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WFP Impact Evaluation Strategy

(2019–2026)

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Foreword

In the era of the Sustainable Development Goals, evaluation evidence is needed more than ever. Evaluations help the World Food Programme (WFP) perform better, improving the lives of the millions of poor and vulnerable people the organization serves every day. Knowing which interventions do – and do not – work provides essential information to steer a more precise course towards Zero Hunger. In this context, impact evaluation can play a unique role in generating robust evidence essential for policy making, critical to improving programme success and valuable for learning and accountability.

Developed by WFP's Office of Evaluation (OEV), this Impact Evaluation Strategy (2019-2026) describes how WFP can play a greater role in humanitarian and development impact evaluation, with the ambition of contributing operationally relevant evidence with global significance to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Impact Evaluation Strategy, which sits under the WFP Evaluation Policy (2016-2021) and the Corporate Evaluation Strategy (2016-2021), was developed through a process of consultations, workshops and comparative

analyses with our partners in other international organizations, including the World Bank, FAO, IFAD and UNICEF, among others.

For WFP, the world's largest humanitarian organization fighting hunger and malnutrition, impact evaluation can make a major contribution towards saving lives and changing lives. The potential return on investment for evidence generated by impact evaluations far outweighs initial investment in resources. Achieving the vision set out in this strategy will ultimately depend on strong support from WFP leadership and its partners.

As Director of Evaluation, I am pleased to introduce this Impact Evaluation Strategy, confident it will contribute to our global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Andrea Cook
Director of Evaluation



Section 1: Introduction

This Impact Evaluation Strategy is set out through the following sections: Section 2: Why Should WFP Invest in Impact Evaluation? provides background information regarding the use and potential benefits of impact evaluations; Section 3: Impact Evaluation in WFP, gives an overview of past and ongoing centralized and decentralized impact evaluation activities; Section 4: Key Considerations for an Impact Evaluation Function, highlights some of the choices to be made when developing an impact evaluation function for WFP; Section 5: Vision and Objectives of the Impact Evaluation Strategy provides a detailed description of the objectives of the strategy; Section 6: Impact Evaluation Activities, provides a broad overview of the main activities to be implemented; Section 7: Strategy Implementation, Oversight and Monitoring, sets out the management, oversight, monitoring and reporting mechanisms to support the impact evaluation function in WFP; and Section 8: Resourcing the Impact Evaluation Strategy gives an overview of funding requirements

and sources for delivering the impact evaluation strategy.

Assisting 86.7 million people in around 83 countries each year, the World Food Programme (WFP) is the leading humanitarian organization saving lives and changing lives, delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience.

While the strategy covers a period of seven years, the first two years will be a pilot phase, designed to test the level of demand and develop approaches to supporting and delivering impact evaluations across WFP. This is intended to ensure that the operational model taken is fit for purpose and meets organizational needs. Lessons learned during this pilot phase will be reflected in WFP's next evaluation policy.

Section 2: Why Should WFP Invest in Impact Evaluation?

Impact evaluations answer questions such as what, how and for whom results have been achieved. For international organizations and donors, the increased use of impact evaluations is driven by a need to demonstrate results in clear and measurable terms.

Measuring the impact (i.e. net effect) of an intervention enables stakeholders to understand whether something works. Equally, testing multiple ways of achieving the same result can help to identify which interventions represent the greatest value for money and are the most suitable for scale-up and replication.

Impact evaluations have already proven to be valuable for development interventions. In 2015, a World Bank report¹ found that: “projects with impact evaluations are more likely to implement their activities as planned and, in so doing, are more likely to achieve their objectives”.

The Agency Française de Développement (AFD) found² that impact evaluations support policymakers and practitioners by

providing evidence for: 1) the impact of interventions 2) factors of success 3) supporting/contesting theoretical assumptions 4) effects of scaling (from micro to macros) and 5) assessing value for money.

Many donors³, international development organizations⁴ and non-governmental organizations⁵ have adopted impact evaluation as a tool for learning and accountability purposes. The benefits of using impact evaluations have increased demand and led to corresponding increases in supply from social scientists and evaluators specialized in impact evaluation methodologies. As a result, impact evaluation as a practice has become prevalent across international development programming and related social science research.

Interest in and donor funding for impact evaluations have also led to a rise in impact evaluation networks and organizations, including the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), the Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP), the Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), and World Bank Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) unit. As a result of these initiatives, the impact evaluation research

¹ Legovini et al (2015), “Impact Evaluation Helps Deliver Development Projects”, World Bank, Washington D.C., WPS7157:

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2015/01/23173058/impact-evaluation-helps-deliver-development-projects>

² Pamies-Sumner, S. (2015), “Development Impact Evaluations: State of Play and New Challenges”, AFD: <https://www.afd.fr/en/development-impact-evaluations-state-play-and-new-challenges>

³ Including, Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ), the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

⁴ Including, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), WFP and the World Bank.

⁵ Including, Building Resources Across Communities (BRAC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Oxfam.

design registry, hosted by the Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP), has received 1193 entries since 2009. DIME already has a portfolio of more than 170 impact evaluations.

Despite global recognition of the value of impact evaluation, the humanitarian sector has not benefitted to the same extent as the development sector. Fragile and rapidly evolving contexts may have limited impact evaluations in the past, but today's new technologies and data sources present opportunities for WFP to harness the potential of impact evaluation, notably in

bridging the humanitarian-development nexus, and shifting from strictly short-term emergency responses to embrace the country strategic plan model. As countries and donors invest in data disaggregation and commit to the data revolution, humanitarian organizations are under increasing pressure to use new technology and innovation to demonstrate the effectiveness of their interventions in supporting poor and marginalised populations escape poverty. Impact evaluation can help WFP contribute to achieving the SDGs and leaving no one behind.



Section 3: Impact Evaluation in WFP



The WFP Evaluation Policy (2016-2021) defines impact evaluations as assessments of the positive and negative, direct or indirect, intended or unintended changes in the lives of affected populations in receipt of WFP interventions. The Office of Evaluation expanded on this definition by specifying that impact evaluations measure changes in development outcomes of interest for a target population that can be attributed to a specific programme or a policy through a credible counterfactual.

The WFP evaluation guidance⁶ notes that impact evaluations are useful in answering cause and effect questions to understand whether interventions have had an impact, i.e. net effect, on target populations, and to assess the extent of the impact and how it came about. The term “impact” is understood as short-term or long-term “changes and effects”, which is not to be confused with impact indicators in a results chain.

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