



IMPACT EVALUATION

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

2022 in review



**World Food
Programme**

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Foreword



In 2022, WFP launched a new [Evaluation Policy](#) and [Corporate Evaluation Strategy](#), in harmony with the new [WFP Strategic Plan for 2022-2025](#), which identifies evidence as one of six enablers that will support the organization's ability to achieve results.

The new Evaluation Policy is the first to address impact evaluation as a third category of evaluation, alongside centralized and decentralized evaluations, thereby institutionalizing impact evaluation as part of WFP's comprehensive evaluation function.

The inclusion of impact evaluation in the new WFP Evaluation Policy was followed by the establishment of a dedicated Impact Evaluation Unit. The new Unit is now responsible for delivering the [WFP Impact Evaluation Strategy \(2019-2026\)](#) in alignment with the Evaluation Policy and corporate priorities, and developing the organizational capacities, systems, and partnerships needed to harness impact evaluation effectively.

WFP's Impact Evaluation Strategy has an explicit aim of supporting the organization to use rigorous impact evaluation evidence to inform policy and programme decisions, optimise interventions and provide thought leadership to global efforts to achieve Zero Hunger.

The Impact Evaluation Strategy also highlights the important role that external partners play as a source of inspiration, knowledge, and technical expertise. WFP established a Strategic Advisory Panel (SAP) of external experts to guide efforts to build capacity and deliver impact evaluations. The advice of the SAP is an important contribution as we move towards institutionalizing impact evaluation within WFP.

As the Director of Evaluation, I am very pleased to share the 2022 Annual Report of the Strategic Advisory Panel, which captures progress to date, lessons learned from piloting our strategy, and key issues for consideration as we move into 2023.

Director of Evaluation
Anne-Claire Luzot

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

2022 in Review

INTRODUCTION

This annual report outlines progress made towards implementing [WFP's Impact Evaluation Strategy](#) in 2022. The first two years of the strategy (2019-2021) were a pilot phase, during which period the Office of Evaluation (OEV) assessed the demand for impact evaluation evidence in WFP and explored different models of delivering them in rapidly evolving contexts.

Following an [independent review of the Strategy pilot phase in 2021](#), impact evaluation was embedded into the [WFP Evaluation Policy 2022](#) as a third type, alongside centralized and decentralized evaluations. WFP also established a standalone Impact Evaluation Unit (IEU) to deliver the Impact Evaluation Strategy, in alignment with the new Policy and WFP [Corporate Evaluation Strategy 2022](#) (CES).

The WFP Evaluation Policy 2022 defines impact evaluations as those that “measure changes in development outcomes of interest for a target population that can be attributed to a specific programme or policy through a credible counterfactual”. The policy stipulates that impact evaluations are managed by OEV at the request of country offices, and that individual impact evaluations are not required to be presented to the WFP Executive Board. The decision to keep impact evaluation as a demand-led exercise helps ensure the purpose remains primarily focused on programme learning, and that impact evaluations are used when the contexts and resources are suitable to producing evidence that is globally recognised and relevant.

The CES also institutionalises the Impact Evaluation Strategy (2019-2026) as part of the normative framework for the overall evaluation function (Workstream A.4) and indicates that OEV will update the Impact Evaluation Strategy in 2026. The CES commits OEV to work with external partners on impact evaluation methods (Workstream 1.1.4) and

to increase WFP's understanding of impact evaluation through trainings and targeted initiatives (Workstream 4.1.3).

The CES also commits OEV to assess impact evaluation capacity needs and establish systems to support capacity development in regional bureaux and country offices. The CES highlights a need to broaden impact evaluation delivery partnerships and explore opportunities for generating impact evaluation evidence jointly with other UN agencies and communities of practice (Workstream 5.2.3). Finally, the CES acknowledges that institutionalizing impact evaluation will require additional staff and resources “above current planning levels” (Workstream B).

WFP'S IMPACT EVALUATION STRATEGY (2019-2026)

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

The Strategic Advisory Panel (SAP) plays a key role by providing external experience as WFP implements the Impact Evaluation Strategy in line with the new Policy and CES. This report informed the SAP's annual meeting and discussion on how to fine-tune WFP's Impact Evaluation Strategy considering evolving external contexts and emerging lessons.

Vision of the Impact Evaluation Strategy

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

Impact Evaluation Activities in 2022

WFP impact evaluations are managed by OEV upon request from country offices and aligned with the implementation timelines of programmes evaluated. In 2022, the gradual reduction in COVID-19 related travel restrictions enabled OEV to resume missions and in-person data collection. This made it possible for WFP to complete the first impact evaluation endline surveys under the new Impact Evaluation Strategy, and to start collecting qualitative data. In addition, the decision to establish the IEU, created new opportunities for expanding in-house capacities and exploring new technical partnerships.

In 2022, the newly established IEU continued delivering the impact evaluation windows initiated during the pilot phase, and related capacity development and partnership activities. By the end of 2022, there were 13 active impact evaluations and two pilots underway. Some of the highlights included the completion of the first endline survey for the cash-based transfers and gender evaluation in El Salvador, as well as the decision to include qualitative data collection and analysis into all WFP impact evaluations. In addition, WFP successfully finished collecting high-frequency survey data to analyse the resilience of households as they faced shocks in the Sahel and South Sudan. Finally, WFP started designing and implementing impact evaluations under the workstream for optimising humanitarian interventions, which often adopt a leaner approach (e.g., comparing variations in programming without a pure control group).

In terms of challenges, in 2022, the IEU made efforts to improve communications with regional bureaus, and to start building wider WFP capacity to engage with impact evaluation. Impact evaluation methods, and particularly randomised controlled trials (RCTs), are new to most WFP staff. Many seem to view impact evaluations positively as a way for WFP to generate rigorous evidence and demonstrate its commitment to learning. However, questions have been raised by some about how to ensure impact evaluations are done ethically (e.g., not withholding any available support from potential beneficiaries), and what results can be expected during the timeframes analysed (e.g., short- to medium-term results). The IEU worked

with external technical partners and key stakeholders to address concerns and increase the transparency of impact evaluation processes. These experiences also informed the drafting of an impact evaluation process guide. The following is a summary of progress made in 2022.

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 reviews existing global evidence to identify questions that are important for WFP's programmatic 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. The Window Steering Committees are responsible for guiding the selection of impact evaluation priorities and making recommendations to the Director of Evaluation on the inclusion of individual evaluations into windows.

Windows test the effectiveness of WFP supported interventions, and identify underlying 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 plan.

Having impact evaluations managed centrally by the IEU helps to ensure continuity over time and consistency in approaches across countries, with the aim that evidence generated contributes to organizational learning.

The first three windows were developed in partnership with the [World Bank Development Impact Evaluation \(DIME\)](#) department and focus on: 1) cash-based transfers and gender; 2) climate change and resilience; and 3) school-based programming. OEV is currently considering opening a 4th window on nutrition. The following sections summarise progress made in delivering these windows.

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, the first window-level pre-analysis plan (PAP) was drafted, peer reviewed, [and registered](#), and a [Brief was published 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 economic empowerment of women affect the gender norms that surround them, or their self-perception?
- ▶ Do food assistance for assets (FFA) 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 and Haiti in 2022.

It should be noted that COVID-19 significantly altered the timelines for all CBT and Gender impact evaluations as it also hindered OEV and DIME from engaging in-country as planned.

Ongoing CBT and gender impact evaluations

In **El Salvador**, the impact evaluation design relies on randomly assigning households into one of two groups: 1) the first, where women are encouraged to work and receive transfers; or 2) the second, a comparison group receiving unconditional cash transfers. Baseline, midline, and endline data

were all completed in 2021. Qualitative data was collected in 2022. The [El Salvador baseline and inception reports](#) have been published, and the final report is currently under development and is expected to be published in Q2 of 2023.

In **Kenya**, in February/March of 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 was 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. Project timelines were adjusted to enable the Kenya country office to focus its efforts on a severe drought emergency. Midline data was therefore collected in Q1 of 2023, once the project resumed, and endline and qualitative data collection is planned for Q3 of 2023.

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 the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and OEV.

The SMART impact evaluation contributes evidence to both the CBT and Gender, and the Climate and Resilience windows. A baseline survey was completed in 2021 and was followed by a series of bi-monthly high-frequency surveys that will end in June 2023 (staggered in sync with phases of implementation). The high-frequency data collection captures seasonal changes in household well-being, as well as any idiosyncratic or covariant shocks and related coping strategies (see next section). A larger midline data collection survey was done in 2022, and the endline in Q1 of 2023 (along with qualitative data collection). The [Rwanda baseline and inception reports](#) were published, and the team is currently working on the final report.

In **Haiti**, in 2022 OEV was asked to support an impact evaluation of its resilience project, using WFP's FFA modality, in the Departments of Northwest and Nippes.

OEV co-developed the impact evaluation proposal which was approved by the donor (the Inter-American Development Bank). The design follows the first pre-analysis plan, with three groups of

households: 1) targeting women directly with the project; 2) targeting men; and 3) a control group.

Baseline data will be collected in Q2 of 2023 after which the project will start.



The first pre-analysis plan developed by OEV and DIME focussed primarily on FFA interventions, which was representative of the WFP programmes that expressed interest in 2019. However, it does not capture all of WFP's interventions in emergency or humanitarian settings (where WFP often reverts to unconditional cash transfers).

To ensure the window remains aligned with current WFP evidence priorities, OEV is consulting with WFP's CBT and gender programme teams to assess how priorities have evolved since 2019, and potentially develop additional pre-analysis plans (while still welcoming country offices to use the existing design).

In line with WFP's workstream on optimising humanitarian interventions (further below), OEV is conducting a "[Lean impact evaluation](#)" in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**, testing two different household targeting methods for unconditional cash transfers: 1) the status quo

method that uses proxy-means-testing (PMT) enriched with information from focus groups; and 2) a community-based approach, where the communities themselves, through committees, select the criteria and their weights to be used for prioritisation. Outcomes of interest are inclusion and exclusion errors, community satisfaction, and cost-effectiveness. This evaluation uses the country office targeting data instead of a separate baseline. Midline data collection is expected to take place in July 2023 (after the transfers are initiated) and endline in Q4 of 2023.

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 to evaluate these efforts.

The Climate and Resilience Impact Evaluation Window initially sought to answer the following questions:

- ▶ How does integrated programming, which brings together multiple activities aimed at improving different outcomes, contribute to resilience?
- ▶ How can resilience activities target the most vulnerable households and their needs?
- ▶ How can we adjust the timing and sequencing of activities to reach beneficiaries when they need the support most?

Overall, the window successfully started answering these questions. Impact evaluations of FFA or integrated resilience interventions in Mali, Niger, Rwanda, and South Sudan focused primarily on questions 1 and 2. More recent evaluations in Mali and Nepal of anticipatory action or WFP's replica of the African Risk Capacity (ARC) macro-insurance interventions will focus mostly on question 3.

Since 2019, eight impact evaluations were launched under the Climate and Resilience Window. The impact evaluations in Mali, Mali (ARC Replica), Nepal (forecast-based financing), Niger, Rwanda, and South Sudan are due to finish in 2023. The impact evaluation in the DRC transitioned to a decentralized evaluation due to issues related to security and the continuity of access to areas in

Kivu, and the impact evaluation in Sudan is currently paused due to the volatile situation.

All the above-mentioned impact evaluations 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. The following sections provide a summary of progress in each country.

Ongoing climate and resilience impact evaluations

Impact evaluations in **Mali** and **Niger** are both part of the regional Sahel resilience learning initiative funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The impact evaluation design examines the impact of an integrated resilience package which includes multiple forms of support, including FFAs, school-feeding, smallholder agricultural market support and a nutrition package. The baseline surveys were completed in March 2021, while high-frequency surveys collecting data on food consumption, shocks and coping strategies were conducted every two months from April 2021 until December 2022. OEV and DIME created a dashboard which presents the trends emerging from these data in a manner that can support programme decision-making.

Moreover, the [Mali baseline](#) and [Niger baseline](#) reports were both completed in 2022. To inform the endline questionnaire and make sure we could better capture all the potential benefits of the intervention, focus group discussions were conducted in both countries before the start of endline data collection, around the end of 2022.

Endline data collection is expected to be completed in March 2023. However, questions have been raised by some WFP teams about the ability of impact evaluation methods to capture the longer-term, transformational impacts on resilience expected to result from the integrated resilience package in the Sahel. The IEU is therefore exploring the possibility of conducting longer-term follow-up surveys to measure changes in resilience over time, if funding allows, but this would still focus primarily on community and household level resilience capacities.

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. Several rounds of high-frequency data were collected in Rwanda during 2021 and 2022; the last round will be completed in June 2023.

This data is available on an online dashboard for relevant stakeholders to review the trends in food security and other outcomes. In addition, the Rwanda inception and baseline reports were finalised and published. Endline data collection is planned for Q1 of 2023 (along with qualitative data collection).

In **South Sudan**, the impact evaluation focuses on a resilience programme that is jointly implemented by UNICEF and WFP. In 2020, a significant amount of time and effort were focussed on exploring design options that could 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 prioritised by communities; and 3) integrated education and school feeding activities. The baseline data collection was completed in September 2021, despite encountering security challenges in part of the impact evaluation areas. All ten rounds of high-frequency data have been collected; moreover, endline data collection as well as qualitative work to better understand the pathway of impacts are planned for the first quarter of 2023. As in the Sahel, [South Sudan inception and baseline reports](#) have been published.

Expanding focus areas for the Climate and Resilience Window

In the **DRC**, in 2020, BMZ requested an impact evaluation to understand the impact of phase II of the Joint Resilience Programme, implemented in partnership with FAO and UNICEF in North and South Kivu. Phase II of the Programme faced operational challenges since its inception in 2020.

In December 2021, after careful consideration, the DIME-OEV impact evaluation team, the WFP DRC country office and other partners concluded that it would not be feasible to conduct a rigorous impact evaluation of the Joint Programme, and that a more qualitative decentralized evaluation is better suited for examining the entire programme.

In addition, in January 2022, after consultations with different stakeholders, it was decided that DIME-OEV would also produce a quantitative study which provides diagnostic evidence on two critical factors for strengthening the socio-economic resilience of vulnerable populations in eastern DRC: (i) gender equality and women's empowerment, and (ii) social cohesion. This study will complement the planned decentralized evaluation led by the country office.

In 2022, OEV completed the feasibility assessment and started the design phase of a new impact evaluation focused on a joint UNICEF-WFP resilience and social cohesion programme in **Darfur, Sudan**. The new focus on food security and social cohesion created an opportunity for OEV to partner with the International Security and Development Centre (ISDC) in Berlin. OEV and ISDC jointly organized a workshop in Khartoum to discuss the theory of change that links resilience programming to social cohesion. The feasibility assessment led to a proposal that was accepted by KFW/BMZ, however, the impact evaluation, as at time of writing, is paused in 2023, due to the security situation.

In addition to social cohesion, OEV received growing demand to evaluate the effectiveness of climate related interventions (anticipatory action and macro-insurance for floods and droughts). An overarching question these evaluations aim to answer is whether it is more effective to support people just before a shock. Or, immediately after a shock, when can assistance be targeted towards those most affected. Another interesting side aspect might be the accuracy of the trigger.

In 2022, as part of the workstream on optimising humanitarian interventions, OEV started impact evaluations focused on anticipatory action for floods in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, and drought in **Mali**. These impact evaluations do not have a 'pure' control group, and instead compare groups receiving cash transfers at different times.

In Bangladesh and Nepal, the focus in 2022 was on finalising a design and preparing the survey tools that would be used if water levels triggered cash-payments a few days before the peak of a flood. However, only Nepal experienced flooding that triggered activation, and OEV started three rounds of data collection in early 2023.

In **Mali**, OEV supported the country office to assess the feasibility of conducting an evaluation of the ARC Replica drought response, which was activated

in late 2022 for pay-outs in 2023. Data collection will start in 2023. A similar design was considered for drought in Burkina Faso; however, security concerns led to new government restrictions on cash-transfers, making it impossible to evaluate questions about the timing of payments.

School-based Programmes (SBP) Window

School-based programmes are one of the most extensive social safety nets worldwide, with an estimated 418 million children currently benefiting 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 support transitions towards greater country ownership and inform the trade-offs in school-based programmes' design and implementation. For example, finding the balance between cost, size, frequency, and meals' composition; comparing different procurement and delivery models; determining the trade-offs between central or decentralized procurement systems; assessing 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 a key 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 (SBP). 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 greater girls' well-being?

- ▶ To what extent do different procurement systems (e.g., imported food vs. locally-grown school meals) increase the effectiveness of programmes at improving food security and nutrition in supported communities?
- ▶ To what extent do different programmes' characteristics support households' consumption and food security in the presence of shocks?

A call for expressions of interest to all WFP's country offices was launched in the first quarter of 2021. Eleven country offices responded to the call. A series of in-depth feasibility assessments were held with all eleven country offices to determine 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.

In the first quarter of 2022, the window's Steering Committee endorsed the inclusion of Burundi, Gambia, Guatemala, and Jordan into the window. Given the novel approach employed in Burundi and Guatemala, the Steering Committee also suggested for these countries to first conduct a pilot, followed by a revised feasibility assessment for a larger-scale impact evaluation.

Throughout 2022, WFP also explored the feasibility of conducting an impact evaluation under the SBP window in Malawi, Bhutan, and Cameroon. While the Steering Committee endorsed the inclusion of Malawi into the window, Bhutan and Cameroon were not deemed feasible.

Ongoing school-based programmes impact evaluations

In **Burundi**, WFP's school feeding model is based on a centralized procurement model delivered directly to schools. With the aim to increase the proportion of locally produced school meals, WFP started a new pilot procurement model based on CBTs directly to schools in 2022.

In June 2022, OEV and DIME visited the WFP Burundi country office to design a pilot impact evaluation to be embedded into the new pilot model. This pilot uses a lean impact evaluation approach, relying on a randomised controlled trial (RCT) design to assess whether the new procurement model impacts the performance of meals distributed by schools (e.g., quantity,

diversity, and quality of meals). It compares outcomes from 51 randomly selected schools enrolled in the new procurement model with 46 randomly selected schools that remained in the previous centralized model.

The Burundi pilot will include a survey with cooperatives, farmers, and school children. While the scale of the pilot is not big enough to measure statistically significant changes in farmers' revenues and children's outcomes, the descriptive results will inform the scale-up of the CBT model. It will also inform the feasibility and design of a larger-scale impact evaluation with the aim to assess the impact of Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) on farmers' income during programme scale-up. OEV and DIME are expected to conduct a scale-up workshop in Burundi in the second quarter of 2023.

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

OEV and DIME worked with the WFP country office throughout 2022 to design a pilot impact evaluation to assess the app's impact on the performance of meals distributed by schools. The pilot will use a lean impact evaluation approach to compare food procurement and meal distribution practices in 108 randomly selected schools in 30 municipalities, where schools and suppliers are trained in the use of the app, with 102 randomly selected schools in 29 municipalities where the app is not promoted yet.

The registration surveys, which served as baselines, started in the third quarter of 2022. The remaining data collection processes are expected to be collected in the first half of 2023. A revised feasibility workshop will be conducted in the third quarter of 2023 to determine whether a larger scale-up impact evaluation that will explore the impact of the decentralized procurement system on the local economy and smallholder farmers, is feasible.

In **Jordan**, WFP was asked by the government to test and pilot alternative procurement and delivery models to the current national school feeding programme (NSFP). In 2022, WFP piloted a new healthy meal intervention, also referred to as the

community-based kitchen model, which had embedded an impact evaluation design. In March of 2022, OEV and the World Bank held a design workshop with the WFP CO office and its partners to codesign an impact evaluation to assess the impact of this new healthy meal intervention. The workshop included representatives from the Jordan national government, the Ministry of Education, and implementing partners.

The impact evaluation in Jordan is designed to evaluate two outcome areas:

- First, whether meals provided by a community-based kitchen model have an impact on the diet, attention span, and educational outcomes for primary-school students, when compared with the current national school feeding model (centrally procured date bars). To do this, it compares children's outcomes from 331 randomly selected schools enrolled in the new community-based kitchen model and with children from 142 schools randomly selected schools which continue to receive the current national school feeding programme.
- Second, to assess the impact of being hired to produce the school meals through the community-based kitchen model, comparing nearly 600 eligible workers and their households across eight kitchens. Baseline data collection for children and workers was conducted in the third quarter of 2022, and workers' high-frequency surveys started in the fourth quarter of 2022. Endline data collection is expected to take place in the second and third quarters of 2023.

In **Gambia**, the Gambia Agriculture and Food Security Project aims to increase food and nutritional security, as well as household income, by strengthening the sustainable Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) Programme. Throughout 2022, OEV and the World Bank has worked in close collaboration with the WFP country office and the African Development Bank (AfDB) to design an evaluation to assess the impact of HGSF on children's educational, nutritional and health outcomes.

The programme was randomly assigned to 46 new schools among 92 potentially eligible schools. In addition, to understand how the impact of school feeding varies by seasonal fluctuations and shocks, the evaluation is planning to collect child high-frequency surveys at various points throughout the

year. Finally, the evaluation is measuring the impact of an additional component that aims to increase teachers' attendance, to assess whether teacher presence can magnify the impacts of school feeding programs on learning outcomes.

Nutrition Window

In 2022, OEV and the Nutrition Division started work to develop an impact evaluation window planned for launch mid-2022 but postponed to better align with a new corporate nutrition strategy to be launched by WFP in mid-2023.

Consultations identified malnutrition prevention interventions for pregnant and breastfeeding



women as the initial evidence priority area for this window. To support the future impact evaluation window concept note, WFP and the Nutrition Division contracted the University of California Davis to conduct a literature review on the selected topic areas.

IMPACT EVALUATION IN FRAGILE AND HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

With support from USAID's Food for Peace (FFP) general contribution, starting in 2020, the OEV initiated a workstream on optimizing humanitarian interventions, which cuts across its impact evaluation windows. During the first year, OEV and

DIME focused on identifying evidence priorities and building demand for impact evaluation evidence in the humanitarian sector.

In 2021, WFP received additional funding from the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) general contribution to continue developing impact evaluation capacity and start delivering humanitarian impact evaluations in the 4 priority areas identified in year one:

- ▶ Forecast-based financing & climate adaptation
- ▶ Precision targeting
- ▶ Configurations of cash-based transfers
- ▶ Peace & social cohesion

In 2022, OEV was successful in securing a new three-year BHA grant (2023-2025), to expand the work initiated with BHA support under the previous two grants. A continued focus of this work is exploring options to design and conduct impact evaluations on cash-transfers, gender, and climate adaptation interventions. The grant supports WFP to deliver impact evaluations within humanitarian responses and in areas of protracted crises, to better understand the transition to a path of more stable development. (The specific impact evaluations initiated under this workstream are listed in the “window” sections of this document.)

As part of this workstream, in 2022, OEV started piloting the use of ‘lean’ impact evaluations (for example in Nepal and the DRC), as part of the strategy for accompanying emergencies in new contexts. A ‘lean’ impact evaluation can be used in scenarios where the aim is to explore which of two (or more) variants of a project is most effective – and cost-effective – to reach the goal (akin to “A/B testing”). OEV will continue to explore the use of “lean” impact evaluations for all potential engagements.

In addition to working on specific impact evaluations, the team supports innovation by developing impact evaluation designs, approaches, and resources most appropriate for climate adaptation programming, rapid-onset emergencies and protracted crises and capture a wider range of impacts (e.g., social cohesion, nutrition, etc.).

As a public resource, a systematic [literature review](#) of the existing experimental evidence on humanitarian assistance relevant to WFP programming was published (authored by DIME). Findings emphasised a concerning lack of evidence in the sector and provided additional justification for an investment in impact evaluations on humanitarian assistance.

To support efforts in making impact evaluations more adaptable to rapidly changing contexts, OEV identified a need to catalogue the existing data sources in WFP which are routinely used by country offices, and which could be useful to enrich impact evaluation work. Drafting of the document has been ongoing, and includes guidance on the use of GIS systems, forecast-prediction systems, SCOPE data, and routine phone survey data.

OEV is currently finalising an “Impact Evaluation Quality Assurance System” (IEQAS), that includes a process guide, templated, and other resources to make it easier for WFP offices and partners to use impact evaluations.

In addition, all WFP impact evaluation designs, along with template questionnaires, and the guidance on the use of existing data sources, are being collected for further adaptation and use by WFP colleagues and partners.

Furthermore, OEV is actively capturing and sharing lessons learned to support and develop communities of practice focused on generating impact evaluations evidence in humanitarian settings. To this end, OEV has hosted or contributed to multiple internal and external capacity building and evidence dissemination events in 2022. In addition, the team has started publishing on its own Medium blog and developed a line-up of topics for the blog to be released going forward. (See the following section for details on capacity development and communications activities).

IMPACT EVALUATION CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

OEV continued its impact evaluation capacity development activities in 2022 using a more regional approach, with training events organized with four of the six regional bureaus. OEV impact evaluation colleagues joined Heads of Programme and M&E Colleagues in our Regional Bureau for Western Africa and Regional Bureau for the Middle East and Northern Africa. The sessions introduced the various opportunities for partnership with OEV impact evaluation unit and provided an overview of impact evaluation methods and their application in the WFP context.

In the Regional Bureau for Southern Africa, and the Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa, capacity development efforts centred around our emerging line of work evaluating anticipatory action. We joined regional anticipatory action focal points to provide insight into the value of incorporating impact evaluation into their programming.

OEV's impact evaluation team also contributed to the development of other WFP training efforts, such as the new Evaluation Foundations course aimed at a wide audience in WFP, where colleagues can receive information on the Impact Evaluation Strategy and related opportunities.

COMMUNICATIONS

OEV continued to increase its communication efforts for impact evaluation in 2022. In addition to publishing briefs and reports on the externally facing WFP impact evaluation [webpage](#), OEV published 8 blogs on our [Medium blog page](#). The blogs proved to be an accessible way to share lessons learned throughout the course of an evaluation and generated over 1700 views during the year.

In addition, OEV organized or contributed to seven events in 2022, including the European Evaluation Society conference where OEV impact evaluation colleagues presented in four sessions covering the topics of humanitarian impact evaluation, evidence use, ethics, and methods. The year's events were often organized in collaboration with partners in an effort to strengthen the community of practice.

During the course of the year, OEV joined partners at the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), World Bank, Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), Mercy Corps, the International Security and Development Center (ISD), the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA).

Events were broad-ranging and covered evidence generation on the themes related to the OEV windows and humanitarian workstream. This allowed for OEV to present preliminary results to audiences, such as in the conference organized by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) where colleagues shared first insights from the evidence generated in our Climate and Resilience and CBT & Gender Windows.

Other events covered topics of anticipatory action and social cohesion; two key evidence priorities covered as part of our humanitarian workstream.

PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES IN 2022

The Impact Evaluation Strategy 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.

World Bank partnership

The first impact evaluation partnership under this approach was formed with the World Bank's DIME unit, initially for five years (2019-2023).

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 the operational reality.

In 2022, the MoU with DIME was revised and extended to 2026 to align with the current Impact Evaluation Strategy. The MoU with DIME covers a wide range of impact evaluation activities, including technical advice, design support, data collection, analysis, etc. To support the expansion of data sharing activities, a new complementary non-disclosure agreement was signed between WFP and the World Bank, which covers all joint impact evaluation activities globally.

Other partnerships

Regarding partnerships with other UN agencies, the impact evaluation in the DRC was designed jointly with FAO and UNICEF. Impact evaluations in South Sudan and Sudan are delivered in partnership with UNICEF. In addition, funding for the forecast-based financing intervention evaluated in Nepal is provided by the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), and OEV is coordinating with UN OCHA on the dissemination of evidence.

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 cash-based transfers 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 (SHN). 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 SBP window.

OEV also continued strengthening WFP's impact evaluation partnerships with the Green Climate Fund (GCF), by supporting the Learning-Oriented Real-Time Impact Assessment (LORTA) as well as collaborating on the identification of suitable GCF projects for joint impact evaluations.

However, the 2021 Review identified a 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 work initiated with ISDC in Sudan. In addition, OEV and the WFP Nutrition Division are exploring how to use existing research partnerships to support impact evaluations. In 2022, OEV also supported the Nutrition Division to contract the UC Davis to complete a literature review.

In 2023, OEV aims to continue broadening the range of methods used in impact evaluations, and the partners engaged to support them. This will involve exploring engagements with individual academics, as well as new organizations, depending on the thematic area and needs.

IMPACT EVALUATION RESOURCES IN 2022

WFP's capacity to deliver the strategy 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 Impact Evaluation Strategy, 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 in a way that can enable

the identification of their impact on intended outcomes. In 2020 and 2021, this became even more intense 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 2022, OEV recruited three new impact evaluation Officers (two P3 and one P2 level). This brought the total number of dedicated impact evaluation staff (officers and consultants) to eight, seven of which are based in Rome, and one is based in the Regional Bureau in Bangkok.

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 established a dedicated Unit and explored 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 the country offices commit to covering the cost of data collection. Starting in 2022, the scope of the Contingency Evaluation Fund (CEF) has been broadened to support small country offices that face genuine resource constraints in respect to impact evaluation data collection costs, but no applications were received in 2022 given other funding options.

In addition, OEV continued to fundraise for impact evaluations. Ongoing WFP impact evaluations are being supported by BMZ and KFW, KOICA, NORAD, and USAID. In 2022, OEV received confirmation of a new multi-year grant from USAID's BHA to support impact evaluation activities



Lessons Learned in 2022

Reflecting on progress made implementing the WFP Impact Evaluation Strategy in 2022, a few key lessons emerge:

INSTITUTIONALISING IMPACT EVALUATION IN WFP

In 2022, WFP moved from a pilot phase towards institutionalizing impact evaluation within WFP's evaluation function. A first step was the inclusion of impact evaluation as a third category of evaluation in the 2022 WFP Evaluation Policy and corporate Evaluation Strategy (CES), alongside centralised and decentralised evaluations. The 2022 Policy and CES recognise the unique characteristics of impact evaluations (e.g., multi-year, randomised interventions, large datasets from comparison groups) and challenges (e.g., capacity, resources, timing) that need to be overcome to use them effectively.



OEV established the Impact Evaluation Unit (IEU) to continue developing WFP's capacity to generate impact evaluation evidence. In addition, significant effort was made by OEV to stabilise impact evaluation staffing, including the recruitment of a Head of Unit and three Evaluation Officers dedicated to impact evaluation.

However, moving forwards, WFP needs to start exploring complementarities between different types of evaluation, and with other research, assessment, and monitoring activities. For example, it is not immediately clear how IE evidence, which focuses on community, household, or individual level outcomes, feeds into macro-level evaluations of WFP strategies over a three-to-five-year period. Similarly, it is not obvious how macro-level evaluation evidence coming from global, or policy, evaluations can feed into the analysis of impact at household and individual level outcomes.

It may be difficult, and possibly unnecessary, for every evaluation to feed into all other types of evaluation. However, any potential complementarities should still be unpacked to avoid duplication of efforts and under-utilisation of evidence generated.

THE VALUE OF WINDOWS

In 2022, OEV, in partnership with the World Bank DIME department, began collecting the first endline surveys for the cash-based transfers and gender window, as well as qualitative data in all impact evaluations. One of the benefits of the window approach is the use of common designs and standardised surveys for each country.

Pooling standardized data from across multiple countries helps distinguish whether results are spurious or become statistically significant, making the difference between individually underpowered evaluations and rich multi-country evaluations.

For the CBT and Gender Window, the benefits of this approach became immediately visible when the midline data was collected in the first two countries, increasing statistical power to detect impacts on women's economic empowerment. Similarly, comparing the high-frequency data collected for the Climate and Resilience Window in Mali, Niger, Rwanda, and South Sudan already highlights similar patterns regarding the seasonality of impacts from programme participation on food consumption.

Complementing the standardised survey data with rich country-specific qualitative data also helps to better understand how the impacts are shaped by different contexts. The qualitative data also helps to understand if the impacts measured are influenced

by any issues related to the fidelity of programme implementation and explain differences in experiences between sub-groups.

MANAGING THE IMPACT EVALUATION PIPELINE

In 2022, WFP completed the first impact evaluation endline surveys under its new window approach. In addition, OEV received significant new funding and demand from country offices to conduct additional impact evaluations, both within and outside the current windows. It is therefore increasingly important that OEV reflects on the priorities for current windows in the years to come, as well as the ability of existing windows to cover demand in newly emerging priority areas.

In addition to identifying new evidence priorities, the timing of onboarding new impact evaluations or opening new windows has implications on capacity. In 2023, WFP will complete data collection and start reporting on its first seven impact evaluations. This represents a considerable proportion of the current portfolio, and substantial portion of the current WFP and partner capacity is dedicated to completing these evaluations.

The skills and resources required to finalise reports are also different than the skills needed to manage data collection and coordinate large multi-country evaluation portfolios. This can result in a situation where capacities are under-utilised if there is a large gap between the timing of completion and start of new impact evaluations. In 2023, WFP therefore needs to start onboarding new impact evaluations at the same time as finalising reports and disseminating evidence. The way new impact



evaluations are identified, whether through an open call or more targeted approach, also needs to be carefully considered.

EXPANDING IMPACT EVALUATION DELIVERY PARTNERSHIPS

The 2021 Review of the Impact Evaluation Strategy highlights the importance of expanding WFP's

impact evaluation delivery partnerships and increasing representation of Southern researchers. Following the establishment of the IEU and additional staffing capacity, WFP started to expand its technical partnerships to include new academic institutions with specific expertise (e.g., social cohesion, nutrition, etc.), as outlined above under the partnerships section.

Early experience from Sudan shows that country offices and partners value the inclusion of thematic and country-specific expertise in the design phase of impact evaluations. However, OEV is just starting to explore how new technical partners can also facilitate linkages to academics in countries where WFP operated.

TOWARDS A UN APPROACH TO IMPACT EVALUATION

In 2022, OEV continued working towards stronger partnerships with other UN agencies. The first joint impact evaluation successfully implemented under the new Strategy is with UNICEF in South Sudan. The early success of the impact evaluation in South Sudan was a big reason why both UNICEF and WFP were willing to explore another joint impact evaluation in Darfur, Sudan.

These early experiences demonstrate the possibility of combining resources and generating evidence that meets the needs of multiple UN agencies. In 2023, WFP will continue engaging with other UN agencies working in the same countries and areas, such as FAO, IFAD, UNHCR, etc., to explore opportunities for joint impact evaluations. The presence of multiple UN agencies based in Rome could create opportunities for collaborating more regularly on related capacity development initiatives.

Finally, WFP will engage with the UN Evaluation Group and other initiatives to share experiences and lessons learned from its impact evaluation activities.

Strategic Advisory Panel Annual Meeting

22 February 2023

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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 2022, and the second was a roundtable discussion with guiding questions. Below is a summary of the two discussions.

2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

Overall progress in 2022: 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.

Supporting the utilisation of impact evaluation evidence: During the meeting, several discussions took place regarding the role of the Office of Evaluation (OEV) in promoting utilization of impact evaluation evidence to inform programme interventions.

OEV highlighted it provides support to country offices and partners by engaging in literature reviews, providing evidence to support programme design discussions, presenting data and dashboards for learning during implementation, and sharing evidence across different areas. The motivation for WFP to engage in impact evaluation was also discussed, with the organisation aiming to achieve two main objectives: supporting programme learning and contributing to global evidence for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Rethinking the nutrition window: Concerns were raised about the potential for WFP programmes to impact nutrition outcomes through food support, and the difficulty of achieving behavioural changes. Achieving impact on health and nutrition outcomes requires overcoming issues related to water, sanitation, hygiene, and

behaviours, and some of these areas fall outside of WFP's mandate and expertise. OEV acknowledged the importance of caution regarding nutrition impacts and stated that they would work closely with the Nutrition Division to ensure that the expected impacts on nutrition are realistic within the capacity of WFP.

Quality support for impact evaluations: The panel raised questions about the main elements that will be included in the new impact evaluation quality support system.

OEV is developing an Impact Evaluation Quality Assurance System (IEQAS) to facilitate engagement in impact evaluation processes that includes: i) a process guide for stakeholders engaged in impact evaluations; reporting templates; checklists; guidance; etc. The objective of the system is to make it easier for WFP offices and partners to engage in impact evaluation processes.

Building new phases of impact evaluation on evidence generated: The first phase of the cash and gender impact evaluation window mainly focused on projects that created opportunities for women to work outside of their homes, such as food assistance for assets. However, this type of programming represents a small portion of WFP's operations. In the next phase, lessons learned will be incorporated as relevant, but the focus will probably shift towards testing modalities and other programme adjustments that can be used to improve the effectiveness of cash transfers more broadly.

Examining timing of impacts in relation to timing of interventions: Panel members questioned how WFP will examine the relationship between timing of intervention and timing of impacts. OEV is working to unpack the relationship between interventions and transfers vis-à-vis impacts in several ways.

First, for the resilience programmes, interventions like the construction of assets aim to have longer-term impacts. OEV is therefore proposing to collect longer-term follow-up surveys to assess this theory. Second, to understand the impact of timing in the short-term, WFP is comparing different timings in relation to shocks (floods and droughts), and frequencies of transfers.

Engaging governments in impact evaluations: The panel raised questions about how government partners are involved in WFP impact evaluations. WFP works with government partners in all countries, and they are included in impact evaluation processes whenever possible.

For example, in Jordan and Malawi, government partners were invited to participate in the design workshops and are engaged in each step of the evaluation, and receive information (baseline presentations, etc.) as the programme implements. To meet local evidence needs, the designs are also adapted to country contexts. For example, the additional focus on local economic impact of kitchens in Jordan, came in response to a request from the Ministry of Education.

Including cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analysis: The SAP has repeatedly asked about how WFP intends to include costing into the impact evaluations. Specific suggestions were made to explore the possibility of cash benchmarking whenever appropriate. OEV will consider the feasibility of including cost-effectiveness analysis in each impact evaluation, which depends on the context, types of interventions, intended outcomes, and data availability.

Risk of unintended consequences from impact evaluations: A question was raised about whether there is any risk of withholding support from communities in need to establish a comparison group. WFP is very careful never to withhold any available support. In many cases, WFP IEs compare different intervention options to see which one is marginally more effective, without a pure control group.

If impact evaluations include a 'control' group, they compare populations that receive support with additional populations that WFP cannot support due to funding constraints or logistics. WFP also does not prevent these control communities from receiving support at any time when it becomes available.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

During the last part of the meeting OEV and the SAP discussed: 1) the next phase of priorities for windows that are finishing several impact evaluations in 2023, and 2) how to start encouraging greater collaboration within the UN in thematic areas where multiple agencies are involved (e.g., climate change). The SAP recommended consolidating and sharing the

work conducted over the past five years as a global public resource. To stay relevant, impact evaluations need to remain demand led. OEV should focus on meeting country demands, ensuring the usefulness of evidence for policymakers. OEV will work towards developing and engaging with communities as it continues to build up its internal capacity to generate and use impact evaluation evidence.

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