



**WFP EVALUATION**



**World Food Programme**

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# Review of the implementation of recommendations from thematic evaluations of a strategic/global nature

Report on the Evaluation of WFP Policy on Capacity Development: An Update on Implementation (2017)

May 2022

# Background

This report on the evaluation of the 2009 update of the World Food Programme (WFP) Policy on Capacity Development was produced within the framework of the Review of the Implementation of Recommendations from Global Evaluations (2016 – Q2 2020). The review looks at recommendations from Global Evaluations issued between 2016 and the first half of 2020 to shed light on their uptake and identify areas where further action is recommended by WFP. The review comprised ten stand-alone reports as well as one synthesis report.

The review was commissioned by the WFP Office of Evaluation and conducted by the consulting firm *hera*. The review team from *hera* based their analysis on data from the Risk and Recommendation (R2) tracking tool that was extracted in March 2021, as well as semi-structured interviews with WFP staff that were conducted between April and June 2021. Before publishing the report, the Office of Evaluation complemented *hera's* analysis by updating outdated information based on comments and input received from WFP staff/action-owners in January 2022.

## Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the review team, and do not necessarily reflect those of WFP. 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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# Introduction

The evaluation of the 2009 update of the World Food Programme (WFP) Policy on Capacity Development was conducted in 2016 by the Universalia Management Group and managed by the WFP Office of Evaluation. The evaluation was presented to the Executive Board in February 2017.

The evaluation focused on assessing the quality of the policy, its results and the factors influencing the achievement of results from 2009 to 2015. Evaluation findings were largely positive regarding WFP's contributions to capacity development in the three capacity dimensions outlined in the 2009 policy update. The evaluation concluded that WFP's work on capacity development, both in terms of funding and continuity of engagement, has been constrained by the agency's emergency focus and short-term operational horizon. Evaluation findings on factors affecting the achievement of results were critical of the extent of corporate support for policy dissemination and implementation.

The evaluation issued six recommendations of which three were agreed and three were partially agreed by management.<sup>1</sup> In responding to the recommendations, management identified nine actions with four action-owners among the different divisions and units. The WFP Risk and Recommendation tracking system (R2) reported (March 2021) that all actions had been implemented by 2020 (Annex 1).

## Findings

Recommendations are considered useful by key informants, as there has been full recognition of the need for capacity strengthening and for greater focus on coordinated efforts in the Integrated Road Map (IRM) process, specifically in relation to country strategic plans (CSPs) ensuring that the topic receives sufficient prioritization and ownership. The findings of the Internal Audit of WFP's Country Capacity Strengthening reinforce the evaluation findings, pointing out several systemic weaknesses that have affected WFP's ability to deliver, demonstrate sustainable capacity strengthening results and put forward very clear and explicit functional and technical development areas according to key informants. Furthermore, the Synthesis of Evidence and Lessons on Country Capacity Strengthening from Decentralized Evaluations seems to have given impetus to management to address the challenges set out in the Policy Evaluation.

The post hoc assessment on the quality of the evaluation found that the conclusions were not structured against evaluation questions, and recommendations had to be linked back to the findings, which were well presented, rather than to the conclusions.

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<sup>1</sup> "Management Response" (WFP/EB.1/2017/6-A/Add.1).

**Table 1 Summary of recommendations and management responses**

Recommendation (short)	Management response
Rec 1 Elevate capacity strengthening as core function of WFP	Partially agreed
Rec 2 Provide country offices with tools and guidance on capacity strengthening	Agreed
Rec 3 Enhance internal capability to support national capacity strengthening	Agreed: 3a, b and d Partially agreed: 3c
Rec 4 Strengthen monitoring and reporting on all WFP capacity strengthening work	Agreed
Rec 5 Ensure that internal and external communications reflect capacity strengthening as a core organizational function	Partially agreed
Rec 6 Update or renew policy upon IRM completion	Agreed

### **Rec 1 – Elevate capacity strengthening as core function of WFP**

***Are the actions defined in the management response relevant to the recommendation?***

Management has partially agreed to the recommendation and therefore did not fully address the recommendation. A new or temporary transitional structure was not required. Nevertheless, the recommendation triggered the attention of the organization to strengthen capacity building.

***Have the actions of the management response been implemented?***

A Country Capacity Strengthening (CCS) Unit has ultimately been established and a CCS Task Force supports addressing functional gaps. The management response also alludes to an action to develop guidance and tools, which in fact are covered by the second recommendation.

The recommendation calls for immediately creating a temporary, multi-stakeholder management transition team that should draw attention to capacity strengthening within the organization. Management has partially agreed to the recommendation and notes that multiple resourcing needs associated with the IRM precluded the creation of a specific management transition team in the management response.

To support elevating the organizational attention to capacity strengthening as a core function, recent lessons learned from the Evaluation<sup>2</sup> and the Audit<sup>3</sup> provided an opportunity to strengthen the conceptual and operational approach to country capacity strengthening (CCS). Much has been done to address the functional gaps identified, i.e. better defined staff roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for capacity strengthening in functional areas (functions, divisions, units, etc.) and mainstreamed into programming areas. This largely fell within the sphere of influence of a circumscribed group of players, but additional attention is needed to address the gaps. These require the commitment of a broader group of stakeholders to ensure that solutions are effectively adopted and coherently rolled out and embedded within daily organizational practice across the board.

The follow-up to the recommendation was delayed due to the time that it took WFP to allocate appropriate funding (i.e. programme support and administrative (PSA) and structure (CCS Unit in the Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division (PRO)) to proceed with implementing this recommendation.

<sup>2</sup> Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Capacity Development: An Update on Implementation (2009).

<sup>3</sup> Internal Audit of WFP's Country Capacity Strengthening.

Although not mentioned in the management response, the main tangible action which key informants identify as stemming from the recommendation has been the creation of the CCS Task Force (CCS-TF).

The CCS-TF was established in the first half of 2020 to address evaluation and audit recommendations and other CCS priorities. Its primary purpose is to support the institutionalization of corporate capacity to design, deliver and document a coherent and effective CCS portfolio that highlights and generates evidence for WFP's CCS contribution towards national Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals.

CCS functionalities have been institutionalized in WFP's PRO/CCS Unit, which was created at the end of 2020, three years after evaluation findings were presented to the Executive Board.

## **Rec 2 – Provide country offices with tools and guidance on capacity strengthening**

**Are the actions defined in the management response relevant to the recommendation?**

The management response is relevant but does not fully address the recommendation; the response could be more specific and actionable.

**Have the actions of the management response been implemented?**

Commitments are broadly formulated. Nevertheless, the CCS Unit took up the challenge and responded with the development of many good guiding materials.

The recommendation is considered relevant and useful. As the second generation of CSPs are currently being rolled out, the PRO/CCS Unit has been actively engaged with the countries going through the CSP process to make sure that the latest guidance and corporate thinking on CCS is integrated into the upcoming CSP formulation. Furthermore, guidance aligned with WFP's socio-economic response and recovery programme framework) for implementing CCS activities under Covid-19 has been issued.

The action formulated in the management response is regarded as actionable although it could have been more specific. Given the identified weaknesses in the organization on capacity strengthening, it would have been better to question the timeframe in the recommendation and put forward a more realistic one.

The CCS framework, the CCS toolkit and guidance notes have been developed. However, the lack of financial and human resources in the Capacity Strengthening Unit (previously OSZI) has impacted uptake and proper operationalization of tools and guidance for all levels. Guidance in relation to the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus is implicitly related.

Links to criteria or conditions whereby WFP support may no longer be required – including transition and exit plans – could not be discerned as part of the country strategic planning process from the materials that were shared. As informed by PRO/CCS, this lack of criteria is due to a focus on working within the framework of national priorities and goals. WFP does not see transition or exit as the only endpoint, or means, of a capacity strengthening intervention, and the CCS framework and guidance are designed accordingly to reflect this.

The need for internal capacity strengthening in CCS has been addressed to the extent that the CCS Unit is functional. However, it needs to be aligned to the level of ambition that will be outlined in the new Strategic Plan, whereby the CCS framework and approach is integrated into sector/thematic areas of work.

### **Rec 3 - Enhance internal capability to support national capacity strengthening**

**Are the actions defined in the management response relevant to the recommendation?**

The management response is relevant but does not fully address the recommendation. The relatively rapid shift in action-ownership from human resources (HR) to the functional areas was in all likelihood unanticipated' when the recommendations and management responses were formulated.

**Have the actions of the management response been implemented?**

Internal mainstreaming of capacity strengthening capabilities has been put at the centre of WFP's agenda, in line with other mainstreaming activities such as advocacy, partnering, skills to influence governments, etc.

The recommendation has four sub-recommendations, all of them put under the responsibility of HR. The People Strategy was not updated to include capacity strengthening as a functional capability. Instead, the People Policy was developed and recently approved at the Executive Board June 2021 session (sub-recommendation 1). The People Policy provides "a framework for people management" and "guides the expectations of WFP and its people with regard to behaviour and interaction in the workplace";<sup>4</sup> it sets out the vision of the future WFP workforce required to save lives and change lives, implying capacity strengthening, and refers to organizational processes such as strategic workforce planning and talent management that reinforce capacity strengthening as a functional capability.

HR has been in the past the owner of many recommendations and actions on capability and capacity strengthening both in evaluations and audits. However, this has changed, as functional areas in the divisions and units are increasingly assuming responsibilities. They include capacity strengthening in their workplans and have the budgets for this. As part of the staff Performance and Competency Enhancement (PACE) process, functions are responsible for prioritizing the most important skills for their own accountability and capability frameworks and these are then assessed in PACE. This action-owner shift applies to developing incentives (sub-recommendation 2) and developing a staffing roster (sub-recommendation 4); for these, HR sees a supporting role to play.

Management partially agreed with sub-recommendation 3 which proposes to have focal points on capacity strengthening at regional and country levels. Terms of Reference (ToR) for regional and country office CCS posts have been drafted and provide evidence for the establishment of these CCS functions in the field. It is therefore not clear why the recommendation was partially agreed. Instead of creating posts, developing capacity strengthening skills with existing expert staff in the functional areas, thus mainstreaming these capabilities, may have driven initial ideas.

### **Rec 4 – Strengthen monitoring and reporting on all WFP capacity strengthening work**

**Are the actions defined in the management response relevant to the recommendation?**

The management agreed with the recommendation; the response is relevant but did not spell out clear actions.

**Have the actions of the management response been implemented?**

Actions that directly followed-up on the recommendation were implemented, including the development and dissemination of indicators for CCS.

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<sup>4</sup> WFP/EB.A/2021/5-A

The recommendation calls for monitoring and reporting on all capacity strengthening work. The management response refers to already ongoing activities and could be more specific regarding knowledge management initiatives, what they would entail and who would be responsible.

In 2018, following the implementation of IRM, standard project reports (SPRs) were replaced by annual country reports (ACRs) capturing WFP work on capacity strengthening. The new 2018 ACR template (and corresponding drafting guidance) has enabled significant strides towards improved presentation of capacity strengthening results at country office level. The revised corporate results framework (CRF) – approved in November 2018 by the Executive Board – has further enhanced the reporting.

The CCS Theory of Change (ToC) and the CRF review process allowed for the introduction of a new set of corporate outcome and output indicators for CCS. These enable WFP to reflect better the wide range of CCS areas of engagement and short- to medium- and long-term results. Technical guidance and webinars to explain usage of these new indicators have been developed and are available to colleagues across WFP.

***Rec 5 – Ensure that internal and external communications reflect capacity strengthening as a core organisational function***

<b><i>Are the actions defined in the management response relevant to the recommendation?</i></b>	Management has partially agreed to the recommendation and did not fully address the recommendation. Disagreement related to the strong integrative function of the IRM.
<b><i>Have the actions of the management response been implemented?</i></b>	A communication plan developed by the Communications, Advocacy and Marketing Division (CAM) fully supported integration, but changes to the communication strategy became apparent again after Partnerships and Advocacy Department (AED PA)'s strategic shift towards resource mobilization and WFP's positioning.

Management did not fully agree to the recommendation that refers to capacity strengthening as a core organisational function in all contexts. Management explains that it is not in disagreement with the substance of the recommendation, however there is a more effective way of implementing the recommendation by integrating capacity strengthening into the broader IRM focus and IRM message.

At the time of the evaluation, the Communications, Advocacy and Marketing Division (CAM) was much involved in supporting the IRM and the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021). At the end of 2018, CAM developed and implemented a communications plan to support the roll-out of the IRM which contributed to the organizational change process. This had a strong buy-in from the organization according to one informant. With the change of the Assistant Executive Director PA, the strategy shifted and with that shift CAM was given different expectations, more closely related to resource mobilization and positioning. This took “the wind out of the sails”, meaning that the initial plans were not necessarily realized anymore.

Currently, the communications strategy for both internal and external audiences is being refined. It is in line with the new CCS Strategy that is being developed alongside the new Strategic Plan (2022–2026). In the meantime, PRO continues using WFP internal and external communication platforms to disseminate information about the CCS approach and the organization’s achievements in capacity strengthening. Most recently, PRO has established an interactive Teams channel for CCS and South–South Triangular Cooperation to support country office operational responses to the Covid-19 crisis.

## Rec 6 – Update or renew policy upon IRM completion

**Are the actions defined in the management response relevant to the recommendation?**

The management response is relevant to the recommendation.

**Have the actions of the management response been implemented?**

Given the initial timeframe set for the action, the renewal of the CCS policy is overdue.

The new policy on CCS was initially envisaged to be presented to the Executive Board in 2018, as a follow-up action to the evaluation and audit findings. It was postponed to align better with the numerous IRM-oriented policy updates planned across the board. A new CCS policy will be developed in 2021 and will inform the implementation of WFP's new Strategic Plan from 2022.

## Conclusions

Over time, the organization has responded to the spirit of the recommendations – although not to the letter. Progress has been made in internal mainstreaming of capacity strengthening capabilities and monitoring, supported by the set-up of the CCS Unit and the development of guiding materials.

Regarding the action planning and implementation in response to the recommendations, detailed actions would have helped to direct and hasten follow-up processes. The partial agreement by management to some of the sub-recommendations, together with limited relevance and limited actionability of some actions, clouded clear guidance for follow-up on some of the sub-recommendations.

Nevertheless, concrete actions were identified and accomplished by the action-owner(s), even more than stated in the management responses.

The management responses and formulated actions sometimes refer to another recommendation. For consistency in implementation and allocation of responsibility for tasks, this should be avoided in future.



# Annexes

## ANNEX 1: Recommendations and Actions

Recommendation	Action by	Management response / Actions	Priority Closure date Status*	Assessment of progress
<b>Recommendation 1: WFP should immediately elevate the organizational attention to capacity strengthening as a core function by creating a temporary, multi-stakeholder management transition team.</b>		<b>Partially agreed</b>		<b>Implemented</b>
<p>The multi-stakeholder management transition team will:</p> <p>a) articulate WFP’s vision and strategy for capacity strengthening in line with the Integrated Road Map (IRM) for 2017–2021, including conceptual and operational definitions for capacity strengthening as an issue to be mainstreamed in Strategic Objectives 1 to 3, as a programmatic focus in Strategic Objective 4, and as a transfer modality in the new Financial Framework;</p> <p>b) define the staff roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for capacity strengthening as a functional responsibility and as mainstreamed into other programming areas;</p> <p>c) review, revise and create practical tools and guidance for WFP’s capacity strengthening</p>	<p>Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division (PRO)</p>	<p>While the multiple resourcing needs associated with the IRM preclude the creation of a specific management transition team, WFP will ascribe roles, responsibilities and accountabilities in supporting capacity strengthening across functions, divisions and departments. WFP will continue to adapt tools, guidance and best practice to support WFP country offices with the formulation and implementation of CSPs. These tools include guidance on creating synergies in WFP’s capacity strengthening between government entities and civil society, reflecting the “whole of society” approach of WFP’s country strategic planning process.</p>	<p>Not applicable December 2020 Implemented</p>	<p>A CCS Unit and a special Task Force (CCS-TF) have been established and are functional. The management response also alludes to the development of guidance and tools, which in fact are covered by the second recommendation.</p>

