



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Strategic Evaluation of the Contribution of School Feeding Activities to the SDGs

CONTEXT

The evaluation was conducted in the context of WFP efforts to strategically position itself across the humanitarian development and peace nexus in the framework of the Agenda 2030 and the UN reform. This shift is reflected in the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021) and in the recent School Feeding Strategy, endorsed by WFP management in 2020, which identifies contributions to eight SDGs and emphasizes the need to strengthen WFP enabling role. Three main changes are implied in this strategic vision: the way WFP works in partnership, the way WFP works with governments, and the way WFP delivers school feeding.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation assessed progress towards the 2013 School Feeding Policy objectives, and how well WFP is positioned and equipped to deliver on its school feeding agenda, with particular emphasis on the organizational readiness to implement the 2020–2030 school feeding strategy.

OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation served the dual objectives of learning and accountability. The primary intended users of the evaluation include WFP's Executive Board; senior management; staff in headquarters, global offices, regional bureau and country offices; donor partners; government partners; private sector partners; and other interested parties.

KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

Is the School Feeding Policy relevant in the framework of the Agenda 2030 and WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021)?

The relevance of WFP School Feeding Policy is demonstrated by global evidence on the contribution of school feeding to a range of SDGs, and by the role of school feeding as part of a school health and nutrition package delivered through schools. Moreover, data on global coverage of school feeding reinforce the idea of gradually shifting towards supporting nationally owned programmes to maximize results, an approach that is central to the new WFP school feeding strategy and was already envisaged in the 2013 policy. However, neither the policy nor the strategy provide sufficient strategic guidance on school feeding in

humanitarian contexts, even though this remains a major component of WFP school feeding activities.

To what extent has WFP delivered results in line with the School Feeding Policy objectives?

School feeding effects on school attendance are confirmed, suggesting that the value transfer implied by school feeding is significant relative to household income in the contexts where WFP operates. The role of school feeding as safety net is increasingly recognized, but relatively rarely integrated into wider national systems for social protection. There is widespread evidence of positive school feeding effects on enrolment, including positive gender and equity effects. However, educational outcomes depend on context and complementary inputs. Home-grown school feeding initiatives increased during the period observed, but operationalizing a decentralised approach and ensuring sustained demand are key challenges. All school feeding rations are designed to be nutritious, although the incorporation of additional nutrition-sensitive components into school feeding programmes has been haphazard and its outcomes difficult to track. Finally, school feeding was an important part of the emergency response to COVID 19 and WFP was able to rapidly adapt and to work with partners to provide a safety net through take home rations

How well is WFP equipped to deliver and to assist governments in implementing effective and equitable school feeding programmes?

The strategy, the regional implementation plans and the CSPs provide a coherent framework to support programming, although more clarity is needed on WFP role in different contexts and on practical implications of the proposed strategic approach. However, there are inherent staffing, budget, financing and systems constraints. Mobilizing funding for capacity strengthening remains a challenge, particularly in middle income countries. Resource mobilization approaches need to be compatible with overall ambitions on partnerships and combined with stronger support for national governments in their efforts to attract resources for national school feeding programmes. WFP has sought to improve its results-based management, however, WFP acknowledges serious shortcomings in its ability to monitor and report on school feeding performance. Noting that since 2018 WFP

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has given new impetus to work on global evidence generation, evaluation and advocacy in this area.

How well is WFP equipped to foster environments that enable national institutions to design, finance and implement sustainable school feeding programmes?

In line with its corporate organizational shift, WFP is paying greater attention to its role in enabling school feeding in all contexts, as reflected in CSPs. WFP is recognized as the agency of reference in the school feeding domain and is thus well positioned to advocate policy changes aimed at the adoption of an integrated school health and nutrition approach that contributes to multiple SDGs. The evaluation revealed that WFP's progress in global partnerships, advocacy and multi-sectoral coordination is not equally reflected at regional and country levels. Evidence shows challenges in anchoring school feeding in national social protection and education frameworks and in leveraging national funding. WFP has facilitated the government-led formulation of policy and strategy frameworks that advance school feeding in various settings. WFP's capacity-strengthening work mostly focuses on implementation activities and less on institutional reforms that contribute to enabling environments. Overall, the evaluation found that there is need for greater corporate understanding of the challenges implied when transitioning towards nationally owned programmes as well as of WFP role post-transition.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Assessment

While acknowledging progress against the school feeding policy objectives, the evaluation concluded that implementation of the policy fell short of ambitions due to funding and capacity constraints and insufficiently tailored responses. It notes however that the strategy for 2020–2030 sets out an ambitious and transformative agenda, serving as a policy update as well as an implementation plan. Opportunities for enhancing WFP's contribution are being generated by the strategy, and the partnerships that have been built around the school health and nutrition agenda, and the collaborative approaches and partnerships that have characterized the COVID-19 response. The preparation of the next WFP strategic plan is an important opportunity to reinforce school feeding as a WFP priority.

Country strategic plans and regional implementation plans are increasing the visibility of the strategic role of school feeding, and WFP has a well recognized role in this field. The strategy has helped highlight and is beginning to address some of the systemic constraints that hamper WFP efforts to promote and support national school feeding systems. However, WFP will need to actively manage risks to the school feeding agenda including the risk of reduced prioritization, not being specific enough about WFP's role and added value, and the likely challenges in obtaining adequate funding (which may become more acute in the aftermath of COVID-19).

Recommendations

The evaluation makes 8 recommendations focusing on key dimensions of organizational readiness that, if addressed, will enable WFP to achieve its ambitions and be more effective in contributing to the Agenda 2030.

Sub-recommendations provide further detail in the evaluation report regarding how each recommendation can be implemented.

Recommendation 1

Ensure continuing high-level attention to school feeding by providing appropriate inputs to the Strategic Plan process, providing an Executive Board update on school feeding policy and strategy, and revising the Policy and Strategy during 2022–2023.

Recommendation 2

Develop guidance and standards for school feeding and school health and nutrition in humanitarian settings (including for school feeding as a response to shocks) and ensure that the principles and strategic priorities of this guidance are adequately reflected in the revised School Feeding Policy and Strategy (see Recommendation 1).

Recommendation 3

Prioritize corporately the Regional Bureau Implementation Plans (RBIPs) linked to the Strategy 2020–2030 and ensure that predictable minimum resources to enable implementation of the RBIP action plans are mobilized.

Recommendation 4

Significantly strengthen WFP's capacity to support the transition to school feeding programmes under full national ownership in priority countries and to add value in countries where transition processes have been completed.

Recommendation 5

Strengthen attention to gender transformation and equity in school feeding and in the broader school health and nutrition agenda by focusing on these issues in regional and country planning, implementation and reporting.

Recommendation 6

Develop a resource mobilization plan that complements WFP corporate resource mobilization efforts (globally and through second generation CSPs) and seeks predictable multi-year funding to support the roll-out of the School Feeding Strategy.

Recommendation 7

Scale up human resource capacity for the school feeding agenda, especially at country level, in line with the ambitions set out in the School Feeding Strategy and the forthcoming People Policy, to ensure that WFP can play the envisioned roles across different contexts and stages of transition.

Recommendation 8

Strengthen school feeding monitoring, evaluation and learning in a balanced way that supports accountability, strategic decision making, global learning and advocacy with respect to increasing decentralisation of responsibility within WFP and ensures that demands placed on country office monitoring systems are realistic.