



# WFP EVALUATION

## COUNTRY CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

*Lessons from WFP evaluation initiatives*



Supporting the 2014 UNGA Resolution ([A/RES/69/237](#)), the evaluation function of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is working with countries and partners to strengthen national evaluation capacities (NEC). This brief is part of a series of five that documents results and lessons from 22 initiatives implemented across 25 countries in five regions in collaboration with 49 partners between 2018 and 2022. The briefs were informed by interviews with WFP and partner staff, and the review of background material, NECD literature and relevant external documents.

### CONTEXT

This brief covers three examples of how WFP helped establish and strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems, policies and frameworks in India, Lesotho and Tunisia.

The initiatives sought to promote effective M&E planning, implementation and use among national actors, with a key focus on strengthening the capacities of national institutions and fostering an enabling environment.

The partnership includes the secondment of an M&E expert who cooperates with the DMEO in a wide range of activities including evaluation policy development, strengthening institutional M&E capacities, undertaking joint evaluations and knowledge sharing.

In Lesotho and Tunisia, WFP country offices, with their respective Regional Evaluation Units (REUs), supported line ministries in designing and setting up improved M&E policies and frameworks for the national school feeding programmes.

In Lesotho, WFP provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Education and training in producing the National School Feeding Policy and corresponding **M&E framework**.

In Tunisia, WFP supported the Office of School Services in identifying M&E gaps as part of the **Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER)** workshop.



In India, WFP's national evaluation capacity development (NECD) work is framed by a three-year (2020-2023) institutional partnership with the Development M&E Office (**DMEO**) of the Government of India.



## RESULTS

- Developed a national evaluation policy framework and related normative products including the DMEO Strategic Paper for M&E, a National M&E Competency Framework and Curriculum for Government officials.
- Mapped existing national evaluation capacities at institutional and individual levels. WFP and the DMEO developed an evaluation diagnostic tool to assess institutional evaluation capacities in different states. This tool assesses gaps and identifies customised training programmes for specific states.
- Designed and implemented M&E training and related events. This directly contributes to enhanced capacity of government officers to undertake and use evaluations, enhancing evaluative thinking for decision-making.
- Provided technical advice to country-led evaluations and conducted joint National Food Security Act (NFSA) evaluations and assessments. In addition to evidence generation, this contributes to enhanced capacities for DMEO staff and stakeholders involved in the evaluations.
- Developed M&E frameworks, toolkits, guidelines and related resources. This supports the DMEO in becoming the one-stop-shop for M&E resources and toolkits to national and state actors in India.
- Disseminated findings and communication efforts to a wide audience. WFP and the DMEO co-authored three articles on the role and use of M&E for evidence-based decision-making (links [here](#), [here](#) & [here](#)), and participated in conferences, webinars and workshops to introduce findings and lessons from food security and nutrition evaluations.
- Developed the National School Feeding Policy in Lesotho. This anchors the National School Feeding Programme (NSFP) within the National Social Protection framework. Following the recommendation of the joint [evaluation of the NSFP in 2018](#), WFP supported the Ministry to develop the [NSFP M&E framework](#), which is used to guide the implementation of the National NSFP M&E activities.
- Created a common understanding on programme objectives and M&E responsibilities. The WFP team that supported the development of the M&E framework in Lesotho developed a theory of change to enhance a common understanding of the programme's objectives through stakeholder consultations.
- Provided training to develop a functional M&E system for the national school feeding programme in Tunisia. The training was well aligned and fully coherent with WFP's strategic objective on country capacity strengthening as well as the [WFP Tunisia's country strategic plan](#) at the time.
- Established an entry point for future engagements in Tunisia. The regional evaluation officer's participation in the SABER workshop provided an opportunity for WFP and the Government to engage in discussions on commissioning a future joint evaluation, and how to foster evidence use for decision-making at country level.



## EMERGING LESSONS

- 1 WFP senior management and their national counterparts are key in creating an enabling and collaborative environment.**

This gave space for the WFP and DMEO teams to co-design and implement several initiatives in a short time.
- 2 Reinforcing the national M&E system requires research, assessment and coordinated M&E efforts.**

Through a comprehensive evidence-generation strategy where evaluation is combined with research and assessments, India is including NECD for food security and nutrition in national programmes. Tunisia's experience also speaks about the need to embed evaluation requirements and plans into programmatic discussions and broader country capacity strengthening activities.
- 3 Strategic NECD initiatives need to be aligned with policy cycles to ensure their adoption.**

In India, this required accelerating advocacy on implementing the National Evaluation Policy.
- 4 Secondment works where it complements existing national capacities without substituting nationally-mobilized resources.**

For sustainability purposes, the focus should be on "leveraging expertise" with a transfer of skills and responsibilities to DMEO staff. Exit strategies need to be considered (with stakeholder buy-in) for initiatives ready to be institutionalized.
- 5 M&E frameworks are best suited when developed for national strategies with clear roles and responsibilities, not for high-level national policies alone.**

Experience from Lesotho shows that it is easier to develop an M&E framework from a NSFP strategy rather than from a policy with general statements.
- 6 Sustaining interest and use of toolkits and other standardization initiatives becomes a challenge when facing government staff rotation.**

To address this, WFP and the DMEO are exploring ways to provide digitized self-learning toolkits and self-paced content which can be accessed anywhere on-the-go.
- 7 A sustainable funding mechanism is critical for strategic NECD initiatives to expand, scale and sustain impact.**
- 8 Engagement of government stakeholders and WFP programmatic units is crucial in developing M&E frameworks.**

Lesotho's experience was grounded in a WFP-government working group leading a desk review and consultative process with national stakeholders and experts. The participation of both the multi-sectorial national school feeding technical team (from various ministries and departments), and ground-level consultation involving district school feeding teams, is a good practice to ensure relevance and ownership of the final M&E framework.
- 9 Evaluations of national programmes that make NECD-related recommendations can foster commitments and investment to strengthen capacities.**

The development of the M&E framework in Lesotho was part of implementing a recommendation for a joint decentralized evaluation conducted by the Ministry and WFP. The management response to the recommendations clearly stipulated the need and timeline to develop the M&E Framework. This shows that joint evaluations can be key entry points for more strategic work on NECD at policy and institutional levels.
- 10 Meetings, exchanges and workshops need to be translated into actionable points and thoughtful follow-up to ensure progress.**

The relationship between WFP and the government of Tunisia played a key role in successfully organizing and implementing the SABER workshop. However, informants agreed on the need for a follow-up action plan to ensure its implementation.



## CONDITIONS FOR SCALE UP

- 1 Replicate NECD as part of WFP's wider country capacity strengthening (CCS) efforts.**

CCS guarantees a coordinated effort from programmatic and M&E functions, and reliable support from the regional office.
- 2 Secure predictable and sustainable funding over several years.**

There is a need for deliberate funding mechanisms for NECD, so that strategic initiatives are designed with a long-term view to ensure impact.
- 3 Create trusted partnerships with governments.**

Demand for and opportunities to support NECD initiatives are more likely when there is a trusted, nurtured partnership with the government.
- 4 Explore the benefits of NECD initiatives in an open environment.**

In some contexts, government and other stakeholders may not be clear on the benefits of NECD. Open discussions with senior management are important to achieve a common understanding of how investing in NECD results is a critical element of public governance.
- 5 Establish collaborative and inclusive planning from key national partners and UN agencies to decide on the common goal.**

Engagement of both politically and technically skilled staff is necessary for nationally-owned and technically sound initiatives.
- 6 Discuss national resourcing as a pre-condition for functional, sustainable M&E frameworks.**

Without discussions and engagement with the national budgeting and finance departments, operationalization of M&E frameworks and plans in the long run is unlikely to be successful. To ensure institutionalization, budgeting and resourcing must be discussed as part of the workplan.
- 7 Include NECD in UN Sustainable Development Corporation Frameworks as part of the UN work in a country.**

The M&E and CCS focal points of the UN country team member agencies must ensure that NECD-related work is included in the framework for coordination, engagement and mobilization of additional UN expertise.
- 8 Foster NECD through South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC).**

SSTC not only offers learning opportunities from experiences already tested, but also increases funding opportunities.
- 9 Establish individual-level expertise within WFP and partner government institutions to replicate in other contexts the systematic approach to NECD in India.**

India's success is anchored within high levels of individual expertise and capacities of both government and WFP's country office. This expertise can be leveraged to design NECD interventions in other countries.

The series of briefs were prepared as part of a collaboration with the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA).

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World Food Programme

[wfp.org/independent-evaluation](http://wfp.org/independent-evaluation)

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