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**Centre of Excellence
Against Hunger:**

IMPACT EVALUATION REPORT

(2011-2016)



**Centre of Excellence
against Hunger**

wfp.org

May, 2017

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Centre of Excellence against Hunger was established in 2011 and has since engaged with over 70 countries to strengthen their capacities to develop and enhance initiatives in areas such as social protection, home-grown school feeding, and food and nutrition security. The Centre is an innovative trilateral arrangement between the Brazilian Government and the World Food Programme (WFP), based on both partners' comparative advantages, in order to widen exchanges between developing countries and increase their developmental impact.

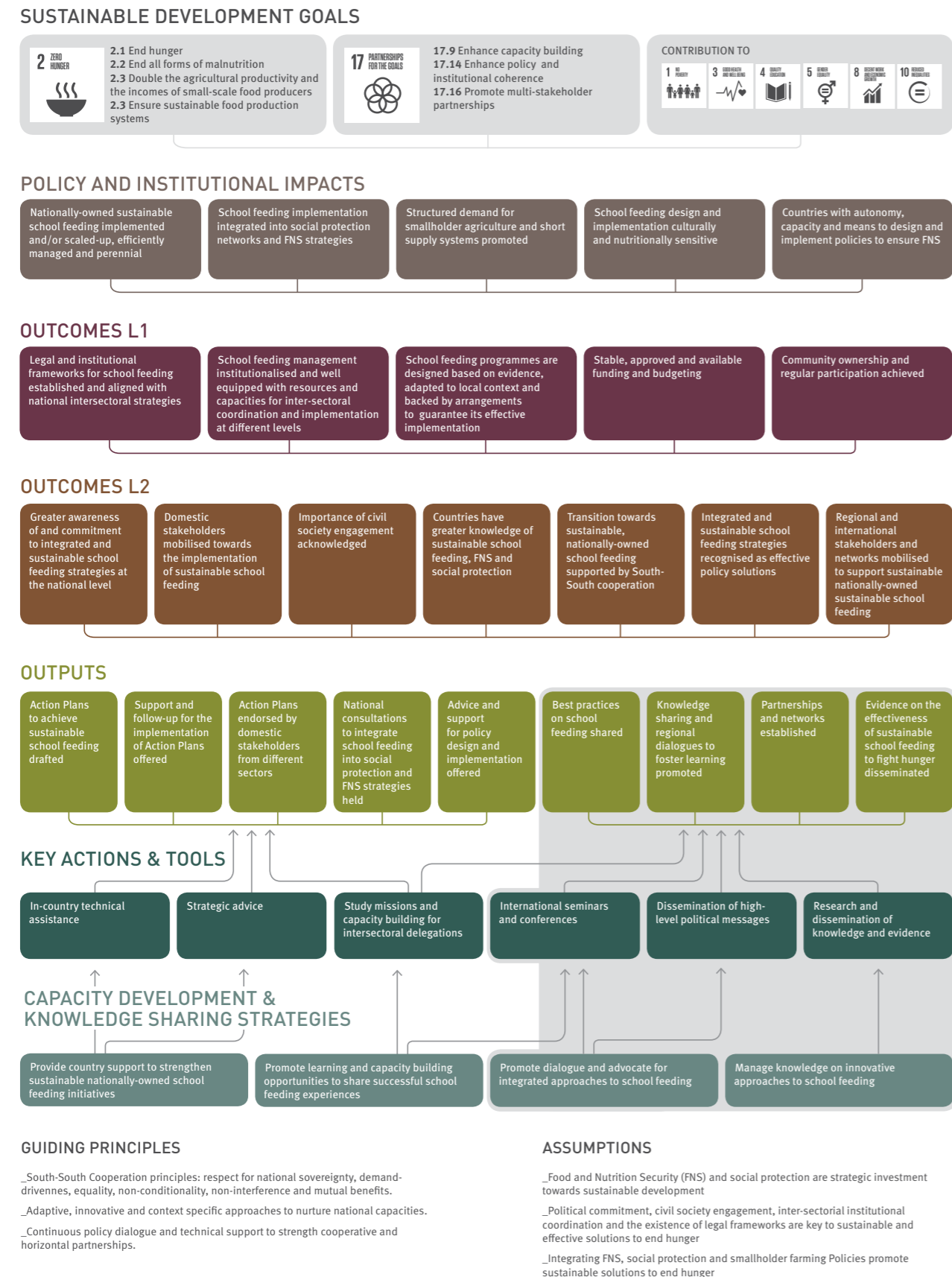
The Centre aims to encourage innovative, sustainable, and nationally owned solutions to overcome hunger. It supports countries in their efforts towards efficient and scaled-up home-grown school feeding policies, integrated with social protection and food and nutrition security strategies, which are able to structure the demand of local and smallholder agriculture and whose design and implementation are culturally and nutritionally sensitive. In order to achieve effective and sustainable solutions to end hunger, the Centre recognises the need for high-level political commitment, civil society engagement, intersectoral institutional coordination, and the existence of supportive legal frameworks.

So that partner countries may achieve these outcomes, and guided by the principles of South-South Cooperation, the Centre invests in activities channelled by two main strategies: capacity development and knowledge sharing. It promotes the exchange of experiences, provides policy advice and technical assistance, and invests in international and regional enabling environments for nationally owned home-grown school feeding. Thus far, the Centre has organised 51 study visits for 40 countries, promoted 38 in-country technical assistance visits, and supported the organisation of 12 national participatory consultations. Besides, it provides continuous support and advice for 28 countries.

This external impact evaluation assessed the degree of achievement of the Centre's objectives, the efficiency and relevance of its strategies, and the quality of its support activities. The evaluation also identified possible recommendations. Since this is the Centre's first external evaluation, we opted for a mixed method approach and a theory of change to provide an overall picture of the Centre's work rather than a detailed analysis of the impact in specific countries. The evaluation focused on the 28 countries that benefited from the Centre's continuous support, out of which 24 countries were consulted during the evaluation process. The evaluation team conducted 66 semi-structured interviews with partners, the WFP, and the Centre's staff, in addition to 2 workshops with partners and a survey to gather the partner countries' views on the Centre's contribution to their school feeding and social protection initiatives.

The Centre's theory of change (Figure 1) was the first step in the evaluation and provided the basis for the Evaluation Matrix. The latter was structured around 3 questions and 18 crosscutting criteria, representing the expected pathways of changes supported by the Centre. The evaluation sought to provide comprehensive answers to each of these questions, with a detailed analysis of each criterion. This report thoroughly explores the questions and evaluation results, which are summarised in Figure 2 at the end of this summary. The evaluation also strived to provide a crosscutting analysis of the Centre's main contributions and challenges in dialogue with its theory of change. This crosscutting analysis and the main findings of the evaluation are highlighted in this summary. At the end of this summary, one may find the recommendations for addressing the main challenges identified.

FIGURE 1 Theory of Change



MAIN FINDINGS

The Centre notably contributed to mobilising support and developing capacities deemed key to sustain nationally owned home-grown school feeding as well as to changes in policies and institutional frameworks across partner countries. The Centre has been successful in supporting countries to engage with important domestic stakeholders, resulting in increased political and technical support, and greater engagement and commitment to national school feeding initiatives.

Moreover, the Centre’s activities in capacity development have contributed to increased national ownership and autonomy in the design and implementation of national school feeding initiatives, and to the technical quality of the latter. This was possible because of the Centre’s approach rooted in South-South cooperation principles, government-to-government approach, and the expertise and political legitimacy provided by Brazilian policies and their results in poverty and hunger alleviation.

The Centre contributed to the recognition of the crosscutting developmental impacts of home-grown school feeding. The Centre is also recognised by its ability to build strategic partnerships and facilitate exchanges and networks to endow a wider outreach of its strategies, which contribute to an enabling environment for the pursuit of nationally owned solutions.

Notwithstanding this positive trend in what the Centre’s theory of change puts forward as ‘coalitions for change’ (level 2 outcomes in its theory of change), collected evidence is uneven – across partner countries – regarding changes in the conditions required to effectively sustain the national school feeding initiatives positive impacts in the long-term (level 1 outcomes of its theory of change). At that level, an exception is the Centre’s positive contribution to the establishment and improvement of legal and institutional frameworks to support an intersectoral approach to school feeding, especially regarding the link with national social protection strategies. Additionally, it was possible to observe that countries more engaged in the Centre’s activities recognise the Centre’s contribution to a wider range of

positive changes when compared to countries less exposed to the Centre’s activities.

On the one hand, such findings are coherent with the rationale behind the Centre’s theory of change, which expects changes at policy level to occur in a medium- or long- term perspective. On the other hand, improvement areas were identified in regards to the Centre’s in-country technical assistance and follow-up activities.

Against this backdrop, the evaluation points toward the need for strategic adjustments and investments in capacity development to support countries in implementing their initiatives and reaching a further level of outcomes and impacts. This holds especially true if we consider that after an initial boost on raising awareness and mobilising stakeholder’s support, partners’ demands tend to underscore the need for further ground presence and fieldwork as well as more specific and enhanced technical support.

Another important impact of the Centre’s work is its added value to the WFP’s transition strategy and South-South and Triangular Cooperation practices. For instance, it has inspired WFP to open new Centres of Excellences in other countries. The Centre’s practical knowledge regarding national ownership and capacity development, and the lessons drawn from its innovative trilateral arrangement can potentially inform the 2030 Agenda.

The Centre is widely renowned for its inspirational role. Partners demonstrate confidence and enthusiasm in their partnership with the Centre, illustrated by their growing demand for deeper political exchanges and enhanced technical support. The findings point to the appropriateness and relevance of the Centre’s approach, even in face of the diversity of countries supported. Moreover, the Centre’s institutional evolution and efforts to improve its practices reveal an institutional capacity and willingness to adapt, innovate, and remain responsive to the partners’ shifting demands and contexts. Altogether, these results point to the Centre’s promising contribution towards better sustainable and nationally owned policies for tackling poverty and hunger.

MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS

Inspiring ownership and supporting domestic coalitions for change

The Centre's advocacy work contributed to the recognition of the school feeding agenda as an effective solution for hunger relief and the promotion of social protection and local development. It also influenced the content of the agenda, having successfully made the case for the potential of home-grown school feeding as an intersectoral policy with multidimensional impact; the importance of government ownership of school feeding initiatives; and the need to establish legal and institutional frameworks for school feeding to foster the sustainability of the initiatives. This contributed to inspire national governments to assume the task of investing and improving school feeding initiatives, notably in the African continent. The Centre's activities fostered engagement from high-level government stakeholders, particularly from line Ministries, leading to an increased commitment to the school feeding agenda in partner countries. It also contributed towards further technical and political support for national school feeding initiatives.

Supporting capacity development

The Centre contributed to the partners' increased autonomy in the design and implementation of their national school feeding initiatives. This includes increased capabilities to lead the agenda; to coordinate the various actors involved in school feeding comprising the governments' strategy; to consolidate or improve intersectoral structures for coordinating school feeding; to perform gap assessments and; to design and implement solutions that reflect the opportunities and challenges of specific national contexts. Additionally, the findings demonstrate the Centre's contribution to the improvement of legal and institutional frameworks to ensure sustainability to school feeding initiatives and provide linkages to broader social protection strategies.

Fostering an enabling environment for home-grown school feeding

The Centre contributed to the creation of favourable conditions for strengthening school feeding initiatives in partner countries, mainly through raising awareness and mobilising the support of decision-makers, reinforcing the importance of school feeding initiatives in governments' agendas. This is particularly noticeable in the African continent, where liaison with the African Union (AU) culminated in the recommendation by the Head of States to adopt and improve home-grown school feeding initiatives, the establishment of a technical committee to undertake a study on school feeding in the AU Member States, and the creation of an African School Feeding Day. In addition, as a facilitator and supporter of regional networks and exchanges, the Centre contributed to strengthen regional collaboration, peer-to-peer learning, and partners' leadership.

Contributing to the International Development Cooperation Landscape

The Centre clearly adds value to the practices and policies of its institutional partners. It supported WFP's policies and fieldwork with its practical approach of engaging governments, contributing to the national ownership of school feeding initiatives, and thus supporting the WFP's transition strategy. It also informed the WFP's Triangular and South-South cooperation Policy with lessons learned from the Centre's experience. On the Brazilian side, the Centre contributed to the dissemination of the country's experiences and brought methodological innovations to the Brazilian South-South cooperation. Initial evidences indicate the contribution of the Centre's activities to the Brazilian school-feeding programme. Such exchanges assisted the Brazilian technical staff to identify gaps and brought suggestions on how to overcome them. This analysis illustrates the South-South cooperation principle of mutual benefits.

Another set of contributions affects, albeit modestly, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially goal number 17 (global partnerships). The Centre contributes

to operationalise the concept of South-South and Trilateral Cooperation and to expand the principle of national ownership through a very precise set of activities, especially in regards to capacity development, which are negotiated with each partner and strayed from 'one-size fits all' approaches. The Centre's learn-by-doing approach both inspires and pushes partner countries to lead and improve their initiatives.

MAIN CHALLENGES

Supporting national initiatives scale-up and implementation

The Centre has successfully raised awareness among decision makers regarding the potential impacts of a multisectoral approach to school feeding, including the benefits of promoting local supply chains connected to smallholder farming, and the importance of mechanisms for ensuring budget and financing to school feeding. Nevertheless, the evaluation found uneven evidences – across partner countries – that such institutional positive developments resulted in improvements in the implementation or in the scale-up of national school feeding initiatives. Additionally, the Centre encouraged an approach to school feeding grounded on participation and accountability mechanisms, but findings were uneven as to the increase in engagement and commitment from the larger spectrum of national actors, such as local governments, civil society, and the private sector. Altogether, those obstacles can negatively affect the sustainability of national initiatives in the long-term, as assumed by the Centre's theory of change.

While there are contextual particularities in each partner country determining the possibilities of improving implementation and scale-up, the evaluation assessed important bottlenecks that need to be addressed regarding the Centre's in-country technical assistance, the pace of communications, and the follow-up activities of partners' domestic processes to bolster the Centre's contribution to the sustainability of home-grown school feeding initiatives. On the one hand, such shortcomings reflect the limits of the Centre's current staff and financial resources, faced with increasing demands by partners, and the wide scope

of its support activities. On the other hand, feasible adjustments are possible within current capacities.

Expediting knowledge management, production and dissemination

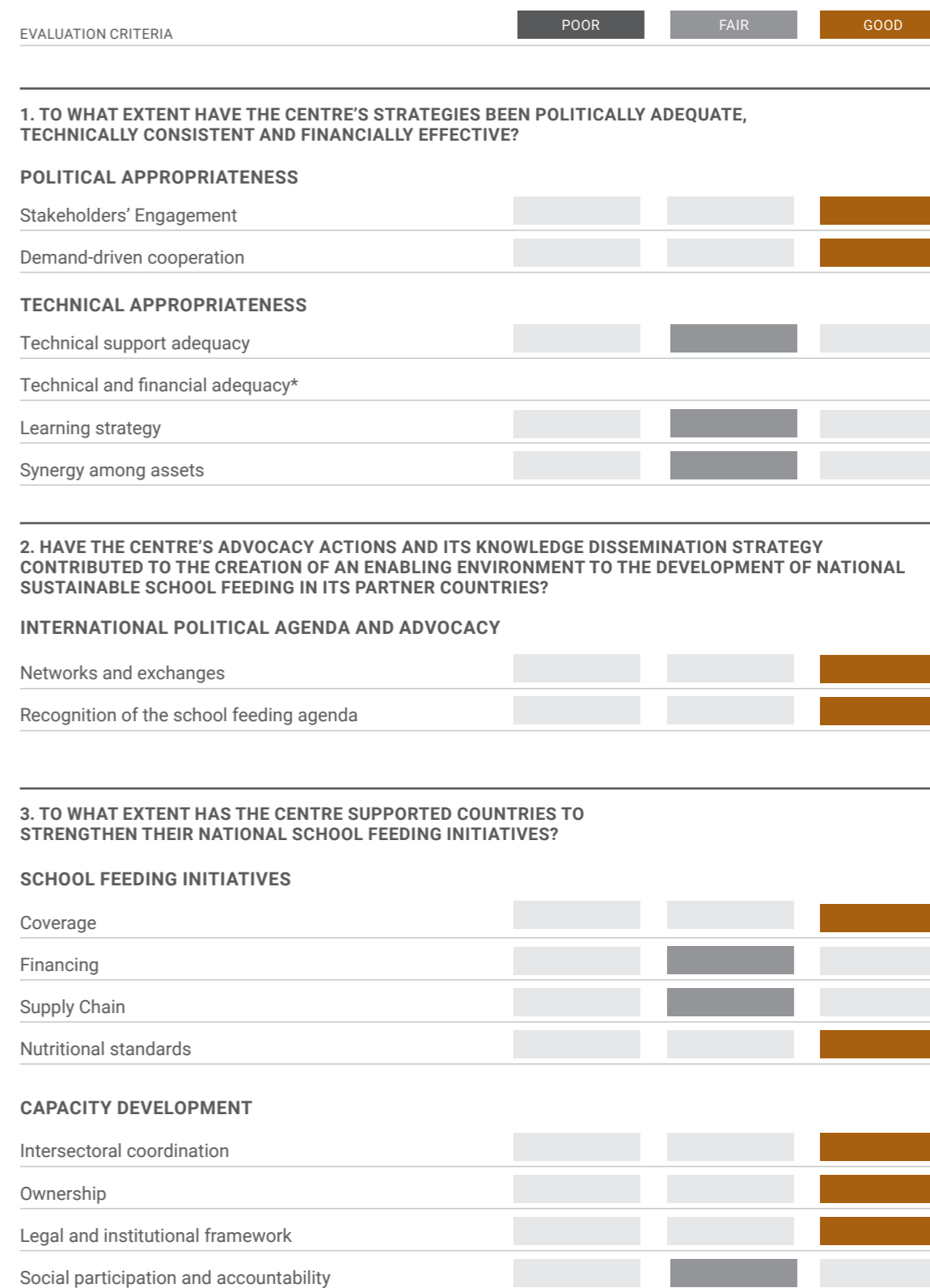
Practical knowledge and evidences are key advocacy tools, crucial to the implementation and scaling up of sound policies. Even though the evaluation assessed advances in the Centre's knowledge management activities, especially in recent years, this is an underdeveloped area when compared to the capacity development activities. Further investment in knowledge management and dissemination is deemed useful to improve the Centre's future impacts. The Centre could incorporate a broader and more diverse set of international best practices into its pool of experiences, including those of partner countries. This could increase horizontal learning exchanges while promoting further international recognition of the partners' progresses. Moreover, the Centre has yet to put in place a clear methodology on how to scale up its outreach in terms of supporting knowledge dissemination to technical areas within line ministries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Centre's willingness and flexibility to answer all demands positively is highly appreciated by partners. At the same time, the Centre has limited capacities and devotes itself to an increasingly diverse number of partnerships and activities. It needs to strengthen its already valued areas and strategically invest in new capacities and solutions to support countries more effectively in reaching higher impact levels. In particular, the Centre should consider:

- > **Strategically revise its scope** to address (i) the increasing demand for support, both in the number of countries and thematic areas; (ii) its current capacities regarding financial and human resources.
- > **Enhance in-country technical assistance and follow-up activities**, addressing (i) the adequacy of experts profile vis-à-vis partners' contexts; (ii) partners' expectations regarding the Centre's contribution to developing capacities among a wider number of stakeholders; (iii) the rising demands to broaden the technical assistance's thematic scope; (iv) communication flows with partners.
- > **Enhance knowledge management and dissemination strategy**, adjusted to the partners' needs and addressing requests to: (i) make available practical knowledge on successful cases, including experiences by partner countries; (ii) expedite knowledge production processes; (iii) enhance the visibility of produced knowledge towards a wider audience.
- > **Implement a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning strategy for the Centre's activities**, to: (i) support partners' capacities to systematise their own learnings and build up information to enable peer-to-peer exchanges; (ii) to inform future evaluations, support follow-up of partner countries' processes, and enhance the Centre's accountability to partners.
- > **Expand strategies to strengthen partner countries' leadership**, taking advantage of opportunities to: (i) establish horizontal exchanges that may benefit from the leadership of partner countries; (ii) foster and support South-South cooperation among partners.
- > **Create new synergies by strengthening and expanding institutional partnerships**, exploring: (i) partner countries' demands for specific technical support; (ii) spaces to engage with other actors involved in social protection and food security agendas; (ii) opportunities to foster civil society participation and contribution in the Centre's activities.
- > **Strengthen its institutional identity as a trilateral arrangement**, establishing strategic dialogues with the Brazilian Government and the WFP and bearing in mind the need (i) to maintain the Centre's added value in the trilateral arrangement while enhancing synergies with WFP units and Brazilian South-South cooperation practices; and (ii) to provide lessons learned for establishing other Centres of Excellence and triangular cooperation initiatives.

FIGURE 2 Synthesis of the evaluation results



*Criterion not assessed



1. INTRODUCTION

The Centre of Excellence against Hunger completed five years in 2016. Over the past years, the Centre has been supporting countries to strengthen their capacities to develop and enhance national initiatives in areas such as social protection, home-grown school feeding, and food and nutrition security, hoping to encourage innovative, sustainable, and nationally-owned solutions to overcome hunger.

In order to explore and communicate the lessons learned and the results achieved thus far, this external evaluation assessed the degree of achievement of the Centre of Excellence's objectives, the efficiency of its strategies, and the quality of its activities. It also identified recommendations that may inform future interventions. Since this is the Centre's first evaluation, we have chosen a methodological strategy to paint an overall picture of the Centre's contribution during its five years of existence. A comprehensive Evaluation Matrix guides our analysis (see Chapter 3), which encompasses the full range of the Centre's strategies and methodologies, providing the basis for the thorough analysis developed in this report. To enhance data availability for future evaluative endeavours, particularly in Monitoring & Evaluation, the conclusions provide some recommendations. In the context of the 2030 Agenda, the evaluation also attempted to provide evidence-based information on the contribution of South-South and Triangular cooperation, as well as capacity development interventions, to attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The structure of the present Evaluation Report is as follows:

- > **CHAPTER 2** introduces the Centre of Excellence and its Theory of Change.
- > **CHAPTER 3** presents an overall picture of the evaluation methodological strategy.
- > **CHAPTER 4** describes and analyses the evaluation's main findings for each of the evaluation questions and criteria.
- > **CHAPTER 5** presents a crosscutting analysis.
- > **CHAPTER 6** presents the main conclusions and recommendations.
- > **ANNEXES** bring a detailed description of the applied methods and research techniques as well as a list of the interviewees and respondents for the survey.

In order to ensure that key-informants remained anonymous, they were quoted using the following acronyms system: GOV (for partner countries' representatives); WFP (for Field Offices and Headquarters staff), PART (for institutional partners' representatives) and COE (for Centre of Excellence staff).



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2. CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE AGAINST HUNGER: AN OVERVIEW

The Centre of Excellence against Hunger represents an innovative arrangement between the Brazilian Government¹ and the World Food Programme (WFP), aiming at strengthening partner countries' national capacities on sustainable food and nutrition security and social protection strategies. The Centre supports national governments in the design, management, and expansion of national home-grown, nutritious, sustainable school feeding programmes integrated with social protection and inclusion strategies. The Centre was created based on the added value and comparative advantages of Brazilian South-South cooperation and WFP's work with the objective of scaling up exchanges between Southern partners and enhancing their developmental impact.

For more than a decade, Brazil has had remarkable results in food security, a result of strong political will and a set of comprehensive and coordinated policies. Due to the positive outcomes of such policies, demands for Brazil to share its experience in hunger and poverty alleviation have increased and have drawn the attention of other developing countries, international organisations, and traditional donors. A hallmark of the Brazilian experience consists of the intersectoral policies, which sustained the Zero Hunger Strategy and is included the National School Feeding Programme (*Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar - PNAE*). In a continuous effort to respond to the growing number of demands, the Brazilian government engaged in new trilateral arrangements that allowed it to expand and strengthen its South-South cooperation exchanges.

Concurrently, WFP itself has been transitioning from providing food aid to supporting the countries' priorities in order to achieve the SDGs and, as a result, government ownership of food security becomes of fundamental

¹ Among the Brazilian governmental institutions supporting the Centre's activities, the National Education Development Fund (FNDE) and the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) are the main partners. The Fund is responsible for implementing education policies in Brazil, including school feeding. While, the ABC, subordinated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is legally entitled to coordinate received and provided technical cooperation.

importance. WFP's South-South and Triangular Cooperation Policies acknowledge that facilitating South-South and government-to-government exchanges has the potential of: strengthening national systems and capacities, increasing their ownership; mobilising additional funding sources to be invested in development; and fostering innovation based on first-hand experience and tested solutions². Moreover, WFP's School Feeding Policy, published in 2009, represents a turning point in the relation of school feeding programmes and development, towards a strategic conception of the programmes as safety nets and as part of national social protection systems and of social development initiatives. The Policy modernises WFP's school feeding approach and emphasises the need for WFP to support sustainable school feeding initiatives in integration with national poverty and hunger reduction strategies. It also establishes the institutional objective of the hand-over of school feeding programmes to governments and the phase out of its assistance.³

Recognising these synergies, as well as the positive results from the previous collaboration between the Brazil and the WFP in the school feeding agenda, the Brazilian Trust Fund (BTF) was created in late 2007 to support WFP capacity development activities regarding school feeding programmes, specially its hand-over strategy. BTF, which has contributions from the Brazilian Government and is managed by the WFP, assured funding to this trilateral partnership and its actions. In 2010, a 'Framework Agreement for Technical Assistance and Cooperation to Promote School Feeding Programmes' was signed between the Brazilian government and WFP to establish a centre, in Brazil, focused in capacity development in school feeding, leading to the creation, in 2011, of the WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger.

The Centre's approach, as well as its mandate, have constantly evolved over time to adapt to new challenges in a sharp learning curve.

² See: World Food Programme (2015). WFP South-South and Triangular Cooperation policy. Rome: WFP Also mentioned in interviews.

³ See: World Food Programme (2009). WFP School Feeding Policy. Rome: WFP and World Food Programme. (2013) Revised School Feeding Policy. Rome: WFP

More recently, the Centre has incorporated, for instance, strategies towards improving child nutrition and a broader range of social protection policies. The BTF has also evolved, becoming a multi-donor arrangement thus allowing contributions from other partners. Until 2016, the BTF had received contributions from the Brazilian government, the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the KFC Add Hope Foundation. Those contributions have enabled the Centre to execute, until December 2016, a total of USD 15,296,525.25.

The Centre of Excellence against Hunger – Theory of Change

A theory of change is the articulation of the goals, underlying beliefs, and assumptions guiding an organisation's strategy, all of which are critical for producing change and institutional improvement. It puts forward the expected causal relationships between an organisation's interventions and its desired outcomes, thought of as preconditions for the achievement of long-term goal(s). An important element within a theory of change concerns the understanding of the relationships between all of the abovementioned components, considered as pathways of change.

The main underlying assumption of the Centre's theory of change is that integrated food and nutrition security, social protection, and support to smallholder farming policies contribute to end hunger. Such policies are strategic investments towards sustainable development. The key drivers to put forward these policies and achieve sustainability are: high-level political commitment, civil society engagement, intersectoral institutional coordination, and the existence of legal and institutional frameworks.

The theory describes two levels of impacts expected in the long-term:

> The ultimate impacts expected are in line with the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. Goals '2 Zero Hunger' and '17 Partnerships for the goals' are more likely to be influenced by the Centre's interventions. In addition, the Centre's support can

potentially contribute to goals '1 No poverty', '3 Good health and well-being', '4 Quality education', '5 Gender equality', '8 Decent work and economic growth', and '10 Reduced inequalities'. Underlying the understanding of the Centre's contribution to these long-term impacts is its multidimensional approach to food and nutrition security and social protection. School feeding, in particular, has the potential to improve the food and nutrition security of vulnerable children, encouraging families to send their children to school, and thus improving enrolment, attendance, and learning. When targeting girls, school feeding can improve their access to education. By connecting smallholders farmers' food supply to the predictable demand of public food procurement for school meals, policies can at the same time provide safety nets for children and create markets that enhance farmers' income. Home-grown school feeding value local food culture and promote healthy eating habits. Overall, food and nutrition security integrated approaches help to break the cycle of hunger, poverty, and social inequality in the poorest areas. Moreover, the Centre's contribution to SDG 17 relates to its own triangular nature and its South-South approach, as a 'Means of Implementation' to achieve the SDGs.

> A specific set of policy impacts need to be in place in order to achieve such broader development goals (SDGs). These refer to the **policy and institutional impacts** and encompass efficient and scaled-up nationally-owned school feeding policies, integrated into social protection and to food and nutrition security strategies, and able to structure the demand of local and smallholder agriculture; and whose design and implementation are culturally and nutritionally sensitive. In order to ensure sustainability, a final crosscutting impact at this level is expected, wherein partner countries achieve autonomy, capacity, and the means to design and implement such policies.

The outcomes that will lead to such policy and institutional impacts have also been divided in two levels. The first (Level 1) refers to changes in policy and institutional frameworks, while the second (Level 2) refers to changes in



the actors' perceptions and actions to recognise and endorse school feeding as an effective solution to end hunger. Both are expected to occur in the medium-term:

> **Level 1 outcomes refer to a set of conditions required to effectively sustain policy and institutional changes.**

These include: the establishment of legal and institutional frameworks aligned with national intersectoral strategies, the institutionalisation of school feeding management with an intersectoral coordination sufficiently equipped with resources and capacities for evidence-based design, and the implementation of home-grown school feeding at national and local levels. It also includes securing stable funding for school feeding as well as achieving community ownership and regular participation in the policy-making process.

> **Level 2 outcomes refer to coalitions and capacities for change in place,** meaning:

(i) increased national commitment to school feeding and (ii) building blocks for an enabling environment to school feeding. The first cluster relates to greater awareness and commitment to integrated school feeding solutions at the national level, mobilisation of domestic stakeholders, and acknowledgement of the importance of civil society engagement. The engagement by the constituencies is a key element of policy sustainability. The second cluster gathers enablers such as the home-grown school feeding agenda, recognised as an effective policy solution, regional and international stakeholders and networks mobilised to support such solutions, and countries with greater knowledge of integrated food and nutrition security, and social protection policies.

In order to support partner countries in achieving those outcomes, and guided by the principles of South-South cooperation, which emphasises horizontal and demand-driven exchanges as means to support endogenous



and autonomous solutions to development, the Centre invests in adaptive, innovative and context specific activities guided by two main **strategies**, namely, **capacity development and knowledge sharing**:

- > Those two intertwined strategies aim at strengthening the national governments' capacities for designing, implementing, and managing their own solutions against hunger and at the same time foster an international and regional enabling environment that provides elements for bolstering national processes. This is unpacked in four main building-blocks: (i) promote learning and capacity building opportunities to share successful school feeding experiences; (ii) provide country support to strengthen sustainable nationally-owned school feeding initiatives; (iii) promote dialogue and advocate for integrated approaches to school feeding; and (iv) manage knowledge on innovative approaches to school feeding.

Those strategies are unfolded through different **activities and their expected outputs**:

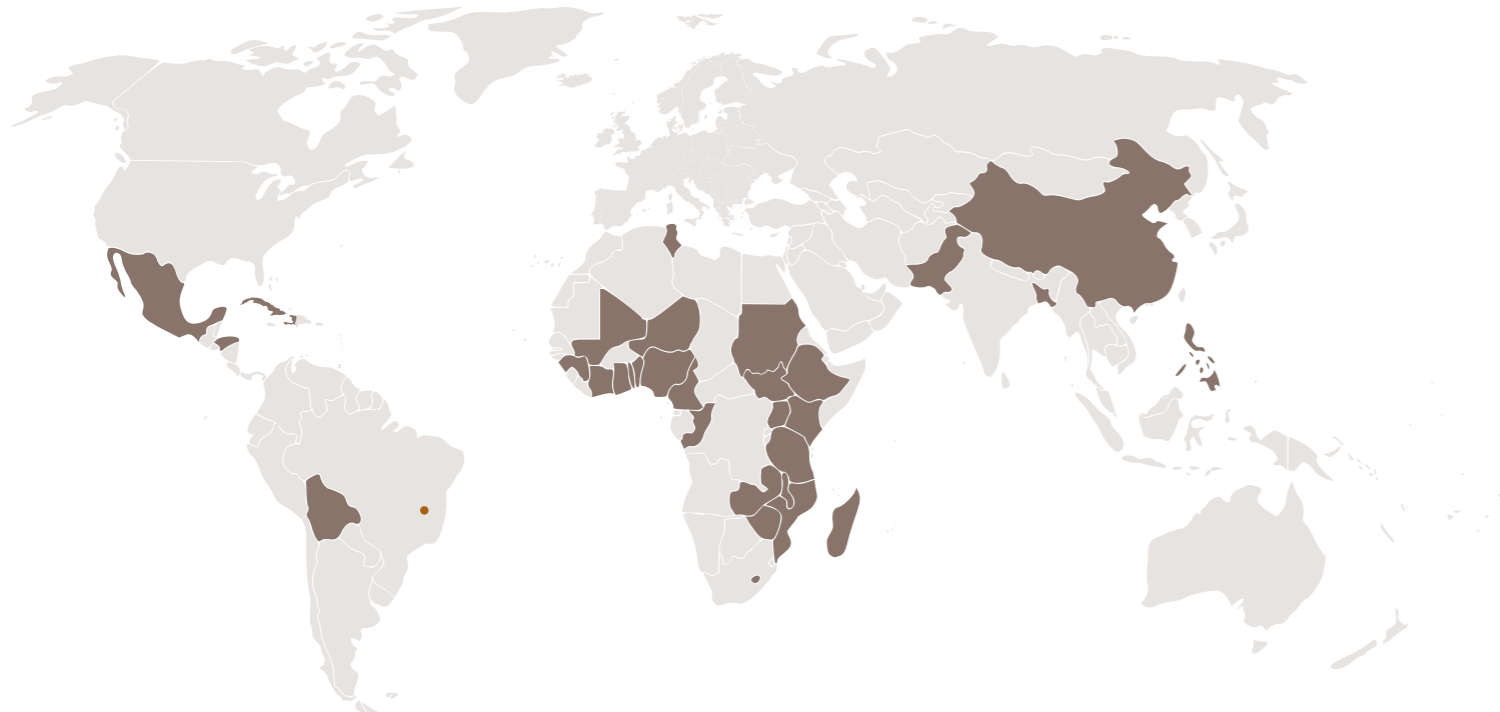
- > The Centre organises study visits by national intersectoral delegations to Brazil to share experiences in food security and nutrition through peer-to-peer dialogue and field visits. The visits are planned based on the partner countries' demands, priorities, and particular contexts. Delegations are expected to draft an action plan during the study visit to guide the design and/or implementation of their school feeding and social protection initiatives.
- > The Centre supports and facilitates the organisation of country-led participatory processes (National Consultations) to promote cross-sectoral dialogue. These consultations should lead to an increased awareness and greater domestic buy-in as well as the mobilisation of diverse sectors and stakeholders towards the implementation of nationally-owned home-grown school feeding initiatives.
- > The Centre provides policy advice and technical assistance, either remotely or in-country, to support the design and implementation of solutions and sound policy and institutional frameworks. Activities

include technical training, assistance to develop legal and institutional frameworks, policy drafts, and pilot projects.

- > The Centre invests in strengthening an international and regional enabling environment for national school feeding initiatives. By promoting international dialogue and research, the Centre expects to inform and sensitise a broad and diverse range of actors, including policymakers, international organisations, civil society, and community leaders on the multiple benefits of governmental commitment and investment in initiatives that integrate food and nutrition security to social protection, mainly through home-grown school feeding. The Centre also invests in a wide range of partnerships to leverage the implementation of its strategies and its outreach capacities. It also facilitates the establishment of cooperation networks to encourage countries' leadership and to bolster synergies at the regional level.

To date, the Centre has engaged with more than 75 national governments through direct cooperation and international advocacy. Figures 3 and 4 below summarize the main activities performed by the Centre.

FIGURE 3 Centre's activities: general outlook 2011-2016⁴



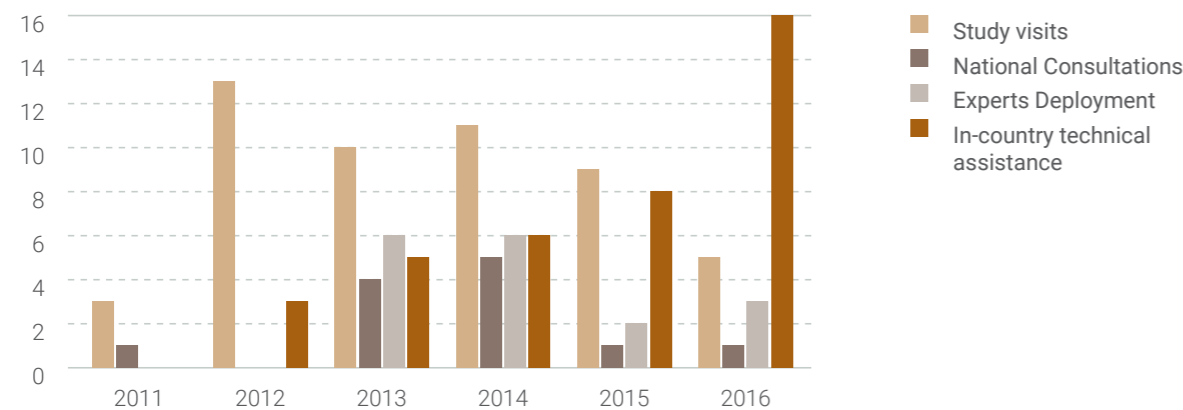
PROVIDING CONTINUOUS SUPPORT TO

28
COUNTRIES

76
COUNTRIES ENGAGED WITH CENTRE'S ACTIVITIES

20
ACTION PLANS APPROVED AND BEING IMPLEMENTED

+5
NOT OFFICIALLY APPROVED BUT BEING IMPLEMENTED



⁴ Information from December 2016, provided by the Centre of Excellence against Hunger. Continuous support is a category designed by the Centre encompassing the countries that it currently provides continuous technical and policy support. This is a smaller group compared to the range of countries the Centre interacts and dialogues.

FIGURE 4 The Centre of Excellence institutional partnerships and activities for fostering an enabling environment for school feeding 2013-2016⁵

2013

Structured Demand and Smallholder Farmers in Brazil: the case of PAA and PNAE

XV edition of the Global Child Nutrition Forum, in Brazil

Bahia State Government

Brazilian Company for Technical Assistance and Rural Extension

Global Child Nutrition Foundation

2014

Videos on public policies for the semi-arid

XVI edition of the Global Child Nutrition Forum in South Africa

VI Latin American and Caribbean School Feeding Seminar in Mexico

International seminar "Institutional Purchase + Local Development" in Brazil

Department for International Development (UK)

São Paulo City Hall

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Lula Institute

2015

Food supply and public food procurement in Brazil: a history

Modalities of public food procurement from smallholder farmers in Brazil

XVII edition of the Global Child Nutrition Forum in Cape Vert

Regional Seminar on School Feeding, in Senegal

Scale of public food procurement in Brazil

Launch of the African Network on School Feeding in Senegal

International Seminar about Social Protection in Africa, in Senegal

Global Forum on Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection: Towards Partnerships for Development, in Russia

Brazilian National Supply Company

Organisation of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture

2016

Dossier on Fighting hunger Worldwide - Brazilian Journal of International Law

Reference Center on Food and Nutrition Sovereignty and Security (CERESAN)

XVIII edition of the Global Child Nutrition Forum in Armenia

International Seminar Policies for Development - MDS in Brazil

Food Security and Nutrition International Seminar in Brazil

II Regional Seminar on Home-grown school feeding, in Ethiopia

- Evidences and studies
- International and regional seminars
- Partnerships (year of establishment)

Participation in International Events: World Economic Forum (2013); the UN System Network for Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) workshop (2013); the Renewed Efforts Against Hunger and Undernutrition (REACH) meeting (2013); VI Latin American and Caribbean School Feeding Seminar in Mexico (2014); School Feeding Forum for a better life – Feeding the future of our children, in Honduras (2015); International Seminar on Successful Experiences in Nutrition: a path to building a better future, in Colombia (2015); VII School Feeding Seminar for Latin America and the Caribbean, in Peru (2015), Remote participation at the Nutrition Seminar, in Timor Leste (2016)

⁵ Information compiled from the Centre's Annual Reports (2013-2015). The Centre of Excellence provided Information for year of 2016.



3. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation sought to provide answers to the following questions:

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- > 1. To what extent have the Centre’s strategies been politically adequate, technically consistent, and financially effective?
- > 2. Have the Centre’s advocacy actions and its knowledge dissemination strategy contributed to the creation of an enabling environment to the development of national sustainable school feeding in its partner countries?
- > 3. To what extent has the Centre supported countries to strengthen their national school feeding initiatives?

In order to answer these questions, the evaluation team has developed a methodological approach based upon three assumptions regarding the nature of the work performed at the Centre of Excellence, namely, the multi-centric context in which it operates, the principles for South-South and Trilateral cooperation underpinning its strategies, and the characteristics of its capacity development support work. Table 1 summarises the main implications of these key assumptions.

It is worth highlighting that this evaluation did not aim to evaluate the partners’ school feeding initiatives. Rather, it aimed to assess the Centre’s contribution to capacity development and to positive changes and improvements on their initiatives.

TABLE 1 External impact evaluation methodological approach assumptions

ASSUMPTION	DEFINITION
MULTI-CENTRIC EVALUATION OBJECT	The principles for South-South and Trilateral cooperation informed the evaluation in different aspects: (i) transversally, during the elaboration of the Evaluation Matrix, in which principles such as demand-driven cooperation, horizontal relations and autonomy were operationalised under different criteria, (ii) as a lens for analysing the Centre’s institutional arrangement, attentive to specific dimensions highlighted in the literature on trilateral cooperation, such as drivers for engaging in cooperation, the potential for win-win-win outcomes, and transactional costs.
SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRILATERAL COOPERATION PRINCIPLES	The principles for South-South and Trilateral cooperation informed the evaluation in different aspects: (i) transversally, during the elaboration of the Evaluation Matrix, in which principles such as demand-driven cooperation, horizontal relations and autonomy were operationalised under different criteria, (ii) as a lens for analysing the Centre’s institutional arrangement, attentive to specific dimensions highlighted in the literature on trilateral cooperation, such as drivers for engaging in cooperation, the potential for win-win-win outcomes, and transactional costs.
CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT	The Centre’s approach acknowledges capacity development as a non-linear, context-dependent, long-term process of change. Thus, this evaluation understands the Centre’s capacity development support as an ongoing process, making it often difficult to establish specific causality links to each particular strategy. In addition, the evaluation team developed crosscutting criteria for assessing its capacity development support by considering four interrelated levels where capacities can be enhanced: 1) individual, 2) organisational, 3) inter-institutional, and 4) social/ enabling environment. ^A

^A For the definitions of capacity development levels considered for this evaluation see: World Food Programme (2009). WFP Policy on Capacity Development. Rome: WFP and Agência Brasileira de Cooperação. (2014) Manual de Gestão da Cooperação Técnica Sul-Sul. Brasília: ABC.

Against this backdrop, the evaluation team has opted to carry out an evaluation based on the following methodological approaches:

- > **Theory of change:** to provide clarity for the objectives of the Centre's support in the short-, medium- and long-term, including the beliefs and assumptions of how improved capacities contribute to wider development goals. A clear understanding of those relationships was crucial for defining criteria specific enough to measure the success achieved in each of the pathways of change.
- > **Mixed Methods Evaluation:** combining qualitative and quantitative methods to establish a satisfactory analysis regarding the relevance and quality of the Centre's approach, and aiming to identify the most prominent contribution of the Centre's support in strengthening school feeding initiatives, bearing in mind the diversity of partner countries.
- > **Stakeholder engagement:** in order to adapt the scope and perspective of the evaluation to different national and local contexts the evaluation process invited the Centre's partners to reflect upon the Centre's contribution to improvements in their capacities and enhancement of their school feeding initiatives.

The evaluation process

The first step was to set up the Centre's theory of change, based on a dialogue with the Centre's team, partner countries, and WFP field offices and headquarters' representatives. The theory of change's relations were translated into different criteria in the Evaluation Matrix (Figure 6), aiming to build value judgments through precise and transparent rubrics. Those rubrics articulate different variables, offering an alternative for assessing complex realities, which cannot be judged based on a single aspect. The rubrics were operationalised through three performance levels: (i) Good; (ii) Fair; (iii) Poor.

The Evaluation Matrix and its criteria informed the data collection process, comprised of a survey sent to partner countries under the Centre's continuous support list, semi-structured interviews, desk review, and two workshops with partners and participant observation in two international seminars supported by the Centre.

This evaluation assessed the Centre's overall strategies, focusing on the universe of 28 countries to which the Centre has provided continuous support. Inputs and perceptions from 24 partner countries were gathered.

Following the mixed-methods evaluation approach, findings were based in a combined analysis of quantitative and qualitative evidences. The quantitative results presented throughout this report only reflect the diversity of the 18 countries that responded to the survey (also referred to as 'the survey sample'), and thus shall be read as indicators of the Centre's impacts, rather than a definite statement of its total figures. Survey's results are presented with both absolute numbers and the percentage of valid responses for each particular question. Lastly, it is worth mentioning that all answers were based on the partners' views and perceptions, including answers regarding the progress of their own national school-feeding initiatives.

Figure 5 reflects the sources of inputs gathered for this evaluation. Annex 1 brings a detailed description of the used methods and research techniques, a list of interviewees and respondents for the survey, as well as an analysis of the sample's representativeness.

FIGURE 5 Inputs gathered for this evaluation

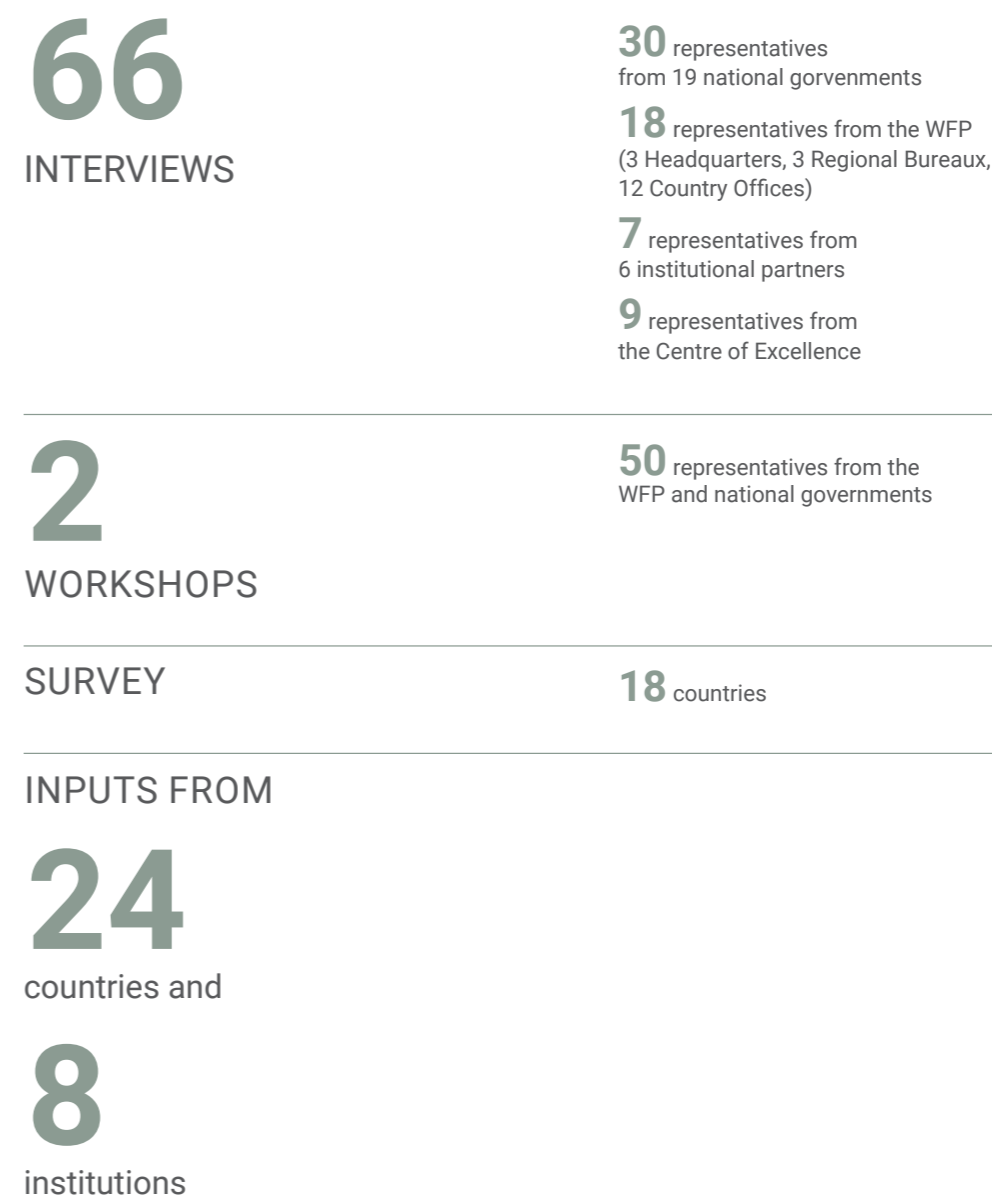


FIGURE 6 Evaluation Matrix

1. To what extent have the Centre's strategies been politically adequate, technically consistent and financially effective?

DIMENSIONS		EVALUATION CRITERIA		
		GOOD	FAIR	POOR
POLITICAL APPROPRIATENESS	Stakeholders' engagement	The Centre's support has favoured a participatory approach to the development of national school feeding, leading to a greater commitment from stakeholders, such as national and local government, civil society, private sector and international organisations.	The Centre's support has contributed to map and invite diverse stakeholders, but this has not favoured greater commitment of those actors to the development of national school feeding.	The Centre's support has not favoured a participatory approach to the development of the national school feeding and only governmental actors are engaged.
	Demand-driven cooperation	The Centre's support was defined based on the partner's demands as well as an institutional and context analysis. The support has remained responsive to partner's political and technical context.	The Centre's support was defined based on the partner's demands but it has not remained responsive to partner's political and technical context.	The Centre's support was partially defined according to the country's demands and it has not remained responsive to partner's political and technical context.
TECHNICAL APPROPRIATENESS	Technical support adequacy	The Centre's technical support activities are responsive to the country's needs and are recognised for their quality and effectiveness.	The Centre's technical support activities are responsive to the country's needs and partially recognised for their quality and effectiveness.	The Centre's technical support activities are not recognised for their quality and effectiveness, and do not respond to the country's needs.
	Technical and financial adequacy	The Centre's strategies considered most relevant and effective by partners coincide with those receiving more technical and financial investments.	The Centre's strategies considered most relevant and effective by partners partially coincide with those receiving more technical and financial investments.	The Centre's strategies considered most relevant and effective by partners do not coincide with those receiving more technical and financial investment
	Learning strategy	The Centre's activities effectively support partner's technical staff capacities in Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E). The knowledge acquired is shared by participants to others. Exchanges are recognised as positively influencing policy development, implementation and scale-up.	The Centre's activities effectively support partner's technical staff capacities in PM&E, but they are restricted to participants. Exchanges are recognised as partially influencing policy development, implementation and scale-up.	The Centre's activities are not effectively designed to support partner's technical staff capacities in PM&E.
	Synergy among assets	Partners' experience and knowledge, international best practices and international cooperation experiences are recognised and incorporated into the Centre's strategies, significantly strengthening national school feeding	Partners' experience and knowledge, international best practices and international cooperation experiences, are partially recognised and incorporated into the Centre's strategies, strengthening national school feeding	Partners' experience and knowledge, international best practices and international cooperation experiences, are neither recognised nor incorporated into the Centre's strategies.

2. Have the Centre's advocacy actions and its knowledge dissemination strategy contributed to the creation of an enabling environment to the development of national sustainable school feeding in its partner countries?

DIMENSIONS		EVALUATION CRITERIA		
		GOOD	FAIR	POOR
INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL AGENDA AND ADVOCACY	Networks and exchanges	Regional and international networks and exchanges promoted by the Centre inspire countries to develop national sustainable school feeding initiatives and promote learning processes, collaboration and peer-to-peer sharing. Countries use the knowledge acquired in those spaces to innovate, complement or regulate their own national policies. Partners' leadership in building those spaces is encouraged.	Regional and international networks and exchanges promoted by the Centre inspire countries to develop national sustainable school feeding initiatives and promote learning processes, collaboration and peer-to-peer sharing. Few countries use the acquired knowledge to innovate, complement or regulate their own national policies. Partners' leadership in building those spaces is partially encouraged.	Regional and international networks and exchanges promoted by the Centre are not recognised as encouraging countries to develop national sustainable school feeding initiatives and promoting learning processes, collaboration and peer-to-peer sharing. Countries do not make use of the knowledge acquired in those spaces to innovate, complement or regulate their own national policies. Partners' leadership in building those spaces is not encouraged.
	Recognition of the school feeding agenda	The promotion of the sustainable school feeding agenda, carried out by the Centre, contributes to its recognition as an effective solution to fight hunger and promote local development. This recognition contributes to mobilise political and financial support (nationally, regionally and internationally) for strengthening national school feeding initiatives.	The promotion of the sustainable school feeding agenda, carried out by the Centre, contributes to its recognition as an effective solution to fight hunger and promote local development. This recognition partially contributes to mobilise political and financial support (nationally, regionally and internationally) for strengthening national school feeding initiatives.	The promotion of the sustainable school feeding agenda, carried out by the Centre, partially contributes to its recognition as an effective solution to fight hunger and promote local development and does not contribute to mobilise political and financial support (nationally, regionally and internationally) for strengthening national school feeding initiatives.

1. To what extent has the Centre supported countries to strengthen their national school feeding initiatives?

DIMENSIONS	EVALUATION CRITERIA			
	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	
SCHOOL FEEDING INITIATIVES	Coverage	National school feeding coverage is prioritised based on evidence. Since the beginning of the Centre's support, school feeding coverage has increased in a planned and sustainable manner or remained stable, even in the face of humanitarian, economic, environmental, and/or political crisis.	National school feeding coverage is targeted, but target definition is not based on clear evidence. Since the beginning of Centre's support, school feeding coverage has increased, matching opportunities or urgent demands, but without the necessary planning to ensure sustainability. Coverage has fluctuated due to humanitarian, economic, environmental, and/or political crisis.	National school feeding coverage is unknown or not prioritised. Since the beginning of Centre's support neither has coverage increased, nor was it followed by a policy targeting process.
	Financing	Budget for school feeding has increased since the beginning of Centre's support. School feeding has legally established financing sources, as well as mechanisms to ensure investments. School feeding budget is under national government control.	Budget for school feeding has increased since the beginning of Centre's support, but without legally established financing sources or mechanisms to ensure investment in school feeding. School feeding budget is under national government control, but priority-setting and management is influenced by other stakeholders or interests.	Budget for school feeding has remained stable or has decreased since the beginning of Centre's support, with neither legally established financing sources, nor mechanisms to ensure investments in school feeding. School feeding budget is set by others rather than by the national government, which is not fully autonomous to manage it.
	Supply Chain	There are effective mechanisms ensuring that a certain percentage of food items is locally purchased. There are incentives to promote greater participation of local producers in the supply chain. National food purchase is the second option, while food import is the last one.	Priority, when possible, is given to purchasing food items from local producers, but without any mechanisms to guarantee it. There are some incentives to promote greater participation of local producers in the supply chain. Apart from local purchase, no priority is given to nationally grown food over imported items.	No priority is given to local food purchase, and no incentive mechanism for purchasing from local producers is in place. Food import is prioritised, with some food items being purchased nationally.
	Nutritional standards	Guidelines exist and are implemented by schools. Guidelines set a list of minimum standards for food macronutrients and micronutrients; preference to non-industrialised food; instructions for purchase, storage, preparation and supply.	Guidelines exist and set some quality and nutritional criteria. Guidelines are followed by some schools	There are no guidelines that set quality and nutritional criteria/ Or in the case of existing guidelines, those are not known or implemented by the schools.

DIMENSIONS	EVALUATION CRITERIA			
	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	
CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT	Intersectoral coordination	National school feeding is coordinated by a unit or by units in different governmental areas ensuring intersectoral actions. Roles are clearly defined and planning and monitoring capacities are in place.	National school feeding is coordinated by a unit or units in different governmental areas with capacity to ensure some occasional intersectoral actions but without joint planning and monitoring.	National school feeding coordination is under one governmental unit, without a trained technical body, and with no participation of other relevant sectors.
	Ownership	High-level actors from several governmental areas are politically engaged with the national school feeding, and its implementation also counts with technical support.	A few high-level actors from different governmental areas are sensitised to national school feeding, but only technical areas are engaged in national school feeding implementation.	Only the technical areas are engaged in the national school feeding, with no continuous backing from high-level political actors.
	Legal and institutional framework	National school feeding has legal and institutional frameworks that ensure its sustainability, even in humanitarian, economic, environmental, and/or political crisis.	National school feeding is a policy but without any legal or regulatory protection, leaving it vulnerable in humanitarian, economic, environmental, and/or political crisis.	National school feeding is not a policy and has no legal framework, which leads to insecurity in its implementation and vulnerability to humanitarian, economic, environmental, and/or political crisis.
	Social participation and accountability	Effective national and local social participation and/or accountability mechanisms are in place, engaging a wide range of social groups. Such mechanisms strengthen national school feeding, as they contribute to policy design, implementation, monitoring, and sustainability.	Social participation and accountability mechanisms are in place nationally or locally, engaging a limited range of social groups. To a certain extent, those mechanisms strengthen national school feeding, as they contribute to policy design, implementation, monitoring, or sustainability.	National school feeding is implemented by government only, without any social participation and/or accountability mechanisms in place.



4. OUTCOMES

This section presents the main findings of the evaluation, organised by the three evaluation questions, and the dimensions and criteria established by the Evaluation Matrix. For each evaluation question, the following content will be explored: (i) analysis of the main findings for each criterion through qualitative and quantitative evidence; (ii) analysis of explanatory factors and linkages between outputs, outcomes and impacts.

4.1 To what extent have the Centre's strategies been politically adequate, technically consistent, and financially effective?

The Centre's strategies are politically appropriate. On the one hand, they reflect the Centre's demand driven approach. The Centre's support is perceived as responsive and flexible, adequate to the partners' needs, contexts, and demands. Findings also show growing demands for the Centre to become even more engaged with partners' processes and with greater in-country presence. This demonstrates the partners' confidence on the Centre's work. On the other hand, the strategies employed led to an increased national commitment to the school feeding agenda in partner countries, since they fostered the engagement from high-level government stakeholders, particularly from line Ministries. The Centre's emphasis on promoting a multisectoral approach is highly distinctive and adds value to existing experiences. However, the Centre's efforts had uneven results on engagement and commitment from the larger spectrum of national actors, such as local governments, civil society, and the private sector, which can negatively affect the long-term sustainability of national initiatives.

Regarding technical consistency, the Centre's performance is considered fair. Although partners recognise the relevance of all activities to their realities, perceptions as to the quality and effectiveness of each activity varied significantly. In general, the Centre's activities that promote the sharing of experiences were better appraised than in-country technical assistance and follow-up support. The Centre's support improves partners' gap assessment and planning capacities, providing substantial knowledge on school feeding design and implementation. Nevertheless, capacities are mainly developed at the individual level and there are no clear strategies to support knowledge dissemination to technical areas within the line ministries. The Centre's activities generate synergies with partner countries' experience and knowledge, but it could incorporate a broader and more diverse set of internationally renowned practices into its practice of sharing experiences. The Centre has already improved its practices during the past five years through a learn-by-doing process, which led to adequate methodological innovations.

The Centre's financial effectiveness was not assessed since the disclosed financial information

DIMENSION: POLITICAL APPROPRIATENESS

Stakeholders' engagement

The Centre's interventions positively contributed to foster participatory approaches to school feeding and to further engagement by stakeholders in partner countries, increasing their commitment to this policy and agenda.

Regarding the actors' engagement in partner countries, evidences were stronger in relation to

increased engagement by national governments where the Centre played an important role in sensitising and engaging high-level policymakers in key line ministries – across all sectors, and particularly in the Education sector. Nonetheless, this was less visible in other national stakeholders (local governments, civil society, and the private sector). Sectorial ministries and international donors are the most actively engaged actors in the revision or formulation of national school feeding initiatives in most partner countries. Across the countries,

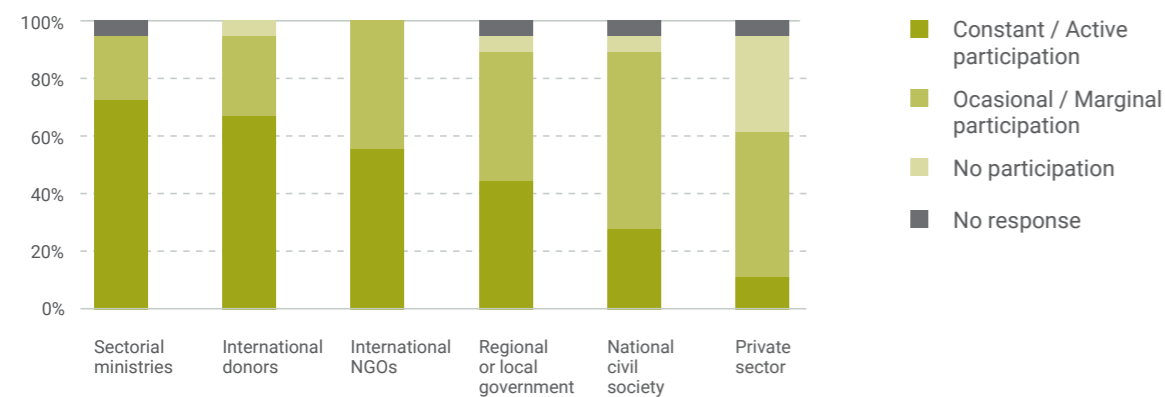
international Non-Governmental Organisations had a more constant involvement than national civil society (Figure 7).

In 12 countries (70%), national civil society engagement in the revision or formulation was considered occasional or inexistent. A more thorough discussion on the role of national civil society will be explored in the criterion devoted to 'social participation and accountability'. One partner country mentioned that although the private sector is not yet engaged, the Centre encouraged thinking about how to include this sector in school feeding initiatives^(GOV 13). Private sector engagement has also been a frequent topic in international seminars co-hosted by the Centre, such as the Global Child Nutrition Forum (GCNF), appearing in all GCNF communiqués since 2013⁶. Regarding the engagement of international organisations, WFP Country Offices' staff interviewed recognise the Centre's contribution to in-country stakeholders' engagement, including WFP offices, creating synergies that improve the outreach of their own work^(WFP 11; WFP 13).

The survey results also indicate that a majority of countries recognised that greater engagement by stakeholders brought greater commitment to school feeding initiatives (15 countries or 83%). The vast majority of respondents (16 countries or 88%) considered that during the years of partnership with the Centre, it was possible to harmonise school feeding initiatives implemented by other actors with national school feeding initiatives. In this context, 13 countries (72%)

6 See: <http://gcnf.org/events/forum/>

FIGURE 7 Stakeholders' engagement in the revision or formulation of school feeding initiatives



judged the Centre's contribution to be significant or moderate in increasing the engagement and commitment of various stakeholders to domestic school feeding initiatives.

"The National Consultation was a turning point for stakeholders' commitment. At the strategic level, there was a greater engagement from the Education Ministry and other sectors. Canteens were chosen as a flagship program in the National Strategy for Social Protection alongside major presidential projects. At the operational level, the pilot projects received more attention and have encouraged the emergence of new initiatives with a range of new external partners"^(GOV 19)

As shown in figure 8, when it comes to underscoring the existing technical and political support to school feeding initiatives in partner countries, survey results show Education Ministers and international donors as the most frequently mentioned visibly engaged sectors (in 15 countries or 83%). A second group of mentioned actors, albeit in fewer countries, was the technical staff from the Education sector. In their part, Ministers of Agriculture are visibly engaged in 10 countries (55%). Technical sectors from the Ministry of Agriculture and from other ministries, national civil society, and the private sector were judged mostly aware or sensitised, but not yet fully engaged in the majority of countries. Interviews also corroborate this finding, highlighting that more work is required in order to further engage and commit the Agriculture sector to school feeding initiatives^(GOV 19; GOV 20).

The Centre's contributions under this criterion were enabled by its facilitation role, assisting in

the engagement of national actors, with emphasis on promoting an intersectoral approach and governance for school meals initiatives^(WFP 5; GOV 5; WFP 4). This intersectoral aspect has often been described as a highly distinctive feature of the Centre's approach to school feeding, and an added value to existing national experiences as well as other international interventions, including those developed by WFP itself^(WFP 18; WFP 6).

"With the Centre of Excellence's support we have come to the understanding that school feeding is an issue to be dealt by a range of ministerial departments, based on which we have designated a series of focal points within different ministries to follow the implementation of an integrated, and thus sustainable, school feeding programme"^(GOV 20)

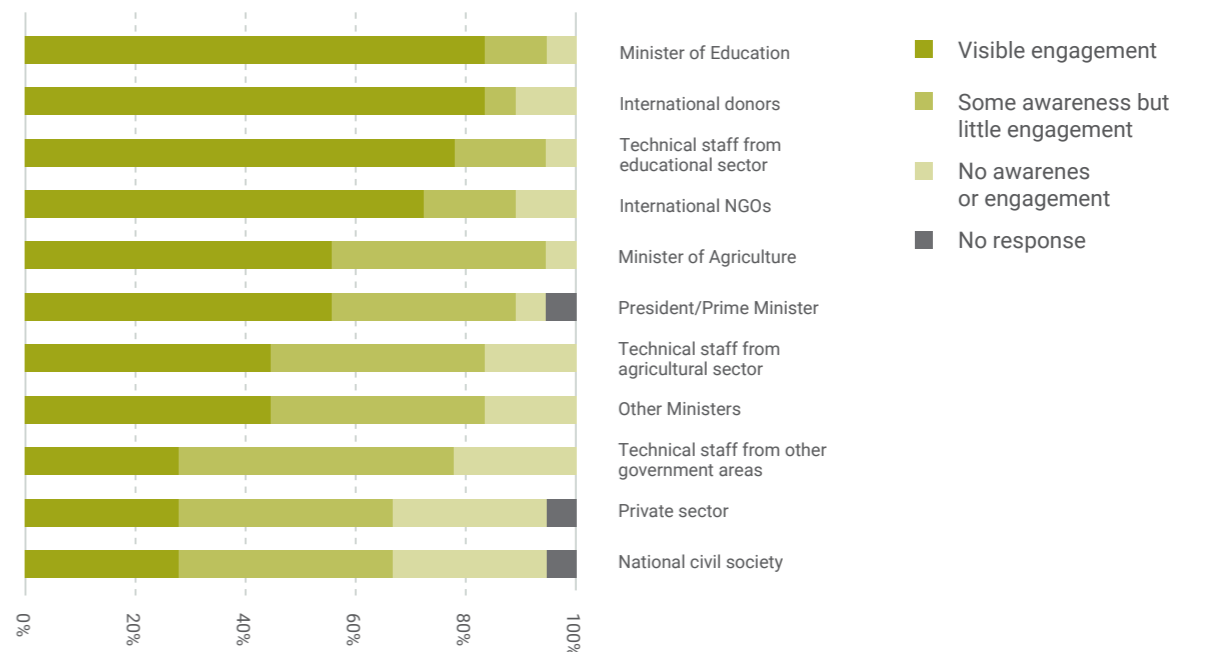
The Centre's activities also enable the increased engagement of national stakeholders. Examples are the attending intersectoral delegations, the Action Plans contributing to clarify each player's responsibility, the National Consultations as an opportunity to promote the agenda's visibility among national actors, and the importance of a Centre-supported participatory validation of school feeding policies.^(GOV 12; GOV 5; GOV 19)

"The Centre came to structure things. Through the intersectoral frame we are now in a position to engage stakeholders identified through the SABER exercise"^(GOV 20).

As an additional outcome, stakeholders' engagement and commitment fostered the sustainability of existing national school feeding initiatives. Some of the concrete examples retrieved were: (i) the Centre's high-profile in-country activities brought together key national stakeholders and have become a safeguard to incipient school feeding initiatives, having secured the continuity of the school feeding unit, even in face of a ministerial reform^(GOV 5; WFP 3); (ii) the Centre-supported participatory approach to school feeding raised the political cost for elected governments to dismantle such initiatives^(GOV 14); and (iii) the Centre's supported advocacy efforts led to an active engagement of the African Union leadership, which worked as a complementary sustainability mechanism to prevent newly elected officials from withdrawing from the agenda, as emphasised by one partner high-ranked representative interviewee^(GOV 9).

The Centre's results under this criterion are considered good, due to its recognised contribution to the engagement and commitment of high-level national government stakeholders to the school feeding agenda in the great majority of partner countries.

FIGURE 8 Technical and political support to school feeding initiatives



_Demand-driven cooperation

Guided by the principles of South-South cooperation, all partnerships agreements established between the Centre and its partners are demand driven. In order to understand the added value of this aspect, the evaluation assessed the Centre's performance through two complementary aspects: if the Centre's support was considered suitable to each partner's technical and political realities (responsiveness), and if it remained flexible and responsive to cope with changes in the scope of the demands and national contexts (flexibility). Those two aspects combined underscore both the kick-start of the partnership and the ongoing elements of this demand-driven approach to remain responsive and flexible to shifting needs.

Interviewees fully recognise the demand-driven nature of the Centre's support. This is also perceived as a contributing factor to the Centre's legitimacy among governments and for securing horizontal and lasting relationships. The Centre's openness and flexibility in accommodating and answering partners' demands were highly emphasised aspects (GOV 12; GOV 5; GOV 19; WFP 5), including the flexibility in resource allocation, a particular feature of the Brazilian Trust Fund.

"The Centre of Excellence is very open to our demands. It has accepted all demands made by our government. Its openness is unique. Its way of communicating with partners as well. The Centre of Excellence is able to hear and understand national issues." (GOV 19)

"Working with Brazil allows us to have the final word. Brazil takes into consideration our specificities." (GOV 4)

Survey results show 9 countries (64%) perceiving the Centre's support as being fully responsive to their technical and political needs and specificities, while 4 considered it partially responsive, and 1 country considered it not responsive.

The interviews provided complementary insights to such results, indicating areas where partners perceive that the Centre's support could have been more responsive: (i) some partners call for a greater high-level political exchange with

the Centre's senior leadership and with Brazilian high-ranked government representatives (GOV 4; GOV 14), including Brazilian diplomats and ambassadors. Country representatives have particularly emphasised the presence of those actors in school feeding national events as making an important difference on the ground (GOV 10; GOV 5); (ii) partners call for a more constant involvement by the Centre with the unfolding of their national processes and increased in-country presence and activities in order to obtain a more accurate panorama of the practical challenges each partner faces and not lose momentum (WFP 5; WFP 12); (iii) there are unmet demands with regards to technical support on additional correlated issues, such as local production and smallholder farming (GOV 6; GOV 20; WFP 16); (iv) some countries also mentioned that further in-depth dialogue on the exact consultants' profile for in-country technical assistance prior to deployment could have led to more satisfactory results (GOV 3; GOV 17; GOV 20; GOV 14; WFP 2; WFP 13; WFP 4) ..

While the latter aspect will be further discussed under the 'technical support adequacy' criterion (page 33), it is interesting to note that the first three aspects refer to a demand for more support and closer relations, whether technical or political. This demonstrates the partners' confidence on the Centre's work and can be read as indicators of the appropriateness in the Centre's political support, although it also suggests limits to the Centre's current capacities in facing these increasing and broader demands. Considering that not all types of demands can and will be satisfied in the long run, continuous and open discussions between the Centre and its partners can further qualify demands and adjust expectations from both sides.

The Centre's performance under this criterion was considered good, for having been considered fully responsive and flexible to the majority of partner countries. Findings on how countries perceive the level of responsiveness and flexibility further point to increasing demands for more technical support and political dialogue, and room for adjusting expectations from both sides.

DIMENSION: TECHNICAL APPROPRIATENESS

_Technical support adequacy

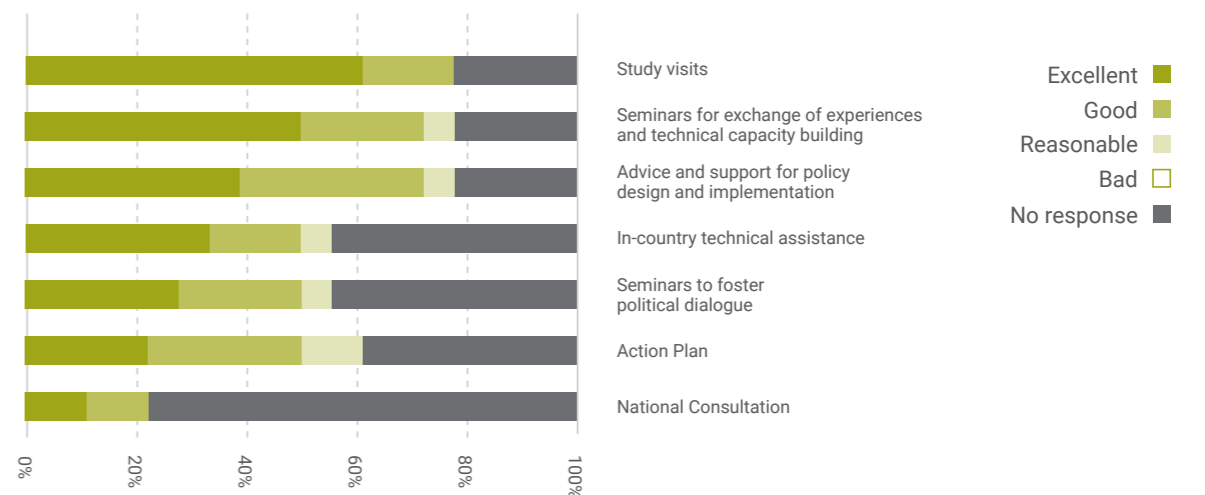
The Centre is recognised for the quality of its support activities, in particular the Study Visits, the seminars for the exchange of experiences and technical capacity building, and its advice and support to policy design and implementation (Figure 9)

As further explored in the following subtopics, findings regarding technical support adequacy are not homogenous, reflecting the diversity of activities and technical areas encompassed by the Centre as well as the fact that not all countries were exposed to the same support activities. Although the majority of partner countries recognises the relevance of all activities to their realities, perception of quality and effectiveness of each particular type of activity varied significantly. In general, the Centre's sharing and learning activities were better evaluated than in-country technical assistance and follow-up activities, in particular the Centre's capacities for following-up more closely on how the countries' processes unfolded, which can compromise the quality and timing of the technical support.

STUDY VISITS TO BRAZIL

An inspirational entry door for all partners and a type of activity to which the Centre has devoted most of its energy in its first years of existence, the Study Visits are frequently mentioned as the Centre's most significant contribution to partner countries. Several partners mentioned that Study Visits to Brazil were 'eye-opening' (GOV 17; GOV 7; WFP 7; WFP 4) and described feeling inspired and energised when exposed to the Brazilian experience, most particularly when introduced to the local purchase and intersectorality mechanisms (WFP 7; GOV 7; GOV 19; WFP 15; WFP 3). Study Visits are also an area where the Centre has been able to learn and innovate, creating joint visits for mutual learning and peer-to-peer exchanges among different countries, and adjusting visiting sites to create further identification among delegates. The choice of visiting schools in the Brazilian state of Bahia, for instance, rather than in the country's capital district was highly commended by country representatives and the Centre's partners, who underlined its appropriateness (GOV 14; PART 3).

FIGURE 9 Partners' perception of the quality of the Centre's support activities⁷



⁷ For this analysis, only answers from countries engaged in each particular activity were considered. The evaluation team crosschecked the survey's responses with the seminars' participant list and the information provided by the Centre regarding 'Study Visits', 'in-country technical assistance' (consultants deployment and the Centre's staff technical missions), 'Action Plans', and 'National Consultations'. With respect to 'Advice and support for policy design implementation', since this is a constant activity performed in-person and remotely (either in international seminars or during in-country missions), and with no systematised information regarding this type of support, all answers were considered.

“The visits to Brazil have made a huge difference in African leadership for school feeding” (PART 3)

“Study visits are interesting because they explain the operationalisation of the thinking around school feeding” (GOV 17)

INTERNATIONAL SEMINARS

Regional and international seminars promoted by the Centre were highlighted as productive opportunities for being exposed to international best practices, which national governments may then reflect upon and use as inputs to develop or to refine national school feeding initiatives (GOV 14; GOV 4).

The exchanges that take place in these spaces, such as the GCNF initiative having the Centre as a co-organiser since 2013, contribute to provide countries with more substantial and concrete knowledge on school feeding design and implementation (GOV 10; WFP 15). These seminars have fostered communication and political dialogue among countries, enabling mutual and cross-regional learning. For instance, one country mentioned that cross-regional dialogue with countries facing harsh drought conditions from other continents was very useful (GOV 13). Conversely, regional seminars, notably in Africa, are seen as generating the political conditions for school feeding to prosper regionally.

NATIONAL CONSULTATION

This type of support activity is considered useful for mobilising high-level support and to increase awareness and engagement among national actors (GOV 5; GOV 19). For instance, one country mentioned that the Action Plan resulting from the Consultation is currently being considered as an outline for the WFP hand-over strategy in the country (GOV 19), while another mentioned that the National Consultation was crucial to the decision of creating a school feeding unit and a multisectoral coordination unit for school feeding (GOV 10).

ADVICE AND SUPPORT FOR POLICY DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Partners recognise the Centre’s valuable assistance in improving existing initiatives through an assessment of existing capacities

and eventual institutional gaps (GOV 11; GOV 19), as well as supporting governments with practical knowledge and first-hand experience (GOV 17; GOV 20; WFP 15). Accordingly, an overwhelming majority of survey responses (11 countries or 85%) do consider that, through the Centre’s support, their country has been able to identify current needs, capacities, potentials, and challenges regarding the current state of school feeding initiatives. Policy advice has become an important activity in recent years, both with an increasing number of in-country missions as well as remote policy advice (COE 4; COE 2).

“The Centre promotes innovations and government thinking on how to improve programmes” (WFP 10)

ACTION PLANS

Action Plans are recognised as an important type of activity to support the identification of current policy and institutional gaps and provide national stakeholders with a road map for future action. Partners agree that a tool such as the Action Plan (and its follow-up) is particularly suitable to complement existing WFP hand-over strategies in partner countries, identifying what is needed for its operationalisation (GOV 19; WFP 3; WFP 5). The moment dedicated to this strategic reflection, during Study Visits, is seen as boosting the WFP-World Bank SABER exercise, helping to clarify operational aspects of home-grown school feeding to domestic stakeholders (GOV 20). Nonetheless, there are shortcomings within this particular activity, given the Centre’s limitations for a closer follow-up on how the countries’ processes unfolded and for supporting monitoring and evaluation of the Action Plans (GOV 16; GOV 10; WFP 12).

IN-COUNTRY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Rapidly becoming the most frequent support activity, in-country technical assistance (through the Centre’s staff short-term in-country missions and/or external expert deployment) are acknowledged as an important tool to support governments in concretely advancing certain institutional gaps, for instance in cost-studies and on drafting policies and strategies, while bringing an appreciated ‘outsider’ and ‘alternative’ perspective (GOV 4; WFP 13).

Nonetheless, in-depth interviews raised a series of shortcomings in regards to this activity, such as: (i) insufficient negotiation on the experts’ prospects profile (GOV 20; GOV 3; WFP 13; WFP 2); (ii) experts not engaging enough in capacity development activities for local public servants while in-country, an expected feature of a consultancy-like intervention taking place within a South-South cooperation arrangement (GOV 20; GOV 14); (iii) inadequate profile for drafting official documents, including language skills (GOV 14; WFP 17; WFP 4; GOV 3; WFP 2), (iv) insufficient seniority for high-level engagement (GOV 14; WFP 18, WFP 4).

It is worth noting that such concrete limitations are intrinsically related to each partner specific context, and therefore do not constitute a homogenous picture of all in-country technical support activities across all countries. For instance, dissatisfaction with experts’ languages skills were not retrieved in deployments in French-speaking countries, while insufficient seniority was not considered an issue in all contexts. This evaluation also found initial evidence that in-country missions engaged in facilitation activities (such as dialogue promotion and national consultations) or specific themes (such as cost-analysis studies, or reviewing purchase mechanisms) were better appraised than those aiming at supporting the drafting of school feeding policies or other official documents, which require strong and context-sensitive language skills. Equally important, stakeholders do recognise the innovative character of the Centre’s support and the current shortage of experts with practical knowledge on intersectoral approach to home-grown school feeding, constraining the pool of experts the Centre could cooperate with and recruit for its in-country technical missions (WFP 2; WFP 15; WFP 11; WFP 17; WFP 16).

Positive improvements concerning some of those issues were already identified. The Centre’s approach to consultancies and expert deployment has evolved since its inception. For instance, with the Centre’s increasingly opting to send its own staff for short-term in-country missions rather than hiring external experts, and increasingly combining international experts with national consultants,

as to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the developed activities, and to improve the quality and adequateness of outputs such as the drafting of school feeding or social protection bills (COE 4; GOV 20; WFP 13).

COMMUNICATION AND FOLLOW-UP

The Centre is widely recognised for its openness, flexibility, and genuine commitment by its staff (PART 4; GOV 19; GOV 5; PART 7; PART 8). Nonetheless, findings also indicate concern from partners regarding the pace of communication, in some cases losing windows of opportunity to influence policy development, such as the development of national landmarks for school feeding (GOV 20; GOV 17; GOV 19; WFP 4; WFP 12). Some interviewees have described this slow path as a consequence of increasing demands on the Centre’s already small team (PART 3; GOV 20; GOV 14), while others believe that demands and communication flows are not completely clear (GOV 17; WFP 17; WFP 12). Altogether, improving communication and follow-up timing and flows could bolster the Centre’s in-country support and contribute to meaningful impacts.

“Communications could also have been better. A letter demanding a consultant was sent 7 months ago and we never received a response” (GOV 17)

“The Centre of Excellence needs more personnel. It is slowing down in-country processes” (WFP 4)

The Centre’s performance under the technical support adequacy criterion indicate **fair** results. Despite having its support activities fully recognised as relevant, the quality of some are only partially recognised. Moreover, important attention points are raised in regards to in-country technical missions as well as the Centre’s communication flow and follow-up capacities, which if not addressed can represent an important stumbling block for the Centre’s capacity development work.

_Technical and financial adequacy

In order to assess the Centre's financial effectiveness, this evaluation sought to verify whether the Centre's activities deemed most relevant and effective by partners coincided with the areas of major technical and financial investments. The information consulted included general objectives and foreseen activities of the eleven grants received by the Centre from 2011 until December 2016, which total USD 16,413,269.79 of contributions received (out of which the Centre executed 93% – USD 15,296,525.25). Nevertheless, the financial reporting available to the research team did not have the necessary data disaggregation to allow for the intended crosschecking. Due to this concrete limitation, the Centre's performance under this criterion was not assessed.

Against that backdrop, the data provided allows for some useful analysis, particularly regarding grants with specific objectives and activities descriptions. Three grants represent 12% of executed budget and single-out particular strategies or thematic areas, explored below. The remaining eight grants represent 88% of the executed budget and cover a broad range of activities in Food and Nutrition Security, Home-grown School Feeding, and Social Protection, thus not allowing for a more detailed analysis under this criterion.

From the grants' description it is possible to affirm that research and dissemination remains a minor part of the Centre's financial investment. Specific discrimination of knowledge management and research activities is only present in two grants, both from 2014 onwards. Only one grant is exclusively devoted to the production of knowledge and represents 3% of the Centre's executed budget (or approximately 5% for the 2014-2016 biennial). This grant's outputs (studies documenting Brazilian experience with home-grown school feeding), however, have not all been published yet. This corroborates the assessment presented throughout this evaluation that knowledge management is an underdeveloped area, albeit one receiving a greater attention in the last couple of years.

Moreover, two grants are specific regarding their thematic scope: (i) local food purchases, and

(ii) nutrition. Regarding the former, the Centre implemented in 2012 a grant to support home-grown school feeding pilot programs in five countries, joining efforts with the Purchase from Africa for Africans (PAA) initiative (5.6% of the total executed budget). This was the entry-door for DFID's partnership ^(PART 6). Albeit with limited impact across all partners (see the criterion 'Supply Chain'), two countries that benefitted from this particular grant explicitly mentioned the piloting on home-grown school feeding with local purchases as key for improving their capacities. In regards to nutrition, the financial reporting reveals a prioritisation of this topic since 2015, with one specific grant, representing 3% of the Centre's total executed budget or 9% of total budget for the 2015-2016 biennial. Still, nutrition is an area where the Centre's support was positively assessed by partners (see criterion 'Nutrition Standards').

Despite the current lack of disaggregated data on the Centre's financial investment, the further improvement of financial reporting and M&E systems already lies on the Centre's horizon ^(COE 5). Those tools should enable future assessments to provide more consistent analysis of the Centre's technical and financial investments.

The Centre's results under this criterion were not assessed since the disclosed financial information was not sufficiently disaggregated.

_Learning strategy

The learning strategy transversally builds upon Centre's support activities, such as the Study Visits, the seminars and events, and in-country technical assistance. This crosscutting criterion addresses the Centre's contribution to: (i) enhancing partner countries' technical staff capacities in Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation for school feeding and other food and nutritional security integrated strategies (at the individual level), (ii) supporting knowledge dissemination to a broader range of national stakeholders, and (iii) promoting exchanges recognised as influencing policy development, implementation, and scale-up.

On supporting partners' technical staff capacities

the Centre contributed to strengthening the overall management capacities for school feeding, supporting the introduction of management tools, such as the SABER exercise and tailored management guides. The Centre also contributed to strengthening the technical capacities of school feeding focal points, mostly through international seminars and trainings, which are valued as spaces for learning and provide moments for strategic exchanges among the country delegation themselves ^(GOV 10). Overall, this support is closely associated with reinforcing planning and design capacities and implementation of national school feeding initiatives ^(GOV 10; GOV 5; GOV 20; GOV 12). Partners' self-assessment on existing technical capacities for school feeding coordination complement this picture: 14 countries (78%) believe their implementation capacities are currently excellent or adequate, 13 countries (76%) classified their diagnosis capacities as excellent or adequate, and 12 (71%) countries deemed their planning capacities adequate. In turn, 7 countries (41%) believe their monitoring capacity is insufficient and an equal number of countries classified their evaluation capacity as insufficient.

"The School Canteen Division was strengthened through the visit of the Centre of Excellence, the participation in various GCNF, and the National Consultation They have all contributed to the establishment of a proven expertise in the design and implementation of the school feeding policy." ^(GOV 19)

"The support by the Centre of Excellence helps us to develop some tools for implementing policies related to school feeding. Some key implementing actors have received training on those recently developed management tools." ^(GOV 20)

On supporting knowledge dissemination to other national stakeholders

a comparison between the survey's results and in-depth interviews points to two main findings. On the one hand, survey results show positive trends across countries regarding their perception of the extent to which the knowledge acquired

in the Centre's-promoted activities was shared among national actors. 15 countries (88%) expressed that such knowledge is being shared with other actors at the national level, 14 at the local level (82%), and 7 countries (41%) mentioned it is also being shared with civil society and the private sector.

On the other hand, interviewees stated that learning takes place mainly for delegates participating in the Centre's activities (such as the Study Visits and exchange seminars), rather than among the remaining technical staff back in their country of origin. In this sense, some mentioned that their countries' processes would benefit if more people were exposed to the messages and knowledge disseminated by the Centre. Some also provided several recommendations as to how the Centre could scale up its outreach in terms of promoting learning, such as on-the-job training and closer exchanges among street-level bureaucracies ^(GOV 14, GOV 12; GOV 16). As framed by one country representative:

"Contact with the Centre has helped to shift the thinking on school feeding and social protection, but this has yet to cascade down to technical levels within each ministry" ^(GOV 16).

International events, such as the GCNF, were also identified as a good tool to uphold the attention of policymakers on the school-feeding agenda, since its periodicity can contribute to reenergise efforts. However, since it has mostly served as a space for mobilising key policymakers and the school feeding focal points from partner countries, it does not adequately respond to the particular challenge of further involving technical staff ^(WFP 17; PART 3; GOV12; GOV 14) and creating opportunities to thoroughly discuss implementation and scale-up ^(WFP 17; WFP 11; PART 4; PART 3).

With respect to the in-country technical assistance, perceptions are also divided regarding their contribution to learning. As previously mentioned, some partners expected expert support to be more focused on strengthening capacities at the individual and organisational levels ^(GOV 20; GOV14). Alternatively, other partners provided some practical illustrations of how Centre-supported activities

contributed to capacity development at these levels, through specific technical and practical support for policy implementation. Among the examples, one could mention the Centre-supported training for cooks responsible for preparing school meals by their Brazilian peers in one country, which was perceived as a valuable practical exchange exercise ^(GOV 4). Another example raised by a second country was the Centre's financial support for implementing nutrition and hygiene training programmes in pilot schools (through a local civil society organisation). According to the country representative, this was the first time the Centre funded an implementation project, and this was done following a specific country demand ^(GOV 5; WFP 3), and thus aligned with the evaluation findings on Centre's support flexibility. Finally, in a third country, the Centre has supported awareness raising activities with smallholder farmers ^(GOV 10), a direct intervention with key stakeholders beyond the circle of policymakers and technical staff. These cases are encouraging examples of what could be a more frequent scenario in the next cycle, once partner countries advance in developing their institution frameworks for school feeding or home-grown school feeding and turn to demands for implementation support from the Centre.

The Centre achieved **fair** results under this criterion. Contributions to the strengthening of the partners' technical staff planning capacities are more evident than to monitoring and evaluation capacities. In addition, knowledge acquired in the Centre's activities is not sufficiently cascading down to technical areas within line ministries, and the Centre has yet to put in place a clear methodology to support this process among its partners. Finally, knowledge shared does provide support and has a positive impact on policy development. Nevertheless, evidences show further impact on policy design with more modest outcomes when it comes to implementation and scale up.

Synergy among assets

Under this criterion, the evaluation assessed the Centre's recognition and incorporation into its strategies of three sets of assets: (i) partner countries' experience and knowledge, (ii) international best practices, and (iii) international cooperation experiences.

Regarding the partner countries' experience and knowledge

the Centre's support activities are in close dialogue with national contexts. They are an important international push for domestic school feeding and social protection policies and programmes, complementing existing capacities and experiences, and thus creating synergies and strengthening in-country initiatives. In some contexts, the Centre's activities also had a particular positive impact on creating synergies within the WFP structure itself, fostering linkages among WFP offices, notably between Regional Bureaux and the Country Offices ^(WFP 13; WFP 5).

When it comes to incorporating other international best practices

, a broad range of stakeholders highlighted the need for incorporating other international successful cases into the Centre's strategies, rather than focus almost exclusively in the Brazilian experience ^(GOV 14; GOV 3; WFP 17; WFP 13; WFP 1; WFP 10; PART 3). Still, there is an important weighting to this. The Brazilian model is not homogenous and thus one should speak of Brazilian 'models' in the plural. This diversity reinforces the Brazilian model as a valid example to partners and could be further emphasised by the Centre ^(WFP 15; PART 4).

Even though survey results mentioned 'getting more knowledge about the Brazilian school feeding experience' as the most frequent response to why countries demanded the Centre's support in the first place, the second most frequent response was 'getting more knowledge on how to implement sustainable school feeding initiatives'. As partner countries advance in implementing their own solutions, those calls for the Centre to encourage further operational peer-to-peer learning may serve as an opportunity for the Centre to make a more consistent use of other international experiences.

With regards to incorporating international cooperation experiences

, on the one hand there are evidences of the Centre incorporating experiences from other international actors working in the field of food and nutrition security or social protection. One important example is reinforcing the use of the SABER exercise as a key working tool. Another example is the strong partnership with the GCNF and, more recently, the forthcoming publication of the *Resource Framework on Home Grown School Meals*, jointly developed by the WFP headquarters, the Centre of Excellence, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF) and the Partnership for Child Development (PCD). On the other hand, collaboration and coordination between the Centre and other international development actors engaged in the subject still requires adjustments and tunings from all parties to bolster synergies. Among the improvement realms mentioned, we find the need to enhance communication, greater attention to avoid duplication of work, and the possibility of joining efforts to answer demands and technical support requests ^(PART 3; WFP 1; WFP 10; WFP 12; WFP 9).

Likewise, the Centre has constantly evolved and adapted in order to incorporate the partners' experiences and learnings into its own strategies ^(WFP 7; PART 3; WFP 17; WFP 10). Noteworthy examples are the current efforts toward incorporating more peer-to-peer learning into its activities, including hosting joint study visits and regional workshops, inviting other countries to take part in school feeding National Consultations, adopting new methodologies during the GCNF to allow partner countries to share their own experiences, or the Centre's renewed efforts to support the African School Feeding Network to facilitate peer-to-peer exchange. Stakeholders identify the Centre's current efforts concerning knowledge production, systematisation, and dissemination, and perceive the Centre as increasingly becoming a knowledge hub for school feeding, also exemplified by the study commissioned by the African Union with the Centre's financial support on the state of school feeding in Africa

^(WFP 6, GOV 11; PART 4). A current challenge – already identified by the Centre's own personnel - for this sharing to be amplified is to improve its communication tools, including reforming its website, and having the autonomy to manage and update it ^(COE 1). Together, those efforts all point to the expected direction in terms of incorporating the partners' experiences into the Centre's methodologies, but they need to be strengthened in the next cycle.

"The Centre is now able to favour peer-to-peer exchange among African countries. Since 2011, it has also broadened its agenda to include not only the Brazilian model, but more generally to locate school feeding within social protection, and to foster investment in social protection ^(WFP 7)"

The Centre's performance in generating synergies among assets are considered **fair**, with bolder results on the recognition and incorporation of partners' experience and knowledge than international best practices and international cooperation experience. Encouraging improvements in the past years point to a sharp learning curve with broad recognition among stakeholders.

4.2 Have the Centre's advocacy actions and its knowledge sharing strategy contributed to the creation of an enabling environment to the development of national sustainable school feeding in its partner countries?

Overall, the Centre's contributions to the global recognition of the school feeding agenda are seen as its most significant achievement so far. It has also influenced the content of school feeding agendas, such as by promoting an intersectoral approach to school feeding, linking it with social protection and local development and the need to establish legal and institutional frameworks.

Moreover, participants consider inspiring both regional and international exchanges and networks promoted by the Centre, recognising them as promoting learning, collaboration, and progressively more peer-to-peer sharing and leadership from partner countries. Such activities have contributed to the creation of favourable conditions for strengthening national school feeding initiatives, mainly through the mobilisation of key actors, such as high-level policy makers. The Centre's activities have also led to improved capacities for managing and innovating in programmes and policies back home, although further investment in knowledge production, dissemination, and management is considered useful to improve impact in the future.

DIMENSION: **INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL** **AGENDA AND ADVOCACY**

_Networks and exchanges

Promoting spaces for networking and exchange is a highly significant aspect of the Centre's work, widely recognised as contributing to reinforcing capacities and favouring positive changes in partner countries. This criterion is also strongly connected to the Centre's current broad range of knowledge sharing activities.

When it comes to exchanges, the survey results show that seminars for experience exchange and technical capacity building seminars are considered relevant by 100% of the Centre's partner countries (15 responses in that particular question). In regards to seminars for fostering political dialogue, 11 countries (79%) consider them relevant. At the same time, as shown in figure 9 (p. 35), the majority of respondents consider the overall quality of these spaces as excellent or good.

Uncovering the specific positive outcomes in partner countries, exchanges facilitated by the Centre through international and regional seminars are considered an inspiring

international exposure, promoting not only capacity building but also empowerment (GOV 3; GOV 17; GOV 19; WFP 2; WFP 15; WFP 18), where countries can 'borrow from different countries, not taking the wholesale, and then domesticating or making hybrid solutions to their own problems' (GOV 14). As mentioned before, international spaces such as the GCNF are described as enabling experience sharing; fostering communication among government representatives; contributing to raising the political importance of the school feeding agenda, enabling mutual learning, and valuable regional and cross-regional exchanges (GOV 13; GOV 10; GOV 9). Importantly to note, most of the Centre's-backed regional exchanges have taken place in Africa, and only very recently in Asia (with the first South Asia Regional School Feeding meeting, in 2016).

"Communication among African countries ends up being more effective in GCNF spaces than in Africa. The same applies to governmental representatives that are part of the national delegation. GCNF creates the opportunity, the proposal, and the environment to enable debates" (GOV 10)

"Spaces like the GCNF can be empowering, we can compare ourselves and see our improvement" (GOV 17)

The creation of school feeding networks among partners also ranks among the Centre's priority goals. For the past five years, the Centre has consistently invested efforts in network building and supported such initiatives, most significantly in Africa, and to a lesser extent in Asia (GOV 13; COE 2; WFP 17). The recent creation by the African Union of an *African School Feeding Network*, in 2016, is considered an important outcome of the Centre's support to the school feeding agenda in the region. A range of regional actors involved in building this particular network acknowledged the Centre's continuous political encouragement, facilitation, and material support to this enterprise (GOV 19; GOV 13; COE 4; WFP 7). For the next cycle, the most engaged actors in building the networks clearly recognise that the main challenge is how to make them operational (GOV 19; PART 3; WFP 17). Several stakeholders are not entirely informed of how the Centre is overseeing and planning its short- and medium-term support to these emerging initiatives. They expect the Centre's facilitation support to continuously assist the expansion of these promising initiatives so that they may prosper autonomously.

More broadly concerning knowledge management, production, and dissemination, this is an area where the Centre has devoted more energy in recent years. Within this dimension, the Centre is recognised as having increasingly become a *knowledge hub* (COE 2; WFP 6), albeit still an underdeveloped area when compared to other support activities. Stakeholders shared different views as to which extent knowledge production and dissemination should be a priority as well as to which type of knowledge should be prioritised within this strategy. Some argue the Centre should strengthen its knowledge management component and invest on gathering and publicising evidences that make the case for school feeding and support advocacy efforts (including cost-benefits analyses of school feeding, value for money and value chain approach, impact assessment) (WFP 10; WFP 6). Others defend that the priority should be practical knowledge, 'knowing how to' on costing, resource mobilisation, or even on the Brazilian experience with agriculture policies (GOV 4; GOV 5; GOV 20; WFP 15).

"Exchange among African countries is not yet systematised, data is lacking, and experience is not captured. The African School Feeding Network platform can help on that" (WFP 18)

With regards to networks and exchanges, the Centre's results are good. Both regional and international exchanges and networks promoted by the Centre are deemed inspiring, stimulating learning, collaboration, peer-to-peer sharing and partner countries leadership. Participants also explicitly associated learning from those exchanges with improved capacities for managing and innovating in programmes and policies back home, although more investment in knowledge production, dissemination, and management is considered useful to improve impact in the future.

Recognition of the school feeding agenda

Among all the criteria, the Centre's contributions to the global recognition of the school feeding agenda stands out as its most significant contribution, with positive outcomes on three levels: nationally in most of the partner countries, regionally and internationally (creating a more favourable international environment), and also within the WFP structure itself.

The Centre's successful advocacy work is renowned in internationally advancing the school feeding agenda, contributing to its recognition as an effective solution to fight hunger and promote local development. This impact was particularly recognised regarding the African continent, where liaison with the African Union led to the creation of an African School Feeding Day, the African Union recommendation to adopt and improve home-grown school feeding initiatives, and the establishment of a technical committee supported by the WFP and the Centre, all included in the African Union Summit 2016

Declaration of Head of States ^(PART 2; PART 5; PART 4; PART 3; WFP 7). One country representative heading the African School Feeding Day initiative has described it as a particular way through which countries themselves could also contribute to the advocacy on school feeding among African peers ^(GOV 10).

Visits to Brazil by a series of ministers from African countries and by the African Union Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology are seen as having contributed considerably to this objective, strongly inspiring African decision-makers ^(WFP 7; PART 3).

Spaces for dialogue and exchange among countries supported by the Centre are perceived as creating awareness on the importance of school feeding. Within these spaces, GCNF is the most frequently recognised as enabling this global advocacy campaign ^(GOV 9; WFP 4; WFP 2). Stakeholders also recognise that the Centre has added value to the Forum, expanding its outreach and geographic representation, contributing to new methodologies, and providing concrete stances

on how to move forward the home-grown school feeding agenda, both by providing the Brazilian example and by supporting countries with technical assistance ^(GOV 19; PART 3). This contributed to boost GCNF's advocacy capacity to take messages on home-grown school feeding to key-audiences at other policy spaces, such as the United Nations and the African Union ^(PART 3).

The Centre is also credited for having advanced the school feeding agenda WFP itself, both at Headquarters and in-country levels, increasing the agenda's visibility and importance across the agency's thematic areas ^(WFP 10; GOV 20). One of the Centre's main addition to the WFP's hand-over process was to make clear that governments should invest in school feeding as a priority agenda, and that the role of WFP as a technical partner should be to provide support for this to happen ^(WFP 15; WFP 2; WFP 11).

When it comes to the contents of the school feeding agenda, this advocacy is particularly acknowledged as having successfully made the case for several aspects such as: (i) home-grown school feeding as an intersectoral policy with multidimensional impact; (ii) government ownership of school feeding initiatives; (iii) strong connections between home-grown school feeding, social protection and local development; (iv) school feeding as an investment rather than an expenditure; and (v) emphasis on the need to establish a legal and institutional framework for school feeding in all partner countries ^(WFP 9; WFP 10; GOV 12; GOV 6; WFP 6; GOV 13; WFP 7; GOV 3; GOV 21).

Figure 10 illustrates how the networking and international exchange activities promoted by the Centre of Excellence have contributed to the creation of favourable conditions for strengthening school feeding in partner countries through the mobilisation of key actors.

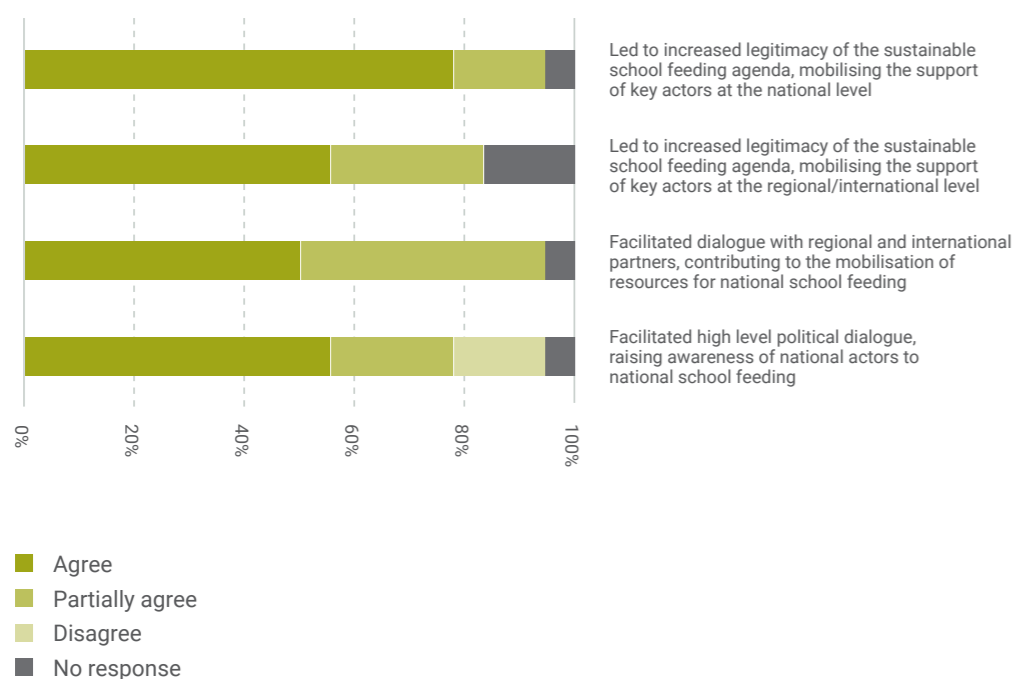
Several partners mentioned that the Centre's advocacy efforts and high profile activities were key to advancing the school feeding agenda within national political priorities, mostly due to the Centre's capacity to raise awareness among high-level political leaders in partner countries ^(GOV 6; GOV 5; GOV 10; WFP 15; PART 7; PART 8). One country exemplified that this joint effort prompted school feeding to ascend within government educational priorities, going as far as unexpectedly dictating the

priorities of the National Education Strategy in subsequent years ^(GOV 12).

The Centre's South-South cooperation and government-to-government approaches are a key factor in explaining the positive outcomes on this agenda-setting element. As stated by one country representative 'Brazil is seen as a brother who has achieved something, giving the message that anyone of us can get there' ^(GOV 14). A WFP representative further added to this by stating the importance of in-country high-level discussions: 'When the Centre director comes to the country, that is exactly the kind of political level required. It makes a difference' ^(WFP 18).

The Centre's results in supporting the recognition of the school feeding agenda are considered good, with outcomes at several levels: nationally in most of the partner countries, regionally and internationally, and within the WFP structure itself. Altogether, stakeholders consider that the Centre is contributing to a more favourable international environment for integrated national policies, programmes, and strategies to prosper.

FIGURE 10 Partners' perceptions about the contributions of networks and international exchanges to national school feeding initiatives



4.3 To what extent has the Centre supported countries to strengthen their national school feeding initiatives?

This question investigated the extent to which the Centre's work has supported countries to strengthen their national school feeding initiatives. It explored improvements in school feeding policies and capacity development in partner countries and assessed the Centre's contribution to such changes. It was unpacked through a series of technical and policy criteria. Overall, the Centre's contribution to capacity development was good, while its contribution to changes and improvements in school feeding policies was fair.

Partners were positive regarding their own progress in the past five years across all analysed criteria: school feeding coverage and financing, local purchase, nutritional standards, intersectoral coordination, ownership, legal framework, and social participation and accountability. When asked to what extent the Centre has contributed to such changes, results were mixed. Positive correlations were assessed regarding the Centre's support to expanding school feeding coverage and targeting; fostering domestic technical and political support for school feeding initiatives; and promoting positive changes in the legal and/or institutional frameworks. The Centre's contribution to school feeding financing and local purchase were fair, with particular positive outcomes in making the investment-case for school feeding and the importance of its awareness raising efforts on the value of promoting local supply chains and integrated intersectoral approaches to school feeding. Lastly, partners' perceptions are that the Centre has contributed to changes in participation and accountability practices.

In order to provide methodological transparency, some disclaimers are necessary regarding this evaluation question. First, the source of the information presented under the first dimension of this question, i.e. 'school feeding initiatives', comes mostly from the survey, with little evidence being provided by partners through in-depth interviews. Secondly, for each criterion, the Centre's results were considered good when three factors converged (i) positive changes in school feeding initiatives in more than 50% of the survey sample; (ii) partners recognised the Centre's contribution to those changes; and (iii) qualitative information from the interviews supported those results. This 50% threshold was established in order to provide a single standard to judge the Centre's performance, while embracing the diversity of partners' engagement and exposure to the Centre's activities, as well as the particularities of their contexts.

DIMENSION: SCHOOL FEEDING INITIATIVES

_Coverage

The percentage of school feeding coverage for primary-school children in partner countries varies considerably. Among all survey respondents, coverage was never higher than 50%, with an average of 30%. Most of the partners currently consider their national school

feeding coverage to be either medium or low.

The trend is positive against this backdrop, with 12 countries (80%) expressing that coverage has increased since they first started cooperating with the Centre, 2 countries stating that coverage has remained stable, and only one country stating that it has decreased. Among those, all but one country indicated that school feeding coverage has undergone a targeting process since the beginning of Centre's support, adopting a new

geographical and/or social criterion, such as: poverty rates; food insecurity rates; gender disparity; low school enrolment rates; and specific urgent response to humanitarian and environmental crises.

When it comes to the partners' assessments of the Centre's contribution to these positive changes in school feeding coverage, 9 partners (56%) believed the Centre had a significant or reasonable contribution, while 7 countries (44%) believed that the Centre's contribution was either marginal or inexistent. Among the former, all 9 countries have been highly engaged with the Centre's activities, while among the latter, 3 countries have been seldom exposed to Centre activities, whereas one stated that current political instability prevented the implementation of designed strategies to increase coverage ^(GOV 11), and another country stated that the Centre support has not yet reached the implementation phase, expected to begin in early 2017 ^(GOV 20).

Moreover, 11 countries (69%) indicated both increased coverage and positive changes in their planning capacities. Among those, only two believed that the Centre's contribution was inexistent, one being a country less engaged with the Centre's activities. There is thus a correlation between the support of the Centre and perceptions about its contributions to positive changes in coverage.

"The huge coverage of school feeding by the Brazilian government's own resources significantly inspired our government." ^(GOV 3)

The Centre's performance under this criterion is considered **good**, as the majority of partner countries associates the Centre's support to an increased school feeding coverage and improvements in planning capacities.

_Financing

This criterion was assessed through two aspects: **budget execution** and establishment of **measures to ensure financing and budget stability**. With respect to budget execution, 9 countries (53%) increased (in real terms) their budget execution on school feeding initiatives, while in 4 countries budget execution remained the same, and another 4 stated that the government does not execute the school feeding budget. Regarding measures to ensure financing and budget stability to national school feeding, 10 new measures were established in 6 different partner countries, either adding up to existing ones (in 2 countries) or creating measures where none existed (in 4 countries). Table 2 shows the landscape of measures adopted by partner countries since the beginning of the partnership with the Centre.

TABLE 2 Measures ensuring financing and budget stability of school feeding in partner countries

MEASURES	ALREADY EXISTENT IN (COUNTRIES)	ESTABLISHED IN (COUNTRIES)
Specific budget line for school feeding in the national budget	8	2
Law, norm or judicial precedent that provides resources for school feeding	3	2
Budget lines of different Ministries earmarked for school feeding	3	1
Budget from local and regional entities earmarked for school feeding	1	4
Specific tax revenues earmarked for school feeding	0	1
Specific fund to finance school feeding	0	0

Regarding the extent to which the Centre's support has contributed to positive changes in both the school feeding national budget execution and in ensuring financing and stability, 7 countries (46%) believe the contribution has been significant or moderate. From these, 4 countries have established one or more new measures to ensure financial and budget stability for school feeding activities. One country explicitly mentioned that the Centre's support enabled to better position canteens among other public policies, directly affecting the budget allocation for school feeding, with an expected continuous increase from 2017 to 2021^(GOV 19). Among the 8 countries (54%) that believe that the Centre's contribution was either marginal or inexistent, 4 countries currently do not execute the school feeding budget.

Partner country representatives interviewed during this evaluation highlighted that the Centre's main contribution under this criterion is closely connected to its successful advocacy in making the investment-case for school feeding^(GOV 13; WFP 7; GOV 5). This not only convinced countries to invest in this particular set of policies, but also included very practical and specific recommendations on how to ensure the necessary means (e.g. through specific budget lines in the national budget or looking for new partnerships with private actors or international donors)^(GOV 10 and GOV 22). Moreover, where this advocacy found fertile ground and stronger governance for school feeding, the Centre's support is recognised as having contributed to a better positioning of school feeding among other public policies, translated into real term budget increases^(GOV 19).

“Even though the share of the national budget allocated to school feeding has remained stationary, the State is in the process of seeking further funding for increasing school feeding coverage and initiatives towards improving food nutritional quality. Furthermore, during the GCNF meeting in Armenia, we were given the opportunity to understand how to formulate an approach towards attracting more funding for school feeding from external partners, including the private sector”^(GOV 10)

“Exchange visits by key ministries resulted in a specific school feeding budget line in the national budget”^(GOV 22)

The Centre's performance under this criterion is considered fair. The evaluation shows that the execution of the school feeding budget increased since the beginning of the Centre's support in most countries, while financing mechanisms remain incipient and uneven across countries. Perceptions regarding the Centre's contributions to the stability or increase of the national budget and financing for school feeding are not unequivocal across partner countries. Nonetheless, the Centre is successful in its advocacy efforts in making the investment-case for school feeding.

_Supply chain

Since the beginning of their partnership with the Centre, 10 countries (59%) have **introduced measures to ensure the purchase of local or national products**, of which 7 countries have established a fixed percentage for local purchase, 1 for national purchase, and the remaining two have not established fixed percentages. Yet, in 7 countries (41%) no measures have been put in place.

When it comes to new **incentives introduced to promote participation of local producers in the school feeding supply chain**, 9 countries responded positively and 8 countries responded negatively (53% and 47%, respectively).

Regarding the **levels of purchase of locally produced food**, 10 countries (71%) mentioned that the purchase of locally produced food has increased while 4 countries (29%) stated that purchase levels have remained the same.

When it comes to associating these positive results to the partnership with the Centre, 6 countries (37%) acknowledged the Centre's contribution to positive changes in the supply chain for school feeding as either significant or moderate, while 10 countries (63%) said it was either marginal or inexistent. Among

the countries that recognise the Centre's contribution one may observe a higher proportion of newly introduced measures and incentives, as well as a slightly smaller dependency on imported foods. On the other hand, among countries that do not recognise the Centre's contribution to improvements in the school feeding supply chain, 4 countries have their national school feeding programmes highly dependent on imported food, and 2 countries have expressed their interest in pursuing locally sourced food to school feeding in the future^(GOV 11 and GOV 20).

Although the overall panorama is mixed, some countries highlighted the Centre's valuable contribution in supporting government activities with smallholder farmers^(GOV 10, GOV 21), as well as in fostering synergies with other Brazilian cooperation initiatives (such as the Purchase from Africans for Africa - PAA) as a way to operationalise and boost the local purchase component^(GOV 19; GOV 10). Moreover, the Centre has an inspirational role, raising awareness on local food procurement for school feeding potentialities. The supply chain element of the Centre's approach – notably the public procurement from smallholder farmers - is considered highly relevant and appealing to several partner countries^(GOV 7; GOV 10; GOV 12; WFP 10; WFP 13). Nevertheless, there is fewer evidence regarding the Centre's assistance to partner countries on how to implement such mechanisms.

The Centre's performance under this criterion is fair, since the panorama across countries points to improvements regarding local food purchase levels, and to a lesser extent to the introduction of measures to ensure local procurement and support smallholder farming. However, positive changes were not clearly attributed to the collaboration with the Centre in the majority of partner countries consulted.

_Nutritional Standards

The Centre's specific technical support in the nutritional field began recently. Since 2015, the Centre has provided direct technical assistance on nutrition to six African countries. Through the survey, the evaluation identified 9 partner countries (53%) implementing guidelines to orient the quality of food served in schools and 5 other countries (29%) where guidelines exist, but are not yet in effect. Table 3 brings the instructions regarding nutrition standards and good practices included in the existing guidelines across partner countries.

TABLE 3 Standards and Good Practices in school feeding in partner countries

INSTRUCTIONS INCLUDED	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	%
Guidelines that value local food culture	12	86
Good standards for purchasing, receipt, storage, hygiene, preparation and food supply for children	11	79
Provision of micronutrients (vitamins, minerals, salt, etc.)	10	71
Provision of micronutrients (vitamins, minerals, salt, etc.)	9	64
Prioritisation of purchase and use of non- or low-processed food	8	57

When asked to what extent the support provided by the Centre of Excellence has contributed to develop and implement these guidelines, 10 countries (62%) responded that the Centre has contributed significantly or moderately, and 6 countries said the contribution was marginal or inexistent.

Qualitative assessment provides evidences on the satisfaction by partner countries with the Centre's support related to nutritional standards. The Centre's technical assistance in three countries was positively evaluated by partners ^(GOV 20; GOV 4; GOV 5). Those included the assistance in the elaboration of school management guides; practical training for cooks in which Brazilian cooks provided training in loco; and through enabling a practical training conducted by a women's non-governmental organisation in pilot schools. It is worth noting that the Centre's contribution to improving nutrition standards and practices is recognised both by partners who received in-country technical assistance as well as by partners only exposed to the Centre's message on the importance of developing home-grown school feeding. As for the latter, the way the Centre's interventions present nutrition standards as integrated to local eating habits and to local production was particularly emphasised by partner countries ^(GOV 6; GOV 23).

The Centre's has accomplished **good results on nutritional standards for school feeding in partner countries, with increasing standards and good practices being adopted and implemented in pilot schools. These findings converge with the Centre's relatively recent investment in expanding its support in nutrition. The fact that the Centre has recently created a unit specifically devoted to nutrition can certainly be a promising sign of its willingness to boost this aspect.**

DIMENSION: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

_Intersectoral Coordination

Under this criterion, the survey results show that intersectoral coordination is a reality in a significant part of the Centre's partner countries. In 12 countries (71%) school feeding coordination counts with the active participation of more than 3 sectors, while in 7 countries (41%) at least 5 sectors are actively participating. Education, Agriculture, and Finance are the most active sectors in the majority of countries. Moreover, partner countries express that this broad participation contributes to linking school feeding with social protection strategies (in 8 countries or 47%), or at least contributes to the promotion of specific intersectoral initiatives (in 9 countries or 53%).

When it comes to examining how governmental coordination takes place in partner countries (in terms of coordination structures and division of roles), the survey results show 15 countries (83%) with school feeding coordination under the responsibility of a Ministry, unit or department. In 1 country (6%) the coordination is under the responsibility of different units or departments in distinct Ministries, and 2 countries (11%) lack a clearly defined or institutionalised coordination. On the division of roles, the survey results present two different clusters. One cluster, with 10 countries (56%), states that roles for all the actors involved in the implementation are clear, known and complied with. In addition, another cluster, with 6 countries (33%), states that only some roles are clear.

When assessing the Centre's support against this promising backdrop, 9 countries (56%) perceive the Centre's contribution to school feeding coordination since the beginning of the partnership as being significant or moderate, while 7 countries (44%) qualify this contribution as marginal or inexistent. The exchange of knowledge on integrated intersectoral approaches for school feeding figures among the Centre's most valuable contribution to enhancing coordination in partner countries ^(GOV 5; GOV 6; GOV 10), including practical advise on how to structure domestic institutions for school feeding through the

creation and/or expansion of school feeding units and the creation of national inter-ministerial committees on school feeding ^(GOV 5).

"The Centre highlighted the importance of intersectoral commitment to the programme as each sector has its own role. The Brazilian model that worked as a learning platform clearly outlined this and is being adopted in our country. This has led to the development of a multi stakeholder school feeding taskforce driving the coordination" ^(GOV 17)

"The Centre's approach has always been to involve other sectors. That is why the delegation during the visit to Brazil associated the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Finance. In all the activities that we have carried out with the Centre, there is a strong involvement of other actors, as demonstrates today's existence of a multisectoral technical group which coordinates the PAA in our country" ^(GOV 19)

The Centre's support achieved good results under this criterion. Intersectoral coordination is a reality in many of the Centre's partners, and a significant portion of the Centre's support – mostly through sharing practical knowledge on the Brazilian model and experience – is recognised as having contributed to consolidating or improving national intersectoral structures for coordinating school feeding.

_Ownership

Ownership is a key evaluation criterion, intertwined with several others such as stakeholder engagement, synergy among assets, and social participation and accountability. The survey results show that 12 partner countries (67%) assessed the support provided by the Centre of Excellence as significantly or reasonably contributing to increased political and technical support to national school feeding policies, strategies, and/or programmes. Additionally, 11 countries (69%) mentioned that this support contributed to further increase national autonomy in the design and implementation of national school feeding initiatives. The support also reportedly

increased capabilities to lead the agenda, to coordinate the various actors involved in school feeding around the government strategy, and to find and implement endogenous solutions that reflect the opportunities and challenges of the national context. It is worth noting that the statistical analysis corroborates the significance of the Centre's support to increased levels of engagement and commitment as well as the technical and political support to school feeding initiatives in partner countries.

Concrete illustrations of how the Centre has contributed to increased political and technical support to school feeding include raising awareness on the need for political commitment and the multisectoral character of school feeding; the Centre's activities for supporting high-level actor exchanges, inviting different national actors to Study Visits and National Consultations; and its pedagogic and hands-on approach ^(GOV 19). For partner countries, such examples illustrate the meaning of ownership, underlining the government's responsibilities to invest in and improve school feeding initiatives ^(GOV 12; WFP 15). As mentioned earlier, the Centre has also supported ownership through its efforts to safeguard a specific budget for school feeding, which also made countries aware of the need to strengthen school feeding institutional structures ^(WFP 13; GOV 5).

Regarding the positive contributions for increased *autonomy*, concrete examples include: (i) the Centre's continuous support for strengthening school feeding unit capacities on policy design and implementation ^(GOV 19); (ii) the joint development of implementation and management tools and provision of training for key implementation actors ^(GOV 20); (iii) the Centre's support in enhancing school feeding policy gap assessment processes ^(GOV 5; GOV 12); (iv) the Centre's support for piloting school feeding and designing an outline for policy consultation on school feeding ^(GOV 3).

"The main input given by the Centre is on 'what model of national ownership'. In my country this means not only to pay for a program, but also to perform it with quality, working toward further improvements, and thus being able to expand it in the future" ^(WFP 15)

The Centre's performance under this criterion is **good**. The Centre fosters technical and political support for national school feeding initiatives and supports the partners' increased autonomy in designing and implementing national solutions.

Legal and Institutional Framework

The Centre contributed to both the development of legal and institutional frameworks in partner countries where they were inexistent (GOV 5; GOV 6) and the improvement of frameworks and practices where legal and/or institutional arrangements were already in place (WFP 10; WFP 15; GOV 16). Table 4 provides a panorama of the most frequent legal and/or institutional frameworks supporting school feeding in partner countries.

Notwithstanding the diversity of frameworks, 11 countries (69%) believe the existing legal and/or institutional frameworks: (i) ensure the sustainability of school feeding, preventing its reduction, discontinuation, or abandonment; (ii) 12 countries (75%) believe existing frameworks provide linkages between school and social protection policies or strategies; and (iii) 9 countries (56%) believe they adequately support school feeding implementation. The survey also showed a statistically relevant correlation between the level of the Centre's support and the partners' perceptions regarding the existence of legal and institutional frameworks linked with social protection strategies or policies in partner countries.

Findings on the extent to which the Centre of Excellence support contributed to positive changes in the legal and/or institutional frameworks for school feeding in partner countries demonstrated a positive panorama of 10 countries (59%) attributing significant or moderate contribution, and 7 countries (41%) judging the contribution to be marginal or non-existent. In one case, for instance, marginal contribution was justified by the WFP's lengthy presence in the country (GOV 7). In three countries, government representatives explained that they are still working on establishing their legal and institutional frameworks for school.

"Visits to Brazil have set the pace for many improvements in our country programme. Key among them is the decision to provide legislation for school feeding, to make the programme continue with successive governments" (GOV 16)

"The Centre of Excellence assisted our country to set up a national school feeding policy. However, this policy is yet to be adopted – as law – by our national assembly" (GOV 23)

The Centre's results under this criterion are **good**. Findings demonstrate the Centre's contribution to the development or improvement of legal and institutional frameworks that assure sustainability to school feeding initiatives, adequately support implementation and provide linkages to broader social policies and programmes.

TABLE 4 Legal and institutional frameworks for school feeding in partner countries

FRAMEWORKS	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	%
National policies or strategies	12	75
Specific guidelines for the implementation of school feeding	10	59
Laws, norms or judicial precedents	3	17
None	4	22

Social participation and accountability

According to the survey results, 9 countries (50%) informed the existence of social participation and accountability mechanisms related to school feeding initiatives currently operating in their country, either at local or national levels. Community organisations and parents were identified as the most active participants, while local producers had none or occasional/marginal participation in 9 countries (64%), and private sector had none or little participation in 11 countries (79%). National civil society participated actively in 7 countries (50%), while in another 7 countries it had marginal involvement.

The interviewed government representatives recognise that social participation remains a challenging aspect of national school feeding initiatives (GOV 5; GOV 6; GOV 10; PART 7). The local purchase/supply component of the home-grown school feeding model is an important entryway for community engagement. Among the countries with working participatory mechanisms, community participation through school gardens and in the preparation of meals was the most frequently mentioned participation modality (GOV 20, GOV 12 and GOV 24). However, they also recognised that this is an incipient aspect of most programmes and initiatives, thus impact is not yet visible (GOV 10).

When it comes to the partners' perception of the extent to which support provided by the Centre of Excellence contributed to changes in participation and accountability practices of national school feeding policies, strategies, and/or programmes, 12 countries (75%) answered it contributed significantly or moderately and 4 countries (25%) answered that it contributed marginally. The evaluation team also retrieved that in one partner country where school feeding initiatives already counted on long-standing participatory structures, the Centre is recognised as having contributed to strengthening them, thus enhancing community participation in school feeding initiatives (GOV 12; WFP 5).

"The Centre has encouraged community participation. For example, our national strategy aims to use vegetable gardens as centres for community participation" (GOV 24)

"When it comes to community participation, the Centre's support has allowed us to focus on the role of parents and communities in the management of school canteens. The Centre has also funded community mobilisation in pilot schools" (GOV 5)

The Centre's performance under this criterion is considered **fair**, since the Centre encouraged participation and accountability mechanisms in school feeding-related initiatives, but those remain, in most partner countries, at an embryonic stage with limited engagement from a diverse range of social groups.



5. CROSSCUTTING ANALYSIS

In this section, we outline three sets of crosscutting outcomes of the Centre’s interventions emerging from this evaluation: the first relates to outcomes promoted at the level of partner countries, the second refers to the Centre’s institutional partner policies and practices, and the third relates to the international development cooperation landscape.

(I) STRENGTHENING NATIONAL SCHOOL FEEDING INITIATIVES AND SUPPORTING NATIONAL ‘COALITIONS FOR CHANGE’

The Centre has been successful in supporting countries to engage important domestic stakeholders, resulting in increased political and technical support and greater engagement and commitment to national school feeding initiatives. Moreover, the Centre’s support activities for capacity development have contributed to increased autonomy in the design of national school feeding initiatives and to the technical quality of the latter. Those findings are strongly confirmed by both the qualitative and quantitative analysis.

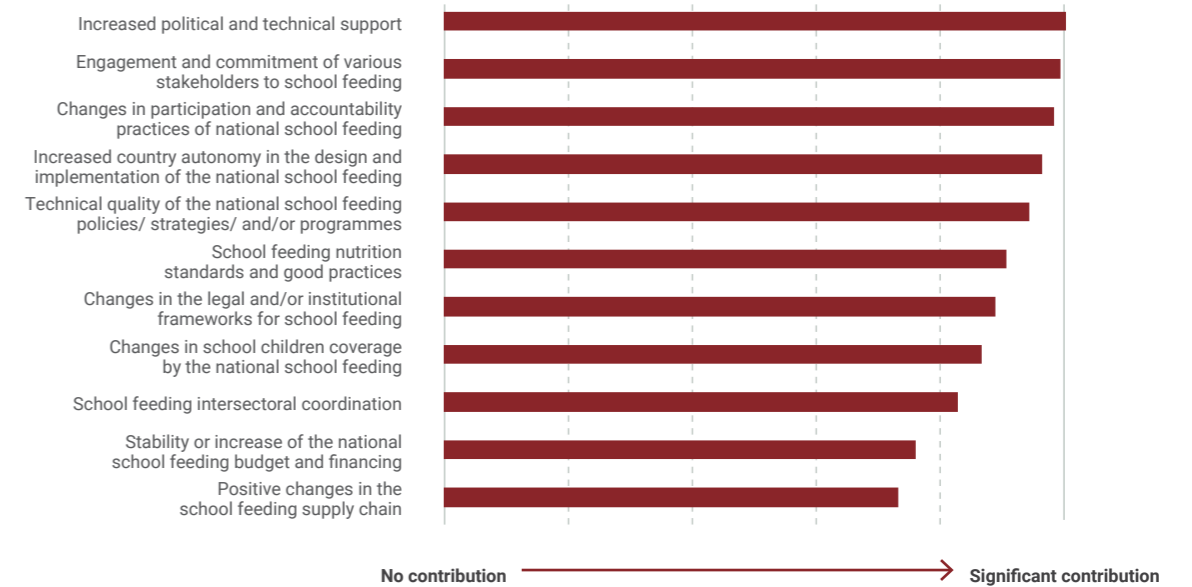
Notwithstanding this positive trend in what the Centre’s theory of change puts forward as ‘coalitions for change’ (level 2 outcomes), collected evidence is uneven – across partner countries – regarding changes in the conditions required to effectively sustain the national school feeding initiatives positive impacts in the long-term (level 1 outcomes).

An exception is the Centre’s contribution to legal and institutional frameworks supporting an intersectoral approach to school feeding. Figure 11 represents those dynamics and reflects the partners’ perceptions regarding the Centre’s contribution to each criterion assessing changes in their national school feeding initiatives.

Those findings are coherent with the rationale behind the Centre’s theory of change, in which changes at the policy and institutional level depend on a series of other variables beyond the Centre’s support, and expected to occur in a medium- or long- term perspective.

Additionally, it is worth highlighting that, as the partners’ processes unfolded from sensitisation and awareness-raising to actual design and implementation of policies and programmes, the Centre’s efforts have moved from Study Visits to an enhanced approach geared towards implementation through technical assistance and policy advice (see Figure 3, page 20).

FIGURE 11 Partners’ perception of the Centre’s contribution to strengthening school feeding initiatives (based on the averages for each criterion)



Particular examples of the Centre’s support to national initiatives’ implementation highlighted throughout this report point to areas where the Centre’s support to implementation has been effective (particularly nutrition, costing studies, and intersectoral coordination), although some reservations were raised in regards to in-country technical assistance and follow-up.

Furthermore, this type of support does not equally encompass all partners. On the one hand, this is aligned with the Centre’s approach, which presumes that every new support activity depends on a formal request by national governments, culminating in higher transactional costs and dependent upon each partner’s national contexts and pace. On the other hand, the evaluation findings point to the limits of the Centre’s current capacities in broadening its support scope to an increased number of countries and in an expanded thematic range, which requires specialised expertise in a larger range of issues.

Figure 12 shows that partners more engaged in the Centre’s activities reported its contribution to positive changes in more criteria when compared to less engaged partners. This

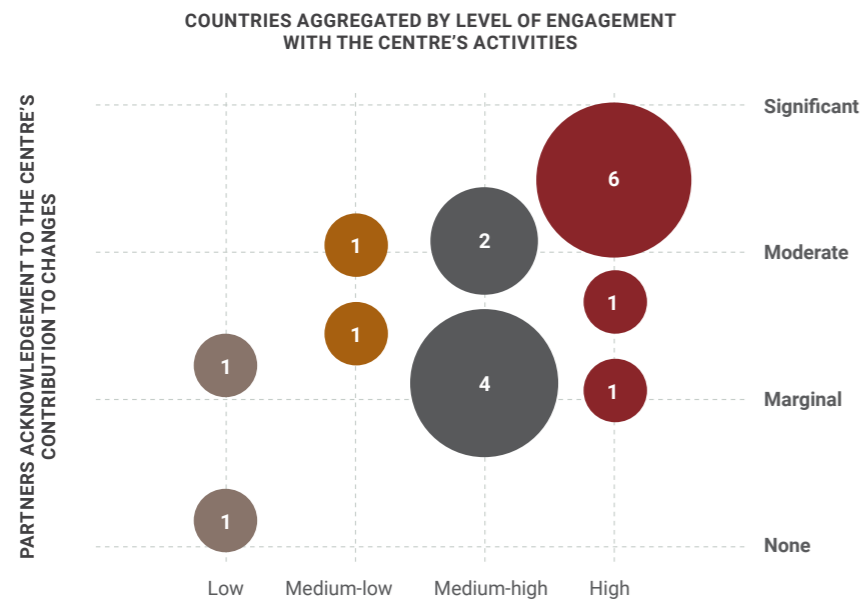
relation points to a pattern between the level of the Centre’s support and actual changes in school feeding. Altogether, and taking the overall picture across countries, such findings reinforce the appropriateness of the Centre’s strategies, even in face of the diversity of countries supported, and thus demonstrates the strategic relevance of the Centre’s diverse, albeit integrated, support activities. Nevertheless, strategic adjustments are required in order to continue to support progress in partner countries and effectively respond to the raising number of demands as well as to respond to the specific country-situations increasingly requiring tailored approaches.

(II) TRILATERAL PARTNERS’ PRACTICES AND POLICIES

Since the Centre is a recent and innovative trilateral arrangement, it is worth to pin down specific outcomes with regards to its main institutional partners: the WFP and the Brazilian government.

Concerning the WFP, it is noteworthy that the Centre does add value to the organisation’s institutional policies and fieldwork. This was highlighted by a wide range of the WFP staff

FIGURE 12 Partners’ perception on the Centre’s contribution to strengthening their school feeding initiatives and the Centre’s level of support



and national government representatives, and thus should be taken as a remarkable outcome. In this regard, the evaluation identified three sets of contributions to the WFP: (i) approach to national ownership, (ii) technical capacities to support countries, and (iii) Trilateral and South-South Cooperation practices.

With respect to national ownership, in the view of a senior WFP leader the Centre of Excellence has contributed to changes in the organisational culture, counterbalancing the predominant humanitarian assistance approach (WFP16) and providing new ways of engaging with governments (WFP10, PART3). “Let the government take the forefront” (WFP5) is a concrete lesson drawn from the Centre’s work.

“It is very clear that the Centre brings a further push towards the country’s perspectives by not merely focusing on our own operations. This becomes very clear on the School Meals Policy. It changed quite significantly, focusing not only on WFP practices, but also on how the WFP can support countries. This was very largely driven by the different perspective that the Centre brought to the WFP.” (WFP16)

The Centre also contributed to foster the WFP’s ability to support capacity development, providing new tools and skills for in-country work (WFP5, WFP16), thus supporting the WFP’s transition strategy from food aid to food assistance (WFP10). The examples provided reach different aspects of the Centre’s work, such as: (i) seminars as important networking and learning spaces for the WFP Country Offices staff (WFP11); (ii) the Centre’s activities contributing to enhance the WFP country offices’ capacities to meet governments’ demands on the ground (WFP16, WFP5); (iii) the Centre’s approach having sensitised country offices on the usefulness of South-South cooperation to advance their work in school feeding, leading them to search for new South-South partnerships beyond the Centre (WFP11, WFP15); (iv) the Centre contributing to the overall coordination within the WFP, enabling connections and fostering synergies among Regional Bureaux, Country Offices, and national governments (WFP13, GOV19). Another concrete evidence of the Centre’s role in supporting the

WFP capacity development, raised by a senior WFP representative, is the reformulation of the Headquarters’ School Feeding Unit, which now has a more strategic role focusing on social protection (WFP16).

Regarding the Centre’s contribution to the WFP’s Triangular and South-South Cooperation practices, the WFP has elaborated its South-South and Triangular Cooperation policy inspired by what the Centre has delivered so far (WFP6, WFP16). Additionally, the WFP has decided to partner with other middle-income countries and establish new thematic Centres of Excellence, for instance in China, and also drawing on the lessons learned about coordination challenges of this new type of arrangement (WFP6, WFP16).

“We have a policy on South-South cooperation and a lot of it was partly inspired by how the Centre works, by the value of the way the Centre works. This is also visible in the way the Centre is influencing the establishment of other Centres in the WFP” (WFP16)

With respect to the Brazilian government, two sets of perceptions in regards to the Centre’s outcomes were identified: (i) on the Brazilian South-South and trilateral cooperation practices, and (ii) on the Brazilian national school feeding programme and social protection policies.

The Centre’s establishment has contributed to the dissemination of the Brazilian school feeding, food and nutrition security and social protection experiences and has brought methodological innovations on how to improve this sharing of experiences. In addition, the possibility to engage with non-traditional partners also represents positive outcomes for Brazilian foreign policy (PART 2; WFP 16). As a trilateral arrangement embedded in an international organisation with worldwide presence, the Centre brought new cooperation demands to the Brazilian government, pointing to the need for coordination adjustments between the Centre, line ministries and the Brazilian Agency of Cooperation in order to respond to demands effectively and, at the same time, avoid the excessive burden on public servants responsible for hosting international delegates and sharing the Brazilian experience.

Additionally, Brazilian partners have also shown increasing interest in acquiring knowledge and learnings from the Centre’s partner countries, such as supporting other South-South exchanges initiatives (PART 7; PART 8). Finally, the challenges from the trilateral partnership management (for instance, insufficient clarity on each partner’s roles and proper recognition of the Brazilian contribution) prompted institutional reflection regarding trilateral cooperation arrangements. (PART 2; PART 5). Those reflections could be shared and discussed among all trilateral partners to strengthen the partnership itself.

Promising, albeit incipient, contributions to the Brazilian school feeding and social protection policies were also identified and refer to: (i) international exchanges helping Brazilian technical staff to identify gaps and providing suggestions for improvement (COE3; PART 7), and (ii) international visits from foreign delegations improving the local governments’ accountability of school feeding implementation, as it raised their visibility and reinforced local civil society oversight (COE 3). Although more evidence is required to further verify these outcomes, this cluster brings clear illustrations of the South-South cooperation mutual benefits principle.

“An outsider look forces a reflection by the Brazilian government. It rebuilds our way of thinking, acting, and our norms. Once we were back from the missions, we had inputs to improve the national programme. Moreover, exchanges play a “VIP monitoring” role, because local managers had to improve their actions to receive the foreigners. Local civil society monitoring also increased after the international visits we received.” (COE 3)

(III) INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION LANDSCAPE

The third set of the crosscutting outcomes from the Centre of Excellence interventions affects, albeit modestly, the international development cooperation landscape and SDGs achievement, especially goal number 17. As expressed throughout this evaluation, there is a wide recognition of the Centre’s contribution to operationalise the concept of South-South Cooperation and to expand the principle of

national ownership through a very precise set of methodologies and support activities (WFP5, WFP15; GOV14, PART5).

“When the Centre came, the ownership dimension took off, because the Centre could provide technical assistance to countries. The rest of us were talking about ownership, but we couldn’t move the needle to do something like they do.” (PART 3)

In this particular set, the evaluation also found evidences of the Centre’s contribution to South-South cooperation practices, especially in regards to capacity development interventions. The Centre’s contribution to gap assessment, its facilitator role, as a well as its learn-by-doing approach, which both inspires and pushes partner countries to learn (and improve) by doing, are the most prominent features of the Centre’s approach to capacity development highlighted by this evaluation. Partner countries’ recognise that the Centre’s South-South capacity development activities are not based on ‘one-size fits all’ solutions, but show possibilities based on the achievements of a country with similar developmental challenges, inspiring them to pursue their own solutions.

“The Centre has given a name to ‘capacity development’, placing it within a process, in a policy. It does help engagement with countries. The Centre has a systematic way of engaging and approaching countries. They created a framework or a system to do this in a systematic and efficient way.” (WFP10)



6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Centre has provided notable contributions in partner countries to building coalitions and capacities for change that are key for sustaining nationally owned home-grown school feeding. This was because of its South-South approach – rooted in principles such as horizontality and demand driven cooperation – and because it benefited from expertise and the political legitimacy provided by the Brazilian positive results on poverty and hunger alleviation. The Centre is renowned for its facilitator and inspirational role. There is wide acknowledgement of the Centre contribution to countries' ownership and to the recognition of home-grown school feeding's crosscutting developmental impacts. The Centre's has notably added value to the WFP's transition strategy and it can potentially inform the 2030 Agenda, especially its practical stances regarding national ownership and capacity development, as well as provide lessons drawn from its innovative trilateral arrangement. These results point to an effective contribution to transition towards sustainable and nationally owned policies for tackling poverty and hunger.

The Centre also contributed to changes in policies and institutional frameworks across partner countries. This may be seen in the Centre's support to the creation or improvement of legal and institutional frameworks that respond to an integrated approach to social protection and food and nutrition security. It also contributed to the enhancement of the partners' intersectoral coordination capacities. Notwithstanding its significant role in setting a favourable ground to nationally owned home-grown school feeding initiatives, evidences of its contribution in supporting the conditions required to effectively sustain the national school feeding initiatives positive impacts in the long-term are more scattered.

Such findings are aligned with the Centre's institutional evolution and efforts. During its first two years, its activities were mainly focused on sharing the Brazilian experience through study visits, while in-country technical support only began from 2013 onwards. Besides, the technical support activities, which are demand-driven, do not reach all countries engaged with the Centre. Countries more engaged with the Centre's activities recognise its positive

contribution to a wider range of changes compared to countries engaged in the Centre activities. This partially answers the uneven results - across partner countries - regarding the Centre's contribution to impacts at the policy implementation level.

Another explanatory factor is that these impacts refer to medium- and long-term changes and, thus, are expected to take longer to be achieved.

At the same time, the Centre's support activities have evolved since its inception in an attempt to face the ever changing and growing demands brought by its partners. The Centre has widened its institutional partnerships and has begun to experiment with activities that enable the expansion of its capacities, such as supporting partners remotely or facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges. Nonetheless, important shortcomings regarding technical support should not be overlooked.

Against this backdrop, the findings illustrate the appropriateness of the strategies chosen by the Centre. There are positive trends on a wide range of dimensions placed by the theory of change. However, two areas deviate from this trend, namely the outcomes regarding community ownership and knowledge production and dissemination strategy. Regarding the latter, while it has been underrepresented in comparison to all other support activities, this did not prevent the Centre's remarkable outcomes in raising awareness of the potential in home-grown school feeding and in generating greater commitment from a wide range of policymakers and leaderships. The Centre has recently strengthened its efforts in this area, but it still needs more investment to support the countries' implementation processes. Civil society engagement and community ownership, a building block of the Brazilian experience, show timid advances in the partner countries' processes. Although partners recognise that the Centre has effectively spread the word on the importance of community ownership and regular participation in the policy-making process, this seems to be the least developed pathway of change proposed by the Centre's Theory of Change. Figure 13, at the end of this section, illustrates the evaluation findings vis-à-vis the Centre's theory of change.

In the figure, the darker boxes represent those areas where the Centre invested more efforts (at the activities and output levels) and where findings indicate the Centre's contribution to positive changes in partner countries (at the outcome and impact levels).

RECOMMENDATIONS

> To promote strategic adjustment in its capacity development strategy

The Centre's willingness to provide a positive answer to all demands is appreciated by its partners. At the same time, the Centre is devoted to an increasing number of partnerships, each one presenting diverse contexts and demands. This evaluation points to the importance of addressing the partner countries' growing demand for support in terms of enhanced technical assistance, broadened thematic scope, and closer follow-up activities. Moreover, the Centre's theory of change encompasses a great variety of activities and a multisectoral approach, which requires strong technical capacities in different subjects.

Against this backdrop, strategic adjustments and investments are needed to enhance the effectiveness of the Centre's capacity development strategy in order to support countries in implementing their school feeding initiatives and reaching a further level of outcomes and impacts, especially considering that after an initial boost on raising awareness and mobilising stakeholder's support, partners' demands emphasise the need for further ground presence and more specific technical support. Specific recommendations regarding capacity development refer to:

1. **Strategically revise the capacity development scope**, addressing (i) the increasing demand for support, both in number of countries and thematic areas; (ii) its current capacities regarding financial and human resources.
2. **Enhance in-country technical assistance and follow-up activities**, addressing (i) the adequacy of experts profile vis-à-vis the partners' contexts; (ii) the partners' expectations regarding the Centre's

contribution to developing capacities among a wider number of public servants; (iii) the rising demands to broaden the technical assistance's thematic scope; (iv) communication flows with partners.

> To invest in knowledge production and dissemination activities

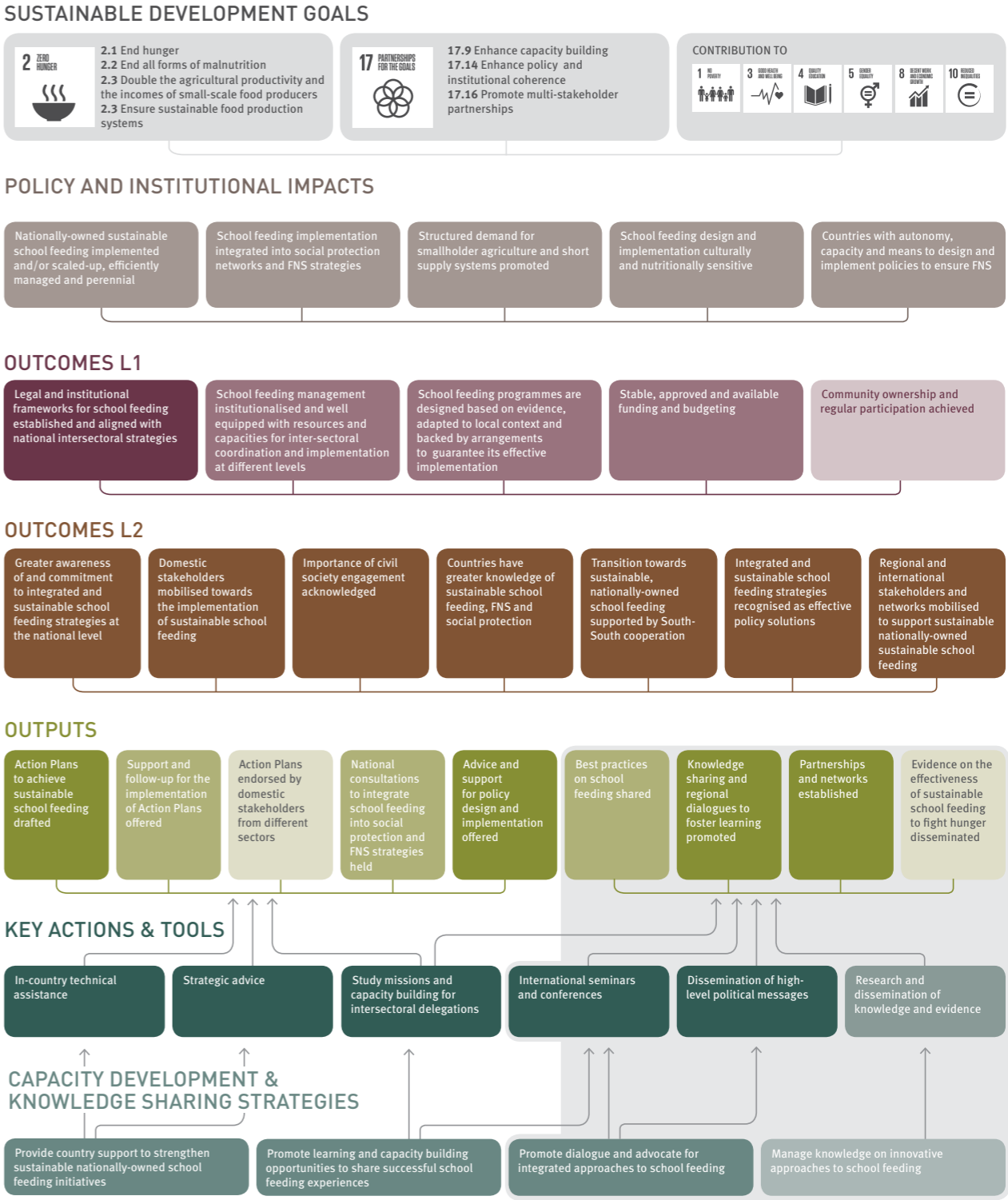
Knowledge plays a crosscutting role in the Centre's strategy. Evidence-based studies on home-grown school feeding impacts, besides subsidising technical assistance, are a key advocacy tool for fostering buy-in and support from national and international constituencies. A systematic analysis of policy learnings and technical expertise support the design, implementation, and scaling up of sound policies. Knowledge management within the Centre's strategy can also encourage the partners' leadership and promote international recognition of their advances as well as support horizontal exchanges among partners. Certain recommendations are suggested to fulfil the Centre's potential of becoming a privileged knowledge hub on integrated approaches against hunger. They are:

3. **To enhance the Centre's knowledge management and dissemination strategy**, aligned with the partners' needs and addressing requests to: (i) go beyond the Brazilian experience and include experiences from partner countries; (ii) expedite knowledge production processes to timely respond to opportunities; (iii) enhance the visibility of produced knowledge in order to reach out to a wider audience and thus support the Centre's learning strategy and advocacy efforts.
4. **To implement a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning strategy for the Centre's activities** to: (i) support the partners' capacities to systematise their own learnings and build up information to enable peer-to-peer exchanges; (ii) to gather solid and systematised data that can inform future evaluations, support follow-up of partner countries' processes, and enhance the Centre's accountability to partners.





FIGURE 13 The Centre’s theory of change vis-à-vis the findings



> Partnerships

The Centre is recognised by its ability to build strategic partnerships that bring a wider outreach of its strategies as well as by its contribution to an enabling environment for the pursuit of nationally owned solutions. Moreover, the Centre’s innovative trilateral arrangement brought new institutional challenges and potentialities to both the Brazilian Government and the WFP. New and stronger partnerships can support the Centre to overcome some of the challenges it faces. Specific recommendations regarding partnerships are:

5. **Expand strategies to strengthen the partner countries’ leadership**, taking advantage of opportunities to: (i) establish horizontal exchanges that may benefit from the partner countries’ leadership, such as peer-to-peer exchanges and working groups; (ii) foster and support South-South cooperation among partners.

- 6. **Create new synergies by strengthening institutional partnerships**, exploring: (i) partner countries’ demands on specific technical support; (ii) spaces to engage with other actors involved in social protection and food security agendas; (ii) opportunities to foster civil society participation and contribution to the Centre’s activities.
- 7. **Strengthen the Centre’s institutional identity as a trilateral arrangement**, establishing strategic dialogues with the Brazilian Government and the WFP, and facing (i) the need to maintain its autonomy and, at the same time, enhance synergies with WFP units and Brazilian South-South cooperation practices; and (ii) providing lessons learned to the establishment of other Centres of Excellence and triangular cooperation initiatives, contributing with evidence-based recommendations to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 17.



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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. METHODOLOGY

This annex presents a description of the methodological strategy developed by the external evaluation team responsible for performing the Centre’s external impact evaluation. As mentioned in the introduction to this report, this strategy was built on three acknowledgments regarding the nature of the work conducted at the Centre of Excellence. These are: (i) the multi-centric and complex context in which the Centre operates, (ii) the principles for South-South and Trilateral cooperation that guides its strategies and (iii) the capacity development support nature of the Centre’s work.

Informed by those elements, the following three approaches were chosen to compose the toolkit for this methodological evaluation: (i) Theory of Change; (ii) Mixed Methods Evaluation; (iii) Stakeholder engagement.

The development of the Centre’s Theory of Change (ToC) was the initial step and served as the basis for the evaluation process. Together with the Centre staff, the external evaluation team developed the ToC and facilitated its critical analysis by the Centre’s main stakeholders. In a meeting that took place in Addis Ababa, the team presented the evaluation objectives and invited Centre partners to review, adjust, and validate the ToC. It was also an important moment to engage the countries’ representatives and the WFP staff with the process. The validated ToC then became the point of departure for the assessment of the Centre’s processes, results and impacts, serving as the basis of this evaluation.

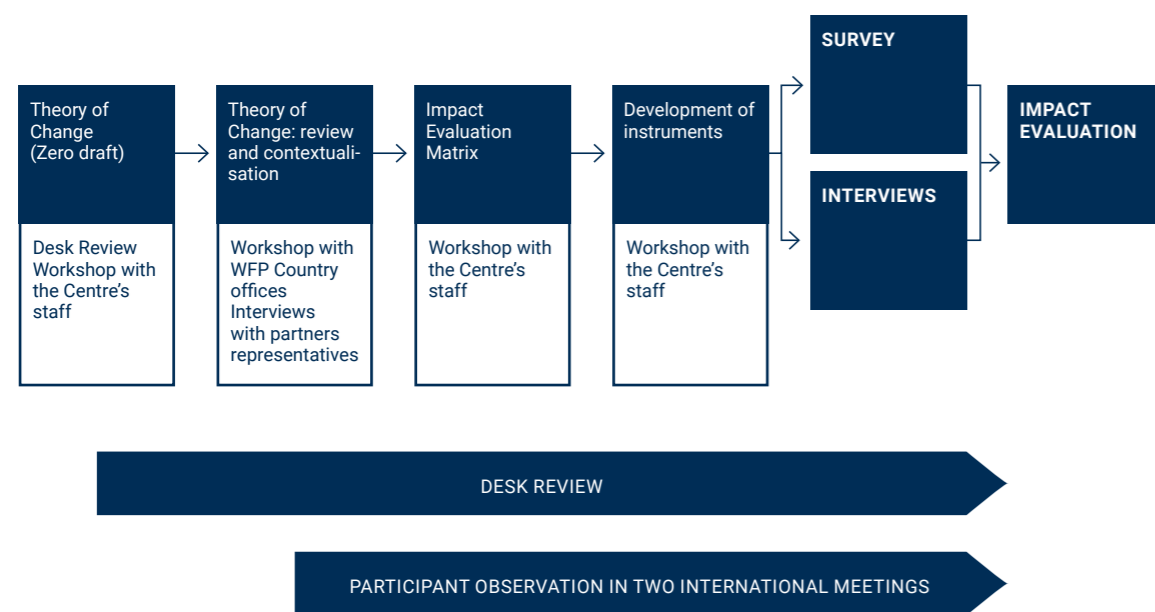
The team then developed an Impact Evaluation Matrix (hereafter the Matrix), covering the key aspects of the Centre’s ToC. The Matrix brings together three evaluation questions and their investigative dimensions, as well as the criteria to evaluate the results. The Matrix is operationalised through evaluating rubrics, bringing together several qualitative and quantitative aspects to create a basis for evaluative judgments.

Two main data-gathering tools were applied to find evidences of the impacts from the Centre’s interventions. The first was to develop a Survey for partner countries to answer. In addition to the Survey, representatives from partner countries and institutional partners were selected for in-depth semi-structured interviews. In order to provide comparison elements, the selection of interviewees from partner countries took in consideration different criteria, as detailed in the ‘In-depth interviews’ subtopic below.

Stakeholders’ engagement has occurred continuously throughout the evaluation process, whereas the evaluation team invited partners to critically reflect upon the Centre’s contribution to improvements in their capacities and enhancement in their school feeding initiatives. This approach aimed to adapt the evaluation’s perspective and scope to different national and local contexts. Figure 1 represents this evaluation methodological strategy.

Before advancing into a detailed account of each methodological tool, some important disclaimers are necessary. First, we

FIGURE 1 Methodological Strategy



acknowledge that the empirical evidence collected does not cover the entirety of the Centre's past interventions, neither in terms of countries, nor in terms of activities. The concrete limitations we would like to indicate refer to information gaps and poor systematisation of the full range of the Centre's activities conducted during the past 5 years; the fact that this evaluation team did not conduct field visits in the supported countries due to resources availability; and the limitation of interviews to representatives that attended seminars promoted by the Centre. In this regard, one should note that government representatives do change quite often, and interviewees or survey respondents did not always have the institutional memory of the relationship with the Centre. It is also worth mentioning that, since the interviews took place in events co-organised by the Centre – rather than in their countries – the research team had to be aware of the potential over emphasis given by key-informants to this type support activity, as well as possible constraints in openly discussing critical issues of their relationship with the Centre.

Due to the diversity of the Centre's support activity and the high number of activities performed by the Centre, as well as number of countries supported, we have targeted the

main stakeholders in each partner country. We thank their generosity and the time they devoted to share their thoughts on the Centre's work and impact.

Nevertheless, some other important actors were not interviewed. For instance, participants in activities promoted in partner countries, representatives of institutional partners in Brazil (such as Emater – The Brazilian Company for Technical Assistance and Rural Extension, the Sao Paulo City hall, the Government of the State of Bahia), as well as representatives of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, one key contributor to the Brazilian Trust Fund.

Lastly, since this is the first comprehensive impact evaluation conducted by the Centre since its inception, and due to the incipient stage of its M&E strategy, this evaluation did not count with a baseline information. To cope with this shortcoming, the research team has made an important effort – both during interviews and though the survey – to identify major landmarks in school feeding in an attempt to establish an evaluative foundation. In the absence of this baseline, findings cannot be assessed against any particular period and, thus, readers should remain cautious about both over-expectations and over-criticism.

Theory of Change

Considering the complexity of the Centre's multi-centric interventions, a crucial part of the evaluation strategy was to promote a dialogue with the Centre's staff as well as its main stakeholders and partners in order to draw a more accurate picture of the main pathways of change supported by the Centre's work.

The first step of the evaluation team was to elaborate and validate a first version of the ToC with the Centre's staff. This first draft was then presented to a group of the Centre's stakeholders, namely representatives from African governments supported by the Centre and from WFP Country Offices, Regional Bureaux and Headquarters, participating in the II WFP Regional Workshop – Home Grown School Feeding: How to Integrate Systems, which took place in Addis Ababa from May 30th to June 3rd, 2016. Besides presenting the ToC, the evaluation team conducted a round of consultation with those stakeholders, comprised of at least 50 people, through semi-structured interviews and two participatory workshops.

The first workshop, held with the WFP's Country Offices, Regional Bureaux, and Headquarters representatives, was split into two parts. In the first part, the evaluation team presented the Centre's impact evaluation process and the first version of the ToC. In the second part, the participants discussed the ToC, considering their national or regional context. The participants were invited to discuss in small groups, come to an agreement on suggestions to improve the ToC, and indicate aspects they considered a priority by the evaluation. The workshop had 30 participants, approximately.

During the second workshop, conducted with government representatives, partner countries introduced their school feeding initiatives and main areas of collaboration with the Centre. Subsequently, the evaluation team presented the timeline, the main activities planned for the evaluation process, and the ToC rationale. 17 government representatives attended this meeting.

During this event, we also conducted 23 interviews in order to capture how actors from different realities understand the outcomes

and impacts of the Centre's activities and to better understand the partners' school feeding contexts. Such interviews focused on gathering inputs to review the Centre's ToC as well as to elaborate the Matrix.

Universe

Although the Centre has engaged, during the past 5 years, with more than 75 countries, in reality it continuously supports a group of 28 countries. This represents a smaller group than the one comprising the range of countries the Centre has other forms of interaction, such as those participating in international events led or co-hosted by the Centre. 'Continuous support' is thus a Centre category comprising the 28 countries to which the Centre is currently providing technical and policy support on a continuous base. Although this evaluation addressed Centre's overall strategies, it has mainly focused on assessing the Centre's work related to this group of countries.

Countries in the Centre's continuous support list:

Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Kenya, Lao, Lesotho, Liberia, Mali, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo, Tunisia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Evaluation Matrix

Based on the final version of the ToC, the evaluation team elaborated a first version of the Evaluation Matrix, which was presented to the Centre's team in a workshop. The evaluation team registered the Centre's inputs and incorporated them into a revised version of the Matrix.

The evaluation team has developed a comprehensive database to organise the information gathered and to enable data treatment and analysis. This database also includes a list of independent variables to assess possible explanatory factors that may influence

the outcomes in each partner country. The list of independent variables and their indicators are in Table 1, below.

With respect to the variable assigning the Centre's level of support to partner countries, the evaluation team designed it to provide it a more tangible perspective and create a reliable account for the 'level of exposure' to the Centre's interventions in each partner country. This variable was generated through

combining existing information on each partner country on: the number of years the country has been partnering with the Centre, the number of activities undertaken, the country's attendance to GCNF (since 2013), the country's priority level accordingly to the Brazilian Trust Fund setting. Initially we had the intention to include information regarding the Centre's remote support, but this information could not be collected.

TABLE 1 Independent variables

VARIABLE	SOURCE	SOURCE (DETAIL)	INDICATOR
# CENTRE'S LEVEL OF SUPPORT	Evaluation team elaboration based on the Centre of Excellence against Hunger data	Centre's internal documents	Scale for the Centre's level of support: from 1 to 4
# SOCIO-POLITICAL AND/OR ENVIRONMENTAL RUPTURES	Evaluation team elaboration based on the United Nations data: United Nations Security Council, United Nations Environment Programme and World Food Programme	http://www.un.org/en/sc/programme/ http://web.unep.org/disastersandconflicts/ http://www.wfp.org/countries	There was no rupture in the past five years: 0 In the past 5 years the country was listed on the UNSC agenda, AND/OR on UNEP Disasters and Conflicts Sub-or, AND/OR was part of WFP Disaster Risk Reduction programmes: 1
# HISTORY OF SCHOOL FEEDING IN THE COUNTRY	Centre of Excellence against Hunger/ World Food Programme	The Centre's and the WFP official documents Desk review	WFP Hand-Over strategy before 2012: 0 WFP Hand-Over strategy since 2013: 1 There is no Hand-Over strategy in place: 2
# COOPERATION WITH THE BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT	IPEA/ABC	COBRADI report (2010 and 2011-2013)	The amount invested by Brazil in technical cooperation, between 2010 and 2013 in each partner country
# POSITION IN THE HUNGER MAP	FAO (2015)	http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/communications/wfp275057.pdf?_ga=1.39724267.938712718.1467985579	Prevalence of undernourishment in the population (percentage) in 2014-16, according to the following scale: < 5% - Very low 5-14,9% - Moderately low 15-24,9% - Moderately high 25-34,9% - High 35% and over - Very high
# HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX	UNDP (2015)	http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi	Country's HDI index

Survey

The survey was developed based on the ToC and the Matrix. It aimed to assess the contribution of the Centre's support in strengthening nationally owned school feeding initiatives in each partner country.

The Survey was structured in three dimensions:

- 1. Strengthening capabilities for school feeding:** focused on understanding to what extent the support of the Centre contributed to strengthening national capacities for the design, management, and implementation of integrated sustainable school feeding initiatives;
- 2. Technical appropriateness of the Centre's strategies:** focused on identifying to what extent the Centre's strategies are relevant, effective and suitable.
- 3. Changes in school feeding supported by the Centre:** focused on exploring to what extent the support of the Centre has contributed to the achievement of positive changes.

Survey data was treated using both analytical description and statistical analysis and – in some cases – crossed with independent/explanatory variables in pursuit of additional causal relationships.

The survey design acknowledged that improvements in institutional processes and broader changes in school feeding initiatives simultaneously respond to several causes, including (but not exclusively) the support provided by the Centre. Therefore, the structure of the survey was designed to assess positive changes observed in the years that partner countries have been engaging with the Centre, as well as the Centre's actual contribution to such changes. To answer the survey the evaluation team suggested partners to organise joint meetings with different stakeholders responding to school feeding initiatives or participating in the Centre's activities.

Survey development process: The evaluation team presented the Centre with an initial version of the survey, followed by four rounds of feedbacks for adjustments until its final format. It was then translated into the Centre's three working languages (Portuguese, English, and French) and shared with three partner countries to test its adequacy and gather their feedback on eventual language and factual misunderstandings.

Survey's universe and sample: The survey's final version was sent to 26 of the 28 countries under the Centre's continuous support list. Each survey took into account the exact number of years each country has been partnering with the Centre. The two absentees refer to one country that partnered with the Centre in the year of 2016, and one country that the evaluation team was not able to locate the contact of a focal person at the national government to address the survey, despite having tried with both the local WFP Country Office and the Centre's staff. The return rate for the survey return was 18 countries (69%).

Figures 2 to 7 show the relation between the sample (18 countries) and the universe of countries supported by the Centre (28 countries). The figures take into account different independent variables, such as the Centre's support level; Human Development Index, position in the 'World Hunger Map'; the existence of an agreed school feeding hand-over strategy between the country and the WFP; agriculture share of the GDP; official development assistance's share of GDP; and enrolment rate in primary schools. Although those variables may hinder each country's specificities, they do validate the sample as being representative of the universe of countries supported by the Centre.

In-depth interviews

A total of 66 interviews were conducted for this evaluation. A first round of exploratory interviews was conducted with the partner countries' representatives and the WFP staff in Ethiopia (May 2016), including Country Offices, Regional Bureaux, and Headquarters. The focus of this round of interviews was to discuss

FIGURE 2 Centre's support

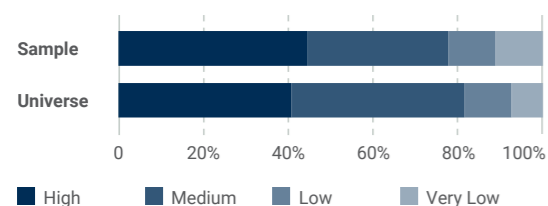


FIGURE 3 WFP hand-over strategy

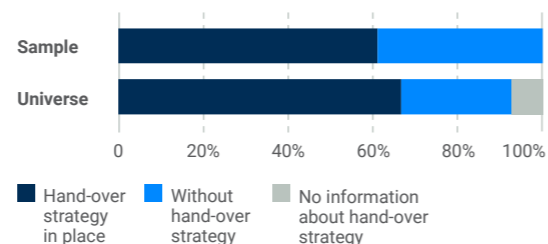


FIGURE 4 Human Development Index (2015)

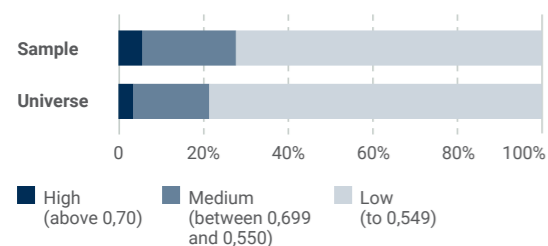


FIGURE 5 Hunger Map position (2015)

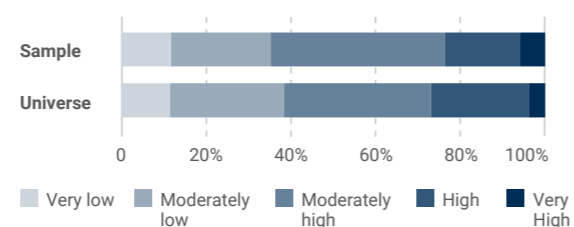


FIGURE 6 Agriculture, value added (% of GDP) 1997-2014

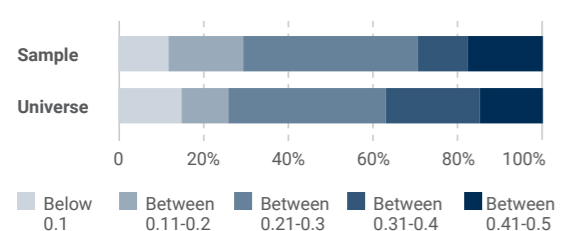
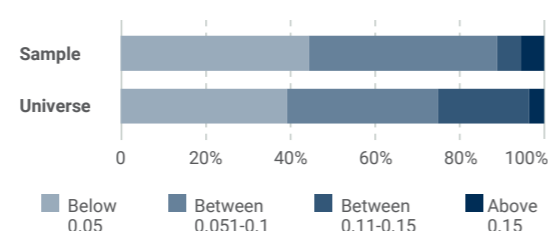


FIGURE 7 Net ODA received (% of GNI) 1997-2014



Source: FAO, 2015

the Centre's ToC as well as to gather inputs to support the evaluation matrix elaboration.

During the XVI GCNF in Armenia (September 2016), a group of twelve countries was selected for in-depth semi-structured interviews. The selection followed a country categorisation conducted by the evaluation team based on data crossing between: (i) the Centre's initial year of support; (ii) the nature of the activities that had already been in place (e.g. study visit, national consultation, in-country technical assistance); (iii) geographic representativeness, (iv) the Centre's perception regarding the partners' outcomes in school feeding, and (v) the partner countries' perception regarding their outcomes in school feeding. This last data source came from the initial interviews conducted in Ethiopia, in May. The selection

also sought to include diverse contexts (namely, countries in post-crisis situations, countries receiving remote support, and countries that are only engaged with the Centre's international activities). During the GCNF, the evaluation team has also conducted interviews with WFP country officers in partner countries supported by the Centre, as well as other five interviews with the Centre's key institutional partners, including representatives from the WFP headquarters and representatives from other institutional partners.

This second round of interviews allowed the research team to conduct an in-depth and qualitative look at the Centre's strategies and outcomes. Interviews observed a previously designed questionnaire guide aiming at gathering additional information and

TABLE 3 Countries that receive the Centre's continuous support and their inputs to the evaluation

COUNTRY	INTERVIEWED IN ADDIS ABABA (MAY 2016)	INTERVIEWED IN YEREVAN (SEPTEMBER 2016)	RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY (SEPT/OCT 2016)
Bangladesh			
Benin			
Burkina Faso			
Burundi			
Cameroon			
Congo			
Côte d'Ivoire			
Democratic Republic of Congo			
Ethiopia			
Gambia			
Ghana			
Guinea Bissau			
Guinea Conakry			
Kenya			
Lao			
Lesotho			
Liberia			
Mali			
Malawi			
Mozambique			
Niger			
Pakistan			
Rwanda			
Senegal			
Togo			
Tunisia			
Zambia			
Zimbabwe			

validating hypotheses on the Centre's most prominent contributions, lessons learned, and current challenges. The evaluation team elaborated these hypotheses based on desk reviews, stakeholders' initial interviews in Ethiopia, and consultations with the Centre's team. Questionnaires were adapted to the different interviewees' profiles: Country technical-representatives, Country political-representatives, WFP Country Office representatives, WFP headquarters

representatives, and institutional partners.

Lastly, during the evaluation process the research team also interviewed the Centre's staff, one Centre consultant, two representatives from the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), one representative from the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) and two representatives from the Brazilian National Fund for Education Development (FNDE). Annex 2 brings the complete list of interviewees.

ANNEX 2.

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

	NAME	POSITION	COUNTRY/ PARTNER INSTITUTION
1	Muhammad Abdul Mannan	Second Minister, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Planning	Bangladesh
2	Gias Uddin Ahmed	Additional Secretary, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education	Bangladesh
3	Ram Chandra Das	Project Director, School Feeding Programme in Poverty Prone Areas Ministry of Primary and Mass Education	Bangladesh
4	Julienne Zimé	School Feeding Focal Point, Minister of Maternal and Primary Education	Benin
5	Godonou Gnonlonfin	Director, Office for managing WFP project in Benin, Ministry of Development and Planning	Benin
6	Lucile Evelyn Ouedraogo	Chief of Staff, Ministry of Education	Burkina Faso
7	Liboire Bigirimana	Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research	Burundi
8	Owotsogo Onguene Ambroise	Deputy Directeur, Projects and Planning, Ministry of Education	Cameroun
9	Kone Soualeho	Cantines Division, Ministry of Education	Côte d'Ivoire
10	Patrick Acheampong	School Feeding Programme, Ministry of Gender and Social Protection	Ghana
11	Bernadette Lopes Correia	School Feeding Focal Point, Ministry of Education	Guinea Bissau
12	Paulina Mendes	National Coordinator, Ghana National School Feeding Programme, Ministry of Gender and Social Protection	Guinea Bissau
13	Júlio Malam Injai	Director of School Social Affairs, Ministry of Education	Guinea Bissau
14	Habat Abdi Habat Abdullahi	Director of Basic Education	Kenya
15	Kibet Ngetuny Lagat	Programme Officer, School Meals Home Grown, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology	Kenya
16	Paul Mwangera	National School Meals Coordinator	Kenya
17	Yangxia Lee	Deputy Director Ministry of Education and Sports	Lao
18	Ratsiu Majara	Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education and Training	Lesotho
19	Augustine Kuleh	Coordinator, Department of School Feeding, Ministry of Primary Education, Literacy, and Promotion of National Languages	Liberia
20	Arlinda Chaquisse	National Director, Nutrition and School Health, Ministry of Education and Human Development	Mozambique
21	Laouali Abdo	Coordinator, Department of School Feeding, Ministry of Primary Education, Literacy, and Promotion of National Languages	Niger
22	Abdoulaye Touré	Director, School Cantines, Ministry of Education	Senegal
23	Edson Sanches Fernandes Moniz	Coordinator, National School Feeding And Health Programme, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science	St Tome e Principe
24	Tida Jatta Jarjou	Director for Education, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education	The Gambia
25	Pa Gumbo Saine	School Meals Programme Manager, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education	The Gambia
26	Wanata A. Agbisso	Director of Community Development Ministry of Development, Crafts, Youth, and Employment	Togo
27	Pierre Komlavi Agbenkponou	Deputy Coordinator, Community Development and Social Affairs Project, Social Affairs Expert	Togo
28	Mathias K. A. Adedje	School Feeding Focal Point, Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Vocational Training	Togo
29	Lazarus D. Dokora	State Minister, Primary and Secondary Education	Zimbabwe
30	Utete Masango	Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education	Zimbabwe

31	Allison Oman	Senior Regional Nutrition Advisor, WFP Regional Bureau - Nairobi	WFP
32	Beriname Badjare	Programme Officer, Togo	WFP
33	Thomas Yanga	Director and representative to the African Union	WFP
34	Armelle Korogoné	Programme Officer, Benin	WFP
35	Isatou Nasir Chiam	Programme Officer, The Gambia	WFP
36	Kiyomi Kawaguchi	Representative & Country Director, Guinea Bissau	WFP
37	Charles Njeru	Programme Officer, Kenya	WFP
38	Nanna Skau	Head of Programme, Lao	WFP
39	Raul Meneses Chambote	Programme Officer, Mozambique	WFP
40	Agustin Depetris	Programme Officer, Tunisia	WFP
41	Tsungai Chibwe	Programme Officer, Zimbabwe	WFP
42	Stanlake Samkange	Policy and Programme Division Director	WFP
43	Piet Vochten	Representative in Bhutan	WFP
44	Adamou Outeini	Regional Bureau - Dakar	WFP
45	David Rychembush	Safety Nets and Social Protection Unit	WFP
46	Constance Kobolar	School Feeding Advisor, WFP Regional Bureau - Dakar	WFP
47	Shahida Akther	Programme Officer, Bangladesh	WFP
48	Giacomo Re	HGSM Programme and Policy Officer, Safety Nets and Social Protection	WFP
49	Napo Ntlou	Head of the School Meals Programme, Lesotho	WFP
50	Leticia Lopes	Focal Point	Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC)
51	Cecília Malaguti do Prado	Coordinator, General coordination of Institutional Partnerships and Trilateral Cooperation	Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC)
52	Nard Huijbregts	Social Policy Advisor	Economic Policy Research Institute (South Africa)
53	Arlene Mitchell	Executive Director	Global Child Nutrition Foundation
54	Andy Chi Tembon	Senior Health Specialist	The World Bank
55	Daniel Bradley	Team Leader - Low Carbon Growth* British High Commission, India Former Climate and Development Adviser for DFID in Brazil	Department for International Development, United Kingdom
56	Karine Silva dos Santos	General Coordinator – National School Feeding Programme	Brazilian National Fund for Education Development (FNDE)
57	Sollange Freitas	Coordinator – Food and Nutrition Security – National School Feeding Programme	Brazilian National Fund for Education Development (FNDE)

CENTRE'S STAFF CONSULTED

58	Daniel Balaban	Director	CEAH
59	Peter Rodrigues	Deputy Director	CEAH
60	Christiani Buani	Head of Programme	CEAH
61	Sharon de Freitas	Programme Officer	CEAH
62	Carmelucia Mello	Finance and Administration Officer	CEAH
63	Albaneide Peixinho	Nutrition Coordinator	CEAH
64	Isadora Ferreira	Communications and Reports Officer	CEAH
65	Daniel Melo	Technical expert in social policy	CEAH
66	Nadia Goodman	Consultant	CEAH

ANNEX 3.

LIST OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Survey respondents

Bangladesh

Benin

Cote D'Ivoire

Democratic Republic of Congo

Ethiopia

Ghana

Guinea Bissau

Guinea Conakry

Kenya

Lao

Liberia

Niger

Pakistan

Senegal

Togo

Tunisia

Zambia

Zimbabwe



What partners say about the Centre

“Joint study visits resulted above of the expectations, opening the door for a partnership” “At present, women cooks receive training so they can better understand the role that each actor can play in ensuring their success” “The Centre of Excellence has enabled us to establish a coherent and integrated system for our nationally-owned school feeding programme” “Building the capacity of the School Canteens’ Division through the visit of the Centre of Excellence, participating in the various GCNFs, and the National Forum contributed to the development of proven expertise in the design and implementation of the school feeding policy” “A concrete outcome of the partnership with the Centre has been the development of an institutional and legal framework, an incipient coordination unit, and an intersectoral coordination mechanism. Additionally, the government has committed to take charge of school feeding and has started to fund school feeding programmes” “Through the engagement of the Centre it became vital and necessary to increase the coverage with a vision of covering all school-going children in our country” “The Centre advocates for the right policies, through the rights methodologies” “The Centre provided technical assistance on how school feeding can promote local supply chains among small scale farmers, cooperative unions, women and youth unions, and local market enterprises” “It was only when the Centre came that the government finally started to operationalise its ownership. The structure was already there, but it was not working properly” “The Centre consistently advised us and encouraged us to have the legal framework and institutional arrangement” “The Study Visit to Brazil has enabled a multisectoral delegation to discover the strategic role of school feeding in development; SABER exercise and the National Consultation have laid the foundations for an intersectoral coordination and the Action Plan from the Forum became the outline for the hand-over plan”

