



World Food Programme  
Programme Alimentaire Mondial  
Programa Mundial de Alimentos  
برنامج الأغذية العالمي

**Executive Board**  
First regular session  
Rome, 25–27 February 2019

---

|                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Distribution: General | Agenda item 7      |
| Date: 25 January 2019 | WFP/EB.1/2019/7-B  |
| Original: English     | Evaluation reports |
|                       | For consideration  |

Executive Board documents are available on WFP's website (<https://executiveboard.wfp.org>).

---

## Summary report on the evaluation of the Ethiopia country portfolio (2012–2017)

### Executive summary

The independent evaluation covered all WFP activities in Ethiopia from 2012 to 2017. It assessed WFP's alignment and strategic positioning in the country, its decision making and the overall performance and results of the portfolio.

*Country context.* Ethiopia's population exceeds 100 million people and there is great diversity in climate and livelihood patterns throughout the country. Despite rapid economic growth, millions of people remain poor and are vulnerable to climate and other shocks. There are large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons. Major droughts occurred in 2015/16 and 2016/17. The Government leads the humanitarian response and is WFP's implementing partner for most operations.

*WFP operations.* WFP programmes for supporting Ethiopian nationals during the period evaluated included humanitarian assistance and safety net support for vulnerable households experiencing shocks, targeted support for nutrition, school feeding and various pilot activities supporting livelihoods. Capacity building was an important element of logistics and other activities. WFP led the provision of food assistance for refugees, which included supplementary feeding and school feeding programmes. Additional operations supported humanitarian logistics. Total expenditure was about USD 2 billion.

*Strategic positioning.* The country office had a formal strategy for 2012–2015. Although the strategy was not renewed, a major structure and staffing review was carried out after the period of its implementation with a view to aligning staffing levels with funding. WFP's strategic positioning throughout the period evaluated was found to be appropriate, but WFP was largely reactive and followed a pattern of engagement that was established before 2012. However, WFP and external

*In line with the Evaluation Policy (2016–2021) (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-A/Rev.1), to respect the integrity and independence of evaluation findings the editing of this report has been limited and as a result some of the language in it may not be fully consistent with the World Food Programme's standard terminology or editorial practices. Please direct any requests for clarification to the Director of Evaluation.*

---

#### Focal points:

Ms A. Cook  
Director of Evaluation  
tel.: 066513-2030

Ms E. Figus  
Evaluation Officer  
tel.: 066513-2065

stakeholders perceived a decline in strategic clarity. WFP aligned its activities closely with national policies and systems, usually working with other agencies under government leadership.

*Decision making and influence.* Chronic weaknesses in monitoring, reporting and evaluation constrained learning and fundraising. Nevertheless, WFP influenced approaches to nutrition work, school feeding and the adaptation of humanitarian and development support to conditions in pastoral regions. The Government exerts strong leadership in food security and humanitarian response, and WFP's role in meeting needs is largely determined by the preferences of the Government and donors. As the roles of Government and international non-governmental organizations increased throughout the period evaluated, the share and geographical scope of WFP food assistance changed with an increasing focus on the more challenging Somali and Afar regions.

*Portfolio results.* WFP played a major role in preventing the 2015/16 drought from becoming catastrophic and averting famine in Ethiopia's pastoral lowlands. The country office used the Global Commodity Management Facility and the Berbera corridor in order to reduce lead times and increase volumes, providing logistics support to the Government in addition to its own deliveries. WFP's main programmes – humanitarian assistance, support for safety nets, nutrition support, school feeding, refugee support – were all broadly effective. Threats to effectiveness came from resource constraints (especially for refugee support) and weaknesses in the targeting of programmes to which WFP contributes. There were major improvements in logistics efficiency, and biometric identification increased the efficiency of refugee assistance. Overall, the use of cash-based transfers increased but less than it could have done according to evidence uncovered by the evaluation team.

The *recommendations* stemming from the evaluation findings have the aim of guiding strategic planning. Discontinuity in country office leadership adversely affected WFP's performance and reputation and must not be allowed to recur. Preparation of a country strategic plan must be used as an opportunity for engaging with the Government and other stakeholders in defining WFP's future role with the aim of supporting resilience at the individual, household and national levels. Planning of nutrition activities requires special attention, as do joint efforts to meet humanitarian responsibilities towards refugees. WFP must address weaknesses in monitoring, reporting and learning, while further strengthening its gender strategy, adherence to humanitarian principles and accountability to affected populations in Ethiopia.

### **Draft decision\***

The Board takes note of the summary evaluation report of the Ethiopia country portfolio (2012–2017) set out in document WFP/EB.1/2019/7-B and the management response WFP/EB.1/2019/7-B/Add.1 and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account the considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

---

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

## Introduction

### Evaluation features

1. The country portfolio evaluation covered all WFP operations in Ethiopia from 2012 to 2017. It assessed WFP's alignment and strategic positioning, the quality of its strategic decision making and the performance and results of its portfolio of activities. Fieldwork in April 2018 and interviews with more than 200 stakeholders supplemented data and document reviews. The evaluation took place in parallel with preparation of an interim country strategic plan (ICSP) for 2019–2020 and its findings will support preparation of a full country strategic plan (CSP).

### Context

2. Ethiopia's population exceeds 100 million people. Its system of ethnic federalism<sup>1</sup> comprises two city administrations and nine regions of varying sizes and levels of development. The pastoral Afar and Somali regions tend to have the worst socio-economic indicators. Ethiopia hosts more than 900,000<sup>2</sup> refugees, mainly from South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and the Sudan, in 26 camps across the country. Recent conflict between Somali and Oromo communities resulted in the internal displacement of more than 1 million conflict-affected people, bringing the national total of internally displaced persons to about 1.3 million at the time of the evaluation.
3. Economic growth averaged 11 percent over the past seven years. The proportion of the population living in poverty declined from 38.7 percent in 2005 to 29.6 percent in 2010/11 and to an estimated 23.5 percent in 2016. Nonetheless, Ethiopia remains one of Africa's poorest countries, with a per capita income of USD 1,530 per year. Rapid population growth results in very high absolute numbers of people in poverty: 25 million Ethiopians live below or just above the poverty line, making them vulnerable to climate shocks and seasonal food insecurity. Despite recent improvements, an estimated 38 percent of children aged under 5 are stunted because of chronic malnutrition and 10 percent are wasted because of acute malnutrition. One fifth of women and girls of reproductive age are undernourished.<sup>3</sup> Women's rights are constitutionally guaranteed, but Ethiopia still ranks 115th of 144 countries on the Gender Parity Index.<sup>4</sup>
4. Ethiopia's mountainous landscape and location in the Horn of Africa result in enormous variations in agro-ecology and livelihoods. Most people depend on rainfed agriculture or pastoralism, making the country highly vulnerable to rainfall shocks.

---

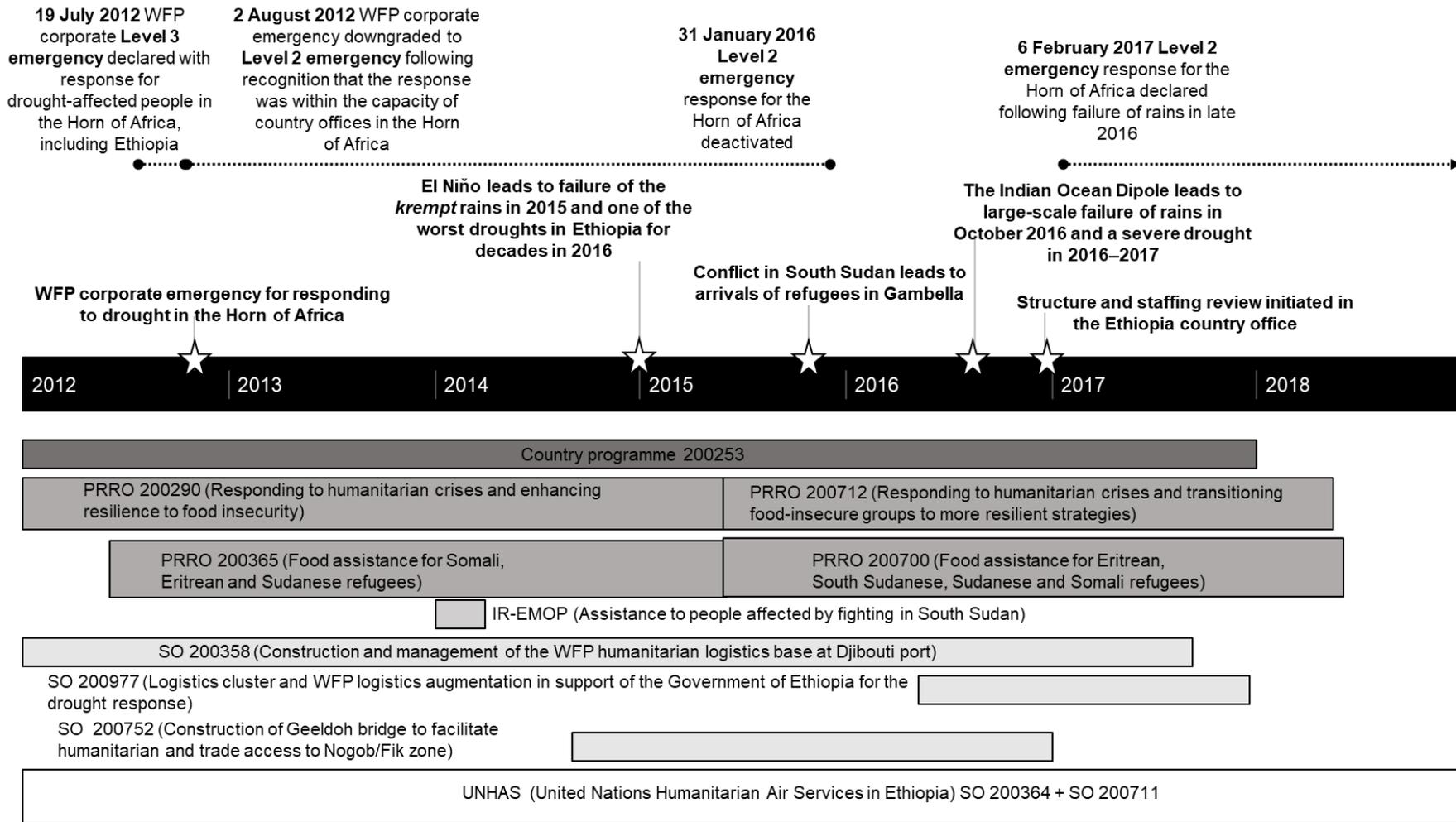
<sup>1</sup> Ethnic federalism is a federal system of national government in which the federated units are defined according to ethnicity.

<sup>2</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) figures for January 2018.

<sup>3</sup> 22.4 percent according to the Central Statistical Agency and the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) Program. 2017, *Ethiopia – Demographic and Health Survey 2016*. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR328/FR328.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> World Economic Forum, 2017. The Global Gender Gap Report 2017. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2017>.

**Figure 1: Chronological overview of the portfolio**



IR-EMOP: immediate-response emergency operation

PRRO: protracted relief and recovery operation

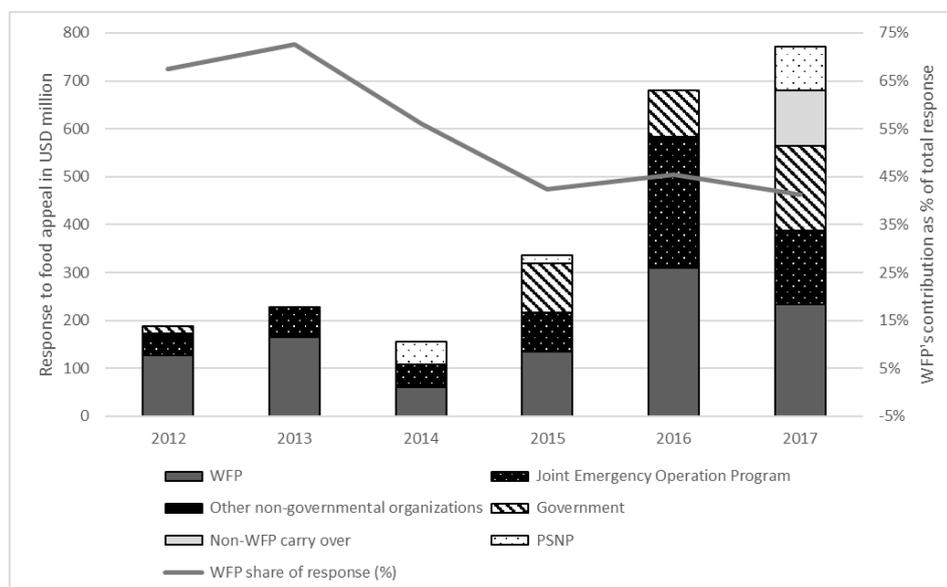
SO: special operation

5. From 2012 to 2017 between 5 and 8 million people received support through the Government's rural safety net – the productive safety net programme (PSNP)<sup>5</sup> – and between 2 and 10 million received humanitarian food assistance. Recent years have seen severe crises. Rain failure in 2015 led to almost 19 million people receiving food assistance in the form of safety net transfers or general food distributions in 2016, and poor lowland rains in 2016/17 caused severe food crises for pastoralists.
6. Although heavily dependent on official development assistance,<sup>6</sup> the Government exerts strong leadership in food security and humanitarian response. It is WFP's main implementing partner, although WFP also partners with non-governmental organizations, particularly on nutrition programmes.

