

STRATEGIC EVALUATIONS 2010–2011
CONCEPT NOTE



ANNUAL CONSULTATION ON EVALUATION

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CONTINUING WITH A BIENNIAL PLAN FOR STRATEGIC EVALUATIONS

1. The Office of Evaluation (OE) introduced in the 2008–2009 biennium a new approach to strategic evaluations that uses a consultative process for their selection to ensure that they are highly useful, and chooses evaluations that cover related areas to gain greater depth of analysis and support synthesis of findings. The Executive Board and senior management expressed appreciation for the approach during consultations for the 2010–2011 Biennial Plan for Strategic Evaluations.
2. At the 2009 Annual Consultation on Evaluation (ACE), an options paper¹ was discussed so that the Board could provide guidance on the strategic focus of evaluations in the forthcoming biennium. The options paper had been extensively discussed with senior management and selected operational staff and revised based on their inputs prior to the ACE. In the options paper and at the ACE it was made clear that only one of the options would be selected and undertaken; each option included four strategic evaluations.
3. This concept note expands on the selected option “Choosing the Right Responses to Hunger Needs”. It:
 - (i) provides OE clients with information on how the evaluations will serve WFP’s corporate needs;
 - (ii) explains in broad strokes what the evaluations will address; and
 - (iii) provides the framework within which the evaluations will be carried out to ensure that they complement each other.²
4. The evaluation manager for each evaluation will prepare its terms of reference (TOR). These TOR will be discussed with stakeholders and will reflect the pertinent points of this concept note.

THE 2010–2011 STRATEGIC FOCUS

5. The focus area for the 2010–2011 strategic evaluations was chosen in light of the WFP’s Strategic Plan 2008–2013 and the “historic shift from WFP as a food aid agency to WFP as a food assistance agency” called for in the Plan. As stated in the Strategic Plan, this shift implies “a more nuanced and robust set of tools to respond to critical hunger needs” – which increases the range of response options and the need for making choices that ensure WFP meets the priority needs of the hungry poor.
6. The strategic evaluations focus on how WFP uses its response options to provide the most efficient and effective hunger solutions to save lives, meet

¹ The options paper can be downloaded from WFP’s website
<http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/resources/wfp201644.pdf>.

² OE will also establish a small working group, consisting of the relevant evaluation managers and the Director, to ensure complementarity of the evaluations is maintained throughout.

the needs of the vulnerable and complement the responses of other actors. An improved understanding of the conditions under which different options – strategies, approaches and tools – work best will contribute to improved decision-making at the country, regional and headquarters’ levels.

7. The 2010–2011 strategic evaluations will generate a better understanding of WFP’s experience and how it prepared the Programme to meet new challenges. The Strategic Plan was designed to prepare WFP to respond to changing demands; the strategic evaluations aim to generate insights and lessons from WFP’s experience to help in this process. They deliberately place more emphasis on learning to support WFP’s transition from food aid to food assistance and aim to provide timely and relevant inputs to country offices as they adapt.³
8. The strategic evaluations will focus on questions about how WFP has exercised choices: What can be learned from this experience? How can these lessons be applied to choices that need to be made? The evaluations will highlight issues that may require changes at corporate level to ensure necessary support is provided for delivering on WFP’s mission at country and regional levels.
9. The four strategic evaluations will focus on the changes that the Strategic Plan has brought or can bring about for: i) the people who are at the heart of WFP’s mission: the most vulnerable suffering food insecurity and undernutrition; ii) the governments, which play a central role in ensuring the food security of the people they govern by providing sustained safety nets; iii) the partners with whom WFP works and fulfils its mission; and iv) WFP as it is responding to changing needs and demands.

THE 2010–2011 STRATEGIC EVALUATIONS

Evaluation One: People at the Centre

10. The food security crisis, which started with increased food and fuel prices and continued through the financial crisis, endangers gains made to reduce poverty and hunger. The incidence of poverty had started to decline, but in absolute numbers 1 billion people are now food-insecure. Their livelihood systems and food security are exposed to market factors, security risks and environmental factors.
11. People are at the heart of WFP’s mandate and Strategic Objectives: saving lives, protecting and rebuilding livelihoods after shocks, serving the vulnerable and food-insecure, and breaking the inter-generational cycle of

³ A greater emphasis on accountability would require waiting until enough time had passed since the approval of the Strategic Plan to allow for meaningful evaluation results; such an evaluation would focus on plan implementation and achievement of stated goals.

hunger. The vulnerable groups include internally displaced persons and refugees, people living with HIV and AIDS, and other vulnerable people. In addition, the Strategic Plan sets out overarching approaches that include, among others, being “responsive to the principles related to the right to food, and based on the practical wisdom and needs of local populations wherever possible”; and to provide assistance “as targeted and connected as possible to the needs of the most vulnerable”.

12. This evaluation will focus on the effectiveness and efficiency of select programme activities or operations designed for specific target groups. In so doing, the evaluation will aim to identify conditions under which programmes targeted towards one group or another are more effective and efficient than others, and discuss the trade-offs between different options. It will take into account WFP’s overarching goal of finding long-term solutions to hunger. The evaluation will produce a number of case studies that will illustrate the challenges and choices involved in focusing on the various target groups.

Evaluation Two: Working with Governments – The Role of WFP Assistance in Social Protection and Safety Nets

13. High-level meetings such as those held in Paris and Accra resulted in resounding commitments to increased government ownership and a greater role of partner governments in determining and managing assistance. Partner countries committed to strengthening their capacities, and donors and international organizations to supporting these processes. Capacities for social safety nets and social protection systems exist and are being assisted by a number of actors. However, the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis noted, “While progress has been made in aligning and coordinating nationally funded and externally supported aid programs and in improving program efficiency [...], there is much to be done to improve coverage of socially vulnerable groups with benefit levels that will cover their basic needs.”⁴ The task force includes a number of short-term and longer-term measures in this respect, making explicit reference to types of programmes typically supported by WFP.
14. WFP adopted a policy on food-based safety nets in 2004,⁵ which sets out concepts and gives directions for programming. This policy received a boost in the Strategic Plan (2008–2013). The Strategic Plan recognizes the importance of integrating assistance into national social protection strategies so that “safety nets help prevent duplication of effort and assist governments in developing sustainable food-assistance systems”. It sets goals for safety nets to strengthen the resilience of communities to shocks

⁴ Comprehensive Framework for Action, High Level Task for on Food Security Crisis (2008).

⁵ WFP and Food-based Safety Nets: Concepts, Experiences and Future Programming Opportunities, WFP/EB.3/2004/4-A, October 2004.

and sees its assistance as a “critical enabler for re-establishing livelihoods through productive safety nets”. WFP programmes often entail resource transfers that are typical for safety net measures; if the programmes are to be gradually handed over for greater government ownership, they will have to fit into and complement national safety net systems.

15. Assistance programmes, by virtue of transferring resources to individuals and households, provide some kind of social safety net measure, whether designed as such or not. An evaluation of WFP’s experience will bring to light factors that play a role in making assistance programmes an integral and supportive part of sustainable food-based safety net systems. These insights will help systematize WFP experience and support country offices when they need to adjust programmes to support national safety net and social protection systems.

Evaluation Three: Working in Partnership – Implications of the Shift from Food Aid to Food Assistance

16. The international community, through a variety of initiatives, high-level task forces and meetings, has repeatedly expressed its commitment to partnerships. In July 2009, at the G8 meeting in L’Aquila (Italy), heads of states pledged “to advance by the end of 2009 [...] the implementation of the Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food Security”, which had also been discussed at the Madrid high-level meeting earlier in the year and at the FAO Summit in June 2008. This partnership should be developed through a consultative process engaging a cross-section of stakeholders. The United Nations and humanitarian reforms also strive to improve how partners work together at country level.
17. The Strategic Plan (2008–2013) recognizes the importance of partnerships – “Success will depend not only on WFP’s own capacity, but also on the extent to which WFP manages to be a partner for others” – and acknowledges the broad cross-section of WFP’s partners. Embedded in the Strategic Plan are a number of roles for WFP for fostering partnerships: identifying gaps and working with partners to close them; developing partner capacities in preparation for hand-over; engaging in policy dialogue on hunger, food and nutrition security issues; and continuing to play an effective role within the United Nations system. It recognizes the importance of WFP’s non-governmental partners and the private sector.
18. This evaluation will focus on the change in WFP’s role – and therefore its partnerships – implied in the shift from food aid to food assistance and further changes that may come about in light of the Global Partnership. The evaluation will analyse WFP partnership experiences at country, regional and global levels to help understand better the extent to which partnerships could potentially be changed and to identify lessons that can be applied to

situations where WFP chooses new roles, partners and/or partnership arrangements.

Evaluation Four: WFP Responding to Changing Needs

19. Governments, civil society and the public at large are increasingly exposed to shocks, whether caused by people or by nature. The increased number and severity of natural disasters leads to more emergency situations. The food and fuel price and financial crises have led to even greater need for longer-term solutions to food security.
20. WFP's Strategic Plan, together with a changing operating context, put WFP country offices in a position to make more choices than in the past. The Programme has demonstrated its capacity to respond rapidly to emergencies, but will need a similar agility to adapt programmes to recovery and development situations as they evolve, possibly more rapidly than before. These adjustments are more challenging than merely expanding or reducing logistics capacities and programmes, because objectives change depending on circumstances.
21. This evaluation will focus on WFP's experience in shifting its response capacities among emergency, recovery and development contexts, looking at how country offices have redefined their roles and adjusted their objectives and consequently their portfolios and logistics capacity. The evaluation will analyse the demands placed on the capacities of country offices by this need for adaptability; identify strengths that could be replicated; and ascertain any gaps that require corporate responses to ensure that WFP is prepared for implementing its Strategic Plan.