

ASSESSING HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS' TRANSITION FROM A SERVICE PROVIDER TO A CAPACITY STRENGTHENER: A CASE STUDY OF WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

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Introduction

In East and Central Africa (ECA), the World Food Programme (WFP) is highly respected as a service provider quickly responding to disasters and overcomes food insecurity. At the same time, governments in ECA have developed a stronger interest in their leadership to predict, prevent and respond to ongoing natural or human induced disasters. The attempt of governments in ECA to take the main role in preventing and responding to disasters requires WFP and other humanitarian organizations to engage in a fundamental shift in their strategic positioning and management strategies and re-orientate their mandate (Benett et al. 2016, World Humanitarian Summit, 2017). It requires WFP and other humanitarian organizations to transition away from the idea of being the main emergency responder, and instead support national governments to strengthen and develop their emergency preparedness and response capacities.

The overall aim of this research is to investigate and determine the interactive nature and dynamics between these internal and external aspects that determine change, and ultimately develop a plan of action that could be used by various humanitarian organizations to address the needs of the vulnerable individuals in fragile contexts. The research question is: How do humanitarian organizations manage the transition from a SP to a CS in the humanitarian system? The hypothesis of this research is that factors internal to an organization and those more related to the wider environment, within which the organization operates, determine the extent to which a humanitarian organization is capable or successful in transitioning from a SP to a CS.

To determine what internal and external factors influence the transition in the case of the World Food Programme (WFP) in East and Central Africa (ECA, interviews with eighteen WFP key informants from the Regional Bureau in Nairobi (RBN) and the Kenya country office (KECO) were conducted. This was complemented by extensive literature review from studies published in journal articles, book chapters, and technical reports. The results of the interviews revealed that the biggest challenge for WFP is to improve its communication strategy when it comes to its transition from a SP to a CS. In order for WFP to successfully transition from a SP to a CS management needs to be more communicative and spread the information about the change to all staff members from the top (management) to the bottom (full-time staff, field staff, consultants, interns, and volunteers) of the transitioning to facilitate an understanding of and acceptance for the

change within the organization.

Moreover, management needs to involve staff members in the process of change. Involving staff members can lead to a better “we” feeling for the organization as a whole, and, moreover, allows to adequately address the fear of staff members to change. Fear is often one of the hidden factors to resistance to change and needs to be managed. Besides that, management also needs to fully commit and champion the change to avoid ambiguity and uncertainty associated with the implementation of change, and moreover, make sure that CS becomes part of WFP’s core work. The four main key success factors for managing the transition from a SP to a CS are defined to be:

- Effective communication inside and outside the organization.
- Clarity of purpose, vision, and values of the proposed change.
- Management commitment.
- Training and skills development of staff members.