### WFP strategy

7. A formal WFP strategy covered the period from 2012 to 2015. There was no formal strategy for later years.
8. The main drivers of humanitarian need were successive arrivals of large numbers of refugees, especially from South Sudan, and major droughts in recent years (see figure 1).
9. Although WFP delivers and supports the delivery of humanitarian assistance in virtually all of Ethiopia, changes in the division of labour among humanitarian actors have led to an increasing focus on Somali region, whose share of WFP in-kind food assistance rose from about 60 percent in 2015 to more than 90 percent in 2017.

**Figure 2: Humanitarian response delivery channels (USD million) and WFP share (%), 2012–2017**



Source: Evaluation team's calculations from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs data. Covers only the humanitarian response for Ethiopian nationals.  
JEOP: Joint Emergency Operations Plan

<sup>5</sup> Launched in 2005 and jointly funded by the Government and development partners, Ethiopia's PSNP is the largest social safety net programme in Africa. It provides food and/or cash transfers to food-insecure households in chronically food-insecure districts (*woredas*). Most households earn their safety net transfers through participation in labour-intensive public works, but unconditional transfers are provided to households without able-bodied adult labour.

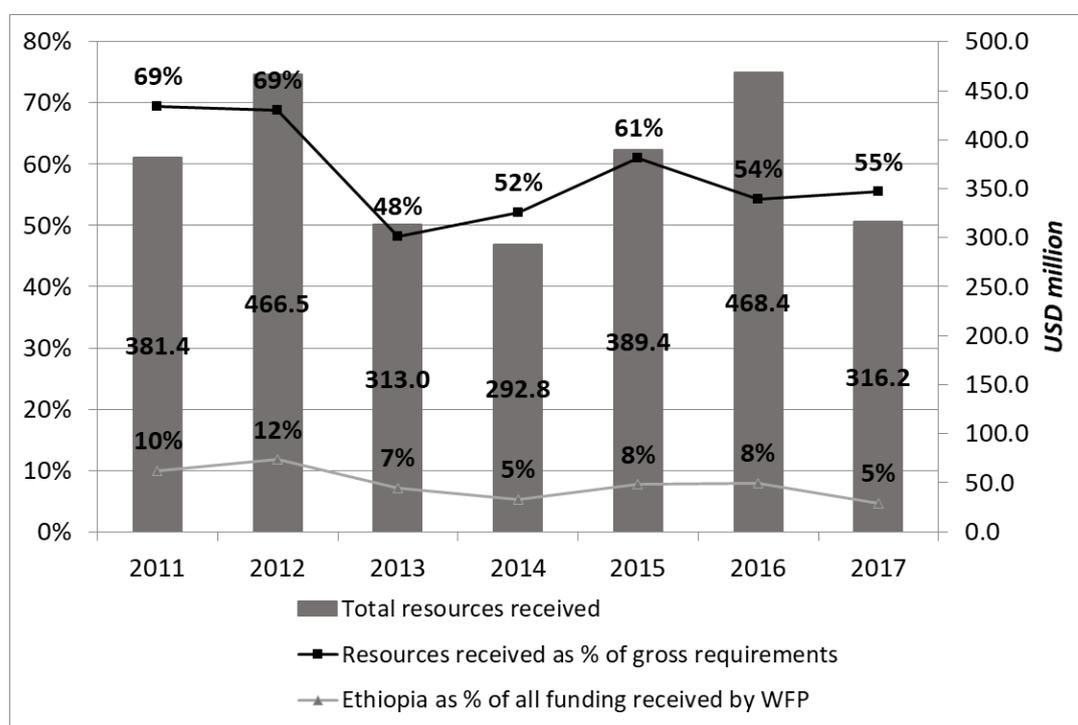
<sup>6</sup> Official development assistance of more than USD 4 billion in 2016 represented 5.6 percent of gross national income (according to data provided by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). Official development assistance funded more than a third of the annual budget.

10. This partly explains why, although the value in United States dollars of WFP's response for Ethiopian nationals rose dramatically during the crises of 2015/16 and 2016/17, WFP's share of the total response fell sharply (figure 2). WFP managed about 70 percent of distributions in 2012–2013, but only 40–45 percent in the last three years of the period evaluated.

### WFP portfolio

11. Ethiopia is one of WFP's largest operations. Expenditure during 2012–2017 totalled just over USD 2 billion; receipts were nearly 70 percent of requests in 2011/12 but only 57 percent over the whole period (figure 3). Ethiopia's share of WFP global funding declined from 10 to 5 percent between 2011 and 2017. WFP's largest donors to the Ethiopia portfolio were the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada and the European Commission.

**Figure 3: WFP Ethiopia funding: requests versus receipts, 2011–2017**



Source: Evaluation team's analysis of data from the WFP donor information hub.

12. Total staff in Addis Ababa and 17 sub-offices and area offices rose from 660 in 2011 to almost 850 in 2017. Major efforts to reduce staff numbers began in 2016 and by 2018 were in their final stages. However, the effects do not yet show clearly in staffing data because the structure and staffing review coincided with successive emergencies, which required additional staff, and the process of separating from "retrenched" staff members is slow. The proportion of international staff fell steadily from 10 percent in 2012 to 7 percent in April 2018. There is a major gender imbalance, especially among national and field office staff; sub-offices in Somali and Afar regions have the fewest women staff members.
13. Figure 1 shows the WFP operations implemented during the period evaluated: a country programme<sup>7</sup> and five protracted relief and recovery operations (PRROs). Two successive

<sup>7</sup> Country Programme Ethiopia 200253 (2012–2015) (WFP/EB.2/2011/8/2).

PRROs addressed humanitarian crisis and supported resilience to food insecurity.<sup>8</sup> Three others ran consecutively for assisting refugees.<sup>9</sup> Five special operations supported humanitarian logistics; the two largest were for the construction of a humanitarian logistics base in Djibouti and a road bridge in Somali region.

14. WFP programmes for Ethiopian nationals, which accounted for more than 70 percent of expenditures, included humanitarian assistance and safety net support for vulnerable households, targeted nutrition support, school feeding and various pilot projects related to livelihoods. Capacity building was an important element of logistics and other programmes. In programmes for refugees, which accounted for nearly a quarter of expenditures, WFP took the lead in providing basic food assistance and supporting supplementary feeding and school feeding programmes.
15. WFP made increasing use of cash-based transfers, but they continued to account for only a small proportion of total expenditures, accounting for about 12 percent by value of WFP operations for Ethiopian nationals and less than 10 percent of operations for refugees in 2017.

## Evaluation findings

### WFP's strategic alignment and positioning

16. All the main elements of the WFP portfolio were relevant to Ethiopia's humanitarian and development needs and WFP remained relevant by responding well to emerging needs. However, at the time of the evaluation, WFP and other humanitarian actors were not yet meeting the needs of conflict-affected internally displaced persons as systematically as those of other distressed people. The scale of humanitarian needs restricted WFP's scope for development work, but WFP has been active among agencies seeking to strengthen work at the humanitarian–development nexus. WFP's strong focus on pastoral lowlands, particularly in Somali region, was also relevant. The Government and other partners recognize the challenges of working effectively in these difficult settings and value WFP's willingness and ability to do so.
17. The Government is WFP's main partner. This ensures that WFP's programmes are strongly coherent with national policies and strategies, and there are close working relationships between WFP and core government agencies. WFP activities are generally integrated with national systems for targeting and delivery. Using government systems is beneficial in providing opportunities for dialogue and influence and pathways for sustainability, but there are trade-offs between working within government-led systems and fully adhering to WFP guidelines. WFP is not autonomous in targeting and sometimes accepts standards of service that are lower than its norms, when doing so allows wider coverage.
18. Government-led coalitions are the main framework for ensuring WFP's coherence with other United Nations agencies and development partners. The United Nations development assistance framework plays a secondary role in ensuring coherence among United Nations agencies. Throughout the period covered by the evaluation, WFP had particularly strong working relationships with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and strengthened its relationship with the World Bank.

---

<sup>8</sup> PRRO – Ethiopia 200290 (2012–2015) (WFP/EB.2/2011/9-C/2) and PRRO – Ethiopia 200712 (2015–2018) (WFP/EB.A/2015/9-B/2).

<sup>9</sup> PRRO 10127.3 (2009–2012) (WFP/EB.2/2008/8-B/3); PRRO – Ethiopia 200365 (2012–2015) (WFP/EB.1/2012/8/3) and PRRO – Ethiopia 200700 (2015–2018) (WFP/EB.2/2014/8-B/6). In addition, IR-EMOP 200656 from January to March 2014 provided assistance to people affected by fighting in South Sudan.

19. WFP's orientation and activities in Ethiopia have been consistent with its evolving global strategies and policies. It will take time to adapt fully to the gender policy of 2015; new policies on the environment, climate change and emergency preparedness, all adopted in 2017, are too recent to have been reflected in the portfolio. Country office staff and management recognize the importance of the approaches to and concepts of resilience in WFP's 2015 policy, but are still absorbing their implications. They have tended to focus on resilience at the household and individual levels, while WFP's support for national logistics and emergency-preparedness systems also contributes to national resilience.
20. WFP's partners were strategically appropriate. However, WFP's strategic positioning continued patterns set before 2012; the main changes were matters of adaptation to changing circumstances rather than choice. For example, Somali region became more prominent mainly because of WFP's reduced share in the delivery of humanitarian assistance elsewhere in Ethiopia; this in turn accentuated WFP's role in technical support and capacity development for national systems. External stakeholders and recent leadership in the country office agree that WFP in Ethiopia has lacked a sufficiently well-articulated strategy. Several initiatives linked to livelihoods had the aim of complementing emergency work, but some donor representatives have perceived them as detracting from WFP's core emergency-related business.

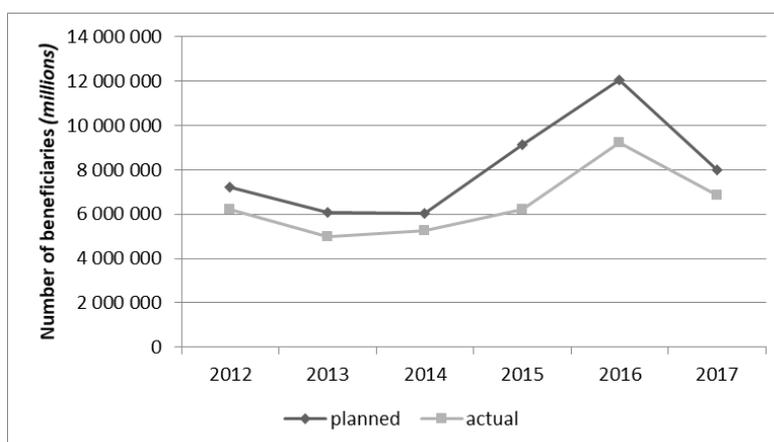
#### **Factors influencing WFP's decision making**

21. Space for strategic decision making was limited by the inherited patterns already noted and by the government-led frameworks within which WFP works. The Government leads the biannual humanitarian needs assessments, and WFP's role in meeting needs is largely determined by the preferences of the Government and donors. As shown in figure 2, the role of the Government and non-governmental organizations increased while the share and geographical scope of WFP deliveries decreased.
22. WFP's ability to innovate has been limited by difficulty in obtaining funding in an increasingly difficult environment for international aid. There were also internal constraints: discontinuities in the country office's leadership were detrimental, and the office's work in recent years was dominated by a structure and staffing review, which was necessary but morale-sapping and added to the burden of senior staff who were already stretched, not least by the demands of concurrent emergencies. There are strong external perceptions that WFP has not been as effective as it needs to be in joint planning and coordination forums at all levels. However, there is also appreciation of the calibre of certain WFP staff members and the value of WFP's contribution in responding to major crises.
23. There are several examples of successful advocacy and of the Government seeking to learn from WFP approaches. However, WFP's own learning from experience was hampered by serious deficiencies in monitoring and reporting and by weaknesses in managing and responding to evaluations. Beyond obligatory corporate reporting, the use and analysis of data were weak; the evaluation team found that available outcome indicators had little explanatory power, and WFP paid too little attention to the wider monitoring and evaluation frameworks of the national programmes to which it contributed. The quality, timeliness and transparency of reporting were regarded as weak by major donors, although the difficulties of operating through government systems, particularly in Somali region, were acknowledged, as were some recent improvements. The absence of an operational country strategy since 2015 resulted in corporate learning being less systematic than it could have been.

## Portfolio performance and results

24. Figure 4 shows that during the period evaluated there were nearly 5 million WFP beneficiaries as a minimum (in 2013–2014) rising towards 9 million during the response to *El Niño* in 2016, but actual total beneficiaries were fewer than planned for every year. The shortfall in beneficiaries was far less than the shortfall in funding noted in figure 2, meaning that assistance was spread more thinly than planned.

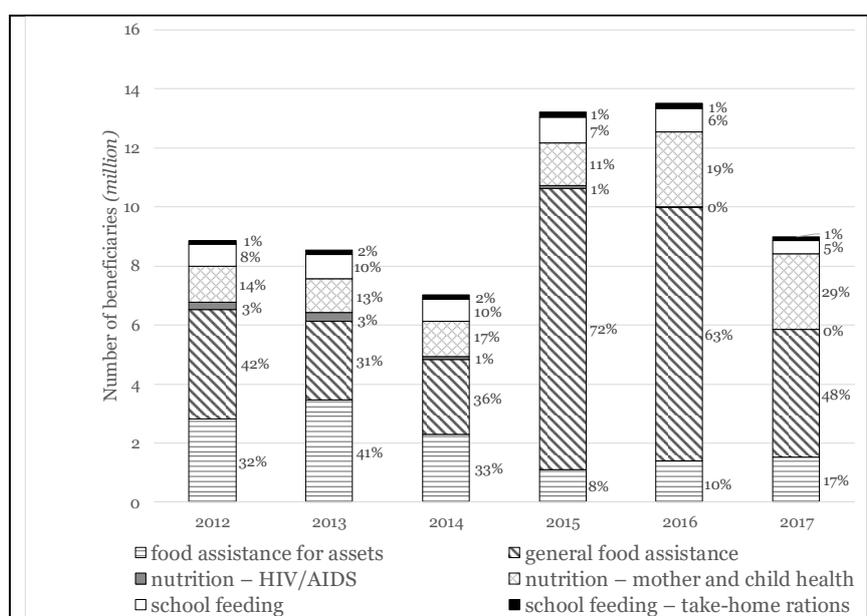
**Figure 4: Total planned versus actual beneficiaries, 2012–2017**



Sources: Standard project reports for 2012–2017.

25. Figure 5 shows the changes in beneficiary numbers by activity. Increasing shares of beneficiaries of general food assistance and nutrition support reflect emergency feeding during recent droughts, while the declining proportion of food assistance for assets beneficiaries reflects reductions in funding for such work and the reduced geographical scope of WFP support for the PSNP.

**Figure 5: Beneficiaries by activity, 2012–2017**



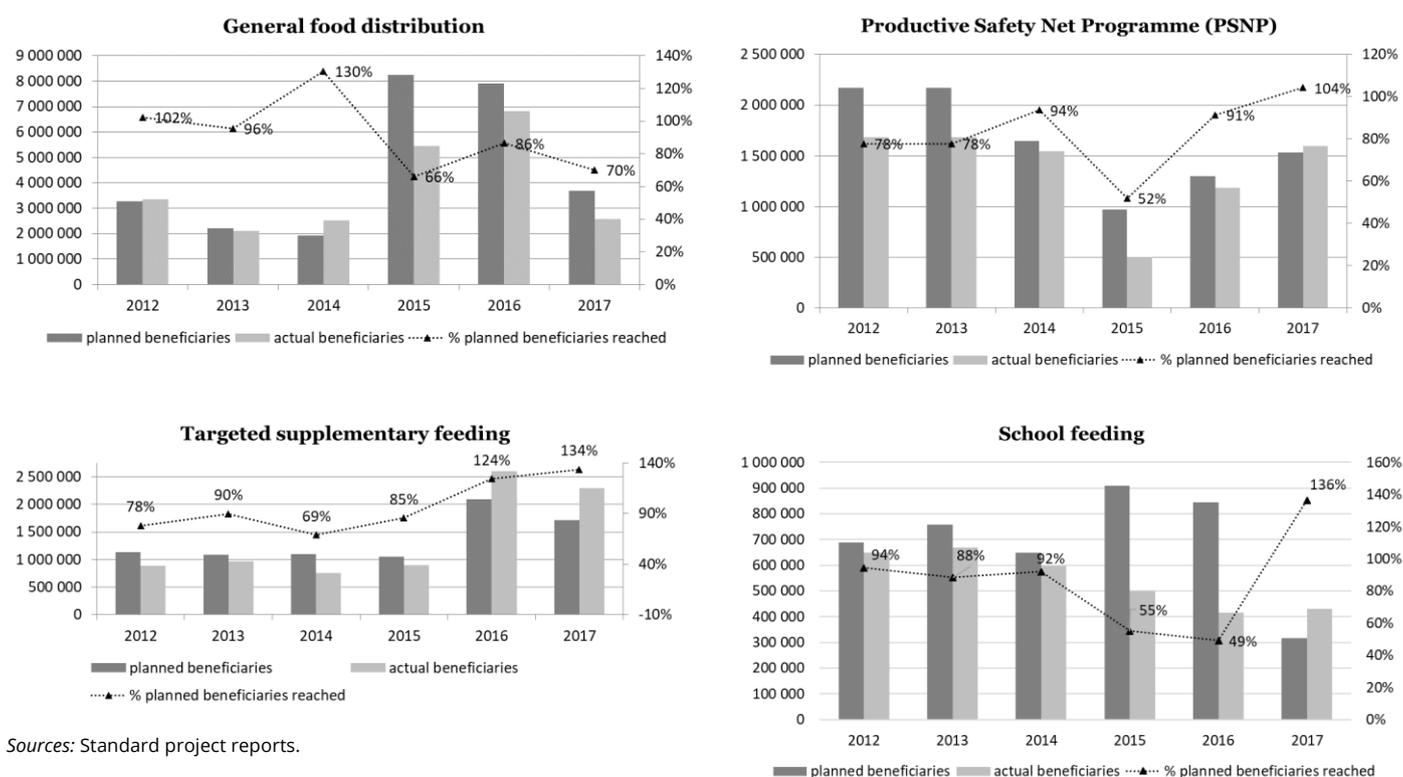
Sources: Standard project reports for 2012–2017.

Totals exceed those in the figure 4 because figures include double counting of beneficiaries receiving assistance through more than one modality.

26. The evaluation found that WFP's main programmes were all broadly effective. The integration of WFP's work with wider programmes led by the Government and supported by a range of partners means that it is rarely possible to attribute outcomes specifically to

WFP inputs; the challenge is to assess WFP's contributions to overall efforts. The biggest humanitarian achievement was the successful emergency response to large-scale droughts from 2015/16 onwards. Non-WFP stakeholders all credit WFP with a major contribution to the national logistics response, in addition to its own direct deliveries.

**Figure 6: WFP support for Ethiopian nationals, 2012–2017**



Sources: Standard project reports.

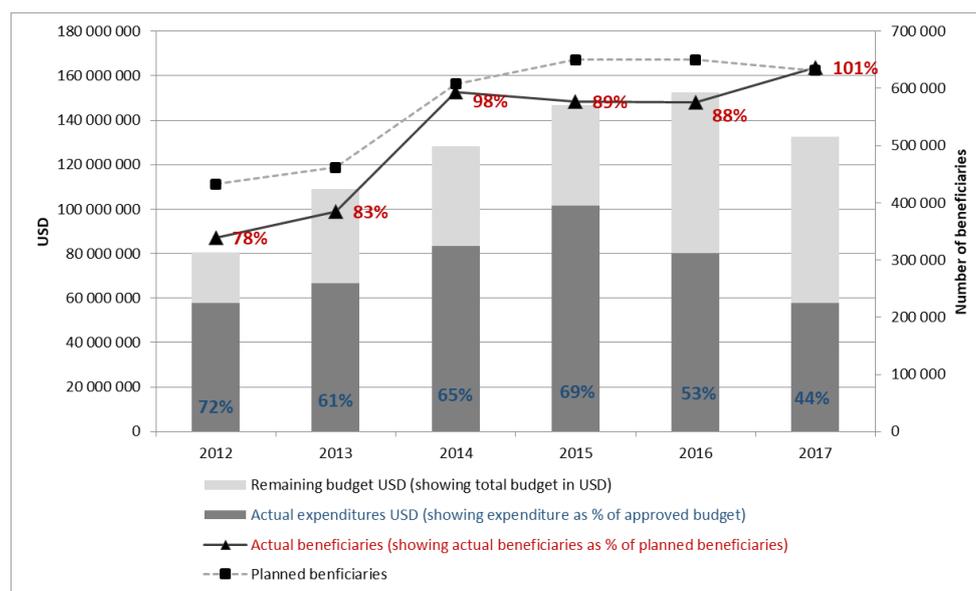
27. Figure 6 shows the main elements of WFP support for Ethiopian nationals; all the charts in the figure show a surge resulting from responses to droughts in 2015/16 and 2016/17. However, assistance for the PSNP declined over the period evaluated because of WFP's declining role in the PSNP outside Afar and Somali regions. WFP's work on vulnerability analysis made a useful contribution to needs assessments carried out by the Government and its partners and WFP continued to play an effective role in support for food security through the PSNP and humanitarian food assistance, particularly in Afar and Somali regions. The programmes to which WFP contributed made a big difference to beneficiaries' ability to survive a major drought. WFP's livelihoods and climate-related projects, although small in scale, were useful pilots for testing various approaches to resilience.
28. In the last two years, numbers of supplementary feeding beneficiaries exceeded initial targets because of rapid escalation in needs. The scaling up of WFP's humanitarian nutrition programming undoubtedly helped to save lives. Improved ("second generation") targeted supplementary feeding and the targeted supplementary feeding programme for refugees were effective in treating moderate acute malnutrition.
29. As a result of reduced funding, the scale of school feeding declined from about 640,000 beneficiaries per year between 2012 and 2014 to about 450,000 between 2015 and 2017. A recent evaluation<sup>10</sup> provided rigorous evidence of the effectiveness of the

<sup>10</sup> Final Evaluation of WFP's United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Programme's Support in Afar and Somali Regions in Ethiopia 2013–2017 (June 2018).

school feeding programme in Afar and Somali regions in strengthening pupils' enrolment and performance, especially for girls.

30. Figure 7 shows the growing gap between requirements and expenditures for refugees. In the last three years actual expenditures declined from 69 percent to 44 percent of requirements. Nevertheless, WFP and core partners (the Government and UNHCR) responded to very substantial and, at times, rapid increases in refugee numbers during the period.

**Figure 7: Refugee operations, beneficiary numbers and budgets, 2012 -2017**



Source: WFP financial database

31. The main challenges to effectiveness came from resource constraints – especially for refugee programmes, in which ration cuts became unavoidable – and from weaknesses in targeting for programmes to which WFP contributes. WFP piloted improved supplementary feeding approaches, which should strengthen the future effectiveness of all nutrition programmes. Infrastructure investments intended to reduce transport costs have not yet achieved this objective. The Djibouti logistics hub was completed late and at higher cost than planned; it was not significantly used during the evaluation period – WFP found other ways of expediting humanitarian deliveries. The Geeldoh bridge in Somali region already provides an effective link among communities, but will not be useful for heavy lorries until access roads are upgraded.
32. Ethiopia's ability to cope with major crises was greatly assisted by efficiency gains in WFP's supply chain; advance procurement through the Global Commodity Management Facility reduced lead times and lowered costs, while volumes increased. Reopening of the Berbera corridor, although it involved high insurance costs, made it possible to bypass the bottleneck of Djibouti and enabled supplies to be transported directly to Somali region. WFP also deserves credit for efficiency gains associated with biometric identification of refugees, which allows the use of fingerprints for verifying the identities of registered beneficiaries and led to a substantial reduction in the number of claimants. The share of cash-based transfers increased from 6 to 12 percent of the portfolio, helping to enhance both efficiency and effectiveness. However, the Government was reluctant to allow the use of cash-based transfers in some refugee settings, and WFP has not shaken off perceptions that it is a self-interested advocate for in-kind food transfers.

33. Despite systematic efforts to strengthen WFP's approach to gender issues in line with the 2015 corporate gender policy, changes are gradual and the country gender action plan has yet to be fully implemented. Women remain severely under-represented among country office staff. The Ethiopia country office has the worst staff gender ratios in the East Africa region and the staffing review has made little difference. There has been no systematic engagement with the Government on addressing gender issues, and stakeholders do not see WFP as having particular strengths in this area.
34. Most activities had broadly equal numbers of female and male beneficiaries, but pregnant and lactating women and girls were special targets for supplementary feeding, and take-home rations boosted girls' school attendance. Projects with a special focus on women included Purchase for Progress, the Rural Resilience Initiative and the Rural Women's Economic Empowerment programme, which is a joint programme of the Rome-based agencies. The PSNP fostered women's participation in community decision making and provided social protection support aimed at helping women to participate in public works, but these provisions were weaker in the regions where WFP is most active (Somali and Afar).
35. As regards internal synergies, WFP's support for logistics and supply chain systems underpinned the rest of the portfolio, home-grown school feeding approaches and the Rural Women's Economic Empowerment programme drew on experience from the Purchase for Progress pilot, and WFP brought a common nutrition perspective to programmes for refugees and Ethiopian nationals. However, the absence of an agreed country strategy impeded more systematic exploitation of internal synergies. The thoroughgoing coherence of WFP's portfolio with national policies and systems fostered external synergies, notably WFP's leveraging of its logistics and supply chain expertise in support of national systems, although the country office could have done more to influence the programmes in which it participated.
36. WFP's support for the capacity development of the National Disaster Risk Management Commission and the national logistics system made a significant contribution to sustainability. The use of government systems to deliver the programmes in WFP's portfolio enhanced the prospects for sustainability, but Ethiopia's needs for humanitarian support (both financial and technical) are likely to continue in a context of increasing attention directed to better integration of humanitarian and development efforts.
37. Integrated humanitarian response frameworks in Ethiopia mean that key successes cannot be attributed to WFP alone and weaknesses need to be addressed jointly by WFP and its implementing partners. Given the strong alignment between the humanitarian and development objectives of the Government and its development partners, operational collaboration supports effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, but makes attention to the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality all the more important. For example, the Government's preferential treatment of Eritrean refugees in relation to ration cuts was a clear infraction of the impartiality principle. Although neutrality in situations of conflict has not emerged as a major issue in Ethiopia, the nature of WFP's working relationship with the Government requires vigilance, particularly as regards WFP's close identification with the Government of Somali region. Humanitarian access was good except for reaching some groups of internally displaced persons. WFP sought to strengthen feedback mechanisms in accordance with its commitments to ensuring accountability to affected populations.

## Conclusions

### Overall assessment

38. During 2012–2017, WFP played a substantial role in responding to emergencies in Ethiopia, providing support for national systems and logistics as well as its own deliveries of assistance. It continued to lead in the provision of food assistance to refugees, although funding constraints made it increasingly difficult to provide adequate rations. Its school feeding programmes were demonstrably effective and influenced the Government's emergency school feeding responses. WFP helped strengthen national approaches to targeted supplementary feeding, although this proceeded more slowly than intended. Of most significance, WFP played a major role in preventing the 2015/16 *El Niño* crisis from becoming a catastrophe and subsequently in averting famine in Ethiopia's pastoral lowlands.
39. However, WFP saw its overall role in humanitarian response change and become increasingly focused on the more challenging Somali and Afar regions. The country office suffered, in practical and reputational terms, from lack of leadership continuity and a perceived lack of strategic focus. Trying to match staffing to income levels while simultaneously dealing with major humanitarian crises put the country office under unprecedented strain. Acknowledged weaknesses in monitoring and reporting hampered strategic reflection and affected donor confidence.
40. In the coming period, with the staffing review nearing completion, significant improvements to monitoring and evaluation initiated, new leadership in place and the development of a CSP under way, WFP has an unmissable opportunity to address past shortcomings and define and strengthen its future role in Ethiopia.

### Major conclusions

41. During the period evaluated, WFP's effectiveness in Ethiopia was jeopardized and WFP incurred reputational damage on account of discontinuities in senior leadership. With its structure and staffing review now complete, there is a need to restore morale in the country office and to strengthen the office's efficiency and effectiveness. Ethiopia is a complex country that requires sustained attention from senior staff with experience of working in the country.
42. The absence of an explicit country strategy since 2015 has been another weakness. Preparation of a CSP provides a major opportunity, aided by the portfolio-wide rigour of analysis required for the CSP framework. WFP staff must align with a common vision that is credible to external stakeholders. The ability to take full advantage of WFP's new approach to planning and budgeting depends on donors reducing the earmarking of their contributions and providing more multi-year funding, which in turn requires donor trust in WFP's country office and headquarters. Implementation of the CSP will require continued partnerships with core government agencies, which must be willing partners in any proposed capacity building. WFP needs to convince all major stakeholders that activities such as building of livelihood resilience or stunting prevention will reflect WFP's comparative advantages without undermining what they see as WFP's core emergency functions.
43. This last point is important as there is an opportunity for WFP to use resilience as a conceptual framework for linking humanitarian and development objectives. WFP's portfolio includes several resilience-related programmes but more thinking is needed about how to operationalize approaches to resilience and to go beyond household and individual resilience to look at institutional resilience as well. The PSNP and humanitarian food assistance programmes provide opportunities to be considered from a resilience building perspective.

44. The quality of monitoring, reporting and analysis has been inadequate, which has hampered learning. High-level indicators reported in standard project reports are insufficiently detailed to allow the gauging of performance, especially because WFP usually works jointly with other actors. The country office needs to consider how WFP can both use and complement the monitoring and reporting systems of the wider programmes within which it operates (such as the PSNP and programmes for refugees), ensure adequate staffing of its monitoring and evaluation function, factor in the (reasonable) reporting requirements of donors and ensure timely implementation and adequate supervision of a prioritized programme of evaluations. A clear and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan could also support requests for donor funding specifically for monitoring and evaluation.
45. With the head of nutrition position vacant for more than two years, staffing constraints limited the attention that the nutrition team was able to direct to persistent advocacy, particularly for the scale-up of "second-generation" targeted supplementary feeding; capacity building and the holding of partners to account for the quality of programme delivery; and overseeing evaluations and ensuring adequate generation of evidence. There was also insufficient attention to nutrition activities for refugees and WFP did not receive funding for activities for the prevention of stunting. To guide advocacy and staffing decisions, WFP needs a clear strategy for nutrition that shows how it complements other actors in Ethiopia.
46. The Government's road map for supporting refugees in line with UNHCR's Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework is promising and should be supported, but it will take time to change the magnitude of humanitarian resource requirements. Meanwhile, the achievement of consistent and predictable funding for more efficient delivery of essential assistance continues to be a challenge. Greater collaboration with other agencies and partners on viable livelihood strategies for refugees should also be pursued. Discrimination in the treatment of different groups of refugees is inconsistent with humanitarian principles and should continue to be actively resisted.
47. Much more attention to gender dynamics is needed in all elements of the portfolio. This will require ensuring that all the work that the country office does, and the way in which it does it, contributes to gender equality and transformation of the balance of power between women and men. It is essential that the links between gender inequality and poverty and the different implications that interventions have for women and men are recognized and that WFP's strategy and operations are tailored accordingly. The country office's internal practices, including its staffing, need to be consistent with these needs. More broadly, protection and accountability to affected populations are vital elements of all WFP's work and should continue to receive attention in the new CSP.

### **Recommendations**

48. The following recommendations stem from the evaluation findings and respond to the main conclusions outlined in the previous section. They are pitched at the strategic level and linked to CSP preparation, but many of them imply the implementation of operational recommendations as shown in the table below.

| No. | Issue   | Rationale   | Recommendation   | Responsibility and timing  |
|-----|---|---|--|--|
| 1   | WFP staffing and continuity                                   | Discontinuities in senior leadership impaired performance and caused reputational damage. | Ensure that the discontinuities in senior staffing that were experienced during the 2012–2017 period do not recur and prioritize recruitment for core senior posts, including heads of nutrition and the monitoring and evaluation function, in the country office.  | Human Resources Division and country office supported by the Nutrition Division, Performance Management and Monitoring Division, Office of Evaluation and Regional Bureau.<br>June 2019. |
| 2   | Strategic focus and preparation of the country strategic plan | Absence of an explicit country strategy since 2015 has been a weakness.                   | <p>Ensure that the CSP preparation process is outward-looking so that the CSP is credible with the Government and donors, who must share WFP's perspective on WFP's future role.</p> <p>Among issues to be addressed with Government and other development partners are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WFP's dual mandate, areas of comparative advantage and appropriate long-term role in Ethiopia;</li> <li>• an appropriate geographical focus for WFP activities and roles;</li> <li>• ways of mitigating governance and accountability risks in the delivery of food and nutrition assistance in Ethiopia, with particular focus on Somali region; and</li> <li>• evidence-based discussions of cash-based versus food transfers and appropriate levels of benefits.</li> </ul>   | Country office.<br>November 2019.  |
| 3   | Focus on resilience   | More thinking is needed about how to operationalize approaches to resilience building.    | <p>Use work on resilience as a conceptual framework for linking humanitarian and development objectives, addressing the resilience of national institutions as well as that of households and individuals. This should include providing support for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emergency planning and response and national capacities in supply chains and logistics;</li> <li>• strengthening of humanitarian needs analysis and the targeting of responses;</li> <li>• integration of humanitarian support, safety nets and development; and</li> <li>• initiatives that focus on capacity strengthening and building household resilience.</li> </ul> <p>The PSNP and humanitarian food assistance programmes should be considered in terms of resilience building. In particular, WFP should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work more closely with the Government and other stakeholders in order to strengthen integration between the PSNP and humanitarian</li> </ul> | Country office supported by the Regional Bureau and Policy and Programme Division.<br>November 2019.   |

| No. | Issue                               | Rationale  | Recommendation  | Responsibility and timing  |
|-----|-------------------------------------|--|---|--|
|     |                                     |  | <p>food assistance and develop relevant capacities within the Government;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contribute to better adaptation of the PSNP and humanitarian food assistance programmes to pastoral regions; and</li> <li>• continue to support government capacities to manage in-kind food assistance programmes, with a view to achieving full implementation by the Government.</li> </ul>   |  |
| 4   | Monitoring, evaluation and learning | The quality of monitoring, reporting and analysis has been inadequate. | <p>Ensure adequate staffing and leadership in the country office's monitoring and evaluation function. Rethink the priorities for monitoring and evaluation in order to better reflect the reality that WFP is predominantly a contributor to joint programmes. Ensure that each main activity has a monitoring and evaluation plan that explicitly considers what WFP can draw on and contributes to the monitoring and evaluation of WFP's overall efforts in Ethiopia.</p> <p>Areas where more evidence-based learning is required include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective use of cash-based transfers, with attention to the full spectrum of transfer options, from solely cash-based transfers to solely in-kind food distributions;</li> <li>• strengthening of cost analysis generally, during the design, implementation and monitoring of programmes;</li> <li>• stronger nutrition analysis (see recommendation 5); and</li> <li>• stronger gender analysis (see recommendation 7).</li> </ul> | <p>Country office supported by the Regional Bureau, the Performance Management and Monitoring Division and Office of Evaluation.</p> <p>November 2019.</p> |

| No. | Issue                 | Rationale  | Recommendation   | Responsibility and timing   |
|-----|-----------------------|--|--|---|
| 5   | Nutrition programming | WFP needs a clear nutrition strategy, showing how its work complements that of other actors in Ethiopia.           | <p>The country office should conduct a situation analysis and develop a nutrition plan for the next CSP period, working with the Government and other actors in order to identify where WFP has the most added value; it should prioritize recruitment of the staff required to deliver this plan.</p> <p>Priorities for the WFP nutrition strategy should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• humanitarian nutrition, with advocacy and support for measures that address stunting;</li> <li>• support for a more rapid roll-out of the “second-generation” approach to targeted supplementary feeding;</li> <li>• strengthening of technical support for the refugee programme;</li> <li>• increased analysis, with partners, of nutrition trends among refugees and the effects of ration cuts on nutrition; and</li> <li>• ensuring a nutrition-sensitive approach in all WFP activities.</li> </ul> | Country office with support from the Regional Bureau.<br>November 2019. |
| 6   | Refugee assistance    | More consistent and predictable funding is needed for more efficient delivery of essential assistance to refugees. | <p>Work with partners with a view to ensuring adequate and timely funding that meets humanitarian needs while also supporting evolution towards more sustainable approaches. Join other United Nations agencies on insisting that humanitarian principles are observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for and support greater use of cash-based transfers in refugee assistance.</li> <li>• Support stronger analysis of the effects of ration cuts on nutrition (see recommendation 5).</li> <li>• Support reconciliation of refugee numbers and continued strengthening of registration systems.</li> <li>• Support moves towards responses that are better tailored to the different needs and capacities of different groups of refugees.</li> <li>• Promote realization of the objectives of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.</li> </ul>   | Country office.<br>November 2019.                                       |

| <b>No.</b> | <b>Issue</b>  | <b>Rationale</b>   | <b>Recommendation</b>  | <b>Responsibility and timing</b>  |
|------------|---|--|--|---|
| 7          | Gender  | Much more attention is required to gender dynamics in all elements of the programme. | Gender issues should (continue to) be addressed in an integrated way, building on the country gender action plan. Actions should include proactive measures for boosting recruitment of women national staff and more attention should be directed to context-specific gender issues throughout the portfolio including appropriate mainstreaming of gender equality and the empowerment of women in all components. | Country office with support from the Regional Bureau.<br>November 2019. |
| 8          | Protection and accountability to affected populations | Protection and accountability are vital elements in all WFP's work.                  | Strengthening protection and accountability to affected populations should continue to be a priority, but WFP should work on strengthening national systems wherever doing so is consistent with the needs of beneficiaries.   | Country office.<br>November 2019.                                       |

**Acronyms used in the document**

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| CSP     | country strategic plan                                      |
| ICSP    | interim country strategic plan                              |
| IR-EMOP | immediate-response emergency operation                      |
| PRRO    | protracted relief and recovery operation                    |
| PSNP    | productive safety net programme                             |
| UNHCR   | Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |