

Management Response from WFP CO Lao PDR to the recommendations of the decentralized evaluation of the Endline Evaluation of USDA McGovern-Dole Grant for WFP School Feeding in Laos (DE/LACO/2022/006) from September/2022 to May/2023



1. This document, finalized in September 2023, presents the management response to the recommendations of the endline evaluation USDA McGovern-Dole Grant for WFP School Feeding in Laos (DE/LACO/2022/006).
2. The evaluation, which was commissioned by WFP CO Lao PDR covers an assessment of all the activities outlined within the project Award including areas with Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and literacy activities, and all types of beneficiaries including educators, cooks and storekeepers, smallholder farmers, and school-aged children and their parents/caregivers, as well as national and subnational governance structures. The evaluation serves the dual purpose of accountability and learning and informed WFP CO Lao PDR and its partners whether targeted beneficiaries have received services as expected and if the project met its stated goals and objectives in line with the results frameworks and assumptions, and in contrast to the baseline and mid-term findings. The evaluation generated evidence on the long-term outcomes and the extent to which change occurred since baseline. In terms of learning, the evaluation determined the reasons why certain results were or were not achieved, identified good practices and provided lessons to form a platform for evidence-based policy dialogue internally at WFP and nationally with the government of Lao PDR, notably regarding the implementation of the various school feeding activities and their handover and incorporation in a nationally-owned and community-driven school feeding program.
3. The evaluation made seven key recommendations with fourteen actions. The matrix sets out whether WFP agrees, partially agrees or disagrees with the recommendations and sub-recommendations. It presents the planned (or taken) actions, responsibilities and timelines.

Recommendations and related Sub-recommendations (Deadline) <i>[as per evaluation report – one (sub-) recommendation per row, deadline in brackets.]</i>	Recommendation and Sub-Recommendation Lead (Supporting Offices/Divisions) <i>[Name of responsible WFP office/division (/possibly external stakeholder in the case of Joint Evaluation). Names of supporting WFP offices/divisions and/or external stakeholders if any in brackets.]</i>	Management Response <i>[Is (sub-) recommendation Agreed, Partially Agreed or Not agreed? If Partially agreed or Not agreed, provide a brief reason for this.]</i>	Actions to be taken <i>[Briefly state what action(s) will be taken to address each sub-recommendation – one action per row.]</i>	Action Lead (Supporting Offices/Divisions) <i>[Name of responsible WFP office/division/unit. Names of supporting WFP offices/divisions and/or external stakeholders if any in brackets.]</i>	Action Deadline <i>[Month and year – not to exceed related (sub-) recommendation deadline.]</i>
<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Recommendation 1:</p> <p>Recommendation 1.1 Investigating causes of decline in learning scores for future interventions: Despite the increase in enrolment, attendance and attentiveness, which helped narrow the gap between comparison and intervention scores, the learning scores declined across all schools included in this study. This was likely the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, however there is still a need for specific investigation and continued monitoring to (dis)confirm</p>	<p>WFP CO, specifically M&E, with support from WFP RB</p>	<p>Rec#1.1: Partially Agree</p>	<p>WFP agrees that it would be beneficial to better understand the causes of decline in learning scores. WFP will therefore consult with UNICEF, the World Bank, and other development partners to discuss options to support studies in this context. However, WFP is not in a position to lead such studies or undertake them without partners.</p>	<p>Rec#1.1: WFP CO – SO1 School Feeding Programme together with support from M&E and Government partners – Ministry of Education and Sports – Research Institute of Education Sciences.</p>	<p>June- Nov 2024</p>

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<p>this. Therefore, WFP should collaborate with other partners such as UNICEF and the World Bank for targeted studies to investigate this decline and accordingly revise (or advise) future interventions in Lao PDR.</p> <p>(Deadline: November 2024)</p>					
<p>Recommendation 1.2</p> <p>Given the observed patterns and historical presence supporting schools through McGovern-Dole, it is essential for WFP to critically assess its strategic position concerning the delivery of literacy interventions in Lao PDR. Should WFP sustain its commitment to literacy initiatives</p>	<p>WFP CO, specifically M&E, with support from WFP RB</p>	<p>Rec#1.2: Agree</p>	<p>WFP is planning to incorporate a much larger and stronger literacy component in the future McGovern-Dole funding proposal to be submitted to US Department of Agriculture by April 2024. Additionally, collaboration with key literacy partners has</p>	<p>Rec#1.2: WFP CO Laos, SO1 Program and Head of Programme</p>	<p>12 months (November 2024)</p>

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<p>through USDA McGovern-Dole, there is a pronounced need to reinforce the literacy component in subsequent proposals. Specifically, this should involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring timely engagement with the most appropriate partners with technical capacity in this area for informing design and ensuring effective collaboration in its implementation • Refining the intervention framework to be more systematic • Advocating for prolonged intervention durations to achieve sustainable impacts. 			<p>taken place to create broader literacy components to be incorporate in the future activities.</p>		

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<p>If literacy outcomes, which are indirectly supported by school feeding, move beyond the primary remit of WFP, a strategic reassessment of WFP's engagement in literacy interventions as a complementary activity to SFP engagement should be undertaken.</p>					
<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Recommendation 2:</p> <p>Recommendation 2.1:</p> <p>Streamline and improve monitoring mechanisms:</p> <p>The project monitoring framework is robust, though could be streamlined and further targeted to country contexts. While this is outside the</p>	<p>WFP CO, specifically M&E, with support from WFP RB</p>	<p>Rec#2.1 Agree</p>	<p>WFP, in consultation with RB and HQ, will seek opportunities to advocate for a revision of the indicators of the project monitoring framework for future proposals of relevant projects.</p> <p>Together with key stakeholders such as UNICEF</p>	<p>M&E</p>	<p>6-12 months (June - November 2024)</p>

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<p>scope of WFP work, it is recommended to consider advocating for revisions to have fewer mandatory core- and a selection of project-specific indicators to ensure monitoring and evaluation frameworks and mechanisms are manageable and support targeted and context-specific learning agendas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the case of Lao PDR, improved mechanisms to effectively track teacher attendance and application of new learning techniques would be beneficial, to better understand the extent of contribution to learning outcomes. Indicators related to 			<p>and the World Bank, WFP will advocate to and support the government with the extension and revision of the indicators integrated in the state-owned Education Management Information System (EMIS) to better track teacher attendance, and application of new learning techniques.</p> <p>As WFP is expanding the home-grown school feeding components of the school feeding programme in collaboration with the government, WFP will integrate monitoring on</p>		

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agriculture, procurement, and market development activities may also require more extensive monitoring in order to understand market capacity to contribute and sustain a nutrition-sensitive school feeding program. WFP should support and engage GoL in understanding these challenges and potential solutions. (Deadline: November 2024.)			components related to agriculture, procurement and market development and discuss these with the government.		
Recommendation 2.2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additionally, continue to revise and develop a plan for monitoring the transition and handover. This will also require 		Rec#2.2 Agree	WFP is in the process of strengthening the government's monitoring systems for tracking school meals, and plans to provide	WFP CO, SO1 team, M&E with support of RBB and HQ	6-12 months (June-November 2024)

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<p>capacity strengthening at national and local levels with regards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasize the importance of understanding what is happening in the schools and the impact of the program, as well as how demonstrating the positive outcomes and impact of the program can serve as a means for effective resource mobilization. <p>(Deadline: November 2024. 6-12 months – medium-term)</p>			<p>trainings on the systems to ensure proper monitoring after handover. Additionally, WFP continues to support the institutionalisation of policy on the monitoring of the national school lunch programme.</p> <p>WFP will consult with HQ and RBB to identify the indicators required to monitor the transition and handover plan developed with the Government. Furthermore, WFP will engage with the Sustainable financing initiative (structure operating under the School Meals</p>		

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			Coalition) to promote the production of a cost benefit analysis and design of a resource mobilization strategy in support to the Government.		
<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Recommendation 3:</p> <p>Increased community-level assessments and capacity strengthening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a more comprehensive yet concise process for community-level assessments that gather localized needs, challenges, and preferences, as well as resource requirements. 	WFP CO with support from WFP RB	Rec#3: Agree	WFP agrees with the evaluation that the community-level assessment is an important tool to ensure a sustainable and successful national school meal programme. WFP will update the existing Community Capacity Assessment (CCA) tool and re-train the government on its use, so that it can become	RAM (VAM together with M&E team)	12 months (November 2024)

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<p>These assessments can be effectively used to inform the implementation of the school feeding program, ensuring it is context-specific and responsive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the government in integrating relevant components in their regular school inspections. <p>(Deadline: November 2024)</p>			<p>a part of its regular school inspection systems.</p>		
<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Recommendation 4:</p> <p>Strengthen capacity and collaboration within and between local government entities towards the promotion of ownership: WFP should actively engage and</p>	<p>WFP CO with support from WFP RB</p>	<p>Rec#4: Agree</p>	<p>WFP successfully supported the government in establishing the Prime Minister's Decree on Supporting School Lunch which outline the duties and responsibilities of the government for</p>	<p>SO1</p>	<p>12 months (November 2024)</p>

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<p>collaborate with local governments to ensure the integration of school feeding programs into national policies and frameworks. This collaboration should include joint planning, resource allocation, and capacity-building efforts to promote long-term sustainability.</p> <p>In addition, prioritize timely and sufficient capacity-building initiatives at the community and local institutional levels. This includes training local staff, teachers, and community members on program implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. By building local capacity and promoting ownership, the program can become more</p>			<p>implementation of the School Lunch Programme at the Ministerial, Provincial, and district level and increase the government’s funding allocation to schools. WFP also supported the establishment of other key government documents for the school lunch programme including the Policy on Promoting School Lunch, the Minister’s Decree for the Establishment of SLP Model Schools, The Minister’s Decree for Endorsement of the Guidelines for Monitoring SLP in Model</p>		

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sustainable and effectively tailored to the specific needs of the communities. (Deadline: November 2024)			Schools; Guidelines for the Minister's Decree on SMP Administration, and the Minister's Decree for budget decentralization. Nonetheless, WFP will continue to advocate with the authorities at all levels to foster the integration of the school feeding programme into the national policies and frameworks. Capacity building activities will be undertaken to strengthen the existing systems and processes and develop the ownership of all parties active at community level.		

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<p>Priority: Medium</p> <p>Recommendation 5: Pay specific attention to addressing disparities among ethnic groups, persons with disabilities, and gender inequalities.</p> <p>(Deadline: June 2024)</p> <p>Recommendation 5.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop targeted strategies and interventions to monitor and improve equal access, outcomes, and inclusion for these marginalized groups. This may involve addressing transportation and language barriers, enhancing accessibility infrastructure, and providing 	<p>WFP CO with support from WFP RB</p>	<p>Rec#5.1: Partially agree</p>	<p>WFP is already actively working on improving the inclusion of women and marginalized populations in its programme. In case literacy related fund mobilisation is successful, language barriers will be addressed through the scale up of literacy components focusing on children whose first language is not Lao. Even though WFP is not in a position to address infrastructure and transport challenges in support to children with disabilities among ethnic groups, it will</p>		<p>November 2024</p>

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adequate support for persons with disabilities. (Deadline: November 2024)			continue to advocate with the government and education partners for such improvements.		
Recommendation 5.2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additionally, it is recommended to promote gender equality and social inclusion by engaging more women in project implementation and seeking collaborations with potential women’s empowerment projects. (Deadline: November 2024)		Rec# 5.2: Agree	WFP is consistently promoting the participation and inclusion of women and marginalized groups in its programmes. Under the current USDA McGovern-Dole project, close to 50% of the smallholder farmers receiving agricultural packages are women. Always looking for ways to further women’s empowerment, WFP Lao is		November 2024

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			part of a regional study aiming at identifying gender transformative approaches that could be integrated into the School lunch programme in the future.		
Recommendation 5.3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop targeted interventions to increase VEDC/community involvement. (Deadline: June 2024)		Rec# 5.3: Agree	Targeted training and sensitization sessions are undertaken under the ongoing USDA McGovern-Dole school lunch programme to increase the involvement and ownership of the Village Education Development Committee (VEDC) and the communities to guarantee the adequate	Completed	Note: 5.3- completed

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			maintenance and management of the assets developed in support to home grown school feeding initiatives		
Priority: Medium Recommendation 6: Diversify funding sources: To mitigate the risks associated with limited budgets and donor dependency, WFP should explore opportunities to diversify funding sources. This could involve engaging with private sector partners, philanthropic organizations, and other potential stakeholders to secure additional financial support for the program.	WFP CO with support from WFP RB	Rec#6: Agree	WFP fully agrees with this recommendation and has been working on diversification of funding sources for several years. This has resulted in several new donors for school feeding activities in 2023, and advocacy will continue to ensure diversified funding for the future.	Completed	September 2023 Note: It is completed

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(Deadline: September 2023)					
Priority: Medium Recommendation 7: Promote sustainable agriculture and local procurement: WFP should support initiatives that promote sustainable agriculture practices and local procurement of food items. This can contribute to local economic development, enhance food security, and reduce dependence on external sources. Investing in agricultural training, supporting farmers' cooperatives, and facilitating access to markets can strengthen the resilience of communities and create long-term benefits.	WFP CO with support from WFP RB	Rec#7: Agree	WFP fully agrees with this recommendation, and this has been taken into account in the newly obtained funds for school feeding programmes. The new funding focuses on home-grown school feeding and includes farmer support packages. Additionally, any further USDA McGovern-Dole funding will include support to local farmers.	Completed	September 2023 Note: It is completed

