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Approach Paper

Addressing Food Insecurity Where It Matters Most: An Independent Evaluation of the World Bank Group's Support, 2016–25

December 15, 2025

1. Background and Context

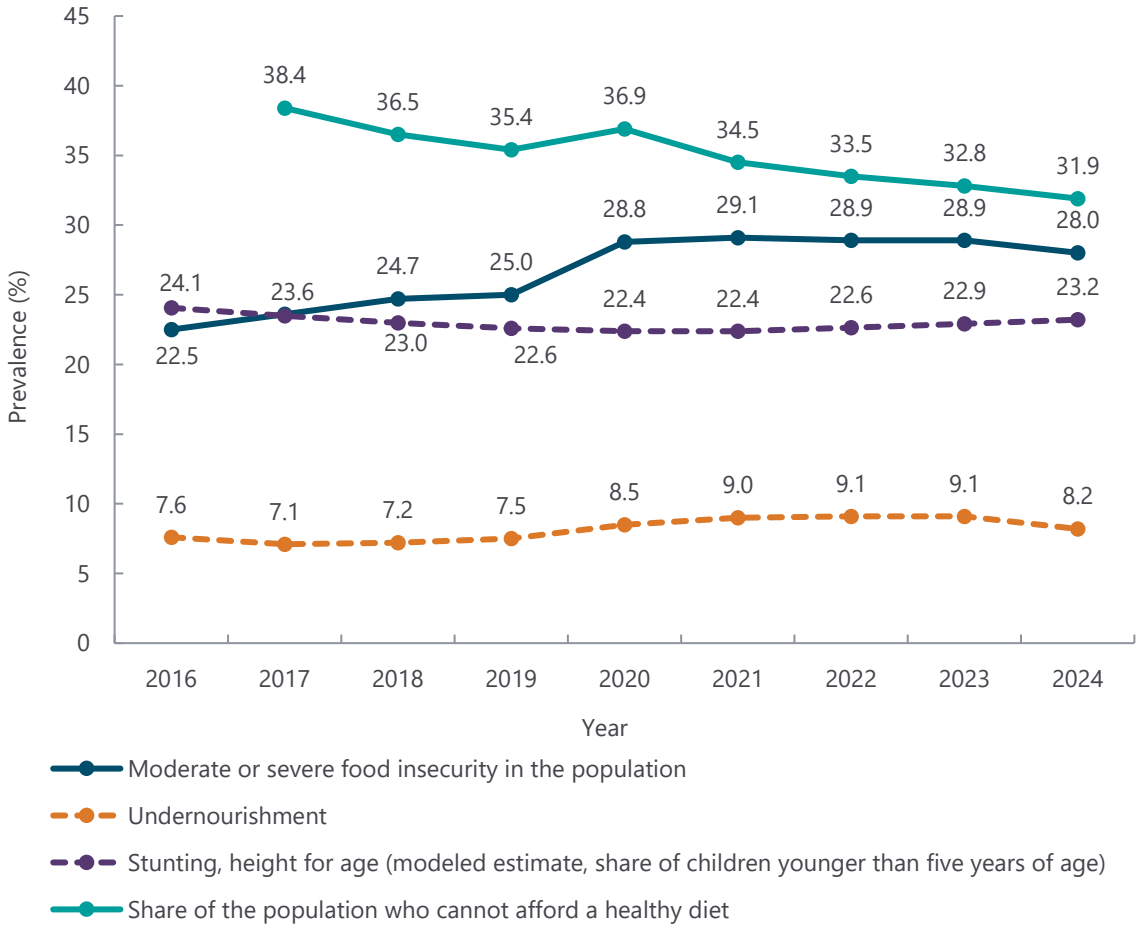
1.1 This Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) evaluation will assess the relevance, effectiveness, and coherence of the World Bank Group's approach to food security in the most food-insecure countries. It intends to inform the Bank Group's strategic direction on food security. In the context of worsening global food insecurity, the evaluation aims to provide strategic lessons for the Bank Group's Global Challenge Program (GCP) on Food and Nutrition Security and for country and regional programs in countries with high food insecurity. The evaluation covers the 2016–25 period, and its definition of food security encompasses nutrition, as described in box 1.1.

1.2 Several indicators of food insecurity have been worsening globally (figure 1.1). Indicators of moderate to severe food insecurity and undernourishment worsened in all Regions (indicators worsened in many countries, and only a few countries saw small improvements). Childhood malnutrition is declining at a slow pace but remains high. Thirty-two percent of the world's population could not afford a healthy diet in 2024 (World Bank 2025a). Worldwide adult obesity has more than doubled since 1990, and adolescent obesity has quadrupled. Moreover, food systems are important for job creation or lack thereof, depletion of soil, water, biodiversity, and greenhouse gas emissions. All of this underscores the need for robust approaches to safeguard food security outcomes, as recognized in the GCP on Food and Nutrition Security.

1.3 There are large regional disparities in global food insecurity (figure 1.2). Sub-Saharan Africa has the largest proportion of food-insecure people at 59 percent—nearly double the global average in 2023. South Asia also faces severe food insecurity challenges, with a larger absolute number of people experiencing hunger, particularly in densely populated and conflict-affected situations. Latin America and the Caribbean and the Middle East and North Africa continue to struggle with food insecurity, exacerbated by high poverty rates, climate variability, and supply chain inefficiencies. East Asia and Pacific saw almost one-fifth of its population experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity in 2023. Low- and lower-middle-income countries often experienced rising food insecurity because of COVID-19 disruptions, food price inflation, weakened labor markets, and reduced household incomes. Fragile and conflict-affected countries face compounded risks from instability, displacement, and economic shocks that undermine

food production and distribution systems. If current conditions persist, projections indicate that 582 million people will be chronically undernourished by the end of the decade, with more than half of them in Africa (FAO et al. 2024).

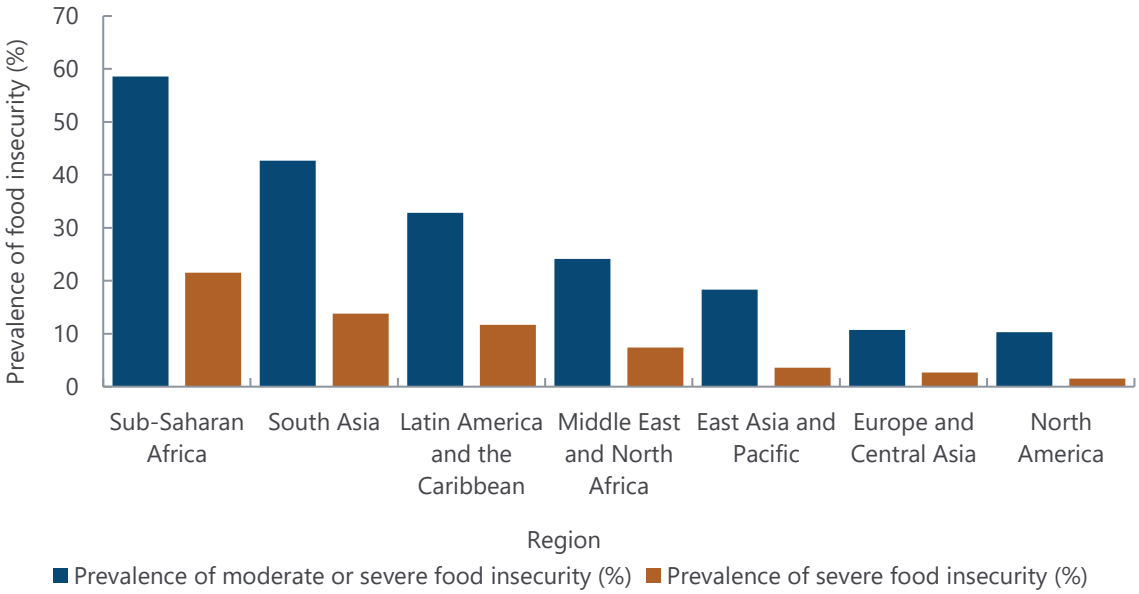
Figure 1.1. Persistent and Worsening Global Food Insecurity



Sources: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal indicators data portal; Food Prices for Nutrition database; Independent Evaluation Group based on World Development Indicators database.

1.4 Food insecurity has multiple drivers. Food insecurity can be driven by a combination of climate change, conflict, low productivity, food price inflation, restrictive trade policies, and market failures (IPCC 2023; UNHCR 2025). Broader factors such as poverty, inequality, governance, and adverse policies also affect food security. The configuration of food insecurity drivers varies by country context: while the worst global hunger hot spots are in countries in armed conflict, many middle-income countries have large food-insecure populations and stunted children. Food insecurity can be caused or exacerbated by both collective or covariate shocks, such as conflict, violence, and pandemics, and household-specific or idiosyncratic factors, such as health shocks.

Figure 1.2. Unequal Burden of Food Insecurity in 2023



Source: Independent Evaluation Group calculations based on the latest data available at the country level in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Suite of Food Security Indicators. See also box 1.2.

1.5 Food insecurity is a multidimensional and multiscalar problem. Food insecurity can be understood at many levels—it manifests in individuals, households, communities, countries, and regions, often crossing multiple country boundaries. Food security is not only about the physical availability of food and its supply but also about whether people have adequate means—economic, physical, and social—to access and demand food, supported by systems and institutions that facilitate its provision. Moreover, the food that is available and accessible must be nutritious to meet dietary needs. These dimensions—availability, access, and use—must be ensured consistently over time, demonstrating resilience to periodic shocks and disruptions (box 1.1). Malnutrition is increasingly recognized as an integral dimension of food security. While some Bank Group publications refer to *food and nutrition security*, this report uses the term *food security* as a shorthand, encompassing both aspects for clarity and consistency. Food security cannot be summed up in one indicator; therefore, organizations use multiple indicators to capture different aspects of food security (box 1.2).

Box 1.1. Dimensions of Food Security

The most widely used definition of food security is when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. This definition originates from the 1996 World Food Summit and was further updated by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition in 2020. It has been widely adopted by organizations such as the World Bank Group and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The Bank Group often uses the term *food and nutrition security* to make it explicit that the nutrition is part of this definition.

Food security is commonly understood in relation to four dimensions:

- Physical **availability** of food: Food availability is about sufficient quantities of appropriate quality and represents the "supply side" of food security. Supply is determined by the level of food production, stock levels, and net trade including food aid.
- Economic and physical **access** to food: An adequate supply of food at the national or international level does not in itself guarantee household- and individual-level access to food. Concerns about insufficient food access have resulted in a greater policy focus on economic, political, social, and legal (including traditional rights) arrangements that determine access to food. For example, policy areas focus on incomes, expenditure, markets, and prices in achieving food security objectives from the economic access perspective.
- Food **use**: Use is commonly understood as the way the body makes the most of various nutrients in the food. Sufficient energy and nutrient intake by individuals are the result of good care and feeding practices, food preparation, diversity of the diet, and intrahousehold distribution of food. Combined with good biological use of food consumed, this determines the nutritional status of individuals and brings out the importance of nonfood inputs to achieve food security.
- **Stability** of the other three dimensions over time: Even if an individual's food intake is adequate today, they could still be considered food insecure if they have inadequate access to food on a periodic basis (for example, seasonal food insecurity) or as a result of a shock, risking a deterioration of their nutritional status.

Two additional dimensions are sometimes used:

- **Agency**: Agency refers to the ability of individuals or groups to make independent decisions about the foods they eat and produce and how those foods are produced, processed, and distributed within food systems, and to participate in policy processes that shape the food system.
- **Sustainability**: Sustainability requires food system practices that support the long-term regeneration of natural, social, and economic systems, meeting present food needs without compromising those of future generations.

In addition to being multidimensional, food security is also multiscalar in nature: availability is often discussed and determined at the system level, such as the level of a country, whereas access is discussed at the individual or household level, use is discussed at the intrahousehold or individual level, and stability can be understood at the country, household, or individual level.

Sources: Clapp et al. 2022; HLPE 2020; Independent Evaluation Group synthesis.

Box 1.2. No Single Indicator Captures All Aspects of Food Security

Because food security is multidimensional and multiscalar, no single indicator can track progress. Different indicators measure different dimensions.

The Sustainable Development Goals use several indicators to monitor hunger and malnutrition, and a few are listed below:

- The prevalence of undernourishment, which measures the percentage of the population with insufficient dietary energy intake based on national food supply and consumption data.
- The prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity, which measures the percentage of the population experiencing food insecurity based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale—a metric used by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to estimate the proportion of a population facing challenges in accessing sufficient, safe, and nutritious food based on responses to eight questions about constrained food access.
- The prevalence of stunted growth in children younger than five years of age, which measures the percentage of children younger than five years with low height for age, which indicates chronic malnutrition and long-term food insecurity. The prevalence of wasting among children younger than five years, which measures the percentage of children with low weight for height, indicating acute malnutrition. Wasting reflects recent and severe weight loss, often due to insufficient food intake or disease, and is a key indicator of short-term nutritional stress and elevated risk of mortality.

Food crisis response frameworks use an indicator for acute food insecurity, defined as a situation where a person's inability to consume adequate food puts their lives or livelihoods in immediate danger. This condition is assessed using the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, which categorizes the severity of food insecurity into five phases: minimal/none, stressed, crisis, emergency, and catastrophe/famine.

The World Bank Group Scorecard uses the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity as one of its vision indicators to reflect the Bank Group's vision and mission and to offer broad measures to track progress in addressing key global challenges. To track the Bank Group's progress in addressing food security, it also has a results indicator to measure its own operations that support people with strengthened food and nutrition security. This indicator used is "the number of people who have better access to food through World Bank Group operations such as those involving climate-resilient agriculture, nutrition services or food imports and distribution," showing 200.7 million achieved since 2023 as of July 2025.

In addition, the Bank Group Food Prices for Nutrition platform provides indicators on the cost and affordability of energy-efficient, nutrient-adequate, and healthy diets, drawing on the International Comparison Program's food price data. These data can help monitor progress toward making nutrient-adequate and healthy diets more accessible and affordable.

Sources: FAO 2023; World Bank 2024a; World Bank Group 2025.

The World Bank Group's Policies, Programs, and Analytics on Food Security

1.6 The Bank Group has been deeply involved in agriculture and food security since the 1950s and 1960s. Food security enables poverty reduction, and investing in agriculture and agribusiness is imperative for long-term food security, while also supporting job creation and better livelihoods. The World Bank has long been a major funder of agricultural research, which drives productivity. Over the decades, the focus has broadened from chronic food deficits to nutrition, social protection, trade and transport, and responding to acute food crises. More recently, the Bank Group allocated nearly US$50 billion toward food security initiatives, both emergency responses and long-term investments, in response to the global food crisis alone over a period of 15 months in 2022–23 (World Bank Group 2023). Several of the emergency response projects have been funded through the Crisis Response Window—a dedicated funding mechanism within the International Development Association.

1.7 There are major corporate initiatives to address food security. The Bank Group has designated food and nutrition security as a key priority to be addressed through one of its new GCPs (box 1.3). Sustainable food systems is one of 15 "outcome areas" in the Scorecard, showing its importance to the Bank Group mission. According to the Scorecard, as of October 2025, the Bank Group actively supports more than 208 million people with improved food and nutrition security in more than 410 projects in 107 countries and works with more than 40 governments on "policy repurposing," or the act of changing policies to achieve more beneficial goals, such as shifting agricultural subsidies to promote climate-friendly practices instead of unsustainable ones. Bank Group senior leadership has pledged to allocate US$9 billion each year for agrifinance and agribusiness by 2030 (World Bank Group 2024a). To achieve this target, the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) have jointly launched AgriConnect to develop value chains and create jobs in the agriculture sector. Additionally, SP500—the target to extend social protection and jobs support to 500 million people by 2030—is relevant because many social protection operations focus on food security and nutrition.

1.8 The Bank Group advocates a tailored approach to food security. Although the Bank Group has not had a formal food security strategy in recent decades, it consistently emphasizes adapting food security strategies to the unique challenges of each country or region. Several corporate strategic documents (summarized in box 1.4) argue against a one-size-fits-all approach, highlighting the need for menus of interventions across sectors to respond to food crises and increase food systems' productivity, resilience, and sustainability. Bank Group programs straddle both chronic and acute food security, as well as responses grounded in food, agriculture, and agribusiness; nutrition programs;

social protection, and others. Key Bank Group documents note the tendency for immediate humanitarian needs to divert funding from agricultural research and long-term development, and for countries to allocate budgets to inefficient fertilizer and input subsidies (World Bank 2024b).

Box 1.3. The Food and Nutrition Security Global Challenge Program Aims to Help Break the Cycle of Food and Nutrition Insecurity by 2030

The Global Challenge Program (GCP) on Food and Nutrition Security is one of six programs aiming to help countries tackle key development problems with speed, scale, and impact through large-scale innovation. These programs intend to combine national, regional, and global World Bank Group work into one large program with a focused goal to tackle a difficult global issue, deploying both public and private solutions.

The GCP on Food and Nutrition Security focuses on mobilizing resources, enhancing stakeholder coordination, and scaling innovative solutions to improve food and nutrition security. Its Concept Note advocates a country-led, demand-driven approach using a broad menu of options. The GCP defines this menu around three "action areas"—namely, crisis prevention, preparedness, and response; nutrition and healthy diets; and low-emissions and climate-resilient food systems, including efforts to change policies and repurpose (meaning switch to more beneficial purposes) public support to agriculture.

Two multicountry food security resilience programs, one each in East and West Africa, are among the GCP's flagship initiatives. They seek to address regional drivers and offer broad menus of investment options.

Sources: Summary of World Bank Group documents; World Bank 2024a.

1.9 Additionally, analytics have long advocated multidimensional approaches to tackle food insecurity. Multidimensional, or integrated, approaches include those focused on gender, nutrition behavior change, crop diversification, nutritious food production, trade and transport of food, food fortification, and reduction of food losses. Key documents such as the *Future of Food* reports and an International Development Association paper summarized in box 1.4 emphasize the need for collaboration across sectors, including agriculture, social protection, nutrition, education, and water, and for public-private sector collaboration. Nevertheless, the role of agriculture in providing adequate nutritious food has sometimes been overlooked in projects focused on increased agricultural production, according to a 2014 World Bank study (World Bank Group 2014).

Box 1.4. Examples of Tailored Approaches to Food Security in Corporate Documents

The first *Future of Food* publication in 2015 grouped core actions into climate-smart agriculture, improving nutritional outcomes and strengthening value chains, with environmental sustainability, gender, and vulnerability as transversal issues. It emphasized working as One World Bank Group to help countries design and implement integrated approaches to end poverty and hunger (World Bank Group 2015).

Another *Future of Food* publication from 2016 focused on nutrition. It emphasized the diverse policies that countries need to implement tailored to their needs: "Policies need to target food producers, post-harvest handlers, processors, food distributors, and consumers across low- middle- and high-income countries to address the specific challenges of energy deficiency, nutrient deficiency, excessive net-energy intake and unhealthy diets, and food safety issues that each country faces….There are many tested solutions, but no one size fits all. Countries need to tailor the combination and form of interventions to their own circumstances" (Townsend et al. 2016, 20, 25).

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the International Development Association financed a variety of activities to address food insecurity through the Global Crisis Response Program. A Board paper describes these as including short-term support for safety nets, distributing and improving access to food, protecting jobs, keeping international and domestic food trade moving, providing support for agribusiness, and investing in next season production. The International Development Association also continued its support for One Health, climate-smart agriculture, and other responses to the long-term drivers of food security. The paper lists the key drivers of food crises as COVID-19, crop pests, climate change, conflict, and lack of economic opportunity (IDA 2020).

Source: Independent Evaluation Group based on cited documents.

1.10 Coverage of food security issues is spread across multiple country documents with varied degrees of coverage. The evaluation team's initial review of advisory services and analytics in seven food-insecure countries found that poverty assessments, Systematic Country Diagnostics, Country Climate and Development Reports, rural income studies, and agriculture and social protection reports often discussed the drivers of food insecurity, although the quality of their coverage varied. For example, Bangladesh had numerous relevant advisory services and analytics, including comprehensive sector studies on rural growth and several on nutrition and climate-smart agriculture. Kenya and Burkina Faso had several sector studies on agriculture, climate resilience, and social protection, with nutrition less prominent. Most recently, the World Bank has started supporting country food crisis preparedness plans in some of the worst-affected countries. Additionally, the Global Food and Nutrition Security Dashboard is a central platform that offers comprehensive global and country-level data on indicators to support countries in their food crisis preparedness and response.

1.11 IFC has increasingly prioritized food security in its strategic focus. Its FY 2019–21 Strategy and Business Outlook mentioned food security in the context of limited access to

blended finance and severe food insecurity in Africa. By FY24–26, food security became a key component for building resilience, with IFC prioritizing investments to enhance food production by improving input access, greening fertilizer production and use, reducing crop losses and food waste, mitigating infrastructure and logistic bottlenecks with a focus on strengthening value chains, and raising incomes—especially in fragile and conflict-affected countries. This strategy also emphasizes climate-smart investments and creating market initiatives. Additionally, IFC engages in Bank Group–wide initiatives such as the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program and the Global Food Safety Partnership to mobilize resources and support sustainable food systems. In 2021, it strengthened its advisory services with support from the Food Systems Development Program to better target smallholder farmers and small and medium enterprises with value chain development and access to finance.

1.12 IFC's approach to food security emphasized the importance of mobilizing the private sector to address food security challenges. Its approach has been rooted in the 2017 agribusiness technical briefing to the Board, which discussed how its product offerings positioned IFC to address specific market challenges related to food security depending on countries' issues. The document highlighted the importance of taking a value chain approach—including inputs, primary production, commodity processing, secondary processing, and distribution. Furthermore, to enhance food security outcomes and support economic development, the document identified sustainability as a business driver, with a focus on climate-smart agriculture and creating market initiatives, to be pursued by leveraging new technologies and collaborating with the World Bank. Before the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, IFC often implemented this strategy by investing in food production in high agricultural potential areas with an export-oriented focus. Although it does not seem to have abandoned this approach, supply chain disruptions caused by these two crises have led to a greater focus on supporting domestic production. Furthermore, increasing numbers of Country Private Sector Diagnostics (a key diagnostic study) address food security in their discussion of agribusiness.

1.13 MIGA also supports agribusiness and food security. In its efforts to enhance countries' food systems, MIGA's strategic pillars for agribusiness include food security and nutrition, among others. MIGA projects focus on attracting foreign direct investment to improve farm productivity, including value addition and product diversification in supply chains to enhance food security. MIGA also supports critical infrastructure, such as transport networks, digital financial services for farmers, and so on. However, all of this is a small part of MIGA's portfolio.

1.14 The Bank Group is an active partner in the international system supporting global food and nutrition security. The 2024 edition of the World Bank Group Scorecard

described this as a complex and fragmented landscape with many humanitarian, development, and peace actors working in the sector. The World Bank has historically been a major funder of agricultural research and innovation, including as a founder and funder of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and hosts the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (box 1.5). It is a member of many other partnerships on agriculture and food crises and has been a prominent global convenor on food and nutrition, including through the Famine Action Mechanism; the Human Capital Project; the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement; the Global Alliance for Food Security, which ran from 2022 to 2024; and most recently the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, launched in 2024. It hosts the Global Food and Nutrition Security Dashboard as a central public platform for food security data.

1.15 The World Bank also supports numerous regional institutions related to food and nutrition, particularly in Africa. Its Africa Regional Integration and Cooperation Assistance Strategy identifies food security as one of the challenges it sets out to address, working with regional institutions on issues that transcend national borders such as trade and market integration and regional connectivity (World Bank 2018). IEG identified about 121 regional projects in Africa relevant to this evaluation approved over the past 10 years, many of which support regional institutions with finance and technical assistance.

Box 1.5. Global Agriculture and Food Security Program: A Collaborative Financing Initiative for Food Security

The Global Agriculture and Food Security Program is a financing initiative established in 2010 by the Group of Twenty in response to the 2007–08 food price crisis. Its primary aim is to reduce poverty and enhance food security through agricultural development in countries eligible for International Development Association assistance. The World Bank serves as the host for the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program Secretariat and acts as the program trustee, and can serve as an implementing partner, alongside the regional multilateral development banks and United Nations Rome-based agencies. Since its inception, the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program has raised approximately US$2.4 billion in donor contributions, providing both financial and technical support to World Bank projects, producer organizations, and the private sector through the dedicated Private Sector Window managed by the International Finance Corporation. By December 2024, the program had reached 32 million people.

Source: GAFSP 2025.

Previous Independent Evaluation Group Evaluations

1.16 IEG has conducted several evaluations and studies related to agriculture and food security (appendix B). IEG's 2022 evaluation of the Bank Group's support for agrifood system development focused on productivity, inclusion, and sustainability outcomes but not food security or nutrition. The evaluation found that the Bank Group had been broadly relevant in responding to countries' needs but with gaps in scaling up and

targeting. It also found that the Bank Group's productivity-enhancing investments were insufficiently weighted toward high-value, nutrient-rich food products (such as fruits, vegetables, dairy, and fish) that offer dietary and other benefits to farmers (World Bank 2022). An Evaluation Insight Note on the integration of resilience aspects into food security operations found that resilience features in projects helped bridge the gap between immediate crisis responses and long-term sustainable development (World Bank 2023). It defined resilience features as those that aim to promote stability, a definition that this evaluation also adopts: "Stability includes interventions on income generation and income diversification; risk management systems, including insurance; access to land and finance; agricultural infrastructure development; and market integration. [It] also includes support for climate adaptation activities, such as climate-smart agriculture…and social protection approaches that develop or expand social safety net systems to include food-insecure households" (World Bank 2023, 4).

1.17 Several IEG evaluations have covered the Bank Group's crisis response capacities. The evaluation of the World Bank's response to the 2007–08 food price crisis found that it helped increase food supply and social safety nets, although with gaps in targeting the most vulnerable populations (World Bank 2013). A recent evaluation covered the World Bank's support for adaptive social protection systems, assessing their relevance, integration of adaptive elements, and performance in response to shocks. It found that although expansions to existing beneficiaries were timely, countries often struggled to deliver adequate shock responses to new beneficiaries (World Bank 2025b).

1.18 IEG evaluated child undernutrition in 2021. The evaluation found that the World Bank's approach to nutrition had evolved in line with international best practice to include multidimensional and multisectoral support, combining interventions that address both immediate and underlying determinants of nutrition, such as access to nutritious food, health care, water and sanitation, and behavior change (World Bank 2021b). The evaluation confirms that the World Bank's approach provides a pathway to improving nutrition outcomes but with room to improve in targeting, multisectoral coordination, and alignment with country needs, among others.

1.19 Partnering with crisis response organizations allows the World Bank to support vulnerable populations in insecure areas. IEG's report on World Bank engagement in situations of conflict found that partnering with the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross allows the World Bank to deliver critical services to vulnerable populations in conflict-affected areas that are otherwise inaccessible (World Bank 2021a). This collaboration leverages the United Nations' extensive field presence and ability to negotiate access with all parties, enabling the World Bank to reach populations in high-instability regions and continue financing essential services, such as locust control and food security, even in the absence of a central government.

2. Objectives and Intended Users of the Evaluation

2.1 The primary goal of this evaluation is to inform the Bank Group's strategic direction on food security. Specifically, the evaluation aims to assess the relevance, effectiveness, and coherence of the Bank Group's support to food security in the most food-insecure countries and provide strategic lessons for the Bank Group's work on food security. The evaluation will develop lessons for the GCP's and AgriConnect's implementation, strategic approaches in countries with high food insecurity (via Country Partnership Frameworks, food crisis response plans, and so on), and regional integration strategies. It will do so by providing insights into what has worked or not worked in the past in creating the necessary conditions for sustainable food security. While it is too early to assess the GCP and AgriConnect, lessons from past collaboration and convening will be useful to inform their rollout. The evaluation's scope and questions are designed to provide evidence on the key issues confronting the GCP and other initiatives aimed at food security, although the GCP itself will not be evaluated.

2.2 The intended audience includes high-level decision makers at the Bank Group. This specifically includes the Bank Group's Board of Executive Directors, Bank Group management involved in the GCP and special initiatives such as AgriConnect, country management and technical leads in countries with high food insecurity, World Bank regional integration units, and IFC directors for regional integration. Stakeholders in countries and regional organizations covered by the case studies are another audience. Given the significance of this topic, IEG anticipates that the evaluation will attract interest from clients, partners, and civil society, in general and in specific countries.

3. Conceptual Framework and Themes

3.1 The Bank Group's food security portfolio spans thousands of operations across multiple sectors and entry points. These sectors include health, trade, climate, transport, agriculture, and social protection, among others. Moreover, Bank Group support in this space is inherently enabling and catalytic, rather than directly tied to specific, attributable food security outcomes. Additionally, food security is a multidimensional issue, with different indicators capturing its various aspects.

3.2 As such, the evaluation will not be a comprehensive summative assessment of food security outcomes or related indicators or dimensions. Such an assessment would cut across a highly diverse portfolio and would require an extensive scale of evidence collection and analysis that exceeds what is feasible for this evaluation. Moreover, the interplay among institutional factors, political economy dynamics, and broader employment and poverty constraints makes it difficult to demonstrate the link between the Bank Group's interventions and employment or poverty outcomes, including the final impacts on food security or related to any single indicator or dimension. Consequently,

this aspect will be beyond the scope of the evaluation. Instead, the evaluation will focus on the Bank Group's role in creating enabling conditions for achieving food security around four key themes. These four themes are interim results on the path to food security where IEG can meaningfully evaluate the Bank Group's contributions. IEG will assess the Bank Group's success based on intermediate outcomes, policy changes, process effectiveness, and wherever possible, country-level evidence on outcomes. The evaluation will also use IEG's validation data to provide breadth and depth on results achieved.

Main Themes

3.3 The evaluation will assess whether and how effectively the Bank Group has supported four important food security themes. Bank Group documents on food security and the GCP emphasized these themes, and they are also reflected in the evaluation's identified food security portfolio. IEG validated the themes based on a review of literature; consultation with select academics, sector experts, and Bank Group practitioners; and insights from prior IEG evaluations.[1] The four themes are reflected in the theory of action, which serves as the conceptual framework for the evaluation (figure 3.1). The specific rationale for each theme is outlined as follows:

- **Tailoring and targeting: Support informed by food insecurity drivers and focused on vulnerable areas and populations.** Food insecurity is rarely the result of supply constraints alone; it is often driven by context-specific drivers such as poverty, inequality, conflict and fragility, and climate change, among others. Bank Group documents emphasize a country-based approach tailored to national and subnational needs and addressing the specific drivers of food insecurity. Informed by this emphasis, and by findings from previous IEG evaluations that underscored the need for stronger targeting and selectivity, this theme will assess whether Bank Group strategies and programs are grounded in robust analytics and responsive to country-specific drivers, including the balance between supply- and demand-side challenges. It will also assess how the Bank Group targeted its projects and programs to the most food-insecure areas, including conflict-affected areas with hunger spots. It will also cover gender issues and targeting of support to specific population groups.

- **Engaging for policy reform: Evidence-informed and inclusive policy engagement tailored to food security needs.** Agrifood public policies, programs, and expenditures affect food security outcomes. Expert interviews and studies have often pointed to input subsidies, price controls, and trade policies that worsen food security and environmental outcomes. For example, input subsidies can unintentionally lead to fertilizer overuse, excessive groundwater extraction, or reliance on monoculture systems (World Bank 2024c). Given the Bank Group's

influential role in shaping reform agendas—through analytics, dialogue, technical assistance, lending, and IFC's upstream engagement—this theme will evaluate whether policy and regulatory support has been evidence based, context specific, and inclusive, and whether it has contributed to more coherent and implementable food security reform outcomes.

- **Balancing responsiveness and resilience: Crisis-responsive support with a pathway to medium- and longer-term resilience and development objectives.** Frequent crises—such as food price shocks, climate stress, and conflict—have increased pressure for rapid response. However, scoping interviews with Bank Group staff raised concerns about the need to respond to recurring emergencies and overreliance on emergency tools that may divert attention and resources from medium- to longer-term food systems development. Considering these concerns and the Bank Group's stated commitment to embedding resilience and preparedness into food security operations, this theme explores whether interventions have balanced short-term crisis response with sustained support for strengthening resilience, productivity, and systems transformation and whether it has successfully promoted food systems resilience outcomes. In this context, crisis response may include both supply-side food availability measures and support for food access through income, affordability, or social protection measures.

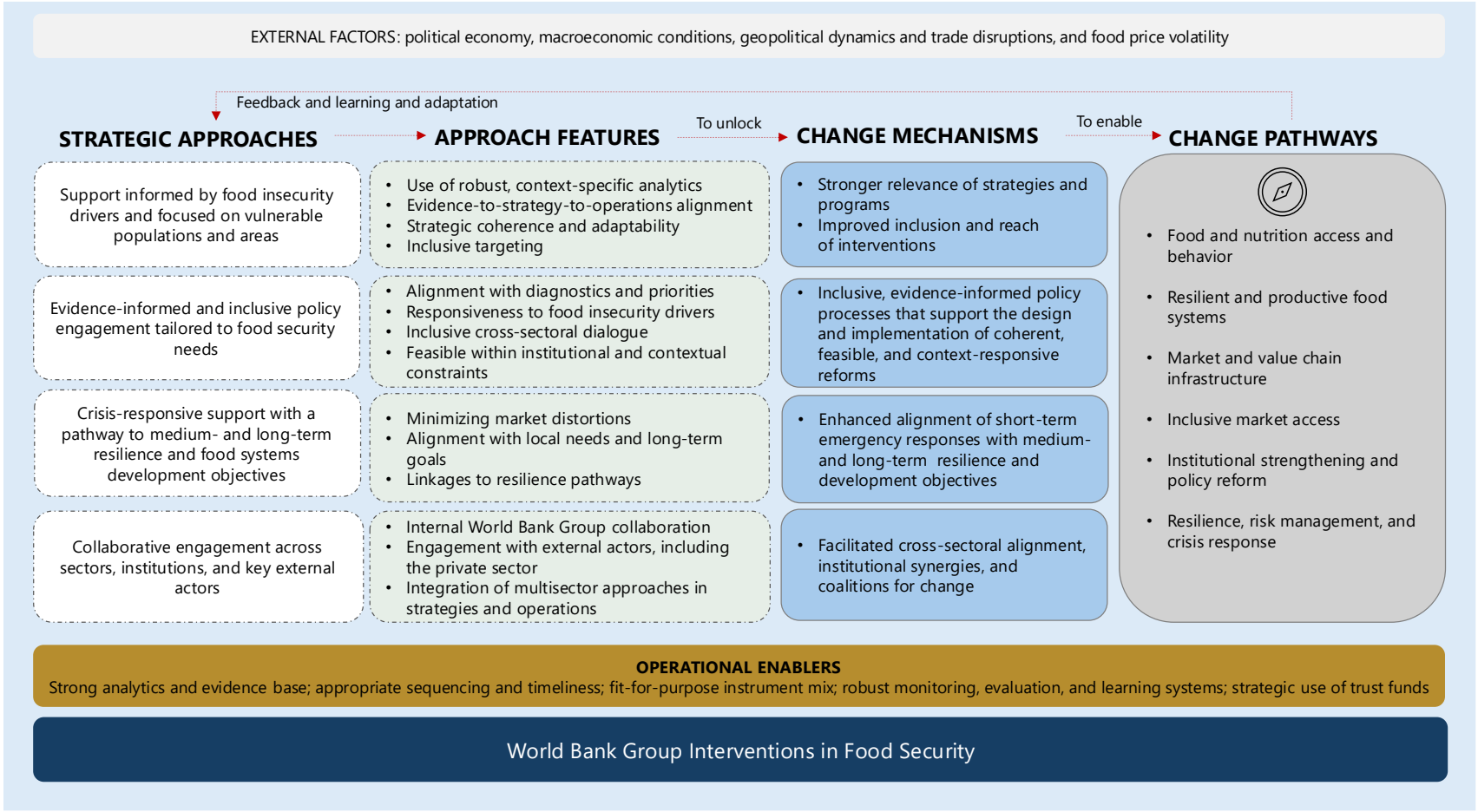
- **Institutional coherence: Collaborative engagement across sectors, institutions, and key external actors.** Numerous global and regional organizations perform specialized roles in this space. The Bank Group has long recognized the need for collaboration on cross-cutting food security challenges—internally (across Global Practices and among IFC, MIGA, and the World Bank) and externally (with development partners, regional bodies, agricultural research institutions, and the private sector). Based on this recognition and stakeholder feedback highlighting continuing challenges in cooperation, this theme examines whether institutional mechanisms, staff incentives, and operational approaches have enabled effective collaboration and pursuit of One World Bank Group synergies to support integrated and scalable food security solutions. It will also examine alignment with major global and regional initiatives, including the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program and others. The theme will also cover global convening of the Bank Group on food and nutrition.

Conceptual Framework

3.4 The evaluation's conceptual framework focuses on the Bank Group's role in enabling food security outcomes. The theory of action (figure 3.1) articulates how the Bank Group's strategic approaches enable context-driven, inclusive, resilience-oriented

and collaborative conditions for achieving food security. Specifically, it shows how the Bank Group's strategic approaches and its features aim to unlock change mechanisms and enable change pathways within countries' food systems. These change mechanisms are the intermediate results that the evaluation will focus on. They include the effectiveness of tailoring and targeting, policy engagement, promotion of resilience, and efforts to operate as a coherent, complementary One World Bank Group. The theory of action allows the evaluation team to analyze the Bank Group's strategic, institutional, and operational choices; assess the Bank Group's support for food security within national and regional food systems; understand key change pathways as the necessary features expected to be present; and examine the Bank Group's approaches, successes, and challenges in supporting inclusive, resilient, context-driven, and collaborative food security.

Figure 3.1. Theory of Action



Source: Independent Evaluation Group.

4. Scope and Questions

4.1 The evaluation will assess the Bank Group's contributions to food security in food-insecure environments, through the theory of action's four themes (figure 3.1). The evaluation will adopt a One World Bank Group approach. The evaluation will assess the Bank Group's engagement in the world's 72 most food-insecure countries from FY16 to FY25. The 72 priority countries were selected using two food insecurity indicators—prevalence of the stunted growth of children and undernourishment (appendix A). The evaluation will focus on country-level engagement and give global and regional efforts a lighter treatment.

Evaluation Questions

4.2 The evaluation's overarching question is: To what extent has the Bank Group's approach contributed to food security in the most food-insecure countries? The evaluation poses four main evaluation questions (EQs), organized around the four main themes described in the theory of action (figure 3.1), further supported by subquestions (box 4.1).

- EQ 1. How well has the Bank Group's support responded to context-specific food insecurity drivers and targeted vulnerable populations?
- EQ 2. How well has the Bank Group's policy engagement supported food security reforms?
- EQ 3. How well has the Bank Group's emergency support met short-term needs while advancing long-term food systems resilience?
- EQ 4. How well has the Bank Group collaborated and convened on food security challenges?

Box 4.1. Evaluation Questions and Subquestions

EQ 1. How well has the World Bank Group's support responded to context-specific food insecurity drivers and targeted vulnerable populations?

- To what extent did the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation, and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency integrate food security into their strategies, projects, and programs?
- How well did the Bank Group use data and analytics to adapt its support to specific food security contexts, including conflict, climate shocks, and market volatility?
- How well did Bank Group operations target and reach the most vulnerable populations and areas? To what extent did they address gender issues?

EQ 2. How well has the Bank Group's policy engagement supported food security reforms?

- How effectively did the Bank Group engage with governments and other stakeholders in policy processes?
- How well did the Bank Group contribute to food security–related reforms?

EQ 3. How well has the Bank Group's emergency support met short-term needs while advancing long-term food systems resilience?

- How well did Bank Group emergency responses follow market-friendly principles and avoid creating excessive distortions while supporting access to food through food affordability and inclusive market participation?
- How well did the Bank Group support the building of local capacity and productive assets to reduce aid dependency and enhance availability and access to food?
- How well did the Bank Group's emergency responses promote medium- and long-term food systems resilience?

EQ 4. How well has the Bank Group collaborated and convened on food security?

- How well did the Bank Group collaborate and align efforts across its internal organizational boundaries, including among the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation, and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency?
- How well did the Bank Group collaborate and convene major external partners?

Source: Independent Evaluation Group.

5. Evaluation Design

Design Principles

5.1 The evaluation will use a multilevel mixed methods design grounded in a set of design principles that ensure strategic alignment, methodological rigor, and contextual relevance. It maintains a clear focus on the evaluation's objectives and thematic priorities and is anchored in the theory of action that emphasizes enabling conditions for food security. By integrating qualitative and quantitative methods, the evaluation captures

both depth and breadth of evidence, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of context, drivers, and effectiveness. Triangulation across country cases, portfolio components, and institutional levels enhances the credibility and generalizability of findings, ensuring that insights are robust and applicable across the World Bank Group's broader food security engagement.

Methodological Approach

5.2 The evaluation design strategically integrates context-specific analysis with broad generalizability by combining structured portfolio and global-level reviews with in-depth country and regional case studies. It will triangulate findings across multiple data sources and analytical levels—country, regional, portfolio, and global—and will enable the synthesis of recurring patterns and distinctive themes, allowing insights to be both robust and applicable across the Bank Group's broader food security engagement. This approach balances depth with breadth, ensuring that conclusions are both nuanced and widely relevant. It will have the following elements (for details, see appendix A):

- Portfolio review and analysis of the Bank Group's engagement in the 72 food-insecure countries, in several parts: development policy financing and Program-for-Results–supported policy reforms; projects that are stand-alone emergency projects and those that have Contingent Emergency Response Components triggered; IEG's validation ratings and evidence on all World Bank and MIGA projects in the portfolio; sample reviews of IFC's portfolio; and comprehensive review of MIGA's portfolio in the 72 food-insecure countries, focusing on guarantees that support agribusiness, trade finance, and reinsurance.
- Eight in-depth case studies with in-person visits to countries. These will ensure that findings are grounded in local realities and will be selected from among the 72 priority countries experiencing long-term food insecurity and using a typology of country contexts to ensure diverse risk levels of food insecurity drivers.
- Two regional case studies focused on the Bank Group's support for regional connectivity, regional institutions, and agricultural research and development.
- Light desk-based country case studies on particular issues.
- Structured literature review of pathways followed by countries that over time have made significant progress on food security.
- Analysis of the Bank Group's contribution to major global partnerships and convening initiatives.

Risk and Mitigation Strategies

5.3 There are a few risks to achieving the evaluation's objectives, which we plan to mitigate:

- **The challenge of focus.** The vast scope and the diversity of food security situations could result in an evaluation that is spread thinly across many issues. We will address this by focusing on the four priority themes, thereby ensuring depth of evidence on the EQs. The evaluation will therefore not cover other topics than those listed in the four themes and the EQs.
- **Challenges in generalizing findings.** The evaluation methods include deep case studies with credible, context-specific analyses. This could lead to the risk of the evaluation findings being perceived as overly driven by the choice of cases. We will address this through (i) careful case selection guided by a framework that ensures that cases are spread across diverse geographies and risk levels of food insecurity drivers and (ii) synthesis of evidence across diverse case studies and portfolio data to identify patterns and draw generalizable insights on food insecurity, policy engagement, and resilience building through Bank Group support (appendix A).
- **Ensuring adequate attention to IFC and MIGA.** The World Bank's larger food security portfolio brings the possibility that findings pertinent to the World Bank could overshadow IFC's and MIGA's contributions. We will mitigate this through methods protocols that emphasize specific IFC and MIGA data collection and analysis activities in the evaluation's portfolio and case study work and by retaining IFC and MIGA expertise in the team's composition.

6. Quality Assurance Process

6.1 The Approach Paper and the evaluation will follow IEG's standard quality assurance processes. These processes include internal IEG and Bank Group management review, two one-stop review meetings that also benefit from advice from the Methods Advisory Function, and a review by external peer reviewers. Regular interactions with management representatives are also anticipated to ensure factual accuracy and to maximize utility. In addition, the evaluation will have a technical advisory panel composed of Onno Ruhl and Madhur Gautam, both retired from the World Bank. This evaluation will be peer-reviewed by the following experts on food security: Chris Barrett (Stephen B. and Janice G. Ashley Professor of Applied Economics and Management at Cornell University); Antony Chapoto (executive director, Africa Network of Agricultural Policy Research Institutes); and Julie Howard (senior adviser, nonresident,

Global Food and Water Security Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies).

7. Engagement and Outreach

7.1 The main output will be a report that will be delivered to the Bank Group's Board of Executive Directors' Committee on Development Effectiveness. We will seek avenues to share emerging findings with its technical counterparts as these emerge. IEG will make summaries of the case studies available as an additional output. The evaluation will then share these summaries with country and regional officials and other counterparts, development partners, and Bank Group teams in the case study countries and regions.

7.2 IEG will engage with internal and external stakeholders throughout the evaluation. This will include structured interviews with technical experts, ongoing dialogue with counterparts from technical units and regions, and engagements with clients and country experts during field visits. We will develop an outreach plan in consultation with IEG's knowledge and communications unit, involving internal and external outreach and dissemination. Dissemination products are likely to include blogs, podcasts, webinars, tailored presentations, and conference presentations.

8. Timeline and Resources

8.1 IEG will deliver this evaluation in the first quarter of FY27. The team will conduct in-person fieldwork for case studies through January 2026, finalize the desk studies and other data collection by March 2026, conduct one-stop review meeting in June 2026, and request management comments on the draft report during July or August 2026. The expected budget for the evaluation is US$1.125 million, inclusive of all staff fixed costs and variable. This budget is driven by the evaluation design, with its many components and extensive use of in-country visits by multiperson teams composed of seasoned experts.

8.2 The team conducting this evaluation will be led by Samjhana Thapa and Rasmus Heltberg (co-team leads). The members of the team include Ugo Amoretti, Deborah Delmar, Madhur Gautam, Azada Hussaini, Chris Jackson, Ebru Karamete, Yulia Krylova, John Lamb, Xiaoyi Lu, Naseema Noor, Epimaque Nsanzabaganwa, Amit Patel, and Marc Tully. Romayne D. Pereira and Emelda Cudilla will provide administrative support. Additional team members will be recruited as needed, including local consultants, to assist with field-based case studies. The evaluation will be prepared under the guidance of Penelope Jackson (manager), Carmen Nonay (director), and Sabine Bernabè (vice president and Director General, Evaluation).

[1] These lessons include, among others, prioritizing resilience in food security operations; improving targeting and institutional support for scaling up interventions; promoting behavior change and community-based implementation for nutrition interventions; and enhancing cross-sectoral programming at the country level to address persistent challenges. The technical inputs were based on the following IEG evaluations: (i) *Integrating Resilience into Food Security Operations* (World Bank 2023); (ii) *Toward Productive, Inclusive, and Sustainable Farms and Agribusiness Firms: An Evaluation of the World Bank Group's Support for the Development of Agrifood Economies (2010–20)* (World Bank 2022); (iii) *World Bank Support to Reducing Child Undernutrition* (World Bank 2021b); (iv) *World Bank Support for Irrigation Service Delivery: Responding to Emergent Challenges and Opportunities* (World Bank 2019); and (v) *Growing the Rural Nonfarm Economy to Alleviate Poverty: An Evaluation of the Contribution of the World Bank Group* (World Bank 2017).

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Appendix A. Evaluation Design and Methods

This evaluation employs a multilevel mixed methods design that integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches to produce robust and generalizable findings. The structure of the design enables comprehensive analysis across country contexts, portfolio components, and institutional levels, ensuring that insights are both contextually grounded and broadly applicable to the World Bank Group's food security engagement.

The evaluation is guided by several core principles. It maintains a strategic focus on the evaluation's objectives and themes and is grounded in conceptual frameworks, including a theory of action that emphasizes enabling conditions for food security. The integration of qualitative and quantitative methods allows for a holistic understanding of context, drivers, and effectiveness. Triangulation across cases and analytical building blocks further strengthens the generalizability and credibility of the findings.

The evaluation will be conducted across four levels of analysis. At the country level, eight in-depth case studies will be undertaken through structured protocols, stakeholder interviews, field visits, and document reviews. These studies will focus on Bank Group–supported interventions that create enabling conditions for food security outcomes across the four key themes. While the themes provide a coherent structure for assessing Bank Group's support, the country cases will examine the context-specific multidimensional and multiscalar nature of food security—including food availability, household access, and nutrition—and related interventions. Countries selected for these case studies will represent diverse food insecurity profiles and substantial Bank Group engagement. Each case study will include literature reviews, structured document analysis, key informant interviews, field visits to vulnerable regions, and, in some instances, methods such as process tracing or contribution analysis. Additionally, two regional case studies will examine Bank Group–supported financing, knowledge, and convening interventions aimed at fostering food security at the regional level.

At the portfolio level, the evaluation will review interventions across 72 countries. For specific evaluation subquestions, the analysis will include development policy financing, Program-for-Results portfolios, and emergency response projects. Emerging findings from case studies will be further analyzed using portfolio data, including validation ratings and evidence from World Bank, International Finance Corporation (IFC), and Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) projects. Although an in-depth assessment of the financial or insurance sector is beyond the scope of the evaluation, IFC's engagement will be examined through its agribusiness and agrifinance investments, climate-smart initiatives, and participation in global programs, including the Global Food Security Platform and the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program. Additionally, if agrifinance or agri-insurance interventions are supported by the relevant World Bank operations, they will be covered. MIGA's role will be analyzed through its guarantees supporting agribusiness, trade finance, and reinsurance. Although these projects

represent a small portion of MIGA's overall portfolio, they are directly relevant to food security and support critical activities such as agricultural production, agroprocessing, and access to finance.

At the global level, the evaluation will assess the Bank Group's collaboration with major external partners and contributions to major international partnerships on food and nutrition. These will tentatively include the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program, the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, the United Nation's food agencies, the Famine Action Mechanism, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, and the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement. It will conduct a structured literature review of countries that over time have made significant progress on food security, focusing on the major pathways such as agricultural productivity, economic growth and job creation, nutrition, and social protection. It will also review corporate strategies, Scorecard indicators, financing mechanisms, tool kits for crisis preparedness and response, and the Global Challenge Program to evaluate institutional positioning and coherence.

The integration of mixed methods is central to the evaluation's approach. Qualitative components include in-person country visits and desk-based case studies, document reviews of strategic and operational materials, and interviews with Bank Group staff, clients, and partners. Quantitative components involve structured portfolio reviews using sector codes, instrument types, thematic tags, and search terms, as well as analysis of project results frameworks and Scorecard indicators.

To enhance generalizability, the evaluation will synthesize evidence across the different methods to identify commonalities and divergences. It will use triangulation to integrate findings across country, regional, portfolio, and global levels. This process will identify recurring patterns and distinctive themes in how the Bank Group has addressed food insecurity drivers, structured policy engagements, and supported resilience while also responding to food shocks. By synthesizing evidence on a question-by-question basis, the evaluation aims to generate insights that are both analytically robust and contextually nuanced.

The evaluation design embeds risk mitigation throughout. These include careful case selection using a typology of food insecurity drivers, supplementary desk-based case work to address evidence gaps, and triangulation across analytical building blocks. The evaluation team includes dedicated IFC and MIGA expertise to ensure balanced coverage. We will select case studies using a typology that categorizes countries by their predominant food insecurity drivers—such as climate risk, fragility and conflict, and food price inflation (box A.1). The selected countries will reflect a diverse set of challenges and responses, including fragile and conflict-affected settings, climate-vulnerable regions, and varying levels of institutional capacity. This approach promotes diversity in food insecurity profiles and geographic representation. Initial consultations with Bank Group country teams are guiding the selection

process. Each regional case study will embed country-level cases to support cross-scale analysis. All eight country case studies will include assessments of IFC portfolios and engagement.

Box A.1. Steps for Identifying Case Study Countries

- Begin with 72 countries (those in the evaluation's portfolio) identified as having high food insecurity—based on the stunted growth of children or prevalence of undernourishment exceeding defined thresholds.
- Narrow the list to 40 countries where the World Bank Group has provided substantial financing for food security.
- Gather data on three major food insecurity drivers for these 40 countries—climate risk, fragility and conflict, and food price inflation.
- Categorize these 40 countries into three groups defined as (i) relatively low risk on all three drivers, (ii) moderate or high risk on one of the drivers, and (iii) moderate or high risk on two or more drivers.
- Select 2–3 countries from each of the three groups, ensuring also regional diversity.

Source: Independent Evaluation Group.

The evaluation will include additional desk-based case work and focused literature reviews on select themes. These efforts will complement existing Independent Evaluation Group evidence, such as recent Country Program Evaluations and the Multiphase Programmatic Approach evaluation. Evidence from the fragility, conflict, and violence evaluation will be incorporated where relevant. We will also review the uptake of past Independent Evaluation Group recommendations and conduct expert consultations and literature reviews. If initial case studies do not yield sufficient evidence for robust generalization, additional desk-based case work will be conducted. This flexible approach ensures comprehensive coverage of emerging issues and supports conclusions grounded in a broad and varied evidence base.

Table A.1 is the evaluation design matrix.

Table A.1. Evaluation Design Matrix

Evaluation Questions	Judgment Criteria or Evidence Threshold	Information Sources and Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Methods	Risks and Mitigation Strategies
EQ 1. How well has the World Bank Group's support responded to context-specific food insecurity drivers and targeted vulnerable populations?				
EQ 1.1. To what extent did the World Bank, IFC, and MIGA integrate food security in their strategies, projects, and programs? (Relevance)	• Evidence that there is a clear and strong alignment between the Bank Group's strategic approaches and country and regional projects and programs that address the key drivers of food insecurity • Evidence of suitability of the chosen lending instruments	• Project documents such as PADs, ICRs, ICRRs, PPARs, latest ISRs, XPSRs, PCR EvNotes, and PERs • Literature review (broader and country specific) of effective or proven interventions for addressing specific food insecurity drivers • Interviews with CMUs, TTLs, and clients	• Case studies: content analysis of project documents and interview transcripts to document alignment between strategic approaches and investment portfolio	• Key project documents may not have adequate detailed information on specific interventions or activities addressing food security that could be assessed • Mitigation strategies: interviews with current and past TTLs, relevant project officials of the clients, and development partners can provide additional reports and documentation that can help mitigate this risk
EQ 1.2. How well did the Bank Group use data and analytics to adapt its support to specific food security contexts, including conflict, climate shocks, and market volatility? (Relevance)	• Evidence that the Bank Group effectively used robust ASA and studies from other organizations and clients to diagnose the specific food security issues and challenges to inform its strategy and identify drivers faced at the country and regional levels, and addressed them in its strategic approach • Evidence that the Bank Group considered the appropriate balance between efforts to boost agricultural supply and interventions focused on helping the food-insecure people access food • Evidence of how the Bank Group assesses its contributions to food security; line of sight between	• Bank Group food security dashboards and other data sources • For case study countries, this will include some of the following: SCDs, poverty assessments, rural sector diagnostics, CCDRs, policy notes, sector reviews, country risk and resilience assessments, CPSDs, food security crisis preparedness plans, diagnostic reports from other organizations and government agencies, IEG CPEs, CPFs, and so on • Interviews with experts, development partners, TTLs, and team members	• Case studies: Content analyses of analytics and diagnostic documents and interview transcripts to develop and document food security context and identify food security drivers, triangulating with interview data • Content analyses of strategy documents and interview transcripts to develop and document food security strategic approaches, triangulating with interview data • Review and assessment of diagnostics and strategies to map the coherence among	• Limited or no ASA covering food security; limited data on food security • Identifying interview participants, especially in countries with high turnover, and especially for the earlier part of the evaluation period • Mitigation strategies: we will prescreen case study countries and regions further for data and diagnostics availability

Evaluation Questions	Judgment Criteria or Evidence Threshold	Information Sources and Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Methods	Risks and Mitigation Strategies
	country results and corporate results indicators		drivers, issues, and challenges with strategic approaches	
EQ 1.3. How well did Bank Group operations target and reach the most vulnerable populations and areas? To what extent did they address gender issues? (Effectiveness)	• Evidence that data and ASA identify the vulnerable groups and areas, and Bank Group support has reached vulnerable populations and areas and targeted gender issues, which are reflected in the Bank Group's strategic approaches and are targeted and delivered through its investments	• Publicly available dashboards and other readily available data • In-country and regional data on food security indicators and other key data on poverty levels, climate, conflict, and other relevant measures • Project documents • Geospatial data (for example, on Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, the World Food Programme's HungerMap, climate risk layers on drought frequency, flood recurrence, land degradation indicators, and so on, for mapping needs and project location data) • Interviews with CMU, TTLs, and clients • In-country field visits to vulnerable regions • Gender analysis for World Bank projects (where available)	Case studies: • Validation that ASA identify vulnerable populations and areas and address gender issues, which are reflected in strategy documents • Bank Group project documents incorporate information and include its targeting approach, including on gender • Country data and information on regions and areas with the highest number of food-insecure populations • Documents that provide evidence of the Bank Group's programs reaching vulnerable populations and areas • Geospatial analysis will be considered	• Limited official country-level or regional data that are disaggregated by population or region • Mitigation strategies: interviews with key stakeholders and review of documents; additionally, other development partners that work in specific regions could have data that can be tapped into; furthermore, geospatial data will also be useful in such situations
EQ 2. How well has the Bank Group's policy engagement supported food security reforms?				
Assessment of use of diagnostics to inform policy design and tailor it to food insecurity drivers; EQ 1.2 applied to this theme	• Evidence that Bank Group policy support was grounded in solid analytics of the drivers and policy constraints Specifically: • Clear use of country-specific diagnostics in project documents and policy inputs • Evidence on the alignment between identified food insecurity drivers	• Concept Notes, outputs, and completion reports of ASA for selected countries; SCDs, poverty assessments, rural sector diagnostics, CCDRs, Public Expenditure Reviews, diagnostic reports from other organizations and government agencies, government strategies, IEG CPEs, and country case studies from relevant thematic evaluations; DPF (analytical underpinnings of prior	• Structured portfolio scan (DPF and PforR for 72 countries—total 147 operations) and clustering of reform areas: the evaluation will conduct a structured review of Bank Group–supported policy and regulatory interventions to identify two to three prominent reform pathways (for example, food subsidy	• Insufficient overlap between in-depth country case studies and countries with relevant policy reform engagement: some of the preselected case study countries may not have significant Bank Group policy engagement relevant to food security, limiting the ability to assess this question across the

Evaluation Questions	Judgment Criteria or Evidence Threshold	Information Sources and Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Methods	Risks and Mitigation Strategies
	and policy issues and the focus or content of Bank Group policy advice or reforms • Evidence showing tailoring of support to national or subnational food security needs, especially in fragile or vulnerable areas • Stakeholder feedback indicating that Bank Group support addressed key priorities or gaps identified through country analyses	actions), PforR, and IFC project and advisory documents related to policy or institutional reform support; interviews with relevant stakeholders; summaries of structured policy dialogues (for example, regional food security forums); and policy briefs from regional economic communities where Bank Group support was involved • Literature review and expert consultations on food security policies in case study countries	reform and trade policy); this review will help identify the reform areas where the Bank Group was most active, narrow the scope of the review, and ensure comparability across countries • Structured portfolio review: country-level relevance analysis (15–20 countries, including the countries selected for in-depth case studies) Based on the results of the portfolio scan, we will use purposive sampling to select a sample of countries to answer the evaluation subquestion • Review of key policy instruments: assess the alignment and coherence between diagnostics and the design of DPF and PforR, and relevant diagnostics by reviewing project documents and analytical inputs • Triangulation using interviews and document analysis: complement the portfolio and document review with targeted interviews (Bank Group staff, government, and donor partners) and content analysis of ASA and government policy documents to fill information gaps and validate findings on relevance and tailoring	same cases used for other themes • Limited contextual and diagnostic information in countries outside the in-depth case studies: for countries selected based on reform pathways (for example, subsidy or trade reform), a focused review of one to three reform pathways may not provide sufficient context to assess alignment with food insecurity drivers • Mitigation strategies: flexible case study selection for policy analysis; the evaluation will use a two-tiered approach, maintaining the core in-depth country case studies for the other three themes, while selecting a separate (but partially overlapping) set of countries where the Bank Group has supported food security policy reforms for a structured portfolio review and document-based assessment • To address potential contextual gaps, the evaluation will draw on a layered evidence approach. This includes reviewing publicly available diagnostics (for example, SCDs and PERs) and conducting targeted

Evaluation Questions	Judgment Criteria or Evidence Threshold	Information Sources and Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Methods	Risks and Mitigation Strategies
				interviews with Bank Group staff and partners familiar with the reform process in each country. Where contextual alignment is unclear, triangulation will be used to infer links between food insecurity drivers or policy constraints and policy focus; priority will be given to cases where diagnostics and reform intent are clearly documented
EQ 2.1. How effectively did the Bank Group engage with governments and other stakeholders in policy processes? (Effectiveness)	• Evidence that the Bank Group used inclusive, cross-sectoral, and multistakeholder engagement in the design and implementation of supported policy and regulatory reforms at the country level Specifically: • Evidence of inclusive consultations with relevant ministries, local authorities, civil society, or private sector actors during the policy design and reform process • Feedback from stakeholders reflecting meaningful participation, transparency, and responsiveness of the engagement process • Evidence that collaborative mechanisms supported or led by the Bank Group, such as working groups, joint policy platforms, or technical committees, resulted in tangible outputs such as joint decisions, coordinated strategies, or codeveloped policy proposals	• Stakeholder consultation reports, aide-mémoire, meeting minutes, and project documents • Interviews with relevant stakeholders (teams, counterparts, development partners, and nonstate actors) • Documents such as workshop or consultation proceedings	Case studies: • Stakeholder mapping and engagement reconstruction: we will reconstruct the reform process by mapping key stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of policy reforms; this includes relevant government ministries, Bank Group teams (including IFC), development partners, civil society, and private sector actors; assessment of the breadth and quality of engagement • In countries with limited or no Bank Group policy engagement, structured analysis of absence (document review and interviews) to understand demand-side and supply-side factors shaping Bank Group choices • Process review of key operations (DPF and PforR):	• Limited documentation of stakeholder engagement processes: engagement processes may not be systematically recorded in available project or reform documentation, making it difficult to assess breadth and depth of participation • Recall bias or selective perspectives in interviews: stakeholder interviews may reflect partial or biased recollections, especially if reforms were implemented several years ago or if stakeholders were peripherally involved • Risk of bias from overfocusing on countries with visible reforms Mitigation strategies: • Selectivity in cases: we will prioritize countries with clearer documentation or

Evaluation Questions	Judgment Criteria or Evidence Threshold	Information Sources and Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Methods	Risks and Mitigation Strategies
	• Evidence that stakeholder engagement in food security policy processes led to tangible improvements in ownership, consensus, or cross-sectoral alignment, such as joint policy commitments, harmonized regulatory measures, or integrated implementation plans • In cases where no significant policy engagement took place, evidence of the reasons (for example, client demand, political economy, Bank Group selectivity, and crisis-driven priorities) and implications for food security outcomes		review of policy operations and related ASA and technical assistance to identify how engagement processes were structured and implemented; examination of the inclusion of stakeholder consultation in design notes, project preparation documents, and implementation reports, with attention to evidence of cross-sectoral dialogue or feedback loops • Content analysis of documentation and interviews to extract qualitative evidence from project documents and ASA outputs, complemented with semistructured interviews to assess perceptions of engagement quality and inclusiveness	more accessible stakeholders to ensure robust insights, while acknowledging limitations in others • Use of stakeholder maps: in each case study, we will map out key actors involved and assess participation levels to identify patterns and gaps • The evaluation will explicitly include case studies (or within-case sections) where Bank Group policy engagement was limited or absent and analyze the reasons and consequences
EQ 2.2. How well did the Bank Group contribute to food security–related reforms? (Effectiveness)	• Evidence that the Bank Group influenced policy dialogue and contributed to the design, adoption, and implementation of food security–related policy and regulatory reforms Specifically: • Evidence of Bank Group–supported analytics or advice cited or referenced in food security policies or legislative proposals • Evidence of shifts in government discourse or reform priorities aligned with Bank Group	• Bank Group inputs to the reform process including IFC upstream and advisory efforts. Policy drafts. ICRs, ICRRs, and other relevant project documents • Interviews with relevant stakeholders (teams, counterparts, development partners, and nonstate actors)	Case studies: • Contribution analysis will be applied in selected country case studies to assess the extent to which Bank Group support plausibly contributed to shaping policy dialogue and advancing the design, adoption, and implementation of food security–related reforms • This approach will involve reconstructing the reform pathways for the key policy reforms in the selected case(s)	• Contribution assessment challenges: it may be difficult to isolate the Bank Group's influence from that of other actors, especially in complex or multipartner policy environments • Limited or sensitive data on government decision-making: some information about how decisions were made, or the extent of the Bank Group's influence, may not be publicly available or may be politically sensitive

Evaluation Questions	Judgment Criteria or Evidence Threshold	Information Sources and Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Methods	Risks and Mitigation Strategies
	recommendations or technical assistance • Policy reforms or regulatory frameworks adopted or implemented with Bank Group input or facilitation • Feedback from stakeholders recognizing the Bank Group's role in shaping or advancing reforms • Evidence of progression from upstream engagement to concrete reform milestones		and evaluating the Bank Group's contribution against alternative explanations using a mix of document review, stakeholder interviews, triangulation with independent sources, and a theory of change	• Short evaluation time frame relative to reform timelines: reforms often unfold over years; some reforms may be ongoing or too recent to observe meaningful adoption or implementation outcomes Mitigation strategies: • Contribution analysis will be applied selectively, focusing on a small number of case studies where Bank Group involvement in the reform process is documented and traceable • We will use interviews and timelines to reconstruct the Bank Group's role in influencing specific reform milestones • Clear qualification of findings: where evidence of contribution is inconclusive or reforms are incomplete, findings will be presented with appropriate caveats
EQ 3. How well has the Bank Group's emergency support met short-term needs while advancing long-term food systems resilience?				
EQ 3.1. How well did Bank Group emergency responses follow market-friendly principles and avoid creating excessive distortions while supporting access to food through	• Evidence that Bank Group emergency interventions promote market-friendly approaches (for example, using existing market systems, actors, and so on) and did not disincentivize longer-term investments or disrupt the functioning of markets (for example, the provision of free seeds	• Project documents (PADs, ICRs, ICRRs, XPSRs, and PCR EvNotes) of stand-alone emergency projects in case study countries • Price data for fertilizer and seed during years of crisis • Literature and document reviews on good practice on emergency support	• Case studies: content analysis of these project documents to identify country-specific interventions for emergency support • Project-level findings are corroborated by review of market data and literature or document reviews to (i) assess	• There could be challenges in securing reliable market data • Mitigation strategies: we will triangulate the information through document reviews and in-country interviews with key stakeholders, including experts

Evaluation Questions	Judgment Criteria or Evidence Threshold	Information Sources and Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Methods	Risks and Mitigation Strategies
affordability and inclusive market participation? (Relevance)	and fertilizers did not adversely affect domestic or local seed and fertilizer markets, or their actors, or distort prices; interventions were justified in attempting to correct market failures or protect vulnerable groups) • Evidence that Bank Group emergency interventions such as cash transfers or payments for public works did not undermine local labor markets; these interventions did not lead to wage distortions or draw labor from long-term employment	that promotes market-friendly approaches • Interview with TTLs, clients, private sector, and development partners	how and whether Bank Group interventions worked through or in support of local markets and (ii) ensure that they did not create parallel markets that are not sustainable after the emergency support ends • Interviews with key stakeholders in the country (clients, private sector, and development partners)	
EQ 3.2. How well did the Bank Group support the building of local capacity and productive assets to reduce aid dependency and enhance availability and access to food? (Relevance)	• Evidence that Bank Group stand-alone emergency projects supported building local institutional capacities (that is, farmer groups, local NGOs, extension services, and other local service providers) and built productive assets (for example, roads, small-scale irrigation, and floodwalls) enhancing local employment and providing income-generating activities, paving the way for social safety nets	• Project documents (PADs, ICRs, ICRRs, XPSRs, and PCR EvNotes) and identification of emergency projects to assess the extent of how local institutional capacities are used and supported; in addition, assessment of intervention types and whether they build productive assets • Country emergency and preparedness plans (if there is one) or similar documents • Interviews with TTLs, clients, development partners, farmer associations, NGOs, and research organizations	• Case studies: content analysis of project documents and strategy documents to identify country-specific and project-specific interventions to support local capacity and build productive assets • Interviews with TTLs and stakeholders in the country (clients, local stakeholders such as farmer groups, NGOs, and development partners)	• Measuring capacity building is challenging as projects often do not monitor capacity-building outcomes • Mitigation strategies: we will triangulate evidence based on project documents, stakeholder interviews and literature, and other studies done by development partners
EQ 3.3. How well did the Bank Group's emergency responses promote medium- and long-term food systems	• Evidence that Bank Group stand-alone emergency projects also include interventions or systems that build long-term resilience	• Project documents (PADs, ICRs, and ICRRs) to identify emergency projects and those that have CERCs triggered • Code interventions and objectives of these projects (emergency and CERCs), and for closed projects,	Case studies: • Identify emergency interventions • Use literature and stakeholder interviews to assess the extent of balance between emergency	• Building crisis prevention and early-warning systems could be done under other projects that are not part of emergency support; crisis preparedness and prevention

Evaluation Questions	Judgment Criteria or Evidence Threshold	Information Sources and Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Methods	Risks and Mitigation Strategies
resilience? (Effectiveness)	• Evidence that projects where CERCs are triggered and used for food security purposes • Evidence that projects where CERCs were triggered practiced adaptive management and were able to resume momentum toward original PDOs postcrisis	assess the achievements on longer-term interventions and objectives • Literature on effective interventions on emergency support and in building long-term resilience • Country emergency and preparedness plans (if there is one) or similar documents • Interviews with TTLs, clients, development partners, and research organizations	and long-term resilience building and crisis prevention mechanisms Portfolio review: for projects with CERC components: • Trace how projects evolved (ISR ratings before and after) subsequent to CERC triggering • Identify what share of project costs went to CERCs • For closed projects, assess how CERC components affected achievement of PDO and targets for the other components (compare main PDO ratings and CERC component PDO ratings) • For stand-alone emergency projects, review the interventions and whether they build long-term resilience	can be built during CERC activation rather than beforehand Mitigation strategies: • Additional data at the country level will be considered as needed (if there are other specific projects building crisis prevention mechanisms, they will also be assessed) • Team to interpret resilience building and crisis preparedness as dynamic concepts and not assess based on ex ante project designs
EQ 4. How well has the Bank Group collaborated and convened on food security?				
EQ 4.1. How well did the Bank Group collaborate and align efforts across its internal organizational boundaries, including among the World Bank, IFC, and MIGA?	• Vertical coherence: evidence that Bank Group support helped align national strategies with local implementation by reinforcing domestic systems (for example, planning, budgeting, and delivery mechanisms) and supporting effective governance structures and frameworks • Evidence that Bank Group support strengthened coordination and accountability mechanisms between national and local actors, including	• Case study interviews and project documents • Government sources: national and local food security strategies, policy frameworks, and so on • External sources: evaluations or reports from development partners and independent research institutions on institutional capacity, domestic investment, and relevant reforms • Interviews: IFC, World Bank, and MIGA staff involved in food security	Case studies: • Targeted portfolio screening to identify World Bank–IFC food security–related projects with potential for collaboration (for example, reforms enabling investment, value chain development, and agrifinance); the evaluation will focus on actual and potential links rather than project labels • Thematic coding of interviews with Bank Group staff,	• Limited overlap between World Bank and IFC engagement in some countries • Mitigation strategies: flexible case study selection, purposefully selecting countries where both institutions have a presence

Evaluation Questions	Judgment Criteria or Evidence Threshold	Information Sources and Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Methods	Risks and Mitigation Strategies
	feedback loops that allowed local realities to inform national strategies • Evidence that Bank Group support promoted policy and regulatory coherence across levels (for example, by aligning national frameworks with local regulations or helping reduce contradictions that constrained implementation) • Institutional strengthening and domestic investment: evidence that the Bank Group supported the strengthening of national and local institutional capacity to unlock domestic public or private investment • Organizational alignment (World Bank–IFC–MIGA): evidence of collaboration mechanisms (for example, shared diagnostics, cofinancing, and linked operations) that facilitated alignment across Bank Group institutions • Evidence of how and why specific mechanisms such as MPAs, shared diagnostics, cofinancing, joint missions, linked operations, and collaboration in the context of the Global Challenge Program and AgriConnect have influenced alignment and collaboration • Complementarity and added value: evidence that the World Bank, IFC, and MIGA played complementary roles in supporting food security objectives, with clear division of	initiatives; government officials at the national and local levels; private sector actors engaged in value chains or investment; and development partners for triangulation	government, and private sector to reconstruct how collaboration mechanisms functioned in practice • Contribution analysis or process tracing in selected countries and region(s) to assess the effectiveness of World Bank–IFC collaboration and to explore the extent to which institutional and contextual factors facilitated or constrained its success; this will draw on a simple theory of what enables collaboration	

Evaluation Questions	Judgment Criteria or Evidence Threshold	Information Sources and Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Methods	Risks and Mitigation Strategies
	responsibilities and identifiable added value of each institution • Examples may include value chain development and market creation but also policy reform, investment mobilization, or risk-sharing mechanisms • Evidence of cases where collaboration led to increased private sector engagement, private capital mobilization, or scalable interventions			
EQ 4.2. How well did the Bank Group collaborate and convene major external partners?	• Presence of joint or explicitly aligned programs with development partners, regional bodies, research bodies, or the private sector, including clearly defined roles, shared objectives, or coordinated financing • Alignment with major regional frameworks and initiatives in Africa • Support for research and development • Use and functionality of coordination mechanisms (for example, donor platforms, MDTFs, or technical working groups), demonstrated through joint decision-making processes and evidence of resulting operational alignment or harmonized action • Documented cases where collaborative efforts (including working with donor partners as third-party implementors) led to greater scale, efficiency, or	• Interviews with Bank Group managers, directors, IFC and MIGA staff, government counterparts, private sector actors, and external donor partners • MDTF reports and evaluations and program documents of MDTFs of global and regional programs • Program documents from key development partners (for example, UN agencies, bilateral donors), and private sector investment briefs where relevant	Case studies: • Targeted interviews with Bank Group TTLs, managers, regional and sectoral staff, and representatives of key external partners (for example, UN agencies, regional organizations, research bodies, bilateral donors, private sector actors) to explore the nature and effectiveness of collaboration and support for research; incentives or constraints shaping partnership quality; and perceptions of the Bank Group's leadership, value addition, and responsiveness • In regional cases, review of alignment and collaboration with African regional bodies and frameworks, including the Comprehensive Africa	• Difficulty assessing the effectiveness of collaboration efforts in the absence of strong outcome data • Mitigation strategies: the evaluation will focus on intermediate results such as joint planning, resource pooling, and the scale or reach of collaborative interventions, and will draw on findings from existing evaluations of MDTFs where available

Evaluation Questions	Judgment Criteria or Evidence Threshold	Information Sources and Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Methods	Risks and Mitigation Strategies
	coherence, evidenced by reduced duplication or fragmentation, leveraged or pooled resources, or expanded geographic or beneficiary reach • Evidence of effective public-private collaboration, including blended finance or risk-sharing mechanisms facilitated by IFC or MIGA, with examples of market creation or improved access to inputs, finance, or markets (for example, input cost reductions, expanded credit availability, and cross-border trade facilitation)		Agriculture Development Program • Thematic coding of interview data to assess common patterns in the functioning, outcomes, and challenges of external collaboration • Comparative analysis across selected case studies to identify what types of partnerships (for example, bilateral, regional, and public-private) were most effective, under what conditions, and in what types of interventions	

Source: Independent Evaluation Group.

Note: ASA = advisory services and analytics; CCDR = Country Climate and Development Report; CMU = Country Management Unit; CPE = Country Program Evaluation; CPF = Country Partnership Framework; CPSD = Country Private Sector Diagnostic; DPF = development policy financing; EvNote = Evaluative Note; ICR = Implementation Completion and Results Report; ICRR = Implementation Completion and Results Report Review; IEG = Independent Evaluation Group; IFC = International Finance Corporation; ISR = Implementation Status and Results Report; MDTF = multidonor trust fund; MIGA = Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency; MPA = Multiphase Programmatic Approach; NGO = nongovernmental organization; PAD = Project Appraisal Document; PCR = Project Completion Report; PDO = project development objective; PER = Project Evaluation Report; PforR = Program-for-Results; PPAR = Project Performance Assessment Report; SCD = Systematic Country Diagnostic; TTL = task team leader; UN = United Nations; XPSR = Expanded Project Supervision Report.

Appendix B. Previous Independent Evaluation Group Evaluations on Related Topics

The World Bank Group and the Global Food Crisis: An Evaluation of the World Bank Group Response (2013)

The evaluation reviewed how the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation responded to the 2007–08 food price crisis through the Global Food Crisis Response Program. Although support reached 35 countries, mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa, and helped increase food supply and social safety nets, there were gaps in targeting the most vulnerable populations. Medium-term efforts focused on increasing agricultural capacity and resilience, although declines in analytical work affected policy dialogue and lending quality. Key lessons include the need for detailed strategic frameworks, adequate administrative resources, better targeting of vulnerable groups, and improved monitoring of nutritional outcomes.

Growing the Rural Nonfarm Economy to Alleviate Poverty: An Evaluation of the Contribution of the World Bank Group (2017)

The evaluation reviewed how successfully the World Bank Group contributed to the creation of sustainable income-generating opportunities for the rural poor people through the rural nonfarm economy. It found that the Bank Group lacked a cohesive approach to developing the rural nonfarm economy to alleviate poverty, often resulting in fragmented efforts and insufficient income generation for the rural poor people. Efforts by the International Finance Corporation in food processing and retail have had some positive rural employment outcomes, but there is a lack of targeted and tracked benefits for poor people. Addressing key constraints and improving coordination are essential for linking the rural poor people to productive activities in the rural nonfarm economy and achieving sustained poverty alleviation.

World Bank Support for Irrigation Service Delivery: Responding to Emergent Challenges and Opportunities (2019)

The evaluation sought to inform the World Bank's efforts to support sustainable irrigation services by analyzing how projects responded to factors such as population growth, climate change, and urbanization. It did not assess irrigation's contribution to food security. It suggested a theory of change and an expanded results framework to improve water service delivery, water resources management, and climate resilience and to achieve sustainable development impacts through better coordination among projects and tracking key performance indicators.

World Bank Support to Reducing Child Undernutrition (2021)

This evaluation assessed the contributions of the World Bank to improving nutrition. It found that the World Bank's approach to nutrition has evolved to include multidimensional and multisectoral support, combining interventions that address both immediate and underlying determinants of nutrition, such as access to nutritious food; health care; water, sanitation, and hygiene services; and behavior change. Investments in nutrition-sensitive interventions have increased significantly, whereas nutrition-specific interventions have not seen the same rise. The evaluation confirms that the World Bank's approach provides a pathway to improving nutrition outcomes but with persistent measurement gaps and a need for a greater emphasis on immediate nutrition determinants, multisectoral coordination, alignment with country needs, social norms, and water, sanitation, and hygiene.

Toward Productive, Inclusive, and Sustainable Farms and Agribusiness Firms: An Evaluation of the World Bank Group's Support for the Development of Agrifood Economies (2010–20) (2022)

The evaluation reviewed the Bank Group's support for agrifood system development—that is, in developing more productive, inclusive, and sustainable farms and agribusiness firms. It focused on productivity, inclusion, and sustainability outcomes but not food security or nutrition. Topics covered include social inclusion, food safety standards, climate mitigation, access to agricultural finance, and the enabling business environment. It found that the Bank Group has been broadly relevant in responding to countries' agrifood system development needs, but gaps remain in scaling up and better targeting support. The World Bank has been effective in supporting productivity gains in food crops and livestock, but significant gaps remain in Western and Central Africa and in rainfed areas. The Bank Group's productivity-enhancing investments are insufficiently diversified toward high-value, nutrient-rich food products—such as fruits, vegetables, grain legumes, oil crops, small ruminants, dairy, fish, and poultry—that offer multiple benefits to smallholder farmers and small and medium enterprises. The current approach to agrifood systems can be strengthened by improving the targeting and intensity of support for increasing agricultural productivity; enhancing access to agricultural finance; improving the enabling business environment; diversifying toward high-value, nutrient-rich food products; ensuring complementarity between investments in agricultural productivity and in improved market access; and enhancing Bank Group collaboration.

Integrating Resilience into Food Security Operations (Evaluation Insight Note; 2023)

The Evaluation Insight Note was based on a rapid literature review, a portfolio review of 112 active and 69 closed projects from FY16 to FY22 with food security nutrition theme codes, and document reviews. It focused on how the World Bank has integrated resilience into food security operations. It defined resilience activities to include support for the diversification of household income sources, market integration, and other medium- to longer-term value chain development activities. It found that the food security portfolio grew over time and that a growing share of it included resilience features. In emergency operations, such resilience features helped bridge the gap between immediate crisis responses and longer-term sustainable development. Closed projects with resilience features achieved higher outcome ratings.

Agricultural Innovation and Technology in World Bank Projects (Evaluation Insight Note; 2024)

The Evaluation Insight Note reviewed the technologies used in World Bank agriculture and irrigation projects, finding limited coverage of advanced technologies. Furthermore, the technologies prevalent in projects focus mainly on increasing agricultural productivity, with limited attention to technologies for facilitating market linkages. Geographic information systems, early-warning systems, and management information systems were the most supported technologies.

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