

WFP AND THE AFRICAN UNION



Informal Consultation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper, prepared at the initiative of the WFP Secretariat, examines the relationship between WFP and the African Union. It analyses the degree of congruence between their strategic approaches with the aim of clarifying how the partnership might be expanded and deepened for mutual benefit. WFP's mandate to address hunger in both humanitarian and development contexts – and its shift to providing food assistance – drives policies, frameworks and strategic initiatives that are very relevant to the African Union. The strategy of the African Union Commission serves as a comprehensive frame of reference for WFP activities in Africa. WFP's capacity to bridge implementation gaps in the agrifood sector at regional, national and sub-national levels enables it to contribute significantly to AUC responses to humanitarian and development challenges facing African countries. Several implications for investment in capacity development arise.

INTRODUCTION

1. With its Strategic Plan (2008–2013), WFP stepped up the level of its engagement and partnership with a larger number of humanitarian and development actors. Given that WFP is active in more than 40 African countries and spends more than 50 percent of its global assistance budget in Africa, the nature and effectiveness of its partnerships there are critical. One of the most important partnerships is with the African Union (AU), which is responsible for providing African countries with leadership and normative guidance on a wide range of issues that are both directly and indirectly relevant to WFP's dual mandate of averting starvation through emergency operations and promoting long-term development to break the hunger–poverty cycle. WFP's relationship with the AU needs to be examined with a view to maximizing the benefits to Africa of WFP's activities while strengthening the AU's capacity to contribute to food and nutrition security.
2. This is an opportune moment to examine the relationship between WFP and the AU. WFP's Strategic Plan (2008–2013) and the AU Strategic Plan (2009–2012) make explicit reference to an increasingly complex and volatile global economic, social and political environment, arguing for greater sophistication, flexibility and innovation in a range of areas and highlighting the critical importance of enhanced partnerships. This paper examines the degree of congruence between the two strategic approaches and how the partnership might be expanded and deepened for mutual benefit. It begins by outlining the AU's mission, strategy and organization, and goes on to analyse convergences and complementarities between the AU and WFP. Potential opportunities and challenges for WFP are then outlined, and the investment implications are considered.

THE AFRICAN UNION: MISSION, STRATEGY AND ORGANIZATION¹

3. The AU envisions “an integrated, forward-looking prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, and representing a dynamic force in the global arena”. In furtherance of this vision, the mission of the AU Commission (AUC) – the AU Secretariat with executive functions – is to become “an efficient and value-adding institution driving the African integration and development process in close collaboration with AU Member States, the regional economic communities and African citizens”.
4. Among the guiding values of the AUC are: respect for diversity and team work; transparency and accountability; integrity and impartiality; and efficiency and professionalism. Its operating principles include: subsidiarity and complementarity with other organs, Member States and RECs; results orientation, feasibility and impact focus; close coordination and cooperation with the RECs; coherence of policies and programmes; and a networking approach that takes advantage of available resources through other players.
5. Building on the AU’s comparative advantage as the only pan-African body with a political mandate to develop the continental policy space and speak for Africa, the AUC’s Strategic Plan 2009–2012 is based on four pillars corresponding to the major current and future challenges facing Africa:
 - i) peace and security;
 - ii) integration, development and cooperation;
 - iii) shared values; and
 - iv) institution and capacity-building.
6. The logic is that, to attain its overall vision of sustainable development and integration for Africa, the AU must promote a stable and secure environment free of fear and want. In addition, the AU requires strong institutions, structures and systems that are backed by a shared set of values and standards relating to political, economic and social governance, human rights, the rule of law and culture.
7. The pillars refer to the strategic issues that go to the heart of the AUC’s mission and determine how it organizes its activities and allocates its resources. In a profound paradigm shift from the past, the Strategic Plan emphasizes a programme and results-based orientation, as opposed to an activity-driven approach. The AUC carries out programmes in six areas:
 - peace and security;
 - development;
 - integration;
 - co-operation;
 - shared values; and
 - institution and capacity-building.

¹ This section draws on material from the AUC’s Strategic Plan 2009–2012 and other official AU and AUC documents, which are available on the AU website: www.au.int.

8. Led by a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, the AUC is organized into eight Departments, each headed by a Commissioner, jointly covering the set of issues embedded in the six Programmes:
 - Peace and Security;
 - Political Affairs;
 - Trade and Industry;
 - Infrastructure and Energy;
 - Social Affairs;
 - Rural Economy and Agriculture;
 - Human Resources, Science and Technology; and
 - Economic Affairs.
9. The eight Departments design and implement interdepartmental and cross-sectoral programmes relating to the four pillars. Each Department sets out what contribution it will make to each pillar, and all the departments assume collective responsibility for the delivery of results.

THE AU AND WFP: STRATEGIC CONVERGENCES AND COMPLEMENTARITIES

10. The AUC's Strategic Plan sets out the following 18 Strategic Objectives that refer to the four pillars:
 - i) Reduce conflicts to achieve continental security and stability;
 - ii) Achieve the necessary continental security and stability as a prerequisite for Africa's development and integration;
 - iii) Promote sustainable economic development;
 - iv) Promote sustainable social and human development;
 - v) Formulate frameworks for developing and sharing Africa's statistics, and research and development capacities;
 - vi) Enhance continental integration;
 - vii) Build and foster continental and global cooperation;
 - viii) Promote good governance, democracy and human rights;
 - ix) Strengthen the Africa-wide humanitarian response and action;
 - x) Promote inter-African solidarity;
 - xi) Promote African Cultural Renaissance and the protection of Africa's cultural heritage;
 - xii) Promote the active participation and contribution of all segments of the African society in Africa's development and integration;
 - xiii) Promote the ratification and entry into force of all outstanding legal instruments adopted by the Assembly of the Union;
 - xiv) Promote gender equality;

- xv) Strengthen the capacity and enhance the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the AUC;
 - xvi) Promote synergies, linkages and good working relations with all AU organs;
 - xvii) Promote effective cooperation and collaboration with Member States and the RECs; and
 - xviii) Promote strategic partnerships for leveraging sustainable sources of funding and comparative advantages.
11. Each Strategic Objective contains a subset of strategies, which, taken together, make up the AUC's policy and operational agenda. It is here that the scope for strategic congruence and complementarity between the AUC and WFP can be most profitably explored. Owing to the broad sweep of the AUC's mandate, WFP's policy portfolio intersects with only 7 of the 18 strategic objectives mentioned above, and with 19 of the 75 strategies. Where overlap does occur, it is extensive, as shown in Table 1. It is evident that the AUC's mission can serve as a coherent and comprehensive frame of reference for WFP's activities in Africa.
 12. WFP has progressively elucidated and enhanced the methods it uses to design and execute programmes to address food and nutrition security needs of vulnerable populations in different contexts. The process began with a 1999 landmark document called "Enabling Development" and continued with the publication in 2002 of "Disaster Mitigation: A Strategic Approach". In 2004 two related documents were published: "Transition from Relief to Development" and "WFP and Food-Based Safety Nets: Concepts, Experiences and Capacity Development" and in 2006 "Food Procurement in Developing Countries" was published. Following adoption of the Strategic Plan 2008–2013, WFP introduced the Purchase for Progress (P4P) initiative, the vouchers and cash transfers policy, the school feeding policy, the gender policy, the disaster risk reduction policy and the humanitarian protection policy, and thus put in place a comprehensive policy framework for its transition to a food assistance agency.
 13. The strategy and portfolio of related programmes not only set WFP at the forefront of humanitarian innovation, but also affirm its role as an agency offering an extensive set of food assistance tools with which to tackle hunger, and promote growth and development. The forward-looking policy and the innovative programme portfolio make a powerful combination and give WFP the potential to make a far-reaching contribution to the success of the AUC's mission and the realization of the AU's vision.

TABLE 1: STRATEGIC CONVERGENCES AND COMPLEMENTARITIES BETWEEN THE AFRICAN UNION AND WFP

| African Union Commission | | | WFP |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pillars | Relevant Strategic Objectives | Relevant Strategies | Relevant Policies, Frameworks and Strategic Initiatives |
| Peace, Security and Stability | Reduce conflicts to achieve continental security and stability | Facilitate the development of a programme of conflict prevention, management and resolution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WFP Policy on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management - Building Food Security and Resilience (WFP/EB.2/2011/4-A); • WFP and Food-Based Safety Nets: Concepts, Experiences and Future Programming Opportunities (WFP/EB.3/2004/4-A); • Transition from Relief to Development (WFP/EB.A/2004/5-B); • From Crisis to Recovery (WFP/EB.A/98/4-A). |
| | | Promote and coordinate programmes for post-conflict reconstruction and development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WFP Policy on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management - Building Food Security and Resilience (WFP/EB.2/2011/4-A); • WFP and Food-Based Safety Nets: Concepts, Experiences and Future Programming Opportunities (WFP/EB.3/2004/4-A); • From Crisis to Development: Transition from Relief to Development (WFP/EB.A/2004/5-B); • From Crisis to Recovery (WFP/EB.A/98/4-A). |
| | Achieve the necessary continental security and stability as a prerequisite for development and integration of Africa | Promote the development and stabilization of security, political and economic systems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling Development (WFP/EB.A/99/4-A); • WFP and Food-Based Safety Nets: Concepts, Experiences and Future Programming Opportunities (WFP/EB.3/2004/4-A); • Engagement with Poverty Reduction Strategies (WFP/EB.A/2006/5-B) |
| | | Promote the development of continental social and environmental management systems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling Development (WFP/EB.A/99/4-A); • WFP Policy on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management - Building Food Security and Resilience (WFP/EB.2/2011/4-A); • WFP and Food-Based Safety Nets: Concepts, Experiences and Future Programming Opportunities (WFP/EB.3/2004/4-A); |

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| African Union Commission | | | WFP |
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| Pillars | Relevant Strategic Objectives | Relevant Strategies | Relevant Policies, Frameworks and Strategic Initiatives |
| Development, Integration and Cooperation | Promote sustainable economic development | Promote the growth of intra-African trade and investments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Procurement in Developing Countries (WFP/EB.1/2006/5-C) |
| | | Accelerate infrastructure development with emphasis on interconnectivity, reliability and cost effectiveness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Procurement in Developing Countries (WFP/EB.1/2006/5-C) |
| | | Promote agricultural development and food security through Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling Development (WFP/EB.A/99/4-A); • Engagement with Poverty Reduction Strategies (WFP/EB.A/2006/5-B); • Food Procurement in Developing Countries (WFP/EB.1/2006/5-C) • Vouchers and Cash Transfers as Food Assistance Instruments: Opportunities and Challenges (WFP/EB.2/2008/4-B); • Purchase for Progress Proposal: Leveraging Food Assistance Programmes in Support of African Small Farmers with Innovations in Procurement and Market Development (unpublished). |
| | | Promote the development of the African private sector and the informal economy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Procurement in Developing Countries (WFP/EB.1/2006/5-C) • Vouchers and Cash Transfers as Food Assistance Instruments: Opportunities and Challenges (WFP/EB.2/2008/4-B); • Purchase for Progress Proposal: Leveraging Food Assistance Programmes in Support of African Small Farmers with Innovations in Procurement and Market Development (unpublished). |
| | | Develop and implement programmes for productivity improvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling Development (WFP/EB.A/99/4-A); • Food Procurement in Developing Countries (WFP/EB.1/2006/5-C) • Vouchers and Cash Transfers as Food Assistance Instruments: Opportunities and Challenges (WFP/EB.2/2008/4-B); • Purchase for Progress Proposal: Leveraging Food Assistance Programmes in Support of African Small Farmers with Innovations in Procurement and Market Development (unpublished). |

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| Pillars | Relevant Strategic Objectives | Relevant Strategies | Relevant Policies, Frameworks and Strategic Initiatives |
| | | Promote effective environmental and natural resource management, including climate change | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling Development (WFP/EB.A/99/4-A); • WFP Policy on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management - Building Food Security and Resilience (WFP/EB.2/2011/4-A); • WFP and Food-Based Safety Nets: Concepts, Experiences and Future Programming Opportunities (WFP/EB.3/2004/4-A); • Vouchers and Cash Transfers as Food Assistance Instruments: Opportunities and Challenges (WFP/EB.2/2008/4-B); |
| Development, Integration and Cooperation | Promote sustainable social and human development | Develop and sustain human capabilities through increased access to health, education, nutrition, shelter and sanitation and employment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling Development (WFP/EB.A/99/4-A); • WFP School Feeding Policy (WFP/EB.2/2009/4-A); • WFP Nutrition Policy (WFP/EB.1/2012/5-A); • WFP HIV and AIDS Policy (WFP/EB.2/2010/4-A); • Vouchers and Cash Transfers as Food Assistance Instruments: Opportunities and Challenges (WFP/EB.2/2008/4-B) |
| | | Promote youth development and women's empowerment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WFP Gender Policy (WFP/EB.1/2009/5-A/Rev.1); |
| | | Promote social welfare and the protection of vulnerable groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling Development (WFP/EB.A/99/4-A); • WFP Humanitarian Protection Policy (WFP/EB.1/2012/5-B/Rev.1); • Vouchers and Cash Transfers as Food Assistance Instruments: Opportunities and Challenges (WFP/EB.2/2008/4-B). |
| | | Promote the achievement of the MDGs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling Development (WFP/EB.A/99/4-A); • WFP School Feeding Policy (WFP/EB.2/2009/4-A); • WFP Nutrition Policy (WFP/EB.1/2012/5-A); • WFP HIV and AIDS Policy (WFP/EB.2/2010/4-A) • WFP Gender Policy (WFP/EB.1/2009/5-A/Rev.1); • Vouchers and Cash Transfers as Food Assistance Instruments: Opportunities and Challenges (WFP/EB.2/2008/4-B). |

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| African Union Commission | | | WFP |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pillars | Relevant Strategic Objectives | Relevant Strategies | Relevant Policies, Frameworks and Strategic Initiatives |
| Shared Values | Strengthen the Africa-wide humanitarian response and action | Develop and facilitate the implementation of an Africa-wide humanitarian policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WFP Emergency Preparedness and Response Framework (unpublished); WFP Framework for Strategic Engagement with National Disaster Management Organizations (unpublished) |
| | | Develop and facilitate the implementation of disaster and emergency preparedness and management frameworks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WFP Emergency Preparedness and Response Framework (unpublished); WFP Framework for Strategic Engagement with National Disaster Management Organizations (unpublished) |
| | Promote gender equality | Promote programmes to combat gender based violence including harmful traditional practices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WFP Humanitarian Protection Policy (WFP/EB.1/2012/5-B/Rev.1); WFP Gender Policy (WFP/EB.1/2009/5-A/Rev.1). |
| Institution and Capacity-Building | Promote strategic partnerships for leveraging sustainable sources of funding and comparative advantages | Strengthen the Joint AUC, African Development Bank, Economic Commission for Africa Secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building National and Regional Capacities (WFP/EB.3/2004/4-B) |
| | | Develop and implement a framework for effective collaboration with multilateral agencies and with strategic and development partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building National and Regional Capacities (WFP/EB.3/2004/4-B) |

OPPORTUNITIES FOR WFP

Positive Dynamics in the AU

14. Positive dynamics underway within the AU present the most important partnerships opportunities to WFP. In light of its higher public profile and the internal changes in its functioning and business model, more is expected of the AU, and of the AUC in particular. The AUC's Strategic Plan articulates the new challenges that have accompanied the higher expectations; but higher expectations also suggest high returns on investments in the AU by partners with similar aspirations and objectives.

WFP Coverage of the AUC's Portfolio

15. WFP's mandate and strategy are fully aligned with the four AUC pillars, and WFP is therefore in a position to contribute to all six AU programmes. Similarly, it is well placed to collaborate with the AUC Departments in initiatives for the execution of certain strategies. WFP already works with the departments of rural economy and agriculture, social affairs and political affairs. There is room to expand this cooperation and to explore the establishment of relationships with others, in particular the departments of peace and security, infrastructure and energy and economic affairs.

United Nations System Coordination

16. With the adoption of Resolutions 57/2 and [57/7](#) of 2002, the United Nations General Assembly established the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa (RCM-Africa), whose task is to coordinate United Nations support to the AU. Nine thematic clusters were set up corresponding to the AU priority areas. Each cluster operates under the joint direction of an AUC department and a United Nations agency, and its activities are determined with reference to the AUC's Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme and the AUC annual work plan. WFP is a participant in three clusters: agriculture, food security and rural development; social and human development; and peace and security. Despite some difficulties (see the "Challenges" section below), RCM-Africa forms a solid foundation on which United Nations agencies may build their partnerships with the AUC.

Bridging Implementation Gaps

17. Several recent AU meetings have observed that the "implementation gap"— the failure to translate policies and strategies into functioning programmes and projects — is a major obstacle to the achievement of important targets for the continent-wide reduction of food and nutrition insecurity. As a large operational agency working at global, regional, national and sub-national levels, WFP has long had a unique capacity to bridge the gap between policy and implementation in the field of food security and nutrition. WFP is well placed to act as a powerful ally for the AU as it seeks to turn strategies, policies and plans for the African continent into realities on the ground. WFP can also facilitate the AU's efforts to engage national governments and other partners with Africa-wide covenants and agendas.
18. Two on-going partnerships – the Africa Risk Capacity initiative and the Cost of Hunger in Africa Study – exemplify the potential of WFP in this area. Housed within the AUC Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture, Africa Risk Capacity is a financial entity designed to provide African governments with timely, reliable and cost-effective contingency funding in the event of a severe drought by pooling risk across the continent, capitalizing on the diversification of weather risk. Led jointly by the AUC Department of Social Affairs and the Economic Commission for Africa, the Cost of Hunger in Africa

Study is a multi-country initiative to quantify the social and economic impacts of hunger in Africa, and thereby raise awareness, build consensus and catalyse action and investment for the reduction of child undernutrition in Africa.

19. In both cases, WFP is supporting resource mobilization and providing technical backstopping for the design and implementation of key elements of the projects that will contribute to enhancing the capacities of the AUC and Member States. Given the ample common ground between the strategies of the AUC and WFP, there is considerable room for additional initiatives of this kind.
20. This ability to bridge implementation gaps is critical in the humanitarian sphere, where WFP's operations and partnerships underpin collective action at the global, regional, national and sub-national levels. The AUC is still honing its skills at designing holistic responses to humanitarian crises and facilitating their practical implementation. But based on its achievements in relation to the ongoing crisis in the Horn of Africa and the emerging crisis in the Sahel, it is clear that the AUC has gained much from WFP's unique mix of policy and operational capacities.

CHALLENGES FOR WFP

Capacity gaps in the Addis Ababa Liaison Office

21. The Addis Ababa Liaison Office serves as WFP's representation to the AU and the Economic Commission for Africa. The office also coordinates WFP's input for the RCM-Africa and serves as the focal point for WFP's partnership with the African Development Bank and the Cost of Hunger in Africa Study. The Office has two professional staff members, and a budget that precludes augmentation of staff from external sources. Despite these constraints, the office has provided new opportunities for enhanced relationships with AUC departments. Its staffing and financial capacity involve significant opportunity costs for WFP in its relationship with the AU.

Capacity gaps in the AUC

22. The AUC's role is to facilitate, coordinate and harness the efforts of Member States and partners toward attainment of the AU's vision for Africa. The AUC is fortunate to have highly competent senior officials who lead efforts to fulfill this role. But budget constraints result in significant technical and organizational capacity gaps at the middle and lower levels where most of the AUC's facilitation and coordination activities are designed, implemented, monitored and reported on.

Coordination gaps between the United Nations and the AUC

23. One rationale for the RCM-Africa cluster-based system of United Nations support is to help fill capacity gaps in the AUC. But ten years after its creation, the RCM-Africa is facing two fundamental tensions of its own as noted during the 2011 RCM-Africa meeting: i) adding structure and formality in United Nations–AUC interactions vs. catalysing action on the ground; and ii) promoting leadership and ownership by the AUC vs. enhancing partnership based on shared responsibility. These tensions must be addressed in the near term, within the RCM-Africa or through informal channels.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND INVESTMENT

Strengthening the Addis Ababa Liaison Office

24. There is an urgent need to align the capacity of the Addis Ababa Liaison Office with its functions and responsibilities. The human and financial resources available to the office are significantly less than those available to the New York and Geneva liaison offices, which have similar liaison functions but are not expected to undertake representational and capacity development tasks to the same extent. Levels of resources available to other United Nations liaison offices in Addis Ababa with comparable or narrower ranges of engagement with the AU and the Economic Commission for Africa also are significantly higher.

Develop additional targeted capacity development initiatives

25. The Africa Risk Capacity and Cost of Hunger in Africa Study are generating valuable lessons on how to best apply WFP's capacities for the benefit of the AU and its Member States. The initiatives address major themes in the AUC portfolio, support programme design and strengthen links with Member States, offering major returns to all partners. WFP will explore developing additional similar initiatives. One important lesson from the two initiatives is that WFP's technical and organizational capacities to support the AUC must be enhanced. As for the AUC, the main areas requiring attention are mid-level capacities that improve partnerships and promote the sustainability of initiatives.

Promote United Nations System coordination

26. WFP will participate in efforts to strengthen United Nations–AU cooperation within the RCM-Africa, while continuing to contribute to clusters. WFP will also enhance United Nations system coordination through the United Nations liaison team, an informal platform for responding to common opportunities and challenges facing United Nations liaison offices with the AU and the Economic Commission for Africa, seeking to promote a conducive environment for effective support and collaboration.

CONCLUSIONS

27. The AU is a young organization. The four pillars on which its portfolio is built aim to address stakeholder expectations of: greater transparency and accountability; effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of its mandate and services; better communication and information-sharing; responsiveness to opportunities in Africa, and threats facing it; leadership, coordination, collaboration and greater involvement in AU processes; timely reporting and contract compliance; and promotion of Africa's interests. The AUC's Strategic Plan makes clear how far the AU has to go before it can meet these expectations and fully contribute to achieving the vision for Africa it sets out. It identifies numerous hurdles to be overcome, but also positive features on which to build. WFP is fully committed to accompanying the AU on that journey, and to working with other partners to support the AU's efforts to build on its strengths and overcome its limitations, for the benefit of Africans.

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

| | |
|------------|--------------------------------------------|
| RMC-Africa | Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa |
| P4P | Purchase for Progress |
| REC | REC |
| AUC | AU Commission |
| AU | African Union |