

Multilateral Aid Review: Assessment for World Food Programme (WFP)

| Summary | |
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| Organisation: World Food Programme | Date: February 2011 |
| Description of Organisation | |
| <p>WFP is the world's largest humanitarian organisation with two-thirds of its resources channelled through humanitarian interventions. Delivering food assistance¹, it also advocates globally for attention to hunger (currently 925 million people who cannot meet basic food needs). It is entirely voluntarily funded and its scale of operation is driven in large part by fluctuating humanitarian need and funding. In 2009 its expenditure was US\$ 4.2 billion; in 2010 it was US\$ 3.8 billion. WFP receives no core funding: its administrative budget derives from a 7 per cent surcharge on programme funding. The vast bulk of WFP's income is earmarked by donors to specific operations/purposes – only eight per cent is undirected multilateral.</p> <p>WFP works in 75 countries although over 63 per cent of its expenditure is accounted for by the 15 countries of the CHASE vulnerability and crisis index. It leads the humanitarian logistics and emergency telecommunications clusters and will co-lead (with FAO) the new global food security cluster. It operates the UN Humanitarian Air Service UNHAS.</p> <p>The UK is one of WFP's top donors and WFP is one of the largest recipients of UK humanitarian funding (£101 million in 2008/09).</p> <p>-----</p> <p>¹ <i>Food assistance</i> refers to the set of instruments used to address the food needs of vulnerable people. These include in-kind food aid, vouchers and cash transfers (WFP, 2009). <i>Humanitarian food assistance</i> aims to ensure the consumption of sufficient safe and nutritious food in anticipation of, during, and in the aftermath of a humanitarian crisis to avert excess mortality, emergency rates of acute malnutrition or detrimental coping mechanisms. (European Commission. 2010).</p> | |

| Contribution to UK Development Objectives | Score (1-4) |
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| <p>1a. Critical role in meeting International Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Only agency capable of delivering emergency food assistance at scale in difficult and often dangerous environments. + Underpins the logistics response of the humanitarian system. + Builds governments' capacity for disaster preparedness. - Still working out a role in more stable development contexts and in some countries persisting with less effective tools. = Prominent among the humanitarian agencies with 2/3 of its work in the most fragile countries and a significant capacity for the provision of large quantities of aid. | <p>Strong (4)</p> |

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| <p>1b. Critical role in meeting UK Aid Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + WFP is a critical humanitarian partner for the UK. We deliver more humanitarian assistance (36 per cent of our 2008-09 spend) through WFP than any other agency. + We rely on WFP for emergency logistics (e.g. Haiti, Pakistan), emergency preparedness and disaster risk management. In fragile and post-conflict situations we are working with WFP to help deliver effective transitions to stability e.g. in Gaza and Southern Sudan. + WFP is becoming a more important developmental partner for UK in countries where it is successfully managing the transition to a strategic and capacity building role e.g. Bangladesh. - We focus relatively less on food assistance as a component of emergency response than some other donors. - WFP is not a priority partner for UK in more stable development contexts. = WFP is an important partner for the UK, mainly in humanitarian contexts, and we often rely on its logistics systems for the delivery of aid. It is a less important partner in development contexts. | <p>Satisfactory (3)</p> |
| <p>2. Attention to Cross-cutting Issues:</p> <p>2a. Fragile Contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Most of WFP's programme is delivered in conflict-affected and fragile contexts: ability to operate in these contexts is one its key comparative advantages, reflected in the quality of its staff and systems. + On the back of its humanitarian and logistics work WFP often has a bigger operational footprint than other agencies. For example, in Nepal (and elsewhere) its country-wide network of monitors is able to provide real-time data and mapping for a variety of purposes. In South Sudan WFP filled a major gap with its de-mining and road-building programme. WFP provides assistance for refugees, returnees and demobilisation. + Numerous examples (e.g. Nepal, Haiti, Pakistan and Darfur) of WFP performing well in conflict situations and being one of only a few agencies to provide comprehensive and sustained aid delivery in such contexts. - In some cases it may have demonstrated insufficient independence from governments (Pakistan IDP crisis; Sri Lanka conflict), potentially compromising its beneficiary reach. = WFP demonstrates routinely that it is effective in fragile contexts. | <p>Strong (4)</p> |

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| <p>4. Contribution to Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + WFP delivers results at scale in humanitarian and fragile contexts. The most unambiguous results are where food assistance and logistical support is life-saving. + School feeding demonstrates results but often with sustainability and VFM caveats. - We have concerns (echoed in WFP's own independent evaluations) about the effectiveness and VFM of some of WFP's recovery tools e.g. food-for-assets (though there are contexts where these <i>do</i> demonstrate positive results e.g. Nepal immediately following the peace agreement). - It is too early to tell if WFP playing a more strategic, capacity building role is delivering results. = Reflects strong humanitarian but more variable recovery performance. | <p>Satisfactory (3)</p> |
| Organisational Strengths | Score (1-4) |
| <p>5. Strategic & Performance Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + WFP's basic strategic planning, results, leadership, oversight and governance structures are broadly sound and provide reasonable assurance. + WFP is starting to report against outcome targets using a new strategic results framework. + Its executive board has worked constructively with management on e.g. the strategic plan but has challenged the organisation on transparency and efficiency. + The quality of evaluations is improving (allowing more meaningful assessment of effectiveness). - Better measurement and reporting of performance against objectives is needed at field level. - More effective risk management including systematic risk assessment is needed. - Evaluations could go further to address VFM. = Whilst basic structures are in place, achieving a results-based culture across the organisation is still work in progress. | <p>Weak (2)</p> |
| <p>6. Financial Resources Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + WFP was the first UN organisation to implement International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), since when it has achieved unqualified annual audits. + Its programme categories provide it with the flexibility to operate in all contexts from emergency through recovery to development. + Its financial accountability systems and processes are strong and the organisation is making ongoing improvements (for example applying greater discipline and focus in programme categories, especially protracted | <p>Satisfactory (3)</p> |

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| <p>relief and recovery operations (PRROs) and improving supply-chain controls in high-risk environments).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + A financial framework review (approved by the Executive Board in November 2010) will <i>inter alia</i> address the problems of the tonnage-based funding model (see Section 3). – Proactive management of poor project performance appears weak. – WFP has limited flexibility to manage its resources when the largest part (92 per cent of all programme resources) is earmarked by donors. = WFP has strong systems and is addressing remaining areas of weakness. However, it faces a number of externally imposed constraints. | |
| <p>7. Cost and Value Consciousness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Increasingly tackling sustainability in preparation for handover to governments e.g. school feeding. + Drives cost control with delivery partners. + Has internal systems (including for procurement) to manage costs, driven by the Executive Board. + Seeks value for money through local procurement and cost-efficient delivery tools such as electronic vouchers. + Administration costs capped at 7 per cent overall. + Is demonstrating cost efficiencies in a range of operations and has committed to a corporate efficiency strategy. – Some programme tools do not always represent best VFM in comparison with non-food alternatives. – WFP’s cost-recovery model provides incentives for managers to maximise volume rather than minimise costs; there is a specific issue around direct support costs. – In some cases donor funding modalities constrain the achievement of greater value for money. = Reflects strong corporate emphasis on costs/efficiencies coupled with business model improvements, with work underway at country level to keep costs down. | <p>Satisfactory (3)</p> |
| <p>8. Partnership Behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + WFP has demonstrated good partnership behaviour over the last two years: improvements can be seen at country and global levels. + It is generally well regarded for its humanitarian cluster leadership. + WFP is the implementing partner of choice of a number of middle income countries where WFP’s programmes have been handed over. + WFP has developed effective relationships with the UN. Amongst these are the Rome agencies (FAO and IFAD) | <p>Satisfactory (3)</p> |

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| <p>where collaborative planning has much improved (although competitive behaviour is still evident in some countries); UNICEF with which WFP has a detailed MoU; and the World Bank with whom WFP has developed a number of policy partnerships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WFP has a long-standing reputation for being an independent, input-driven and sometimes competitive partner. These behaviours are still evident in some countries visited. = Reflects strong corporate emphasis on partnerships and evidence that this is being reflected in improved behaviour at multiple levels – but with some examples of poorer behaviour still evident. | |
| <p>9. Transparency and Accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + WFP has taken a number of steps to improve <i>transparency</i> over the last two years, responding to its Executive Board. + Developing countries have redress through membership of the Executive Board in which they are a majority - Basic project documents and resourcing data are available but not project performance data - The principal deficiency relates to WFP's main instrument of accountability at operational level – the Standard Project Report. The UK has asked WFP in the Executive Board to address this. - In common with other humanitarian actors accountability to beneficiaries remains weak. = Transparency at WFP has been improved recently and developing countries have redress for grievance through the Executive Board. WFP needs to do more to improve accountability at the operational level and to beneficiaries. | <p>Weak (2)</p> |
| <p>Likelihood of Positive Change Score (1-4)</p> | |
| <p>10. Likelihood of Positive Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + WFP and its Executive Board work well together in pursuit of improvement; management have demonstrated responsiveness to member concerns. + Significant reforms have already been undertaken for example with the financial framework. + Board processes provide significant opportunity for member engagement in policy and strategy formulation. - Some reforms have taken time to gain momentum and others remain politically sensitive within the Board and need careful handling. = Senior management are committed to reform the pace of which may be tempered by the need to build support and momentum both in the Board and internally. | <p>Likely (3)</p> |