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Evaluation reports
For consideration

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Management response to the recommendations deriving from the synthesis report on four evaluations of the impact of WFP programmes on nutrition in humanitarian contexts in the Sahel

Background

1. This document presents the management response to the recommendations deriving from the synthesis report on four WFP-funded impact evaluations of nutrition and food security interventions in sub-Saharan Africa. The four evaluations, carried out in Chad, Mali, the Niger and the Sudan, examined the effect of WFP's programmes for food security and the prevention and/or treatment of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) on nutrition and food security outcomes. They also identified lessons for improving programme effectiveness and achieving WFP objectives in food security and nutrition.
2. Management appreciates the findings and recommendations, which are aligned with the priorities of WFP's nutrition policy for 2017–2021 and its implementation. Management notes that the evaluation found positive outcomes stemming from the combination of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive approaches, reaffirming the findings of *The Lancet* series on maternal and child nutrition (2013), which stressed the importance of scaling up both nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions to sustainably reduce malnutrition. With long experience in nutrition-specific programmes, WFP's dual mandate in food security and nutrition uniquely positions it to work with multiple sectors to address the basic and underlying causes of malnutrition through nutrition-sensitive approaches. Both approaches therefore feature prominently in the nutrition policy, and in early 2017 WFP issued its first ever nutrition-sensitive programming guidance. Increasing use of this guidance in the field is highlighted throughout the planned actions outlined in the table below.
3. Management also notes that the synthesis report found that important action is needed in data collection, management and sharing among partners to improve programme effectiveness. WFP has embarked on a digital transformation of its programmes, with many innovations in its nutrition programming leading the way. The digitization of data for MAM programmes – from beneficiary information to nutrition indicators – is already under way to improve the availability of the data and their form and accessibility to partners.

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4. Given the multi-sector nature of nutrition interventions, management notes the complexities of ascertaining cost effectiveness when programmes have a multiplicity of outcomes in several sectors. In line with WFP's new financial framework, management is committed to collecting more detailed and disaggregated cost data for nutrition programmes and will seek resources to support this work in 2018. Such data will be necessary in facilitating cost-effectiveness analyses that accurately capture both the costs and the range of benefits emanating from nutrition programmes.
5. Management agrees with the five recommendations for improving nutrition programming derived from the synthesis report. The following table sets out management's response to each recommendation, along with planned actions and timelines for implementation.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS DERIVING FROM THE SYNTHESIS REPORT OF FOUR EVALUATIONS OF THE IMPACT OF WFP PROGRAMMES ON NUTRITION IN HUMANITARIAN CONTEXTS IN THE SAHEL			
Recommendations	Action by	Management response and action taken	Implementation deadline
<p>Recommendation 1: To improve overall efficiency and operational effectiveness, WFP should invest in the strategic deepening of its relationships with partners and stakeholders, providing capacity strengthening where relevant. This recommendation pertains to matters such as coordination of efforts to ensure appropriate timing, sequencing, connectedness of provision, and coverage¹ cost management and the collection of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data.</p>	<p>Headquarters – Government Partnerships Division (PGG), Budget and Programming Division (RMB), Nutrition Division (OSN), Performance Management and Monitoring Division (RMP) – country offices, regional bureaux</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Management recognizes the importance of strengthening its strategic partnerships to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of programmes seeking to address MAM.</p>	December 2021
		<p>a) Following consultations with diverse partners, including governments, donors and non-governmental organizations, WFP has developed a new nutrition policy for 2017–2021, which was approved by the Executive Board at its 2017 first regular session. The policy emphasizes the need to establish and deepen strategic partnerships – with, for example, Scaling Up Nutrition partners and the Rome-based agencies – to end all forms of malnutrition, including MAM. The policy is being implemented through the action plan for nutrition (2017–2021), which was approved by the Board at its 2017 annual session and provides a framework for working in partnership.</p> <p>b) WFP is engaging in renewed high-level dialogue with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) on strengthening partnership for nutrition. This dialogue is complemented by collaboration through joint task teams – comprised of members of the regional and headquarters nutrition teams of both agencies – on identifying strategies for enhancing partnerships in major areas of technical cooperation. These areas include management of acute malnutrition, for which the task team is investigating issues related to the coordination of activities, including data collection, and strategies for improving nutrition outcomes.</p>	December 2019

¹ For example, there is need to improve timelines for seasonal food assistance through earlier mobilization of resources to prevent delays in programme implementation.

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		c) WFP has developed an external learning portal to support work in nutrition, which aims to provide partners and national governments with the information and guidance they need to accelerate positive nutrition outcomes. Nutrition is the first of WFP's corporate functions to offer an external learning portal. The portal will contain a comprehensive package of resources and e-modules, including videos, interactive courses and case studies, to help users enhance their nutrition knowledge and skill sets. Nutrition-sensitive programming and social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) are among the priority modules and resources that will be made available first.	June 2018
Recommendation 2: To improve the uptake and coverage of prevention and treatment programmes, the planning and design processes for WFP interventions should pay greater attention to communication with target groups, effectiveness of case finding, and community sensitization, all of which will help to improve the quality of targeting, achieve efficiencies and contribute to enhanced effectiveness of MAM treatment and prevention programmes.	Headquarters – OSN, Information Technology Division (RMT), country offices, regional bureaux	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Management is committed to employing various strategies for improving the uptake and coverage of prevention and treatment programmes.</p> <p>a) Recognizing the need to improve communication with target groups and following approval of the nutrition policy in February 2017, WFP expanded its capacity to deliver in this priority area by recruiting an SBCC expert. With this expertise, OSN has developed guidance and standards for SBCC and disseminated them in the field. Better SBCC will increase communication with target groups and support improved identification of malnutrition cases by raising awareness of and encouraging participation in treatment and/or prevention programmes.</p> <p>b) WFP is strengthening the capacities of staff in the field to enhance and expand SBCC activities in nutrition programmes using a training-of-trainers approach at the regional level to support country roll out of SBCC guidance to all country offices. By the end of 2018, all six regions will have received technical support from OSN.</p>	<p>February 2018</p> <p>December 2018</p>

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<p>Recommendation 3: MAM programme components should be better tailored to context to facilitate the reduction of malnutrition in a sustainable manner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In any context, various treatment and prevention activities may need to be integrated into longer-term, multisector solutions. For example, the studies in Mali and the Niger both emphasize the synergies among various types of nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific programmes and the need to design assistance packages with a variety of complementary interventions. ➤ In conflict-affected situations, the critically important need to understand the political economy of food assistance is particularly important to the effectiveness of programme delivery. Enhanced understanding of the political economy can help when making critical trade-offs that involve on the one hand programme scale and cost effectiveness, and on the other hand the practicalities of operating in areas under the control of armed groups, including security, governance and transparency issues. ➤ In conflict-affected situations, programme design and delivery can be enhanced to improve the scale up of food-based assistance programmes. Increasing the coverage of nutrition-specific interventions, including the provision of specialized complementary foods, appears to be a critical gap. ➤ The findings also suggest that from a design perspective, appropriate bundling of various forms of food assistance, with components tailored to context, may be an effective strategy for supporting vulnerable populations, as also suggested in WFP’s 	<p>Headquarters – OSN, Policy and Programme Division (OSZ), Emergency Preparedness and Support Response Division (OSE) – country offices, regional bureaux</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Management recognizes the importance of context-specific programming and of integrating nutrition programming into longer-term multisector solutions for reducing malnutrition sustainably.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) One of WFP’s first actions in implementing the nutrition policy for 2017–2021 was to develop, translate into four languages and disseminate guidance for nutrition-sensitive programming. In 2018, ten countries are being prioritized for technical support to advance WFP’s work in integrating treatment and prevention activities into longer-term, multisector solutions. b) Programming that is better tailored to context requires enhanced content-specific analysis. By the end of 2018, WFP aims to have carried out “Fill the Nutrient Gap” analyses in 22 countries – including the Sudan and the Niger – and 13 country analyses are already complete or under way. The analysis provides context-specific recommendations for improving policy and programmes to tackle nutrition challenges, based on up to 100 data sources and multisector stakeholder consultations at the country level. Given the consultative nature of the Fill the Nutrient Gap process, the analyses can also take into account the political economy of food assistance. c) In line with WFP’s digital transformation, nutrition data is being digitized through various innovative mechanisms supported by donor trust funds. For example, a new function of WFP’s corporate digital beneficiary and transfer management platform SCOPE has been developed for nutrition; SCOPE for nutrition enables the digitization of data on the beneficiaries of MAM treatment programmes. This digitization initiative will be rolled out to ten countries in 2018, helping to overcome critical challenges with data in treatment and prevention programmes and facilitating linkages to nutrition-sensitive activities. 	<p>December 2018</p> <p>December 2018</p> <p>June 2019</p>

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<p>current guidance on nutrition-sensitive programming. For example, in households receiving two forms of food assistance, the Mali evaluation found evidence of pronounced positive impacts on food consumption and on changes in height in children aged 2–5 years at baseline. The Niger evaluation recommended the extension of food assistance for assets (FFA) programming given its strong and positive impact on MAM-related indicators, which the evaluation report suggests can be further enhanced through the joint provision of FFA and prevention programming (specifically) and of prevention and treatment programmes generally.</p>		<p>d) In 2018, the new directive on minimum standards for nutrition in emergency preparedness and response will be applied for all field operations. Given the important role that these standards have in facilitating the scale up and improving the quality of nutrition activities in emergencies, special attention will be given to ensuring that all responses to Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies meet these standards by the end of 2018. Work to improve nutrition in emergencies is supported by the ongoing integration of nutrition issues into the Functional and Support Training for Emergency Response (FASTER), OPweb dashboards and updated emergency preparedness and response training manuals, such as the Emergency Field Operations Pocketbook.</p> <p>e) Through various partnerships, including with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the No Wasted Lives coalition, WFP’s research is adding to the global evidence base for nutrition interventions. Research on the effectiveness of “bundling” nutrition and complementary interventions is under way in various contexts – from Pakistan to Burundi – with results expected by the end of 2019.</p>	<p>December 2018</p> <p>December 2019</p>

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<p>Recommendation 4: Given the common, cross-agency commitment to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 – particularly in this instance SDG targets 2.1 and 2.2 – the agencies at the forefront of that effort, including WFP, need to make a greater effort to ensure that data are shared, taking into account the likely costs associated with data curation, and hosting; and to work to mainstream, to the greatest extent possible, compatibility in how they measure phenomena, including with regard to tools, methods, indicators and core demographic details. Consideration should be given to developing protocols for sharing data among agencies and studies with a view to maximizing available data sets, minimizing the duplication of effort in mutually exclusive studies of the same subjects and facilitating the efficient development of longitudinal data sets to support more in-depth analyses and assessment. This may require considerable effort in, for example, negotiating ethical concerns. The possibility of using a database mechanism to open access to what are often stand-alone sets of data and to effectively present the data as a public good is worth pursuing with the objective of enhancing overall humanitarian and development efforts in pursuit of SDG 2.</p>	<p>Headquarters – PGG, OSN, OSZ, RMP, RMT – country offices, regional bureaux</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Management acknowledges that cross-agency commitments, especially related to data management and sharing, must be strengthened in order to achieve the SDGs. In response to successive editions of the Global Nutrition Report that highlighted the imperative need to invest in better quality, more accessible data, management is focusing on digitizing data and partnering with governments so that they have the nutrition data they need for policy making.</p> <p>a) As part of WFP’s ongoing digital transformation of its projects, SCOPE for nutrition is being offered to UNICEF as a tool for simultaneously supporting and managing the collection and use of beneficiary information for programmes focused on severe acute malnutrition. Having one system to support the work of both agencies will facilitate joint data collection and enable all stakeholders to use the same data. In 2018, ten countries will be prioritized for the digitization of beneficiary data for nutrition programmes.</p> <p>b) WFP will strengthen countries’ capacities for measuring global indicators of nutrition including the minimum acceptable diet for children and minimum dietary diversity for women. As these are globally agreed indicators, improvements in the quality and swiftness of data collection will facilitate greater compatibility of results among agencies.</p> <p>c) The roll-out of the Integrated Road Map and the adoption of country strategic plans (CSPs) will also help strengthen cross-agency commitments. The CSP process enables WFP to be a more predictable partner in longer-term programming and multi-year resourcing. Through national zero hunger strategic reviews, WFP’s country nutrition strategies are developed in closer consultation with governments and major partners. This process facilitates better coordination, co-location and prioritization of nutrition action with partners.</p>	<p>June 2019</p> <p>December 2018</p> <p>February 2019</p>

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<p>Recommendation 5: Greater support and attention are needed to improve the collection and use of monitoring and cost data. This will help improve programme implementation in real-time, and support assessment of the longer-term impacts and cost effectiveness of various programme components. The studies found that, to undertake a specific cost effectiveness analysis, adequate resources need to be devoted to collecting and maintaining detailed cost data on the various components of the programme.</p>	<p>Headquarters – RMP, OSN, OSZ, RMT, RMB – led by country offices with support from regional bureaux</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Management recognizes the importance of collecting and using monitoring and cost data, particularly so that programmes can be improved during implementation. In addition to strengthening the activities and systems that support these essential actions, management has also initiated innovative actions to accelerate improvements in these areas.</p>	
		<p>a) WFP is disseminating updated M&E guidelines for its nutrition programmes. These revised guidelines cover both the quantitative and qualitative components of M&E and will help improve the quality of monitoring in nutrition programmes.</p>	December 2018
		<p>b) WFP’s corporate mobile data collection and analytics tool, which enables the swift collection of programme data using standard, ready-to-use questionnaire templates, is being rolled out with nutrition templates in four regions to facilitate faster data collection and analysis.</p>	December 2018
		<p>c) In countries where poor access to affected populations is a major barrier to monitoring, WFP is prioritizing the roll out of a version of WFP’s mobile vulnerability analysis and mapping (mVAM) tool tailored to nutrition assessment and programming. Computer-assisted telephone interviews are used to reduce the time and cost of data collection. By the end of 2018, WFP will have rolled out mVAM for nutrition in six countries to support more cost-effective and real-time improvement of nutrition programming.</p>	December 2018
		<p>d) WFP will work with the No Wasted Lives coalition on generating evidence to inform refinements in M&E of nutrition programming and to fill priority gaps in evidence, for example, cost effectiveness in addressing acute malnutrition.</p>	December 2019

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		<p>e) WFP will seek resources for improving the collection and management of more detailed, multi-country cost data for nutrition programming, in line with WFP's new financial framework. Such improvements in cost data will allow greater standardization of cost-related information on various components of nutrition programmes, which is essential for cost effectiveness analysis.</p> <p>f) WFP is collaborating with the United States Agency for International Development, IFPRI, academic institutions and other partners to develop new parameters for gauging cost effectiveness in nutrition programmes. While many cost effectiveness studies look at cost per disability-adjusted life year gained or cases of stunting averted, the costs of achieving improvements in dietary intake, for example, may be more appropriate for WFP programmes. Improving dietary intake is a critical goal in supporting healthy, productive lives that are free from malnutrition of any form and from non-communicable diseases. A cost effectiveness analysis of this kind is being piloted, building on WFP's Fill the Nutrient Gap analyses. Given the multiplicity of outcomes that stem from nutrition programmes, other cost effectiveness models may also be needed to capture the full effect of nutrition interventions, whose results often affect several sectors.</p>	<p>December 2018</p> <p>June 2019</p>

Acronyms used in the document

CSP	country strategic plan
FASTER	Functional and Support Training for Emergency Response
FFA	food assistance for assets
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MAM	moderate acute malnutrition
OSN	Nutrition Division
OSZ	Policy and Programme Division
PGG	Government Partnerships Division
RMB	Budget and Programming Division
RMP	Performance Management and Monitoring Division
RMT	Information Technology Division
SBCC	social and behaviour change communication
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund