

**BACKGROUND PAPER
COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLANS**



Informal Consultation

21 September 2015

World Food Programme
Rome, Italy

Introduction

1. This paper follows from the 29 June 2015 discussion of the Executive Board Bureau on WFP's proposal to adopt a country-level strategic and programmatic planning approach, and the President's subsequent request that the Secretariat prepare a short document outlining the proposed approach. It describes the context of the approach; completed Country Strategic Plans are also provided as examples for review.

Background

2. WFP began piloting country strategies in 2009. A 2011 independent review of the country strategy process, the mid-term review and final evaluation of the WFP Strategic Plan (2008–2013) and the Business Process Review concluded that while the country strategy document is a constructive approach with the potential to replace individual project documents, there was a need to better harmonize strategic and programmatic planning.
3. WFP developed, refined and tested an enhanced approach in response to the recommendations, based on strategic reviews in six countries in 2014. The approach reflected the importance of high-level engagement with governments by partners, including WFP, and close alignment of their strategies with national and international hunger targets, including those of Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2). An initial focus on middle-income countries has since been broadened to include all contexts where WFP is engaged.

Objectives

4. The objectives of the new approach are to: i) support countries in making progress towards achieving zero hunger; ii) operationalize the Strategic Plan at the country level; and iii) improve WFP strategic positioning.
5. Operationalizing the Strategic Plan by linking country-level strategic and programmatic planning and actions to national and global efforts to achieve zero hunger ensures WFP is well-positioned to deliver a coherent and strategically focused portfolio of assistance to address food insecurity and malnutrition. The process promotes WFP adoption of Country Strategic Plans as the sole country-level strategic, programmatic and governance document for a country, in lieu of the current set of project documents.

Process

6. The process consists of a strategic review followed by the drafting of a Country Strategic Plan. The strategic review is an independent, consultative analysis of the context that identifies the challenges a country faces in achieving zero hunger – such as gaps in the national policy framework and programmes, public and private funding of the food security and nutrition sector and implementation capacities of government institutions – with proposals on how WFP and its partners can support the country in making progress towards zero hunger (Figure 1). The review uses the analytical framework provided by SDG 2, and frames each country's food security and nutrition issues in a manner in line with the post-2015 development agenda and World Humanitarian Summit.

Figure 1: Strategic review methodology

PROCESS STEPS	KEY QUESTIONS	INPUT
1. ANALYSIS OF THE FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION SITUATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the main trends and problems? • What are the causes? • What are the humanitarian challenges? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature and secondary data review • Vulnerability and food security assessments • Gender analysis • Consultations
2. NATIONAL POLICY AND PROGRAMMATIC RESPONSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the main national targets and goals? • What programmes and policies are implemented to achieve these targets and goals? With what financial and institutional resources? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of national policy and programme frameworks and budgets • National evaluations • Sector funding reviews • Consultations
3. GAPS IN THE FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION RESPONSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which gaps in humanitarian and development assistance planning, design, implementation, capacity and/or resourcing, hinder the achievement of targets and goals? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmarking of the situation against the targets and the response • Review of findings from previous steps • Consultations
4. RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What needs to be done to fill the gaps? • What institutional, financial and human resources are required? • How will priority humanitarian and development actions be implemented? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of all findings • Consultations including validation of outcomes

- The strategic reviews inform the WFP Country Strategic Plans, along with national and United Nations system planning in the country. The evidence they provide enables WFP and other actors to position their assistance portfolios in support of nationally owned and nationally led agendas in line with international mandates; and supports consultations on WFP’s portfolio, activities, resourcing and staffing arrangements in the country.
- Country Strategic Plans seek to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of WFP assistance to governments and people in need, including those affected by conflict. The analytical, consultative process they use enhances WFP’s added value, fosters engagement with governments and convenes partners around a common approach to eliminating hunger. They translate WFP’s Strategic Plan and SDG 2 on ending hunger into actions at the country level, align WFP operations with national and United Nations plans, and facilitate better framing of food security and nutrition issues in such plans and programmes.
- Country Strategic Plans comprise the entirety of WFP’s portfolio of assistance, including protracted relief and recovery operations; emergencies would continue to be handled through emergency operations (EMOPs). Country Strategic Plans: i) define WFP’s position and role based on country needs and WFP’s comparative advantage; ii) specify the government-determined or jointly-defined targets – “strategic results”– to which WFP will contribute during a four- or five-year period; and iii) identify the strategic, resourcing and technical support actions that will be taken to maximize WFP’s contributions to these strategic results (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Country Strategic Plan components

COMPONENTS	KEY QUESTIONS	INPUT
COUNTRY ANALYSIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the problem and its causes? • What is being done to solve the problem? • What are the main gaps in the response? • What are the priority actions to fill the gaps? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary literature and data review • Vulnerability and food security assessments • Policy framework review • Consultations
STRATEGIC ORIENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which of the above priority actions is WFP best positioned to undertake? • What impact will WFP achieve? • What is the optimal set of activities to achieve the intended impact? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength, weakness, opportunity and threat (SWOT) analysis • Evaluation findings and lessons learned • Consultations
OPERATIONALIZING THE PLAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which principles will guide implementation? • What changes and innovations are introduced? • What partnerships will improve performance? • What skills and capacities are needed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and structure analysis • Discussions with partners • Consultations
RESOURCES FOR RESULTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the cost of achieving the results? • How will cost evolve during implementation? • How will resources be mobilized? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource mobilization strategy • Funding trends and forecast analysis • Activity budgeting • Consultations
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND EVALUATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will activities be monitored? • How will evidence be generated and used? • How will WFP be accountable for results? • What are the main risks and mitigation measures? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring plan and budget • Evaluation timeline and budget • Risk assessment

10. Country Strategic Plans: i) facilitate effective humanitarian and development action; ii) promote internal focus, coherence and prioritization; iii) facilitate better alignment and integration of WFP’s portfolio with national and United Nations priorities, particularly those of the other Rome-based agencies; iv) build recognition of WFP as the food assistance partner of choice; and v) support advocacy and fundraising for food security and nutrition. The fundamental shift of this new approach is in how programmes are designed, which leads to better performance and financial reporting.
11. Figure 3 presents the Country Strategic Plan results structure, which directly links strategic and operational plans: the lowest level of the Country Strategic Plan results chain – WFP outcomes from the Strategic Results Framework (SRF) – forms the highest level of the management-oriented Country Operational Plan. This interconnection between strategic and operational planning addresses a critical and longstanding gap in WFP’s ability to form clear links between the Strategic Plan and actions at the country level.
12. Figure 4 uses the Zimbabwe Country Strategic Plan to illustrate how a Government-determined or jointly-developed strategic result is achieved through the combined efforts of WFP, the Government and other partners.

Figure 3: Country Strategic Plan results structure

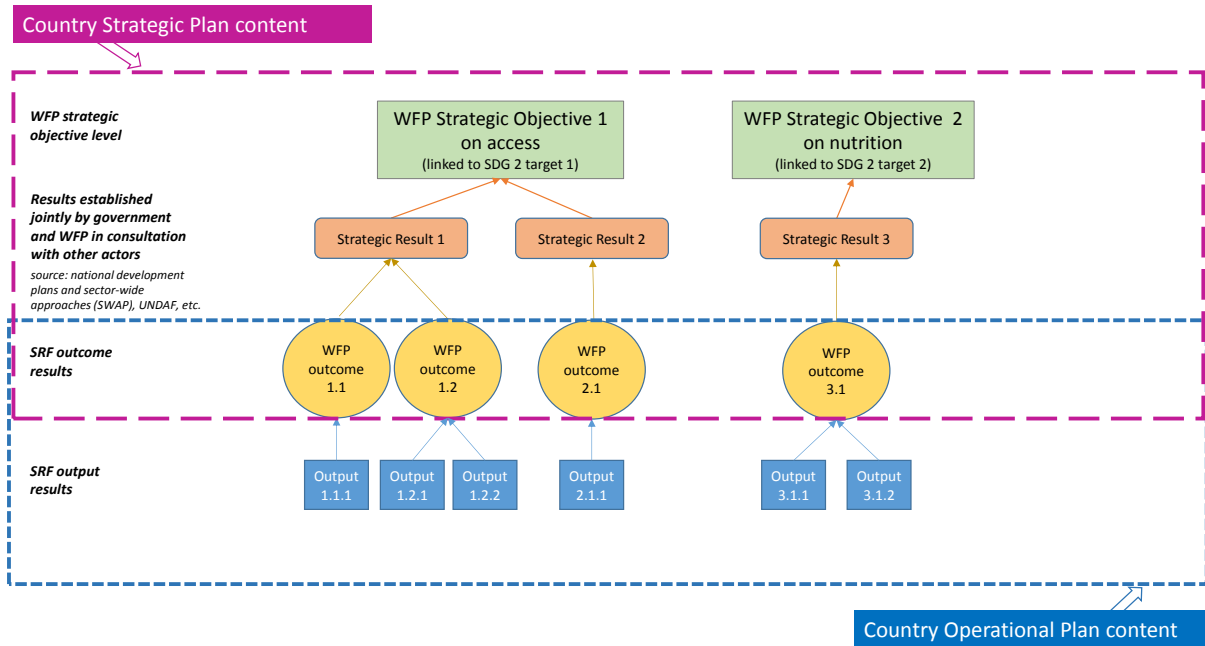
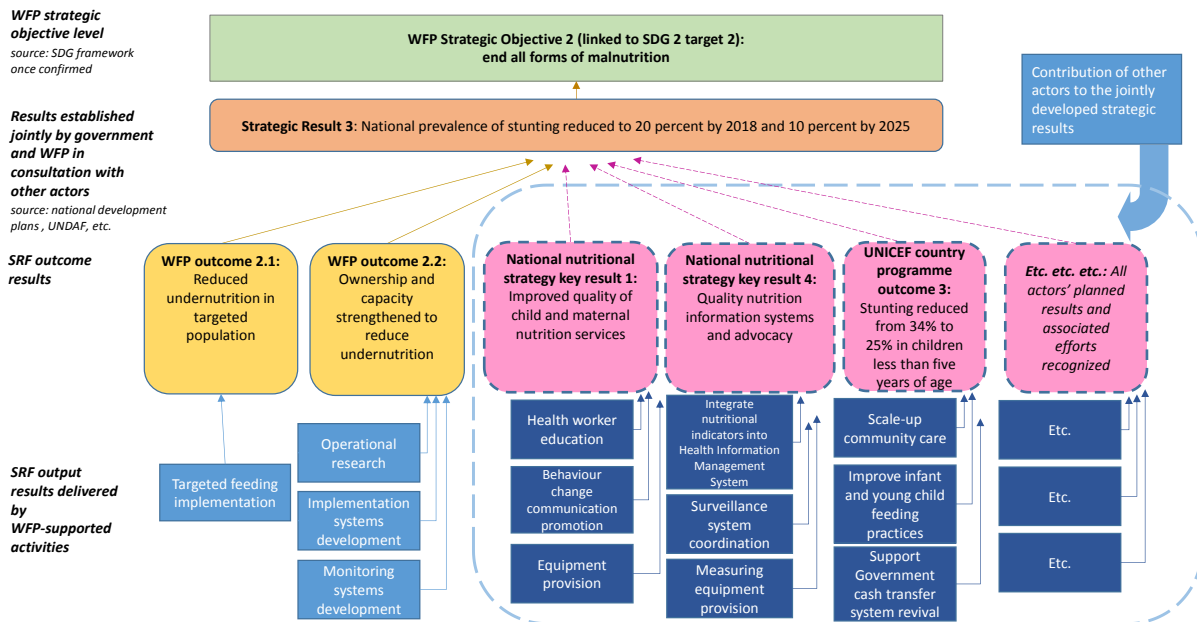


Figure 4: Joint contributions to strategic results

Elaboration of a Strategic Result from the Zimbabwe Country Strategic Plan



CONTRIBUTIONS TO COHERENCE AND EFFICIENCY

13. WFP has facilitated strategic reviews in Cambodia, China, Ecuador, India, Indonesia and Zimbabwe. Country Strategic Plans for Indonesia and Zimbabwe have been endorsed by WFP's Programme Review Process; others are under development. Governments, humanitarian and development partners, country offices, regional bureaux and Headquarters divisions all contributed to the strategic reviews and Country Strategic Plans, enabling refinement of the new approach to country strategic and programmatic planning.
14. The advantages of the new approach include:
 - *Orientation towards achieving zero hunger.* A portfolio of assistance driven by results linked to zero hunger targets would enhance WFP's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals and have a positive impact on vulnerable populations, including refugees and internally displaced persons. The focus of strategic reviews and the orientation of Country Strategic Plans are consistent with the proposed revision of the Strategic Plan (2017–2021) to orient WFP's strategic vision around zero hunger. Greater coherence between the Strategic Plan and international goals and country-led zero hunger targets is expected to bring about significant improvements in WFP programming and strategic positioning in countries and to help WFP forge deeper partnerships with governments, donors, the private sector, civil society and others.
 - *Flexibility that ensures appropriate responses to dynamic operational contexts, and a balance between humanitarian and development work.* By aligning the Strategic Objectives to SDG 2, the Strategic Plan (2017–2021) will enhance WFP's ability to deliver on its humanitarian mandate and its role in the humanitarian system, helping to mobilize the world around zero hunger, and contributing to the objectives of the World Humanitarian Summit. It will encourage humanitarian and development actors to work together to strengthen weak institutions and focus on risks and vulnerabilities.

Country Strategic Plans are the vehicles for translating this approach at the country level. They are context-specific and adaptable to ensure appropriate response to changes in the operating environment; promote links between humanitarian and development assistance; ensure that any crisis response invests in recovery and long-term development; and that development activities reflect an understanding of risk and vulnerability as well as ways to protect vulnerable people from crisis. Country Strategic Plans will enhance WFP's preparedness and mitigation work, and facilitate more efficient response to unplanned humanitarian needs that are now addressed through a variety of funding mechanisms, including EMOPs.

Annual operational planning processes will continue to provide opportunities to review performance and adjust assistance accordingly. Mid-term reviews and modifications of Country Strategic Plans will ensure mid-course improvements, and evaluations at the end of the plan period will assess progress and provide lessons for subsequent assistance. Any other evaluations shall be determined in coordination with the Office of Evaluation.

- *Enhanced strategic role and efficiency of the Board.* The Board will be better placed to provide strategic oversight and guidance through Country Strategic Plans that: i) present a comprehensive picture of WFP's role in a country rather than the fragmented view obtained from reviewing individual project documents; and ii) reduce the number of Board documents to be discussed, resulting in time and cost savings.
- *More efficient and effective internal management and operations.* Engaging in a process that integrates strategic and programmatic planning, resourcing, technical support and performance management – rather than developing individual project documents with overlapping timeframes – will reduce design costs and improve efficiency and effectiveness to better serve the needs of WFP's beneficiaries. It promotes the coherence of developmental and humanitarian finance, and of more timely, comprehensive, appropriate and cost-effective approaches to the management and mitigation of natural disasters and complex emergencies. WFP can thereby channel more time and funds to quality programming and operational management in line with its partnerships, human resources, financial frameworks, performance management, and South–South and triangular cooperation.
- *More transparent alignment between donor funding objectives and WFP expenditures.* The Country Strategic Plans strategic results allow donors to target support to those activities that are aligned with their funding objectives in a particular country. Donors could provide funding for a Country Strategic Plan as a whole or target particular strategic results, which would ensure that funds earmarked for humanitarian or development activities are used only in support of the corresponding strategic results, even when needs shift.
- *A robust platform for delivering on commitments in agreed areas of engagement and planning effective exit strategies.* Country Strategic Plans ensure targeted institutional capacity-strengthening to support governments in designing and managing their nationally owned hunger solutions. They position WFP to catalyse mobilization and exchange of technical expertise for zero hunger and lay the groundwork for orienting internal capacities towards technical assistance delivery and for facilitating external technical support. The three complementary modalities WFP has developed to leverage external expertise are: i) Centres of Excellence; ii) the Technical Experts Network (expanded Technical Services Pool); and iii) South–South and triangular cooperation. Linking these platforms to the design of the Country Strategic Plans facilitates planning and sourcing of technical expertise for effective implementation at the country level.

ONGOING CONSULTATION WITH THE BOARD

15. As lessons become available they will be used to refine the process as it is rolled out to additional countries in 2016 and facilitate the migration to a Board-approved governance instrument. WFP will continue to engage the Board through consultations on progress and lessons learned.