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# Evaluation of the WFP People Strategy (2014-2017)

Evaluation Report: Volume I

Commissioned by the  
WFP Office of Evaluation



January 2020

# Acknowledgements

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## Disclaimer

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# Executive Summary

## INTRODUCTION AND EVALUATION FEATURES

1. Approved in 2014, the WFP People Strategy (2014–2017) is now in its sixth year of implementation and its inclusion in the Office of Evaluation workplan (2019–2021) was therefore timely.
2. The three main evaluation questions for this evaluation were:
  - How good is the strategy?
  - What were the results of the strategy?
  - Why has the strategy produced the results observed?
3. The evaluation covers the period 2014–2019. Between April and June 2019, evaluation data were collected at the global, regional and country levels through the following lines of inquiry:
  - a retrospective construction of the theory of change underlying the WFP People Strategy;
  - a document and literature review;
  - a review of relevant datasets, including global staff survey results;
  - group interviews with over 580 employees conducted by contract type during field missions at WFP country offices in Afghanistan, Algeria, Burundi, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Nicaragua, Senegal, the Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania and to the regional bureaux in Johannesburg and Panama;<sup>1</sup>
  - key informant interviews with WFP headquarters employees currently and formerly based in Rome; and
  - a review of comparator organizations – the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the private-sector firm Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (KPMG) – using a document review and interviews.
4. Primary intended users of the evaluation are the Human Resources Division (HR), regional directors, country directors and their human resource officers, the leadership group, the Legal Office, headquarters directors and staffing coordinators, the Ethics Office, the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services and the Inspector General and Oversight Office.
5. Certain limitations were encountered, including the lack of a fourth comparator organization; the unavailability of Executive Board members for interviews; and the inability to disaggregate interview data by gender owing to the organization of group interviews by contract type. Those limitations did not affect the quality of the data collection process.

## CONTEXT

6. The WFP People Strategy was approved in November 2014. While entitled a “strategy”, it was approved by the Executive Board and included in the WFP policy compendium. It is structured around four imperatives and 11 related initiatives and articulates the goal of WFP’s human resource function becoming less “transactional” and more “strategic”.
7. The evaluation uses the term “WFP staff” to refer to international professional staff, junior professional officers, national professional officers and general service staff, while “other employees” refers to consultants, United Nations volunteers, fellowship holders, interns, service contract and special service agreement holders and WFP volunteers.

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<sup>1</sup> Field mission locations were chosen based on the criteria of geographic balance, balance of different office sizes and staffing trends, different types of programmatic activities and human resource structures, and avoiding overlap with field missions related to other evaluations, audits and the organizational realignment process.

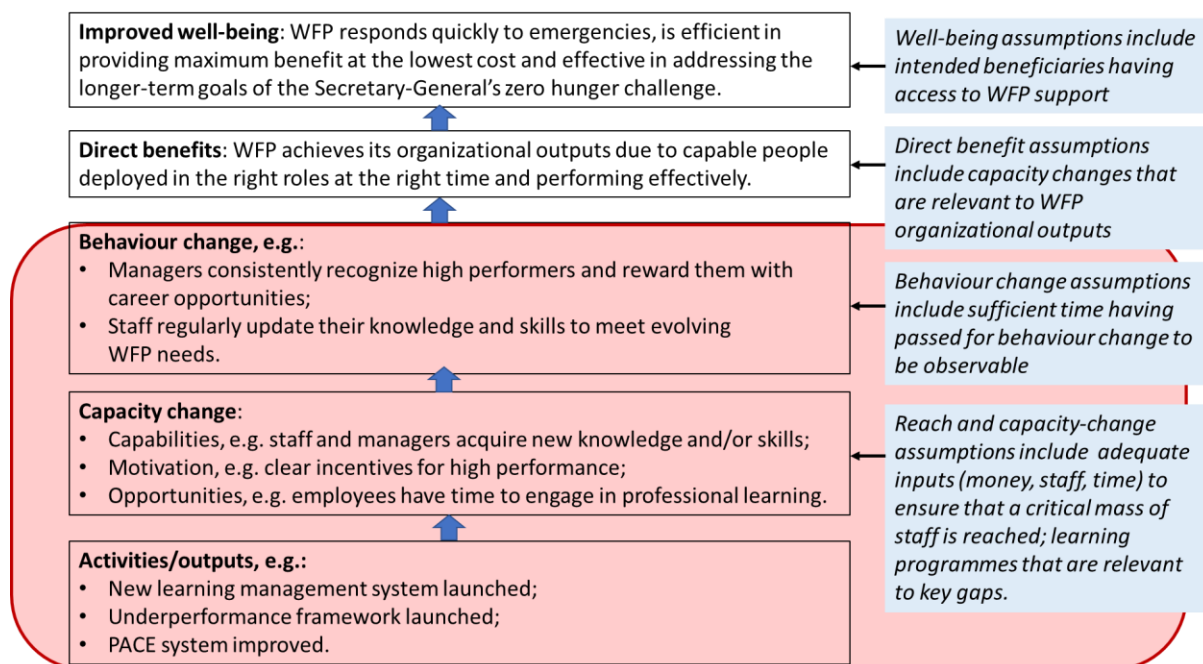
8. Since 2014, the relevant changes in WFP’s external contexts have included the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; an increased occurrence of complex and protracted food security emergencies across the globe; evolving expectations for inter-agency collaboration, as outlined in the Committee on World Food Security’s 2015 Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises; evolving expectations of United Nations managers and staff in relation to preventing and responding to sexual harassment and abuse committed by United Nations personnel; and renewed United Nations system commitments to gender parity.

9. Research and the global discourse on issues of human resource management have remained relatively consistent since 2014. Main topics include performance management, including how to address weak performance; staff well-being as a factor affecting performance; talent acquisition and workforce planning; diversity in the workplace; and effective leadership to keep organizations competitive and profitable.

10. Shifts in WFP’s internal context during the evaluation period, starting in 2014, included changes in the posts of WFP Executive Director (in 2012 and 2017) and Director of Human Resources (in 2013, 2017 and 2019), which resulted in changes to organizational and human resources priorities.

11. The theory of change developed by the evaluation team in consultation with HR (figure 1) illustrates how the People Strategy was expected to contribute to WFP’s organizational goals by directly influencing changes in employee capacity and behaviour. The theory of change drew on the COM-B theory of change model,<sup>2</sup> which posits that individual behaviour change occurs as the result of the interaction of three conditions: capability – an individual’s psychological and physical capacity to engage in an activity, including having the required knowledge and skills; opportunity – factors that lie outside the individual that make a behaviour possible or prompt it; and motivation – brain processes that energize and direct behaviour, including habitual processes and emotional response.

**Figure 1: Overview of theory of change for the WFP People Strategy**



12. At the time of its approval, the estimated cost of the People Strategy’s implementation was USD 17.3 million for the period up to 2017. In line with the original estimate, USD 21.5 million was earmarked for the implementation of the strategy, under the control of HR, for the period 2013–2018.

<sup>2</sup> John Mayne. 2016. *The COM-B Theory of Change Model*. Available at [https://www.academia.edu/29391991/The\\_COM-B\\_Theory\\_of\\_Change\\_Model](https://www.academia.edu/29391991/The_COM-B_Theory_of_Change_Model).



## KEY FINDINGS

### Quality of the strategy

13. The WFP People Strategy (2014–2017) outlines an overall vision but provides only limited clarity on what its implementation would require from internal and external stakeholders and on related accountabilities. Also, as noted in the 2016 internal audit of the human resources function, key elements of the strategy, such as the career framework and the establishment of overall workforce planning capabilities, were not systematically reflected in the “people” dimension of country office annual performance plans, increasing the risk that country office contributions to the strategy would not be captured.

14. The strategy reflected various global good practices regarding human resource management at the time of its development, which remain valid today. However, it is largely gender blind and silent on issues of diversity and inclusion.

15. The main topics covered by current UNHCR, UNICEF and KPMG strategies on human resource management are broadly the same as those addressed under the WFP People Strategy’s four imperatives. Differences lie in the area of strategy implementation.

16. The People Strategy was relevant to the 2014–2017 context. While the core issues addressed in the strategy remain relevant, its visibility has declined over time and it is outdated in the light of recent developments at WFP and the United Nations, including the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the development of a new WFP strategic plan for the period 2017–2021 and an increasing focus on workplace culture and staff satisfaction.

## STRATEGY RESULTS

17. The evaluation found that implementation of the People Strategy since 2014 had addressed all the strategy imperatives and related initiatives. However, the strategy did not include a standalone results framework but was instead monitored through four key performance indicators and several sub-indicators that covered selected aspects of the strategy.

18. After the approval of the People Strategy, the human resource function at WFP took on a more strategic role. The creation of a senior human resource officer position at the P-5 level in all regional bureaux was positive but contrasted with the varying levels and contract types for human resource officers in WFP country offices.

### Imperative 1: Reinforce a performance mindset

19. Changes to relevant tools and processes have led to improved compliance with performance reporting requirements – from 81 percent in 2012 to 97 percent in 2017, one of the highest completion rates in the United Nations system – and enhanced transparency of assessment ratings. However, WFP’s overall performance management culture is only beginning to change, and many employees still perceive performance management as a “form-filling” exercise rather than part of an ongoing professional development process. Supervisors are not rewarded for a focus on professional development and people management.

20. Since 2014 WFP has strengthened its framework and tools for dealing with underperformance by providing toolkits to supervisors and staff and by introducing “partially achieved” as a fourth performance rating category in the Performance and Competency Enhancement (PACE) online performance measurement system. It is likely that this has contributed to an increase in the percentage of staff receiving negative – unsatisfactory or partially achieved – ratings, from 0.4 percent in 2012 to 2.1 percent in 2017 and 1.7 percent in 2018.

21. At the same time, information gleaned during field visits suggests that many supervisors still try to avoid giving negative PACE ratings due to a combination of factors, including the administrative effort required and fear of retaliation. This has resulted in teams working around poor performers – a challenge also faced by other United Nations agencies.

22. In July 2019 the Director of the WFP Ethics Office launched an independent review of WFP’s workplace culture, which identified performance management as “an avenue through which many experiences of harassment take place,” both for employees, who feel that their careers are “in the hands of leaders that have the authority to make subjective decisions”,<sup>3</sup> and for managers, some of whom are “afraid to provide an unsatisfactory rating [of an employee] in fear of being reported for abusive behaviour as a form of retaliation by the employee.”<sup>4</sup>

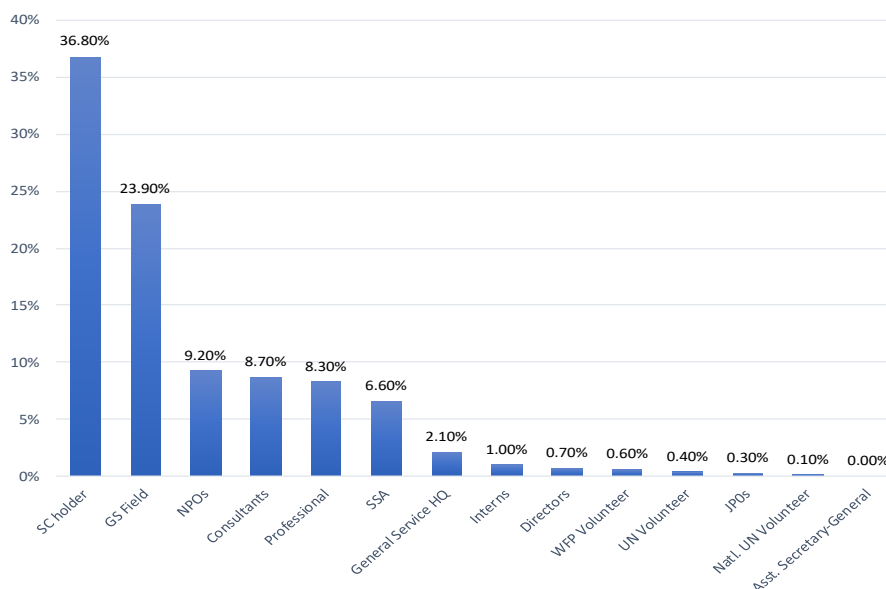
## Imperative 2: Build WFP’s talent

23. Since 2014, WFP has improved career development processes and made them more transparent and accessible. Related measures have included the creation of capability-based career frameworks for various career paths and a revision of the promotion process for international professional staff and the junior professional officers programme.

24. However, career development remains a major source of frustration for WFP employees. The results of the 2018 global staff survey and evaluation interview data indicate that the majority of WFP employees do not see themselves as being in control of their own career development. It is likely that some related frustrations derive from the perception that career development equals promotion. The People Strategy is silent on the question of whether every employee can or should be promoted and on the need to recognize, value and support staff who have reached their natural career ceilings.

25. WFP has considerably improved learning opportunities for employees through its online WeLearn platform. From 165 in 2014, the number of different types of WeLearn courses completed increased to 1,922 in 2018; the number of individual WeLearn users increased from 3,936 in 2014 to 11,173 in 2017, with around two thirds of users being locally recruited employees (figure 2).

**Figure 2: Percentage of course completions by user category for 2014–2018 combined**



Source: Data on WeLearn completions (2014–2018) provided by HR.

<sup>3</sup> WFP. 2019. *External Review of Workplace Culture and Ethical Climate at World Food Programme*, p. 30. Available at: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000108824/download/>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

Abbreviations: SC = service contract; GS = General Service; NPOs = national professional officers; SSA = special service agreement; HQ = WFP headquarters; JPOs = junior professional officers; Natl. = national; Asst = Assistant

26. Since 2014, WFP has made some progress in enhancing the diversity of its workforce, albeit to varying degrees depending on the level of seniority. In 2018 women constituted 35 percent of WFP's overall workforce – a small increase from 32 percent in 2014. In comparison, women made up 47 percent of UNICEF's global workforce in 2017, 39 percent of UNHCR's staff and 55 percent of the staff of UNHCR affiliates. WFP gender parity varies by geographic location – usually with lower percentages of female staff in emergency settings – and by staff category and grade. At senior levels (P-3 and higher) WFP has not yet reached gender parity.

27. Since 2014 WFP has improved elements of its strategic workforce planning, but it is only beginning to develop a coherent approach to related challenges. The Policy on Country Strategic Plans appears to have given this agenda a considerable “push”, particularly through systematic organizational alignment reviews carried out in the context of country strategic plan (CSP) implementation. The country offices visited for this evaluation that had undergone the organizational reviews, including those for Burundi, Chad, Nicaragua, Senegal and the Sudan, widely considered the reviews to be a key driver of positive change in workforce planning for CSP roll-out.

28. WFP has put in place new and promising tools for effective and efficient talent acquisition, in particular the future international talent (FIT) pool. WFP has not clearly articulated how it views fostering the professional growth of existing staff versus attracting new external talent.

### **Imperative 3: Shift the focus**

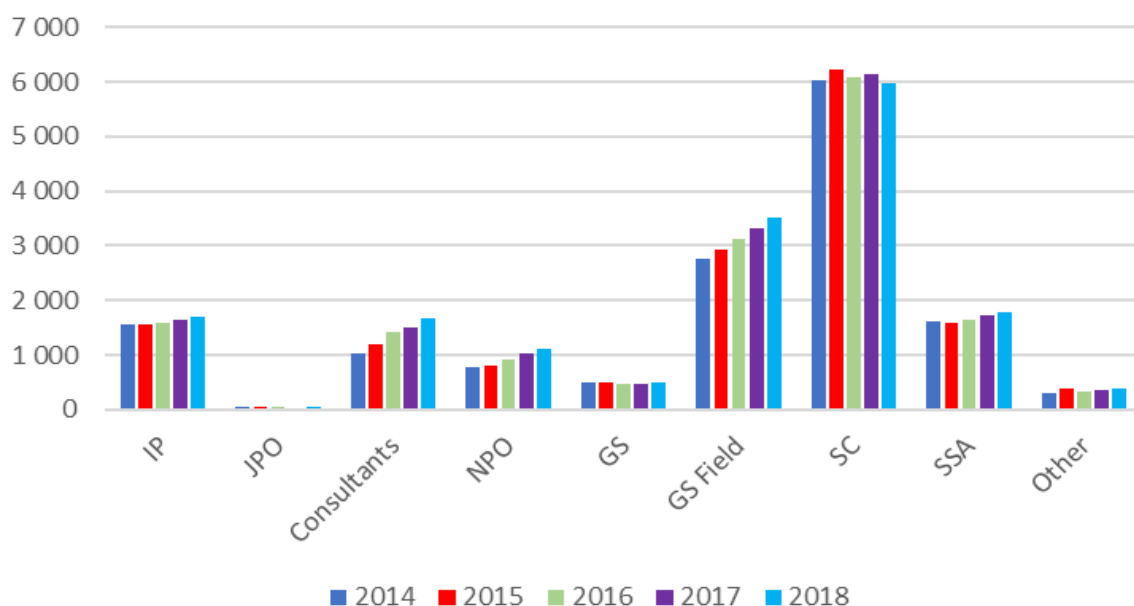
29. Locally recruited service contract holders have been taking advantage of resources offered on WeLearn, with 79 percent of course completion having been achieved by them. Further, the new FIT pool has the potential to facilitate the transition of national staff to international positions, although the English-language fluency requirement has proved to be a barrier for some.

30. However, under this imperative WFP has had only limited success in establishing “fit for purpose contracts” for national staff and, more broadly, for all locally recruited employees. WFP's extensive use of short-term contracts for much of its workforce – and over extended periods of time – is an issue that urgently requires sustained attention. While WFP does face challenges in the predictability of its funding, other voluntarily funded humanitarian organizations, such as UNHCR, have demonstrated that it is possible to eliminate service contracts altogether, thereby offering fairer contractual arrangements to employees. The 2019 workplace culture report found that 40 percent of respondents stated that WFP colleagues were “likely or somewhat likely” to treat others unfairly based on their contract type.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid* at 18.

**Figure 3: WFP workforce by contract type 2014–2018**



Source: Data set on employees (2014–2018) provided by HR.

Abbreviations: IP = international professional; JPO = junior professional officer; NPO = national professional officer; GS = General Service; SC = service contract; SSA = special service agreement

31. There is strong evidence that WFP is placing greater emphasis on – and investing more in – staff wellness, which relates to the “creating a supportive and healthy workplace” component of imperative 3. While areas for improvement remain, wellness is the one topic on which consulted stakeholders most consistently expressed positive views. Positive examples include facilitating access to gym facilities and other physical activities; improving employee accommodation and office infrastructure; organizing vaccination drives and other in-office medical check-ups; providing access to counselling; and organizing various social and team-building activities.

32. Despite those efforts, persistent threats to employee well-being remain, particularly for national staff. These include the fact that many employees in remote sub-offices cannot obtain medical services despite having medical coverage; that while international staff in hardship locations are entitled to regular paid rest and recuperation time, national staff are not, although many of them do not come from the areas where they work; and that in some countries special service agreement and service contract holders with contracts of less than a year are not eligible to receive bank loans, including mortgages, even if they have had successive one-year contracts for years.

33. Further challenges to creating a supportive and healthy workplace were noted in the 2018 global staff survey results, which showed that only 40 percent of female and 53 percent of male respondents felt that WFP would protect them if they spoke out about experienced or observed wrongdoing, and only 53 percent of women and 68 percent of men believed that WFP employees at all levels were held accountable for unethical behaviour and misconduct. The findings of the 2019 WFP workplace culture survey<sup>6</sup> indicate that WFP has not yet been able to effectively prevent and address cases of abuse of power, other forms of abuse and harassment, including sexual harassment.

#### **Imperative 4: Equip high-impact leaders**

34. Under the initiative to “mobilize senior leaders”, the People Strategy aims to reinforce WFP leaders’ commitment to driving change by creating a common understanding of the strategy and establishing leaders’

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid* at 14.

roles in communicating and delivering programmes under the strategy, inter alia. That has been achieved to varying degrees, largely depending on individual leaders' commitment to people management.

35. Since 2014 WFP has invested in the leadership and management capabilities of individuals through dedicated training programmes. However, it is difficult to determine whether they have contributed to changes in leadership and management practices at WFP.

36. In order to approach succession planning more systematically and transparently, WFP has put in place a leadership track for P-4 and P-5 staff to identify individuals with the potential to move up to P-5 and D-1 positions. The two-year internal review process includes three phases and training at an externally-managed career development centre. It is too early to tell how this process will affect the performance of WFP's future leaders.

37. The "4Ps" Core Organisational Capability Model, which defines expectations of WFP leaders in relation to "purpose, people, partnership and performance" and forms the foundation for existing training programmes, does not make explicit reference to gender equality, although it does mention creating an inclusive culture as a desired people-related capability. It is unclear to what extent gender equality is being explored in the various training programmes currently available at WFP, beyond efforts to ensure equal participation by male and female employees or, in the case of INSPIRE,<sup>7</sup> to target women only.

38. Other gaps in relation to "equipping high-impact leaders" include the lack of a comprehensive framework for holding supervisors accountable for their performance in relation to people management; the absence of "bottom-up" feedback to supervisors through regular 180 or 360 degree reviews; and the fact that the 4Ps capability model is not widely known or used.

## EXPLANATORY FACTORS FOR RESULTS ACHIEVED

39. Global trends shape views of what constitutes effective, efficient and ethically appropriate people management within the United Nations and other large organizations. Evolving global, regional and country contexts (e.g. the introduction of the 2030 Agenda and the Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises) influenced, both positively and negatively, progress towards the strategy's envisaged results, including by causing sudden surges or decreases in WFP's workforce requirements and by influencing the ability of regional bureaux and country offices to fill existing vacancies with qualified regional or national staff.

40. In some countries, social or cultural barriers to gender equality can make it challenging for women, especially national staff, to work in remote duty stations. WFP talent acquisition strategies to mitigate those challenges have included tailoring internship programmes to women.

41. Despite the commitment by some senior leaders to strengthening WFP's people management practices, and the resources allocated to doing so, the lack of clearly defined roles, responsibilities and work plans for WFP units other than HR, and the lack of a detailed implementation plan and results framework for the strategy and an accountability framework for supervisors, impeded its full operationalization.

42. WFP's voluntary funding model and the lack of long-term resource predictability were cited to explain the organization's continued reliance on short-term contract modalities. However, similar organizations have successfully limited long-term use of special service agreements. The country portfolio budgets are expected to enable increased financial visibility, predictability and flexibility, setting the stage for strengthened workforce planning and less reliance on short-term contracts.

43. WFP's evolving organizational culture has both supported and created challenges for the strategy's implementation. There are signs of increasing awareness and acceptance of the importance of staff wellness to organizational performance. At the same time, WFP's internal culture has traditionally placed higher value

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<sup>7</sup> INSPIRE – a Women's Leadership and Career Development Programme.

on programme-related performance (“we deliver”) than on employee-related concerns. The 2019 WFP workplace culture report notes that valuing performance and failing to examine how results are achieved increases the potential for misconduct and places WFP employees at risk. The report further finds that employees would like to see improvement in the inequality between local and international employees.

## CONCLUSIONS

44. The WFP People Strategy (2014–2017) was of good quality at the time it was written in that it outlined a clear vision that was relevant to the priorities of the WFP strategic plan in force at the time, was forward-looking and was coherent with other WFP policies and good people management practices. The weaknesses of the strategy were an absence of comprehensive and clear expectations as to what “success” would look like and a degree of blindness regarding gender and diversity.

45. The implementation of the People Strategy has been driven largely by HR and, since 2015, the newly established Staff Wellness Division. Progress has been made in relation to all four strategy imperatives. Nevertheless, consulted employees at all levels have expressed the view that important elements of WFP’s human resource management are not yet as good as they should be, especially in relation to the transparency of recruitment and promotion processes and to actual and perceived inequities on the part of WFP employees doing similar jobs but on different contract types with different terms and benefits.

46. Mapping achievements since 2014 against the theory of change has shown the greatest evidence of progress in relation to strengthened capabilities but less so in relation to strengthening motivation and opportunities. There have been only a few isolated examples of potentially sustainable behaviour change. This is not an indication of poor performance of the strategy, given that behaviour change tends to evolve slowly. Nevertheless, the mapping has drawn attention to the importance of addressing human resource reform as a culture change process that needs to be deliberately managed.

47. WFP’s evolving organizational culture both supports and creates challenges for the strategy’s implementation. The 2019 WFP workplace culture report draws attention to leaders that have failed to model ethical behaviour and to hold employees accountable for misconduct, and to a focus on performance with limited concern for how it is achieved, which are characteristics that put companies at risk of misconduct and are seen to be “part of the culture at WFP”.<sup>8</sup>

48. As noted in the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) report on WFP for 2017–2018, WFP is performing well. If WFP wants to keep pace with United Nations reform, however, it needs to address the concerns with abusive behaviours and inequities between different groups of WFP employees raised in the global staff survey and the recent workplace culture report; strengthen accountability for good people management beyond HR; and explicitly address topics that have not, or have only marginally, been addressed in the People Strategy, such as gender equality and workforce diversity, persistent challenges for WFP’s surge capacity; and ensure that its people management priorities address the demand for varied skills and competencies.

49. As it currently stands the People Strategy does not provide sufficient direction to enable WFP to address all of its human resource management challenges. There is an urgent need for WFP to attract, effectively use and consistently develop the skills of the best workforce possible and to do so in ways that reflect and model the United Nations system’s commitment to human rights, gender equality, diversity and inclusion.

## LESSONS

50. The evaluation has identified a number of lessons, including the need to drive organizational change with a full appreciation of the views and experiences of all WFP employees; the importance of enhancing communication and transparency with regard to recruitment and promotion processes; and the importance

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid* at 14.

of acknowledging that all employees deserve professional satisfaction and growth, irrespective of whether they are promoted.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

51. The following six recommendations derive from the evaluation findings and conclusions. They aim to build on, expand and deepen the positive changes set in motion under the People Strategy and should be considered when implementing the priority actions identified by the joint Board/management working group on harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination.<sup>9</sup>

Recommendation	Priority/responsibility/deadline
<p><b>Recommendation 1: WFP should develop a new policy, focusing on “people”, that sets out the organization’s vision of its future workforce and the core values that should shape WFP’s workplace culture.</b></p> <p>a) The policy should build on positive changes already in place but elaborate on topics not sufficiently addressed in the current strategy, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• workplace culture, including in relation to harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of power;</li> <li>• gender equality, diversity and inclusion;</li> <li>• workforce planning, including in relation to balancing the need for a nimble and flexible workforce while respecting the purpose of different types of contracts (see also recommendation 5);</li> <li>• performance management.</li> </ul> <p>b) The policy should include a theory of change, a costed implementation plan and a dissemination plan.</p> <p>c) The policy should clearly identify accountabilities for various units, divisions, regional bureaux and country offices.</p> <p>d) A clear governance structure should be established to oversee the development phase.</p>	<p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Responsibility:</b> Assistant Executive Director, Resource Management Department, in collaboration with the Director of human resources, endorsed by the leadership group and in consultation with functional units at headquarters, regional bureaux and a representative selection of country offices.</p> <p><b>Deadline:</b> February 2021</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2: WFP should implement a new people policy through an organizational change management process.</b></p> <p>a) Human resources, functional offices and regional bureaux, based on consultations with country offices, should hold joint annual working sessions to take stock of progress and challenges in implementation, based on a clear set of indicators.</p> <p>b) Human resources, functional offices and regional bureaux should provide annual updates on organization-wide progress to the leadership group and to WFP employees at all levels.</p> <p>c) All functional offices should include activities, targets and milestones in their respective strategies.</p>	<p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Responsibility:</b> Assistant Executive Director, Resource Management Department, in collaboration with human resources, headquarters functional units and regional bureaux.</p> <p><b>Deadline:</b> February 2023</p>

<sup>9</sup> See the working group report set out in document WFP/EB.2/2019/9-A.

