

WFP's role in urban areas

Draft policy



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Context

1. Rapid urbanization is one of the most important megatrends that will affect global development efforts.¹ While more than half of the world's population already lives in towns and cities,² urbanization is set to intensify significantly over the course of the next generation. As a result, roughly two thirds of the world's population will be living in towns and cities by 2050.³ The majority of this additional urban growth will take place in middle- and especially low-income countries.⁴ In some respects, this is a positive trend. On its present trajectory, urbanization is fuelling macroeconomic growth and, in doing so, improving the lives of millions of people. The benefits of this can be witnessed in the generally lower *prevalence* of poverty and hunger in urban areas compared to rural areas.
2. And yet, the very rapid and haphazard manner in which towns and cities are expanding, is creating challenges. Urbanization is associated with rising social inequalities and leaving many people living in slums without affordable housing or access to basic services.⁵ Meanwhile, urban sprawl is encroaching on productive land and having negative economic, social and environmental repercussions not only in the immediate periphery of towns and cities but also far back into the rural hinterland. The current dynamic is also leading to the spatial concentration of risk, as population densities rise in poorly planned urban environments that are prone to natural hazards. On top of this, in many parts of the world urban infrastructure and basic social services are under additional strain due to growing numbers of forcibly displaced persons who are seeking refuge in towns and cities.⁶ Taken together, these challenges will lead to higher *absolute numbers* of poor and hungry people in urban areas than in rural areas.
3. These trends clearly indicate that it will be not be possible for countries to meet their targets under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, on achieving zero hunger, unless they also make significant progress on SDG 11, on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.⁷ By the same token, urban areas will only be inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable when the food- and nutrition-related implications of rapid urbanization are fully reflected in policies, strategies and programmes. By design, the 2030 Agenda recognizes the reciprocal relationship between various SDGs, thereby providing an opportunity to ensure that issues are addressed coherently through multisectoral and integrated approaches. Urban considerations have also been mainstreamed into in a number of other important global policy instruments and processes. For example, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction calls for a greater focus on city resilience, while the Paris Agreement on climate change recognizes that well-managed urbanization can facilitate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
4. At the 2016 United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), Heads of State and Government and other government representatives adopted the ground-breaking “New Urban Agenda”, which represents the global consensus on how the 2030 Agenda can be advanced in towns and cities. The New Urban Agenda recognizes that food security and nutrition are critical considerations in a world that is rapidly urbanizing, while highlighting the particular vulnerabilities of especially marginalized groups, including the

¹ Report of the High-level Committee on Programmes of the United Nations system at its thirty-third session, United Nations Headquarters, New York, 16 and 17 March 2017 (CEB/2017/4).

² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision”.

³ *Idem*.

⁴ Urbanization is being driven by a combination of three main factors: 1) Natural population growth; 2) Rural-to-urban migration; and 3) The reclassification of administrative boundaries.

⁵ United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), “World Cities Report 2016”. UN-Habitat estimates that the proportion of the urban population living in slums in the developing world decreased from 46.2 per cent in 1990 to 29.7 per cent in 2014. However, estimates also show that the absolute number of slum dwellers in the developing world is increasing, with more than 880 million people living in slums in 2014, compared to 689 million in 1990.

⁶ The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that more than 60 percent of all refugees currently live in urban environments.

⁷ SDG 11: “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”.

inhabitants of informal settlements (hereinafter referred to as “slums”). It commits countries, inter alia, to ensuring that marginalized groups in urban areas have improved access to basic social services and that slums are upgraded by better integrating them into the social, economic and political dimensions of cities, while making greater efforts to enhance urban-rural linkages, including by strengthening food systems. At the same time, the New Urban Agenda acknowledges the urgent need to reduce disaster risk in urban areas and for support to be extended to towns and cities that are overwhelmed by large numbers of forcibly displaced persons.

Rome-based agency collaboration on urban issues

Before and during the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development in October 2016 (Habitat III), the three Rome-based Agencies (WFP, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) joined forces by organizing high-level events and joint messaging to stress the importance of building sustainable towns and cities that are free of hunger and malnutrition. As a result of these collaborative efforts, urban food security and nutrition concerns are now prominently featured in the New Urban Agenda.

Building on these efforts, the Rome-based agencies, together with UN-Habitat, organized joint events during the ninth World Urban Forum, in February 2018, highlighting the strong relationship between SDG 2, on achieving zero hunger, and SDG 11, on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

5. With the global policy framework in place, states and their development partners now need to shift their attention to implementation on the ground. In environments that are highly resource-constrained or have been affected by major disruptions, capacities may need to be temporarily augmented. Countries will also need long-term support to ensure that their policies, strategies and programmes take into account the importance of food security and nutrition and are well tailored to urban contexts. Although there is no universally applied method for defining “urban”, all towns and cities share certain characteristics.⁸ These include particular physical characteristics such as defined municipal boundaries, the built environment, a relatively high concentration of administrative structures, essential services and infrastructure and social characteristics such as relatively great socio-economic and cultural diversity, weakened social ties and shifting gender norms. The economy also looks very different in urban areas, being almost exclusively cash-based and more sensitive to regional and global economic trends. Moreover, the livelihoods of urban populations tend to be more directly dependant on human and financial capital rather than on natural and physical capital.
6. Within that broader picture, approaches and tools also need to take into account the distinctive features of slums. This includes the insecure residential status of inhabitants, including lack of tenure, which means that they are often subject to eviction or forced relocation. It also includes overcrowding and generally poor access to essential basic services such as health, education and drinking water. The inhabitants of slums tend to be heavily reliant on informal food systems such as street vendors and depend on informal livelihoods such as unskilled daily labour and domestic work. To complicate matters further, the inherent informality of slums means that they are often not recognized in formal governance frameworks, which creates a vacuum that can be filled by informal mechanisms including organized crime. In some countries, this is leading to high levels of urban violence and particular threats to women and girls.

⁸ This should, however, not be seen as an impediment to WFP’s work. Pending the adoption of a universal definition of “urban areas” by United Nations Member States, WFP will continue to align itself with country-level practices for operational purposes.

Reflection on WFP's work in urban settings

7. WFP adopted a policy on urban food insecurity in 2002 that reflects the Organization as it was then. Thus, for example, the policy predates WFP's corporate shift from food aid to food assistance, as embodied in the WFP Strategic Plan (2008–2013), and its subsequent alignment with the global development agenda, as articulated in the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021). Furthermore, the policy does not reflect certain areas of expertise and tools that WFP has acquired in more recent years and that are particularly amenable to urban contexts, such as digital platforms (e.g., SCOPE), mobile phone based capabilities (e.g., mobile vulnerability analysis and mapping) and cash-based transfers.

Rapid scale-up in urban areas following the Haiti earthquake

In January 2010, Haiti was hit by a major earthquake that led to widespread destruction across the country. Humanitarian needs were heavily concentrated in urban and peri-urban areas due to high population densities and poor construction standards.

In response, WFP scaled up its operations in Port-au-Prince and other towns. During the initial months following the earthquake, WFP reached over 4 million people with life-saving general food assistance.

8. Programmatically, WFP has overseen a major expansion of its urban portfolio in recent years driven by a series of dramatic events that led to unprecedented levels of humanitarian need in towns and cities across the world. The first such event was the 2008 global food price crisis, which disproportionately affected the urban poor, millions of whom were suddenly unable to obtain sufficient nutritious food through their usual market channels. This crisis saw an outbreak of violent protests and rioting in many parts of the world, prompting countries to ask WFP to urgently scale up its operations in urban areas for the first time. After this, a series of natural calamities affected urban areas around the world, starting with the Haiti earthquake in 2010 and followed by the Philippines typhoon in 2013 and the Nepal and Ecuador earthquakes in 2015 and 2016, respectively. The Ebola pandemic in West Africa in 2014 and 2015 also had a strong urban dimension. WFP was at the forefront of the international community's response to all of these dramatic events.
9. During the same period, WFP was confronted with increasing numbers of forcibly displaced persons seeking refuge in urban areas. In response to the Syrian refugee crisis, the Organization has for a number of years been implementing large-scale urban programmes in countries such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.⁹ The Organization has had to respond to the needs of internally displaced persons in many countries, including Afghanistan, Nigeria and South Sudan. In addition, WFP has provided assistance to the inhabitants of urban areas that are directly affected by conflict and violence. Through its work in conflict-affected countries such as Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, the Organization has had to find new ways to reach populations trapped in besieged urban centres and to operate across frontlines that cut through cities.

⁹ In February 2017, WFP assisted nearly 1.9 million refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt, of which an estimated 1.7 million were living "off camp" and a majority in urban settings.

WFP's first ever high-altitude airdrops, into densely populated Deir Ezzor

Some 100,000 Syrians were trapped in their hometown without access to food, water or electricity when the city of Deir Ezzor became inaccessible by land due to its besiegement by militant groups. In response to this, WFP ran its first ever high altitude airdrop operation in the history of humanitarian emergencies. The organization was able to deliver life-saving food and other humanitarian assistance to the urban population under challenging circumstances due to a volatile security situation and constantly changing frontlines.

10. To ensure that the design of this new policy is informed by WFP's experience with operating in urban areas, the organization commissioned an independent meta-analysis of all the evaluations of WFP's past operations in urban settings. Key lessons learned included: that local capacities should be reinforced but not replaced; that there was a need to bridge the humanitarian-development divide; that it was necessary to take into account the complexity and interconnectedness of the urban environment, including multi-sectoral needs; that it was necessary to ensure that data were sufficiently disaggregated and targeting approaches adapted to the urban context; and that it was important to understand the importance of informal urban livelihoods.

Purpose

11. This policy, as set out in the present document,¹⁰ will fulfil three purposes. First and foremost, it represents a commitment by WFP to increase its focus on urban issues, building on experience and based on growing needs, to support countries in achieving their vision and plans for 2030, as outlined in the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021). Accordingly, the policy outlines how WFP's engagement in urban areas can contribute to the achievement of SDG 2 (on zero hunger) and SDG 17 (on partnerships for the goals).
12. Second, in view of the indivisible nature of the SDGs the policy shows how progress with SDGs 2 and 17 is a prerequisite for achieving parts of SDG 11, on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and the advancement of the New Urban Agenda.
13. Third, the policy outlines how WFP's work under SDGs 2 and 17 will contribute to the achievement of other parts of the 2030 Agenda, in particular SDGs: 1, on no poverty; 5, on gender equality and empowering women and girls; 12, on sustainable consumption and production; and 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions.

Guiding principles

14. In its engagement in urban areas, WFP will:
 - i) ***Proactively partner with relevant actors*** – Urban areas are normally overseen by city governments.¹¹ Given their central role, WFP will increase its collaboration with city governments while continuing to engage at the national level. At the same time, there

¹⁰ This new policy will supersede the 2002 policy on urban food insecurity (WFP/EB.A/2002/5-B). To ensure that the design of this new policy is informed by WFP's experience with operating in urban areas, the organization commissioned an independent meta-analysis of all the evaluations of WFP's past operations in urban settings. Key lessons learned included that local capacities should be reinforced but not replaced; that there was a need to bridge the humanitarian-development divide; that it was necessary to take into account the complexity and interconnectedness of the urban environment, including multisectoral needs; that it was necessary to ensure that data were sufficiently disaggregated and targeting approaches adapted to the urban context; and that it was important to understand the importance of informal urban livelihoods.

¹¹ These might be referred to in various ways, depending on the country. The most commonly used terms in English are municipalities and councils.

are other key actors, including the private sector and civil society organizations.¹² Within the United Nations system, there are agencies that have a wealth of relevant urban expertise, including UN-Habitat and the other Rome-based agencies. WFP will also proactively reach out to these actors and work to build partnerships that enhance and accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

- ii) ***Reach the furthest behind first*** – Urban areas are increasingly affected by humanitarian crises, and typically have large numbers of vulnerable people as well as socioeconomic dynamics that are very complex and fluid. Recognizing this, WFP will use effective analysis, robust targeting and verification to prioritize the most vulnerable, including by considering factors such as age, gender and diversity,¹³ and will ensure that its approach is gender-transformative.
- iii) ***Strengthen capacities at all levels and implement directly only when necessary*** – Urban areas tend to be easily accessible by governments and have a range of local organizations with a permanent presence on the ground. WFP will work to enhance the resilience of these structures and directly implement only when they are clearly overwhelmed or when there is another obvious gap that needs to be filled.¹⁴
- iv) ***Build social cohesion*** – Urban areas typically have weaker social cohesion than rural areas and are often riven by social cleavages that run along socio-economic, ethnic or religious lines. WFP will strive to ensure that its efforts are conflict-sensitive, do no harm and uphold humanitarian principles while, to the extent possible, supporting transitions to development and peace.¹⁵

Main policy directions

- 15. In accordance with the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021), WFP’s engagement in urban areas will be focused on eight SDG targets, four of which fall under SDG 2 and four under SDG 17. WFP will also draw on the New Urban Agenda to ensure that its engagement in urban areas is properly contextualized and fully coherent with the approaches and activities of other actors that are operating in the same space, while contributing to SDGs on which others are leading.
- 16. WFP’s primary role in urban areas is to respond effectively to emergencies, either by implementing directly or by strengthening country capacities, and to align with and support long-term development efforts. Recognizing that an increasing number of urban crises are triggered by conflicts which may become protracted, WFP’s implementation of a nexus approach will ensure that the organization’s programming across the humanitarian, development and peace spheres are interlinked and mutually reinforcing in order to better prevent and resolve crises in urban settings. Moreover, there are serious, underlying structural vulnerabilities in urban areas that need to be resolved through resilience-building measures and long-term strategic investments that have strong national ownership.

¹² WFP’s engagement with the private sector in urban areas will be undertaken in accordance with private sector partnerships and fundraising strategy for 2018–2022 that is currently being developed and is expected to be presented for approval by the Board at its 2018 annual session.

¹³ Diversity includes factors such as ethnicity, nationality, religion and disability. Guiding principle II will be taken forward in accordance with WFP’s gender (WFP/EB.A/2015/5-A) and humanitarian protection (WFP/EB.1/2012/5-B/Rev.1) policies.

¹⁴ An example of this would be providing assistance to urban refugees as part of the broader international protection framework.

¹⁵ This will be done in accordance with WFP’s policy on its role in peacebuilding in transition settings (WFP/EB.2/2013/4-A/Rev.1).

SDG 2 (Zero hunger)¹⁶

Access to food (SDG target 2.1)¹⁷

17. Access to food in urban areas is derived almost entirely from market purchases, meaning that food security is mostly based on household purchasing power. The urban poor have low and unstable incomes and as a result may struggle to afford a safe, healthy and nutritious diet, a situation that can be aggravated significantly by a major economic shock or other disaster. To address this, WFP will support efforts to raise and stabilize incomes in poorer urban households, thereby improving access to nutritious food. This could involve assisting governments to ensure that the urban poor are incorporated into social safety nets or other social protection instruments, including school meals. Alternatively, it may involve partnering with vocational skills training or micro-entrepreneurship initiatives that seek to empower the heads of poor urban households or improve the employment prospects of marginalized young people. WFP would enhance these initiatives, ensuring that participants are able to receive conditional transfers.
18. To complement this work, WFP will support efforts to increase the affordability and physical availability of food in low-income neighbourhoods, particularly in the aftermath of major economic shocks or other disasters. This might include providing market incentives for food retailers to open up new outlets in informal settlements, either by linking them to voucher-based formal safety nets or by expanding demand for their produce by providing targeted assistance to poor urban households in the form of cash-based transfers.

WFP's support to retailers in the city of Aleppo

As a result of the Syrian crisis, many bakeries in the city of Aleppo have been destroyed, leaving many families without enough food to eat. Given the vital role that bread plays in the local diet, WFP has responded by operating a large-scale bread production project in the city of Aleppo to improve people's access to the baking facilities and fuel needed to bake bread. WFP's partners channel their allocations of wheat flour to contracted private bakeries to bake bread bundles, while WFP fully covers production and transportation costs. The bread production project has enhanced access to bread for thousands of hungry people and at the same time created employment opportunities. As of mid-2017, bread produced under WFP's bread project accounted for 30 percent of the bread produced in the city of Aleppo.

19. In situations where national- and city-level structures are overburdened by major shocks, WFP will fill the gap by directly implementing well-calibrated emergency responses. In natural disaster settings, WFP is likely to focus on responding in a timely manner and exiting as early as possible through carefully planned handovers to national authorities or other partners. In protracted crises, on the other hand, WFP's work is likely to involve multi-layered approaches that combine humanitarian assistance with parallel measures to help vulnerable populations to become more self-reliant in food security and nutrition over time.¹⁸ Where successful, such an approach would see the gradual reduction of humanitarian assistance as self-reliance activities expand, providing a foundation for long-term development.

¹⁶ SDG 2: "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture".

¹⁷ Target 2.1: "By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round".

¹⁸ In refugee settings, the approach will be guided by the *WFP/UNHCR Joint Strategy for Enhancing Self-Reliance in Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Refugee Situations* (<https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000009706/download/>).

End malnutrition (SDG target 2.2)¹⁹

20. Malnutrition tends to be more complex in urban areas and statistics often mask the high prevalence of malnutrition among urban populations. Urbanization often involves shifting dietary habits (the so-called “nutrition transition”), which, combined with rising social inequality, can lead to a triple burden of undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight/obesity with related non-communicable diseases. In emergency situations, it will be necessary for WFP to undertake well-coordinated multisectoral responses that consider the food and non-food drivers of undernutrition, including water, sanitation, hygiene and health. This will involve collaboration with other United Nations agencies that have complementary expertise in this field, including the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).
21. WFP will also need to find innovative ways to reach and assist those most at risk of suffering from two or more forms of malnutrition. This could involve helping governments to ensure that their core urban social safety nets include some form of, or link to, additional support for households with nutritionally vulnerable members such as pregnant and lactating women, infants, young children, adolescent girls and chronically ill persons. This will be critical for ensuring that malnutrition during the first 1,000 days of life does not lead to irreversible damage, thereby undermining human capital. Depending on the context and the design of the safety net instrument in question, this might involve fortifying the food transfer, increasing the amount of a cash-based transfer, supplementing a cash-based transfer with a specialized nutritious food product or linking the safety net to complementary services such as maternal health care and child growth monitoring.
22. It may also involve principled engagement with sectors that rely heavily on the unskilled labour of women of reproductive age, such as the ready-made garment industry. Such work would aim to create work environments that cater for the nutritional vulnerabilities of women and their dependants. Entities in such sectors could, for instance, be supported to put in place corporate social responsibility initiatives that facilitate access to nutrition sensitive safety nets and quality childcare by employed women and their dependants. This work would necessarily be undertaken in partnership with actors who are already familiar with the ready-made garment industry and the “decent work” agenda, most notably the International Labour Organization, while WFP would contribute its technical expertise in food-based approaches to nutrition.

Improving nutrition in Ecuador’s cities through shock-responsive social safety nets

When towns and cities along Ecuador’s northern coastline were hit by an earthquake in 2016, WFP complemented government efforts by providing cash-based transfers through the existing shock-responsive government-led social safety net. As part of its preparedness actions, WFP made efforts to ensure that the social safety net was nutrition sensitive by agreeing with the Government on a nutritionally balanced list of products that would be included in the social safety net in case of an emergency. After the earthquake hit the country, WFP provided nutrition messaging on nutritious foods, dietary diversity, food storage and hygiene.

23. At the same time, WFP will need to ensure that the food assistance it provides does not inadvertently fuel overweight and obesity. This could include improving the prevailing understanding of the urban food environment and shaping consumer behaviour in order to facilitate a shift in consumer preference from popular junk foods to healthy foods. This might involve WFP complementing the food assistance that it provides with tailored and

¹⁹ Target 2.2: “By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons”.

gender-sensitive social behavioural change communication on healthy diets and physical activity. It might also involve policy work with governments and the private sector on advertising, labelling, marketing, fortification and pricing. Any programmes to improve urban nutrition would need to be based on robust analysis of the availability and affordability of a healthy diet as well as barriers to adequate diets among specific target groups.²⁰

Smallholder productivity and incomes (SDG target 2.3)²¹

24. Although smallholder farmers produce most of the food in low-income countries, they are not well integrated into the major value chains that supply urban areas. This limits the overall volume of commodities flowing into urban areas and thus causes price increases in city markets. Recognizing this challenge and the critical importance of rural-urban linkages, WFP will strengthen its collaboration with the other Rome-based agencies in rural areas to ensure that smallholder farmers have the capacities needed for post-harvest handling and processing along with access to basic bulking and storage facilities and transportation. Building on its Purchase for Progress (P4P) and Farm to Market Alliance initiatives, WFP could also develop systems that increase smallholder farmer access to market information, including through mobile phone technology.
25. Closer to the urban periphery there may be opportunities for WFP to help small-scale producers to enter the market for fresh foods such as fruits and vegetables, which benefit from shorter value chains. This could involve collaboration with the private sector to strengthen input supply, to improve cold chains and to ensure that producers have reliable access to appropriate financial services, including credit and insurance.
26. Within the boundaries of towns and cities, WFP may also help countries to address the untapped potential for urban agriculture. The focus of these efforts will be on enhancing dietary diversity through the cultivation of nutrient-dense foods such as fruits and vegetables, the cultivation of which does not require a large amount of physical space. Building on the work of the WFP Innovation Accelerator, for instance, the Organization may scale up innovative models such as hydroponic farming. This work would be undertaken in close cooperation with FAO, which has growing expertise in supporting cities in the development of urban food policies.

Hydroponics for improved nutrition in the slums of Lima

Through the WFP Innovation Accelerator based in Munich, Germany, WFP is equipping vulnerable women who live in the slums of Lima, Peru, with the knowledge and tools to grow fresh vegetables by applying the “hydroponics” technique.

Growing hydroponic food can save resources and is cost-efficient because it requires less water and space than traditional agriculture. The urban communities where hydroponics is being used have improved access to fresh vegetables, which contributes to their nutritional status, while the women who grow the crops benefit from strengthened livelihoods. The initiative is being scaled-up beyond the slums where it began after local governments expressed their interest in seeing it expanded.

²⁰ This will be done in accordance with WFP's nutrition policy (WFP/EB.1/2017/4-C).

²¹ Target 2.3: “By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment”.

Sustainable food systems (SDG target 2.4)²²

27. Food systems are expanding not only rapidly but also somewhat haphazardly as a result of urbanization. If countries fail to manage this expansion effectively, they may find themselves on unsustainable development trajectories with serious, long-term implications for the food security and nutrition status of their growing urban populations. To address this, WFP will contribute to countries' efforts to ensure that their urban food markets expand in an environmentally sustainable manner.²³
28. In part, this might involve work to improve the management of natural resources in major production belts, which WFP may be able to support through food assistance for assets activities. For instance, WFP helps to restore degraded landscapes by promoting reforestation while enabling households to gain access to conditional food or cash-based transfers. Such efforts will have the added benefit of addressing the lack of income earning opportunities in rural areas, which is one of the key adverse drivers of rural-to-urban migration. It could also involve efforts to optimize food supply chains, thereby minimizing their contribution to carbon emissions. This may require strategic investments in the critical "midstream"²⁴ sections of food value chains, which is where WFP's partnerships, programmes and capacities are largely concentrated. These sections tend to be located in small and intermediate towns and cities, where the bulk of additional urban population growth is likely to occur.²⁵ WFP may support this type of work through close collaboration with the private sector on scaling up critical infrastructure such as milling, processing and storage facilities.

Linking smallholders to flour millers in Afghan cities

WFP, in collaboration with the Government of Afghanistan, works with large-scale flour mills to increase the production of fortified flour made from wheat grown by Afghan farmers. The mills are strategically located in cities across the country, and the millers receive food quality and safety training as well as equipment and materials. In 2015, WFP began purchasing fortified wheat flour for use in general food distribution. Millers producing flour for WFP are required to obtain at least 40 percent of their wheat locally, strengthening the livelihoods of smallholder wheat farmers.

29. In situations where food systems have been disrupted by major shocks, WFP will leverage its food assistance operation in order to address any breakages in the systems.²⁶ For instance, in situations where a natural disaster has interrupted the flow of food to local markets, WFP will respond initially using in-kind assistance while switching to a market based approach at the earliest available opportunity in order to provide incentives for traders to resume their normal trade practices.

²² Target 2.4: "By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality".

²³ This will be done in accordance with WFP's policy on climate change (WFP/EB.1/2017/4-A/Rev.1) and WFP's environment policy (WFP/EB.1/2017/4-B/Rev.1).

²⁴ The "midstream" is the section of a food system where food is transported, stored, handled, processed, wholesaled and retailed.

²⁵ See supra footnote 2.

²⁶ WFP's work in this area will be undertaken in accordance with its strategy for leveraging food assistance to improve food system performance. See <http://www.wfp.org/content/systemic-food-assistance-wfp%E2%80%99s-strategy-leveraging-food-assistance-improve-food-system-perfo>.

30. Meanwhile, countries will also need to tackle the increasingly unsustainable consumption practices of their growing urban populations, including with regard to the large volume of food produced in rural areas that routinely goes to waste. WFP may assist countries in finding innovative ways to repurpose food that is no longer commercially viable yet remains fit for human consumption. Sustainable diets could be promoted through social behaviour change communication linked to environmental sustainability.

Transforming “ugly” foods into nutritious school meals in Nairobi

In the packing houses around Nairobi airport, large quantities of fruit and vegetables that have been produced for the European market are rejected for purely cosmetic reasons. Working with the Government and other partners, WFP is exploring how this nutritious food can be systematically repurposed so that it does not end up going to waste.

This included an initial pilot in 2017, whereby WFP developed an off-site catering model and was able to introduce these nutritious food products into the daily school meals of 2,200 children in the poorest slums in Nairobi.

SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals)²⁷

Capacity strengthening (SDG target 17.9)²⁸

31. The capacities needed to address hunger and malnutrition in urban areas need to be significantly enhanced in many countries. Policymakers do not always have the information that they need to make informed choices. They also may not know how to operationalize particular strategies in urban contexts, while key actors at the local level and affected populations may not be sufficiently empowered. WFP will help governments at the national and city levels to build systems that will enable them to better understand, and continuously monitor, the food security and nutrition situation in urban areas and produce data that present a disaggregated picture, to the extent possible, by gender, age (women, men, girls and boys) and diversity.²⁹ This will capitalize on WFP’s expertise in the area of vulnerability analysis and mapping³⁰ and the “Fill the Nutrient Gap tool”.³¹ It could involve collaboration with higher education institutions and other research institutes at the country level and draw on new technologies that are more responsive to the dynamic urban environment such as “big data” and satellite imagery.
32. WFP will also support national and city governments in their efforts to strengthen social protection delivery systems by strengthening core implementation processes such as identity registration, payment, information management and monitoring and evaluation. WFP will seize opportunities to work with disaster management actors at the national and city levels to enhance disaster risk reduction and preparedness for shocks such as major earthquakes.³² This might be complemented with efforts to strengthen the shock responsiveness of national and municipal programmes, including by linking them to catastrophe risk financing and insurance schemes that provide for rapid payouts in case of shocks.

²⁷ SDG 17: “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.”

²⁸ Target 17.9: “Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the sustainable development goals, including through North–South, South–South and triangular cooperation”.

²⁹ See supra footnote 12.

³⁰ WFP is already making progress in adapting its assessment methodologies and tools to the urban context, as part of the “Adapting to an Urban World” initiative.

³¹ “Fill the Nutrient Gap” aims to strengthen analysis, build consensus and improve decision making for improving nutrient intake among populations.

³² This will be done in accordance with WFP’s emergency preparedness policy (WFP/EB.2/2017/4-B/Rev.1*).

33. In keeping with the whole-of-society approach, WFP will also extend its capacity strengthening efforts to civil society. This might include targeted efforts to augment the capacity of key actors at the local level, such as grassroots non-governmental organizations and slum dwellers' associations. For instance, WFP will proactively develop standby arrangements with local actors in view of the critical role they play as first responders to urban crises. Once these standby partner arrangements are in place, WFP may carry out joint contingency planning exercises as part of its broader emergency preparedness work.

Adapting tools to measure vulnerability in Metropolitan Manila

Identifying the most vulnerable in urban areas can be challenging due to a lack of reliable data. To complicate matters further, some of the traditional tools that WFP uses to measure food insecurity perform differently in the urban context and therefore need to be adapted.

WFP made significant progress in this regard, for example by conducting an urban vulnerability mapping study in Metropolitan Manila, a large urban area characterized by densely populated informal settlements that are highly prone to natural disasters. WFP made use of innovative tools such as high-resolution satellite imagery and Facebook gridded population data and worked closely with local grassroots organizations to get the vulnerability data into the hands of local responders.

34. Where gaps exist, WFP may also contribute to participatory slum upgrading initiatives. This work would be undertaken in partnership with entities that have strong relationships with urban actors at the local level, including UN-Habitat. WFP's role would be to contribute its expertise in food security and nutrition as part of broader, multisectoral approaches. In parallel, it will work to strengthen the role of critical actors in the private sector such as bakeries and supermarkets.

Policy coherence (SDG target 17.14)³³

35. Historically, countries have regarded food insecurity as a rural issue primarily of concern to the agricultural sector. Meanwhile, urbanists have traditionally focused on matters pertaining to shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene. As a result, the challenge of hunger and malnutrition in urban areas has tended to fall into the cracks between different policy instruments and institutional mandates. WFP will support countries in striving to bridge such cracks by harnessing its convening power to create and support forums and processes that include all stakeholders. This could mean ensuring that urban stakeholders are invited to participate in key WFP-led analytical work related to food security and nutrition, such as comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis and "Fill the Nutrient Gap".
36. By the same token, it will mean ensuring that food security and nutrition agencies and experts engage more proactively in policy dialogue on urban issues, including by contributing to the formulation of national urban policies in close coordination with UN-Habitat and the other Rome-based agencies and to system-wide discussions about how to best serve humanitarian needs in urban areas. Where gaps exist, WFP may offer additional support to municipalities in order to strengthen the overall coherence of their various instruments and interventions on the ground. This may include providing support for situational analysis and the development of comprehensive, multisectoral approaches, for example through the deployment of WFP's adapted seasonal livelihood programming tool.

³³ Target 17.14: "Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development".

Diversified resourcing (SDG target 17.3)³⁴

37. Much greater financial investment will be required if countries are to succeed in their efforts to address food insecurity and malnutrition in urban areas. In part, this can be achieved by supporting countries in their efforts to access new financial support through public financial instruments. WFP will help countries to secure the necessary financial backing for their policies, strategies and programmes, including from international financial institutions and sources such as the Green Climate Fund, which can support the implementation of national and city level climate change adaptation measures.³⁵
38. Given the limited resources that are available in the form of official development assistance, however, such efforts will also need to leverage the comparatively much greater resources that are at the disposal of the private sector. To that end, WFP will also collaborate with private sector entities to seek better alignment between public policy goals and private business interests. This might involve collaboration with the insurance sector to develop instruments that build resilience to natural disasters in urban areas. Such work would build on the relationships that WFP has successfully developed with the insurance industry under micro and macro insurance schemes within the framework of the R4 Rural Resilience Initiative and African Risk Capacity Replica insurance coverage. It might also involve harnessing WFP's extensive relationships with financial service providers in order to provide vulnerable urban populations with training in basic financial literacy or working with the information technology sector to develop training packages in digital skills tailored to urban refugees.

Enhancing global partnership (SDG target 17.16)³⁶

39. In working with countries to make progress on their 2030 Agenda commitments in urban areas WFP will have to work through enhanced partnerships. This can include working to promote the sharing of knowledge and best practices between national and city governments, including through city-to-city, South-South and triangular cooperation. In addition, WFP will collaborate with other actors in the humanitarian system with a view to improving the quality of emergency responses in urban settings, including by intensifying its engagement in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas, the global Food Security Cluster Food Security and Livelihoods in Urban Settings Working Group and the Global Alliance for Urban Crises.
40. Building on its core competencies in vulnerability analysis and mapping, digital identity management and CBTs, WFP also has a major contribution to make to multisectoral programming and may also use its capabilities to develop common delivery platforms, including for multi-purpose cash assistance.

ESSN: the largest multipurpose cash transfer scheme in United Nations history

To support refugees in Turkey, WFP runs a groundbreaking monthly multipurpose cash assistance programme based on a debit card called the “Emergency Social Safety Net” (ESSN). The ESSN meets the essential food and non-food needs of more than one million vulnerable refugees, most of whom reside in towns and cities across the country. Funded by the European Union and its member states, and implemented by WFP, the Turkish Red Crescent and the Turkish Government, the ESSN is a powerful example of partnerships that enable multisectoral emergency programming in urban areas.

³⁴ Target 17.3: “Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources”.

³⁵ WFP is a Green Climate Fund accredited entity.

³⁶ Target 17.16: “Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries”.

Means of implementation

41. Although this policy addresses fundamental questions concerning WFP's role in urban areas, it does not herald any shift in WFP's core mandate nor the launch of a significant new body of work. Instead, WFP regards urbanization as an issue that needs to be fully mainstreamed into all of its existing workstreams. Accordingly, WFP plans to implement the policy in a manner that is fully consistent with the Integrated Road Map and through its existing structures and systems. One implication of this is that it will be possible to implement the policy with only marginal additional investments.
42. The main vehicles that will enable WFP to implement the policy will be:
 - **Policy dialogue** – WFP will contribute to national zero hunger strategic reviews and the formulation of national urban policies as well as other key processes, with a view to ensuring that they consider the growing food security and nutrition challenges in urban areas and how to address them. Where knowledge gaps exist, WFP will help to strengthen the evidence base through analytical work.
 - **Country strategic plans** – WFP will take a strategic approach to urban issues at the country level and position itself in the most appropriate manner, whether by focusing on strengthening the capacity of potential first responders or by promoting the sharing of experiences between national and city governments from different parts of the world.
 - **Crisis responses** – WFP will make investments to ensure that it is better equipped to respond to major crises in urban areas, whenever national capacities are overwhelmed and there is another clear gap that needs to be filled. This will involve measures to adapt some of WFP's traditional approaches and tools for emergency response that were conceived with rural contexts in mind, as well as staff training, to the urban context.

Partnerships

43. In order to ensure the successful implementation of this policy, WFP will make concerted efforts to forge the right types of partnerships. As a priority, WFP will map out partnership opportunities with UN-Habitat by exploring how the work of each agency complements that of the other and how the two agencies might be able to achieve collective outcomes at the national and city levels in various countries and contexts.
44. In addition, WFP will capitalize on its existing partnerships with the other Rome-based agencies. The enhancement of collaboration, coordination and synergies between FAO and WFP on urban issues will be undertaken in accordance with the 2017 memorandum of understanding between the two organizations. Tripartite collaboration will be guided by the document "Collaboration among the United Nations Rome-based Agencies: Delivery on the 2030 Agenda".³⁷
45. WFP will also strengthen its collaboration with other key actors in the United Nations system, including the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the International Organization for Migration, among others. The organization will also build on its engagement with the Scaling Up Nutrition Business Network.
46. Moreover, WFP will intensify its active engagement in relevant forums under the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the global Food Security Cluster, as well as the Global Alliance for Urban Crises. The same team will be responsible for providing technical support on urban programme design to field-based colleagues when requested.

³⁷ WFP/EB.2/2016/4-D/Rev.1.

Contribution to other parts of the 2030 Agenda

Contribution to SDG 11

1. SDG 11, on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, ensures that the 2030 Agenda includes a focus on urban issues and areas. Inclusivity has been singled out as a key priority, given that the absolute number of impoverished people living in slums with no tenure or access to essential basic services is increasing. Resilience is also critical, given that many slums are located in environments that are highly prone to natural hazards such as flooding and landslides. Sustainability is a major concern, given the phenomenon of urban sprawl and its negative environmental repercussions along the entire urban-rural continuum.
2. Certain targets under SDG 11 cannot be achieved unless progress is made in achieving SDGs 2 and 17. These targets are outlined below, along with an explanation of how WFP's work in urban areas may contribute to achieving them.

SDG target 11.1¹

3. Ensuring access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services will, in most contexts, require the urban poor to have some level of access to appropriate basic social safety nets. WFP will support this through its activities under SDG target 2.1.

SDG target 11.5²

4. Reducing human deprivation and economic loss as a result of natural disasters will, in some situations, require effective responses to emergencies along with long-term efforts to reduce disaster risks. WFP will contribute to this through its activities under SDG targets 2.1, 17.3, 17.9 and 17.16.

SDG target 11.6³

5. The overall environmental impact of cities will only be significantly reduced if progress can be achieved in reducing the massive proportion of food that goes to waste. WFP's work under SDG 2.4 will contribute to this end.

SDG target 11.a⁴

6. Positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas can only be achieved by developing more sustainable food systems that stretch from farm gate to fork. WFP's work under SDG target 2.4 will contribute to this.

¹ Target 11.1: "By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums".

² Target 11.5: "By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations".

³ Target 11.6: "By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management".

⁴ Target 11.a: "Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning".

SDG target 11.b⁵

7. Climate change adaptation and disaster risk management in the context of rapid urbanization will require efforts to reduce the environmental footprint of cities and strengthen disaster management planning at all levels. WFP will contribute to this through its work under SDG targets 2.4, 17.3 and 17.9.

Additional contributions to other SDGs

8. Although WFP's work in urban areas will be focused on SDGs 2 and 17, while contributing to SDG 11, it will inevitably have certain positive spillover effects on other parts of the 2030 Agenda, including SDGs 1, 5, 12 and 16.

SDG 1 (No poverty)⁶

9. WFP will contribute to SDG targets 1.2, 1.4 and 1.b through the support it provides to governments to increase the coverage of safety nets and other social protection instruments in urban areas, which will help to address income poverty while increasing access to basic social services. Moreover, WFP will help to advance SDG target 1.5 through the work it undertakes to promote climate change adaptation measures and access to insurance against climatic shocks.

SDG 5 (Gender equality and empowering women and girls)⁷

10. WFP will contribute to SDG target 5.1 by integrating gender throughout the design and implementation of its programmes in urban areas. In some contexts, WFP may also contribute to SDG target 5.3 by supporting governments in the provision of school meals to disadvantaged school-aged girls and boys. In addition, WFP may help advance SDG target 5.a through its work to promote financial inclusion among marginalized urban women.

SDG 12 (Sustainable consumption and production)⁸

11. WFP will contribute to SDG target 12.2 through the work it carries out in rural areas on the management of natural resources, which is critical for ensuring that expanding urban food markets are not exacerbating environmental stresses. In addition, WFP will help to advance SDG target 12.3 through its work to minimize food waste in towns and cities.

SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions)⁹

12. WFP will contribute to SDG target 16.1 by supporting countries in their efforts to deal more effectively with food price shocks, which is necessary in order to preserve social stability in urban areas. WFP may also help to advance SDG target 16.9 by helping governments to expand and improve their identity management systems for vulnerable urban populations, including displaced persons.

⁵ Target 11.b: "By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels".

⁶ SDG 1: "End poverty in all its forms everywhere".

⁷ SDG 5: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls".

⁸ SDG 12: "Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns".

⁹ SDG 16: "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels".

Acronyms used in the document

SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund