

Decentralized evaluation for evidence-based decision making

WFP Office of Evaluation

Decentralized Evaluation Quality Assurance System (DEQAS)

Management Response from WFP Malawi to the recommendations of the decentralized evaluation of the School Meals Programme in Malawi with financial support from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) from 2016 to 2018

Rec #	Recommendation	Management Response	Actions to be taken	Priority	Action By	Implementation timeframe	Status
1	<p>Enhance the quality of education by improving access to Early Childhood Development Centres (ECD), school infrastructure and allocation of teachers to lower grades.</p> <p>1.1 Scale up coverage of SMP in ECDs to prevent underage enrolment. Government should generally increase the number of ECD and promote community establishment of ECDs for greater access</p> <p>1.2 Government should continue to allocate more teachers with better experience to congested schools to maintain the decline in student/teacher ratio, especially in the lower grades.</p> <p>1.3 Build classrooms in supported schools through government funds, strategic partnerships with donors and agencies and enlisting the support and contribution of communities</p>	Accepted	<p>Actions related to this recommendation are to be taken by Government with support of development partners. WFP's role will be to advocate and provide technical support to Government (for example in ensuring utilization of available evidence that shows the importance of ECD and linkage to improvement of education at early grades. WFP will also advocate for:</p> <p>1.1 Increased investment into the SMP to scale-up coverage for ECDs.</p> <p>1.2 An allocation of teachers with better experience to congested schools, especially targeting lower grades as well as train existing teachers to give them better skills to handle larger classes.</p> <p>1.3 The construction of ECD classrooms using government funds and complemented with financial support through</p>	High	Government (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Ministry of Gender, Children, Disabilities and Social Welfare); WFP CO (Programme unit/School feeding section); Development partners.	Sept 2019 – Aug 2020	<p>Closed</p> <p>There has been a shift of strategy in WFP's school feeding in Malawi and we are currently no longer working on ECD. In 2020, the Ministry of Education is leading the review of the national inclusive education strategy. WFP remains a supportive partner to the Ministry and continue advocating on issues related to quality education, for example through the implementation</p>

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			strategic partnerships with donors.				and coordination of the Joint Programme on Girls Education, jointly with UNICEF as leading UN partner working with Government in this area.
2	<p>Consult with teachers and review the duration, timing and quantity of in-service/continuous teacher training sessions in the literacy promotion activity of the SMP.</p> <p>2.1 Consult widely with teachers to obtain their input on the duration, quantity and content of the in-service teacher training</p> <p>2.2 Pilot an initially agreed approach for teacher training and evaluate its outcomes</p> <p>2.3 Distribute the teaching and learning materials on time</p> <p>2.4 Scale up coverage of the literacy promotion activity to all districts</p>	Accepted	<p>2.1 In-service training was not a specific component in the USDA programme, but WFP will continue to advocate with government to strengthen in-service training through existing national efforts such as the National Reading Programme.</p> <p>2.2 In addition, Government and WFP will share lessons and recommendations from the evaluation and other programme reports with other partners involved in implementing literacy activities to ensure that key findings/recommendations from the USDA-McGovern Dole Program can contribute to overall strengthening of quality of education in Malawi</p> <p>2.3 Distribute the teaching and learning materials on time.</p>	High	WFP CO (Programme unit/School feeding section), Ministry of Education and other education stakeholders	September 2019 to December 2023	Closed WFP does no longer implement a literacy promotion activity, as the USDA supported programme has ended. However, WFP continues to make efforts for complimentary partnerships and advocacy with MOEST on strengthening quality of education. For example, through the UN Joint Programme on Girls Education which WFP implements jointly

