

OPERATION EVALUATION

Lao People's Democratic Republic, Country
Programme 200242 (2012-15): A mid-term
evaluation of WFP's Operation

Management Response

[August, 2014]



World Food Programme

wfp.org

Management response cleared by:

Country Director: Bradley Guerrant, 27 August 2014

Detailed responses to evaluation recommendations

Evaluation Recommendations	Management Accepted, partially accepted or not accepted and COMMENT on the Recommendation, providing clear reasoning for partially accepted and not accepted	Management - Action to be taken			
		Action	Responsible CO unit	Timeframe	Further funding required (Y or N)
<p>Recommendation 1:</p> <p>The WFP CO needs to continue to invest time and energy in improving the monitoring, evaluation and reporting functions it undertakes to ensure that programme data is collected and used and impact and outcomes can be assessed to inform future programming. In particular, the M&E Unit (in conjunction with the relevant programme units and senior management) should:</p> <p>➤ Establish more feasible and locally appropriate indicators and clear baseline data and targets. Currently the targets and indicators are confused and difficult to interpret and monitor, especially with the introduction of the new SRF. Explore options for joint monitoring systems in the health system with the MoH's</p>	<p>Partially accepted.</p> <p>Data is increasingly analyzed and used to facilitate programme decisions.</p> <p>WFP Lao has aligned its Logical Framework to the SRF 2014-2017.</p> <p>Corporately, WFP strengthens outcome monitoring, but moved away from impact monitoring (SRF 2014-2017). Establishing additional impact indicators is beyond the CO's capacity.</p> <p>The CO is currently working on a study that investigates the true effect of the Lao MCHN programme on stunting.</p> <p>The current indicators and targets have been replaced by corporate indicators as per the SRF 2014-2017.</p>	<p>Operations, M&E and Programme units to closely follow up data submission.</p> <p>Ensure follow up actions are taken by respective units in response to M&E analysis and recommendations</p> <p>Establish baselines for new SRF outcome indicators.</p> <p>Re-design process monitoring tools based on minimum monitoring requirements.</p> <p>Acquiring partners for an impact study.</p> <p>No action required</p>	<p>Operations; M&E</p> <p>CO management</p> <p>M&E; Programme</p> <p>M&E; Programme</p> <p>Programme</p>	<p>Immediately</p> <p>Immediately</p> <p>Sept-14 - Mar 15</p> <p>Oct-14</p> <p>Sept 14-Dec 15</p>	<p>N</p> <p>N</p> <p>Y</p> <p>Y</p> <p>N</p>

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<p>HMIS to avoid duplication of workload, and introduce upgraded approaches accordingly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Conduct a simplified two-arm cohort study aiming to harmonise WFP's MCHN interventions with the MoH's MCH package to improve impact data on stunting reduction, and to determine the impact of LNS on stunting in a challenging high prevalence province. [Further details of the possible methodology to be followed will be offered directly to WFP Lao.] ➤ While acknowledging it is a global level recommendation, the current SPR formats need to be revised to make them more reader-friendly and useful documents. At present the annual SPR gives a lot of numerical information about funding, commodities and beneficiaries but contains very little analysis of the programme, lacks a clear description of progress to date or analysis and discussion about the way forward. It would also benefit from including detail about how the programme will respond to the changing needs. The SPR was designed to meet the needs of all 	<p>Joint monitoring with MoH has been explored but it can't currently be implemented for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) HMIS is not yet standardized. There are different reporting formats used in different provinces. 2) Information is not submitted in a timely fashion to serve WFP's needs. <p>Awaiting details from the evaluation on possible methodology.</p> <p>This is a corporate concern and the lead to tackle it remains with HQs</p>	No action required			

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donors but it does not do so. The CO could include additional discussion and analysis to cover these gaps while waiting for a new format to be devised centrally.					
<p>Recommendation 2:</p> <p>The CO needs to continue to its actions to close the gap between funding availability and programme needs and also to increase the flexibility of funding between components. It is recognized that this is a constant struggle for WFP at national and global level but funding constraints are perhaps the most important factor affecting the successful implementation of the current CP.</p> <p>➤ The CO senior management should step up efforts to ensure firm commitments from donors before launching programmes or their components. Earlier</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p> <p>At the corporate level, programming is based on needs, yet funding opportunities are always factored in. When the CP had been drafted, development partners, including donors, had been consulted and the funding prospect were sound enough for the CP to be approved. Unfortunately, experience has shown that development programmes are usually able to resource 60% or less of its planned budget. In addition, at least 90% of the funds received have been earmarked to certain activities, leaving limited flexibility to prioritize between components.</p> <p>This is a corporate issue and a global trend in WFP.</p> <p>While there is always scope to further improve and increase funding opportunities, it is to be</p>	<p>The CO has been reviewing the current resource mobilization strategy, with the intention to focus further on less traditional donors and the private sector</p> <p>The CO will continue to liaise with RB and HQ to seek new avenues and opportunities for additional funding</p> <p>A Budget Revision is planned for November 2014 for the CP to be extended to December 2016; This will be the opportunity to also review the scope of some activities and possibly better align programme needs and funding available.</p>	<p>Ext. Rel. and CO Management</p> <p>Ext. Rel. and CO Management</p> <p>CO management</p>	<p>Nov 14</p> <p>Continuous</p> <p>Nov 14</p>	

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<p>launching of the appeal relative to the programme start date may enable the management to make more timely responses to under- or over-funding.</p> <p>➤ The CO and HQ must also work with donors towards more flexibility of available funding for programmes to smooth out short-term crises, and multi-year cash contributions should be sought wherever possible. Advocacy with donors regarding the most appropriate support they can offer is important, and in-kind commodity donations should only be accepted where they meet the needs of programme.</p> <p>➤ At a corporate level WFP might consider planning programmes that are more closely linked to the expected level of funding. Although there are many uncertainties at the planning stage an expected funding range of 80-120 percent might be appropriate.</p>	<p>acknowledged the opportunities are limited and the funds made available for WFP's operation in Lao PDR are often meant to complement and match the donors' own bilateral programmes and/or policies. The CO has been accepting in-kind donation when they meet the needs of programme.</p>				
<p>Recommendation 3:</p> <p>A key role in each of the components of the programme is capacity building to enable the</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>Capacity Building of the Government is definitively a priority for the short, medium and long term, acknowledging various</p>	<p>The CO is in the process of hiring adequate staff for its different</p>	<p>HR unit and CO</p>	<p>Aug-Dec 14</p>	

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<p>government to take over responsibility for the programmes at central and local levels. WFP's large scale programming in health and nutrition is not matched by its capacity. Thus, in order to address issues with programme quality the CO needs to reassess the current resources and commitments and invest in additional technical staff capacity as required and in accordance with available resources.</p> <p>➤ The CO lacks the capacity to deliver some of its core roles in capacity building and policy development and it needs to develop greater competence in this field. The CO needs to ensure they have the necessary level of technical skills and competencies available within its country team, and/or available to call upon from outside, to guide and amend the current programme activities for best effect.</p> <p>➤ The design and implementation of capacity building programmes is a specialized function and the CO</p>	<p>challenges with the Government of Lao PDR structures. To this end, CO is in the process to hire new staff. This process is however very lengthy as there is a severe lack of adequate human resources available and inversely proportionate to the market dynamics. While UN salary scale has been revised, it is still not perceived as competitive enough compare to the private sector and/or the prestige of working for the Government.</p>	<p>components.</p> <p>The field monitors have been relocated at the district level in order to work more closely with the Government counterparts and thus have more time available to provide capacity building support.</p> <p>CO management is discussing and negotiating with donors for the possibility of receiving specific funding for staffing, including through stand-by partnership.</p>	<p>management</p> <p>Operations</p> <p>CO Management</p>	<p>Dec 14</p> <p>Dec 14</p> <p>continuos</p>	<p>Y</p>

