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MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT OF WFP SCHOOL FEEDING POLICY

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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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BACKGROUND

1. WFP's school feeding policy was approved by the Board in November 2009. At the time, the policy represented a significant step towards aligning and establishing programme approaches with the Strategic Plan (2008–2013). Since approval, considerable effort has been made to implement the policy. This has entailed adjusting and revising existing programmes and designing new programmes in line with the policy.
2. Any new policy requires some time to implement fully. This evaluation focuses on the initial implementation period and as a consequence highlights challenges facing WFP that were less obvious at the time the policy was prepared. WFP welcomes the evaluation and its recommendations, which provide extremely useful and timely input for enhancing and fine tuning implementation of the policy.
3. A workshop on the school feeding policy evaluation was held on 21 and 22 November 2011, jointly hosted by the Office of Evaluation (OE) and the Policy, Planning and Strategy Division (PS), which provided a unique opportunity for the evaluation team leader and WFP staff from Headquarters, regional bureaux and country offices to exchange views prior to finalization of the evaluation.
4. The evaluation report benefitted from the workshop, which also helped management clarify how to sharpen its focus and act more effectively to better implement the policy. The Secretariat's responses and actions for following up the evaluation recommendations are presented in the attached matrix.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT OF WFP SCHOOL FEEDING POLICY

Recommendations	Action by	Management response and action taken	Implementation deadline
<p>Recommendation 1: Clarify and update the policy. As this report has shown, the debates around school feeding are evolving quite rapidly, and it is therefore necessary to refresh the policy at regular intervals. This will afford an opportunity to deal with some of the weaknesses and oversights of the original policy. WFP should therefore prepare an update of the school feeding policy and seek Board approval for it (probably in June 2013). The update would amend rather than replace the existing policy.¹ The exercise should be led by the school feeding policy and programme units, which should involve other Headquarters divisions and engage with regional and country-level staff, so as to maximize ownership and ensure it is oriented towards the practical implementation challenges.</p> <p>The update should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) bridge the gap between the policy and the implementation strategy. In particular, the update should spell out more clearly WFP roles and the changes in WFP activity and portfolio that will result from the policy. It should be more explicit about the comparative advantages of WFP and specify the limits of WFP's responsibilities.² It should also set out a clear monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy (see also Recommendations 2 and 4). ii) update the treatment of key themes, facilitating practical context-specific choices and addressing the gaps identified in this evaluation. 	<p>PS/Centre of Excellence in Brazil/Programme Division (ODX)/ regional bureaux/ country offices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Agreed. In 2012, WFP will elaborate a plan of action and include an M&E strategy, centered on the concept of Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSE). WFP will further refine and enhance implementation of the policy through a participatory approach with governments, development partners and other United Nations agencies. ii) Agreed. To support national governments, WFP will refine tools for alternative models of school feeding, including analyses of supply chains and institutional capacity to implement the optional models and strategies. 	<p>November 2013</p> <p>June 2012</p>



¹ The 2009 update of the policy on capacity development took a similar approach.

² The concept of comparative advantage implies identifying also those areas for which others are better suited to take responsibility.

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<p>Recommendation 2. Operationalize the policy more effectively. Better operationalization requires:</p> <p>a) strengthening staff skills and implementation support at field level. Ensure adequate technical support for all country offices³ and continue work on identifying and developing the new skills required for WFP's new school feeding approaches. Wherever possible, link training and staff development to wider initiatives across WFP in order to avoid focusing too narrowly on specific instruments such as school feeding.</p> <p>b) further development of guidance material. This should focus on the rationalization of materials (taking account of user feedback), more guidance on prioritization and trade-offs in school feeding design, better links to WFP processes,⁴ and objective benchmarking that can be used to track progress in national school feeding systems.</p>	<p>PS/Centre of Excellence in Brazil/ODX/ External Relations Department/ Resource Management and Accountability Department (RM)/Human Resources Division (HR)</p>	<p>a) Agreed. WFP has a commitment to comprehensive staff development at the programme leadership level and at the technical level for school feeding. Staff training in school feeding programme design was carried out in July 2011, and additional training is being developed. WFP is committed to enhancing staff capacity to engage in policy dialogue with governments and stakeholders.</p> <p>b) Agreed. WFP will update the <i>Programme Guidance Manual</i> to streamline different organizational processes and workflows to implement the school feeding policy. WFP is compiling a capacity development toolkit that includes the model planning tool and the System Assessment and Benchmarking for Education Results (SABER) framework, jointly established by the World Bank, WFP and the Partnership for Child Development (PCD). SABER is an innovative method for evaluating educational programmes using quality standards. The Centre of Excellence in Brazil will provide technical inputs to the new school feeding toolkit.</p>	<p>June 2012</p> <p>March 2012</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

³ This has budget implications – see Recommendation 4.

⁴ As one example, the guidance for the preparation of country strategies, which is currently framed at a very high level and generic level, should be more explicit about the material on national progress towards development of sustainable school feeding strategies that will be required.





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<p>c) more attention to costs and cost-effectiveness. Build on the very valuable analysis performed and data collected during the cost-benchmarking exercise and by better monitoring WFP's own costs. At a minimum, all strategy, programme and monitoring documents should be required to report on planned and effective unit costs.</p> <p>d) strengthening relationships with external partners. Existing core partnerships could be further strengthened (e.g. by reciprocal secondment of personnel), while also making sure traditional partnerships with other United Nations agencies are not neglected.</p>		<p>c) Agreed. Cost containment and cost-effectiveness are central to WFP programme design. Effective application of this recommendation involves recognizing and applying cost considerations when choosing and designing any intervention, including school feeding.</p> <p>WFP processes – including programme design and approval – will continue to use refined cost-effectiveness and efficiency considerations.</p> <p>Resources permitting, longer-term research will be undertaken to assess the relative cost-effectiveness of different models and modalities of school feeding.</p> <p>d) Agreed. WFP will continue to engage with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). At the country office level, partnerships will be strengthened in line with each agency's operational presence. A D-1 post in PS has been established in Washington, DC to offer support to governments through partnerships with the World Bank.</p>	<p>December 2012</p> <p>December 2012</p>
<p>Recommendation 3. Strengthen the financing of the policy. Financial resources and financial and budgetary incentives are key to the operationalization of the policy. The following steps are recommended:</p> <p>a) Cost and ensure additional financing for the budgetary implications of Recommendation 2 a) – such as country office staff training and specialist support – as part of an overall policy implementation plan, to enable the School Feeding Service, the Programme Design Service and the regional bureaux to support all country offices more effectively in policy implementation.</p>	<p>PS/ ODX/RM/HR</p>	<p>a) Agreed. WFP will continue to seek the best balance between financing the technical aspects of school feeding and supporting complementary activities necessary for the school feeding policy to be fully effective.</p>	<p>December 2012</p>

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<p>b) Roll out WFP's new financial framework as rapidly as possible.</p>		b) Agreed. Roll-out of the new financial framework is under way.	December 2012
<p>c) Seek more predictable funding. Developmental and capacity development work require a strategic perspective that is undermined by very short-term financing. This implies, first, securing multi-year funding for WFP's own professional staff working to support the school feeding policy. The Board should (continue to) press for more unrestricted and multi-year funding to support WFP's core analytical and policy development work. The prevalence of short-term and earmarked funding perpetuates fragmentation and makes it harder to ensure thematic coordination across WFP. Second, to promote a strategic perspective that contributes to the development and financing of national school feeding strategies, country strategies should flag long-term financing requirements (focused pre-eminently on overall national school feeding requirements, and only secondarily on funding requirements for possible WFP operations).</p>		c) Agreed. Australia, Brazil, Canada, Luxembourg, the Russian Federation and the United States of America are among the partners committed to multi-year funding for school feeding activities. WFP will continue to seek increased and predictable long-term funding for school feeding activities and Headquarters-based research and support.	December 2012
<p>d) Strengthen WFP's ability to analyse school feeding's budgetary implications for governments. Those considering the nexus of school feeding, education and social protection need to understand the political economy of the budget processes involved. In particular, what funds does school feeding compete with in practice, and at which levels of government?⁵</p>		d) Agreed. WFP will work with partners to: i) ensure that the budget fits government policies and priorities; ii) help them to make the right interventions in the most cost-effective manner; and iii) use best practices in national budget processes and cycles.	December 2012

⁵ *Rethinking School Feeding* rightly highlighted this as an issue that requires more attention, both in research and in practice.



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<p>To promote international learning, WFP and its partners – particularly the Brazil Centre of Excellence – should consider setting up a database on school feeding programmes that describes the coverage and functioning of programmes globally and the possibility of linking it to an annual independent report on developments and trends in school feeding. What happens in the aggregate of WFP school feeding operations is less important than what is happening globally: that hungry children are fed is more important than who feeds them.</p>		<p>The Centre will support country offices and governments in developing the capacity of staff to implement nationally owned and sustainable school feeding programmes, with emphasis on nutrition. A school feeding website will be launched to provide lessons learned, best practices in school feeding and technical expertise.</p>	



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

HR	Human Resources Division
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
ODX	Programme Division
OE	Office of Evaluation
PCD	Partnership for Child Development
PS	Policy, Planning and Strategy Division
RM	Resource Management and Accountability Department