Evaluation of WFP’s Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

February 2022

First Regular Session of the Executive Board
Summary of findings: adaptation of WFP systems and capacities for the response

**Long experience/expertise in emergency response**

**But**
- No global emergency response framework/preparedness systems still being built
- Human capacity limitations
- Advance financing mechanisms developing
- Risk systems maturing
- Partnerships enhanced

**And**
- Weak knowledge management
- Gaps in gender equality & AAP
- Debate re: balance humanitarian-development activity
How well did systems & capacities adapt?

Overall, swiftly & well

- **L3** not expeditious – but attention, financing & flexibility
- **Strategic frameworks** swift
- **Data & analysis** - global public good
- **Fundraising** novel & responsive (but country variance/late contributions/earmarked)
- ‘No regrets’/risk management balanced
- **HR/wellness** systems adapted but immense strains faced by workforce

Challenges (but mostly navigated)

- HQ in emergency mode; **Regional Bureaux** as interface HQ-CO
- Diverse global experience = no shared understanding
- Strains on response decision-making/unclear accountabilities
- **Global surge** coped but challenging start
- Remote working at first
- **Knowledge transfer** experiential
How well did partnerships and strategic positioning adapt?

Overall – partnerships expanded, positioning changed

- Scale up **Common Services** = learning curve, but international respect
- Praise for **Logistics & ETC clusters**
- Some tensions in **UN partnerships** in the early stages of the response
- Overall aligned behind **government responses** - though testing at times
- **CPs** praised WFP shift
- Expanded **private sector** partnerships
- Expanded **global/national advocacy**
How did programming adapt to meet needs?

**Overall – Stayed to deliver; agile & flexible**

- Biosecurity measures implemented
- CSPs adapted
  - Emergency shift
  - Adapting targeting incl. urban
  - Cash/social protection expansion
  - Increased capacity strengthening/technical advice
  - Supply chain & logistics to governments
- **Supply chain sustained**
- **AAP – communications kept open**

**But**

- Challenges in CSPs with **no emergency outcome**
- Budget Revision slow
- Timeliness mixed
- No increased corporate investment in **gender/social protection**
What did the response achieve?

No significant deterioration in food security and nutrition status

**Maintained**
- Knowledge management
- Corporate investment in gender and social protection
- Roles of HQ, RB, COs in structures of response

**Expanded**
- Global surge system
- Generating data & analytics
- Social protection activity
- Capacity strengthening support
- Supply chain & logistics services Common services
  - Partnerships – UN, govt, private sector
  - Staff wellbeing

**New initiatives/innovation**
- Strategic frameworks
- Financing requests and internal arrangements
- Remote working
- Urban targeting
- Communications modalities

**Pivoted**
- Remote working
- Emergency focus within CSPs
- Management arrangements
- Estimating needs
- Human capacities to respond
- Risk management system
- Supply chain
- Gender at country level
- Cooperating partner relationships
Conclusions

- WFP Stayed to deliver – but high human cost
- Agile, adaptive & effective overall
- Enhanced profile – WFP as systems enabler
- Lack of formal knowledge management systems a constraint
- Lack of shared understanding impeded organisational coherence/decision-making
- Limited central investment in gender/social protection restricted transformational change
Issues for consideration

Reposition WFP in post-COVID-19 recovery
- Articulate WFP’s role in medium-term responses
- Clarify intersections in WFP’s response to structural vulnerabilities and emergencies

WFP as a “systems enabler”
- Expand ‘service offer’ to other humanitarian actors
- Define capacity needs
- Provide consistent external communications

Upscale advocacy
- Food security and nutrition aspects of socio-economic recovery
- Skills training for staff
- Leverage partnerships
Issues for consideration

Shared overview/review management arrangements
- Common understanding of diverse emergency contexts
- “Empowered decentralisation”

Resilient but adaptative systems
- Stress test of/contingency planning
- Enhanced KM systems

Ethos of staff care
- Workplace culture/management skills
- Contractual basis
- Debriefing/harnessing experience