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RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUMMARY REPORT OF THE PEER REVIEW OF THE EVALUATION FUNCTION AT THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME



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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 WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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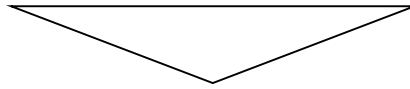
Should you have any questions regarding availability of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Conference Servicing Unit (tel.: 066513-2645).

* Performance Management and Monitoring Division

** Office of Evaluation

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DRAFT DECISION*



The Board takes note of “Response to the Recommendations of the Summary Report of the Peer Review of the Evaluation Function at the World Food Programme” (WFP/EB.2/2014/6-D/Rev.1). With the purpose of promoting its ownership of, and productive dialogue with the Secretariat on, the development of the evaluation function at WFP, the Board also:

- i) requests the Secretariat to develop a set of key performance indicators to support the Board’s oversight of evaluation across WFP, based on the indicators suggested by the peer review panel;
- ii) requests the Secretariat to report to the Board at its Second Regular Session in 2015 on progress made in this regard, and thereafter to report regularly against the key performance indicators through the Annual Evaluation Report;
- iii) requests that when it revises the 2008 evaluation policy, the Secretariat pay adequate attention to the need to have systems and processes in place to maximize the use of evaluation results in policy and strategy development, and in project and programme design; and
- iv) agrees to limit the Director of Evaluation to a non-renewable and non-repeatable six-year term, with no re-entry into WFP.

* 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. This document presents the response to the recommendations of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) peer review of WFP's evaluation function.¹ The review focused on the extent to which WFP's evaluation policy, function and products are independent, credible and useful for learning and accountability purposes.
2. The review recognized that the centralized Office of Evaluation (OEV) had high functional independence, reinforced by the rational processes that support the evaluation system. In terms of credibility, the review noted an increasingly favourable climate for evaluation in WFP. OEV had a good reputation and received considerable attention from senior management and the Board. A corporate focus on demonstrating results and accountability, and enhancing monitoring, reporting and evaluation, had recently provided further impetus to evaluation. Evaluations in WFP were found to be relevant and widely used across WFP as accountability tools and to benefit development of global policies, strategies and country programmes.
3. The Secretariat substantially agrees with the review's findings and appreciates that it presents evaluation models. WFP finds valuable elements in each, including the need to maintain and safeguard the high quality of WFP's centralized evaluations and the complementarity between monitoring and evaluation.
4. Elements of these models will be used in a phased approach to enhance the availability of quantifiable evidence, mindful of WFP's operational and resource environments. The immediate focus will be to improve monitoring capacities to generate credible data and evidence to contribute to evaluations, and to maintain the high quality of the evaluation function. Stock-taking at critical points of this phased approach will assess improvements and determine future actions.
5. Specific actions and timeframes are outlined below.

Recommendation 1: Evaluation model for WFP.² *WFP management should take decisions concerning the most appropriate model for the evaluation function in WFP, using the three models set out in paragraph 15 and making sure that the necessary human and financial resources are made available to implement the preferred model. These decisions should be made when the results of the Business Process Review (BPR) assessment of decentralized evaluation capacity become available and before the management response to the peer review is submitted to EB.2/2014.*

Response: Agreed.

Implementation timeframe: 2015–2017.

6. With the increasing international demand for robust evaluation, management reaffirms its commitment to using evidence and evaluation as a basis for decision-making, performance management, accountability, learning, and continuous improvement to maximize the effectiveness and impact of WFP's work. Building on the strength of its central evaluation function, WFP will seek to build on the quality and value of investments already being made in decentralized evaluation and reviews by country offices. Management has extensively

¹ "Summary Report of the Peer Review of the Evaluation Function at the World Food Programme" (WFP/EB.A/2014/7-D).

² All italicized text is reprinted verbatim from the summary report of the peer review submitted to the 2014 Annual Session (WFP/EB.A/2014/7-D).

considered the review's findings related to WFP's decentralized evaluation function in the context of WFP's organizational strengthening processes, the wider context for WFP's work and its resourcing position, and in consultation with Board members.

