Strategic formative evaluation of WFP's adaptation to the evolving partnership landscape

Summary Terms of Reference

WFP
World Food Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

Background and context

The global humanitarian landscape is increasingly complex, marked by protracted crises, climate shocks, and funding shortfalls. WFP faces declining contributions (31% drop from 2022 to 2024) and growing needs (733 million people hungry in 2023). Partnerships are critical for WFP's ability to deliver on its mandate and adapt to systemic changes. Over the past decade, WFP's partnership strategies have evolved from donor-centric approaches to more diversified, collaborative models.

The WFP Strategic Plan (2022–2025) emphasizes five partnership pillars: resource partnerships for sustainable funding; knowledge partnerships for innovation and evidence; policy partnerships to influence agendas; advocacy partnerships for global support; and capacity partnerships to strengthen actors.

Rationale, purpose, objectives and scope

Rationale: Significant shifts in the partnership landscape and humanitarian architecture require WFP to reassess its strategies. No recent evaluation has reviewed partnerships since 2018.

Purpose: Forward-looking formative evaluation to inform WFP's strategic positioning and engagement within an evolving partnership environment.

Objectives: Draw lessons from global partnership approaches (2022–2026); assess relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of WFP's normative framework; examine agility in adapting to new partnership models; identify enablers and barriers for sustainable partnerships.

Scope: The evaluation will cover the period from January 2022 to April 2026, ensuring a comprehensive review of activities and outcomes over this period. Its geographic scope is at the global level. It focuses on global partnerships that go beyond fundraising, encompassing collaboration with the UN system, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), the private sector, innovation actors, global policy bodies, and multi-stakeholder platforms.

Key evaluation questions

Aligned with OECD-DAC criteria, the evaluation will address four thematic areas (those will be refined during inception phase):

1. WFP's vision and approaches to partnerships

1.1 How clearly articulated is WFP's strategic ambition for global-level partnership building and how well-aligned is its vision with the evolving partnership landscape?

1.2 How well are partnerships aligned with WFP's strategic priorities, including its saving lives and changing lives mandate, and cross-cutting concerns?

1.3 Which types of global partnership are working well for WFP, and which not in the current landscape?

2. WFP's institutional architecture and organizational culture for partnerships

2.1 To what extent do WFP's institutional arrangements – including its guidance, tools, internal and external support systems, and procedures – support adaptation to its partnership needs for the current global environment?

2.2 To what extent does WFP's internal culture and dynamics influence WFP's agility and credibility in global partnerships?

3. Breadth and range of partnerships

3.1 How have WFP's approaches to and types of partnership evolved over the past five years in terms of scope, particularly in areas beyond "transactional" delivery, such as: knowledge-sharing, technological innovation, and advocacy in sustainably mobilizing global support for zero hunger?

3.2 To what extent is WFP prepared to engage with a more complex and diverse partnership environment across the humanitarian, development and peace contexts (e.g. diplomacy, debt-swap and banking expertise; manage climate-related and other thematic funds as well as new and emerging partners)?

3.3 How well does WFP work in partnership with others beyond funding?

4. Key factors for effective partnership management

4.1 What are the key factors that explain the success or failure of partnerships in this context, and in what ways do these factors enable or constrain effective partnerships?

4.2 To what extent does WFP have the adequate staff capacity and skillsets to effectively manage and sustain a diverse range of partnerships?

➢ What opportunities exist to further strengthen partnership management capabilities across the organization?

Methodology

The partnership evaluation will be formative and forward-looking in nature, aiming to generate actionable insights to strengthen current and future collaboration efforts. It will focus on understanding how partnerships are functioning, what factors are enabling or hindering effective collaboration, and how WFP can adapt and enhance its partnership efforts to achieve its goals. The evaluation will be transparent, inclusive, and participatory, with a strong focus on learning and utility. It will adopt a mixed-methods approach, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, relying on primary and secondary sources. Systematic and traceable data triangulation across different sources and tools will be carried out to validate findings and avoid biases in the evaluative judgement.

The proposed data collection methods for this evaluation include, but are not limited to, document review, online surveys, and institutional focus groups. Given the formative and strategic nature of the evaluation, a range of analytical methods and approaches will be considered, including network analysis, systems analysis, content analysis, quantitative analysis with descriptive statistics, and deep-dive studies.

Roles and responsibilities

The evaluation will be conducted by an external team with extensive experience in global strategic evaluations with an institutional focus. Oversight of the evaluation process will be provided by Alexandra Chambel, Senior Evaluation Officer, supported by Silvia Penazzi Catalani, Research Analyst. An internal reference group will play an advisory role by commenting on draft reports. The Deputy Director Evaluation will provide quality assurance, while the Director of Evaluation will present the Evaluation to the WFP Executive Board for consideration.

Timeline

Inception (Aug – Nov 2025)
Data Collection (Dec 2025 – Mar 2026)
Analysis & Reporting (Apr – Jun 2026)
Dissemination (Aug – Nov 2026)
Executive Board (Nov 2026)