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Programme**

**Executive Board
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Agenda item 7

For consideration

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MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT ON WFP'S RESPONSE TO THE SYRIAN CRISIS (2011–2014)

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration.

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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DRAFT DECISION*

The Board takes note of “Management Response to the Recommendations of the Summary Evaluation Report on WFP’s Response to the Syrian Crisis (2011–2014)” (WFP/EB.A/2015/7-C/Add.1).

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

BACKGROUND

1. This document presents management's response to the summary evaluation report on WFP's response to the crisis in and around the Syrian Arab Republic in 2011–2014. This was the first evaluation of the response – one of WFP's largest and most complex to date. Since starting in 2011, the operation has expanded considerably in beneficiary numbers and tools employed, particularly cash and vouchers. The evaluation assessed the strategic direction, positioning, effectiveness, performance and results of the response.
2. Management is pleased to note the evaluation's affirmation of WFP's response capacity, reflected in the appropriate and timely response to a fast-evolving, complex crisis requiring rapid scale-up as needs grew. The evaluation recognized the appropriateness of establishing the Regional Emergency Coordinator office (REC), and its effective coordination with other humanitarian actors in the region.
3. Challenges were identified. Initial response plans lacked detailed analyses of conflict, gender, or the costs and benefits of different modalities. This gap was compounded by WFP's failure to gather timely baseline data for measuring results, and to connect field staff to up-to-date guidance as they rolled out new modalities. Addressing these issues will be critical for WFP's future engagement in the region.
4. Management welcomes the findings of the evaluation and generally agrees with its recommendations. REC and the concerned country offices will continue focusing on lessons learned and more systematic sharing of information to help guide WFP's support to those affected by the conflict. The following matrix sets out the planned actions and implementation timelines.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT ON WFP'S RESPONSE TO THE SYRIAN CRISIS (2011–2014)

| Recommendations | Action by | Management response and action taken | Implementation deadline |
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| <p>Recommendation 1: Transition (Overarching Recommendation)</p> <p>1a) Prepare country-specific transition strategies and consider significant scaling down of assistance using a systematic vulnerability-based targeting process. Changes should be introduced through a new emergency operations (EMOP) or protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) rather than further budget revisions. Where authorities have financial and delivery capacity, as in Turkey, prepare for handover of responsibility for food assistance, with WFP providing technical assistance to the authorities.</p> <p>1b) In future crises, ensure early development and introduction of short-term contingency plans based on vulnerability analysis. These plans should be regularly updated and communicated to partners and beneficiaries to manage oscillations in donor funding.</p> <p>1c) Develop scenario-based, long-term transition plans that cover the spectrum from maintaining/expanding the response to a country-by-country exit strategy.</p> | <p>REC, in consultation with country offices</p> <p>Emergency Preparedness and Support Response Division (OSE)/Policy and Programme Division (OSZ)</p> <p>OSE/OSZ</p> | <p>Agreed.</p> <p>Targeting has been implemented in Egypt since the onset of the operation, in Lebanon since 2013, and in Jordan since 2014. All countries are implementing targeting and prioritization plans based on a regional targeting and prioritization strategy. The regional EMOP foresees hand-over of operations in some camps in Turkey during 2015.</p> <p>WFP's regular household food security analysis groups households into four categories: i) food-secure; ii) marginally food-secure; iii) moderately food-insecure; and iv) severely food-insecure. WFP is developing a household targeting method that uses data collected at the time of refugee registration for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)/World Bank vulnerability analysis. These data on household demographics and socio-economic characteristics will complement WFP food security analysis, facilitating improved targeting and decision-making on resource use by enabling country-level managers to develop contingency plans for prioritizing resource allocations according to vulnerability levels across geographic areas and livelihood groups.</p> <p>Given the uncertainty over how the crisis will develop, scenario-based transition plans should remain broad and be clear about which of the types of transition referred to in the evaluation is being discussed. WFP will: i) review current guidance on transitions, internally and externally; and ii) develop a plan for filling gaps and ensuring wider dissemination of the guidance.</p> | <p>Completed</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>End of 2015</p> |



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| <p>Recommendation 2: Evidence-based programming</p> <p>Undertake further analysis on cash and vouchers, gender, host community relations and conflict dynamics to inform country-specific programme strategies and decision-making.</p> | <p>REC, with support from OSZ and the Gender Office (OMG)</p> | <p>Agreed.</p> <p>WFP is reviewing its transfer modalities for refugee operations in the regional EMOP. To generate evidence for supporting modality selection, a pilot comparing cash and voucher with mixed programmes is planned for Jordan and possibly Lebanon. WFP will conduct further market/supply chain analysis to inform modification of the programme's delivery model.</p> | <p>To be confirmed</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 3: Humanitarian access and principles</p> <p>3a) Monitor application of the humanitarian principles in Syria; develop and monitor implementation of a strategy for managing perceptions of WFP's relationship with the Syrian Government and its assistance in opposition-held areas.</p> <p>3b) In future crises where a strategic task force is required, articulate, monitor and record strategies for balancing competing pressures on WFP and managing perceptions about WFP's role.</p> | <p>REC</p> <p>OSE</p> | <p>Agreed.</p> <p>WFP's engagement conforms with humanitarian principles: i) humanity – suffering must be addressed; ii) neutrality – sides must not be taken; iii) impartiality – humanitarian action should be needs-based, prioritizing the greatest in need, without distinction based on nationality, race, gender, politics, religion, etc.; and iv) independence – humanitarian action should be independent of political, military or economic objectives. WFP is continuously monitoring its conformity and advocates with the Government, opposition groups and the public – including through the media and other fora – on the need to respect humanitarian principles. WFP has led development of the Whole-of-Syria approach, and will continue reporting on denials of access while advocating for all parties to the conflict to respect humanitarian principles and allow humanitarian workers to deliver food to the most vulnerable.</p> <p>To enhance information flows between the strategic and operational task forces, OSE will assume management of the Strategic Task Force Secretariat, continuing to manage the operational task force. It will ensure that competing pressures and perceptions are considered in the decision-making process and are documented. The Communications Division will be involved when perceptions of WFP's role lead to significant risks.</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> |



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| <p>Recommendation 4: Support to programmes and operations</p> <p>4a) At the country and sub-office levels, increase attention to: i) lesson-learning and information-sharing opportunities; ii) capturing lessons from innovation; and iii) early consideration of country office-specific transition and exit strategies.</p> <p>4b) Develop a flexible system for linking WFP operations staff to corporate guidance, expertise and documents, such as through better use of WFP's intranet, connecting staff facing similar programme challenges around the world, and maintaining a help desk).</p> <p>4c) Make greater use of anonymous surveys and other tools for eliciting staff views and ideas on support and other issues that may not be communicated to line managers.</p> | <p>REC, with support from the regional bureau and Headquarters</p> <p>Internal Communications Office (PGM)</p> <p>Human Resources Division (HRM)</p> | <p>Partially agreed.</p> <p>In March 2014, REC organized a workshop on lessons learned from cash and voucher use. Quarterly regional programme meetings – where all EMOP country offices discuss and share information on targeting, transition to early recovery/development, partnership management, market analysis, M&E, and accountability to affected populations – provide a forum for learning from other countries. REC has also developed assessment and M&E tools for C&V use. REC and country offices will enhance systematic lesson-learning and information-sharing and their documentation.</p> <p>PGM is redeveloping the intranet with guidance from the Intranet Council. Starting with a global survey to identify the information needs of employees in the field, this work will involve developing a user-friendly interface, continuous monitoring to ensure up-to-date data, and developing systems for improved delivery and integration of information.</p> <p>WFP and an external provider carry out a Global Staff Survey every two years covering 14,400 staff members with 73 questions. The next survey, planned for May 2015, will be in Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish; the 2012 survey was available in English only. Reports on survey responses are provided to units with at least eight staff members, to ensure confidentiality.</p> | <p>Completed</p> <p>June 2016</p> <p>May 2015</p> |



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| Recommendation 5: Human Resources | | | |
| 5a) Conduct an internal review to ascertain why the REC offices for this crisis lacked staff with skills and experienced in conflict analysis and negotiations, cash and vouchers, working with the private sector, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and vulnerability analysis. | HRM, with support from OSZ, OSE and the Cash for Change Service (OSZIC) | Partially agreed. Internal reviews should be led by the country offices concerned, with support from HRM. Skill gaps resulting from this shift in mandate are addressed under the People Strategy imperative "Building WFP's talent", through the talent pool initiative and other means of identifying and attracting the necessary talent. | Ongoing |
| 5b) Develop a responsive staffing model alongside the emergency roster to ensure that technical experts are deployed to support emergency operations for a minimum period, such as three or six months. | HRM, with support from OSZ, OSE and OSZIC | WFP already has a staffing model identifying minimum requirements for emergency response, and a protocol for emergency deployment. The emergency response roster, which assists REC in deploying experts, became operational in early summer 2014. | Completed |
| Recommendation 6: Targeting | | | |
| 6a) As an immediate step towards transition, gather and consolidate food security data on affected populations to inform vulnerability-based targeting of WFP food assistance. | REC, in consultation with country offices and with support from OSZ | Agreed. In 2015, WFP is targeting its assistance on the basis of 2014 food security assessments carried out in all EMOP countries except Turkey; conducting an assessment in Turkey is being discussed with the Government. Targeting of off-camp assistance is based on vulnerability analysis using assessment data from two partners. | Completed; ongoing for Turkey |
| 6b) In future EMOPs, systematically prepare for timely food security-based targeting by gathering household-level vulnerability information, including pre-assistance baselines, as early as possible and shift promptly from category or status targeting. | OSZ | WFP collects and collates as much information as possible on the food security of affected populations in and outside the Syrian Arab Republic. It has shifted from status-based to needs-based food assistance, with household targeting criteria to be applied across all EMOP countries in 2015. Enhanced targeting criteria are developed and implemented in collaboration with stakeholders, and a mechanism enabling refugee households to appeal targeting decisions is being considered. | End 2015 |





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| Recommendation 7: Measuring results | | | |
| <p>7a) Use existing data or conduct needs assessments among populations currently excluded from programmes, particularly non-camp refugees in Iraq and Turkey, and refugees deemed ineligible for assistance in Lebanon.</p> <p>7b) Support governments in assessing conditions among host communities, but avoid raising expectations of WFP assistance</p> | <p>REC, with support from OSZ</p> <p>REC</p> | <p>Agreed.</p> <p>A multi-sector needs assessment of Syrian refugees outside camps was carried out in urban areas of Iraq in 2014/15. Targeting of vulnerable refugees in urban areas is being discussed with local authorities; discussions with the Turkish Government aim to reach agreement on assessments of off-camp refugees. WFP will provide assistance based on the outcomes of these discussions and in line with its targeting and prioritization strategy.</p> <p>WFP supports host populations in all EMOP countries except Turkey. Consultations with governments and other partners on longer-term assistance to both host and refugee populations are part of an ongoing review of regional programme strategy.</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> |
| Recommendation 8: Modality selection | | | |
| <p>8a) Ensure that WFP systems are able to report transparently, routinely and consistently on costs per beneficiary by delivery modality for use in modality selection, project approval and review.</p> <p>8b) Ensure that all delivery modalities, including cash, are considered in future responses, based on a rigorous assessment of their appropriateness, to ensure that modality selection is based on context-specific and clearly recorded technical evidence.</p> | <p>Performance Management and Monitoring Division (RMP)</p> <p>OSZ</p> | <p>Agreed.</p> <p>As a key performance indicator in WFP's Management Results Framework (2014–2017), the cost per ration enables WFP to identify more accurately the costs of providing assistance through food, cash or voucher transfers, allowing clearer differentiation by operation and activity. The indicator is assessed at the country, regional and corporate levels.</p> <p>Headquarters units will continue to provide country offices with technical support and guidance in selecting transfer modalities. WFP will ensure that modality selection is based on technical evidence and complies with the relevant operational directive. Since the first quarter of 2015, OSZIC is rolling out cash-and-voucher training to WFP country offices, with both face-to-face and e-learning components.</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> |

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| <p>Recommendation 9: Evidence and accountability</p> <p>9) Assign extra medium- to long-term staff for M&E and vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) – particularly in country offices – for systematic monitoring and measurement of results and outcomes, and to analyse information and feed it into programme management and operational decisions.</p> | <p>REC, with support from OSZ and RMP</p> | <p>M&E capacity has been reinforced through the structure and staffing review, particularly at the Jordan, Lebanon and Syrian Arab Republic offices. The REC office in Amman will continue to provide support.</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 10: Operational efficiency</p> <p>10) Assess the reasons for voucher encashment and differing prices among WFP partner shops; improve monitoring of encashment and minimize efficiency losses; and strike the appropriate balance between accountability and the number of shops contracted for voucher programming.</p> | <p>REC, with support from the Analysis and Nutrition Service (OSZA), RMP and OSZIC</p> | <p>Regional standard operating procedures (SOPs) for monitoring encashment are being developed, based on the system currently used in Lebanon. Measures already being implemented include identification of risk and risk mitigation activities; development of standards for monitoring bank transaction reports, shops, beneficiaries and counterparts; and recommendations on actions when irregularities are identified. After piloting in Jordan, the SOPs will be rolled out regionally by June 2015.</p> | <p>June 2015</p> |



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

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| EMOP | emergency operations |
| HRM | Human Resources Division |
| M&E | monitoring and evaluation |
| OSE | Emergency Preparedness and Support Response Division |
| OSZ | Policy and Programme Division |
| REC | Region Emergency Coordinator office |
| RMP | Performance Management and Monitoring Division |
| OSZA | Analysis and Nutrition Service |
| OSZIC | Cash for Change Service |
| SOP | standard operating procedure |
| VAM | vulnerability analysis and mapping |