



IMPACT EVALUATION



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

2023 in review

May 2024

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Foreword



Over the past year, the global landscape for WFP's humanitarian and developmental work evolved in response to emerging crises and conflicts, alongside an overall reduction in available resources to address these escalating needs. At the same time, the World Food Programme (WFP) welcomed a new senior leadership team with the arrival of Cindy McCain as the Executive Director.

In this evolving global context, WFP's Office of Evaluation (OEV) has remained steadfast in ensuring the availability of useful evidence to guide decisions and to identify the most cost-effective approaches for saving and changing lives.

WFP utilizes impact evaluations to generate evidence that informs policy and programme decisions, optimizes interventions, and contributes thought leadership. To fulfil these objectives, the OEV Impact Evaluation Unit conducts rigorous, on-demand impact evaluations, primarily through windows that align with global corporate priorities.

In 2023, WFP achieved several significant milestones in the production of rigorous impact evaluation evidence.

Particularly noteworthy was the publication of the [final impact evaluation report](#) for El Salvador, as part of the Cash-based Transfers and Gender Window. This impact evaluation marks the first completed report following the publication of the 2019 WFP Impact Evaluation Strategy and the first done in partnership with the World Bank Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) department.

In addition, OEV invited all WFP country offices to express their interest in conducting new impact evaluations related to cash transfers and gender, climate and resilience, school-based programmes, and other priority topics.

OEV received a record number of 29 expressions of interest, underscoring the growing demand for impact evaluation evidence in WFP.

Lastly, to ensure impact evaluation evidence reaches a global audience, OEV convened the inaugural WFP Impact Evaluation Forum at its headquarters in Rome in December. This initiative brought together UN agencies, the World Bank, donors, practitioners, and academics to discuss impact evaluation evidence and work towards developing a community of practice for humanitarian impact evaluation. It was also used to build the capacity of WFP's staff to engage in future impact evaluations.

As the Director of Evaluation, I am delighted to share the 2023 Annual Report of the Strategic Advisory Panel, which encapsulates progress thus far, lessons gleaned from piloting our strategy, and key considerations for future directions in 2024.

Anne-Claire Luzot
Director of Evaluation

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

2023 in Review

INTRODUCTION

This annual report outlines progress made towards implementing [WFP's Impact Evaluation Strategy](#) in 2023. The [WFP Evaluation Policy 2022](#) defines impact evaluations as those that “measure changes in development outcomes of interest for a target population that can be attributed to a specific programme or policy through a credible counterfactual”. The policy stipulates that impact evaluations are managed by OEV at the request of country offices, and that individual impact evaluations are not required to be presented to the WFP Executive Board.

Impact evaluation is a demand-led exercise in WFP and the primary purpose is achieving programme learning. The WFP [Corporate Evaluation Strategy 2022](#) (CES) institutionalizes the Impact Evaluation Strategy (2019-2026) as part of the normative framework for the overall evaluation function (Workstream A.4) and indicates that OEV will update the Impact Evaluation Strategy in 2026. The CES commits OEV to work with external partners on impact evaluation methods (Workstream 1.1.4) and to increase WFP's understanding of impact evaluation through trainings and targeted initiatives (Workstream 4.1.3).

The CES also commits OEV to assess impact evaluation capacity needs and establish systems to support capacity development in regional bureaux and country offices. The CES highlights a need to broaden impact evaluation delivery partnerships and explore opportunities for generating impact evaluation evidence jointly with other UN agencies

and communities of practice (Workstream 5.2.3). Finally, the CES acknowledges that institutionalizing impact evaluation will require additional staff and resources “above current planning levels” (Workstream B).

WFP'S IMPACT EVALUATION STRATEGY (2019-2026)

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

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

Vision of the Impact Evaluation Strategy

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

Impact Evaluation Activities in 2023

WFP impact evaluations are managed by the OEV Impact Evaluation Unit (IEU) upon request from country offices and aligned with the implementation timelines of programmes evaluated.

In 2023, WFP reached a new peak of 20 completed and ongoing rigorous impact evaluations, each using forms of experimental methods. WFP collected impact evaluation endline data in 10 countries and published its first final impact evaluation report. To ensure the data collected is managed and published appropriately, the IEU worked to create a [data library](#) for impact evaluations.

At the beginning of the year, the IEU also received a new three-year grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) to scale-up its workstream on optimizing humanitarian interventions. This grant enabled WFP to start new impact evaluations focusing on forecast-based financing, humanitarian targeting, and support to in-transit migrants.

The ongoing analysis of endline data also enabled the IEU to inform WFP's programmes and partners through a variety of presentations, briefs, and discussions. In addition, the IEU was asked to present the Climate and Resilience Window measurement strategy and results to the WFP Executive Board during a broader roundtable organised by the programme division to discuss resilience measurement in WFP.

To ensure evidence also contributes to the global humanitarian and development community, the IEU presented at events, published blogs, and hosted the first Impact Evaluation Forum in Rome. The Forum was a major event that brought together 130 stakeholders to reflect on impact evaluation evidence and practice.

In terms of expanding the range of impact evaluation partners, WFP successfully initiated impact evaluations with new technical partners in 2023. In addition, the IEU began working with WFP's Regional Bureaus to map out current and potential impact evaluation partners in their regions.

In terms of challenges, the combination of evolving crises in Ukraine, Sudan, Yemen, and Gaza and the

overall reduction in resources available to WFP is having a major impact on the size and shape of the organization. Many WFP programmes are experiencing budget cuts that are making it difficult for country offices to reach the number of households planned, and fund data collection.

In addition, for the IEU, the delayed recruitment of several new positions to augment the capacity of the IEU in 2023 was another challenge, with a corporate hiring freeze put in place in the last quarter necessitating special waivers to allow recruitment of two out of three planned positions to proceed.

IMPACT EVALUATION WINDOWS

To ensure impact evaluations contribute to building bodies of evidence in WFP priority areas, in 2019, OEV began a process of creating impact evaluation 'windows' that align with programme priorities. Each window starts by reviewing the global evidence base for WFP's policies and strategies to identify questions that are important for WFP's programmatic learning and can be answered using impact evaluations.

Impact evaluation windows are developed by OEV in partnership with the relevant WFP programme units. The Window Steering Committees are responsible for guiding the selection of impact evaluation priorities and making recommendations to the Director of Evaluation on the inclusion of individual evaluations into windows.

Windows test the cost-effectiveness of WFP supported interventions across different contexts to increase the external validity of evidence generated. To support formal syntheses of this evidence, each window is guided by a window-level concept note and one or more pre-analysis plan, and the data collected by IEU is standardized across all WFP impact evaluation windows.

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

The first phase of impact evaluations was developed jointly with the [World Bank Development Impact Evaluation \(DIME\)](#) department and focus on: 1) cash-based transfers and gender; 2) climate

change and resilience; and 3) school-based programmes. Following the completion of a new WFP nutrition strategy in 2023, OEV is also working with the Nutrition Service to assess the added value of having a fourth window focused on nutrition, or to embed nutrition focused questions in open windows. . The following sections summarize progress made in delivering these windows.

Cash-based Transfers (CBT) Impact Evaluation Window

With the growing global popularity of cash transfers as a modality for both humanitarian and development assistance, the need to understand the impact of such interventions is increasingly important. Programmes often target women or women-headed households as recipients of cash transfers, under the assumption that this is an effective way of achieving food and nutrition outcomes in target populations.

Following approval of the concept note and initial design discussions with country offices, the first window-level pre-analysis plan (PAP) was drafted, peer reviewed, [and registered](#), and a [brief was published in 2021](#).

The first phase of impact evaluations focused on “CBT and Gender” and aim to estimate the effect of increasing women’s earned income on intra-household decision-making, as well as on personal autonomy and gender gaps.

The main evaluation questions are:

- ▶ Does increasing women’s control over earned income boost their decision-making power?
- ▶ Does economic empowerment of women affect the gender norms that surround them, or their self-perception?
- ▶ Do food assistance for assets (FFA) interventions using CBT improve psychological well-being and reduce the incidence of intimate partner violence within the household?

Completed and ongoing CBT and Gender impact evaluations

In **El Salvador**, the impact evaluation design relied on randomly assigning households into one of three groups: 1) the first, where women are encouraged to work outside the household and receive direct transfers; 2) a group where the household is receiving unconditional cash transfers

(UCT), and 3) a comparison group that was not participating in the project.

The endline report was published in December 2023. Findings show increased women’s agency over consumption, men’s positive attitudes towards women’s agency over time use, and men’s perceptions of norms related to women’s agency over time use when comparing the “women’s” group to the UCT group.

When assessing the “women’s” groups against the comparison group of non-participants, there are increases in women’s attitudes towards their time use, women’s perceptions of norms related to time use, and subjective well-being.

In **Kenya**, communities are randomly assigned to one of two treatment groups, where either women or men are involved in training and asset-building activities, or a third comparison group.

Project timelines were adjusted to enable the Kenya country office to focus its efforts on a severe drought emergency. Midline data was therefore collected in Q1 of 2023, once the project resumed, and endline and qualitative data collection was completed at the end of 2023.

In **Rwanda**, WFP is conducting an impact evaluation of the *Sustainable Market Alliance and Asset Creation for Resilient Communities and Gender Transformation project (SMART)*, funded by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and OEV.

The SMART impact evaluation contributes evidence to both the CBT and the Climate and Resilience windows.

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

In **Haiti**, in 2022 OEV was asked to support an impact evaluation of its resilience project, using WFP’s FFA modality, in the departments of Northwest and Nippes. The CO is closely monitoring

the evolving situation in Haiti and OEV will adapt the IE design as needed, including potentially reducing the number of data collection rounds if needed.

OEV co-developed the impact evaluation proposal which was approved by the donor (the Inter-American Development Bank). The design follows the first pre-analysis plan, with three groups of households: 1) targeting women directly with the project; 2) targeting men; and 3) a comparison group. Baseline and midline data was collected in 2023.



New focus areas for Cash+ Impact Evaluations

The first pre-analysis plan developed by OEV and DIME focussed primarily on FFA interventions, which was representative of the WFP programmes that expressed interest in 2019. However, it does not capture all of WFP's cash-based interventions in emergency or humanitarian settings (where WFP often reverts to unconditional cash transfers). To ensure the window remains aligned with current WFP evidence priorities, in 2023 OEV has been consulting with WFP's programme teams to assess how priorities have evolved since 2019, and potentially develop additional pre-analysis plans (while still welcoming country offices to use the existing design).

Going forward, and in line with WFP's overall agenda, the window will focus more on how cash transfers can be optimized in humanitarian and emergency settings. This includes how cash programmes (predominantly in the form of unconditional cash support) can be designed to boost, for example financial inclusion, climate change adaptation, nutrition, women's empowerment, and social cohesion (*Cash+*), while assessing the cost-effectiveness of different programme designs.

In line with [WFP's workstream on optimizing humanitarian interventions](#) (supported by USAID's BHA – details further below), OEV is conducting "[Lean impact evaluations](#)", for example in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**, testing two different household targeting methods for unconditional cash transfers: 1) the status quo method that uses proxy-means-testing (PMT) enriched with information from focus groups; and 2) a community-based approach, where the communities themselves, through committees, select the criteria and their weights to be used for prioritization. Outcomes of interest are inclusion and exclusion errors, community satisfaction, and cost-effectiveness. This evaluation uses the country office targeting data instead of a separate baseline. Midline data collection was completed in 2023 and endline data is being collected in Q2 of 2024.

In **Peru**, an impact evaluation in partnership with DIME is focusing on testing different assistance modalities for in-transit migrants from Venezuela. The evaluation tests restricted vs. un-restricted cash assistance. Migrants are being interviewed when they enter Peru in-person and will be followed up multiple times over the phone once *en route* through Peru. The planning was completed in 2023 and data collection is starting in April 2024. The evaluation intends to measure impacts on food security, coping, consumption, psychosocial well-being, and migration patterns.

In **Lebanon**, an impact evaluation in partnership with the International Security and Development Center (ISDC) is testing four different quantitative targeting methods for food insecure Lebanese households. The WFP Lebanon country office is not able to serve all households that could be eligible for assistance and therefore is required to prioritize assistance. The country office requested OEV's support to test alternative methods to their current targeting method. Key outcomes will be perceptions

of satisfaction and fairness, but also differences in food security, coping, and other measures or welfare. Data collection will start in May 2024.

Climate and Resilience Impact Evaluation Window

Conflict, economic downturns, and extreme weather events linked to climate change interact and increase the likelihood and severity of shocks associated with food crises. WFP supports a range of interventions that aim to build resilience within the humanitarian-development nexus. Launched in 2019 in collaboration with DIME, the first phase of the Climate and Resilience Window studied how FFA interventions and integrated resilience packages can help build households' resilience.

Between 2020 and 2023, four impact evaluations were successfully conducted in **Mali, Niger, South Sudan and Rwanda**, with endline data collected during 2023.

Evaluations used rigorous randomized control trial designs to document livelihoods strategies, food security, and resilience for communities who have access to FFA and packaged interventions against communities who do not participate in these programmes during the evaluation. Impact evaluations in **Mali** and **Niger** are both part of the regional Sahel resilience learning initiative funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

BMZ (through KfW) also funded the impact evaluation in South Sudan, while KOICA supported the impact evaluation in Rwanda.

These impact evaluations collected high-frequency data (bi-monthly or quarterly) during programme implementation to capture seasonality of impacts and how food security and well-being interact with shocks and stressors. The evaluation team started to disseminate findings on different platforms, including the Impact Evaluation Forum in Rome in December 2023. All final reports will be published in 2024.

The evaluations find that access to the integrated package of interventions increases food security. However, these impacts vary over the two years of measurement. The impacts of FFA on food security are largest in the post-harvest period and less pronounced during the lean season, suggesting room for programmes to further enhance consumption smoothing.

Investigating the adaptations households made during this period to achieve these impacts, the evaluations find that the main impact of the programmes on livelihoods or households' productive capacities after two years is to increase agricultural production. The evaluations also observe some positive impacts on livestock ownership but little change in off-farm income-generating activities. In some cases, the programmes also improve psychological well-being and social capital.

A unique contribution of the evaluation in South Sudan above and beyond the other studies in the Climate and Resilience window is the ability to separate impacts arising from the community asset work component of FFA programming from the impact of the transfers, as well as the fact that it measures the impacts of a joint WFP-UNICEF programme. On the first point, the FFA and UCT had a similar contribution to increased food security, but FFA had a stronger impact on agricultural production, while UCT was more effective at increasing asset ownership and wage labour outside of the household. Given that FFA interventions are more costly to implement, tracking livelihood strategies over a longer term would be important to understand the future returns from the increases in agricultural productivity. Regarding the second point, the evaluation finds that the UNICEF education package had a positive impact on retention rates among eligible children and, at the same time, that children's education outcomes improved as a result of WFP livelihoods programming (FFA), suggesting gains from joint programming.

The lessons from this first phase are feeding into subsequent phases of programming wherever it continues (notably in DRC, Niger, and South Sudan). The evidence is also informing an emerging agenda on forecast-based financing and macro-insurance, with ongoing or planned impact evaluations which answer questions about whether concentrating cash transfers to populations forecast to be affected by floods (in Nepal and Bangladesh) or by typhoons (in Philippines), can deliver bigger impacts by helping households manage and avoid the worst consequences of these climate-extreme events. These evaluations are often unpredictable due to the need for payouts to be triggered and reach and large enough population. Last year, IEs planned in Bangladesh and Mali were not feasible, and OEV will reassess feasibility in 2024.

OEV's [Humanitarian Workstream](#) also intersects with the Climate & Resilience Window, supporting

two evaluations: The impact evaluation in **Nepal** measured the impacts of providing anticipatory cash, based on weather forecast predicting severe flooding. It shows that there is a benefit to delivering anticipatory cash at the moment of the flood peak when compared to a comparison group receiving cash transfers a few weeks after the floods (a more “business-as-usual” approach). Data collection was completed in 2023, and final outputs will be published in 2024.

In addition, in 2023 we started an impact evaluation of a smallholder farmer support intervention in **Ghana**, consisting of a cash transfer programme complemented with financial and agricultural sensitization activities to support farmers’ resilience and productivity. The impact evaluation compares two transfer modalities, a lump sum distributed before the planting season, and three monthly payments of equal size to assess which of these two leads to better farmers’ productivity and resilience. The last round of data collection took place in the beginning of 2024 and the final report is currently being drafted.

In the DRC, OEV received a request in 2020 to conduct an impact evaluation of a Joint Resilience Programme; however, due to access issues in North Kivu this was converted to a Decentralized Evaluation and a diagnostic study.

The study provides descriptive evidence on two critical factors for strengthening the socio-economic resilience of vulnerable populations in eastern DRC: (i) gender equality and women’s empowerment, and (ii) social cohesion. Data collection for this study was collected in August/September of 2023, and the report will be finalized in 2024.

In 2022, BMZ/KFW requested WFP to include an impact evaluation in its joint resilience and social cohesion programme in **Darfur, Sudan**. This impact evaluation was paused in 2023 during the conflict, and discussions are ongoing to assess feasibility of an adaptive lean impact evaluation starting in 2024.

Expanding focus areas for the Climate and Resilience Window

Building on the evidence generated and consultations with WFP programme teams and donors so far, the following are proposed questions that will be explored in the next phase of the climate and resilience window:

- 1) Related to longer-term impacts of resilience programming or FFA, including the impacts of the assets built on adaptive capacities:
 - ▶ What are the longer-term impacts of WFP’s integrated resilience packages? Do longer-term impacts alter the programme’s cost-effectiveness?
- 2) Related to shock-responsive interventions and systems:
 - ▶ How to improve targeting and reach those most vulnerable to different shocks and stressors at the most cost-effective times?
 - ▶ What are the gains of providing anticipatory cash transfers (in response to floods, droughts, and other climate induced shock, both rapid and slow onset) versus post-shock transfers?
 - ▶ How does the cost-effectiveness and impact of humanitarian short-term interventions, specifically designed to respond to shocks, compare to routine social protection provision in supporting the most affected by climate events?
- 3) Related to the need to better understanding the individual benefits and complementarities associated with layering programme components for improving climate adaptation and adaptive social protection systems, such as: (i) Cash+ interventions; (ii) supporting the development of assets designed specifically to ensure risk diversified livelihoods; (iii) farmers’ insurance or (v) Smallholder Agriculture Market Support (SAMS), etc.
 - ▶ What is the relative effectiveness of different interventions in promoting climate adaptation?
 - ▶ How can WFP boost the impact of existing programmes on adaptive capacities?



School-based Programmes (SBP) Impact Evaluation Window

School-based programmes are one of the most extensive social safety nets worldwide, with an estimated 418 million children currently benefiting from school feeding. For many children, it represents the most nutritious – for some, the *only* – meal of the day. School meals also encourage the poorest families to send their children to school. Once in the classroom, school meals ensure children are well-nourished and ready to learn. Therefore, school meal programmes are crucial for promoting children’s health, nutrition, education, and learning. While there is already strong evidence that school feeding impacts children’s attendance,

more evidence is needed on the impact of such programmes on health, nutrition, human capital outcomes, and social protection, particularly from a gender perspective.

At the same time, with a global annual investment of US\$48 billion in school meal programmes, school meals are increasingly recognized as a key investment to create a stable demand for locally produced food, support the creation of local jobs, and promote more sustainable food systems. If appropriately designed, home-grown school feeding programmes can promote greater demand for small-holder farmers’ produce, stimulate crop diversity, and make communities more resilient to climate change. Many governments are increasingly sourcing food for school meals locally from smallholder farmers with the aim of boosting local agriculture, stimulate crop diversity and increase resilience and climate adaptation. However, empirical evidence on how best to design home-grown school feeding programmes and their effects on the local economy is still extremely limited.

In 2021, OEV in partnership with the World Bank’s DIME department, launched the [School-based Programmes Impact Evaluation Window](#) to generate a portfolio of impact evaluation evidence to inform policy decisions and programmes. While specific evaluation questions for each impact evaluation largely depend on country office priorities, it is expected that impact evaluations conducted as part of the window will answer at least one question within the following three areas of interest:

Health and education systems

- ▶ What is the impact of school meal interventions on children’s nutritional, health, and learning outcomes? How do these effects vary by age and gender?
- ▶ To what extent do different complementarity activities contribute to children’s outcomes? What is their relative cost-effectiveness?
- ▶ To what extent do the benefits of school meal programmes vary throughout the year depending on seasonal fluctuations, shocks and stressors?

Food systems and local economies

- ▶ What is the impact of home-grown school feeding programmes on the local economy, including farmers’ income, cooperative revenues, and market prices?

- ▶ To what extent can different procurement models be combined with crop and livelihood interventions to support farmers and communities in increasing their resilience and climate adaptation?

Optimization and cost-effectiveness

- ▶ To what extent can programmes' characteristics be optimized? Which ones are the most cost-effective?

Since 2021, five experimental impact evaluations have started in The Gambia, Jordan, Burundi, Guatemala and Malawi. Throughout 2023, the last round of data collection was conducted in Jordan, Guatemala and The Gambia, with evaluations expected to be completed in 2024. During the summer of 2023, a call for expressions of interest was launched to join the Window..

Ongoing school-based programmes impact evaluations

In **Burundi**, WFP's school feeding programme used a centralized procurement model to deliver food to schools. In 2022, WFP piloted a new procurement model based on commodity vouchers with local cooperatives distributing commodities directly to schools. The model aimed to increase the proportion of locally produced school meals.

In 2022, the IEU, DIME, and the WFP Burundi country office embedded a lean impact evaluation into the implementation of this new decentralized procurement model to assess whether it impacts the performance of meals distributed by schools (e.g. quantity, diversity, and quality of meals), compare their relative costs, and pilot the feasibility for a larger-scale impact evaluation. The pilot compared the school delivery outcomes from 50 randomly selected schools enrolled in the new procurement model, with 45 schools remaining in the old-centralized model.

Findings from the first year of the pilot indicate that schools enrolled in the new commodity voucher model have a statistically significant higher number of meal days compared to the centralized procurement model (on average, 13 days against 7.4).

In June 2023, the IEU and DIME visited the WFP Burundi country office to discuss the pilot's findings and revise the feasibility for a larger-scale impact evaluation aiming to assess the impact of the

commodity voucher model on children's outcomes (e.g. health, nutrition, learning) and agricultural cooperatives and their members.

A larger-scale impact evaluation was deemed feasible, and therefore it was decided to scale-up the programme and the impact evaluation. However, given uncertainties around programme funding and its scale-up, it is expected that the evaluation design will be revisited in June 2024.

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

OEV and DIME worked with the WFP country office throughout 2023 to implement a pilot impact evaluation to assess the app's impact on the performance of meals distributed by schools. The pilot used a lean impact evaluation approach to compare food procurement and meal distribution practices in 108 randomly selected schools in 30 municipalities, where schools and suppliers are trained in the use of the app, with 102 randomly selected schools in 29 municipalities where the app is not promoted yet.

In July 2023, OEV and DIME visited the WFP Guatemala country office with the objective to present and discuss the emerging findings from the pilot and determine the feasibility of a large-scale impact evaluation. During the country visit, the evaluation team and Country Office met with the Minister of Education and representatives from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Agriculture to present and discuss the findings.

The pilot recognized the significant opportunity the home-grown school feeding programme represents to small-holder farmers in Guatemala.

However, it was recognized that – at the time of the workshop - the app was not fully utilized by large sections of its intended users, with only 8% of schools reporting posting an order through the app and only 5% reporting receiving an offer from suppliers. It was therefore agreed to complete the pilot phase without recommending scaling up to a larger scale impact evaluation to investigate the impact on the local economy.



In **Jordan**, WFP was asked by the government to test and pilot alternative procurement and delivery models to the current national school feeding programme (NSFP). In 2022, WFP piloted a new healthy meal intervention, also referred to as the community-based kitchen model, which had embedded an impact evaluation design. In March of 2022, the IEU and the World Bank held a design workshop with the WFP country office and its partners to codesign an evaluation to assess the impact of this new healthy meal intervention. The workshop included representatives from the Jordan national government, the Ministry of Education, and implementing partners. The impact evaluation in Jordan is designed to evaluate two outcome areas:

- First, whether meals provided by a community-based kitchen model have an impact on the diet, attention span, and educational outcomes for primary-school students, when compared with the current national school feeding model (centrally procured date bars). To do this, it compares children's outcomes from 331 randomly selected schools enrolled in the new

community-based kitchen model and with children from 142 randomly selected schools which continue to receive the current national school feeding programme.

- Second, to assess the impact of being hired to produce the school meals through the community-based kitchen model, comparing nearly 600 eligible workers and their households across eight kitchens.

In February 2023 a re-design workshop was conducted to assess which changes in evaluation designs were needed to ensure adherence to programme implementation. During the workshop it was also decided to incorporate a discrete choice experiment to determine workers' employment preferences and inform programmes operations.

Baseline data collection for children and workers was conducted in the third quarter of 2022, and workers' high-frequency surveys started in the fourth quarter of 2022. Endline data collection for children and workers was conducted in June 2023.

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

The programme was randomly assigned to 46 new schools among 92 potentially eligible schools. In addition, to understand how the impact of school feeding varies by seasonal fluctuations and shocks, the evaluation is planning to collect child high-frequency surveys at various points throughout the year. Finally, the evaluation is measuring the impact of an additional component that aims to increase teachers' attendance, to assess whether teacher presence can magnify the impacts of school feeding programmes on learning outcomes.

Throughout 2023, the evaluation conducted five data collection rounds from a sample of 2,175 children in the 92 schools. It also conducted five attendance ledgers and five external spot visits. Preliminary results were shared to the country office and regional bureau in an online presentation in November 2023. Preliminary results indicate that the school meals programme is leading to higher

food security and dietary diversity, particularly for girls.

In **Malawi**, the WFP Malawi country office, OEV, and SPE, World Bank's DIME and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) partnered to conduct an impact evaluation of the expansion of the home-grown school feeding programme in the Kasungu district. The evaluation will use a school-level randomized controlled design with 1,760 children in 88 schools to assess the impact of school meals on children's outcomes. Secondly, the evaluation will use a randomized encouragement design potentially complemented by focus group discussions and a discrete choice experiment to assess the impact on the local economy, including 1,650 farmers and 274 farmers' organizations.

Nutrition Impact Evaluation Priorities

In 2023, OEV and the Nutrition Division have been working with the University of California Davis to conduct a scoping review on the already existing evidence of balanced energy protein supplements and other related nutrition interventions on maternal, birth, and child outcomes in low- and middle-income countries. A research article and WFP publication are expected to be published in 2024.

IMPACT EVALUATION IN FRAGILE AND HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

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

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

the use of lean impact evaluations for all potential engagements.

As a public resource, a systematic [literature review](#) of the existing experimental evidence on humanitarian assistance relevant to WFP programming was published in 2022 (authored by DIME). Findings emphasized a concerning lack of evidence in the sector and provided additional justification for an investment in impact evaluations on humanitarian assistance.

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

For example, OEV has piloted innovative tools, such as using GIS analysis to enrich flood data from Nepal, adding objective measures of flood exposure for more than 3000 households. In the DRC, the team is running discrete choice experiments to test the preferences of households for targeting procedures and assistance modalities, in line with WFP's mandate to put "people first." In eastern DRC, OEV is also testing new tools to advance the measurement of social cohesion.

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

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

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

COMMUNICATIONS

OEV continued to increase its communication efforts for impact evaluation in 2023. Several

[reports](#) were published on the externally facing WFP impact evaluation [webpage](#), including baseline reports for resilience impact evaluations in Mali, Niger, and South Sudan, an inception note for Malawi's evaluation on home grown school feeding, and our [first endline report](#) on the impact of cash-transfers in El Salvador. In addition, in 2023 OEV continued to author blogs on our [Medium page](#), which has received over 6300 views since its launch.

OEV also organized or contributed to 16 events in 2023. Ten of these events showcased early results from ongoing or recently closed impact evaluations, including emerging findings from the climate and resilience and school-based programmes windows. OEV increased its outreach this year with governments, through targeted engagement with ministries from Jordan, and the Philippines. OEV also showcased results in events hosted by partners, including the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the World Bank, the Green Climate Fund (GCF), UNICEF, UNOCHA, and the Humanitarian Assistance Evidence Cycle (HAEC), as well as through networks such as the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Weeks (HNPW) and the Global Dialogue Platform on Anticipatory Humanitarian Action.

The year also saw the launch of the first Impact Evaluation Forum, held in December in Rome. We welcomed over 130 guests, including WFP country office colleagues and external partners, as well as over 300 online attendees.

Over four days, the event showcased the latest impact evaluations from WFP and other UN, NGO, and academic partners; facilitated collaboration through dedicated partnership sessions with donors and implementers; and built internal capacity for impact evaluation through dedicated in-person training.

IMPACT EVALUATION CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

In 2023, OEV worked to increase the awareness and capacity of WFP to engage in impact evaluations. OEV was invited to present its impact evaluation work at a Research, Assessment, and Monitoring (RAM) global meeting in Dubai. OEV also focused its capacity development efforts in 2023 through its call for expressions of interest which was launched in July 2023. During the call, OEV conducted two online global sessions aimed at country office management to increase understanding of impact evaluation and its usefulness for designing and improving programming. The sessions introduced the various opportunities for partnership with OEV impact evaluation unit and provided an overview of

impact evaluation methods and their application in the WFP context. OEV received a total of 29 expressions of interest, from which 21 countries were selected to attend further in-person training as part of the Impact Evaluation Forum. This training culminated in some proposed impact evaluation designs that would then form the basis of feasibility discussions with the IEU moving forward into 2024.

OEV's impact evaluation team also worked with external partners to provide additional training to interested WFP colleagues. A session on "Building a Culture of Evidence in your Organization", led by Marie Gaarder of 3ie, formed a key part of the Impact Evaluation Forum in Rome. In Istanbul, partners from HAEC offered training on Impact Evaluation and Operational Research in Humanitarian Settings to colleagues working in Türkiye and on cross-border assistance. OEV also completed and launched the online Evaluation Foundations course which offers colleagues across the organization a self-paced learning platform to better understand WFP's Evaluation Function, including the Impact Evaluation Strategy and related opportunities.

PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES IN 2023

Before the Impact Evaluation Unit was established in 2022, WFP had limited in-house capacity to design and deliver rigorous impact evaluations. In the past WFP impact evaluations were generally supported by external academics.

However, this led to mixed results in terms of alignment of evidence priorities and timing of evaluations. To address these issues OEV started to explore partnerships that are better suited to WFP's operational realities, especially to meet the requirement for responsive support that adapts to changes in context.

World Bank partnership

The first impact evaluation partnership under this approach was formed with the World Bank's DIME department. In 2022, the Memorandum of Understanding with DIME was revised and extended to 2026 to align with the current Impact Evaluation Strategy. In 2023, OEV and DIME began a process of reviewing and refocusing the impact evaluation partnership on the topics and countries where WFP and the World Bank have operational partnerships and the evidence can inform both agencies.

Additional partnerships

Regarding partnerships with other UN agencies, in 2023, the IEU started discussing a new joint impact evaluation in the DRC with FAO and UNICEF. Impact evaluations in South Sudan and Sudan are both focusing on joint programmes with UNICEF. In addition, funding for anticipatory action interventions and data is provided by UN OCHA's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

Beyond the UN, OEV continues to develop a community of practice around impact evaluation in fragile and humanitarian contexts. For the [IE Forum in December](#), OEV welcomed member states and donors (USAID, GIZ and KfW, KOICA, AFD), seven multilateral organizations (FAO, IFAD, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, Green Climate Fund and the World Bank), four implementing partner agencies (ICRC, IRC, Mercy Corps, and Save the Children), research institutes (3ie, IFPRI, IPA, ISDC, J-PAL, and WZB Berlin) as well as several partners from evidence networks, universities and foundations.

For the school-based programmes window, OEV works closely with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and a Research Consortium on School Health and Nutrition. The Consortium is supported by WFP, the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, and the World Bank. It includes an Impact Community of Practice that connects to WFP's School-based Programmes window.

In addition, OEV and the WFP Nutrition Division are exploring how to use existing research partnerships to support impact evaluations. In 2023, the IEU supported the Nutrition Division to finish a literature review with UC Davis that will inform the way forward. In 2024, OEV will continue broadening its partnerships, with a particular focus on engaging with organizations based in the regions WFP operates.

IMPACT EVALUATION RESOURCES IN 2022

WFP's capacity to deliver the strategy depends on its human and financial resources.

Human Resources

In 2023, OEV continued to refine its hybrid model of conducting impact evaluations. The completion of the first randomized controlled trials clearly demonstrates WFP has the capacity to generate this kind of rigorous impact evaluation evidence. However, experience from the first phase of impact evaluation windows also demonstrates the

necessity of having strong in-house, technical capacity.

WFP works in the most challenging humanitarian and development contexts. To conduct impact evaluations, WFP programmes need access to highly responsive IEU that can quickly be deployed to engage with programmes on the ground, understand contexts, collect and analyse data, and generate useful evidence. Even with the early success, impact evaluation is still new to many WFP programme teams, and they require significant advice as they design and implement interventions in ways that enable impact evaluation.

The expressions of interest from WFP country offices, and high levels of engagement in the Impact Evaluation Forum, indicate growing demand for impact evaluations in WFP. To meet this demand, OEV began a process of expanding the IEU by initiating the recruitment of three new positions, one for each of the open windows.

OEV successfully recruited a new member to work on the School-based Programmes Window. However, two positions were frozen when WFP implemented its hiring freeze for all headquarters and regional bureau divisions. OEV successfully received a waiver to recruit one position to support the humanitarian workstream. OEV is still planning to fill the planned Climate and Resilience Window position, which is a growing priority area for corporate evidence.

Finally, in addition to the impact evaluation specialist positions, the IEU recruited a dedicated business support assistant focused on budget and programming to monitor and track the growing number of grants and financial transactions. A new rotational P4 position to provide management support to all impact evaluations will be recruited mid 2024.

Financial Resources

WFP continues to seek ways to increase financial resources available to impact evaluation through a co-financing model. OEV covers the cost of the management and technical support needed to deliver an impact evaluation, and the country offices commit to covering the cost of data collection.

In 2023, impact evaluations were supported by BMZ and KfW, KOICA, NORAD, and USAID. In addition, the World Bank DIME department was successful in raising funds from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme to support the joint school-based programme impact evaluation in The Gambia.

Lessons learned in 2023



IMPACT EVALUATION IN TIMES OF CHANGE

In 2023, WFP underwent several major changes that had implications for the evaluation function.

First, the process of appointing a new Director of Evaluation (DoE) mid-year brought stability and greater clarity on the future direction for WFP impact evaluations. This enabled OEV to circulate a new call for expressions of interest to country offices, and to start planning the Impact Evaluation Forum.

However, stability was short-lived, as the wider organization initiated a change process in response to new leadership, rapidly evolving global crises, and a global reduction in funding available for humanitarian and development interventions.

Changes are creating new challenges and opportunities for impact evaluation. The biggest challenge has been the pause on recruitment, which makes it more difficult to meet growing demand for impact evaluations from WFP partners and country offices. For example, in 2023, OEV was unable to support IE requests

from Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, and other COs, even before the call for EOIs. Following the call for EOIs last July, OEV will hopefully support at least 9 of the 29 expressions received. The change in organizational structures also has implications on corporate policies and strategies, and related evidence priorities.

However, in terms of opportunities, the reduction in global resources is increasing the pressure on WFP to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of its programmes. Because rigorous impact evaluations, such as RCTs, are perceived by many donors as being a strong source of evidence, this increases the demand for and visibility of impact evaluation evidence. Executive Director Cindy McCain even referenced impact evaluation in her remarks at the [UN Remarks at Security Council open debate on advancing public-private humanitarian partnerships](#).

In 2024, WFP is likely to continue feeling the pressure to engage in many crises with fewer available resources. This will continue to have implications for staffing and budget availability to the IEU, as OEV will need to carefully prioritize all evaluation activities.



MAXIMIZING THE USEFULNESS OF IMPACT EVALUATIONS

In 2023, WFP collected IE data in 12 countries (Burundi, DRC, Ghana, The Gambia, Guatemala, Haiti, Jordan, Nepal, Niger, Mali, Rwanda, South Sudan). This influx of new data created opportunities to conduct endline analyses and start producing reports. However, given the global situation, many donors and WFP country offices expressed strong interest in having access to evidence before reports were published.

The process of producing formal evaluation reports is necessarily long, with rounds of quality assessment, approvals, and commenting. As a result, the data collection and analysis occur long before the reports are published.

To get around the timing issue, the IEU explored ways of communicating impact evaluation evidence before publishing reports. This included getting approvals for presentations and briefs based on endline data and providing on-demand presentations to donors, country offices and the Executive Board.

In 2024, OEV will continue seeking ways of making the reporting processes for impact evaluations as efficient and timely as possible. In addition, the IEU will explore how different communication channels and tools are most

effective at reaching different audiences in the most useful manner.

DEVELOPING IMPACT EVALUATION COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

One of the biggest new initiatives supported by OEV in 2023 was the first Impact Evaluation Forum. The Forum was made possible by generous support from the USAID BHA, which explicitly request that its multi-year impact evaluation funding be used to support the development of a global community of practice.

The Impact Evaluation Forum was the most visible initiative supported by IEU towards developing communities. It also opened a much wider discussion on the need for greater pooling of resources and expertise.

Following the Forum, the IEU committed to:

- Identify the most critical questions, and to combine efforts in finding the answers, which requires us to pool resources and align evidence agendas, working in partnership to deliver evidence that speaks to global issues.
- Continue conversations on a shared evidence agenda in humanitarian and development settings and set the tone for more such engagement in the future, identifying and leveraging opportunities to work in close collaboration with our learning- and funding partners
- Draw on the multiple existing sources of evidence within this community. The Forum identified that while there is no shortage of evidence on certain topics, the evidence base on others remains thin. WFP will continue to work with WFP country offices, regional bureaus, and partners to identify the most crucial knowledge gaps and find the most efficient ways to address them.
- Work more collaboratively with governments, policymakers, and broader constituencies to ensure evidence use beyond only this community.

In 2024, the IEU will work towards further developing a Community of Practice for Humanitarian Impact Evaluation (COPHIE), building on the suggestions that were identified at the Forum. The IEU also aims to cohost the next Forum jointly with UNICEF.

Strategic Advisory Panel Annual Meeting

26 April 2024

PANEL MEMBERS

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Christoph Erichsen, Trainee in Impact Evaluation Unit, WFP

INTRODUCTION

The Annual Meeting of the Strategic Advisory Panel (SAP) reviews progress made in implementing WFP's Impact Evaluation Strategy (2019-2026). Below is a summary of the discussion.

2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

Overall progress in 2023: Panel members welcomed progress and the completion of the first WFP impact evaluation in El Salvador. They were happy that several impact evaluation endline surveys were completed in 2023 and looked forward to final reports. Panel members also questioned whether there had been challenges or negative experiences during ongoing impact evaluations.

Supporting the utilisation of impact evaluation evidence: The panel raised questions about how OEV ensures that generated IE evidence is utilised.

WFP's impact evaluations are designed to ensure evidence generated is relevant to the programming. This will become even more evident in the coming years, as more impact evaluation reports are expected in 2024.

OEV highlighted the example of South Sudan, where evidence from the impact evaluation is directly informing the conceptualisation of the project's next phase by stakeholders at BMZ, KfW, WFP and UNICEF, even before the final report is published. In particular, the next programme phase aims to respond to evaluation findings related to seasonal food insecurity, high teacher-student ratios, and gender.

OEV also pointed out that conducting an impact evaluation requires robust monitoring and implementation. This close contact between OEV and the country offices ensures that data and findings from impact evaluations are discussed throughout the programme cycles.

Impact evaluation community of practice: During the meeting, Panel members raised questions about OEV's current work to contribute to a community of practice for impact evaluation.

OEV is actively working with USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, UNICEF, and others to

further develop a community of practice for impact evaluation in areas it operates (e.g., cash transfers, humanitarian responses, resilience, etc.).

In particular, the great interest in the first Impact Evaluation Forum has shown that demand for more exchange exists. The 2024 Impact Evaluation Forum will be co-hosted with UNICEF in New York. In addition to events, OEV actively shares lessons learned about impact evaluation through its blogs.

The Panel questioned whether the Forum and blogs are the best way to foster a community. They suggested that more frequent, thematic (e.g. resilience), interactions by practitioners and stakeholders may encourage greater knowledge sharing and collaboration. The Panel emphasised that developing communities takes a lot of effort, but that the potential benefits are worth the investment.

Collaboration with other UN agencies: The question was raised to what extent WFP collaborates with other UN agencies to carry out impact evaluations.

WFP is actively working to expand collaborations with other UN agencies. For example, WFP is working with UNICEF as part of the joint programmes in Sudan and South Sudan, and with UNICEF and FAO in the DRC. OEV welcomes the fact that more Offices of Evaluation in other UN agencies are expressing interest in generating rigorous impact evaluation evidence and building their own capacity to engage in them.

Access to WFP impact evaluation data: The panel was pleased with OEV's plans to publish impact evaluation data in WFP's data library. In addition, panel members recommended that the publication of collected data should be considered at the data collection stage and raised the question of who will have access to the data once it is published.

To facilitate further research, OEV is working on making anonymized impact evaluation data available as a public good. However, due to WFP privacy policies, it may be necessary to present data in aggregated form.

Use of remote sensing technologies: Panel members asked whether and to what extent GIS data has been used in WFP impact evaluations.

OEV piloted the use of GIS data for an impact evaluation on Anticipatory Action in Nepal. Satellite imagery was used for post-flood analyses to verify

self-reported flood exposure. OEV expects remote sensing data to play an increasingly important role.

Engaging with evaluation stakeholders: The panel asked how and to what extent the various stakeholders and partner governments are involved during WFP's impact evaluations.

Through the country offices, WFP works closely with the respective governments and non-governmental partner organizations. As impact evaluations are demand-led, OEV ensures designs are adapted to country contexts and also serve global evidence priorities. Close cooperation with all partners involved is a fundamental requirement of impact evaluations of the OEV. For example, the [Ministry of Education in Jordan](#) actively contributed to the impact evaluation from design to completion.. In addition, for all impact evaluations weekly or biweekly meetings are held between CO and OEV to ensure that the respective needs are considered throughout the entire process.

Including cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analysis: Panel members pointed out that cost-effectiveness analysis is becoming increasingly important and asked about how WFP intends to include costing into the impact evaluations.

OEV is systematically seeking to include cost-effectiveness analysis in each impact evaluation. For example, OEV is conducting a cost-effectiveness analysis to compare targeting methods in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Further cost-effectiveness analysis is planned for other forthcoming evaluations. However, this has proven challenging when cost data needs to be collected retrospectively.

Risk of unintended consequences from cash transfers: A question was asked about possible unintended negative consequences for women receiving cash transfers.

During impact evaluations, OEV collects data regarding women's agency, time use, decision making, norms, and intimate partner violence. The results of the impact evaluations from El Salvador and Rwanda, as well as preliminary results from Haiti, show reduced psychological well-being of women in households receiving cash transfers. These evaluations also find that women in households receiving unconditional cash transfers experience a loss of agency over decision making. OEV takes these results very seriously and encourages programmes to explore new ways of

preventing unintended outcomes for women in future cash-based programmes.

Sharing challenges and lessons learned: The panel was interested to learn about OEV's experience with impact evaluations that did not go according to plan. They encouraged OEV to be more proactive in sharing the challenges encountered when conducting impact evaluations.

The Panel also suggested that they would be interested in engaging more regularly on specific technical and practical issues related to conducting impact evaluations.

OEV pointed out that all impact evaluations experience many challenges. They provided examples from the DRC, where access to North Kivu made the impact evaluation impossible, and from Guatemala, where the pilot phase identified a need to further refine the intervention.

OEV agreed to find better ways of sharing impact evaluation challenges and lessons learned, by engaging with the Panel and global community of practice through different avenues.

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