7. Management will pursue a modified version of the peer review's model 2. This model – characterized as “centralized evaluation with demand-led decentralized evaluation” – remains the desired longer-term nature of WFP's evaluation function. However, WFP will adopt a phased and prioritized approach, given its resource and capacity constraints. While immediate investment in additional evaluation capacity is not feasible at the scale envisaged by the peer review's model 2, the need for a sustainable arrangement for financing and resourcing evaluation, envisaged by peer review model 3, is recognized as a priority in WFP's modified model 2.
8. The two main distinctions between the peer review's model 2 and WFP's modified model are that the latter: i) in the early phases focuses on investing in monitoring capacities, especially in regional bureaux, using current budget allocations; and ii) envisages assessments at critical junctures to determine the extent to which improved monitoring has enhanced the overall evaluation function, and to define next steps, especially through review of regional bureaux's evaluation capacity requirements, including financing for evaluation.
9. In phase 1 (2015–2016) priority will be given to:
 - i) enhancing the consistency of monitoring across WFP by implementing an updated monitoring strategy and setting norms, standards and guidance for reviews; (Performance Management and Monitoring Division – RMP);
 - ii) maintaining central evaluation function coverage as the main source of high-quality independent evaluation (OEV); and
 - iii) setting and embedding coverage norms for decentralized evaluations into the design and approval process of new projects; setting standards for decentralized evaluations with associated guidance and providing limited technical advice; providing training materials on WFP's mission and role in evaluation; developing a quality rating and reporting system for decentralized evaluations; and identifying sustainable sources of financing and human resources for evaluation (OEV).
10. Progress will be reviewed in 2016 to inform planning of phase 2, which will be included in the 2017–2019 Management Plan, consistent with the revised evaluation policy and strategy and other measures developed in response to the peer review's recommendations.

Recommendation 2: Evaluation policy. *WFP should revise the 2008 evaluation policy in line with the selected evaluation model to ensure that financial resources for evaluation are protected; criteria for evaluation selection and coverage are clearly specified; the roles of the Board, OEV and management at different levels of the organization are clarified; evaluation terminology is revised; and the typology of evaluations is brought into line with current WFP practice. The policy should also specify WFP's role in developing national evaluation capacity, and the involvement and role of partners in country-level evaluation.*

Response: Agreed.

Implementation timeframe: September 2015 (EB.2/15).

11. To maintain and enhance WFP's position at the forefront of the United Nations' evaluation system, OEV will lead revision of the evaluation policy in line with UNEG norms and standards, the model selected for WFP's evaluation function, and findings and recommendations of the 2014 Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) assessment of the United Nations' evaluation function. The new policy will:
- i) reaffirm WFP's commitment to the role of the evaluation function in WFP's accountability and learning systems, and to international principles and safeguards for the independence of evaluation;
 - ii) clarify roles and responsibilities in WFP's evaluation function, including those of the Board, senior management, OEV, regional bureaux, country offices and Headquarters divisions, in line with WFP's Fit for Purpose and organizational strengthening processes;
 - iii) define terminology for and linkages among evaluation, monitoring, review, and policy and programme design, in line with WFP's new performance management system;
 - iv) establish the coverage and resourcing requirements for central and decentralized evaluations; and
 - v) clarify WFP's engagement in system-wide evaluation, including joint and inter-agency evaluations and development of national evaluation capacity.
12. The policy will be accompanied by a medium-term evaluation strategy (see response to recommendation 11) to guide policy implementation, monitoring and reporting.

Recommendation 3: Oversight of the evaluation function. *The Board should request the development of a set of key performance indicators to support its oversight of evaluation across WFP, giving OEV adequate time to establish the necessary systems. The panel suggests the following as a possible set of indicators:*

- 1) *the numbers, types and coverage of evaluations taking place across WFP;*
- 2) *the human and financial resources used for evaluation;*
- 3) *progress in the development of WFP's capacity and competence in evaluation; and*
- 4) *ratings of the quality of evaluations, including decentralized evaluations if model 2 or 3 is selected.*

The Board should ensure that WFP management has systems and processes in place to maximize the use of evaluation results in policy and strategy development, as well as in project and programme design. The strategic use of evaluation results should be the Board's main focus in its deliberations with WFP management, over and above discussion of individual evaluations.

Response: Agreed.

Implementation timeframe: End of 2015 for agreement on and set up of reporting systems covering central and decentralized elements of the evaluation function; reporting through the Annual Evaluation Report.

13. A set of key performance indicators will be identified in line with the revised evaluation policy (and strategy). Priority will be given to indicators that facilitate the Board's strategic oversight of the evaluation function, including ensuring systems and processes are in place for use of evaluations in policy, strategy and programme design. Such system development will take time and require consideration of the costs and benefits of altering current

management information systems to identify and monitor the resources used for evaluation throughout WFP.

Recommendation 4: Management response. *WFP management should improve the quality and effectiveness of management responses to evaluations, in particular by giving due attention to the ownership of follow-up. This requires the active engagement of relevant senior managers and other stakeholders during the evaluation process and beyond. Specifically:*

- *OEV should continue to improve the quality of evaluation recommendations by ensuring that they are clear, realistic and relevant to WFP's context and structures. OEV should also strengthen its dialogue with evaluation consultants and management at the draft report stage, including through its current good practice of holding workshops with major stakeholders so that, as far as possible, recommendations are agreed before the evaluation is complete – although OEV may retain recommendations with which management does not agree.*
- *WFP management should nominate a member of the Executive Management Group to be responsible for engaging management in each OEV evaluation from its outset through to its presentation to the Board, with RMP in a supporting and advisory role.*
- *WFP should provide staff with online access to the RMP database for tracking progress in implementing the management responses to recommendations, so that the staff responsible can enter completed actions online, as they already do for audit recommendations.*
- *WFP should replace the current management response template with a more detailed format for setting out action plans in which management can specify more clearly how it intends to act in response to each evaluation.*
- *WFP management may request OEV's informal comments on how well a draft management response corresponds to the findings, conclusions and recommendations of an evaluation. The management response will still be fully owned by management, and OEV will in no sense be approving or taking responsibility for its content.*

Response: Partially agreed.

Implementation timeframe: Ongoing.

14. Management recognizes the potential for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of management responses, noting that this depends in part on the quality of the evaluation recommendations. To ensure continued coherence between recommendations and responses, management will increase its consultation and engagement with OEV during the finalization of evaluations, building on current good practice recognized in the peer review.
15. Management favours improved use of existing mechanisms such as OEV's long-established internal reference group (IRG) system, to ensure management's engagement in all centrally managed evaluations. The Executive Management Group (EMG) and directors nominate deputy or senior technical advisers as IRG members, whose role is specified in evaluation terms of references. For some evaluations, OEV supplements the IRG system by, for example, identifying evaluation champions, establishing strategic reference groups, briefing the EMG and holding joint seminars. OEV supports RMP's presentation of management responses for the EMG's consideration prior to sign-off by the Executive Director or her deputy.

16. Regarding online access for tracking progress in implementing recommendations, staff currently enter completed recommendation actions into the system through correspondence with RMP, allowing for substantial quality control and tracking by RMP. Management considers this system sufficient.
17. Management also considers the current template sufficient. It will work with OEV to develop arrangements for OEV to comment on the coherence between responses and recommendations, bearing in mind the tight deadlines for preparing responses.

Recommendation 5: Vesting evaluation independence in OEV. For each evaluation it manages, OEV should take ownership of all aspects of the evaluation report, including the recommendations. Independence is vested in OEV, not in evaluation consultants.

Response: Partially agreed.

Implementation timeframe: Ongoing.

18. While the intent of the recommendation is agreed, management considers the current arrangements to be the most appropriate for WFP. OEV is responsible for evaluation selection, scoping, initial design and method, external team selection, evaluation quality, integrity and dissemination. The contracted external team is responsible for conducting the evaluation and analysing and reporting results under an evaluation manager designated by OEV. These arrangements are consistent with safeguards for independent evaluation – appropriate for WFP’s rotational staffing policy – and efficient with respect to evaluation coverage, as confirmed by the peer review’s positive assessment of the independence of WFP’s central evaluation function.
19. The 2014 JIU assessment judged WFP to be among the most independent and high-performing evaluation functions in the United Nations and confirmed that the arrangements are consistent with other United Nations entities. Management’s position is also compatible with the peer review’s observation regarding capacity limitations in OEV and the need to balance evaluation coverage with stimulating learning from and use of evaluations, and to embed evaluation into WFP’s project cycle management.
20. Under the current model, OEV is already responsible for ensuring the quality of recommendations: it applies a quality assurance system that sets standards and requires in-depth review of recommendations, dialogue with management and external evaluation teams, and final approval from the Director of OEV.

Recommendation 6: Evaluation quality assurance. OEV should commission an external consultant to review the EQAS and identify evaluation steps and elements that can be simplified, reducing the time inputs of staff and consultants, the number of steps and the duration of evaluations. OEV should also take account of the panel’s proposals on improving evaluation quality.

Response: Agreed.

Implementation timeframe: End of 2016, following approval of the evaluation policy and strategy in 2015, and a progress review on implementation of WFP’s selected model for its overall evaluation function in 2016.

21. Review of the EQAS will follow selection of the evaluation function model and development of the new evaluation policy and strategy. The EQAS for centrally managed evaluations was reviewed in 2013, with support from an external consultant, resulting in streamlining of some elements and enhancements in priority areas such as gender, efficiency,

recommendations, stakeholder engagement and evaluation use. A new EQAS was developed by OEV for operation evaluations managed through outsourcing. A “proof of concept” review of the model for operation evaluations is underway and will inform the development of quality standards and guidance for the decentralized evaluation function.

Recommendation 7: Utilization of evaluation. *In redesigning its project and programme planning and approval process, WFP management should ensure that evaluation evidence is taken into account, not only from any evaluations of the project under consideration, but also from other relevant evaluations; management should request OEV’s assistance in identifying such evaluations if necessary.*

OEV should strengthen its inputs to WFP’s revision of project and programme planning, design and approval processes to encourage the use of evaluation evidence and improve arrangements for evaluation within projects, in particular by promoting the design of projects that can be evaluated effectively (evaluability); the use of prior evaluations of a project, and other relevant evaluations; and planning to facilitate evaluation from the outset.

Response: Agreed.

Implementation timeframe: OEV 2015 work plan.

22. Evaluation findings are systematically taken into account in the design of new projects and budget revisions and in review by the Policy, Programme and Innovation Division and other reviewers, as reflected in corporate programme guidance.
23. OEV and management are seeking ways to further address this recommendation in line with available capacity and the need for independence of evaluations. To avoid duplication of effort, OEV will liaise with divisions to enhance evaluation planning and the use of project plans and budgets as the basis for reporting on project-level evaluation coverage in line with the response to recommendation 3.

Recommendation 8: Evaluation training. *OEV should develop evaluation training in partnership with the Human Resources Division, including modules for evaluation planning and management in WFP management training; and WFP induction courses covering the essential elements of evaluation concepts and purposes, and the evaluation policy.*

Response: Agreed.

Implementation timeframe: 2015 for initial inputs; evaluation strategy to set out more comprehensive and phased approach in line with the monitoring strategy, “People Strategy” and other corporate initiatives.

24. Under the modified model 2 selected by management, regional bureaux and country offices are likely to have limited evaluation capacity for the medium term. During development of the evaluation policy and strategy, OEV will engage with the Human Resources Division to identify training priorities and methods. OEV will also collaborate on evaluation modules for training initiatives under the new monitoring strategy, in line with the new evaluation policy and strategy.

Recommendation 9: Roles and responsibilities. *WFP management should ensure that regional monitoring and evaluation advisers have a reporting line to OEV for technical oversight and support on evaluation, and review of their performance with regard to evaluation.*

WFP management should clearly delineate the roles of OEV and RMP, giving OEV the lead responsibility for evaluation standards and guidance at all levels of WFP, with RMP taking the lead on monitoring and all forms of project/programme review by management.

WFP management should request Regional Directors to take responsibility for receiving and reviewing management responses to the single operation evaluations and decentralized evaluations in their regions.

Internal Audit and OEV should agree how to identify audit risks regarding compliance with the WFP evaluation policy, and should develop standard questions for testing the compliance of individual country offices, regional bureaux or Headquarters divisions where risks of non-compliance are identified.

Response: Partially agreed.

Implementation timeframe: In line with development of the evaluation policy and strategy.

25. OEV will set standards and develop guidance for decentralized evaluation and provide limited technical advice in line with the modified evaluation model 2, which foresees no increased support for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) advisers until at least the 2017 Management Plan. OEV will also establish a post-hoc quality rating system for decentralized evaluations, with ratings reported to the Board (see responses to recommendations 1 and 3). This will not require changes to existing management reporting lines for accountability and responsibility in regional bureaux.
26. Roles in evaluation and review functions will be clearly differentiated in policy strategy guidance and administrative instruments such as memoranda and directives.
27. Subject to resource availability, Regional Directors will be responsible for reviewing the management responses to single-operation and decentralized evaluations.
28. OEV and the Office of the Inspector General will identify risks concerning the revised WFP evaluation policy and ensure that these are considered appropriately in audit frameworks, although it will not be possible to be systematic with respect to the policy as a whole.

Recommendation 10: Monitoring and evaluation guidance. *OEV should work with RMP to make sure that WFP guidance on evaluations and, separately, on monitoring and review are distinct but mutually compatible and understood by country offices; that any regional and global training of M&E officers is coordinated; and that management reviews are used as key inputs to operation evaluations, country portfolio evaluations and other types of evaluation.*

Response: Agreed.

Implementation timeframe: End of 2015.

29. RMP and OEV will work together to develop complementary but distinct guidance on field review and decentralized evaluation, which is also consistent with the Business Process Review initiative to improve field-managed evaluations.
30. RMP will coordinate with OEV on training of regional M&E advisers where relevant.

Recommendation 11: Evaluation strategy. *OEV should develop an evaluation strategy in line with the selected model for evaluation. The evaluation strategy, separate from the monitoring and review strategy, should set out how WFP will develop evaluation capacity, resourcing, selection, coverage, and utilization across the Organization.*

Response: Agreed.

Implementation timeframe: End of 2015.

31. OEV will prepare an evaluation strategy as the basis for policy implementation, setting out a phased approach to achievement of the modified model 2 selected by management, and taking into account the forthcoming monitoring strategy and developments in the United Nations system relevant to evaluation. The strategy will include plans for evaluation capacity development, resourcing, coverage, types, selection and use, and will link the evaluation policy to annual management plans, with performance indicators for monitoring the overall evaluation function including both its central and decentralized functions.

Recommendation 12: Role and designation of the Director of Evaluation. *To support the Board's governance of the function, the Board should request the Director of OEV to oversee and report on the evaluation function across WFP. In its annual report, OEV should include an assessment of the quality of decentralized evaluations and the salient issues emerging from these evaluations. In line with this change in role, the Board should request WFP management to redesignate the Director of OEV as the Director of Evaluation.*

To avoid any possible conflicts of interest, the Board should limit the Director's term to a single period of six years, non-renewable, and without the right of return to WFP. This would replace the current arrangements – a term of four years renewable once, with the possibility of re-employment in WFP.

The Executive Director should redesignate the Director of OEV as the Director of Evaluation. The Director should retain direct responsibility for OEV-managed evaluation and should also be responsible for standard-setting, oversight and support of evaluation across WFP.

Response: Agreed.

Implementation timeframe: November 2015.

32. The Director of OEV will be redesignated as the Director of Evaluation. She/he will retain responsibility for WFP's central evaluation function while also overseeing and reporting on the evaluation function across WFP, including decentralized evaluation. Reporting and quality assessment systems for the decentralized evaluation function will be established in line with the revised evaluation policy and strategy (see response to recommendation 3).
33. The Director shall be limited to a non-renewable and non-repeatable six-year term, with no re-entry into WFP. This is also consistent with recommendation 4 of the draft JIU report³ on the evaluation function in the United Nations, as referenced in the response to recommendation 5.
34. On approval of these proposals, the Executive Director will issue a Circular establishing a charter for the Office of Evaluation outlining the designation, appointment, authorities and other elements of the office.

Recommendation 13: Decentralized evaluation standards and guidelines. *OEV should develop appropriate and realistic standards for decentralized evaluations based on a simplified version of its EQAS and reflecting the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group. Once these standards are agreed, OEV should issue guidelines to country offices on the management of decentralized evaluations.*

Response: Agreed.

Implementation timeframe: End of 2015, modified as appropriate following the stock-taking progress review in 2016, referred to in response to Recommendation 1.

³ "Analysis of the Evaluation Function in the United Nations System", prepared by Sukai Prom-Jackson and George A. Bartsiotas (draft).

35. Responses to recommendations 1, 3, 6, 10 and 11 outline proposed actions related to the evaluation function model, key performance indicators and reporting, evaluation quality assurance, the evaluation strategy and evaluation guidance.

Recommendation 14: Evaluation expertise. *WFP management should ensure that the WFP People Strategy includes the development of a staff cadre for assessment, monitoring and evaluation in WFP, so that regional bureaux and country offices have the human resource capacity and expertise to implement the evaluation strategy.*

Response: Agreed.

36. The WFP People Strategy includes a focus on building skills and capabilities for mission-critical roles, including M&E, among all employees through development activities and job deployment. In addition to initiatives it outlines, functional leaders will be responsible for ensuring that the workforce receives appropriate skills development in their areas. Skills will be built throughout implementation of the People Strategy from 2014 to 2017.

Recommendation 15: Evaluation database. *OEV should develop an online database for all centralized and decentralized evaluations into which country offices and regional bureaux can upload their evaluation reports. OEV can use this database to make an annual assessment of the quality of evaluation reports, with a summary included in the Annual Evaluation Report. WFP may be able learn from the database solutions developed for this purpose by the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund.*

Response: Agreed.

Implementation timeframe: End of 2016.

37. Based on project M&E plans, OEV will include decentralized evaluations in existing evaluation repositories that currently cover only centralized evaluations. It will improve access to and searchability of this database to enhance learning and use of evaluation evidence in policy and programme design, and will support continued efforts to engage stakeholders in the evaluation process and improve evaluation dissemination through briefs, workshops, events and online media.

ACRONYMS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

EMG	Executive Management Group
EQAS	Evaluation Quality Assurance System
IRG	internal reference group
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
RMP	Performance Management and Monitoring Division
OEV	Office of Evaluation
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group