

Revised evaluation policy



Second informal consultation

9 September 2021

**World Food Programme
Rome, Italy**

Overview

1. Following the first informal consultation with the Executive Board and further internal consultation with WFP management, this note summarizes proposed updates to the following sections of the evaluation policy: the theory of change; use, communication and follow-up; harmonization of financial instruments; and the Contingency Evaluation Fund (CEF). It also proposes potential coverage norms based on scenarios for the evolution of the evaluation function and how they will be used to cost the evaluation function. The financial targets for the function will be finalized once coverage norms have been set.
2. At this consultation we are seeking the Executive Board's endorsement of the approach and proposals presented below.

Detail

A. Theory of change

3. Following additional consultation, the theory of change has been adjusted to include more detail on the principles that underpin the evaluation function, which influence both what is evaluated and how it is evaluated. The updated theory of change is provided in the annex to the present document, and climate adaptation and mitigation have been added to the principles. By taking the principles into account in its evaluations, WFP will be able to further embed them in its strategies, plans and programmes.

B. Use, communication and follow-up

4. The proposed approach to addressing strategic outcome 3 of the theory of change focuses on the use of, communication about and follow-up to evaluations. The text to describe the approach in the revised policy is currently drafted as follows:

“Recognizing the contribution of evaluation to knowledge and the evidence base, WFP is committed to strengthening organizational learning from evaluation. The utility of evaluations is enhanced when evaluations are planned and conducted with clear intent to use their results, when they are timed to inform decision making processes and when evaluation evidence is available and accessible.

Steps to ensure the appropriate planning and conduct of evaluations are noted elsewhere in this policy; building on current products and processes, communication of results to stakeholders and affected populations will be considered throughout the planning and implementation of each evaluation.

The Office of Evaluation (OEV) will continue to introduce innovative and agile evaluation approaches and methods in order to enhance the timeliness and utility of evaluation results for decision making. OEV will work with the regional bureaux to foster innovation in evaluations commissioned at the regional and country levels and to facilitate cross-fertilization between regions.

This outcome is focused on ensuring that evaluation evidence is systematically accessible and available to meet the needs of WFP and its partners. Detailed actions to achieve this outcome will be identified in the corporate evaluation strategy and will focus on:

- Strengthening established mechanisms for utilizing evaluation evidence to inform decision making including by the Executive Board and WFP management. OEV will continue to share lessons learned with the Executive Board; the Oversight and Policy Committee (OPC) will continue to review evaluation

evidence of strategic importance; accountability and learning needs will guide consultation processes between the OPC and the Evaluation Function Steering Group (EFSG) at the corporate level, and the regional evaluation committees at the regional level. Systems for approving policies, strategies and programmes will require the incorporation of evaluation evidence and plans for future evaluations.

- Implementing the WFP evaluation communications and knowledge management strategy to promote evaluation use, knowledge sharing and knowledge access through the communication of evaluation results to all stakeholders. This will maximize their use in policy, strategy and programme design.
- Ensuring that the evaluation function proactively supports learning, becoming a learning partner at all levels of the organization.

All WFP evaluations and management responses will be publicly available. WFP is committed to ensuring coherence between evaluation recommendations and management responses through regular engagement between management and OEV during the finalization of the evaluations and their management responses. The Executive Board considers all OEV-commissioned evaluations and their management responses. WFP management will monitor and report to the Board on the follow-up to central evaluation recommendations through an analytical report on the implementation status of evaluation recommendations for consideration by the OPC and the Executive Board.”

C. Scenarios for the evolution of the evaluation function

5. Internal consultations on the potential evolution of the evaluation function have continued and have considered the proposed scenarios for decentralized evaluations in more detail. There is a clear consensus that there should be no reduction in the number of evaluations undertaken in small country offices. While these offices may not undertake as many evaluations as their larger counterparts they nonetheless implement a substantial programme portfolio, including in new areas of WFP’s work such as social protection, and they contribute to capacity strengthening and evidence generation. WFP should not limit the opportunity for learning or the need to demonstrate accountability by reducing the number of evaluations in small country offices.
6. The three scenarios for decentralized evaluations are status quo; more evaluations in large offices; and more evaluations in all offices. In each case it is expected that decentralized evaluations will be complemented by more joint evaluations, system-wide evaluations (i.e., United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework (UNSDCF) evaluations at the national level) and a small number of regional multi-country evaluations. The potential for engagement in more system-wide evaluations will be explored but is dependent on the further development of the system-wide evaluation architecture.
7. These scenarios will be costed using standard costs to set financial targets for the policy (together with the budgets for OEV-led evaluations and activities set out in the 2022 WFP management plan).

D. Updated coverage norms

8. Table 1 sets out proposed minimum coverage norms by commissioning unit, with consideration of the three decentralized evaluation scenarios. There is no change proposed for OEV-managed centralized evaluations; however, the coverage norm for impact evaluations has been revised to reflect the approach set out in the impact evaluation strategy. The proposed minimum coverage norms for decentralized evaluations are informed by benchmarking against other comparable United Nations agencies and the need to meet accountability requirements and to inform learning, particularly for new areas of programming, on issues on which the evidence is unclear and in new operating environments.

TABLE 1: PROPOSED MINIMUM EVALUATION COVERAGE NORMS	
Commissioning unit	Type of evaluation
OEV	Strategic evaluations providing balanced coverage of WFP's core planning instruments, including elements of the WFP strategic plan and related strategies.
	Policy evaluations: evaluation of all policies from four to six years after the start of implementation ¹ and/or prior to a policy change.
	Evaluation of corporate Level 3 and protracted Level 2 crisis responses , including responses to multi-country crises, will be conducted by WFP or inter-agency humanitarian evaluation teams (in accordance with inter-agency humanitarian evaluation guidelines) or through country strategic plan (CSP) evaluations together with decentralized evaluations of certain issues as appropriate.
	Syntheses: at least one per year
	Country strategic plan evaluations: ² a) A CSP evaluation is required in the penultimate year of every CSP ³ b) For interim CSPs (ICSPs), an evaluation must be conducted every five years for the 10 largest country offices and every 10–12 years for all other country offices implementing ICSPs.
	Impact evaluations: ⁴ OEV will determine how many evaluation windows and how many evaluations within each window can be managed at any one time. This will be determined using criteria set by OEV, including WFP evidence priorities and capacity.
Country offices ⁵	Scenarios: <i>Status quo:</i> at least one decentralized evaluation (e.g. activity or thematic evaluation or CSP strategic outcome evaluation) per country office per CSP or ICSP cycle <i>Scenario 1:</i> For small and medium-sized offices: at least one decentralized evaluation (e.g., activity or thematic evaluation or CSP strategic outcome evaluation) per CSP or ICSP cycle. For large and very large offices: at least one activity or thematic evaluation every three years. <i>Scenario 2:</i> All country offices: at least one decentralized evaluation (e.g., activity or thematic evaluation or CSP strategic outcome evaluation) every three years.
Regional bureaux	No specific norms, but criteria to guide decision making on evaluation should be applied, particularly for multi-country evaluations. ⁶

TABLE 1: PROPOSED MINIMUM EVALUATION COVERAGE NORMS	
Commissioning unit	Type of evaluation
Headquarters office or division	No specific norms, but criteria to guide decision making on evaluation should be applied.
Joint and system-wide evaluations: WFP will seek out opportunities with other United Nations agencies and at the country level in consultation with national partners to undertake more joint and system-wide evaluations, including UNSDCF evaluations and inter-agency humanitarian evaluations.	

¹ WFP/EB.A/2011/5-B.

² WFP/EB.2/2016/4-C/1/Rev.1*.

³ The current CSP evaluation norms will be reviewed in 2023 once the first generation of CSP evaluations has been completed and the CSP policy has been evaluated.

⁴ Currently there are four evidence windows and up to six evaluations are running in each window at any time. Non-window impact evaluations are considered on a case-by-case basis by OEV.

⁵ Different country offices have been grouped into four categories based on WFP criteria established by the Operations Management Support Office as well as size, number of staff and number of beneficiaries.

⁶ Regional programmes and projects should include plans for generating evidence through evaluation where appropriate.

9. Alongside these coverage norms, the policy will also provide criteria to guide decisions regarding whether and what to evaluate, particularly for evaluations commissioned by country offices, regional bureaux and headquarters divisions. The proposed criteria are given in table 2.

TABLE 2: PROPOSED CRITERIA TO GUIDE DECISION MAKING FOR EVALUATIONS COMMISSIONED BY COUNTRY OFFICES, REGIONAL BUREAUX AND HEADQUARTERS DIVISIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic relevance to WFP • Evidence gaps (at the country, regional or global levels) • Programme expenditure • Emergency response • Before replication or scale-up of pilots, innovations or prototypes • Innovative results (e.g. achieved across a region or through innovative multi-country programmes that are centrally funded or supported) • Formal commitments to stakeholders (e.g. to national partners to inform national programmes or to funders as part of funding requirements) • Likelihood of influencing policy making or potential for leveraging partnerships • Feasibility of undertaking the evaluation

E. Harmonization of financial instruments

10. Table 3 summarizes the four principal funding sources of the evaluation function. Significant progress has been made in diversifying and consolidating funding sources over the duration of the current evaluation policy.

11. Following a review of WFP expenditure on evaluation, including a comparison with other United Nations agencies, a number of guiding principles have emerged for financing the function:
- There should be a balance in funding sources to avoid overloading the programme support and administrative (PSA) budget.
 - There should be a differentiated approach to funding depending on the evaluation type and the office commissioning the evaluation.
 - Direct costs under CSPs should be budgeted for at the country level; in other words, country offices should continue to incorporate the costs of CSP evaluations and other evaluations they commission into their country portfolio budgets (CPBs). For impact evaluations, data collection costs should also be included in CPBs. Contributions to evaluations led by resident coordinators (such as UNSDCF evaluations) should also be budgeted for in CPBs.
 - There should be an incentive-based mechanism for country offices, particularly small offices, that have genuine resource constraints for mandatory or demand-based evaluations.
12. When donors have specific evaluation requirements, their full cost needs to be budgeted for in the relevant proposal or budget.

TABLE 3: WFP EVALUATION FUNCTION FUNDING MODEL, JULY 2021			
Programme support and administrative budget	Programme resources country portfolio budget	Multi-donor trust fund (donor contributions)	Multilateral Contingency Evaluation Fund*
Decentralized evaluation oversight: regional evaluation units (staff + operational costs of each unit)	Decentralized evaluation conduct and management (staff time); implementation costs		Support country offices that face genuine resource constraints in respect of planned and budgeted decentralized evaluations .
Centralized evaluation conduct and management (OEV annual work plan)	Country strategic plan evaluation conduct: adjusted direct support costs (DSC)		<i>Support country offices that face genuine resource constraints for planned and budgeted CSP evaluations.</i>
Impact evaluation conduct and management (OEV annual work plan)	Impact evaluation data collection costs	A dedicated multi-donor trust fund managed by OEV that channels donor resources to specific WFP impact evaluations	<i>Support small country offices that face genuine resource constraints in respect of impact evaluation data collection costs.</i>
OEV overall function responsibility (standards, oversight, reporting)			

* The CEF was funded from the PSA between 2017 and 2021. From 2022, in accordance with guidance resulting from the bottom-up strategic budgeting exercise, multilateral funding will be used. Text in italics refers to the expanded scope of the CEF. Technical guidance will be revised regarding the joint assessment of applications for CEF funding by the Programme Services Branch and OEV against agreed criteria for EFSG decision making.

F. Updates to the Contingency Evaluation Fund

13. Evidence suggests that resource constraints influence which evaluations are commissioned, particularly at the country level. Some of these constraints can be addressed through better budgeting and improved oversight of the budgeting process which will ensure that adequate and timely allocations are made, especially for CSP evaluations. Nonetheless, there is a need for an incentive-based mechanism that enables resource-constrained country offices to undertake evaluations; this will act as a safety net that ensures that accountability and learning needs are met.
14. The CEF was established under the previous evaluation policy at the level of USD 1.5 million annually and was designed to provide additional resources for decentralized evaluations where there was demand but insufficient resources. Applications from country offices are reviewed by regional bureaux and then assessed jointly by OEV and the **Programming Services Branch** based on a set of eligibility and assessment criteria, including a review of funding shortfalls and affordability. This informs advice on grant size and decisions by the EFSG on final allocations. The process validates the genuine nature of the resource constraint.
15. Based on experience and the governance mechanism and processes in place, the EFSG has agreed in principle to expand the scope of the CEF to include:
 - CSP evaluation funding gaps
 - Support for small country offices that face genuine resource constraints by covering data collection funding gaps for impact evaluations
16. Further consideration is being given to proposals to:
 - allow regional bureaux to use CEF funds to support multi-country or regionally led evaluations
 - allow country offices to use CEF funds to undertake preparation and scoping exercises for planned and budgeted CSP evaluations where there are genuine funding constraints.
17. The level of the CEF would be established annually during the development of the management plan, based on an analysis of use to date and indications of projected demand for the coming year. In the event that 80 percent of the initial allocation is disbursed, the EFSG would approach the appropriate budget governance body to request that the fund be replenished based on evidence of use.

G. Costing the function

18. A floor for evaluation function financial targets will be calculated as part of the preparation of the evaluation function work plan and its associated costing for the WFP management plan for 2022–2024 through the bottom-up strategic budgeting exercise. This will be based on coverage norms and data on planned evaluation activities for 2023. Given the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on WFP expenditure, including expenditure for the evaluation function, it would be unrealistic to use 2022 as the base calculation year. The ceiling will be calculated by modelling the scenarios noted in section C above informed by expectations as to which scenario is the most realistic reflection of the evolution of the function.

WFP evaluation function theory of change

PRINCIPLES

United Nations charter principles: equity, justice, human rights, respect for diversity
 Humanitarian principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence
 Gender equality
 Protection
 Accountability to affected populations
 Climate change adaptation and mitigation
 Ethics
 Diversity and inclusion
 "Leave no one behind"
 Transparency

OUTPUTS

- Normative framework in place
- Quality assessment system functioning
- Quality assurance system functioning
- Innovative evaluation methods and approaches adopted
- Coverage norms established and met
- Evaluations are planned and designed to meet coverage norms and priority learning needs
- Communication and knowledge management in respect of evaluation evidence promotes use and stimulates demand
- Evaluation evidence is packaged, channeled and shared
- Funding targets meet the needs of the function
- Professional evaluation cadre developed and supported through evaluation capacity development strategy
- Partnerships broadened and strengthened
- Contribution to global, regional and national communities of practice and national evaluation capacity development

OUTCOMES

- 1 Evaluations are independent, credible and useful
- 2 Evaluation coverage is balanced and relevant and supports both accountability and learning
- 3 Evaluation evidence is systematically accessible and available to meet the needs of WFP and partners
- 4 WFP has enhanced capacity to commission, manage and use evaluations
- 5 Evaluation partnerships contribute to the global evaluation agenda and United Nations coherence

GOALS

Evaluation evidence consistently and comprehensively informs decisions on WFP policies, strategies, plans and programmes

The WFP evaluation function contributes to global knowledge and supports global decision making and SDG achievement

VISION 2030

WFP's contribution to achieving zero hunger is strengthened by a culture of accountability and learning supported by evaluative thinking, behaviour and systems

Assumptions

Effective results-based management systems	Sustainable and predictable financing	Adequate (external) evaluator expertise available	Added value of agency evaluation functions maintained in context of United Nations reform	Interest of partners in joint evaluations National evaluation systems continue to evolve	External stakeholder demand for evaluation	Adequate internal demand for evaluation evidence	WFP absorption capacity for evidence	Effective corporate knowledge management systems	Effective incentives for evidence-informed policies, strategies, plans and programmes	Organizational leadership, ownership and support
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Acronyms

CEF	Contingency Evaluation Fund
CPB	country portfolio budget
CSP	country strategic plan
EFSG	Evaluation Function Steering Group
ICSP	interim country strategic plan
OEV	Office of Evaluation
OPC	Oversight and Policy Committee
UNSDCF	United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework