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Update on WFP's role in the collective humanitarian response (2020)

Executive summary

This paper provides an update on WFP's role in the collective humanitarian response during 2020 and the first quarter of 2021.

The year 2020 brought unprecedented challenges. Amid humanitarian crises, conflict, climate change and displacement, the world had to contend with the COVID-19 pandemic. This dreadful convergence triggered record-high humanitarian needs – estimated at USD 39 billion by the end of 2020 – and hampered progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 2.

In response to these extraordinary events, WFP and the humanitarian system worked together as never before. The United Nations and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee promptly prepared a consolidated COVID-19 global humanitarian response plan in order to mobilize the resources required to cover multisectoral needs in 63 countries and foster synergies across the entire humanitarian system. To compensate for the impact of COVID-19 containment measures on transport and global supply chains, WFP, in collaboration with the World Health Organization, other entities of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and governments, leveraged its logistics and supply chain expertise to enable the health and humanitarian communities to stay and deliver.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee continued to be a major forum for advocacy and coordination, addressing strategic and operational requirements in the context of COVID-19. Following the declaration of the pandemic by the World Health Organization, the principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee activated [system-wide scale-up protocols, which were adapted](#)

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to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic¹ in April 2020. The protocols enabled a coordinated approach to scaling up preparedness and response efforts. Sustained investments were also made in collective anticipatory action and emergency response through the Central Emergency Response Fund.

Discussions at the Inter-Agency Standing Committee focused on the localization of aid, strengthening of partnerships with local actors and duty of care to protect the health and safety of all humanitarian personnel. Through shared leadership and collective responsibility, the committee paid particular attention to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, racism and racial discrimination.

WFP continued to work on humanitarian–development–peace nexus approaches at the strategic and operational levels. In July 2020, WFP adhered to the nexus recommendation made by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, demonstrating its commitment to improving programming in fragile settings. Following its receipt of the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize award, WFP sought to expand the evidence base related to its contribution to peace through a partnership with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and continued to raise awareness of the link between conflict and hunger and United Nations Security Council resolution 2417.

Throughout 2020, WFP engaged in multilateral forums such as The Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All and collaborated with United Nations sister agencies, including the World Health Organization, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the update on WFP's role in the collective humanitarian response (2020) (WFP/EB.A/2021/5-E).

¹ Inter-Agency Standing Committee. 2020. *IASC System-Wide Scale-Up Protocols - Adapted to Respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic*. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/inter-agency-standing-committee/iasc-system-wide-scale-protocols-adapted-respond-covid-19-0>.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

The humanitarian landscape in 2020

1. The year 2020 was like no other. The convergence of conflict, climate change and COVID-19 created the greatest humanitarian challenge since the Second World War,² exacerbating an already complex situation, reversing development gains achieved after decades of investment and triggering a profound change in the humanitarian landscape.
2. The 2020 global humanitarian overview stated that funding of USD 29 billion was needed to assist 109 million of the 168 million people in need.³ In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a global humanitarian response plan (GHRP) was launched in March 2020 with estimated requirements of USD 2 billion. By the end of 2020, overall humanitarian requirements had reached USD 39 billion.⁴ Only 50 percent of this amount was covered,⁵ with the GHRP attracting just 40 percent of the amount needed.

Food security, conflict, climate change and COVID-19

3. The intersecting and compounding impact of conflict, climate change and COVID-19 containment measures have led to a huge increase in the number of severely food-insecure people in the world. As a result, WFP assisted an unprecedented 115 million people in 2020. Its operations included 17 L3 and L2 emergencies and 549 staff deployments to 71 countries. WFP also stepped up its humanitarian service provision, particularly its air services. While commercial airlines were grounding their fleets, WFP transported humanitarian personnel and delivered health equipment worldwide.
4. The situation in 2021 continues to be critical. [Of the 235 million people in need](#)⁶ – nearly a 40 percent increase from 2020 – the United Nations and partner organizations plan to assist 160 million.⁷ The share of people experiencing or at high risk of acute food insecurity in the 79 countries where WFP operates has increased significantly from pre-pandemic levels.⁸

COVID-19

5. Beyond the health impact of COVID-19 – over 82 million cases and 1.8 million victims between March and December 2020 alone⁹ – the socioeconomic impact of containment measures has driven human suffering to a staggering scale.¹⁰ According to the [World Bank](#),¹¹ many countries are expected to lose a decade or more of per capita income gains, and by the end of 2021 the number of people in COVID-19 induced poverty is estimated to rise to

² Office of the United Nations Secretary-General. 2020. "Secretary-General's video message to launch the 2021 Global Humanitarian Overview". <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2020-12-01/secretary-generals-video-message-launch-the-2021-global-humanitarian-overview>.

³ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). 2019. *Global Humanitarian Overview 2020*. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GHO-2020_v9.1.pdf.

