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## **Management response to the recommendations deriving from the evaluation of the Ethiopia country portfolio (2012–2017)**

### **Background**

1. This document presents the management response to the recommendations deriving from the evaluation of WFP's Ethiopia country portfolio.
2. The evaluation covered all of WFP's operations in Ethiopia between 2012 and 2017. It assessed WFP's alignment and strategic positioning in the country, its decision making and the performance and results of the portfolio as a whole.
3. The eight recommendations deriving from the evaluation have the aim of guiding strategic planning.
4. Management notes that the evaluation found WFP's strategic positioning to have been appropriate and closely aligned with national policies and systems. WFP acknowledges that external stakeholders perceived a decline in the clarity of WFP's strategy in the country and agrees that discontinuity in the leadership of the country office should not be allowed to recur. Management appreciates the finding that WFP played a major role in preventing the 2015/16 drought from being catastrophic, and that it helped avert a famine in the pastoral lowlands. The evaluation found that WFP's main activities were broadly effective but were threatened by resource constraints and poor targeting in programmes to which WFP contributes, while weaknesses in monitoring, reporting and evaluation constrained learning and fundraising. Management notes the major improvements in logistics efficiency and the introduction of biometric registration of refugees and acknowledges that there is potential for greater use of cash-based transfers. Management will ensure that the country strategic plan (CSP) preparation process is outward-looking in order to ensure that the CSP is credible with the Government and other development partners and to foster a shared perspective on WFP's future role in Ethiopia.
5. The Secretariat appreciates the findings and recommendations, which will inform the preparation of the CSP.
6. The following matrix sets out the actions planned in response to the recommendations and the timelines for their implementation.

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### **Focal points:**

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<b>MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT: ETHIOPIA COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION (2012–2017)</b>			
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Management response and action taken/to be taken</b>	<b>Implementation deadline</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 1: WFP staffing and continuity</b></p> <p>Ensure that the discontinuities in senior staffing that were experienced during the 2012–2017 period do not recur and prioritize recruitment for core senior posts, including heads of nutrition and the monitoring and evaluation function, in the country office.</p>	<p>Country office with support from the regional bureau, Nutrition Division, Performance Management and Monitoring Division (RMP), Office of Evaluation (OEV) and Human Resources Division</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The country office experienced numerous changes in senior leadership over a short period, which was disruptive for both WFP staff and partners. However, decisions on the assignment of country directors are made at headquarters and not within the control of the country office. The country office supports the recommendation on ensuring that changes in management positions are predictable and not disruptive.</p> <p>The country office also accepts the recommendations regarding staffing gaps in leadership of the nutrition and monitoring teams. These were the result of a lack of suitable candidates at the P4 level. In August 2018, the country office was able to assign an appropriate candidate for leading the nutrition team under a fixed-term contract for four years. A monitoring and evaluation position has been included in the mid-year reassignment with the aim of attracting a high-calibre candidate. Additional monitoring and evaluation capacity has already been acquired through the appointment of a senior-level national staff member and an international consultant.</p>	<p>July 2019</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2: Strategic focus and preparation of country strategic plan</b></p> <p>Ensure that the CSP preparation process is outward-looking so that the CSP is credible with the Government and donors, who must share WFP's perspective on WFP's future role.</p> <p>Among issues to be addressed with Government and other development partners are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WFP's dual mandate, areas of comparative advantage and appropriate long-term role in Ethiopia;</li> </ul>	<p>Country office</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The country office fully recognizes the importance of building the credibility of and consensus for both the interim country strategic plan (ICSP) and the forthcoming CSP. Consultations have been held at high levels with government counterparts and ministries and with donors, both collectively and bilaterally. Written comments received from major donors have also been taken into account and are reflected in the final ICSP document. The process will be repeated during preparation of the CSP.</p> <p>a) Ethiopia is a pilot country for testing the United Nations new way of working" and WFP is a lead agency in demonstrating results. While WFP's strength and experience in humanitarian response is already well known, the country office is making efforts to highlight activities in the development sphere, including WFP's ongoing and planned work in supply chains, school feeding, livelihood support and promotion, social protection, support for smallholders and pastoralists, climate adaptation solutions and risk management. WFP also participates in forums on development such as the Development Assistance Group and the donor working group of the productive safety net programme (PSNP) with a view</p>	<p>December 2019</p> <p>April 2020</p>

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		to highlighting to government and other partners WFP's value proposition and the contributions that WFP can make at the output and outcome levels.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an appropriate geographical focus for WFP activities and roles;</li> <li>ways of mitigating governance and accountability risks in the delivery of food and nutrition assistance in Ethiopia, with particular focus on Somali region; and</li> </ul>		<p>b) As a way of sharing the workload of relief and safety net activities, WFP has agreed with the Government and donors that its main area of operation in Ethiopia is Somali Regional State, where it is responsible for general food distributions and support for the PSNP. In line with its global mandate for the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition, WFP implements supplementary feeding interventions in nutrition-insecure <i>woredas</i> throughout the country. A large share of the country portfolio is allocated to activities for supporting refugees, with geographic targeting determined by the location of refugee camps. WFP also provides part of the humanitarian food requirements of internally displaced persons (especially for the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition), which requires it to be flexible in providing assistance where displaced people require it. There are areas of acute and chronic food insecurity – linked primarily to the effects of climate change on livelihoods – in several other regions where WFP can apply its expertise in livelihood support and climate adaptation.</p> <p>c) WFP has started to implement this recommendation. The complex operating environment in Somali region creates particular challenges for accountability and transparency. Given the large percentage of WFP's country portfolio that is in this region, and donor's request for action in mitigating risks to transparency and accountability, in 2018 the country office enhanced its monitoring unit by turning it into a monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning team. As a result, in addition to traditional process monitoring, the country office is also systematically reviewing recommendations from evaluations and incorporating them into its work, integrating complaint and feedback mechanisms and other elements for ensuring accountability into all of its activities, carrying out targeting studies for informing programme design, increasing its use of electronic information management, and strengthening staff capacities in these areas. The country office has promoted the concept of "strategic moments of learning and reflection", especially with representatives of the Government of Somali Regional State, with a view to encouraging and facilitating the identification of issues as soon as possible and fostering a shared sense of responsibility for issues and their</p>	<p>December 2019</p> <p>December 2019</p>

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		solutions. Following the appointment of a new regional president, WFP organized a high-level consultation on strategy with the disaster management unit of the regional government in order to emphasize the importance of ensuring transparency and accountability.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evidence-based discussions of cash-based versus food transfers and appropriate levels of benefits.</li> </ul>		<p>d) The country office has substantially increased its capacity in cash-based programming, including its ability to provide evidence for informing discussions of appropriate modalities of food assistance. This work has included the creation of a team that works on systems to support cash-based transfers, led by a “cash coordinator”, and the appointment of a market specialist to the vulnerability analysis and mapping team. A cash working group in the country office gathers information and advice from the finance and supply chain units with which to inform value for money analysis for proposed cash-based interventions. WFP founded and now chairs the Ethiopia cash working group, consisting of United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and government partners that are stakeholders in cash-based transfers. In 2018, the country office started to examine the use of multipurpose grants and basic needs assessments, including in value for money analysis of the effectiveness of different transfer modalities. Over the past year, the monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning approach has been used in rapid assessments and post-distribution and process monitoring of all cash-based transfer activities, gathering information on what beneficiaries spend money on, market performance, nutrition outcomes and gender and protection issues.</p>	June 2020

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<p><b>Recommendation 3: Focus on resilience</b></p> <p>Use work on resilience as a conceptual framework for linking humanitarian and development objectives, addressing the resilience of national institutions as well as that of households and individuals. This should include providing support for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emergency planning and response and national capacities in supply chains and logistics;</li> <li>• strengthening of humanitarian needs analysis and the targeting of responses;</li> </ul>	<p>Country office with support from the regional bureau, Policy and Programme Division and Emergency Preparedness and Response Support Division</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Resilience in Ethiopia depends on the delivery of humanitarian assistance in ways that take into account deficiencies and gaps in development, and the provision of development support through risk-informed approaches.</p> <p>a) Given Ethiopia's high vulnerability to conflict and climate-related shocks, it is likely that supply chain systems will continue to be under pressure in delivering large-scale public assistance programmes. The Government and partners recognize that building supply chain capacities is essential for effective emergency response and efficient humanitarian action. The country office is investing in supply chain systems such as those that support the Office of Maritime Affairs Authority, the Ministry of Transport and the Federal Transport Agency. Investments in emergency preparedness have been well received by national disaster management entities and are now incorporated in national humanitarian appeals as a dedicated budget line. Storage facilities continue to be augmented with both long-term, permanent structures and mobile options for facilitating quick response.</p> <p>b) The country office has a leading role in the coordination and facilitation of innovations in and improvements of the annual humanitarian needs assessments that are led by the Government, assessments carried out by specialized partners and early warning exercises. The country office and partners are introducing Integrated Food Security Phase Classification in order to strengthen humanitarian needs analysis in Ethiopia. Vulnerability analysis and mapping and food security and price analysis also contribute to humanitarian needs analysis and targeting. In Somali region, WFP is focusing on improving targeting through decentralization of the beneficiary classification process, training on and reaffirmation of targeting guidelines, and standardization of beneficiary registration.</p>	<p>November 2019</p> <p>June 2020</p> <p>June 2020</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>integration of humanitarian support, safety nets and development; and</li> <li>initiatives that focus on capacity strengthening and building household resilience.</li> </ul> <p>The PSNP and humanitarian food assistance programmes should be considered in terms of resilience building. In particular, WFP should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>work more closely with the Government and other stakeholders in order to strengthen integration between the PSNP and humanitarian food assistance and develop relevant capacities within the Government.</li> </ul>		<p>c) The country office is implementing activities that integrate elements of humanitarian support, safety nets and development. These include a pilot project on shock-responsive social protection (integrating humanitarian and safety net actions), emergency school feeding, support for drought risk management for pastoralists and smallholders, and livelihood support for refugees and host communities.</p> <p>d) The Government is WFP's main implementing partner in Ethiopia and capacity strengthening of government counterparts is a major focus of work under all strategic outcomes of the ICSP. A strategic outcome dedicated to capacity strengthening covers activities in supply chain management, safety net implementation, school feeding and nutrition services. Capacity strengthening activities target national institutions and systems, communities, households and individuals.</p> <p>e) Piloting of the integration of the PSNP and the Government's humanitarian and disaster resilience plan (providing safety net relief) started in 2018 and is expected to continue during implementation of the ICSP. This will generate learning for decision makers and implementers in the Government and donor partners. The pilot has generated lessons for both partners and policy makers and has yielded benefits for operations at the regional, zonal and <i>woreda</i> levels. WFP is supporting the institutionalization of joint technical committees involving various sectors of government. Robust post-distribution monitoring and specialized assessments will contribute to learning about the impacts of integration efforts on beneficiaries of both the PSNP and the humanitarian and disaster resilience plan.</p>	<p>June 2020</p> <p>June 2020</p> <p>November 2019</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contribute to better adaptation of the PSNP and humanitarian food assistance programmes to pastoral regions; and</li> <li>continue to support government capacities to manage in-kind food assistance programmes, with a view to achieving full implementation by the Government.</li> </ul>		<p>f) As part of its support for implementation of the PSNP, the country office and PSNP partners are adapting public works activities and graduation processes to the needs and situations of pastoralists. Adapted tools and services for drought risk management are yielding positive results for pastoralist households, including financial inclusion. WFP is working with other actors on efforts to enhance understanding of pastoralist settings and to jointly identify new approaches for building the resilience of pastoral livelihoods in lowland regions. For example, some of WFP's interventions in the Rural Resilience Initiative overlap with the small-scale irrigation development interventions of the International Fund for Agricultural Development.</p> <p>g) Interventions for building supply chain capacities include support for the management of food commodities through the handover of tools for information sharing and other instruments that improve the visibility of commodity movements. These include commodity tracking and allocation systems, the commodity management procedure manual, investments in enhanced food quality and safety and consultations with food agencies, ministries and authorities at the national level. The secondment of WFP staff members to core government institutions is also yielding positive results.</p>	<p>November 2019</p> <p>June 2020</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4: Monitoring, evaluation and learning</b></p> <p>Ensure adequate staffing and leadership in the country office's monitoring and evaluation function. Rethink the priorities for monitoring and evaluation in order to better reflect the reality that WFP is predominantly a contributor to joint programmes. Ensure that each main activity has a monitoring and evaluation plan that explicitly considers what WFP can draw on and contributes</p>	<p>Country office with support from the regional bureau, RMP and OEV</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Measures for addressing staffing and leadership issues in the monitoring unit are described in the response to recommendation 1.</p> <p>a) The monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning approach will be followed in order to ensure that cash-based transfers are used effectively – with guidance from the country office's cash working group– and that all transfer options are taken into consideration. The selection of cash-based transfers or in-kind food distributions will be informed by the National Integrated Cash-Food Implementation Plan, which aims to harmonize humanitarian transfers in Ethiopia, and by assessments and reviews, taking into account protection and gender issues. See also the response to recommendation 2d).</p>	<p>July 2019</p> <p>July 2019</p>

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<p>to the monitoring and evaluation of WFP's overall efforts in Ethiopia.</p> <p>Areas where more evidence-based learning is required include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective use of cash-based transfers, with attention to the full spectrum of transfer options, from solely cash-based transfers to solely in-kind food distributions;</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strengthening of cost analysis generally, during the design, implementation and monitoring of programmes;</li> <li>• stronger nutrition analysis (see recommendation 5); and</li> <li>• stronger gender analysis (see recommendation 7).</li> </ul>		<p>b) In 2019, the country office will undertake analyses of cost efficiency and effectiveness in order to inform preparation of the CSP. It will also strengthen programming based on evidence from programme implementation and “value for money” analysis. The country office will engage with retail markets and will provide supply chain services with a view to increasing cost-efficiency and ensuring that support is provided efficiently. See also the response to recommendation 2d).</p> <p>c) The “Fill the Nutrient Gap” study will generate evidence for informing WFP's nutrition activities. The country office will work with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on causal analysis and behavioural studies that increase understanding of the persistent high prevalence of malnutrition among refugees. Feasibility studies of cash-based transfers will take into consideration fluctuations in the prices of nutritionally important foods. See also the response to recommendation 5.</p> <p>d) The country office will strengthen gender-sensitive monitoring and documentation, including operational research and gender analysis for evidence-based decision making. The gender action plan will identify women's practical and strategic needs with a view to achieving gender equity in agriculture, food security and nutrition and leadership roles. See also the response to recommendation 7.</p>	<p>December 2019</p> <p>December 2019</p> <p>June 2020</p>



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<p><b>Recommendation 5: Nutrition programming</b></p> <p>The country office should conduct a situation analysis and develop a nutrition plan for the next CSP period, working with the Government and other actors in order to identify where WFP has the most added value; it should prioritize recruitment of the staff required to deliver this plan.</p> <p>Priorities for the WFP nutrition strategy should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>humanitarian nutrition, with advocacy and support for measures that address stunting;</li> <li>support for a more rapid roll-out of the “second-generation” approach to targeted supplementary feeding;</li> <li>strengthening of technical support for the refugee programme;</li> </ul>	Country office with support from the regional bureau	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The two-year gap in leadership of the nutrition unit created challenges for the strategic coherence of activities, partnerships and links to other country office units. The appointment of a nutrition team leader with appropriate experience and profile is yielding positive results.</p> <p>a) In humanitarian assistance, the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition continues to be prioritized and is a substantial intervention for crisis-affected populations and refugees under the ICSP. The incorporation into the ICSP of activities for the prevention of stunting will enable the country office to implement activities that were not previously available to it. Staffing includes specialized positions for national officers and dedicated activity managers, with funding provided by donor partners. Investments in the form of both human resources and funding have also been made in order to provide the country office with the capacity to deliver effective social and behaviour change communications in relief, refugee, safety net, social protection and nutrition activities.</p> <p>b) The development of new guidelines on the integrated treatment of severe and moderate malnutrition will contribute to a more rapid rollout of the new approach and was a major area of focus in 2018. The guidelines will facilitate the handover of WFP activities for the treatment of moderate malnutrition to the Ministry of Health. This, combined with provision of the requisite capacity development, is expected to yield positive results even in the short and medium terms.</p> <p>c) The appointment of a team leader for nutrition and an officer dedicated to nutrition for refugees will facilitate implementation of this recommendation. WFP will also continue to work with UNHCR on causal analyses and behaviour studies for improving understanding of why high malnutrition rates persist despite the prioritization of nutrition services in refugee camps.</p>	<p>June 2020</p> <p>December 2019</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increased analysis, with partners, of nutrition trends among refugees and the effects of ration cuts on nutrition; and</li> <li>• ensuring a nutrition-sensitive approach in all WFP activities.</li> </ul>		<p>d) In addition to the activities outlined in the response to recommendation 5c, WFP has also secured funding for a “Fill the Nutrient Gap” study to be carried out during the first year of ICSP implementation in order to build evidence and guide nutrition activities throughout the portfolio, especially activities for refugees and school feeding. The country office will replicate the rapid assessment of vulnerable households that was conducted after the cuts in refugees’ rations in 2017 and will use the findings to complement the results of behaviour and causal analyses.</p>	December 2019
		<p>e) The Fill the Nutrient Gap study will be a first step in addressing this recommendation. In addition, the design of all school feeding rations takes into account the nutrition needs of students and their families when considering take-home rations. In its support for the PSNP, WFP prioritizes the linking of its nutrition activities to those of the PSNP, with PSNP clients being the primary targets for WFP’s stunting reduction and nutrition awareness interventions. Cash-based transfers are not introduced until feasibility studies that examine the price fluctuations of nutritionally important commodities have been carried out; when appropriate, these commodities are provided in-kind in order to enhance the nutrition status of vulnerable beneficiaries. WFP’s work on food systems will include consideration of how to support the parts of the system that foster or enhance nutrition outcomes.</p>	June 2020

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<p><b>Recommendation 6: Refugee assistance</b></p> <p>Work with partners with a view to ensuring adequate and timely funding that meets humanitarian needs while also supporting evolution towards more sustainable approaches. Join other United Nations agencies on insisting that humanitarian principles are observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for and support greater use of cash-based transfers in refugee assistance.</li> <li>• Support stronger analysis of the effects of ration cuts on nutrition (see recommendation 5).</li> <li>• Support reconciliation of refugee numbers and continued strengthening of registration systems.</li> </ul>	Country office	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>WFP plans to engage in joint resource mobilization efforts with partners in order to mobilize sufficient funding for activities that assist refugees. The country office will use the opportunities for obtaining sustainable funding that are offered by the comprehensive refugee response framework and will advocate for respect of humanitarian principles.</p> <p>a) The use of cash-based transfers for providing assistance to refugees in Ethiopia is a sensitive issue with the Government citing security issues as a major concern in camps on the borders with Somalia and South Sudan. WFP continues to advocate with the Government for an increased use of cash-based transfers, offering a variety of options including restricted cash-based transfers, and methods of improving beneficiary management.</p> <p>b) The response to this recommendation is covered in the response to recommendation 5.</p> <p>c) WFP partnered with UNHCR on the biometric registration of refugees in all camps, which was completed in 2018. The registration system for Level 3 emergency responses uses iris and fingerprint identification, which eliminates the risk of beneficiaries receiving duplicated rations. Nevertheless, regular verification exercises are still required in order to ensure that data on household sizes is still accurate. Biometric registration of refugees at “sites” (locations with fewer than 5,000 refugees) is not considered cost-efficient because these are stable and relatively small populations.</p>	<p>June 2020</p> <p>June 2020</p> <p>December 2019</p> <p>December 2018</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support moves towards responses that are better tailored to the different needs and capacities of different groups of refugees.</li> <li>Promote realization of the objectives of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.</li> </ul>		<p>d) The country office is working with the regional bureau in order to learn from experience in this area in other countries, primarily Kenya and Uganda. The objective is to see how ration cuts, when they are necessary, can be implemented in ways that protect the most vulnerable households from negative outcomes. The costs and benefits of measures to protect the most vulnerable households will continue to be analysed. Given the planned activities in livelihood diversification and support in the ICSP, it is also important that the productive capacities of each household are clearly understood so that livelihood activities (mainly on-farm activities and off-farm jobs) can target the areas and households where they have the greatest chance of success.</p> <p>e) WFP will support implementation of the comprehensive refugee response framework, particularly through the planned activities for building the livelihood capacities of refugees. Given that refugees now have permission to own and cultivate land and open bank accounts, WFP will focus its livelihood support on households with a demonstrated capacity to benefit from this permission. This work will be implemented in close partnership with local authorities and UNHCR.</p>	<p>December 2019</p> <p>June 2020</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7: Gender</b></p> <p>Gender issues should (continue to) be addressed in an integrated way, building on the country gender action plan. Actions should include proactive measures for boosting recruitment of women national staff and more attention should be directed to context-specific gender issues throughout the portfolio including appropriate mainstreaming of gender equality and the empowerment of women in all components.</p>	Country office with support from the regional bureau	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The country office will continue to implement the actions prioritized in the country gender action plan, including by recruiting more national staff and providing targeted support to existing women national officers. Men's potential role as agents of change is recognized. Innovative approaches are being developed for the recruitment of talented women staff members, including as interns from local universities, and the country office is identifying and addressing the workplace and cultural barriers that constrain the recruitment and retention of women staff members, especially in sub-offices.</p> <p>There are plans to shift from the current over-reliance on international gender advisers to the mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment into all ICSP activities.</p> <p>A national staff gender adviser began work on implementation of the country gender action plan in January 2019, mainly in the field in sub-offices.</p>	November 2019

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<p><b>Recommendation 8: Protection and accountability to affected populations</b></p> <p>Strengthening protection and accountability to affected populations should continue to be a priority, but WFP should work on strengthening national systems wherever doing so is consistent with the needs of beneficiaries.</p>	Country office	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The country office's safeguarding policy includes analysis of how well WFP's activities protect the safety, dignity, inclusion and non-discrimination of beneficiaries.</p> <p>Sufficient resources have been received for ensuring compliance with WFP corporate standards in complaint and feedback mechanisms for all activities, with dedicated staff charged with the design and implementation of the mechanisms, which come in various forms based on assessments of beneficiaries' preferences.</p> <p>The assessment of safeguarding issues started with the cataloguing of existing mechanisms and ways of strengthening or complementing national systems. WFP will propose entirely new mechanisms only as a last resort.</p> <p>Voice and text telephone hotlines have been established and information on entitlements and protection issues is systematically provided to beneficiaries. When necessary, WFP will provide hotline staff with capacity-building support and will strengthen the mechanism itself. WFP will use the digital platform SUGAR for capturing, managing and providing feedback on complaints and will offer it to the Government as part of its capacity development and exit strategy.</p>	November 2019

**Acronyms used in the document**

CSP	country strategic plan
ICSP	interim country strategic plan
OEV	Office of Evaluation
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme
RMP	Performance Management and Monitoring Division
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees