

Management Response from WFP Ethiopia Country Office to the recommendations of the Decentralized Mid-Term Evaluation of WFP - USDA McGovern - Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Programme's Support in Afar and Oromia regions in Ethiopia 2019 to 2025



1. This document, finalized in **August 2024**, presents the management response to the recommendations of the **Mid-Term Evaluation (2019 – 2023) of WFP - USDA McGovern - Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Programme's Support in Afar and Oromia regions in Ethiopia 2019 to 2025**
2. The evaluation, which was commissioned by **WFP Ethiopia Country Office** covers **2019-2023**. The evaluation serves the dual purpose of accountability, learning and informed decision making. Specifically, based on the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, the evaluation assessed:
 - 2.1 The performance and results of the programme to generate and present high quality and credible evidence to its stakeholders for accountability purposes.
 - 2.2 The reasons why certain results occurred or not, to draw lessons, derive good practices and pointers for learning, providing evidence to inform operational and decision-making.
 - 2.3 Project progress toward the final planned targets as per the results framework and theory of change
3. The evaluation made **3** key recommendations with **13** sub-recommendations. 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/Medium</p> <p>Recommendation 1:</p> <p>For the remainder of the project WFP and partners should focus on maximising the efficiency of the delivery of school meals and preparing for a smooth transition to successor programmes (Deadline)</p>	Not applicable	Agreed	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Sub-recommendation 1.1</p> <p>Taking advantage of the WFP role in delivery to ensure that school feeding days are maximised and avoid the need for ad hoc take-home rations.</p>	Programme (School Feeding)	Agreed	1.1.1 There are many routine factors that can contribute to excess stock balance at the end of a semester, leading to take-home rations. These include lack of access to water, lower than planned attendance, and school holidays, among others.	Programme (School Feeding) Logistics	Ongoing

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Deadline - Immediate			<p>However, WFP is working to enhance coordination and delivery timelines to ensure that the stock can be fully utilized as school meals. First, the follow-on FY24 MGD project has planned two annual call forwards instead of one, to extend the project shelf life, and has based planning off of 90% feeding days instead of 100% feeding days to mitigate excess stock.</p> <p>Further, timeliness of food delivery is critical. Having taken over the responsibility of transportation from the Bureaus of Education, WFP is continuing to work with the BoEs, WFP field offices, and WFP logistics colleagues to ensure that commodity allocation plans for each semester are finalized in</p>		

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			advance and food dispatch happens at the onset of the school semester.		
			1.1.2 For schools that are not accessible by vehicle, WFP has signed a field-level agreement with APDA, an NGO in Afar to facilitate secondary transport to target schools. WFP has entered into this agreement with APDA as: 1) APDA has strong experience doing similar work for UNICEF, 2) APDA is more cost-effective than commercial contracting for secondary transportation; and 3) APDA has strong oversight and accountability mechanisms in place to ensure proper food handling and management, minimizing the risk of food loss or misuse during secondary transport. This has been	Programme (School Feeding) Logistics	March 2024

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			implemented for the first time with the February 2024 semester dispatch and will expedite dispatch timelines moving forward.		
			1.1.3 In the case of insecurity, WFP's security unit is regularly coordinating with all relevant stakeholders to identify any possible routes that can be used to safely deliver commodities to target schools.	Programme (School Feeding) Logistics Security	Ongoing
Priority: High Sub-recommendation 1.2 Continue efforts to resolve the shortage of non-food items (NFIs) and address other factors that may disadvantage girls. Deadline - Ongoing	Programme (School Feeding)	Agreed	1.2.1 WFP has already initiated another round of NFI procurement and is in process of delivering the NFIs to schools to address identified gaps that disadvantage school children, especially girls. While inflation impacted the ability of the project budget to purchase the number of NFIs originally	Programme (School Feeding) Programme (Cross-cutting Unit incl. gender and protection)	October 2024

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			<p>envisaged, the largest contributor to the gap in NFIs was the conflict in Afar, in which a significant portion of project schools were impacted. NFIs were entirely looted or damaged and then needed to be replaced. The follow-on FY24 MGD project has included a substantial budget for NFI provision; further, WFP and the government are encouraging communities to contribute NFIs with their own resources where feasible to address these efforts. This is a common practice in target schools in Oromia, where income generated from school gardens is used to purchase additional NFIs for the school meals programme. Finally, WFP is working between its school feeding and cross-</p>		

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			<p>cutting/gender teams to address negative gender stereotypes that lead to girls being more disadvantaged by this and similar issues. For example, in many of the targeted communities, boys often eat first and more, while girls eat last and least. The school feeding programme, and other platforms like gender clubs within the school community, provide critical entry points for addressing these harmful gender norms within schools and communities at large. A gender analysis of school feeding programmes in Ethiopia, which included discussions with school communities in both Afar and Oromia, has made recommendations that WFP is working to implement to strengthen the school feeding</p>		

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			programme to be gender transformative.		
<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Sub-recommendation 1.3</p> <p>Strengthen the roll-out of nutrition screening in schools (if such screening remains age-relevant for children in Year 0).¹</p> <p>Deadline - Immediate</p>	Programme (School Feeding)	Partially agreed	1.3.1 A recent Ministry of Education directive regarding the minimum age for school-age children has challenged implementation of this activity. In particular, the Bureau of Education in Oromia is enforcing guidance that children should only be enrolled in pre-primary (grade 0) school at the age of 5 or above, at which point the children are already aged out of the targeted malnutrition treatment they were referred to in case of identifying	Programme (School Feeding)	September 2024

¹ At the validation workshop which discussed a draft of this report on 12 April 2024, a recent directive by the Ministry of Education was mentioned, which provides that school children should only enrol in pre-primary school from the age of five and primary school at the age of seven. If implemented by the regions, this would undermine the logic of in-school screening, since Year 0 children would already be aged out of the malnutrition services that that the screening service is intended to refer them to. The wording of this recommendation has been adjusted accordingly.

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			malnourishment. As a result, WFP is working with the BoE to see if and how this activity can still be implemented to link children with critical health services.		
<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Sub-recommendation 1.4</p> <p>Continue to seek partnerships that can provide additional support for the final year of the project and help to avoid a “cliff-edge” termination when USDA commodities have been fully utilised.</p> <p>Deadline - Ongoing</p>	<p>Programme (School Feeding) Partnerships</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>1.4.1 WFP is continuing its resource mobilization efforts and has already secured an additional 1.5M EUR to support to continue programming in the most vulnerable schools for the 2024-2025 school year where sustainable transition to government ownership is not yet feasible. WFP will continue to advocate for additional resources to cover additional schools and for a longer period as required. Under the national school meals programme, the Government has also committed an increased budget allocation</p>	<p>Programme (School Feeding) Partnerships</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

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			<p>to school feeding for the 2024-2025 school year, which will benefit McGovern-Dole target schools. In Oromia, the budget allocation increased from 264M ETB to 364M ETB. In Afar, the regional government has not yet finalized the budget, but the Bureau of Education has requested a budget of up to 120M ETB, a substantial increase from 15M ETB. In some project producing areas, communities are also contributing their own resources, both cash and food, to support home-grown school feeding.</p>		
<p>Priority: High Sub-recommendation 1.5 Simultaneously make contingency plans for transferring the project’s schools to the government</p>	<p>Programme (School Feeding) Logistics Procurement Food Safety and Quality M&E</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>1.5.1 While working to mobilize additional resources, WFP is working with the Ministry of Education and Bureaus of Education to help bring efficiency to the implementation</p>	<p>Programme (School Feeding) Logistics Procurement</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

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<p>programmes in Afar and Oromia, while seeking support for a further phase of the project.</p> <p>Deadline - Immediate</p>			<p>of the national school feeding programme, including through clear and transparent prioritization and targeting of schools based on vulnerability to be supported through government resources, strengthening procurement and transportation processes to ensure cost-effective implementation, supporting cost-effective and regionally-contextualized nutritious menu design, strengthening programme monitoring, among other activities. At a federal level WFP is also supporting the Ministry of Education to finalize a resource mobilization, partnerships, and advocacy strategy to sustainably increase domestic financing for school feeding.</p>	<p>Food Safety and Quality M&E</p>	

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<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Recommendation 2:</p> <p>Feed lessons from this project into the design of its successor and the implementation of school feeding programmes across Ethiopia.</p> <p>Deadline: Ongoing</p>		Agreed	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Sub-recommendation 2.1</p> <p>Ensuring programme design is informed by comprehensive gender and equity analyses in programme areas and incorporating the lessons from recent gender analysis.</p> <p>Deadline - Ongoing</p>	Programme (School Feeding, Cross-cutting units)	Agreed	2.1.1 WFP's programme design, monitoring, and implementation is underscored by programme integration, including for cross-cutting issues such as gender and equity. WFP will increase the engagement of the cross-cutting unit, in particular focal persons for gender, protection, conflict sensitivity, and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) into the programme design, implementation, and monitoring processes to ensure that such cross-cutting issues are mainstreamed across activities	RAM Unit Cross-cutting Unit Programme (School Feeding)	Ongoing

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			<p>and the most vulnerable school children are reached. Findings from the recent gender analysis conducted will also be integrated into programme design and implementation as feasible.</p> <p>Conduct dissemination and action planning session based on the findings of the recent gender analysis report among SF stakeholders</p>		
<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Sub-recommendation 2.2.1²</p> <p>The importance of working with broad coalitions across school health and nutrition to maximise school feeding complementarities, and</p>	<p>RAM Unit</p> <p>Programme (School Feeding, Nutrition)</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>2.2.1.1 WFP is engaging a cross-functional group of school health and nutrition stakeholders, including government counterparts, UN agencies, and development partners to</p>	<p>RAM Unit</p> <p>Programme (School Feeding, Nutrition)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

² Sub-recommendation 2.2 has been split into 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 by WFP as we feel it presents two separate recommendations.

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address weaknesses in the current school feeding theory of change. Deadline - Ongoing			strengthen multi-sectoral coordination of the implementation of school feeding across Ethiopia. WFP has supported the Ministry of Education to launch the National School Feeding Programme Network to facilitate this engagement and strengthen coordination across school health and nutrition stakeholders in the planning, coordination, implementation, and monitoring of school feeding across the country.		
Priority: High Sub-recommendation 2.2.2	RAM	Agreed	The RAM team will work with the project team to review and ensure that the theory of change addresses the identified gaps and remains fit for its purpose	RAM Programme (School Feeding)	Ongoing

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Address weaknesses in the current school feeding theory of change. Deadline - Ongoing					
Priority: High Sub-recommendation 2.3 The value of community support, but the need to be realistic about the level of resources that can be raised from poor and crisis-stressed communities. Deadline - Ongoing		Agreed	2.3.1 WFP is continuing to work with BoEs to ensure that available government resources, as well as WFP resources, are targeting the most vulnerable communities to support them in sending their children to school. In designing sustainable transition plans which seek to handover WFP-supported schools to government ownership, a level of community engagement is important for sustainability and is a key component of the government school feeding model. However, WFP continues to advocate for models that do not exacerbate	Programme (School Feeding)	Ongoing

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			any burden on communities to support the programme.		
<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Sub-recommendation 2.4</p> <p>The need to reinforce capacity strengthening elements of school feeding programmes (SFPs), while also being realistic about timetables for handover to government programmes.</p> <p>Deadline - Ongoing</p>		Agreed	2.4.1 While working to mobilize additional resources, WFP is working with the Ministry of Education and Bureaus of Education to help bring efficiency to the implementation of the national school feeding programme, including through clear and transparent prioritization and targeting of schools based on vulnerability to be supported through government resources, strengthening procurement and transportation processes to ensure cost-effective implementation, supporting cost-effective and regionally-contextualized nutritious menu design, strengthening programme monitoring, among	Programme (School Feeding)	Ongoing

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			<p>other activities. At a federal level WFP is also supporting the Ministry of Education to finalize a resource mobilization, partnerships, and advocacy strategy to sustainably increase domestic financing for school feeding.</p> <p>WFP is further working to mobilize additional resources to continue providing support to the Government at federal, regional, and local levels to implement school feeding, with a view to transitioning schools to government ownership by 2030. WFP is also supporting the development of a resource mobilization, partnerships, and advocacy strategy to sustainably increase domestic financing for school feeding to increase the</p>		

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			coverage and quality of the national school feeding programme.		
<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Sub-recommendation 2.5</p> <p>The need to strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and learning (see Recommendation Error! Reference source not found.).</p>	RAM	Agreed	The RAM unit has assigned a dedicated M&E staff at CO who will coordinate monitoring activities with field offices to ensure that planned monitoring activities for school feeding are implemented and feed into the overall monitoring and reporting	RAM Unit	Ongoing
<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Recommendation 3:</p> <p>Take short-term actions to strengthen the project's monitoring and evaluation. These are important not only to strengthen the evidence base for the endline evaluation and to ensure its timeliness, but also to establish a better</p>					

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>
foundation for M&E of any future McGovern-Dole programmes in Ethiopia. Deadline:					
Update the Performance Monitoring Plan to provide rigorous guidance for the monitoring of MGD indicators in compliance with USDA guidelines.	RAM	Agreed	RAM will update the monitoring plan	RAM Unit	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retrospectively, where possible, to provide valid time series to feed into the endline. 		Agreed	RAM will review existing data to determine any valid time series and share with the program team.	RAM Unit	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prospectively, to strengthen guidelines that accompany the school feeding monitoring SOP. 		Agreed	Together with the program team, the RAM team will review the existing SoPs for School Feeding,	RAM Unit	Ongoing

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>
Pay particular attention to the sex-disaggregation issues the MTE has highlighted.		Agreed	Ensure data analyses are based on and where necessary informed by the required sex-desegregation. Joint review of the SF M&E checklist to identify areas of data disaggregation	RAM Unit	Ongoing
3c. Prepare for the endline evaluation by: 3c.1 Ensuring TOR are issued in good time to allow for inception mission not later than August/September 2024. (This is to allow for the endline survey to be conducted in November/December, with the qualitative fieldwork to follow in early 2025.)	County Office	Agreed	Prepare and submit an addendum to the original Terms of Reference for USDA's approval. Request CO Procurement to initiate Bidding Process to issue Purchases Order to hire the evaluation firm.	Evaluation Unit	June 2024
3c.2. Preparing follow-up KAP survey (assuming the endline contractor will again be asked	Country Office	Agreed	Commission a KAP survey and resulting data to be analysed by comparing it with baseline HAP	Evaluation Unit	July 2024

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>
to administer the KAPS alongside the main survey).			survey data and included in the final evaluation report.		
3c.3 Ensuring an adequate budget for the evaluation, given its scope (e.g., inclusion of EGRA as well as KAPS).	Country Office	Agreed	Given the expanded scope to include KAP and EGRA surveys, an effort will made to ensure required budget to cover the costs of these two surveys.	School Feeding Team	June 2024