



IMPACT EVALUATION



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

2024 in review

May 2025

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Foreword



The year 2024 presented a complex global landscape marked by shifting donor priorities, funding constraints, and the persistent challenge of multiple, complex humanitarian crises.

Amidst these pressures and significant organizational change within the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), the imperative to demonstrate the effectiveness and efficiency of our interventions has only grown stronger.

WFP's leadership has underscored the need for focused, prioritized programming that optimizes resources and maximizes impact for those we serve.

In this context, WFP's Office of Evaluation (OEV) remains dedicated to providing robust, credible evidence through rigorous impact evaluations.

Impact evaluation evidence is crucial for navigating the challenges ahead and ensuring our assistance is as effective as possible.

In 2024, WFP made considerable progress in advancing this agenda. We reached a new peak with twenty-three impact evaluations completed or ongoing. Critically, we published seven impact evaluation reports, including final reports shedding light on climate resilience programming in Niger and South Sudan, and school-based programmes in Jordan. We also launched four new impact evaluations to support WFP in

optimizing the effectiveness of its programmes in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ghana, and Madagascar.

Innovation remained central to our work. We employed innovative impact evaluation methods like A/B testing to assess anticipatory action for flood responses in Bangladesh and Nepal, and network analysis to understand targeting modalities in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Furthermore, WFP continued to champion the use and understanding of impact evaluation evidence, co-hosting the second Global Impact Evaluation Forum with UNICEF in New York and hosting a Regional Forum in Bangkok. These efforts foster stronger collaboration and aim to disseminate rigorous evidence to government representatives, donors, impact evaluation practitioners from various sectors, and academia. Furthermore, WFP and UNICEF advanced collaboration and the promotion of best practice across UN agencies by proposing the establishment of a United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) working group on impact evaluation.

Partnerships are fundamental to this success. We maintained our strategic collaboration with the World Bank and expanded technical partnerships with entities like the International Security and Development Center (ISDC), while initiating processes to broaden our partner base further.

As the Director of Evaluation, I am pleased to present the 2024 Annual Report for the Strategic Advisory Panel. It details our progress; the valuable lessons learned during a period of change and outlines the strategic direction for impact evaluation at WFP as we move into 2025.

Looking ahead, 2025 will be another year of major global changes. As Official Development Assistance (ODA) declines, WFP will need to further adapt to the changing context and adjust priorities accordingly.

To ensure any remaining resources reach the most people with the most effective support, requires timely, useful, and rigorous cost-effectiveness evidence.

Anne-Claire Luzot
Director of Evaluation

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

This is the sixth annual report produced under [WFP's Impact Evaluation Strategy](#), which outlines the progress made in 2024 towards achieving its objectives and vision.

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

Key messages

WFP reaches new peak, completing and implementing 25 rigorous impact evaluations

2024 was a significant year for impact evaluation in WFP, culminating in the publication of seven impact evaluation reports, three of which were final reports. The final reports for [Niger](#) and [South Sudan](#) were published under the climate change and resilience window. Under the school-based programmes window, the final report for [Jordan](#) was published along with the inception and pilot reports for Burundi and the inception report for Malawi. Finally, the baseline report for Kenya was published. Four new impact evaluations commenced in 2024, bringing the total number of impact evaluations in the preparation and implementation phases to twenty-five, each using forms of experimental methods.

OEV continued to develop and use innovative approaches to rigorously evaluate WFP's humanitarian and development interventions. In Bangladesh and Nepal, OEV randomised households into two groups (A/B testing) to test the relative cost-effectiveness of anticipatory action for flood responses. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), OEV used network analysis to complement traditional outcomes measures and compare the relative effectiveness of different targeting modalities.

WFP continues promoting the use of impact evaluations, especially in humanitarian settings

Building on the success of the inaugural Impact Evaluation Forum, in Rome in December 2023, WFP continued to maintain the momentum and implement the commitments made during the Forum. The WFP regional bureau of Bangkok, in partnership with the Office of Evaluation (OEV), hosted a Regional Impact Evaluation Forum, to discuss the evidence from impact evaluations of programmes that protect vulnerable people against climate related shocks through early action. This three-day event brought together eleven WFP country offices from the Asia Pacific region and key Government counterparts from Thailand, Nepal, and Cambodia. It also welcomed well established as well as new and emerging donors, multilateral development banks, UN agencies and WFP staff.

WFP also co-convened with UNICEF the second [Global Impact Evaluation Forum](#), in December 2024. Held at the United Nations in New York, this forum explored how rigorous impact evaluation can drive evidence-based decision-making in fragile contexts in more cost-effective ways.

Government representatives, donors, impact evaluation practitioners from various sectors, and academia discussed how to promote impact evaluation as a tool to inform decision-making, how to foster collaboration between and among different sectors, how to innovate for more timely and robust impact evaluations, especially in fragile settings where impact evaluation is challenging, and how to better connect impact evidence to policy action so that these evaluations, demanding in both time and money, yield concrete programmatic decisions – and ultimately better results for the most vulnerable.

Advancing impact evaluations within the United Nations

Immediately after the Global Impact Evaluation Forum, WFP and UNICEF held a meeting with other UN agencies to advance these priorities by proposing the establishment of a United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) working group on impact evaluation to promote collaboration and best practices across agencies. The success of the second forum, co-organized by UNICEF and WFP,

particularly the significance of two UN Agencies working together, demonstrated to external stakeholders the ability of UN agencies to move forward on this agenda in a coordinated and joint way.

All agencies present for this meeting participated in identifying priorities for the working group, which were subsequently transferred into a draft proposal and workplan template for the UNEG Working Group on Impact Evaluations. This was shared at the UNEG Annual General Meeting early 2025 when the establishment of the new Working Group was proposed.

The formation of the UNEG working group is a significant step to capitalise on concrete opportunities to advance impact evaluations in UN agencies.

Partnerships expanded and developed

WFP continued to invest in its partnerships, maintaining its strategic partnership with the World Bank's Development Impact group (DIME), to generate evidence through the thematic windows and start four new impact evaluations (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ghana Farmers Phase 2, Lebanon, and Madagascar).

WFP also expanded its technical partnership on impact evaluations with the University of Milan-Bicocca and International Security and Development Center in Lebanon and Sudan. Finally, in 2024, WFP initiated a corporate procurement exercise to expand its partnership base with other entities that specialise in impact evaluations.

Regarding partnerships with other UN agencies, OEV continued managing the 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, co-funding for anticipatory action interventions and data is provided by UN OCHA's Central Emergency Response Fund.

Beyond the UN, OEV continues to develop a community of practice around impact evaluation in fragile and humanitarian contexts. For the school-based programmes window, OEV works closely with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, which hosts the School Meals Coalition's Research Consortium on School Health and Nutrition. The Consortium is supported by WFP BMZ, Dubai Cares, IDRC-CRDI, Norad, the Novo Nordisk foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation. It includes an Impact Community of Practice that connects to WFP's School-based Programmes window.

Impact evaluations in times of change

2024 was also characterised by a change management process and the setup of global headquarters. As part of this process, WFP's leadership team is empowering country offices to deliver more focused, prioritized programmes that generate greater impact for beneficiaries and optimize resources. This presents a significant opportunity for the impact evaluation team, whose work can directly guide country offices to make evidence-informed decisions and maximize cost-effectiveness and efficiencies. However, other implications relating to funding shortages may affect programmes and have a knock-on effect on the successful implementation of impact evaluations

In 2025, 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 impact evaluation unit, as OEV will need to carefully prioritize all evaluation activities.



Impact evaluation activities in 2024

2024 in review

WFP impact evaluations are managed by the OEV impact evaluation unit upon request from country offices and aligned with the implementation timelines of programmes evaluated.

In 2024, WFP surpassed its 2023 peak, implementing 25 rigorous impact evaluations, each using forms of experimental methods. At the same time, this numerical growth is only one indicator of the function's overall maturity. Of greater importance is ensuring that all evaluations are optimally targeted to cover the most strategically important issues facing the organization, and that they are of high credibility and utility.

WFP published seven impact evaluation reports, three of which were final reports. The final reports for Niger and South Sudan were published under the climate change and resilience window. Under the school-based programmes window, the final report for Jordan was published along with the inception and pilot reports for Burundi and the inception report for Malawi. Finally, the baseline report for Kenya was published. Furthermore, WFP managed a joint impact evaluation in South-Sudan with UNICEF to assess the Joint Resilience Programme. Four new impact evaluations commenced in 2024 (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ghana Phase II, and Madagascar).

OEV continued to develop and use innovative approaches to rigorously evaluate WFP's humanitarian and development interventions. In Bangladesh and Nepal, OEV randomised households into two groups (A/B testing) to test the relative cost-effectiveness of anticipatory action for flood responses. In the DRC, OEV used network analysis to complement traditional outcomes measures and compare the relative effectiveness of different targeting modalities.

WFP continued its efforts to ensure the data collected is managed and published appropriately.

The impact evaluation unit is working closely with the Analysis, Planning and Performance (APP) Division in WFP in a joint effort to enhance data protection and utilization. The unit also continues to store impact evaluation data in its [data library](#) on DataLib and facilitates access for other WFP colleagues, including the Jordan country office,

school feeding teams at country offices, and the resilience team at headquarters.

OEV allows data sharing within WFP upon request to ensure data protection, provided that the request includes a clear justification for use. The proposed use must align with the conditions approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and any related ethical clearances.

The ongoing analysis of data also enabled the impact evaluation unit to inform WFP's programmes and partners through a variety of presentations, briefs, and discussions (please see section 4).



Cash-based transfers and gender (CBT&G) impact evaluation window

The cash-based transfers and gender impact evaluation window was created in 2019 to assess the impacts of directing cash programming to women on their economic and social empowerment.

The first set of evaluations under this window focused on testing the impacts of targeting women with Food-Assistance-For-Assets programming (FFA), compared with a standard FFA approach (mainly involving men) and a comparison group of households not participating in the projects in the first phase.

CBT and Gender impact evaluations under the 1st pre-analysis plan

Haiti impact evaluation (2022-2025)

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

OEV co-developed the impact evaluation proposal with the WFP country office, which was approved by the donor (the Inter-American Development Bank). The design followed 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 and endline data in 2024. The final report is currently under review.

Rwanda impact evaluation (2022-2025)

In Rwanda, WFP is conducting an impact evaluation of the *Sustainable Market Alliance and Asset Creation for Resilient Communities and Gender Transformation project (SMART)*, funded by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and OEV. The SMART impact evaluation contributes evidence to both the CBT and gender, and the climate and resilience windows.

A baseline survey was completed in 2021 and was followed by a series of bi-monthly high-frequency surveys that ended 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 2023 (along with qualitative data collection). The [Rwanda baseline and inception reports](#) were published in 2022. The final report will be published in 2025.

Kenya impact evaluation (2023-2025)

In Kenya, the impact evaluation aims to estimate the impacts of women participating in FFA programming on gender equality, household decision making, and women's social and economic empowerment.

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.

The baseline report, which was published in May 2024, presents data from the impact evaluation baseline survey. This data reflects the pre-programme baseline situation in the study regions, focusing on primary outcomes and other descriptive variables of interest.

The impact evaluation focuses on 20 of the most vulnerable households from each of the 75 communities included, for a total of 1,500 households included in the evaluation survey sample.

Project timelines were adjusted to enable the Kenya country office to focus its efforts on a severe drought emergency. Data analysis was also conducted in 2024, and the impact evaluation report is being finalized and will be published in 2025.

El Salvador impact evaluation (2019-2023)

Findings from the [first impact evaluation](#) in El Salvador completed in 2023 are detailed in the box below.

Targeting women with FFA programming in El Salvador

The impact evaluation in El Salvador assessed how cash-based transfers can influence gender equality and women's empowerment in a context where only 45.4 percent of women participate in the labour force, compared to 74.4 percent of men. Conducted under the WFP Cash-Based Transfers and Gender Impact Evaluation Window in collaboration with the World Bank's DIME department, the study used a cluster randomized controlled trial across 75 communities. These were divided into three groups: one where women were invited to participate in Food Assistance for Assets activities and received three monthly transfers of 100 US dollars, another where households received a one-time unconditional cash transfer of 300 US dollars, and a comparison group that received no transfer during the project period.

Both the FFA and unconditional cash transfer groups saw improvements in household food security during the intervention, although these effects did not persist after the project ended. Lasting improvements in women's agency, social norms, and economic empowerment were observed only in the FFA group. However, only 42 percent of

households in that group had women-only participation, potentially reducing the programme's full impact.

The evaluation suggests that linking cash transfers to women's active participation in economic activities outside the home can lead to more sustained empowerment outcomes than unconditional household transfers. These findings support WFP's 2023 Cash Policy objective of increasing the economic power of food-insecure women and can inform the design of future cash-based programming in El Salvador.



Cash+ impact valuations in humanitarian and emergency settings

Findings of the WFP-World Bank [literature review](#) in 2022, emphasized a concerning lack of evidence for humanitarian operations. Open questions include how variations of 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.

As a response, through [WFP's workstream on optimizing humanitarian interventions](#) OEV has been focused on conducting "[Lean impact evaluations](#)", varying key aspects of assistance programming such as the targeting method, the timing of transfers, targeting women with transfers, or changing the assistance modality.

DRC impact evaluation (2022-2025)

In the DRC, WFP is [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 targeting 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 in 2024. The report is currently being drafted.

Peru impact evaluation (2023-2025)

In Peru, OEV, in partnership with DIME, is conducting an impact evaluation that tests 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 started in April 2024. The evaluation measures impact on food security, coping, consumption, psychosocial well-being, and migration patterns. Data is currently being analysed and the report is being drafted for publication in 2025.

Lebanon impact evaluation (2023-2025)

In **Lebanon**, an impact evaluation in partnership with the ISDC is testing four different quantitative targeting methods for food-insecure Lebanese households.

Due to funding constraints, 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 alternatives to their current targeting method. Key outcomes evaluated include the perceptions of satisfaction and fairness, but also differences in food security, coping, and other measures or welfare. Data was collected in 2024, which is currently being analysed and the report is being drafted and will be published in 2025.

Ghana impact evaluation (2022-2025)

In addition, in 2023 WFP 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 (as part of the climate and resilience window).

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 addition, a second impact evaluation was started that varied the gender of the cash transfer recipient in double-headed households (where both are farmers). Follow up data was collected in 2024, and further data collection will be implemented in 2025.

Afghanistan impact evaluation (2024-2026)

In Afghanistan, an impact evaluation was initiated in 2024, in partnership with DIME, designed to test the impact of different lean-season assistance modalities in two sites.

The Afghanistan country office requested support to conduct a rigorous analysis of their delivery modalities in 2023, with data collection beginning in late 2024.

The evaluation compares cash vs. in-kind modalities in a rural setting, and cash vs. digital transfers in an urban area. The outcomes of interest are food security, coping strategies, household decision-making, mobility, and cost-effectiveness. Data collection is still on-going and expected to finish in 2025, followed by analysis and reporting.

Challenges observe

Barriers to participation in public works programmes manifested more acutely for women than for men. Understanding these barriers and supporting women's participation is essential for improving the economic empowerment of women.

The first phase of the window identified short-term negative impacts, specifically, an increase in psychological abuse, which had dissipated by the endlines. Future programmes targeting women, will need to incorporate measures to avoid this outcome.

Future Directions for the Cash & Gender Window

WFP is increasingly moving towards providing cash transfers through digital mechanisms and tools, to also improve health and nutrition-related outcomes for mothers and children. However, there is insufficient evidence on the effectiveness of these approaches.

The impact evaluation unit has been collaborating with the Digital Financial Inclusion team in the Gender Protection and Inclusion Division and the Nutrition Division to explore interest from country offices and secure external supplemental funding for evaluations, including those that incorporate digitally enhanced social, and behaviour change communication.



Climate and resilience impact evaluation window

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.

First Phase: Niger (2021-2024); South Sudan (2021-2024); Mali (2021-2025); Rwanda (2021-2025)

This first phase of the window comprised of four impact evaluations (in Mali, Niger, South Sudan and Rwanda), all of which were successfully conducted between 2021 and 2024.

Endline reports for Niger and South Sudan were published in 2024, while the Mali and Rwanda endline reports are undergoing final revisions and will be published in 2025.

Evaluations used rigorous randomized control trial (RCT) 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 disseminated findings on different platforms, including the Global Impact Evaluation Forum in New York in December 2024.

The evaluations found that access to the integrated package of interventions increases food security, and these impacts hold two years after the start of the programme.

These impacts are dynamic and vary considerably over the two years of measurement.

In Niger and South Sudan, the impacts of FFA on food security are largest in the post-harvest period, even though this is when food is most available.



In **Rwanda**, impacts take a few months to emerge following transfers. In Mali, the impact evaluation does not find significant improvement in food security or other resilience indicators: implementation challenges, coupled with the fact that the comparison group (as well as programme group) was receiving lean season support and unconditional cash transfers in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which were considerable in size, could explain the lower-than-expected effects on household level outcomes.

The primary mechanism for the increase in food security after harvest in Niger and South Sudan appears to be an increase in agricultural production driven by staple crops – beneficiaries had more food available to consume.

Agricultural production increased, on average, 60kg per household in beneficiary communities. On the other hand, in Rwanda, the main mechanism for the increased food security results from a combination of higher expenditure on food, and increased borrowing and business ownership.

The impact evaluation in South Sudan differs from the others in that it also analyses outcomes prioritized by UNICEF programming, such as education outcomes and access to nutrition and WASH facilities.

We find that livelihood programming led to a large increase in school enrolment. The UNICEF school package had small but positive impacts, including an increase in enrolment.



While resilience impact evaluations show positive short-term impacts of WFP's programmes on food security, more time is needed to understand if and how short-term impacts on food security, agricultural production, and coping, contribute to longer term resilience.

Another limitation of the first phase of impact evaluations on resilience is that it was not possible to assess the relative effectiveness (and cost-effectiveness) of individual components integrating the resilience package. Future impact evaluation will pay more attention into the cost side of interventions. Future work will also assess impacts of a wider range of interventions beyond those focusing on agriculture, as different programmes can strengthen resilience, including nutrition activities, school meals, cash transfers/social protection, etc.

In 2024, BMZ awarded OEV with an additional grant for two more years to assess the longer-term impacts of interventions for resilience building in at least one of the countries studied. The grant will also support the dissemination of findings, the use of evidence, and the definition of new impact evaluation evidence priorities in the resilience sphere.

Findings from this first phase of resilience impact evaluations are already being used to inform future WFP programming. For instance, the Phase II of the Joint Resilience Programme in South Sudan builds on the learnings from the impact evaluation of Phase I of the project.

DRC impact evaluation (expected, 2025-2027)

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 was finalized in 2024.

Recently, the DRC country office received funding for a second phase of the project and asked the impact evaluation unit to assess the feasibility of an impact evaluation. The team worked on a proposal, together with impact evaluation

experts from UNICEF and FAO, and conversations on the impact evaluation design will start in 2025.

Sudan impact evaluation (2025- 2026)

Engagement with the **Sudan** country office and with BMZ/KFW continued in 2024, after the impact evaluation of the WFP and UNICEF Joint Resilience Programme in **Darfur** had to be paused in 2023. In 2024, discussions started regarding the re-launch of an adaptive impact evaluation that will start in 2025 designed to support the country office as it adjusts programming in response to the evolving context.

Ghana Agroforestry Project impact evaluation (2025-2028)

The World Food Programme (WFP) is launching a transformative initiative to promote agroforestry and regenerative agriculture among smallholder farmers (SHFs) in collaboration with the Ghanaian Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) and Acorn Rabobank. The project targets 30,000 farmers in food-insecure areas of Bono, Bono East and Savannah.

All the targeted farmers will be given a technical training on agroforestry, while some of them will be given tree seedlings to be able to plant on one hectare of their own land. Carbon credits are issued for surviving trees by Acorn Rabobank, and those carbon credits are sold on the voluntary carbon market. Cash payments representing 80% of the value of the carbon credit are ultimately made to farmers. Initial funding for the programme come from WFP's Changing Lives Transformation Fund (CLTF)

The impact evaluation will answer the following primary question: What is the impact of receiving free tree seedlings and training on tree planting and survival, land use, carbon sequestration and, potentially in the longer term, farmers' income.

Also under this window, and overlapping with the humanitarian workstream, OEV has developed a learning agenda to answer questions related to the optimal timing for providing humanitarian responses to climate shocks and assessing the overall effectiveness of innovative shock-responsive interventions.

For these impact evaluations to happen, the agreed trigger point must be met, meaning there

is a high likelihood of a severe shock happening (i.e. a flood, a drought, etc.).

In 2022, flood levels met the trigger in the Karnali Basin in **Nepal**, whereas in **Bangladesh**, anticipatory action flood triggers were activated in July 2024 in five districts in the Jamuna basin.

Impact evaluation of anticipatory action in Nepal

The impact evaluation in Nepal measured the impacts of providing anticipatory cash when compared to a comparison group receiving cash transfers a few weeks after the floods (a more "business-as-usual" approach). Households receiving transfers in the immediate aftermath of the flood consumed more food (especially animal proteins), avoided food insecurity, and had better mental health. They were also less likely to engage in negative coping strategies as 13 percent fewer households relied on less preferred food, 14 percent fewer households borrowed food from others, and 15 percent fewer households reduced meal portions as compared to the group receiving transfers around a month and a half after the floods.

When the post-shock transfers are distributed, the differences between the two groups eventually dissipate. However, the more recent cash infusion did not translate into significantly higher outcomes for the post-shock group relative to the anticipatory action group, resulting in a net overall benefit for the anticipatory action group. The report was finalized in 2024 and will be published in 2025.

Bangladesh impact evaluation (2024-2025)

Findings in Bangladesh are consistent with those in Nepal. Households receiving anticipatory action support before the flood peak reported less hunger, better mental health, and fewer negative coping strategies such as skipping a meal than those receiving early or standard post-shock aid. Three rounds of data collection have been completed in Bangladesh since the flood response, and the team is currently doing cost-effectiveness analysis to understand whether the welfare gains driven by responding early is not offset by higher cost of anticipatory action compared to post-shock response. The report will be finalized in 2025.

Future Directions for the Climate & Resilience Window

Planned impact evaluations

In 2025, this learning agenda will expand studies to cover other shocks, including typhoons (in **Philippines**) and droughts (in **Mozambique** and potentially in **the Sahel**).

Additionally, in 2024, WFP received a new BMZ grant, which will focus on the longer-term impacts of resilience programmes, support the use of impact evaluation evidence generated, and to re-assess evidence priorities for the Climate and Resilience Window.

School-based programmes (SBP) impact evaluation window

In 2021, WFP launched the [School-based Programmes Impact Evaluation Window](#) to generate a body of generalisable evidence on school meals. Since then, six experimental impact evaluations have started in The Gambia, Jordan, Burundi, Guatemala, Malawi, and Madagascar. Throughout 2024, the impact evaluations in The Gambia and Jordan and the pilots in Burundi and Guatemala were concluded, and two feasibility missions in Madagascar and Zambia were conducted.

Completed and ongoing school-based programmes impact evaluations

Madagascar impact evaluation (2024-2028)

In Madagascar, OEV, the WFP Madagascar country office, and the World Bank's DIME department have signed a memorandum of understanding agreeing on the delivery of the impact evaluation of Madagascar's HGSP programme. It was agreed that the impact evaluation will have two separate components. First is a school component, which began in September 2024 and expected to be completed in 2027. A second component which focuses on farmers, with its feasibility to be determined by May 2025.

Malawi impact evaluation (2023-2026)

In Malawi, the WFP Malawi country office, OEV, and WFP's School Meals and Social Protection service, 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 in 88 schools to assess the impact of

school meals on children's outcomes and a randomized encouragement design to assess the impact on farmers' organizations. The [inception note](#) with the impact evaluation design was published in March 2024. The evaluation is expected to be concluded in 2026.

Jordan impact evaluation (2022-2024)

In February of 2024, the impact evaluation unit in partnership with the WFP **Jordan** country office and the World Bank held a two-day results workshop event with representatives from the Jordan National Government, the Ministry of Education, and implementing partners to present and discuss the results, findings and policy implications of the impact evaluation of the school meal programme in Jordan. The [final report and briefs](#) were published in November 2024.

Impact evaluation of the School Meals Programme in Jordan

The Government of **Jordan** asked the WFP Jordan country office to pilot an alternative school feeding model which aims to increase children's nutritional diversity through healthier meals and foster socioeconomic development in vulnerable areas by creating jobs for women. In partnership with the Royal Health Awareness Society (RHAS), the new model introduces two important features: moving towards healthier school meals distribution and shifting from centralized to decentralized procurement of school meals. Under this model, community-based organizations (CBOs) run kitchen facilities to deliver healthier meals to children.

WFP in partnership with the Government of Jordan and the World Bank conducted a rigorous impact evaluation using two RCTs.

The first to examine the effects of the new school-meals delivery model within Jordan's National School Feeding Programme. The impact evaluation analysed how this change in meal composition affected children's nutritional diversity, behaviour, education and learning outcomes.

The evaluation has found that children's diets become more diverse in schools receiving healthy meals compared with children in schools receiving the status quo meal options: date bars and high-protein biscuits.

Receiving healthy meals also makes children less likely to bring food to school, and results

Women's income tripled, and their household income increased by a third. Savings and non-food expenditures increased in households where women received job offers. Workers reported marginally higher life satisfaction. The men in the employed women's households also reported less restrictive attitudes towards women earning more than their husbands. No short-term impacts on other downstream outcomes were detected (bargaining power, social cohesion, food consumption and coping strategies).

In November of 2024, the impact evaluation unit in partnership with the WFP **Gambia** country office and the World Bank held a results workshop and event with representatives from the national government to present and discuss the results, findings and policy implications of the impact evaluation of the home-grown school meals programme in The Gambia.

The final report will be published in 2025. The country visit was also the opportunity to gauge the feasibility for an impact evaluation of the home-grown school meal programme on farmers' income and agricultural production.



Impact evaluation of the Home-Grown School Meals Programme in The Gambia

In **The Gambia**, WFP in partnership with the Ministry of Basic Education and funded by the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) through the Gambia Agriculture and Food Security Project is implementing a Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme aiming to increase food and nutritional security, as well as farmers' household income. The programme provides meals to students in 421 schools across three of the country's six regions, five days a week. Local suppliers, selected by school food management committees, deliver commodities to schools, which then organize daily meals, that include five typical Gambian dishes made of nine perishable and non-perishable ingredients.

In October 2022, OEV and the World Bank's DIME launched an impact evaluation under the school-based programmes impact evaluation window. The evaluation used a phased-in cluster RCT comparing Grade 3 children in 92 schools (encompassing 2,175 children). It also cross-randomized an accountability system based on teacher incentives to increase teacher attendance and study its impact on children's outcomes.

The evaluation found that the HGSF programme significantly improved children's food security and dietary diversity, with a 12 percent increase in food security and a 22 percent rise in dietary diversity. The strongest results were seen in girls.

School meals also reduced self-reported stress and depression in children, with a 13 percent decrease in depression and a 20 percent decrease in medium to high stress. School meals increased child attendance and reduced drop-out among children whose attendance was low to begin with. However, there were limited improvements in children's literacy test scores during the evaluation period. Given the limited duration of the evaluation, there were no measurable effect of school meals on malnutrition outcomes.

The evaluation also found that an accountability system based on teacher incentives increased teacher attendance by 10 percentage points (from 74 to 84 percent) and teacher retention by 17 percentage points (from 70 to 87 percent), with stronger effects

for female teachers. While the evaluation did not find large differences in impacts or complementarities, results showed potential initial gains in children's ability to read when school meals and teacher incentives were combined. Further research is needed on how school meals can complement interventions that maximize learning potential, such as cognition and learning outcomes

Finally, the evaluation conducted a cost-effectiveness analysis identifying that home-grown school feeding alone, and combined with teacher incentives, is as cost-effective as cash transfers or school inputs (e.g. providing textbooks, uniforms, etc.). As home-grown school meals impact multiple dimensions, the cost analysis on child outcomes covered multiple outcomes including dropouts, food security, mental well-being and reading abilities. For every USD 100 spent on school meals over seven months, two children avoid dropping out of school, one child avoids food insecurity, and one child avoids reporting high levels of depression.

Burundi impact evaluation (2023-2026)

In **Burundi**, following the increased confidence coming from the pilot, a school-level randomized design has been embedded into the programme scale-up to assess the impact of the new procurement model on children's outcomes and retaining the programme's principles. Similarly, a cooperative-level randomized design has been embedded in the restricted tendering process to select the local cooperatives which will deliver food directly to schools.

This design will also assess the impact of the new procurement model on the local economy. The [pilot impact evaluation report](#) was published in August 2024, while the [inception note](#) for the large-scale impact evaluation was published in July 2024.

Comparing procurement models: Lean impact evaluation in Burundi (2022-2024)

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 impact evaluation unit, 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.

The findings from 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).

The increase in the number of meal days is mainly driven by the increased use of refined rice procured from local cooperatives. This translated into a reduction in school meal quality, as measured by the GDQS-Meal.

However, in low food security settings like Burundi, where ensuring caloric sufficiency on a regular basis is crucial, the addition of refined rice may be considered an acceptable, albeit not ideal, compromise.

A cost efficiency analysis also revealed that, on average during the pilot, the CV model was less expensive than the centralised model (US\$ 40.61 per child per year compared with US\$ 46.85).

Guatemala impact evaluation (2022-2025)

In 2024, the evaluation team completed the analysis and report writing for the pilot impact evaluation in **Guatemala**. The report was approved and will be published in 2025.

Future directions for the school-based programmes window

Looking ahead, WFP aims to align evidence priorities for the window with global evidence priorities from a wider network of researchers in the space. A key area of exploration is the potential for school meals to support regenerative agriculture, creating a virtuous cycle that benefits both students and local ecosystems.

Innovations will also include exploring the integration of machine learning and artificial intelligence tools to enhance data analysis. WFP aims to expand partnerships and delivery models, and improve how evidence is used and communicated, ensuring that insights are accessible and actionable for policymakers, practitioners, and communities alike.

2024 was a significant year for learning in the School Based Programmes Impact Evaluation Window, with significant investments dedicated to identifying robust evaluation designs for the farmers' components, as well conducting cost-effectiveness analyses across different countries and programmes within the window. The cost effectiveness tools developed under this window will be adapted and used in other impact evaluations going forward.

Nutrition impact evaluation priorities

In 2024, OEV and the Nutrition Division, along with the University of California, Davis (UC Davis) and University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), published a [scoping review](#). The review aimed to gather and analyse existing research on maternal nutrition, particularly focusing on pregnant and breastfeeding women (PBW) in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

This review evaluates the effectiveness of nutrition interventions, such as balanced energy protein supplements and multiple micronutrient supplements. The goal is to understand how these interventions impact maternal health, birth outcomes, and child development.

Additionally, the review highlights areas where more research is needed to optimize these programmes. In 2024, a decision was made to mainstream nutrition as a cross-cutting outcome area instead of creating a separate nutrition impact evaluation window. The impact evaluation unit continues to work with Nutrition division to ensure that the impact evaluation windows address evidence gaps relating to nutrition. In 2025, OEV will increase its focus on the use of cash+ and other interventions for achieving nutrition outcomes.

Communication

OEV continued to increase its communication efforts for impact evaluation in 2024. Seven reports were published on the externally facing WFP impact evaluation [webpage](#), including final reports for Niger, South Sudan and Jordan, along with the inception and pilot reports for Burundi, the inception report for Malawi, and the baseline report for Kenya.

In addition, OEV continued to author blogs on its [Medium page](#), with eleven blogs published in 2024. In 2024, the blogs have received over 10,865 views since launch.

OEV also organized or contributed to 21 events in 2024. All of these events showcased results from ongoing or recently closed impact evaluations, including emerging findings from the climate and resilience and school-based programmes windows.

OEV also showcased results in events hosted by partners. In June 2024, OEV took part in the World Bank's Impact Group's [Building poor households' resilience in the wake of climate change](#). As one of only two case studies, OEV presented how WFP resilience programming can improve food security and agricultural livelihoods. As part of this event, OEV participated in a roundtable between government and international representatives to discuss implications for policymaking.

OEV participated in [Fragile Lives](#) in October 2024, an international expert conference on the use of rigorous, scientific evidence for the development of knowledge-based policy interventions in fragile, conflict-affected and under-developed settings.

In December 2024, OEV participated in a Wilton Park event on evidence-led and impact-driven development, and shared WFP's experience with institutionalizing the generation and use of impact evaluation within a UN agency.

In October 2024, the WFP regional bureau in Bangkok, in partnership with OEV, hosted a **Regional Impact Evaluation Forum**, to discuss the latest evidence from programmes that protect vulnerable people against climatic shocks through early action.

This [three-day event](#) brought together eleven WFP country offices from the Asia Pacific region and key Government counterparts from Thailand, Nepal, and Cambodia. It also welcomed new and emerging donors in climate finance, multilateral development banks, UN agencies and WFP staff.

The first day focused on discussing the latest causal evidence on climate change and anticipatory action, based on recently conducted impact evaluations by WFP, IFPRI, FAO and UNCHR-ISDC across countries in Asia, and Africa.

