

IMPACT EVALUATION

Annual Report for the Strategic Advisory Panel on Impact Evaluation at WFP

2021 in Review



**World Food
Programme**

**SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES**

June 2022

Contents

Foreword	i
Review of the pilot phase (2019-2021) of the WFP Impact Evaluation Strategy (2019-2026)	2
Findings.....	2
Considerations.....	2
Recommendations	2
Strategic Advisory Panel Annual Meeting	3
Introduction	3
Annual Report for the Strategic Advisory Panel on Impact Evaluation at WFP	6
Introduction	6
WFP's Impact Evaluation Strategy (2019-2026).....	6
WFP Impact Evaluation Activities in 2021	7
Impact evaluation windows.....	7
Non-window impact evaluations.....	12
Impact evaluation in fragile and humanitarian settings.....	12
Capacity development activities	12
Communications	13
Partnership activities in 2021	14
Impact evaluation resources in 2021	14
Lessons learned in 2021	16
Country office capacity	16
Broadening methods.....	16
Expanding partnerships.....	17
Impact evaluation communications.....	17
Annex I: Impact Evaluation Window Summary Tables	18
Cash-based Transfers (CBT) and Gender Window	18
climate and resilience Window	19
School-based programmes Window	20
workstreams: optimizing humanitarian interventions	21

Cover page photo credit: WFP/Fredrik Lerneryd

Foreword

To achieve Zero Hunger by 2030, WFP and our partners need to identify what works best for the people we serve.

We must know which interventions work best in each area we operate. To do this, we must both generate and follow the evidence.

In 2021, WFP completed the pilot phase of its Impact Evaluation Strategy (2019–2026). The strategy has an explicit aim of supporting the organization to use rigorous impact evaluation evidence to inform policy and programme decisions, optimize interventions and provide thought leadership to global efforts to achieve Zero Hunger.

The pilot phase enabled WFP to test the level of demand and start developing approaches to support and deliver impact evaluations. It also provided the space needed to explore operational models for impact evaluations that meet organizational needs.

In 2021, the Office of Evaluation (OEV) commissioned an external review of the WFP Impact Evaluation Strategy. Overall, the review confirms that WFP can and should play a leading role in generating impact evaluation evidence to support organizational learning and contribute to global evidence. The review also highlighted challenges to be addressed as the organization moves beyond the pilot phase.



WFP established the Strategic Advisory Panel (SAP) to guide its efforts to build capacity and deliver impact evaluations. The advice of the SAP to inform WFP's response to the 2021 review recommendations is important as we move towards institutionalizing impact evaluation.

As Director of Evaluation, I am pleased to share the 2021 Annual Report of the Strategic Advisory Panel, which captures progress to date, lessons learned from piloting our strategy and key issues for consideration in 2022.

Andrea Cook
Director of Evaluation

Review of the pilot phase (2019-2021) of the WFP Impact Evaluation Strategy (2019-2026)

In 2021, the Office of Evaluation (OEV) commissioned IOD PARC to conduct the 'Review of the pilot phase (2019-2021) of the WFP Impact Evaluation Strategy (2019-2026)', hereafter referred to as 'the review'. The review assessed progress towards the strategy's objectives, and to what extent WFP had established the structures and capacity required to deliver the strategy.

Overall, the review found that the strategy is a highly relevant, important and timely initiative by WFP. The review also identified substantial demand for more impact evaluations in WFP, and provided a basis to further develop the capacity needed to meet this demand.

FINDINGS

Two years into the WFP Impact Evaluation Strategy (IES), the review found that:

The IES is proving resilient and there is considerable positive feedback and evidence of progress.

Most of the respondents interviewed for the review regarded the IES as a highly relevant, important and timely initiative by WFP.

What is also clear is that there is substantial demand for more impact evaluations in WFP.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is still too early to see completed impact evaluations, but progress has been made in most of the key workstreams.

A demand-led model for generating impact evaluation evidence requires intensive support from OEV to make it work and to overcome the practical and technical challenges involved in impact evaluations.

To make the IES sustainable, and to meet the growing global demand for WFP's impact evaluation evidence, internal capacity is emerging as a key prerequisite for success.

CONSIDERATIONS

The review highlights the following areas for consideration in the future:

- ▶ Further refining a hybrid model which combines external expertise and in-house capacity, in which WFP's in-house impact evaluation specialists provide a strong and confident lead and draw on a range of external partners.

- ▶ Accelerating WFP's capacity building work to allow the organization to respond to latent and actual demand for more impact evaluations.
- ▶ Building links to researchers in developing countries and the global south.
- ▶ Broadening the methods used to help answer the 'why' question, to provide greater contextual knowledge and understanding of programme implementation.
- ▶ Improving awareness of the IES through strong communications work.
- ▶ Ensuring continuity and sustainability are fully embedded and institutionalized.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Five specific recommendations are put forward by the review:

Recommendation 1. As part of its overall approach to building internal capacity, including a strong OEV team in headquarters, WFP should consider having a small number of impact evaluation specialists as focal points in regional evaluation units. Focal points could also contribute to other evaluation-related activities in their units. Enhanced synergies with regional VAM/RAM teams should also be explored.

Recommendation 2. OEV has already developed a range of incipient partnerships but should now develop a clear plan for broadening its partnerships for delivery of impact evaluations. As the range of impact evaluations increases, there will be a need to draw on expertise in other areas and windows which no single partner can provide.

Recommendation 3. The windows concept is proving its worth and is a powerful way to ensure quality, however, OEV should consider how it can be applied in a more flexible way, using a greater range of methods.

Recommendation 4. Alongside broadening partnerships for delivery in Recommendation 2, OEV should proactively build strategic partnerships in other aspects set out in the IES and spearhead more systematic engagement on impact evaluations within the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

Recommendation 5. Given the need to raise awareness of the IES and looking ahead to when impact evaluations are completed and published, OEV should prioritize communications aspects of implementing the IES, including work on how impact evaluations will be used, well in advance of when they are published.

Strategic Advisory Panel Annual Meeting

22 February 2022

PANEL MEMBERS

Ben Davis, Strategic Programme Leader on Rural Poverty Reduction, FAO

Macartan Humphreys, Professor of Political Science, Columbia University, and Director of Institutions and Political Inequality Group, WZB Berlin Social Science Center

Marie Gaarder, Executive Director, 3ie

Robert Darko Osei, Associate Professor, ISSER, University of Ghana

Sara Savastano, Director of Research, and Impact Assessment (RIA) Division, IFAD

WFP PARTICIPANTS

Andrea Cook, Director of Evaluation, WFP

Sarah Longford, Deputy Director of Evaluation, WFP

Jonas Heirman, Evaluation Officer (Impact Evaluation), WFP

Felipe Dunsch, Impact Evaluation Officer, WFP

Hanna Paulose, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (Impact Evaluation), WFP

Simone Lombardini, Impact Evaluation Specialist, WFP

Kristen McCollum, Impact Evaluation Analyst, WFP

Ola El Toukhi, Impact Evaluation Analyst, WFP

Nidhila Adusumalli, Impact Evaluation Analyst, WFP

Kriti Malhotra, Regional Field Coordinator for Impact Evaluation, WFP

INTRODUCTION

The Annual Meeting of the Strategic Advisory Panel (SAP) reviews progress made in implementing WFP's Impact Evaluation Strategy (2019-2026). The agenda had two main topics: the first was a discussion on progress made in 2021, and the second responded to recommendations in the 2021 Review of the Impact Evaluation Strategy (IES). Below is a summary of the two discussions.

2021 YEAR IN REVIEW:

► *Overall progress in 2021:* Panel members welcomed WFP's continued progress in the design and delivery of rigorous impact evaluations. They were encouraged that many impact evaluations are moving from the design to implementation phase. Panel members questioned whether there had been any early positive or negative findings and related opportunities for learning from data collected during ongoing impact evaluations.

OEV highlighted how the major challenges encountered so far are related to programme implementation and monitoring capacities. Rigorous impact evaluations require programmes to monitor the support provided to specific households or individuals, over a period long enough to measure changes in well-being. This type of programme implementation and monitoring represents a new way of working and is a challenge for many WFP offices and staff.

The decision to introduce a pilot phase into the new [School-based Programmes Impact Evaluation Window](#) is designed to enable WFP country offices and partners to develop their capacity and test tools before evaluating full-scale programmes.

OEV highlighted how additional data collection methods, such as key informant interviews, are providing valuable information for examining implementation process questions and support course corrections during programme implementation.

► *Demand-led versus global evidence priorities:* Panel members questioned how well the evidence priorities expressed by country offices

are aligned with global evidence needs. They suggested that questions related to operational issues such as procurement models are probably better examined using non-experimental evaluation methods.

OEV agreed and highlighted that the windows aim to balance both global evidence needs and country office questions, and these needs may not always be fully aligned. For WFP's school-based programme impact evaluations, the plan is to explore more process-related questions during the pilot phases, and then shift the focus towards child health and education outcomes during the scale-up of interventions.

- ▶ *Within and cross-window synthesis opportunities:* Panel members were struck by the range of interventions and questions within and across windows and reflected on how many of the impact evaluations within each window were able to answer the same questions (see [Annex 1](#) for window summary tables). There was also recognition that similar intervention modalities are present in different windows which could enable combining data and findings from across multiple windows.
- ▶ *External visibility and communicating what WFP learns during impact evaluations before completion:* Panel members felt that much of the progress and lessons learned during WFP's impact evaluations are not easily accessible to external stakeholders and recommended that significant additional value could be gained from impact evaluation data, including baseline and high-frequency data, etc. if OEV were to broaden the methods of analysis used.

OEV explained how data and evidence are already feeding back into programmes. In Mali, the baseline data collected was used to target COVID-19 support. In Mali, Niger, Rwanda and South Sudan high-frequency data is used to monitor participation rates and inform implementation adjustments for the subsequent programme cycle. In Kenya, WFP is improving beneficiary monitoring based on experiences in Rwanda and El Salvador.

- ▶ *Connecting impact evaluations to wider monitoring and evaluation activities:* Panel members highlighted the importance of ensuring that impact evaluations utilize and contribute to country office monitoring systems. A recommendation was made that building impact evaluations into routine monitoring and evaluation processes could reduce costs, increase country office buy-in and help ensure sustainability. There was also a discussion on how impact evaluations fit into WFP's wider evaluation function and relate to other types of evaluation.

OEV explained that within WFP's updated Evaluation Policy and new Corporate Evaluation Strategy there is a much more explicit commitment to ensure coherence between all types of evaluation, and an increase in focus on evidence use as a clear objective.

- ▶ *Embedding cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis into impact evaluations:* The Panel welcomed recent progress in collecting baseline and high-frequency data. The Panel recommended that more be done to analyse the cost-effectiveness of interventions.

OEV agreed and highlighted that because WFP country offices use a wide range of procurement modalities and field-level agreements to deliver programmes, it is challenging to standardize any unit of cost. OEV will work with country offices to explore the availability and usefulness of cost data and offer additional guidance and support. Where possible, OEV will step up efforts to use cost data collected to conduct cost-effectiveness analyses.

- ▶ *Engaging country governments:* The Panel enquired about the extent to which OEV engages with national researchers in its ongoing impact evaluations. OEV confirmed that this is a future priority that has so far been limited to the selection of field coordinators.

OEV hopes to engage in a more in-depth process of identifying the most effective avenues for both developing and collaborating with evaluation and research capacity either in-country or regionally in areas where WFP operates.

REVIEW OF THE PILOT PHASE (2019-2021) OF THE WFP IMPACT EVALUATION STRATEGY (2019-2026)

The second agenda item responded to recommendations in the 2021 Review of the Impact Evaluation Strategy. OEV presented all the recommendations and suggested responses, before opening the floor for feedback:

- ▶ *General feedback from SAP members:* Panel members highlighted that there appears to be a disconnect between review findings and the recommendations. Overall, the review is positive about progress, but then recommends additional areas for future development. Many of the recommendations are simply good principles, but do not connect directly to the findings.

OEV agreed and clarified that the review confirmed demand for impact evaluation in WFP. The recommendations are taken as areas for continuing development, and the WFP response to the review sets out incremental steps for the continued strengthening of WFP's impact evaluations.

- ▶ *Recommendation 1. As part of its overall approach to building internal capacity, including a strong OEV team in headquarters, WFP should consider having a small number of impact evaluation specialists as focal points in regional evaluation units.*

Panel members indicated that OEV should reflect carefully on what can be decentralized, and the capacity needed to do this effectively.

- ▶ *Recommendation 2. OEV has already developed a range of incipient partnerships but should now develop a clear plan for broadening its partnerships for delivery of impact evaluations, beyond its current reliance on DIME (the World Bank Development Impact Evaluation), in support of the hybrid delivery model combining in-house and external expertise.*

Panel members noted that expanding partnerships could bring in new expertise. However, they also cautioned about expanding too quickly. Expanding the number of partners involved requires an increase in management capacity. In addition, there is a risk that working with multiple partners within the same window could reduce coherence and make it more difficult to conduct multi-country syntheses.

- ▶ *Recommendation 3. The windows concept is proving its worth and is a powerful way to ensure quality, but OEV should consider how it can be applied more flexibly using a greater range of methods.*

The Panel members recognized the potential additional value that could be generated by using different methods of analysis during and after impact evaluations. However, they also warned WFP that caution is needed, and there is a risk that trying to do too many different types of analysis within an impact evaluation could reduce its quality and distract from the core design.

- ▶ *Recommendation 4. Alongside broadening partnerships for delivery in Recommendation 2, OEV should proactively build strategic partnerships in other aspects set out in the IES and spearhead more systematic engagement on impact evaluations within UNEG.*

Panel members were unclear about the purpose of the recommendation. In general, they welcomed efforts to develop partnerships; however, they questioned whether UNEG in particular has a strong interest or focus on impact evaluation.

- ▶ *Recommendation 5. Given the need to raise awareness of the IES and looking ahead to when impact evaluations are completed and published, OEV should prioritize communications aspects of implementing the IES, including work on how impact evaluations will be used, well in advance of when they are published.*

The Panel welcomed the recommendation to more actively share lessons learned during implementation. They also highlighted that building buy-in for impact evaluation is an iterative process that requires time and will need to combine strategic communications with space for learning.

Annual Report for the Strategic Advisory Panel on Impact Evaluation at WFP

2021 in Review

INTRODUCTION

This annual report outlines the progress made in implementing WFP's Impact Evaluation Strategy (2019-2026) in 2021. The first two years of the strategy (2019-2021) were a pilot phase, during which the Office of Evaluation (OEV) assessed the demand for impact evaluation evidence in WFP and explored different models of delivering impact evaluations in rapidly evolving contexts. The timing of the pilot phase aligned with the WFP Evaluation Policy (2016-2021) to ensure that lessons learned during the pilot phase will be incorporated into the development of the updated evaluation policy and the new corporate evaluation strategy.

In 2021, OEV commissioned a mid-term review of the Impact Evaluation Strategy (IES). The review examined whether the strategy is fit for achieving the vision of producing rigorous impact evaluation evidence to inform policy and programme decisions. Due to programme implementation delays, some caused by COVID-19, the review was conducted before the completion of any new impact evaluations initiated under the IES.

Achieving the objectives set out in the IES requires that WFP learns from experienced external partners. The Strategic Advisory Panel (SAP) plays a key role in helping OEV to reflect and learn from external experience as it refines and implements its strategy. This report informs the SAP's annual meeting and discussion on how to fine-tune WFP's IES considering emerging lessons from the review and the delivery of impact evaluations under the three impact evaluation windows that have been established to date.

WFP'S IMPACT EVALUATION STRATEGY (2019-2026)

WFP's IES (2019-2026) aims to deliver impact evaluations relevant to WFP operations and contribute to global evidence. To do this, WFP identified four strategic objectives for impact evaluation, to: 1) contribute to the evidence base for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); 2) deliver operationally relevant and useful impact evaluations; 3) maximize the responsiveness of impact evaluations to rapidly evolving contexts; and 4) harness the best tools and technologies for impact evaluation.

Impact evaluations can make major contributions towards saving lives and changing lives. The WFP IES aims to contribute evidence on what works best to achieve the SDGs, such as Zero Hunger, by generating operationally relevant evidence on what works and what does not, and under which circumstances. Delivering impact evaluations in WFP's operational contexts is challenging; this was particularly evident during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Vision of the Impact Evaluation Strategy

WFP uses rigorous impact evaluation evidence to inform policy and programme decisions, optimize interventions and provide thought leadership to global efforts to end hunger and achieve the SDGs.

WFP Impact Evaluation Activities in 2021

WFP impact evaluations are aligned with the implementation timelines of the programmes evaluated, and are supported in a manner that is responsive to changing contexts. In 2021, the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic and additional country-specific crises pushed OEV to test the limits of this adaptive approach, requiring activities to be paused on several occasions. Despite challenges, significant progress was made and WFP successfully launched a new window for school-based programming. The following is a summary of progress made in 2021.

IMPACT EVALUATION WINDOWS

To ensure impact evaluations contribute to building bodies of evidence in WFP priority areas, in 2019, OEV began a process of creating impact evaluation 'windows' that align with programme priorities. Each window uses existing global evidence to identify questions that are important for programme learning and can be answered using impact evaluations.

Impact evaluation windows are developed by OEV in partnership with the relevant WFP programme units and selected external technical partners, which together form Window Steering Committees. In addition, each window is supported by a Window Reference Group, composed of global stakeholders identified in a thematic area, and a Technical Advisory Group, composed of academics with a deep knowledge of literature in the window area.

Windows test the effectiveness of WFP interventions, and identify causal mechanisms across different contexts in a manner that can increase the external validity of evidence generated. To support formal syntheses of this evidence, each window is guided by a window-level Concept Note and one or more pre-analysis plans.

All WFP impact evaluations are supported by OEV to ensure continuity over time and consistency in approaches across countries, ensuring that evidence generated contributes to organizational learning. Whenever possible, priority is given to impact evaluation evidence that can contribute to ongoing and future windows or workstreams.

The first three windows are being developed in partnership with the World Bank Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) unit and focus on 1) cash-based transfers and gender; 2) climate change and resilience; and 3) school-based programming.

Cash-based Transfers (CBT) and Gender Window

With the growing global popularity of cash transfers as a modality for both humanitarian and development assistance, the need to understand the impact of such interventions is increasingly important. Programmes often target women or women-headed households as recipients of cash transfers, under the assumption that this is an effective way of achieving food and nutrition outcomes in target populations.

Following approval of the Concept Note and initial design discussions with country offices, a pre-analysis plan was drafted and peer reviewed, and an accessible [Brief](#) was published online in 2021.

The first set of evaluations in the CBT and Gender Window aim to estimate the effect of increasing women's earned income on intra-household decision making, as well as on personal autonomy and gender gaps. The main evaluation questions are:

- ▶ Does increasing women's control over earned income boost their decision making power?
- ▶ Does the economic empowerment of women affect the gender norms that surround them, or their self-perception?
- ▶ Do food assistance for assets interventions using CBT improve psychological well-being and reduce the incidence of intimate partner violence within the household?
- ▶ The CBT and Gender Window was launched in February 2019 with a call for expressions of interest that resulted in the selection of El Salvador, Kenya and Syria into the window. Rwanda was added to the window in the fourth quarter of 2020.

COVID-19 significantly altered the timelines for all CBT and gender impact evaluations. It also prevented OEV and DIME from engaging in-country. The impact evaluation teams assigned to each evaluation switched to a virtual engagement process, often led by in-country field coordinators.

Ongoing CBT and gender impact evaluations

In 2021, WFP's **El Salvador** programme altered both its gender targeting and asset-building activities in light of COVID-19 relief efforts. Communities were randomly assigned into one of two groups: 1) where women are encouraged to work and receive transfers; or 2) a comparison group receiving unconditional cash transfers. Baseline, midline and endline data collections were all completed in 2021, and data cleaning, analysis and reporting are currently ongoing.

In **Kenya**, in February/March 2021, the impact evaluation team conducted a pilot with 350 households in 16 communities, across three wards in Isiolo county. Following the pilot, baseline data collection for the full impact evaluation was completed in December 2021 and the project is about to be rolled out in Q1 of 2022. Communities are randomly assigned to one of two treatment groups where either women or men are involved in training and asset-building activities, or a third control group. Midline and endline data collection is planned for 2022.

Despite significant interest and efforts, the **Syria** country office was unable to participate in the CBT and Gender Window in 2021 due to difficulties finalizing agreements with implementing partners. The resulting delays made it impossible to implement seasonal livelihood interventions on time. In light of these delays and challenges, OEV agreed to reassess opportunities together with the country office in 2023, following completion of a new Country Strategic Plan.

In **Rwanda**, WFP is conducting an impact evaluation of the *Sustainable Market Alliance and Asset Creation for Resilient Communities and Gender Transformation project (SMART)*, funded by KOICA. The SMART impact evaluation contributes evidence to both the CBT and Gender and the Climate and Resilience windows. A baseline survey and five rounds of high-frequency follow-up surveys were completed in 2021 (staggered in synch with the phases of implementation). The high-frequency data collection captured seasonal changes in household well-being, as well as any idiosyncratic or covariant shocks and related coping strategies (see next section), in addition to informing the questions examined within the CBT and Gender Window.

In 2022, OEV will again invite WFP country offices to join the CBT and Gender Window. To ensure the window remains aligned with current WFP evidence priorities, OEV will consult with WFP's CBT and gender programme teams to assess how priorities

have evolved since 2019. As noted, the first pre-analysis plan developed by OEV and DIME focuses primarily on food assistance for assets interventions, which were representative of the WFP programmes that expressed interest in 2019. However, the plan does not capture all WFP's interventions in emergency or humanitarian settings. Consultations will help determine whether to add more countries that align with the current pre-analysis plan design, and whether to explore additional design options that examine a wider range of WFP interventions.



WFP/Damilola Onafuwat



WFP/Srawan Shrestha

Climate and Resilience Window

Conflict, economic downturns and extreme weather events linked to climate change interact and increase the likelihood and severity of shocks associated with food crises. WFP supports a range of interventions that aim to build resilience within the humanitarian-development nexus.

The Climate and Resilience Window was launched in 2019. Eight programmes were identified as potentially suitable for the window. However, all programmes originally proposed for the window experienced significant delays and changes because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite COVID-19 delays, significant progress has been made in the design and delivery of three BMZ-funded resilience impact evaluations in Mali, Niger and South Sudan, and a fourth funded by KOICA in Rwanda. In 2021, OEV also supported the design of an impact evaluation in DRC, which was converted into a decentralised evaluation due to feasibility considerations.

These four impact evaluations provided a basis for drafting the first window pre-analysis plan, which was peer reviewed in late 2020 and finalized in 2021. The high-level evaluation questions include:

- ▶ How do integrated resilience programmes contribute to absorptive, adaptive and transformative resilience capacities?
- ▶ How can multiple components of resilience programming be combined to strengthen resilience capacities?
- ▶ How do the timing of interventions and targeting decisions affect returns to programming?
- ▶ How do existing measurement strategies need to be adapted to better capture the shared BMZ-WFP resilience framework for resilience on multiple dimensions?

In addition to examining the window-level questions, the impact evaluations will also collect high-frequency data (bi-monthly or quarterly) on key food security outcomes and shocks to capture absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities through well-being dynamics.

In late 2021, the WFP and UNICEF Sudan country offices requested support to explore the feasibility of conducting an impact evaluation of their BMZ-funded joint resilience and social cohesion programme. The programme will start with an inception phase in 2022, during which time the agencies will select local partners and interventions. OEV will provide support to assess the feasibility of conducting an impact evaluation.

Ongoing climate and resilience impact evaluations

Due to COVID-19 restrictions preventing in-country visits, OEV had to provide virtual support throughout 2021. Each country office was supported by an OEV focal point and researchers from DIME. Changes and uncertainties in resilience programme implementation (e.g. activities, timelines, scope, etc.) due to COVID-19 meant that developing a clear impact evaluation plan was challenging in some countries.

Impact evaluations in **Mali** and **Niger** are both part of the regional Sahel resilience learning initiative funded by BMZ. In Mali, the design of the impact evaluation aims to examine the added impact of livelihood activities beyond other types of support received. In Niger, the design focuses on the impact of an integrated resilience package which includes multiple forms of support. Baseline surveys were completed in both countries in March 2021. In Mali and Niger, high-frequency surveys were completed every two months from April 2021 until January 2022 to collect data on food security, shocks and coping strategies. OEV and DIME are currently finalizing a dashboard which will present the trends emerging from the high-frequency data to support programme decision making.

In **South Sudan**, the impact evaluation focuses on a resilience programme jointly implemented by UNICEF and WFP. In 2020, a significant amount of time and effort was focused on exploring design options to capture the impact of interventions supported by both organizations on a range of food security, health and education outcomes. The design in South Sudan examines the impact of: 1) asset creation activities beyond the direct impact of cash transfers; 2) introducing flexible asset creation timing where it is prioritized by communities; and 3) integrated education and school feeding activities. Baseline data collection was completed in September 2021, despite security challenges in some impact evaluation areas. High-frequency data collection in South Sudan started in October 2021. The third round of data collection is currently ongoing.

The impact evaluation in **Rwanda** examines the overall impact of the resilience programme, in addition to the questions it focuses on under the CBT and Gender Window. Five rounds of high-frequency data were collected in Rwanda during 2021. The data is currently being presented in the high-frequency data dashboard for relevant stakeholders to review trends in food security and other outcomes.

