

WFP and the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aspire to end need. SDG 16 seeks to achieve the peace, justice and strong national institutions necessary to enable achievement of the other SDGs, including ending hunger. World Food Programme (WFP) has prioritized SDG 2 to End Hunger and SDG 17 on Partnerships and Implementation. However, given the rapid increase in numbers of conflict-related crises, notably protracted crises around the world today, WFP is committed to contributing to SDG 16 as it is in large part this SDG which speaks most urgently and explicitly to the humanitarian community.

The Secretary-General's Vision for Prevention¹ laid out four pathways to preventing human suffering and acting to avoid crises and build resilient societies: preventive diplomacy; the 2030 Agenda and Sustaining Peace; strengthening partnerships; and delivering United Nations reform to overcome fragmentation in pursuit of our common goals. These have been embraced by WFP as part of a corporate approach to the Nexus to deliver better in line with challenges the world faces today.

WFP's historical focus – and the bulk of resource allocations accordingly – on humanitarian action has seen us mitigate hunger and food insecurity but, by definition, has not truly tackled their root causes nor provided a clear pathway to increased food security in the future. Based on a growing body of work in a number of countries in crisis, WFP is making all possible efforts to ensure that our humanitarian action contributes to longer term interventions that will support countries and communities transition out of crisis. Contexts where this approach² has yielded clear dividends in reducing humanitarian requirements have prompted WFP to deepen engagement in the development sphere, notably around social protection, local and national capacity strengthening, and resilience building in fragile communities and contexts.

WFP's Country Strategic Plans, based on Strategic Reviews are a strong platform for managing the internal, systemic links between our humanitarian and development objectives and action. The multi-year planning and implementation frameworks give WFP greater predictability and the ability to design assistance that can deliver medium to longer term outcomes in addition to immediately saving lives. They also provide us the framework to align ourselves internally and will, ideally, over time contribute to defining when and with whom we enter into particular collaborative partnerships and Collective Outcomes under the New Way of Working. WFP is strengthening this area of innovation by further investing in identification of contexts, tools, mechanisms, partnerships, and programmes in which we can capitalize on the scale and efficiencies of our core humanitarian and development portfolios.

Joint assessments, joint planning, joint programming, and better data sharing initiatives are underway in a range of crisis contexts. WFP is identifying what measurement and monitoring systems, and what associated data systems, will best allow the organization to define and capture the contributions of WFP's humanitarian and development programmes to peace. As the evidence base evolves this will enable more targeted, conflict sensitive interventions that make a positive contribution to stabilization, resilience, and peace while achieving core humanitarian and development outcomes in support of national SDG priorities.

WFP development programmes such as social protection and national capacity strengthening make a valuable contribution to SDG 16, yet engaging more strongly across the development and peace elements of the nexus does mean we need to address some challenges. Large questions emerge, notably how our humanitarian action can remain principled in contexts where the state is party to the crisis yet pathways out of crisis are contingent on engagement with and support to that same state. If we choose to prioritize a principled stance

¹ <https://www.antonioguterres.gov.pt/vision-statement/>

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08a0ded915d3cfd000572/61114_Niger_Report.pdf

in light of the centrality of protection to our humanitarian offer then we need to ask ourselves how we contribute to addressing root causes and building national resilience in a meaningful way.

While the option remains to keep our primary focus on WFP's core humanitarian business, it is worth highlighting that donors are increasingly vocal about the need to grow investment in building the national systems needed to end protracted crises, rather than simply paying rising, year on year humanitarian bills. Member states and multilaterals are promoting pre-emptive investment in tackling fragility before crises take hold, on a 'no regrets' basis³. Global attention has also turned to how funding and financing mechanisms may need to be adjusted to build the local and national systems needed to end crises, rather than simply alleviating short term needs with humanitarian support. The entire UN reform agenda is directed at strengthening national capacities and engagement as the only way in which fragility will be addressed, national resilience built, and the impacts of humanitarian crises rendered manageable.

Considerations Moving Forward

WFP, dual mandated and with a particular, albeit limited, role to play in the peace sphere⁴, clearly has the capability and reach to operate across the three points of the nexus. We have made commitments to reform at the systemic level as well as the sectoral level accordingly. We understand that our engagement on the Nexus cannot simply be a rebranding exercise but must mean real change in how, where, when and with whom we work.

As WFP works to establish the parameters and scope of its engagement across the Nexus, notably in the new terrain of increasing numbers of violent and extended humanitarian crises, the following priority considerations need exploration, unpacking, and investment:

1. What steps or systems would ensure that we design and deliver programme portfolios that will best reduce need and the chance of violence erupting, escalating, or entrenching? Will the New Way of Working and Collective Outcomes set in line with national SDG priorities be sufficient, or is more work in the prevention and risk reduction space prudent?
2. What measurement and monitoring systems are needed⁵ to define and capture value added and efficiencies achieved by New Ways of Working, and internal alignment and layering of contributions to peace provided by WFP humanitarian and development programmes?
3. What are the next steps to strengthen the contribution of operations and programmes to development and peace outcomes in support of national SDG priorities? To what extent should WFP examine:
 - a. Can scaled up development and peace programming in fragile contexts where humanitarian budgets are severely underfunded provide meaningful value and resilience opportunities?
 - b. In contexts where donors have low risk appetite yet needs are high, do development and peace interventions offer a less contentious avenue to reach those in need? If so, what protection and humanitarian principles thinking needs to be done?

³ See UK new Humanitarian Aid Policy (November 2017) and DFID's Protracted Crisis Hub discussion paper (Feb. 2018)

⁴ WFP's peacebuilding policy (2013) sets clear parameters for WFP's engagement in peacebuilding activities.

⁵ The WFP-SIPRI Partnership agreement signed in February 2018 is intended to contribute to the development of a range of evidence-based WFP tools, mechanisms, and programme designs that improve our Nexus operationalization and results.