

OPERATION EVALUATION

Armenia DEV200128 **DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE
SCHOOL FEEDING (2010-2016)**

A mid-term evaluation of WFP's Operation

Management Response

[March, 2015 – report OEV/2014/20]

Management response cleared by:

Country Director: Pascale Micheau/ 11 March 2015



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><i>Create a handover plan</i></p> <p>Documenting achievements against a set of predetermined milestones will help determine how and when WFP should phase-out. With Government partners, the CO should create a well thought out handover plan to move forward towards a nationally owned programme in order to facilitate the CO's transition from implementer to enabler of national ownership and capacity, as per the objectives of the DPAP and in line with WFP's Strategic Plan 2014-2017. Starting from now, this initiative conducted by the CO will clarify WFP's evolving role and provide information to assist in the Government's strategic planning.</p> <p>Within this initiative the CO should notably (i) develop a detailed framework of capacity development needs where WFP,</p>	Accepted	<p>Together with the government and SIFI, the CO will re-discuss the school feeding policy and strategy, document achievements reached so far and identify gaps, including those from the implementation of the government-run pilots to allow moving towards a sustainable nationally-owned programme. Mapping the gaps will entail a good understanding of the reasons behind all constrains and the Government's actual financial capacity within the current socio-economic crisis mounting and progressively eroding many of the pre-2008 development achievements.</p> <p>This information will be used to redefine a gradual handover plan with a realistic timeframe. The plan will focus on capacity building activities, which will be implemented by WFP in cooperation with SIFI and the government aiming at increasing government ownership of the programme, a smooth handover and sustainability.</p>	CO Management and Programme Unit	<p>January 2016</p> <p>February 2016</p>	N

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<p>in cooperation with SIFI, can make a difference, with benchmarks and indicators of success, with a view to confirming milestones for programme handover; (ii) Demand results from capacity development efforts from external consultants, to ensure confirmation of transfer of capacity and skills.</p> <p>The current project ends in June 2016. Given the necessity to re-discuss policy and strategy with the Government and engage partnerships with a broad range of actors, a one-year extension in this period should allow sufficient time to rethink and redesign a new project clearly articulated with the Government priorities, with SF embedded as a social safety net.</p>		<p>The CO will prepare a Budget Revision with a one year extension in time until June 2017. This additional year will allow time for discussions with Government and all stakeholders, strengthening partnerships, as well as undertaking a number of specific assessments and studies, which will inform the strategic concept note and new project aligned with the UNDAF cycle (2016-2020). An Integrated Context Analysis, which will include food security trends and potential risk factors will be initiated.</p>		June 2015	Y
<p>Recommendation 2:</p> <p><i>Strengthen the School Feeding Strategy</i></p> <p>Joint efforts by the MoES, WFP and SIFI have contributed to develop a 'Sustainable School Feeding Strategy'. Nevertheless, national ownership of the strategy</p>	Accepted	<p>Discussions on the revision of the national school feeding policy and strategy will inevitably lead to revising the programme's short, medium and long-term objectives laying the foundation for a clear action plan. National ownership of the revised strategy is a critical factor for the success of the national</p>	CO Management and Programme and Logistics/procurement Units With the support of the RB	February 2016	N

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<p>still has to be improved. WFP should assist with the development of a national school feeding programme based on clearly established national priorities and targeted at revised objectives.</p> <p>With reference to the findings, conclusions and recommendations from this present MTE, WFP jointly with relevant Government bodies should organize a workshop whose main objectives will be to help prioritize national school feeding long-term objectives (education / health and nutrition / social protection), and revise strategic aims and implementing modalities accordingly. This recommendation should include the Ministries of Education, Health, Agriculture and Social Affairs, and related departments at provincial level. The development of a national school feeding programme could also benefit from counselling from other external parties, such as the Centre of Excellence Against Hunger in Brazil.</p>		<p>programme' sustainability.</p> <p>With the support of SIFI, the CO will organize a workshop not only with the different government ministries' representatives at national and sub-national levels (education, health, agriculture and social affairs), but also with key partners (UNICEF, FAO, WHO) to mutually agree on objectives and milestones for the development of a national school feeding programme fully aligned with the Government priorities. This process, involving extensive discussions with the government and other partners should strengthen national ownership while enhancing synergies between the various actors and maximising impact.</p> <p>The CO will liaise with the Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil with a view to an opportunity of learning from the Brazilian experience of school feeding to help the government design and guide the national school feeding programme.</p>		<p>February 2016</p> <p>March 2016 (depending on availability of the Center of Excellence)</p>	

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<p>Recommendation 3:</p> <p><i>Improve/enhance gender equality impact</i></p> <p>A strategy of men's engagement in school feeding related activities should be designed with consideration of the general trends related to gender involvement in education. Considering that 90 percent of all schoolteachers are female and that men occupy mostly the high administrative positions (repeating the general patterns of gender disparity in women's employment and earnings across all employment sectors, both private and public), WFP, working with MoES and cooperating partners, should promote gender balance in parents' committees and advocate for an increased men's presence on school feeding parents' committees. This will help to pursue two objectives: (i) to increase fathers' engagement in child-care related tasks and tackle existing negative practices limiting their effective participation in education; (ii) to enhance the sense and practice of</p>	Partially accepted	<p>While important, men's engagement in school feeding activities is not an objective WFP aims to achieve in order to reach the project goal. Nevertheless, WFP will advocate for an increased men's presence on school feeding parents' committees to raise fathers' engagement and responsibility in child-care related tasks. The new Country Programme will address this gap.</p> <p>The CO is advocating for a national school feeding programme based on locally produced and processed products. This objective is one of the immediate priorities and entails not only discussions with all stakeholders (Government, donors, UN Agencies and civil society) but also specific studies. Hence the CO agrees with the suggestion to elaborate a structured approach of working with partners to advance the gender aspect of the home-grown component of the 'Sustainable School Feeding Strategy' (reflected in the M&E framework). However, it cannot and should not be exclusively women. MASHAV and SIFI will help WFP to develop the component with the involvement of the ministry of agriculture and in collaboration with</p>	CO Management and Programme Unit	<p>October 2016</p> <p>June 2017</p>	Y

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<p>social responsibility for the vulnerable, and promote improved care practices in general within communities.</p> <p>In the context of the support to overall social economic growth of the country, increased household economic resilience and mitigation of negative effects of labour migration, which increase women's economic vulnerability, the project would benefit from elaboration of a structured approach of working with partners to advance the gender aspect of the home-grown component of the 'Sustainable School Feeding Strategy' (reflected in the M&E framework). This can be achieved through capacity building and engaging women-led households into local food value chains within school feeding activities and may become an important step toward promoting gender equality and participation. Hiring a dedicated gender consultant will help alleviate the lack of CO staff capacity in gender-sensitive programming.</p>		<p>FAO. Private sector partnerships will also be explored. While it may be difficult to hire a dedicated gender consultant under the current project budget, the CO will request support from the RB to promote gender-sensitive programming.</p> <p>The participation of poor vulnerable women who prepare and serve meals to the children is a gender-specific dimension to the project, which could be reinforced. Although, their involvement is considered a temporary measure in the WFP-administered project, these women should definitely continue to be part of the national project, especially where hot feeding is involved. Therefore, it will be WFP's contribution to empower them to have a greater equality in the home and a more active role in community affairs.</p>		September 2016	

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<p>Recommendation 4:</p> <p><i>Enhance the transfer of knowledge and good practice to the Government</i></p> <p>From an operational point of view, improving national ownership of the School Feeding Strategy, as recommended through the Strategic Recommendation 2 above, should be based on a sound knowledge and practice of all school feeding procedures from planning to M&E. WFP should encourage and facilitate an effective hands-on capacity development by duly assigned full-time Government school feeding staff, enabling joint implementation with relevant ministries and the progressive takeover of school feeding activities.</p>	Accepted	As a priority, the CO will discuss with the Ministry of Education the possibility of establishing full-time Government school feeding staff and understand the reasons why it was not/could not be done so far. Initial feedback pointed at the cost effectiveness of a fully-fledged school feeding unit below a certain scale/geographical coverage of the national SF programme. Hence, a gradual mutually agreeable set-up of such unit will be worked out between the MoES and WFP. While under recommendation 1 and 2, a hand over plan including capacity development needs will be worked out jointly with the Government, an efficient and sustainable transfer of knowledge and good practice will only happen with fully dedicated staff. Once this is in place, WFP will facilitate effective capacity development events, including study tours not only in Brazil but also in other neighbouring countries. The plan will be to undertake joint M&E visits and to have regular weekly meeting with the	CO Management and Programme and Logistics units	June 2016	Y
				March 2016 (depending on availability of the Center of Excellence in Brazil)	

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		Government SF staff, SIFI and WFP.			
Recommendation 5: <i>Improve the M&E system</i> In order to avoid a double system of data collection and to facilitate the comparison between assisted and non-assisted schools, WFP M&E school feeding indicators and data, particularly those related to students' attendance, retention and performance, should be integrated within the broader regular framework of the Education Monitoring and Information System (EMIS) of the MoES operated by the National Centre of Education Technology (KTAK).	Partially accepted	There is no double data collection practice as such for outcome-level indicators. Most data on outcomes are provided to WFP by the government's National Centre of Education Technologies (KTAK). WFP is collecting its operational data in order to allocate and distribute food accordingly. However, WFP must strengthen its M&E strategy and system to align it with the new Strategic Result Framework. WFP will take this opportunity to embed a SF monitoring system within the existing national monitoring system as part of the overall strategic review of the project.	CO Management and Programme Unit	School year 2016-17 June 2015	N
Recommendation 6: <i>Improve partnerships, particularly with United Nations sister agencies</i> Building on the widely established fact that food aid interventions,	Accepted	To maximise synergies and broaden the scope of the school feeding programme, WFP will not only partner with other UN Agencies, but also with other ministries, like the Ministry of Social Affairs to embed SF within the national social	CO Management and Programme Unit	On going	N

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<p>including school feeding, often have a greater developmental impact when and where they are linked to other development assistance, WFP should help generate replicable school feeding models that incorporate partnership among agencies and other actors, including the private sector, for further scale up in support of national priorities.</p> <p>WFP should seek to reinforce its cooperation with sister United Nations agencies (particularly with UNICEF in the areas of nutrition, hygiene, water and sanitation, etc.; with WHO regarding students' health, deworming, etc.; and with FAO about school gardens, HGSF).</p>		<p>protection system, the Ministry of Agriculture for HGSF and the Ministry of Health for nutrition-sensitive approach to SF. WFP will also meet donors and advocate for funding a wide range of SF-related activities.</p> <p>WFP will hold individual meetings and a general meeting with the various ministries and United Nations agencies (including UNDP) to explore possibility/constraints of creating tangible links between their development assistance and school feeding.</p> <p>WFP will reinforce partnerships with other actors, including NGOs and the private sector, which will help scaling up support for the various aspects of the national school feeding programme.</p>			
<p>Recommendation 7:</p> <p><i>Continue to invest in studies and research as evidence for programme design</i></p> <p>According to WFP's School Feeding Policy, school feeding benefits fall into four main</p>	Partially accepted	<p>To meaningfully revisit the SF strategy and define a realistic plan of action for a gradual hand over and inform the new programme, the CO will need a set of evidence-based information.</p> <p>The CO intends to conduct an Integrated Context Analysis, also</p>	CO Management and Programme Unit	Dec. 2015	Y

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<p>categories: safety nets, education, nutrition and local economies. Surveys and research conducted by SIFI have contributed to knowledge required to effectively plan programmes. This evaluation has identified areas where further research is needed to base effective programme planning targeted at possible revised objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A study on the effectiveness and efficiency of cash-based transfers as opposed to in-kind food will help provide support to the most vulnerable children in the form of conditional transfers within the broader framework of national social protection measures and the provision of social benefits. The study should set out to determine the best means of asset transfer (food, cash, or vouchers). This study should be jointly undertaken by WFP, the Ministries of Education, Social Affairs, and SIFI in view of the objectives in the 'Sustainable School Feeding Strategy' and the 		<p>looking at food security and nutrition. Another key information needed but not mentioned in the evaluation recommendations is an accurate analysis of the budgetary possibility for the national SF programme, which will be the basis for the hand over plan. Similarly, a cost benefit analysis of the hot meal's modality versus snack will be key analysis for decision making.</p> <p>It is agreed that WFP together with SIFI and the ministries of Education, and Social Affairs will undertake a study to compare the effectiveness and efficiency of in-kind food and cash-based transfers within the broader framework of national social protection.</p>			

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<p>handover of school feeding activities to the Government in 2016.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similarly, in cooperation with the Ministries of Education, Health, and WHO, WFP should support a survey to ensure and determine the best ways to monitor and evaluate nutritional benefits of school feeding activities in Armenia related to: a child's health improvement and related impact on school performance and educational attainment, increase in energy and kilocalories through enhanced child's diet, improved cognition and learning capacity through preventing key micro-nutrient deficiencies, possible prevalence and intensity of worm infestations amongst schoolchildren and appropriate deworming measures if deemed necessary. This survey should also consider that school feeding, when 		<p>The scope of an impact study (against that proposed by the ET) of school feeding benefits in Armenia will be determined in consultation with the ministries of Education, Health, and WHO as well as SIFI. It will also depend on the revised objectives of school feeding. Attribution of school feeding to academic achievement (improved cognition and learning capacity) would be difficult to establish as it is currently a much debated issue in terms of feasibility. Moreover, school feeding is providing one mid-morning feeding accounting for 700 Kcal/day only. Last but very important, WFP will need to optimize resources and prioritise the implementation of the above mentioned studies.</p>			

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<p>targeted at pre-school aged children, may play a role in preventing the damage to cognitive development that poor nutrition can contribute to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on the findings of the feasibility study on the efficiency of the use of locally produced and processed products conducted by SIFI, in cooperation with the Ministries of Education, Agriculture, and FAO, WFP should facilitate some follow-up research to establish the basis for a national homegrown school feeding programme where procurement schemes will focus to the largest extent possible on food produced, processed and purchased locally, instead of internationally. 		<p>The establishment of a national home grown school feeding programme aiming to shift from internationally procured food to locally produced and processed food is a top priority being discussed with the Government and the current two donors. Building on the initial feasibility study conducted by SIFI, WFP will support a follow-up research, in cooperation with MASHAV, SIFI, Ministries of Education and Agriculture, and FAO.</p>			