

Evaluation Top 10 Lessons

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



Top 10 Lessons for Policy Quality in WFP

Introduction

This note shares lessons concerning policy formulation and practicalities. These lessons emerged after analyzing ten policy evaluations conducted by the Office of Evaluation between 2008 and 2018. The note is intended to be of practical use when drafting new WFP policies by providing an overview of elements required for a good quality policy document.

- Section 1 presents the results of the analysis and the lessons learned
- Section 2 presents an overview of WFP policy framework
- Section 3 presents the external literature and research

Section 4 provides details on the methodology

Section 1: Results of the Analysis and Lessons Learned

Based on the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the ten policy evaluations, ten criteria, or lessons, have been identified and grouped into policy formulation and policy practicalities.

Policy formulation, (lessons 1-7), deals with the elements required to ensure a high-quality policy design.

Policy practicality, (lessons 8-10), deals with the elements required to increase the likelihood of successful implementation.






The elements presented in this section are drawn from the WFP policy evaluation criteria used to assess policy quality, implementation and results. The related analysis provided in the reports is also considered. Although policy standards and practice are not defined in WFP, this mapping provides an overview of the elements required for policy formulation.

- WFP's Policy on Capacity Development (2008)
- WFP's HIV and AIDS Interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa (2008)
- WFP's Gender Policy (2003-2007): Enhanced Commitments to Women to Ensure Food Security (2008)
- WFP's School Feeding Policy (2011)
- Evaluation of WFP's 2009 Gender Policy. This Time Around? (2013)
- WFP's 2008 Cash and Voucher Policy (2015)
- 2012 Nutrition Policy (2015)
- WFP's Policy on Capacity Development (2009): An Update on Implementation (2016)
- WFP Humanitarian Protection Policy (2012)
- WFP Policies on Humanitarian Principles (2004) and Access in Humanitarian Contexts (2006)

Box 1: Policy Evaluation Reports Reviewed

Criteria

For each criterion, an overall assessment was conducted based on the average scoring level of each evaluation (see box below). This was cross-checked and refined with the descriptive statements in the evaluation reports to ensure accuracy. The total scoring indicates whether, for each criterion:

	All evaluations have negative or no evidence, with zero evaluation showing only positive results
	Evaluations contain little evidence or insufficient results: two evaluations have positive or mixed findings
	Evaluations contain limited evidence or results, with mixed findings and between 1 and 2 evaluations with only negative or no evidence or results
	Evaluations contain some evidence or results. All evaluations have at least mixed findings or results and none show only negative results
	Evaluations contain strong evidence or results. All evaluations show only positive results

Box 6, presented in section 4, provides a full assessment of how effectively these criteria were included in the policies evaluated.

Policy Formulation Lessons

→ Lesson 1: Include a context analysis to ensure timeliness and wider relevance



Clarification

- A context analysis provides a comprehensive analysis of the environment. This will identify any influences on the policy, as well as all key stakeholders.

Summary

- A policy is made more relevant if it is contextualised within current debates on the topic and in the pertinent academic literature. Developing a policy is an opportunity to reflect on the organization's experience. It is a chance to codify existing good practice, increase clarity on the instruments to be used and provide systematic guidance for the agency.
- Ensuring that the policy is timely positions the organization's work within a broad and changing context.
- Including a clear rationale and justification for the policy sets the direction within the organization for new areas of work. It also allows the organization to respond to existing gaps and/or changing contexts, and to take into account new circumstances and emerging evidence.

All evaluations found that the policies timely placed WFP work in a broad and changing context. For example:

- The *School Feeding Policy Evaluation* was "relevant and timely in seeking to codify and seek consensus around good practices in school feeding" (p.vi). It responded to "a dynamic international context, as well as to strategic developments within WFP" (p.ii).
- The *Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access* "remain highly relevant at a time characterized by growth in the number of protracted emergencies and increasing politicization of the aid environment" (p.i).

Policy documents update, clarify and codify WFP practical guidance. This is illustrated in the following evaluations:

- The *HIV and AIDS Policy Evaluation* noted that the policy "formalised activities that had been ongoing since 2000 [as] set out in the Information Notes" (p.12).
- The *Capacity Development Policy Evaluation* indicated that the policy "summarized prior strategies and initiatives" (p.2), while its policy update "appropriately positioned capacity development work in the context of WFP transition from food aid to food assistance" (p.vii).

A clear rationale and justification contextualise a policy. For example, the following observations on policy context were made:

- “The *Gender Update Policy Evaluation* policy makes reference to the broader shifts within the United Nations system of the time as part of its rationale” (p.12).
- It said that the policy “lacked a clear statement of ‘why gender’ related to the mandate of WFP” (p.v).
- It also observed that “external factors such as the SWAP reporting system and conducive national environments were the primary drivers of WFP efforts to address gender issues growing importance of

accountability for gender considerations within the United Nations system” (p.xiii).

- The *WFP’s humanitarian protection policy* clearly “drew on international discourse. Its relevance was enhanced from the outset by the thorough bottom-up process of policy development, which made protection visible within WFP and allowed the policy to overcome internal resistance” (p. Xiii). It is also observed that the “policy was relevant and appropriate given the climate at the time it was formulated, although staff still found it hard to operationalize” (p.18).

