

Evaluation Brief



Synthesis Report of the Evaluations of WFP's Emergency and Preparedness Response

Context

In 2005, a range of measures was introduced to improve global emergency response, including the cluster approach and pooled funds. In 2010, three large-scale emergencies (the Haiti earthquake, Pakistan floods and Sahel drought) stretched the system's response capability. In 2011, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) adopted the Transformative Agenda to strengthen leadership, coordination and accountability in major humanitarian emergencies.

As WFP is a central player in the global humanitarian system, the Emergency preparedness and response EPR is at the core of WFP's mandate and activities, not least in view of strategic changes initiated in 2008 and consolidated in 2012/2013 from food aid to food assistance. EPR expenditures amounted to USD 3.65 billion or 86 percent of WFP's programme in 2014, directly covering 70 percent of its total beneficiaries.

The Preparedness and Response Enhancement Programme (PREP) was launched in 2011 to enhance WFP's capability to respond to large-scale emergencies. In the meantime, both the scale of needs and the complexity of emergencies have increased, and in 2014, the humanitarian system responded to five system-wide Level 3 (L3)¹ crises and WFP declared its Cameroon and Ebola responses as additional L3 crises.

Objectives and Scope of the Synthesis

This synthesis covered a series of strategic evaluations commissioned by WFP's Office of Evaluation to contribute lessons for WFP's organisational effectiveness and strategic direction in EPR. While the evaluation series did not assess the totality of WFP's EPR activities, they addressed four important dimensions:

- The global Logistics Cluster (2012)
- The global Food Security Cluster (2014)
- WFP's use of pooled funds for humanitarian preparedness and response (2015); and
- WFP's Preparedness and Response Enhancement Programme (PREP) (2015).

Findings from these strategic evaluations were cross referenced and validated against seven WFP operation evaluations with strong EPR components and the inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the typhoon Haiyan response. The operation evaluations covered natural

disasters and complex emergencies, in response and recovery phases.

Key Findings and Conclusions

1. Relevance and funding: all four strategic evaluations found that WFP's EPR strengthening and coordination activities were highly relevant and contributed to positive results at country level. However, a common challenge for the examined strategic activities was their inconsistent resourcing. Similarly, funding for coordination was inconsistent and unpredictable.

2. Human resources: despite improvements, human resources remain a major concern in continuing areas: high turnover rates of qualified staff, inadequate capacity to fill senior and expert roles, problematic living and working conditions in emergencies, gaps in the availability or lack of capacity for specific technical profiles, and gaps in the ability to deploy staff quickly to emergencies. Staff trainings were found by all four strategic evaluations to be high quality, but were not always well targeted, sufficiently inclusive or linked to deployments.

3. Non-governmental partners: investment in clusters were worthwhile and have helped to build trust and improve relationships with partners. However, WFP needed to further improve relations with, and capacities of, non-governmental partners. All strategic evaluations found that despite the importance of non-governmental cooperating partners for WFP's strategic and technical success, the quality of relationships varied widely.

4. Government partners: WFP made progress in building capacities of government agencies, particularly in countries enduring frequent natural shocks. However, the strategic evaluations found that national capacity building initiatives and preparedness were not adequate and lacked consistency.

5. Cash and voucher: cash and voucher programming rising from one percent of WFP's beneficiaries in 2009 to ten percent and over USD 500 million expenditure in 2013. However, the PREP evaluation found significant room for improvement in supporting cash and voucher programming in emergencies. This finding was validated in country level evaluations.

6. Advance financing mechanism: the PREP and logistics cluster evaluations found that advance financing mechanisms were central to a timely initial response and

¹ WFP's Emergency Response Activation Protocol (2012) defined emergency classification as: L1 – manageable with country-level emergency response capabilities; L2 – requires augmentation of country-level response capacity with regional capacity; and L3 – requires mobilization of WFP's global

response capabilities ("corporate level") in addition to regional and country capacities.

scale-up. The pooled funds evaluation noted that internal advances were flexibly used to support all aspects of WFP operations and many country offices relied strongly on these internal financing solutions in the initial phases of an emergency.

7. Unintended consequences: all evaluations found that the focus on L3 emergencies improved response to corporate emergencies, but had unintended negative consequences for lower-level emergencies which constitute the majority of WFP's emergency responses.

8. Upward process demand: global system demands were seen as excessive, limiting commitment of country and regional offices to the global reform processes. Evaluations found that system-wide processes at country level, for example strategy formulation and response planning by clusters and humanitarian country teams, generated more coherence, trust and ownership, but were highly resource-intensive.

9. Cross cutting issues: WFP's formal commitment to cross-cutting issues had little influence on operations. The IASC gender marker, pooled fund guidelines and a growing number of gender focal points in clusters increased the formal integration of gender considerations, but these had little influence on operations. PREP had some activities concerning gender, but none on accountability to affected populations. Operation evaluations found that while gender-disaggregated data was collected in some countries such as the Syrian Arab Republic and Tajikistan, there was limited further analysis or integration into programme.

10. Knowledge management: there were improvements in operational information management. However, PREP evaluation found inconsistent links between operational information and situation monitoring data, needs assessment data and vulnerability analysis. Similarly, many country evaluations (e.g. Syrian regional and Haiyan responses) found that shortcomings in WFP's monitoring and analysis undermined evidence-based decision-making despite investments in this area.

These findings point to broader challenges with regard to knowledge management and learning at WFP. In particular, the PREP evaluation found that PREP's efforts to institutionalize lessons learned exercises for L3 emergencies were limited by the absence of an effective WFP-wide knowledge management system.

The series of strategic evaluations confirms that WFP has made relevant investments in EPR. However, constraints continue to limit the implementation of EPR-related reforms. Field-level managers and staff often lack the capacity to implement all elements of "corporate priorities" and were not sufficiently involved in consultation or participation for change-management processes. Moreover, WFP's focus on immediate response inhibits adoption of the longer-term view.

Recommendations

While the recommendations made in the component strategic evaluations remain valid, this synthesis suggests four additional, strategic recommendations to ensure

continued investment and prioritization, which will need WFP to continuously adapt its response capabilities:

Recommendation 1: Executive management should ensure that more resources and stronger leadership are directed towards human resources management specifically for EPR, placing EPR centrally within the implementation of WFP's People Strategy. The Human Resources Division (HRM) should assume responsibility for developing a holistic, multi-functional approach that includes recruitment, career development, capacity, deployment, health and well-being, with special consideration for national staff and women. Staff capacity development should include options beyond formal training, and should provide incentives for person-to-person approaches such as mentoring and on-the-job training.

Recommendation 2: WFP's new corporate knowledge management initiative should address EPR challenges faced by field staff, with an emphasis on:

- informal information-sharing and learning; and
- more systematic use of information and data for EPR operational decision-making.

Recommendation 3: More WFP staff and financial resources should be directed towards emergency preparedness and EPR capacity enhancement of non-government partners and national authorities for improved response efficiency. WFP should also advocate for increased donor funding for development. These measures should focus on:

- making WFP's approach to EPR capacity enhancement of partners and national authorities more consistent and sustainable; and
- enhancing data and information for preparedness through partner mapping, capacity assessment and analysis of markets, structures and potential service providers for cash-based transfer programmes.

Recommendation 4: Taking greater advantage of its involvement in global humanitarian reform processes and discussions on humanitarian financing, WFP should emphasize:

- giving more balanced consideration to all types of emergency operation, including chronic, lower-level and under-funded or "forgotten" crises;
- reducing demands on field staff associated with global processes and focusing limited resources on improving the quality of emergency response, including better communication with and accountability to affected populations and more emphasis on gender and protection; and
- disseminating WFP's positive experiences with advance financing among other agencies and partners, supporting partners in setting up similar mechanisms, and advocating to increase advance financing.



Reference: Full and summary reports of the evaluation and the Management Response are available at: www.wfp.org/evaluation

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