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MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUMMARY REPORT OF THE IMPACT EVALUATION OF SCHOOL FEEDING IN CAMBODIA

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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 impact evaluation of WFP's school feeding programme in Cambodia (2000–2010).
2. The Secretariat appreciates the recommendations of this evaluation, which have contributed to the design of the new country programme (CP) for 2011–2016. The CP addresses – in partnership with the Government, United Nations agencies, civil society and communities – the needs of schoolchildren through school meals and take-home rations, in line with the Government's goals and strategies. In accordance with the recommendations, WFP will increase its engagement in the nutrition sector and will use fortified food to a greater extent.
3. Actions to implement the evaluation recommendations are presented in the matrix.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUMMARY REPORT OF THE IMPACT EVALUATION OF SCHOOL FEEDING IN CAMBODIA

Recommendations	Action by	Management response and action taken	Implementation deadline
<p>Recommendation 1: The country office should consider the differentiated effects of modalities in future programming.</p> <p>The school feeding programme was aligned with the Government's education goals and strategy. In the past ten years it has achieved its aim of supporting primary education by contributing to increased enrolment, attendance and promotion and to reduced drop-out rates. The school feeding programme had marked effects on nutrition and value transfers to households, but the school meals programme and take-home rations affected education, nutrition and value transfer in different ways.</p>	Country office	<p>Agreed. The educational outcomes and outputs of the country programme (CP) for 2011–2016 are in line with WFP's Strategic Results Framework and project objectives, and take into account the differentiated effects of the school meals and take-home rations modalities.</p> <p>On the basis of the situation analysis and in line with the Government's Education Strategic Plan (ESP) for 2009–2013 and the National Social Protection Strategy, the school meals programme targets the poorest and most food-insecure areas with a view to increasing enrolment, attendance and nutrition. The take-home rations modality will continue targeting the most vulnerable households to improve attendance, address high drop-out rates, encourage completion of primary education and enhance safety nets that achieve food-security objectives under the National Social Protection Strategy. School feeding in early childhood development pre-schools aims to improve enrolment at the right age.</p> <p>During the CP, WFP will continue to refine programme modalities to: i) increase national ownership; ii) seek linkages with domestic food-supply chains; and iii) explore ways of utilizing school meals to improve children's access to micronutrients, for example by providing fortified noodles and rice.</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>October 2013</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: A higher proportion of resources should be allocated to take-home rations.</p> <p>The National Social Protection Strategy is the most appropriate framework for future school feeding, and take-home rations are the preferred approach because they target those most in need and have a higher value for beneficiaries than the school meals programme, thus functioning as a more effective social-protection scheme.</p>	Country office	<p>Agreed. The new CP significantly increases the planned proportion of take-home rations in the education component.</p>	October 2012



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<p>Recommendation 3: The country office should focus on supporting the development of a sustainable, nationally owned school meals programme. The core of WFP's involvement should be support for the development of capacities in national institutions and development of a sustainable procurement modality. On the basis of current experience WFP and the Ministry of Education should identify a pilot modality for later roll-out.</p> <p>The positive effects of the school feeding programme could be significantly increased through mutually reinforcing partnerships with agencies working to improve the quality of education.</p>	Country office	<p>Agreed. Funding permitting, WFP will increase its assistance to the Government in reviewing and updating national education strategies. WFP will also increase hands-on training and capacity development for staff of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport at the national and sub-national levels to improve management and implementation of the school meals and take-home ration modalities.</p> <p>The Government's budget limitations are a challenge, but national ownership opportunities should increase in future because government budget allocations for education are expected to increase. The new CP aims to enable cost sharing and to increase cost efficiencies and incentives for national ownership: 79 percent of the school meals food basket may be purchased locally, and WFP will increase this proportion for example by piloting locally produced fortified noodles and linkages with smallholder food-supply chains.</p>	October 2013
<p>Recommendation 4: Future interventions should be part of comprehensive packages; the collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) should be broadened to include other partners.</p> <p>The positive effects of the school feeding programme could be significantly increased through mutually reinforcing partnerships with agencies working to improve the quality of education.</p>	Country office	<p>Agreed. WFP will continue to seek strong partnerships to ensure delivery of comprehensive and integrated packages: partners will include the Government, United Nations agencies, communities and civil-society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). WFP will make this a condition for moving into new target and thematic areas such as early childhood development. WFP currently reaches most school feeding beneficiaries through tripartite agreements with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and UNICEF or with the ministry and non-governmental organizations that provide complementary services such as water and sanitation programmes, school infrastructure and technical support. Other Essential Package activities include nationwide deworming through the Ministry of Health, and prevention of HIV and AIDS and malaria in school and life-skills training curricula.</p> <p>UNICEF's child-friendly schools initiative has been nationalized and is now government policy. WFP's partnerships with UNICEF and the Government will be reassessed accordingly.</p>	October 2013

