

World Food Programme (WFP)

JUNE 2024



OVERALL PERFORMANCE REFLECTIONS

WFP is responding to an increasing number of global conflicts and other crises. Needs have increased as ongoing emergencies have been supplemented by new conflicts in Haiti, the Sahel, Sudan, Ukraine and, most recently, the evolving conflicts in the Middle East. In this context, WFP has responded and scaled up effectively and its programmes have grown rapidly. However, WFP is now facing steep reductions in funding, combined with a highly restrictive humanitarian space and widespread violations of international humanitarian law – pressures that are not only felt by WFP but the whole humanitarian system. WFP is facing these external challenges while also working to address internal challenges of aid diversion and a major corporate restructuring.

This MOPAN assessment of WFP is therefore about what WFP must do to stay and deliver in an increasingly challenging global environment. Our overall conclusion is that WFP has retained key strengths and has made progress since the last MOPAN assessment in 2017-18, but there is also room for further improvement. The current global context reveals some weaknesses in WFP's approach and this assessment lays out a range of areas for current and future action.

This section provides an overview of the key findings from the assessment, focusing on areas of strength and outlining issues that WFP will still need to address to ensure it remains fit for the future to fulfil its mandate of working to end world hunger and promote nutrition and food security through saving and changing lives.



Food distribution in Rusayo, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

By ensuring the availability of food, WFP and its partners help to reduce the vulnerability of affected communities, thus helping them to get back on their feet and enabling displaced people to maintain a certain dignity and stability in difficult situations.

Photo:
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PROGRESS SINCE THE LAST MOPAN ASSESSMENT

MOPAN's 2017-18 assessment of WFP, published in 2019, highlighted five major areas for improvement. Some progress has been made in all areas (Box 1).

BOX 1. WFP's progress in areas previously Identified for improvement must be sustained

MOPAN's 2017-18 assessment of WFP identified five key areas in need of improvement. There has been progress in all areas, but more needs to be done.

1. WFP's new approach to partnerships has not yet been fully realised. This assessment finds that WFP has expanded its range and number of partners, including with the private sector and international financial institutions (IFIs), and now has over 1,000 NGO partners. Some national NGOs feel as though they are treated as implementing partners by WFP.
2. Structured workforce planning has not kept pace with other aspects of reforms – this assessment concludes that workforce planning has been strengthened through a range of corporate initiatives, but problems remain in contract lengths and types, incentives for national staff and deploying staff to remote locations.
3. The Corporate Results Framework (CRF) needs to be refined – this assessment concludes that the CRF has been strengthened and expanded, and there is a new compendium with cross-cutting indicators, but that staff have criticised the increasing number and complexity of indicators.
4. WFP's knowledge management system is not yet sufficiently integrated to support learning and improvement – this assessment concludes that WFP's knowledge generation remains strong, but staff have difficulty in accessing information for decision making and knowledge management requires further investment.

WFP has not yet systematically implemented all of its cross-cutting priorities. This assessment concludes that WFP has made progress, including on gender and protection but needs to do further work particularly on environmental sustainability, child protection and disability.

Source: MOPAN (2019) MOPAN 2017-18 Assessments: World Food Programme (WFP), see <https://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/wfp2017-18/WFP%20Report.pdf>

The remainder of this section highlights WFP's key strengths, current challenges and areas of improvement for the future.

Over 56%, or an estimated 7.1 million people, in South Sudan and more than 1.6 million children are suffering from malnutrition.

WFP provides lifesaving food and nutrition assistance, prioritising communities facing the highest levels of food insecurity.

Photo:
© WFP/Eulalia Berlanga





Refugees at Alemwach refugee camp, Ethiopia, receiving food assistance.

WFP provides food assistance to nearly 900,000 refugees in Ethiopia and also supports refugees in Somali, Gambella, Benishangul Gumuz, Oromia, SNNP and Afar regions of Ethiopia, providing refugees with cereals, pulses, vegetable oil and salt.

