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MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT – THE NIGER COUNTRY PORTFOLIO (2007–2011)

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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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BACKGROUND

1. This document presents the management response to the Niger country portfolio evaluation (2007–2011), which the Secretariat welcomes.
2. Partnerships and integrated programming are the foundations of WFP's approach to resilience in the Niger. The country office is focusing on: i) developing human capital through school meals and programmes to combat malnutrition; and ii) enhancing agricultural production by supporting land recovery, irrigation and local purchase. Safety nets in place for the lean season include targeted relief distributions and blanket feeding. Capacity has been developed to monitor and report on activities.
3. At the request of the Government, WFP is expanding the school meals programme in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), with special attention to nomads. WFP has begun to use local purchase for school feeding.
4. Management actions seek to reinforce WFP's work in the Niger and its partnership with the Government and others.



**MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT —
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Recommendations	Action by	Management response and action taken	Implementation deadline
Recommendations for the country office			
<p>Recommendation 1: Launch a preventive supplementary feeding pilot programme using selected Centres de récupération nutritionnelle ambulatoire en charge de la malnutrition modérée (CRENAM) sites. The country office should choose a region in which to launch a preventive supplementary feeding pilot programme for all children 6–23 months of age with below-average weight/height ratios or whose mid-upper arm circumference is below a certain threshold. The pilot programme should be run by partners responsible for CRENAM in locations adjoining CRENAM premises. This will reduce time and costs by eliminating the need for a census and registration and by limiting inclusion and exclusion errors. It could also provide a starting point for implementing a multi-sectoral approach to addressing the causes of childhood malnutrition other than lack of access to food.</p>	Country office	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>WFP recognizes that limited access of at-risk populations to health facilities such as CRENAM and the limited capacity of CRENAM are major challenges. Because CRENAM are government structures, the country office will discuss these challenges with key partners before launching a preventive supplementary feeding pilot for children under 2 in one of the existing rehabilitation centres for moderate malnutrition in late 2013.</p>	December 2013
<p>Recommendation 2: Find alternative solutions to the nutritional problems of people with tuberculosis (TB) and HIV. After the failure of the eleventh round of negotiations of the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the suspension of WFP assistance because of the lack of funding, patients with TB and HIV no longer receive food assistance, although they continue to receive medication. The country office should undertake discussions with the nutrition cluster or within the framework of the Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition (REACH) or Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) initiatives to find partners able to provide long-term food assistance.</p>	Country office	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>WFP will engage partners in seeking alternative food assistance solutions for TB patients and HIV clients, contingent upon availability of funding. Because of the low prevalence of HIV and AIDS in the Niger, the Government is likely to prioritize access to basic health services.</p>	December 2013

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<p>Recommendation 3: Establish a multi-year programme to support agropastoral activity. The country office should conduct assessments in a number of high-potential areas where multi-year food-for-work (FFW) and cash-for-work (CFW) activities could be launched, detaching its programming decisions from geographic targeting procedures directed by the <i>Dispositif national de prévention et de gestion des crises alimentaires</i> (DNP-GCA). It should also establish longer-term relationships with its own implementing partners and with other donors – the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), etc. – to develop an integrated technical and financial support programme. In 2012, the country office began to identify joint agricultural support projects conducted with other actors. This initiative should be continued and strengthened in the coming years.</p>	Country office	<p>Partially agreed.</p> <p>Since 2012, WFP has sought long-term partnerships with FAO, IFAD and the Government's <i>Nigériens Nourish Nigériens</i> (3N) initiative. It has engaged ministries in expanding cash-for-assets (CFA) and food-for-assets (FFA) activities.</p> <p>FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP jointly developed a strategy and targeting for agricultural support projects. WFP and IFAD launched a multi-year project to develop and protect agro-pastoral areas. Given the importance of aligning with government priorities and supporting capacity development, WFP will continue to base its programming decisions on the geographical targeting proposed by the <i>Dispositif national de prévention et de gestion des crises alimentaires</i> (Food Crisis Prevention and Mitigation Mechanism).</p>	Ongoing
<p>Recommendation 4: Streamline support to cereal banks by defining specific objectives. The country office should specify its objectives for cereal banks. This could involve viewing them primarily as a tool for emergency relief, for example as a source of pre-positioned stocks managed by communities. The management model for that is relatively simple, with the cereal banks concentrating on good practices in supply management and collective management. Another approach would be to see the cereal banks as an economic activity that contributes to longer-term community resilience, which requires financial sustainability. This longer-term approach would require much more rigorous management. Both models are valid, and there are technical partners in the Niger with the necessary skills; the second model requires much more investment in training and assistance over a longer term, which the country office will need to take into account in field-level agreements with partners.</p>	Country office	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Continued support for cereal banks will depend on government clarification of objectives and steps being taken to address problems.</p> <p>The country office is developing a post-2013 strategy and assessing the need for continuing WFP support for cereal banks.</p>	July 2013 (new operation to be submitted for approval at EB.2/2013)



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<p>Recommendation 5: Strengthen school feeding management training for school management committees. This measure will promote greater ownership of school feeding activities by the communities involved. The country office should seek out partnerships with organizations so that the training takes place in the framework of a functional literacy programme for adults.</p>	Country office	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>WFP is expanding training for the school feeding programme by providing refresher training for directors of schools already in the programme and training directors of those schools included in the expansion.</p>	Implemented
Recommendations for the country office and Headquarters			
<p>Recommendation 6: Expand school feeding support in targeted areas to cover preschool and secondary schoolchildren (second basic cycle). This measure would significantly increase the number of students targeted; currently, only primary schoolchildren are covered. It would improve the balance between planned and actual amounts of food distributed in assisted schools providing preschool education. It would also facilitate the transition from the first to the second basic cycle, particularly for girls who have passed their final primary-school examinations. To be effective, this measure would require a budget increase and additional efforts by the country office and Headquarters to secure adequate funding.</p>	Country office and Policy, Programme and Innovation Division (OSZ) – Programme Guidance and Policy Service/ School Feeding and Chronic Hunger Unit	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>In 2012, at the Government’s request, WFP began expanding school feeding coverage, focusing on nomads in the country. WFP is developing a post-2013 strategy; it is discussing the feasibility of expanding the target age group given that the current target group of vulnerable primary-school age children is not being covered.</p>	



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<p>Recommendation 7: Reduce the number of programme categories by consolidating interventions under the protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) category and resorting to emergency operations (EMOPs) in crisis situations. The country office faces a real challenge in terms of planning because the current system is two-track: some interventions fall under both the well-funded PRRO/EMOP category and the less-funded country programme (CP) category. Each category has its own planning cycle. This may occasionally cause mistakes, and also makes it difficult for the country office to streamline its overall portfolio to face fluctuating needs. The Niger is constantly having to adjust before or after a crisis; there were three major food crises between 2005 and 2013. So, even if it means departing from the provisions of the “Programme Category Review”¹ document, the country office and Headquarters could consolidate the portfolio of activities for the Niger under the PRRO category and reinforce them occasionally if necessary through an EMOP. Among the country portfolio activities, the one that least fits the PRRO category is support for school meals, for which another funding source such as a development project could be used.</p>	Country office and OSZ	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Beginning in January 2014, WFP will have one PRRO to respond to both transitory and chronic needs; it will include targeted school feeding.</p> <p>The country office's priority is to ensure an integrated approach.</p>	July 2013 (new operation to be submitted for approval at EB.2/2013 and implemented from January 2014)
<p>Recommendation 8: Shift to longer-term field-level agreements with main implementing partners. The short-term nature of these field-level agreements limits the effectiveness of activities, such as FFA and cereal banks, that would benefit from longer-term implementing partner presence. The lack of preliminary planning and monitoring of activities can be attributed, at least in part, to the fact that the implementing partners cannot take a longer-term perspective because of the short-term nature of their contracts with WFP.</p>	Country office and OSZ	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>WFP will examine long-term field-level agreements used in other protracted situations and will work with partners to establish long-term agreements that ensure continuity and implementation.</p>	December 2013



¹ WFP/EB.A/2010/11/Rev.1.



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Recommendation for Headquarters			
<p>Recommendation 9: Review WFP information technology (IT) systems to deal more effectively with cash transfers. The current IT systems in the country office are inadequate for ensuring satisfactory monitoring of cash distributions. Efficiency ratios and calculations of portfolio shares are generally determined based on food volume without taking cash transfers into account. An increasing share of the portfolio is in the form of cash transfers, which creates problems for country office staff and for evaluators monitoring activity levels. It would be useful to have an IT system that could handle data on cash distributions in the same way that the Commodity Movement Processing and Analysis System (COMPAS) tracks food distributions. It should be compatible with COMPAS, facilitate unified analysis of cash and food distributions, and use a common unit of measure for volume such as the value of a ton of food based on a set reference price. This will require a more comprehensive review at Headquarters.</p>	<p>OSZ – Programme Innovations Service Budget and Programming Division/ Business Innovation and Support Office</p>	<p>Agreed. The Cash-for-Change initiative includes a beneficiary management system, which is being piloted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Somalia and the Sudan. The system includes beneficiary registration, verification of identity through biometrics and tracking of the quantity and frequency of assistance. Once the pilot is complete in mid-2013, and if resources are available, the system will be scaled up, giving priority to country offices with large cash and voucher components, including the Niger. In line with WFP’s output indicators, assistance provided in the form of cash or vouchers is reported as US\$ distributed.</p>	<p>2013–2014</p>
Recommendation for the country office, the Government and other technical partners involved in vulnerability surveys			
<p>Recommendation 10: Study the feasibility of modifying the Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) surveys and the joint household vulnerability surveys to provide more precise detailed geographic analysis. To overcome geographic targeting problems that occur mainly in relation to blanket feeding activities but also with other interventions, it would be useful to have analyses that provide more detail on malnutrition rates and food insecurity at lower geographic levels within the framework of the SMART surveys and the joint vulnerability surveys. For the SMART surveys, this would mean performing analyses at the sub-regional level, while for the joint vulnerability surveys it would involve analysis at the community level. These changes would require major additional financial and staffing resources from the various partners involved. This requires prior assessment of the options to determine technical and financial feasibility.</p>	<p>Country office and Analysis and Nutrition Service in collaboration with the Government and technical partners</p>	<p>Agreed. The country office is willing to assess the feasibility of modifying surveys, in collaboration with the Government since the surveys are a government-led exercise. The country office also recognizes that a more detailed analysis may require additional resources beyond what is typically available. A short-term expert will be contracted to review the options for targeting and to determine how best to address this recommendation.</p>	<p>December 2013</p>

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

COMPAS	Commodity Movement Processing and Analysis System
CRENAM	<i>Centres de récupération nutritionnelle ambulatoire en charge de la malnutrition modérée</i> (mobile nutritional rehabilitation centres for moderate malnutrition)
EMOP	emergency operation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFA	food for assets
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IT	information technology
OSZ	Policy, Programme and Innovation Division
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
SMART	Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions
TB	tuberculosis
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund