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LIVES



# Synthesis of Country Portfolio Evaluations in Africa

## Evaluation report



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# Executive Summary

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**S**ub-Saharan Africa faces complex challenges including recurring cycles of conflict, political instability and climate change-related shocks. Populations in the region are highly vulnerable to poverty, hunger and displacement.

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This report synthesizes the findings of eight evaluations of WFP country portfolios focused on the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, conducted between 2016 and 2018. It seeks to draw lessons from the evaluations; assess WFP performance and results; and expand the evidence base on WFP's assistance in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

The evaluated portfolios comprised 68 separate operations, with combined requirements of over USD 12.7 billion and targeted almost 100 million beneficiaries. The evidence shows that WFP's specialized capabilities met highly unpredictable needs over the evaluation period. Strengths in rapid adaptation and scale-up; emergency response capacity; high-quality food security and nutrition analysis; and committed relationships with national partners supported large-scale food assistance delivery. WFP played a major role in preventing famines in Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan.

Where funding and conditions permitted, WFP activities spanned the humanitarian-development continuum, although the prioritization of life-saving activities sometimes compromised strategic relevance in other areas. Contributions to peacebuilding under the triple nexus were still emerging, and further scope exists for applying a resilience lens when preventing and reducing food and nutrition insecurity. WFP was praised as a neutral and impartial actor in conflict situations, with assistance

largely adhering to international humanitarian principles, albeit with challenges at local level.

Rapid descent into emergency conditions and gaps in leadership continuity compromised effective strategic planning, although the implementation of WFP's 2016 policy on country strategic plans promised future improvement. Performance was enhanced by a high tolerance of risk, willingness to innovate and an agile approach. Risk assessment and mitigation were unsystematic at times, and exit strategies were inconsistently in place. Approaches to gender were limited to including women rather than promoting transformative change, and commitments to accountability to affected populations were not adequately realized.

WFP was a leading and influential partner to host governments, although some opportunities to harness synergies with other United Nations agencies were missed or encountered practical barriers. Communication with donors was sometimes inadequate and/or inconsistent.

WFP faced difficult choices in volatile situations, particularly when balancing life-saving with ongoing development needs. The lessons from this synthesis report suggest that flexible advance planning and preparation, clear rationales for decisions and increased multi-year funding will help WFP strengthen strategic and operational linkages across the triple nexus. To support this shift, the report makes six recommendations. To enhance strategic planning, WFP should improve the availability and use of guidance on country strategic plan design; strengthen its financial and partnership base for development and peacebuilding; and address staffing and management arrangements in fragile contexts and protracted crises. To support operational improvement, WFP should develop regional operational plans for development and peacebuilding actions, applying a gender-transformative lens; systematize adherence to international humanitarian principles at the local level; and improve adherence to accountability to affected populations commitments.

# INTRODUCTION





## 1.1 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Sub-Saharan Africa faces complex and interconnected challenges including extended cycles of conflict, political instability and climate change-related shocks. Populations in the region are highly vulnerable to poverty, hunger and displacement.

Shaped by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustaining Peace Agenda and the Agenda for Humanity, the 'triple nexus' approach to addressing humanitarian, development and peacebuilding needs is gaining international momentum. The WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021) articulates a shift from 'saving lives' to 'changing lives', focusing on the poorest and most marginalized people.

This report brings together the findings of eight evaluations of WFP country portfolios in Africa, focused on the Sahel and Horn of Africa. It seeks to draw lessons from experience; assess WFP's performance and results; and contribute to the evidence base on WFP's assistance in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

## 1.2 CONTEXT

A country portfolio evaluation assesses the strategic positioning, decision making, performance and results of all WFP work in a particular country. The eight country portfolio evaluations, included in this synthesis report, were conducted between 2016 and 2018 in Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Somalia and South Sudan (figure 1).

The eight countries are highly vulnerable and volatile (figure 3). They include five Level 2 or 3 country-specific corporate emergencies<sup>4</sup> and two Level 2 or 3 regional corporate emergencies<sup>5</sup>. Region-wide challenges include conflict and climate-related events such as drought.

<sup>1</sup> Stimson Center. 2018. The UN's new "Sustaining Peace" Agenda: A Policy Breakthrough in the Making. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/un-s-new-sustaining-peace-agenda-policy-breakthrough-making>.

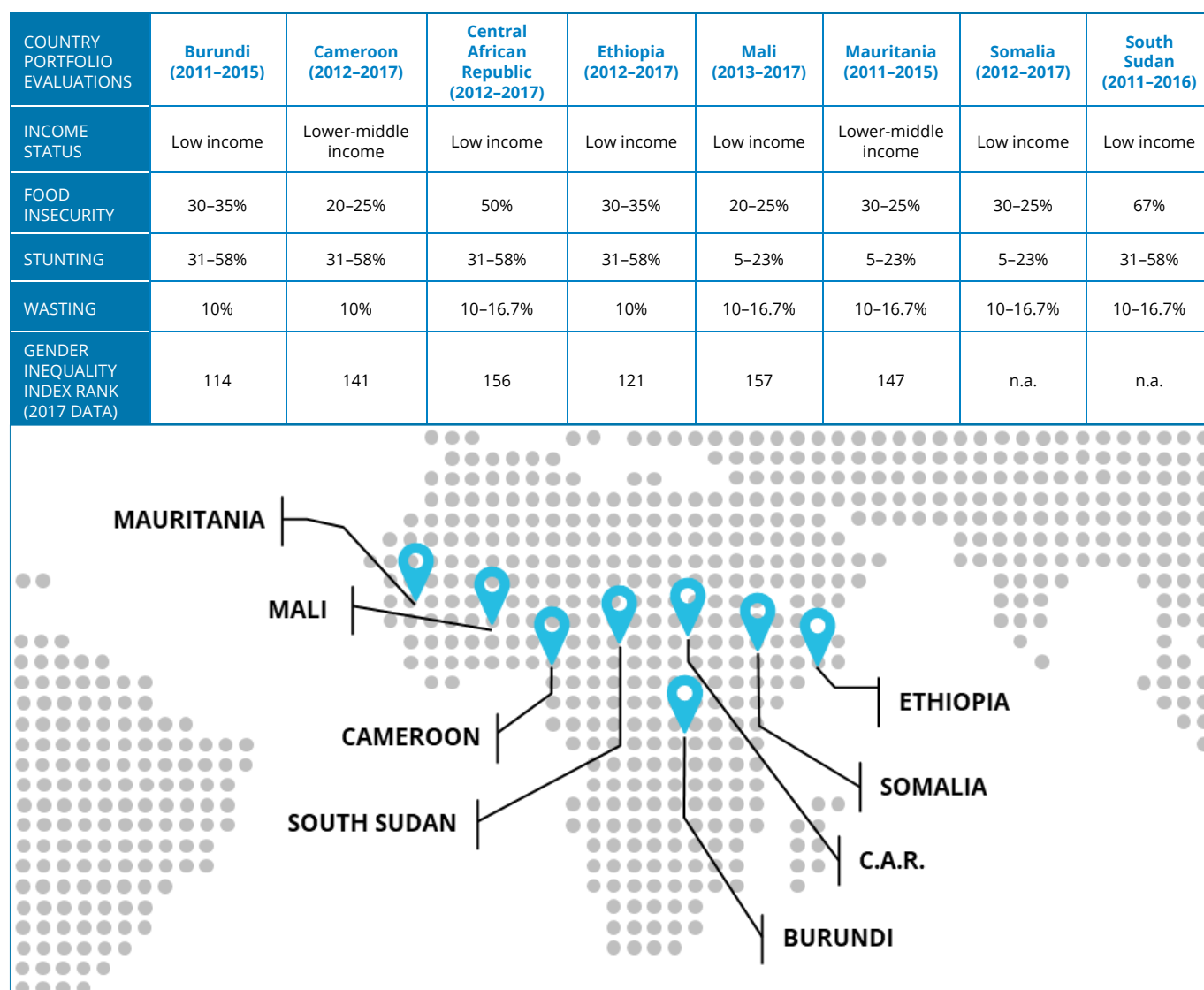
<sup>2</sup> Agenda for Humanity. 2016. Webpage on Agenda for Humanity. <https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/agendaforhumanity>

<sup>3</sup> WFP. 2017. WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021). <https://www.wfp.org/content/wfp-strategic-plan-2017-2021>.

<sup>4</sup> Cameroon, Central African Republic, Mali, Somalia and South Sudan.

<sup>5</sup> The Sahel region, including Mali and Mauritania, and the Horn of Africa, affecting Ethiopia and Somalia.

**FIGURE 1. COUNTRIES COVERED BY THE EVALUATION**



**FIGURE 2. MAJOR EMERGENCY RESPONSES**

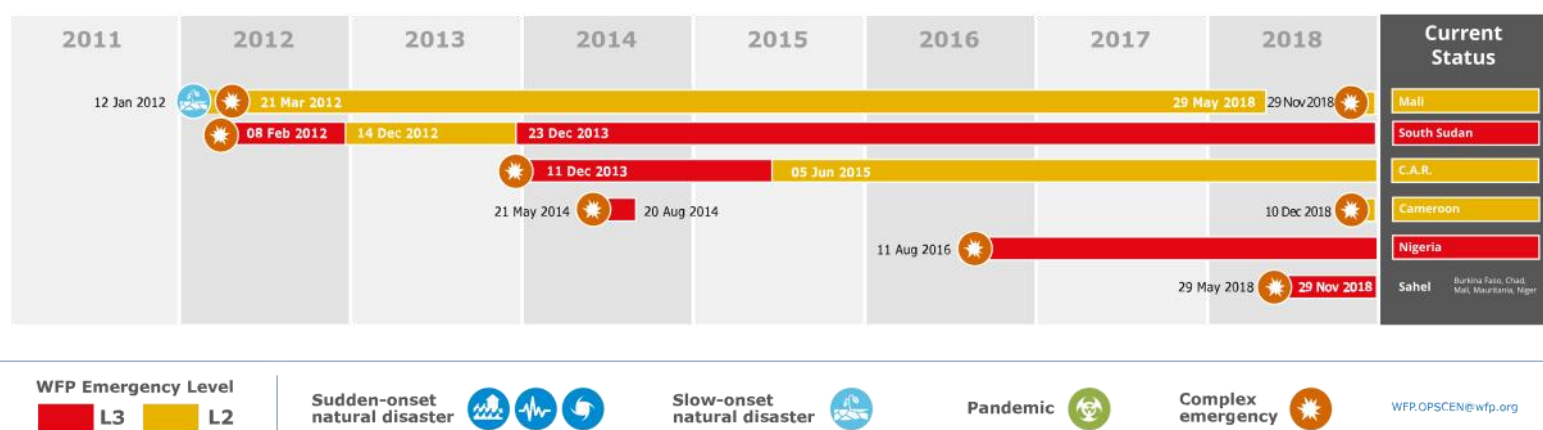
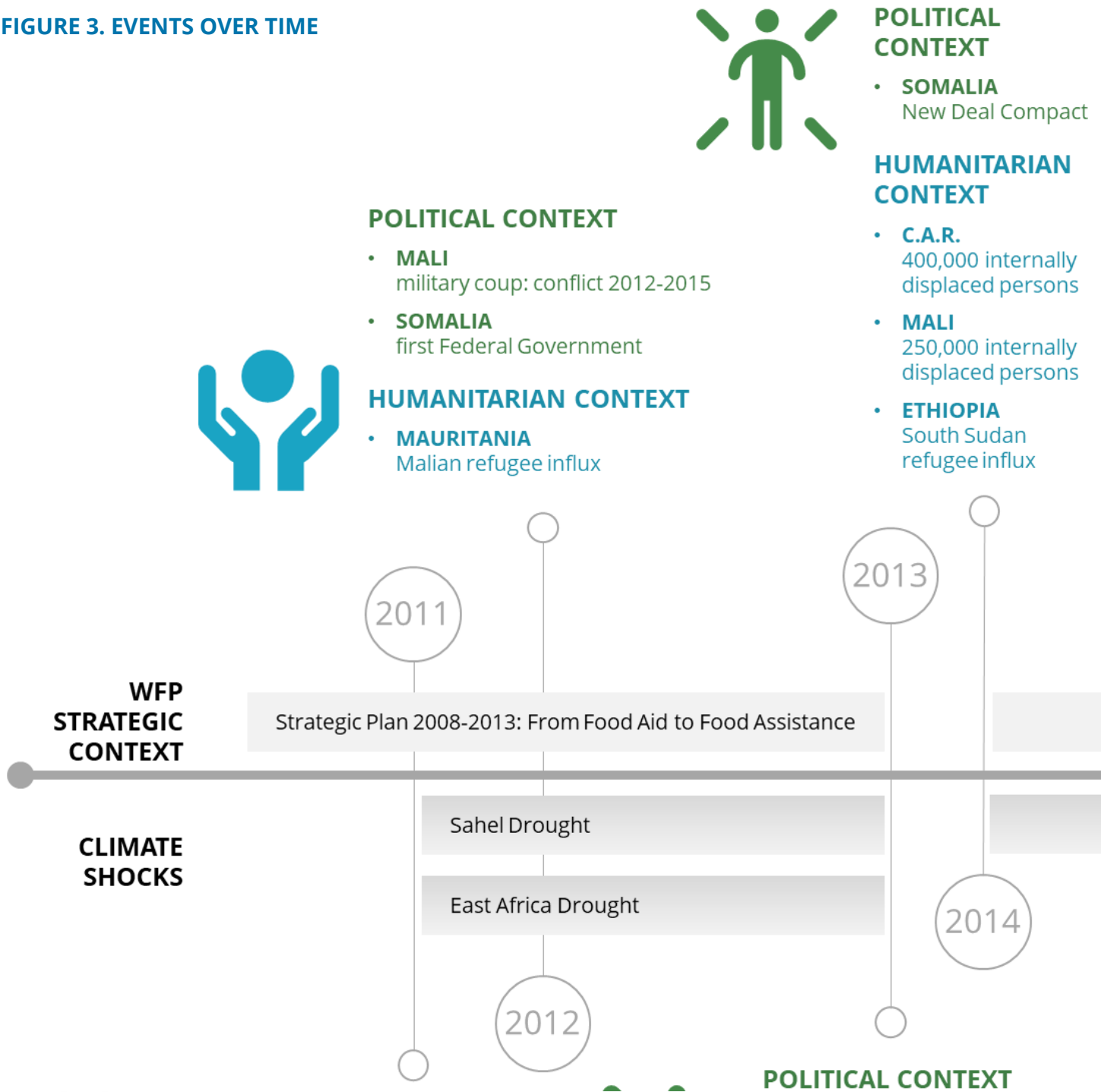


FIGURE 3. EVENTS OVER TIME



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