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Management response to the recommendations from the summary report on the evaluation of the interim country strategic plan for South Sudan (2018–2022)

Background

1. This document presents the WFP management response to the recommendations in the summary report on the evaluation of the interim country strategic plan (ICSP) for South Sudan for 2018–2022.
2. The purpose of the evaluation was to provide evaluation evidence and learning regarding WFP's performance in order to inform country-level strategic decision making, including the design of the next country strategic plan (CSP) for South Sudan, and to provide accountability for results to WFP stakeholders.
3. The evaluation covered WFP interventions implemented under the ICSP between 2018 and 2021. It was conducted between July 2021 and April 2022.
4. The evaluation made six recommendations, three strategic and three operational. Sub-recommendations elaborate on how each recommendation can be implemented.
5. The response sets out whether WFP agrees, partially agrees or disagrees with the evaluation recommendations and sub-recommendations. It presents the planned (or completed) actions, responsibilities and timelines for the implementation of those recommendations. In general, the country office agrees with the recommendations but has made adjustments to the deadlines for the completion of some based on planned actions.

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MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SUMMARY REPORT ON THE EVALUATION OF THE INTERIM COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN FOR SOUTH SUDAN (2018–2022)					
Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation and sub-recommendation lead office (with supporting offices and divisions in brackets)	Management response	Actions to be taken	Action lead office (with supporting offices and divisions in brackets)	Action deadline
<p>Priority: High Deadline: June 2023 Recommendation 1: In its next country strategic plan for South Sudan, WFP should avoid spreading its resources too thinly.</p>	Country office (regional bureau)				
<p>1.1 To avoid spreading its resources too thinly, WFP should align the ambitions of the country strategic plan with the forecasted level of funding and, going forward, should focus on priority areas where long-term impact can be achieved in coordination with other humanitarian and development actors.</p>	Country office (regional bureau)	Agreed	WFP will strengthen its vulnerability-based targeting approach so that it better informs the development of prioritization plans that ensure that targeted groups are reached and inclusion and exclusion errors are minimized. In the event of funding shortfalls, WFP will prioritize life-saving assistance and resilience interventions in partnership with other humanitarian and development actors to address root causes of hunger and conflict in priority areas. This action will be implemented throughout the period of the new CSP.	Programme unit (country office and regional bureau research, assessment and monitoring unit)	June 2023

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<p>Priority: High Deadline: December 2023 Recommendation 2: WFP should consider a number of opportunities to maximize the long-term and sustainable results of its interventions with a view to ensuring greater coherence throughout its portfolio – including synergies among strategic outcomes – and better supporting the transition of beneficiaries from activities under strategic outcome 1 to activities under other strategic outcomes.</p>	Country office (regional bureau, United Nations country team, Government, headquarters divisions)				
<p>2.1 To guide the formulation of an explicit vision of how it will deliver long-term change and impact through its next country strategic plan, WFP should develop a theory of change and a supporting narrative describing how it will deliver sustainable impact during implementation of the country strategic plan and beyond, including in addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity.</p> <p>Priority: High (November 2022)</p>	Country office (regional bureau)	Agreed	A theory of change has been developed for the new CSP that considers the impact of CSP activities beyond the three-year duration of the CSP.	Research, assessment and monitoring unit (programme unit, regional bureau evaluation unit)	November 2022

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2.2 To support progress on the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, in the next country strategic plan WFP should more explicitly set out its framework for supporting that progress and should recruit or deploy from the regional bureau specialists in social protection and peacebuilding who will promote a stronger emphasis on those areas in the country strategic plan. Priority: High (December 2023)	Country office (regional bureau, headquarters Emergencies and Transitions Service)	Agreed	WFP will reinforce and expand its long-term partnerships to advance work at the triple nexus by adopting area-based programming.	Programme unit (research, assessment and monitoring unit, regional bureau programme unit, headquarters Emergencies and Transitions Service)	June 2023
			WFP will seek regional bureau support in the development of a country office strategy for supporting conflict-sensitive social protection systems.	Programme unit (regional bureau programme unit)	July 2023
			Conflict sensitivity and contributions to peace at the triple nexus are explicitly addressed in the new CSP and underpin large parts of its underlying strategy. Under the new CSP, support for the nexus approach focuses on governance and social service provision, especially at the local level.	Programme unit (research, assessment and monitoring unit, regional bureau programme unit, headquarters Emergencies and Transitions Service)	June 2023

