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Evaluation Reports

For consideration

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

Management Response to the Annual Evaluation Report, 2015

Introduction

1. The 2015 Annual Evaluation Report (AER) provides a synthesized summary of evaluation findings related to emergency preparedness and nutrition, and valuable insights into issues drawn from country-specific evaluations. In view of the pace of WFP's ongoing organizational change, management is pleased to note that the evaluations presented in 2015 recognized progress in the transition from implementer to enabler.
2. Elements that have helped to demonstrate the transition include a stronger evidence base for programme design and prioritization, and improved measuring of and reporting on results. Recent investments in enhancing assessment and monitoring systems and developing approaches for capacity development in areas such as resilience-building and nutrition are also appreciated.
3. In accordance with the AER's analysis of overarching lessons and recommendations, management presents this high-level response to complement the more specific management responses to the recommendations of individual evaluations. The broader analysis in the AER reinforces learning and adds impetus to work on the actions included in other management responses.
4. Management values the Office of Evaluation's (OEV's) work and its contributions to learning and the enhancement of WFP's performance, and concurs with the lessons and recommendations of the AER. It acknowledges that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development presents new challenges and opportunities for partnering with other United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and donor and recipient governments. The AER's underlining of the importance of working in partnership towards common outcomes is well noted, and is reflected in the new Strategic Plan with its alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals – particularly goals 2 and 17 – and its focus on partnerships with national governments. The new financial framework will be essential in providing the flexibility required for appropriate programme support.
5. The following section summarizes WFP commitments to addressing issues in each of the three broad categories of findings presented in the AER.

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Lessons, Recommendations and Main Findings

6. Management acknowledges the eight lessons and recommendations on addressing systemic issues, which draw on the more specific recommendations made in individual evaluations. This management response reflects some of the learning gained from more specific recommendations in the areas of emergency preparedness, nutrition and country-specific issues.

Emergency Preparedness

7. The evaluations of emergency preparedness recognized that the increased demands of managing multiple Level 3 emergencies have had unintended consequences in diverting attention and resources from the protracted, chronic and lower-level emergencies that constitute the majority of WFP's operations.
8. Evaluations of WFP's work in emergency preparedness and response have informed improvements in the effectiveness and predictability of responses, especially in major sudden-onset emergencies. These improvements include application of Functional and Support Training for Emergency Response (FASTER) modules in inter-agency coordination, cash-based transfers and gender sensitivity in response, protection and accountability to affected populations. Field-level agreements have been put in place to reduce the time needed to establish partnerships in emergencies.
9. Enhancing staff capacity, deployment and well-being is the highest priority in strengthening emergency preparedness and response. WFP's work on preparedness has influenced development of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's approach to emergency preparedness.
10. Addressing the need to strengthen the evidence base for improved targeting, highlighted in the Syrian crisis evaluation, WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations conducted a crop and food security assessment mission and the Syrian food security assessment, which provided vulnerability analysis and other inputs to inform the prioritization of resources and facilitate scenario-based planning. A study carried out with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees generated data on household demographics and socio-economic characteristics, which complement WFP food security analysis and are available to country-level managers.
11. At the corporate level, WFP developed the consolidated approach for reporting indicators of food security, which assesses vulnerability at the household level to facilitate food security-based targeting. Guidance and training materials for the new approach are being disseminated.

Nutrition

12. The evaluation of the nutrition policy found that the policy provided a useful analytical framework and was consistent with WFP's mandate, Strategic Plan and other policies. Areas for improvement included field-level guidance and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacities; and the scale of some preventive programmes under the policy was not matched by adequate levels of funding. WFP will continue working to ensure that the reductions in malnutrition sought by the policy can be sustained by national governments, including through multi-sector strategies.
13. Enhancing its nutrition capabilities and partnerships is a major focus area for WFP. Building on evaluation findings, the recently established Nutrition Division is developing a nutrition research strategy detailing priorities, estimated funding needs and recommendations for research, including with academic partners. Initial research topics include rice fortification, the effectiveness of nutritious foods in different contexts, innovative delivery mechanisms for nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programmes, and strategies for reaching adolescent girls. The strategy is being reviewed by partner agencies and will be finalized shortly.
14. The Nutrition Division's activities for improving M&E include quality control of new metrics and dissemination of guidance on assessing moderate acute malnutrition treatment programmes and applying programme impact pathways to improve programme design, implementation and M&E through greater use of performance data. WFP will develop a learning strategy prioritizing actions that increase staff's understanding of and capabilities in nutrition. An area of focus will be nutrition-sensitive actions, including developing and disseminating guidance on

nutrition-sensitive programming, generating evidence of the linkages between nutrition-sensitive programming and nutrition outcomes, and enhancing the complementarity of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programming.

Country Portfolios

15. Lessons derived from country-specific evaluations in 2015 include the need for strengthened monitoring and analysis, especially to underpin innovations such as cash-based transfers; stronger links to national social protection systems; more flexible and predictable funding; selection of appropriate national partners for programme delivery and long-term commitment to facilitate the shift from implementer to enabler; and development of WFP's corporate systems to enhance country-level management of transition in protracted and rapidly altering contexts.
16. Many of these lessons are reflected in the planned shift to the country strategic planning approach. Country Strategic Plans are intended to facilitate more holistic responses to national priorities, reflecting WFP's comparative advantages and added value in the country context.
17. Recognizing that implementation of this approach requires system changes – such as the development of a portfolio budget, which is currently under consideration in the Financial Framework Review – management is committed to ensuring that WFP is fit for purpose to support national governments.

Conclusion

18. Management notes that its increased interaction throughout the evaluation process has helped ensure greater coherence between findings and recommended actions. Improvements in the programme review process have contributed to more systematic use of evaluation findings in project design and implementation, and WFP's commitment to inter-agency collaboration is increasing awareness of the value of its evaluation processes. Management expects these processes to evolve further as WFP engages in more joint and collaborative evaluations in the future.