



**WFP EVALUATION**



**World Food Programme**

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# **Evaluation of WFP Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Centralized Evaluation Report – Volume II Annexes

OEV/2020/062  
Office of Evaluation

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# Acknowledgements

This evaluation was conducted in the spirit of teamwork between the evaluation team and the WFP Office of Evaluation. Accordingly, the evaluation team would like to express our appreciation for the collaborative and supportive approach adopted.

We are especially grateful to WFP employees who took time to share their experience of working through the COVID-19 pandemic, under difficult and demanding conditions; and to all partners who were willing to share their views. We are indebted to Dr Michael Quinn Patton, for his expert guidance and support throughout.

# Disclaimer

The opinions expressed are those of the evaluation team, and do not necessarily reflect those of the World Food Programme. Responsibility for the opinions expressed in this report rests solely with the authors. Publication of this document does not imply endorsement by WFP of the opinions expressed.

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# Annex 1: Summary terms of reference

This annex presents the terms of reference for the evaluation.

## EVALUATION OF WFP'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

### Subject and Focus of the Evaluation

The COVID-19 pandemic is having an unprecedented effect on health, societies, economies, politics and the environment impact around the world. For the first time in over 20 years, poverty levels are increasing and so are food insecurities.

The multidimensional effects of the crisis which combine health, food security, human rights, social and economic aspects, is challenging WFP – along with its national and international partners - across all aspects of its operational and institutional practice.

On 27th March 2020, at the onset of the pandemic, WFP declared a corporate Level 3 (L3) emergency. This sought to address the travel restrictions, border closures, and reduced commercial aviation and shipping operations impacting on operations.

The L3 declaration included a workstream structure of 1: Wellness; 2: Sustain and Scale up Operations and 3: Service Provision. For the first time, WFP launched a universal surge deployment requirement, requesting all HQ- and Regional Bureau-based staff to make themselves available for deployment. The surge response supplied more than 500 staff through surge deployment to field offices, to provide support to field offices in the acute stages of their response.

The evaluation will cover all of WFP's adaptations to the COVID-19 response, programmatic and institutional, which were undertaken during the period January 2020 to June 2021. It will use the evaluation of WFP's Capacity to Respond to Emergencies, presented to the Executive Board in January 2020 and covering the period 2011-2018, as a guiding reference point for analysis. It will also consider the year 2019 when examining changes in WFP's programmatic and organizational arrangements during the main evaluation period of 2020 -June 2021.

This timeframe will enable the evaluation to assess key corporate changes in WFP's approach and adjustments to the COVID-19 pandemic, and programmatic adaptation within CSPs. The evaluation will look at whether and how WFP built on or departed from its previous (pre-COVID-19) activities; assess whether a strategic/institutional shift has taken place; and, if so, what are any consequences arising.

In addition to WFP's direct programmatic response to the COVID-19 pandemic in its Country Offices and Regional Bureaux, the scope will also include WFP's support to the GHRP. It will cover both adaptive capacities and results, considering the enabling environment, organizational capacities, partnerships and co-ordination, and assessing both institutional and programmatic achievements.

### Objectives and Users of the Evaluation

Evaluations serve the dual objectives of accountability and learning.

**Accountability** – The evaluation will build on a recent evaluation of WFP's capacity to respond to emergencies by assessing the extent to which WFP effectively and efficiently responded to the COVID-19 pandemic both in terms of i) its programming and operations, and ii) its institutional systems, structures and staffing.

**Learning** – The evaluation will assess how, why and under which conditions WFP’s adaptations to the COVID-19 pandemic helped increase the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, sustainability, coverage and impact of its operations and partnerships.

The main internal stakeholders and users of this evaluation are WFP Regional Bureaux and Country Offices, as primary deliverers of the COVID-19 response at field level, are key stakeholders with a high level of influence on/interest in the response, and beneficiaries of the COVID-19 response have a strong interest in the evaluation particularly. Other key stakeholders include WFP’s leadership and senior management, including the members of the Executive Board.

## Key Evaluation Questions

The evaluation will address four broad questions and sub questions

### **Question 1: How well did WFP’s enabling environment adapt to respond to the demands of the COVID-19 crisis?**

This question will examine WFP’s management systems (including internal communication) and supporting structures for all phases of the response. It will examine oversight, risk management and explore if the response was evidence based and supported by WFP emergency preparedness systems.

### **Question 2: How well has WFP adapted its organizational assets and capacities to respond to the demands of the crisis?**

The question will explore if WFP’s overarching framework for the response, and if the external and internal resources mobilization systems supported the response. Were the interventions adaptable to operational needs, and if AAP, gender and protection and conflict sensitivity concerns addressed. It will also examine if WFP successfully cared for its employees while responding to the pandemic.

### **Question 3: How well has WFP fulfilled its role as a partner in the collective humanitarian response, at country, regional and at global level?**

The question will address the extend WFP sustained and increased its global partnership to address needs, and if it supported national response. It will also examine to what extend has WFP delivered its intended role in the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP).

### **Question 4: What results have WFP ‘s response to the COVID-19 pandemic delivered?**

Ultimately, what results for food security and nutrition has WFP contributed to, and what sustainable institutional changes have been created to address such a crisis.

## Scope and Methodology

The evaluation will adopt standard UNEG and OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, namely: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, impact and coherence<sup>29</sup> as well as coverage

The methodology for the evaluation will build on the logic that is the basis for WFP’s COVID-19 response (L3, Global Response Plan and Medium-Term Programming Framework). It will be geared towards addressing the evaluation questions and encompass aspects of a developmental evaluation approach in an analytical framework

## Roles and Responsibilities

**Evaluation Team:** This developmental evaluation will be conducted by an evaluation team with appropriate evaluation and technical capacities. The evaluation team should have strong capacity in conducting global humanitarian evaluations that incorporate an organizational learning dimension. The team will be multi-disciplinary including extensive knowledge, skill and expertise in evaluating emergency responses as well as in the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data and information. At least one team member should have experience with the analysis and synthesis of extensive quantitative data.

**OEV Evaluation Manager:** The Evaluation Manager is Deborah McWhinney, Senior Evaluation Officer in WFP's Office of Evaluation.

**Stakeholders:** WFP stakeholders at country, regional and headquarters levels are expected to engage with the evaluation process to ensure a high degree of utility and transparency. An Internal Reference Group has been created to facilitate this engagement, which will include commenting on key draft documents and participating in the stakeholder workshop at the conclusions of the data collection phase.

### **Communications**

It is important that Evaluation Reports are accessible to a wide audience through transparent reporting. The dissemination strategy will consider from the stakeholder analysis who to disseminate to, involve and identify the users of the evaluation, duty bearers, implementers, beneficiaries, including gender perspectives.

The Summary Evaluation Report, together with Management Response, will be presented to the Annual Session of the WFP Executive Board in February 2022. A dissemination plan will be organized to engage with WFP staff and external stakeholders on the evaluation and facilitate further utilization of the evaluation findings and conclusions.

### **Timing and Key Milestones**

**Inception Phase:** January – March 2021

**Data Collection:** December 2020 – June 2021

**Reports:** July- November 2021

**WFP Executive Board:** February 2022

# Annex 2: Methodology

This annex presents the methodology for the evaluation.

## 1. Introduction

This annex describes the evaluation design and methodology, and how it was implemented. The exercise proved a learning curve, for both the Office of Evaluation and for the evaluation team. As such, recounting its implementation here will also hopefully serve as a learning tool for any future such exercises.

## 2. Context

The evaluation took place at a time when the emergency response in WFP, in late 2020, was still underway. The organization was therefore under a very considerable stress, not least because its Rome-based headquarters also faced emergency conditions. Meanwhile, field offices faced extremely high burdens trying to manage their responses amid global and national uncertainty.

Additionally, the role of WFP was particularly prominent in the global response to COVID-19, given its comparative advantages in logistics and supply chain, which placed it at the centre of the international response.

Travel restrictions were also in place at the time of design, with many countries still locked down and border restrictions in place. Field missions for the evaluation were unlikely to be feasible, even if they could be planned in advance.

Finally, the learning environment for the evaluation was relatively crowded, with several internal review exercises ongoing, including one on the Level 3 emergency response mechanism. The evaluation had to navigate this terrain carefully to avoid overburdening stakeholders or risking duplication.

## 3. Design process

The evaluation design applied an iterative process. A concept note and approach paper were prepared from August to October 2020, before the terms of reference (ToR) was drawn up and finalized in November 2020. The process-based approach to design had several advantages:

- It allowed for “thinking through” the conceptual issues prior to concretizing them in the terms of reference
- It allowed for broad consultation across the organization, to ensure that questions of institutional import and concern were raised in the evaluation design
- It allowed for adjustment as the organization’s response to COVID-19 – then mid-flow- adapted, to ensure maximum relevance at the point of issue of the terms of reference

Both the team leader and the Office of Evaluation were engaged in this process, as part of the collaborative approach, which was to underscore the evaluation process and design.

Following the development of the terms of reference, in December 2020, a pilot summary of evidence was conducted on one thematic area of the response: workforce management. This pilot process allowed for the testing of a) early methodological thinking on the evaluation model, and b) the practice of conducting one element of the evaluation on a small scale in one discrete thematic area.

## 4. Conceptual basis

The conceptual background and features of the evaluation were developed and explicated in the concept note and approach paper, and the subsequent terms of reference (December 2020). Initially, the design proposed was that of a developmental evaluation, following the work of Dr Michael Quinn Patton.<sup>1</sup> The differences between a traditional and a developmental evaluation are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Patton, M.Q. (2010) *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use*. New York: Guildford Press.



	<b>Traditional evaluation</b>	<b>Developmental evaluation</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	Supports improvement, summative tests and accountability	Supports development of innovation and adaptation in dynamic environments
<b>Roles &amp; relationships</b>	Positioned as an outsider to assure independence and objectivity	Positioned as an internal team function integrated into the process of gathering and interpreting data, framing issues, surfacing and testing model developments
<b>Accountability</b>	Focused on external authorities and funders based on explicit and pre-ordained criteria	Centred on the innovators' values and commitment to make a difference
<b>Opinions</b>	Rigorously options-focused, traditional research and disciplinary standards of quality dominate	Utilization-focused: options are chosen in service to development use
<b>Evaluation results</b>	Detailed format reports: validated best practices, generalizable across time and space. Can engender fear of failure	Rapid, real time feedback, diverse, user-friendly forms of feedback. Evaluation aims to nurture learning
<b>Complexity &amp; uncertainty</b>	Evaluator tries to control design implementation and the evaluation process	Learning to respond to lack of control, staying in touch with what's unfolding and responding accordingly
<b>Standards</b>	Methodological competence and commitment to rigour, independence; credibility with external authorities and funders; analytical and critical thinking	Methodological flexibility eclecticism and adaptability; systems thinking; creative and critical thinking balanced; high tolerance for ambiguity; open and agile; teamwork and people skills; able to facilitate rigorous evidence-based perspectives

A developmental model was considered appropriate for the following reasons:

- i. The distinguishing characteristic of a developmental evaluation is “contributing to something that is being developed”. The WFP COVID-19 response required major corporate adaptations that were ongoing at the time of evaluation design. Consultations during the design process had found consensus that adaptations implemented in WFP during COVID-19 might lead to longstanding shifts in the WFP operating model. The presumption within developmental evaluation of a high degree of flexibility and adaptation, and a focus on emergence, was therefore considered appropriate.
- ii. The COVID-19 response in WFP functioned in a systemic manner, taking place across corporate structures, systems and operations. This made systems thinking and analysis, and also complexity theory – both central to the developmental evaluation paradigm – highly relevant, particularly as WFP was undergoing ongoing corporate transformation.
- iii. Developmental evaluations are situated within the wider context of a utilization-focused evaluation.<sup>2</sup> Consultations indicated that ongoing production of evidence was a critical organizational need. A developmental evaluation explicitly geared to providing useful evaluative input to support corporate learning, as the WFP COVID-19 response evolved, had the potential to add value at multiple levels across the organization.

To incorporate aspects of a developmental evaluation, the evaluation needed to encompass the following conditions:

- i. A high level of engagement with management and staff (headquarters, regional bureau and country office as appropriate), throughout data collection, and ensuring regular feedback loops to promote ongoing learning
- ii. Adopting an approach of openness, receptiveness and flexibility, and willingness to adapt the evaluation process where needed

<sup>2</sup> Patton, M/Q. (2008) *Utilization-Focused Evaluation: 4th edition*. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage Publications.

- iii. Building a high level of ownership and decision making, with findings, conclusions and implications for next steps presented by the evaluation team and collectively discussed in feedback events with learning groups throughout the evaluation
- iv. A collegiate approach among the evaluation team members, involving regular discussions and open communications, to harness collective expertise and experience of both evaluation commissioners and the evaluation team
- v. Strong attention to process management by the evaluation team and Office of Evaluation.

These conditions were originally assumed to be met. However, as thinking evolved, and in consultation with Dr Quinn Patton, it became clear that, while the developmental principles overall were applicable to the exercise, there were some areas where the conditions for a purely “developmental” approach could not be guaranteed. These were:

- i. Stakeholder willingness to engage openly and consistently with an external evaluation team on corporate decision making and, concomitantly – given the context of organizational stress at the time
- ii. Evaluators’ unconditional availability for swift and timely engagement when a decision making opportunity arose, given their other commitments
- iii. Stakeholder engagement with raw data to inform decision making, given time constraints on management
- iv. The anticipation and mapping of potential decision making opportunities within the WFP corporate environment at a time of high fluidity in the organizational response
- v. Less “formal reporting” than on a standard evaluative process, given the evaluation culture in WFP
- vi. The need for results reporting as part of the evaluation’s accountability mandate, which does not fully align with the conceptual approach of a developmental evaluation.

Growing knowledge of the context raised concerns that not all these conditions could be met in WFP in 2021. Pressures on the organization at the time – and not least a headquarters operating under emergency conditions in Italy – was likely to constrain stakeholder engagement in the process of evaluation. Decisions were being taken and amended on a daily basis, as the response unfolded. Moreover, the evaluation would be presented to the WFP Executive Board – and as such, had accountability, as well as learning, aims.

With the central principle of evaluation fidelity in mind, the design was therefore amended to that of a “retrospective” developmental evaluation. This reflects what Patton refers to as a “patch” evaluation design, combining developmental evaluation elements with a component assessing results.<sup>3</sup> The retrospective element of a developmental evaluation is often a precursor to a full developmental evaluation. This element asks questions such as:

- i. What were the major decision points?
- ii. What were the implications of these choices?
- iii. What did you learn about the nature of adaptation in the system in which you operate?
- iv. What processes helped to stimulate or sustain innovation?<sup>4</sup>

These questions were applicable to the exercise – and as such, a retrospective developmental design was considered appropriate.<sup>5</sup> This is based on eight key principles:

- i. Developmental purpose
- ii. Evaluation rigour
- iii. Utilization-focus
- iv. Innovation niche
- v. Complexity perspective
- vi. Systems thinking
- vii. Co-creation
- viii. Timely feedback.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Patton (2006) M (2010) *ibid*.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.artsfwd.org/evaluating-innovation-an-introduction-to-developmental-evaluation/>

<sup>5</sup> Patton, M. (2011). *Developmental evaluation applying complexity concepts to enhance innovation and use*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

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

Dr Patton agreed to act as an expert adviser to the evaluation process, and the final design and ongoing process benefitted from his guidance and advice.

## 5. Building on prior learning

An additional principle of evaluation design was therefore to contribute to the continuum of WFP evaluative exercises by mapping the organization's trajectory in its corporate reforms as they have applied to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the Office of Evaluation conducted an evaluation of the WFP Capacity to Respond to Emergencies.<sup>7</sup> This evaluation addressed the contribution that WFP capacity at three levels – enabling environment, organizational and individual – makes to the quality of its emergency responses. The evaluation's key findings were as follows:

- i. WFP has increased its capacity to respond to the increased number and scale of emergency responses over the past decade. However, capacities at the individual level are overstretched.
- ii. 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.
- iii. 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.
- iv. 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.
- v. The contribution of WFP to sector-wide responses is highly valued and contributes to inter-agency efficiency and better coverage. Evolving roles and United Nations reform mean that new guidance and clarification will be needed.
- vi. Limitations in WFP corporate monitoring frameworks and systems constrain oversight of the effectiveness of its responses. Effective learning platforms are also lacking.
- vii. More work can be done to support capacity strengthening of governments.

The evaluation made ten recommendations, all of which were agreed or partially agreed.

Additionally, the first pilot evidence summary conducted had provided several process-related lessons that would inform the wider evaluation implementation:

- i. The crowded space on COVID-19-related exercises meant that WFP staff had little time to engage
- ii. Some communication barriers were encountered, though notably not at country office level, where staff appeared enthusiastic to engage and discuss their experience
- iii. Some staff were distressed in recounting their experience; a highly emotionally intelligent approach was needed for remote interviews
- iv. The richness of data at country level was immense, and much of the most valuable data was acquired by asking staff to speak from a very human perspective, recounting their own experience.

This learning was built into the main implementation phase of the evaluation, as set out below.

## 6. Analytical framework<sup>8</sup>

To implement the conceptual approach, the evaluation developed an analytical framework, intended to serve as the main analytical spine of the evaluation. The framework was based on that prepared for the Evaluation of the Capacity to Respond to Emergencies, and also drew on:

- Review of WFP and the wider OECD-DAC hosted COVID-19 evaluation coalition on COVID-19 response material

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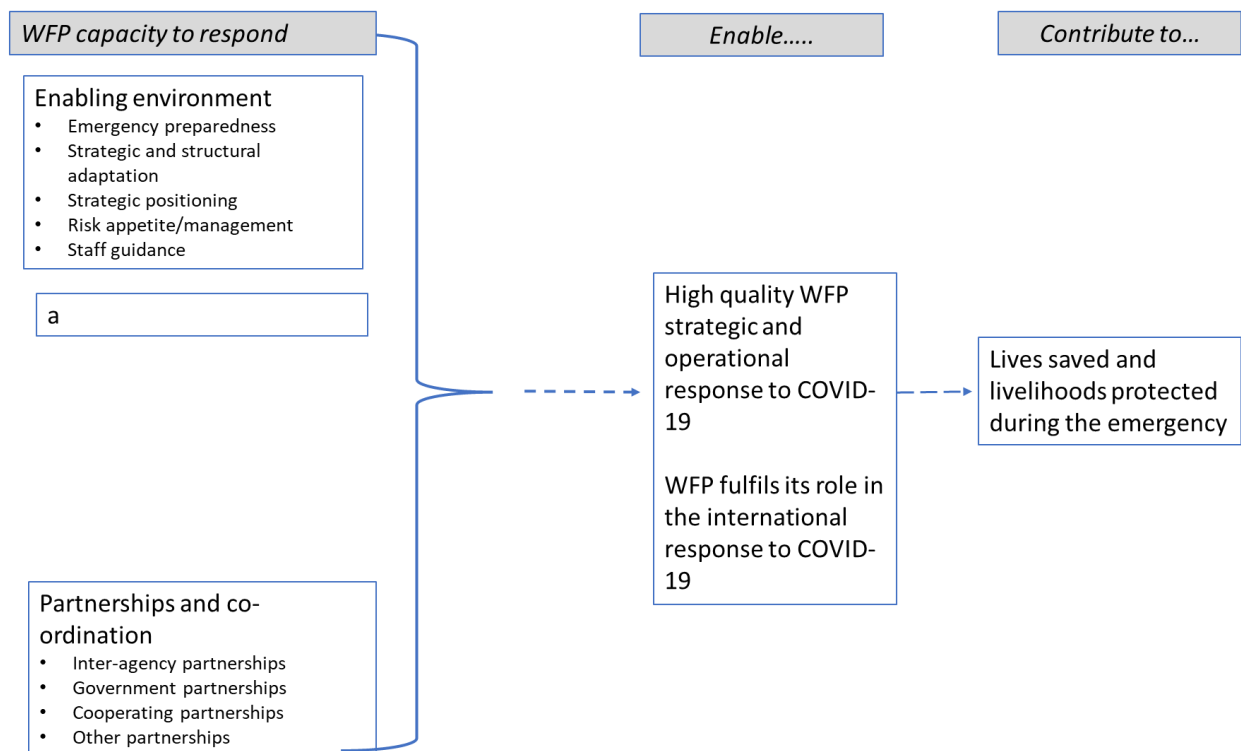
<sup>7</sup> WFP (2020) Evaluation of the WFP Capacity to Respond to Emergencies.

<sup>8</sup> A Theory of Adaptation was not developed for the evaluation given the very fluid and fast-moving nature of the response (and the consequent risk of being outdated by the time of evaluation delivery); the evaluation's focus on both programmatic and institutional concerns; and the building on the exercise on findings from the evaluation of WFP's Capacity to Respond to Emergencies.

- Review of other previous WFP evaluations; the Ebola Crisis Response (2017); Response to the Syrian Regional Crisis (2018); the Corporate Emergency Response in Northeast Nigeria (2019); the Democratic Republic of the Congo WFP Interim Country Strategic Plan Evaluation (2018-2020) (2020); and Bangladesh Country Strategic Plan Evaluation (forthcoming)
- Mapping against the WFP COVID-19 Risk Register and Risk Appetite Statement.

The analytical framework combined elements of the WFP institutional environment, on the assumption that this would contribute to a high-quality WFP strategic and operational response to COVID-19; with accountability for results, as required by the Office of Evaluation. It was refined both for the inception report and the final evaluation report. The final version is below:

**Figure 1: Analytical framework**



Source: Evaluation team

## 7. Stakeholders and consultation

The retrospective developmental model for the evaluation meant that the role of stakeholders in its conduct and use was particularly important. This required the conducting of a detailed stakeholder analysis, undertaken as part of the inception report, which identified the groups of stakeholders with interests in the evaluation, and/or those with the potential to influence it.

Stakeholders identified were: WFP leadership, management and staff; host governments and other partners in the countries where WFP works; cooperating partners; United Nations partners, particularly those with which WFP worked closely on the pandemic, such as its humanitarian partners and agencies such as WHO and UNICEF; and those that contributed financially and in other ways to support and enable the strategic and operational response of WFP to the pandemic. The stakeholder analysis also noted the importance of ongoing engagement with management and staff, as part of the retrospective developmental approach, though a careful approach had to be adopted to avoid imposing burdens.

A foundational part of the design was the formation of consultative groups, to support ongoing learning and engagement. These groups were formed around particular thematic areas of the evaluation, and were a critical part of the organizational engagement aspect of the evaluation design.

## 8. Evaluation questions and associated criteria

The evaluation questions were presented in the terms of reference. Having been refined through a sequential process (concept note, approach paper, terms of reference), they were not adapted at the inception stage.

**Table 1: Evaluation questions and subquestions**

<b>1. How well did the WFP enabling environment adapt to respond to the demands of the COVID-19 crisis?</b>		<b>Relevance Effectiveness Efficiency</b>
<b>1.1</b>	<i>To what extent have <b>management systems and structures</b> for both phases of the response (immediate emergency response/medium term programme framework) enabled effective and efficient decision making?</i>	Efficiency Effectiveness
<b>1.2</b>	<i>To what extent did WFP <b>oversight and risk management systems</b> enable it to balance risk management with ensuring delivery during the pandemic?</i>	Efficiency Effectiveness
<b>1.3</b>	<i>Have both phases of the response (initial emergency response/medium-term programme framework) been adequately <b>evidence-based</b> in their design and implementation?</i>	Relevance
<b>1.4</b>	<i>To what extent have guidance and <b>internal communications</b> supported the WFP response to the pandemic?</i>	Effectiveness
<b>1.5</b>	<i>To what extent did WFP <b>emergency preparedness</b> support the delivery of the response?</i>	Effectiveness Efficiency
<b>2. How well has WFP adapted its organizational assets and capacities to respond to the demands of the crisis?</b>		<b>Relevance Effectiveness Efficiency Coverage</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<i>To what extent have the <b>overarching frameworks</b> for the WFP response guided short-term and medium-term needs while sustaining business continuity?</i>	Efficiency Effectiveness
<b>2.2</b>	<i>To what extent have the <b>external and internal resource mobilization and resource allocation systems</b> of WFP allowed it to respond flexibly and in a timely way to the needs of the pandemic?</i>	Efficiency Effectiveness
<b>2.3</b>	<i>How swiftly and flexibly did WFP initiate <b>programmatic adaptation to operational needs</b> in the pandemic? (beneficiary numbers, modalities, activity choice, etc)</i>	Relevance Efficiency
<b>2.4</b>	<i>How well has WFP addressed <b>accountability to affected populations, gender, protection and conflict sensitivity</b> concerns throughout the response?</i>	Relevance Coverage
<b>2.5</b>	<i>To what extent has WFP successfully managed, supported and cared for its employees when responding to the demands of the pandemic?</i>	Relevance Effectiveness Efficiency
<b>3. How well has WFP fulfilled its role as a partner in the collective humanitarian response, at country, regional and at global level?</b>		<b>Coherence Effectiveness Sustainability</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<i>To what extent has WFP maintained/broadened its global and national partnerships during the crisis, and what mutual benefits did this bring?</i>	Coherence Sustainability
<b>3.2</b>	<i>To what extent and how well has WFP supported national responses to COVID-19?</i>	Coherence Effectiveness
<b>3.3</b>	<i>To what extent has WFP delivered its intended role in the global response (GHRP) e.g. in common services/upstream supply services?</i>	Coherence Effectiveness
<b>4. What results have the WFP response to the COVID-19 pandemic delivered?</b>		<b>Effectiveness/impact</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<i>What results for food security and nutrition has the WFP response delivered or contributed to, particularly at country level?</i>	Effectiveness/impact

4.2	What sustainable institutional adaptations have been created, particularly at country level?	Effectiveness/sustainability
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The questions were aligned to the international evaluation criteria, which were defined for this exercise and are detailed in Table 2.

**Table 2: Evaluation criteria definitions**

Evaluation criteria	Definition for the evaluation
Relevance	The WFP response to the COVID-19 pandemic was aligned to its mandate and role in the international response and to national expectations; and it was tailored to beneficiaries and to the needs of its staff. It adapted to meet new needs emerging
Efficiency	WFP delivered its services for the COVID-19 response in a timely manner: making the best use of available resources (financial, human, learning and knowledge)
Effectiveness	The extent to which WFP assistance under the COVID-19 response met the intended objectives of WFP as set out in i) its Medium Term Programming Framework, and ii) the GHRP
Coherence	WFP fulfilled its role in the global humanitarian response to the best of its capacities, and its response adhered to the humanitarian principles. It was well-coordinated internally
Coverage	The extent to which WFP assistance met humanitarian needs across its target populations, and to which adaptations in corporate systems stimulated by the pandemic response reached across the full organization
Sustainability	The extent to which relevant aspects of the assistance and corporate adaptation have been planned and delivered with a view to ensuring their continuance in the future
Impact	The WFP response contributed to higher-level or longer-term adaptations, both at country/regional level, and across the organization

Two additional elements were however added at the inception stage; these were not criteria, but rather areas for consideration. They and their definitions, are detailed in Table 3.

**Table 3: Additional considerations and definitions**

Integrating gender, protection and accountability	The response was gender-responsive; protected the safety, dignity, and well-being of vulnerable people; and integrated their needs, concerns and expectations
People-centred	The WFP COVID-19 response ensured the safety, dignity, and well-being of its staff, while supporting them to deliver the response effectively; and protected the same elements for its beneficiaries

Both the criteria and the additional elements were integrated into the analytical framework for the exercise.

## 9. Methodology

### 9.1 Process lessons

The process-based approach to design had allowed five key lessons to emerge, which were subsequently integrated into the evaluation design. These were:

- i. **The utility of a staged and adaptive approach.** The process-based approach – concept note, approach paper, terms of reference – all produced as part of a collaboration between Office of Evaluation and the evaluation team, helped to a) develop conceptual and operational thinking, b) build momentum and interest across the organization, and c) map out the approach in line with the evolving institutional context. The adaptive model also fitted with the fluid institutional dynamic at the time.
- ii. **Centring on organizational requirements rather than existing orthodoxies.** Gearing design to the question “what does the organization need at this point in time?” rather than being driven either by standard evaluation formats in WFP or evaluation orthodoxy/typologies, proved its worth in terms of evolving a solidly grounded design and

approach. As the evaluation proceeded, the need to keep organizational requirements in view on an ongoing basis, and adapt as needed, remained paramount.

- iii. **The value of intensive process management.** For a developmental approach, a different set of working modalities to a more “traditional” evaluation approach apply. This required very careful attention to stakeholder engagement and evaluation messaging, led by the Office of Evaluation, with significant attention needed to manage procedural mechanics, for example to ensure that interviews were not duplicated (see Section 9.2 below).
- iv. **The value of a collaborative approach.** Without compromising on independence and impartiality, the evaluation required working across the traditional “boundaries” of an evaluation exercise, with the commissioning agency (WFP) and the evaluation team working jointly in the spirit of a “collective team.”
- v. **Integrating with the surrounding evidence-building environment.** Mindful of the crowded learning landscape, the evaluation design also drew on evidence being generated across the organization, such as real-time assurance reviews under the internal audit function and learning emerging from a Level 3 lessons learned/ business process review.

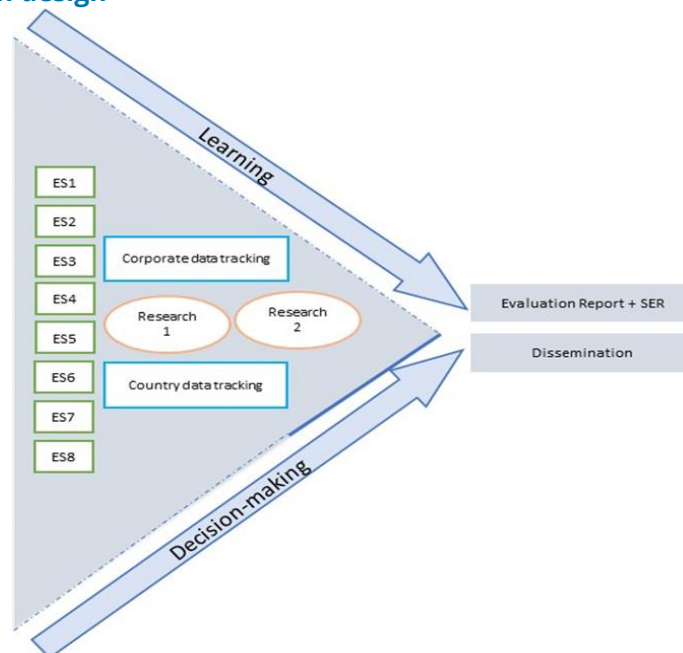
## 9.2 Methodological framework

In line with the principles of developmental evaluation, the methodology design adopted a sequential and graduated evidence-building approach, built on three tracks:

- **Track 1:** Building on the experience gathered by the initial pilot evidence summary, whose theme was workforce management, a set of further nine individual evidence summaries were developed around particular dimensions of the WFP COVID-19 response. Each thematic summary aimed to “tell the story” analytically of one specific dimension of the response
- **Track 2:** Concurrently, data were gathered from a purposive sample of 24 countries, to gain an overview of the COVID-19 response at country level, complemented by data received from country strategic plan evaluations (CSPEs)
- **Track 3:** Finally, corporate-level results data were collected, to review the results of the overarching WFP corporate response.

The overall design is reflected in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Evaluation design**

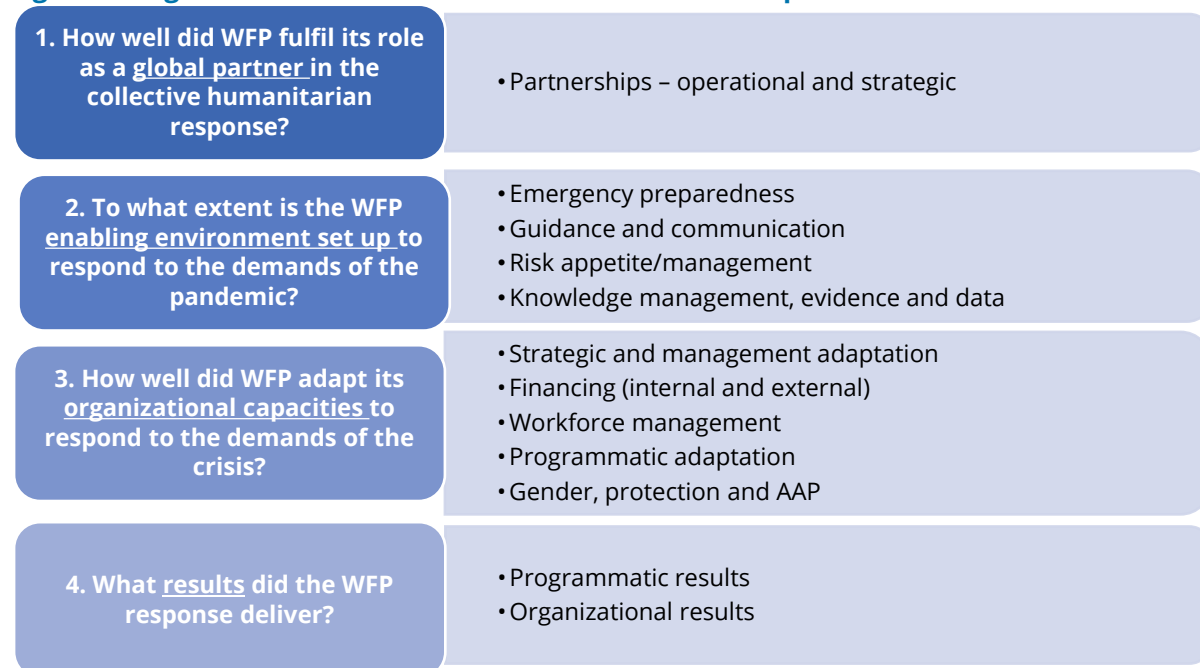


Source: Evaluation team

### Track 1: Evidence summaries

The evidence summaries were aligned to the overarching evaluation questions as per Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Alignment of evidence summaries to evaluation questions**



Source: Evaluation team

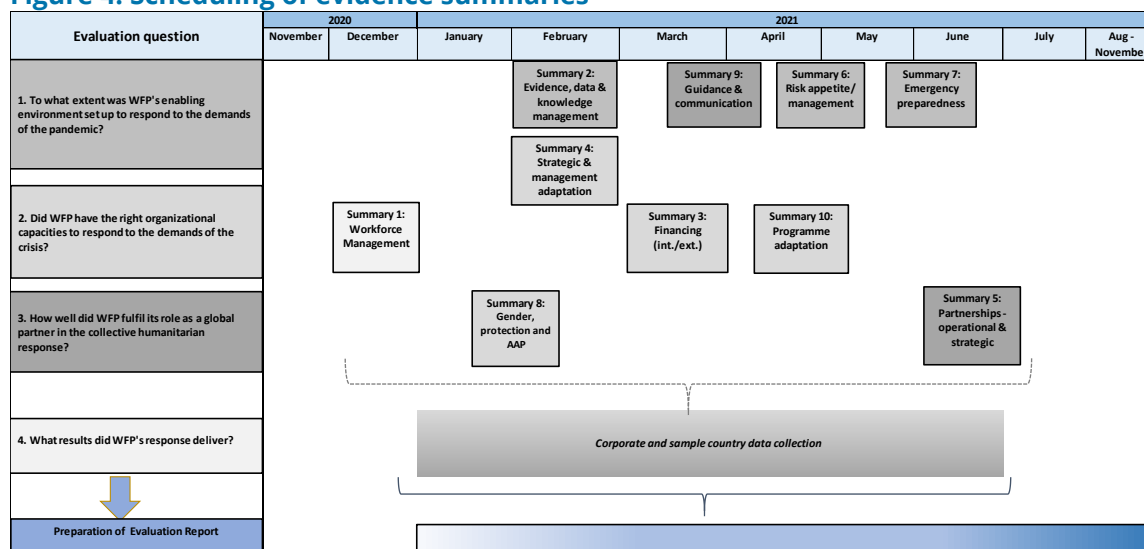
Each evidence summary:

- i. Was built on the learning generated from the pilot summary on the topic of workforce management
- ii. Was based on a 1-2-page concept note outlining the rationale for the evidence summary; issues arising in discussion with management to date; overarching question and subquestions; and proposed methodology, including suggested stakeholders/interviewees
- iii. Adopted the following process:
  - a) Orientation with evaluation team lead/evidence summary manager
  - b) Briefing with Office of Evaluation
  - c) Data gathering and analysis/write-up
  - d) Internal quality and consistency checks
  - e) Office of Evaluation quality check
  - f) Debriefing and dissemination.

The evidence summaries were conducted sequentially, but with overlaps, as detailed in Figure 4.



**Figure 4: Scheduling of evidence summaries**



Source: Evaluation team

Since the evidence summaries varied in scope and “reach” across WFP, and accordingly in their methodologies, they were categorized into three tiers, as follows:

- Tier 1: Desk study with a limited number of headquarter interviews
- Tier 2: Desk study “plus” (documentary review plus interviews at headquarter/regional level)
- Tier 3: “Mission” (documentary review plus headquarter, regional and country-level interviews).

The final categorization is set out in Table 4.

**Table 4: Categorization of evidence summaries**

Tier 1: Desk study	Tier 2: Desk study plus	Tier 3: Mission
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender, protection, and AAP</li> <li>• Strategic and management adaptation</li> <li>• Evidence, data, and knowledge management</li> <li>• Financing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce management</li> <li>• Partnerships – operational and strategic</li> <li>• Risk appetite/management</li> <li>• Programme adaptation</li> <li>• Emergency preparedness</li> </ul>

Each evidence summary applied a structured analytical template geared to the overarching analytical framework for the evaluation. The analytical pitch sought was a middle ground between a “mini-evaluation” and a purely descriptive narrative. Analytically, a focus was requested on four areas:

- i. **Complexity** – What was complex within the particular arena of the evidence summary that WFP had to deal with? What was difficult or challenging?
- ii. **Systems** – What system was WFP working with? Did WFP have to adapt this system to deal with COVID-19? How did it do so?
- iii. **Relationships** – What were the main relationships in the WFP response – between parts of the system, policies and strategies or people? Did these adapt at all during the response?
- iv. **Uncertainty** – How did WFP deal with the uncertainty of COVID-19 in the particular area of the summary? Did they try to embrace the uncertainty or did they try to impose a “command and control” model onto it?

The two main methods used for the evidence summaries were documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews. These were implemented as follows:

**Documentary analysis:** The WFP Office of Evaluation collated a repository of evidence for each evidence summary, held on a collective database. This was reviewed by the respective evidence summary team, and data extracted to support later interviews.

Document collations varied widely per evidence summary, but the exercise was marked by the very large numbers of documents made available to the evaluation team, with over 700 documents reviewed in total for the ten evidence summaries. Analysis of documents applied the structured analytical framework developed per evidence summary.

**Semi-structured interviews:** Given the considerable organizational pressure at the time of the evaluation, and the crowded learning environment, a clear directive from the Office of Evaluation was to avoid overlapping interviews/burdens on country offices and regional bureaux particularly.

Since field study was unfeasible, the evaluation opted to at least ensure maximum coverage of WFP field offices and regional bureaux through interviews. Accordingly, stakeholders were interviewed from all six regional bureaux and from 74 of 84 country offices. One staff member per country office was interviewed for relevant evidence summaries, but to support data-sharing, questions were integrated relating to other evidence summaries where appropriate/feasible for the interlocutor to respond. Data were shared among the evaluation team, with the agreement of the interviewee.

Managing this process in such a large-scale evaluation was complex and required considerable dexterity by the Office of Evaluation. A large spreadsheet was prepared, which provided an overview of all stakeholders interviewed, and those planned to be interviewed by different evidence summaries. This was updated and reviewed on a “live” and ongoing basis by the Office of Evaluation and the evaluation team.

Where interviews with external interlocutors were required – particularly the case for the partnerships evidence summary – these were mapped out in advance, with the aim of maximum coverage of WFP partners. For United Nations agencies, donor representatives and cooperating partners, this worked relatively well, and satisfactory coverage was achieved. However, reaching government stakeholders while conducting a remote evaluation proved very challenging; the process and its implications for the evaluation report are discussed in Section 10.

Finally, the pilot evidence summary on workforce management had encountered heightened emotions, with many WFP interviewees expressing distress at their experience of the response. The evaluation team therefore underwent specific training on “therapeutic” interviews, with a particular view to doing these remotely under the conditions of COVID-19. This training was provided by the contracted evaluation firm, Konterra.

**Consultative groups:** In keeping with the retrospective developmental aspects of the evaluation, each evidence summary benefitted from debrief and discussion with a consultative group, formed largely from those interviewed for the summary. The consultative groups were formed to a) share and disseminate learning generated, in the form of a debriefing and b) validate the narrative presented.

Eight consultative groups were held, over the period February-July 2021, with none held for evidence summary 2 on strategic adaptation, since the topic did not lend itself to discussion in such a group and because the Level 3 lessons learned/business process review was ongoing at the same time; and discussion for evidence summaries 3 and 5 combined in a single group. The groups were timed to take place approximately two weeks after the finalization of the summary, though in some cases, due to WFP organizational events or processes, the timing stretched to three-four weeks.

## **Track 2: Country data tracking**

This second track of data set out to systematically analyse a consistent dataset from a sample of 24 countries. Sampling parameters combined:

- i. The application of a structured set of parameters, to ensure logic and rigour in the individual evidence summary sample. These were:
  - a) Region
  - b) COVID-19 category
  - c) COVID-19 scale-up beneficiaries
  - d) Income classification
  - e) Needs-based plan
  - f) Emergency level
  - g) Budget revisions

- ii. Overall review, to ensure that the sample “in the round” covered the spectrum of WFP operations globally that have experienced the effects of COVID-19.

The resulting sample comprised:

- i. A range of income, development, and governance contexts
- ii. Coverage of all category 1 and 2 country offices
- iii. Coverage of all L3 and L2 emergencies
- iv. Coverage of all offices with a high scale-up of COVID-19-related additional beneficiaries
- v. Coverage of all offices with revised budgets due to COVID-19
- vi. Regional spread
- vii. Spread of office size (using budget as a proxy).

The sample of countries is detailed in Table 5.

**Table 5: Sample of countries for data collection**

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3
<b>RBB</b>	Afghanistan	Pakistan	Sri Lanka Kyrgyzstan
<b>RBC</b>	Yemen	Palestine Jordan	
<b>RBD</b>	Chad Nigeria	Mauritania	The Gambia
<b>RBJ</b>	DRC	Lesotho Malawi	Zambia
<b>RBN</b>	Burundi South Sudan	Kenya Sudan	
<b>RBP</b>	Haiti	Honduras	Ecuador Peru

\*= Country strategic plan evaluation planned for 2020/2021

Data sources are detailed in Table 6.

**Table 6: Evidence sources for country data tracking**

Category
• Country strategic plans
• Annual country reports
• Country office annual plans and reviews
• Budget revisions
• Partnership data
• Country office internal audits
• Results data (outputs and outcomes)

Data analysis sought to compare across the two reference years of 2019 and 2020, to identify and track adaptations in WFP country-level activity since the start of the pandemic.

This seam of data proved less rich than anticipated, however. While country strategic plans set out intentions, and annual country plans and reports/budget revisions indicated how country offices had adapted during COVID-19, little data emerged that was not reflected in corporate-level data (Track 3). Partnership data also proved extremely difficult to access, though a qualitative mapping did yield some findings.

Although this track was completed, it was eventually complemented by a review of 32 annual country reports, triangulated by country office interviews. This provided insight into WFP adaptations made, and interviews enabled specific questioning about areas of the response.

Finally, data from country strategic plan evaluations (CSPEs) were also fed into the evaluation's analysis, via a mechanism developed by the Office of Evaluation, where CSPEs ongoing in 2020 integrated dedicated questions on COVID-19, and provided reporting for the evaluation in a standard format. Eight CSPEs were analysed: China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Peru, El Salvador, Honduras, Lebanon, Zimbabwe and the Gambia.

### Track 3: Corporate data tracking.

This final evidence track collected and analysed organizational data to assess how WFP corporate-level planning and delivery adapted during the COVID-19 response. As for Track 2 above, reference years of 2019 and 2020 were applied. The dataset was:

- i. Human resourcing data
- ii. Finance and budgetary data (including budget revisions)
- iii. Risk management
- iv. Vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM)
- v. Beneficiary data at global level
- vi. Modalities data.

These items were fed into evidence summary analysis and discussion.

Additionally, the evaluation analysed corporate results data (outcomes and outputs), again with a view to comparing between 2019 and 2020 particularly. Analysis of outcomes proved challenging given the WFP outcome methodology, where even indicators where only one or two countries have reported undergo the same methodology to rate performance, resulting for example in a "100 percent" or "strong performance" rating for an indicator where only one country has reported. While the distinctions in evidence density are explained in the narrative of the annual performance report, outcome level performance is still reported with equivalent weighting to indicators where, for example, 50 countries report.

The evaluation made adjustments to compensate for this limitation, extracting those outcome indicators where more than ten countries reported, a figure agreed with WFP.<sup>9</sup> This resulted in a basket of six outcome indicators, which were analysed for direction of travel from 2019-2020 (Improved in 2020, remained the same/declined).

## 9.3 Gender equality

Gender equality was integrated into the evaluation design in several ways:

- Through undertaking a specific evidence summary on gender, protection and accountability to affected populations (evidence summary 7: Cross-cutting issues)
- By integrating gender equality-related questions into interview schedules for country-level staff being asked about programmatic issues
- By conducting research and analysis of gender issues in relevant evidence summaries (evidence summary 1: Workforce management, evidence summary 3: Evidence, data and knowledge management, and evidence summary 6: Programmatic adaptation)
- Committing to embedding gender and protection concerns into analysis and reporting
- By embedding gender into analysis for the overall evaluation report and reporting explicitly on the issue .

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<sup>9</sup> The following outcome indicators were excluded: Outcome 1.3: Enhanced social and public sector capacity to assist populations facing acute, transitory chronic food insecurity; Outcome 2.2 – Improved value chains for high-quality, nutrition-dense foods; Outcome 3.2: Increased efficiencies in pro-smallholder aggregation in food value chains; Outcome 3.3: Improved availability of key pro-smallholder public goods and services.; Outcome 4.2: Supported inclusive commercial food system functions and services; Outcome 4.3: Improved availability of food system-strengthening public goods and services; Outcome 5.2: Partners' demand for quality services fulfilled; Outcome 6.1: Supported inclusive and sustained food security and nutrition policy reform processes; Outcome 6.2: Prioritized and implemented food security and nutrition policy reforms; Outcome 7.1: Increased government access to financial resources; Outcome 8.2: Enhanced strategic partnerships with the public and private sectors, Rome-based agencies and other operational partners.

## 10. External perspectives

While individual evidence summaries were largely focused on the internal workings of WFP, the wider evaluation required interviews with external stakeholders, to gain views on the organization's external role, engagement and performance. These were plotted out, and relevant stakeholders identified, to ensure full coverage.

This process worked relatively well for United Nations, donor and cooperating partner interviews. However, it proved more challenging to gain the perspectives of host government interviewees. Three separate tracks were attempted, including:

- i. Request sent (and repeated) to all Executive Board members, whether host governments or donor representatives. This yielded three replies, all from donor representatives
- ii. Approaching regional evaluation officers to request use of their contacts with national government representatives. This did not yield any results
- iii. Requesting WFP staff being interviewed for the partnerships evidence summary to provide contacts with government representatives. This also yielded no results.

This remains a gap in the final evaluation methodology therefore, though efforts were made at mitigation by applying documentary evidence and making maximum use of other external perspectives gained (donor, United Nations and cooperating partners).

## 11. Ongoing learning and cross-fertilization

Recognizing that the evaluation's design ran the risk of becoming "silo'ed" with ten evidence summaries being separately conducted, the evaluation design sought to emphasize ongoing learning and cross-fertilization of evidence. This was partly supported by the use of the same evidence summary leads for three of the evidence summaries, with the team leader conducting two; and researchers conducting three evidence summaries each, to allow for knowledge transfer.

Additionally, however, the evaluation team conducted cross-fertilization workshops, attended by Office of Evaluation staff and Dr Quinn Patton. These comprised a series of three discussions, held following the preparation of a small set of evidence summaries/country level analysis. They aimed to share learning generated and to identify potential implications and cross-overs for subsequent summaries. They also aimed to ensure that team members retained the "wider view" of how individual summaries fit into the wider evaluation, and keep the full team informed of analytical themes and issues arising.

The workshops had two unanticipated benefits, however:

- i. As evidence summary conduct proceeded, it became clear that potential overlaps were arising, and that boundaries needed to be confirmed. Ongoing liaison with summary leads helped navigate these issues but discussing them in the workshops helped ensure wider team sighting on such potential pitfalls, and to identify any potential overlaps in advance of other summary implementation.
- ii. After the first workshop, it became clear that rather than focusing on individual evidence summaries in a dissemination model, discussion naturally evolved to identify more systemic issues and concerns. The two subsequent workshop themes were therefore adapted to focus on:
  - Direction, distance and pace of travel on institutional change
  - Complexity, systems, relationships, uncertainty.

These discussions helped identify findings on an emergent basis, and to elevate early discussion among the team analytically.

## 12. Enquiry framework

Neither a fully developmental nor a retrospective developmental evaluation applies a traditional "evaluation matrix", with indicators and progress markers mapped out in advance.<sup>10</sup> Rather, the analytical aspect of the evaluation is treated as emergent.

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<sup>10</sup> Patton, MQ (2010) *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use* New York: Guildford Press.

However, given that the evaluation was not fully developmental in nature, it was considered appropriate to translate the analytical framework presented in Figure 1 into an enquiry framework, to ensure a systematic approach across the validation, and therefore to maximize internal and external validity/credibility. The framework included analytical fields geared to the overarching evaluation questions; indicative markers for assessment; and key data sources.

As the evaluation proceeded however, and analytical themes started to emerge – such as complexity and uncertainty - it became apparent that while the enquiry framework served a useful purpose for data collection, it was less useful for wider analysis. Iteratively, therefore, a set of other analytical frameworks, as set out in Tables 7 to 10 below, were developed and applied.

**Table 7: Uncertainty and complexity**

UNCERTAINTY	EXTERNAL	INTERNAL (systems/partnerships & relationships)
What was uncertain within the demands of COVID-19 that WFP had to deal with?		
Which areas of uncertainty were new, and in which areas did WFP already have experience?		
Which areas caused the most institutional strain/were most difficult for WFP to manage?		

COMPLEXITY	EXTERNAL	INTERNAL (systems/partnerships & relationships)
What was complex within the demands of COVID-19 that WFP had to deal with?		
Which areas were new, and in which areas did WFP already have experience?		
Which areas caused the most institutional strain/were most difficult for WFP to manage?		

**Table 8: Direction of travel**

	Went backwards (reversed)	Was ongoing but stopped	Was ongoing and continued in same direction and at same pace (maintained)	Was ongoing and accelerated	Was ongoing but adaptation direction (pivoted)	Was a new adaptation (innovation/new initiative)
Area of adaptation						
Area of adaptation						
Area of adaptation						
Area of adaptation						
Area of adaptation						

<b>Area of adaptation</b>						
<b>Area of adaptation</b>						

**Table 9: Sustainability of adaptation**

	<b>Adaptation which has been fully embedded into institutional environment (sustained)</b>	<b>Aspects which have been embedded into institutional environment (partly sustained)</b>	<b>Aspects which could usefully be embedded into institutional environment but have not (not sustained)</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>Area of adaptation</b>				
<b>Area of adaptation</b>				
<b>Area of adaptation</b>				
<b>Area of adaptation</b>				

**Table 10: Results of adaptation**

	<b>What did adaptation achieve? (institutional adaptation, learning or development); operational results</b>	<b>Characterization</b>			
		<b>Served WFP and the response well</b>	<b>Worked during a specific phase of the response e.g. emergency phase but less useful after that</b>	<b>Did not work well and was discontinued or adapted as need be, based on learning</b>	<b>Did not work well and was not learned from/no adaptations made</b>
Area of adaptation					
Area of adaptation					
Area of adaptation					
Area of adaptation					
Area of adaptation					

These frameworks were used within analysis and reporting: (i) to generate the eventual “categories of adaptation” for systems and capacities (maintained/pivoted/expanded/new initiative or innovation) that appeared in the final report; (ii) to generate the section of the results chapter on institutional change; and (iii) to generate and shape the final analysis that appeared in the evaluation report.

For the final analytical process, a two-day team meeting was held, to which the Office of Evaluation was invited. The analytical frameworks were used to shape discussion across evidence summaries and extract higher-level findings – which then fed into the preparation of the final evaluation report.

### 13: Ethical issues

The evaluation conformed to 2020 United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) ethical guidelines.<sup>11</sup> This was especially important since it took place in a sensitive corporate environment, given the prominent role of WFP in the global response to COVID-19. Although its design did not include focus groups with direct beneficiaries of WFP activity, ethical concerns nonetheless required particular consideration.

**Table 11: Ethical standards applied**

<p><b>Integrity</b></p>	<p>“Integrity is the active adherence to moral values and professional standards, which are essential for responsible evaluation practice.”<sup>12</sup></p> <p>Evaluation team members committed to adherence to the UNEG Code of Conduct for evaluators in the United Nations system, and to accurately presenting procedures, data, and findings, including ensuring that the evaluation findings were transparently generated, had full integrity and a commitment to “doing the right thing” and were unbiased. The main team analytical meeting, held in June 2021, provided an opportunity to verify this.</p>
<p><b>Accountability</b></p>	<p>“Accountability is the obligation to be answerable for all decisions made and actions taken; to be responsible for honouring commitments, without qualification or exception; and to report potential or actual harms observed through the appropriate channels.”</p> <p>The evaluation team were transparent throughout, regarding evaluation purpose and actions taken. This included for example being open with interviewees that the data they provided might be shared, within the evaluation, with other evidence summary teams/other evaluation teams, as part of securing informed consent; adapting as needed to circumstances, for example combining the consultative groups on some evidence summaries rather than holding one per summary; and assuming collective responsibility throughout with the Office of Evaluation for meeting the evaluation’s needs as part of the teamwork approach.</p>
<p><b>Respect</b></p>	<p>“Respect involves engaging with all stakeholders of an evaluation in a way that honours their dignity, well-being and personal agency while being responsive to their sex, gender, race, language, country of origin, LGBTQ status, age, background, religion, ethnicity and ability, and to cultural, economic and physical environments.”</p> <p>The evaluation team sought to ensure that the evaluation process did not prevent access to anyone who wished to engage, for example through circulation of products for comment. Stakeholders’ contributions to the evaluation were valued, and all efforts were made to treat their comments and observations with appreciation, respond to all comments on their treatment and address them. The evaluation design and implementation sought to ensure full and fair representation of different voices and perspectives in evaluation products: by reaching out to staff in as many country offices and regional bureaux as feasible, mindful of avoiding burdens; by holding consultative groups with those interviewed; and by engagement with management on the final report.</p>
<p><b>Beneficence</b></p>	<p>“Beneficence means striving to do good for people and planet while minimizing harms arising from evaluation as an intervention.”</p> <p>The evaluation design made explicit its consideration of risks arising from the evaluation process (see Section 15) and tried to ensure the avoidance of all kinds of harm, for example by avoiding placing burdens on country offices by using as many secondary sources as possible. It sought at all stages to ensure that evaluation benefits were generated for WFP and for the wider international response to COVID-19 by implication, for example through the production of evidence summaries.</p>

<sup>11</sup> UNEG (2020) Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



## 14. Preparation of final report

The preparation of the final report took place over the summer of 2021, following the production of evidence summaries. It aimed to bring together findings across the three evidence tracks, as well as interviews with external stakeholders, which had largely been conducted by the team leader, and the additional review of 32 annual country reports.

Challenges were different from those faced in a standard evaluation, and included:

- i. A particularly large-scale analytical process for the evaluation report, given the vast range of evidence generated and the need to distil findings into a coherent narrative and “story” of the response
- ii. Finding an analytical balance between the “learning” impetus of a developmental evaluation – even a retrospective one – and the accountability needs of WFP, with the report going to the organization’s Executive Board in 2022
- iii. Reporting on “results”, given the emphasis in the evaluation design on institutional change.

These challenges were navigated by prioritizing the need to “tell the story” of the response, both in substance and in tone. It was also considered important that the lived experience of WFP staff during the report, who had taken time to share their experience, was reflected in its content. The “human” dimension of the response was therefore woven into the narrative.

Dr Quinn Patton provided feedback on the early draft. He considered that the evaluation report largely met, or had the potential to meet, the principles of a retrospective developmental evaluation, but identified areas for refinement as follows:

- i. More explicitly highlight the systems focus of the evaluation
- ii. Better match findings and issues to distinct intended users to improve the utilization focus of the evaluation
- iii. Separate the two questions: “What was achieved?” and “What was learned?” Identify and highlight learning, disaggregating lessons for separate groups.

These amendments were addressed in the draft report sent to the Office of Evaluation.

Dr Patton also pointed out that that the potential for co-creation was limited by the evaluator independence norms and accountability assignment, but noted potential in using findings and addressing issues. He also observed that no evaluation report in itself is developmental – that its success or otherwise as a developmental evaluation would depend on how WFP went on to make use of the report’s contents.

## 15. Risks and assumptions

**Risks:** The evaluation design contained a number of risks for the Office of Evaluation, as well as some potential limitations. These, and whether they transpired/how they were mitigated, are presented in Table 12.

**Table 12: Risks and mitigation**

Anticipated risk	Transpired?	Mitigation applied
Limited meaningful engagement by WFP stakeholders	To a limited extent, and not at country level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication throughout, to ensure that opportunities for consultation and engagement were provided (from the Office of Evaluation/the evaluation team as required), including consultation/opportunities for feedback on evidence products, on the emerging narrative and draft evaluation report</li> <li>• Adapting approach to any opportunities for learning/communication as they evolved e.g. presentation to Emergencies Division</li> <li>• Use of a communication strategy developed by the Office of Evaluation</li> </ul>

Limited understanding among stakeholders of the sequenced/iterative nature of the approach	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear communication (from the Office of Evaluation particularly) on the nature of a retrospective developmental evaluation, its implications for WFP and management and the nature of its products (evidence summaries) as well as forms of consultation</li> </ul>
"Learning/evaluation fatigue" given the multiple ongoing efforts in WFP to learn from the COVID-19 pandemic	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing communication from the Office of Evaluation on the corporate relevance of the evaluation and its strategic positioning in relation to other exercises; Director of Evaluation raising the exercise in meetings with senior management</li> <li>• Demonstrable use of data from other exercises, for clarity on the "building on not adding to" approach e.g. Level 3 lessons learned exercise</li> </ul>
Unwillingness of WFP divisions/units to engage with evidence summaries	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication by the Office of Evaluation on the potential utility for relevant division/unit</li> </ul>
Timing concerns, particularly on evidence summary production	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall timeline maintained; flexible approach adopted by the Office of Evaluation to interim milestones so that, e.g. time for comments process adapted</li> <li>• Some evidence products produced in parallel to reduce timespan</li> </ul>
Relevance – the response is unfolding very rapidly, and the evaluation report may risk being outdated by the time it is presented to the Executive Board	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence summaries produced to schedule, and response still ongoing throughout the duration of the report</li> <li>• Intent of presentation at February 2022 Executive Board meeting maintained</li> </ul>

No additional risks arose.

## 15. Roles and responsibilities

Table 13 below provides the main roles and responsibilities for the exercise.

**Table 13: Roles and responsibilities**

Name	Role	Tasks conducted
Andrea Cook	Director of Evaluation, WFP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall leadership and strategic guidance for the evaluation</li> <li>• Leading on strategic use of/consultation on the evaluation within WFP</li> <li>• Presentation to Executive Board</li> </ul>
Deborah McWhinney	Evaluation Manager, Office of Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall evaluation management within WFP</li> <li>• Quality assurance of all outputs, including evidence summaries and evaluation report</li> <li>• Dissemination across WFP</li> <li>• Supporting presentation to Executive Board</li> </ul>
Sanela Muharemovic	Research Analyst, Office of Evaluation,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of evaluation library</li> <li>• Supporting evaluation data analysis</li> <li>• Review of outputs</li> <li>• Supporting evaluation management</li> </ul>

Aya Schneerson	Research Analyst, Office of Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting evaluation data analysis</li> <li>Review of outputs</li> <li>Supporting evaluation management</li> </ul>
Dr Michael Quinn Patton	Developmental Evaluation (DE) Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coaching members of the evaluation team and the Office of Evaluation on developmental/adaptive approaches</li> <li>Engagement in and steering of analytical process</li> <li>Review and expert guidance on all products including draft evaluation report</li> <li>Supporting the evaluation in its internal learning and external dissemination processes, as a contribution to the discipline of evaluation</li> </ul>
Julia Betts	Evaluation Team Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designing the evaluation and drafting the terms of reference/inception report</li> <li>Oversight of and drafting engagement in all evidence summaries and country and corporate data tracking</li> <li>Conduct of interviews for the wider evaluation report, including with external stakeholders</li> <li>Preparation and drafting of the evaluation report and summary evaluation report including this methodological annex</li> <li>Lead: Evidence summary 7: Gender, protection and AAP</li> </ul>
Teresa Hanley	Evidence Summary Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead: Evidence summary 8: Risk appetite and management</li> <li>Lead: Evidence summary 9: Emergency preparedness</li> <li>Engaging in cross-fertilization meetings</li> <li>Contributing to preparation and analysis of final report</li> </ul>
Lydia Poole	Evidence Summary Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead: Evidence summary 4: Finance</li> <li>Engaging in learning groups workshops</li> <li>Contributing to preparation and analysis of final report</li> </ul>
Mariangela Bizzarri	Evidence Summary Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead: Evidence summary 5: Guidance and communications</li> <li>Support: Evidence summary 2: Strategic adaptation and management</li> <li>Engaging in learning groups workshops</li> <li>Contributing to preparation and analysis of final report</li> </ul>
Andy Featherstone	Evidence Summary Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead: Evidence summary 10: Inter-agency &amp; operational partnerships</li> <li>Engaging in learning groups workshops</li> <li>Contributing to preparation and analysis of final report</li> </ul>
Hisham Khogali	Evidence Summary Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead: Evidence summary 3: Evidence, data &amp; knowledge management</li> <li>Evidence summary 6: Programmatic adaptation</li> <li>Engaging in learning groups workshops</li> <li>Contributing to preparation and analysis of final report</li> </ul>
Belén Díaz	Evidence Summary Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead: Evidence summary 2: Strategic adaptation &amp; management</li> <li>Engaging in learning groups workshops</li> <li>Quality assurance of evidence summaries and final draft report</li> <li>Contributing to preparation and analysis of final report</li> </ul>
Sithabiso Gandure	Lead: Country and Corporate Data Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data extraction, systematization, and analysis of 24 country level datasets and corporate datasets</li> <li>Contributing to preparation and analysis of final report</li> </ul>
Kristen Olsen	Evidence Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data extraction, systematization, and analysis of three evidence summaries</li> <li>Engaging in learning groups workshops</li> <li>Contributing to preparation and analysis of final report</li> </ul>
Orinda Gjoni	Evidence Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data extraction, systematization, and analysis of three evidence summaries</li> <li>Engaging in learning groups workshops</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributing to preparation and analysis of final report</li> </ul>
Elizabeth Harrop	Evidence Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data extraction, systematization, and analysis of three evidence summaries</li> <li>• Engaging in learning groups workshops</li> <li>• Contributing to preparation and analysis of final report including graphics production</li> </ul>

## 17. Key lessons learned

In addition to a blog on the evaluation prepared by Dr Michael Quinn Patton (see [Lessons about evaluating responses to the pandemic: Insights from the World Food Program Developmental Evaluation | Blue Marble Evaluation](#)), the experience has highlighted ten lessons for the process and team construction of a developmental evaluation. It has also prompted some reflection on applying the principles of retrospective developmental evaluation in a humanitarian organization experiencing a large-scale emergency response.

### Process lessons

Lesson 1: Organizational buy-in at a time of crisis and institutional stress for a developmental approach – even a retrospective one – cannot be assumed or created from the outset. Optimally, it is developed gradually and iteratively as the process unfolds. Developing the “reputational capital” of the exercise happens through consistent, gradual messaging and ongoing demonstrations of potential utility. This requires a deliberative approach, mapped out in advance, but also an opportunistic one, seizing communication opportunities as they arise. Senior level engagement (see Lesson 8 below) was also key.

Lesson 2: Defining the scope and content of the evidence summaries in advance helped place boundaries around them, but there was a perhaps inevitable tendency for them to fall into becoming “mini-evaluations” – both on the evaluation team’s side and from the perspective of quality assurance within the Office of Evaluation. This required ongoing management and checking of expectations on both evaluation team and Office of Evaluation sides.

Lesson 3: Conducting the evaluation fully remotely during the conditions of COVID-19 proved to be challenging for several reasons, not least that the evaluation team felt less “sighted” on the country response to the pandemic than would have occurred with field visits. This was mitigated to some extent through interviews and the consultative groups but meant that the wider validation process with WFP became particularly important, in order to ensure that the findings resonated with WFP staff who had actually lived through the response, and could “see themselves” in the findings.

Lesson 4: Interviews in the period December 2020-April 2021 revealed some staff who were distressed by their experiences during COVID-19, and who had lacked any previous opportunity to “debrief”. In one sense the evaluation process played a useful process role here within WFP. However, for the evaluation team, concerns arose about how to best manage these interviews, and satisfy ethical concerns of “do no harm”. A training on trauma-informed interviews led by Konterra, the contracted company for the evaluation, proved valuable in ensuring a sensitive and ethical approach.

Lesson 5: The evolving of the analytical frameworks was very different to a standard evaluation design, where the evaluation matrix or other logic is “fixed” and employed throughout as the evaluation’s analytical template. The guidance of an external expert, here Dr Michael Quinn Patton, was especially valuable here, as it provided confidence to the team leader that the adaptation was not only acceptable but preferable under the rubric of a retrospective developmental evaluation.

Lesson 6: Conducting a retrospective developmental evaluation with the model adopted was much more time-consuming than anticipated. Both the team leader and evaluation manager had allowed dedicated time in their workplans, but the demands far exceeded these plans. Anticipating the likely demands from the outset and planning accordingly, would help avert this.

### Team construction lessons

Lesson 7: Using external expertise, in the form of Dr Michael Quinn Patton, was invaluable, both helping shape the evaluation’s analytical direction and its substantive content, and in ensuring fidelity to the

principles of a retrospective developmental evaluation. Dr Patton also served as a highly-valued sounding board and guide for the team leader in maintaining the direction of the evaluation.

Lesson 8: The evaluation had the support – and was given its freedom – by the Director of Evaluation in the Office of Evaluation, who placed considerable trust in the evaluation manager and team leader to conduct the evaluation to Office of Evaluation standards and in the best interests of WFP. Regular check-ins ensured that the Director was sighted on developments as they arose, and the process benefitted from her guidance and identification of strategic entry points for dissemination.

Lesson 9: Having a dedicated evidence summary manager helped manage the complex process of summary production, including timelines and deadlines. This role took pressure off the team leader to focus on methodological and substantive concerns, as well as the production of evidence summary 7.

Lesson 10: The relationship between the team leader and evaluation manager was fundamental to the exercise. This took some initial navigation with both being accustomed to formalized roles and clear boundaries. However, early tensions were resolved, and the relationship became an extremely collaborative one, with the interpersonal playing a significant role.

### Lessons on the principles of retrospective developmental evaluation

Developmental purpose principle: Illuminate, inform, and support what is being developed, by identifying the nature and patterns of development (innovation, adaptation, systems change), and the implications and consequences of those patterns.

As Dr Quinn Patton noted in his feedback on the draft report, “a retrospective developmental evaluation serves to track and document prior adaptations, extract lessons, spotlight achievements and challenges, and thereby create a new baseline for future developmental adaptation -- and evaluation. This evaluation report serves all of the purposes of a retrospective developmental evaluation...but does so with an accountability focus and mandate, so whether the report serves a developmental evaluation purpose depends on what is done with it by WFP.”

For commissioning agencies whose established model is to culminate an evaluation process with a final report and its presentation, this puts the onus of a developmental purpose on the agency, and particularly on its actions post-report. This implies a longer process, with considerable investment post-report, and continuing engagement with the evaluation team – which in turn, implies different design and contracting models.

Evaluation rigour principle: Ask probing evaluation questions; think and engage evaluatively; question assumptions; apply evaluation logic; use appropriate methods; and stay “empirically grounded” — that is, rigorously gather, interpret and report data.

The principle of staying empirically grounded can take many forms; in this exercise, it was highlighted in the human dimension to the emergency response, which came through strongly in interviews. This was not anticipated nor built into the design. The evaluation team would emphasize here that the importance of listening to the data gathered; respecting its integrity; and following its empirical path, are all crucially important if the real story and resonance of the evaluand is to be “heard” in its analysis.

Utilization focus principle: Focus on intended use by intended users from beginning to end, facilitating the evaluation process to ensure utility and actual use.

The importance of disaggregating different user groups was emphasized by Dr Quinn Patton in his feedback on the draft report; the evaluation team would complement this by adding that different user groups – or degrees of interest and engagement – may emerge as the evaluation proceeds. The evaluation design had not fully anticipated the degree of interest in the evidence summaries, particularly from country staff, whose lived experience was often reflected in their contents; and dissemination had not been designed accordingly. It was adapted to respond but considering differing potential interests in advance would be helpful.

Innovation niche principle: Elucidate how the change processes and results being evaluated involve innovation and adaptation, the niche of developmental evaluation.

The evaluation used a set of icons and visualizations to tell the story of how change occurred within WFP. These were developed iteratively, and only finalized during the final report drafting. This process was very

different to a standard evaluation, where evaluative benchmarks or standards may be set in advance, but from the perspective of the evaluation team, it allowed for greater rigour, since the analytical “layers” built up over time meant greater confidence in the analysis by the final stage. This requires a degree of trust and confidence in the process from commissioning bodies.

Complexity perspective principle: Understand and interpret development through the lens of complexity and conduct the evaluation accordingly. This means using complexity premises and dynamics to make sense of the problems being addressed; to guide innovation, adaptation, and systems change strategies; to interpret what is developed; to adapt the evaluation design as needed; and to analyse emergent findings.

The evaluation team found the complexity lens to be highly valuable; it allowed for institutional systems and capacities to be set within their wider context from the start, and it offered a “realistic” view of the WFP world, with all its fluid dynamics and external forces. Developing visual representations of complexity helped the evaluation team to crystallize their thinking; even if these were not all used in the final report, they had high process and analytical value, and should be considered an integral part of the analytical process.

Systems thinking principle: Think systemically throughout, being attentive to interrelationships, perspectives, boundaries, and other key aspects of the social system and context within which the innovation is being developed and the evaluation is being conducted.

This principle required a very different mindset from the evaluation team to a standard evaluation exercise, with a continuous effort needed to identify relationships, connections and intersections between data gathered and findings emerging. Ongoing interrogation of the data was needed across evidence summaries, with the cross-fertilization workshops playing an important role. The value of multiple perspectives – from the evaluation management, evaluation team and Dr Quinn Patton as expert adviser – was crucial, and validated the collaborative approach adopted.

Co-creation principle: Develop the innovation and evaluation together – interwoven, interdependent, iterative, and co-created – such that the developmental evaluation becomes part of the change process.

The principle of co-creation is challenging, though not unfeasible, to implement in a humanitarian organization under stress – especially when remote working. If this principle is to be adopted in full, considerable explanation and communication to management would be needed in advance, as well as agreement on the time investments/participation needed to implement it. “Secondary co-creation”, through the role of the evaluation function, occurred here, but is heavily dependent on the function’s traction and connectedness across the organization, and requires considerable willingness to invest time and effort.

Timely feedback principle: Time feedback to inform ongoing adaptation as needs, findings, and insights emerge, rather than only at predetermined times (for example, quarterly, or at mid-term and end of project).

The evidence summaries offered some degree of timely feedback, and the report itself occurs when the pandemic is still ongoing. Thus, commissioning a retrospective developmental evaluation even when the evaluand is still in process can serve this principle – despite the methodological constraints that need to be navigated. Providing issues for consideration rather than recommendations may help stimulate discussion, but as Dr Quinn Patton noted in his feedback on the draft report, the implementation of this principle depends on how well the commissioning agency will engage with and use the evaluation report.

## Annex 3: Funding Contributions

This annex presents the total donor contributions to WFP in the period 2017-2020 and preliminary data for 2021:

### Total donor contributions to WFP 2017-2020

2017			2018			2019			2020		
Donor	US\$ million	% of total	Donor	US\$ million	% of total	Donor	US\$ million	% of total	Donor	US\$ million	% of total
USA	2,510	41%	USA	2,533	35%	USA	3,370	42%	USA	3,664	43%
Germany	917	15%	EC	1,112	15%	Germany	887	11%	Germany	1,180	14%
UK	588	10%	Germany	849	12%	UK	697	9%	UK	562	7%
EC	377	6%	UK	615	8%	EC	686	9%	EC	537	6%
Canada	196	3%	Saudi Arabia	248	3%	Saudi Arabia	387	5%	Canada	244	3%
Japan	176	3%	UAE	226	3%	UAE	272	3%	UN CERF	244	3%
UN CERF	143	2%	Canada	218	3%	Canada	190	2%	Japan	196	2%
Sweden	116	2%	Sweden	145	2%	Sweden	159	2%	Sweden	196	2%
Norway	100	2%	UN CERF	139	2%	Japan	157	2%	Private Donors	161	2%
Private Donors	84	1%	Japan	130	2%	UN CERF	149	2%	UN Other Funds a	154	2%
All other donors	854	14%	All other donors	1,115	15%	All other donors	1,101	14%	All other donors	1,330	16%

Source: Evaluation team calculations based on WFP weekly contributions data 15th March 2021

Preliminary data for 2021 (as of 24 October 2021) is as follows:

2021		
Donor	USD million	% of total
USA	3038	44%
Germany	911	13%
Private donors	415	6%
Canada	294	4%
EC	283	4%
UK	280	4%
Japan	180	3%
Sweden	154	2%
Norway	151	2%
UN Other Funds and Agencies (excl. CERF)	109	2%
All other donors	1,107	16%
TOTAL	6,922	

Source: WFP weekly contributions data as of 24 October 2021

# Annex 4: Inter-Agency Partnerships

This annex presents a mapping of inter-agency partnerships that formed part of the WFP COVID-19 response.

Name of partner	Nature of partnership
ESCWA	Joint briefing on the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality in the Arab region
FAO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination through Rome-based agency collaboration</li> <li>• Co-lead of the global Food Security Cluster</li> <li>• Joint briefings to United Nations Security Council</li> <li>• Coordination on data and evidence e.g. on United Nations socioeconomic response</li> <li>• Joint analysis on the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality and food security in the Arab region</li> <li>• Joint guidance on school feeding and nutrition</li> <li>• Issue-based coalitions and country-level responses e.g. disaster preparedness in Lesotho</li> </ul>
IFAD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration through Rome-based agency partnership</li> <li>• Joint policy studies and joint analytical products</li> </ul>
UNDOS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-lead of the aviation arm of the COVID-19 MEDEVAC cell</li> </ul>
UNESCO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint guidance on reopening schools in the context of COVID-19</li> </ul>
UNHAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global movement of goods and personnel integral to WFP common service</li> </ul>
UNHCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serving persons of concern (refugees; internally displaced persons; asylum seekers)</li> <li>• Cash responses</li> <li>• Joint guidance on reopening schools in the context of COVID-19</li> <li>• Joint donor briefings</li> </ul>
UNHRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enabled 4 of 8 humanitarian response hubs established (Dubai, Panama, Kuala Lumpur, Accra) and global support to cargo operations (Brindisi)</li> </ul>
UNICEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic partnership for health and nutrition services</li> <li>• School feeding</li> <li>• Joint guidance on reopening schools in the context of COVID-19</li> <li>• Country level responses e.g. social protection (Niger), gender-based violence (GBV) service provision (Somalia), strengthening disaster preparedness and response (Lesotho)</li> </ul>
UN Habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint needs analysis (urban areas) and training in East Africa</li> </ul>
UNOCHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall coordination of humanitarian response through IASC</li> <li>• Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP)</li> <li>• UN Security Council engagement</li> </ul>
WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to Supply Chain Inter-agency Coordination Cell (SCICC) led by WHO</li> <li>• Co-chair of the Supply Chain Task Force</li> </ul>
<b>UN inter-agency partnerships</b>	<b>Nature of partnership</b>
Emergency Telecommunications Cluster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead agency; support to risk communication and operational scale-up in target countries, support to health authorities, and mapping resources and</li> </ul>



Name of partner	Nature of partnership
	equipment and through the provision of dedicated information management for the COVID-19 response
Global Food Security Cluster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-lead agency</li> <li>• Technical guidance to support operating in the context of COVID-19 in relation to e.g. emergency distributions, livestock interventions, targeting in urban settings, food market-based approaches, and safe food hygiene and handling</li> <li>• Joint advocacy messages and briefs</li> <li>• The cluster also established a COVID-19 Working Group to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the food security of vulnerable and affected populations</li> </ul>
Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidance and analysis to support IASC COVID-19 preparedness and early action for adaptation</li> </ul>
Logistics Cluster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead agency; dissemination of information on the impact of COVID-19 on humanitarian logistics</li> <li>• The cluster also led the Global Humanitarian Logistics Continuity Working Group established to address global supply chain constraints</li> </ul>
Programme Criticality Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement in the Programme Criticality Group</li> <li>• Country-level programme criticality assessments</li> </ul>
Supply Chain Interagency Coordination Cell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic guidance, operational decision making, and overall monitoring of the global humanitarian response to the outbreak of COVID-19</li> </ul>
Supply Chain Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-chair of the Task Force (under the SCICC)</li> <li>• Strategic direction to identify and address critical gaps in supply chains</li> </ul>
UN Crisis Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement in the strategic guidance forum</li> </ul>
UN Human Resources Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment of guidance with wider United Nations HR guidance</li> </ul>
UN Medical Director's Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with wider United Nations guidance on staff physical wellbeing</li> </ul>

# Annex 5: List of Human Resource Guidelines

This annex presents WFP human resources guidance issued as part of the COVID-19 response.

Guidance	Date
Global Response to COVID-19 WFP Operational Plan for Office Hygiene Items Standard Operating Procedures	10 March 2020
Interim medical clearance procedures valid until Sept 2020	undated
COVID-19 and workplace related issues: Message from the Ombudsman	24 March 2020
COVID-19 reporting procedures	March 2020
Staff wellness FAQs	March 2020
Second FAQs on Coronavirus	16 March 2020
Guidance on self-isolation, close contacts and preparations	March 2020
WFP COVID-19 case reporting measures	28 March 2020
WFP Medevac Process note	undated
COVID-19 Mobility Services Preventive Measures Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)	April 2 2020
FAQs on masks, March 2020/COVID-19 guidance on home-made masks	updated 23 April
Guidance on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Recommendations for WFP Offices Re-Opening and COVID-19 Pandemic Management Services and Staff Wellness Divisions	12 May 2020
Guidance on cloth masks for employees and cooperating partners in WFP operations	22nd June
Guidance on "how to self quarantine after travel"	updated 10 July 2020
Guidance on managing COVID-19 patients via remote home monitoring, 22nd July/patients Home Monitoring Contact Tracing	22nd July
WFP Operating Procedures for Medevac	Sept 2020
Funding source options for costs related to MEDEVAC and FLOD: MEDEVAC and First Line of Defense (FLOD)	7 September 2020
Guidelines on Top 12 Things to Consider when Re-Opening a WFP workplace	Sept 2020
Ergonomics for teleworkers	03 Sept
Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Guidance WEL Medical Service 1) Return to work for COVID-19 cases and 2) Self-isolation for COVID-19 Cases & Self-Quarantine for Close Contacts	updated 23rd October 2020
Medical guidance on return to work and self-isolation	updated Oct 2020
COVID-19 Business Continuity Guidance - Guidance on meetings in Rome HQ- Endorsed at HQ-CMT 10 September	10 November 2020
COVID-19 Vaccines Q&A	November 2020
Guideline on the management of employees with underlying medical conditions in the context of COVID-19 pandemic	(undated)

Guidance	Date
Travel guidance during COVID-19	first published Feb 2020 and updated several times to November 2020
COVID-19 Travel for Consultants, issued 13 March 2020	08 April 2020
FAQs on duty travel	28th August 2020

# Annex 6: List of Risk Management Exercises

This annex presents key processes undertaken by WFP to assess controls in the COVID-19 response.

Date	Name of assessment	Areas investigated	Process	Conclusion
May 2020 – February 2021	Real Time Assurance Reviews	The reviews considered risks related to the use of: the early release guidance (June 2020); COVID-19 Trust Fund (July 2020); budget revision (July 2020); asset management (September 2020); emergency services marketplace (September 2020); medical procurement (September 2020); programme monitoring (September 2020); Trust Fund (September 2020); Aviation procurement and staffing (November 2020), and business continuity and remote working arrangements (February 2021). It also included an initial risk assessment of the COVID-19 response (July 2020).	OIGA launched a series of remote real time assurance reviews to assess the governance and design of the framework in place for the COVID-19 emergency, including the global response, common services operation and the COVID-19 Trust Fund; as well as to identify areas where controls may necessarily have been amended or waived, and to assess the actions taken in order to keep these risks at a reasonable level in the context of the emergency. The findings fed into an overall audit and capping report on the WFP COVID-19 emergency response and provided assurance on the effectiveness of controls to Executive Board members.	<p>As well as specific findings, the reviews identified the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The lack of a suitable corporate vehicle to manage a corporate global emergency response, and the consequent need for the COVID-19 emergency to use a trust fund.</li> <li>• A lack of clear line-of-sight for service provision activities, leading in some cases to these not being captured in country offices' results frameworks.</li> <li>• A number of areas where weaknesses in WFP processes and systems meant that they were not fully fit for purpose for a global emergency response, especially for budgeting, asset planning and acquisitions, cost accounting and financial reporting.</li> <li>• The need to organizationally embed risk consideration and escalation mechanisms, including for food safety and quality; and to fast track the establishment of a cross-functional food</li> </ul>

Date	Name of assessment	Areas investigated	Process	Conclusion
				<p>safety and quality committee (subsequently established in October 2020).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The need for revised guidance on minimum standards and expected controls in an emergency setting, with consideration of risk appetite or confidence.</li> </ul> <p>Real time reviews recommendations largely acted on 60 recommended actions; by January 2021, 56 actions were agreed, and 23 actions were reported as implemented, with 11 in progress, and the remaining 26 actions were reported as scheduled for review and action during the remainder of 2021.</p>
October 2020	Executive Director COVID-19 Controls Enquiry	The COVID-19 controls enquiry identifies the top control concerns (of country offices and divisions under their leadership) and key mitigating actions identified by global management in the context of the COVID-19 emergency.	A consultative process across 86 country offices and headquarter divisions, <sup>13</sup> facilitated by the Senior Management Group at the request of the Executive Director – in advance of the Executive Board’s Annual Session 2020. Country offices and divisions were requested to indicate the top three control concerns with particular attention to controls that may have been modified in the current COVID-19 context. Found to be useful, although there were some variations	The top controls of concern were identified as relating to monitoring (23 percent), human resources and people management (20 percent), beneficiary management (10 percent), finance and administration (10 percent) and supply chain (9 percent). Cross-cutting observations included that there was an increasing risk and weakening of internal controls as a result of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.Limitations in field access resulting in restrictions in typical monitoring and due diligence activities;</li> <li>2.Staffing difficulties (shortages, delayed</li> </ul>

<sup>13</sup> As of 10<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

Date	Name of assessment	Areas investigated	Process	Conclusion
			<p>in the approach of respondents e.g., with some focusing on general issues rather than COVID-19 specifically, on gaps, on controls put in place due to escalating needs, or on hypothetical risks that may arise in the future.</p>	<p>deployment, teleworking) leading to an inability to ensure appropriate segregation of duties; and 3.Suspension of biometrics for identity management, which may cause data quality concerns affecting future reporting and fraud risks. Key mitigating actions identified by global management in the context of the COVID-19 emergency are outlined as well as links to relevant guidance.</p>
October 2020	Management Assurance Project (MAP)	<p>The project focused on management assurance over control implementation across 8 key functions, 29 focus areas and 89 key controls addressing 39 risks. Functions covered include: supply chain, cash-based transfers, monitoring, NGO management, human resources, financial resources, physical resources and technical resources. The 2020 key assurance controls included both standard controls and alternative controls. MAP aimed to support more effectively management of operations; provide additional data to OIGA and the External Auditor for their assurance and opinion; propose improvements to implementation and strengthening of internal control accountabilities; and</p>	<p>The MAP aimed to provide management assurance for the Executive Director, Audit Committee and Executive Board on control implementation in the field in 2020 and resulting limitations on internal and external audit field visits. Data were gathered from 40 field offices including 34 country offices and all 6 regional bureaux</p>	<p>The report noted the increasing risk and weakening of internal controls as a result of: a) limitations in field access resulting in restrictions in typical monitoring and due diligence activities; b) staffing difficulties (shortages, delayed deployment, teleworking) leading to an inability to ensure appropriate segregation of duties; and c) suspension of biometrics for identity management which may cause data quality concerns affecting future reporting and fraud risks. It also noted that field offices reported that in 88.6 percent of control assessments they had complied with the 2020 key assurance controls. The MAP found that where individual controls could not be applied, alternative controls provided by headquarters were provided – and in isolated cases where this was not possible this had “manageable effects on the control environment and risk exposure”.</p>

Date	Name of assessment	Areas investigated	Process	Conclusion
		demonstrating to the Executive Board continued trust in WFP.		Headquarters provided alternative controls in the 2020 emergency context – and the risk associated with these were recognized and mitigated. Finally MAP found that standard controls were to be reinstated once field access returns to normal, although in some cases the challenges had resulted in the development of smarter controls that are likely to be retained.
April 2021 <sup>14</sup>	Executive Director Assurance Exercise (EDA) (2020)	An annual management review of significant corporate risk and control issues covering: workplace culture and conduct; talent management and workforce planning; non-governmental organizations; management digitalization and information technology (IT) solutions; monitoring and review systems; scale-up of support to cope with the emergency portfolio; and food safety and quality. In addition, material events <sup>15</sup> in seven country offices were escalated to management's attention – and related specifically to food safety and quality, beneficiary	The Executive Director Assurance Exercise seeks feedback from global management to identify risk and internal control issues that merit escalation to senior management or the Executive Board, and that require focused attention or systematic solutions. The exercise takes place through an annual survey completed by country directors, regional directors, headquarters function directors, headquarters department heads and other senior officials – and is organized around key risks to some extent. It incorporates a “second line” review by regional bureaux and headquarters	With the exception of remote monitoring, <sup>16</sup> the main corporate risks remain high level risks for WFP, and have experienced additional challenges as a result of COVID-19 – although progress in mitigating risk and strengthening controls are reported including: establishment of a Food Safety and Quality Assurance Management Committee (2020) and improvements in organizational maturity on FSQ; an investment in the emergency staffing surge unit in EME; headquarters guidance and country office efforts to strengthen NGO management e.g. by improving oversight and communication with cooperating partners; expanding the WFP toolbox of remote monitoring guidance and instruments and efforts

<sup>14</sup> Draft ED Assurance report (2020) accessed in April 2021.

<sup>15</sup> Material events are defined as any occurrence that led or could lead to material loss of funds, reputational damage, unforeseen withdrawal or suspension of critical partners or major disruption to operations, services, or functions.

<sup>16</sup> Both the Executive Director Assurance Exercise and the 2020 Management Assurance Project suggest that the current COVID-19 situation served to catalyse lasting improvements to monitoring and review systems that enabled expanded monitoring coverage, strengthened data management and analysis capabilities, and improved the use of monitoring findings in WFP programming (Draft ED assurance report (2020) accessed in April 2021).

Date	Name of assessment	Areas investigated	Process	Conclusion
		management, and management of vendors and service providers.	departments to add value through “constructive challenge”.	to enhance data management and analysis capabilities; establishment of Minimum Control Standards for Managing Third Party Risks in Emergencies; increased use of SCOPE, and introduction of alternative verification processes where biometrics were suspended. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on well-being, and the workload of employees was a new element impacting workplace culture.



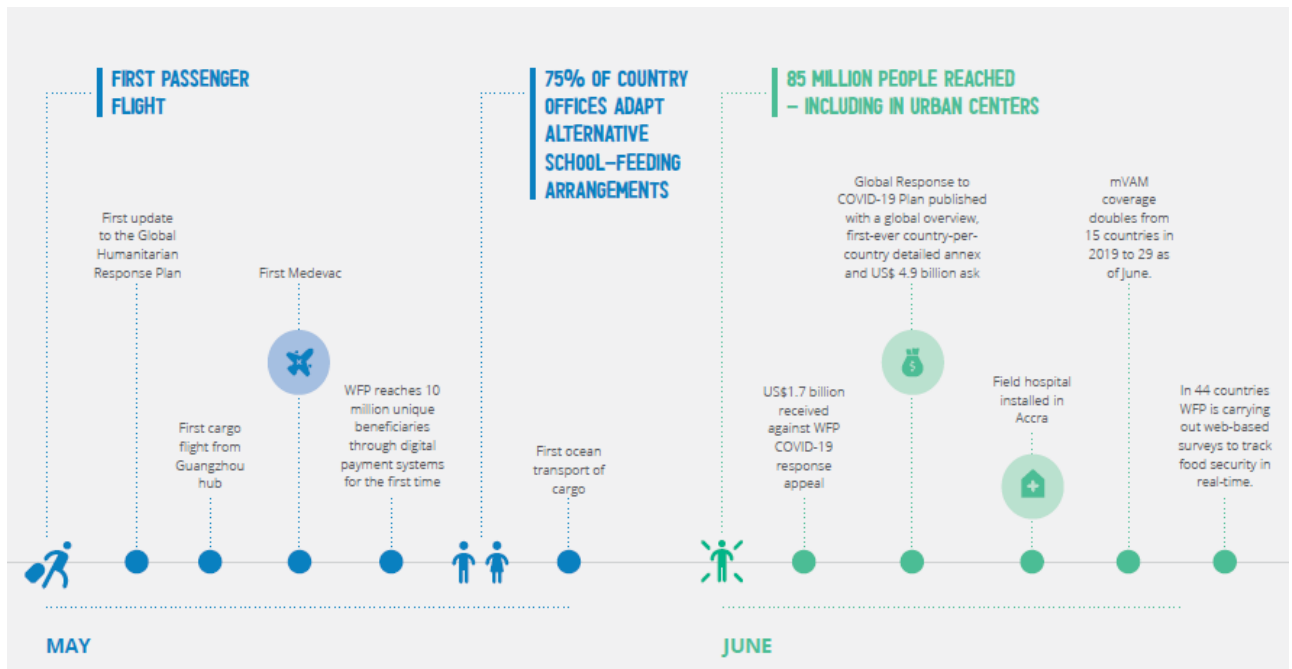
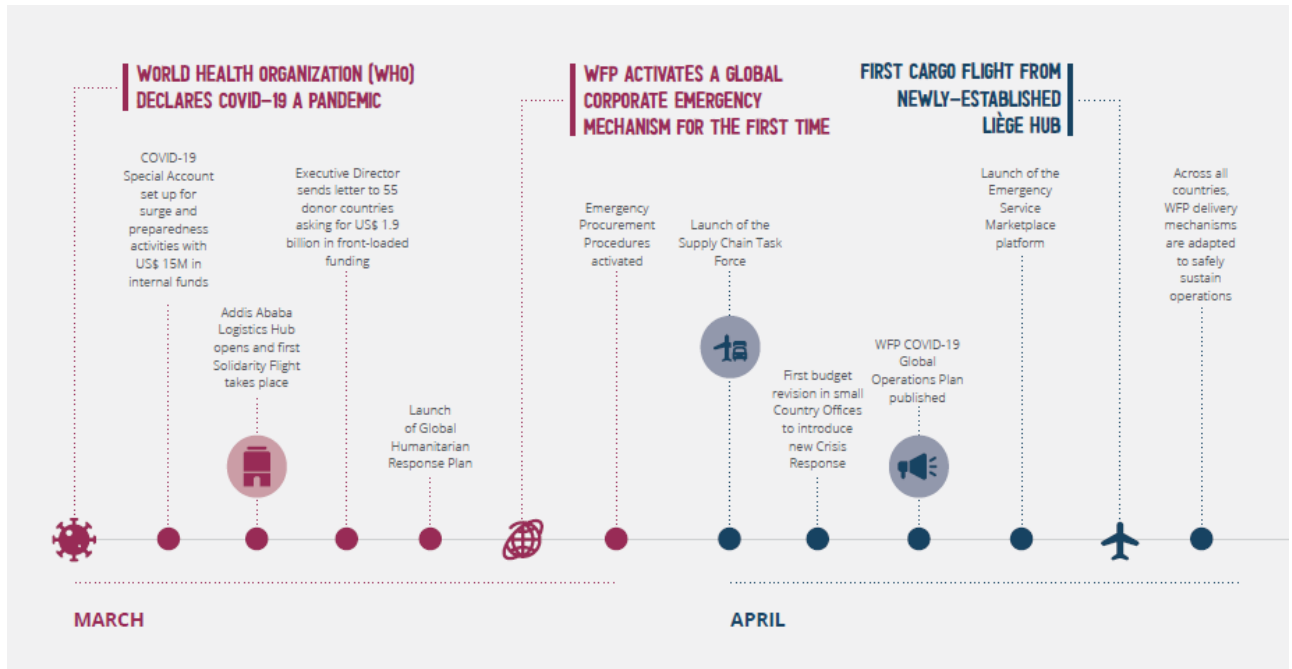
# Annex 7: Timing of Programmatic and Operational Guidance Issued

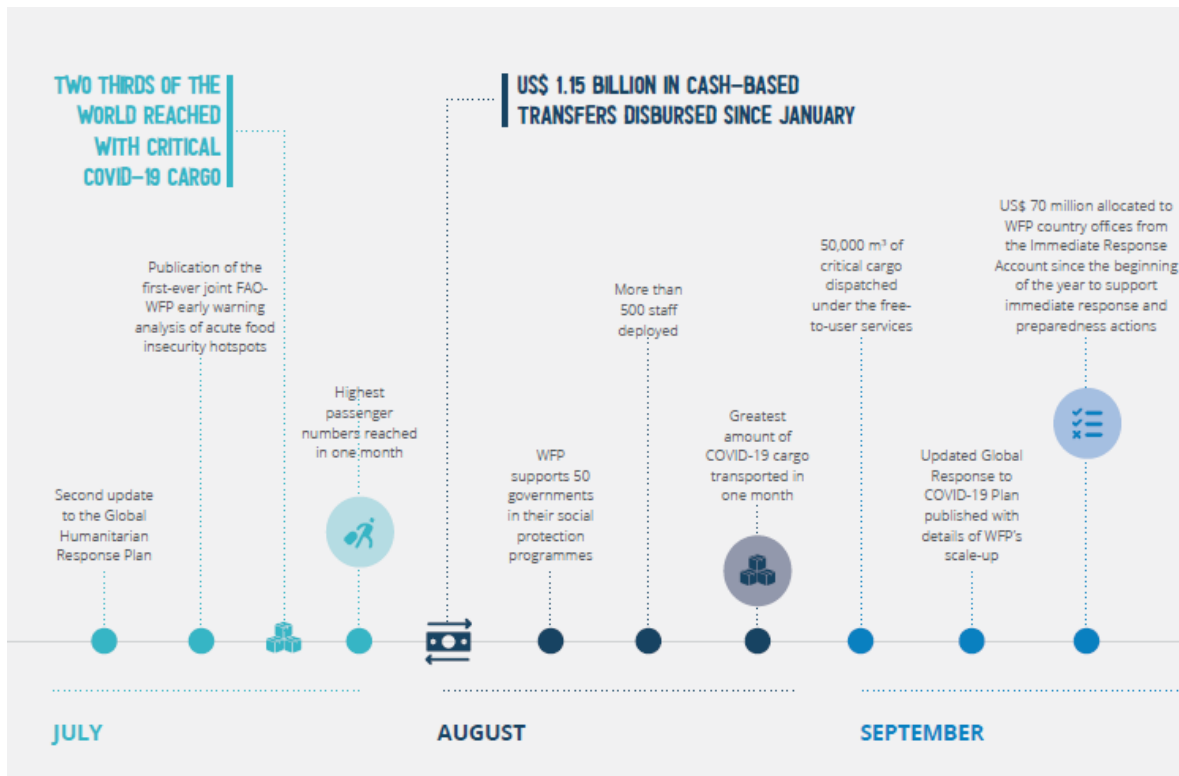
This annex presents the timing of the issuance of programmatic and operational guidance. The generation of guidance material was broadly aligned with the trajectory of the pandemic response. March and April 2020 saw a significant surge in volume following the declaration of COVID-19 as a Level 3 emergency.

Month	Number of guidance items
February 2020	2
March 2020	34
April 2020	39
May 2020	21
June 2020	7
July 2020	8
August 2020	0
September 2020	5
October 2020	2
November 2020	2
December 2020	1
January 2021	1
February 2021	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>123</b>

# Annex 8: Timeline of Common Services Response

The timeline below was prepared by WFP. It is included in this report for reference purposes.





## Annex 9: List of Countries Analysed for the Evaluation

This annex presents a list of WFP country offices whose COVID-19 response were analysed to support the evaluation.

<b>RBB</b>	<b>RBC</b>	<b>RBD</b>	<b>RBJ</b>	<b>RBN</b>	<b>RBP</b>
Afghanistan	Yemen	Chad	DRC	Burundi	Haiti
Pakistan	Palestine	Nigeria	Lesotho	South Sudan	Honduras
Sri Lanka	Jordan	Mauritania	Malawi	Kenya	Ecuador
Kyrgyzstan	Syria	The Gambia	Zambia	Sudan	Peru
Myanmar	Algeria	Guinea Bissau	Mozambique	Somalia	Nicaragua
Cambodia		Niger	Tanzania	Djibouti	Cuba

# Annex 10: List of Stakeholders Interviewed

This annex presents a list of stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation.

## WFP staff

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Arayaprayoon	Piyamon	Strategic Financing Branch
Archibald	Vernon	Leading Systems and Processes Review Manager
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Birkia	Intisar	Regional Gender Advisor, Regional Bureau Cairo
Bjorge	Henriette	Acting Head, Communications and Advocacy Unit, Pakistan
Bogart	Brian	Regional Programme Officer, Regional Bureau Johannesburg
Bonsignore	Vanessa	Asset Creation and Livelihoods, Communication and Knowledge Management
Bottone	Rosella	VAM, Regional Bureau Panama

Bran	Luis	Partnership Officer, El Salvador
Brause	Jon	Head of Washington Liaison Office
Buitragocrespo	Valeria	Programme Services Branch
Burbano	Carman	Director of School Feeding
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Carter	Donna	Global Surge Coordination Unit, Division of Emergencies
Caruso	Silvia	Deputy Director, PPR
Castro	Lola	Regional Director Johannesburg
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Chemiron	Joanjobet	HR Officer, Malawi
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# Annex 11: Bibliography

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### [Workforce management \(evidence summary 1\)](#)

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### Country results analysis

For a set of 24 countries (see below):

- Afghanistan
- Pakistan
- Sri Lanka
- Kyrgyzstan
- Yemen
- Palestine
- Jordan
- Chad
- Nigeria
- Mauritania
- The Gambia
- The Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Lesotho
- Malawi
- Zambia
- Burundi
- South Sudan

- Kenya
- Sudan
- Ecuador
- Peru
- Haiti
- Honduras

Current country strategic plan/interim country strategic plans

Annual country reports 2019 and 2020 including outputs and outcomes data

Budget revisions

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# Annex 12: Evidence Summary Briefs

## 1. Workforce Management Brief

This is the first of a series of up to ten evidence summaries generated as part of the evaluation of the WFP response to COVID-19. The evaluation, commissioned by the WFP independent Office of Evaluation, aims to “contribute to something that is being developed” supporting corporate learning to inform the organization’s ongoing COVID-19 response.

This summary brings together evidence from documents and WFP statistics, as well as interviews with Human Resource and Wellness Divisions in headquarters and with senior management. It complements, and builds on, other ongoing review exercises, including the Level 3 lessons learned and business continuity during COVID-19.

### TO WHAT EXTENT HAS WFP SUCCESSFULLY MANAGED, SUPPORTED AND CARED FOR ITS EMPLOYEES WHEN RESPONDING TO THE PANDEMIC?

When the global pandemic broke out in 2020, WFP faced a potential “perfect storm” of a combination of a global corporate emergency; vastly increased operational needs; mobility restrictions; and pandemic-related staffing gaps. The challenge was compounded by a diverse contractual basis, a mobility-based culture, and ongoing internal realignment exercises.

### WHAT DID IT FIND?

#### 1

**WFP mostly successfully maintained business continuity by recognizing workforce management challenges early - and acting swiftly and responsively to address them.**

WFP took action to:

- Adapt normal procedures for workforce management, to allow more flexibility
- Provide extensive guidance to staff, and disseminated this well
- Extend the availability of short-term staff through contract extensions
- Delegate authority to Country Directors and regional bureaux on recruitment and other human resourcing issues
- Provide emergency (“surge”) deployments to help manage staffing gaps and increasing or changing operational needs.

#### 2

**WFP took action to support staff physical and mental well-being.**

Using and expanding its existing systems, WFP:

- Provided clear guidance and directives to management and staff on well-being concerns
- Supplied physical safety measures including PPE
- Expanded medical facilities in some locations
- Extended health insurance and medevac services to all staff categories
- Extended sick leave up to 28 days for non-staff employees
- Allowed flexibility to general leave allowances, when staff could not leave their duty station
- Introduced flexibility on rest and recuperation within UN system parameters
- Provided access to counselling if needed.

#### 3

**Remote working presented the biggest challenge and greatest learning.**

Practical challenges were acute, including connectivity and home-working conditions. Some offices struggled to ensure continued productivity. Staff experienced isolation and loneliness, and team dynamics sometimes suffered. Working time became “elastic” - often due to connectivity issues - as staff tried to meet operational needs amid difficult conditions.

WFP tried to address the issues through management training, including on time management and productivity, and putting in place regular communication modalities. Remote working was seen as a major part of the future for the organization: “It’s a revelation”; “A new discovery”; “Surprisingly, the way forward for the future”.

## SIX ISSUES FOR WFP CONSIDERATION



**Build equity across contract types** as far as feasible – within the new people policy



**Manage burdens** of communication and decision making, particularly at regional level



**Plan for remote working** including practical considerations; take staff preferences into account; develop management skills; and agree working hours



**Be prepared to “stay put”** including transport and exit; medevac procedures; respite systems; and wellness support for those “sheltering in place”



**Determine what is “business as usual”** to support preparedness in future



**Think through the chain of actions arising from decisions** and consider their sustainability in future

## 2. Strategic Management and Adaptation Brief

This summary is the second in a series of ten evidence summaries generated as part of the evaluation of the WFP response to COVID-19. The evaluation, commissioned by the WFP independent Office of Evaluation, aims to “contribute to something that is being developed”, supporting corporate learning to inform the organization’s evolving COVID-19 response.

This summary brings together evidence from programmatic and operational guidance produced during the pandemic as well as ongoing lesson learning exercises; and interviews with a small number of interlocutors from WFP headquarters. It complements, and builds on, other ongoing review exercises, including the Level 3 lessons learned and business continuity during COVID-19 process.

### TO WHAT EXTENT DID WFP STRATEGIC ARCHITECTURE MEET THE NEEDS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE?

The COVID-19 emergency affected all 84 countries with WFP interventions in place, its Rome-based headquarters and its six regional bureaux.

To address the crisis, WFP developed a set of strategic planning documents, mechanisms and structures, aimed at ensuring timely cross-functional coordination, establishing a clear chain of command and defining programme priorities to address the effects of the pandemic. Some of these mechanisms had no precedent in WFP with no corporate guidance or comparable experience to guide their production.

### WHAT DID IT FIND?

#### TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE WFP RESPONSE ARCHITECTURE PROVIDE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE PANDEMIC RESPONSE?

For the first time in its history, WFP needed to establish a corporate strategic architecture that would address a global crisis affecting its entire workforce, as well as its ability to operate in regions and countries across the world.

1

**Level 3 Surge Emergency activation**, lasting March-October 2020, enabled emergency decision making, established management structures and defined the chain of command

2

The **Global Response Plan (GRP)** in April 2020 provided concrete operational direction for regional bureaux and country offices to act on immediate emergency priorities and support resource mobilization

3

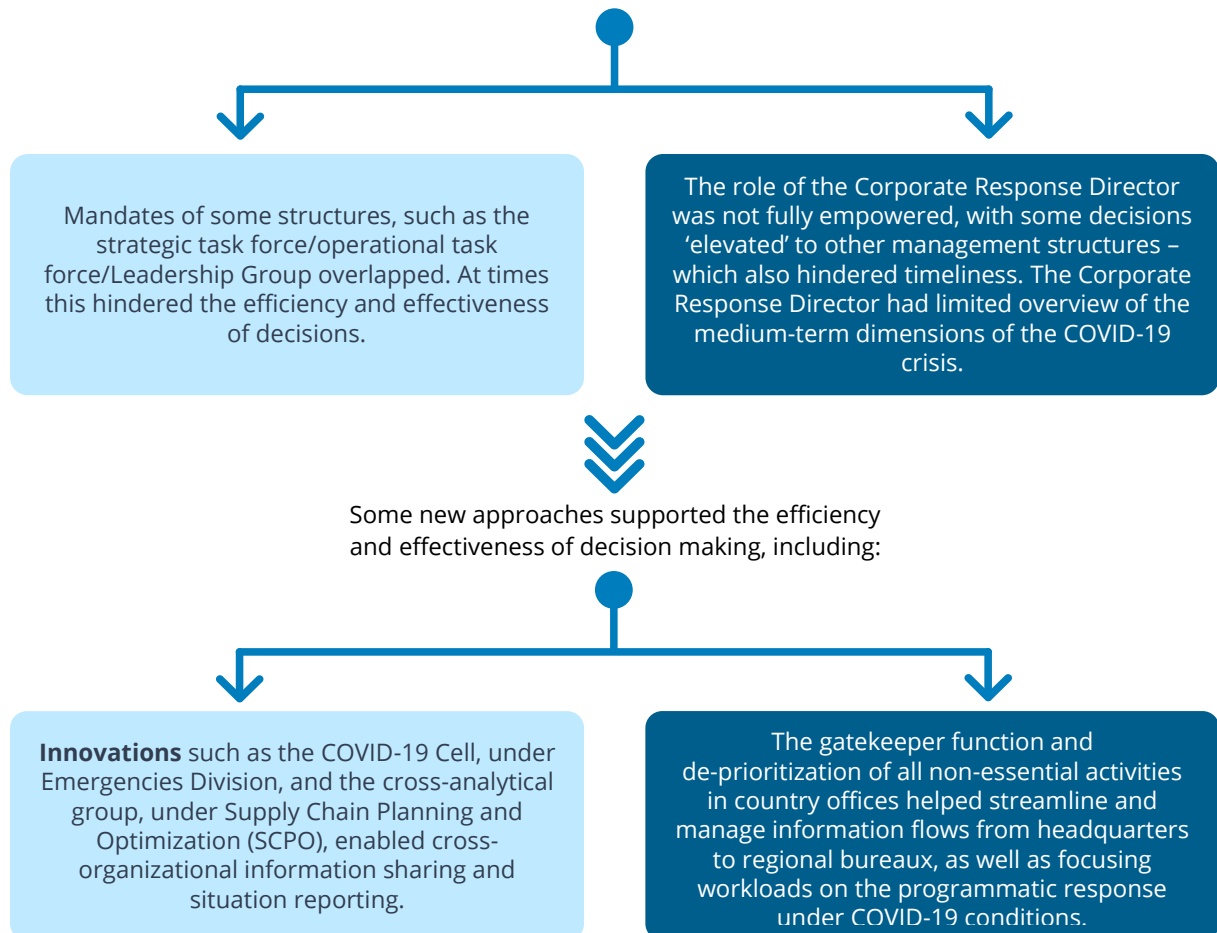
The **Medium-Term Programme Framework (MTPF)** of June 2020 (subsequently the Socioeconomic Response and Recovery Plan or SERRPF) guided regional bureaux and country offices’ programmatic adaptation to cope with medium-term effects of the pandemic

Combined, these instruments provided a cohesive corporate framework, which enabled WFP to address and deliver on the immediate needs of the pandemic, while paving the way for medium-term programme adaptation – though greater synergies among these instruments could have been sought.

In terms of global strategic positioning, WFP has affirmed itself as the crucial stakeholder for the provision of common services for the international community in global emergencies through the United Nation’s Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP). However, its positioning among the agencies and international community in the GHRP has not been similarly leveraged with respect to food security and food assistance in humanitarian response.

## TO WHAT EXTENT DID MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES FOR THE RESPONSE SUPPORT SWIFT DECISION-MAKING AND INTERNAL COHERENCE?

WFP utilized its existing structures for emergency response, namely the strategic and operational task forces. Management systems and structures were directed by headquarters but with strong engagement by regional bureaux and country offices in strategic and operational decision-making. They participated in both task forces, led programme criticality exercises and guided resource allocation/stock management decisions. However, challenges included:





## FIVE ISSUES FOR WFP CONSIDERATION



**Build on existing corporate policies and strategic guidance to develop an explicit framework for global-scale emergencies** – including, for example, varying global-level crisis scenarios, defining the roles WFP could play in global emergencies and setting out approaches to emergency preparedness



**Clarify the mandates of decision making functions in global emergencies** as well as the membership and responsibility divides, and the use of thematic groups in relevant areas



**Enhance the role and the positioning of the Corporate Response Director** for global crisis, to better support timely operational decision making and enhance its strategic engagement in cross-functional services beyond operations



**Leverage WFP emergency food assistance skills to the global humanitarian community**, for example, by developing a clearer inter-agency articulation of WFP capacities and capabilities for future global emergencies



**Institutionalize positive innovations** such as the COVID-19 Cell, the “de-prioritization” exercise and the combination of short- and medium-term complementary strategic planning documents

# 3. Evidence, Data and Knowledge Management Brief

This summary is the third in a series of ten evidence summaries generated as part of the evaluation of the WFP response to COVID-19. The evaluation, commissioned by the WFP independent Office of Evaluation, aims to “contribute to something that is being developed”, supporting corporate learning to inform the organization’s evolving COVID-19 response.

This summary brings together evidence from learning and knowledge management documents, WFP food security projections, audit assurance processes, as well as interviews with 12 key headquarter- and regional bureau-level interlocutors involved in evidence and knowledge management functions. It complements, and builds on, other ongoing review exercises, including the Level 3 lessons learned and business continuity during COVID-19 process.

## TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THE WFP RESPONSE TO COVID-19 EVIDENCE-BASED IN ITS DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION?

The global emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic challenged existing WFP systems of evidence generation, learning and knowledge management. Estimates of populations at risk of food insecurity required adaptation, and new demands for evidence arose, not least to inform programming. Lessons also needed to be learned as the pandemic unfolded. At the same time, travel and movement constraints restricted access to affected populations and impinged on WFP and its partners’ use of traditional data gathering measures.

## WHAT DID IT FIND?

# 1

### TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THE WFP ESTIMATION OF NEEDS BASED ON SOUND EVIDENCE?

Estimations of needs used “best available” evidence at the time – but had some necessary limitations.

1. Despite technical and methodological challenges, WFP generated a mostly soundly based global picture of potential acute food insecurity, using a complex projection model. This was demanding given that:
  - a. Standard needs assessment systems had to adapt to address the requirements of a global pandemic
  - b. Estimates were based on available evidence, but had to include multiple assumptions, given the uncertain trajectory of the pandemic
  - c. While estimates were as robust as feasible in the circumstances, ineffective communication created some confusion on how estimates were developed.
2. Similarly, and drawing on country office projections and other data, WFP estimated that **121.5 million people** would become food insecure as a result of COVID-19 in 2020, within WFP countries of operation. Of these 121.5 million, WFP would target **38 million COVID-19-related additional beneficiaries** in 2020.

	<b>Pre-COVID-19 estimates of Food Insecure<sup>17</sup> (millions)</b>	<b>Additional Food Insecure due to COVID-19</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent change</b>
Asia and the Pacific	27.1	22.5	49.6	83%
Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa	41.1	11.9	53.0	29%
West and Central Africa	24.5	33.0	57.6	135%
Southern Africa	27.6	24.8	52.4	90%
East Africa	24.0	17.5	41.6	73%
Latin America and the Caribbean	4.3	11.7	16.0	269%
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>148.7</b>	<b>121.5</b>	<b>270.2</b>	<b>82%</b>

3. Although these figures were based on “best available” methodologies and data at the time, a number of challenges were present:
  - a. **Systems:** WFP data systems for food insecurity are set up to establish a one-time figure for country-level needs – yet during the pandemic, the situation was constantly evolving
  - b. **Technical:** WFP had to rely mainly on remote data gathering techniques, and embed assumptions, such as how labour markets would evolve
  - c. **Political:** The process of defining needs-based figures could not always involve consultation with WFP host governments – meaning that national validation could not always be secured.

## 2

### TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE RESPONSE APPLY LEARNING FROM PREVIOUS CRISES IN ITS DESIGN?

1. WFP applied learning drawn from previous crises, including the Ebola virus, the Syrian regional crisis and a 2019 review of WFP Support in Health Emergencies, to inform its response.
2. The Operations Centre Unit, COVID-19 Cell and the innovation of the Cross-Functional Analytical Group developed valuable cross-analytical products to inform decision making.
3. Previous learning was used in three main areas: (i) food security projections; (ii) institutional systems to manage the crisis; and (iii) programmatic activity – including cash-based transfers, social protection and safety nets and school feeding.
4. Use of learning was mostly informal and unsystematic, and based heavily on staff’s experience of previous crises.

## 3

### HOW WELL DID INTERNAL LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS FUNCTION?

**COVID-19 has shone a light on existing flaws in WFP knowledge management and internal learning systems.**

1. Even before COVID-19, the WFP approach to knowledge management and internal learning was fragmented and lacked corporate support. During COVID-19, a wide range of learning initiatives arose. However, these were not all fully grounded in corporate learning needs.
2. Several divisions made critical contributions to supporting knowledge management and internal learning. For example:
  - Emergencies Division launched a Level 3 Isson learning exercise for COVID-19, undertaken November 2020-April 2021. The exercise encompasses a systems and process review
  - The Programme and Policy Development Department produced over 120 pieces of

<sup>17</sup> The number of acute food insecure people prior to COVID was based on the latest food security information available for 2020. It also included refugees who are food insecure or dependent on food assistance.

- guidance, targeted to country office staff
- Human Resources and Wellness Divisions produced extensive guidance
  - RAM Division led the expansion of a real-time, remote analytics platform to track food security, health and market functionality in priority countries.
3. Key units and divisions with an explicit learning and knowledge management mandate – including the Office of Evaluation, the Office of Internal Audit and Innovation and the Knowledge Management Division – all adapted to improve real-time learning and its uptake.

## SIX ISSUES FOR WFP CONSIDERATION



**Communicate widely on the complexity of food insecurity projections** – to build confidence and consensus in estimates



**Build on the current expansion of real time remote data collection** – including corporate targets set for expansion, given its potential strategic importance



**Capture experiential learning and integrate it into existing mechanisms** – such as the Cross Functional Analytical Group



**Devise an institutional mechanism for the tracking of lessons learned and their implementation** – to ensure systematic recording of the use and follow-up of learning



**Build on adaptations to oversight and learning functions** – such as real-time assurance in other protracted corporate emergencies



**Update the 2017 Knowledge Management Strategy and resource it** – to include developments within regional bureaux and in some headquarter divisions

## 4. Financing the COVID-19 Response Brief

This summary is the fourth in a series of ten evidence summaries generated as part of the evaluation of WFP's response to COVID-19. The evaluation, commissioned by the WFP independent Office of Evaluation, aims to "contribute to something that is being developed", supporting corporate learning to inform the organization's evolving COVID-19 response.

This summary brings together evidence from WFP financial and resourcing data, interviews with key headquarter-level interlocutors involved in resource mobilization, budget management and management of the WFP internal funding instruments and tools supporting the COVID-19 response, and regional bureaux staff involved in resource mobilization. It complements, and builds on, other ongoing review exercises, including the Level 3 lessons learned and business continuity during COVID-19 process.

### **TO WHAT EXTENT HAS WFP EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION SYSTEMS ALLOWED IT TO RESPOND FLEXIBLY AND IN A TIMELY WAY TO THE NEEDS OF THE PANDEMIC?**

The financial impacts of addressing the humanitarian aspects of the COVID-19 crisis are immense, with billions of dollars both needed and mobilized. Total humanitarian financing contributions to the COVID-19 response reached USD 6.7 billion in 2020. WFP entered the COVID-19 pandemic on the back of several years of sustained growth in income, reaching USD 8 billion in 2019 – though the gap between funding and needs has successively widened, reaching 32 percent in 2019, before the pandemic began.

## WHAT DID IT FIND?

# 1

### **What were WFP external resource mobilization requests?**

The global nature of the crisis created a demand for an early consolidated picture of WFP funding needs. WFP requests to the international community included:

- March 2020: USD 1.9 billion of already committed or anticipated contributions to be frontloaded and USD 350 million for the system-wide Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP), to support provision of common supply chain and logistics services, MEDEVAC services, and real-time remote vulnerability monitoring
- June 2020: USD 4.9 billion to support the WFP Global Response Plan, which included USD 1.7 billion in additional funding to meet additional needs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic (later revised upwards to USD 5.1 billion in September 2020)
- January 2021: the programme of work required USD 13.5 billion to meet the needs of 109 million beneficiaries throughout the year.

This, combined with the corporate-level common services response, meant that resource mobilization efforts for the COVID-19 response needed a higher level of leadership and technical involvement from headquarters than is normally the case.

# 2

### **How timely were WFP resource mobilization requests?**

WFP was fast out of the blocks with its initial funding requests, with Executive Director requests to donors, the GHRP and the creation of a Special Account to support WFP scale-up and response and a Trust Fund to support the new expanded role of WFP as provider of common services for the sector and for host governments, all of which were in place before the end March 2020.

# 3

## How successful was WFP in raising the resources it needed across the different areas of the response?

WFP was successful in mobilizing a significant level of resources, achieving USD 8.5 billion in confirmed donor contributions in 2020 compared with USD 8 billion in 2019 – more than 80 percent of requested funds.

With these resources in place, WFP was ultimately able to assist a record 114 million people in 2020, an increase of 17 million on 2019.

However:

- Growth in funding was heavily concentrated in emergency activities
- There was considerable variation across different country offices, with smaller offices receiving very low levels of support and funding shortages in East Africa and the Horn of Africa
- Adapting systems for extensive country strategic plan budget revisions, urgent grant review and prioritization relied heavily on the creativity, determination and hard work of WFP staff at many levels
- WFP data management systems – notably WINGS and Salesforce - were labour intensive and not well synchronized to help manage funding flows
- Country-level processes to support GHRP revision were time-consuming for staff and successful resource mobilization arose mainly as a result of direct efforts by WFP to engage with donors.

### Who contributed?

- The leading 10 donors in 2020 overall provided a similar share of total contributions to the previous three years but with variations in “burden sharing”
- Host government, international financial institution and private sector contributions expanded markedly. For example, funds received via host country governments grew by 174 percent in 2020, reaching a record peak of USD 348 million. Funding from the private sector increased to USD 161 million in 2020 (a near 60 percent increase compared with 2019).

# 4

## How timely were the contributions?

- Contributions to country strategic plans were delayed after May 2020, impacting continuity and scale-up of operations. By September, some country offices were deferring plans to scale up and reducing rations. However, by the end of Quarter 4, WFP had received record levels of funding.
- WFP was able to manage the impact of delays in contributions to common services by using its own multilateral funds and advance financing mechanisms to provide initial capital.

# 5

## Was funding sufficiently flexible and predictable?

- Despite the clear messaging by WFP to donors, there was no substantial increase in the availability of flexible or predictable funding in 2020
- However, WFP was successful in achieving its requests for extensions and changes of activities within existing grants to meet the needs of the crisis.

# 6

## How well did WFP internal financing systems and tools work?

- WFP internal tools and processes suffered from many known weaknesses in the system, with the burdensome country strategic plan (CSP) budget revision process and limited scale of the Immediate Response Account limiting the speed and scale of the adaptive capacity of WFP
- The COVID-19 Trust Fund and Special Account were important adaptations that enabled WFP to accommodate the global nature of the pandemic, though limits to the ability of the Trust Fund to account for results were widely acknowledged
- The Immediate Response Account, Internal Project Lending and Strategic Response Allocation Committee allocation of multilateral funds were critical in enabling early surge and scale-up, and addressing critical financing gaps, respectively
- The Global Commodity Management Fund (GCMF) also played a critical role in supporting the timely and cost-efficient supply of commodities to the WFP response and was able to accommodate a significant increase in demand in 2020.

## FIVE ISSUES FOR WFP CONSIDERATION



**Improve systems and processes to support headquarter-led global fundraising**, for example with infrastructure systems and processes to facilitate a corporate response to a global emergency in future



**Seize opportunities arising from the pandemic to re-position WFP and build a more sustainable funding model**, for example by telling the story of its flexible and advance funding instruments to donors



**Build up and communicate the WFP role in supporting national social safety nets** as a major potential growth area for WFP



**Clarify and extend common logistics services for the broader humanitarian community**, for example develop proposals to invest in standing technical and financing capabilities in logistics to serve the humanitarian community



**Prepare financial models in advance for global crisis response**, for example scenarios, costings and financing models to enable a more timely and predictable scale-up to large scale and systemic crises

## 5. Guidance and Communication Brief

This Summary is the fifth in a series of ten evidence summaries generated as part of the evaluation of the WFP response to COVID-19. The evaluation, commissioned by the WFP independent Office of Evaluation, aims to “contribute to something that is being developed”, supporting corporate learning to inform the organization’s evolving COVID-19 response.

This summary brings together evidence from programmatic and operational guidance produced during the pandemic as well as ongoing lesson learning exercises; and interviews with a small number of interlocutors from WFP headquarters. It complements, and builds on, other ongoing review exercises, including the Level 3 lessons learned and business continuity during COVID-19 process.

### TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THE WFP RESPONSE TO COVID-19 SUPPORTED BY GUIDANCE AND INTERNAL COMMUNICATION?

The COVID-19 pandemic posed an array of new challenges to communication and information-sharing within WFP. The organization’s information management system had long confronted major challenges, due to the evolving size and complexity of WFP. The advent of a major global pandemic required WFP to simultaneously adapt its guidance in every area of its work, and conduct organization-wide outreach and communication – especially on business continuity and health protection for the many staff and beneficiaries of WFP. This summary explores the extent to which WFP internal guidance and communication to its staff supported its operational response.

## WHAT DID IT FIND?

### 1

#### WHAT WAS THE VOLUME OF INTERNAL GUIDANCE PRODUCED?

**A very high volume of internal and external guidance was produced.**

Over 120 operational and programming-related guidance items were developed by headquarters alone – and many further items were developed at regional and country level. This included at least 56 programmatic guidance items; at least 37 operational guidance notes; and at least 30 human resource and wellness-related guidance items. Some items were regularly updated, to keep abreast of developments.

- The timing of guidance mirrored the pandemic’s trajectory, with a large surge in volume in March and April 2020, following the declaration of COVID-19 as a Level 3 emergency.
- Programmatic guidance notes covered a wide range of areas, including emergency distributions, livestock interventions, targeting in urban settings, food market-based approaches, safe food hygiene and handling, and humanitarian-military interaction. Supply chain guidance provided instructions on cargo handover, packing, labelling, and shipping.
- Joint guidance was also developed with other agencies, such as WHO, UNESCO, UNICEF and UNHCR.

### 2

#### HOW CLEAR AND CONSISTENT WAS THE GUIDANCE?

- Guidance prioritized clarity and accessibility for hard-pressed field staff – and much was deliberately brief.
- Guidance reflected a shift in the WFP narrative on COVID-19 during 2020, from the pandemic as “the central emergency” to one of several compounding factors shaping WFP operations, along with conflict, and climate change.
- Some guidance struggled at times to balance the WFP duty of care to its employees with the organizational commitment and ethos to “stay and deliver”.



# 3

## HOW WELL WAS GUIDANCE DISSEMINATED?

### WFP disseminated its guidance extensively.

- Dissemination systems were initially dispersed, but eventually superseded by a “one-stop shop” – namely OPWeb, which is in frequent use by WFP staff around the world. An OPweb page dedicated to the COVID-19 response was developed with four thematic portals
- Regional bureaux played a major role in tailoring and disseminating guidance to country offices – as well as producing their own guidance
- Mechanisms used included webinars, help-desks and real-time communities of practice
- The WFP Executive Director and the Deputy Executive Director issued a weekly communications summary, summarizing the status of the pandemic and the WFP response, as well as more ad-hoc communications when needed
- The Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division created a COVID-19 Coordination on Programmatic Issues site on Microsoft Teams. The platform was intended to function as a one-stop shop for guidance; a help-desk; and a community of practice – though it had limited participation from field colleagues
- Webinars proved especially popular, being held on themes such as social protection, country capacity strengthening, food systems, school-based programming; climate change and other areas
- Efforts were also made to synchronize and where possible, make systems inter-operable.

# 4

## WHAT ROLE DID THE INTERNAL MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS PLAY IN ENSURING STAFF WERE KEPT INFORMED OF DEVELOPMENTS?

- As the first global-level emergency, COVID-19 brought to the fore the importance of internal communications as a substantive part of emergency management
- New working modalities had to be established, and roles clarified, with the Communications Advocacy and Marketing Division (CAM) playing a key role in corporate communication, including for emergency purposes
- An internal coordination team was established between the Operations Centre Unit (OPSCEN), CAM, and the Staff Wellness and Human Resources Divisions, whose remit was to process all internal and external information and guidance being produced, and to decide what was relevant to communicate and how
- Tonality in communications was carefully selected, whether for reassurance, provision of information or guidance
- However, some existing weaknesses in WFP internal headquarters communication were also highlighted, including the need for more control over quality, frequency and landing of communications, to avoid creating confusion
- The gatekeeper function encountered wide appreciation at the field level but was contentious for some divisions in headquarters. Its usefulness in the later stage of the response became less evident, and it was eventually phased out.

## FIVE ISSUES FOR WFP CONSIDERATION



**Build on and maximize the cross-functional internal dialogue channels set up through the COVID-19 response**, for example, the OPSCEN COVID-19 Cell as well as other smaller coordination teams



**Establish a system for enhanced coordination and coherence of information-sharing**, with strengthened oversight by headquarters, to manage information requests to field offices on an ongoing basis, as well as during a pandemic



**Define protocols and working procedures for internal communication in global emergencies** in order to streamline communications and shield country offices particularly from an excessive burden of information requests and responsibilities



**Institutionalize the “one-stop shop” approach for information-sharing**, such as an augmented OPSCEN capacity, and the use of OPweb as the “go-to platform”



**Integrate internal communications in emergency-related learning processes** in order to build on experience gathered during COVID-19

## 6. Programme Adaptation Brief

This summary is the sixth in a series of ten evidence summaries generated as part of the evaluation of the WFP response to COVID-19. The evaluation, commissioned by the WFP independent Office of Evaluation, aims to “contribute to something that is being developed”, supporting corporate learning to inform the organization’s evolving COVID-19 response.

This summary brings together evidence from programmatic and operational guidance produced during the pandemic as well as ongoing lesson learning exercises, and interviews with a small number of interlocutors from WFP headquarters. It complements, and builds on, other ongoing review exercises, including the Level 3 lessons learned and business continuity during COVID-19 process.

### TO WHAT EXTENT DID WFP ADAPT ITS PROGRAMMING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE?

WFP operates in a highly diverse range of operational contexts. During 2020 and into 2021, it faced a highly complex operating environment. The closure of international borders, movement restrictions and diverse national pandemic responses all affected its operational delivery.

At the same time, WFP identified 121.5 million people in need in 79 programme countries. This called for significant programmatic adaptation to serve these new and emerging needs.

### WHAT DID IT FIND?

#### 1

##### How did beneficiary volumes and profiles change during the pandemic?

**The COVID-19 response required a change in targeting of beneficiary populations.** The pandemic highlighted increased vulnerabilities among specific groups, such as urban populations and migrants/refugees, and particularly women and girls.

WFP country office budget revision requests show the scale of adaptation needed. In 2020, country offices requested 111 budget revisions, compared to 67 in 2019. Of these 111, 66 were directly related to COVID-19, with USD 4 billion in funding required to meet needs.

#### 2

##### Did WFP manage to meet operational needs during the pandemic?

**WFP reached record numbers of beneficiaries in 2020**, serving 115.6 million people with food or cash-based transfers. This exceeded those reached in 2019 by almost 20 percent and was 93 percent of planned numbers for the year. While economic shocks, conflict and climate extremes also played a role, COVID-19 was a significant driver behind this increase.

In addition, 2021 saw an increase in support to almost all beneficiary groups during 2020, including to refugees, internally displaced persons and resident beneficiaries. Urban population targeting also increased. However, despite international evidence on increased vulnerability of women and girls and older populations during the pandemic, no significant changes in targeting or programme adaptation based on age or gender were evident.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The numbers of girls and women reached in 2020 increased by only 3.9 percentage points from 2019

#### 3

##### What changes did WFP make to activities/delivery modalities and how equipped was it to make the change?

**WFP showed rapid flexibility and agility** when adapting its existing programmes to make them COVID-

#### 4

##### How swiftly did WFP adapt corporately to serve programmatic needs?

Overall, WFP adapted swiftly to support programme adaptation needs:

- Headquarter-produced programmatic guidance

19 safe, despite increased costs. Three types of programme adaptation were made:

i) **Making existing programmes COVID-19 safe.**

Adaptations included:

- Reducing congestion at food distributions and retail shops
- Applying health mitigation measures
- Replacing cooked meals with food packages, commodity vouchers or take-home rations
- Adapting market-based approaches including shifting between modalities (food, cash, vouchers)
- Adapting school meals programmes to take-home rations
- Engaging with national social protection systems to address new or growing needs

ii) **Scaling up existing programmes**, for example by extending the duration of support where populations remained vulnerable; integrating newly vulnerable people into existing activities; and supporting national governments in country capacity strengthening. (For example, WFP invested USD 285 million in capacity strengthening activities in 2020 - an increase of 9 percent compared with 2019 expenditure.)

iii) **Developing and implementing new programmes** though these tended to be pilots; small-scale initiatives; or direct responses to government requests, for example helping establish government isolation/quarantine centres.

The WFP crisis response made up 83 percent of allocated funding in 2020, an increase of 12 percent compared with 2019. However, funding to “resilience” and “root causes” activities saw a significant decline in 2020, with decreases of 26 percent and 3 percent respectively in comparison to 2019.

helped programmes adapt

- Rapid human resource deployments to country offices helped ensure operational continuity
- Enhanced cross-functional collaboration, such as between cash-based transfers and social protection, or nutrition and school feeding, helped tailor programmes to need
- Disruptions to WFP in-kind and cash transfer supply chains created some delays but overall, operations mostly were maintained.

# 5

## What factors supported or hindered programme adaptation?

Adaptation was supported/hindered by different factors:

	HELPED	HINDERED
<b>Internal</b>	<p>WFP staff culture and commitment to “stay and deliver”</p> <p>Technical capacities</p> <p>Having existing programmatic systems and partnerships in place</p>	<p>Adequacy of internal funding mechanisms to cope with a global crisis</p> <p>Cumbersome/lengthy budget revision processes</p> <p>Extended due diligence processes</p> <p>Lack of experience in urban programming</p> <p>Lack of key staffing profiles in supply chain, VAM, CBT and social protection</p>
<b>External</b>	<p>Donor flexibility</p> <p>Existing relationships with government</p>	<p>Government control measures applied</p> <p>Availability and flexibility of donor funding</p> <p>Increased operating costs</p>

## SIX ISSUES FOR WFP CONSIDERATION



**Balance crisis response with adequate investment in resilience**, with strategies in resilience and livelihoods, basic services (nutrition and school feeding) and food systems, more adequately reflected from the start



**Invest in and build urban programming capacity**, for example through social protection



**Strengthen the integration of gender and protection considerations in programme delivery**, for example by making the guidance on environmental and social safeguards mandatory



**Continue to grow the WFP portfolio in country capacity strengthening, with a specific focus on social protection**, for example by building on recommendations from the recent synthesis of evidence and lessons on country capacity strengthening from decentralized evaluations<sup>2</sup>



**Build on the successful collaboration among headquarters, regional bureaux and country offices** by capturing and embedding these structures in existing organizational systems as part of preparedness



**Address systemic and capacity issues that have impeded programmes**, such as budget revision procedures and adaptation of internal financing mechanisms and diligence procedures for cash transfers

# 7. Cross-Cutting Issues Brief

This summary is the seventh in a series of ten evidence summaries generated as part of the evaluation of the WFP response to COVID-19. The evaluation, commissioned by the WFP independent Office of Evaluation, aims to “contribute to something that is being developed”, supporting corporate learning to inform the organization’s evolving COVID-19 response.

This summary brings together evidence from programmatic and operational guidance produced during the pandemic as well as ongoing lesson learning exercises; and interviews with a small number of interlocutors from WFP headquarters. It complements, and builds on, other ongoing review exercises, including the Level 3 lessons learned and business continuity during COVID-19 process.

## COVID-19 AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Globally, COVID-19 has deepened inequality both within and between countries. The pandemic has created major backsliding effects for gender equality and disrupted efforts on protection and accountability to affected populations. It has worsened conditions for those living in conflict zones.

WFP has a well-established gender policy framework, though evaluations have found shortcomings in implementation. It has made considerable investments in developing strong normative and institutional frameworks for accountability to affected populations, protection and conflict sensitivity. Limited central human and financial resources for cross-cutting issues were available prior to the pandemic.

## WHAT DID IT FIND?

### 1

#### What effort did WFP make to embed cross-cutting issues in the response?

- Cross-cutting issues were not adequately incorporated into the Global Response Plan – but they featured more strongly in the Medium-Term Programme Framework
- Collective guidance on cross-cutting issues was produced early the response
- Limited specific headquarters guidance was produced on gender equality, though more was generated on conflict analysis and COVID-19
- Trainings were patchy and often linked to existing policies and initiatives rather than geared to supporting COVID-19 responses.

Although a wide body of international evidence was emerging on the effects of the pandemic on global inequality by mid-2020, WFP did not upscale its institutional commitments to address cross-cutting issues within the pandemic. It did not increase the corporate human or financial resources dedicated to these areas.

### 2

#### How well were cross-cutting issues reflected in the pandemic response?

- WFP made considerable efforts to keep channels of communication open with beneficiaries and to conduct analysis during the pandemic, often using remote methods (Box 1).
- Protection responses were mostly focused around COVID-19 safety, including face masks, handwashing, health screening and physical distancing measures. Remote monitoring was used, and training on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse delivered.
- Some adaptations were made to address gender needs, for example, changing targeting and distribution mechanisms, shifting transfer modalities, and raising awareness on gender-based violence – but this depended on management and staff commitment and interest.
- Emerging efforts were made to integrate conflict sensitivity in relevant contexts – though tools and guidance were very recent.

### 3

#### What cross-cutting results were achieved?

Longstanding data limitations on cross-cutting results remained. No specific corporate indicators exist to monitor work on conflict sensitivity.

- Overall - and despite difficult conditions - WFP maintained and expanded its accountability to affected populations activity compared to 2019.
- Positive corporate results in gender were undermined by missed opportunities to understand gender-related needs.
- Addressing protection issues still presents a challenge, although distribution points were mostly safe and accessible.

**Box 1: WFP used a range of mechanisms to expand and extend its outreach to beneficiaries during COVID-19. This included:**

- Using existing SMS systems, physical distribution points and food assistance for assets (FFA) sites to share COVID-19 mitigation measures and symptom recognition (for example, in Lesotho, Myanmar, and Nicaragua)
- Using established community engagement mechanisms to collect feedback and suggestions from beneficiaries (for example, in Myanmar)
- Establishing a dedicated telephone hotline and email feedback loops (for example, in Armenia)
- Developing a referral system to build networks to address needs in new populations (for example, in Lebanon, Colombia, and Sierra Leone)
- Developing a gender-based violence referral system to be implemented through general food assistance platforms (for example, in Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka).

## SIX ISSUES FOR WFP CONSIDERATION



**How can WFP more explicitly and publicly recognize inequalities within its COVID-19 response and articulate its commitment to a people-centred approach?** The new WFP social protection strategy recognizes the intersectional inequalities of people in need; reflect this in senior level statements concerning the WFP pandemic response



**How can WFP align its resource commitments to the scale of cross-cutting needs presented by the pandemic?** Prioritize resources available corporately to address gender/protection/accountability to affected populations/conflict sensitivity within the COVID-19 response, to help tackle the inequalities exacerbated by COVID-19



**How can WFP define more clearly its role in addressing the inequalities created by COVID-19?** Establish a cross-organizational group to define the WFP role in addressing the intersectional inequalities created by COVID-19



**How can WFP become more corporately sighted on trends in cross-cutting concerns?** Ensure more consistent, comprehensive and accurate reporting on cross-cutting issues from country offices



**How can WFP continue sustaining two-way channels of communication with affected populations during the pandemic?** Collect and analyse accountability to affected populations data centrally, or regionally to help make informed choices and decisions for affected populations



**How can WFP ensure that its future planning for the COVID-19 response embeds a clearer articulation of its role in addressing the inequalities created by the pandemic?** Embed the pillars of inequality, inclusion and peacebuilding into any successor plan to the SERRPF

# 8. Oversight and Risk Management Systems Brief

This summary is the eighth in a series of ten evidence summaries generated as part of the evaluation of the WFP response to COVID-19. The evaluation, commissioned by the WFP independent Office of Evaluation, aims to “contribute to something that is being developed”, supporting corporate learning to inform the organization’s evolving COVID-19 response.

This summary brings together evidence from risk management guidance, policy and related directives, reports and risk assurance processes produced before and during the pandemic as well as ongoing lesson learning exercises; and interviews with a small number of interlocutors from WFP headquarters and also risk and compliance focal points from the six regional bureaux and 13 country offices. It complements, and builds on, other ongoing review exercises, including the Level 3 lessons learned and business continuity during COVID-19 process.

## COVID-19 AND RISK

COVID-19 presented a wide range of risks to WFP. Implementing the Global Humanitarian Response Plan and the organization’s own global response; ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of its programme framework; and keeping staff and beneficiaries safe, presented challenges to the management of strategic, operational, fiduciary and financial risks.

Before the pandemic, WFP was working to strengthen its risk management systems. The challenge it faced was to balance the risk-tolerance needed for the COVID-19 response, with the robust risk management required for programme quality and demanded by partners.

## WHAT DID IT FIND?

### 1

#### How well did risk management procedures work?

WFP applied its standard Three Lines Model for risk management during its COVID-19 response:

First line – Achieve: implement controls to manage risks related to their operations

Second line - Advise: provide guidance and advice to the first line on risk management and related controls and compliance with corporate rules and regulations

Third line - Assure: provide independent assurance on WFP effectiveness of management of risk and control.

- Individuals and departments made significant efforts to fulfil their roles in the Three Lines model. Holders of:
  - First line responsibilities identified and assessed risks and implemented controls
  - Second line responsibilities provided rapid guidance and advice to support decision making by first line risk holders
  - Third line responsibilities adapted plans for independent risk assurance and stepped up processes in pace and intensity from June 2020.

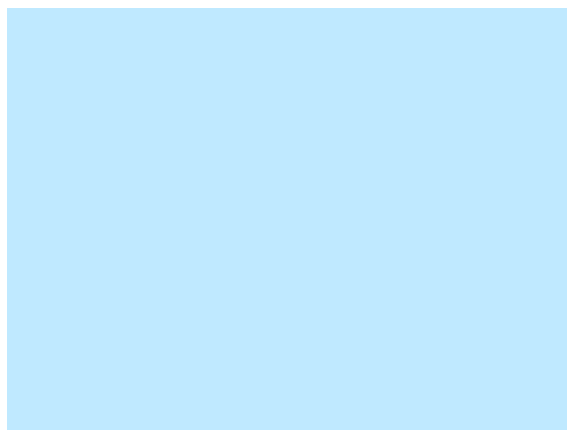
### 2

#### How was a balance struck between risk tolerance during a global crisis, and risk management/mitigation?

- Despite the challenging context, choices and decisions were made carefully and considering guidance and rules.
- There were some tensions in balancing the different risk appetites between risk categories.
- These tensions were made worse by communication challenges and pressures of an emergency response context.
- Despite different perspectives, WFP staff at all levels had a deep commitment to, and respect for, risk management processes.



- Active communication and collaboration among the three lines helped strengthen risk management.
- Assurance processes were adapted in response to the complex operating environment.
- Five factors influenced how well the risk management system worked:
  - Staff's understanding of the WFP risk management system and their responsibilities
  - Office capacity for risk management
  - The tone set by leadership at different levels
  - Cross-functional analysis of risk and its management at different levels
  - Access of risk and compliance focal points to decision-makers.



## FOUR ISSUES FOR WFP CONSIDERATION



**How can the different systems involved in WFP management of risk become better connected?** How can the benefits of the different risk systems be maximized to avoid increasing bureaucracy and demands on staff?



**What would help decision makers in all parts of the organization when weighing up different risks and their management in the emergency context?** How can staff be supported to manage different risks simultaneously?



**What would enable risk management that is informal to be more transparent without increasing bureaucracy or slowing down decision making in emergency response?** How can day-to-day risk management processes be enhanced without increased process or paperwork?



**What are the implications of the broadening range of ways of working for WFP risk management approach?** This may include the widening range and increasing scale of common services; WFP collaborative working with other organizations and working in an “enabling” and technical support role

## 9. Emergency Preparedness Brief

This summary is the ninth in a series of ten evidence summaries generated as part of the evaluation of the WFP response to COVID-19. The evaluation, commissioned by the WFP independent Office of Evaluation, aims to “contribute to something that is being developed”, supporting corporate learning to inform the organization’s evolving COVID-19 response.

The summary brings together evidence on WFP emergency preparedness in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. It brings together evidence from policy, programmatic and operational documents including from 14 selected country offices. It complements, and builds on, other ongoing review exercises, including the Level 3 lessons learned and business continuity during COVID-19 process.

### COVID-19 AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Emergency preparedness in WFP aims to support the organization to respond to emergencies in an efficient, effective and timely manner. WFP emergency preparedness is linked to that of its partners; it works as part of United Nations agency preparedness and response activities, and it supports preparedness planning with national partners through capacity strengthening activities.

When COVID-19 struck, a number of developments on preparedness were underway, led by Emergencies Division. These included the implementation of a five-year plan for staff training in emergency-related areas; corporate discussion on financing mechanisms including the Immediate Response Account (IRA); the development of a new emergency activation protocol; and the revision of the existing emergency preparedness and response package.

### WHAT DID IT FIND?

# 1

#### Was the WFP institutional framework/ guidance for preparedness appropriate for COVID-19?

WFP had not planned in advance for a major global health pandemic. Its existing response preparedness was largely focused on climate change, seasonal, recurrent and conflict-related risks.

Limitations in the preparedness framework included the lack of a system to track financing of preparedness; and reliance on country office preparedness focal points/monitoring completion rates of minimum preparedness actions.

However, the framework did support preparedness for scaling up of WFP programmes and provision of common services during COVID-19. It anticipated government leadership, inter-agency and context-specific approaches to preparedness and response.

# 2

#### How well did corporate-level preparedness measures taken since 2019 support WFP readiness to respond to COVID-19?

**Increased investments in preparedness** since 2019 helped WFP respond to the pandemic. These included:

- Enhanced Emergencies Division capacity, which enabled WFP contributions to early warning and analysis in Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) processes
- Increased capacity to prepare and coordinate surge staff, which supported country offices in their response

(though gaps included French speakers and higher-grade personnel)

- Enhanced data and analysis capacity, which played a limited role in COVID-19 early warning but increased the visibility of potential COVID-19 developments as the crisis evolved.

**Additional elements** included:

- WFP management of the United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot system, as well as long-term agreements with financial service providers and other partners on a global scale, could be scaled up when needed
- Some improved financing mechanisms, such as an increased ceiling for the Global Commodity Management Facility, enabled swift response. But others, such as limited resources available within the Immediate Resource Account, constrained preparedness.

However, limited infrastructure investment constrained preparedness for remote working.

# 3

## How well did country-level preparedness and response plans work?

Overall, country level preparedness worked well but with some challenges:

- Country offices with crisis response objectives built into country strategic plans, supported by flexible funds that could be reallocated internally, had valuable flexibility when the pandemic struck
- Completing minimum preparedness actions provided a useful base for scaling up and response
- Business continuity plans were also valuable in helping prepare country offices for the shift to remote working
- Country offices that had undertaken exercises to stress test preparedness, such as simulations including table-top exercises, found them extremely useful.

Less formal – but critical – factors supporting preparedness included:

- Relationships previously built with national stakeholders and other partners, which enabled WFP to move swiftly when needed
- Leadership at country office and regional bureau level, including clarity of vision about the WFP role and commitment in the response
- WFP staff culture and commitment to “stay and deliver”.

Factors impeding preparedness included:

- Lack of prior planning for a health-based crisis as part of WFP country-level risk planning
- Misplaced assumptions in some country offices/regional bureau plans about the path that COVID-19 would take, or the extent to which it would take hold
- Some severe limitations on flexibility, including
- Shifting between modalities (in-kind or cash) requiring lengthy due diligence processes
- Lengthy internal processes to modify country strategic plans without crisis response objectives or results
- The need to respond in new geographical areas where the country office lacked established partners (financial services providers, retailers, transport capacity)
- Limited integration of learning from past experience of health emergencies into preparedness systems
- Unanticipated implications of challenges with government leadership and capacity constraints on the WFP response
- Lack of previous relationships with some key government stakeholders and other international agencies in the health-based response

## FIVE ISSUES FOR WFP CONSIDERATION



**Connectivity - How can preparedness for WFP response be better connected with building national capacity for preparedness and response?** For example, consider and maximize the synergies between the organization's own emergency response preparedness and its role in building national capacities



**Monitoring preparedness - How can WFP emergency preparedness at the corporate level and across types of preparedness be better monitored?** For example by monitoring adaptive capacities such as flexibility or agility at global, regional and country levels



**Funding preparedness - How can continuity in funding of preparedness be strengthened?** For example by ensuring sustained investment



**Preparedness for crises with characteristics of COVID-19 -How can WFP prepare better for crises with characteristics of COVID-19 crisis and response?** For example through the development of scenarios for simulation and/or table-top exercises



**Maintaining the organizational culture for flexibility and adaptation.** For example, consider the factors that contribute to its organizational culture and that have enabled adaptation, and how these can be nurtured

# 10. Partnerships Brief

This summary is the tenth in a series of ten evidence summaries generated as part of the evaluation of the WFP response to COVID-19. The evaluation, commissioned by the WFP independent Office of Evaluation, aims to “contribute to something that is being developed”, supporting corporate learning to inform the organization’s evolving COVID-19 response.

The summary brings together evidence on partnership aspects of the response and explains how these evolved over time. It combines evidence from policy, programmatic and operational documents with interview perspectives from 63 WFP staff at global, regional and country level and 42 external stakeholders from other United Nations agencies, donors, cooperating partners and the private sector.

## COVID-19 AND PARTNERSHIPS

The COVID-19 pandemic represented a perfect storm of challenges for humanitarian and development partnerships. WFP partnerships with governments, United Nations agencies, the private sector and cooperating partners were severely affected by movement restrictions and travel constraints, as well as by in-country conditions.

At the same time, the effects of the pandemic significantly increased the “partnership imperative” – that is, to collectively respond to the challenges of the pandemic, and to develop new solutions to new problems emerging.

Three key strategic documents formalized WFP partnerships during the COVID-19 response:

- The March 2020 United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan asked WFP to provide common services for the international response
- The April 2020 Global Response Plan (GRP) set out the WFP role in partnering governments and other partners to help meet country-specific needs
- The June 2020 Medium-Term Programme Framework (later the Socioeconomic Response and Recovery Plan) focused WFP efforts on national social protection systems, basic service delivery, and food systems – all of which required close partnerships at country level.

## WHAT DID IT FIND?

# 1

How well did WFP support nationally led responses to COVID-19?

From early in the pandemic, WFP anticipated that it would need to take a more active role in supporting governments to shape, facilitate and supplement their national responses to COVID-19. Areas of partnership that expanded during the pandemic – and required expanded/ changed partnerships – were:

- Social protection
- Food security analyses and market assessments
- Urban targeting
- Supply chain and logistics
- School feeding

Overall, WFP responded positively where it could to new requests,

# 2

In what ways and how effectively did WFP work within the wider United Nations system to respond to the pandemic, at a global-level and at a country-level?

Partners voiced broad praise for the WFP risk-appetite, no-regrets approach, and response-focus WFP met its common services responsibilities, enabling the global humanitarian system to continue during the pandemic:

- The Supply Chain, including moving equipment and personal protective equipment, helped the rest of the humanitarian system to remain operational
- The Humanitarian Response

# 3

To what extent did WFP maintain or broaden its other global/national partnerships during the crisis, and did this bring any mutual benefits?

The pandemic saw some shifts in WFP partnerships at all levels. In particular:

- WFP showed openness to working with new government stakeholders at country level, even where no prior relationship was in place
- WFP relationships with its cooperating partners was perceived to have changed during the pandemic, with partners reporting that WFP had adopted a more collaborative, trust-based

even where this meant working in new areas or with different partners. This commitment, and visibly “staying to deliver”, when some other organizations were departing, has helped position WFP as the “go to” actor in emergencies. It has also positioned WFP to expand its support to governments in the future.

Hubs facilitated cargo movement on a free-to-user basis on behalf of all humanitarian organizations

- The MEDEVAC service enabled humanitarian organizations to access medical support for staff in need
- The UNHAS service allowed humanitarian agencies to move staff around the world, so that operations could continue.

WFP also stepped up its global advocacy, and took a lead role in strategic international forums – positioning it more prominently within the United Nations system and more broadly.

Scaling-up of social protection activity also located the WFP programme much closer to its United Nations development partners. Although uncomfortable at times, this places WFP in a stronger position to deliver ongoing United Nations reforms.

and flexible approach than previously

- Cooperation with international financial institutions expanded as part of work on social protection, extending previous partnerships built.
- WFP intensified its engagement with private sector partners, which provided complementary technical expertise and resources to improve systems and tools.

## THREE ISSUES FOR WFP CONSIDERATION



### Expand and deepen government partnerships:

- How can WFP analysis of the political economy of its engagement with governments, particularly regarding social protection, be strengthened?
- How to ensure capacity to manage fiduciary risks of government/international financial institution engagement in social protection?



### Leverage strengths in common services:

- How can the WFP position as a global humanitarian service provider for the collective good be maximized, for example through partnerships with WHO and UNDOCS?
- What lessons can be learned from the Geneva Coordination Cell? How can the model be institutionalized for future emergencies?



### Continue to build on gains made in United Nations reform and United Nations partnership:

- How can an appropriate balance be sought with other United Nations agencies, in areas of work where agencies may overlap, enhancing a spirit of partnership?
- How can improvements in partnerships approaches with cooperating partners be consolidated beyond the COVID-19 response?
- How can new partnerships continue to be built upon, and existing ones adapted, to find structural and sustainable solutions to future complex global responses?

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