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			2.4 Advocate with government and partners to scale-up literacy promotion efforts in areas with WFP implemented programmes and base teacher trainings on needs assessments and in consultation and with inputs from teachers.				with UNICEF and UNFPA, and whereby support to improved education is one of the key areas of intervention
3	<p>Improve sustainability of the SMP by formalizing a handover strategy, strengthening community ownership and developing a contextually relevant and climate smart national SMP.</p> <p>3.1 Formalize a gradual, sequenced, handover strategy via a signed agreement that includes a comprehensive roadmap and plan for transitioning from external to local funding. Sequencing can be done by regions or school terms e.g. start with term overlapping with the lean season.</p> <p>3.2 Sensitize communities on their roles and responsibilities to strengthen their sense of ownership</p> <p>3.3 Develop agriculturally and climate sensitive, contextually relevant national SMP that is implemented via centralized and decentralized models that has linkages with actors and initiatives in irrigation</p>	Accepted	<p>3.1 WFP will provide technical support to the Ministry of Education by developing a gradual, sequenced, handover strategy to be articulated within a national school meals Operational Plan and to include a comprehensive roadmap and plan for transitioning. This will be informed by a Systems Approach for Better Education Results Assessment (SABER) and a Cost-Benefit Analysis of the school meals programme's main implementation models</p> <p>3.2 WFP and government will sensitize communities on their roles and responsibilities to strengthen school meals sustainability as well as local ownership of the SMP</p> <p>3.3 WFP will provide technical support to government to develop a context based, climate sensitive and</p>	High	WFP CO (Programme unit/School feeding section), Ministry of Education	<p>September 2019 to August 2021</p> <p>October – December 2020</p> <p>September 2019 - December 2023</p>	<p>Closed</p> <p>All the actions under this recommendation have been adopted into the new school feeding programme following end of USDA funded programme. They are part of WFP's CSP and they are included in the new CO school feeding strategy. The implementation will be tracked as part of the CSP implementation. This specific action is part of regular implementation as</p>

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	development, resilience and climate smart agriculture		sustainable national SMP, leveraging on the experience and design of the Home-Grown school feeding				communities are sensitized on providing contribution/support to SMP (as result, all communities provide volunteers for cooking, firewood. For example, few schools in Thyolo district have started providing food items especially after being informed of WFP's scale down).
4	<p>Improve financial readiness and sustainability by prioritizing school feeding in fiscal planning, increasing finding fiscal space for the SMP and establishing public-private partnerships.</p> <p>4.1 Government should ring-fence a school feeding line item in the MoEST or National Social Security Programme (NSSP) annual budget. Alternatively, a budget line can be included in the district council budget or primary school grant programme. This would increase accountability and</p>	Accepted	<p>4.1 WFP, in partnership with other development partners, will advocate for government to increase the funding in the annual budget that is allocated for school feeding</p> <p>4.2 To support the resource mobilization efforts WFP will also assist in evidence building</p>	High	<p>WFP CO (CD), Ministry of Education and other education stakeholders</p> <p>WFP CO (Programme Unit/School feeding</p>	September 2019 to December 2023	<p>Closed</p> <p>All the actions under this recommendation have been adopted into the new school feeding programme following end of USDA funded programme. They are part of WFP's CSP and they are included in the</p>

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	<p>guarantee funding – necessary for national ownership.</p> <p>4.2 Increase fiscal space for the SMP in line with increasing GDP. Options include reducing inefficiency in expenditures, expanding the tax base by widening the higher tax brackets or scaling back tax cuts for the wealthiest, or raising “vice/sin taxes”.</p> <p>4.3 Establishing public-private partnerships that provide funding towards school feeding operations and facilitate affordable access to school materials. Local businesses can be engaged.</p>		<p>(e.g. by conducting Cost-Benefit Analyses in collaboration with the government)</p> <p>4.3 This (public-private partnerships) is an area for further exploration</p>		<p>section)/Ministry of Education</p> <p>WFP CO (Programme Unit/School feeding section)/Ministry of Education</p>		<p>new CO school feeding strategy. The implementation will be tracked as part of the CSP implementation. In the meantime, progress was made on advocacy, as a paper on benefits of school meals was drafted in collaboration with BMZ, GIZ and the EU. CBA partnership with Mastercard was discussed – implementation was halted due to political tensions first and COVID-19 later but planning will resume as soon as possible</p>
5	<p>Monitor and address the unintended consequences of the early feeding time.</p> <p>5.1 Encourage communities to provide enhanced security for volunteers travelling to school in</p>	Accepted	5.1 & 5.2 WFP will support Government in sensitizing communities and schools on the importance of gender equality in meal preparation, and providing enhanced security for volunteer	Medium	WFP CO (Programme/School Meals/Sub-office), Ministry of Education	September 2019 to June 2020	<p>Closed</p> <p>This action has been implemented as part of training/sensitizati</p>

