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Evaluation Reports

**For consideration**

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## **Summary Evaluation Report of WFP Policy on Capacity Development**

### **Executive Summary**

This evaluation of WFP's Policy on Capacity Development: An Update on Implementation (2009) was commissioned by the Office of Evaluation in line with the requirement that policies be evaluated within four to six years of the start of implementation. The evaluation is strategically relevant to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and implementation of the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021).

The evaluation posed three main questions:

1. How good is the policy?
2. What were the results of the policy?
3. Why has the policy produced the results that have been observed?

The policy update reflected contemporary thinking about capacity development at the time. In defining capacity development-specific outcomes and outputs, the policy update addressed a key recommendation from the 2008 evaluation of WFP's 2004 Policy on Building Country and Regional Capacities. However, the 2016 evaluation noted that the policy is not well known within WFP and has not been widely applied to guide the planning and implementation of or the reporting on WFP's capacity development initiatives.

Evaluation findings were largely positive regarding WFP's contributions to capacity development and results in the three capacity dimensions outlined in the 2009 policy update – enabling environment, institutional capacities and individual capacities – and across thematic areas and contexts. However, results cannot be linked back to implementation of the policy update, and WFP monitoring data do not enable linkages between WFP's contributions and impact-/system-level changes.

Evaluation findings on factors affecting the achievement of results were critical of the extent of corporate support for policy dissemination and implementation. This included observations about: i) WFP's funding model, which has not been conducive to the predictable and dedicated long-term commitments required for capacity development; ii) organizational structures that do not identify clear roles and responsibilities for the capacity development function; iii) corporate systems and tools that have led to considerable under-reporting of achievements related to capacity development and that do not capture WFP's contributions to results; and iv) WFP's staffing approach and procedures, which give little consideration to capacity development.

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The 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit indicate the importance of strengthening the capacities of developing countries to manage their own hunger solutions. To realize its ambitious objectives for 2017–2021, WFP can and must build on a wide range of successful experiences identified in the evaluation.

Capacity development results have been achieved despite the challenges faced. The heightened importance of capacity strengthening in the Strategic Plan (2017–2021) means that it is not feasible simply to conduct “business as usual” with respect to the conceptualization and prioritization of the capacity strengthening function, and the internal support provided to it. To do so would result in a high degree of reputational risk.

The main recommendations of the evaluation are to: i) create a time-bound transition management team immediately, to articulate WFP’s vision and strategy for capacity strengthening in the context of the new Strategic Plan (2017–2021); ii) support country offices in carrying out capacity strengthening activities by providing concrete and practical guidance; iii) enhance WFP’s internal capacities to support and facilitate national capacity strengthening; iv) strengthen provisions for monitoring and reporting, to capture quantitative and qualitative information on WFP’s contributions to capacity strengthening results; v) ensure that WFP’s internal and external communications reflect capacity strengthening as a core organizational function; and vi) leave the 2009 policy update in place while updating the document or developing a new policy to align with and support implementation of the Strategic Plan (2017–2021).

### **Draft decision\***

The Board takes note of “Summary Evaluation Report of WFP Policy on Capacity Development” (WFP/EB.1/2017/6-A/Rev.1) and the management response (WFP/EB.1/2017/6-A/Add.1), and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

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

## Introduction and Evaluation Features

1. In November 2009, the Executive Board approved the Policy on Capacity Development: An Update on Implementation. In accordance with the WFP requirement that policies be evaluated within four to six years of their start of implementation, this evaluation provides an evidence-based assessment of the policy update's quality and intended and unintended results during 2009–2015.
2. The evaluation was conducted between February and July 2016, through the following lines of inquiry:
  - retrospective construction of a theory of change based on the stated results in the policy update;
  - extensive document review, including 356 Standard Project Reports (SPRs) and previous evaluations with findings on capacity development;
  - field missions to country offices in Bangladesh, Jordan, Kenya, Namibia, Peru and Senegal, and regional bureaux in Panama and Bangkok, representing a cross-section of WFP's operating environments;<sup>1</sup>
  - country desk studies of Colombia, India, the Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho, Liberia and Uganda to complement the field missions with more robust documentary evidence;
  - reviews of comparator organizations – the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC);
  - electronic surveys of 213 senior WFP staff members from Headquarters, regional bureaux and country offices; and
  - key informant interviews of 46 WFP Headquarters staff members and 11 Executive Board members.
3. Limitations included: incomplete data on the universe of WFP's capacity development work; the generic nature of the intended results as defined in the policy update, which limited the contribution analysis; a low response rate for the survey; statistically unreliable data from the review of SPRs; and few data available from the 12 sample countries on specific capacity development approaches and performance in acute crises. Despite these limitations, the evaluation team was able to construct valid findings and conclusions.

## Context

4. WFP's policy update applies internationally accepted definitions:
  - "Capacity" refers to the ability of people, organizations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully.
  - "Capacity development" denotes the process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole identify, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain that ability over time.
5. Over the past decade, important changes in the global discourse on capacity development include:
  - i) a shift in focus from the skills of individuals to the performance of groups or organizations and the notion of capacity to deliver results as one dimension of the capacity required for an organization or system to endure, adapt and perform over time; and
  - ii) a shift from viewing

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<sup>1</sup> The criteria used to make this selection included number and type of operations; income status; country office size; Country Strategic Plan or Financial Framework Review pilot country; range of reported capacity development activities; quality of reporting on capacity development-related results; and presence of a Level 2 or Level 3 emergency.

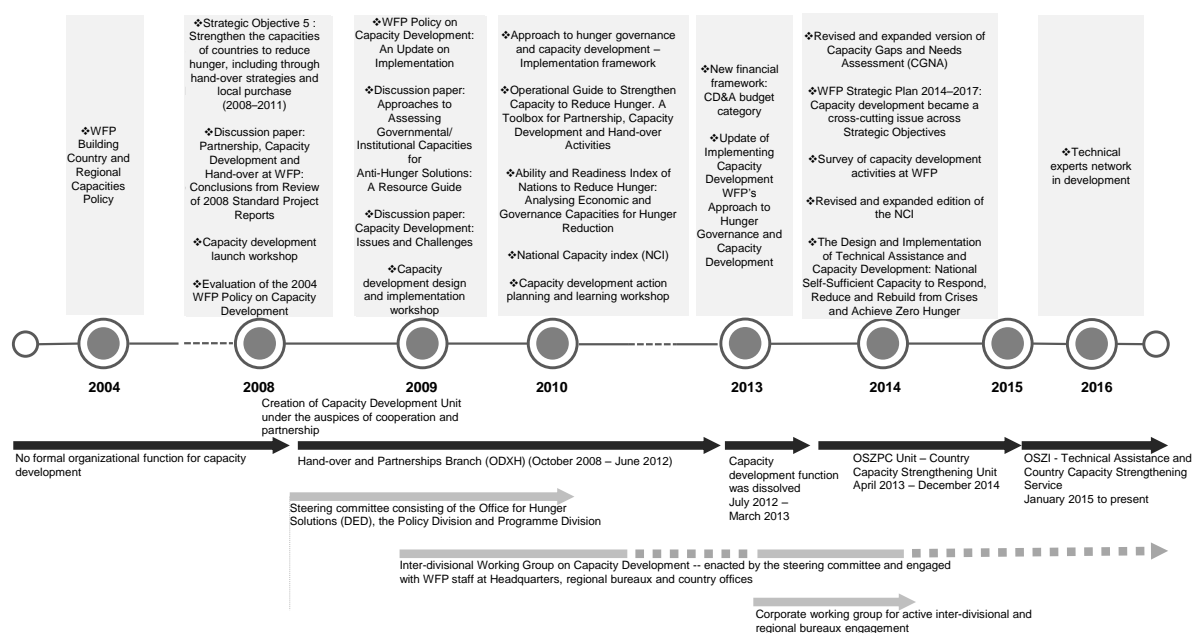
capacity development as linear and externally generated to seeing it as self-organizing, emergent and part of a complex adaptive system.

6. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in 2015 – particularly Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17, target 17.9 – emphasizes the need to “enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries and to support national plans to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.”<sup>2</sup> During this evaluation, WFP was developing its new Strategic Plan (2017–2021) as part of an Integrated Road Map to achieve zero hunger, which foresees enhanced approaches to capacity strengthening and explicit collaboration with national partners.
7. An important outcome document from the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit<sup>3</sup> recognized that responding to humanitarian emergencies cannot be isolated from broader sustainable development efforts, and that strengthening national capacities – including those of first responders – is essential to building an endogenous ability to prepare for and respond to risks.

## WFP’s Policy Framework for Capacity Development

8. The evolution of capacity development policies and related guidance at WFP started with “Building Country and Regional Capacities” (2004), which provided a framework for implementing capacity development in the Strategic Plan (2004–2007). The 2008 evaluation of that policy recommended a policy update and the inclusion of a results framework; this was undertaken in 2009. The 2004 policy remains in force.

**Figure 1: Evolution of the WFP Policy on Capacity Development and related guidance**



Source: “The Making of Capacity Development at WFP (2008–2015)”. Briefing Note.

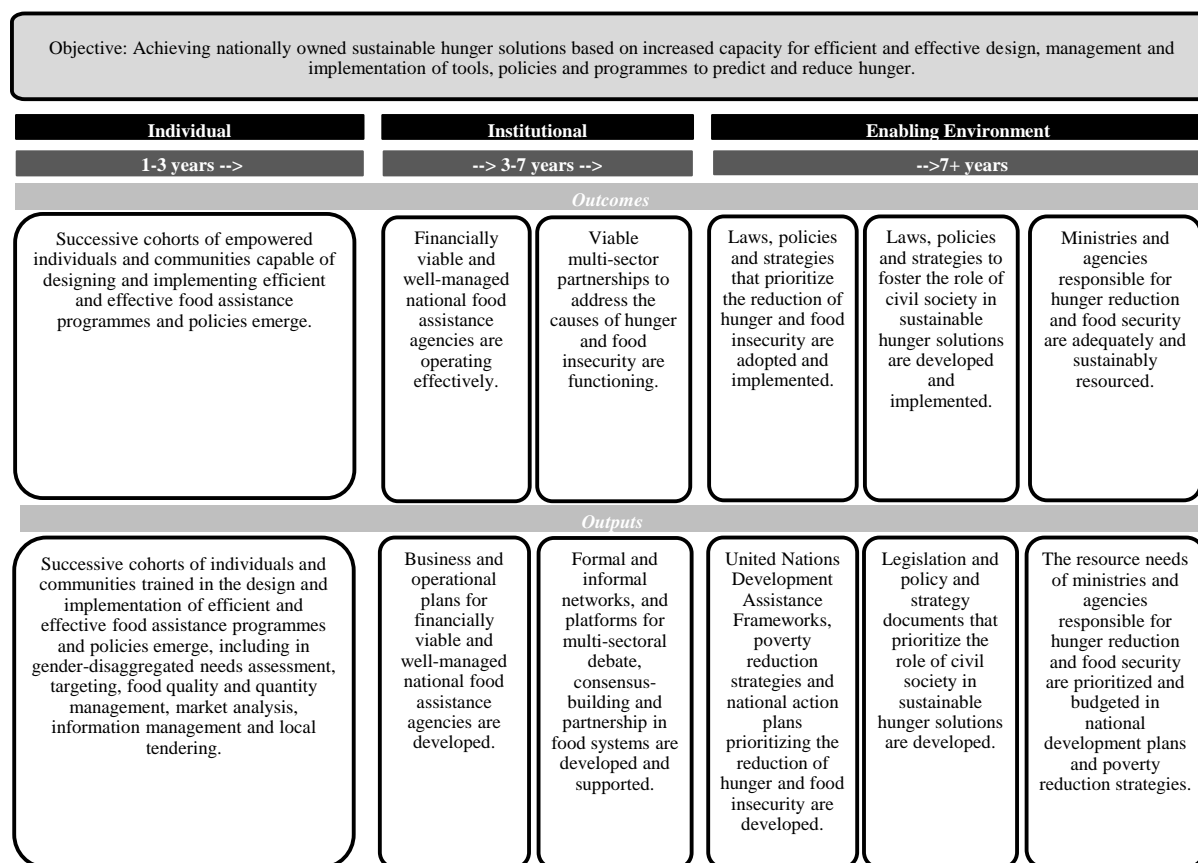
9. The main feature that differentiates the 2009 policy update from the 2004 policy is its comprehensive policy framework, including a vision, overarching objective, outcomes and outputs at three levels of capacity: enabling environment, institutional, and individual (Figure 2).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/globalpartnerships/>

<sup>3</sup> *The Grand Bargain – A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need.*

[http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Grand\\_Bargain\\_final\\_22\\_May\\_FINAL-2.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Grand_Bargain_final_22_May_FINAL-2.pdf)

**Figure 2: Results framework – WFP Policy on Capacity Development:  
An Update on Implementation (2009)**



10. The policy update was followed by an action plan for implementation of the capacity development and hand-over components of the WFP Strategic Plan (2008–2013) issued in 2010. Other capacity development-related guidance documents include:
- Operational Guide to Strengthen Capacity of Nations to Reduce Hunger (2010);
  - The Ability and Readiness of Nations to Reduce Hunger (Ability and Readiness Index) (2010);
  - Implementing Capacity Development: WFP’s Approach to Hunger Governance and Capacity Development (2013);
  - The National Capacity Index (NCI) – Measuring Change in Capacity for Hunger Governance in Support of Projects to Strengthen National Capacity to End Hunger (2014);
  - Capacity Gaps and Needs Assessment in Support of Projects to Strengthen National Capacity to End Hunger (2014); and
  - Design and Implementation of Technical Assistance and Capacity Development (2015).

## Implementation

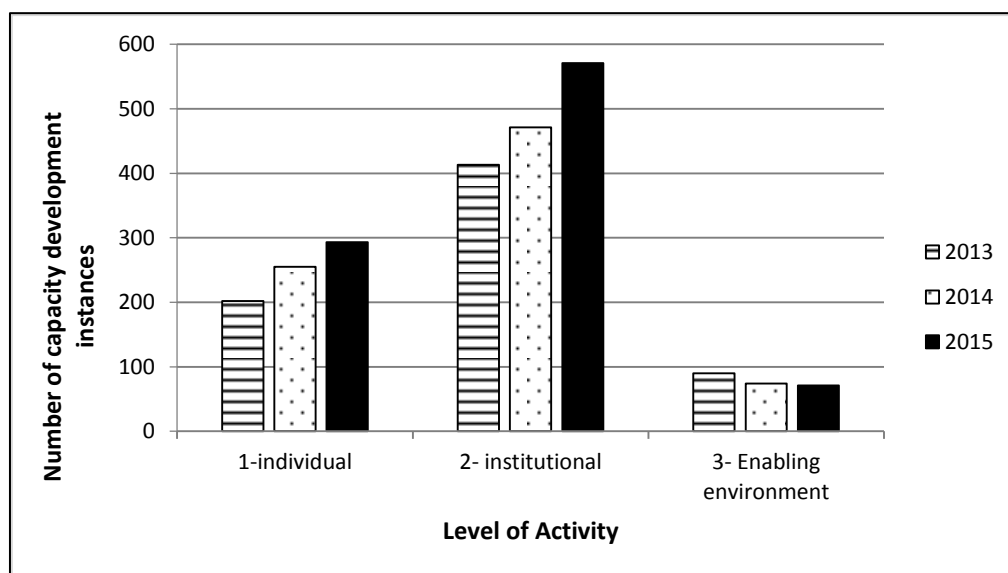
11. All 356 SPRs for protracted relief and recovery operations (PRROs), country programmes and development operations from 2013 to 2015 – covering 161 operations in 70 countries – included a capacity development and augmentation (CD&A) budget component.<sup>4</sup> The total approved CD&A budget for these operations in 2014 and 2015 was USD 374 million – 16 percent of their

<sup>4</sup> The SPR review focused on PRROs, development projects and country programmes given the greater likelihood that these types of WFP operations would contain activities in line with the emerging understanding of capacity development.

total planned budgets. Of this total, 64 percent was for development operations and 7 percent was for PRROs.

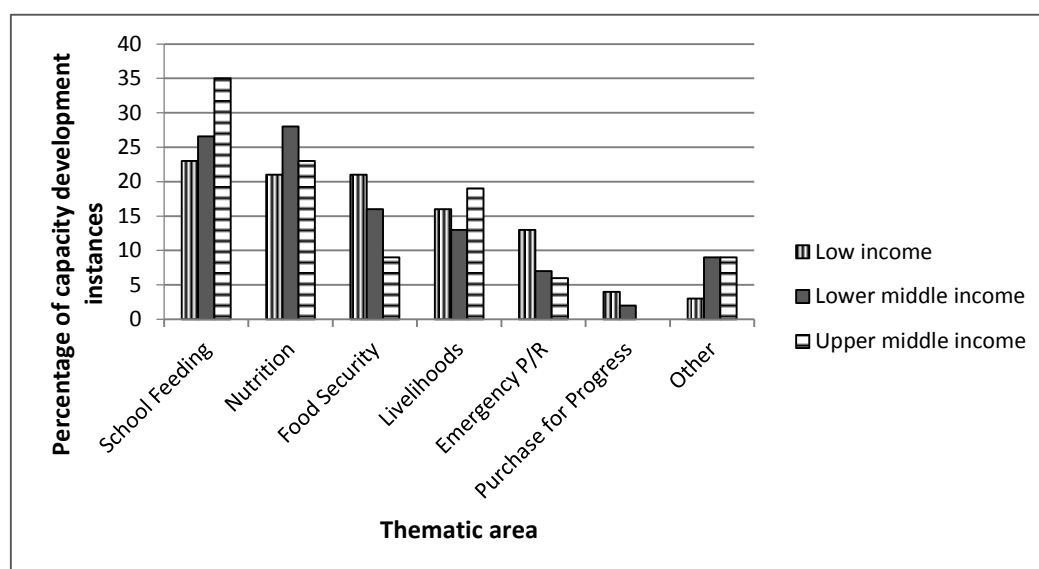
12. Since 2013, reported annual expenditures (excluding trust funds) on CD&A have declined from USD 38.4 million to USD 13.5 million. This represents a decrease from 0.9 percent of WFP's total programme of work in 2013 to 0.3 percent in 2015. A similar pattern emerged when trust funds were included: the percentage of CD&A in the overall programme of work decreased from 1 percent (USD 42 million) in 2013 to 0.7 percent (USD 30.4 million) in 2015. However, these data exclude special operations and regular project activities that have mainstreamed capacity development, in which there is evidence that considerable capacity development took place.

**Figure 3: Number of reported capacity development instances by level of activity and year**



Source: WFP SPRs 2013–2015 (n = 2,448)

13. Figure 3 indicates that while capacity development efforts spanned all three levels outlined in the policy update, most interventions targeted the institutional level. Support for individual- and institutional-level capacity appears to have grown steadily from 2013 to 2015 while there was a slight decrease in support for strengthening the enabling environment.
14. During the evaluation period, WFP's capacity development work supported national and subnational government agencies in the education, health, planning and agriculture sectors. Capacity development activities also included engagement with communities, smallholder farmers, non-governmental organizations and civil society. The SPR data indicated that school feeding had the highest number of reported capacity development activities, with 628 during 2013–2015, followed by nutrition, with 604 (Figure 4). Capacity development in the area of food security was more prevalent in low-income countries, while nearly 80 percent of capacity development in upper-middle-income countries was in school feeding, nutrition and livelihoods. As Figure 4 indicates, there were no significant differences in activity level by national income classification.

**Figure 4: Percentage of capacity development instances by income level and thematic area**

Source: WFP SPRs 2013–2015 (n = 2,448)

15. Recent WFP evaluation reports, such as the synthesis of WFP’s emergency preparedness and response evaluations (2012–2015), the 2014 and 2015 annual evaluation reports and the 2016 synthesis of operation evaluations, confirm that WFP has contributed to strengthening national emergency response capacity and preparedness, and is increasing efforts to reinforce capacities in diverse contexts and thematic areas, including contributions to strengthening government institutions and national policy frameworks. The evaluations note similar shortcomings in WFP’s capacity development work, including: i) the need for a clearer assessment of critical gaps and areas of WFP’s comparative advantage; ii) piecemeal approaches; iii) limited staff capacity – in both quantity and skills – and insufficient resources dedicated to capacity strengthening; iv) lack of a robust performance measurement system, with few baselines or targets; and v) need for more sophisticated technical approaches, systematic guidance and support to meet future challenges.

## Findings

### Quality of the Policy

16. At the time of its creation, the policy update reflected contemporary thinking about capacity development. For example, it:
- used the term “capacity development” instead of “capacity-building”;
  - conceptualized capacity holistically in terms of an enabling environment and institutional and individual capacities;
  - emphasized the long-term nature of capacity development; and
  - stressed the need to foster national ownership.
17. The policy update does not reflect more recent thinking on capacity development processes such as “complex adaptive systems”, but these are covered in guidelines and tools developed later to support policy implementation.
18. The policy update is coherent with international commitments on aid effectiveness such as the principles of strengthened national leadership and planning, harmonized approaches in alignment with country priorities and systems, and support for demand-driven capacity development.
19. Looking forward, the policy update remains broadly relevant. The objective of supporting nationally owned, sustainable hunger solutions is in line with SDG 2 on ending hunger, achieving

- food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture. Its focus on capacity development processes and results is also broadly aligned with SDG 17.<sup>5</sup> The extensive conceptual and technical guidance developed since 2010 positions WFP to capitalize on the challenges presented by the SDGs and their emphasis on national capacities.<sup>6</sup>
20. The quality of the policy update is comparable to that of the strategic documents developed by comparator agencies UNDP, UNICEF, FAO and IFRC. As United Nations organizations, the first three of these share similar capacity development principles such as demand-driven support, and conceptualization of capacity development as a long-term process framed by the aid effectiveness agenda.
  21. While none of the four comparator organizations has an explicit policy on capacity development, UNICEF and IFRC position capacity development as one of their main implementation strategies while UNDP and FAO describe it as a core function. Formulating and monitoring capacity development-specific results, indicators and targets has been a challenge for all four agencies.
  22. The policy update was drafted using clear and understandable language, and appropriately positioned capacity development work in the context of WFP's transition from food aid to food assistance. The broad nature of the policy enabled its adaptation to different contexts while stopping short of being prescriptive.
  23. Numerous guidance and other tools have been developed to aid implementation (paragraph 10 and footnote 7), but are quite technical in nature. These tools provide theoretical and practical approaches to defining appropriate hunger solutions, measuring changes in capacity and identifying ways to support capacity development in a range of thematic areas and response modalities, such as emergency response, social safety nets, school feeding, resilience, and South–South/triangular cooperation, for example through the Brazil Centre of Excellence.
  24. However, weaknesses inhibited the utility of the policy and related guidance and included: i) inconsistent use of terms such as “enabling environment” and “institutional capacities”; ii) lack of clarity on output versus outcome results and on how expected results were to be achieved; iii) the absence of results indicators and guidance on capacity development-related reporting requirements before 2014, when the NCI was developed; and iv) insufficient information on how the 2004 policy would continue to be applied.
  25. The 2008 evaluation found that the 2004 policy was consistent with WFP's mandate and other policies, but did not fully reflect the prioritization of capacity development as a Strategic Objective. Management agreed with all 12 recommendations, but only the recommendation on adapting guidance materials from partners has been fully implemented. Major aspects of the suggested review of funding arrangements for capacity development have not been addressed. The remaining ten recommendations have been partially implemented, including the development of an action plan with a results framework and milestones, and frequent updates of the policy to reflect evaluation findings.
  26. There has been limited cross-policy integration, with only the 2015 Policy on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition explicitly referring to the policy update. Compared with other WFP policies developed during the same era,<sup>7</sup> the policy update was rated as weak on several assessed criteria,<sup>8</sup> including clarity of methods for policy implementation, and coherence with other policies.

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<sup>5</sup> SDG 17: Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

<sup>6</sup> The timing of this evaluation did not allow for a rigorous analysis of the policy update's coherence with WFP's draft Strategic Plan 2017–2021.

<sup>7</sup> These include WFP's policies on disaster risk reduction (2009), gender (2009), school feeding (2009) and HIV and AIDS (2010).

<sup>8</sup> Other criteria include coherence with the Strategic Plan, clarity of objectives, specification of indicators, cross-policy integration and provisions for monitoring and reporting on the policy.



27. The policy update reflects only a basic level of gender awareness by: i) mentioning the need to strengthen national capacities for conducting gender-disaggregated assessments of existing food needs; and ii) noting that WFP needs to strengthen its internal gender-awareness skills.
28. Gender-related considerations could have included the potential long-term contributions of capacity development to globally or nationally defined gender equality objectives; and information about the potential role of gender considerations in prioritizing resources for capacity development.

### Policy Results

29. The 2008 evaluation of the 2004 policy noted an imbalance towards a supply-driven approach. Evidence gathered for this evaluation positively indicates that the processes used to develop capacity development interventions have become increasingly standardized – largely based on WFP’s dialogue with government partners to strengthen their ability to manage hunger solutions – and adaptable, using a variety of approaches to support change processes.
30. WFP-supported capacity development activities include on-the-job coaching, advocacy, the provision of specialized information and tools, and facilitating South–South and triangular cooperation. The Centre of Excellence Against Hunger in Brazil represents WFP’s largest and most systematized mechanism for supporting South–South cooperation and contributing to the exchange of knowledge about school feeding within WFP and among partner countries.<sup>9</sup> This innovative partnership, in which WFP provides a host government with technical expertise but no food assistance, represents a new way of operating for WFP.<sup>10</sup>

**TABLE 1: WFP CONTRIBUTIONS TO CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT RESULTS IN REVIEWED COUNTRIES, BY THEMATIC AREA AND INCOME LEVEL**

Thematic area	Countries visited						Desk reviews					
	Bangladesh	Jordan	Kenya	Namibia	Peru	Senegal	Colombia	India	Kyrgyz Republic	Lesotho	Liberia	Uganda
	LMIC	UMIC	LMIC	UMIC	UMIC	LMIC	UMIC	LMIC	LMIC	LMIC	LIC	LIC
School feeding	2,3	1,2	1,2,3	1,2,3	1,2	1,2	2	2	1,2,3	1,2,3	2,3	1,2,3
Nutrition	1,3		1,2,3	2	1	2,3	1	2	3	1,2,3	1,2,3	1,2,3
Food security	1	1,2,3	1,2	1,2,3	1,2	1,2,3	1,3	1,2,3	2,3	1,2		1,2,3
Livelihood support	1,2,3	1	1,2			1,2,3	1,2	2	1,2,3	1,2	1	1,2,3
Emergency preparedness and response	1		1,2,3		1,2	1	1,2		1,2	1,2,3	1,2	1,2
Purchase for Progress			1								1	1
Other	1	2	1,2	2	1		1	2		1,2,3		2

Sources: WFP SPRs 2013–2015, country-level documentation and interviews.

capacity development results by level: 1 = individual; 2 = institutional; 3 = enabling environment.

LIC = low-income country; LMIC = lower-middle-income country; UMIC = upper-middle-income country. (World Bank: <http://data.worldbank.org/country>)

31. Evidence of contributions to capacity development results<sup>11</sup> was found in all WFP’s thematic areas of intervention (Table 1). There was a consistent pattern in all income categories – low, lower-middle and upper-middle – and all three capacity development levels, with approximately

<sup>9</sup> The 2015 Annual Report states that direct technical assistance was provided to national governments 11 times and 17 exchanges of experience were facilitated.

<sup>10</sup> Requests for this type of support are increasing. WFP has established offices in Brazil and China, and is providing technical assistance in countries such as the Dominican Republic, India and Namibia, which do not receive food assistance.

<sup>11</sup> Conceptual and data limitations constrained the analysis (paragraph 3).

60 percent of results accruing at the institutional level. All countries except Colombia have strengthened capacities at the individual, institutional and enabling environment levels in at least one thematic area, irrespective of income status or type of operation.

### ***Contributions to strengthening individual and community capacities***

32. The analysis of SPRs, triangulated with other evidence, confirms WFP's considerable contributions to strengthening the awareness, knowledge and skills of individuals in government institutions working on hunger solutions. These efforts usually form part of a broader approach to strengthening institutional capacities (see following section). While training is still frequently employed in the sample countries, steps are being taken to avoid one-off training events and build longer-term engagement with partners.
33. While there were few plans for engaging with communities and limited information on associated results, the evaluation elicited positive feedback from stakeholders regarding WFP's contributions to strengthening the capacities of individuals and community groups (Box 1).<sup>12</sup>

#### **Box 1: WFP contributions to enhancing community resilience**

In Jordan, school feeding through the distribution of commercially manufactured biscuits has long been one of WFP's core activities. New and innovative approaches to strengthening community resilience have recently been introduced. Community kitchens equipped by WFP, were established in five school districts in central Jordan. Training was provided to local staff to introduce a freshly cooked school meal that was distributed to schools throughout the district. This approach strengthens community resilience through the local purchase of all the food items needed, and increases participation in the labour force, especially for women.

### ***Contributions to strengthening institutional capacities***

34. WFP has focused on strengthening the technical and management capacities of national and subnational government organizations. The following are some achievements:
- *More effective and efficient nationally led food assistance and hunger governance programmes.* WFP – sometimes in collaboration with the Brazil Centre of Excellence – assisted national governments in improving the quality, management and monitoring of school feeding programmes in Bangladesh, Jordan, Kenya, Namibia and Peru.
  - *Development of new or improved operational guidelines and standards for national and subnational agencies.* In India, the WFP country office compiled best practices for the national targeted public distribution system. The Government has distributed the resulting best-practice guide widely, and the state governments of Kerala and Odisha are adapting and implementing these practices. Other country offices have supported the production of guidelines and standards for national school feeding programmes.<sup>13</sup>
  - *A strengthened evidence base to facilitate national decision-making.* In Jordan and Namibia, country offices supported the development of food security monitoring systems and are helping to strengthen government capacity to run and adapt them.
  - *Enhanced partner coordination at the regional, national and subnational levels.* WFP is co-chairing cross-sectoral thematic working groups and steering committees on issues such as food security and nutrition in Peru, social protection in the Kyrgyz Republic, and agriculture and rural development.
35. There was insufficient evidence to assess WFP's influence on improving the financial viability of national food assistance agencies – one of the intended policy outcomes.

<sup>12</sup> Examples are limited to the 12 sample countries reviewed by the evaluation; this does not mean that the results mentioned were achieved only in those countries.

<sup>13</sup> Examples from Kenya, the Kyrgyz Republic, Namibia and Peru were noted.

***Contributions to strengthening enabling environments***

36. Country-based data collection and analysis of SPRs revealed multiple instances in which WFP has contributed to the adoption and implementation of laws, policies and harmonized strategies to strengthen the enabling environment for hunger solutions through advocacy, technical inputs, modelling and coaching.
37. There was insufficient evidence to determine the extent to which WFP's efforts led to more adequate and sustainable resourcing of government institutions in host countries – another expected policy outcome.

***Likely contributions to impact***

38. The policy's constructed theory of change proposes that overall impact depends on synergies among results at the enabling environment, institutional and individual levels. WFP's monitoring data do not allow for a full, evidence-based assessment of contributions to impact. However, as indicated in Table 1, WFP's efforts have simultaneously spanned at least two of these three levels in 42 instances in 12 countries (see also Box 2).

**Box 2: Synergies in capacity results**

In Peru, WFP provided the National Institute for Civil Defence (INDECI) with technical assistance on a wide range of issues, including improving the agency's information systems, configuring cash-based transfer schemes for emergencies, and strengthening the knowledge and skills of government officials in addressing food emergencies.

E-course modules developed by WFP and implemented by INDECI reached more than 1,300 officials at the local and regional levels in less than a month. WFP's work has also strengthened the enabling environment by developing a directive on standards for purchasing, storing and distributing food assistance in emergencies

***Links between observed results and the policy update***

39. With very few exceptions, the capacity development-related results identified by the evaluation cannot be directly linked to implementation of the policy update.
40. Most of the WFP staff members consulted were either unaware or only vaguely aware of the policy's content. Of those who had read the document, most found it to lack specificity and to have limited use in guiding the planning, implementation or monitoring of specific capacity development interventions. The numerous tools and guidance materials developed (paragraph 10) are highly technical and cover a range of thematic areas and modalities. None makes explicit reference to the policy update or provides guidance on how to achieve the outputs and outcomes set out in the policy.
41. There is little evidence that the policy has contributed to a shared understanding and coherent use of the term "capacity development" among WFP staff, managers and Executive Board members. The term is used broadly to encompass everything that may benefit local populations, and narrowly to refer only to training activities.

***Gender equality considerations***

42. The country offices consulted displayed a basic level of gender awareness in the design, implementation and monitoring of capacity development interventions. In most country offices however, reporting captured only sex-disaggregated participation in capacity development initiatives, with no information on contributions to strengthening gender equality in country contexts.
43. Gender was considered in the substance of capacity development initiatives in only a few cases. For example, WFP's work to strengthen the capacity of school management committees in Bangladesh, Kenya, Namibia and Peru included sensitization of committee members to gender equality and the importance of women's participation and leadership in the committees.

### ***Sustainability***

44. WFP has made deliberate efforts to enhance sustainability by fostering its partners' technical and managerial skills and supporting national ownership and leadership of change processes. Data indicate that effective hand-over is a gradual, iterative process during which WFP's role slowly changes from implementer to technical adviser, rather than being a one-directional process led by WFP. This advisory role often extends beyond the point at which national actors take over financial or managerial responsibilities from WFP-led programmes.

### **Explanatory Factors for Results Achieved**

#### ***External factors***

45. The importance attached to strengthening national capacities as part of the global aid effectiveness agenda has created opportunities for United Nations agencies. However, this favourable discourse has not consistently translated into the provision of resources for WFP's capacity development activities.
46. The main factors that have affected the scope, nature and effectiveness of WFP's capacity development activities are:
- the political will to address hunger governance issues;
  - host governments' demand for food aid versus technical assistance;
  - existing government capacities at the national and decentralized levels; and
  - socio-cultural factors.
47. Evidence from SPRs indicates that WFP is strengthening the capacities of institutions in countries, irrespective of a country's income level or position on the emergency–development continuum:
- In middle-income countries, governments are transitioning from being the recipients of food assistance to become the consumers and purchasers of specialized technical services from WFP. These countries offer conducive environments for lasting system-level changes, as they tend to have relatively solid legal and policy frameworks and strong capacities. However, WFP offices in middle-income countries face challenges in fundraising because of the lack of traditional food-related programming and the decrease in official development assistance in these countries.
  - In contexts of acute crisis, recent WFP guidance states that “there are opportunities to support long-term capacity alongside immediate humanitarian relief. In these contexts, technical assistance will often take the form of showing practical examples and joint implementation of activities in a specific area of capacity transfer... Building anti-hunger capacity is as urgent a priority as peace-building and humanitarian assistance or longer-term development.”<sup>14</sup> Despite this, there is a lack of consensus about WFP's capacity development role in emergency response.

#### ***WFP's reputation, branding and collaboration with others***

48. WFP's reputation and branding has tended to focus on its role as a “doer” rather than a facilitator. This has implications for the organization's perceived positioning and comparative advantage.
49. Evaluation respondents characterized WFP's collaboration with other United Nations actors that support national capacity development processes as working in parallel rather than jointly.

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<sup>14</sup> WFP Programme and Policy Division. 2015. *The Design and Implementation of Technical Assistance and Capacity Development: National Self-sufficient Capacity to Respond, Reduce and Rebuild from Crises and Achieve Zero Hunger*. p. 18.

### ***Policy dissemination and guidance***

50. Commensurate with the limited resources available, dissemination of the policy update has been only moderately effective.<sup>15</sup> The tools developed for this purpose – such as the NCI and capacity gaps and needs assessments – were found to be technically complex and difficult to utilize, with inconsistent application among country offices. As none of these tools contain explicit links to the policy update’s result statements, they have been of limited use for policy implementation.

### ***Resources and operating environment***

51. Financial resources made available to advance WFP’s capacity development agenda have consisted almost exclusively of a USD 4-million trust fund for capacity development funded by Canada, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, which was established following the 2008 evaluation. When this trust fund expired after four years, no further funding was sought.
52. Introduction of the CD&A budget line in 2013 was a positive development that allowed country offices to allocate and track dedicated resources for capacity development independently of funding for food or cash assistance. However, given that augmentation costs are often associated with special operations and include costly elements, this composite budget line masks specific capacity development expenditures.
53. Almost all the country office teams consulted identified short-term funding and budget uncertainties as critical challenges for coherent and effective capacity development planning and implementation. Unlike some United Nations agencies, WFP does not have systematic access to country-level funding to finance its capacity development work. Funds and staff originally intended for capacity development may be deployed elsewhere in the event of an emergency or resource shortfall.
54. WFP staff at all levels noted a lack of ownership of the policy update within the organization, and observed that the small and fluctuating size of the Headquarters capacity development unit had reduced its visibility and influence considerably.
55. The reporting systems that WFP had in place during the evaluation period led to considerable under-reporting of capacity development results. For example, SPRs do not include interventions financed by trust funds, which account for a considerable portion of WFP’s capacity development work. Some regional bureaux and country offices have developed their own tools to capture capacity development-related contributions, but these have yet to influence WFP-wide monitoring and reporting practices.
56. The NCI introduced in October 2014 aimed to measure changes in capacity levels resulting from myriad investments in capacity development. NCI data are gathered through regular assessments of hunger governance indicators for four types of capacity – latent, emergent, moderate and self-sufficiency. However, despite its ambitious scope, the NCI has limitations, including its complexity and its inability to define the pathways leading to observed capacity changes.
57. WFP’s staffing approach, the 2014 WFP People Strategy, includes relatively little consideration of capacity development. A review of WFP job postings at various levels of seniority indicates no competency requirements or other soft skills related to capacity development, apart from generic management and diplomacy skills. There are few incentives for staff to engage in, or excel at, capacity strengthening in WFP.

### **Conclusions**

58. WFP’s capacity development work – in terms of both funding and continuity of engagement – has been constrained by the organization’s focus on emergencies and its short-term operational horizon.

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<sup>15</sup> The same result was found in the 2008 evaluation of the 2004 policy.

59. Most of the factors that have limited the scope, effectiveness and sustainability of WFP's capacity development work are influenced less by external factors than by managerial decisions taken since 2009. As a result:
- capacity development is not prominently positioned within WFP's organizational structure;
  - financial resources invested in promoting capacity development in WFP have been limited to a one-time trust fund;
  - the small capacity development unit has not been able to exercise strong leadership in policy implementation;
  - there have not been any comprehensive efforts to strengthen related staff capacities or tailor resource mobilization efforts to capacity development needs; and
  - despite some improvements, monitoring and reporting on capacity development remain weak and inconsistent, limiting WFP's ability to showcase and learn from its work.
60. Capacity development has been cited in numerous WFP evaluations since 2009. There have been repeated recommendations for WFP to strengthen the definition, approach, measurement, funding and staffing of its capacity development activities. Capacity development was a Strategic Objective in the Strategic Plan (2008–2013), but few results were reported because the systems to support its implementation were insufficient. In the Strategic Plan (2014–2017), capacity development was mainstreamed throughout the four Strategic Objectives, but without the commensurate engagement in critical areas needed to ensure its success.
61. WFP is well positioned to engage further in capacity strengthening with country partners, based on its proven expertise, especially in food-related emergency preparedness and response. However, the organization's strategic positioning is limited by its prevailing image as a "doer" and its comparative disadvantage compared with other United Nations agencies with more established track records in technical cooperation.
62. This evaluation showed that WFP is supporting capacity development processes in a wide range of geographic and thematic contexts, despite limited organizational support, resources, guidance and tools. However, in light of the evolving global context and WFP's stated ambition of contributing to zero hunger, continuing "business as usual" in the conceptualization and prioritization of the capacity strengthening function and the internal support to it is not an option. To do so would lead to considerable reputational risk.
63. The 2030 Agenda, the SDGs, the World Humanitarian Summit and related dialogue clearly articulate the primacy of strengthening countries' capacities to develop and manage their own hunger solutions. WFP's Integrated Road Map re-envisioned the organization's planning, budgeting and monitoring systems to respond to the 2030 Agenda and work towards the SDGs. Capacity strengthening activities are included in WFP's Strategic Plan (2017–2021), in Strategic Objectives 1 to 3 at the individual and institutional levels and at the heart of Strategic Objective 4, and as a transfer modality in the new Financial Framework. Significant attention to ensuring conceptual clarity and explicit accountabilities for this topic will be critical going forward.

## Lessons

64. As also noted in the evaluation of WFP's Gender Policy (2014), WFP has arrived at a critical juncture in its capacity strengthening work. The gender policy evaluation noted a series of strategic considerations, many of which are equally relevant to this evaluation:
- i) "When will we ever learn?" Many previous policy, strategic and operation evaluations have noted similar shortcomings. If things are to change, WFP's commitment to capacity strengthening must be sincere, systematic and sustained.

- ii) There is need to establish a clear WFP-wide understanding that the mainstreaming of capacity strengthening will facilitate the delivery of WFP's SDG commitments, rather than competing with it or other priorities.
- iii) A shift in mindset is critical: capacity strengthening should be considered "everybody's business", regardless of institutional roles or geographic locations. The responsibility should not fall on the Policy and Programme Division alone.
- iv) Failure to facilitate capacity strengthening with an appropriate organizational structure, skills and technical support poses risks to WFP's effectiveness, efficiency and credibility.
- v) Leadership and prioritization are essential and must be sustained. Partners, including United Nations agencies, donors, governments and civil society, must combine their demands for reform with supportive action.

## Recommendations

65. The following recommendations were informed by discussions at a workshop in September 2016, which was attended by a cross-section of WFP staff. They are sequential, with the first recommendation being a necessary precursor to the others.
66. **Recommendation 1:** WFP should immediately elevate the organizational attention to capacity strengthening as a core function by creating a temporary, multi-stakeholder management transition team that will:
- a) articulate WFP's vision and strategy for capacity strengthening in line with the Integrated Road Map for 2017–2021, including conceptual and operational definitions for capacity strengthening as an issue to be mainstreamed in Strategic Objectives 1 to 3, as a programmatic focus in Strategic Objective 4, and as a transfer modality in the new Financial Framework;
  - b) define the staff roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for capacity strengthening as a functional responsibility and as mainstreamed into other programming areas;
  - c) review, revise and create practical tools and guidance for WFP's capacity strengthening work in the context of its Policy on Country Strategic Plans (CSPs), including in humanitarian response; and
  - d) remain in place until the roll-out of the CSP approach is complete.
67. **Recommendation 2:** In implementing the Integrated Road Map – specifically the Policy on CSPs – WFP should ensure that country offices are provided with relevant, concrete and practical tools and guidance on capacity strengthening within 12 months. This guidance should:
- a) be based on good practice drawn from WFP's own experience and that of other United Nations agencies;
  - b) be applicable in contexts along the humanitarian–development–peacebuilding nexus; and
  - c) integrate criteria or conditions in which WFP support may no longer be required – including transition and exit plans – into the country strategic planning process.
68. **Recommendation 3:** WFP should further enhance its internal capability to effectively support national capacity strengthening processes within 12 months by:
- a) updating its People Strategy to include capacity strengthening as a functional capability;
  - b) developing incentives for capacity strengthening work in staff performance assessments;
  - c) designating a capacity strengthening focal point with clearly defined responsibilities and accountabilities in each regional bureau and country office; and
  - d) accelerating the creation of a roster of capacity development experts in relevant thematic and geographic areas.

69. **Recommendation 4:** WFP should continue to strengthen its provisions for monitoring and reporting on all capacity strengthening work within 12 months by expanding the quantitative and qualitative information required in SPRs and trust fund reporting, including illustrative qualitative studies covering the contexts for both CSPs and Interim CSPs.
70. **Recommendation 5:** Within six months, WFP should ensure that its internal and external communications reflect and support its strategic vision for capacity strengthening, including by presenting capacity development as one of WFP's core organizational functions in all contexts.
71. **Recommendation 6:** The 2009 policy update should remain in force until all elements of the Integrated Road Map are in place. WFP should then either revise the policy update or develop a new policy to articulate its strategic approach. The policy should be accompanied by dissemination tools that align with and support implementation of the Strategic Plan (2017–2021).



## **Acronyms Used in the Document**

CD&A	capacity development and augmentation
CSP	country strategic plan
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INDECI	National Institute for Civil Defence
NCI	National Capacity Index
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SPR	Standard Project Report
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund