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Management response to the recommendations in the summary report on the evaluation of the interim country strategic plans for the Syrian Arab Republic (2018–2025)

Background

1. This document presents the WFP management response to the recommendations from the summary report on the evaluation of the WFP interim country strategic plans (CSPs) for the Syrian Arab Republic for 2018–2025, including the transitional plan for 2018. The evaluation was conducted between October 2022 and January 2024 and assessed WFP's relevance, its strategic positioning and contribution to strategic outcomes, its efficiency in implementation and the factors explaining its performance. Adopting a utilization-focused, consultative approach, the evaluation served the dual purpose of accountability and learning and informed the preparation of a new CSP. The evaluation made five recommendations, three of which are strategic and two operational. The response presented below sets out whether WFP management agrees, partially agrees or disagrees with the evaluation recommendations and sub-recommendations and presents the planned (or completed) actions, responsibilities and timelines for their implementation. In some instances, the country office has agreed with the recommendations but has adjusted the deadlines to permit the implementation of relevant actions.

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Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation and sub-recommendation lead office (with supporting offices, divisions and units in brackets)	Management response	Actions	Action lead office (with supporting offices, divisions and units in brackets)	Action deadline	Status
<p>Priority: Medium Deadline: June 2025</p> <p>1. Better reflect WFP's full mandate - saving and changing lives - in the next CSP by consolidating the transition to a "dual track" approach adopted to address the double burden of needs in the Syrian Arab Republic.</p> <p>The "dual track" approach - combining humanitarian emergency assistance, recovery, safety nets and resilience interventions - should allow for a greater focus on the sustainability of support and the transition from food assistance to resilience and recovery.</p> <p>For this, actions to be implemented include those below.</p>	Country office	Agreed				
<p>1.1. Continue to advocate - jointly with other actors - an early recovery and safety net approach, emphasizing that it is not sustainable to keep people on general food assistance, and continue to make the case that, in a protracted humanitarian crisis, saving lives is about sustaining lives.</p> <p>Priority: medium (June 2025)</p>	Country office (regional bureau and headquarters Partnerships and Innovation Department and Programme Operations Department)	Agreed	1. The country office will identify opportunities to advocate with policymakers and donors for an early recovery and safety net approach for the Syrian Arab Republic and will continue to engage with the Resident Coordinator and other actors on the United Nations 2024-2028 early recovery strategy for the Syrian Arab Republic.	Country office management (country office external partnerships unit and programme unit; regional bureau management)	30 June 2025	Ongoing

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<p>1.2. Clarify the comparative strength of WFP in terms of mandate, expertise and reach in addressing the double burden of needs.</p> <p>Priority: medium (June 2025)</p>	Country office (regional bureau, headquarters)	Agreed	2. Through stakeholder consultations in preparation for the 2026 interim CSP (ICSP) for the Syrian Arab Republic, and in line with the United Nations 2024–2028 early recovery strategy, the country office will produce a concept note that outlines WFP’s comparative strengths in addressing the double burden of needs.	Country office programme unit	30 June 2025	Ongoing
<p>1.3. Develop a theory of change for the next CSP that reflects the transition to the dual track approach.</p> <p>Priority: high (June 2025)</p>	Country office (regional bureau (vulnerability analysis and mapping unit; monitoring and evaluation unit))	Agreed	3. Through stakeholder consultations in preparation for the 2026 ICSP for the Syrian Arab Republic, and in line with the United Nations 2024–2028 early recovery strategy, the country office will develop a theory of change to guide the strategic direction of the next ICSP, reflecting the transition to the dual track approach.	Country office research, assessment and monitoring unit (country office management)	31 December 2025	Ongoing

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1.4. Accompany the theory of change with a results framework and monitoring mechanisms that allow WFP to track medium- to long-term changes; further enhance the country office's learning approach, allowing for stronger attention to long-term issues. Priority: high (June 2025)	Country office (regional bureau research, assessment and monitoring unit)	Agreed	4. The country office will establish a results framework and monitoring mechanisms – based on clear outcome and process indicators – to track medium- and long-term changes to implementation processes and ensure that activities are proceeding according to schedule.	Country office research, assessment and monitoring unit	31 December 2025	Ongoing
			5. To enhance its approach to learning, the country office will ensure that lessons learned are taken into account in the development of the theory of change.	Country office programme unit	31 December 2025	Ongoing
1.5. Increase WFP's direct monitoring of programmes. Priority: medium (December 2024)	Country office	Agreed	6. The country office will increase the proportion of field visits conducted by WFP's direct monitoring staff rather than third-party monitoring teams.	Country office research, assessment and monitoring unit	31 December 2024	Ongoing

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<p>1.6. Identify strategies for addressing harmful gender-related norms under each CSP outcome, including for general food assistance, nutrition and livelihoods interventions.</p> <p>Priority: medium (December 2024)</p>	Country office (regional bureau gender unit)	Agreed	<p>7. The country office will provide cooperating partners with gender budgets to facilitate the implementation of targeted and transformative activities in the field and increase the proportion of female staff and gender officers.</p>	Country office protection, gender and accountability to affected populations unit	31 December 2024	Ongoing
			<p>8. The country office will integrate gender and disability considerations into vulnerability-based targeting and continue to encourage households to nominate women as recipients of assistance.</p>	Country office protection, gender and accountability to affected populations unit	31 December 2024	Ongoing
			<p>9. The country office will complete the gender equality certification programme.</p>	Country office protection, gender and accountability to affected populations unit	31 December 2024	Ongoing

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<p>Priority: high Deadline: March 2025</p> <p>2. Achieve a stronger strategic focus by fine-tuning the design of the portfolio and seeking synergies across interventions to better align action with available financial resources and with the mandate of saving and changing lives. Current circumstances will require challenging strategic decision-making to ensure an effective transition from humanitarian assistance to recovery and resilience.</p> <p>Areas of improvement in each programmatic area are listed below.</p>	Country office	Agreed				
<p>2.1. Unconditional resource transfers. In the absence of increased funding to cover all food-insecure people, reduce and phase out general food assistance where possible, retaining it in areas of severe vulnerability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reduce the number of beneficiaries in order to reach the most vulnerable people with rations that meet their food and nutrition needs; ➤ Review the composition of the food basket to improve nutritional variety and reduce the emphasis on calories. 	Country office; regional bureau; headquarters (Programme Department; Supply Chain and Delivery Division)	Agreed	1. The country office will review its targeting criteria to focus on the most vulnerable households in areas with the highest levels of severe food insecurity – based on assessments.	Country office programme unit (country office management)	31 March 2025	Ongoing
			2. The country office will continue to conduct periodic market functionality surveys and review and adjust the levels and modalities of assistance, in line with food security cluster recommendations.	Country office programme unit (country office management)	31 March 2025	Ongoing

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue rolling out cash-based transfers where feasible, in coordination with relevant actors. ➤ Expand cash-based transfers, considering retail capacity and market functionality. ➤ Regularly review cash and voucher values to take into account general inflation, market prices and other factors. ➤ Keep contingency planning and stocks in case of lack of access to hard-to-reach areas and maximize direct on-the-ground monitoring by WFP. <p>Priority: high (March 2025)</p>			<p>3. The country office will maintain updated contingency plans and stock for emergency response – funds permitting. As part of its contingency plan, the country office will consider cash-based transfer response options which do not require stock on hand.</p>	<p>Country office programme unit (country office management)</p>		
<p>2.2. School feeding. Maintain an area-based approach to school feeding, prioritizing areas with high prevalence of food insecurity and education needs in coordination with education sector partners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue e-voucher support and strengthen coordination with the United Nations Children's Fund to reach more out-of-school children. ➤ Explore the potential of home-grown school feeding initiatives for further diet diversification. <p>Priority: medium (March 2025)</p>	<p>Country office (regional bureau)</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>4. The country office will develop a prioritization matrix based on most recent education and food security data.</p>	<p>Country office programme unit</p>	<p>31 March 2025</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

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<p>2.3. Nutrition. Maintain a strong connection between malnutrition treatment and prevention interventions to address all forms of malnutrition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue to target those most in need of assistance under the blanket supplementary feeding programme. ➤ Maintain current targets for the e-voucher programme for pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls; consider increasing the duration of assistance and expanding eligibility to second pregnancies. ➤ Improve the quality of social and behaviour change communication through increased investment and more training of partners, local authorities and key informants and make engagement more interactive so that it not only informs but also inspires and empowers women and girls. <p>Priority: high (31 December 2024)</p>	Country office (regional bureau)	Agreed	5. The country office will continue to link prevention and treatment interventions via the community management of acute malnutrition platform.	Country office programme unit	31 December 2024	Ongoing
			6. To maximize impact, the country office will prioritize integrating nutrition as a key cross-cutting component of its response. The country office will use nutrition vulnerability as a key criterion for determining eligibility for assistance for nutrition interventions as well as for emergency food assistance interventions (under strategic outcome 1).	Country office programme unit	31 December 2024	Ongoing

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<p>2.4. Early recovery/resilience. Strengthen the adoption of a food systems approach for food security and nutrition in coordination with relevant actors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discuss with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme the opportunity to develop a theory of change for the food systems approach. ➤ Within an overall food systems strategic framework, identify short-term (restoring community-level agricultural productive assets) and long-term (supporting better food supply) activities. • Focus on areas and communities where revival of agricultural production will have an influence on food security, reliance on general food assistance and shock responsiveness. <p>Priority: high (31 December 2025)</p>	Country office (regional bureau)	Agreed	<p>7. The country office will engage with relevant stakeholders to develop a theory of change for the adoption of a food system strategy in the Syrian Arab Republic, focusing on activities along the food value chain that can contribute to strengthening the food system – in its ability to sustain and recover from shocks – and improve food and nutrition security.</p>	Country office programme unit	31 December 2025	Ongoing
			<p>8. The country office will focus on promoting healthy diets while strengthening the resilience of smallholder farmers and small-scale enterprises along the food value chain, focusing on critical enablers of improved livelihoods, with the ultimate aim of reducing humanitarian needs.</p>	Country office programme unit	31 December 2025	Ongoing

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation and sub-recommendation lead office (with supporting offices, divisions and units in brackets)	Management response	Actions	Action lead office (with supporting offices, divisions and units in brackets)	Action deadline	Status
<p>2.5. Social safety nets. Continue to focus on interventions that support inclusive social safety nets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support the rehabilitation of public bakeries to provide subsidized bread. ➤ Support national efforts to pilot the fortification of bread through a wheat flour fortification programme. ➤ Provide technical assistance and share WFP learning with Syrian institutions in relation to the implementation of sustainable safety nets that support the poorest and most vulnerable in society. ➤ Facilitate understanding of cash programming for social protection among key stakeholders. <p>Priority: medium (March 2025)</p>	Country office (regional bureau)	Agreed	9. The country office will provide technical advice and services to partners to enhance the targeting and delivery and access to basic social services.	Country office programme unit (country office management)	31 August 2025	Ongoing
<p>Priority: high Deadline: June 2025</p> <p>3. Achieve a stronger strategic focus by enhancing targeting to reach the most vulnerable households with general food assistance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue engagement with relevant stakeholders to gain access to beneficiary and non-beneficiary data to allow for fair and transparent targeting. 	Country office (regional bureau)	Agreed	1. The country office will enhance its targeting approach in order to prioritize emergency food assistance for the most vulnerable households. In doing so, the country office will continue to engage with relevant stakeholders to gain adequate access to data. At the same time, the country office will test the feasibility and effectiveness of various transfer modalities.	Country office programme unit (country office management; regional bureau programme unit)	30 June 2025	Ongoing

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation and sub-recommendation lead office (with supporting offices, divisions and units in brackets)	Management response	Actions	Action lead office (with supporting offices, divisions and units in brackets)	Action deadline	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establish an annual process that supports the grievance redress mechanism for beneficiaries appealing exclusion decisions. ➤ Build further evidence on the effectiveness of various cash-based transfer modalities in improving the food security of beneficiaries in various locations; consider cash vs. vouchers, cash-based transfers vs. in-kind transfers and full cash-based transfers vs hybrid transfers. ➤ Produce a verified beneficiary list for general food assistance that is as accurate as possible. ➤ Strengthen direct communication with general food assistance beneficiaries and cooperating partners on WFP's targeting methodology. 			<p>2. The country office will apply identity management digital systems to registration and verification processes, thereby enhancing assurance that beneficiaries are real, unique and eligible. The country office will also ensure adequate mechanisms are in place for beneficiaries to appeal exclusion decisions.</p>	<p>Country office programme unit (country office management; regional bureau programme unit)</p>	<p>30 June 2025</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Priority: medium</p> <p>Recommendation deadline: June 2025</p> <p>4. Further adapt to context and strengthen WFP's contribution to achieving cross-cutting aims, supporting principled aid delivery and accountability to crisis-affected populations.</p>	<p>Country office</p>	<p>Agreed</p>				

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<p>4.1. Humanitarian principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Based on need.</i> Continue advocating for the right to adequate food and demonstrate a transparent approach in the delivery of assistance according to identified need. ➤ <i>Conflict sensitivity.</i> Maintain a strong understanding of the operating environment and conflict dynamics through community presence and engagement with all actors on the ground. Prioritize the safety and well-being of staff and cooperating partners by adopting conflict-sensitive measures to avoid causing harm. <p>Priority : medium (June 2025)</p>	Country office (regional bureau)	Agreed	1. The country office will continue to advocate as described in sub-recommendation 4.1 and will undertake an integrated context analysis and risk assessment to document and analyse context, conflict sensitivity and gender issues as they relate to vulnerability and assessment of needs.	Country office security unit and programme unit (country office management)	30 June 2025	Ongoing
			2. The country office will continue to deepen understanding of its operating environment through increased engagement with relevant actors on ground and community presence, so as to ensure that conflict sensitivity continues to guide operations.	Country office security unit (country office programme unit, country office management)	30 June 2025	Ongoing

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<p>4.2. Protection, accountability to affected populations, community feedback mechanisms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Accountability to affected populations.</i> Expand helpline centres and use direct community-level engagement to communicate information regarding the reduction of assistance. Clarify targeting processes in a transparent manner. ➤ <i>Community feedback mechanisms.</i> Maintain a WFP mechanism directly accessible by beneficiaries; and enhance the quality of the mechanism across all areas and all cooperating partners. ➤ <i>Capacity of cooperating partners.</i> Further strengthen WFP efforts to support the capacity of cooperating partners to develop their own policies and tools for community feedback mechanisms and accountability to affected populations and support them in communicating decisions to communities. <p>Priority: medium (December 2024)</p>	Country office (regional bureau)	Agreed	<p>3. The country office will strengthen two-way communication with beneficiaries and will conduct extensive community consultations to ensure that the new targeting criteria are developed in full consultation with communities and that reasons for reducing assistance are clear.</p>	Country office protection, gender and accountability to affected populations unit	31 December 2024	Completed
			<p>4. The country office will work to enhance community feedback mechanisms across the whole of the Syrian Arab Republic by establishing a new helpline and increasing the number of operators and establishing a call centre for individuals living in the north-west of the country.</p>	Country office protection, gender and accountability to affected populations unit	31 December 2024	Completed
			<p>5. The country office will further strengthen the capacity of cooperating partners to enhance community feedback mechanisms, for example by training cooperating partners to collect information for the corporate response mechanism initiative.</p>	Country office protection, gender and accountability to affected populations unit	31 December 2024	Ongoing

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation and sub-recommendation lead office (with supporting offices, divisions and units in brackets)	Management response	Actions	Action lead office (with supporting offices, divisions and units in brackets)	Action deadline	Status
<p>4.3. Gender and inclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Nutrition.</i> Further integrate corporate nutrition and gender policies by considering household gender dynamics when designing and implementing nutrition programmes. ➤ <i>Gender-transformative actions.</i> As part of early recovery and resilience activities, undertake gender-transformative actions and monitor their progress using participatory approaches involving community members. ➤ <i>Inclusion.</i> Strengthen the inclusion of people with disabilities across all activities and monitor it more closely. <p>Priority: medium (31/12/2024)</p>	Country office (regional bureau)	Agreed	<p>6. As per sub-recommendation 1.6, the country office will complete the gender equality certification programme.</p> <p>7. The country office will invest in engaging with men, women and local leaders within communities to raise awareness in relation to gender-based violence, household caring and sharing responsibilities, early marriage and nutrition-related health issues.</p>	Country office protection, gender and accountability to affected populations unit	31 December 2024	Ongoing
<p>Priority: medium Deadline: December 2024</p> <p>5. Maximize internal and external resources in support of a “dual track” approach and a focus on transition.</p>	Country office	Agreed				

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<p>5.1. In the context of reduced financial resources, ensure the strategic use of internal resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Align activities with available resources, optimizing planned results (see recommendation 2). ➤ Advocate unearmarked funding for early recovery. ➤ Support and empower staff seeking to implement changes in operational direction, ensuring that they have the right skills and competencies. ➤ Streamline, optimize, consolidate and simplify processes in order to enhance internal cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness. <p>Priority: medium (December 2024)</p>	Country office (regional bureau)	Agreed	<p>1. In line with available resources, the country office will aim to ensure that beneficiaries in greatest need receive adequate emergency assistance, while at the same time implementing resilience and livelihoods interventions that can reduce humanitarian needs and promote self-resilience.</p>	Country office management team (country office programme unit; regional bureau management team)	31 December 2024	Ongoing
			<p>2. The country office will continue to advocate with donors on the need to prioritize early recovery and safety net programmes and will request that the regional bureau and headquarters do the same.</p>	Country office management team (country office programme unit; regional bureau management team)	31 December 2024	Ongoing
			<p>3. The country office will go through an organizational alignment and optimization exercise to simplify processes, reduce costs and ensure that the country office has the right staff with the right competences to deliver on its mandate.</p>	Country office management, human resources unit	31 December 2024	Ongoing

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation and sub-recommendation lead office (with supporting offices, divisions and units in brackets)	Management response	Actions	Action lead office (with supporting offices, divisions and units in brackets)	Action deadline	Status
<p>5.2. Leverage headquarters resources in support of country office efforts to increase and diversify funding sources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase headquarters and regional bureau support to the country office in advocating unearmarked and multi-year funding in support of early recovery. ➤ Seek to identify new donors for early recovery activities and expand partnerships with current donors to scale up current successful resilience activities. <p>Priority: high (December 2024)</p>	<p>Headquarters Partnerships and Innovation Department (regional bureau)</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>4. The country office partnerships and management teams will continue to work closely with the regional bureau and headquarters partnership units and management teams, as well as WFP global offices, to strengthen communication and reporting and scale up advocacy with donors at the highest levels, advocating for unearmarked and multi-year funding in support of early recovery interventions.</p>	<p>Country office, regional bureau and headquarters partnerships units (country office, regional bureau and headquarters management teams)</p>	<p>31 December 2024</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
			<p>5. To sustain and scale up the country office's resilience portfolio, the country office management and partnerships teams will work closely with the regional bureau, headquarters and the WFP global offices to scale up advocacy with current donors, United Nations funds, political stakeholders and the private sector in order to expand current partnerships and/or identify new donors – including exploring innovative funding mechanisms.</p>	<p>Country office, regional bureau and headquarters partnerships unit (country office, regional bureau and headquarters management teams)</p>	<p>31 December 2024</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation and sub-recommendation lead office (with supporting offices, divisions and units in brackets)	Management response	Actions	Action lead office (with supporting offices, divisions and units in brackets)	Action deadline	Status
<p>5.3 Support capacity development for cooperating partners in the area of early recovery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide adequate support to cooperating partners to ensure staff capacity and growth. ➤ Select partners for capacity-building training and support on early recovery. <p>Priority: medium (December 2024)</p>	Country office (regional bureau)	Agreed	6. To support the expansion of its resilience portfolio, the country office will work to ensure the capacity development of its cooperating partners in the area of early recovery, including through guidance and training.	Country office programme unit	31 December 2024	Ongoing