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Evaluation Reports

**For consideration**

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## **Management Response to the Recommendations of the Summary Evaluation Report — State of Palestine Country Portfolio (2011 to Mid-2015)**

### **Background**

1. This document presents the management response to the recommendations of the evaluation of the State of Palestine country portfolio. The evaluation covered activities during the period 2011 to mid-2015.
2. The Secretariat appreciates the evaluation's findings and recommendations, which highlighted the country office's contribution to sustainable institutional results; strong performance in relief assistance; and commitment to innovation and learning from experience.
3. Despite the challenges of providing food assistance in a difficult institutional and operating environment, the evaluation found WFP to be a valued and constructive partner in the development of national policy and strategy in the State of Palestine. WFP will continue to design and implement activities in close collaboration with the Palestinian Authority (PA), enhancing its alignment and strategic positioning to address chronic food insecurity while also responding to emergency food needs.
4. During the review period relief programmes were relatively well resourced but other areas of the portfolio were hampered by significant funding constraints. Management embraces the evaluation recommendations regarding future programmes to increase the focus on WFP's engagement in social protection to further enhance coherence.

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5. The evaluation recommendations will be taken into account as WFP develops a new country strategic plan and engages in the next cycle of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). Within the level of anticipated resources WFP's programme in the State of Palestine must balance the need to continue to provide policy engagement, technical assistance and creative integrated programmes with that of retaining capacity to respond rapidly to periodic crises.
6. Management appreciates the evaluation's recognition of the strong contribution of WFP's experienced and committed staff. WFP's innovative programmes, strong partnerships and leadership during recent crises in Gaza have been the direct result of the skill and dedication of the country office team.
7. The matrix below sets out the planned actions and implementation timelines.

<b>MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT — STATE OF PALESTINE COUNTRY PORTFOLIO (2011 TO MID-2015)</b>			
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Management response and action taken</b>	<b>Implementation deadline</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 1: Strategic orientation</b></p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> To clarify the role that WFP can most effectively play in food assistance to the State of Palestine.</p> <p>Food insecurity is a real problem in many impoverished Palestinian households. The mechanisms for addressing it should be contained in a national social protection framework, rather than external United Nations systems.</p> <p>As defined by WFP,<sup>1</sup> food security constitutes a meaningful theme for WFP in the Palestinian context. In the preparedness pillar of the country strategy (CS), WFP could deploy established competence and made valuable contributions during the review period.</p> <p>The country office is not adequately skilled or resourced in livelihood development. Moreover, the Palestinian context makes it extremely difficult for WFP to use food assistance to promote more sustainable livelihoods. WFP's focus should rather be on using food assistance to protect livelihoods.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> In the next CS, the country office should redefine the focus of its food assistance in the State of Palestine as support to the assurance of food security, and thus the protection of livelihoods, within a nutrition-sensitive national social protection framework, mitigating the erosion of assets and increasing indebtedness. This focus includes the promotion of preparedness to meet acute food security challenges.</p> <p>WFP should restructure its portfolio design and presentation accordingly. It should include protection of livelihoods, but not building livelihoods. The 'resilience' pillar is not recommended for continuation.</p>	<p>Country office, with support from the regional bureau and Policy and the Programme Division (OSZ)</p> <p>Implementation to be guided by the forthcoming scoping study by the regional bureau and the Institute of Development Studies on WFP's role in social protection.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>(This response also applies, where appropriate, to recommendation 5.)</p> <p>The country office, with support from the regional bureau and Headquarters, will consider discontinuing the resilience pillar in its next country strategy. The reasons for doing so outlined in the evaluation are well noted and appreciated.</p> <p>The country office will continue to focus its support on assuring food security through the national social protection framework and nutrition-sensitive approaches.</p> <p>The country office will request the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and Food Security Sector partners to review the links between food security and the protection of livelihoods and the ways in which food assistance programmes can address both.</p> <p>Management notes that defining and specifying indicators of livelihood protection in the Palestinian context is complex and difficult, and will require time and expertise that the country office does not have. The country office currently lacks the financial resources to secure its own specialist in livelihoods, but will seek learning opportunities for national staff to enhance their capacities in this area through training, on-the-job-learning, temporary duty assignments, etc. WFP will work with other relevant organizations to capitalise on their experience to shape a realistic approach to the protection of livelihoods.</p>	December 2016

<sup>1</sup> WFP, 2015. *What is Food Security?*

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<p><b>Recommendation 2: Shift to advisory role</b></p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Despite the valued and useful contributions that WFP made to school feeding approaches and delivery during the review period, it would not be a good use of scarce resources to invest new efforts in further direct engagement in school feeding.</p> <p>Resourcing and implementation of food assistance for assets (FFA) and food assistance for training (FFT) activities during the review period were unconvincing and offered no justification for further direct WFP engagement. FFT has no clear place in a social protection strategy. Labour-intensive public works may. This is a field in which WFP has corporate expertise.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> WFP should provide technical advisory services to the PA in development of: i) school feeding policy and implementation approaches; and ii) labour-intensive public works policy and implementation approaches.</p> <p>The technical advisory role does not exclude joint pilot work with the PA.</p>	<p>Country office, with support from the regional bureau and OSZ</p>	<p>Partially agreed.</p> <p>Management agrees that WFP should shift to an advisory role, but notes that none of the relevant ministries have requested WFP's support in the specific areas mentioned. WFP has, however, supported all stages of the national social protection framework, at the request of PA ministries. This work has supported all elements of social transfers, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- developing and conducting annual national food security assessments;</li> <li>- targeting, using the proxy means testing formula;</li> <li>- programme design;</li> <li>- monitoring and evaluation; and</li> <li>- the creation of a logical framework for the national safety net.</li> </ul> <p>Management agrees that technical support in this area should continue. WFP will seek to enhance its role in areas requested by government counterparts and will explore with the PA interest in providing additional support in the areas cited.</p>	<p>June 2016</p>

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<p><b>Recommendation 3: Human resources</b></p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Adjustment of strategic orientation and focus necessitates corresponding change in staff profiles.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> WFP should develop staff profiles – including job descriptions – to combine the existing high operational competence with stronger strategic competence in social protection, maintaining the flexibility to respond to acute as well as chronic challenges.</p>	<p>Country office, with support from the regional bureau and the Human Resources Division</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Management notes the need to enhance capacity in social protection. The country office is committed to working within the framework of the global staff profiles developed by Headquarters, and will adjust its own staff profile in line with WFP’s rules and regulations for human resources. The country office will seek to enhance the skills and knowledge of national staff through on-the-job-learning and temporary duty assignments within the region, while funding constraints limit its ability to hire and retain specialized subject matter experts.</p> <p>The new strategic orientation will be decided during development of the next Country Strategic Plan, and this recommendation will be taken into account when country office staffing requirements are defined.</p>	<p>December 2016</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4: Targeting</b></p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> As the country office recognizes, a targeting approach that specifies beneficiary sub-groups in terms of poverty, food security level and household size would enhance the overall effectiveness of food assistance for the poorest groups, particularly at times when it may be necessary to reduce the level of support.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> WFP should refine the targeting of households whose food security will be supported by the national social protection system, so that beneficiary sub-groups are assisted according to the level of poverty and food security as well as the household size.</p>	<p>Country office, in consultation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and with support from the regional bureau and OSZ</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The new targeting approach was being piloted in late 2015. It will be rolled out in 2016–2017 until it is applied to the entire national social safety net system. The shift will be made in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs.</p>	<p>December 2017</p>

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<p><b>Recommendation 5: Monitoring</b></p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> To provide robust evidence on efficiency, and on food security and livelihood outcomes, enhancing understanding of appropriate uses of different modalities.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> WFP should develop monitoring and analytical systems for: i) more comprehensive and routine analysis of the efficiency of its operations and more thorough comparative analysis of the efficiency of modalities; and ii) careful specification of solid and feasible outcome-level monitoring of the effects of food assistance on livelihoods protection.</p>	Country office, with support from the regional bureau and Monitoring Branch	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Management welcomes the evaluation’s observation that the country office has a “sophisticated, high-quality monitoring system”.</p> <p>An ongoing corporate initiative is identifying the most useful measures for determining the efficiency of WFP programmes. Once these measures have been developed, the country office will deploy them, making adjustments to its activities based on the results.</p> <p>The evaluation highlighted the need to generate evidence of progress towards country strategic outcomes. The monitoring of livelihood outcomes will be reviewed with the support of Headquarters/the regional bureau, including by re-analysing with a livelihood protection lens existing data from monitoring and food security surveys.</p>	June 2017

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<p><b>Recommendation 6: Gender and nutrition</b></p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Expansion of the Nutrition Awareness Campaign (NAC) could achieve significant gender and nutrition benefits and is a practical way of helping to achieve objectives 2 and 3 of the WFP gender policy.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> WFP should advocate and seek resources for expansion of the NAC to all food assistance beneficiary households in the State of Palestine.</p>	<p>Country office, with support from the regional bureau, the Gender Office and the Nutrition Advisory Office (OSN)</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The country office will develop a specific fundraising effort for NAC activities, which will be developed and rolled out in the first quarter of 2016. To allow gradual expansion of the NAC to WFP beneficiaries throughout the State of Palestine, the country office will develop/identify additional partner capacity and enhance tools for measuring project performance. The country office agrees with the evaluation finding that the NAC has “a direct impact on improving household nutrition, and therefore increased human capital.”</p> <p>The country office notes that resource constraints mean that partnerships with the PA ministries, the United Nations Children’s Fund and others will be essential for effective deployment of the NAC at a larger scale.</p> <p>WFP is fully committed to meeting and exceeding the standards of the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women for sustainably promoting and embedding gender equality and the empowerment of women into all its operations. WFP is also fully committed to meeting the eight gender-related indicators in the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review.</p> <p>Resources for gender activities have been allocated in line with the projections of operational requirements performed by all country offices for the three-year Management Plan budget (2016–2018). The country office updated its gender activity catalogue in 2014 based on outcomes and examples from its gender expenditure analysis of gender-related activities implemented during 2014. The same exercise will be carried out for 2015 and 2016.</p>	<p>March 2016</p>

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<p><b>Recommendation 7: Partnership</b></p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> The United Nations currently relies too heavily on WFP for nutrition expertise in the State of Palestine. Although WFP has performed well in this field, this situation is unsustainable and detrimental to the nutrition of the Palestinian population, and to the reputation of the United Nations.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> With reference to work across the United Nations system on the United Nations Global Nutrition Agenda, WFP should consult the other relevant United Nations agencies in the State of Palestine to confirm their respective roles in the field of nutrition, advocate for adequate resourcing and fulfilment of these roles, and confirm the specific mandate of WFP in this field.</p>	Country office, with support from the regional bureau, OSN and the Partnership and Advocacy Coordination Division	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The country office will work with the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nutrition is included in the 2016 common country assessment and UNDAF process;</li> <li>• effective and transparent coordination of activities related to nutrition among all United Nations stakeholders;</li> <li>• gaps in nutrition responses in the State of Palestine are mapped;</li> <li>• opportunities for joint programmes are identified; and,</li> <li>• joint advocacy for system-wide funding for nutrition interventions.</li> </ul>	December 2016

**Acronyms Used in the Document**

CS	country strategy
FFT	food assistance for training
NAC	Nutrition Awareness Campaign
OSN	Nutrition Advisory Office
OSZ	Policy and Programme Division
PA	Palestinian Authority
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework