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## **Management response to the recommendations from the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Benin (2019–2023)**

### **Background**

1. This document presents the management response to the recommendations in the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan (CSP) for Benin for 2019–2023.
2. The evaluation was conducted between March 2022 and April 2023 and assessed WFP's strategic positioning, its contribution to strategic outcomes, its efficiency in implementation and the factors explaining its performance.
3. Taking a utilization-focused and consultative approach, the evaluation served accountability and learning purposes and informed the preparation of a new CSP for Benin.
4. The evaluation made five recommendations addressing key issues for the next CSP; three recommendations are strategic and two operational.
5. The following response sets out whether WFP agrees, partially agrees or disagrees with the evaluation recommendations and sub-recommendations and presents the planned (or completed) actions, responsibilities and timelines for implementing the recommendations.

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**MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SUMMARY REPORT  
ON THE EVALUATION OF THE COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN FOR BENIN (2019-2023)**

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Responsible WFP office or division (with supporting offices and divisions in brackets)	Management response	Actions to be taken	Action lead office or division (with supporting offices and divisions in brackets)	Deadline for completion	Status of implementation
<p><b>Priority: High</b>  <b>Deadline: Design of the country strategic plan (fourth quarter 2023)</b>  <b>1. Ensure that the strategic direction of the country strategic plan is balanced.</b></p>	Country office (regional bureau)	Partially agreed.				
<p>1.1 In the school feeding component of the next country strategic plan, strengthen engagement with the partners on complementary activities in order to improve the nutrition status of schoolchildren and support the local economy. (See also recommendation 5 of the joint evaluation of the national integrated school feeding programme.)</p>		Agreed.	Support the establishment and strengthening of a coordination mechanism to promote partnerships in support of school feeding.	School feeding and nutrition team	June 2024	Under way
			Formalize partnership frameworks with key partners such as the United Nations Children's Fund, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the United Nations Capital Development Fund, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition and the International Fertilizer Development Center.	School feeding/ nutrition sub-units	June 2024	Under way

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1.2 Integrate nutrition issues into the country strategic plan systematically and review the relevance and potential value of introducing a standalone nutrition component as part of an integrated approach to country strategic plan implementation. Consider formulating an approach that strengthens nutrition-sensitive food systems and value chains.		Agreed.	Finalize the Fill the Nutrient Gap analysis, which will be used to support the strategic orientation of the CSP implementation.	Nutrition team (with smallholder agriculture market support (SAMS), school feeding, research, assessment and monitoring (RAM) and emergency preparedness and response (EPR)/social protection teams)	December 2023	Under way
			Update the nutrition strategy to ensure that nutrition issues are integrated into CSP activities by identifying nutrition-sensitive entry points.	Nutrition team (with SAMS, school feeding and EPR units; social protection focal point)	March 2024	Not started

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<p>1.3 Strengthen WFP's focus on building resilience to food and nutrition insecurity in rural communities. Contribute to the development of a strategic approach to improving household resilience based on agriculture and climate change adaptation, and determine the added value of WFP in the implementation of that approach.</p>		<p>Partially agreed. When designing the CSP, WFP has chosen to use schools and the school feeding programme as entry points for WFP's interventions in Benin. In terms of interventions particular attention will be put on support for value chains and smallholders</p>	<p>Draw up a strategy to improve smallholders farmers' livelihoods by developing innovative solutions for key value chains, with particular attention to nutrition sensitivity, and identifying actions and partners in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries to ensure that WFP's work is aligned with government policy on food security.</p>	SAMS unit	June 2024	Under way
<p>1.4 Prioritize the development of shock response interventions using an approach that is integrated with the social protection system. There should be a particular focus on supporting vulnerability and risk assessment and early warning mechanisms. Specific attention should be paid to the northern border areas of the country, which are at risk of being affected by conflict and humanitarian crises.</p>		Agreed.	<p>Develop a strategy to enhance work under pillar 2 of the sub-strategy for the Gulf of Guinea on preparedness for and response to conflict-driven population displacement (including refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons) and those impacted by displacement (host communities).</p>	EPR unit (RAM unit)	March 2024	Under way

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			Support the Government in updating the national multi-risk contingency plan.	EPR unit (RAM unit)	March 2024	Under way
			Support the Government in setting up and updating a mechanism for collecting and analysing food security and vulnerability data to inform early warning and preparedness.	RAM unit (EPR unit)	December 2024	Not started
<b>Priority: High</b> <b>Deadline: Design of the country strategic plan (fourth quarter 2023)</b> <b>2. Strengthen the integration of cross-cutting issues into the country strategic plan.</b>	Country office (regional bureau)	Partially agreed. Management does not agree with sub-recommendation 2.4.				
2.1 Integrate capacity strengthening activities into the relevant country strategic plan outcomes based on a comprehensive needs analysis including at the decentralized level, and a funding strategy, particularly for the school feeding programme.		Agreed	Conduct a capacity assessment and include capacity strengthening activities under each CSP outcome.	Country Director; knowledge management unit (partnerships unit; social protection focal point	June 2024	Under way

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2.2 Together with partners, develop a balanced investment strategy based on the need for complementary services, such as those related to water, sanitation and health. Carry out nutrition education activities for schoolchildren and consider developing curricula to encourage long-term behavioural change. <i>(See also recommendation 5 of the joint evaluation of the national integrated school feeding programme.)</i>		Agreed	Develop a database of local private sector actors that are highly likely to be able to support WFP activities.	Partnerships unit (with the support from the regional bureau)	March 2024	Under way
			Establish collaboration with different actors working on gender, nutrition, climate change and protection issues.	Country Director; knowledge management and partnerships units	March 2024	Under way
2.3 Strengthen the approach to inclusion and gender issues under the next country strategic plan based on in-depth analyses, with particular emphasis on promoting girls' enrolment and retention in schools and the use of mechanisms for ensuring accountability. <i>(See also recommendation 6 of the joint evaluation of the national integrated school feeding programme.)</i>		Agreed	Carry out a gender analysis and develop a gender strategy for the new CSP.	Gender sub-unit	March 2024	Under way

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			Support the implementation of actions that promote the integration of gender and inclusion considerations in the school feeding programme.	Gender sub-unit	June 2024	Not started
			Establish a community feedback mechanism	RAM unit	March 2024	Under way
2.4 Explain the method used to select the schools and geographical areas that will receive food assistance.		Not agreed for the part on the selection of schools. The coverage of the programme follows the aspiration of the Government, which is to progress from the current coverage of 75 percent to reach 100 percent coverage. The schools currently covered are mostly in rural zones and in the most food-insecure areas.	Ensure that targeting criteria are applied in relation to food assistance.	EPR unit	March 2024	Under way

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2.5 Improve the system for monitoring progress on cross cutting issues. <i>(See also recommendation 3 of the joint evaluation of the national integrated school feeding programme.)</i>		Agreed				
			Update the monitoring strategy and results framework to reflect cross-cutting themes.	RAM unit	June 2024	Not started
			Ensure that staff and partners are trained on cross-cutting themes.	Programme unit	June 2024	Not started
<b>Priority: High</b> <b>Deadline: End of 2024</b> <b>3. Promote WFP's comparative advantages beyond its support for the national integrated school feeding programme.</b>	Country office (regional bureau)	Partially agreed. Management only partially agrees with sub-recommendation 3.3.				
3.1 Strengthen engagement in national strategic dialogue on food and nutrition insecurity, crisis preparedness and response, resilience and climate change.		Agreed	Initiate a memorandum of understanding with relevant entities, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, the national agency for civil protection, the national agency for social protection, the permanent secretariat of the national food and nutrition council.	Country Director; knowledge management unit	June 2024	Under way

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			Provide the Government with regular updates on vulnerability analysis and mapping, demonstrating WFP's comparative advantage, and subsequently leverage this work as an entry point for promoting national system strengthening in vulnerability analysis and mapping and in crisis preparedness in general.	RAM unit	June 2024	Under way
3.2 Strengthen dialogue with donors on these areas and clarify WFP's comparative advantages.		Agreed	Develop a partnership action plan covering the CSP implementation period, 2024-2027.	Partnerships unit	June 2024	Under way
			Establish a channel of consistent and regular communication with technical and financial partners.	Country office management; partnerships unit	June 2024	Under way
3.3 Reinvigorate and expand strategic partnerships aimed at addressing the root causes of food and nutrition insecurity, including through climate resilience, nutrition sensitive agriculture and the protection of soil fertility.		Partially agreed. A key recommendation from previous evaluations has been to ensure a strategic focus and build on WFP's comparative advantage.	Mobilize additional resources from bilateral and multilateral donors and international financial institutions, through either service provision or indirect contributions channelled via the Government.	Partnerships and programme units	December 2024	Under way

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		Interventions linked to soil fertility protection require new areas of expertise and competencies already covered by other partners.  Specific resilience building activities are currently not part of the next CSP.				
<p><b>Priority: Medium</b> <b>Deadline: End of 2026</b> <b>4. Strengthen sustainability of the achievements of the country strategic plan.</b> <i>(See also recommendations 1, 2 and 4 of the joint evaluation of the national integrated school feeding programme.)</i></p>	Country office (regional bureau)	Partially agreed  Management partially agrees with sub-recommendations 4.1, 4.3 and 4.4.				

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4.1 Working with the relevant ministries, formulate and operationalize a strategy for the gradual transfer of responsibility for the implementation of the national school feeding programme to government bodies, based on a sustainable school feeding model.		Partially agreed. A strategy has been formulated; the priority now is on implementing it. As a clear governance structure is in place, WFP will engage with the main ministries and agencies within that governance structure and conduct joint diagnostic and joint design processes with them in order to understand how current government systems can handle a national school feeding programme, learning lessons on WFP's delivery model.	Continue to support and provide inputs for the Government's discussion on establishing the national governance structure for the national school feeding programme.	Country Director; knowledge management unit	December 2024	Under way

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4.2 Transfer competences to the government bodies involved in the national school feeding programme at the national and decentralized levels, based on an analysis of local capacities.		Agreed	Define a capacity development action plan for the entities involved in the national school feeding programme.	Country Director; knowledge management unit	June 2024	Not started
			Provide capacity strengthening support for decentralized structures.	Country Director; knowledge management unit	June 2024	Not started
4.3 Accelerate the process of institutionalizing the national school feeding programme, based on identified capacity strengthening needs.		Partially agreed. While WFP will continue to support the institutionalization of the national school feeding programme, the decisions related to this process rest with the Government. WFP's support in the institutionalization process is described above in response to sub-recommendations 4.1 and 4.2.	Continue providing support for the final review and adoption of a school feeding law.	Country Director; knowledge management unit	June 2024	Under way

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4.4 Jointly with the Government, pilot the implementation of the national school feeding programme in urban areas with a view to accelerating the transfer of responsibility for the related activities.		Partially agreed. As explained in the response to sub-recommendation 4.3, while WFP will continue to pilot the implementation of the national school feeding programme in urban areas, it will do this in order to improve coverage and support testing, and not to accelerate the transfer of responsibility for these activities.	Conduct a pilot project on cash-based transfers within the framework of the national school feeding programme.	Country Director; knowledge management unit	December 2024	Under way

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4.5 Support capacity strengthening for national agencies working in the areas of food security and social protection (national agency for civil protection ( <i>Agence nationale pour la protection civile</i> ), Scaling Up Nutrition government focal point/permanent secretary of the national food and nutrition council ( <i>Conseil national de l'alimentation et de la nutrition</i> ), the technical unit for monitoring and supporting food security management ( <i>Cellule technique de suivi et d'appui à la gestion de la sécurité alimentaire</i> ) with a view to increasing their efficiency.		Agreed	Operationalize the country capacity strengthening portfolio strategy, including capacity strengthening support for the relevant agencies.	Country Director; knowledge management unit	December 2024	Under way
4.6 Pilot methods, including financial management systems, that schools with canteens can use to source their supplies from smallholder producers and that ensure the accountability necessary for the proper functioning of the canteens.		Agreed	Support the implementation of a pilot project on the direct delivery of locally procured foods for schools.	SAMS unit (supply chain unit)	June 2025	Not started
			Support the pilot project on cash-based transfers.	School feeding unit	December 2024	Under way
			Strengthen digital monitoring tools.	RAM unit	March 2024	Under way

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<b>Priority: Medium</b> <b>Deadline: End of 2024</b> <b>5. Align the human resources capacity and organizational structure of the WFP country office in Benin with the strategic direction of the country strategic plan.</b>	Country office (regional bureau)	Agreed				
5.1 Consider delegating operational responsibilities to suboffices based on the competencies needed in order to improve the implementation of capacity strengthening, monitoring, coaching, local procurement support, emergency preparedness and other activities.		Agreed	Undertake a strategic workforce planning review.	Country office management	December 2023	Done
			Reorganize the country office's structure based on the review and analysis.	Country office management/human resources unit (regional bureau support)	March 2024	Under way
5.2 Ensure that WFP has adequate capacity for advocacy and engage with partners in strengthening the capacities of decentralized government bodies and gradually transferring the responsibility for activities.		Agreed	Undertake a skills gaps analysis and increase WFP staff's ability to support capacity development, advocacy, partnership and policy advice at the field level.	Country office management/human resources unit	June 2024	Not started

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5.3 Address capacity gaps – including in the areas of inclusion, gender issues, nutrition, local procurement, resilience, climate change, emergency preparedness and response – in order to reformulate and implement strategies and identify solutions.		Agreed	In addition to filling the required skills and positions in line with the strategic workforce planning review (see the response to sub-recommendation 5.1), identify and implement skills and capacity strengthening opportunities through training, mentorship, online courses, temporary duty assignments and other channels.	Country office management/human resources unit	March 2024	Under way