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MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT – THE CONGO COUNTRY PORTFOLIO (2009–2012)

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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.

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

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BACKGROUND

1. This document presents the management response to the Congo country portfolio evaluation (CPE) (2009–2012). The independent evaluation findings generally consider WFP's activities to be appropriate and relevant to the evolving humanitarian and development needs of the Congo.
2. The conclusions of the CPE come at a very timely moment for WFP's work in the Congo and will inform ongoing discussions on the strategic direction of WFP's interventions. Many of the recommendations refer to WFP's country strategy for 2014–2018, which is currently under development and will underpin the formulation of a new country programme (CP) expected to start in January 2015.
3. The evaluation's recognition of the partnerships that WFP is building with the Government, especially with the ministries of education and social affairs, is welcome. Partnerships have been strengthened through a new Memorandum of Understanding between WFP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), extending the scope of collaboration beyond school feeding to include a nutrition component in the safety net for preventing stunting. WFP will continue to identify additional partners to ensure programme sustainability.
4. Management notes that actions addressing the CPE's recommendations related to safety net interventions, partnership strengthening, and enhancement of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacities are already under way.
5. Actions addressing the CPE recommendations, and implementation timelines are presented in the attached matrix. Overall, management finds these recommendations to be constructive, not only for future activities in the Congo but also in providing guidance for other WFP offices with similar operational profiles.

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Recommendations	Action by	Management response and action taken	Implementation deadline
<p>Recommendation 1: Conduct an independent formative evaluation of the safety net programme to inform the planned scale-up and identify priorities and strategies for continued support to this area as one of the main components of the new country strategy document (CSD).</p> <p>Given that social protection is a government priority, the independent evaluation, which will also provide input to recommendation 7, should identify how the safety net programme can be effectively adjusted and set out the monitoring and evaluation plan.</p>	<p>Country office with support from the Johannesburg Regional Bureau (OMJ) and Headquarters</p> <p>Country office</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>An independent mid-term evaluation of the e-voucher programme was completed in January 2013; follow-up is under way. In July 2013, WFP prepared a biannual monitoring report for the Government to measure progress in implementing the CPE recommendations. This report included comparison of the food consumption scores of project beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, and documented significant improvements, especially in dietary diversity. It showed that most outcome indicators were met, but identified some (M&E) challenges.</p> <p>Thus, rather than conduct another independent evaluation so soon after the last one, activities will be reviewed with support from external consultants, the regional bureau and Headquarters units and concentrating on developing recommendations and drafting elements for the safety net component of the new CP. The Policy, Programme and Innovation Division and OMJ will assist the country office with a capacity needs assessment ahead of the scale-up.</p> <p>In April 2014, the country office will have been using electronic transfers for two years; an independent evaluation of these transfers will be considered during the second half of 2014.</p>	<p>Implemented</p> <p>December 2013</p> <p>December 2014</p>



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<p>Recommendation 4: Ensure the humanitarian assistance component under the new CSD includes capacity development of the Government and operational partners, especially in the area of disaster mitigation and preparedness.</p> <p>In line with the sharper focus on development in the evolving context of the country, the new CSD should ensure stronger links between the humanitarian and development components of the portfolio through the inclusion of specific strategies for capacity development in disaster mitigation and preparedness.</p>	Country office	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The Ministry of Defence has requested WFP to train its personnel in disaster preparedness, and the Minister of Social Affairs has requested assistance in capacity development from the humanitarian community.</p> <p>Disaster management and preparedness is one of the three pillars in the CSD; WFP plans to support the Government with vulnerability assessment and mapping and early warning systems. The country office will seek assistance from the regional bureau and Headquarters units in training government counterparts at the start of country strategy implementation.</p>	March 2015
<p>Recommendation 5: The new CSD, while addressing both humanitarian and development needs, should prioritize capacity development and knowledge transfer; include a transition road map for further increasing government responsibility and takeover of funding; and contain explicit commitments and strategies for enhancing coordination efforts by the Government.</p> <p>Paving the way to sustainability, a medium- to long-term transition/hand-over plan with set milestones should be agreed upon with the Government. The new CSD should include explicit commitments to: i) support the Government in developing policy and coordinating the activities and inputs of its development partners, and ii) play a prominent role in structures and processes for coordination among United Nations agencies in the country, in areas where WFP has an established and emerging comparative advantage: humanitarian assistance, school feeding and social protection.</p>	Country office, with support from OMJ and Headquarters	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The emphasis on capacity development and knowledge transfer is appropriate and relevant. The safety net programme is a joint effort between WFP and the Ministry of Social Affairs and provides an example of good practice in capacity enhancement. In The country office planned to start discussions with government ministries in mid-September 2013, to identify their needs for technical support in 2014.</p> <p>The country office will seek technical expertise from OMJ and Headquarters units, as appropriate, especially in cash and vouchers, nutrition and performance measurement.</p>	March 2014