→ Lesson 2: Define the scope and prioritise



Clarification

- The scope sets the boundaries of the policy. This narrows the focus of the activities to be implemented.

Summary

- A policy should be broad enough to allow the organization to respond appropriately to needs in varying contexts. It should identify areas where the organization has a comparative advantage and a proven track record to prioritise when needed. The policy should also define, as realistically as possible, the scope of the organization’s responsibility for specific outcomes.
- A long list of activity areas in a policy presents a risk during implementation.

A systematic discussion of the realistic scope of WFP responsibility helps identify the key priority areas and set expectations:

- The *Nutrition Policy Evaluation* showed that the policy emphasised five key areas, while ensuring that “its scope was broad enough to allow WFP to respond appropriately to needs in varying contexts” (p.iv).
- The *Capacity Development Update Policy Evaluation* found that “the broad nature of the policy enabled its adaptation to different contexts while stopping short of being prescriptive” (p.vii).

However, in six out of ten evaluations the scope was identified as too widely defined, with a list of areas that was overly-inclusive. For example:

- The *School Feeding Policy Evaluation* found that “the broad scope of the policy made considerable demands of already scarce country office staff” (p.viii).
- The *HIV and AIDS Policy Evaluation* noted that “the overall scope of WFP HIV and AIDS policy should be reduced and adapted to enable country offices to respond to local needs and the realities of their budgets” (p.80).
- The *Humanitarian Protection Policy* was “deliberately kept broad in scope and ambition. The duality of the broad scope alongside the specific definition used by WFP reflected internal compromises” (p.10). “Ambiguities in the policy and supporting guidance

were initially useful for WFP in helping it to define its role in protection but led to an operational focus that did not adequately consider broader protection risks and that hampered the translation of norms into practice” (p. xv).

Several evaluations also pointed to the importance of specifying outcomes:

- The *School Feeding Policy Evaluation* concluded that there was a need to reduce outcomes.
- The *Cash and Vouchers Policy Evaluation* highlighted that “some of the objectives and assumed outcomes were determined to be ambitious or aspirational for WFP” (p.27)
- The *Capacity Development Policy Evaluation*, in contrast, noted that the policy provides definitions and clear directions to avoid a wide range of interpretations
- The *Gender Policy Evaluation* pointed out that “the Policy was so pragmatic and specific that it did not provide a normative basis from which staff and partners could make decisions about when to take proactive action” (p.12).
- The *Gender Update Policy Evaluation* subsequently highlighted the need to avoid “gaps in content, the absence of critical foundations, and [a] project-based approach”. It considered these to be elements that could “undermine [the policy] scope as an instrument for driving reform” (p.3).

→ Lesson 3: Develop a vision and a theory of change



Clarification

- A vision is an aspirational statement of an organization's mid and long-term goals.
- A theory of change captures all elements of the logic framework and identifies key assumptions on how and why changes take place.

Summary

- Developing a theory of change for the policy identifies definite objectives, expected results and a limited, quantifiable and realistic number of outcomes. It also highlights intended pathways of change, assumptions and risks and provides a clear vision.
- Underpinning the policy with an explicit theory of change aligns the activities with an intervention logic, against which performance and results can be assessed.

All the evaluations showed that some type of vision statement was included in the policy documents. However, this was usually associated with the policy goal:

- In the *School Feeding Policy Evaluation*, the vision was “tantamount to a goal: WFP vision is to reduce hunger among schoolchildren so that it is not an obstacle to their development” (p.iv).

Theories of change were not specifically included in any policy document. However, they were often reconstructed by evaluation teams and validated by the relevant policy owner. For example:

- In the *Capacity Development Policy Evaluation* and its *Update Policy Evaluation*, sufficient elements were found in the policy documents to reconstruct a theory of change.

In total, six policy evaluations found a lack of overall logic framework. Examples include:

- The *HIV and AIDS Policy Evaluation*.
- The *Gender Update Policy Evaluation*, which indicated that such a lack of logic framework “limit[s] common

understanding of what results were intended, why and how they would be achieved, and what assumptions were embedded in the policy's logic” (p.9).

- The *Gender Policy Evaluation*, in which it is noted that a lack of logic framework can also lead to developing a hybrid of policy and action-plan (p.12). 1
- *The Humanitarian Protection Policy* was found to “lack a precise objective that went beyond internal capacity building and related to external outcomes” (p. viii). A theory of change was developed but “was not formally adopted as a tool for implementing the policy” (p.13).

A theory of change helps to test the key assumptions that link outputs, outcomes and objectives. The *Cash and Voucher Policy Evaluation* observed that when concrete objectives, priorities and actions aligned to a theory of change are not included in the policy, there is a risk that the document is more like a policy discussion paper than a proper policy.

→ Lesson 4: Ensure external coherence



Clarification

- Assessing external coherence facilitates consistency. It focuses on similarities and differences and examines the policy against international benchmarks. It should not be confused with coordination.

Summary

- Policies should include an assessment of the external environment. International benchmarks should be taken into account and the policy clearly positioned in relation to them. A policy that coheres with international good practice and standards sustains a robust normative system or policy framework.
- Examining where other agencies stand on any relevant topics enables complementarity and reduces the potential overlap of mandates.

A review of available scientific evidence and accepted international standards ensures consistency, setting the

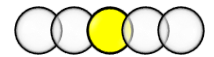
stage for the policy in as wide a context as possible. It also helps identify the comparative advantage of WFP:

- The *School Feeding Policy Evaluation* observed that the policy had made “an innovative and commendable effort to propagate general standards for school feeding systems. The policy was also generally consistent with international standards for nutrition, education and aid effectiveness” (p.13). However, the evaluation noted that other dimensions, such as social protection, remained embryonic by international standards.
- The *Cash and Voucher Policy Evaluation* positioned the WFP system well in the international arena. It said that the system was “further developed, both because it began creating the framework earlier than most organizations and because the degree of change and agreement needed to authorise use of cash & vouchers is perceived as more significant than in other organizations working across sectors without a food-focused mandate” (p.18).
- The *Capacity Development Update Policy Evaluation* found that the policy document cohered with international commitments (p.vii).
- The *Gender Policy Evaluation*, when conducting comparisons, noted that the policy went beyond rhetoric to specify actions (p.11).
- The *Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access* “are largely coherent, relevant, and appropriate. Both reflect system-wide positions on the issues” (p.70).
- The *Humanitarian Protection Policy Evaluation* also “found that WFP’s humanitarian protection policy clearly drew on international discourse”. (p. vii). Among the United Nations system humanitarian entities that do not specialize in protection, WFP was one of the first to formalize its protection responsibilities by adopting an explicit policy (p. vii)
- The *Gender Update Policy Evaluation*, however, found that “WFP does not cohere with other policies/institutions in setting out a clear accountability framework and minimum standards for programming, and the institutional mechanisms and processes for applying them” (p.vii).

To avoid encroaching on other agencies’ mandates, the policy should clearly define the organization’s role:

- The *HIV and AIDS Policy Evaluation*, for example, indicated that the “policy is in line with central elements of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with UNAIDS” (p.91).
- The *Nutrition Policy Evaluation* reported that “in relation to coherence with other agencies, the policy provided a clear statement of WFP envisioned role across different aspects of nutrition. This implied (that) a wider role, particularly in the prevention of chronic malnutrition in development and emergency contexts, was not intended to displace that of any other agency” (p.iv).

→ Lesson 5: Ensure internal and strategic coherence and integrate gender



Clarification

- Assessing internal and strategic coherence ensures that policies are consistent and aligned with WFP corporate strategy, as well as with cross-cutting strategies, policies and programmes.

Summary

- Policies should not be developed in a vacuum. Careful attention should be paid to cross-fertilization across policies and to internal policy coherence.
- Assessing strategic coherence ensures that policies are consistent and aligned across programmes and activities. It also helps to actively integrate gender into the policy. Assimilating policies with WFP programming facilitates decision-making and effective reporting.

The quality of the policy relies, in part, on its internal alignment and consistency with WFP strategies, policies and programmes.

Broadly, all policies evaluated cohered with the strategic plan and strategic results framework, but the evaluations showed that more work could be done to improve these linkages (this is noted, for example, in the *Gender Update Policy Evaluation*, p.vii).

More work was also needed to establish a results framework with corporate outcome indicators (as identified in the *Capacity Development Policy Evaluation*,

p.38, and in the *Humanitarian Protection Policy Evaluation*, p. ix and 23).

Several evaluations addressed internal policy alignment and strategic coherence. For example:

- The *Capacity Development Policy Evaluation* concluded that the policy was “well-grounded in WFP legislative background and mandate and coherent with other WFP policies” (p.8).
- The *Nutrition Policy Evaluation* and *Capacity Development Update Policy Evaluation* both noted that there was

“scope for greater cross-fertilization among policies” (p.iv, and p.viii).

- The *Cash and Voucher Policy Evaluation* and *Gender Policy Evaluation* recommended updating “other sectoral and thematic policies to incorporate [...] lessons” (p.53 and p.14).

Internal coherence also depends on actively integrating with WFP programming categories, modalities, operations, activities and tools across all regions, as well as on integrating gender considerations.

Demonstrable integration with WFP programming facilitates decision-making and reporting. The linkages between policy objectives and scope and other areas of programming were highlighted in all policy evaluations, but its full implications were not necessarily realised at the policy development stage:

- The *HIV and AIDS Policy Evaluation* reported that the policy “committed WFP to adjusting programming tools to reflect the realities of HIV and AIDS” (p.91) and recognised that “the establishment of effective partnerships and gender mainstreaming are important elements in all WFP’s HIV and AIDS activities” (p.2).
- The *School Feeding Policy Evaluation* found that “some progress has been made to align WFP activities with the agenda set forth by the policy, but much remains to be done” (p.xv). However, it also observed that “the policy is relevant and is already reflected in WFP’s portfolio and activities in several positive ways” (p.xiv). More particularly, “the policy highlights the gender implications and opportunities of school feeding” (p.28).
- The *Humanitarian Protection Policy Evaluation*

highlighted that “programme tools have begun to integrate protection practices and knowledge” (p. 21), but the integration was not done systematically.

Actively integrating gender analysis helps to inform programme design:

- The *Cash and Voucher Policy Evaluation* similarly outlined that the policy document was explicit in highlighting the “rationale and comparative advantages of introducing Cash & Vouchers in WFP projects and programmes. It highlights opportunities and challenges, and explains potential programming, capacity development and partnership implications” (p.ii). However, the same evaluation also noted that, “gender implications were found to be monitored at a very basic level (i.e. whether women receive or use a transfer) and mechanisms for measuring the implications related to burdens, violence and status were weak” (p.29).
- The *Gender Update Policy Evaluation*, during the implementation stage, “encountered gaps in the treatment of gender issues which have arisen from the sometimes ‘vertical’ or ‘siloed’ approach to programming in WFP country offices” (p.27).
- The *Humanitarian Protection Policy Evaluation* reported that “corporate indicators provided little information about empowerment or the extent to which WFP contributes to an operational environment where rights are respected”. The evaluation also found a “broad conflation of gender and protection issues so that gender was considered in terms of gender-based violence rather than women’s empowerment”. (p. ix)



→ Lesson 6: Develop evidence-based policies

Clarification

- An evidence-based policy gathers substantive and comprehensive evidence to place the document on a sound footing based on global research and analysis.

Summary

- All policies should be based on substantive, comprehensive and valid evidence from internal and external sources. Using accurate evidence makes policies credible and relevant.
- Substantive and comprehensive analysis gives the policy a clear rationale. The lack of a carefully-balanced analysis can lead to advocacy rather than guidance.

Policy relevance increases when the policy is soundly based on evidence gathered during the development process. For example:

- The *School Feeding Policy Evaluation* indicated that “the evidence-gathering that preceded [the policy] was very impressive” (p.viii) and that “it drew on an insightful stock-taking of accumulated evidence relating to the holistic view of school feeding” (p.xiii).

Evidence can also be generated by studying previous country studies and consultations and by building on previous policies:

- The *Gender Policy Evaluation* (p.5) illustrates this point.
- Other evaluations, such as the *HIV and AIDS Policy Evaluation*, found that there were studies being conducted which “aimed to address critical gaps in the

evidence base" (p.vi).

- The *Nutrition Policy Evaluation*, in contrast, noted that "some prescriptions and recommendations were not (and still are not) adequately supported by evidence. There was – and is – much less evidence on the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of supplementary feeding programmes in preventing malnutrition" (p.iii).

Several evaluations, for example the *School Feeding Policy Evaluation*, highlighted the risks of limited evidence and of advocacy insufficiently supported by programmatic evidence. Further examples of this include:

- The *HIV and AIDS Policy Evaluation*, which referred to the importance of "analysis and reporting of results to provide information on effectiveness of interventions and guide the development of approaches" (p.9).

- The *Capacity Development Policy Evaluation*, and the *Gender Update Policy Evaluation*, the latter of which "found cases of WFP using its insights from the field – often remote communities – to identify issues that decision-makers needed to be more aware of" (p.44).

- The *Capacity Development Policy Evaluation*, noted "this field experience [could then be] combined with research and analysis to ensure that advocacy efforts [are] placed on a sound footing" (p.44).

- The evaluation of WFP *Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access* noted that due to a lack of documentation and institutional memory, it was not possible to establish whether or not the Policy on humanitarian principles "was informed by adequate research and analysis" (p.31).

→ Lesson 7: Validate and create ownership through internal consultation



Clarification

- The policy development process sets out the ways in which stakeholders are involved or consulted.

Summary

- A broad, internal consultation provides momentum, generates understanding and builds commitment and ownership. Involving other technical units and regional and country offices gives the policy a practical orientation and identifies cross-cutting areas and bottlenecks at an early stage.
- Formal and pro-active dissemination of the policy, guidance and tools makes staff aware of the expected results and their responsibilities. With this, staff are more likely to achieve the intended results.

Extensive consultation processes took place in two policies: The *HIV and AIDS Policy Evaluation* and *The Nutrition Policy Evaluation*. In the latter, it was noted that "ownership among WFP nutritionists and senior management was ensured by extensive consultations, particularly with the Board, before its adoption". This led to a "good understanding of it by staff" and its acceptance (p.x).

However, limited communication and dissemination efforts were noted in eight policy evaluations:

- The *Gender Update Policy Evaluation* and the *School Feeding Policy Evaluation* recommended strong dissemination efforts and "broad and deep consultation, particularly at the field level" (p.xvi).
- The latter evaluation also identified "ambiguity between rolling out the policy across WFP and focusing on pilot countries chosen as having high potential for enacting the policy" (p.viii).
- The *Capacity Development Policy Evaluation* highlighted that it was important to "invest in a programme to 'roll-out' the policy, explaining it to managers and staff in the field, who have to implement it and providing

systematic training and support" (p.42).

- In the *Capacity Development Update*, dissemination was found to be only moderately effective. Staff were either not, or only vaguely, aware of it (p.xi and xiii).
- Both the *Nutrition Policy Evaluation* and the *Cash and Voucher Policy Evaluation* noted that consistently disseminating guidance to support policy implementation is essential to respond to staff demands. They also noted that guidance and tools would be better used if they were systematically followed up with support.
- The evaluation of WFP *Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access* found that "WFP has not invested sufficiently in their dissemination and implementation in concert with other cross-cutting policy areas, leading to a highly variable understanding of humanitarian principles across the organization and a lack of clarity about important aspects of WFP's approach to access (p.1).

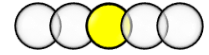
Any dissemination efforts should also consider partners at the operational level who may not systematically receive materials. It is also important to remember that WFP staff

lack time given their multiple responsibilities. This is particularly the case for focal points (as noted in the *Gender*

Policy Evaluation, p.17, and the *Humanitarian Protection Policy Evaluation*)

Policy Practicality Lessons

→ Lesson 8: Invest in effective institutional frameworks, systems, guidance and accountability arrangements



Clarification

- Policy practicality assesses whether the organizational systems, frameworks, guidance and accountability arrangements needed for the policy implementation are in place.

Summary

- Policy implementation is improved by an action plan/implementation strategy that includes a results framework with targets and milestones. An estimate of costs should be included to support implementation.
- Establishing an effective organizational and accountability structure enhances coordination, oversight and leadership. It also supports learning and institutionalization and clarifies roles and responsibilities. This avoids silos and ensures integration across roles at all levels.
- Developing and rolling out practical guidance, manuals, tools and business processes translates the policy into action.

Policy practicality assesses the likelihood of the policy being implemented and the extent to which it is workable.

As mentioned in the evaluations for capacity development, cash and voucher, school feeding and protection, policies can be enhanced by developing an explicit action plan that defines how WFP will operationalize the changes envisioned. This implementation strategy ensures policies are understood and followed. It also identifies cross-functional leadership. Only four of the policies evaluated had an associated action plan/ implementation strategy.

There is, therefore, sometimes a gap between the policy and the implementation plan. An enabling internal environment bridges this gap and supports the policy's institutional dimension and associated reforms. Creating an overarching institutional framework helps implement the policy. Efforts to do so were noted across six of the ten policies evaluated. Evaluation findings indicate that it is essential to invest in effective organizational structures, as they provide an oversight of the change-management process. These observations were made in the following evaluations:

- The *Gender Update Policy Evaluation* suggested that organizational buy-in, particularly leadership and senior management support, were most needed for the policy launch (p.viii).
- The *Gender Policy Evaluation* highlighted that strong corporate leadership, both at headquarters and the country office level, oversight and coordination efforts were constantly required (p.49).
- The *School Feeding Policy Evaluation*, stated: "the full

implementation of the policy depends on major changes in WFP systems, incentives and procedures" (p.xii).

- The *Nutrition Policy Evaluation* also noted that this required strong management support and sometimes organizational restructuring (p. 46).
- The *Humanitarian Protection Policy Evaluation* outlined similarly the importance of a clear framework of responsibility and accountability, including in relation to the role of senior managers; it also reported that a diffuse normative framework made up of a large number of policies with varying degrees of relevance to protection, among other factors, constrained the implementation of the policy.

Both the *Cash and Voucher Policy Evaluation* and the *Nutrition Policy Evaluation* recommended including accountability mechanisms to clarify roles and responsibilities at all levels and to help with programme adjustments. For example, the *Gender Policy Evaluation* recommended precise responsibilities in PACEs (p.53). The building blocks of this framework were in place in the *Gender Update Policy Evaluation*. Although two policy evaluations identified some of these elements, eight others reported the need to enhance these mechanisms.

Practical and targeted guidance materials are helpful tools to ensure proper policy operationalization, particularly in the field. For example:

- The *School Feeding Policy Evaluation* found that policy development was "complemented by an impressive amount of work to produce guidelines and tools for its

implementation” (p.xi) and cautioned to avoid redundancy.

- This observation was also found in the *Capacity Development Update Policy Evaluation*. In this regard, all evaluations suggested that further efforts were needed.
- The *Capacity Development Policy Evaluation* and the *Gender Update Policy Evaluation* both suggested keeping materials updated with new or evolving information and providing support in interpreting the policy within programming, policy or business areas.
- The *Nutrition Policy Evaluation* also recommended ensuring: “that guidance is disseminated to staff regularly and is easily accessible” (p.53).

The policy must envision the types of partnerships needed for the sustainability of WFP approaches. Indeed, the launch of a policy might require a diversified and differentiated set of partners to meet implementation

needs. In total, seven policy evaluations included positive findings on partnerships. The *Capacity Development Policy Evaluation* observed that this enabled WFP to draw on partners’ comparative advantage (p.22). However, nine policy evaluations identified that additional efforts were needed to ensure partnership adequacy or to fully understand the implications of what the partnerships could provide.

- The *Cash and Voucher Policy Evaluation* concluded that “new global corporate partnerships have not yet proven effective in supporting country offices with Cash & Vouchers implementation” (p.36).
- The evaluation of *WFP Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access* found that “WFP relies heavily on partners and commercial providers to deliver its programmes” and that “few active efforts to encourage them to apply the policies”. “Weaknesses in partner selection, management, and monitoring weaken adherence to humanitarian principles” (p. 5).

→ Lesson 9: Identify financial and human resource requirements



Clarification

- To implement the policy, it is necessary to assess early on the funding and human resources designated and/or available.

Summary

- Financial and human resources are needed to implement policy. Planning and prioritization are simplified when the budgetary and human resource requirements are clearly set out.
- Successful policy implementation requires the right combination of staff. This means investing in targeted recruitment and capacity development. Formal training and competency-development should be used to build the skills base needed to achieve the results set out in the policy.

Policy implementation requires reliable and sustainable funding mechanisms and adequate staffing. All policy evaluations identified financing and human resource arrangements as important constraints and pointed to challenges in aligning long-term needs with the short-term and unpredictable nature of WFP funding:

- The *Capacity Development Update Policy Evaluation* stated that “funds and staff originally intended for capacity development may be deployed elsewhere in the event of an emergency or resource shortfall.” (p.xiii).
- The *Cash and Voucher Policy Evaluation* noted that “implementation is hindered by donors who oppose their use, funding constraints and lack of advance funding mechanisms for cash and voucher.” (p.47). Ensuring resources are available to initiate and sustain policy implementation produces results at different levels.
- The *Gender Policy Evaluation* recommended that, during

policy implementation, special attention be given to ensure “that shifting resources does not mean decreasing resources, i.e. that the level of resources that was used at HQs in early years of [the] policy be restored and allocated strategically for use at the HQ, regional and country levels” (p.63).

Evaluations also commonly reported ad hoc staffing and gaps in human resources for specific functional capacities. These observations were made in the following evaluations:

- The *HIV and AIDS Policy Evaluation* noted that staff rotation procedures were inefficient in keeping qualified staff in positions where their skills were needed (p.93).
- The *Gender Update Policy Evaluation* identified some key elements to consider, such as continuity, formal training, work plans, budgets and time allocations (p.11).

- The *Capacity Development Policy Evaluation* stated that performance improved when resources were more reliable as it helped to engage in a more structured and systematic approach (p.42).
- The *School Feeding Policy Evaluation* concluded that “the broad scope of the policy also made considerable demands of already scarce country office staff” (p.xiii).
- The *Cash and Voucher Policy Evaluation* noted that this

challenge could be addressed by systematic efforts to recruit external expertise.

- Overall, the lack of resources hampered the implementation of the *Humanitarian Protection Policy*; while WFP invested in diverse efforts to strengthen its engagement in protection, it was reported that investing in technical capacity for protection was not a priority.

→ Lesson 10: Integrate monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems



Clarification

- Monitoring is a continuing function. A systematic collection of data on specified indicators is used to provide both management and stakeholders with indications of progress made and objectives achieved. The monitoring data generated is then included in the corporate reporting systems and standard annual exercises.
- An evaluation is a systematic and impartial assessment that focuses on expected and achieved accomplishments. It examines the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality to understand achievements or the lack thereof. It considers the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the interventions. It should provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful, which in turn enables the timely incorporation of findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making process.

Summary

- The policy’s monitoring and evaluation plan should be integrated into the WFP programme cycle. This facilitates the measurement, analysis, reporting and evaluation of results and increases awareness of the policy in country offices and with partners.
- There should be a strong link between the outcomes and objectives of the policy and those of the strategic plan. This ensures a stronger causal chain, enhances consistency in approach and strengthens monitoring efforts. Building internal coherence in performance measurement also improves project design, monitoring and reporting at a corporate level.

In all the policy evaluations reviewed, substantial and consistent monitoring and evaluation data was identified as being essential for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions and to inform change. The *Capacity Development Policy Evaluation* and its update noted uneven reporting and concluded that “generally far more work is done than is reflected in design documents and performance reports” (p.9).

To facilitate policy monitoring and evaluation:

- The *Cash and Voucher Policy Evaluation* proposed linking the policy outcomes to the corporate monitoring system (p.11).
- The *Gender Policy Evaluation* referred to the need to shift from monitoring inputs and outputs, to assessing outcomes in order to measure the real objectives (p.40 and p.60).
- The *School Feeding Policy Evaluation* recommended including an explicit monitoring and evaluation strategy in the policy update (p.58).
- The *Capacity Development Policy Evaluation* highlighted

that a results framework and indicators for designing, implementing and monitoring are needed (p.43).

- The *Gender Update Policy Evaluation* recommended the integration of gender issues into all levels of logic frameworks, results frameworks and monitoring and reporting processes as a requirement for approval (p. xvii).
- The *HIV and AIDS Policy Evaluation* mentioned the need to develop standards, mandatory and standardized indicators and a system to measure progress (p. 80).
- The *Humanitarian Protection Policy Evaluation* recommended the strengthening of the analysis of contexts and protection issues by reinforcing the data systems for monitoring and evaluation and building on existing information management systems to capture protection-related information.

All these measures should support more systematic analysis and use of data, which will capture effective results and inform future improvements.

Section 2: WFP Policy Framework

Policies are approved by the WFP Executive Board. They can be updated to reflect trends, emerging issues or priorities.

WFP policy framework is composed of a large set of supporting documents that provide direction to the organization. It covers aspects such as core principles, standards, regulations, guidance and implementation.

Box 3 presents different elements of WFP policy framework.

“New policies are initiated when WFP enters into new areas of work, when a gap in existing policies is identified, or when the changing context or directives from governing bodies require a policy to be reviewed and reissued. Sometimes the Board provides the impulse for a new policy, while at other times a new policy may be initiated by the Secretariat.”

WFP Policy Formulation Document (2011)

Box 2: WFP's policy framework

Rationale and Timing

The timing and rationale to develop a new policy can be influenced by the launch of a new strategic plan and a shift in strategic objectives. However, this is not exclusively the case.

The WFP has a policy compendium that is updated annually. It contains a summary of the current policies which are therefore considered normative guidance. It also identifies potential policy gaps.

The strategic plan should serve as a framework that aligns all policies to ensure cohesion. However, a policy can have an independent existence that does not necessarily synchronize with the strategic plan. The evaluability assessment in the WFP Strategic Plan 2014-2017 noted that further clarity in policy alignment was needed.

Foundation

General Rules and Regulations

- The United Nations General Assembly General and various United Nations agencies provide policy guidance to WFP.
- The United Nations General Assembly <at the FAO conference?> approve and establish a programme's purpose and functions and then give the WFP Executive Board and the Secretariat authority to execute the tasks.

Regulations

Circulars, Directives, Procedures, Memoranda

- Circulars, directives procedures and memoranda are the instruments used by heads of departments, divisions or offices, to issue policies, procedures and other instructions/guidance.
- Directives can be issued to implement policies contained in an Executive Director's circular or other communication. They can also be used to establish new or revised policies, rules and procedures.
- Circulars can cover policy pronouncements to implement applicable resolutions of the General Assembly, the FAO Conference and the Executive Board's decisions and recommendations.

Normative

Strategic Plan

- The strategic plan is approved by WFP Executive Board. It establishes high-level priorities and goals for a defined time-frame.

Normative

Policies and Strategies

- Policies are approved by WFP Executive Board. They articulate rationale, expected outcomes and impacts, experience, approach, links to strategic objectives, and implications for a theme or area of work.
- WFP issues sectoral strategies, such as the Corporate Monitoring Strategy (2018-2021), the People Strategy (2014-2017) and the Private Sector Partnerships and Fundraising Strategy (2013-2017).

Guidance

Manuals, guidance and tools

- Manuals guidance and tools represent a consolidation of existing policies, rules and procedures relevant to a specific functional area.

Box 3: WFP's policy framework

Policy Cycle and Governance

The Policy and Programme Division formulates policies but other divisions can also draft policies if a policy falls under their area of work.

Between 2008 and 2012, a policy committee was responsible for policy formulation. The committee reviewed drafts to “ensure that the objectives of the policy are clear, coherent with overall corporate objectives and synchronised with the objectives of other policies”. The committee then consulted with the Executive Board; the Executive Director chaired the Policy Council, which approved the policies.

The drafting process took approximately nine months and sometimes included external experts. The final policy was

then presented for consideration to the Executive Board. In 2012, the Executive Management and Policy Group replaced these councils and committees for efficiency.

In February 2015, the role of the Executive Management Group was consolidated to “continue as the primary locus of strategic thinking across the organization; and for the agreement of policies and instruments of policy (Executive Board papers, circulars, directives) prior to approval by the Executive Director. The Executive Management Group meets formally on the basis of prepared documents”.

The Role of the Office of Evaluation

In 2008, the WFP Office of Evaluation introduced policy evaluations to assess policy quality and results.

The norm for evaluating WFP policies is set out in the Evaluation Policy 2016-2021. It states that corporate

policies should be evaluated between four and six years after start of implementation. Analysing the WFP policy compendium and consulting information on intended policy developments determines which policy to select. Policies approved before 2010 are included in the Office of Evaluation’s workplan if they are considered relevant to WFP work or if they have potential for new policy development.

By mid 2018, ten policy evaluations have been conducted and two are in progress. The Office of Evaluation plans to increase the coverage from one per year to approximately four per year by 2020.

As an observer member of the Executive Management and Policy Group, the Director of Evaluation comments on draft new policies, drawing on lessons learned from relevant evaluations.

Section 3: External Literature and Research

Overseas Development Institute has identified three models for developing a policy. The first, referred to as the traditional, linear or classic model, refers to a uniform cycle composed of agenda setting, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The cycle then feeds back into further policy formulation. This model splits policy-making and implementation, ignoring the dynamism of the changing environment. According to the UK Institute of Government, the classic model is divorced from reality; policy making is often determined by events and does not take place in distinct stages.

The second, “interactive” model is considered more responsive, driven by a sudden change at any point. This allows stakeholders to exert pressure for change.

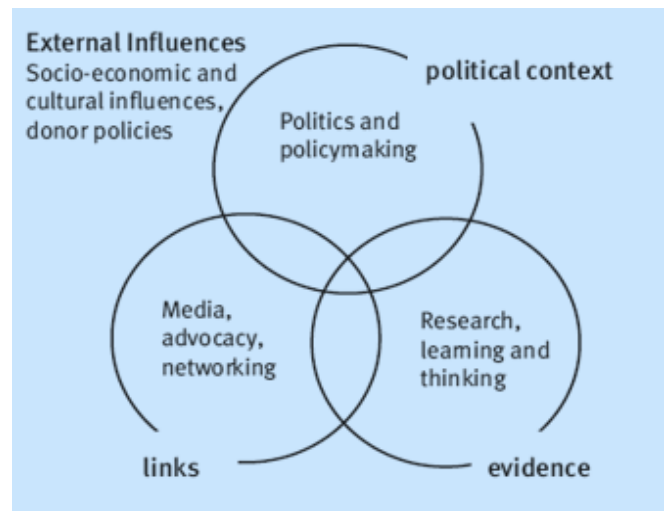
The third model defines what it calls “policy regimes” in which policy making varies “depending on perceived urgency for action, agreement on policy principles and the state of the underlying knowledge base”. Topical relevance and operational usefulness might also influence the policy process.

Further research conducted by ODI highlights the importance of integrating evidence and knowledge into policy making (see box 5).

“Policy-making is now such a broad term that it cannot be examined using a single model”. However, a policy could be defined as “a deliberate plan of action to guide decisions and achieve desired outcomes”.

ODI Background Note. H. Jones, N.Jones, L.Shaxson and D.Walker. Knowledge, policy and power in international development: a practical framework for improving policy. January 2013.

Box 4: Policy-making and definition



Box 5: The RAPID Framework

Section 4: Methodology

This section presents the approach used to conduct the analysis and the criteria used to guide the data collection. It also discusses the limitations encountered and lists the reports that were reviewed.

Approach

The approach included a desk review and benchmarking of relevant documentation (policy evaluation reports, summary evaluation reports, policy regulations and normative documents). All ten evaluations were carried out between 2008 and 2018.

The approach included the following steps:

- Collect available guidance and documentation on WFP policy framework and WFP policy evaluation reports.
- Identify relevant criteria emerging from the evaluations and the evaluation quality assurance system to establish a synthesis matrix.
- Review and systematically extract information from the evaluation reports to populate the matrix.
- Draft a note covering WFP policy framework, key criteria and messages derived from the evaluations, highlighting strengths, weaknesses, and points of commonality and divergence.
- Review the draft note incorporating the Office of Evaluation Management Team comments.
- Finalise the draft, incorporating comments as appropriate.

Criteria

The ten criteria are based on the standard policy evaluation questions outlined in the evaluation quality assurance system by the WFP Office of Evaluation. The

criteria were refined by taking into account the criteria used by the evaluation teams and its clustering to ensure effective communication. The findings, conclusions and recommendations of the summary evaluation reports were consolidated into a spreadsheet by evaluation at criteria level, and cross-checked with evaluation reports to assure the reliability of information.

The criteria were divided into two groups: policy formulation and policy practicality. They were then substantiated with descriptive statements, identifying recurring messages across evaluations. For each main criterion, the degree of integration for each evaluation was assessed (see box 6 below) through a three-level scale which indicates:

- (+) The evaluation identifies positive evidence or results.
- (+/-) The evaluation identifies mixed evidence or results.
- (-) The evaluation identifies only negative or lack of evidence or results.

Limitations

As with any desk review, analysing documentation has limitations but these limitations are not considered to represent serious risks to the overall findings:

- Primary data was provided by the summary evaluation reports and is subject to the length limitations of this type of report, leading to limited findings in the analysis. This risk was mitigated by a review of the main evaluation reports.

Evaluation sub-questions are not standard. Messages might even be expressed in different words and criteria reported might change between evaluations. This was mitigated through an analysis to identify common high-level criteria across evaluations

(+) POSITIVE FINDINGS (+/-) MIXED FINDINGS (-) NEGATIVE FINDINGS

Criteria	Policies											Overall assessment
	Capacity Dev.	HIV and AIDS	Gender	School Feeding	Gender Update	Cash and Voucher	Nutrition	Capacity Dev. Update	Protection	Humanitarian principles and access		
POLICY FORMULATION	1. Context analysis to ensure timeliness and relevance	+	+/-	+	+	+	+/-	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	
	2. Scope and prioritization	-	-	+/-	-	-	-	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	
	3. Vision and theory of change	-	-	-	+/-	-	-	+	+/-	-	-	
	4. External coherence	+	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	+	+	+	+	+	
	5. Internal policy and strategic coherence and gender integration	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+	+/-	-	+/-	-	
	6. Evidence-based policies	+/-	+	+	+/-	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	+	-	
	7. Comprehensive internal consultation process	-	+	+/-	-	-	-	+/-	-	+/-	-	
POLICY PRACTICALITY	8. Effective institutional frameworks and systems, accountability arrangements and guidance	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	-	
	9. Financial and human resource requirements	-	-	+/-	-	-	+/-	-	-	-	-	
	10. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems	-	-	+/-	+/-	-	+/-	+/-	-	+/-	+/-	

Box 6: Assessment of the Degree of Criteria Integration in the Policy Evaluations Reviewed