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Management response to the recommendations in the summary report of the synthesis on evaluations of WFP's engagement in middle-income countries (2019–2024)

Background

This document presents WFP management's response to the recommendations in the summary report of the synthesis on evaluations of WFP's engagement in middle-income countries from 2019 to 2024. The evaluation synthesis covered activities implemented between 2019 and 2024 in 25 middle-income countries across all WFP regions. Taking a utilization-focused, consultative approach, the synthesis served the dual purposes of accountability and learning.

The synthesis made four recommendations. The response presented below 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 their implementation.

Focal point:

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Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation and sub-recommendation lead office	Management response	Actions	Action lead office	Action deadline	Status
Priority: High Deadline: By September 2025 in conjunction with the development of the new strategic plan 1. Set out a clearer rationale for WFP's presence, positioning and resourcing in middle-income countries (MICs) and, in particular, in upper-middle-income countries. WFP should articulate a clear rationale for its engagement in MICs, recognizing in particular the conditions of upper-middle-income countries, with a view to ensuring focused and effective engagement. Specifically, this should include the following: Within the framework of the CSP as the instrument guiding WFP's country-level work, and building on WFP's demonstrated strengths in MICs, clearly articulate the strategic rationale for WFP's engagement in MICs, including upper-middle-income countries in particular, with an emphasis on technical support and national systems-strengthening.	Office of the Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer Other contributing entities Programme Operations Department Partnerships and Innovation Department Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division Human Resources Division	Partially agreed WFP welcomes the recommendation and agrees to regularly review its presence, positioning and resourcing in countries where it operates, including MICs. The income status of a country is not the sole determinant of WFP's presence, which, in line with the WFP strategic plan, is also a function of country office discussions and engagement with governments regarding national plans and priorities. WFP aims to better equip country offices to engage in discussions with national counterparts in the area of development (not only in MICs) to ensure that their engagement is appropriate and aligned with stakeholder engagement and support for governments.	1. Produce a guidance note on long-term programming for impact with considerations relevant to various contexts, including MICS.	Strategic Coordination and Assistant Executive Director Office	June 2026	Ongoing
			2. Develop and disseminate a corporate resource mobilization strategy that outlines approaches and considerations relevant to partnerships with national government authorities regarding national priorities.	Partnerships and Innovation Department	December 2025	Ongoing

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation and sub-recommendation lead office	Management response	Actions	Action lead office	Action deadline	Status
- Assess and articulate the rationale for WFP maintaining its presence and response capacity in MICs so that it can pivot swiftly to crisis response if needed. Ensure that relevant systems and capacity to deal with contingencies are in place, such as “dormant” or contingent CSP objectives, and staff with appropriate skills. - State a clear intention to seek funding from diverse sources, including global funding mechanisms, host governments and private sector partners.						

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation and sub-recommendation lead office	Management response	Actions	Action lead office	Action deadline	Status
Priority: High Deadline: December 2026 2. Clarify and strengthen the development and use of partnership strategies in MICs. Revise existing or prepare new guidance for country offices on strengthening the development and use of strategic and operational partnership strategies for WFP's engagement in MICs. This guidance should include the following: - Define the specific areas in which, and partners with whom, WFP will engage while remaining flexible so that it can respond to new opportunities as they emerge. - Clearly position WFP vis-à-vis other entities, taking into account WFP's areas of demonstrated strength and comparative advantage. - Clarify the requisite staffing profile, including the seniority and continuity of employees, for engaging in and sustaining strategic partnerships at the country level. - Provide for the monitoring and, as needed, reassessment of partnership engagement.	Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division Other contributing entities Human Resources Division	Agreed	1. Prepare guidance for country offices – building on the new strategic plan and best practices – with regard to approaches to developing and supporting government partnerships in the context of WFP operations, including MICs.	Partnerships and Innovation Department	June 2026	Ongoing
			2. Update the country director job profile to clarify requirements for partnership management in MICs.	Human Resources Division	December 2025	Ongoing

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation and sub-recommendation lead office	Management response	Actions	Action lead office	Action deadline	Status
Priority: High Deadline: December 2026 3. Strengthen planning for programme handover and transition, where relevant and the path to WFP's exit from the country, where appropriate. Set clear guidance for programme handover and transition, and/or country exit, as appropriate, including by providing relevant guidance to country offices. This guidance should cover: • agreement with national counterparts of realistic timeframes for handover, transition and exit, with clear agreed pathways and milestones; • assessment and consideration of national capacity at the central and local levels; • consideration of risk throughout the process, with clear allocation of roles and responsibilities for WFP and its counterparts; • analysis of any administrative, data-related and legal requirements at the central and local levels; and • articulation of the role envisaged for WFP before, during and after handover, transition and exit, as appropriate.	Programme Policy and Guidance Division Other contributing entities Office of the Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer	Partially agreed The decision to exit a country rests with the leadership team and is driven by various factors that extend beyond programmes. WFP is working on guidance on how to transition from or phase out a given programme. Timelines for this recommendation have been adjusted to match related commitments arising from other evaluations.	1. WFP will document examples and provide guidance to country offices on effective programme handover and transition, leveraging its experiences in school meals and emergency preparedness.	Programme Policy and Guidance Division	December 2028	Ongoing

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation and sub-recommendation lead office	Management response	Actions	Action lead office	Action deadline	Status
Priority: Medium Deadline: December 2026 4. Enhance the generation of evidence from pilot activities to inform decisions regarding potential scale-up. Provide clear guidance on the assessment of results from pilot initiatives, which should include the following: - Define the specific features and mechanisms at play that affect scalability and sustainability, and clarify that strategies for addressing these will need to be built into the design of initiatives. - Clarify in advance the potential for, and pathways to, scale-up, where relevant. - Prepare strategies and implementation plans for scale-up, as appropriate. - Clarify monitoring, review, assessment and evaluation expectations.	Programme Policy and Guidance Division Other contributing entities Analysis, Planning and Performance Division Office of Evaluation Other concerned divisions at global headquarters	Agreed WFP is committed to generating strong evidence and learning from pilot activities to enhance their potential for sustainability and scale-up. As this topic was identified as requiring attention internally, WFP has recently developed and issued guidance on “smart piloting” that identifies key factors, methodological considerations, pathways and indicative timelines for pilot projects in order to enhance their sustainability and scalability. Efforts will be made to ensure the effective roll-out and uptake of this guidance and to generate evidence and learning.	1. In collaboration with the Analysis, Planning and Performance Division, the Office of Evaluation and other relevant global headquarters teams, the Programme Policy and Guidance Division will roll out the smart piloting guidance to country offices to inform how they design, implement, monitor and evaluate field pilot projects.	Programme Policy and Guidance Division (Analysis, Planning and Performance Division; Office of Evaluation)	December 2026	Ongoing
			2. WFP will document and disseminate lessons learned on piloting projects, leveraging initiatives such as the Changing Lives Transformation Fund.	Programme Policy and Guidance Division (Strategic Coordination and Assistant Executive Director Office)	December 2026	Ongoing