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<p>Recommendation 5: The country office should continue its participation in multi-sectoral initiatives such as technical working groups, which are required to combat childhood undernutrition in an efficacious and cost-effective manner.</p> <p>Schoolchildren in Cambodia suffer from high levels of chronic undernutrition, underweight and anaemia, which will affect child health, economic productivity and maternal mortality.</p>	Country office	Agreed. The new CP will increase WFP's engagement in the nutrition sector, with a focus on developing sustainable food-assistance models to promote nutrition outcomes and to improve the evidence base needed to inform and update national policy. In school feeding, to identify efficacious and cost-effective models for enhancing nutritional impacts, the CP will aim to improve children's access to micronutrients by providing foods such as micronutrient-fortified noodles and fortified rice.	October 2013
<p>Recommendation 6: The country office should design and implement modalities for including fortified food in its school feeding programme.</p> <p>Tackling childhood undernutrition is vital in Cambodia, and different approaches need to be explored. The use of fortified rice in the school feeding programme could be effective in this context if evidence can be provided to show that it reduces the prevalence of iron-deficiency anaemia in both sexes. The school feeding policy emphasizes that WFP will ensure that school meals are nutritious and that it will fortify them where necessary.</p>	Country office	Agreed. The acceptability trials of fortified rice in school feeding under the protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) will be followed by effectiveness trials in the CP. The CP includes micronutrient-fortified noodles as an option in the school meals food basket in addition to fortified rice; it also includes a budget for work with existing local food-fortification initiatives that may be suitable for incorporation into the school meals programme.	October 2013
<p>Recommendation 7: Targeting should be improved to better ensure a focus on the most vulnerable populations.</p> <p>More precise targeting of household-level vulnerability criteria would increase the effects and impacts of the take-home rations modality, especially with regard to value transfers and retention of children from poorer families.</p>	Country office	Agreed. The country office will continue to improve targeting under the CP. The take-home rations modality targets the most vulnerable populations using a range of criteria such as housing, area of farmland, number of livestock, value of household assets, main sources of income, duration of household food gaps, and household debt; there is a clear scoring system and cut-offs are in place. Beneficiaries are selected in a participatory process that has been refined over the past ten years and that involves as stakeholders provincial departments of education, district departments of education, NGOs, teachers, students, school directors, teacher representatives, parent representatives, village and community chiefs, the clergy, and commune councils for women and children. The process includes mandatory household spot checks by department of education or NGO staff. There are systems and checks in place to minimize inclusion and exclusion errors.	



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		Under the CP, WFP intends to improve its targeting by: i) providing vulnerability analysis and mapping expertise to improve the Government's Identification of Poor Households Programme "IDPoor" system of enrolling the poorest households nationwide; and ii) aligning take-home rations modality targeting with IDPoor, taking into account additional food-insecurity criteria that are not captured in IDPoor registration.	October 2013
Recommendation 8: WFP should use control groups and longitudinal indicators for future monitoring to improve results-based programming and produce evidence of the effects of school feeding programmes on education, nutrition (including anaemia) and value transfer as set out in the school feeding policy. School feeding monitoring measurements change over time for some indicators, but they do not provide for comparisons with non-programme areas. To improve monitoring, prospective analysis must be improved and smaller control groups should be used as part of regular monitoring.	Country office	Agreed. The country office will consider the feasibility of including some schools as controls in routine monitoring: they will be compared with WFP-assisted school meals programme schools. The country office will also revise the current monitoring and reporting guidelines, particularly beneficiary-contact monitoring checklists, which include longitudinal indicators such as pupils' attendance and concentration.	October 2012