

## Talking points for school feeding EB session

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### Talking points for Stanlake – Introduction to the policy

- We are presenting you with the revised school feeding policy for your approval. Before we go into the discussion of the document itself, I would like to thank you for the constructive and thoughtful feedback we received from you during the informal consultation on this document a few weeks ago. Unfortunately I was not able to join you as I was on duty travel, but have read the transcript of the meeting and have received feedback from Amir, Zlatan and Peter.
- We have also received written feedback from some of you and have sent back our responses before this session. We have done our best to incorporate your feedback and address the issues you raised into this final version of the document and believe it is stronger now thanks to the discussion during the informal consultation.
- The policy we are presenting to you today seeks to further refine or clarify the direction set out in the 2009 policy approved by the Board. In that sense, it is not presenting a new policy position or changing our course. It is rather responding to the need for going deeper into the implications of incorporating the food assistance approach into our programming, in this case into our work in school feeding.
- It also seeks to provide our country offices with clear guidance on the expected results, the connection with the Strategic Plan and other policies, the Strategic Results Framework, and the trade-offs they must keep in mind in their work.
- These are all issues that the corporate evaluation of the school feeding policy raised. This policy document is in response to the first recommendation of the evaluation, which was discussed by the Board in 2012.
- I would like to emphasize a few key messages before Peter presents the document itself.
- The first is that WFP is committed to supporting nationally-owned sustainable school feeding programmes. This document makes it clear that WFP's role is to support what governments are already doing or what they want to do and that we are committed to engaging with them at the policy level to inform national decision-making processes. The WFP Center of Excellence in Brazil is a key piece of that strategy.
- Recent information tells us that WFP's support accounts for only 7% of the global caseload on school feeding. This means that governments are indeed in the lead and investing in the programme, including most of the high and middle income countries. WFP's support is crucial in the poorest countries, where most of our work is concentrated. So we continue to have a focus on low-income countries and we will continue to ensure that within these countries, support is targeted to the most vulnerable.
- The second is that WFP will work on designing a new generation of school feeding programmes that are more sustainable, more cost-conscious and more effective. The new policy will enable WFP to make the best use out of all the tools available to provide the best possible assistance to beneficiaries and at the same time facilitate the transition to national ownership.
- The third is that WFP intends to work in partnership with organizations and agencies that have comparative advantages in areas like in education or in support to agricultural production and academic research. WFP will continue to do what it does best and it will leverage partnerships in the different sectors to make sure school feeding programmes are linked to other programmes supporting children and their families throughout the lifecycle, like mother and child nutrition

programmes and other safety nets. WFP will also ensure that the investments made in school feeding are provided in a coordinated way with other investments in the education sector, to ensure learning. We will also work to connect school feeding to programmes supporting smallholder farmers like our own P4P and other agriculture sector efforts.

- And finally, this policy is explicitly designed to help us change the way we do business. We see this document not just as a normative instrument, which tells our country offices what we think we should be concentrating on and the overall strategy on the way forward. It is also calling for deep institutional change. The logic of the policy, which responds to the findings of evaluations and your feedback, is that we need to deepen our relationship with governments at the policy level and that we need to be better and smarter at designing programmes that are more context-specific and better able to achieve the desired results. We have made this more explicit than it was in previous versions of the document by adding a set of institutional results, which will help us measure how and to what extent WFP is changing its practices and its programmes.
- We take the findings of evaluations very seriously. In this case, the corporate evaluation of the school feeding policy signalled that we had several areas we needed to work on. We are confident that this draft paper addresses these issues and incorporates them into our new policy direction.

#### **Talking points for Peter: SUMMARY OF THE POLICY**

- This policy is the product of an extensive consultation and research process that has taken place over almost a year and a half. We wanted to make sure it was evidence-based and consultative. We commissioned three position papers on key topics raised by the evaluation: nutrition, social protection and the link to local agriculture. Additionally, the *State of School Feeding Worldwide*, which we discussed during the consultation, provided a lot of the evidence and context for the policy. We also consulted the major relevant internal policies to ensure alignment – the safety net, nutrition and capacity development policies.
- Internally, we wanted to make sure our country offices provided inputs. The draft was sent to all regional bureaux who consulted with their country offices. We got consolidated comments back from all regional bureaux and incorporated them into the draft. We also worked with the technical units here in headquarters and with the Center of Excellence to incorporate their views. These included our nutrition, safety nets, VAM, M&E, gender, humanitarian transitions, cash and vouchers and evaluation units.
- Externally, there was a consultation with UNICEF, UNESCO, FAO, the World Bank and PCD. Last week we discussed the way forward with NGO partners at the Annual Partnership Consultations.
- We also had the opportunity to discuss this with our Executive Management Group. All of our regional directors plus executive staff here at HQ weighed in on this document.
- Finally, of course, as Stanlake has mentioned, we would like to acknowledge and thank your inputs and feedback during the consultation a few weeks ago.
- In terms of the policy, first let me address an issue that was raised in the consultation. This policy document responds directly to the first recommendation of the evaluation of the school feeding policy. And, where appropriate, it also includes information as to how WFP has responded to the other three recommendations. We have, for example, addressed recommendation 2 which was about staff capacity and implementation of the policy. We have trained country office staff,

updated guidance and done a cost benchmarking exercise, all of which addresses the second recommendation and have incorporated most of those areas in this policy document.

Recommendation 4 which related to improving the learning around the policy, we have also addressed mainly through the global school feeding survey, the publication of *State of School Feeding Worldwide* and through the research agenda that is expected to yield results well into 2015.

- The policy sets out WFP's overarching vision, which is to continue advocating for the universal adoption of school feeding programmes as safety nets, that increase children's access to education and learning opportunities and strengthens their nutrition status. WFP will focus on helping countries to transition to nationally-owned programmes. In certain fragile contexts or very low-income contexts, we will continue supporting and operating programmes.
- Our ultimate objective is to gradually handover the programmes to governments, as we have already done in 38 countries.
- We believe school feeding to be a programme that has multiple benefits related to child development and social protection. The evidence tells us that school feeding acts as a safety net in crises, it has education benefits (enrolment, attendance and learning in many contexts), nutrition benefits, and has a positive effect on local economies and local agricultural production. In response to your comments during the consultation, we have added language on how school feeding fares in relation to other safety nets, based on latest published reviews. We have also added references to the evidence on education.
- The policy is introducing the following new elements into our framework:
  1. We will increasingly focus on systematically planning the transition to government ownership. This will be done with the support of the Center of Excellence in Brazil, and other south-south initiatives. And by increasing the capacity of our own staff.
  2. We will focus on making sure school feeding is complementing other education inputs. That's why we have launched the Nourishing Bodies, Nourishing Minds initiative, to make sure our partnership with UNICEF and UNESCO is strengthened to look at the issue of learning. In response to your comments during the consultation, we have further specified how WFP intends to work with partners in the education sector, as this is not an area where we have a comparative advantage or expertise. This highlights that WFP does not intend to take the lead on anything related to the education sector itself, but rather seek to better coordinate investments with other agencies and sectors.
  3. We will look into better ways of reaching our beneficiaries and linking school feeding to local agricultural production and local economies. This may be, if appropriate, by expanding the use of cash and vouchers and other modalities of local procurement. This will also be by linking P4P into our school feeding programmes, and other initiatives like PAA, in partnership with FAO.
  4. We will continue to ensure that our food baskets are fortified. This will be the main mechanism through which we will guarantee children get the micronutrients they need. But, in certain contexts, we will explore the use of fresh commodities (fruits, vegetables, etc) to diversify the diets of children. We will also pay special attention to issues surrounding overweight and obesity. In response to some of your comments during the consultation, we have clarified language on this. WFP will make sure that school feeding

programmes are being combined with nutrition education so the food reinforces positive messages on eating habits and nutrition to children.

5. We will seize opportunities to reach adolescent girls. We realize that we have a captive audience in our programmes, of girls that are very difficult to reach via other routes and are critical to interrupting the cycle of malnutrition.
  6. And, we will ask our country offices to comply with two new requirements. First, we will ask them to report on the costs per child per year of school feeding in all new projects. These will be compared against corporate benchmarks we will issue every two years. On this, we have added new information in this draft on how WFP has already taken steps to look into the costs of existing school feeding programmes.
  7. The second requirement is that we will ask our country offices to use an assessment tool developed by the World Bank called SABER, which will help them assess the quality of school feeding programmes and discuss with governments on strategies to move forward.
- A few weeks ago you all expressed your support to the mainstreaming of SABER in WFP operations. This is indeed a very exciting development, which is a product of our partnership with the World Bank. We discussed SABER at length during the consultation and we understood this is an area you would like more information on in the document. We have included a longer description of SABER in the text and also specified that we will be rolling it out in a phased manner during the next two years. In 2014 we will work with the Bank to develop a training package for WFP staff. We will work with selected country offices which are preparing new projects to test the use of the tool and the trainings. Mainstreaming is expected to happen from 2015 onwards.
  - Finally, you also raised the issue of how WFP will measure results and the expected M&E plan. After the consultation we brainstormed with the team and thought that the policy could be strengthened by adding a second set of results, related to institutional outcomes expected out of the implementation of this policy. We felt that the underlying principles in this policy and the commitments that WFP is making to change its programmes were not adequately captured in the results framework. We have added a new annex with the main aspects that WFP will be measuring in terms of our own institutional performance, and how these are in turn, expected to improve the way we reach beneficiaries.
  - The M&E strategy will be designed to measure the two sets of results, those that are related to our beneficiaries and those that are institutional. It will be developed by the school feeding unit in 2014, in consultation with several technical units in HQ, especially our M&E unit and evaluations, and with the field. The M&E strategy will look at all the results that are presented in this policy, specify the indicators that will be measured, how and with what frequency they will be measured, how they will be reported on and who has the responsibility to report on what. If needed, we will modify reporting templates, like SPR's and project documents to reflect the new results and indicators such as SABER. New guidance will be produced for country offices and training to WFP staff if needed. The Executive Board will start to see the results of these changes in all new project documents that go for approval, in the SPR's, APR and other regular reports. At a broader level, WFP will report on global changes in the context in its *State of School Feeding*

*Worldwide*, to be published every two years, based on the global school feeding survey which will be done with the same frequency.

- Last year we trained programme officers from 50 countries on school feeding. This has allowed us to establish a global network of practice. We will be further consolidating this network, ensuring that we have a mechanism of information sharing and a way to disseminate best practice and the latest guidance through this global network.
- We are also compiling a large roster of school feeding experts on different areas, that can be called upon to support our country offices where needed. We will be building on the partnerships with the World Bank, PCD, UNICEF, Brazil and FAO to increase the quality of support that countries get for school feeding.
- We think this document will strengthen WFP's ability to provide better assistance to governments. And that this in turn, will make a difference in millions of lives of children. We look forward to your comments and to the discussion.