Recommendation	Action by	Management response / Actions	Priority Closure date Status*	Assessment of progress
work in the context of its policy on country strategic plans (CSPs), including in humanitarian response; and d) remain in place until the roll-out of the CSP approach is complete.				
<b>Recommendation 2: In implementing the IRM – specifically the policy on CSPs – WFP should ensure that country offices are provided with relevant, concrete and practical tools and guidance on capacity strengthening within 12 months.</b>		<b>Agreed</b>		<b>Partially implemented</b>
This guidance should: a) be based on good practice drawn from WFP’s own experience and that of other United Nations agencies; b) be applicable in contexts along the humanitarian– development–peacebuilding nexus; and c) integrate criteria or conditions whereby WFP support may no longer be required – including transition and exit plans – into the country strategic planning process.	PRO	Guidance will include the criteria and conditions for WFP support to transition to the strengthening of countries’ capacities, with clear objectives and outcomes for interventions.	Not applicable December 2020 Implemented	While the recommendation is considered useful, the management response could be more specific in its prescribed actions. CCS work nevertheless took up the challenge and responded with the development of many good guiding materials. Implicitly they address guidance in relation to the humanitarian–development–peacebuilding nexus. Links to criteria or conditions whereby WFP support may no longer be required – including transition and exit plans could not be discerned from the materials. However, WFP does not see transition or exit as the only endpoint, or means, of a

Recommendation	Action by	Management response / Actions	Priority Closure date Status*	Assessment of progress
				capacity strengthening intervention, and the CCS framework and guidance are designed accordingly to reflect this.
<b>Recommendation 3: WFP should further enhance its internal capability to support effectively national capacity strengthening processes within 12 months. This should be done by:</b>				<b>Partially implemented</b>
a) updating its People Strategy to include capacity strengthening as a functional capability;	HR	<b>Agreed</b> The People Strategy will be revised to reflect critical capacity development functions and commitments.	Not applicable December 2020 Implemented	The People Strategy was not updated to include capacity strengthening as a functional capability. Instead, the People Policy was developed and recently approved by the Executive Board. However, the People Policy rather sets out the vision of the future WFP workforce required to save and change lives. It refers to organizational processes such as strategic workforce planning that reinforce capacity strengthening as a functional capability.
b) developing incentives for capacity strengthening work in staff performance assessments;	HR	<b>Agreed</b> Guidance will be developed to facilitate the inclusion of capacity development skills, capabilities and functions in the staff Performance and Competency Enhancement (PACE) process.	Not applicable December 2020 Implemented	Creating additional opportunities in terms of career advancement is seen as a functional responsibility, which is being carried out. Functions are responsible to prioritize the most

Recommendation	Action by	Management response / Actions	Priority Closure date Status*	Assessment of progress
				important skills for their own accountability and capability frameworks, and these are then assessed in PACE.
c) designating a capacity strengthening focal point with clearly defined responsibilities and accountabilities in each regional bureau and country office; and	HR	<b>Partially agreed</b> Recommendations for appropriate staff roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for the capacity strengthening function will be proposed to each regional bureau and country office, taking resourcing levels and current portfolios into account.	Not applicable December 2020 Implemented	Terms of Reference (ToR) for regional and country office CCS posts have been drafted. The capabilities of staff to carry out capacity strengthening in functional areas in country offices and regional bureaux have been strengthened through training. The review did not capture evidence on the actual designation of capacity strengthening focal points in regional bureaux and country offices. Human Resources Division (HRM) supported the implementation of this action, but much of this responsibility ultimately lies with the relevant functional area.
d) accelerating the creation of a roster of capacity development experts in relevant thematic and geographic areas.	HR	<b>Agreed</b> A roster is being developed as part of the Technical Experts Network.	Not applicable December 2020 Implemented	HRM is not involved in a staffing roster nor in a Technical Experts Network. Roster creation is a function lead, not HR.

Recommendation	Action by	Management response / Actions	Priority Closure date Status*	Assessment of progress
<b>Recommendation 4: Strengthen monitoring and reporting on all WFP capacity strengthening work.</b>		<b>Agreed</b>		<b>Implemented</b>
WFP should continue to strengthen its provisions for monitoring and reporting on all capacity strengthening work within 12 months by expanding the quantitative and qualitative information required in Standard Project Reports (SPRs) and trust fund reporting, including illustrative, qualitative studies covering the contexts for both CSPs and interim CSPs.	Corporate Planning and Performance Division - Monitoring and Evaluation Liaison (CPP – CPPM)	Work is continuing alongside the roll-out of the CSP/interim CSP process. Templates for and guidance on SPRs have been reviewed to reflect capacity development interventions and results more clearly. Ongoing knowledge management initiatives aim to improve reporting on WFP's engagement in capacity development through lessons learned and case studies. Funding permitting, these initiatives will continue.	Not applicable December 2020 Implemented	Management agreed with the recommendation but did not spell out clear actions. However, implemented actions directly followed-up on the recommendation and have made up for this as indicators for CCS were developed and disseminated.
<b>Recommendation 5: Ensure that internal and external communications reflect and support WFP's strategic vision for capacity strengthening.</b>		<b>Partially agreed</b>		<b>Implemented</b>
Within six months, WFP should ensure that its internal and external communications reflect and support its strategic vision for capacity strengthening, including by presenting capacity development as one of WFP's core organizational functions in all contexts.	Communications, Advocacy and Marketing Division (CAM)	A communications plan is being developed for the WFP Strategic Plan and the IRM. Messages on country capacity strengthening will be developed and disseminated in the broader context of the WFP-wide communications plan.	Not applicable December 2020 Implemented	The actions have been completed: a communications plan on capacity strengthening has been developed for the IRM and the current implemented Strategic Plan, and information has been disseminated. Currently, the communications strategy for both internal and external audience is being refined. It is in line with the new

Recommendation	Action by	Management response / Actions	Priority Closure date Status*	Assessment of progress
				CCS Strategy that is being developed alongside the new Strategic Plan (2022–2026).
<b>Recommendation 6: The 2009 policy update should remain in force until all elements of the IRM are in place.</b>		<b>Agreed</b>		<b>Implemented</b>
WFP should then either revise the policy update or develop a new policy to articulate its strategic approach. The policy should be accompanied by dissemination tools that align with and support implementation of the Strategic Plan (2017–2021).	PRO	Management will determine whether to update the current policy or develop a new one when all of these evaluation recommendations have been implemented and the implementation of CSPs and interim CSPs has been assessed.	Not applicable December 2020 Implemented	A new CCS Policy, which has been on the roll for some time, will now be developed in 2021 and will inform the implementation of WFP’s new Strategic Plan from 2022.

\* According to R2 Database 29/03/2021

## Annex 2. Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACR	Annual country report
CAM	Communications, Advocacy and Marketing Division
CCS	Country capacity strengthening
CCS-TF	Country Capacity Strengthening Task Force
CPP	Corporate Planning and Performance Division
CPPM	Monitoring and Evaluation Liaison
CRF	Corporate Results Framework
IRM	Integrated Road Map
HRM	Human Resources Division
IRM	Integrated Road Map
PACE	Performance and Competency Enhancement
PRO	Programme - Humanitarian and Development Division
SPR	Standard project reports
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference

## Annex 3. Persons Interviewed

Aitor Maguna	Chief, Career Management, Human Resource Division
Corinne Woods	Director, Communications, Advocacy and Marketing Division
Deborah McWhinney	Evaluation Manager, Office of Evaluation
Maria Lukyanova	Head of Office Tunisia and Morocco, PROT Tech Assist and Country Cap Strength Services

# Annex 4. Documents consulted

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"Management Response to the Recommendations of the Summary Evaluation Report of WFP Policy on Capacity Development" (WFP/EB.1/2017/6-A/Add.1).

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