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Management response to the recommendations deriving from the synthesis report of WFP's country portfolio evaluations in Africa (2016–2018)

Background

1. This document presents the management response to the recommendations deriving from the synthesis report of WFP's country portfolio evaluations in Africa covering the period from 2016 to 2018.
2. The report presents the findings from eight country portfolio evaluations conducted in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa subregions between 2016 and 2018.
3. It includes six recommendations, which have the aim of guiding WFP's strategic planning in Africa and fostering improved ways of working in WFP.
4. The evaluations found that WFP activities spanned the humanitarian–development continuum. Delivery targets were largely achieved, although most improvements were made in emergency rather than development responses. In many areas, performance was enhanced through the adoption of high tolerance to risk, innovation and an agile approach. In complex operating environments, assistance was provided in accordance with the international humanitarian principles, and WFP was respected at the country level as a neutral and impartial actor, despite some challenges at the local level. Effective advocacy contributed to the granting of humanitarian access in areas with security challenges.
5. The evaluation synthesis concluded that WFP faced difficult choices in volatile settings, particularly when balancing life-saving activities with development needs. The lesson from the synthesis suggests that flexible planning and preparation, clear rationales for decisions and increased multi-year funding will help WFP to develop strategic and operational linkages across the triple nexus of humanitarian, development and peace work and increase its engagement in prevention and preparedness activities in future.

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6. Management appreciates the findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations included in the report, which are aimed at supporting and informing WFP as it continues its strategic shift to the country strategic plan (CSP) process.
7. The following matrix sets out the planned actions and timelines for implementing recommendations from the evaluation synthesis.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS DERIVING FROM THE SYNTHESIS REPORT OF WFP'S COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATIONS IN AFRICA (2016–2018)			
Recommendations	Action by	Management response and action taken/to be taken	Implementation deadline
<p>Recommendation 1: Improve the availability and use of guidance to support CSP design</p> <p>(i) Provide clear and specific guidance (particularly within CSP and national zero hunger strategic review guidance) to ensure that CSPs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The use of conflict-sensitive approaches (including conflict/fragility analysis, do no harm and peacebuilding approaches, where relevant); 	<p>Policy and Programme Division (OSZ), Emergency Preparedness and Support Response Division and Enterprise Risk Management Division</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>(i) Management agrees that there is need to provide additional guidance on conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity in order to support CSP design and the zero hunger strategic review process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Where appropriate, CSP documents will identify concerns regarding conflict, measures for mitigating these concerns and expected contributions to peace. To facilitate this a specific module on conflict analysis and conflict-sensitive approaches will be included in WFP programme guidance. WFP will partner with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute on refining guidance for the design of programmes in humanitarian, development and peace settings. Further insights into conflict sensitivity will be generated from ongoing discussions about the United Nations reform process and the United Nations development assistance framework (UNDAF) and from a review of CSPs and zero hunger strategic reviews aimed at ensuring closer linkages to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in addition to SDGs 2 and 17. An internal review of the zero hunger strategic review process and its linkages to UNDAF common country analyses is ongoing. 	<p>Fourth quarter of 2019</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support for innovation (including building the evidence base; piloting/trialing approaches; monitoring and reporting on results); ➤ Risk identification and mitigation in CSP design across the spectrum of political, strategic and conflict-related risks. <p>(ii) At the next available opportunity (CSP formulation/mid-term review) ensure that these areas are fully and explicitly addressed.</p>	Country offices with support from the regional bureaux for East Africa and West Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ WFP will direct attention to innovations and make concerted efforts to develop an evidence base that supports the testing and piloting of approaches and the monitoring of and reporting on results. Several CSPs have benefited from the WFP Innovation Accelerator, which has facilitated the inclusion of innovations early in the design process and in the implementation phase. ➤ WFP has included a section on risk management in the template for CSP documents, together with guidance on the risk categories identified in its 2018 enterprise risk management policy. In order to further mitigate risks during CSP implementation, management will emphasize the importance of carrying out thorough context analysis, including consideration of strategic, political and conflict risks. <p>(ii) Where appropriate and with guidance and support from regional bureaux and headquarters, country offices will use the first opportunity – including during CSP formulation and mid-term reviews – to address the issues identified in recommendation 1.</p>	<p>Fourth quarter of 2019</p> <p>Fourth quarter of 2019</p>

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<p>Recommendation 2: Strengthen the financial and partnership base for the development and peacebuilding aspects of zero hunger</p> <p>(i) Develop regional medium-term partnership strategies explicitly defining WFP's comparative advantage and intended contributions to the collective development and peacebuilding elements of zero hunger.</p> <p>(ii) Develop a fundraising strategy to strengthen medium to long-term financing of development and peacebuilding activities. Include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clear and time-bound targets for more flexible and predictable funding for development and peacebuilding activities in the context; and 	<p>Regional bureaux for East Africa and West Africa with engagement of country offices and support from the Partnerships and Governance Department</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>(i) Regional bureaux will develop regional level partnership strategies that define and leverage WFP's comparative advantages – including those in food security and nutrition analysis, logistics, agility in operating at scale, field knowledge, innovation and humanitarian advocacy – in order to support operations in delivering humanitarian, development and peacebuilding objectives. WFP is encouraging country offices and regional bureaux to formulate partnership action plans that support country offices in engaging systematically and strategically with partners, mobilizing resources and positioning their programmes in relation to national strategies, policies and plans and internationally agreed frameworks, standards and norms Partnership action plans are comprehensive documents that formulate a strategy for strengthening all types of partnership and include a fundraising strategy.</p> <p>➤ Through its regional and country partnership action plans, WFP will continue to prioritize the development of strategic partnerships with a broader range of donors with a view to ensuring that its resource base is better aligned with the requirements of its strategic plan and CSPs. WFP will continue to advocate for and request flexible and predictable funding for all of its activities, including those for development and peacebuilding, reflecting the integrated planning and multi-year timeframe of CSPs.</p>	<p>First quarter of 2021</p> <p>First quarter of 2021</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Communication strategies to convey the cost and potential harm to communities of interrupting ongoing development and peacebuilding activities to address emergency response. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Regional bureaux will continue to support country offices with their fundraising strategies, including by building an evidence base for investments in development and peacebuilding activities and emphasizing the need for continuity in these activities, even during emergency responses. 	First quarter of 2021
<p>Recommendation 3: Address staffing and management arrangements in fragile contexts and protracted crises</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Examine incentives to ensure that hard-to-fill duty stations receive assistance with filling key management and staffing posts and for ensuring continuity thereafter (mindful of diversity issues and the corporate gender parity action plan). (ii) Build or enhance skills for fragile situations and protracted crises, including skills relevant to conflict-sensitive approaches, peacebuilding, political awareness, innovation, gender, protection, the IHPs and AAP. 	Human Resources Division and the human resources units in the regional bureaux for East Africa and West Africa, with support from OSZ	<p>Agreed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) WFP will maintain its efforts to ensure appropriate staffing at hardship duty stations, in compliance with the corporate gender parity action plan wherever possible. This is facilitated by changes to the reassignment policy, which were made in November 2016. The filling of positions for Level 3 and Level 2 emergency responses will continue to be prioritized over all other vacancies. WFP is unable to introduce remunerative incentives for staff as these are within the purview of the International Civil Service Commission. (ii) WFP will continue to develop the staff skills required for work in fragile settings and protracted crises through training and the coaching and mentoring of staff members who are newly assigned to these situations. Staff rosters such as Future International Talent pools and job profiles will also be managed in ways that enhance access to staff with the requisite skills and experience, including in gender and protection issues and accountability to affected populations. Where needed, responsibilities in these areas will be further articulated within job descriptions. 	First quarter of 2021

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(iii) Build or enhance staff capacities to engage in policy dialogue with national and local authorities in key areas, including with regard to developing policy and strategy frameworks where they are absent or weak.		(iii) WFP will continue to develop staff's skills in policy dialogue with national and local authorities. Initiatives for developing in-house capacities will include training in the skills needed for implementation of initiatives related to the CSP framework, the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations reform.	
<p>Recommendation 4: Develop regional-level operational plans for development and peacebuilding actions required to reduce food and nutrition insecurity, applying a gender-transformative lens</p> <p>(i) Within the multi-year planning opportunity presented by CSPs, and based on the mapping of root causes and national capacity, identify the regional-level medium-term development and peacebuilding actions required to prevent and reduce food and nutrition insecurity, focusing on strengthening systems where feasible.</p> <p>(ii) Ensure a gender-transformative approach to achieving planned strategic outcomes by:</p>	Regional bureaux for East Africa and West Africa with engagement of country offices and support from OSZ and the Gender Office (GEN)	<p>Partially agreed.</p> <p>(i) Partially agreed. The principal focus of the current WFP strategic plan and the Integrated Road Map is on CSPs. Where appropriate, WFP regional bureaux will explore the possibility of developing regional level operational plans that reflect regional development and peacebuilding priorities. However, conditions in some countries and subregions may make it necessary to develop operational plans at the country rather than the regional level. Broader regional concerns will also continue to be taken into account in country-level strategic planning and operational prioritization for development and peacebuilding actions. Mid-term reviews and CSPs will be designed in ways that strengthen the evidence base for programme design and implementation through attention to systems, root causes and capacity levels.</p> <p>(ii) Agreed. With support from OSZ and the Gender Office, regional bureaux will continue to support country offices in their gender mainstreaming efforts.</p>	Fourth quarter of 2019

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Using available tools to adopt gender-transformative approaches within development and peacebuilding programming and following through on implementation; ➤ Embedding gender in country office annual work plans; and ➤ Tracking progress through gender-responsive monitoring. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Agreed. WFP will strengthen and apply tools and processes that foster gender-transformative approaches to food security and nutrition, such as the Gender Toolkit and the Gender Transformation Programme. WFP will also enhance gender and age analyses and their use and the formulation and implementation of context-specific gender equality strategies, which will be assisted by gender specialists as required. ➤ Agreed. WFP will operationalize the gender-related results included in CSPs through annual country office work plans. This will involve elaborating specific activities aimed at achieving outputs and outcomes that foster gender equality and ensuring that their implementation is supported with adequate human and financial resources. ➤ Agreed. WFP recognizes the importance of tracking progress through gender-responsive monitoring. All WFP country offices with CSPs are committed to carrying out gender-responsive monitoring and have access to tools for doing so. Starting in 2019, the Gender Office will work with the Monitoring and Evaluation Liaison Unit and regional bureaux on the piloting of gender-responsive monitoring. 	<p>Fourth quarter of 2019</p> <p>Fourth quarter of 2019</p> <p>Fourth quarter of 2019</p>

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<p>Recommendation 5: Systematize localized adherence to the IHPs, particularly in complex emergencies and protracted crises</p> <p>(i) Strengthen staff competencies related to humanitarian principles and access, particularly in complex emergency situations, including by developing tailored training modules.</p> <p>(ii) Ensure that humanitarian principles are integrated into engagement with cooperating and commercial partners, including selection processes, field level agreements, assessments, planning and communications.</p> <p>(iii) Country offices should report on the implementation of these recommendations to their regional bureaux.</p>	<p>Country offices with support from the regional bureaux for East Africa and West Africa, the Emergencies and Transitions Unit (OSZPH), the NGO Partnerships Unit and the Supply Chain Division</p>	<p>Partially agreed.</p> <p>(i) Agreed. With support from OSZPH, the regional bureaux will continue to strengthen the competencies in humanitarian principles of WFP staff and partners, including through formal training and the use of specialized expertise provided by partners. The Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation is providing training for staff, alongside tailored engagement at the country level. A plan for strengthening capacities in humanitarian principles and access will also be developed by the end of 2019 as part of WFP's corporate approach to enhancing humanitarian access.</p> <p>(ii) Agreed. Actions will be taken to enhance the integration of humanitarian principles into WFP's engagement with cooperating and commercial partners, including in selection processes, field-level agreements and due diligence processes for contractors.</p> <p>(iii) Partially agreed. Country offices' implementation of recommendations will be assessed and periodically reviewed as part of the regular support for quality assurance that regional bureaux and headquarters units provide, rather than through continuous reporting, which would create a heavy additional administrative burden for country offices and regional bureaux. However, issues requiring more specific follow-up action will be reported to the appropriate regional bureau and headquarters units</p>	<p>Fourth quarter of 2019</p> <p>Fourth quarter of 2019</p> <p>Fourth quarter of 2019</p>

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<p>Recommendation 6: Improve adherence to AAP commitments</p> <p>(i) Ensure dissemination of WFP AAP tools and guidance across country offices.</p> <p>(ii) Implement systematic feedback and complaint mechanisms, including two-way communication with various beneficiary groups to ensure that their interests are understood and that they receive information on their entitlements.</p> <p>(iii) Clearly define and communicate the AAP standards expected of cooperating partners and reflect them in field level agreements.</p>	<p>Country offices with support from the regional bureaux for East Africa and West Africa, and OSZPH</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>(i) With support from OSZPH, regional bureaux will continue to support country offices in the implementation of corporate commitments to accountability to affected populations, including through the development, updating and dissemination of tools and guidance aimed at strengthening consultation and two-way communications, among other objectives.</p> <p>(ii) With support from OSZPH, regional bureaux will continue to assist country offices in the implementation of complaints and feedback mechanisms, including by improving the coverage and responsiveness of such mechanisms and ensuring reporting of major issues. Two-way communications through these systems will include those aimed at enhancing understanding of the interests and information needs of different beneficiary groups. More consistent and standardized roll-out of complaints and feedback mechanisms will be based on consultations with different beneficiary groups and will help facilitate stronger two-way communications with affected people.</p> <p>(iii) With support from OSZPH and the NGO Partnership Unit, regional bureaux will support country offices in ensuring that WFP's standards and expectations regarding accountability to affected populations are communicated to cooperating partners and reflected in field-level agreements, and – where needed – in strengthening cooperating partners' capacity to adhere to these standards.</p>	<p>First quarter of 2020</p> <p>First quarter of 2020</p> <p>First quarter of 2020</p>