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برنامج الأغذية العالمي

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## **Management response to the recommendations deriving from the evaluation of the Mali country portfolio (2013–2017)**

### **Background**

1. This document presents the management response to the recommendations deriving from the evaluation of WFP's Mali country portfolio.
2. The evaluation covered all of WFP's operations in Mali from 2013 to 2017 and assessed WFP's strategic positioning in the country, the quality of and factors influencing WFP's decision making, and the performance and results of portfolio activities.
3. Based on findings from the evaluation, eight recommendations have been made, which WFP will start implementing in 2018.
4. During the period covered by the evaluation, WFP's work in Mali included the scaling up of a response to the large-scale conflict and displacement that arose from the political and security crisis of 2012/2013, the scaling down of the response following the conclusion of peace arrangements and the return of most displaced people, and – most recently – a response to a significant drought.
5. Although large-scale conflict has ended, a large and increasing portion of the country is affected by insecurity, limiting the capacity of the Government to maintain stability and provide essential services. This in turn affects food security and the ability of the Government to fulfil key functions, including the provision of assistance to people in need.
6. The Secretariat appreciates the findings of the evaluation and the related recommendations, which will inform the preparation of a country strategic plan (CSP) for Mali.
7. The following matrix sets out the planned actions and implementation timelines.

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### **Focal points:**

Mr A. Dieng  
Regional Director  
Dakar

email: [abdou.dieng@wfp.org](mailto:abdou.dieng@wfp.org)

Ms S. Caruso  
Country Director

email: [silvia.caruso@wfp.org](mailto:silvia.caruso@wfp.org)

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<b>Management response to the recommendations deriving from the evaluation of the Mali country portfolio for the period 2013–2017</b>			
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Management response and action taken</b>	<b>Implementation deadline</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 1: Understanding the root causes of needs</b></p> <p>While maintaining a response mechanism, in order to be able to respond to acute humanitarian needs in cases of displacement caused by conflict or climate shocks, WFP should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) prepare a formal detailed analysis of the root causes of needs throughout the country, by region, type of need, type of beneficiary, etc.;</li> <li>b) discuss with partners, including FAO, UNICEF, other United Nations agencies and NGOs, and with the Government the strategic links among humanitarian assistance, development and peacebuilding and the WFP activities that can (indirectly) support the combined treatment of both the symptoms and causes of needs;</li> <li>c) consider synergetic activities for addressing the root causes of needs, such as multi-annual FFA, in order to reduce the need for assistance during the lean season (June to September); and</li> <li>d) ensure that the needs of pastoral and agro-pastoral people are appropriately considered.</li> </ul>	Country office, with support from the regional bureau	<p>Agreed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Analysis of needs and their root causes is ongoing. The recent zero hunger strategic review is a core component of this analysis and is also informing the design of the CSP. Over the next 12 months, reviews of the causal factors of malnutrition in different parts of the country and studies of the linkages among social cohesion (or conflict), food insecurity and the impact of WFP activities will also be undertaken. As part of the preparation of the CSP, a detailed analysis of food insecurity will be carried out using data sets from previous national food security and nutrition surveys. The analysis will be used to update the integrated context analysis, which will in turn inform the country office's decision making regarding geographical priorities.</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b) Discussion of strategic links has already started at several levels: as part of the common country assessment underpinning the preparation of the United Nations development assistance framework, in which the importance of engaging in the triple nexus of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work is one of the guiding principle; through an ad hoc nexus task force, in which WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) are members and which was</li> </ul>	

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		<p>set up under the coordination of the committee for the rehabilitation of post-conflict areas (<i>Commission de Réhabilitation des Zones Post-Conflict</i>), one of the entities responsible for coordinating the provision of humanitarian aid in Mali, its membership includes representatives of the Government, donors and United Nations agencies); and through direct bilateral engagement with partners, including other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in the development of collaborative programmes for fostering access to services, social cohesion and resilience to shocks through integrated and complementary interventions.</p>	

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		<p>c) The country office is currently expanding its multisector, multi-year interventions, including through joint programming. With financial support from the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ), the country office is scaling up the provision of an integrated package of interventions that include food assistance for asset activities aimed at increasing resilience at the community, household and individual levels. A multi-year programme targeting extremely fragile areas and using resources from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund is currently being implemented with FAO and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.</p>	2019
		<p>A three-year programme developed with FAO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), targeting central Mali and combining nutrition activities, safety nets and support for agricultural production is being prepared for the consideration of Canada as a potential donor. A joint WFP, FAO and UNICEF strategy for promoting resilience through multisector, multi-year interventions is under development. In addition, the country office will enhance awareness and analysis of gender inequalities as root causes of food</p>	

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		insecurity and malnutrition by integrating into its current programming the findings and recommendations from an analysis of gender issues in cash-based interventions.	
		d) During 2017, seasonal assistance in response to drought included a component that specifically addressed the needs of pastoral and agropastoral populations during the early lean season of March to June. Pasture conditions and access to surface water will be monitored closely during the rainy season and until the end of the pastoral lean season. Further analytical work planned for the next 12 months will have the purpose of informing improvements to the targeting of pastoral and agropastoral populations and development of an appropriate response strategy. This will involve coordination with the Government and other actors such as FAO and the International Committee of the Red Cross.	

<p><b>Recommendation 2: Re-prioritizing assistance by region</b></p> <p>WFP should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) review the current geographic targeting of general food assistance with a view to addressing needs in areas beyond the conflict zones of the north and centre;</li> <li>b) improve coordination with partners such as the International Committee of the Red Cross in order to align targeting criteria and avoid “over-assisting” some areas of the country while “under-assisting” others;</li> <li>c) discuss the geographic balance of needs with donors with a view to increasing funding for areas that are currently not directly involved in the conflict; and</li> <li>d) discuss with the Government the division of coverage (always under Government oversight) by region and by location – for example, between rural versus urban beneficiaries, who are easier to reach.</li> </ul>	Country office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Partially agreed. Conflict-affected areas are not the only focus for the targeting of food assistance, which is based on the results of food security and nutrition assessments. In setting its operational priorities, WFP also takes into account the complementarity among the interventions and priorities of other stakeholders such as the Government, United Nations agencies and NGOs. During the 2018 lean season, when needs were identified in the south and west of the country, assistance was extended to these areas. It should be noted, however, that when resources are limited compared with needs WFP has to set priorities and conflict-affected zones typically have the country's worst food security and nutrition indicators.</li> <li>b) Agreed. Continuous efforts are made to improve coordination of the food and nutrition assistance provided through both the national response plan coordinated by the Government and the food security and nutrition clusters. In 2018, a particular effort was made to strengthen the food security cluster. Ongoing investments in further improving coordination include capacity building for government institutions (including the Office of the Commissioner for Food Security) and the enhancement of communications between among actors and between actors and the donor community.</li> </ul>	2019
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		<p>c) Partially agreed. During the response to the current crisis, donors have been open-minded and flexible about the use of their contributions, enabling the country office to ensure adequate coverage of people in need with WFP emergency assistance. It should be acknowledged, however, that donor governments feel that national institutions and programmes should use their own resources to address pockets of food insecurity in areas where there is no conflict and where the Government is present and its services are functional, unless such areas are facing a large or very large shock. The country office is already working with other partners on the mobilization of resources (including multi-year funding) for promoting resilience in areas that are not directly affected by conflict. These efforts include documentation of the expected results of increased resilience in terms of reducing the need for outside assistance, promoting social cohesion and reducing perceptions of marginalization.</p> <p>d) Agreed. More progress is needed in sharing responsibility for the response with the Government, including the national social protection system and the Office of the</p>	

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		Commissioner for Food Security. The predictability of the Government's response continues to be constrained by the limited availability of capacity and resources, which complicates coordination and communication with donors on remaining requirements.	



<p><b>Recommendation 3: Advanced planning for reductions in the funding for school feeding and nutrition activities</b></p> <p>WFP should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) realistically estimate the funding that it can allocate to these activities in the future and identify any potential cost efficiencies in the delivery of assistance, such as changes in modality, new partnerships, etc.; and</li> <li>b) prepare a hand-over strategy with partners and the Government with a view to minimizing the negative impact of the reduced coverage of WFP activities on beneficiaries, and identify at an early stage of this process other organizations that have potential to take over from WFP in providing assistance and the relative sources of funding. Solutions may include moving some activities into the main social protection and health interventions funded by the Government.</li> </ul>	Country office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Agreed. Funding for school feeding has been put on a more sustainable basis for the short to medium term. The move to the use of cash-based transfers and direct work with government structures has increased cost efficiency. In nutrition interventions, emergency activities such as blanket supplementary feeding in conjunction with humanitarian food assistance have attracted significant levels of support while other interventions – primarily the treatment of moderate malnutrition – have not. The planned levels of activities for treating moderate malnutrition have been adjusted to fit the projected availability of resources, focusing on areas with high prevalence of malnutrition.</li> <li>b) Partially agreed. WFP will continue to advocate for increased allocations of the national budget to the school feeding programme and for resources for the development of a national protocol for malnutrition treatment as elements of the Government's efforts to expand its social protection programme. The explicit recognition of school feeding and interventions that address malnutrition as part of the social protection system and the recent allocation of USD 1.8 million from the Government's budget to the expansion of safety net programmes have made these interventions a more attractive</li> </ul>	2019
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		investment for donors. In the short to medium term, however, the potential for a full handover of WFP interventions to the Government is constrained by the limited fiscal space of the Government. The country office is working on facilitating an eventual transition by ensuring increased consistency between the activities that it implements and those implemented by the Government and other actors and by supporting the Government in policy development.	
<p><b>Recommendation 4: Managing in activities or modalities</b></p> <p>WFP should design a tool that facilitates the formal mapping of the direct and indirect implications of changes in activities or modalities in advance of their implementation so as to support evidence-based decision making. The tool should include both quantitative and qualitative analysis and incorporate feedback from beneficiaries and other major stakeholders. In areas where evidence is limited, WFP should consider carrying out impact assessments.</p>	Country office with support from the regional bureau, the Policy and Programme Division (OSZ) and the Supply Division	<p>Partially agreed.</p> <p>The country office is documenting the interactions among activities, including the synergies and complementarities that underlie the decision to pursue a multisector approach and the expected impacts of investments in resilience on future needs for emergency assistance. This work is expected to require a range of different approaches, rather than a single tool. Several evaluations were carried out between 2013 and 2017 using both qualitative and quantitative methods and including interviews with beneficiaries and major stakeholders. Impact evaluations and baseline assessments using quantitative and qualitative methods are planned for the next two years in order to inform the design and implementation of the CSP and major</p>	2019–2020

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		projects supported by BMZ, Canada, the European Union and other donors.	
<p><b>Recommendation 5: Strengthening food assistance for assets</b></p> <p>WFP should scale-up and strengthen its design of and monitoring methodology for FFA activities, ensuring that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) all interventions are designed in ways that allow outcomes to be monitored; and</li> <li>b) thorough use is made of the lessons learned from the “zero hunger village” approach, which involves the integration of several assistance modalities, including FFA.</li> </ul>	Country office with support from the regional bureau and OSZ	<p>Agreed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The country office is establishing baselines, particularly for resilience building activities, in order to allow comparisons between pre- and post-intervention situations. This work on baselines is included in the resilience building activities to be implemented with BMZ funding and is reflected in the revised targeting for the school feeding activity.</li> <li>b) Food assistance for assets activities are increasingly being implemented as part of a wider, multisector strategy for addressing the different facets of resilience. Examples include the multisector activity being implemented with BMZ and the joint proposal with FAO and UNICEF that is currently being discussed with Canada.</li> </ul>	2019–2020
<p><b>Recommendation 6: Preparing a gender strategy</b></p> <p>WFP should develop an evidence-based operational strategy for integrating consideration of gender issues into programming, ensure that programming is based on specific gender analysis and strengthen its country gender team.</p>	Country Office, with support from the regional bureau, OSZ and the Gender Office	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Issues related to gender and protection (as also discussed in the response to recommendation 7) need to be taken into account in the planning and monitoring of activities. To strengthen the integration of gender issues into programming, the country office will strengthen and systematize the carrying out of participatory gender (and age)</p>	2020

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		analyses. With support from headquarters and the regional bureau and depending on the availability of resources, the country office will consider joining WFP's gender-transformative programme with a view to supporting the integration of gender issues into its programming, operations and office structure. The findings from efforts to systematize participatory gender (and age) analyses will inform the choice of transfer mechanisms, targeting and delivery procedures and monitoring. In the medium term, opportunities for reducing gender inequality will be sought, such as through the school feeding programme and equitable livelihoods opportunities. An initial step will involve applied research aimed at identifying situations and considerations that are specific to different locations and situations. While the details of the research have still to be finalized, the intention is to develop and start implementing appropriate strategies within the next two years.	
<p><b>Recommendation 7: Strengthening the feedback mechanism on protection and humanitarian access</b></p> <p>WFP should:</p> <p>a) accelerate the roll-out of a comprehensive beneficiary feedback mechanism and ensure that beneficiaries, implementing partners and third-party monitors are properly informed of their rights, roles and responsibilities related to the new tool; and</p> <p>b) improve the monitoring of protection of women, girls and other vulnerable groups.</p>	Country office with support from the regional bureau and OSZ	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The development of a complaints and feedback mechanism based on a toll-free phone number is well advanced. Work includes the introduction of special procedures for management-sensitive complaints that involve protection-related issues and the design of a communication strategy for making beneficiaries aware of the feedback mechanism.</p>	June 2019

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		In the immediate term, the emphasis will primarily be on following a “do no harm” approach by designing interventions that avoid adding to protection concerns.	
<p><b>Recommendation 8: Leveraging technology for reduced costs and increased impact</b></p> <p>For <i>food security assessments</i>, WFP should carry out a study to identify more cost-effective methods of gathering and analysing information on food-insecure and vulnerable households and the root causes of needs, looking at recent developments in mobile vulnerability analysis and mapping, mobile phone-facilitated assessments, quantitative and qualitative information collected through third-party monitoring and potential synergies with other initiatives such as the Government’s universal social registry.</p> <p>a) For <i>cash-based transfers</i>, WFP should carry out an assessment of the potential for using vouchers in remote areas and e-transfers in urban areas that are usually assisted with vouchers; and</p> <p>b) strengthen partnerships with mobile phone providers.</p>	Country office with support from the regional bureau, OSZ and the Supply Division	<p>a) Agreed. The mobile vulnerability analysis and mapping mechanism is being expanded and third-party monitoring arrangements have been extended and expanded. The country office is also actively engaged in planning the implementation of a government-managed unified social registry.</p> <p>b) Agreed. Analysis for informing the selection of appropriate transfer mechanisms is continuously being carried out. Agreements are being finalized with a range of financial service providers, ensuring very wide geographical coverage; however, with some providers having overlapping coverage, there is also a significant degree of redundancy.</p>	2019–2020

**Acronyms used in the document**

BMZ	Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany
CSP	country strategic plan
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
NGO	non-governmental organization
OSZ	Policy and Programme Division
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund