

South–South and triangular cooperation policy update

**Enabling Global South solutions
to accelerate progress towards zero hunger**



**Second informal consultation
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**World Food Programme
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Executive summary

This updated policy will deepen WFP's position as a trusted and reliable partner of country-led South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) to effectively boost food security and nutrition, by empowering Global South country actors to sustainably share, adapt and implement zero hunger solutions.

Guided by the 2021 policy evaluation and extensive consultations, the policy will enhance WFP's facilitation support to SSTC and expand its partnerships with developing countries and triangular partners. Jointly, WFP and its partners will leverage Global South solutions to tackle the common challenges of achieving zero hunger in an increasingly complex national and international context.

Based on successful experience over the past years, WFP's engagement in SSTC will focus on three strategic areas, namely consolidating what WFP does best, responding to emerging demands, and ensuring quality and results. This will be done by activating the corporate enablers outlined in the current strategic plan, ensuring consistent policy implementation and working in coherence with other corporate and United Nations policies.

Background and context

1. For the past decades, South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) has driven partnerships, processes and sustainable development results among developing countries, often supported by multilateral organizations and developed countries. SSTC is a means for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and plays a critical role to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 on zero hunger. Consequently, WFP's current strategic plan, notably through its outcome 4, integrates SSTC to strengthen national capacity, programmes and systems for food security and nutrition. As such, SSTC is also one of the key drivers of deeper collaboration among the Rome-based agencies (RBAs) supporting countries to achieve SDG 2 and its targets.
2. Guided by its 2015 SSTC policy and growing demands and opportunities, WFP has expanded its SSTC engagement in the past eight years. It has invested in institutional, operational and staff capacity to facilitate learning and broker zero hunger solutions among developing countries. Milestones include the establishment of a dedicated SSTC unit at headquarters; corporate coordination through a global SSTC task force; the development of SSTC guidance, training and backstopping services; and the creation of new centres of excellence (COEs) in China (2016) and Côte d'Ivoire (2019) to complement the pioneering work of the COE established in Brazil in 2011.
3. To support (a) country capacity strengthening (CCS) efforts and (b) strategic partnerships, including resource mobilization and joint advocacy, SSTC is fully integrated into WFP's corporate frameworks, including in its strategic plan for 2022–2025, country strategic plans (CSPs) and corporate results framework. In addition, strategic approaches to SSTC have been developed in thematic areas such as nutrition, school feeding and social protection. There is increasing recognition that SSTC – as part of WFP's "enabling", rather than "delivering" role – can generate substantial benefits at marginal additional cost, providing a favourable return on investment (ROI) notably in terms of development results, partnerships and resource mobilization.
4. Globally, WFP is one of the most innovative and fastest-moving United Nations entities supporting SSTC. WFP has consolidated its corporate reputation as a trusted and reliable SSTC partner, supporting countries in their efforts to share their and adopt others'

zero hunger solutions through various institutional arrangements, including through the creation of COEs. WFP has been a key contributor to intergovernmental processes such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizing SSTC as a critical means of implementation under SDG 17. At the interagency level, effective collaboration with WFP's fellow United Nations RBAs is instrumental to WFP's SSTC efforts.

5. Countries recognize WFP's value proposition as an organization that can facilitate results-oriented, demand-driven and localized SSTC that supports country-led efforts to achieve SDG 2 and SDG 17 with a dedicated focus on the most vulnerable and food insecure populations. WFP's comparative advantages as an SSTC broker include its extensive field presence, wide variety of partners, dynamic global operational footprint, innovative institutional arrangements, including the COEs, and technical expertise in thematic areas relevant to zero hunger.
6. WFP continues to address the challenges which are holding back more systematic engagement in SSTC and in fields of emerging demands from the Global South. As outlined in WFP's 2021 evaluation of its SSTC policy, more needs to be done to mainstream SSTC across country programming and other corporate frameworks; to improve corporate understanding of SSTC's ROI; to enhance evidence generation and learning; to improve strategic and operational guidance; to strengthen staff capability; and to deepen United Nations-wide partnerships and joint work towards international norms and principles relating to human rights, gender equality and leaving no one behind. The consultations conducted for this policy update firmly corroborated this while also stressing the need for better in-house coordination, more focus on results, and solutions that are vetted and packaged adequately.
7. This policy update constitutes an avenue not only for addressing the remaining challenges, but also for guiding WFP's efforts to consolidate its portfolio and respond to emerging demands by developing countries while also involving additional triangular partners such as members of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC).

Definitions and key concepts

8. Since the adoption of the 2015 SSTC policy, multilateral definitions for SSTC have remained widely unchanged. The latest (2016) update of the Secretary-General's framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support for SSTC and the BAPA+40 outcome document uses the following definitions:
 - South-South cooperation is a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how and through regional and interregional collective actions, including partnerships involving governments, regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector, for their individual and/or mutual benefit within and across regions.
 - Triangular cooperation involves Southern driven partnerships between two or more developing countries supported by developed country(ies)/or multilateral organization(s) to implement development cooperation programmes and projects.
9. Accordingly, WFP's support for SSTC takes place as a triangular partner, and is further framed by the following conceptual definitions:

10. SSTC is a key to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and plays a particularly critical role to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, on zero hunger and also as a means for implementation of the SDGs, as outlined in SDG 17 with its direct reference under target 17.6.
11. SSTC contributes to strengthening country capacity, in line with WFP's vision stated in the respective CCS 2022 policy stating that "aligned with national/local priorities, WFP contributes to strengthened national capacities, resulting in effective and impactful in-country systems." SSTC also furthers strategic partnerships and policy advocacy among developing countries, as well as the mobilization of resources from the Global South and triangular partners.
12. WFP-supported SSTC contributes to capacity changes in the individual, organizational and enabling environment domains through a whole-of-society approach. It promotes access to and use of country-owned tools, skills, knowledge and innovations that can strengthen national and local programmes and systems needed to achieve SDG 2 and SDG 17. In SSTC (and contrastingly to its CCS efforts where it serves as a direct provider of its own expertise) WFP plays essentially a facilitator role brokering exchanges between Global South countries.
13. WFP's SSTC support also provides wide-ranging opportunities for governments and other national and local partners to expand their network of partnerships and mobilize additional resources for their zero hunger goals. In addition, SSTC is also a powerful driver for advocacy of policy, institutional and system change, particularly with a view to the most vulnerable populations.
14. SSTC involves providers, recipients and triangular partners. Providers are national and local stakeholders from developing countries that own solutions and make available their technical and/or financial peer support to other countries. Recipients are partners from developing countries that benefit from the expertise of a provider's solutions. Developing countries might play a dual role, i.e., both providing and receiving. Triangular partners are traditional development partners (members of OECD-DAC) or multilateral organizations – including WFP itself – that contribute complementary support and resources to South–South exchanges, such as financial means and/or technical assistance.

Centres of excellence as a key mechanism for WFP's support to SSTC

The WFP COEs are a key mechanism to WFP's efforts to support developing countries to achieve SDG 2 through SSTC. Beginning in 2011, WFP engagement in SSTC was spearheaded by the WFP COE in Brazil and then later joined by the COE in China, established in 2016, and the COE in Côte d'Ivoire, launched in 2019. The China and Côte d'Ivoire COEs are at the forefront of the implementation of WFP SSTC initiatives such as efforts to enhance cooperation between China and African countries on rice value chains with support from triangular partners such as the United Nations Office for South–South Cooperation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Brazil COE has shared its successful experience in school feeding, nutrition and food security with 70 countries, resulting among other outcomes in the adoption of relevant laws and the implementation of national home-grown school feeding programmes, including the promotion by the African Union Commission of a home-grown school feeding strategy. Funded by respective host governments, COEs are one way for governments to provide and scale up solutions, complementing other existing institutional arrangements such as cooperation agencies, line ministries and others.

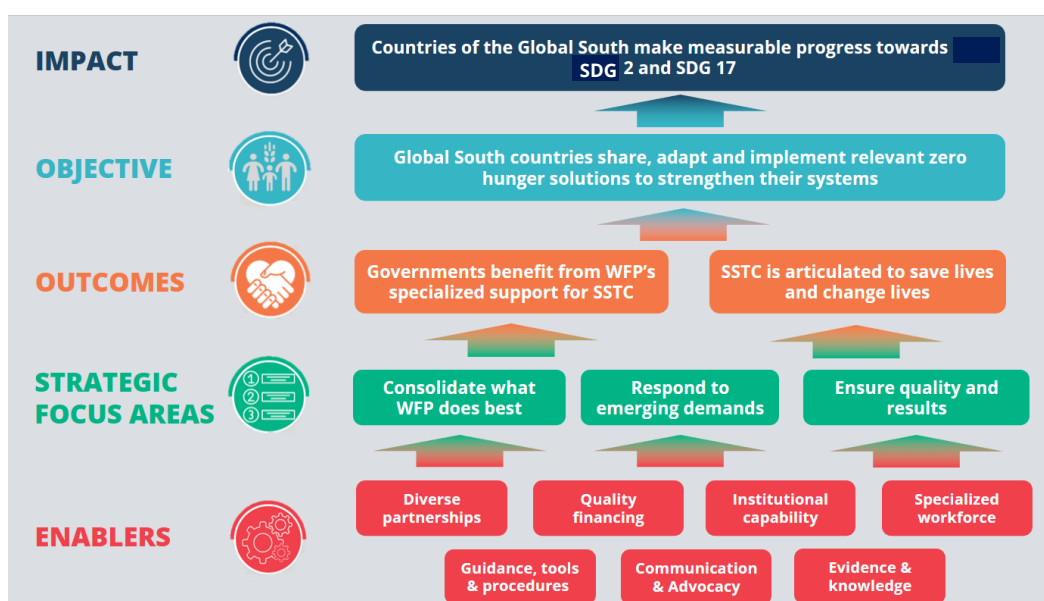
15. The content of SSTC brokered and facilitated by WFP are country-owned solutions in the areas of SDG 2. These solutions are defined as an approach and/or methodology developed and acquired to solve a specific problem, ranging from policy and programmes to tools and procedures, among others. They are developed by a national stakeholder (such as line ministries, research institutions, local civil society organizations, etc.) from a developing country, as opposed to solutions developed by WFP or other international partners.

Principles for WFP's SSTC engagement

16. WFP will engage in SSTC that meets the following principles:
- Leaving no one behind, especially the most vulnerable: the people benefiting from WFP's engagement in SSTC should be the most vulnerable people and their communities.
 - Gender equality and women's rights: SSTC brokered and facilitated by WFP must consider the equal exercise of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards by women, men, girls and boys.
 - Country demand and local inclusive ownership: WFP brokers and facilitates SSTC at the national, subnational and community levels, responding to country demand and ownership, while ensuring that all voices are heard and adjusting solutions to local challenges and opportunities.
 - Innovative high-quality solutions: WFP supports countries in sharing innovative practices as well as capturing and packaging country-owned solutions.
 - Stronger country systems and capacity: in facilitating SSTC WFP focuses on using and strengthening national systems and institutions.

Theory of change

17. Building on the overall theory of change for SSTC used in the 2021 SSTC policy evaluation and endorsed by the global SSTC task force in 2021, this policy relies on the following theory of change.



Vision for impact

18. This policy envisions that demand-driven SSTC significantly empowers countries of the Global South to accelerate measurable progress towards SDG 2 and SDG 17.
19. To ensure SSTC as a means for implementing the 2030 Agenda and particularly SDG 2, WFP's role as a facilitator, broker and matchmaker for SSTC will be based on clear comparative advantages while meeting quality standards and principles. Concurrently, SSTC will also be articulated in ways that optimize its contribution to saving lives and changing lives, particularly by strengthening country capacity, supporting diverse partnerships, mobilizing resources and deepening advocacy for achieving zero hunger.

Objective and outcomes

20. Complementing WFP's ambition to provide facilitation support to country-led SSTC, this updated policy also intends to ensure the contributions of SSTC to saving lives and changing lives, thus pursuing the objective and outcomes outlined below.

Objective

21. WFP-facilitated SSTC enables Global South country actors (institutions and individuals) to sustainably share, adapt and implement zero hunger solutions to strengthen their national and local food security and nutrition systems with a focus on vulnerable groups.

Outcomes

22. To achieve this objective, this policy pursues two supporting outcomes:
 - Outcome 1: Governments benefit from WFP's specialized support for SSTC and the matching of solutions in the area of SDG 2.
 - Outcome 2: Country-led SSTC is articulated to save lives and change lives, by strengthening national and local capacity and systems, deepening partnerships and mobilizing resources for accelerating progress to achieve zero hunger.

Strategic focus areas

23. In line with lessons learned since adoption of the original SSTC policy, and a changing and maturing SSTC context, WFP will focus on the following three strategic areas:
 - Consolidating what WFP does best in SSTC
 - WFP's SSTC portfolio has grown dynamically since 2015. 91 percent of WFP country offices engaged with host governments on SSTC in 2021, compared to 62 percent in 2017. In 2021 alone WFP worked with 62 developing countries on more than 60 projects for which USD 7.5 million was mobilized. Nevertheless, the policy evaluation and consultations conducted for this policy update show that more investment is needed to expand impact in WFP's traditional SSTC thematic areas such as school feeding, nutrition, safety nets implementation and small farmers' market access. While WFP has advanced in its incipient capacity to support SSTC, it is opportune for these thematic areas to move from "pilot" approaches to larger scale, more impactful and sustainable engagement while ensuring a strong and continued focus on quality and results.

Diversifying financing partnerships for SSTC – Cassava value chain in the Republic of the Congo

To address the root causes of food insecurity and contribute to reducing the Congo's dependence on food imports, WFP worked with multiple partners to strengthen the country's cassava value chain. Such capacity strengthening efforts were complemented by SSTC initiatives at the grassroots level, with strong local leadership. Since 2019, this initiative has benefitted from complementary funding from triangular and Southern partners, including from Germany, Canada, the European Union, China, the fellow RBAs and recently India, Brazil and the South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation. As such, it constitutes valuable experience in scaling up WFP's collaboration with diverse partners in the area of SSTC.

- Responding to SSTC emerging demands
 - Given the harsh impact of interlinked crises on the most vulnerable people, WFP is experiencing emerging demand for the facilitation of South-South cooperation in SSTC areas such as supply chain management, emergency preparedness and response, disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action. Based on country demand, WFP's comparative advantage in respective thematic areas and other relevant criteria of emerging demand, WFP will collaborate with partners interested in such fields where SSTC can contribute impactfully. In these areas, WFP will also support regional SSTC platforms and bodies with strong SDG 2 agendas. Innovation and technologies will be integrated into the SSTC portfolio to ensure efficiency and sustainability.

Responding to emerging demands – Peer learning for disaster-ready youth

WFP facilitated peer-to-peer learning on disaster management through SSTC between Bangladesh and Indonesia. Building on the success of the Indonesian Ministry of Social Affairs in engaging young people in disaster preparedness in the last few years, WFP facilitated the identification and documenting of the lessons-learned and best practices for replication in neighbouring countries. The engagement of young people in disaster management is critical to nurturing in the younger generation greater awareness regarding disasters in their environments and, at the same time, including them in disaster preparedness and response. The established network between Bangladesh and Indonesia has provided a foundation for future dialogue and exchange in disaster risk management involving young people as drivers.

- Ensuring quality and results
 - WFP will increase its focus on quality and results through dedicated tools, while ensuring SSTC initiatives are brought to a sufficient scale for meaningful impact, including through dedicated approaches to criteria-led scalability, gender equality and leaving no one behind. Further assessments will address the SSTC ROI, specifically to map the relation between the outcomes of SSTC and its cost effectiveness. WFP will pursue a consistent process of identifying, vetting and packaging zero hunger solutions from provider countries – be it through centres of excellence or other institutional mechanisms of provider governments – to ensure that more high-quality scalable solutions become available for interested recipient countries. Quality and effectiveness will be boosted through complementarity with the other RBAs and other United Nations entities.

Essential enablers

24. Increasing WFP's effectiveness as a broker and facilitator of SSTC in both traditional areas and emerging demands will depend on the mobilization and effective use of the essential enablers identified in the strategic plan for 2022–2025. The following seven essential enablers will be activated to achieve the objectives and outcomes of this policy.
- Diverse partnerships for SSTC: Building up on a dedicated partnership strategy, WFP will expand existing partnerships with emerging and developed economy countries aimed at garnering additional political support, technical expertise, financing and access to global and regional networks. WFP will deepen its already active collaboration with the other RBAs and other United Nations entities, including the United Nations Office for South–South Cooperation, to ensure inter-agency complementarity. Ongoing strategic RBA and United Nations-level coordination will be complemented with joint initiatives, including through country-level United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks (UNSDCFs) and common country analyses (CCAs). Partnerships with international financial institutions will be pursued proactively, as will partnerships with private sector actors and academic institutions, particularly from the Global South.

Home-grown school feeding – A joint RBA initiative

An FAO, IFAD and WFP joint initiative supports countries to scale up national, home-grown school meals programmes by leveraging SSTC. Presented at the 2022 Global South–South development EXPO, this initiative assists countries to assess their progress, outline challenges and adapt, to their own contexts, solutions that have been successfully implemented elsewhere. Five country members of the School Meals Coalition – Kenya, the Philippines, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe and Senegal – will initially participate.

- Quality financing for more sustainable SSTC: WFP will design and roll out a financing strategy which will feature scenarios and options to ensure incremental financing modalities enabling impact and effectiveness at scale. Current seed funding mechanisms will be articulated within a scalability approach enabling long-term, predictable financing of successful country-led solutions. Financing will be subject to the quality of SSTC initiatives defined by criteria such as scalability, replicability, adaptability, impact and sustainability. The strategy will outline and define key steps to be taken to ensure access to a wider set of financing sources and accelerate the use of more diverse financing instruments.
- Institutional capability to deliver SSTC results: WFP will upgrade its institutional and organizational readiness to support SSTC through approaches and tools for further mainstreaming SSTC in areas with high impact potential. Priority areas include the consolidation and specialization of the existing global SSTC task force, ensuring a more proactive role of country offices' leadership and technical teams. The task force will oversee the implementation of this policy and provide strategic and practical orientation for the overall SSTC portfolio. WFP will set up new mechanisms to engage with provider countries through more coordinated support by its country offices, with a view to enabling access to high-quality solutions.

- Specialized workforce to deliver SSTC results: WFP will continue to improve its SSTC workforce in alignment with the corporate planning efforts, including the internal capability development workstream of the implementation plan for the updated CCS policy. The focus will be on national staff skill set strengthening in country offices with a significant actual or potential SSTC portfolio, thus improving corporate ability to support national stakeholders effectively, as well as on the overall capacity and consistency of the existing workforce dedicated to SSTC.
- Guidance, tools, and procedures: WFP will consolidate its full suite of SSTC programme guidance, particularly for CSP mainstreaming, results focus, financing, communication, gender equality, scalability and ROI. Practical guidance will be updated to support country office staff particularly, to ensure increased usability and relevance. SSTC reviews and other innovative methodologies with a focus on field support will be rolled out across countries, regions and thematic areas.
- Communication and advocacy: WFP will improve its internal advocacy, corporate coordination, partnerships, resource mobilization, learning and accountability with regard to SSTC. In addition, WFP will deepen its global and regional advocacy as a facilitator and matchmaker by consolidating its external positioning in the United Nations system and with member countries, including providers, recipients and triangular partners. Communication with government partners will proactively enable access to and raise awareness on Global South solutions and best practices.
- Evidence generation and knowledge management: WFP will consolidate and broaden its work on evidence generation, knowledge management and SSTC's impact on achieving SDG 2 through strengthened national systems and capacities. This will entail a full-fledged monitoring and evaluation tool for SSTC, a research and learning agenda and a shared approach to identifying, vetting and matchmaking for solutions from the Global South, including through the recently updated SSTC Match platform. Outcome measurement and ROI will become cornerstones of WFP's analytical work on SSTC, thus addressing impact, effectiveness and efficiency beyond the conventional focus on activities only. Consistent internal and external reporting, including the annual reports prepared by the United Nations Secretary-General, will be ensured as part of the overall monitoring of WFP's SSTC portfolio, including on the implementation of this updated policy.

Pathways for implementation

25. The implementation of this policy will be framed by a plan clarifying the main workstreams and their respective activities and outputs, baseline and required funding and roles and responsibilities. Funding will follow the current logic of a high ROI, ensuring impact, effectiveness, and efficiency at relatively low cost. The implementation plan is expected to inform annual workplans of the SSTC unit at headquarters, as well as coordination with the COEs and the SSTC-related work planning of WFP's regional bureaux.

26. Based on corporate experience in policy planning and implementation thus far, the implementation plan will cover the period of 2023–2027 and evolve around the following main tentative workstreams in line with the enablers mentioned above:
- Partnerships and financing for SSTC
 - Programme support and mainstreaming
 - SSTC results, learning and knowledge management
 - Strategic workforce planning
 - Communication and advocacy
 - Internal governance and coordination
27. The roll-out of the implementation plan will follow a cascading logic by which an overarching corporate plan is expected to be further operationalized through regional and, where appropriate, country-level implementation thus ensuring maximum ownership of and relevance for national and local stakeholders.

Policy coherence within WFP’s strategic framework and the United Nations system

WFP strategic framework

28. This policy’s outcomes are expected to contribute directly to strategic outcome 4 of the strategic plan for 2022–2025 by enabling national stakeholders to strengthen their capacity, programmes and systems for food security and nutrition through SSTC. The focus of SSTC to promote CCS, fully in line with the respective policy as updated in 2022, will be deepened as part of country-level work. At the same time, this policy update also provides clear direction for further mainstreaming SSTC across key thematic areas in strategic outcomes 1–3 through capacity strengthening at the technical and grassroots levels. Areas such as nutrition, school feeding, and social protection call for a systematic use of SSTC in their respective implementation plans.
29. SSTC is also included under the strategic plan for 2022–2025 as a key partnership enabler for WFP to achieve its strategic results through resource mobilization and joint advocacy. The current SSTC portfolio already plays an essential role in widening WFP’s and countries’ partnership base, adding new regional and global opportunities for joint advocacy around zero hunger, and mobilizing additional resources, particularly for country-led SDG 2 priorities. The implementation of this policy will further deepen these contributions of SSTC in line with the current strategic plan and specific corporate approaches in these areas.
30. While this policy will mobilize further support for SSTC in the changing lives agenda, particularly among middle-income countries, it will also generate flexible directions for WFP to respond to emerging demands such as in fragile and conflict-affected states with opportunities to strengthen national and local capacity to achieve zero hunger.
31. Operationally, this policy will be implemented in full alignment with existing WFP frameworks such as the gender policy (to ensure gender quality and women’s empowerment), the CCS policy, the CSP policy (for mainstreaming SSTC in country programming and reporting) and in coherence with other corporate policies such as the people policy (for staff capability) and the evaluation policy (for results framework, monitoring and evaluation).

United Nations System

32. The implementation of this policy is embedded in wider WFP engagement to more effective support of the United Nations system for SSTC in line with existing multilateral agreements on sustainable development (2030 Agenda), development finance (Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development), support for small island developing States (SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway (SAMOA Pathway)) and disaster risk reduction (Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030) and climate change (Paris Agreement), among others. Multilateral commitment to SSTC was renewed through the BAPA+40 outcome document and further operationalized in the United Nations system-wide SSTC strategy. This policy update is one of the first United Nations entity SSTC policies being fully aligned with the latter strategy, and its implementation will thus contribute to interagency effectiveness in supporting SSTC. In practice, coherence and complementarity with the United Nations system will help to accelerate all essential enablers for the success of this policy, particularly in the areas of partnerships, guidance, evidence generation and advocacy.

Risk management

33. WFP's engagement in and support for SSTC recognizes that for many developing countries SSTC is inherently part of their legitimate international agendas. That said, the potential risks of engaging in SSTC will be effectively mitigated and managed by anchoring corporate work on SSTC in the principles outlined above and further fine-tuning the operationalization of those principles throughout the full cycle of partnerships and projects. Some tools that could be used are country and/or regional level SSTC needs assessments to inform the formulation of CSPs; risk analysis guidance for country offices; consistent vetting of solutions; and an additional push for quality, results, transparency and learning. Ultimately, the diversification of partnerships, the increased effectiveness of tools and the continued specialization of staff envisaged by this policy will not only lead to a thriving SSTC portfolio but also contribute to further minimizing risks not only for WFP but for all involved partners from the Global South, and triangular partners.

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

34. The implementation of this policy will be framed by a policy results framework clarifying goals, milestones and indicators for each of the workstreams of the implementation plan. To the extent possible, the indicators will be aligned with the corporate results framework and the United Nations system-wide results framework. Based on this, monitoring of the policy implementation will be conducted annually and is expected to feed into both internal and external reporting streams, the latter including the annual reports of the Secretary-General on the state of South–South cooperation.
35. Evaluation of the policy will be scheduled and conducted towards the end of the policy cycle, in line with existing corporate evaluation plans and under the leadership of WFP's Office of Evaluation.

Acronyms

BAPA+40	Second High-Level United Nations Conference on South–South Cooperation
CCS	country capacity strengthening
COE	centre of excellence
CSP	country strategic plan
OECD-DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RBA	Rome-based agency
ROI	return on investment
SAMOA	SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSTC	South–South and triangular cooperation