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MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 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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BACKGROUND

1. This document presents the management response to the recommendations of the Afghanistan country portfolio evaluation.
2. The Secretariat appreciates the findings and recommendations, which will inform the revision of the protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO).
3. The conflict in Afghanistan has led to poverty, poor diets and micronutrient deficiencies, all of which contribute to undernutrition. Recent droughts and failed harvests have exacerbated the situation, and a significant part of the population that traditionally produces its own food now relies on the market as its primary source of food.
4. The political and security context has made it especially difficult to guarantee effective food assistance. Increasing the proportion of targeted interventions through partnerships is critical if WFP's food assistance is to build resilience and provide community safety nets.
5. The Secretariat's responses to the recommendations are presented in the attached matrix.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT – AFGHANISTAN COUNTRY PORTFOLIO

Recommendations	Action by	Management response and action taken	Implementation deadline
<p>Recommendation 1: Reconfigure the overall portfolio in accordance with national priorities, the operating environment, and staff capacities.</p> <p>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, whilst 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, <i>Do No Harm Plus</i> tools, etc.</p>	<p>Country office, in coordination with Regional Bureau Bangkok (Asia) (ODB), Programme Division (ODX), Policy, Planning and Strategy Division (PS), Emergency Preparedness and Response (ODEP), Performance and Accountability Management Division (RMP), Field Security Division (ODF)</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Programme priorities will be realigned and reflected in the 2013 budget revision for PRRO 200063 and in the next PRRO to start in 2014. The country office is working on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ comprehensive contextual and conflict analysis – including risk assessment, <i>Do No Harm</i>, and gender and protection – that balance security and programme risks against essential assistance activities; ➤ strategies for activities relating to nutrition, education and community resilience-building to realign the PRRO with Afghan priority programmes and WFP policies; and ➤ ways of supporting the Nutrition Action Framework developed by ministries, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which is designed to ensure a coherent response to undernutrition and which will form part of the Food and Nutrition Security Policy Framework being developed with ministries and with support from FAO and WFP. 	<p>December 2012</p> <p>October 2012</p> <p>December 2012</p> <p>October 2012</p>



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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.	Country office, ODB	A staffing review and efficiency study in September 2012 led to a revised staffing structure to reflect the realigned portfolio and promote a shift to national staffing of WFP operations.	September 2012–June 2013
	Country office	In late 2011 the country office prepared a staff training strategy focusing on nationalization of several international positions; a full-time national officer for capacity development was hired in April 2012 to oversee the plan. As of September, 718 staff had been trained. Future training will focus on core competencies.	July 2012
	Country office, in coordination with ODB	Risk assessment was included in the PRRO budget revision and will be revisited regularly as a management priority.	August 2012
Recommendation 2: Ensure that WFP is strategically positioned for maximum effectiveness.	Country office, in coordination with ODB, Food Security Analysis Service (ODXF), Emergencies (ODE) and United Nations partners	Agreed.	September 2012–February 2013
2a) Refine targeting throughout the PRRO cycle through a regularly updated National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (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.		WFP supported the Afghanistan Central Statistics Office in the 2011/12 NRVA, the main appraisal of food insecurity and the basis of targeting for the 2013 PRRO. WFP will target populations in districts where food insecurity is above 40 percent. Access and the availability of partners will be taken into account in programme coverage.	
	Country office, in coordination with ODB, ODX, PS, Multilateral and NGO Relations Division (ERM), RMP	WFP co-leads with FAO the food security and agriculture cluster at the national and regional levels with a view to improving targeting, integration and joint programming. The country office will continue to support national food security analyses such as NRVA and the development of national strategies.	August–December 2012



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Recommendation 3: Make programming fit for context.		Partially Agreed. With reference to recommendation 3c) – Tuberculosis (TB), WFP has decided to suspend its TB programme from April 2013 (see below).	
3a) Retain the capacity for emergency response general food distribution (GFD), food for work (FFW) and mother-and-child health nutrition (MCHN) while reducing the time lag in the assessment process, particularly for conflict-displaced populations.	Country office, in collaboration with ODB, ODX, PS	<p>The plans for emergency general food distribution in 2013 respond to the critical needs of vulnerable populations affected by conflict, natural disasters or acute seasonal food insecurity.</p> <p>WFP has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to ensure coordinated and prioritized emergency responses and has arranged standby partnerships with non-governmental organizations(NGOs) to ensure rapid response to local shocks.</p>	January–December 2013
3b) Prioritize recovery operations based on monitoring feedback on their relevance, effectiveness and efficiency over the preceding period, with food for assets (FFA) linked to community resilience taking a prominent role	Country office, in collaboration with in-country stakeholders	<p>WFP's targeted supplementary feeding programme and community-based management of acute malnutrition (CMAM) activities will be scaled up to cover acutely malnourished children and pregnant and lactating women in districts where global acute malnutrition rates exceed the emergency threshold.</p> <p>FFA and community resilience will be implemented in very severely and severely food-insecure districts prone to natural hazards.</p>	January–December 2013
3c) Retain the TB incentive programme, but with clearer reporting on objectives.		<p>In the light of the realignment to focus on primary criteria of acute food insecurity, the TB programme will be suspended from April 2013. Although TB is a critical problem in Afghanistan, WFP's priority is to address acute food insecurity, so it must adapt to the reduction in resources in 2013 and to the need to refocus activities. Following a review to determine whether food is a necessary part of TB treatment, a decision as to reinstatement of the programme will be made; this will be supported by an evaluation of WFP's capacity to manage several activities, the availability of resources and other factors.</p>	March 2013



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3d) Consider a scale reduction and redesign of food for education (FFE).		WFP's FFE programme will be significantly reduced and re-focused on areas where food insecurity is 40 percent or higher and where schools have low enrolment rates and high gender disparity. The 6,000 schools targeted in 2011/12 will be reduced to 1,040 schools in 2013, and WFP will operate in partnership with UNICEF and its Child Friendly Schools programme.	January–December 2013
3e) Use the limited urban safety net initiative where feasible to underpin the development of a national social protection policy.		WFP's urban safety-nets cash and voucher activity will be scaled down in 2013 and work will focus on supporting acutely affected urban populations. A feasibility study on cash programming in Afghanistan was conducted in July 2012. ¹ A cash pilot project will be implemented in 2013, with a shift from paper vouchers to e-vouchers. WFP will develop a more comprehensive safety-net strategy for the new PRRO in 2014. In 2013, WFP will use cash and vouchers for conditional transfers in some post-emergency responses and for food for training (FFT).	January–December 2013
Recommendation 4: Improve operational partnerships.	Country office, in collaboration with ODB, ODX, ERM	Partially agreed. With reference to recommendation 4e), WFP will take a broader approach to “incentive structures for staff” than that recommended by the evaluators (see below). In 2011/12, WFP made a number of agreements with government counterparts and United Nations agencies to guide joint activities; they will be reviewed and updated annually. ➤ A letter of intent was signed in late 2011 with FAO for joint programming and policy setting in six areas of food security in line with the 2009 Afghanistan National Development Strategy.	December 2012

¹ Conducted by a programme officer on temporary duty assignment from Bangladesh; results will be released by October 2012.



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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.	Country office, in collaboration with ODB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A Letter of Agreement was signed in June 2012 with the IOM for country-level collaboration in response to natural disasters. ➤ A country-level Letter of Agreement will be signed by November 2012 with UNICEF on collaborative response in nutrition and education; WFP and UNICEF will continue joint implementation of CMAM in 2012 and 2013. ➤ The Memorandum of Understanding with UNHCR will be renewed in October 2012 to reflect changes in joint responses to conflict-affected populations and internally displaced people. <p>In May 2012, WFP commissioned a study of models for short-term and medium-term partnerships with a view to maximizing effectiveness and accountability and minimizing risk. On the basis of this WFP will from 2013 establish partnerships with:²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ local and national NGOs to maintain deliveries of food assistance in emergency and early-recovery situations; and ➤ government counterparts to engage in capacity development, technical assistance, information sharing and coordination. <p>A partnership framework will be developed by the country office with a view to maximizing the impact of programmes and enhancing response capacity and accountability; this will include a clearer criterion for the selection of partners and provisions for a more flexible and decentralized approach that will include multi-year financial commitments.</p>	June 2012
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.			November 2012 – December 2013
			September 2012
			December 2012

² WFP acknowledges that future partnerships will be with NGOs and/or Government, as appropriate to the activity.



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4d) Increase community level communications and advocacy for entitlements; these should include a gender perspective.		In January 2012, the country office developed a communications and outreach strategy with a view to improving humanitarian access, transparency and security. This includes visibility materials on ration entitlements and the promotion of the hotline launched by the Compliance Unit in 2012 to receive feedback from beneficiaries. An analysis of the gender-specific needs of women, men, boys and girls will be included by the end of 2012.	December 2012
4e) Introduce staff incentive structures that reflect time spent in coordination and collaboration as part of joint planning and initiatives with other development actors.		WFP agrees in part with recommendation 4e). Rather than focusing on incentive structures on activities for staff such as collaboration with other development actors, the country office will encourage staff to take a broader view of programming. Under the current staff capacity development plan (see Recommendation 1c), indicators on coordination and collaboration will be included in performance appraisals.	January 2013
Recommendation 5: Increase focus on national ownership.	Country office, in collaboration with ODB, ODX	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The country office has elaborated a development strategy and budget, of which the main elements are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ enhancement of analytical and preparedness capacities in food security analysis and emergency preparedness for government counterparts, including continued support for the Central Statistics Office and the Afghan National Disaster Management Authority; ➤ a Purchase for Progress trust fund supporting the three modalities used in Afghanistan: i) local procurement of food for distribution under WFP's food aid programme; ii) local production of high-energy biscuits for distribution in FFE programmes; and iii) food safety and quality control programmes; and 	January 2012
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.			



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ continued support for the strategic grain reserve of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock to provide national emergency storage capacity for wheat. <p>A consultant will be contracted to design a technical assistance package for capacity development under the new PRRO in 2014.</p>	June 2013
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.	Country office, with support from Headquarters and ODB	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Headquarters will help the country office to identify a standby partner who can appoint a gender/protection officer to assist with the integration of protection and gender issues into all WFP interventions in 2013 and into the PRRO 2014–2015. The officer will represent WFP at inter-agency protection-related meetings.</p> <p>The officer will coordinate the Gender and Protection Action Plan developed by WFP in Afghanistan in June on the basis of the 2012 humanitarian protection policy and the “WFP Gender Policy: Corporate Action Plan (2010–2011)”, which includes staff capacity development and a gender audit. The Gender Service at Headquarters will advise on conducting the gender audit.</p> <p>In addition to FFE and FFT programmes targeting women and gender disparity, WFP will collaborate with United Nations, government and NGO partners to integrate protection and gender objectives into food assistance programmes and establish systems for managing protection-related information.</p>	October 2012
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.		<p>Training in gender analysis is planned for regional and country offices as part of WFP’s roll-out of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender Marker. This has been shown to improve the quality of contextual understanding and of gender-sensitive project design, implementation and reporting, but it requires the attendance of senior level managers and staff to be effective.</p>	September 2012 April 2013



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		<p>From 2013, the WFP gender accountability framework, which is aligned with the United Nations system-wide action plan,³ will set benchmarks for reporting on gender equality at the country and regional levels.</p> <p>The WFP regional protection advisor will carry out an initial needs assessment and set out action points for implementation in the coming years.</p>	December 2013 October 2012
6c) Conduct a full <i>Do No Harm Plus</i> analysis of the portfolio, leading ultimately to a statement on how protection issues will be addressed in the new country strategy and PRRO redesign.		<p>Since the 2005 roll-out of WFP's protection project, which is supported by Headquarters and the regional protection advisor, the country office has benefited from a number of workshops and field studies to build the capacities of national officers and guarantee basic skills. The country office will be a pilot country in 2013 for WFP's new policy on protection. The Humanitarian Policy and Transitions Service and the regional protection advisor will continue to support the country office in integrating protection into its operations, with a focus on context, conflict and <i>Do No Harm</i> analysis.</p>	End 2013–2014

³ CEB/2006/2.