

DAC/UNEG Peer Review of the Evaluation Function at the World Food Programme

Presentation to WFP Executive Board
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Purpose of the peer review

- To provide an independent peer assessment of WFP's evaluation function
- **A learning opportunity:** to identify good practices and opportunities to strengthen WFP's evaluation function and so promote accountability, learning and performance improvement
- Key question, assessed against UNEG norms and standards:
*“Are the agency's evaluation policy, function and its products **independent**, **credible** and **useful** for learning and accountability purposes?”*
- NB: **not** an evaluation!



Background and approach

- Context: Peer review undertaken at a time of considerable organizational change in WFP:
 - organizational reforms, new Strategic Plan, Framework for Action, BPR, M&SE strategy etc
- ED invited UNEG to undertake the Peer Review
 - In line with the ED's "Fit for Purpose" commitment to improved monitoring, reporting and evaluation, including field-based evaluation
- Activities:
 - Document review, quality review of 20 evaluation reports, key informant interviews, on-line surveys (staff and EB) and benchmarking.
- Panel visits:
 - May 2013; January 2014

Key findings



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Evaluation progressing well...

- **Favourable climate for evaluation** at WFP:
 - increasing engagement at all levels
- **Significant progress** since the 2007 Peer Review:
 - 2008: evaluation policy approved
 - Evaluation Office professionalised and functionally independent
 - Balanced and increasingly well-targeted portfolio of evaluations delivered
 - Rigorous evaluation quality assurance system (EQAS) set up
 - Improved communication of evaluation results through tailored products
 - Increasing uptake and use of evaluation results
 - Management response system set up
 - Increased resources



...but some commitments missed

- The management response to the 2007 peer review made commitments which remain **unfulfilled**:
 - An evaluation strategy not yet developed
 - Staff still unclear about terminology
 - Improvements in monitoring systems slow
 - Board sub-committee on evaluation not created
 - Initiative to build WFP evaluation capacity at country level faltered
- Some further **concerns**:
 - No formula for safeguarding resources allocated to evaluation
 - Loopholes in OEV Director's terms of employment
 - Some management responses formulaic; and concerns about follow up

Evaluation quantity and quality

- **OEV highly productive**, delivering evaluations of consistently **high quality**
 - On average 12 major evaluations each year
 - EQAS has made a key contribution – but may need to be simplified
- Decentralized evaluations reportedly **increasing in number**, but of **variable quality**
 - Quantity now perhaps 40 each year? Utilization?
 - Quality of small sample rated by PR overall satisfactory to good
 - EQAS probably too demanding for application to decentralized evaluations
- **Operations evaluations deficit:**
 - Policy target of 30 per annum missed
 - OEV has now launched a temporary, innovative programme
- **Evaluation of emergency operations**
 - Now receiving increased attention

Summary assessment

✓ Independence:

- Functional independence of OEV is high, with close oversight from the Board – decisions made and procedures followed without management interference

✓ Credibility:

- OEV evaluations are of high quality, and highly regarded by the Board, senior management and external stakeholders. OEV a key player in inter-agency fora

✓ Utility:

- All types of OEV evaluations seen to be relevant and useful across WFP
- Board finds OEV evaluations useful

Benchmarking shows that OEV is performing at “Premier League” level

Challenges facing OEV

- Emerging challenges:
 - Conducting evaluations
 - Communicating evaluation results, contributing to learning
 - Oversight/reporting on the evaluation function across WFP
 - Strengthen evaluation systems across WFP (CE and DE)
 - Contribute to inter-agency and system-wide evaluation
- OEV should:
 - Continue to conduct independent, high quality evaluations; **but also** take on standard setting and oversight responsibilities across WFP, providing quality assessments
- In addition, OEV may need to provide:
 - Guidance, training, helpdesk advice, support to RBx, etc
- **If resources remain constant, new roles will force trade-offs and re-prioritizing**

Key conclusion

- Independent evaluation is now well established at WFP, with OEV performing strongly and the value of its output widely recognized
- But key aspects of the evaluation function suffer from uncertainty:
 - The appropriate levels and mechanisms for allocating human and financial resources to evaluation
 - The value to WFP of decentralized evaluation
 - Clarity regarding the respective roles of OEV, RMP, country offices and regional bureaux

WFP now needs to make a strategic choice regarding its future approach to the evaluation function – and must then follow through

Model 1: centralized evaluation

- Broadly, status quo:
 - OEV main source of high quality evaluations
 - Decentralized evaluations as internal lesson learning exercises
 - No technical support or quality assurance
 - OEV undertakes operations evaluations beyond 2015
- Cost:
 - Within current budget levels, but (allowing for oversight role and other tasks) OEV reduces evaluation output by 10-20%
- Comment:
 - Ignores potential added value of decentralized evaluation
 - Out of line with “Fit for purpose”

Model 2: CE + demand-led DE

- Model 1 plus enhancements:
 - OEV quality standards and guidance for DE
 - OEV helpdesk and consultant roster set up
 - On demand, OEV and RBx provide technical support to COs
 - OEV assessing and reporting on quality of DE reports
 - RBx prepare regional evaluation plan (coordinated with OEV)
- Costs:
 - Beyond current budget levels
 - Additional staffing required in OEV and RBx
- Comment:
 - Some recognition of added value of DE. Improvements expected, but likely to be patchy.

Model 3: comprehensive CE and DE

- Over medium term:
 - Evaluation significantly expanded and enhanced at all levels
 - RBx supporting COs, with OEV backup
 - DE coverage planned according to key criteria
 - OEV quality assessment of all evaluation reports
- Costs:
 - Substantial increase over current budget levels
 - Substantial increase in evaluation staffing at each level
- Comment:
 - Fully effective, adequately supported evaluation function. Systematic evaluation planning, coverage and use.

Recommendations



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1. Evaluation model for WFP

- Management should choose the most appropriate model for the evaluation function at WFP, considering the following models:
 - **Model 1: Centralized evaluation** (limited support to decentralized evaluation)
 - **Model 2: Centralized evaluation plus demand-led decentralized evaluation** (some technical support on demand, guidance and quality standards provided and OEV reporting on evaluation quality)
 - **Model 3: centralized and decentralized evaluation** (evaluation function expanded, enhanced and supported at all levels; expanded coverage; evaluation staffing increased at all levels; OEV reporting on evaluation quality)
- Choice of model must be matched by appropriate level of human and financial resources

2. Evaluation policy

- Revise the evaluation policy to align with the selected evaluation model:
 - Define and protect allocation of financial resources for evaluation
 - Clarify criteria for evaluation selection and coverage
 - Clarify roles of Board, senior management, functional divisions (including OEV and RMP), RBx and COs
 - Revise evaluation terminology
 - Update typology of evaluations
 - Clarify roles of partners in country-level evaluation
 - Specify WFP's role in national evaluation capacity development



3. Oversight of the evaluation function

- **The Executive Board** should request development of a set of **key performance indicators** to support its oversight of the evaluation function
 - Increase focus on the strategic use of evaluation results;
 - Ensure that management has systems and processes in place to maximize the use of evaluation results in policy and strategy development and in project and programme design

4. Management response

- Management should improve the effectiveness of management responses through increased engagement of **senior management “owners”** at key steps in the evaluation process
- Management should introduce process improvements including:
 - Provision of online access to the RMP database tracking progress in implementing agreed actions (comparable to audit process)
 - Replacement of the current management response template with a format providing strategic overview, and setting out action plans
 - Seek OEV’s informal comments on the fidelity of the management response with the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations



Recommendations to OEV

5. Vesting evaluation independence in OEV:

- for evaluations it manages, OEV should take full ownership of the evaluation report (not the external consultants)

6. Evaluation quality assurance:

- consider steps to simplify EQAS

7. Utilization of evaluation results:

- OEV should strengthen its inputs to WFP's project and programme planning, design and approval process
- In redesigning its project and programme planning and approval process, Management should make arrangements for taking evaluation evidence into account

8. Evaluation Training:

- OEV should develop evaluation training courses, in partnership with the Human Resources Division, RMP etc



9. Roles and responsibilities

- Delineate the roles of OEV and RMP:
 - OEV with lead responsibility for evaluation standards and guidance at all levels
 - RMP leading on monitoring and all project/programme management reviews
 - Regional monitoring and evaluation advisers should have a reporting line to OEV on evaluation matters
- Regional Directors and management responses:
 - RDs should take responsibility for reviewing management responses for single operation evaluations and decentralized evaluations in their regions
- Internal Audit and OEV:
 - should agree how to identify risks and audit compliance with the evaluation policy

10. Monitoring and evaluation guidance

- OEV and RMP should work together:
 - To ensure that guidance on evaluation and, separately, monitoring and review are distinct but compatible and well understood by country office staff
 - To coordinate relevant training
 - To use management reviews as inputs to evaluation, where appropriate

Further recommendations

11. Evaluation strategy:

- OEV should develop an evaluation strategy in line with the selected model for evaluation

12. Role and designation of the Director of Evaluation:

- **The Executive Board** should request the OEV Director to oversee and report on the evaluation function across WFP; and request management to redesignate the Director accordingly
- The Director's term should be a single period of six years, non-renewable, without right of return to WFP*

13. Decentralized evaluation standards and guidelines

- OEV should develop realistic standards for decentralized evaluations and issue guidelines on the management of decentralized evaluations

* Regardless of the evaluation model selected.

Further recommendations (continued)

14. Evaluation expertise:

- The WFP People Strategy should include development of a staff cadre for assessment, monitoring and evaluation, to permit effective implementation of the evaluation strategy

15. Evaluation database:

- OEV should develop an online database into which all WFP evaluations can be uploaded, to facilitate access and allow OEV to make an annual assessment of the quality of evaluation reports



Towards the future

The Peer Review findings and recommendations need to be considered along with other evidence, notably results from the Business Process Review

The key decision concerns the choice of model for the evaluation function – and following through with the required level of human and financial resources.

The Panel has recognized that WFP already has a strong centralized evaluation function. This provides a strong base upon which to build a robust decentralized evaluation function.

A strong evaluation function enhances WFP's credibility and reputation. Investing further in evaluation can equip WFP with the tools, knowledge and flexibility to cope and compete successfully in a world of rapid change, increasing complexity and tough challenges.

Questions and discussion