Recommendation	Priority/responsibility/deadline
<p><b>Recommendation 3: WFP should revise its human resource functional strategy to continue the professionalization of the human resources function at all levels and locations of the organization.</b></p> <p>a) A revised human resources strategy should clarify how human resources will support implementation of the new people policy at headquarters and at the regional and country levels.</p> <p>b) The strategy should articulate a costed plan for gradually reinforcing WFP’s human resource capacity in the field with the aim of ensuring that every country office has easy access to a human resource officer at short notice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• regional human resources business partners should continue to be responsible for ensuring that accessible human resource services are in place;</li> <li>• as part of strategy development, human resources should conduct a workflow review to streamline priority human resource processes.</li> </ul> <p>c) The strategy should articulate how the human resources function will continue to strengthen the capacity of human resources staff in the field in relation to their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• capabilities (knowledge, skills);</li> <li>• motivation and ways of thinking and decision making, e.g. in relation to reinforcing an understanding among human resources staff and other employees of human resources as a business partner;</li> <li>• opportunities, e.g. in relation to ensuring that technology upgrades, automated systems and tools are in place to reduce workloads related to transactional tasks such as payroll entries, thereby freeing up human resources staff to focus on more strategic issues.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Priority:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Responsibility:</b> The Director of human resources, in consultation with regional bureaux, country offices, functional units and the leadership group.</p> <p><b>Deadline:</b> February 2021</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4: Human resources should develop a supervisors’ accountability framework for supervisors to achieve excellence in people management and present it to the leadership group for endorsement.</b></p> <p>a) The framework should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• update expectations and outline good people management practices, how they manifest themselves at various career levels and how they relate to the notion of leadership;</li> <li>• include regulatory elements relating to performance management to ensure that it adequately protects the rights of both supervisors and supervisees, especially in relation to underperformance;</li> <li>• ensure that people management responsibilities are reflected in the job descriptions, key performance indicators and performance assessments of all supervisors; and</li> <li>• introduce a mechanism to broaden performance feedback, such as regular 360° reviews, for all</li> </ul>	<p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Responsibility:</b> The Director of human resources, in consultation with the leadership group, regional bureaux and country offices.</p> <p><b>Deadline:</b> August 2021</p>



Recommendation	Priority/responsibility/deadline
<p>supervisors to contribute an organizational culture of giving and receiving constructive feedback.</p> <p>b) Support supervisors in their efforts to continuously enhance their people management skills through integrated measures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rollout of existing and planned management programmes and related follow-up;</li> <li>• Exploring whether newly appointed country directors, deputy country directors, regional directors and deputy regional directors could be matched with recently retired individuals who have held their positions in the past and have consistently demonstrated excellent people management skills to act as mentors;</li> <li>• Having regional bureaux explore how to best provide access to coaching and other types of professional support services for other staff in supervisory positions in their regions, share related insights with each other and ensure follow-up;</li> <li>• Having human resources establish a supervisor's helpdesk at headquarters that would be available to all employees with supervisory or people management responsibilities;</li> <li>• Having human resources, with input from regional bureaux and country offices, compile and regularly update a toolbox of simple and cost-effective measures for recognizing and rewarding good performance by individuals and teams;</li> <li>• Allowing for time dedicated to people management when determining supervisors' workloads.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Recommendation 5: WFP should conduct a comprehensive review of existing contract modalities and their use.</b></p> <p>a) Human resources, with leadership group support and in collaboration with the regional bureaux, country offices and headquarters functional units, should institutionalize a headquarters-supported process for systematic workforce planning at all levels of the organization beyond the currently planned duration of the organizational alignment project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSPs should include mandatory workforce analyses and plans, including on the proposed distribution of short-term and fixed-term contracts;</li> <li>• Human resources should actively participate in the programme review process, reviewing all draft CSPs from a human resource perspective, including at the regional level.</li> </ul> <p>b) WFP should continue to consult regularly with other organizations, including but not limited to other United Nations agencies and private sector firms, and to exchange good practices on limiting the use of short-term contracts while ensuring organizational flexibility;</p>	<p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Responsibility:</b> Assistant Executive Director, Resource Management Department, with human resources support and in collaboration with regional bureaux, country offices and headquarters functional units.</p> <p><b>Deadline:</b> February 2021</p>

Recommendation	Priority/responsibility/deadline
<p><b>c)</b> The leadership group should communicate clear expectations about a gradual reduction in the long-term use of short-term contracts.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 6: Human resources should further strengthen its approach to proactively sharing relevant information with WFP employees.</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Human resource officers at headquarters and in regional bureaux and country offices should communicate regularly and offer regular information sessions on contract modalities and benefits for different employee groups.</p> <p><b>b)</b> Human resources, in collaboration with regional bureaux and country offices, should review and, where required, strengthen existing processes for sharing information on existing or upcoming capacity development opportunities and on the criteria used to decide which individuals are invited to attend various types of courses and training programmes.</p>	<p><b>Priority:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Responsibility:</b> The Director of human resources, in consultation with regional bureaux, country offices and functional units.</p> <p><b>Deadline:</b> Ongoing, with the actions undertaken to be included in the annual updates to the Executive Board</p>

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 EVALUATION FEATURES

### Evaluation Rationale, Objectives and Scope

1. Rationale: The Evaluation Policy (2016-2021)<sup>1</sup> of the World Food Programme (WFP) specifies that corporate policies should be evaluated within four to six years of implementation. Approved in 2014, the People Strategy (PS)<sup>2</sup> is now in its fifth year of implementation and its inclusion in the Office of Evaluation (OEV) work plan (2019-2021) is therefore timely. The Summary Evaluation Report is to be presented at the First Session of the Executive Board (EB) in February 2020.

2. Objectives: As per its terms of reference (Annex 1), the evaluation serves the dual objectives of accountability and learning. The evaluation is summative in nature and focuses on evaluating the quality of the People Strategy, the results achieved, and the factors that enabled or inhibited its implementation. Evaluation findings and recommendations are intended to inform the development of a new human resource (HR) policy/strategy.

3. Scope: The evaluand is the WFP People Strategy (2014-2017). The evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact<sup>3</sup> of the People Strategy and its implementation from 2014 to early 2019.

4. The primary intended internal stakeholders and users of the evaluation are the Human Resource Division (HRM), Regional Directors, Country Directors and their human resource officers, the Leadership Group (Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director and Assistant Executive Directors), the Legal Office, Headquarters (HQ) Directors and their staffing coordinators, the Ethics Office, Office of the Ombudsman, and the Inspector General and Oversight Office. However, given the nature of the People Strategy, every person in the WFP workforce is a stakeholder and a sample of “people” was consulted during the evaluation to provide a representative cross section of responsibilities and views.

### Methodology

5. The evaluation was conducted between January and July 2019 by an independent team of six international evaluators, two human resource experts and four analysts. Data collection during field missions was supported by national consultants. The WFP Office of Evaluation prepared the terms of reference in consultation with key stakeholders, oversaw the evaluation’s design and quality assured its implementation and products.

6. A full methodology for the evaluation was set out in the inception report (April 2019) and is summarized in Annex 2. All evaluations of WFP policies address three main evaluation questions (EQ), which also provide the structure of Section 2 of this report:

- EQ1: How good is the People Strategy?
  - i. Does the strategy communicate a clear understanding of WFP conceptual and strategic vision on its staff (“people”)?
  - ii. Does the strategy set clear and measurable expectations to internal and external stakeholders?

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<sup>1</sup> WFP. 2015. Evaluation Policy (2016-2021). (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-A/Rev.1), 5 November 2015.

<sup>2</sup> WFP. 2014. People Strategy (2014-2017).

<sup>3</sup> In the context of this evaluation, “impact” relates to the question of whether implementation of the People Strategy contributed to significant changes in the WFP organizational culture and individual or collective behaviours. The evaluation did not assess impact in terms of whether improved HR management practices had effects on WFP programmatic performance in relation to its ultimate beneficiaries.

- iii. How does the strategy compare with (i) strategic human resource-related documents of relevant comparator organizations (in particular, UNICEF and UNHCR) and (ii) evolving (global) good practice?
- iv. Has the strategy remained relevant to:
  - Changes in the WFP Strategic Plan (2017-2021)
  - Other WFP policies, strategic plans or frameworks in terms of consistency, coherence and complementarity
  - United Nations reform and specific initiatives, such as on gender?
- EQ2: What were the results of the People Strategy?
  - i. What have been the results of the strategy in relation to “refreshing performance-management processes” (Imperative 1)?
  - ii. What have been the results of the strategy in relation to “building WFP talent” (Imperative 2)?
  - iii. What have been the results of the strategy in relation to “shifting the focus to increase attention to national staff” (Imperative 3)?
  - iv. What have been the results of the strategy in relation to “equipping high impact leaders” (Imperative 4)?
  - v. What (if any) have been the unplanned (positive and negative) consequences of implementing the strategy?
- EQ3: Why has the People Strategy produced the results that have been observed?
  - i. What internal factors have influenced (positively or negatively) the implementation of the strategy and results achieved?
  - ii. What external factors have influenced (positively or negatively) the implementation of the strategy and results achieved?

7. The main features of the evaluation methodology were: (i) retrospective construction of a theory of change underlying the People Strategy (Annex 3); (ii) a full evaluation matrix (Annex 4); (iii) extensive reviews of internal and external documents and relevant literature as well as of relevant datasets, including of global staff survey (GSS)<sup>4</sup> data; (iv) field missions to ten country offices (CO) in Afghanistan, Algeria, Burundi, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, Nicaragua, India, Senegal, Sudan, and Tanzania; and to the regional bureaux (RB) in Johannesburg and Panama; (v) key informant interviews and focus groups with WFP headquarter staff based in Rome; (vi) a review of three comparator organizations - the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the private sector firm Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (KPMG) - using document review and interviews; and (vii) compilation of four mini-case studies, one for each of the four imperatives under the People Strategy, to help focus data collection and analysis.

8. Field mission locations were chosen based on the criteria of: geographic balance; including both regional bureaux and country offices; balance of different office sizes and staffing trends (downsizing/growing); reflecting different types of programmatic activities; reflecting different types of human resource structures on site; avoiding overlap with field missions related to other evaluations, audits or the organizational realignment process; including at least one “delivering as one” country ; including at

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<sup>4</sup> The global staff survey has been implemented every three years since 2012 (2012, 2015 and 2018). While the 2012 and 2015 versions were run through Kenexa/IBM, the 2018 survey was designed by Gallup, resulting in changes to some of the questions. The main dimensions covered have remained mostly unchanged however and include satisfaction, well-being, empowerment and autonomy, and line manager effectiveness. Prior to the current GSS, staff surveys had already been conducted at least in 2004 and 2006. In 2009, the WFP Joint Inspection Unit conducted an all-staff survey of 50 questions (with 35 percent response rate), which recommended that GPE institutionalize similar GSS. See: [https://www.unjju.org/sites/www.unjju.org/files/jiu\\_document\\_files/products/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU\\_REP\\_2009\\_7\\_English.pdf](https://www.unjju.org/sites/www.unjju.org/files/jiu_document_files/products/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2009_7_English.pdf)

least one country that had an L2 and/or L3 emergency during the review period; and including a mix of countries with different levels of government effectiveness. Visits to country offices lasted between two and three days, and visits to regional bureaux lasted two days. Follow-up consultations via telephone, Skype or email were conducted as necessary. In addition to the noted locations, the regional bureau in Nairobi and the country offices for Kenya, Somalia and Uganda were visited as part of the evaluation inception phase.

9. Stakeholder consultations were conducted in the form of individual or, more commonly, group interviews with between 2 and 12 participants at a time. These group interviews were organized by employee contract type (rather than by, for example, sex, age, or time with the organization), as consultations conducted during the inception phase had indicated that the type of contractual arrangement significantly shapes a stakeholder's experiences with, and views of, WFP human resource management practices. A list of the 587 stakeholders (282 women and 305 men; 17 percent from regional bureaux and 74 percent from country offices) consulted during the evaluation's data-collection phase and the 192 stakeholders consulted during the inception phase are provided in Annex 5. Interview protocols are shown in Annex 6,<sup>5</sup> and a summary of trends emerging from stakeholder consultations during (field) missions to headquarters, regional bureaux and country offices is included as Annex 7. A bibliography is presented as Annex 8.

10. An updated version of the triangulation and evidence matrix included in the inception report is shown in Annex 9. While the evidence base for EQ2 (What were the results of the People Strategy?) entailed a slightly broader range of both quantitative and qualitative data sets than available for EQ 1 (How good is the People Strategy?) and EQ3 (Factors affecting results), the evaluation was able to draw upon complementary lines of evidence for all three evaluation questions.

11. Evaluation data were used to test the validity of the constructed theory of change, including the underlying assumptions on how and why the transitions between different stages of change that are logically implied by the People Strategy would occur. Annex 10 provides a high-level summary of related insights mapped against the theory of change.

12. Gender equality and equity-related questions and indicators were included in the evaluation matrix and in data-collection tools. The evaluation team members ensured that interactions with stakeholders were appropriate to the socio-cultural contexts, and to the gender and other social roles of the respondents. Confidentiality of stakeholder contributions was ensured by avoiding direct attribution of views to specific individuals. There was no indication that existing power imbalances among consulted stakeholders affected stakeholder responses to the evaluation questions. WFP staff at country office, regional bureau and headquarter levels were offered the opportunity to approach the evaluators in private should they wish to share confidential or sensitive information, and three individuals made use of this opportunity.

13. The evaluation team systematically applied the WFP Evaluation Quality Assurance System (EQAS) quality criteria, templates and checklists. Also, it used the services of an external quality assurance reviewer who was not involved in data collection or analysis but focused on providing autonomous quality assurance.

14. The main limitations of the evaluation and related mitigation strategies, where applicable, were:
- The originally planned field visit to the Madagascar country office had to be cancelled as the timing of the evaluation was not convenient, reducing the total number of field visits from the originally envisaged 11 to 10. Given the diversity of the remaining sample of visited regional bureaux and country offices and the large number of stakeholders consulted, this change did not significantly limit the scope or nature of data collection.
  - There was an absence of an explicit results framework or theory of change for the People Strategy and this resulted in a lack of clarity over envisaged changes in workforce capacity and behaviours. To address this issue, the evaluation team constructed a theory of change based on the People Strategy document and in consultation with HRM.

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<sup>5</sup> Annex 6 shows the core protocol used to structure group interviews during field missions. Individual interviews that were conducted in person or by telephone followed a similar outline but included more specific questions tailored to the respective interviewee.

- Despite various efforts, the evaluation team was unable to consult with a representative of an originally envisaged fourth comparator organization, the UK Department for International Development (DfID). As such, no government organization was included in the comparative review.
- Only two members of the WFP Executive Board were available for consultations, thereby limiting the extent to which the evaluation team was able to gather information from this stakeholder group.<sup>6</sup>
- The group interview approach to data collection in countries allowed for disaggregation of findings by categories of staff but limited the team's ability to disaggregate data by gender or sex. Wherever possible the team used sex-disaggregated data from the global staff survey and other WFP sources to inform and nuance its findings.

## 1.2 CONTEXT

### Terminology

15. Throughout this report, we distinguish between two broad groups that make up the WFP workforce: WFP staff and other employees. Both of these groups can be further divided between internationally and locally recruited individuals and various contract types as outlined below:

- "Internationally recruited staff" refers to international professional staff (including those on short term contracts) and junior professional officers
- "Nationally recruited staff" refers to national professional officers (NO) and general service (GS) staff.<sup>7</sup>
- "Internationally recruited other" refers to consultants, United Nations volunteers, fellowship holders and interns
- "Nationally recruited other" refers to holders of service contracts (SC) and special service agreements (SSA), as well as to WFP volunteers and locally recruited interns.

16. In the report, while the term "WFP staff" only refers to the first two of these groups, the broader notions of "WFP employees" and the "WFP workforce" are used to refer to all of the above.<sup>8</sup>

### External Context

17. During the period under review, several changes in the global and the United Nations system's contexts have influenced WFP, including in relation to human resource issues. These include: (i) the adoption of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, known as Agenda 2030, which sets forth an ambitious, people-centred framework of action for achieving sustainable development;<sup>9</sup> (ii) an increase in the occurrence of complex, protracted, conflict-driven food security emergencies across the globe, which poses challenges related to workforce planning and deployment for all United Nations (and other) organizations working in the humanitarian sphere; (iii) evolving expectations of interagency collaboration as outlined, for example, in the 2015 Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises, which calls for a "new way of working" across the humanitarian – development – peace nexus, thereby implying changes in United Nations staff knowledge, skills and experience;<sup>10</sup> (iv) evolving expectations of United Nations managers and staff in relation to being aware of, and able to prevent and/or respond to,

<sup>6</sup> The evaluation team had not set a specific target for interviews with Board Members but had hoped to reach more than two to allow for more solid triangulation of views within this group.

<sup>7</sup> Based on their level of seniority, national professional officers can be at level NO-A (minimum 1 to 2 years of work experience) to NO-E (over 7 years of work experience). GS staff categories range from GS 1 to GS 7.

<sup>8</sup> Terminology as per evaluation ToR, p.11.

<sup>9</sup> A/RES/70/1, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E).

<sup>10</sup> These being, besides WFP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Health Organization (WHO). Also, the framework was endorsed by the World Bank and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The main principles of this framework were echoed and magnified in the Grand Bargain commitments that resulted from the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.

incidents of sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority committed by United Nations personnel against other personnel or externally;<sup>11</sup> and (v) renewed commitments to the goal of gender parity and for employees to work towards the goal of gender parity.<sup>12</sup>

18. Research and global discourse on issues of human resource management have remained relatively consistent since 2014. Main topics include reflections on: staff performance management, including how to address weak performance; ensuring staff-well-being as a factor affecting performance; talent acquisition and, more broadly short-, mid-, and long-term workforce planning; and fostering diversity in the workplace and ensuring effective leadership within organizations to keep them competitive and profitable. For each of these topics, broad trends have remained the same since 2014, but specific approaches to addressing related challenges have evolved. See Finding 2 in Section 2.1 for further discussion and selected sources.

### Internal Context

19. Figure 1 provides an overview of key events in WFP internal context during the period under review (2014-2019) and during the years preceding this period that are relevant in the context of the People Strategy’s development and implementation. These include changes in WFP Executive Directors (2012, 2017) and of the Director of Human Resources (2013 and 2017), each of which implied (varying degrees of) changes to organizational and/or human resource-related priorities.

**Figure 1 Timeline of contextual changes within WFP**



<sup>11</sup> See for example the United Nations Secretary-General: Note to Correspondents on Sexual Harassment. December 21, 2017. Relevant in this context is also the emergence of the "MeToo" movement as of 2017, which has led organizations in both the public and private sector to review their related policies, practices and address areas of concern.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, <https://www.un.org/gender/> for more information on United Nations efforts to achieve gender parity.

## 1.3 THE PEOPLE STRATEGY

20. Following internal consultations<sup>15</sup> and various rounds of review through the WFP Executive Board, the People Strategy was approved in November 2014. It was intended as a “blueprint for how WFP intends to reinforce, build, retain and recruit its workforce, creating a more people-centred organization that focuses on the development and welfare of its employees, so they can better serve its beneficiaries”<sup>16</sup> (Box 1). While titled a “strategy”, the People Strategy was submitted to and approved by the WFP Executive Board. As such, it intended to carry the same agency-wide importance and legitimacy as other corporate policies.

### Box 1: The People Strategy versus a human resource strategy

The People Strategy was intended to be “more than a traditional human resources strategy” in that it “directly involves all of the WFP workforce in defining the changes needed to enable WFP to achieve its Strategic Objectives”.<sup>13</sup> A (traditional) human resource strategy is typically about building programmes and processes to attract, retain and motivate top talent, while a People Strategy is about building programmes and processes to improve human performance so as to positively affect the overall organization’s performance.<sup>14</sup>

21. The People Strategy was structured around four imperatives and 11 related initiatives as shown in Table 1. In addition, it formulated the cross-cutting intent for the WFP human resource function to become less “transactional” and more “strategic”.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 1 The People Strategy imperatives and related initiatives**

Imperatives	Related initiatives
1. Reinforce a Performance Mindset	Embed common WFP values and behaviours
	Refresh the performance-management process
2. Build WFP Talent	Develop career frameworks and skills
	Refine the employee-value proposition & talent-acquisition strategy
	Establish workforce planning capability
3. Shift the Focus	Enhance skills and capacity of national staff
	Implement fit-for-purpose contractual arrangements
	Create a supportive and healthy workplace
4. Equip High-Impact Leaders	Mobilize senior leaders
	Develop leadership and management capabilities
	Conduct a leadership talent review

<sup>13</sup> WFP. 2014. People Strategy (2014-2017), paragraph 9. This is also iterated in the strategy’s subtitle: “A People Management Framework”.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Mercer. 2018. How to Develop a People Strategy. Blog entry. Available at: <https://www.uk.mercer.com/our-thinking/thrive-series/how-to-develop-people-strategy.html>

<sup>15</sup> According to the People Strategy (paragraph 6), its development was informed by the 2012 global staff survey results, and by workshops involving 200 employees, of whom 80, from different staff groups, locations and grades, were interviewed, including 25 country directors. The Director of the Human Resources Division visited three regional bureaux and six country offices to ensure that opinions from the field were voiced and heard directly. More than 1,500 staff members were consulted on the People Strategy, and all employees were provided with an opportunity to comment during an informal global meeting.

<sup>16</sup> WFP. 2014. People Strategy (2014-2017), p.3.

<sup>17</sup> WFP. 2014. People Strategy (2014-2017), paragraph 52. At UNHCR, an organizational assessment conducted in 2018 noted that the agency’s HR function was more reactive and transactional than strategic and made recommendations to change this, thereby outlining similar objectives for UNHCR as the People Strategy had done for WFP.



22. Since 2014, many efforts have been made that, together, addressed all of the strategy's imperatives and related initiatives (see Annex 11 for a mapping of initiatives for strategy implementation in relation to the People Strategy's four imperatives).

23. The People Strategy did not include a stand-alone results framework but was monitored through four key performance indicators (KPI) and several sub-indicators that covered selected aspects of the People Strategy. The key performance indicators were included in the 2014-2017 corporate Management Results Framework (MRF) and reported on in WFP annual performance reports (APR) (Box 2). In addition, annual performance reviews captured two key performance indicators derived from global staff survey results related to staff learning and skills development and to organizational culture.<sup>19</sup>

**Box 2: People-related key performance indicators included in the WFP Management Results Framework (2014-2017)**

1. Skills: Effective staff learning and skills development (Number of learning management system completions, number of learning management system users)

2. Culture: An engaged workforce supported by capable leaders promoting a culture of commitment, communication and accountability (Equal representation of men and women among international professionals and senior staff, geographic representation among senior staff)

3. Organization: Appropriately planned workforce (Retention rate)

4. Talent: Effective talent acquisition and management (Number of applications, number of women applications, percentage of international professional women hired and of total hires from developing countries, and three reassignment-related sub-indicators).<sup>18</sup>

24. The constructed theory of change for the People Strategy illustrates how the strategy was envisaged to contribute to WFP organizational goals by directly influencing changes in employee capability<sup>20</sup> and behaviours. Figure 2 depicts an overview version of this theory of change, with the elements shaded in red constituting the focus of this evaluation. A more granular version of the theory of change is included as Annex 10.

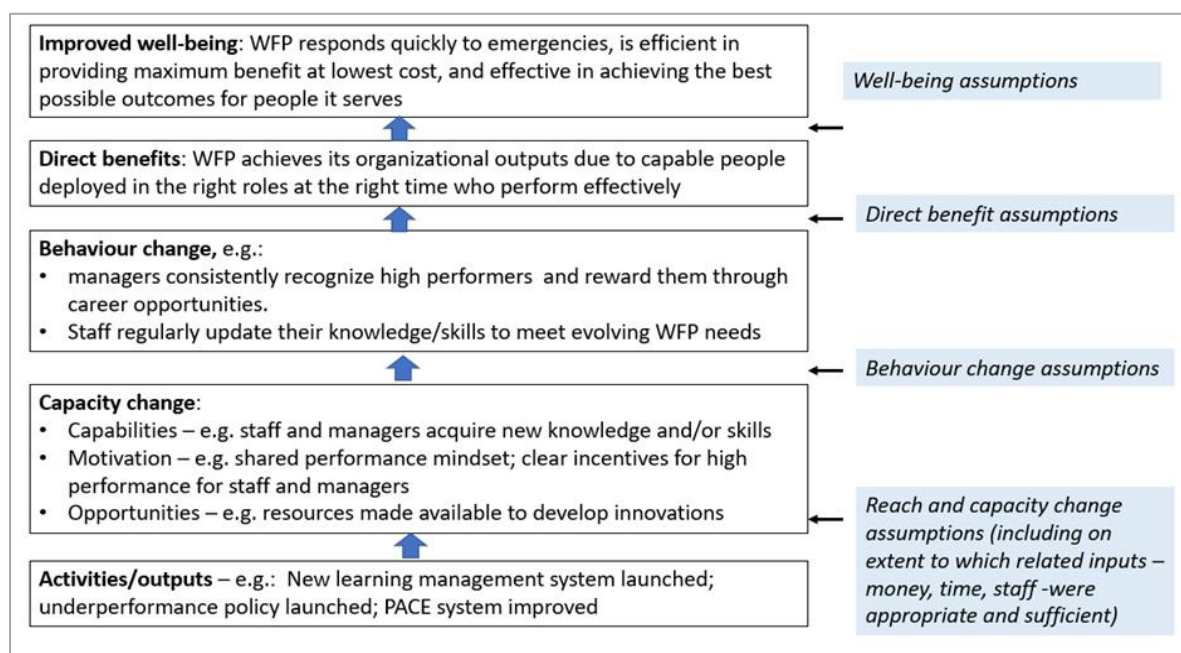
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<sup>18</sup> Number of positions with zero applications, percentage of positions filled, and proportion of applications to D and E duty stations.

<sup>19</sup> Total of five related sub-indicators: online-manager effectiveness, growth and development, inclusiveness, employee engagement and involvement and belonging.

<sup>20</sup> The structure and terminology used to depict the theory of change is drawing on the COM-B-theory of change model put forward by Mayne (2017) based on the understanding that individual behaviour change (B) occurs as the result of interaction between three necessary conditions: capability (C) - individuals' psychological and physical capacity to engage in the activity concerned, including having the required knowledge and skills -, motivation (M) - those brain processes that energize and direct behaviour, including habitual processes and emotional responding-, and opportunity (O), i.e. factors that lie outside the individual that make a behaviour possible or prompt it

**Figure 2 Overview theory of change for the People Strategy**



25. At the time of its approval, the estimated cost of strategy implementation was USD 17.3 million for the period up to 2017. The actual budget explicitly earmarked for implementation of the People Strategy under the control of HRM, was USD 21.5 million for the period 2013-2018 (USD 16.9 million for 2013-2017) and thus in line with the original estimate<sup>21</sup> (Annex 12). Resources allocated to the People Strategy are considerably higher than those spent on implementation of other cross-cutting policies/strategies, such as the Capacity Development Policy (USD 4 million for 2014-2017) or the Corporate Partnership Strategy (USD 300,000 for the same period).

<sup>21</sup> Since 2014, other parts of programme support and administrative (PSA) budgets as well as Corporate Trust Fund resources may have supported initiatives relevant to the People Strategy but were not under control of HRM and were not explicitly earmarked for the People Strategy. In addition, a total of USD 18 million has been allocated for the implementation of the Wellness Strategy (2015-2019), which derived from the PS.

## 2. Key Findings

### 2.1 QUALITY OF THE PEOPLE STRATEGY

#### Introduction

26. This section provides an analysis of the quality of the People Strategy as it was designed. It is organized by the main sub-questions related to EQ1 – “How good is the People Strategy?” shown in the evaluation matrix in Annex 4. The analysis draws on evidence from document review, field missions, the review of comparator organizations, and key informant interviews. The available evidence base was solid in relation to the evaluation question/sub-questions and allowed for adequate triangulation of data sources.

#### Communicating the WFP vision of its staff and setting clear expectations to stakeholders<sup>22</sup>

**Finding 1 The People Strategy outlines an overall vision but provides only very limited clarity on what its implementation will require from internal and external stakeholders and on related accountabilities.**

27. The People Strategy states its underlying rationale and intended purpose and outlines its overall vision. This is “to build an engaged workforce, with the right skills, in the right roles to enable WFP to continue fulfilling its humanitarian response role while simultaneously building its capabilities to address the longer-term goals of the Secretary-General’s Zero Hunger Challenge”.<sup>23</sup>

28. The People Strategy does not include an explicit theory of change and, with a few exceptions, does not elaborate on specific envisaged changes in staff capacity and/or behaviours. It is therefore not clear what success would “look like” under each of its four imperatives.<sup>24</sup> On the positive side, the relative generality of the People Strategy allowed actors, especially HRM, to implement a variety of different initiatives to address evolving priorities under each of the four broad areas.

29. The People Strategy is concise and clearly written.<sup>25</sup> Structuring the People Strategy into four “imperatives” is helpful for reader orientation, but is also problematic, especially in relation to addressing the concerns of national staff. By singling out this employee group under a separate imperative (Imperative 3: “Shift the Focus”) the People Strategy ran the risk of creating the unintended impression that national staff were neither considered to be the subject of efforts to strengthen a performance mind-set (Imperative 1) nor part of “WFP talent” (Imperative 2). While some consulted WFP employees found that the People Strategy thereby somewhat undermined its intent to work towards more equality and recognition of national staff,<sup>26</sup> others found singling out national staff appropriate for furthering the interests and opportunities for this employee group.

30. “The People Strategy defines the goal but does not tell us how to get there.”<sup>27</sup> The People Strategy provides very little detail on how progress in its four imperatives would support WFP in achieving its organizational objectives as outlined in the Strategic Plan (2014-2017). For example, it does not elaborate on challenges surrounding WFP surge capacity to respond to emergencies, or on how to balance the organization’s need for flexibility/adaptability with the need to invest in capacity for the long term. This also means that the People Strategy does not explicitly address some profound people-management challenges,

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<sup>22</sup> Evaluation sub-questions 1.1 and 1.2

<sup>23</sup> WFP. 2014. People Strategy (2014-2017), p.3.

<sup>24</sup> See Annex 3 for the constructed theory of change developed by the evaluation team in consultation with HRM.

<sup>25</sup> However, a few respondents (at HQ and in the field) noted that it sometimes uses “private sector jargon” that lacked meaning to the average WFP employee. This includes the titling of the document as a ‘people strategy’.

<sup>26</sup> In comparison, the people/HR strategies of UNHCR and UNICEF do not single out national staff separately from other employees.

<sup>27</sup> HR officer, field.

such as resolving the different terms and conditions of fixed versus short-term contract-holders. Based on this, several consulted WFP staff found that the People Strategy was not sufficiently contextualized for WFP.

31. While noting that its implementation “involves the whole of WFP”,<sup>28</sup> the People Strategy provides very limited information on the envisaged processes and timelines for its implementation and related accountabilities. The Wellness Strategy (2015-2019) subsequently elaborated on how wellness-related elements would be addressed, and the Human Resources Functional Strategy (2016-2018) provided clarity on HRM’s role in implementation of the People Strategy. However, no other units at headquarters developed similar strategies or work plans to implement the People Strategy, thereby leaving a gap in the formal accountability for strategy implementation. Also, as noted in the 2016 internal audit of the human resource function, key elements of the People Strategy, such as the career framework and the establishment of overall workforce planning capabilities, were not systematically reflected in the people dimension of country office’s annual performance plans. The report further stated that “the misalignment between WFP’s Human Resource Strategy and country offices’ work plans increases the risk that strategic objectives will not be achieved and that country offices’ contribution to the People Strategy will not be captured”.<sup>29</sup>

32. The People Strategy provides a high-level timeline for implementation of the four imperatives during the initial 2014-2016 period but provides no details on specific related activities or required resources. The same applies to People Strategy update presentations to the WFP Board in 2016 and 2018. There does not appear to have been an overall implementation plan for the People Strategy.

33. In terms of communicating WFP expectations in relation to external stakeholders, the People Strategy does not state whether or how WFP intends to collaborate with other United Nations agencies, in particular, other Rome-based agencies, on issues such as talent identification and recruitment, to ensure efficiencies and reduce competition. This is notable given that collaboration is a core priority for all three organizations.<sup>30</sup>

34. Upon the launch of the People Strategy, HRM conducted a dedicated communication campaign to inform managers and employees about the new strategy. To date, however, the People Strategy is not well known among the WFP stakeholders at headquarters, regional bureau and country office levels consulted for this evaluation, with the exception of most human resource officers/focal points and senior managers (Directors, Deputy Directors).<sup>31</sup> The majority of consulted employees (locally and internationally recruited) had never heard of the People Strategy (see Annex 7 for differences between stakeholder groups). Those who were aware of it usually recalled that it had been structured around four imperatives but were unable to recall details. This is not unusual for a corporate policy or strategy, particularly a cross-functional one, and likely reflects both a natural waning of awareness over time, as well as some loss of corporate memory due to staff turnover since 2014. Similar observations had been made in the 2017 evaluations of the WFP Corporate Partnership Strategy and the Policy on Capacity Development.

35. The People Strategy has been a key driver for the HRM initiatives that have been put in place since its approval. Other WFP units, however, were less aware of the People Strategy itself as a driver of change, although they were aware of initiatives birthed out of the People Strategy but not necessarily communicated as such. Those initiatives were therefore often perceived as stand-alone efforts, including (i) the Wellness Strategy; (ii) Executive Director directives/policy statements (for example on the National Staff Project); (iii) individual regional bureau/country office directors’ efforts to address human resource challenges in their offices – sometimes prompted by country-specific weaknesses identified in the global staff survey;<sup>32</sup> and (iv)

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<sup>28</sup> WFP. 2014. People Strategy (2014-2017), paragraph 63.

<sup>29</sup> WFP. 2016. Internal Audit of Human Resources Management in Country Offices. Office of the Inspector General. Internal Audit Report AR/16/15, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> The other agencies are the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agriculture and Development (IFAD). The 2016 joint document “Collaboration among the UN Rome-based Agencies: Delivering on the 2030 Agenda” highlights the agencies’ ongoing collaboration and presents opportunities for cost-efficiencies deriving from working together.

<sup>31</sup> One exception was the Nicaragua CO, where almost all consulted employees were at least broadly familiar with the strategy.

<sup>32</sup> The GSS provides performance data for the People Strategy. Also, the GSS speaks to Imperative 3 on staff engagement of the HR functional strategy, which aims to operationalize implementation of the People Strategy.

efforts related to implementing the Strategic Plan (2017-2021) and the Policy on Country Strategic Plans, in particular the organizational realignment exercises (see Finding 10).

## Comparison with the strategies of other organizations and global good practice<sup>33</sup>

**Finding 2 The People Strategy reflected global good practice related to human resource management principles and priorities at the time of its development. However, it was largely gender blind and vague on issues of diversity and inclusion.**

36. The People Strategy was aligned with key elements of the global discourse on human resource/people management at the time of its creation, by: (i) emphasizing the importance of staff's physical and mental well-being as key factors for organizational performance; (ii) focusing on the importance of workforce planning and deliberate, transparent, effective and efficient talent acquisition; (iii) recognizing the central role that effective, capable leaders play in relation to staff performance; and (iv) embracing emerging technologies to support human resource management processes. Good practice further calls for recognition of the fact that organizational performance requires robust performance management at both the individual and team level. While the People Strategy placed emphasis on the former, it did not highlight the role of teams in assessing performance and furthering a performance culture.<sup>34</sup>

37. The People Strategy shows weaknesses in addressing gender equality, and, more broadly, diversity and inclusion, all of which are factors with the potential to significantly affect the physical and/or mental well-being of employees.<sup>35</sup> It does emphasize the benefits of: a diverse workforce, the importance of gender parity in recruitment, meeting requirements of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and increasing the number of women in leadership positions. The People Strategy is silent, however, on how to monitor and address day-to-day inequities faced by existing WFP employees due to their sex, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic, linguistic or cultural backgrounds, or due to them living with a disability. While the People Strategy envisaged the creation of a diversity and inclusion strategy, such a broader document has not been developed.<sup>36</sup>

38. International good practice suggests that a high quality People Strategy should be relevant to all employees of an organization.<sup>37</sup> This is not consistently the case for the People Strategy, parts of which focus on WFP staff only – for example in the discussion of career development opportunities – and pays little attention to the specific challenges faced by, and needs of, “other” employees, such as service contract (SC) and special service agreement (SSA) holders, despite the fact that, at the time of strategy development, “non-staff” employees made up 61 percent of the WFP workforce.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Evaluation sub-question 1.3.

<sup>34</sup> Relevant sources include Coen and Jenkins (2002), Javidan, Dorfman, Sully de Luque, House (2006), Johnson and Geal (2010), Colville and Millner (2011), Falcone (2012), OECD (2013), Bersin for Deloitte (2016), Ashkenas (2017). See Annex 8 for full references.

<sup>35</sup> Global good practice, at the time of strategy development as well as currently, acknowledges that equity, diversity and inclusion are desirable not merely as a moral imperative, but that they offer tangible benefits to organizational performance. See, for example, Marsden (2017) and Goryunova, Scribner and Madsen (2017). See Annex 8 for full references.

<sup>36</sup> The 2016 Update on the People Strategy notes that a diversity and inclusion strategy has been developed, but the evaluation team has not been able to elicit a copy of this document, and several consulted WFP stakeholders noted that an actual strategy does not exist. Likely, what the 2016 update refers to are various efforts put in place since 2014 to strengthen gender parity, including awareness raising interventions for staff, rather than a formal strategy document, which would also address other dimensions of equality and inclusion beyond gender parity.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Howes, Julia for Mercer. 2015. Strategic Workforce Planning: Latest Trends and Leading Practice Examples. Mercer Workforce Analytics & Planning.

<sup>38</sup> WFP staffing data 2014-2018 provided by HRM. According to these data, in 2018, non-staff employees made up 59 percent of the overall WFP workforce.

### Finding 3 The WFP People Strategy is comparable to similar strategies of KPMG, UNICEF and UNHCR.

39. As illustrated in Table 2, the main topics covered by current UNICEF, UNHCR and KPMG strategies on human resource management are broadly the same as those addressed under the WFP People Strategy's four imperatives. Those topics cover: staff and leaders' performance and competence, workforce planning, and staff well-being including issues of workforce diversity. While UNICEF has a more traditional human resource strategy and it is thus "owned" primarily by the human resource function, KPMG and UNHCR developed "people strategies", which were intended to be the responsibility of the whole organization including, but not limited to, the human resource function. UNHCR has faced similar challenges to WFP in translating this commitment into action. Consultations with WFP employees and representatives of the comparator organizations indicate that most differences in human resource management practices are not visible at the level of the respective organizations' overarching and human resource/people strategies but rather lie in the details of strategy implementation. Several examples of differences are provided in Section 2.2.

**Table 2 Human resource/people strategies of comparator organizations**

Dimension	UNICEF Human Resource Strategy (2018-2021)	UNHCR People Strategy (2016-2021)	KPMG People Strategy
Similarities to the WFP People Strategy	<p>Describes three relatively high-level goals that cover similar dimensions as the WFP People Strategy. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shaping a workforce that meets the current and evolving needs of UNICEF and creating an empowering work environment where staff can excel in realizing the UNICEF mission<sup>39</sup></li> <li>Developing and leveraging the talents of managers and staff to successfully contribute as individuals, in teams, and across organizational boundaries</li> <li>Creating a results-based culture of accountability, effectiveness and efficiency where everyone understands what is expected of them and where performance is recognized and rewarded</li> </ul>	<p>Assigns responsibility for strategy implementation to all units in the organization (a people strategy, not just an HR strategy) and outlines four overarching goals that cover similar dimensions as the WFP People Strategy. These goals are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Preparedness and diversity:</b> Anticipate global operational demands for staff and skills; value diversity and provide an inclusive working environment; attract, hire and retain highly qualified people.</li> <li><b>Performance and competence:</b> Actively support staff growth and development; aim at excellence through leadership; promote effective performance management.</li> <li><b>Flexibility and timeliness:</b> Manage staff mobility in a fair and efficient manner; maximize the potential of different workforce arrangements; support staff in managing their mobility.</li> <li><b>Care and support:</b> Ensure a quality health and well-being system for workforce; supported by highly professional HR staff and systems; foster a culture of trust, communication and core values</li> </ul>	<p>Outlines five pillars covering similar dimensions as the WFP People Strategy. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership &amp; culture</li> <li>Progression</li> <li>Diversity &amp; inclusion</li> <li>Recruitment (attracting the best talent)</li> <li>Retention &amp; engagement</li> </ul>

<sup>39</sup> While the strategy does not include an explicit objective related to staff well-being, it makes clear references to providing the work environment and support to staff members in order that they can give their best in service of the UNICEF mission.

Dimension	UNICEF Human Resource Strategy (2018-2021)	UNHCR People Strategy (2016-2021)	KPMG People Strategy
Differences from the WFP People Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supported by annual operational plans</li> <li>Responsibility for implementation lies with the HR unit (HR strategy, not people strategy)</li> <li>Emphasis not only on individual but also team performance across organizational boundaries</li> <li>Does not single out national staff as separate category</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Underpinned by a five-year implementation plan</li> <li>Does not single out national staff as separate category</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The strategy is reviewed on an annual basis</li> <li>There are metrics to support the operational deliverables that underpin the strategy, and these cascade into objectives for individuals (for example, senior staff members have individual performance objectives related to diversity ambition targets)</li> </ul>

## Relevance of the People Strategy in light of changes in WFP internal and external contexts<sup>40</sup>

**Finding 4 The People Strategy was relevant in 2014. While the core issues addressed in the People Strategy remain relevant, its visibility has declined over time and it is outdated in light of some recent developments in the United Nations.**

40. The People Strategy explicitly supported implementation of the WFP Strategic Plan (2014-2017). It addressed areas for improvement in human resource noted in evaluations and audits prior to its development, such as: gaps in staff skills, especially in emerging thematic areas; challenges in meeting the need for rapid deployment during emergencies; reactive workforce planning; and weakness in the use of its Performance and Competency Enhancement Programme (PACE).<sup>41</sup>

41. Within WFP, the People Strategy's visibility and perceived relevance declined over time, partly due to other corporate priorities and special initiatives that were placed higher on the agenda, but also because the "people agenda" was widely associated with the leadership of the Executive Director who left office in 2017. Other factors affecting the People Strategy's visibility were that: i) it was originally approved for the 2014-2017 period<sup>42</sup> but further elements of a new people or human resources strategy were put to the Board in an October 2018 update; ii) the Strategic Plan (2017-2021) notes that the People Strategy is one of the corporate policies that needs to be updated to fit in its context; and iii) the people-related indicators in the WFP Corporate Results Framework (2017-2021) are fewer in number and less directly aligned with the People Strategy's imperatives than in the Management Results Framework (2014-2017). Consulted stakeholders familiar with the People Strategy widely agreed that the thematic issues addressed under its four imperatives remain relevant but require nuancing to reflect WFP evolving context and lessons learned.

42. The People Strategy makes no reference to any other WFP policies, and several policies that were developed after 2014, while commenting on human resource-related issues, do not mention the People Strategy: for example, the Nutrition Policy (2017) and the Emergency Preparedness Policy (2017). The 2016 Policy on Country Strategic Plans briefly mentions the People Strategy in the context of providing guidance and training for policy implementation but provides no in-depth discussion of other people-related considerations.

43. The People Strategy was relevant to the broader global and United Nations contexts at the time of its development, in particular the Secretary-General's Zero Hunger Challenge, and to the realization that the

<sup>40</sup> Evaluation sub-question 1.4.

<sup>41</sup> WFP. 2014. People Strategy (2014-2017), paragraph 7.

<sup>42</sup> It is, however, not uncommon for policies and strategies to remain valid after their initially approved period has passed. In other words, policies and strategies in WFP do not "expire" but remain in place until they are revised or replaced, or a deliberate decision is made to end them.

number and scale of emergencies – and hence the number and diversity of WFP beneficiaries – were increasing globally. The People Strategy is less relevant in light of more recent changes in the United Nations context, including: the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030), including the Sustainable Development Goals (2015), which also forms the main reference point of the current WFP Strategic Plan (2017-2021); and calls for a “new way of working” within the United Nations across the humanitarian – development – peace nexus (2015).

44. This is also the central in relation to the evolution of expectations on awareness, prevention and response to incidents of harassment in the wake of Revelations of Sexual exploitation and abuse in the United Nations in 2016;<sup>43</sup> the United Nations Leadership Framework (2017), which outlined desired characteristics of United Nations personnel in the context of the 2030 Agenda;<sup>44</sup> as well as resolution A/RES/72/279, adopted by the General Assembly in 2018, on repositioning the United Nations development system, including through a new generation of United Nations country teams, with needs-based, tailored country presence and strengthened authority and leadership of resident coordinators.<sup>45</sup>

## 2.2 RESULTS OF THE PEOPLE STRATEGY

### 2.2.1 INTRODUCTION

45. This section reviews progress made towards achieving the envisaged results outlined in the People Strategy, thereby responding to sub-questions under EQ2 in the evaluation matrix (Annex 4). As the People Strategy has neither a comprehensive results framework<sup>46</sup> nor an explicit theory of change, the evaluation team based its assessment on a combination of (i) the expected changes in employee capacity and behaviours described in the constructed theory of change (Annex 3); (ii) the specific people-related indicators and targets in the Management Results Framework (2014-2017) and the Corporate Results Framework (2017-2021); and (iii) information on envisaged and actual achievements derived from document review and stakeholder consultations. The assessment is not limited to those changes that can be verifiably attributed to implementation of the People Strategy but considers significant changes in the thematic areas covered by the strategy that are evidenced for the period 2014-2019. The evidence base for addressing this evaluation question was solid in that it entailed a variety of complementary, qualitative and verifiable quantitative sources, including data from the global staff survey, which allow for the identification of trends in employee perceptions over time and across the whole organization.

### 2.2.2 OVERARCHING RESULTS

**Finding 5 Since the approval of the People Strategy, the human resource function in WFP took on a more strategic role. However, the extent of this shift varies considerably by location.**

46. The People Strategy aimed to strengthen the WFP human resource function to provide more “value-added” activities - such as workforce planning, learning and development and coaching - beyond its then predominant focus on transactional activities such as administering contracts and benefits.<sup>47</sup> As one human resource officer noted: “The big change is that now human resources is at the table, it is seen as structural, the new idea is that the human resources staff need to know the business of WFP.” Stakeholders consulted for this evaluation varied in their views, however, on whether the human resource function had ever been

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<sup>43</sup> See, for example, United Nations Secretary-General: [Note to Correspondents](#) on Sexual Harassment. December 21, 2017

<sup>44</sup> United Nations. 2017. The United Nations System Leadership Framework. April 2017.

<sup>45</sup> In 2019, this resolution was elaborated through guidance on the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, which replaces the previous United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) mechanism, and a related new Management and Accountability Framework of the United Nations Development and Resident Coordinator System.

<sup>46</sup> The key performance indicators captured in the MRF (2017-2021) did not cover all of the People Strategy’s imperatives and related initiatives but largely focused on topics relevant in relation to Imperative 2 on “Build WFP Talent”.

<sup>47</sup> As stated in paragraph 53 of the People Strategy: “The roles of HR staff are expanding to include strategic business partner, employee advocate and change agent, while maintaining the valuable role of administrative expert.”



fully or largely “transactional” and noted that there had always been a “strategic” element to the function’s work.

47. One concrete measure put in place in 2014 to facilitate a strategic shift was the creation of senior human resource officer positions at the P5 level in all regional bureaux. Most of these positions were staffed with new, externally recruited human resource specialists. Stakeholder consultations at headquarters and during field missions indicate that this shift elicited mixed responses and results. On the one hand, raising the professional profile of the posts did send a strong signal about the emphasis that the organization was willing to place on human resource management issues, and enhanced the likelihood of the P5 officers being taken seriously by senior managers at regional and country levels. On the other hand, the recruitment of external candidates into P5 positions led to frustration among existing international professional staff, given that a new P5 position is usually filled with an internal candidate through the reassignment process.

48. Other than the senior regional human resource officer positions, the extent to which human resource officers/focal points are able to play a more strategic, forward-looking role in their offices varies considerably by location and by level. Broadly speaking, lower level staff tend to be perceived as being less likely to influence decisions and cultural change in their offices than higher level staff. Locally recruited employees tended to regard international human resource officers as more “neutral” and, therefore, more reliable than national officers.<sup>49</sup>

49. Some consulted stakeholders stated that since 2017, WFP had assigned decreasing priority to the organization’s people/human resource management function. This perception was based on the observation that the Strategic Plan and Corporate Results Framework 2017-2021 included fewer explicit references to people-related issues than the previous strategic plan, and on the fact that HRM’s reporting line has recently been shifted from the Deputy Executive Director to the Assistant Executive Director for Resource Management/Chief Financial Officer, a move which several staff perceived as “downgrading” HRM’s significance and influence. At the same time, the current senior leadership of WFP has demonstrated both interest in, and support for, addressing human resource management-related issues, for example in relation to addressing negative results deriving from the 2018 global staff survey in relation to the WFP workplace culture (see Finding 13). In comparison, in 2017, UNICEF was in the process of implementing a substantial human resource reform, including efforts to position the human resource function clearly as a “partner” role.

### 2.2.3 IMPERATIVE 1: REINFORCE A PERFORMANCE MINDSET<sup>50</sup>

50. Under this imperative, the People Strategy foresees WFP focusing on practices and processes that recognize and reward successful performance and reinforce line managers’ accountability to create an environment that fosters the best outcomes for its beneficiaries. It calls for a clear, collective understanding among staff of why and how this is to be achieved – and of what WFP purpose, operational modalities and outcomes, and performance management are<sup>51</sup> (Box 3).

#### Box 3 Expected behaviour changes under Imperative 1 as per constructed theory of change<sup>48</sup>

Staff and managers demonstrate a culture of open, honest and continuous performance feedback.

Managers recognize high performers and reward them through career opportunities.

Managers and staff identify performance issues and address them promptly through tailored improvement plans.

<sup>48</sup> See Annex 10 for an overview of the evaluation team’s assessment of the extent of progress towards the noted capacity and behaviour changes outlined in the theory of change.

<sup>49</sup> This was especially noted in contexts where tensions between ethnic groups posed a challenge.

<sup>50</sup> Addressing evaluation sub-question 2.1.

<sup>51</sup> WFP. 2014. People Strategy (2014-2017), paragraph 11.

## Refresh performance-management processes<sup>52</sup>

**Finding 6** Changes to relevant tools and processes have led to improved compliance with performance reporting requirements and enhanced transparency of assessment ratings. However, the overall performance-management culture at WFP is only beginning to change, and many employees still perceive performance management as a “tick the box” exercise rather than as a professional development process.

51. Changes to the PACE tool since 2014 aimed to streamline its application and strengthen the alignment between individual performance and WFP strategic objectives.<sup>53</sup> This included the introduction of a fourth rating category (“partially achieved”) to provide more nuanced rating options, thereby allowing supervisors to indicate room for improvement in staff performance without marking this performance as insufficient.<sup>54</sup> The revised tool can be filled out online, and includes an initial self-assessment by the staff member, thereby providing employees with more control over what achievements are taken into consideration in the assessment. Changes to the tool were accompanied by extensive awareness raising and capacity development efforts by HRM.<sup>55</sup>

52. Following initial progress made prior to 2014,<sup>56</sup> the various innovations put in place under the People Strategy likely contributed to further increasing compliance with PACE reporting requirements to achieve nearly total completion – from 81 percent in 2012 to 97 percent in 2017- and thus among the highest completion rates within the United Nations.<sup>57</sup>

53. Reinforcing the already existing management review committees in regional bureaux and country offices through new terms of reference and a more systematic approach constituted another improvement to the PACE process. Management review committees add a second level review of performance appraisals and thereby mitigate the risk of assessments being overly dependent on the subjective views of one individual. The committees are composed of a representative of the country/regional director to act as chair, a selection of senior staff at the office - national or international, a national officer appointed by the country and/or regional director to represent the views of the staff, and a human resource representative. Management review committees review the quality of PACE assessments, ensure that ratings are used consistently across the office and promote a shared understanding of performance standards.<sup>58</sup> The committees facilitate comparison of relative performance between staff members. While they are free to seek clarification from people other than the respective staff members’ supervisors, management review committees are neither expected nor equipped to systematically elicit feedback on employees’ performance from peers or those supervised by the respective staff members.

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<sup>52</sup> The People Strategy outlined two initiatives under this imperative: (1) Refresh performance-management processes, and (2) Embed common WFP values and behaviours, which related primarily to the development of a staff value proposition. However, the staff value proposition is also mentioned under imperative 2 of the Strategy, and, in this report, is discussed in that context (Section 2.2.4).

<sup>53</sup> WFP. 2017. Review of Fit-for-Purpose Organization-Strengthening Initiative. Rome. February 2017, p. 14f.

<sup>54</sup> The four rating categories are now “outstanding”, “successful”, “partially achieved”, and “unsatisfactory”. In comparison, as indicated by UNICEF HR staff consulted during field missions, during the review period, UNICEF reduced the number of rating criteria that it uses from five to three (low, solid, and outstanding). KPMG uses five “performance zones”. Some global actors, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, have completely abandoned formal performance ratings and, instead, rely solely on individual and frequent discussions between supervisee and supervisor (based on informal consultations with Foundation staff through evaluation team members during an unrelated assignment).

<sup>55</sup> In 2014, 92 PACE workshops and an unspecified number of dial-in sessions were held; 9,102 PACE queries were answered; and 5,430 promotion-related emails were answered by the individual performance strengthening branch. In 2015 an online resource centre was launched to equip staff in remote locations with tools for performance management. Source: WFP. 2015. HR annual report for 2014, p.19; WFP. 2016. HR annual report 2015, p.24.

<sup>56</sup> Between 2011 and 2012, PACE compliance had increased from 50 percent to 81 percent.

<sup>57</sup> WFP annual performance reports for 2013-2018, and WFP. 2017. Review of Fit-for-Purpose Organization-Strengthening Initiative. Rome. February 2017, p.34.

<sup>58</sup> Source: WFP. Undated. Terms of reference. Management Review Committee in WFP regional bureaux and country offices.

54. During the review period, HRM also undertook various efforts to facilitate a change in WFP organizational culture around performance management, including by training 1,027 front line supervisors since 2017 in supervisory skills, which focus on how to coach a team and lead effectively. Also, in 2018, 2,184 employees were trained on how to provide feedback.

55. Changing organizational culture and ingrained habits takes time. As such, it is not surprising that evidence from field missions and global staff survey results indicate mixed progress in this regard (Box 4). Many supervisors and supervisees still tend to see performance management as an obligatory annual “tick the box” exercise that involves filling out PACE forms rather than as a strategic opportunity to discuss and address performance and/or capacity and career development on an ongoing basis. There are still considerable variations between offices and between individual

**Box 4: Global staff survey results (2018)**

Of the respondents, 62 percent (56 percent of women and 66 percent of men) agreed that “my supervisor gives me feedback that helps me improve my performance”. In the 2019 WFP Workplace Culture report, however, 50 percent of surveyed WFP employees noted that they were given little or no feedback on their performance.

Of the respondents, 57 percent (54 percent of women, 59 percent of men) agreed that “there is someone at work who encourages my development”.

Only 54 percent of respondents (52 percent of women, 55 percent of men) confirmed the statement: “In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.”

Only 46 percent of employees (43 percent of women, 47 percent of men) stated that “in the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work”.

The results for all four above-noted questions were below the (external) average used to benchmark survey results.<sup>59</sup> Also, it is noteworthy that for all questions the percentage rates of those in agreement with the respective statement are lower for women than for men employees.

managers/supervisors in how frequently they engage in informal conversations on employee performance outside of PACE.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, the length and modality (in person, by email) of performance conversations during PACE completion varies. Several national staff members expressed experiences similar to the one captured in the following quote: “The PACE review - it’s just a form that lists activities and related observations by the supervisor, not a real conversation.”

56. One important factor in this regard may be that in most country offices, supervisors are not rewarded for taking time away from operational priorities to manage people.<sup>61</sup> National staff middle-management (such as NO-A/B professional officers and senior general service staff), while fulfilling supervisory functions, often do not have people management clearly identified in their job descriptions or in their own performance reviews. Furthermore, “people management” is not a mandatory rated performance parameter for supervisors, even though people management is listed in the core competencies of PACE (see also Section 2.2.6). In comparison, KPMG has designated “performance leaders”, who spend 50 percent of their time on people management, to manage the performance process for a cohort of 100 staff members each, with managers conducting 1:1 reviews and interim performance reviews for approximately six more senior staff members each.

57. In July 2019, the Director of the WFP Ethics Office launched an independent review of WFP workplace culture,<sup>62</sup> which identified performance management as “an avenue through which many experiences of harassment take place”,<sup>63</sup> both for employees, who feel that their careers are in the hands of leaders who

<sup>59</sup> The external reference used to benchmark GSS results is a comparison to public and private sector organizations in Gallup’s global database. GSS results are rated as being above, below or within the average (45-55 percent of organizations). As not all WFP GSS questions are part of Gallup’s database, not all questions have an external reference.

<sup>60</sup> In some COs, such as in Tanzania, stakeholders noted positive improvements in this regard, following the most recent (2018) GSS results and subsequent discussions among staff on areas requiring strengthening. Office-wide positive changes were noted by employees in the Nicaragua office. In all other visited COs and RBs, employees noted that some individual supervisors had always placed emphasis on providing regular, constructive feedback, but that there had been no general shift in office culture since 2014.

<sup>61</sup> This was also noted in the 2019 Internal audit of performance management and appraisal in WFP.

<sup>62</sup> WFP. 2019i. External Review of Workplace Culture and Ethical Climate at World Food Programme. September 2019.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p. 36.

have the authority to take subjective decisions, but also for managers, some of whom are afraid to provide a (deserved) unsatisfactory rating to an employee for fear of being reported for abusive behaviour as a form of retaliation.<sup>64</sup>

58. Other concerns related to current performance-management practices at WFP are:

- There is no formal mechanism in place for employees to provide input into the PACE ratings of their supervisors, for example through regular 180- or 360-degree review processes.<sup>65</sup> As such, performance management is widely perceived as a one-way and top-down communication process. In comparison, in KPMG performance assessments routinely include the gathering of feedback from others that staff interact with within the organization.
- PACE is not perceived or used as a tool to foster systematic capacity strengthening, despite the fact that the PACE tool includes space for employees and supervisors to indicate professional development needs and related actions to be taken in the following year.<sup>66</sup>
- For international staff, step increases in payment and promotion recommendations for staff at levels P2 to D2 are dependent on the candidate having received positive (“successful” or “outstanding”) PACE ratings in previous years. Positive ratings are also required for national professional officers and general service staff to be eligible for pay step increases. Nevertheless, consultations during field visits indicated limited awareness among WFP staff of these uses of positive PACE ratings. Staff members noted that they were not aware of any benefits deriving from obtaining an “outstanding” as opposed to a “successful” rating, thereby questioning the relevance of this distinction.

59. The revised online PACE tool covers all national and international WFP staff as well as international consultants, including short-term general service staff, locally recruited consultants, United Nations volunteers and interns. According to HRM, WFP is one of only a few United Nations agencies to incorporate so many employee categories into its online performance-management system. At present, the performance of service contract and special service agreement holders is still being assessed through a paper-based system outside of PACE, but service contract holders are expected to be included under a revised “PACE 2.0” that is being piloted in several offices and is expected to be rolled out in 2020.

60. The current paper-based service contract evaluation form includes both planning and evaluation elements and, in 2017, was aligned to the current PACE in terms of the capabilities and ratings applied. Consultations during field visits indicated, however, that in practice service contract (and special service agreement) holder performance management often entails little, if any, explicit planning and tends to be reduced to an assessment only at the end of their contracts, which allows for limited, if any, opportunity for enhancing performance in the meantime. Box 5 has an example of good practice in Nicaragua.

#### Box 5: Good practice

The [Nicaragua country office](#) has put in place its own adapted PACE version for service contract holders, who now participate in a similar annual work planning and performance review process as other staff. These reviews, including a mid-term review, are linked to capacity development discussions and plans.

### Finding 7 WFP has strengthened its framework and tools for dealing with underperformance, but challenges remain in relation to their consistent implementation.

61. WFP introduced a revised framework for dealing with underperformance in May 2016 to address recognized shortcomings in regular and honest performance feedback between staff members and supervisors, and its previous inability to identify and address performance issues at an early stage.<sup>67</sup> The

<sup>64</sup> *ibid*, p. 30.

<sup>65</sup> This was also critically noted in the 2019 External Review of Workplace Culture and Ethical Climate at WFP. HRM has been conducting voluntary 360-degree reviews upon request. Since 2018, a total of 236 such assessments have been completed by regions, COs and divisions in HQ. 360-degree reviews are also conducted for staff at senior level through the leadership track. This type of upwards feedback mechanism will be included under PACE 2.0.

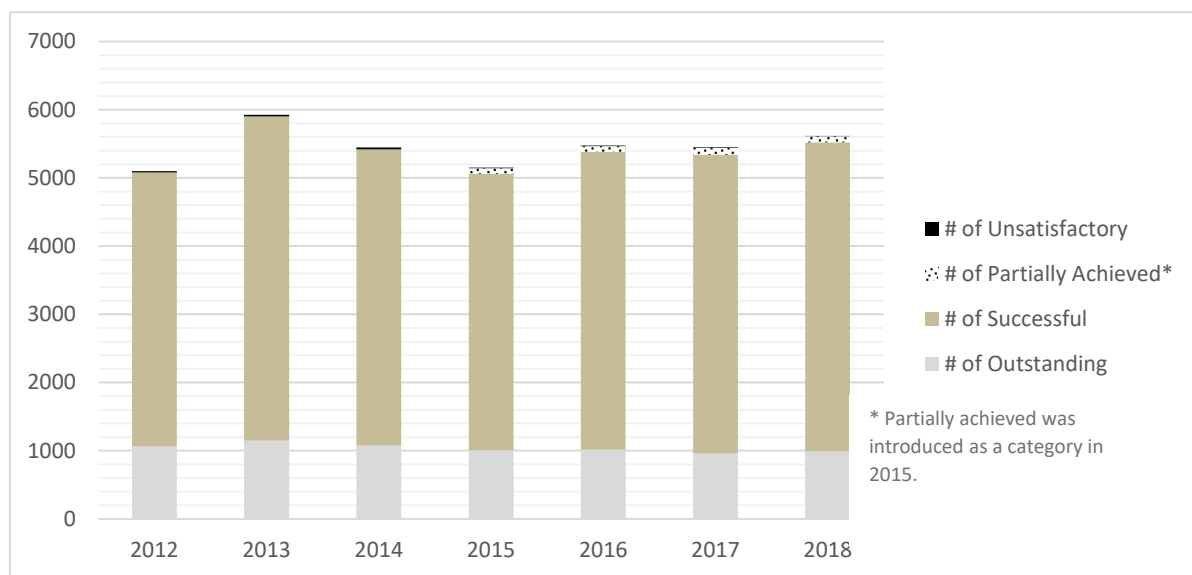
<sup>66</sup> This is also noted in the 2019 internal audit of performance management and appraisal in WFP.

<sup>67</sup> Email from Chief of HR Global Services on Underperformance, [undated] as well as stakeholder interviews.

framework simplified the requirements for dealing with underperformance and for separation in the worst case scenario; from two consecutive “unsatisfactory” PACEs to one “unsatisfactory” PACE followed by an additional six-month performance improvement plan (PIP). Performance improvement plans focus on capacity development and growth rather than punishment, and similar tools are used in KPMG and in other United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Secretariat and UNOPS.<sup>68</sup> To facilitate implementation, the revised framework was accompanied by awareness-raising sessions as well as tailored toolkits for staff and supervisors respectively,<sup>69</sup> and HRM staff at headquarters offered technical support to managers dealing with cases of underperformance. See also Annex 14 for further information on this topic as part of one of four mini case studies.

62. Evaluative evidence suggests that these changes have contributed to raising employee awareness about WFP intent to address rather than tolerate underperformance. As illustrated in Figure 3, the percentage of staff receiving negative ratings (unsatisfactory or partially achieved) has increased from 0.4 percent in 2012 to 2.1 percent in 2017, constituting an increase of 450 percent.<sup>70</sup> The introduction of the fourth “partially achieved” category in 2015 likely contributed to this change by allowing for more nuancing within the negative performance ratings (fewer “unsatisfactory” ratings, and more “partially achieved” ones). For positive assessments, “successful” ratings consistently remained around 80 percent and “outstanding” ones around 20 percent. This distribution is problematic if the expectation is, as it tends to be the case in the private sector, that performance ratings should form a normal distribution bell curve – an expectation that, according to HRM, is neither realistic nor adequate for a United Nations (or other public service) agency. Other agencies reported similar rating distributions as WFP: at UNICEF, while a nominative performance curve would expect about 10 percent of staff in the “low” category, actual figures are reportedly around 1 percent. Whilst this could be perceived as an indicator of under-performance not being appropriately managed, the perspective of UNICEF is that this low figure reflects the fact that managers are now expected to be pro-actively managing underperformance throughout the year.

**Figure 3 PACE ratings before and after the introduction of the “partially achieved” rating category (2012-2018)**



Source: Dataset “Trends on PACE ratings before and after the new rating system” provided by HRM

63. Since the introduction of performance improvement plans in 2016, 23 such plans have been developed and 11 of the individuals with performance improvement plans subsequently separated from WFP (45 to 50

<sup>68</sup>See, for example: United Nations Performance Management Working Group. 2018. Slide Presentation: Driving Results and Building on our Shared Experiences. HR Network 36<sup>th</sup> Session, Bonn. 23-25 January 2018.

<sup>69</sup> How to Effectively Address Underperformance: Toolkit for Staff Members and How to Effectively Address Underperformance: Toolkit for Supervisors (both undated).

<sup>70</sup> In 2018, the percentage of staff receiving negative ratings slightly decreased to 1.7 percent.

percent of staff on performance improvement plans per year).<sup>71</sup> The small number of performance improvement plans used so far that did not end in separation does not permit an assessment of the overall usefulness of the tool in helping to improve staff performance (Box 6).

#### Box 6: Good practice

The [Nicaragua country office](#) has adopted a constructive approach that may avoid the perception that performance improvement plans constitute a punishment for only 'hopeless' cases among WFP staff. First, the mid-year reviews are taken very seriously and used to identify and begin to document performance issues. Second, everyone in the office, including SC holders, may have a performance improvement plan that outlines objectives and areas for professional improvement if their performance begins to deteriorate, thereby contributing to establishing a culture of ongoing performance dialogue.

The [Burundi country office](#) has carried out regular skills audits and talent reviews (which had been designed and launched by the Uganda country office's human resource unit as one of the "People" projects in the organizational alignment exercise), as a structured diagnosis of staff aptitudes and personality traits. As a result of these audits, select staff have built skills profiles that they can use to shape (a) identification of different jobs and functions within WFP to which they might be well-suited, and (b) a specific programme of learning to support them to reach new goals or to address identified gaps. This approach allowed the country office to address (or prevent) not only performance issues that derived from a lack of ability but also those arising from waning motivation or perceived lack of future perspectives.

64. Since 2014, HRM has also emphasized the need to use probation periods more deliberately and – where required – terminate employment of poorly performing employees at an early stage before offering them longer term contracts.<sup>72</sup> In 2017, an online probation tool was adapted to include national staff, which facilitated a more efficient management of performance-management processes. Since 2014, there has been an overall decrease in the proportion of staff<sup>73</sup> whose contracts were confirmed after probation, indicating that the probationary period may have been used more deliberately and diligently. As shown in Figure 4, percentages fluctuate, however, especially for international professional (IP), general service staff at headquarters and WFP office<sup>74</sup> staff, and do not indicate linear trends. In early 2019, WFP made further changes to its probationary framework to broaden the scope, provide clarity, and introduce stronger accountability for related processes.<sup>75</sup> It is too soon, however, to see the effects of these latest changes.

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<sup>71</sup> The separations occurred based on continued unsatisfactory service, resignation, abandonment of the post, post abolishment, expired appointments or death.

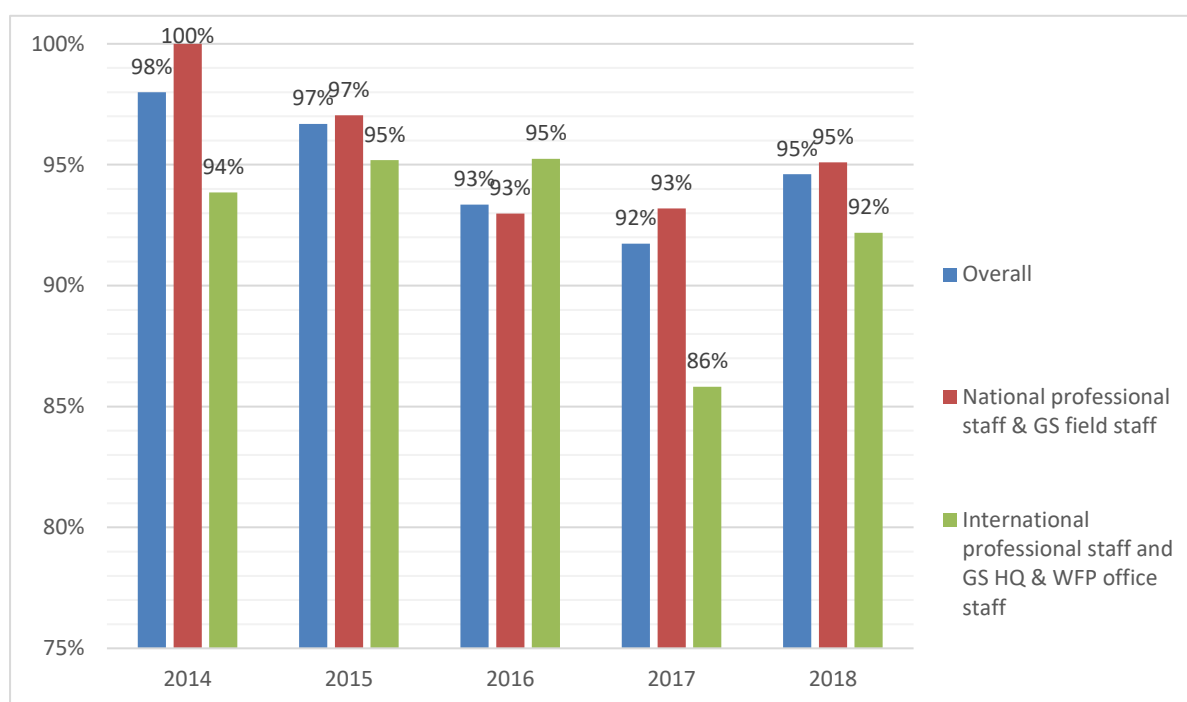
<sup>72</sup> Annual performance review 2017, p. 92.

<sup>73</sup> National professional and GS field staff, and international professional, GS HQ and WFP office staff.

<sup>74</sup> "WFP offices" refers to the "global" offices in Berlin, Brussels, Copenhagen, Dubai, London, Madrid, Paris, Seoul, Tokyo and Washington.

<sup>75</sup> Information memorandum on "Changes to the Probationary Framework" to all staff from the Director, HRM (24 January 2019).

**Figure 4 Percentage of contract confirmations after probation (2014-2018)**



Source: Datasets on probation trends 2014-2018 provided by HRM

65. While acknowledging the improvements in dealing with underperformance, many consulted stakeholders (especially senior staff) noted that there remains further room for improvement (Box 7). Similar insights derive from the 2019 internal audit of PACE.

66. The majority of supervisors interviewed noted that they still try to avoid giving negative PACE ratings whenever possible, resulting in teams “working around” poor performers.<sup>77</sup> The main reasons cited for this were (i) the administrative effort involved in justifying negative ratings and putting someone on a performance improvement plan; (ii) the rotational nature of positions, whereby many supervisors just wait for “problem persons” (or the supervisor him or herself) to be reassigned; (iii)

**Box 7: Stakeholder views (global staff survey and field missions) on dealing with underperformance**

In the 2018 global staff survey, 56 percent of respondents (only 45 percent of women but 63 percent of men) agreed that “at WFP we hold people accountable for performing their job well”. This result is below the external reference average of other organizations in the Gallup database.

A larger proportion of 66 percent of respondents (59 percent of women and 69 percent of men) agreed that “I am confident my supervisor will take appropriate action if our team has an ongoing performance problem”.

In consultations during evaluation field missions on how WFP deals with underperformance, only 8 percent of interviewees noted primarily positive changes, 35 percent expressed primarily negative views, 57 percent noted both improvements and considerable remaining weaknesses.<sup>76</sup>

stigma and retribution that people endure for identifying/being identified as a poor performer; (iv) empathy for poorly performing staff (for example, a desire to help them preserve their position in a context that offers no alternative employment); (v) supervisors lacking the confidence, experience and skills to have difficult conversations and address weak performance constructively;<sup>78</sup> (vi) the fact that, until recently, a large number

<sup>76</sup> See Annex 2 for a description of how responses from consulted employees were coded and analysed. See Annex 7 for a summary of key trends emerging from consultations conducted during field missions.

<sup>77</sup> This effect of “working around” poor performers is well captured in HR literature, see, for example, Falcone, P. (2012). “Held Hostage by Underperformers”; HR Magazine, Oct2012, Vol. 57 Issue 10, p92-93.

<sup>78</sup> Both UNICEF and UNHCR have faced similar challenges in managers not always understanding or knowing how to use performance assessment systems. In UNICEF, efforts to strengthen how the organization deals with underperformance

of WFP employees (service contract and special service agreement holders) have not been subject to PACE or the formal underperformance framework. For these groups, weak performance results in their contracts not being renewed, allowing supervisors to avoid having uncomfortable conversations or otherwise investing in staff performance management.

67. Interviews with representatives from comparator organizations, UNICEF and UNHCR, indicate that these agencies face similar challenges. HRM staff in Rome emphasized that WFP is doing as well as, if not better than, most other public service institutions when it comes to deliberately and systematically addressing underperformance.<sup>79</sup> However, field visit data indicate that there is considerable frustration among employees at all levels based on the perception that weak performance and/or negative work attitudes of others are not yet consistently addressed which, in turn, creates a disincentive for good performers to continue doing their best.<sup>80</sup>

## 2.2.4 IMPERATIVE 2: BUILD WFP TALENT<sup>81</sup>

68. Under this imperative, the People Strategy aimed to address future staffing requirements given that “WFP needs to expand its access to talented people with the potential to take on diversified and increasingly responsible leadership roles”<sup>82</sup> Box 8 lists expected behaviour changes under Imperative 2.

### Box 8: Expected behaviour changes under Imperative 2 as per constructed theory of change<sup>83</sup>

WFP staff drive their own career development (for example, by working to gain specific capabilities or experience).

Supervisors provide guidance on staff career development.

WFP decision makers forecast expected future staffing needs proactively and in a timely manner, and respond in line with insights derived from structure and staffing reviews.

Decision makers consider at least one female candidate for each vacant mid- to senior-level post.

## Develop career framework and skills

**Finding 8 Since 2014, WFP has improved career development processes and made them more transparent and accessible. Nevertheless, career development remains a major source of frustration for many WFP employees.**

69. In 2014, HRM developed a set of capability-based career frameworks to help WFP staff take greater ownership of their career paths and develop a culture of continuous learning. The career frameworks are based on core/leadership skills, competencies and specific functional capabilities developed for 11 WFP

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included creation of a dedicated support team to assist managers throughout the entire process, including helping them to write the performance review in the most constructive and robust manner and to both write and monitor PIPs.

<sup>79</sup> Other than the noted similarities with challenges faced by other United Nations agencies, the evaluation team did not obtain any evidence that would either confirm or refute this claim.

<sup>80</sup> The literature on managing underperformance stresses that not dealing with poor performers can be worse for morale and overall team performance than confronting the issue directly. Further, some employees may resent the fact that they have to work hard while others do not, eventually leading to a situation where they too might feel that they can get away with underperforming. See, for example, Ashkenas, R. 2017. “How to Handle Underperformers on a Team You Inherit”. Harvard Business Review Digital Articles. 6/15/2017, p2-4. 3p.

<sup>81</sup> Addresses evaluation question 2.2.

<sup>82</sup> WFP. 2014. People Strategy (2014-2017), paragraph 20.

<sup>83</sup> All four 2014-2017 WFP MRF key performance indicators regarding the “people” dimension were linked to this imperative: KPI 1 on “effective staff learning and skills development” focused on the use of the learning management system; KPI 2 on an “appropriately planned workforce” (which, however, only measured the staff retention rate); KPI 3 on “an engaged workforce supported by capable leaders promoting a culture of commitment, communication and accountability” measured gender and geographic representation; and KPI 4 on “effective talent acquisition and management” tracked various measures around applications, hires, and reassignment.



divisions. They included the development of 35 illustrative career paths and 736 practical experiences.<sup>84</sup> One of the key messages of the frameworks was that career development is not limited to vertical movement (promotion) but also encompasses lateral movement and development within the same role.<sup>85</sup>

70. Another set of interventions aiming to enhance the effectiveness and transparency of career progression in WFP was the revision of the promotion process for international professional staff at the P1-P4 levels. Promotions are now conditional on the candidate having received successive positive (“outstanding” or “successful”) PACE ratings. In addition, the first stage of recommendations for promotion has been decentralized to first level supervisors, instead of all cases being reviewed by a centralized panel, as had been the case. This makes line managers accountable for promotion decisions and emphasizes the importance of basing these decisions on evidence of staff performance and potential.<sup>86</sup>

71. Revisions were also made to the junior professional officer (JPO) programme with the intent to ensure more selective recruitment, better support and mentoring of junior professional officers to facilitate their professional journey within the organization.

**Box 9: Negative WFP employee views on career opportunities/progression**

In the 2018 global staff survey, only 38 percent of all staff agreed that “at WFP, career progression is based primarily on merit”.<sup>87</sup> This overall result masks a considerable difference based on the respondents’ sex: while 42 percent of men answered the question positively, only 29 percent of women did. The most negative responses to this question came from international “P” level professional staff and international consultants (both 16 percent), followed by junior professional officers. In contrast, in the same survey, 60 percent of general service staff on special service agreements and 50 percent of professional contract holders on special service agreements responded positively to this question although (or possibly because) these employee groups do not have access to formal career paths within WFP.

Similar scepticism emerged during individual and group interviews during evaluation field missions, with 58 percent of consulted employees expressing primarily negative opinions on questions related to career development and progression opportunities (see Annex 7 for details).

72. At the same time, 2018 global staff survey results, consultations conducted by the evaluation team and the 2019 WFP Workplace Culture Report<sup>88</sup> all indicate that the majority of WFP employees do not see themselves as being in control of their own career development (Box 9). This may reflect the fact that the WFP career framework and staff value proposition, which is included in the framework, are not widely known or understood by WFP staff across categories. As one consulted human resource officer noted: “The career framework is beautifully done, but it somehow never trickled down.” Across visited regional bureaux and country offices, except for (some) human resource officers and senior managers, none of the consulted staff members had ever heard of the career framework or the WFP value proposition. In addition, the following factors likely shape negative employee perceptions in this regard:

- Among international fixed-term professional staff, career progression is perceived as strongly dependent on factors largely unrelated to performance, often referred to as “who you know, not what you know.” In 2018, related concerns were also raised by the Professional Staff Association, which pointed to the negative effects of mobility on people’s chances of promotion and raised concerns over promotion criteria focusing on potential but not actual merit.<sup>89</sup> Most consulted international professional staff acknowledged that, unlike other staff categories, they do have, at least in theory, vertical and lateral career development opportunities and related support within their functions, including access to a staffing coordinator to

<sup>84</sup> WFP. 2017b. Review of Fit-for-Purpose Organization-Strengthening Initiative. Rome. February 2017.

<sup>85</sup> WFP (undated). Capability-Based Career Framework Guidance, p. 6.

<sup>86</sup> WFP 2017b, Review of Fit-for-Purpose Organization-Strengthening Initiative, p. 32. See also WFP 2017m, p.29 (Report of the External Auditor on Changes in HR), which notes that the promotion procedure for categories P1 to P4 was better managed and more transparent.

<sup>87</sup> In the 2015 GSS, this question had been answered positively by 43 percent of all staff.

<sup>88</sup> WFP. 2019i. External Review of Workplace Culture and Ethical Climate at World Food Programme. September 2019.

<sup>89</sup> As changes in duty station and/or function can negatively influence a supervisor’s ability to assess the candidate’s performance and potential. Source: PSA Newsletter – September 2018.

support their career planning. The degree of this support varies, however, by function.<sup>90</sup> One person noted that "there is no monitoring of individual careers. People do not have a career management plan that allows them to build their individual path."

- For national staff (national professional officers and general service staff), there are limited opportunities for vertical career progression. Instead, national staff must compete for a vacant higher-level position (usually against other applicants including external candidates), or in exceptional circumstances they can be promoted if their position is reclassified upwards. Such competitions can be stressful and, especially in small offices, opportunities for vertical progression are severely limited because there are very few positions at a higher level in the same functional area. Once a staff member has reached the highest national officer level in their office (in most cases this tends to be NO-B or sometimes NO-C), there is nowhere further to go in terms of career progression unless the person is interested in pursuing a career as an international professional, which is not an option that is open to all or even desirable for all. As one international staff noted: "Local staff are usually recruited to do job X, and stay therein as long as that job exists, or another job is advertised in their duty station." Box 10, however, details good practice.<sup>91</sup>

#### **Box 10: Good Practice - National Officers Track project**

The WFP Policy and Programme Division has carried out a mapping of high-performing national officers across country offices to create a pool of staff to deploy on temporary duty assignments, including in emergencies. According to Policy and Programme Division staff, the pool is not yet at the desired scale, but it is a first step towards using and furthering the professional development of talented national staff more systematically throughout the function.

All national officers working in the division have been screened and the Policy and Programme Division is planning to extend the process to include service contract and special service agreement holders and consultants to better identify and use the full range of internal talent in the division. This responds to the fact that, while it is not the official WFP talent acquisition model, many national staff first enter the organization through special service agreement contracts, later move on to service contracts and finally to fixed-term staff contracts. As such, short-term contract holders constitute a considerable part of the organization's future talent, but the extent to which they are included in opportunities for professional growth still tends to be low.

- Junior professional officers are among the least satisfied staff group in relation to career development (based on 2018 global staff survey results and field mission data), primarily due to a lack of systematic support and guidance from supervisors and the perception that, in the absence of any mechanism for conversion to fixed-term contracts, whether junior professional officers get a chance to stay with WFP largely depends on personal relationships rather than performance.<sup>92</sup>

- Internationally and locally recruited "other", service contract, special service agreement holders and international consultants have a different sense of career progression: for many in this community their "progression" consists of moving to progressively more stable contracts (i.e. from special service

agreement to service contract to fixed-term general staff, or from consultant to short-term professional to fixed-term professional), and only once they have reached some fixed-term stability do they focus more on upward progression. This, in itself, is not problematic. One challenge derives, however, from the fact that within WFP many individuals have worked on such short-term contracts for several years, in some cases decades. In these cases, while the length of their employment indicates that they are considered WFP "staff", they do not enjoy opportunities for career development. In comparison, neither UNICEF nor UNHCR use service contracts, and strictly limit the use of special service agreements to up to one year. Short-term employees of WFP leaving for UNICEF and UNHCR due to (actual or perceived) better working conditions and career prospects was noted in several visited country offices where there was a large or

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<sup>90</sup> Based on the size of the function in terms of staff, which affects whether the staffing officer is full-time or part-time and the extent to which he/she is able to know, closely follow and support the career development of individuals within the function.

<sup>91</sup> The report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority (UNICEF 2019) indicates similar challenges in UNICEF, with many national staff stating that they felt like "second class citizens without career prospects, respect or voice" (p.22).

<sup>92</sup> While JPO positions do not guarantee career progression opportunities in the respective host organization, they are intended to be, and are widely regarded as, an entry point for longer-term career paths within the United Nations system.

growing humanitarian sector. As one consultant noted, “WFP is developing my talent to then go to UNICEF”.<sup>93</sup>

73. Several respondents indicated a view that career development means promotion, while little or no value is assigned to what the WFP career framework refers to as “lateral” movement and “on-the-job development”. One of the blind spots in the People Strategy is its silence regarding the fact that not every employee can or should be promoted, and that there is a need to find ways to recognize, value and support staff who have reached their natural career ceiling. In addition, consultations with P and D level international professional staff indicated that many international staff tend to expect that they should be almost automatically promoted as soon as they meet the formal criteria that would make them eligible for a vertical move. However, as noted in the 2016 Report of the External Auditor, within the United Nations, promotions occur relatively rarely in one’s career, and the great majority of international staff retire at P3 or P4 levels.<sup>94</sup>

**Finding 9 WFP has considerably improved learning opportunities for employees through the online “WeLearn” platform. At the same time, hands-on experiences and interaction have not yet been systematically encouraged across the organization.**

74. The People Strategy envisaged the development of an “organization-wide learning curriculum for all the required skills identified in the career frameworks, using information technology to provide global access” and also referred to “on-the-job experiences and exposure to various situations” as a means for staff capability development.<sup>95</sup>

75. During the review period, there was notable progress regarding formal learning opportunities.<sup>96</sup> As of 2015, a revision and expansion of the WFP learning management system (LMS) “WeLearn”, led by HRM in collaboration with other WFP divisions, provided employees with increased opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills relevant to the capabilities described in the career frameworks. Since 2014 there has been a significant increase in the types of available WeLearn courses completed (from 165 different types of courses in 2014 to 1,922 in 2018) as well as, as shown in Figure 5, in the total number of completed courses. WeLearn includes a set of courses that are mandatory for all employees and that focus on core topics relevant to staff safety and to the organizational reputation of WFP, such as courses on safety and security, on ethics and standards of conduct, and on the prevention of harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority. During the 2014-2018 period, the number of mandatory courses increased from three to five (plus one mandatory security course depending on the employee’s duty station). At the same time, while mandatory courses used to make up the majority of learning management system access from 55 percent in 2013 to 37 percent in 2016,<sup>97</sup> there had been a significant shift to more voluntary utilization of the system.

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<sup>93</sup> The Independent Task Force Report (UNICEF 2019, p.23) noted that UNICEF is also suffering from a perceived divide between staff and non-staff, with the latter reporting feeling vulnerable to harassment and abuse of authority due to complete lack of job security, networks and resources.

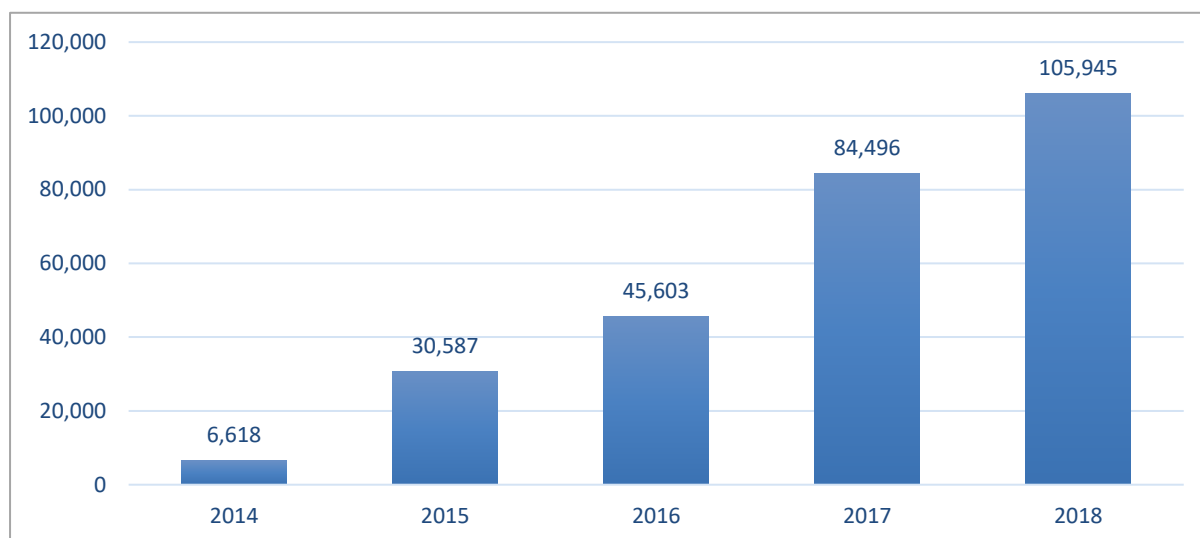
<sup>94</sup> WFP 2017m, p.29.

<sup>95</sup> WFP. 2014. People Strategy (2014-2017), paragraphs 34 and 23.

<sup>96</sup> UNICEF has a similar platform (ACHIEVE). No related information was obtained for UNHCR.

<sup>97</sup> Source: WFP 2017b. Review of Fit-for-Purpose Organization-Strengthening Initiative.

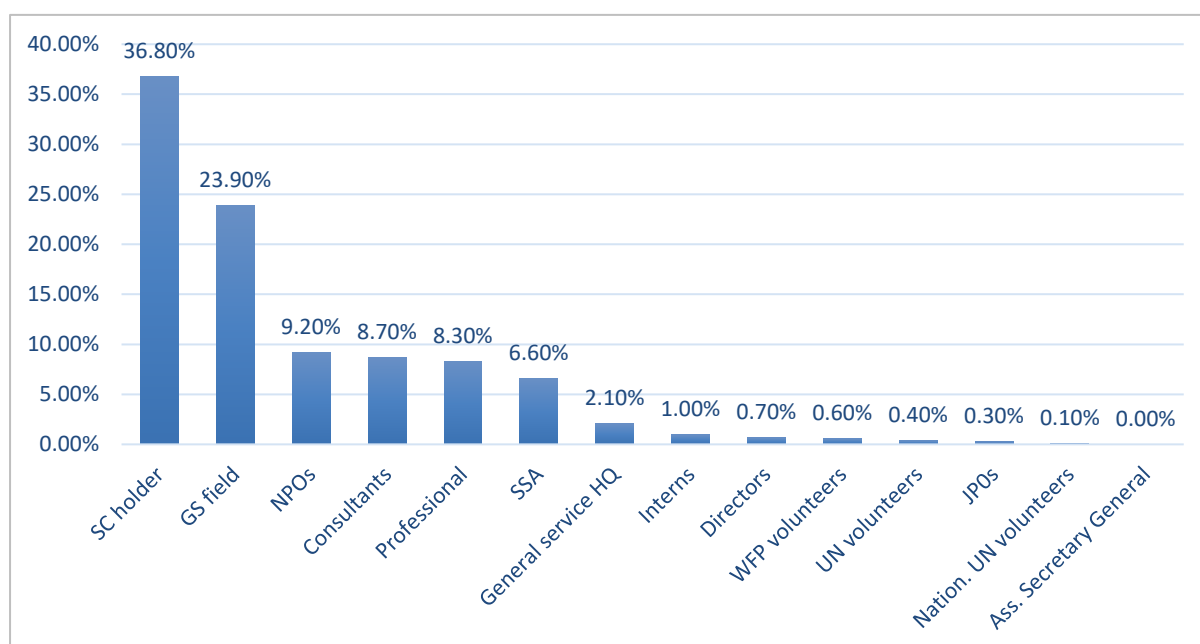
**Figure 5 Changes in number of completed courses 2014-2018**



Source: Dataset on WeLearn completions (2014-2018) provided by HRM

76. The number of individual learning management system users increased from 3,936 in 2014 to 11,173 in 2017, with around two thirds of users being locally recruited employees.<sup>98</sup> Since 2014, the majority of course completions were logged by service contract holders, as shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6 Percentage of course completions by user category for 2014-2018 combined**



Source: Dataset on WeLearn completions (2014-2018) provided by HRM

77. In WFP, staff training is interdivisional with HRM sharing responsibilities with the different functional units. Prior to HRM's improvements to the learning management system, different units and divisions outside of HRM were often unaware of the training that other units were developing and there were no common quality standards, systems or approaches. Consulted stakeholders indicated that efforts to improve and systemize online learning options for WFP employees through WeLearn also contributed to the creation of a

<sup>98</sup> Service contract holders make up 36.8 percent of all users, followed by General staff field (23.9 percent) and national professional officers (9.2 percent). Source: Dataset on WeLearn completions (2014-2018) provided by HRM.

dynamic community of practice within WFP, which now holds regular learning management meetings to share lessons learned and good practice. Also, WeLearn allows functional units to develop their own training content within the system. To support this, HRM has trained approximately 80 colleagues from different WFP functional units and country offices on how to create their own training courses as part of online learning channels.<sup>99</sup>

78. While stakeholder consultations and document review largely indicate positive change, there are also some areas for improvement and some open questions around the use of the learning platform.

- In WeLearn, courses are structured according to WFP functional channels to help orient users to what is relevant to them. Nevertheless, most employees consulted during site visits stated that they found the vast offer of available materials<sup>100</sup> difficult to navigate and prioritize. To respond to this challenge, HRM (Capability Development Branch) is working with different thematic functions to develop structured curricula for foundation programmes that would provide staff with clearer guidance on what resources to access at a minimum. A foundational programme for the human resource function has been developed and is about to be launched and others will follow (for example, for nutrition, IT, and the Programme Division). Box 11 details good practice.

#### Box 11: Good practice (and related challenges)

In the [Afghanistan country office](#), senior management aimed to develop a global country office training plan wherein, as of 2019, each thematic function would develop and follow a specific learning journey encompassing the right mix of mandatory and non-mandatory courses. Implementation of this promising approach is facing difficulties, however, due to the absence of a dedicated capacity development budget for the entire office workforce.

- While learning management system completions are logged in PACE, it is not currently clear to employees or their supervisors whether and how completing courses actually helps people obtain relevant competencies that improve their performance, and whether or how related information should be considered when making decisions about filling higher-level positions, for example.<sup>101</sup>
- According to HRM staff at headquarters, most new training initiatives in WFP come with a budget for translation, which had not been the case in the past, and new courses are usually made available in French, English, Spanish, and sometimes also in Arabic. However, while all mandatory courses<sup>102</sup> are available in multiple languages, the vast majority of learning management system content is available only in English; if translations are available, these are issued considerably later than the English versions. For many of the consulted employees for whom English is not their main working language this constituted a disincentive to use the learning management system.<sup>103</sup>
- To make learning management system access more flexible, HRM developed a mobile app and an offline platform in 2018. Field visits indicate that this is not yet widely known among employees, as several interviewees complained that accessing the learning management system was difficult in the absence of a good internet connection.

#### Box 12: Good practice

The [Tanzania country office](#) has begun to regularly set aside dedicated work time during which employees are encouraged to access WeLearn or other professional development resources.

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<sup>99</sup> Information from interviews with HRM staff.

<sup>100</sup> An HRM briefing to the Executive Board in October 2018 indicated that there are approximately 23,000 individual learning resources for ten functional areas in the system.

<sup>101</sup> HRM and technical functions made the deliberate decision to not link course completion to immediate rewards such as promotions. Completing courses and attending training are treated as prerequisites, but they are not automatic accelerators for career advancement.

<sup>102</sup> On the Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority; Basic and Advanced Security; on the Prevention of Fraud, Corruption and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse; on Ethics and Standards of Conduct; on Gender; and on Cyber Security Awareness.

<sup>103</sup> Some employees in visited francophone COs noted that they had used the “Learning and Development Space” in their respective PACE assessments to request access to English language training, partly in order to be able to access more WeLearn offers. In most cases, this access appears to have been granted.

- Many employees find it difficult to make time to engage in formal learning such as through the learning management system, and some staff noted that availability of time for learning varies between functional units depending on the intermittent or constant nature of the workload (Box 12).

79. The WFP career frameworks are based on the “70:20:10” model for learning and development, which suggests that employees make the most progress if 70 percent of their learning is experiential (through daily tasks, challenges and practice), 20 percent is social (through exchange with co-workers and mentors), and 10 percent is formal (through courses and programmes).<sup>104</sup> Organization-wide initiatives put in place since 2014 have largely focused on formal learning especially through the learning management system and various leadership development programmes (see Section 2.2.6). In comparison, opportunities for experiential and social learning vary considerably by location and staff category and are not always deliberately structured to systematically encourage knowledge and skill transfer from experienced to newer employees. Several consulted employees (especially interns and junior professional officers) reported that when they started working for WFP, they received very limited guidance including on available capacity development modalities and opportunities. This also indicates that the structured onboarding process for new staff that is suggested by HRM is not yet consistently followed in all offices. However, Box 13 details a good practice example.

#### Box 13: Good practice

In the [India country office](#), all head of unit positions are filled by national professional officers (NO-B), each of whom has a deputy (NO-A) who is trained to be able to replace the chief if needed (short-term or more permanently). The country office also put in place a “sharing knowledge committee” to enhance cross-unit sharing of knowledge and overcome previously noted working in silos.

79. The most common means for social learning in WFP appears to be the use of temporary duty assignments - that is, placement in other offices or locations for a limited amount of time. While the original intended purpose of temporary duty assignments is to help fill short-term staffing needs rather than providing a learning mechanism, evaluation field missions indicate that temporary duty assignments are widely used as a tool for professional development and recognition. The assignments are highly popular among national staff as they are considered a desirable experience that can support career progression and that provides an important financial incentive. Visited country offices varied, however, in the extent to which temporary duty assignments were available to staff at all, and in how transparent the selection process was perceived to be.

## Establish overall workforce planning capability

**Finding 10** Since 2014, WFP has improved elements of strategic workforce planning, but it is only beginning to develop a coherent approach to related challenges.

80. The People Strategy emphasized the importance of workforce planning but did not clarify how this concept related to other dimensions of people management addressed in the People Strategy.<sup>105</sup> As captured in a 2018 Executive Board briefing by the Director of HRM, the term “workforce planning” is not yet well understood in WFP and tends to be used as a synonym for talent management, succession planning or talent acquisition. While these can constitute outputs, strategic workforce planning is a broader concept related to the continuous alignment of the organization’s workforce with the changing (and particularly future) needs of its operations.<sup>106</sup> Consulted senior managers at headquarters, regional bureau and country office levels widely agreed that, with some exceptions, WFP workforce planning still tends to be focused on the short term and is relatively *ad hoc*, reflecting immediate priorities in rapidly changing humanitarian settings. The review of comparator organizations indicates that both UNICEF and UNHCR have faced similar challenges in systematically addressing workforce planning (Annex 13).

<sup>104</sup> WFP. 2014. Capability-Based Career Framework Guidance, p. 25.

<sup>105</sup> This is linked to the observation in Section 2.1 about the absence of a theory of change or equivalent for the People Strategy.

<sup>106</sup> WFP. 2018au. Update on the 2014 People Strategy. Executive Board Briefing. 11 October 2018.

81. Since 2014, WFP has made improvements in several aspects of workforce planning, such as talent acquisition (Finding 12).<sup>107</sup> The Strategic Plan (2017-2021) and the Policy on Country Strategic Plans (2017-2021) appear to have given this agenda a considerable “push”, particularly through systematic organizational alignment reviews carried out in the context of country strategic plan development to ensure that country offices are equipped with the right workforce, skills and capabilities. Between June 2018, when the organizational alignment project started, and June 2019, 40 review missions (18 headquarters led and 22 regional bureau led) have been carried out, and another nine reviews were tentatively planned at the time of writing this report. Within the sample of countries visited for this evaluation, the country offices in Burundi, Chad, Nicaragua, Senegal and Sudan had undergone organizational reviews, which were widely considered key drivers of positive changes in systematic workforce planning.<sup>108</sup> These comprehensive reviews included an assessment of the current country office set up and alignment to the country strategic plan, development of new high-level and detailed organizational structures, assessment of gaps between existing and anticipated workforce composition, identification of critical capability and learning needs, development of an implementation plan, including calculation of preliminary costs, and provision of change management guidance and training of human resource teams in the country office to support implementation. Organizational realignment is also seen by some country offices as an opportunity to address long-standing concerns by deliberately adjusting the ratio of short-term to fixed-term staff.

**Finding 11 Since 2014, WFP has made some progress in enhancing the diversity of its workforce, albeit to varying degrees depending on the level of seniority.**

82. The People Strategy stated that workforce planning would help WFP to forecast and plan ways of building a diverse and high-performing workforce and complying with the gender performance standards of the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN SWAP).<sup>109</sup>

83. In 2018, 35 percent of overall WFP workforce were women - a small increase from 32 percent in 2014.<sup>110</sup> However, since 2014, the number of women employees has been increasing at a higher rate than that of men employees (between 5 and 6 percent annually for women and between 1 and 3 percent for men). In WFP, this percentage varies by geographic location, usually with lower percentages of women staff in emergency settings (Annex 16), as well as by staff category and grades. As shown in Figure 7, in 2018, 54.7 percent of staff at the P2 level were women, thereby for the first-time meeting and exceeding the WFP target of 50 percent. Envisaged targets have not yet been achieved for any other international professional staff positions, with P3 and P5 level stagnating at around 42 percent, P4 level at 44 percent, D1 fluctuating and reaching 40 percent in 2018, and D2 levels slightly declining from 34.7 to 33.3 percent between 2017 and 2018. In comparison, UNICEF reached parity between men and women in the senior staff rotation cadre for the first time in 2018, with 109 women and 108 men.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> To provide decision-makers in WFP with easy access to workforce data in order to facilitate workforce-related decision making, HRM developed an HR analytics dashboard. During field missions the evaluation team did not specifically explore, however, whether and how this tool is being used by different entities at HQ, RB and CO levels.

<sup>108</sup> Source: WFP. 2019. Organizational Alignment Reviews - Overview. Briefing to Internal Auditors. 4 June 2019. PowerPoint Presentation.

<sup>109</sup> WFP. 2014. People Strategy (2014-2017), paragraph 26.

<sup>110</sup> In comparison, in 2017, 47 percent of UNICEF global workforce were women, as were 39 percent of UNHCR staff and 55 percent of its affiliate personnel. Like WFP, UNHCR is close to achieving gender parity for international staff but further away for national staff (rates vary from 25 percent women staff in Africa, to 38 percent in the Middle East and North Africa, and 57 percent in the Americas). This is due in part to the high number of men drivers, who represent 20 percent of all national staff. (Sources: UNHCR. 2017. The People Working for UNHCR, as well as consultations with UNICEF and UNHCR representatives at HQ.)

<sup>111</sup> Source: Interview with UNICEF representative at HQ.

84. Under the People Strategy, WFP adopted the requirement that at least one female candidate should be put forward for each mid- to senior-level professional position. This can, at least in part, explain the noted increase in women on P2 positions (Box 14). The modest progress made towards meeting gender diversity targets for senior staff levels may, in part, be due to the fact that, as noted by interviewed stakeholders, male (international) staff tend to leave the organization in their 50s, while women frequently do so between the ages of 35 and 45, often due to family-related reasons. However, WFP does not have any actual data that would enable the monitoring or addressing of underlying shortcomings.

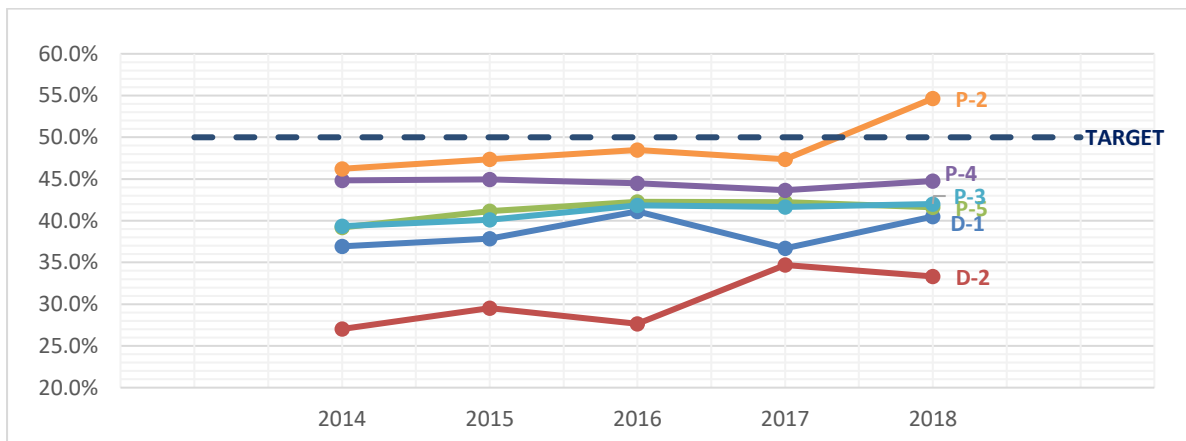
**Box 14: Good practice**

The [Chad country office](#) has created an internship programme for women university graduates, aimed at building a cohort of professional women with the potential to join the WFP workforce on a more permanent basis.

The [Afghanistan country office](#) pays for a shuttle service for women employees to assist them with safely getting to and from work, thereby removing one obstacle that could otherwise keep them from continuing their employment.

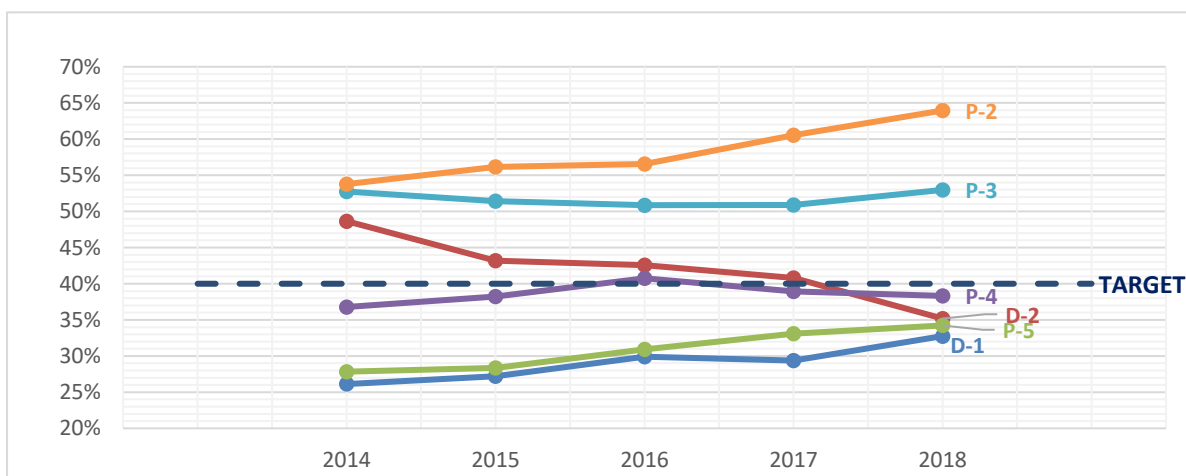
The [Sudan country office](#) has built a separate prayer space for women staff.

**Figure 7 Percentage of international professional staff who are women**



85. When it comes to enhancing the diversity of senior staff originating from developing countries, as shown in Figure 8, the related target of 40 percent has been consistently exceeded since 2014 for P2 and P3 levels, while there has been a decline for P4 and D2 levels, and only modest progress at P5 and D1 levels.

**Figure 8 Percentage of international professional staff who are considered to be nationals of “developing countries”**



Source for both graphs: WFP. EB statistical reports 2014-2018



86. Given the noted absence of a formal diversity and inclusion strategy (beyond the Gender Parity Action Plan developed in 2018), until now it has been up to individual Country Directors to address diversity-related tensions within their teams and to set related norms and expectations. Document review and stakeholder consultations indicate that significant differences remain in the day-to-day workplace experiences of various employee groups. The gender-related differences are highlighted by global staff survey results, which show notable differences in the responses given by male and female employees (Box 15). In comparison, survey results by age cohorts show relatively little variation except for responses to well-being.<sup>113</sup> No similar data are available, however, that would allow for the identification of differences in perceptions and experience based on, for example, sexual orientation, disability, primary language, or religious affiliation.

**Box 15: Global staff survey 2018 results indicate that the workplace experiences of male and female WFP employees differ considerably<sup>112</sup>**

42 percent of male but only 29 percent of female respondents agreed that, at WFP, career progression is based primarily on merit.

65 percent of male but only 55 percent of female respondents agreed that all WFP employees are treated with respect regardless of their job.

53 percent of male but only 40 percent of female respondents stated that they trusted WFP to protect them if they spoke out about something not being done right.

68 percent of male but only 53 percent of female respondents believed that WFP employees at all levels are held accountable for unethical behaviour and misconduct.

87. With some exceptions such as in regional bureau Johannesburg there is no common practice of conducting exit interviews with departing WFP staff to identify the reasons why they are leaving.<sup>114</sup> This limits the organization's ability to understand challenges that may affect some employee communities more than others, and to address them based on evidence. Overall staff retention rates for WFP are consistently around 97 percent for the review period as per WFP annual performance reports; however, the annual performance reports are not explicit about whether this figure relates to staff only or to all employees. Consultations during site visits indicate that there may be considerably higher turnover among short-term employees (those on service contracts, special service agreements and consultants), but the evaluation team has not obtained data to verify this impression. This is an important information gap in the context of initiatives to strengthen workforce diversity.

<sup>112</sup> In the 2018 GSS, 18 statements elicited results with differences of 10 percent or more in responses from men and women. The 2018 survey also included five questions focusing on issues of harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of power. The evaluation team has not had access to respondent replies to these five questions as HRM is keeping them confidential.

<sup>113</sup> The 2018 GSS results have been disaggregated by three generational groupings: Millennials (the demographic cohort born between the early 1980s and the mid 1990s to 2000), Generation X (with birth years from the early/mid-1960s to the early 1980s) and Plus 54 (those born before the mid 1960s). Overall, Plus 54 respondents had slightly more positive responses than the other two groups, with the biggest difference noted in responses related to well-being, where Gen X and Millennial positive responses were around 10 percent lower than those from Plus 54 group.

<sup>114</sup> The same is the case in UNICEF. See UNICEF. 2019. Report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority, p.22. Experience from RBJ, which has integrated exit interviews as part of its HR separation processes, one challenge is the analysis and use of exit interview data.

## Refine the WFP employee value proposition and talent acquisition strategy

**Finding 12** Since 2014, WFP has put in place new and promising tools for talent acquisition, such as the future international talent mechanism (FIT Pool). While WFP aims to prioritize professional growth of existing staff over attracting new external talent, the organization has not clearly and consistently communicated this intent to its employees.

88. HRM's Capability-Based Career Framework Guidance (2014) outlined a WFP staff value proposition giving some answers to the question, "what does it mean to have a career at WFP?"<sup>115</sup> Field mission data indicate that this value proposition is not widely known among WFP employees, but some of its key messages have been shared through other channels, including the questions posed in the global staff survey.<sup>116</sup> The global staff survey allows WFP to monitor the extent to which employee experiences are aligned with those envisaged in the value proposition. Related insights are addressed throughout this report and in Annex 15.

89. WFP developed a talent acquisition strategy only in late 2018. However, since 2014 the organization has put in place various mechanisms to strengthen talent acquisition.<sup>117</sup> Key initiatives in this regard include (i) the re-activation of the emergency response roster (ERR), which had been in place during 2000-2001, in 2014;<sup>118</sup> (ii) the establishment of "talent pools" for 11 functional areas (2014-2016);<sup>119</sup> and (iii) the creation of future international talent pools (FIT Pool) (since 2018), replacing the previous talent pools. The FIT Pools are open to both internal and external candidates and involve the systematic vetting of applicants. Finally, as noted earlier, WFP introduced a requirement that at least one female candidate be put forward for consideration for each mid-to senior-level professional position. In addition, HRM has made efforts to encourage human resource officers and staffing managers to use a wider array of tools to advertize positions and reach out to potential future staff, including, for example, through the online platform LinkedIn and working with specialized recruitment firms to identify qualified female candidates for upcoming positions.

90. There is some, albeit limited, information available on the results of these efforts in terms of strengthening the quality and efficiency of recruitment and deployment processes:

- In 2018, 24 percent of staff members deployed to emergencies were selected from the internal emergency response roster, a slight increase from 21.8 percent in 2017 and 19 percent during the 2013-2016 period.<sup>120</sup>
- There are no data available on the actual use or results of the initial talent pools (2014-2016) and the mechanism was abandoned after two years, reportedly because it lacked a formal screening process for candidates and therefore did not save staffing managers' time or effort.
- Data on the total number of applications received by WFP were not consistently tracked throughout the review period, and information is available only for 2014-2016, when the total number of applications, excluding the talent pool, dropped from 12,463 in 2014 to 11,231 in 2015, and then increased to 20,677 in 2016.<sup>121</sup> There is insufficient data to reliably link this increase to specific changes in how WFP reaches out to potential candidates but it is possible that changes such as reaching out through LinkedIn may have contributed to this increase.

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<sup>115</sup> WFP. 2014. Capability-Based Career Framework Guidance; p.5.

<sup>116</sup> For example, the value proposition's statement "I am compensated well and feel valued and recognized" is picked up in GSS (2018) questions 4 (benefits), 21 (recognition), 30 (supervisor cares about me), 31 (opinions count) and 35 (feel valued and respected for who I am).

<sup>117</sup> Several of the approaches implemented by WFP are very similar to those utilized by UNICEF and UNHCR, see Annex 13.

<sup>118</sup> The development of this roster is being considered as part of the ongoing strategic evaluation of WFP Capacity to Respond to Emergencies.

<sup>119</sup> These functional areas are administration, communication, finance, human resources, nutrition, programme policy, procurement, security, security analyst, monitoring and evaluation, as well as vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM).

<sup>120</sup> Source: Excel file on ERR and non-ERR deployments 2014-2017 and 2018 provided by HRM field support. Given that WFP Capacity to Respond to Emergencies is currently the subject of a concurrent separate evaluation, the evaluation team did not delve deeper into assessing the relevance, effectiveness or efficiency of the ERR.

<sup>121</sup> WFP. 2017. annual performance report 2016, p. 122.

- The percentage of international professional hires who were women declined during the 2015-2017 period (from 57 percent in 2015 to 38 percent in 2017).<sup>122</sup> During the same period, the share of applications from women (not limited to senior international positions and excluding talent pools) declined from 37.1 percent to 30.4 percent. However, as noted in the 2018 annual performance report, WFP experienced an increase of nearly 120 percent in the number female applicants in that year. The annual performance report attributed this increase to the roll-out of the new 2018 talent acquisition strategy developed by HRM. The evaluation team has been unable to verify or refute this claim.
- Among most consulted stakeholders, the FIT Pool mechanism is regarded as a promising innovation. At present, there are FIT Pools for 11 functions in the organization include a total of 468 members. Since 2018, 80 staff selections (of which 42 were women) have been made through the mechanism.<sup>123</sup> Key informant interviews indicate that, where they exist and are used, FIT Pools have helped reduce the time required to fill positions from between 8 to 18 months to around 3 months on average.<sup>124</sup> The thematic functions define the selection criteria relevant to their needs, and several consulted staff managers noted they had recruited excellent staff through this mechanism. However, not all functions in WFP have developed effective FIT Pools, and consultations in different country offices also show that Country Directors and other staffing managers vary in the extent to which they have been able or willing to use this mechanism<sup>125</sup> (Box 16).

**Box 16: Good practice**

Regional bureau [Johannesburg](#) is exploring how to expand talent screening (especially for local talent) beyond the assessment of technical competency to also include soft skills such as mental agility and integrity of candidates.

- Due to available resources, all FIT Pools are currently managed by one individual. This prevents HRM from providing unsuccessful applicants with feedback on why they were not selected, which likely contributes to frustration among those whose applications were not accepted.

91. Senior staff at headquarters noted that wherever possible, WFP hiring managers tend to give priority to internal candidates in order to benefit from their experience gained within the organization (Box 17). Field visits indicated, however, that this is not widely known among WFP employees. This may reflect the fact that WFP has not formulated and communicated an explicit corporate position on how the organization values and intends to develop internal versus external talent. In comparison, UNICEF has clearly communicated to its staff members that when running competitive hiring processes,

**Box 17: Internal versus external successful applicants to FIT Pools<sup>126</sup>**

By mid-2019, of 468 approved FIT Pool members, 197 (42 percent) were internal applicants from within WFP, while 271 (58 percent) were external. These proportions vary considerably across the different FIT Pools, however. For example, the pools for the security and human resource functions encompass primarily external candidates (81 percent and 74 percent respectively), while those for vulnerability, analysis and mapping (VAM) and finance predominately included internal candidates (77 percent and 63 percent respectively).

Also, a larger proportion of internal applicants tends to be more successful than external ones. For example, in the security FIT Pool, while about 90 percent of all applications for different positions were from external applicants, in most cases only about 80 percent of the final pool of successful candidates were external, indicating that bringing WFP experience does constitute a certain advantage. However, on an individual level this advantage tends to be minimal for internal candidates given the comparatively large number of external applicants.

<sup>122</sup> WFP. 2018. annual performance report 2017, p. 151.

<sup>123</sup> FIT Pool data provided by HRM.

<sup>124</sup> Following the FIT Pools' screening, technical and language assessment functions, between 1 and 5 percent of applicants ends up being invited into the pool. Having this pre-screened smaller pool of applicants to choose from significantly reduces the time and effort required from individual staffing managers.

<sup>125</sup> For example, the Chad CO has had difficulty attracting and retaining international staff because the duty station is challenging, non-family and does not offer hardship allowances. Although FIT Pool candidates were reportedly identified, they declined the offer to deploy to Chad and the CO has had to fall back on the slower approach of external recruitment.

<sup>126</sup> Source: FIT Pool data provided by HRM.

staffing managers have the option to select internal applicants if these are among the top three contenders for a position.

### 2.2.5 IMPERATIVE 3: SHIFT THE FOCUS<sup>127</sup>

92. Under this imperative, the People Strategy emphasized the role of national staff members as the “backbone of WFP” and announced the intention to “shift its focus and provide more for national staff” in terms of strengthening their skills, capabilities and engagement in ways that respond to WFP operational and strategic needs<sup>129</sup> (Box 18).

**Box 18: Expected behaviour changes as per the constructed theory of change:<sup>128</sup>**

National staff actively manage their career development (including through gaining relevant capabilities or experience).

Staff access available counselling and medical services.

Staff report incidents of alleged misconduct/abuse/harassment/retaliation to appropriate channels.

Staff stay longer with WFP and take fewer sick days/have fewer injuries.

Managers take appropriate action to address dangers to the health or safety of staff.

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<sup>127</sup> Addressing evaluation subquestion 2.3.

<sup>128</sup> Some of these overlap with, and are being addressed under, other imperatives, such as the notion of staff actively managing their career development (Section 2.2.4). WFP Management Results Framework (2014-2017) included no KPIs specifically related to issues covered under this imperative.

<sup>129</sup> WFP. 2014. People Strategy (2014-2017), paragraph 32

## Create a supportive and healthy workplace

**Finding 13** Since 2014, WFP has notably strengthened its attention to staff wellness and there is evidence of an ongoing change in organizational culture in this regard.

93. Staff wellness was the initiative of the People Strategy that elicited the most consistently positive responses from stakeholders during field visits. The approval of a corporate Wellness Strategy (2015-2019), the subsequent establishment of a dedicated Staff Wellness Division in the same year (2015) and the allocation of USD 10 million for a Wellness Programme Fund in 2015 and another USD 8 million in 2017 signalled the organization's commitment to the topic and allowed for concrete changes to be made. Key achievements since 2015 include upgrades to employee accommodation, providing new and enhanced medical services, such as mobile clinics able to reach remote locations, and increasing employee access to staff counsellors either through individual or group sessions<sup>131</sup> (Box 19 and Annex 14).

94. During the review period, as confirmed by stakeholder consultations at headquarters and during field missions and document review, all regional bureaux and country offices put in place measures to enhance the physical and mental well-being of employees.<sup>132</sup> Examples include making available or facilitating access to gym facilities and other physical activities (such as dance, sports, team hikes); improvements to employee accommodation (especially in remote field offices) and office infrastructure; organization of vaccination drives and other in-office medical check-ups; access to counselling; and organization

### Box 19: Good practice in relation to staff well-being

All the visited regional bureaux and most country offices had developed global staff survey action plans (sometimes at unit level) to address shortcomings that had emerged in the 2018 global staff survey. These plans were usually developed through participatory processes, though offices varied in the extent to which they provided regular updates on implementation and successes. While a small number of consulted employees expressed scepticism over the extent to which the plans would help to address shortcomings, the vast majority of stakeholders welcomed them as tools to enhance transparency and give employees an active role in addressing areas for improvement.

Regional bureau Johannesburg offers weekly yoga classes for employees, as well as a fitness class followed by "happy hour" on Fridays.

The Uganda country office offers in-country medevac to the capital for service contract and special service agreement holders in field offices where medical facilities are limited. This covers both service and non-service incurred cases.

The Burundi country office has started to put some office management decisions up to a vote by employees, for example by using mini surveys and social media polls, in order to address perceptions of lack of transparency and fairness that had emerged in recent global staff surveys.

The Algeria country office, at the request of national staff, has established a compressed working schedule in recognition of the hazardous, stressful and difficult conditions of the hardship duty station of Tindouf. While the country office is unable to provide national staff with paid rest and recuperation, the compressed working schedule at least allows staff time to travel home on a regular basis. In introducing the compressed working schedule, the country office mirrored flexible work schedule arrangements observed by other United Nations agencies in the area, such as UNHCR.

The Afghanistan country office has introduced flexible working hours to allow staff to better manage work and home life.

In the Senegal country office, following a suggestion from the staff association and the wellness committee, a weekly one-hour yoga session was introduced to help staff deal with stress, in particular in the context of a considerable downsizing of the office during the 2016-2018 period.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>130</sup> Since 2014, the Senegal CO has been reduced by 35 percent, from 77 employees in 2014 to 65 in 2016 and 50 in 2018. See Annex 16.

<sup>131</sup> Available data from counsellor reports and the staff wellness survey (2017) indicate that between 40 and 50 percent of all WFP employees have been reached by a counsellor of some form (for example, a peer support volunteer or staff counsellor).

<sup>132</sup> The (UNICEF) Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority found, however, that in UNICEF the implementation of flexible working and family friendly policies varies considerably by office and individual supervisor. Interview and document review related to KPGM indicate that the organization is placing emphasis on using an "intelligent working" approach by allowing any working schedule outside of traditional working patterns that allows employees to get their work done, with an overall focus on outcomes rather than time spent at work.

of various social and/or team building activities. By June 2018, 28 country offices had established staff wellness committees and 4 country offices had developed tailored country office wellness strategies.<sup>133</sup> Field visits indicate, however, that country offices differ in the extent to which their approaches to addressing employee wellness take into account gender considerations, including in relation to identifying and providing nuanced solutions to the sometimes differing needs and experiences of men and women respectively.<sup>134</sup>

95. Consulted WFP employees widely agreed that there has been, and continues to be, a culture shift around the notion of staff wellness among managers and employees. As one individual stated: "A few years ago, providing staff with access to a gym would have been regarded as a waste of money that could have been used to feed people. Now we are starting to see benefits for our performance if staff are healthy." WFP has also included staff wellness in the organization's corporate risk register as one of the main fiduciary risks to be actively managed.<sup>135</sup>

96. Relevant in the context of enhancing staff well-being are initiatives led by units other than the Wellness Division, including, for example, extensive awareness campaigns on the prevention of harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority conducted by the Ethics Office, and the development of mandatory online training courses on the same topics through HRM. The extensive global staff survey, conducted in a similar format every three years since 2012, has become an important mechanism not only for HRM to "take the pulse" of the WFP workforce, but also for employees to give credit or air frustrations, and, more generally, for them to feel heard and respected. The value assigned to the survey is also indicated by the steadily increased global staff survey participation rates, from 44 percent of the workforce in 2012 to 70 percent in 2015 and 85 percent in 2018.<sup>136</sup>

97. Despite noted improvements, some persistent threats to employee well-being remain. Among these, challenges around accessing medical benefits constitute one of the main issues. While covered by medical insurance through WFP, many employees in (remote) sub-offices do not yet have access to medical services. In some locations, local health centres/hospitals require WFP employees to pay for treatment upfront, which, for many locally recruited staff, poses a major obstacle, even if they are able to be reimbursed for expenses at a later date. Field visits indicated that in some locations in emergency settings staff have been requested to pay large sums due to delays with the issuance of a letter of guarantee from the insurance, or the insurance not paying hospitals in a timely manner leading to the institution not honouring agreements.

98. There are further examples of threats to employee well-being. (i) While international staff in hardship locations are entitled to regular, paid rest and recuperation time, the United Nations common system principles – which WFP human resource procedures have to align with – do not make similar provisions for national staff, based on the fact that these staff are hired from within their home country. However, many national staff do not come from the area where they are working and have limited opportunities for home visits or other forms of recuperation. (Box 19 has a related example of good practice from the Algeria country office). (ii) In some countries, service contract and special service agreement holders with contracts of less than a year are not eligible to receive bank loans, including mortgages (because their income is not considered as guaranteed) even if they have had successive one-year contracts for several years: a situation that is not only frustrating in terms of a lack of career progression, but also in relation to choices they can make in their personal lives.<sup>137</sup> (iii) In at least one country office, the WFP headquarters' decision that service contract and special service agreement holders cannot open accounts with the United Nations Federal Credit Union prevents them from depositing their salaries in inflation-protected convertible currency – exposing

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<sup>133</sup> WFP. 2018az. Executive Board Meeting briefing on the Wellness Strategy, June 2018.

<sup>134</sup> For example, by ensuring that employees who are nursing mothers have access to a private, quiet space for breastfeeding.

<sup>135</sup> This is not just a formality but carries actual commitments including the development of a related KPI to monitor change. UNHCR is the only other United Nations agency that also includes staff wellness in its risk register, but does so under operational rather than fiduciary risks, thereby assigning the issue slightly less central prominence than WFP.

<sup>136</sup> WFP. 2018ad. GSS Summary of World Food Programme Overall.

<sup>137</sup> As an example of good practice in this regard consulted WFP stakeholders noted that in some COs the respective country director has taken the risk to provide long serving SC holders with over three years of service a one-month salary advance if needed. This prevents employees from taking out often high-risk loans.

them to significant inflation risks and exchange rates losses that colleagues with fixed-term contracts do not experience.

99. In 2017, the Office of the WFP Ombudsman reported a 71 percent increase in the number of employees contacting the Ombudsman and a 96 percent increase in the number of individual issues brought to the office's attention.<sup>138</sup> At the same time, the majority of employees consulted during field visits stated that, while they were now familiar with the various channels available to them for reporting abuse or misconduct, they were unlikely to use them. This mirrors findings outlined in the 2019 WFP Workplace Culture Report. Reasons given for not reporting experienced or witnessed cases of abuse or misconduct included: fear of retaliation, concerns over getting involved in a lengthy bureaucratic or even legal process with an uncertain outcome, and directly experienced or witnessed cases of reported abuse or misconduct not leading to any action or change. The Workplace Culture Report further notes that for most surveyed WFP employees the preferred reporting avenue is through to the direct supervisor/manager or another supervisor/manager, followed by an human resource officer or focal point, a staff counsellor and the Ombudsman. The Ethics Office, a security officer, a peer support volunteer and the Office of the Inspector General were named as the least utilized reporting avenues given that, according to employees, these avenues seemed very serious.<sup>139</sup> UNICEF employees have voiced similar concerns. The 2019 report of the UNICEF Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority noted that only 51 percent of UNICEF employees believed that if they reported misconduct, they would be protected from retaliation.<sup>140</sup>

100. It is also of concern that, according to the 2018 global staff survey, only 40 percent of women and 53 percent of men respondents felt that WFP would protect them if they spoke out about something not being done right, and only 53 percent of women and 68 percent of men believed that WFP employees at all levels were held accountable for unethical behaviour and misconduct. The global staff survey results indicate that women tend to experience WFP as a less safe and supportive workplace than men do. The Workplace Culture Report confirmed that WFP has not yet been able to effectively prevent and address cases of abuse of authority, harassment and sexual harassment.<sup>141</sup> It also noted that the most referenced form of abusive behaviour experienced or observed by surveyed WFP employees was abuse of authority, involving unjustified preferential treatment of certain colleagues, which employees perceived as leaders demonstrating favouritism.<sup>142</sup>

## Enhance the skills and capacities of national staff

101. Several observations regarding progress and remaining areas for improvement in relation to capacity development and career progression for national WFP staff (and, more broadly, all locally recruited employees) have already been made in Section 2.2.4 on Imperative 2. Improvements in this regard include the noted increase in availability of learning offers through WeLearn, with, on average, 79 percent of WeLearn course completions being achieved by locally recruited employees.<sup>143</sup>

102. Furthermore, in most visited regional bureaux and country offices, the FIT Pool is widely appreciated not only as a talent identification tool but also as a mechanism to facilitate the transition from national to international staff positions, thereby offering possibilities for personal and professional growth to local staff. In 2018, 52 percent of successful FIT Pool applicants were national staff.<sup>144</sup> At the same time, consultations during field missions indicated that expectations raised among national staff about the ability of the pool to

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<sup>138</sup> WFP. 2019e. Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services for 2017. WFP/EB.1/2019/4-A. January 2019, p.1.

<sup>139</sup> WFP. 2019i, External Review of Workplace Culture and Ethical Climate at World Food Programme. September 2019, p. 56.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, p.30-34. The report cites the 2017 UNICEF global staff survey, which also noted that 15 percent of respondents stated that whether a person was held accountable to charges of misconduct depended on their seniority within the UNICEF hierarchy.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, p.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, p. 27.

<sup>143</sup> Data provided by HRM.

<sup>144</sup> WFP. 2018. Update on People Strategy (HRM Briefing to the Executive Board). Slide presentation. October 2018.

facilitate access to international positions appear to have been higher than what the mechanism has delivered.<sup>145</sup> Unsuccessful applicants across the visited country offices and regional bureaux expressed frustration especially over the fact that FIT Pool application requires fluency in English,<sup>146</sup> which excludes many otherwise skilled and experienced individuals. Consulted staff at headquarters pointed out, however, that this language requirement reflects an organizational need within WFP. WFP is offering a free language-learning programme to support employees in developing required capacities, which, since 2015, has had over 4,500, mostly national, staff participants. Box 20 details an example of good practice in the Burundi country office.

103. In all country offices visited for this evaluation, national staff (national professional officers and some general service staff) held positions with considerable responsibilities for other employees whom they supervised and for financial resources, capital equipment and supplies. Interviews with external stakeholders such as representatives from donor and other United Nations agencies indicated differences, however, in the extent to which national staff play a role in representing WFP externally. Similarly, some international and national WFP professional staff noted critically that

**Box 20: Good practice**

In the [Burundi country office](#), the staff association declared Friday as the office-wide English-speaking day in order to provide practice opportunities for those employees wishing to improve their language abilities.

During the review period, the [Afghanistan country office](#) has taken deliberate steps to increasingly 'nationalize' field positions while reducing the number of international staff positions, which has considerably changed the "face" of WFP in both sub-offices and the country office. Stakeholder consultations indicate that to a considerable extent this change has been motivated by funding conditions and donor requests to lower staff costs.

In the [Uganda country office](#), the nationalization of posts was one of the principles underlying the office's organizational alignment exercise, which contributed to national staff motivation and capacity strengthening. Other country offices in the regional bureau Johannesburg region are taking similar approaches.

within parts of WFP and among some donors, the belief prevailed that national staff were prone to corruption and pressure from local authorities and could therefore not be trusted with large amounts of money or other resources. The 2019 Report of the External Auditor on Fraud Prevention, Detection and Response indicates that most investigated cases of fraud between 2017 and 2019 were, indeed, committed by national employees (24 percent by local staff and 33 percent by service contract holders). However, the relatively small number of 46 investigated cases in total during this period puts into question the conclusions drawn about all national staff. In the view of the interviewed national professional officers, such generalizations did, at times, limit their opportunities for professional growth.<sup>147</sup> Box 20 details a good practice example of national staff empowerment in the Afghanistan and Uganda country offices.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Strongest criticism of the FIT Pool was expressed in the LAC region (Panama RB), where most consulted stakeholders expressed concerns over a lack of transparency over FIT Pool selection criteria and, until now, lack of success by managers to obtain staff through the mechanism.

<sup>146</sup> Individual FIT Pools also varied in how the English language criterion was formulated, some generically requiring "fluency", others naming a specific level of competence. Many consulted national staff, especially in French and English-speaking countries, perceived an English language requirement as an obstacle that systematically disadvantaged talented individuals.

<sup>147</sup> As one NO noted: "It's really bizarre because if you go on temporary duty assignments or something and you go into another country office then suddenly you're perceived as an international staff member and they treat you very differently. Then, when you come back to your office suddenly your document has to be signed off by someone."

<sup>148</sup> The Nicaragua CO, as well as most other COs in the LAC region was also noted as a context where the division of responsibility between "international" versus "national" staff in positions has been overcome, given that most positions are filled with locally recruited employees. See also Annex 16.



## Adapt and implement fit-for-purpose contractual arrangements for national staff

**Finding 14 The People Strategy raised expectations of significant changes to contractual arrangements for national employees. To date, these expectations have been fulfilled to a limited degree.**

104. Since 2014, the proportion of locally recruited employees has remained relatively stable at around 80 percent of the WFP workforce.<sup>149</sup> The People Strategy emphasized the importance of national staff as the “backbone of WFP”, given that their skills, capabilities and engagement are the foundation of WFP ability to deliver in the countries it serves.<sup>150</sup> Imperative 3 of the People Strategy stemmed from the realization that WFP had not done enough to address the professional needs of this community. Stakeholders consulted during this evaluation widely agreed that while WFP has made several efforts in this regard, a lot remains to be done, and national employees are not yet consistently at the forefront of management attention.

105. One initiative aiming to enhance contractual arrangements for national staff was the “Local Staff Transfer Project” (2013-2014), which is explicitly mentioned in the People Strategy. Under this project, 3,600 national staff contracts (national professional officers and general service staff) were transferred from UNDP to the WFP/FAO administrative framework. The 2017 External Auditor Report<sup>151</sup> claims that this resulted in better health coverage for these staff members, and several stakeholders at headquarters highlighted that the shift had been important in sending a message of inclusion and belonging. Consultations during field missions indicate that affected staff themselves did not perceive any tangible benefits from this change. Several senior managers at headquarters described the Local Staff Transfer Project as “primarily legalistic” but of little consequence to the employees’ lives, and some human resource managers in the field regarded it as a time-consuming effort at a time when the effort could have been spent on activities with more direct benefits for national staff. However, the transfer to WFP/FAO rules marked the beginning of WFP, through what is now the Wellness Division, taking a more active role in health insurance management.

106. The People Strategy was silent on the use of short-term contracts (service contracts, special service agreements and consultancies) and using these modalities over extended periods. During the review period, driven by the WFP senior leadership at headquarters and regional levels, efforts were made to initiate change through the National Staff Project (Box 21). However, under this initiative, only 543 individuals who previously held short-term contracts received fixed-term (and thus staff) contracts, constituting approximately 7 percent of national short-term staff at the time.<sup>152</sup> While a 2013 study<sup>153</sup> had foreseen that reducing the number and proportion of short-term contracts in WFP could be achieved without adding considerable costs, the initial experiences in the context of the National Staff Project showed that this was not the case, and the ambition of widespread

### Box 21: The National Staff Project (2016-2018)

The project focused on four issues: i) contract modalities, including addressing ongoing concerns regarding the use of short-term contracts for long-serving personnel; ii) nationalization of functions to take advantage of the growing capacity in the countries where WFP works and provide new opportunities to locally recruited colleagues; iii) career development, including ensuring that all colleagues benefit from opportunities to develop their capacities and their careers; and iv) staff wellness.

Stakeholder consultations indicate that the National Staff Project strongly influenced the creation of the FIT Pool as a mechanism to facilitate the transition of national staff to international positions.

<sup>149</sup> As per staffing trend data provided by HRM, 80 percent in 2014, 79 percent and 78 percent in 2018. See Annex 16. The proportion of national employees in WFP is slightly greater than in UNHCR, where, in 2017, 72 percent of staff and 70 percent of affiliate personnel (contractors, consultants, or United Nations volunteers) were national, and 28 percent (30 percent) were international. Source: UNHCR. 2017. The People working for UNHCR.

<sup>150</sup> WFP. 2014. People Strategy (2014-2017), paragraph 32.

<sup>151</sup> WFP 2017m.

<sup>152</sup> WFP. 2017h. Review of Fit-for-Purpose Organization-Strengthening Initiative, p.14.

<sup>153</sup> Boston Consulting Group. 2013. National staff: people management. Summary of project results/next steps. Slide presentation, 28 November 2013.

conversion was curtailed. In some country offices, this meant that expectations raised among employees for all short-term contract holders to obtain fixed-term positions, were disappointed.

107. The long-term use of short-term contract modalities for both local and international employees was critically noted, for example, in the 2016 internal audit<sup>154</sup>, which stated that service contracts were in many cases used well beyond their intended period, creating de-facto continuous employment relationships with WFP. In some cases, locally recruited non-staff represented between 70 and 90 percent of the employees in country offices. Annex 16 also details current trends in visited country offices. The WFP Workplace Culture Report (2019) highlighted differences in employee treatment by contract type, and vulnerabilities deriving from contract insecurity over extended periods of time as an issue requiring improvement. Of the employees surveyed for the Workplace Culture Report, 40 percent noted that it was likely or somewhat likely that WFP colleagues may treat other colleagues unfairly based on their respective contract type. In comparison, only 25 percent saw nationality/ethnic origin as likely causes of unfair treatment, and 23 percent race and language respectively, highlighting the importance of contract types for how WFP employees perceive themselves and their colleagues.

108. The adoption of the Policy on Country Strategic Plans (2017-2021) and the related process of country strategic plan development created an opportunity to address the balance of contract modalities in a more systematic way as they required country offices to systematically review their existing workforce size and capabilities in order to best align them with projected programmatic needs (see description of the organizational alignment project under Finding 10). In some cases, related review processes identified longer-term needs, which provided the rationale for creating new fixed-term positions. Still, field missions indicated that such changes often came at a cost and, while some individuals got a fixed-term contract, some other non-staff employees had to be let go to make up a financial gap.

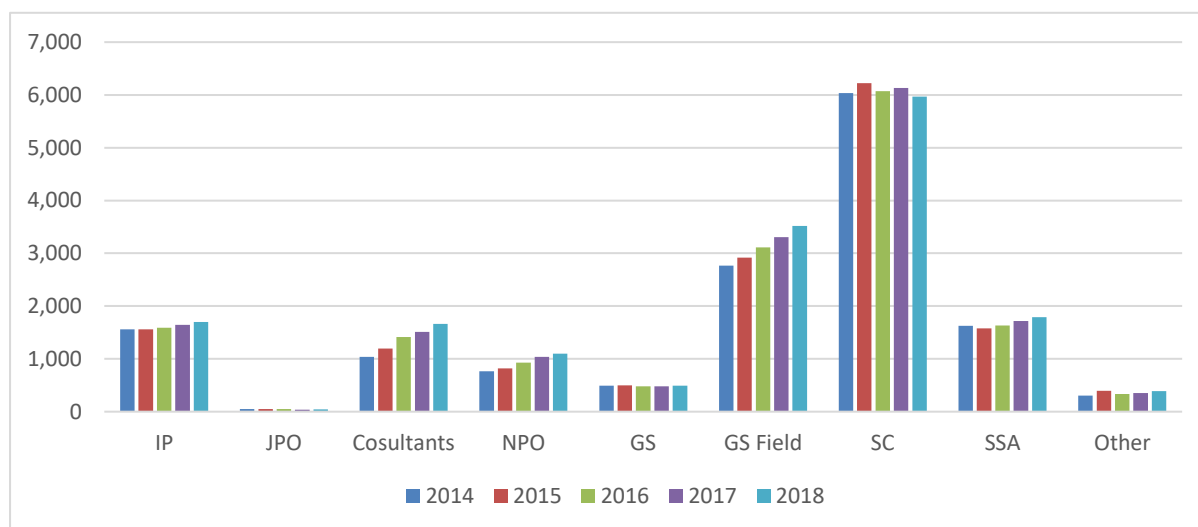
109. Recent statistics show only a modest change in the overall reliance of WFP on short-term contracts. As illustrated in Figure 9, the percentage of service contract holders as part of the overall WFP workforce declined from 41 percent in 2014 to 36 percent in 2018, while the percentage of fixed-term general service positions in the field increased from 19 percent to 21 percent and that of national professional officers from 5 percent to 7 percent. The share of special service agreement holders has remained stable at 11 percent. At the same time the proportion of international consultants has increased from 7 percent to 10 percent. Overall, the proportion of employees categorized as “staff” versus “non-staff” has not changed significantly since 2014 (in 2014, 61 percent of all employees were non-staff, compared to 59 percent in 2018).<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> WFP 2016e.

<sup>155</sup> Dataset on Employees by Gender, recruitment (2014-2018) provided by HRM.

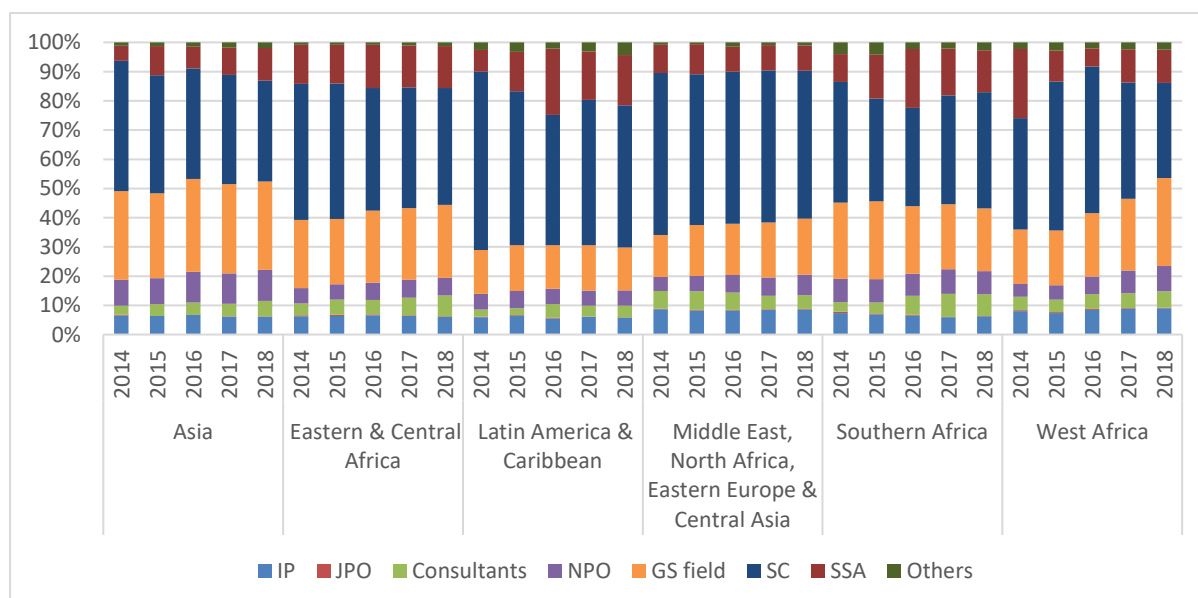
**Figure 9 WFP workforce by contract type 2014-2018<sup>156</sup>**



Source: Dataset on Employees (2014-2018) provided by HRM

110. As shown in Figure 10, there are differences between regions and countries in how staffing patterns have evolved since 2014, especially in relation to the use of short-term agreements for locally recruited staff. Throughout the 2014-2018 period, the Middle East region consistently had the highest percentage of service contract holders, although this decreased from 55 percent of the region’s total workforce in 2014 to 51 percent in 2018. One likely factor contributing to this is that several of the current L2 and L3 emergency countries lie in this region (Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Libya, and parts of Sahel). Service contract holders constitute the largest employee category in all the regions, followed by general service staff in all regions except Latin America, where special service agreement holders have been the second biggest category since 2016 – making up 23 percent of all employees in 2016 and 17 percent in 2018.

**Figure 10 Staffing trends by contract type and region 2014-2018**



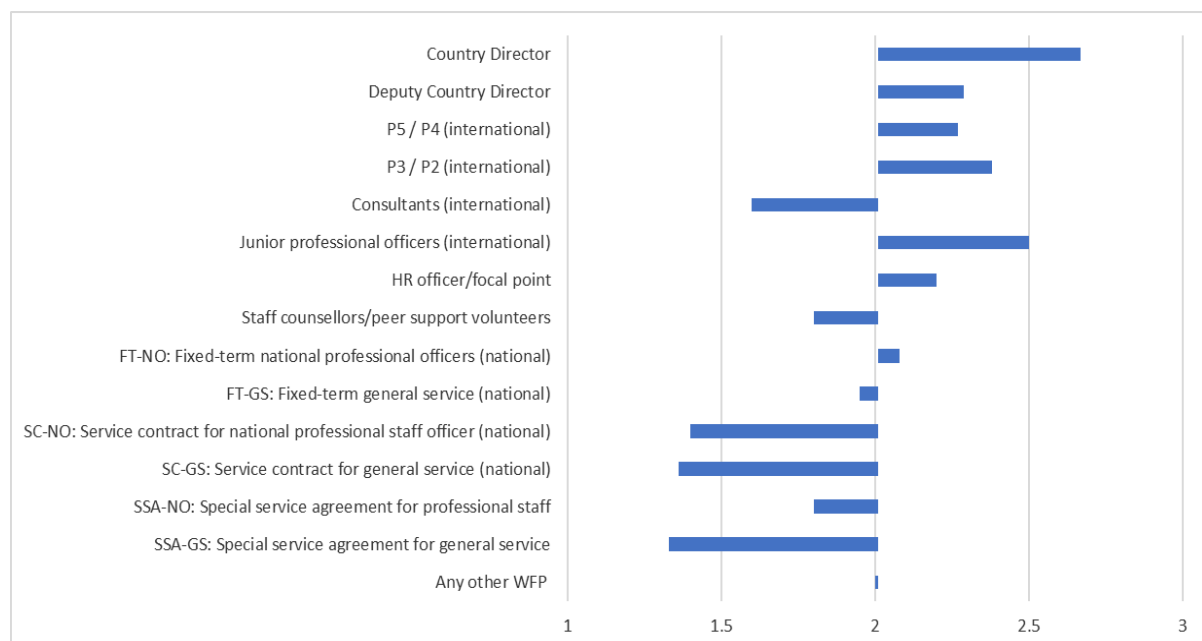
Source: Dataset on Employees by Gender, Recruitment (2014-2018) provided by HRM

<sup>156</sup> The category of “others” includes WFP volunteers, UNV, fellowship holders and interns.

111. In all country offices visited for this evaluation, service contract holders constitute the largest part of the workforce, followed by general service staff. Exceptions are (i) the Algeria country office, which did not have any service contract holders during the 2014-2018 period but relied primarily on general service field staff, and (ii) the Uganda country office, where in 2018 special service agreement holders were the largest group (45 percent), reflecting a rapid increase in office size from 276 in 2017 to 498 in 2018. The Nicaragua country office has the highest proportion of service contract holders, which in 2018 formed 68 percent of the country office's workforce. It remains to be seen if and how this changes over time following the organizational alignment review that Nicaragua is implementing in 2019 and that proposes to almost double the number of fixed-term positions. In 2018, six out of the 13 country offices visited during inception and data collection had a higher proportion of staff than non-staff<sup>157</sup> (Algeria, Burundi, India, Tanzania, Senegal, and Somalia). In two of these countries, Senegal and Somalia, the proportion of non-staff had decreased since 2014, while current figures constituted an increase since 2014 in the remaining four countries (see Annex 16 for details). The updated WFP Human Resource Manual (2019) incorporates provisions for all categories of employees and states explicitly that service contracts should not go over two years. Field missions indicate, however, that the long-term use of special service agreements and, especially, service contract modalities (up to, in one case, 23 years) is still common.

112. As illustrated in Figure 11, interviews with WFP employees during field missions indicated notable differences between employee categories in relation to the extent to which stakeholders perceived their existing contract modalities as fair and adequate.

**Figure 11 WFP employee perceptions of fairness/adequacy of existing contractual arrangements (by employee category) (n= 213 individual and group interviews conducted during field missions)<sup>158</sup>**



<sup>157</sup> As noted in Section 1.2, WFP “staff” refers to international professional staff (including those on short-term contracts), junior professional officers; national professional officers (NO) and general service (GS) staff. “Other” or “non-staff” refers to special service agreement and service contract holders, international consultants, United Nations volunteers, fellowship holders and interns.

<sup>158</sup> Source: Field mission interviews. See Annex 2 for a description of how interview data were coded. While staff counsellors/peer support volunteers are not a separate staff category, individuals in these roles had been interviewed separately, thereby constituting an exception from organizing interviews (as was the case for other employees) by contract type.

## 2.2.6 IMPERATIVE 4: EQUIP HIGH IMPACT LEADERS<sup>159</sup>

113. Under this imperative, the People Strategy envisaged the development of systems for identifying emerging leaders, ensuring that all leaders have the experience and skills to deliver results, and reinforcing line managers' accountability to ensure that managers are accountable for all aspects of people management<sup>160</sup> (Box 22).

### Box 22: Expected behaviour changes as per constructed theory of change

Leaders consistently apply appropriate people-management strategies/values.

WFP leaders demonstrate accountability for what their staff deliver.

Line managers are accountable for decisions related to talent management.

More women apply for leadership positions within WFP.

## Mobilize senior leaders

**Finding 15** While elements of the People Strategy's initiative on "mobilizing senior leaders" were put into place, important gaps remain, including incentives for leaders to aim for excellence in people management.

114. Under the initiative to "mobilize senior leaders", the People Strategy aimed to reinforce WFP leaders' commitment to driving change and outlined four areas of focus; the first three are summarized in Table 3 while the fourth is discussed below.

**Table 3 Mobilizing senior leaders**

Focus areas as per People Strategy <sup>161</sup>	Progress during 2014-early 2019
Creating a common understanding of the People Strategy, and establishing leaders' roles in communicating and delivering programmes under the strategy	<b>Achieved (with variations):</b> Following its adoption, Country Directors were briefed on the People Strategy and, to varying degrees, started sharing related information with their staff. Evaluation data from field visits and key informant interviews indicate that Country Directors vary in the extent to which they have played a (pro)active role in implementing people-focused programmes/initiatives
Engaging the Executive Management Group and leaders at the director level in planning for WFP future leadership requirements	<b>Progress:</b> As noted in Section 2.2.4, WFP is only starting to embark on comprehensive, longer-term workforce planning including identifying and addressing WFP future leadership requirements. However, as described in Section 2.2.6, WFP has put in place measures towards creating a pool of leadership talent for succession planning
Creating a unified system for developing the required capabilities	<b>Progress:</b> The various leadership training programmes described under Finding 17 have been rolled out across (most of) the organization and constitute a common approach to strengthening leadership capabilities. As discussed below, there remains some room for further refinement

<sup>159</sup> Addressing evaluation sub-question 2.4.

<sup>160</sup> WFP. 2014c. People Strategy (2014-2017), paragraph 36.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, paragraph 37

115. The People Strategy also indicated, as a fourth focus area under this imperative, that WFP would adopt a standard approach to evaluating leaders' (or, more accurately, managers')<sup>162</sup> performance. Available data indicate that while some progress has been made, the following gaps remain:

- i. Given the absence of regular 180- or 360-degree reviews, weaknesses in managers' people skills are not comprehensively or systematically identified. Numerous consulted employees across staff categories and locations noted that it is not uncommon in WFP to have people in leadership positions who are technically strong but who have significant weaknesses when it comes to organizing, motivating, and strengthening the performance of the individuals and teams for which they are responsible. This was also highlighted in the 2019 WFP Workplace Culture Report. In comparison, in KPMG and UNICEF all staff in senior positions receive regular 360-degree feedback, which, in case of KPMG, is incorporated into senior managers' performance-management reviews.<sup>163</sup>
- ii. **The extent to which different supervisors are held accountable varies by contract type.** Within WFP, the community of individuals in supervisory positions is broad and includes international and national staff at different levels of seniority, and international consultants as well as locally recruited short-term employees. Due to the nature of their contracts, the latter two categories have considerably more limited accountability towards WFP than fixed-term (international or national) staff, and often feel insufficiently empowered by the organization, for example in relation to providing supervisees with performance feedback.
- iii. **The WFP 4P capability model, which constitutes the foundation for what the organization considers to constitute good leadership, is not widely known or used.** The 4P capability model specifies, per level, expectations of WFP leaders in relation to "purpose, partnership, people and performance".<sup>164</sup> These four areas are reinforced through the existing leadership and management training programmes and leadership track (see para 122). However, data deriving from stakeholder consultations in Rome and during field missions indicate that most employees do not have a clear or shared understanding of what is considered good leadership in WFP, indicating limited knowledge and/or acceptance of the 4P capability model (Box 23).

#### Box 23: United Nations Leadership Framework

Subsequent to the finalization of the People Strategy, in April 2017, the United Nations system Chief Executive's Board for Coordination adopted a United Nations leadership framework. It identifies eight defining characteristics of 21<sup>st</sup> century United Nations leadership: norm-based, principled, inclusive, accountable, multi-dimensional, transformational, collaborative, and self-applied. It also identifies four leadership behaviours that exemplify the envisaged "new way of working" towards the 2030 Agenda: focusing on impact, driving transformational change, systems thinking, and co-creation (positioning the United Nations as conveners and connectors rather than mere project implementers).

Current performance assessment and leadership development mechanisms in WFP are not yet explicitly aligned with this framework, nor with the implications of the United Nations's approach to revived United Nations country teams and the related possibility of more WFP Country Directors being appointed to resident coordinator roles.<sup>165</sup>

<sup>162</sup> The People Strategy uses the terms "leader" and "manager" inconsistently. While in some parts the strategy distinguishes between leadership and management capabilities as two separate concepts, in other places – such as under this focus area – it uses the term "leaders" when the context implies that what is meant are "managers". In the evaluation team's understanding, the notion of "manager" refers to staff/employees at different levels who fulfill supervisory functions for other employees (from first level supervisors to senior managers). In contrast, "leadership" relates to the individual's ability to set an example and inspire others to work not only under them but with them. While, ideally, senior managers have leadership capabilities, leadership does therefore not need to be linked to rank or the number of people someone supervises.

<sup>163</sup> In UNICEF, this feedback process is considered developmental and cannot be used for performance evaluation purposes. UNICEF. 2019. Report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority, p.28.

<sup>164</sup> See, for example WFP. 2014k. Equip high impact leaders. 4Ps Leadership Framework Briefing Document. July 2014.

<sup>165</sup> A/RES/72/279 called for separating the functions of the resident coordinator from those of the resident representative of the United Nations Development Programme in order to better draw on the expertise and assets of all United Nations development system entities.

116. The urgent need for further improvement is also highlighted by the 2019 WFP Workplace Culture Report, which notes (p. 14) that part of the current WFP culture is leadership failing to consistently model ethical behaviours and holding employees accountable for misconduct.

## Develop leadership and management capabilities

**Finding 16** Since 2014, WFP has made targeted investments in developing the leadership and management capabilities of certain individuals.

117. Table 4 summarizes some key characteristics of training programmes put in place since 2014 that aim to strengthen the leadership and management capabilities of WFP employees. The 4P capability model, which forms the foundation for these programmes, does not make explicit reference to gender equality, but does mention creating an inclusive culture as one of the “people” related capabilities desired from leaders. Within the scope of this evaluation the evaluation team was not able to assess in any depth whether and to what extent gender equality perspectives are being explored in the various leadership/management training programmes currently available in WFP beyond efforts made to ensure equal participation of male and female employees or, in case of INSPIRE, targeting women only.

**Table 4 Leadership/management training programmes**

Programme	Participants to date	Participant feedback
<b>Programmes in place</b>		
<p><b>Leading for Zero Hunger (LfZH)</b> (since 2014): Developed in response to the 2012 United Nations Secretary General’s Zero Hunger Challenge. The programme targets: Country Directors, Division Directors, heads of units and sub-offices. It is a four-month programme aimed at “increasing leaders’ self-awareness, courage and skills necessary to achieve WFP’s mandate of eliminating global hunger.”<sup>166</sup> The training entails in-person seminars, self-study and some coaching (see also Annex 14)</p> <p>An updated version of the programme (now called “WFP leadership programme”) was developed in 2018-2019 and is awaiting approval at the time of writing this report</p>	<p>1,068 participants since 2014 (54 percent male/46 percent female; 48 percent international professionals, 42 percent NOs, 4.9 percent Directors, 2.3 percent GS staff, and less than percent each SC, SSA and consultants)<sup>167</sup></p>	<p>Participant feedback on the LfZH programme has been very positive, with ratings for participant satisfaction and assessments of course relevance both around and above 90 percent<sup>168</sup></p> <p>Some participants consulted during this evaluation felt that the course was largely focused on change management in the context of the fit-for-purpose initiative and, as such, not sufficiently “hands-on” in terms of providing practical leadership and management skills including around people/team management</p>
<p><b>INSPIRE women’s leadership programme</b> (since 2013): A three-day programme aimed at female professional employees with the aim of further strengthening WFP women’s leadership</p>	<p>281 participants to date (all female; 76 percent international and 24 percent national employees)<sup>169</sup></p>	<p>Participant feedback has been largely positive.<sup>170</sup> However, field missions also indicated that beyond individuals who have attended the</p>

<sup>166</sup> WFP. 2017b. Review of Fit-for-Purpose Organization-Strengthening Initiative. Rome. February 2017.

<sup>167</sup> LfZH data shared by HRM. See also Annex 14.

<sup>168</sup> “As of 2016, the “programme continuously gets outstanding ratings by participants; with 84 percent recommending the course to peers, and 98 percent rating the course highly useful.” Source: WFP 2017b. Review of Fit-for-Purpose Organization-Strengthening Initiative, p. 20.

<sup>169</sup> While initially aimed at international professional women P4 to D1 levels only, recent training has included NOPs, and a few SC holders and GS staff. The programme has not been rolled out in the LAC region.

<sup>170</sup> “The average feedback scores from the nine sessions was 4.2/5 in terms of the impact of the programme”. Fit-for-Purpose Review (2013-2016), p. 7. However, a few individuals consulted during this evaluation critically noted that (i) the programme constituted a mentorship, not a leadership programme (i.e. it did not actually provide women with leadership skills or techniques), and (ii) it failed to address institutional barriers to women’s professional progress in the organization and, instead, emphasized what each woman could or should do to progress despite existing obstacles. Further, the question was raised whether WFP needs its own women’s leadership programme given that a number of excellent courses already exist within and outside of the United Nations system.

Programme	Participants to date	Participant feedback
capabilities, career aspirations and overall confidence The programme format includes both formal and informal training, group coaching and peer mentoring support		course, the programme is not yet widely known
<b>Supervising for Zero Hunger</b> (since 2018) A ten-week course held entirely online (through WeLearn) complemented by a moderated webinar, on-the-job assignments and one-to-one coaching (done virtually)	627 participants to date (46 percent female/54 percent male; 90 percent national employees) <sup>171</sup>	Course participants consulted during field missions provided very positive feedback on their experience, describing the programme as relevant, and applicable in their day-to-day work. One suggestion was, however, to build in more in-person contact time <sup>172</sup>
<b>Programmes planned/under development</b>		
HRM has submitted a business case for developing a middle-management programme to fill the gap between the Leading for Zero Hunger programme, which is aimed at senior managers, and Supervising for Zero Hunger, which is targeting first-time supervisors		
A revised Country Director induction training programme has been developed and implementation is due to start later in 2019. Consultations during field missions confirm that until now, despite existing induction measures, new Country Directors often felt ill-equipped to deal with the many requirements of their new position as their previous careers may only have exposed them to some of these responsibilities		

118. Despite the very positive participant feedback on leadership training programmes, it is difficult to determine whether, and to what extent, they have contributed to changes in leadership and/or management practices. This is a general challenge related to the likely causal effects of specific training interventions (compared to other factors likely to influence behaviours over time, such as opportunities to apply knowledge and skills, and “learning by doing”). Most participants of the three above-noted programmes consulted during field missions were unable to say whether or how the course(s) had influenced their leadership or management behaviours. The exception was several participants of the Supervising for Zero Hunger programme, who noted that the course had helped improve their interactions with supervisees, for example in providing constructive feedback or having difficult conversations. This may at least partly reflect the fact that the programme is aimed at employees who are relatively new to supervisory positions and who may therefore experience a steeper learning curve than more senior staff.

119. According to the Fit-for-Purpose Review (2017), after attending the INSPIRE programme, several participants who were in non-rotational posts decided to pursue opportunities outside their comfort zones. Also, several women cited the programme as influencing them to mentor other women on their teams and support early talent development. WFP’s Emergency Preparedness Policy<sup>173</sup>, Madsen (2017) and Sugiyama et al (2015) put forward data and cases where hosting a women’s only leadership programme does have a positive effective in leadership, not to mention a financial return on investments for organizations and the larger community. In comparison, UNICEF offers a free mentoring programme to staff at all levels who move into new roles. For newly appointed country representatives this includes partnering them with recently retired representatives, and Regional and Deputy Regional Directors.

<sup>171</sup> Supervising for Zero Hunger data shared by HRM.

<sup>172</sup> Interviews with HRM indicate that this suggestion is already in the process of being addressed.

<sup>173</sup> WFP 2017d, p. 22.



120. The existing training programmes have not yet resulted in creating a “sustained leadership community” as envisaged in the People Strategy.<sup>174</sup> Consulted participants of all three programmes widely agreed that they would have appreciated access to more sustained coaching and/or mentoring opportunities to help them apply what they had learned. Since 2018, HRM has been offering coaching opportunities independently from the leadership programmes and experiences growing demand. This opportunity was, however, not yet widely known among staff consulted during field visits<sup>175</sup> (Box 24).

#### Box 24: Good Practice

In November 2018, [regional bureau Johannesburg](#) organized, for the first time, a Country Director leadership meeting that focused on senior managers’ people skills and facilitated peer exchange on related challenges and good practice. Each participant also received a copy of a relevant book on people management.

The [Uganda country office](#) established a library of books on “soft” people-management skills that staff can borrow through the human resources team.

121. According to HRM, information flyers with selection criteria are sent out along with every request for nominations. Interviews indicated, however, that this information does not always “trickle down”, as several employees noted that they did not know why they (and not others) had been nominated by their respective supervisors or by senior leadership to attend a particular leadership/management course. This also indicates that managers do not always have preparatory discussions with training course participants prior to their attendance in a programme to discuss expectations, objectives and follow-up activities, although such discussions should be mandatory. Stakeholders at headquarters further noted that small country offices with low budgets are often unable to send any, or can only send a few, participants to take part in the available leadership and management programmes. This disadvantages the respective office as well as qualified individuals in these country offices.

## Review leadership talent

**Finding 17 Since 2014, WFP has put in place mechanisms to approach succession planning more systematically and transparently. It is too early to tell how these new processes will influence the performance of future WFP leaders.**

122. In 2015, WFP put in place a leadership track for P4 and P5 staff to identify individuals with potential to eventually move up to P5-D1 positions. The two-year internal review process includes three phases (Box 25) and is aimed at making the selection of senior level candidates more systematic and transparent.<sup>176</sup> Recommended candidates are invited to attend an externally managed career development centre. After the career development centre, the WFP Senior Staffing Committee reviews all information, including PACEs, mobility history, and professional background along with career development centre outcomes and invites those with the highest potential into a leadership pool. Those not included in the pool but considered promising are placed in a high potential pool and benefit from further learning and development opportunities including coaching and mentoring.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> WFP. 2014. People Strategy (2014-2017), paragraph 51.

<sup>175</sup> To address existing demand, RBJ is in the process of launching a nine-month mentoring pilot programme with 56 participants (25 mentors and 31 mentees, 58 percent of whom are women). It is envisaged that the pilot initiative will form the basis for a subsequent larger corporate project to facilitate implementation of the 70:20:10 learning model.

<sup>176</sup> WFP. 2017 (updated 2018). Guidelines and key information on the identification and development of WFP future leaders. Available on WFP Go.

<sup>177</sup> Mentoring has been provided externally through the Harvard Management Mentor (HMM) programme, a self-paced course. Stakeholder consultations indicate, however, that access to the HMM has been discontinued due to costs, although the programme was highly appreciated by several interviewed individuals who had benefited from it.

123. Consulted stakeholders had mixed views on the leadership track: individuals who had passed the talent review were generally enthusiastic, while those who were not successful perceived a lack of transparency in the application of selection and assessment criteria. Several individuals expressed the view that, while new and more transparent selection criteria had indeed been put in place, it was not evident from some senior appointments that these criteria and mechanisms had been consistently employed.

#### Box 25: Three phases of the Leadership Talent Review

1. **Staff application:** Applicants need to meet two criteria of (i) time in grade and (ii) successful or outstanding in two most recent annual PACE assessments.
2. **First level talent review:** This is conducted by the Country Director or Deputy Regional Director or Divisional Director to assess the applicant's performance and potential against five criteria, one of which is "leadership", i.e. the ability to engage and connect with people and to communicate a persuasive vision using both emotion and logic (the other criteria are motivation, agility, insight, and determination).
3. **Second level review:** This is where 2<sup>nd</sup> level reviewers provide input and identify applicants who demonstrate the highest level of potential and readiness to be future leaders and recommend them for participation in the career development centre.

124. The attempt by WFP to systematize career progression, make selection criteria more transparent, and de-link related processes from personal networks is commendable. At this stage, there is no available data that would enable an assessment of the mid- to long-term effectiveness or efficiency of the Leadership Talent Review.

## 2.3 FACTORS AFFECTING RESULTS ACHIEVEMENT

### 2.3.1 INTRODUCTION

125. This section summarizes the main internal and external factors likely to have positively or negatively influenced the implementation of the People Strategy or progress towards the changes envisaged by the strategy thereby addressing sub-questions under EQ3 in the evaluation matrix. The analysis draws on evidence from document, dataset and literature reviews, stakeholder consultations and the review of comparator organizations. The resulting evidence base was solid in that it allowed triangulation of data sources.

### 2.3.2 EXTERNAL FACTORS

**Finding 18 Evolving global, regional and country contexts have shaped the human resource management priorities of WFP overall, as well as of individual regional bureaux and country offices. These shifts in context have also influenced the perceived and actual relevance and implementation of the People Strategy within WFP.**

126. Characteristics of the ever-evolving regional and country contexts that WFP works in influence a variety of factors that either facilitate or pose challenges to effective and efficient human resource management within regional bureaux and country offices. These include the following:

- The occurrence, nature and duration of conflict, natural disasters or other emergencies can require a surge or decrease in the required WFP workforce. Within the current global context, complex, protracted, conflict-driven food security emergencies increasingly constitute the "new normal". Increasing instability and large-scale conflict, the consequences of climate change and extreme weather events, large-scale migration resulting from conflict and an economic slowdown are all contributing to the worsening situation.<sup>178</sup> This poses challenges related to workforce planning and deployment for all organizations working in the humanitarian sphere. Also, working in hardship contexts can lead to a high turnover in staff which, in turn, can negatively affect operations. This is indicated in several WFP regional operational evaluation synthesis reports (2013-2017). In addition, interviews with WFP employees indicate that a

<sup>178</sup> WFP. 2018z. WFP Management Plan (2019-2021). 22 November 2018.

country's classification influences the extent to which a country office is considered a desirable duty station by different groups of international staff - for example, whether it is classified as a family duty station, whether hardship allowances apply and at what level, and whether, the posting is considered valuable in relation to future career development.

- The types and extent of alternate employment options in the country influence how attractive it is for national/regional actors to work for WFP and, in turn, how easy or difficult it is for regional bureaux and country offices to fill vacant positions, especially those requiring specialized technical expertise. The WFP shift from food aid to food assistance has resulted in the need for specialized technical expertise in some new areas. As noted in several recent WFP evaluations, often, this type of expertise is not readily or sufficiently available in the respective country or region.<sup>179</sup> Another related issue is that in contexts that lack alternative employment options, several consulted supervisors stated that they would feel reluctant to terminate an employee's contract. This poses an additional challenge in relation to WFP efforts to effectively address cases of underperformance.
- Cultural and political contexts contribute to the specific workplace culture of each regional bureau and country office. For example, ethnic, religious or other historical tensions can affect intra-office relationships among national employees. Context-specific rules, laws and social norms such as attitudes towards and rights of the LGBTQ community or towards different religious affiliations can affect well-being and the safety of some employees. A country office's ability to achieve gender parity within its workforce is influenced by the extent to which men and women have equal or at least similar degrees of access to education in the national context. Similarly, social or cultural barriers to gender equality can make it challenging for women (especially national staff) to work in remote duty stations or to take on leadership positions where they must interface with conservative (usually state) institutions. WFP strategies to mitigate resulting challenges include sourcing and talent acquisition strategies, including reaching out to populations of the respective country living in diaspora and offering internship programmes for women.

127. As noted in Sections 2.1 and 2.2, while the People Strategy broadly addressed all the above-noted potential challenges to human resource management, it provided relatively little detail and concrete strategies to address them, especially in relation to further improving WFP surge capacity and in relation to workforce diversity and inclusion. As such, for regional bureaux and country offices where these issues constituted major challenges, the People Strategy was of limited practical relevance.

128. Global trends were reflected in the design of the People Strategy, as discussed in Section 2.1, but they also influenced strategy implementation. For example:

- Donor priorities have had influence. The expectation for United Nations organizations to "deliver more with less" and the need for WFP to demonstrate "value for money" influence the WFP workplace culture including, as noted by many consulted employees, the organization's formal and informal reward systems, which have tended to focus on "getting things done" rather than on exploring how results were achieved and at what costs to WFP employees (Section 2.3.3).
- In addition to United Nations-wide reform initiatives (such as UN SWAP) already in place when the People Strategy was developed, global movements such as "MeToo" that emerged during the review period created additional public pressure for all United Nations agencies, including WFP, to act upon and demonstrate accountability for existing commitments - in this case in relation to cases of sexual harassment and abuse of power - and to review their related people-management practices accordingly. While the People Strategy included broad related considerations, changes in the global context forced a stronger focus on addressing specific challenges in this area.
- Varying expectations of different generations, in relation to life/work balance or the flexibility of work arrangements, likely affect the extent to which existing work contexts meet or do not meet WFP employee expectations and, in consequence, the extent to which they are satisfied with the status quo. This may, at least partly, explain why global staff survey results and consultations conducted for this evaluation show

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<sup>179</sup> Related challenges were noted, for example, in the Evaluation of the WFP Capacity Development Policy (2017), the Iraq Country Portfolio Evaluation (2016), the Synthesis report on evaluations of WFP Emergency Preparedness and Response 2012-2015 (2015), the evaluation of the WFP Nutrition Policy (2015) and the evaluation of the Purchase for Progress (P4P) initiative (2014).

that junior professional officers hold more negative views on career development. It may also explain differences in the global staff survey 2018 results between Millennials and Generation X/Plus 54 communities<sup>180</sup> in relation to staff wellness.

### 2.3.3 INTERNAL FACTORS

**Finding 19 While there was considerable commitment to improving people management throughout the organization, limited ownership and lack of accountability posed challenges for People Strategy implementation and related results achievement.**

129. The evaluation noted a range of internal factors that both supported and challenged the adoption of the People Strategy and, more broadly, results achievement in its thematic priority areas.

130. The main, largely supportive factors as identified through document review and stakeholder consultations were:

- A strong organizational commitment to improving people management, especially improving working conditions for national staff, at the time of developing the People Strategy. This commitment was reflected in dedicated central resource allocations for People Strategy implementation (managed by HRM) as well as allocations for other people-focused initiatives since 2014 including for implementation of the Wellness Strategy (2015-2019).
- Specific initiatives launched since 2014 that address thematic foci of the People Strategy, such as: the Wellness Strategy, the National Staff Project (2015-2018), the Executive Director's Circular on Harassment (2018) and the Organizational Realignment Project. These are examples of initiatives that contributed to progress towards the People Strategy's objectives. However, while these initiatives furthered progress towards the People Strategy's objectives, they also diluted the clarity and focus that the People Strategy might have provided and contributed to its waning visibility.
- Individual regional bureau director/Country Director commitment to improving people management and enhancing the working conditions of employees in their office(s). Field visits indicated that the nature and degree of interest in, and focus on, people-management issues varied with directors of regional bureaux/country offices.

131. Implementation of the People Strategy and related results achievement faced challenges due to the following internal factors:

- There is limited ownership of, and lack of accountability for, implementation of the People Strategy beyond HRM. This is combined with resistance from some WFP staff to the People Strategy due to the perception that it was insufficiently informed by knowledge of the WFP and United Nations contexts, and too much driven by private sector perspectives. In addition, (i) the absence of a detailed overall implementation plan and results framework, (ii) the absence of a theory of change or equivalent that would clarify what "success" of the People Strategy implementation would look like, and (iii) the fact that key performance indicators in the corporate Management Results Framework (2014-2017) enabled the monitoring of only a few of the various initiatives of the People Strategy all combined to make it impossible to state whether the strategy has been fully implemented or not.
- The change in WFP senior leadership in 2017, combined with the fact that the People Strategy had been developed to cover the time period 2014-2017, likely contributed to the decreasing visibility of the strategy as it was widely perceived to be closely linked to the tenure of the previous Executive Director.
- The voluntary funding model of WFP and the resulting lack of longer-term resource predictability is one of the main factors cited for the organization's continued strong reliance on short-term contract modalities, given that fixed-term positions are more costly. As noted earlier, other voluntary-funded organizations working in fast-changing emergency contexts, including UNHCR, have been able to limit the long-term use

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<sup>180</sup> "Millennials" refers to the demographic cohort born between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s to 2000. "Generation X" refers to the preceding demographic cohort with birth years from the early mid-1960s to the early 1980s. "Plus 54" refers to individuals born before the mid-1960s.

of special service agreement contract modalities and have eliminated the use of service contracts altogether. Following the adoption of the Financial Framework Review in 2016, and the replacement of fragmented project budgets with the newly-created country portfolio budgets, it is expected that country offices will have more financial predictability and flexibility, setting the stage for an increase in the proportion of fixed-term positions at country level. Funding restrictions have also negatively affected the ability of several country offices to acquire necessary technical expertise and fill existing vacancies.<sup>181</sup>

- The absence of dedicated resources for People Strategy implementation at regional bureau and country office levels meant that implementation was dependent on the will and ability of individual regional bureau directors/Country Directors, who had to balance attention to human resource issues with programmatic pressure to deliver “more with less”. According to several consulted senior staff, a related factor is the inconsistent and often weak financial-management skills of new Country Directors, an issue that is envisaged to be addressed under the upcoming induction programme for new Country Directors.
- New human resource staff and many senior managers do not fully understand the regulatory context for human resources in WFP. Many long-standing staff members assume that “the ways things have always been done” is immutable and they underestimate the extent to which there is discretion and flexibility within the rules. In field visits, it was also emphasized that existing human resource regulations do permit and provide a robust process for the termination of fixed-term contracts in cases of underperformance or for reasons related to organizational restructuring or reduced funding. In the view of some human resource managers, WFP management is more anxious than necessary about the perceived irreversibility of fixed-term appointments.

132. Different characteristics of the WFP (evolving) organizational culture have both supported and posed challenges to strategy implementation:

- On the one hand, there are indications of increasing awareness and acceptance among the WFP workforce and leadership of the importance of staff wellness for organizational performance. On the other hand, the WFP internal culture has traditionally placed higher value on programme-related performance (“We deliver”) than on employee-related concerns. Where this attitude persists, it creates a negative incentive for leaders to place emphasis on people management. The focus on “doing good work” is closely linked to the humanitarian mandate of WFP, which often requires swift and urgent action and doing so in hardship contexts. As also noted in the 2019 WFP Workplace Culture Report, performance is highly valued in the organizational culture, sometimes at the cost of also looking into how results are achieved. This increases the potential for misconduct and for placing WFP employees at risk.
- The 2019 WFP Workplace Culture Report further found that inequality between local and international workers is among the cultural elements that surveyed employees would most like to be improved. The report noted that an employee’s contract type is the factor most likely to trigger individuals being treated unfairly by colleagues.
- The composition of the WFP workforce is increasingly diverse and, as indicated in stakeholder consultations, this is known and welcomed by the majority of employees. Nevertheless, some WFP employees appear to hold on to the perception that “real” WFP staff tend to be “white men from Western countries doing logistics”,<sup>182</sup> an attitude that negatively affects efforts aimed at ensuring inclusive and supportive workspaces and opening up professional development opportunities for all employees. Concerns over discrimination based on employees’ “nationality/ethnic origin, race, sex and/or gender identity” were also raised by the 2019 WFP Workplace Culture Report, which found that 25 percent of surveyed employees perceived nationality/ethnic origin as a factor explaining why a WFP colleague might be treated unfairly by other colleagues. In total, 23 percent identified race and language as other factors, followed by sex (22 percent), gender identity (20 percent) and age (19 percent).
- WFP tends to have an internal culture of staff “looking out for each other”. In many regional bureaux and especially country offices, this attitude, which at least partly derives from the humanitarian mandate of WFP and frequent work in hardship contexts, was noted by consulted stakeholders to positively influence

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<sup>181</sup> Operational evaluation synthesis reports for 2013-2017 note related challenges across regions.

<sup>182</sup> Quote from international P-level staff member, but also expressed by many international and national employees.

feelings of employee belonging and pride in working for WFP.<sup>183</sup> At the same time, this culture can pose challenges in the contexts of fair, consistent performance assessments and transparency of career advancement, as well as in relation to consistently addressing cases of harassment and abuse of power. For example, WFP employees, especially international staff (men and women), frequently referred to somewhat weakened, but still very present and influential “boys’ networks” and prevailing patriarchal and “cowboy culture” that drove issues such as career progression within the organization and that, in some cases, likely prevented employees from reporting cases of harassment or abuse. The 2019 WFP Workplace Culture Report made similar observations.

- Similarly, employees widely agreed that within WFP, field experience – especially when gained in hardship locations and/or emergencies – is highly valued. This can make it difficult for new employees whose experience and expertise, if gained outside of WFP and/or outside the humanitarian sector, may not be fully valued.

133. WFP has not clearly defined what should characterize the organization’s internal culture in terms of core values that shape how employees are treated and how they treat each other. Further, as mentioned under Finding 15, the 2019 WFP Workplace Culture Report identified failings in terms of a leadership that does not model ethical behaviour or hold employees accountable for misconduct.

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<sup>183</sup> Field visits also revealed, however, that in some locations WFP field staff associate more often with their own sub-community; for example, fixed-term staff were more inclined to support other fixed-term staff than SCs and SSAs, and international staff were more likely to help each other.

# 3. Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Recommendations

## 3.1 CONCLUSIONS

### How good was the People Strategy?

134. The People Strategy was of good quality overall in that it outlined a clear vision that was relevant to WFP priorities at the time. It was forward-looking and coherent with other prevailing WFP policies and with good global practice around people management. One weakness of the strategy was the absence of comprehensive, clearly defined expectations of what “success” would look like. Also, while addressing some aspects of workforce diversity, the strategy was silent on how to overcome obstacles that affect the work experiences of different employee groups, including women and men, and staff with disabilities. The People Strategy’s visibility has diminished over time. While the main issues addressed by the strategy remain relevant in relation to global good practice, the document is outdated in relation to some changes in the WFP and United Nations contexts, in particular the 2030 Agenda.

135. People Strategy implementation was largely driven by HRM and, since 2015, the newly established Wellness Division. While various other units and parts of WFP have undertaken efforts to strengthen people management - in particular, regional bureaux and country offices - accountabilities for People Strategy implementation beyond HRM were not clearly established. As such, ownership and uptake of the strategy beyond HRM varied considerably and were largely dependent on the interest and commitment of individuals. This is not unusual, however, for cross-cutting corporate strategies in WFP and in similar large organizations.

### Results of the People Strategy

136. In terms of overarching results, the development and implementation of the People Strategy contributed to raising organization-wide awareness of the importance of people management at WFP, especially the need to pay more attention to the needs, accomplishments and potential of national staff, and to staff wellness. People Strategy implementation has contributed, to varying degrees depending on location, to an improvement in the extent to which the strategic role of the human resources function is understood and accepted. The evaluation also noted, however, that placing low ranking officers in the human resource management role at the country level negatively affects the overall influence of the human resource function and limits the country office’s potential for making the best possible use of its human capital.

137. Across all four imperatives of the People Strategy, there were achievements and areas for improvement, as summarized below:

- On reinforcing a performance mindset (Imperative 1), noted strengths included improved tools and guidance, including for addressing underperformance, and increased awareness among employees of the need to use existing tools. While there are indications of emerging changes in organizational culture, challenges remain in relation to supervisors and supervisees consistently approaching performance management as an ongoing and constructive dialogue rather than as an annual “tick the box” exercise, and in relation to addressing underperformance consistently and constructively.
- With respect to building WFP talent (Imperative 2), the organization developed various tools, frameworks and employee guidance for career development, improved the promotions process for international professional staff, and expanded learning opportunities, especially through the WeLearn learning management system. The evaluation confirms what had also emerged from the 2018 global staff survey, namely that, while the vast majority of employees are proud to work for WFP, they – especially women – also often experience professional vulnerability and, in most cases, do not feel they are the “driver” of their

own career development. Room for improvement was further noted in relation to fostering structured opportunities for professional growth through on-the-job and social learning.

- As regards shifting the focus to national staff (Imperative 3), there is strong evidence that WFP has embarked on a shift to place emphasis on, and invest in, staff wellness. While areas for improvement remain, such as in relation to medical insurance for all employees, wellness was the one topic explored in the evaluation on which consulted stakeholders most consistently expressed positive views. WFP was less successful in achieving the other dimension of this imperative: establishing “fit-for-purpose contracts” for national staff (and, more broadly, for all locally recruited employees). Related expectations raised by the People Strategy among national employees have only been fulfilled to a very small degree. The continued and extensive use of short-term contracts in WFP for much of its workforce and over extended periods of time is an issue that urgently requires dedicated attention. WFP does face challenges in the predictability of its funding, which is a common reason for regional bureaux and country offices to continue to rely on convenient, flexible, and possibly cheaper short-term contracts. Nevertheless, other voluntary-funded humanitarian organizations such as UNHCR have demonstrated that it is possible to reduce the use of short-term arrangements, thereby offering fairer contractual arrangements to employees.
- In relation to equipping high impact leaders (Imperative 4), investments have been made in expanding professional development opportunities for emerging and senior managers through a variety of training programmes. These programmes have been complemented only to some extent through coaching and mentoring opportunities. WFP is lacking consistent accountability measures and ongoing institutional support for people in supervisory positions to help them develop and apply good people-management skills.

138. Overall, consulted employees at all levels expressed a strong sense that important elements of WFP human resource management are not as good as they should be. There were three major dimensions to this:

- Staff felt that recruitment and promotion processes were not fully transparent. Despite significant efforts to make staffing processes more systematic, including the outsourcing of some staffing functions to specialized third parties, like the career development centre, there remains a strong perception that promotions and preferred assignments depend significantly on who you know.
- The selection of staff for discretionary opportunities with significant career or financial benefit (for example, candidates for temporary duty assignments or for international training) is perceived to be based on personality rather than needs or capacities.
- There was a very strong sense of inequity on the part of many WFP employees doing similar jobs but on different contract types that have different terms and benefits. This perception of unfair staffing practices was not directly addressed by the People Strategy and remains strong at the end of the period reviewed.




139. The constructed theory of change for the People Strategy is based on the distinction between behaviour changes and changes in capacity as the precondition for behaviour modifications. The notion of capacity is understood to encompass changes in capability (for example, knowledge, awareness, including of existing tools), motivation (for example existence of positive or negative incentives), and opportunity (for example, availability of sufficient time or financial resources to apply changes, and a supportive organizational culture). As illustrated in Figure 12, when mapping achievements since 2014 against the theory of change, the most consistent and clearly evidenced progress has been in relation to strengthened capabilities, and some, albeit less, progress in relation to strengthening motivation and opportunity. To date, there have been only a few isolated examples of consistent and likely sustainable behaviour changes. This is neither surprising nor an indication of poor performance of the People Strategy, given that behaviour change and underlying changes in organizational culture tend to evolve slowly. Nevertheless, there are bottlenecks that appear to contribute to slowing down or preventing behaviour change in the areas addressed under the People Strategy. This mapping draws attention to the importance of addressing human resource reform efforts as a cultural change process that needs to be deliberately managed.



**Figure 12 Mapping evaluation findings against the constructed theory of change for the People Strategy**

Theory of change/element	Overarching findings	
Capacity changes	<b>Capabilities: Most consistent evidence of change</b> , for example, knowledge of new/ revised tools and systems and of how to use them (such as PACE, WeLearn), albeit with variations (for example, career framework not widely known among employees)	Green
	<b>Motivation: Some changes</b> in terms of incentives to adopt new/ revised practices or processes (for example, awareness-raising campaigns on PACE compliance, GSS results being publicized within WFP), but also considerable obstacles remaining (such as the perceived absence of a link between performance management and rewards)	Yellow
	<b>Opportunities: Some changes</b> (for example, in some COs time is set aside for staff for learning) but considerable obstacles remain (such as supervisors having the time and feeling supported to appropriately deal with cases of underperformance; rotational system providing negative incentive to engage in difficult conversations/address difficulties regarding staff behaviours)	Yellow
Behaviour changes	<b>Very few examples of consistent, organization-wide behaviour changes</b> (for example, now regularly considering at least one female candidate for all mid- to senior-level positions).  <b>However, there are various areas where desired behaviours appear to occur at least sometimes</b> (for example, some supervisors providing regular guidance on staff career development, some staff and managers demonstrating a culture of open and honest feedback)	Orange

**Legend:**

-  Consistent evidence of organization-wide changes
-  Some changes but persistent significant obstacles
-  No or only isolated evidence indicating envisaged change having taken place

**Factors affecting results achievement**

140. Global contexts set the backdrop for the continued relevance of the People Strategy by shaping expectations in relation to what constitutes effective, efficient, equitable and ethically appropriate people management within United Nations and other large organizations, and by creating specific human resource management priorities and challenges for individual regional bureaux and country offices. Evolving global, regional and country contexts influenced, both positively and negatively, progress towards the strategy's envisaged results, including by determining sudden surges or decreases in the WFP workforce requirements and by influencing the ability of regional bureaux and country offices to fill existing vacancies with qualified regional or national staff.

141. Internal factors within WFP that positively influenced adoption and implementation of the People Strategy included organizational and senior leadership commitment to strengthening the WFP people-management practices, and resource allocations for strategy implementation managed by HRM. Internal factors that negatively affected strategy implementation were the absence of clearly defined roles, responsibilities and workplans for other WFP units than HRM, as well as the absence of a detailed overall implementation plan and results framework for the strategy. The voluntary funding model of WFP and the resulting lack of longer-term resource predictability was one of the main factors cited for the organization's continued strong reliance on short-term contract modalities.

142. The evolving organizational culture of WFP both supported and created challenges for strategy implementation. The 2019 WFP Workplace Culture Report drew attention to (i) leadership that fails to model ethical behaviour and to hold employees accountable for misconduct, and (ii) a focus on performance with

limited concerns for how it is achieved, which are characteristics that put companies at risk of misconduct and were seen to be “part of the culture at WFP”.<sup>193</sup>

## Implications

143. WFP is performing well. The MOPAN 2017-2018 assessment notes that “the World Food Programme is steering an ever-clearer path towards maximizing its strengths and capacities to respond to humanitarian and development needs. WFP has successfully aligned its long-term vision to two Sustainable Development Goals on zero hunger (SDG 2) and partnerships to support SDG implementation (SDG 17), which are commensurate with its dual humanitarian and development mandate and comparative advantage.” It further emphasises that “ongoing reforms are equipping WFP to better deliver on these objectives, with a shift in focus to country level and gearing of the organization to be an enabler as well as an implementer”.<sup>194</sup> However, if in future WFP wants to position itself as a key actor within the context of the United Nations’ revitalized United Nations country team and resident coordinator system, it must (i) continue to attract, effectively use and consistently develop the skills of the best workforce possible, and (ii) do so in ways that reflect and model the United Nations system’s commitment to human rights, diversity and inclusion. While the evaluation illustrated many areas in which notable improvements have been made, it also identified areas in which shortcomings carry the risk of negatively affecting individual and collective employee performance and well-being.

144. The core issues addressed under the current People Strategy’s four imperatives continue to be relevant considering the current and emerging priorities of WFP as well as the context of global good practice. However, there is a need for WFP to (i) address the areas for improvement related to workplace culture raised by global staff survey results, confirmed by both the recent Workplace Culture Report and the findings of this evaluation; (ii) explicitly address other (sub-)topics that have not or have only marginally been addressed in the current strategy, such as gender equality and employee diversity, but also persistent challenges around WFP surge capacity; and (iii) better “tie together” different human resource management objectives into a coherent whole and strengthen accountability for progress in relation to people management beyond HRM. In addition, WFP people-management priorities need to be clearly aligned with, and address demands on, employee skills within the context of repositioning the United Nations system to meet Agenda 2030 goals.

145. Evaluation findings also indicate a need for WFP to explicitly define the overarching values and principles that (should) underlie people management within the organization in a high-level (policy) document in order to provide a common foundation on which more operationally focused strategies of different WFP units can be developed.

## 3.2 LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

146. **Efforts to drive organizational change need to be visibly grounded in a deep knowledge of what it means to work for WFP.** The internal culture of WFP is characterized by many employees’ pride in working for this organization, combined, however, with the experience of WFP as a hierarchical, task-oriented entity. Both contribute to a widely shared sense of WFP constituting a unique environment that only insiders can fully understand. For people-related reform efforts to be perceived as legitimate among the WFP workforce, they need to be visibly grounded in a deep knowledge of this specific WFP context and shaped by an understanding of the specific challenges that different (sub-)groups of employees face. However, this should not prevent WFP learning from (people-related) experiences and good practice examples of other organizations, both within and outside of the United Nations system.

147. HRM and functional units can improve the extent to which they explain the various processes and selection criteria used for staff recruitment and promotion, and their underlying rationale. Considerable frustration over career development came from staff perceptions of unfairness and lack of transparency, fuelled in part by staff not being sufficiently aware of the criteria used to select staff for promotion. While a

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<sup>193</sup> WFP. 2019e. p 14.

<sup>194</sup> “ MOPAN 2017-2018 Assessment of WFP.

certain level of frustration among individuals is unavoidable in any context that involves selecting some but not others, frequent and frank communication on applied criteria and underlying rationales can likely help manage some of the frustration more constructively.

148. **Not everyone can or should be promoted, but everyone should be able to experience professional satisfaction and growth.** Many WFP employees still hold the notion that promotion is the only measure of professional value, and managers are not yet consistently conveying the message that staff who are performing well at their own level are the bedrock of the organization. Similarly, the professional experience of staff with repetitive jobs is not consistently recognized. Employees often do not have a clear understanding that opportunities for learning and expanding their professional horizons are available (such as through rotation to different locations or functions within the same office) or to whom, when, and based on what criteria. While it is the prerogative of senior regional bureau/country office managers to decide, for example, which individuals to recommend or release for temporary duty assignment opportunities, managing such high-value opportunities in a fair and transparent way, and using criteria that are clearly communicated to staff, can help defuse tensions and prevent (actual and perceived) cases of favouritism.

### 3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 3.3.1 INTRODUCTION

149. The following recommendations aim to build on, expand and/or deepen the positive changes already set in motion under the People Strategy. The recommendations are prioritized based on the evaluation team's assessment of their urgency and relevance. Each recommendation is supported by reflections on its rationale and considerations for implementation.

### 3.3.2 TOWARDS DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A NEW POLICY/STRATEGY

Recommendation	Priority, Responsible, Deadline	Rationale
<p><b>Recommendation 1: WFP should develop a new policy, focusing on “people”, that sets out the organization’s vision of its future workforce and the core values that should shape WFP’s workplace culture.</b></p> <p>a) The policy should build on positive changes already in place but elaborate on topics not sufficiently addressed in the current strategy, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• workplace culture, including in relation to harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of power;</li> <li>• gender equality, diversity and inclusion;</li> <li>• workforce planning, including in relation to balancing the need for a nimble and flexible workforce while respecting the purpose of different types of contracts (see also recommendation 5);</li> <li>• performance management.</li> </ul> <p>b) The policy should include a theory of change, a costed implementation plan and a dissemination plan.</p> <p>c) The policy should clearly identify accountabilities for various units, divisions, regional bureaux and country offices.</p> <p>A clear governance structure should be established to oversee the development phase.</p>	<p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Responsibility:</b> Assistant Executive Director, Resource Management Department, in collaboration with the Director of human resources, endorsed by the leadership group and in consultation with functional units at headquarters, regional bureaux and a representative selection of country offices.</p> <p><b>Deadline:</b> February 2021.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current People Strategy was relevant at the time of its approval and many of the core issues that it addresses continue to be relevant. However, the PS does not reflect recent developments in the global/United Nations context, including General Assembly resolution 72/279 on repositioning the United Nations development system</li> <li>• There is a need for WFP to explicitly define the workplace culture and workforce ethos that the organization aspires to achieve. The People Strategy had only marginally addressed issues such as workforce diversity and inclusion, for example in relation to challenges faced by employees with disabilities; discrimination based on sex, ethnic origin, sexual orientation or other factors; as well as problems related to harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of power</li> <li>• The People Strategy is widely perceived as being linked to the tenure of the previous Executive Director and the Strategic Plan (2014-2017). Developing a new higher-level and visionary document would boost the visibility of the topics covered, emphasize their continued relevance and provide a common anchor for various operational strategies (see Recommendation 2)</li> <li>• Implementation of the People Strategy (2014-2017) led to the creation and improvement of many tools and processes but was in several cases less successful in influencing the organizational culture of WFP around some important HR management topics</li> <li>• One factor that limited uptake of the People Strategy beyond HRM was a lack of clarity over the accountabilities of other units in WFP. In comparison, the WFP Gender Policy (2015-2020) explicitly formulated minimum standards for gender mainstreaming applicable to all of WFP<sup>195</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>195</sup>See WFP. 2015. Gender Policy (2015-2020), p. 14f.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration should be given to the model used in the Gender Policy to identify “minimum standards” for various functional areas defined as “drivers of change” when developing the new “people” policy</li> <li>• The policy development process should include broad internal stakeholder consultations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation 2: WFP should implement a new people policy through an organizational change management process.</b></p> <p>a) Human resources, functional offices and regional bureaux, based on consultations with country offices, should hold joint annual working sessions to take stock of progress and challenges in implementation, based on a clear set of indicators.</p> <p>b) Human resources, functional offices and regional bureaux should provide annual updates on organization-wide progress to the leadership group and to WFP employees at all levels.</p> <p>c) All functional offices should include activities, targets and milestones in their respective strategies.</p>	<p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Responsibility:</b> Assistant Executive Director, Resource Management Department, in collaboration with human resources, headquarters functional units and regional bureaux.</p> <p><b>Deadline:</b> February 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective change management requires clear and frequent communication around the envisaged goals and related progress of the strategy at all levels of the organization</li> <li>• Two factors that negatively affected implementation of the current People Strategy were: (i) the absence of clearly defined roles, responsibilities and workplans for other WFP units than HRM and (ii) the absence of dedicated implementation resources at regional and country levels</li> <li>• The change management process should continue throughout the implementation of the new policy</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation 3: WFP should revise its human resource functional strategy to continue the professionalization of the human resources function at all levels and locations of the organization.</b></p> <p>a) A revised human resources strategy should clarify how human resources will support implementation of the new people policy at headquarters and at the regional and country levels.</p>	<p><b>Priority:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Responsibility:</b> The Director of human resources, in consultation with regional bureaux, country offices, functional units and the leadership group.</p> <p><b>Deadline:</b> February 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current HRM functional strategy (2016-2018) is outdated and was linked to the People Strategy (2014-2017). A new “people policy” will require an updated HRM strategy</li> <li>• In order to take on an (increasingly) strategic role as a CO “business partner”, HR officers need to be supported through appropriate structures, tools (including technology) and processes that can help minimize the time they spend on transactional tasks such as payroll management</li> <li>• Placing low ranking and/or insufficiently trained or experienced officers in the HR management role at the country level negatively</li> </ul>

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<p>b) The strategy should articulate a costed plan for gradually reinforcing WFP's human resource capacity in the field with the aim of ensuring that every country office has easy access to a human resource officer at short notice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• regional human resources business partners should continue to be responsible for ensuring that accessible human resource services are in place;</li> <li>• as part of strategy development, human resources should conduct a workflow review to streamline priority human resource processes.</li> </ul> <p>c) The strategy should articulate how the human resources function will continue to strengthen the capacity of human resources staff in the field in relation to their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• capabilities (knowledge, skills);</li> <li>• motivation and ways of thinking and decision making, e.g. in relation to reinforcing an understanding among human resources staff and other employees of human resources as a business partner;</li> <li>• opportunities, e.g. in relation to ensuring that technology upgrades, automated systems and tools are in place to reduce workloads related to transactional tasks such as payroll entries, thereby freeing up human resources staff to focus on more strategic issues.</li> </ul>		<p>affects the overall influence of the HR function and limits the CO's potential for making the best possible use of its human capital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HR officers at RB and CO levels need clear guidance on what taking on the role of "business partner" can look like and they should have easy access to support on related questions from HRM at RB or HQ levels</li> <li>• HRM needs to provide the clear message that HR officers at RB and CO levels are expected to regularly identify and (help to) address the concerns of all WFP employees (national and international; and regardless of their sex and gender, ethnic, cultural or other backgrounds)</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Recommendation 4: Human resources should develop a supervisors' accountability framework for supervisors to achieve excellence in people management and present it to the leadership group for endorsement.</b></p> <p>a) The framework should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• update expectations and outline good people management practices, how they manifest themselves at various career levels and how they relate to the notion of leadership;</li> <li>• include regulatory elements relating to performance management to ensure that it adequately protects the rights of both supervisors and supervisees, especially in relation to underperformance;</li> <li>• ensure that people management responsibilities are reflected in the job descriptions, key performance indicators and performance assessments of all supervisors; and</li> <li>• introduce a mechanism to broaden performance feedback, such as regular 360° reviews, for all supervisors to contribute an organizational culture of giving and receiving constructive feedback.</li> </ul> <p>b) Support supervisors in their efforts to continuously enhance their people management skills through integrated measures, including:</p>	<p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Responsibility:</b> The Director of human resources, in consultation with the leadership group, regional bureaux and country offices.</p> <p><b>Deadline:</b> August 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the same time, many supervisors do not feel sufficiently empowered and protected to focus on people management especially in relation to addressing underperformance. This creates negative incentives, leading many supervisors to “deferring” performance issues until they or the employee leave to another post. This in turn contributes to frustration among well-performing employees</li> </ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rollout of existing and planned management programmes and related follow-up;</li> <li>• Exploring whether newly appointed country directors, deputy country directors, regional directors and deputy regional directors could be matched with recently retired individuals who have held their positions in the past and have consistently demonstrated excellent people management skills to act as mentors;</li> <li>• Having regional bureaux explore how to best provide access to coaching and other types of professional support services for other staff in supervisory positions in their regions, share related insights with each other and ensure follow-up;</li> <li>• Having human resources establish a supervisor’s helpdesk at headquarters that would be available to all employees with supervisory or people management responsibilities;</li> <li>• Having human resources, with input from regional bureaux and country offices, compile and regularly update a toolbox of simple and cost-effective measures for recognizing and rewarding good performance by individuals and teams;</li> </ul>		



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<p>Allowing for time dedicated to people management when determining supervisors' workloads.</p>		
<p><b>Recommendation 5: WFP should conduct a comprehensive review of existing contract modalities and their use.</b></p> <p>a) Human resources, with leadership group support and in collaboration with the regional bureaux, country offices and headquarters functional units, should institutionalize a headquarters-supported process for systematic workforce planning at all levels of the organization beyond the currently planned duration of the organizational alignment project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSPs should include mandatory workforce analyses and plans, including on the proposed distribution of short-term and fixed-term contracts;</li> <li>• Human resources should actively participate in the programme review process, reviewing all draft CSPs from a human resource perspective, including at the regional level.</li> </ul> <p>b) WFP should continue to consult regularly with other organizations, including but not limited to other United Nations agencies and private sector firms, and to exchange good practices on limiting the use of short-term contracts while ensuring organizational flexibility;</p> <p>c) The leadership group should communicate clear expectations about a gradual reduction in the long-term use of short-term contracts.</p>	<p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Responsibility:</b> Assistant Executive Director, Resource Management Department, with human resources support and in collaboration with regional bureaux, country offices and headquarters functional units.</p> <p><b>Deadline:</b> February 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The evaluation found that contract modalities are not being used as they were originally intended</li> <li>• The evaluation found that many country offices continue to use short-term contracts over extended periods of time, causing considerable frustration within teams where different employees doing the same work receive different salaries and benefits</li> <li>• The actual and perceived unfairness that derives from the long-term use of short-term contracts is damaging staff morale among national employees and harms the reputation of WFP within the United Nations system and in the eyes of some donors</li> <li>• While the extensive use of short-term contracts may temporarily be cheaper than fixed-term positions, the mandatory contract breaks negatively affect the continuity of work and often require “reinventing the wheel” thereby causing inefficiencies</li> <li>• Several other United Nations agencies, including some that are also voluntarily funded such as UNHCR, already do better than WFP in offering more equal treatment to all employee categories and avoiding the long-term use of SC or SSA contract modalities</li> <li>• The distinction between national and international employees and related differences in contract types reinforces a divide between these two groups. This is an United Nations-wide challenge, however, which would require joint advocacy from various United Nations agencies in order to be resolved</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Recommendation 6: Human resources should further strengthen its approach to proactively sharing relevant information with WFP employees.</b></p> <p>a) Human resource officers at headquarters and in regional bureaux and country offices should communicate regularly and offer regular information sessions on contract modalities and benefits for different employee groups.</p> <p>b) Human resources, in collaboration with regional bureaux and country offices, should review and, where required, strengthen existing processes for sharing information on existing or upcoming capacity development opportunities and on the criteria used to decide which individuals are invited to attend various types of courses and training programmes.</p>	<p><b>Priority:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Responsibility:</b> The Director of human resources, in consultation with regional bureaux, country offices and functional units.</p> <p><b>Deadline:</b> Ongoing, with the actions undertaken to be included in the annual updates to the Executive Board</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While information about key people-management issues is available from HRM, the reality is that people are busy and tend to forget things they were told some time ago. As a result, employees may not “know what they don't know” and therefore not proactively seek clarification. In particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not all employees, especially those on short-term contracts, are fully aware of the specific elements of their respective contracts, such as in relation to vacation or sick day benefits. Incomplete knowledge on these issues can aggravate perceptions of unfairness between employee groups</li> <li>• Information on why and how specific individuals are invited or selected to attend existing professional development opportunities does not always “trickle down” to employees. This causes distrust and frustration</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

# Acronyms

<b>APR</b>	Annual Performance Report
<b>CD</b>	Country Director
<b>CO</b>	Country Office
<b>COM-B</b>	Capability, Opportunity, Motivation - Behaviour
<b>CRF</b>	Corporate Results Framework
<b>CSP</b>	Country Strategic Plan
<b>DFID</b>	(UK) Department for International Development
<b>EB</b>	Executive Board
<b>ED</b>	Executive Director
<b>EMG</b>	Executive Management Group
<b>EQAS</b>	Evaluation Quality Assurance System
<b>ERR</b>	Emergency Response Roster
<b>FT</b>	Fixed Term
<b>FIT</b>	Future International Talent
<b>GS</b>	General Service
<b>GSS</b>	Global Staff Survey
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>HRM</b>	The WFP Human Resources Division
<b>IP</b>	International Professional staff
<b>IRM</b>	Integrated Road Map
<b>JPO</b>	Junior Professional Officer
<b>KPI</b>	Key Performance Indicator
<b>KPMG</b>	Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler
<b>LfZH</b>	Leading for Zero Hunger programme
<b>LG</b>	Leadership Group
<b>LMS</b>	Learning Management System
<b>MRF</b>	Management Results Framework
<b>NO</b>	National Professional Officer
<b>OEV</b>	Office of Evaluation
<b>PACE</b>	Performance and Competency Enhancement Programme
<b>PIP</b>	Performance Improvement Plan
<b>PS</b>	People Strategy
<b>PSA</b>	Programme Support and Administrative budget
<b>RB</b>	Regional Bureau
<b>SC</b>	Service Contract

<b>SSA</b>	Special Service Agreement
<b>SSR</b>	Senior Staff Rotation
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UN SWAP</b>	UN System Wide Action Plan (on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women)
<b>UNHCR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>VAM</b>	Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme

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