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	<p>the dark to prepare the meal through provision of lights, a watchman or forming commuting groups.¹</p> <p>5.2 Sensitize communities on the importance of gender equality in meal preparation.</p> <p>5.3 Continue efforts to mobilize resources for provision of the planned 100g ration size in order to counter the risk of afternoon hunger among older school children.</p> <p>5.4 Commission a study into the effects of the new mealtime on a broad spectrum of unintended results.</p>		<p>cooks travelling to schools through engagement of the school management committees and village committees</p> <p>5.3 WFP will continue resource mobilization efforts</p> <p>5.4 Government is currently leading a study analyzing the consequences of early meal preparation and feeding, and WFP will provide technical inputs from its monitoring data as requested to support this study</p>		<p>WFP CO (Partnerships/CD/Programme unit)</p> <p>Ministry of Education</p>		<p>on of school management committees and village committees (communities provide security arrangements where needed – through watchman, community team escorting volunteers to the school etc). As per 2020 CO school feeding strategy resource mobilization efforts have now focused on maintaining school feeding in priority districts based on vulnerability. Thus prioritizing maintaining coverage first. Study by Ministry of Education ongoing, WFP provided inputs.</p>

¹ Though it did not come up during the data collection, one suggestion by WFP Malawi CO is to provide training for school cooks on options to reduce cooking time. This could be a lasting solution

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6	<p>Scale up the duration and coverage of partner-managed complementary activities and improve their timing to maximize synergies, increase efficiency and effectiveness.</p> <p>6.1 Scale up the geographical coverage and duration of the literacy promotion activity and capacity building in ECDs to accelerate the achievement of SO1</p> <p>6.2 Prevent late implementation by consolidating the commencement and duration of partner-managed complementary activities with that of school meals to increase efficiency e.g. literacy promotion, capacity building for ECD centers and provision of bursaries.</p> <p>6.3 Strengthen ties and maximize synergies between geographically overlapping activities e.g. AECDM and CRECCOM (Creative Centre for Community Social Mobilization) activities.</p> <p>6.4 The launch or implementation of complementary activities that require community mobilization or sensitization should avoid rainy seasons when communities are too busy farming.</p>	Accepted	<p>6.0 For future programming of complementary activities paired with SMP and depending on resources, WFP will ensure to maximize synergies by ensuring activities are implemented at the same time and across same geographical scope.</p> <p>6.1 If resources will be available for literacy promotion activities these will be scaled up</p> <p>6.2 If resources will be timely available complementary activities through partners will also be funded timely by WFP, as now there is an established design and partners in place</p> <p>6.3 If resources will be available for these activities – synergy in implementation will be further strengthened</p> <p>6.4 WFP will ensure that in the design and implementation of these complementary inputs, seasonality and respective responsibilities for community are taken into account</p>	High	<p>WFP and partners</p> <p>WFP CO (Programme unit/School feeding)</p>	Implementation timeline dependent on future funding for complementary activities	<p>Closed</p> <p>Complimentary activities under this recommendation (i.e. literacy promotion, capacity building for ECD, provision of bursaries) were specific to the design of the USDA/McGovern Dole funded programme. With the end of the programme these activities have also ended. However, WFP continue to promote literacy and quality education through partnerships under other programmes such as the UN Joint Programme on Girls Education, in partnership with UNICEF, whereby school feeding is provided alongside and in synergy</p>

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							with interventions supporting improved quality of education, digital learning, communication for development
7	<p>Improve efficiency through the timely delivery of commodities and reduction of transportation costs.</p> <p>7.1 Continue the practice of consolidated haulage and delivery of all the CO's commodities to benefit from economies of scale and improve timeliness.</p> <p>7.2 Consider local or regional procurement of commodities, with an initial focus on maize meal (THR)</p> <p>7.3 Continue to prioritize stocks for remote schools with inaccessible roads and deliver them in advance</p> <p>7.4 Conduct regular monitoring and inspection of expenditures to keep track of changes in cost drivers.</p>	Accepted	<p>To ensure efficiency in delivery WFP will continue to:</p> <p>7.1 Consolidate the delivery of commodities where feasible to benefit from economies of scale and improve timeliness.</p> <p>7.2 Depending on donor requirements, WFP will increase local or regional procurement of commodities.</p> <p>7.3 Prioritize stocks for remote schools with inaccessible roads and deliver them in advance</p> <p>7.4 Regularly monitor the expenditures to keep track of changes in cost drivers which will also inform the Cost-Benefit Analysis</p>	Medium	<p>WFP CO (Supply chain)</p> <p>WFP CO (Programme/Supply Chain)</p> <p>WFP CO (Programme/Supply Chain)</p> <p>WFP CO (Programme/Supply Chain)</p>	September 2019 to December 2023	<p>Closed</p> <p>All actions have been implemented or are part of regular/standard procedures. Specifically:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.This is standard practice in supply chain and continues. 2. USDA funding required mostly in-kind commodities. WFP prioritizes local and regional procurement. 3. Prepositioning during rainy season is standard practice. 4. This is regularly done as part of standard procedure in funds management

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8	<p>Strengthen gender mainstreaming, analysis and protection mechanisms by formulating a strategy/action plan, addressing gendered cultural norms, GBV and improving feedback mechanisms.</p> <p>8.1 Formulate a specific gender and protection strategy or action plan that defines the scope, purpose and goals of mainstreamed activities.</p> <p>8.2 Pro-actively address the incidence of GBV in schools. For instance, the Joint Programme on Girls Education (JPGE) can be scaled up to cover all supported schools in the targeted districts.</p> <p>8.3 Address cultural norms such as early marriage and cultural sexual initiation through community sensitization</p>	Accepted	<p>8.1 – 8.3 Gender analysis will be undertaken by using a variety of methods to better understand the relationships between women, men, boys and girls relative to their access to and control over resources, their gender roles and activities, and the specific contextual constraints they face relative to each other. This will enable WFP to assess the intersectional dynamics that influence cultural and social norms, educational attainment, economic empowerment and development of women, men, boys and girls in Malawi. The gender analysis will then inform the development of a strategy that is both gender-sensitive and gender-transformative where relevant. The strategy will clearly define the scope, purpose, and goals of gender mainstreamed activities. Furthermore, WFP will continue to advocate for a multi-sectoral approach to education interventions (following the model of the UN Joint Programme on Girls Education – JPGE) that seeks to address other factors impacting access</p>	Medium	WFP CO (Programme Unit/School Meals section/Gender and Protection officer), Ministry of Education and other education stakeholders	September 2019 to December 2023	<p>Closed</p> <p>Gender analysis has been included among activities to be done within the CSP for all programme activities, including school feeding. Meanwhile, WFP continues to implement gender transformative programmes such as the UN Joint Programme on Girls Education, which also seek to address factors impacting access to education, such as GBV and other gendered cultural norms (e.g. early marriages).</p>

