

Professional Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of the World Food Programme

Approach and work plan

*Final version
(11 May, 2007)*

Introduction

The Professional Peer Review is conducted in line with the *Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Functions in Multilateral Organizations*, which was finalized by the DAC/UNEG Joint Task Force in early 2007. Following the peer reviews of the evaluation function of the UNDP and UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP) volunteered as the third multilateral organization for such review.

Experiences from the previous two Peer Reviews have been taken into account in this document which sets out the key elements of the Peer Review of the evaluation function of the WFP. It describes the background of the Peer Review, its purpose, the scope and general approach and methods, the composition of the Peer Panel and the time schedule. The document, which was agreed by the Panel members and has been shared with WFP for comments, serves as a basic reference guide for the Review.

Background

WFP formally requested the Chair of the DAC/UNEG Task Force to initiate the assembly of the Panel on 20 December 2006. The Chair approached Sida's Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit to take the lead in this Peer Review, which would involve making arrangements with the Office of Evaluation at WFP to plan the Review, establishing the Peer Panel and recruiting consultants to serve as advisors to the Panel. This was accepted by Sida at the end of January 2007.

In a contribution to this Approach Paper the Office of Evaluation at WFP describes the development of its evaluation function in the following way:

"WFP has had an evaluation function since 1965. The Office of Evaluation (OEDE), and its predecessors, has undergone a number of changes since. Between 2000 and 2005, the Executive Board (EB) of WFP received four papers on the evaluation function of WFP¹. The main

¹ WFP's Principles and Methods of Monitoring and Evaluation, presented for consideration at WFP/EB.A/2000/4-C; A Policy for Results-Oriented Monitoring and Evaluation in the World Food

concerns of the EB members were (i) location, (ii) reporting lines, (iii) budget, and (iv) interface with the Board.

During the Board's 2006 annual session, the Executive Director of WFP agreed to professionalizing OEDE by (a) appointing a director with a proven track record in evaluation (rather than filling the position through an internal appointment), (b) upgrading the position and making the director of evaluation part of the executive staff, (c) changing the reporting lines, i.e. the director reports now directly to the Executive Director.

At the same time, WFP informed the member countries of WFP about the intention to volunteer for a professional peer review of the evaluation function. As a result, the EB members agreed to hold further queries and discussions about the independence of OEDE until the results of the Professional Peer Review were presented to the EB."

Purpose of the Professional Peer Review

The purpose of the Professional Peer Review is to provide DAC and UNEG members as well as decision-makers in the leadership of WFP, WFP's Executive Board members and the OEDE with an independent assessment of the functioning of OEDE and the quality of its work. The findings of the Professional Peer Review will be presented to WFP's Executive Board meeting in February 2008 and inform further discussions and decisions about the functional and administrative independence of OEDE.

The Professional Peer Review takes the central evaluation function, i.e. OEDE as its starting point but will include also the decentralised evaluation work in the review. It reviews the evaluation function in light of the objectives and structure of the WFP and according to the core assessment questions summarised below.

Scope of and Limitations to the Professional Peer Review

The Professional Peer Review will examine and comment on:

1. Structural aspects of how the evaluation function operates in WFP, including whether the current functional arrangements are effective in ensuring that OEDE can contribute to the learning and accountability within WFP;

Programme, presented for approval at WFP/EB.A/2002/5-C; WFP's Evaluation Policy, presented for approval at WFP/EB.3/2003/4-C; and Report on the Management of Evaluation, presented for consideration at WFP/EB.A/2005/5-E. The four documents can be accessed at www.wfp.org/operations/evaluation.

2. The evaluation policy of WFP and other policies and procedures having a bearing on OEDE and its work, in particular the extent to which the evaluation policy conforms with international standards, and whether other policies are relevant to the functioning of OEDE (e.g. those concerning results-based management, strategic planning, budgeting, evaluation coverage of operations, decentralized evaluations, etc.).
3. Organizational relationships of OEDE at the governance level (WFP's Executive Board and Bureau), OEDE's position and relationship to the Executive Director, the Core Management Team, and the Executive Staff, the roles and responsibilities of OEDE vis-à-vis the Regional Bureaux and the Country Offices concerning decentralized evaluations; the roles and responsibilities of OEDE in relation to other HQ departments (e.g. Policy, Operations etc).
4. Relationships regarding the evaluation function and responsibilities vis-à-vis WFP's cooperating partners.
5. The quality of the evaluations undertaken and commissioned by OEDE and by regional and country offices. This includes the conduct of the actual evaluation, the quality of the evaluation reports, the independence of evaluation teams and team leaders (consultants), the ways in which OEDE enables them to produce credible reports including the ways stakeholders are facilitated to comment on draft reports (e.g. when do comments become an infringement on independence and when are they warranted to ensure standards of evaluation reports).
6. Use of evaluation results and follow-up. Important aspects are: the ways in which evaluation results are disseminated and lessons used both within WFP and by others (donors, cooperating partners etc); the responsibility for the follow-up of recommendations with management; and how follow-up is undertaken and monitored.

The Peer Review will collect and analyse information about evaluations managed both by WFP HQ and field offices (regional and country level) and include a discussion of decentralised approaches towards evaluations. This discussion will consider the oversight function of OEDE in relation to evaluations led by WFP regional or country offices.

Core Assessment Questions

In line with the *Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Functions in Multilateral Organizations*, the Peer Review of the Evaluation function of WFP will apply three core criteria that need to be satisfied for evaluation functions and products to be considered of high quality:

- A. **Independence** of evaluations and the evaluation system(s). The evaluation process should be impartial and independent in its function from the process concerned with the policy making, the delivery, and the management of assistance. A requisite measure of independence of the evaluation function is a recognised pre-condition for credibility, validity and usefulness. At the same time, the review should bear in mind in that the appropriate guarantees of the necessary independence WFP is defined according to the nature of its work, its governance and decision-making arrangements, and other factors. Moreover, like most organizations WFP's aim is to encourage the active application and use of evaluations at all levels of management, meaning that systemic measures for ensuring the necessary objectivity and impartiality of this work should receive due attention.
- B. **Credibility** of evaluations. The credibility of evaluation depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators and the degree of transparency of the evaluation process. Credibility requires that evaluations should report successes as well as failures. Recipient countries should, as a rule, fully participate in evaluation in order to promote credibility and commitment. Whether and how the organization's approach to evaluation fosters partnership and helps builds ownership and capacity in developing countries merits attention as a major theme.
- C. **Utility** of evaluations. To have an impact on decision-making, evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful and be presented in a clear and concise way. They should fully reflect the different interests and needs of the many parties involved in development co-operation. Importantly, each review should bear in mind that ensuring the utility of evaluations is only partly under the control of evaluators. It is also critically a function of the interest of managers, and member countries through their participation on governing bodies, in commissioning, receiving and using evaluations.

The advisor(s) to the Peer Panel will together with the Peer Panel prepare a detailed set of assessment questions related to each of the core questions in order to better focus the review. This set of questions will be formulated taking into account similar questions in the previous peer reviews.

Normative Framework

WFP's evaluation office is part of two professional evaluation groups: that of evaluators of humanitarian assistance (ALNAP), which includes *inter alia* bilateral and multilateral organizations and international NGOs, and of UNEG, composed of 36 heads of evaluation functions of the UN System and works in close cooperating with the OECD/DAC Evaluation Network. The Peer Review Panel

will consider the normative framework of UNEG, and relevant guidelines of the OECD/DAC Evaluation Network as well as ALNAP's proforma for evaluation quality assessment of evaluation reports when assessing WFP's evaluation function. This will include efforts to harmonise the various guidelines in order to facilitate the work of the Peer Panel.

Panel Composition

A number of important considerations were taken into account when composing the panel membership: (i) relevant professional experience – WFP has a dual role in providing humanitarian and development assistance and therefore it was important that panel members brought together professional experience of both types of work; (ii) independence – to avoid any potential or alleged conflict of interest or partiality, the panel members should not have any close working relationship to WFP that might influence the Panel's position and deliberations; and (iii) broader membership – experience and viewpoints from donors, executing organisations and partner countries should be represented in the panel.

The combination of these criteria together with the voluntary nature of serving on the Panel resulted in the following composition:

Jock Baker, accountability & programme quality coordinator, CARE International
Stefan Dahlgren, senior evaluation officer, Sida (lead responsibility)
Susanne Frueh, former chief of evaluation, OCHA
Ted Kliest, senior evaluation officer, Netherlands Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Zenda Ofir, independent member

The Panel will be assisted by two advisors responsible for data collection and information gathering; preliminary assessment the collected information which is to form the basis for more detailed information gathering through structured and semi-structured interviews. The advisors will provide the Panel with a consolidated information base, specifying the sources. With the benefit of the information assembled by the advisors, its examination by the members of the Peer Panel, and observations provided by WFP on the information gathered, the Peer Panel will conduct interviews with WFP Senior Managers, other senior staff and (a selection of) Executive Board Members.

Reporting

The Peer panel will submit its report to WFP's OEDE, which in turn will provide it to the Executive Director of WFP, the Executive Board and disseminate it within WFP. The final report will also be provided to the DAC/UNEG Task Force, for dissemination among its respective constituencies and to interested cooperating

partners. The Peer Panel will from time to time report on the Review's progress to OEDE and the DAC/UNEG Task Force.

Responsibility of OEDE

OEDE serves as the main contact point within WFP for the Panel and its advisors. OEDE will provide requested information and data, including the names and details of contact persons whom the Panel or its advisors wish to contact.

OEDE will continue to brief WFP Executive Staff (through the Internal Evaluation Committee) and the Executive Board (through an Informal Meeting) about the Peer Review. OEDE will also be responsible for submitting the Panel's report and recommendations to the Executive Board and for reporting on follow-up action.

OEDE aims to provide the DAC/UNEG Task Force with feedback on the experience of the Panel Review to enable the members of the DAC Evaluation Network and the members of UNEG to learn from WFP's experience.

Review Process

The Peer Review will employ the following steps:

1. Preparation of the Approach and Work Plan and Terms of Reference for the advisors to the Peer panel.
2. Initial meeting of the Peer Panel to discuss details of the task as outlined in the Approach and Work Plan and ToR for the advisors and to familiarise itself with WFP's evaluation work.
3. Preparatory work including a desk review and interviews undertaken by the advisors. During this phase the advisors will analyze relevant documentation and carry out interviews at WFP headquarters in Rome, a selection of WFP's regional and country field offices (preferably by telephone), former evaluation team leaders and with representatives of member countries (in particular Executive Board members). Stakeholders include: Executive Board members, the Executive Director, Executive Staff (individually and as members of the Internal Evaluation Committee), OEDE (director and staff), regional and country directors, division directors, and staff. In addition views from external stakeholders like cooperating partners will be taken into account to the extent possible. Part of the data collection from field offices will be carried out through an e-mail survey.
4. Analysis and identification of issues for in-depth discussion – the desk review and preliminary interviews will generate issues for follow-up by the Panel members. The advisors will present a draft factual report to the Panel.

5. Peer Panel interviews with selected stakeholders based on the issues raised by the advisors. Preliminary assessment by the panel, which will include (a) Panel agreement on its framework for judgement, (b) Panel consideration of evidence and findings in order to arrive at draft conclusions and recommendations and (c) agreement on an outline for the draft report. The preliminary assessment report will be drafted by the advisors.
6. Peer Panel finalises the draft assessment report.
7. Draft assessment report is discussed with WFP in a Review Meeting. Based on this discussion the final assessment report is produced.
8. The final assessment report will be submitted to WFP (the report will be submitted by OEDE to the WFP Executive Board's 2008 first regular session in February 2008). The final assessment report will also be provided for information to the DAC/UNEG Task Force.

Schedule

The Peer Review will be conducted according to the following preliminary schedule:

Composition of the Panel	January – March 2007
Approach and work plan	End of March 2007
Recruitment of Advisors	March – April 2007
Initial meeting of the Peer Panel	April 2007
Preparatory Work by Advisors	May – July 2007
1 st report – to the Panel meeting in Geneva	25 June
2 nd report to the Panel	August 2007
Panel Visit to Rome (interviews)	End of September 2007
Finalization of Draft Report	2 nd Week October 2007
Review Meeting on Draft Final Report in Rome	25-26 October 2007
Final Report	End October 2007
Discussion of Draft Final Report in WFP's Executive Board	February 2008

Throughout the period, consultations will take place between the Panel lead agency and OEDE, within the Panel, and between the Panel and the advisors, as necessary.

The need for Regional Bureaux or country office visits will be determined during the process of the Peer Review, keeping in mind the option to conduct telephone interviews.

Resources

The costs of the respective Panel members should be covered by her or his agency; the costs of the independent member of the Panel will be covered by Sida acting as the lead agency for the Review. The cost of the advisors will primarily be covered by Sida; other DAC or UNEG members may provide financial contribution on a voluntary basis.

OEDE's contribution to the exercise will be in-kind (professional and general service staff time for organizing and facilitating the Peer Review process).