⁴ OCHA. 2020. "Global Humanitarian Overview 2020 Monthly Funding Update - 31 December 2020". <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2020-monthly-funding-update-31-december-2020>.

⁵ OCHA. 2020. "Appeals and response plans 2020". <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/overview/2020>.

⁶ OCHA. 2021. Global Humanitarian Overview 2021 landing page. <https://gho.unocha.org/>.

⁷ OCHA. *Global Humanitarian Overview 2021*. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GHO2021_EN.pdf.

⁸ WFP. 2021. *WFP Global Operational Response Plan 2021, update 1*. https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000123959/download/?_ga=2.43435429.1020716451.1617006997-452813577.1576669866.

⁹ OCHA. 2021. *Global Humanitarian Response Plan COVID-19: final progress report*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-humanitarian-response-plan-covid-19-progress-report-final-progress-report-22>.

¹⁰ WFP. 2021. *WFP Global Operational Response Plan 2021, update 1*. https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000123959/download/?_ga=2.43435429.1020716451.1617006997-452813577.1576669866.

¹¹ World Bank. 2021. *Global Economic Prospects*. Chapter 1 highlights. <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/930531599838746942/Global-Economic-Prospects-January-2021-Highlights-Chapter-1.pdf>.

between 143 and 163 million.¹² The global economic recovery is forecast to be slow because even leading economies have been deeply affected by the pandemic.

6. Movement restrictions, border closures and lockdowns put in place to contain the spread of the virus have also disrupted supply chains and increased market volatility with dramatic consequences for the food security of the poorest.¹³ Gender-based violence has risen sharply during lockdowns. Some countries recorded a 700 percent increase in calls to gender-based violence hotlines in the first months of the pandemic.¹⁴

Conflict

7. About 60 percent of the nearly 700 million hungry people live in countries affected by conflict. While armed conflict and insecurity are among the key drivers of acute hunger in eight out of ten of the world's food crises,¹⁵ hunger and food insecurity exacerbate social tensions and trigger violence.
8. Instability can have disastrous effects on food security and food systems, sometimes resulting in a cycle of hunger, poverty and violence that can persist over decades. The monetary cost of violence is immense. In 2019, the Institute for Economics and Peace estimated it at USD 14.5 trillion.¹⁶
9. Conflicts increase the fragility of national systems such as health services, leaving societies more vulnerable to outbreaks of disease. As such, COVID-19 has acted as a shock multiplier, driving vulnerabilities and risks to historic levels and exacerbating regional conflicts and political tensions in areas such as the Sahel.

Climate change

10. In 2020, the world witnessed several extreme weather events that undermined the pandemic response in many countries and brought a cascade of additional shocks for the most vulnerable people, driving up the human and financial costs of the disasters.
11. Of particular severity were two hugely destructive storms in Central America that ended the record-breaking Atlantic hurricane season, and major droughts that destroyed crops in Zimbabwe and Madagascar and pushed millions into hunger.¹⁷ Devastating combinations of flooding and locust infestations affected food systems in large parts of East Africa. During the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 50 million people were affected by over 100 disasters – 93 percent of which were related to the climate.¹⁸

¹² <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/updated-estimates-impact-covid-19-global-poverty-looking-back-2020-and-outlook-2021#:~:text=As%20reported%20above%2C%20the%20pandemic,between%20143%20and%20163%20million>.

¹³ WFP. 2020. *From outbreak to action: How WFP responded to COVID-19*. <https://www.wfp.org/publications/outbreak-action-how-wfp-responded-covid-19>.

¹⁴ OCHA. 2021. *Global Humanitarian Response Plan COVID-19: final progress report*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-humanitarian-response-plan-covid-19-progress-report-final-progress-report-22>.

¹⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO). 2020. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020*. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9692en/online/ca9692en.html>; and FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2017. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017*. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-17695e.pdf>.

¹⁶ Institute for Economics & Peace. 2020. *Global Peace Index 2020: Measuring Peace in a Complex World*. <http://visionofhumanity.org/reports>.

¹⁷ World Meteorological Organization. 2021. *State of the Global Climate 2020 provisional report*. https://library.wmo.int/doc_num.php?explnum_id=10444.

¹⁸ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. 2020. *World Disasters Report 2020*. <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/world-disaster-report-2020/>. Data for 1 March and 1 September 2020.

