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Evaluation reports

For consideration

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

Summary evaluation report on WFP's policies on humanitarian principles and access in humanitarian contexts during the period 2004–2017

Executive summary

An evaluation of World Food Programme policies on humanitarian principles and access in humanitarian contexts was commissioned by the Office of Evaluation. The evaluation covers the period from the approval of the policies by the Executive Board (in 2004 and 2006, respectively) through 2017, with a focus on 2012–2017.

The evaluation assesses the quality of the policies, WFP's progress on humanitarian principles and access and factors affecting the results observed. It relies on a mixture of data-gathering tools and methods, including field visits, interviews, surveys with staff, partners and communities, network analysis, media and social media analysis and regression analysis.

The evaluation team finds that WFP's 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. The policies are largely coherent, but 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.

Regarding access to people in need, the evaluation team finds that WFP faces important restrictions on its conduct of needs assessments and monitoring activities. By working through partners, however, WFP enjoys relatively strong access for delivering food assistance. Its performance is particularly strong in difficult operating environments, covering a greater share of needs in areas that face insecurity and logistics constraints than in areas that do not.

Consequently, with regard to its core humanitarian principles WFP enjoys a positive reputation for humanity, qualified only by concerns about the quality of the assistance it delivers. It also has a relatively strong performance on impartiality: no evidence of deliberate discrimination was found,

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although the evaluation team found impartiality-related weaknesses reflected in uneven coverage of food security needs, both globally and within countries. Perceptions of WFP's neutrality are less positive, especially among external stakeholders, owing to its close relationship with host governments and its reliance on the use of armed escorts, particularly in conflict situations. Finally, WFP's operational independence was found to be constrained by its dependence on inflexible funding from a relatively small pool of donors.

Crucial factors affecting WFP's performance on humanitarian principles and access include its mandate, organizational culture, relationships with partners, relationships with host governments and armed non-state actors, institutional processes and capacities and security management.

The evaluation team recommends WFP pay more attention to humanitarian principles, including in situations where there are trade-offs between access and humanity on the one hand and impartiality, neutrality or operational independence on the other. It also recommends that WFP significantly increase its investment in the dissemination and implementation of the policies, including by strengthening staff competencies, designating responsibilities for humanitarian principles and access at the country level, prioritizing humanitarian principles when engaging with cooperating partners and commercial providers, investing in its use of needs assessment data and its security capacity and strengthening dialogue and advocacy with donors.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report of the evaluation of WFP's policies on humanitarian principles and access in humanitarian contexts during the period 2004–2017 set out in document WFP/EB.A/2018/7-C and the management response set out in document WFP/EB.A/2018/7-C/Add.1 and encourages further action on the recommendations presented in the report, taking into account the considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

* 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

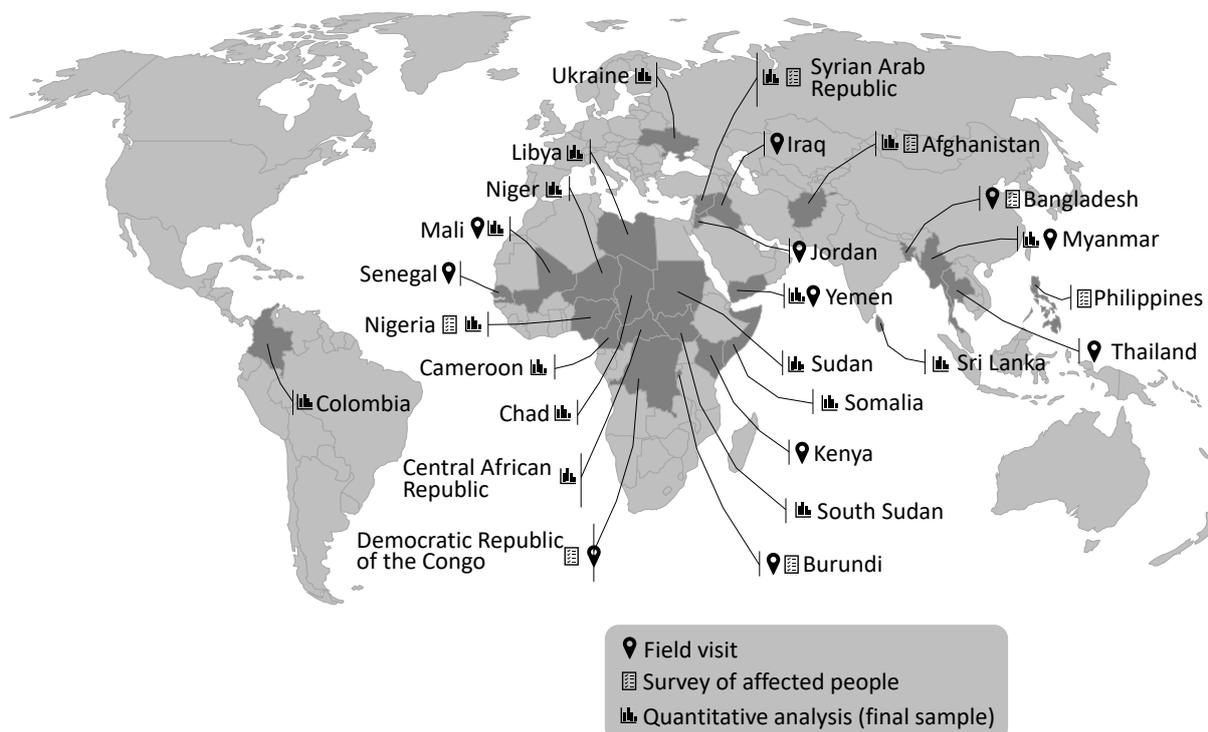
Evaluation features

1. WFP's policies on humanitarian principles¹ and humanitarian access² were approved by the WFP Executive Board in 2004 and 2006, respectively.
2. Adherence to the core humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and operational independence and the ability to gain access to those in need of assistance are central to WFP's operations. In accordance with the WFP requirement that policies be evaluated within four to six years of the start of their implementation, this evaluation provides an evidence-based assessment of the policies' quality, WFP's performance on humanitarian principles and access and factors affecting results.
3. The evaluation focused on the period 2012–2017. It was conducted between March and December 2017 by a four-person team that collected evidence at the global, regional and country levels through:
 - a document and literature review including over 100 project documents, related evaluations, policies and guidance;
 - field visits to country operations in Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Bangladesh, Mali and Burundi and four regional hubs (in Dakar, Nairobi, Amman and Bangkok);
 - over 440 key informant interviews with WFP staff at headquarters, regional bureaux and country offices and with partners and donors;
 - electronic surveys with over 1,300 staff and partners;
 - telephone surveys with over 2,500 affected people in six countries;
 - analysis of media, social media and complaints and feedback mechanism data;
 - network analysis; and
 - quantitative analysis of WFP's coverage of needs and factors potentially influencing access.

¹ "Humanitarian Principles" (WFP/EB.A/2004/5-C).

² "Note on Humanitarian Access and its Implications for WFP" (WFP/EB.1/2006/5-B/Rev.1)".

Figure 1: Geographic scope of field visits, surveys of affected populations and quantitative analysis



4. Findings from the various data sources were triangulated during the analysis phase to reach consensus on findings and conclusions. In addition to the usual confidentiality arrangements for evaluations, the evaluation team ensured that no context-specific information drawn from interviews was included in the report so as to mitigate risks to participants and thus gain access to relevant sensitive information.
5. The evaluation team applied a gender-sensitive approach and adopted measures to ensure that as far as possible men and women participated in the surveys, interviews and workshops in equal proportions. Differences in the responses of men and women and other relevant groups were systematically analysed.
6. The evaluation was coordinated with, an evaluation of WFP's humanitarian protection policy, a summary report on which will be presented for consideration by the Board at its 2018 second regular session.
7. Limitations of the evaluation included a lack of direct interviews with affected people; use of a snapshot analysis and observation-based indicators in the quantitative analysis; exclusion of some interview data after the revision of confidentiality arrangements; and changes to the field mission schedule. Despite these limitations, the evaluation team developed valid findings and conclusions.

Context

8. *More protracted emergencies and greater politicization.* WFP's implementation of the policies on humanitarian principles and access since their adoption has increasingly taken place in the context of complex and protracted conflict-related crises. WFP has responded by shifting its approach from food aid to food assistance, with a significant increase in cash-based transfers. The protracted nature of crises has also given the debate on linking humanitarian and development programmes a new impetus, through the "New Way of Working" initiative, for example. Furthermore, WFP has aligned its strategic planning with the Sustainable Development Goals. The integration of these very different agendas raises important questions for the application of humanitarian principles.

9. *Increasing obstacles to access.* At the same time, the fragmentation of armed groups, numerous attacks against humanitarian workers, counter-terrorism legislation and increasingly sophisticated government restrictions have rendered access negotiations more complex. This has resulted in an increased focus on access by WFP and the wider humanitarian community, including through programme criticality assessments that aim to balance security and humanitarian programme requirements. Despite these efforts, many international humanitarian organizations have less and less direct contact with affected people, particularly in highly insecure contexts.
10. *Emerging realization that principles entail trade-offs.* There is an emerging realization that the application of humanitarian principles may entail trade-offs. Many organizations are still reluctant to acknowledge this, however, and further debate is required.

WFP policies on humanitarian principles and access in humanitarian contexts

11. *Humanitarian principles.* In its 2004 Statement of Humanitarian Principles³ WFP committed itself to the core humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality. Later, in its Strategic Plan (2014–2017), it amended these three principles to reflect WFP's shift from food aid to food assistance and added operational independence as a fourth humanitarian principle that would guide its work. The Statement of Humanitarian Principles also includes five “foundations of effective humanitarian action” and two “standards of accountability and professionalism”, which are not the focus of this evaluation. WFP's definition of the core humanitarian principles (see box below) is closely aligned with the definitions found in international humanitarian law and adopted by various members of the humanitarian system, including the United Nations, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and many non-governmental organizations. The document is a statement of—rather than a policy on—humanitarian principles and as such does not discuss application of the principles in practice or include an implementation plan.

WFP's definition of the core humanitarian principles

Humanity: WFP will seek to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it is found and respond with food assistance when appropriate. It will provide assistance in ways that respect life, health and dignity.

Impartiality: WFP's assistance will be guided solely by need and will not discriminate in terms of ethnic origin, nationality, political opinion, gender, race or religion. In a country, assistance will be targeted to those most at risk, following a sound assessment that considers the different needs and vulnerabilities of women, men and children.

Neutrality: WFP will not take sides in a conflict and will not engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature. Food assistance will not be provided to active combatants.

Operational independence: WFP will provide assistance in a manner that is operationally independent of the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where such assistance is being provided.

Source: WFP Strategic Plan (2014–2017)

12. *Access.* WFP's 2006 Note on Humanitarian Access and its Implications for WFP⁴ focuses on access by humanitarian organizations to people in need. The note stresses that it is not possible to standardize WFP's approach and does not prescribe how WFP should strengthen its capacity to negotiate context-specific access. It does, however, identify matters considered crucial for access. These include situation analysis, security awareness and management, partnerships and learning and training.

³ “Humanitarian Principles” (WFP/EB.A/2004/5-C), paragraph 14.

⁴ (WFP/EB.1/2006/5-B/Rev.1).

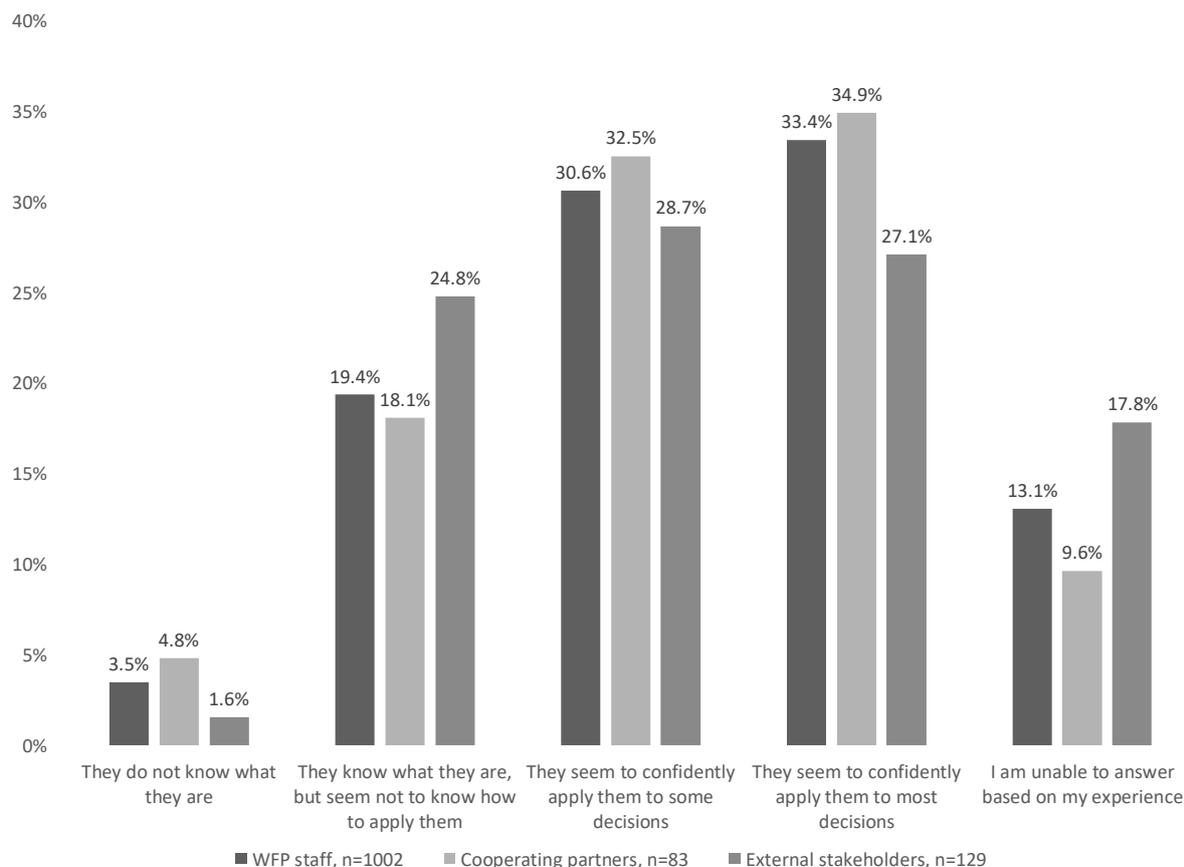
Findings

Quality of the policy documents and implementation measures

Humanitarian principles

13. The evaluation team finds that the Statement of Humanitarian Principles remains a relevant confirmation of WFP's adherence to the foundational principles of the humanitarian system but fails to meet the standards of a fully-fledged policy. The document presents the four core principles together with other corporate standards and thus risks diluting their importance. Moreover, it does not distinguish between the emergency and development activities of WFP's dual mandate, nor does it articulate how potential tensions between principles could be addressed or how, for example, WFP's work through government agencies in conflict settings might be reconciled with the principles of independence and neutrality.
14. The Statement of Humanitarian Principles and other WFP policies on matters such as gender and humanitarian protection largely support and reinforce each other. There are unacknowledged tensions, however, arising for example from the application of a gender transformative approach, which in certain contexts may be perceived as creating confusion.
15. *Access.* The Note on Humanitarian Access and its Implications for WFP is based on a review of WFP experiences and is largely coherent, including with WFP policies on matters such as its enterprise risk management. The evaluation team finds that the analysis of obstacles to access, the division of labour in access negotiations and the practices and approaches that are important for access remain relevant. The document does not, however, provide any guidance on how to deal with trade-offs and compromises that might be necessary to secure principled access.
16. *Policy implementation.* Neither of the two policy documents prescribes measures for implementation. Initially, WFP did not allocate dedicated resources for policy implementation and instead treated protection activities as one way of operationalizing the humanitarian principles.
17. Since 2014 there has been a marked increase in access activities. WFP has invested USD 550,000 from extrabudgetary resources in efforts to document lessons learned; the creation of an advisory group and an operational cell on access; the designation of access focal points in some regional bureaux and country offices; access training and support missions; the development of operational guidance on humanitarian access; and the launch, together with other leading humanitarian organizations, of the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation. The evaluation team found little evidence of any impact of these activities on field operations to date. Moreover, while many WFP staff welcomed this recent increase in efforts, a majority of interviewees said that humanitarian principles and access did not receive adequate corporate attention and support.
18. *Awareness.* Dissemination of the Statement of Humanitarian Principles is not supported by operational guidance, and the evaluation team found it to have been ineffective. As a result, the level of understanding of the humanitarian principles is highly variable across the organization. Twenty-five percent of staff members interviewed displayed only partial knowledge of the core humanitarian principles, despite pre-briefings in several field locations. Of the various stakeholder groups responding to the survey, between 20 and 25 percent stated that WFP staff did not know how to apply the principles (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Survey responses on how well WFP staff understand humanitarian principles

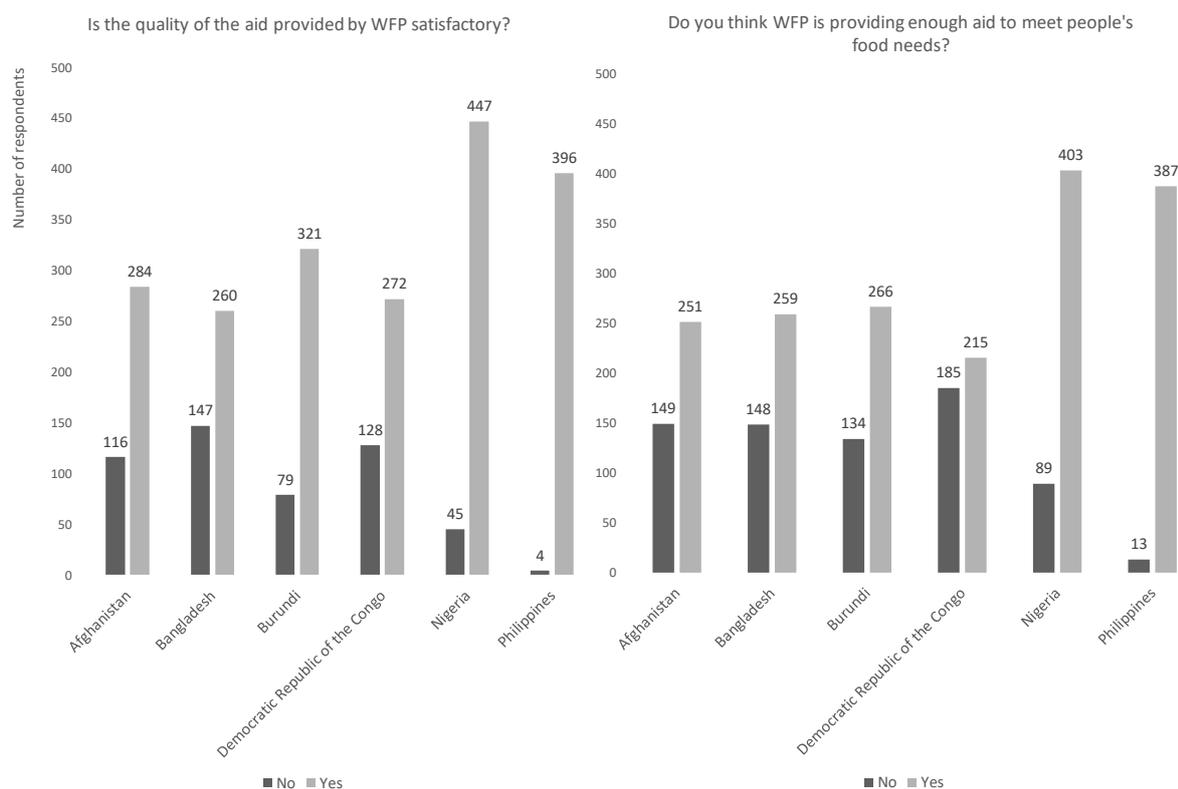


19. Regarding access, a majority of interviewees understood well the different roles of humanitarian coordinators, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and WFP in access negotiations, as well as the responsibility of country directors for decisions affecting humanitarian principles and access. The evaluation team found that the vast majority of access questions were discussed at the country level and that the networks of staff drawn on for access advice were highly decentralized. Moreover, the involvement of WFP headquarters and access to senior management on particularly sensitive access issues was uneven. As a result, the understanding of certain aspects of WFP's approach to access was inconsistent, for example with regard to whether WFP should engage with non-state armed groups.
20. *Application of the policy to partners.* WFP relies heavily on partners and commercial providers to deliver its programmes, but the evaluation team found few active efforts to encourage them to apply the policies. While field-level agreements with non-governmental organizations include references to impartiality and some aspects of neutrality, contracts with commercial suppliers do not include equivalent provisions. Non-governmental organization partners reported that training, workshops and conversations with WFP focused mostly on technical issues rather than on strategies, approaches or principles. Many partners said that having access to operational areas was a key criterion for selection as a WFP partner and felt compelled to maintain access even where doing so required a compromise with regard to humanitarian principles. The same partners said that their adherence to humanitarian principles was not important in WFP's due diligence and partner selection.

WFP's progress on humanitarian principles and access

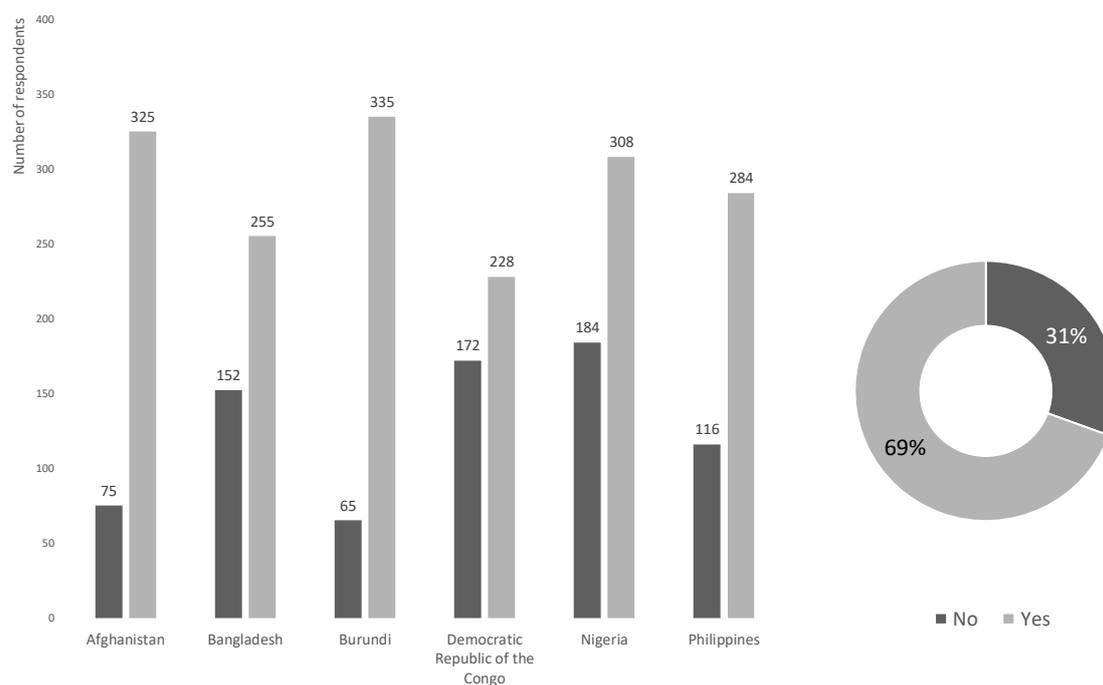
21. *Obstacles to access* were found to be frequent, with 20 out of 22 evaluations of WFP's emergency operations and the same number of project reports mentioning access difficulties. The types of obstacles faced by WFP have remained similar over time. Frequently identified obstacles include visa and food import restrictions, infrastructure problems, government restrictions and conflict.
22. *Current levels of access.* The evaluation team found that access restrictions had the most severe effect on needs assessments and monitoring. Partners clearly recognized WFP for its strong needs assessment capacity. To strengthen assessments in areas with limited access, WFP has invested in technological solutions; however, significant challenges linked to the reliability and quality of assessment data were highlighted in the majority of operations visited for this evaluation.
23. The evaluation team also identified insufficient WFP field presence for monitoring as a problem in almost all contexts visited, despite investments in third party monitoring: 56 percent of WFP staff members and 68 percent of external stakeholders interviewed were critical of WFP's monitoring practices. Third party monitors often lack the information about WFP's activities necessary to monitor effectively. In addition, data was mostly quantitative and not always easily triangulated.
24. Regarding access for delivery of food assistance, available data showed that WFP and its partners performed particularly well in difficult operating environments. In 2016, WFP and its partners assisted an average of 40 percent of people in need in countries identified as experiencing access challenges, compared to just over 10 percent globally.⁵ Within those countries, coverage was found to be higher in insecure areas and in areas with difficult logistical conditions. The evaluation team also found a strong and positive relationship between WFP staff presence and its coverage of total needs, as well as a strong correlation between coverage and the availability of non-governmental organization partners. By contrast, coverage did not appear to be directly affected by other factors such as the presence of integrated peacekeeping missions, the level of engagement of other humanitarian organizations, the level of funding per person in need, the level of travel restrictions or the number of staff at the province level.
25. Interviewees stressed the important role that WFP, as leader of the Global Logistics Cluster, plays in facilitating the access of other organizations. Ninety-three percent of interviewees provided positive feedback on these services. Nevertheless, apparent coverage gaps remain. Thirty-five percent of stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation stated that there was no access to significant areas with high needs in their countries of operation, and 47 percent (58 percent among WFP staff) said that at least pockets of people were not being reached by WFP or its partners.
26. Progress on the humanitarian principles was found to be uneven. Performance against each principle is discussed in the following paragraphs.
27. *Humanity.* The evaluation found that due to the nature and the scale of assistance delivered WFP enjoyed a generally positive reputation. The majority of affected people surveyed were satisfied with both the quantity and the quality of assistance delivered (Figure 3). The echo of WFP's operations in the media and on social media was largely positive. Survey participants gave humanity the highest rating of all the principles. Ninety percent of WFP staff and 71 percent of external respondents said that WFP "always" or "usually" designed and delivered assistance in a way that respected the dignity of affected people.

⁵ Based on food security needs data as reported in the Humanitarian Response Plan and WFP beneficiary numbers for food distribution as reported in WFP's standard project reports. Global data from [WFP Year in Review 2016](#).

Figure 3: Aid recipient perceptions of quantity and quality of aid delivered

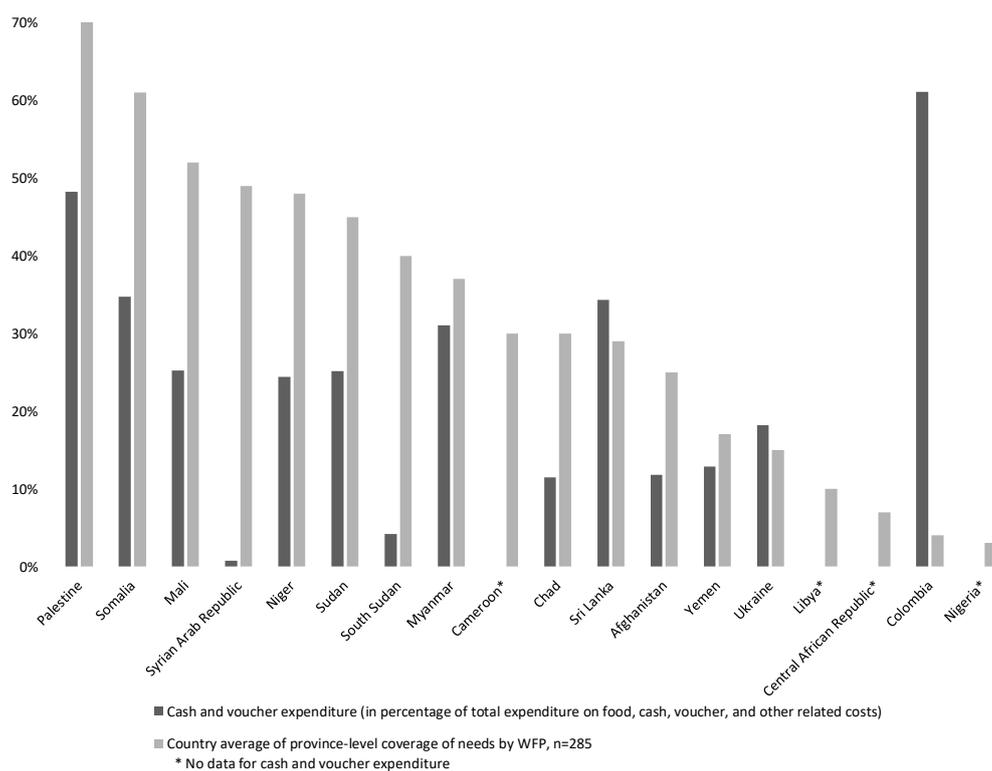
28. Within this positive picture, quality issues emerged as the most important limitation, raised in nearly all operations visited for this evaluation. These included delayed or incomplete distributions, inappropriate types of food, lack of food diversity and low-quality, expired or rotten food. Many interviewees linked these problems to WFP's perceived prioritizing of quantity over quality. Some cooperating partners, for example, criticized WFP for what they saw as its reluctance to pay more to improve the quality of its programming. Partners also linked quality issues—particularly disappointed community expectations due to delays and irregular distribution—to problems in WFP's planning and processes for communicating with partners.
29. Community information, feedback and complaint systems are crucial for tracking and potentially improving the quality of aid. Affected people rated WFP's systems positively, with 66 percent of men and 61 percent of women surveyed reporting that community members were able to give their opinions on WFP's programmes, make complaints and suggest changes. Nevertheless, there were indications that accountability to affected populations required further improvement and that more effort could be made to achieve gender balance in community outreach. Other concerns include significant variability in current partner practices in accountability to affected populations, overlaps and duplication between WFP and partners' mechanisms and gaps in the systematic analysis and use of beneficiary feedback data.
30. *Impartiality.* The evaluation team found that WFP had a relatively strong reputation on the principle of impartiality. Staff and partners had a clear understanding of what impartiality entailed and demonstrated a high level of buy-in to the principle. The majority of affected people surveyed found that WFP provided assistance impartially, albeit with significant differences among countries (Figure 4). Crucially, none of the data collection and analysis tools used in the evaluation provided any evidence that WFP had deliberately discriminated against any group or individual or that it would do so.

Figure 4: Affected people’s answers to the question “Do you believe WFP provides aid impartially, without favouritism, based on need alone?”



31. However, the evaluation team found weaknesses regarding impartiality. Available data suggested that current coverage of food security needs was highly uneven at the global level (Figure 5). The unevenness persisted when data on WFP’s cash programmes were considered as well. WFP had limited flexible funding at its disposal, and there was little evidence of such funding being used strategically to correct global coverage imbalances. Moreover, earmarked funding continued to restrict WFP’s room to manoeuvre, especially in vulnerable and volatile contexts where flexibility was paramount, as noted in a number of evaluations.⁶

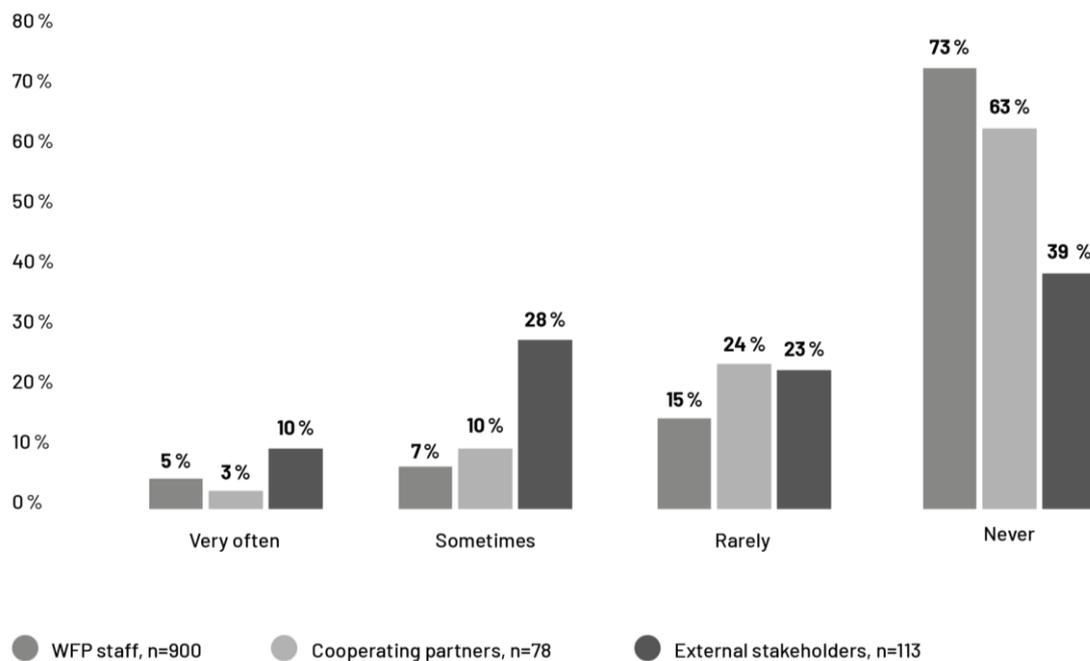
⁶ “Synthesis report of operations evaluations (2016–2017)” (WFP/EB.2/2017/6-B).

Figure 5: Average WFP coverage of food security needs

32. The evaluation team also found uneven coverage of food security needs within countries. Food Security Cluster needs and coverage data from some major operations revealed areas where emergency food security needs were severely under-covered (reaching less than 10 percent of people in need), as well as areas where coverage was extremely high (reaching 100 percent of people in need or more). This suggested that WFP could be more active in addressing imbalances by, for example, using data more strategically, identifying coverage gaps to guide funding allocations and requesting donors for less earmarking and greater flexibility to reallocate resources to underserved areas. Currently, WFP also lacks a clear corporate stance on how to handle attempts by host governments or *de facto* authorities to influence needs data and beneficiary selection.
33. *Neutrality.* WFP's neutrality tended to be perceived less positively, especially by external stakeholders (Figure 6). Among affected populations, 46 percent of survey respondents said that WFP was working to help one side in the conflict win. The main reason for WFP's perceived lack of neutrality was its close relationships with governments, particularly in situations where governments were party to ongoing conflicts. This was

further confirmed in nine of 11 evaluations⁷ that discussed the role of the host government, questioned whether WFP cooperated too closely and indicated that at times governments exerted influence over operations and restricted assistance for specific groups. Interviewees linked WFP's close cooperation with host governments to its status as a United Nations agency, the lack of a clear distinction between development and emergency operations and WFP's limited role in advocating the application of and raising host government awareness of the humanitarian principles.

Figure 6: Survey responses on how often WFP takes sides in a conflict or engages in controversies of a political, religious or ideological nature



34. Another reason for WFP's perceived lack of neutrality was its reliance on the use of armed escorts (in certain settings), which a majority of interviewees (70 percent) considered to be problematic. In many contexts, in line with the United Nations' security management system, WFP routinely uses armed escorts provided by peacekeeping missions, private contractors or government forces. The evaluation identified good practices in some countries that demonstrate how WFP can influence the decisions of the United Nations' security management system so that they are better aligned with humanitarian principles

⁷ Evaluations raising criticisms: 1) Final Evaluation (2014) "Mozambique, Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation 200355, Assistance to Vulnerable Groups and Disaster-affected Populations in Mozambique: An evaluation of WFP's Operation (2012–2014)"; 2) Evaluación de la operación (2016) "Operaciones prolongadas de socorro y recuperación – América Central 200490 Restablecimiento de la seguridad alimentaria y los medios de subsistencia de los grupos vulnerables afectados por crisis recurrentes en El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras y Nicaragua (2014–2016)"; 3) Country Portfolio Evaluation (2017) "Sri Lanka: An Evaluation of WFP's Portfolio (2011–2015)"; 4) Country Portfolio Evaluation (2013) "Sudan: An evaluation of WFP's Portfolio 2010–2012"; 5) Country Portfolio Evaluation (2012) "Afghanistan: An Evaluation of WFP's Portfolio"; 6) Emergency Evaluation (2015) "An Evaluation of WFP's Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis, 2011–2014"; 7) Operation Evaluation (2014) "Kenya, PRRO 200174, Food Assistance to Refugees: An Evaluation of WFP's Operation (2011–2013)"; 8) Operation Evaluation (2016) "Ukraine – EMOP 200765 Emergency Assistance to Civilians affected by the conflict in Eastern Ukraine November 2014–December 2015"; 9) Évaluation d'opération (2014) "Mali, opération d'urgence 200525, "Assistance pour les populations affectées par la crise au Mali: personnes déplacées, familles hôtes, et communautés fragiles (2013–2014)". Evaluations highlighting positive aspects: 10) Operation Evaluation (2014) "Kenya, PRRO 200174, Food Assistance to Refugees: An Evaluation of WFP's Operation (2011–2013)" and 11) Operation Evaluation (2014) "Philippines, Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation PRRO 200296: Support for Returnees and Other Conflict Affected Households in Central Mindanao, and National Capacity Development in Disaster Preparedness and Response 01 May 2012 to 30 April 2014".

by, for example, avoiding armed escorts. WFP's own security capacity is not always sufficient, however, or adequately utilized for this purpose.

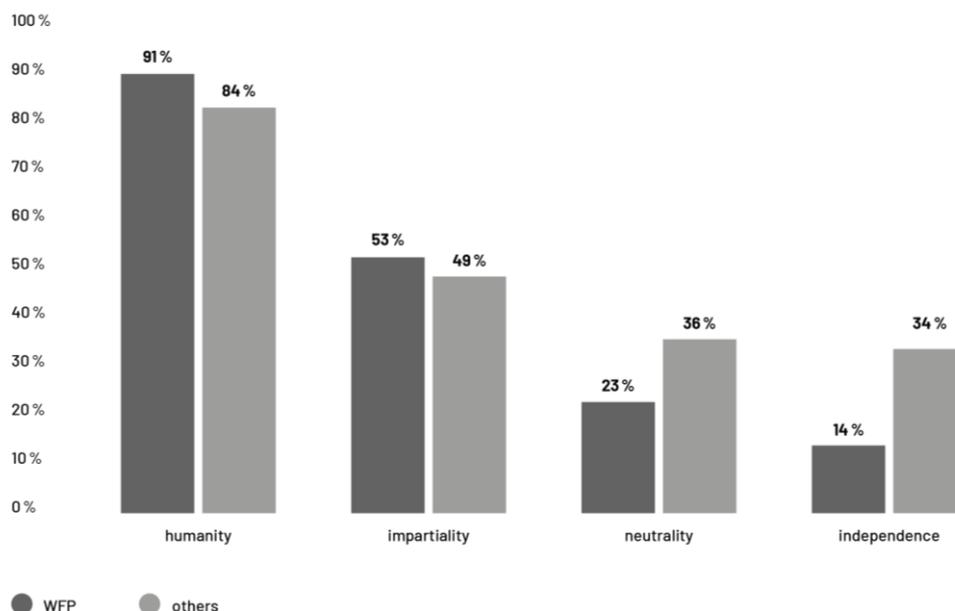
35. *Operational independence.* This is the least understood of WFP's core humanitarian principles. Staff members demonstrated various understandings of independence, including as referring to the importance of having an independent logistics capacity, the requirement to separate their personal or political convictions from their jobs, and a variation of impartiality and the requirement to provide assistance based solely on need. The evaluation team found that WFP's potential exposure to the political interests of donors was high. In addition, the dependence of WFP on a small pool of donors for much of its funding and the steadily declining share of multilateral and fully unearmarked contributions (6.45 percent of contributions in 2016)⁸ poses a potential risk to operational independence. While interviewees and survey respondents indicated that donor pressure on WFP to follow non-humanitarian objectives was relatively rare, there is little evidence of WFP refusing donor funding, even when tied to conditions. While the majority of affected people surveyed believed that WFP was independent of its donors, many interviewed staff and partners said that WFP was donor-driven and hesitant to better use its strategic position to influence donors.

Explanatory factors

36. Interviewees frequently mentioned WFP's mandate to provide food assistance as one of the most important factors facilitating the organization's access to people in need. This is due to the relatively uncontroversial nature of food assistance (as compared to protection, for example); the ability to use even short windows of opportunity to distribute food in an area; and the popularity of food as a commodity, which increases its acceptance but can also attract efforts to manipulate or divert it.
37. The evaluation team found that WFP had an organizational culture that often gave precedence to humanity and access over, and at times in trade-off of, other longer-term considerations, including WFP's perceived neutrality, independence and impartiality. Factors driving this culture include the organization's pride in its ability to deliver in challenging environments and incentives for prioritizing delivery. As a result, interviewees clearly view WFP's performance on humanity more positively than they view its performance on the other humanitarian principles (Figure 7).

⁸ *WFP's Use of Multilateral Funding: 2016 Report* (available at <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000019524/download/>)

Figure 7: Share of interviewees expressing a positive or very positive opinion about WFP's performance on humanitarian principles



38. WFP relies heavily on partners for access to operational areas and assistance delivery. Adherence to humanitarian principles was constrained, however, by weaknesses in partner selection and management and monitoring of partner activities, combined with strong competition among partners and pressures on price. Survey respondents identified private contractors and cooperating partners as the actors most likely to accept problematic compromises in order to achieve access. With regard to private contractors, particularly transport companies, interviewees criticized WFP's lack of oversight and control over their business practices such as the handling of road checkpoints.
39. Strategic relationships with host governments often facilitate government authorizations and enhance WFP's access. However, these same relationships may in some contexts undermine the perception of WFP's neutrality and the impartiality of assistance. This is particularly true when WFP does not actively advocate principled engagement. WFP's practice of continuing to deliver through government agencies in some conflict contexts may also interfere with perceptions of neutrality and impartiality. Furthermore, the lack of systematic and strategic engagement with non-state armed groups in many contexts not only undermines WFP's perceived neutrality but can also limit its access to areas controlled by such groups.
40. Decision-making processes in WFP are highly decentralized, and this flexibility has enabled access. It also limits coherence between different country offices and sub-offices, however, especially when operational responsibilities for access and humanitarian principles are not clearly defined at the country level.
41. Against this background, the evaluation team found staff competence to be a crucial factor. It also found significant shortcomings in corporate efforts in the context of deployments, induction, training and staff selection to ensure consistently high levels of staff competence on humanitarian principles and access.

Conclusions

42. The evaluation team concludes that humanitarian principles and access are more relevant today than ever before and need increased institutional attention and support. The policy documents are largely coherent, but have not been adequately disseminated or implemented in concert with other cross-cutting policy areas.
43. WFP's strong access for delivery through partners and its related strong performance on humanity comes at the expense of some compromises on the principles of impartiality, neutrality and operational independence in some settings. Greater attention to a principled approach, as well as to promoting principled access for needs assessment and monitoring, are essential.
44. Since a broad range of internal factors affect humanitarian principles and access, the evaluation team concludes that a cross-functional effort is required for successful policy implementation.

Recommendations

45. The following eight recommendations derive from the evaluation findings and conclusions and are informed by an evaluation workshop in January 2018 that was attended by WFP staff in a number of WFP functional areas.

Recommendation	Timing and responsible units
Recommendation 1: Policy dissemination	
Strengthen the dissemination and operationalization of the policies on access and humanitarian principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop and compile short versions of the policies and ensure their integration in core institutional guidance; • share guidance and training materials more widely and adapt them to specific contexts where necessary; • increase the accountability of country directors for policy implementation; • strengthen communications on the humanitarian principles with host governments, <i>de facto</i> authorities and communities; and • clarify outstanding policy issues in new guidance and training. 	2019 Policy and Programme Division
Recommendation 2: Prioritization of principles	
Put in place measures to increase the priority given to neutrality, impartiality and operational independence relative to access and humanity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that humanitarian principles are taken into account in the development of other policies and strategies; • identify triggers for corporate decisions on complex trade-offs; and • increase the coherence of efforts relating to cross-cutting issues such as gender, protection and accountability to affected populations. 	2018 Policy and Programme Division

Recommendation	Timing and responsible units
Recommendation 3: Staff capacity	
<p>Considerably strengthen staff competencies on humanitarian principles and access, particularly in complex emergency situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide standard, mandatory induction, including on access and humanitarian principles, to all WFP personnel; • develop tailored training modules on humanitarian principles and access for existing trainings, including compulsory online courses; • strengthen mentoring, continue supporting the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation and enable the deployment of experienced national staff; • assign operational responsibility for issues relating to humanitarian principles and access to a field management position reporting to the country director; • facilitate peer exchanges; • include humanitarian principles and access in the terms of reference of all regional humanitarian advisers; • ensure adequate field capacity for analysing and documenting principled access issues in L3 and L2 emergency responses; and • ensure compliance with programme criticality processes. 	<p>2019 Human Resources Division</p>
Recommendation 4: Partnership – cooperating partners	
<p>Give more priority to humanitarian principles in all elements of engagement with cooperating partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exchange with donors on good practices; • integrate humanitarian principles into standardized partner selection and due diligence, field-level agreements, assessment and training; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ strengthen WFP's monitoring capacity; • better define the standards for accountability to affected populations expected of partners; and • improve joint planning and communication with partners, including on risks. 	<p>2019 Operations Services Department</p>
Recommendation 5: Partnership – commercial partners	
<p>Increase policy awareness, guidance and training opportunities for commercial partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide guidance and training on how to handle sensitive situations; • require reports on humanitarian principles and accept costs linked to compliance with humanitarian principles where necessary; and • where there are risks to compliance with humanitarian principles, rely more strongly on WFP transport assets and staff. 	<p>2019 Supply Chain Division</p>
Recommendation 6: Needs assessment	
<p>Continue investing in and further strengthen needs assessment and the use of needs assessment data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continue investing in vulnerability analysis and mapping; • develop a coherent corporate position on how to react when host governments seek to significantly challenge or influence needs assessment data; • work more actively with the Food Security Cluster to track and document sector coverage of needs; and • use partner data more actively for triangulation. 	<p>2019 Operations Services Department</p>

Recommendation	Timing and responsible units
Recommendation 7: Security	
<p>Strengthen WFP's security capacity in complex emergencies and improve security officers' focus on humanitarian principles and access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continue to prioritize filling security positions in complex emergencies, including by providing sufficient resources, and improve contractual conditions to strengthen retention of security staff; • adapt terms of reference for field security officers; and • engage WFP's security capacity on operations and programme design. 	<p>2019 Field Security Division</p>
Recommendation 8 a): Donor relations and funding	
<p>Increase and regularize the dialogue with donors on humanitarian principles and access and strengthen principled financing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve the overview of global and country-level coverage of needs for advocacy with donors; • hold regular high-level dialogue with donors on their support for principled response; • establish criteria for rejecting funding when conditions conflict with humanitarian principles; • use flexible funding strategically in high-risk settings where coverage is low; and • strengthen non-government funding sources. 	<p>2019–2020 Government Partnerships Division</p>
Recommendation 8 b): Donor relations and funding	
<p>Advocate for stronger support for all the facets of WFP operations that are critical for principled access, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • application of the Good Humanitarian Donorship commitments and funding according to need; • more unconditional funding; and • engagement with WFP on programme criticality, acceptable risk and resources needed to mitigate risks. 	<p>2019–2020 Government Partnerships Division</p>