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Programme**

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SYNTHESIS REPORT OF 2014–2015 OPERATION EVALUATIONS

**Changing Course: From Implementing to
Enabling**

Executive Board documents are available on WFP's Website (<http://executiveboard.wfp.org>).

NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration.

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report synthesizes the findings of 16 WFP operation evaluations conducted during 2014–2015. The operations had combined requirements of over USD 2.8 billion, targeted over 26 million beneficiaries and were implemented in highly diverse country contexts.

Under volatile and unpredictable conditions, WFP operations provided generally relevant food assistance to beneficiaries, although with limitations in individual activities. Appropriate analysis was applied, but detail was sometimes lacking. Efficiency suffered from difficult operating terrain, and designs were insufficiently gender-sensitive.

Most of the evaluations were conducted mid-term in the operations, affecting the results data available. Outputs referred mainly to beneficiaries reached and transfers achieved against plan. General distributions and school feeding delivered well against coverage targets; there was a positive trajectory in nutrition, but weaker performance in food assistance for assets. In the operations evaluated, WFP distributed less food to its beneficiaries than planned.

Within these operations, most outcome-level progress occurred under Strategic Objectives 3 and 4, with significant contributions to policy reforms. Fewer operations targeted Strategic Objectives 1 and 2, although there was encouraging performance towards the latter. Gender results were mixed and most were quantitatively reported. Sustainability was limited apart from for policy improvements.

External challenges, such as political upheaval and conflict, and limited funding constrained performance. Operational ambitions outstripped WFP's human resource capacity; and internal communication, along with some design flaws, remained a weakness. Conversely, WFP's credibility with partners, based on its technical and analytical expertise, helped realize results.

Based on evidence from these 16 evaluations, WFP's reorientation from *implementer* to *enabler*, signalled in the 2014–2017 Strategic Plan, appears to be gaining momentum. WFP has moved swiftly into policy spaces, acting as a convenor, modeller, information provider, leveraging actor, knowledge broker, and pilot tester of innovation to support nationally owned food assistance strategies.

However, these changes have been accompanied by “growing pains”. The new skills and approaches required are not always matched by WFP's technical and human capacities. A cultural tendency to “go it alone” sometimes undermined partnership; and operations lacked internal coherence. WFP has been vulnerable to limited and piecemeal funding, with short-term commitments and project-based resources restricting room to manoeuvre and scope for medium-term strategizing.

Overall, the findings of these evaluations suggest that WFP is progressing steadily, albeit sometimes uncertainly, along a continuum of change. The lessons presented in this synthesis aim to support WFP as it continues its journey towards becoming fit for purpose.

DRAFT DECISION^{*}

The Board takes note of “Synthesis Report of 2014–2015 Operation Evaluations” (WFP/EB.2/2015/6-E*) taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

* 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.

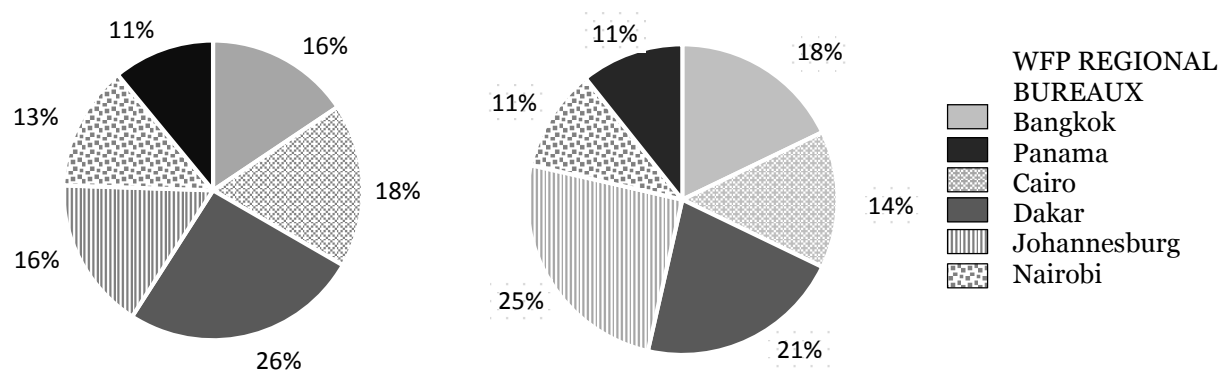
INTRODUCTION

1. WFP's mission is to end global hunger. Its operations are implemented in some of the world's most challenging terrain. They face new challenges, including increased conflict, protracted humanitarian crises and greater unpredictability.
2. This second annual synthesis analyses the findings of 16 WFP operation evaluations conducted during 2014 and 2015. Highlighting performance and lessons, it aims to support accountability, contribute to learning and help WFP realize its objectives and mandate for the beneficiaries it serves.

Operation Evaluations

3. The operation evaluation series was launched by WFP's Office of Evaluation (OEV) in 2013. It aims to support WFP's renewed emphasis on evidence and accountability for results, assessing the appropriateness and results of operations, and the factors explaining these findings.
4. Figure 1 shows the coverage of the operation evaluation series related to WFP's programme of work for 2013 and 2014 in terms of numbers of operations.

Figure 1: Cumulative coverage of WFP operation evaluations, by region, 2013 and 2014



WFP operations by regions in terms of number of operations (2013 and 2014 Programme of Work)

Operations evaluations series coverage by region in terms of number of operations (2013 and 2014 selection)

5. The 16 evaluated operations had combined requirements of over USD 2.8 billion, targeting more than 26 million beneficiaries from 2012 to 2015. They were implemented in diverse and sometimes volatile contexts, confronting situations of collapsed governments and conflict – Guinea-Bissau and Mali; natural disasters – Haiti, Honduras and Mozambique; and macroeconomic instability – Ghana, Malawi and Zimbabwe. They are listed in Table 1 (see also Annex).

TABLE 1: OPERATIONS EVALUATED	
Armenia DEV	Malawi CP
Bangladesh CP	Mali EMOP
Ecuador PRRO	Mozambique CP
Ghana CP	Pakistan PRRO
Guinea-Bissau PRRO	Somalia PRRO
Haiti DEV	Tunisia DEV
Honduras CP	Zambia CP
Islamic Republic of Iran PRRO	Zimbabwe PRRO

CP = country programme; DEV = development project; EMOP = emergency operation; PRRO = protracted relief and recovery operation.

Methodology

6. This report applied standard methods for transnational synthesis, including a structured analytical framework and systematic data extraction. Evidence was rated for validity and reliability on a scale of 1 (low) to 4 (high), with only evidence scoring at least 2 being included. Findings were validated by OEV.
7. Limitations include this report's dependence on its component studies, and some evidence gaps. Results data, being variably reported, were gathered primarily from standard project reports, triangulated with evaluation reports. For the ten mid-term evaluations, only limited results data were available. Findings of this synthesis reflect the 16 operations evaluated and do not claim to represent WFP's full global portfolio.

FINDINGS

Operation Designs

8. Designs emphasized nutrition in 11 operations, including HIV/AIDS activities, and school feeding in 15 operations. Eight operations applied general distributions (GDs), mostly targeting refugees or responding to emergencies. Food assistance for assets (FFA) was applied in 12 operations, directed towards disaster risk reduction goals in seven. Thirteen operations planned capacity development activities. The Annex lists the activities and modalities applied.
9. Designs were formulated as follows:
 - Seven of the eight operations in countries with weak macroeconomic and human development indicators¹ were multi-component, including GD for emergency/refugee requirements.
 - Four of the five operations in lower-middle-income countries were multi-component, (the exception being Armenia). All four reflected WFP's strategic reorientation, combining targeted transfers in pockets of food insecurity with an enabling role in policy and capacity development.

¹ World Bank income status 2014; United Nations Human Development Index 2014.

- The three operations in countries with high income or high human development indicators targeted refugee populations in Ecuador and the Islamic Republic of Iran, and development of national capacity for school feeding in Tunisia.

⇒ *Coverage and scale*

10. The 16 operations were mostly ambitious in terms of coverage and scale. Operations sought full or near-full coverage when the main target group was refugee/internally displaced populations – as in Ecuador, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. In countries with widespread food insecurity, operations were correspondingly large: WFP provided three-quarters of country needs for global acute malnutrition in Malawi, and distributed iodized salt to 174 million people in Pakistan.

⇒ *Rigour of design*

11. Comparable to findings from the 2014 operation evaluation synthesis, 12 of the 16 operations applied a comprehensive – or at least the best available – analytical basis in their design. Some WFP-conducted analyses were extensive, as in Pakistan and Somalia, while others were rapid assessments under crisis conditions, as in Guinea-Bissau. Six operations were designed in the framework of country strategies, although the strategies informed operation designs in only Malawi and Mozambique.
12. Weaknesses related to broad and shallow analysis, with insufficient focus on specific target populations. Only the Malawi operation applied gender analysis to inform design. Lessons learned, including from evaluations, were only partially applied: three evaluations found good application and three limited.

⇒ *Appropriateness to needs*

13. Findings on appropriateness reflect those of the 2014 synthesis, with the broad objectives of all 16 operations being appropriate to beneficiary needs. However, specific limitations were found in 11 operations, with weak activity designs in four cases; failure to address target populations' specific needs, such as in mitigating stunting, in three; and greater clarity on intent or reorientation recommended to adequately address needs in four others.
14. *Geographical targeting* intentions were mostly appropriate at the time of design, but needs evolved during implementation (see section on Factors). Limitations included weak intra-district targeting; national guidelines/protocols on nutrition and education that compromised appropriateness; and donor preferences for funding specific geographic areas or population groups.
15. *Transfer modalities* were fully or almost fully appropriate in eight of fifteen² operations. In four others, WFP stayed with familiar transfer modalities – food or vouchers – but evaluations recommended reconsidering these. Seasonal price fluctuations were not priced into cash transfers in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, resulting in decreased transfer values for beneficiaries. Donor choices determined transfer modalities in Mozambique and Somalia.

Coherence and Strategic Positioning

16. Even under challenging operating conditions, almost all operations sought *coherence* with national/sector policy frameworks and objectives. Eight were geared to helping to implement government school feeding, health or social protection programmes.

² The Tunisia operation did not involve transfers to beneficiaries.

17. WFP's *strategic positioning* varied across operations, but continued the trajectory signalled in the 2014–2017 Strategic Plan, from *implementing* to *enabling*. In the nine countries where operating architectures permitted, evaluations found WFP moving into policy spaces, seeking to act as a strategic partner in harmonized responses for food security and nutrition. Under conditions of crisis – as in Guinea-Bissau and Mali – WFP stayed engaged when other international actors departed, operating through decentralized structures and non-governmental organizations.

⇒ *Intended partnerships*

18. Most evaluations found strong intentions for partnership where opportunities existed. A positive finding was that all 16 operations were coherent with United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and all apart from in Armenia were designed in partnership with government and/or United Nations agencies. However, good intentions were not always put into practice (see section on Results, below).

Results

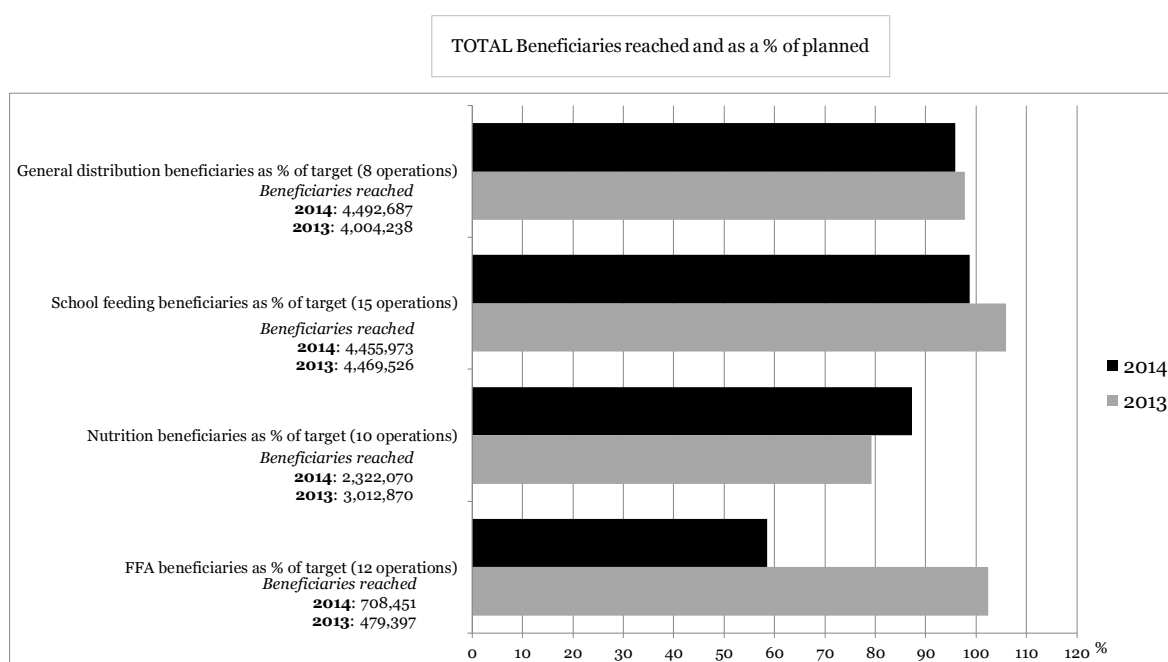
19. The availability of results data has improved since the 2014 synthesis. Monitoring systems were praised in seven evaluation reports, but systemic weaknesses – including limited monitoring/analysis and poor data quality and parallel systems – were still identified in eight, although some corrections are under way. The 2015 synthesis found challenges, particularly with the quality of outcome data.³ Outcome findings were also affected by the mid-term status of ten evaluations, with final results unavailable.

⇒ *Outputs*

20. The availability and quality of output data have improved since the 2014 synthesis, when all evaluations found limitations arising from weak monitoring systems. Figure 2 shows the absolute numbers and percentages of beneficiaries reached against targets for GD, school feeding, nutrition and FFA during 2013 and 2014. Some operations did not receive funding to implement their planned activities.

³ Weaknesses included baseline figures that were inconsistent with targets; internal contradictions in data; missing data; questionable figures; and targets that appeared unrealistic or lacking in rationale.

Figure 2: Beneficiaries, by activity area, 2013 and 2014



⇒ *General distribution*

21. Eight operations implemented GDs in 2013 and 2014 using a variety of modalities. GD was a major modality in Ecuador, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mali, Somalia and Zimbabwe, and was applied for specific refugee or internally displaced populations along with other modalities in Bangladesh, Mozambique and Pakistan. Percentages of actual against planned beneficiaries were relatively high. Some operations experienced comparatively predictable caseloads, as in Ecuador and the Islamic Republic of Iran; others faced more variability, particularly in volatile situations, as in Mali and Somalia.

⇒ *School feeding*

22. School feeding reached slightly more beneficiaries than GD did. The main school feeding operations were in Bangladesh, Haiti, Malawi and Zambia. Comparatively high achievements against beneficiary targets reflect funding levels arising from WFP's established record in this area. Operations frequently supported government school feeding programmes, as in Armenia, Ghana, Mozambique and Tunisia. Coverage levels were high, with WFP providing almost half of school meals in Haiti.

⇒ *Nutrition*

23. Ten operations implemented nutrition interventions. Beneficiary coverage against targets rose from 79 percent in 2013 to 87 percent in 2014, up from 47 percent in 2012. Performance was comparatively constant across operations, perhaps reflecting more realistic planning and/or growing donor confidence in WFP's capabilities.

⇒ *Food assistance for assets*

24. Fewer beneficiaries were reached by FFA than by other interventions in all 16 operations. Beneficiary numbers were evenly distributed, but WFP's ambitious plans for FFA outstripped delivery, with only 58 percent of coverage achieved against target in 2014. Increased targets in Malawi, Somalia, Zambia and Zimbabwe were constrained by funding shortfalls.

⇒ *Food volume*

25. Overall, 67 percent of intended distributions were achieved. However, only the Honduras operation exceeded its target, while nine evaluations found higher percentages of target beneficiaries reached than of tonnage distributed. As in the 2014 synthesis, therefore, WFP served its beneficiaries with less food than planned. The main causes were pipeline breaks or funding shortfalls, but external factors, such as strikes or school closures in Guinea-Bissau, Haiti and Mali, also contributed.

⇒ *Ration suitability*

26. Ration suitability presented fewer challenges than in the 2014 synthesis. In Bangladesh, Ecuador and Honduras, rations were appropriate, of high quality and well received. In Ghana and Haiti, rations were culturally appropriate, but quality concerns compromised their uptake by beneficiaries in Haiti. Corn-soya blend plus was not well accepted in Pakistan or Somalia, with effects including significant drop-out in Pakistan and longer stays to reach discharge criteria in Somalia.

⇒ *Cash-based transfers*

27. Cash-based transfers were applied in eight operations.⁴ A total of USD 48 million was disbursed in 2013–2014 – slightly less than 35 percent of WFP’s combined targets for the 16 operations. However, this figure masks wide variations, ranging from 90–100 percent of target in Ecuador to only 22 percent in Somalia. Cash and voucher modalities were generally well received, allowing beneficiaries flexibility in purchasing.

Outcomes

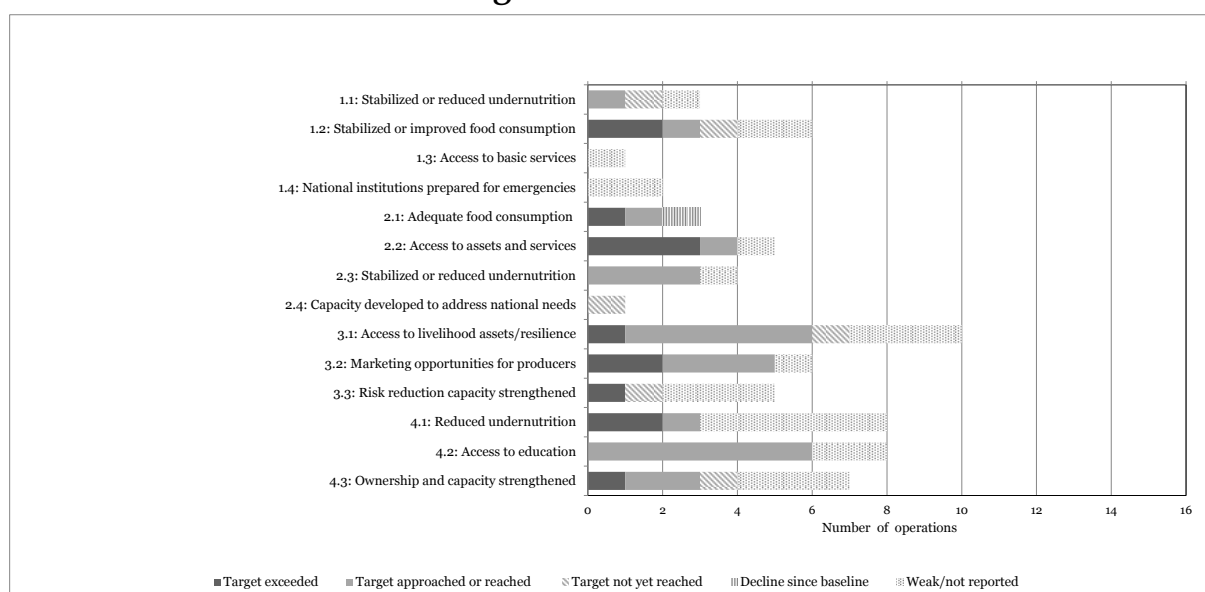
28. Outcome data were more readily available than in 2014, although data quality remained a challenge.³ Under-achievement against targets related mainly to the evaluations’ mid-term status. However, five evaluations identified flawed approaches to capacity development – piecemeal approaches, individual- rather than systems-oriented models, and confusion between capacity development and capacity augmentation – and/or failure to deliver on commitments made at the design stage.

29. Figure 3 compares the achievements of the evaluated operations with their original intentions at the design stage, based on the outcome indicators in WFP’s 2014–2017 Strategic Results Framework.⁵

⁴ They were also planned but not implemented in Malawi and Zambia.

⁵ 2014 data were used because of the changed indicators in the Strategic Results Framework and the mid-term status of ten evaluated operations.

Figure 3: Outcomes



30. Positive results were most frequent under Strategic Objective 3,⁶ despite the low numbers of FFA beneficiaries reached (see section on Outputs). This apparent contradiction reflects: i) WFP's corporate recording mechanisms;⁷ and ii) its increasing emphasis on disaster risk reduction in vulnerable countries. Strategic Objective 4 also showed positive results, reflecting the emphasis on school feeding in this cohort of operations.
31. Fewer operations targeted Strategic Objectives 1 and 2, although performance under Strategic Objective 2 appears encouraging. The highly variable caseloads in volatile operational contexts, as in Mali and Somalia, also affected achievement.
32. Particularly under Strategic Objective 4, WFP's shift from *implementer* to *enabler* contributed to significant policy-level achievements (Table 2).

TABLE 2: POLICY-LEVEL ACHIEVEMENTS	
Education	Improved policy and accountability instruments for school feeding – Bangladesh, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Tunisia, Zambia
Social protection	National protocols/implementation modalities built on WFP's guidance – Bangladesh, Mozambique, Zambia
Nutrition	Improved quality/relevance of nutrition policy instruments to align with international standards – Ghana, Malawi, Zambia
Disaster risk reduction	Development/improvement of national planning and management instruments for disaster risk management – Malawi, Mozambique, Pakistan, Zambia

⁶ Strategic Objectives 1 – Save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies; 2 – Support or restore food security and nutrition and establish or rebuild livelihoods in fragile settings and following emergencies; 3 – Reduce risk and enable people, communities and countries to meet their own food and nutrition needs; 4 – Reduce undernutrition and break the intergenerational cycle of hunger.

⁷ For outputs reporting, FFA performance is measured in terms of beneficiaries and transfers against plan, while outcome measurement applies an updated plan, based on actual funding and in-year targets.

33. *Under-reporting*⁸ at the outcome level is less of a concern than in the 2014 synthesis, although data quality concerns remain (Table 3). Capacity development-related indicators would particularly benefit from greater availability of robust data.

TABLE 3: UNREPORTED OUTCOME RESULTS	
Strategic Objective 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved national capacity for disaster risk reduction and management – Malawi, Pakistan
Strategic Objective 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved national capacity and infrastructure for food security and nutrition monitoring – Ghana, Pakistan Enhanced capacity of government school feeding systems – Ghana, Malawi

34. Some results remain under-represented,⁹ with evaluations uncovering significant contributions to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Zero Hunger Challenge (ZHC) targets not captured by WFP reporting systems (Table 4).

TABLE 4: SAMPLE OF OUTCOME RESULTS THAT ARE NOT CAPTURED	
MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger ZHC: 100% access to adequate food ZHC: 100% increase in smallholder productivity/income	<p>Strengthened economic activity – Ecuador, Mozambique, Somalia</p> <p>Increased agricultural production/farmer participation in local markets – Ghana, Mozambique, Zambia</p> <p>Increased household income for smallholder farmers – Ecuador, Mozambique</p> <p>Increased opportunities for income generation/diversified livelihoods – Pakistan, Zimbabwe</p>
MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education	<p>Reduced absenteeism from/increased attendance at school – Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia</p> <p>Local schools rehabilitated – Armenia, Malawi</p>
MDG 4: Reduce child mortality	<p>Improved infrastructure for and outreach of health systems – Honduras, Mali</p> <p>Increased access to/uptake of health services – Ghana, Honduras, Mali, Pakistan, Somalia</p>
Other	<p>High levels of local commodity purchasing by WFP – Ecuador, Ghana, Haiti, Mozambique</p> <p>Increased resilience through climate protection measures – Honduras, Pakistan, Somalia</p>

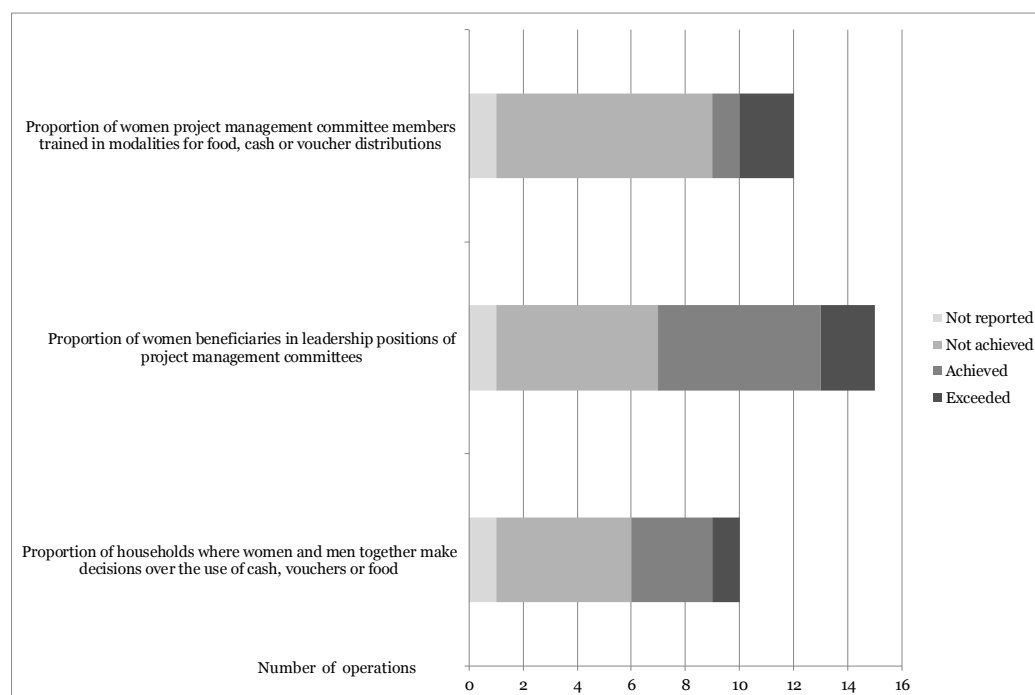
⁸ Under-reporting refers to results evidenced in evaluations but not present in corporate reporting.

⁹ Under-representation refers to results evidenced in evaluations but not featuring in WFP's corporate reporting system.

⇒ *Gender results*

35. All evaluations contained some reference to gender (MDG 5), albeit with varying depths of analysis. Figure 4 reports achievements against targeted gender indicators of the Strategic Results Framework 2014–2017.

Figure 4: Gender results



36. Proportion of leadership positions held by women beneficiaries had the highest level of achievement against objectives; women trained in distribution modalities had the lowest.

Box 1: Gender learning

Of the eleven operations reporting on gender, four were assessed as having gender-sensitive designs, with activities based on the findings of sound gender analysis; clear intended gender results, including qualitative results; and alignment with national gender policies and goals. The remaining seven operations focused mainly on quantitative *inclusion of women* in activities.

At the implementation stage, beyond quantitative disaggregation, thirteen evaluations sought evidence of more structural efforts to tackle gender barriers during implementation. Six found positive gains, such as building leadership capacity in Honduras, increased self-reliance in Somalia, and a greater role for women in household decision-making in Bangladesh.

However, seven evaluations found shortcomings, with gender interpreted mainly as “50–50 representation” of women and men in activities, and a purely quantitative approach to measuring progress. Four evaluations pointed to the limited nature of WFP’s corporate performance indicators, which do not adequately capture the strategic or qualitative dimensions of gender-sensitive programming.

⇒ *Adaptation to context*

37. The 16 operations faced diverse operating conditions, including spiralling conflict, sudden shocks and protracted emergencies. Ten evaluations commented positively on WFP’s swift adaptation: in two countries facing State collapse – Guinea-Bissau and Mali – WFP scaled up rapidly to address major emergencies. A flexible PRRO in Somalia enabled a dynamic response to an unpredictable food insecurity situation.

38. However, inflexibility remains. In Zimbabwe, where the evaluation found donors increasingly reluctant to fund food assistance, WFP was slow to reposition strategically. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, WFP stayed disconnected from wider dialogue on refugee resilience.

⇒ *Partnerships*

39. Partnerships in implementation were generally strong. In Ecuador, the “spirit of partnership” was a major success factor. However, also reflecting the 2014 synthesis, some opportunities were missed and some design-stage promises went unfulfilled. In Armenia and Haiti, despite opportunities for partnership, a “go it alone” attitude prevailed, with programmes operating in quasi-isolation.

40. In line with WFP’s strategic reorientation, evaluations found generally strong partnerships with national governments or local authorities. *Enabling roles* adopted are outlined in Box 2.

Box 2: WFP’s enabling roles

- *Convenor* of multi-sectoral dialogue on food security and nutrition – Bangladesh, Ecuador, Ghana, Honduras, Pakistan, Tunisia, Zambia.
- *Modeller* of replicable approaches – Bangladesh, Honduras, Mozambique, Pakistan, Zambia.
- *Leveraging actor* for skills, expertise and resources for developing high-quality policy responses – Bangladesh, Zambia.
- *Information provider* for detailed and current *data* on food security and nutrition, sometimes where few other data exist – Bangladesh, Ghana, Malawi, Pakistan, Somalia, Zambia.
- *Knowledge broker* providing access to international experience, technically advanced advice and cutting-edge research – Bangladesh, Ghana, Tunisia.
- *Pilot tester of innovations* – Bangladesh, Ecuador, Malawi, Mozambique, Pakistan, Zambia.

41. However, six evaluations also found overoptimistic assumptions regarding the technical and financial capacities of partners and sometimes beneficiaries, leading to overambitious programming. This constrained effectiveness when WFP aligned behind a national programme or sought hand-over to national government for sustainability.

42. WFP’s relationships with its cooperating partners were weak in seven operations, with shortcomings including poor communication in five, weak accountability in two and limited joint action planning/risk sharing in three. These shortcomings compromised WFP’s credibility and caused food losses in one case.

43. Four operations suffered from poor communication with/accountability to beneficiaries. Effects included sudden disruptions of distributions jeopardizing the well-being of vulnerable populations in Zimbabwe; reduced acceptability of ration changes in the Islamic Republic of Iran; and beneficiaries being unable to query delayed payments in Mozambique.

⇒ *Internal coherence*

44. As in the 2014 synthesis, operations' internal coherence remained problematic. In six of the twelve multi-component operations, the designs, targeting and intended results of components were "silo-ed". In Ghana, each activity had its own objectives and geographical targeting criteria. Donors sometimes required that specific activities be implemented under trust funds, as in Mozambique.

⇒ *Efficiency*

45. 2015 finds WFP continuing to confront challenges to operational efficiency under difficult conditions. Only the Pakistan and Tunisia operations were considered largely efficient in timeliness and cost. All others encountered delays and/or pipeline breaks, attributed to funding shortfalls in six cases. As in 2014, evaluations highlighted the negative effects of inefficiency on beneficiaries, including missing the lean season in Ghana, Mali and Malawi, and increased recovery times for malnourished children in Somalia, as well as reputational risks incurred.

⇒ *Sustainability*

46. Only the Bangladesh and Tunisia operations were considered largely sustainable, because of alignment with government programmes and capacity improvements. Remaining operations were either unsustainable or had limited potential for sustainability. Reasons included weak policy frameworks/national capacity to support continuation in fifteen operations, limited durability of community-level improvements in six, and a lack of clear or implemented exit strategies in three. Across operations, potentially sustainable elements related to policy reforms and capacity improvements, with gains in household food security considered potentially more transient.

Factors

47. *External factors.* As in the 2014 synthesis, features inherent to WFP's *challenging and volatile operating terrain* proved the major constraint to effectiveness. At least seven operations experienced significant insecurity/political instability, restricting access to vulnerable populations and engagement with national institutions. Macroeconomic volatility compromised performance in Ghana, Malawi and Zimbabwe. *Limited national capacity* (see paragraph 46) universally affected performance.

48. Low funding volumes were a further constraint, with funding levels ranging from 38 percent in Zimbabwe to almost 100 percent in single donor-funded operations such as in Armenia and Tunisia. When shortfalls arose, the activities most commonly curtailed were disaster risk reduction, nutrition and FFA; curtailment of the latter restricting a much-needed shift to resilience in Somalia.

49. Critically, difficulties with *short-term, inflexible or piecemeal/project-specific funding* compromised effectiveness in nine operations, including by limiting WFP's influence in national fora. By contrast, the use of undirected grants in Ghana permitted flexibility and forward planning. WFP's own regulations on middle-income countries, which require governments to contribute to specific operational costs, constrained performance in two operations.

50. *Internal factors.* Positively, WFP's *credibility with its government partners* contributed to success in nine operations, particularly when WFP adopted a more enabling role, as in Tunisia. Such credibility arose partly from WFP's technical and analytical capabilities, as in nutrition profiling in Bangladesh, but also in newer fields such as disaster risk management, as in Zambia.
51. However, limited *human resources* significantly constrained performance in nine operations. Monitoring systems were especially affected, with WFP's extensive operational coverage and associated process monitoring requirements not always being matched by available human capacity. Small country offices were particularly affected. More positively, *strong technical back-stopping from the regional bureau* was a success factor in five operations.
52. *Targeting* remains a challenge in 2015. The need to revisit planned geographical coverage in the light of evolving needs was raised in ten evaluations. While beneficiary selection worked well in five cases, limited application or awareness of criteria was found in WFP or cooperating partners in nine. Effects included inclusion and exclusion errors.
53. Internal design flaws, including weak *theories of change*, constrained performance in six operations. Deficiencies in *internal communication*, also reported in the 2014 synthesis, compromised effectiveness in five cases, with overly centralized decision-making and/or weak information flows from central to field-level offices.

CONCLUSIONS

54. Evidence from these 16 operation evaluations finds that WFP food assistance was mostly appropriately designed for needs. It supported communities and beneficiaries under challenging conditions of poverty and hunger, whether in a country experiencing crisis, or in a pocket of poverty in a rapidly developing context. However, designs were still insufficiently gender-sensitive; in several cases, targeting required revisiting to address evolving needs; and efficiency, under challenging conditions, was limited.
55. The evidence base appears to be strengthening, with improved monitoring systems enhancing the availability of output data and reducing under-reporting. Outcome data still face challenges, particularly in terms of quality and under-representation of WFP's field-level achievements. The sustainability of food assistance transfers is uncertain, but as WFP shifts to an enabling role, its policy-level changes appear increasingly "built to last".
56. From the evidence of these 16 evaluations, WFP appears to deploy its operational agility well, capitalizing on its technical capacity where feasible and tailoring interventions swiftly as conditions change. Operating models have generally been adapted, whether in response to donor repositioning in middle-income settings or for emergency response when crisis hits. WFP has also stayed engaged in crisis conditions when other actors departed – a position that has bought it major credibility when conditions normalize.
57. As country contexts evolve, WFP's strategic reorientation from *implementer* to *enabler*, reflected in the 2014–2017 Strategic Plan, appears to be gathering pace. Where conditions permit, WFP is moving swiftly into policy spaces, providing high-quality and technically advanced food security and nutrition advice. In many locations, its adoption of new roles – convenor, modeller, leveraging actor, information provider, knowledge broker, and pilot tester of innovations – is making it a key partner for national governments.

58. However, these changes are not without “growing pains”. The skills and approaches required for such strategic repositioning are relatively new to WFP. They are challenging demands for an organization whose most familiar operating zone is emergency response. Evidence from these 16 evaluations finds good intentions – such as for corporate monitoring – not always matched with sufficient technical or human capacity; programme logics sometimes lacking rigour; and assumptions – whether on partner capacity to implement activities or on beneficiaries’ capacity to receive them – only bluntly conceived. Capacity development approaches lack a fully strategic approach.
59. The evaluations also found evidence of a lingering cultural tendency to “go it alone”. This is most striking where conditions become difficult, and WFP reverts to the confident familiar. Similarly, operations are not always implemented as synergetic dimensions of an overarching food security response, but more frequently as a silo-ed set of discrete activities.
60. Dependent on voluntary contributions, WFP found itself vulnerable to donor preferences in these 16 operations. Earmarking of funds, short-term commitments and fragmented contributions restricted its room to manoeuvre and limited its scope to strategize for the future. Country-level reorientation has occurred despite, rather than because of, resource flows.
61. Overall, the findings of these evaluations suggest that WFP is progressing steadily, if sometimes uncertainly, along a continuum of change. Strategic reorientation at the country level is under way, but not without difficulties, and business processes, such as monitoring, are evolving. While challenges remain, institutional reforms are gradually taking hold.

LESSONS

62. Key lessons from this set of 16 evaluations build on those from 2014. They include the following.
63. *Place partnership first.* The transition from implementer to enabler implies a shift in operating model if WFP is to fully realize its strategic partnership potential. In countries where rapidly growing economies are reshaping the profile of food security, WFP requires less of a delivery lens and more of a partnership one. The operations evaluated here show growing willingness to engage in joint planning, the realization of joint results, risk sharing and collective learning from successes and failures. This is not universal however, and while the “go it alone” mindset of the past can serve WFP well – for example, in its courage and commitment to remaining when others leave – it can also compromise the coherence so essential for relevance and future-proofing.
64. *Bring capacity development to the fore.* Also raised in the 2014 synthesis, a revised model for capacity development is required. Focused less on individuals, and more on systemic change, approaches should be collective, employing joint analyses and strategic models aligned to national needs. The 2014–2017 Strategic Plan provides the entry point for this, but country-level planning and implementation need to follow through.
65. *Improve planning and design.* An enabling role requires a more sophisticated approach to planning and design. Ambitions must be underpinned by rigour, technical competence, appropriate resourcing and capacity development. Results chains – including assumptions and risks, such as partners’ capacity to implement – require detailed extrapolation, particularly in volatile contexts. Timeframes for change should be realistic rather than optimistic, including for hand-over strategies.

66. *Confirm and convey the evidence base for decisions.* WFP's evidence base requires continued attention. While output data are improving, outcomes remain a challenge. The ambition of WFP's current monitoring systems is not always matched by available human or financial resources. Rigour should be balanced with feasibility, for example by agreeing adequate coverage levels for representation and/or applying technology-based data gathering techniques.
67. *Gender involves more than numbers.* Despite some positive results, gender in these operations remains largely focused on "including women". This is some distance from the corporate shift required, and even further from the transformative vision of the Sustainable Development Goals. Beyond limited corporate indicators, designs need to tackle structural barriers where appropriate, and adopt a less quantitative, and more strategic, approach to gender equality.
68. *Communication matters.* Communication – as the 2014 synthesis found – remains generally weak. WFP's cultural roots are perhaps to blame; the "go it alone" tradition does not lend itself to continual close engagement. However, the importance of dialogue, consulting on decisions, and justifying choices is strongly indicated in the evidence presented here. Moreover, evidencing and making visible results is paramount for an externally funded agency in a competitive world.
69. *Flexibility and predictability of funding are paramount for the future.* In a volatile world, the critical importance of more flexible and predictable funding is clearly signalled. Born from its roots in emergency response, WFP's major comparative advantage is its operational agility. While restricted by specific donor preferences or locked into piecemeal projects, WFP cannot mobilize the flexible responses that appear to be its inherent strength, nor can it respond to the strategic reorientation and medium-term strategizing required by the shifting geopolitics of today.
70. The principle of universality, embodied in the Sustainable Development Goals, calls for a spirit of strengthened solidarity to support the poorest and most vulnerable. WFP's shift from *implementer* to *enabler*, now well under way, requires investments that reflect this spirit. Such commitments – which should always be accompanied by rigorous evidence of results – appear fundamental to building a WFP that is fully fit for purpose to best serve the new global agenda and help to meet the Zero Hunger Challenge.

ANNEX: FEATURES OF THE 16 OPERATIONS EVALUATED

Operation							Activities						Modalities		
Country	Category	No.	Duration	Value (USD million)	% funded	Target beneficiaries	Targeted GD	Nutrition ¹	School feeding	FFA ²	Capacity development	Purchase for Progress	Food	Cash and vouchers	Technical assistance
Armenia	DEV	200128	2010–2016	20.1	91.1	68 300			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Bangladesh	CP	200243	2012–2016	369.9	48.0	4 305 315	✓	✓	✓	✓+	✓		✓	✓	✓
Ecuador	PRRO	200275	2011–2014	16.5	67.7	160 365	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Ghana	CP	200247	2012–2016	56.3	70.0	960 740		✓*	✓	✓+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Guinea-Bissau	PRRO	200526	2013–2015	16.7	89.4	157 000		✓*	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Haiti	DEV	200150	2012–2014	70.5	71.3	685 000			✓		✓		✓		✓
Honduras	CP	200240	2012–2016	29.1	92.0	910 905		✓*	✓	✓+	✓		✓		
Islamic Republic of Iran	PRRO	200310	2013–2015	7.0	55.5	30 200	✓		✓				✓		
Malawi	CP	200287	2012–2016	113.9	51.1	2 058 674		✓*	✓	✓+	✓		✓	✓	✓
Mali	EMOP	200525	2013–2014	351.3	50.5	1 304 000	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Mozambique	CP	200286	2012–2015	104.0	41.1	1 264 300	✓	✓*	✓	✓+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pakistan	PRRO	200250	2013–2015	564.0	67.3	8 346 676	✓	✓	✓	✓+	✓		✓	✓	✓
Somalia	PRRO	200443	2013–2015	866.4	40.0	2 632 500	✓	✓*	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Tunisia	DEV	200493	2012–2015	1.5	100.0	100 ³			✓		✓				✓
Zambia	CP	200157	2011–2015	43.5	59.2	1 150 000		✓*	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Zimbabwe	PRRO	200453	2012–2015	246.5	38.0	2 409 000	✓	✓*		✓+	✓		✓	✓	✓
TOTAL							8	11	15	12	13	3	14	10	12

¹ * denotes HIV/AIDS activities analysed/reported under nutrition.

² + denotes FFA activities for disaster risk reduction.

³ Capacity development operation targeting government officials.

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

CP	country programme
DEV	development programme
EMOP	emergency operation
FFA	food assistance for assets
GD	general distribution
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
OEV	Office of Evaluation
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
ZHC	Zero Hunger Challenge