Displacement and migration

12. Conflicts, climate change and hunger are major underlying causes of displacement and population movement. Hunger is a critical factor in pushing people to move, particularly when combined with conflict or a lack of economic opportunities.
13. Worldwide, 82 million people – 1 percent of the global population – are forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.¹⁹ It is estimated that 80 percent of those displaced by conflict live in countries affected by acute food insecurity and malnutrition.
14. Of the almost 272 million global international migrants, nearly two thirds are labour migrants.²⁰ The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically reduced their livelihood opportunities. The World Bank estimates that remittances to low and middle-income countries will drop by 14 percent in 2021. A joint analysis of the food security of mobile and displaced populations during COVID-19 conducted by WFP and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) recommended providing access to humanitarian assistance for migrants in distress.²¹

The collective efforts of the humanitarian system

COVID-19 global humanitarian response plan and common services

15. In order to foster synergies across the entire humanitarian system and improve multisectoral responses to the pandemic, the United Nations launched the GHRP. The GHRP provided donors with a consolidated funding plan that covered COVID-19 induced humanitarian needs in 63 countries. The cost of the GHRP rose to USD 9.5 billion as the scale of the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic and the obstacles hindering the response to the global public health crisis became clear.
16. In 2020 the measures adopted by countries to contain the impact of COVID-19 led to a shutdown of borders and transport services. To enable the humanitarian and health community to respond to the pandemic despite these conditions, WFP worked closely with the World Health Organization (WHO), other entities of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governments in support of the COVID-19 health response and ongoing humanitarian operations. WFP managed a network of eight strategically located humanitarian hubs²² and provided global air operations to transport essential health and humanitarian supplies and personnel to where they were needed the most. This not only enabled the global health response but ensured the continuity of existing humanitarian operations – maintaining support to the most vulnerable populations at a crucial time.
17. Through the COVID-19 global common services, WFP transported nearly 150,000 m³ of critical medical and humanitarian cargo to 173 countries on behalf of 73 organizations. Over 130,000 m³ of this was transported via WFP's free-to-user cargo services under the GHRP.

¹⁹ International Organization for Migration (IOM) and WFP. 2020. *Populations at risk: Implications of COVID-19 for hunger, migration and displacement*. https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/populations_at_risk_-_implications_of_covid-19_for_hunger_migration_and_displacement.pdf.

²⁰ IOM. 2019. *World Migration Report 2020*. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf.

²¹ International Organization for Migration (IOM) and WFP. 2020. *Populations at risk: Implications of COVID-19 for hunger, migration and displacement*. https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/populations_at_risk_-_implications_of_covid-19_for_hunger_migration_and_displacement.pdf.

²² In Accra, Addis Ababa, Dubai, Guangzhou, Johannesburg, Kuala Lumpur, Liege and Panama. See WFP. 2020. *WFP Global Response to COVID-19: September 2020*. <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000119380/download/>.

18. The WFP passenger air service reached 68 destinations worldwide, transporting more than 29,000 staff from 436 organizations. Once commercial air services resumed, WFP stood down its passenger services except those that served locations without safe and reliable commercial options.
19. As part of the COVID-19 medical evacuation system, WFP has been co-leading the aviation arm of the United Nations Medevac Cell with the United Nations Department of Operational Support. By 20 April 2021, WFP had carried out 139 of the 223 medical evacuations and established COVID-19 treatment centres in Accra and Addis Ababa.

Global clusters

20. Since its establishment in 2011, the global Food Security Cluster (gFSC), co-led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WFP, has been coordinating the food security response in emergencies and protracted crises in more than 30 countries. In 2020, despite COVID-19 restrictions and operational challenges, the gFSC partners reached over 90 million people, 20 percent more than in 2019. The gFSC global funding requirements reached a record high of USD 9.3 billion. More than half of the 1,200 partners convened by the gFSC were national and local organizations, which helped strengthen country-level localization and food security coordination systems.
21. Following the outbreak of COVID-19, the gFSC established a technical working group with over 100 members representing 50 organizations from the United Nations system, NGOs and other clusters. The working group was tasked with assessing the situation and scaling up life-saving responses. Partners swiftly expanded and adapted their operations to the new needs and working environment through increased use of cash and voucher transfer modalities, urban safety net programmes and virtual monitoring and evaluation systems. Intersectoral integration was also augmented, with gFSC partners working closely with the health and water, sanitation and hygiene clusters to enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian operations.
22. In 2020, the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster, led by WFP, served over 12,420 users from 450 organizations, achieving a 92 percent satisfaction rate – the highest recorded. The cluster also provided technical assistance to 12 countries in order to strengthen their capacity in disaster and COVID-19 preparedness and response. The cluster established common feedback mechanism platforms and hotlines in the Central African Republic, Fiji and Libya, which received thousands of calls from people requesting information or assistance. A chatbot solution (Mila) was also developed to facilitate open dialogue with affected communities while providing vital information to humanitarians and governments. Mila is being rolled out in 2021 in several countries including Libya and will provide factual, country-specific information on COVID-19 to affected populations.
23. The Logistics Cluster, also led by WFP, engaged in an unprecedented 16 country and regional operations, supporting 543 humanitarian organizations and stakeholders. In 2020, new Logistics Cluster coordination mechanisms were activated in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Somalia and the Sudan. To support the COVID-19 global coordination and information management response, the Logistics Cluster facilitated 12 global consultations, which brought together 139 humanitarian organizations. Overall, the Logistics Cluster answered more than 5,000 requests for warehousing and transport services and provided over 2,000 updates on humanitarian logistics services. Despite the COVID-19 restrictions, the Logistics Cluster was able to offer remote training and learning, including a virtual reality simulation, to nearly 1,400 participants.

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)

24. The unparalleled challenges posed by COVID-19 required the principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to frequently review the rapidly evolving situation and determine necessary actions. They were supported by the IASC Emergency Directors Group, which held regular calls with the humanitarian coordinators and briefed donors.
25. On 16 April 2020, following the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic by WHO, the IASC principals activated the [IASC System-Wide Scale-Up Protocols, which were adapted to respond to the global COVID-19 pandemic emergency](#).²³ This first-ever global system-wide emergency activation remained in place until January 2021 and facilitated a coordinated approach to scaling up preparedness and response efforts, including joint analysis, surge and logistical support as well as resource mobilization.
26. Although the Emergency Directors Group could not undertake in-person field missions during 2020, it continued to provide inputs and address operational bottlenecks, especially in the context of COVID-19.
27. To support systematic, joint cross-sectoral responses to the pandemic, the IASC Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG), co-chaired by WFP and the Norwegian Refugee Council, fast-tracked the release in several languages of 18 critical guidance notes. WFP led the development of *interim recommendations for adjusting food distribution standard operating procedures in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak*.²⁴
28. The 2020 IASC structure and its priorities²⁵ were extended by the IASC principals until the end of 2021. This includes the role and activities of OPAG.
29. WFP has been an active member of OPAG's results groups, contributing to the production of guidance on data responsibility in humanitarian action²⁶ and the development of key food security messages in order to promote consistent language use among IASC members.²⁷ Within the humanitarian–development results group, WFP and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies continued to manage a community of practice. WFP also contributed to [IASC light guidance on collective outcomes](#),²⁸ which provides country level senior management across the humanitarian, development and peace community with a common understanding of analysis, funding and financial strategies as they create and deliver collective outcomes. WFP also contributed to an IASC issue paper on [exploring peace within the humanitarian–development–peace nexus](#)²⁹ and chairs with IOM a group on how to engage with peace actors, processes and programming.

²³ IASC. 2020. *IASC System-Wide Scale-Up Protocols adapted to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic*.

<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/inter-agency-standing-committee/iasc-system-wide-scale-protocols-adapted-respond-covid-19-0>.

²⁴ IASC. 2020. *Interim recommendations: Adjusting food distribution standard operating procedures in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak*. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/other/interim-iasc-recommendations-adjusting-food-distribution-standard-operating-procedures-context-covid>.

²⁵ Operational response; accountability and inclusion; collective advocacy; humanitarian–development collaboration; and humanitarian financing.

²⁶ IASC. 2020. *Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action*. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2021-02/IASC%20Operational%20Guidance%20on%20Data%20Responsibility%20in%20Humanitarian%20Action-%20February%202021.pdf>.

²⁷ IASC. 2020. *Key messages: Food security 2020–2021*. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/collective-advocacy/iasc-food-security-key-messages-2020-2021>.

²⁸ IASC. 2020. *Light Guidance on Collective Outcomes*. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/inter-agency-standing-committee/un-iasc-light-guidance-collective-outcomes>.

²⁹ IASC. 2020. *Exploring peace within the humanitarian–development–peace nexus*. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-10/Issue%20paper%20-%20Exploring%20peace%20within%20the%20Humanitarian-Development-Peace%20Nexus%20%28HDPN%29.pdf>.

30. WFP also engaged with the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) steering group. It extensively contributed to an *IAHE on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls*³⁰ published in February 2021. As a member of the Evaluation Management Group, WFP helped steer the process, support the dissemination campaign, advocate the development of an IASC management response and prepare a workplan for implementing the evaluation recommendations. In this regard, WFP has been strengthening gender expertise, ensuring the participation of women in humanitarian decision making and improving data collection and resources dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. In 2020, WFP also engaged in the IAHE on the cyclone response in Mozambique, which identified preparedness and strong collaboration with the Government as positive results, together with good integration of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). WFP will follow up on recommendations with the aim of better prioritizing the needs of affected communities.
31. In 2021, WFP will join the management group for IAHE of the response to the crisis in Yemen; this complex evaluation will focus on the humanitarian crisis resulting from the prolonged conflict. The IAHE will also feature an evaluation of the COVID-19 humanitarian response in order to identify lessons learned and recommendations for the international community relevant to other potential global emergencies.

Early warning and early action

32. In July 2020, WFP and FAO produced their first joint analysis of acute food insecurity hotspots,³¹ which identified 27 countries likely to experience significant increases in acute food insecurity as a result of multiple factors including COVID-19; the report also provided strategic recommendations. The analysis, updated in October 2020³² and March 2021,³³ is an important country-specific early warning and early action tool, which FAO and WFP are also using for joint advocacy.
33. In 2020, the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) facility funded large-scale anticipatory action in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Somalia. More than 142,000 people in the Brahmaputra and Jamuna river basins in Bangladesh received WFP cash transfers ahead of forecasted floods. Similarly, over 100,000 people in Somalia's urban areas received WFP cash transfers and preventive nutrition services for children under 2 and pregnant and lactating women in an effort to address the compounding effects of desert locusts, COVID-19 and flooding.
34. Recently, using the drought forecast trigger system developed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and funding for anticipatory action from Denmark, WFP provided cash transfers and early warning information to protect the food security and livelihoods of over 35,000 pastoralists in the Somali region of Ethiopia. In 2021, WFP remains committed to supporting joint anticipatory action with other United Nations agencies and partners through CERF funding in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Chad, Madagascar, Nepal, the Niger, the Philippines and South Sudan. Discussions on the portfolio for the second phase of anticipatory action in Somalia are ongoing.

³⁰ IASC. 2020. *Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls*. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/operational-policy-and-advocacy-group/iasc-operational-policy-and-advocacy-group-opag-meeting-inter-agency-humanitarian-evaluation-iahe>.

³¹ FAO and WFP. 2020. *FAO-WFP early warning analysis of acute food insecurity hotspots, July 2020*. <https://www.wfp.org/publications/fao-wfp-early-warning-analysis-acute-food-insecurity-hotspots>.

³² FAO and WFP. 2020. *Hunger Hotspots: FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity, March to July 2021 outlook*. <https://www.wfp.org/publications/fao-wfp-early-warning-analysis-acute-food-insecurity-hotspots-november-2020>

³³ Ibid.

Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and the sexual harassment and abuse of aid workers

35. In 2020, United Nations agencies and partner organizations stepped up efforts to enhance PSEA and the prevention of sexual harassment and abuse of aid workers. In order to address PSEA issues within the unprecedented situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, WFP issued internal guidance on key PSEA considerations in its COVID-19 response and contributed to the development of the *IASC Checklist to Protect from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse during COVID-19*.³⁴
36. WFP has been supporting cooperating partners in ensuring that adequate standards and mechanisms are in place to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) situations. One example is the PSEA learning package for partners *Saying No to Sexual Misconduct*. The package, prepared by WFP with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), IOM and other IASC members, includes tools that equip partner organizations to define, detect and respond to SEA and mitigate related risks.
37. Similarly, WFP led the inter-agency launch of the *United Nations Implementing Partner PSEA Capacity Assessment* – a harmonized screening tool for partners developed by WFP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNHCR in coordination with IASC and the United Nations SEA Working Group. WFP has been working with inter-agency partners to jointly pilot the tool in selected countries in 2021 and to integrate it into the *United Nations Partner Portal*.³⁵
38. In partnership with IOM and Translators without Borders, WFP invested in local capacity building and launched a field-focused project, *PSEA at the Frontline*, designed for United Nations employees including frontline workers as well as non-United Nations employees such as contractors.
39. WFP made systematic use of ClearCheck, a database developed in collaboration with UNICEF to share personnel files about individuals dismissed due to their engagement in sexual exploitation, sexual harassment or abuse. WFP and UNICEF have been administering a system-wide questionnaire on improved reporting of sexual harassment in the United Nations system, which will highlight differences in reporting mechanisms and indicate potential improvements. Results will be shared with other United Nations bodies in May 2021.

³⁴ IASC. 2020. *IASC Checklist to Protect from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse during COVID-19*. <https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/IASC%20Checklist%20PSEA%20during%20COVID%2019.pdf>.

³⁵ United Nations Partner Portal. <https://www.unpartnerportal.org/landing/>.

Racism and racial discrimination

40. The IASC principals issued a [statement on racism and racial discrimination in the humanitarian sector](#)³⁶ and asked the IASC Deputies Forum and OPAG to determine how best to tackle this critical issue. The IASC has also produced a [compilation of best practices to prevent and address racism and racial discrimination](#)³⁷ in order to promote learning and information sharing and has drafted an [anti-racism and anti-discrimination action plan](#)³⁸ that seeks to translate IASC commitments into action.

Accountability to affected populations, protection and disability inclusion

41. As part of the IASC accountability and inclusion results group, WFP developed and launched the Accountability and Inclusion Service Directory,³⁹ an online repository of global services addressing collective accountability, protection from SEA and inclusive programming. WFP also supported the development of the IASC Collective Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Framework and the Collective AAP Results Tracker, led by OCHA, and the Core Humanitarian Standard.
42. In Somalia, WFP supported the establishment of a common information management system to centralize feedback received through various agency mechanisms. Throughout this process, WFP prioritized the participation of and learning from organizations of persons with disabilities.
43. To improve accountability in the context of local sociocultural practices and to ensure safe, dignified food security programming, WFP and the Global Protection Cluster initiated a project to develop a digital repository on affected communities' food practices, preferences and identities. WFP also engaged in the call to action working group on gender-based violence (GBV) and became a member of the IASC GBV steering committee and GBV accountability forum reference group.
44. WFP is a member of the reference group on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action and participated in several inter-agency networks on disability inclusion in 2020. As a member of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy focal point network, WFP supported task teams including on the socioeconomic response to COVID-19 and the development of the United Nations Secretary-General's policy brief on disability inclusion and COVID-19. WFP played a key role in the AAP and disability inclusion advisory groups under the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland–United Nations Single Business Case programme. Following these initiatives, the humanitarian needs overviews and humanitarian response plans were reviewed in order to strengthen their coverage of AAP and disability inclusion.

³⁶ IASC. 2020. "Statement by Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Racism and Racial Discrimination in the Humanitarian Sector". <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/inter-agency-standing-committee/statement-principals-inter-agency-standing-committee-iasc-racism>.

³⁷ IASC. 2021. *IASC compilation of best practices to prevent and address racism and racial discrimination*. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2021-03/Draft%20Best%20Practices%20Compilation%20from%20IASC%20members%20-%20IASC%20Survey%20on%20Racism%20and%20Racial%20Discrimination%2C%20March%202021.pdf>.

³⁸ IASC. 2021. *Draft IASC Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Action Plan*. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/operational-policy-and-advocacy-group/draft-iasc-action-plan-against-racism-and-racial-discrimination>.

³⁹ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/rg2/service-directory>

Gender

45. WFP continued to use its gender and age marker – an adaptation of the IASC gender marker – to mainstream gender and age in the design and monitoring of its country strategic plans.
46. WFP remained engaged in the advisory group of the IASC Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap). In 2020, GenCap rolled out reforms at the management and operational levels, including strengthened resource mobilization and roster diversification. It piloted a new methodology in the field and engaged with field operations more than in previous years. Efforts were also made to synchronize the deployment of protection and gender senior advisers.
47. As a member of humanitarian country teams, WFP has been benefiting from the deployment of gender experts under the new road map, which is designed to ensure the sustained participation of experts in all operations. In 2021, WFP will continue its participation in GenCap, supporting the consolidated roll-out of its reform process, and ensure adequate adaptation to needs in the field.

Bureaucratic and administrative impediments

48. WFP extended its support for OPAG work on bureaucratic and administrative impediments aimed at better understanding the various types of such impediments faced by operational actors. The outcomes of the project will help inform the development of IASC guidance on addressing these impediments, which will set out recommendations for field-level collective action applicable across country contexts through supportive policies.

Joint needs assessments and innovative platforms

49. WFP continued to participate in the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, the Joint Intersectoral Analysis Group and the Food Security Information Network. WFP recently updated its essential needs analysis guidance⁴⁰ to better equip its staff and partners to conduct multi-partner assessments.
50. WFP also made progress with HungerMap LIVE,⁴¹ which was launched in 2020 and provides near real-time estimates of acute food insecurity in over 90 countries. The platform was upgraded to include hunger, conflict and COVID-19 alerts, highlighting areas of rapid deterioration. Near real-time monitoring systems were expanded to track the impact of the pandemic on food security, livelihoods, health and access to markets.
51. The use of web surveys was expanded to 48 countries in order to rapidly and efficiently assess the impact of COVID-19 on markets, livelihoods and people's ability to meet their food and other essential needs and to capture safety concerns. Web surveys proved a viable tool for reaching important segments of the population such as women, migrants, displaced people and young people.

Cash coordination

52. In 2020, WFP transferred USD 2.1 billion, a 36 percent increase compared to 2019, to assist more than 38 million people in 67 countries. Cash-based transfers and commodity vouchers continued to represent nearly 40 percent of WFP's total assistance.

⁴⁰ WFP. 2021. Essential needs guidelines. <https://www.wfp.org/publications/essential-needs-guidelines-july-2018>.

⁴¹ <https://hungermap.wfp.org/>.

53. The signatories of the United Nations Common Cash Statement⁴² made significant progress in joint programming, procurement and interoperability. They developed United Nations guidance on collaborative procurement for humanitarian cash transfers, entered into a trilateral WFP-UNICEF-UNHCR global data sharing agreement and implemented a [minimum dataset for assistance](#) specifying the data to be collected by all actors.
54. WFP rolled out corporate guidance and tools on essential needs assessments, the calculation of minimum expenditure baskets and transfer value, cash-based transfer reconciliation, the contracting of financial service providers, beneficiary and transfer management and beneficiary risk mitigation. Increasingly, new digital systems have been adopted to improve the efficiency of delivery.
55. In 2020, WFP provided technical support to 37 governments that set up cash-based safety nets in response to the COVID-19 crisis. In Bangladesh, Colombia, Haiti, Lebanon, Mozambique, Somalia and the Sudan, WFP worked closely with international financial institutions (IFIs)⁴³ on the implementation of government-funded cash-based programmes. Discussions are ongoing regarding the expansion of the collaboration between governments, IFIs and WFP in other countries.

Peace and the nexus

56. In 2020, WFP adhered to the recommendation on the humanitarian–development–peace nexus of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development,⁴⁴ which provides a legal framework for strengthening collaboration, coherence and complementarity between bilateral and multilateral systems that carry out humanitarian, development and peace work. The recommendation also reinforces WFP's commitment to conflict sensitivity as a minimum requirement in all its operations and a prerequisite for peace programming, an area of increasing investment for WFP. WFP developed minimum standards for conflict-sensitive programming and a COVID-19 conflict sensitivity rapid operational conflict risk and prevention tool to support country office operations.
57. Following its receipt of the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize award, which recognized the critical role of food assistance in paving the way for peace and stability, WFP continued to gather evidence of its contribution to peace and its work at the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. Through its partnership with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, WFP is examining, among other things, the potential stabilizing effect of food security interventions on communities and how, climate change, gender and cash transfers interplay with food security and peace considerations.⁴⁵ WFP also carried out a series of case studies to identify good practices, opportunities and challenges associated with using a humanitarian–development–peace approach when addressing the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition in various contexts.⁴⁶ WFP expanded its partnership with the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, engaging in joint programmes aimed at achieving peace outcomes in various contexts. WFP developed an approach to measuring its peace performance and has tested it in Bangladesh and the Philippines. The peace measurement approach is being refined and will be rolled out in several countries in 2021; data generated by the approach could be integrated into WFP reporting, risk management and monitoring platforms and used to inform programme adjustments.

⁴² OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP.

⁴³ World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Inter-American Development Bank.

⁴⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2021. *DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus*. <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/public/doc/643/643.en.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Nigeria, South Sudan, Guatemala, Honduras, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Colombia, Central African Republic and Sri Lanka.

⁴⁶ Somalia, South Sudan and Ethiopia.

58. WFP continued its advocacy related to hunger and conflict and the political action required to ensure compliance with United Nations Security Council resolution 2417. These efforts are pursued through a partnership with the Oxford Institute for Ethics, Law and Armed Conflict, which led to the publication of a special issue of the *Journal of International Criminal Justice* on starvation in international law.⁴⁷ Since 2016, WFP and FAO have been regularly reporting to the Security Council on the food security situation in countries affected by conflict.
59. To foster collaboration and coordinate efforts related to humanitarian access, WFP helped set up a global access working group, established by OCHA in early 2021. At the country level, WFP staff have been participating in cross-cutting access working groups, collaborating with other United Nations agencies and partners.

Localization and duty of care

60. The localization of aid and strengthening of partnerships with local actors gained prominence in inter-agency discussions. In line with the whole-of-society approach, WFP has been supporting community-based organizations and local actors in leading national responses alongside their governments and other actors. Efforts were made in 2020 to enhance national capacities in areas such as emergency preparedness, early warning, social protection and supply chain management. For example, WFP has been working with the national Red Cross in Burundi on early warning and forecast-based financing activities.
61. Operational challenges related to COVID-19 prompted the development of duty of care standards for all personnel, regardless of nationality or contract type. WFP and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) led the IASC task team that developed the minimum standards,⁴⁸ which are aimed at protecting the health and safety of personnel while ensuring that organizations continue to deliver on their mandates.

Partnership in focus

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

62. WFP is on track with the implementation of the Global Refugees Forum commitments adopted in December 2019.⁴⁹ Refugee data are now integrated into the *Global Report on Food Crises* and UNHCR has become a member of the Food Security Information Network. In 2020, WFP and UNHCR launched the Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub, which supports the operationalization of joint global frameworks on needs assessments, targeting strategies, data sharing and systems interoperability, AAP and strategies that promote refugee livelihoods and self-reliance. So far eight countries⁵⁰ have benefitted from this initiative. In-country joint coordinators have been recruited in Cameroon and Rwanda.

⁴⁷ Oxford University Press. 2019. *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, special issue on starvation in international law. <https://academic.oup.com/jicj/issue/17/4>.

⁴⁸ IASC. 2020. *Minimum standards on duty of care in the context of COVID-19*. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-11/IASC%20Minimum%20Standards%20on%20Duty%20of%20Care%20in%20the%20Context%20of%20COVID-19%20.pdf>.

⁴⁹ WFP announced three individual pledges and one joint pledge with FAO, related to WFP's unique expertise in vulnerability assessment, mapping and targeting in support of the design and advocacy of operations that build the resilience and self-reliance of refugees and host communities; WFP expertise in two-way communication with affected populations that support the voice of refugees in responses; joint fundraising efforts to increase resources for refugees, particularly in underfunded refugee operations; and the integration of refugee data into the *Global Report on Food Crises* and of UNHCR in the Food Security Information Network.

⁵⁰ Algeria, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Jordan, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda and Zambia.

63. At the 2020 session of the UNHCR Executive Committee, in October, UNHCR and WFP co-hosted a panel discussion on refugee food security. Participants discussed the economic inclusion of refugees in host countries and the role of national social protection schemes in enabling refugees to meet their basic needs. WFP and UNHCR are pursuing efforts to find lasting solutions to refugees' food security and other essential needs while contributing to the overall development and well-being of host populations.

World Health Organization

64. In 2020, WFP's collaboration with WHO reached new heights. After the signing of the first memorandum of understanding in February, WFP sprang into action to enable health partners and the humanitarian system to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. WFP established a supply chain inter-agency coordination cell within WHO tasked with managing critical logistics services including the transport of life-saving equipment, cargo and personnel to the locations where they were needed the most. WFP continues to expand its partnership with key health actors via initiatives such as the Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All and by increasing operational collaboration with WHO, Gavi and The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.
65. WFP supports the principle of vaccine equity and signed the [Call to Action: Vaccine Equity](#) declaration proposed by the Director-General of WHO.

The Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria

66. WFP supported the Global Fund and nine of its implementing partners by delivering USD 102 million worth of life-saving health items, including HIV and tuberculosis medicines and 12 million mosquito nets, to eight fragile and conflict-affected countries in 2020.⁵¹ This partnership has been hailed as a prime example of the humanitarian-health-development nexus in action and demonstrates how intersectoral collaboration can save lives.

International Organization for Migration

67. Given the direct link between food insecurity and migration, WFP and IOM began preliminary discussions on strengthening their country-level collaboration. After identifying potential areas for collaboration in the humanitarian and development space such as data sharing and biometrics, evidence creation and advocacy, livelihoods programming and social protection, a joint action plan is being developed.
68. WFP continued to support the United Nations Network on Migration, set up by the Secretary-General, to assist national governments in implementing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Several WFP country offices applied to the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund, which was created to support national migration priorities, ensure better protection of migrants, foster cooperation and promote migration governance that benefits all. A joint proposal put forward by WFP, IOM and UNFPA in El Salvador has been approved and is expected to be funded once the trust fund is resourced. Activities will focus on various aspects of humanitarian assistance as well as financial reintegration and psychosocial assistance throughout the various stages of the migration cycle.

World Bank Group

69. In 2020, WFP received an unprecedented number of requests from governments seeking support for the expansion of safety net schemes to mitigate the socioeconomic impact of the COVID--19 pandemic. Building on the ongoing dialogue and collaboration with the World Bank and a growing number of IFIs at the country, regional and global levels, WFP's contractual engagements with national governments increased substantially and are

⁵¹ Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Djibouti, Mali, Pakistan and Zimbabwe.

expected to continue growing over the coming years. Opportunities with IFIs focused on the human capital and sustainable development agendas, with contributions to vulnerability analysis and mapping, targeting, the delivery of social assistance through various modalities, support for smallholder farmers and impact evaluation. The demand from governments and IFIs for WFP support in targeting and delivering safety nets in a timely manner was particularly high in contexts affected by fragility, conflict and violence. As a consequence, WFP collaborated with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Inter-American Development Bank in over 20 countries.

Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation

70. As a strategic partner of the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation (CCHN), WFP continued to support frontline negotiators in some of the most difficult humanitarian operations, where access to populations in need is a major challenge. The partnership is being leveraged to build capacity in access negotiations for WFP and cooperating partner staff, while ensuring this will not compromise the safety of beneficiaries or the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. CCHN has now trained over 300 WFP staff in frontline humanitarian negotiation skills. Given the challenges of COVID-19, in 2020 CCHN continued its programmes through online training, reaching a wider and more diverse audience. In response to anticipated challenges in future operations, CCHN has developed advanced training for vaccine-related negotiations in conflict, which will be offered from April 2021. WFP is participating in the strategic discussions on the future of CCHN and will join its annual global summit in 2021.

Acronyms

AAP	accountability to affected populations
CCHN	Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation
CERF	United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GBV	gender-based violence
GenCap	IASC Gender Standby Capacity Project
gFSC	global Food Security Cluster
GHRP	global humanitarian response plan
IAHE	Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IFI	international financial institution
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OPAG	IASC Operational Policy and Advocacy Group
PSEA	protection from sexual exploitation and abuse
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEA	sexual exploitation and abuse
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization