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Management response to the recommendations deriving from the evaluation of the Central African Republic country portfolio for the period 2012–mid-2017

Background

1. This document presents management's response to the recommendations deriving from the evaluation of the WFP Central African Republic country portfolio, which covered the period from 2012 until mid-2017.
2. The evaluation assessed WFP's alignment and strategic positioning in the Central African Republic, the quality of and factors influencing decision making, and the performance and results of portfolio activities as a whole. The relevance of the interim country strategic plan (ICSP) for 2018–2020 was also assessed.
3. Central African Republic is a landlocked, least developed country of 5 million people. In spite of its vast reservoir of natural resources and unexploited land for agriculture, the country's growth potential has not been realized because of poor governance and repeated political and military crises over decades.
4. Since December 2012, the Central African Republic has faced a new wave of political and intercommunal conflict across its territory. Population displacement, destruction of infrastructure and social safety nets and reduction of economic activities and public services have continued for more than three years, reversing all the development gains made in previous years and resulting in an unprecedented socio-economic and humanitarian catastrophe. Currently, there are 700,000 internally displaced persons and another 500,000 Central African refugees are living in neighbouring countries.

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5. There has been progress in improving security through the concerted efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and other international forces. The situation, however, remains fragile and volatile, especially in prefectures where the continued presence of armed groups incites fear and sporadic incidents of violence.
6. The prolonged conflict has affected the country's feeble socio-economic development indicators. The Central African Republic is ranked 187th of the 188 countries in the 2015 Human Development Index. Gross domestic product contracted by 36.7 percent in 2013 and shows a slow recovery with increases of 1.3 percent in 2014 and 5.5 percent in 2015. In April 2015, enrolment in primary education was 3.1 percent lower than in the 2011/12 academic year.
7. Agriculture and livestock production, the main source of livelihoods for two-thirds of the population, has been severely hit by the crisis, threatening national food security.
8. According to context analysis, over the last five years WFP has implemented 18 operations aiming to save lives, support the recovery of vulnerable people and provide air transport and communications support to other humanitarian actors operating in the country. WFP has based its project objectives on the population's needs – subject to access – the Government's priorities and plans and the intervention frameworks of United Nations agencies and has participated in relevant coordination mechanisms. WFP has also introduced new initiatives such as cash-based transfers (CBTs) and Purchase for Progress (P4P) to help strengthen the resilience of targeted communities.
9. Management appreciates the evaluation findings and the related recommendations, which will inform preparation of the country strategic plan.
10. The matrix sets out the planned actions and timelines for implementing the recommendations.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS DERIVING FROM THE EVALUATION OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC COUNTRY PORTFOLIO FOR THE PERIOD 2012–MID-2017			
Recommendations	Action by	Management response and actions planned or taken	Implementation timeline
<p>Recommendation 1: WFP should:</p> <p>a) support, particularly through food assistance for assets (FFA) activities and/or the vouchers modality, the work of partners directly involved in the re-establishment of peace – United Nations Children’s Fund, United Nations Development Programme, the civil affairs department of MINUSCA, etc.);</p> <p>b) contribute to the mapping of national institutional capacities in order to improve the focus and effectiveness of its own capacity strengthening activities, leveraging the experience and knowledge available from headquarters and the regional bureau;</p> <p>c) ensure the systematic involvement of line ministries and national actors in the design and monitoring of its projects;</p> <p>d) enhance synergies with relevant civil society and other actors, including in education;</p> <p>e) ensure that its partners are fully aware and regularly reminded of the importance of adhering to the humanitarian principles that underpin all humanitarian assistance; and</p>	<p>Country office, supported by regional bureau and headquarters – Livelihoods and Resilience Unit (OSZPR), Government Partnerships Division (PGG), Supply Chain Cash-Based Transfer Team, and Technical Assistance and Country Capacity Strengthening Service</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>WFP is already implementing food assistance for assets (FFA) activities (using in-kind and/or voucher distributions) that contribute to social cohesion and the re-establishment of peace. WFP’s planned interventions in the ICSP for 2018–2020 are coherent with pillar 2 (access to basic social services) of the Central African Republic’s national recovery and peacebuilding plan. In January 2018, WFP started to collaborate with the MINUSCA civil affairs unit and other partners on supporting the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration project.</p> <p>The country office will continue to support the peacebuilding process through FFA.</p> <p>The mapping of national institutional capacities has been completed in collaboration with other agencies in the United Nations development assistance framework. Each year, WFP signs memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and joint action plans with the ministries of planning, agriculture, health and education. The country office provides technical offices in the ministries with the technical assistance and other support needed to implement their annual action plans, calling on support from the regional bureau and headquarters where needed.</p> <p>The ministries of planning, agriculture, health and education were involved in preparation of the ICSP from the design stage. Monitoring will continue through quarterly technical reports, visits to project sites and monthly newsletters.</p> <p>The country office has recently expanded its collaboration with relevant civil society actors in order to enhance operational effectiveness and the impacts of WFP programmes in rural and</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

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f) whenever possible, work with FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development on institutionalizing partnerships for both programming and fundraising, particularly in the areas of agricultural resilience and gender equality.		<p>urban communities. For activities related to education, WFP already works in partnership with non-governmental organizations and parent-teacher associations. WFP will continue to enhance the visibility of its interventions through the media and social networks.</p> <p>WFP engages with partners that demonstrate adherence to humanitarian principles. WFP continuously monitors such adherence: a letter was recently sent to remind all cooperating partners about preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and WFP's beneficiaries are constantly informed on and sensitized to the principles that guide the interventions of WFP and its partners.</p> <p>WFP collaborates closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on field projects such as food security assessments and seed protection. It will work with FAO on institutionalizing this partnership in an MOU. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is not present in the country.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Fourth quarter of 2018</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: Funding</p> <p>WFP should examine the donor landscape with a view to assessing the range of donors and donors' appetite for funding WFP's recovery activities in the Central African Republic. WFP should also review its articulation of linkages between the triple nexus and its FFA and P4P activities in order to ensure that existing and potential donors are able to make informed decisions on funding allocations.</p>	Country office, supported by regional bureau and headquarters – Private Sector Partnerships Division, OSZPR and P4P Unit	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>As part of the approved ICSP and related funding plan, WFP has already engaged development-oriented donors in FFA and P4P-type activities. Since January 2018, new donors have been providing funding for these activities – the European Union for FFA and Norway for FFA.</p> <p>The donor base will continue to be strengthened around the triple nexus of peacebuilding, development and humanitarian interventions with the engagement of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, the World Bank and the African Development Bank.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

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<p>Recommendation 3: Food security information and monitoring</p> <p>WFP should:</p> <p>a) optimize its strategic role in food security by enhancing the use of existing tools and taking the lead in assisting the Government in developing a national food security information strategy and ensuring government ownership of a “sentinel surveillance” network of sites to be used to gather relevant information;</p> <p>b) continue to strengthen monitoring systems, centrally in the country office and in sub-offices;</p> <p>c) prepare a formal strategic monitoring plan with clear coverage targets, systematically taking into account the various levels of security and access limitations that exist in the country by planning various frequencies and modalities of monitoring, such as the use of third-party monitoring and remote monitoring via telephones and tablets; and</p> <p>d) use the strategic monitoring plan to track and monitor accountability to affected populations effectively.</p>	<p>Country office, supported by regional bureau</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>WFP is the co-lead of the food security cluster in the Central African Republic. In partnership with the Government, WFP has established a set of systems and tools for data collection and analysis. Training is organized for national government agencies and ministries, in accordance with a capacity strengthening plan. The food security monitoring system will be implemented across the country.</p> <p>The country office continues to implement its plan for strengthening monitoring through dedicated training of WFP and partner staff, full implementation of corporate tools such as the country office tool for managing effectively (COMET), and recruitment of additional food aid monitors at the country and field levels.</p> <p>Standard operating procedures for monitoring and evaluation define the roles and responsibilities of staff in all offices.</p> <p>Operational procedures are already in place and a more formal monitoring and evaluation strategy are being finalized.</p> <p>Measures for ensuring accountability to affected populations have been established. Information related to such accountability and protection is collected regularly through post-distribution monitoring. Direct communication lines to beneficiaries have been activated to foster beneficiaries’ empowerment through mechanisms that allow complaints and feedback with regard to any aspect of the provision of food assistance.</p>	<p>Second quarter of 2019</p> <p>First quarter of 2019</p> <p>Fourth quarter of 2018</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

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<p>Recommendation 4: Gender</p> <p>WFP should develop an evidence-based operational strategy for integrating gender into programming. In particular it should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) ensure that programming is based on specific gender analysis; b) improve and monitor the protection of women, girls and other vulnerable groups; c) prioritize women's access to productive assets and financial services and their control over property; and d) strengthen partnerships with the Government, international agencies and entities led by women. 	Country office, supported by regional bureau	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Analysis of gender issues is included in food security assessments in order to ensure that programmes are gender-transformative. A decentralized evaluation of programme results related to gender, in compliance with the gender policy, is planned with a view to strengthening gender-specific programming.</p> <p>Protection measures for women, girls and other vulnerable groups are in place. Distribution sites are selected in consultation with communities, and complaints and feedback mechanisms are in place.</p> <p>Women are given priority in WFP-supported interventions. Women participate in decision making regarding use of the food assistance provided (according to post-distribution monitoring reports).</p> <p>WFP works with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Women's Promotion in partnership with UN-Women.</p>	<p>Fourth quarter of 2018</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: Nutrition</p> <p>WFP should strengthen nutrition approaches. In particular, it should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) enhance coherence between WFP and UNICEF moderate acute malnutrition and severe acute malnutrition targeting, respectively, to ensure maximum synergies between the two programmes; b) identify an appropriate strategy for working with the Ministry of Health and Population; 	Country office, supported by regional bureau and headquarters – Nutrition Division, PGG	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The country office has an ongoing joint project with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). WFP and UNICEF also have an MOU for jointly implementing nutrition-related interventions and will work to reinforce the joint geographical targeting of their respective programmes for addressing moderate and severe acute malnutrition and to establish a joint monitoring system to track their performance.</p> <p>An MOU between WFP and the Ministry of Health is in place. WFP works closely with the ministry's technical services in the areas of nutrition policy and strategy. Projects for scaling up joint nutrition-sensitive field initiatives are in place.</p>	<p>Fourth quarter of 2019</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

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c) consider a developmental approach to addressing chronic malnutrition, when feasible.		Nutrition-sensitive interventions aiming to reduce the risk of malnutrition are in place. WFP will continue working with communities in order to promote good nutrition practices and hygiene.	Ongoing
<p>Recommendation 6: Vouchers</p> <p>WFP should expand its programming capacity and scale up the voucher modality by carrying out:</p> <p>a) more systematic market studies;</p> <p>b) more comparative analyses of the various modalities used in interventions; and</p> <p>c) better analysis of the factors affecting people's choices and preferences.</p>	Country office, supported by regional bureau	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Each CBT intervention is preceded by a market assessment and feasibility analysis. Because of insecurity and trading constraints, analyses have sometimes shown fragile market conditions, preventing the expansion of CBTs in some targeted locations.</p> <p>Comparative analysis between in-kind and CBTs will be carried out regularly to evaluate the efficiency of each intervention.</p> <p>This information is regularly collected through post-distribution monitoring. The commodities that can be obtained with CBTs/vouchers will continue to be selected in consultation with targeted communities.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Fourth quarter of 2018</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 7: Human Resources</p> <p>WFP should:</p> <p>a) commission and publish a staffing review based on the staff needed to deliver results under the new ICSP; and</p> <p>b) widen efforts to improve living conditions, security and incentives at sub-offices in order to help attract good-quality staff to the field offices closer to beneficiaries.</p>	Country office, supported by regional bureau	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The country office will commission a staffing review to ensure that it has the staff skills required to implement the ICSP.</p> <p>In December 2017, the country office completed upgrade projects at all its field offices, which aimed to improve living and working conditions in operational areas. All field offices are now fully compliant with WFP's well-being standards and with minimum operating security standards.</p>	<p>Fourth quarter of 2018</p> <p>Completed</p>

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<p>Recommendation 8: Logistics</p> <p>WFP should:</p> <p>a) work to improve management of the Douala–Bangui corridor, which is under the responsibility of the Cameroon country office, with the regional bureau playing a technical advisory role;</p> <p>b) advocate with national authorities, through senior management, for problem-free transit;</p> <p>c) allocate adequate funding to truck maintenance facilities; and</p> <p>d) optimize the use of its fleet of trucks.</p>	<p>Regional bureau for the first point and country office, supported by regional bureau for the other points</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>In light of the continuous challenges in Douala and the increased operations in Cameroon, Chad and the Central African Republic, the regional bureau will continue to be responsible for the technical management of the Douala office while staff of the office will remain under the administrative supervision of the Cameroon country office. The Douala office will continue to work in close consultation with the country offices of Cameroon, Chad, the Central African Republic and Nigeria. This arrangement will allow WFP to continue strengthening its operational set up in the corridor and enhance the services provided to country offices.</p> <p>Regular meetings between the managements of the country office and the customs authorities of the Central African Republic and Cameroon will continue with a view to addressing issues of concern to WFP and reducing transit times for WFP food entering the country.</p> <p>Truck maintenance facilities at Bangui will be upgraded.</p> <p>A planned reconfiguration of the WFP fleet will augment the capacity of six- and eight-wheel drive trucks, which are suitable to conditions in the Central African Republic, while dismissing the old vehicles.</p>	<p>Fourth quarter of 2019</p> <p>Fourth quarter of 2018</p> <p>Fourth quarter of 2019</p> <p>Fourth quarter of 2019</p>

Acronyms used in the document

CBT	cash-based transfer
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFA	food assistance for assets
ICSP	interim country strategic plan
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MOU	memorandum of understanding
OSZPR	Livelihoods and Resilience Unit
PGG	Government Partnerships Division
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund