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Evaluation Reports

For consideration

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Management Response to the Annual Evaluation Report, 2016

Introduction

1. The 2016 Annual Evaluation Report (AER) synthesized evaluation findings from WFP's Level 3 emergency responses, a global evaluation of the Capacity Development Policy and country-specific evaluations. This management response to the AER complements the management responses to the recommendations of individual evaluations.
2. The 2016 AER was the first produced in line with WFP's Evaluation Policy (2016–2021). It provided an update on WFP's evaluation function, which is based on the model of centralized evaluation and demand-led decentralized evaluation.
3. Management values the AER synthesis and acknowledges the importance of the Office of Evaluation and the Evaluation Policy (2016–2021). Management highlights the strategic relevance of this report to implementation of the Integrated Road Map (IRM) and progress towards the goals of the 2030 Agenda.
4. The following section summarizes WFP's commitments to addressing issues in each of the areas synthesized in the AER.

Lessons, Recommendations and Main Findings

5. Management acknowledges the lessons and recommendations of the AER, and makes efforts to incorporate them into WFP operations whenever applicable.

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Emergency Response

6. The synthesis of evaluation findings related to Level 3 emergency responses was based on evaluations of two of WFP's six Level 3 responses in 2016: the Iraq country portfolio; and WFP's response to the Ebola crisis in West Africa (2014–2015). The AER also synthesized the findings of inter-agency humanitarian evaluations on the response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines (2014), the South Sudan emergency (2015) and the crisis in the Central African Republic (2016). The Syria Coordinated Accountability and Lessons Learning evaluation synthesis and gap analysis was also utilized.
7. These evaluations confirmed WFP's strength in emergency response and ability to respond rapidly in large-scale, sudden-onset emergencies. This was clearly demonstrated in WFP's Level 3 response to the Ebola crisis, which was appropriately designed, relevant, timely and efficiently scaled up according to evolving needs. The operations were conducted within the framework of existing policies and in compliance with all control mechanisms. Partnerships – especially with the World Health Organization – contributed to WFP's effectiveness. In addition, WFP's increased cost-efficiency contributed to reducing transaction costs for the United Nations system and a logistics gap was filled as a result of WFP's leadership in providing common services.
8. Major lessons regarding Level 3 emergency responses included the need to adopt a strong strategic approach, conduct and use needs assessments systematically, plan for transitions, and reflect the humanitarian principles in programming. The WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021), development of country strategic plans, progress monitoring, and reporting against plans will enable WFP to integrate these lessons into its operations. The observations on progress in WFP's shift from implementer to enabler are important in this context. WFP is seen as increasingly able to “move fluidly between implementing and enabling and back, using a range of activities and transfer modalities, to respond to shocks in countries where development and humanitarian needs are in constant juxtaposition”. Building staff capacity for this flexible approach is important, as pointed out in the AER.
9. The lessons from the Level 3 response to the Ebola crisis and from the AER are well received. Management has taken action to address the recommendations and will ensure that all lessons learned are reflected in future planning, monitoring and reporting.

Capacity Development

10. The synthesis of evaluation findings on capacity development was based on the summary evaluation report of WFP's Policy on Capacity Development: An Update on Implementation (2009). The evaluation focused on: i) the quality of the policy; ii) the results achieved by the policy; and iii) the reasons for these results. Evidence from country-specific evaluations was also taken into consideration.
11. The evaluation findings were generally positive regarding WFP's contribution to country capacity development, creating an enabling environment, and strengthening the capacities of institutions and people. However, as noted in the AER, the relevance of some WFP capacity development initiatives was not always clear. Evaluation findings also indicated that the policy was not well known and therefore was not being implemented to its fullest potential. The need for a more coherent implementation strategy and tools was noted.
12. While management was initially in agreement with the recommendation to leave the 2009 Capacity Development Policy Update in place, WFP has since committed to revising the policy in 2017 to align it with the Strategic Plan (2017–2021). Action is also being taken to address other important lessons from the AER, including the need to support country offices with updated and easily accessible tools and guidance on country capacity strengthening in the context of the IRM. This guidance should include the criteria and conditions for WFP to support national capacity strengthening, with clear objectives and outcomes for interventions, robust design, and improved monitoring and reporting guidelines. Expanding the roster of experts in capacity development and specific sectors in relevant thematic and geographical areas is envisaged to facilitate implementation of the IRM.

Country Portfolios

13. The synthesis of country-specific evaluations was based on a selection of 19 evaluations from a diverse range of country contexts. While the country-specific evaluations showed that WFP's objectives at the country level were mostly aligned with national priorities and were relevant to needs, they also pointed to a lack of formal country strategies, which affected the coherence of WFP's operations.
14. Major lessons learned from the AER included the need to: i) design informed country strategies and operations; ii) plan and prepare for flexibility, especially in emergencies, building on national capacities; iii) improve WFP's outcome-level data to increase confidence in its results by strengthening its systems; iv) continue strengthening partnerships, especially with other United Nations agencies; and v) identify possible funding constraints at the design stage and prepare contingency plans.
15. The ongoing shift towards country strategic planning and implementation of the IRM will go a long way towards addressing these issues. In line with the evaluation findings and recommendations, management foresees improvements in WFP's ability to measure the achievement of its outcomes, enhance the sustainability of its work, develop hand-over strategies, and balance its funding model with short-term programming needs.

Evaluation Function

16. Major progress has been made through the implementation of WFP's Evaluation Policy (2016–2021). In the future, the policy's implementation will be measured against newly developed key performance indicators for evaluation. In line with the policy, WFP has applied an integrated model of centralized evaluations and demand-led decentralized evaluations, for which a funding mechanism has been established. In addition, WFP has finalized a new Corporate Evaluation Strategy and Charter, established a high-level evaluation function steering group, and recruited regional evaluation officers. The IRM presents opportunities for strengthening evaluation coverage and use further, allowing WFP to embed a culture of evaluation into its decision-making.

Conclusion

17. Management notes that the findings of the 2016 evaluations highlight the organizational challenges that the IRM is designed to address. These findings therefore reaffirm the significance of WFP's strategic reorientation. Management also notes the importance of follow-up on evaluation recommendations and will increase efforts to use evaluation findings for enhanced planning and performance throughout WFP. The strengthened evaluation function will enable this.

Acronyms Used in the Document

AER Annual Evaluation Report

IRM Integrated Road Map