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Management response to the recommendations in the summary report on the evaluation of the WFP regional response to the Syrian Crisis (January 2015–March 2018)

Background

1. This document presents the management response to the recommendations set out in the summary report on the independent evaluation of WFP assistance provided in response to the Syrian regional crisis.
2. The evaluation covered WFP's operations in response to the crisis from January 2015 to March 2018. The evaluation examined the WFP response inside the Syrian Arab Republic and in five surrounding countries: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.
3. Management appreciates the evaluation findings and the recognition that WFP was able to serve millions in need through a highly time- and cost-efficient response in complex and changing circumstances, innovating on a large scale, particularly with regard to cash-based assistance.
4. The evaluation recommendations aim to improve WFP's response, mindful of the need to place the beneficiary at its centre. They also propose steps for the next phase of the response, as the crisis continues to evolve.
5. Management generally agrees with the recommendations and will ensure that beneficiaries are at the centre of the response, with an increased focus on accountability to affected populations (AAP) and gender and protection concerns. WFP will draw on lessons learned to articulate its strategy for the next phase of the response.
6. The following matrix sets out the planned actions and implementation timelines.

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MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE SUMMARY REPORT ON THE EVALUATION OF THE WFP REGIONAL RESPONSE TO THE SYRIAN CRISIS (JANUARY 2015–MARCH 2018)			
Recommendation	Action by	Management response and actions planned or taken	Implementation timeline
<p>Recommendation 1: Strengthen AAP capacity and systems <i>Regional Bureau Cairo (RBC) (supported by headquarters)</i></p> <p>a) Designate (and capacitate where appropriate) dedicated staff for AAP, allocating resources specifically for capacity strengthening and/or mainstreaming.</p> <p>b) Review current AAP mechanisms within country offices to inform strategization, and make proposals for improvement.</p> <p><i>Country offices</i></p> <p>a) Allocate staff and resources for dedicated AAP mainstreaming and capacitate them to set-up and support a network of field focal points.</p> <p>b) Provide a clear strategic statement that sets out intended actions to ensure that:</p> <p>i) beneficiaries are sufficiently informed of their entitlements and of complaint and feedback mechanisms; and</p> <p>ii) channels of communication with affected populations are improved based on best practices.</p> <p>This may include regular documented feedback meetings with cooperating partners; two-way communication and beneficiary feedback mechanisms within beneficiary contact monitoring systems and protocols; and robust links to ensure the trickle-up of monitoring findings to programme decision-making functions.</p>	<p>RBC with support from the Human Resources Division (HRM), Policy and Programme Division (OSZ) and Emergencies and Transitions Unit (OSZPH)</p> <p>All country offices, with support from RBC, HRM and OSZ including OSZPH</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Dedicated staff and resources will be designated for AAP, and current country office AAP mechanisms will be reviewed in order to draw up proposals for improvement.</p> <p>Agreed.</p> <p>Improved AAP mainstreaming and beneficiary feedback mechanisms and communication are already in place in most country offices, through dedicated staff and resources. Country offices will ensure that recommended standards are met across all country offices, and that a clear strategic statement is developed for each country office.</p>	<p>By the end of second quarter 2019</p> <p>By the end of second quarter 2019</p>

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Recommendation 2: Centralize gender in the response			
<i>RBC</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Allocate dedicated staff and resources at the RBC level to mainstream gender within the response. b) Conduct/continue conducting regular mandatory gender training for all RBC staff and management. 	RBC, with support from the Gender Office (GEN)	<p>Agreed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) RBC has a regional gender advisor (position filled in August 2018 after a temporary vacancy), an international gender consultant and a national gender/nutrition officer, who all work closely with regional bureau and country office staff to mainstream gender within the response. b) A regional gender work plan with an allocated budget and provision for gender training for RBC staff and management is already in place. RBC will review the content and attendance of past and planned training sessions to ensure that all staff and management have acquired or will acquire appropriate knowledge of gender issues. 	<p>Completed</p> <p>By the end of second quarter 2019</p>
<i>Country offices</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Designate (and capacitate where appropriate) dedicated staff and resources at the country office level to ensure gender mainstreaming. b) Conduct gender training for WFP country office and sub-office staff to ensure that gender issues are recognized and addressed. c) Update country office gender action plans so they meet the standards required by the Gender Policy (2015–2020) and the WFP Gender Action Plan.¹ d) Analyse available data on gender issues in the response and use the results to develop gender-sensitive programmatic responses. 	All country offices, with support from RBC and the Gender Office	<p>Agreed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Many country offices already have dedicated staff and resources to ensure gender mainstreaming. Where capacity is still insufficient, country offices are in the process of recruiting the appropriate staff. b) Gender training is being conducted in all country offices. All country offices will ensure that gender training continues, including for sub-office staff. c) Country offices will review their gender action plans in line with the Gender Policy (2015–2020) and WFP Gender Action Plan. 	<p>By the end of second quarter 2019</p>

¹ Gender Action Plan: *Walking the Talk* (WFP/EB.1/2016/4-B).

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<p><i>Headquarters/RBC</i></p> <p>a) At the next opportunity for reassignment, consider gender balance in staff selection.</p>	<p>Reassignment Committee and Executive Director, with support from HRM</p>	<p>d) Monitoring tools and systems will be used and improved to capture and systematize sex and age-disaggregated data and gender analysis to develop increasingly gender-transformative programmatic responses.</p> <p>Agreed. The full evaluation report refers to “gender balance of senior management for the response”. As of August 2018, three out of six country directors and four out of seven deputy country directors for the Syrian response are women. The Reassignment Committee will keep gender balance in mind for future senior staff appointments for the response.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: Reinforce protection <i>Headquarters</i></p> <p>a) Given the limited nature of WFP's corporate indicators for protection, consider revision, drawing on existing resources such as the global protection cluster indicators.</p>	<p>Performance Management and Monitoring Division (RMP)</p>	<p>Agreed. The timeframe covered by the evaluation coincides with the governance and phase-out of the previous monitoring framework (the Strategic Results Framework), which had a limited number of indicators for protection. Additional indicators have been introduced in the current WFP Corporate Results Framework (2017–2021) (CRF). Moreover, acknowledging the need to place beneficiary concerns and expectations more centrally within WFP's response, AAP and protection indicators are being strengthened as part of the ongoing revision of the CRF. Six additional cross-cutting indicators, three for protection and three for AAP, are being introduced to enhance adherence to humanitarian principles and to improve knowledge management.</p>	<p>By the end of second quarter 2019</p>

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<p><i>RBC</i></p> <p>a) Designate (and capacitate where appropriate) dedicated staff and resources at the RBC level to protection mainstreaming.</p> <p>b) Conduct regular protection training for all RBC staff and management.</p>	<p>RBC with support from OSZ and HRM</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>a) Dedicated staff and resources for protection mainstreaming will be considered as part of an ongoing RBC organizational realignment exercise.</p> <p>b) Regular protection training will be conducted for all RBC staff and management.</p>	<p>By the end of second quarter 2019</p>
<p><i>Country offices</i></p> <p>a) Designate (and capacitate where appropriate) dedicated staff and resources to ensure that protection is mainstreamed in each country office.</p> <p>b) Conduct protection training for WFP country office and suboffice staff to ensure that protection issues are recognized and addressed.</p> <p>c) Prepare country office protection statements that include a clear vision and strategies.</p> <p>d) Analyse available data on protection issues within the response, and use this to develop appropriate programmatic responses.</p>	<p>All country offices, with support from OSZ and OSZPH</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>a) Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon already have dedicated protection staff. Other country offices will designate dedicated staff to ensure protection is mainstreamed.</p> <p>b) Protection training has been conducted for country office, sub-office and cooperating partner staff and will be continued to ensure that all WFP and cooperating partner staff are trained.</p> <p>c) All country offices will prepare protection statements.</p> <p>d) Monitoring tools and systems will be used and improved to capture and systematize protection data to develop appropriate programmatic responses.</p>	<p>By the end of second quarter 2019</p>

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<p>Recommendation 4: Build capacity to improve adherence to humanitarian principles <i>Country offices</i></p> <p>a) Ensure training for all staff on the humanitarian principles, protection and decision-making in complex (and highly politicized) operating environments, particularly at the local level.</p> <p>b) Conduct situation-based feedback sessions with staff on lessons learned from experience in the response.</p> <p>c) Provide focused and context-specific orientation to all incoming staff and consultants, including information on local political dynamics.</p> <p>d) Train cooperating partners and financial service providers in adherence to humanitarian principles in the local context.</p>	<p>All country offices, with support from RBC, OSZ, OSE, Supply Chain Division and HRM</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>All country offices will ensure that their staff and cooperating partners receive training on humanitarian principles and protection and will hold context-specific security and political orientation sessions for all incoming staff. Country offices will conduct sessions on lessons learned with all staff and incorporate feedback into future training.</p>	<p>By the end of second quarter 2019</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: Improve knowledge management</p> <p>Develop an RBC-led learning and knowledge transfer strategy for the response. Key areas should include:</p> <p>a) Technical approaches to cash-based transfers</p> <p>b) Targeting and prioritization</p> <p>c) Resilience</p>	<p>RBC, with support from OSZ and all country offices and the sub-regional office</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>RBC has been facilitating knowledge development, sharing and transfer between country offices, including in the areas of cash-based transfers, targeting and prioritization, and resilience. This approach will be systematized and consolidated into a more formal learning and knowledge transfer strategy for the response.</p>	<p>By the end of first quarter 2019</p>

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<p>Recommendation 6: Define success – build a clear intended vision</p> <p>To better package the regional dimension of the response within the country strategic plan (CSP) environment, build on Vision 2020 and individual CSP objectives to develop an overarching strategic statement of ‘where to from here’. The statement should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Clearly articulate the WFP regional-level vision of success for the response. b) Locate the beneficiary at the centre of the response, responding to diverse situations, needs and priorities. c) Include – beyond the operationally focused objectives of CSPs – the strategic intentions of the response at the regional level, such as the management of returnees; support for strengthened national social protection and safety net systems; future intended coordination and partnerships; intentions for resilience programming at scale; planned internal coordination mechanisms; and the intended role of AAP, gender equality and protection. d) Map potential scenarios and identify response options. e) Be linked to realistic resource planning and associated financing contingency plans. f) Be accompanied by an advocacy plan for donors, focused on the costs of adjusting the response from scale to depth, including the cost implications of resilience activities and the integration of AAP/gender/protection. 	<p>RBC with contributions from country offices and the subregional office</p> <p>Support from the Emergency Preparedness and Support Response Division (OSE) and OSZ, including the Direct Implementation Programme Service and units, including the Asset Creation and Livelihoods Unit, OSZPH, the Safety Nets and Social Protection Unit and the School Feeding Service</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>RBC will develop a strategic statement and regional-level vision of success for the response, incorporating lessons learned and best practices, to allow WFP to continue to respond to diverse situations, to place the beneficiary at the centre of the response, and to inform and support the design of future responses. Discussions have already taken place and will continue around planning for refugee returns, support to national efforts to build resilience and social safety nets, strengthened partnerships and coordination, and the role of AAP, gender equality and protection. RBC will also outline a clear advocacy plan for donors to accompany the strategic goals of the response.</p>	<p>By the end of first quarter 2019</p>

Acronyms used in the document

AAP	accountability to affected populations
CRF	Corporate Results Framework (2017–2021)
CSP	country strategic plan
HRM	Human Resources Division
OSZ	Policy and Programme Division
OSZPH	Emergencies and Transitions Unit
RBC	Regional Bureau Cairo