Photo:
© WFP/Claire Nevill

WFP'S KEY STRENGTHS

WFP demonstrates a unique capacity for humanitarian response

WFP is the first organisation that donors and other governments turn to when responding to a food crisis. WFP has an unparalleled local presence, reaching into remote locations, and an impressive speed of response. WFP has scaled up rapidly and effectively to address the increasing level and complexity of crises since 2018, including in the Sahel, Ukraine, Sudan and the evolving conflicts in the Middle East. It has strong logistics, dynamic financial mechanisms to pre-fund responses, and a committed and skilled workforce with high levels of mobility, although there are challenges in staffing remote locations, especially for women. WFP has demonstrated its adaptability through its strong performance during COVID-19. This adaptability will be vital as WFP faces a challenging and rapidly changing global context.

WFP exercises a clear leadership role in the humanitarian community

WFP takes a clear leadership role in the response to humanitarian emergencies through its own programmes and through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee cluster mechanisms. WFP leads the clusters on emergency telecommunications and logistics and is the co-lead with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in the food security cluster. WFP leads on access negotiations in non-refugee situations and collaborates well with governments and United Nations (UN) partners. It provides a range of vital, and highly appreciated common services for the humanitarian system, including the UN Humanitarian Air Service. WFP has expanded its range of cooperating partners at national and international levels. Relationships are generally strong, although some national co-operating partners feel they are only used as implementing agencies.

WFP has effectively decentralised its operations to country offices

Decentralisation has helped WFP work with and through country systems and actors and made its responses more context specific. Staff at country level feel empowered. The full rollout of country strategic plans (CSPs) has significantly strengthened WFP's planning and fundraising, and its ability to address cross-cutting issues. CSPs have also moved WFP towards multiannual results and more effective consultations with partners. They are supported by strong systems of design and evaluation. They are often aspirational but are accompanied by an operational plan with a more realistic financial scenario. It would be better if the public facing CSP more closely reflected forecast resource levels.

WFP is transparent with robust oversight functions

WFP has a strong internal culture of transparency. Staff are open about discussing issues. Almost all reports are published, including corporate planning, results and financial documents, evaluations and management responses, internal audit reports, audited annual accounts, and country level strategic plans and annual country reports (ACRs). The Inspector General is fully independent and operates rigorous internal audit and investigation functions, while the Evaluation Office was classified as a clear leader in terms of its independent evaluation function by a 2021 peer review. Oversight and judicial bodies are adequately resourced and have been protected from current budget cuts so far in 2024. However, the Office of the Inspector General, the Evaluation Office, the Ethics Office and the Office of the Ombudsman have all been requested to implement a 10% budget cut in 2025.

WFP'S CURRENT CHALLENGES

WFP is undertaking a necessary organisational restructuring at a demanding time

WFP is undergoing a major restructuring exercise to address perceived weaknesses in the current organisational structure. The restructuring is also to respond to severe reductions in operating budgets, which could have been anticipated earlier. Management's future vision for WFP is based on its geographical presence and having an effective toolkit of skills and instruments. This seems well suited to a lower funding environment, while still retaining WFP's ability to scale up rapidly in response to crises.

The assessment finds that the restructuring is a measured approach to addressing duplication and siloed working and offers the prospect of greater clarity and reduced costs. The restructuring process and associated budget cuts have created anxiety among staff, but have been implemented rapidly, thus minimising uncertainty. Although the aims and vision of the exercise are positive, it is too early for the MOPAN assessment team to form a view on its effectiveness. However, MOPAN encourages WFP to document lessons from the restructuring to inform future organisational growth and contraction.



Since the beginning of the war on Gaza in October 2023, WFP has delivered more than one million food parcels to internally-displaced families across the Gaza Strip.

Photo: © WFP/Alì Jadallah



Assistance to Afghani returnees from Pakistan as thousands of Afghans living in Pakistan cross back into Afghanistan after the Government of Pakistan's announcement that all undocumented Afghans must leave the country by 1 November 2023. WFP is provided emergency food assistance at border crossings and, in the first half of November, supported more than 200,000 people with fortified biscuits, in-kind food rations or cash assistance to help them cover their basic needs.

Photo: © WFP/
Philippe Kropf

WFP is addressing the causes of very serious aid diversion incidents

In 2023, WFP was alerted by the US to a major aid diversion in Ethiopia. Food distribution had been delegated to local government authorities without adequate supervision. This in turn led to food being diverted to feed the national army fighting in the Tigray region. In Somalia, aid intended for vulnerable communities was diverted to landowners hosting internally displaced persons (IDPs). These incidents have eroded donor trust in WFP, which will take some time to rebuild. They highlighted long-term weaknesses in procedures, staff roles, transparency and effective communications with donors. To mitigate risks in the future, WFP is rolling out a comprehensive reassurance plan, however:

- The plan will add significant costs in some areas, which donors need to recognise.
- WFP needs to have frank and honest discussions with donors and the Executive Board on risk tolerance levels, given the environments in which it works and the impossibility of eliminating aid diversion completely.

WFP needs to do more to address severe financial challenges

WFP faces significant financial risks with declining resources, heavy earmarking and a high dependence on its top donors. There is a risk that donors may insist more and more on funding their own political priorities rather than meeting needs, which would conflict with key humanitarian principles to which WFP adheres and affect its ability to support humanitarian crises based solely on considerations of need. WFP is seeking to diversify its funding base and access new sources of finance and has developed private sector, innovative financing, and country level financing strategies, but it does not have a comprehensive corporate funding strategy. In addition, WFP does not yet have a clear strategy for planning, delivering and demonstrating value for money, which will be critical in an increasingly tight funding environment. Country offices are facing appalling choices on budget cuts within their programmes and want greater guidance from HQ to help steer them through these difficult decisions.

WFP needs to further strengthen its implementation in the areas of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, and cross-cutting issues

WFP has improved its policies and infrastructure for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), and protection from sexual harassment (PSH). On PSEA, significant resources have been invested at HQ and in locations identified as high-risk, including leading inter-agency initiatives, and in a variety of training opportunities. However, in general, country offices lack the necessary resources to implement the policies or engage effectively with cooperating partners on issues of SEA. Furthermore, WFP is yet to mainstream its victim-centred approach, which was recently introduced into the normative framework for SEA, across SEA or SH prevention and response initiatives. WFP could also do better on cross-cutting issues such as mainstreaming gender and protection.

WFP'S FUTURE CHALLENGES

WFP needs to maintain its access to vulnerable beneficiaries

WFP faces growing challenges to meet the needs of those who require its support most. It is getting harder to assist a growing number of vulnerable beneficiaries in the context of more complex operating environments, shrinking humanitarian access and reduced and heavily earmarked resources. WFP will need to work together with a range of governments and other parties to maintain its funding for, and access to, those most in need, particularly in highly polarised conflict situations.

WFP must protect its reputation

WFP's reputation is being challenged. WFP received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020, in recognition of the organisation's role in promoting peace and acting to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war. However, recent events, in relation to aid diversion and ongoing conflicts, have challenged perceptions of WFP's ability to ensure adherence to humanitarian principles and eroded relations between field staff and management. WFP is seeking to address these issues.

WFP needs to clarify and communicate its mandate in the context of reduced resources

Management has confirmed that both "saving lives" and "changing lives" work will continue, as WFP seeks to link resilience building work to emergency support to reduce humanitarian need, and to work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. MOPAN agrees that this is appropriate, building on WFP's comparative advantage and geographical presence. However, this position has not yet been communicated effectively to staff and donors, some of whom favour a focus on core humanitarian work and question whether WFP has adequate resources and the right skills, experience and business model for working effectively on resilience and with development agencies.

Relationships between WFP and its member states and donors need to be improved

WFP needs to come together with its member states and donors to respond to their concerns and to address issues of aid quality and governance reform. WFP is and will remain reliant on a few donors for a large share of its overall funding. It needs to strengthen its relationships at all levels with major donors and address their concerns including targeting, biometrics, aid diversion, localisation, rationalising communications lines, lack of consultation, and last-minute fundraising drives based on threats of breaks in the food distribution pipeline. WFP receives short-term and heavily earmarked funding from its donors and is therefore unable to provide a substantial volume of high-quality funding to its partners. This limits WFP's adaptability and its ability to undertake multi-year planning and use development approaches. Donors would also like to see the 2023 governance review fully implemented.

WFP needs to continue to address staff contract issues and incentives

WFP's employees are the organisation's greatest asset. They demonstrate extraordinary courage and flexibility in responding to emergencies, often at considerable personal cost. They are the reason that WFP is able to scale up and respond. The organisation has a strong system of duty of care for its fixed-term staff. Nonetheless, the assessment heard a range of concerns about the uncertainty caused by short-term contracts and that incentives are not always adequate

for hardship postings. Some employees in-country have concerns about whether WFP will support them when things go wrong, given the organisation's response to the aid diversion in Ethiopia when senior country managers were removed from their posts. The staff survey in 2021 demonstrated progress from 2018 on a range of staff perceptions including the effectiveness of management, but further work needs to be done.

WFP needs to improve communication between senior leadership and staff

As noted above, there are several areas where senior leadership could have communicated better with staff across the organisation. These include meeting the demand from country offices for guidance on how to deal with funding cuts and to clarify WFP's position on continuing with both "saving lives" and "changing lives" approaches. Senior leadership could have provided greater reassurance to staff to allay anxiety around the recent restructuring and in the wake of the aid diversion issues in country offices. The current resource reductions, which will also affect employment levels, are adding to staff anxieties.

WFP needs to integrate its IT systems

WFP has a proliferation of IT tools and systems that do not talk to each other, with significant efficiency losses across the organisation. This issue has been raised over many years but not resolved. The Informational and Technology Strategy 2023-26 was published in 2023 and seeks to address these concerns. The strategy highlights the increases in WFP's digital investments over recent years but notes that many initiatives have been undertaken in isolation, leading to a fragmented IT landscape with increasing costs, and technology and data initiatives that are not interoperable. The strategy recognises the need to integrate data from a variety of systems to expedite decision making. The strategy is not costed, but significant investment will clearly be required to address these issues.



WFP distributes emergency assistance to people who are seeking refuge in Osma Degna School in Port Sudan after conflict spilled over into Gezira State.

WFP has so far supported around 40,000 people from Gezira State who fled further east to Red Sea, Kassala, Gedaref and Blue Niles States.

In Port Sudan, people are seeking shelter across dozens of locations and public buildings, such as at Osman Degna School, where WFP carried out distributions in January.

Photo: © WFP/
Abubakar Garelnabei

WFP needs to give greater attention to learning, results reporting and knowledge management

WFP has placed more focus on systems for compliance and accountability to donors than for learning and adjustments to interventions. It does not report on failure and its monitoring systems do not adequately identify poorly performing programmes. Results are reported at activity levels, but further development is needed on initiatives to monitor higher-level results, combined with more comprehensive value for money methodologies. WFP is a strong generator of knowledge but does not have effective knowledge management systems to share learning across countries or to present knowledge in a form that useful for decision makers at country level. Artificial Intelligence tools have substantial potential to bring improvements in these areas.

CONCLUSION

WFP retains substantial strengths but is facing increasing financial and operational challenges. To ensure that WFP is better placed to tackle these challenges, the MOPAN assessment team has identified a number of areas for performance improvement moving forward. MOPAN will monitor progress against these areas, including in the next assessment of WFP (Box 2).

BOX 2. WFP's main strengths, current issues, and areas for improvement
Main strengths

- WFP demonstrates unique capacity for humanitarian response.
- WFP exercises a clear leadership role in the humanitarian community.
- WFP has effectively decentralised its organisation to empower country offices.
- WFP is transparent with robust oversight and evaluation functions.

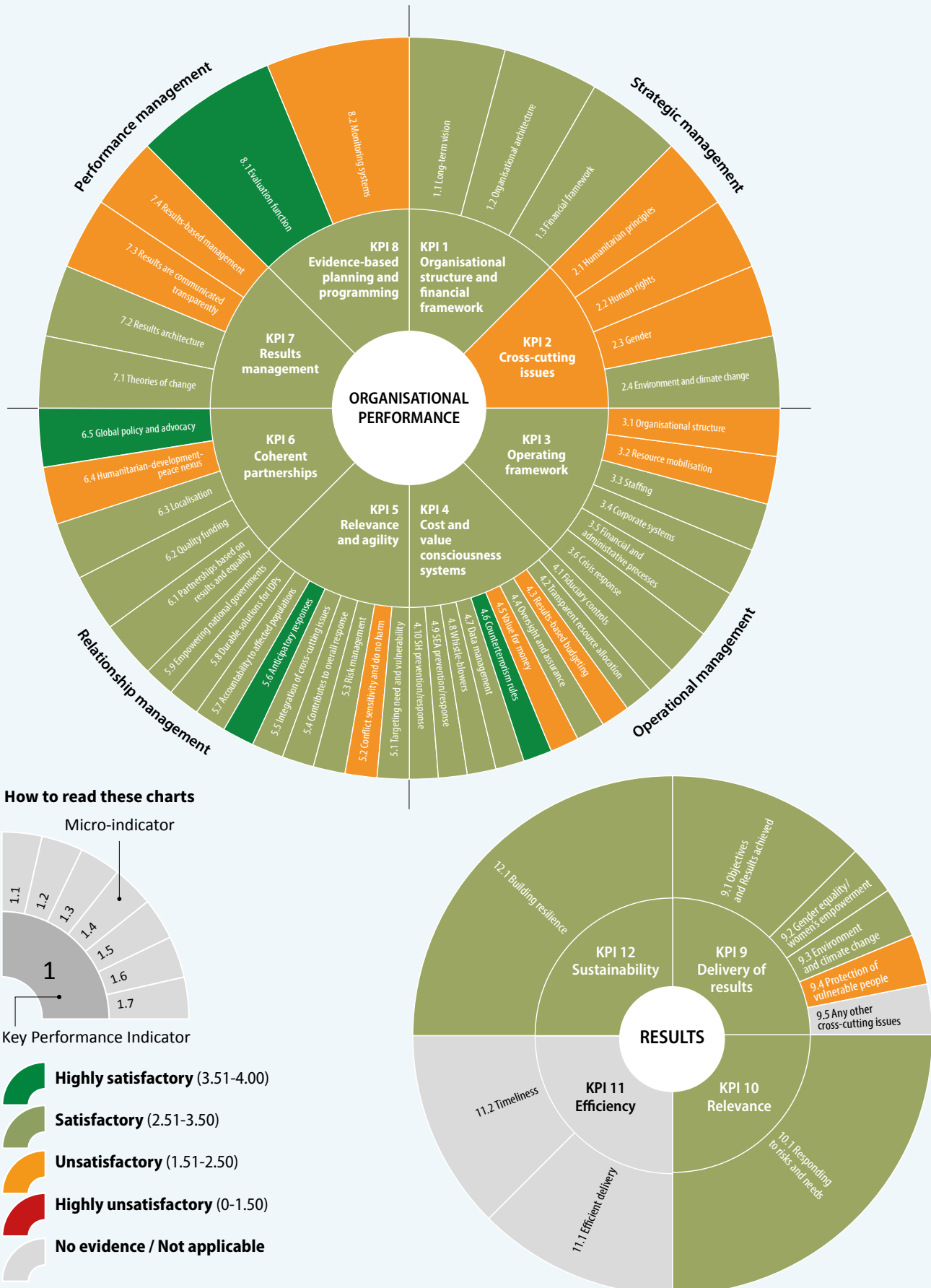
Current issues

- WFP's organisational restructuring needs to be seen through in a challenging environment.
- WFP must assure donors that it has dealt effectively with the causes of aid diversion.
- WFP needs to address current financial challenges, which threaten the extent and flexibility of its programmes.
- WFP needs to consolidate its progress on PSEA and PSH with more resources at country level and full implementation of the victim-centred approach.

Areas for Improvement

- WFP needs to maintain its access to vulnerable populations.
- WFP must address reputational risk.
- WFP needs to clarify its mandate in the context of reduced resources.
- Relationships between WFP and donors need to be improved.
- WFP needs to continue to address staff concerns on contractual terms and incentives.
- WFP needs to improve communication between senior leadership and staff.
- WFP need to integrate IT systems, improve results reporting and knowledge management.
- WFP needs to accelerate efforts to diversify its funding base.

FIGURE 1: WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME'S PERFORMANCE RATING SUMMARY



ABOUT WFP

WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency with more than 23,000 staff, of whom 87% are field based. It was founded in 1961 and delivered its first programme in 1963. It has a dual mandate, often summarised as “saving lives” (meeting food and nutrition needs in emergencies) and “changing lives” (building resilience in communities and addressing the root causes of hunger). It aims to bring life-saving relief in emergencies and to use food aid to promote peace, stability and prosperity for people recovering from conflict and disasters.

WFP is funded by voluntary contributions, principally from government donors. Contributions received rose steadily from USD 4.4 billion in 2013 to USD 9.6 billion in 2021. Global food crises led to a record contribution for WFP in 2022 of over USD 14 billion, which was nevertheless lower than the identified budgetary needs of over USD 20 billion. WFP received 40% less in contributions in 2023 at USD 8.5 billion, which is in line with pre-COVID-19 contribution levels. In 2022, WFP reached a total of 160 million people, representing a 25% increase from 2021. 53% of people reached in 2022 were women and girls.

WFP is present in over 120 countries and territories, overseen by 6 regional bureaux. WFP works with governments, other international organisations and over 1,000 NGOs around the world to implement its programmes. In 2020, WFP was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020 “for its efforts to combat hunger, for its contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas and for acting as a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict.” WFP's Executive Director, Ms Cindy McCain, has held the position since 5 April 2023.



WFP has recently been awarded an in-kind contribution of high-quality rice for the Rohingya refugees from Korea's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA). After more than a month of journey, the rice donation from the Republic of Korea arrived at Chittagong Port, Bangladesh.

Photo:
© WFP/Saikat Mojumder

WFP in figures

INSTITUTIONAL LEADS FOR THE MOPAN ASSESSMENT

Switzerland, Türkiye, United State of America



In 2022, WFP reached a total of **160 million people**, a 25% increase from 2021.



WFP is present in **over 120 countries** and territories, overseen by **6 regional bureaux**.



As of January 2024, WFP had **23,500 staff**, more than 85% of whom are field-based.



In 2023 WFP received a total of **USD \$8.5 billion** in contributions.

