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SYNTHESIS REPORT OF OPERATION EVALUATIONS (JULY 2013–JULY 2014)



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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration.

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

Director, OEV*: Ms H. Wedgwood tel.: 066513-2030

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report synthesizes the findings of 12 WFP operation evaluations conducted between July 2013 and July 2014. The operations were implemented in diverse settings, from refugee camps to development contexts. They had a combined planned value of USD 3 billion, targeted 14.3 million beneficiaries a year, and were of varying types, durations and sizes.

The evaluations found that amid some of the most difficult operating conditions in the world, WFP's operations cohered well with national and sector policy frameworks. WFP is directly influencing and helping to formulate policy and strategy in many locations, and is increasingly engaging in joint programming.

WFP delivered broadly relevant food assistance to its beneficiaries, with most operations being appropriate to national food security and nutrition needs. However, insufficient differentiation in the analysis and planning of some operations compromised planning for specific beneficiary needs.

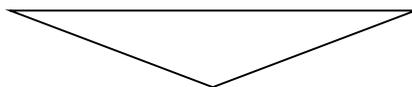
Results were inadequately documented, particularly at the outcome level, mainly because of weak monitoring and field-level evaluation systems. Evaluations revealed some valuable outcome-level results, but the full extent of WFP's achievements – and under-achievements – is not currently reflected in its reporting systems.

Most of the outputs reported referred to numbers of beneficiaries reached and transfers achieved against plans, but these metrics mask wide variations in type, quality and duration of assistance. Based on the limited available data, general food distribution, school feeding and nutrition activities delivered well against coverage targets, with weaker performance in food assistance for assets. Evidence found that WFP served its beneficiaries with less food than planned, with effects including disrupted ration supplies and incomplete rations. Gender sensitivity was limited.

At the outcome level, WFP made most progress under Strategic Objective 1. Only limited data were available on Strategic Objectives 2 and 5, and mixed performance was evident under Strategic Objectives 3 and 4. Assessment of efficiency and sustainability was variable and shallow; where analysis was more comprehensive, 2 of 12 operations were characterized as generally efficient and 2 as having some likelihood of sustainability.

Many of the external factors affecting results are features of WFP's complex operating terrain, including political instability. Funding was a major constraint. Internal factors are symptomatic of an organization in transition, with progress in introducing changes, but business practices still to be oriented to new external and corporate realities. The lessons presented in this synthesis report aim to support WFP as it becomes increasingly fit for purpose.

DRAFT DECISION*



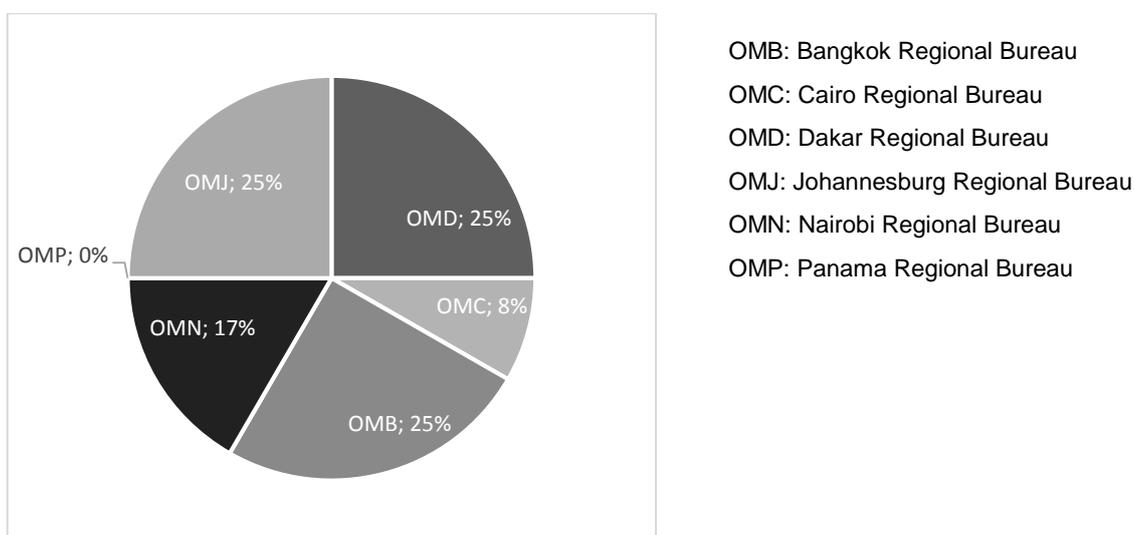
The Board takes note of “Synthesis Report of Operation Evaluations (July 2013–July 2014)” (WFP/EB.2/2014/6-E) and encourages the Secretariat to take into account the lessons included in the report and the considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

INTRODUCTION

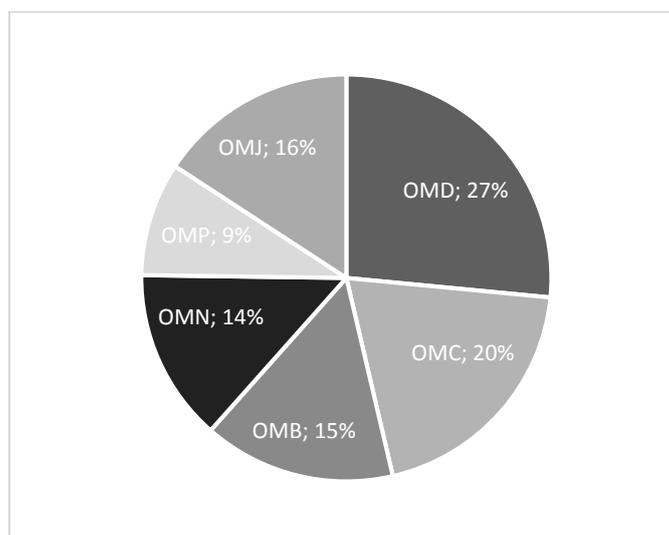
1. As the frontline United Nations agency in the global fight against hunger, WFP is undergoing a historic shift. Its transition from a food aid to a food assistance organization has received impetus from the Fit for Purpose Agenda and the Strategic Plan (2014–2017). Working to ensure that “no child goes to bed hungry and that the poorest and most vulnerable, particularly women and children, can access the nutritious food they need”¹ has implied major institutional reforms.
2. The Zero Hunger Challenge, the Transformative Agenda and the emerging post-2015 development agenda call for more efficient and effective humanitarian actors. WFP operates in an environment where accountability for results and value for money are increasingly demanded.
3. WFP’s beneficiaries continue to face poverty, conflict and natural disasters. Often hungry and always vulnerable, they have few resources, little choice and persistent need for food assistance. Designed and implemented in some of the world’s most risky and challenging areas, WFP’s operations face many expectations and demands.
4. In response to the renewed corporate emphasis on evidence and accountability for results and the ongoing organizational strengthening, in 2013 the Office of Evaluation (OEV) revitalized its use of operation evaluations to complement more complex evaluations of policies, strategies, country portfolios and impacts of core activities. The first series conducted as part of this initiative included 12 evaluations, all of which used a common process and framework. They asked three questions: i) How appropriate is the operation? ii) What are the results of the operation? and iii) Why and how has the operation produced the observed results?
5. This report brings together the findings of 12 evaluations of operations. It aims to support accountability, contribute to learning and help WFP to realize its mission and mandate for the beneficiaries it serves. Figures 1 and 2 show the coverage and Table 1 the countries, operation types, values and durations.

Figure 1: Operation evaluations by region



¹ “WFP Strategic Plan (2014–2017)” (WFP/EB.A/2013/5-A/1), p. 3.

Figure 2: WFP operations by region (2013)



METHOD

6. This report used standard methods for transnational synthesis, with an analytical framework geared to the evaluation questions, and systematic data extraction. Evidence was rated for validity and reliability on a scale of 1 to 4, with only sound and reliable evidence – scoring at least 2 – included in the analysis. Other sources such as Standard Project Reports (SPRs) were used for triangulation where appropriate – for example, for results data.
7. Limitations included the synthesis report’s dependence on its component studies, and some evidence gaps. Reporting of results data varied across evaluations so had to be treated separately.
8. The 12 operations evaluated were implemented in highly diverse settings, from refugee camps to development contexts. They had combined planned requirements of more than USD 3 billion, targeted 14.3 million beneficiaries a year, and were of varying types, sizes and durations. Their key features are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1: COMPONENT OPERATIONS*					
Country	Operation name and type	Duration	Value (planned + revision) (USD million)	% funded (aggregate total)	Beneficiaries targeted**
Burkina Faso	CP 200163	2011–2015	52.4	31.7	888 000
Cambodia	CP 200202	2011–2016	141.9	50.6	2 836 380
Chad	PRRO 200289: Targeted Food Assistance for Refugees and Vulnerable People Affected by Malnutrition and Recurrent Food Crises	2012–2014	561.6	62.9	1 630 000
Ethiopia	PRRO 200290: Responding to Humanitarian Crises and Enhancing Resilience to Food Insecurity	2012–2015	1 488	46.5	4 382 000 (yearly maximum)
Kenya	PRRO 200174: Food Assistance to Refugees	2011–2014	436	78.7	616 000
Lao People's Democratic Republic	CP 200242	2012–2015	76.8	48	894 500
Madagascar	PRRO 200065: Response to Recurrent Natural Disasters and Seasonal Food Insecurity	2010–2014	63.6	45.7	516 000
Mozambique	PRRO 200355: Assistance to Vulnerable Groups and Disaster-Affected Populations	2012–2014	30.1	53	253 000
Philippines	PRRO 200296: Support for Returnees and Other Conflict-Affected Households in Central Mindanao, and National Capacity Development in Disaster Preparedness and Response	2012–2014	72.9	86.8	1 480 000
Swaziland	Development projects 200422 and 200508: Support to Children and Students Affected by HIV and AIDS 2013–2014 and Component 1 of Support to Community-Based Volunteer Caregivers of Children Affected by HIV and AIDS 2013–2014	2013–2014	11.9	45	250 900
Tajikistan	PRRO 200122: Restoring Sustainable Livelihoods for Food-Insecure People	2010–2014	23.6	29	356 000
West Africa (regional)	EMOP 200438: Assistance to Refugees and Host Communities Affected by Insecurity in Mali (Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, the Niger)	2012–2014	136.9	55.3	174 000

CP = country programme; EMOP = emergency operation; PRRO = protracted relief and recovery operation.

* Mid-term evaluations for Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Ethiopia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic; final evaluations for all the others.

** Evaluation terms of reference.

FINDINGS

Appropriateness

⇒ *Coherence and positioning*

9. Even under extremely difficult operating conditions, all the operations evaluated were coherent with national and sector policy frameworks and objectives, with only minor exceptions. In at least four cases² WFP responded swiftly to national policy shifts as they arose, sometimes reorienting major programmes. Focus on disaster preparedness and response (DPR) is increasing, such as in Ethiopia and the Philippines.
10. In several countries,³ WFP is directly influencing and supporting policy change and formulation through technical advice and analysis. For example, in Cambodia, Chad and the Philippines, WFP supported the development of new national nutrition policies/guidelines, reflecting its growing strategic influence and engagement.

⇒ *Synergy*

11. While some efforts were made to exploit synergies with partners at the design stage, other opportunities were missed. All 12 operations were coherent with United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and designed in alignment with the activities of partners, including other United Nations agencies; operations with refugee components⁴ sought complementarity with partners such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Children's Fund. WFP is increasingly engaging in joint programming where conditions permit, such as in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Philippines. Missed opportunities, identified in three cases,⁵ commonly stemmed from insufficient consideration of potential complementarities, for example with food assistance for assets (FFA) activities in Chad.

⇒ *Rigour of design*

12. Nine of the twelve operations⁶ had a comprehensive analytical basis for their designs, determining alignment and ensuring complementarity. Five operations⁷ were designed within the framework of country strategies, and country strategy analyses were applied to operations in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Mozambique. All three refugee operations applied joint assessment missions to identify needs. Some analyses were extensive; in Mozambique, ten years of data from the Vulnerability Assessment Committee were analysed to plan activities and targeting.

² Chad, Ethiopia, the Philippines and Tajikistan.

³ Cambodia, Chad, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Swaziland and Tajikistan.

⁴ Chad, Kenya, Mozambique and West Africa.

⁵ The regional EMOP, Burkina Faso and Chad.

⁶ All except the Burkina Faso, Madagascar and the Philippines evaluations, which do not provide commentary.

⁷ Ethiopia, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mozambique and Swaziland. The Ethiopia, Kenya and Swaziland evaluations have no commentary, but the Ethiopia and Kenya operations were based on detailed analysis.

⇒ *Appropriateness*

13. All operations were broadly appropriate to national food security and nutrition needs. However, three evaluations found that insufficient differentiation in planning and targeting compromised planning for specific beneficiary needs. In Chad and Madagascar, a regional-level approach masked intra-regional variations – which were particularly stark in Chad – reducing the operations’ relevance for some target groups. In Ethiopia, where government humanitarian planning is based on the seasonal calendar of highland areas, WFP had not sufficiently differentiated its approach for food-insecure groups in lowland areas.
14. In two cases, questions regarding geographical coverage were raised. The Cambodia evaluation found that adaptations to resource constraints, partners’ availability and other factors resulted in a focus on the accessible poorest, which risked excluding others. In the Philippines, the evaluation noted that “Remote areas, although targeted, have not seen the full benefit of the programme implemented to date”.⁸
15. Activities were generally relevant to beneficiary needs. Exceptions included the use of emergency modalities for nutrition activities in protracted situations in the Philippines and in the regional EMOP, particularly in the Niger; FFA activities that responded to the community needs as perceived by local authorities rather than the communities themselves, in the Philippines; and insufficient consideration of distances to distribution points for beneficiaries of nutrition activities in Cambodia, cash transfers in Tajikistan and several activities in the Philippines. Several evaluations, particularly those in Chad, Mozambique, the Philippines and Tajikistan, noted the need to improve gender sensitivity at the design stage.
16. Transfer modalities – cash, vouchers or food – were considered appropriate, with beneficiaries generally being highly satisfied with cash or voucher distributions,⁹ even where collection incurred costs, as in Tajikistan. Innovations encountered included the use of cash scholarships in food-for-education initiatives in Cambodia.

Results

17. Significant data constraints prevented comprehensive reporting on results. All 12 evaluations cited limitations – particularly at the outcome level – which were linked to weaknesses in field monitoring and evaluation systems in nine reports.¹⁰

⇒ *Output-level results*

18. Beneficiary numbers and quantities of food, cash and vouchers distributed were the main output-level results reported. Figures 3 and 4 show the numbers and percentages of beneficiaries reached against targets across the 12 operations for general food distribution (GFD), school feeding, nutrition and FFA activities in 2012 and 2013. Data on capacity development outputs were limited and did not generally include information on beneficiaries.¹¹

⁸ Operation Evaluation Philippines, p. 40.

⁹ Such as in Kenya. In Ethiopia, most of the relief beneficiaries interviewed preferred a mix of food and cash, although WFP’s cash pilot was still at an early stage.

¹⁰ Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Mozambique, the Philippines, Tajikistan and West Africa.

¹¹ Data were available on numbers of training courses held in Chad and the Philippines, numbers of early warning systems in place in the Philippines, beneficiaries trained in Mozambique, and simple expenditure in Swaziland.

Figure 3: Beneficiaries reached by activity type, 2012 and 2013

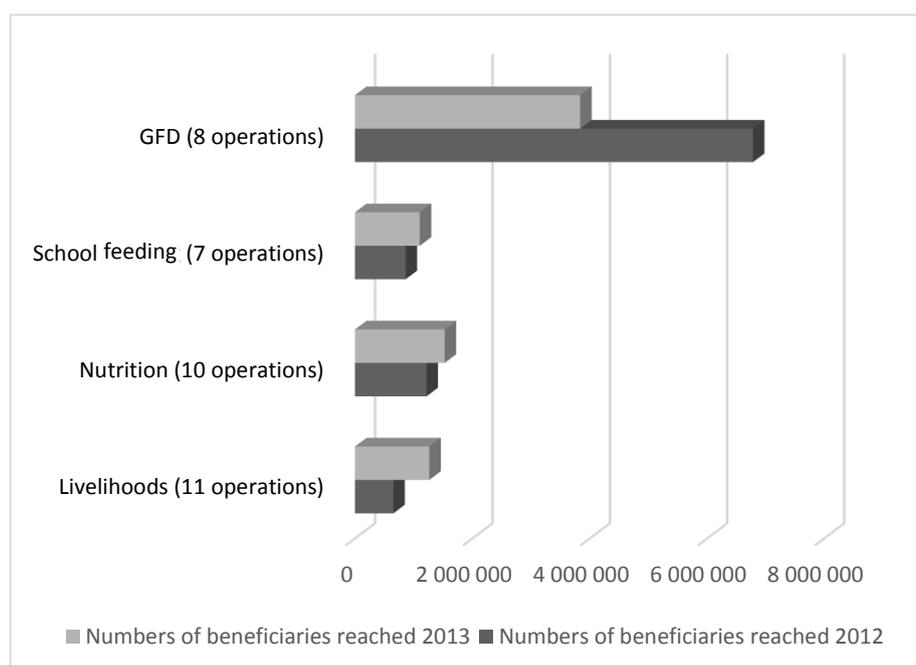
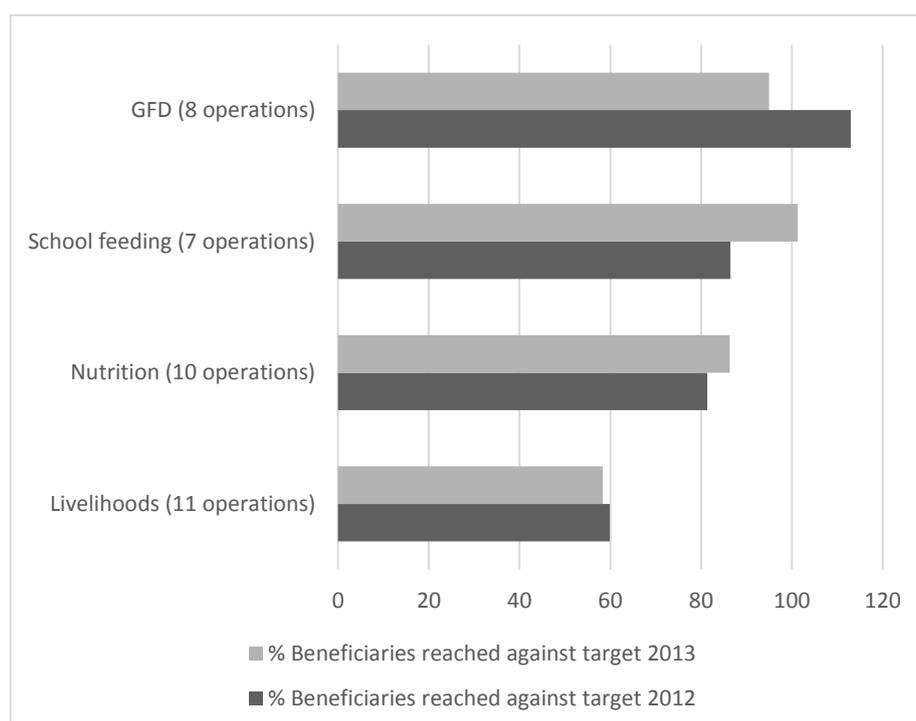


Figure 4: Beneficiaries reached as percentages of targets, 2012 and 2013



General food distribution

19. In all 12 operations evaluated, GFD activities targeted and reached the greatest numbers of beneficiaries, particularly in the four major relief operations in Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya and West Africa. Percentages of planned beneficiaries were reached in GFD activities, but results should be interpreted with reference to needs. For example, Madagascar and Tajikistan face frequent natural disasters, and WFP based its beneficiary targets on historical trends; when disasters did not occur, targets were not achieved.

20. Six evaluations identified the use of foods unsuited to local consumption preferences: affected populations in Chad and Kenya resisted sorghum; months of training and sensitization were required for Supercereal Plus in Burkina Faso, Cambodia and West Africa; and the provision of unground maize incurred milling costs for beneficiaries in Burkina Faso and Mozambique. For WFP and cooperating partners, the implications and burden of providing culturally unfamiliar foods can be significant.

Nutrition

21. After GFD, nutrition activities reached the second most beneficiaries, exceeding 2.9 million over the evaluation period, mainly through the Ethiopia PRRO. More than 80 percent of targeted beneficiaries were reached in 2011–2013, reflecting comparatively high funding levels for nutrition activities, but masking significant variations among individual activities and across years.

School feeding

22. A well-established modality for WFP, school feeding reached 2.4 million beneficiaries over the period, although fewer operations included school feeding. Operations in Burkina Faso, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Philippines reached more than 250,000 beneficiaries each. Comparatively high achievements against targets reflected proportionately high funding levels because of WFP's good record in school feeding, and high coverage in some countries.¹²

Food assistance for assets

23. Food assistance for assets reached more than 2 million beneficiaries over the period. Numbers were evenly spread across operations and increased steadily between 2011 and 2013, with activities in Ethiopia and the Philippines reaching more than 600,000 beneficiaries.¹³ However, these achievements did not match WFP's ambitions, and lower percentages of targets were reached than in other programme areas. Individual evaluations such as those in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mozambique and Tajikistan cited major funding constraints, with lower donor confidence in WFP's capabilities in FFA.¹⁴

Food volume

24. Five evaluations – Mozambique, the Philippines, Swaziland, Tajikistan and West Africa – pointed to higher numbers of beneficiary targets reached than of planned food volumes distributed. For example, in Tajikistan, the PRRO reached 93 percent of target beneficiaries but distributed only 57.3 percent of planned food tonnages. The corporate methodology for counting beneficiaries is under review, but the evidence from these 12 operations shows that WFP served beneficiaries with less food than planned. Effects included disrupted ration supplies and incomplete rations, such as for refugees in Mozambique.

¹² In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, for example, WFP assisted more than 90 percent of all schools in 30 districts in 2013.

¹³ However, the data for Ethiopia are uncertain.

¹⁴ As reflected in WFP's 2014 "Synthesis Report of the Evaluation Series on the Impact of Food for Assets (2002–2011)" (WFP/EB.A/2014/7-B*).

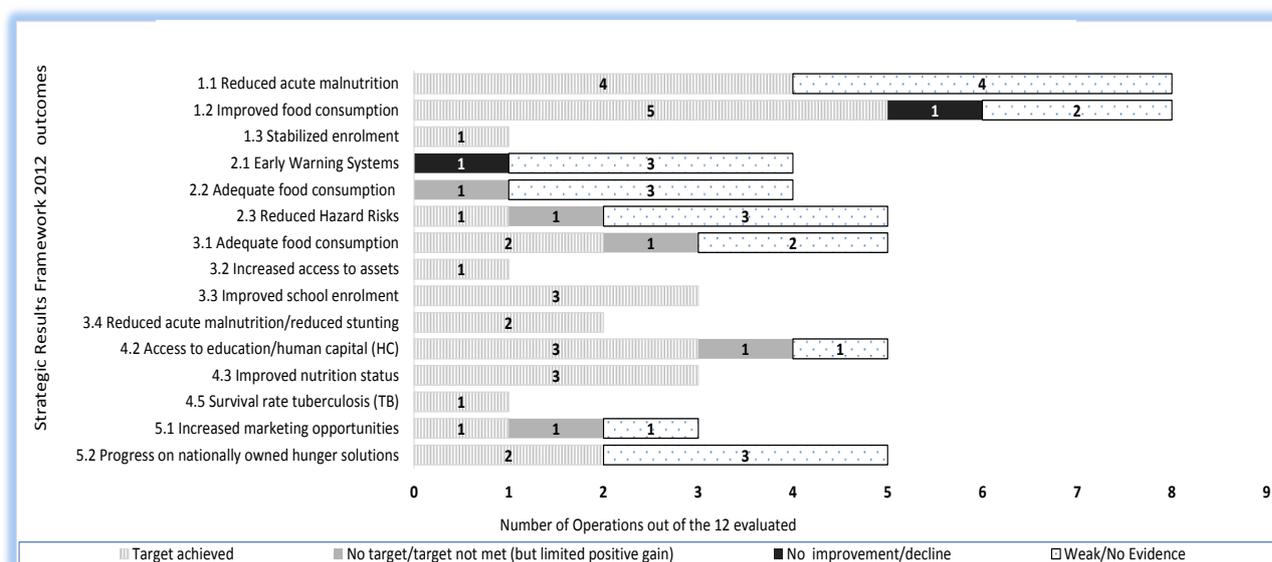
Cash and voucher transfers

25. Cash and voucher transfers were used in seven operations.¹⁵ Nearly USD 12 million was disbursed in cash and vouchers over the period – just over 61 percent of the amount planned.¹⁶ Results were positive, with evaluations in Kenya, Tajikistan and West Africa reporting significant household expenditure on food. Most beneficiary reactions to cash and vouchers were positive, as in Kenya, Tajikistan and West Africa.

⇒ Outcome-level results

26. All 12 evaluations found limited outcome-level data, partly because monitoring and evaluation systems were weak, and partly because outcome monitoring was not embedded in country-level planning and programme cycle management.¹⁷ Figure 5 compares the stated objectives of the evaluated operations at the planning stage with the outcomes achieved against WFP's 2012 Strategic Results Framework.¹⁸

Figure 5: Operations' achievement of Strategic Objectives



27. Unsurprisingly, the greatest evidence of positive results was under Strategic Objective 1; evidence under Strategic Objective 2 was particularly scant; and there was limited evidence under Strategic Objective 5. Under-reporting and under-representation were major issues.¹⁹

¹⁵ In GFD for refugees in Kenya, Tajikistan, West Africa and a pilot recently launched in Chad; school scholarships in Cambodia; and FFA in Cambodia, Chad, Ethiopia, Tajikistan and West Africa.

¹⁶ According to SPRs. Main contributors were Ethiopia with USD 6.5 million, and the Philippines with USD 2.1 million.

¹⁷ For example, some operations did not report outcomes under the 2012 Strategic Results Framework (SRF); some reported outcome indicators under inappropriate Strategic Objectives; and some applied outcome-level indicators that did not feature in the SRF. The SRF was also amended during its implementation period.

¹⁸ "No target/target not met" means that evaluations found some progress, but either progress was insufficient to meet the target or no target had been set.

¹⁹ Under-reporting refers to results reflected in WFP's corporate reporting system for which operation evaluations found limited evidence. Under-representation refers to results that are not reflected in WFP's corporate reporting system, but for which operation evaluations found evidence of achievement

Under-reporting

28. Based on evidence from the 12 evaluations, WFP's outcome-level results appear to be under-reported. While many of the results reported in the evaluations indicated valuable changes for target populations (Table 2), greater availability of robust data would permit more systematic and accurate assessment of WFP's contributions to intended outcomes – and its under-achievements.

TABLE 2: EXAMPLES OF OUTCOME RESULTS FOR BENEFICIARIES	
Strategic Objective 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased acute malnutrition among children under 5 – Kenya, Tajikistan and countries in West Africa • Increased food consumption scores against baselines – Ethiopia, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar and Tajikistan
Strategic Objective 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased community asset scores following FFA activities – Cambodia
Strategic Objective 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased school attendance – camps in Burkina Faso under the West Africa EMOP, Kenya and the Philippines
Strategic Objective 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased enrolment and attendance rates in WFP-assisted schools – Burkina Faso, Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic • Higher than national average survival rates for children and adults affected by HIV and AIDS – Burkina Faso
Strategic Objective 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National capacity indices improved – Chad and Tajikistan

Under-representation

29. Almost all the operation evaluations found valuable results that were not captured in current systems. These results included potential contributions to Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets and the Zero Hunger Challenge (Table 3).

TABLE 3: EXAMPLES OF UNCAPTURED OUTCOME RESULTS	
MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livelihoods created as a direct result of WFP food-for-training activities in a camp under the Kenya PRRO • Increased dietary diversity of beneficiaries in Tajikistan and Cambodia and of beneficiary refugees in Kenya • Increased agricultural production and access to services in Cambodia FFA projects
MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased school promotion rates through grades, particularly among girls, and lower repetition rates arising from scholarships in Cambodia • Enhanced community participation in education in Cambodia and the Philippines • Reduced absenteeism from/increased attendance at schools in Swaziland
MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved economic status for women in Cambodia
MDG 4: Reduced child mortality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved birthweights and child growth in the Lao People's Democratic Republic through nutrition activities
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased health-seeking behaviour in Chad, Kenya, the Philippines and Tajikistan • Rebuilding of community links and contributions to peacebuilding in the Philippines through FFA activities • Increased numbers of early warning systems in place in the Philippines

30. Strategic Objective 5 on capacity development suffered particularly from both under-representation and under-reporting. Outcome data were scant, but evaluations revealed many valuable results including improved local government capacity for disaster risk profiling in Ethiopia and enhanced national capacities in Mozambique.

Limited effects

31. Six evaluations reported under-achievement or non-achievement of outcome targets, mostly in school feeding and nutrition activities. These limitations arise when assumptions embedded in results chains – for example, that take-home rations for girls in school feeding activities are enough to combat gender-based exclusion from education – are insufficiently explored.²⁰

Synergies and complementarity in implementation

32. WFP's operational partnerships were generally found to be strong, and most cooperation with United Nations agencies was positive, sometimes because of gradually maturing relationships, as in the Philippines and Swaziland. However, in the West Africa regional EMOP, problematic relationships between UNHCR and WFP eroded donor confidence.

33. In line with WFP's growing policy influence, evaluations also found generally strong partnerships with national governments or local authorities where conditions permitted. In some, particularly middle-income, countries WFP is moving from a delivery to an enabling role, such as in helping to improve the national evidence base for food security and nutrition in Cambodia, the Philippines and Tajikistan.

²⁰ Such as in Kenya and the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

34. Relationships with donors and cooperating partners varied and depended on the context. Where national capacity was weak, all evaluations found that WFP sought other ways of working, such as with local authorities or non-governmental organizations.

Internal synergies

35. Internal synergies varied. While linkages among activities were strong in the Kenya and Tajikistan PRROs, there was scope for improvement in most other operations. Four evaluations – Cambodia, Ethiopia, Madagascar and the Philippines – found that DPR initiatives were not always fully integrated into other activities.
36. WFP faces considerable challenges in improving cost-efficiency given the insecurity and difficult access of its operating environments. All 12 evaluations commented on efficiency, but the evidence was mainly shallow or limited. Only the Kenya and Mozambique PRROs were found generally efficient, with timely implementation, few pipeline breaks and efficient distribution mechanisms. Innovative – biometric – targeting mechanisms reduced inclusion and exclusion errors and saved costs in Kenya. The evaluations highlighted the serious effects of inefficiency on beneficiaries, with late food deliveries in Ethiopia and Tajikistan causing peak hunger periods to be missed.

Sustainability

37. Only the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Philippines operations were assessed as potentially sustainable. The main external challenge was weak national capacity, but three evaluations noted WFP's failure to embed sustainability strategies at the design stage.²¹

Factors

⇒ *External factors*

38. Features inherent to WFP's complex and often hazardous operating environments were the main constraints to effectiveness. Insecurity and political instability resulted in restricted access, limited availability of food security data, more frequent displacements and limited incentives for refugee repatriation in Kenya, Madagascar, the Philippines and West Africa.

⇒ *Funding limitations*

39. Limited funds were the second largest constraint; funding volumes ranged from 32 percent in Burkina Faso to 79 percent in Kenya and 87 percent in the Philippines. Limitations were particularly prominent in CPs and development projects, and/or in countries approaching middle-income status. Several operations had to downsize significantly or cancel plans. There was evidence of over-optimistic or over-ambitious planning, such as in Burkina Faso. Many of the activities receiving limited funding were recent additions to WFP's toolkit, such as asset-creation activities.

⇒ *Internal factors*

40. Efforts to demonstrate a clear evidence base for activities resulted in better designs, with good vulnerability analysis and mapping generating detailed and up-to-date knowledge of local food security situations.²² Technical support from regional bureaux and other WFP units helped improve design quality.²³ Efforts to move from delivery to more strategic

²¹ Burkina Faso, Mozambique and Swaziland.

²² Chad, Mozambique and Tajikistan.

²³ Cambodia, Chad, Kenya and Tajikistan.

operational support bore fruit in some locations, with WFP helping to build national capacity and stronger strategic frameworks for food security and nutrition.²⁴

41. Major factors constraining effectiveness included weak monitoring and evaluation systems, which restricted the availability of sound data on results and the evidence base for informing designs and adaptations. At least two evaluations noted that this limitation could compromise the confidence of donors and host governments in WFP's capacity to deliver results.²⁵

⇒ *Targeting issues*

42. Nine evaluations raised targeting issues,²⁶ including the challenges of balancing breadth with depth of coverage; the mismatch between WFP's targeting systems, which tend to focus on the individuals level such as in nutrition activities, and prevailing cultural norms, which mandate intra-household or community sharing of the foods or benefits provided;²⁷ the distortion of community-based targeting mechanisms by local sharing practices and/or the application of political or family allegiances to beneficiary selection;²⁸ and, in asset-creation activities, the prioritization of expediency and the availability of capable partners over vulnerability and need.²⁹ Recorded effects included inclusion and exclusion errors, which affected donor confidence.

⇒ *FFA activities*

43. Eight evaluations raised concerns about FFA activities: these included the lack of a clear design rationale in Mozambique and Kenya; and implementation plans that were not aligned with the local seasonal calendar, in Ethiopia and the Philippines, and/or with local requirements/practices, in Tajikistan. In Chad, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Philippines, approval and centralized decision-making processes were too long, and project approval and oversight processes insufficiently rigorous. Five evaluations raised concerns about the appropriateness, quality and sustainability of assets created.³⁰

⇒ *Gender sensitivity*

44. Although all 12 evaluations reported on gender, only 8 provided sufficiently robust analysis for inclusion in this synthesis report.³¹ Only in Cambodia, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Swaziland were operations found to have mainstreamed gender successfully. All others had scope for improvement, with Chad and Mozambique operations assessed as largely gender-blind.

²⁴ Particularly in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Madagascar, the Philippines and Tajikistan.

²⁵ Chad and Mozambique.

²⁶ All evaluations apart from Kenya, Swaziland and West Africa.

²⁷ FFA in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, the Philippines and Tajikistan, and Mozambique.

²⁸ Nutrition in Chad and Ethiopia; school feeding and nutrition in Burkina Faso; vulnerable group feeding in Tajikistan; FFA in Mozambique and the Philippines.

²⁹ Burkina Faso, Chad, Madagascar, the Philippines and Tajikistan.

³⁰ Chad, Ethiopia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar and Mozambique. Issues with asset quality and sustainability are also noted in "Synthesis Report of the Evaluation Series on the Impact of Food for Assets (2002–2011)" (WFP/EB.A/2014/7-B).

³¹ Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mozambique, the Philippines, and Swaziland.

⇒ *Communications*

45. At least three evaluations highlighted weak communications with partners at the national level.³² Despite exceptions such as Kenya, limitations included insufficiently frequent and up-to-date information on WFP's progress and decisions amid rapidly changing conditions on the ground.

CONCLUSIONS

46. Evidence from the 12 operation evaluations found that in highly challenging operating conditions, WFP delivered broadly relevant food assistance to beneficiaries, although planning and targeting were insufficiently differentiated for specific beneficiary needs in some cases. Results were inadequately documented, particularly at the outcome level, mainly because of weak monitoring and field-level evaluation systems. Some valuable outcome-level results were revealed by evaluations, but WFP's achievements – and under-achievements – are not fully reflected in current reporting systems. Efficiency was mixed, mainly because of difficult operating conditions, and sustainability was limited.
47. The evidence suggests that WFP is confident in its traditional strengths, as reflected in the profile of its operations, and makes increasing use of innovative approaches. It indicates that WFP is shifting its focus to higher levels in many countries, using policy engagement and technical assistance to influence and support the formulation of national policy and strategy. WFP's detailed food security and nutrition analysis is gaining recognition at the national level in many countries, and its adroit reactions to national policy changes help ensure its continued operational relevance.
48. However, the evidence also suggests a need for greater progress in reorienting WFP's business practices to new external and corporate realities. Increasing attention to accountability for results and value for money makes it critical that WFP demonstrate its credibility; this series of operation evaluations represents a major step in this process. However, robust data management is not yet fully embedded and WFP's results are sometimes unsystematically and inadequately captured, particularly regarding contributions to national food security solutions. Programme ambitions sometimes exceed technical capacities; results chains, including assumptions and risks, are not always fully thought through; major gaps, such as in gender-sensitive programming, persist; and greater synergies and better communication are needed.
49. Overall, the findings are symptomatic of an organization in transition. Positive shifts have been made in introducing changes, but considerable gaps remain. While management and strategic reorientation drive these changes, WFP's business practices and operational culture are moving more slowly and unevenly.

LESSONS LEARNED

50. The following is a summary of lessons learned³³ from this set of operation evaluations:
51. Enhanced investments in evidence management to improve programme design and reporting on results should provide a sound platform for dialogue at the national level, improve the visibility of achievements, and raise partners' confidence. Such an evidence

³² Chad, Mozambique and the Philippines.

³³ The terms of reference for this synthesis requested lessons rather than recommendations.

base requires fully extrapolated result chains with associated assumptions and risks; more available, reliable, rigorous and comprehensive monitoring information; and greater use of evaluations and reviews to improve programme design.

52. Targeting issues can be complex; applying – and demonstrating – detailed analysis can help ensure that planning and targeting are sufficiently differentiated to serve specific beneficiary needs. Targeting decisions will benefit from a clearly articulated rationale, with decisions – such as to exclude distant rural communities – both justified and collectively agreed. Rigorous capturing of outcome effects will support such discussions, facilitating clear assessments of effectiveness and efficiency.
53. While WFP scales up its contributions to resilience, the potential of its FFA activities to deliver results is not being fully realized. There is need to align designs to beneficiary needs, particularly regarding gender issues; ensure appropriate targeting; embed technical requirements for quality standards and sustainability of assets from the start; and integrate clear oversight arrangements for partners. The application of new corporate guidance and capacity development of staff and partners will support these efforts. While few specific lessons on DPR emerged, similar learning may apply to DPR as a growing area of importance in the 12 operations.
54. Gender is not yet fully integrated into WFP operations. Gender lessons include the need for gender-sensitive designs based on disaggregated data and analysis, including for different groups. Disaggregated monitoring supports detailed and gender-sensitive planning and design, which in turn enable greater recognition of diverse gender needs. Evaluations can make major contributions to WFP's accountability on gender, but require clear parameters for and expectations of gender analysis and reporting.
55. WFP's role in food security and nutrition policy is increasing in scale and scope, with significant implications for its capacity development efforts. As reflected in the 2014–2017 Strategic Plan, capacity development is best conceptualized and considered as an integral aspect of programme design, with opportunities sought wherever feasible. Clear entry and exit points and appropriate implementation strategies should be defined from the start, to support a proactive approach.
56. The evidence confirms that communication is a cornerstone of good operation design and implementation. The value of dialogue with partners on WFP's challenges and decisions in often fast-moving situations is clearly signalled, as is the importance of making WFP's achievements, results and lessons learned more visible. Much of the evidence reported reflects progress in WFP's transition from an instrument-based to a problem-based approach. Transparent communications will help drive a concomitant shift in the perceptions of partners and – particularly – donors of WFP as a modern food assistance agency, with the knowledge, tools and capacities to help countries and partners meet both their own food security needs and the Zero Hunger Challenge.

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

CP	country programme
DPR	disaster preparedness and response
EMOP	emergency operation
FFA	food assistance for assets
GFD	general food distribution
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
SPR	standard project report
SRF	Strategic Results Framework
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees