Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Use of Technology in Constrained Environments

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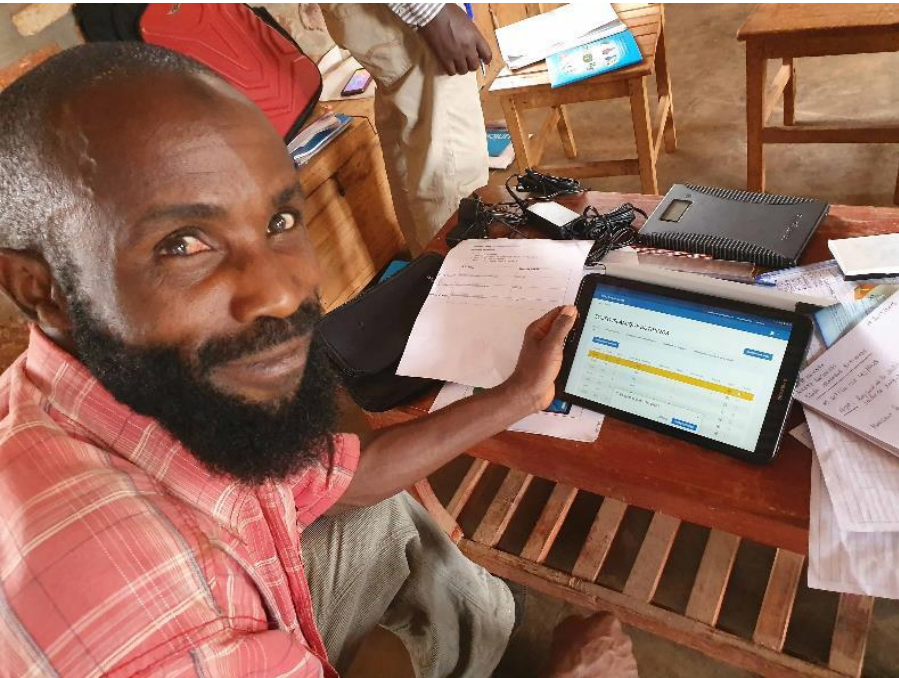WFP
World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

EQ1. How does the use of **technologies** help WFP increase the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations in constrained environments?

- Increased effectiveness across multiple dimensions: targeting, delivery, gathering of information, coordination of logistics, M&E

- Improved efficiency and adaptability of operations through automation, simplification, error reduction, enhanced management

- Appropriateness and relevance of technologies decrease with higher constraints e.g., poor connectivity, low mobile phone use

EQ2. How does the use of technologies in constrained environments affect the **people** served by WFP, and how do people affect this use?

- General positive effect on the lives of people served by WFP, including increased access, flexibility and dignity

- Technology benefits dampened by known barriers, new risks and increased burden carried by the people served

- Digital technologies often mistakenly seen as inclusive or neutral with limited consideration for gender, marginalized groups

- Major progress on data protection and cyber-security but insufficient concern for protection and security

- Insufficient investment in digital literacy of staff and cooperating partners

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EQ3. How appropriate are WFP **policies and processes** in place to enable strategic use, promote innovation and manage risks in relation to the use of technologies in constrained environments?

- Rapid expansion of policies and processes, and efforts to clarify processes and governance for digital innovation

- Technology development process remains costly and cumbersome → tensions between rapid innovation needs and risk management

- Risks to operations well considered but clarity on responsibilities is lacking

- Very limited monitoring and knowledge management on use, performance and risks of ICTs

EQ4. How well does WFP manage its **partnerships** in relation to the provision and use of technologies in constrained environments?

- WFP is leading the provision of technology services across the humanitarian sector

- Information sharing is increasingly critical and frequent but hindered by technical mechanisms, protocols, inter-operability

- Challenges to ensure compliance by partners with WFP regulations on personal data handling

- WFP is a pioneer in working with the private sector and in assistance to governments, but room to improve transparency and consultation on strategy and partnership decisions

Conclusions (1/2)

STRATEGY

- WFP leadership in the use of humanitarian technologies with important performance and adaptability gains

- Strategic role of technology not clearly articulated. Lack of clear and coherent positioning on humanitarian debates

- Insufficient prioritization of protection, localization and participation

GOVERNANCE

- Recent formalization of roles and regulations regarding development and use of digital technology across the organization

- Struggle to find right balance between centralized and localized approaches

RISKS & PROTECTION

- Concerted efforts to manage cyber-security and data protection risks

- Implementation of policies and guidelines related to data protection is lagging → significant vulnerabilities and risks for WFP and affected populations

Conclusions (2/2)

INCLUSION, ENGAGEMENT AND APPROPRIATENESS

- Appropriateness of people-facing technologies undermined by limited engagement with people served

- Lack of monitoring of differential impacts and exclusion dynamics

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

- Unique level of experience on digital technology use in constrained environments

- Lack of systematic processes to monitor and share experiences on the development, deployment and continued use of technologies

DIGITAL SKILLS AND PARTNERSHIPS

- Insufficient investment in diverse digital skills of staff and partners

- Opportunity to engage more with partners on critical debates around humanitarian technologies

Recommendations (1/2)

1. Formulate an overall strategic vision for the use of digital technology and data in which people and protection are central concerns. Translate this vision into clear standards, directives and guidance, and disseminate them internally and to partners.

2. Clarify and strengthen governance arrangements, division of roles and responsibilities, and allocation of resources driving WFP's digital transformation across all levels of the organization, enhancing the balance between product-driven efforts and business needs.

3. Develop strategies and mechanisms for ensuring effective protection of affected populations and personnel and the management of risks associated with the use of technologies, considering constrained environments in particular.

Recommendations (2/2)

4. Integrate inclusion, gender equality and women's empowerment in technology development and use, and meaningfully engage with diverse community members.

5. Develop a knowledge management approach appropriate for constrained environments to capture, store and disseminate relevant information on WFP's use of technology.

6. Invest in developing and implementing a coherent capacity development and change management strategy with regard to basic digital skills and data literacy for all WFP staff.

7. Invest in developing and supporting successful technological partnerships for operations in constrained environments, including efforts to improve access to the Internet.