



World Food Programme  
Programme Alimentaire Mondial  
Programa Mundial de Alimentos  
برنامج الأغذية العالمي

**Executive Board**  
Annual session  
Rome, 18–22 June 2018

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Distribution: General

Agenda item 7

Date: 16 May 2018

WFP/EB.A/2018/7-A/Add.1

Original: English

Evaluation reports

For consideration

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

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## Management response to the 2017 annual evaluation report

### Introduction

1. The 2017 annual evaluation report is the second annual evaluation report produced under the Evaluation Policy (2016–2021). Among other things, the report provides an update on and describes the outlook for WFP's evaluation function, which is based on a model of centralized evaluations complemented by demand-led decentralized evaluations.
2. It is important to note a change in approach that was introduced by the Evaluation Policy (2016–2021): the 2017 annual evaluation report does not provide a synthesis of centralized evaluations completed in 2017. Instead of including such information in its annual reports the Office of Evaluation (OEV), starting in 2018, will submit a number of synthesis reports on specific issues and topics.
3. Management values the contents of the annual evaluation reports and acknowledges the importance of OEV and implementation of the evaluation policy. In addition, management highlights the strategic relevance of the 2017 report to implementation of the Integrated Road Map (IRM) and progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
4. The 2017 annual evaluation report is divided into three parts:
  - a) Part 1 looks at how the evaluation function is evolving in line with the strategic direction of WFP and trends in the broader operating context;
  - b) Part 2 answers the question "how are we doing?" by reporting on major developments in evaluation. It also looks at human and financial resources for evaluation;
  - c) Part 3 describes the outlook for the evaluation function and highlights areas for attention in coming years.

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5. The following sections summarize the main findings and highlights from each of the three parts of the 2017 annual evaluation report.

## **Part 1: WFP evaluations for evidence-based decision making**

6. WFP planned that between 22 and 24 centralized evaluations would be ongoing in 2017. Management agreed with OEV's decision to increase the number of country portfolio evaluations (CPEs) and to adjust the topics selected for policy and strategic evaluations in order to strengthen the evidence base for supporting IRM implementation. Exceeding the planned number, a total of 29 evaluations were completed or ongoing in 2017: three policy evaluations; two strategic evaluations; six CPEs; five operation evaluations; one Level 3 emergency response evaluation; six regional syntheses of operation evaluations; one synthesis of four evaluations of the impact of WFP programmes on nutrition in humanitarian contexts in the Sahel; and the annual synthesis of operation evaluations.
7. Looking ahead, in response to a request from the Board, OEV aims to increase evaluation coverage with a view to meeting specific accountability requirements related to responses to protracted Level 3 and Level 2 crises. For instance, management acknowledges that findings from the evaluation of WFP's Level 3 emergency response to the Syrian crisis have contributed to strengthening evidence-based decision making in the Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia region; a follow-up evaluation has been commissioned and will be completed in 2018.
8. Management recognizes that in selecting countries for CPEs, OEV prioritized the utility of the evaluations, ensuring that their timing enabled their findings to inform the formulation of country strategic plans (CSPs) and interim country strategic plans (ICSPs). The same rationale was applied to the regional evaluation syntheses, which were commissioned to enhance the accessibility of evidence from operation evaluations and to inform the preparation of new CSPs and ICSPs.
9. Three CPEs were completed in 2017, for Cambodia, Cameroon and South Sudan. WFP management agreed with all the recommendations resulting from these evaluations. For example, the Cambodia country office particularly appreciated the focus on lessons that informed its strategic shift from the previous portfolio to a transitional ICSP for 2018 and a full CSP for 2019-2023. Recommendations from the CPE were formulated mainly to support this shift.
10. In addition, management notes that the two strategic evaluations commissioned in 2017 with a focus on topics central to the IRM – CSP pilots and WFP's support for enhanced resilience – and the policy evaluation of WFP's corporate partnership strategy for 2014–2017 were particularly timely for the IRM rollout. For instance, the policy evaluation provided important evidence to inform the achievement of WFP Strategic Goal 2, "Partner to support implementation of the SDGs (SDG 17)".
11. It is also noted that in 2017 OEV completed a series of four impact evaluations for Chad, Mali, the Niger and the Sudan, which examine the impact of WFP programmes on nutrition in humanitarian contexts in the Sahel. WFP management and the Secretariat appreciated the evaluation findings and recommendations, which are consistent with the priorities of the nutrition policy for 2017–2021 and provide important evidence of successful programming for preventing malnutrition.
12. Management also welcomes the substantial increase in the number of decentralized evaluations planned for 2016–2018 compared with the original projections made in early 2016. The distribution of these evaluations by region reflects the number of country offices in each region, taking into account the diversity and complexity of the regions and the need to inform the formulation of new CSPs and ICSPs. A survey conducted among the staff of

country offices and regional bureaux found that most decentralized evaluations were commissioned to support decision making and learning in country offices in the context of IRM implementation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

13. The main lessons from centralized and decentralized evaluations are well received by management. The WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021), the development of CSPs and ICSPs, the implementation and monitoring of progress, and reporting against country plans will enable WFP to incorporate these lessons more fully into its operations.

## **Part 2: WFP's evaluation function**

14. Management notes that the augmentation of dedicated evaluation personnel has enabled major progress in developing WFP's evaluation function and significantly strengthened the evaluation function at the regional and country levels. WFP has stationed regional evaluation officers in every regional bureau and created three additional staff positions in OEV.
15. In 2017, regional evaluation officers were able to provide fairly intensive support to country office evaluation managers who were commissioning decentralized evaluations and to build the necessary awareness among personnel in country offices and regional bureaux of their respective roles in operationalizing the evaluation policy. The evaluation officers also started to develop regional evaluation strategies and took the lead in developing regional evaluation plans that combine both centralized and decentralized evaluations for optimum complementarity and balanced coverage.
16. Management acknowledges that the continuous engagement of OEV and regional evaluation officers in the CSP review processes has contributed to ensuring that evaluation costs are budgeted for in ICSPs and CSPs and that criteria for financing evaluations through WFP's contingency evaluation fund are met.
17. Launched in January 2017, the contingency evaluation fund has proved to be effective as a reserve mechanism for funding evaluations, especially for small country offices facing funding constraints. Overall, the fund provided partial funding – up to 70 percent – for 62 percent of the decentralized evaluations with planned starting dates in 2017.
18. Management acknowledges the important role played by OEV in developing evaluation capacity in WFP. For instance, to ensure an adequate supply of evaluation expertise from independent evaluators with relevant technical and geographical knowledge, OEV increased the number of long-term agreements with evaluation service providers around the world from 15 to 24 and provided induction sessions on WFP. A roster of individual consultant evaluators continues to enhance the options for hiring evaluation experts according to need.
19. In the longer term, in the light of WFP's commitment to supporting countries in the development of national capacities, investments in enhancing national evaluation capacities and promoting joint evaluations will be important in helping to meet demand.

## **Part 3: Outlook for WFP's evaluation function**

20. By establishing the Evaluation Function Steering Group, senior management helped to ensure appropriate and balanced coverage of centralized and decentralized evaluations to meet global expectations for independent evaluation and evidence-based decision making throughout WFP, in line with the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021) and the 2030 Agenda and within WFP's broader oversight framework.
21. Looking ahead, as well as increasing evaluation coverage with a view to meeting the specific accountability requirements of responses to protracted Level 3 and Level 2 crises (see paragraph 7 above), OEV is exploring the potential for developing new types of

synthesis products to promote greater use of evaluation findings by WFP management and partners.

22. Management agrees with the priorities set by OEV in the medium-term outlook for WFP's evaluation function and acknowledges the consistent progress made towards establishing and complying with coverage norms and ensuring secure, predictable and adequate financial and human resources for evaluation.
23. As implementation of the IRM advances, management expects to see continued strengthening of the linkages between evaluation and the IRM and of the use of CPEs as a mechanism for supporting the transition to CSPs in the context of IRM implementation and the 2030 Agenda. OEV will therefore continue to prioritize utility when selecting countries for CPEs.
24. Further adjustments to the link between evaluation and the transition to CSPs will be subject to ongoing consultation with WFP management and the Board and will be reflected in OEV's plan of work for 2019–2021.

## **Conclusions**

25. Management notes that the IRM presents opportunities for strengthening further the coverage and use of evaluations, allowing WFP to embed an improved culture of evaluation into decision making throughout the organization.
26. It is noted that, in 2017, 100 percent of strategic programme review documents – a total of 77 documents – were reviewed by OEV staff and regional evaluation officers paying particular attention to the use of existing evaluation evidence and the planning of future evaluations.
27. Management recognizes that the evaluation function in regional bureaux plays an important role in supporting the achievement of corporate evaluation targets and that regional evaluation strategies are tools for reaching broader corporate policy objectives related to the achievement of zero hunger.
28. Management also notes the major progress made in fulfilling the evaluation policy's vision of creating a culture of evaluative thinking throughout WFP by increasing the resources for and the coverage of evaluation.

## **Acronyms used in the document**

CPE	country portfolio evaluation
CSP	country strategic plan
ICSP	interim country strategic plan
IRM	Integrated Road Map
OEV	Office of Evaluation
SDG	Strategic Development Goal