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Evaluation Reports

**For consideration**

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## **Management Response to the Recommendations of the Summary Evaluation Report — Iraq Country Portfolio (2010–2015)**

### **Background**

1. This document presents the Management Response to the Recommendations of the Summary Evaluation Report of Iraq Country Portfolio (2010–2015). The evaluation covered the Iraq country strategy 2010–2014 and all WFP activities from 2010 to 2015, with the exception of activities in Iraq carried out under regional emergency operation (EMOP) 200433. It assessed the alignment and strategic positioning of WFP's country strategy and portfolio; factors and quality of strategic decision-making; and performance and results of the WFP portfolio.
2. Management is pleased to note that the country strategy was found to be appropriately designed, well aligned with the WFP Strategic Plan, and implemented in coordination with government ministries. WFP positioned itself strategically alongside its United Nations partners, responding to immediate humanitarian needs and introducing flexible support modalities in a difficult operational environment.
3. Management takes note of the challenges and shortcomings identified in the report. Notably, limitations in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity led to a significant gap in the evidence base needed for informed decision-making. Management is also aware of the problems associated with targeting of populations in an urban context. The proposed actions outlined in this response are intended to address these challenges.
4. The findings and recommendations of this evaluation are much appreciated and accepted by management and they will help to form a solid foundation for WFP's next Iraq country strategy – to be developed in line with the roll-out of the new country strategic planning approach.
5. The following matrix sets out the planned actions and implementation timelines.

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MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT — IRAQ COUNTRY PORTFOLIO (2010–2015)			
Recommendations	Action by	Management response and action taken	Implementation deadline
<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> With support from the regional bureau, the country office should start preparing the next country strategy before the end of 2016. The strategy should acknowledge the protracted nature of the conflict in Iraq and predict displacements over the next three years. It should incorporate a mid-term review process to track progress and ensure relevancy. The following should be included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) a package of activities that includes continuation of WFP’s ongoing support to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and emergency life-saving activities – immediate-response rations – and continued management of the WFP-led clusters;</li> <li>ii) reoriented capacity development interventions for targeted safety net programmes in food-insecure areas. Activities should be coordinated with those of other major actors, with a new emphasis on vocational training and cash transfer modalities, through the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The possible regeneration of school feeding and mother and child health and nutrition (MCHN) programmes should be considered, based on the adjustments recommended below;</li> <li>iii) WFP support that is based on national and localized partnerships with government agencies, cooperating partners and United Nations agencies, and initiated only when a robust resource mobilization strategy is in place;</li> <li>iv) a formal hand-over/exit strategy indicating timelines for the transfer of responsibilities in all sectors, including IDP food assistance and long-term social safety net programmes and incorporating an assessment of the constraints and potential benefits of Public Distribution System (PDS) reform for national food security. Any future initiatives need to be funded by the Government with WFP providing enabling support; and</li> <li>v) thorough integration of gender considerations into all programmes through comprehensive gender analysis. For example, gender disparity in terms of girls’ attendance at primary school, should be targeted and addressed in any future school feeding interventions, possibly through a combination of in-school feeding support and conditional family take-home rations for girls.</li> </ul>	<p>Country office with support from the regional bureau and Policy and Programme Division (OSZ)</p>	<p>Partially agreed.</p> <p>In the months following this evaluation, the security and humanitarian contexts in Iraq have changed frequently and unpredictably, which limits WFP’s ability to predict displacements over the longer term.</p> <p>While WFP generally agrees with the suggested content of a forthcoming country strategy, the proposed timeframe is not compatible with the timeframe envisioned in WFP’s overall Country Strategic Planning approach. The approach seeks to: support countries in making progress towards zero hunger; operationalize the WFP Strategic Plan at the country level; and enhance strategic coherence, focus, operational effectiveness and partnerships to better support efforts to address food insecurity and malnutrition.</p> <p>Therefore, while WFP generally agrees with the suggested content of a forthcoming country strategy, the proposed timeframe is not viable.</p> <p>WFP will work closely with the Government of Iraq and other partners to develop a Country Strategic Plan that ensures capacity for response to sudden-onset emergencies as well as a more focused long-term approach to safety nets and resilience that is clearly aligned with national goals and targets.</p> <p>The current plan is to submit a CSP for the Board’s approval in November 2018. Prior to this, the country office – in consultation with the regional bureau and OSZ – will develop appropriate interim instruments such as concept notes to frame engagement and activities in Iraq. A first concept note will be finalized in the first quarter of 2017.</p>	<p>2018 Country Strategic Plan (CSP) for EB.2/2018</p> <p>First quarter of 2017 (for first concept note)</p>

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<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b> In addition to the planned comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis (CFSVA), the country office should undertake, prior to the end of 2016, a detailed gender-disaggregated assessment of beneficiary livelihoods, food security, nutrition and economic status, which will ensure that support goes to the right beneficiaries, and provide:</p> <p>i) revised targeting criteria to be incorporated into new programme design, replacing the current IDP targeting criteria; and</p> <p>ii) a basis – when combined with the upcoming 2016 CFSVA – for future evidence-based programming and improved decision-making regarding targeting.</p>	Country office with support from the regional bureau and OSZ	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The CFSVA can provide gender-disaggregated data on the areas mentioned. The results, complemented by region-specific assessments of IDPs, will be used to revise the targeting criteria for programme assistance. Baselines will be established to guide future assessments and programme monitoring.</p> <p>Currently, the final CFSVA dataset and its report are under review by the regional bureau team.</p> <p>In collaboration with WFP’s vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) team at Headquarters and at the regional bureau, the country office will conduct an in-depth Emergency Food Security Assessment of IDPs in Iraq. The emergency food security assessment will complement the CFSVA and capture livelihoods, food security, nutrition and economic information on IDPs to inform programme targeting and interventions.</p>	<p>End of 2016</p> <p>March 2017</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> As a matter of utmost urgency, WFP Headquarters needs to resolve issues preventing the resumption of school feeding activities that are currently on hold. If the school feeding programme is reactivated, WFP should strengthen its support to national and local authorities for a government-led programme. This should be based on district-level targeting according to identified areas of food insecurity in inner cities and rural areas, and be implemented using a locally procured variable food basket appropriate to each location. Future school feeding programmes need to be more results-oriented, and incorporate a long-term strategy for attaining programme sustainability.</p>	Operations Services Department (OS) with support from country office	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>WFP is undertaking a thorough review of the underlying issues related to its discontinuation of school meals and anticipates that this will be finalized by the end of 2016. Consultations will be held with the Government of Iraq about future cooperation on school meals.</p> <p>In the process, WFP will work with national and local authorities to maximize capacity development throughout implementation.</p> <p>Aspects of targeting and a longer-term strategy for this activity will be reflected in the concept note referenced in recommendation 1.</p>	<p>End of 2016</p> <p>First quarter of 2017</p>

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<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> For reasons of cost-effectiveness and the overwhelming preference of stakeholders, by the end of 2016, with support from the regional bureau and Headquarters, the country office should move from family food parcels and vouchers to the use of cash transfers as the transfer modality, wherever feasible. A gender and protection analysis of the move towards cash should be undertaken as a prerequisite. Investments should be made in efforts to establish WFP as a central figure in the cash-based assistance sector, including recruitment of staff with relevant cash-based transfer (CBT) experience, analysis of lessons learned to date, and finalization of technology and support systems for the System for Cash Operations (SCOPE) card.</p>	<p>Country office with support from regional bureau and OSZ</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>As of August 2016, WFP's CBT activities in Iraq were among the largest of any of the humanitarian actors, with 315,000 beneficiaries receiving entitlements via SCOPE cards. By the end of the 2016 WFP expects to reach 650,000 beneficiaries. In August 2016, WFP upgraded the SCOPE platform with the deployment of mobile point-of-sale (m-POS) allowing a much faster distribution of CBT assistance. Additional upgrades and innovative tools to be deployed by the end of the year include quick response codes for rapid registration of newly displaced populations.</p>	Ongoing
		<p>A recent report by the Iraq country office indicated a preference among recipient communities for CBTs. Women in particular welcomed the shift from family food parcels to CBTs.</p>	Continuing
		<p>Gender and protection remain central to the design of CBT activities. The pilot project in Akre demonstrated that CBT activities do not negatively impact protection or gender issues. At all distribution points, women and men are separated and those requiring protection (including the elderly and people with disabilities) are identified and prioritized in receiving assistance.</p> <p>WFP suggests that the impact of cash assistance on gender and protection should be analysed only after sufficient information is generated to provide reliable results.</p> <p>Additional CBT staff will be needed if WFP assumes leadership of the cash working group in Iraq. Recruitment is ongoing to strengthen CBT capacity in-country with a view to reaching full capacity by the end of 2016.</p>	End of 2016

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<p><b>Recommendation 5:</b> The country office should prioritize the recruitment and placement of national and international staff to fill core positions, including in VAM and M&amp;E, as soon as possible. WFP's Human Resources Division should consider a review of corporate human resources recruitment and deployment practices in a Level 3 environment such as Iraq. The possibility of further fast-tracking of administrative policies and procedures should also be explored.</p>	Human Resources Division (HRM)	Agreed. A new vacancy announcement has been issued for a P4 Head of VAM and M&E to oversee a strengthened unit. One programme associate for VAM and one associate for M&E have been recruited locally.	End of 2016
	Country office with support from HRM	WFP has issued both internal and external vacancy announcements for a P3 VAM officer to broaden the potential talent pool.	End of 2016
		WFP continues to review and enhance its talent acquisition and deployment policies and procedures to ensure that staff with the right skills are always available, especially in emergency operations. Management is exploring innovative ways of sourcing and deploying staff to streamline procedures and WFP's support to managers. The actions taken include:	End of 2016
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ revamping talent pools to create a source of candidates who have been selected according to consistent policies and procedures and are ready to take up fixed-term contracts promptly when needed;</li> <li>➤ reviewing contractual modalities to ensure that WFP managers use the various contract formats for the right purposes;</li> <li>➤ improving emergency rosters to enhance WFP's capacity for rapid deployment of staff with the right skills to the right posts; leadership and consultancy rosters will be developed by the end of 2016; and</li> <li>➤ continuing to enhance accountability and performance across WFP, including through the use of dedicated tools and communications.</li> </ul>	End of 2017

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<p><b>Recommendation 6:</b> By the end of 2016, the country office should formulate and implement a more communicative and inclusive participatory approach to partnerships with the Government, cooperating partners and beneficiaries. A quarterly review process should be initiated to ensure that all relevant WFP staff receive and act on beneficiary feedback, particularly on the quality and sell-by dates of commodities provided, and that beneficiary feedback is used to improve programme activities. The management of communications between WFP and different levels of government structures in the field needs to be reviewed and responsibilities clearly defined.</p>	<p>Country office with support from regional bureau and the Partnership and Advocacy Coordination Division (PGC)</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The country office is exploring further options for information dissemination and bringing participatory mechanisms such as focus groups to inform WFP's efforts on a continuous basis. As suggested, a quarterly review can be initiated to ensure that WFP programming and other units are acting upon beneficiary feedback, and programmatic decisions are regularly informed by beneficiary feedback and complaints.</p> <p>Partnerships with the Government will be strengthened upon the resolution of issues identified in Recommendation 3.</p>	<p>March 2017</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7:</b> At the corporate level, WFP should ensure that all future Level 3 responses have adequate M&amp;E and VAM capacity in place to ensure the availability of national food security mapping and analysis on which beneficiary targeting and strategic and operational decision-making can be based.</p> <p>With regional bureau support, the country office should ensure consistent and robust internal monitoring capacity that enables more thorough assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of support provided. Building on experience, it should make the most effective use of the expertise of WFP staff, together with third-party monitoring, to ensure continual improvement of programme activities.</p>	<p>Performance Management and Monitoring Division (RMP) and OSZ for the corporate response</p> <p>Country office and regional bureau</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>At Headquarters, actions include updating WFP's Third Party Monitoring Guidelines and expanding the M&amp;E talent pool to improve on the timely deployment of M&amp;E staff for Level 3 responses.</p> <p>A new VAM and M&amp;E Unit has been established and will be headed by a P4 Officer. The unit will have dedicated international VAM and M&amp;E officers, support staff, field monitors and geographic information system (GIS) mapping capacity.</p> <p>The country office will also seek increased support for food security analysis and mapping from the regional bureau and Headquarters.</p> <p>Partnerships with government agencies will be developed for third-party monitoring to ensure better-quality data collection. These partnerships will include the Central Statistics Office and the Kurdistan Regional Statistics Office – the government agencies that collect field data and provide statistical analysis in Iraq.</p>	<p>June 2017</p> <p>Implemented</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>March 2017</p>

**Acronyms Used in the Document**

CBT	cash-based transfer
CFSVA	comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
IDP	internally displaced persons
HRM	Human Resources Division
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
OS	Operations Services
OSZ	Policy and Programme Division
SCOPE	System for Cash Operations
VAM	Vulnerability analysis and mapping