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برنامج الأغذية العالمي

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## South–South and triangular cooperation policy update

### Draft decision\*

The Board approves the South–South and triangular cooperation policy update set out in document WFP/EB.A/2023/5-C.

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\* 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.

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## Background and context

1. South–South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) is a vital tool for empowering the Global South to achieve a more stable, prosperous future. A plethora of evidence and analyses – including the 2021 evaluation of the first WFP SSTC policy – has revealed that SSTC can catalyse country-led solutions for zero hunger by promoting partnerships and knowledge. Now, as the Global South is buffeted by one of the most complex hunger and malnutrition crises the world has ever known, renewed investment and collective support for SSTC are more important than ever.
2. Since its SSTC policy was first approved in 2015, WFP has become an established and trusted SSTC partner in the Global South, thanks to a range of investments across the organization. There is now significant institutional, operational and staff capacity to facilitate learning and to broker zero hunger solutions among developing countries. There is a dedicated SSTC Unit at headquarters that supports regional bureaux and country offices; the WFP global SSTC task force produces strategic and operational guidance;<sup>1</sup> SSTC services have been provided to support country offices; and two centres of excellence have been established in China and Côte d'Ivoire, building on the success of WFP's first centre of excellence in Brazil.

### Key features of this policy update

3. This policy update builds on WFP's existing SSTC offer and reflects the current level of global food insecurity and the attendant changes in demand for WFP engagement in SSTC. It sets out a refined SSTC objective for WFP to enable institutions and individuals in Global South countries to sustainably share, adapt and implement zero hunger solutions in order to strengthen their national and local food security and nutrition systems. Moving forward, efforts to deliver on this overarching objective should sit within three strategic focus areas:
  - consolidating WFP's established SSTC offer;
  - responding to emerging areas of demand for SSTC support; and
  - ensuring quality and results.
4. Successful delivery will require WFP to draw heavily on its comparative advantages as an SSTC broker for both "saving lives" and "changing lives". These advantages include its far-reaching field presence, diverse and extensive network of partners, dynamic global operational footprint and innovative institutional arrangements (including the centres of excellence). Efforts must also be guided by best practices in measuring results, generating evidence and learning, advancing staff capability, strengthening United Nations-wide partnerships and aligning SSTC initiatives with international norms and principles relating to human rights, gender equality and "leaving no one behind".

### Alignment with WFP's strategic framework and the wider United Nations system approach to South–South and triangular cooperation

5. This policy update contributes to the aims of the WFP strategic plan for 2022–2025 and is aligned with the wider United Nations system approach to SSTC. Its outcomes will contribute directly to the achievement of strategic outcome 4 of the strategic plan for 2022–2025 by enabling national stakeholders to strengthen their food security and nutrition capacity, programmes and systems. SSTC should also be mainstreamed in key thematic areas under strategic outcomes 1, 2 and 3 through capacity strengthening at the technical and grassroots levels. For example, implementation plans in areas such as nutrition, school feeding and

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<sup>1</sup> The WFP global SSTC task force served as the steering group for this policy update.

social protection call for the systematic use of SSTC. This policy will be implemented in alignment with a range of other WFP policies.<sup>2</sup>

6. The WFP SSTC policy will feed into the United Nations approach to SSTC. It is aligned with the 2019 Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) and the United Nations system-wide SSTC strategy. It is also consistent with a range of multilateral agreements.<sup>3</sup>

## Key concepts and principles

### Key concepts

7. Multilateral definitions related to SSTC have remained largely unchanged since the formulation of the 2015 SSTC policy. The latest definitions can be found in the most recent update (2016) of the Secretary-General's framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support for SSTC and in the BAPA+40 2019 outcome document.<sup>4</sup>
8. WFP acts as a triangular partner supporting SSTC by brokering and facilitating the exchange of country-owned solutions to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 on zero hunger (and, in certain cases, SDG 17). A solution is an approach or methodology developed and adapted by a national stakeholder such as a ministry, research institution or local civil society organization, and not by WFP or other international partners. They include policies, programmes, tools and procedures that contribute to strengthening food security and nutrition.
9. SSTC contributes to strengthening country capacity, in line with its 2022 country capacity strengthening (CCS) policy update. SSTC also deepens strategic partnerships and policy advocacy among developing countries and facilitates the mobilization of resources from the Global South and triangular partners.
10. WFP-supported SSTC contributes to capacity changes at the level of individuals, organizations and enabling environments through a whole-of-society approach. It promotes access to and use of country-owned tools, skills, knowledge and innovations that can strengthen the national and local programmes and systems needed to achieve SDGs 2 and 17. Through SSTC, WFP plays a facilitator role, brokering exchanges between Global South countries; this is in contrast to CCS, in which WFP directly provides its own expertise.
11. Strategic approaches to SSTC have been developed in thematic areas such as nutrition, school feeding and social protection. SSTC, as part of WFP's "enabling" role, can also generate substantial benefits at marginal additional cost, providing a favourable return on investment notably in terms of development results, partnerships, resource mobilization and inclusive solutions.
12. SSTC involves providers, recipients and triangular partners. Providers are national and local stakeholders from developing countries that own solutions and share their technical and/or financial peer support with other countries. Recipients are partners from countries that

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<sup>2</sup> Including WFP policies on gender, CCS, country strategic plans, human resources and evaluation.

<sup>3</sup> Including 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 (SAMOA) Pathway), disaster risk reduction (Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030) and climate change (Paris Agreement).

<sup>4</sup> 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."

benefit from a provider's expertise and solutions. Countries might play a dual role, both providing and receiving support. Triangular partners are traditional development partners, specifically members of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, international financial institutions or multilateral organizations – including WFP itself – that facilitate South-South exchanges through complementary support and resources such as financial means and technical assistance.

#### **Centres of excellence as a key mechanism for WFP support for SSTC**

WFP-supported centres of excellence are important mechanisms for WFP support for the achievement of SDG 2 through SSTC. For example, the centres in China and Côte d'Ivoire are enhancing cooperation between China and African countries on rice value chains with support from triangular partners, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Brazil centre of excellence has shared its successful experiences in school feeding, nutrition and food security with 70 countries, resulting in the adoption of laws and the implementation of national home-grown school feeding programmes. For instance, the Brazil centre of excellence has contributed to the adoption and promotion of a home-grown school feeding strategy by the African Union Commission. Funded by their host governments, centres of excellence enable governments to provide scalable solutions, complementing other institutional arrangements such as cooperation agencies and national ministries.

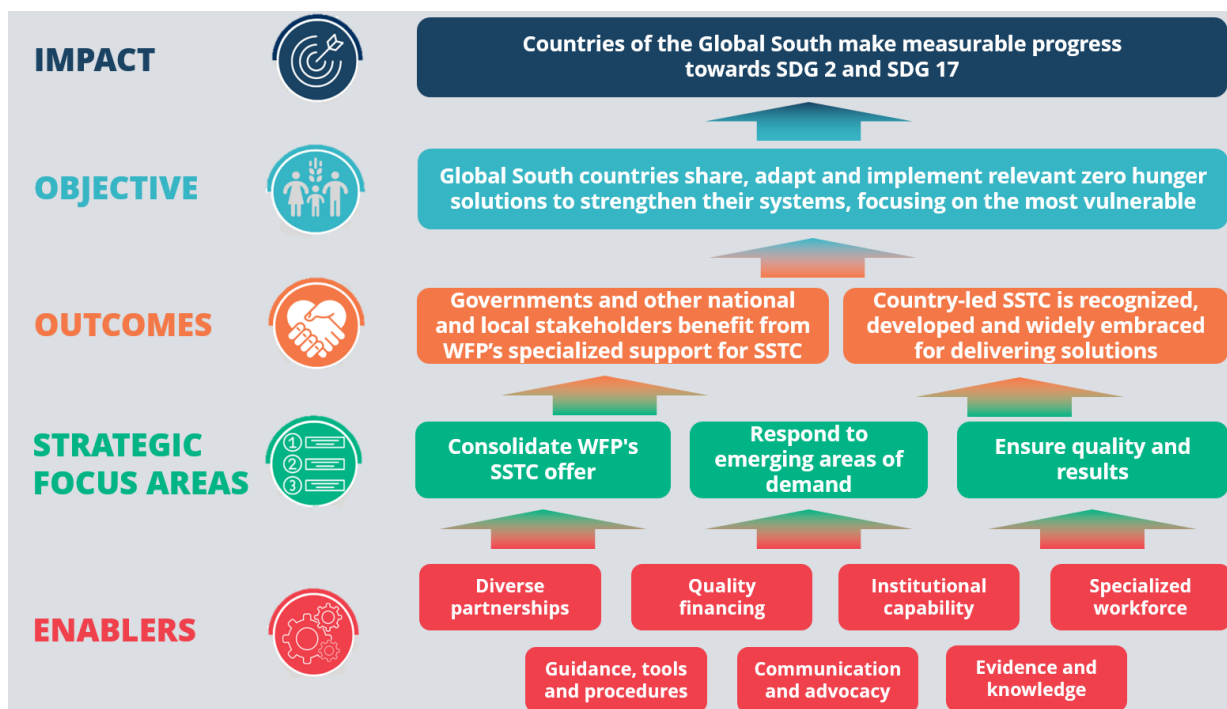
#### *Principles*

13. WFP will engage in SSTC that meets the following principles:

- *Leave no one behind:* WFP engagement in SSTC will benefit those most at risk of being left behind (such as women and girls, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, minority language speakers and those with multiple, intersecting needs) and their communities.
- *Gender equality and women's rights:* SSTC brokered and facilitated by WFP will consider the equal exercise of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards by women, men, girls and boys.
- *Country ownership:* WFP brokers and facilitates SSTC at the national, subnational and community levels, responding to country demand and national ownership and ensuring that communities and people have decision-making power and, through appropriate and accessible mechanisms, are able to express their priorities regarding local solutions.
- *Added value:* WFP engages in SSTC when it can add value through its networks, expertise, quality standards, cost-effectiveness and operational capacity, ensuring a high return on investment in SSTC.
- *Innovation:* WFP supports countries in sharing innovative practices as well as capturing and packaging country-owned solutions that are innovative, replicable and relevant to other countries' circumstances.
- *Strengthening country systems and capacity:* In facilitating SSTC WFP focuses on using and strengthening national systems and institutions.

## Theory of change

14. Building on the broader theory of change for SSTC used in the 2021 SSTC policy evaluation and endorsed by the global SSTC task force in 2021, this policy update is built upon the following theory of change.



## Vision for impact

15. WFP is committed to supporting demand-driven SSTC that empowers countries of the Global South to accelerate measurable progress towards SDG 2 and SDG 17.
16. WFP will base its role as a facilitator, broker and matchmaker for SSTC on its clear comparative advantages while complying with quality standards and principles.

## Objective and outcomes

17. WFP-facilitated SSTC will enable institutions and individuals in the Global South to share, adapt and implement zero hunger solutions sustainably in order to strengthen their national and local systems with a focus on vulnerable groups.
18. To achieve this objective, this policy pursues two supporting outcomes:
- *Outcome 1:* Governments and other national and local stakeholders 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 recognized, developed and widely embraced as an integral tool for delivering inclusive solutions.

## Strategic focus areas

19. Based on lessons learned since the adoption of the SSTC policy, and given the evolving context of SSTC, WFP will focus on the following three strategic areas:

➤ Consolidating WFP's SSTC offer

In 2021 WFP worked with 62 developing countries on more than 60 projects for which USD 7.5 million was mobilized. However, the policy evaluation and consultations conducted for this policy update show that more investment is needed to increase impact in the areas where WFP has traditionally prioritized its support for SSTC: school feeding, nutrition, safety net implementation and smallholder farmers market support as well as value chains and post-harvest loss management. This is an opportune time for SSTC in these areas to move from "pilot" approaches to large-scale, sustainable engagement with greater impact and a continued focus on quality and results.

**Diversifying financing partnerships for SSTC -  
Cassava value chain in the Congo**

WFP worked with local, national and international partners to strengthen the cassava value chain in the Congo in order to help reduce the country's dependence on food imports and to contribute to addressing the root causes of food insecurity. Capacity strengthening efforts were complemented by South-South exchanges at the grassroots level; strong local leadership spearheaded innovation, with lasting impact on small-scale cassava producers. Since 2019 this initiative has benefitted from complementary funding from triangular and Southern partners, including Germany, Canada, the European Union, China, WFP's sister Rome-based agencies and recently the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation. As such, it constitutes a valuable experience in the scale-up of WFP SSTC collaboration with diverse partners.

➤ Responding to emerging areas of demand for SSTC support

Given the increased food insecurity and malnutrition due notably to shocks, demand for SSTC has increased in the areas of supply chain management, emergency preparedness and response (where WFP is particularly well positioned to provide support given its global leadership and capacity), disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action. The level and nature of WFP engagement in these fields of emerging SSTC demand will be based on country-specific needs, WFP's comparative advantage in each situation, the availability of appropriate solutions and resources and the potential impact of SSTC. Innovation, including with regard to technologies, will be integrated into the SSTC projects portfolio to ensure efficiency and sustainability.

**Responding to emerging demands –  
Peer learning for disaster-ready young people**

Awareness of and engagement by young people in disaster management is critical to national disaster preparedness and response capacity. 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, WFP facilitated the identification and documentation of the lessons learned and best practices for replication in neighbouring countries. The established network between Bangladesh and Indonesia has provided a foundation for future dialogue and exchange in disaster risk management, with young people at the helm.

➤ Ensuring quality and results

WFP will increase its focus on quality and results through dedicated SSTC-related tools while ensuring that SSTC initiatives are undertaken on scale sufficient to achieve meaningful impact, including through dedicated approaches to scalability, gender equality and the principle of leaving no one behind. Further assessments will address the return on investment of SSTC to map the relationship between SSTC outcomes and cost effectiveness. WFP will pursue a consistent process of identifying, vetting and packaging solutions from provider countries (including through centres of excellence and other institutional mechanisms) to ensure that more high-quality, scalable and measurable evidence-based solutions are available for interested recipient countries. Quality and effectiveness will be boosted through complementarity with the other Rome-based agencies and other United Nations entities, thus enabling WFP to contribute its comparative advantages to SSTC.

## Essential enablers

20. The following seven enablers will be essential in increasing the effectiveness of WFP as a broker and facilitator of SSTC and achieving the objectives and outcomes of this policy:

- *Diverse partnerships for SSTC:* Building on a dedicated partnership strategy, WFP will expand its partnerships with emerging and developed economy countries to garner additional support, technical expertise, financing and access to global and regional networks. WFP will deepen its collaboration with the other Rome-based agencies and other United Nations entities, including the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, to ensure inter-agency complementarity. Ongoing strategic Rome-based agency and United Nations-level coordination will be complemented with joint initiatives, including, at the country level, through United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks and common country analyses. WFP will pursue triangular partnerships with international financial institutions as well as innovative partnerships with private sector actors and academic institutions, in particular those from the Global South.

### **Home-grown school feeding – A joint Rome-based agency initiative**

A joint initiative between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and WFP will support countries in scaling up national home-grown school meals programmes by leveraging SSTC. Presented at the 2022 Global South–South development EXPO, this initiative assists countries in assessing their progress, outlining challenges and adapting to national circumstances solutions that have been successfully implemented elsewhere. The initiative is expected to involve several member countries of the School Meals Coalition established at the 2021 United Nations food systems summit, including Kenya, the Philippines, Rwanda and Senegal.

- *Quality financing for more sustainable SSTC:* WFP will design and roll out a strategy for promoting incremental financing modalities that enable SSTC to achieve impact and effectiveness at scale. Current seed funding mechanisms will be framed by a scalability approach that delivers long-term, predictable financing for successful country-led solutions. Financing will be based on criteria such as scalability, replicability, adaptability, impact, catalytic potential and sustainability. The strategy will outline and define key steps for promoting a wider range of financing resources and instruments.
- *Institutional capability to deliver SSTC results:* WFP will upgrade its institutional and organizational readiness to support SSTC by further mainstreaming SSTC in areas with high impact. The global SSTC task force will oversee the implementation of this policy, providing strategic and tactical guidance for the whole SSTC portfolio. WFP will set up new mechanisms for engaging with provider countries and offering them strategic support through country offices and, where appropriate, regional bureaux, to enable access to high-quality solutions.
- *Workforce for delivering SSTC results:* WFP will continue to improve its SSTC workforce in alignment with corporate planning efforts, including the internal capability development workstream of the implementation plan for the updated CCS policy. National staff skills will be strengthened in country offices that have a significant actual or potential SSTC portfolio, including skills related to the provision of effective support for national stakeholders, as well as 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 on the mainstreaming of SSTC in country strategic plans, the results focus, financing, communication, measurement, gender equality, the principle of leaving no one behind, scalability and return on investment. User-friendly guidance will be updated to support country office staff. Innovative field support tools will be rolled out across countries, regions and thematic areas.
- *Communication and advocacy:* WFP will deepen its global and regional advocacy as a facilitator and matchmaker by consolidating its positioning in the United Nations system and with member countries including SSTC providers, recipients and triangular partners. Communication with government partners will proactively facilitate access to and raise awareness of inclusive Global South solutions that are locally owned and adjusted to context.



- *Evidence generation and knowledge management:* WFP will broaden its work on evidence generation, knowledge management and the impact of SSTC on achieving results through strengthened national systems and capacity. This will entail a fully-fledged monitoring and evaluation tool for SSTC with sufficient capacity to capture disaggregated data on vulnerable groups, including women and girls, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, minority language speakers and those with multiple, intersecting needs. WFP will develop 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 return on investment will become cornerstones of WFP's analytical work on SSTC, providing a deeper understanding of impact, effectiveness, efficiency and inclusiveness. Consistent internal and external reporting, including the annual reports prepared by the United Nations Secretary-General, will be an integral part of the monitoring of WFP's SSTC portfolio and of the implementation of this updated policy.

## Pathways for implementation

21. The implementation of this policy will be framed by a costed plan that outlines the main workstreams and their respective activities and outputs, as well as required funding and roles and responsibilities. Funding will follow the current logic of a high return on investment, ensuring impact, effectiveness and efficiency at relatively low cost. The costed implementation plan is expected to inform the annual workplans of the SSTC Unit at WFP headquarters, as well as coordination with the centres of excellence and the SSTC-related work planning of the regional bureaux.
22. The costed implementation plan will cover the period 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.
23. The rollout of the costed 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 to ensure maximum ownership by and relevance to national and local stakeholders.

## Risk management

24. WFP recognizes that SSTC is inherently part of many developing countries' legitimate international agendas. That said, the potential risks of engaging in SSTC will be effectively mitigated and managed by anchoring corporate SSTC work in the principles outlined above, which will be operationalized throughout the full project cycle. Tools and guidance such as country and regional SSTC needs assessments, risk analysis guidance for country offices and vetting protocols for solutions will be used to inform the formulation of country strategic plans. The diversification of partnerships, the increased effectiveness of tools and the continued specialization of staff outlined in this policy will lead to a thriving SSTC portfolio that minimizes risk for WFP and its partners from the Global South.

**Monitoring, evaluation and reporting**

25. This policy will be framed by a policy results framework that sets out goals, milestones and indicators and against which implementation will be measured. To the extent possible, the indicators will be aligned with WFP's corporate results framework and the United Nations system-wide results framework. Policy implementation will be monitored annually, and the results are expected to feed into internal and external reporting mechanisms including the annual reports of the Secretary-General on the state of South-South cooperation.
26. An independent evaluation will be conducted four years after the approval of the policy update.

**Acronyms**

BAPA+40	second High-Level United Nations Conference on South–South Cooperation
CCS	country capacity strengthening
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSTC	South–South and triangular cooperation