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<p>Recommendation 6: Develop a joint WFP–Government capacity development plan for the priority areas in the new CSD and ensure its inclusion in the detailed planning for component implementation.</p> <p>This capacity development plan should outline priorities across the component areas and clearly indicate where WFP will provide inputs. The priorities identified should be included in WFP's internal planning process (recommendation 7), and in the implications for funding to be discussed with the Government (recommendation 10).</p>	<p>Country office, with support from OMJ</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>This builds on recommendations 1 and 5.</p> <p>In conjunction with preparation of the new CP, the country office will prepare a capacity development plan outlining priorities and identifying where WFP technical assistance will be most effective.</p>	<p>May 2014</p>
<p>Recommendation 7: Under the framework of the annual performance plan, develop an implementation plan in 2014 for each area of the new CSD that maximizes alignment with WFP and government policies; identifies partners, strategies and targets; strengthens monitoring, and specifies appropriate human resource and funding needs.</p> <p>This exercise should provide the basis for the implementation of the portfolio and allow for planning of resource needs (recommendations 8 and 10). For each component, it should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ build on the findings of the present evaluation, in particular with reference to gender, social protection and capacity development, and seek to improve alignment with WFP policies; ➤ include strategies and targets for both policy and operational aspects of the portfolio; ➤ identify opportunities for partnerships and strategies to optimize these, giving specific attention to technical, non-logistical areas; ➤ formulate strategies that allow for streamlining and improving the monitoring systems; and ➤ identify implications for staffing and resource needs. <p>This process should be carried out with the involvement of the Government and implementing partners, and the recommendations should be reflected in country office programming.</p>	<p>Country office, with support from OMJ</p> <p>RMP</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The country office will develop an implementation plan with OMJ and the Performance Management and Monitoring Division (RMP) before the end of the first quarter of 2014.</p> <p>In consultation with the regional bureau, RMP will advise the country office on incorporating elements of the implementation plan into the country office's Annual Performance Plan to enable systematic and integrated follow-up and accountability.</p>	<p>March 2014</p> <p>March 2014</p>



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<p>Recommendation 8: Conduct a review of country office staffing needs in light of the CSD priorities in social protection, market analysis, and disaster preparedness and mitigation.</p> <p>Draw up a staffing plan for the CSD period that will allow the country office, within each of the component areas, to: i) adequately respond to requirements; ii) increase effectiveness and efficiency; and iii) play a stronger technical assistance/advisory role in its engagement with the Government. This should equip the country office with a fit-for-purpose team and adequate staffing level to analyse strategic opportunities, while achieving efficient performance in the conventional management functions. Attention should be given to securing the appropriate skills sets in the team, both national and international, in core component areas of the portfolio, which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ social protection, including education/school feeding; ➤ market analysis for local purchases and urban vouchers; and ➤ humanitarian response and disaster preparedness and mitigation. <p>This would allow WFP to provide more substantial input to national dialogue and coordination, and support the implementation of the portfolio through strong technical input in appropriate areas. Outputs from recommendations 6 and 7 would contribute to the staffing profile.</p>	<p>Country office, with support from Headquarters and OMJ</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The country office plans to conduct a staff review to assess the skill sets required to implement priorities under the new CSD: social protection, market analysis and disaster preparedness and mitigation.</p>	<p>March 2014</p>



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<p>Recommendation 9: Before the implementation of the new CSD, conduct a comprehensive review of the country office monitoring and reporting practices, based on the new Strategic Results Framework, to strengthen links between data collection, analysis and use of data for decision-making.</p> <p>This should include: i) redoubling efforts to make sure all monitoring is done comprehensively and accurately to generate full data sets; ii) ensuring that all project monitoring is done in partnership with the Government and/or non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and iii) planning and implementing external evaluations at appropriate times in project cycles.</p>	<p>Country office with support from OMJ</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Actions already taken to address this recommendation include recruitment of two United Nations Volunteers to boost M&E capacity; revision of terms of reference for field missions, to clarify objectives; establishment of a mechanism for the submission and follow-up of a mission report; review – and updating where necessary – of the school feeding guide for schools, checklists and other monitoring tools; and, in June 2013, enhancement of the country office's monitoring capacity with the arrival of Junior Professional Officers covering vulnerability analysis and mapping and M&E.</p> <p>The safety net project is monitored jointly by WFP and the Government, and – following the Minister of Education's appointment of a focal person assigned to WFP – joint monitoring missions are undertaken for the school feeding programme.</p> <p>The country office will work with the regional bureau to: i) implement the corporate M&E system COMET; and ii) reinforce the capacity of government staff involved in projects to ensure that they use the COMET database to generate data for decision-making.</p>	<p>Implemented</p> <p>December 2013</p>
<p>Recommendation 10: Draw up a funding strategy from 2014 onwards to support advocacy with the Government as to the funding of operations and staff in line with the agreed CSD and transition plan.</p> <p>The strategy for continued and scaled-up funding of WFP operations by the Government should be in line with the agreed transition road map (see recommendation 5) so that by the end of the CSD period the bulk of the technical positions are funded by the Government. The plan should be based on the detailed planning for components (see recommendation 7) and staffing needs (see recommendation 8). It should also identify how the monitoring of operations – outputs, outcomes and achievements of the programme – will be reported back to the Government to provide the rationale for continued support (see recommendation 9).</p>	<p>Country office</p> <p>Country office, with support from OMJ and Headquarters</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The Government has given a written commitment to funding up to 60 percent of any WFP project budget. Since early 2013, the Ministry of Planning has held quarterly meetings with United Nations agencies to discuss their respective activities, budgets and fund utilization, and has assigned a focal person to each agency to follow up on the implementation of projects that use Government funding. The country office has submitted concept notes requesting 2014 budget allocations from relevant ministries.</p> <p>The country office will update the basic agreement with the Government.</p> <p>The country office will develop a funding strategy for the country strategy, with support from the regional bureau and Headquarters units when necessary.</p>	<p>September 2013</p> <p>December 2013</p>



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

CP	country programme
CPE	country portfolio evaluation
CSD	country strategy document
IPHD	International Partnership for Human Development
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
OMJ	Johannesburg Regional Bureau (Southern Africa)
REACH	Renew Efforts Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition
RMP	Performance Management and Monitoring Division
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund