

**Mid-term review of the
WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021)**

Outline



Informal consultation

5 February 2020

**World Food Programme
Rome, Italy**

Executive summary

This section will offer a summary of the mid-term review (MTR) findings and key recommendations.

Methodology of the mid-term review

1. The review is being conducted under the overall guidance of the Assistant Executive Director for Programme and Policy Development, and in close collaboration with relevant WFP divisions. The MTR is based on the review of literature issued during the course of the strategic plan focusing on three main aspects:
 - a) WFP-centred: To analyse and offer high level considerations on the overall performance of WFP in operationalizing the strategic plan particularly through the various instruments and internal reforms brought about by the Integrated Road Map (IRM). This section will draw data and information from an internal review of the first generation country strategic plans (CSPs) and interim country strategic plans (ICSPs) carried out by the Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division, thematic audit reports, thematic and portfolio evaluations conducted since the beginning of 2017 as well as the evaluation of 5 CSPs.¹ Additionally, data from the annual performance reports (APRs) 2018 and 2019 will be used to gauge how WFP country offices are contributing to the achievement of the strategic objectives. Overall, the MTR will try to draw conclusions on the desired transformational change sought through the roll-out of the CSP approach, including strategies across the humanitarian and development space.
 - b) UN-centred: In 2018, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on the repositioning of the United Nations development system to align with the 2030 Agenda. With just 10 years to go, in September 2019, the United Nations Secretary-General called on all sectors of society to mobilize for a decade of action. The MTR will look at the coherence between the strategic plan (and its operationalization tools i.e. CSPs) the overarching goals of the United Nations reform, the strategic directions of the Rome-based agencies as well as other United Nations agencies to create cross-sectoral synergies delivering transformative results.
 - c) Global trends: The world is changing at a fast pace. Several challenges are threatening what seemed to be reachable and feasible in 2015. The absolute number of undernourished people has slowly increased over the past few years. We know that this is result of several interconnected challenging trends e.g. population growth, economic slowdown, conflict, extreme climate events, etc. The MTR will assess how these challenges have a direct impact on WFP's strategic direction supporting the 2030 Agenda. The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a collective responsibility. Failure to achieve them will have significant human, economic, political and environmental cost with implications for peace and human rights. These challenges cannot be addressed and resolved using yesterday's approaches and programmes. Innovation and a process of systemic transformation are required. The fourth industrial revolution is bringing changes and disruption across social, political, economic and cultural dimensions. The current unprecedented technological and digital transformation is shaping geopolitics and rapidly changing the way people create, distribute and exchange value.

¹ Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Timor-Leste, Cameroon, Bangladesh, Indonesia.

2. The MTR will contextualize inputs from the literature review by carrying out interviews with a selected group of senior WFP staff in country offices, regional bureaux and at the headquarters. Discussions with selected external partners, donors and recipient countries are also conducted to understand their perspective across the three main aspects of the review.
3. The MTR also relies on the advisory role of a dedicated internal reference group.

Current global context

4. The Integrated Road Map offered a working environment, where WFP can play a greater role as a partner and an enabler while continuing to be a leader in delivering humanitarian assistance whenever necessary. However, global trends are creating a much more complex and challenging working environment for humanitarian and development programmes to succeed.
5. This section will provide an update on the key trends that have a direct or indirect impact on the achievement of zero hunger. In addition to the key global trends (e.g. economic growth, conflict and displacement, climate extremes, population growth and demographics, etc.) which are both cause and effect of increasing undernourishment, the following aspects will also be included:
 - i) migration
 - ii) aid flows
 - iii) foresight considerations on future production and consumption
 - iv) latest global risks
6. A review of the trend of WFP operations (e.g. number of L2 and L3 operations) since the start of the strategic plan will also be included in this section.

External institutional engagement

7. The repositioning of the United Nations development system to align with the 2030 Agenda promotes multi-sectoral and integrated approaches to achieve the SDGs. A whole-of-system approach to achieve collective and interlinked transformative outcomes thus ending needs. WFP's Integrated Road Map featured in the 2018 "Financing the UN Development System" report as a good practice of the agency's systematic approach for linking the strategic plan and corporate results framework to the SDGs. It stated that the IRM enables WFP to integrate both country-level performance management as well as budgeting processes with the overall WFP strategic plan.
8. This section will be informed by reviewing available documents on:
 - i) United Nations reform
 - ii) common chapter
 - iii) Committee on World Food Security 2019
 - iv) Rome-based agencies collaboration

WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021): conceptual framework

9. The strategic plan is not just aligned to the 2030 Agenda. WFP took a step forward. The conceptual framework is deliberately tightened to components of SDG 2 and SDG 17 taking into consideration the organization's comparative advantage. The strategic plan articulates WFP's role on the ground of doing what is needed and doing what the organization can offer to support the achievement of SDG 2 in countries where food insecurity is a significant issue.
10. The 2017 and 2018 Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) assessments recognized that WFP has made significant efforts to align with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and that the agency has a clear and cohesive long-term vision, outlined in the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021), noting that it is strengthened by its clear links to SDG 2 and SDG 17.
11. Acknowledging that the underlying causes of food insecurity are very different from country to country and that individual country capacities and priorities are also diverse; WFP strategic outcomes are defined at the country level. This is an important change in the architecture of the conceptual framework. Country strategies are now responsible for achieving outcomes and the aggregated country-level results constitute WFP's direct contribution to SDG 2 and SDG 17.
12. In selecting SDG 17 as a strategic goal, WFP highlights the critical role of partnership as a necessary condition to: a) achieve its country strategic outcomes; and b) contribute to the global agenda.
13. In line with what is stated in the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021): *"Responding to emergencies and saving lives and livelihoods will continue to constitute the major part of WFP's operations..."*, 76 percent of WFP's programme of work in 2020 and 70 percent in 2019 focus on Strategic Result 1: Everyone has access to food. However, the strategic plan also highlights that: *"...as WFP focuses on its core business of saving lives, it must do so in ways that contributes to outcomes that provide productive opportunities over the longer term,..."*
14. It has been largely recognized that WFP has much to offer, particularly in emergency and protracted crises contexts. Strategic Goal 2 has allowed the organization to adequately profile its important work on common services and platforms. Partnership, as a way to work to address challenging trends and as a goal to support the global agenda, has offered a conducive environment for WFP to pursue new, more strategic and not only transactional partnerships. There are some interesting and promising examples: the Farm to Market Alliance which focuses on smallholder farmers and enhanced food systems; the partnership with Alibaba which lead to the development of the Hunger Map Live; EMPACT, a collaboration with private sector companies connecting young people with digital microwork; and others.
15. The review of the conceptual framework will:
 - a) analyse data and evidence from country offices on operationalizing the strategic plan in relation to the roll-out of the country strategic planning approach and the corporate results framework;
 - b) examine how country strategies have been bridging crises responses, resilience and root causes to achieve the SDGs;
 - c) review strategic and operational partnerships contributing to the 2030 Agenda;
 - d) review the level of alignment and integration of WFP food assistance programmes with the interventions and the investments of governments, international financial institutions, United Nations agencies, civil society and the private sector.

16. A review of the last two management plans will provide inputs on the trends of WFP's programme of work.

Implementation and results

17. In February 2019 the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) senior level meeting adopted recommendations on the humanitarian–development–peace nexus stating that actors should adopt approaches that: “...*prioritise prevention always, development wherever possible, humanitarian action when necessary*”. There is a clear need for a shift from delivering humanitarian assistance to ending needs. Ensuring that the immediate humanitarian needs are met, should go along with investing in development whenever possible. This can be made possible by strengthening collaboration, coherence and complementarity across the respective mandates of humanitarian, development and peace actors particularly in fragile and conflict-affected countries.
18. WFP assistance is meant to save lives as well as to change lives thus to reduce, and ideally end the need for humanitarian assistance.
19. In 2018, as the number of hungry people increased for the second consecutive year, WFP highlighted the challenging new trends. During the same year, the United Nations Security Council recognized the clear links between food insecurity and conflict and the importance of food security as a fundamental building block for the sustainable development of any nation.²
20. Considering the undernourishment trend and its underlying causes, SDG 2 will not be achieved unless WFP and its partners collectively address development issues. Saving lives in emergencies is WFP's core work. However, its comparative advantage, where the organization has demonstrated capacity and expertise, goes beyond the provision of temporary solutions.
21. The strategic evaluation of the pilot country strategic plans found that the adoption of the CSP as the framework for planning, managing and delivering WFP's contributions to the achievement of zero hunger was a significant step forward. It also noted that the CSP framework may strengthen long-term efforts to build resilience and tackle vulnerability's root causes. Furthermore, as the country strategies are strongly grounded on the national zero hunger strategic review, the CSP approach offered opportunities to move from “delivering” to “enabling” as well as develop better conceptual links between humanitarian and development work.
22. The first generation of ICSPs were guided by the strategic plan's new objectives and have a three- to five-year duration. As the strategic plan is fully aligned with 2030 Agenda and CSPs are aligned with the national priorities, a transformation of country portfolios was expected. If we consider transformation as interventions that support significant, sustainable changes towards the achievement of SDG 2 and indirectly also other SDGs, the review of the country documents showed that most country offices opted for relatively humble results. Of course, given the very difficult contexts in which WFP operates, aspiring to be transformational is often not possible or even not an appropriate objective. However, CSPs that clearly articulated a transformation include a range of diverse countries in terms of income level, stability and emergency level. Functioning governments, institutional capabilities,³ formal

² Resolution 2417, May 2018

³ World Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) scores and other measures of state capability from the World Governance Indicators (WGI) and from the Quality of Government Institute.

road maps to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda are some important common elements across those countries.

23. The evaluation of the pilot country strategic plans highlighted that funding constraints is preventing country offices from making programmatic shifts and attempting more ambitious programmes. Interviews with WFP senior managers have highlighted that although CSPs are aligned with national priorities, designed through inclusive consultative processes and focussing on achieving outcomes, the way funds come to the organization has largely remained the same. More than 80 percent of the contributions are earmarked and often include restrictions preventing country offices from doing this differently in order to achieve better results. Findings from the ongoing CSP evaluations should provide factual evidence on the causal relationship between funding and results.
24. The issue of funding restrictions and predictability was also cited as an impediment in relation to the country office capacity to pursue strategic partnerships. The review of the CSP documents and data from the annual performance report for 2018 show that WFP's body of work under SDG 17 is underleveraged. Few country offices have articulated a role beyond service provision and/or institutional capacity development. These activities are certainly important and needed, however not fully meeting the vision and the ambition set in the strategic plan under Strategic Goal 2.
25. Interviews with WFP senior managers seem to indicate that perhaps country offices may not have understood the full potential of Strategic Goal 2. Insufficient guidance and absence of a methodology to estimate and report on indirect beneficiaries were cited as important obstacles in clearly articulating WFP's contribution under Strategic Goal 2. To better understand this issue, the MTR closely reviewed some CSPs characterized by significant capacity strengthening components. It emerged that even when WFP's role in supporting governments to establish and run effective food security and safety net programmes is crucial, most country offices do not provide estimates on the indirect beneficiaries (e.g. children benefitting from a home-grown school meals programme; vulnerable groups receiving cash transfers from a national safety net programme, etc.). In the few instances when those indirect beneficiary numbers were estimated, they were significantly higher than the direct beneficiaries.
26. Data from the ongoing CSP evaluations and from the annual performance report for 2019 will provide the latest information on the operationalization of the strategic plan thus to obtain a clearer picture and offer useful recommendations.

Cross-cutting issues

27. The MTR will examine the cross-cutting issues identified in the corporate results framework, which are: gender, protection and accountability to affected populations and partnerships. The review will be based on the findings from the policy and practice evaluations. Initial inputs are summarized herewith.
28. Evaluation of humanitarian protection: WFP is one of the first United Nations humanitarian entities having formalized its protection responsibilities by adopting an explicit policy. The policy is in line with the principle of mainstreaming protection throughout programming.
29. The evaluation pointed out that WFP demonstrated a strong institutional awareness of the importance of avoiding discrimination and providing support in a manner that respected the dignity of recipients. By differentiating targeting by gender, age, disability status and diversity, WFP programmes were well tailored to specific needs and capacities.

30. The evaluation found that positive outcomes had been achieved in several areas, including reduced safety risks and heightened respect for beneficiaries. Furthermore, greater advancements were made in internal capacity development.
31. Evaluation of humanitarian principles and access: The Statement of Humanitarian Principles is coherent with other WFP policies on gender and humanitarian protection. However, the level of understanding of the humanitarian principles is highly variable across the organization as staff may not know how to operationalize the principles.
32. The vast majority of WFP staff and external respondents affirmed that WFP has a positive reputation for humanity as its assistance is delivered in a way that respects the dignity of the affected people.
33. WFP staff and partners have a clear understanding of what impartiality means and demonstrated a high level of buy-in to the principle. However, impartiality-related weaknesses were identified as a result of uneven coverage of food security needs. Earmarked, non-flexible, unpredictable funding continue to hamper WFP's ability to adjust its work especially in vulnerable and volatile contexts. Furthermore, dependence on non-flexible funding, often from a small number of donors undermines operational independence.
34. The close relationship with the government and the use of armed escorts is in some circumstances seen by external stakeholders as a weakness vis-à-vis neutrality. On the other hand, cordial relationships with the government often facilitate access to people living in restricted areas. Similarly, having access to operational areas is often a key selection criterion for both non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and commercial suppliers. Field-level agreements with NGOs do include references to impartiality and neutrality, but contracts with commercial suppliers do not.
35. The majority of surveyed affected people reported that community members are asked and were able to offer suggestions and opinions on WFP's programmes. They also reported that there are mechanisms to make complaints and suggest changes.
36. WFP's strong needs assessment capacity and use of technological solutions for monitoring was positively recognized by partners. In the same way, partners stressed the important role of WFP as a leader in the Global Logistics Cluster.
37. A review of the findings from WFP main emergency responses (e.g. the Syrian crisis and North-east Nigeria) will also be undertaken to link policy with operation evaluation findings.
38. The MTR will also review the ongoing evaluation of the gender policy as well as relevant recently approved policies e.g. local and regional food procurement; private sector partnerships and fundraising.

Consolidated findings and recommendations

39. A set of recommendations will be made to inform about any necessary mid-way correction and contribute to the formulation of the next strategic plan. Recommendations will attempt to answer the following, albeit not exhaustive, questions:
 - i) Are the strategic plans and corporate results frameworks mutually supportive, facilitating the delivery and the reporting of WFP's contribution to the global agenda?
 - ii) How can WFP leverage Strategic Goal 2 and the United Nations reform to further contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda?
 - iii) What aspects of the strategic plan would need to be strengthened to articulate value propositions addressing key challenges to the achievement of SDG 2?

- iv) Should WFP redefine its value propositions to incorporate transformative programming tools supporting a “saving lives, changing lives” approach?
- v) Shall WFP work in capacity strengthening support governments’ service delivery in a way that tackles the root causes of food insecurity?
- vi) Is a mindset shift required?