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SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT – AFGHANISTAN COUNTRY PORTFOLIO

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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 WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Afghanistan country portfolio evaluation covered the period from April 2010 to June 2012, concentrating on WFP's strategic and operational work under protracted relief and recovery operation 200063. The evaluation focused on three key evaluation questions: i) the alignment and strategic positioning, given the particularly challenging humanitarian situation and complex geopolitical context; ii) the factors that have driven WFP's strategic decision-making; and iii) the performance and results of the portfolio.

WFP's operations underwent considerable change over the portfolio period, concomitant with the changing political and security context. Initial optimism in 2009 gave way to reluctance to fund the operation in the face of security and governance constraints. Most international actors focused on state building and governance in the last decade, but attention is shifting back towards humanitarian concerns as displacement increases. WFP's operating environment is characterized by insecurity for staff and partners and increasing politicization of the humanitarian space. The country office has responded with an ongoing series of internal situation assessments and reappraisals of operational activities, the findings of which complement and contribute to this evaluation.

The evaluation found that the portfolio was closely aligned with the evolving general architecture of government policy, and cooperated increasingly with the Government and other actors in the areas of food security and nutrition policy. Communications through some – but not all – line ministries were good.

Operationally, the evaluation found that while WFP worked closely with government partners at the local level for delivery, monitoring and follow-up, there were challenges and concerns related to partners' legitimacy in some regions and the adequacy of their management of WFP's food distribution. WFP's cooperation and alignment with non-governmental organization partners have been less than that with the Government, owing in part to the challenge of finding viable and legitimate non-governmental partners at the local level, and in part to WFP's association with an international agenda aligned with an occupying force – a representational compromise that some non-governmental organizations are not willing to make.

In response to funding shortfalls, WFP made strategic efforts to maintain the number of beneficiaries in the original operation design by reducing food distributions. The implications of this approach varied by activity, but overall were characterized by "breadth versus depth". Monitoring and evaluation systems improved considerably over the evaluation period and provided essential data for operational adjustments, although the evaluation found that there were opportunities to harmonize some parallel activities. Third-party programme assistance teams were filling field-level gaps where security prohibits access for United Nations staff; WFP is addressing the teams' capacity gaps.

The evaluation found several gaps in the analytic basis for targeting, including outdated national food security data; insufficient integration into the programming of operating activities of other actors; gender and protection issues at the community level; and the geographically varied links among food access, inequality, conflict and displacement.

Data paucity, due to intermittent access and capacity constraints among partners, means that the performance and results of the portfolio cannot be easily measured. Pipeline breaks, particularly in general food distribution and school feeding activities, negatively affected the timeliness of food delivery and the perception of WFP among partners and beneficiaries. However, the evaluation found that medium- and longer-term activities such as food for assets were well received by beneficiary communities.

The evaluation makes six main recommendations. WFP should: i) refocus the portfolio within the shrinking humanitarian space and shifting staff capacities; ii) make activities more relevant to communities' medium-/long-term livelihoods; iii) continue the ongoing improvement of national capacity development and operational partnerships; iv) include a full conflict analysis in the design of the new protracted relief and recovery operation to improve the effectiveness of the portfolio; v) increase the focus on national ownership of all programmes; and vi) renew emphasis on gender and protection analysis within the design and implementation of all activities.

DRAFT DECISION*

The Board takes note of “Summary Evaluation Report – Afghanistan Country Portfolio” (WFP/EB.2/2012/6-D) and the management response in WFP/EB.2/2012/6-D/Add.1 and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

* 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.

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation Features

1. This country portfolio evaluation (CPE) covered WFP activities in protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) 200063 from April 2010 to June 2012.¹
2. The objectives of the CPE were to facilitate learning, by evaluating how and why decisions were made, and accountability, by measuring the performance and results of the PRRO. It focused on three key evaluation questions: i) the country office's alignment and strategic positioning given the particularly challenging humanitarian situation and complex geopolitical context; ii) the factors that have driven, and the quality of, WFP's strategic decision-making; and iii) the performance and results of the operations over the portfolio period.
3. The evaluation findings complement the ongoing development of a WFP country strategy and the preparation of the next PRRO, to begin in 2014.²

The Afghanistan Context

4. Afghanistan has been a fragile state for decades, both politically and in terms of development indicators. International actors – the military, donor agencies, the United Nations and others – have dominated the country's stabilization and development agenda, particularly since 2001. By 2012, aid was contributing 91 percent of the Afghan Government's public spending. Poverty and, particularly, food insecurity kill more Afghans than conflict. Food security indicators rely on data from 2007, but they continue to be some of the worst in the world. Afghanistan is subject to cyclical weather patterns, with poor harvests often followed by relatively good harvests, and a perennial dependence on grain imports from neighbouring countries. Land utilization rates are very low, and seasonality and topography are important determinants of food security. The long-term development solution lies in improving infrastructure, landownership, watershed management and technology for increasing productivity. The correlates of poverty – few assets, poor health and low income – are intensified by social and power relations from the village level upwards. Many of the causes of social exclusion and gender disparity lie in political and cultural practices that vary across the country. Increasing displacement resulting from drought and conflict – with about 450,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in 2012 – tends to exacerbate these issues.
5. Aid distorts the economy. With unemployment at about 36–40 percent, there is overreliance on service-sector jobs based on the presence of international actors. Corruption is a major source of discontent in the population; it is caused by a combination of weak state institutions and rule of law, the illicit drug market, vertical layers of contracting and subcontracting, and the huge inflow of foreign funds.
6. The intended reduction and departure of the bulk of International Security Assistance Force combat troops under North Atlantic Treaty Organization command by the end of 2014 has intensified the debate over medium-term development priorities, particularly in basic health and food security. Although funding levels may be retained in the immediate

¹ Evaluation of the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service special operation is reported separately as an Annex to the main evaluation report.

² There will also be a budget revision to the PRRO in 2012.

future, they are likely to decline in subsequent years, requiring all international actors to make strategic and difficult decisions regarding priorities.

WFP's Portfolio in Afghanistan

7. Total official development assistance (ODA) to Afghanistan in the period 2006–2010 exceeded US\$25 billion.³ The PRRO was launched in April 2010 with a target over three years of 816,882 mt of food costing more than US\$1.2 billion. As planned, it was the second largest PRRO in the world, representing 9 percent of WFP's total global budget.
8. The PRRO aimed to enhance food security and improve the human and productive capital of 7.6 million food-insecure Afghans. Its intended outcomes were to:
 - i) stabilize acute malnutrition and improve food consumption (WFP Strategic Objective 1);
 - ii) establish early warning, contingency and monitoring systems (Strategic Objective 2);
 - iii) improve access to assets in transition situations, school enrolment and access to education, and increase household capital (Strategic Objective 3);
 - iv) increase fortified food production capacity and improve the success of tuberculosis (TB) treatment (Strategic Objective 4); and
 - v) increase market opportunities through local purchases by WFP, and make progress towards government-owned hunger solutions (Strategic Objective 5).
9. From mid-2011, funding constraints and the onset of drought forced reprioritization of the PRRO to 4.5 million beneficiaries, through a reduction in food for education (FFE) and the shifting of activities in 14 drought-affected provinces to an emergency operation. Operating in 34 provinces, the PRRO comprises the following activities.

⇒ Relief

- *Emergency food assistance.* Provides general food distribution (GFD) to populations affected by shocks, IDPs and returnees, mainly in rural areas. Where possible, food for assets (FFA)/food for work (FFW) is undertaken.
- *Urban safety net project.* Operates a cash/food voucher system, primarily for households headed by disabled people or widows with limited employment opportunities who are not supported by other safety net mechanisms.
- *Mother-and-child health and nutrition (MCHN).* Provides targeted supplementary feeding for children under 5 and pregnant and lactating women, alongside partners' activities in therapeutic feeding and growth monitoring.

⇒ Recovery

- *Food for assets/food for training (FFA/FFT).* Provides primarily micro-catchment watershed management, irrigation systems and vocational training in disaster-prone areas. Targeted at vulnerable groups such as IDPs and returnees.
- *Food for education/food for training (FFE/FFT).* Provides high-energy biscuits, and a take-home ration incentive for girls, to schools in food-insecure districts with poor education/education and gender indicators. A wet feeding pilot has operated in eight

³ US\$25.50 billion in net ODA receipts for the period 2006–2010 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] Aid Statistics 2012).

provinces. FFT includes vocational training and literacy training activities targeting women as a priority.

- *Support to the national TB programme.* Provides food assistance packages to patients receiving directly observed treatment, shortcourse (DOTS) medication at clinics.

⇒ *Capacity development*

- *Strategic grain reserve and community storage facilities.* Provides support to the government for a strategic grain reserve complemented by community-level storage facilities, and support to silo construction and training.
- *Purchase for Progress (P4P) (pilot).* Aims to link farmers' associations to local markets and purchase farmers' produce for the PRRO. High wheat prices prevented purchases from taking place, but WFP supports efforts to increase productivity and improve storage for wheat and soya.
- *Flour fortification.* Includes providing micro-feeders and training to private millers for fortifying flour for commercial use, with some purchases by WFP.
- *Establishment of a vulnerability surveillance system and market analysis.* Includes capacity development for the forthcoming National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA), a national early warning system, and collection of market information.

FINDINGS

Alignment and Strategic Positioning

10. The PRRO was designed in 2009 in a very different environment from that of mid-2012. Up to 2009, the main discourse on Afghanistan focused on state building and development. As a result, WFP's major donors encouraged it to "think big" in the PRRO design.
11. However, during the first year of the PRRO, the climate in the country changed dramatically. A marked deterioration in security led to a reduction in operational scope and increased security concerns and costs for all international actors.⁴ WFP's major donors adopted a more conservative financial outlook, leaving the PRRO only 45-percent funded in 2011, with further reductions anticipated for 2012.
12. At the same time, WFP's capacity to closely monitor its activities was drastically reduced. Government of Afghanistan priorities were also shifting away from reliance on multilateral support, towards bilateral and international financial institution funding.
13. WFP has had to reduce the direct expenditures of food delivery considerably, while also restricting the geographical scope of operation. Although it continued working in 34 provinces, it could no longer travel in large areas of southern Afghanistan and many areas in the east. Starting in mid-2011 there was a serious reappraisal of the portfolio, based on external analysis commissioned by WFP – and to which this CPE contributes – to examine the possibilities available in an increasingly constrained security environment.

⇒ *Alignment with the Government*

14. The evaluation found that WFP was appropriately and closely aligned with the evolving general architecture of government policy, despite there being some incoherence over

⁴ WFP's staff, office and vehicle security costs increased by almost US\$15 million in 2010–2011.

national strategies relating to food security. Together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), WFP has agreed to support six thematic areas in food security, which are in line with the overarching 2009 Afghanistan National Development Strategy. Communication with some – although not all – key line ministries had been good.

⇒ *Alignment with WFP policy*

15. The objectives of the PRRO were in line with WFP corporate objectives, the corporate shift from a food aid to a food assistance agency, and the four emphases of the WFP Management Plan (2010–2011): cash/vouchers, targeted supplementary food, school feeding, and hand-over strategies. However, improved food consumption (Strategic Objective 1) was too broad an objective to be meaningful or measurable in Afghanistan. Disaster risk reduction at the village level (Strategic Objective 2) became a main priority for WFP, particularly through FFA. As FFW/FFA activities tended to be communal rather than individual, monitoring was based on community asset scoring, and household capital data were not gathered for each sub-project; there is thus no evidence of changes in household capital (Strategic Objective 3).

⇒ *Alignment with international good practice*

16. “Taking context as the starting point”⁵ requires a thorough and sound information base. The evaluation found that the original PRRO design had not undertaken or applied a thorough conflict analysis. Without this, the PRRO was never likely to be sufficiently adaptive and responsive to contextual changes as they emerged.
17. Reacting to volatility meant that WFP had to make two major budget revisions to the PRRO in just two years. The portfolio had to shift towards what is feasible rather than sticking to its original ambitions.
18. Since mid-2011, WFP has sought to improve the analytical base of its programming, and risk identification and mitigation measures have been put in place. However, changes have been driven mainly by operational necessity rather than the strategic revisioning desirable in the current and expected future political, economic and security context.
19. Declining humanitarian space in Afghanistan has been an acute issue for WFP, given its relationship with a government whose legitimacy is challenged by some sections of the population, and its placement within the United Nations integrated mission. WFP has lobbied – as yet unsuccessfully – for a separation of the roles of Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, to increase advocacy for access to contended areas/populations.

⇒ *Alignment with development partners – United Nations agencies, international financial institutions, donors*

20. WFP has cooperated closely with the complex aid architecture of Afghanistan, and made significant inputs at the strategic level, such as with the United Nations country team, and on Afghanistan National Development Strategy priorities. WFP co-leads with FAO the food security and agriculture cluster, and in targeted areas has close working relationships with FAO, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework Working Group on Sustainable Livelihoods and Agriculture.

⁵ OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). 2007. *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States*. Paris.

⇒ *Alignment with non-governmental organizations (NGOs)*

21. The ratio of government to non-government partners implementing WFP's portfolio by early 2012 was about 65 to 35. WFP has sought to increase the number of national NGOs it works with, but with some difficulties. The major constraint has been national capacity, but there have been also financial problems when the food tonnage – and therefore fee – is less at implementation than originally intended and the NGO has already met initial set-up costs. These costs are more easily met by international NGOs, which often have access to complementary funds through other projects in the same area. Although NGOs are concentrated in the east of the country, the evaluation found the supposed dearth of NGOs was not as severe as usually depicted. The challenge is to identify viable, mainly local NGO partners with local knowledge. Some NGOs questioned the desirability of working with a United Nations agency, given the problems of associating with an international agenda aligned with an 'occupying force'. Some donors still insist on the presence of national logos on assistance products, even in areas where this may endanger recipients.

Factors Driving WFP's Strategic Decision-Making in Afghanistan

22. WFP's responses to the operational limitations over the evaluation period were assessed, including the portfolio's beneficiary coverage and targeting; efforts to improve the availability and use of knowledge and information; approaches to capacity development; and efforts to make maximum use of WFP's internal technical capacity.

⇒ *Coverage and targeting*

23. WFP reached roughly the number of beneficiaries planned in the PRRO document, covering 34 provinces, but with reduced volumes of food (see Table 1). This reflects the "breadth-over-depth" approach that has characterized WFP's programming over the period.

TABLE 1: PLANNED AND ACTUAL BENEFICIARIES AND FOOD			
Beneficiaries	Planned	Actual	% of planned
2010	7 052 200	6 556 047	93
2011	7 317 475	6 972 839	95
Tonnage (mt)	Planned	Actual	% of planned
2010	197 115	145 267	74
2011	273 022	163 806	60

Source: WFP standardized project report data.

24. At the programme level, WFP's geographical and group-based targeting mechanisms were clearly and explicitly justified in relation to contextual needs. For example, the FFE programme targeted food-insecure districts within the 34 provinces and which also had poor education indicators. Within this initial targeting, the more specific criterion for targeting the take-home ration incentive for girls was the districts with a gender gap of more than 25 percent in enrolment rates.
25. The main groups identified for targeting – IDPs and returned refugees (GFD), pregnant and lactating women and malnourished children under 5 (MCHN), TB patients (TB support), children in school (FFE), and women lacking literacy skills (FFT) – approximate the vulnerable groups identified in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. However, these groups are being targeted by a range of actors simultaneously,

and fieldwork for this evaluation indicated a marked lack of coherence in WFP's targeting at the operational level until recently.

26. This situation is now changing with more coordinated models in place via the food security and nutrition cluster. Afghanistan has also been selected as a pilot for the United Nations' Integrated Food Security Phase Classification System, expected to begin in late 2012.
27. In Afghanistan, the gap between targeting theory and practice is undoubtedly wide, although the evaluation was not in a position to quantify it. WFP takes a tolerant view of endogenous community systems of redistribution, but there have been serious concerns over diversion and/or leakage. The country office set up a Compliance Unit in January 2011 with a remit to improve the management and governance of WFP commodity distribution. Its efforts are showing promising results, including, in one instance, of the return of misappropriated goods. However, access and staffing constraints make it unlikely that this problem will be tackled comprehensively.
28. The risk of diversions and inclusion/exclusion errors associated with access constraints and remote management is high and likely to increase if the political-economic context deteriorates further. The evaluation team was not able to identify WFP's risk management strategy through which an explicitly defined threshold of diversion would trigger specific management actions, including activity suspension or closure. The institutional improvements cited in the previous paragraph have gone some way to mitigating donor and WFP concerns, but balancing a pragmatic acceptance that diversion exists with official intolerance of it remains a difficult equation for WFP in a country as challenging as Afghanistan.

⇒ *Monitoring and evaluation*

29. Security and access seriously constrain WFP's ability to monitor its food distributions in Afghanistan. WFP's strategy has been to contract private programme assistance teams (PATs)⁶ that travel to the growing number of areas inaccessible to United Nations staff.
30. WFP's learning curve on PAT recruitment has been steep.⁷ The evaluation found that issues encountered are being proactively addressed, and are likely to lead to significant improvements over time.
31. There has been a lack of robust or systematic approaches to monitoring. Changes made since 2011 include the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation unit and systems – including key performance indicators – that enable real-time collection of distribution data. These systems functioned discretely, however, and there is a need for harmonization.
32. There have been some good – although not systematically applied – approaches to supporting national data collection systems, such as Education Management Information Systems in the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Public Health's collation and analysis of health and nutrition data.

⁶ In mid-2012, WFP had contracted 143 PATs at a net additional cost of US\$2.5 million per year.

⁷ Challenges identified included high staff turnover, capacity limitations, the near-absence of women in PATs, management challenges at the field office level, and disputes over differing salary levels.

⇒ *Gender, protection and Do No Harm*

33. Afghanistan is an extremely complex and challenging environment for gender work by international agencies. However, given that the links between addressing gender inequalities and improving food security are well-documented and central, for WFP and others,⁸ it is one of the most pressing and important issues facing the country office's work.
34. Despite some useful support to national systems, including to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and to development of a gender marker system for the Consolidated Appeal Process, WFP is far from meeting its commitments on gender in Afghanistan. Efforts have been generally shallow and unsystematic; lacking a clear institutional vision of WFP's goals in gender and food security over the PRRO period; without guidance on implementation strategies; lacking partnerships with other agencies for achieving what WFP alone cannot achieve; and without clear accountability processes or comprehensive internal training.
35. Certain protection issues were identified through regular monitoring missions, but these were not addressed in programming, although protection training was carried out. WFP needs a far more robust and explicit response to gender and protection. A full *Do No Harm* analysis, which would inform this response, was not evident.

⇒ *Use of partnerships*

36. WFP relies heavily on its operational partnerships to deliver on its mandate in Afghanistan. Over the evaluation period, it worked most extensively through the Government, although also through NGOs.
37. However, there have been major concerns about partners' efficiency and capacity to deliver. A mapping exercise currently under way will help develop a revised partnership model for community-based assistance. The Government will remain an important partner, but 2013 may see an appropriate shift in implementation modalities, with more focus on non-government actors at delivery level.

⇒ *Approaches to capacity development*

38. Despite the PRRO's objectives, capacity development has remained subsidiary – not core – within PRRO implementation, with no concerted, coherent, planned and implemented efforts. An institutional mind-set from “can do” to “enabling others to do” has yet to happen. There was little evidence of planned and monitored approaches to hand-over other than for P4P.

⁸ WFP's protection policy is clear on these links. Other examples are Institute of Development Studies (IDS). 2012. Innovative Approaches to Gender and Food Security. *Food Security and Gender Insights* 82, July. Brighton, UK (available from the Eldis resource centre at www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/food-security/food-security-and-gender&id=59402&type=document); and FAO's resources at www.fao.org/gender/gender-home/gender-why/why-gender/en/

⇒ *Use of WFP's internal technical capacity*

39. Impressive and creative efforts were made to tackle staffing constraints and improve internal national capacity.⁹ As international engagement decreases and transition takes hold, the drive for nationalization will intensify and the international footprint will be further reduced. A scenario planning exercise will provide an opportunity to devise appropriate strategies and tools for this.

Portfolio Performance and Results

40. Data paucity in Afghanistan continues to be a major constraint for WFP in assessing the effectiveness and impact of its programmes. The complex interplay between pipeline breaks and access constraints also confounds efforts at robust measurement.

41. Pipeline breaks, particularly within GFD and FFE, have negatively affected WFP's ability to deliver to its beneficiaries in a timely way. This has affected WFP's relationships with its partners and beneficiaries.

42. Table 2 shows summary findings about PRRO activities.

TABLE 2: FINDINGS ABOUT PRRO ACTIVITIES	
Relief	
GFD and FFW	Performance was affected by pipeline breaks, donor contributions over time, closures of the Pakistan border at key points, and some access difficulties. Despite being gratefully received by beneficiaries, GFD was the least robust of WFP's activities in terms of meeting its primary objectives, because of poor targeting, intermittent delivery and some diversions. However, GFD makes an important contribution to welfare in highly vulnerable populations where hunger is pervasive.
Prevention of acute malnutrition	WFP, along with United Nations partners, has led the debate and pushed for greater coherence for nutrition in government policy, such as the new Food Security and Nutrition Policy. A collaborative programme with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on preventive and curative activities has delivered good results; the Ministry of Public Health is seeking to integrate this approach into its basic package of health services and has requested WFP to expand its programme beyond emergencies. However, sustainability in terms of food procurement is not yet feasible.
Urban social safety net	Urban social safety net activities experienced teething problems – including a six-month delay in Mazar-e Sharif – relatively high transaction costs, and conceptual confusion. Targeted populations have been the chronically vulnerable, who qualify for long-term safety net assistance rather than emergency assistance or livelihood enhancement. The pilot schemes have however opened new avenues for WFP to explore safety net assistance for the urban poor, pending development of a national social protection strategy and safety net scheme.

⁹ Including by using short-term consultants, developing a roster of local staff to fill gaps, proposing an internship programme with local universities, and appointing a capacity development officer. There is no corporate requirement for psychological screening for new recruits to conflict zones.

TABLE 2: FINDINGS ABOUT PRRO ACTIVITIES	
Recovery	
FFE	School feeding accounted for 25 percent of total PRRO resources. Resource shortfalls led to significant variance between planned and actual beneficiary numbers. Reasons for underperformance included the closure of supply routes via the Pakistan border, food losses while in storage in Pakistan, and quality and supply issues with the Indian supplier. FFE has suffered from design shortcomings and conceptual confusion; its original design as an emergency response mechanism to get children back into school after a period of conflict is no longer applicable in a country where demand for education now outstrips supply. WFP has worked hard to correct these problems during implementation of its FFE programme, but the challenges will be difficult to overcome without a major redesign.
FFT	The targeting of this relatively small component has been among the more successful of any WFP activity. FFT has been highly valued and in demand from communities. However, to maximize effectiveness it needs a solid and comprehensive partnership strategy that matches the quality of delivery with guaranteed food supply.
FFA	This programme has undergone internal redesign, adopting a more focused and integrated approach over time. FFA exceeded its asset creation targets and has been highly valued by participants. It has experienced some implementation challenges and there are concerns about the sustainability of some of the assets built. Although it could have greater coherence with other activities, FFA was one of the more relevant and effective programmes.
TB support	This programme has also suffered pipeline breaks, especially in wheat. Targeting has been pragmatic, with no distinction between food-insecure and non-food-insecure patients. Anecdotal evidence found strongly positive results in incentivizing patients to complete DOTS. However, results are not available beyond the incentive effects. More real-time monitoring, particularly of patient needs, would support delivery.
Gender equality	Targets for WFP's Enhanced Commitments to Women indicators are relatively low and progress against them has been mixed. Some indicators – such as on women in leadership positions in food management committees in 2011 – showed that good results are possible where concerted efforts are made. However, a more systematic approach and concerted effort are needed.
Capacity development	
Capacity development across the portfolio	There was no evidence of coherent capacity development efforts of the form or intensity intended in the PRRO design. Important contributions were made in some ministries – such as data collection and analysis in the Ministry of Public Health – but overall, capacity development has remained a subsidiary part of PRRO implementation. The PRRO objective of developing Community Development Councils has relied heavily on partners with limited capacity to develop the councils' capacity. The contractual nature of relationships between WFP and cooperating partners does not lend itself to achieving the PRRO's capacity development goals.
P4P	In 2011, unprecedented procurements of wheat were made from the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, and WFP has worked hard to implement the P4P programme as a means of improving local purchasing from farmers. However, production volumes have been extremely limited compared with needs. WFP has helped increase productivity and improve storage for wheat and soya. Private sector processing plants are receiving assistance in producing soya and wheat products, such as high-energy biscuits, including for WFP projects. Three factories produced 100 mt of biscuits in 2011, increasing to 867 mt in 2012. This is a positive result, but does not yet meet the high requirements of the WFP programme.

TABLE 2: FINDINGS ABOUT PRRO ACTIVITIES

Disaster preparedness	WFP assistance has contributed significantly to Afghanistan's information base for national intervention planning, through support to the national vulnerability surveillance system, market analysis, and capacity development in preparation of the updated NRVA in 2012. However, disaster preparedness requires closer work with communities in the design and implementation of lasting projects that offset the effects of drought and displacement.
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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

43. It has rarely been necessary for a country office to reconfigure a PRRO as radically as that of Afghanistan in 2011–2012. This is an ongoing process, and key issues identified by the CPE include the following.

⇒ *Breadth versus depth*

44. The initial ambition of WFP's portfolio in Afghanistan reflected the optimism of the time, but funding and intensified conflict have caused operational constraints that have reduced what could reasonably be achieved within the timeframe. Reaching close to planned numbers of beneficiaries over successive years of PRRO implementation was a considerable achievement, but can mean less than optimal use of resources in areas where WFP is spread too thinly. Reduced frequency of food rations, for instance, diminishes the intervention's impact over time and compromises objectives of improving food security.

45. WFP has responded to operational constraints by reducing its scale, but retaining the same portfolio. With high-value food commodities – such as fortified biscuits for FFE – being no longer financially viable, and the PRRO operating at only about half of its projected funding, this approach is no longer tenable. Changes in vision and strategy should be reinforced by the new corporate guidance that focuses on results.

⇒ *Portfolio results*

46. Mother-and-child health and nutrition projects have shown some encouraging results, particularly where inter-agency collaboration has improved. In terms of actual versus planned outputs, the poorest performing portfolio activities in 2011 were FFE, FFT and cash/voucher schemes. Targeting has been a problem across all activities, especially GFD and cash/voucher schemes. Inclusion and exclusion errors have been most severe where food aid is distributed to conflict-displaced communities, partly because of access difficulties.

47. The humanitarian imperative will remain, not least because of the increase in conflict displacement that occurred in 2012. WFP will be obliged to answer the growing demand for food aid from those displaced or cut off in the winter months. The cross-agency approach to address acute malnutrition is encouraging.

48. For recovery activities, greater depth of coverage in selected geographical areas will build on WFP's comparative advantage, with increased integration and tracking of results within its own portfolio, combined with joint programming with other development actors in the field.

⇒ *Conflict analysis*

49. More thorough conflict analysis at the PRRO design stage may have enabled the PRRO to respond more proactively to volatility, such as by enabling greater awareness of likely risks, identifying priorities in the sequencing of activities, and developing mitigation and management strategies where changes and shifts – including reductions in scale and scope – were needed. Risk analysis – a fundamental element of conflict analysis – is now being undertaken more comprehensively, but there is need for more explicit recognition of the full spectrum of risk, including political, strategic and those related to the political economy of the country, rather than merely operational risk.
50. WFP has been mainly reactive to operational constraints, rather than proactively designing conflict-sensitive activities. With such high-value commodities at its disposal, WFP has also been a victim of diversions and of poor cooperating-partner accountability, although ongoing institutional reforms – including efforts related to the compliance and operations units – should help address this.

⇒ *Coherence*

51. WFP's alignment with national priorities has been strong, although subject to donor priorities. There is need for increased joint programming; declining funds make “go-it-alone” activities no longer viable. Recent collaboration in food security and nutrition policy and field practice with FAO and UNICEF should be continued and extended.
52. WFP has a strong voice in both the food security and nutrition clusters. Capacity development across the portfolio as a whole has not been as fruitful as it could have been; there has been a tendency to use partners as service delivery agents, rather than creating lasting institutional resources.

⇒ *Political space, partnerships and future strategy*

53. There are increasing risks related to the operational and political “space”. The legitimacy of the Government is contested in some areas of Afghanistan. Revised partnership agreements will be crucial as WFP steers the difficult path between supporting government institutions and maintaining appropriate political neutrality that allows access to all communities in need.
54. A crucial prerequisite for future programming will be identifying the most appropriate delivery partners. A pragmatic solution, already under-way, is to build partnerships with non-government actors, while simultaneously helping to develop the Government's capacity in oversight, coordination and information management.
55. Afghanistan is likely to continue to be highly volatile over the medium term, resulting in a shrinking operational space for WFP, and reduced funding. To avoid repeating its earlier adaptive decision-making, WFP needs to balance its focus at the level of operational delivery with a more strategic and conflict-sensitive vision of the future.

Recommendations

56. The CPE make the following recommendations for action by the country office.
57. **Recommendation 1: Reconfigure the overall portfolio in accordance with national priorities, the operating environment, and staff capacities.**
- 1a) Use the ongoing strategic review and realignment process to concentrate the scope of the portfolio around key priorities in the medium term, possibly working in fewer communities, while retaining a longer-term vision. Ensure a full conflict analysis to drive

decision-making in the PRRO budget revision, including sequencing of projects, institutional capacity development, the use of strategic risk analysis, *Do No Harm Plus* tools, etc.

1b) Given the need to nationalize staff posts and increase remote management, increase resources and staffing for compliance issues and provide communities with a greater voice over accountability and reporting.

1c) Review internal management, staff training and capacity to better reflect the more concentrated portfolio and incorporate the need for ongoing risk assessment.

58. Recommendation 2: Ensure that WFP is strategically positioned for maximum effectiveness.

2a) Refine targeting throughout the PRRO cycle through a regularly updated NRVA complemented by improved data collection using vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM), focusing on areas of highest food insecurity. The new data from the NRVA and VAM should be combined with ongoing United Nations assessments of access. Continue to work through the food security and agriculture cluster and the nutrition cluster to press for enhanced targeting, integration and joint programming.

59. Recommendation 3: Make programming fit for context.

3a) Retain the capacity for emergency response (GFD/FFW and MCHN) while reducing the time lag in the assessment process, particularly for conflict-displaced populations.

3b) Prioritize recovery operations based on monitoring feedback on their relevance, effectiveness and efficiency over the preceding period, with FFA linked to community resilience taking a prominent role.

3c) Retain the TB incentive programme, but with clearer reporting on objectives.

3d) Consider a scale reduction and redesign of FFE.

3e) Use the limited urban safety net initiative where feasible to underpin the development of a national social protection policy.

60. Recommendation 4: Improve operational partnerships.

4a) Scale up joint programming opportunities with complementary United Nations and donor initiatives.

4b) Devise clear criteria for cooperating partner selection, based on effectiveness and efficiency of delivery, and develop relationships based on clear and detailed contracts that specify expectations, roles and responsibilities for both parties.

4c) Examine ways to enhance NGO partnerships through a combination of implementation and capacity development. Long-term relationships with fewer communities are likely to be the way forward.

4d) Increase community level communications and advocacy for entitlements; these should include a gender perspective.

4e) Introduce staff incentive structures that reflect time spent in coordination and collaboration as part of joint planning and initiatives with other development actors.

61. **Recommendation 5: Increase focus on national ownership.**

5a) Develop a stronger and more explicit focus on developing national capacity for coordinating and facilitating service delivery.

5b) Increase support to the Central Statistics Office for the development of, for example, a rolling NRVA.

62. **Recommendation 6: Improve the focus on gender and protection quality issues in WFP programming.**

6a) Renew emphasis on gender and protection analysis in activity design and implementation strategies for targeted and mainstreamed programmes and for monitoring and reporting, drawing on strategic partnerships and in-country resources.

6b) This would include the development of a series of immediate, short- and medium-term actions to improve focus on and accountability for gender equality. A country office vision statement should be developed, with intended results and delivery strategies for gender equality. Conduct a gender audit of the portfolio, leading ultimately to a full gender mainstreaming strategy for the new country strategy and redesigned PRRO. Draw on strategic partnerships and in-country resources.

6c) Conduct a full *Do No Harm Plus* analysis of the portfolio, leading ultimately to a statement on how protection issues will be addressed in the new country strategy and PRRO redesign.

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

CPE	country portfolio evaluation
DOTS	directly observed treatment, shortcourse
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFA	food for assets
FFE	food for education
FFT	food for training
FFW	food for work
GFD	general food distribution
IDP	internally displaced person
MCHN	mother-and-child health and nutrition
NGO	non-governmental organization
NRVA	National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
ODA	official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD-DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
P4P	Purchase for Progress
PAT	programme assistance team
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
TB	tuberculosis
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAM	vulnerability analysis and mapping