Fighting Hunger Worldwide

Policy Evaluation

WFP's School Feeding Policy: a Policy Evaluation Vol.I Full Report

30 November 2011

Commissioned by the
Office of Evaluation
Measuring Results, Sharing Lessons

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[Report number: OE/2012/002]

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Evaluation Management

Table of Contents

Annexes – In Volume II

Boxes

Tables

Figures

Maps

Executive Summary

Introduction

WFP Context

1.   In recent years WFP school feeding (school meals, biscuits and take-home rations) have reached over 20 million children annually, almost half of them girls.[1] In 2009, WFP invested US$475 million (14percent of its budget) on school feeding. The map below shows the extent of WFP school feeding activities in 2010.

WFP-Assisted School Feeding Beneficiaries in 2010
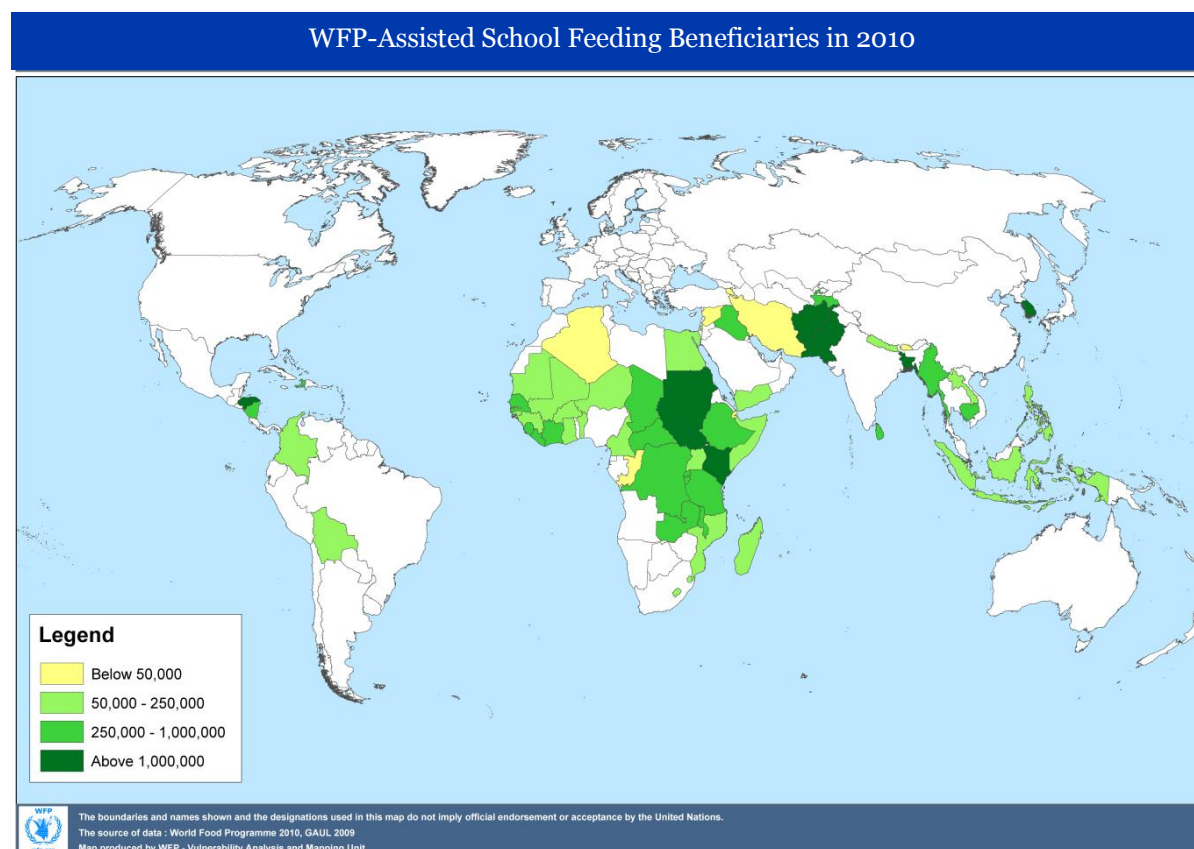
2.   The school feeding policy was approved by the Board in November 2009. It was one of the first policies to follow through on the principles of WFP's Strategic Plan 2008–2013, and is fully consistent with the plan's orientation towards food assistance and capacity development. Purchase for Progress (P4P) is a relevant but parallel initiative.

Evaluation Objectives and Approach

3.   At the time of approval, the Board also mandated an evaluation of the policy to be presented at its first session in 2012. This independent evaluation reviews the quality of the policy and its early implementation and draws practical lessons. It is not an evaluation of the impact of school feeding *per se*, but it does address the

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[1] WFP Annual Report for 2010.

policy's consistency with emerging evidence of the impact of school feeding. The terms of reference are such that emergency school feeding is excluded, and the evaluation focuses on primary schools. Even so, the scope is still very wide, because the policy links school feeding to many outcomes. Some of the challenges for the evaluators were the brevity of the period from the first adoption of the policy to its evaluation, the complexity of its objectives and the manner in which it combines continuity with innovation.

4.　　　The evaluation took place in April–November 2011 using a methodology and evaluation questions that had been agreed at the inception of the evaluation. It drew on document and data reviews, interviews with over 300 stakeholders, and case studies for eight countries – Afghanistan, Bhutan, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique and Tajikistan – selected to represent pilot and non-pilot countries, different levels of government management of school feeding systems, and geographical variety. A broad reference group across WFP was consulted, and the final report takes account of feedback from a two-day workshop in Rome.

International Context

5.　　　The policy responds to a dynamic international context as well as to strategic developments within WFP. Concerns about aid effectiveness were relevant: despite some progress, the challenges of country ownership and aid predictability remain. The policy identifies multiple school feeding objectives relating to social protection and local economic development, as well as education, health, gender and nutrition. In all these areas, and in matters of aid effectiveness, the international context has been evolving. In particular, international approaches to social protection now tend to consider safety nets in the wider context of the preventive, protective and promotive potential of social protection systems. School feeding, too, can have protective, preventive and promotive effects, but in each dimension it may have to compete with other possible interventions (see Figure 1 below).

6.　　　With respect to nutrition, there is international recognition that, from a life-cycle perspective, the first 1,000 days after conception are crucial. With respect to education, it is recognized that gains in access must be complemented by quality improvements to ensure learning. And there is no doubt of the inter-generational importance of nutrition and education for girls. The Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) dimension of the policy, which links school feeding to the promotion of agriculture, is not new but has attracted increased attention.

Figure 1: The 3P framework of social protection

Risk management
- Crop and weather insurance
- Health insurance
- Remittances
- Pensions
- Unemployment and disability insurance

Prevention

School Feeding can be seen as having protective, preventive and promotive effects, but may have to compete with other interventions for each purpose

Promotion

Promotion of opportunities
- Education, health and nutrition services
- Agricultural extension
- Microcredit
- Conditional cash transfer
- Skills training
- Labor facilitation and regulatory reform

Protection

Poverty Alleviation
- Charitable, family and community transfers
- Conditional and unconditional cash transfers
- Public works
- In-kind transfers

Source: Building Resilience and Opportunity: Better Livelihoods for the 21st Century. Emerging ideas for the World Bank's 2012–2022 Social Protection and Labor Strategy: For Consultation. World Bank, HumanDevelopment Network, 2011.

Origins of the Policy

7.   The 2009 policy had no direct predecessor, though WFP's approach to school feeding was embodied in various staff guidelines. Different motivations for preparing the policy converged. The School Feeding Unit saw a need to update, clarify and codify WFP's practical guidance. Several Board members felt that WFP needed to provide a clearer rationale and justification for its school feeding activities. The 2008 food crisis spotlighted school feeding as a safety net that could often be rapidly scaled up, and so suggested a strengthened case for school feeding. It was also logical to review WFP's approach to school feeding in the context of the seminal Strategic Plan (2008–2013).

8.   A draft of the policy was discussed informally in 2008, but was referred back for further work. The School Feeding Unit was already collaborating with the World Bank and the Partnership for Child Development (PCD). Its response was to redouble efforts to strengthen the evidence base for the policy. The joint publication *Rethinking School Feeding*[2] was the centrepiece, supported by work on HGSF, a

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[2]Bundy, D., Burbano, C., Grosh, M., Gelli, A., Jukes, M. and Drake, L. 2009. *Rethinking School Feeding: Social Safety Nets, Child Development and the Education Sector*. Washington, DC, World Bank.

comprehensive review of WFP's school feeding experience and the modeling of school feeding's potential benefits (the "investment case").

Main Features of the Policy

9.   The policydoes not spell out WFP's objectives for school feeding, but its "vision" is tantamount to a goal:

> WFP's vision is to reduce hunger among schoolchildren so that it is not an obstacle to their development. (paragraph 35).

10.   The policy proposes social protection as an overarching framework for a number of possible outcomes. These can include a direct safety net function (value transfer), educational benefits (through incentives for enrolment and attendance, and by enhancing the ability to learn) and nutritional benefits (by alleviating short-term hunger and improving children's nutritional status, particularly when food is fortified and accompanied by deworming); school feeding's potential to support gender equality; and school feeding as a "platform" for pursuing wider benefits, not the least of which is supporting small-scale agriculture through HGSF. It identifies roles for school feeding as a safety net in emergencies and protracted crises; in post-conflict, post-disaster and transition situations; and in situations of chronic hunger. School feeding is expected to help break the inter-generational cycle of hunger by contributing to learning and school completion.

11.   According to WFP's School Feeding Policy Unit, the policy has three "elements of novelty": i) framing school feeding as a safety-net intervention with multiple outcomes; ii) working more closely with governments (focusing on the strengthening of sustainable national school feeding systems); and iii) introducing eight standards for quality and sustainability (See Box 1).

Box 1: The eight quality standards for school feeding

> 1. Sustainability
>
> 2. Sound alignment with national policy framework
>
> 3. Stable funding and budgeting
>
> 4. Needs-based, cost-effective quality programme design
>
> 5. Strong institutional frameworks for implementation, monitoring and accountability
>
> 6. Strategy for local production and sourcing
>
> 7. Strong partnerships and inter-sector coordination
>
> 8. Strong community participation and ownership

12.   The policyretains the traditional focus on educational objectives and on links to the education sector, but also highlights other outcomes, with social protection as

an overarching theme. The effect is to multiply the stakeholders that WFP potentially has to deal with, especially at country office level. The complexity that may result is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Multiple outcomes, multiple stakeholders
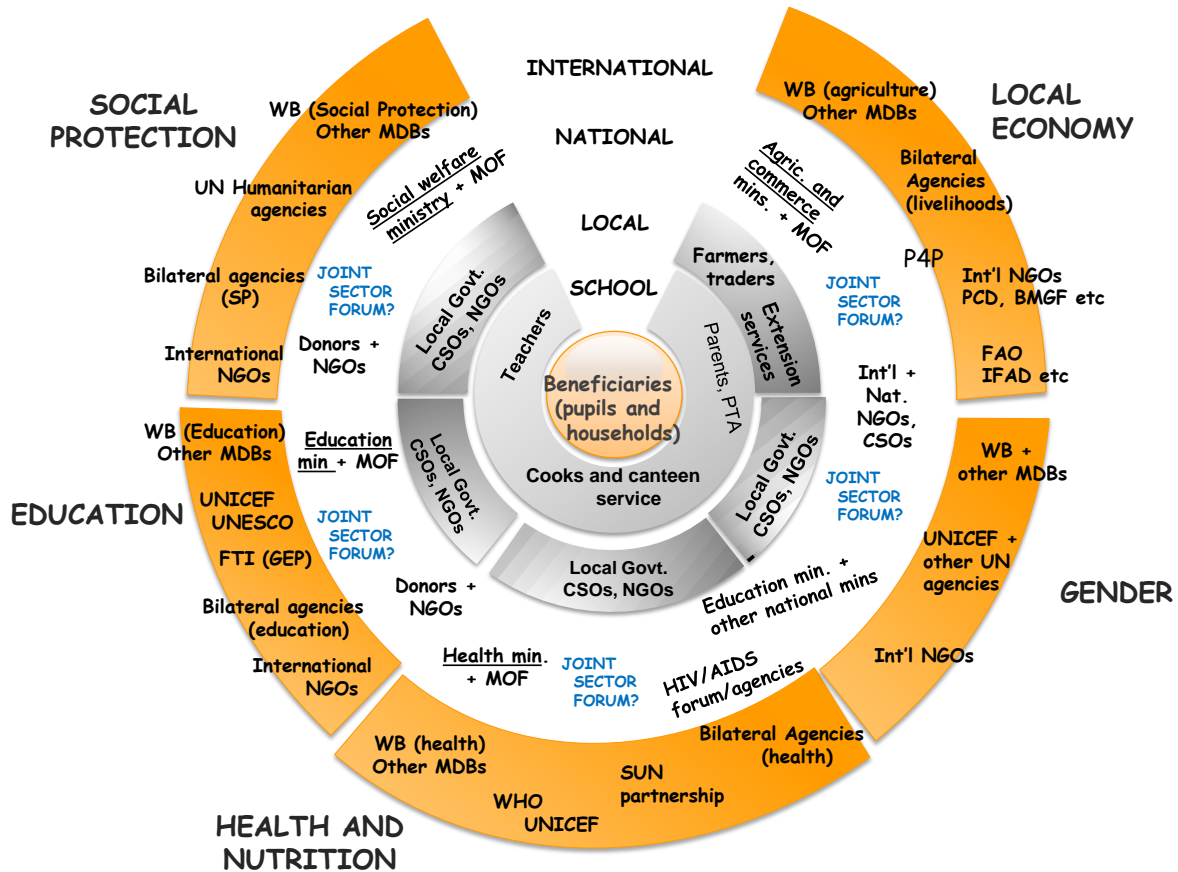
Source: Authors.

Abbreviations in figure: BMGF – Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; CSO – Civil Society Organization; FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN; FTI – Fast Track Initiative; GEP – Global Education Partnership; IFAD – International Fund for Agricultural Development; MDB – Multilateral Development Banks; MOF– Ministry of Finance; NGO – non-governmental organization; P4P – Purchase for Progress; PCD – Partnership for Child Development; PTA – parent-teacher association; SP– Social Protection; SUN – Scaling Up Nutrition; UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund; WB – World Bank; WHO – World Health Organization

Main Findings

Perspective

13. The evaluation took place during the roll-out of the policy. This ensures an early opportunity to strengthen policy implementation, but also means that the evaluation is a review of a work-in-progress, not a final assessment. There is a natural tendency to focus on aspects where improvement is possible, but this should not obscure the positive findings.

Quality of the Policy

14.   The policy was generally clearly written, and it was grounded in evidence. It was relevant and timely in seeking to codify, and seek consensus around, good practices in school feeding.

15.   The policycould have been stronger in three important respects. In the first place, it should have distinguished more carefully between the generic objectives of school feeding and the specific objectives for WFP. It was left to later documents to explain that the objectives of the policyfor WFP were: i) improved school feeding quality; ii) wider school feeding coverage; and iii) effective capacity for school feeding. Both the purpose of the policy document and its corporate implications for WFP would have been clearer if these goals and objectives, as shown in Figure 3, had been spelled out. The update submitted to the Board in June 2011 was a helpful elaboration of the original policy, and paid closer attention to the practicalities of implementation. (Figure 3 below is also recent and illuminating.)

Figure 3: Policy objectives and goal of the school feeding policy
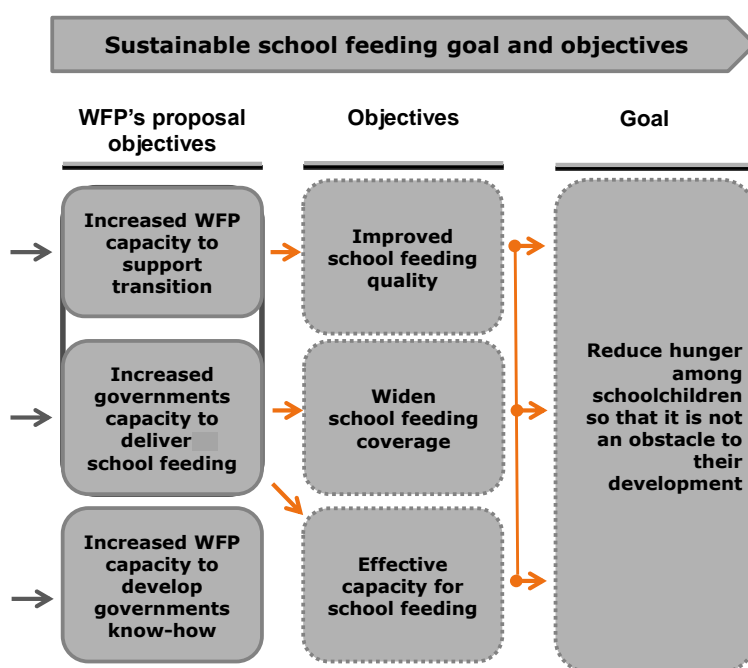
Source: WFP. 2009. Sustainable School Feeding: Lifting Schoolchildren Out of the Hunger Trap (Concept Note). Rome.

Figure 4: WFP school feeding: vision and objectives

OBJECTIVES: to improve quality, widen coverage and secure sustainability

WFP's vision	To reduce hunger among schoolchildren so that hunger is not an obstacle to their development

Improve quality

Improve effectiveness
- Eight standards
- Improve targeting
- Identify most appropriate modalities and food basket
- Widen benefits: e.g. link to local production, synergies with add-on interventions

Improve efficiency
- Assess costs, benefits, and trade-offs to ensure costs are contained

Widen coverage

Increase reach
- 66 million schoolchildren in need of school feeding

- Additional 72 million out of schoolchildren worldwide

- A more effective and efficient implementation would allow coverage of more recipients with same resources

Secure sustainability

Ensure transition to sustainable nationally owned programmes
- Support mainstreaming of school feeding into national policies
- Enhance government technical capacity
- Provide additional assistance with resourcing strategies
- Coordinate partnership with NGOs, private sector and local communities

Key to shift school feeding ownership to national governments and mainstream it into national policies

Source: March 2011 workshop.

16.   Secondly, the policy should also have distinguished more carefully between advocacy and guidance. A tension exists between the advocacy role of the document (persuading the Board and wider stakeholders of the legitimacy of school feeding and of WFP's role in supporting it) and its role as corporate guidance for WFP (how to approach school feeding in practice). Advocacy tends to dominate. Also, there was insufficient recognition that the potential benefits of school feeding are not realized automatically, and that, in practice, there are usually trade-offs between objectives. By exalting all the potential benefits of school feeding, the policy runs the risk of oversimplifying, providing a reference point under which all school feeding objectives can be justified, without emphasizing that most school feeding operations will need to focus on a subset of the possible objectives.

17.   Thirdly, it would have been helpful if more attention had been given to the "elements of novelty" that were later highlighted.

18.   Moreover, using a social protection framework is demanding. The school feeding policy focuses mainly on the value transfer aspect of school feeding, and does not adequately bring out the promotive aspects (see Figure 1 above). It does not follow through the concept of social protection as an overarching system, within which school feeding would be just one of many possible interventions. The presentation is very WFP-centric – school feeding is described as the platform for

other interventions – and the radical implications for WFP of a social protection approach are not brought out. The recent evaluation of WFP's role in social protection and safety nets,[3] by contrast, argues that shifting towards social protection requires fundamental changes for WFP at all levels: in how it operates, in the objectives of its programmes, and in how it works with others. It warns that simply relabelling projects and programmes as social protection will harm WFP's credibility.

19.   The policy is strongly evidence-based, and the evidence-gathering that preceded it was very impressive. However, the policy tends to cite positive findings about the potential benefits of school feeding without adequately stressing the other factors on which those benefits also depend.

20.   Recent evidence broadly corroborates that which was available when the policy was prepared. Thus:

   a) On educational benefits: there is no doubt that school feeding can act as an incentive for enrolment and attendance. It can be targeted effectively to girls through on-site feeding and take-home rations (THR). However, the fact that such effects have often been demonstrated does not mean that they are inevitable (this is a key finding from recent impact evaluations). Effects further along the causal chain are more controversial. Attendance may be necessary for learning to take place, but it is never sufficient. Learning depends on the presence and quality of teachers, together with other aspects of the learning environment, and there may be little return on investment if children drop out early. School feeding may have undesirable or paradoxical effects on the education system as a whole. For example, it may exacerbate overcrowding and strain inadequate facilities. It has been empirically demonstrated that short-term hunger can impair concentration and cognitive performance, but impact evaluations have found it much more difficult to demonstrate a corresponding performance improvement attributable to school feeding. (This is not wholly surprising, in view of the complementary factors that contribute to learning.)

   b) On nutritional benefits: the policy acknowledged the importance of the "first thousand days", which are not directly covered by school feeding. The policy highlighted the potential importance of school feeding programmes not only in alleviating child hunger in school, but also in enhancing the nutritional status of children particularly when the food is fortified with micronutrients, and referred to the potential cognitive – and hence educational – benefits that may derive from this. There is indeed strong evidence that school feeding can bring such benefits: a large number of studies agree on the direction of effects, but their scale is less clear. At the same time, recent evidence in two areas has

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[3]*WFP's Role in Social Protection and Safety Nets: A Strategic Evaluation*. The summary report of the evaluation is available as WFP.EB.A/2011/7-B and the management response as WFP/EB.A/2011/7-B/Add.1.

tended to strengthen the nutritional relevance of school feeding. The first relates to the spillover effect (the benefits of school feeding that extend to other members of the household), and the second to evidence about the potential positive influence of school feeding on adolescent girls from a life-cycle perspective. The policy does not mention the latter case, though the Strategic Plan does.

c) Framing school feeding as a social protection measure does not introduce new benefits; it is more a matter of looking at the same effects in a different way. For example, it highlights the significance of the value transfer that provides the incentive for increased enrolment or for a lower drop-out rate in times of stress. The policy drew attention to two very important pieces of "pragmatic" evidence: i) as countries develop, they tend to maintain school feeding systems; and ii) school feeding can often be scaled up rapidly (a major lesson of the 2008 crisis). These factors suggest that school feeding should indeed be taken into account when considering the range of available social protection measures. On the other hand, the policy tends to understate the difficulties in the way of school feeding being seen as the optimal intervention. School feeding may be at a disadvantage because of its high administrative costs and its limited targeting. Its strengths may include an ability to scale up and the low opportunity cost if resources are provided as food aid (though WFP is rightly seeking to make resources more fungible).

d) As regards HGSF, the dimension of the local economic benefits derived from it is the hardest to bring within the "social protection" framework, though it can be reconciled with WFP's broader mandate. It is certainly true that food procurement can be a stimulus to local agriculture, and there are conspicuous examples (including the United States of America and Brazil) where this has contributed to the development of established national school feeding systems. These collateral benefits can attract political support, which reinforces the sustainability of school feeding. The policy, however, tends to oversimplify the mechanisms through which school feeding may be able to contribute to local economic development, and is silent on the relationship between HGSF and P4P.

21.   The policy presented the "investment case" for school feeding as a demonstration of its high economic returns. This was misleading, because it presented a hypothetical model as if it were an empirical finding. There is indeed evidence for each of the links in the chain of causality on which the model is based, but the overwhelming weight of evidence is that most of the links in the causality chain are fragile; for a low-income country to achieve the results portrayed by the model would require a perfect combination of complementary inputs. Recent studies, including the Office of Evaluation(OE) evaluations of the impact of school feeding in Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia and Kenya, show that the interlinked benefits of school feeding cannot be taken for granted, and that the benefits vary according to the modality used (in-school meals, THR, etc). Thus:

> There is one overriding conclusion that has been carefully examined and analysed. It is that the beneficial impacts attributable to school feeding are limited if one attempts to extract school feeding from the larger context of how learning, health, and livelihood outcomes are achieved. School feeding without the appropriate learning environment and family/community support is a weak intervention and its impacts are mostly restricted to food security outcomes.[4]

22.   Most seriously, evidence about the costs and the cost-effectiveness, of school feeding is conspicuously weak. Given that costs are at the heart of making choices, the policy could have been more emphatic about the importance of addressing cost issues and of using cost-effectiveness as a criterion not only in the design of school feeding interventions but also in choosing between school feeding and other means of achieving specific outcomes.

23.   The policy was coherent with WFP's Strategic Plan and other key policies. It included an innovative and commendable effort to propagate general standards for school feeding systems (see Box 1 above). The policy was also generally consistent with international standards for nutrition, education and aid effectiveness.

24.   By 2008, widely accepted criteria for good social protection systems were available (and, indeed, had been used in *Rethinking School Feeding*). It was unfortunate that the framers of the policy did not measure school feeding against these criteria, which highlight both the strengths and the weaknesses of school feedingand should affect its role in a social protection system. By international standards, the social protection dimension of the policy was therefore embryonic.

25.   In general, practicability ("the extent to which a policy is workable and can be achieved") is an area of relative weakness in the policy. Given the complexity of the policy and the extent of the changes it envisaged in WFP's approach and behaviour, the policy would have been stronger as a practical document if it had: i) acknowledged more fully the scale of the challenges that adopting these new directions would imply and recognized the need to prioritize objectives in specific cases; ii) discussed more systematically and realistically the scope of WFP's responsibility for school feeding outcomes; and iii) clearly set out WFP-specific objectives and outlined the main activities required for their attainment.

Results of the Policy

26.   It is a complicated undertaking to attribute results to the policy, and too soon to expect outcomes and impacts from operations commenced only after the policy was adopted. At the same time, the policy envisages the continuation of many long-standing approaches and of some innovations that predate its adoption. A relevant

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[4]*Impact Evaluation of WFP School Feeding Programmes in Kenya (1999‑2008): A Mixed-Methods Approach.* The summary report of the evaluation is available as WFP/EB.A/2010/7-D.

consideration, then, is whether subsequent practices are in line with the policy and whether they are the direct result of it. At this stage, it is also relevant to consider whether the policy is on course to achieve its envisaged results. Most judgements are qualitative because it is early for data trends to emerge and because the effects of the policy on WFP's portfolio are ambiguous. For example, increasing school feeding but decreasing the amount undertaken by WFP might be in line with the policy.

27.   The endorsement of the policy allowed the policy and programme units to turn their energies to supporting its implementation. The Concept Note (2009), the Implementation Approach (2010) and the Implementation Update (2011) provided successively more detailed implementation plans and, in some respects, also elaborated the policyitself. These documents have given the policy a more practical orientation and have been complemented by an impressive amount of work to produce guidelines and tools for its implementation.

28.   WFP has a good reputation with stakeholders generally, who tend to approve its recent strategic shifts. The evaluation nonetheless found that, beyond direct partners and Board members, awareness of the policy itself was patchy. Although external stakeholders are aware of WFP's reorientation towards food assistance, many sector and thematic specialists in aid agencies remain rather sceptical of some of the policy's principal claims relating to, for example, the competitiveness of school feeding as a social protection intervention, and of its place in a nutrition strategy. Some are also wary of what they see as WFP "mission creep" and self-promotion.

29.   Within WFP, there is no doubt that Headquarters staff in both the policy and programme units are highly committed to the implementation of the policy, and that it provides their main agenda. At country level, with some exceptions, there is much less familiarity with the policy as such. However, the policy endorses many good practices and initiatives that country offices are already following and embodies principles, such as government ownership, that are already familiar elements of WFP's overall strategy. Thus country offices are often implementing important elements of the policy without acknowledging it as a guide. But this falls short of a conscious commitment to implementation, and neglects important elements such as the eight quality standards, which are not being used systematically to monitor and report on school feeding programmes.

30.   The evaluation found that WFP's valuable relationships with core school feeding partners (notably the World Bankand PCD) have been reinforced. Less attention was accorded to traditional United Nations partners during the policy development and roll-out. Relationships with two emerging donors, Brazil and the Russian Federation, have clearly been strengthened by the policy.

31.   The School Feeding Policy Implementation Approach stated that "WFP programmes, work plans and the Country Strategies will reflect the WFP school

feeding policy and implementation approach".[5]The evaluation found that this is beginning to happen, but that there is room for improvement. For example, the school feeding policy is reflected to some degree in the majority of Country Strategies, but even where the alignment between these strategies and the policy is greatest, only limited analysis is made of the prospects for sustainable national school feeding systems. Among ten operations recently approved for countries that were not case-study countries, some evidence emerged of movement in the directions advocated by the policy (at least according to the descriptions of the operations). Recent operations have laid greater emphasis on supporting capacity development to favour government management of school feeding systems. Similarly, more references are being made to the importance of results-oriented monitoring and evaluation. Generally, however, the principal justification for school feeding refers to its educational outcomes, and the safety net/social protection dimensions are not strongly expressed. The main change in the nutritional aspects of the school feeding design is the increased prominence of micronutrients.

32.   Many innovations that are in line with the policy also preceded it. They include working with governments to support the development of national school feeding systems, assisting in managing such systems, consciously using THR for social objectives that extend beyond education, the wider use of micronutrients, and drives, usually government-led, to obtain synergies between school feeding and agricultural development. There is also evidence of good receptiveness to some themes of the policy, notably the promotion of HGSF – although, in practice, HGSF issues are more complex than the policysuggests, and WFP's efforts have focused more on the flagship P4P pilot, which the policy does not mention. Stakeholder workshops in both Mozambique and the Dominican Republic – countries at very different stages in the development of national school feeding systems – have found the policy's quality standards helpful. These standards have been used by some country offices, most frequently as a communication tool, but have not been used as a basis for systematic monitoring and reporting. Surprisingly, the evaluation found that the energy content of rations in four of the five full case study countries was below WFP's own recommended standards.

33.   The sustainability of national school feeding systems is highly dependent on how deeply embedded and affordable they are for the country concerned. Among the case studies, the systems in Bhutan, the Dominican Republic and Honduras seem highly durable. Their survival is not in doubt, but there are issues concerning their quality in various dimensions, including social protection. The three African cases (Malawi, Mali and Mozambique) all aspire to develop sustainable school feeding systems. Mali is the furthest advanced, drawing on many years of WFP support for system development; Mozambique is at the earliest stage (and therefore very receptive to guidance); and Malawi's early plans are very ambitious. In all three

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[5] WFP. 2010. Note to the Executive Policy Council: School Feeding Policy Implementation Approach, EPC11/2010/D.

cases, the systems must be regarded as fragile. Afghanistan and Tajikistan, for different reasons, do not see hand-over/transition as practical in the near term.

34.   WFP's ability to sustain its support for the policy will depend on its following through with a radical reorientation of its approaches, as the policy requires.

Reasons for Results

35.   A number of external trends have facilitated the implementation of the policy. The changing patterns in food assistance have made it more practical to espouse a more flexible policy that is not driven by the availability of food aid. As the policy correctly analysed, countries that achieve higher levels of income are likely to include school meals among the services they provide. The discourse on aid effectiveness continues to stress the importance of country ownership and the use of country systems. Linking school feeding to support for domestic agriculture repeatedly proves politically popular, even if not technically straightforward. In many ways, therefore, the policy is well positioned, although the competition for funding – whether external or domestic – is usually intense, with greater financial constraints in the poorer countries.

36.   At the same time, the evaluation found a number of factors that have tended to hold back the implementation of the policy. For instance, WFP encounters some external suspicion of its motives when it advocates school feeding. During the preparation of the policy, no consultation was held with WFP's field operatives, and internal dissemination was weak. There was ambiguity between rolling out the policy across WFP and focusing on pilot countries chosen as having high potential for enacting the policy. The paradoxical result was that some non-pilot country offices that were well advanced in pursuing key elements of the policy felt support was lacking, whereas some of the pilots found that, in the light of the progress they had already made, much of the guidance material was redundant. Human resources for implementing the policy were severely constrained. Not only was the availability of professional staff at Headquarters limited, but the broad scope of the policy also made considerable demands of already scarce country office staff (see Figure 2 above).

37.   Above all, the full implementation of the policy depends on major changes in WFP systems, incentives and procedures. Most of the necessary changes are identified in the Strategic Plan, but their implementation is slow.

Conclusion

Overall Assessment

38.   The 2009 policyhad important strengths. It was timely, clear and persuasively written. It was well aligned with WFP's Strategic Plan and other key policies, and with principles of aid-effectiveness. It drew on an insightful stock-taking of accumulated evidence: insights included the holistic view of the effects of school

feeding, including social protection, the need to work towards sustainable government-run school feeding systems, and the possibilities for linking school feeding to agricultural development. Its proposal to set quality standards for school feedingwas an important innovation.

39.   But the policy also had significant weaknesses. It did not distinguish clearly enough between the general case for school feeding and the specific role(s) that WFP should play in school feeding. Its treatment of social protection was too narrow (re-labelling school feeding is not enough). While it drew on solid evidence, it tended to overstate the case and allowed advocacy to undermine balanced guidance, which erodes WFP's credibility. The policy should have been more emphatic about the need to focus on a subset of objectives in a specific operation, and should have given greater emphasis to the importance of cost-effectiveness as a criterion not only in the design of school feeding interventions but also in choosing between school feeding and other means towards achieving specific outcomes. Including a high-level implementation plan in the policy document would have substantially enhanced its practicability, along with the quality of Board discussions. International thinking has been evolving quite rapidly in several of the fields that the policy links to school feeding, and making sure that the policystays relevant and up to date therefore poses a challenge.

What have been the Results of the Policy?

40.   Attributing results to the policy is difficult, partly because its adoption is recent, but also because the policy endorsed many elements of existing practice, and many of its recommendations for "new" approaches were already being tried in some countries. The evaluation took note of the progress made to date in implementing the policy and looked at whether the policyis on course to achieve its intended results.

41.   The policy is already reflected in WFP's portfolio and activities in several positive ways, but there is room for further progress. Aggregate data on WFP's own school feeding activities do not yield much information because it is too soon for post-policy trends to appear, and the effects of the policy are also potentially ambiguous. Most Country Strategy documents reflect some themes of the policy, but little analysis is made of the scope for national school feeding systems. Recently approved WFP school feeding operations do give more weight to capacity development but, in terms of their organization and coordination and dialogue processes, most are firmly rooted in the education sector. The safety net/social protection dimensions of the policy do not yet come through clearly.

42.   On the other hand, there are plenty of examples of WFP already working in the ways the policy envisages, for example by supporting an emerging national school feeding system. There are also cases at different stages of school feeding system development where governments seem very receptive to WFP support for capacity development and to HGSF. Although social protection/safety net concepts are increasingly being used within WFP, it can be difficult to have school feeding included as part of the social protection dialogue at a country level, especially where

the leading players have already shaped the terms of the debate using other models. The quality standards advocated by the policy have so far been used to a limited extent only, and not all the school feeding programmes in the case-study countries comply fully with WFP's own nutritional guidance.

43. Overall, the evaluation found that experience to date tends to confirm the relevance of the policy. Some progress has been made to align WFP activities with the agenda set forth by the policy, but much remains to be done.

Why has the Policy Produced the Results Observed?

44. The evaluation noted many positives in the implementation of the policy, including the energy that has gone into its roll-out and the development within WFP of supporting guidelines and tools. Inevitably, reporting so soon after the policy was launched will focus on why the policy has not made more difference yet, and will ask what can be done to further the attainment of results in the future.

45. The evaluation notes that the policy's implications are radical, and that radical change usually takes time. More specifically, implementation has been constrained by:

   i) limitations in the policy itself;

   ii) limited internal consultation with personnel in the field – better consultation would have given the policy a more practical orientation, as well as a head start in dissemination and ownership;

   iii) the focus on pilot countries, which resulted in some advanced country offices unsupported, while some of the pilot countries felt they had already moved beyond the materials being offered by Headquarters; and

the radical change of organizational approach and culture that is embodied not just in the school feeding policy but in the overall strategic transformation of WFP that it supports. Implementation depends not only on the technical advice of the school feeding and programme units at Headquarters – and the complexity and breadth of the policy makes providing such advice very demanding – but also on organization-wide financing arrangements and incentive structures that are still being put in place.

Main Recommendations

46. The evaluation's recommendations are consistent with the spirit and intent of the existing policy. They are designed to reinforce the implementation work that has already been done and, in many cases, to build on efforts already under way. They are mutually reinforcing and presented in a logical rather than a chronological order.

47. **Recommendation 1: Clarify and update the policy.** As this report has shown, the debates around school feeding are evolving quite rapidly, and it is therefore necessary to refresh the policy at regular intervals. This will afford an

opportunity to deal with some of the weaknesses and oversights of the original policy.WFP should therefore prepare an update of the school feeding policy and seek Board approval for it (probably in June 2013). The update would amend rather than replace the existing policy.[6] The exercise should be led by the school feeding policy and programme units, which should involve other Headquarters divisions and engage with regional and country-level staff, so as to maximize ownership and ensure it is oriented towards the practical implementation challenges.

48.   The update should:

   i) **bridge the gap between the policy and the implementation strategy**. In particular, the update should spell out more clearly WFP roles and the changes in WFP activity and portfolio that will result from the policy. It should be more explicit about the comparative advantages of WFP and specify the limits of WFP's responsibilities.[7] It should also set out a clear monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy (see also Recommendations 2 and 4).

   ii) **update the treatment of key themes**, facilitating practical context-specific choices and addressing the gaps identified in this evaluation (see Box 2).

Box 2: Themes to be addressed in the policy update

Social protection. Reflect the new WFP policy on social protection (expected mid-2012), ensuring that the vocabulary and approaches are up-to-date and realistic.

Education. Highlight the extent to which the full realization of the potential educational benefits of school feeding depends on other elements of national education systems, which WFP and other donors should seek to support.

Nutrition. Take account of WFP's new policy on nutrition (expected early 2012), while recognizing that governments may have to strike a balance between coverage and a "gold standard" of nutritional quality.

HGSF. Address the relationship between HGSF and P4P. It will need to take better cognizance of the complexities arising from possible divergences in objectives and differing approaches to local procurement, and be more realistic about WFP's ambitions for local economic development.

The WFP workshop that reviewed the draft of this report also suggested that the update could: i) give more thorough consideration to the full continuum, from pre-primary to adolescence; and ii) address school feeding in emergencies and in protracted refugee/internally displaced person (IDP) contexts, bearing in mind that WFP does not have a comparable policy on emergency school feeding.

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[6] The 2009 update of the policy on capacity development took a similar approach.

[7] The concept of comparative advantage implies identifying also those areas for which others are better suited to take responsibility.

49.   **Recommendation 2: Operationalize the policy more effectively.** Better operationalization requires:

  a) **strengthening staff skills and implementation support at field level**. Ensure adequate technical support for all country offices[8] and continue work on identifying and developing the new skills required for WFP's new school feeding approaches. Wherever possible, link training and staff development to wider initiatives across WFP in order to avoid focusing too narrowly on specific instruments such as school feeding.

  b) **further development of guidance material.** This should focus on the rationalization of materials (taking account of user feedback), more guidance on prioritization and trade-offs in school feeding design, better links to WFP processes,[9] and objective benchmarking that can be used to track progress in national school feeding systems.

  c) **more attention to costs and cost-effectiveness.** Build on the very valuable analysis performed and data collected during the cost-benchmarking exercise and by better monitoring WFP's own costs. At a minimum, all strategy, programme and monitoring documents should be required to report on planned and effective unit costs.

  d) **strengthening relationships with external partners.** Existing core partnerships could be further strengthened (e.g. by reciprocal secondment of personnel), while also making sure traditional partnerships with other United Nations agencies are not neglected.

50.   **Recommendation 3: Strengthen the financing of the policy.** Financial resources and financial and budgetary incentives are key to the operationalization of the policy. The following steps are recommended:

  a) **Cost and ensure additional financing for the budgetary implications of Recommendation 2(a) – such as country office staff training and specialist support –** as part of an overall policy implementation plan, to enable the School Feeding Service, the Programme Design Service and the regional bureaux to support all country offices more effectively in policy implementation.

  b) **Roll out WFP's new financial framework as rapidly as possible**.

  c) **Seek more predictable funding.** Developmental and capacity development work require a strategic perspective that is undermined by very short-term financing. This implies, first, securing multi-year funding for WFP's own professional staff working to support the school feeding policy.

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[8]This has budget implications – see Recommendation 4.

[9] As one example, the guidance for the preparation of country strategies, which is currently framed at a very highlevel and generic level, should be more explicit about the material on national progress towards development of sustainable school feeding strategies that will be required.

The Board should (continue to) press for more unrestricted and multi-year funding to support WFP's core analytical and policy development work. The prevalence of short-term and earmarked funding perpetuates fragmentation and makes it harder to ensure thematic coordination across WFP. Second, to promote a strategic perspective that contributes to the development and financing of national school feeding strategies, country strategies should flag long-term financing requirements (focused pre-eminently on overall national school feeding requirements, and only secondarily on funding requirements for possible WFP operations).

d) **Strengthen WFP's ability to analyse school feeding's budgetary implications for governments.** Those considering the nexus of school feeding, education and social protection need to understand the political economy of the budget processes involved. In particular, what funds does school feeding compete with in practice, and at which levels of government?[10]

51. **Recommendation 4: Intensify and expand learning and further develop the policy.**For near-term strengthening of monitoring, evaluation and learning within WFP:

a) include an explicit M&E strategy in the policy update;

b) document experiences and lessons from the pilot countries; and

c) draw on the impact evaluation approach that OE has developed as part of its guidance for project formulation and subsequent M&E:

◊ At project formulation, spell out the anticipated paths to impact and distinguish which factors are under the control of WFP (or a national school feeding agency) from those that are not. This approach will help ensure a more frugal initial design that focuses on a subset of school feeding objectives, and designs interventions accordingly.

◊ Strengthen regular M&E with a better general understanding of the relevance and quality of different types of evidence.

52. **Support applied research relevant to the design and management of school feeding operations.**[11]This is a long-term strategy – rigorous research takes time – and is vital to credibility (see Box 3).

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[10]*Rethinking School Feeding* rightly highlighted this as an issue that requires more attention, both in research and in practice.

[11] The workshop on the draft evaluation report suggested a number of fields for applied research, including: i) conditions for feasible hand-over; ii) nutrition (or broader) benefits of school feeding, in particular to adolescent girls and pre-primary children; iii) school feeding in emergency and protracted situations (could include IDPs/refugees); iv) issues surrounding cost-effectiveness of school feeding; v) different school feeding modalities or cash transfers.

Box 3: Ensuring the value and credibility of research

The credibility of research is crucial, especially because WFP is not regarded as a disinterested party. Wherever possible, such research should be undertaken independently and/or in partnership with organizations that are regarded as sufficiently credible and disinterested. When reporting on such research and on its own studies, WFP should be more careful to distinguish between analytical work and advocacy. Analytical work should be careful to maintain balance and not to draw stronger conclusions than the evidence justifies. The credibility and quality of WFP's internal work could be enhanced by systematic peer review, drawing on expertise external to WFP. It would be useful to develop clear protocols for the review and publication of research findings.

In order to ensure robust findings, research could be linked to deliberate experiments – for example in controlled trials of school feeding modalities or approaches to targeting. More direct comparisons between school feeding and alternative interventions – such asconditional cash transfers – should be encouraged.[12] Much can be learned from such experiments, although care is needed in interpreting the findings[13] and in determining the extent to which they can be generalized to other contexts.

WFP should be willing to test core assumptions through such research; an example is the assumption that within-school targeting of school meals is generally infeasible.

53.　　To **promote international learning,** WFP and its partners – particularly the Brazil Centre of Excellence – should consider setting up a database on school feeding programmes that describes the coverage and functioning of programmes globally[14] and the possibility of linking it to an annual independent report on developments and trends in school feeding.[15] What happens in the aggregate of WFP school feeding operations is less important than what is happening globally: that hungry children are fed is more important than who feeds them.

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[12] For planned research in Cambodia, see WFP. 2011. Evaluation of Cash vs. Take-Home Rations in Food-for-Education Programmes (Concept Note). Rome.

[13] Not least because school feeding interventions may have a more complex set of benefits than the comparator.

[14] As mentioned in *Rethinking School Feeding.*

[15] This, in turn, could contribute to establishing objective benchmarks for school feeding systems – see Recommendation 2 on guidance materials.

1. Introduction

1.1 Evaluation Features

1.   The School Feeding Policy (WFP, 2009q)[16] was approved by WFP's Executive Board (EB) in November 2009. At the same time, the EB mandated an evaluation of the Policy to be presented to its first session in 2012. The full terms of reference (TOR) are at Annex B. The evaluation is required to:

- Assess the quality and results of the policy and activities to implement it (accountability).

- Determine the reasons behind these findings in order to draw lessons for the future (learning).

2.   There is a broad diversity of stakeholders and partners in implementation of the Policy with an interest in this evaluation (see the stakeholder analysis in section 1.3). Many of these may use this evaluation, but the primary users will be WFP's Governing Body in deciding strategic priorities and WFP's Secretariat to enhance policy direction and implementation.

3.   The evaluation set out to answer the main evaluation questions (EQs) shown in Box 1 below, and these questions also provide the structure for the findings reported in Section 2.

4.   This is an early evaluation of policy and process, not an evaluation of the impact of school feeding per se.[17] However, EQ1 does address the Policy's consistency with emerging evidence of impact. The TOR excluded emergency school feeding from the scope of the evaluation, and specified a focus on the primary school level.[18] Even so, the range of the enquiry is very wide, because the Policy links school feeding to multiple outcomes in social protection, nutrition, education, gender and local economic development.

Box 1   Main Evaluation Questions[19]

A. To assess the **quality of the policy** the evaluation will consider:
EQ1   How relevant is the policy? Are its objectives appropriate and is it soundly based on evidence?
EQ2   Is the policy clear and internally consistent?
EQ3   Is the policy coherent with WFP's strategic plan and other relevant policies?
EQ4   Is the policy coherent with international standards?
EQ5   How practicable is the policy?

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[16] The bibliography is at Annex A.

[17] The EB has subsequently adopted guidelines under which, in future, at least four years will elapse between the adoption of a policy and its evaluation (see WFP, 2011z).

[18] But it was agreed to take account of the potential benefits of keeping adolescent girls in school (Lister et al, 2011, ¶82).

[19] For the full Evaluation Matrix, see Annex E.

B. To identify and assess the **results of the policy**, the evaluation will consider:

EQ6 Are relevant stakeholders aware of the policy, and committed to its implementation?

EQ7 How have WFP's relationships' with other stakeholders changed since the policy was introduced?

EQ8 How has WFP's portfolio changed since the policy was introduced?

EQ9 Does WFP's school feeding portfolio reflect the policy's quality standards?

EQ10 Are the observed changes a result of the policy, a continuation of pre-existing good practice, or the consequence of other WFP policy shifts?

C. To **explain the results (or absence of results) of the policy**, the evaluation will consider:

EQ11 Was there sufficient consultation and ownership in the development of the policy?

EQ12 How well was the policy disseminated, with guidelines for its implementation?

EQ13 Were there sufficient (financial and other) resources for its implementation?

EQ14 What internal factors facilitated or obstructed implementation of the policy?

EQ15 What external factors facilitated or obstructed implementation of the policy?

EQ16 What feedback loops have been put in place and how effective have they been?

EQ17 How sustainable are the emerging results of the SF policy?

5.   The evaluation took place between April and November 2011. Evaluation team composition reflected the broad thematic expertise required. The methodology, as agreed during the inception phase, is fully described in Annex C. A glossary of relevant terms was assembled at the inception stage, and is reproduced as Annex D.[20] The full evaluation matrix is at Annex E. Evaluation activities included:

(a) An extensive literature review (see the bibliography at Annex A; Annex F is a guide to key documents linked to the SF Policy).

(b) Interviews with over 300 global and country-level stakeholders within and beyond WFP (see Annex G).

(c) Review of data on WFP's portfolio of school feeding activities (see Annex H).

(d) Preparation of a synthesis of SF evaluations, focused particularly on recent impact evaluations of SF (see summary in Annex I).

(e) A review of all available country strategy documents, and a comparison of recently approved SF operations with earlier examples from the same countries, to check for evidence of consistency with, and influence by, the SF Policy. (See supplementary notes in Annex J on this and other topics.)

(f) Preparation of eight country case studies (with visits to Bhutan, Honduras, Malawi, Mali and Tajikistan, and desk studies for Afghanistan, the Dominican Republic and Mozambique). Executive summaries of the case

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[20] As regards "impact" and "results", the evaluation follows the WFP OE preferred usage in which:

(a) "result" and "effect" are practically synonyms, and results can be at the output, outcome and/or impact levels, while

(b) "impact" refers to lasting and significant effects at the goal and outcomes level of the logical framework (results-chain).

studies are reproduced as Annex K, and case study findings against the EQs are at Annex L.

6.   The evaluation approach allowed triangulation across different stakeholder perspectives, between documentary sources and interviews, and by comparing evidence broadly across the WFP portfolio and in more depth for a set of case studies (cases were selected to represent countries with different levels of government ownership of school feeding systems). The main limitations on evaluability[21] concern the short period since the Policy was adopted, the complexity of its objectives, and the fact that it combines elements of continuity with innovation. The report is careful to indicate the strength, or limitations, of the evidence on which its conclusions are based.[22]

7.   The evaluation team was independent, supervised by the WFP's Office of Evaluation (OE), applying the international evaluation standards embedded in its Evaluation Quality Assurance System (EQAS). Two external reviewers provided independent quality assurance.

1.2   Context

International Context

8.   The SF Policy identifies multiple objectives for school feeding, involving social protection and local economic development as well as education, health and nutrition. The policy evaluation therefore took account of international discourse linked to those objectives, as well as the general discourse on aid effectiveness.

9.   The aid effectiveness agenda, defined by the Paris Declaration (OECD-DAC, 2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (OECD-DAC, 2008), continues to evolve as the 4th High Level Forum in Busan (2011) approaches. This has particular implications for the use of country systems, and considerations of fiduciary risks in procurement and service delivery. The UN has responded with efforts to strengthen UN coordination globally and at country level, with the One-UN and UNDAF initiatives. There are continued emphases on country ownership and the strengthening of country systems as key to effective and sustainable development, along with increasing focus on demonstrable results. Lack of predictability in the provision of aid is recognised as a major weakness and source of inefficiency in the use of aid.[23]

10.   WFP's mission statement (adopted in 1994) describes WFP as "the food aid arm of the United Nations system", but there have since been major changes in perceptions and practices concerning food aid. Crucially, WFP has become much less reliant on in-kind donations and therefore much more directly involved in procurement, while also deploying a wider range of instruments, including cash and vouchers (see discussion of WFP context below).

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[21] See Annex B, §5.1.

[22] The final section of Annex C reflects on the methodology employed.

[23] See the report prepared for the Busan High Level Forum (OECD-DAC, 2011).

11.   The present century began with renewed commitments to the objectives of Education for All (EFA), and some of the key EFA objectives were also reflected as MDG commitments. The EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI)[24] was established in furtherance of these commitments (Cambridge Education et al, 2010). Basic education has been seen as a universal right, but its practical benefits have also been stressed, both generally, in terms of the links between human capital and economic growth, and more specifically because of the wider effects of education, such as promoting gender equality, and the inter-generational benefits of educating women.

12.   In many countries, education enrolments have been boosted by abolition of fees and by other demand-side measures to reduce the costs of participation or to provide positive incentives for parents to send their children to school. School feeding is well recognised as an effective incentive, especially for poor families. At the same time, it has often proved easier to expand enrolments than to ensure that children in school complete a basic education of adequate quality, and there is increasing attention to the determinants of learning outcomes.

13.   UNESCO's annual EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) tracks progress towards the EFA objectives and provides an analytical commentary. Box 2 below shows highlights from the 2011 GMR (UNESCO, 2011c). The prominent concerns with enrolment, dropout and gender confirm the relevance of school feeding, inasmuch as SF promotes enrolment and attendance, and often focuses on girls. But it is noticeable that the GMR's review of measures to encourage parents to keep their children in school pays scant attention to school feeding while highlighting evidence for the effectiveness of conditional cash transfers (CCTs).

14.   There is a dynamic international aid framework for addressing the challenges of hunger and nutrition – encapsulated in the Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) initiative and Road Map (SUN Task Team, 2010). This is driven by a humanitarian concern to meet the basic MDGs and by advances in understanding of under-nutrition and the importance of different interventions (e.g. micronutrients) at different stages of the life-cycle (e.g. increasing appreciation of the importance of "the first 1000 days" from conception, which has implications for both mother and child nutrition interventions). WFP itself has been engaged in these developments, and they also influence international stakeholders' perspectives on SF as a nutrition intervention (see for example DFID, 2009, DFID, 2010).

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[24] To be known from November 2011 as the Global Partnership for Education.

Box 2   EFA – Progress and Challenges

Progress	Challenges
• From 1999 to 2008, an additional 52 million children enrolled in primary school. The number of children out of school was halved in South and West Asia. In sub-Saharan Africa, enrolment ratios rose by one-third despite a large increase in the primary school age population.	• The number of children out of school is falling too slowly. In 2008, 67 million children were out of school. Progress towards universal enrolment has slowed. If current trends continue, there could be more children out of school in 2015 than there are today.
• Gender parity in primary enrolment has improved significantly in the regions that started the decade with the greatest gender gaps.	• Gender disparities continue to hamper progress in education. Had the world achieved gender parity at the primary level in 2008, there would have been an additional 3.6 million girls in primary school.

Analysis

• Many children drop out of school before completing a full primary cycle. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, 10 million children drop out of primary school every year.
In most cases, children drop out because of poverty-related factors beyond their parents' control, as well as problems linked to the quality of education, or school-based factors that influence progression through grades. Lowering the risk of dropout requires a broad set of policies aimed at reducing these underlying vulnerabilities.

• The quality of education remains very low in many countries. Millions of children are emerging from primary school with reading, writing and numeracy skills far below expected levels.
School-level factors are important in shaping learning outcomes. Key factors include: the quality of teachers, real teaching time, the classroom environment, what happens in the early grades, and schools' selection procedures.

Source: adapted from GMR 2011 (UNESCO, 2011c)

15.   As noted in the WFP Social Protection evaluation (Majewski et al, 2011), social protection emerged in the late 1990s as a reaction to the narrower concept of 'social safety nets'. Safety nets are now seen as a component of social protection, which constitutes a basis for evolving social welfare and social security systems in low-income countries that are too poor to afford comprehensive systems.

16.   The definition of social protection varies by agency and by country with a diverse range of concepts, tools, and modes of implementation – and continues to evolve. The high food price crisis of 2008 highlighted the importance of safety nets and social protection, and gave more traction to discussion of the issue. Both the IMF and the World Bank have advocated the development of social protection systems as a key tool for poverty reduction, and many host governments are now including social protection within their own poverty reduction strategies.

Figure 1   The 3P Framework of Social Protection
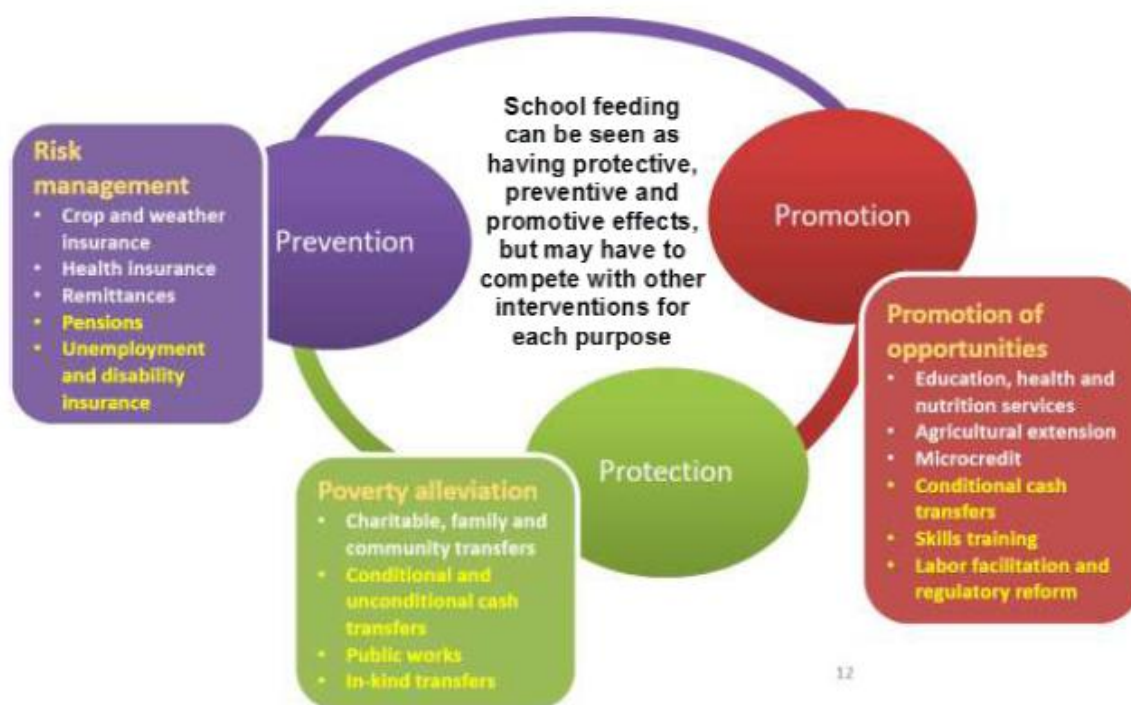
Source: adapted from World Bank, 2011b.

17.   The World Bank's emerging social protection policy (World Bank, 2011a) reflects its current thinking and is a reasonable summary of the view held by the major social protection actors (such as the EC, DFID, UNICEF and ILO[25]). For the World Bank, effective, efficient and equitable social protection programmes directly reduce poverty and inequality, and build resilience by helping individuals and families smooth their consumption and handle shocks. They also can promote opportunity, productivity and growth. As such, they stress three inter-connected functions for social protection (prevention, promotion and protection, as shown in Figure 1 above). This perspective goes much further than the income effects of a "value transfer", since it addresses also the dynamic potential for social protection instruments to address the causes as well as the symptoms of poverty.

18.   In the same vein, social protection is increasingly defined in terms of overall systems rather than individual programmes. This implies the need for strong overall coordination, prudent integration and layering of new and existing instruments. From this perspective, school feeding is one potential intervention of many within an integrated social protection system that seeks to do more than just provide a safety net.[26]

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[25] But it should be noted that the UN agencies' concepts tend to be more rights-based, while the WB's is more oriented towards economic benefits and human capital.

[26] We note that "safety nets" are correctly defined in the school feeding (SF) policy as "sub-sets of broader social protection systems". However, "safety net" is often used loosely when "social

19. Linking school feeding to the promotion of agriculture is not new – school feeding in the USA was promoted as an agricultural development initiative –but it has attracted increased attention in recent years. In particular, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) identified the potential links between school feeding and agricultural development early in the evolution of its Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP, which WFP helped to design). In 2003, the United Nations (UN) Millennium Hunger Task Force, NEPAD and WFP launched a CAADP "flagship programme" for "NEPAD school feeding using increased domestic food production in rural areas". This sowed the seed for the home-grown school feeding (HGSF) activities in which WFP is involved today.[27]

20. Research and advocacy on the subject has been strongly promoted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and the Partnership for Child Development (PCD). The potential links between school feeding and agricultural development remain intuitively, and politically, attractive and can play an important role in ensuring support for continuing school feeding programmes.

WFP Context

21. WFP has always had to find a balance between emergency humanitarian interventions and a role in addressing the underlying causes of hunger. Recent years have seen an important strategic shift and a change in WFP's business model. This has been facilitated by trends in WFP's resourcing: a trend away from donations in kind has increased the importance of direct WFP procurement in national and international markets, and has also facilitated the use of a broader range of instruments, including cash and vouchers.

22. The Strategic Plan adopted in 2008 (WFP, 2008d)[28] was pivotal. It embodied a shift from "food aid" to "food assistance", clarified WFP's strategic objectives, and stressed the importance of working in partnerships, of moving from a project to a strategic approach, and of promoting in-country capacity development. As noted in Annex F (key documents), implementing the new strategy has required fundamental changes to WFP systems: this has included adoption of a strategic results framework, a programme categories review, and adoption of a new financial framework (which, when operationalised, will break the link between food tonnage and operational funding, and thus facilitate the financing of advisory and capacity development activities). There is a new requirement to prepare country strategies, separate from the specific programmes through which WFP operations are financed. These developments within WFP are of direct relevance to the SF Policy's origins and implementation, and are discussed further in the context of specific evaluation questions.

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protection" more accurately describes the overarching framework of which school feeding may form a part; we will prefer the term "social protection" when it is more appropriate.

[27] WFP seconded staff to CAADP for several years; there was a gap in 2011, which swas due to be filled soon.

[28] Originally for 2008–2011, subsequently extended to 2013.

23.   The new business model has also facilitated the flagship "Purchase for Progress" (P4P) initiative, which has direct implications for the HGSF element of the school feeding policy. The wording of the 2008 Strategic Plan shows endorsement of a broad commitment to local procurement for economic development purposes, but HGSF is not mentioned. In 2007–2008, WFP and the BMGF changed gear, and to some extent direction, with regard to HGSF. The balance of the BMGF funding was transferred to the P4P project, launched in September 2008 as a five year pilot. P4P covers 21 pilot countries[29] and has a budget of USD 140m, from BMGF and several other sources.[30]

24.   While fully in keeping with SO5, the P4P initiative has broadened the scope beyond school feeding. P4P aims to strengthen local smallholder food production, processing and marketing capacity, systems and income by redirecting and restructuring WFP procurement, in the context of WFP's own efforts to build national ownership of many of the activities that it currently undertakes. In some countries, such as El Salvador, Honduras, Liberia, Malawi, and Mali the P4P unit in the WFP Country Office (CO) arranges procurement of some of the food that the organisation uses for school feeding. Overall, however, school feeding demand is relatively small, which was one reason for designing P4P to address other WFP activities too. Meanwhile, PCD and others continue to promote HGSF around the world. School feeding, and HGSF, are what P4P emerged from; but the strategic emphasis on HGSF in WFP has been overtaken by the broader, well-funded, P4P effort. In the process, the potential nutritional benefits of HGSF (which may be able to supply fresh local produce) have been given less emphasis than the economic and livelihood benefits that P4P can achieve.

1.3   WFP's School Feeding Policy and its Implementation

Origins of the SF Policy

25.   The 2009 SF Policy had no direct predecessor, though WFP's approach to school feeding was embodied in guidelines to staff and a series of innovations over the years (see Box 3 below). Annex F is a summary of the key documents involved, both before and after the SF Policy itself.

26.   Different motivations for preparing the policy converged over time. At a practical level, the SF unit saw a need to update, clarify and codify WFP's practical guidance on school feeding. From the perspective of several Board members, WFP needed to provide a clearer rationale and justification for its SF activities (for example the evaluation of SF in emergencies (WFP, 2007e) had highlighted issues concerning handover or exit from SF operations). The food crisis of 2008 brought SF into the spotlight as a safety net intervention that could, in many cases, be rapidly scaled up, and thus provided an opportunity to present a strengthened case for SF.

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[29] Including five of this evaluation's case studies (Afghanistan, Honduras, Mali, Malawi and Mozambique).

[30] This funding is for the technical activities and personnel of the project, and not for the actual WFP food purchases that it facilitates; the procurement itself is funded from the usual WFP budgets.

And it was also logical to review WFP's approach to SF in the context of the seminal 2008 Strategic Plan.

Box 3   Precursors of the School Feeding Policy

1999	A School Feeding Handbook (WFP, 2000a), jointly prepared by WFP with UNESCO and WHO. provided guiding principles on the rationale, design, implementation and evaluation of school feeding programmes. It emphasised the role of SF in promoting attendance, improving ability to concentrate, and addressing micronutrient deficiencies.
2000	WFP launched the "School Feeding Initiative" (WFP, 2000b, linked to resources from the USA McGovern/Dole initiative) to encourage governments to put in place national school feeding programmes.
2000	WFP established a School Feeding Unit (WFP, 2004f).
2001	WFP, with support from WHO, World Bank and CIDA, launched a de-worming initiative linked to school feeding.
2002	WFP partnered with UNICEF to promote an "Essential Package" of linked school-level interventions, designed to strengthen school health, hygiene and nutrition programmes. (See UNICEF & WFP 2006 and WFP, 2010d.)
2003	The Hunger Task Force proposed linking school feeding directly with agricultural development. Agreement between WFP and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to undertake pilot Home-Grown School Feeding programmes.
2005	WFP collaborated with the private sector to test acceptability and use of single-dose sachets of micronutrients in powdered form – "sprinkles".
2006	WFP organised an expert seminar on "Food for Education (FFE)" to gather and disseminate the most recent facts, figures, and solutions available. (WFP, 2006e)
2006	WFP published a guide on school feeding which reiterated the educational and nutritional objectives of school feeding. (See WFP, 2006d. This was described as a summary of the existing School Feeding Handbook.)
2007	WFP launched the FFE web-site to allow international agencies, national governments, non-governmental organizations and civil society to access and share reliable information on school feeding (see http://www.schoolsandhealth.org/sites/ffe/Pages/Default.aspx).

27.   The school feeding unit had begun work on a draft SF policy in early 2006, and the first target date for submission to the Executive Board was June 2006. Preparation of the paper proved much more time-consuming, and it was not until September 2008 that a draft policy was discussed, informally, with Board members.

28.   However, there was insufficient support for the 2008 draft when it was put forward. The SF unit was requested to do more work on the paper, including a more rigorous presentation of evidence and more analysis of SF's relative advantages as a safety net, to reconsider some of the claims about SF effects (it was not necessarily credible to link SF with all five Strategic Objectives), and to provide clearer guidance about which objectives should be pursued in particular operations.

29.   The SF Unit was already collaborating with the WB (and PCD) and its response was to redouble efforts to strengthen the evidence base for the SF Policy – hence the documents noted in Box 4 below, which are given prominence in the 2009 Policy. According to some key interviewees, the 2009 Policy's emphasis on making the case for SF reflects the experience with the 2008 draft.

Box 4   Research and Analysis towards the SF Policy

As a platform for the 2009 SF Policy, WFP concluded various research and analysis work to enhance its knowledge base and hence improve the quality of WFP's school feeding programmes. These include:

- ▫ "Learning From Experience – Good Practices from 45 Years of School Feeding" (WFP, 2009zh).
- ▫ *Rethinking School Feeding: Social Safety Nets, Child Development and the Education Sector*, a joint publication by WFP and the World Bank Group (Bundy et al, 2009a).
- ▫ "Home-Grown School Feeding: A Framework to Link School Feeding with Local Agricultural Production", a study conducted by WFP in 2008 and 2009, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Espejo et al, 2009).
- ▫ "An Investment Case for School Feeding" by WFP and The Boston Consulting Group (BCG) which compared the monetary costs of providing school feeding with potential long-term economic benefits (WFP, 2009i).

For more details see Annex F.

Goals and objectives of the SF Policy

30.   In this section we consider the purposes of the Policy, its main features, and what was new about it. The underlying question for the evaluation is "what was the Policy trying to achieve?"

31.   Several distinct purposes can be disentangled from the Policy's introductory paragraphs: (a) to make the case for school feeding in general, based on a conceptual framework that draws from recent research and other evidence; (b) to describe (or prescribe) WFP's role in achieving SF objectives; (c) to serve as a guide for WFP staff in performing WFP's role(s). Purpose (c) is the least fully articulated, and it was largely left to later documents to describe the strategy for implementing the Policy (see ¶43ff below). Most of the document is in practice devoted to (a) and (b), often without distinguishing clearly between them.

32.   The Policy articulates a broad case for school feeding. It offers social protection as an overarching framework for benefits which can include a direct safety net (value transfer) function, educational benefits (an incentive for enrolment and attendance, while also enhancing the ability to learn), nutritional benefits (not only alleviating short-term hunger, but improving the nutritional status of children, particularly when food is fortified with micro-nutrients and accompanied by de-worming); its potential to support gender equality in schooling is highlighted, and school feeding is offered as a "platform" for pursuit of wider benefits with the school as a focus. Among such wider benefits it highlights opportunities to support small-scale agricultural development through HGSF. It identifies roles for SF as a safety net

in emergencies and protracted crises, in post-conflict, post-disaster and transition situations, and in situations of chronic hunger. School feeding is expected to contribute to breaking the inter-generational cycle of hunger through its contribution to learning and school completion.

33. The Policy does not spell out WFP's objectives for SF, but its "vision" is tantamount to a goal:

> WFP's vision is to reduce hunger among schoolchildren so that it is not an obstacle to their development. (¶35)

34. The Policy emphasises WFP's role in supporting governments to develop sustainable school feeding strategies (with different models that may involve different degrees of decentralisation – a dimension especially relevant when considering strategies for local procurement and sourcing). It proposes guiding standards for school feeding, which seem to apply both to WFP SF operations and to the wider national SF systems of which they form part.

35. According to WFP's School Feeding Policy Unit, the Policy brought in three "elements of novelty":[31] (i) framing school feeding as a safety net intervention with multiple outcomes; (ii) working closer with Governments (headlined in the Policy as "Government Capacity Development and Transition to Government Ownership" and linked to a model of staged transition towards full government ownership and management[32]); and (iii) introducing eight standards[33] for quality and sustainability.[34] However, these three elements were intended to reflect good practices, which were in some cases already being applied, rather than to introduce elements entirely new to WFP.

36. Among the more familiar elements in the Policy were the educational objectives it identified, and its continued support for elements of the Essential Package. The eight guiding standards address both familiar and novel elements of the policy; they are in themselves quite vague but are linked to an annexed table of indicators.

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[31] Paragraph adapted from TOR (Annex B), ¶16.

[32] "WFP will ensure that all programmes include a transition strategy that will clearly specify how WFP and the government will work towards putting in place the elements for a sustainable school feeding programme." (¶66 of the Policy)

[33] Rethinking School Feeding identified 5 standards, which the WB SABER benchmarking guidelines also use. They map onto the WFP standards as follows (World Bank, n.d.-a):

Rethinking SF standards	SF Policy Standards
1. Policy frameworks	1. Sustainability (crosscutting Rethinking standards)
2. Institutional capacity and coordination	2. Sound alignment with national policy framework (Re 1)
3. Financial capacity	3. Stable funding and budgeting (Re 3)
4. Design and implementation	4. Needs-based, cost-effective quality programme design (Re 4)
5. Community participation	5. Strong institutional frameworks for implementation, monitoring and accountability (Re 2)
	6. Strategy for local production and sourcing (Re 4)
	7. Strong partnerships and inter-sector coordination (Re 2)
	8. Strong community participation and ownership (Re 5)

[34] In the Policy, these are referred to as standards for sustainability and affordability.

37.   HGSF objectives had not been articulated so directly in previous WFP guidance.

Stakeholder analysis

38.   The Inception Report (Lister et al, 2011) included a stakeholder analysis which is reproduced in Annex C, Box C5. This was used as a guide in seeking a range of interviewees for the evaluation (see category analysis of interviewees in Annex G, Box G1).

39.   Stakeholder analysis, drawing on interviews and documents, highlights that:

- Institutional stakeholders are not monolithic: for example, there are significant differences in perspective among the different specialist units of aid agencies, and views at field level do not necessarily echo those at HQ.

- The Policy's perspective on multiple outcomes (across education, social protection, nutrition, HGSF etc) has the effect of multiplying the number of relevant stakeholders, both globally and at country level. This has direct implications for the scale and complexity of communication and coordination tasks. At country level, in particular, this is potentially very demanding for CO staff. Figure 2 is a schematic (and simplified) illustration of this complexity.

- WFP's general reputation has risen in recent years, and there is considerable awareness of its new strategic orientations. At the same time, in some quarters, WFP is burdened with a reputation that is out of date with current practice, and is often informed by biases against food aid and a lack of understanding of WFP's current operations. Stakeholder analysis suggests that aid agencies (including WFP's funders and its peers) are sceptical of new WFP initiatives which tend to be viewed as 'mission creep' (or as the re-labelling of familiar approaches). They are aware that WFP does not have core funding and perceive it as keen to capture new funding streams.

40.   Stakeholder views have informed all aspects of the evaluation, and are particularly reported against EQ6 and EQ7 in Section 2.2 below.

Figure 2 Multiple outcomes, multiple stakeholders
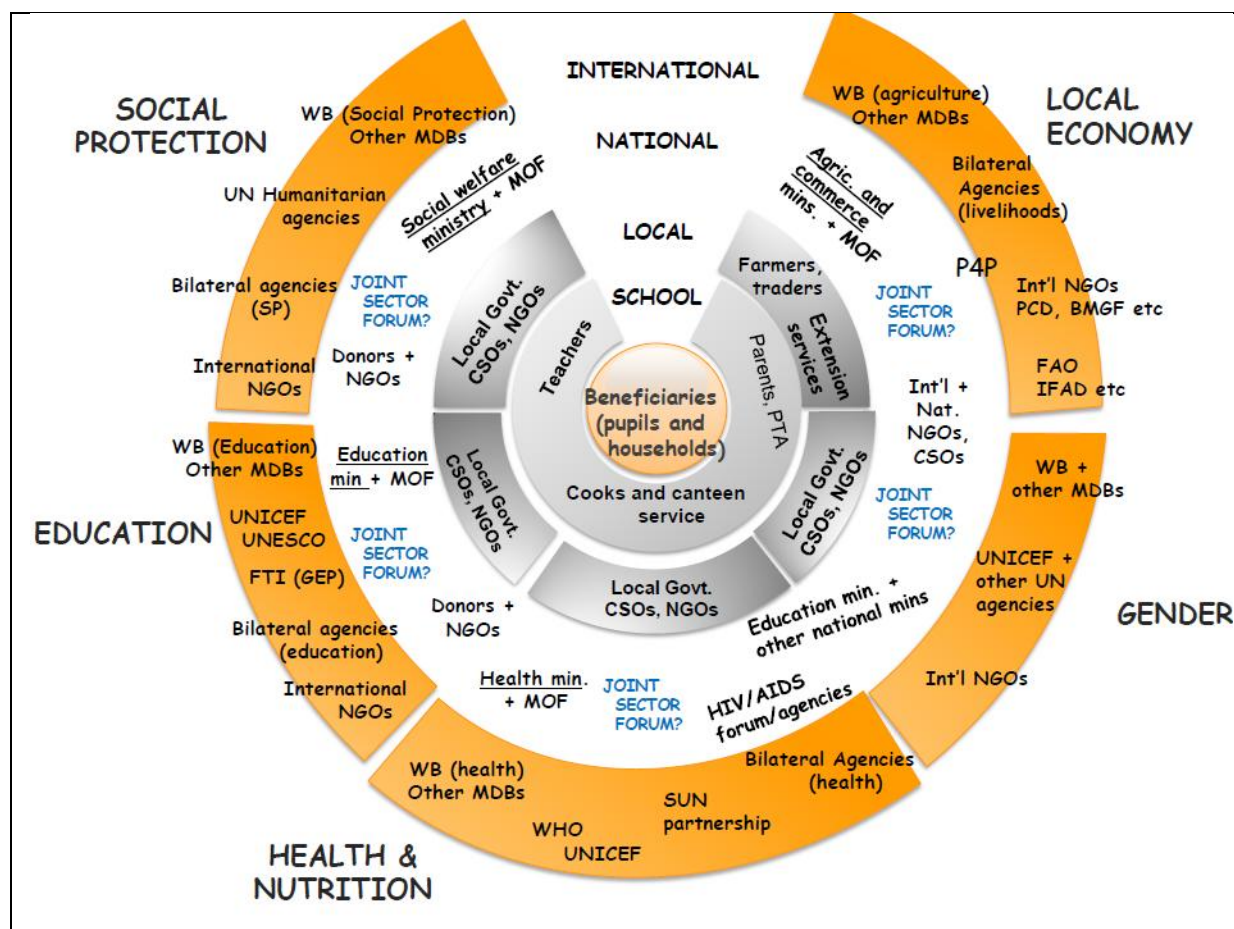
Activities to Implement the Policy

41.   This section provides an overview of activities to implement the policy; the results of these activities are considered in the next chapter.

42.   Responsibilities for implementation are distributed across WFP, from its senior management at HQ, to regional bureaus and country offices. However, the pivotal roles are played by the school feeding sections of the policy and programme departments at HQ (respectively designated PSS and ODXP).

43.   The SF Policy itself did not include an implementation plan, although some elements were implicit. But, as Annex F shows, the Concept Note (WFP, 2009zg), the Implementation Approach (WFP, 2010p) and the Implementation Update (WFP, 2011zb) provided progressively more articulated descriptions of an implementation strategy. For clarity we describe the implementation activities through the lenses of these later documents, but it is important to remember that implementation plans were not so systematically laid out in prospect.

44.   It was left to the Concept Note to spell out three objectives for the SF Policy: (a) improved SF quality, (b) wider SF coverage, and (c) effective capacity for school

feeding. The Implementation Approach links three pillars of implementation (implementation support, strategic thought leadership, and global partnership, advocacy and fund-raising) to these objectives, as shown in Figure 3 below. In practice, there are several cross-overs between the three pillars, but the broad distinction is helpful. A draft results matrix 2010-2012 was attached to the Implementation Approach, but was not referred to in the Implementation Update.

45.   The Implementation Update, however, is more specific about the SF Policy objectives:

In line with this policy, WFP seeks to support national governments with a view to achieving:

a) **improved quality of school feeding** by increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of implementation: programmes must be targeted, nutritious, cost-effective and use locally produced foods to the extent possible;

b) **wider coverage**, especially of girls, by scaling up school feeding to reach as many hungry schoolchildren as possible;

c) **sustainability** by aiming to establish stable funding and budgeting; needs-based, nutritious, cost-effective programmes; sound implementation arrangements such as local procurement and links with agriculture and local development; and sound partnerships, coordination and community ownership. (WFP, 2011zb, emphasis added)

Figure 3   School Feeding Policy Objectives and Implementation Approach
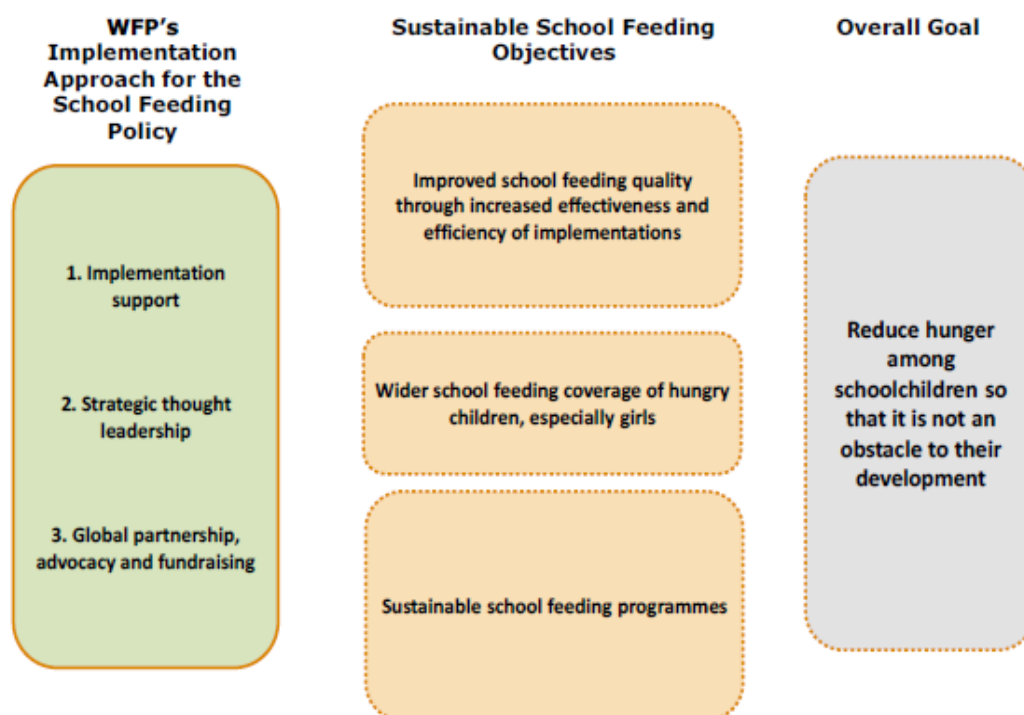
Source: WFP, 2010p, Figure 1 "Approach to School Feeding".

Figure 4   The Four-Stage Process to Develop National SF Programmes

1.Respond to demand/enable	2. Assess and build knowledge	3. Appraise and design	4.Launch and implement
High-level consultations • Buy-in • School feeding role in national development strategy clarified **Partnerships at country level** • World Bank agreements • Agreements with other partners as needed	**Analyses and assessments at country level** 1. Needs and coverage analysis 2. Investment case 3. Cost analyses 4. Quality standards assessment 5. Stakeholders workshop **Workshop** • Assessment and analytical work discussed • Ownership at government level enhanced • Strengthened coordination mechanism • Roadmap for transition to sustainable school feeding • Alternatives school feeding models identified	**Design of country school feeding programme** 6. School feeding sustainability strategy 7. School feeding modality options analysis • Technical assistance to governments to design national school feeding programme • WFP and/or government school feeding programmes designed in line with overall country strategy for sustainable school feeding and quality standards **Country study field visits** **South-South cooperation** **Memorandum of Understanding signed by government and main stakeholders**	**Monitor implementation of new programmes** **Programme managers trained** **Backstop and coaching in country**

Source: WFP, 2011zb, Figure 2.

46.   The document notes a continuing direct role for WFP in school feeding, particularly where capacity is weak, but emphasises a "new approach to create a new generation of school feeding programmes". It presents a stylised "four-stage process" for the development of such programmes (as depicted in Figure 4 above).

47.   The Implementation Approach and Implementation Update describe key elements of the implementation strategy, including:

- The development of tools and guides to support the new approach (see Annex J, Note 1 for an overview).

- Consultation and dissemination within WFP.

- Support to COs through technical missions and advice at relevant stages of the programme cycle.

- Continuation of the partnerships with the World Bank and PCD.

- A programme of advocacy and fund-raising at international level.[35]

- Focus on pilot countries (in partnership with the WB and PCD[36]). The pilot countries – selected on the basis of their potential to demonstrate the new approach successfully – were Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Haiti, Kenya,

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[35] Advocacy by WFP and the World Bank seems to have influenced EFA High Level Group communiqués in 2010 and 2011 which made positive references to school feeding.

[36] Collaborating in Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Mali.

Laos, Malawi, Mali, and Mozambique. At the same time the new approach would be gradually mainstreamed into WFP school feeding programmes as they are reviewed or developed.[37]

- Promotion of South-South collaboration and cross-country learning (including the establishment, in collaboration with the Government of Brazil, of a school feeding centre of excellence in Brasilia – see Box 5 below).

- Ongoing research work, including the impact evaluations managed by WFP OE (on the latter see Annex I).

Box 5   The Centre of Excellence in Brazil

The "WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger" was established in Brasilia in 2011, with initial funding from the Brazilian government. It aims to help national governments develop their capacity to run effective school feeding services by:

- supporting cross-country learning through visits to countries with mature school meal programmes;

- acting as a global source of information on school feeding; and

- providing technical support to governments establishing and developing school feeding programmes.

The centre is the latest phase of cooperation between WFP and Brazil, and its first director is a former head of the Brazilian school feeding programme.

WFP's school feeding portfolio

48.   In recent years WFP school feeding (school meals, biscuits and take home rations) has reached over 20m children annually, almost half of them girls.[38]   In 2009, when the SF Policy was introduced, WFP invested around US$ 475m (14% of budget) on school feeding. Figure 5 shows the breakdown of SF by programme categories and by modalities (school meals, biscuits and take-home rations), while Map 1 below shows the global spread of WFP school feeding in 2010, (for additional data see Annex H).

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[37] The Implementation Approach results framework gives target numbers of countries to be brought into the new approach each year, but this is not mentioned in the Implementation Update.

[38] WFP Annual Report for 2010.

Figure 5   Operations by Programme Category and Modality
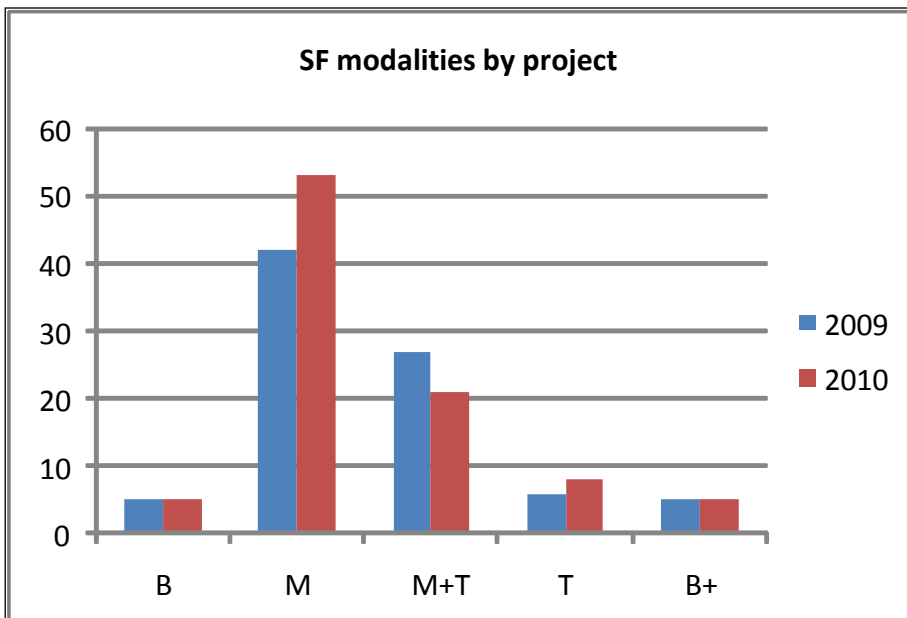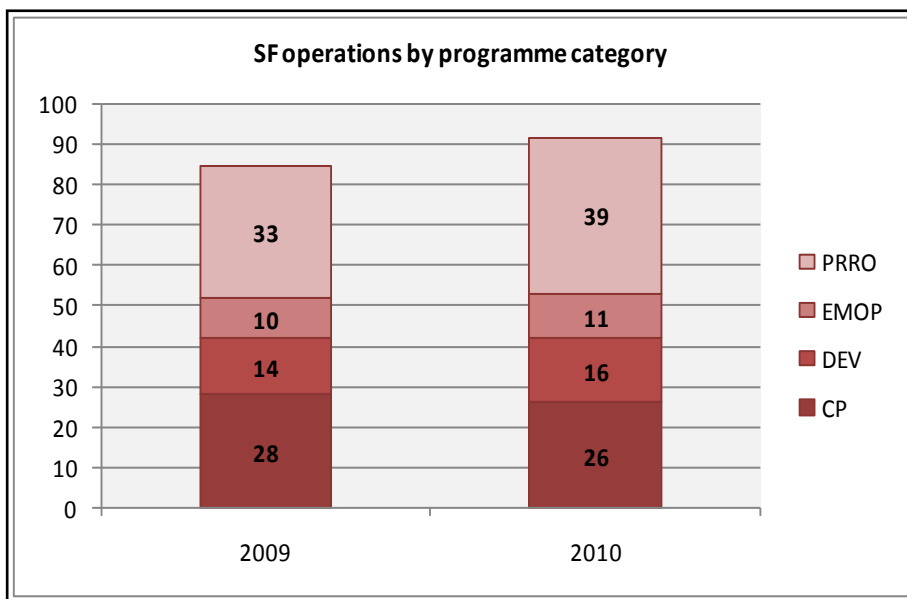
Key: B = High Energy Biscuits; M = on-site meals; T = Take Home Rations

Map 1   WFP School Feeding Beneficiaries 2010
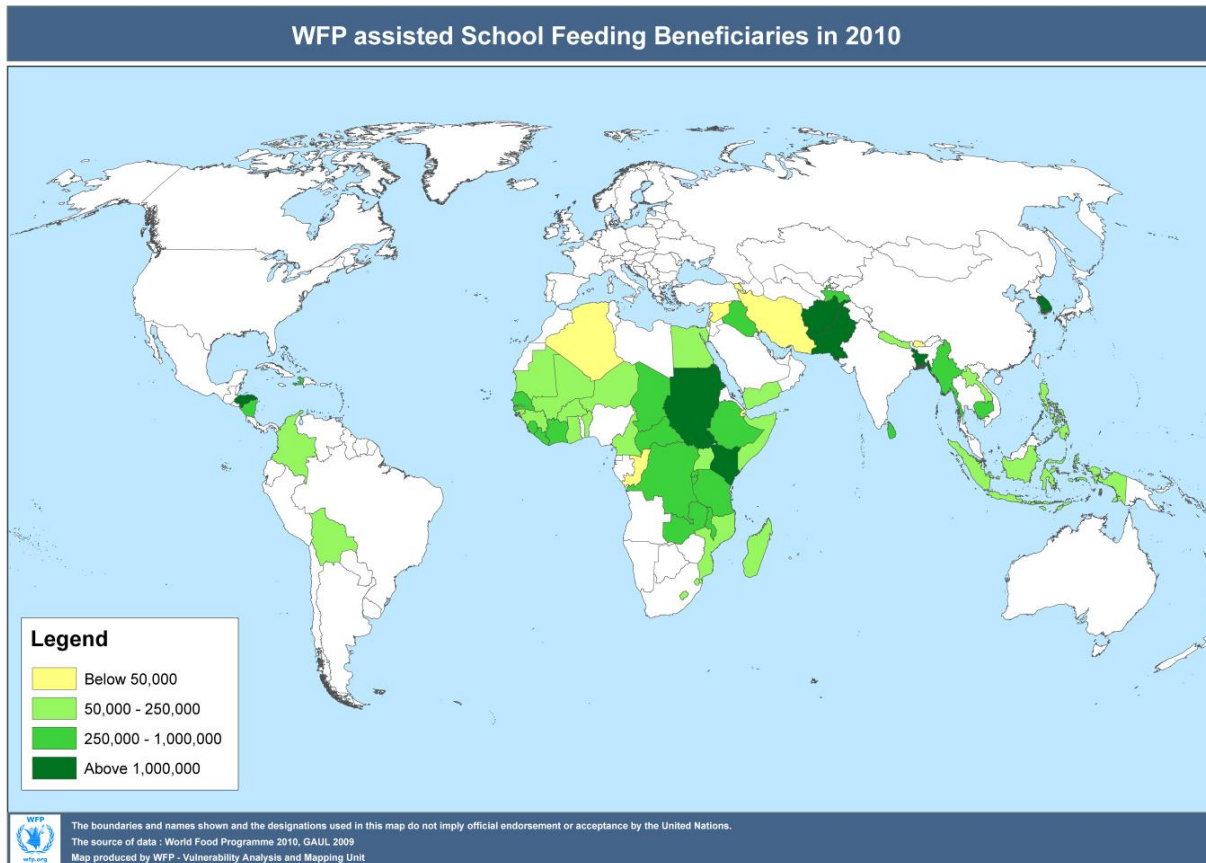
2. Evaluation Findings

2.1   Quality of the Policy

49.   This section considers the quality of the Policy, as articulated, in order to understand whether it was at the outset designed to attain best results. Its implementation and results are considered subsequently.

50.   As explained in section 1.3 above, the Policy approved in November 2009 has to be understood in context, as part of a policy process; Annex F notes key documents that help to explain the origins and purposes of the Policy, and its subsequent interpretation in practice.

Clarity and Internal Consistency

EQ 2: *Is the policy clear and internally consistent?*

51.   Throughout, we try to distinguish between the ultimate purposes of school feeding, and the more immediate purposes of the SF Policy. In many ways the SF Policy is a very articulate document. It was rightly seen by many Board members as much clearer, more cogent and more specific than the 2008 draft. But the document is not completely clear about the purposes of articulating the policy, or about what differences in WFP behaviour will be brought about by its adoption.

52.   As noted in ¶31 above, most of the document serves two purposes: (a) to make the case for school feeding in general, based on a conceptual framework that draws from recent research and other evidence; (b) to describe (or prescribe) WFP's role in achieving SF objectives. More care in distinguishing between generic school feeding objectives, on the one hand, and the specific objectives of WFP's policy, on the other, would have enhanced both the clarity and the internal consistency of the document.

53.   There is a tension between the advocacy role of the document (persuading the Board and wider stakeholders of the legitimacy of school feeding and of WFP's role in supporting it) and its role as corporate guidance for WFP. The advocacy tends to dominate. Thus the logic model presented is one that articulates the generic operations of school feeding. The Policy provides a "vision",[39] but it is left to the Concept Note (WFP, 2009zg) to provide the logic model that spells out the link between this vision (goal) and corporate objectives for WFP (see Figure 6 below). We understand that there was a deliberate decision to put forward detailed implementation plans at a later stage,[40] but both the purpose of the policy document and its corporate implications for WFP would have been clearer if goals and objectives as depicted in Figure 6 had been spelled out. (Figure 7 below shows a more recent, and very helpful, elaboration.)

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[39] "WFP's vision is to reduce hunger among school children so that it is not an obstacle to their development." (¶35)

[40] Indeed, early drafts included an implementation plan, but the School Feeding Unit was advised to omit it. See additional discussion under "practicability", ¶83ff below, and in Section 3.2.

Figure 6   Policy objectives and goal from Concept Note logframe
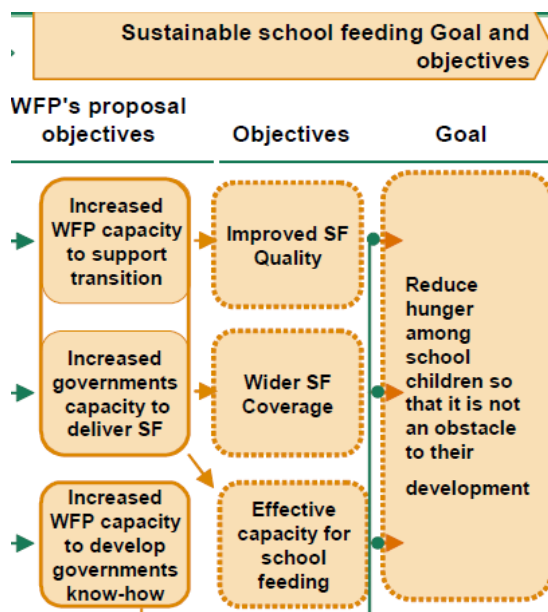
Source: Concept Note (WFP, 2009zg – the full logframe is reproduced as Annex C, Box C2).

Figure 7   WFP School Feeding: Vision and Objectives
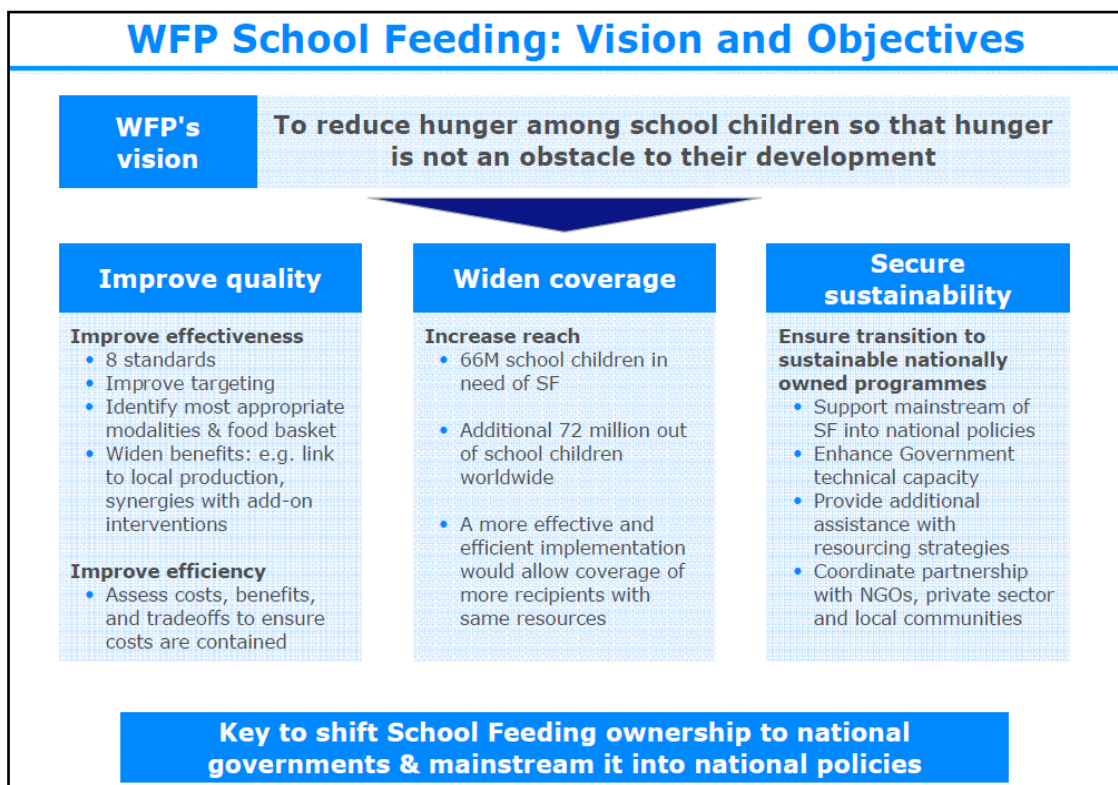
Source: March 2011 workshop, document #3

54.   Similarly, the Policy attempted both to capture existing good practice and to propose new points of emphasis for WFP's future engagement with school feeding. The school feeding unit subsequently drew attention to three "elements of novelty" in the Policy: (i) framing school feeding as a safety net intervention with multiple

outcomes; (ii) working closer with Governments; and (iii) introducing eight standards for quality and sustainability. Again, highlighting these points of novelty more directly in the policy document itself would have enhanced the clarity of its messages.

Relevance: Policy Objectives

EQ 1: *How relevant is the policy? Are its objectives appropriate … ?*

55.   It was relevant to have an explicit policy (not least to promote goal alignment among stakeholders). There were good reasons to reflect on WFP's experience and practice, and to provide more systematic guidance for WFP's future engagement with SF. It was timely in responding to WFP's evolving corporate objectives (food assistance) and to the prominence SF attained as a response to the 2008 food crisis. It was a useful step towards codifying much existing good practice, as well as adapting policy to take account of new circumstances and emerging evidence.

56.   The main directions mapped out by the policy were relevant (it was aligned on appropriate goals), but the policy did not address them all as well as it could have. Broadening understanding of SF roles, and in particular framing SF as a safety net intervention with multiple outcomes, was relevant, but also challenging. There is no doubt that SF can have multiple benefits, but dealing with multiple outcomes (hence multiple possible objectives for SF operations) is complex. The various potential benefits are not automatically realised in practice (this point emerges strongly from the evaluations reviewed in Annex I), and there are frequently trade-offs between objectives in the way SF operations are designed (for example, maintaining nutritional standards may limit coverage or the ability to rely on local procurement). Moreover, as noted in Section 1.2 above, international thinking has been evolving quite rapidly in several of the fields to which the Policy links SF, and it is therefore a challenge to ensure that the Policy stays relevant and up to date.

Box 6   School feeding as a social protection intervention

The idea of linking school feeding to social protection is not new, but it is demanding:

> One example of a social protection intervention that can contribute to longer-term poverty reduction goals is school feeding schemes that provide learners with free meals at school. Because school meals serve two functions – providing an immediate consumption transfer to children who are often malnourished, and encouraging children from poor households to attend school even during difficult times – school feeding schemes can be characterised as serving both protective and promotive social protection objectives. However, making this case requires demonstrating that education generates higher incomes for school-leavers, that school feeding improves educational outcomes, and that school feeding is pro-poor.

Source: Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004. The authors add that education per se is not just an investment in an individual's future, it is also an investment in a country's future – leading to higher levels of economic growth etc.

57.   Framing school feeding under an overarching theme of social protection or safety nets is a case in point (see Box 6 above). The SF Policy does not follow the idea through sufficiently. It focuses mainly on the "value transfer" aspect of SF, and does

not adequately bring out the promotive aspects. Nor does it link SF sufficiently to the concept of social protection as an overarching system, within which it would be one among many possible interventions (in practice management and resourcing of SF as depicted in the Policy remain tightly linked to the education sector). It is also depicted in a very WFP-centric way (the Policy repeatedly refers to SF as the platform for other activities and benefits), and the radical implications for WFP of a social protection approach are not brought out.

58. The recent evaluation of WFP's role in social protection and safety nets (Majewski et al, 2011), by contrast, argues that shifting towards social protection requires fundamental changes for WFP at all levels: in how it operates, objectives of its programmes, and how it works with others. Majewski et al conclude that simply relabeling projects and programmes as social protection will negatively affect WFP's credibility. Because WFP capacity, consistent funding and sustainability are all problematic, partnerships are critical for WFP to contribute to national systems, and they recommend that WFP should focus its social protection efforts on comparative advantages, develop WFP organisational and staff capacity, contribute to the development of national social protection systems and continuously improve adherence to SP standards of good practice.

59. While the broad directions of the Policy were appropriate, additional issues are raised by the consideration of its evidence base, discussed next.

Relevance: Evidence Base for the Policy

EQ 1: *How relevant is the policy? ... is it soundly based on evidence?*

60. The Policy is strongly evidence-based in its approach. It highlights the evidential work (most notably *Rethinking School Feeding*) that fed into its preparation, and it offers evidential support for each of the school feeding outcomes it claims. Here the evaluation comments on (a) whether the policy deployed available evidence accurately and fairly; and (b) whether subsequent evidence bears out the policy.

61. The evaluation reviewed the Policy's deployment of evidence, and also surveyed more recent literature on its principal themes; stakeholder views on the Policy's claims were noted, and the evaluation also paid special attention to the impact studies and other SF evaluations that are reviewed in Annex I. There are some interesting nuances in recent findings, some of which have implications for the value and design of SF programmes, but in general they confirm previous findings (and previous caveats). However, the Policy does tend to cite positive findings about the potential benefits of SF without adequately stressing the other factors on which those benefits also depend. We illustrate this below, for each of the main themes, and then comment on the presentation of evidence as a whole.

62. Many of the potential educational effects of school feeding are well-documented. There is no doubt that SF can act as an incentive for enrolment and attendance. It can be targeted effectively on girls, through on-site feeding and THR. But the fact that such effects have often been demonstrated does not mean that they

are inevitable (as illustrated by the contrasting findings in impact evaluations – see Box 7 below).

63.   Effects further along the causal chain are more controversial. Attendance may be necessary for learning to take place, but it is never sufficient. Learning depends on the presence and quality of teachers, together with other aspects of the learning environment, and there may be little return on investment if children drop out early. School feeding may have undesirable or paradoxical effects on the education system as a whole. For example, it may exacerbate overcrowding and pressure on inadequate facilities. Those for whom the SF incentive is powerful are likely to come from educationally impoverished households, and may thus pull down average test scores.[41] It has been empirically demonstrated that short term hunger can impair concentration and cognitive performance, but impact evaluations have found it much more difficult to demonstrate a corresponding performance improvement attributable to school feeding. (This is not wholly surprising, in view of the complementary factors that contribute to learning.)

Box 7   Insights from SF Evaluations in Uganda, Burkina Faso and Laos[42]

These three impact evaluations were initiated in 2005 as part of WB and WFP collaboration. All sought to compare different SF modalities (school meals and THR) in the same context. Among their findings:

- The northern Uganda study did not find a significant effect on gross or net enrolment, although it did find small positive effects on afternoon attendance and drop-out rates.

- It also found no impact on body mass index or on the overall prevalence of anaemia. However it did find a significant reduction in anaemia prevalence amongst girls aged 10–13 and significant benefits for younger siblings from the school meals programme (there were suggestions that the latter effect arose both from pre-schoolers participating directly in the school meal and from children at home receiving more food when an older sibling was eating at school).

- The Burkina Faso study found a definite effect on girls' enrolment (for both school meals and THR) but accompanied by a complex pattern of reallocation of household labour, and no substantial effects on academic performance.

- The study in the Lao PDR[43] found very little conclusive evidence that SF affected enrolment or the nutritional status of the population. It noted more positive findings in Uganda and Burkina Faso, and speculated that there might have been more effect if there had been better targeting or fuller take-up of the SF programmes.

64.   Two prominent students of school feeding recently reviewed the current state of knowledge. On educational benefits they provide a reminder that "FFE programs can only be effective in education terms if combined with quality education programs." On education and school feeding they conclude:

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[41] See the Ethiopia impact evaluation (Annex I).

[42] See Annex I.

[43] This study's findings were published after the SF Policy was approved (see Buttenheim et al, 2010).

> Do the results imply that FFE is the best way to use funds for education? ... the quick answer is likely no. However ... the answer is ...nuanced. FFE is not a substitute for a well-organized education system and teacher performance. However, there is extensive evidence that FFE can complement a good education program. So although FFE may not be the best education response it may be an important element in achieving an effective education system. (Alderman & Bundy, 2011)

65.   On nutrition, there is a significant difference in tone between *Rethinking School Feeding* and the SF Policy. The former identifies social protection and education benefits as the primary drivers of support for school feeding[44] (citing evidence that "the most cost-effective nutrition interventions are those that target the first 24 months of life, and those that promote maternal nutrition and thus intrauterine growth" (Bundy et al, 2009a, chapter 3). The Policy does not dispute this analysis, but highlights the potential for school feeding programmes to play an important role not only by alleviating child hunger in school, but in enhancing the nutritional status of children particularly when the food is fortified with micro-nutrients (¶15–18 of the Policy); potential cognitive and hence educational benefits are also mentioned in this context.[45]

66.   There is indeed strong evidence that SF can have such benefits, but, *Rethinking School Feeding* was careful to note that while a large number of studies agree on the direction of effects, their scale is less clear.[46] Kristjansson et al, 2007, comparing 18 SF studies across 9 high income and 9 lower income countries, concluded that the magnitude of benefits depends on factors such as the amount of energy and other nutrients provided by the meal/snack, baseline nutritional status, conditions for learning in the classroom, timing of meal/snack, substitution and social environment at home, age of the child, and compliance. The authors concluded that school meals may have a number of small benefits for children but that it is unrealistic to expect that school meals or any other single intervention can be a panacea for all of the deprivation of children living in poverty. Nevertheless, school meal programmes should be well-designed, and provide sufficient energy, protein, fat and micronutrient content for children's age and baseline nutritional status.[47]

67.   A more recent review has explored the impact of SFPs on nutritional, health, and educational outcomes of school-age children in developing countries. It covered

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[44] "Defining Objectives in Practice: Safety Net, Education, or Nutrition? In today's world, the primary drivers for increased support for school feeding are the benefits for social protection and for education." (Bundy et al, 2009a, chapter 3)

[45] And *Rethinking School Feeding* acknowledges:

> Well-designed school feeding programs, which include micronutrient fortification and deworming, can provide nutritional benefits and should complement and not compete with nutrition programs for younger children, which remain a clear priority for targeting malnutrition overall. (Bundy et al, 2009a, Executive Summary)

[46] They are also rather difficult to measure routinely (because of the need for anthropometric measures and possibly invasive tests of nutritional status). The review of WFP evaluations (see Annex I) showed that in practice SF has been treated as an educational rather than a nutrition intervention.

[47] I.e. interventions should be nutrition-sensitive even if they are not nutrition-focused.

peer-reviewed journal articles and reviews published in the past 20 years. The analysis of the articles revealed relatively consistent positive effects of school feeding in its different modalities on energy intake, micronutrient status, school enrolment, and attendance of the children participating in SFPs compared to non-participants. However, the positive impact of school feeding on growth, cognition, and academic achievement of school-aged children receiving SFPs compared to non-school-fed children was less conclusive (Jomaa et al, 2011).[48]

68.   Two threads of recent evidence have tended to strengthen the nutritional relevance of SF. These concern evidence on spill-overs (favourable externalities), and lifecycle evidence about the potential influence of SF on adolescent girls. Box 7 above includes an example of positive spill-overs (the northern Uganda case), and also some evidence of significant effects on girls' nutrition. This is supported by the World Bank's evaluation of social protection measures which finds, inter alia, that:

> CCTs and education fee waivers, **by keeping adolescent girls in school longer**, seem to encourage them to adopt safer sexual practices and delay early marriage and childbirth. (IEG, 2011, emphasis added)

69.   Alderman and Bundy offer the following updated verdict:

> Do the results reviewed here imply that FFE is among the best investments in nutrition? Despite new evidence indicating favorable externalities to siblings of students, and the clear benefit in addressing hunger in schoolchildren, the fair answer to this question is no. While FFE can provide iron and other key micronutrients, these programs are not designed to address the most critical nutritional constraints in low income settings, simply because they are not targeted at the most vulnerable period in child development, which is between conception and two years of age. (Alderman & Bundy, 2011)

70.   Viewing school feeding as a social protection measure does not so much bring additional benefits into play as look at the same effects in a different way (e.g. highlighting the significance of the value transfer which provides the incentive for increased enrolment, or reduced drop-out in times of stress, and investigating the pattern of consequential effects at household level).

71.   The Policy drew attention to two very important pieces of "pragmatic" evidence: that countries tend to maintain SF systems as they develop, and that SF has often shown an ability for rapid scale up (a major lesson of the 2008 crisis). These factors suggest that SF should indeed be taken into account when considering the range of available social protection measures. On the other hand, the Policy tends to understate the difficulties in the way of SF being seen as the optimal intervention. SF is likely to be comparatively vulnerable because of high administrative costs, and limited targeting. Its strengths may include an ability to scale up, and low opportunity cost if resources are tied to food aid (but WFP is rightly seeking to make such resources more fungible).

72.   The World Bank's evaluation of safety nets observes: "the world of safety nets is extremely dynamic, and new knowledge and new practices are constantly

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[48] Although published after the Policy was adopted, this review (with its 20-year retrospective) draws mainly on material already available in 2009, and echoes the conclusions of earlier syntheses.

evolving." and "the task of comparing policy options is complicated by SSNs' multiple objectives, which rule out simple rates-of-return analyses" (IEG, 2011). Our discussion of international standards (¶80ff) includes a review of the Policy's consistency with emerging international standards for social protection (see Table 1), which is also relevant to the way in which evidence was presented in the Policy.

73.   There is an important difference between regarding SF as a plausible part of a social protection system, and judging it to be an optimal social protection intervention. This is reflected in Alderman and Bundy's updated assessment:

> We review some recent evidence on school feeding and make the case that the strongest direct consequence of school feeding is best viewed as a form of an income transfer to assist low income households, although there is also a case to be made for a complementary role in education. As such, a primary role is to reduce current poverty with the additional benefit of promoting the accumulation of human capital by jointly influencing education and health.
>
> Do the results imply that FFE is a plausible candidate for a social protection investment on a par with CCTs? Here the fair answer appears to be: quite likely. FFE can increase human capital investments while also providing support to poor households. Thus they serve as a support to current poverty reduction while making the need for future transfers and assistance less likely. The dual objectives of raising current consumption while promoting investments, however, make it difficult to compare outcomes of either CCTs or FFE with direct investments. (Alderman & Bundy, 2011)

74.   The dimension of local economic benefits is the hardest to bring within the "social protection" framework, though it can be reconciled with WFP's broader mandate. It is certainly true that food procurement can be stimulus to local agriculture, that there are conspicuous examples (including the USA and Brazil) where this has contributed to the development of established national SF systems, and that such collateral benefits can bring political support which reinforces the sustainability of SF. However, the Policy tends to oversimplify the mechanisms through which SF may be able to contribute to local economic development – a point which we develop further in the discussion of practicability (see Box 8 below).

75.   On the combined benefits of school feeding, the SF Policy makes much of the potential for the different possible benefits of school feeding to reinforce each other. It includes the following claim:

> **School feeding, a sound investment:** A joint cost-benefit analysis undertaken in 2009 by The Boston Consulting Group and WFP has compared, in Kenya and Laos, costs related to the design, implementation and delivery of school feeding with the benefits arising from the three major school feeding outcomes: increased education, improved nutrition and health, and value transfer to the beneficiaries. Findings from this study revealed that school feeding improves enrolment, attendance and cognition, decreases drop out and morbidity and enhances disease awareness. These lead to increased wages and a longer productive life which together lead to increased lifetime earnings. School meals and take-home rations translate into savings at household level, which can result in increased returns on investment. The analysis also highlighted the reinforcing and multiplication effects between the various outcomes which make school feeding a unique intervention. The study points to two conclusions: Investing in school feeding creates significant economic value; and school feeding is a unique safety net driven by the interdependency between various outcomes, and combines short-, mid- and long-term benefits. (WFP, 2009q,¶32)

76.   There is indeed evidence that different possible effects of school feeding can reinforce each other. However, the "Investment Case" is a hypothetical modelling exercise presented as fact ("this study revealed that...") and as such is very misleading. The authors of the Investment Case have been careful to describe it as a model, and as an advocacy tool, not as empirical research (see Annex F, Figure F1). There is indeed evidence for each of the links in the chain of causality on which it is based, but the overwhelming weight of evidence is that most of the links in the causality chain are rather fragile; for a low income country to achieve the results portrayed by the model would require a "perfect storm" of complementary inputs. Moreover, a large part of the benefit depicted comes from the "value transfer" component (for which there are other options than school feeding), while the combination of up-front costs and long term benefits means that it takes many years for the benefit/cost ratio to turn positive.

77.   Presenting the model in this way also obscures two points that ought to be emphasised. First, available evidence on the costs, and the cost-effectiveness, of school feeding is conspicuously weak. Costs and cost-effectiveness are at the heart of making choices, and the Policy could have been more emphatic about the importance of addressing cost issues, and of using cost-effectiveness as a criterion not only in the design of SF interventions but also in choosing between SF and other means towards achieving specific outcomes.   Second, the interlinked benefits of school feeding cannot be taken for granted. This is a key finding of the impact evaluations reviewed in Annex I. As the Kenya evaluation puts it:

> There is one overriding conclusion that has been carefully examined and analyzed. It is that the beneficial impacts attributable to school feeding are limited if one attempts to extract school feeding from the larger context of how learning, health, and livelihood outcomes are achieved. School feeding without the appropriate learning environment and family/community support is a weak intervention and its impacts are mostly restricted to food security outcomes. (Finan et al, 2010)

78.   **To summarise:** there is a growing body of evidence about school feeding, and the Policy marshals fluently the evidence that indicates a range of positive effects for SF. But the Policy allows its advocacy to undermine guidance. Advocacy plays up what the positive effects can be. Guidance requires more awareness of the necessary conditions for benefits to be realised, and has to be based on carefully balanced analysis.

Coherence with WFP Strategy and Policies

EQ3: *Is the policy coherent with WFP's strategic plan and other relevant policies?*

79.   The radical organisational changes implied by the Strategic Plan are still being worked through. The SF Policy is thoroughly coherent with the Strategic Plan, both in setting SF in a wider framework of instruments to tackle hunger in the long term, and in its alignment with SO5 – to strengthen the capacities of countries to reduce hunger. All the main directions of the SF policy are anticipated in the strategic plan itself. It is similarly aligned with WFP policies on capacity development and gender, and with WFP commitments on aid effectiveness. The evaluation noted only two areas where the policy might have addressed policy coherence more fully.

80.   First, in relation to gender and nutrition: the Policy highlights the gender implications and opportunities of school feeding, and it is also consistent with existing nutrition policy such as *Food for Nutrition: Mainstreaming Nutrition in WFP* (WFP, 2004d). However the Policy does not refer to the significance of school feeding for adolescent girls.[49] This point was already highlighted in the Strategic Plan which states: "Furthermore, school feeding programmes represent a long-term and sustainable solution to hunger since their impact on education levels, especially those of adolescent girls, will help break the intergenerational cycle of hunger and undernutrition" (WFP, 2008d). It is also embodied in the WFP's adoption of a life-cycle approach to nutrition. For example, a recent "Feeding Minds" publication states:

> Keeping adolescent girls in schools gives them a better education and contributes to raising the age at which they marry or have children. Teenage girls need nourishing food for themselves – and for the day they will become mothers themselves, completing the cycle. (WFP, n.d.-g)

81.   Second, as noted in Section 1.2, ¶23–24, the strategic emphasis on HGSF in WFP has been overtaken by the broader, well-funded, P4P effort. The Policy should have commented directly on the relationship between P4P and HGSF, and its practical implications for the implementation of the SF Policy, but did not do so.

Coherence with International Standards

EQ 4: *Is the policy coherent with international standards?*

82.   Here we consider whether the Policy, as adopted, was well aligned with relevant international standards. The evaluation's principal comments concern alignment with social protection standards, but we first comment briefly on the other themes of the policy:

(a) The Policy was coherent with aid effectiveness standards (as codified by the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action), particularly in the emphasis on supporting government-owned and managed programmes.

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[49] Except for an implicit reference to secondary schools in ¶62.

(b) The Policy was also coherent with international nutrition standards and good practice, both in its implicit link to WFP's own guidelines on the nutritional quality of school meals, and in its advocacy of de-worming, which is in line with WHO advice.

(c) More generally, continued endorsement of the Essential Package shows awareness of complementary factors required to maximise the education, as well as nutrition, benefits of school feeding.

(d) There are no obvious international standards that relate to HGSF.

83. There was an innovative, and commendable, effort to propagate general standards for SF systems. Their use in practice reveals certain strengths and weaknesses in their formulation, which we discuss in the next section (under EQ9).

84. A major innovation of the Policy was to offer social protection as an overarching framework for school feeding. In considering the relevance of the Policy, the evaluation has already noted that this theme was not adequately followed through (see ¶0–55 above). A particular gap, is that the strengths and weaknesses of SF from a social protection perspective are not systematically discussed. International standards (criteria for what constitutes a good safety net system) were referred to in *Rethinking School Feeding*, and in Table 1 below we consider the implications of these criteria for school feeding. It is striking that the Policy itself did not address most of these points. The social protection theme in the Policy was thus, by international standards, rather embryonic. This has implications for the Policy's practicability, which is discussed next.

Table 1   The SF Policy and Standards for Social Protection

Criterion/Definition	Implications for the Policy
Appropriate The programme responds to the particular needs of a country and is customized to the context.	• The appropriateness of SF depends on the specific objectives defined for SF in a particular country, the wider objectives of the education and social protection sectors, and a direct comparison of other available instruments in each sector. This implies high levels of direct engagement with other partners and flexibility on WFP's part.
Adequate The programme should provide full coverage and meaningful benefits to the population it is trying to assist.	• The Policy does not offer any benchmarks to determine whether SF is adequate in social protection terms. There is no doubt that SF can represent a substantial value transfer for poor households, but this may be offset by direct costs and opportunity costs of sending children to school. • Targeting issues are considered as an aspect of equity, below.
Timely and predictable People know what they will receive and when, and receive benefits before or during the time of greatest need.	• Productive safety nets are built on the assumption that a predictable transfer allows the poor to take a risk on a new productive activity such as credit with the knowledge that a portion of consumption is guaranteed (i.e. that part of the budget is taken care of). Consequently, it is key for them to know how much is coming when. SF has a number of factors that threaten predictability including the challenge of maintaining a predictable supply, logistic considerations that may cause delay including the transition to government systems, and the potential variability of local supply for HGSF. • The short term nature of WFP funding and the lack of core funding makes

Criterion/Definition	Implications for the Policy
	social protection engagement a major challenge. This is also a critical challenge for systems and capacity development which, by definition, requires a medium to long term commitment. WFP's overall credibility could be damaged if it is unable to fulfil commitments. • Timing may become an issue in terms of the school year. There is no SF coverage during holidays (unless a boarding school) or "summer" months. This limits SF's effectiveness as a value transfer, especially where the summer break corresponds with the lean/hungry season.
Equitable The programme should provide the same benefits to individuals or households that are equal in all important respects (horizontal equity) and may provide more benefits to the poorest (vertical equity).	• There are inclusion and exclusion aspects to targeting which have implications for using SF as a social protection instrument. If the primary objective is to transfer value to the poorest households, covering all students through a universal SF programme will be a very expensive option compared to targeted cash transfers. There are also concerns that SF does not capture the poorest students who often do not attend school despite the presence of SF for reasons such as the opportunity cost of productive labour and additional hidden expenses such as uniforms, books and transport. And geographical targeting (SF only in the poorest or most food-insecure districts) can also lead to large exclusion errors.[50]
Cost-effective The programme should run efficiently with the minimum resources required to achieve the desired impact, but with sufficient resources to carry out all programme functions well.	• Cost-effectiveness, in comparison to other social protection instruments, is a major challenge for school feeding, given the often high administrative costs of delivering food, and the imprecision of its targeting. • Cost comparisons, though necessary, are complicated by the complex effects of SF (it may have auxiliary effects that the comparator does not have). • A further complication arises in the ways the opportunity costs of SF resources are perceived: e.g. SF will seem less attractive if competing directly within education budgets, but more attractive if external resources for SF are seen as unavailable for other uses.
Incentive-compatible The programme should avoid changing households' behaviour in a negative way, may even encourage positive changes.	• SF as a positive incentive for attendance and retention, and as a targeted incentive for girls through THRs is well articulated in the policy. However, there is little attention to potential negative outcomes such as drawing students to schools beyond their capacity (teachers and infrastructure), of the opportunity cost of investing in SF compared to other education priorities. Utilising SF as a social protection instrument requires attention to potential negative as well as positive effects, based on a good understanding of the political environment and the social protection system as a whole. • A similar point applies in the design of specific SF instruments (cf. some of the unanticipated side-effects noted in the review of evidence above).
Sustainable The programme should be politically and financially sustainable (and not dependent on indefinite donor support).	• This standard links to predictability (see above). There are challenges in ensuring that SF systems are both politically and financially sustainable, but many of the long-term benefits claimed for SF are dependent on the durability of the programme.

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[50] The Policy's frequent reference to SF as a tool to reach "the most vulnerable" is problematic. Most often it is likely to reach only some of the most vulnerable.

Criterion/Definition	Implications for the Policy
Dynamic The programme should evolve over time as the economy grows.	• Implies ongoing involvement in the maintenance and adaption of social protection systems, which is much more demanding (especially on staff) than standard project-focused approaches.
Notes: With one exception, the standards in the first column are adapted from *Rethinking School Feeding* (Bundy et al, 2009a)Table 3.1, which itself credits Grosh et al, 2008. We have added "timely and predictable" – a dimension highlighted in Gentillini, 2005.	

Practicability

EQ 5: *How practicable is the policy?*

85.   An earlier WFP policy evaluation defines practicability as "the extent to which a policy is workable and can be achieved" (WFP, 2008a, ¶41). Clarity and internal consistency obviously contribute to the practicability of a policy (see the earlier discussion). Also: does the policy provide sufficient guidance to those responsible for its implementation? does the organisation have, or can it acquire, the competences required to implement the policy? does the policy set reasonable expectations for what the organisation can accomplish? The experience of implementing the Policy is reviewed in Section 2.2 below: at this point we discuss whether the Policy itself was sufficiently oriented towards practicability.

86.   Based on observations from internal and external stakeholders, as well as from an examination of the internal logic of the Policy, the evaluation finds that practicability is an area of relative weakness in the Policy. Several factors contribute: (a) the inherent complexity of the Policy; (b) the extent to which the Policy requires new patterns of behaviour by WFP; (c) weaknesses in the underlying logic model; and (d) insufficient attention to the implementation strategy for the Policy.

87.   While it was relevant to highlight the multiple potential outcomes of school feeding, this perspective greatly complicates the operational tasks of WFP staff, particularly at country level. It implies that, both strategically and in respect of any prospective school feeding operation, they must consider the multiple dimensions of social protection, education, nutrition and HGSF, and also the balance between direct implementation by WFP and building up the government's capacity to manage its national SF system. WFP has a long tradition of considering educational and nutrition perspectives, but other dimensions are much less familiar, and the consideration of so many dimensions multiplies the number of stakeholders with which WFP should consult and collaborate (cf. Figure 2 above). Of course, the role for a policy document is to set broad directions, on which more detailed implementation guidelines may build. However, by exalting all the potential benefits of SF, the Policy runs the risk of over-simplifying, providing a reference point under which all SF objectives can be justified, without emphasising that in most cases SF operations, if they are to be efficient and effective, will need to focus on a subset of the possible objectives.

88.   Moreover, the Policy (in line with the Strategic Plan and SO5) envisages a different orientation in much of WFP's behaviour: many interviewees commented on

the different skills required for advisory and capacity development work, and on the demands on staff time for participating in country level dialogues. They also noted that WFP's incentive structures and financial models have not traditionally supported such an approach, and that the Policy therefore implies radical organisational change.

89.   We noted earlier that the Policy does not distinguish clearly enough between the overall potential benefits of school feeding, and the contributions towards such benefits that can reasonably be expected from WFP.[51] However, such a distinction is a vital first step towards setting practical organisational objectives for WFP. Box 8 below illustrates this point, using the example of HGSF. Similar points apply to other themes (as discussed above in relation to the evidence base).

Box 8   The Logic and Practicality of WFP support for HGSF

Conceptually, linking school feeding procurement to enhanced and sustainable incomes for small-scale farmers is an attractive but also a complex proposition. There are multiple factors, relationships and potential strategies to consider (Sumberg & Sabates-Wheeler, 2010). A stable market is an obvious advantage for producers. But it must offer an attractive price – which, conversely, WFP cannot allow to exceed prices in alternative (international) markets. Furthermore, farmers must have access to appropriately priced inputs and, in some cases, credit. Their production technologies must achieve appropriate quantities and quality of produce on an environmentally sustainable basis. If they do not, a long and complex series of interventions may be needed to achieve this. Storage and transport technologies and facilities must ensure that quantities, quality and prices are not adversely affected for producers, buyers or consumers between field and school. There is therefore no automatic connection between a decision to promote 'local' school feeding procurement (whatever 'local' is assumed to mean) and the achievement of agricultural development and enhanced smallholder livelihoods.

The policy speaks of creating "synergies between school feeding programmes and other social and agricultural programmes". This automatically makes WFP dependent on the presence and performance of other agencies for the achievement of the benefits that are claimed for local procurement strategies. Six decades of global experience have shown that agricultural development initiatives fail more often than they succeed. Efforts to intervene in agricultural marketing systems have a particularly poor record. The policy therefore appears to underestimate the practical challenges of achieving positive impacts on the local economy.

Because it says virtually nothing about them, the policy must be judged unrealistic as to timescale, the demands for resources and the required changes in behaviour by and within WFP, which has very limited resources to tackle the challenges implicit in building "synergies between school feeding programmes and other social and agricultural programmes".

90.   **To summarise:** In view of the complexity of the Policy, and the extent of the envisaged changes in WFP approach and behaviour, the Policy would have been substantially enhanced as a practical document if it had included:

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[51] The logic model annexed to the Policy exemplifies this: it addresses the overall logic of school feeding, rather than the logic of WFP's engagement.

- more acknowledgement of the scale of the challenges that would be faced in adopting these new directions, and of the need for prioritisation of objectives in specific cases;

- more systematic discussion of the realistic scope of WFP responsibility for SF outcomes; and

- a clear statement of WFP-specific objectives, together with an outline of the main activities envisaged to pursue those objectives.

2.2   Policy Results

What results could be expected?

91.   This section identifies the results of the SF Policy, prior to discussion in Section 2.3 below of the reasons for these results. Different levels of result are possible. A first level would be the immediate effects of activities to disseminate and implement the Policy (Section 1.3 above). A second level would be the consequential changes in WFP's portfolio of SF operations. These would be linked to the objectives of improved SF quality, expanded SF coverage, and sustainable SF programmes (objectives which were made more explicit in subsequent implementation plans than in the Policy itself). Ultimately, there would be changes at the level of impact on beneficiaries of SF. It is recognised (see Annex C) that it is too soon to expect changes at impact level to be visible, and the evaluation therefore focuses on the earlier levels of results.

92.   This section is heavily dependent on qualitative judgements, for several reasons. As we discuss below, quantitative data (e.g. on WFP's portfolio) are limited. In any case, they require qualitative interpretation, since implementation of the Policy may have an ambiguous effect on such data. For example, the policy envisages an expansion of SF – but whether there is a net increase in the number of children fed by WFP will depend also on progress in building up governments' roles in SF, another objective of the Policy. Moreover, the Policy envisages change in some areas, but continuity in others: it is important to consider both aspects. And for each EQ it is relevant to consider what results would reasonably be expected at this stage in the implementation of the Policy.

Awareness of the policy

EQ 6: *Are relevant stakeholders aware of the policy, and committed to its implementation?*

93.   The evaluation's findings draw heavily on its extensive interviews with stakeholders (see Annex G). The following broad patterns were apparent:

(a) Amongst members of the Executive Board, there was high awareness of the Policy. For many, the Implementation Update presented to the June 2011 EB meeting (WFP, 2010zb) was an important elaboration on the original Policy document, clarifying what the Policy actually means in practice. The Update appears to have reinforced support for the Policy. Some agencies acknowledge that they have become less sceptical of SF and of WFP's role in SF.

(b) Amongst major aid agencies (including those represented on the Board) the pattern at HQ level was mixed. People who had very direct dealings with WFP (e.g. the Board Members, and those directly collaborating with WFP over SF) were likely to be aware of the Policy in a general sense, but few of them saw it as a regular reference document. Amongst other agency staff (e.g. specialists in education and nutrition), there was much less awareness of the Policy, or of its specific messages. However, there was wide awareness of the recent strategic shifts in WFP, and its efforts to become more broadly engaged in food assistance and in capacity development. This awareness had often been reinforced by WFP advocacy in international forums. A similar pattern is apparent amongst international NGOs.

(c) Within WFP, the pattern at HQ and at country level was very different. At HQ there was a high level of awareness of the Policy, and it was recognised as an integral part of the strategic shift embodied in the 2008 Strategic Plan. At CO level, most interviewees had been aware of the Policy prior to the interview, as it had been announced through the usual formal channels within WFP. However, very few treated it as a practical guide to action, and several identified the Strategic Plan as their key reference document. In several cases, the March 2011 workshop was regarded as their first proper briefing on the Policy.

(d) Amongst non-WFP stakeholders at country level, there was minimal awareness of the Policy as such. Amongst government agencies, however, there was often good awareness of the strategic and programmatic directions for WFP that are embodied in the document. Amongst aid agency representatives, again, there tended to be a general awareness of WFP's strategic directions, but no familiarity with the Policy as such. In several cases, stakeholders who became aware of certain messages (e.g. SF as a safety net, the potential nutritional benefits of SF) were instinctively very sceptical.

94.   As regards commitment to implementation of the Policy within WFP:

(a) There is no doubt that HQ staff in both the policy and programme units are highly committed to implementation of the Policy, and that it provides their main agenda.[52]

(b) At country level, with some exceptions,[53] there is much less familiarity with the Policy as such. However, the Policy endorses many good practices and initiatives that COs are already following, and it embodies principles, such as government ownership, that are already familiar elements of WFP's overall strategy. Thus COs are often implementing important elements of the Policy, without crediting it as a guide. But this falls short of a conscious commitment

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[52] However, the workshop that reviewed the draft of this report expressed the view that other HQ units were less aware of the Policy's requirements (e.g. its implications for procurement, finance, logistics, external relations – see WFP, 2011zf).

[53] In some pilot countries and/or where key CO staff have had direct previous engagement with SF at HQ.

to implementation, and neglects important elements such as the eight quality standards (see ¶109ff below).

Influence on Stakeholder Relationships

EQ 7: *How have WFP's relationships with other stakeholders changed since the policy was introduced?*

95.   The evaluation's interviews demonstrated that WFP's reputation among international stakeholders has risen in recent years. WFP has long been regarded as an exceptionally efficient and practical UN agency, and this reputation has been enhanced by its more recent strategic shifts. At the same time, it is recognised that WFP has to campaign continually to raise funding for its programmes. Hence, many stakeholders view WFP's advocacy for SF with a degree of scepticism, suspecting that WFP is partly motivated by self-interest. WFP needs to be continually alive to this issue, and careful not to undermine its own credibility (one sympathetic observer captured a widespread sentiment in recommending "less advocacy, more engagement").

96.   At global level, links with the World Bank and with PCD have been the strongest element in WFP's relations with other agencies. The tripartite partnership continues to evolve (WFP, 2011zc). The relationship with PCD over HGSF has been influenced by the emergence of P4P as the flagship of WFP efforts to parlay its procurement power into local economic benefits. At the same time, WFP's links with FAO and IFAD remain rather weak. There has been little practical collaboration with FAO so far and hence little FAO commitment to the implementation of HGSF. While the logic of collaboration between WFP and FAO on school feeding is repeatedly endorsed in various forums (WFP, 2011zd), capacity constraints on the staff in both organisations mean that progress is slow.

97.   UNICEF is a long-standing partner (cf. the Essential Package), but interviews reveal that the relationship is not always an easy one. The two organisations have very different approaches (UNICEF has many more professional staff at country level and is more accustomed to the capacity development roles that WFP is now seeking to adopt; WFP has a much stronger role in implementation), and several WFP staff voiced the view that UNICEF's attitude to collaboration is coloured by a disdain for food aid. At country level, collaboration at school level is often hampered by different targeting strategies that limit their geographical overlap.[54]

98.   The evaluation found that WFP's relationships with its traditional UN partners had been relatively neglected during the development and roll-out of the SF Policy. WHO appears to be another case in point. Although the Policy highlights the importance of linking SF to deworming, interviews with WHO Preventive Chemotherapy and Transmission Control (PCT)/Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) revealed that that NTD is not receiving any requests for technical assistance from WFP. Nor is WFP taking advantage of WHO assistance to

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[54] A comment on the draft of this report pointed out that WFP is frequently operating at a much larger scale than UNICEF, and this too limits the scope for collaboration at school level.

obtain donations for deworming drugs. Furthermore, NTD has developed a group of national experts in several countries that are available to assist when designing a new school-based deworming programme or evaluating an on-going one. This network could be made available to WFP.[55]

99.   Relationships with two emerging donors have clearly been strengthened by the SF Policy. WFP is collaborating with the Government of Brazil to establish a school feeding centre of excellence in Brasilia (see Box 5 above), while Russian finance and technical assistance for a school feeding programme in Armenia may set a pattern for further support to Russia's neighbours.

Changes in WFP's Portfolio

EQ 8: *How has WFP's portfolio changed since the policy was introduced?*

Overview

100.   By portfolio we understand the existing set of WFP operations, new operations in the pipeline, and plans/intentions as reflected in country strategies etc. For the case study countries, it was possible to review the country portfolios in depth. The evaluation also reviewed aggregate data on WFP SF operations for the past two years, examined how SF is reflected in the newly-mandated country strategies, and undertook a comparison of recently approved SF operations with their predecessors. The aim was to judge how far the present portfolio is consistent with the Policy, and whether it is becoming more consistent.

101.   In reviewing changes in WFP's portfolio, it is important to distinguish changes in its working approach and engagement with school feeding and related sectors, from changes in its portfolio of funded projects. There are two reasons why there may have been only limited alterations in the project portfolio so far. First, the lead time on new projects means that the first ones to be designed after the November 2009 approval of the Policy can only recently have been approved. Secondly and more significantly, slow change in the project portfolio is likely to reflect the institutional inertia and capacity lag that any major innovation like the SF Policy must overcome.

102.   An overview of WFP's school feeding operations was presented in Section 1.3, ¶48. More details of WFP school feeding in 2009 and 2010 are provided in Annex H (Figure H1–Figure H3). They show that WFP continues to be a major global provider of school feeding. WFP operations are dominated by general food distribution (GFD), but school feeding follows closely behind FFA/FFW in terms of tonnage distributed (although volumes have declined slightly in the last two years) and exceeds FFW/FFA in terms of total direct expenses (Figure H1). In 2009 there were 85 SF operations in 63 countries; in 2010 there were 92 operations in 62 countries. In both

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[55] Comments on the draft of this report pointed out that at country level WFP often collaborates on deworming with other WHO partners, including UNICEF and various NGOs, as well as collaborating directly with WHO. WFP-supported school feeding programmes in CAR, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Zambia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Chad, and Mozambique, were among those that benefitted from WHO support for deworming in 2009 and 2010. However, the need to strengthen partnership with WHO at global level was acknowledged.

years the total number of beneficiaries was close to 22 million. However, as noted in ¶90 above, it is not possible to draw significant conclusions about implementation of the SF Policy from such aggregated data.

Influence of the Policy on Country Strategies

103. The SF Policy Implementation Approach stated that "WFP programmes, work plans and the Country Strategies will reflect the WFP school feeding policy and implementation approach" (WFP, 2010p,¶33). For WFP, Country Strategies (CSs) are an innovation, introduced in 2009 "to help country offices to engage in a meaningful strategic review of what WFP should be doing to contribute to hunger solutions in a country" (WFP, 2009zd). The guidelines for preparing CSs pre-date the SF Policy, and are at a very high level (there is no specific mention of school feeding or of other elements of WFP policy).

104. By mid-2011, 19 Country Strategies had been approved. The evaluation reviewed these documents for evidence of influence by the SF Policy. The review took note of the principal justifications advanced for SF, and looked for evidence of a safety nets/social protection approach to school feeding, and for reference to supporting a national SF strategy or system. Any references to HGSF and to cost effectiveness were also noted. On the basis of this internal evidence, the strategies were assigned to three groups: those where there was substantial evidence of alignment with the SF Policy, those where there was only limited evidence of such alignment, and the remainder where there was no significant evidence of such alignment. Table 2 below shows the classification that resulted. Note 4 in Annex J provides more documentation of these judgements.

Table 2   Alignment with the SF Policy in Country Strategies

	Substantial alignment	Moderate alignment	No obvious alignment
2009	Iraq		Sudan Uganda
2010	Burkina Faso Jordan Mauritania Zambia	Burundi Egypt Tanzania	Nepal
2011	Bangladesh Ecuador Mozambique Peru	Ethiopia Lao PDR Malawi	Indonesia

105. The overall conclusion is that the SF Policy seems to be reflected in the majority of CSs to some degree. However, even in the ones classified as "substantially aligned" there is only limited analysis of the prospects for national SF systems. Country Strategies, with their perspective that extends beyond specific WFP operations, might have been seen as a particularly appropriate opportunity to

address prospects for a sustainable national SF strategy and system,[56] but this is not yet systematically occurring.

106. Only two of the CSs, Malawi and Mozambique, are for countries included as case studies for the present evaluation. The Malawi CS pays considerable attention to the (long term) process of handover as Malawi develops its own SF system, but there is scant reference to the safety net dimension of SF. This evaluation's case study for Mozambique notes that the recent CP and PRRO are directly linked to the Country Strategy. The CS does refer to the concept of safety nets, and notes that WFP will support the Ministry of Education to "transition to a new school feeding model embedded in the overall national education strategy that is fiscally sustainable and relies on locally procured food" (WFP, 2011l, p24) but it does not link social protection explicitly to the SF programme:

> The CO is understandably reluctant to fully incorporate school feeding under the social protection umbrella as it means adding another level of engagement to an already taxing slate of government relationships. In practice safety nets are far from being the overarching framework for school feeding in Mozambique. (Anderson, 2011, ¶116)

Influence of the Policy on recent operations

107. The evaluation also compared WFP programme designs completed since approval of the school feeding policy with the immediately preceding designs (from before the policy was approved). This was possible for 10 (non-case-study) countries. Note 5 in Annex J shows the operations analysed, and also provides an analysis of their treatment of the local economy effects of school feeding.

108. Comparisons are impressionistic, but there is some evidence of operations moving in the directions advocated by the Policy, at least in the way they are described. In particular, recent operations put more emphasis on support to capacity development for government management of SF systems; there are also more references to the importance of results-oriented monitoring and evaluation. Educational outcomes are generally the dominant justification for SF, however, and safety net/social protection dimensions do not come through strongly. The main change in the nutritional aspects of SF design is more prominence for micro-nutrients. In only three cases – Tanzania, Ghana and Cambodia – is there prominence for HGSF objectives, and only in Tanzania has this emphasis appeared since the SF Policy was approved.

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[56] Thus the Implementation Approach (WFP, 2010c) states:

> WFP will support national governments to develop a national strategy for sustainable school feeding. WFP will clearly elaborate in its programme documents how it will contribute to the national strategy, including specific milestones and capacity building activities. (¶24)

The Policy's influence in case study countries

109.   In the case study countries (see Annex K and Annex L) the evaluation found only limited evidence so far of changes in WFP's portfolio (although in some cases there had been relevant changes of emphasis prior to the adoption of the policy, and in some others efforts to apply key elements of the Policy are just beginning). Thus:

(a)   For the "handed-over" countries:

- There are no direct WFP operations in the Dominican Republic, but WFP's role of technical support to an existing national SF system is entirely in keeping with the Policy.

- In Honduras, again in keeping with the policy, WFP acts as an agent in managing the national SF programme, and the new Country Programme has planned the development of a handover strategy.

(b)   Among the pilot countries:

- In Malawi, WFP efforts are increasingly dedicated to supporting the emergence of a national school meals programme.

- In Mali a dramatic shift towards SO5 support pre-dated the SF Policy, and means that at least half of the SF unit's time is devoted to support for the government.

- In Mozambique, where SF accounts for 70% of the country programme, the CO is now systematically seeking to apply the new approach.

(c)   Among the "other" countries:

- In Afghanistan, there have been no substantive changes, although the need to improve the working relationship with government is acknowledged.

- In Bhutan, with a government already committed to SF and financing it, there was no change until recently, but there is now a renewed WFP emphasis on transition strategy.

- In Tajikistan there has been no substantive change in operations, but the CO has begun sustainability discussions with the government.

110.   As regards HGSF, the strongest new feature with regard to promoting local economic benefits is P4P (see Note 5 in Annex J).

Application of the Quality Standards

EQ 9: *Does WFP's school feeding portfolio reflect the policy's quality standards?*

111.   The Policy proposes "Eight Standards Guiding Sustainable and Affordable School Feeding Programmes" and an annex provides indicators associated with each guiding standard. The introduction of these standards has been highlighted as one of the key "elements of novelty" in the Policy. The Policy itself stresses: "*The eight quality standards ... are relevant for school feeding programmes in all contexts* [i.e. emergency and other contexts] *and should be seen as benchmarks for planning and implementing sustainable programmes*". The evaluation linked its detailed

evaluation questions for the country studies to these standards (see the subquestions under EQ9 in Annex L), and also checked whether explicit use is being made of these standards.

112.   The evaluation found that these standards, and their associated indicators, are not being systematically used in monitoring and reporting on SF programmes although, in several cases, they have been useful as a communication tool (e.g. as an intuitively helpful perspective for stakeholder workshops). The evaluators' experience of using the standards as a reference point in reviewing the country cases suggests that, while the concept of benchmarking is certainly useful, considerable further work would be needed to develop a set of indicators that could be robustly used both to compare SF systems across countries and to track the development of each country's SF system over time. Thus some of the existing indicators are highly specific (e.g. "a feasibility study on connecting small farmers to markets"), while others are very high-level (including all the indicators under "needs-based cost-effective programme design").

Figure 8   Energy Content of the Rations in Case Study Countries

	Bhutan	Honduras	Mali	Malawi	Tajikistan	Minimum for Half-Day Schools	Minimum for Full-Day Schools	Estimated Daily RNI
■ Energy Content	1317	658	734	396	758	565	1110	1850
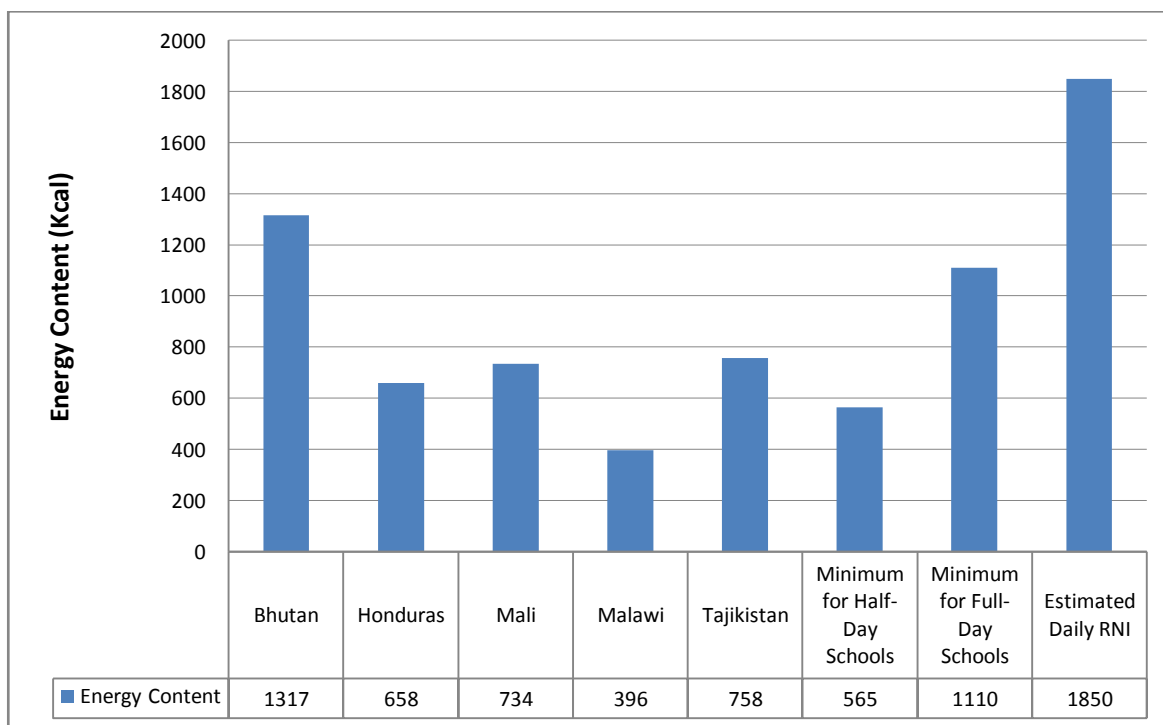
Note: Half-day schooling in Malawi.

113.   WFP also has additional quality standards that it applies to its own SF operations, notably those that apply to the nutritional quality of the meals provided.[57] The evaluation checked SF provision in the five full case study countries against WFP's current nutrition standards. In four of the five countries, the ration appears to be below the recommended range in terms of energy (see Figure 8

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[57] Although, surprisingly, project documents are often unclear in their ration specifications.

above). In several cases, rations are also below standards in terms of micronutrients (iron, iodine, Vitamin A), though there were mitigating factors in some of the cases. Frequently, the ability to meet nutritional objectives is compromised by breaks in school feeding or shortfalls in supplies (this is a well known issue across many countries besides the case studies). Detailed findings are in Annex J, Note 2.

Sustainability of Emerging Results

EQ 17: *How sustainable are the emerging results of the SF policy?*

114.   Sustainability can be considered both in terms of the durability of the school feeding systems WFP seeks to support at country level, and in terms of WFP's ability to follow through the changes in its own roles that the Policy required.

115.   *Rethinking School Feeding* pointed out that countries are more able to sustain national SF systems as their per capita income increases. The country case studies illustrate the range of favourable and unfavourable contexts in which WFP works, as well as the potential fragility of recent innovations. Thus:

 (a)   For the "handed over cases":

- In both the Dominican Republic and Honduras, SF is already established as an element of national welfare systems; the survival of SF systems is not in doubt, the issues are about the quality and effectiveness of the programmes.

 (b)   Among the pilot country cases:

- In Mali, there is a foundation of five years of collaboration between government and WFP towards developing the national system that is emerging; even so it faces severe financial constraints, and could be vulnerable to (democratic) changes in political priorities.

- In Malawi, by contrast, the emerging national system is very fragile – it is not certain that the government will have the capacity or the financial means to realise its vision.

- In Mozambique, initiatives in line with the Policy are just getting under way, and are proving more demanding than anticipated.

 (c)   Among the non-pilot cases:

- In Bhutan there is an established national SF programme; the issue is not whether it will survive, but the scale and standards (e.g. nutritional standards) it will attain.

- In Afghanistan it is difficult to talk about sustainability in what remains an emergency context where school feeding is seen as a WFP programme rather than a government one.

- In Tajikistan, although the context is less difficult, WFP efforts to pursue the Policy are at a very early stage, and it remains to be seen whether SF will be nationally adopted as an element of social protection strategy.

116.   WFP's ability to sustain its support for the Policy will depend on its ability to follow through the radical reorientation of WFP approaches that the policy requires – an issue that is taken up in the final chapter.

Are changes the result of the Policy?

EQ 10: *Are the observed changes a result of the policy, a continuation of pre-existing good practice, or the consequence of other WFP policy shifts?*

117.   The SF Policy was thoroughly consistent with the Strategic Plan that WFP adopted in 2008. The Policy itself was very broad, seeking to embrace all the potential benefits of school feeding. It deliberately sought to identify and propagate existing good practices. It is therefore difficult to attribute changes specifically to the Policy, especially in view of the short elapsed time since the Policy was approved. A less academic question is whether the Policy has helped to reinforce and accelerate changes in the directions that it mapped out.

118.   The findings from the country case studies show a complex pattern:

  (a)   For the "handed over cases": in both the Dominican Republic and Honduras, governments had already taken responsibility for national school feeding systems, which were seen as part of national social welfare systems. The Policy's effect was to endorse a role that WFP was already adopting.

  (b)   Among the pilot country cases:

  •   In both Mali and Malawi, governments had already adopted the goal of establishing a national school feeding system, with HGSF as part of the rationale. Mali had taken this much further, and the relationship between the government and the CO anticipated much of the guidance that accompanied the policy. It was not a coincidence that the Mali Country Director during this formative period had worked in school feeding at WFP HQ and had been involved in the earliest stages of deliberation about a school feeding policy. The trend in Malawi is more recent and less embedded: it flows from country level developments interacting with strategic shifts in WFP which the SF Policy reflects.

  •   Amongst the case study countries, Mozambique is closest to following the "recipe" provided by the Policy. Although a strategic reappraisal by WFP was in any case under way, the government's adoption of a national approach to SF was in its early stages, and WFP was able to play a leading role in bringing national stakeholders together.

  (c)   Among the non-pilot cases:

  •   In Afghanistan, the CO regarded the Strategic Plan and WFP's M&E indicators as their main reference points, and did not perceive the Policy as a strong direct influence.

  •   In Bhutan, there was a pre-existing commitment to a transition towards government ownership and management of a national SF system. This was in

line with the Policy, but the CO did not appear to receive significant additional support as a result of the Policy.[58]

- In Tajikistan, the current operation is essentially a continuation of what has worked in the past, although advice from PSS and ODX has helped to reinforce some of the themes reflected in the new phase.

119. Thus, overall, many of the Policy's main elements had already been anticipated in WFP practice at country level, but the Policy can take some credit for the extent to which WFP practice has continued to evolve in the directions it advocates.

120. HGSF deserves an additional comment. Many of the changes towards increased local procurement and (potential) benefits for the 'local' economy (however defined) were already under way before the policy was approved – partly as a natural result of increased national ownership of SF and partly because WFP was already starting to work in this direction.[59] However, WFP's strongest efforts to benefit local producers through its procurement are through the P4P programme (see ¶23-24 above), which is not mentioned in the Policy, and which seems to have overshadowed other HGSF efforts.

2.3   Factors Explaining Results

External Factors Affecting Implementation

EQ 15: *What external factors facilitated or obstructed implementation of the policy?*

121. A number of external trends have facilitated implementation of the policy. The changing patterns in food assistance have made it more practical to espouse a more flexible policy that is not driven by the food aid available, while the 2008 food and financial crisis gave prominence to the safety net role of SF programmes. As the Policy correctly diagnosed, countries that achieve higher levels of income are likely to include school meals among the services they provide. The discourse on aid effectiveness continues to stress the importance of country ownership and the use of country systems. Linking school feeding to support for domestic agriculture repeatedly proves politically popular, if not technically straightforward. In many ways, therefore, the Policy is pushing on open doors, although the competition for funding – whether external or domestic – is usually intense, with greater financial constraints in the poorer countries.

122. At the same time, external perceptions of WFP's proper role can hamper implementation of the Policy. Historically, WFP has sometimes oscillated in striking a balance between emergency aid and support to development that strengthens food security. The large majority of WFP's resources and efforts are devoted to emergency

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[58] Bhutan fits well with the pattern of transition to national SF systems as countries become more developed, but, surprisingly, the evaluation team could find no evidence that this case had fed into the preparation of the Policy (for example, Bhutan is not cited in *Rethinking School Feeding*).

[59] As noted in Box 3 (on page 9), WFP collaboration with NEPAD and others had begun as early as 2003.

situations, and WFP's ability to pursue the SF Policy, with its emphasis on the developmental role for SF, depends on WFP's Board and major donors continuing to see this as strategically appropriate for WFP. Even so, WFP's traditional raison d'être drains resources from its attempts to achieve a different kind of school feeding policy.

123.   At the practical level, WFP encounters suspicion when it engages in country level dialogue around school feeding and safety nets, because it has acquired a reputation for promoting the instruments that it happens to deliver. It is perceived to be slow to relinquish its service delivery role and content to operate business as usual. This gives added importance to its external partnerships in making the case for school feeding. The partnership with the World Bank, in particular, has brought vital credibility.

Consultation in developing the policy

EQ 11: *Was there sufficient consultation and ownership in the development of the policy?*

124.   A striking finding from the country case studies and the evaluation's other interviews is the apparent lack of consultation with COs during policy formulation (the findings on this EQ in Annex L are unequivocal). Apart from field personnel who had previously worked on SF at HQ, we found none who recalled being consulted in advance about the Policy. As a result there was little sense of ownership of the Policy. There was no antipathy towards the Policy, but the evaluation considers that WFP missed an opportunity for more engagement which, as discussed below, might have led to better appreciation of its demands on country offices, and perhaps a reconsideration of the piloting strategy.

125.   There seem to be two explanations for the lack of downward consultation. First, such consultation is not mandatory within WFP. Second, as documented in Section 1.3 above, the Policy's authors were involved in intense collaboration with external partners (particularly the World Bank) and their primary objective was to build a Board-level consensus for the Policy. Field-level consultations seem to have been squeezed out in the process.

Dissemination and Implementation Guidelines

EQ 12: *How well was the policy disseminated, with guidelines for its implementation?*

126.   As noted earlier (see ¶91 above), awareness of the Policy per se was limited amongst external stakeholders not directly engaged in WFP governance or in developing the Policy itself. However, and more importantly, external stakeholders, including partner governments, are generally aware of the strategic shifts in WFP approach that the Policy reflects. The more serious gap is the limited familiarity with the Policy among CO staff who are in the front line of its implementation.

127.   There was very limited dissemination of the Policy internally within WFP. It was routinely announced, circulated and posted on the internal website. A number of interviewees compared the development and roll-out of the SF Policy unfavourably

with other policies they had experienced in WFP. The gender policy, for example, was said: to have been based on prior consultation with various levels of WFP including the field; to have been accompanied by an action plan, supported by a budget for roll out with training for partners and WFP staff; and to have been more obviously written for an operational audience (and not primarily for a donor/external audience).**60**

128.   Putting the Policy into practice requires more detailed guidance than is contained in the policy document itself. Many staff felt that the workshop in Rome in March 2011 was the first thorough explanation of the Policy. Much work went into the elaboration of guidance (including the "7 tools" – see Table 3 below and Annex J, Note 1), but PSS concentrated their assistance on the pilot countries. ODX sought to respond to requests for assistance from non-pilot countries, but have felt very stretched in doing so.

129.   Tools directly inspired by the Policy have been complemented by other relevant advice, such as an update of guidance on the Essential Package (WFP, 2010d). Although not among the 7 tools, the concept of local purchase and sourcing that the policy advocates has been well disseminated by the P4P programme in its 21 pilot countries. Policy support for the HGSF concept continues to be provided from headquarters, but it is limited because of the severe constraints on advisory capacity at that level.

130.   The piloting strategy recognised that many of the innovations in the policy would need to be refined and developed on the basis of experience. The pilots (see ¶46 above) were chosen as countries that were well placed to showcase aspects of the policy, while concentrating on the pilots was a recognition that both PSS would need to focus their limited staff resources. This approach was understandable, but there were some clear disadvantages. Non-pilot countries have felt under-assisted (and ODX feel overwhelmed by demands for support). At the same time, several pilot countries felt some of the tools were irrelevant, because they had already passed the stage the tools were aimed at.

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60 As one of the external reviewers pointed out: "The findings on too much advocacy and too little adoption at the country level are surely linked – COs saw the document as advertising, not policy direction".

Table 3   The "7 Tools" to assist Policy Implementation

Tool	Description	Main usage
1 Investment case	Assessment of monetary cost and economic benefits of recognized outcomes of school feeding	Advocacy
2 Needs and coverage	Estimation of no. children in need of school feeding, no. of children receiving school feeding and regional distribution	Advocacy
3 Cost analysis	Cost analysis for **3a** • WFP school feeding programmes **3b** • National school feeding programmes	Decision-making
4 Quality standards assessment	Qualitative assessment of country situation against 8 quality standards for sustainable school feeding	Decision-making
5 Stakeholder workshop	Set of generic modules on where school feeding stands in a country and what it takes to improve the quality while transitioning to sustainability using the 8 quality standards	Decision-making
6 Sustainability strategy	Guide for development of transition strategy for the government for sustainable school feeding programmes, based on quality standards, with estimated cost and timeline	Decision-making
7 School feeding model planning tool	Analysis of options – and relative tradeoffs - available for government choice among different models and modalities of school feeding programmes	Decision-making

Source: Implementation Update (WFP, 2011zb) Figure 3.

131.   Much admirable work has gone into preparing implementation tools and guidelines. However, the guidelines are very voluminous, and it is not always clear how directly they relate to mandatory WFP processes (such as the preparation of Country Strategies and of project documents).[61] Guidance materials have lagged behind the policy and are fragmented between PSS and ODX with unclear boundaries leading to inefficiencies, potential duplication and lack of clarity in roles. COs are unsure which unit to contact for what, and so often contact both when in doubt.

132.   WFP (with ODXP leading has also made a start on a training programme linked to the requirements of the policy. A consultant was retained to work on identifying the skills required by the new Policy; a participatory approach has been adopted, and an initial workshop involving staff from HQ, regional bureaus and country offices was held in Tanzania in July 2011.

Resources for Implementing the Policy

EQ 13:*Were there sufficient (financial and other) resources for its implementation?*

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[61] Related work is under way to update and streamline the school feeding sections of WFP's Programme Guidance Manual (PGM).

EQ 14:*What internal factors facilitated or obstructed implementation of the policy?*

133.   The units within WFP which have the main responsibility for driving implementation of the policy (the school feeding policy and programme units) are both very small, with fewer than a dozen professional staff between them. They have been able to draw on some extra-budgetary resources (including pro-bono assistance from BCG, an Australian grant, a Brazil trust fund, and some resources allocated by the Executive Director). Nevertheless, resources for development of policy and guidelines, internal training, and advisory support to country offices are very constrained (particularly in view of the scope and scale of the tasks the Policy implies). This partly explains the weakness in dissemination discussed above.

134.   A more fundamental issue is that the Policy tends to magnify the demands on CO staff in their interactions with recipient countries, both by emphasising the range of issues that school feeding may influence, and by increasing WFP's commitment to provide advisory and capacity development support to governments. In the short term, limited staff resources at HQ have impeded the roll-out of the Policy across WFP. But in the long term the bigger challenge is whether WFP can deploy sufficient staff with the right skills to fulfil the roles the Policy demands.

135.   Some necessary supporting changes have been initiated but not yet rolled out – most notably the new financial framework which will de-link finance for capacity development and technical assistance from the delivery of food aid (see Annex F, ¶F35ff). The scale and pace of change across WFP is itself a constraining factor (thus one of the case study countries, Mozambique, is simultaneously a pilot for school feeding, cash and vouchers, risk management and climate change initiatives). In all countries the evaluation found CO staff overloaded with existing and new tasks, with the latter often requiring expertise and aptitudes quite different from those applied to managing WFP's traditional operations. In some contexts (e.g. Afghanistan) the difficulty of recruiting, deploying and retaining staff multiplies the challenges. When new tasks (dialogue, advocacy) compete with the smooth running of existing operations, the latter naturally takes priority. In the long run, WFP needs to recognise potential issues of conflicting incentives: will staff who successfully promote government ownership and management of school feeding thereby work themselves out of a job?

Feedback and Learning during Implementation[62]

EQ 16: *What feedback loops have been put in place and how effective have they been?*

136.   The SF Policy's final section emphasised the importance of results-oriented M&E ("WFP will ensure that a rigorous monitoring and evaluation system is in place to measure progress and results" (¶100)) and referred to the annexed logic model[63] as the basis on which "a more detailed monitoring strategy for school feeding will be

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[62] In addition to the elements discussed below, the present evaluation was mandated by the EB as an early review of progress in implementing the Policy.

[63] Box C1 in the present report.

developed" (¶101)[64]. A comprehensive monitoring strategy has not been put in place, but there have been significant activities, including:

(a) WFP's ongoing programme of evaluations, and in particular the SF impact evaluations (see Annex I). Findings from WFP evaluations are included in the review of evidence in Section 2.1 above. There is a striking contrast between WFP's more routine evaluations and the recent set of impact evaluations. The former are very weak in their assessment of SF results, with claimed results relying heavily on anecdotal evidence and evidence of association rather than causality. The impact evaluations set a much higher evidential standard; they use qualitative as well as quantitative evidence, but generate much more robust insights into the performance of SF interventions through careful analysis of their programme logic.[65]

(b) Refinement of relevant indicators as part of WFP's overall Strategic Results Framework (WFP, 2009j). The current indicators collected at country level are included in the data annexes of each of the country case studies. There is still scope to strengthen them so as to ensure standard information on how WFP-supported SF operations are implemented (for example, this evaluation found that compliance with standard ration scales is not systematically monitored – cf. Annex J, Note 2).

(c) Collaboration with the WB and PCD in the pilot countries. There are ongoing efforts by WFP to document pilot country experience, but, apparently, no plans for an overall summation of lessons, although the originally agreed piloting period was two years (2010–2011). PCD has led the preparation of a series of country case studies of HGSF, but, at the time of writing, these were not yet final. When available, they should be a rich source of learning.

(d) The cross-country cost benchmarking exercise which has sought to collect and analyse cost data in more detail and more systematically than ever before; the country-level data presented in Annex H are drawn from this study. This is an important initiative, given the past lack of sufficient attention to costs.

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[64] The present evaluation has commented on the limitations of the logic model (see Section 2.1), and the need, for practical purposes, to distinguish between WFP's organisational objectives and the outcomes sought from SF interventions themselves.

[65] PCD is undertaking impact evaluations in Mali and Kenya that should report in 2012.,

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 Overall Assessment

137.   This section draws on the findings presented in the previous chapter to give the evaluation team's overall assessment against each of the three basic evaluation questions. In each case the assessment is forward looking, so as to underpin the recommendations which follow.

How Good is the Policy?

138.   A good policy sets the right directions for an organisation, and it does so in a way which helps the organisation to achieve the objectives which the policy identifies. Policy documents may also have collateral functions such as explanation and advocacy, addressed to both external and internal audiences, but balancing such functions may be tricky.

139.   **The 2009 Policy had important strengths:**

  (a) It was timely. There was a need to build consensus around the roles of SF, and of WFP's involvement, to review and codify good practice and strengthen operational guidelines. The context of WFP's strategic reorientation, and the particular attention SF had attracted in the response to recent food crises, created a special opportunity to re-visit policy and practice. The Policy achieved an unprecedented degree of consensus at EB level.

  (b) It was clearly and persuasively written.

  (c) It was fully aligned with the WFP strategic plan and with other key policies, and in tune with aid effectiveness concerns for national ownership, sustainability and results orientation.

  (d) It was based on a commendable stock-taking of accumulated evidence, and a holistic view of SF which provided some valid and important insights, including: the recognition that SF can contribute to multiple outcomes; that, among these, SF can contribute to social protection; that most countries, as they develop, keep and consolidate national SF systems, which WFP should seek to support; and that there are possibilities for linking SF to agricultural development (and such possibilities have political as well as economic importance).

  (e) Proposing quality standards for SF was an important innovation.

140.   **But the Policy also had significant weaknesses**:

  (a) It drew on solid evidence, but it tended to overstate the case. Evidence shows that achieving SF's many potential benefits depends on specific factors in how SF is delivered, and on complementary inputs that accompany SF. For example, there is credible evidence that SF can improve short term concentration and attentiveness, but the timing as well as the nutritional content of the meal is important for this effect, and whether improved learning will result depends on many other factors in the school environment.

The Policy did not ignore such factors, but neither, in the evaluation's judgment, did it give them sufficient weight.

(b) Although WFP has an aspiration to target the "most vulnerable", the practical limitations in targeting SF are often a disadvantage for SF as a social protection instrument (which emphasises that SF can only be part of an overall social protection system).

