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First Regular Session**

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## **EVALUATION REPORTS**

**Agenda item 6**

*For consideration*



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## **MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SYNTHESIS SUMMARY REPORT OF THE JOINT UNHCR/WFP IMPACT EVALUATIONS ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF FOOD ASSISTANCE TO DURABLE SOLUTIONS IN PROTRACTED REFUGEE SITUATIONS**

## NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

**This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration.**

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

Director, RMP*	Mr C. Kaye	tel.: 066513-2197
Director, OSZ**	Ms V. Guarnieri	tel.: 066513-3286
Deputy Director, GVA***	Ms D. Tymo	tel.: 0041-22917-8569
Programme Adviser, RMP	Ms K. Oppusunggu	tel.: 066513-3068

Should you have any questions regarding availability of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact Ms I. Carpitella, Senior Administrative Assistant, Conference Servicing Unit (tel.: 066513-2645).

- \* Performance Management and Monitoring Division
- \*\* Policy and Programme Innovation Division
- \*\*\* Liaison Office, Geneva



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## BACKGROUND

1. This document constitutes a joint management response to the recommendations made in a synthesis of four impact evaluations on food assistance for refugees in protracted situations, commissioned by WFP's Office of Evaluation and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) Policy Development and Evaluation Service.
2. The evaluations were undertaken to provide an evidence base for future organizational strategies regarding how food assistance can contribute to refugee livelihoods and self-reliance, thereby supporting the wider search for solutions to protracted refugee situations.
3. The following definitions are used in this document:
  - a) A *livelihood* comprises the capabilities, assets – including social and physical assets – activities and opportunities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets.
  - b) *Self-reliance* is the ability of people, households or communities to meet their basic needs, including food and nutrition, and enjoy social and economic rights in a sustainable and dignified manner. Self-reliance is a positive livelihoods outcome.
  - c) A *durable solution* for refugees is attained when refugees are able to avail themselves of the protection of a state by means of voluntary repatriation to their country of origin, local integration in their country of asylum, or resettlement in a third country that has agreed to admit them on a permanent basis.
4. A core aspect of the joint work of WFP and UNHCR is ensuring that durable solutions are complemented by support that facilitates self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods.
5. At a high-level meeting (HLM) between UNHCR and WFP held on 9 January 2013, management welcomed the evaluation and agreed that it provided compelling evidence of the need for all parties to renew their commitment to supporting the attainment of durable solutions for refugees in protracted situations. The HLM also reiterated the importance of placing the recommendations and related responses into historical context, recognizing that many of the issues raised by the synthesis evaluation have been on the international community's agenda for many years.
6. The joint responses to the recommendations are presented in the attached matrix.

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Recommendations	Action by	Management response and action taken/to be taken	Implementation deadline
<p><b>Recommendation 1: Under the auspices of the WFP/UNHCR High-Level Meeting, a working group from both agencies should develop a joint corporate strategy and operational framework for refugees in protracted displacement and for the role that food assistance can play. The strategy should:</b></p> <p>a) recognize that encampment brings risks to the prospects for self-reliance and that the current approach to food assistance is insufficient;</p> <p>b) outline plausible pathways to self-reliance and durable solutions for refugees in protracted displacement, and the role that food assistance – including complements to general food distribution (GFD) such as cash, vouchers or food for work – can play;</p> <p>c) develop a more holistic approach and the partnerships necessary to achieve it;</p> <p>d) establish management mechanisms for implementing the strategy, incorporating more systematic use of joint assessment missions (JAMs), both in specific countries and in synthesis for corporate learning.</p> <p>For WFP, the approach should reflect and be embedded in the new Strategic Plan (2014–2017).</p> <p>This process might start with the WFP/UNHCR High-Level Meeting organizing a reflection to deepen analysis of why the two agencies find it so difficult to address the challenges and implement an approach for building self-reliance and of what each agency may need to change to develop the necessary partnerships.</p>	<p>WFP and UNHCR Headquarters</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>In formulating a joint corporate strategy, WFP and UNHCR will take full account of the international community's limited success after striving for many years to promote refugee livelihoods and self-reliance and establish more effective linkages between humanitarian aid and longer-term development processes in protracted refugee situations.</p> <p>Both organizations recognize that the promotion of self-reliance and durable solutions in protracted refugee situations is often constrained by host government policies – regarding freedom of movement, access to land, the right to work, etc. – and the availability of predictable and multi-year funding, which enables a transition from food aid and other forms of relief assistance. WFP and UNHCR will continue to advocate on these issues with host and donor states.</p> <p>WFP and UNHCR will use the formulation of a joint corporate strategy and operational framework as an opportunity to re-examine the internal constraints identified in the synthesis report and to determine how to address them. Entry points for further joint engagement include UNHCR's ongoing preparation of a revised policy position regarding the out-of-camp settlement of refugees – as refugees who are subjected to encampment and associated restrictions on their economic activities are often unable to establish sustainable livelihoods and attain self-reliance – and its efforts to develop a livelihood strategy and to pilot new approaches for plausible pathways to self-reliance for populations of concern in both rural and urban settings. These efforts are being undertaken in consultation with the World Bank and non-traditional partners such as the private sector, and seek to build practical experience and a list of good partners.</p>	<p>June 2014</p>



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Recommendations	Action by	Management response and action taken/to be taken	Implementation deadline
		<p>WFP and UNHCR will review protracted refugee situations and identify those with good potential for promoting livelihoods and self-reliance. Strategic plans based on these findings will involve other members of United Nations country teams (UNCTs), engage with both host and donor states, and emphasize the role that food assistance can play in the shift from care and maintenance approaches.</p> <p>To learn lessons from past experience, UNHCR will identify situations in which refugees have successfully moved from food aid towards self-reliance, and will identify the key variables that facilitate such transitions. WFP will be kept informed of this exercise and will be invited to contribute ideas and information.</p> <p>WFP and UNHCR will ensure that their governing bodies are fully informed of action taken. Management will disseminate the findings of the synthesis report internally and externally. WFP and UNHCR will prepare a joint report on initial progress in implementing this recommendation for submission during 2014. (Precise dates to be discussed with respective governing bodies.)</p>	

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<p><b>Recommendation 2: All actors should recognize that improving the lives of refugees in protracted displacement is not the business of WFP and UNHCR alone but must involve coordinated change in the approaches currently followed by United Nations country teams, particularly development-oriented agencies, host States, donors and implementing partners, as well as UNHCR and WFP.</b> The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Task Force on Accountability to Affected Populations should be encouraged to take a lead role in building this recognition and the resulting actions, notably by strengthening the architecture for accountability to help bring forgotten crises to an end and to focus the international community's attention on its responsibilities under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol.</p>	<p>WFP and UNHCR at the Headquarters and country levels</p>	<p>Partially agreed.</p> <p>WFP and UNHCR agree that the promotion of livelihoods and self-reliance and the search for durable solutions in protracted refugee situations require full engagement with UNCTs, development actors and host and donor states. Both organizations agree about the need for more systematic exploration of the roles that the private sector and civil society might play, and will take steps to ensure such engagement at the global, regional and country levels.</p> <p>However, the HLM recognized and reaffirmed UNHCR's mandated role in leading and coordinating international action for refugee protection and solutions and agreed that the IASC Task Force on Accountability to Affected Populations was not an appropriate entity to lead the promotion of livelihoods and self-reliance in protracted refugee situations. WFP and UNHCR agreed that a more effective approach might be to ensure that the issue of food assistance, livelihoods and self-reliance in protracted refugee situations is included in the international development agenda.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>





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<p><b>Recommendation 3: United Nations country teams should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) engage and advocate with host governments for refugees' rights to mobility, to practise livelihoods, to protection and to some form of acknowledged integration when repatriation remains elusive;</li> <li>b) engage with host governments to improve the selection of camp sites for those in or likely to be in prolonged displacement, with the goal of enabling refugees to make a meaningful contribution to national and local economic development while minimizing conflict over natural resources and the accompanying negative implications for the environment, economy and protection;</li> <li>c) monitor the prospects for repatriation and seek to increase spontaneous returns;</li> <li>d) encourage donors to be more flexible (see recommendation 4);</li> <li>e) insist on greater involvement of United Nations agencies specialized in protection, development and gender issues;</li> <li>f) engage with refugees' host and original States to advance political solutions to protracted displacement.</li> </ul>	<p>WFP and UNHCR at the Headquarters and country levels</p>	<p>Partially agreed.</p> <p>WFP and UNHCR recognize the need for UNCTs to support efforts to provide refugees with protection, solutions, livelihoods and self-reliance opportunities in situations of protracted displacement. Both organizations also acknowledge that efforts to identify sites for refugee camps and settlements and to mitigate the impact of refugee influxes on the environment – and hence on relations between refugees and host communities – must involve the authorities at both the central and local levels. Every effort will be made to engage the UNCT and the host governments, not only in protracted refugee situations but also in more recent refugee emergencies, so that livelihoods and self-reliance can be promoted from the outset of a refugee situation.</p> <p>However, in line with the response to recommendation 2, WFP acknowledges UNHCR's specific mandate in relation to refugee protection and solutions. Both organizations maintain that any efforts by a UNCT to monitor prospects for repatriation and to enhance spontaneous return should be led by UNHCR; organized return may be a preferable approach in some refugee situations and for certain groups of refugees.</p> <p>WFP and UNHCR agree that the United Nations system needs to engage with refugees' host states and countries of origin to advance political solutions to protracted displacement. Such efforts must be fully consistent with international refugee, human rights and humanitarian law, particularly the principle of non-refoulement, which prevents refugees from being returned to a country where their lives or liberty would be at risk.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

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<p><b>Recommendation 4: Donors should overcome or remove barriers to conventional funding restrictions based on dichotomies between emergency and development situations.</b></p>	Donors	<p>Noted.</p> <p>WFP and UNHCR will continue to advocate for transitional funding from donor states; the limited scale and late availability of such funding has consistently impeded efforts to link short-term refugee relief with longer-term development processes.</p> <p>Both organizations note that this issue has been on the international community's agenda for almost 30 years; the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA 2) Conference of 1984, jointly sponsored by UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme, noted that such assistance should be "development-oriented from the outset". WFP and UNHCR will continue to work with donor states and development actors to ascertain how barriers related to conventional funding restrictions might be overcome or removed. An initial discussion of this issue with donor states is scheduled for March 2013 in the context of UNHCR's Transitional Solutions Initiative.</p>	Ongoing
<p><b>Recommendation 5: WFP and UNHCR country teams should systematically develop consensual programme strategies for the transition to self-reliance, based on contextualized knowledge of refugees' specific needs and prospects for long-term durable solutions – repatriation, local integration or resettlement.</b> These strategies should transform the existing planning architecture based on joint plans of action to provide a strategic management tool for the country level, which:</p> <p>a) draws in new partnerships and funding; and</p> <p>b) provides a reference point for operation design and approval.</p> <p>Annual progress reports should be made to the United Nations country team and to the UNHCR-WFP High-Level Meeting.</p>	WFP and UNHCR country offices	<p>Partially agreed.</p> <p>WFP and UNHCR are in broad agreement with this recommendation, while underlining that a transition to self-reliance is not always feasible in protracted refugee situations that are strongly affected by the external constraints identified in the synthesis report.</p> <p>WFP and UNHCR fully agree on the need for continuous assessment of the prospects for durable solutions, and will make the maximum use of any opportunities that arise. However, the three durable solutions of voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement are usually contingent on political developments, which humanitarian and development actors can influence but not control or direct.</p>	Ongoing







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<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Management response and action taken/to be taken</b>	<b>Implementation deadline</b>
<p>The strategies should be based on analysis of inter-community social and economic relations between refugees and host communities and among groups of refugees within camps, and on market analysis of the potential for complementing GFD with alternative modalities. Selection of the food assistance modalities should be based on analysis and the desired objectives, rather than the other way around. This is a precondition for aligning programming with contextual realities and for improved understanding of the sale of food assistance and non-food items (NFIs) and the recourse to negative coping strategies. Strategy development should involve new partnerships with relief and development actors active in the area, the host government and refugees themselves.</p>		<p>WFP and UNHCR will strive to improve understanding of local and regional markets; remittance receipts; interactions among groups of refugees within camps and among encamped refugees, out-of-camp refugees and local hosts; and the role that local and cross-border mobility plays in refugees' efforts to establish livelihoods and become self-reliant.</p> <p>Such analyses will go beyond the relatively narrow focus of the current joint assessment missions, to provide a basis for the formulation of livelihood and self-reliance strategies that enable a phased reduction of direct food assistance, according to mutually agreed benchmarks that protect the nutrition status of all refugees, especially those with specific needs, such as older people, people with disabilities and households headed by women.</p>	

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## ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

GFD general food distribution

HLM high-level meeting

IASC Inter-Agency Standing Committee

UNCT United Nations country team

UNHCR Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees