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Evaluation of the WFP People Strategy (2014-2017)

Evaluation Report: Volume I

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Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION AND EVALUATION FEATURES

1. Approved in 2014, the WFP People Strategy (2014–2017) is now in its sixth year of implementation and its inclusion in the Office of Evaluation workplan (2019–2021) was therefore timely.
2. The three main evaluation questions for this evaluation were:
 - How good is the strategy?
 - What were the results of the strategy?
 - Why has the strategy produced the results observed?
3. The evaluation covers the period 2014–2019. Between April and June 2019, evaluation data were collected at the global, regional and country levels through the following lines of inquiry:
 - a retrospective construction of the theory of change underlying the WFP People Strategy;
 - a document and literature review;
 - a review of relevant datasets, including global staff survey results;
 - group interviews with over 580 employees conducted by contract type during field missions at WFP country offices in Afghanistan, Algeria, Burundi, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Nicaragua, Senegal, the Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania and to the regional bureaux in Johannesburg and Panama;¹
 - key informant interviews with WFP headquarters employees currently and formerly based in Rome; and
 - a review of comparator organizations – the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the private-sector firm Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (KPMG) – using a document review and interviews.
4. Primary intended users of the evaluation are the Human Resources Division (HR), regional directors, country directors and their human resource officers, the leadership group, the Legal Office, headquarters directors and staffing coordinators, the Ethics Office, the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services and the Inspector General and Oversight Office.
5. Certain limitations were encountered, including the lack of a fourth comparator organization; the unavailability of Executive Board members for interviews; and the inability to disaggregate interview data by gender owing to the organization of group interviews by contract type. Those limitations did not affect the quality of the data collection process.

CONTEXT

6. The WFP People Strategy was approved in November 2014. While entitled a “strategy”, it was approved by the Executive Board and included in the WFP policy compendium. It is structured around four imperatives and 11 related initiatives and articulates the goal of WFP’s human resource function becoming less “transactional” and more “strategic”.
7. The evaluation uses the term “WFP staff” to refer to international professional staff, junior professional officers, national professional officers and general service staff, while “other employees” refers to consultants, United Nations volunteers, fellowship holders, interns, service contract and special service agreement holders and WFP volunteers.

¹ Field mission locations were chosen based on the criteria of geographic balance, balance of different office sizes and staffing trends, different types of programmatic activities and human resource structures, and avoiding overlap with field missions related to other evaluations, audits and the organizational realignment process.

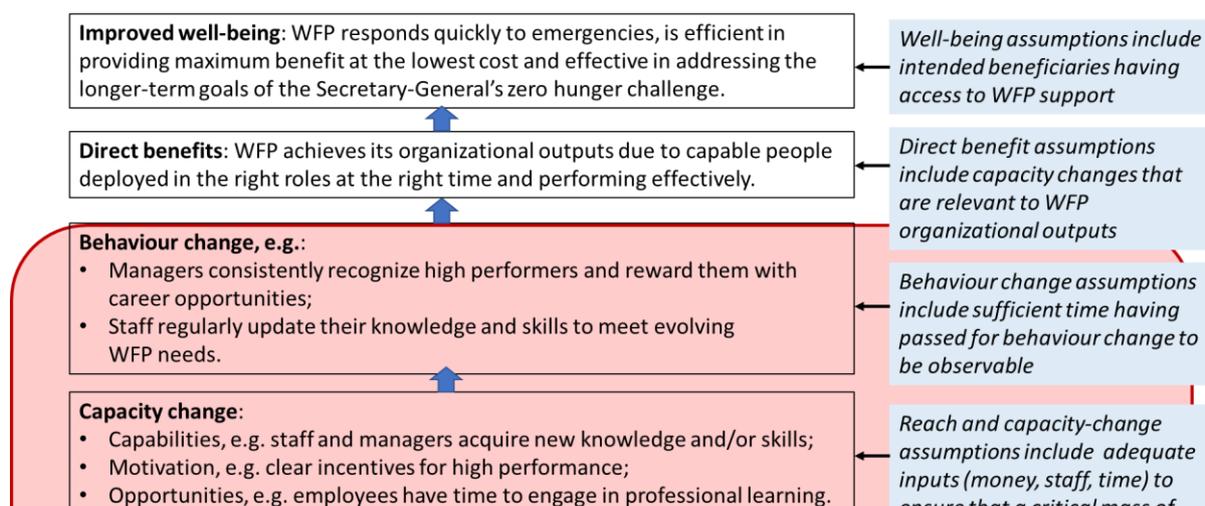
8. Since 2014, the relevant changes in WFP's external contexts have included the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; an increased occurrence of complex and protracted food security emergencies across the globe; evolving expectations for inter-agency collaboration, as outlined in the Committee on World Food Security's 2015 Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises; evolving expectations of United Nations managers and staff in relation to preventing and responding to sexual harassment and abuse committed by United Nations personnel; and renewed United Nations system commitments to gender parity.

9. Research and the global discourse on issues of human resource management have remained relatively consistent since 2014. Main topics include performance management, including how to address weak performance; staff well-being as a factor affecting performance; talent acquisition and workforce planning; diversity in the workplace; and effective leadership to keep organizations competitive and profitable.

10. Shifts in WFP's internal context during the evaluation period, starting in 2014, included changes in the posts of WFP Executive Director (in 2012 and 2017) and Director of Human Resources (in 2013, 2017 and 2019), which resulted in changes to organizational and human resources priorities.

11. The theory of change developed by the evaluation team in consultation with HR (figure 1) illustrates how the People Strategy was expected to contribute to WFP's organizational goals by directly influencing changes in employee capacity and behaviour. The theory of change drew on the COM-B theory of change model,² which posits that individual behaviour change occurs as the result of the interaction of three conditions: capability – an individual's psychological and physical capacity to engage in an activity, including having the required knowledge and skills; opportunity – factors that lie outside the individual that make a behaviour possible or prompt it; and motivation – brain processes that energize and direct behaviour, including habitual processes and emotional response.

Figure 1: Overview of theory of change for the WFP People Strategy



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