

OPERATION EVALUATIONS SERIES

Regional Synthesis 2013-2017

Asia and the Pacific Region

November 2017

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Commissioned by the
WFP Office of Evaluation

Report Number: OEV/2017/007

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Policy and Institutional Context

1. Major contextual shifts, including climate change, increasing inequality, more frequent natural disasters and increasingly protracted conflicts, have influenced global policy reforms. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2016, calls for increased partnership and collective action to support country-led efforts in achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2. The WFP Strategic Plan 2014-2017 signalled a major shift from WFP as a “food aid” to “food assistance” agency. The subsequent WFP Strategic Plan 2017-2021 positions WFP firmly in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and particularly in contributing to the achievement of SDG 2: “End Hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”. It focuses on reaching those in greatest need first, while ensuring that no one is left behind.¹

3. To meet the demands of this new environment, WFP has launched the Integrated Road Map (IRM). This redefines WFP architecture as well as its country strategic planning process under the WFP Strategic Plan 2017-2021.

1.2 Operations Evaluations

4. The WFP series of operations evaluations (OpEv) supports its corporate objective of accountability and learning for results. Since mid-2013, the series has generated 58 evaluations of operations across the six regions in which WFP operates. The evaluations assess the appropriateness of WFP operations, their results, and the factors explaining these results. The series will close in mid-2017.

5. Within the Asia and the Pacific region, operations were evaluated in nine countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal, Laos, Pakistan, and the Philippines. The nine operations had combined requirements of over USD 2.3 billion, targeting over 25 million beneficiaries from 2013 to 2017.²

- Nine out of 55 operations in the region were evaluated under the 2013 to 2016 operations evaluation series (excluding Level 3s). This corresponds to 16 percent of the regional portfolio of operations and 64 percent of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific’s operational budget.
- Four operations evaluated were protracted relief and recovery operations (PRROs) and four were country portfolios (CPs). One development programme (DEV) was also evaluated.³
- The nine countries in which evaluations were conducted form just over half of the region’s countries in which WFP is currently active.

1.3 Purpose and Objectives

6. This Synthesis of Operations Evaluations for the Asia and the Pacific Region brings together the findings of nine operations evaluations, conducted from mid-2013 to mid-2017. The synthesis aims to:

¹ WFP (2017) Strategic Plan 2017-2021 WFP/EB.2/2016/4-A/Rev.2

² Including all budget revisions. Source: Operation Evaluation Factsheets; Annual Operation Evaluation Synthesis Reports, 2014, 2015, 2016. Specific figures: USD requirements: 2,318, 102,286. Beneficiaries targeted 25,172,026

³ Source: Operations Evaluations Factsheet; Southern Africa Region, March 2017

- Enhance efficient and effective use of evaluation evidence and learning in programme development
- Help facilitate the country strategic planning process for the regional bureau
- Create a concise, regional-friendly ‘body of evidence’ analysis to inform the upcoming development of the regional evaluation strategy.⁴

1.4 Context of the Operations Evaluated

7. Key features of the region are as follows:

- **Vulnerability to natural disasters:** The Asia and the Pacific region is highly vulnerable to climate change. It consistently experiences more disaster-related fatalities than the rest of the world combined. Despite rapid economic transformation, the region remains susceptible to sudden-onset events that can outstrip short-term national response capacities and create challenges for the mobilisation of international humanitarian assistance. Adverse effects fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable segments of the population.
- **Rapid but uneven economic development:** Between 1990 and 2013, the number of people in the region living in extreme poverty fell by over 920 million.⁵ However, swift economic progression to middle income status has brought challenges of its own, with countries facing the double burden of malnutrition (underweight/stunting and overweight/obesity) and gaps in social safety nets.
- **Acute hunger and nutrition insecurity:** The 2016 Global Hunger Index indicates that seven of nine countries evaluated in the region have “serious” hunger levels.⁶ Micronutrient deficiencies including iron, iodine and Vitamin A are common in the region.
- **Diverse gender inequality:** Countries in the region have diverse levels of gender inequality, though all rank in the lower half of the 2016 Gender Inequality Index. Values in countries for this cohort of operations range from a ranking of 116/188 countries in 2016 (Philippines) though to 169/188 countries (Afghanistan).⁷

1.5 WFP in the Asia and the Pacific Region

8. WFP has country offices in 16 countries in the region in 2017.⁸ It works through eight protracted relief and recovery operations (PRROs), six country/development programmes (CP/DEVs), three emergency operations (EMOPs); six special operations (SOs), and two trust fund programmes (TFs).⁹

9. As social and economic transformation takes place across Asia, WFP is redefining its role and relevance in the region. It is seeking to shift from direct implementation to technical assistance and capacity development – where conditions permit. The regional bureau aims to emphasise WFP strengths in capacity

⁴ Terms of Reference

⁵ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eap/overview>

⁶ All other than the Philippines, where rates are moderate, and Bhutan, for which no data for 2016 is available. <http://ghi.ifpri.org/>

⁷ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>

⁸ Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Democratic Popular Republic of Korea, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Lao Popular Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, Vietnam

⁹ Source: Supplied by Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, June 2017

development, resilience building, technical cooperation and knowledge sharing across the region.¹⁰

- In 2016, WFP reached 12.4 million beneficiaries in the region, or 79 percent of the planned caseload, a slight decrease from the 14.2 million reached in 2015
- Of these, 46 percent of beneficiaries were men and 54 percent women. The increased proportion of women was due to some activities, such as nutrition programmes, targeting groups such as pregnant and lactating women.¹¹
- In 2016, WFP initiated first-time emergency operations in Papua New Guinea, providing food assistance to those affected by *El Niño*-induced drought. A new country office was also established in Fiji to support the Pacific countries and emergency preparedness interventions.

1.6 The Evaluated Operations

10. The operations evaluated in this synthesis were implemented under diverse conditions:

- **Varied income levels:** Six of the evaluated operations were implemented in low-income countries (Cambodia, Nepal, Laos, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan) and three in middle income countries (Bhutan, the Philippines, Myanmar). Of the latter group, operations in the Philippines and Myanmar targeted vulnerable or excluded populations in areas of the country affected by conflict, displacement, natural disasters and/or acute poverty.
- **Fragile/complex operating environments:** Six of the evaluated operations were implemented in fragile or volatile operating environments, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. In the Philippines and Myanmar, the WFP operations were implemented in regions of the country experiencing significant social unrest and fragility.
- **Population displacement:** Operations in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Myanmar served refugee/internally displaced person (IDP) populations, but none were solely focused on these groups

11. To address the needs of the 25 million people targeted by the operations, WFP managed to raise a total of 54.9 percent of the USD 2.3 billion requirements overall, at the time of evaluation.

12. **Activities/modalities:** The nine evaluated operations comprised a range of activities and modalities, specifically:

- The only single-activity operation was Bhutan, which provided school feeding. The remainder were multi-component, in all cases implementing at least three of the four key WFP activity types (general distribution, nutrition, school-feeding and food assistance for asset creation).
- All designs other than Bhutan included and implemented nutrition¹² and food assistance for asset/food assistance for training (FFA/FFT) activities.

¹⁰ Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (2017) Annual Performance Report 2016; internal document.

¹¹ Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (2017) Annual Performance Report 2016

¹² Including HIV/AIDS activities in two operations.

- All operations planned and implemented school feeding activities. In five countries, WFP either supported national programmes and/or planned capacity-building activities aiming at the gradual transition of activities to ministries of education.¹³
- General distribution was designed and implemented in only five out of nine operations.¹⁴ In all cases, it was used as an instrument to respond to the needs of particularly vulnerable populations such as internally displaced persons/refugees/returnees, those affected by natural disasters, and chronically food-insecure populations in the lean season.
- Capacity development was designed and applied (though to highly varied extents) in all nine operations.
- Cash and vouchers was a notable delivery modality in the region. All designs other than that in Bhutan combined cash or voucher transfers with in-kind distributions.
- Local purchase of commodities for distribution was implemented in all nine operations.

13. **Policy frameworks:** WFP engaged in the region with a wide range of policy platforms for food security. These include policies and frameworks on school feeding; nutrition; disaster management and risk reduction; health; agriculture; and food security. WFP also engaged with national social protection policies and frameworks (see ‘Findings’, below).

14. **Strategic partnerships:** Operations also formed a wide range of strategic partnerships in the Asia and the Pacific region. These included central ministries (of planning, education, health, agriculture, nutrition and rural development) as well decentralised government functions, national vulnerability assessment mechanisms, national nutrition councils and disaster management authorities. Other partnerships were formed with broad spectrum of United Nations agencies and with international and national non-governmental organisations (NGO). Annex 1 lists the strategic partnerships identified per country within evaluations (though recognising that these date back in some cases to 2014).

15. Table 1 presents the operations’ main features.

¹³ Bangladesh, Bhutan, Laos, Pakistan, Philippines Pakistan.

¹⁴ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Laos, Myanmar, Pakistan.

Table 1: Features of operations

| Year of evaluation approval | Country | Category | Operation | | | | | | Activities ¹⁵ | | | | | | Modalities | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------|-----------|-----------|---------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|------------|----------------------|
| | | | No. | Duration | Value (USD million) | % funded at evaluation | % funded overall ¹⁶ | Target beneficiaries ¹⁷ | General distribution | Nutrition ¹⁸ | School feeding | Food assistance for assets / training | Capacity development | Local purchase | Food | Cash-based transfers |
| 2014 | Cambodia | CP | 200202 | 2011-2016 | 170,783,830 | 50.6 | 67.6 | 2,836,380 | | √* | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| | Laos | CP | 200242 | 2012-2015 | 104,400,323 | 48 | 59.4 | 894,514 | √ | √ | √ | √◊ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| | The Philippines | PRRO | 200296 | 2012-2014 | 68,180,569 | 86.8 | 68.8 | 1,480,112 | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| | Pakistan | PRRO | 200250 | 2013-2015 | 676,125,674 | 67.3 | 85.5 | 8,346,676 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 2015 | Bangladesh | CP | 200243 | 2012-2016 | 345,117,519 | 48.0 | 58.1 | 4,305,315 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 2016 | Bhutan | DEV | 200300 | 2014-2018 | 7,574,068 | 78 | 102.6 | 30,000 | | | √ | | √ | √ | √ | |
| | Nepal | CP | 200319 | 2013-2017 | 216,275,282 | 27 | 27.8 | 492,909 | | √ | √ | √◊ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| | Afghanistan | PRRO | 200447 | 2014-2016 | 763,727,877 | 52.9 | 49.4 | 3,869,800 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| | Myanmar | PRRO | 200299 | 2013-2017 | 360,940,823 | 56.1 | 61.4 | 2,916,320 | √ | √* | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| | Totals | | | | 2,318,102,286 | | | 25,172,026 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 6 |

¹⁵ ◊ denotes planned but not implemented or [√◊] / to denote implemented to a very limited degree in terms of beneficiary numbers or duration.

¹⁶ As at the time of this synthesis for ongoing operations or as at the end of the operation for already completed operations. Note that some of the operations may have had budget revisions after the evaluation was completed. This information is therefore intended to illustrate the volatility of funding environment. The source of this information is resource updates found in the WFP operations database. (<http://www.wfp.org/operations/database>).

¹⁷ Planned beneficiaries throughout the project's lifetime.

¹⁸ *Denotes HIV/AIDS activities that are analysed/reported under nutrition.

1.7 Methodology

16. The individual evaluations analysed here applied mixed-methods approaches, including documentary analysis, review of financial data and statistics, interviews and focus groups with key informants, and other relevant methods. All methodologies were checked for quality and reliability through the operations evaluations process.

17. This regional operations evaluations synthesis applies a structured analytical framework and systematic data extraction. Evidence was rated for validity and reliability on a scale of 1 (low) to 4 (high), with only reliable evidence – scoring at least 2 – included. Findings were validated by the WFP Office of Evaluation and by the regional evaluation officer for Asia and the Pacific.

18. Limitations of this regional synthesis include:

- Six of the nine evaluations were mid-term, limiting final results data available.
- Four of the nine evaluations reported in 2016 (Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan and Myanmar), one in 2015 (Bangladesh) and four in 2014 (Cambodia, Laos, the Philippines and Pakistan). Evidence is therefore mixed between recent and earlier periods.
- The evidence arises from nine countries in the Asia and the Pacific region. Although themes identified may have wider relevance, they cannot be extrapolated to the WFP wider portfolio.

26. Nonetheless, the breadth and depth of the information presented in this synthesis constitutes a relevant, and hopefully useful, evidence base to inform the Integrated Road Map and country strategic planning processes in the Asia and the Pacific region.

2. FINDINGS

QUESTION 1: How appropriate was the operation's design? (relevance, strategic positioning and coherence)

Summary findings: relevance/appropriateness

Overall, evaluations found WFP playing a major role in the humanitarian and development response for specific targeted populations in the region. It responded to strong national demands for its services, working closely with government to plan and develop designs. Designs were firmly grounded in country humanitarian and development partnerships, with governments providing national contributions to five operations. Enabling dimensions took priority, with capacity development intentions built in to operation designs. WFP also made explicit efforts to align behind social protection and safety net policy frameworks, where these were a national priority.

Designs were mostly based on sound or the best available evidence, though they lacked sufficient internal synergies to maximise effectiveness, and were inadequately gender sensitive. They targeted population needs appropriately, though with some specific weaknesses at activity level. Vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) is a comparative advantage for WFP in the region, and targeting was strongest when collaboratively designed with partners.

2.1 How appropriate was WFP strategic positioning in the region?

Overall, evaluations found WFP operations relevant and appropriate to beneficiary needs. WFP played a major role in the collective humanitarian and development response in the region, responding to strong national demands for its services. Designs were developed in partnership with national actors, with governments providing national contributions in five operations. WFP adopted an enabling role, with capacity development intentions built into operation designs, though these commonly lacked a sound analytical basis and overarching strategic frameworks. Operation designs were mostly firmly grounded within the country humanitarian and development partnership, and WFP made explicit efforts to align behind social protection and safety net policy frameworks, where these were prioritised by government.

19. Evaluations found WFP playing a major role in the humanitarian response for targeted populations in the region. Activities were designed at scale: In Pakistan, for example, the micronutrient component extended coverage of iodized salt to 110 districts reaching 174 million people. In Bhutan, WFP targeted two-thirds of children enrolled in the education system; whilst in Cambodia, it targeted two-thirds of primary schools in the country.

20. In common with operations in other regions reviewed through this series,¹⁹ evaluations found strong partnerships in design between WFP and governments in the region. All nine operations were designed in close collaboration with government, with WFP responding in all cases to national demands. Additionally, joint work has extended in the Asia and the Pacific region to shared contributions, with the government acting as a funder/contributor to five operations. Box 1 identifies these.

¹⁹ See regional operation evaluation syntheses for East and Central Africa; Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Europe; Southern Africa; Latin America and the Caribbean; and West Africa.

Box 1: Shared contributions

- In Bangladesh, the Government provided one-half of the wheat requirements for the WFP-supported school biscuit programme and jointly funded the emergency response aspects of the operation
- In the Philippines and Pakistan, the Government was the second largest donor to WFP operations in the country
- In Cambodia, the Government made annual inputs of 2,000 metric tonnes of rice and associated costs as its contribution to the CP
- In Nepal, the Government allocated matching funds of USD 2 million in both 2014 and 2015 towards the WFP partnership with government authorities in developing food assistance for assets activities

21. Seven out of nine operations²⁰ were also explicitly geared to help implement government programmes, and/or were implemented through national structures. These were school feeding programmes in Bhutan, Laos, the Philippines and Bangladesh; nutrition programmes in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Myanmar; and emergency food distributions in Bangladesh and Pakistan.

22. Also in common with wider findings from this series, seven out of nine evaluations²¹ also found an explicit intent to re-align the WFP role, away from pure delivery, where conditions permit, and towards more enabling roles focused on technical assistance, capacity development and supporting national ownership. Although this has progressed over time, with more recent operation designs reflecting these intentions explicitly, re-orientation started early in the strategic period. For example:

- In Cambodia (evaluated in 2014), the WFP CP design articulated the explicit intention across the operation to transition away from direct implementation, to supporting national ownership and capacity development.
- In Bangladesh (evaluated in 2015) the CP design focused on technical assistance and capacity building to improve policies, processes and the effectiveness of government safety nets.
- In Myanmar (evaluated in 2016), the PRRO sought, in its overall design, to enhance national capacity and shape national policies to promote ownership and the eventual handover of activities.

23. In Afghanistan, however, a core delivery role was still required to address humanitarian needs (though WFP made efforts to build capacity where feasible); and in Bhutan, WFP missed the opportunity to re-orient design, basing its intentions largely on a continuation rationale.

24. In line with findings across this series, none of the nine evaluations found capacity analysis conducted as part of design. However, in contrast with these wider findings, all found generally realistic assessments of capacity levels, linked to close partnerships with government in design. All nine designs included capacity-development intentions, with specific areas of focus including:

- Improved food security monitoring (Pakistan, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Nepal)

²⁰ All other than those in Cambodia and Nepal

²¹ Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines,

- The design and implementation of social safety nets (Bangladesh, Nepal)
- Disaster preparedness and emergency response capacity (Pakistan, the Philippines, Afghanistan, Laos, Nepal, Myanmar, Cambodia)
- Nutrition policy frameworks and implementation capacity (the Philippines, Nepal, Myanmar, Cambodia)
- Education/school feeding policy frameworks and implementation capacity (Bhutan, Myanmar).

25. However, approaches to capacity-development activities were not always systematically planned or designed. For example, in Bhutan, the capacity-development dimensions of the portfolio lacked a strong evidence base and clear results frameworks for intended achievements.

26. Evaluations found that, also in line with other regions in this series,²² WFP made explicit efforts to align behind social protection/safety net frameworks, in countries where these form a strategic priority for governments in the region (for example, Nepal, Cambodia, the Philippines, Bangladesh) (Box 2). In Myanmar, where poor safety net coverage left a significant proportion of the population vulnerable to shocks, WFP provided essential safety nets for vulnerable populations.

Box 2: Social Protection

- In Nepal, WFP contributed to the development of a national social protection strategy that will incorporate livelihoods and asset creation support
- In Bangladesh, WFP dialogue, evidence creation, capacity strengthening efforts and advocacy to strengthening government safety nets resulted in reformation of ongoing safety nets and exploration of implementation modalities for effective and sustainable safety net interventions

27. Finally, and also reflecting wider findings from this series, evaluations found WFP operation designs mostly firmly grounded within the country’s humanitarian and development partnership. Seven out of nine designs aimed for implementation as part of a coherent (national and international) response to the problem. In Myanmar, for example, WFP partnership decisions at design stage were strategic, “acknowledging its limitations, the strengths of others, and [establishing] coherency with relevant sector initiatives, where possible”. In both Bhutan and Nepal, however, evaluations found that WFP had scope to expand its intended partnerships at design stage.

2.2 How rigorous was the operation design?

Operation design differed in two respects from the wider trend within the operations evaluations series. Firstly, evaluations in the Asia and the Pacific region found comparatively strong quality of designs, with evidence applied where appropriate and vulnerability analysis and mapping a strength of WFP in the region. Secondly, and again in contrast to wider findings, evaluations also identified some, but not widespread, limitations in causal chains. However, in common with most evaluations in the series, the use of internal synergies for improved effectiveness and gender sensitivity of designs were identified as weaknesses.

²² See regional syntheses for Latin America and the Caribbean; West Africa and Southern Africa.

28. All nine operations were continuations of a previous design. Five²³ had adequately revisited the previous design to meet current needs, using approaches such as the application of evidence (below); stakeholder feedback; the consolidation of existing initiatives and strategic prioritisation. By contrast, the Bhutan DEV was largely based on the predecessor operation.

29. In common with findings from some other regions in this series,²⁴ the majority (eight out of nine) of evaluations found the evidence basis applied for design sufficient or adequate at the time.²⁵ Evidence sources applied are listed in Box 3.

Box 3: Sources of evidence applied for operation design

- Evidence from evaluations and reviews
- Baseline studies
- Vulnerability analysis and mapping, including comprehensive food security and vulnerability assessment data and risk and vulnerability surveys
- National statistics and data on food security and nutrition
- Data from pilot exercises
- Joint assessments with partner United Nations agencies
- Information generated through the country strategy development process
- Integrated Phase Classification data
- Research and pilot studies
- Food security information network bulletins
- Market and agricultural assessment bulletins

30. However only four operations, in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos, explicitly applied evidence from evaluations and reviews to inform design.

31. Vulnerability analysis and mapping data in the region was especially praised in six evaluations²⁶ for providing detailed and specific insights into population needs. Box 4 provides examples.

Box 4: Vulnerability analysis and mapping

- In Nepal, the WFP vulnerability and mapping unit has worked since 2007 with the government to establish and strengthen a national food security monitoring system, known as NeKSAP, whose data informed the design of the CP
- In Bangladesh, the WFP vulnerability analysis and mapping unit, in partnership with government, produced poverty and undernutrition maps down to *upazila* (local area) level for the entire country, which informed operation design
- One WFP comparative advantages in Pakistan is the vulnerability analysis and mapping unit, whose in-depth assessments served not only WFP but also Government and other development partners. Its products included market, food security and livelihood assessments, and technical support on food security monitoring and policy development to the Government

32. Weak causal chains/design flaws have been a repeated finding in the operation evaluations series,²⁷ but were identified in only two evaluations in the region (in

²³ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos . Evaluations in Nepal, the Philippines and Pakistan do not comment.

²⁴ See regional operation evaluation syntheses for Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Europe; Southern Africa; East and Central Africa.

²⁵ All other than the evaluation of the Philippines PRRO, which does not comment.

²⁶ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan.

²⁷ Operations Evaluations Syntheses 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Bhutan and Laos), both related to school feeding.²⁸ Three evaluations (in Afghanistan, Laos and Nepal) found that the operation did not take on board available lessons from previous operations regarding available resourcing, leading to questioning of ambition of the operation's design. Three operations had received less than 50 percent of funding at mid-term evaluation stage (Bangladesh, Laos and Nepal, see Table 1), leading in all cases to activities being cut short, and/or rations and coverage reduced.

33. Six evaluations commented on internal synergies in design.²⁹ Findings reflect the pattern of wider findings arising from this series:

- Two (in Laos and the Philippines) found that internal synergies were strong at design stage, with the Laos operation explicitly integrating three previously-separate components to achieve enhanced medium-term results. In the Philippines, internal linkages between food assistance for assets/food assistance for training activities were linked to disaster preparedness and nutrition activities, to offer a comprehensive package of support to the same communities, many of which also benefitted from school feeding.
- In line with wider findings, four operations³⁰ found scope for improvement, with, for example, the Cambodia CP comprising “more a juxtaposition of separate activities than an integrated programme”. In Nepal, different geographic targeting across activities meant that synergies between components were underexploited, due to activities taking place in different geographical areas.

34. As also reflected in the overall operations evaluation series, the use of gender analysis to inform design was a weakness across the region's operations. Only two, in Cambodia and Laos, explicitly applied such analysis to inform design. Even where this analysis was present, however, it did not automatically lead to a gender-sensitive design, with both evaluations (as well as four others)³¹ finding that the operation adopted a mainly ‘including women’ approach, without sensitising or adapting activities to identified needs.

35. Conversely, although no specific gender analysis informed designs in Afghanistan, Myanmar and Bangladesh, efforts were made to build in gender-sensitive approaches, though these were not always sufficiently nuanced Box 5 gives examples.

Box 5: Gender in design

- In Afghanistan, the WFP global gender and protection strategy was contextualised for the country and led to gender-sensitive implementation approaches, for example in school feeding and vocational training
- In Bangladesh:
 - The school feeding component included messages to parents and teachers on the importance of educating girls and avoiding early marriage for girls
 - The enhancing food security pilot focused on the empowerment of ultra-poor women through the provision of a cash grant for investment, other financial support, and training

²⁸ The assumption that school feeding will lead to increased attendance/retention rates was unverified in Bhutan; and that deworming campaigns would lead to reduced iron deficiency in children is questioned in Laos.

²⁹ No comment in the Afghanistan and Myanmar evaluations; not relevant to Bhutan.

³⁰ Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal, Pakistan.

³¹ Operations lacking a gender-sensitive approach were Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, as well as Cambodia and Laos.

- The nutrition component did not include specific activities to target men, despite acknowledging the need to engage them and community leaders in changing cultural practices and addressing underlying factors of undernutrition
- In Myanmar, gender and protection issues were mainstreamed in the design as per WFP humanitarian protection and gender policies, and the evaluation found that WFP aimed for gender balance and women’s leadership across activities

2.3 How responsive were operations to needs?

Overall, WFP operations in the region were well-designed to respond to target population needs, although with some specific weaknesses at activity level. Targeting was strongest when designs were produced in cooperation with partners and evaluations found weaknesses within food assistance for assets and nutrition targeting. Cash gained momentum over time as a transfer modality.

36. In line with findings from across this series, WFP operation types in the Asia and the Pacific region were largely fit for context. Eight out of nine evaluations found operation types appropriate for country conditions, with only the Bhutan evaluation questioning the appropriateness of school feeding as an incentive for school enrolment or attendance. Design was informed by a final or draft country strategy in six countries.³²

37. Eight evaluations found the intended coverage of WFP appropriate for humanitarian needs overall,³³ based on data available at the time. Only the evaluation of the Nepal CP found that WFP should have scaled down its projections and rationalised the planned CP beneficiary numbers earlier, in the areas of nutrition and food assistance for assets.

38. All evaluations, bar that in Bhutan, found operations’ overall objectives and intent well-aligned with the needs of food insecure populations in the country. In Nepal, Afghanistan, Myanmar and the Philippines, evaluations praised WFP for reaching out to some of the most hard-to-reach populations in these countries, who in Afghanistan are “one shock away from crisis”.

39. At activity level, evaluations found WFP choices mostly relevant to population needs. In common with weaknesses identified elsewhere in this series, three evaluations identified specific concerns:

- In Bhutan, as noted, school feeding as an effective or necessary incentive to school enrolment or attendance was questioned.
- In the Philippines, the prolonged use³⁴ of blanket supplementary feeding within nutrition interventions was challenged.
- In Afghanistan, although food assistance for assets interventions chosen were appropriate, given the primary objective of improved natural resource management, they had the unintended consequence of reducing the number of women participants in 2015.

40. Evaluations identified generally appropriate operation-level geographical targeting, supported by strong vulnerability analysis and mapping, but with limitations at activity level. Eight out of nine operations were appropriately targeted

³² Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines.

³³ All, other than Nepal.

³⁴ Whilst the suggested duration is three to six months, within the PRRO its use stretched over a two-year period.

geographically, focusing on areas of the country most affected by conflict, displacement, food insecurity and malnutrition and/or disasters.³⁵ The exception, the Cambodia CP, did not extend to outlying and sparsely-populated provinces with the highest poverty incidence.

41. Seven evaluations³⁶ found specific activity-level targeting concerns. These mostly arose in nutrition, identified in six out of nine³⁷ evaluations. Specific concerns were raised about:

- Choice of districts for nutrition interventions in Nepal, Myanmar, Bangladesh and the Philippines, based on available data. For example, districts selected for nutrition interventions in the Bangladesh CP were based on areas of high food insecurity and poverty rather than undernutrition, though the two did not necessarily coincide.
- Gaps in age-group coverage in Cambodia, with some age groups left uncovered by Government and WFP nutrition interventions respectively, despite high measurements of moderate acute malnutrition.
- The use of gender-blind targeting criteria in Afghanistan, with facility-based approaches risking the exclusion of the poorest and most vulnerable women.

42. Other targeting weaknesses occurred in:

- School feeding in Bhutan and Nepal arising from differences between national and WFP targeting criteria in Bhutan, leaving some children uncovered by national school feeding programmes following handover of WFP support; and targeting criteria in Nepal excluding schools with higher level grades, resulting in overcrowding in some schools and reduced attendance in others
- Food assistance for assets in the Philippines, where targeting was characterised as “somewhat reactive”, tending to support applications received rather than seeking out and supporting communities that most needed the projects, based on social indicators.

43. Targeting modalities aligned with national guidelines or approaches in all cases other than Bhutan school feeding, and in nutrition interventions in Bangladesh, where national nutrition guidelines differed from the weight-for height approach applied by WFP. Donor preferences also shaped targeting in Bangladesh, with funding linked to certain geographic areas or specific groups, rather than the CP as a whole.

44. Finally, and in common with the majority of operations reviewed through this series, the WFP choice of transfer modalities, whether cash and voucher or in-kind, were assessed as fully appropriate in seven evaluations. The two which raised concerns (in Afghanistan and Nepal) cited donor provision of in-kind donations creating gaps in alignment with government direction (Afghanistan) or WFP country office aspiration (Nepal).

³⁵ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan Laos, Nepal, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines.

³⁶ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Nepal, Myanmar, the Philippines.

³⁷ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal, Myanmar, the Philippines.

QUESTION 2: What were the results of the operations?

Summary findings: results

Monitoring systems showed some good practice in the region, though also some areas of weakness. Evaluations found data availability and quality concerns, particularly at outcome level. Performance was variable across activity areas, and dependent on contextual factors, with consistent achievement in general distribution, school feeding and food assistance for assets (though with significant concerns raised about the quality and sustainability of assets created).

Evaluations also identified additional results in line with the “enabling” role of WFP in the region. These included: improved policy environments, enhanced national capacities, evidence generation, and results in social protection and resilience. Results in gender were weak and mostly reflected a quantitative approach. Local purchase was a priority in the region.

Strong design-stage partnerships with governments continued into implementation but relationships with partner United Nations agencies were inconsistent. The willingness of WFP to adapt under changing conditions was praised in six evaluations, and operations were generally timely in relation to needs. The potential for sustainability was variable and dependent on individual activities. Transition strategies were not consistently implemented.

2.4 What evidence of results is available?

Evaluations in the region found some good practice in monitoring systems, although some systemic weaknesses continue into 2016. In line with findings from the wider operations evaluations series, output data was increasingly available, though weaknesses in outcome data persisted. Monitoring systems in the region were assessed as comparatively strong in relation to evaluations across the series, though data quality and reliability concerns occurred frequently, and data analysis, management and use was mixed, with some good examples and some inadequacies.

37. **Monitoring systems:** Operations evaluations in this series have consistently found shortcomings in WFP monitoring systems being gradually addressed over time. By contrast, however, just under half (four out of nine) of evaluations from the Asia and the Pacific region identified weaknesses in monitoring systems, spanning the period 2014-2016.³⁸ The evaluation in Myanmar identified improvements over time.

38. Evaluations in Cambodia, Nepal and Pakistan all pointed to good practice in monitoring systems with potential for replication across WFP. Box 6 gives examples.

³⁸ Afghanistan (2016), Bhutan (2016), Laos (2014), the Philippines (2014)

Box 6: Good practice in monitoring systems

- In Cambodia (evaluated in 2014), the evaluation commended the country office on its merging of the vulnerability analysis and mapping unit with the monitoring and evaluation function, to form the MERVAM Unit. In particular, the monitoring of the school feeding programme was an exemplar that other activities and operations could follow
- In Pakistan (evaluated in 2015) WFP innovative use of text messaging (SMS) for daily reporting was praised as showing great potential for simplifying reporting and for further promotion across the organisation
- In Nepal (evaluated in 2016), the monitoring system combined input from Government counterparts, cooperating partners and WFP through a web-based database (e-SPR) linked to the Government's management information systems

39. Specific weaknesses identified in monitoring systems included:

- The lack of a clear monitoring and evaluation strategy (Bhutan)
- Insufficient resources to ensure monitoring requirements under WFP minimum monitoring standards (Bhutan and Laos)
- The use of parallel monitoring systems to national ones (Laos)
- Weaknesses in the follow up of individual beneficiaries (the Philippines)
- The use of multiple databases, presenting challenges for data management (Afghanistan).

40. Five evaluations also raised concerns about the relevance of corporate indicators available at the time to capture operations' results.³⁹

41. In terms of data availability, three evaluations found gaps in output data in the region, even in the later period.⁴⁰ However, in common with other regions, gaps in outcome data were noted in seven out of nine evaluations.⁴¹ Issues particularly arose in relation to nutrition outcome and output data, with gaps identified in six evaluations.⁴²

42. Despite comparatively strong monitoring systems, data quality and reliability issues were raised in seven evaluations.⁴³ Concerns included:

- Use of national statistics rather than data gathered from WFP-targeted populations or schools (Bhutan)
- Lack of analysis of attribution of outcome indicator changes to WFP interventions (Bhutan)
- Collection of 'point in time' data, which risked portraying an inaccurate/unrepresentative picture due to seasonal fluctuations, particularly where these take place at 'better off' times of the year (Cambodia)

³⁹ Although not part of this region, it is interesting to highlight that in the Kyrgyz Republic, this was addressed by developing tailored indicators.

⁴⁰ Afghanistan, the Philippines, and Myanmar (in the earlier period).

⁴¹ All, other than Bangladesh and Pakistan.

⁴² Afghanistan, Cambodia, Laos Nepal, Myanmar and the Philippines.

⁴³ Afghanistan, Bhutan, Laos Nepal, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines.

- Discrepancies in the data arising from input errors or calculation errors, for example of target populations (Laos, the Philippines, Afghanistan, Pakistan)
- Overstated beneficiary for reasons including: double counting of beneficiaries across cohorts, namely in nutrition programmes (Afghanistan)
- Difficulties in applying the community asset score to assess community resilience under the food assistance for assets component (Bangladesh)
- Overly limited indicators for reporting against wider intentions for example using the minimal acceptable diet as the only indicator to measure the impact of critical non-food programme components) (Pakistan)
- Disconnects between outputs reported and the outcome indicators (Myanmar).

43. Data management, analysis and use was – in common with wider findings from the series - mixed across the region: evaluations in Pakistan, Cambodia and Myanmar found positively, with many examples of data being analysed and applied to adjust programming.⁴⁴ For example, the operation in Myanmar was praised for its well-organised, accessible and useable output data for facilitating real-time programme learning. However, shortcomings in data analysis and use to improve programme management were found in four evaluations.⁴⁵ The evaluation of the Bhutan DEV found improvements over time.

44. Finally, WFP target-setting was questioned in Nepal and Afghanistan, with over-ambitious targets set in nutrition (Nepal), school feeding (Afghanistan) and food assistance for assets (Nepal); and under-ambitious targets set in food assistance for assets (Afghanistan). In Nepal, the lack of regular programme reviews should have led to revised targets which would have resulted in higher achievements or higher quality of results.

2.5 What output and outcome results have been achieved, per theme/sector?

Performance was variable across activity areas and highly dependent on contextual factors, including funding. Outcome data particularly was limited in availability and reliability.

- **General distribution:** General distribution was used in the Asia and the Pacific region to target specific vulnerable populations. Planned output targets were reached in three operations but not in two, mainly due to changing caseloads. Four out of five operations met intended outcomes targets.
- **Nutrition:** Eight of the nine operations implemented a nutrition response. No activity fully met its output targets across all nutrition intervention types. However, interventions showed some positive outcome results, though evidence was sometimes anecdotal.
- **Education:** Activities were implemented in all nine operations, in five cases in support of national programmes. Output targets were achieved in seven

⁴⁴ The evaluation of the Bangladesh CP does not comment.

⁴⁵ Afghanistan, Laos, Nepal, the Philippines.

out of nine operations, and all nine reported positive progress against outcome targets, though attribution to WFP interventions was sometimes uncertain.

- **Livelihoods:** Eight operations implemented food assistance for assets activities, with smaller planned beneficiary numbers than for other activity areas. Only three operations found that FFA/FFT activities were on track or had met/exceeded output targets. Six evaluations, of seven for which data was available, found that food assistance for assets activities achieved positive results in outcome areas. However, four evaluations raised concerns about the quality and sustainability of assets created.

45. All except one operation (in Bhutan) contained multiple components (Table 1). Coverage was broadly as planned in four operations⁴⁶ but varied significantly against plan in five.⁴⁷ Reasons included: funding limitations; deliberate scaling back to avoid duplication with other actors; varying emergency caseloads; and expansion at government request.

46. Results against activity areas were as follows:

General distribution

47. Five operations (both CPs and PRROs) implemented general distribution activities over the evaluation period. General distribution targeted specific populations, such as internally-displaced populations/refugees/returnees; those affected by natural disasters; and chronically food-insecure populations in the lean season. Operations with the largest intended caseloads for general distribution were: Afghanistan, which targeted over 3.6 million beneficiaries over the 2014 and 2015 reporting years; Pakistan, which provided monthly rations to nearly two million people through general distribution in 2013, and over one million by July 2014; and Myanmar, which targeted 770,000 people in 2015.

48. **Output results:** The realisation of general distribution targets is highly dependent on contextual factors, particularly given the region's vulnerability to climate-related disasters. Three operations met planned output targets (Myanmar, Pakistan, Bangladesh), due to relatively stable caseloads in Myanmar; adaptation of targets to adjust to changing numbers of displaced people in Pakistan; and swift responses to natural disasters in Bangladesh. In Myanmar, general distribution activities met intended targets in one year, but not in the second. Only in Afghanistan did general distribution activities not meet planned targets, due to changing caseloads.⁴⁸

49. **Outcome results:** All five evaluations reported shortcomings in outcome data. However:

- Four operations, in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Laos and Pakistan, showed improvements in outcome indicators – for dietary diversity and food consumption in Myanmar and Bangladesh; food consumption in Pakistan and Laos; and reduced coping strategies in Bangladesh.

⁴⁶ Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar and Pakistan.

⁴⁷ Afghanistan, Cambodia, Laos, Nepal and the Philippines.

⁴⁸ In 2014, the number of people who returned to Afghanistan was much lower than expected and therefore WFP reached only 13.7 percent of their target. However, WFP was flexible and supported an unexpected influx of refugees from Pakistan to Khost and Paktika provinces. In 2015, the deteriorating security situation and a number of natural disasters led to a higher number of IDPs than expected.

- The operation in Afghanistan did not meet food consumption score targets, due to reductions in food assistance ration size and an increase in the number of newly arrived internally displaced persons (who comprise a high proportion of households with poor food consumption scores) in 2015.

Nutrition

50. Eight out of nine operations implemented nutrition interventions,⁴⁹ reflecting its importance as a strategic priority in the region. All nutrition activities included programmes focused on stunting, a specific priority in the region.

51. The largest numbers of nutrition beneficiaries were intended in Pakistan, which provided large-scale treatment of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) in six provinces, enabling WFP to reach 671,066 moderate acute malnutrition cases aged 6 - 59 months (Jan 2013-August 2014). In Afghanistan, WFP targeted up to 250,000 beneficiaries for nutrition activities per year.

52. **Output results:** Output performance for nutrition activities was mixed:

- No activity fully met its output targets across all nutrition intervention types. Instead, nutrition activities in all eight countries either did not meet output targets in specific areas, or showed mixed performance across activities. For example, in Pakistan, although overall nutrition and blanket supplementary feeding programmes targets were met, at activity level, the numbers of beneficiaries under the stunting project and those being treated for acute malnutrition were lower than intended.
- Performance against targets improved once these were adjusted downwards in Nepal and Bangladesh. In Laos, although a slow start was experienced, the scale-up of the mother-and-child health nutrition programmes was rapid and geographical reach impressive, reaching 95 percent of villages in target districts. Blanket supplementary feeding activities for children aged 6-23 months far surpassed planned beneficiary numbers for 2012, as did micronutrient supplementation programmes.

53. **Outcome results:** As above, evaluations note significant concerns in relation to the quality and reliability of nutrition outcome data. Much data provided is anecdotal, and several evaluations could not report achievement against targets.

54. However, despite these data shortcomings, and despite poor output level performance, where populations were reached, interventions showed some positive outcome results:

- In Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Pakistan, nutrition activities came close to meeting or met outcome targets in terms of default, mortality, non-response and recovery rates.
- Four evaluations (Cambodia, Nepal, Laos and the Philippines) identified other positive changes, though much data was anecdotal, with results including visible health and nutrition improvements, reductions in undernutrition/increases in children consuming a minimum acceptable diet upon introduction of food support, and increased use of health centre services.

⁴⁹ with the only exception being Bhutan.

Education (school feeding)

55. All nine operations implemented school feeding initiatives, reflecting its strategic importance to the region. Five⁵⁰ supported government programmes, often as part of a social protection response. The largest scale activities were in Cambodia, where by mid-point the activity had reached more than 1.1 million children and Myanmar, where approximately 500,000 students and family members were reached annually.

56. **Output results:** Output-level achievement was mostly positive, often linked to joint planning and implementation with Government:

- In seven operations⁵¹ WFP met or almost met planned beneficiary targets over the reference period. However, in Pakistan, girls represented only 28 percent of beneficiaries, short of the target of 49 percent.
- In only two operations (Nepal, Myanmar) targets were not met, with school feeding activities in Nepal reaching a little over 50 percent of the planned beneficiaries at the time of evaluation (largely as a result of alignment with government policy which reduced the targeted population). In Myanmar, 75 percent of the target was reached annually.

57. **Outcome results:** Results were available, and were positive, for all nine school feeding interventions. However, as for nutrition, above, much evidence was anecdotal. Evaluations in Bhutan and the Philippines both reported that attribution of improvements to WFP interventions was very uncertain. All relevant evaluations⁵² found outcome targets for enrolment, retention and completion either met or close to being met. However, in Bhutan, enrolment was achieved for girls but not boys. In Laos, enrolment improved, but retention (the proportion of pupils remaining in schooling until the end of grade five) did not increase significantly.

Livelihoods (Food assistance for assets/food assistance for training)

58. Eight operations⁵³ implemented food assistance for assets or training (FFA/FFT) activities. Planned beneficiary numbers were generally smaller than for other activity areas. The largest volumes targeted were in Pakistan, where over 400,000 beneficiaries were targeted in 2013 to 2014, and Myanmar, which targeted just under 370,000 and 380,000 participants in 2013 and 2014 respectively, and 175,000 in 2016.

59. **Output results:** Only three operations⁵⁴ found that FFA/FFT activities were on track or had met/exceeded output targets. In Afghanistan, the total number of participants was higher than planned due to community requests to include larger numbers in activities, at a cost of fewer work periods per person. Five operations⁵⁵ did not meet either beneficiary or asset creation targets, with reasons including resource constraints, late and restricted (earmarked for relief) donor contributions and postponed food assistance for assets activities to prioritise life-saving aid. In Laos, for example, due to a lack of funding, the intended food assistance for assets programme

⁵⁰ Bangladesh, Bhutan, Laos, Pakistan, the Philippines.

⁵¹ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, Pakistan, the Philippines.

⁵² Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Nepal, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines.

⁵³ All other than Bhutan.

⁵⁴ Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

⁵⁵ Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines.

only reached five per cent of planned beneficiaries, with only 16 food assistance for assets schemes carried out.

60. **Outcome results:** Data was available for seven operations, with findings mostly positive:

- Six evaluations⁵⁶ found that FFA/FFT activities achieved positive results in relation to food consumption scores, coping strategies, community asset scores and dietary diversity - though the Pakistan evaluation noted a short-term, potentially temporary food security impact.
- One evaluation, in Myanmar, found mixed progress, with only the improved community asset score showing achievement against target (though also noting that, where assets were created, meaningful improvements in household and community livelihood assets and road assets also occurred).

61. The quality and sustainability of assets under food assistance for assets activities created have been repeatedly raised within the operations evaluations series, along with a lack of links to resilience objectives. Findings from the Asia region reflect this concern:

- Four evaluations⁵⁷ found that assets built were of acceptable or good quality
- Four raised concerns:
 - Two in relation to quality and/or durability in part due to insufficient technical input on quality construction and/or reduction in numbers of available days of work (Nepal, Pakistan)
 - Two in relation to ongoing maintenance due to inadequate community capacity and resources (Cambodia, Pakistan)
 - One (Laos) in relation to relevance and poverty impact.

2.6 What other results have been generated, beyond outputs and outcomes?

Evaluations also report results which were not consistently captured in corporate reporting at the time, but which arose from the “enabling” role of WFP in the Asia and the Pacific region. They include: improved policy environments, enhanced national capacities, and results in social protection and resilience.

2.6.1 Improved policy environments

62. Evaluations identify contributions made to enhanced national policy environments in the region. Not all these results were captured in corporate reporting, particularly since operations were implemented over two strategic plan periods (2008-2013 and 2014-2017) with very different reporting frameworks. Table 2 provides examples:

⁵⁶ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines

⁵⁷ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar

Table 2: Policy environment results

| | |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Education</i> | Supporting the development of policy/legislative frameworks and national systems for school feeding (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, the Philippines.) Development of operational guidelines, standards and other approaches for school feeding (Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal) |
| <i>Nutrition</i> | Supporting the development of food security and nutrition policies (Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines) Supporting the mainstreaming of nutrition into wider sector policies, frameworks and interventions (Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines) |
| <i>Disaster preparedness and response</i> | Helping to develop national and decentralised policies, systems and approaches for emergency preparedness and response (Afghanistan, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines) Development of early warning systems (Afghanistan) Development/improvement of national planning and management instruments for disaster risk management (Pakistan) |

2.6.2 Enhanced national capacities

63. Several evaluations also recorded significant improvements in national capacities arising from WFP support to governments in the region. Examples are presented in Table 3:

Table 3: Capacity development results

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Disaster preparedness and response</i> | Conducting assessments and building infrastructure and capacity for emergency preparedness and disaster response capacity (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, the Philippines, Laos) |
| <i>Education</i> | Developing and enhancing decentralised capacity for the implementation of school feeding, including training on the roles and responsibilities of government staff at different levels for food delivery, distribution, storage, and monitoring processes (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar) |
| <i>Nutrition</i> | Institutionalising analytical and assessment tools (the Philippines) Developing tools, protocols and guidelines used by national authorities and partners (Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines) Modelling technical approaches, for example, to nutrition services which governments then adopted (Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines) |
| <i>Food security and nutrition monitoring/analytical capacity</i> | Developing local/national capacity for vulnerability, food insecurity and other mapping and analysis (Bangladesh, Laos, Nepal, Pakistan) |

64. Box 7 below provides an example of the WFP approach to capacity development in Bangladesh:

Box 7: Capacity development for education in Bangladesh

To build capacity in education in Bangladesh, WFP and the Government conducted annual assessments on a four-point scale to analyse five dimensions of capacity development: strong policy frameworks; stable funding and budgeting; strong institutional capacity and coordination; sound programme design and implementation; and strong community participation and ownership. The annual exercise highlighted progress in institutional capacity development and areas that needed further strengthening

65. Although capacity development efforts were generally praised in the region, evaluations still found limited analytical bases and weak strategic approaches. For example, although WFP has made major contributions to building government ability to implement national school feeding/food security and nutrition programmes in Bhutan and Nepal, its approaches to capacity development lacked a clear plan and intended results in Bhutan; and would have benefited from more consistent commitment and provision of technical expertise in Nepal.

2.6.3 Knowledge generation in the region

66. Within the Asia and the Pacific region, evaluations found WFP demonstrating a comparative advantage in knowledge generation to serve the country partnership. Three forms are identified: (i) providing high-quality food security and nutrition data, (ii) conducting/commissioning high-level technical research and studies to inform national decision-making (particularly in nutrition), and (iii) pilot testing new or innovative approaches to inform national decision-making. Table 4 provides examples.

Table 4: Evidence generation and knowledge products

(i) Providing high-quality food security and nutrition data

- **Nepal** - WFP partnered with government and other actors to produce the NeKSAP database, described as “the best go-to information on the real-time food security situation”. The evaluation found that NeKSAP “**is seen as a key public good which all actors benefit from. WFP has built government interest and capacity to own and institutionalise the system**”.
- **Afghanistan** - The PRRO, in conjunction with the European Union, contributed to the Afghanistan living conditions survey. The results and findings of the survey are widely used by government departments, United Nations agencies and NGOs.
- **Bangladesh** - WFP worked with the Government and Massey University to produce statistically valid **upazila**-level undernutrition maps for the country. These focus on stunting and underweight data.

(ii) Conducting/commissioning high-level technical research and studies to inform national decision-making (in nutrition, particularly)

- **Cambodia** – WFP contributed towards the implementation of the micronutrient deficiencies module, including data collection and analysis of a set of indicators to specifically help document deficiencies among mothers and children under two at national level. In addition, WFP partnered on a study on the effectiveness of different formulations of fortified rice.
- **Nepal** - Between 2012 and 2015 the country office supported the low birth weight South Asia trial to assess the effectiveness of supplementary feeding on birth weight outcomes.
- **Laos** - WFP commissioned a study to look at options for food fortification and marketing.
- **Philippines** - WFP conducted operational research with Save the Children on targeted supplementary feeding programmes to test community-based management of acute malnutrition

guidelines for the Philippines. A micronutrient powder study investigated implementation modalities and assisted the Government to include these in national policy.

- **Myanmar** - A joint study was conducted by WFP and Columbia University on the gendered aspects of care and treatment of malnourished children in Northern Rakhine State. WFP also commissioned a gender analysis in food assistance for assets activities and a study on gender and care practices.
- **Bangladesh** - WFP collaborated with the International Food Policy Research Institute on research to identify the best modalities for social safety net transfers.

(iii) Pilot testing new or innovative approaches to inform national decision-making

- **Nepal** - WFP conducted two pilot studies to support government decision-making on school feeding approaches: one on implementation modalities for a government-implemented cash-based school feeding programme; and another on nutrition-sensitive literacy.
- **Cambodia** - WFP tested new implementation models in nutrition and food assistance for assets and provided capacity development and support for scale-up.
- **The Philippines** - WFP collaborated with partners to develop a local ready-to-use supplementary food product based on mung beans.
- **Afghanistan** - A factory for high energy biscuits was set up in Jalalabad, funded through WFP. Production facilities for lipid-based nutrient supplements have been purchased.
- **Pakistan** - WFP provided technical support to pilot test the commercial fortification of refined wheat flour with iron/folate in association with 51 mills. WFP also developed a universal salt iodisation initiative.
- **Bangladesh** - WFP contributed evidence to social protection policy dialogue through pilots including rice fortification and cash grants to ultra-poor women.

2.6.4 Results in social protection/ social safety nets

67. Seven evaluations commented on the role of WFP in social protection or safety net frameworks in the region.⁵⁸ Five⁵⁹ found that WFP successfully contributed to the implementation of social protection frameworks in the region. For example:

- In the Philippines, WFP supported the Department of Social Welfare and Development's social protection policy to mainstream nutrition and food security considerations into the conditional cash transfer programme.
- In Bangladesh, WFP dialogue, evidence creation, capacity strengthening efforts and advocacy for strengthening government safety nets resulted in reformation of ongoing safety nets and exploration of new implementation modalities.
- In Cambodia, WFP played a greater enabling role through promoting capacity for scale up of model social protection programmes in the country.

68. Evaluations in Pakistan and Nepal recommended that WFP explore further links with social protection programmes in the country.

2.6.5 Results in resilience/disaster risk reduction

69. Six evaluations⁶⁰ commented on WFP contributions to resilience in the region. Five found positive results,⁶¹ with activities in food assistance for assets contributing to building resilience at community level in particular, though the lack of a link to a

⁵⁸ All other than Laos and Bhutan.

⁵⁹ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar, the Philippines.

⁶⁰ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines.

⁶¹ All of above, except Nepal.

wider strategic vision for resilience is noted in Bangladesh. In Nepal, WFP had not sufficiently engaged with available resilience frameworks.

70. At a policy level, WFP disaster preparedness activities focused on early warning systems, contingency plans and food insecurity monitoring, as outlined in Table 2. However, evaluations in the Philippines and Bangladesh note the lack of connection to broader emergency preparedness strategies in the country, and in Laos, activities were slow to start up.

2.6.6 Use of technology in innovation

71. Evaluations found some strong examples of technology-based or digital solutions being applied to support innovative solutions to realise food security and nutrition objectives in the Asia and the Pacific region. Examples include:

- The use of electronic cash transfer systems in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Myanmar and Cambodia, which were assessed as more secure, eliminating the need for beneficiaries to visit banks and allowing WFP to monitor usage through electronic data collected by private sector partners.
- Real time information platforms to support swift and efficient programme management decisions in Pakistan and Cambodia.

2.7 Gender, protection and accountability to affected populations

Gender was not systematically mainstreamed into operation implementation and results mostly focused on ‘including women’. Two evaluations however report more qualitative achievements from operations which adopted more progressive, empowerment-focused models of gender. Five evaluations reported on protection issues, with four finding that WFP had addressed these positively. Accountability to affected populations was a relative strength within the operations, with strong communication to beneficiaries and complaints mechanisms established.

72. **Gender:** Five out of nine evaluations⁶² found gender-sensitive implementation modalities in practice, with some operations, such as those in Afghanistan and Pakistan, having increased their attention to gender over time, adopting more gender-sensitive approaches as the operation evolved. However, in common with wider findings from the series, a quantitative ‘including women’ approach persisted in the other four operations.⁶³

73. Results achieved were mostly quantitative against corporate targets, focused on parity of inclusion, such as ratios of girls to boys in school feeding. Targets were achieved or mostly achieved in four operations;⁶⁴ but five operations missed targets in at least one activity.⁶⁵

74. Only two evaluations, in Nepal and Bangladesh, reported qualitative gender results that reflected more progressive approaches to gender equality. Achievements included increased social mobility for women, a stronger role for women in household decision-making, and more engagement by husbands in domestic tasks following a cash transfer pilot all in Bangladesh; and improved female status in communities in Nepal.

⁶² Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Laos, Myanmar, Pakistan.

⁶³ Bhutan, Cambodia, Nepal, the Philippines.

⁶⁴ Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, Pakistan.

⁶⁵ Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Nepal, the Philippines.

75. **Protection:** Five evaluations reported on protection.⁶⁶ Four found positively,⁶⁷ with few safety concerns encountered at delivery sites. Examples of good practice were identified: WFP in Pakistan developed a safe distribution model to make distribution sites women-friendly and also to engage women in the management of the process. In Myanmar, an externally-funded protection advisor joined the country office staff, which enabled more comprehensive mainstreaming of protection issues. In Nepal, the evaluation found few protection challenges reflected within corporate reporting, but noted that available reporting mechanisms did not allow context-specific protection concerns to be addressed.

76. **Accountability to affected populations:** Of seven evaluations reporting,⁶⁸ six found positively,⁶⁹ a higher proportion than in other regions. Beneficiaries were largely aware of their entitlements and/or of access to the programme. Complaints processes (whether hotlines or through WFP staff) were established in Afghanistan, Myanmar and Pakistan. In Bhutan, communication to beneficiaries, including on handover, was weak.

2.8 WFP partnerships in Asia and the Pacific region

Evaluations found WFP engaged in close and collaborative partnerships with governments in the Asia and the Pacific region, reflected in shared contributions to some operations. Relationships with partner United Nations agencies were less consistent, with opportunities for operational co-ordination missed.

77. **Government partners:** All nine evaluations praised the strength and collaborative nature of WFP partnerships with government in the region. Relationships were characterised as “collegial” (Bhutan) and “solid” (Cambodia), with WFP working “hand in hand” with government” (Nepal), “providing excellent co-ordination” (the Philippines), acting as “a valued partner” (Bangladesh), and “well-respected, appreciated for its proactive approach” (Pakistan). The trusted nature of these relationships is reflected in national government contributions to five operations in the region, with four of these being low-income countries.⁷⁰ Weaknesses, identified only in Laos and Bhutan, related to the need for improved communication and coordination, particularly at decentralised level.

78. **United Nations partners:** Relationships with partner United Nations agencies reflect wider inconsistencies found across this series overall. All nine evaluations found strategic alignment with the main policy frameworks at country level, such as United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF), and three evaluations found positive operational coordination also.⁷¹ However, seven evaluations also found limited coordination, and/or missed opportunities to partner on the ground.⁷² For example, in Nepal, whilst WFP partnerships with United Nations partners, donors and NGO consortia were active, the quality of the engagement was more limited, with concerns that WFP was narrowly focused on its own programmes and priorities.

2.9 Efficiency and agility in implementation

The majority of evaluations in the region found that WFP had delivered food and cash assistance in a timely way. Four found efforts to improve cost-efficiency. The agility of WFP and its willingness to adapt to changing conditions were explicitly praised in six evaluations,

⁶⁶ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal Pakistan.

⁶⁷ All the above, except Nepal.

⁶⁸ All other than Cambodia and Laos

⁶⁹ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines,

⁷⁰ Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal and Pakistan.

⁷¹ Laos, Pakistan, Philippines

⁷² Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, Nepal, Myanmar

though it had not adequately kept abreast of changing policy frameworks in Nepal. Transfer modalities were appropriate, with particular benefits noted for cash transfers, and local purchase was a priority in the region.

79. Timeliness was more consistent in the Asia and the Pacific region than elsewhere in this series, being mostly praised in the region's operations. Six evaluations found that WFP had delivered mostly uninterrupted food and cash assistance to beneficiaries, attesting to the efficiency of its logistics operations in often challenging environments. Delays in Laos, Pakistan and the Philippines arose from: external constraints (see Question 3, below); funding limitations; a slow emergency response in Laos; and delayed procurement agreements with government in the Philippines. Four operations encountered delays in food assistance for assets activities particularly, with approval processes slow in Laos and Bangladesh and payments delayed in Cambodia and the Philippines.

80. Four evaluations, of operations in Myanmar, Cambodia, Bangladesh and Laos, found explicit efforts to improve cost-efficiency. Measures included:

- A switch to cash from in-kind provision
- Increased local procurement
- Switching commodity types
- Bulking deliveries to reduce transport costs
- Efforts to improve targeting, for example by introducing vulnerability targeting approaches.

Box 8: Cost efficiency in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the evaluation noted that WFP support to government and private sector efforts towards market-based solutions to locally produce fortified products used in nutrition and food security programmes may increase the overall cost-effectiveness of these interventions

81. Internal synergies: these were a particular weakness identified in the region, commented on in the eight multi-component evaluations. Evaluations identified missed opportunities here as the most frequently noted constraint to results, alongside funding.

- Four⁷³ evaluations found weak or missing internal synergies. For example, in Cambodia, there was no linkage between school feeding and nutrition components, nor between food assistance for assets and school feeding activities. Similarly, disaster risk reduction appeared an add-on to the CP.
- Three evaluations, in Laos, the Philippines and Afghanistan, found mixed attention to synergies, with effective examples of integration in some areas, and missed opportunities or under-exploitation of synergies in others. For example, in the Philippines, WFP adopted an integrated approach in some communities, applying FFA/FFT activities in the same location, linked to school feeding and nutritional support via rural health centres. However, disaster preparedness and response programmes were kept separate from other activities.

⁷³ Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal and Pakistan.

- In Myanmar, attention to synergies was improving, since in 2016 WFP shifted to a cluster approach that better integrated food assistance for assets with nutrition and school feeding activities.

82. **Adaptive capacity:** WFP proactive approach to adapt to changing conditions reflected wider praise noted throughout this series, being commended in five evaluations.⁷⁴ Specifically:

- Four evaluations, in Myanmar, Laos, Pakistan and Bangladesh, commended the close engagement of WFP with government in continually reviewing the operating environment, population needs and the policy context.
- Evaluations in Cambodia and Bangladesh noted the changing role of WFP from operational delivery through to a more enabling model, focused on evidence generation, piloting and advocacy, in response to changing operational conditions.

83. However, in Nepal, where the policy context evolved considerably during the course of the CP, WFP did not keep fully abreast of changes, for example in social protection frameworks, limiting appropriateness over time.

Box 9: Agility in Myanmar

In Myanmar WFP ensured appropriateness through regular and systematic monitoring of the complex operational environment. The PRRO adapted its activities and transfer modalities based on monitoring conditions around food security, commodity prices and other market dynamics, changes in context and beneficiary populations

84. **Beneficiary entitlements:** All nine evaluations found WFP delivering less food or cash than intended to beneficiaries, and/or carrying out transfers for a shorter duration or with less frequency than planned. However, in some cases reductions were limited. In Bhutan, Laos and Pakistan, for example, over 80 percent of planned commodity delivery/work days were provided, whilst in Myanmar, beneficiaries received their full entitlement, though overall feeding days were below target in 2015.

85. **Transfer modalities:** All eight operations implementing cash and voucher transfers found positive effects in terms of food security and other benefits. Examples include:

- In Pakistan, WFP monitored beneficiary spending of the transfers received from cash for work projects to assess food security. Studies found that households spent the bulk of the cash transfer on food, with no adverse effects on the market as a result of cash injections into neighbouring communities.
- In Bangladesh, the cash grants provided to women under the enhancing food security pilot resulted in increased mobility, a stronger role for women in household decision-making, and more engagement by husbands in domestic tasks.

86. The close attention WFP paid to systematically assessing the feasibility and subsequent effects of cash transfers, including their effects on local markets and commodity prices, was also praised in five evaluations.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Pakistan.

⁷⁵ Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan

87. For in-kind transfers, acceptability was mixed: two evaluations reported that commodities provided were well-accepted by beneficiaries (Bhutan and Myanmar), whilst four find more limited acceptability. These concerned the use of corn soya blend in Cambodia and Pakistan; different rice types in Laos; and the use of sweet-tasting food under targeted supplementary feeding initiatives in Bangladesh (which had the unintended effect of making the transition to rice-based foods difficult when the supplementary food finished).

88. Local purchase was a priority in the region: eight out of nine⁷⁶ evaluations found substantial or increasing proportions of WFP commodity deliveries purchased in the country. For example:

- In Bhutan, around 80 percent of the food purchased by WFP in 2015 came from the local market while 20 percent was purchased internationally
- In Myanmar, nearly 95 percent of commodities were procured in country
- In Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh, Governments locally procured commodities and were responsible for procurement and transport of the food to WFP logistics hubs

89. Local procurement by WFP improved programme efficiency and planning by reducing transportation costs and delivery delays, whilst also providing a market for small vendors in some countries, such as Myanmar.

2.10 Sustainability and transition.

The implementation of transition strategies was inconsistent across the region. The potential for sustainability was only consistently high in one school feeding operation, being variable across individual activities in others. The potential for sustainability was strongest where activities were implemented in strong partnership with government.

90. All nine evaluations reported on sustainability and transition, with mixed performance. In line with wider inconsistencies identified throughout this series, transition strategies were well underway in four operations,⁷⁷ but assessed as inadequate or lacking overall in five, with concrete plans for handover not planned at design stage, or sufficiently developed during implementation.⁷⁸

91. Despite inconsistent planning and strategizing for transition, the potential for sustainability was assessed as high in Bhutan, where the school feeding programme was almost ready to be handed over to Government. However, the remaining eight evaluations found mixed potential for sustainability, with high levels of variation across activity types. Sustainability was most likely where government was closely involved in the planning and implementation of the programme.

92. Box 10 presents examples where WFP activities in the region were assessed as having strong potential for sustainability.

Box 10: Sustainability

- In Nepal, the NeKSAP food security information system was successfully handed over to Government. The evaluation found that “this represents a major success for WFP through a

⁷⁶ The Laos CP evaluation does not comment on the extent of local procurement in the country, although it notes that ‘WFP procures locally where feasible’ and a purchase for progress pilot activity formed part of the operation.

⁷⁷ Bangladesh, Laos, Myanmar and the Philippines

⁷⁸ Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cambodia, Nepal, Pakistan

process that has been appropriately tailored to the specific needs of the Government at different levels.”

- In Pakistan, WFP in collaboration with Government and key partners established a revolving fund mechanism to support the universal salt iodisation programme, managed by a non-profit organization, which has ensured long-term sustainability
- In Bangladesh, many WFP contributions under the CP were assessed as sustainable, since they formed part of, or were closely connected to, the Government’s own programmes, and some were financially supported in part by Government
- In Myanmar, WFP initiated transition towards self-reliance models for internally displaced persons in Kachin and Shan states and developed a transition strategy for Rakhine

QUESTION 3: What factors affected the results?

Summary findings: factors

External factors affecting results included climate-related challenges, financial volatility, national logistical and administrative delays, political and governance uncertainty or instability, and cultural issues. Funding-related concerns, such as short-term contributions and earmarking, also hindered effectiveness. While conducive policy environments (such as social protection frameworks) supported implementation, national capacity limitations were a constraint.

Internal barriers to effectiveness in the region were design flaws, targeting weaknesses, internal communication and limited human resources. However, strong and frequent external communication with partners, including governments, supported the achievement of results.

2.12 Internal and external factors

93. Evaluations identified a combination of internal and external factors which affected results. The external factors namely reported were:

- External environment: Climate-related challenges, including drought and floods, typhoons, culturally-entrenched gender inequalities, and political and governance uncertainty. Security and access difficulties arose in five out of nine evaluations.⁷⁹ Positively, conducive policy frameworks supported implementation in five countries,⁸⁰ and WFP was assessed as having constructively engaged with these in four⁸¹ to improve results. National capacity limitations proved a barrier across all evaluations albeit to varying degrees.
- Funding-related challenges: Funding was a major constraint for the region’s operations. Volumes ranged from 27 percent in Nepal at mid-term evaluation stage, to 86.8 percent at final evaluation stage in the Philippines (see Table 1). As well as limited funding volumes in themselves, seven evaluations raised challenges with the nature of funding provided,⁸² with challenges for WFP including: short-term funding, which constrained future planning; transition planning and staff sustainability; earmarking; and preferences for funding certain geographic areas or specific groups, rather than the operation as a whole. In Afghanistan and Nepal, the provision of in-kind donations rather

⁷⁹ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Pakistan, , the Philippines

⁸⁰ Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar, and Pakistan

⁸¹ All of above, but Bangladesh

⁸² Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines,

than cash limited WFP in its alignment with Government preferences for transfer modalities.

The internal factors namely reported were:

- A number of targeting weaknesses were identified including divergence between national and WFP approaches in Bhutan; inclusion and exclusion errors in Pakistan; increased effort required to reach vulnerable outlying populations in Cambodia, Nepal and the Philippines; and maintaining geographical spread at the cost of effectiveness for beneficiaries in Nepal. Evaluations however consistently praised WFP willingness and commitment to work in hard-to-reach or challenging areas of countries, for example in Nepal, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Pakistan and others.
- Internal communication within WFP offices and between WFP and its cooperating or other local partners was identified as a barrier in three evaluations.⁸³ This was linked to weak internal synergies and includes centralised decision-making, for example in Pakistan.
- Human resources – in all cases due to funding restrictions – was a constraint in six evaluations.⁸⁴ In some countries this led to WFP lacking sufficient technical expertise in key activity areas such as food assistance for assets and nutrition; whilst in others it reduced capacity and expertise at area or sub-office level. In Bhutan, human resource constraints meant that staff lacked sufficient time for handover facilitation and capacity strengthening, on top of the regular school feeding activities.
- External communication with governments, donors and other humanitarian actors was praised in five operations⁸⁵ but room for improvement was found in four.⁸⁶ Specific areas for improvement included closer engagement in national-level technical and strategic fora in Nepal; improved and clearer messaging on future directions for activities in the Philippines; the need to keep government officials informed of WFP choices and actions in Laos; and the need for a communication strategy to guide the handover process in Bhutan. The need for improved communication with cooperating partners was also noted in Bangladesh.
- Regional bureau support was praised in five evaluations.⁸⁷ This included: support for a gender review in Myanmar; food assistance for assets and monitoring and evaluation in Afghanistan; nutrition advice in Cambodia; cash transfers in Pakistan; and targeting/monitoring and evaluation in Bhutan.

⁸³ Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan

⁸⁴ Afghanistan, Bhutan, Laos, Nepal, Myanmar the Philippines, Myanmar

⁸⁵ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Myanmar

⁸⁶ Bhutan, Laos, Nepal and the Philippines

⁸⁷ Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Pakistan

3. EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS

94. Over the period 2013-2017, evaluations presented WFP country offices in the region with a series of recommendations for improvement. The most frequently-occurring themes are set out below (all occurring in three evaluations or more). All recommendations in the region’s operations evaluations were accepted or partially accepted by country offices, with only one (in Nepal)⁸⁸ not accepted.

Table 5: Evaluation recommendations

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Enhance nutrition approaches and modalities, with a particular focus on increasing communication to/mobilisation of communities regarding messaging and behaviour change | 8 operations ⁸⁹ |
| 2. Intensify attention to, and improve technical approaches to, gender across analysis, activities and monitoring and reporting. | 5 operations ⁹⁰ |
| 3. Improve the evidence base through better data management and reporting quality, particularly improving the utility of information to support decision making | 5 operations ⁹¹ |
| 4. Increase technical capacity in specific areas of WFP programming (nutrition and disaster risk reduction) | 4 operations ⁹² |
| 5. Create and implement a handover plan, as part of the transfer of responsibilities to partners | 3 operations ⁹³ |
| 6. Invest in studies and research to improve the evidence base for activity formulation | 3 operations ⁹⁴ |
| 7. Increase planning and strategising with other actors in areas such as nutrition for more harmonised approaches at country level | 3 operations ⁹⁵ |
| 8. Refine targeting approaches to focus on the most vulnerable beneficiaries in need | 3 operations ⁹⁶ |

95. The most frequently occurring recommendations therefore related to WFP nutrition approaches, reflecting their importance as a strategic priority in the region, and focusing particularly on maximising the value of supply-focused initiatives by integrating nutrition and/or behaviour change messaging. The need to improve approaches to gender – reflected in Section 2.7 above – is also identified in evaluation recommendations, as is the need to move efforts beyond a focus on monitoring and

⁸⁸ “Recommendation 9. Within the 2017 planning process, CO programme management supported by relevant technical advisors within RB should explore with MOE the possibilities and options for extending support to targeted secondary schools to promote the transition of girls into secondary education, in consideration of the high drop-out rates and high rates of child marriage. Criteria related to equity, gender, socially excluded groups (deaf children), caste discrimination and most vulnerable catchment areas could be considered to target secondary school support. Creative approaches should be considered, such as the girls’ incentive programme resource transfer and creation of synergies with other actors to address comprehensively the multiple issues that prevent girls as well as boys from accessing secondary education.” In response, the country office indicated that this would be a substantial increase on the change in beneficiary population which requires assessment or impact of activities amongst WFP beneficiary group and multiyear commitment. It committed to reviewing this recommendation as part of country strategic plan preparations.

⁸⁹ All other than Bhutan.

⁹⁰ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan Nepal.

⁹¹ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Philippines.

⁹² Bangladesh, Bhutan, Laos, Pakistan.

⁹³ Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cambodia.

⁹⁴ Bhutan, Cambodia, Myanmar.

⁹⁵ Afghanistan, Laos, Nepal.

⁹⁶ Cambodia, Nepal, Philippines.

evaluation, alone, to data management and robust evidence generation which focuses on results.

96. Human resource challenges are also reflected in evaluation recommendations to improve dedicated technical capacity in specific programming areas. The need to: plan for transition; improve the evidence base for activity planning; and refine targeting approaches were also priorities for the region, as identified by evaluations.

4. CONCLUSIONS

97. The eleven operations evaluations undertaken in the Asia and the Pacific region have provided some valuable insights and lessons from four years of operational implementation in the region. The evaluations have drawn a number of conclusions.

98. In a dynamic region, the predominant role of WFP is now as an enabling partner. Evaluations found that WFP has a clear sense of its own strategic role and comparative advantage in the region. Holding this knowledge, and at the same time adapting to contextual shifts, the role of WFP is progressing rapidly to a more upstream model, focused on policy development, capacity enhancement, technical advice, knowledge transfer and evidence generation. This shift has been encouraged by: changing needs; changes in the national policy and implementation architecture for food security and nutrition; and changing international funding patterns.

99. WFP has focused its direct delivery on locations where the most vulnerable populations require ongoing food assistance – whether due to insecurity, displacement, chronic poverty or natural disaster. Sometimes, these locations occur in countries experiencing rapid development and where national capacities are high, such as the Philippines.

100. WFP and governments are working together in progressive models of partnerships in many countries in the region. Perhaps reflecting the conducive nature of some of the policy and governance environments in which WFP works in the Asia and the Pacific region, partnerships with government are recorded in evaluations as strongly mutual in nature. Governments – even in low-income countries - contribute to WFP operations. Designs are developed jointly, with WFP contributions geared where feasible to the delivery of national initiatives, and ongoing collaborative working shaping adaptation in practice. This is not consistent across operations, however.

101. WFP has grounded its designs within country humanitarian partnerships but cooperation is less than systematic in practice. Whilst designs reflect a strong positioning within the identified food security and nutrition response at country level, cooperation and coordination with the humanitarian and development architecture is weaker in practice. Missed opportunities for cooperation are consistently reflected across evaluations, within all activity types.

102. Knowledge generation is a strength. Arising less from a strategic choice and more from responsiveness to context, evaluations in the Asia and the Pacific region reflect a strong capability and willingness for WFP to undertake knowledge generation. This often takes the form of highly sophisticated technical research or studies; assessing approaches to nutrition interventions, for example, or examining options for fortification. It has also, in several countries, provided the ‘go to’ food security and nutrition information basis for the country. Such a clear comparative advantage positions WFP well for a more strategic role in the region in future.

103. Internal synergies are a consistent weakness. Whilst some examples of good practice emerge, alongside an apparent trend for stronger integration, reduced effectiveness for beneficiaries and potential cost inefficiencies due to poor internal coherence is a consistent theme across evaluations. In a region where mostly conducive conditions exist, in the form of conducive policy frameworks, strong national support and (in some countries) capable cooperating partners, the lack of such synergies arises simply from poor design.

104. Gender is 'behind the curve' in operation designs and implementation. As reflected in evaluation recommendations, gender has been neither consistently implemented into operations designs in the region, nor implemented with attention to 'more than numbers' in practice. The approach might well be characterised as 'hitting the target' (of equal numbers) in some but 'missing the point.'

105. Whilst evidence generation is a technical and strategic strength, WFP internal data generation and management systems have lacked rigour, reliability and accuracy. Beyond mere monitoring and evaluation, systems require an improved focus on results reporting, geared to support programmatic decision-making, and harmonised data management systems. In particular, given WFP comparative strengths in the region, the advent of the new strategic plan may provide an opportunity to better capture WFP policy support and knowledge-generation results.

106. For individual activity areas:

- **General distribution:** General distribution was implemented in less than half the evaluated operations in the region, but remained a critical instrument for humanitarian support to specific vulnerable groups. It was implemented at scale. Whilst caseloads varied according to needs, outcome results were largely positive.
- **Nutrition:** Nutrition was implemented in almost all operations, reflecting its strategic importance in the region, and also at considerable scale in some countries. However, results were weaker than in other activity areas, with no activity fully meeting its output targets, though interventions showed some positive outcome results (albeit with inconsistent quality of evidence).
- **Education:** School feeding was implemented in all nine operations evaluated, reflecting (as for nutrition) its role in social protection frameworks in the region. WFP interventions were frequently geared to support national programmes. Activities generally performed well in meeting output and outcome targets, though attribution to WFP interventions was not always certain.
- **Livelihoods:** Food assistance for assets activities were often (though not always) geared to resilience objectives in the region, and were implemented at a smaller scale than other activity areas. Results were mixed, with only three operations finding positive results at output level, though gains were stronger at outcome level. However, four evaluations raised concerns about the quality and sustainability of assets created.

107. Finally, the WFP approach to resilience and emergency preparedness indicates strong potential, as well as scope for greater coherence in the region. Many positive gains in improving resilience at local level are noted in evaluations, but also some missed opportunities to link to broader frameworks. Much valuable work is also being done to improve emergency preparedness, but as for resilience, this is not consistently linked to wider strategic intentions to improve preparedness as part of risk identification, management and mitigation in the relevant country.

5. LESSONS

108. A number of lessons can be drawn from these eleven evaluations for the Asia and the Pacific region.

1. Ensure consistency. With a clear sense (but not always consistent application) of its role and remit in the region, WFP may benefit from ensuring consistency across the region in terms of a) defining its strategic position within the humanitarian and development community in countries and b) identifying where its assets and comparative advantages are most effectively and efficiency deployed. Country strategic planning may usefully articulate the organisation's specific assets and capacities (such as in capacity development, knowledge generation and transfer, the use of technological and digital solutions, research, logistics, the use of technology and the development of cash solutions) and, in specific terms, where and how these competencies can be deployed within the country partnership for maximum effectiveness.
2. **Analyse partnership dynamics:** Strategic partnerships are a strength of WFP in the region but are highly varied, being embedded within diverse governance and political (and political economy) systems, including at decentralised level. Explicitly analysing, and seeking to understand, the political and strategic dynamics of partnership as part of country planning – such as, for example, through political economy analysis – will help WFP better understand not just national capacities, but also (in line with the forward-looking approach of the Integrated Road Map) to identify political and strategic risk, as well as future opportunities for engagement.
3. **Apply risk-informed programming:** In a region prone to sudden shocks and climate-related disasters, WFP may find it useful to consistently apply the conceptual framework of a risk-informed approach to programming. This means: taking an overarching view of political, strategic, operational and climate-related risk, including strong analysis of vulnerability to shocks in country planning design; applying relevant programming approaches within a clear resilience and emergency preparedness framework; and retaining the flexibility for direct delivery capacity, where relevant, when conditions require.
4. **Scope social protection:** As part of the country strategic planning process, WFP may find it useful to conduct a detailed analysis of the role of social protection frameworks within the country context: their state of development, political dimensions and priorities, national capacities and financing. The country-level role of WFP in social protection, where relevant, can then be defined accordingly, and in relation to current frameworks in the region.
5. **Communise and fundraise:** Funding constraints consistently arise as a major constraint to effectiveness across the evaluations analysed here. A more strategic approach – and supportive action by donors – is required if WFP is to benefit from the sort of flexible, medium-term funding which will enable it to fully realise its contributions to the wider partnership at country level. A region-level overview of funding instruments, including those offered by national governments and development banks in the region, with approaches focused less on individual operations, and more oriented to a country-based 'case for support', linked to the country strategic reviews, may support resource-raising.

Allied to this, a communication strategy which clearly articulates the distinctive assets and capacities of WFP within the region, should be developed.

6. **Define and strengthen capacity development:** As part of the country strategic planning process, in all its country offices and in all its activity areas, WFP should base its programming on a robust analysis of national capacities in the country. This analysis forms the information base to prepare capacity development plans, not only at operation but also – critically - at individual activity level.
7. **Define and mainstream gender:** Despite considerable corporate action in recent years, the WFP approach to gender in the Asia and the Pacific region lacks rigour and technical sophistication. It requires stronger and more consistent implementation into operations’ designs in the region, and a conceptual understanding more in tune with current approaches to gender equality and the empowerment of women. These go “beyond numbers” to systematically mainstream gender into needs assessments and analysis (the gender-related causes of food insecurity), target group selection, programme design and implementation, and to recognise unintended consequences, such as gender-based violence. In the Asia and the Pacific region, WFP would benefit from a clear articulation of “what gender means” for the organization, and from implementing a concentrated ‘push’ on gender as part of forthcoming country planning processes.

Annex 1: Partnerships per country⁹⁷

| Country | Government | United Nations Agencies | NGOs |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bhutan (200300) | Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC) Ministry of Education (MoE) School Health and Nutrition Division (SHND) Policy and Planning Division (PPD) Ministry of Health (MoH) Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF) Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority | FAO UNFPA UNICEF WHO | N/A |
| Myanmar (200299) | Ministry of Planning and Finance (MoPF) Ministry for the Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs (NaTaLa) Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MoALI) Ministry of Health and Sports (MoH) Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR) Ministry of Education (MoE) Department of Rural Development Township General Administrative Department District Relief and Resettlement Department. | FAO UNOCHA UNAIDS UNDP UNFPA UNHCR UNICEF UNODC WHO | Action Contre la Faim (ACF) Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) International Aide Médicale Internationale (AMI) Asian Harm Reduction Network (AHRN) Association of Medical Doctors of Asia (AMDA) Consortium of Dutch NGOs (CDN) Health Poverty Action (HPA) Malteser International |

⁹⁷ Source: Operational Factsheet of each operation Evaluation Report

| Country | Government | United Nations Agencies | NGOs |
|---------|------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | <p>Médecins Du Monde France (MDM)</p> <p>Médecins Sans Frontières – Holland, Organisation for Industrial, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement (OISCA)</p> <p>Partners Asia</p> <p>Plan International</p> <p>Save the Children International</p> <p>Terre des Hommes Italia</p> <p>World Vision International</p> <p>Progetto Continenti (PC)</p> <p>Action for Green Earth (AGE)</p> <p>All Country Agency for Rural Development (ACRD)</p> <p>Ar Yone Oo Social Development Association (AYO)</p> <p>Community Association for Rural Development (CARD)</p> <p>Grassroots Empowerment and Ecosystem Nurturing</p> <p>Karuna Myanmar Social Solidarity (KMSS)</p> <p>Medical Action Myanmar</p> |

| Country | Government | United Nations Agencies | NGOs |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | <p>Myanmar Health Assistant Association (MHAA) Myanmar Heart Development Organisation (MHDO)</p> <p>Network Activities Group (NAG)</p> <p>Noble Compassionate Volunteers (NCV)</p> <p>Myanmar Enhancement to Empower Tribal (MEET)</p> <p>Rahmonnya Peace Foundation (RPF), Renewable Energy Association Myanmar (REAM).</p> <p>International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)</p> |
| Cambodia (200202) | <p>Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS),</p> <p>Ministry of Health (MoH)</p> <p>Ministry of Rural Development (MRD)</p> <p>National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development (NCDD) and Sub-National Administration (incl. Commune Councils and Districts)</p> <p>Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD)</p> <p>National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM)</p> | <p>FAO</p> <p>UNAIDS</p> <p>SUNI</p> <p>CEFWHO</p> <p>World Bank</p> | <p>AMK</p> <p>CARE</p> <p>Education Partnership</p> <p>For the Smile of a Child</p> <p>Kampuchean Action for Primary Education (KAPE)</p> <p>Plan International Cambodia</p> <p>Samaritan's Purse</p> <p>School Aid Japan</p> <p>World Vision</p> |

| Country | Government | United Nations Agencies | NGOs |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | Caritas Cambodia Khana RACHA |
| Nepal (200319) | Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development Ministry of Agricultural Development Ministry of Education Ministry of Health and Population Ministry of Home Affairs National Planning Commission | FAO UNICEF IFAD UN WOMEN | SAPPROS Manahari Development Institute (MDI) World Education Open Learning Exchange (OLE) Himalayan Health and Environmental Services Solukhumbu (HHESS) Center for Disaster Management (CDM) Integrated Development Society (IDS) Nepal Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN) Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) |
| Lao PDR (200242) | Ministry of Planning and Investment Ministry of Health Ministry of Education and Sports Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare; Lao Women's Union | UNICEF IFAD FAO WHO World Bank UNDP | World Vision Save the Children International Lao Red Cross Oxfam CARE International Plan International |

| Country | Government | United Nations Agencies | NGOs |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Lao Youth Union Lao Front for National Construction Post Office Ministry of Industries | | ADRA Norwegian Church Aid |
| Philippines (200296) | The Department of Social Welfare and Development Department of Health | FAO UNDP UNFPA UN HABITAT UNHCR UNICEF | Community and Family Services International Helen Keller International Save the Children Plus 17 national NGOs (unlisted) |
| Afghanistan (200477) | Ministry of Education Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled Ministry of Public Health Ministry of Women's Affairs Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development Community development councils | UNHCT UNHCR UNICEF UNOCHA FAO | Afghanaid Agha Khan Foundation Aide Medicale Internationale Danish Afghanistan Committee HealthNet TPO Hilfe Zur Selbsthilfe Hungarian Interchurch Aid International Medical Corps International Organization for Migration International Rescue Committee |

| Country | Government | United Nations Agencies | NGOs |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | Premier Urgence-AIDE Medicale Internationale Rupani Foundation Save the Children Federation, Inc. Shelter For Life International Shelter Now International Swedish Committee for Afghanistan World Vision International Concern Worldwide HELP |
| Bangladesh (200243) | Economic Relations Division of the Ministry of Finance Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Ministry of Primary and Mass Education Ministry of Women and Children Affairs Ministry of Local Government Rural Development and Cooperatives Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief Ministry of Food | FAO UNESCO ILO REACH | Action Contre la Faim Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee Helen Keller International Muslim Aid Save the Children Terre des Hommes IFPRI Institute of Development Studies, Massey University International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) |

| Country | Government | United Nations Agencies | NGOs |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | <p>Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)</p> <p>17 national NGOs (unlisted)</p> |
| <p>Pakistan (200250)</p> | <p>Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Economic Affairs Division, National Disaster Management Authority</p> <p>Planning Commission (including Nutrition)</p> <p>National Programme for Family Planning and Primary Health Care (NPFP & PHC).</p> <p>Provincial and district levels: Development, Health, Food and Agriculture and Education Departments.</p> | <p>FAO UNHCR UNICEF UNOCHA United Nations Women WHO</p> | <p>ACF Islamic Relief Pakistan MERLIN SCF Johanniter.</p> <p>22 National NGOs including BEST, CRDO, CERD, SRSP, PEACE, AJKRSP and others</p> |

Acronyms

| | |
|------|------------------------------------------|
| AAP | accountability to affected populations |
| CO | country office |
| CP | country programme |
| DEV | development programme |
| DRR | disaster risk reduction |
| EMOP | emergency operation |
| FFA | food assistance for assets |
| FFT | food assistance for training |
| GD | general distribution |
| MAM | moderate acute malnutrition |
| OEV | Office of Evaluation |
| PRRO | protracted relief and recovery operation |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| UN | United Nations |
| VAM | vulnerability analysis and mapping |
| WFP | World Food Programme |

Office of Evaluation
www.wfp.org/evaluation



World Food Programme