In **DRC**, a resilience programme is being jointly delivered by FAO, UNICEF and WFP. In 2021, OEV and DIME worked with programme counterparts to confirm the feasibility of an impact evaluation design developed in 2020. However, the joint resilience programme faced many implementation challenges, including significant access and security constraints, a volcano eruption and multiple public health crises (e.g. COVID-19). In Q4 of 2021, after careful consideration of all options, DIME and OEV concluded that it would not be feasible to implement the current impact evaluation design as planned, unless the operational situation improves and the programme is able to reach more communities. OEV and RBJ are now exploring decentralised evaluation options to meet stakeholders' learning and evidence needs.

School-based Programmes Window

School-based programmes are one of the most extensive social safety nets worldwide, with an estimated 388 million children currently benefitting from school feeding. Such interventions are intended to promote health, nutrition, learning and the creation of human capital, while at the same time stimulating local economies when school meals are procured locally.

There is a need for more evidence to inform the trade-offs in the design and implementation of school-based programmes. For example, finding the optimal balance between cost, size, frequency and meal composition; whether meals should be provided on-site, as a take-home ration, or via voucher/cash transfer; and whether the benefits of locally procuring food are greater relative to direct import. There is also a growing need to better understand how different school-based programme designs can play an important role as a social safety net protecting boys and girls during shocks.

In 2021, WFP launched its third impact evaluation window on School-based Programmes. The selection of window priorities was guided by a [comprehensive literature review on school feeding](#) (published online in April 2021), and an extensive consultation process within WFP and with leading academic experts on school feeding.

Four window-level evaluation questions were identified for school-based programmes:

- ▶ To what extent do different programme interventions, including modalities (in-school, take-home rations, or cash/voucher) or complementary activities, contribute to children's outcomes? How do these effects vary by age and gender
- ▶ To what extent do different programme interventions (modalities or complementary activities) contribute to the greater well-being of girls?
- ▶ To what extent do different procurement systems (e.g. imported food versus locally grown school meals) increase the effectiveness of programmes at improving food security and nutrition in supported communities?
- ▶ To what extent do different programme characteristics support household consumption and food security in the presence of shocks?

A call for expressions of interest to all WFP country offices was launched in the first quarter of 2021. Eleven country offices responded to the call: Burundi, Ecuador, Gambia, Guatemala, Iraq, Jordan, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, Sri-Lanka and Yemen. Representatives from these country offices then completed a five-week virtual training course on impact evaluation to ensure there is a shared understanding of terms, practices and processes before agreeing to participate in the window.

A series of in-depth discussions were held with all 11 country offices to determine the feasibility and fit of their school-based programmes with the window's overarching questions. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all discussions were held remotely, significantly impacting the timeline and duration of this consultation process.

Burundi, Gambia, Guatemala and Jordan were assessed as having the greatest potential to generate globally relevant programmatic evidence. These four country offices are now completing their feasibility assessment before submitting a formal request for inclusion to the window's Steering Committee.

Planned school-based programme impact evaluations

In **Burundi**, WFP's school feeding programme is based on a centralized procurement model delivered directly to schools. Starting in 2022, the country office plans to pilot and scale up new decentralized procurement modalities based on cash transfers to schools, which will be used to directly procure food from local cooperatives.

Guatemala has close to universal school feeding coverage, with half of school meal ingredients procured through local markets. To encourage market participation from local farmers, the WFP country office developed a smartphone app to improve school procurement systems and to better connect schools with local farmers.

In **Jordan**, the government asked WFP to test and pilot alternative procurement and delivery models to the current national school feeding programme. In 2022, WFP is planning to pilot and launch a new procurement and delivery model based on centralized kitchen facilities in which fresh meals will be prepared and distributed with the direct engagement of local community-based organizations.

In **Gambia**, the Gambia Agriculture and Food Security Project aims to increase food and nutritional security, as well as household income through strengthening the sustainable home-grown school feeding programme. Discussions are currently ongoing to determine which impact evaluation design would be most effective in assessing the impact of home-grown school feeding programmes on children's outcomes and local economies.

The four WFP school-based programmes identified in 2021 each represent opportunities to pilot new procurement systems and delivery modalities. These pilots will provide operationally relevant evidence on the quality of the service (e.g. meal quality, quantity, delivery and diversity). Based on evidence and lessons learned during these pilots, decisions can be taken on whether and how to scale up the programmes. If scaled up, it will be possible to assess the impact of programmes on the local economy, household and children's outcomes (health, nutrition, learning and gender) in 2023 and 2024.

NON-WINDOW IMPACT EVALUATIONS

In 2021, OEV and the Nutrition Division started work to develop an impact evaluation window planned to launch in mid-2022. Consultations identified malnutrition prevention interventions for pregnant and lactating women as the initial evidence priority area for this window.

OEV also began to support an impact evaluation feasibility assessment and design process in Bangladesh that may fit the future nutrition window. If feasible, the impact evaluation proposed for Bangladesh focuses on how to improve nutrition outcomes for pregnant and lactating women, and women with young children in urban communities through a combination of CBT and complementary interventions.

IMPACT EVALUATION IN FRAGILE AND HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

In 2021, OEV and DIME continued to develop WFP's capacity to deliver impact evaluations of humanitarian operations. These efforts align with WFP's strategy to 1) maximize the responsiveness of impact evaluations to rapidly evolving contexts; and 2) harness the best tools and technologies for impact evaluation.

Work commenced to develop the most appropriate impact evaluation designs and approaches for rapid-onset emergencies and protracted crises, as well as to engage with communities of practice interested in this type of evidence.

Related activities initiated and continued in 2021 included:

- ▶ Completion of a systematic literature review of existing experimental evidence on humanitarian assistance relevant to WFP programming (authored by DIME). Findings emphasized a concerning lack of evidence in the sector and provided additional justification for investment in impact evaluations of humanitarian assistance.
- ▶ Consultation exercises examining the operational contexts, intervention types and opportunities for their optimization. These consultations aimed to generate buy-in and agreement for the most important questions to be answered to optimize humanitarian interventions.

- ▶ Four initial priority evidence areas for humanitarian impact evaluations were identified:
 - Forecast-based financing
 - Precision targeting
 - Configurations of CBT
 - Peace and social cohesion.
- ▶ In line with SAP recommendations in 2020, OEV continued to prepare a library of designs that could be deployed during future emergency responses.
- ▶ In 2021, OEV and DIME started to identify the WFP country offices where humanitarian designs could be deployed. Initial proposals focus on improving household targeting in DRC and/or El Salvador, and forecast-based financing for flood responses in Nepal and Bangladesh.
- ▶ OEV and DIME began to develop data collection tools and processes (e.g. ethical reviews, quality support, etc.) for impact evaluations in humanitarian contexts.
- ▶ Drafting guidance for WFP staff and partners to use the designs, tools and systems established for humanitarian impact evaluation.
- ▶ Participating in communities of practice by hosting and contributing to events, as well as through blog posts and briefs.

Activities are supported by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

OEV continued its impact evaluation capacity development activities in 2021. This included reviewing and producing guidance aimed at supporting WFP programmes to identify opportunities for impact evaluation and to conduct them.

OEV strengthened the Evaluation Quality Assurance System for impact evaluations. Templates and forms to support the delivery of impact evaluations were revised and updated. Specific templates were developed for inception and baseline reports, feasibility assessment forms, memoranda of understanding and terms of reference. The process for conducting an impact evaluation was also documented in a process guide. OEV developed new guidance on the measurement of sensitive

subjects, based on experience gained from the CBT and Gender Window.

OEV continued its process of updating quality assessment mechanisms. In 2021, four decentralized impact evaluations, commissioned before the new strategy, were submitted for external Post-Hoc Quality Assessment. The reviews provided an independent assessment of the quality of the evaluations and were summarized in an annual report that provides valuable reflections on the challenges of conducting impact evaluations in WFP.

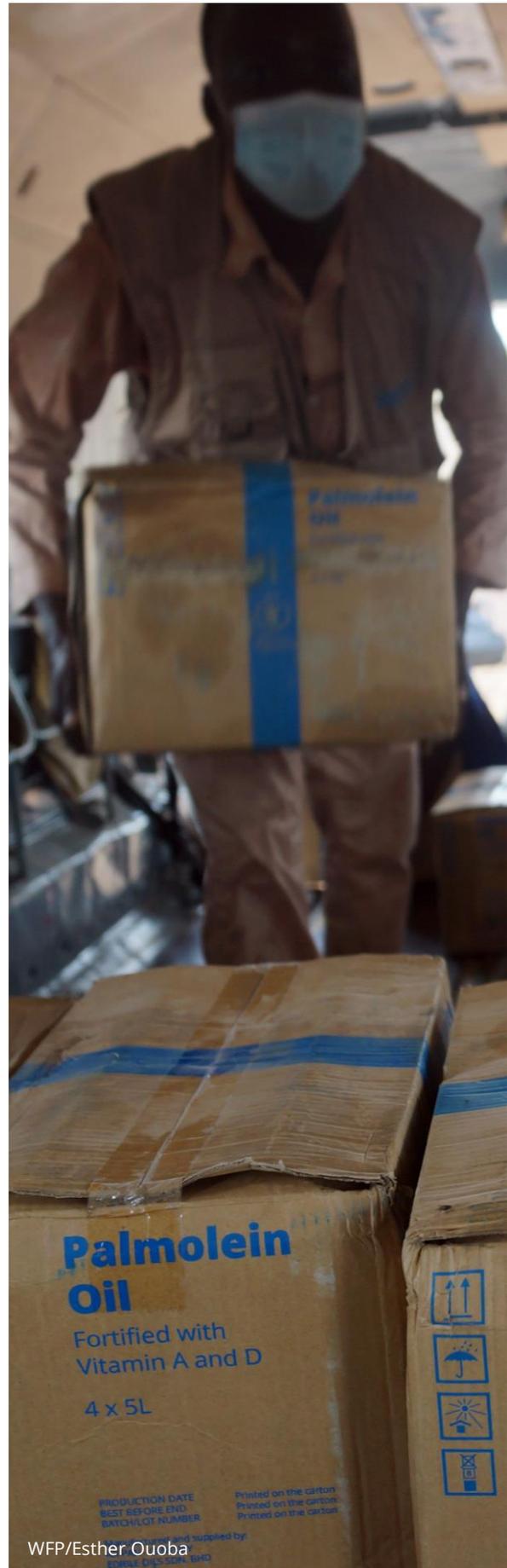
Following completion of the last decentralized impact evaluation Post-Hoc Quality Assessments, OEV undertook a process to revise the template. This process included two workshops and the development of quality standard notes which define the parameters for the updated template. The revised Post-Hoc Quality Assessment template is now better aligned with the type of impact evaluations that WFP aims to deliver in the future.

OEV actively supported internal and external impact evaluation training programmes. In Spring 2021, in partnership with the World Bank's DIME unit, OEV organized a five-week virtual training programme open to all WFP staff and selected external partners. Over 200 people signed up and engaged throughout the training programme. OEV's impact evaluation team also contributed to other WFP training efforts, such as EvalPro, and to external training and round tables organized by J-PAL, ALNAP and 3ie.

COMMUNICATIONS

Recognizing the need for greater engagement and visibility, OEV scaled up its communication efforts for impact evaluation in 2021. In addition to publishing briefs and reports on the external WFP impact evaluation [webpage](#), OEV launched a [medium blog page](#).

Two WFP impact evaluation blog series were established to help build recognition and capacity. Impact evaluations can take several years to complete, which makes it important to keep key stakeholders informed and updated on progress. The blogs share lessons learned and critical reflections on how impact evaluations are conducted and their role in the humanitarian and development space.



PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES IN 2021

The IES notes that WFP has limited in-house capacity to design and deliver rigorous impact evaluations. In the past, WFP impact evaluations were generally supported by external academics. However, this led to mixed results in terms of alignment of evidence priorities and timing of evaluations. To address these issues, OEV started to explore partnerships that are better suited to WFP's operational realities, especially to meet the requirement for responsive support that adapts to changes in context.

The first impact evaluation partnership under this approach was formed with the World Bank's DIME unit, initially for a five year period (2019-2023). The memorandum of understanding with DIME covers a wide range of impact evaluation activities, including technical advice, design support, data collection, analysis, etc.

The partnership with DIME has demonstrated the benefits of responsive and flexible impact evaluation support when facing challenges such as COVID-19. The breadth of the partnership enabled WFP to pivot to activities that were better suited to operational realities. In late 2021, OEV and DIME started a process to review and refine the memorandum of understanding to align with operational realities and ways of working with WFP programmes.

Regarding partnerships with other UN agencies, the impact evaluation in DRC was designed jointly with FAO and UNICEF. Impact evaluations in South Sudan and Sudan are delivered in partnership with UNICEF.

Beyond the UN, OEV continues to develop a community of practice around impact evaluation in fragile and humanitarian contexts. OEV engaged with the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP), Cornell University, DEval, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), ODI, Oxfam and World Vision through reference groups for the CBT and Gender, and Climate and Resilience windows.

For the School-Based Programmes Window, OEV works closely with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and a Research Consortium on School Health and Nutrition. The Consortium is supported by WFP, the Children's Investment Fund Foundation and the World Bank. It includes an impact community of practice that connects to WFP's School-Based Programmes Window.

OEV continued to strengthen WFP's impact evaluation partnerships with the Green Climate Fund, by supporting the Learning-Oriented Real-

Time Impact Assessment (LORTA) as well as collaborating on the identification of suitable Green Climate Fund projects for joint impact evaluations.

However, the 2021 review identified a clear need to expand WFP's impact evaluation delivery partnerships, and increase the representation of southern research partners. A first step towards this expansion is the ongoing work in Bangladesh, where OEV and WFP's Nutrition Division are exploring how research partners in-country, and existing long-term agreements with global research organizations, can support future nutrition impact evaluations.

In 2022, OEV aims to respond to the review recommendations by reassessing evidence and capacity needs. This will include assessing opportunities for broadening the range of methods used in impact evaluations, and the partners engaged to support them.

IMPACT EVALUATION RESOURCES IN 2021

WFP's capacity to deliver the IES depends on its human and financial resources.

Human Resources

Experience so far indicates that the level of support needed from OEV to deliver impact evaluations in WFP is much greater than originally anticipated. During the pilot phase of the IES, the assumption was that external partners such as DIME could directly substitute WFP capacity. However, because rigorous prospective impact evaluations are relatively new to WFP, programme teams require significant support to design and implement interventions to enable the identification of their impact on intended outcomes. In 2020 and 2021, this became even more acute due to the switch to virtual engagements with country offices, which spread activities that were previously completed in a short mission, over several months of fragmented discussion.

To handle the growing portfolio of impact evaluations, in 2021, OEV expanded its impact evaluation team by recruiting two new specialist consultants, bringing the number of impact evaluation team members to eight.

The 2021 review identified capacity constraints as a major challenge for meeting WFP's growing demand for impact evaluation support and evidence. In 2022, OEV will establish a dedicated unit and explore the placement of impact evaluation focal

points in regional bureaux, or country offices, (depending on needs) on a pilot basis.

Financial Resources

WFP continues to seek ways to increase financial resources available to impact evaluation through a co-financing model. OEV covers the cost of the management and technical support needed to deliver an impact evaluation, and country offices commit to covering the cost of data collection.

Starting in 2022, the scope of the Contingency Evaluation Fund has been broadened to support small country offices that face genuine resource constraints in respect to impact evaluation data collection costs.

In addition, OEV continued to fundraise for impact evaluations. Ongoing WFP impact evaluations are being supported by BMZ and KFW, KOICA and USAID.



WFP/Sean Rajman

Lessons learned in 2021

Reflecting on progress made in implementing the WFP IES and the review in 2021, a few key lessons emerge as detailed below.

COUNTRY OFFICE CAPACITY

OEV continues to experience demand for rigorous impact evaluations. During the pilot phase, OEV focused on ensuring that demand was aligned with WFP's evidence priorities through the window process. Although challenging, WFP has demonstrated that it is possible to identify global evidence priorities and develop window-level pre-analysis plans that fit programme objectives.

In 2021, WFP moved from a phase of primarily focusing on impact evaluation design into full delivery, as baseline, midline and endline surveys got under way together with high-frequency data collection in some countries. The data collected is already providing valuable insights into household gender dynamics, food security, coping mechanisms and many other important areas for WFP's work. It is also showing gaps in intended beneficiary participation and programme implementation, which can potentially be used for learning and course correction.

However, ensuring that impact evaluations are contributing to WFP learning will require that regional bureaux and country offices are better equipped to utilize the data and evidence generated. There is a risk that differences between the household-level data collected by impact evaluations and more traditional output monitoring data collected by country offices could create misunderstandings. To mitigate this risk, OEV needs to work more closely with regional bureaux, country offices and monitoring and programme divisions to strengthen monitoring capacity. This work requires additional time and resources and will require increased capacity in OEV, regional bureaux, or country offices, depending on need.

BROADENING METHODS

The 2021 review recommends that WFP broaden the range of methods used in impact evaluations. The need to support country offices to better understand and address programme implementation challenges also provides an opportunity to respond to this recommendation.

In Niger, WFP and DIME are conducting a series of key informant interviews and focus group discussions to explore unexpected trends in household participation rates. Depending on findings, this information will be used to adjust programme monitoring and implementation. It also offers an opportunity to develop process evaluation methods and tools that can be deployed in other WFP impact evaluations.

In addition to incorporating process evaluation methods into ongoing impact evaluations, OEV is learning from the current portfolio and adjusting its approach in future impact evaluations. Whenever feasible, new impact evaluations will include a pilot phase that focuses explicitly on ensuring programme design, capacity and monitoring systems are sufficient before implementation. The decision on whether or not to transition from a pilot phase to full impact evaluation will be informed by process evaluation evidence. Tools developed for the Climate and Resilience Window, such as the high-frequency dashboard, will also be adapted to new country and programme contexts.

EXPANDING PARTNERSHIPS

The SAP and 2021 review both highlighted the importance of expanding WFP's impact evaluation delivery partnerships, and increasing representation of southern researchers. OEV welcomes these recommendations and is actively exploring the types of partners and partnerships that will be most effective in achieving its strategic objectives.

In 2022, OEV will look into refining a hybrid model for delivering impact evaluations with a wider range of partners. The Impact Evaluation Unit will use the ongoing impact evaluations to identify the specific roles that must remain in-house, and those that are best filled by partners.

Once the hybrid model is further refined, OEV will work with WFP's Regional Evaluation Units to map regional impact evaluation and research capacities, as a basis for identifying potential partners. OEV will also explore how to increase capacity within regional bureaux and country offices to support impact evaluation activities, while staying aligned with WFP's strategic objectives and quality standards.

IMPACT EVALUATION COMMUNICATIONS

OEV has already made significant efforts to highlight the WFP IES and activities, both online and through events. Despite these efforts, the review found that many internal and external stakeholders had a limited understanding of impact evaluation and opportunities to access OEV support. Building awareness takes time, and this will be a major focus area for OEV in 2022.

The Impact Evaluation Unit will work closely with OEV's Communication and Knowledge Management Unit to increase the number and types of outputs, as well as the range of communication channels. Following the 2020 Peer Review of the evaluation function by UNEG and the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), OEV is working to enhance the use of evaluation evidence within WFP. Future efforts to enhance the visibility and strategic communication of impact evaluation activities will align with OEV's wider focus on evaluation evidence use.



WFP/Vannette Tolbert

Annex I: Impact Evaluation Window Summary Tables

CASH-BASED TRANSFERS (CBT) AND GENDER WINDOW

Country	Main evaluation questions	Expected timeline
El Salvador	What are the impacts of a food-assistance-for-assets programme targeting women on women’s social and economic empowerment (vis-à-vis a control group and an unconditional cash transfer to the household)?	Baseline: Q1 2021 Midline: Q2 2021 Endline: Q3 2021
Kenya	What are the impacts of a food-assistance-for-assets and training programme targeting women (with poultry rearing support) on women’s social and economic empowerment (vis-à-vis a control group and a programme targeting men)?	Baseline: Q1 2021 Midline: Q2 2021 Endline: Q3 2021
Rwanda (part of two windows)	<p>CASH-BASED TRANSFERS (CBT) AND GENDER WINDOW</p> <p>What are the impacts of a food-assistance-for-assets programme targeting women on women’s social and economic empowerment (vis-à-vis a control group and a programme utilizing a “business-as-usual” approach mainly involving men)?</p> <p>CLIMATE AND RESILIENCE WINDOW</p> <p>In Rwanda, the impact evaluation of the “Sustainable Market Alliance and Asset Creation for Resilient Communities and Gender Transformation” project (SMART) seeks understand how the resilience of households is supported by the project.</p>	Baseline: Q1 2021 High-frequency surveys: April 2021 – August 2022 Planned Endline: Q3 2022
Syria	The evaluation planned to examine the impact of targeting women for cash-transfers conditional on their participation in a newly designed livelihoods programme.	Discontinued by country office due to feasibility concerns and changing priorities.

CLIMATE AND RESILIENCE WINDOW

Country	Main evaluation questions	Expected timeline
Bangladesh Forecast-based Financing (FBF)	What are the impacts of anticipatory action/cash transfers ahead of severe flooding on household mitigation and coping when compared to an early response post-shock, and a more “traditional” post-shock response?	Follow-up 1: Q3 2022 Follow-up 2: Q3 2022 Follow-up 3: Q4 2022
Nepal (FBF)	What are the impacts of anticipatory action/cash transfers ahead of severe flooding on mitigation and coping when compared to an early response post-shock, and a more “traditional” post-shock response?	Follow-up 1: Q3 2022 Follow-up 2: Q3 2022 Follow-up 3: Q4 2022
Mali	The impact evaluation in Mali examines the overall impact of the Integrated Resilience Programme, which includes Food Assistance for Assets, School Feeding, Nutrition and Smallholder Agriculture Market Support activities.	Baseline: Q1 2021 High-frequency surveys: April 2021 – August 2022 Planned Endline: Q1 2023
Niger	The impact evaluation in Mali examines the overall impact of Integrated Resilience Programme, which includes Food Assistance for Assets, School Feeding, Nutrition and Smallholder Agriculture Market Support activities.	Baseline: Q1 2021 High-frequency surveys: April 2021 – August 2022 Planned Endline: Q1 2023
South Sudan	The impact evaluation design consists of two components: 1) measure the impact of Asset Creation Activities compared to Unconditional Cash Transfer and control group villages; 2) measure the impact of joint education interventions by WFP and UNICEF.	Baseline: Q3 2021 High-frequency surveys: November 2021 – December 2022 Planned Endline: Q1 2023
Sudan	Impact evaluation is in the design stage. Focus will be on the additional impact of adding specific social cohesion interventions (e.g. dispute resolution mechanisms) to UNICEF and WFP resilience interventions (e.g. cash-transfers, education, livelihoods, WASH, etc.).	Baseline: 2022 (TBC) High-frequency surveys: 2022 – 2026 (TBC) Endline: 2026 (TBC)
DRC	Evaluation aimed to understand the impact of a joint-resilience programme funded by BMZ and delivered by FAO, UNICEF and WFP.	Converted from an impact evaluation to a decentralized evaluation due to feasibility.

SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMMES WINDOW

Country	Main evaluation questions	Expected timeline
Burundi	An initial pilot will be introduced to assess the extent to which the introduction of a new cash-based decentralized procurement model will impact the quality of school-feeding meals (e.g. quality, quantity, delivery and diversity of meals), compared with a centrally based procurement system. The pilot is intended to build programme implementation capacity. If the pilot is successful, a large-scale impact evaluation will be included in the scale-up of the programme to assess the impact of the cash-based decentralized procurement model on children's outcomes (i.e. health, nutrition, human capital and gender) and on smallholder farmers and the local economy.	Pilot is tentatively expected to take place from September 2022 to June 2023 Feasibility assessment for a large-scale impact evaluation will take place in June 2023. If a large-scale impact evaluation is feasible, the baseline is expected in 2023 and end-line in 2024.
The Gambia	To what extent does the introduction of a Home-Grown School Feeding intervention impact children's outcomes (e.g. health, nutrition, human capital and gender) and on smallholder farmers and the local economy.	Baseline: September 2022 Midline: June 2023 Endline: December 2024
Guatemala	To what extent the introduction of a new app that supports schools' procurement system will impact the quality of the school-feeding meals (e.g. quality, quantity, delivery and diversity of meals). If the pilot is successful, a large-scale impact evaluation will be included in the scale-up of the programme, which will assess the impact of the decentralized procurement system on children's outcomes (i.e. health, nutrition, human capital and gender) and on smallholder farmers and the local economy.	Pilot: April to December 2022 Feasibility assessment for a large-scale impact evaluation will take place in January 2023. If a large-scale impact evaluation is feasible, the baseline is expected in 2023 and the endline in 2024.
Jordan	To what extent a new school-feeding model based on community-based kitchens will impact children's outcomes (e.g. dietary diversity, learning and norms) and the local economy (e.g. employment, income and household decision making).	Baseline: September 2022 Endline: June 2023

WORKSTREAMS: OPTIMIZING HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS

Country	Main evaluation or measurement questions	Expected timeline
DRC (Targeting)	What are the impacts of different targeting mechanisms (data-driven versus community-based targeting) on targeting precision, community satisfaction and livelihood outcomes?	Baseline Q3 2022 Endline Q2 2023
South Sudan (not an impact evaluation)	Social Cohesion Measurement Pilot: Can mapping the quality of social networks and a conjoint experiment contribute to social cohesion measures?	Baseline Q2 2022 Endline Q4 2022

Office of Evaluation

World Food Programme

Via Cesare Giulio Viola 68/70

00148 Rome, Italy

T +39 06 65131 | wfp.org