

# Evaluation Brief

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



## Evaluation of WFP's Corporate Partnership Strategy (2014-2017)

### Context

In June 2014, the WFP Executive Board approved the Corporate Partnership Strategy (2014-2017) (CPS) to establish a sound basis for excellence in partnering with WFP becoming the “partner of choice” on food assistance.

Although at the time of the evaluation the CPS had only had two and a half years of implementation, it was seen as timely considering the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and the development of the WFP Integrated Roadmap (IRM) 2017-2021.

While titled a ‘strategy’, the CPS was included in the WFP Policy Compendium to aid in the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

The evaluation applied the definition of ‘partnership’ provided in the CPS. As per the CPS, “types of partners” refers to nature of the partnership between WFP and another entity:

- *Resource partners* provide human, financial, and technical resources;
- *Knowledge partners* contribute information, evaluation and analysis;
- *Policy and governance partners* work on WFP’s own policies, governance, regional and country hunger and nutrition policies, and hunger and institutional governance;
- *Advocacy partners* support WFP’s work to advocate for food security and nutrition;
- *Capability partners* support the design and implementation of programs and operations.

### 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 strategy; ii) its initial results; and, iii) the factors influencing the observed results.

Data collection and analytical methods included: a retrospectively constructed theory of change; extensive document review; field missions to 6 Country Offices (Cambodia, Chad, Egypt, Honduras, Mozambique, and Somalia), three Regional Bureaux (Bangkok, Johannesburg, and Nairobi) and two WFP Offices (Dubai and New York); a review of comparator organizations (FAO, UNICEF, Save the Children and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMFG)); an analysis of WFP partnership data; and key informant interviews with WFP HQ staff.

### Key Findings

#### Quality of the Strategy

The evaluation found that the CPS reflected good partnership practice outlined in the relevant literature at the time of its design and outlined a clear partnership vision for WFP.

The strategy filled a gap in WFP’s strategic framework by providing an agreed upon definition of ‘partnership’ and related principles. However, many informants reported that the CPS was too generic to be of practical use to their day-to-day work and the evaluation found that the term ‘partnership’ is still used inconsistently within WFP.

Moreover, the strategy has not fully enabled the development of clear incentives for staff and managers to engage in stronger partnering behaviors or of an explicit communications strategy for partnerships.

Finally, while the CPS remains broadly relevant in light of major developments in the external context, its direct applicability to the Integrated Roadmap 2017-2021 is limited.

#### Initial Results

New guidelines and tools on partnerships and partnership management reflect principles of ‘good’ partnership as per the CPS, are usually concise and written in clear language, and address acknowledged gaps on WFP staff knowledge and skills. Weaknesses relate to the materials being almost exclusively in English and limited access to online resources outside of HQ and WFP Offices.

The creation of the Partnership and Advocacy Coordination Division and establishment of a network of Partnership Focal Points has facilitated CPS implementation; however, the development of Regional Partnership Strategies has taken longer than anticipated.

Since 2014, WFP has strengthened its data collection and reporting on partnerships. Finalizing the roll out of COMET, a new country-level monitoring system, in 2016 further enhanced systematic data collection on partnerships by capturing information on new areas, such as partner type; however, WFP staff do not yet use the full potential of COMET and other information systems

The CPS includes attention to gender equality and equity concerns; however, there is a lack of guidance on integrating these principles into partnerships.

The evaluation found evidence that relationships with NGOs and CBOs were expanding beyond purely

‘cooperating’ partners, with 31% reported as both cooperating and complementary partners.

By drawing upon complementary strengths and reducing duplication of efforts, partnering enhances the reach and/or quality of WFP’s and its partners’ programming.

### Explanatory Factors for Results Achieved

Since 2014, global, regional and country-level environments have changed thereby requiring new partnership modalities to respond to Agenda 2030. For example, a growing number of countries have reached, or are approaching, middle income status, which often includes strengthened public sector capabilities. This opens the door for host governments to engage with development and humanitarian actors as ‘full’ partners and go beyond transactional service-recipient interactions.

There have been successes related to enhanced coordination and collaboration within the UN; however, some UN agencies view WFP as a competitor in countries where food assistance is no longer required.

WFP’s comparative advantages lie in its field presence, ‘can do’ attitude, and WFP staff technical expertise and skills. Most UN agencies and some NGOs also highlighted WFP’s strong performance as a humanitarian cluster lead. Many non-governmental organizations appreciate WFP as a financial partner and as a provider of infrastructure and logistical support in challenging environments.

Effective implementation of the CPS has been hampered by inconsistent and narrow ownership of the strategy by the Partnership and Advocacy Coordination Division and related accountability challenges.

To date, and commensurate with the available resources, CPS implementation has largely focused on the establishment of the Partnership Resource Centre, training staff, and integrating partnership dimensions into corporate systems and tools. The results of the CPS implementation have yet to fully penetrate the country level.

Existing WFP legal frameworks can sometimes impede the development of sustainable partnerships based on mutual trust. WFP’s efforts to expand partnering with the private sector are taking place but face particular challenges and require increased staff skills in this area.

Enhanced staff skills are also required to strengthen national capacities, engage in high-level policy dialogue and advocate with government partners.

### Conclusions

WFP is making progress towards most of the five envisaged results outlined in the CPS. However, several conditions for the successful implementation of the CPS remain incomplete. There remains considerable scope for increased impact of the strategy, which is not yet

widely known or used. The financial investment for CPS implementation has been incongruent with WFP’s aspirational partnership vision outlined in the IRM.

### Lessons

Agenda 2030 and other high level documents highlight the importance of partnerships to achieving sustainable development and effective humanitarian response. WFP’s Integrated Roadmap 2017-2021 reflects the agency’s commitment to working within this partnership mindset. However, for WFP to adopt a partnering approach constitutes a significant organizational transformation – one that will require sustained leadership, enhanced accountability, increased resources, capacities, and systems able to capture and report on change.

### Recommendations

**Recommendation 1.** By the end of 2017, the IRM Steering Committee should finalize a costed action plan to implement the partnership pillar of the Strategic Plan 2017-2021 that builds on the partnership principles outlined in the CPS, clearly identifies major milestones by Department and is aligned to the Corporate Results Framework 2017-2021.

**Recommendation 2.** WFP should immediately include the development of a Partnership Action Plan as a mandatory component of each Country Strategic Plan and Interim Country Strategic Plan with specific resources allocated for partnering activities in Country Portfolio Budgets.

**Recommendation 3.** By the end of 2017, WFP should update guidance and revise or develop practical tools to enable WFP staff to effectively engage in a broad range of partnerships, including longer-term, multi-functional, and non-commodity based partnerships.

**Recommendation 4.** Starting immediately, PG should assist RBs and COs in further strengthening their partnering skills by developing guidance on the preparation of country level partnership action plans, working with the RBs to prepare and roll-out context-adequate partnership training modules at the country level and developing tools for partnership-related knowledge management and dissemination.

**Recommendation 5.** By the end of 2018, WFP should strengthen systems to capture qualitative data on partnering and develop templates that include a requirement to report on the effectiveness, efficiency and innovative nature of partnerships.

**Recommendation 6.** By the end of 2018, WFP should ensure that prioritized partnership agreements with UN agencies, international and national NGOs, private sector actors, International and Regional Financial Institutions, Regional Economic Organizations and private sector actors have been revised to support the partnership pillar 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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