



# WFP EVALUATION



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES  
CHANGING LIVES

## COUNTRY CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

*Lessons from WFP initiatives in NECD*

Supporting the 2014 United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution ([A/RES/69/237](#)), the evaluation function of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is working with countries and partners across the globe on national evaluation capacity development (NECD). This brief identifies nine overarching lessons from five distinct NECD action areas since 2018. The five action areas are captured in five thematic briefs, that could be viewed below:



### 49 PARTNERS



Governments



UN agencies and multi- & bilateral organizations



VOPEs, CSOs and academia



Global coalitions

## CONTEXT

WFP is increasingly engaging in a wide range of NECD-related activities partnering with governments and non-governmental actors around the world. This includes support for scaling up country-led evaluations (CLEs), so countries are leading evaluations that are useful to them in their contexts.

Reflecting on this experience, WFP captured the learning in a [series](#) of **five briefs** that documented 22 initiatives in 25 countries between 2018 and 2022.

The briefs were guided by [UNEG's Theory of Change for NECD](#), the five pathways of WFP's Corporate Framework for Country Capacity Strengthening (CCS) and the three domains for capacity development: enabling environment, organizational, individual.

The lesson learning exercise aimed to inform WFP and the NECD community at a time when:

- UN agencies were called to strengthen coordination and sharing knowledge, as a result of the recommendations in the [UNEG study on progress made in the implementation of the 2014 UNGA resolution](#)
- WFP transitions to an updated [Evaluation Policy](#) and Corporate Evaluation Strategy, with NECD as one of the outcomes, to be achieved through developing and implementing WFP's first Action Plan on NECD.
- Progress under the first generation of WFP's Regional Evaluation Strategies (RES) is able to inform NECD priorities in the second generation of RES being drafted in 2022.

## **1 Programme-monitoring-evaluation coordination helps better align NECD actions to government needs.**

WFP M&E units at country level involved in programmatic discussions around CCS are better positioned to provide technical assistance to partners when national policies and frameworks had to be designed or reinforced, resulting in more evaluative thinking. It is also an opportunity for evaluation colleagues to expand their network within the Government and initiate discussions on how to support NECD-related demands in the future.

## **2 Decentralized evaluation functions that are technically strong and possess a mature relationship with government and national partners are best placed to add value to country-led evaluations.**

Substantive support to CLEs requires coordinated mobilization of evaluation, monitoring and programmatic expertise at different stages. This is a reminder for WFP to strategically discuss a country's NECD gaps as part of a broader CCS workplan during conversations with partners on country strategic plan (CSP) formulation and implementation. This will ensure that WFP and UN partners' advisory role with national entities is informed by evaluation thinking, standards and procedures.

## **3 NECD initiatives that are results-oriented or product driven are more likely to gain partner trust.**

A results-orientation approach contributes to strengthening partnerships, helps clarify expectations and roles, and helps other partners to join at any time. On the other hand, partnerships without a shared workplan or specific expected results prove harder to clarify contributions and mutual accountability in terms of progress.

## **4 Engagement in joint- and country-led evaluations can act as a catalyst for future capacity development cooperation.**

As joint evaluation and CLE processes unfold based on national needs and mutual commitment, individuals involved at various stages can reflect on institutional and individual capacities needed to conduct independent evaluations. This provides entry points to future, longer-term NECD opportunities and allowed WFP to better understand the public administration context, ensuring that technical assistance is better organized to provide guidance in developing national evaluation frameworks.

## **5 Prioritising national needs is key to effective joint evaluations.**

Joint evaluations require many elements to work effectively. The following logic is present in more successful joint evaluations:

- a) Integrating national needs in the discussion
- b) Opening spaces for a sense of ownership by the government
- c) Clarifying roles, evaluation scope, key questions, funding, and timing
- d) Co-chairing the steering committee that facilitates commitment
- e) Appointing a dedicated senior government official as co-manager

## **6 Process guides and quality assurance systems, like WFP's DEQAS, are instrumental in building the confidence of national staff to manage evaluations.**

The WFP [Decentralized Evaluation Quality Assurance System](#) guidance is easily adaptable to government 'language' and public administration context for joint evaluations and CLEs. Its tools can be tailored for more complex evaluations.

## **7 Government-driven, UN-coordinated multi-stakeholder partnerships are best equipped to map and assess national evaluation capacities.**

Most countries are willing to cooperate in NEC mapping exercises. As many actors are involved, the most useful mapping or assessments of national and regional capacities are planned and conducted in a coordinated manner to avoid duplication and to minimize an 'extractive' exercise for external use only.

## **8 Global networks and coalitions help to avoid duplication, share resources and increase advocacy but require a bottom-up, jointly planned regional approach.**

Meaningful initiatives at global level complement and inform existing work at regional and country level where there is considerable, though often fragmented and dispersed, grassroots activity. Better coordination with a regional scope gives added value, piecing together, co-planning and raising the voice of the multiple networks and UN-Government partnerships present in the NECD space.

## **9 Participation in regional M&E UN working groups opens opportunities for more coordinated NECD engagement.**

Regional gatherings present opportunities for WFP to share knowledge with partners about NECD activities conducted and the potential for scale up. Engagement in UN M&E working groups at country level is uneven and, with regional evaluation units' support, requires better understanding on how NECD could be part of CCS priorities in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Guidance Framework.

## GUIDING NECD PRINCIPLES

The lessons learning exercise confirmed the added value of the five CCS principles adapted to NECD, with better results when those were applied by WFP and partners.

### COORDINATED PARTNERSHIP

The more multi-stakeholder, inclusive, and effectively coordinated the partnership, the more the chances for NECD results to be adopted and sustained. This is particularly relevant when implementing complex initiatives related to M&E systems requiring a combination of resources and expertise from multiple partners.

### COUNTRY OWNERSHIP

NECD efforts are likely to be sustainable if led by national entities. When national entities outline the changes or products needed, and pace partners' contributions, it facilitates constructive approaches to capacity goals and results.

### RECOGNITION OF CAPACITIES

Identifying and recognizing existing capacities is critical to effective NECD. When actions are based on and adapted to national capacities, progress is more likely and sustainable.

### MUTUAL TRUST AND COMMITMENT

Cooperative relationships based on mutual trust and commitment (in terms of resources, knowledge and tools) are as important for the long-term success of NECD.

### TIME AND FLEXIBILITY

Long-lasting NECD results require time and patience on all sides, so that investment can grow. It also requires flexibility to recognize changing needs over time and acceptance of the complexity of the evaluation ecosystem and its interlinkages.

## HOW WAS THE LESSONS EXERCISE DONE?

The lessons are based on the experiences and knowledge of stakeholders involved the NECD initiatives. The briefs were prepared through the following sequence:

- review of background material (products or documentation, recorded of sessions and videos)
- review of NECD literature and relevant external documents
- interviews with or writing inputs collected from WFP and partner's staff involved in the initiatives



28

Interviews



47

Documents  
reviewed



19

Questionnaires

The lessons were captured in five briefs:

- **Mapping evaluation capacities**
- **Technical assistance to governments**
- **Supporting joint and supporting country-led evaluations**
- **Collaborating with VOPEs and other evaluation stakeholders**
- **Global advocacy**

Each brief outlines: the context, WFP's contribution, the results achieved, the emerging lessons, and pre-conditions for scale-up.



# INITIATIVES BY COUNTRY

BRIEF	SHORT TITLE	COUNTRY/REGION	PARTNERS	PERIOD
1	NEC index	LAC region	7 Governments, D'Eval, RELAC, 4 UN agencies, IADB and a working group of more than 40 members	Since 2019
	Mapping & Assessing NECD in East Africa	Djibouti, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda	4 Governments	2019-2020
2	Secondment of M&E expert to DMEO	India	DMEO - NITI Aayog	Since 2020
	M&E Framework	Lesotho	Ministry of Education	2020
	Technical assistance M&E system	Tunisia	Office of School Services	2021
3	Joint evaluations	Lesotho	Ministry of Education	2017-2018
		Benin	Ministry of Primary and Preschool Education	2019
		Namibia	Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture	2019-2020
		Eswatini	Ministry of Education	2019
		Dominican Republic	Ministry of Presidency and National Health Service	2021-2022
	Country-led evaluations	India	Development M&E Office (DMEO)	Since 2017
		Peru	Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion	2018-2019
4	EvaluVision	Bangladesh, Lao, Myanmar, Sri Lanka	4 Governments, 1 UN agency, 1 NGO, local authorities, and communities	2019-2021
		Egypt	Ministry of Social Solidarity, IFPRI, Save The Children	2018
	Collaboration with SAMEA	South Africa	SAMEA, CLEAR, UNICEF	Since 2018
5	GPF – EvalColombo	Global / Sri Lanka	Global Parliamentarians Forum, EvalPartners	2018
	gLOCAL Evaluation Week	Global	CLEAR	Since 2018
	Global Evaluation Initiative	Global	GEI, CLEAR	Since 2021
	EvalPartners	Global	EvalPartners umbrella	Since 2019
	Promoting CLE of the SDGs	Global	UN agencies, EvalPartners, IDEAS	Since 2021
	UNEG NEC Working Group	Global	UNEG	Since 2020

## GLOSSARY

**Capacity development (CD)** is the process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time (in order to achieve development results). Capacities can be grouped in three levels: individual, organizational, and enabling environment, which altogether are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. (Source: OECD/DAC, adopted by the [UNDG](#)).

**Country Capacity Strengthening (CCS) for WFP** is the process through which individuals, organisations and societies obtain, strengthen, and maintain their capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time. It is about building on existing skills, knowledge, systems and institutions to enable governments to take responsibility for investing in and managing hunger solutions. (Source: WFP's CCS Framework, adopted from UNDG, OECD/DAC).

**National Evaluation Capacity Development (NECD)** is the process whereby state and non-state entities and individuals expand, reinforce and sustain national capacity to manage, produce and use evaluation. NECD is linked to national priorities and ultimately aims at strengthening governance through accountability and learning. (Source: [UNEG](#)).

**National Evaluation System (NES)** – or national M&E system – consider all norms, actors, structures, and processes that allow for the planning, implementation and use of evaluations to assess national public policies, recognizing the importance of both the ability to provide sound evidence (supply side) as well as the capacity within the system for institutions and individuals to use information (demand side). A broader evaluation ecosystem and culture may include other systems and players that contribute to the practice of evaluation, such as parliaments, universities and VOPEs. (Source: [UNEG 2012 & 2022](#); [Haarich, S.N.](#); [Holvoet, N.](#) & [Renard, R.](#); [Furubo et al.](#))

This brief was prepared as part of a collaboration with the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa ([CLEAR-AA](#))

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