droughts and floods, particularly in the Upper Nile, some areas of the Equatoria region and Jonglei and Central Equatoria. By June 2020, over 181,000 people were taking shelter in six United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) protection of civilians sites.⁵⁵ Since September 2020 UNMISS has, citing a reduction in political violence, gradually transitioned all but one PoC site to camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) under the jurisdiction of the Government of South Sudan.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, International Organization for Migration (IOM) data shows that the number of people displaced by conflict has increased progressively since the R-ARCSS was signed, with 114,521 people displaced by conflict in 2019, 144,947 in 2020 and 223,498 in 2021.⁵⁷ Over 2 million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries.⁵⁸ South Sudan also hosts 264,540 refugees mostly from Sudan and the DRC.⁵⁹

Humanitarian access and protection

26. Protracted conflict, the deterioration of basic infrastructure and the impassability of roads restrict humanitarian access in South Sudan. Other factors affecting access include sub-national violence, bureaucratic impediments, operational interference, violence against humanitarian personnel and, more recently, COVID-19 travel restrictions.⁶⁰

27. Of the estimated 8.3 million women, men, girls and boys in need of humanitarian assistance in 2021, 54 percent are children, 24 percent are women and 15 percent are disabled⁶¹ and these groups face multiple barriers in accessing their rights and needs due to an increase in protection risks.⁶²

28. As well as being more susceptible to diseases such as malaria, children experience constant displacement, school dropouts, harassment and trauma.⁶² Nearly all families apply customary laws to raise

⁵¹ FAO. 2020. *South Sudan Desert Locust Control Operations, Desert Locust Update*. South Sudan, Issue 8–27 May.

⁵² Germanwatch. 2021. *Global Climate Risk Index 2021*. Berlin.

⁵³ Government of South Sudan. Republic of South Sudan Intended Nationally Determined Contribution.

⁵⁴ UNHCR. 2022. Global Focus Reporting: South Sudan.

⁵⁵ UNMISS. 2020. Protection of Civilians (PoC) Sites Population Update, 12–18 June.

⁵⁶ UNMISS. September 2020. UN Protection of Civilian Sites Begin Transitioning to Conventional Displacement Camps.

⁵⁷ IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix.

⁵⁸ UNHCR. December 2021. Operations Data Portal: Refugees from South Sudan.

⁵⁹ UNHCR. 2022. Global Focus Reporting: South Sudan.

⁶⁰ OCHA. January 2021. Humanitarian Needs Overview South Sudan.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Anei, Tong Deng and Paterno, Steve. August 2021. A Gender Analysis on the Impact of Conflict: A Report for the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management in Collaboration with UN Women. Juba, South Sudan.

children, which often contravene both domestic law and the international United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.⁶³

Education

29. South Sudan's educational system has been devastated, and lacks adequate infrastructure, human resources and institutional capacity. The overall literacy rate in the country stands at only 34.53 percent, with the ratio for women significantly lower in comparison to men.⁶⁴

30. South Sudan has the highest proportion of out-of-school children in the world, with 2.8 million in 2020, predominantly in rural areas and mostly IDPs and returnees.⁶⁵ In 2015 (the most recent data available), the enrolment rate was 72.5 percent for primary school and only reached 11 percent for secondary school.⁶⁶

31. At 5.6 percent of the national budget between 2019 and 2020,⁶⁷ public investment in education remains one of the lowest rates in East Africa, falling short of both national and international targets, including the Incheon Declaration of 2015, which requires 20 percent of the national budget to be spent on education.⁶⁸

Gender

32. South Sudan is ranked at 163 out of 168 countries on the Women Peace and Security Index⁶⁹ and at 169 out of 188 countries in the UN Gender Development Index.⁷⁰ An estimated 28.9 percent of women are literate (in comparison to 40.3 percent of men),⁷¹ and have limited access to property ownership, financial opportunities or employment.⁶² Women contribute 60.2 percent of agricultural labour, but their access to productive assets is limited.

33. Some patriarchal customs prevail, including child, early and forced marriages and women are underrepresented in decision making in the customary law system of the country.⁷² As of November 2021, 32 percent of parliament seats were held by women.⁷³ Girls are at high risk of forced early marriages, early pregnancies and denial of education; 52 percent of girls are married before 18 years of age,⁷⁴ while the adolescent birth rate is 57 births per 1,000 women between the ages of 15 and 19.⁷⁵ High levels of sexual and gender-based violence (GBV) are expected to have worsened during COVID-19 as restrictions on movement have put vulnerable women and girls at greater risk.

⁶³ The Transitional Constitution of South Sudan, amended in 2020, the Child Act promulgated in 2008 and the ratified UN Convention on the Rights of the Child offer legal protection for children. UN Women. 2018. *Country Portfolio Evaluation, Final Evaluation Report: Volume 1, South Sudan Strategic Note 2014–2018*. Juba, South Sudan.

⁶⁴ World Bank. Databank (accessed 10 December 2022).

⁶⁵ UNICEF. 2019. *The State of the World's Children 2019: Children, Food and Nutrition: Growing Well in a Changing World*.

⁶⁶ World Bank. Databank (accessed 10 December 2022).

⁶⁷ Ministry of General Education and Instruction and UNICEF. January 2021. *Education Budget Brief South Sudan 2019–2020*.

⁶⁸ Ministry of Finance and Planning. 2019. *Education Budget Brief*. Juba, South Sudan.

⁶⁹ WFP. 2020. *South Sudan Annual Country Report*.

⁷⁰ UN Women. 2018. *Country Portfolio Evaluation, Final Evaluation Report: Volume 1, South Sudan Strategic Note 2014–2018*. Juba, South Sudan.

⁷¹ World Bank. Databank (accessed 10 December 2022).

⁷² World Bank. 2012. *Gender and Conflict Note: South Sudan*.

⁷³ IPU Parline. 2021. *South Sudan Transitional National Legislative Assembly Data*.

⁷⁴ WHO. *Global Health Observatory data repository* (accessed March 2022).

⁷⁵ World Bank. Databank (accessed 10 March 2022).

34. Women and girls lack access to services such as water, hygiene kits and sanitation, contraceptives, antenatal services and mental health support. Girls and women aged 15–49 are more likely to die during childbirth than finish primary school.⁷⁶

35. Education opportunities are restricted for girls: the out-of-school rate in 2019 for primary-aged boys was 57.6 percent and 67.3 percent for girls.⁷⁷ The level of school dropouts among girls tends to be higher as they progress through the education system, with 2019 data indicating only 4 percent of girls completing upper secondary education compared with 11.5 percent of boys. For primary education, the figures are 31.4 percent for boys and 18.3 percent for girls.⁷⁸

1.3 SUBJECT BEING EVALUATED

Strategic focus of the ICSP

36. The ICSP for South Sudan was developed to provide WFP with a medium-term strategy for responding to a multi-year acute crisis building on existing humanitarian-development synergies to address immediate needs and underlying constraints for effective crisis response. It represents a shift from a series of emergency operations to an ICSP with a longer cycle that was expected to facilitate a scale-up of resilience interventions that require longer-term planning and execution. The ICSP was intended to serve as a transitional bridge to a longer-term CSP for South Sudan.

37. The design of the ICSP was informed by earlier evaluations and studies⁷⁹ and it was based on “the most likely scenario” of increasing country-wide conflict spreading to new areas and groups, political instability, displacement and economic collapse leading to a worsening of livelihood opportunities. This assumption of a need for continuation of life-saving support was valid, with South Sudan remaining in a Level 3 emergency context before and throughout the lifetime of the ICSP.

38. The ICSP’s main focus is on addressing emergency response through the provision of life-saving assistance which is planned to be achieved through the own-delivery mechanisms of WFP and its CPs, while also implementing strategies for strengthening community empowerment and self-reliance.

39. The ICSP is framed around four strategic outcomes (SOs) which are expected to contribute to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 17 (on partnering to support other SDGs). These are:

- **SO1:** Food insecure people in crisis-affected areas have access to safe and nutritious food all year round.
- **SO2:** People at risk of malnutrition in crisis-affected areas, especially young children, PLW and people with disabilities, are able to meet their basic nutrition requirements all year round.
- **SO3:** Food insecure smallholders and communities in non-crisis areas have enhanced livelihoods and resilience to seasonal climate shocks throughout the year.
- **SO4:** The humanitarian community in South Sudan has access to reliable common services until satisfactory alternatives are available.

40. In order to understand the logic behind the design of the ICSP, and the chain of results anticipated to meet these objectives and thus contribute to the longer-term SDGs, the Evaluation Team reviewed key documentation and engaged in a participatory process with WFP during the inception phase of the evaluation. This culminated in the drafting of a theory of change, as depicted in Figure 3. This diagram articulates how the WFP portfolio can deliver the outputs necessary to achieve its intermediate and long-term goals.

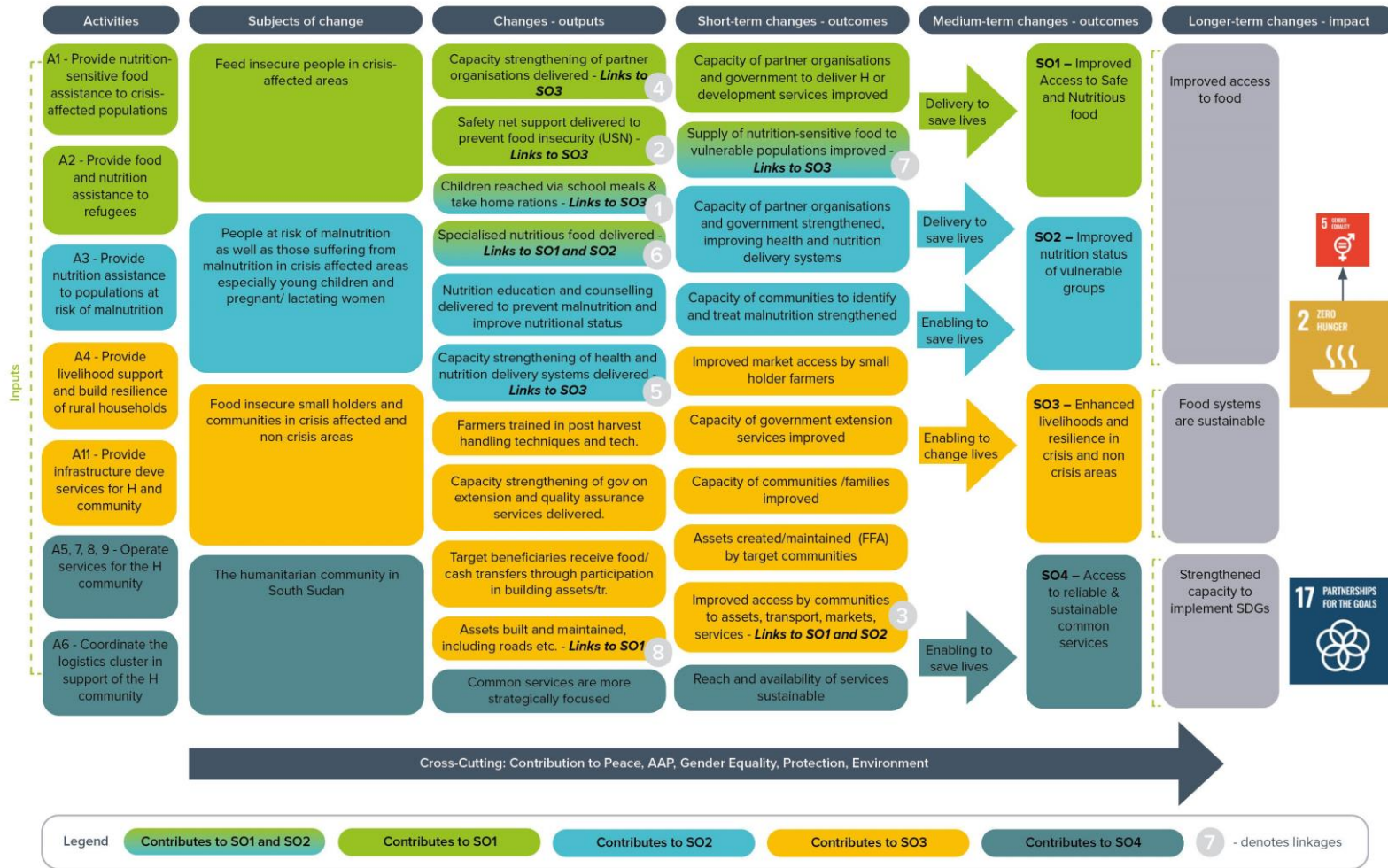
⁷⁶ Anei, Tong Deng and Paterno, Steve. August 2021 and World Bank. 2012. Gender and Conflict Note: South Sudan February 2012.

⁷⁷ UNICEF. 2022. UNICEF data warehouse (accessed 15 January 2022).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Country portfolio evaluation commissioned by OEV in 2017, the inter-agency humanitarian evaluation conducted in 2015, a country evaluation brief by NORAD, Substantive Dialogue on Reframing the Approach to Food Assistance in South Sudan (2015) and the South Sudan 2017 SDG report.

Figure 4: Theory of change reconstructed by the Evaluation Team



Source: Evaluation Team analysis.

41. The activities of the ICSP, as listed in Table 1, follow a dual-pronged approach, comprising food and nutrition assistance and unconditional transfers for crisis-affected populations and those at risk of malnutrition (aimed at “saving lives”); and resilience building through livelihood support and infrastructure development in more stable areas to address the root causes of food and nutrition insecurity and ensure flexible responses to the needs of the population (aimed at “changing lives”). Improving humanitarian access is also an objective of the ICSP, with six activities focused on provision of infrastructure and air services, digitalization of beneficiary registration and management systems, improving food pipeline management and incorporating emergency deployment.

Table 1: ICSP activities under each strategic outcome

Focus area	SO	Activity
Crisis response	SO1	01 Nutrition-sensitive food assistance
		02 Food and nutrition assistance to refugees
Crisis response	SO2	03 Nutrition assistance to those at risk of malnutrition
Resilience building	SO3	04 Livelihood and rural household resilience
		11 Infrastructure development <i>*[new activity included through BR06]</i>
Crisis response	SO4	05 Air services for humanitarian community
		06 Logistics cluster
		07 Supply chain provision <i>*[new activity included through BR02]</i>
		08 Security telecommunication services <i>*[new activity included through BR02]</i>
		09 Information management service SCOPE <i>*[new activity included through BR04]</i>
		10 IT (Humanitarian Internet Support Project) HISP <i>*[deactivated through BR06]</i>

Source: ICSP document.

42. Delivery of the ICSP requires WFP to strengthen its inter-agency approach to resilience building and to enhance its efficiency in working with partners in humanitarian coordination. It is envisaged that this way of working would enable functioning of the continuum of the humanitarian-development-peace (triple) nexus and better collaboration with stakeholders in South Sudan.

43. WFP activities have been designed to embed the principles of nutrition-sensitive programming and gender-transformative approaches, as well as address protection needs of people with disabilities, PLW and other at-risk individuals, with the aim of leaving no one behind. WFP aimed to be conflict sensitive across the design and implementation of the ICSP, as well as to make a contribution to peace in South Sudan.

44. Other cross-cutting objectives are included through targets which are integrated into the ICSP’s results framework. Sex-disaggregated data is collected on all person-related indicators, including those aimed at assessing AAP. Other indicators have been designed to assess directly the representation of women in decision-making entities, and screening of environmental risks and mitigation actions.

45. The South Sudan Country Office conducts regular process, post-distribution and outcome monitoring covering the different elements of the ICSP interventions; results are synthesized in annual country reports (ACRs). In addition, the country office conducts high quality, robust analytical work, including vulnerability analysis mapping (VAM) analysis, major annual and twice-yearly food security monitoring exercises such as the Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission and the Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System (FSNMS). These are the primary sources of food security information in the country (for resident populations and displaced people respectively). They are a key source for the IPC, and guide WFP geographic targeting. They are also complemented by more regular monthly market monitoring (covering food prices, wages, etc.).

Contextual factors and assumptions

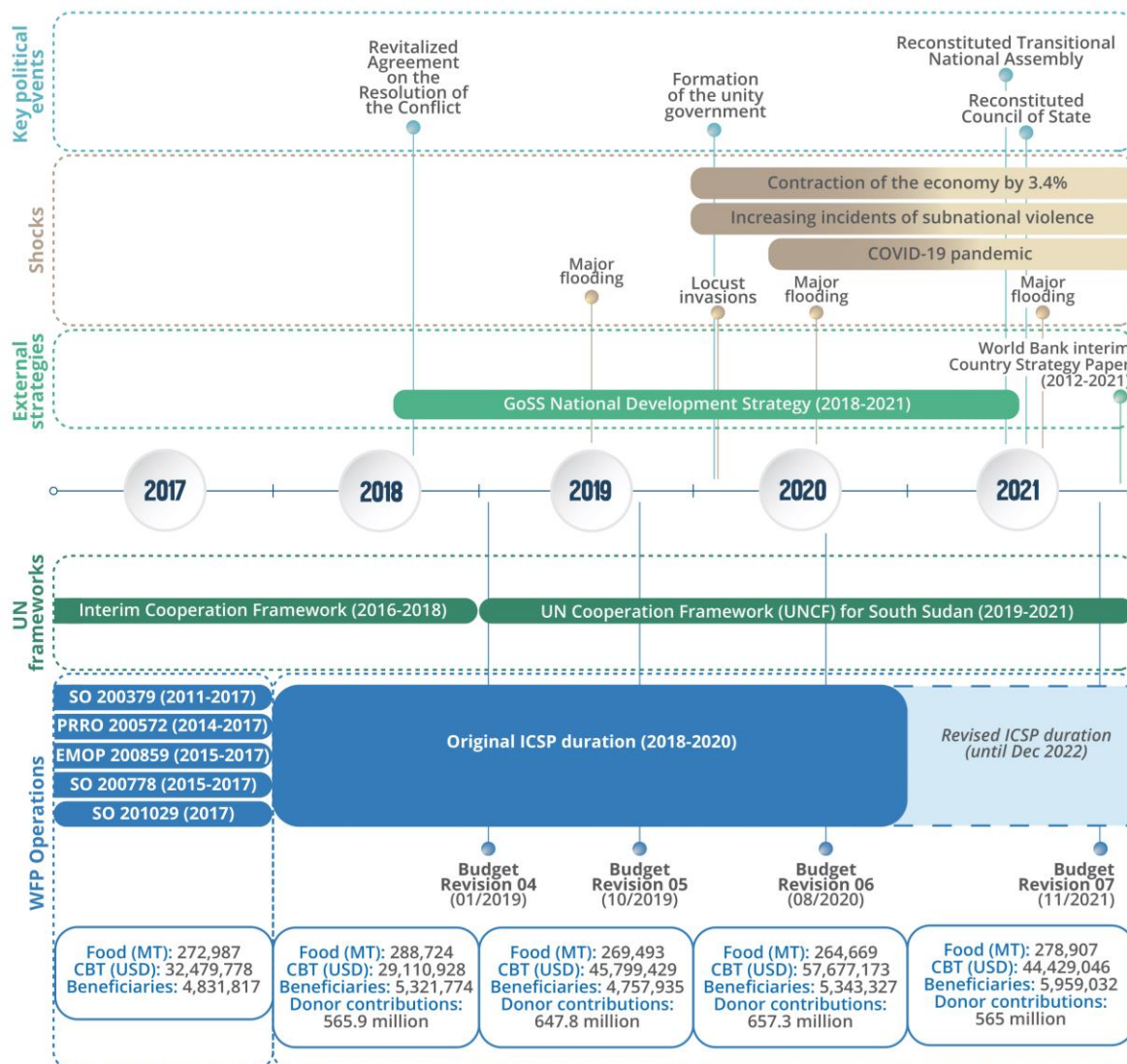
46. As depicted in Figure 5, there were some potentially positive contextual changes during the delivery of the ICSP, notably the signing of the (latest) truce in September 2018 and subsequent formation of a unity government in February 2020 providing hope for recovery and peacebuilding. Conflict events decreased significantly in 2019, allowing some refugees to return. At the same time, a resumption of production in oil fields previously shut down due to conflict raised hopes for an oil-led recovery. However, the country faces the risk of reversal of these gains, with increasing incidents of sub-national violence since 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating an already dire situation.⁸⁰ COVID-19 restrictions, a precipitous decline in global oil prices and the resurgence of violence in various parts of the country contributed to a contraction of the economy by an estimated 5.4 percent in financial year 2020/2021.⁸¹ It is estimated that the cost of the food basket rose by 62 percent in April 2021 (compared with April 2020),⁸² significantly increasing the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance.

⁸⁰ World Bank. 2022. Country Overview South Sudan (accessed 20 December 2021).

⁸¹ World Bank. 2022. *South Sudan Economic Monitor – Towards a Jobs Agenda*. Washington, D.C.

⁸² World Bank. 2021. *South Sudan Economic Update, June 2021: Pathways to Sustainable Food Security*. Washington, D.C.

Figure 5: Country context and WFP operational overview of South Sudan (2017–2021)



Sources: ET. Data for output MT and USD source: CM-R007 Annual Distribution (CSP) 2018–2020, and 2021 (extracted 31 March 2022). Beneficiaries: ACRs 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021. Donor contributions source: Country Portfolio Budget (CPB) South Sudan Annual Resource Situation Report (extracted 1 April 2022).

47. The reconstructed theory of change (ToC) in Figure 3 factors in the adaptations that were made over the course of the ICSP. A key change was the introduction of some resilience building work in areas identified as conflict “hot spots”, in recognition that SO3-type resilience activities are relevant and feasible beyond non-conflict areas.

48. In addition, the school feeding programme is now viewed as an SO1-type activity as well as SO3 (resilience activity) depending on the context. When implemented under SO3 it can be linked to support to smallholder farmers and turned into home-grown school feeding, with the food items sourced locally; under SO1, minimum requirements in terms of school facilities will be lowered. There are three different school feeding modalities: on-site, take-home rations (THRs) and boarding. These and other considerations highlighted during the development of the ToC are detailed in Annex 4.

49. As for any strategy, the successful delivery of the ICSP’s objectives depends on a number of assumptions. Portfolio-level assumptions are summarized in Table 2, and presented alongside an analysis of assumptions by strategic outcome in Annex 4.

Table 2: Portfolio-level assumptions

Theme	Portfolio-level assumptions
Government, governance and peacebuilding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with the Government to support delivery of ICSP objectives • WFP maintains its independence in the delivery of assistance
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political instability, conflict, pandemic (COVID-19) and climate events (floods and drought) do not lead to increased populations classified as IPC Phase 4 and 5 • Inflation and currency devaluation do not increase food insecurity and vulnerability • WFP is expected to respond to every shock, even after all the other stakeholders have left • Community's number one need is food
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNCT, Rome-based agencies and other international organizations work in a cooperative way to support constructive collaboration
Organization, management and human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CO management and ways of working reflect the ICSP priorities • CO has adequate institutional skills and staff to support timely planning and implementation of support • CO and partners are able to work in a flexible way to adapt support in accordance with changing context and needs
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding shortfalls and constraints to reallocation of funds, for example due to earmarking by donors, do not unduly limit WFP to deliver envisaged ICSP ambitions
Programming and operations related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CO and partners have the capacity to conduct gender and protection risk analysis and implement gender transformation programming • WFP and partners are able to adhere to humanitarian principles, and support across the programme is guided by AAP • Targeting criteria are comprehensive and communities identify accurately households that reflect WFP prioritization of the most vulnerable • Access challenges do not prevent food and cash transfers • Fraud and corruption do not result in exclusions of WFP targeted beneficiaries notably the most vulnerable • Operational shortfalls and pipeline breaks do not damage the reputation of WFP or its relationship with communities

CSP budget and funding

50. The ICSP budget increased from an original USD 3,182 million in 2018 to USD 5,043 million in 2021, as a result of a series of budget revisions (BRs). Seven BRs were undertaken during the implementation of the ICSP with the largest share of the budget required for crisis response interventions which are focused on food assistance to crisis-affected populations as well as assistance to refugees and provision of common services to the humanitarian community. BR06, approved in August 2020, extended the duration of the ICSP for one year until December 2021. BR07, approved in November 2021, extended the ICSP until December 2022 to align the start of the next CSP with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) in 2023.

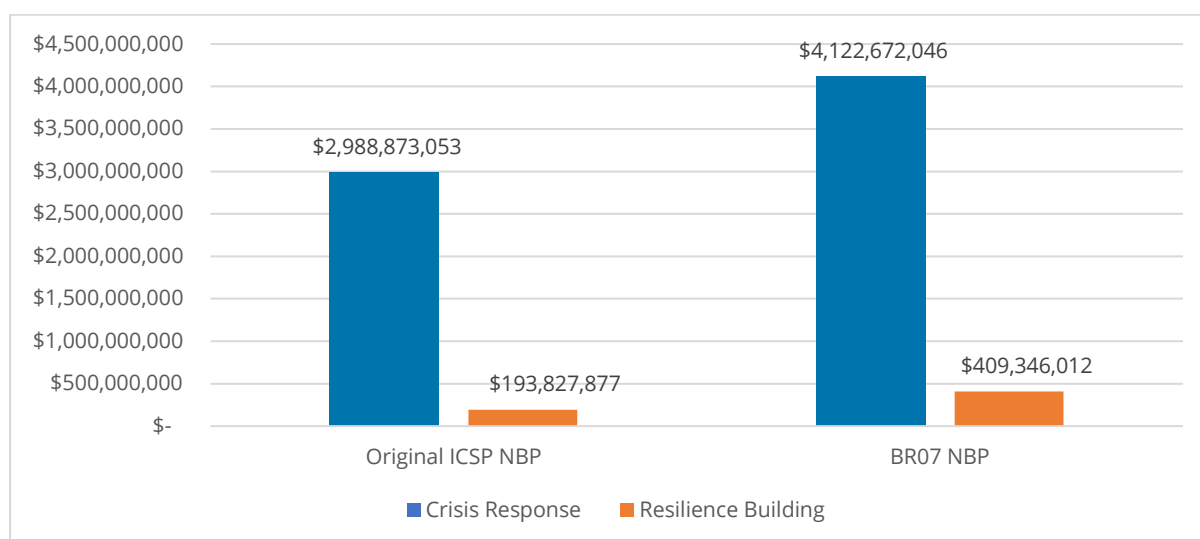
Table 3: Needs-based plan requirements until December 2021 and December 2022 and resources allocated to date

NBP	NBP requirements	Allocated resources (as of 31/12/2021)	Percentage funded	Expenditures (as of 31/12/2021)	Percentage of NBP implemented
NBP as per BR07 (to end 2021)	\$3,894,146,061	\$2,574,431,462	66%	\$2,322,102,724	60%
NBP as per BR07 (to end 2022)	\$5,043,601,104	\$2,574,431,462	51%	\$2,322,102,724	46%

NB: Allocated resources and expenditures are as of 31 December 2021 and NBP is as per BR07.

Sources: BR07 NBP and ACR1-A v33 as of 31 December 2021 (extracted 31 March 2022).

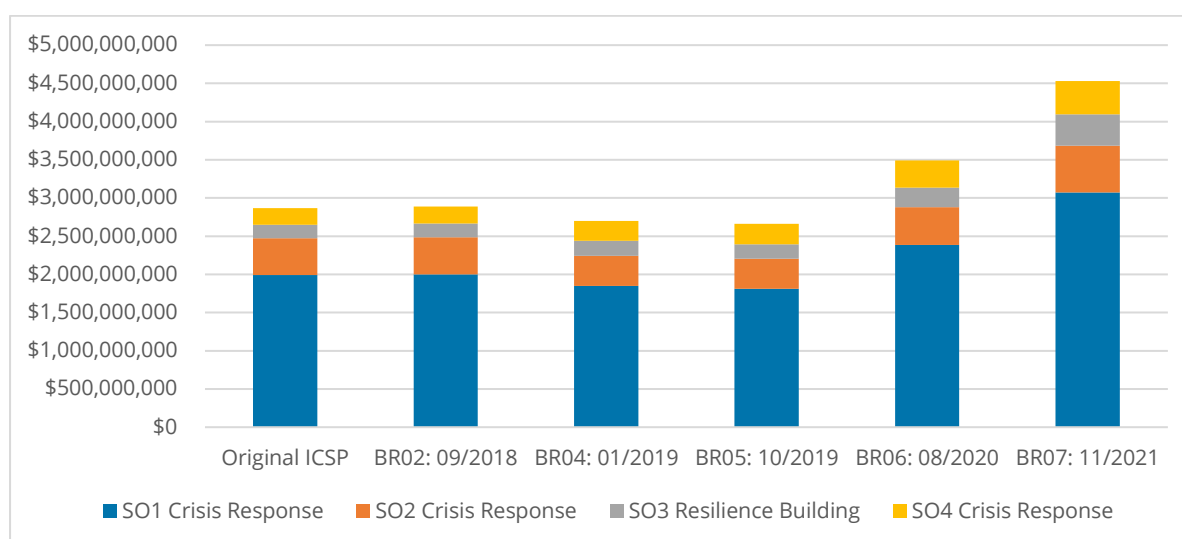
Figure 6: Needs-based plan by focus area (original ICSP and BR07)



NB: Indirect support cost (ISC) is excluded.

Source: ICSP, BR07 NBP.

Figure 7: ICSP budget revisions by focus area and strategic outcome (2018–2022)



NB: ISC is excluded.

Sources: ICSP (2018–2022) CPB; BR02, 04, 05, 06, 07.

51. As of 31 December 2021, the ICSP received USD 2.57 billion through donor contributions against a needs-based plan of USD 5.04 billion, bringing the overall funding level to 66 percent for the period 2018–2021 and 51 percent for the period 2018–2022, as shown in Table 3.⁸³ Funding shortfalls have forced WFP to reduce the size of rations. A substantial complicating factor in South Sudan has been the imperative of getting early contributions in order to procure and pre-position food commodities before the rainy season. Furthermore, a third issue on the resourcing trends is donor earmarking at activity level (81.3 percent),⁸⁴ which, when combined with negative impacts of a fluctuating currency, has created implementation challenges for WFP.

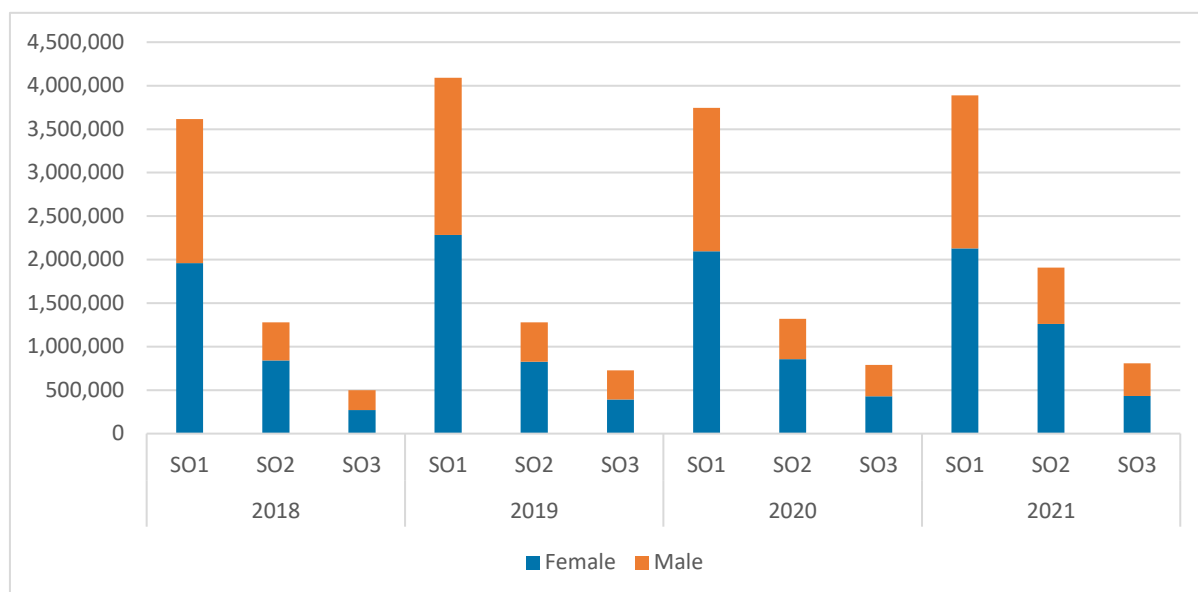
Beneficiary data

52. As summarized in Table 1, each SO is supported by a number of activities, the majority of which involve direct food and nutrition assistance to beneficiaries, while those in support of SO4 have indirect benefits, as they are aimed primarily at improving humanitarian access and coordination. Figure 8 presents the numbers of targeted beneficiaries by activity (except for those under SO4), disaggregated by sex. SO1 consistently aimed to reach the highest numbers of beneficiaries across SOs, accounting for between 59 and 67 percent of total planned beneficiaries between 2018 and 2021, while SO3 accounted for a share of between 9 and 12 percent. Each year WFP planned to reach a larger number of women than men, due to the higher prevalence of households headed by women in displaced populations, and nutrition activities that target adult women.

⁸³Evaluation Team analysis using ACR1-A- v33 (extracted 31 March 2022).

⁸⁴ Figures are calculated based on CSP contribution earmarking levels in contribution years 2018–2022; data from FACTORY (Distribution Contribution and Forecast Stats extracted 27 March 2022).

Figure 8: Planned number of beneficiaries by year, SO and sex (2018–2021)



Source: CM-R020 (extracted 31 March 2022) for 2018–2021. There is a possibility of overlap between the number of beneficiaries between activity tags.

1.4 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY, LIMITATIONS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

53. The temporal scope of the evaluation covers most of the ICSP implementation from January 2018 to December 2021.

54. The specific evaluation questions (EQs) are common for all CSPs and broadly cover: relevance (EQ1); effectiveness/sustainability (EQ2); efficiency (EQ3); and factors explaining WFP performance and the extent to which WFP has made the expected strategic shifts (EQ4). The four EQs and related sub-questions are expanded into lines of enquiry and indicators (with associated data sources and analysis methods) in the evaluation matrix (see Annex 5), which provides a structured framework for the data collection process.

55. The evaluation uses the standard United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee evaluation criteria⁸⁵ of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability, as well as connectedness and coverage. In addition, the evaluation integrates the analysis of cross-cutting issues which are embedded within the EQs, particularly in EQ2.2. In answering the EQs, the evaluation adopts a theory-based approach which has utilized a reconstructed ToC to articulate the elements of the ICSP's chain of logic. The ToC takes into account the assumptions and external contextual factors that are likely to have influenced the progression of the ICSP's trajectory from inputs through to impact, and builds these into the hypotheses that have been developed and tested using the evidence gathered by the evaluation.

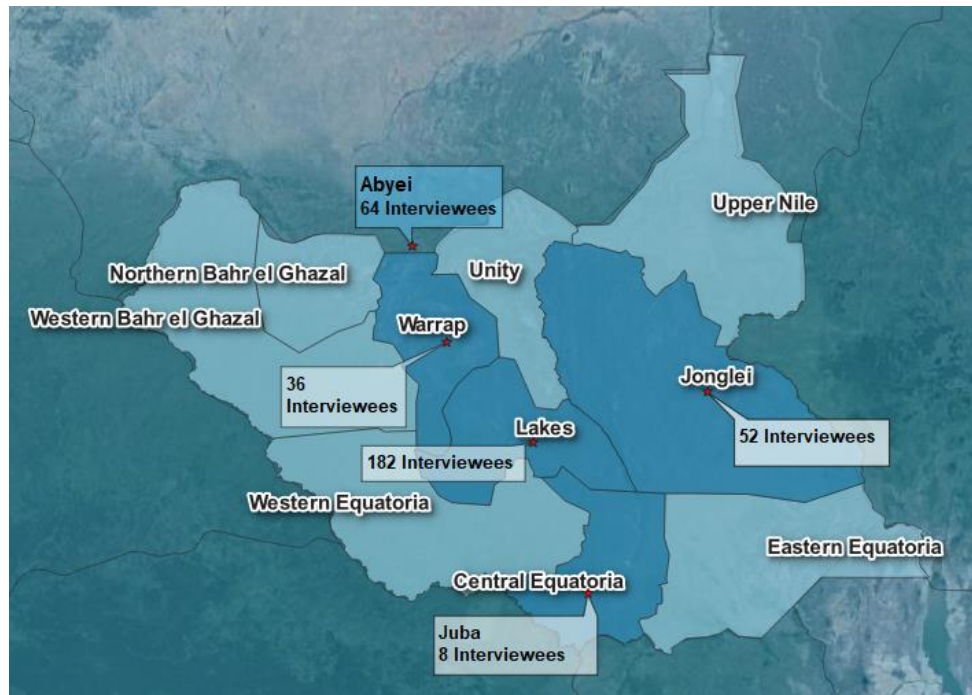
56. Evidence was drawn from both quantitative and qualitative data sources, collected using mixed methods ranging from document review and analysis of secondary results data to primary data collection through key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). These were sampled according to criteria defined in the inception phase. In total, 419 key informants including 202 beneficiaries were consulted by the Evaluation Team. Of all key informants, 55 percent were male and 45 percent female.

57. In response to the COVID-19 travel restrictions in place in November 2021, primary data collection was conducted through a hybrid approach. This consisted of a three-week field mission during which face-to-face KIIs and FGDs in South Sudan were conducted by a national team, with support from one senior, international evaluator. The field visits to the states of Jonglei, Warrap and Lakes, and the special AA of Abyei gave the Evaluation Team the opportunity to evaluate a diverse range of WFP activities and to meet

⁸⁵ OECD. 2019. Better Criteria for Better Evaluation: Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use. Paris.

with different target beneficiary groups, CPs, project management committees (PMCs), field office (FO) staff, academia, local teachers and local government representatives. See Figure 9 for the geographic distribution of field interviews conducted. In parallel, remote interviews were carried out with country office, Regional Bureau Nairobi, headquarters and WFP senior management, donors and CP headquarter staff and national-level government representatives.

Figure 9: Map of number of in-person interviewees reached by the Evaluation Team during November 2021 field mission



Source: Evaluation Team. Map uses openAFRICA Centre for Humanitarian data.

58. An e-survey was also carried out with WFP FO and CP staff, which received 41 (100 percent response rate) and 86 responses (39 percent response rate) respectively. A detailed description of the field phase is provided in Annex 6 and the data collection tools in Annex 7.

59. Due consideration was paid to AAP in the design of data collection. To seek further the perspectives of a large number of beneficiaries and to triangulate findings from Evaluation Team consultation with them, the Evaluation Team formulated additional questions which the country office embedded its post-distribution monitoring (PDM) survey of 2,605 households undertaken in October 2021. Of the respondents to the PDM survey, 85 percent were female and 15 percent male. A detailed description of the specific methods and data sources used are provided in Annex 6.

60. While travel restrictions limited the international team's ability to observe first hand and engage directly with respondents in South Sudan, this was mitigated through the hybrid approach described above. The fielding of national consultants in South Sudan had additional benefits in terms of increasing the cultural acceptability of the Evaluation Team and reducing risks associated with ethnic tensions.

61. Other limitations faced by the CSPE included lack of availability of data for some indicators, resulting in some evidence gaps, notably in the assessment of effectiveness (under EQ2). To mitigate this, the Evaluation Team addressed these data gaps by supplementing the available quantitative data with qualitative data gathered through KIIs, beneficiary feedback, e-surveys and inclusion of additional questions in the PDM exercise carried out by the country office in October 2021. Secondly, security challenges limited the conduct of interviews in relation to the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA)/Jonglei community violence reduction (CVR) programme. The Evaluation Team supplemented the evidence base by reviewing additional documentation on the programme made available by the country office.

62. The evaluation was designed to ensure adherence to 2020 UNEG ethical guidelines.⁸⁶ Throughout the evaluation, and particularly during the field mission, the Evaluation Team applied ethical guidelines through a series of evaluation protocols. These include ensuring that KII and FGD respondents were provided with information on the purpose of the evaluation; that personal data was protected and anonymized during analysis and reporting; and respecting health, safety and well-being guidelines during consultations.

63. Following data collection, the KII and FGD transcripts were translated, coded and analysed according to each EQ and sub-question. During the synthesis of the data, the Evaluation Team engaged in a review and joint analysis of each other's findings in order to scrutinize the evidence and conduct additional triangulation where required. The preliminary findings debriefing, held remotely after the completion of the field mission, also provided a further opportunity for testing and looking at early findings. Two internal and external stakeholder workshops were held in February and April 2022 to refine the evaluation recommendations further.

64. The evaluation also assessed the progress made towards gender equality and women's empowerment through the ICSP, and reviewed the extent to which interventions appropriately analysed and integrated a contextual assessment of gender inequalities. The evaluation was designed in line with the UNEG guidelines on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation.⁸⁷ Gender considerations were mainstreamed throughout the evaluation matrix, embedding gender-related questions into lines of enquiry. Data collection tools and analysis were designed to be gender sensitive. Where feasible, the evaluation systematically reflects gender in findings, conclusions and recommendations.

⁸⁶ UNEG. 2020. *UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation 2020*. New York.

⁸⁷ UNEG. 2014. *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation – Towards UNEG Guidance*. New York.

2 Evaluation findings

2.1 EQ1: TO WHAT EXTENT IS WFP'S STRATEGIC POSITION, ROLE AND SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTION BASED ON COUNTRY PRIORITIES AND PEOPLE'S NEEDS AS WELL AS WFP'S STRENGTHS?

1.1 To what extent is the CSP relevant to national policies, plans, strategies and goals, including achievement of the national SDGs?

Finding 1: The ICSP was aligned to government policies and plans, with additional ones developed over its lifespan, some with WFP support. Shortcomings in engagement with government stakeholders resulted in WFP opting for an ICSP rather than a CSP

65. During the design of the ICSP⁸⁸ in 2017, the South Sudan Development Plan (SSDP)⁸⁹ was the Government's main development policy document. WFP participated in the development of the new National Development Strategy (NDS),⁹⁰ which was launched by the Ministry for Finance and Economic Planning in 2018 and superseded the SSDP. The NDS was the relevant national development policy document for alignment of the ICSP. However, at the time of the ICSP design, it was not possible to conduct a full strategic review of government priorities for achieving the SDGs due to the ongoing conflict and instability, which led WFP to opt for an ICSP rather than a CSP⁹¹ due to the shortcomings in engagement with government stakeholders in the design process.

66. The ICSP relates in particular to the Government's food security, nutrition and resilience priorities. The NDS has three main outcomes: the population should feel safe to go about its business; it should enjoy stable prices (food currency and labour); and it should have access to basic services (health, education, rule of law). The ICSP was also aligned with the Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, which guided the activities of the transitional government of national unity during the transitional period.

67. Since the launch of the NDS, the development context has changed significantly with a new peace agreement, a National Dialogue and a global pandemic, which has further impacted the state of the national economy.⁹² Even if the NDS has been relevant as an overarching national framework, these contextual shifts have affected its value during the closing phases of the ICSP.⁹³

68. The ICSP was aligned with various sectoral policies developed by the Government prior to 2018. Examples include the Comprehensive Agriculture Development Master Plan (2014–2040) and Irrigation Development Master Plan, priorities of the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, National Health Policy (2016–2025), General Education Strategic Plan for South Sudan 2017–2022 and South Sudan National Action Plan 2015–2020 on United Nations Security Resolution on Women, Peace and Security. WFP supported the development of the 2019 National Home Grown School Feeding Strategy (HGFS), through technical and financial support that has created a platform for the scale-up of HGFS in 2020.⁹⁴ Some country office staff noted that some policy frameworks lack a clear reference to national priorities, but WFP has kept abreast of emerging national interests through contact with relevant sectoral line ministries. Some policies and plans are yet to be approved by the Government, for example the unified policy on vocational education and training and the draft national nutrition policy.

⁸⁸ WFP. 2017. South Sudan Interim Country Strategic Plan (2018–2020).

⁸⁹ Government of South Sudan. South Sudan Development Plan 2011–2016.

⁹⁰ Government of South Sudan. 2018. National Development Strategy 2018–2021, Consolidate Peace and Stabilise the Economy. Juba, South Sudan.

⁹¹ WFP. ICSP Evaluation Terms of Reference.

⁹² UNDP. March 2021. People, Opportunities, Choice: South Sudan's National Development Strategy Looking Forward.

⁹³ KII UN agencies.

⁹⁴ Ministry of Education and General Instruction. November 2019. National Home Grown School Feeding Strategy.

Finding 2: The ICSP’s strategic outcomes were relevant to the needs of people with a greater emphasis put on life-saving interventions given the scale of the humanitarian crisis

69. South Sudan has been classified by WFP as a Level 3 corporate emergency – most severe - since 2013, that is, before and during ICSP delivery. At the time of the ICSP design in 2017, famine was declared in two counties in South Sudan and chronic and severe food insecurity was estimated to affect some 6 million people. There were chronic malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies among nutritionally vulnerable groups. Overall, there were over 3.5 million people (30 percent of the population) in crisis or emergency food insecurity phases (IPC Phases 3 and 4) as of May 2014⁹⁵ with this figure doubling to a projected 7.2 million in 2021.⁹⁶ This context provided a strong rationale for inclusion of SO1 and SO2 in the ICSP, given their focus on saving the lives of the food insecure and those at risk of malnutrition in crisis-affected areas. The rationale for SO4 was also clear given the severe infrastructure gaps in South Sudan and the need for the provision of common transportation and logistics services to enable delivery of life-saving and life-changing assistance. Given the frequency of seasonal climate shocks, particularly flooding in 2019 and 2020, the inclusion of SO3 focusing on changing lives by improving the resilience of food insecure households was also appropriate.

70. The balance of the ICSP between life-saving emergency response and life-changing resilience building interventions was rated by stakeholders interviewed as appropriate, in view of the scale of the humanitarian crisis and the context of protracted and frequent shocks, including COVID-19. The latter hampered a significant alteration to the proportion of support allocated to the emergency response, over the lifetime of the ICSP, which remained as in the original ICSP’s design, overwhelmingly the main focus of WFP intervention in South Sudan. As a result, the focus of the ICSP was on arresting declines in the food security and nutrition status of affected communities, rather than on addressing the root causes of food insecurity.

Finding 3: There has been a shift in thinking over the life of the ICSP, with a move from reacting to/responding to crises to a more forward-looking approach reflecting government interest in a more resilience-focused approach

71. WFP has provided support to the vulnerable population of South Sudan since 1965, predominantly through food assistance which remains a priority in addressing high levels of food insecurity. Many interviewees recognized that WFP had lived up to its mandate by providing humanitarian assistance that responded both to the scale of needs and to the protracted nature of the crises in South Sudan.

72. Over the lifetime of the ICSP, the Government recognized potential donor fatigue in providing humanitarian support over the long term, as well as the need to develop a forward path beyond emergency support. As a result, in recent years, the Government has expressed interest in transitioning to more resilience building work, which is seen by national stakeholders as the long-term objective for sustainable human development.

73. While the ICSP had the ambition to increase commitment to capacity strengthening and policy coordination with the Government, lack of financial resources for service delivery and the weak capacity at national, state and local levels constrained the extent to which it could deliver on this. There was no evidence available to demonstrate that at the time of the ICSP design a capacity gap assessment was conducted. However, WFP has worked with the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission and the Ministry for Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management since 2013 to establish an early warning system and to strengthen institutions in disaster risk management and preparedness. Moreover, since 2018 WFP has worked with both the Commission and the Ministry to implement a project focused on capacity augmentation in these areas.

Finding 4: The ICSP has served as a useful framework for WFP engagement in South Sudan, but being a transitional document, it lacked a long-term approach to addressing the root causes of hunger

74. The ICSP was part of the first generation of ICSPs and was rated by stakeholders as a useful document, comprehensively capturing the WFP engagement in South Sudan. However, as a transitional/bridging

⁹⁵ IPC. South Sudan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation May 2014 and Projection for June–August 2014.

⁹⁶ IPC. December 2020. South Sudan IPC acute food insecurity and acute malnutrition analysis, October 2020–July 2021.

document by design it lacked a long-term vision in terms of addressing the root causes of hunger. This shortcoming could have been addressed by developing a theory of change with a longer time horizon at the ICSP design stage, as is increasingly used by WFP in its strategic planning exercises.

1.2 To what extent did the ICSP plan address the needs of the most vulnerable people in the country to ensure no one is left behind?

Finding 5: ICSP design appropriately considered target groups for each of its four strategic outcomes

75. The ICSP identified the target groups for each of its four SOs. For three of the SOs there was an emphasis on the food insecure, with a focus on crisis-affected areas in the case of SO1 and SO2. There was a strong emphasis in SO1 and SO2 on targeting food insecure or malnourished children (in particular those aged 6–59 months), PLW, refugees and vulnerable primary schoolchildren. There was an additional targeting emphasis on HIV, tuberculosis (TB) and kala-azar patients for both these SOs. A household and community focus was in evidence in the targeting of SO3 support with communities and food insecure smallholders the focus of support. Since the needs of the target populations were greater than the resources available, WFP had to engage in additional targeting and (re)prioritization exercises over and above the broad categories of the target groups specified in the ICSP. The target group for SO4 (access to common services) was the humanitarian community, which was also appropriate.

Finding 6: WFP South Sudan’s targeting strategy was based on needs-based planning exercises, with priority given to the most vulnerable based on the principle of reaching “those furthest behind”

76. WFP South Sudan followed WFP corporate targeting and prioritization guidance,⁹⁷ which advocates for the use of an essential needs approach based on three modules – essential needs assessments, minimum expenditure baskets and supply analysis. The guidance also requires prioritization of the most vulnerable, monitoring of assisted and non-assisted populations over time and regular revision of implementation plans in the light of funding changes and subsequent review of prioritization decisions. Using VAM analysis, the country office sought to target the most vulnerable people based on the prescribed approach.⁹⁸ Seven BRs were approved to support reprioritization of support to target groups and areas of intervention. Rapid monitoring teams were dispatched to inform about needs arising from new shocks or emergencies.

77. WFP actively supported various food and nutrition studies including the inter-agency FSNMS and the IPC reports.⁹⁹ In addition, WFP engaged in an extensive range of assessment exercises, including assessments for crop and food security (with FAO), emergency food security, rapid needs, market, cash and voucher feasibility and logistics capacity. While stakeholders recognized that further analysis would improve targeting, such evidence gathering is particularly challenging in South Sudan due to the volatility of the environment.

78. As prescribed in the targeting and prioritization guidance, IPC classifications were a central driver of the geographical targeting decisions of WFP throughout ICSP delivery with an emphasis on supporting populations in IPC Phase 3 or above, due to the urgency of their needs for life-saving humanitarian assistance. Over the life of the ICSP, IPC classification processes became increasingly more contentious, due to the challenges of reaching technical consensus between stakeholders on the classification of most food insecure affected areas. Despite the valiant efforts to address the needs of the most vulnerable, targeting remained a significant and persistent challenge due to the scale of need and resource shortfalls.

79. Some 87 percent of FO staff considered that the design and selection of activities was “strongly informed” by evidence and analysis of the most vulnerable populations’ needs.¹⁰⁰

Finding 7: WFP made substantial efforts to reach the most vulnerable and ICSP design placed an emphasis on addressing the needs of vulnerable women and girls

80. Throughout delivery of the ICSP, WFP provided support to vulnerable people in all ten States of South Sudan. Interviewees unanimously acknowledged the substantial efforts of WFP in targeting and delivering

⁹⁷ WFP. January 2021. Targeting and Prioritization Operational Guidance Note.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ WFP. 2019. South Sudan ACR. No Zero Hunger joint assessments have been prepared for South Sudan.

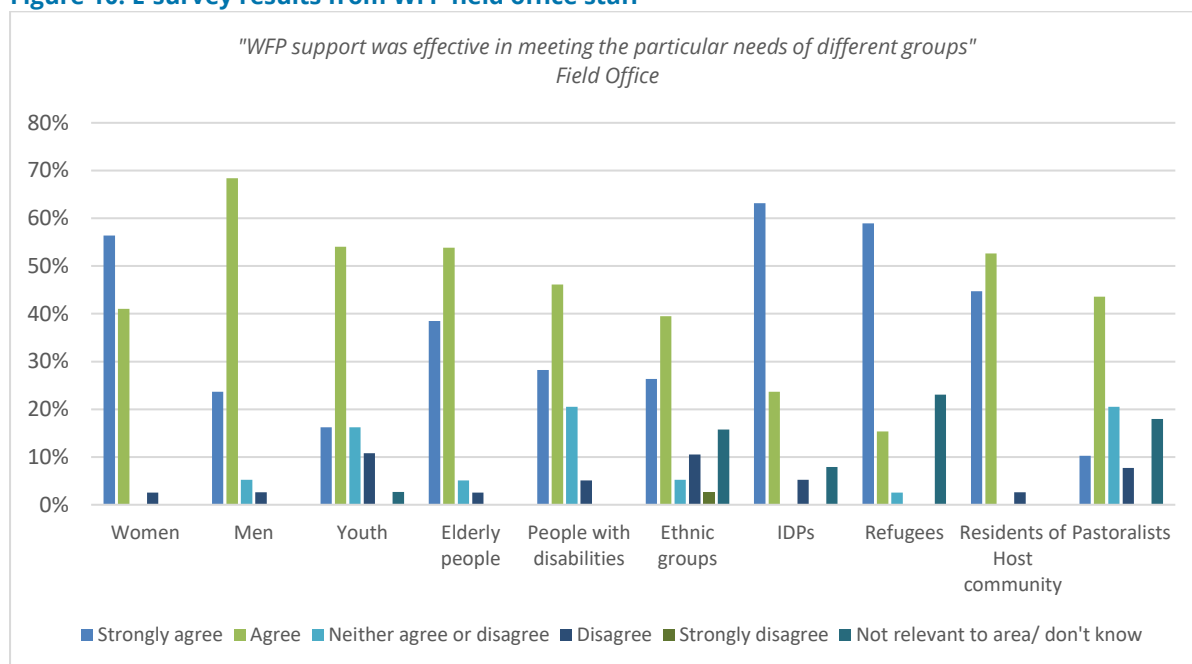
¹⁰⁰ E-survey FO staff. 2021.

assistance to the most vulnerable in hard-to-reach locations, highlighting the specialized access team, vulnerability assessment missions, door-to-door assessments and logistical planning which helped to identify the most vulnerable and reach those in most need.¹⁰¹ Some shortcomings in accessing certain vulnerable groups (who are targeted due to their vulnerability) due to delivery challenges are noted in Finding 8 below.

81. The SCOPE platform was designed to improve the accuracy and efficiency of beneficiary registration,¹⁰² although the paper-based system had to be reintroduced temporarily to address technical issues.¹⁰³ Beneficiaries reported that the registration and verification processes were time consuming.

82. All surveyed WFP FO staff and 98 percent of CP staff agreed that WFP focuses on the needs of vulnerable people and, as shown in Figure 10, WFP was regarded by more than 97 percent of FO staff to be effective in meeting the needs of women.

Figure 10: E-survey results from WFP field office staff



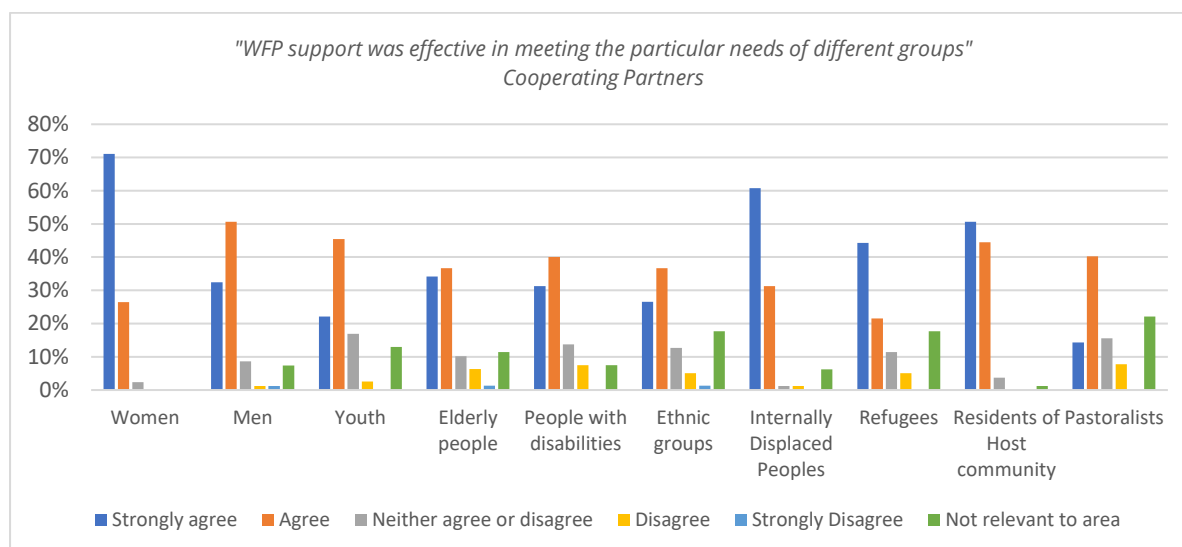
Source: Evaluation Team E-survey.

¹⁰¹ WFP. 2018. South Sudan ACR.

¹⁰² WFP. 2019. South Sudan ACR.

¹⁰³ FCDO. 2019. BRACE II Annual Review. KIIs CPs. Evidence and Learning Facility for South Sudan (ELFSS), May 2020. Synthesis Study WFP on Determining Needs and Beneficiary Targeting.

Figure 11: E-survey results from cooperating partner staff



Source: Evaluation Team E-survey.

83. On the suitability of WFP assistance to the needs of women, 75 percent of beneficiaries interviewed¹⁰⁴ ranked that the support was “good” or “very good”. For female-only responses, 69 percent ranked this as “good” or “very good”, compared with 88 percent of men. No beneficiaries interviewed ranked the suitability of assistance for the needs of women as “bad” or “very bad”. However, there was a higher frequency of women who did not know or did not answer this question (28 percent). Explanations given for the positive and neutral responses included that it was mostly women who collected the assistance, and that this was appropriate as they were best placed to spend it well and to use food efficiently to provide for their households. Responses also frequently cited that assistance given to women had helped to reduce conflict within households, and that women acquired skills and knowledge through WFP training which empowered them to contribute to community meetings and decision-making processes.

84. WFP has also delivered capacity strengthening activities to CPs and government representatives, with the long-term aim of strengthening gender equality and the empowerment of women.¹⁰⁵

85. While nutritional programmes targeted adult women, other programmes such as general food distributions (GFD) and food assistance for assets (FFA) placed an equal emphasis on addressing the needs of vulnerable men, women, girls and boys. Since female heads of household are overrepresented in displaced households, they tended to be the largest group benefiting from GFD. This may explain why some male beneficiaries felt that their food and nutrition needs were not addressed to the same extent as women.

Finding 8: Due to delivery challenges some vulnerable groups may have been underserved by the ICSP, notably pastoralists, older persons and those with disabilities although these groups are included in targeting criteria which is vulnerability based. WFP acknowledges the need to continue to improve the delivery of assistance to reach these groups

86. While 87 percent of WFP FO e-survey respondents and 92 percent of CP respondents found that the needs of IDPs had been met, third party monitors for the Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience in South Sudan (HARISS) programme¹⁰⁶ funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) reported exclusions of some groups (particularly IDPs) and pastoralists.

¹⁰⁴ A total of 202 beneficiaries were consulted through interviews and FGDs; 116 responses were recorded as individual responses and aggregated: 74 percent were female, 22 percent male and for 4 percent sex was not recorded.

¹⁰⁵ WFP. 2019. South Sudan ACR.

¹⁰⁶ Evidence and Learning Facility for South Sudan (ELFSS), May 2020. Synthesis Study WFP on Determining Needs and Beneficiary Targeting.

87. Overall, both WFP FO and CP staff consulted through the e-survey were less favourable on the extent to which the particular needs of other vulnerable groups were met by WFP support. For pastoralists, 54 percent of FO and 55 percent of CP staff agreed this group's needs had been met. CPs noted that pastoralism needs to be better integrated into the WFP response plans in recognition of the diverse needs within cattle camps, the mobility of beneficiaries and its potential benefits in terms of resilience. Nonetheless it is worth noting that the country office has had specific FFA activities targeting pastoralist communities since 2019 and is expanding its support to this group in areas like Rumbeer East, Awerial, Kapoeta North and Terekeka. To support its 2020 FFA expansion strategy, WFP drafted operational guidelines for the implementation of pastoral FFA in cattle camps.

88. For the particular needs of ethnic groups, 66 percent of FO and 63 percent of CP staff agreed these were met. For youth, 70 percent of FO staff and 68 percent of CP staff agreed this group's needs were met. For people with disabilities, 74 percent of FO staff and 71 percent of CP staff agreed this group's needs were met. Similarly, beneficiary feedback was favourable on the suitability of WFP assistance to people with disabilities and older people. Of the respondents, 78 percent reported it was suitable to address the needs of people with disabilities and 80 percent said so regarding older people (see Annex 10 for more analysis).

89. While people with disabilities are targeted there are access challenges. WFP also has a programme that focuses on the nutrition needs of older persons. Moreover, towards the end of the ICSP implementation, WFP sought to adapt activity design to allow greater coverage of older persons and those with disabilities. BR07 aims to strengthen disability focused programming and mainstreaming across WFP activities in the last year of ICSP delivery.¹⁰⁷

90. The ICSP also made provision to support the needs of people living with HIV, TB and kala-azar to improve their nutritional status and adherence to treatment.¹⁰⁸ The Urban Safety Nets programme also had a particular focus on youth and included a vocational training component.

1.3 To what extent has WFP's strategic positioning remained relevant throughout the ICSP implementation (changing context, national capacities and needs in South Sudan, response to COVID-19)?

Finding 9: The ICSP's four strategic outcomes remained relevant, although protracted crises and funding constraints affected the programme's ability to focus on longer-term needs

91. Studies such as the 2018 United Nations and World Bank report *Pathways for Peace*¹⁰⁹ demonstrate that investments in resilience yield greater progress on achieving SDGs and lead to less time and resource needs for crisis response and recovery.

92. However, the multiple and protracted crises have posed a challenge for WFP to break the cycle of dependency on food assistance, compromising its ambitions to focus more on transitioning beneficiaries from GFD to resilience building and livelihood support. Therefore, even though this transition was built into the design of WFP support, beneficiaries continued to indicate their need for a continuation of food assistance. Nonetheless, WFP is engaged in delivery of some Partnership for Recovery and Resilience (PfRR) activities under the FFA programme and is implementing a joint resilience programme (nutrition, school feeding, livelihoods).

93. Echoing a finding from the 2018 strategic evaluation of WFP support for enhanced resilience, and confirmed by stakeholders, the WFP resilience building work in South Sudan (and in other countries) lacked a clear coherent framework setting out its overall ambition on how it would engineer sustainable impact and create synergies with other parts of the WFP portfolio in South Sudan.¹¹⁰ This shortcoming is being addressed with the drafting of a resilience strategy for the country. Moreover, in 2021, WFP and FAO reported that South Sudan continued to be heavily impacted by years of conflict and the ravages of climate

¹⁰⁷ WFP. 2021. BR07 Narrative.

¹⁰⁸ WFP. 2018. South Sudan ACR.

¹⁰⁹ UN and World Bank, 2018. *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches for Preventing Violent Conflict*. Washington, D.C.

¹¹⁰ WFP. 2018. Strategic Evaluation of WFP Support for Enhanced Resilience.

change, so that marginal gains in cereal production¹¹¹ (2019–2020) were far from sufficient to end food insecurity and turn a page on hunger.

Finding 10: WFP appropriately identified and managed risks including those of the COVID-19 pandemic

94. WFP classifies risks into four categories: strategic, operational, fiduciary and financial. Risk management was not systematically covered in WFP ACRs¹¹² until the ACR of 2020 which noted that WFP faced high level risks of political instability and localized conflict in the context of the transitional government. A review of the 2021 risk register¹¹³ indicated that the country office managed and mitigated against risks appropriately and registers were reviewed and updated regularly. A register was prepared to manage COVID-19 pandemic related risks.

Finding 11: WFP has operated in a flexible and adaptive way in South Sudan, adjusting activities and delivery approaches over time in response to changes in context and needs

95. There were seven BRs over the lifetime of the ICSP, as shown in Figure 7, to adjust WFP operational requirements in response to Level 3 emergency related needs. BR06 included new activities such as provision of infrastructure development services, while deactivating the activity of provision of IT data communication services (under SO4). Programmatic adjustments and operational costs were also included in BR06 to mitigate against the risks associated with COVID-19. BR07 made provision for an increase in beneficiaries under SO1 and SO2, a significant expansion of FFA, smallholder agriculture market support and a shift of all urban safety net activities from SO1 to SO3.

96. In response to the major flooding in 2019 and 2020, WFP allowed CPs to extend the response period to beneficiaries. The transformation of the school feeding programme towards HGSP corresponded to the WFP global rethinking on school feeding¹¹⁴ and reflected the country office's view of its importance as an instrument for resilience and peacebuilding efforts by facilitating cohesion among communities. Piloted in 2018 in Western Equatoria, HGSP was scaled up in 2019 to cover more than 13,000 children, although CPs note that the lack of trained teachers compromises the educational impact.

Finding 12: WFP adapted well to respond to needs during the COVID-19 pandemic

97. WFP was very active in responding to the pandemic in South Sudan. WFP led with the nutrition cluster and UNICEF the development of revised protocols for distributions, data collection, etc. Through the logistics cluster, WFP supported the COVID-19 response by addressing supply chain issues. WFP also made adaptations such as the doubling of rations as part of GFD, reduced frequency of distributions to minimize contact, mobilization of rapid response teams¹¹⁵ and introduction of THRs for school feeding programmes. In-kind food assistance or cash-based transfers (CBTs) were also provided in the context of the Urban Safety Net programme.

98. All WFP FO staff and 96 percent of CP staff surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that WFP “appropriately adapted programming approaches and redesigned activities in the context of COVID-19 and other shocks”.

1.4 To what extent is the ICSP coherent and aligned with wider United Nations and humanitarian sector's response plans or strategies and include appropriate strategic partnerships based on the comparative advantage of WFP in South Sudan?

Finding 13: There was good coherence and alignment between the ICSP and the United Nations Cooperation Framework (particularly Pillar 3) and agencies

¹¹¹ Cereal production in 2020 estimated at 874,400 mt was 7 percent higher than 818,500 mt in 2019. Joint Press Release June 2021. FAO and WFP. South Sudan Highly Food Insecure Despite 2020 Increase in Cereal Production.

¹¹² WFP. 2019 and 2018. South Sudan ACRs.

¹¹³ WFP. 2021. South Sudan Risk Register.

¹¹⁴ There has been increasing recognition of the pivotal role school feeding plays in addressing hunger, malnutrition and providing children with access to education.

¹¹⁵ WFP. 2020. South Sudan ACR.

99. The contribution of the portfolio's four strategic outcomes to SDGs 2 and 17 is aligned with the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021)¹¹⁶ and Corporate Partnership Strategy (2014–2017). The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) contributes to national development priorities and Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development through the United Nations Cooperation Framework (2019–2022). The UNCF is predicated on the NDS and has four priority areas:

- building peace and strengthening governance;
- improving food security and recovering local economies;
- strengthening social services; and
- empowering women and youth.

100. The work of WFP is most aligned to the UNCF priority focused on improving food security and recovering local economies, which it co-led with FAO. WFP interventions are also relevant to the empowerment of women and youth and building peace and strengthening governance priorities. The ICSP was extended to December 2022 to align the commencement of the next CSP for South Sudan with the UNSDCF which starts in 2023.¹¹⁷

101. Working in partnership and supporting partners has been a core feature of the work of WFP in South Sudan, in keeping with the WFP Corporate Partnership Strategy (2014–2017) that no single organization can address complex food and nutrition security challenges alone. The UNCF advocated more joined up working by providing a stronger framework for United Nations agencies to plan and implement programmes together and this is reflected in the WFP contribution to coordination and complementarity between United Nations agencies in South Sudan reported by stakeholders. The South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan¹¹⁸ made provision for an integrated multi-sectoral approach to engagement in the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group which involves WFP, which additionally plays a key role in the Global Logistics Cluster, co-leading the Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster and is engaged also in the Nutrition Cluster. United Nations stakeholders recognized the value add of working in partnership with WFP including its extensive humanitarian reach, large geographical footprint and strong understanding of beneficiary communities. Donors saw the comparative advantage of WFP as mainly in crisis/emergency response.

102. Four life-saving clusters in Country, Food Security and Livelihoods, WASH and Health and Nutrition, elaborated an integrated inter-cluster response plan embracing the multi-sectoral approach to respond to the famine crisis. The process started in October 2017 during the preparation of the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), was formalized in January 2018 and resulted in a joint famine response strategy, which WFP contributed to. Regular inter-cluster meetings and an integrated response have been supported by cluster coordinators promoting geographical convergence in the provision of support.¹¹⁹

103. A number of interventions demonstrated WFP's strong partnership approach with United Nations agencies¹²⁰ notably the PfRR mentioned previously as well as the GPAA/Jonglei CVR programme which, through an established partnership with UNMISS, has engaged some national, State and local level actors although stakeholders reported that relationships with South Sudanese stakeholders need to be developed further. There has also been good cooperation on advocacy, conduct of food and nutrition studies, including the inter-agency FSNMS and IPC reports, and in the joint emergency response in hard-to-reach areas through the Integrated Response Mechanism.¹²¹ Further assessment of WFP partnership work is presented under EQ4.3.

¹¹⁶ WFP. 2020. Mid-Term Review of WFP Strategic Plan, 2017–2021.

¹¹⁷ WFP. 2021. South Sudan ICSP BR07 Narrative.

¹¹⁸ OCHA. 2021. South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan.

¹¹⁹ UNICEF. September 2020. Inter-Cluster Famine Response, South Sudan.

¹²⁰ WFP. June 2021. Food Assistance for Assets (FFA).

¹²¹ WFP. 2018. South Sudan ACR.

2.2 EQ2: WHAT IS THE EXTENT AND QUALITY OF WFP'S SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTION TO COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN STRATEGIC OUTCOMES IN SOUTH SUDAN?

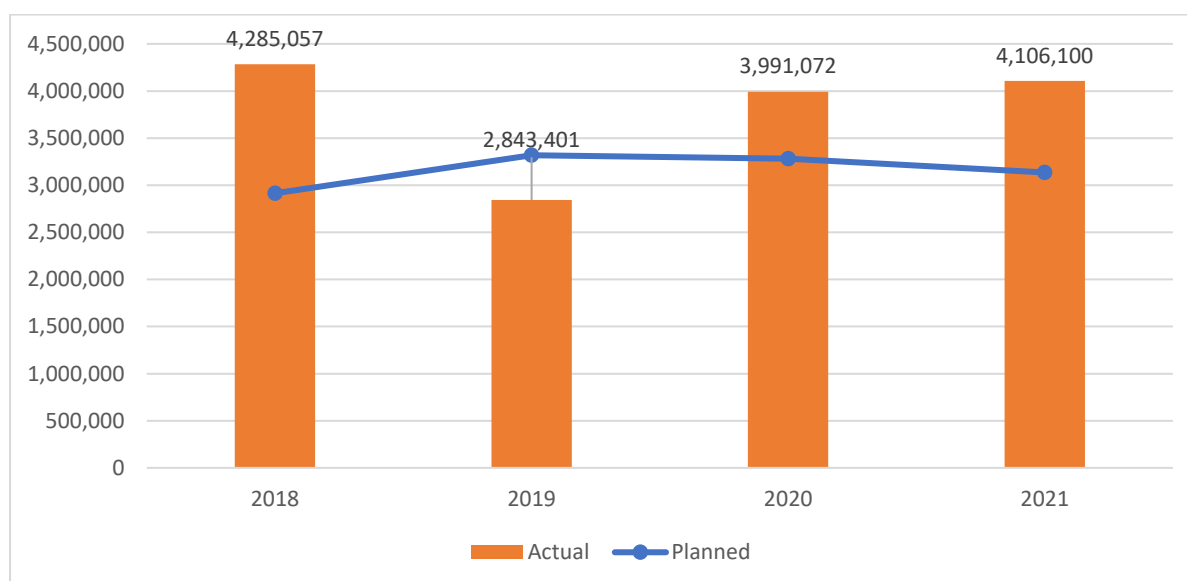
2.1 To what extent did WFP deliver expected outputs and contribute to the expected ICSP strategic outcomes?

SO1 – Food insecure women, men and children in crisis-affected areas and refugees have access to safe and nutritious food.

Finding 14: WFP was effective in saving lives and improving the food security of populations in IPC Levels 4 and 5. However, the level of assistance was not sufficient to reach food security targets

104. Activity 1 under SO1 is the largest component of the WFP ICSP. Under this activity, WFP has provided nutrition-sensitive food assistance (food or CBTs) to crisis-affected populations in counties classified by the IPC as Phase 3–5, IDPs, food insecure communities, flood-affected people, food insecure households with members affected by HIV or TB undergoing treatment; in-patients with kala-azar, HIV or TB and their caregivers; caregivers of children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) in stabilization centres; and school meals to schoolchildren. While the target groups supported were diverse, they all had extreme vulnerability in common. In the absence of alternative support to these groups, it was appropriate that WFP targeted them for support. Figure 12 shows the number of beneficiaries planned to receive support, and actually receiving support through Activity 1 between 2018 and 2021. The lowest achievement rate was in 2019 at 86 percent, which is explained by the low funding in that year.¹²² In 2018, 2020 and 2021 the achievement rates exceeded 100 percent. These figures reflect the deteriorating food security situation after 2019.¹²³

Figure 12: SO1 Activity 1 Planned and actual number of beneficiaries by year



NB: There is a possibility of overlap between the number of beneficiaries between activity tags.

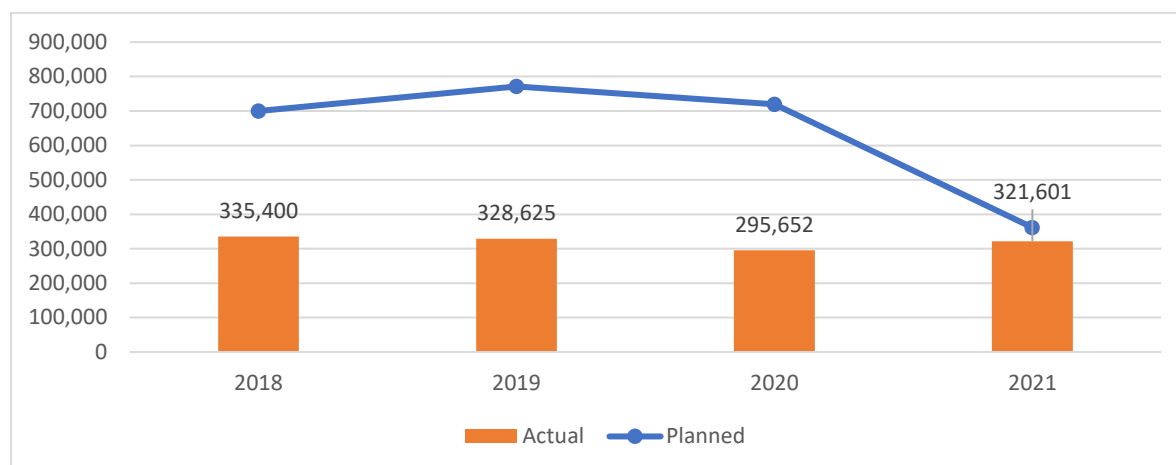
Source: CM-R002b (extracted 15 March 2021) for 2018–2020, CM-R002Bv1.1 (extracted 31 March 2022) for 2021.

105. Under Activity 2 of SO1, WFP provided food and nutrition assistance to refugees. This included GFD or CBTs, specialized nutritious foods for refugee children aged 6–59 months and PLW and girls with moderate acute malnutrition and school feeding to refugee children. As shown in Figure 13, for this activity, the number of beneficiaries planned was almost double those actually reached from 2018 to 2020. Revised plans for 2021 have since brought figures closer to the actual numbers.

¹²² WFP. 2019. South Sudan ACR.

¹²³ WFP. 2020. South Sudan ACR.

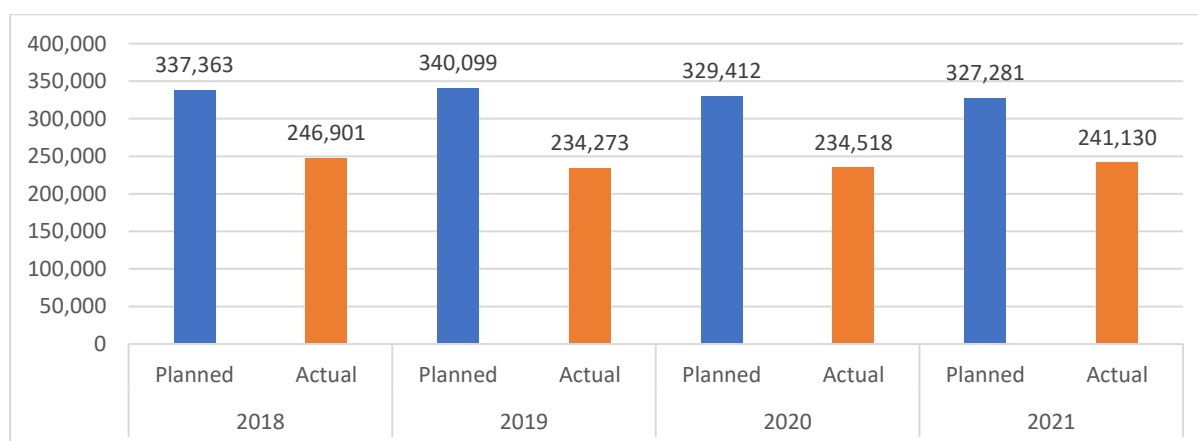
Figure 13: SO1 Activity 2 Total planned and actual number of beneficiaries by year



Source: Ibid.

106. In all years, the actual quantities of food distributed for SO1 were about 70 percent of the amount planned over the period of the ICSP. The amounts of cash and vouchers transferred were about half the planned figures (see Figure 14), due to earmarked funds and lack of markets where food could be purchased (see Section 2.3). The lower achievement rates in terms of food/CBT transferred than in terms of beneficiary numbers mean that not all beneficiaries are receiving full/regular rations. The most food insecure are prioritized (see EQ3.2). Additional challenges in delivering humanitarian assistance posed by conflict and insecurity, as well as flooding, reduced the coverage. The 2020 ACR stated that 35 percent of households reported delayed or skipped food assistance.¹²⁴ In addition, beneficiaries faced challenges receiving and utilizing entitlements for reasons that include: geographical challenges accessing distribution sites; having to share rations; items missing from the entitlements; costs for transport from distribution site to home and milling of the distributed whole grains; technical errors related to the biometric verification system;¹²⁵ and, because of frequent movements, beneficiaries missing registration or being registered in other areas. Third party monitoring for the HARISS programme also reported that beneficiaries often had to travel long distances to receive their rations.¹²⁶

Figure 14: SO1 Planned and actual food distributions (MT)



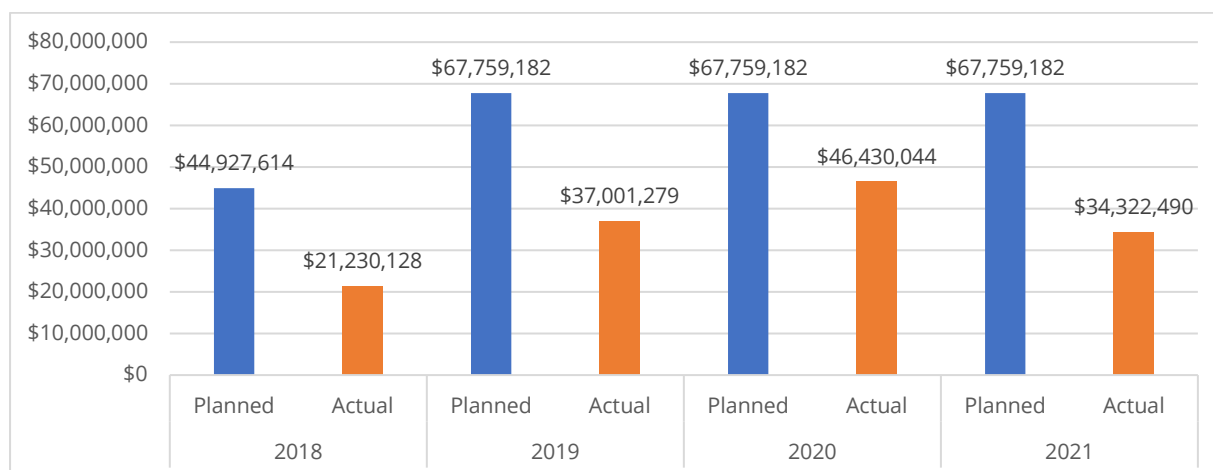
Source: CM-R007 v1.4 (extracted 31 March 2022).

¹²⁴ WFP. 2020. South Sudan ACR.

¹²⁵ Evidence and Learning Facility for South Sudan (ELFSS), May 2020. Synthesis Study WFP on Determining Needs and Beneficiary Targeting.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Figure 15: SO1 Planned and actual transfers of CBT and commodity voucher (USD)



Source: Ibid.

107. Table 4 shows selected food security and nutrition outcome indicators and indicates that the food expenditure share is both below baseline and target. However, outcome indicators which are related to the quality of diet show a more positive outcome. Food consumption scores improve over time. This is possibly due to the nutrition-sensitive approach of the ICSP, implemented through strong partnerships to address underlying causes of malnutrition, FFA production activities, and fortification. In interviews with beneficiaries, the nutrition programme and improvement in nutrition rates of the community were the most frequently cited results (62 percent).

Table 4: SO1 Activity 1 Selected outcome indicators targets and follow-up rates

Outcome Indicator	Baseline	2018 follow-up	2019 follow-up	2020 follow-up	2021 follow-up	2021 target	End-CSP target
Food expenditure share	46.5	49	37.25	68	50	<45	<26
Livelihood-based Coping Strategy Index (Percentage of households not using coping strategies)	23.05			44.6	38.1	≥25	≥28
(Percentage of households using crisis coping strategies)	7.5			27.3	1.5	≤6	≤7
(Percentage of households using emergency coping strategies)	60.75			12.5	56	≤59	≥45
(Percentage of households using stress coping strategies)	8.7			15.6	2	≤8	≤8.5
Food consumption score / Percentage of households with acceptable food consumption score	25.75		45.85	34.8	60	>48	>51
Food consumption score / Percentage of households with borderline food consumption score	38		36.05	43.1	26	<35	<35
Food consumption score / Percentage of households with poor food consumption score	35.5		18.1	22.1	14	<17	<14
Minimum dietary diversity - women	17		26.5	45	27.3	≥35	≥40

<i>Proportion of children 6–23 months of age who receive a minimum acceptable diet</i>	7.1		10.35	20	3.6	>8	23
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Source: ACRs 2018–2021.

108. WFP uses four indicators for coping strategies, which show a mixed picture, with two above target and two below. These outcomes indicate that the level of assistance was hampered by the many challenges in the country and was not sufficient to offset recurrent shocks and crises including insecurity, flooding, increased food prices, poor infrastructure and COVID-19 restrictions.

109. Outcome indicators for refugees under Activity 2 followed the same trend, although there was an increase in the percentage of households with acceptable food consumption compared with both the 2018 baseline and 2019 results. This may be attributed to the regular provision of food assistance to refugee camps.¹²⁷

110. While data shows that progress in achieving outcomes has not met targets, there was recognition across the board, including from beneficiaries, that WFP is an effective organization in delivering assistance. The lower-than-planned performance is understandable given the extremely challenging context in South Sudan and insufficient resources.

Finding 15: The school feeding programme has made a positive contribution to school enrolment and attendance. However, its impact on education outcomes is limited by structural barriers to provision of quality education

111. Over the period of the ICSP, WFP provided school meals to alleviate short-term hunger and re-engage school-aged children who have limited access to education in food insecure and conflict-affected areas. It also promoted the right to education for all children by increasing access, promoting gender equality and ensuring equity. WFP encouraged girls’ education through providing take-home rations (THRs) to girls attending 80 percent of classes. The intervention included blanket deworming, messaging on health, hygiene and nutrition and pilots with micronutrient powder.

112. In 2019, 92 percent of the planned 500,000 children were reached (276,787 girls and 183,626 boys) representing an 8 percent increase compared with 2018.¹²⁸ In 2020, the school feeding programme was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic but adapted through the provision of THRs. Overall, 72 percent of the planned target of 460,000 school-aged children were reached in 2020¹²⁹ and 123 percent of the planned 425,000 were reached in 2021.¹³⁰

113. As shown in Table 5, the number of primary schools assisted with on-site food varied little (between 902 and 996) and was close to or above target. For the number of schools with THRs, data is only available for 2019 when 84 percent of the planned number of 146 schools were assisted, and for 2021 when 66 percent of the same planned target were helped. The number of secondary schools assisted increased from 2 in 2018 to 12 in 2019 and 2021.

¹²⁷ WFP. 2020. South Sudan ACR.

¹²⁸ WFP. 2019. South Sudan ACR.

¹²⁹ WFP. 2020. South Sudan ACR.

¹³⁰ WFP. 2021. South Sudan ACR.

Table 5: SO1 Number of schools and primary school children assisted with school feeding¹³¹

Output indicator	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
Number of primary schools assisted (on-site)	929	937	904	902	904	No data	960	996
Number of students (primary schools) school feeding (on-site)	No data	No data	440,000	433,385	400,000	321,219	400,000	490,304
Idem for refugees	No data	No data	85,000	No data	85,000	736	15,000	2,640
Number of primary schools assisted by WFP (take-home rations)	No data	No data	146	123	146	No data	146	96
Number of students (primary schools) school feeding (take-home rations) ¹³²	No data	No data	60,000	27,028	60,000	10,747	25,000	33,567
Number of secondary schools assisted	2	2	12	12	12	No data	12	12
Number of institutional sites assisted (act 2)	No data	No data	No data	No data	2	No data	No data	No data

Source: ACRs 2018–2021.

114. The ACRs state that the school feeding programme contributed to a 1.67 percent increase in the enrolment rate of girls assisted with THRs in 2019. There was a further 5 percent rise in enrolment in 2020, and a 6 percent increase in retention in that year. In 2021, enrolment rates of girls assisted with THRs improved from the baseline and surpassed the 2021 target (at a rate of 21 against a target of >6). While many respondents (CPs, WFP, PMC members and local government) agreed that school feeding is an effective means to increase attendance, its impact is limited as the main barriers preventing children from accessing schools are distance and conflict. The school system in South Sudan faces many constraints, such as inadequate number of qualified teachers and poor quality classroom spaces.¹³³

115. A range of stakeholders mentioned that they can already see, or expect, a broader impact of HGSP, recognizing that the linkages it creates with other programme components can stimulate local food systems, and they see this as the “way to go” with WFP programmes.

SO2 People at risk of malnutrition in crisis-affected areas, especially young children, PLW and elderly (PoCs only), are able to meet their basic nutrition requirements all year round.

¹³¹ No planned or actual data is available for the number of secondary school children in 2020 and 2021 as some data was not collected because of COVID-19.

¹³² In addition, in 2019 and 2020 a planned number of 2,545 primary school girls were planned to receive CBT; no data is available on how many received this.

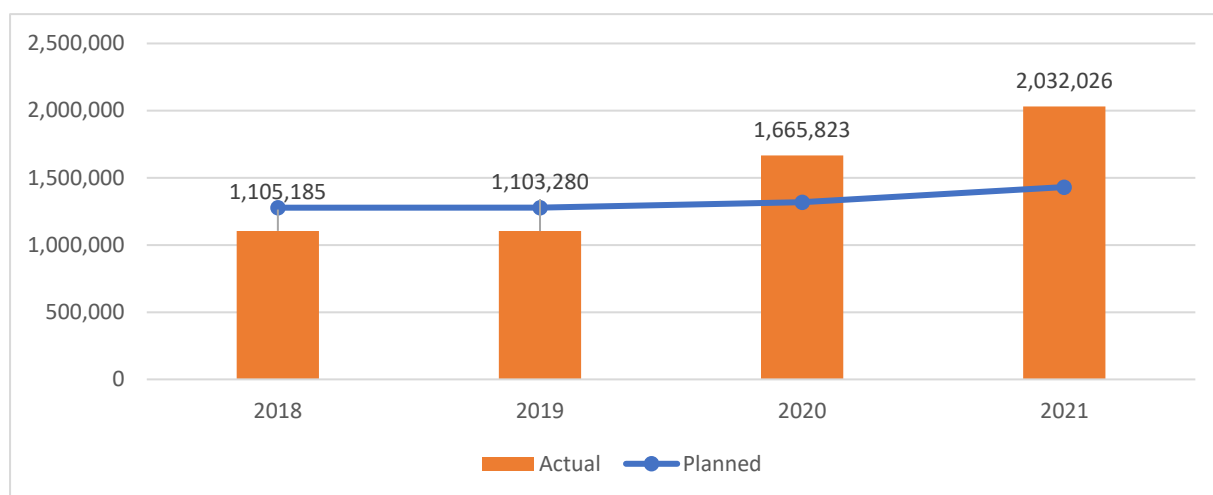
¹³³ Government of South Sudan. 2019. *National HGSP Strategy South Sudan*. Juba, South Sudan.

Finding 16: WFP has been effective in the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition and improving the quality of diet, but the coverage of assistance in the preventive activities was insufficient

116. SO2 is focused on improving the nutrition status of vulnerable groups through nutrition-specific interventions. The treatment programme targeted moderately acutely malnourished (MAM) children aged 6–59 months, pregnant and lactating women and girls (PLW/G) and people living with HIV and/or TB, with treatment rations of a nutritional supplement. The prevention programme targeted children aged 6–59 months and PLW/G, in areas where global acute malnutrition (GAM) rates were higher than 10 percent and/or aggravating factors were present. These were combined with nutrition-sensitive programmes (see Finding 32). While MAM treatment was well above Sphere minimum standards, the coverage of assistance in the preventive activities was not sufficient.

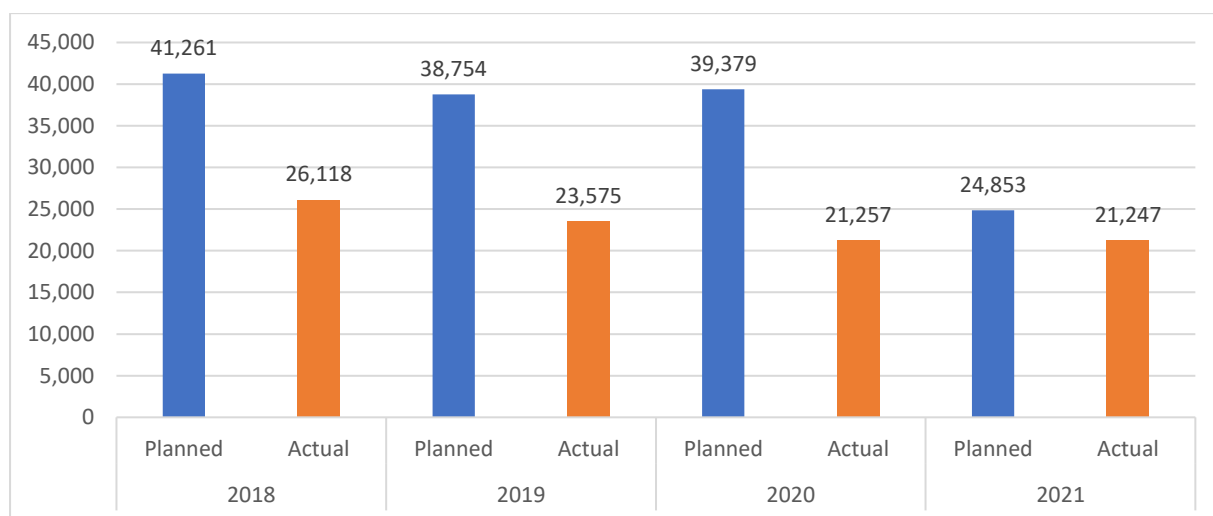
117. As shown in Figure 16, the achievement rate in terms of beneficiaries reached through SO2 ranged between 86 percent and 142 percent across the years 2018–2021. The higher than planned number of actual beneficiaries reached in 2020–2021 reflects the greater need for assistance in those years. Figure 17 shows that actual food transfers under SO2 were lower than planned in all years and the achievement rate varied between 54 percent in 2020 and 85 percent in 2021.

Figure 16: SO2 Activity 3 Planned and actual number of beneficiaries by year



Source: CM-R002b (extracted 31 March 2022). There is a possibility of overlap between the number of beneficiaries between activity tags.

Figure 17: SO2 Planned and actual food transfers (MT)



Source: CM-R007 Annual Distribution (CSP) v1.4 (extracted 31 March 2022).

118. As shown in Table 6, coverage of the preventive programme in terms of blanket supplementary feeding programmes had been consistently below the 70 percent target until 2021; this is mainly attributable to security and logistical challenges. In addition, in 2019, challenges in the procurement of Super Cereal Plus partially suspended the blanket supplementary feeding programmes from June to October. In 2020, flooding limited access to planned distribution sites. Resources were a constraint, with allocated resources to date¹³⁴ funding 44 percent of the NBP requirements for SO2 (see Annex 12, Table 6).

Table 6: SO2 Selected outcome indicators, baseline, targets and follow-up rates

Outcome indicator	Baseline	Follow-up rates				2021 target	End-CSP target
		2018	2019	2020	2021		
<i>Proportion of eligible population that participates in programme (coverage): BSFP malnutrition risk</i>	26	50	61	50	96	>70	>70
<i>Proportion of eligible population that participates in programme (coverage): TSFP malnutrition risk</i>	23	55	75	66	66	>50	>50
Antiretroviral therapy (ART) default rate	5	No data	No data	14.2	4.2	<15	<15
ART nutritional recovery rate	85	No data	No data	61.3	90	≥75	≥75
TB treatment recovery rate	96	No data	No data	65.9	92.7	≥75	≥75
TB treatment default rate	2	No data	No data	13.4	3.1	<15	<15
Proportion of target population that participates in an adequate number of distributions (adherence)	0	No data	98	93.3	88	>66	>66
MAM treatment recovery rate	88	89	91	94.6	91.1	>75	>75
MAM treatment mortality rate	0	0	0.1	0.32	0	<3	<3
MAM treatment non-response rate	5	5	5	2.35	5.7	<15	<15
MAM treatment default rate	7	6	4	3.27	2.6	<15	<15
Proportion of children 6–23 months of age who receive a minimum acceptable diet	7.1	No data	14	20	20	>15.2	>15.2

Source: South Sudan ACRs 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021.

119. The estimated coverage of MAM treatment in 2019–2021 was above the target of 50 percent, but this data is not fully reliable, as moderate malnutrition is difficult to identify and there has been a lack of routine data since 2020 due to COVID-19.

120. Evaluation Team analysis of ACR 2021 found that all 13 outcome indicator targets for SO2 were achieved. Targets were appropriately set according to the minimum Sphere standards, in consideration of the resources available and the challenging context.

121. The MAM treatment programme is performing well, and results are above target for the community management of acute malnutrition treatment, despite all the challenges mentioned.

122. For institutional feeding, the indicators on ART and TB treatment recovery rates are only available for 2020 (for which they were below target) and 2021 (for which they reached the target for the year).

123. Understandably, a deterioration was noted in the default rate of TB and a significant drop in admissions was seen immediately following COVID-19 related movement restrictions, although numbers stabilized from June onwards once mitigation measures had been put in place.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ 31 December 2021.

¹³⁵ WFP. 2020. South Sudan ACR.

Finding 17: Community nutrition volunteers play a vital role in programme effectiveness and sustainability

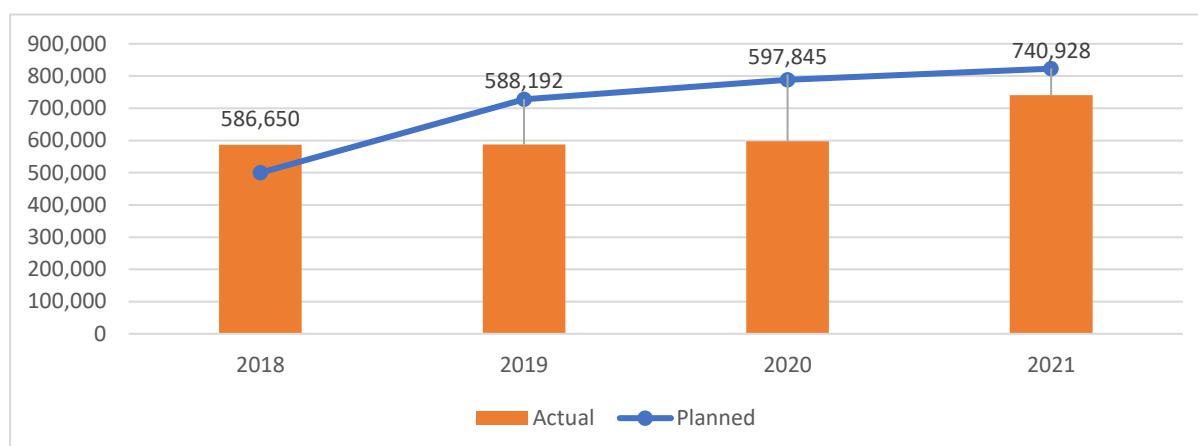
124. Over the years, WFP and UNICEF have continued to strengthen the prevention programme through the use of community nutrition volunteers (CNVs). In 2021, 7,404 CNVs (of which 40 percent were women) were active.¹³⁶ Respondents found that CNV support has increased programme acceptability and success in their local communities. CNVs helped with the mobilization of the community, screening and taking relevant measurements, and provided community awareness and education on hygiene, health and nutrition, COVID-19 and distribution of assistance. According to the 2021 PDM data, one third of respondents had received a health or nutrition message and two thirds had not.

SO3 Food insecure smallholders and communities in non-conflict zones have enhanced livelihoods and resilience to seasonal climate crises throughout the year

Finding 18: Over time, WFP has scaled up its support for resilience building activities. Performance against targets in terms of outputs was broadly good, although there was some disruption due to COVID-19

125. The resilience building activities supported by WFP constitute a relatively small but important component of the overall support, representing 9 percent of the NBP budget requirement (BR07). The numbers of beneficiaries reached increased slightly from 586,650 in 2018 to 740,928 in 2021. Achievement rates against targets averaged at 88 percent across the years 2018–2021, with the lowest rate of achievement in 2020 (75 percent for women and 77 percent for men) and the highest in 2018 at 117 percent for both women and men.

Figure 18: SO3 Activity 4 Planned and actual number of beneficiaries by year



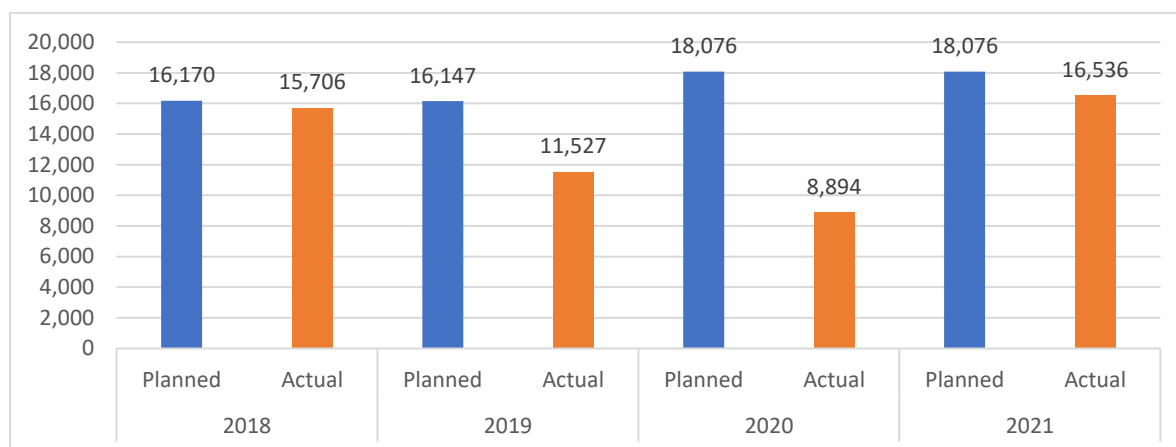
NB: There is a possibility of overlap between the number of beneficiaries between activity tags.

Source: CM-R002b (extracted 31 March 2022).

126. In years the actual quantity of food distributed was below the planned figure, with the lowest achievement rate in 2020 (49 percent) and the highest in 2018 (97 percent). For the CBT the achievement rate of planned versus actual transfers varied from 45 percent in 2018 to 123 percent in 2020.

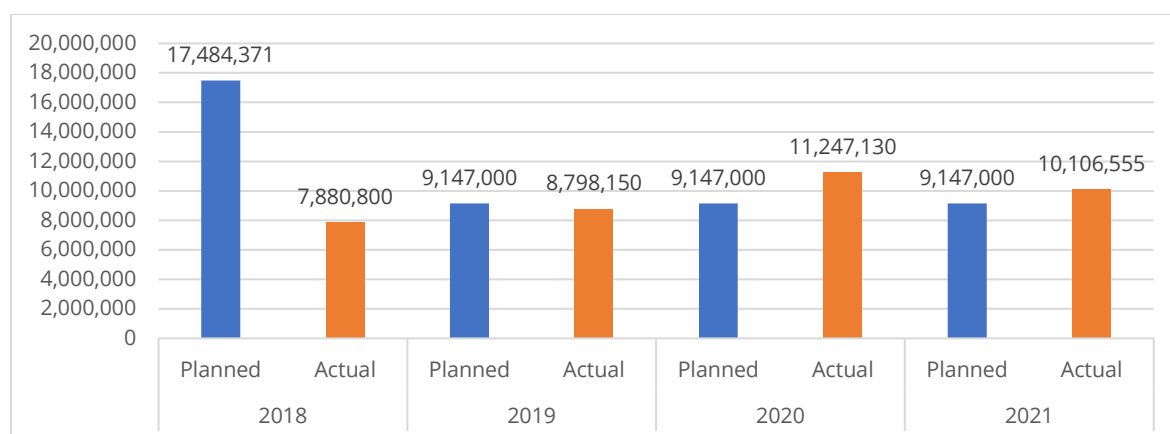
¹³⁶ UNICEF. 2021. South Sudan Annual Report.

Figure 19: SO3 Planned and actual food distributions (MT)



Source: CM-R007 (extracted 31 March 2022).

Figure 20: SO3 Planned and actual transfers of CBT and commodity voucher (USD) by year



Source: CM-R007 (extracted 31 March 2022).

127. Table 7 shows that most output indicators did not reach set targets. While in 2018 and 2019, achievement rates were often over 80 percent, COVID-19 significantly reduced implementation of SO3 activities in 2020, and the ACR stated that just 57 percent of planned FFA activities were achieved. Over the years, the lowest achievement was for the production of tree seedlings. Some outputs reached full or over achievement; most notably, there were five times more flood protection dykes rehabilitated in 2018 than initially planned, and three and a half times more farmer organizations trained in 2019.

Table 7: Selected output indicators for SO3

Output Indicator	Unit of measure	2018		2019		2020		2021	
		Actual Activity	% Achieved	Actual Activity	% Achieved	Actual Activity	% Achieved	Actual Activity	% Achieved
Targeted beneficiaries receive nutrition sensitive food or cash transfers through participation in building and maintaining assets and through training activities in order to build resilience to shocks									
Community water ponds for domestic use constructed	Number	64	98%	62	98%	39	71%	58	97%
Wells or shallow wells for domestic use	Number	382	64%	424	94%	247	64%	273	64%
Flood protection dykes rehabilitated	Linear meter	176	489%	162,000	96%	61,000	38%	172,940	68%
Land cleared	Ha	35,553	95%	37,656	96%	40,102	99%	44,552	105%
Gardens created	Ha	407	87%	381	105%	388	132%	552	99%
Feeder roads built	Km	429	88%	464	85%	51	9%	481.2	92%
Soil/stones bunds or small dykes rehabilitated	Linear meter	35	21%	36,000	86%	26,000	55%	43,000	83%
Culverts and drainage systems built (between 4-6m in width)	Number	5	167%	10	83%	5	100%	20	74%
Fishponds constructed	Number	13	41%	22	105%	14	64%	14	88%
Tree seedlings produced/provided	Number	3,181,611	40%	3,005,724	32%	0	0%	752,000	8%
Smallholder farmers and farmer organizations have improved market access through training in post-harvest handling techniques and technology, and institutional development									
Farmer individuals supported through local purchases	individual	1,565	78%	3,736	62%	4,350	73%	7,779	111%
Farmer organizations trained in market access and post-harvest handling skills	farmer organization	12	100%	42	350%	17	100%	45	129%
Farmers contributing to the quantity of food purchased by WFP	individual	1,565	78%	3,736	187%	4,350	73%	7,779	111%
Farmers trained in marketing skills and post-harvest handling	individual	16,143	115%	15,290	85%	10,432	42%	30,000	86%
Smallholder farmers supported by WFP	individual	17,708	98%	19,026	106%	10,432	42%	30,000	86%

Source: ACRs 2018–2021.

Finding 19: FFA has been effective in improving self-reliance, food security and nutrition and in reducing tensions and violence. Evidence on the effectiveness of resilience efforts against floods is unclear

128. Based on a comparison between SO3 2021 follow-up rates against 2021 targets, seven outcome indicators were achieved, ten underachieved and two were not evaluable due to lack of data. This represented an achievement rate of 33 percent for SO3 outcome indicators, with 10 percent not evaluable. These findings reflect the effects for beneficiaries of the created assets and FFA food/cash assistance, which were challenged by the reduced food security situation in the country and local crises. Selected indicators are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: SO3 selected outcome indicator targets and follow-up rates

Outcome indicator	Baseline	2018 follow-up	2019 follow-up	2020 follow-up	2021 follow-up	2021 target	End-CSP target
Livelihood-based Coping Strategy Index (Average)	2.5	1.64	1.82		3	<1.82	<1.82
Food expenditure share	58.5	47		67	72	<42	<42
Proportion of the population in targeted communities reporting benefits from an enhanced asset base	0	82.2	83.6	77	85	≥90	≥92
Proportion of targeted communities where there is evidence of improved capacity to manage climate shocks and risks	8.4					>8.4	>8.4
Minimum dietary diversity – women	18	23	42		29.7	>30	>35
Food consumption score / Percentage of households with acceptable food consumption score	27.8	49.2	55.65	50.3	41	>55.65	>58
Food consumption score / Percentage of households with borderline food consumption score	34.95	34.2	24.2	35.6	37	<24.2	<24
Food consumption score / Percentage of households with poor food consumption score	37.25	16.65	20.2	14.1	21	<20.2	<19

Percentage of WFP food procured from smallholder farmer aggregation systems	1	0.15	0.25	0.34	0.35	≥5	≥6
Consumption-based Coping Strategy Index (Average)	14.83	10.31	10.48	5.35	16	<10.48	<11
Food expenditure share	58.5	47		67	72	<42	<42

Source: ACRs 2018–2021.

129. PDM 2021 data show that of respondents who received FFA, around 60 percent agreed that the assistance helped partially, and 25 percent agreed that it helped fully to protect the household from floods or droughts, increased diversity in production, improved access to markets and basic services, and raised the household’s ability to manage its main assets. In other surveys beneficiaries reported higher food production, increasing the quantity of diet and income especially in high potential areas. Also, 88 percent reported benefits of functioning assets, for example from improved roads and the economic empowerment of women.¹³⁷ CPs and local government reported higher food production and less dependency on food assistance, as well as more peaceful co-existence among communities and improved ability to pay for school and hospitals and lower food prices.

130. However, although some farmer groups are now self-reliant and able to function without project support, others mentioned the devastating impact that flooding has had on assets such as dykes and vegetable gardens. Costs of replacing basic tools like hoes and wheelbarrows affect sustainability. Lack of access to markets also continues to be an issue. In the e-survey, the vast majority of respondents said that resilience building is effective/very effective, whereas 13 percent of CPs and 3 percent of FO staff indicated it was not effective. Staff in WFP headquarters recognize that building resilience is not a smooth process, and those suffering from repeated displacement may have to start all over again.

SO4 The humanitarian community has access to reliable common services until satisfactory alternatives are available

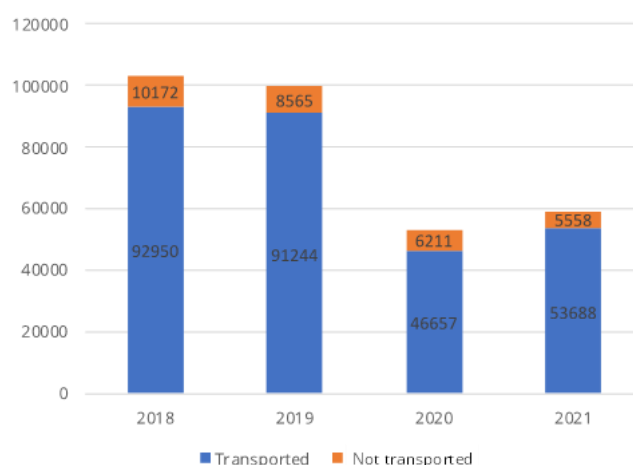
Finding 20: UNHAS services were effective in delivering humanitarian assistance in South Sudan

131. Under Activity 5, United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) has played a vital role in securing access while reducing risks to humanitarian staff working in remote locations and providing support to the emergency flood response and COVID-19 response activities. For example, a dedicated helicopter was contracted for Inter-Cluster Working Group flood emergency assessment and response missions.

132. Demand for air services from all international aid organizations and donors, authorized national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), other civil society members and government departments, and other WFP partners corresponded to the protracted humanitarian situation and poor infrastructure across the country. However, as shown in Figure 21, in 2020 there was a 50 percent decrease in the number of passengers transported, compared with 2019, due to COVID-19 related restrictions on movement.

¹³⁷ WFP. 2021. Programme Activity Evaluation of FFA Project in South Sudan.

Figure 21: UNHAS passengers transported (2018–2021)



Source: UNHAS South Sudan shared with Evaluation Team in December 2021.¹³⁸

133. UNHAS’ annual passenger satisfaction survey results indicated that user satisfaction remained high at an average of 90.5 percent between 2018 and 2021; positives cited included the reliability of freight delivery, booking office efficiency and positive in-flight experience (see Table 9).

Table 9: Percentage user satisfaction rate for common service provision

Activity	Baseline	2018 follow-up	2019 follow-up	2020 follow-up	2021 follow-up	2021 target	End-CSP target
Activity 5: Provide air services to the humanitarian community							
UNHAS	91	94	91	86	91	>92	>92
Activity 6: Coordinate and facilitate access to common logistics services and information management in support to the humanitarian community							
Logistics Cluster	95	95	94	99	99	≥95	≥95
Activity 7: Provide bilateral logistics services on cost recovery basis for humanitarian actors to achieve their objectives							
WFP Logistics	75		90	70	70	>80	>80

Source: WFP surveys / 2021 ACR.

134. Aviation safety was found to be well organized, with two safety officers employed, and monthly meetings conducted with other air operators. However, some informants found the management (by the government) of airspace a major concern. Aviation fuel supply has been relatively stable – except in places affected by floods – UNHAS having worked with suppliers to build fuel stocks during the dry season. Fuel contracting has been managed by WFP aviation globally. Due to the tough environment, ensuring that the right level of personnel could be based in field locations has been problematic.

135. Importantly, given the context in South Sudan, and despite the reduced service in 2020 and 2021, UNHAS was able to respond to all requests made for security and medical evacuations (Table 10).

Table 10: UNHAS overall achievements (2018–2021)
Current UNHAS fleet: 12 aircraft (8 fixed wing and 4 helicopters)
Total passengers transported 2018–2021: 284,539
Total passengers not transported 2018–2021: 30,506
Percentage of passengers served 2018–2021: 90.43%

¹³⁸ UNHAS passengers “Not Transported” refers principally to “no shows” or flights cancelled for technical or security reasons.

MEDEVACs & Security Relocations Security Relocations
565 MEDEVACs from 54 locations (100% against requests)
43 security relocations with 737 passengers from 23 locations (100% against requests)

Source: UNHAS South Sudan.

Finding 21: The Logistics Cluster in South Sudan was seen as instrumental to, and a key enabler for, the successful implementation of the humanitarian response; strong support for the cluster helped to sustain a well-managed and fully funded common logistics service¹³⁹

136. There were a number of activities supported by the Logistics Cluster, including logistics information sharing, overland transport, storage, training, supply chain management advice, pandemic preparedness, supply chain services and security telecommunications services.

137. Both the Logistics Cluster and UNHAS operated with flexibility, for example increasing use of road convoys and river transport.¹⁴⁰ Contracting arrangements for road transportation were adjusted which helped improve operational effectiveness both for transporters and WFP. A significant increase in storage space and improved planning to allow pre-positioning supported the effectiveness of service delivery.

138. There was no focal point in the Government for logistics, partly due to the high staff turnover, making it difficult for the cluster to engage in capacity strengthening. Nonetheless, there has been important engagement with the private sector, such as barge operators, which WFP and the Logistics Cluster supported with capacity strengthening initiatives.

139. Overall, the Logistics Cluster either met or exceeded all planned outcome and output targets. User satisfaction rate reached an average of 96.75 percent between 2018 and 2021 (see Table 9).

Finding 22: The WFP common service for biometric registration of beneficiaries was regarded as a valuable approach to sharing information

140. CPs regarded the WFP common service for biometric registration (Activity 9) as a valuable approach to generating digital information. The South Sudan Nutrition Cluster partners, WFP, Medair and Action Against Hunger piloted SCOPE CODA (Conditional on-Demand Assistance), a digital information management system that enabled the tracking of the nutrition and health status of beneficiaries.¹⁴¹

2.2 To what extent did WFP contribute to achievement of cross-cutting aims (humanitarian principles, protection, accountability to affected populations, gender equality and wider equity considerations, environment, conflict sensitivity)? Did the response to COVID-19 change the degree of contribution in any of these areas?

Finding 23: WFP was committed to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence in delivery of assistance to affected communities

141. CPs perceived that humanitarian principles were observed in the delivery of assistance to all affected communities.¹⁴² The Regional Bureau found WFP to have considerable weight in South Sudan due to the volume of support, which positioned WFP well in ensuring adherence to humanitarian principles. However, increasingly complex operational contexts can make the adherence to humanitarian principles challenging.¹⁴³ Staff face a growing number of operational, security and safety challenges. WFP performance in terms of cross-cutting indicators relating to delivery of support to affected populations in a manner that promotes their safety, dignity and integrity is broadly good, with 2021 results exceeding targets (see Annex 12).

¹³⁹ Logistics Cluster. 2020. South Sudan Lessons Learned Report.

¹⁴⁰ Logistics Cluster. 2021. South Sudan Logistics Efficiency and Pre-positioning Strategy 2020–2021.

¹⁴¹ SCOPE CODA expands on SCOPE by providing smartcards to beneficiaries, which they present when they visit a clinic. Action Against Hunger, Learning Review 2018. SCOPE CODA: How Digital Technology Tools Can Transform the Way We Fight Malnutrition, South Sudan.

¹⁴² KIIs.

¹⁴³ WFP. 2020. WFP Mid-Term Review of WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021).

Finding 24: Conflict sensitivity in programming was considered. To address challenges in translating theory into practice, there has been considerable investment in capacity strengthening of staff in this area in recent years

142. The Regional Bureau rated the country office as an advanced office in terms of thinking on peacebuilding work. Since 2019, WFP has partnered with the Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (CSRF) to strengthen institutional capacity to analyse and programme for conflict sensitivity and intentionally contribute to peacebuilding.¹⁴⁴ WFP South Sudan was the first country office to prepare a conflict sensitivity action plan in 2020; the CSRF and WFP presented suggested next steps in the Facilitated Reflection Report. In addition, WFP has sought to move towards a more explicit contribution to peacebuilding through the development of the 2020–2030 Contributions to Peace Strategy which provides a framework for the examination of the interplay between hunger and conflict to inform the design of contextually specific programming by WFP and other organizations in violence and hunger hotspots. The launch of a joint pilot project in Jonglei on community conflict reduction is among the country office flagship programmes.

143. The country office conflict sensitivity action plan sought to address some of the challenges in applying conflict sensitivity in the work of WFP. The plan noted that some WFP staff in South Sudan tend to understand conflict sensitivity primarily in terms of “do no harm”, protection or promoting staff safety and security, and lack guidance on how to translate theory into practice, while others appreciate the need for deep analysis of conflict dynamics in order to strengthen the WFP contribution to peace. It is noteworthy that the June 2019 report on the WFP contribution to peace recognized that it is axiomatic that interventions in conflict-affected countries “do no harm”,¹⁴⁵ which remains a necessary mainstreaming and baseline conflict-sensitive requirement, but that this is insufficient to make contributions to peace.¹⁴⁶

144. To address the challenges of conflict-sensitive programme design and delivery, WFP South Sudan has taken a number of steps. The country office established a dedicated conflict security and access team which undertakes regular conflict analyses and risk assessments to inform strategic decision making and processes. The conflict security and access team staff actively engaged with the nascent WFP global community of practice. WFP has also conducted training and awareness raising on conflict sensitivity among country office staff to enhance institutional capacity as well as among cooperating partners. CPs noted an increased emphasis on conflict sensitivity in training and monitoring, for example, in relation to feeding practices in schools and land disputes in targeted areas. There are however no indicators measuring the degree to which the programme is delivered in a conflict-sensitive way. Further information on the work of WFP in the area of conflict sensitivity and the CVR programme in GPAA/Jonglei is contained in Annex 11.

Finding 25: Protection issues are taken seriously, and risks mitigated

145. The Humanitarian Country Team Protection Strategy for South Sudan provides the strategic guidance necessary for addressing humanitarian protection concerns through a coordinated and coherent, multi-sectoral approach to response and advocacy.¹⁴⁷

146. WFP has sought to build its capacity to understand and address protection considerations within the context of its mandate and its own operations. The PDM has a module on gender and protection. Almost all beneficiaries, both male and female, reported that they feel safe and have no security issues accessing WFP assistance.¹⁴⁸ The majority of interviewed beneficiaries (82 percent) reported that WFP assistance contributed a lot to ensuring the protection for the rights of the individual, through delivery of assistance in a dignified and appropriate way, preventing risks and consequences of coercion, deprivation or abuse of persons. Beneficiaries particularly mentioned the value of training on rights, gender-based violence (GBV) and other abuses, leading to increased knowledge on how to report such violations and seek justice.

¹⁴⁴ WFP. 2019. South Sudan ACR.

¹⁴⁵ SIPRI, WFP. June 2019. The World Food Programme’s Contribution to Improving the Prospects for Peace.

¹⁴⁶ WFP. May 2020. SSD Contributions to Peace.

¹⁴⁷ Humanitarian Country Team in South Sudan, 2015. A Protection Strategy.

¹⁴⁸ PDM. 2021.

147. The most common protection issues reported by beneficiaries across the different areas of support¹⁴⁹ included the taxation of assistance by different actors, GBV and threats and harassment by youth. Mitigation measures implemented by WFP included alternation of distribution sites, simultaneous distribution to address potential conflicts over resources and introduction of GBV awareness, prevention and referral messaging. Help desks at distribution sites and the training of all community feedback committees¹⁵⁰ on sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption and child protection were other measures designed to ensure protection standards were met in the provision of assistance.¹⁵¹ The WFP access working group also negotiated with government against illegal checkpoints. Moreover, safety audits were conducted in 2020 on safety and security issues for women and girls in and around nutrition facilities, GBV concerns and opportunities for GBV risk mitigation in nutrition programming.¹⁵²

Finding 26: WFP made an important contribution to beneficiary protection during COVID-19

148. WFP actively supported awareness-raising on COVID-19 risks among beneficiaries by promoting mitigation actions such as mask wearing, hand sanitation and social distancing. WFP and its CPs engaged PMCs on training and sensitization in relation to protective measures and supported the establishment of COVID-19 quarantine and isolation facilities.¹⁵³ Remote monitoring approaches were used to conduct process monitoring activities. UNHAS acquired additional aircraft to transport testing and personal protective equipment.¹⁵⁴ In response to increased protection risks for women and children, WFP worked with partners on GBV prevention and response and on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.¹⁵⁵

149. While staff vaccination was rolled out to support protection of communities and WFP staff, there was some vaccine hesitancy. Progress in development of country office guidelines and procedures was impacted as the country office awaited guidance from headquarters/Regional Bureau Nairobi, which was provided three months after the first case in South Sudan.¹⁵⁶

Finding 27: Over the life of the ICSP community feedback mechanisms were launched and scaled up. The majority of complaints are reported to have been resolved satisfactorily

150. Following the AAP/community feedback mechanism (CFM) pilot in South Sudan in 2017, the CFM was scaled up in 2018 and 2019, including the recruitment of three staff dedicated to AAP to support structured implementation of the WFP AAP strategy. The mechanism had three main channels: a telephone hotline, help desks at distribution centres and community outreach activities.¹⁵⁷

151. Training was delivered to WFP and CP staff, community outreach was executed, a CFM database was set up and follow-ups conducted to facilitate closure of the feedback loop. The South Sudan Country Office had a dedicated budget line for CFM.¹⁵⁸ WFP also held regular meetings with the PMCs, to solicit community feedback in order to feed into programming and delivery decisions.¹⁵⁹

152. PMCs were established in 80 percent of project sites already in 2018, exceeding the target of 70 percent,¹⁶⁰ thereby providing an important engagement mechanism for community feedback.

¹⁴⁹ FCDO. 2020. HARISS Annual Review.

¹⁵⁰ Community feedback committees collect and refer issues to project management committees.

¹⁵¹ FCDO. 2020. BRACE II Annual Review.

¹⁵² WFP. 2020, South Sudan ACR.

¹⁵³ WFP. 2020. South Sudan ACR. KIIs with PMCs.

¹⁵⁴ WFP. 2020. South Sudan ACR.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ KIIs country office, WFP. July 2020. Interim Guidance on Tier 2 and Tier 3 Beneficiaries in the Context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁵⁷ KIIs CPs and WFP. 2020. Community Feedback Mechanism (CFM) Annual Health Report 2020, Regional Bureau Nairobi Report.

¹⁵⁸ WFP. 2020. Community Feedback Mechanism (CFM) Annual Health Report, Regional Bureau Nairobi Report.

¹⁵⁹ WFP. 2020, South Sudan ACR.

¹⁶⁰ WFP. 2018. Accountability to Affected Populations Annual Report, South Sudan Country Office.

153. The 2018 CFM report provided several examples of actions taken by WFP in response to issues raised, including addressing commodity nutrition shortfalls, community awareness raising on domestic violence, raising taxation issues with the State Governor and addressing technical glitches with SCOPE. By the end of 2020, all 2020 CFM hotline cases were closed and an analysis of CFM data for 2021 demonstrates good progress with resolution of complaints with 87 percent resolved satisfactorily. The Regional Bureau Nairobi Annual Health Report on CFM in 2020 reported that validation of improvements in programming with affected communities because of feedback, was an area of weakness in the countries in the region.¹⁶¹ While 80 percent of the beneficiaries know their entitlement (this was similar for both males and females)¹⁶² and 38 percent of beneficiaries (44 percent for males and 33 percent for females) interviewed by the Evaluation Team stated they participated in discussion on the kind of assistance they needed, 18 percent stated more involvement of beneficiaries in the design of assistance was needed.

Finding 28: Overall the number of beneficiaries making complaints is very small relative to total numbers of beneficiaries, with underreporting by cooperating partners and insufficient visibility of CFM among beneficiaries

154. More than 90 percent of WFP and CP staff participating in the e-survey were positive about the implementation of CFM. Both WFP and CP respondents cited help desks and toll-free, user-friendly hotlines as the most positive AAP initiatives, with hotlines also allowing privacy for sensitive complaints.¹⁶³ Nonetheless, beneficiaries mainly use traditional CFM channels (other than the hotline) to report complaints (e.g. reporting complaints to community leaders, CPs or WFP field monitors). Limited mobile phone access, awareness of the service, absence of local language hotline support and network coverage limited use of the hotline by both men and women. Over 70 percent of beneficiaries reported that they did not have a mobile phone, and females were less likely than males to own one (75 percent of females and 67 percent of males did not own a phone).¹⁶⁴

155. Table 11 shows that, by 2020, recorded number of cases had dropped significantly.¹⁶⁵ In 2020, this low number was attributed to COVID-19 mitigation measures which limited face to face interactions with communities, although an additional CFM call centre in Bor was opened in 2020 to increase remote CFM services to beneficiaries.¹⁶⁶

Table 11: Complaints reported through the community feedback mechanism (all channels) disaggregated by sex (2018–2021)¹⁶⁷

Year	Male	Female	Total
2018	837	4,444	5,281
2019	461	672	1,133
2020	357	648	1,005
2021	1,483	3,190	4,673
Total	3,138	8,954	12,092

Source: WFP CFM annual reports for 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021.

¹⁶¹ WFP. 2021. Ration Reductions: Timeline of Engagement and Communication – WFP actions taken to inform all stakeholders and partners of reduced rations due to inadequate resources.

¹⁶² PDM. 2021.

¹⁶³ WFP. 2021. WFP Use of Technology in Constrained Environments, Country Case Study – South Sudan.

¹⁶⁴ Evaluation Team analysis of country office PDM survey conducted in October 2021.

¹⁶⁵ WFP. 2020. Community Feedback Mechanism (CFM) Annual Health Report 2020, Regional Bureau Nairobi report. Field Offices report and WFP. 2018. Accountability to Affected Populations 2018 Annual Report, South Sudan Country Office.

¹⁶⁶ WFP. 2020. South Sudan ACR. WFP. 2020. CFM Report, South Sudan Country Office.

¹⁶⁷ Cases reported to CFM excluding cases not forwarded by CPs.

As a result, in 2020, 88 percent of reported cases in CFM came through the hotline. However, in 2020, more than 3,000 cases handled by field-based help desks could not be recorded in CFM due to different tools used by partners,¹⁶⁸ which might be due to the high licence costs of the SugarCRM software introduced in 2019 at the country office but not yet rolled out to the FOs. As shown in the numbers of beneficiaries using the CFM in all four years (2018–2021) accounted for an extremely small proportion of the total beneficiary numbers (ranging between 4.76 and 5.96 million per year).¹⁶⁹ However, there was a notable increase in numbers of beneficiaries reporting complaints in 2021, up more than 4.5 fold on complaints reported in 2020, with the number of women reporting complaints up almost five fold.

156. Most CFM users, according to Table 11, were women. Available data on the age profile of female CFM users for 2018 indicates that most were from the age bracket 34–45 followed by 19–25 and finally 26–30. While the CFM data analysis did not provide reasons for the differences in the rate of use of CFM services by men and women, field monitoring in 2018 noted that the reason women were the majority of CFM users for both hotline and help desks was that they were mainly responsible for collecting food and cash as they are considered to be the custodian of ration cards and culturally it is believed that men should not be allowed to handle food in the kitchen.

157. The high proportion of CFM cases reported to CPs, yet not forwarded to WFP, is in itself a case for further enquiry.¹⁷⁰ Data presented in Table 11 is therefore an underreporting of complaints from beneficiaries. Monitoring results also found that a large number of beneficiaries were not aware of the hotline, and pilot outreach exercises indicated lack of CFM visibility. This raises an important question on whether there is sufficient visibility of CFM, and thus accountability to the affected population.

158. Data on cross-cutting indicators relating to AAP demonstrates significant shortfalls in the proportion of assisted people informed about the programme (comparison of 2020 actual against 2020 target levels) – see Annex 12, Table 23 and Figure 45.

Finding 29: ICSP delivery placed an emphasis on gender equality and the empowerment of women

159. The WFP Gender Policy 2015–2020 expressed gender equality and empowerment of women (GEEW) as a core organizational objective.¹⁷¹ In 2016, the South Sudan Country Office participated in WFP corporate gender transformation programme. This may explain why gender equality and transformative objectives feature prominently in the ICSP,¹⁷² with the majority of activities receiving a Gender and Age Marker code of 4, reflecting the full integration of gender and age across activities. Of 24 CSPs submitted to the WFP Executive Board in 2018, only 4 (including South Sudan) were assigned a code of 4.

160. As shown in Figure 22, in each year of the ICSP, WFP planned to reach a larger number of women than men and always reached a greater absolute number of women. This reflects the priority given to PLW, and the fact that households headed by women are more often food insecure than households headed by men.

¹⁶⁸ WFP. 2020. CFM Report, South Sudan Country Office.

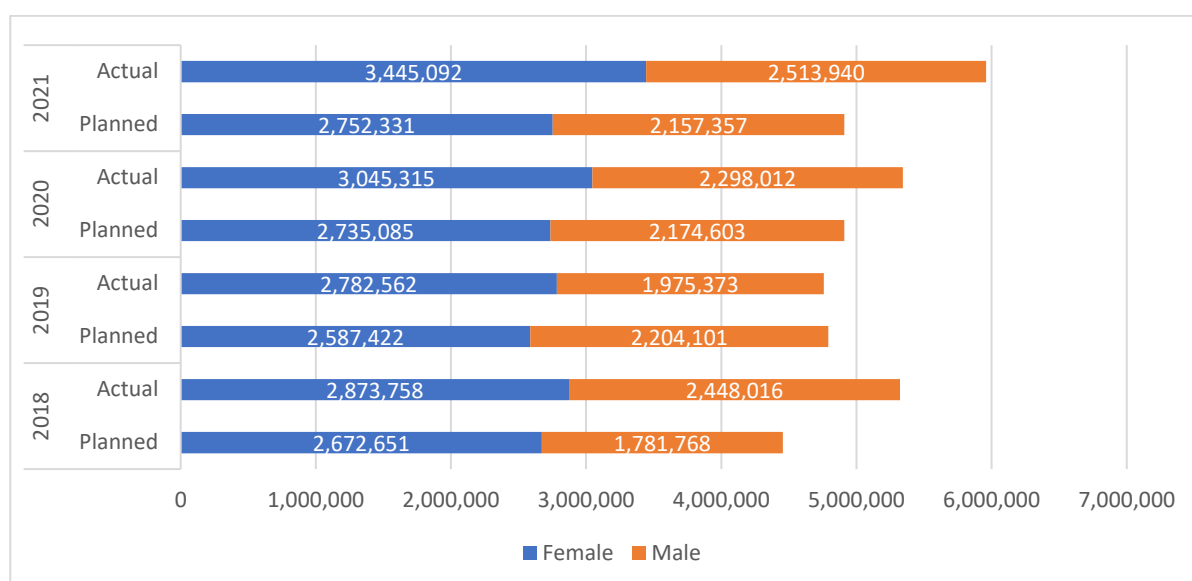
¹⁶⁹ WFP. ACRs 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

¹⁷⁰ WFP. 2021. WFP Use of Technology in Constrained Environments, Country Case Study – South Sudan.

¹⁷¹ WFP. 2015. WFP Gender Policy 2015–2020.

¹⁷² WFP. 2018. South Sudan ICSP.

Figure 22: Planned and actual beneficiaries by sex and year



Source: ACRs 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021.

161. Some examples of gender mainstreaming included special attention to involving male caregivers in nutrition counselling and the engagement of male change agents for nutrition. WFP PDM data demonstrated strong female participation in household decision making with the proportion of households where women make decisions on the use of food and cash assistance at 63 percent for refugees and 77 percent for crisis-affected people.¹⁷³

162. Interviews with CPs confirm the strong guidance of WFP on gender mainstreaming. The equal representation in PMCs was cited as an example of the impact of WFP on the empowerment of women in community decision making. However, more male beneficiaries (44 percent) than female (33 percent) had been part of discussions on the type of support they most needed. Almost all beneficiaries interviewed (98 percent of women and 96 percent of men) reported a positive impact on the position of women in the community or household, for example through increased knowledge on their rights, better involvement in decision-making processes in the community and household, plus a reduction in household conflict due to food rations. Beneficiary feedback also emphasized the positive impact of men trained on the importance of women and girls' participation in community projects. Although several CPs reported on the positive impact of the school feeding programme on girls' enrolment, and forced and early marriage, this is within a context in which girls continue to be subject to traditional norms and values.

163. WFP has undertaken a gendered situational analysis highlighting good practices and it is committed to adopting a gender-transformative agenda, although there are challenges.¹⁷⁴ The gender unit is constrained in resources, as it is highly dependent on the request and budget of other units for mainstreaming gender in their programmes, while recognizing that WFP endeavours to mainstream gender considerations across teams. The focus in the programme on women and empowerment has probably a wider impact on community and household dynamics, of which little is known because PDM exercises include reporting mainly from heads of household. Cross-cutting indicator data (until end 2021) however shows that women feature prominently in decision making on use of food/cash/vouchers¹⁷⁵ (for details see Annex 12, Table 21). The impact and point of view of youth and elderly household members are not surveyed regularly.

164. Beneficiaries noted during Evaluation Team field missions that WFP FO and CP staff was overwhelmingly male, and that female staff would have a better understanding of their needs. Overall WFP

¹⁷³ WFP. 2020. South Sudan ACR.

¹⁷⁴ Development Pathways. 2020. Gender Research Guidance for WFP South Sudan.

¹⁷⁵ In 2021, between 61 and 85 percent of women made decisions on the use of food/cash/vouchers depending on activity 4. Source: WFP 2021. South Sudan ACR.

staff in South Sudan are 27 percent female and the challenges of recruiting female staff was highlighted by WFP FOs.

Finding 30: Inclusion of elderly people and persons with disabilities is under development

165. Inclusion of elderly persons and those with disabilities and improving their access to assistance is considered and piloted but still needs further development. In 2020 WFP was finalizing guidelines on disability inclusion which will list food security and livelihood activities that persons living with disability can actively engage in.¹⁷⁶

166. Of the beneficiaries interviewed, 41 percent had a household member with a disability. Of these respondents, 77 percent stated that the kind of assistance was “good” or “very good” and suitable for people with a disability.

Finding 31: Environmental risks were appropriately identified and managed in the delivery of assistance

167. Prior to undertaking any asset creation activities, such as the construction of roads, dykes and shallow wells, WFP and its partners undertook environmental screening to identify potential environmental risks. Where risks were identified, mitigation measures were put in place to ensure no unintended negative consequences on the ecosystem.¹⁷⁷

168. To reduce emissions, WFP has reduced the amount of food delivered by air-drops and used roads and rivers where possible.¹⁷⁸ Among interviewed beneficiaries, 69 percent felt that WFP assistance had either a positive or neutral impact on the environment.

Finding 32: There have been improvements in the nutrition indicators of beneficiaries despite increased food insecurity. However, it was not possible for the Evaluation Team to analyse if these improvements were due to the nutrition-sensitive approach of WFP

169. To some extent, WFP mainstreamed a nutrition-sensitive approach through the fortification of rations and in the FFA and school feeding programmes. However, there were shortcomings in the monitoring of the application of this approach due to the absence of specific process indicators (e.g. for households with increased availability of nutritious food from own production or percentage of food assistance which is fortified), goals or plans. This meant that it was not possible for the Evaluation Team to measure the WFP contribution to improvements in nutrition as a result of the use of the nutrition-sensitive approach.

2.3 To what extent are the achievements of the ICSP likely to be sustainable – in particular from an institutional, environmental and socio-cultural point of view?

Finding 33: South Sudan's context is extremely challenging, undermining potential for sustainable impact

170. South Sudan remains in a serious humanitarian crisis and extreme levels of acute food insecurity persist across the country. In 2021, more than 7 million people (more than half the population) faced crisis-level food insecurity.¹⁷⁹ Political instability, violence, poor infrastructure and high dependency on food imports, climate-related crises and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic hinder sustainable progress on the food security of the most vulnerable.¹⁸⁰ The country office perceives expectations from communities for humanitarian assistance to continue and efforts to transition people from food assistance are compromised by new crises which lengthen the lean season. Government capacity limitations, resource constraints (e.g. for road maintenance) and government staff turnover are some of the additional factors hindering the likelihood of sustainability.

¹⁷⁶ WFP. 2020. South Sudan ACR.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Logistics Cluster 2021. South Sudan Logistics Efficiency and Pre-positioning Strategy 2020–2021.

¹⁷⁹ IPC. December 2020. South Sudan: IPC acute food insecurity and acute malnutrition analysis, October 2020–July 2021.

¹⁸⁰ The Feeder Road Improvement and Maintenance Project (FRIMP) Baseline Report.

Finding 34: Conceived as a transitional document, the ICSP lacked a long-term vision. Sustainability was not sufficiently considered in its design due to the prevailing assumption of significant food insecurity throughout the period covered

171. Stakeholders within WFP reported that the ICSP was not a strategy as such but rather a framework to house the portfolio of WFP activities in South Sudan. As a transitional document, it lacked long-term vision and a roadmap to deliver sustainable impact. In addition, the absence of political and economic stability, and the ongoing Level 3 emergency context impeded sustainable progress towards humanitarian and development objectives. The ICSP was based on the assumption that the most likely scenario for the 2018–2020 period was increased conflict throughout the country, political instability, displacement and economic collapse, requiring the reliance of South Sudan on WFP for food and nutrition assistance for much of its population until 2020. Most outputs and funds address immediate needs, with less effort devoted to resilience building, sustainability and system strengthening. The ICSP was lacking in setting out the process for beneficiaries to transition from Activities 1 and 2 (provision of food assistance – SO1) and Activity 3 (provision of nutrition assistance – SO2) to sustainable resilience building and livelihood support. The insufficient consideration of sustainability in the ICSP design was however understandable given the prevailing context at the time – namely a volatile security situation, economic and political instability, climate crises, as well as insufficiency of engagement and capacity constraints on the part of government. In hindsight, the assumption of significant food insecurity throughout the period covered by the ICSP was appropriate.

172. The WFP Strategic Plan for 2017–2021 pointed out that, in order to achieve SDG2 (End hunger, achieve food security and promote sustainable agriculture), WFP needed to integrate a life-changing strategy alongside its life-saving focus. Furthermore, progress on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is rated as essential to deliver sustainable impact on food and nutrition security. While throughout ICSP delivery WFP placed an emphasis on both, progress was hindered by the challenges of multiple protracted crises and the very difficult security context.

Finding 35: There has been a strategic shift over the life of the ICSP to increase consideration of sustainability, most notably in its resilience building work but a longer-term approach to climate adaptation is required

173. Despite the challenging context and the need for “continuous firefighting” as the country office calls it, WFP moved towards a greater focus on resilience building during the ICSP. The FFA and SAM programmes provide examples of how WFP has looked at ways to move from emergency food distributions towards sustainable livelihood and resilience, including improving access to markets and supporting livelihoods for pastoralists and youth. However, the HARISS Programme 2020 Annual Review noted that WFP needs to consider a time horizon of 15 years, when thinking about how to promote the transition away from food assistance. WFP staff suggested that it should consider more deeply how it will engineer sustainable impact from its resilience building work, as well as target resources and focus more, as assistance was “spread too thinly” during this ICSP. COVID-19 was also rated as a disrupter to the building of resilience.

174. Extensive flooding has occurred in much of South Sudan in recent years – notably 2019–2021 – leading to widespread displacement, destruction of livelihoods and water contamination. The frequency of floods means that this phenomenon can no longer be considered as a shock per se but rather requiring a longer-term structural change and approach to climate adaptation.

Finding 36: The experience of WFP so far indicates some initiatives have the potential to be sustained going forward

175. WFP and CP staff considered the necessary conditions for sustainability to include deeper engagement and more capacity strengthening of the Government, participatory community engagement to build ownership (e.g. involving local community leaders and chiefs), partnership building, selecting the right locations and working through the nexus approach. Cash assistance was seen as a good modality to build sustainability as it supports the building of local markets, but a strategic market development approach is lacking. Some CPs found engagement with the private sector such as local traders important for sustainability. With only nine local NGOs as partners in South Sudan, there is potential for WFP to broaden its partnerships. At the World Humanitarian Summit of 2016 the Secretary-General of the United Nations called for humanitarian action to be “as local as possible, as international as necessary”.

176. Examples of potential sustainable impacts from WFP support reported by various respondents include the following:

- Some evidence of a change in mindset among beneficiaries towards own food production rather than dependent on food provided by WFP.
- Smallholder farmers are now running and sometimes growing their businesses using their FFA supported products without project support.
- Wider adoption of approaches by other actors, for example five other cattle camps are interested in engaging in the pastoral FFA initiative.
- The HGSP programme is regarded as “the way to go” to ensure sustainability of local agricultural production.
- CNVs help to ensure that knowledge on prevention and identification of malnutrition remains in the community.
- In 2020 WFP supported the local economy, injecting USD 58 million into local markets through cash-based transfers and purchasing 13,000 mt of food locally, including from 4,350 smallholder farmers, at a value of USD 4.4 million.¹⁸¹
- The Feeder Road Improvement and Maintenance Project (FRIMP)'s road maintenance component was implemented through the engagement of the local community labour force and local road maintenance groups that employ local youth and women, who are trained to conduct basic road maintenance activities. However, subsequent maintenance has been an issue, due to local road maintenance units not being operational, and resource constraints.¹⁸²
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2.4 To what extent did the ICSP facilitate more strategic linkages between humanitarian, development and, where appropriate, peace work?

Finding 37: Throughout ICSP delivery, WFP in South Sudan has been cognisant of the strong interconnections between long-term food security, resilience and peacebuilding

177. WFP recognized that to transition people from emergency food assistance to resilience building programmes that promote long-term food security, peace and stability are necessary conditions. “Peace is the key to unlocking potential solutions for the future of South Sudan,” said Matthew Hollingworth, WFP Country Director in South Sudan, in 2020.¹⁸³ If South Sudan is to achieve the Zero Hunger SDG, armed conflict as a recurrent crisis which directly causes severe and extreme food insecurity must end.¹⁸⁴

178. While the work of WFP is aligned to the three pillars of the nexus, many FO staff expressed a need for WFP to go further in its support for resilience building and activities which focus on root causes. This would include livelihood strengthening, agricultural development and FFA-type activities, as well as a more limited use of GFD and an expanded, strategic approach to CBT with the aim of promoting local procurement and developing local economies. Nonetheless, WFP is clearly committed to making progress on the nexus, with its GDF+ work and FFA portfolio cited by KIIs as some of the examples demonstrating WFP support for this agenda in South Sudan.

Finding 38: Since the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize, WFP has sought to position itself further as a peacebuilding actor¹⁸⁵ in South Sudan through a partnership approach

179. According to country office staff, WFP is supporting the Ministry of Peace Building to develop a peacebuilding strategy for South Sudan and peacebuilding is mainstreamed throughout the work of WFP via its conflict-sensitive approach. The flagship GPAA/Jonglei CVR programme (see Annex 11) is an example

¹⁸¹ WFP. 2020. South Sudan ACR.

¹⁸² The FRIMP Baseline Report.

¹⁸³ WFP. 2020. Why South Sudan Must Give Peace a Chance.

¹⁸⁴ WFP. 2020. SSD Contributions to Peace, V3.

¹⁸⁵ WFP. 2020. South Sudan ACR.

of how WFP is also supporting more targeted peacebuilding work, although informants indicated that better engagement with some South Sudanese institutions is needed. While the country office expressed the intention to increase this type of work in the future, it recognizes that it will need to work with other partners that have a stronger focus and expertise in this area.

180. FFA activities have helped to reduce local conflicts in communities, for example by decreasing competition for water resources by creating multi-purpose wells for livestock and vegetable gardens, building roads and rehabilitating dykes. Inter-camp linkages and social dialogue platforms and events (such as wrestling for peace) have been effective peacebuilding interventions constructed as part of the Pilot Pastoral Programme. Although WFP country office and headquarters staff found this approach potentially useful in promoting peaceful relations at a local level, limitations in tackling more deeply rooted conflicts were also recognized.

Finding 39: WFP faced significant challenges in making progress on the nexus during this ICSP

181. Beneficiaries see weak governance at national and state levels as a critical factor undermining progression from humanitarian to development priorities, exacerbated by the sheer scale of humanitarian needs resulting from protracted and frequent crises. Donors have also been hesitant to engage directly with a government that has limited development-oriented funding and support. Dependency on food distributions, as well as poor infrastructure (roads, markets, etc.) have also constrained the use of livelihood-building approaches.

182. The absence of a long-term vision in the ICSP impeded progress on the nexus, as the strategy was focused mainly on shorter-term humanitarian needs. Interviewees noted that more development actors were needed in South Sudan. Many respondents reported the nexus to be critical when thinking about the long-term impact of the work of WFP in the country if WFP is to lay the foundations for peace and development.

Finding 40: WFP has made a strong contribution to the use of social protection approaches in South Sudan, although funding remains highly inadequate

183. As a signatory to the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection to Achieve the SDGs (USP 2030), WFP is committed to working with governments and partners to extend social protection globally.¹⁸⁶ Of South Sudan's six main non-contributory social protection programmes¹⁸⁷ three are implemented by WFP – namely FFA, Urban Safety Nets and the school feeding programme, representing 66 percent of social protection funding in 2020. GFD is also increasingly recognized for its social transfer. However, overall funding for social protection in South Sudan is extremely inadequate. All three of the social protection programmes of WFP were impacted by COVID-19 disruption and had to be adapted accordingly.

184. WFP has taken up the opportunity to engage with the government through participation in the steering committee for a new World Bank funded social protection programme in South Sudan.¹⁸⁸ However, the comparative advantages of WFP, for example in relation to SCOPE's beneficiary registers and the strong understanding of WFP of context in South Sudan, have not yet been harnessed to maximum benefit.

2.3 EQ3: TO WHAT EXTENT HAS WFP USED ITS RESOURCES EFFICIENTLY IN CONTRIBUTING TO COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN OUTPUTS AND STRATEGIC OUTCOMES?

3.1 To what extent were outputs delivered within the intended timeframe?¹⁸⁹

Finding 41: WFP could not fully deliver planned outputs due to funding constraints and shortfalls

¹⁸⁶ WFP. 2021. The work of WFP in enabling social protection.

¹⁸⁷ Included in South Sudan's National Social Protection Policy Framework.

¹⁸⁸ World Bank. 2021. South Sudan Urban Safety Nets Project.

¹⁸⁹ Here "timeliness" is defined by OEV as the extent to which goods, activities and outputs are delivered within the intended timeframe, with attention to quality (WFP OEV. Technical Note on Efficiency Analysis in CSPes (Draft))

185. The overall ICSP funding level, for its full 2018–2022 duration, is 51 percent (as of 31 December 2021), against the needs-based plan as per BR07. If only the ICSP period to date is considered (2018–2021) then the funding level against the NBP is 66 percent.¹⁹⁰ This underfunding against the NBP requirements forced the country office to define implementation plans (IPs) on an annual basis with a reduced level of ambition based on forecasted levels of funding. These forecasts were, on average, 37 percent lower than the NBP. The most significant reductions to activity budgets made by IPs were in Activity 2 (refugees – 33 percent reduction against NBP), Activity 7 (supply chain – 31 percent), Activity 4 (resilience – 27 percent), Activity 8 (telecoms – 24 percent), Activity 3 (nutritional assistance to malnutrition risk – 21 percent). The most protected activity budget was for Activity 11 (infrastructure development – 0 percent reduction). Overall, resilience building activities were cut by 25 percent, whilst crisis response activities were reduced by 20 percent. Budget reductions across various “cost categories” were generally consistent: between 15 and 24 percent (see Table 12).

Table 12: Needs-based plan and implementation plan budget lines by activity and cost category

Cost Category	Needs Based Plan	Implementation Plan	IP as % of NBP
Sub-total - Implementation costs	\$ 410,430,988	\$ 315,259,615	77%
Sub-total - Direct Support Costs	\$ 204,009,566	\$ 172,488,983	85%
Sub-total - Food and CBT value	\$ 1,239,916,128	\$ 966,869,211	78%
Sub-total - Food and CBT transfer costs	\$ 2,332,109,835	\$ 1,809,194,539	78%
Sub-total - Cooperating Partner costs	\$ 441,028,517	\$ 335,274,848	76%
Grand Total	\$ 4,737,364,748	\$ 3,770,729,840	80%
Activity	Needs Based Plan	Implementation Plan	IP as % of NBP
01 Nutrition-sensitive Food Assistance	\$ 2,534,168,813	\$ 2,045,737,122	81%
02 Food SM Nutrition assist. to refugees	\$ 539,082,390	\$ 358,873,830	67%
03 Nutr. assist. to malnutrition-risk	\$ 612,142,779	\$ 481,388,571	79%
04 Livelihood & rural HH resilience	\$ 373,613,938	\$ 271,634,392	73%
05 Air services for humanitarian comm.	\$ 236,911,622	\$ 225,242,903	95%
06 Logistics cluster	\$ 109,627,464	\$ 102,299,945	93%
07 Supply Chain Provision	\$ 24,886,896	\$ 17,149,991	69%
08 Security telecoms services	\$ 10,914,623	\$ 8,315,804	76%
09 Info mgmt service SCOPE	\$ 55,232,307	\$ 51,122,086	93%
10 IT HISP	\$ 1,152,166	\$ 919,115	80%
11 Infrastructure Development	\$ 35,622,184	\$ 35,557,098	100%
Direct Support Costs	\$ 204,009,566	\$ 172,488,983	85%
Grand Total	\$ 4,737,364,748	\$ 3,770,729,840	80%

NB: ISC is excluded.

Source: CPB – Plan vs Actuals Report v2.1 (extracted 31 March 2022).

186. Despite this reduced funding ambition, only 64 percent of IP requirements have been funded.¹⁹¹ Funding levels for SO1 stand at 49 percent of the NBP and 63 percent of the IP. For SO2 funding is at 44 percent and 56 percent respectively, for SO3 it is 55 percent and 74 percent, and for SO4 72 percent and 77 percent. Sixty-one percent of IP requirements has been spent.¹⁹² Actual expenditure levels against the IP vary considerably by activity and cost category. “Programme” activities (1–4) have delivered 55–65 percent of the IP budget. Common service activities 5–8 (UNHAS, Logistics Cluster, supply chain and telecoms) have administered between 59 percent and 87 percent. Activities 9–11 (SCOPE, IT Humanitarian Internet Support Project ((HISP)) and infrastructure) report the lowest levels of expenditure against the IP (see Table 13 below). Expenditure as a percentage of allocated resources can be found in the cumulative financial overview of Table 6, Annex 12.

¹⁹⁰ Source of allocated resources to date (as of 31 December 2021): ACR1-A – Standard Country Report v33 as of 31 December 2021 (extracted 31 March 2022).

¹⁹¹ Source of NBP and IP requirements: CPB Plan vs Actual Report v2.1 (extracted 31 March 2022). Data on allocated resources source ACR1-A v33 as of 31 December 2021 (extracted 31 March 2022). Data excludes ISC.

¹⁹² Source of IP requirements and actuals: CPB Plan vs Actual Report v2.1 (extracted 31 March 2022).

Table 13: Actual expenditure compared with implementation plans by activity and cost category

Cost Category	Implementation Plan	Actual Expenditures	Actual Expenditures as % of IP
Sub-total - Implementation costs	\$ 315,259,615	\$ 163,364,854	52%
Sub-total - Direct Support Costs	\$ 172,488,983	\$ 86,538,078	50%
Sub-total - Food and CBT value	\$ 966,869,211	\$ 658,147,032	68%
Sub-total - Food and CBT transfer costs	\$ 1,809,194,539	\$ 1,035,439,844	57%
Sub-total - Cooperating Partner costs	\$ 335,274,848	\$ 225,717,030	67%
Grand Total	\$ 3,770,729,840	\$ 2,300,332,290	61%
Activity	Implementation Plan	Actual Expenditures	Actual Expenditures as % of IP
01 Nutrition-sensitive Food Assistance	\$ 2,045,737,122	\$ 1,231,127,928	60%
02 Food SM Nutrition assist.to refugees	\$ 358,873,830	\$ 234,813,667	65%
03 Nutr. assist. to malnutrition-risk	\$ 481,388,571	\$ 266,632,300	55%
04 Livelihood & rural HH resilience	\$ 271,634,392	\$ 167,601,745	62%
11 Infrastructure Development	\$ 35,557,098	\$ 9,302,931	26%
05 Air services for humanitarian comm.	\$ 225,242,903	\$ 179,357,248	80%
06 Logistics cluster	\$ 102,299,945	\$ 88,625,927	87%
07 Supply Chain Provision	\$ 17,149,991	\$ 10,188,033	59%
08 Security telecoms services	\$ 8,315,804	\$ 6,299,327	76%
09 Info mgnt service SCOPE	\$ 51,122,086	\$ 19,845,105	39%
10 IT HISP	\$ 919,115	\$ -	0%
Direct Support Costs	\$ 172,488,983	\$ 86,538,078	50%
Grand Total	\$ 3,770,729,840	\$ 2,300,332,290	61%

Source: CPB – Plan vs Actuals Report v2.1 (extracted 31 March 2022).

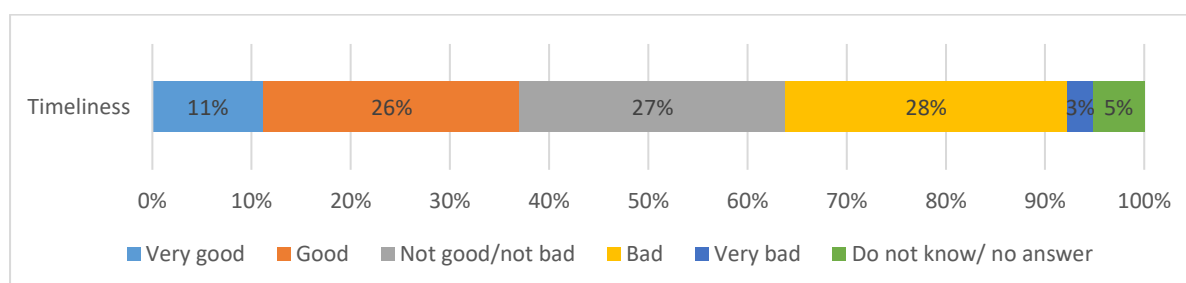
Finding 42: WFP has demonstrated its capability to deliver emergency assistance rapidly, although delays have been reported, and timing of FFA support has not been optimal. Use of technology contributed to timely delivery of assistance

187. WFP and CPs reported that WFP has demonstrable ability to deliver emergency assistance rapidly, effectively and in a timely manner despite significant challenges in ensuring humanitarian access due to insecurity. Similarly, 90 percent of WFP FO staff and 84 percent of CP staff surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that WFP delivered outputs on time to respond to needs effectively. “Timely response” or “timely delivery of food” was a common response from CPs when asked to identify the strengths of WFP in supporting their work.

188. WFP and CPs interviewed recognized that COVID-19 impacted delivery timelines with some activities having to be paused or postponed. Although WFP was flexible and adaptive in response to the pandemic, there was an impact on the timeliness of delivery of school feeding, FFA and smallholder agricultural market support.¹⁹³ CPs also noted delays in the delivery of food by WFP, late payment of invoices and hold-ups in the signing of field level agreements (FLAs) for the next year (at the year-end/start), all of which hampered programme implementation and interrupted transfers, service delivery, payment of staff, etc.

189. Almost a third of the interviewed beneficiaries perceived timelines as bad/very bad, and delays to scheduled distributions were cited as an issue in nearly one third of third party monitoring visits, including half of GFD locations and one third of institutional feeding programme locations visited.

Figure 23: Beneficiary interviews – perception of adequacy of timeliness of assistance



Source: Beneficiary interviews.

¹⁹³ WFP. 2020. South Sudan ACR.

190. The Logistics Cluster and UNHAS (both managed by WFP) performed well, with outputs consistently delivered on time.¹⁹⁴ Similarly, cash transfers were reported to be timely in distribution and inputs to smallholder livelihoods and resilience building were said to be well-timed for the start of agricultural activities and the rainy season.¹⁹⁵ For FFA activities, however, CPs noted that the most appropriate time for planting crops coincided with the scheduling of work on community assets, although the Evaluation Team heard that this issue had been noted and was being addressed by WFP. Similarly, the 2018 CFM report reported that FFA and cash for assets beneficiaries complained of delays in delivery of food rations and seeds for early cultivation.

191. To some extent technology contributed to timeliness of the delivery of assistance and the timeliness of administrative functions also improved.¹⁹⁶ For example, the introduction of SCOPE biometric registration systems and SugarCRM resulted in cost savings and improved the timeliness of responses to beneficiary feedback, and online reporting by CPs substantially reduced long delays associated with the settlement of invoices.

Finding 43: Changes in the frequency of food distributions resulted in unintended challenges for beneficiaries and cooperating partners

192. Changes in the frequency of food distributions, due to COVID-19 and other access issues, resulted in unintended consequences,¹⁹⁷ for example where the practice of distributing multiple months-worth of rations in a single distribution (during COVID-19) led beneficiaries to wait for longer for future assistance. Getting a larger food ration at one time also sometimes caused transportation issues for them.¹⁹⁸ Donor feedback highlighted the risk that beneficiaries receiving larger rations (covering for example a three-month period) may sell the food, leading them to suffer food shortages later on. However, this was regarded as a necessary trade-off in the circumstances.

Finding 44: Multiple factors outside the control of WFP have affected the timeliness of assistance to beneficiaries

193. Security and conflict issues, access challenges due to flooding and COVID-19 impact on pre-positioning of assistance, as well as gaps in warehousing facilities in remote areas were the most frequently cited factors explaining delays and inefficiencies in the delivery of assistance to beneficiaries by multiple respondents. Distance to distribution centres was an important challenge for beneficiaries, although WFP staff indicated they tried as much as possible to keep distances within 10km in compliance with SPHERE standards, while recognizing that this is an ongoing logistical constraint.¹⁹⁹

194. While feedback from United Nation agencies reported the need for early warning systems to mitigate against flooding risks and pre-positioning plans, a significant challenge for WFP was the late confirmation of donor funding, affecting timely pre-positioning of food. The impact of US reprioritization of funding in 2020 determined the late allocation and availability of funding. CPs noted that WFP planning could be improved to strengthen pre-positioning efforts.

3.2 To what extent were decisions concerning resource allocations relating to targeting of interventions appropriate?

Finding 45: Seven budget revisions were used to reconfigure resources during the life of the ICSP to align appropriately programme adaptations and targeting with resource allocations

¹⁹⁴ FCDO. 2020. HARISS Annual Review.

¹⁹⁵ FCDO. 2020. BRACE II Annual Review.

¹⁹⁶ WFP. 2021. Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Use of Technology in Constrained Environments – Country Case Study South Sudan.

¹⁹⁷ ELFSS Synthesis Study WFP Final.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

195. As explained in paragraph 95, seven budget revisions were made to adjust resources in line with changing needs and priorities, including COVID-19 requirements in BR06.

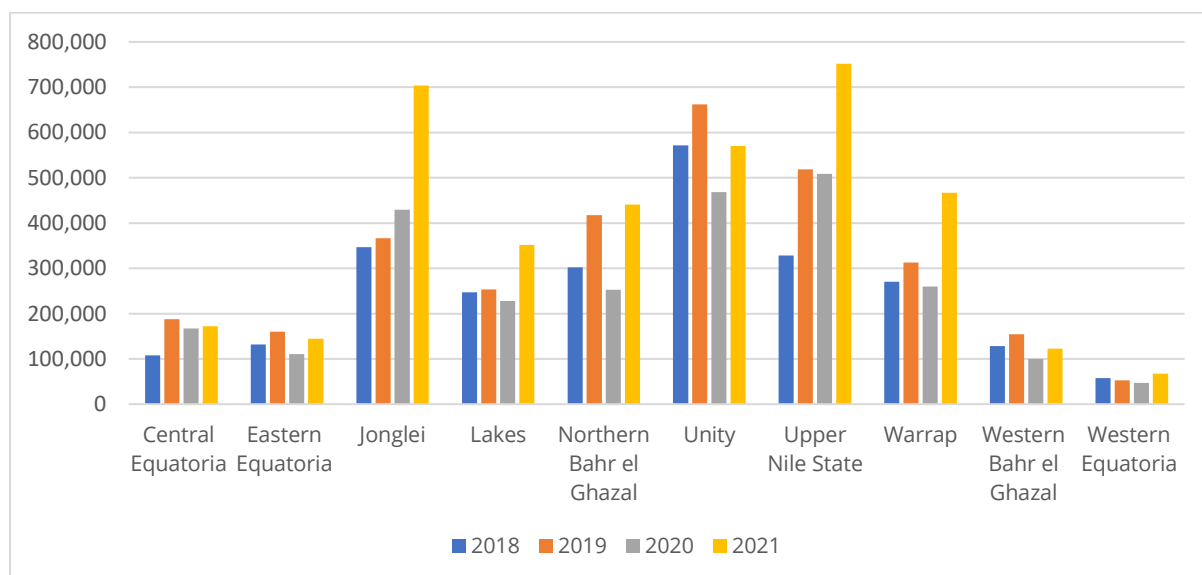
Finding 46: WFP assessments informed geographic targeting and resource prioritization

196. Inter-agency FSNMS and IPC reports were used to inform resource allocation and geographic targeting for the ICSP based on analysis of acute food insecurity and prevalence of global acute malnutrition (GAM). Since the resources of WFP were less than needs, WFP had to deliver a reduced level under a resource-based prioritization plan based on expected funding availability. WFP was constrained in the allocation of resources to CBT due to donor earmarking of most contributions for food and nutrition items.²⁰⁰ Resource shortfalls resulted in additional decisions having to be taken such as reducing rations, lessening duration of support to beneficiaries, etc. In the circumstances, it was appropriate to make these resource allocation adjustments. Beneficiaries complained that they were not always informed appropriately about reprioritization of assistance.²⁰¹

Finding 47: Resource allocations were based on needs/vulnerability levels as determined by the IPC food security classification and on geographic targeting which broadly and appropriately reflected needs although WFP support was perceived to have been “spread too thinly”

197. The top five states in terms of highest number of beneficiaries (2018–2021) reached by WFP assistance have been Unity, Upper Nile State, Jonglei, Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Warrap. These were all classified as IPC 3 and above.

Figure 24: Monthly average of total beneficiaries by state and year (2018–2021)



NB: Beneficiaries cannot be summed up across years as they are likely to include the same individuals.

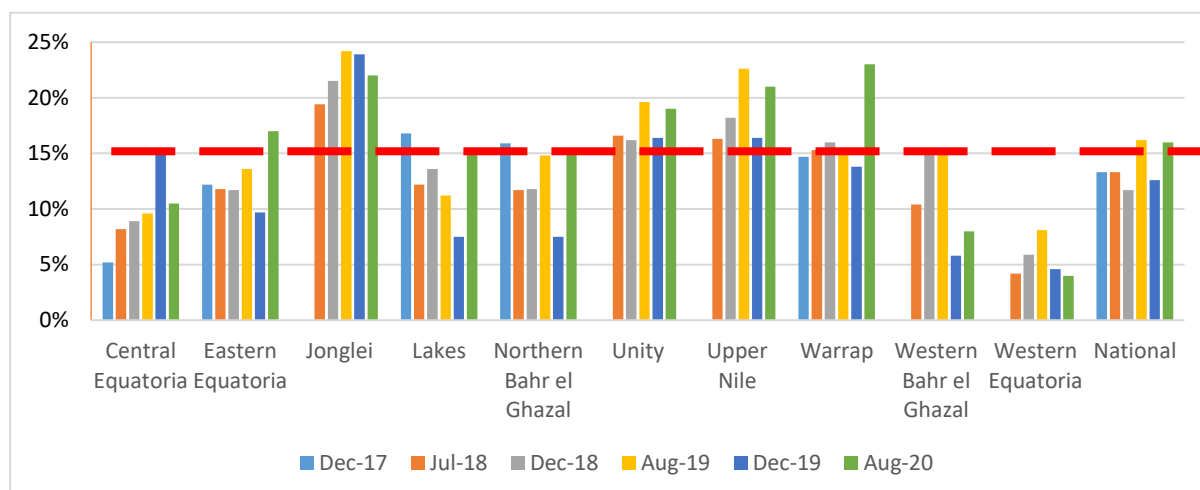
Source: CM-A003 v3.4 (extracted 31 March 2022).

198. An analysis of GAM rates by state shown in Figure 25 (where the red line represents the “emergency threshold” of 15 percent) shows good alignment between the states with the highest number of beneficiaries supported by WFP and GAM rates by state, indicating appropriate geographic targeting, informing resource allocation decisions.

²⁰⁰ WFP. 2019. South Sudan ACR.

²⁰¹ KII beneficiaries, CFM reports.

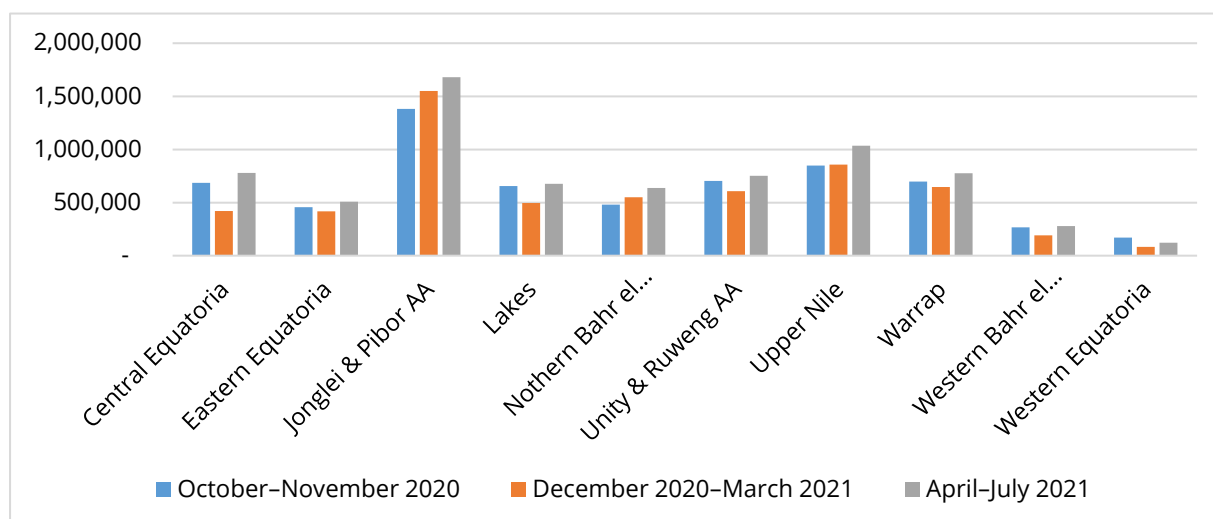
Figure 25: GAM rate by state



Source: FSNMS Rounds 21–26.

199. An analysis of data on the estimated number of people by state who were found to be moderately or severely food insecure (IPC 3 and above) indicates that the states with most beneficiaries are broadly aligned to the states with high numbers of moderately or severely food insecure people – see Figure 26 below.

Figure 26: Number of people moderately or severely food insecure by state



NB: AA = administrative area.

Source: IPC. December 2020. South Sudan: IPC acute food insecurity and acute malnutrition analysis, October 2020–July 2021.

200. The extensiveness of WFP coverage across the country coupled with funding constraints has led to the perception that WFP support is “spread too thinly”. Ration cuts and a reduction in the frequency and duration of support to beneficiaries meant that, while WFP succeeded in reaching the most vulnerable, their needs were only met partially. The sudden cuts in assistance led to an outcry from communities, for lack of an alternative form of support.

Finding 48: Targeting has been a huge challenge. Food support was insufficient given scale of need and funding constraints. Beneficiaries have not always fully understood/agreed with targeting decisions. While WFP staff and some CPs reported that decisions on resource allocations were appropriate, PMCs and some CPs also highlighted the mismatch between available resources and level of need

201. Targeting has remained a systemic challenge for WFP and its CPs,²⁰² which is not surprising given its importance in the management of food assistance.²⁰³ WFP support to GFD+ aims to target support first to those furthest behind (e.g. PLW, people with disabilities, people with illnesses, older persons).²⁰⁴ The recent Independent Review of the IPC in South Sudan reported “the humanitarian response in South Sudan in 2020/2021 is widely regarded as “too little too late”.

202. WFP has struggled with escalating needs of the most vulnerable, alongside reduced donor funding. PMC members noted that, although rightly targeted, food rations were not adequate. CPs also considered that the targeting approach adopted by WFP could be strengthened further as some communities are now stabilizing from conflict and displacement.

203. Third party monitoring of the HARISS programme²⁰⁵ reports confusion on the part of beneficiaries and communities about decisions relating to the food assistance response (e.g. frequency, caseloads, ration sizes, targeting criteria) and communication of those decisions.²⁰⁶ They also mentioned the heavy reliance on local political leaders, which may introduce real/perceived bias into the process. WFP provided the Evaluation Team with an extensive list of actions taken at country and FO level to support stronger and clearer communication with beneficiaries.²⁰⁷

204. WFP field staff and some CPs considered that WFP decisions on allocation of limited resources were appropriate. However, interviews with PMC and CPs reported mismatches between the targeted population by WFP and the perceived number or category of people in need of assistance.

205. The majority (84 percent) of beneficiaries interviewed believed that WFP assistance was given to people who needed it most. For the 16 percent who disagreed with this, explanations included absence during the headcount, for example older persons, or those with disabilities, as well as people travelling long distances. Asked about areas of improvement, the most frequent answers were that more people should be included as beneficiaries, the targeting criteria needed improvement and quantities of support should be higher.

3.3 To what extent were WFP's activities cost-efficient in delivery of its assistance?

Finding 49: Logistics efficiencies have continuously been explored by WFP and reliance on expensive air transport reduced but costs could be further contained with timely funding

206. As South Sudan is one of the most expensive operating environments for humanitarian operations in the world,²⁰⁸ it has been critical for WFP to explore ways to improve cost efficiency. Funding constraints have also been an important driver of cost efficiency in WFP South Sudan operations.

207. WFP was successful in reducing the cost of food delivery in South Sudan, for example by using road and river transport rather than expensive air-drops. WFP delivered by road three times more in 2018 than in 2017 in part due to the rehabilitation and maintenance of key trunk roads which prolonged their use during rainy seasons. Cost savings were also achieved through expanding river transportation.

208. These initiatives enabled WFP to reduce the number of locations served by air, realizing operational efficiency gains of approximately USD 63 million²⁰⁹ and a reduction in air-drops from 29 to 19 percent (compared with 2017).²¹⁰ The logistics team reduced the dedicated fleet of cargo aircraft from eight to two

²⁰² FCDO. 2020. HARISS Annual Review.

²⁰³ C. Barrett and Maxwell, D. 2005. *Food Aid After Fifty Years*. London: Routledge.

²⁰⁴ WFP. 2021. Strategy for Implementing GFD+.

²⁰⁵ Evidence and Learning Facility for South Sudan (ELFSS), May 2020. Synthesis Study WFP on Determining Needs and Beneficiary Targeting.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ WFP. 2021. Ration Reductions: Timeline of Engagement and Communication – WFP actions taken to inform all stakeholders and partners of reduced rations due to inadequate resources.

²⁰⁸ International Business Publications USA, 2018. South Sudan Country Study Guide (page 158), KII country office.

²⁰⁹ WFP. 2018. South Sudan ACR.

²¹⁰ FCDO. 2019. HARISS Annual Review.

airplanes, which saved approximately USD 200 million during the ICSP.²¹¹ UNHAS was also able to reconfigure its fleet by releasing two passenger aircraft, which helped reduce operating costs from USD 3.5 million to USD 3.2 million per month.²¹²

209. WFP also extended pre-positioning coverage through mobile storage structures and use of innovative transport solutions such as Sherp all-terrain vehicles.²¹³ The efforts of WFP were reported to have helped to open new routes to commercial transport.²¹⁴

210. However, a significant challenge in ensuring that there was a robust food pipeline for dry season deliveries to support pre-positioning has been related to donor resourcing plans and constraints. Some major donor plans and regulations delay the timely procurement and delivery of food stocks, which in turn can necessitate expensive air-drops. Pre-positioning of food can only take place during a short window of three months. While annual funding from donors has generally been steady, it often arrives late in the year, as was the case in 2021, and often funding is only confirmed when the pre-positioning window is already closing. The cost impact of this can be seen in Figure 27.

Figure 27: Financial impact of delayed food pre-positioning and increased need for air-drops in 2021



²¹¹ WFP South Sudan logistics team estimate,
²¹² UNHAS performance management reports,
²¹³ FCDO. 2019. HARISS Annual Review,
²¹⁴ WFP. 2018. South Sudan ACR,

Source: WFP country office analysis based on 2021 expenditures.

211. Scenario 1 above indicates that if WFP had received early contributions allowing food to be pre-positioned on time, only 4 percent of the food would have been airlifted, at a cost of USD 31 million. Whereas in practice for 2021, the late confirmation of some contributions meant that the country office had to deliver 12 percent of the food by air at a cost of USD 73 million. This resulted in an overall additional cost (including road and river transport) of USD 19.6 million that could have been avoided if funding had been made available on time for food to be transported by road and river. (Note that these figures do not consider storage costs.)

Finding 50: Transport performance (percentage of food uplifted at the requested time) during 2021 was below the regional average

212. Based on the Regional Bureau Nairobi monthly logistics dashboards for January to October 2021, the Evaluation Team found that South Sudan’s transport performance was 15 percent below average when compared with the other eight country offices in the region. There were multiple reasons for this, with access constraints due to floods and COVID-19 restrictions among the primary causes (see Table 14).

Table 14: WFP South Sudan transport performance uplift timeliness for 2021

Month	Percentage uplifted at requested time	Regional average
Jan	64%	80%
March	52%	76%
April	50%	69%
May	50%	66%
July	51%	78%
August	65%	79%
September	65%	76%
October	73%	83%
November	75%	79%
December	63%	71%
Average %	61%	76%

Source: Regional Bureau Nairobi Monthly Logistics KPI Dashboard 2021 – Transport Performance Uplift Timeliness per CO.²¹⁵

Finding 51: Food losses due to expiry of best before dates were a challenge, impacting cost efficiency

213. Food losses due to expiry of best before dates were an issue over the lifespan of the ICSP. In Quarter 4 2020, some 403 mt of food was lost due to this. Although food losses declined to 76 mt for the first three quarters of 2021, they constituted an increase on those reported in 2018.

214. Due to significant operational challenges, according to the WFP report on global losses for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2020, South Sudan accounted for the second highest (after Yemen) instance of food losses, with losses of 3,143 mt at an average value of USD 668/mt, or 14 percent.²¹⁶ It should be recognized that food is often pre-positioned in remote locations ahead of the rainy season when road access becomes impossible. Insecurity sometimes prevents access to these locations once food is pre-positioned and this results in losses when CPs cannot get to a location in a timely manner to carry out distributions.

215. To overcome food loss and transport performance challenges, and improve operational efficiencies further, the Evaluation Team learned that the logistics team introduced a new transport contracting strategy, which aimed to reduce costs and associated risks by making long-term and seasonal transport contracting awards.²¹⁷

Finding 52: Changing the type of nutritious food products used helped to reduce distribution costs

²¹⁵ Data for February and June could not be accessed.

²¹⁶ WFP. 2020. Report on Global Losses (WFP/EB.A/2021/10-E).

²¹⁷ KILs.

216. Malnutrition levels have stayed high throughout the ICSP, requiring the ongoing provision of expensive treatments, but efforts were made to improve efficiencies where feasible, such as by changing the type of nutritious food products (e.g. to 50 g sachets of liquid-based supplements) which helped lower transport and distribution costs.²¹⁸ Other cost efficiencies were achieved by co-locating SAM, MAM and health provision. In 2019, WFP reported a 91 percent co-location (and cost sharing) of SAM/MAM services with UNICEF.²¹⁹

217. The use of technology also led to significant cost savings and improved cost efficiency. Major savings were associated with improved use of staff time, de-duplication of beneficiaries and better supply chain management.²²⁰

Finding 53: The quantity of locally procured food increased between 2018 and 2021, yet volumes remained relatively low, as a result of systemic challenges

218. The volume of food procured locally represents 4 percent of the total supplied. However, this has increased over the period of the ICSP, as shown in Table 15, which indicates an increase of 436 percent from 2018 to 2021. Although the overall volume of locally procured food remains small, the trajectory towards more local procurement is positively aligned with the global local procurement policy of WFP.²²¹

Table 15: Local, international and regional food procurement (2018–2021)

Year	Local Purchases		International Purchases		Regional Purchases	
	Quantity (MT)	Amount (USD)	Quantity (MT)	Amount (USD)	Quantity (MT)	Amount (USD)
2018	4,490	\$1,244,766	215,516	\$77,630,074	81,056	\$24,097,413
2019	8,308	\$2,703,756	79,143	\$46,618,299	141,241	\$56,630,292
2020	8,898	\$3,060,819	177,357	\$75,459,555	104,274	\$45,423,574
2021	24,056	\$8,459,600	115,591	\$64,573,653	121,237	\$47,265,000
Grand Total	45,752	\$15,468,941	587,607	\$264,281,581	447,808	\$173,416,279

Source: WFP South Sudan Country Office.

219. In 2019, WFP was able to aggregate 708 mt of locally produced cereals through the Rural Aggregation Network, which was piloted by WFP in 2018, purchasing directly from 3,736 individual smallholder farmers.²²² The country has large food production deficits and there are systemic issues that are difficult to address such as the capacity of the market to respond to demand.

Finding 54: The biometric registration system, SCOPE, improved efficiency significantly by reducing duplications and subsequent beneficiary caseloads

220. WFP collaborated with other agencies operating biometric registration systems – including the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which was essential to expand coverage of humanitarian assistance and improve efficiency.

²¹⁸ KIIS.

²¹⁹ FCDO. 2020. HARISS Annual Review.

²²⁰ WFP. 2021. Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Use of Technology in Constrained Environments – Country Case Study South Sudan.

²²¹ WFP. 2019. Local Procurement Policy.

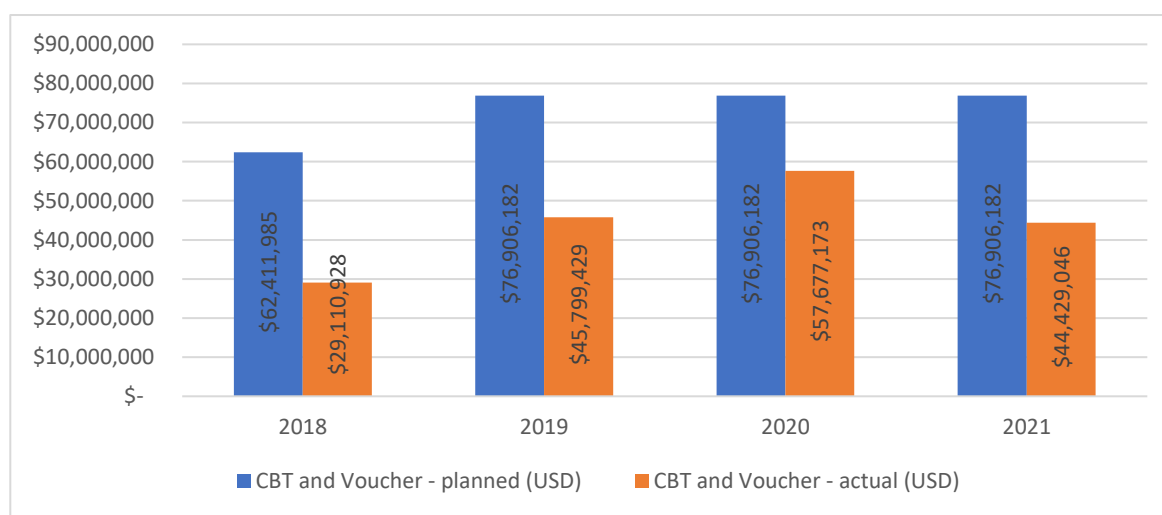
²²² WFP. 2019. South Sudan ACR.

221. The use of SCOPE as a common biometric registration service helped to reduce data duplications. WFP estimated that the approach saved USD 2 million in operational costs in the second half of 2018.²²³ In some locations better authentication led to a 14 percent reduction in the number of people registered.²²⁴ By removing duplicates in the system, in 2019 an estimated 8,000 mt of food did not need to be distributed and SSP 1.5 billion of cash transfers was not required.

Finding 55: CBT was found to be more cost-effective than providing the equivalent value of food

222. There was a small reduction in the planned and actual amount of food distributed and an increase in the amount of CBT over the ICSP period. In areas where markets were operating, the move to CBT and hybrid interventions helped to reduce logistics costs further. WFP also piloted transitional approaches such as cash for milling assistance and hybrid baskets where feasible.

Figure 28: Total cash and voucher planned and actual distribution by year (2018–2021)



Sources: CM-R007 Annual Distribution (CSP) v1.4 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 (extracted 31 March 2022).

223. As shown in Table 16 after 2018, the target in terms of CBT remained consistent at USD 76.9 million per year, and actual achievement rates of transfers increased until 2020 before decreasing in 2021. The fall in actual transfers via cash and voucher modality in 2021 may be explained by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on use of CBT.

Table 16: Food, cash and voucher planned and actual distribution per year (2018–2021)

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Food - planned (MT)	394,794	395,000	386,867	370,209
Food - actual (MT)	288,724	269,375	264,669	278,913
Food % of planned	73.13%	68.20%	68.41%	75.34%
CBT and Voucher - planned (USD)	\$ 62,411,985	\$ 76,906,182	\$ 76,906,182	\$ 76,906,182
CBT and Voucher - actual (USD)	\$ 29,110,928	\$ 45,799,429	\$ 57,677,173	\$ 44,429,046
CBT and Voucher - % of planned	46.64%	59.55%	75.00%	57.77%

Sources: CM-R007 Annual Distribution (CSP) v1.4 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 (extracted 31 March 2022).

224. As shown in Table 17 in Annex 12, during the period, WFP South Sudan has been able to deliver a greater percentage of programme activity budgets into the hands of beneficiaries (as food or cash) than planned. In the case of food transfers, the value of the food ration represents 33 percent of the total costs required to deliver the food, whilst it is 84 percent for CBT. The analysis presented under Tables 30, 31 and 32 in Annex 12 demonstrates that CBT is a significantly more cost-efficient modality, in terms of the share of expenditure that reaches the end recipient. During 2019, the WFP cost per beneficiary per year, under the

²²³ WFP. 2018. South Sudan ACR.

²²⁴ FCDO. 2019. HARISS Annual Review.

BRACE II programme,²²⁵ rose to an average of USD 39.59.²²⁶ The budget allocated for CBT in 2020 showed a 9 percent increase over 2019 levels while the transfer cost decreased by 8 percent, indicating a significant reduction in operational costs.²²⁷ The highest costs under BRACE II were cash transfers and staff. Overall, CBT was found to be more cost-effective than providing the equivalent value of food, with WFP reporting that costs associated with distributing food reached 300 percent of its value.²²⁸

225. Cost per beneficiary is a common way of measuring cost efficiency in humanitarian assistance. However, the figures below should be treated with some caution, due to well-known caveats that need to be applied to beneficiary counting (e.g. a “beneficiary” can be assisted for 1 day in a year of 365 days, it does not consider half rations, missed months, etc.). The average cost per beneficiary between 2018 and 2021 was lower for CBT over food distribution, in most activities where this could be compared.

Table 17: Average cost per unique beneficiary (transfer value + cost/beneficiaries) in USD²²⁹

Activity	Modality	2018			2019			2020			2021		
		NBP	IP	Actual	NBP	IP	Actual	NBP	IP	Actual	NBP	IP	Actual
1	Food	181	125	43	132	97	107	125	89	83	139	89	86
	CBT	18	67	16	103	97	83	18	61	37	149	45	33
	Overall	183	118	42	13	98	103	122	91	73	132	78	74
2	Food	224	214	105	153	217	110	154	208	175	202	157	149
	CBT	15	0	26	78	77	44	40	39	65	77	259	153
	Overall	151	214	126	130	291	146	125	247	225	251	179	150
3	Food	119	133	18	78	89	53	77	41	34	60	61	45
	CBT	N/A											
	Overall	119	133	18	78	89	53	77	41	34	60	72	55
4	Food	59	43	29	46	54	44	45	52	38	49	47	67
	CBT	39	55	29	50	47	51	18	42	52	50	59	50
	Overall	81	46	29	47	51	47	46	48	44	47	51	61

Source: CPB - Plan vs Actuals Report v2.1, CM-R002b, extracted 31 March 2022; ACRs, IP data 2018–2020 shared by country office.

226. As shown in Figure 28, budget allocation to CBT rose by 23 percent between 2018 and 2019, and stayed at a consistent allocation of USD 76.906 million in the following years. The actual distribution of CBT rose by 57 percent between 2018 and 2019, and by 26 percent in 2020. In 2021 it decreased by 23 percent, which is explained by the impact of COVID-19 on distribution.

227. The depreciation of the South Sudanese Pound (SSP) in 2020 was unprecedented, with a 67 percent drop within one year. This led to a rise in the cost of the food basket, and a consequent deterioration of purchasing power. This was particularly damaging for vulnerable households with a high (more than 65 percent) share of food expenditure for which markets were the main source of food supply.²³⁰

Finding 56: UNHAS South Sudan has been one of the best performing UNHAS operations worldwide in terms of cost recovery

²²⁵ Building Resilience through Asset Creation and Enhancement (BRACE II) is the FCDO South Sudan’s flagship resilience and international climate finance project, aiming to increase the capacity of vulnerable households to cope with climate shocks and stresses, improve their food security and build better community relationships. BRACE II has two delivery components. Component I is delivered by the WFP and FAO. BRACE fits under the SO3 of WFP.

²²⁶ FCDO. 2019. BRACE II Annual Review. Reported as GBP 51.90 – converted to USD at an exchange rate of 0.763.

²²⁷ FCDO. 2020. BRACE II Annual Review.

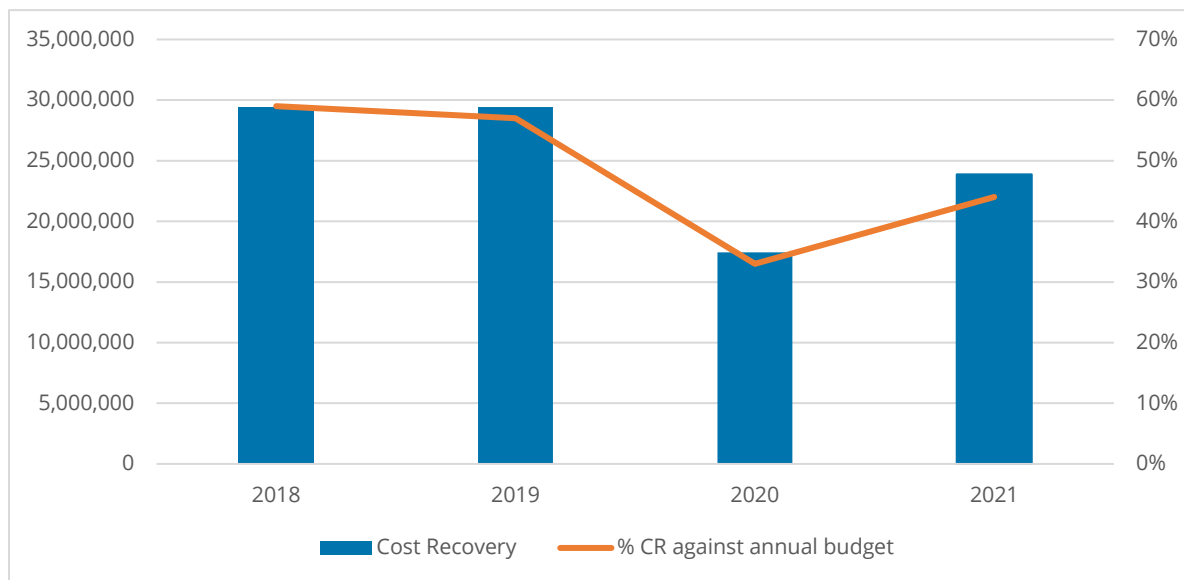
²²⁸ FCDO. 2019. BRACE II Annual Review.

²²⁹ The Evaluation Team has calculated costs per beneficiary in line with the methodology/formula that is believed to be applied corporately, based on a review of recent APRs. This involves adding the total food value (or CBT) transferred to the costs of transferring it and dividing by the number of unique beneficiaries that a given activity reached in the calendar year. This excludes implementation costs, capacity strengthening costs, service delivery costs, direct support costs and indirect support costs.

²³⁰ FCDO. 2020. BRACE II Annual Review. The WFP Country Office also indicated that the purchasing power of households was not affected as WFP increased the value of cash transfers.

228. Despite resourcing challenges, UNHAS has been well funded through donor contributions²³¹ and was able to raise up to 50 percent of its funding in the form of cost recovery,²³² making it one of the best performing UNHAS operations worldwide²³³ (see Figure 29).

Figure 29: UNHAS level of cost recovery (2018–2021)



Source: UNHAS South Sudan.

3.4 To what extent were alternative, more cost-effective measures considered?

Finding 57: Information regarding the evaluation and adoption of alternative cost-effective approaches is very limited

229. Information regarding the evaluation and adoption of alternative cost-effective approaches is very limited. The country office did not conduct any specific studies on cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) during the ICSP period, to assess whether interventions made the best possible use of limited resources. However, a country office is not expected to conduct cost-effectiveness comparisons for all its interventions. Within WFP, CEA is only compulsory as part of the selection methodology of the most appropriate transfer modality.²³⁴

230. The challenging crisis environment during the ICSP implementation period and the need to respond to crises quickly is understood to be a significant cause of the lack of CEA studies that the Evaluation Team could examine to assess quality and appropriate use of CEA findings. There was evidence that, during crises response, the requirement for urgency outweighed concerns for cost-effectiveness.²³⁵ With increasing needs in the country and insufficient resources to meet requirements, various mechanisms have been used throughout the ICSP implementation period to ensure the saving of lives with the available resources.

231. The country office conducted relevant cost-effectiveness comparisons between transfer modalities, through regular market monitoring reports. Evidence was found that the cost-effectiveness benefits of cash programming over in-kind food distribution was considered and recognized appropriately by WFP, as discussed in EQ3.3.

232. With a recognition of these cost-effective advantages, as well as other wider benefits of cash-based programming, there is an ambition to use cash whenever possible and feasible. WFP used a market

²³¹ UNHAS estimates that donor contributions make up 85 percent of budget needs.

²³² Passengers pay in advance a fixed ticket price of USD 275, which was set by the UNHAS Steering Committee.

²³³ WFP. 2020. South Sudan ACR.

²³⁴ WFP. 2017. Operations and Finance Joint Directive on CBT Programming (2013).

²³⁵ KILs country office.

monitoring process to determine the most appropriate modality to deliver assistance (cash, voucher or food) with the aim to identify appropriate locations for cash programming. Reviews of food assistance modalities were undertaken regularly, as well as reviews of value of cash transfers to ensure beneficiaries retained their purchasing power. WFP should continue to monitor the contextual factors relating to cash programming viability to ensure the modality is used where effective, and to replace in-kind food distribution wherever possible.

233. One point of consideration that emerged as requiring further study by the country office in its feasibility analysis for transfer modalities is the possibility of using cash transfers in locations in which markets are not well established. However, the limited evidence available to the Evaluation Team on the cost-effectiveness comparisons between transfer modalities provided an insufficient basis for assessment of their quality and the appropriate use of findings.

2.4 EQ4: WHAT ARE THE FACTORS THAT EXPLAIN WFP PERFORMANCE AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT HAS MADE THE STRATEGIC SHIFT EXPECTED BY THE COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN?

4.1 To what extent did WFP analyse or use existing evidence on the hunger challenges, the food security and nutrition issues in the country to develop the ICSP?

Finding 58: There was significant data generated by the WFP MEAL system. While some decisions are made on the basis of evidence generated, additional efforts are required to strengthen more systematically the link between evidence generation and decision making

234. As reported under EQ1.2 (Finding 6), the country office supported several food security and nutrition assessments and surveys – notably the FSNMS, crop and food security assessments with FAO and IPC analysis – and engaged in a variety of studies, including a decentralized evaluation of FFA²³⁶ and local economy-wide impact evaluations. Due to access restrictions and the complex operating environment, field assessments and monitoring have been critical to improving the timeliness of the delivery of assistance under the ICSP.²³⁷ Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) systems incorporated sex and age disaggregation into data collection, analysis and reporting on person-related indicators. However, while monitoring processes were well developed, the visibility of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data in decision making among management is less apparent, particularly for decision making around programme adaptation and scale-up. With a shortage of in-house skills in data analysis, requiring hiring of consultants on short-term contracts, the extent to which data can be optimized has been limited. More recently, the Evaluation Team understands that monthly monitoring updates and quarterly meetings have been put in place since Quarter 3 of 2021, providing an opportunity for the MEAL team and country office management to review monitoring findings and implement actions to improve programme design and enactment.

235. Each country office unit had an M&E focal point but overall functional skills on M&E were insufficient, and its corporate positioning was not well established. Key informants advised that knowledge management within a complex country like South Sudan requires institutional memory to support learning, but frequent staff changes meant that important lessons were often lost.

236. However, 92 percent of surveyed FO staff and CPs agreed that “WFP makes programming decisions based on lessons learnt from delivery”.

Finding 59: There have been various studies on FFA, but fewer on other programmes and it is unclear which data are available and used for programme decision making.

237. During the ICSP, an integrated context analysis informed a geographic expansion of the FFA programme, and community based participatory planning exercises helped to determine community needs and priorities. The country office further invested in a Rapid Gender Assessment²³⁸ of FFA, with a view to understand better how women and men experienced and benefited from FFA. The study found that men

²³⁶ WFP. 2020. South Sudan Food Assistance for Assets (2016–2019) Evaluation.

²³⁷ WFP reported that it had more than doubled the number of site visits from 1,944 in 2018 to 4,600 in 2019.

²³⁸ WFP. 2019. Rapid Gender Assessment, Food for Assistance for Assets programme of WFP in South Sudan.

and women went through many of the same changes. For example, both women and men reported meeting their immediate food needs, farming more land, increasing their knowledge and skills, and starting new or expanding livelihoods; male FGD participants reported no longer needing to sell livestock during the hunger gap, and women reported no longer having to spend many hours collecting wild foods. While this deepened the WFP understanding of the local context and livelihoods, the Evaluation Team found that it was less clear how this enabled better decision making.

Finding 60: The logistics team played a valuable programme support role through the implementation of a supply chain market assessment oversight model

238. The Evaluation Team found that the logistics team played a valuable programme support role through the implementation of a supply chain market assessment oversight model²³⁹ in collaboration with MEAL and VAM. The approach streamlined and simplified processes to optimize communications and visibility for decision making and supply chain interventions to create an integrated data repository.

4.2 To what extent has WFP been able to mobilize adequate, predictable and flexible resources to finance the ICSP?

Finding 61: Monetary contributions from donors have been declining, which has limited flexibility and efficiency, and WFP has also been very reliant on the US Government for funding

239. WFP has faced unprecedented challenges in South Sudan, targeting over 5 million vulnerable people, requiring USD 927.94 million to fund the ICSP in 2021²⁴⁰ but raising only USD 565.042 million in donor contributions for that year.²⁴¹ Cumulatively, for the ICSP duration of January 2018 to December 2022 as per BR07, 51 percent of the needs-based plan has been funded, at USD 2,574.4 million of the USD 5,043.6 million required across the period.²⁴²

240. To raise sufficient resources, WFP South Sudan held more regular in-country meetings and improved reporting on the use of funds.²⁴³ Approximately 86 percent of funding has come from five donors, with the USA contributing almost 60 percent of funding each year.²⁴⁴ The Evaluation Team noted an increase in earmarking between 2018 and 2020, evidenced in the rising funding at activity level and decreasing at country level (see Table 18). In 2021 there was a slight decline in the level of funds earmarked at activity level (82 percent of total multilateral direct contributions in that year, compared with the peak of 84 percent in 2020).

Table 18: Total multilateral direct contribution by level of earmarking by year (2018–2022)

Year	Activity Level	Country level	Strategic outcome level	Strategic result level	Non CPB	Total
2018	\$401,135,222	\$66,666,766	\$49,063,827	\$5,087,313	\$129,836	\$522,082,964
2019	\$470,234,267	\$45,304,423	\$66,513,025	\$42,023	\$0	\$582,093,738
2020	\$526,299,007	\$21,737,008	\$73,511,261	\$3,108,627	\$0	\$624,655,903
2021	\$418,513,230	\$32,076,527	\$57,487,090	\$3,160,556	\$0	\$511,237,403
2022	\$127,228,761	\$11,522,867	\$10,380,197			\$149,131,825
Total	\$1,943,410,487	\$177,307,591	\$256,955,399	\$11,398,520	\$129,836	\$2,389,201,832

Source: FACTory (Distribution Contribution and Forecast Stats 27 March 2022).

²³⁹ WFP. 2021. Supply Chain Market Assessment Oversight Model. “Going Digital – An Integrated Lean Approach”.

²⁴⁰ As per BR07, to end 31 December 2022. Source: ACR5-A (as of 31 August 2021).

²⁴¹ CPB South Sudan Annual Resource Situation Report (extracted 1 April 2022).

²⁴² Total NBP as per BR07 (to end 31 December 2022). Allocated resources source: ACR1-A - Standard_Country Report v33 as of 31 December 2021 (extracted 31 March 2022).

²⁴³ KIIs.

²⁴⁴ WFP. 2019. South Sudan Draft Resource Mobilisation Strategy.

241. During the ICSP, approximately 70 percent of donor contributions were monetary, compared with 30 percent in-kind, which provided greater flexibility for food procurement, reduced delivery time and enabled enhanced support to regional markets.²⁴⁵

242. Available internal advance financing mechanisms are good but insufficient, considering that not all donors permit advances against their pledges. In 2019, only a small percentage of contributions were multi-year, and about one third of all contributions were received during the last quarter.

Finding 62: Pipeline sustainability has been facilitated by the Global Commodity Management Facility (GCMF) but mobilization of funds has been hampered by donor resourcing plans and constraints

243. The GCMF has played a critical role in ensuring pipeline sustainability for South Sudan operations. In 2019, over 99 percent of food procured through cash contributions originated through the GCMF.²⁴⁶ However, key informants commented that the GCMF could have played an enhanced role if more time-sensitive funding had been made available by donors to support the mechanism.

Finding 63: The funding environment for the operations of WFP in South Sudan has become more challenging with clear signs of donor fatigue

244. Some donors see too little progress, with the Government showing low accountability, leading to donor fatigue. With other humanitarian crises facing increasing needs – in the Horn of Africa region and elsewhere – it has been difficult for WFP to advocate for more funds for South Sudan. Funding also has been channelled directly to implementing organizations, which created tension between the Government and humanitarian partners. Humanitarian aid has largely been coordinated from Juba and donors interviewed indicated that better delegation of coordination to the field level could have addressed local needs more effectively and enabled more conflict-sensitive programming.

245. In general, funding is seen to be declining and United Nation partner agencies and donors interviewed see the need to be more innovative as the international community cannot continue to be regarded as the State substitute for services. There have also been efforts to increase interest from donors on climate change funding in the aftermath of COP26.

4.3 To what extent did the ICSP lead to partnerships and collaborations with other actors that positively influenced performance and results?

Finding 64: The WFP operational engagement with government was good, although limited government capacity and resources threaten the sustainability and impact of the work of WFP

246. Engagement with government has been good from an operational and humanitarian perspective. Memoranda of understanding with government line ministries have provided a useful framework for collaboration, although some country office staff suggested that WFP should engage more strategically with senior members of the national government (e.g. Undersecretary of State, ministerial level).

247. Working relationships established between WFP and relevant ministries have been viewed positively by the Government, particularly those with the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission under the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, the Ministry of Road and Bridges and the Ministry of Education. A working group involving WFP, the World Bank and UNICEF was also established with the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, but was put on hold during COVID-19.

248. However, the significant lack of capacity and resources within government was considered to be a major limitation to the impact and sustainability of WFP support. The decentralized nature of governance and the absence of functional state governance structures (national and state level) have limited the ability of WFP to engage in capacity strengthening activities effectively. Many critical elements of the peace process are yet to be realized, including the appointment of the governors in all ten states.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ WFP. 2020. ACR. In-kind contributions comprised of services such as manpower and commodities.

²⁴⁶ WFP. 2019. ACR. The GCMF allows WFP to purchase commodities when prices are most favourable and reduces food delivery lead-time enabling overall programme efficiency and effectiveness.

²⁴⁷ WFP. 2018. South Sudan ICSP BR06 narrative.

249. Still, WFP was able to make progress for example in supporting the Ministry of General Education and Instruction to launch the National Home Grown School Feeding Strategy, and by seconding staff to the Ministry of Health's Nutrition Department. WFP also supported the establishment of resilience platforms which facilitated state-level ministry engagement on resilience building programmes in two states.²⁴⁸

250. WFP also engaged with the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management and its implementing agency, the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, to support capacity strengthening in early warning systems and disaster risk management.²⁴⁹ It has also interacted with the Ministry of Roads and Bridges and the CSRF in South Sudan and Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid on the FRIMP project.²⁵⁰

Finding 65: There were good collaborations supporting delivery and results, particularly with UNICEF, FAO and IOM

251. The country office continued to partner with UNICEF through the integrated rapid response mechanism (IRRM) at sub-office and central levels.²⁵¹ UNICEF leads the South Sudan Nutrition Cluster with WFP as deputy coordinator, which is regarded as a valuable yet unique arrangement, and they are viewed by the Government as strong partners. WFP also has cooperated with UNHCR for example during the standardized expanded nutrition surveys. These partners employ multi-sectoral approaches or work together to deliver results across sectors, for example in the WFP-led IRRM (with UNICEF and FAO) and on issues of inter-operability between IOM and WFP.²⁵² WFP and UNICEF co-led Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) support and in 2021 revitalized the SUN United Nations network.

252. The activities of WFP contributed positively to the objectives of the Partnership for Recovery and Resilience (PfRR) involving United Nations agencies, donors and NGOs. Schoolchildren's health, FFA, smallholder agricultural market support and feeder roads activities were also successfully implemented in line with the PfRR principles of collaboration, co-location and coordination.²⁵³ A joint resilience project with UNICEF provided further opportunity for expansion of such partnerships.²⁵⁴

4.4 To what extent did the ICSP provide greater flexibility in dynamic operational contexts and how did it affect results in particular as regards adaptation and response to the COVID-19 and other unexpected crises and challenges?

Finding 66: WFP has been adaptive and flexible in its approach to tackling shocks

253. Respondents recognized WFP South Sudan's strong emergency capacity in responding to the shocks that occurred during the ICSP including flooding, COVID-19 and conflicts, including management through its risk register.²⁵⁵

254. WFP has been dynamic in its targeting and reprioritizations, but the country office recognized there was a need for a more structured and rigorous approach to these processes. For example, when a request for support was made, it was difficult to determine whether there was an equally pressing need in another location due to information limitations to enable decisions. This often meant that WFP ceased support to some communities based on their ability to access other sources of support.

255. Country office respondents indicated that, because of the need for flexibility to respond to shocks, programme management started to become less siloed. Some donors had been keen on earmarking but still saw flexibility as important. Resilience funding has also not been forthcoming from donors.

²⁴⁸ WFP. 2019. South Sudan ACR.

²⁴⁹ WFP. 2019. South Sudan Resource Mobilisation Strategy.

²⁵⁰ WFP. Crisis response revision of South Sudan interim country strategic plan (2018–2020) and corresponding budget increase. Final report FRIMP Baseline Study Report.

²⁵¹ WFP. 2017. South Sudan ICSP 2018–2020 (page 17) (WFP/EB.2/2017/7-B/4).

²⁵² WFP and IOM collaborate on beneficiary registration information systems for the alignment of datasets (with SCOPE).

²⁵³ WFP. 2019. South Sudan ACR.

²⁵⁴ WFP. 2018. South Sudan ICSP BR06 narrative.

²⁵⁵ WFP. 2020. South Sudan ACR.

Finding 67: The flexible and adaptive approach of WFP to delivery, as well as innovative approaches, were effective drivers of performance despite the highly challenging and complex environment

256. The country office has been at the forefront of WFP innovation, motivated by the need to transition people away from food assistance to creating local markets, for example through plans to scale up CBT. The WFP Innovation Unit has adopted three pillars – process, technology and new ways of working. The unit has been designed to help other functional units try new approaches, which have included SCOPE CODA²⁵⁶ (as mentioned above); “Cockpit”, which is designed to optimize data on WFP school feeding programming; and “Retail in a Box”, which is aimed at mobilizing retail networks for beneficiaries to purchase local food using CBT.²⁵⁷ The risk appetite for innovation has not been adversely affected by funding constraints as there is a cost efficiency argument for most initiatives.

257. The use of technology made an important contribution to maintaining business continuity and reducing health risks during the COVID-19 crisis. Moreover, it also helped to reach new COVID-19 related caseloads.²⁵⁶

258. The survey of South Sudan WFP and CP staff conducted as part of the Strategic Evaluation on the WFP use of technology found that technology did contribute to fair and equal outcomes for both men and women. There was near consensus (nine out of ten respondents) among the female users of CODA that women were not disadvantaged in the use of technology although there was also some evidence that women were hard to reach through mobile VAM given that the relatively few mobile phones are owned/controlled by men. In contrast to the neutral impacts on the inclusion of women, there was no evidence that the use of technology has served to empower women.

4.5 What are the other factors that can explain WFP performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected by the ICSP?

Finding 68: Over the life of the ICSP there was a gradual increase in emphasis on resilience building activities, although the focus of the programme remained mainly on life saving rather than life changing

259. In 2018, WFP reaffirmed that SDG2 will not be achieved unless humanitarian and development issues are addressed collectively through an integrated approach. The South Sudan ICSP reflected a strategic shift from saving lives to changing lives. Although the budget allocations for resilience building were small overall (9 percent per BR07), funding allocated to this grew over the life of the ICSP and results have been positive, demonstrating that WFP can deliver resilience building support effectively, even in conflict-affected areas.

Finding 69: Limited government capacity combined with a number of other external factors obstructed progress in WFP South Sudan's performance in making the strategic shift

260. The challenging context of protracted and frequent shocks, limited national and state government capacity, COVID-19 and weak market infrastructure all served as binding constraints to engagement in and scale-up of resilience building activities. As indicated in response to EQ1, more thinking is needed going forward to better define the approach and ambition of the WFP resilience building activities, taking into account what is feasible in such a challenging environment.

Finding 70: Resilience building results were hampered by limited internal staff capacity and expertise

261. Insufficiency of staff capacity and specific expertise in the country office to support resilience building activities, staff turnover, shortcomings in the integration of life-saving and life-changing interventions and

²⁵⁶ WFP. 2021. Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Use of Technology in Constrained Environments – Country Case Study South Sudan.

²⁵⁷ WFP Innovation Accelerator. Project Overview: Cockpit and Project Overview: Retail in a Box.

“silo working” by technical units in the country office were some of the internal challenges which impacted on the degree of focus on resilience building in ICSP delivery.²⁵⁸

Finding 71: WFP had to deal with/respond to a large number of very difficult challenges in the delivery of the ICSP which inevitably impacted performance

262. WFP had to drive ICSP implementation during a highly turbulent period in South Sudan marked by protracted crises and shocks.²⁵⁹ Despite best efforts to mitigate against these risks and respond to these challenges, performance of all SOs against targets was invariably negatively affected (as reported in response to EQ2.1).

Finding 72: Over the lifetime of the ICSP WFP has substantially increased the use of ICTs and digital data in South Sudan to support its operations

263. There was a strong overall agreement among survey respondents in the framework of the strategic evaluation on the use of technology in South Sudan,²⁵⁶ by both WFP field monitors and CPs, that the use of technology had improved substantially the ability of WFP to serve its beneficiaries, with four out of five respondents stating that it had improved the ability of WFP either “very” or “extremely”. The main barrier to the use of technology remains the lack of digital infrastructure in South Sudan, while enablers have included contextual improvements alongside senior management support.

²⁵⁸ KII country office.

²⁵⁹ KII country office, FO, CPs, donors, UN agencies.

Conclusions and recommendations

3.1 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1: WFP is the leading provider of humanitarian assistance in South Sudan, reflecting its strong comparative advantage as an emergency responder. The programme was well aligned to national priorities and the UNCF, but stronger engagement with national and state government is needed, if the focus on sustainability and country capacity strengthening are to increase

264. Donors, CPs and WFP staff saw the comparative advantage of WFP mainly in the crisis/emergency response space, which aligned well with the strong emphasis on SO1 and SO2 life-saving activities in the ICSP.

265. The ICSP was highly relevant and aligned to key government policies and plans including the National Development Strategy 2018–2021. Over the lifetime of the ICSP, the Government increasingly emphasized the need for a transition from food assistance to resilience building, an aspiration taken on board by WFP in its programming. The ICSP was aligned to the UNCF (2019–2022) and good coordination with United Nations agencies and operational partnerships have supported the delivery of ICSP results.

266. While WFP succeeded in working with key government ministries, going forward there is a need for it to engage more strategically with senior members of government (Undersecretary of State and ministerial levels) with respect to analysis/planning/strategy. The fledgling state of governance structures at national and state levels limited the scope of country capacity strengthening (CCS) activities. Other constraints to CCS included high turnover of government staff and donor hesitancy to invest in capacity strengthening of government structures/staff.

Conclusion 2: Targeting for GFD was a huge challenge given the scale of need due to protracted crises and funding constraints. Given available resources, WFP assistance was spread too thinly and was insufficient to address all needs fully

267. Throughout the life of the ICSP, targeting (largely driven by IPC classifications) has remained a huge challenge for WFP, with food assistance insufficient given the scale of need alongside escalating funding constraints. While there was broad agreement among stakeholders that the WFP targeting was strongly informed by evidence on the needs of the most vulnerable, some groups were identified as under-served – namely, older people, people with disabilities, pastoralists – because of access challenges reaching these groups. Funding constraints resulted in harsh prioritization decisions.

268. Although most interviewed beneficiaries agreed that the most vulnerable are targeted, beneficiaries have not always fully understood/agreed with targeting decisions although the country office did direct FOs and CPs to disseminate these decisions to affected communities. The extensiveness of the WFP coverage in South Sudan (all states) and valiant efforts made to reach the most vulnerable in extremely challenging contexts is widely appreciated. However, stakeholders perceive that the work of WFP is spread too thinly, resulting in only partial address of needs. The dilemma WFP faces is responding to the scale of need in a context of new protracted crises and working more strategically. Choosing to respond to one emergency but not to another would be contrary to the principle of humanity. However, a strategic and selected approach would be somewhat less of a challenge for other types of interventions such as FFA.

269. The launch and scale-up of the SCOPE beneficiary registration system as a common service during this ICSP was rated as useful, although registration and verification processes for beneficiaries need to be more efficient.

Conclusion 3: The ICSP was useful as an overarching framework for WFP intervention in South Sudan. However, the context constrained working towards longer-term goals and the design of the ICSP did not engender an integrated approach to portfolio management

270. The ICSP was widely regarded as a useful framework setting out, in one document, the activities of WFP in South Sudan, but as a longer-term vision and ToC were missing, it could not be regarded as a strategy as such.

271. South Sudan has been classified as a Level 3 emergency since 2013 and protracted crises and funding constraints limited a longer-term lens/orientation in programming although a new conditional food distribution modality designed to incentivize resilience building was included in the design of the ICSP. The ICSP was developed as a transitional/bridging document rather than a longer-term strategy for WFP engagement in South Sudan. However, for much of the period covered by the ICSP, the resilience building work of WFP lacked a clear, coherent framework setting out an overall approach to delivering sustainable impact and mapping synergies/linkages with other parts of the ICSP portfolio. Inculcation of a resilience mindset and joined up working across teams are needed. Moreover, throughout the life of the ICSP many of the conditions necessary to deliver long-term impact were absent including political and economic stability, security, government ownership and capacity and resilience to climate shocks. In 2022, in view of increasing interest on the part of the Government of South Sudan on resilience building and in the face of donor funding fatigue, the time is now right in the next CSP for WFP to plan the gradual progression of the transition towards a longer-term resilience-oriented approach. This would include setting out CCS activities, a clear strategy and framework for resilience building and better understanding the transition of beneficiaries from food assistance to livelihoods support. Moreover, more recently, WFP has developed a draft strategy for its resilience building activities going forward.

Conclusion 4: Adaptations of the programme, particularly in response to COVID-19, are assessed positively. More work is needed to better integrate research, assessment, monitoring and evaluation systems with decision making processes

272. WFP was successful in managing risks during the COVID-19 pandemic and was flexible and adaptive in adjusting activities and delivery approaches in response to changing context and needs throughout the lifespan of the ICSP, using seven budget revisions to adjust the programmes. WFP collects an extensive body of evidence to inform the design and monitors the implementation of the ICSP interventions (including sex disaggregation of data for person-related indicators). However, further efforts are needed to ensure that the analysis of this data systematically informs decision making by senior management.

Conclusion 5: WFP performance on food assistance and nutrition (SO1 and SO2) was rated highly by all stakeholders. Nevertheless, overall performance of SOs fell short of ICSP targets, mainly due to the challenging context and COVID-19 disruption, as well as funding constraints and scale of needs

273. The contribution of WFP to ICSP strategic outcomes in South Sudan was strongest in the case of SO2 (nutrition). WFP was effective in the treatment of MAM and improving quality of diet and CNVs played a vital role in programme effectiveness and sustainability. WFP SO1 assistance was life-saving (particularly in extreme food insecure areas – IPC 4 and 5) but insufficient to deliver ICSP's target food security outcomes given the deteriorating food security situation in the country. School feeding programmes were rated as very beneficial for the alleviation of hunger and malnutrition of schoolchildren. SO3's resilience building work was effective in improving self-reliance, food security, nutrition in communities and in reducing tensions and violence, but effectiveness on resilience against seasonal shocks was not clear. SO4's UNHAS services were essential to supporting the safe and effective delivery of humanitarian assistance in South Sudan. The Logistics Cluster in South Sudan was a key enabler of delivery of the humanitarian response. Overall, however, the effectiveness of SO4 was compromised by disruption due to movement restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

274. In terms of quality of the support, indicators of quality of diet have improved over baseline levels. The malnutrition prevention programme needs more attention in terms of coverage of beneficiaries. More needs to be done to address the root causes of malnutrition and support contributions to education outcomes in view of the wider challenges of access to and quality of education provision in South Sudan (although some of these issues are outside WFP scope, e.g. WASH).

275. External factors, outside WFP control, such as protracted and frequent crises including conflict and security challenges, flooding, as well as funding constraints and the COVID-19 pandemic, were the key drivers of underperformance over the lifespan of the ICSP. The risk register of WFP, including a customized COVID-19 risk register, documented risks and mitigation measures appropriately.

Conclusion 6: WFP delivered a strong performance in terms of consideration of cross-cutting issues such as protection, adherence to humanitarian principles and emphasis placed on management of environmental risks. However, WFP needs to continue to build on its work to mainstream conflict

sensitivity in programme design and delivery and support progress towards delivery of a gender-transformative approach

276. WFP was committed to humanitarian principles in delivery of assistance to affected communities, although there were some challenges in some localities due to the prevailing security context. Protection issues are taken seriously, and risks mitigated. Environmental risks were identified appropriately and managed in the delivery of assistance.

277. Consideration of conflict sensitivities in programming was in evidence, but there were challenges in translating theory into practice. A greater focus on peacebuilding going forward warrants continued strengthening of conflict-sensitive capacities to ensure these considerations are reflected fully in programme design and delivery. Although attention to AAP grew over the life of the ICSP with the launch and scale-up of the CFM, the overall number of beneficiaries making complaints was very small relative to total numbers of beneficiaries, raising a question about whether the CFM system is serving beneficiaries adequately. Underreporting of beneficiary feedback by CPs is a cause for concern. More needs to be done to report back to beneficiaries on the impact of their complaints on programming or delivery. ICSP delivery took into account gender equality and women's empowerment issues, although further work is needed to support progress towards delivery of a gender-transformative approach.

Conclusion 7: South Sudan's context is extremely challenging, undermining potential to deliver sustainable impact

278. Sustainability was not considered sufficiently in the design of the ICSP due to the prevailing assumption of significant food insecurity throughout the period covered by the ICSP and its short-term perspective as a transitional/bridging framework for support to South Sudan. There was however a strategic shift over the life of the ICSP with an increased consideration of sustainability, most notably in its resilience building work although deeper consideration of approaches to building sustainable resilience is needed going forward. Nonetheless, the experience of WFP in delivery of the ICSP does indicate that some initiatives have the potential to be sustained in the future although protracted and frequent crises are barriers to the delivery of sustainable impact.

Conclusion 8: Throughout ICSP delivery, WFP in South Sudan has been cognisant of the strong inter-connections between promoting long-term food security, resilience and peacebuilding

279. In 2020, WFP has sought to position itself further as a peacebuilding actor²⁶⁰ in South Sudan through use of a partnership approach most notably in delivery of its flagship pilot CVR in GPAA/Jonglei, although stronger engagement of the latter project with some key South Sudanese institutional actors is needed. WFP faced significant challenges, impeding progress on the triple nexus during this ICSP, most notably weak governance at national and state levels, limited development funding and dependency on food assistance by the affected populations, as well as the absence of a long-term vision focused on the nexus in the ICSP. Political will and delivery of actions aligned to the terms of the Revitalized Peace Agreement for South Sudan are essential prerequisites to progress on the nexus. Although WFP has made a useful contribution to use of social protection approaches in South Sudan, funding for this remains highly inadequate.

Conclusion 9: WFP has a solid reputation as a rapid emergency responder. However, efficiency in the timely delivery of planned outputs was hindered by a number of factors, most outside WFP control, with some leading to unintended consequences for beneficiaries and CPs

280. WFP demonstrated a strong commitment and efficient operational capacity to timely delivery of assistance to the most vulnerable despite the challenging context. However, WFP could not deliver fully against all output expectations due to funding shortfalls, lack of access resulting from insecurity and conflict or flooding and gaps in warehousing facilities in remote areas. Additional impediments were caused by the COVID-19 restrictions (travel and personal contact with beneficiaries) which had an impact on pre-positioning of assistance and frequency of distributions. Changes to the timing of food distributions resulted in some unintended consequences and risks for beneficiaries and CPs, most notably transportation issues for beneficiaries when multiple rations were shared at one time, reduced awareness

²⁶⁰ WFP. 2020. South Sudan ACR.

by beneficiaries on the availability of food rations when timelines were changed, possible sale by beneficiaries of food rations leading to subsequent food insecurity and reputational issues for CPs, in the eyes of beneficiaries, as a result of changed plans.

Conclusion 10: WFP activities in South Sudan are delivered in a cost-efficient way

281. South Sudan is one of the most expensive countries for humanitarian operations. Funding constraints were a key driver of the serious consideration of WFP of cost efficiency in the delivery of assistance. Some cost-efficient measures put in place include cost sharing with UNICEF, significant reduction in the use of air transport, extension of pre-positioning coverage through the use of mobile storage structures, reduction in transportation costs, use of multi-year FLAs with CPs, reduction in duplications of beneficiaries registered (on SCOPE) and scaled-up use of CBT. Some logistics cost inefficiencies have resulted from challenges with use of GCMF due to funding delays and there were increased food losses, particularly in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion 11: Funding shortfalls have been a major issue in the delivery of the ICSP

282. Funding levels for the top five donors in each year accounted for between 79 and 92 percent of funding. Although the top five donors varied over the years, the United States consistently remained the top funder of the ICSP. Cuts in donor support indicate some degree of donor fatigue. There is a growing need for deeper consideration of new funding streams, for example from climate funds and international financial institutions (IFIs), to finance the next CSP. Earmarking of funds hindered flexibility to adapt the programme and make a strategic shift towards more resilience building activities.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

#	Recommendation	Level/nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
1	In its next country strategic plan for South Sudan, WFP should avoid spreading its resources too thinly.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	November 2022
1.1	To avoid spreading its resources too thinly, WFP should align the ambitions of the country strategic plan with the forecasted level of funding and, going forward, should focus on priority areas where long-term impact can be achieved in coordination with other humanitarian and development actors.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	November 2022
2	WFP should consider a number of opportunities to maximize the long-term and sustainable results of its interventions with a view to ensuring greater coherence throughout its portfolio – including synergies among strategic outcomes – and better supporting the transition of beneficiaries from activities under strategic outcome 1 to activities under other strategic outcomes.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, United Nations country team, Government of South Sudan, headquarters divisions	High	November 2022
2.1	To guide the formulation of an explicit vision of how it will deliver long-term change and impact through its next country strategic plan, WFP should develop a theory of change and a supporting narrative describing how it will deliver sustainable impact during implementation of the country strategic plan and beyond, including in addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	November 2022
2.2	To support progress on the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, in the next country strategic plan WFP should more explicitly set out its framework for supporting that progress and should recruit or deploy from the regional bureau specialists in	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, Emergencies and Transitions Service	High	December 2023

#	Recommendation	Level/nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
	social protection and peacebuilding who will promote a stronger emphasis on those areas in the country strategic plan.					
2.3	Given the increasing malnutrition rates in South Sudan WFP should work more proactively with humanitarian and development partners (including the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization) with a view to better understanding the causes and implications of malnutrition and supporting nutrition-related programming in the next country strategic plan.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, United Nations country team, Nutrition Division	High	December 2023
2.4	Building on the findings from political economy analyses and the identification of champions in national, state and local government, WFP should articulate the short-, medium- and long-term objectives of its country capacity strengthening work and set out a plan for that work based on its corporate country capacity strengthening framework and in coordination with other United Nations entities.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, United Nations country team, Government of South Sudan	High	November 2022
2.5	WFP should strengthen advocacy on integrated school-based health and nutrition programmes and place school feeding at the core of those programmes. WFP should work with communities, faith-based organizations, local governments and national and international non-governmental organizations to examine how complementary interventions that better support improved education outcomes and gender equality can be fostered in order to increase the contribution of the school feeding programme to those objectives. WFP should continue to work with the United Nations Children's Fund as a key partner in its education and nutrition activities.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, School-based Programmes unit, Nutrition Division	High	June 2023
2.6	In the next country strategic plan, WFP should give greater consideration to addressing the access constraints faced by some	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	Medium	November 2022

#	Recommendation	Level/nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
	groups (such as older persons, persons with disabilities and pastoralists) with a view to ensuring that their food and nutrition needs are met.					
3	To deliver on its ambition to increase the focus on resilience building in the next country strategic plan, WFP needs to take various steps.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, Resilience and Food Systems Service	High	January 2023
3.1	WFP should give greater consideration to its long-term vision for resilience building work and the approaches (market systems, food systems, community empowerment) that are the most appropriate for various groups and settings.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	January 2023
3.2	To inform strategic insights into, and the scale-up of approaches to, the transition from unconditional food assistance to resilience-oriented activities, and to support the tailoring of WFP interventions to better fit the needs and aspirations of beneficiaries, WFP should conduct research (possibly behavioural insight research) to increase its understanding of behaviours and the underlying objectives, constraints, situations and triggers that drive the transition of beneficiaries from dependence on relief support to self-reliance. Across WFP, there is a need for more sharing of good practices on and positive experiences of beneficiaries' transition from humanitarian to development-oriented support in order to inform the formulation of a strategy in that area.	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau, Resilience and Food Systems Service	High	June 2023
3.3	WFP should scale up the development of integrated teams with a view to moving from some degree of siloed implementation of activities to fully incorporating a resilience lens into its portfolio of activities in South Sudan and shifting the mindset of WFP and	Strategic	Country office	Regional bureau	High	January 2023

#	Recommendation	Level/nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
	cooperating partner staff from humanitarian to development thinking.					
4	Beneficiary registration and verification processes need to be made more efficient and research, assessment, monitoring and evaluation data and analyses should be better integrated into decision making structures.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau	Medium	April 2023
4.1	WFP should continue to improve the efficiency of biometric registration and verification processes to reduce the time that they require and the stress they cause for beneficiaries.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau	Medium	April 2023
4.2	WFP should address the gaps in capacity for the assessment of research, assessment and monitoring data in the country office and field offices and conduct a specific diagnostic review of monitoring, evaluation and learning systems with a view to informing better integration of those systems into decision making structures and data use by senior management and to improving knowledge management practices, including the sharing of data and evidence with partners.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau	Medium	January 2023
5	WFP should continue to strengthen approaches to a number of cross-cutting themes, including accountability to affected populations, conflict sensitivity and gender equality.	Operational	Country office	Cooperating partners, regional bureau, headquarters divisions	High	January 2023
5.1	To address beneficiaries' concerns regarding inadequate communication on ration cuts and reprioritization exercises, WFP and cooperating partners should expand the channels they use for sharing information by, for example, recording messages in local languages, broadcasting them at distribution sites and monitoring the effectiveness of communications with the involvement of local government.	Operational	Country office	Cooperating partners	High	June 2023

#	Recommendation	Level/nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
5.2	WFP should work closely with field offices and cooperating partners to ensure that all feedback from beneficiaries (including feedback received via informal channels) is logged and recorded on community feedback mechanisms, and the issues raised are addressed in a timely manner. Furthermore, helpdesks should be reinstated at all distribution sites (where not yet the case). To provide incentives for senior managers (those at head of field office level and above) to pay due attention to accountability to affected populations, the subject should be included in their performance appraisals. Feedback loops and reporting to beneficiaries on the outcomes and programmatic adjustments resulting from their feedback need to be strengthened.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau, Human Resources Division, cooperating partners	High	June 2023
5.3	WFP should take a long-term approach to achieving its aspirations regarding the progressive application of a gender-transformative approach by defining short-term activities that contribute to that long-term goal. Further research on identifying the enabling factors and good practices in the application of a gender-transformative approach is also recommended. WFP should consider investing in gender-related stand-alone projects that can be implemented by partners.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau, Gender Office	High	January 2023
5.4	WFP should build on its work to ensure that conflict sensitivity is mainstreamed into programme design and delivery by continuing to enhance internal capacity to promote consensus on a conflict-sensitive approach to all of its engagement in South Sudan and, in so doing, to contribute to corporate-level learning.	Operational	Country office	Cooperating partners, regional bureau, Emergencies and Transition Service	Medium	Ongoing

#	Recommendation	Level/nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
6	WFP needs to strengthen partnership arrangements in several areas.	Operational	Country office	Headquarters divisions, regional bureau	High	January 2023
6.1	To address funding constraints going forward, the country office should engage with headquarters and the regional bureau on revising the fundraising strategy for South Sudan by proactively exploring and considering new funding streams such as climate funds and international financial institutions and defining a fundraising strategy for its resilience building activities.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau, Private Partnerships and Fundraising Division, Washington Office, Climate and Disaster Risk Reduction Programmes Unit	High	January 2023
6.2	In the light of the annual delays in the procurement of food supplies, the country office and regional bureau should proactively encourage headquarters to more flexibly support pre-financing of food procurement in order to bridge the gap between the confirmation of donor contributions and the deadlines for food procurement and delivery and enable effective pre-positioning of supplies in advance of flooding or rainy seasons.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau, Strategic Resource Allocation Committee, Supply Chain Operations Division	High	January 2023
6.3	Where possible, WFP should sign field-level agreements of three years duration with its cooperating partners and should advocate multi-year funding commitments. The annual funding commitments made by certain donors, and the two-year duration of most field-level agreements, affect the forward planning of WFP activities.	Operational	Country office	Regional bureau, Private Partnerships and Fundraising Division	Medium	January 2023

#	Recommendation	Level/nature	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	Action deadline
6.4	While planning the next country strategic plan WFP should seek to broaden its engagement with South Sudanese stakeholders such as the Ministry of Peacebuilding with regard to peacebuilding interventions and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry for work on climate adaptation.	Operational	Country office	Government of South Sudan	High	November 2022

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