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Evaluation Reports

For consideration

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Management Response to the Recommendations of the Summary Evaluation Report — Mauritania Country Portfolio (2011–2015)

Background

1. This document presents the management response to the recommendations of the summary evaluation report of the Mauritania country portfolio (2011–2015).
2. The Secretariat appreciates the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, which highlights WFP Mauritania's good strategic and operational progress despite the continuously changing operational context and managerial challenges experienced during the evaluation period.
3. The evaluation found that the country office's strategies and responses to recurrent crises, including the arrival of Malian refugees, were relevant and effective, and that WFP's strategic decision-making was supported by an effective food security monitoring system. In collaboration with national authorities, WFP will continue to strengthen resilience activities and improve coordination, particularly in the nutrition sector.
4. While relief programmes were relatively well funded, the evaluation found that significant funding constraints, including delays, hampered implementation of other components of the portfolio, particularly school feeding under the country programme and food assistance-for-assets activities.
5. WFP participates in the national strategic planning process for the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, which will inform the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and WFP programmes. As noted in the evaluation, WFP needs to focus more on strengthening national capacities in food security surveillance systems and information analysis. The country office will also focus on enhancing the effectiveness of national mechanisms and programmes for preventing and treating malnutrition.
6. Appreciating the evaluation's recognition that WFP's response to the crises affecting Mauritania was appropriate and in line with the current resilience-building strategy, management notes the need to refocus available resources on the capacity-development objectives of the country strategy.
7. The following matrix sets out the planned actions and timelines for implementing the evaluation recommendations.

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MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT–MAURITANIA COUNTRY PORTFOLIO (2011–2015)			
Recommendations	Action by	Management response and action taken	Implementation deadline
<p>Recommendation 1: The country office should build further complementarities and synergies with the national social safety nets programme, <i>Tekavoul</i>. This work should include: i) phasing in use of the national poverty register to target multi-annual conditional transfers, thus complying with associated targeting criteria; ii) linking these transfers to explicit objectives for addressing the underlying causes of malnutrition, based on updated analysis of gender issues and the causes of food and nutrition insecurity, including food consumption practices; iii) where <i>Tekavoul</i> operates, providing complementary support only in cases of shock by increasing transfer values or widening the coverage of transfer programmes; and iv) capitalizing on experience to date.</p> <p><i>High priority – must be sustained over the long term, from 2016/17.</i></p>	Country office	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Development of the national register of vulnerable households was directly influenced by the country office’s work on targeting. The country office maintains constructive dialogue with all stakeholders on this issue, beginning with the Ministry of Economy and Finance (formerly the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development) and the World Bank. The targeting methodology used by <i>Tekavoul</i> – the community-based participatory approach with verification using statistical tools – is in line with that used by WFP. The country office will:</p> <p>i) assist the Government in completing the national register of vulnerable households; ii) use the register for its own transfer programmes; and iii) ensure synergies with <i>Tekavoul</i> and other assistance programmes of the Government and other actors.</p>	June 2017
<p>Recommendation 2: With the regional bureau’s support, the country office should continue strengthening national food and nutrition security monitoring and early warning systems. This work should include supporting: i) further institutionalization of the Harmonized Framework in Mauritania; ii) enhanced sensitivity to pastoral and urban issues in the National Food Security Monitoring System; and iii) formalization of a national nutrition surveillance system, complementing surveys with information on nutrition operations.</p> <p><i>Secondary importance – must be sustained over the long term, from 2016.</i></p>	Country office, with support of the Regional Bureau for West Africa (RBD)	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>a) Institutionalization of the Harmonized Framework for joint food security analysis is: i) led by the national <i>Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire</i> (CSA, Food Security Commission); ii) implemented by a national Harmonized Framework Committee, which was established by inter-ministerial decree; and iii) supported by the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel, WFP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Famine Early Warning Systems Network and non-governmental organizations such as <i>Action contre la faim</i> and Oxfam.</p> <p>Since 2013, countries in the region have conducted two annual joint analyses in March and November; results are validated and collated at the regional level. Analyses of the Harmonized Framework benefit from the technical support</p>	Ongoing

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		<p>of experts from WFP’s country office and regional bureau and use food security data collected with WFP’s support. With support from the regional bureau, the country office will continue to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support the CSA by organizing workshops and joint analyses; - reinforce the capacities of the national Harmonized Framework Committee; and - advocate for greater national ownership of the Harmonized Framework. <p>b) WFP will reinforce its dialogue with the Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock and FAO to: i) strengthen information systems for the agriculture and livestock sectors; and ii) promote harmonization of early warning information systems and data.</p> <p>c) The country office will consult ministries involved in nutrition-related issues, and United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund and FAO on formalizing a national nutrition surveillance system. This will require mobilization of expertise from the regional bureau, and stakeholders’ cooperation.</p>	<p>June 2017</p> <p>June 2017</p>

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<p>Recommendation 3: The country office should strengthen efforts to improve the institutional environment for nutrition and the efficiency and effectiveness of the malnutrition treatment and prevention system, including by: i) revitalizing joint United Nations initiatives for enhanced dialogue among the national institutions concerned; ii) implementing operational approaches that reinforce local coordination of nutrition-related activities; iii) continuing efforts to build the nutrition-related capacities of national actors; and iv) conducting a joint diagnosis with United Nations partners and national institutions on the efficiency and effectiveness of the national system for moderate and acute malnutrition (MAM) treatment and prevention of malnutrition.</p> <p><i>High priority – must be sustained over the long term, from 2016/17.</i></p>	<p>Country office, with support of RBD and the Nutrition Division (OSN)</p>	<p>Partially agreed.</p> <p>The country office is already implementing recommended actions i), ii) and iii).</p> <p>Regarding action iv), the country office will work with United Nations and national institutions to advocate for and plan a joint analysis of the national system for treating and preventing malnutrition. This will require mobilization of expertise from the regional bureau and OSN.</p> <p>However, management notes that the Government is responsible for making the necessary changes to the institutional environment. The efficiency and effectiveness of the malnutrition treatment and prevention system ultimately depend on the efficiency and effectiveness of national institutions.</p>	<p>June 2017</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: The country office should enhance the governance, quality and sustainability of its resilience approach. This work should include: i) ensuring effective implementation of the corporate resilience approach, giving priority to <i>Planification communautaire participative</i> (Community Participatory Planning) and its implementation over three years to ensure that asset management, governance and maintenance issues are addressed from the planning stage; ii) supporting the ministries concerned in preparing technical standards for asset creation; and iii) investing in results beyond those included in the Strategic Results Framework (SRF) indicator compendium, by conducting studies on the impact and sustainability of the assets built.</p> <p><i>High priority – must be sustained over the long term, from 2016/17. Impact measurements to be scheduled for 2018.</i></p>	<p>Country office, with support of RBD and the Policy and Programme Division (OSZ) – Resilience and Prevention Unit</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>a) The country office’s resilience strategy as outlined in the protracted relief and recovery operation document is in line with the corporate approach to resilience, but its implementation has been hampered by lack of funding.</p> <p>The country office is carrying out an integrated context analysis in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the United States Agency for International Development, UNICEF and other stakeholders. This will provide the analytical basis for: i) building national consensus on geographical areas that need long-term resilience-building efforts; ii) developing strategies for tackling constraints; iii) building strong partnerships at the national level; and iv) advocating for multi-year funding.</p>	<p>December 2016</p>

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		<p>The country office will also introduce tools for seasonal and livelihoods-based planning and community-based participatory planning in areas that are targeted for resilience-building activities.</p> <p>b) Since 2015, particularly through the <i>Projet d'amélioration de la résilience des communautés et de leur sécurité alimentaire face aux effets néfastes des changements climatiques</i> (PARSACC, Project for Improving Communities' Resilience and Food Security to Overcome the Adverse Effects of Climate Change), the country office has been strengthening the technical capacities of ministries – including the Ministry of Economy and Finance, CSA and the Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock – in integrating climate change issues into national and local planning and technical standards for assets building.</p> <p>c) The country office will maintain its dialogue with the regional bureau and Headquarters in Rome on measuring resilience with project- or country-specific indicators; depending on the capacities available, it will conduct specific impact assessments.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 5: The country office should make its involvement in school feeding conditional on the Government guaranteeing its commitment to funding a national programme. Following the SABER workshop, the technical support needs should be specified, and WFP's role and modalities defined more precisely.</p> <p><i>High priority for 2016.</i></p>	Country office, with support of RBD and OSZ – School Feeding Service	<p>Partially agreed.</p> <p>WFP is advocating for stronger government commitment to developing and funding a national school feeding programme, in which WFP will have a well-defined role. However, the Government's guaranteeing of this commitment is outside the control of the country office or WFP.</p> <p>In 2015, the country office supported the Government with a workshop on the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER). Priority actions from the SABER action plan are being implemented, including the formulation of a national school feeding policy.</p>	December 2016

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<p>Recommendation 6: The country office should concentrate its activities geographically and reinforce synergies among activities. Geographical coverage should be reduced to the three or four <i>willayas</i> with the highest food and nutrition insecurity levels over the last five years to make programme implementation more predictable. This geographical concentration should be complemented by effective synergies among WFP activities and increased local and intersectoral coordination.</p> <p><i>High priority, to be addressed in 2016.</i></p>	Country office with support of RBD	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The country office had started to concentrate its activities in the most vulnerable regions prior to the evaluation. WFP currently operates in five regions and parts of Hodh El Gharbi because of the nutrition situation. The country office plans to reduce this to the most vulnerable three or four regions from mid-2017, under the new UNDAF for 2018.</p>	December 2016
<p>Recommendation 7: WFP – country offices, regional bureaux and the Policy and Programme Division – should stabilize and strengthen country offices’ human resources, particularly in their programme units. This work includes: i) strengthening the programme unit’s capacities in nutrition, gender, education and rural development; ii) ensuring strict compliance with hand-over norms; and iii) encouraging continuity of international human resources, staggering arrivals and departures to and from key posts, particularly in small country offices – such as Mauritania – that are sensitive to the negative effects of management rotation.</p> <p><i>High priority – must be sustained over the long term, from 2016/17.</i></p>	Country office, with support of RBD and OSZ	<p>Partially agreed.</p> <p>The country office has done its utmost to satisfy the staffing requirements of all operations, but suitable candidates have not been found for all positions. Despite lacking the resources to implement this recommendation in full, new human resources, logistics and nutrition officers have been recruited.</p> <p>The Reassignment Committee plays a critical role in ensuring that the country office has experienced, high-performing staff with the right profiles to fill the few core positions that it can afford.</p>	Ongoing

Acronyms Used in the Document

CSA	Food and Security Commission
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
OSN	Nutrition Division
OSZ	Policy and Programme Division
RBD	Regional Bureau for West Africa
UNDAF	United Nations Development Framework
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund