

POLICY ON COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLANNING

FIRST DRAFT



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy outlines WFP's new approach to country-level strategic and programmatic engagement. In accordance with the arrangements outlined in this policy, WFP's current programme categories and project documents will eventually be replaced by Country Strategic Plans.

Until now, WFP has used one or more project documents for different categories of programme to guide the delivery of its assistance in any given country. Since 2009, country strategy documents have been used with a view to positioning WFP to deliver coherent and strategically focused portfolios of assistance through its operations. These strategic documents have been voluntary and internally endorsed, without submission to the Board for approval.

Many evaluations and reviews have highlighted the limitations of the current planning architecture, which include: i) high transaction costs resulting from fragmentation among projects; ii) limited coordination among different operation types; iii) lack of synergy between strategic and programme planning; and iv) the Board's limited ability to provide strategic oversight and governance.

The new approach to country-level planning set forth in this policy builds on the achievements of the current approach and exploits opportunities for improvement. It responds to changes in the global food security and nutrition situation – emerging challenges, increasing complexity, conflict and displacement, etc. – and aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals and WFP's Strategic Plan (2017–2021). The approach has been informed by internal evidence, reviews and evaluations; broad consultations, including with the Board; best practices in other organizations; and lessons learned through experience in selected countries.

The approach seeks to: i) support countries in making progress towards zero hunger; ii) operationalize the WFP Strategic Plan at the country level from 2017 onwards; and iii) enhance strategic coherence, focus, operational effectiveness and partnerships to provide better support to efforts to address food insecurity and malnutrition. The planning process has two core elements: a national strategic review process that examines approaches to achieving zero hunger, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 2 followed by formulation of a WFP Country Strategic Plan.

Informed by national zero hunger strategic reviews, Country Strategic Plans seek to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of WFP's assistance to governments and people in need, including those affected by conflict. The consultative analytical planning process enhances WFP's added value, fosters engagement with governments, and convenes partners around a common approach to eliminating hunger and malnutrition.

Experience shows that this approach to country strategic planning improves the quality of WFP's assistance through: i) increased effectiveness and efficiency in emergencies; ii) enhanced flexibility to respond to dynamic operational contexts while balancing humanitarian and development work; iii) improved alignment with national Sustainable Development Goal targets and partners; iv) improved focus, visibility and communication; v) better integration of technical assistance and resource mobilization; vi) improved strategic guidance and reduced transaction costs; vii) closer harmonization with United Nations agencies and processes; and viii) enhanced performance reporting and accountability.

By moving to a portfolio approach to country-level planning, WFP integrates the strategic orientation of its assistance with performance management and budgeting processes to strengthen its capability to manage for results. The results-oriented focus of country strategic planning clarifies the relationships between resources deployed and results achieved while linking strategic, programme and operational planning.

INTRODUCTION

1. This policy outlines WFP's revised strategic approach to programming and implementing activities and operations at the country level. The approach facilitates effective and efficient implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and aligns WFP's country planning with that of other United Nations agencies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Country Strategic Plans (CSPs) consolidate WFP's assistance in a given country, establishing a strategy for up to five years and outlining programme and operational plans. In accordance with the arrangements outlined in this policy, WFP's current programme categories and project documents will eventually be replaced by CSPs.
2. Food security and nutrition challenges have become more complex and diverse, actions to eradicate them more urgent, and the expectations and aspirations of countries more demanding. This policy prepares WFP to deliver on its commitments under the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021) and thus to play a crucial role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It recognizes the need for change and builds on WFP's successful record and best practices while addressing gaps in strategic, programme and operational planning and implementation.
3. The new approach presented in this policy has been under development since 2014 and is being informed by internal evidence, reviews and evaluations; broad consultations, including with the Board; best practices in other organizations; and lessons learned through experience in selected countries.

THE CURRENT PLANNING ARCHITECTURE

4. To deliver on its dual mandate and provide its assistance in any given country, WFP implements projects in the following programme categories depending on the specific needs and context:¹
 - *Emergency operations (EMOPs)* are WFP's responses to new emergency needs and last for up to one year, with the possibility of extension for one more year.² Their emphasis is on saving lives, reducing malnutrition and protecting livelihoods.
 - *Protracted relief and recovery operations (PRROs)* respond to needs for up to three years and may be extended for a maximum of three years. They focus on re-establishing and stabilizing livelihoods and food security to the extent possible, while providing relief as necessary.
 - *Development programmes* comprise country programmes (CPs) and development projects (DEVs). CPs last for up to five years and include several components, while DEVs are generally limited to a single activity.
 - *Special operations (SOs)* are undertaken to rehabilitate and enhance transport and logistics infrastructure to facilitate the timely and efficient delivery of food assistance, especially for emergency and protracted relief, and to enhance coordination within the United Nations system and with other partners through the provision of common services.

¹ For a list of the purposes of WFP programmes, projects and activities, see Article II of WFP General Regulations.

² See "Definition of Emergencies" (WFP/EB.1/2005/4-A/Rev.1).

- *Trust funds* are not a programme category in themselves, but are used as mechanisms for programming extra-budgetary resources received as contributions for specified purposes – such as providing services to governments, development partners and other United Nations organizations – that do not fall within one of the four programme categories but that are consistent with WFP’s objectives and policies.³
5. Country strategy outlines were presented to the Board for information and guidance in tandem with development projects until the end of 2002. Since 2009, country strategy documents have been used to guide WFP’s delivery of coherent and strategically focused assistance through its operations in a country. These documents, which focused on strategic direction, were endorsed internally and were not submitted to the Board for approval.

Limitations

High transaction costs resulting from fragmentation among projects

6. Fragmentation among projects with different approval processes, durations and planning cycles increases the transaction burden of internal processes. In 2015, 63 percent of WFP country offices managed several projects. For example, WFP implemented eight projects each in Ethiopia and South Sudan, and six projects each in Nepal and Yemen.⁴ The multiple processes required to design, draft, submit, approve, implement and manage each project limit efficiency and significantly increase transaction costs in terms of time and resources. In addition, the fragmented approach to programming among projects limits coherence among activities.

Limited coordination among different project types

7. In 2015, 42 of WFP’s 75 country offices implemented projects in more than one programme category, excluding trust funds and regional operations. Each programme category has its own strategy, which is often not synchronized with those of other categories. In 2001, the Board recommended re-examining the use of different instruments for development, relief and emergency assistance. Members pointed out that the existence of separate programme categories often led to the perception that humanitarian and development activities in a country were not coordinated.⁵
8. A 2010 programme category review⁶ attempted to clarify the relationship between programme categories and WFP’s Strategic Objectives in order to address perceived inconsistencies in use of programme categories. The project-based approach has continued to fall short of promoting interconnections between humanitarian and development responses. These linkages are essential in recovery and transition contexts, and for achieving sustainable results. A fragmented approach to response reduces the effectiveness of assistance.

³ Extra-budgetary resources are available for implementing activities that are within WFP’s regulatory framework, but are not explicitly approved by the Board.

⁴ Ethiopia implemented three special operations (SOs), four PRROs and one CP. South Sudan implemented five SOs, two EMOPs and one PRRO. Nepal implemented one CP, two EMOPs, two SOs and one PRRO. Yemen implemented three SOs, two PRROs and one EMOP.

⁵ WFP/EB.3/2001/INF/20.

⁶ WFP/EB.A/2010/11/Rev.1.

Lack of synergy between strategic and programme planning

9. As country strategies are optional and focus on higher-level objectives, they have not always contributed to effective programme design and implementation, thereby limiting the potential impact of assistance. The short duration of many projects adds to the challenge of achieving outcomes. One of the main concerns raised during the 2013 business process review regarded the unclear relationship between country strategies and project documents.
10. In many cases, the contents of the two documents overlap, while in others there is no readily identifiable link between them. Participants in the business process review wondered whether project documents were meant to be used as strategies, operational plans, fundraising vehicles or all of these. The synthesis of four strategic evaluations undertaken in 2011 on various dimensions of the transition from food aid to food assistance at the core of the WFP Strategic Plan (2008–2013) pointed out that a short-term project approach was practiced, and the potential of the strategic planning process was limited.⁷

Limited strategic oversight and governance

11. The business process review also raised concerns about the rationale for having project documents approved by the Board and country strategies approved by an internal committee, when the latter are intended to provide a strategic framework for the former. Its review of isolated project documents gives the Board a fragmented picture of WFP's work in a country, reducing its ability to provide strategic oversight and guidance. This has sometimes left Board members feeling overwhelmed by the volume of projects, making it difficult to provide meaningful, strategic inputs to or guidance on WFP's work and/or positioning at the country level. In the 2014 statistics on the use of Board time, the Executive Board Bureau noted that the Board spent close to 40 percent of its time discussing and approving individual operations and welcomed a review of how this time could be used more strategically.

Opportunities for improvement

12. In 2011, WFP's Oversight Office reviewed the country strategy process internally⁸ and drew the following conclusions and recommendations:
 - An improved country strategy document could become the main channel through which the Board approves WFP's plans in a given country, but the review and approval process needs to be adjusted.
 - The internal review process should be improved to ensure better communication of corporate issues during the early stages of country strategic planning and to derive corporate benefit from lessons learned and best practices.
 - The internal management committees reviewing country strategies and project documents should be merged to ensure that operations reflect strategic plans.
 - Adequate resources and support should be made available to ensure capacity in strategic planning at the country level.

⁷ Office of Evaluation. 2012. *Four Strategic Evaluations on the Transition from Food Aid to Food Assistance: A Synthesis (Full Version)* (OE/2012/S002).

⁸ Oversight Office/Office of Internal Audit (OSA). 2011. *Internal Review: Country Strategy Process Review – Advisory Services Report*

- A policy paper should be submitted to the Board on using the country strategy as the main document for obtaining the Board’s approval of WFP operations in a country and delegating the approval of subsidiary documents that is currently with the Board.
13. The potential for improving country strategies to incorporate new ways in which WFP can contribute to national food security and nutrition initiatives was also identified in the four strategic evaluations mentioned in paragraph 10.⁹ Since 2013, WFP’s Annual Evaluation Report (AER) has also consistently highlighted this potential. The 2013 AER reaffirmed the importance of country strategies and recommended clarifying their role in WFP’s governance, partnership, strategic and operational frameworks. The 2014 AER recommended that WFP clarify, communicate and implement requirements for country office strategic planning and establish them as the basis for systematic long-term planning and performance management of country portfolios, with attention to national contexts, capacities, partnerships and funding. The 2015 AER recommended increasing the focus of the country strategy process to align it with national and local systems.

THE NEW APPROACH TO COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLANNING

14. The new approach to country strategic planning builds on the achievements of the current approach and exploits opportunities for improvement.

The evolving context of hunger

15. Nearly 800 million people – 11 percent of the world’s population – are undernourished, 25 percent of the world’s children are stunted,¹⁰ and approximately 2 billion people suffer from micronutrient deficiencies.¹¹ Most of these people live without social protection, often amid conflict and instability. Conflicts are becoming increasingly complex and protracted, with the resultant protracted displacements reaching their highest levels since the 1940s. Lack of gender equality and women’s empowerment hinders progress in all areas of sustainable development, especially ending poverty and hunger. In many countries, despite progress in reducing poverty overall, food insecurity, undernutrition and overnutrition persist. Hunger is increasingly an urban challenge as well as a rural problem. Climate change increases risk for the poorest countries and most vulnerable people.
16. These dynamics require all stakeholders to work together in combatting hunger, adapting their ways of working accordingly. The changing nature of food insecurity and food systems in individual countries means that responses must be tailored, adaptable and context-specific. For WFP, this requirement has led to a reconsideration of its approach to country-level actions based on lessons learned from its experience in many regions and contexts. Improvement of country-level actions through a new approach to country strategic planning is essential in enabling WFP to deliver on its objectives in evolving global and country-specific contexts.

⁹ These four strategic evaluations examined: i) WFP’s role in social protection and safety nets; ii) WFP’s role in ending long-term hunger; iii) from food aid to food assistance – working in partnership; and iv) how country offices adapt to change.

¹⁰ FAO. 2015. *The State of Food Insecurity in the World – Meeting International Hunger Targets: Taking Stock of Uneven Progress*. Rome.

¹¹ FAO. 2013. *The State of Food Insecurity in the World – The Multiple Dimensions of Food Insecurity*. Rome.

Translating the global vision for zero hunger into action

17. In September 2015, world leaders formulated the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which sets out an ambitious 15-year timeframe for achieving sustainable development and ending poverty, hunger and inequality. The Agenda situates humanitarian action within the broader context of human progress and development, with a clear focus on the most vulnerable people and a strong commitment to leaving no one behind. The Agenda is led and driven by Member States, global in coverage and universally applicable; its 17 global goals are integrated and indivisible. Each government will set its own national targets, guided by the global vision of the goals and adapted to the national context.
18. WFP is devising a new and comprehensive planning architecture that will support its contribution to the 2030 Agenda. This work involves the formulation of a series of interrelated documents and processes, starting with the Strategic Plan (2017–2021), the Corporate Results Framework (CRF), the new approach to country strategic planning and a revamped financial framework. These comprehensive tools will equip WFP to design and deliver coherent, strategy-focused portfolios that maximize impact at the country level.
19. The new Strategic Plan (2017–2021) provides the overall framework for WFP’s contribution to achieving zero hunger. It prioritizes two goals – SDG 2 on achieving zero hunger, and SDG 17 on partnering to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda – while contributing to other SDGs depending on country contexts and national priorities. WFP has five Strategic Objectives, which relate to SDGs 2 and 17, and eight Strategic Results.
20. Although SDG 2 lies at the core of WFP’s mandate, it is clear that no single agency or entity owns any of the SDGs. To achieve progress on all the goals, including zero hunger, partnerships will be required that span across sectors and areas of expertise within countries and among partners, including WFP and the other Rome-based agencies.
21. The new CRF will consolidate the current Strategic Results Framework and the Management Results Framework to provide a holistic view of both operational and management results. WFP will link its performance planning, monitoring and reporting system to the CRF while ensuring alignment to the Strategic Plan (2017–2021).
22. To achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda, each country will determine its own priorities and targets and the actions required to reach these. Similarly, WFP’s Strategic Plan will be translated into country-level action through enhanced country strategic planning. In implementing the Strategic Plan (2017–2021), WFP will work closely with national stakeholders and United Nations country teams to determine how best to support national strategies to achieve zero hunger across contexts, making the necessary links across sectors and ensuring coherence with and support of countries’ broader strategies.
23. WFP’s revamped financial framework and the associated country portfolio budget will provide a clear link from corporate strategy to resourcing for country-level results to activity-based resourcing. The supportive financial framework and a budgeting structure with clear links to the results framework will enhance transparency and accountability in determining WFP’s contribution to zero hunger and the 2030 Agenda.

The new approach

24. The country strategic planning approach seeks to: i) support countries in making progress towards zero hunger; ii) operationalize the WFP Strategic Plan at the country level from 2017 onwards; and iii) enhance strategic coherence, focus, operational effectiveness and partnerships to provide better support to efforts to address food insecurity and malnutrition. The planning process has two core elements: a national zero hunger strategic review process followed by formulation of a WFP CSP.

National Zero Hunger strategic reviews

25. WFP's engagement at the country level should be formulated within the broader context of the country's efforts to achieve zero hunger by 2030, in line with SDG 2. In this regard, it will be important to have a country-owned national zero hunger strategic review to establish the baseline for formulating country, WFP and other efforts to achieve zero hunger in the country by 2030. A national zero hunger strategic review should derive from an open, consultative and comprehensive analysis of the challenges the country faces in achieving zero hunger by 2030. It should identify gaps in the national policy framework and programmes; the economic environment, fiscal policy, and financial requirements and funding sources for achieving zero hunger; opportunities and requirements for collaboration with the public and private sectors; and the implementation capacities of government institutions at the national and local levels. In addition to providing a baseline, strategic reviews inform the action plans of national stakeholders and partners.
26. WFP will participate in and support the facilitation of independent, country-led national zero hunger strategic reviews, including discussion of how WFP and the country's other partners can support national progress towards zero hunger. Information and evidence from WFP-supported assessments and studies will feed into the reviews as relevant. The review should be undertaken as part of the United Nations country team's work to deliver as one. WFP may also facilitate reviews in countries where it does not have an operational presence.

Country Strategic Plans

27. CSPs are informed by country-led national zero hunger strategic reviews or similar analyses as well as evaluations, assessments, feasibility studies, etc. They are developed in line with the planning processes of governments and United Nations country teams. The plans will replace separate project documents for CPs, DEVs, PRROs and EMOPs and will comprise WFP's entire humanitarian and development portfolio in a country. They will:
- i) define WFP's position and role based on country needs and WFP's strengths;
 - ii) specify those outcomes determined by or with the government to which WFP will contribute during the five-year period; and
 - iii) identify the strategic guidance, resources and technical support that WFP will dedicate to maximizing its own contributions.
28. CSPs seek to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of WFP's assistance to governments and people in need, including those affected by conflict. The consultative analytical planning process enhances WFP's added value, fosters engagement with governments and convenes partners around a common approach to eliminating hunger. The plans align WFP's assistance with national and United Nations plans and programmes, and facilitate more effective attention to food security and nutrition issues in these plans and programmes.

29. CSPs will identify the national SDG targets and results that WFP is well placed to support. WFP will determine with governments and other partners the outcomes through which it can contribute towards SDG 2, SDG 17 and other SDGs, depending on the country context and national priorities.

Focus on results: addressing the gap between strategic and operational planning

30. By moving to a portfolio approach to strategic and operational planning at the country level, WFP integrates the strategic orientation of its assistance with performance management and budgeting processes to strengthen its capability to manage for results. Throughout its lifecycle, the design, planning, implementation, measurement, reporting and performance management of the CSP are based on its results chain, which clarifies the relationship between resources deployed and results achieved while linking strategic, programme and operational planning. The results chain of a CSP translates the results framework of the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021) to the country level, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021) results framework



31. The CSP results chain is at the core of WFP’s results-based management approach at the country level. It provides a model that defines the necessary steps for achieving stated objectives, and outlines the causal relationships and underlying assumptions regarding how results are to be achieved. Figure 2 provides an example of the results chain of a CSP.

Strategic Goals

32. In a WFP CSP results chain, the highest-level results are WFP's two Strategic Goals: Strategic Goal 1 is in line with SDG 2 – End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; and Strategic Goal 2 with SDG 17 – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. As noted in the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021), WFP's prioritization of these two SDGs reflects its own history and mandate, and the interconnections among all 17 SDGs.

Strategic Objectives

33. Underpinning WFP's Strategic Goals are its five Strategic Objectives, which relate to the elements of SDG 2 and SDG 17 addressed by WFP. The Strategic Objectives frame WFP's programmatic and operational focus, and link the Strategic Goals to the Strategic Results through which WFP contributes to country and global efforts towards achievement of SDGs 2 and 17 and their targets.

Strategic Results

34. The Strategic Results elaborated in WFP's Strategic Plan (2017–2021) focus WFP's actions on what countries need rather than on what WFP can provide. WFP's eight Strategic Results are mapped to the SDG 2 and SDG 17 targets that are relevant to WFP's capacities and mandate, aligning WFP's support to national and global efforts on the SDGs. WFP CSPs contribute to the WFP Strategic Results that are relevant to and prioritized in specific countries.

National SDG targets

35. Nationally defined SDG targets adapt the global SDG targets to the local context. Based on national zero hunger strategic reviews and in line with the planning processes of governments and United Nations country teams, WFP will identify the national SDG targets and results that it is well placed to support.

Outcomes

36. Guided by the WFP Strategic Results, and taking into account local context and priorities, WFP will contribute to relevant national SDG targets through a set of outcomes – both strategic and operational – related to each WFP Strategic Result.
37. In defining outcomes of both types, WFP adheres to the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) definition of an outcome: “The intended or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs, usually requiring the collective effort of partners. Outcomes represent changes in development conditions which occur between the completion of outputs and the achievement of impact.”¹² Strategic outcomes are medium-term effects, while operational outcomes are short-term effects.
38. A strategic outcome makes a substantive contribution towards achievement of selected national priorities for development; directly contributes to a goal or target that is implied or established in a country's national plan or agreed to in a regional framework; and facilitates progress towards the SDGs, particularly SDGs 2 and 17. WFP and partners contribute to strategic outcomes through the outputs of their activities. Strategic outcomes are typically

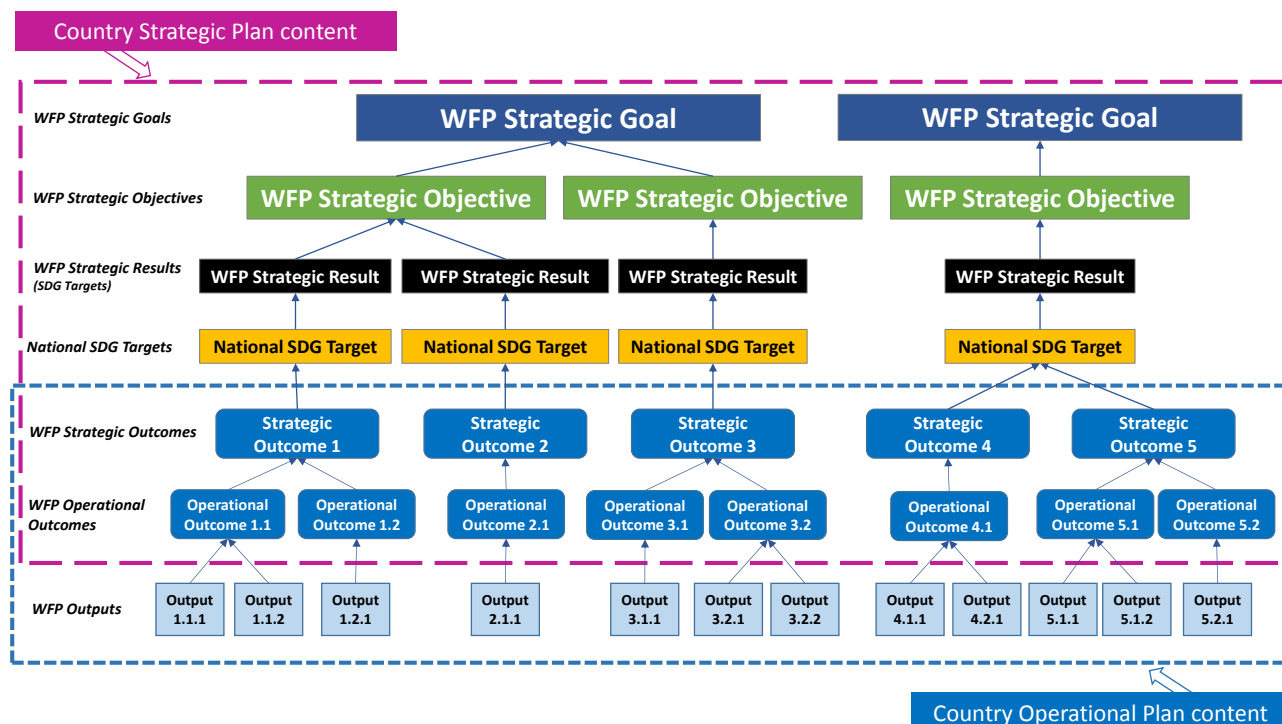
¹² UNDG. 2011. Results-Based Management Handbook: *Harmonizing RBM concepts and approaches for improved development results at country level*.

Available at <https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/UNDG-RBM-Handbook-2012.pdf>.

included in United Nations strategic planning frameworks in a country. Attribution of results at the strategic outcome level is typically collective, combining contributions from WFP and various governmental and non-governmental actors. The planning horizon for strategic outcomes should correspond to the time frame of the CSP – typically four to five years.

39. Because strategic outcomes reflect the specific situation and dynamics of a country, their wording needs to be appropriate to the national context, resonate with national and subnational actors and show clear alignment with national priorities and goals. Individual strategic outcomes vary from country to country in pitch and formulation, but they all show a clear link to the achievement of a national SDG target, and hence also a WFP Strategic Result.
40. To be truly valuable, strategic outcome statements must be sufficiently consistent with the terminology, mindsets and policy environment of the specific country to foster consensus among the government and other main stakeholders during the country strategic planning process. Cooperation on the prioritization and framing of results statements also helps to build consensus and joint ownership. WFP’s strategic outcomes are formulated at the country level and focus on local needs and priorities; reflect the results to which WFP’s assistance contributes; and identify the target populations, institutions and systems to be supported.
41. A central feature of CSPs is that each strategic outcome is tied to only one higher-level result – a WFP Strategic Result/SDG target or Strategic Objective. To maintain focus and coherence, there should be relatively few strategic outcomes. In cases of ambiguity, a strategic outcome may need to be reformulated or divided into two separate results statements to maintain the identifiable link between cause and effect.

Figure 2: Example of the results chain for a WFP CSP and operational plan



42. Operational outcomes are the direct result of WFP outputs. They describe the short-term effects – typically achieved over a one- to three-year timeframe – that lead to the higher-level strategic outcomes. As attribution is more closely aligned to WFP interventions, operational outcomes serve to help WFP monitor and manage its performance. Operational outcomes are standardized and included in the CRF, in alignment with the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021). The CSP logical frameworks will be based on the CRF, which specifies the corporate indicators to be used by all WFP offices for monitoring. WFP country offices will retain the flexibility to complement or fill gaps in the CRF with country-specific operational outcomes and indicators as required.
43. The operational outcome level is the lowest level of the results chain in the CSP and the highest level in the country operational plan that guides the management of WFP’s work in a country. This interconnection between strategic and operational planning fills a longstanding gap in WFP’s ability to make clear links between the Strategic Plan and actions at the country level.

An illustration of application of the results chain in a CSP

WFP Strategic Goal 1: Support countries to achieve zero hunger (SDG 2)

WFP Strategic Objective 1: End hunger

WFP Strategic Result 1 aligned with national SDG targets: Everyone has access to food

Strategic outcome 1: Access to adequate, nutritious food is ensured for conflict-affected refugees, IDPs, schoolchildren and food-insecure households

Operational outcomes

- 1.1 Adequate food consumption reached or maintained over assistance period for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs)
- 1.2 Adequate food consumption reached or maintained over assistance period for schoolchildren and vulnerable households
- 1.3 Food production for targeted food-insecure communities and households increased and diversified

Outputs

- 1.1.1, 1.2.1 Food or cash-based transfers distributed in sufficient quantity and quality and in a timely manner to targeted households
- 1.2.2 Nutritious school meals received by targeted affected schoolchildren in vulnerable areas (contributing to SDG 4)
- 1.2.3 Nutritious take-home rations received by targeted affected households in vulnerable areas (contributing to SDG 4)
- 1.3.1 Natural and physical assets created or rehabilitated
- 1.3.2 Community-based management committees and other targeted households trained on the creation, use and maintenance of assets

Activities: General food distribution (food, cash, vouchers); asset creation/rehabilitation; school feeding with micronutrient powders and take-home rations

WFP Strategic Goal 2: Partner to support implementation of the SDGs (SDG 17)

WFP Strategic Objective 5: Partner for SDG results

WFP Strategic Result 8 aligned with national SDG targets: Global partnerships support country efforts, including through sharing knowledge, expertise and technology, to achieve the SDGs

Strategic outcome 2: Humanitarian partners are able to deliver their services in a safe, timely and cost-efficient manner

Operational outcomes

- 2.1 Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations agencies, donor organizations and diplomatic missions have safe, effective and efficient access to beneficiaries and project implementation sites
- 2.2 Medical supplies, high-energy foods and information and communications technology equipment is transferred to implementation sites
- 2.3 Capacity to evacuate humanitarian staff is available as needed

Outputs

- 2.1.1 Passengers transported to implementation sites
- 2.2.1 Light cargo transported to implementation sites
- 2.3.1 Medical and security evacuations conducted when needed

Activities: Management and implementation of the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service

Outputs and Activities: Linking WFP's Work to other SDG Targets

44. The CSP will describe the planned activities and their strategic and operational outcomes, while country operational plans will set out the lower part of the results chain. WFP adheres to UNDG's definitions of outputs and activities:
 - Outputs are changes in skills, abilities and/or capacities of individuals or institutions, or in availability of new products and services that result from the completion of activities in an intervention under the control of WFP.
 - Activities are actions taken or work performed through which inputs – such as funds, technical assistance and other types of resources – are mobilized to produce specific outputs.
45. As the full definition of outputs specifies that they “are achieved with the resources provided and within the time period specified”, the details of outputs and activities will be determined during annual country operational planning and performance management processes.
46. As stated in the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021), the starting point of WFP's work is its contribution to the achievement of zero hunger as enshrined in SDG 2. The interrelated challenges and solutions involved in ending hunger and poverty mean that WFP will contribute directly and indirectly to many other SDGs through the outputs of its activities. WFP's primary focus on ending hunger thus serves as an entry point and rationale for contributing to SDGs other than SDG 2.
47. For example, by supporting a school meals programme in food-insecure areas of a country, WFP may contribute to national SDG 2 targets related to access to food, improved nutrition or smallholder livelihoods. To reflect this contribution, the strategic outcomes, results and objectives of WFP's results chain will all be oriented towards WFP Strategic Goal 1 – Support countries to achieve zero hunger (SDG 2). However, the activities and outputs associated with this support may also make substantial contributions to the achievement of other national SDG targets, such as those relating to education (SDG 4), gender equality and equity (SDG 5), family income (SDG 1) and health (SDG 3). These contributions to other national SDG targets may be identified and mapped at the country level, in relevant national, United Nations and other planning frameworks.
48. In support of SDG 17, WFP may respond to the request of a national government and partners to provide specific services that support achievement of other SDGs. While these services may match WFP's strengths and capacity, they may not be directly focused on zero hunger efforts. When supporting the response to an emergency, WFP may provide supply chain, logistics and communications support to the broader humanitarian community, such as procurement services and provision and management of communication systems, storage facilities, cargo and personnel transport. The activities and outputs associated with this support, while not necessarily directly supporting zero hunger, can make substantial contributions to the achievement of several national SDG targets. These contributions too can be identified and mapped at the country level, in relevant national, United Nations or other frameworks.

IMPACT OF THE NEW APPROACH

Emerging evidence of benefits

49. As a means of positioning WFP at the country level in relation to national zero hunger efforts, the approach of combining a national zero hunger strategic review with a country strategic planning approach is being tested internally in 27 countries. Draft CSPs¹³ have been reviewed and endorsed through WFP's internal strategic programme review process, and another six are nearing the end of this process.¹⁴ More than 40 large and small WFP country offices in all regions and in diverse contexts – structural poverty, recovery following disruptions have requested support in developing their own CSPs, demonstrating the large demand in WFP for country strategic planning.
50. A 2015 mid-term review of the Strategic Plan (2014–2017)¹⁵ found that an enhanced approach to country strategic planning:
- presents an opportunity for consolidating the transition from food aid to food assistance by – together with the Financial Framework Review – strengthening the linkages between financial and short- and long-term operational goals;
 - offers an important opportunity to increase WFP's role in capacity development, particularly through national zero hunger strategic reviews, which offer an alternative to the “piecemeal” approach much criticized in evaluation reports to date; and
 - enables WFP to develop strategic and programme plans that respond better to country needs through a less fragmented approach.
51. An evaluability assessment of the Strategic Plan (2014–2017) carried out in 2015/16 found that instituting an enhanced approach to country strategic planning together with complementary budget systems is critical in filling gaps in the current planning architecture, shifting the focus from projects to country-level outcomes and enabling assessment of cost efficiency and effectiveness. According to the assessment, these elements have strong potential for reorienting WFP's performance management towards the support of national objectives and priorities, particularly in ending hunger, which will be critical as WFP aligns its Strategic Plan with the vision and goals of the 2030 Agenda.¹⁶

Projected impact

52. WFP's new approach to country strategic planning has the potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of WFP's assistance in the following ways.
53. *Increased effectiveness and efficiency in emergencies:* The approach enables WFP to orient emergency responses more strategically, while maintaining flexibility and agility. By articulating and focusing on strategic outcomes in rapidly evolving and/or volatile emergency situations – rather than on particular activities only – WFP will be in a much better position to respond quickly, flexibly, and efficiently with a range of appropriate

¹³ India, Indonesia and Zimbabwe.

¹⁴ Bangladesh, Colombia, Ecuador, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania.

¹⁵ WFP/EB.1/2016/4-A.

¹⁶ WFP Office of Evaluation. 2016. *Evaluability Assessment: WFP's Strategic Plan 2014–2017 - Advisory Report*. Rome (OEV/2015/022).

activities and modalities. The approach also facilitates transition to recovery and resilience-building programmes as the situation evolves.

54. As a context evolves to recovery, the CSP enables a multi-sector approach to recovery programming, addressing risk and building resilience for food security and nutrition, which requires wide consultation and long-term collaboration. In each context, all aspects of the programme cycle will be examined through a resilience lens to determine how actions can best be integrated with national government strategies and partner-supported programmes.¹⁷ The integration of emergency responses into the country portfolio as soon as conditions permit allows WFP to address both short- and long-term issues, thereby increasing the effectiveness of its interventions, while maintaining flexibility to respond quickly and efficiently to any change in the situation.
55. *Improved alignment with national SDG targets and partners:* CSPs are informed by country-led national zero hunger strategic reviews that reflect national SDG targets and government ownership of the 2030 Agenda. Using the reviews as a tool for fitting the SDGs – particularly SDG 2 – into the local context, national planning institutions are leading the formulation of zero hunger strategic reviews and incorporating priority issues and recommendations identified by the reviews into national policies, strategies, plans and programmes. The reviews are also fostering greater coherence among operations and strategies of the Rome-based agencies and other partners, particularly at the country level, helping WFP to forge deeper partnerships through consensus on common approaches to eliminating hunger.
56. *Greater focus, improved visibility and communication:* The new approach helps WFP to articulate its value proposition and reposition itself at the country level. Through the country strategic planning process, governments and development partners have greater understanding of WFP’s multifaceted mandate and are increasingly involving WFP in policy and programme dialogue across the humanitarian–development spectrum. Its enhanced positioning and visibility is enabling WFP to communicate its value added to all stakeholders.
57. *Integration of operational support, technical assistance and resource mobilization:* National zero hunger strategic reviews systematically integrate strategic, resource and technical assistance planning that is informed by analyses of resourcing and capacity constraints. CSPs ensure targeted institutional capacity enhancement to support governments in designing and managing their nationally owned hunger solutions, and to equip WFP country offices with information, skilled staff and required capacities in line with the WFP People Strategy. Resourcing issues are considered throughout the planning process.
58. *Flexibility to respond to dynamic operational contexts while balancing humanitarian and development work:* CSPs are context-specific and adaptable to changes in the operating environment. They promote links between humanitarian and development assistance and enable effective resilience-building by ensuring that crisis response supports recovery and long-term development, and that development activities are informed by an understanding of risk and protect vulnerable people from crisis. At the same time, the CSP and its budget structure improve transparency and alignment with funding commitments while maintaining programmatic resource-allocation flexibility.

¹⁷ WFP/EB.A/2015/5-C.

59. *Increased strategic guidance and reduced transaction costs:* CSPs will enhance the strategic role and efficiency of the Board, increasing its ability to provide strategic oversight and guidance. This benefit is possible because the plans: i) present a comprehensive picture of WFP's role in a country rather than the fragmented view obtained from individual project documents; and ii) reduce the number of projects to be discussed by the Board, resulting in time and cost savings. CSPs will also increase operational efficiency. By integrating strategic and programme planning, resourcing, technical support and performance management, and replacing individual project documents, CSPs will reduce the process-management burden for WFP at the country, regional and Headquarters levels and increase the efficiency and quality of planning and implementation.
60. *Harmonization with other United Nations agencies and processes:* The Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) reinforces the need for simplified, inclusive and nationally owned programming processes with clear lines of accountability. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) is the strategic, medium-term results framework that guides the collective vision and response to national development priorities of the United Nations system at the country level.
61. The WFP approach to country strategic planning is aligned with and supportive of the nationally owned programming processes referred to in the QCPR; WFP will endeavour to maintain this alignment with subsequent QCPRs. The approach also clarifies WFP's contribution to the collective vision and response outlined in the UNDAF guidelines that are being prepared by the UNDG. Country strategic planning cycles will be aligned with national and – consequently – UNDAF planning cycles. National zero hunger strategic reviews will complement the common country analyses that inform UNDAFs, and CSPs will ensure that WFP outcomes are coherent with both national and UNDAF outcomes and complement the outcomes of other United Nations agencies.
62. *Enhanced performance management, reporting and accountability:* CSPs respond to a QCPR recommendation that programmes deliver demonstrable results at the country level. The plans articulate the cause and effect relationships between WFP's assistance, the resources it employs, and the results it achieves. By clarifying the links between resources and results, CSPs improve reporting on results, and accountability to beneficiaries, host governments, donors and other partners. The new approach will make it easier to evaluate country portfolios, measure progress and extract lessons from country-level actions. Country portfolio evaluations will help WFP identify and consider patterns or specificities of a thematic nature or at a regional level.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Roles of WFP country offices, regional bureaux and Headquarters

63. WFP country offices are responsible for the country strategic planning process. In consultation with Headquarters divisions and the relevant regional bureau, the Country Director leads in-country steps in the process, including the selection of a strategic planning team, the development and implementation of a work plan and the allocation of resources. Country Directors mobilize participation from all technical areas to ensure adequate inputs and collective ownership. They also ensure alignment of country strategic planning cycles with United Nations calendars and national development planning.

64. WFP regional bureaux coordinate the scheduling of CSPs in their region and monitor their timely preparation. They provide strategic and technical guidance and support, and oversee quality standards from a regional perspective, formulating and disseminating best practices and lessons learned across the WFP offices in their regions. Regional bureaux also provide in-country support to strategic planning processes and focus on assisting country offices in the formulation of portfolios informed by national zero hunger strategic reviews.
65. Headquarters provides guidance and support throughout the country strategic planning process. Headquarters divisions set guidelines and quality standards and deliver training, technical support and quality assurance, collecting and disseminating lessons learned. In coordination with regional bureaux, Headquarters divisions may also directly support national and WFP strategic planning processes by deploying global experts and contributing to the articulation of WFP outcomes and activities, and by promoting innovations, partnerships and cross-functional thinking.

Partnerships

66. The country strategic planning approach is aligned with WFP's Corporate Partnership Strategy (2014–2017), which defines partnership as “Collaborative relationships between actors that achieve better outcomes for the people we serve by: combining and leveraging complementary resources of all kinds; working together in a transparent, equitable and mutually beneficial way; and sharing risks, responsibilities and accountability. To achieve objectives that could not be achieved as efficiently, effectively or innovatively alone, and where the value created is greater than the transaction costs involved.”¹⁸
67. The two-pronged approach of a national zero hunger strategic review process followed by formulation of the CSP adheres to the principles of the partnership strategy; promotes these values during engagement with governments, donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, United Nations agencies – including the Rome-based agencies – and other actors at the country level; and enhances opportunities to build and strengthen partnerships through the consultative planning process. The national zero hunger strategic review process fosters coherent support to countries in achieving zero hunger, and generates consensus on coordination of individual partner actions; and the CSPs articulates the short- and long-term contributions of partners to WFP Strategic Results, national SDG targets and WFP strategic outcomes.
68. The country strategic planning approach fosters private-sector investments in ending hunger, including through resource mobilization and the scaling up and harnessing of market forces to sustain socio-economic development. The planning process contributes to the priorities of the WFP Private-Sector Partnerships and Fundraising Strategy (2013–2017)¹⁹ by seeking resource and capacity transfers from the private sector to support WFP activities. In line with this strategy, the country strategic planning process in selected countries includes identification of opportunities to design new funding models that leverage domestic and international, public and private resources to maximize progress towards national humanitarian and development objectives.

¹⁸ WFP/EB.A/2014/5-B.

¹⁹ WFP/EB.A/2013/5-B.

69. In line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and as an integral part of implementing the 2030 Agenda, national zero hunger strategic reviews include assessment of private-sector resource flows to enhance understanding of the food security and nutrition situation in a country and to facilitate use of the transformative potential of the private sector in promoting inclusive and sustainable development.
70. Plans for continued engagement with government donors are embedded in the country strategic planning approach. Against the backdrop of the Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship and the World Humanitarian Summit, WFP will seek resources to operationalize its Strategic Plan (2017–2021) at the country level through CSPs. Increasing the alignment of aid with donor and host country priorities; promoting local resource mobilization through effective engagement with country-led processes; allocating humanitarian funding in proportion to needs; providing humanitarian assistance in ways that support the recovery of long-term development; and seeking flexible and predictable funding are principles that continue to drive resourcing efforts under the new country strategic planning approach.²⁰
71. WFP’s partnerships with national and international NGOs have traditionally involved little substantive engagement. The country strategic planning process fosters strategic interactions and dialogue with NGOs and other civil society actors, whose roles and capacities are considered and utilized to varying degrees, depending on the context. For example, during national zero hunger strategic review processes, WFP may advocate for actions to strengthen the capacities of national civil society actors, and include these actions in its resulting CSP.
72. While WFP’s decentralized approach to engagement with NGOs has brought advantages – in allowing WFP country offices to determine which partnerships to pursue and how these partnerships should be managed – the new country strategic planning process helps to ensure that partnerships with national and international NGOs are prioritized and managed in ways that build on partners’ deep understanding of local contexts to enrich WFP programmes, facilitate increased access and support greater accountability to target populations.

Approval process

73. CSPs will be submitted to the Board once, for approval, at any of the Board’s sessions.

Rapid emergency responses

74. Sudden-onset emergencies require short-term, rapid response, for which WFP is well equipped. Where WFP has an approved CSP in place, the country office will:
- introduce one or more new WFP strategic outcomes or augment one or more existing WFP strategic outcomes to respond to emergency needs;
 - develop these outcomes and articulate WFP’s response, drawing upon existing emergency operational templates; and
 - seek approval of the new or revised strategic outcomes from the Executive Director or the Executive Director and the FAO Director-General, depending on the size of the CSP budget.

²⁰ WFP/EB.1/2010/5-B/Rev.1.

75. Where WFP does not have an approved CSP in place (or an Interim Country Framework during the transitional period²¹), the country office will:
- develop a limited emergency operation (LEO) drawing upon existing emergency operation templates;
 - seek approval of the new or revised strategic outcomes from the Executive Director or the Executive Director and the FAO Director-General depending on the size of the CSP budgets; and
 - embed LEOs into an Interim Country Framework if the operation is to continue beyond six months, and into a CSP if WFP engagement is likely to exceed 18 months.
76. All strategic outcomes that add special operations to complement the emergency response – whether added to an existing CSP or introduced separately when there is no CSP in place – are approved by the Executive Director, regardless of the size of the budget.
77. Rapid response mechanisms financed by the Immediate Response Account will be adapted to the new approach, while preserving the speed and effectiveness of these mechanisms.
78. All rapid emergency responses, whether incorporated into an approved CSP, and Interim Country Framework or standing alone as a LEO will apply the Country Portfolio Budget created as part of the Financial Framework Review.

Regional responses

79. Humanitarian crises affecting food security and nutrition throughout a region warrant a regional WFP response. When feasible, regional responses are implemented through individual CSPs with additional or augmented WFP strategic outcomes as appropriate. The regional bureau coordinates the planning, design and pursuit of these strategic outcomes in the country offices participating in the regional response, and develops and oversees joint resource mobilization strategies. Country-specific CSPs may include a regional strategic chapeau developed by the regional bureau. WFP is currently reviewing how to best present a coherent strategic view of regional responses which adequately reflects the issues and choices involved, and their overall effectiveness and efficiency.

Revision processes

80. CSPs will be revised to respond to significant contextual and operational changes.²² Revisions within the timeframe approved by the Board are delegated to the Executive Director, except when they:
- respond to an emergency situation that requires a rapid response exceeding the delegated authority of the Executive-Director, in which case they are approved by the Executive Director and the Director-General of FAO; or
 - significantly alter the overall strategic focus²³ and/or role of WFP in a country, in which case approval is sought from the Board.

²¹ See paragraph 94.

²² CSPs cover a longer timeframe than EMOPs, PRROs and DEVs, so their budget revisions are likely to involve higher dollar values. Current thresholds for delegation of authority from the Executive Director will therefore need to be re-examined and agreed upon.

²³ A change that significantly alters the overall strategic focus and/or role of WFP in a country is a change that requires the revision of a strategic outcome (unless it is a strategic outcome that focuses on emergencies).

81. If the revision introduces or augments activities defined as special operations and linked to WFP Strategic Result 8, it will be approved by the Executive Director in line with the Appendix to the General Rules on the Delegation of Authority to the Executive Director.

COUNTRY-LEVEL FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Country portfolio budget

82. Budget planning for CSPs follows the structure of the country portfolio budgets developed under the Financial Framework Review to be submitted to the Board in November 2016. Each CSP will include an indicative year-by-year budget for the duration of the plan, divided by WFP strategic outcome. The Board will approve the total budget as part of the CSP.
83. The proposed country portfolio budget will harmonize WFP's strategies and operations at the country level with the Strategic Plan (2017–2021), the country strategic planning approach and the country results framework. The budget structure will: i) maximize WFP's ability to respond efficiently and effectively to prioritized operational needs; ii) provide for disciplined financial management, reporting and analysis; and iii) facilitate fundraising.
84. Requirements for the country portfolio budget framework include an overview of all operations in line with the CSP; clear links from strategy to planning to resourcing to results; a simple and unified structure for implementing operations; clear demonstration of impact, cost-effectiveness and cost-efficiency; and clear lines of accountability.

Operational planning

85. WFP's programme of work will consist of CSPs designed on the basis of needs identified in collaboration with government counterparts and partners through the national zero hunger strategic reviews and assessments. By presenting a country's needs, CSPs appeal for the resources that are required to meet those needs.
86. Country operational plans will support the implementation of CSPs; to be designed on the basis of updated assessments of needs in collaboration with government counterparts and partners, they will be used for advocacy and to appeal for the resources required to implement the CSP.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

87. Each CSP will include a logical results framework. WFP will develop a country-level monitoring and evaluation plan – a component of its performance management system – as part of each CSP. Overall performance of the CSP will be measured against targets set in the national zero hunger strategic review.
88. In line with international norms, the monitoring of SDG indicators and of selected national, sub-national and thematic indicators will be the responsibility of national authorities with the assistance of international organizations.²⁴ International organizations will also work to build the capacity of national monitoring efforts.

²⁴ United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) documents E/CN.32016/2 and E/CN.32016/3. 2016. *Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators* and the *Report of the High-Level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity Building for Post-2015 Monitoring*.

89. WFP's performance management will involve tracking operational outcome indicators, process indicators, output indicators and activity indicators. Outcome and output achievement values will be reported on in annual performance reports at the country and global level. Key performance indicators for organizational effectiveness, efficiency and economies will also be established, capturing value-for-money considerations. These indicators will be monitored through various managerial systems and processes and will also be reported on in country and global level annual performance reports.
90. All outcome, output and process indicators will be disaggregated by gender whenever relevant. The main purpose of monitoring will be to ensure that operational decision-making and revisions to the CSP are evidence-based. Monitoring and evaluations will support accountability, with findings and lessons learned being used to refine WFP's work and ensure that future assistance is informed by reliable evidence.

Risk management

91. All CSPs will include analysis of the risks associated with their implementation and mitigation measures. The analyses will take into account the country context and will assess institutional, programmatic and security risks. The mitigating measures will seek to maintain WFP's strategic direction as set out in the CSP in the event that an anticipated risk transpires.

EVALUATION

92. Under the management of the Office of Evaluation, all CSPs will undergo country portfolio evaluations during the CSP's final year, to assess progress and identify lessons for the design of subsequent country-level support. Lessons applicable beyond the country concerned will be disseminated across WFP.²⁵
93. Decentralized mid-term reviews and decentralized evaluations of CSPs will be managed by WFP at the country level with support of the relevant regional bureau as needed. The findings of these reviews will inform annual resource-based country operational planning exercises to ensure that timely mid-course improvements are made as necessary. As well as tracking progress towards specific planned outcomes, mid-term reviews and country portfolio evaluations will also measure progress towards gender equity and other cross-cutting corporate objectives.

TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

94. All WFP country offices will be expected to start adopting the CSP template for ongoing activities by 31 December 2017. This process will involve combining all existing WFP activities in a country into an Interim Country Framework (ICF) that uses the CSP template and includes strategic outcomes aligned with the WFP Strategic Plan. ICFs will be based on existing in-country evidence (i.e. analyses, multi-sector processes and common country assessments) and consultations when necessary. ICFs will also be aligned with the Country Portfolio Budget structure that forms part of the Financial Framework Review. ICFs will be reviewed and approved internally by WFP management.

²⁵ This would require a review of the coverage norms set in the Evaluation Policy (2016–2021) (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-A/Rev.1).

95. The first batch of CSPs will be submitted for approval at the Board's 2017 First Regular Session; the second batch will be submitted to the 2017 Annual Session. All WFP country offices will be expected to have an approved CSP, informed by a national zero hunger strategic review, by 31 December 2018.
96. The Financial Framework Review will submit a revised budget structure for the Board's approval in November 2016. If approved, the new structure will require system changes that will be implemented subsequently. Interim budgets, performance reporting and monitoring systems will be used to ensure smooth transition to country strategic planning in 2017 and 2018.

ENSURING SUCCESS

97. *Transition management:* A roadmap will be prepared to ensure timely and successful transition from project documents to CSPs, taking into consideration country-specific project cycles and timelines. Progress and developments will be reported on through tailored communications for all stakeholders – Board membership, governments, donors, staff, partners and beneficiaries. Regional bureaux and country offices will have central roles in leading the transition.
98. *WFP-wide synergies:* Collaboration and synergies across WFP will be essential in ensuring that the redesigned system is fully functioning by 31 December 2018.
99. *Guidance and training for implementation:* In line with the People Strategy, guidance and training on the design and implementation of CSPs will be provided to staff. Gaps in human resources will be filled and the transition process will generate lessons for improving implementation.

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

AER	Annual Evaluation Report
CP	country programme
CRF	Corporate Results Framework
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
DEV	development project
EMOP	emergency operation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
ICF	Interim Country Framework
LEO	limited emergency operation
NGO	non-governmental organization
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SO	special operation
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group