

# Evaluation Brief



## WFP's role in ending long-term hunger: A Strategic Evaluation

This evaluation is one of the four strategic evaluations conducted in 2011 by WFP's Office of Evaluation (OE) that are related to WFP's strategic shift from food aid to food assistance.

### Global Context of Hunger

Recent estimates place the number of undernourished people around one billion, the vast majority of whom live in developing countries. Through the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) the global community pledged to reduce the number of hungry people by half, by 2015. Progress towards meeting this target has been uneven. WFP's ability to end long-term hunger is shaped by both external and internal factors, including short-term crises. The global economic context interacts with domestic forces to influence the effect of the interventions. Climate change and natural disasters, in affecting domestic agricultural production, affect domestic food prices and food access. Civil strife and prevalence of disease can also affect food production, access to food and use of food at the household level.

### Ending Long-Term Hunger

Three WFP activities were identified as contributing to ending long-term hunger: Mother and Child Health and Nutrition (MCHN), School Feeding (SF), and Food for Work/Food for Assets (FFW/A). They contribute respectively to better nutrition and health, improved education, and community assets for poverty reduction. Goals under Strategic Objectives 4 and 5 of the 2008-2013 Strategic Plan relate to breaking the intergenerational cycle of chronic hunger, increasing education and basic nutrition, meeting the food needs of those with disease, and strengthening national capacity to reduce hunger.

Several definitions exist for *hunger*, *undernutrition* and *food security*. For the purpose of the evaluation the following working definitions were used:

- Hunger is a condition in which people lack the required macro and micronutrients;
- Undernutrition is the physical manifestation of hunger;
- Food Security is vulnerability or susceptibility to hunger.

### Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The objectives of the evaluation were to assess the contribution of the three WFP activities to ending long-term hunger and to draw lessons for WFP's future role in ending long-term hunger.

The six case studies included field visits to Nepal, Bolivia and Zambia, and desk studies for study of a particular intervention; MCHN in Guatemala, SF in Bangladesh and FFW/A in Ethiopia.

The evaluation is presented to the WFP Executive Board in February 2012.

### Key Findings and Conclusions

The evaluation findings are presented within the framework of the five evaluation questions- common to all four strategic evaluations in this series.

### Question 1: To what extent are WFP activities/mix of activities integrated into national solutions to end long-term hunger ?

Governments are strategic partners for WFP, and the evaluation found that WFP activities were well integrated into national strategies related to hunger. However, no government had explicit goals to end long-term hunger *per se*. The common denominator in these hunger-related strategies drew on MDG1, where undernutrition and poverty were proxy indicators for long-term hunger. While these are important objectives, they may not completely overlap with long-term hunger.

COs have developed effective partnerships with ministries, however the team could not find a direct link between government-level strategies and the three WFP activities, since they are not part of any government's long term hunger strategy. If WFP is to address the issue of ending long-term hunger, it needs to lead integrated nation-wide campaigns that involve civil society in determining strategies and solutions.

### Question 2: To what extent are the activities identified by the evaluation as contributing to breaking the long-term cycle of hunger, appropriate and effective ?

MCHN, School Feeding and FFW/A activities were found to be appropriate for addressing long-term hunger if they target the right people and are delivered in time. The evaluation found that funding constraints have led to reductions in beneficiary numbers in some targeted areas, or have delayed the delivery of rations. The three activities also appear to be relatively efficient and cost-effective in terms of food aid delivery. However no yardstick to measure their impact on ending long-term hunger was found. The evaluation team also found little evidence of synergy between the three activities. The life-cycle approach is a useful integrating framework that could be applied more systematically.

MCHN activities were consistently implemented in geographic areas targeted for their food security vulnerability. Locally made blended food was used in all cases, reducing the costs associated with imported products and increasing demand for local production. However MCHN activities were not adequately monitored to measure their contribution to long-term hunger. As a result it's hard to demonstrate the effect of the food and associated support on long-term hunger.

School Feeding: Geographic targeting is based on food insecurity and drop-outs rates. Although the activity does not specifically target individual malnourished children, it reaches communities at risk of long-term hunger. As the utility of SF is seen when beneficiary children become adults; measuring the intervention's effectiveness in reducing long-

term hunger presents challenges. The team found this activity appropriate to end long-term hunger when it aims at increasing girl's attendance at school – delaying early pregnancy and reducing associated nutritional risks.

The team found that FFW/A was an appropriate and effective response to hunger. Its localized character makes it particularly relevant to communities targeted based on environmental vulnerability.

However local anthropologist's studies found that WFP interventions may not be reaching the most vulnerable in micro-level contexts, and could address better their hunger concerns.

### Question 3: How do factors in the external operating environment, including donors, partnerships, the policy environment and social/political/economic and cultural conditions in the country affect WFP's ability to find and implement long-term hunger solutions ?

Four external factors were identified in affecting WFP's ability to find and implement long-term hunger solutions:

Food prices. The sharp rise of basic staples affected WFP programming, with case study countries showing reduced resource flows and shifts to relief and PRRO activities, which had greater chances of being funded.

The close link between short and long term crises. Based on several findings, the team concluded that long-term hunger cannot be addressed without also addressing vulnerability to short-term crises.

WFP funding volatility. Funding uncertainty is a major stumbling block for any strategy aiming to end-long term hunger.

Donor and partner perceptions. Despite WFP's good relationships with governments and functions well within the UN network, WFP is hardly perceived to be a development player with a comparative advantage for addressing long-term hunger.

WFPs' ability to alter donor perceptions and to define its role in the multi-stakeholder context of humanitarian assistance will determine its future role in addressing long-term hunger.

### Question 4: What factors related to WFP's organizational capacity including its processes, systems and culture affect its ability to adopt long-term hunger solutions ?

The team identified five factors affecting WFP's ability to adopt long-term hunger solutions:

- The uncertainty of funding to cover approved projects and the occasional delays between WFP's submissions for approval and the arrival of donor funds were found to negatively affect implementation. This puts pressure for resource mobilization at the CO level.
- WFP has consistently delivered its food assistance on time and in committed quantities whenever funds were available. But irregular funding has led to variable deliveries.
- WFP does not have yet a system for integrating with each other the activities that address long-term hunger. The barriers to integrated programming are exacerbated by the division of activities and reporting requirements across different units.
- WFP monitoring system is not designed to track the effectiveness of any of the three interventions, or their combined effect on long-term hunger.
- VAM is a potential integrator for both short and long-term interventions, and a mechanism for WFP to enter the wider sphere of responding to poverty and under-development. The useful VAM tool does not include a method for tracking

individual household food security status over time

### Question 5: What factors related to the capacity of WFP staff, including their skills, knowledge, attitudes and motivations, affect WFP's ability to find and implement long-term hunger solutions ?

WFP staff is dedicated to their mission, often in difficult circumstances. They have developed effective partnerships with government ministries, NGOs and other UN agencies. However there is a mismatch between local knowledge and HQ strategic direction, which translate into an operational gap in terms of designing, implementing and tracking the three activities in order to contribute to long-term hunger solutions.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Overall Assessment

The factors causing short term shocks and factors causing long-term hunger are highly interconnected. The team concluded that the artificial division between WFP's short term emergency response work and its "long term" development work impedes integrated programming.

All three activities were found to be appropriate for addressing long-term hunger, provided correct targeting and timely food delivery are present. The funding model of WFP is not adequate to address long-term hunger and WFP is not yet considered as a development player. WFP needs to improve its M&E system in order to demonstrate effectiveness and build on the success of food security analysis by widening its net to cover long-term hunger, and adjust staff career pathways in order to maximize the use of relevant technical skills.

### Recommendations

**Broad Recommendation.** WFP should approach hunger holistically, integrating short-term and long-term hunger solutions together.

**Recommendation 1.** WFP should ensure that those who are vulnerable to hunger are actively engaged in choosing, shaping, implementing and evaluating the hunger solutions that affect them.

**Recommendation 2.** WFP should adopt a life-cycle approach to hunger.

**Recommendation 3.** WFP should work with donors and other UN agencies to develop a funding model consistent with long-term hunger solutions and to challenge donor governments to meet their food security-related funding commitments.

**Recommendation 4.** WFP should develop a model to demonstrate where it has comparative advantage in addressing long-term hunger.

**Recommendation 5.** WFP should have core-funded long-term career paths up to the senior level for technical specialists, which are performance assessed in terms of ending long-term.



### Reference:

Full and summary reports of the evaluation and the Management Response are available at [www.wfp.org/evaluation](http://www.wfp.org/evaluation)

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