Presentations showed, for instance, that anticipatory action improves well-being and helps people cope better during and immediately after disasters by ensuring support reaches early and allowing impacts to happen as quickly as possible.

Moreover, resilience and climate adaptation programmes such as FFA improve food security through changes in livelihoods followed by the programme, such as increases in agricultural production.

UNICEF and WFP Global Impact Evaluation Forum 2024 at the United Nations



Over **200 participants** joined online and in person for the UNICEF and WFP Global Impact Evaluation Forum

80 organizations from over **30 countries** were represented

UN agencies, Government representatives, Foundations, NGOs, Researchers, and Donors all convened to discuss how to **promote, innovate, and connect** in impact evaluation

Stay tuned for more updates on the key messages from the 2024 Forum

The remaining two days of the forum focused on capacity building through the delivery of impact evaluation training, discussing the basics every country office should know before engaging in an impact evaluation.

Building on the momentum from the inaugural Impact Evaluation Forum hosted by WFP in Rome in 2023, the **UNICEF and WFP Global Impact Evaluation Forum** was held in December 2024 at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

Over 200 practitioners, evaluators, government representatives, donors and researchers came together to discuss how impact evaluation can generate the robust evidence required to help achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals – even (and especially) as resources become stretched.

Participants spent three days discussing how to promote impact evaluation within their organizations and foster collaboration between and among their sectors, how to innovate for more timely and robust impact evaluations, especially in fragile settings where impact evaluation is challenging, and how to better connect impact evidence to policy action so that these evaluations, demanding in both time and money, yield concrete programmatic decisions—and ultimately better results for the most vulnerable.

Key takeaways from the 2024 Forum include:

1. Impact evaluation is a moral imperative. The most vulnerable people worldwide deserve decisions affecting their lives to be based on rigorous evidence; 2. Impact evaluations help to show what can be achieved with every dollar, euro, peso, rupee, or shilling; and 3. We need to work across the UN, and wider sector, to deliver more coordinated evaluations with harmonised measurement and consistent methodologies.

Impact evaluation capacity development

In 2024, OEV worked to increase the awareness and capacity of WFP to engage in impact evaluations.

In April 2024, OEV participated in impact evaluation training, in Colombia, sponsored by USAID and led by the Humanitarian Assistance Evidence Cycle (HAEC). The HAEC workshop lasted four days, covering experimental evaluation on days 1 and 2, and quasi-

experimental designs on days 3 and 4. In addition to the WFP-led sessions, the organizing team included representatives from IDEAL and Causal Designs. The training was attended by 50 participants from 17 organizations, including WFP staff from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic. WFP staff traveling from outside Bogota were sponsored using USAID funds from the Humanitarian Workstream as part of grant objectives 2 and 3. Directly after the workshop, WFP colleagues met privately to discuss WFP's Impact Evaluation Strategy and explore the potential impact evaluation designs proposed by colleagues.

OEV was invited to present its impact evaluation work at a Macro-insurance workshop, organized by the WFP climate team at headquarters. The workshop brought together programme teams working on macro-insurance from country offices, and regional bureaus were invited. OEV's presentation was part of the evidence generation session, along with showcasing emerging results from the ongoing impact evaluation, the session also introduced impact evaluations in WFP and discussed how these types of evaluations can help programme teams generate evidence related to macro-insurance programmes.

OEV's impact evaluation team led a two-day training after the Regional Impact Evaluation Forum in Bangkok for staff from eleven WFP country offices from the Asia Pacific region, key government counterparts from Thailand, Nepal, and Cambodia, new and emerging donors in climate finance, multilateral development banks, UN agencies and WFP staff from headquarters and the regional bureau in Bangkok. This training was 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 the OEV impact evaluation unit and provided an overview of impact evaluation methods and their application in the WFP context.

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 continued to publish on its Medium blog, with 11 blogs published in 2024. The impact evaluation team has developed a line-up of blog topics to be released going forward. (See the next section for details on communications and capacity development).

In 2024, OEV finalised its Impact Evaluation Quality Assurance System (IEQAS), one of the building blocks for implementation of the 2022 WFP Evaluation Policy. It is OEV's primary means of safeguarding the international evaluation principles of independence, credibility and utility.

The IEQAS guides all impact evaluations conducted by WFP. The IEQAS is a working tool for WFP's impact evaluation cadre, including evaluation partners and evaluation teams, covering all stages of the impact evaluation cycle.

The IEQAS builds on the norms and standards of UNEG; the OECD-DAC Evaluation Network; related tools from the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP); and the wider evaluation literature and community of practice. It consists of:

- guidance for process guide and content
- quality checklists
- templates
- technical notes
- post-hoc quality assurance (PHQA) template
- other reference materials

Additionally, in 2024, OEV produced its Technical Note: [Quality standards for impact evaluations](#), which sets out the quality standards on the process and content for impact evaluations in WFP.

Both the Technical note and the IEQAS will be periodically and systematically updated in line with the WFP evaluation function's evolving needs, international best practice and feedback from country offices, regional evaluation units and partners to ensure that it continues to serve its intended purpose.

Finally, in 2024, all three impact evaluation reports, which were published, were reviewed by the external quality assurance partner, and rated as "satisfactory" in OEV's updated Post-hoc Quality Assurance of impact evaluations. All three impact evaluations scored as 'highly satisfactory' for methodology, and analysis.

Areas to improve include ensuring that gender equality considerations are reflected in the recommendations as well as in the country background section.

Partnership activities

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 Development Impact Group (DIME). 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. In 2024, WFP continued its strategic partnership with the World Bank's development impact evaluation department to generate evidence through the thematic windows and start new impact evaluations. WFP also presented its impact evaluation findings at World Bank hosted events in Washington DC and Cape Town.

Additional partnerships

The 2021 review of WFP's impact evaluation strategy recognised that while the partnership with DIME has been a major part of the success of implementation of the strategy, there was a need for WFP to expand its partnership base in order to secure access to more expertise and experience. In the intervening years, OEV consulted within WFP and other external stakeholders on what skills and expertise were required.

In 2024, WFP initiated a corporate procurement exercise to expand its partnership base with other entities that specialise in impact evaluations. WFP outlined a range of potential impact evaluation services that providers can then respond through a competitive procurement process. WFP decided to split the services into two lots, one lot comprising of the entire impact evaluation process and a second

lots which comprised key deliverables to attract as many suppliers as possible, particularly those from countries in which WFP operates.

It is envisioned that additional partners would be able to provide different ideas and experiences on mixed methods in rigorous designs, have specialist expertise in topics like nutrition, and/or they may have more flexibility and be able to work in locations that are more challenging for DIME (for political and security reasons).

In 2024, WFP also expanded its technical partnership on impact evaluations with the International Security and Development Center in Lebanon and Sudan.

Regarding partnerships with other UN agencies, OEV continued conducting 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.

Furthermore, immediately after the Global Impact Evaluation Forum, WFP and UNICEF held a meeting with other UN agencies to advance impact evaluation within the UN by proposing the establishment of a United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) working group on impact evaluation to promote collaboration and best practices across agencies.

The success of the second forum, co-organized by UNICEF and WFP, particularly the significance of two UN Agencies working together, demonstrated to external stakeholders the ability of UN agencies to move forward on this agenda in a coordinated and joint way.

All agencies present for this meeting participated in identifying priorities for the working group, which were subsequently transferred into a draft proposal and workplan template for the UNEG

Working Group on Impact Evaluations. This was shared at the UNEG Annual General Meeting early 2025 when the establishment of the new Working Group was proposed.

The formation of the UNEG working group is a significant step to capitalise on concrete opportunities to advance impact evaluations in UN agencies.

Beyond the UN, OEV continues to develop a community of practice around impact evaluation in fragile and humanitarian contexts. For the [impact evaluation Forum in December](#), OEV welcomed member states and donors (USAID, GIZ, KfW, KOICA, BMZ, Saudi Fund for Development), seven multilateral organizations (FAO, IFAD, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women, and the World Bank), five implementing partner agencies (IRC, IOM, Mercy Corps, Save the Children, and World Vision), research institutes (3ie, ISDC, IPA, J-PAL, and DEval), as well as several partners from evidence networks, universities, and foundations (including Google, the Rockefeller Foundation, Presto Policy Research Solutions, the Center for Rapid Evidence Synthesis, Johns Hopkins University, Princeton University, Universidad de los Andes, and more).

For the school-based programmes window, OEV works closely with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, which hosts the School Meals Coalition's 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.

Impact evaluation resources in 2024

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

Human resources

In 2024, OEV continued to refine its hybrid model of conducting impact evaluations. The completion of the first phase of 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. WFP programmes need access to highly responsive impact evaluation unit 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 and facilitate impact evaluation.

As demand for impact evaluations continue to grow, WFP recruited its first two P4 Evaluation Officers. This included the Unit's first rotational P4 to provide management support to impact evaluations, expand the partnership base, lead UNEG work and to strengthen impact evaluation capacities within the organisation. Additionally, two data analysts joined the Impact Evaluation Unit.

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 2024, impact evaluations were supported by BMZ and KFW, KOICA, NORAD, and USAID. In addition, WFP has started to build relationships with private foundations, to fund innovative and rigorous impact evaluations.

Lessons learned in 2024

Impact evaluation in times of scarcity

The year 2024 saw the highest number of WFP impact evaluations on record and a continuation of high geographical coverage, including an increase in impact evaluations implemented in humanitarian settings. However, this occurred against a backdrop of major organisational change and a stark global context. With projections of immense humanitarian need coinciding with significant reductions in available resources, the pressure to maximize the impact of every dollar spent has become acute. Decreasing global resources intensifies the demand from donors and partners for rigorous evidence to guide difficult prioritization decisions. Meeting this growing demand is hampered by resource constraints, including recruitment pauses, highlighting the need for efficient and collaborative approaches to evidence generation. As WFP navigates crises with fewer available resources in 2025, careful prioritization of evaluation activities and leveraging partnerships will be essential.

Maximizing value and addressing systemic evidence gaps

Rigorous impact evaluations are vital tools for demonstrating value, particularly in light of calls for greater cost-effectiveness of humanitarian and development interventions. While significant evidence gaps persist, particularly concerning the causal impact and relative efficiency of different programmatic approaches in humanitarian settings. Generating robust evidence is complicated by the inherent instability, access limitations, and security risks of fragile contexts, alongside the unpredictable timing of crises and funding flows which can hinder planned evaluations.

Furthermore, systemic challenges impede collective learning. Opportunities for efficiency are missed when evaluation efforts are duplicated across organizations, or when methodological inconsistencies prevent meaningful comparison and synthesis of findings. Often, valuable evidence remains siloed within individual agencies, underutilised in broader decision-making processes. Ensuring evaluations are not only methodologically sound but also operationally relevant, timely, and efficiently conducted is crucial. Addressing these critical knowledge gaps, especially around cost-

effectiveness, requires a more strategic, coordinated, and collaborative approach across the sector.

Building collaborative pathways for generating and sharing evidence

Recognizing these challenges, WFP has continued efforts to foster collaboration and build communities of practice. Following the first Impact Evaluation Forum, the impact evaluation unit committed to working with partners to:

- **Identify critical questions together:** Combine efforts to answer the most pressing operational questions, requiring pooled resources and aligned evidence agendas to tackle shared global issues.
- **Sustain dialogue on shared agendas:** Continue conversations focused on humanitarian and development evidence needs, leveraging opportunities for close collaboration between learning and funding partners to avoid silos.
- **Leverage existing evidence more effectively:** Draw systematically on multiple evidence sources, while actively identifying and finding efficient ways to address crucial knowledge gaps where the evidence base remains thin.
- **Broaden engagement for evidence use:** Work more collaboratively with governments, policymakers, implementing partners, and broader constituencies to ensure evidence translates into action.

In 2024, co-organising the second Global Impact Evaluation Forum with UNICEF was a key step in building these collaborative pathways, aiming to improve the generation and use of rigorous evidence across the sector.

A call for collective action

In times of constrained resources and profound need, maximizing the effectiveness and efficiency of our collective efforts is essential. By pooling resources, standardizing approaches where feasible, and prioritizing the generation of comparable cost-effectiveness data, we can collectively address critical knowledge gaps and ensure that humanitarian and development assistance delivers the greatest possible impact for the people we serve.

Strategic advisory panel annual meeting (5 May 2025)

PANEL MEMBERS

Ben Davis, Director Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division, FAO

Carola Alvarez, Managing Director, Office of Development Effectiveness, Leonardo Corral, Agriculture and Resource Economist, IFAD

Macartan Humphreys, Director of Institutions and Political Inequality Group, WZB Berlin Social Science Center

Marie Gaarder, Executive Director, 3ie

Robert Darko Osei, Professor of Development Economics at the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research and Dean for the School of Graduate Studies, University of Ghana

WFP PARTICIPANTS

Anne-Claire Luzot, Director of Evaluation, WFP

Jonas Heirman, Senior Evaluation Officer (Head of Impact Evaluation Unit), WFP

Felipe Dunsch, Impact Evaluation Officer, WFP

Jennifer Waidler, Impact Evaluation Officer, WFP

Niamh O'Grady, Evaluation Officer WFP

Simone Lombardini, Impact Evaluation Officer, 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.

2024 Year in review

Overall progress in 2024

Panel members welcomed progress and the completion of three WFP impact evaluations in Jordan (School-Based Programmes), Niger and South Sudan (Climate and Resilience). The panel noted that several impact evaluation endline surveys were completed in 2024 and looked forward to final reports. Panel members also welcomed the discussion of challenges, operational insights, and lessons learned during ongoing impact evaluations.

Supporting and tracking the utilisation of impact evaluation evidence

The panel raised questions about how OEV ensures that generated IE evidence is utilised and how this is being tracked.

WFP's impact evaluations are intentionally designed to produce evidence that is directly relevant to programme planning and decision-making. One example highlighted by OEV is South Sudan, where preliminary findings from the impact evaluation are already shaping the design of the project's next phase. Stakeholders, including BMZ, KfW, WFP, and UNICEF, are using the emerging evidence—prior to the final report's release—to address key issues such as seasonal food insecurity, high teacher-student ratios, and gender disparities.

OEV also emphasized that conducting impact evaluations depends on strong monitoring systems and effective implementation. The close collaboration between OEV and country offices ensures that evidence and insights from evaluations are continuously integrated throughout the programme cycle.

WFP website

The Panel identified that the impact evaluation reports were not 'easy to find' on WFP's website and recommended that the Impact Evaluation Team consider how to showcase these publications in a more accessible way. OEV has committed to publish all impact evaluation reports on its externally-facing website – wfp.org. However, in light of the comments of the Panel Members, it will revisit this arrangement in case a redesign of website is necessary.

Sharing lessons learned

Panel members noted that the impact evaluations had produced some valuable learning and insights that go beyond impacts

(e.g. about programme implementation, etc.) but that these lessons were implicit in the report, rather than explicit. Panel members suggested that it would be useful to unpack this learning and insights more intentionally.

OEV explained that learning from evaluations is shared widely through blogs, evaluation briefs and presentations. In 2025, OEV will also draft additional window-level analyses, which will aggregate key operational insights and actionable recommendations.

Partnerships

Panel members appreciated the efforts made during 2024 to expand the partnership base to new partners, particularly those based in the countries where WFP is operational.

OEV agreed that there are multiple benefits strengthening partnerships with entities based in the global south, and confirmed that OEV had actively taken steps to attract entities that had not previously had contracts with WFP.

Review of WFP's impact evaluation strategy

In 2025, WFP will conduct an internal review of the Impact Evaluation Strategy, as required by a specific clause in WFP's Corporate Evaluation Strategy (2022), which commits the Office of Evaluation to review the impact evaluation strategy before it ends.

This Review will assess of the strategy's overall performance, its delivery and funding models, its approach to partnership and capacity-building. The findings of this Review will inform decisions on a future Impact Evaluation strategy, particularly whether it should remain as a 'standalone' strategy or be incorporated into the corporate evaluation strategy.

Members of the Strategic Advisory Panel agreed to support this Review process in 2025.

Annex 1: Overview of impact evaluation in WFP

WFP's impact evaluation strategy

WFP identified four strategic objectives for impact evaluation

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

The 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 review and 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) The Impact Evaluation Strategy (2019-2026) aims to change the role WFP plays in humanitarian and development impact evaluation, with the ambition of contributing operationally relevant evidence essential for policy making, learning and accountability, and with global significance to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The strategy introduced a flexible, demand-led approach for delivering rigorous impact evaluations that builds on lessons learned over the past decade and sets out expectations for increased investment in financial and human resources to meet rising demand.

Under the strategy, the role of WFP shifted from being a subject, or consumer, of impact evaluation evidence towards agenda setting and production of globally recognised evidence.

OEV first established an impact evaluation team, which subsequently became an impact evaluation unit in 2022, that coordinates activities delivered in partnership with WFP programme units and external evaluation specialists and academics to ensure more continuous impact evaluation support to WFP offices involved in the design and delivery of programmes in continuously evolving contexts.

Demand for rigorous impact evaluation evidence continues to grow from both external donors and government partners, as well as WFP headquarter divisions, regional bureaux and country offices. In line with the Impact Evaluation Strategy, WFP shifted its focus towards delivering a range of impact evaluations that have the highest potential to make significant contributions to global evidence and to systematically test, improve and demonstrate the effectiveness of interventions across its growing range of programmatic areas.

The SAP plays a key role by providing external perspectives 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.

Annex 2: WFP's Impact evaluation windows

Since 2019, OEV has used impact evaluation windows, aligned with WFP programme priorities, to ensure impact evaluations contribute to building bodies of evidence in its organisational priority areas. 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. Each window is guided by a window-level concept note, one or more pre-analysis plans, and the data collected by the unit is standardized across all WFP impact evaluation windows to support formal syntheses of this evidence.

Managing impact evaluations centrally by the impact evaluation unit 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's 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 to embed nutrition focused questions in open windows, where relevant.

Cash-based transfers and gender (CBT&G) impact evaluation window

As cash transfers gain worldwide traction as a strategy for both humanitarian and development support, it becomes increasingly crucial to assess how these interventions affect their beneficiaries.

The data generated through this window equips WFP to focus on improving household food security while safeguarding women's well-being and supporting their empowerment.

This people-centred approach, aligned with humanitarian principles, enables WFP to deliver safe and accountable assistance that meets the different needs of women, men, boys, and girls - ultimately strengthening their resilience and capacity to thrive.

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

The first phase of impact evaluations aimed to estimate the effect of increasing women's earned income and offering work outside the household on intra-household decision-making and empowerment.

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?

Climate and resilience impact evaluation window

Through a coordinated, multi-country approach, this Impact Evaluation Window aims to provide robust evidence on the effectiveness of resilience programmes in strengthening households' ability to respond to, recover from, and adapt to shocks and stressors. Impact evaluations guided by this Window pre-analysis plan focus on answering the overarching question: How do integrated resilience programmes, which combine multiple activities to support a population, strengthen household resilience? This question is answered across a portfolio of country specific impact evaluations. A multi-country analysis of data collected from four to six countries will support

in understanding the impact of integrated resilience programmes across contexts. Additionally, each evaluation will examine the effectiveness of resilience programmes in that specific context. Data is collected from households through a combination of baseline, endline, and bi-monthly high-frequency surveys.

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

- ▶ How does integrated programming, which brings together multiple activities aimed at

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.

improving different outcomes, contribute to resilience?

- ▶ How can resilience activities target the most vulnerable households and their needs?
- ▶ How can we adjust the timing and sequencing of activities to reach beneficiaries when they need the support most?
- ▶ How do combinations of short-term (e.g., shock response) and long-term (e.g., livelihood development) activities strengthen household's ability to absorb and adapt to shocks, and improve their well-being

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:

Children's education and nutrition

- ▶ 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?

Employment 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?

Comparing school meals models

- ▶ To what extent do different procurement and delivery models influence programme implementation?
- ▶ Which models are most cost-effective and most suitable to scale up or transition to national government and local authorities?

Office of Evaluation

World Food Programme

Via Cesare Giulio Viola 68/70

00148 Rome, Italy

T +39 06 65131 wfp.org

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