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			At the United Nations-wide level, WFP will continue to lead, coordinate, actively participate in and maintain relationships within the main vehicles for nexus-related interventions – the multi-partner, multi-sector Reconciliation, Stabilization and Resilience Trust Fund and the Partnership for Recovery and Resilience. This action will be implemented throughout the period of CSP implementation.	Programme unit (research, assessment and monitoring unit)	December 2023
2.3 Given the increasing malnutrition rates in South Sudan WFP should work more proactively with humanitarian and development partners (including the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization) with a view to better understanding the causes and implications of malnutrition and supporting nutrition-related programming in the next country strategic plan. Priority: High (December 2023)	Country office (regional bureau, United Nations country team, headquarters Nutrition Division)	Agreed	In collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund, WFP will conduct an ethnographic study on infant and young child feeding practices.	Programme unit (regional bureau programme unit)	June 2023

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			WFP will conduct a study of its blanket supplementary feeding programme with the aim of better understanding response timing and alternative sources of assistance.	Programme unit (regional bureau research, assessment and monitoring unit, programme unit)	June 2023
			WFP will partner with the University of Juba to update the nutrition causal analysis for South Sudan.	Programme unit (regional bureau programme unit)	June 2023
			WFP will support the Ministry of Health in conducting a study on staple foods.	Programme unit (regional bureau programme unit)	June 2023
2.4 Building on the findings from political economy analyses and the identification of champions in national, state and local government, WFP should articulate the short-, medium- and long-term objectives of its country capacity strengthening work and set out a plan for that work based on its corporate country capacity strengthening framework and in coordination with other United Nations entities. Priority: High (November 2022)	Country office (regional bureau, United Nations country team, Government)	Agreed	Capacity strengthening is included in the new CSP as a stand-alone activity, and memoranda of understanding are being developed to serve as a framework for the provision of support to government institutions at the national level. Capacity strengthening at the national level will focus on the strengthening of capacity for analysis and planning rather than service delivery. Support for service delivery will initially be focused at the local level (state and below) and based on framework agreements to be developed with local actors (including civil society organizations and government	Research, assessment and monitoring unit (country office and regional bureau programme units)	June 2023

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			institutions and offices). This action will be implemented throughout the period of CSP implementation.		
2.5 WFP should strengthen advocacy on integrated school-based health and nutrition programmes and place school feeding at the core of those programmes. WFP should work with communities, faith-based organizations, local governments and national and international non-governmental organizations to examine how complementary interventions that better support improved education outcomes and gender equality can be fostered in order to increase the contribution of the school feeding programme to those objectives. WFP should continue to work with the United Nations Children's Fund as a key partner in its education and nutrition activities. Priority: High (June 2023)	Country office (regional bureau, headquarters School-based Programmes Division, Nutrition Division)	Agreed	WFP will conduct a decentralized evaluation of the school feeding programme.	Research, assessment and monitoring unit (programme unit)	June 2023

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			WFP will develop a school feeding strategy for the country office.	Programme unit (regional bureau programme unit)	October 2023
			WFP is ensuring that nutrition is integrated into the national school health policy and will work with the ministries of health and education to ensure that nutrition messages are integrated into any future curricula updates.	Programme unit (regional bureau programme unit)	July 2023
2.6 In the next country strategic plan, WFP should give greater consideration to addressing the access constraints faced by some groups (such as older persons, persons with disabilities and pastoralists) with a view to ensuring that their food and nutrition needs are met. Priority: Medium (November 2022)	Country office (regional bureau)	Agreed	WFP will continue to target and support agropastoral and pastoral communities, including people living in and migrating to temporary cattle camps. This action will be implemented throughout the period of CSP implementation.	Programme unit (regional bureau programme unit)	April 2023

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			WFP will strengthen its vulnerability-based targeting approach to non-conditional assistance to ensure that targeted groups are reached and inclusion and exclusion errors are minimized. This action will be implemented throughout the period of CSP implementation.	Research, assessment and monitoring unit (field offices, regional bureau programme unit)	February 2023
			Prior to targeting exercises and the distribution of assistance, WFP will provide refresher training on targeting criteria to non-governmental organizations and beneficiary communities. Training on targeting will be particularly important for newer, less experienced partners, including national non-governmental organizations.	Research, assessment and monitoring unit (field offices, regional bureau programme unit)	February 2023
Priority: High Deadline: June 2023 Recommendation 3: To deliver on its ambition to increase the focus on resilience building in the next country strategic plan, WFP needs to take various steps.	Country office (regional bureau, United Nations country team, Government, headquarters divisions)				

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<p>3.1 WFP should give greater consideration to its long-term vision for resilience building work and the approaches (market systems, food systems, community empowerment) that are the most appropriate for various groups and settings.</p> <p>Priority: High (January 2023)</p>	Country office (regional bureau)	Agreed	WFP will develop a resilience strategy informed by the resilience priorities of the new CSP, stakeholder consultations and the findings of the evaluation of the corporate resilience policy.	Programme unit (regional bureau programme unit, headquarters Resilience and Food Systems Service)	June 2023
<p>3.2 To inform strategic insights into, and the scale-up of approaches to, the transition from unconditional food assistance to resilience-oriented activities, and to support the tailoring of WFP interventions to better fit the needs and aspirations of beneficiaries, WFP should conduct research (possibly behavioural insight research) to increase its understanding of behaviours and the underlying objectives, constraints, situations and triggers that drive the transition of beneficiaries from dependence on relief support to self-reliance. Across WFP, there is a need for more sharing of good practices on and positive experiences of beneficiaries' transition from humanitarian to development-</p>	Country office (regional bureau, headquarters Resilience and Food Systems Service)	Agreed	WFP will conduct a study to explore the issues related to dependency.	Research, assessment and monitoring unit	June 2023

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oriented support in order to inform the formulation of a strategy in that area. Priority: High (June 2023)					
			WFP will conduct a decentralized evaluation of its general food distribution programmes.	Research, assessment and monitoring unit (regional bureau programme and research, assessment and monitoring units)	December 2023
3.3 WFP should scale up the development of integrated teams with a view to moving from some degree of siloed implementation of activities to fully incorporating a resilience lens into its portfolio of activities in South Sudan and shifting the mindset of WFP and cooperating partner staff from humanitarian to development thinking. Priority: High (January 2023)	Country office (regional bureau)	Agreed	WFP will develop an integration strategy that will enable it to work with partners to provide an integrated package of emergency, livelihood, education and social cohesion activities in jointly targeted areas and over a sustained period with the aim of achieving systemic and life-changing impacts.	Programme unit (regional bureau programme unit)	June 2023

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<p>Priority: Medium Deadline: April 2023 Recommendation 4: Beneficiary registration and verification processes need to be made more efficient and research, assessment, monitoring and evaluation data and analyses should be better integrated into decision making structures.</p>	Country office (regional bureau)				
<p>4.1 WFP should continue to improve the efficiency of biometric registration and verification processes to reduce the time that they require and the stress they cause for beneficiaries. Priority: Medium (April 2023)</p>	Country office (regional bureau)	Agreed	To improve the beneficiary registration process, WFP will develop and implement a beneficiary sensitization and mobilization strategy that helps to fast-track the overall registration process.	Innovation and SCOPE (digital beneficiary information and transfer management platform) unit (regional bureau research, assessment and monitoring unit)	January 2023
			To improve the verification process, WFP will decentralize to field offices some core functions related to the resolution of verification-related complaints, including the printing of cards, the recapture of fingerprints and the preparation of a follow-up cycle that ensures that no one fails to receive their entitlements.	Innovation and SCOPE unit (regional bureau research, assessment and monitoring unit)	January 2023

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4.2 WFP should address the gaps in capacity for the assessment of research, assessment and monitoring data in the country office and field offices and conduct a specific diagnostic review of monitoring, evaluation and learning systems with a view to informing better integration of those systems into decision making structures and data use by senior management and to improving knowledge management practices, including the sharing of data and evidence with partners. Priority: Medium (January 2023)	Country office (regional bureau)	Agreed	WFP will engage an external independent consultant to conduct a diagnostic review of its monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning function.	Research, assessment and monitoring unit	April 2023
			WFP will review its monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning strategy and standard operating procedures with a view to including knowledge management components.	Research, assessment and monitoring unit	January 2023
			WFP will develop a capacity development plan taking into account the available resources and the needs in each setting.	Research, assessment and monitoring unit	January 2023

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<p>Priority: High Deadline: June 2023 Recommendation 5: WFP should continue to strengthen approaches to a number of cross-cutting themes, including accountability to affected populations, conflict sensitivity and gender equality.</p>	Country office (cooperating partners, regional bureau, headquarters divisions)				
<p>5.1 To address beneficiaries' concerns regarding inadequate communication on ration cuts and reprioritization exercises, WFP and cooperating partners should expand the channels they use for sharing information by, for example, recording messages in local languages, broadcasting them at distribution sites and monitoring the effectiveness of communications with the involvement of local government.</p> <p>Priority: High (June 2023)</p>	Country office (cooperating partners)	Agreed	WFP will develop standard operating procedures for the communication of key messages on the operation plan and prioritization exercises to relevant government agencies, activity managers, field offices and cooperating partners. The key messages will be disseminated in various languages through various channels.	Programme unit (field offices, communications unit)	June 2023

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<p>5.2 WFP should work closely with field offices and cooperating partners to ensure that all feedback from beneficiaries (including feedback received via informal channels) is logged and recorded on community feedback mechanisms, and the issues raised are addressed in a timely manner. Furthermore, helpdesks should be reinstated at all distribution sites (where not yet the case). To provide incentives for senior managers (those at head of field office level and above) to pay due attention to accountability to affected populations, the subject should be included in their performance appraisals. Feedback loops and reporting to beneficiaries on the outcomes and programmatic adjustments resulting from their feedback need to be strengthened.</p> <p>Priority: High (June 2023)</p>	Country office (regional bureau, human resources unit, cooperating partners)	<p>Partially agreed.</p> <p>The proposed actions by the country office in response to the ICSP evaluation recommendations will ensure that issues raised regarding community feedback mechanisms are collected, collated and logged on the SugarCRM software platform but will not ensure their inclusion in the performance appraisals of field office managers.</p>	WFP will train the staff of field offices on the collection, consolidation and reporting of information gathered from complaints and other feedback.	Research, assessment and monitoring unit (field offices)	January 2023

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			WFP will track and report on issues with community feedback mechanisms that field offices collect from cooperating partners, the action taken to address those issues and progress made towards their resolution.	Research, assessment and monitoring unit (field offices)	November 2022
			WFP will revise its process monitoring tools by including observations on the presence of helpdesks at food distribution points and assistance sites.	Research, assessment and monitoring unit (field offices)	November 2022
5.3 WFP should take a long-term approach to achieving its aspirations regarding the progressive application of a gender-transformative approach by defining short-term activities that contribute to that long-term goal. Further research on identifying the enabling factors and good practices in the application of a gender-transformative approach is also recommended. WFP should consider investing in gender-related stand-alone projects that can be implemented by partners. Priority: High (January 2023)	Country office (regional bureau gender unit)	Agreed	WFP will conduct studies (on gender and climate) and analyse the gaps and challenges uncovered in order to identify the areas where stand-alone gender programmes are needed.	Gender and protection unit (research, assessment and monitoring unit)	April 2023

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			WFP will strengthen its collaboration with partners that have expertise in gender-transformative programming and women-led organizations to identify opportunities for women's economic empowerment programmes.	Gender and protection unit	January 2023
			WFP will continue to follow its mainstreaming approach so as to improve gender-blind programmes through application of the gender and age marker.	Gender and protection unit	April 2023
5.4 WFP should build on its work to ensure that conflict sensitivity is mainstreamed into programme design and delivery by continuing to enhance internal capacity to promote consensus on a conflict-sensitive approach to all of its engagement in South Sudan and, in so doing, to contribute to corporate-level learning. Priority: Medium (Ongoing)	Country office (cooperating partners, regional bureau, Emergencies and Transitions Service)	Agreed	The country office will update the conflict sensitivity action plan approved in 2020, which will serve as the framework for supporting the mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity through the enhancement of internal capacity.	Access unit	October 2022

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			The country office is working closely with headquarters to incorporate reporting requirements on conflict sensitivity risks and opportunities into existing risk management and monitoring, evaluation, assessment and learning tools and processes for the country office and field offices.	Access unit (country office research, assessment and monitoring unit)	January 2023
			The country office has recently recruited a new conflict sensitivity expert who will take the lead on these efforts.	Access unit	Completed
Priority: High Deadline: January 2023 Recommendation 6: WFP needs to strengthen partnership arrangements in several areas.	Country office (headquarters divisions, regional bureau)				

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6.1 To address funding constraints going forward, the country office should engage with headquarters and the regional bureau on revising the fundraising strategy for South Sudan by proactively exploring and considering new funding streams such as climate funds and international financial institutions and defining a fundraising strategy for its resilience building activities. Priority: High (January 2023)	Country office (regional bureau, headquarters Public Partnerships and Resourcing Division, Washington Office, headquarters Climate and Disaster Risk Reduction Programmes Unit)	Agreed	The country office will develop a fundraising plan for the financing of the climate and resilience strategy.	Donor relations unit (country office programme unit, regional bureau, headquarters Resilience and Food Systems Service)	April 2023
			The country office will revise its fundraising strategy based on its strategic and operational direction and in accordance with the new CSP, taking into account circumstances, donor appetite and funding opportunities.	Donor relations unit (country office budget and programming unit regional bureau, headquarters Resilience and Food Systems Service)	March 2023

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6.2 In the light of the annual delays in the procurement of food supplies, the country office and regional bureau should proactively encourage headquarters to more flexibly support pre-financing of food procurement in order to bridge the gap between the confirmation of donor contributions and the deadlines for food procurement and delivery and enable effective pre-positioning of supplies in advance of flooding or rainy seasons. Priority: High (January 2023)	Country office (regional bureau, headquarters Strategic Resource Allocation Committee, Supply Chain Operations Division)	Agreed	The country office and the regional bureau will ensure timely communications with headquarters and will continue to work closely with the Corporate Planning and Performance Division and the Public Partnerships and Resourcing Division on timely requests for flexible funding and advances from donors.	Donor relations unit (country office budget and programming unit)	January 2023
			The country office will ensure the proactive preparation of evidence and advocacy materials aimed at justifying the advance funding requests it submits to headquarters.	Budget and programming unit (country office donor relations unit)	January 2023

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6.3 Where possible, WFP should sign field-level agreements of three years duration with its cooperating partners and should advocate multi-year funding commitments. The annual funding commitments made by certain donors, and the two-year duration of most field-level agreements, affect the forward planning of WFP activities. Priority: Medium (January 2023)	Country office (regional bureau, headquarters Public Partnerships and Resourcing Division)	Agreed	WFP will ensure that in 2023 the field-level agreement process includes consideration of the incorporation of multi-year agreements.	Public Partnerships and Resourcing unit	January 2023
6.4 While planning the next country strategic plan WFP should seek to broaden its engagement with South Sudanese stakeholders such as the Ministry of Peacebuilding with regard to peacebuilding interventions and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry for work on climate adaptation. Priority: High (November 2022)	Country office (Government)	Agreed	WFP engaged all relevant stakeholders (including the Ministry of Peacebuilding and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry) in consultative meetings during the development of the new CSP.	Management (country office programme unit)	Completed