

DFID Management Response: Final Evaluation Report for Improving Food Security level for the people of Gaza

Notes:

- a) **Background:** This is an external independent evaluation of the DFID-funded £25.5 million programme, 'Improving Food Security for the People of Gaza' (2011-15). It reviews the progress of a) the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Job Creation Programme (JCP) which provides cash to refugees for short-term work assignments for professional, skilled and unskilled workers; and b) the World Food Programme (WFP) Voucher Programme (VP), which provides food vouchers to non-refugee families assessed to be poor through the use of a proxy means test.
- b) **Methodology:** An external evaluation team carried out a baseline study for DFID, between January and March 2013. The final evaluation, which mirrors the baseline study, was based on fieldwork, consultations, data analysis and focus group discussions. The final evaluation was primarily conducted in Gaza and Jerusalem in March 2015. It has examined the VP and JCP from the perspectives of impact and effectiveness, coverage, co-ordination, coherence and sustainability.
- c) **QUEST / Dev Tracker links:** Project number: 202375. Evaluation QUESTED at 5104634; management response at 5198061. Evaluation completed August 2015; management response agreed October 2015
- d) **Ownership:** All actions are 'owned' by the DFID Senior Responsible Owner of the project with close involvement by the Programme Manager.
- e) **Acronyms:** DFID – Department for International Development; WFP – World Food Programme; VP – WFP's Voucher Programme; UNRWA – UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; JCP – UNRWA's Jobs Creation Programme; M&E – Monitoring and evaluation; PECS – Palestinian Expenditure and Consumption Survey; SEFSec –Socio Economic and Food Security; MoSA – Ministry of Social Affairs; PMTF – Proxy Means Test Formula; PNCTP– Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme.

DFID management response:

#	Recommendations (from pages 78-90 of the report)	Accept / Reject	Comments
1	<p>On the basis that WFP's VP is having a positive and cost-effective impact on food security in Gaza, DFID should continue and expand support to the VP. To have greater impact on food security through the VP, DFID should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage e-voucher further development and platform sharing. The platform has potential to be a unified social safety net covering not just food but other needs. Voucher-based food assistance is gradually becoming the default modality; Continue to provide multi-year support to VP, given the evidence that WFP has been able to make good use of this funding modality. It has allowed WFP to give financial and stability and assurance to shop owners and beneficiaries. 	Partially accept	<p>DFID acknowledges the evaluation's findings regarding the positive impact of the WFP Voucher Programme. We will take into consideration the recommendation to continue funding and find ways to enhance the VP's impact in developing our 2016-21 Operational Plan. We cannot at this stage guarantee to continue funding the programme, however, given competing pressures on DFID's budget across the Middle East and North Africa region.</p> <p>We will come to a decision at the latest by the end of March 2016, based on considering the best approaches to promote food security in the long term, tracking what other donors are planning in the social protection field, and whether DFID can add value to this sector.</p>
2	To maximise secondary impacts of the VP, DFID should consider scaling up the voucher programme significantly to increase the (currently limited) trickle-down effects at the production level, particularly for small dairy producers and farmers.	Partially accept	As above.
3	<p>As UNRWA's JCP is not having any impact on food security, DFID should not support JCP with further funding. To have greater impact on food security through UNRWA, DFID should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider switching support from JCP to the General Fund, noting that this decision would need to be assessed by DFID within the wider political context of DFID's support to UNRWA and the reform agenda, and against other options such as focusing on youth, countering extremism, or supporting vocational training. The final decision for how DFID could fund UNRWA depends on a wider assessment that is beyond scope of this evaluation; Investigate alternative approaches to increasing labour market opportunities to get more refugees into more intensive (if not full-time) work e.g., setting up small businesses; Investigate UNRWA's internal food assistance programme to understand whether there may be an opportunity to develop this further, drawing on the experience of WFP's Voucher Programme; Encourage UNRWA to conduct in-bound and out-bound performance conversations with beneficiaries at the end of their contracts. These should be designed to both remind beneficiaries of the gains they have made in skill development and employability and provide counsel on how best to manage some of the psychosocial issues related to sudden unemployment; Consider multi-year funding if UNRWA can present a convincing 'investment plan' that will have an increased impact on beneficiaries; Review the linkages and assumptions in any future Theory of Change concerning support to 	Accept	<p>On the basis of the findings of this evaluation and concerns raised in previous Annual Reviews, DFID has taken a decision not to continue funding the JCP as a project beyond March 2016. Our funding for 2015/16 represented a decline from previous levels. DFID has already informed UNRWA of this decision.</p> <p>DFID agrees that it is important to prioritise support for the General Fund and to take into account the evaluation's recommendations on how to improve UNRWA's impact on food security. DFID has seconded a Social Development Adviser to UNRWA for 3 years from September 2015 to work on such issues. The Social Development Adviser will spend 3 days a week with UNRWA, and the remaining 2 days in DFID's office, helping to work across our portfolio on how for instance greater support to Gazan economic development can improve food security. We agree that beneficiary engagement is crucial.</p>

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	JCP, to ensure that the models adequately consider the effect on outputs and outcomes of very short-term inputs, such as the JCP wages when viewed from the beneficiaries' perspectives.		
4	<p>To improve the effectiveness of food security programmes in general, DFID should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote multi-year funding, particularly where there is an 'investment plan' that will allow new approaches and platforms to be developed that can bring a 'step change' in programme performance. Ensure implementing partners, particularly UNRWA, strengthen their monitoring and evaluation regimes for future programming. This will involve ensuring partners conduct baselines, mid-point reviews and final evaluations at the right time. DFID should also ensure that methodologies measure outcomes as well as outputs, and are not over-reliant on external data sources such as PECS or SEFSec. 	Partially Accept	<p>DFID agrees that multi-year funding is beneficial. As a principle, we are currently developing multi-year programmes for our 2016-21 Operational Plan and regularly encourage other donors to follow DFID's lead where their budgetary cycles allow.</p> <p>Both WFP and UNRWA already have procedures which cover the different stages of the project cycle, with details and templates on how projects should be monitored and managed. UNRWA uses a Results Based Management system to monitor the achievement of strategic results. WFP relies on the Office of Evaluation to ensure increased use of evaluation evidence in the decision-making process and in monitoring projects at a country level.</p> <p>DFID is engaging with UNRWA on measures to improve their evaluation capacity as part of a broader focus on strengthening Internal Oversight. We have invested in work to improve the quality of field-led evaluations in UNRWA and will consider providing further technical assistance in this regard. DFID will raise this recommendation with WFP at the field level and with DFID institutional leads in Rome.</p>
5	DFID should expand assistance to food insecure populations. DFID should consider re-focusing on food security rather than poverty, recognising that the only way to significantly improve the Gazan economy and reduce poverty is to lift the blockade, and that food insecurity will be a long-term ongoing issue that needs to be addressed.	Partially Accept	DFID recognises that the only way to improve significantly the Gazan economy and reduce poverty is to lift movement and access restrictions as part of a political agreement between the Palestinians and Israelis. We regularly raise this at a political level with relevant interlocutors. DFID is considering whether and how any future interventions on food security per se would add value, whether as part of an ongoing programme or a sleeping investment which we would activate in times of spikes in conflict.
6	DFID should promote dialogue between actors working in the food security space, in particular MoSA, WFP and UNRWA, and encourage each actor to fix on the same version of the PMTF, to enable information sharing.	Partially Accept	DFID agrees that dialogue and co-ordination is important but we regard this as the responsibility of the Food Security Sector (FSS) which is co-led by FAO and WFP, and guided by the relevant PA ministries with active input and participation from NGOs and other local expertise. We will, however, draw this to their attention.
7	DFID should conduct a full assessment of all assistance programmes in Gaza (MoSA, WFP, UNRWA) to understand which has the greatest impact on food security and poverty. This assessment should be followed by workshops involving MoSA, UNRWA and WFP to build a consensus regarding the best modality for reducing food insecurity: vouchers, cash or in-kind and to identify overlaps between UNRWA's JCP, WFP's VP and MoSA's PNCTP beneficiaries.	Reject	DFID regards vouchers and cash as the best modalities for addressing poverty and food insecurity where (as in Gaza) most commodities can be purchased on the local market. We regard WFP's voucher model as better practice than UNRWA's in-kind distributions and we have encouraged UNRWA, including through their 2016-21 Medium Term Strategy, to move away from food to cash/vouchers. DFID recognises that different systems are less efficient and that greater consensus would be welcome. We will encourage partners to improve co-ordination and stay in contact with other donors on this, but again we regard this as the responsibility of the Food Security Sector.
8	DFID should encourage WFP to work further with MoSA. MoSA is interested in the e-voucher system and some preliminary discussions have been held. WFP is looking to present their system to MoSA. Currently, though, there is no direct coordination with MoSA in Gaza.	Partially Accept	While DFID agrees that dialogue and co-ordination with MoSA is important, we regard this as the responsibility of the Food Security Sector (FSS) leads. The FSS is co led by FAO and WFP and guided by the relevant PA ministries including MoSA with active input and participation from NGOs and other local expertise. DFID will, however, raise the issue as part of our dialogue with implementing partners and other donors.
9	DFID should support the transition of the VP system to a new payment platform based on a regular banking platform, which could pave the way for participants to gain access in the longer term to bank accounts. A pilot payment mechanism, "PayPal", via Bank of Palestine started a pilot in January 2015, with the aim of replacing the current Jordanian service provider to reduce transaction costs and thus improve efficiency of the programme.	Partially Accept	DFID is considering future support to the WFP VP. We understand from the Evaluation that the existing mechanism is working well. While any efficiency gains are to be welcomed, we would also wish to see adequate controls.