

Strategic evaluation on WFP's approaches to Targeting and Prioritization for Food and Nutrition Assistance

Strategic evaluations in WFP focus on systemic issues of corporate relevance as defined in strategic documents, policies, and directives. The purpose of this evaluation is to meet both accountability and learning needs with a stronger emphasis on learning and forward looking.

Subject, focus and scope of the evaluation

The terms “targeting” and “prioritization” are often used inter-changeably though they are distinct concepts. Targeting is the process by which populations are selected for assistance, informed by needs assessments and programme objectives. Prioritization is the process through which people within a targeted population, who have greater needs and/or are in more vulnerable situations, receive assistance when overall identified needs cannot be met, or when entitlements are reduced due to resource constraints.¹

Although WFP has always been forced to make targeting and prioritization choices, those decisions are now becoming more challenging than ever as a result of growing humanitarian needs and rising resource pressures. Country offices have been forced to reduce both the number of beneficiaries and the rations or even suspend assistance for a period of time. Such decisions inevitably have repercussions on the food security and nutrition status of targeted communities, leading in some instances to increased protection risks along with the adoption of risky coping strategies.

WFP's approaches to targeting and prioritization have evolved over the years. In response to an internal audit on targeting and to the pressing challenges faced by country offices, WFP launched several initiatives aimed at strengthening the way targeting and prioritization are done across operations, as well as increasing coherence, integrity and transparency in targeting analysis, decision-making and implementation. Several HQ Divisions collaborated on a Targeting Strengthening Initiative and efforts were made to improve regional bureaux' capacity on targeting. Cross-functional efforts on targeting and prioritization have consisted of : i) Identifying and documenting operational challenges and good practices; ii) Producing or updating guidance; iii) Providing hands-on support to country offices; iv) Tracking and reporting on progress made across the organization and accountability through the Global Assurance Plan; v) Facilitating capacity

strengthening initiatives and vi) exploring new technologies.

Together with WFP policies on emergency needs assessment and targeting in emergencies which date back to 2004 and 2006, the [ED Circular on Management of Targeting Processes by WFP offices](#) (2022) and the [Targeting and prioritization Operational guidance](#) (2021) provide an overall framework that should be tailored to the specific context and capacities in each country. This was further complemented by an **ED Circular on Global Assurance Framework** issued in June 2024 which aims to ensure food assistance reaches the right people safely and effectively.

The evaluation will focus on WFP's approaches to targeting and prioritization for interventions involving direct food/cash assistance to beneficiaries as reflected in its normative framework and as operationalized at country level.

The evaluation will cover all regions where WFP operates and draw from a purposeful sample of six country case studies, reflecting a range of operational contexts. Though the temporal scope extends from 2019 till April 2025, particular attention will be given to WFP recent and current practices to inform the way forward.

Objectives and users of the evaluation

The evaluation is expected to:

- i. document and draw lessons from WFP's current approaches to targeting and prioritization;
- ii. assess the relevance of its normative framework and institutional arrangements;
- iii. identify internal and external enablers and barriers to effective targeting and prioritization as well as promising practice.

The evaluation aims to generate evidence to inform ongoing reflections on how WFP could enhance its targeting and prioritization approaches in a severely resource constrained environment. Issues related to gender equality, disability and other factors of vulnerability which influence food insecurity and malnutrition, as they relate to targeting and prioritization, will also be considered.

Primary internal users of the evaluation results include WFP's senior leadership and management as well as staff involved directly in targeting and prioritization work at

¹ WFP. Targeting and Prioritization Guidance Note | January 2021

country office and regional bureau levels. External stakeholders include crisis-affected communities, community leaders and gate-keepers, civil society, host governments, and a wide range of humanitarian and development actors.

Evaluation questions

The evaluation will address the following questions (those were refined during inception phase):

QUESTION 1: How relevant and appropriate are WFP's approaches to targeting and prioritization?

QUESTION 2: What are the effects of WFP's targeting and prioritization practices?

QUESTION 3: How effectively does WFP engage and collaborate with others on targeting and prioritization?

QUESTION 4: What factors affect WFP's performance on targeting and prioritization?

Methodology and ethical considerations

The overall evaluation design will be developed by the evaluation team through a participatory, iterative reflection and learning process. In the absence of an existing explicit Theory of Change and considering that targeting and prioritization are not an end in themselves but rather a necessary process to ensure that WFP assistance reaches those most in need, the evaluation will first develop an analytical framework along with a set of hypotheses that will be subsequently tested.

The methodology is expected to:

- adopt mixed methods (quantitative, qualitative) for data collection and analysis;
- demonstrate attention to impartiality and reduction of bias by relying on different primary and secondary data sources and stakeholders and adopting systematic triangulation;
- mitigate challenges to data availability and validity, and budget and timing constraints, further expanding and validating elements included in the initial evaluability assessment;
- include a desk-based summary of evaluation evidence, expanded with relevant research and evaluations commissioned by others; and
- Review the targeting and prioritization approaches of other humanitarian and development actors.
- collect the views of crisis-affected communities through focus group discussions and analysis of data generated by community feedback mechanisms in each country sampled for the evaluation, paying particular attention to gender, equity and inclusiveness dimensions.

Through a number of country case studies, the evaluation will look at the extent to which country offices have operationalized WFP's targeting and prioritization circular, guidance and tools; as well as how targeting and

prioritization decisions are made, monitored and what are their effects.

The evaluation is expected to adhere to the 2020 UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) ethical guidelines. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring informed consent, protecting personal data, confidentiality and anonymity of informants, ensuring cultural sensitivity, respecting the autonomy of participants, ensuring fair recruitment of participants (including women and socially excluded groups) and ensuring that the evaluation cause no harm to participants, their communities, and to WFP operations.

Roles and responsibilities

EVALUATION TEAM: The evaluation will be conducted by a team of independent consultants with strong experience in conducting global strategic evaluations, and organizational performance assessments. All team members must have experience evaluating humanitarian and development programmes and understand the multidimensional constraints under which WFP and its partners operate.

OEV EVALUATION MANAGEMENT: The evaluation will be managed by Julie Thoulouzan, Senior Evaluation Officer with the support of Lia Carboni in a Research Analyst capacity. They will be the main interlocutors between the evaluation team, represented by the team leader, and WFP counterparts, to ensure a smooth implementation process and adherence with OEV quality standards for evaluation process and deliverables.

An **INTERNAL REFERENCE GROUP** will be asked to review and comment on draft evaluation reports, provide feedback during evaluation briefings and be available for interviews with the evaluation team.

An **EXTERNAL ADVISORY GROUP** will provide expert input on key deliverables and/or engage in discussions on key topics during the evaluation process.

The **DIRECTOR OF EVALUATION** will approve the final evaluation products and present the SER to the WFP Executive Board for consideration.

Communication

All WFP strategic evaluation products will be produced in English. As part of the international standards for evaluation, WFP requires that all evaluations are made publicly available. The evaluation team will propose/explore communication/feedback channels to appropriate audiences (including affected populations as relevant) as part of the inception phase.

Timing and key milestones

Inception phase: September -December 2024

Data collection phase: January -April 2025

Reporting phase: May-November 2025

Stakeholder workshop: September 2025

Executive Board: February 2026