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Management response to the recommendations set out in the summary report on the strategic evaluation of the pilot country strategic plans (2017–mid-2018)

Background

1. This document presents the management response to the recommendations set out in the summary report on the strategic evaluation of WFP's progress in formulating and implementing country strategic plans (CSPs)¹ within the framework of the Integrated Road Map (IRM), which comprises the CSP policy,² the WFP Strategic Plan for 2017–2021,³ the financial framework review⁴ and the corporate results framework for 2017–2021.⁵
2. The evaluation addressed six issues: progress towards the intended organizational change set out in the CSP policy and other IRM documents; the extent to which WFP headquarters and regional bureaux worked effectively to develop the CSP framework and provided adequate support to country offices in the formulation and implementation of the 2017 CSPs; country-level factors exerting positive or negative influence on the intended organizational change; whether WFP adequately captured and used lessons from the formulation and implementation of the CSPs; opportunities and risks encountered; and the likelihood that WFP will achieve the intended organizational change through the CSPs.
3. The evaluation recommendations cover five topics: management of the CSP framework; CSP processes and guidance; United Nations reform; monitoring and reporting performance; and funding.
4. The management response matrix below sets out the planned actions and implementation timelines.

¹ WFP/EB.2/2018/7-A.

² "Policy on Country Strategic Plans" (WFP/EB.2/2016/4-C/1/Rev.1).

³ "WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021)" (WFP/EB.A/2016/5-A).

⁴ "Financial Framework Review" (WFP/EB.2/2016/5-B/Rev.1).

⁵ "Corporate Results Framework" (WFP/EB.2/2016/4-B/1/Rev.1).

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MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS SET OUT IN THE SUMMARY REPORT ON THE STRATEGIC EVALUATION OF THE PILOT COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLANS (2017–mid-2018)			
Recommendations	Action by	Management response and action taken	Implementation deadline
<p>Recommendation 1: Management of the CSP framework</p> <p>1(a): From now until 2021, mainstream IRM-specific structures while strengthening all existing structures to ensure effective coordination of the IRM and effective operationalization of the CSP approach in a transparent and inclusive manner. (IRM Steering Committee; IRM Implementation Office (IRMO); Executive Management Group).:</p> <p>➤ Maintain implementation of the CSP framework as a top management priority for WFP until the end of 2021.</p>	<p>IRM steering committee; IRM implementation office (IRMO); Executive Management Group; Policy and Programme Division (OSZ); Performance Management and Monitoring Division (RMP); Partnerships and Governance Department (PG); Nutrition Division (OSN); the Office of Evaluation (OEV); regional bureaux; country offices; Strategic Coordination and Support Division (STR); Emergency Preparedness and Response Support Division (OSE); and Supply Chain Division (OSC)</p>	<p>Drafting focal points: IRMO</p> <p>1a) Agree.</p> <p>➤ Implementation of the CSP framework will continue to be a top management priority. This notwithstanding, it is important to recognize the potential trade-off between maintaining centralized capacity and mainstreaming responsibilities and accountabilities in regular structures.</p>	<p>It is anticipated that most implementation activities will be mainstreamed by 31 December 2018.</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue to dedicate senior staff time to CSPs at headquarters and the regional bureaux. ➤ Ensure the continuation of an active, carefully coordinated effort to optimize the efficiency and complementarity of all relevant systems and procedures, as well as the ongoing strategic monitoring of the fitness of the current CSP model for its many diverse purposes. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consistent with the recommendations of the internal audit of the IRM pilot phase,¹ the IRM steering committee will remain in place until 2021 to oversee the coordination and operationalization of the CSP framework and to assess the impact of changes while ensuring that sufficient resources are available in 2019 to enable the IRM implementation office to deliver final documents for consideration by the Executive Board at its 2020 first regular session. ➤ By the first quarter of 2020, the IRM steering committee will re-evaluate WFP's success in mainstreaming IRM-specific structures. IRM-specific elements such as training, communications, organizational alignment, the budget planning tool and internal review processes are already being mainstreamed, and the process is due to be complete by the end of 2018. In 2019 WFP will focus on completing the transition to the IRM, with a smaller IRM implementation team that will coordinate the work, continue to simplify and improve the framework and finalize the permanent delegations of authority to be presented at the 2020 first regular session of the Board. 	31 March 2020
<p>1(b): By the end of June 2019, strengthen the process of systematic learning from the implementation of the CSP framework and strengthen implementation process monitoring to support learning across all areas. (IRMO; Policy and Programme Division (OSZ); Performance Management and Monitoring Division (RMP); Partnership and Governance Department (PG); Nutrition Division (OSN); Office of Evaluation (OEV); regional bureaux; country offices).</p>	RMP; PG; Office of the Deputy Executive Director; and OSE	1b) Agree.	31 December 2019

¹ Office of the Inspector General Internal Audit Report AR/18/05.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strengthen the capacity of country offices to learn from their experiences and adapt as necessary. ➤ Encourage the exchange of information and experience from country office to country office and from regional bureau to regional bureau. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ RMP will train trainers on the revised corporate results framework and will conduct webinars and online courses for staff responsible for monitoring to facilitate the application of the corporate results framework and enhance the monitoring of operations and improve reporting. Guidance on conducting mid-term reviews will be available for the first wave of CSPs, helping country offices to learn from their experience with the initial implementation of their CSPs and, if necessary, adjusting them. OEV will continue to review and comment on all draft CSP concept notes and other CSP documents as part of its work to provide evaluation evidence to support country office learning. ➤ Updated guidance will be rolled out to facilitate and inform systematic learning in country offices, regional bureaux and headquarters. 	<p>1 January 2019</p> <p>31 December 2019</p>
<p>1(c): In the first quarter of 2020 carry out a comprehensive review of experience with the CSP format and systems to generate recommendations for improving the CSP framework and other elements of the IRM. (IRMO; OSZ; Strategic Coordination and Support Division (STR); PG; OSN).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The review should cover a full implementation cycle of the pilot CSPs (which will include the formulation of the second-generation CSPs in the pilot countries). ➤ The review should build on all existing efforts, including those of the regional bureaux. ➤ The process should be linked to the mid-term review of the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021). ➤ The review should focus on areas that are relatively difficult to assess, such as alignment with national priorities and the development of strategic partnerships. It should also 	Office of the Deputy Executive Director/IRMO	<p>1(c) Agree.</p> <p>A comprehensive management review linked to the mid-term review of the strategic plan will be initiated, building on all existing efforts, including those undertaken by regional bureaux, subject to the final outcomes of the current effort to reform the United Nations development system, including the United Nations development assistance framework (UNDAF) system and the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, and its implications for United Nations country teams. The review will examine alignment with national priorities and the development of strategic partnerships, progress towards more flexible and predictable funding and the alignment of CSPs with UNDAFs.</p>	1 January 2020

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include updates on the extent and nature of the earmarking of contributions and the alignment of CSPs with UNDAFs (in terms of both content and cycles).			
<p>Recommendation 2: CSP process and guidance</p> <p>2 (a): Building upon existing efforts, ensure that the simplification process is complete by 1 January 2019. (IRMO; OSZ; Emergency Preparedness and Support Response Division (OSE); Gender Office (GEN); PG, Resource Management Department (RM).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure that country offices have systems that are fit for purpose. ➤ Reduce transaction costs as far as possible. ➤ Keep staff workloads within acceptable limits. 	IRMO; OSZ; OSE; Gender Office; PG; Resource Management Department; RMP; OSN; OEV; OSE; OSC; and regional bureaux	<p>2a) Agree.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Country offices are being closely monitored to ensure that the tools, training and support structures needed for CSP implementation are mainstreamed and that they have the capacity and office structure necessary for CSP implementation. ➤ Recommendations from an IRM alignment and simplification workshop held in May and endorsed by the IRM steering committee are being implemented to simplify and align a number of internal IRM processes. Efforts to simplify the country portfolio budget structure – consolidating or streamlining certain cost planning elements or categories – and related processes will reduce the transactional workload. ➤ The IRM implementation office together with the Project Budget and Programming Service and Digital Solutions Delivery will introduce the simplified budget structure to minimize any additional workload for country offices. <p>Simplification work will continue through 2019, including with regard to emergency response and preparedness activities to ensure efficiency and excellence in emergencies.</p>	<p>Completion date: 2a) 31 December 2019</p>

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<p>2(b) By the end of the first quarter of 2019, update existing guidance related to the development and implementation of CSPs and prepare a single and comprehensive set of new guidance that reflects the need to undertake differentiated processes according to national context. (IRMO to coordinate; other units at headquarters including OSZ, RMP, PG, OSN, OEV).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ All existing guidance related to the implementation of the CSP framework and the WFP Programme Guidance Manual should be replaced by a new comprehensive CSP manual that will guide all aspects of the formulation and implementation of CSPs. ➤ WFP should now confirm that the CSP is a dynamic model and that the next generation CSPs (and their supporting procedures, notably NZHSRs) may vary more according to local conditions – while all adhering to core systems that facilitate standardized management, monitoring and reporting procedures. All guidance should specify what is mandatory, where there should be flexibility and where waivers can be obtained. ➤ NZHSR processes should better reflect national needs and provide opportunities to use the approach in areas beyond SDG 2. 		<p>2 (b). Agree.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A new CSP manual has been created, providing a “one-stop-shop” for users. ➤ The CSP framework permits the revision of CSPs and ICSPs in response to changing circumstances. CSPs are based on intensive consultations with a wide range of stakeholders that aim to reflect country-specific needs and circumstances while following corporate standards and system requirements. ➤ Guidance, including on emergency response and preparedness activities, will continue to be revised to clarify mandatory requirements, address issues of flexibility and lay out options for waivers. ➤ ZHSRs are by design tailored to national needs and differ according to each country’s circumstances. All stakeholders recognize the value of ZHSRs and may consider using them for other SDGs and the new UNDAF. 	<p>30 June 2019.</p> <p>Most of the recommendations are under way or already implemented</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There should be a light option for the mandatory mid-term review for countries with CSP cycles of less than five years. ➤ Mid-term review and country portfolio evaluation processes should be aligned in sequence and method. ➤ Guidance should take the United Nations reform process into account, and the revision of guidance should be designed accordingly. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mid-term review guidelines will be issued, instructing each country office to include a section in each annual country report that provides information on any required mid-term adjustments to their CSPs. Mid-term reviews will be light, based on performance during the initial years of CSP implementation. Country offices will conduct the reviews, with possible assistance from their regional bureaux, and each country office with a five-year CSP will need to include description of its mid-term review in its annual country report for the third year of its CSP. ➤ Agreed. RMP and OEV will continue ongoing consultations to finalize the mid-term review and country portfolio evaluation guidance to ensure that the purpose and scope of both are complementary, and that the complementary nature of the two processes is clearly communicated to field offices. Mid-term reviews will be mandatory only for five-year CSPs to avoid overburdening country offices and stakeholders with multiple consultation processes. RMP, OEV, regional bureaux and country offices will also continue to coordinate through the strategic programme review process and the electronic programme review process and subsequent annual planning processes to ensure the appropriate sequencing of mid-term reviews, country portfolio evaluations and decentralized evaluations. ➤ Guidance will be revised in line with United Nations reform decisions. 	
2(c): By the end of the first quarter of 2019, define cross-cutting issues and provide guidance on how to address them in the context of CSPs. (GEN; OSZ to define cross-cutting issues; OSN and other units depending on how the issues are defined.)		2 (c). Agree.	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review the WFP policy compendium and streamline it to reflect the findings and recommendations of recent OEV policy evaluations. ➤ Incorporate gender equality and other cross-cutting issues in all other CSP guidance. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The WFP policy compendium will be reviewed and updated with the findings and recommendations of the strategic evaluation of the pilot CSPs. Other OEV policy evaluations and recommendations have been addressed in recent management responses. OEV will continue to review the WFP policy compendium and provide updates on planned policy and strategic evaluations to inform decision making. ➤ Gender equality has already been incorporated into CSP templates and guidance, which will be further updated as the framework matures. Gender equality, accountability to affected populations and protection cross-cutting indicators are being revised as part of the ongoing review of the CRF. In addition, the methodology for the use of an environment cross-cutting indicator has been developed. 	
<p>Recommendation 3: United Nations reform</p> <p>3(a): Continue strong engagement with the United Nations reform process and participate in the practical work of developing a new generation of UNDAFs, including by introducing WFP innovations and experiences into the process. (STR; United Nations System, African Union and Multilateral Engagement (NYC), Rome-based agencies and Committee on World Food Security (PGR)).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tailor lesson-learning documents to United Nations reform work streams, especially those related to developing the new generation of UNDAFs. 	Regional bureaux; country offices; OSZ; United Nations System, African Union and Multilateral Engagement; Rome-Based Agencies and Committee on World Food Security; STR; OSC; and Management Services	<p>3 (a). Agree.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ WFP continues to engage in the United Nations reform process, including interagency discussions, and is leading some of the strategic thinking and work streams of the newly established UNDAF design team. WFP is providing input based on its experience as the first United Nations agency to align its corporate strategic plan with the SDGs. 	3 (a) 30 June 2019 (dependent on United Nations reform progress and rollout)

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<p>➤ Options may include joint country strategic reviews and planning with the Rome-based agencies and possibly other United Nations entities, or the whole United Nations country team.</p>		<p>➤ WFP expects the zero hunger strategic review approach to become increasingly important in informing United Nations system-wide SDG 2 discussions by facilitating the inclusive and country-owned localization of SDG 2 and shaping the way common country analyses are done by United Nations country teams and by providing a shared understanding of the main hunger gaps and challenges to a reformed UNDAF approach. WFP will explore ways to increase collaboration among the Rome-based agencies on joint zero hunger strategic reviews as inputs to UNDAFs.</p> <p>WFP is drawing on its participation in the discussions on United Nations development system reform at United Nations system-wide level to inform its own work to provide input for those discussions in areas such as the new UNDAFs, the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system and its implications for United Nations country teams and country-level issues such as the shared back office functions and premises (an area of work that Executive Director is co-leading at the principals level, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees).</p>	

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<p>3 (b): By mid-2019, develop strategies to ensure that all CSP cycles match UNDAF cycles as quickly as possible. (regional bureaux; country offices; OSZ; NYC; PGR).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ For each ongoing CSP that does not match the corresponding UNDAF cycle, examine opportunities to shorten or extend the CSP cycle to align with that of the UNDAF. ➤ Include a short section on the strategy for UNDAF alignment (or an explanation for the absence of such a strategy) in all concept notes for CSPs. 		<p>3 (b). Agree.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ WFP is looking at how interagency instruments (e.g., UNDAFs) and WFP instruments (e.g., CSPs) align, and how best to engage the Executive Board in this process. <p>WFP will match CSPs, especially CSPs in the development stage, to the revised UNDAF cycles as quickly as possible to be consistent with United Nations reform. This will take place as early as possible, to shift from the current, expiring UNDAF model and cycle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The guidance on zero hunger strategic reviews and CSPs recommends that each ZHSR and CSP be aligned with the current UNDAF cycle to the extent possible and when not possible to revise the CSP to align it with the next UNDAF. Each CSP concept note will refer to alignment with UNDAF outcomes and describe how the CSP reinforces the UNDAF. In the light of current UNDAF reform proposals, WFP will consider strengthening this alignment in concept notes and full CSPs. As the UNDAF appears set to become the most important instrument for planning and implementing United Nations development activities, CSPs may ultimately become a sub-document of an overarching UNDAF. 	30 June 2019
<p>Recommendation 4: Monitoring and reporting performance</p> <p>4(a): By the second quarter of 2019, ensure that the comprehensive system for monitoring and reporting performance is aligned with the revised corporate results framework (RMP).</p>	RMP; OEV; Budget and Programming Division; and PG	<p>Drafting focal points: RMP/OEV</p> <p>4 (a). Agree.</p>	1 January 2019

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Gender-responsive monitoring and reporting systems based on a revised corporate results framework should be tested. Once confirmed workable, they should be adopted by country offices after adequate training and should be in place to support the comprehensive monitoring and reporting of all CSP results. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The revised corporate results framework has a set of cross-cutting indicators, including gender. New indicators have been tested before being included in the framework, and training will be provided through face-to-face sessions, webinars and online courses to support monitoring and reporting through the revised framework. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In the meantime, WFP will need to confirm to donors and other stakeholders that it will not be able to report in full on all activities under certain CSPs for the first one or two years of implementation because indicators and a supporting methodology were not in place when the CSPs were launched. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ RMP will analyse information gaps caused by a lack of data collection, a lack of methodologies for some indicators, or a slow or late start for some activities under the pilot CSPs in 2017. The review of the corporate results framework found that data on some indicators may remain scarce (or more frequently, that indicators may not be selected) for 2018 because the revised framework will only enter in force in January 2019. 	
<p>4 (b): By mid-2019, ensure country portfolio evaluations are at the centre of the performance management system to ensure better assessment of WFP's contribution to development results. (RMP; OEV; RMB; PG.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ OEV to review and revise the current country portfolio evaluation model and adapt it to CSPs (by end 2018). ➤ Ensure the sustainable financing of country portfolio evaluations. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Agree. OEV has begun reviewing the country portfolio evaluation model and process in order to streamline the process and adjust timelines in order to deliver evaluation evidence in time to inform the design of CSPs. This work should be completed by December 2018, and the new model will be tested on the first three country strategic plan evaluations (CSPEs) conducted in 2019. After testing, it will be adopted for all CSPEs. ➤ Agree. A sustainable financing task force has been set up by RMB (Chair) supported by OEV (Secretariat) to identify a mechanism for securing adequate and timely funding for country portfolio evaluations. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Introduce a rating system in country portfolio evaluations that gauges CSP performance in terms of contribution of CSP activities to strategic outcomes. ➤ Incorporate the results of country portfolio evaluations into annual performance reporting using the rating system. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Partially agree. OEV agrees that it is necessary to place CSPEs at the centre of the performance management system, subject to the full development and implementation of the corporate results framework, which will be necessary to provide reliable and consistent data for CSPEs. In 2019, OEV will explore the feasibility of developing a rating system for all CSPEs, noting that this will have implications for OEV systems and processes. As the CSPE model is adopted in 2019 and 2020, OEV will pilot the rating system. If it is found feasible, OEV will use it in all CSPEs, starting with the second generation of CSPs. ➤ Partially agree. If an operational rating system is in place, its results will be made public at the evaluation level. OEV and RMP will consider which annual performance reporting should also include CSP operational ratings. 	
<p>Recommendation 5: Funding</p> <p>By mid-2019, address constraints on more flexible and predictable financing. (IRMO; PGB; Government Partnerships Division (PGG); RM).</p> <p>To ensure more flexible and predictable financing, WFP should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Undertake strategic dialogue with the Executive Board on multilateral funding and earmarked funding. ➤ Strengthen engagement with donors on adapting to the new model. ➤ Make greater effort to demonstrate the gains in efficiency and effectiveness that predictable and flexible funding delivers in the context of the long-term CSP framework. 	PG	<p>5. Agree.</p> <p>[Response to 1, 2, 3 and 5]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Agree. Management is committed to advocating more fully flexible funding and predictable multi-year funding to maximize operational effectiveness and agility while building evidence to demonstrate the gains in efficiency and effectiveness that such funding delivers. ➤ A strategy for maximizing funding impact is currently being implemented. It involves bilateral strategic financing dialogues with major donors, taking into consideration flexibility and predictability in the context of the relatively long-term CSP framework. 	Bilateral strategic financing dialogues are under way and will continue through 2019

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Make special efforts to reduce earmarking by strengthening staff negotiating skills. ➤ Set clear and time-bound targets for more flexible and predictable funding. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Government Partnerships Division is providing improved guidance to staff to ensure that deliberate efforts are made to improve the nature of funding and ensure that negotiations are tailored to individual donors with the aim of easing or eliminating conditions and maximizing flexibility within the constraints of current donor policies. 	

Acronyms used in the document

CRF	Corporate Results Framework
CSP	country strategic plan
CSPE	country strategic plan evaluation
GEN	Gender Office
HRM	Human Resources Division
ICSP	interim country strategic plan
IRM	Integrated Road Map
IRMO	IRM Implementation Office
NYC	United Nations System, African Union and Multilateral Engagement Division
NZHSR	national zero hunger strategic review
OEV	Office of Evaluation
OSC	Supply Chain Division
OSE	Emergency Preparedness and Response Support Division
OSN	Nutrition Division
OSZ	Policy and Programme Division
PG	Partnership and Governance Department
PGR	Rome-based Agencies and Committee on World Food Security Division
RM	Resource Management Department
RMB	Budget and Programming Division
RMP	Performance Management and Monitoring Division
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
STR	Strategic Coordination and Support Division
UNDAF	United Nations development assistance framework
ZHSR	zero hunger strategic review