(c) The Policy did not distinguish clearly enough between the general case for school feeding and the specific role(s) that WFP should play in school feeding. It was left to later documents to spell out WFP's objectives in relation to SF, and the activities through which WFP would pursue each of the objectives. This matters, because it is very important to distinguish in practice between the programme factors that WFP can control and the contextual factors that it cannot (this is a strength of the WFP OE impact evaluations – see Annex I). This in turn affects the extent of responsibilities that WFP ought to take: for example, is it really practical for WFP to "create synergies" between SF and agricultural development, or is a more modest role appropriate?

(d) In the same vein, the Policy tends to put SF, and WFP's own role, more at the centre of possibilities than is justified – for example in identifying SF as "a platform" for achieving complementary benefits. Much more often, the school, or the education system, or a system of social protection, is a platform, and SF has a complementary rather than a fundamental role.

(e) The link to safety nets/social protection is an important one, but the treatment in the Policy was too limited. It focused mainly on the "value transfer" aspect of SF, and did not adequately bring out the promotive aspects. Nor did it link SF sufficiently to the concept of social protection as an overarching system, within which it would be one among many possible interventions.[66] Identifying the social protection dimension of SF is only a start, and it has many ramifications. A social protection approach has implications for behaviour, not just the language in which SF is described.

(f) The tendency to overstate, or oversimplify, the case for SF is understandable, but it has two downsides. First, it risks undermining WFP's credibility, by conforming to a stereotype that sees WFP as always making the case for the instruments that it happens to deliver. Second, exalting all the potential benefits of SF tends obscure the need to identify trade-offs and set priorities in particular cases. In other words the advocacy function of the Policy tends to undermine its operational function.

141.   The evaluation acknowledges that an implementation plan has not been regarded as mandatory for WFP policies. Nevertheless, it considers that including at least a high-level implementation plan in the Policy document submitted to the EB would have substantially enhanced the practicability of the Policy (and the quality of

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[66] This conclusion is based on the detailed discussion in ¶0-56, ¶70-71, and ¶82. See also the discussion of social protection standards in Table 1.

Board-level discussion).**67** The Policy was apparently approved without any discussion of the resources that would be required to implement it.

142.   Costs and cost-effectiveness are at the heart of making choices, and the Policy could have been more emphatic about the importance of addressing cost issues, and of using cost-effectiveness as a criterion not only in the design of SF interventions but also in choosing between SF and other means towards achieving specific outcomes. Decisions have to be tailored to context, and so it is not possible to say which outcome should always be prioritised, or that one SF modality should always be preferred to another; nonetheless the Policy could have highlighted the need to be selective about objectives, recognising that most specific SF operations are likely to be focused on a subset of the possible outcomes, not all of them.

143.   Much of the analytical work behind the Policy was excellent. Subsequent evidence on SF impact offers nuances rather than radical alterations of perspective. However, such findings mainly serve to reinforce two points: the complexity of the pathways through which SF achieves impact, and, hence, the need to design specific SF operations to suit a specific context and specific objectives.

What were the results of the Policy?

144.   **Attribution of results to the Policy is complicated**. On the one hand, it is too soon to expect impact from operations commenced since the Policy was adopted. On the other hand, the Policy envisages a continuation of many long-standing approaches and of some innovations that had begun before the Policy was adopted. The first consideration, therefore, is whether subsequent practice is in line with the Policy, whether or not it is a direct result of the Policy.

145.   Endorsement of the Policy allowed the policy and programme units to turn their energies to supporting its implementation. Three key documents – the Concept Note, the Implementation Approach and the Implementation Update – provided successively more elaborate implementation plans, as well as, in some respects, elaborating the Policy itself. These documents have gone some way towards giving the Policy a more practical orientation; they have been complemented by an impressive amount of work on guidelines and tools to support policy implementation.

146.   However, external awareness of the Policy is patchy beyond the limited circle of direct partners (and EB members). To the extent that stakeholders are nevertheless aware of the broad themes of WFP's reorientation towards food assistance, this may not matter much – especially since WFP's overall reputation has been enhanced in recent years. But many sector and thematic specialists in donor agencies remain rather sceptical of some of the principal claims of the Policy (e.g. of the competitiveness of SF as a social protection intervention, or of its place in a nutrition strategy). For many, it seems, the "debate about whether school feeding

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67 Post-approval, PSS proposed to submit a 5-year implementation plan to the EB, but this was not taken up (WFP, 2011zf).

makes sense as a way to reach the most vulnerable" is not over. And such scepticism is frequently encountered also amongst aid agencies' representatives at country level.

147.   Within WFP, there is no lack of commitment to the implementation of the Policy, but there is in many countries a lack of real familiarity with the Policy and understanding of its practical implications at country level.

148.   Among developing country governments, similarly, there is usually only limited awareness of the Policy as such, but this is not an obstacle to informed collaboration on matters of common interest, such as HGSF. Engagements with WFP concerning HGSF and social protection have been only partly driven by SF – but this is not a bad thing in itself.

149.   The Policy has strengthened some non-traditional partnerships (e.g. with Brazil and Russia), and the core strategic partnerships (WB, PCD) remain strong. However, other traditional partnerships have not been reinforced as much as the Policy appears to require. The partnership with FAO (in relation to HGSF etc) remains rather limited, and there is room to make more use of WHO expertise and contacts in relation to micro-nutrients and de-worming.[68]

150.   **The Policy is reflected in WFP's portfolio and activities in several positive ways, but there is a mixed picture overall**. It is not possible to draw much from aggregate data on WFP's own SF activities, because it is too soon for post-Policy trends to appear and, in any case, the Policy's effects are potentially ambiguous. The evaluation's overall conclusions are:

- The direct influence of the Policy on country strategy documents is rather limited.

- The change in language and orientation of recently-approved WFP SF operations is also rather limited. Most are firmly located (organisationally and in terms of coordination and dialogue processes) within the education sector, with a dominance of education objectives and justification.

- There are important cases (often pre-dating the Policy) where WFP is working to support an emerging national SF system (e.g. Mali, Malawi among the case studies – both of which also highlight the complexity and difficulties that can be involved). There are also cases (at different stages of SF system development) where governments seem very receptive to WFP support for capacity development (cf. stakeholder workshops in Mozambique and the Dominican Republic, and implementation support from WFP to Honduras).

- In promoting HGSF, WFP is often pushing at an open door (although there is more WFP momentum behind the P4P initiative).

- Although social protection/safety net concepts are increasingly being used within WFP, it can be difficult to ensure SF is included in country-level social

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[68] The November 2011 workshop pointed out that maintaining partnerships absorbs scarce staff resources, hence the tendency to focus on the main strategic partners (see WFP, 2010zzi)

protection dialogue, especially where leading players have already shaped the terms of the debate in other directions.

- There has been only limited use so far of the quality standards advocated by the Policy. Not all the SF programmes in the country cases comply fully with WFP's own nutritional guidance.

151. **To summarise**: the evaluation judges that this pattern tends to confirm the relevance of much of the Policy's agenda, but that, at this early stage, there has not been as much tangible progress in implementing (or accelerating) that agenda as would have been hoped.

Why has the Policy produced the results observed?

152. The evaluation has noted many positives in the implementation of the Policy, including the energy that has gone into efforts to roll out the Policy and to support it with guidelines and tools within WFP. Inevitably, however, reporting so soon after the Policy's launch, there is a focus on things that might have been done better, or where future action is anyway needed (why hasn't the Policy made more difference yet? and what can be done to reinforce its future results?).

153. Radical change usually takes time. Beyond that, the evaluation considers that relatively slow progress is explained by:

(a) Limitations in the Policy itself (¶138 above), and constraints on resources available for its implementation.

(b) Liaison with external partners, and an understandable orientation towards addressing high level sceptics of school feeding, led to a relative neglect of internal consultation with field level personnel. Better consultation could have given the Policy a more practical orientation, as well as a head start in dissemination and ownership. The dissemination strategy focused on pilot countries that were judged "good prospects" for the Policy. Again, this was an understandable response to constraints on staff resources and a desire to prove the viability of the Policy's innovations. However, it meant that non-pilot countries felt insufficiently supported, even though some of them (such as Bhutan and Honduras) were well advanced in directions espoused by the Policy. Ironically, it also meant that some of the pilot countries regarded some of the tools as too late to be useful for the stage they had reached.

(c) The radical change of organisational approach and culture that is embodied not just in the SF Policy but in the overall strategic transformation that it supports. Implementing the Policy requires much more than explanation and exhortation. It widens the range of competences that WFP staff need, and the analytical, advisory and capacity development roles that it envisages may not be easy to combine with the emphasis on rapid and efficient implementation on which WFP has built its reputation. Implementation depends not only on the technical advice which the school feeding and programme units at HQ can provide (though the complexity and breadth of the Policy make this in itself

very demanding) but also on organisation-wide financing arrangements and incentive structures which are still being put in place.**⁶⁹**

3.2 Wider Lessons from the Evaluation

154.   The evaluation noted that the SF Policy was in many ways inspired by, and wholly consistent with, the change in organisational strategy embodied in the 2008 Strategic Plan. A corollary is that many of the factors – positive and negative – that affect the realisation of the Policy are generic across WFP. This needs to be borne in mind when considering the recommendations of this evaluation. Many of them may be best addressed as part of wider reform initiatives (such as the financing framework, the country strategy process) or in tandem with other more specific initiatives (such as the broad pursuit of social protection approaches across WFP's portfolio, or the follow-up to the mid-term evaluation of P4P – WFP, 2011ze). Here we comment on two themes: aspects of organisational culture in which the observations of this evaluation echo those of the evaluation of social protection strategy, and some broad lessons about good practice in policy development.

Changing WFP's organisational culture

155.   The recent social protection evaluation (Majewski et al, 2011) has noted the extent to which adopting social protection approaches requires a change in WFP's culture. The present evaluation endorses its findings:

> **Culture.** WFP's organizational culture has both positive and limiting attributes regarding the adoption of social protection approaches. Positive traits include a "can-do" attitude, delivering with speed and at scale, problem-solving, innovation, a decentralized structure with strong country office leaders, and commitment to staff rotation. Limiting characteristics include impatience with partners, dismissal of the importance of policy engagement, a focus on outputs and standard instruments, a tendency to work in isolation and lack of experience working in urban areas. (ibid, ¶40)

156.   Organisational culture is related to staff capacity, and it is certainly true for SF that "Staff have the greatest skills in instruments and modalities traditionally used by WFP" (ibid, ¶42); staff need to be provided with new skills and new organisational incentives to match the new roles they are expected to play:

> The evaluation found that WFP is already contributing to safety nets and social protection, especially in activities such as school feeding. **However, institutionalizing a safety net and social protection approach more broadly within WFP will require changes in its operations, programme objectives and collaboration.** (ibid, ¶44, emphasis added.)

157.   It is not only the social protection perspective but also WFP's new orientation towards external capacity development (SO5) that requires such organisational change.

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⁶⁹ It remains surprising, and unsatisfactory, that there is so little attention to cost issues in WFP analysis and reporting on SF, and that evaluations have rarely been able to access adequate records on costs.

Good practice in policy development and implementation

158.   A number of interviewees compared the development and roll-out of the SF Policy unfavourably with other policies they had experienced in WFP, such as the gender policy (¶125 above).

159.   WFP has recently sought to standardise and strengthen its policy development process (WFP, 2011z). Among other things, this now establishes a norm that policies will be evaluated between four to six years after approval. See key points from this guidance in Box 9 below.

160.   In the light of this evaluation's findings concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the SF Policy formulation and its implementation process, it may be appropriate to review some of the sequencing set out in Box 9. While implementation might normally be worked out in full detail only after a policy's adoption, there would be merit in ensuring that any major policy put to the Board is accompanied by an outline of plans for its implementation, with particular attention to likely resource requirements and to spelling out the practical implications of the policy (what in WFP will be visibly different as a result of implementing this policy?).

Box 9   Key Points from WFP Policy Formulation Paper

7. Policies should support the Strategic Objectives and may be complemented by action plans, implementation plans and operational guidance.

13. Implementation of WFP policies includes the following activities:
- An implementation plan/strategy is prepared by the lead division with support from relevant divisions (particularly the Programme Division, whose role in developing programmes and providing guidance is strongly linked to policy implementation).
- The lead division shares the implementation plan and funding requirements with the Strategic Resource Allocation Committee (SRAC) for consideration and prioritization.
- Relevant divisions provide Regional Directors and country directors with strategic and technical guidance and support.
- The PRC (Programme Review Committee) provides policy and normative advice on the design of WFP's operational projects, including recommendations to regional bureaux and country offices on the policy, design, strategy and implementation of projects. PRC members (specifically the Chief of the Programme Design Service and Director of PS) are responsible for ensuring that a proposed programme or project conforms to WFP's policies.
- Regional Directors and country directors ensure that the policy guidance is followed in a country office's projects and Country Strategy.
- The relevant divisions monitor and support policy implementation and assess the effectiveness of policies. A review of how projects reflect a policy may reveal gaps or indicate that a policy is no longer relevant. In such cases, potential revision of a policy, or development of a new policy, is overseen by the Policy Committee Secretariat, bringing the policy cycle full circle.

14. Within four to six years of implementation, a policy is evaluated to assess its effectiveness.

Source: WFP, 2011z

3.3   Recommendations

161.   The evaluation's recommendations are consistent with the spirit and intent of the existing Policy. They are designed to reinforce the work that has already been done towards implementing it and, in many cases, build on efforts already under way. They are mutually reinforcing and presented in a logical, rather than chronological, order.

Recommendation 1: Clarify and update the Policy

162.   As this report has shown, the debates around SF (e.g. concerning social protection) are moving quite rapidly, so that there will be a regular need to refresh the SF policy; in doing so, some weaknesses and oversights in the original Policy can also be addressed. Thus, WFP should prepare and seek EB approval (probably in June 2013[70]) for an "Update on WFP's School Feeding Policy". The update would augment the existing Policy, not replace it.[71] The exercise should be led by the SF policy and programme units, but they should involve other HQ divisions, and also engage with regional and country-level staff, so as to maximise ownership and ensure an orientation towards the practical challenges in implementation.

Box 10   Themes to be addressed in the Policy Update

On **social protection** the update should reflect the new WFP social protection policy (expected mid-2012), ensuring that vocabulary and approaches are up-to-date and realistic.

On **education**, highlight the extent to which full realisation of potential educational benefits of SF depends on other elements of national education systems, which WFP and other donors should seek to support.

The update should take account of WFPs new **nutrition policy** (due early 2012), while recognising that governments may have to balance coverage against "gold standard" nutritional quality.

On **HGSF**, address the relationship between HGSF and P4P, note more of the complexities about different possible objectives and approaches to local procurement for SF, and be more realistic about WFP's ambitions for local economic development.[72]

At the WFP workshop which reviewed the draft of this report, it was also suggested that the Update could (a) address the full continuum from pre-primary to adolescents more thoroughly; (b) address school feeding in emergencies and in protracted refugee/IDP contexts (bearing in mind that WFP does not have a comparable Policy on emergency SF).

163.   The Update should:

(a)   **Bridge the gap between policy and implementation strategy**. In particular spell out more clearly WFP roles and the changes in WFP activity

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[70] WFP management will have to consider how best to dovetail the SF Policy update with the roll-over of the Strategic Plan and other Policy revisions.

[71] The 2009 update of the capacity development policy (WFP, 2009p) took a similar approach.

[72] It should draw on a systematic review of the findings of the HGSF case studies currently being finalised by PCD.

and portfolio that will result from the Policy; be more explicit about the comparative advantages of WFP, and the limits to what WFP itself can take responsibility for;[73] include a clear M&E strategy (see also recommendations 2 and 4).

(b) **Update the treatment of key themes**, facilitating practical context-specific choices and addressing the gaps identified in this evaluation (see Box 10 above).

Recommendation 2: Operationalise the Policy more effectively.

164.   Better operationalisation requires:

(a) **Strengthening staff skills and support for implementation at field level**. Ensure adequate technical support for all COs.[74] Continue work on identifying and developing the new skills that are required by WFP's new SF approaches. Wherever possible link training and staff development to wider initiatives across WFP; avoiding a narrow focus on specific instruments such as SF.

(b) **Further development of guidance material.** This should focus on rationalisation of materials (taking account of user feedback), more guidance on prioritisation and addressing trade-offs in SF design, better links to key WFP processes,[75] and objective benchmarking that can be used to track progress in national SF systems.[76]

(c) **More attention to costs and cost-effectiveness.** Build on the very valuable analysis and data collection that have been done through the cost benchmarking exercise and insist on better monitoring of WFP's own costs. At a minimum, all strategy, programme and monitoring documents should be required to report on unit costs planned and achieved.

(d) **Strengthening relationships with external partners.** Existing core partnerships could be further strengthened (e.g. by reciprocal secondment of personnel), while ensuring traditional intra-UN partnerships are not neglected.

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[73] The concept of *comparative* advantage implies identifying also the areas in which others are better suited to take responsibility.

[74] This has budget implications – see Recommendation 3(a).

[75] As one example, the guidance for preparation of Country Strategies, currently very high-level and generic, should be more explicit about the material on national progress towards development of sustainable SF strategies that will be required.

[76] We understand that WFP plans to adopt the 5 SABER benchmarks (see footnote 28), in the interests of standardisation. This will be another element to address in updating the Policy and associated materials.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen the financing of the Policy.

165.   Financial resources and financial and budgetary incentives are key to the operationalisation of the Policy:

(a) **Cost and ensure additional financing for the budgetary implications of Recommendation 2(a) (such as CO staff training & specialist support)** within an overall policy implementation plan to enable PSS, ODXP and Regional Bureaus to support the Policy more effectively across all COs.

(b) **Roll out WFP's new financial framework as rapidly as possible.**

(c) **Seek more predictable funding.** Development programmes and capacity development work require a strategic perspective that is undermined by very short term financing. This relates *first* to ensuring secure, multi-year funding for WFP's own professional staff work in support of the SF Policy. The EB should (continue to) press for more unrestricted and multi-year funding to support WFP's core analytical and policy development work. The prevalence of short-term and earmarked funding perpetuates fragmentation and makes it harder to ensure thematic coordination across WFP. *Second*, to promote a strategic perspective towards the development and financing of national school feeding strategies, country strategies should flag long term financing requirements (focused first on overall national SF requirements, and only secondarily on funding requirements for possible WFP operations).

(d) **Strengthen WFP's ability to analyse SF's budgetary implications for governments**. Those considering the nexus of school feeding, education and social protection need to understand the political economy of the budget processes involved. In particular, what funds does SF compete with in practice, and at which levels of government?[77]

Recommendation 4: Strengthen learning and further development of the Policy.

166.   For near-term **strengthening of monitoring, evaluation and learning within WFP**:

- Include an explicit M&E strategy in the Policy Update.

- Document experiences and lessons from the pilot countries.

- Draw on the impact evaluation approach that OE has developed (see Annex I) in guidance for project formulation and subsequent M&E:

     o At project formulation, spell out the anticipated paths to impact and distinguish factors which are under the control of WFP (or a national SF agency) from those which are not. This approach will help to ensure more

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[77] *Rethinking School Feeding* (Bundy et al, 2009a) rightly highlighted this as an issue that requires more attention, both in research and in practice.

frugal initial design that focuses on a subset of SF objectives and designs interventions accordingly.

o Strengthen regular M&E with a better general understanding of the relevance and quality of different types of evidence.

167. **Support applied research that is relevant to the design and management of SF operations**.**78** This is a long-term strategy – rigorous research takes time – and it is vital to ensure its credibility (see Box 11 below).

Box 11 Ensuring the value and credibility of research

The credibility of research is all-important, particularly as WFP is not regarded as a disinterested party. Wherever possible, such research should be undertaken independently and/or in partnership with organisations that are regarded as sufficiently credible and dispassionate. In reporting on such research, and on its own studies, WFP should be more careful to distinguish between analytical work and advocacy. Analytical work should be careful to maintain balance and not to draw stronger conclusions than the evidence justifies. The credibility, as well as the quality, of WFP's internal work could be enhanced by systematic peer review, drawing on expertise external to WFP. it would be useful to develop clear protocols for the review and publication of research findings.

In order to ensure robust findings, link research to deliberate experiments – e.g. in controlled trials of different SF modalities or different approaches to targeting; more direct comparisons between SF and alternative interventions (e.g. CCTs) should be encouraged (see WFP, 2011v for planned research in Cambodia). Much can be learned from such experiments, although care is needed in interpreting the findings**79** and the extent to which they can be generalised to other contexts.

WFP should be willing to test core assumptions through such research (e.g. the assumption that within-school targeting of school meals is generally infeasible).

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78 The workshop on the draft evaluation report suggested a number of broad fields for applied research, including:

1. Conditions for feasible handover.
2. Nutrition (or broader) benefits of school feeding in particular to adolescent girls and pre-primary children.
3. School feeding in emergency and protracted situations (could include IDPs / refugees).
4. Issues surrounding cost-effectiveness of school feeding.
5. Different school feeding modalities / cash transfers.

79 Not least because SF interventions may have a more complex set of benefits than the comparator.

168.   To promote international learning, WFP and its partners (particularly the Brazil Centre of Excellence) should explore the establishment of a database "*on school feeding programs that describes the coverage and functioning of programs globally*" (as mentioned in *Rethinking School Feeding)* and the possibility of linking it to an annual independent report on developments and trends in school feeding.[80] What happens in the aggregate of WFP SF operations is less important than what is happening globally (whether hungry children are fed is more important than who feeds them).

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[80] This in turn could take forward the objective benchmarking of SF systems – see Recommendation 2 on guidance materials.

Acronyms

ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
ART	Anti-Retroviral Treatment
BCG	The Boston Consulting Group
BMGF	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme
CCTs	Conditional Cash Transfers
CD	Country Director
CFSVA	Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CO	Country Office
CP	Country Programme
CS	Country Strategy
CSB	corn soya blend
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of the OECD)
DEV	Development Project
DFID	(UK) Department for International Development
DSC	Direct Support Cost
EB	Executive Board
EC	European Commission
ED	Executive Director
EFA	Education for All
EM	Evaluation Manager
EP	Essential Package
EQ	Evaluation Question
EQAS	Evaluation Quality Assurance System
ESF	Emergency School Feeding
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FBF	fortified blended food
FFA	Food for Assets
FFE	Food for Education
FFT	Food for Training
FFW	Food for Work
FRESH	Focusing Resources on Effective School Health
FTI	(Education For All) Fast Track Initiative
GFD	General Food Distribution
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
HBC	Home Based Care
HEB	High Energy Biscuits
HGSF	Home Grown School Feeding
HH	Household

HQ	Headquarters
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IEG	Independent Evaluation Group
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
I-NGO	International NGO
ILO	International Labour Organization
IR	Inception Report
LP	local purchase
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCHN	Mother and Child Health and Nutrition
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
n.d.	no date
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NTD	Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases (WHO)
OE	Office of Evaluation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
P4P	Purchase for Progress
PCD	Partnership for Child Development
PCT	Preventive Chemotherapy and Transmission Control (WHO)
PM	Prime Minister
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission
PRC	Programme Review Committee
PRRO	Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RB	Regional Bureau
RE	Retinol Equivalent
SABER	System Assessment and Benchmarking for Education Results
SF	School Feeding
RSF	Rethinking School Feeding
SFP	School Feeding Policy
SO	Strategic Objective
SP	Social Protection
SRAC	Strategic Resource Allocation Committee
SSN	School Safety Net
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach
TB	Tuberculosis
THR	Take-Home Rations
TL	Team Leader
TOR	Terms of Reference

UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USG	United States Government
VAM	Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (UNICEF programme)
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

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