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<p>should recruit or contract specialist staff to oversee this across all programmes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement fully the new EPR capacity-building programme and implement emergency actions as necessary. Work with government agencies to reduce the time taken, following crises, to assess the need for external assistance and implement response activities. ➤ Capacity building should continue to include embedding WFP staff in government ministries and vice versa in order to increase awareness and develop skills of government staff. ➤ Assess the need for retraining and re-equip cooks and storekeepers with needed skills. While training is repeated in areas where the SM programme is ongoing in some areas it was frequently reported that the equipment was worn out. 	<p>The EPR capacity building planned activities are being implemented fully. Any emergency response <i>per se</i> will always be subject to the Government's request for assistance.</p>	<p>If and when required by the line ministries, WFP will make its staff available for capacity building purposes essentially</p>	<p>Programme units and CO management</p>	<p>Dec 15</p>	
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>The number of United Nations organisations operating in Lao</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p> <p>Joint programme among UN agencies is most relevant, yet experience has shown that it also</p>	<p>Within the resource available, WFP – together with sister agencies- will</p>	<p>Programme</p>	<p>Continuous</p>	<p>N</p>

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<p>PDR is high. The CO needs to work with other agencies to achieve greater transparency regarding the role of each organisation and greater coordination of activities, including more joint programmes such as that already being undertaken. It is recognised that this is the role of the United Nations' Resident Coordinator (RC), but WFP could nevertheless take the lead under the RC.</p> <p>➤ WFP should use its competitive advantage in the field of nutrition to work with government to develop an effective forum for the development of a common approach among development partners and government regarding health care and nutrition specific actions.</p> <p>➤ Using the SM programme, and in closer collaboration with external partners, WFP should develop innovative programmes and carry out pilot studies to enhance the role of schools as part of the community and to promote</p>	<p>has its limitation, as it is being experienced with the current MNCH joint programme with UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA. While significant effort has been made to clarify to the Government the differences in modus operandi of the four different agencies, the high turnover among Government staff, resulting in an irregular level of understanding among the stakeholders, has often been to the detriment of the operations.</p> <p>While not necessarily formalized through a joint programme, MoU or else, WFP works closely with the sister agencies; the joint support provided by UNICEF, IFAD and WFP to the Government for the development and the implementation of the multisectoral action plan for food & nutrition security is one example among several.</p> <p>According to the Vientiane Declaration, the Government of Lao PDR is fully responsible and in the driving seat of its growth and development. Hence, WFP -like other development partners- are here essentially to support the Government in its endeavor, providing technical and financial support, matching as much as possible both politics and</p>	<p>continue to provide clarification to its Government counterpart on the way WFP operates. And seek ways to uniformise the approaches among agencies, within the framework of rules and procedures of each agencies.</p> <p>WFP will soon finalize an MOU with UNICEF and is in the process of elaborating an Aide Memoire on the close collaboration between the RBAs.</p>	<p>units</p> <p>Programme units and CO management</p>	<p>Dec 14</p>	<p>N</p>

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linkages between schools and communities and at the same time increase survival rates for girls in schools. These might include: the creation and maintenance of school gardens (see Recommendation 6); use of schools as a community resource for community training on health, nutrition and cooking education and demonstrations; support for sports in school (engagement in sports has been proven to increase retention, particularly of girls); and the introduction of best practice sharing schemes between schools and districts.	programming. Accordingly, as the National School Meals Programme focuses on contributing to school enrollment and attendance, WFP will also concentrate its resources on providing the school meal <i>per se</i> and possibly enhancing that provision by promoting and supporting school gardening and partnership with farmers' associations.				
Recommendations 5 Two components of the current CP are not sustainable under the current market conditions, despite investment and support being committed to find appropriate outcomes: ➤ The P4P programme is not active at the moment and appears	Partially accepted The CO Strategy and CP were drafted in 2011; since then the economic and development dynamics of Lao PDR has evolved tremendously and new and different actors are playing an increasing role. Nevertheless, the need to support small farm holders and vulnerable rural communities –WFP's main target groups – remains. Hence, instead of dropping the two activities, the CO will revise the respective strategies, taking into account the recent developments in this area, including the recently approved agriculture policy of the	The CO will use the planned Budget Revision to review its LIN strategy, encompassing both P4P and C/FFA activities, as well as the FFM strategy. Expected outputs and outcomes will also be reviewed, accordingly. WFP has invited a delegation from Lao PDR to attend the rice fortification regional meeting, which will be the starting point in	Programme and CO management Programme	Nov 14- Feb 15 Sept 14	N N

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<p>unsustainable due to high costs and a lack of markets. Unless these factors can be changed the programme should be closed.</p> <p>➤ The FFM component is not active at present because of the lack of an appropriate medium for modification. Efforts in this area should be redirected to provide the government with policy advice and capacity building input on food safety if the relevant resources and technical skills can be found to do so. Otherwise, the component should be dropped.</p>	<p>Government and the existing stakeholders.</p> <p>The CO had recently undertaken a review of the P4P, which showed that the P4P had contributed to the enhancement of small-farm holders, via its partnership with millers, yet the latter were not so interested in the purchasing dimension of the P4P due to the high quality standards required by WFP that are not perceived as worth the investments, especially in-light of the current dynamics in the rice market. Consequently, WFP will redefine its support directly to the farmers and farmers' associations to enhance their post-harvest skills and knowledge (storage management, market analysis and negotiations, etc.) and resilience capacities. CO will further work in close partnership with other development partners and, when possible, link it to the C/FFA activities.</p> <p>There is a great interest from the Government side for food fortification & marketing, as it is convinced that this is the way forward for long term solution to malnutrition in the country. A recent internal assessment, done with the RB, has shown the current conditions in the country were not at the necessary level to effectively embark on operationalizing a food</p>	<p>elaborating the type of support required from WFP towards FFM, including in terms of policy advice and capacity building.</p> <p>The CO will seek financial support to have a staff specifically focusing on the FFM component.</p> <p>In both cases, the CO will use the remaining two years of the current CP, to position itself strategically for the next CP (2017-20) and in concurrence with the Government of Lao PDR's goal of becoming a MIC by 2020.</p>	Ext Rel. & CO management	Dec 14	Y

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	fortification model and that some pre-requisites were necessary.				
<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>Within the five sub-components of the CP, the following points should be considered for implementation by the relevant programme units during the continuation of the existing CP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The objectives of the school meals programme need to be clarified in conjunction with the Ministry of Education. If the main objective is nutrition then a greater input of food is required to make a difference to children's diets. Future programmes must be aligned better to government policy on the provision of lunches made from local produce. This will result in a cessation of external food provision by WFP in the medium to long term. ➤ Under the MCHN component, continue the use of Nutributter while ensuring that simpler and clearer protocols are available to health staff. ➤ Develop more effective 	<p>Partially accepted</p> <p>The CO fully agrees in the case of the SM component and has already began working towards this end. As the Government has recently approved its National School Meal Programme (NSMP), WFP has the normative and strategic framework to shift concretely toward a lunch-based approach, focusing on local and self-production. However, the option of school gardening by secondary school students (IBs) through FFA activities is not acceptable as the target group are children under the age of 16 and thus are not allowed to work. While the primary objective of the NSMP is contributing to enhancing education (enrollment and attendance), WFP will also continue to put an importance on the nutritive aspect of the school meal, and will provide training accordingly.</p> <p>MCHN component: while there is indeed a need to improve the quality of pre- and post-natal care and delivery services, this goes beyond WFP's mandate and the organization can/is contributing to it through its various</p>	<p>The CO will continue to work on its transition strategy, which will have a two-tier approach: i) shifting from mid-morning snack to a lunch-based meal, and ii) handing-over to the government.</p> <p>The CO will develop various means of providing nutrition training and awareness to school teachers and children.</p> <p>No action required.</p>	<p>Programme</p> <p>Programme</p>	<p>Dec 15</p> <p>Dec 14</p>	<p>Y</p> <p>N</p>

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<p>coordination with MoH and other partners to improve the quality of ante- and post-natal care and delivery services, and support the deployment of newly trained VHVs for remote and marginalised areas. It is recognised that these actions are primarily the responsibility of the MoH but the improvements are vital to ensure successful outcomes.</p> <p>➤ In conjunction with government agencies and other stakeholders, explore options to expand outreach and support to mother-to-mother and other peer support groups at village level with the aim of creating high impact, community-based actions to change practice and increase dietary diversity. Pilot actions to encourage these linkages could be set up during the current CP with a view to scaling up during future programmes.</p> <p>➤ In conjunction with other development partners, to improve IYCF and maternal dietary practice by identifying best practices among the various approaches that are currently being implemented and by</p>	<p>nutrition training of HC staff and VHVs. Additionally, WFP is part of the technical working group within the MoH, which focuses specifically on capacity building of HC staff.</p> <p>Mainly due to lack of funding, the CO has reduced to three the number of Provinces it had planned to work in. Yet, in these three provinces, MCHN is active in all districts and reaches all health centers and villages.</p> <p>The mandate for IYCF related activities lies largely with UNICEF, and in Lao PDR they have the lead on developing tools and methodologies related to it. WFP actively contributes to this process.</p>				

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<p>working with partners to produce simple, effective IYCF tools for use with mother support groups and for the mass media.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In the school meals component, follow up the commitment already made by developing a strategy and implementation plan with the relevant ministry for the transition from a CSB snack intervention to a home grown school feeding programme. ➤ In collaboration with MoES, UNICEF and the World Bank, WFP should test the provision of the CSB snack or locally-produced fortified biscuits in pre-schools. ➤ WFP should promote the development of school gardens (particularly in secondary schools with boarders) – with partners (MoE/DAFO/IFAD) - as a FFA activity. This activity could be started at some pilot schools under the present CP and scaled up under the next CP. This activity would provide local food for the school meals and also underpin nutrition education. ➤ In the LIN programme FFA activities should be expanded if 					

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and when funding allows. Assets created must provide value to the whole community and not just landowners.	The C/FFA activities need indeed to further focus on productive and community-based type of assets, and, due to the limited funding currently available, the CO will concentrate its effort in the three provinces where the Government is implementing the multisectoral action plan for food and nutrition security.	With the planned Budget Revision, the CO will refocus the C/FFA and revise the SOP/guidelines. It will also use these remaining two years of the current CP to revisit its LIN strategy and perhaps further focus on rural development and resilience building, contributing indirectly to nutrition.	Programme	Dec 14	Y
Recommendation 7 The evaluation team was also asked to supply guidance regarding future programming. The following recommendations should be considered during the design process for the next CP: ➤ Stunting should remain the major focus for WFP programming in Lao PDR. MCHN provides for short-term needs while for longer-term impact, SM (including nutrition education) and LIN activities should be included. ➤ EPR should be included in future programming both as short term crisis relief and capacity building for improved	Accepted In line with the Government priorities, malnutrition and stunting more specifically will remain the main focus of WFP programme in Lao PDR. WFP's EPR support already exist in the CP (component 1) and as the Government is fully responsible, the aim of WFP support to ensure that it has the capacity and the means, to handle these responsibilities. As mentioned earlier the strategy for the C/FFA activities will be revisited in the planned Budget Revision and for the next CP. The direct linkages with or engagement into the other components will be looked into, within the scope of WFP policies.	The CO will prepare the Budget Revision, taking into account the agreed recommendations of the present evaluation.	Programme & CO management	Nov 14 – Feb 15	N

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<p>government capacity to plan, deliver and manage emergency preparedness and response. The current programme to support MoNRE and other ministries and provincial and district authorities is funded for two years but the process will take much longer, and this should be reflected in future programming. The ultimate goal of this activity should be to enable the government to take full responsibility for EPR actions in Lao PDR.</p> <p>➤ Review the LIN programme in the light of funding commitments – if funding is likely to be severely restricted as at present then cost efficiency needs to be critically examined. Given sufficient funding, FFA/CFA activities should be aligned with MCHN and SM as now, but also as follow-up operations to increase resilience after EPR distributions.</p>					