



Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Capacity to Respond to Emergencies

CONTEXT

The humanitarian context has changed significantly during the evaluation period (2011–2018), which saw an increase in the number, complexity and duration of crises, resulting in high levels of humanitarian need. The evaluation period starts after WFP made the significant shift from food aid to food assistance.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

This strategic evaluation covers the full range of emergencies WFP responds to from preparedness, immediate response and longer-term response through to exit. The evaluation is organized around the contribution that WFP capacity makes to the quality of its emergency responses. It considers WFP capacities at three interdependent levels - the enabling environment, the organization and the individual.

The data used in the evaluation was collected through an in-depth systematic review of evaluations and lessons learned documents covering major emergencies since 2011, an extensive review of WFP documentation, six emergency case studies, visits to six country offices and six regional bureaux and interviews with internal and external stakeholders.

OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation had both accountability and learning objectives to support the corporate priority of leadership in emergencies. Stakeholders and users include WFP senior leadership, policymakers and programme designers in HQ, RB and COs as well as governmental and nongovernmental partners.

KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

The enabling environment. Most policies have been developed through standalone processes, resulting in some overlaps and competing

priorities. There are also some gaps in the current overall policy framework and limited guidance to cover the range of contexts in which WFP operates

However, the limited support given to the application of policies and to guidance for the increasingly diverse ways of working in different contexts, as well as the limited investment in knowledge management, combined to constrain the quality of responses across all types of context.

Organizational Capacity: WFP has strengthened its decision making processes for emergency response. WFP response to funding constraints yields mixed results in terms of coverage of affected populations. Geographical targeting was generally good but its ability to focus targeting was often constrained by the drive to reach as many people as possible quickly. WFP advance financing mechanisms and related facilities have yielded positive results, but their potential contribution is at times constrained by illiquidity.

The development of guidance and tools adaptable to different contexts is good, but field-level awareness and consistent use of guidance is not always strong. WFP has developed effective tools, ways of working and partnerships that help to reach affected people in insecure locations. Yet it faces difficulties in responding to varied needs, particularly in the early stages of responses and with regard to evolving needs in protracted emergencies. Corporate systems for monitoring the effectiveness of emergency response are limited particularly in relation to effectiveness and other aspects of the quality of the response.

Investment in WFP's preparedness for response, including WFP early warning systems, have improved the efficiency of responses. WFP's potential contributions to approaches connecting humanitarian, development and peace work are limited by lack of practical guidance and limited programme options.

Full and summary reports of the evaluation and the Management Response are available at <http://www1.wfp.org/independent-evaluation>

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WFP capacity in common service provision has enabled greater efficiency and coverage. WFP has developed a practical approach to accountability to affected populations, but still has some way to go to meet commitments.

Individual capacity. WFP successfully scaled up and allocated its workforce to support emergency responses. WFP has made significant progress in meeting its duty of care to employees. There have been skills gaps, particularly beyond the initial wave of deployments as well as in smaller scale emergencies. Substantial investment in building skills reflect awareness of skills gaps, but there is mixed evidence regarding their effectiveness. WFP's efforts to enhance its access to expertise has focused on surge mechanisms. These have had some positive results, but proven insufficient to meet all emergency response needs across stages and types of emergency responses.

CONCLUSIONS

- WFP has increased its capacity to respond to the increased number and scale of emergency responses over the past decade. However, capacities notably at the individual level are over-stretched.
- WFP has invested in surge mechanisms, training and duty of care for employees with some success. However, constraints to developing and sustaining access to needed expertise across emergency contexts and phases of responses risk undermining the quality of emergency responses.
- WFP has developed capacity to deal with the growing complexity of emergency responses and to respond to external trends. However, the lack of an organization-wide emergency response framework constrains linked-up planning for the development of WFP capacities.
- When confronting competing priorities, WFP consistently prioritizes efficiency and coverage. More attention needs to be paid to other aspects of preparedness to make sure responses remain relevant.
- WFP's contribution to sector-wide responses is highly valued and contributes to inter-agency efficiency and better coverage. Evolving roles and UN reform mean that new guidance and clarification will be needed.
- Limitations in WFP corporate monitoring frameworks and systems constrain oversight of the effectiveness of its responses. Effective learning platforms are also lacking.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Significantly increase and maintain investment into the scale and pace of the development of long-term, sustainable HR systems to ensure sustained access to skills needed in emergency responses across emergency contexts, roles and phases of response.
2. Build on current momentum and invest in strengthening duty of care across the organization to include wellness, safety and security of staff and to build awareness and understanding of the cross-organizational responsibilities.
3. Significantly strengthen WFP emergency preparedness through context-specific preparation and sustained liquidity of financing and commodity management mechanisms including for pre-emptive response.
4. Develop a consolidated framework for emergency response to support the planning for capacity development and implementation of WFP responses across contexts reflecting the organization's level of ambition for the quality of responses and range of WFP roles.
5. Pursue more equitable approaches to partnerships to include improved and consistent risk management of partners in insecure contexts as well as partner participation in response design and capacity building.
6. Intensify investment in organizational and staff capacity strengthening to ensure WFP can operate through a broad range of roles in increasingly more complex settings and profoundly changing environment.
7. Significantly strengthen support to the practical application of a principled approach and to the centrality of protection, accountability to affected populations and gender responsiveness in emergency response.
8. Continue WFP meaningful engagement with UN reform process to ensure humanitarian space is safeguarded, clarify WFP roles in inter-agency collaboration and develop WFP systems to sustain support for new forms of partnership .
9. Strengthen monitoring of emergency response through tracking results over time and enable comparison across responses.
10. Increase organization-wide access and use of emergency response lessons learned through strengthened knowledge platforms and incentivizing use.