



World Food Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

WFP EVALUATION

COUNTRY CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

Lessons from WFP evaluation initiatives

MAPPING
EVALUATION
CAPACITIES

TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE TO
GOVERNMENTS

SUPPORTING
JOINT- AND
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EVALUATIONS

COLLABORATING WITH VOPES & OTHER EVALUATION STAKEHOLDERS

GLOBAL
ADVOCACY

Supporting the 2014 UNGA Resolution ([A/RES/69/237](#)), the evaluation function of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is working with countries and partners to strengthen national evaluation capacities (NEC). This brief is part of a series of five that documents results and lessons from 22 initiatives implemented across 25 countries in five regions in collaboration with 49 partners between 2018 and 2022. These briefs were informed by interviews with WFP and partner staff, and the review of background material, NECD literature and relevant external documents.

CONTEXT

This brief covers WFP engagement with Voluntary Organizations for Professionalization Evaluation (VOPes), civil society and other actors with the aim of strengthening capacities and advocacy for evaluation use and professionalization.

In the Southern African region, WFP strengthened ties with the [South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association \(SAMEA\)](#) with the aim of contributing to the skills development of evaluation practitioners.

The WFP regional bureaus in North Africa and the Asia Pacific regions promoted formal exchanges among civil society, academia, government and UN representatives to foster evaluation use.



WFP IN ACTION

Since 2018, WFP's regional bureau in Johannesburg (RBJ) has been collaborating with SAMEA in initiatives such as planning and delivering conference sessions and training in East and Southern Africa.

In 2019, RBJ signed a three-year Memorandum of Understanding with SAMEA, which established a more structured collaboration on areas such as capacity

development through student internships, emerging evaluators' mentoring, South-South learning, conferences, events, and communities of practice.

In Egypt, the Regional Evaluation Officer (REO) co-organized a seminar with the [International Food Policy Research Institute \(IFPRI\)](#) to showcase how evaluations were influencing the performance of nutrition-sensitive school feeding programmes. It used examples from Egypt and the MENA region, and presented preliminary results of an impact assessment conducted by the [Baseera Center](#). By leveraging WFP and IFPRI's convening power, the seminar enabled good practices on using evaluation for policy formulation in education and school feeding programmes among governments, NGOs, academia and UN representatives.

In the Asia Pacific region, a series of visual thinking workshops (referred to as [EvaluVision](#)) were organized in Bangladesh, Laos, Myanmar and India to [raise awareness](#) among government, civil society and communities on evaluation use.

To develop national-owned, actionable management responses, the evaluation results and recommendations were discussed and validated by engaging parents, community members, teachers, local officials and policy makers in participatory, visual thinking workshops.

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RESULTS

- **Strengthened VOPEs as part of a wider contribution to professionalization of the evaluation practice.** The WFP-SAMEA collaboration created a strong, long-term linkage between a UN agency and regional VOPE.
- **Supported young and emerging evaluators as part of a wider contribution to NECD.** The WFP-SAMEA collaboration led to a partnership with UNICEF and CLEAR-AA to pilot a programme that supports young and emerging evaluators through work immersion. This model has potential for scale up across regions.
- **Contributed to SAMEA's evaluator competencies framework with engagement from other actors.**
- **Increased relevance to advocate for evidence use in the national and regional evaluation agenda.**
 - **IN THE MIDDLE EAST:** The advocacy event in Egypt changed how WFP's country office originally engaged in evaluation advocacy due to the partnership with IFPRI. Organizing evidence-use advocacy events in the Middle East increased WFP's reputation and credibility as an agency keen to partner on evidence related matters.
 - **IN SOUTHERN AFRICA:** WFP's cooperation with SAMEA positively changed WFP's perception in the region.
 - **IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION:** WFP increased individual and civil society organizations' interest in evidence use, by showcasing the visual thinking method to communities as well as in several conferences, events and [blogs](#).
- **Made evaluations more meaningful to the people we serve including from a gender lens.** Through EvaluVision, communities, NGOs and other actors gained access to better understanding evaluation processes, exploring how evaluation recommendations could enhance programme implementation. Interacting with stakeholders who do not usually read WFP evaluation reports, improved the accountability to affected communities. The depth of engagement, sparked donors' interest in the evaluation results.
- **Engaging national-based actors led to enhanced communities of practice and professional exchanges.** In Egypt, involving the Social Solidarity and Education Ministries, the country office, regional bureau, Save the Children, FAO, UNICEF, USAID and local evaluators, built momentum that was not there before the event.



EMERGING LESSONS

1 Longer-term, sustained and partnered cooperation has potential for meaningful and transformative effects to support VOPEs.

Since the launch of WFP's decentralized function in 2017, regional bureaux have built relationships with regional VOPEs and promoted cooperation initiatives with variable degrees of scope across the six regions. The SAMEA-WFP MoU proved to be a flexible framework that allows continuous exploration of opportunities.

2 Indirect contributions and one-off events have fewer effects.

While experiences in the Asia Pacific region contributed to offering an innovative approach to evaluation dissemination to agencies, national bodies, communities and evaluators, the impact on national capacities and evaluators' professionalization is less evident. Similarly, while the evidence use advocacy seminar in Egypt brought partners together and created national stakeholders' interest in evaluation, the effects on NECD are only realized if sustained over time.

3 Support to VOPEs does not have to be financial to have impact.

The involvement of a UN agency in managing a conference strand has potential to attract interest and enhance the content and relevance of the sessions. This is a viable and pragmatic model of engagement that worked successfully in Southern Africa. The model was also used by WFP's Office of Evaluation at the 2019 AfrEA conference where WFP co-managed the agriculture and food security strand with FAO and IFAD through [EvalForward](#).

4 Approaching NECD within wider WFP country capacity strengthening (CCS) work is more likely to attract partners, donors and other stakeholders and increase opportunities to contribute.

The initiatives in Egypt and Asia were possible through WFP regional evaluation unit conversations with WFP programme staff working on CCS. This enabled access to additional resourcing opportunities.

5 Internal capacities are not always needed to support NECD or VOPEs.

WFP in Southern Africa used a consultant and intern to augment staff capacity constraints in contributing to SAMEA's competency evaluators framework and co-managing the conference strand.

6 Designing dissemination initiatives with communities in mind has the potential to enhance Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) principles and empower communities to advocate for evaluation use.

Despite evaluation findings being complex and technical in some cases, the experience of Asia shows that when designed with all stakeholders in mind, including at community level, dissemination activities can provide a chance for affected populations to understand and give feedback on evaluation findings and recommendations. This was the case for the school feeding programme evaluation in Bangladesh and Laos where communities provided specific inputs.

The evaluation function should contribute to the operationalization of the [reviewed definitions of AAP](#) commitment areas of Inclusion, and Information & Knowledge Management. Broadly considered, NECD work can be at the intersection of AAP and country capacity strengthening.



CONDITIONS FOR SCALE UP

1 **Structure approaches on *how* collaboration will happen through a standing MoU with VOPEs and other actors.**

Beyond general agreement and interest to collaborate, additional steps must be taken to establish a shared framework for overall areas of mutual interest and key activities.

2 **Think ahead and within the wider context for events to have catalytic effects.**

For event-type initiatives, there should be agreement between all stakeholders on the value and contribution of the event to the wider NECD ecosystem. Each partner's contribution to the agenda, administrative logistics and budget should be based on a reflection of how this would provide avenues for further work or contribute to ongoing work.

3 **Ensure that NECD extends beyond government institutions.**

The inclusion of VOPEs, NGOs and academia in advocacy work on evaluation practice and use, planned with government and donors, is needed to expand awareness of emerging evidence. Civil society can ultimately play a critical role in advocating for evaluations to national bodies and use of evidence more generally.

4 **Design and implement NECD initiatives within wider CCS context.**

Any country's capacity to monitor and evaluate its national programmes and policies, and the capacities of civil society to advocate for M&E, is intricately linked with overall capacities of the country.

5 **Engage the many actors supporting VOPEs while identifying WFP value add.**

There is no shortage of entities working to support VOPEs at regional and country levels. WFP should seek to expand and enhance coordination with the work of entities such as the [Global Evaluation Initiative](#), [EvalPartners](#) and the [IOCE](#) while being clear of its value add in different country and regional contexts. The [VOPE Leadership Boot Camp](#) (April 2022) was a good example of a coordinated effort.

6 **Anchor advocacy interventions on evaluation use and the importance of quality evaluation and usefulness of evidence.**

By focusing on supporting VOPEs' capacities to enhance national evaluators' capacities and credibility, VOPEs could advocate for use of rigorous and credible evidence in decision-making on national policies and programmes.

The series of briefs were prepared as part of a collaboration with the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA).