

# Evaluation Brief

WFP Office of Evaluation: *Measuring Results, Sharing Lessons*



## Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Capacity Development: an Update on Implementation (2009)

### Context

The past decade has seen important changes in the global discourse on capacity development. This includes the shift to the notion of capacity to deliver results as one dimension of capacity required to make an organization or system endure, adapt and perform over time, and to consider it as self-organizing, emergent and part of a complex adaptive system. WFP's Strategic Plan 2017-2021 places a strong emphasis on SDG 17, supporting modified approaches to WFP's capacity strengthening and wider work with national partners.

In 2004, WFP's Executive Board approved the first policy on capacity development (Building National and Regional Capacities) to provide a framework to implement capacity development in the 2004-2007 Strategic Plan. Following its evaluation on 2008, its update was approved in 2009 but the 2004 policy remained in force.

The policy update included a more comprehensive policy framework, with a vision, overarching objective, outcomes and outputs at three levels of capacity (enabling environment, institutional, and individual). It was then followed by the issuance of an action plan and other corporate guidance documents.

### Scope of the Evaluation

The current evaluation was intended for both accountability and learning purposes with an emphasis on the latter. It focused on assessing: i) the quality of the policy; ii) its results; and, iii) the factors influencing the achievement of results from 2009-2015.

Data collection and analytical methods included: a retrospectively constructed theory of change; extensive document review, including 365 Standard Project Reports; field missions to 6 Country Offices (Bangladesh, Jordan, Kenya, Namibia, Peru, and Senegal) and two Regional Bureaux (Panama and Bangkok); 6 country desk studies (Colombia, India, Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho, Liberia and Uganda); review of comparator organizations (FAO, UNDP, UNICEF and ICRC); a global e-survey of WFP staff; and, key informant interviews.

### Key Findings

#### Quality of the Policy

The evaluation found that the policy update reflected key aspects of contemporary thinking about capacity development. It was also coherent with international commitments on aid effectiveness and still remains broadly relevant to and aligned with SDG 17.

The policy update appropriately positioned capacity development work in the context of WFP's transition from food aid to food assistance. It was consistent with WFP's mandate and other policies, but it did not fully reflect the high priority accorded to it as a Strategic Objective and reflected only a basic level of gender awareness.

Although subsequent guidance and tools were quite technical, they enabled the measurement of changes in capacity and identified ways to support capacity development in a range of thematic areas and using different modalities. However, certain gaps were identified in: i) inconsistent use of key terms; ii) lack of clarity on output versus outcome results, as well as how expected results were to be achieved; and, iii) the absence of indicators for formulated results and guidance on related reporting requirements.

#### Policy Results

Evidence of capacity development results were found across WFP's thematic areas, at individual, institutional and enabling environment levels, and irrespective of income level or position on the emergency-development continuum. WFP's capacity development activities have included on-the-job coaching, advocacy, provision of specific information or tools and facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation.

Evaluation findings confirmed: i) WFP's considerable contributions to strengthening the awareness, knowledge and/or skills of individuals working on hunger solutions in government institutions, as part of a broader effort to strengthening institutional capacities; ii) WFP's focus on strengthening the capacities of national and sub-national government organizations with specific contributions to technical and managerial aspects of governmental functions; iii) WFP's contribution to the adoption and implementation of relevant laws, policies, and often harmonized strategies to strengthen the enabling environment for hunger solutions through advocacy, technical inputs and/or modelling and coaching; iv) WFP deliberate efforts to enhance the likelihood of sustainability.

However, there was insufficient evidence to: i) assess WFP’s influence on rendering national food assistance agencies more financially viable; ii) determine the extent to which WFP’s efforts have led to more adequate and sustainable resourcing of relevant ministries and agencies in host countries; iii) provide an assessment of contributions to impact. WFP reporting captures only sex-disaggregated participation in capacity development initiatives rather than contributions to strengthening gender equality.

Moreover, most of WFP staff consulted at different organizational levels were either not, or only vaguely, aware of the policy update’s content. With very few exceptions, the results identified by the evaluation cannot be directly linked to implementation of the policy update.

### Explanatory Factors for Results Achieved

Some external factors affected the scope, nature, and effectiveness of the results achieved, particularly: i) the extent of political will to address hunger governance issues; ii) the degree of host government demand for food aid versus technical assistance; iii) the existing government capacities at national and decentralized levels; and, iv) socio-cultural factors.

However, most factors limiting results achievement were due to internal managerial decisions. When the financial resources made available to capacity development expired after four years, no further funding was sought. The small and fluctuating size of the HQ capacity development unit further reduced visibility and influence. Furthermore, WFP’s corporate staffing approach included relatively few considerations of capacity development. Despite some improvements, under-reporting remained a challenge with corporate systems not capturing trust fund-financed interventions, which funds a considerable portion of WFP’s capacity development work.

In 2013, the introduction of the CD&A budget line allowed country offices to allocate and track dedicated resources for capacity development, but the associated composite budget line including ‘augmentation’ costs did not allow for a differentiation between expenditures. Short-term funding and budget uncertainties and the use of capacity development funds in emergency or shortfall situations were experienced as additional key challenges.

The evaluation also found that WFP’s reputation and branding as a ‘doer’ rather than as a ‘facilitator’ had implications for the agency’s perceived positioning and comparative advantage in the area of capacity development.

## Conclusions

WFP’s capacity development work, both in terms of funding and continuity of engagement, has been constrained by the agency’s emergency focus and short-term operational horizon. The evaluation concluded that WFP is supporting capacity development processes in a wide range of geographic and thematic contexts despite limited corporate support, resources, guidance and tools. Continuing ‘business as usual’ given the Agenda 2030 and new Strategic Plan commitments will lead to considerable reputational risk.

## Lessons

“When will we ever learn?” Many previous policy, strategic and operations evaluations have noted similar shortcomings. If WFP is to achieve the vision laid out in the Strategic Plan 2017-2021, its commitment to addressing capacity strengthening must be sincere, systematic and sustained.

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1.** WFP should immediately elevate the organizational attention to capacity strengthening as a core function by creating a temporary, multi-stakeholder management transition team to articulate operational definitions and clearly define staff roles and responsibilities for capacity strengthening.

**Recommendation 2.** In implementing the Integrated Roadmap, WFP should ensure that Country Offices are provided with relevant, concrete and practical tools and guidance on capacity strengthening based on good practice within 6-12 months.

**Recommendation 3.** WFP should further enhance its own internal capability to effectively support capacity strengthening processes within 6-12 months.

**Recommendation 4.** WFP should continue to strengthen the corporate provisions for monitoring and reporting on all capacity strengthening work within 12 months by expanding the quantitative and qualitative information required in SPRs and Trust Fund reporting, including illustrative qualitative studies covering both CSP and ICSP contexts.

**Recommendation 5.** Within 6 months, WFP should ensure that its internal and external communications reflect and support its strategic vision for capacity strengthening, including its presentation as one of WFP’s core organizational functions across all contexts.

**Recommendation 6.** The 2009 Policy Update should remain in force until all elements of the Integrated Roadmap are in place. WFP should then either revise its Policy Update or develop a new policy to articulate its strategic approach, with associated dissemination tools, to align with and support implementation of the Strategic Plan (2017-2021).

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### Reference:

Full and summary reports of the evaluation and the Management Response are available at [www.wfp.org/evaluation](http://www.wfp.org/evaluation)  
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