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	<p>8.4 Monitor and address gender balance in meal preparation work, sensitize communities on the importance gender equality and increase incentives e.g. training and certification in cooking.</p> <p>8.5 Scale up access to confidential platforms for reporting complaints and grievances and sensitize communities to ensure that all voices are heard. Examples are toll free hotlines and suggestion boxes.</p> <p>8.6 Improve gender analysis by ensuring monitoring data is gender disaggregated as required, including GEEW and protection indicators such child marriage, volunteer safety, female leadership of SFCs and. GEEW indicators can be guided by a parallel gender action plan and monitored via regular gender and protection assessments.</p>		<p>to education, such as GBV and other gendered cultural norms (e.g. early marriages).</p> <p>8.4 WFP will continue to monitor and sensitize communities on the importance gender equality in meal preparation work.</p> <p>8.5 – 8.6 WFP will review its Complaint and Feedback Mechanisms (CFM) for the SMP based on the recommendations from the gender analysis. Confidential platforms for reporting complaints and grievances will be scaled up together with the sensitization of learners, communities, and school committees to ensure they are aware of how to make a complaint and how they can get feedback (e.g. toll-free lines and suggestion boxes in schools</p>				
9	Strengthen M&E by streamlining indicators, incorporating gender and protection and building capacities at local level.	Accepted	9.0 WFP Malawi's M&E Unit in collaboration with the School Meals team will work to revise its current monitoring strategy	Medium	WFP Malawi Country Office (M&E and School Feeding units)	September 2019 to June 2020	Closed WFP CO M&E strategy has been

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	<p>9.1 Lessen the burden of data collection on M&E staff and local level actors by streamlining indicators. Indicators that duplicate others can be dropped e.g. number of social assistance beneficiaries. Indicators for activities with the largest coverage, or those theoretically linked to SOs and impact indicators can be given top priority e.g. literacy and knowledge in teaching, health and nutrition practices.</p> <p>9.2 Performance indicators in the PMP and semi-annual report need to be harmonized.</p> <p>9.3 Consistently collect gender-disaggregated data in routine monitoring. Monitor gender and protection indicators through regular gender /protection and qualitative assessments.</p> <p>9.4 Future evaluations should account for spill-over effects that affect effect size, validity and credibility e.g. younger siblings of learners who also come to eat at schools, migration of learners from non-beneficiary schools.</p> <p>9.5 Provide learner registers and build capacities of schools and</p>		<p>and tools in line with recommendations for incorporating gender and protection as well as streamlining/harmonizing indicators. As part of its adjusted strategy, WFP will introduce outsource monitoring partners for outcome-level monitoring to lessen the burden on WFP staff members as well as ensure the production of high frequency data that meets programmatic needs.</p> <p>9.1 M&E and School meals have revised the process monitoring checklist in order to reduce number of indicators. This will also reduce the amount of time staff spend at one distribution point collecting monitoring data. Some indicators like number of social assistance beneficiaries, were requested by the donor. However, this project has now phased out and these indicators are no longer part of the school meals M&E system.</p> <p>9.2 USDA project phased out. However, M&E has developed a M&E tool kit so that all indicators are properly documented and tracked.</p>				<p>revised (including for school feeding). Tools such as process monitoring checklists are being reviewed. The Gender Officer inputs into data collection tools. Regular reviews with teachers at zone level from 2020 will improve quality of data as they will share experiences on data collection. CO has in place a third-party monitoring option.</p>

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	<p>community structures to improve record keeping. Engage Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and school management committees to support M&E and prevent gaps created by teacher transfers.</p> <p>9.6 Government should allocate more fuel to district level officials to enable M&E and lessen the burden on WFP field monitors. It should also appoint a permanent national M&E coordinator for SMP.</p> <p>9.7 Develop a quality assurance mechanism for the M&E system</p>		<p>9.3 A Gender Programme Officer is now on board and always consulted to input specific gender/ protection questions when M&E is developing assessment/data collection tools.</p> <p>9.4 Recommendation to be highlighted to future evaluation teams.</p> <p>9.5 WFP will also explore ways in which to collaborate with Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and school management committees to support M&E and prevent gaps created by teacher transfers. M&E also plan to include periodical zonal reviews of M&E data and tools by schools. This will enable new teachers to learn from their peers.</p> <p>9.6 Not entirely feasible to appoint a Permanent national M&E coordinator as the MOEST has a centralized M&E department and there cannot be an officer only for school feeding. Currently, WFP has provided a secondment, but it is for a short period. The strategy in working with Government on M&E is rather to advocate for visibility</p>				

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			of school health and nutrition indicators within existing Education M&E as well as Health and Nutrition systems under MOH. 9.7 M&E plan to conduct routine quality data checks/audit starting from 2020.				