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## Summary report on the peer review of the evaluation function at the World Food Programme

### Draft decision\*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the peer review of the evaluation function at the World Food Programme (WFP/EB.A/2021/7-D) and WFP response (WFP/EB.A/2021/7-D/Add.1), and encourages further action on the recommendations set out in the report, taking into account the considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

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\* 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.

*In line with the Evaluation Policy (2016–2021) (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-A/Rev.1), to respect the integrity and independence of evaluation findings the editing of this report has been limited and as a result some of the language in it may not be fully consistent with the World Food Programme's standard terminology or editorial practices. Please direct any requests for clarification to the Director of Evaluation.*

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## Peer review features

1. This peer review of the evaluation function at WFP was carried out in accordance with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of United Nations organizations and the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. It is the third peer review of WFP's evaluation function and was conducted at the request of WFP.
2. The purpose of the peer review is to inform the strengthening of WFP's evaluation function so that it can more effectively contribute to WFP's organizational decision making, programme effectiveness, learning and accountability for results. The terms of reference and guiding questions for the review were structured in line with the UNEG framework and aimed to "provide an independent and professional assessment of the WFP evaluation function on the extent to which the UNEG Norms and Standards<sup>1</sup> have been adopted by WFP". The assessment focuses on the independence, credibility and utility of the WFP evaluation function and on how effectively evaluations were used and followed up on throughout WFP to promote accountability, learning and improvement.
3. The review covers both the centralized and decentralized components of WFP's evaluation function and assesses the role and strategic positioning of financial and human resourcing, evaluation planning, evaluation use and quality assurance mechanisms. It focuses on the period of the current evaluation policy, which covers 2016–2021, and builds on findings from prior assessments, the most recent of which is the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) assessment covering the period from 2017 to 2018.<sup>2</sup>
4. The peer review panel was formed in March 2020 and reviewed and adopted terms of reference in May, when an external consultant was recruited. To prepare for the peer review the Office of Evaluation (OEV) produced a comprehensive self-assessment report against UNEG norms and standards. The review panel considers that OEV's self-assessment constitutes a very frank and constructive reflection on WFP's evaluation practice and endorses its judgments. Drawing on the self-assessment, interviews and an extensive literature review, the consultant produced a comprehensive preliminary assessment. Building on the observations in the preliminary assessment, the panel then held remote meetings between 12 and 26 October 2020. As well as OEV, the panel met a broad range of stakeholders including senior management from WFP departments, divisions and regional bureaux, members of the Executive Board, country directors and members of regional evaluation units. The present report presents evidence and analysis from these sources. Because of travel restrictions related to COVID-19, the entire assessment was conducted remotely. WFP's regional evaluation units were leading mid-term reviews of their regional evaluation strategies at the same time as the peer review was being conducted.
5. The peer review panel comprised six members:
  - Marco Segone, Peer Review Chair, Director, Evaluation Office of the United Nations Population Fund;
  - Sven Harten, Deputy Director, German Institute for Development Evaluation;
  - Maurya West Meiers, Senior Evaluation Officer, Methods Advisory Team, World Bank Independent Evaluation Group;
  - David Rider Smith, Senior Evaluation Coordinator, Evaluation Service, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;

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<sup>1</sup> UNEG. 2016. *Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016)*.

<sup>2</sup> MOPAN. 2019. *MOPAN 2017-18 Assessments. World Food Programme*.

- Silvia Salinas Mulder, President, International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation; and
- Anu Saxén, Director, Development Evaluation Unit, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland.

Daniel Arghiros was the senior evaluation consultant for the panel.

6. The panel would like to thank the Director and Deputy Directors and staff of OEV for facilitating the review through a strongly collaborative approach. OEV's organization of the review was exemplary. The panel would also like to thank all the people to whom they spoke for their open and frank contributions.

### **The WFP evaluation function**

7. The 2016–2021 evaluation policy<sup>3</sup> sets out the vision, strategic direction and model of the evaluation function. The policy commits WFP to:
  - i) maintaining a high-quality centralized evaluation function while applying a phased approach to developing a decentralized function over the life of the policy, with OEV setting the framework of evaluation norms and standards, accountabilities and coverage;
  - ii) enhancing capacity to meet stakeholders' requirements for accountability throughout WFP; and
  - iii) strengthening WFP's culture of learning, along with that of its partners, and facilitating evidence-based decision making.
8. The evaluation policy sets out a clear vision and purpose in its theory of change (see annex). Its purpose is to ensure that evaluation results are "consistently and comprehensively incorporated into WFP's policies, strategies and programmes". WFP's evaluation strategy<sup>4</sup> sets out a phased implementation plan with a comprehensive set of indicators. Each of the six regional bureaux has a regional evaluation strategy that mirrors the structured approach of the corporate evaluation strategy but is attuned to regional conditions.
9. Successive annual evaluation reports show that WFP is achieving the evaluation targets it sets itself. It has increased the number of centralized and decentralized evaluations, achieving the coverage required by its current coverage norms. For example, 16 of WFP's 26 policies have been evaluated, and OEV is on track with the roll out of country strategic plan evaluations. In addition, 40 percent of country offices have conducted at least one decentralized evaluation in their current planning cycles, in line with WFP's current coverage norm. There has also been progress in evaluation quality, with independent post-hoc assessments of quality showing steady improvements.
10. Since the adoption of the policy the financial resources available for the evaluation function have almost tripled. In 2020 they totalled USD 26.02 million, or 0.31 percent of WFP's contribution income. WFP has also increased the number of evaluation professionals in OEV and the regional bureaux, enabling it to deliver its work programme to the required standard.

### **Summary assessment against the peer review criteria**

11. The panel's assessment of the independence, credibility and utility of WFP's evaluation function is substantially positive. WFP's evaluation function operates in line with UNEG norms and standards for evaluation. Centralized and decentralized evaluations are useful

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<sup>3</sup> [Evaluation Policy \(2016–2021\)](#) (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-A/Rev.1).

<sup>4</sup> WFP. 2016. [Corporate Evaluation Strategy \(2016–2021\)](#).

for both learning and accountability purposes, and the evaluation function serves an increasingly important role in contributing to WFP's ability to be a learning organization. The panel fully endorses the MOPAN assessment's conclusion that in WFP "[a] highly strategic independent corporate evaluation function oversees the production of high-quality centralised and decentralised evaluations".

12. The panel considers that all aspects of WFP's evaluation architecture are well articulated and that the governance structure that frames WFP's evaluation function is effective. Much of that structure has been established in direct response to the 2014 peer review.<sup>5</sup> The panel found that UNEG norms and standards have been embedded throughout WFP's evaluation function in all the systems established to support centralized and decentralized evaluations, and they have been updated to reflect recent changes. OEV's evaluations and other products are respected by staff throughout WFP and by the Executive Board. OEV's mandate for evaluation is strong. The evaluation policy clearly describes the governance structure and approval and follow-up mechanisms. It covers all UNEG criteria and other recommended practices identified by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the United Nations system. OEV has a strong and respected institutional identity. The evaluation function steering group, mandated by the current evaluation policy, has served as an effective champion for the evaluation function. Senior management appears to appreciate the role and added value of evaluation, and there is evidence of high levels of support for the function within the organization.
13. In the period reviewed, OEV adapted the evaluation function to keep it aligned with WFP's evolving priorities and organizational changes, ensuring that the function was relevant and added value. Mirroring the organization's emphasis on country-level action, since 2016 OEV has invested heavily in creating a support system to help country offices manage decentralized evaluations to UNEG standards.
14. There has been real progress towards the vision set out in the current evaluation policy that "by 2021 evaluative thinking, behaviour and systems are embedded in WFP's culture of accountability and learning". However, not surprisingly given WFP's size and operational scale, that culture is not yet fully established. This report provides suggestions and recommendations aimed at helping WFP to achieve its vision.
15. The panel finds that WFP's centralized evaluation function is mature and well-grounded. Decentralized evaluation has made great progress since 2016: the creation in 2017 and 2018 of regional evaluation units to support regional bureaux and country offices has made a huge difference. While the centralized evaluation system is mature, the demand-led decentralized evaluation system is still being established, and this is where WFP will need to focus most attention.
16. The panel notes that across WFP and its stakeholders there is also broad appreciation of the way in which the Director of Evaluation and her team have strengthened OEV's impact on the organization. There is high regard for the professionalism of OEV. It is also clear that OEV contributes actively at the international level to UNEG and other major specialized evaluation fora, helping to influence the international evaluation community with WFP's perspective and experience.

## Independence

17. WFP's central evaluation function has a high degree of independence despite being an office within WFP. The Director of Evaluation plans, manages and delivers evaluations without the need for approval from WFP management, while consulting appropriately. Overall, the function meets UNEG's evaluation norms and standards and has a high degree of

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<sup>5</sup> Summary report of the peer review of the evaluation function at the World Food Programme (WFP/EB.A/2014/7-D).

organizational independence. This attribute is not new. In a 2014 assessment of evaluation functions in the United Nations system, JIU judged WFP to be one of only two organizations with the “most comprehensive systems for addressing all five criteria of independence”.

18. Conditions embedded in the evaluation policy and evaluation charter secure a sufficiently high degree of independence in the appointment of the Director of Evaluation. While the director is appointed by the Executive Director, the Executive Director must present the final selection to the Executive Board for approval – an arrangement that ensures sufficient independence. However, WFP may want to explore the possibility of further strengthening that independence by having the selection and appointment of the Director of Evaluation managed directly by the Executive Board.
19. The evaluation function also has a robust degree of financial independence. The centralized evaluation function is financed from separate resources that are largely stable and sustainable and that allow OEV to finance the evaluation coverage mandated by the evaluation policy. The budget for OEV’s annual workplan is approved by the Board as part of WFP’s management plan. The panel considers that the target approved by the Executive Board of committing 0.8 percent of WFP’s contribution income to evaluation has helped to secure the financial independence of the evaluation function.

### **Credibility**

20. OEV has put in place robust systems for securing the validity and reliability of both centralized and decentralized evaluations. This represents a real strength. OEV also consistently uses a set of carefully designed and mutually reinforcing controls and stakeholder involvement to support the credibility of evaluations. The panel considers these to be robust.
21. The evaluation function is supported by guidance on the various kinds of centralized evaluations that it undertakes and on decentralized evaluations. The Evaluation Quality Assurance System consists of a comprehensive centralized Evaluation Quality Assurance System, a similarly comprehensive decentralized Evaluation Quality Assurance System and a body of technical notes that apply to all evaluations. These elements incorporate UNEG criteria.
22. OEV has a high degree of professional integrity. There is also a high degree of professionalism in evaluation at the regional bureau level. Both OEV and the evaluation units of the regional bureaux have in place robust professional and technical standards intended to uphold impartiality and balanced perspectives.
23. OEV invests well in the professional development of its staff. It is seeking to be more strategic in its planning of capacity development for evaluation throughout WFP with its recent evaluation capacity development strategy.<sup>6</sup> The level of technical competence in evaluation among OEV staff is uneven as a consequence of WFP’s human resources policy and OEV’s adaptation to it. The current evaluation policy commits OEV to “continue to be staffed by a 50:50 mix” of externally recruited evaluation specialists and current WFP staff with the required competency for evaluation, appointed in line with WFP’s reassignment policy.

### **Development of the decentralized evaluation function**

24. The most strategically important change introduced by the current evaluation policy, and since the last peer review, is the creation of a demand-led decentralized evaluation function. OEV has defined the strategy and role of the decentralized evaluation function well and has also, in collaboration with the evaluation function steering group, adapted the function

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<sup>6</sup> WFP. 2020. *WFP Evaluation Capacity Development Strategy (2020–2024)*.

during the period of the current evaluation policy. With the introduction of regional evaluation officers and regional evaluation units, WFP has built a regional system that supports the decentralized evaluation capacity of country offices.

25. OEV's support for the decentralized evaluation function is an area of strength. OEV has established a comprehensive set of mechanisms that support country offices and help regional evaluation units to fulfil their roles. The panel considers that together these constitute an extremely strong system and serve as an example for other agencies seeking to build decentralized evaluation functions. WFP country directors interviewed for the peer review value highly the guidance, quality assurance systems and support from regional evaluation units. Despite being in place for only three years, the units have achieved real traction in all the regions. Inevitably it will take longer for regional evaluation units to ensure that all country offices are competent in planning and commissioning evaluations.
26. While the adequacy of financial and human resources for decentralized evaluations at the country level is uneven, by creating a targeted contingency evaluation fund WFP has taken steps to ensure that funding shortfalls do not stop country offices from undertaking decentralized evaluations. As stated in paragraph 34, further investment in strengthening the decentralized evaluation system is needed.

#### **Utility – the added value of the evaluation function**

27. The value that WFP's evaluation function adds is clear both in terms of helping to improve WFP's performance – by generating validated better practices – and in terms of accountability. WFP has a track record of producing centralized evaluations that are highly relevant and that add to learning. The extent to which evaluation is being institutionalized is therefore increasing.
28. Evaluative thinking is strongest at the headquarters level; at the decentralized level it is weaker, but it started from a lower baseline and is heading in the right direction. The panel heard of strong buy-in from the small sample of country offices interviewed but a significant proportion of staff and country offices see evaluation as a bureaucratic exercise. The panel therefore feels that there is room for OEV and regional evaluation units to enhance utility even further, and many of its comments relate to this.
29. There has been a shift in internal perceptions of the evaluation function, resulting in much increased appreciation of evaluation as a contributor to learning. This is a very positive development. However, the panel noted an institutional tendency towards treating evaluation primarily as an accountability tool. To balance this institutional tendency, the panel considers that WFP will need to ensure that more value is attached to learning from evaluation. Such a message will need to come from the Executive Board and senior management as well as OEV.
30. The panel considers that OEV can enhance the responsiveness of the evaluation function by deploying a broader range of evaluation types and methodologies. OEV's piloting of a new, more strategic approach to impact evaluations is an important step in this direction, but there is still room for more innovation, including the piloting of developmental or formative evaluations.<sup>7</sup> The panel heard of demand for more timely production of evidence for informing programmes with short cycles, such as humanitarian interventions, and for real-time and interactive feedback loops that quickly provide management with emerging evaluative evidence.
31. The panel invites OEV and regional evaluation units to consider whether they can enhance value by seeking to more systematically contribute targeted evaluative evidence to decision

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<sup>7</sup> A formative evaluation is one that looks at design and relevance issues rather than assessing results achieved. The distinguishing characteristic of a developmental evaluation is that it contributes to something that is being developed.

makers when it is most needed and therefore likely to have the greatest potential impact. OEV and the regional evaluation units already do this in several ways – and coverage norms have been designed with learning needs in mind – but the panel considers that a more systematic approach could yield dividends. Over time this could enhance the value attached to evaluative learning and promote increased lesson learning at WFP more broadly. In practice, it means OEV and regional evaluation staff attending – as observers and without taking part in any decisions – key decision making events and providing targeted real-time evidence while maintaining independence and preventing the development of any real or perceived conflict of interest.

32. There are weaknesses in WFP's knowledge management system and a culture of using evaluation evidence in planning and programming has yet to be embedded. The lack of a solid and functioning knowledge management system inhibits the systematic use of findings from evaluations. OEV has had to work with policy and programme units to identify knowledge needs and contribute evaluative knowledge. Without functioning organization-wide systems, OEV itself will need to develop a systematic approach to the management of knowledge generated by evaluations.
33. There is demand from outside OEV for better communication, and OEV is developing a new communication and knowledge management strategy that will help to meet this need. The panel endorses this effort and encourages the adoption of cutting-edge methodologies for the evaluation function. The panel also feels that OEV could contribute more to learning beyond WFP by enhancing stakeholder access to evaluative evidence.

#### **Strengthening the integrated evaluation function**

34. Centralized and decentralized evaluations together constitute WFP's evaluation function. The systems and procedures OEV has put in place establish the same expectations and standards for both. Largely because country offices have less evaluation management capacity than OEV, however, the panel considers that more investment is needed in the evaluation capacity of country offices, particularly to minimize the potential for qualitative differences.
35. The panel also invites WFP to give learning needs even more explicit attention in the evaluation planning process. In collaboration with the evaluation function steering group and the Executive Board, OEV could seek to anticipate future learning needs and ensure that its planned coverage addresses them. OEV could develop an evaluation learning plan and use it to inform the evaluation plans in addition to addressing accountability purposes.
36. This approach may lead WFP to review the current coverage norm for country strategic plan evaluations. The panel appreciates that country offices are among the primary users of these evaluations, which generate learning on how to improve impact. Notwithstanding their potential value for country offices, the utility of universal coverage of country strategic plans could be less than expected for two reasons. First, it is likely that many of the 80-plus country strategic plan evaluations will generate similar findings and recommendations with regard to issues that they have in common. Second, apart from the country offices themselves there is limited absorptive capacity in WFP to learn from such a high number of evaluations, within both management and the Executive Board. WFP could therefore consider a differentiated approach to country strategic plan evaluations, proceeding with them in strategically important countries but undertaking lighter processes or engaging in joint or system-wide evaluations in others. The panel recognizes that the commitment to full evaluation coverage was made only recently and that an immediate change would be unhelpful. WFP could therefore continue with full evaluation coverage of the "first-generation" country strategic plans and then review the utility of such coverage for "second-generation" plans.

37. The panel also considers that there is scope to try to increase the strategic contribution that decentralized evaluations make to learning. Country offices could be encouraged to select topics that better contribute to meeting WFP's strategic learning needs once they have been identified (as described in the previous paragraph). Currently, most decentralized evaluations focus on a handful of themes or programmes. OEV could encourage country offices and regional bureaux by providing incentives such as enhanced support for units that choose to evaluate designated topics. OEV and regional evaluation units could also encourage regional bureaux to commission multi-country decentralized evaluations on priority themes.

### **Recommendations from the peer review**

38. The following paragraphs focus on the panel's other findings and related recommendations. These are aimed at strengthening the independence, credibility and utility of WFP's evaluation function. The panel recommends that the evaluation policy be updated to incorporate changes in the external and internal environments and to take into consideration the six overarching recommendations that are presented below with action points for each. Some of the action points are relatively specific in terms of the measures that the panel recommends; others are phrased more generally, leaving WFP to reflect and decide on the best way forward. The text in parentheses at the end of each action point identifies the WFP entity that should implement the action point.

#### **Independence**

39. To safeguard the future independence of the Director of Evaluation position it is important that all conditions underpinning that independence be approved by the Executive Board. The Executive Board approves the evaluation policy and therefore the conditions should be set out in the policy document itself as opposed to in the evaluation charter or strategy. The conditions should include conditions for the dismissal of the Director of Evaluation.

**Recommendation 1:** To support the independence of the evaluation function the panel recommends that all conditions relating to that independence be explicitly stated in the next evaluation policy, which should:

- a) state explicitly that the Director of Evaluation reports to the Executive Board on functional issues and the Executive Director on administrative issues; and (OEV)
  - b) include procedures for the dismissal of the Director of Evaluation, which should require consultation with the Executive Board. (OEV)
40. The future independence and credibility of the evaluation function would be enhanced by three actions related to financing. The inclusion of a target percentage of WFP's contribution income to be invested in evaluation in the current policy contributes to the function's independence. To protect the future financial independence of the function, this practice should be repeated in the next evaluation policy. The target figure should be based on a projection of the cost of a fully-fledged integrated evaluation function and of WFP's contribution income, ensuring that it is appropriate given the scale of WFP's resources.
41. A range of instruments fund different kinds of evaluations. If this complexity continues or is extended, it will be increasingly difficult to manage financing for WFP's evaluation function. WFP could consider reviewing and seeking to harmonize funding for evaluation. The contingency evaluation fund has been a useful tool and, if a new consolidated funding approach does not make it redundant, should be extended and perhaps expanded to enhance the capacity of the smallest country offices to commission and manage evaluations.



**Recommendation 2:** To support the independence and credibility of the evaluation function the panel recommends:

- a) that the next evaluation policy again set a target for a percentage of WFP's contribution income to be dedicated to evaluation, which should be based on an updated financial analysis that takes into consideration the cost of a fully-fledged evaluation function, including an enhanced decentralized evaluation function; (OEV, Executive Board)
- b) that WFP review, with a view to harmonizing, the various financial instruments used to support the various types of evaluations that constitute the evaluation function; and (OEV, evaluation function steering group, Corporate Planning and Performance Division)
- c) that if alternative financing arrangements are not created (recommendation 2 b)), WFP consider extending and perhaps modifying the contingency evaluation fund so that it can provide more flexible support to the smallest country offices and potentially support decentralized evaluations undertaken by regional bureaux. (OEV, evaluation function steering group)

### **Credibility**

42. OEV has put in place robust principles, guidance and practices that support the credibility of both centralized and decentralized evaluations. The panel, however, makes a specific recommendation relating to human resources aimed at ensuring that OEV can recruit staff possessing the technical expertise required to manage the evaluation function effectively in the future. The panel considers that the staffing of OEV should be guided by the skills required rather than the desire to recruit from a specific candidate pool (i.e., current WFP staff).
43. Almost 90 percent of staff in OEV headquarters positions are from the global north; this is also true of head of regional evaluation unit positions. The panel recommends that OEV seek to improve the diversity of staff in evaluation officer posts throughout WFP.

**Recommendation 3:** To ensure that the evaluation function has staff with the requisite professional skills and diversity, the panel recommends:

- a) that WFP recognize evaluation as a specialist skill similar to auditing and exempt OEV from the WFP policy requiring that all positions be first advertised internally; this would allow OEV to advertise posts internally and externally simultaneously and make appointment decisions based solely on skills and competence; (OEV, evaluation function steering group, Human Resources Division)
- b) that WFP continue to explore the establishment of an officially recognized cadre of evaluation professionals that provides evaluation staff with a stratified career route and – depending on the size of the cadre – allows staff to rotate among posts and locations; and (OEV, evaluation function steering group, Human Resources Division)
- c) that OEV enhance the geographical and cultural diversity of staff in OEV and regional evaluation units while maintaining professional entry standards. (OEV)

### **Utility – enhancing value addition**

44. While the vision of embedding evaluative thinking, behaviour and systems throughout WFP by 2021 will not be achieved, it remains a realistic ambition. Given the scale of the challenge, however (WFP has approximately 18,000 staff in 83 locations), to achieve this WFP will need to be extremely focused on driving change. The rest of the panel's recommendations relate to increasing the value addition, and therefore utility, of WFP's evaluation function.

**Recommendation 4:** The panel recommends that WFP and OEV take steps to enhance the contribution that evaluation makes to organizational learning, in addition to accountability. The panel recommends:

- a) that the Executive Board provide incentives for WFP senior management to integrate evaluative lessons into the organization's practices and that WFP senior management drive this same approach downwards through all levels of the organization; (OEV, evaluation function steering group, regional evaluation committees, Executive Board)
- b) that OEV experiment with various evaluation approaches and methodologies and offer an expanded menu of evaluation tools, including formative and developmental evaluations and more syntheses and multi-country thematic studies; (OEV, regional evaluation units)
- c) that OEV enhance its added value by systematically providing targeted evidence to targeted decision makers for targeted decisions; this will be most effective if evaluation staff engage with programme and policy design processes, while maintaining their independence, in addition to organizing dedicated meetings for sharing evidence; and (OEV, regional bureaux, regional evaluation units)
- d) that OEV strengthen its knowledge management and communication practices and:
  - i) until corporate knowledge management systems are in place, take ownership of and responsibility for knowledge management relating to its own products, developing a strategy and procedures for ensuring that evaluation knowledge is accessible and proactively shared throughout WFP; (OEV)
  - ii) finalize the draft communication and knowledge management strategy, ensuring that it sets out a genuinely transformative approach to internal communication and specifies how OEV will systematically take ownership of knowledge management relating to evaluation products; (OEV)
  - iii) explore how to facilitate the use of its evaluative evidence in ways that contribute to learning beyond WFP; (OEV)
  - iv) engage with the Programme and Policy Development Department on the mainstreaming of learning from evaluations; and (OEV, Programme and Policy Development Department)
  - v) consider commissioning an evaluation of knowledge management at WFP. (OEV)

**Recommendation 5:** The panel recommends that WFP implement changes that will help strengthen the quality and utility of decentralized evaluations and contribute to a stronger integrated evaluation function. Specifically, the panel recommends:

- a) that OEV, together with the evaluation function steering group and the Executive Board, consider developing an evaluation learning plan and use it to inform the evaluation plans, in addition to meeting accountability needs. Such a learning plan could be incorporated into WFP's next evaluation strategy; (OEV, evaluation function steering group, Executive Board)
- b) that WFP consider taking a differentiated approach rather than a universal one to evaluating country strategic plans; OEV could base its decision on a review of the strategic value of full coverage when the first-generation country strategic plan evaluations have been completed, which should include consultation with country directors; (OEV, evaluation function steering group, Executive Board)

- c) that country offices and regional bureaux be encouraged and given the “space” to focus decentralized evaluations on issues that are strategically important to WFP, as identified in a potential learning plan (OEV, evaluation function steering group, regional evaluation committees), which would also require that OEV and the Public Partnerships and Resourcing Division engage with donors with a view to harmonizing their evaluation requirements and reducing the number of evaluations on the same subject, thereby giving country offices the “space” to select other topics for evaluation; and
- d) that WFP and OEV invest further in enhancing the credibility and utility of decentralized evaluations so that they add value to centralized evaluations and to evolving evaluation practices at the country level, to which end OEV and WFP could consider:
  - i) further boosting the capacity of regional bureaux so that regional evaluation units can provide more intensive support to country offices; (OEV, evaluation function steering group)
  - ii) ensuring that very small country offices have the capacity to manage evaluations by financing their monitoring and evaluation officers, possibly from WFP’s programme support and administrative budget; (evaluation function steering group, regional bureaux)
  - iii) inviting small country offices to pool resources to hire multi-country evaluation specialists; and (regional evaluation committees)
  - iv) encouraging the sharing of peer-to-peer support by facilitating the provision of support from country offices with strong evaluation expertise to those with less, including through remote or in-person technical assistance. (regional evaluation units)

**Contributing to cross-cutting agendas, humanitarian evaluation, joint evaluation and national evaluation capacity**

- 45. OEV has a strong track record in its treatment of gender equality in centralized evaluations; in decentralized evaluations, however, it is more uneven and could be strengthened. OEV needs to define what integrating a human rights perspective means in practice, and disability and inclusion issues also need to be mainstreamed, reflecting new United Nations and UNEG standards.
- 46. The panel considers that the relative size and profile of WFP’s evaluation function in the United Nations evaluation system gives it a responsibility to play a leading role in modelling best practices for other agencies and partners in the areas listed below.

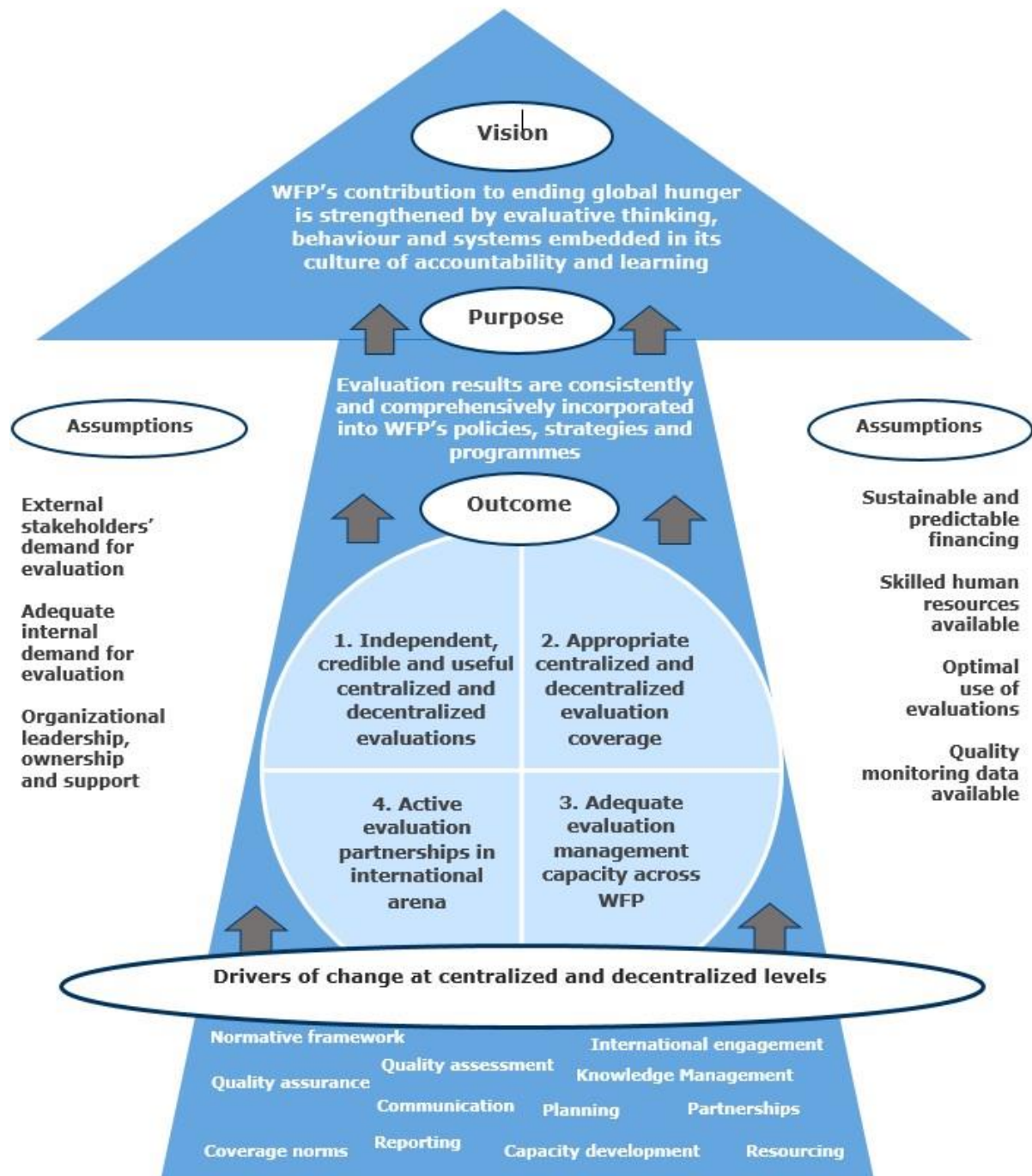
**Recommendation 6:** Given the experience and status of WFP’s evaluation function the panel considers that WFP should contribute in particular to humanitarian evaluation practice, cross-cutting agendas, joint evaluation and national evaluation capacity. Going forward, OEV and regional evaluation units should:

- a) be at the forefront of the development and sharing of evaluation approaches and methods and the co-management of joint and system-wide evaluations, particularly in complex humanitarian settings; (OEV)
- b) position WFP as a leader and contributor to United Nations reform, country-level harmonization initiatives, independent system-wide evaluations and joint evaluations; (OEV, regional evaluation units, evaluation function steering group, country directors)

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- c) continue to work on mainstreaming into evaluation consideration of gender equality, human rights and inclusion – the United Nations’ “leave no-one behind” agenda – given their centrality to the Sustainable Development Goals; and (regional evaluation units, OEV)
  - d) develop and implement clear principles for national evaluation capacity development. (regional evaluation units, OEV)

**ANNEX**

**Evaluation Policy Theory of Change (2016-2021)**



**Acronyms**

JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
OEV	Office of Evaluation
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group