

Evaluation Brief



Evaluation of WFP's Preparedness and Response Enhancement Programme (PREP): 2011-2014

Context

Emergency preparedness and response (EPR) is WFP's core operating area. Responding to emergencies and protracted crises accounted for at least 78 percent of WFP's total direct expenses over the last four years. In 2010, following three large-scale and highly visible emergencies that stretched WFP's response capabilities, WFP's management called for action to address the challenges.

Launched in 2011 for three years, and later extended until December, the Preparedness and Response Enhancement Programme (PREP) aimed to ensure WFP's ability to respond effectively and efficiently to a scenario of three large-scale emergencies a year. PREP implemented more than 70 activities designed to strengthen five priority outcome areas: i) personnel; ii) finance and financial risk management; iii) accountability; iv) food and non-food stocks; and v) external partners. PREP received USD 41 million – 43 percent of its total requested budget of USD 95 million. 94 percent of funding was from extra-budgetary sources.

PREP was implemented during a period of highly complex internal and global conditions: WFP restructuring and decentralizing to support the shift from food aid to food assistance; the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Transformative Agenda launched to improve the global humanitarian system; and an unprecedented number of complex and long-duration Level 3 emergency responses.

Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation, conducted between August and December 2014, assessed PREP's relevance, appropriateness, effectiveness, sustained contribution, and its supporting and constraining factors. It included case studies of recent Level 3 emergency responses,¹ staff surveys, internal/external interviews, and document/data

review. Gender issues were systematically considered and data were disaggregated by gender wherever possible.

The evaluation was part of a series of strategic evaluations on WFP's emergency preparedness and response.

Key Findings

The evaluation found that PREP's design was highly relevant to addressing WFP's internal challenges and implementing the Transformative Agenda. It also found that PREP contributed to important achievements across its priority intended outcome areas:

Personnel: moderate improvements in the timely deployment of qualified surge capacity to Level 3 emergencies through a corporate emergency response roster and inter-divisional emergency training.

Finance and financial risk management: improvements in the volume of and timely access to advance financing, which are essential for WFP's rapid response and early scale-up.

Accountability: improvements in the timeliness, consistency and user-friendliness of information; formal assignment of roles and responsibilities in Level 3 emergencies; and systematic use of strategic and operational task forces and lesson-learning from Level 3 emergencies.

Stocks: support to the pre-positioning of ready-to-eat foods, and modest investments in WFP's logistics capacity.

External partners: a stronger framework for WFP's work with national authorities and better civil-military coordination.

However, by the end of the Programme several activities were not completed, including amongst others, leadership training and deployment, staff

¹ Iraq and Cameroon in 2014; South Sudan, the Syrian crisis and the Philippines in 2013–2014.

health and well-being measures, and review of corporate response stocks.

Other activities such as the emergency response roster, and the emergency preparedness and response package are in need of refinement and/or lack ownership and uptake in WFP.

PREP was too focused on the early phases of sudden-onset disasters rather than the full range of emergency scenarios, and insufficient attention was paid to the phases prior to declaration of a corporate emergency. Important areas such as relationships with cooperating partners, cash and voucher programming, protection, and accountability to affected populations were either not covered by PREP, or not yet sufficiently addressed by other initiatives. In addition, insufficient attention was directed to the quality or appropriateness of assistance.

PREP's dynamic leadership and skilled staff were critical to its achievements. Its cross-functional approach and ability to provide analysis and develop concepts enabled progress in several areas. However many respondents viewed PREP as overly complex; insufficiently clear on what it aimed to achieve and how; and too top-down and, Headquarters-centric in its implementation approach.

Perceptions of PREP's overall effectiveness diverged strongly among WFP staff; while the evaluation noted progress in many important areas, it also raised strong concerns about the sustainability of many PREP activities and achievements.

PREP could have achieved more through better prioritization; enhanced communication with the field to strengthen ownership and application of frameworks, tools and guidance; and a more comprehensive approach that addresses phases beyond immediate response and emergency scenarios beyond sudden-onset natural disasters.

Conclusions and Recommendations

PREP was a relevant initiative to help WFP strengthen its capacity to respond to increasingly complex, global humanitarian challenges. The evaluation team concluded that as a result of the investments in PREP, important achievements were realised in all of PREP's outcome areas.

PREP's accomplishments were achieved while WFP and its Emergencies Division were challenged by an unprecedented number of long-duration and complex Level 3 emergencies, far exceeding the scenario of three corporate

emergencies a year on which PREP was based. PREP was challenged by its wide scope, high level of ambition and implementation approach, which – combined with a funding level of less than 50 percent – limited its overall success.

WFP continues to face critical gaps in EPR capacity, with several PREP activities not having been completed, others needing refinement and some areas not adequately addressed.

PREP's approach did not always build sustainable commitment to activities undertaken. PREP focused too much on generating frameworks, tools and guidance, without investing enough in communicating and supporting their uptake and application.

PREP's reliance on extra-budgetary funding brought in needed resources but did not establish a sustained base of core resources for addressing continuing EPR strengthening needs.

To ensure that PREP's investments and achievements are not lost, EPR strengthening should be fully integrated into the work of all relevant WFP units, building on PREP's efforts to leverage knowledge and learning and its cross-functional approach. Increased emphasis should be placed on consultations with field staff and partners on the design, adjustment and roll-out of activities.

Recommendations

The evaluation made four main recommendations:

- i. Reinforce emergency preparedness and response strengthening as a corporate priority, adopting an integrated agenda that considers all phases of response and levels of emergency including complex and protracted types;
- ii. Focus on three priorities for future EPR strengthening: staff capacity, relationships with cooperating partners, and cash and vouchers programming;
- iii. Clarify and enable the Emergency Preparedness and Support Response Division's role in supporting Corporate EPR strengthening;
- iv. Refine and complete several major PREP activities.



Reference: Full and summary reports of the evaluation and the Management Response are available at www.wfp.org/evaluation

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