

# **STRATEGIC EVALUATIONS CONCEPT AND 2008–2009 WORK PLAN**



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## **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF STRATEGIC EVALUATIONS AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?**

1. Strategic evaluations have a dual purpose of accountability and learning. They provide the Board and senior management with useful and timely reports of performance and results, and they contribute to learning about issues that are central to strategic decision-making and that affect WFP's ability to achieve planned results. These concerns may be systemic problems, issues that arise from the changing context in which WFP operates or matters of corporate concern. Strategic evaluations normally involve one or more Headquarters units and regions.

## **WHY HAVE A BIENNIAL PLAN FOR STRATEGIC EVALUATIONS?**

2. Corporate and systemic challenges are by nature complex and composed of a number of interrelated aspects. To address the multiple dimensions of such issues and provide sufficient depth of analysis, the Office of Evaluation (OEDE) will conduct several interrelated strategic evaluations during a biennium. All of these strategic evaluations will deal with a single, broad area of corporate concern. This approach ensures a balance between depth of analysis and breadth of coverage, and will allow making one summary of the findings from all strategic evaluations.

## **THE 2008–2009 WORK PLAN**

3. The 2008–2009 Management Plan indicates that OEDE will undertake four or five strategic evaluations of emergency preparedness and response, which is central to WFP's mandate. The Strategic Plan (2008–2011) sets out a framework for WFP actions that marks a shift for WFP from being a food aid agency to becoming a food-assistance agency with robust tools to respond to critical hunger needs. It recognizes that the context in which WFP operates is rapidly changing and that WFP needs to respond to trends such as rising prices and changing climate that could exacerbate the catastrophes that destroy people's livelihoods, reduce agricultural yields and push more people into relief situations.
4. OEDE strategic evaluations aim to: determine whether areas exist for improvement, learn from experience and inform future responses. With their focus on emergency preparedness and response the planned strategic evaluations will support the implementation of the Strategic Plan. To identify strategic evaluation topics, OEDE has conducted consultations with units and individuals at Headquarters and in the field.
5. For each of the strategic evaluations OEDE will prepare terms of reference in line with the standards of OEDE's Evaluation Quality Assurance System, which will describe in further detail the issues to be addressed.

## **Topic One: Food Security and Nutrition Information Systems**

6. This evaluation will be conducted jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WFP, at the suggestion of the FAO Programme Committee, which originated the request for the evaluation.
7. *Issue:* Information on food security and nutrition is essential in making the right choices about providing assistance, especially in a changing global environment that affects the availability of food and cost of assistance. FAO and WFP have, jointly and separately, devoted considerable resources to this end and undertaken several related evaluations. For example, WFP evaluated the Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessments Implementation Plan in 2007, focusing on its effectiveness in improving WFP's needs assessments. But there has been no evaluation of food security and nutrition information systems as a whole in terms of their responsiveness to users' information needs and their eventual use in decision-making. This subject will be the focus of this joint evaluation.
8. *Importance to WFP:* Accurate and timely information is essential for decision-making, from selecting appropriate and timely responses, to funding decisions. The evaluation is important to the cooperation arrangements of FAO and WFP, joint work and future strategies for supporting food security and nutrition information systems.

## **Topic Two: Early Warning and Contingency Planning**

9. *Issue:* WFP employs several early-warning tools to enable timely and informed decisions and actions that enhance preparedness and response. This evaluation will focus on the effectiveness, accuracy and usefulness of WFP contingency plans and their activation (in countries with *and* without WFP presence); partnerships for developing and activating contingency plans; and early-warning systems. It will compare standards and good practices with WFP's current policies and working methods with a view to understanding WFP's contributions to the development of good practice. The evaluation will focus on a cross-section of contingency plans in various emergency contexts.
10. *Importance to WFP:* Effective measures to predict and respond to emergencies are at the core of WFP's Strategic Objective 2 and are essential to WFP's ability to respond in a timely and appropriate manner. The evaluation will help to determine the current state of WFP's capacities and identify any areas that could be improved. Maintaining and continuously improving this core competence is important for implementation of the Strategic Plan.

### **Topic Three: Effectiveness of WFP's Recovery Interventions**

11. *Issue:* WFP's recovery interventions include assisting the return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons, the demobilization and reintegration of combatants, the re-establishment of livelihood systems and social services and the setting up of social safety nets. WFP works at the community level to support beneficiaries' coping strategies and introduce new ways of coping, using activities such as food for work and piloting the use of food vouchers and cash. This evaluation will focus on how WFP is helping individuals and communities to recover and rebuild after conflict or natural disaster, and determine which interventions have worked in what contexts.
12. *Importance to WFP:* The effectiveness of WFP's recovery interventions is crucial to its impact at the community level and is at the core of Strategic Objective 3. The evaluation will contribute to learning by examining WFP's experience from different regions and situations with a view to enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of its assistance.

### **Topic Four: Coping with the Consequences of Climate Change**

13. *Issue:* Some regions and countries have experienced changes in the pattern of natural disasters, for example a series of drought years followed by floods. This evaluation will focus on the implications of these changes and patterns for WFP's preparedness work, disaster response and recovery interventions and their funding. It will also look at the implications for the people affected: traditional coping mechanisms may be less effective, and their vulnerability may increase as a result of exposure to multiple shocks in rapid succession. This evaluation will concentrate on WFP operations in countries where there has been a change in frequency and severity of natural disasters and will cover WFP's work from preparedness to recovery.
14. *Importance to WFP:* Climate change is predicted to have a negative effect on food security. The evaluation will build on WFP's experience in dealing with the consequences of climate change to guide it in adapting its preparedness, response and recovery operations as necessary and will consider the issue of fundraising and the funding decisions of donors.

### **THE BIENNIAL PERSPECTIVE**

15. The strategic evaluation topics were selected to shed light on different aspects of inter-related work in emergency preparedness and response. OEDE expects the evaluations to feed into each other as follows:
  - Information on the way food security and nutrition information is used in decision-making (Topic One) might generate lessons that are applicable to the use of contingency plans (Topic Two).

- The interdependence of preparedness (Topic Two) and recovery activities (Topic Three) might arise when comparing the findings of evaluations that cover both ends of a spectrum of activities.
  - The evaluation of the consequences of climate change (Topic Four) will include indications of, among other things, preparedness and recovery activities in particular circumstances (Topics Two and Three).
  - The evaluation of recovery measures (Topic Three) may provide useful insights that can be compared with those of the evaluation of coping with climate change (Topic Four), especially concerning ways in which indigenous recovery measures have, or need to be, adapted.
16. At the end of the 2008–2009 biennium, OEDE will synthesize the findings of the strategic evaluations, with a focus on cross-cutting issues and interrelated findings as described above.

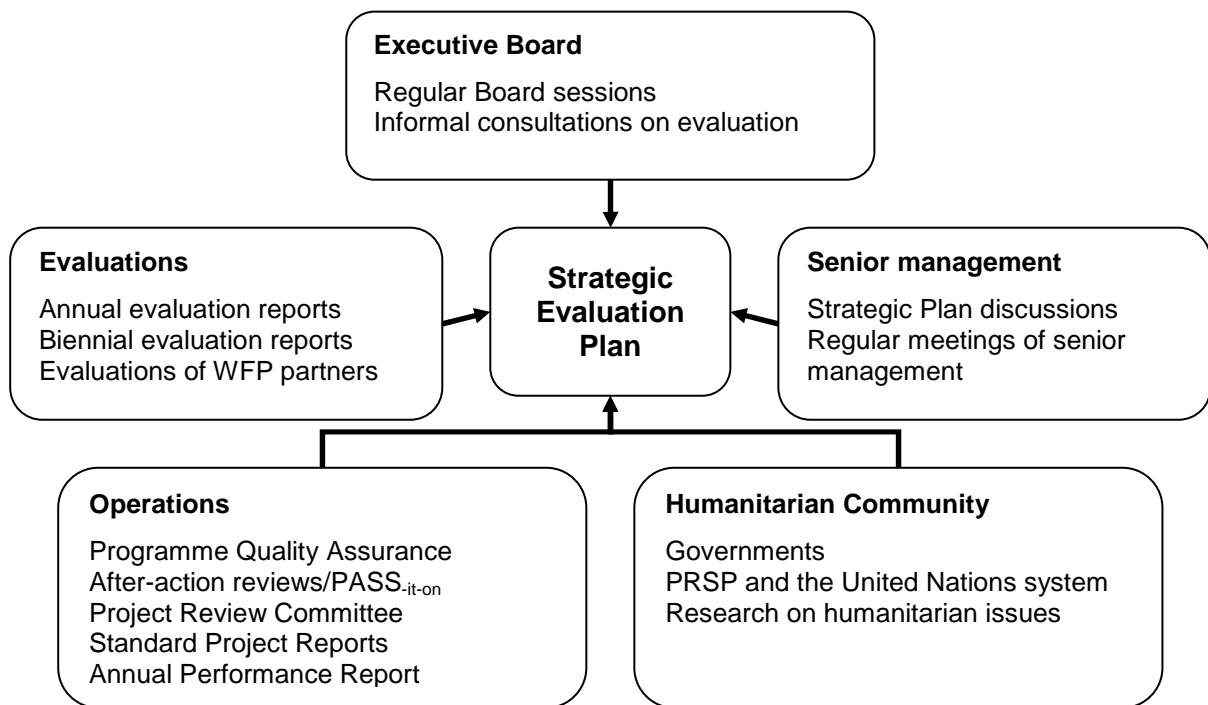
## ANNEX

### IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

#### WHO CONTRIBUTES TO IDENTIFYING STRATEGIC EVALUATIONS?

OEDE engages stakeholders and draws on existing processes to identify strategic issues that warrant evaluation. The figure shows the main stakeholders or sources of information.

FIGURE: STAKEHOLDERS IN THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS



#### HOW DOES THE IDENTIFICATION PROCESS WORK?

OEDE starts the process with an analysis of inputs including:

- a) verbatim records and notes from Board sessions;
- b) documents and notes from executive staff retreats, discussions on strategic planning and forthcoming policies;
- c) feedback systems from the field on programme quality;
- d) the findings of evaluations; and
- e) ongoing debates on strategic direction in the humanitarian community.

The analyses are consolidated to generate a first set of ideas for possible evaluations, which form a draft proposal of options for strategic evaluations. This “options paper” is shared with stakeholders to stimulate discussion. The stakeholders include:

- a) Regional Directors, selected country directors and regional programme advisors;
- b) senior management and Headquarters staff; and
- c) Board members (annual informal consultations on evaluation).

The consultations serve to verify whether the options are valid and important, add options that may be missing and prioritize them. At the end of the consultation, OEDE develops its biennial management plan, including the selected strategic evaluations.

#### **WHAT IS THE TIMING OF THE PROCESS?**

The consultation process takes place every two years in preparation for the biennial Management Plan. An annual update determines whether the chosen strategic evaluation topics remain valid.