



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. These 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 initiatives about WFP engagement with global NECD partnerships and coalitions.

WFP engagement in the international evaluation arena has grown steadily since 2017. To achieve the SDGs, a twin-track of advocacy efforts are important: partnerships with UN agencies, governments, VOPEs, communities of practice, donors and other actors on the one hand; and technical activities channelled through the most relevant UN and country-level coalitions, on the other.

These efforts contribute to a global, regional, and national enabling environment, and create capacities for the demand and supply of evidence contributing to Agenda 2030.



WFP IN ACTION

WFP contributions were channelled by the Office of Evaluation (OEV) with engagement of regional evaluation units (REUs) and some country offices.

WFP's Director of Evaluation has served as co-chair EvalPartners from 2019.

[EvalPartners](#) is a multi-stakeholder coalition which has developed and championed the Global EvalAgenda 2020 and is working to recommit to a new EvalAgenda 2030.

With partners, WFP convened a [High-Level Political Forum \(HLPF\)](#) side event in 2021, and a [Voluntary National Review \(VNR\) Lab](#) in 2022 to promote country-led evaluations (CLEs) of the SDGs.

Working with the UN Rome-based agencies and the [EvalForward](#) community of practice, WFP brought together the global evaluation community in dialogues on the role evaluation could play at the [UN food systems summit](#) and the [UN climate change conference \(COP\)](#).

In 2021, WFP became an associate partner of the GEI, with the signing of the WFP-GEI [Memorandum of Understanding](#). Through this partnership, WFP contributed to the mapping of NECD initiatives around the globe. WFP also provided feedback on different thematic areas including M&E in fragile and conflict situations and professional development & training.

Other areas of action included WFP's contribution to the UNEG working group on NECD, engagement with the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation in 2018 (leading to the [Colombo Declaration](#) that continues to galvanize actors in NECD), and active participation in gLOCAL Evaluation Weeks.



RESULTS

- **Enhanced global positioning and establishing a strong foundation.** Global advocacy efforts have resulted in better positioning of WFP as a well-recognized NECD player, laying a foundation for a continued contribution towards strengthening national evaluation systems for progress towards the SDGs.
- **Created visibility and raised greater awareness of evaluation of CLEs at high-level events.** At the HLFP, close to 200 delegates attended the 2021 side event hosted by WFP and UNICEF together with the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs of Nigeria, UN Women, EvalPartners and IDEAS. The event titled [Country-led SDG Evaluation: the missing piece of the jigsaw?](#) celebrated the progress of evaluation at the national level with distinguished panellists from Nigeria, India, Argentina and the United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO). The Assistant Secretary-General of the UN DCO provided remarks on the role and future of evaluation within the UN system. The event was complemented by a [virtual exhibition](#). In 2022, WFP together with partners UNICEF, UN Women, EvalPartners and IDEAS hosted a [Voluntary National Review Lab \(VNR\) Lab](#) at the High Level Political Forum to introduce different pathways in which evidence from country-led evaluations can feed into country VNR processes. Countries that have used evaluative evidence in their VNRs provided practical examples of how this can be done and shared lessons from the process.
- **Published the UNEG report that maps progress since the 2014 UNGA resolution.** The report includes two core elements that, if taken on board by UN agencies, can propel the NECD work of the UN system. First, a UNEG definition of NECD and a well-articulated theory of change; second, clear recommendations on what the UN can do to enhance NECD efforts and promote high quality national evaluation systems.
- **Built capacity of EvalPartners to take stock of its contributions to the global evaluation community.** WFP supported EvalPartners to strengthen the functioning of its Secretariat, conduct a [stocktaking review of progress towards EvalAgenda 2020](#) that will lead to the development of a renewed EvalAgenda 2030, commission the [Evaluation of the EvalPartners Strategic Plan 2018-2020](#) and its [Management Response](#), and develop a new Strategic Plan 2023-2030.
- **Increased recognition of evaluation in food systems and climate change.** Working with the Rome-based agencies, and EvalForward, greater collaboration was established with the [Food Systems Coordination Hub](#) and the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat](#).
- **Mapped NECD initiatives.** One of the GEI's priorities was to identify their partners' key NECD-related activities, the countries and main target groups for these interventions. Information from this mapping exercise was combined into an interactive [data visualization dashboard](#).
- **Engagement at regional levels.** GEI funded an M&E landscape study of 22 MENA countries and held a consultative workshop with the Islamic Development Bank, WFP, UNDP, and École Nationale d'Administration Publique (ENAP) to discuss a strategic approach for the MENA region. In Latin America and the Caribbean, GEI is now part of the NEC index (INCE).



EMERGING LESSONS

1 Inclusion of NECD in the workplans of OEV and REUs led to relevant and contextualised engagements.

When areas of engagement are prioritized within workplans, WFP was able to contribute substantively with ideas and where appropriate with resources to the work of global coalitions.

2 Results- and product-oriented support makes it easier to contribute more effectively.

When WFP and partners were working towards specific results or products, rather than general engagement, there was concrete achievement or progress. This focus on results contributes to strengthening the partnership itself and enhanced WFP staff capacities.

3 Global commitment to CLE could galvanise actors along a clear NECD pathway, and support to CLEs could become a workstream in regional evaluation strategies.

Many informants interviewed during this lesson learning exercise noted that in developing countries, capacities for demanding, managing, and using high-quality CLEs should be a clear measure or indicator of the NEC status in a country.

4 Making explicit WFP's added value in global NECD discussions would help the organization work along more strategic and recognized NECD pathways.

While engagement with global initiatives advocating for stronger national evaluation functions has positioned WFP as a recognized NECD player, the organization needs to define its added value and niche given the multiplicity of actors in this space.

5 Working with global networks or coalitions is a good starting point to reduce duplication, increase advocacy capacity and combine resources.

Engagement in different partnership forums helps ensure alignment in planning, collective learning and common messaging and advocacy. For example, working with EvalForward on the inclusion of evaluation in climate change dialogues led to an outcome statement that applied systems thinking, assessed climate pledges and addressed impact washing. Equally, engagement in the UNEG NECD working group harnessed the collective expertise of the network, with the potential to build on the successes of the review report and guide more joint NECD work.

6 Advocacy and engagement require diplomacy and intervention of senior leaders as well as technical knowledge and skills .

One of the main lessons from engaging in multi-stakeholder initiatives is the importance of diplomacy and tact when working across governments, the UN, multilateral organizations and networks.

7 Parliamentary forums and other high-level spaces at country level could be the next frontier to expand advocacy efforts beyond governments.

8 Recognition of the important role of VOPEs.

VOPEs are remarkably diverse and pluralistic networks. This creates challenges in aligning their interests with those of other networks, including UNEG and related regional networks, but also offers opportunities to harness their diversity and establish their important advocacy role at national level. When VOPEs engage in capacity development of individuals, and by extension to institutions through training, conferences, and guidelines, and advocacy for national policies, they create space for other actors to engage within the specific national ecosystem.



CONDITIONS FOR SCALE UP

1 **Think strategically about NECD and WFP's value add.**

While it is desirable that WFP continues its engagement and support for global NECD coalitions and partnerships, it would be useful to have a shared understanding of WFP's value add, recognizing that this might vary from region to region and country to country.

2 **Create a long-term vision based on emerging positive experiences.**

The lessons show that WFP can have significant impact if it is intentional about what the organization would like to contribute on NECD worldwide.

3 **Align NECD work across the evaluation function.**

WFP commitments on NECD reflected in the [Evaluation Policy 2022](#) and elaborated in the Corporate Evaluation Strategy 2022 should be concretised in an action plan to explicitly inform NECD expectations in the second generation of regional evaluation strategies.

4 **Prioritise NECD work by allocating WFP resources centrally and regionally.**

This would reduce the risk of NECD being deprioritized due to lack of financial resources or turnover of human resources. Sustainable and predictable resources for NECD would ensure consistency in the implementation of regional action plans.

5 **Align, coordinate and communicate across the organization, with WFP Research, Assessment and Monitoring (RAM) and Country Capacity Strengthening (CCS) units to share knowledge and mainstream M&E CCS into country strategic plans.**

6 **Collaborate with United Nations Country Teams, country-level UN M&E inter-agency working groups and regional UN networks.**

There should be spaces where WFP can engage in mapping the status and evolution of NECD activities.

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