



Impact Evaluations to Optimize Humanitarian Interventions

Under the [Impact Evaluation Strategy \(2019-2026\)](#), WFP's Office of Evaluation (OEV) aims to deliver operationally relevant impact evaluations that contribute to global evidence in the areas it operates.

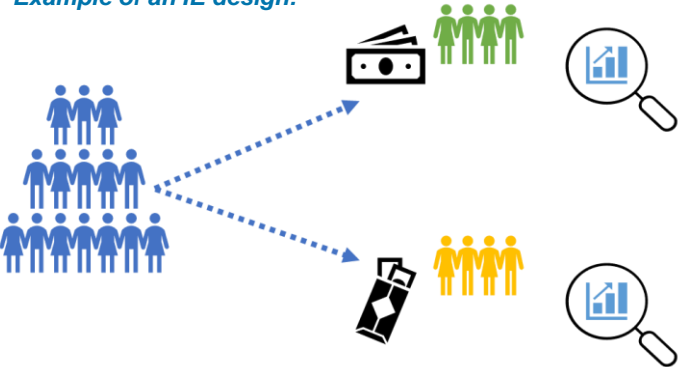
What is an impact evaluation?

Impact evaluations answer questions such as *what, how* and *for whom* results have been achieved. For international organizations and donors, the increased use of impact evaluations is driven by a need to improve effectiveness and demonstrate clear results.

Impact evaluations measure changes in development outcomes of interest for a target population that can be attributed to a specific programme or policy through a credible counterfactual. They use a range of quantitative methods to test the effectiveness of interventions (e.g. through a randomized controlled trial or [A/B testing](#)), which are usually complemented by qualitative methods.

For example, if you want to know whether (A) value vouchers or (B) cash-based transfers are most effective at increasing food security during an emergency, recipients can be randomly assigned to two groups whose food security outcomes are then compared after the intervention.

Example of an IE design:



How is OEV using impact evaluation in humanitarian operations?

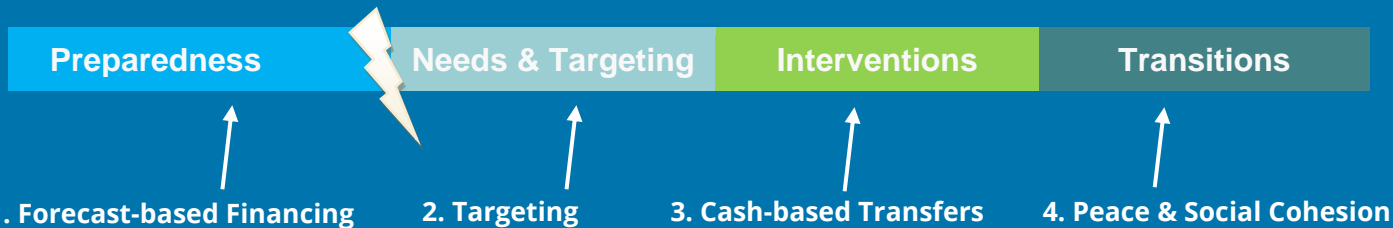
While impact evaluations are already commonly used to generate evidence on the effectiveness of interventions in development contexts, impact evaluation evidence for optimizing humanitarian responses is scarce. However, new programmes, technologies and data sources present great opportunities for WFP to harness the full potential of impact evaluation as a tool for learning and demonstrating results.

To this end, OEV has received funding from [USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance](#) to begin providing technical support to country offices interested in conducting impact evaluations for their humanitarian programming. The work is done in partnership with the [Development Impact Evaluation \(DIME\)](#) Department of the World Bank.

Through consultations with colleagues across the organization, OEV identified four key decision points in the timeline of emergency responses where impact evaluations are feasible, and where additional evidence could improve the way WFP intervenes in emergencies (see next page).

OEV is working to support WFP country offices to identify opportunities, design and deliver humanitarian impact evaluations suitable to their contexts and planned operations. Where possible, these impact evaluations overlap with our existing thematic Windows in their design or measurement strategy to exploit synergies and foster global evidence generation.

Four initial focus areas for impact evaluations along the timeline of an emergency response:



Impact evaluations (IEs) allow WFP to quantify the impact of different programming choices, usually by comparing groups of intended beneficiaries who receive one or more intervention type. Some example questions are listed below.

1. Forecast-based Financing

By predicting extreme weather events, WFP aims to deliver faster and more efficient humanitarian responses that prevent crises before they occur.

- Which is more effective and cost-efficient: Relying on predictions and providing assistance to everyone before a shock? Or, providing targeted assistance after a disaster hits to those most in need?
- How does the timing of a response impact the food security of affected households?



2. Targeting

Targeting is a cross-functional process in WFP, which aims to identify the areas, households and individuals most in need, while safeguarding assistance in case of resource shortfalls.

- Which innovative approaches to targeting increase precision while minimizing costs?
- Which secondary data sources (e.g. satellite, drone imaging, administrative data) are most effective for targeting during an emergency?



3. Cash-based Transfers



WFP is the largest agency delivering humanitarian cash. A global surge in the use of cash is matched by a rise in the complexity of programme choices.

- What timing, frequency, and duration of cash-based transfer is most effective at combating food insecurity — in the short- or longer-term?
- With limited resources, is greater coverage or higher transfer amounts better for affected communities?



4. Peace & Social Cohesion

The 2020 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to WFP in recognition of the important link between conflict and hunger, and the critical role assistance can play in fostering peace.

- What interventions are most effective at contributing to peace-related outcomes in post-conflict contexts?
- How can programming support social cohesion and trust between host and refugee populations?