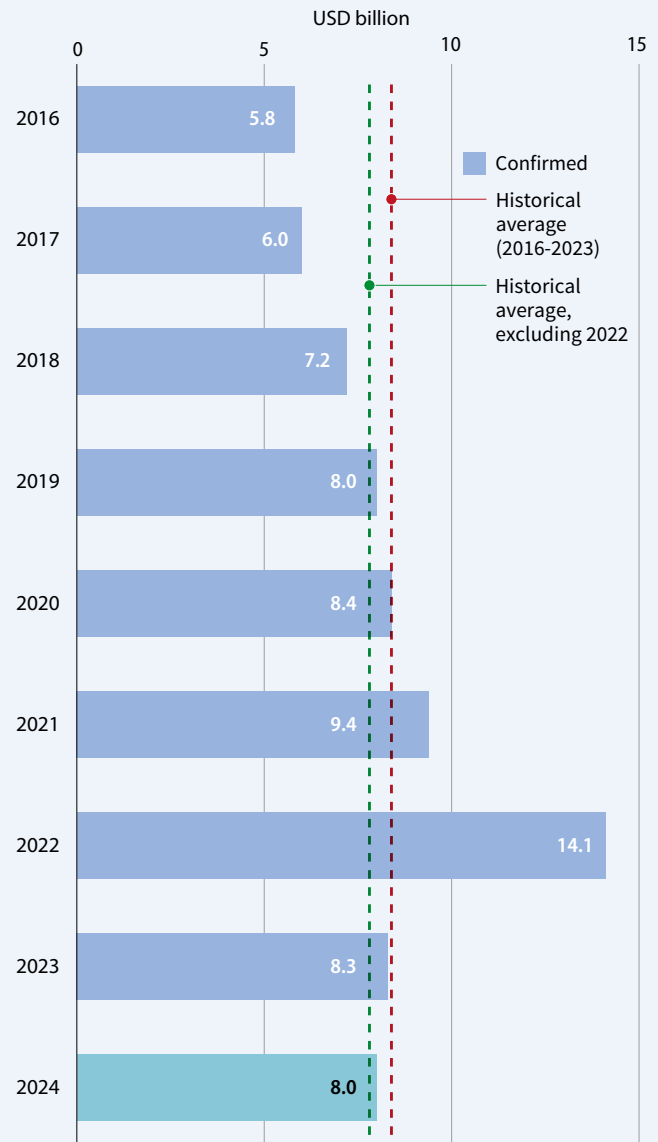


Cash-based transfers account for approximately **35% of WFP's total programming**.

MOPAN MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS TO WFP IN 2023 (as of May 2024)

| Member | Contributions (USD) |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| USA | 3 053 992 793 |
| Germany | 1 329 068 729 |
| Canada | 306 934 019 |
| United Kingdom | 290 941 716 |
| Norway | 224 592 452 |
| Japan | 208 974 498 |
| Sweden | 199 223 703 |
| France | 180 564 829 |
| Switzerland | 122 034 174 |
| Netherlands | 88 932 670 |
| Republic of Korea | 76 554 060 |

CONTRIBUTIONS 2013-2023, in USD billions



| Member | Contributions (USD) |
|-------------|---------------------|
| Australia | 72 713 016 |
| Denmark | 52 488 383 |
| Ireland | 38 042 012 |
| Belgium | 33 513 997 |
| Finland | 31 068 236 |
| Spain | 26 331 084 |
| Italy | 24 716 891 |
| New Zealand | 17 825 433 |
| Luxembourg | 16 734 688 |
| Qatar | 5 401 749 |

Source: WFP, May 2024

ABOUT THIS ASSESSMENT

This is the third MOPAN assessment of WFP, championed by Switzerland, the United States, and Türkiye on behalf of the MOPAN network. WFP was last assessed by MOPAN in 2017-18 (published in 2019).

This assessment covers the period from January 2019 to January 2024, asking whether WFP is fit for purpose in a rapidly evolving global context. The assessment draws on multiple lines of evidence (documentary, survey and interviews) from sources within and outside the organisation, to validate and triangulate findings across 12 KPIs, which are in turn broken down into more than 220 individual indicators.

METHODOLOGY APPLIED IN THIS ASSESSMENT

MOPAN's 2022 study on Rethinking Effective Humanitarian Organisations (MOPAN, 2022) concluded that MOPAN needed to adapt its framework for assessing organisations working in crises to better reflect the nature of humanitarian operations – including the policy environment – and the practical requirements of working in crisis situations. MOPAN then worked under the guidance of a humanitarian advisory group – including MOPAN members, multilateral organisations, policy leaders and think tanks – to develop an adapted framework for multilateral organisations primarily working in crisis contexts. That framework was applied for this assessment. Key adaptations include:

- new crisis-specific areas, such as anticipatory action, humanitarian principles, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, localisation and accountability to affected populations;
- increased focus on other critical areas such as procurement and staff safety and security;
- applying a crisis-specific lens to areas such as gender and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH).

The adapted framework aligns to the five MOPAN 3.1 performance areas: strategic, operational, relationship, performance management and results. However, the micro-indicators (MIs) were adapted to ensure that they reflect the due diligence and learning needs of MOPAN members and multilateral organisations. Accordingly, the elements to guide the rating against the MOPAN rating scale were also adapted to fit these MIs.

ABOUT MOPAN

MOPAN is a network of 22 members¹ that assesses multilateral organisations, shape performance standards, and champion learning and insights to strengthen development and humanitarian results and promote accountability. Capitalising on the network's unique cross-multilateral system perspective and expertise, MOPAN members work together to deliver relevant, impartial, high-quality and timely performance information as a public good through an inclusive and transparent approach. MOPAN's performance information mitigates risks, informs decision-making and supports change, helping to increase knowledge and trust among all stakeholders and ultimately to achieve a stronger and better-performing multilateral system.



For more
information

1. Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States. *Türkiye and New Zealand are observers.