

Evaluation Brief

WFP Office of Evaluation: *Measuring Results, Sharing Lessons*



Annual Evaluation Report: 2015

The 2015 Annual Evaluation Report (AER) provides a synthesis analysis of 32 individual evaluations, comprising 9 evaluation reports published in 2015¹. Reflecting the subject of the evaluations and their relevance to the global context, this year's AER provides a three-dimensional analysis of the findings on two important themes for WFP – Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) and Nutrition; and thirdly, additional commonalities from country-specific evaluations.

The recommendations from these evaluations were further condensed into seven overarching lessons and recommendations which correspond closely to WFP's six corporate priority focus areas for 2015 and 2016, and intended to inform the development of WFP's next Strategic Plan (SP) and associate instruments.

Overarching lessons and recommendations

1) The shifts indicated in the current Strategic Plan (SP) - from **food aid to food assistance** and from **implementer to enabler** were confirmed as appropriate for sustainable hunger solutions and WFP's future strategic direction under Agenda 2030; and are gathering pace on the ground wherever the context permits.

2) Confirming **emergency response** as WFP's primary strength, its investments in strengthening response capacity, quality and coordination were found to have enhanced its reputation in the humanitarian system, and to have contributed to more effective (collective) results, especially in large-scale, sudden-onset emergencies. However, the high visibility and heavy management demands of multiple and concurrent corporate emergency L3 responses, have had unintended consequences for chronic, underfunded and lower-level emergencies.

3) For WFP to effectively and efficiently meet the expectations set by its high ambition, and the range, pace of change and complexity of its work in today's context, requires a strong **evidence and**

knowledge-based culture. The evaluations in 2015 noted WFP's corporate efforts and progress in this direction, but also confirmed that they are not yet fully embedded. Calls for management across WFP to apply stronger incentives and pay increased attention to monitoring and analysis for evidence generation, sharing and use formed the most frequent recommendation topic across the 2015 evaluations.

4) With **partnerships** set to become an even higher priority in the next Strategic Plan, the second most frequent set of evaluation recommendations pertinently urged WFP to apply its strong corporate level commitment to partnerships with greater consistency, and clearer analysis of complementarities and value-added. Room for improvements were noted in several partnership elements, notably inter-agency collaboration and synergy, and in relations with cooperating partners.

5) Concerning government partnerships, **national capacity development** was a further frequent theme of 2015 evaluation recommendations, and relevant to the forthcoming Country Strategic Plan (CSP) approach policy. The evaluations recommended a comprehensive strategic reorientation towards national systems and partnerships, building on positive examples to establish more systematic and national systems-oriented approaches, focused on areas of proven expertise (EPR, food security and vulnerability analysis, social protection and school feeding) and adapted to the main contexts for WFP's engagement:

- In emergency contexts, focus on strengthening engagement and capacity of national counterparts in preparedness and response;
- In protracted crisis situations, develop longer-term transition plans and hand-over strategies to national partners;
- In more structurally stable contexts, position WFP's programming within national social protection and other frameworks (e.g. nutrition).

¹ 2 Strategic Evaluations; 1 Policy Evaluation; 2 Country Portfolio Evaluations; 2 L3 Corporate Emergency Response Evaluations; 2 Syntheses.

6) Several evaluations recommended greater **financing flexibility** to support the humanitarian-development nexus and the long-term perspective of the 2030 Agenda, anticipating WFP's ongoing Financial Framework Review (FFR) and the associated processes to better enable country-level results-based management. Findings concerning similar corporate developments suggest that the time lag between system improvements and operational results should not be underestimated.

7) Mixed findings across the evaluations concerning **gender** and cross-cutting issues led to multiple recommendations calling for rigorous application of the new gender policy in all projects, country and corporate strategies; and, through the People Strategy, to ensure **staff profiles** and deployments combine operational competence with cross-cutting and partnership skills; alongside **skills development** programmes on: accountability to affected populations (AAP); Gender and Equity-focused programme design and monitoring, as well as Cash-based transfers and nutrition.

WFP's Evaluation Function

Partnerships and engagement with the international evaluation system continued to be important in OEV's work, enabling increased evaluation coverage, shared cost and enhanced learning. In 2015, there were 7 joint evaluations completed or underway. OEV played a leading role in the IASC– Inter-agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHE) arrangement and co-hosted a Rome based agencies (RBA) technical seminar on the evaluability of SDG2.

Efforts to support learning from and use of evaluations continued with a range of targeted workshops and briefings, and cross-evaluation syntheses for easier absorption of key lessons. OEV also supported WFP's efforts to strengthen programme design through evidence reviews of almost all of new project documents, Country Strategic Plans and Policies, and an advisory assessment of the evaluability of the Strategic Plan, to help strengthen the performance management architecture in the next SP/CRF.

Set within the wider contextual milestones of Agenda 2030, developments in United Nations and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) arrangements for system-wide evaluation, and the International Year of Evaluation, the approval of

the new Evaluation Policy in 2015 set WFP on a new vision and strategic direction to embed evaluation across the organisation. It positions evaluation at the core of WFP's continued organizational strengthening efforts for achieving Strategic Plan objectives and maximising its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals. The new policy establishes WFP's evaluation function as a combined centralized and demand-led decentralized evaluation model - a significant point of departure from the previous evaluation policy.

As required by the Policy, preparation of an Evaluation Charter began in 2015, setting the governance and institutional arrangements for the new function. It is supported by an internal evaluation strategy to guide the phased implementation of the policy. All this work sets a comprehensive foundation for the function and policy implementation from 2016.

In parallel, OEV started activities to strengthen the decentralized evaluation (DE) function, focusing primarily on its normative framework. All elements of the function have been successfully embedded in the new evaluation policy through setting the norms and standards for decentralized evaluations; and, clear roles and accountabilities for the various stakeholders in WFP in terms of planning, resourcing, capacity development quality assurance, reporting, use, management response and dissemination. It also includes clear provisions to safeguard their impartiality.

In 2015, OEV prioritized initiatives to develop WFP capacity to undertake good quality decentralized evaluations, particularly by:

- Drafting guidance;
- Having a fully operational help desk function (which provided support to RBs and COs on 20 exercises in its first year);
- Embedding evaluation in the corporate Monitoring and Evaluation Learning Programme (MELP);
- Increasing WFP staff awareness of evaluation through Regional M&E network meetings;
- Establishing a DE intranet page.

Reference:

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