

Mid-Term Evaluation of USDA McGOVERN-DOLE GRANT FOR WFP SCHOOL FEEDING in Laos from 2020 to 2025

Decentralized Evaluation Terms of Reference

WFP Laos Country Office



World Food
Programme

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25 August 2023

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1. Background

1. These terms of reference (ToR) were prepared by the UN World Food Programme (WFP) Country Office (CO) Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) based upon an initial document review and consultation with stakeholders and following a standard template. The purpose of these terms of reference is to provide key information to stakeholders about the evaluation, to guide the evaluation team and to specify expectations during the various phases of the evaluation.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

2. These terms of reference are for a mid-term activity evaluation of the FY 2020-USDA McGovern-Dole project in support of WFP's School Feeding Program (SFP) activities in Lao PDR, to be conducted in the period October 2023 to March 2024 (inception phase to submission of the final report), to be able to critically and objectively assess performance of the project for the purposes of learning and accountability. This evaluation is commissioned by WFP Lao PDR CO and will cover the period from September 2021 to September 2023. The TOR aims to 1) provide key learning themes, project scope, and other key information to guide the evaluation team on conducting the evaluation; and 2) to involve stakeholders early on, keeping them informed of progress, and providing opportunities for inputs to secure their support and commitment.
3. The mid-term evaluation will serve several critical purposes: (1) track the progress of achievements after the mid-point of project implementation and to inform future interventions of the current award and future awards, (2) be used for ongoing project monitoring activities to regularly measure activity outputs and performance indicators for lower-level results (i.e. output level), (3) measure performance indicators for McGovern-Dole's two strategic objectives as well as the highest-level results (outcomes) that feed into the strategic objectives as part of the final evaluations, (4) provide a situational analysis after the project has been implemented for over two and half years and confirm the full evaluation design as prepared during the inception period. This analysis will inform project implementation and will provide important context necessary for the final evaluation to assess the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact.
4. The evaluation process within WFP will be managed by an evaluation manager appointed by WFP Lao PDR's Country Director. This evaluation manager will be the main focal point for day-to-day contact during the evaluation period. An external independent firm (evaluation team) will be contracted to carry out the actual evaluation and will appoint their own evaluation team leader and managers.
5. WFP Lao PDR has been awarded \$25.0 million to implement a McGovern-Dole-funded school feeding program in Lao PDR. The five-year project closely aligns with the priorities of the Government of Lao PDR and the US Government on school feeding, nutrition, and education, and will help to strengthen the capacities of the host government and communities in school feeding. The program, building on the successes and lessons learned in the previous McGovern-Dole-funded programs in Lao PDR, expands school feeding to new schools to enable the Government of Lao PDR to reach the last of its priority districts for education while creating the structures and systems within the Government and communities to ensure sustainability after the program ends. The assumption at the start of the project was that it would enable a smooth, coordinated transition of all WFP-supported schools into the national School Lunch Program (SLP) in 2025, in line with government plans. However current schools are prospectively continued to be supported on school feeding implementation post 2025 with a potential further funding to ensure that WFP will not oblige the government partners and communities unless they are fully ready, as the lesson learned from the FY17 handed over schools.
6. The Government's vision of expanding school feeding to the remaining priority districts and integrating them into the SLP are clearly articulated in national development plans and strategies. This project, implemented in partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), provides a package of school health and nutrition activities, including school meals, water access, hygiene promotion, literacy, community mobilization, school feeding-related infrastructure investments, agricultural support, policy support, and health and nutrition awareness activities, to reach approximately 64,000 pre-primary and primary school-aged children in 17 districts in Laos.

1.2. CONTEXT

7. Lao PDR is a country bordering Viet Nam, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, and China with 7.4 million people (2021). Lao's annual population growth is 1.4% and 58% of the total population is under 25 years old. The country has one of the highest adolescent birth rates in the region with 83 births per 1,000 girls (aged 15-19), with important differences between rural and urban areas (136 and 42 births per 1,000 adolescent girls, respectively).
8. Lao PDR is a multi-ethnic society with 49 ethnic groups, with at least 240 subgroups. The ethnic subgroups can be classified in four broader ethno-linguistic groupings: Lao-Tai (62.4%), Mon-Khmer (23.7%), Hmong-Mien (9.7%) and Chinese-Tibetan (2.9%). Despite the significant part of the population still living in rural areas, the country is experiencing the fastest urbanization rate in the region (3.2% in 2021).
9. Lao PDR is considered a least developed country (LDC) - expected to graduate in 2026 from the LDC category¹³ with a GDP growth of only 0.5% since 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the already vulnerable economy. Before the pandemic, the country's macroeconomic situation had shown high growth over the previous two decades, with the poverty rate decreasing by 50% towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 1 of halving poverty and the proportion of hungry people. Based on the most recent estimates of 2017, 23.1% of the population is multidimensionally poor while an additional 21.2% is classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty.
10. The world economy continues to wrestle with the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic coupled with global financial tightening, particularly in developed economies, global supply disruptions, and climate-related challenges. In Lao PDR, year-on-year inflation accelerated to a record 40.3 per cent in January 2023. Lao Kip continues to depreciate 37.4 and 32.9 per cent against the USD and Thai Baht respectively¹.

Agriculture and Climate Change Impacts

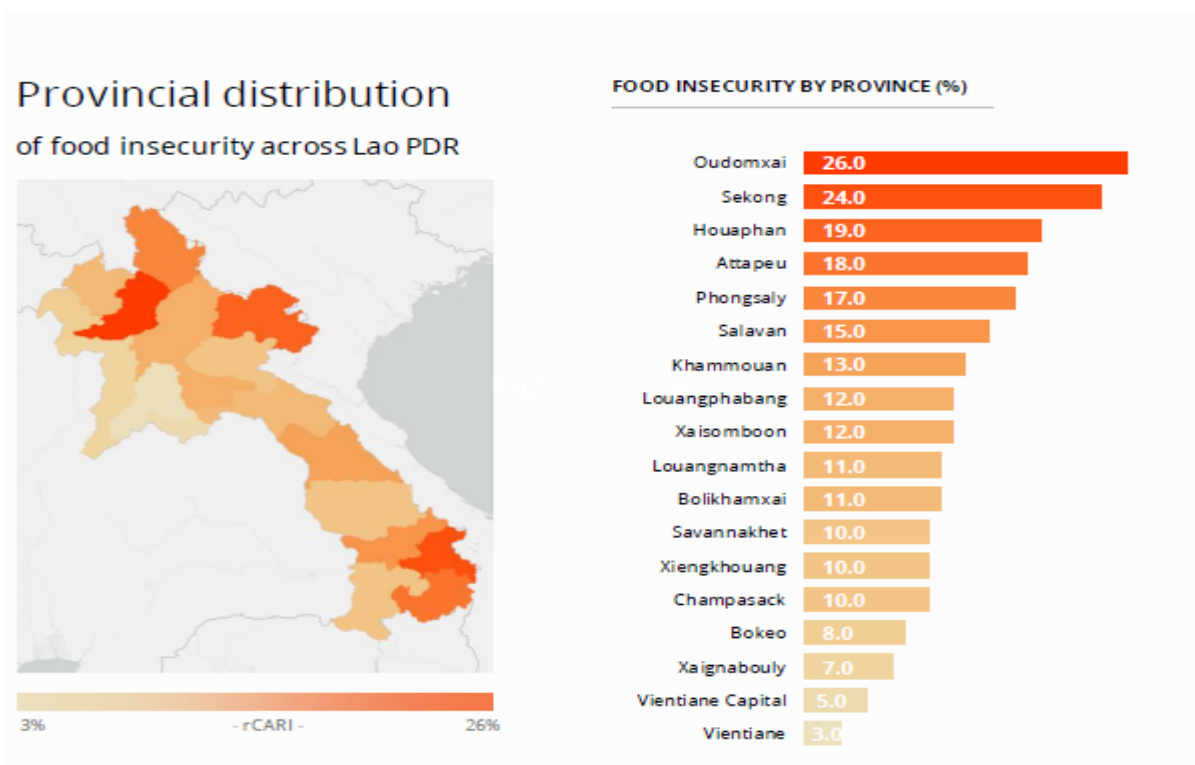
11. Agriculture is the main sector of employment in the country, with over 70% of the population engaged. Women participate in over half of all agricultural activities. Lao PDR has approximately 5 million hectares of suitable land for cultivation (21% of total landmass).
12. Despite the importance of the sector, agriculture in Lao PDR contributes only 16% to the country's GDP due to factors including low productivity and lack of modernization, among other issues. Traditional farming methods on top of lack of knowledge of new technologies are one of the main obstacles to improve yields, in addition to declining soil fertility and lack of access to irrigation. In recent years, commercial crops have included maize, cassava, banana and vegetables, improving productivity among low-income households. Commercial, market-oriented, farming, has benefited rural communities by stimulating economic growth and poverty reduction. The latter, however, despite creating opportunities for households to boost their income by growing cash crops, has become a disadvantage for non-Lao Thai ethnic groups, especially women, who have limited Lao language and business skills.
13. Although the country is not as exposed to natural hazards as other countries in the region, the country is highly vulnerable to climate change, including cyclones, floods, erratic rains and extended dry seasons. It is expected that temperature in the Mekong Basin in the next 20 to 30 years will increase by 1-2 degrees and some areas are expected to face seasonal droughts while other areas will experience increasing rainfall.

Food security, nutrition, and health

14. Fourteen percent of households in Lao PDR are food insecure (one in seven households). However, food insecurity is heterogenous geographically. Oudomxai, Sekong, and Houaphan provinces have the highest prevalence of food insecurity (oscillating between 19% to 26%). Rural areas, compared to urban areas have higher food insecurity on average (14% compared to 6%). Overall variation is significant: while in some districts, households face up to 25% of food insecurity, others district have only 5% of households facing food insecurity (Figure 1).

¹ Macroeconomic Outlook of Lao PDR, UN Lao PDR, February 2023.

Figure 1. Provincial distribution of food insecurity across Lao PDR, April/May 2023



Source: Remote Food Security Monitoring (mVAM), May/June 2023.

15. Food insecurity also affects population differently based on gender. The prevalence of severe food insecurity in the adult population is almost eight percentage points higher for female compared to men (31.3% and 23.9%, respectively). At the household level, the differences between male-headed versus female-headed counterparts persists (11% compared to 15%, respectively). Additionally, female-headed households consume less diverse diets compared to male-headed households (21% compared to 14%).
16. With the economic difficulties brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, as expected, households with significant income reduction (over 50%) are more than twice likely to be food insecure. In general, households have been eating less diverse diets. Staple foods, such as rice, and vegetables are primary food category that are most consumed in a week, while dairy and pulses are eaten less than twice a week.
17. Approximately 44% of pregnant and lactating women and girls (aged 15 to 19) achieve the recommended minimum dietary diversity for women (MDD-W). The prevalence of anemia among children under five in 2018 was 40%, while 33% were affected by stunting in 2019 (which is considered a “high severity prevalence of chronic malnutrition). Additionally, the prevalence of wasting -measured based on a child's weight relative to their height- increased from 6% in 2012 to 9% in 2019, while overweight and obesity are increasing, with 15.7% of children under five classified as overweight. Only one in four children receive a minimum acceptable diet. With either not adequate nutritious food or a low dietary diversity at home, school feeding is considered a key strategy to address hunger and nutrition. Around 35% of Lao PDR households rely on food-based coping mechanisms such as turning to less desired foods, reducing portion sizes, or skipping adult meals for children. It is estimated that around 19% of adults sacrifice meals so that their children can eat.

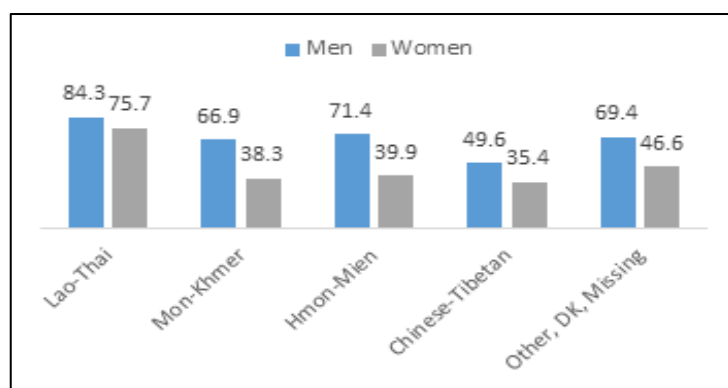
Education and Literacy

18. Lao PDR has some of the poorest education indicators in the region. Inequality in access and dropout are two of the main problems. Although net enrollment in primary education was 98.7% by 2017, only 30% of 5-year-old children were enrolled in Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs (children typically attend

pre-primary school from ages 3-5) as those in the most rural areas and poor families are excluded. Many ethnic groups do not speak the Lao language, which is a challenge considering that it is the official language of education.

19. As such, literacy rates vary significantly when comparing urban and rural areas. 91% of men in urban areas are literate, while only 72% in rural areas are. For women, the difference is even higher with 84.6% of women in urban areas compared to only 51.9% in rural areas. In the aggregate, the literacy rate is 78% for men and 62.9% for women. Moreover, disparities are also considerable among ethno-linguistic groups (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Literacy rate (%) disaggregated by ethno-linguistic groups and sex (2017)



20. Moreover, the quality of education remains a challenge. Approximately 82% (2017) of enrolled children complete primary education despite compulsory education requirements, which is expected to last nine years. In lower secondary education, dropout rates are also high (46% for boys and 47% for girls). The Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) 2019 report shows that 50% of students in Grade 5 were in the lowest Band (2) and are still at the stage of matching single words to an image of a familiar object or concept. Student learning outcomes are very low. The ASLO IV in 2017 found that 42 percent of Grade 3 students had not yet mastered the Lao language skills taught in Grades 1 or 2, with an additional 25 percent working mainly below the Grade 3 skill range. The Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) 2019 report shows that 50% of students in Grade 5 were in the lowest Band (2) and are still at the stage of matching single words to an image of a familiar object or concept.

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)

21. Access to good water, sanitation and hygiene remains a challenge. Inadequate environmental hygiene, such as the use of contaminated water, poor sanitation, and incorrect hygiene practices, including difficulties in access to public health services, is one of the underlying causes of malnutrition. Disparities in this area are also relevant. Based on 2017 available data, while only 18% of urban areas do not have water source at all, the figure is 40.4% in rural areas.

Gender and Equity and Social Inclusion

22. Lao PDR ranks 53rd among 153 countries in the WEF Global Gender Gap Index 2020, an index that measures gender equality and quantifies the gaps between women and men in four key areas: health, education, economy, and politics.
23. Lao PDR has made progress in the representation of women in senior roles in both the public and private sectors: 30-40% in new entrepreneur opportunities are created by women. However, women still constitute most workers in the informal sectors and are often left with the management of the household, including facilitating water supply and energy for cooking, reinforcing traditional and constrictive gender roles. Most unpaid care work is taken up by women, largely due to gender roles and limited educational and productive opportunities. In 2015, 61% of women active in the labor force were unpaid family workers, compared to only 26% of men.
24. In terms of disability, although there is limited information on the status and number of people with disabilities, according to the most recent national survey, 2.8% of the population has a disability. As per the 2017 Indicator Survey, disability is measured in the following domains: seeing, hearing, walking, fine

motor skills, communicating, learning, playing, controlling behaviour. Overall, 2% of children aged 2 to 4 have functional difficulty in at least one domain, while 3.8%, children in rural areas without roads also have difficulty in at least one domain.

25. According to the Lao United Nations Country Team (UNCT) country analysis, Figure 3 below describes the most relevant factors of discrimination and the groups that are left behind or are at risk of being left behind.

Figure 3. Factors of discrimination and groups left behind

Factors of discrimination	Groups left behind
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex, age, or disability • Geographical location and/or fragile ecology • Vulnerability to climatic shocks & nature hazards • Impact of governance (laws, policies) • Socio-economic status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women, particularly pregnant women • Ethnic groups (particularly the Mon-Khmer and Hmong-Mien who live in remote areas)⁵⁶ • Children and adolescents • Migrants • Internally displaced persons • Persons at risk of statelessness • LGBTIQ • Persons with disabilities • Youth NEET (Not in education, employment or training) • People living with HIV • Older persons • Population in informal settlements

26. The 9th Lao National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP), aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) governs sectoral policies and strategies. Under NSEDP, the GoL has addressed food insecurity and nutrition through various school related policies and strategies, such as Policy on Promoting School Lunch, the School Meals Action Plan, the National Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan (NNSPA) establish school meals as one of the 22 priorities.
27. In 2015, the GoL approved its National Nutrition Strategy and Plan of Action, which laid out the key drivers of malnutrition in Lao PDR and outlined a strategic framework for the next 10 years that aims to reduce maternal and child malnutrition rates while improving the nutritional status and food security of the country's multi-ethnic population.
28. Lao PDR is also party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which requires governments to protect economic, social, and cultural rights, including the rights to employment, food, health, and participation in cultural activities, and to conduct recurring reviews of the situation by the UN Expert Committee.
29. The school feeding program can directly and indirectly address some of the interconnected factors leading to malnutrition and food security. School lunches are likely to improve nutrient intake and dietary diversity while also alleviating the economic burden for vulnerable families by reducing household's food expenditure. These savings can then be allocated towards other households' essential needs, such as access to health care, soap and detergent, and other items that can contribute to a more sanitary environment. WASH activities are intended to address the poor environmental hygiene that leads to food, water, and vector-borne diseases, in addition it is intended to provide dignity to the students. Furthermore, gender-responsive nutrition campaigns can reduce the unpaid burden of care of women and girls.
30. As per the terms of reference, high level policy support and capacity strengthening form the backbone of the transition to the NSMP under full government ownership in 2021. Through support to national legislation and guidelines, the strengthening of technical capacity, and the facilitation of knowledge sharing, GoL has taken over management of school feeding of 515 schools in 2019, and another 915 schools in 2021 in the 31 target districts in the 8 targeted provinces. According to MoES, in school years

2019-2020, the total number of schools in Lao PDR was 8,518, so the McGD17 covers 17% of all primary schools in Laos.

31. Today in Lao PDR, nearly 32 percent of all primary and pre-primary school children (approximately 280,000 children in 2,789 schools) receive school lunch through SFPs implemented by the GoL (through the NSMP), WFP and CRS. Under USDA McGovern-Dole FY20 Grant, WFP in partnership with CRS and government partners provide school feeding packages in 705 schools across 17 districts of 11 provinces.
32. WFP is a member of Education Sector Work Groups chaired by Minister of Education and co-chaired by Australia and EU. These subgroups ensure coordination among all stakeholders on delivering inclusive education. In addition, WFP and CRS are member of the Disability Inclusive Development Working group, chaired by UNDP and CBM, a subgroup to ensure coordination with local organizations representing people with disabilities.
33. Among other prominent programmes in the country, WFP partners with FAO and MoES for a pilot on integrating nutrition and school gardens as part of the curriculum. This initiative seeks to enhance knowledge among students, teachers and the community on improved agricultural techniques. Further, WFP, MoES, JICA and UNICEF support workshops on understanding causes for high drop-out and repetition rates among the non-Lao speaking children. The Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR (BEQUAL) program is the largest single donor funded education program in the country. Besides providing textbooks, teacher guides, and reading materials, it advocates for increased remuneration for teachers in remote and rural areas. Finally, MGD21 finance by USDA and implemented by CRS (LEAPS III) in collaboration with MOES, continues to provide school meals, improve literacy rates, increase access to clean water, and promote healthy hygiene and dietary practices in 302 schools of Savannakhet province.

Agriculture and Smallholder Farmers

34. Agriculture and rural livelihoods provide income to more than two-thirds of the population in Lao PDR, although only 4 percent of the total area in Laos is arable – the smallest amount of any country in Southeast Asia – due to its mountainous terrain. Most of this land is devoted to paddy production, with glutinous (sticky) rice making up almost 80 percent of rice production.
35. Changing climate patterns combined with poor access to both markets and diverse livelihoods worsen the situation in remote upland areas, where 25 percent of households are food insecure. In addition, Lao PDR faces limited technical knowledge and know-how in climate-smart agriculture, particularly in climate information management and analysis, technical approaches to agricultural extension with a focus on climate hazards, and community-based approaches for agricultural and rural development.

Overview of Response

36. Of MoES' 40 priority districts, 22 received school feeding through WFP, CRS or the GoL prior to this FY 2020 project. McGovern-Dole funding is being used to support the GoL's priorities in reaching the remaining 18 priority districts that do not receive school feeding and to leverage experience on capacity strengthening and handover to maximise their readiness to be integrated into the SLP.
37. As outlined in the GoL's Policy on Promoting School Lunch, school feeding requires not only the provision of safe and nutritious school meals to enhance learning and improve resistance to infections, but also the promotion of local ownership and capacity, and provision of safe access to water. The project is a collaboration between WFP, leading the school feeding activities in nine districts, CRS – leading the literacy and WASH activities along with the community mobilization components in five districts – and MoES facilitating the provision of school feeding in the four northern districts.

Nutrition Implementation Strategy

38. In 2015, the GoL approved its National Nutrition Strategy to 2025 and Plan of Action 2016–2020. The Government laid out the key drivers of malnutrition in Lao PDR and outlined a strategic framework for

the next 10 years that aimed to reduce maternal and child malnutrition rates while improving the nutritional status and food security of the country's multi-ethnic population.

39. The school feeding program can directly and indirectly address some of the interconnected factors leading to malnutrition. School lunch is intended to improve nutrient intake and dietary diversity while also alleviating the economic burden for vulnerable families by reducing household spending on food. These savings can then be allocated towards other costs, such as access to health care, soap and detergent, and other items that can contribute to a more sanitary environment. WASH activities are intended to address the poor environmental hygiene that leads to food, water, and vector-borne diseases.
40. WFP's experience implementing nutrition awareness campaigns showed that villagers were engaged when learning in their own language. By leveraging the lessons learned from its previous nutrition interventions as part of broader nutrition awareness raising, this project has an opportunity to have an impact on maternal and child health and nutrition.

Policy Support/Government Capacity Strengthening

41. High level policy support and capacity strengthening form the backbone of the transition to the NSMP under full government ownership in 2025. Through support to national legislation and guidelines, the strengthening of technical capacity, and the facilitation of knowledge sharing, WFP aims to build on work completed under the previous McGovern-Dole award to equip the Government with the means to take over the target schools by the end of the project period. The end of the project period aligns with the end of the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED, 2021-2025). The GoL aims to take over management of school feeding in these 18 districts in the 10th NSED (2026-2030). In the context of this proposal, "high level" refers to relevant government officials from national, provincial and district levels.

2. Reasons for the evaluation

2.1. RATIONALE

42. The WFP CO is commissioning this activity evaluation as a mid-term assessment for the FY 2020-USDA McGovern-Dole project in support of WFP's School Feeding Program (SFP) activities in Lao PDR, to be evaluated from the period of October 2023 to March 2024 (inception phase to submission of the final report), in order to be able to critically and objectively assess performance of the project for the purposes of learning and accountability.
43. The mid-term evaluation is being commissioned as the mid-term stage in the evaluation cycle to fulfil USDA McGovern-Dole project requirement to provide information about the project situation at mid-point of project implementation, to compare the progress of mid points with the baseline value and review targets, to validate project design assumptions, and to provide project implementation recommendations for the second half of the programme. As such, the methodology and indicators selected for the baseline are carried forward and used to assess the results of the project in the endline evaluation.

2.2. OBJECTIVES

44. Evaluations serve the dual and mutually reinforcing objectives of accountability and learning for WFP and partners, including government and other stakeholders, to feed into future project design. Evaluation findings will also be used by the key government counterpart for this project, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES).
 - **Accountability** – The evaluation processes will assess and report on the performance and results of the USDA McGovern-Dole project during the funding period. For accountability, the evaluations assess whether targeted beneficiaries have received services as expected, and if the project is on track to meeting their stated goals and objectives aligned with the results frameworks and assumptions.
 - **Learning** – The evaluation processes will determine the reasons why certain results occurred or not to draw lessons, derive good practices and pointers for learning. They will provide evidence-based findings to inform operational and strategic decision-making. Findings will be actively disseminated, and lessons will be incorporated into relevant lesson sharing systems. For learning, the evaluation components will

aim at critically and objectively review and take stock of participants' implementation experience and the implementation environment. The evaluation team is expected to further clarify the learning objectives through meetings with key stakeholders in the inception phase.

45. The objective of this mid-term evaluation is to provide an independent assessment of the programme so far to enable WFP Lao PDR, the Government of Lao PDR, and cooperating partners to feed its results and learning into the remainder of this programme and future programmes - in particular, the Government while also contributing important information to other potential initiatives.
46. To be able to critically and objectively review whether the programme is on track to meet its stated goals and objectives, the midterm evaluation will assess : i) the remaining progress to be made to achieve the objectives as outlined by USDA; ii) the issues or factors that need to be further strengthened to ensure that objectives are met; and iii) further efforts required to ensure handover preparedness and programme sustainability after USDA assistance has ended. In addition, progress with regard to baseline observations will be assessed.
47. This evaluation will provide an evidence-based, independent assessment of the results of the project to enable WFP CO, government, and Cooperating Partners (CPs) to demonstrate results and learning to feed into future school feeding initiatives, in particular the government-led and managed national SLP, while also making it possible to quantify the impacts of the project. It is expected that findings from the evaluation will inform the program design proposed for future McGovern-Dole cycles, and that the government may use this information to prioritize aspects of the project to adopt in the national programme or to decide how best to allocate national school feeding resources

2.3. STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

48. The evaluation will seek the views of, and be useful to, a broad range of WFP internal and external stakeholders. Several stakeholders will be asked to play a role in the evaluation process considering their expected interest in the results of the mid-term evaluation and relative power to influence the results of the programme being evaluated. Table 1 provides a preliminary stakeholder analysis, which should be deepened by the evaluation team as part of the inception phase.
49. Accountability to affected populations, is tied to WFP commitments to include beneficiaries as key stakeholders in WFP work. WFP is committed to ensuring gender equality, equity and inclusion in the evaluation process, with participation and consultation in the evaluation of women, men, boys and girls from different groups (including persons with disabilities, the elderly and persons with other diversities such as ethnic and linguistic).
50. Gender, wider inclusion and human rights issues will also be focused on the MTE. This will given specific consideration in the evaluation methods and tools, going beyond what is prescribed in the project output indicators to look for any unintended positive or negative trends in this area.
51. The primary users of this evaluation will be:
 - The WFP Lao PDR and its partners in decision-making, notably related to programme implementation and design and partnerships.
 - USDA as the donor for the project and the evaluation
 - WFP's Regional Bureau Bangkok (RBB) is expected to use the evaluation findings to provide strategic guidance, programme support, and oversight.
 - WFP HQ may use evaluations for wider organizational learning and accountability as well as program support on school feeding.
 - WFP's Office of Evaluation (OEV) may use the evaluation findings, as appropriate, to feed into evaluation syntheses as well as for annual reporting to the Executive Board.
 - The government is expected to take over the management and monitoring of the school feeding program over time, therefore, information on whether the programme is yielding the desired results is of primary importance. The Ministry of Education and Sports will use evaluation findings as input for its take-over strategy.
 - Other partners such as CRS, World Bank and UN agencies such as UNICEF involved in the education sector may also be interested in the results of the evaluation.

51. The proposed project, building on the successes and lessons learned in the previous McGovern-Dole-funded projects in Lao PDR, expands school feeding to new schools to enable the Government of Lao PDR to reach the last of its priority districts for education while creating the structures and systems within the Government and communities to ensure sustainability after the project ends. The Government's vision of expanding school feeding to the remaining priority districts and integrating them into the NSMP are clearly articulated in national development plans and strategies.

Table 1: Preliminary stakeholder analysis

Stakeholders	Interest and involvement in the evaluation
Internal (WFP) stakeholders	
WFP country office (CO) in Lao PDR	Key informant and primary stakeholder - Responsible for the planning and implementation of WFP interventions at country level. The country office has an interest in learning from experience to inform decision-making. Specifically, the CO School Feeding team will make programmatic decisions on time frame and prioritization of the activity implementation on the basis of the MTE. It is also called upon to account internally as well as to its beneficiaries and partners for performance and results of its programmes. The country office will be involved in using evaluation findings from this mid-term evaluation for programme implementation adjustment and/or in deciding on the next programme and partnerships.
WFP field offices in Oudomxay and Pakse	Key informant and primary stakeholder - Responsible for day-to-day programme implementation. The field offices liaise with stakeholders at decentralized levels and has direct beneficiary contact. It will be affected by the outcome of the evaluation.
Regional bureau (RB) for Asia and the Pacific based in Bangkok	Key informant and primary stakeholder - Responsible for both oversight of country offices and technical guidance and support, the regional bureau management has an interest in an independent/impartial account of operational performance as well as in learning from the evaluation findings to apply this learning to other country offices. The regional bureau will be involved in the planning of the next programme; thus it is expected to use the evaluation findings to provide strategic guidance, programme support, and oversight. The regional evaluation officers support country office/regional bureau management to ensure quality, credible and useful decentralized evaluations.
WFP HQ divisions	Key informant and primary stakeholder - WFP headquarters divisions are responsible for issuing and overseeing the rollout of normative guidance on corporate programme themes, activities and modalities, as well as of overarching corporate policies and strategies. They also have an interest in the lessons that emerge from evaluations, as many may have relevance beyond the geographical area of focus. Relevant headquarters units should be consulted from the planning phase to ensure that key policy, strategic and programmatic considerations are understood from the onset of the evaluation. They may use the evaluation for wider organizational learning and accountability.
WFP Office of Evaluation (OEV)	Primary stakeholder - The Office of Evaluation has a stake in ensuring that decentralized evaluations deliver quality, credible and useful evaluations respecting provisions for impartiality as well as roles and accountabilities of various decentralized evaluation stakeholders as identified in the evaluation policy. It may use the evaluation findings, as appropriate, to feed into centralized evaluations, evaluation syntheses or other learning products.

WFP Executive Board (EB)	Primary stakeholder – the Executive Board provides final oversight of WFP programmes and guidance to programmes. The WFP governing body has an interest in being informed about the effectiveness of WFP programmes. This evaluation will not be presented to the Executive Board, but its findings may feed into thematic and/or regional syntheses and corporate learning processes.
External stakeholders	
Beneficiaries	Key informants and primary/secondary stakeholders - As the ultimate recipients of food assistance, beneficiaries have a stake in WFP determining whether its assistance is appropriate and effective. Among the beneficiaries receiving capacity strengthening are schoolteachers, women and men small-holder farmers and women and men members of Village Education Development Committee. The level of participation in the evaluation of women, men, boys and girls from different groups will be determined and their respective perspectives will be sought.
Government of Lao PDR	Key informants and primary stakeholder - The Government has a direct interest in knowing whether WFP activities in the country are aligned with its priorities, harmonized with the action of other partners and meet the expected results. Issues related to capacity development, the extent to which on readiness to take over by by government partners and sustainability will be of particular interest. Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) and Ministry of Health (MoH) are partners in the design and implementation of WFP Local Regional Procurement and School Meals activities. At sub-national level, Provincial Education and Sports Services (PESS), District Education and Sport Bureau (DESB), Provincial Health Office (PHO), and District Health Office (DHO), all of these sub-national government institutions play key roles at implementation level.
United Nations country team (UNCT)	Secondary stakeholder - The harmonized action of the UNCT should contribute to the realization of the government developmental objectives. It has therefore an interest in ensuring that WFP programmes are effective in contributing to the United Nations concerted efforts. Various agencies are also direct partners of WFP at policy and activity level.
Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) Catholic Relief Services	Key informants and primary stakeholder - NGOs are WFP partners for the implementation of some activities while at the same time having their own interventions. The results of the evaluation might affect future implementation modalities, strategic orientations and partnerships. They will be involved in using evaluation findings from this baseline study for programme implementation.
Donors USDA, France Embassy, DFAT, JICA	Primary/secondary stakeholders - WFP interventions are voluntarily funded by several donors. They have an interest in knowing whether their funds have been spent efficiently and if WFP work has been effective and contributed to their own strategies and programmes. USDA has specific interest in ensuring that operational performance reflects USDA standards and accountability requirements, as well as an interest in learning to inform changes in project strategy, results framework, and critical assumptions. That is the main reason for including USDA in the Evaluation Reference Group.
Others	A wide range of actors, such as local suppliers, school administrators and local communities, are involved in the provision of school meals and are expected to benefit from some of the capacity development activities. WFP-Lao PDR also has established partnerships with CRS, the World Bank, Australian DFAT, UNFPA, UNICEF, FAO, and Lao Women Union to achieve project objectives. Their respective perspectives will be sought during the evaluation as the engagement of these actors influences the effectiveness of the programme as well as its sustainability.

3. Subject of the evaluation

3.1. SUBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

52. This project is implemented in partnership with CRS and the MoES, provides a package of school health, education, and nutrition activities, including school meals, water access, hygiene promotion, literacy, community mobilization, school feeding-related infrastructure investments, agricultural support, policy support, and health and nutrition awareness activities, to reach approximately 64,000 pre-primary and primary school-aged children in 17 districts in Laos.
53. The project provides mid-day school meals consisting of fortified rice, canned fish, lentils, and fortified cooking oil across the 17 targeted districts in Lao PDR: Meung District in Bokeo Province, Park ou District in Luangprabang Province, Nonghed District in Xiengkhouang Province, Feuang District in Vientiane Province, Sangthong District in Vientiane Capital, Bualapha, Mahaxay, Nhommalath and Xaybuathong Districts in Khammouane Province, Xonbuly District in Savannakhet Province, Lakhonepheng District in Salavan Province, Bachiangchaleunsook, Khong, Moonlapamok and Sukhuma Districts in Champasack Province, Lamarm District in Xekong Province, and Xaysetha District in Attapeu Province.
54. This is complemented by a comprehensive package including interventions in the areas of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), community development and infrastructure investment, literacy, agriculture support, policy support/government capacity strengthening, and health and nutrition. Through a set of defined outputs, these activities aim to equip the GoL, schools, parents and communities with the resources, knowledge and practical application experience needed to achieve the key objectives of improving the literacy of school-aged children and increasing the use of health, nutrition and dietary practices. ²
55. The project uses McGovern-Dole commodities and cash funding to contribute directly towards the McGovern-Dole project's highest-level Strategic Objectives, SO1: Improved Literacy of School-Aged Children; SO2: Increased Use of Health and Dietary Practices; and LRP SO1: Improved Effectiveness of Food Assistance through Local and Regional Procurement.
56. The following activities contribute toward the achievement of SO1: literacy, school meals, agriculture support, and community mobilization and infrastructure investments. The following activities contribute toward the achievement of SO2: WASH, health and nutrition, and community mobilization and infrastructure investments. WFP has also incorporated a strong focus on capacity strengthening to ensure sustainability by targeting the following McGovern-Dole Foundational Results: increased capacity of government institutions (McGovern-Dole 1.4.1/2.7.1), improved policy and regulatory framework (McGovern-Dole 1.4.2/2.7.2), increased government support (McGovern-Dole 1.4.3/2.7.3) and increased engagement of local organizations and community groups (McGovern-Dole .4.4/2.7.4). Activities that contribute to these foundational results include policy support & government capacity strengthening, health and nutrition, community mobilization and infrastructure investments, and agriculture support.
57. On literacy, the project provides a package of literacy activities for high-need schools that are responsive to the needs of students and teachers in Laos, built on in-country and global experience. The project focuses on 90 schools in Khammouane Province. Schools were selected using the following criteria: low education indicators, no additional literacy support programming, and high percentage of ethnic minority students who do not speak Lao as their mother tongue. The package of activities focuses on emergent literacy skills covering the first two years of primary school – with an emphasis on non-Lao-speaking children – using materials designed and developed specifically for the Lao context and language. Approaches are designed to support teachers in the classroom and be complementary to the national curriculum, rather than a burdensome add-on to already-busy teachers. Through the literacy activities – designed in alignment with the USAID Reading MATTERS framework – the project trains administrators to become more effective mentors to teachers, train teachers to regularly and effectively assess students' reading and provide adaptive remedial instruction, provide high-quality materials to create extra practice opportunities for students during and outside of school, and familiarize pre-primary children

² The details are added in a table of annual target in Annex 5.

with the classroom environment and Lao language to prevent dropout and grade repetition when entering school. The activities are designed to strengthen the rollout of the national curriculum and complement other existing literacy investments in Laos, such as USAID's Learn to Read and BEQUAL.

58. The endline evaluation of the McGovern-Dole FY 2017 grant, completed in September 2023, reached the following conclusions about the performance and contribution of WFP in this most recent previous project:

- *The handover of schools was executed according to the planned strategy and the capacity of national stakeholders. The program has had a positive impact on attendance, nutrition, and the learning environment. However, improvements are needed in community-level assessments, modality challenges, sustainability, and ongoing support.*
- *The project has been effective in achieving its objectives. It has strengthened local capacity through teacher training and instructional materials, leading to improvements in literacy instruction and increased student involvement. School meals have positively affected attendance and enrolment. However, challenges remain in terms of sustainability, monitoring, and training time.*
- *The project has invested in infrastructure to support school feeding activities and increase awareness of nutrition and hygiene. However, there are concerns about the sustainability of these results, particularly with declining operational infrastructure and the contribution of school gardens to meals in handed over schools (though their educational purpose is still being served).*
- *The project demonstrated adaptability during the COVID-19 pandemic by adopting remote learning resources and distributing food assistance directly to households. The government's commitment and adherence to timelines facilitated a successful transition and handover. However, the pandemic disrupted the learning process and created knowledge gaps among students.*
- *The project has had a substantial impact on the community, bridging the gap between intervention and comparison schools. It has increased school enrolment, attendance, attentiveness, and community enthusiasm for the program. However, the pandemic affected learning scores, and variations in outcomes exist among beneficiary groups, highlighting the need for nuanced strategies to ensure equitable results.*
- *While the project showed success in enhancing child literacy, sustainability remains a concern due to inconsistent teacher attendance and potential decline in community enthusiasm. Nuanced strategies and continued efforts are necessary to maintain the project's gains.*
- *The project has positively influenced school gardening, supported farmers, and provided more nutritionally diverse meals. There are potential nutritional and long-term educational benefits from these aspects.*
- *The sustainability of the project's gains relies on factors such as consistent teacher attendance, community contributions, and governmental support. Inconsistencies in teacher attendance and limited monitoring pose challenges to sustainability.*
- *The project has fostered community responsibility and involvement, but there are concerns about waning enthusiasm and over-reliance on community contributions after the project ends. Challenges exist in providing school meals and achieving dietary diversity. Gender disparities in community contributions and roles also persist, which may be reinforcing gender norms and hindering opportunities for economic empowerment, given that cooking is primarily volunteer based. Community-driven initiatives show promise, but uncertainties remain regarding governmental support and prioritization.*

59. At this mid-term point of the project, the implementing team has a particular interest in the systematic assessment of the progress at the following 6 levels:

1. Policy/institutional capacity in terms of the enabling environment for school feeding.
2. Potential effects of the macro-economic situation on the effectiveness and sustainability of the project, e.g drop-out rate.
3. Quality and progress of the implementation of the grant by the 3 implementing partners
4. Any changes in capacity of the government or in capacity of communities to implement school feeding directly and readiness to scale up its role in future. This could involve some assessment of schools in previous intervention areas where government is doing this, as well as the extent of government technical and financial support in the current intervention areas, to see the sustainability of WFP's capacity strengthening.

5. The trend on the balance of roles and responsibilities in school feeding between the government, UN, INGOs, local civil society organisations and the community.
 6. Assessment of mechanism and structure of digital monitoring system, including functionality, efficiency and relevance to date.
60. The evaluation will also assess whether contributions are being made to SF implementation from other WFP activities in the CSP, such as nutrition, given the stated objective of programmatic integration. For example, as stated above WFP is exploring opportunities to define the minimum nutritional value, frequency of contributions and means to encourage these inputs to ensure enhancement of the school menu in the long run. Has there been progress in this regard?

3.2. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

61. The mid-term evaluation is part of an evaluation plan that includes three key products: a baseline study, a mid-term evaluation, and a final evaluation.
62. The evaluation will include assessment of the **implementation of the programme by all three partners**: WFP, CRS and the MoES. The evaluation should be carried out in a representative sample of the intervention areas (of all three partners) in all target districts, including all types of beneficiaries.
63. The evaluations include **all aspects** of the McGovern-Dole programme including school meals, WASH, literacy activities, community mobilization and capacity, and capacity strengthening foundational results.
64. **WFP's overarching capacity strengthening work** with the Government of Lao PDR that is funded under the McGovern-Dole project to strengthen the enabling environment and government capacity to implement school feeding in Lao PDR including implementation of the national SLP is included. This includes WFP's work on policy/legislation, on strengthening government's financial commitment to school feeding, WFP's roles in strengthening government institutions to manage and monitor school feeding, WFP's role in supporting the design and implementation of the SLP, and WFP's role in working with non-state actors such as community members, private sector etc to strengthen SLP implementation. **Note, this does not include an assessment of government capacity per se**, rather it should focus on the design and effectiveness of WFP's work to strengthen government capacity in school feeding, based on the capacity assessments (SABER-SF³) done in 2015/16 and 2023 and the learning from the previous phase of McGovern-Dole project.

4. Evaluation approach, methodology and ethical considerations

4.1. EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND CRITERIA

65. The evaluation will address the following key questions, which will be further developed and tailored by the evaluation team in a detailed evaluation matrix during the inception phase. Collectively, the questions aim at highlighting the key lessons and performance of the mid-term evaluation of the USDA McGovern-Dole FY20 School Feeding Programme, with a view to informing strategic and operational decisions for the second half of the program.
66. The evaluation should analyse how gender, equity and wider inclusion objectives and GEWE mainstreaming principles were included in the intervention design, and whether the evaluation subject has been guided by WFP and system-wide objectives on GEWE. The gender, equity, human rights, and wider inclusion dimensions should be integrated into all evaluation criteria as appropriate.

Table 2: Evaluation questions and criteria

Evaluation questions - Midterm	Criteria
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³ Systems Approach to Better Education Results (School Feeding)

EQ1 – What is the current level alignment of the intervention with other relevant initiatives		Coherence
1.1.	Are there any changes to the alignment with school feeding national policy, national need, WFP school feeding policy and guidance and with donor and partner school feeding strategies since the baseline?	
1.2	How well integrated is the project in practice with other projects, activities and Outcomes in the WFP CSP?	
EQ2 –To what extent do the McGovern-Dole objectives and design respond to the needs of stakeholders and institutions?.		Relevance
2.1	To what extent is the School Feeding Programme contributing to realizing the Government of Laos policies and strategies related to school feeding	
2.2	How well do teacher and administrator trainings and other literacy interventions organized by the project support teachers to address the issues they face in their schools and communities? Are the topics being offered relevant to their needs?	
2.3	To what extent is the design and implementation of the School Feeding program gender-sensitive?	
2.4	To what extent are WFP's capacity strengthening activities designed based on needs assessments/analyses of national capacity in all five SABER-SF policy goals?	
EQ3 – To what extent are McGovern-Dole activities being delivered in an efficient and timely manner and likely to achieve objectives and results, including possible differences across groups or institutions?		Effectiveness and Efficiency
3.1	What is the output and the progress of program implementation – is the program on track to complete all activities as planned?	Effectiveness
3.2	Has sufficient attention been given to gender, disability and equal rights issues in the implementation of the project and has this produced any results?	Effectiveness
3.3	Is there evidence that the training of teachers led to improved teaching practices? To what degree are objectives related to improved quality of instruction likely to be achieved by the end of the project?	Effectiveness
3.4	Is there evidence that WASH interventions contributed to changes in the use of health and hygiene practice?	Effectiveness
3.5	Are all areas of service delivery in the project as efficient as they can be or are there some areas where there is room for improvement?	Efficiency
3.6	Has WFP been able to timely mobilize the required skills, personnel, and technical support to be able to provide the right support to national actors (at technical, project management and advocacy levels)?	Efficiency
3.7	How effective is the capacity strengthening work at building national capacity in school feeding? Does it include work across the five SABER-SF policy goals? What evidence is there of progress?	Effectiveness

3.8	To what extent has the implementation of the School Feeding Programme to date facilitated the readiness of all stakeholders for the handover of the SFP to GoL and integration into the national School Lunch Programme at the end of the program timeframe?	Effectiveness
EQ4 – Are there any emerging impacts of the intervention at the mid-term stage (part of USDA approved evaluation framework)?		Impact
4.1	What internal and external factors are affecting the project’s achievement of intended results in the evaluation priority areas (see para 59)? For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there evidence that lingering COVID-19 socio-economic effects together with the other negative macro-economic trends are lessening the impact of the project? 	
4.2	What changes in attendance, drop-out and retention rates have been observed as a result of the project? How do these changes compare with the broader trends which are affected by Covid-19 and reduced living standards caused by the macro-economic situation?	
4.3	How are different groups benefiting from the intervention outcomes so far (intended or unintended) and how do GEWE outcomes vary by stakeholder group?	
EQ5 – To what extent are McGovern-Dole FFE programme results, benefits, and outcomes likely to continue after the program concludes?		Sustainability
5.1	Is the program on track for handover and sustainability in the following areas? Have relevant milestones been reached? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community-local level: Access to school feeding (including physical infrastructure, VEDC capacity, community contributions, access to water and community engagement) Government-national and sub-national levels: Financial resources, workforce and human resources, leadership and governance, accountability and M&E 	
5.2	Is there sufficient production of diverse and nutritious crops in the communities, what are the barriers being faced if any, what is the extent of fresh produce being contributed for the SFP and what is the extent to which consistent incomes for farmers and market linkages have been addressed since baseline?	
5.3	What, or who, incentivizes VEDCs and water user committees (WUCs) to sustain/maintain water points and handwashing facilities and what are the internal (project related) and external (enabling environment) barriers for this?	
5.4	Which components of the SFP are proving to be most sustainable in terms of operational efficiency and why?	
5.5	To what extent has the package of capacity strengthening activities within WFP-supported programme been institutionalized into the Government’s policies, strategies, systems, and implementation arrangements so that they are more likely to be sustainable beyond WFP’s support (within all five policy goals)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Policy Goal 1: Is the government convinced of the benefits of school feeding? Does the government have sufficient policies and legislation in place to enable them to implement a sustainable government-run school feeding programme (SLP)? What are the key gaps and priority areas to be worked on? 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Policy Goal 2: Does the government commit sufficient financial resources to school feeding? What are the key gaps and priority areas to be worked on? ➤ Policy Goal 3: Does the government have sufficient governance and coordination structures to implement a national school feeding programme? What are the key gaps and priority areas to be worked on? ➤ Policy Goal 4: Does the design of the national SLP align with the capacity of the government, and the needs of the children? Is there sufficient monitoring and review of the national SLP? What are the key gaps and priority areas to be worked on? ➤ Policy Goal 5: Are communities and other non-state actors sufficiently engaged with school feeding? Are they able to provide contribution in time or resources for the school feeding? What are the key gaps and priority areas to be worked on? 	
5.7	What are the key gaps and priority areas for institutionalization moving forward? What additional advocacy might be required by WFP?	
5.8	What outputs are the most effective at securing community, local or national government investment into the SFP? What are the barriers and challenges in securing investment?	
EQ6– Additional Questions that are part of the USDA-approved evaluation framework for the project.		General
6.1	Are there any recommendations for mid-course corrections to improve the project’s relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and/or sustainability?	To be covered under Recommendations
6.,2	What are the lessons learned from the project so far?	To be covered under Lessons Learned.

67. Evaluation Questions Aligned to the evaluation criteria, the evaluation will address the questions outlined in the table above, which will be further developed by the evaluation team during the inception phase. The evaluation team will develop an analytical approach for the evaluation. This should be documented systematically in the Evaluation Matrix. This evaluation matrix is one of the outputs in the Inception Phase.

68. **The evaluation** will take into consideration the conclusions of the 2017 endline evaluation (see paragraph 58 above) to assess how these observations may apply to the current 2020 grant. Although the schools under the FY17 grant were different and the COVID situation faced during implementation no longer applies, the socio-economic effects of Covid are still being deeply felt and this exacerbated by food and fuel crisis resulting from the Ukraine war. Macro-economic factors such as the depreciation of Lao Kip are affecting government revenues and living standards and this may negatively affect the outcomes of the project.

69. **This mid-term evaluation** should, when answering the evaluation questions, review the programmatic response to the following key observations from the **baseline evaluation**:

Summary of Baseline Key Observation

- a) **New food items introduced by project** : Acceptance of new food items is a gradual process, which could be smoothed by way of undertaking very specific community mobilization activities around it.
- b) **Regular trainings to mitigate turnover**: It is essential that regular trainings of implementation team and district staff are held to ensure mitigate the effect of frequent transfers. Similarly, it is essential to train more cooks that required in order to ensure continuity of services, particularly during harvest season. Use of audio-visual based content is also likely to increase user engagement and comprehension.
- c) **Increase farmer income**: It is essential that farmers' participation in the program and contribution towards school meals, to a large extent would depend upon the chances of the program increasing their incomes. In order to ensure that the farmers benefit from the program, it is essential to not only increase their farm production, but also identify ways and means for increasing their incomes.
- d) **Farmer-Market linkages**: The program would benefit by establishing linkages between farmers and the market and traders, to facilitate sale of their produce on a sustained basis. Similarly, it is essential to identify a variety of other solution ideas, such as food fortification or food processing etc. which could increase farmers' income and diversify their income sources.
- e) **Customised approach in line with vulnerabilities**: Baseline research shows that not all program villages are at the same level at the onset of the program. There are certain characteristics which inherently make certain villages more vulnerable to malnutrition and low educational & learning outcomes. The project should adopt a more intensified and customized approach, responding to their unique cultural contexts and challenges.
- f) **Manage overburdening of teachers** Baseline findings point that teachers are overburdened with teaching as-well-as non-teaching, administrative responsibilities. In light of this, it is essential to identify individuals from the community who could be trained along with teachers and student around development and maintenance of school gardens.
- g) **Energising VEDCs** There is, thus a need to energize VEDCs by way of increasing their engagement within the village, that is, with other village institutions and community members, and with stakeholders outside their village.
- h) **VEDC Competitions**: One of the potential ways of increasing VEDC's engagement could be undertake competitions among multiple VEDCs within a particular geographical cluster.

70. **The mid-term evaluation conclusions** should draw together what the answers to these questions mean for implementation and monitoring: what needs to be modified or strengthened to maximise results?

71. The evaluation will analyse how GEWE objectives and GEWE mainstreaming principles were included in the intervention design, and whether the object has been guided by WFP and system-wide objectives on GEWE Successful integration of gender and inclusion into a WFP evaluation includes the following steps:

- **Contextual analysis** includes contextual constraints and opportunities in relation to gender equality. For instance, how gender and power relationships, including structural and other causes, give rise to inequities, discrimination and unfair power relations. For instance, social, political and economic factors-child marriage, gender biases, lack of national education budget and plan for gender-responsive, etc. That can be further examined with the **GEWE, human rights and wider inclusion lens regardless of whether the focus of intervention is on gender**.
- Including gender issues and gender dimensions in relation to **the subject**. (e.g., school meals, literacy and health in the country. Specifically, drop-out rates, imbalanced domestic work (household errands/chores).
- Reviewing gender aspects in the **previous assessments** and including to what extent the strategic different objectives observed in these groups.
- **Conceptualize a gender-sensitive evaluation**, including scope, approach, methods, evaluation matrix and analysis plan for the entire assessments.
- **Stakeholder analysis** identifies the different groups and their different interests and concerns in evaluation with regards to gender and affected populations and considering the differences within target groups, gender, ethnicity, disabilities, sector, displaced.
- Reflect how gender issues are addressed in **methodology**, including data collection and analysis and ensure that this gender consideration is included in evaluation matrix.
- **The mid-term evaluation recommendations** should outline any missing concrete steps to enabling an operational implementation of the USDA McGovern-Dole FY2020 Program, i.e. school meals, water access,

hygiene promotion, literacy, community mobilization, agricultural support, policy support, and health and nutrition awareness activities and strengthen the capacities of the host government and communities in school feeding to enable a smooth, coordinated transition of all WFP-supported schools into the National School Meals Program (NSMP) in 2025. The recommendations should take into consideration the geographic, political, economic, and enabling environment. Additionally, the lessons learned, challenges and recommendations related to GEWE must also be included and presented in the findings of this mid-term evaluation. The evaluation team must include an annex with a table mapping finding to conclusions and recommendations.

4.2. EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

72. The methodology will be designed by the evaluation team during the inception phase in accordance with the WFP Decentralized Evaluation Quality Assurance System (DEQAS) as well as USDA's Monitoring and Evaluation Policy. Based on the requirements described in the TORs, further analysis done at inception phase and consultations with key stakeholders, the mid-term evaluation team will formulate an appropriate evaluation design, sampling strategy, and methodological approach for each stage of evaluation process. The detailed methodology defined in the Inception Report should be guided by the following principles:
- Employ the relevant evaluation criteria above.
 - Apply an evaluation matrix geared towards addressing the key evaluation questions taking into account the data availability challenges, the budget and timing constraints.
 - Use mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) to ensure information from different methods and sources is triangulated to enhance the validity, reliability and credibility of the findings. Qualitative methods such as focus group discussions and key informant interviews will be used where relevant to highlight lessons learned and case studies representative of the interventions.
 - Partnership with local research firms is encouraged. This includes the use of local enumerators for any survey work, ensuring that cultural and political sensitivities are addressed and that the enumeration teams have the local language expertise to elicit the needed information from beneficiaries and others; and
 - To the extent possible, the evaluation will be conducted by a gender-balanced, geographically, and culturally diverse team with appropriate skills to assess gender dimensions of the subject as specified in the scope, approach and methodology sections of the ToR.
73. The methodology chosen should demonstrate attention to impartiality and reduction of bias by relying on mixed methods (quantitative, qualitative, participatory etc.) and different primary and secondary data sources that are systematically triangulated (documents from different sources; a range of stakeholder groups, including pre-primary (5 years) and primary school students (6-11 years), teachers, parents, cooks, storekeepers, members of the Village Education Development Committees and village leaders); direct observation in different locations; across evaluators; across methods etc.). It will consider any challenges to data availability, validity or reliability, as well as any budget and timing constraints. The evaluation questions, lines of inquiry, indicators, data sources and data collection methods will be brought together in an evaluation matrix, which will form the basis of the sampling approach and data collection and analysis instruments (desk review, interview and observation guides, survey questionnaires etc.).
74. The methodology should be sensitive in terms of GEWE, equity and inclusion, indicating how the perspectives and voices of diverse groups (men and women, boys, girls, the elderly, people living with disabilities and other marginalized groups) will be sought and considered. The methodology should ensure that primary data collected is disaggregated by sex and age; an explanation should be provided if this is not possible.
75. Looking for explicit consideration of gender and equity/inclusion in the data after fieldwork is too late; the evaluation team must have a clear and detailed plan for collecting data from women and men in gender and equity-sensitive ways before fieldwork begins.
76. The evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations must reflect gender and equity analysis. The findings should include a discussion on intended and unintended effects of the intervention on gender equality and equity dimensions. The report should provide lessons/ challenges/recommendations for conducting gender and equity-responsive evaluations in the future.

77. A comparison design between different types of schools being supported by the project was employed for the baseline evaluation of the McGovern-Dole project. This adaptation of the quasi-experimental survey approach will be carried forward in this mid-term and the endline evaluation.
78. The qualitative sampling strategy for the baseline-midterm-endline should be guided by the options presented in Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, Fourth Edition, 2015, Module 30, Purposeful Sampling and Case Selection: Overview of Strategies and Options. The evaluation team will use rigorous sampling methods for understanding and explaining the patterns in the quantitative data through a process of triangulation.
79. With the FY 20 McGovern-Dole award, WFP is looking into the performance of different types of schools within the project according to various characteristics (some are listed below, but the final variables will be determined during the inception phase). Quasi-experimental techniques will still be applied by breaking the schools according to categories and then randomly selecting within these (i.e., stratified random sampling). There is already useful data from the FY 2017 McGovern-Dole project by using a quasi-experimental approach to analyze the overall impact of school feeding versus no school feeding. However, this approach tends to treat the project group (treatment group) as homogeneous.
80. Purposive sampling will be based on known divergences in characteristics to facilitate comparative change from baseline to midline and endline. Examples of divergences to be considered when making up the sample include the following:
- Comparison of schools with different ethnic composition,
 - Comparison of WASH and non-WASH-supported schools.
 - Comparison based upon remoteness from urban centres.
81. Comparison based on local food security (mVAM) Comparison based on poverty and access to services (types of roads) was conducted in the baseline. In practice the baseline used only used this one comparator, types of roads, as a proxy for poverty and access to services. This was because of the exact selection of schools for the different project intervention packages (WASH, literacy etc) had not yet been done. The mid-line presents an opportunity to introduce more of the comparisons mentioned above for a comparison between midline and endline.
82. In addition, the sampling will be done to ensure balanced coverage of the WFP, CRS and MoES implementation schools, to compare performance at the implementing partner level. The situation where the Government is one of the implementing partners being evaluated by WFP will be tabled with the Government to ensure their conformity with the plan.
83. The ambition and complexity of the sampling strategy, with various vectors and layers, is to provide the basis for comparative analysis for maximising learning from the mid-term evaluation. It will provide the basis for concrete and actionable recommendations tailored to each implementation partner and each outcome area (e.g. WASH, Literacy). Depending upon the range of comparisons to be made, the margin of error could be reduced from 95% to 90%, to allow for smaller sample sizes.
84. The overall aim of monitoring and evaluation in this grant is to **understand the extent to which project strategies can compensate for specific vulnerabilities and deprivations**. Gender will also be considered and is an important variable for WFP's gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) agenda. The final sampling frame, methodology, and sample size calculations will be the responsibility of the Evaluation Team in consultation with the WFP Lao PDR in the inception phase of the evaluation.
85. Specific data collection methods are expected to include: a desk review, quantitative survey, semi-structured interviews and focus groups (to ensure that a cross-section of stakeholders can participate so that a diversity of views is gathered) and observation during field visits. Participants for focus group discussions will include school principals/teachers, parent-student associations, village education development committee members and community members/small-holder farmers. Participants for (semi-)structured interviews will include district and provincial education officials, relevant local and international NGOs and UN agencies, and central government officials. The survey modules utilized will include household and child questionnaires, suppliers and smallholder farmers as well as school questionnaire (with teachers and school directors). In a sample of schools targeted for literacy activities, the mid-term evaluation will include a full literacy assessment. The key respondents have been identified as critical for the primary data collection as outlined in Table 3 with the list and survey modules to be reviewed and further detailed based on methodology proposed by the Evaluation Team and agreed by WFP CO.

86. Key respondents for primary data collection for this mid-term evaluation will be school directors, school children, parents, teachers, community members, government, cooperating partners – CRS, WFP officials at CO and FO, and Regional Bureau.
87. The methodology will be GEEW-responsive, indicating what data collection methods are employed to seek information on GEEW issues and to ensure gender equality is considered when designing and performing data collection.
88. The following potential risks to the methodology have been identified:
 - Limited datasets (including baseline)
 - Issues related to comparability of datasets.
 - Data only available in Lao language
 - Availability and quality of gender-disaggregated data, including data related to gender-specific outcomes.
 - High government staff turnover – limited institutional memory.
89. For this mid-term evaluation, the evaluation team will need to expand on the methodology presented in the ToR and develop a detailed evaluation matrix in the inception report.

4.3. EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT

90. Main sources of information available to the evaluation team are the following:

- USDA McGovern-Dole FY2020 – Project Proposal – Approved.
- USDA McGovern-Dole FY2020 – Project Agreement – co-signed
- WFP and Partnership Agreement – Field Level Agreement with CRS – co-signed
- USDA McGovern-Dole FY20 Baseline Report
- Revised Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) and Project Annual Target (post baseline)
- Semi-annual report – USDA McGovern-Dole FY20 2021 and 2022, and 2023.
- WFP Laos CO – monthly mVAM reports
- WFP Annual Country Report 2021, and 2022
- 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021–2025)
- National Nutrition Strategy to 2025 and Plan of Action (2016–2020)
- National Social Protection Strategy 2030.

Concerning the quality of data and information, the evaluation team should:

- a. assess data availability and reliability as part of the inception phase expanding on the information provided. This assessment will inform the data collection.
 - b. systematically check accuracy, consistency and validity of collected data and information and acknowledge any limitations/caveats in drawing conclusions using the data.
 - c. Assess the data and information in the USDA McGovern-Dole FY20 School Feeding Program project documents as key data source for designing of this baseline study.
91. During the inception phase, the evaluation team will be expected to perform an in-depth evaluability assessment and critically assess data availability, quality and gaps expanding on the information provided in Section 4.3. This assessment will inform the data collection and the choice of evaluation methods. The evaluation team will need to systematically check accuracy, consistency and validity of collected data and information and acknowledge any limitations/caveats in drawing conclusions using the data during the reporting phase.

4.4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

92. The evaluation must conform to [UNEG ethical guidelines for evaluation](#). Accordingly, the selected evaluation firm is responsible for safeguarding and ensuring ethics at all stages of the evaluation process. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring informed consent, protecting privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of respondents, ensuring cultural sensitivity, respecting the autonomy of respondents, ensuring fair recruitment of participants

(including women and socially excluded groups) and ensuring that the evaluation results do no harm to respondents or their communities.

93. The evaluation firm will be responsible for managing any potential ethical risks and issues and must put in place, in consultation with the evaluation manager, processes and systems to identify, report and resolve any ethical issues that might arise during the implementation of the evaluation. Ethical approvals and reviews by relevant national and institutional review boards must be sought where required.
94. The team and evaluation manager will not have been involved in the design, implementation or monitoring of this USDA McGovern-Dole FY17 School Feeding programme implemented by WFP Laos CO nor have any other potential or perceived conflicts of interest. All members of the evaluation team will abide by the [2020 UNEG Ethical Guidelines](#), including the Pledge of Ethical Conduct as well as the WFP technical note on gender. The evaluation team and individuals who participate directly in the evaluation at the time of issuance of the purchase order are expected to sign a confidentiality agreement and a commitment to ethical conduct. These templates will be provided by the country office when signing the contract.

4.5. QUALITY ASSURANCE

95. The WFP evaluation quality assurance system sets out processes with steps for quality assurance and templates for evaluation products based on a set of [Quality Assurance Checklists](#). The quality assurance will be systematically applied during this evaluation and relevant documents will be provided to the evaluation team. This includes checklists for feedback on quality for each of the evaluation products. The relevant checklist will be applied at each stage, to ensure the quality of the evaluation process and outputs.
96. The WFP Decentralized Evaluation Quality Assurance System (DEQAS) is based on the UNEG norms and standards and good practice of the international evaluation community and aims to ensure that the evaluation process and products conform to best practice. This quality assurance process does not interfere with the views or independence of the evaluation team but ensures that the report provides credible evidence and analysis in a clear and convincing way and draws its conclusions on that basis.
97. The WFP evaluation manager will be responsible for ensuring that the evaluation progresses as per the [DEQAS Process Guide](#) and for conducting a rigorous quality control of the evaluation products ahead of their finalization.
98. To enhance the quality and credibility of decentralized evaluations, an outsourced quality support (QS) service directly managed by the WFP Office of Evaluation reviews the draft ToR, the draft inception and the evaluation reports, and provides a systematic assessment of their quality from an evaluation perspective, along with recommendations.
99. The evaluation manager will share the assessment and recommendations from the quality support service with the team leader, who will address the recommendations when finalizing the inception and evaluation reports. To ensure transparency and credibility of the process in line with the [UNEG norms and standards](#),^[1] a rationale should be provided for comments that the team does not take into account when finalizing the report.
100. The evaluation team will be required to ensure the quality of data (reliability, consistency and accuracy) throughout the data collection, synthesis, analysis and reporting phases.
101. The evaluation team should be assured of the accessibility of all relevant documentation within the provisions of the directive on disclosure of information. This is available in the [WFP Directive CP2010/001](#) on information disclosure.
102. All final evaluation reports will be subject to a post hoc quality assessment (PHQA) by an independent entity through a process that is managed by the Office of Evaluation. The overall PHQA results will be published on the WFP website alongside the evaluation report.

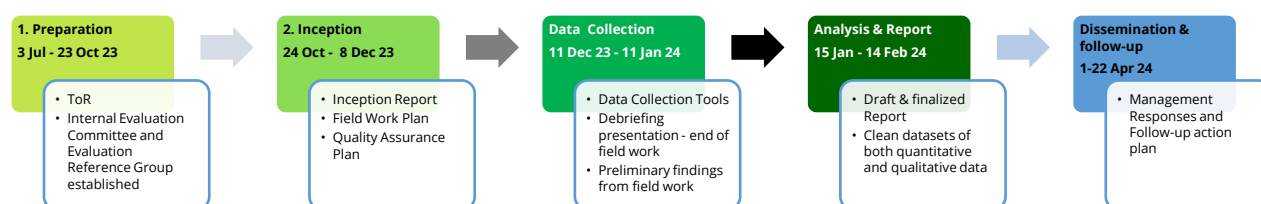
^[1] [UNEG Norm #7](#) states “that transparency is an essential element that establishes trust and builds confidence, enhances stakeholder ownership and increases public accountability”

5. Organization of the evaluation

5.1. PHASES AND DELIVERABLES

103. The evaluation will proceed through the following phases. The deliverables and deadlines for each phase are as follows (refer to Annex 2 - Timeline for further details):

Figure 1: Summary Process Map and Key Deliverables in Each Phase



Please refer to an evaluation timeline in Annex 2

1) Inception phase, timeline is from 24 October to 8 December 2023. The evaluation team is required to share the Inception Report for the mid-term evaluation of USDA McGovern-Dole FY20 School Feeding. The Inception report of the mid-term evaluation of USDA McGovern-Dole FY20 School Feeding will include the methodology of the mid-term evaluation, sample size and locations of villages/schools to be visited during field data collection, review and analysis of secondary data, tentative key informants for focus group discussion, and interviews.

Deliverables: 1) Field Data Collection Workplan, 2) Quality Assurance Plan, and 3) Inception Report.

2) Data collection phase, timeline is from 11 December 2023 to 11 January 2024. The evaluation team is required to collect sufficient and reliable data to enable evaluation questions to be answered, by conducting field visits to collect primary data, key informant information. The evaluation team is also expected to conduct an end-of-fieldwork debriefing session complemented by a written document or Power Point presentation.

Deliverables: 1) Data Collection Tools, 2) Debriefing power-point presentation.

3) Analyse data and report phase, timeline is from 15 January to 28 March 2024. The evaluation team is required to finalize the analysis of data gathered, produce a draft evaluation report which presents the key findings, conclusions and recommendations in an accessible manner with a 2-3-page stand-alone brief describing the evaluation design, key findings and other relevant considerations. It will serve to inform any interested stakeholders of the midterm evaluation and should be written in language easy to understand by non-evaluators and with appropriate graphics and tables. The evaluation team is expected to produce a final report by 17 March 2024. All final versions of international food assistance evaluation reports will be made publicly available. Evaluators shall provide a copy of the evaluation reports that is free of personally identifiable information (PII) and proprietary information. The ET is expected to share de-identified data with WFP. Final versions of evaluation reports ready for publication should be accessible to persons with disabilities.

For guidance on creating documents accessible to persons with disabilities, please see the following resources:
<https://www.section508.gov/create/documents>
<https://www.section508.gov/create/pdfs>

Deliverables: 1) Draft Evaluation Report (with performance indicators annex), 2) Final Evaluation Report, Presentation of Evaluation, and 3) Clean datasets of both quantitative and qualitative data.

104. Table 4 presents the structure of the main phases of the evaluation, along with the deliverables and deadlines for each phase. Annex 2 presents a more detailed timeline.

Table 4: Summary timeline – key evaluation milestones			
Main phases	Indicative timeline	Tasks and deliverables	Responsible
1. Preparation	3 July to 23 October 2023	Preparation of ToR Selection of the evaluation team & contracting Compilation of document library	Evaluation manager
2. Inception	24 October to 8 December 2023	Inception mission Inception report Document review Data collection tools	Evaluation Team
3. Data collection	11 December 2023 to 10 January 2023	Fieldwork Exit debriefing	Evaluation Team
4. Reporting	15 Jan to 28 March 2024	Data analysis and report drafting Comments process (completed ERG and DEQS comments matrix) Evaluation report	Evaluation Team Evaluation Manager
5. Dissemination and follow-up	01-22 April 2024	Management response Dissemination of the evaluation report	Evaluation Manager WFP Laos CO Programme and Management Team

5.2. EVALUATION TEAM COMPOSITION

105. The evaluation team is expected to include at least two members, including the team leader and a mix of national and international evaluator(s) will be required. To the extent possible, the evaluation will be conducted by a gender-balanced and geographically and culturally diverse team with appropriate skills to assess gender dimensions of the subject as specified in the scope, approach and methodology sections of the ToR. At least 3-4 team members should have WFP experience.

106. The team will be multi-disciplinary and include members who, together, include an appropriate balance of technical expertise and practical knowledge in the following areas:

- The evaluation team will need to ensure a complementary mix of expertise in the technical areas covered by the evaluations for both national and international evaluators (excluding field enumerators). To the extent possible, the evaluation will be conducted by a gender-balanced, geographically and culturally diverse team with appropriate skills to assess gender dimensions of the subject as specified in the scope, approach and

methodology sections of the TOR. At least two team members should have experience in conducting evaluation exercises for WFP-implemented programs funded by McGovern-Dole.

- 3-4 members including McGovern-Dole Team Manager, with appropriate balance of expertise and practical knowledge in the following areas:
- Institutional capacity development (with a focus on establishing national systems, cost-efficiency analysis, supply chain management)
- School feeding, education, nutrition, food security, systems strengthening.
- All team members should have strong analytical and communication skills, evaluation experience with a track record of written work on similar assignments, and familiarity with Asia and Pacific regions.

107. Other areas of expertise may include:

- Gender expertise / good knowledge of gender analysis, and gender responsive evaluation
- Evaluation designs and methods (both qualitative and quantitative)
- Knowledge management
- All team members should have strong analytical and communication skills, evaluation experience and familiarity with Lao PDR and/or the region.
- All team members should have strong skills in oral and written English. For the national team members should have strong skills in oral and written Lao, and able to communicate in ethnic minority dialects will be preferable.

108. The team leader will have expertise in one of the key competencies listed above as well as demonstrated experience in leading similar evaluations, including designing methodology and data collection tools. She/he will also have leadership, analytical and communication skills, including a track record of excellent English writing, synthesis and presentation skills. Her/his primary responsibilities will be: i) defining the evaluation approach and methodology; ii) guiding and managing the team; iii) leading the evaluation mission and representing the evaluation team; and iv) drafting and revising, as required, the inception report, the end of field work (i.e. exit) debriefing presentation and evaluation report in line with DEQAS.

109. Team members will: i) contribute to the methodology in their area of expertise based on a document review; ii) conduct field work; iii) participate in team meetings and meetings with stakeholders; and iv) contribute to the drafting and revision of the evaluation products in their technical area(s).

110. Any changes in the composition of the evaluation team members once the contract is signed, must be approved by the evaluation manager in consultation with the EC. The vendor will in such circumstances provide the written justification together with the CV of the replacement/additional team member.

111. Prospective applicants should consider Lao PDR current visa policies in their planning and selection of the team members who will travel to the country, bearing in mind that WFP does not take any responsibility for obtaining visas beyond issuing of support letter.

112. The evaluation team will conduct the evaluation under the direction of its team leader and in close communication with WFP Laos CO evaluation manager. The team will be hired following agreement with WFP on its composition.

5.3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

113. The WFP Laos Country Office management (Director or Deputy Director) will take responsibility to:

- Assign an evaluation manager for the evaluation.
- Compose the internal evaluation committee and the evaluation reference group (see below)
- Approve the final ToR, inception and evaluation reports.
- Approve the evaluation team selection.
- Ensure the independence and impartiality of the evaluation at all stages, including establishment of an evaluation committee and a reference group.

- Participate in discussions with the evaluation team on the evaluation design and the evaluation subject, its performance and results with the evaluation manager and the evaluation team.
- Organize and participate in two separate debriefings, one internal and one with external stakeholders.
- Oversee dissemination and follow-up processes, including the preparation of a management response to the evaluation recommendations.

114. The **evaluation manager** manages the evaluation process through all phases including: drafting this ToR; identifying the evaluation team; preparing and managing the budget; setting up the evaluation committee and evaluation reference group; ensuring quality assurance mechanisms are operational and effectively used; consolidating and sharing comments on draft inception and evaluation reports with the evaluation team; ensuring that the team has access to all documentation and information necessary to the evaluation; facilitating the team's contacts with local stakeholders; supporting the preparation of the field mission by setting up meetings and field visits, providing logistic support during the fieldwork and arranging for interpretation, if required; organizing security briefings for the evaluation team and providing any materials as required; and conducting the first level quality assurance of the evaluation products. The evaluation manager will be the main interlocutor between the team, represented by the team leader, the firm's focal point, and WFP counterparts to ensure a smooth implementation process.

115. An internal **evaluation committee** is formed to help ensure the independence and impartiality of the evaluation. The specified membership and key roles and responsibilities, including overseeing the evaluation process, making key decisions and reviewing evaluation products. Annex 3 provides further information on the composition of the evaluation committee.

116. **An evaluation reference group (ERG)** is formed as an advisory body with representation from. Please find details of list of the membership of the ERG representing the key internal and external stakeholders for the evaluation in Annex 3. The evaluation reference group members will review and comment on the draft evaluation products and act as key informants in order to contribute to the relevance, impartiality and credibility of the evaluation by offering a range of viewpoints and ensuring a transparent process.

The regional bureau: RBB, the regional bureau will take responsibility to:

- Advise the evaluation manager and provide support to the evaluation process where appropriate
- Participate in discussions with the evaluation team on the evaluation design and on the evaluation subject as required
- Provide comments on the draft ToR, inception and evaluation reports.
- Support the preparation of a management response to the evaluation and track the implementation of the recommendations.

117. While the regional evaluation officer will perform most of the above responsibilities, other RBB-relevant technical staff may participate in the evaluation reference group and/or comment on evaluation products as appropriate.

118. Other Stakeholders: **USDA**

- Provide comment on and approve ToRs.
- Participate in an introduction teleconference with the selected independent evaluator prior to evaluate field work for the evaluations.
- Provide comment on the inception report as required.
- Participate in discussions of findings and recommendations that suggest changes in the project strategy, results frameworks and critical assumptions.
- Provide comment on and approve the report.
- In addition to the evaluation committee chair, USDA will also approve the ToR and the final report.

119. **Relevant WFP Headquarters divisions** will take responsibility to:

- Discuss WFP strategies, policies or systems in their area of responsibility and subject of evaluation.
- Comment on the evaluation TOR, inception and evaluation reports, as required.

120. **The Office of Evaluation (OEV).** OEV is responsible for overseeing WFP decentralized evaluation function, defining evaluation norms and standards, managing the outsourced quality support service, publishing as well as submitting the final evaluation report to the PHQA. OEV also ensures a help desk function and advises the Regional Evaluation Officer, the Evaluation Manager and Evaluation teams when required. Internal and external stakeholders and/or the evaluators are encouraged to reach out to the regional evaluation officer and the Office of Evaluation helpdesk (wfp.decentralizedevaluation@wfp.org) in case of potential impartiality breaches or non-adherence to UNEG ethical guidelines.

5.4. SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS

121. **Security clearance** where required is to be obtained from the Laos CO, through UNDSS.

- Consultants hired by WFP are covered by the United Nations Department of Safety & Security (UNDSS) system for United Nations personnel, which covers WFP staff and consultants contracted directly by WFP. Independent consultants must obtain UNDSS security clearance for travelling from the designated duty station and complete the United Nations basic and advance security trainings (BSAFE & SSAFE) in advance, print out their certificates and take them with them.
- As an “independent supplier” of evaluation services to WFP, the contracted firm will be responsible for ensuring the security of the evaluation team, and adequate arrangements for evacuation for medical or situational reasons. However, to avoid any security incidents, the evaluation manager will ensure that the WFP country office registers the team members with the security officer on arrival in country and arranges a security briefing for them to gain an understanding of the security situation on the ground. The evaluation team must observe applicable United Nations Department of Safety and Security rules and regulations including taking security training (BSAFE & SSAFE), curfews (when applicable) and attending in-country briefings.

122. However, to avoid any security incidents, the Evaluation Manager is requested to ensure:

- The WFP CO registers the team members with the Security Officer on arrival in country and arranges a security briefing for them to gain an understanding of the security situation on the ground.
- The team members observe applicable UN security rules and regulations –e.g. curfews etc

5.5. COMMUNICATION

123. To ensure a smooth and efficient process and enhance the learning from this evaluation, the evaluation team should place emphasis on transparent and open communication with key stakeholders. These will be achieved by ensuring a clear agreement on channels and frequency of communication with and between key stakeholders specified in the communication and knowledge management plan in Annex 5.

124. Should translators be required for fieldwork, the evaluation firm will plan and include the cost in the budget proposal.

125. Based on the stakeholder analysis, the communication and knowledge management plan (in Annex 5) identifies the users of the evaluation to involve in the process and to whom the report should be disseminated. The communication and knowledge management plan indicates how findings including gender, equity and wider inclusion issues will be disseminated and how stakeholders interested in, or affected by, gender, equity and wider inclusion issues will be engaged.

126. As part of the international standards for evaluation, WFP requires that all evaluations are made publicly available. It is important that evaluation reports are accessible to a wide audience, thereby contributing to the credibility of WFP – through transparent reporting – and the use of evaluation. Following the approval of the final evaluation report, as having described the communication and knowledge management plan.

5.6. BUDGET

127. This mid-term evaluation will be financed from the WFP Laos Country Office using the M&E budget allocation in the McGovern-Dole grant funds.

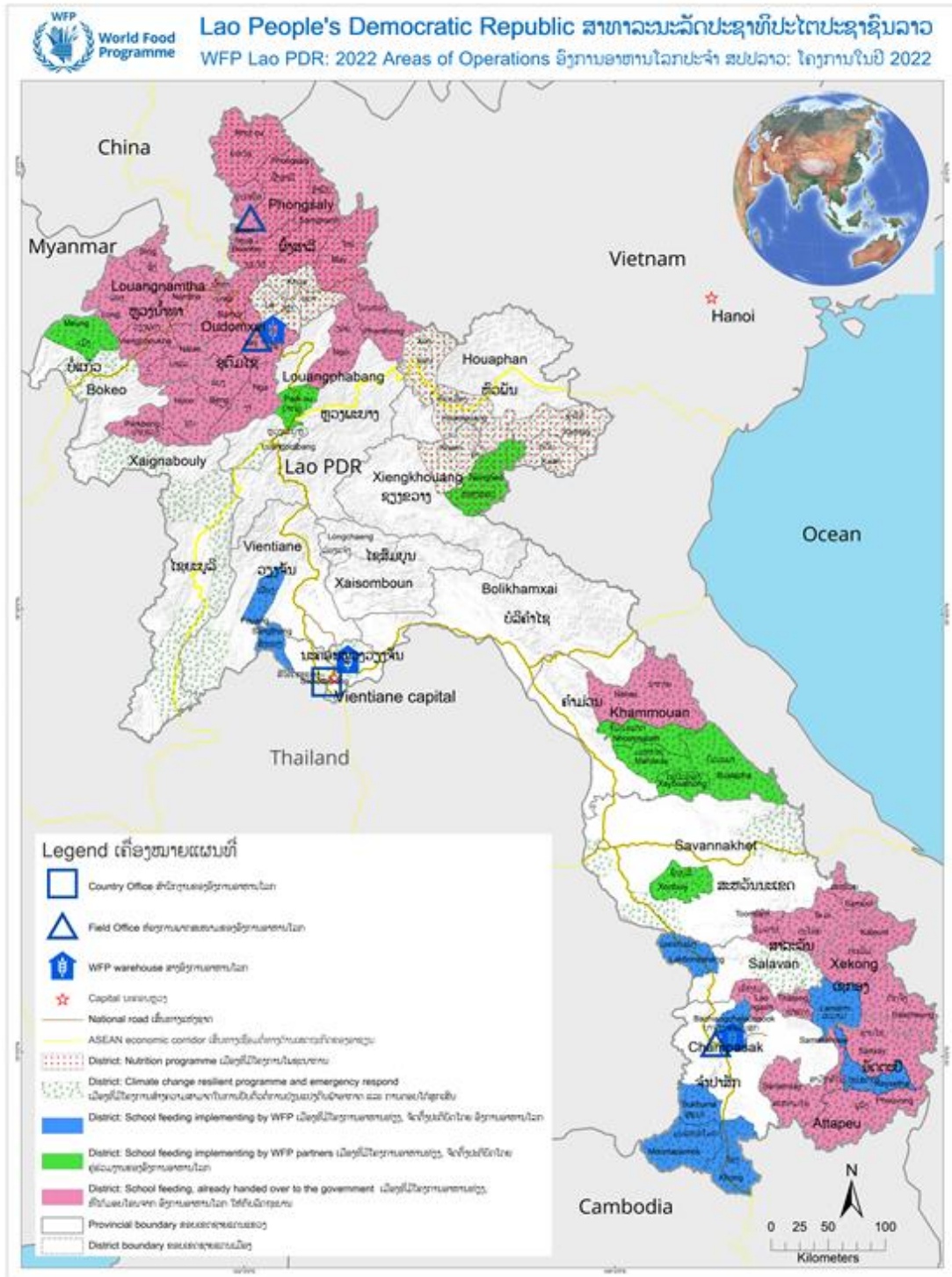
128. The offer will include a detailed budget for the evaluation, including consultant fees, travel costs and other costs (interpreters, etc.). For this evaluation, the service provider will:

- Include budget for travel for all relevant in-country data collection (both qualitative and quantitative)
- Hire and supervise all technical and administrative assistance required (including in-country).
- The final budget and handling will be determined by the option of contracting that will be used and the rates that will apply at the time of contracting.
- Follow the agreed rates for decentralized evaluations as provided for in the Long-Term Agreement (LTA) with WFP

Please send any queries to Sengarun BUDCHARERN, M&E Officer, WFP Lao PDR sengarun.budcharern@wfp.org

Annexes

Annex 1: Areas of Operation Map



Date Created: 30 March 2023
 Contact: wfp.lao@wfp.org
 Website: www.wfp.org

The boundaries and names and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. ອຸປະເທດແລະສັນຍາການສອບຖາມຂອງສັນຍາໃນແຜນທີ່ນີ້ບໍ່ໄດ້ຖືກສັນຍາຢ່າງໃດເອງອາກາດອົງການສາກົນສະແດງສະໜອງສິນຄ້າ.

Data Sources: ສູນຂໍ້ມູນ:
 - Lao Department of Statistics ສູນຂໍ້ມູນທຳມະນາໄນ
 - Lao National Geographical Department ບັນເທນທີ່ສາທາລະນະ
 - Ministry of Education and Sports ກະຊວງສຶກສາທິການ ແລະ ສີລາ
 - WFP Lao PDR ອົງການອາຫານໂລກປະຈຳ ສປປລາວ

Annex 2: Timeline

	Phases, deliverables and timeline	Key dates
Phase 1 - Preparation		Up to 9 weeks
EM	Share draft ToR with SO1 School Feeding Program Team, Internal Evaluation Committee and DEQS Reviewer	3-10 July, 2023
EM	Share draft ToR with ERG and quality support service (DEQS) and organize follow-up call with DEQS together with ERG	11 July – 4 Aug. 2023
	Finalizing ToR (Internally) ToR based on DEQS and ERG	9 Aug 2023
EM	Sharing the revised ToR with USDA for review and inputs	10-24 Aug 2023
EM	Implementation of USDA feedback on ToR and resharing with USDA for approval	24-31 Aug, 2023
EM	Approval on ToR with EC	1 Sep, 2023
EM	Call for proposals with the expressed-interest LTA evaluation firms	2 – 30 Sept 2023
EM	Assess evaluation proposals and recommends team selection	1-7 Oct 2023
EM	Evaluation team recruitment/contracting	20 Oct, 2023
EC Chair	Approve evaluation team selection and recruitment of evaluation team	23 Oct, 2023
Phase 2 - Inception		Up to 7 weeks
EM/TL	Brief core team	24 Oct, 2023
ET	Desk review of key documents	24-27 Oct, 2023
ET	Draft inception report	27 Oct – 10 Nov, 2023
EM	Quality assurance of draft IR by EM and REO using QC, share draft IR with quality support service (DEQS) and organize follow-up call with DEQS	(1 week) 10-17 Nov, 2023
ET	Review draft IR based on feedback received by DEQS, EM and REO	(1 week) 17-24 Nov, 2023
EM	Share revised IR with ERG to review	24 Nov, 2023
ERG	Review and comment on draft IR	24-30 Nov, 2023
EM	Consolidate comments	30 Nov, 2023
ET	Review draft IR based on feedback received and submit final revised IR	1-7 Dec, 2023
EM	Review final IR and submit to the evaluation committee for approval	8 Dec, 2023
EC Chair	Approve final IR and share with ERG for information	8 Dec, 2023
Phase 3 – Data collection		Up to 3 weeks
EC Chair/ EM	Brief the evaluation team at CO	(1 day) 11 Dec, 2023

ET	Data collection	(3 weeks) 12 Dec, 2023 – 10 Jan 2024
ET	In-country debriefing (s)	(1 day) 11 Jan, 2024
Phase 4 - Reporting		Up to 11 weeks
ET	Draft evaluation report	(4 weeks) 15 Jan - 14 Feb 2024
EM	Quality assurance of draft ER by EM and REO using the QC, share draft ER with quality support service (DEQS) and organize follow-up call with DEQS	(1 week) 14-21 Feb, 2024
ET	Review and submit draft ER based on feedback received by DEQS, EM and REO	21-29 Feb, 2024
EM	Circulate draft ER for review and comments to ERG, RB and other stakeholders	1 Mar, 2024
ERG	Review and comment on draft ER	1-7Mar, 2024
EM	Consolidate comments received and share with the ET to revise	8 Mar, 2024
ET	Review draft ER based on feedback received and submit final revised ER	10-17 Mar, 2024
EM	Review final revised ER and submit to the evaluation committee	17-25 Mar, 2024
EC Chair	Approve final evaluation report and share with key stakeholders for information	25-28 Mar, 2024
Phase 5 - Dissemination and follow-up		Up to 4 weeks
EC Chair	Prepare management response	1-14 Apr, 2024
EM	Share final evaluation report and management response with the REO and OEV for publication and participate in end-of-evaluation lessons learned call	19-22 Apr, 2024

Annex 3: Role and Composition of the Evaluation Committee

Purpose and role: The purpose of the evaluation committee (EC) is to ensure a credible, transparent, impartial and quality evaluation in accordance with WFP evaluation policy. It will achieve this by supporting the evaluation manager in making decisions, reviewing draft deliverables (ToR, inception report and evaluation report) and submitting them for approval by the Country Director/Deputy Country Director (CD/DCD) who will be the chair of the committee.

Composition: The evaluation committee will be composed of the following staff:

- The Deputy Country Director (Chair of the Evaluation Committee)
- Evaluation manager (Evaluation Committee Secretariat)
- Head of Programme or programme officer(s) directly in charge of the subject(s) of evaluation
- Regional evaluation officer (REO)
- Country office monitoring and evaluation (M&E) Assistant
- Country office school feeding programme team.
- **Internal Evaluation Committee** for USDA McGovern-Dole FY2020 – Mid-Term Evaluation

No.	Core member	Alternate
1	Jacqueline de Groot (Deputy Country Director)	
2	Marc Sauveur (Head of Programme)	Outhai Sihalath
3	Saman Kalupahana SO Manager – School Feeding Programme	Air Sensomphone
4	Phouthasinh Khamvongsa	Sengphet Laopaoher
5	Vongmany Vongphachanh	
6	Joelle Dahm – Gender and Protection Focal Point	
7	Mari Honjo (RBB Evaluation Officer)	Stuart Coupe (RBB Evaluation Consultant)
8	Sengarun Budcharern (Evaluation Manager)	Rumbidzayi Machiridza

Annex 4: Role and Composition of the Evaluation Reference Group

Purpose and role: The evaluation reference group (ERG) is an advisory group providing advice and feedback to the evaluation manager and the evaluation team at key moments during the evaluation process. It is established during the preparatory stage of the evaluation and is mandatory for all decentralized evaluations.

The overall purpose of the evaluation reference group is to contribute to the credibility, utility and impartiality of the evaluation. For this purpose, its composition and role are guided by the following principles:

- **Transparency:** Keeping relevant stakeholders engaged and informed during key steps ensures transparency throughout the evaluation process
- **Ownership and Use:** Stakeholders’ participation enhances ownership of the evaluation process and products, which in turn may impact on its use
- **Accuracy:** Feedback from stakeholders at key steps of the preparatory, data collection and reporting phases contributes to accuracy of the facts and figures reported in the evaluation and of its analysis.

Members are expected to review and comment on draft evaluation deliverables and share relevant insights at key consultation points of the evaluation process.

The main roles of the evaluation reference group are as follows:

- Review and comment on the draft ToR
- Suggest key references and data sources in their area of expertise.
- Participate in face-to-face or virtual briefings to the evaluation team during the inception phase and/or evaluation phase
- Review and comment on the draft inception report
- Participate in field debriefings (optional)
- Review and comment on the draft evaluation report and related annexes, with a particular focus on: a) factual errors and/or omissions that could invalidate the findings or change the conclusions; b) issues of political sensitivity that need to be refined in the way they are addressed or in the language used; c) recommendations
- Participate in learning workshops to validate findings and discuss recommendations
- Provide guidance on suggested communications products to disseminate learning from the evaluation.
- External Reference Group for USDA McGovern-Dole FY2020 – Mid-Term Evaluation:

Core members	
Jacqueline de Groot, (DCD) as Chair of ERG	
Mari Honjo (RBB Evaluation Officer) or alternate Stuart Coupe (RBB Evaluation Consultant)	Nesrin Semen (RBB Monitoring Advisor)
Anna Hamilton (HQ Evaluation Officer, School Based Programmes)	Sophia Dunn (RBB Consultant)
TBC (USDA Evaluator)	Marc Sauveur (Head of Program)
Chitraporn Vanaspongse (RBB)	Vasundhara Bijalwan (RBB)

Robert Green (Head of Program) CRS in Lao PRD	Rumbidzayi Machiriza (Head of RAM)
Mr. Houmphanh Keo Ounkham Acting Director of Inclusive Education Promotion Center – Ministry of Education and Sports	Director/Deputy Director of Center for Educational Research and Evaluation – RIES (MoES)
Sengarun Budcharern (M&E Officer) as Evaluation Manager	

Annex 5: Project Activities and Annual Target 2021-2025

Activity	Indicator	Target for FY 2021 ⁽¹⁾	Target for FY 2022	Target for FY 2023	Target for FY 2024	Target for FY 2025
Agriculture Support	Number of individuals in the agriculture system who have applied improved management practices or technologies with USDA assistance	0	630	630	1,260	1,260
	Number of individuals who have received short-term agricultural sector productivity or food security training as a result of USDA assistance	900	900	1,800	1,800	1,800
	Percentage of smallholder farmers supported by the project who contributed in-kind food or cash to school meals programs		30	30	30	30
Community Mobilization and Infrastructure Investments	Number of educational facilities (i.e. school buildings, classrooms, improved water sources, and latrines) rehabilitated/constructed as a result of USDA assistance	0	2,358	1,047	1144	0
	Number of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) or similar "school" governance structures supported as a result of USDA assistance	707	707	707	707	707
	Number of school gardens established and functioning	0	249	458	707	707
Food Distribution	Average student attendance rate in USDA supported classrooms/schools	96	97	98	99	99
	Drop-out rate	6	5	4.5	4	4
	Number of daily school meals (breakfast, snack, lunch) provided to school-age children as a result of USDA assistance	0	11,227,300	11,227,300	11,227,300	11,227,300
	Number of individuals benefiting indirectly from USDA-funded interventions	0	170,013	170,013	170,013	170,013
	Number of individuals participating in USDA food security programs	0	66,498	64,951	64,951	64,951

	Number of individuals participating in USDA food security programs that include an LRP component	0	64,156	64,156	64,156	64,156
	Number of individuals receiving take-home rations as a result of USDA assistance	0	2,342	2,342	2,342	2,342
	Number of school-age children receiving daily school meals (breakfast, snack, lunch) as a result of USDA assistance	0	64,156	64,156	64,156	64,156
	Number of schools reached as a result of USDA assistance	707	707	707	707	707
	Number of schools reached with LRP activities as a result of USDA assistance	0	707	707	707	707
	Number of social assistance beneficiaries participating in productive safety nets as a result of USDA assistance	0	66,498	66,498	66,498	66,498

^[1] Please note that the base-line results became available in 2022.

Annex 6: Communication and Knowledge Management Plan

Communication and Knowledge Management Plan

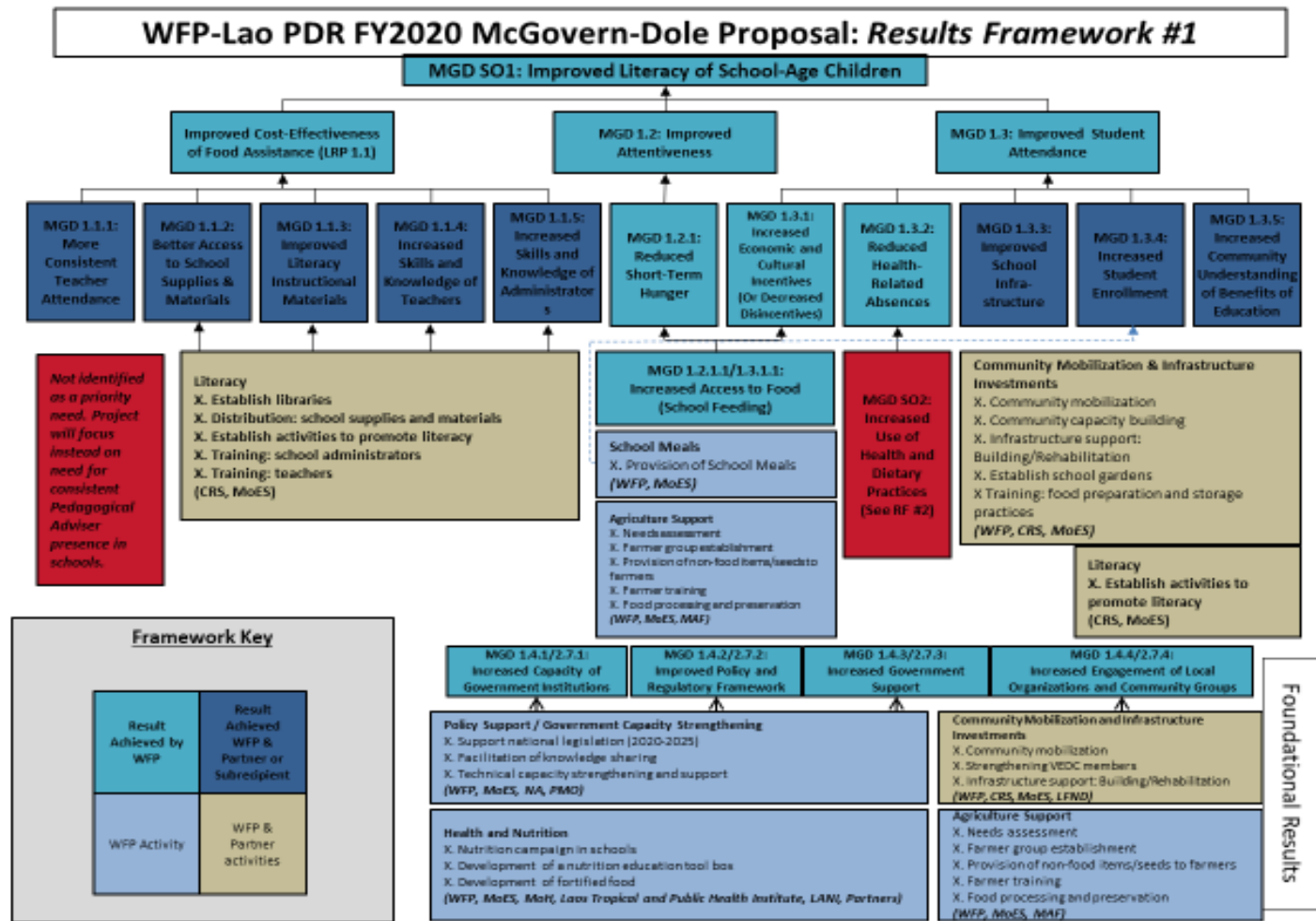
When Evaluation phase	What Product	To whom Target audience	From whom Creator lead	How Communication channel	Why Communication purpose
Preparation	Draft TOR	Evaluation Reference Group	Evaluation manager	Email: ERG meeting if required	To request review of and comments on TOR
	Final TOR	Evaluation Reference Group; WFP Management; Evaluation community; WFP CO Laos - SO1 SF Program Team; USDA McGD Teams.	Evaluation manager	Email; WFPgo; WFP.org	To inform of the final or agreed upon overall plan, purpose, scope and timing of the evaluation
Inception	Draft Inception report	Evaluation Reference Group	Evaluation manager	Email and Teams meetings	To request review of and comments on IR
	Final Inception Report	Evaluation Reference Group; WFP SO1 SF Program and FO Teams; WFP RBB evaluation unit; WFP WA and USDA McGD Teams.	Evaluation manager	Email and Teams; WFPgo	To inform key stakeholders of the detailed plan for the evaluation, including critical dates and milestones, sites to be visited, stakeholders to be engaged, gov't official informing letter for field work plan and schedule for data collection.
Data collection	Debriefing power-point	WFP CO Laos management and programme staff; Evaluation Reference Group	Team leader (may be sent to EM who then forwards to the relevant staff)	Meeting	To invite key stakeholders to discuss the preliminary findings
	Validation of initial findings from data analysis	WFP CO and FO program team Implementing Partner – CRS Gov't Parnters – IEPC MoES		Validation workshop through evalu-vision method (Including training of communication team/artists)	To validate the findings and providing inputs on recommendations from the relevant stakeholders from the three different models of school feeding implementation: Model 1: WFP directly implemented and managed. Model 2: Gov't partners implemented and managed. Model 3: CRS directly implemented and managed.

When Evaluation phase	What Product	To whom Target audience	From whom Creator lead	How Communication channel	Why Communication purpose
Reporting	Draft Evaluation report	Evaluation Reference Group	Evaluation manager	Email	To request review of and comments on ER
	Validation workshop power-point and visual thinking	Commissioning office management and programme staff; Evaluation Reference Group; partners	Evaluation manager and Team Leader	Meeting	To discuss preliminary conclusions and recommendations
	Final Evaluation report	Evaluation Reference Group; WFP Management; donors and partners; Evaluation community; WFP employees; general public	Evaluation manager	Email; WFPgo; WFP.org; Evaluation Network platforms (e.g. UNEG, ALNAP)	To inform key stakeholders of the final main product from the evaluation and make the report available publicly
Dissemination & Follow-up	Draft Management Response	Evaluation Reference Group; CO Programme staff; CO M&E staff; Senior Regional Programme Adviser	Evaluation manager	Email and/or a webinar	To discuss the commissioning office's actions to address the evaluation recommendations and elicit comments
	Final Management Response	Evaluation Reference Group; WFP Management; WFP employees; general public	Evaluation manager	Email; WFPgo; WFP.org;	To ensure that all relevant staff are informed of the commitments made on taking actions and make the Management Response publicly available
Dissemination & Follow-up (Associated Content)	Evaluation Brief	WFP Management; WFP employees; donors and partners; National decision-makers	Evaluation manager	WFP.org, WFPgo	To disseminate evaluation findings
	Infographics, posters & data visualisation	Donors and partners; Evaluation community; National decision-makers; Affected populations, beneficiaries and communities	Evaluation Team; OEV/RB/CO Communications/ KM unit	WFP.org, WFPgo; Evaluation Network platforms (e.g. UNEG, ALNAP); space	
	Video		Evaluation manager		

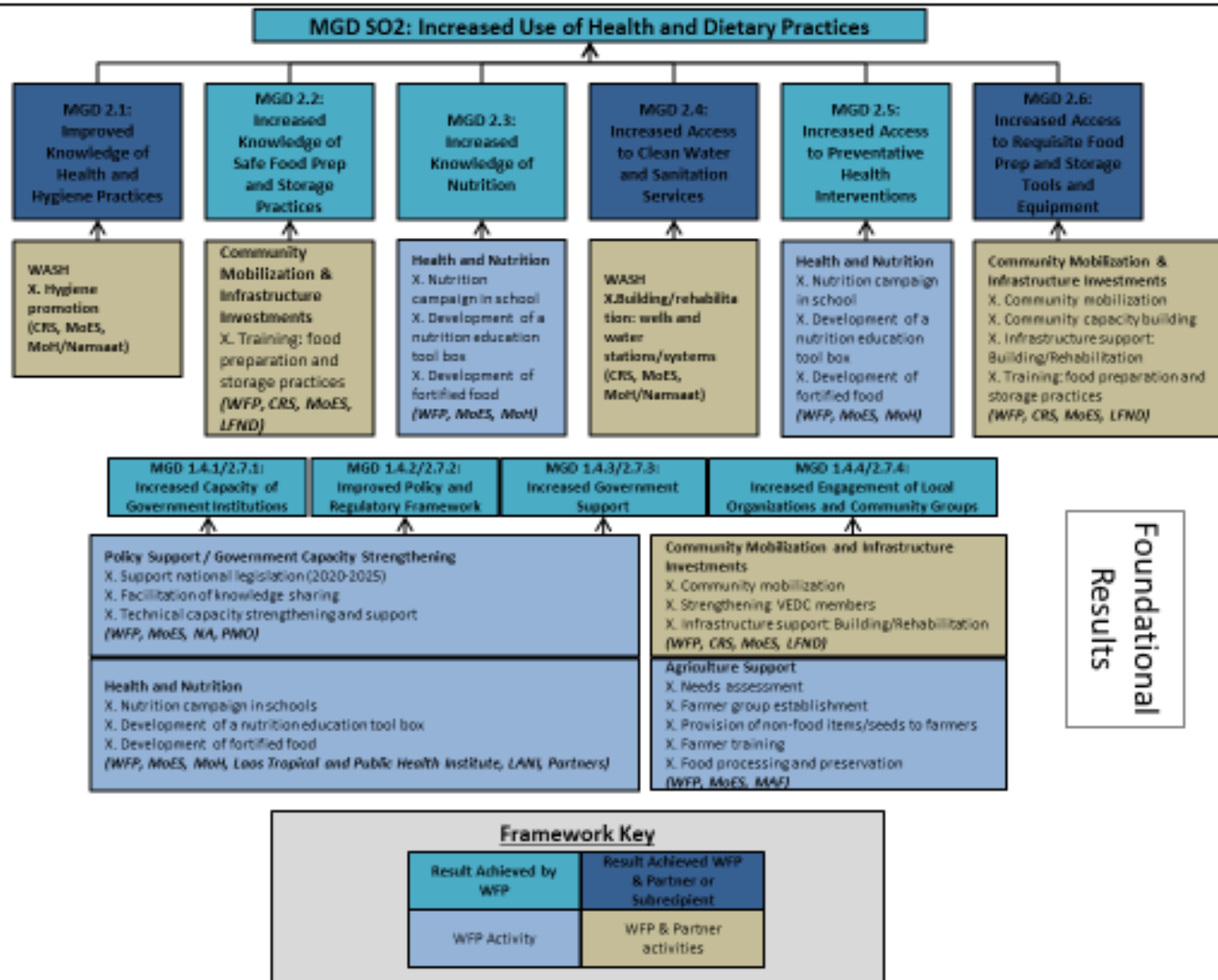
Annex 7: Acronyms

ASEAN	Associate of Southeast Asian Nations
CD	Country Director
CO	Country Office
DEQAS	Decentralized Evaluation Quality Assurance System
DESB	District Education and Sports Bureau
EDF	Education for Development Foundation
EM	Evaluation Manager
EMIS	Education Management and Information System
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
FAD	Food Assistance Division
FFE	Food for Education
GGI	Gender Gap Index
HQ	Headquarters
IEC	Internal Evaluation Committee
LDC	Least Developed Country
LMIC	Lower Middle Income Country
LRP	Local and Regional Procurement
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoH	Ministry of Health
NSMP	National School Meal Program
OEV	Office of Evaluation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
VEDC	Village Education Development Committee
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

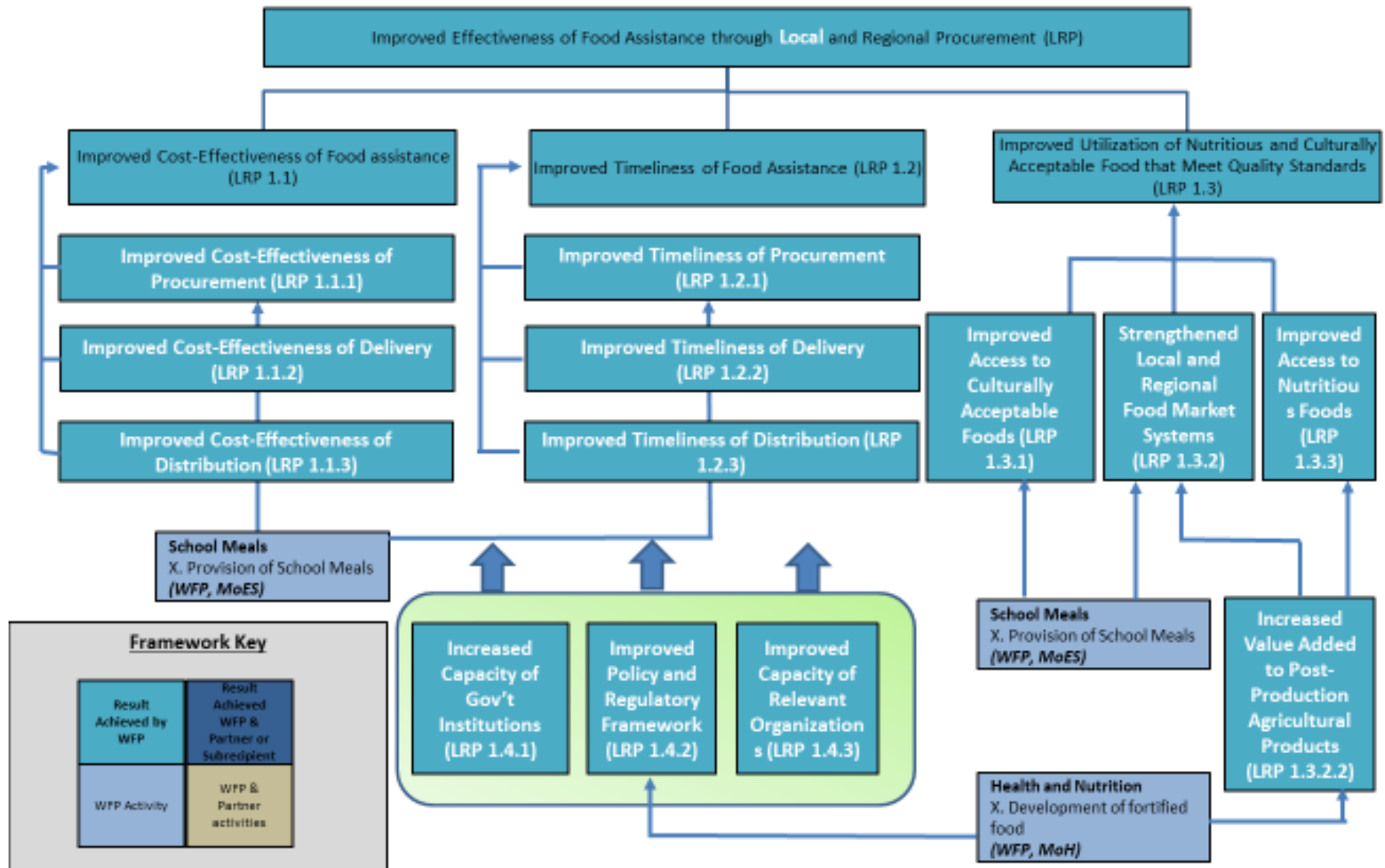
Annex 8: USDA McGD FY20 School Feeding Programme - Logical Framework



WFP-Lao PDR FY2020 McGovern-Dole Proposal: Results Framework #2



WFP-Lao PDR FY2020 McGovern-Dole Proposal: *Results Framework #3 (LRP)*



Program Theory of Change:

The project's causal pathway for SOs 1 and 2 considers that *if* children have access to high-quality learning material for extra practice in school and at home; *if* teachers regularly apply methods of formative literacy assessment and remedial instruction in classroom; *if* district staff provide regular coaching and mentoring to early-grade teachers; *if* schools have knowledge and infrastructure that contribute to a healthier environment; *if* children have knowledge of and access to diversified and nutritious food; *if* schools and communities have knowledge of nutrition; *if* children have access to preventative health interventions; *if* communities are engaged in and are aware of the benefits of education; *then* schools will witness improved quality of literacy instruction, student attentiveness, student