Synthesis of evidence and lessons from WFP’s policy evaluations (2011-2019)

WFP Office of Evaluation
Context

WFP has currently 33 policies in force and included in the Policy Compendium which is updated and presented annually to the Executive Board.
Scope

- WFP’s School Feeding Policy (2009)
- WFP’s 2009 Gender Policy. This Time Around?
- WFP's 2008 Cash and Voucher Policy
- WFP's 2012 Nutrition Policy
- WFP’s Policy on Capacity Development (2009): An Update on Implementation
- Update of WFP’s Safety Nets Policy: The Role of Food Assistance in Social Protection
FINDINGS: Policy formulation and implementation

UNCLEAR AND INCONSISTENTLY APPLIED RULES OF ENGAGEMENT
- Diverse policy initiation triggers
- Diverse designations (terminology)
- No clear policy typology
- Variable use of classifications of documents for EB submission
- Inconsistent policy scrutiny

POLICY COHERENCE
- Largely strong external alignment
- Strong coherence with WFP Strategic Plans
- Gaps in internal policy consistency
- Unclear prioritization
FINDINGS: Policy-making and policy implementation

Supporting factors
- Consultation during Policy development
- Investing in high-quality guidance

Constraining factors
Design including:
- Uneven quality & use of evidence
- Unclear goals/vision & internal logic
- Unclear & inconsistent terminology
- Insufficient attention to gender
- WFP-centric focus

Implementation:
- Limited dissemination
- Inadequate human & financial resources
- Gaps in corporate leadership and ownership
- Weak accountability mechanisms
FINDINGS: Evaluation policies and management response

- MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT
- EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS
- INFORMATION VALIDITY CONCERNS
- JUSTIFICATION OF ‘IMPLEMENTED’ STATUS
FINDINGS: WFP application of learning generated through policy evaluations

**PROGRESS**

High agreement rate for evaluation recommendations and commitment to follow-up in some areas

*Examples*

- Staff training/capacity strengthening
- Financial resources allocated for specific follow-up actions to recommendations
- Corporate indicators adapted

**PERSISTING CHALLENGES**

Slow progress in areas where evaluations recommend more systemic or longer-term changes

*Examples*

- Comprehensive knowledge management systems
- Sustained availability of staff and predictable financial resources
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities for policy implementation
CONCLUSIONS

1. Nomenclature matters
2. Alignment with absorptive capacity is key
3. Policies need common standards and expectations
4. Policies are much more than a stand-alone document: corporate leadership, resources, implementation guidance and accountability frameworks

KEY LESSONS

- Lack of policy coherence, coordination and prioritization
- Persisting constraints in policy implementation
- Evaluation recommendations taken seriously and acted upon: not always consistently
- Information on implementation lacks reliability
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Update the 2011 Policy Formulation document
- Clarify policy governance and accountability procedures
- Define the policy universe through an updated WFP Policy Framework
- Adopt a policy building approach
- Overhaul the current Policy Compendium
- Review the processes for development of management responses and follow-up