



# WFP EVALUATION



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES  
CHANGING LIVES

## 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 the first in 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 experiences and lessons from commissioning five joint evaluations (JEs) with national institutions and providing advice and technical support to three country-led evaluations (CLEs). Beyond ensuring impartial assessment to inform decisions and enhance implementation, the initiatives aimed to strengthen national capacities and transfer skills.

In Benin, the Dominican Republic, Eswatini, Lesotho and Namibia, JEs united partners in an evaluative effort towards the assessment of a programme or theme. In Kenya and Peru, WFP provided technical advice and guidance in school feeding (SF), nutrition and social protection upon the request of line ministries.

For Kenya, the technical assistance included training national staff in data collection for a baseline survey. In India, WFP supported several CLEs, contributing to the development of individual and institutional capacities, guidance materials and tools for high-quality- and utilization-focused JEs and CLEs on food security and nutrition.



### WFP IN ACTION

#### COMMISSIONING JOINT EVALUATIONS WITH GOVERNMENTS

WFP universally applied its structured and systematic approach to conducting decentralized evaluations through its quality assurance system ([DEQAS](#)). In addition to providing proven quality assurance tools and processes, WFP's guidance facilitated intentional participation of national partners through the Evaluation Committee and Evaluation Reference Group. This helped to demystify the evaluation process, enhancing evaluative thinking among participants.

The approach to evaluation management primarily provided opportunities for strengthening individual capacities, with secondary effects on institutional capacities. Furthermore, WFP strengthened, through its convening power, linkages between ministries by providing a platform for engagement and knowledge sharing on roles and responsibilities of different actors.

## SUPPORTING COUNTRY-LED EVALUATIONS

WFP played the role of enabler and adviser contributing to the quality and relevance of CLE processes and the use of results in Kenya, Peru and India.

Advising on scope and methodological issues, WFP supported the impact study conducted by the government of Peru in cooperation with a national university. An International Advisory Group coordinated

by the WFP Peru country office provided both thematic and methodological feedback to the line ministry.

In India, WFP's secondment is providing technical and advisory support in conceptualizing an ongoing CLE.

WFP's enabler role maximized opportunities for cross-learning with national experts and line ministries, which increased the CLEs utility and credibility, as more sectors and stakeholders were consulted.



## RESULTS

- **Contributed to a more systematic and consultative discussion between national partners.** This increased the relevance of the recommendations and a national commitment to using evidence for improved programme design and institutional processes.
- **Contributed to the generation of quality evidence to inform national programmes and policies and aligning WFP and government strategic priorities at country level:**
  - **IN ESWATINI:** The JE provided recommendations on how the school feeding programme should expand food commodity procurement from smallholder farmers and how WFP could support in this process. Recommendations served to guide the design of the home-grown school feeding programme and ensured government ownership. It led to the programme's adoption in all public schools and the increment of budget allocations for nutritious commodities in the 2021-2022 national budget.
  - **IN NAMIBIA:** The JE contributed to discussions at various levels of government on strengthening country ownership, models and sustainability of school feeding programmes and linkages with social protection.
  - **IN LESOTHO:** The JE findings were used to inform WFP and government in transitioning to full ownership in the implementation of the national school feeding programme and to developing an M&E framework.
  - **IN PERU:** The [CLE fed into the redesign of the Qali Warma School Feeding Programme.](#)
  - **IN INDIA:** National and state government M&E capacities were enhanced to evaluate national spending on food safety net programmes, making better use of resources and progress towards SDG 2.

Evidence generated in the southern African region has provided a platform for evidence-based decision-making on 'what works' in school feeding to strengthen fragmented social protection systems and linkages with smallholder agriculture from a sectoral perspective. As WFP gained experience in JEs, the quality of reports increased.

- **Provided a space and time for discussions on and plans for broader, long-term NECD support.** WFP's engagement in JEs and CLEs identified critical institutional capacity needs for future interventions. For example, the JE in Namibia showed the importance of using existing national M&E frameworks. In Lesotho, the JE pointed to the need for developing an M&E framework *before* programme implementation transitions to Government. In the Dominican Republic, the JE included regular face-to-face workshops, engaging government counterparts instead of simply circulating documents. This participatory approach led to requests for more evaluations during the follow-up phase.
- **Contributed directly to individual capacities and indirectly to organizational capacities.** Using WFP DEQAS guidelines and tools and co-managing evaluations empowered government staff to develop skills in navigating barriers and reinforcing a utilization-focused approach to evaluation within their institutions.
- **Utilized the supply of national evaluators.** At the individual level, WFP's deliberate recruitment of national evaluators helped build individual capacity to conduct evaluations following international standards.



# EMERGING LESSONS

## CROSCUTTING LESSONS

- **Joint and country-led evaluations can act as a catalyst for developing national M&E frameworks.** JEs and CLEs help to identify broader national evaluation capacity needs. As the processes unfolds, different individuals involved reflect on the institutional and individual capacities needed to conduct independent evaluations. This could provide entry points to future, longer term NECD opportunities.
- **Clear intentions from the outset help to manage results and expectations.** It's important to clearly state capacity building elements in the terms of reference (ToRs) to create a common understanding and commitment on both sides.
- **Early engagement buys time and understanding.** Stakeholder appreciation that JE management takes time is important to successful processes and the quality of products.
- **Review agreements on scope, intended use and time when context and interlocutors have changed.** In cases where important changes occurred at the initial stages of an evaluation, such as new government staff or national priorities, best practice was to revise the key elements of the ToRs, not to compromise ownership and utility.
- **Plan and invest in evidence dissemination and use.** Disseminating findings and investing time to prepare a response to the recommendations ensures evidence use.

## LESSONS FOR JOINT EVALUATIONS

- 1 Effective JEs require that all stakeholders understand their respective roles.** WFP's experience in several countries has demonstrated the importance of clearly specifying the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders at the planning stage and clarifying these in the ToRs.
- 2 Ensure that evaluation scope, design and timing is based on national needs.** In those cases where national entities were truly involved in evaluation planning from the outset, the ToRs were richer and better tailored to partners' information needs, accountability requirements and learning opportunities.

- 3 Clear commitment and sense of ownership by the government, expressed through leadership.** Co-chairing the evaluation committee and appointing a dedicated senior government official as co-manager of the JE (as in Benin, Eswatini and Namibia), strengthened the partnership with WFP and created national ownership. As a result, other in-country stakeholders took interest in the evaluation.
- 4 Adapting WFP's DEQAS process guide for JEs.** Although government counterparts found the DEQAS process guide to be clear and understandable further adaptation of DEQAS to JEs is needed for different contexts.
- 5 Use knowledgeable, experienced, skilled and politically savvy evaluators to mitigate risks and deal with challenges.** For successful JE's, the key characteristics of evaluation managers, M&E staff and evaluation teams are:
  - a) a great sense of political sensitivity, as well as good stakeholder management.
  - b) knowledge about government systems and experience in working with the government.
  - c) being both persistent, flexible and patient throughout the evaluation process.
- 6 Factoring time in evaluation schedules for informative consultations with key partners.** To ensure national ownership and active participation in leaving no one behind, best practice is to ensure timely feedback by organizing physical or online meetings to enable feedback loops and clarity on issues before asking for written inputs.
- 7 Contributing to JE costs signals partners stake in the process.** To better guarantee national ownership, it is ideal that the government contributes to the evaluation budget, representing a clear interest in the evaluation results and use.
- 8 Effective and continuous communication with government and other stakeholders sustains interest.** Organising regular meetings and workshops in addition to sharing documents via email proved a critical success factor in the [PROSOLI nutrition programme](#) in the Dominican Republic. Furthermore, a representative from the Public Evaluation Office in Benin (in addition to the implementing ministry) was included in the joint steering committee, resulting in elevated discussions on independence issues, and guaranteeing that the evaluation receives proper consideration at political and legislative levels.

## LESSONS FOR COUNTRY-LED EVALUATIONS

- 1 WFP's maturing decentralized evaluation function is increasingly adding value to CLEs.** This is reinforcing national capacities to conduct quality and useful evaluations.
- 2 Mobilizing WFP evaluation and programmatic expertise at different stages of a CLE delivers substantive support.** In Kenya and Peru, governments asked WFP to mobilize its thematic and evaluation expertise in a synchronized way. In both cases, the country offices were able to

leverage WFP's global thematic expertise on social protection (Kenya) and nutrition (Peru), solidifying its partnership with line ministries and providing WFP with a seat at the table for policy discussions during and after the CLE.

- 3 Timing is crucial for proper engagement in government-led evaluations.** WFP is more likely to provide relevant technical advice if it is involved very early on in the process when the evaluation is in its planning stage and its scope, approach and methodology are still being defined.



## CONDITIONS FOR SCALE UP

- 1 Employ confident staff with NECD competencies, working in partnerships and delivering results.** In all the initiatives, having skilled WFP staff was critical in navigating the terrain, engaging country actors, creating government ownership and guiding the JE/CLEs.
- 2 Keep the UN country team and UN M&E regional working groups informed on planned and completed JEs and CLEs.** This allows visibility and engagement of more partners who are relevant to the subject of the evaluation and promotes use far and wide.
- 3 Develop relationships based on mutual desire for learning and accountability.** There should be agreement between partners on why the evaluation is needed, and its rationale for evidence demand in any specific case.
- 4 Co-plan, co-budget, co-manage.** The more a JE is cooperatively planned and conducted, the higher the likelihood of success. There should be close coordination from the planning phase to ensure the process is well-managed, potential challenges are mitigated, and delays minimized.
- 5 Budget adequately and use national frameworks and systems where possible.** The evaluation must be planned and budgeted for by commissioners (for JEs) and the government (for CLEs), with WFP holding an advisory role on these matters based on technical experience and lessons from different countries.
- 6 Engage national evaluators.** It is critical to make use of qualified national evaluators who are conversant with the culture, language and political dynamics of the country.
- 7 Reflect and document lessons from evaluation processes.** Lessons on the successes and failures of commissioning JEs and supporting CLEs must be documented and disseminated periodically to enable wider learning nationally, regionally and globally.

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

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