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

Synthesis report

OEV/2020/068

May 2022

WFP
World Food Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

Background

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 Before publishing the report, OEV complemented *hera's* analysis by updating outdated information based on comments and inputs received from WFP staff/action owners in January 2022.

Acknowledgements

The review team would like to thank all those who contributed to this review. We are grateful to staff and management from WFP headquarters and regional bureaux, in particular, the designated focal points for the ten evaluations, the evaluation managers, key informants and other stakeholders consulted. Special thanks go to the WFP Office of Evaluation for its overall guidance.

Disclaimer

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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1. Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.   The use of evaluations is high on the agenda of WFP's evaluation function, prompting the commissioning of this review of the implementation of recommendations from global evaluations. The review covers global evaluations that were published between 2016 and 30 June 2020.

2.   In 2016 the Executive Board approved the WFP evaluation policy for 2016–2021,[1] which is based on norms, standards and guidance issued by the United Nations Evaluation Group. All evaluations are subject to WFP's evaluation quality assurance system and to independent post hoc quality assessment. Based on the evaluation quality assurance system, the formulation of recommendations for centralized evaluations is guided by a technical note[2] issued by the Office of Evaluation (OEV).

3.   The Corporate Planning and Performance Division coordinates the compilation and finalization of the management response matrix for centralized evaluations.[3] The Corporate Planning and Performance Division reports to the Executive Board on management's follow-up to centralized and decentralized evaluation recommendations and, for centralized evaluations, is responsible for tracking actions and responses in order to determine their implementation status. The process for responding to evaluation recommendations, including roles and responsibilities, has recently been revised in WFP's risk and recommendation tracking tool, R2, which was launched in January 2021. The Corporate Planning and Performance Division has also revamped its annual report to the Board on recommendation follow-up and created a dashboard that allows all staff to obtain live updates on the status of implementation of any evaluation recommendation.

1.2 OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

4.   In accordance with its terms of reference, this review aims to promote the use of evaluation evidence for learning and accountability purposes throughout WFP and to highlight areas where further action is recommended in order to maximize WFP's achievement of its mission. It is also expected to serve as a learning instrument for OEV that could help improve the formulation of evaluation recommendations.

5.   Seven policy evaluations and three strategy evaluations were included in the review.

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[1] "Evaluation Policy (2016–2021)" (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-A/Rev.1).

[2] WFP Office of Evaluation. 2020. *Technical Note: Quality of Evaluation Recommendations*.

[3] WFP. 2018. *Standard operating procedures for management responses to centralized evaluations*.

Seven policy evaluations and three strategy evaluations were included in the review. TABLE 1: EVALUATIONS INCLUDED IN THE REVIEW		
#	Category	Title and year of the evaluation report
1.	Strategic	_Strategic Evaluation of Funding WFP's Work_, 2020
2.	Policy	_Evaluation of the Gender Policy (2015–2020)_, 2020
3.	Policy	_Evaluation of the WFP People Strategy (2014–2017)_, 2020
4.	Policy	_Evaluation of the Update of WFP's Safety Nets Policy_, 2019
5.	Strategic	_Strategic Evaluation of WFP Support for Enhanced Resilience_, 2019
6.	Strategic	_Strategic Evaluation of the Pilot Country Strategic Plans_, 2018
7.	Policy	_Evaluation of the WFP Humanitarian Protection Policy_, 2018
8.	Policy	_Evaluation of WFP Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access in Humanitarian Contexts_, 2018
9.	Policy	_Policy Evaluation: WFP Corporate Partnership Strategy (2014–2017)_, 2017
10.	Policy	_Policy Evaluation: WFP Policy on Capacity Development: An Update on Implementation (2009)_, 2017

6.   The main outputs of the review are ten individual reports on the recommendations and management responses of each of the evaluations in addition to this synthesis report, which analyses the findings and lessons generated by each of the ten reviews. It is intended to strengthen accountability to the Executive Board by highlighting areas of strategic importance where there are gaps in the implementation of recommendations. It also offers feedback that can be used to improve the guidance provided to evaluation teams about the formulation of recommendations based on the experience emerging from global evaluations over the past five years.

1.3 METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

7.   The findings are based on a systematic content analysis of internal documents and the transcripts of key informant interviews with WFP managers and staff responsible for the implementation of actions agreed in response to recommendations. This primarily qualitative methodology was augmented with semi-quantitative methods such as the scoring of the actionability of agreed actions in management responses and the tabulation of progress made in implementing agreed actions.

8.   The main limitation of this methodology is the exclusive use of internal data. Information about implementation progress, for instance, was only collected in interviews and R2 action updates from stakeholders who were themselves responsible for implementation. The inherent bias in this approach could not be avoided. It was, to some extent, mitigated by the collection of documented evidence of progress such as strategies, frameworks and guidelines that had been developed.

9.   Some of the results reported by focal points could be validated through interviews with senior management staff covering the thematic areas of most evaluations; written feedback on the draft report on each evaluation review from WFP management and OEV evaluation managers provided additional validation. The draft synthesis report was also presented and discussed at a stakeholder workshop.

2. Synthesis findings

2.1 LEVEL OF AGREEMENT WITH THE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS AND RELEVANCE OF PLANNED ACTIONS FOR ADDRESSING THEM

2.1.1 Agreement with recommendations

- Key findings

F1 – Management agreed or partially agreed with all 65 recommendations of the ten evaluations. The high level of agreement is due to high levels of staff engagement during formulation, OEV's close involvement in that process and a perception among staff, based on experience with audits, that disagreeing with a recommendation can involve complex processes.

F2 – The reasons that there was only partial agreement with 11 recommendations of six evaluations were that the recommendations did not match WFP's policies or pragmatic nature; did not consider financial or human resource constraints; or went beyond the action needed to address the acknowledged findings.

10.   Management agreed with the 65 recommendations resulting from the 10 evaluations but only partially agreed with 11 recommendations in six evaluations. In three of these evaluations[4] partial agreement was indicated at the level of main recommendations and only the narrative response provided information about which part of the recommendation, or which sub-recommendation, management disagreed with. In the remaining three,[5] agreement or partial agreement was signalled in bulleted responses to sub-recommendations, although in these cases partial agreement with a sub-recommendation could also mean a *de facto* disagreement.

TABLE 2: LEVEL OF MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT WITH EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS			
Evaluation of …	**Recommendations**		
	Total	**Agreed**	**Partially**
• **Policy on capacity development (2017)**	6	3	3
• **Corporate partnership strategy (2017)**	6	4	2
• **Policies on humanitarian principles and access (2018)**	8	5	3
• **Humanitarian protection policy (2018)**	6	5	1
• **Pilot country strategic plans (2018)**	5	4	1
• **Support for enhanced resilience (2019)**	7	6	1
• **Safety nets policy (2019)**	5	5	0
• **People strategy (2014–2017) (2020)**	6	6	0
• **Gender policy (2020)**	8	8	0
• **Funding of WFP's work (2020)**	8	8	0
• **Total**	**65**	**54**	**11**

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[4] On partnerships, the humanitarian principles and humanitarian protection policy.

[5] On capacity development, pilot country strategic plans and resilience.

11.	In interviews with senior managers, the high level of management agreement with recommendations – which amounted to 83 percent of all recommendations and most sub-recommendations of the remaining 17 percent – was explained by three factors: WFP staff and evaluation teams were engaged in consultations during the evaluations and the formulation of recommendations; the process of formulating the recommendations was closely managed by OEV, possibly too closely; and managers might have been reluctant to disagreement explicitly because of experience with the complex processes that are triggered by disagreement with audit findings.

12.	The sub-recommendations to which management only partially agreed, or in some cases *de facto* disagreed, were in all cases recommendations that involved actions with implications for timing, funding or other practical aspects of implementation, as opposed to strategic approach. Thus, they were not fully agreed to because of the following:

   i)	**The recommended action contradicted WFP policies**. For example, the evaluation of WFP's policies on humanitarian principles and access recommended that WFP should rely more strongly on its own transport assets in environments where there are risks of non-compliance with humanitarian principles. Management responded that WFP pursued a policy of relying on the local economy and capacity for its transport operations.

   ii)	**The recommended action did not sufficiently consider financial and human resource constraints.** For example, the evaluation of the policy on capacity development recommended the designation of a focal point for capacity strengthening for each country office and regional bureau. Management replied that efforts to enhance the capacity strengthening function in country offices and regional bureaux needed to take resourcing levels and current portfolios into account. Another example concerns the recommendation that partnership action plans be made mandatory components of country strategic plans (CSPs). While management embraced partnerships, it wanted to avoid a top-down approach that risked overburdening regional and country offices.

   iii)	**The recommendation went too far in addressing an acknowledged finding.** For example, the evaluation of the humanitarian protection policy recommended a revision of the information management system in order to strengthen WFP's analysis of contexts and protection issues. Management agreed that the analysis required improvement but argued that this could be achieved by strengthening current systems rather than revising them.

   iv)	**The recommendation did not match the pragmatic nature of the organization.** For example, the evaluation of the corporate partnership strategy recommended that management revise existing partnership agreements. Management argued that this was not needed because it was preferable to formalize partnerships on an as-needed basis in order to remain flexible and cost-efficient.

2.1.2 Management response: relevance and actionability

Key findings

F3 – The actionability of the management response actions, including their relevance, measurability, assignability and time boundness, varied among evaluations. According to the scoring system applied by this review, the management responses for five of the ten evaluations met the full criteria for actionability. Management responses most frequently scored low when instead of defining an action they described current WFP practice or did not fully address the recommendation.

13.   This section assesses the extent to which WFP management adequately addresses the recommendations and the extent to which a management response can be considered actionable. Most evaluations formulated detailed actionable recommendations supported with evidence-based findings. Implementers considered them useful and followed them in planning, prioritizing and developing responsive actions. However, this relevance and actionability was sometimes lost in the agreed actions of the management response, which therefore did not contribute much to guiding implementation.

14.   The relevance of a management response denotes the extent to which it addresses or is aligned with the recommendation. For example, the review team asked whether all elements of the recommendation were included in the management response and, if not, whether the response explained any omission. Relevance is reflected in the parameter "specificity" in the actionability score (see below). Some management responses addressed recommendations without defining actions, while others defined actions that did not fully or directly address the recommendations. In some cases, the responses raised the question of whether management actually agreed with the recommendations.

15.   Several action statements in management responses were descriptions of what WFP was doing or had already done to address issues raised in the recommendation rather than agreements on actions to be taken. While useful for clarification, they did not constitute actionable responses. They were, nevertheless, entered into the R2 tracking system so that their implementation could be monitored.

16.   Each of the 135 pairs of recommendations and responsive actions was independently reviewed by two team members and scored for the actionability of the response according to four weighted criteria:[6]

   i)   Specificity: Does the response define actions that adequately address the recommendation? (weight: 50 percent)

   ii) Measurability: Can the results of the actions be verified? (weight: 15 percent)

   iii) Assignability: Is the responsibility for implementing the actions clearly assigned? (weight: 25 percent)

   iv) Time boundness: Do actions have a clear timeline for implementation? (weight: 10 percent)

17.   A maximum score of 4 was assigned if the response surpassed the criterion and a score of 3 if it fully met the criterion. The weighted averages achieved by each action statement were averaged across all management responses of each evaluation and converted into percentages whereby an average of 3 (75 percent of the maximum score) indicated that management had responded to the evaluation with responses that were, on average, fully actionable. Higher scores indicated that the responses surpassed expectations.

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[6] Because the assessment was based on Executive Board documents, the total number of actions identified was not identical to the number of actions listed in the R2 tracking system.

TABLE 3: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE ACTIONABILITY SCORES		
Evaluation	**Number of actions scored**	**Mean actionability score**
Corporate partnership strategy (2017)	4	84%
Safety nets policy (2019)	5	96%
Humanitarian protection policy (2018)	5	79%
Funding of WFP's work (2020)	26	76%
Gender policy (2020)	30	76%
Pilot country strategic plans (2018)	26	70%
Support for enhanced resilience (2019)	21	63%
People strategy (2014–2017) (2020)	6	63%
Policies on humanitarian principles and access (2018)	6	61%
Policy on capacity development (2017)	6	59%
Average of averages		**72%**

18.　According to this scoring system, the management responses for five evaluations met or surpassed the full criteria for actionability. Overall, the management responses to the recommendations of the ten evaluations grouped around the target score for actionability of 75 percent (mean score of 3) and were moderately skewed towards those that did not quite reach it.

Figure 1: Distribution of average management response actionability scores by evaluation around 75 percent target
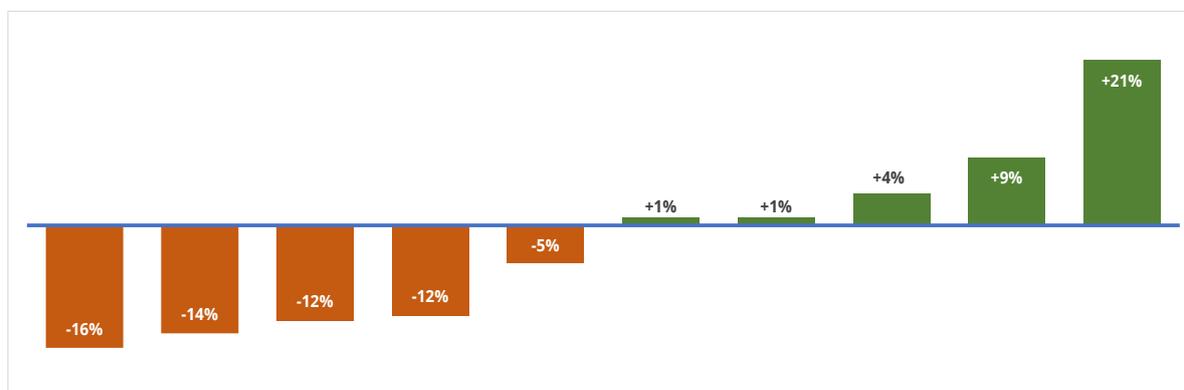
19.　Management response statements most frequently scored low in terms of actionability when, rather than defining an action, they described current WFP practice. Some management response statements scored low on actionability because they were themselves formulated as recommendations and not as actions.

2.2 LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS, RESULTS AND PERCEIVED UTILITY

Key findings

F4 – Among actions that had been closed in R2, full implementation could not be confirmed for about one third although progress and partial implementation was noted for most. The level of implementation of recently formulated actions was low.

F5 – All interviewed implementation focal points confirmed that the findings and recommendations of the evaluations were useful in guiding their work or making it more visible within WFP. Several stated that they used the recommendations rather than the management responses to guide their actions.

F6 – The methodology of the assessment could not generate objectively verifiable findings of the results achieved because the primary source of data was the information provided by those who were in charge of implementing the actions.

2.2.1 Progress on actions

20.   The review team examined progress in the implementation of 156 actions listed in R2. This is not the same as assessing the level of implementation of recommendations because some management responses did not fully agree with or fully address the recommendation (see section 2.1). Among the 156 actions in R2, 99 (63 percent) were marked as "implemented" and 57 were classed as "ongoing" or "open".

- Only 61 of the 99 actions marked as implemented in R2 were confirmed in interviews as having been fully implemented; 23 of them were described as partially implemented.

- Among the 57 actions marked as ongoing or open in R2, 45 (79 percent) were actions formulated in response to the four most recent evaluations, which were published in 2019 and 2020.[7]

21.   Progress on actions, as assessed by the review team, is presented in table 4.

TABLE 4: PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION AGAINST R2 STATUS REPORTS											
	Funding	Humanitarian principles	Humanitarian protection	People strategy	Pilot CSPs	Partnership strategy	Gender	Capacity development	Safety nets	Resilience	Total
Action implemented (R2)	12	20	6	2	33	6	0	6	1	13	99
Implemented	8	8	2	1	24	4		4	1	9	61
Partially implemented*	4	5	4	1	3	1		2		3	23
Ongoing action*		3			2						5
Not implemented					2	1					3
No longer relevant					2						2
Could not be assessed		4								1	5

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[7] On gender, funding, the people strategy and safety nets.

TABLE 4: PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION AGAINST R2 STATUS REPORTS	Funding	Humanitarian principles	Humanitarian protection	People strategy	Pilot CSPs	Partnership strategy	Gender	Capacity development	Safety nets	Resilience	Total
Action open or ongoing (R2)	**13**	**5**	**0**	**7**	**1**	**0**	**21**	**0**	**4**	**6**	**57**
Ongoing/progress noted	13	3		2	1		1				20
Implemented		1		2			4			4	11
Partially implemented				2			8		4	1	15
Not implemented/ not started				1			6			1	8
Could not be assessed		1					2				3
Total actions	**25**	**25**	**6**	**9**	**34**	**6**	**21**	**6**	**5**	**19**	**156**

* Partially implemented actions are those for which completion can be clearly defined (e.g. the adoption of a new policy) but which have not yet been completed. Ongoing actions relate to processes that are implemented over a long period of time (e.g., the alignment of CSPs with United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework cycles) and that are in the process of being implemented but for which it is not possible to specify a date of completion.

22.   It is not entirely clear why almost one third of actions marked as closed in R2 (version of March 2021) had not been fully implemented by November 2021.[8] In interviews, two main reasons were given for the failure to complete actions within the timeframe and the ending of implementation monitoring, including prematurely:

- The action described an ongoing management process rather than a distinct action. This may primarily be an issue of how the action was formulated.

- The recommendations and the agreed actions in the management responses were not properly sequenced. Some actions could only be initiated after others were completed.

23.   Progress related to some recommendations could not be assessed in interviews with stakeholders because the management responses were not sufficiently actionable.

2.2.2   Results and perceived utility

24.   Overall, the stakeholders who were leading management response implementation stated that the findings and recommendations, and to a lesser extent the management responses themselves, were very useful either for guiding their actions – for instance in the development of new policies – or for generating Board support for actions that were already being taken. Examples cited were the evaluations of WFP's safety nets policy and the pilot CSPs, where programming had already advanced beyond the recommended actions but the evaluation findings and recommendations nonetheless provided assurance that the implementation of the Integrated Road Map was on the right course.

25.   Most stakeholders of other units or departments who were named as responsible for implementing associated actions – for instance fundraising, training or recruiting staff to support the

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[8] In its comments on the draft summary evaluation report, the Corporate Planning and Performance Division noted that the accuracy of implementation data should improve thanks to the introduction of the R2 system, clearer management accountabilities for action approval and more detailed guidance, including on various closure statuses.

implementation of a thematic recommendation – had little recollection of recommendations and were less likely to consider them useful. In part this was also explained by staff mobility: many of those interviewed had taken up their posts after the relevant evaluations were published and the management responses formulated.

26.   Several respondents described the perceived results of implementing the recommendations. They included making WFP programmes more people centred and more firmly grounded in humanitarian principles; the increased mainstreaming of partnership principles; and the diversification of funding through organizational change. Results reported by those in charge of implementing actions are, however, not sufficient evidence for a robust assessment; assessing the results of the actions taken is therefore largely beyond the scope of this assessment.

2.3 FACTORS THAT ENABLE OR HINDER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Key findings

F7 – Factors that enabled the implementation of recommendations include the overall flexibility of WFP, focused leadership on specific themes and commitment and collaboration across organizational entities. In addition, the quality of evaluations and recommendations that reinforce policies and ongoing processes help push activities forward.

F8 – Factors that hinder the implementation of recommendations are in large part related to human and financial resource constraints. These include limited availability of funds as a result of earmarking, short-term contributions and low donor appetite for funding staffing costs; and a lack of transparency and communication related to corporate prioritization and allocation decisions.

F9 – Recommendations from thematic evaluations on staffing, funding and other themes can be multiple and compartmentalized, lacking the necessary corporate perspective that takes into account competing priorities, the larger strategic and programmatic context and the financing model of the organization. This hinders implementation because it results in recommendations not being implemented to the extent indicated in management responses.

F10 – Also observed as factors hindering the implementation of recommendations are changes in roles, responsibilities and action ownership, including a lack of clarity therein, in relation to the need for better integration, coordination, workforce planning and accountability for the implementation of overarching programmes that span departments and divisions.
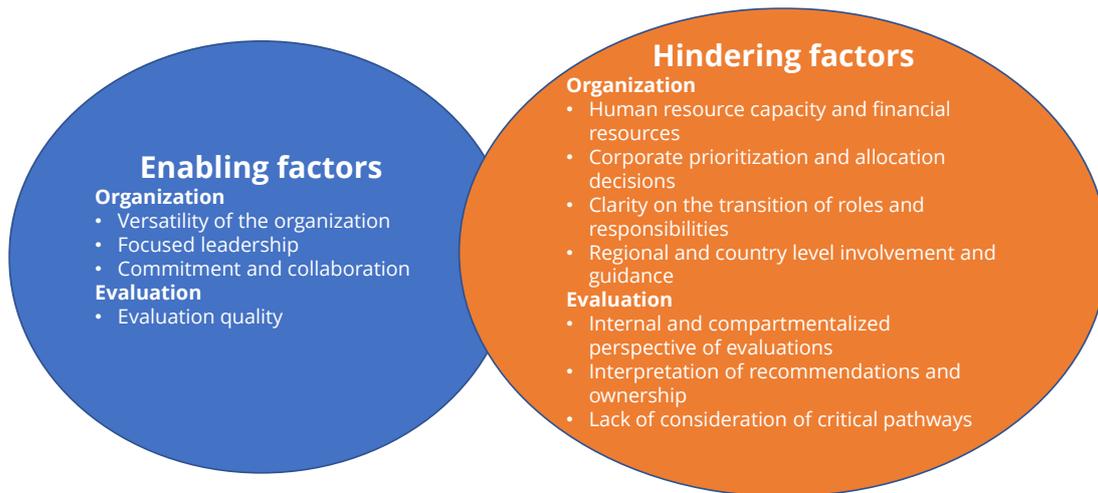
F11 – Country and regional level follow-up remain challenging when country offices and regional bureaux do not feel that they own the actions promised in management responses and are not involved in the formulation of recommendations and management responses, as noted in two of the reviews conducted.

F12 – Implementation of evaluation recommendations is sometimes affected by the understanding and interpretation of the recommendations by management, the response process and a lack of ownership of management responses.

F13 – Implementation can also be hindered by insufficient attention to critical pathways of actions.

27.   The list of enabling and hindering factors is not exhaustive, and there may be other specific and unique reasons for the failure to fully implement an action promised in a management response.

Figure 2: Common enabling and hindering factors

Enabling factors
Organization
- Versatility of the organization
- Focused leadership
- Commitment and collaboration
Evaluation
- Evaluation quality

Hindering factors
Organization
- Human resource capacity and financial resources
- Corporate prioritization and allocation decisions
- Clarity on the transition of roles and responsibilities
- Regional and country level involvement and guidance
Evaluation
- Internal and compartmentalized perspective of evaluations
- Interpretation of recommendations and ownership
- Lack of consideration of critical pathways

2.3.1 Common enabling factors

28.   **Versatility of the organization:** The flexibility and versatility of WFP and the voluntary nature of its funding motivate staff. The organization's agile approach in emergency responses "seeps through everything else we do" and creates a "can do" mentality.

29.   **Leadership:** The importance of focused leadership in the implementation of evaluation recommendations was underlined by several informants, particularly in the context of two of the reviewed evaluations.[9] Although the importance of partnerships has been clear for more than a decade, interviewees valued efforts to anchor the partnership function within the organization and mainstream a partnership mindset, describing the recommendations as useful strategic guides for implementation. Other informants highlighted the recommendation to invest in the bottom up strategic budgeting exercise, which has resulted in better transparency and accountability for WFP in its resource allocation.

30.   The **commitment and collaboration** of departments, divisions and units either directly or through overarching committees or working groups have facilitated implementation. Examples include the collaboration between the Programme Cycle Management Unit and the Gender Office on the mainstreaming of gender in CSP guidance; the cooperation between functional areas facilitated by the interdivisional steering committee on resilience and the team dedicated to implementing the related recommendations; and the development of the WFP strategy on support for social protection, which was possible thanks to strong commitment by the Social Protection Unit, high-level interest from various parts of WFP and strong demand from regional bureaux for an operational strategy.

31.   **Evaluation quality and reinforcement of recommendations:** The quality and credibility of the evaluation team are enabling factors for good management responses and their effective follow-up. The evaluation function's approach to stakeholder involvement and interaction with the evaluation manager during the formulation of recommendations contributed to ownership of the recommendations and their follow-up.

2.3.2 Common hindering factors

32.   **Human resource capacity and financial resource limitations** are the main factors constraining the implementation of recommendations. Management describes the limited availability of funding, which is also often earmarked and short term, and limited donor appetite for funding staffing costs as having an impact on the implementation of recommendations by limiting the deployment of the necessary workforce or the allocation of funds needed for non-emergency programmes.

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[9] Evaluations on the corporate partnership strategy and the funding of WFP's work.

33.   **Corporate prioritization and internal competition for allocations:** Given WFP's funding model, all activities would ideally be included in a prioritization process to increase transparency and improve performance monitoring and accountability. However, the prioritization procedures in place have tended to result in unpredictable and confusing resource allocations for units and divisions. The bottom up strategic budgeting exercise is currently being tested as a tool for strengthening the prioritization process and increasing transparency and is expected to address some of these challenges.[10]

34.   **Internal and compartmentalized perspective of evaluations:** Thematic evaluations often have an inward focus and generate recommendations that are not sufficiently oriented towards WFP's corporate strategy and its many competing priorities; as a result they are sometimes not implemented to the level initially agreed upon. This applies to recommendations related to staff capacity and staffing levels and to competing funding priorities and the overall structure of available funds. For example, WFP has been working on funding diversification for more than ten years but is only now starting to achieve traction because more attention is being directed outwards, with WFP analysing the policies and priorities of individual donors and targeting its fundraising efforts accordingly.

35.   **Lack of clarity on changes in roles and responsibilities:** Changes in roles and responsibilities are natural in a dynamic organization but a lack of clarity in this area has affected the implementation of recommendations and actions. The review noted that changes in the ownership of actions and a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities for cross-cutting programmatic implementation across departments and divisions need to be addressed by strengthening integration, coordination, workforce planning and accountability. For example, cross-functional coordination and coherence were noted as a challenge in the implementation of recommendations from the evaluations on humanitarian protection, gender and the humanitarian principles.[11]

36.   **Regional and country-level involvement and guidance:** The increased focus in recent years on delivering results in-country[12] calls for optimal guidance and participation at the country and regional levels. The reviews of the evaluations on resilience and safety nets uncovered good examples of regional and country-level involvement. However, follow-up remains a challenge when country offices and regional bureaux do not take ownership of the implementation of recommendations and when current staff were not involved in the formulation of recommendations and management responses. In addition, limited capacity at the country level to analyse gender issues also affects the commitment to increased gender-sensitive programming.

37.   **Interpretation of recommendations:** The formulation of recommendations differed among the 10 reviewed evaluations and can influence the formulation of a management response and its implementation:

- The number of recommendations in each evaluation varied between six and nine, all of them strategic. Several of the evaluations broke these recommendations down into sub- and sub-sub-recommendations, many of them highly operational such as a recommendation to "keep staff workloads within acceptable limits" presented in the evaluation of the pilot CSPs.

- In some cases, management only responded to the high-level strategic recommendations; in others, management responded to each sub-sub-recommendation with a commitment to a distinct action for each.

- It is not always clear whether operational sub-recommendations are primarily illustrative of the strategic recommendation or whether they are themselves recommendations of actions to be taken; this causes confusion when it comes to implementation.

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[10] "WFP management plan (2022–2024)" (WFP/EB.2/2021/5-A/1/Rev.1).

[11] Other examples relate to discrepancies between the assignment of responsibility for action in a management response and R2 and the person actually responsible for implementation.

[12] See Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network. 2019. *World Food Programme (WFP) 2017–18 Performance Assessment.*

- In several instances, units were given the responsibility for implementing an action that was beyond their remit.

38. **Ownership of the management response:** The review of some evaluations indicated a lack of ownership of the commitments by management in response to recommendations as a hindering factor; this was not seen among the focal points in the unit leading the evaluations but among action owners in units that had no direct technical involvement in the thematic areas of the evaluations. There was apparently very wide engagement in discussions of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of evaluations; however, less time was given to formulating the management response in a participatory manner and with the involvement of future action owners. In addition, in some cases the managers and technical staff who had participated in consultative workshops had changed roles and the interviewed stakeholders had little recollection of any commitments to action made by their functional unit.

39. **Consideration of interdependencies:** Finally, an issue that hindered the timely implementation of agreed actions in response to several evaluations was insufficient attention to interdependent actions that could only be implemented after other actions had been completed and that therefore required later deadlines. The review identified deadlines for actions in various management responses that were unrealistic in this respect.

2.4 KEY THEMES OF STRATEGIC RELEVANCE THAT REQUIRE FURTHER ACTION

Key findings

F14 – The 65 recommendations of the 10 evaluations addressed 18 cross-cutting themes of strategic importance. The themes most frequently addressed were funding and human resources. As some actions remain outstanding under these themes, the review cannot draw conclusions about the actions taken with regard to some of the more systemic issues raised by the evaluations.

F15 – Many of the financial issues raised in 11 recommendations in 6 evaluations have been systematically covered by the evaluation of the funding of WFP's work. Outstanding issues relate to consolidated planning on development work, ongoing capacity building to improve services related to funding, timely and transparent internal resource allocation decisions, and efforts to mainstream the advance financing mechanisms so that they more systematically facilitate WFP operations.

F16 – The human resource issues raised by ten recommendations in seven evaluations should largely be addressed with the adoption of the WFP people policy and the WFP strategic plan for 2022–2025 in 2021. Inclusivity, gender equity and diversity are prominent aspects of the people policy. Recommended actions to strengthen staff skills and capacities are being implemented, as are workforce planning activities including reviews of contract modalities for technical staff. The people policy and the strategic plan are recent documents and implementation of actions that depend on them is still ongoing.

40. To identify issues of strategic importance that are raised repeatedly in evaluations, the review team analysed the 65 recommendations made by the 10 evaluations and coded them according to the main theme they addressed using the compendium of 104 themes published by OEV.[13] In total, 18 themes were identified, 7 of them more than twice.

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[13] WFP Office of Evaluation. 2020. *Technical Note: Quality of Evaluation Recommendations*.

TABLE 5: MOST FREQUENTLY ADDRESSED CROSS-CUTTING THEMES IN RECOMMENDATIONS	
Cross-cutting themes	# Recommendations
Funding	11
Human resources	10
Performance management/monitoring	8
Partnerships	7
CSPs and interim CSPs	6
Gender	3
Capacity strengthening	3

41. Funding and human resources are the two cross-cutting themes most frequently addressed, followed by performance management/monitoring and partnerships. Funding and human resources account for 13 of 29 actions that require further action for full implementation and merit additional analysis to better understand the progress being made and the nature of any ongoing challenges. All but 3 of the 15 recommendations addressing the themes of performance management/monitoring and partnerships have been implemented.[14] The remaining 13 uncompleted actions addressing 10 distinct themes fell into one of three categories: actions defined in response to very recent evaluations; ongoing actions for which completion points cannot be readily identified; and actions awaiting other policy or strategy decisions before implementation can start.

2.4.1 Funding

42. Besides the evaluation of the funding of WFP's work, five other evaluations formulated recommendations related to funding. While the evaluation of the pilot CSPs made a general recommendation to address constraints to more flexible and predictable funding, the other evaluations recommended increased fundraising efforts or the allocation of additional resources to the areas of work evaluated. These issues were systematically addressed and succinctly described in the report on the evaluation of the funding of WFP's work.

43. The evaluation of the funding of WFP's work concluded that WFP had succeeded in mobilizing resources but had not addressed disparities in what was funded. It recommended that WFP maintain and increase funding by ensuring that it speaks and acts with one voice regarding its mandate and priorities (recommendation 1); strengthen efforts to finance development work (recommendation 2); fully implement the private sector strategy (recommendation 3); and redouble efforts to ensure that the aims of the Integrated Road Map are achieved in full (recommendation 6). Increased investment in resource mobilization and communication functions and in organizational capacities are advised (recommendation 5), as well as improvements in resource allocation processes (recommendation 7) and advance financing mechanisms (recommendation 8).

44. WFP has taken action in these areas. However, this review concludes that some actions remain ongoing as described below and notes that it is premature to reach conclusions on the action taken in respect of some of the more systemic issues highlighted by the evaluation.

- *Recommendation 2* – Activities that strengthen the foundation for financing WFP's work in changing lives, including tailored development offers, engagement notes and investment in WFP's organizational capacity, have been set in motion but cannot be considered fully implemented yet. A consolidated plan for strengthening the foundation for financing WFP's work in changing lives has not yet been formulated but the building blocks are being put together. It is expected that a "Transformation Fund" will be presented to the Executive Board in 2022.

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[14] For partnerships: not all partnership agreements with external partners have been revised yet. For performance management/monitoring: one action was awaiting the approval of the revised corporate results framework and another the completion of OEV guidelines on incorporating gender in CSP evaluations.

- *Recommendation 5* – Organizational capacity building to improve services related to funding is ongoing. There is a growing capacity to build a stronger cadre of experts within the organization for developing new partnerships, tapping into dedicated resources on themes such as gender and resilience, mobilizing resources for recruitment and strategic workforce planning for national and specialized staff, and gaining access to new funding sources at scale.

- *Recommendation 6* – The extent to which funding has followed the shift in WFP's ambitions and the improved transparency introduced by the Integrated Road Map is difficult for this review to establish. There seem still to be differing internal and external views on the funding priorities for large-scale emergencies and WFP's other work. The review cannot establish whether efforts have led to more oversight, leadership or clarity on relative priorities that have the effect of maximizing the effectiveness of fundraising efforts, including by minimizing the risk of WFP competing against itself for the same funding sources.

- *Recommendation 7* – Given the emphasis on flexible and predictable funding for the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, there is a continued need to link resources to results and invest in evidence generation. Internal resource allocation decisions need to be timelier and more transparent. This is the intention behind the bottom up strategic budgeting exercise, but it will take time and further organizational commitment to ensure that WFP is accountable and transparent in prioritizing resource allocations and monitoring performance.

- *Recommendation 8* – In responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, WFP used its advance financing mechanisms and a newly created COVID-19 trust fund and special account to accelerate country and corporate-level responses and balance gaps in the coverage and sequencing of funding that result from a heavily earmarked and voluntary funding base. WFP is already reflecting on how its financing systems and processes can better address a future global emergency.[15]

2.4.2 Human resources

45.   The evaluation of the WFP people strategy for 2014–2017 documented progress in all four of its "strategic imperatives", which covered performance management; the strengthening of staff knowledge and competence; improved opportunities and career pathways for national staff; and stronger accountability, leadership and management skills of senior leaders. The evaluation nevertheless identified gaps such as the blindness of the strategy regarding gender and diversity and documented widespread staff perceptions of inequities and a lack of transparency in recruitment and promotion. It formulated six recommendations covering issues such as organizational change management, the strengthening of supervisor accountability and improved communication on human resource issues.

46.   Three recommendations directly address the context, situation and management of WFP staff. They are summarized in table 6, together with an assessment of their implementation.

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[15] WFP Office of Evaluation. 2022. *Evaluation of the WFP Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic*.

TABLE 6: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEOPLE STRATEGY EVALUATION THAT DIRECTLY ADDRESS HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Recommendation	**Status of implementation**
1: Develop a new policy focusing on people, including: workplace culture; gender equality, diversity and inclusion; balanced and flexible contract modalities; and performance management.	A new people policy was adopted responding to all elements of the recommendation.
3: Revise the human resources functional strategy, focusing on the role of the Human Resources Division including the tasks, capabilities and motivation of human resources staff.	A new human resources strategy has been developed.
5: Review existing contract modalities, including systematic workforce planning at all levels of the organization.	Organizational reviews of country offices were completed and more than 1,200 new fixed-term and national officer positions were created. A new staffing framework was adopted. Workforce planning has been completed at the global level, is well advanced at the functional level and is being rolled out at the country office level.

47. Recommendation 3 is directed at WFP's human resources function, while recommendations 1 and 5 address issues that directly affect staff at all levels of the organization.

48. Human resource concerns are also reflected in seven recommendations in six other evaluations. Six of these recommendations advocate strengthening the human resources available for the area of work that was evaluated, for example through workforce planning, the creation of new specialized staff positions, the establishment of a roster, the development or updating of job profiles, a focus on matching contract types with needs and capacity building for existing staff. The seventh recommendation calls for the integration of gender diversity and inclusiveness in the new human resources accountability framework. All actions in response to the seven recommendations are ongoing or have been partially implemented.

49. Overall, significant attention is given to human resources in the new people policy approved in June 2021 and in the strategic plan for 2022–2025 approved in November 2021. However, the translation of the policy and the strategic plan into confirmed human resource practice across the organization will take time, and some actions in response to the recommendations therefore cannot yet be considered fully addressed and closed.

50. The recommendations on gender, diversity and inclusiveness were taken up in the new people policy and the commitment to an inclusive workplace was reaffirmed in the new strategic plan. However, inclusiveness, diversity and gender equity in the WFP workforce require ongoing monitoring through the key performance indicators in the people policy's monitoring and reporting plan, and the development of a gender-responsive accountability framework is still ongoing. Other recommendations related to human resources tend to address the technical or operational capacity of the WFP functions that are the subject of each evaluation. Some call for the deployment of more staff in the technical fields of focus; several suggest changes in contracting modalities, terms of reference or strengthened performance monitoring; and all recommend additional training and capacity strengthening. These issues are reflected in a generic way in the three cited recommendations of the people strategy evaluation. Key issues for ongoing attention are highlighted below.

51. Strengthening the technical capacity of staff is listed as one of three enablers of the people policy's theory of change. Aligning the workforce, skills and competencies with WFP's organizational needs is one of the core commitments made in the policy. The policy also clearly defines the areas of responsibility for cross-cutting capacity issues addressed by the Workplace Culture Department, technical capacity covered

by functional divisions in their areas and field-level capacity provided by country and regional offices. In all functional areas covered by the reviewed evaluations, recommended activities for capacity strengthening have begun and the reviews of the recommendations of the ten evaluations indicate that these actions are largely on track; however, because of their open-ended nature they can never be considered fully implemented.

52. The issues concerning staff numbers and contract modalities raised by five evaluations are more complex to resolve because of resourcing issues. The Human Resources Division acknowledged the organization's overreliance on short-term contract modalities and consultant contracts, and there is a concerted effort to address this issue. Following an organizational alignment project launched in 2018 that has now been completed, with its processes mainstreamed in the field, WFP is implementing strategic workforce planning at the functional and country office levels. Six functional plans have been developed and four are being developed, with all functional plans expected to be completed in 2022. A new staffing framework has also been established and is expected to result in further changes in the use of short-term contracts.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

3.1 CONCLUSIONS

53.   **Conclusion 1** – Management's high degree of agreement with the recommendations of the ten global evaluations and their firm appreciation of the utility of the recommendations support implementation of the WFP strategic plan for 2017–2021. However, they also mask a tendency for recommendations resulting from evaluations of policies and strategies to include too many operational details and, related to this, to feature unrealistic timeframes that do not respect interdependencies that affect the implementation of recommendations.

54.   **Conclusion 2** – While a participatory approach and guidance from OEV on the recommendation formulation process is sufficient and has mitigated these challenges to a large extent, other underlying strategic and organizational factors, such as the need for a corporate perspective that considers competing priorities, strategic and programmatic contexts, available human and financial resources, WFP's relatively high staff turnover and the large proportion of staff engaged on consultant or short-term contracts, require further attention if thematic evaluation recommendations and their implementation are to be improved.

55.   **Conclusion 3** – Management response formulation and content are crucial for the effective and efficient implementation of agreed recommendations. The management responses for five of ten reviewed evaluations fully comply with the requirements for adequately addressing the recommendations (relevance), being measurable and having key action owners and realistic timelines. Low scores for actionability are expected to influence WFP's strategic and operational performance.

56.   **Conclusion 4** – It is crucial to involve key staff and future action owners in the formulation of management responses to guarantee full understanding of the content and consequences of recommendations and management response and to create the necessary commitment to and ownership of action plans. Due attention should be paid to the proper allocation of roles and responsibilities and timelines.

57.   **Conclusion 5** – The actions to be implemented in response to evaluations are defined by the management responses approved by the Executive Board. However, in some cases, implementing staff noted that the recommendations evaluation reports provided clearer guidance than the agreed actions in management responses. Although the implementation of actions is monitored in R2, the review was not able to confirm the full implementation of about one third of the actions that were closed and marked as implemented in the tracking system.

58.   **Conclusion 6** – Human and financial resource constraints are recognized as key factors that affect the implementation of recommendations and actions defined in management responses. Improvements in transparency related to the prioritization of financial allocations are under way but require attention. Furthermore, thematic evaluations tend to result in recommendations that require resource allocations based on the limited perspective of their theme or sector; management may too readily agree to these but should instead adopt a wider corporate perspective and reflect competing priorities. In addition, the implementation of recommendations is dependent on the continued support for strengthening the management and coordination of cross-cutting and integrated programmes and processes, functional workforce planning and accountability.

59.   **Conclusion 7** – Major strategic themes covered by the recommendations in the evaluations reviewed are funding and human resources, which are also the subject of the evaluations of the funding of WFP's work and the WFP people strategy for 2014–2017. While some actions remain outstanding, the review cannot draw conclusions on some of the more systemic issues such as whether efforts have led to increased oversight, leadership or clarity on relative priorities that have the effect of maximizing the effectiveness of fundraising efforts, including by minimizing the risk of WFP competing against itself for the same funding sources.

60.   **Conclusion 8** – There are two priority areas that warrant continued attention. In terms of financial resources, outstanding issues relate to consolidated planning on development work, ongoing capacity building to improve services related to funding, timely and transparent internal resource allocation decisions and the positioning of its advance financing mechanisms as sustainable resources for WFP operations. All human resource issues flagged by the evaluations have been addressed in the WFP people policy and the WFP strategic plan for 2022–2025. As these are very recent documents, implementation is ongoing although work has begun on all actions. No implementation gaps were identified; however, staff capacity strengthening and workforce management require continued action and can never be considered fully implemented.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

61.   **Recommendation 1** – Adopt a corporate perspective to bring recommendations of global evaluations and their implementation to a higher level. It is recommended that evaluations:

- take into consideration strategic, policy and programmatic contexts, competing priorities and available human and financial resources;

- produce, as a consequence, fewer prioritized strategic recommendations and include in them fewer operational details, the latter are expected to be set out in action plans developed and implemented under actions in management responses; and

- pay due attention to the proper allocation of roles and responsibilities in respect of actions and interdependencies that affect implementation.

62.   **Recommendation 2** – Guide the implementation of recommendations by producing high quality management responses that are relevant and actionable. This should be achieved by addressing the recommendations adequately (with specific actions identified to implement each recommendation), minimizing inconsistencies in agreements, making actions measurable, properly assigning roles and responsibilities (at the country, regional and headquarters levels), and defining meaningful timelines while respecting interdependencies that affect implementation. It is recommended that WFP:

- consistently apply guidelines, including WFP's standard operating procedures for management responses to centralized evaluations, which are currently being updated;

- strengthen guidelines with definitions, clear instructions and examples that increase the relevance and actionability of management response and produce training materials;

- provide guidance on determining deadlines for actions that will take a long time to complete or whose implementation is contingent on other processes;

- strengthen the quality assurance mechanisms that should ensure high quality management responses formulated in the spirit of the recommendations, including through the use of quality checklists; in addition, where relevant, comments from country offices, regional bureaux, OEV and headquarters divisions should be included at all stages of management response review and clearance; and

- organize a workshop on the development of each management response (following the recommendation workshop), led by the designated management response coordinator with contributions from all other units and divisions that are responsible for actions in order to ensure full understanding of the content and consequences of both recommendations and the management response and to ensure optimal ownership of actions.

63.   **Recommendation 3** – When formulating a management response, critically review the recommendations. This includes:

- disagreeing with recommendations that, for instance, are not aligned with WFP policy or that contradict agreed strategic decisions; and

- acknowledging recommendations to continue implementing an ongoing policy, strategy or action without necessarily defining a new action to be taken.

64.   **Recommendation 4** – Further analyse organizational factors that hinder the effective and efficient implementation of recommendations from global evaluations. It is recommended that such analysis cover:

- transparency related to the prioritization of financial allocations;

- the management and coordination of cross-cutting and integrated programmes and processes;

- strategic and functional workforce planning;

- accountability mechanisms; and

- the ownership of actions.

65.   **Recommendation 5** – When following up on themes of strategic relevance to WFP, the following aspects merit particular attention.

- management responses should acknowledge human resource and funding recommendations that relate to issues that are often cross-cutting and require action at a corporate strategy level but do not call for action by any particular function;

- evaluation managers and technical functions reviewing evaluation findings and recommendations should pay close attention to recommended implementation times and advise the evaluation teams about feasible timelines; and

- attention should also be paid to issues including strategic and action planning, funding for changing lives work and the formulation of WFP's strategic direction.

Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of reference

The Review of the Implementation of Recommendations from Global Evaluations (2016-Q2 2020) aims at bringing together 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 for maximizing WFP's delivery on its mission. The review responds to the growing interest in synthesized analysis of evaluation products in WFP. It is the first of a series of periodic reviews of follow-up to evaluation recommendations that will be carried out with a view to enhancing the visibility and use of recommendations.

1. Subject and focus of the review

In accordance with WFP's Evaluation Policy (2016-2021), Directors of Headquarters Divisions, Regional and Country Directors are accountable for "preparing management responses to assigned evaluation recommendations, implementing follow-up actions and reporting on them." A management response details which recommendations have been agreed with and what actions are planned in order to implement agreed recommendations within a specific timeline. WFP's Corporate Planning and Performance Division (CPP) coordinates and tracks management's responses to recommendations from centralized evaluations and related actions. Units/offices in charge of recommendations are requested to report on progress in implementing the agreed actions twice a year.

The review is commissioned at a time when the use of evaluation is high on the agenda of WFP's evaluation community. In response to a recommendation made by the Synthesis of Evidence and Lessons from Policy Evaluations , CPP is reviewing WFP's management response process in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. This review will facilitate a discussion on the overarching recommendations from evaluations and related follow-up actions by the Oversight and Policy Committee (OPC) and allow the Committee to better exercise its oversight function.

2. Objectives and users of the review

The objectives of the review are to (i) determine the extent to which WFP management agrees with and adequately addresses recommendations from Global Evaluations in the management responses, (ii) assess progress in implementing follow-up actions as defined in the management responses, (iii) identify the factors that enable or hinder the uptake of evaluation recommendations, (iv) shed light on the results of actions taken to implement evaluation recommendations on WFP's policies, strategies and programmes, and (v) identify key themes/issues of strategic relevance to WFP, for which there seem to be important gaps in implementation of recommendations with a view to recommend further action to be taken to address outstanding issues.

Among the primary internal stakeholders of the review is WFP's Oversight and Policy Committee (OPC), which, when exercising its oversight function, will benefit from the identification of thematic issues of strategic relevance that require further action. Furthermore, the Corporate Planning and Performance Division (CPP) is a key user of the review as it is mandated with tracking management's follow-up to evaluation recommendations. The intended audience also includes selected Headquarters Divisions that have a direct stake in the topics covered by the Global Evaluations. The review is also of interest to OEV itself, which will learn from it about the relevance, utility, and results of the evaluations it commissions as well as factors impacting uptake with a view to further improve the formulation of recommendations in the future. Finally, the review will be presented to the EB and will be used to serve accountability and learning purposes.

3. Key review questions

The review addresses the following four key questions:

Question 1: *Level of agreement with evaluation recommendations and relevance of planned actions for addressing them:* What common themes/areas emerge in the recommendations from Strategic, Policy and

Impact Evaluations? What is WFP management's level of agreement with evaluation recommendations in the management responses? To what extent can the actions committed to in the management responses be expected to adequately address the recommendations?

Question 2: *Actual actions taken as well as their results and perceived utility:* What concrete actions have been taken to implement the recommendations? What have been the results of implemented actions on WFP's work, including with regard to its contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE), as well as equity (comprising also disability inclusion)? What has been the utility of these recommendations as perceived by WFP management?

Question 3: *Factors that enable or hinder the update of recommendations:* For which reasons were some recommendations agreed, partially agreed, or not agreed? What have been enabling factors for the implementation of recommendations? What have been the main reasons for not implementing agreed actions?

Question 4: *Themes that still need to be addressed:* What actions are still outstanding and required to address the recommendations? Which themes and related recommendations require further action for maximizing WFP's delivery on its mission?

4. Scope and methodology

The review covers all Global Evaluations approved between 2016 and the first half of 2020:

Evaluation of Funding WFP's Work

Evaluation of the Gender Policy (2015-2020)

Evaluation of the WFP People Strategy (2014-2017)

Evaluation of the Update of WFP's Safety Nets Policy

Evaluation of WFP Support for Enhanced Resilience

Evaluation of the Pilot Country Strategic Plans

Evaluation of WFP Humanitarian Protection Policy

Evaluation of WFP Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access in Humanitarian Contexts

Evaluation of WFP Corporate Partnership Strategy (2014-2017)

Evaluation of WFP Policy on Capacity Development – An Update on Implementation (2009)

The review draws from a broad and diverse body of information, evaluative evidence, and primary and secondary data. The main secondary data sources include the evaluation reports, management responses, data related to the recommendations in the Risk and Recommendation Tracking Tool (R2), the Synthesis of Evidence and Lessons from Policy Evaluations and, as well as other relevant documents. Primary data gathered for the review mainly comes from key informant interviews with OEV evaluation managers, CPP, and WFP managers/action owners in charge of implementing recommendations/actions.

Data from the different information sources are triangulated and analysed through content analysis, pattern matching and synthesis analysis. A gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) dimension as well as an equity focus is integrated into the review methodology as appropriate. Furthermore, ethical considerations are taken into account in the overall review approach.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Review team: The review team is responsible for finalizing the methodology in the inception report. It then collects and analyses the data required to answer the review questions and produces draft review reports. It finalizes the review reports after receiving feedback from OEV and WFP management in writing and orally during a stakeholder workshop.

OEV review manager: The OEV review manager commissions the review, guides and oversees the review team and quality assures their work. (S)he also solicits stakeholders' feedback on draft reports and disseminates final reports.

Stakeholders: WFP management provides relevant information to the review team and feedback on draft reports. Management produces a response to the review and uses the findings and recommendations to inform future work.

6. Communications

The review produces: (i) ten stand-alone reports, eachof around four pages in length each for the evaluations within the scope;, and (ii) one synthesis report that provides the overarching findings regarding the review questions across the ten evaluations and the results of the analysis of recommendations across themes of strategic importance.

The synthesis report, along with the management response to its recommendations, is presented to the WFP Executive Board at the Annual Session in June 2022. The final review reports are posted on the public WFP website and OEV ensures the dissemination of lessons notably through the annual evaluation report. All relevant headquarters divisions are encouraged to circulate the final review reports among their staff and relevant WFP external stakeholders.

7. Timing and key milestones

Inception phase: The inception phase starts with introductory calls on 30 November 2020 and ends with the approval of the inception report on 21 April 2021.

Fieldwork dates: The data collection takes place between 22 April and 11 June 2021, with a few outlier interviews after this date.

Briefings: A stakeholder workshop is held on 17 January 2022.

Reports: The final stand-alone reports are approved on 26 January 2022, while the final synthesis report is approved on 31 January 2022.

Annex 2: Methodology

1. Scope and approach

1.	The assessment was guided by a review matrix developed during the inception phase in close consultation with OEV. It is presented in Annex 3. The matrix provides an overview of methods and data sources applied to assess each of the 12 indicators grouped under five evaluation areas as presented in Figure 1. However, during the early phase of data collection, OEV indicated that the first expected output, a thematic mapping of recommendation themes according to tags in the R2 database, was no longer considered necessary. The first indicator and the associated evaluation area was therefore no longer included (it is still presented in Figure 1 and in the review matrix for reference only). The first indicator was replaced by an alternate indicator (Ia) assessing the relevance or alignment of agreed actions to the corresponding recommendation.

Figure 1: Revised framework of assessment areas and indicators

Management response	Action implementation	Results	Outstanding actions & themes
• Alignment with the recommendation (Ia) • Level of agreement (II) • Reasons for (non) agreement (VII, IX) • Actionability (III)	• Progress on action implementation (IV) • Reasons for (non) implementation (VIII, IX)	• Perception on results of implemented actions (V) • Perception on utility of recommendations (VI)	• Actions (X) and Themes (XI) outstanding • Recommendations (XII)

2.	The logic of the first three assessment areas of this methodological approach was applied to the assessment of the recommendations and management responses (MR) to each of the ten evaluations. In a secondary analysis, the ten individual assessment reports were reviewed to identify recurrent themes of strategic importance addressed by the recommendations.

2. Methods

2.1. Document reviews

3.	Documents shared by OEV included:

- documentation from the ten evaluations (evaluation reports, post-hoc quality assessments, MR, transcripts of Executive Board meetings, etc.);

- additional corporate documents (annual performance reports, WFP Strategic Plan 2017–2021 and related documents, annual evaluation reports, versions of the Corporate Results Framework, etc.); and

- an excerpt of the WFP Risk and Recommendation (R2) database from 29 March 2021.

4.	Additional documents and links were provided by interviewed stakeholders or identified by the review team through internet searches.

5.	All documents were organized in a library and imported into the MAXQDA content analysis software for analysis.

2.2. Key informant interviews

6.	Key informant interviews were conducted with 61 WFP managers and staff members involved in implementation of recommended actions or as managers of the reviewed evaluations for OEV. The inherent bias of this approach, especially for a review of results achieved, is further discussed in Section 3 (Limitations).

7.   The informants were given an assurance of full confidentiality and interviews were only recorded after their permission had been given. The recordings were transcribed using the Trint audio transcription software and edited by the interviewer. Both the recordings and the transcripts were stored in a password-protected folder that can only be accessed by the review team. They will be deleted once WFP has accepted the review report.

8.   After a first round of interviews with OEV evaluation managers for all ten evaluations during the inception phase, OEV provided a database of agreed actions relating to the recommendations contained in the ten evaluations, including the WFP focal point for the evaluation and the departments or units responsible for individual actions. OEV then consulted relevant departments to identify staff who would be able to provide information about the utility and implementation progress of these actions. The resulting stakeholder database also included senior managers of the areas covered by one or more of the evaluations. Not all stakeholders listed could be contacted or agreed to be interviewed, and several of the identified stakeholders were not able to discuss the corresponding action because they had only recently been recruited to their post, some as consultants, or they stated that the action had been allocated to their department or unit in error.

9.   The review team conducted semi-structured interviews with the focal points for each of the ten evaluations using a common interview script that focused on their interaction with the evaluation; their participation in preparing the MR; overall progress; facilitating and hindering factors of implementing the evaluation recommendations; and the progress of actions for which they were directly responsible. The focal points were also asked to review, correct or complement the initial list of staff identified as informants about specific actions and for additional documents that provided evidence of achievements. The names of additional potential informants were submitted to OEV and served to update the stakeholder database after consultation with their respective departments or units.

10.   The review team then organized the list of stakeholders by evaluation, noting that several were key respondents for actions identified in the MR of several evaluations. Furthermore, the list of actions and number of stakeholders for some evaluations exceeded the level of effort estimated to be required for the review of each evaluation. Some informants who were listed as action owners with minimal responsibility were therefore not included in the final sample of interviewed stakeholders. The interviews with the action owners focused specifically on the utility, process and results of the specific action under their responsibility. Prior to the interview, these informants were provided with the relevant R2 database excerpt including the recommendation, response, timeline, implementation status and narrative of actions completed.

11.   Finally, the review team conducted two interviews with senior managers from the WFP departments responsible for the thematic areas covered by seven of the ten evaluations.[1] The interviews focused on the overall utility of the evaluation recommendations; the process of formulating MR; and the system of monitoring their implementation.

2.3 Content analysis

12.   All interview transcripts were uploaded on the MAXQDA platform together with the documents selected for review in separate document folders for each evaluation. A common coding system was established based on the review questions, and documents and transcripts were coded individually by the four review team members.

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[1] All except Gender Policy, People Strategy and Funding.

Table 1: Content analysis coding system

Code System	Memo
Department interest	What was your department/division/unit's interest in the evaluation and why?
Q2,3,4 Engagement in developing recommendations	How were you engaged during the evaluation process? How were you involved in the process of developing the evaluation recommendations? Were colleagues with different seniority levels engaged during the evaluation process?
Q5 Quality and relevance	What do you think of the quality of the evidence produced by the evaluation and the relevance of the resulting recommendation/s?
Q6 Decision on agreement	What influenced the management decision in agreeing to the recommendation? What were the main enabling and/or hindering factors?
Hindering factors	Factors that negatively influenced the management decision to agree to the recommendation
Enabling factors	Factors that supported the management decision to agree to the recommendation
Q7 Usefulness of the recommendation	At the time the MR was formulated, was the recommendation useful for the organization, and in particular to your department/division/unit? If so, why was it useful? If not useful, why not?
Q8 MR responsibility	Who wrote the MR? In your opinion, was this the right person?
Q9 Relevance of action	How relevant is the committed action in the MR to address the recommendation?
Q10 Actions addressing recommendations	Do committed actions, if all implemented, fully address the recommendation?
Q10 Actions not implemented	Are there outstanding actions that have not yet been implemented? Why not?
Q11 Feasibility of action	Do you think the actions committed were feasible to implement?
Q12 Action taken and implementation status	What concrete actions were taken to implement the recommendation? Is the implementation status in R2 up to date? What other actions were initiated/accomplished? What evidence is there to support this?
Q13a Hindering factors for implementation	What were the key hindering factors for implementation of the action?
Limited regional bureau support	Implementation hindered because not sufficiently supported by the regional bureau (technical, political, etc.)
Limited headquarters support	Implementation not sufficiently supported by headquarters (technical, administrative, political)
Financial constraints	Implementation hindered because of funding (insufficient funds, donor earmarking of funds, etc.)
Staff capacity	Implementation constrained by limited capacity of implementing staff (numbers, technical capacity, etc.)
Other hindering factors	
Q13b Enabling factors for implementation	In order to act on the recommendation what were the key enabling factors for implementation?

Code System	Memo
Regional bureau support	Activity is strongly supported by the regional bureau (technical, administrative, political)
Headquarters support	Activity is strongly supported by headquarters (e.g. technical support from headquarters unit, political priority of WFP senior management)
Financial support	Activity is sufficiently financed (e.g. supported by earmarked donor funds)
Staff capacity	Good implementation because of sufficient, competent and/or motivated staff
Other enabling factors	
Q14 Results of committed actions	What were the results of committed actions? How impactful have the actions been? Did they contribute to improving projects, programmes, strategies and/or to address priority needs?

13.   Coded segments were exported into Excel and the content under each section was analysed for relevance and frequency. The coding was not validated by a second reviewer because of limitations of the agreed level of effort for the assignment.

14.   For the preparation of the synthesis report, the ten individual evaluation review reports were uploaded on MAXQDA for additional content analyses.

2.4 Actionability scoring

15.   All data sources yielded qualitative data. However, a semi-quantitative scoring methodology was employed for the assessment of actionability of MR (Indicator III).

16.   The tables of the ten Executive Board MR documents were transferred to an Excel platform and each recommendation, sub-recommendation and sub-sub recommendation was paired with a corresponding action from the MR. In some cases, single actions were defined for a group of sub-sub-recommendations. OEV only tabulated recommendations and sub-recommendations that had a clearly identifiable corresponding action in the MR. The approach yielded 152 recommendations and sub-recommendations. As the work was based on Executive Board documents, the total number of actions was not identical to the number of actions listed in the WFP Risk and Recommendation (R2) tracking system. Among the 152 identified recommendations, 4 were not scored because the recommendation itself was not actionable, and 13 because management only partially agreed.

• Total number of recommendations and sub-recommendations	152
• The recommendation or sub-recommendation was not actionable	- 4
• Management only partially agreed with the recommendation or sub-recommendation	- 13
Total number of MR actions scored	**135**

17.   Each of the 135 MR actions was independently scored by two review team members according to the scoring criteria presented in Table 2. Divergent scores were discussed and agreed by consensus. No partial scores were allocated. For the assessment of overall actionability of the MR, each of the four criteria was weighted as indicated in the table.

Table 2: Scoring criteria for MR actionability

Criteria	Exceeds requirements for criterion (The criterion provides additional information/ greater depth that goes beyond requirements) Score = 4	Meets requirements for criterion (The criterion is addressed without gaps or limitations) Score = 3	Approaches requirements for criterion (There are some or partial gaps or limitations in addressing the criterion) Score = 2	Partially meets criterion (There are major gaps or limitations in meeting the criterion) Score = 1	Does not meet criterion (Although relevant, the criterion is not met at all) Score = 0
Specificity Weight = 0.5	Action is closely correlated to the recommendation, and refers to all the details and beyond	Action is closely correlated to the recommendation, and refers to all the details	Action is correlated to the recommendation, and does not refer to all the details	Action is correlated to the recommendation, and does not refer to details	Action is not correlated to the recommendation
Measurability Weight = 0.15	Action results can be verified and are specified in detail	Action results can be verified and are specified	Action results can partly be verified	Action results can hardly be verified	Action results cannot be verified
Assignability Weight = 0.25	One responsible entity has been assigned to lead the task and role is specified in detail	One responsible entity has been assigned to lead the task and role is specified	Responsible entities have been assigned to the task, but no designated lead	No clear assignment of a responsible entity	No responsible entity has been assigned
Time boundness Weight = 0.1	Time period for implementation and deadline are specified, timeline is detailed	Time period for implementation and deadline are specified	A clear deadline or time-period is provided	Time reference is given but not clear	No time reference is given

18.   The scores of each MR action were calculated across the four criteria and expressed in terms of percentage of the maximum obtainable score of four.[2] An overall score of 75 percent signified that the MR action met, on average, the criteria of actionability. A higher score indicated it surpassed the expectation for these criteria. For each evaluation, all scores were averaged to indicate the overall actionability of the MR.

2.5 Analysis of cross-cutting themes

19.   Each of the 65 recommendations from the ten evaluations, together with the assessed status of implementation of responsive actions, was coded using the framework of 104 recommendation themes published by OEV in 2020. Eighteen cross-cutting themes were identified, seven more than twice. The two most commonly mentioned themes, funding and human resources, were then analysed to identify underlying issues that were further explored and described. Actions that had been taken to address these issues, and actions that were still ongoing or only partially implemented were then described, including

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[2] (4 x 0.5) + (4 x 0.15) + (4 x 0.25) + (4 x 0.2) = 4

with reference to additional documentation including the WFP Strategic Plan 2022–2026 and the WFP People Strategy (2021).

3. Limitations

Internal data

20.   A major limitation of this assessment is the almost exclusive use of internal documents and data with few exceptions (one being the review of MOPAN reports for the synthesis analysis). For the ten individual assessments, only WFP internal documents were reviewed, and all interviewed stakeholders were focal points, action owners, or the line managers responsible for implementing actions in the MR. In some cases, the stakeholders were the primary authors of an MR. Their views about the utility of the MR are therefore likely to be biased. An even greater bias is likely and almost unavoidable in their assessment of the results of the implemented actions for which they are responsible. Although the assurance of confidentiality may somewhat mitigate this bias, with only one key informant identified per action the anonymity of information is difficult to preserve. Triangulation of information from informants in different WFP units was also possible for the assessment of some actions and may mitigate some of the bias. But all data collected for Indicator V, the perceptions of the results of implemented actions, can only be considered as self-assessment data with limited external validity.

Staff mobility

21.   For most of the six evaluations published in 2018 or earlier, stakeholders identified as key informants by lead implementing units or units responsible for specific actions were not in place when the recommendations were discussed, and the MR formulated. Some units identified consultants as key informants who had been specifically recruited for coordination of the development of a recommended strategy or policy document. However, the consultants were not able to answer questions about the involvement of their unit in the evaluation and the formulation of the response. Some respondents stated that they were following up on recommendations from many evaluations and could not remember the commitments to all actions for which they were identified as key respondents. In some cases, they provided incorrect information, for instance in mentioning outcomes or results that had already been achieved prior to the evaluation.

Limited access to documents

22.   Several key informants mentioned draft frameworks, guidelines, strategies and other key documents that could provide evidence of results achieved but that were still awaiting approval by management or final editing for presentation to the Executive Board. These documents could therefore not be shared, and the information provided in interviews could not be independently validated.

Non-responders

23.   The overall number of interviewed stakeholders for each single evaluation assessment was low, generally between six and ten, although 61 interviews were conducted in total. In some interviews, respondents named other staff members and sometimes other units as the appropriate source of information about a specific action. Not all of these could be followed up, and not all additional stakeholders were available to be interviewed. Seven planned interviews could not be held because the respondents were not available or indicated that they did not have information about the relevant action(s).

Timing of evaluations

24.   The ten reviewed evaluation reports were published between 2016 and 2020, two only months prior to data collection for the review. The time required for implementing agreed actions is variable; however, the list of commitments that, according to our assessment, required further action was longest among the recently concluded evaluations. In most cases, implementation was ongoing.

Assessing the results of the actions

25.   Assessing the results of actions taken is largely beyond the scope of this assessment. Certainly, when recommended policy and strategy renewals have been implemented, the expected result of a new policy or strategy document could be documented. Similarly, documentation exists for operational changes such as improved internal communication platforms, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, training or staff recruitment and terms of reference, although these changes could not always be fully attributed to

actions in response to a specific evaluation. However, whether the changes generated results in terms of improved programme quality, funding, staff satisfaction or any other measurable outcome cannot be answered by this assessment.

Annex 3: Review matrix

Objectives/subquestions	Indicator/Judgment criteria	Methods	Main sources
A. Level of management agreement with evaluation recommendations and actionability of the management response (MR)			
What is WFP management's level of agreement with evaluation recommendations in the MR?	I. Level of agreement of WFP management with evaluation recommendations (agreed/partially agreed/not agreed)	• *Desk review* - Analysis of MR in R2 versus recommendation sections in evaluation reports • *For reasons of non or partial agreement see indicator VII*	Data from R2 System Evaluation reports MR
To what extent do the actions committed to in MR adequately address the recommendations?	II. Actionability of the MR	• *Desk review* of actions committed to MR against the recommendations with reference to selected criteria to determine actionability, and Executive Board considerations. MR will be rated on actionability (high, moderate, low). In addition, focal points and evaluation managers will be consulted to verify the relevance of the actions compared to the recommendations.	Data from MR reports and transcripts (Executive Board), evaluation reports Key Informant Interviews
B. Level of implementation of recommendations, results of actions taken and perceived utility			
What concrete actions were taken to implement the recommendations?	III. Level of progress in implementing recommendations	• *Content and data analysis* – stocktaking on action implementation updates in R2. • *Desk review* of i) the Synthesis Report to take stock of progress in implementing recommendations issued in Policy Evaluations; and ii) documents shared by headquarters divisions. • *Key informant interviews* - verification with selected stakeholders on action implementation • *For reasons why certain agreed actions have been implemented and others not, see indicator VIII.*	Data from R2 System Synthesis Evaluation Supporting documents Key Informant Interviews
What were the results of implemented actions on WFP's work?	IV. Range of perceptions of managers supported by evidence regarding the results	• *Key informant interviews* - with relevant WFP managers/action owners in charge of implementing	Data from Key Informant Interviews (semi-structured questionnaires)

		of implemented actions on WFP's work, including gender equality and women's empowerment and equity	recommendations/actions, appropriate others as per stakeholder map. • *Desk review of additional documents* (to validate managers' perceptions regarding the results of implemented actions on WFP's work)	Data from documents, databases, external sources including data from WFP Evaluation and Annual Reports as well as relevant policy documents, etc.
What was the utility of these recommendations as perceived by WFP management?	V.	Range of perceptions of managers regarding the utility of the recommendations and their validation	• *Key informant interviews* - with relevant WFP managers/action owners in charge of implementing recommendations/actions, appropriate others as per stakeholder map • *Content analysis* – analysis of various sources (documents, databases, external sources, etc.) – triangulation	Data from Key Informant Interviews (semi-structured questionnaires) Data from documents, databases, external sources including data from WFP Evaluation and Annual Reports.
C. Factors that enable or hinder the uptake of evaluation recommendations				
What were the enabling and hindering factors for the level of agreement with recommendations and for the implementation of recommendations?	VI. VII.	Enabling and hindering factors for the level of agreement with recommendations Enabling and hindering factors for the level of implementation of recommendations	• *Content analysis* - of action implementation updates in R2 • *Key informant interviews* - with evaluation managers of each evaluation report, appropriate others as per stakeholder map • *Key informant interviews* - with relevant WFP managers/action owners in charge of implementing recommendations/actions, appropriate others as per stakeholder map • *Content analysis* - Analysis of data related to each evaluation recommendation	Data from R2 System and MR matrices Annual implementation status of evaluation recommendations submitted to the Executive Board by the Corporate Planning and Performance Division (CPP) Data from Key Informant Interviews (semi-structured) and online verification workshop
	VIII.	Relationship between different identified determinants on the level of agreement with and	• *Content analysis* – Identification and assessment of relationships between factors that hinder or enable the agreement with or implementation of recommendations.	

	implementation of recommendations	• *Verification workshop* – verification with key stakeholder groups of these relationships/determining dimensions	Data from evaluation reports/Synthesis Report
D. Key themes of strategic relevance that require further action			
What actions are still outstanding and required to address the recommendations?	IX. Outstanding and required actions to address the recommendations	• *Content analysis* – Exploration and analysis of data related to the identified gaps between the implementation of actions and recommendations.	Data from evaluation reports Key Informant Interviews (semi-structured)
Which themes and related recommendations require further action to maximize delivery of WFP's mission?	X. Themes of strategic importance to WFP that were covered by the recommendations and have not been sufficiently addressed	• *Synthesis analysis* of findings from the steps above related to a few specific themes (in accordance with R2 classification of recommendations as well as potential other categories identified during the analysis)	Data from R2 System Data from other documents
	XI. Recommended further actions to address outstanding issues		

Annex 4: Background information on follow-up to centralized evaluation recommendations in WFP

1. During the inception phase of the review (November 2020–March 2021) a preliminary review was conducted on the process of developing the recommendations and management response (MR). Relevant documents were reviewed and staff from the Corporate Planning and Performance Division (CPP) and OEV (Evaluation Managers) were interviewed. Interview guides can be found at the end of this Annex. The purpose of the inception phase was to quickly assess the recommendation formulation process, its overall guidance and quality assurance, roles and responsibilities, and stakeholder engagement. To the extent possible at this stage of the review, information was also collected on the MR process, and the tracking system – the Risk and Recommendation Tracking Tool (R2) and its predecessor the Ace Project Database.

(Excerpt from Review Inception Report)[1]

Recommendation formulation process

2. The Evaluation Quality Assurance System[1] includes defined steps, roles and responsibilities that must be undertaken from the preparatory phase to the formulation of recommendations and as such provides guidance on the roles and responsibility of the evaluation manager. This guidance was recently updated for strategic and policy evaluations. Evaluation managers confirmed that overall standards were in place and processes were harmonized throughout different types of evaluations. OEV issued a Technical Note on Quality of Evaluation Recommendations[2] that sets out WFP's standards for quality evaluation recommendations.

3. The evaluation manager is responsible for coordinating the different stages of the evaluation and has a key role in supporting evaluation teams. While the primary responsibility of formulating recommendations lies with the independent evaluation team, the evaluation manager assists the team to ensure that standards are met in preparing final products, including the Summary Evaluation Report.[3] Since 2020, evaluation managers have been responsible for drafting Summary Evaluation Reports in consultation with the evaluation team under the revised Evaluation Quality Assurance System. For instance, evaluation managers work closely with evaluation teams to support the drafting of recommendations which, in general, according to the evaluation managers, positively impacts the quality of the evaluation and the formulation of recommendations. Given the independence of the evaluation team, it is challenging for evaluation managers to guide and assist the evaluation team and ensure that the interests of the organization are safeguarded.

Stakeholders are involved in the process primarily through the Internal Reference Group, which is constituted from WFP technical and managerial staff appointed by departments, divisions and units

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[1] Hera (2021) Review of the Implementation of Recommendations from Thematic Evaluations of a Strategic/Global Nature (WFP Strategic/Policy/Impact Evaluations 2016-Q2 2020). Inception Report, April 2021.

[1] WFP's Evaluation Quality Assurance System is based on UNEG norms, standards and guidance and was developed in 2008 by OEV.

[2] The technical note for centralized evaluations was recently adapted from a specific technical note for decentralized evaluations. <no date>

[3] Evaluation managers are responsible for drafting Summary Evaluation Reports under the revised Evaluation Quality Assurance System.

involved in the specific evaluation. The Internal Reference Group is consulted at different stages of the evaluation and members normally participate in the stakeholder workshop.

4.   Evaluation managers emphasized the importance of stakeholder workshops in the evaluation process for a number of reasons. The workshops aim to increase stakeholder participation in the evaluation by allowing a detailed participatory review of the methodology, findings and conclusions prior to discussing the focus and feasibility of recommendations and the timing, roles and responsibilities for implementation of recommendations. The workshops must be substantial with the participation of a combination of decision makers and implementers within WFP. The participation of senior and technical staff from country offices and regional bureaux and specific headquarters divisions in global evaluations is therefore regarded as important to better shape recommendations and ensure they are relevant and actionable on the ground.

5.   Furthermore, there are mechanisms to ensure senior management's engagement in the formulation of evaluation recommendations. Since 2019/20, OEV has presented strategic evaluations and some policy evaluations to the WFP Leadership Group before the Summary Evaluation Report is finalized so that the Leadership Group can reflect on the more strategic organizational dimensions of the recommendations. In addition, the Oversight and Policy Committee[4] reviews the Summary Evaluation Report, including final recommendations, and provides comments, if necessary. These comments are then addressed before the report is presented to the Executive Board. This procedure is applied to all types of evaluation apart from Country Strategic Plan Evaluations which, since 2021, are only shared for information.

6.   For strategic evaluations, the interest and commitment of staff, particularly senior management in areas/topics evaluated is considered a key factor that influences the decision on the object to be evaluated and the timing of the evaluation. Policy evaluations have a specific coverage norm, which needs to be considered when selecting topics.

7.   Evaluation managers consulted indicated that the provision of guidance and quality assurance for recommendations is the responsibility of OEV. Evaluation managers faced the following challenges in this area: (i) complexity of the topic evaluated, generating debate about the recommendations; (ii) variable levels of interest/ involvement by senior management in the formulation and quality assurance of comments on recommendations made by their own staff; (iii) shortcomings in the performance of the evaluation team during the evaluation process; (iv) limited participation of senior staff at stakeholder workshops, particularly at Director level; and (v) prioritization of recommendations.

Management response formulation process

8.   According to standard operational procedures issued in September 2018,[5] CPP coordinates the compilation and finalization of the MR matrix for centralized evaluations "ensuring that: (i) specific actions are identified to implement each recommendation; (ii) proposed timelines for actions can be realistically implemented; (iii) responsibilities for actions are clearly assigned at the CO/RB/HQ levels; (iv) relevant comments from COs, RBs, OEV and HQ Divisions are included at all stages of review and clearance of the management response; and (v) the Chief of Staff is notified of any contentious issues." CPP reports to the Executive Board on management follow-up to centralized evaluation recommendations and is responsible for tracking actions and responses to determine their implementation status.

9.   The preparation of the MR often requires multiple inputs from different levels and entities within the organization. Those that contribute to the formulation of the MR need to have a good understanding of the evaluation and the recommendations and ideally have also been involved in the development of the evaluation recommendations. Evaluation managers have expressed their concern that management sometimes misinterprets or misunderstands recommendations. CPP shares the draft MR with OEV, but the connection between recommendations and the MR could still be strengthened according to evaluation managers. The process of involving OEV is not formalized.

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[4] Previously the Evaluation Management Group (EMG).

[5] 'Standard Operational Procedures for Management Response to Centralized Evaluations' (Sept 2018).

10. Recommendations are usually accompanied by suggested leads for recommendations and actions. CPP communicates these to the different headquarters divisions/units in charge of the development of the MR. This consultation is conducted with the intention to seek acceptance of the recommendation and formulate actions proposed to address them. In a situation of renegotiation of responsibilities, CPP is tasked with consulting the stakeholders concerned.

11. The finalized MR matrix is cleared by senior management with a follow-up meeting with the Oversight and Policy Committee. The evaluation report and the MR matrix are presented to the Executive Board.

12. Concerns about the process for preparing MR were noted in the report on the *Synthesis of Evidence and Lessons Learned from WFP's Policy Evaluations 2011–2019*.[6] The report refers to concerns including "limited cross-functional engagement in preparing the MR, lack of coordination in the preparation process - particularly with regard to cross-cutting topics - and limited dissemination of responses once prepared." Interviews with CPP staff identified further challenges, including:

- Ownership of recommendations – Within the ACE Project Database, multiple co-leads were identified in the MR matrix. This created confusion about responsibilities, and it was difficult to follow up on the implementation of recommendations. This issue was solved with the introduction of R2.

- Staffing within CPP for the liaison function – The liaison role with different headquarters departments/divisions, regional bureaux and country offices is insufficiently funded, therefore consultants are filling this role.

- Leverage of CPP within the organization – Follow-up of the MR matrix can be challenging for CPP specifically at a senior level, because CPP lacks sufficient influence and leverage. The Inspector General and Oversight Office (OIGA), which reports directly to the Executive Director, tracks follow-up to audit recommendations itself. MR to evaluations, on the other hand, are mainly tracked by more technical staff in CPP,[7] which does not have a direct reporting line to WFP executive management.

13. The MR formulation process could benefit from clear guidance and quality assurance of its contents, according to evaluation managers. Although CPP fulfils its role in coordinating MR, the process could be optimized to reduce misinterpretations and improve the relevance of actions in relation to recommendations; prevent gaps and inadequacies in the MR; and minimize inconsistencies in agreements. OEV notes that evaluation managers can play a helpful role in advising CPP whether the MR actually addresses the spirit and letter of the recommendation. Furthermore, according to OEV, the current coordinator/post box role performed by CPP should be expanded and supported by sufficient human resource capacity, so that CPP can fulfil the function played by regional monitoring advisers at the corporate level.

Tracking system

14. The system for internal tracking and reporting on the implementation status of evaluation recommendations has been a weakness, also identified by the UNEG 2015 peer review of the WFP evaluation function. The Ace Project Database that functioned as a tracking tool has been replaced by the Risk and Recommendation Tracking Tool (R2). While there were delays in making the new system operational, it has recently been rolled-out (January 2021).

15. R2 is considered a stronger tool for tracking follow-up to evaluation recommendations. One of the most significant changes is the better-defined roles of directors in overseeing implementation of recommendations/follow-up actions. In R2, the closure of an action is approved by the director whose office/division is responsible for implementing the action. To close a recommendation, the approval of a

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[6] WFP/EB. A/2020/7-D.

[7] CPP tracks the follow-up to recommendations from centralized evaluations, while regional monitoring advisers track the follow-up to recommendations from decentralized evaluations.

director from an office/division other than that responsible for implementing the recommendation (e.g. regional directors for recommendations addressed to country offices) is required. Furthermore, the R2 database identifies one lead for each recommendation/action; therefore, this will avoid confusion and enhance the accountability of the organization.[8]

16. The establishment of the R2 system is also considered to be an opportunity to review reporting to the Executive Board and to introduce systematic reporting to the Oversight and Policy Committee on the follow-up to evaluation recommendations.[9]

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[8] For decentralized evaluations, regional monitoring advisers are mandated to follow up recommendations and will regularly populate the R2 database, which is assumed to improve the quality of monitoring at a decentralized level.

[9] See: Risk and Recommendation Tracking System Tool (R2) System, OEV Key Points on R2 for the Briefing with Director, CPP.

Annex 5: Examples of management response actions that did not adequately address the recommendation

Evaluation	Recommendation	Management Response Action
Enhanced Resilience	… support regional bodies in connecting and understanding the food security implications and uses of their data; …	[WFP] will continue to engage with global and regional entities in order to create links among different data streams for decision making and advocacy purposes.
Pilot CSPs	… tailor lesson-learning documents to United Nations reform work streams, especially those related to developing the new generation of UNDAFs.	WFP continues to engage in the United Nations reform process, including interagency discussions, and is leading some of the strategic thinking and work streams of the newly established UNDAF design team.
Gender Policy	WFP should revise the policy's theory of change … to articulate the interrelationships between the areas of organizational change, programme processes and the policy objectives, as well as the steps that should be taken to ensure that WFP programmes and operations contribute more to gender equality and women's empowerment.	The updated gender policy will incorporate an applicable theory of change … that supports WFP's mandate for zero hunger and the next iteration of WFP's strategic plan.
Humanitaria n Principles	Increase and regularize the dialogue with donors on humanitarian principles and access and strengthen principled funding: • improve the overview of global and country-level coverage of needs for advocacy with donors; • hold regular high-level dialogue with donors on their support for principled response; • establish criteria for rejecting funding when conditions conflict with humanitarian principles; • use flexible funding strategically in high-risk settings where coverage is low; and • strengthen non-government funding sources.	… WFP's current approach to partnerships includes increasing the visibility of needs, diversifying its funding sources, and entering into dialogue with a range of partners in order to increase flexible and predictable funding to support operations in all situations. WFP's updated programmatic and financial architecture provides opportunities for securing more predictable funding – especially in the form of multi-year contributions – enabling the long-term, consistent, and continuous investments that are necessary in order to reduce humanitarian losses and strengthen community resilience over time.
Funding WFP's work	[WFP] … should develop human resource strategies and funding arrangements for partnerships, reporting, communications, advocacy, and marketing functions at all levels of the organization.	A full-time staffing coordinator was recently appointed for the Partnerships and Advocacy Department and the Communications, Advocacy and Marketing Division; the incumbent is working with the Human Resources

		Division in the development of human resource approaches to resource mobilization, communications, marketing, and advocacy functions. There is a commitment to funding such roles as much as possible.
Capacity Development	In implementing the Integrated Road Map – 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. 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 in which WFP support may no longer be required – including transition and exit plans – into the country strategic planning process.	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.

Annex 6: Examples of Human and financial constraints hindering the implementation of recommendations

Evaluation	Recommendations and hindering factors
Capacity building	***Rec 1 - Elevate capacity strengthening as core function of WFP:*** Implementation of the recommendation was delayed due to the time it took WFP to allocate appropriate funding (i.e. PSA) and structure (CCS Unit in PRO). ***Rec 2 - Provide country offices with tools and guidance on capacity strengthening***: The CCS framework, toolkit and guidance notes were developed; however, the lack of financial and human resources in OSZI impacted uptake and proper operationalization of tools and guidance for all levels.
People strategy	***Rec 5 - Review existing contract modalities and their use:*** An inappropriate reliance on short-term staff for the execution of core functions is still seen as an issue that needs to be addressed. The issue is complex as the creation of long-term positions has implications on long-term financial planning and resource projections.
Gender	***Rec 1 - WFP should update the Gender Policy (2015–2020) to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda:*** The inclusion and focus on gender equality in WFP's operations remains incomplete because of gaps in human and financial resources and limited capacity of staff to understand and meet organizational commitments, including transformative change in gender equality (MOPAN, 2018). The lack of resources and the high workload due to understaffing in the gender office were confirmed by informants to be hindering factors. In addition, due to the lack of internal leadership and seniority, the process on integrating gender into the next strategic plan was hindered.
Safety nets	***Rec 4 - Internal capacity: Identification of dedicated human, technical and financial resource requirements for building sustainable internal capacities in social protection:*** At headquarters level, the Social Protection Unit operates with a limited number of staff, most working on a consultancy basis. The unit is also dependent on unpredictable extra budgetary funds, which provides no guarantee of staff stability.
Funding	***Rec 5 - Invest in tools, products, processes and protocols (sub recommendation on communication, advocacy and marketing tools):*** Substantially lower allocations than requested in the investment case hinders the Communications, Advocacy and Marketing Division (CAM) from expanding and sustaining the advocacy team to efficiently absorb corporate requests, such as to undertake evidence-based policy advocacy; produce additional content streams beyond emergency response or to new target audiences such as International Financial Institutions, host governments, etc. The pending decision on approval of a related critical corporate initiative delayed work on the improvement of effective communication of the added value of WFP's work beyond emergency response.
Humanitarian Protection	**Rec 4 - Increase and formalize protection staffing:** Protection adviser positions in the regional bureaux continue to be filled by consultants.

Evaluation	Recommendations and hindering factors
Humanitarian Principles	**Rec 7 - Fill security positions in complex emergencies, including by providing sufficient resources, and improve contractual conditions to strengthen retention of security staff:** Filling security positions has been a challenge because of an increasing need for security officers with increasing areas of insecurity, while at the same time WFP is becoming less competitive as an employer.

Annex 7: Lists of persons interviewed

Aitor Maguna	Chief, Career Management, HRM
Aldo Spaini	Senior Government Partnership Officer
Andrea Castorina	Programme Policy Officer, RBC
Andy Lintern,	Sales Force Manager, PA
Anne-Laure Duval	Head of Protection Unit, PRO, PD
Ariam Abraha	Budget and Programming Officer, CPP, RM
Arif Husain	Chief Economist & Director, RAM, PD
Catherine Feeney	Senior Executive Manager, PA
Catrina Perch	Evaluation Officer, OEV
Cecilia Roccato	Programme Policy Officer, GEN, PD
Christopher Hopwood	Programme Policy Officer, PRO-M, PD
Corinne Woods	Director, CAM, PA
David Kaatrud	Director, PRO, PD
Deborah McWhinney	Senior Evaluation Manager, OEV
Elena Ganan	Regional Gender Adviser, RBP
Elizabeth Ramborger	Foundations Officer, CPS, PA
Ellen Wielezynski	Global Technical Adviser, PGCN, PD
Elyse Inguanti	Partnerships Officer, PPF, PA
Emilia Caselli	Senior Executive Manager, CPS, PA
Frederick Ranitzsch	Special Adviser to the AED PA
Gabrielle Duffy	Senior Evaluation Officer, OEV
Harriet Spanos	Chief of Risk Management, ERM, RM
Intisar Birkia	Regional Gender Adviser, RBC
Jacqueline Paul	Former Senior Gender Adviser, GEN, PD
Jasmine Jaruphand	Head of Strategic Planning and Coordination, CAM, PA
Jesse Kakumoto	Head, Contracts Unit, HRM
Jesca Muyingo	PA
Jesse Wood	Head, Field Support Unit, PRO, PD
Jonathan Porter	Senior Policy Adviser, People Policy Implementation, WEL
Joseph Manni	Deputy Director, IRM
Julie Thoulouzan	Senior Evaluation Manager, OEV
Kai Roehm	Programme Policy Officer, RBJ
Karin Manente	Director, PPR, PA
Kathryn Milliken	Climate Change Adviser, RBP
Kawinzi Muiu	Director, GEN, PD
Maria Lukyanova	Head of Office Tunisia and Morocco, PROT Tech Assist & Country Cap Strength Services
Maria Montalvo	Director, SEC
Marine Delanoe	Programme Policy Officer, PROM, PD
Mark Gordon	Chief, PRO-R, PD
Martin Wachs	Consultant Programme Policy, PROM, PD
Matthew Dearborn	Programme Policy Officer, PROM, PD

Monia Ladjimi	Budget and Programming Officer, RM
Natasha Nadazdin	Chief of CPPM Monitoring & Evaluation Unit, RM
Nyasha Mtengwa,	Finance Officer, Treasury Branch Service (FINT), RM
Oscar Ekdahl	Programme Policy Officer – Climate Change and DRM, RBC
Piyamon Arayaprayoon	Chief of CPPF Strategic Financing Branch, RM
Rebecca Richards	Head, Peace and Conflict Unit, PRO, PD
Rebecca Ssamba	Sr. Budget & Programming Officer and Staffing Coordinator, CPP, RM
Ronald Tranbahuy	Deputy Director, RAMM Field Monitoring Service, PD
Rosie Bright	Programme Policy Officer, RBN
Rossella Fanelli	External Relations Officer, PPR
Sarah Borchers	Staffing Coordinator, PA
Sarah Laughton	Chief, Safety Net and Social Protection Unit, PROS
Shannon Howard	Senior Strategic Partnerships Officer, STR, PA
Silke Buhr	Communications Officer, HRM
Stanlake Samkange	Senior Director, STR, PA
Thomas Prior	Project Manager, BUSBE, RM
Vera Mayer	Programme Officer, PRO-C, PD
Vernon Archibald	Project Manager, EME
William Affif	Head of Programme Cycle Management Unit, PD
Zalynn Peishi	Senior Programme Consultant, PRO-R, PD

Annex 8: References

Executive Board Documents

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"2018 enterprise risk management policy" (WFP/EB.2/2018/5-C)

"Annual Evaluation Report, 2016" (WFP/EB.A/2017/7-A/Rev.1)

"Annual performance report for 2019" (WFP/EB. A/2020/4-A)

"Compendium of policies relating to the WVP strategic plan" (WFP/EB.2/2020/4-D/Rev.1)

"Management response to the recommendations deriving from the evaluation of WFP's policies on humanitarian principles and access in humanitarian contexts for the period 2004–2017" (WFP/EB. A/2018/7-C/Add.1)

"Management response to the recommendations deriving from the evaluation of the WFP humanitarian protection policy for 2012–2017" (WFP/EB. A/2018/7-B/Add.1)

"Management response to the recommendations deriving from the strategic evaluation of WFP's support for enhanced resilience" (WFP/EB.1/2019/7-A/Add.1)

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

"Management Response to the Recommendations of the Summary Evaluation Report – Corporate Partnership Strategy" (WFP/EB. A/2017/7-B/Add.1/Rev.1)

"Management response to the recommendations of the summary report on the strategic evaluation of funding WFP's work (2014–2019)" (WFP/EB. A/2020/7-C/Add.1 1)

"Management response to the recommendations of the summary report on the evaluation of WFP's Gender Policy" (2015–2020) (WFP/EB.A/2020/7-B/Add.1)

"Management response to the recommendations of the summary report on the evaluation of WFP People Strategy (2014–2017)" (WFP/EB.1/2020/5-B/Add.1)

"Management response to the recommendations set out in the summary report on the strategic evaluation of the pilot country strategic plans (2017–mid-2018)" (WFP/EB.2/2018/7-A/Add.1)

"Mid-term review of the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021)" (WFP/EB. A/2020/5-A/Rev.2)

"Policy on Country Strategic Plans" (WFP/EB.2/2016/4-C/1/Rev.1)

"Summary Evaluation Report of the Corporate Partnership Strategy" (WFP/EB. A/2017/7-B*)

"Summary evaluation report of the strategic evaluation of the pilot country strategic plans (2017–mid-2018)" (WFP/EB.2/2018/7-A)

"Summary evaluation report of the WFP humanitarian protection policy for 2012–2017" (WFP/EB. A/2018/7-B)

"Summary Evaluation Report of WFP Policy on Capacity Development" (WFP/EB.1/2017/6-A/Rev.1)

"Summary evaluation report on WFP's policies on humanitarian principles and access in humanitarian contexts during the period 2004–2017" (WFP/EB. A/2018/7-C)

"Summary report on the evaluation of the WFP People Strategy" (2014-2017) (WFP/EB.1/2020/5-B)

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"Summary report on the strategic evaluation of funding WFP's work (2014–2019)" (WFP/EB. A/2020/7-C)

"Update on the elaboration of the WFP Strategic Plan (2022–2026)" (WFP/EB. A/2021/5-F)

"Update on the Integrated Road Map: Proposed delegations of authority and other governance arrangements" (WFP/EB.1/2020/4-A/1/Rev.2)

"WFP people policy" (WFP/EB. A/2021/5-A)

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Acronyms

BUSBE	Bottom-Up Strategic Budgeting Exercise
CAM	Communications, Advocacy and Marketing Division
CCI	Critical Corporate Initiative
CO	Country Office
CPP	Corporate Planning and Performance Division
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
EB	Executive Board
HQ	Headquarters
HRM	Human Resources Division
IC	Investment case
IFI	International Financial Institution
IRM	Integrated Road Map
MOPAN	Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network
MR	Management Response
MTR	Mid-term Review
OEV	Office of Evaluation
PA	Partnership and Advocacy Department
PD	Programme and Policy Development Department
PRO-M	Programme Cycle Management Unit
R2	Risk and Recommendation (tracking system)
RB	Regional Bureau
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SRAC	Strategic Resource Allocation Committee
STR	Strategic Partnership Division
UN	United Nations
UNSDCF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
WFP	World Food Programme