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Evaluation reports

For consideration

Executive Board documents are available on WFP's website (<https://executiveboard.wfp.org>).

Overarching management response to the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Afghanistan (2018–2022)

1. Management welcomes the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan (CSP) for Afghanistan for 2018–2022, which was conducted with the dual purpose of accountability and learning with a view to informing the formulation of the country's next CSP.
2. Management appreciates the mixed methods and gender-sensitive approach to the evaluation, which incorporated the perspectives of a variety of stakeholders including WFP staff at the field, country office, regional and headquarters levels; cooperating partners; former government counterparts; donors; and beneficiaries.
3. This document provides management's overarching response to the key issues raised by the evaluation. Management appreciates in particular the evaluation's acknowledgement of the significant changes that took place between the conduct of the evaluation in April and May of 2021, and the consolidation of Taliban control of the country in August of 2021. WFP commits to addressing the evaluation recommendations in a flexible manner that takes into account the rapidly evolving circumstances, including the prevailing restrictions on building national capacity and systems imposed by the Taliban, and the implications of those changing circumstances for how rapidly the recommended actions can be completed. Recommendations such as adjusting the programme design based on a context analysis and developing a nutrition strategy will be reflected in future iterations of the Afghanistan CSP, as circumstances permit.
4. WFP welcomes the report's conclusion that the organization broadly responded to the enormous and growing needs of the most vulnerable people, drawing on its comparative advantages and adapting well in the face of rapidly changing needs despite the increasingly fragile governance and extreme insecurity in the country. WFP recognizes that while the CSP was relevant when designed, it subsequently became clear that it was aspirational in its ambitions given the conflict, political instability, severe drought and the coronavirus

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disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, which caused a dramatic growth in need that surpassed the combined response capacity of all humanitarian partners.

Items for consideration

5. The political transition in August 2021 and ensuing economic decline have created a very fluid operating environment such that long-term planning is extremely difficult. As recommended, activities designed as part of an extension of the current CSP or under a new CSP will be based on context analysis as much as possible in order to allow WFP to adapt its response to changing needs. WFP will continue to strengthen outcome monitoring through periodic collection of data on outcome indicators. In its long-term planning strategy WFP will also take into account the forthcoming United Nations strategic framework, set to start in January 2023 and last three years.
6. In relation to the recommendation (1.2) that the country office conduct a capacity gap assessment as the basis for designing a country capacity strengthening strategy, management highlights the restrictions on building national capacity and systems that have prevailed since the political transition in August 2021. In line with paragraph 63 of the summary report and given the context of WFP's engagement with the *de facto* authorities, management notes that flexibility will be required in the implementation of this recommendation.
7. The need to develop a nutrition strategy with an emphasis on malnutrition prevention emerges clearly from the evaluation (recommendation 2). Building on WFP's nutrition strategy for Afghanistan for 2017–2021 and drawing on lessons learned from the successful expansion of malnutrition treatment and prevention activities, the country office will work to develop a nutrition strategy that is further informed by a detailed analysis of the current circumstances and evidence regarding what has worked. Based on this analysis and in line with WFP's comparative advantages, the updated nutrition strategy will seek to ensure that nutrition considerations are reflected in all WFP activities and will have a strong focus on building resilience and preventing malnutrition through nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions. As part of the implementation of the new strategy and in coordination with relevant actors on the ground, the country office will also design and roll out a social and behaviour change communication strategy for each activity with the aim of promoting optimum nutrition practices.
8. The summary evaluation report concludes that WFP capacity to support sustainable resilience at scale was limited (paragraph 53). This should be read against a backdrop of increased humanitarian need during the reporting period driven largely by heightened conflict, drought, the COVID-19 pandemic and underlying economic stagnation. These challenges were compounded by the fact that most funding was earmarked for emergency response and that the amount of multi-year, flexible funding for resilience interventions was limited.
9. The report recommends that the country office enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of resilience building activities by engaging in them only where there is a medium-term perspective (recommendation 4). Building on the WFP global resilience policy, the country office has developed a new integrated resilience, livelihoods and food systems strategy designed to strengthen community resilience in the face of recurrent shocks and stressors. The strategy takes a holistic approach to food systems that complements other programmatic areas. The new strategy has short and medium-term perspectives built on the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. To translate the new strategy into practice, WFP is engaging with cooperating partners, including to strengthen their capacity, in order to improve the quality and sustainability of interventions through long-term field-level agreements and by leveraging newly available multi-year funding. WFP has expanded resilience building and food system interventions and invested in extensive community

consultation using the three-pronged approach (3PA) to inform the design of these projects. So far, three seasonal livelihood assessments involving community stakeholders have been completed at the provincial level, and the use of community-based participatory planning for all new resilience proposals submitted to WFP by cooperating partners has been emphasized.

10. In line with recommendation 4 of the summary report, the new resilience strategy uses 3PA to inform the design of an evidence-based, comprehensive and consultative community-centred resilience building approach. In collaboration with headquarters and the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, the country office is strengthening its monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that outcomes, impact and economic and social returns on investment are measured effectively. New tools in DOTS that are already being used to digitize and automate, among other things, monitoring and evaluation processes, will facilitate evidence building. Data gathered on resilience, livelihoods and food systems will build a body of evidence that supports WFP advocacy for multi-year and unearmarked funding to scale up resilience building programming with a view to establishing WFP as a reliable partner in these fields.
11. In paragraph 58 and recommendation 3 of the summary report, the evaluation concludes that WFP should conduct an in-depth gender analysis to understand the diversity of gender relations and gender-based violence and explore the feasibility of moving from “gender-sensitive” to “gender-transformative” programming. In June 2022, WFP conducted a gender analysis on the key drivers of gender inequality in Afghanistan, which considers factors relevant before and after the political transition in August 2021, as well as global evidence on good practices in promoting gender equality. On the basis of that analysis and considering WFP’s 2022 gender policy, WFP plans to implement a gender strategy for Afghanistan that will cover human resources and programming, working in coordination with other United Nations entities and other humanitarian and development actors.
12. Strengthening collaboration and coordination with key strategic partners in Afghanistan is key to improving the efficiency, advocacy and cohesiveness of development and humanitarian programming. In response to recommendation 5, WFP will continue to build on its strategic partnerships with the World Bank and other international financial institutions to support the creation and development of new shock-responsive safety nets for equitably assisting vulnerable groups who struggle to meet their basic needs. Similarly, WFP will increase dialogue with development-oriented United Nations partners to deepen understanding of its own potential role and value added, notably in the areas of resilience building and shock-responsive safety nets. To that end, WFP has entered into a joint partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on the soybean value chain to harness FAO’s strength in supporting agricultural research and assistance for farmers. WFP will also leverage and scale up partnerships with cooperating partners for greater synergies, resource optimization and joint fundraising, aiming to accelerate the achievement of lasting outcomes in fields such as resilience and food systems.