

# Evaluation Top 10 Lessons



## Working in Partnership

### Strategic positioning of WFP as a partner

**Lesson 1:** WFP has established a substantial and heterogeneous portfolio of partnerships at country, regional and global levels but WFP's objectives and role in its partnerships are not always clearly defined and communicated.

**Lesson 2:** The increasing complexity of WFP's operating environment requires the organization to be more strategic in its selection of partners and more flexible in response to local circumstances.

**Lesson 3:** WFP's credibility and effectiveness as a partner would be improved by increasing staff familiarity with the good partnership principles (equality; transparency; results orientation; responsibility; and complementarity) and by ensuring that partnerships are managed according to these principles, which will require that the principles be communicated, explained and supported through guidance. WFP's main weaknesses relate to transparency and complementarity.

**Lesson 4:** Partnerships with the private sector provide a growing area of opportunity for partnership but WFP needs to clearly distinguish between genuine partnership and traditional resource mobilization.

### Resources for effective partnership

**Lesson 5:** Sufficient resources should be allocated to meeting the transaction costs of partnership, particularly for WFP's participation in large-scale partnerships, such as the cluster system.

**Lesson 6:** WFP's culture emphasizes short-term delivery and technical expertise over longer-term engagement and good relationship management, sometimes to the detriment of building partnerships.

**Lesson 7:** While WFP employees are universally respected for their honesty, dedication and hard work, few are fully equipped to handle the complexities of establishing and managing complex partnerships.

**Lesson 8:** Better systems, tools and processes are required to guide and support the management of partnerships.

### Information and knowledge for learning

**Lesson 9:** Investments by WFP in shared learning and knowledge exchange with partners would increase the effectiveness of partnerships and build long term trust between WFP and its partners.

**Lesson 10:** Better monitoring and measurement is required so that the outcomes, costs and benefits of partnership working can be more accurately assessed.

## Introduction

*The Top 10 Lessons series is intended to be of practical value in planning and implementing WFP operations. Lessons are drawn from past evaluations and reviews in order to inform and support action at both the policy and the operational levels. The Lessons are not directives, but have been compiled within the current strategic framework and are in line with WFP's mission and mandate.*

## Top Line Messages

Partnership is increasingly important, adds value and enhances impact potential for WFP.

WFP is seen as a valuable partner.

Improvements can be made in terms of:

- Strategic approach to partnerships
- Building internal WFP capacity for partnership; and
- Knowledge sharing and learning with partners.

## Background

Working in partnership is an integral element of WFP's overall strategy. Collaboration in advocacy, planning and delivery with other bodies in the field of food security and nutrition enhances WFP's ability to achieve its Strategic Objectives.

The centrality of partnerships to WFP's work has been consistently recognized and is fully aligned with the overall UN commitment to support partnership for humanitarian relief and sustainable development both within the UN system and with relevant actors from government, civil society and the private enterprise sector.

WFP's 2008-2013 Strategic Plan made a commitment to working more coherently together with different actors so as to achieve WFP's goals, contribute to the overall aims of the UN and Millennium Development Goals and complement government capacities to support eventual handover. This commitment is sustained and extended in the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan.

The 2012 Annual Evaluation Report (AER2012)

took 'Partnerships' as its theme, highlighting the findings and lessons for WFP's partnerships work. This reflected the importance of partnership as a common theme in evaluations completed in 2012 and as a critically important factor in delivering WFP's mission.

## Definitions

WFP co-operates with many different organizations worldwide. Not all of these relationships are partnerships – although the term itself is used widely and loosely. The majority of WFP relationships are of a conventional, contractual nature, typically based on the outsourcing of provisions to WFP target beneficiaries. Those relationships that can be categorised as partnerships will involve a degree of shared objectives, joint planning, commitment and shared risk which goes significantly beyond a standard commercial contract. Typically, such partnerships will be governed by a specialized partnership agreement or a Memorandum of Understanding which precedes and sets the context for any relationship, which might include a contractual aspect.<sup>1</sup>

The Strategic Evaluation of WFP partnerships (WIP2012) noted that WFP does not have an agreed corporate definition of partnership. For the purposes of that evaluation partnerships were defined as “those voluntary collaborations sustained over a period of time where each party shares benefits, costs and risks to achieve a

<sup>1</sup> This is well illustrated by WFP's 2005 classification of relations with civil society bodies which distinguishes between 'co-operating' (or 'implementing') partners who “carry out an activity on WFP's behalf” and 'complementary' partners who are engaged in the design of an intervention for a shared objective and target group. WFP (2005) How to work with WFP: A Handbook for Non-governmental Organizations

jointly defined objective”.<sup>2</sup> A general conclusion from the evaluations is that a clear definition of partnership and a typology of partnership activity would be of benefit to WFP.

WFP has traditionally classified partners on the basis of organization type (NGO, private sector, government etc.). The evaluations reviewed here encourage WFP to think of partnerships more in terms of partnership objectives. Such an approach shifts the focus from the type of organization to what WFP is trying to achieve through its partnerships. The evaluations also found that organization type categories are not always completely distinct either within the category (widely varying types of NGOs for example) or between different categories (private sector for instance in strongly centralized countries can be private-public consortia where the boundaries between one category and the other are not distinct). Many of WFP's partnerships could in fact be considered complex partnerships with multiple partners of many different types of organizations interacting with WFP, and with each other more independently from WFP to achieve common goals. Emergency clusters are an example.

Regardless of the overall typology, there is value to be gained from creating categories which better define and guide the partnership. For instance WFP's classification of NGO partners as 'cooperating' or complementary' helps to define partner relations and, at the same time, encourages NGO partners to see themselves as potentially moving from a contractual to a more collaborative relationships with WFP.

The value-added of such a classification is: i) category distinctions can be linked to different types of agreement (e.g. commercial contract versus MoU or partnership agreement) and thus obligations on each side are clearer; ii) potential partners can clearly see the different kinds of partnerships into which WFP will enter and

what is appropriate for them in the current context; iii) NGOs which aspire to establish stronger relations with WFP can identify a spectrum of partnership relations along which they might move in order to become more genuine partners; iv) clear category definitions should establish clear mutual expectations of commitment, behaviour etc.

## Benefits

Working in partnership enables WFP to access financial, technical and human resources that strengthen its ability to meet its strategic and operational goals. NGOs and Private Sector bodies, in particular, offer knowledge and skills that complement WFP's organizational strengths and facilitate positive outcomes for beneficiaries, including those most disadvantaged by lack of food security.

All of the evaluations reviewed in the preparation of the Top 10 Lessons: Working in Partnership confirmed that partnership working brought significant benefits to WFP and to the beneficiaries of its programmes. For example:

- ✓ The Strategic Evaluation 'Working in Partnership' surveyed WFP staff and reported that "Strong positive impacts were seen on beneficiaries, financial resources, complementarity and WFP's main activities" as a result of partnership working. There were no significant differences between the views of internal and external stakeholders (WIP2012 p.vii). See Figure 1 below
- ✓ The evaluation of the Global Logistics Cluster found that the work of the Cluster, itself a partnership, "enabled outcomes and results including more use of information, increased coordination, better decisions, reduced duplication, greater efficiency, greater predictability and better national preparedness." (GLC2012 p. v)
- ✓ The evaluation of Private Sector Partnerships found "many positive examples

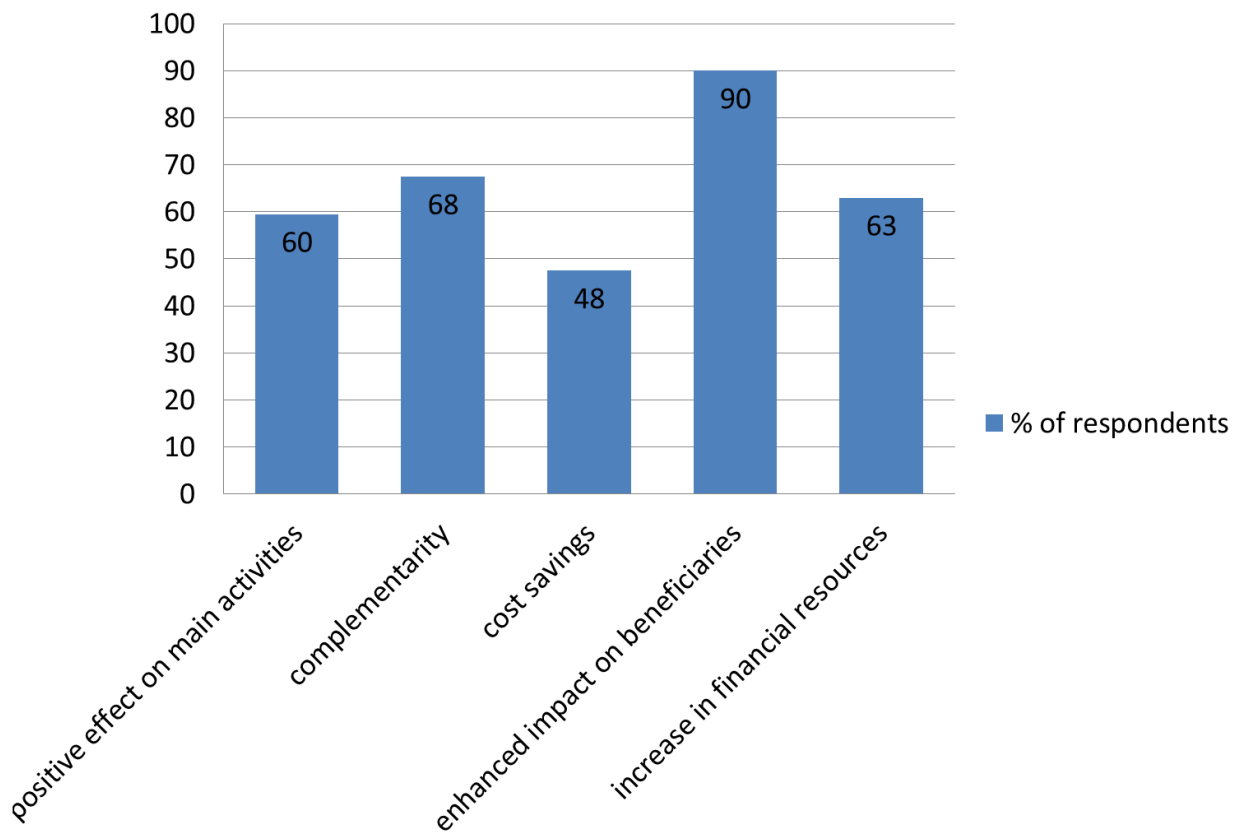
<sup>2</sup> WFP (2011) From Food Aid to Food Assistance. Working in Partnership: A Strategic Evaluation

of private-sector contributions” but “no negative impacts or outcomes.” (PSP2012 p. ix)

- ✓ The evaluation of WFP’s operations in Afghanistan observed that “Mother-and-child health and nutrition projects have shown some encouraging results, particularly where inter-agency collaboration has improved.” (AFG2012 p. x)
- ✓ The private sector was found to have particular comparative advantages in specialist areas of technical expertise and

provision of technology for nutrition. Corporations were also sometimes found to have facilities and access on the ground that WFP did not have, including in sudden-onset emergencies.(PSP2012 p. x)

**Figure 1: Positive Effects of Partnership**



## Evidence from Evaluation

WFP's transition 'From Food Aid to Food Assistance' during the Strategic Plan period 2008-2013 has been widely recognized as timely and welcome. It has expanded WFP's remit and its potential to alleviate some of the world's most pressing issues of food security. However, successive evaluations have found that WFP's partners do not fully understand the strategic shift nor do they fully grasp the respective roles that WFP and partner organizations must play. (AER2011, SYN2012, WIP2012)

The summary of country evaluations in 2011 (AER2011) concluded that WFP was still not able to communicate clearly on the 'front line' about how the new ways of working flow from WFP's mandate and how WFP envisions its roles and responsibilities in relation to other players in the larger system. "The absence of clear communication feeds a common perception among external stakeholders of lack of focus, concerns about duplication and fears of "mission creep". (AER2011 p. 6)

The Strategic Evaluation 'Working in Partnership' concluded that "WFP partners only partly understood the shift in WFP strategy and were even less clear about the division of roles between Country Offices, Regional Bureaux and HQ. At the country level, NGO stakeholders were generally unaware of the strategic transformation or the centrality of partnership to WFP, except that they were being asked to do things differently." (WIP2012 p. v)

This lack of clarity extended to WFP personnel: staff at all levels, including senior managers at Headquarters, had differing views about the nature of food assistance and partnership. (WIP2012 p. v)

The creation of a new Strategic Plan for 2014-2017 offers a timely opportunity to clarify and communicate WFP's full mission to staff at all levels. It also offers an opportunity for WFP to refresh its communications with key partners so

that they too fully grasp the breadth of WFP's remit and its main Strategic Objectives. Staff at all levels can engage with partner representatives to communicate the renewed WFP mission and strategy clearly and improve WFP's reputation on communication and consultation.

The organizational redesign of WFP "Fit for Purpose" created an Assistant Executive Director for Partnership and Governance Services to oversee all government, private sector and interagency partnerships and WFP Liaison Offices. A senior advisor for Rome-based agencies will help enhance collaboration including through the Committee on Food Security. This should help ensure a strong link between partnerships of different kinds and WFP's strategic objectives. (FFP2012)

## About this document

Top10 Lessons: Working in Partnership analyzes recent evaluations to produce a series of observations which have well-established validity and applicability to those creating, supporting and managing WFP partnerships. Recent evaluations of WFP partnerships include two country-specific studies (Afghanistan and Somalia); an evaluation of partnerships with the Private Sector and another of the Global Logistics Cluster. At a higher level of generality, in 2011, a strategic evaluation of WFP's partnerships was undertaken as one of four strategic evaluations conducted by WFP's Office of Evaluation in the 2010-2011 biennium that related to the shift from food aid to food assistance called for in WFP's 2008-2013 Strategic Plan.

All of the evaluations were carried out in 2011 and/or 2012 and relate primarily to activities during the period of the 2008-2013 Strategic Plan. Specifically, the Private Sector evaluation covers the implementation of the 2008 Private Sector strategy from 2008 to 2012; the evaluation of the Global Logistics Cluster relates to its activities from 2005 to 2012; the Afghanistan study covers WFP's work in that country from 2010 to 2012; the Somalia evaluation covers the

period 2006 to 2012.

The Annual Evaluation Report 2012 reviewed the findings of ten WFP evaluations, five of which are also explicitly referenced here as sources of evidence (AER2012). Its four overarching recommendations (shown in the box below) have helped to shape the selection of the Lessons included in the current document.

- i) Mainstream the understanding and application of good partnership principles, based on an inclusive and strategic approach to partnerships of all types.
- ii) Reaffirm the importance of country strategies, and clarify their role in WFP's, governance, partnerships, and strategic and operational frameworks.
- iii) Follow through on commitments to strengthen monitoring and reporting systems that will enable WFP to consistently share and report on planning, costs and benefits, results and outcomes.
- iv) Ensure stronger, more consistent application of analytical tools to underpin<sup>2</sup> WFP's programme effectiveness, including conflict, political, livelihoods, gender and partner capacity analysis.  
*Annual Evaluation Report 2012, p. 5*

In creating this document consideration was also given to previous syntheses of evaluation findings (AER2011, AER2012, SYN2012) to the 2012 organizational redesign of WFP (FFP2012) and to the ongoing development of the 2014-2017 Strategy Plan (DSP2013).

The 10 Lessons are organized into three main groups to highlight the policy or operational implications of each. Lessons 1 to 4 relate primarily to WFP's *strategic positioning* and will have the greatest relevance for those guiding development and management of WFP's partnership strategy; communication; and relations with other major actors. Lessons 5 to 8 are presented as issues of *resources for effective partnership*: these are relevant at operational as well as policy level and have practical implications for the day-to-day management of WFP partnerships. The final group, Lessons 9 and 10, relate to *information and knowledge for learning*, a critical aspect of WFP's future management of global and local partnerships.

## Strategic positioning of WFP as a partner

**Lesson 1:** WFP has established a substantial and heterogeneous portfolio of partnerships at country, regional and global levels but WFP's objectives and role in its partnerships are not always clearly defined and communicated.

**Summary:** *WFP's global reach is one of its greatest assets. It engages in partnerships in almost every aspect of its work but the nature of these collaborations are not consistently understood, well-defined or communicated. There is a perceived need for better communication globally of WFP's strategy and mission. WFP staff and operational partners need a clearer understanding of WFP's strategic positioning vis-à-vis other major players in the field of food security. This will help actual and potential partners recognize WFP's comparative advantage over other actors and enhance the likelihood of establishing successful partnerships.*

**Evidence from Evaluation:** WFP's transition 'From Food Aid to Food Assistance' during the Strategic Plan period 2008-2013 has been widely recognized as timely and welcome. It has expanded WFP's remit and its

potential to alleviate some of the world's most pressing issues of food security. However, successive evaluations have found that WFP's partners do not fully understand the strategic shift nor do they fully grasp the respective roles

that WFP and partner organizations must play. (AER2011, SYN2012, WIP2012)

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The creation of a new Strategic Plan for 2014-2017 offers a timely opportunity to clarify and communicate WFP’s full mission to staff at all levels. It also offers an opportunity for WFP to refresh its communications with key partners so that they too fully grasp the breadth of WFP’s remit and its main Strategic Objectives. Staff at all levels can engage with partner representatives to communicate the renewed WFP mission and strategy clearly and improve WFP’s reputation on communication and consultation.

The organizational redesign of WFP “Fit for Purpose” created an Assistant Executive Director for Partnership and Governance Services to oversee all government, private sector and interagency partnerships and WFP Liaison Offices. A senior advisor for Rome-based agencies will help enhance collaboration including through the Committee on Food Security. This should help ensure a strong link between partnerships of different kinds and WFP’s strategic objectives. (FFP2012)

**Lesson 2:** The increasing complexity of WFP’s operating environment requires the organization to be more strategic in its selection of partners and more flexible in response to local circumstances.

**Summary:** *WFP operates in an environment which is becoming increasingly “crowded” with actors whose interests relate to the core issues of food security and sustainable development. Many of these actors are relatively new players or have rapidly increased their level of engagement. To provide the best possible benefit to those most in need of support, WFP needs to work with a sound understanding of what potential partners can offer and a consistent set of procedures for identifying, selecting and managing partnerships.*

*The need for such guidance becomes all the more pressing in situations, such as those covered by the recent evaluations of Somalia and Afghanistan, where partner capacity itself may be limited. In such situations WFP Country Offices require the best possible information on actual and potential partners operating in the same field in order to optimize the delivery of services to beneficiaries.*

**Evidence from Evaluation:** The evaluation of Private Sector Partnerships recommended

prioritizing areas for partnership based on a partnership’s potential for addressing WFP’s

Strategic Objectives; and defining the scope and limits of partnership with private corporations in terms of WFP objectives and activities. (PSP2012 p. x)

The evaluation of WFP's work in Somalia emphasised the need for flexibility to local circumstances, praising new area-based partnerships set up with local authorities which increased responsiveness to local circumstances and improved resource allocation. (SOM2012 p. vi)

A number of evaluations call for better mapping of potential partners and better criteria with which to assess and select partners. The Management Response to the Afghanistan evaluation proposed developing "a partnership framework with a view to maximizing the impact of programmes and enhancing response capacity and accountability; this will include a clearer criterion for the selection of partners and provisions for a more flexible and decentralized approach that will include multi-year financial commitments." (AFGMR2012:p.8)

The Strategic Evaluation, 'Working in Partnership' recommended that WFP develop an "evaluation tool that enables a mutual assessment by partners of their strengths and weaknesses in the partnership. These may range from the contributions of partnership to

delivery, quality and timeliness to communications, transparency and other aspects of partnership management and effectiveness." (WIP2012 p.xiv)

Working with the right local partners is of special importance in difficult operating environments. The Afghanistan evaluation found that "WFP is far from meeting its commitments on gender in Afghanistan....lacking partnerships with other agencies for achieving what WFP alone cannot achieve" (AFG2012 p. viii)

The Management Response to the Afghanistan evaluation details four new partnership agreements signed with international agencies in response to the recommendation for better targeting of aid through greater partnership and a commitment to establish new partnerships with local NGOs for food distribution. (AFGMR2012 pp7-8)

Greater decentralization of decision-making within WFP offers Regional Bureaux and Country Offices more freedom to research and develop local partners. Internal restructuring means that there will be more emphasis on Regional Bureaux and Country Offices with Rome providing more of a service/support and strategy role: this puts more emphasis on local staff being both trained in, and responsible for, identifying, managing and evolving partnerships. (FFP 2012)

The newly-approved Strategic Plan 2014-2017 acknowledges the need for WFP to "partner more strategically and effectively" (DSP2013 p.3) and makes a commitment to "establish a comprehensive framework and tools to select and facilitate partnerships that can deliver the greatest value". (DSP2013 p.20)

**Lesson 3:** WFP's credibility and effectiveness as a partner would be improved by increasing staff familiarity with the good partnership principles (equality; transparency; results orientation; responsibility; and complementarity) and by ensuring that partnerships are managed according to these principles, which will require that the principles be communicated, explained and supported through guidance. WFP's main weaknesses relate to transparency and complementarity.

**Summary:** WFP subscribes to the 2007 set of good partnership principles developed by the Global Humanitarian Platform. These principles are: equality; transparency; result-oriented approach; responsibility; and complementarity (See Figure 2 below). Feedback from partner organizations



*indicates that the overall experience of working with WFP is a positive one: WFP is a good partner in most contexts. However, understanding of the good partnership principles is still not mainstreamed within WFP and staff need to be better trained in the application of the principles.*

*WFP's main area of weakness is its performance on the principle of transparency, especially with regard to the NGO community (see Figure 3 below). The consistent message from WFP's partners is that the organization needs to be more transparent and readier to consult its partners. Greater transparency is a key factor in building trust between partners. Better consultation with partners is required at the local, operational level especially in terms of WFP's ability to share information and to be open and accountable in decision-making. Complementarity is also an area of relative perceived weakness, which relates to issues raised under the discussion of Lesson 1.*

One of the four overarching recommendations of the 2012 Annual Evaluation Report was that WFP should “mainstream the understanding and application of good partnership principles, based on an inclusive and strategic approach to partnerships of all types.” (AER2012, p. 5)

Among the recommendations of the Afghanistan evaluation was that WFP examine ways to enhance NGO partnerships through a combination of implementation and capacity development, suggesting that “long-term relationships with fewer communities are likely to be the way forward.” (AFG2012 p. xiii). This would mean identifying “viable, mainly local, NGO partners with local knowledge.” (AFG2012 p.vi)

In the Somalia evaluation it was concluded that “A consistent finding from the evaluation fieldwork was that beneficiaries felt they had inadequate direct consultation with WFP and insufficient feedback on what little consultation occurred” (SOM2012 p. vii)

Specific criticisms of WFP centered on a lack of pro-activity in keeping partners informed and a poor level of accountability. This led evaluators to recommend that WFP “considerably improve its external consultations on and communication of analysis, programme planning and decision-making to ensure better transparency and greater accountability to its principal stakeholders.” (SOM2012 p.vii)

The Management Response to the Somalia evaluation acknowledged this problem and listed

a series of measures already taken to improve partner relations in the area, including the introduction of strategy development and review sessions with local authorities, UN agencies and NGOs; quarterly meetings with co-operating partners; and monthly donor meetings. (SMMR2012 p. 10)

The Somalia evaluation, while critical of WFP's transparency also identified a positive lesson in the work of the Vulnerability Assessment Mapping unit, which participated in fieldwork and analysis for the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit's biannual assessments and undertook its own mapping, assessments, analysis and allocation planning. The evaluators noted that “This level of collaboration and consensus on needs assessments is unique. The food security and vulnerability assessments allow a more accurate understanding of the underlying causes of food insecurity.” (SOM2012 p.vi)

The evaluation of the Global Logistics Cluster found dissatisfaction among some of the INGOs with WFP's role in the GLC and a desire for a larger role for NGOs and more consultation. (GLC2012 p. 60)

Evaluation of the Global Logistics Cluster found that engagement between senior WFP logistics staff and their counterparts in partner organizations had diminished over the previous three years. Although senior GLC Support Cell (GLCSC) staff participated in some broader humanitarian logistics platforms, strategic and sustained engagement with significant logistics

initiatives and actors from academic, research and professional logistics organizations appeared to be lacking. Issues related to a shared vision of the GLC's role and mandate, its leadership and transparency caused some disengagement from the GLC. It is plausible that drop-off in outreach and disengagement are linked. (GLC 2012 p. x)

The Partnership evaluation recommended that WFP consider developing a mechanism to complement the standardized field-level agreements and lay out mutual expectations between WFP and local partners with respect to the mutual exercise of good-partnership practices. (WIP2012 p. xiii)

**Figure 2: The Global Humanitarian Platform Principles of Partnership**

## Principles of Partnership

A Statement of Commitment

*Endorsed by the Global Humanitarian Platform, 12 July 2007*

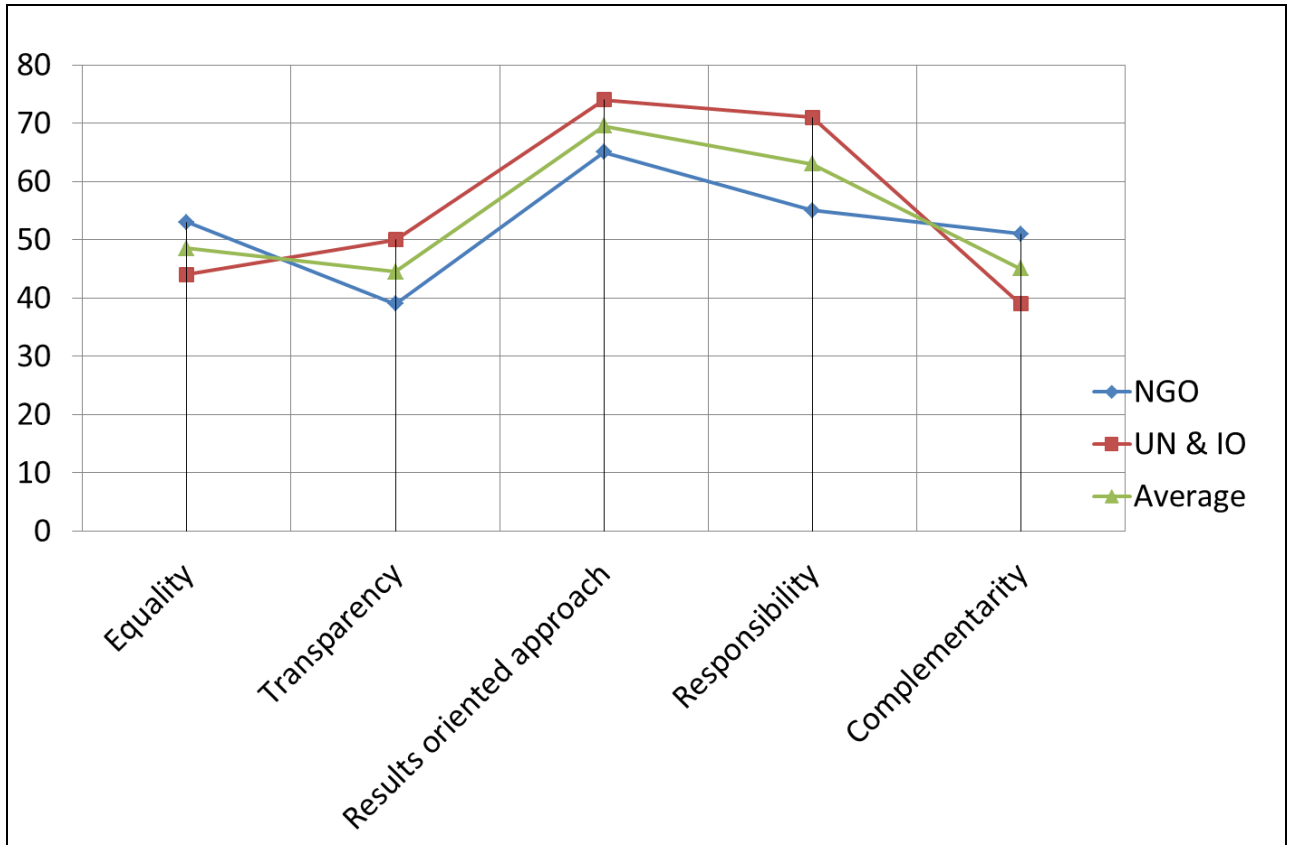
The *Global Humanitarian Platform*, created in July 2006, brings together UN and non-UN humanitarian organizations on an equal footing.

- Striving to enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian action, based on an ethical obligation and accountability to the populations we serve,
- Acknowledging diversity as an asset of the humanitarian community and recognizing the interdependence among humanitarian organizations,
- Committed to building and nurturing an effective partnership; the organizations participating in the **Global Humanitarian Platform** agree to base their partnership on the following principles:

- **Equality**  
Equality requires mutual respect between members of the partnership irrespective of size and power. The participants must respect each other's mandates, obligations and independence and recognize each other's constraints and commitments. Mutual respect must not preclude organizations from engaging in constructive dissent.
- **Transparency**  
Transparency is achieved through dialogue (on equal footing), with an emphasis on early consultations and early sharing of information. Communications and transparency, including financial transparency, increase the level of trust among organizations.
- **Result-oriented approach**  
Effective humanitarian action must be reality-based and action-oriented. This requires result-oriented coordination based on effective capabilities and concrete operational capacities.
- **Responsibility**  
Humanitarian organizations have an ethical obligation to each other to accomplish their tasks responsibly, with integrity and in a relevant and appropriate way. They must make sure they commit to activities only when they have the means, competencies, skills, and capacity to deliver on their commitments. Decisive and robust prevention of abuses committed by humanitarians must also be a constant effort.
- **Complementarity**  
The diversity of the humanitarian community is an asset if we build on our comparative advantages and complement each other's contributions. Local capacity is one of the main assets to enhance and on which to build. Whenever possible, humanitarian organizations should strive to make it an integral part in emergency response. Language and cultural barriers must be overcome.

[www.globalhumanitarianplatform.org](http://www.globalhumanitarianplatform.org)

**Figure 3: WFP’s adherence to good partnership principles**



(Source: From Food Aid to Food Assistance. Working in Partnership: A Strategic Evaluation WIP2012. 51 survey respondents from NGOs; 34 from UN and other WFP partners)

**Lesson 4:** Partnerships with the private sector provide a growing area of opportunity for partnership but WFP needs to clearly distinguish between genuine partnership and traditional resource mobilization.

**Summary:** At present, partnership with the Private Sector represents an opportunity only partly realized by WFP. Recent experience suggests that companies and privately-funded foundations perceive WFP as an attractive and reliable partner but that they also find aspects of WFP’s approach and procedures difficult to work with. WFP does not make sufficient distinction between resource mobilization, where Private Sector bodies are primarily donors, and partnership, in which the emphasis is on joint development and complementarity of resources.

The nature and level of engagement in food security issues by Private Sector bodies reflects a concern to go beyond philanthropy and to reconcile Corporate Social Responsibility targets with commercial and market priorities. WFP’s ability to reach beneficiaries effectively would be enhanced by clarifying its message, approach and its partnership skills with Private Sector bodies. WFP’s Private Sector Strategy approved by the Executive Board in June 2013 provides a measure of clarity, but guidance and support will be needed to ensure its successful implementation.

**Evidence from Evaluation:** Some of the most significant results in nutrition and emergency response have been realized through longer-term partnerships that draw on the strengths of private companies sharing common objectives with WFP, as compared to simple donor relationships.

For example, WFP's partnership with TNT led to the company’s rapid deployment to the emergency response in Aceh, Indonesia following the 2004 tsunami, and was a catalyst for development of the Logistic Emergency Teams – consortia of several global logistics companies

supporting the Global Logistics Cluster. (PSP2012 p. ix)

Establishing a good working relationship with a large corporation opens up possibilities of other partnership activities, as companies are interested in engaging with WFP in a range of philanthropic, logistical and advocacy projects. TNT's partnership with WFP has expanded from collaboration on logistics to include support to school feeding, the Walk the World advocacy campaign and other activities. (PSP2012 p. ix)

Private sector organizations saw advantages in working with WFP as well: corporations surveyed in the Private Sector evaluation were in agreement that partnership with WFP delivered "more significant benefits to the poor and malnourished as compared with their other partnerships." (PSP2012 p. 18)

The many positive results of private partnership leave no doubt of the benefits of partnering with corporations and foundations, but opportunities have been lost in securing funding from other types of private sources and in further resource mobilization from independent foundations. WFP has an increasing and, as yet, unmet need for funding that is not tied to particular countries or programmes. (PSP2012 p. xii)

Effective engagement in private fundraising and partnership by WFP as a whole has not been a priority, and WFP does not have a clear framework of priorities or roles and responsibilities. An integrated planning process that takes account of both private and other non-traditional resources should be developed. (PSP2012 p.xiv)

The evaluation of P4P reported that P4P had engaged in over 250 partnerships that included many private sector actors including supply-side partnerships with farmers and some partnerships with financial institutions. It found that WFP operations would have benefited from a greater involvement of commercial intermediaries (such as traders) for market development and credit institutions, to complement its implementation partnerships. (AER2011 p. 13)

Resource mobilization efforts should themselves be an opportunity for partnership: WFP should take advantage of opportunities to cooperate with its United Nations and NGO counterparts for private-sector fundraising. UNICEF and UNHCR are already co-operating systematically with major NGOs in sharing information on private-resource mobilization, and some of the NGOs interviewed in the Private Sector Partnership evaluation identified opportunities for co-operating with WFP on fundraising for specific projects. (PSP2012 p xi)

The Management Response to the Private Sector Partnership evaluation makes it clear that the new Partnership and Governance Services Department will bring together donor government, private sector and inter-agency partnerships under one Assistant Executive Director. This reorganization, included in the Fit for Purpose document, will ensure that Private Partnerships and Government Partnerships are managed under the same direct line of reporting, helping to improve co-ordination and communication and provide a clear point of reference for regional bureaux, country offices and liaison offices in their engagement with governments and the private sector. (PSPMR2012 p.7 and FFP2012)

## Resources for effective partnership

**Lesson 5:** Sufficient resources should be allocated to meeting the transaction costs of partnership, particularly for WFP's participation in large-scale partnerships, such as the cluster system.

**Summary:** *Recent evaluations confirm the value of WFP's participation in large-scale global partnerships such as the Global Logistics Cluster. The improved co-ordination and resource allocation provided by these partnerships increases the impact of humanitarian efforts and enhances benefits to*

*those most in need of support. But these partnerships also bring advantages beyond the improved service to beneficiaries: they provide opportunities for less well-resourced bodies (e.g. small NGOs) to have their voice heard by the major global relief actors and they create working environments in which agencies from different sectors can learn more about each others' resources and priorities.*

*WFP has demonstrated that it can bring not just technical skills but also high-quality leadership to global partnership. This experience is of value to the organization's internal learning and also to its reputation and relations with partners: learning to become a trusted leader will enhance WFP's attractiveness to other key organizations. However, the full value of large-scale partnerships will not be gained unless WFP allocates sufficient resources to support consistent participation and to monitor the process and impacts in order to draw out key lessons.*

**Evidence from evaluation:** The evaluation of the Global Logistics Cluster found that "improved logistics approaches contributed to enhanced programme delivery, increasing the positive effect on beneficiaries. Survey responses, analysis of records, and key informant interviews presented consistent findings. Effectiveness was confirmed across multiple dimensions, including increased fundraising, enhanced timeliness, cost savings, improved coverage/reduced gaps and duplication, greater predictability and improved information-sharing." (GLC 2012 p.vi)

The GLC evaluation concluded that co-ordination and partnerships contributed to improvements in coverage, capacity and preparedness as well as predictability of service provision. (GLC2012 p.x)

In natural disaster contexts, it may be the larger partnerships that enable WFP to contribute to local capacity building. For example, the Global Logistics Cluster was seen to engage in trying to support national preparedness and capacity building for national governments in situations where state capacity was weak. (GLC2012 p. 54)

The evaluation found widespread agreement that WFP is best positioned to lead the GLC. Although stakeholders had initially been concerned about WFP's ability to create a participatory and collaborative cluster, most reported that the GLCSC exceeded their expectations for inclusiveness and efforts to work together. (GLC2012 p. x)

Internal factors which enabled positive outcomes

included the strength of WFP's core logistics capabilities, highly experienced logistics staff, strong infrastructure and scale. (GLC 2012 p.xii)

A number of new and innovative partnerships are being forged in the area of nutrition and health, including the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) framework and the REACH partnership for ending child hunger. However as reported in the Partnership evaluation, resource limitations in terms of WFP's technical capacity and lack of senior technical staff, as well as financial resources, affects WFP's overall effectiveness as a partner in this area.(WIP2012)

The Afghanistan evaluation found that a previous lack of targeting of the most vulnerable groups was changing with the introduction of more co-ordinated models via the food security and nutrition cluster. (AFG2012 p. vii)

The Somalia evaluation stressed the importance, in the absence of government-driven co-ordination mechanisms at the national level, of WFP ensuring coherence with its humanitarian partners. This could mainly be achieved through the sharing of information and planning undertaken by the Food Assistance Cluster and the multi-sectoral Consolidated Appeals Process. (SOM2012 p. vi)

However, the GLC evaluation found that partnership outcomes were limited by factors related to organizations' inconsistent participation in global-level meetings and a decline over the previous three years in GLCSC's outreach to humanitarian logistics leaders and

organizations for participation in its strategic planning. (GLC 2012 p. x)

**Lesson 6:** WFP's culture emphasizes short-term delivery and technical expertise over longer-term engagement and good relationship management, sometimes to the detriment of building partnerships.

**Summary:** *WFP has a distinctive culture based on its roots as a UN agency, a logistics specialist and a main player in Emergency Preparedness and Response: these three aspects shape its working culture. It has detailed rules and procedures; strong central control over those procedures; is highly task-oriented and focused on delivery outputs. The strength of this internal culture has enabled WFP to build a global reputation as an organization that can (literally) deliver on its commitments. However, the same culture acts to constrain WFP's ability to build long-term relationships which require flexibility, responsiveness and a focus on people rather than product.*

*A focus on short-term goals, traditional delivery methods and a tendency to be reactive rather than pro-active can limit WFP's effectiveness and its attractiveness to other partners. More focus is also required on issues of transition and handover. The challenge to WFP in the current era is to maintain the quality of its core operations while creating sufficient flexibility in the way that it works to support better long-term partnerships.*

**Evidence from evaluation:** The Partnership evaluation concluded that the managerial culture of WFP remains very control-oriented, somewhat top-down and largely designed to manage and control the supply of goods, services and commodities. Human resource systems that are designed to limit unauthorized growth of permanent employees can have an unintended consequence of limiting capacity in new areas of activity such as nutrition and thus limiting the capacity of WFP as a nutrition partner. (WIP2012 p.41)

The short duration of WFP's project cycle is seen as hindering a long-term approach to food insecurity. The Partnership evaluation reported that in Kenya the longest project duration has been three years and that a project-based approach is not well adapted to working with governments in a joint strategy: "Although WFP is making efforts to develop country programmes and strategies, joint strategies developed by WFP and governments were absent in the countries reviewed." (WIP2012 p. viii)

In the evaluation of WFP's work in Afghanistan it was noted that WFP had not used its "strong voice in both the food security and nutrition clusters" to

support more equitable working practices: there had been a tendency "to use partners as service delivery agents, rather than creating lasting institutional resources." (AFG2012 p. xii)

The evaluation of the Global Logistics Cluster concluded that internal factors hindering cluster operations included WFP's human resources systems and culture, which treated seconded staff as outsiders. This was symptomatic of a project-centered rather than people-centered approach: "A self-reliant culture within WFP often prioritized rapid problem-solving rather than including partners." (GLC2012 p.xii)

The Afghanistan evaluation noted that WFP's tendency to favour independent working was not contributing to greater effectiveness: "There is a need for increased joint programming; declining funds make "go-it-alone" activities no longer viable. Recent collaboration in food security and nutrition policy and field practice with FAO and UNICEF should be continued and extended." (AFG2012 p. xii)

The evaluators in the Partnership evaluation found several examples in which governments asked for more support for capacity development but WFP's ability to respond was limited. In Haiti,

for example, the national government requested long-term assistance in capacity development for both nutrition and emergency preparedness, including secondments and mentoring. (WIP2012 p.vii)

In the Afghanistan evaluation it was observed that there was a lack of coherent and concerted efforts to develop local capacity: “An institutional mind-set change from “can do” to “enabling others to do” has yet to happen.” (AFG2012 p. ix)

**Lesson 7:** While WFP employees are universally respected for their honesty, dedication and hard work, few are fully equipped to handle the complexities of establishing and managing complex partnerships.

**Summary:** *WFP is right to regard its employees as its greatest asset: evaluations consistently show that partner organizations value the quality and commitment of WFP staff. Nevertheless, there are also perceived shortcomings in the preparation of staff to handle the complexity of multi-stakeholder relationships. WFP employees perceive themselves to be inadequately trained and supported in this respect. There is also concern over the short-term nature of posts and the frequent rotation of staff, which may restrict employees’ ability to establish specialized knowledge and can undermine the creation of strong local partnerships.*

**Evidence from evaluation:** The Partnership evaluation concluded that “To engender trust and build a long-term knowledge base, partners need to maintain consistency of staff and to ensure staff professionalism and skills”. (WIP2012 p. vi )

The Afghanistan evaluation recommended that WFP “introduce staff incentive structures that reflect time spent in coordination and collaboration as part of joint planning and initiatives with other development actors.” (AFG2012 p. Xiii)

Four evaluations reviewed in 2011 found that there were specific areas in which WFP employees were deficient:

- technical expertise in new sectors;
- partnering expertise (e.g. skills and principles);
- skills in policy making, advocacy and capacity development (enabling rather than doing);
- monitoring expertise.

In a number of different contexts, evaluations reveal that WFP is seen as less able to manage effective “handover” to state actors or local agencies. In part this may be the result of WFP’s delivery-based culture; in part it may be that WFP still lacks both the technical resources and the personnel expertise to manage effective transition. (WIP2012; AFG2012)

These are all areas which are integral to WFP front line staff performing their roles effectively in an environment where people-centered skills (partnering, advocacy, capacity development) are as important as technical skills. (AER2011 p. 7 and SYN2012 p. i)

There is a commitment in the newly-approved 2014-17 Strategic Plan to more dedicated partnership training: "Through training, leadership development and performance management, WFP will enhance staff capacity to: establish successful working relationships with governments, develop durable partnerships with other partners and strengthen accountability to beneficiaries." (DSP2013 p20)

This is strengthened by the commitment in FFP2012 to a revised HR function which more closely aligns workforce capabilities with the organization’s strategic direction. This promises “a radically different approach to talent management, contracting, re-assignments and promotions as well as staff development and

training, and support to career development.” Such changes should address the issue of retaining staff in post long enough to build partnership and not rotating staff too frequently. Currently, evaluations show that employees tend to move too frequently between posts and there is insufficient emphasis on building long-term local relationships. (FFP2012 p.7)

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## **Lesson 8:** Better systems, tools and processes are required to guide and support the management of partnerships.

**Summary:** *The majority of WFP’s systems and processes have been established to support the organization’s primary aim of delivering food aid. The increasing need to work in partnerships – often complex, multi-stakeholder partnerships – has not yet been fully reflected in the tools and systems available. This is true of a number of critical areas both centrally and in decentralized offices, including due diligence procedures, project documentation, financial processes and monitoring systems. Similarly, WFP does not have clear and universally accepted definitions for its main types of partnership engagement. There is a multiplicity of different agreement types that govern partnerships and few of these are regularly reviewed or revised to take account of changing circumstances.*

**Evidence from Evaluation:** An overarching recommendation of the 2012 Annual Evaluation

Report was that WFP should “ensure stronger, more consistent application of analytical tools to



underpin WFP’s programme effectiveness.” (AER2012 p.5)

Staff who responded to the survey carried out by the Partnership evaluation reported that several of WFP’s internal systems were inadequate to support partnerships, including financial systems, monitoring and reporting systems and staff training. At best only 59 percent of staff found WFP’s project planning systems to be supportive of partnership, and only 54 percent found the programme guidance adequate to support partnership.” (WIP2012 p. viii) See Figure 4 below.

The Private Sector Partnership evaluation noted that current due diligence decisions are universally applied and suggested that establishing a local due diligence procedure might increase flexibility: “Application of due diligence to specific projects would allow WFP to approve a relationship for one purpose, such as school feeding, but not another, such as policy development. WFP could then be more flexible in specific situations – such as when dealing with the extractive industries and with subsidiaries of conglomerates – but stricter overall in its application of due diligence criteria.” (PSP2012 p. xvi)

The evaluation of the Global Logistics Cluster noted technical weaknesses in WFP as cluster

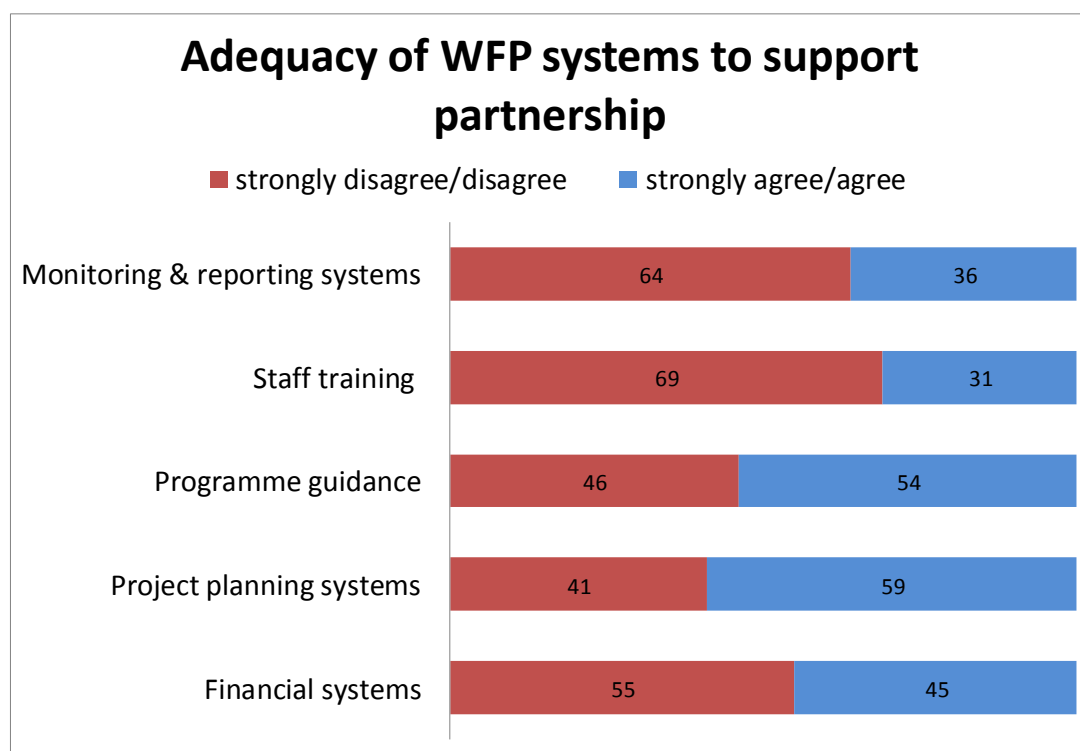
lead in respect of some of its operating systems. The evaluation found that administrative and financial systems were not geared to support the cluster’s inter-agency service and partnership needs. (GLC2012 p61)

Many of the existing MOUs with sister agencies or governments pre-date the shift in programming approach affiliated with the 2008-2013 Strategic Plan and are predicated on assumptions not related to “food assistance” type activities. Current MOU templates were not yet adapted to strategic partnering as well. (AER2011 and WIP2012)

The Afghanistan evaluation recommended the drawing up of revised partnership agreements to govern relations with local NGOs as more appropriate agreements “will be crucial as WFP steers the difficult path between supporting government institutions and maintaining appropriate political neutrality that allows access to all communities in need.” (AFG2012 p.xii.)

Policy responses to this issue include a commitment in the Strategic Plan 2014-2017 to establish a single toolbox that enables WFP country offices to select the most appropriate tools to achieve a specific Strategic Objective in a particular setting, based on rigorous analysis and evidence of impact;" (**DSP2013 p.5**)

**Figure 4: Adequacy of WFP systems to support partnership working**



(Source: From Food Aid to Food Assistance. Working in Partnership: A Strategic Evaluation. 199 survey respondents from WFP staff)

### Information and knowledge for learning

**Lesson 9:** Investments by WFP in shared learning and knowledge exchange with partners would increase the effectiveness of partnerships and build long term trust between WFP and its partners.

**Summary:** *WFP’s formal system of Monitoring and Evaluation has many strengths but the organization is less effective at putting in place systems of internal reflection and mutual review that might enhance learning. Working in partnership brings WFP staff into close contact with representatives of other agencies and sectors whose knowledge and approach to problem-solving can be of value to WFP.*

*WFP would benefit from tapping into this source of potential learning as a means of improving its ability to work with diverse organizations and thus bringing a better service to its targeted beneficiaries. This could be done, externally, by integrating opportunities for discussion, reflection and review into partnership arrangements and, internally, by creating more (actual or virtual) environments for sharing experience and lessons learned from partnerships. Joint review and assessment increases understanding of partnership effectiveness and also contributes to long term trust building among partners.*

**Evidence from evaluation:** The Global Logistics Cluster evaluation found that joint training for cluster participants including meetings, training courses, contingency planning and information management led to more collaborative response, better understanding of how to work together and better information

sharing. These outputs contributed to outcomes of strengthened humanitarian logistics partnerships and increased coordination, especially at the country-level. (GLC2012 p. 55)

The same evaluation found that discussions at global and country co-ordination meetings, GLC

training sessions and some information products contributed to informal learning and adaptation over time. However, GLC efforts to learn lessons were limited to specific internal exercises and basic surveys of partner satisfaction. The GLCSC demonstrated improvement and learning, but this relied heavily on the core staff consistently employed or deployed in the cluster. (GLC2012 p.xi)

No formal systematic efforts were found for collecting, documenting, sharing and discussing lessons learned with GLC/WFP staff and consultants and partners deployed in country-level logistics clusters. Unsystematic recruitment, one-time deployments and lack of debriefing were found to reduce institutional memory. (GLC2012 pxii)

The overview of 2011 evaluations (AER2011) found that “All the evaluations concluded that there needed to be substantially greater joint work with other agencies on technical matters in which WFP could benefit from their expertise.” (AER2011 p. 16)

The weakness of learning systems is related to the dominant culture within WFP (see Lesson 6 above) as there has too often been a failure to translate technical knowledge and a ‘can-do’ attitude into strategic choices based on the careful gathering and analysis of data. (AER2011 p. 22)

The synthesis report on the four Strategic Evaluations found that all the evaluations noted the importance to staff of knowledge exchange and informal peer-to-peer learning. The Change evaluation, in particular, emphasized the need for better knowledge management and improved support to country office staff – and partners – in managing complex collaborations. (SYN2012 p. 7-8)

The synthesis report on all four Strategic Evaluations (SYN2012) concluded that “Enhancing communication and understanding with partners were identified as fundamental to clarifying roles and enhancing partnerships.” (SYN2012 p. i)

## **Lesson 10:** Better monitoring and measurement is required so that the outcomes, costs and benefits of partnership working can be more accurately assessed.

**Summary:** *It is critically important to consider where, how and to what extent the partnership has added value to the particular project or activity. In addition, working in partnership involves substantial transaction costs and the balance between these costs and the observed benefits are not yet well understood. Recent policy initiatives have recognized this need and increased attention is being paid to accurate monitoring and measurement of ongoing partnerships. Major challenges remain in creating reliable methods of measuring the value of partnerships but attempts to measure costs and benefits, combined with better monitoring of impact at country level, would enable WFP to further increase the effectiveness of its partnership working.*

*Monitoring and Evaluation should not be treated as a post hoc activity to be applied only at the conclusion of a programme: setting clear evaluation criteria and gathering accurate data should be regarded as an integral part of the partnership process. WFP staff need adequate training in these skills so that review systems can be built into programme planning.*

An overarching recommendation of the 2012 Annual Evaluation Report was that WFP should “strengthen monitoring and reporting systems that will enable WFP to consistently share and report on planning, costs and benefits, results and outcomes.” (AER2012 p.5)

There is a perception that, despite the established benefits of working in partnership, WFP currently lacks accurate means of monitoring and measuring these collaborations. In the Strategic evaluation ‘Working in Partnership’ WFP staff expressed concern that

“the additional management costs incurred” by partnering might sometimes outweigh the benefits. (WIP2012 p.vii)

A major recommendation of the evaluation of WFP’s operations in Somalia was that Monitoring and Evaluation systems were improved at country level and used more pro-actively to guide local policy decisions. (SOM2012 p. x)

In the Partnership evaluation survey, only 36% of WFP staff believed that partnerships were adequately monitored. However, external stakeholders had a more positive view, with 59% satisfaction with monitoring arrangements. (WIP 2012 p. x) See Figure 5 below.

Monitoring expertise was one of the four skills in which WFP staff were judged to be deficient and where greater training was required. (AER2011 p. 7 and SYN2012 p. i)

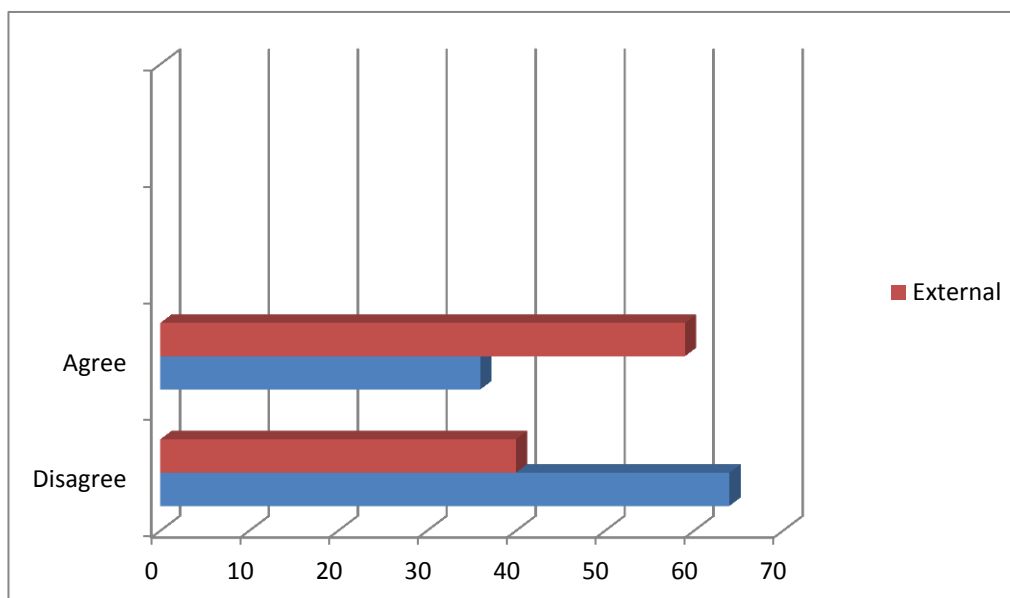
The organizational redesign of WFP, ‘Fit For Purpose’ includes the creation of a unified Performance Management and Monitoring Division which will be better placed both to undertake measurement of partnership activities and to disseminate the findings of that analysis.(FFP2012 p.6)

The work of the Division will include better monitoring and measurement of partnership activity and will incorporate a new indicator in the annual performance evaluations to measure how at every level WFP fosters partnerships and collaboration in the field. (FFP2012 p. 7)

Similarly, within the Management Response to the evaluation of the Global Logistics Cluster, there is a commitment to putting additional reviews of field operations in place, which will include input from WFP’s Cluster partners. (GLCMR2012)

Percentage of respondents agreeing or disagreeing with the statement: “The performance of partnerships with the WFP is adequately monitored.”

**Figure 5: Adequacy of monitoring of WFP partnership**



(Source: From Food Aid to Food Assistance. Working in Partnership: A Strategic Evaluation WIP2012. 50 WFP staff respondents and 104 respondents from other stakeholders )

**WFP documents reviewed in the preparation of this Top 10 Lessons (abbreviation in text given in parentheses)**

**OEV Annual Evaluation Reports**

*(AER2012) Annual Evaluation Report 2012, OEDE/AER/2013*

*(AERM2012) Annual Evaluation Report 2012 Analysis Matrix, see link above*

*(AER2011) Annual Evaluation Report 2011, OEDE/AER/2012*

**OEV Strategic/Thematic Evaluations**

*(GLC2012) Full Report of the Evaluation ‘Joint Strategic Evaluation of the Global Logistics Cluster – A Joint Strategic Evaluation’, OE/2012/006*

*(GLCMR2012) Management Response to the Recommendations of the Summary Evaluation Report – Global Logistics Cluster, WFP/EB.2/2012/6-B/Add.1*

*(WIP2012) Full Report of the Evaluation ‘From Food Aid to Food Assistance- Working in Partnership’, OE/2012/003*

*(SYN2012) Full Report of Evaluation ‘Four Strategic Evaluations on the Transition from Food Aid to Food Assistance: A Synthesis’, OE/2012/S002*

**OEV Policy Evaluations**

*(PSP2012) Full Report of the Evaluation ‘WFP’s Private Sector Partnership and Fundraising Strategy’, OE/2012/010*

*(PSPMR2012) Management Response to the Recommendations of the Summary Evaluation Report of WFP’s Private Sector Partnership and Fundraising Strategy, WFP/EB.2/2012/6-A/Add.1*

**OEV Country Portfolio Evaluations**

*(AFG2012) Full Report of the Evaluation ‘Afghanistan: An Evaluation of WFP’s Portfolio’, OE/2012/015*

*(AFGMR2012) Management Response to the Recommendations of the Summary Evaluation Report – Afghanistan Country Portfolio, WFP/EB.2/2012/6-D/Add.1*

*(SOM2012) Full Report of the Evaluation ‘Somalia: An Evaluation of WFP’s Portfolio’, OE/2012/004*

*(SOMMR2012) Management Response to the Recommendations of the Summary Evaluation Report – Somalia Country Portfolio, WFP/EB.2/2012/6-C/Add.1*

**WFP documents**

*(DSP2013) Draft WFP Strategic Plan (2014 – 2017), Third Informal Consultation, 16 April 2013 [approved at the EB Annual Session 3-6 June 2013, WFP/EB.A/2013/5-A/1]*

*(EBC2013) Development of the 2014-2017 Strategic Results Framework, Informal EB Consultation, 16 April 2013 [second Informal Consultation on the Draft Strategic Results Framework, 9 July 2013]*

*(FFP2012) Fit For Purpose – WFP’s new organizational design, 17 August 2012*