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South-South and Triangular Cooperation Policy Update

Status update for the Executive Board

CONTEXT

As part of the South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) Policy Update inception phase, WFP wishes to provide the Executive Board with a quick overview on the main actions taken so far and share plans for the next steps, thus informing the Executive Board ahead of the informal consultation scheduled for early 2023.

Following the first recommendation of the 2021 evaluation (WFP/EB.2/2021/6-A) of the corporate policy on SSTC, WFP is working to “*revise the SSTC policy based on an agreed upon and widely shared corporate vision.*” This process is supported by an internal cross-functional body (the Global SSTC Task Force, sub-recommendation 1.1), geared towards the compliance with the standards for policy quality in WFP (1.2) and expected to be further operationalized in a costed implementation plan (1.3). In line with the senior management response to the evaluation (WFP/EB.2/2021/6-A/Add.1), WFP has engaged a specialized team leading the policy update process which includes in-depth consultations with all relevant stakeholders (thus complying with action 3 of the management response) and currently preparing the contents to be included in the updated SSTC policy (action 4 of the management response).

SCOPE

In line with the evaluation recommendations, the scope of this policy update is to provide greater conceptual clarity on the vision, ambition and comparative advantage for WFP engaging in and supporting SSTC, while keeping the normative principles unchanged. Further, it will articulate specific objectives and targets for mainstreaming SSTC into WFP’s work in country capacity strengthening, partnerships and other policy and programme and cross-cutting areas, in line with the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and other

corporate policies. Moreover, the updated policy is expected to be aligned with the recently launched UN system-wide SSTC Strategy and its inter-agency outcomes. It will be based on the existing theory of change (see Annex 2), which was reviewed and endorsed in the context of the 2021 policy evaluation. It outlines the results that WFP-brokered SSTC is expected to contribute to at the global, regional and country levels, and also specifies the assumptions and enablers to ensure corporate readiness to deliver on these objectives in an effective and sustainable manner.

SSTC IN WFP SO FAR

Since 2015, WFP has increasingly stepped up its SSTC portfolio and is now considered one among the United Nations entities that have made the most and fastest progress towards mainstreaming SSTC. In 2021, WFP mobilized \$2.7 million for 40+ SSTC field projects, reaching 1.11 million people. In 2021, 91% of country offices reflected SSTC as an area for host government engagement in their Country Strategic Plans, and over half reported SSTC in the Annual Country Reports.

The WFP Centres of Excellence are at the heart of WFP’s efforts to support host governments through SSTC for SDG 2. As of 2011, WFP engagement in SSTC was spearheaded by the WFP Centre of Excellence in Brazil, initially focusing on homegrown school meals. An expansion of WFP engagement in SSTC was further signalled by the establishment of other Centres of Excellence in China (2016) and Côte d’Ivoire (2019) and by the Centre of Excellence in Brazil broadening its SSTC work beyond school feeding to encompass other dimensions of social protection, nutrition and smallholder farmer support.

The SSTC agenda at WFP is framed by the Global SSTC Task Force launched in 2020 which brings together leaders and

November 2022

staff from all corporate level, enabling efficient in-house coordination, shared decision-making, learning and hands-on proposals on how to improve WFP SSTC engagement.

WFP continues the strong collaboration in SSTC also with the Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) seeking complementarities and synergies at global, regional and country levels. In 2021/2022, WFP consolidated and expanded its engagement with FAO and IFAD, in line with the Joint Roadmap on SSTC adopted in 2018. Key areas of collaboration in 2021/2022 included Regular RBA's SSTC Directors Meetings, the field-level pilots in SSTC such as in Ecuador, Peru, Kenya and Republic of the Congo and the joint RBA celebration of the UN Day for SSTC in September 2021. Through a continuous dialogue, the RBAs launched a joint field collaboration on SSTC in homegrown school feeding contributing to the Global School Meals Coalition, during the 11th GSSD Expo in Thailand in September 2022.

PROCESS OF THE POLICY UPDATE

The SSTC Policy update process started in April 2022, through the involvement of a dedicated team of consultants, and the document will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval in June 2023.

So far, the team leading the policy update process has focused on the following actions:

- Identification and validation of key areas of interest, under the leadership of the Global SSTC Task Force and building on existing evidence and lessons learned so far;
- Preparation and the conducting of a corporate-wide consultation process based on a dedicated consultation approach and respective tools, involving internal and external stakeholders;
- Initial work on basic structure for the policy update document in line with WFP quality standards and emerging good practice reflected in recently endorsed policies and policy updates;

Moving forward, the main intermediate milestones include the submission of a zero draft of the SSTC policy update in January 2023 and informal consultations with the Executive Board on this draft during the first quarter of 2023.

CONTENT OF THE POLICY UPDATE

The emerging content of the policy update relates to both strategic and operational aspects, most of which have been extensively mapped and assessed in the 2021 policy evaluation (WFP/EB.2/2021/6-A). Core areas of interest for the policy update have been validated by the Global SSTC Task Force along the following questions:

STRATEGIC AREAS OF INTEREST

- What is WFP's value proposition for SSTC, where does WFP make a difference and how can it be recognised as a trusted and reliable partner in SSTC? What is WFP's comparative advantage as part of the UN system-wide commitment to SSTC?
- What is the potential of SSTC as a modality for WFP to achieve its mandate and objectives? How can SSTC contribute more effectively to corporate priorities?

OPERATIONAL AREAS OF INTEREST

- What is needed to mainstream SSTC across WFP's areas of thematic strength and expertise, for instance in terms of guidance, helpdesk support, financing and results?
- How can WFP strengthen the results focus of its support to SSTC? What is needed to ensure monitoring, evaluation and learning around SSTC?
- Which organizational elements need to be in place to deepen analysis and evidence of WFP's support to SSTC?
- How can policy coherence and consistency be strengthened both internally and externally, specifically as part of broader UN processes and in efficient collaboration with other Rome-based agencies?



These questions were set at the core of the broad consultation process being conducted, which at this stage have involved more than 300 people across Country Offices, Regional Bureaux, Centres of Excellence, HQ Divisions, and partner UN entities. The main messages and recommendations from these consultations will be reflected and addressed in the Policy Update document, alongside the Policy Evaluation recommendations.

An emerging consensus from the consultations seems to indicate that there is strong appetite to expand WFP's support to SSTC among countries, based on its comparative advantages, but that the potential of SSTC is yet to be fully unleashed as a driving force for capacity strengthening and partnerships throughout WFP's thematic agendas. Country offices are at the forefront of engaging with national and local stakeholders around South-South exchanges, but often lack sufficient resources and require quicker access to high-quality solutions and innovations. In terms of financing, corporate stakeholder stress "pilot fatigue" and call for better-quality resources which enable particularly country offices to engage with governments with a longer-term perspective.

Along these lines, the policy update provides an opportunity to both consolidate and innovate WFP's strategic direction for SSTC engagement by exploring the options for:

- WFP value proposition as a fast-paced, impact-focused driver of SSTC based on relatively well-documented comparative advantages in areas such as long-term trust relationships with governments and other local

stakeholders, specialized knowledge and capacity to vet solutions, operational experience in challenging settings and working hand-in-hand with the most vulnerable, and last, but not least the enthusiasm on behalf of a substantial and quickly more knowledgeable number of staff, particularly at the country level.

- Strategic value of SSTC for WFP to achieve its mandate and strategic goals, particularly by brokering top-notch solutions from the Global South complementing more conventional modalities; increasing WFP's relevance as a close government partner engaged in critical national policy and institutional processes; contributing with a high return of investment to the growing portfolio of country capacity strengthening (particularly by using cost-effective and adaptable solutions), including through changing lives to saving lives in contexts of emergencies and fragility, as well as mobilization of untapped financial resources.

Over the coming weeks, these elements will help structure the core sections of the SSTC Policy Update, for which a basic structure was already designed in line with emerging good practice for policy formulation at WFP, as outlined in Annex 1.

Globally, there is increasing demand for and appreciation of SSTC from developing country governments, therefore it is timely for WFP to enhance its role as a SSTC facilitator and enabler in the context of SDG 2, while also integrating SSTC as a key modality for delivering on its mandate and corporate goals.



ANNEX 1: BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE UPDATED SSTC POLICY



ANNEX 2: THEORY OF CHANGE AS A KEY INGREDIENT FOR THE UPDATED SSTC POLICY

The current process of updating corporate policy for SSTC is informed by different contents of the 2021 evaluation of WFP's policy on SSTC (WFP/EB.2/2021/6-A). One of the ingredients is the Theory of Change (ToC) revised and included in the policy evaluation, and further endorsed by WFP's Global SSTC Task Force. The ToC (see figure 1) clarifies the overall logic of WFP's support to SSTC from activities and outputs to outcomes and objectives.

One feature of this ToC is its focus on country capacity development, which is fully aligned with the premises of WFP's Strategic Plan 2022-2025, specifically its Strategic Outcome 4 ("National programmes & systems are strengthened"). Importantly, this ToC reflects the unique nature of SSTC as a modality inherently led by developing countries sharing solutions and learning from each other, with WFP brokering and facilitating such exchanges and follow up, rather than directing or implementing these solutions. Thus, WFP primarily takes the role of a trusted and knowledgeable enabler for developing countries' institutions and/or individuals to share knowledge, learn from each other and support each other with technical assistance.

As such, the updated policy is already framed by a consolidated approach to WFP's role, particularly its readiness to support SSTC effectively. The ToC establishes a series of assumptions which the updated policy – in line with the recommendations of the policy evaluation (WFP/EB.2/2021/6-A) – is expected to address (figure 2). This refers to WFP being able to contribute "adequate resources, guidance and leadership support to effectively support country-led SSTC" at "headquarters, regional bureaux, country offices, centres of excellence", in order or "effectively facilitate and/or enable SSTC through various modalities".

Drawing on these premises, a series of enablers from the Strategic Plan can be activated for WFP to meet the ToC assumptions and increase its operational readiness (figure 3).

Over the next weeks, these elements could guide the preparations of drafting the policy, by providing a structure for core areas of the updated policy in line with policy evaluation's recommendations.

Figure 1: Theory of change for WFP-facilitated South-South and triangular cooperation work, according to 2021 policy evaluation

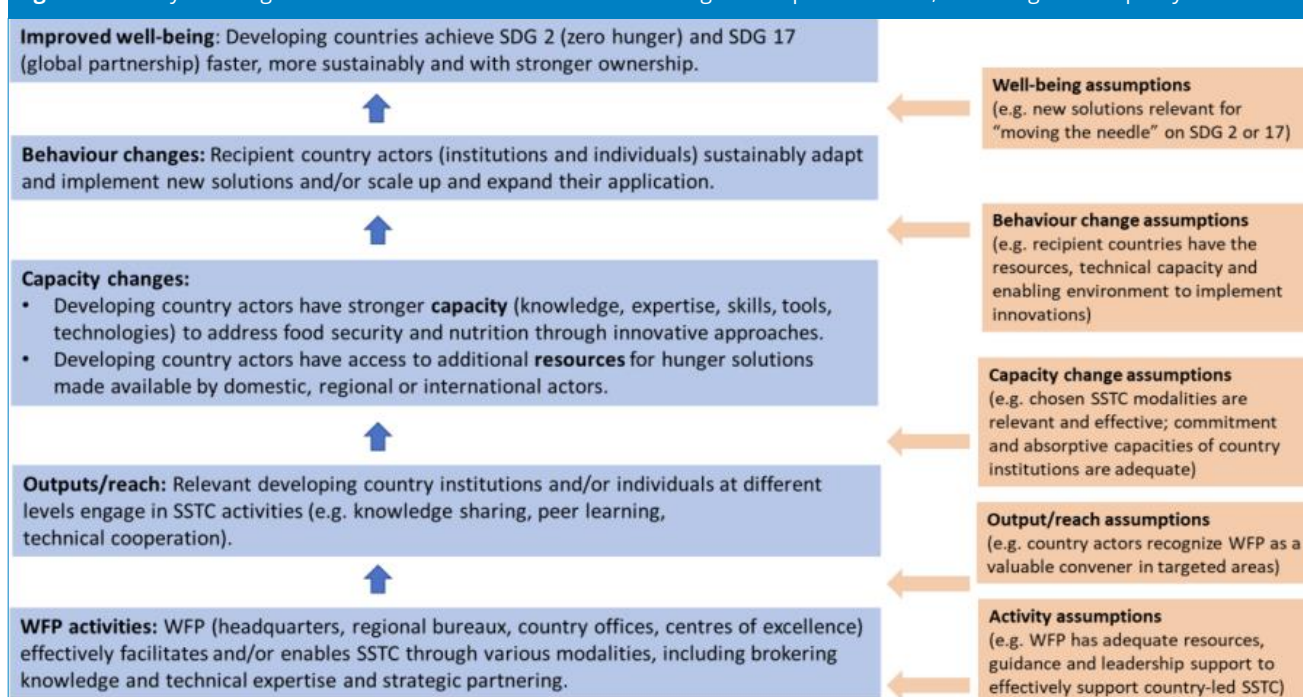


Figure 2: Recommendations of the 2021 policy evaluation for “WFP readiness” (ToC assumptions)

Recommendations of the 2021 policy evaluation for “WFP readiness” (ToC assumptions)		
STRATEGIC	Recommendation 1: Policy update with corporate vision	An overall update of the corporate vision and goals for SSTC reflected in the policy update
	Recommendation 2: SSTC in second-generation CSPs	A continued commitment to mainstreaming of SSTC in country programs, including through adapted guidelines
OPERATIONAL	Recommendation 3: Evidence and Learning	A corporate-wide M&E system for SSTC creating the rights tools and incentives for a stronger results focus
	Recommendation 4: Guidance and tools	A consolidated suite of guidelines, tools and procedures, for instance with a view to CSP mainstreaming and results
	Recommendation 5: Staff capacity	A dedicated approach to SSTC workforce planning, including through training packages and staff networks
	Recommendation 6: System-wide SSTC engagement	Consistent alignment to the UN system-wide SSTC Strategy and deepened collaboration with other Rome-based agencies

Figure 3: Potential of the Strategic Plan enablers for ToC assumptions (“WFP readiness”)







Strategic Plan enablers	Potential to be used to meet ToC assumptions
 PEOPLE	Improved staff capacity and investment in SSTC teams, particularly at the level of country offices and thematic teams with SSTC portfolio
 PARTNERSHIPS	More diverse partnerships, for instance with the private sector, and new partnership approaches enabling further financial resources
 FUNDING	Improved quality of financing enabling SSTC at scale, as well as sustainable results and impact of longer-term engagements with national and local partners
 EVIDENCE	Strengthened focus on results to enable quality, learning and accountability, and deepened analytical work to ensure lessons learned with support to SSTC
 TECHNOLOGY	Increased use of technology for SSTC based on ongoing experience with remote and virtual SSTC modalities, with a view to impact and efficiency
 INNOVATION	Dedicated approach to innovations as a key driver of SSTC solutions and improved use of pilots to ensure scalability and sustainability of innovative solutions

Photo page 1: WFP/Arlette Bashizi

Photo page 3: WFP/Sayed Asif Mahmud

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