



Round table on WFP's critical role in social protection systems strengthening for zero hunger

Executive Board round table discussion
12 October 2023, 9:30–12.30
Auditorium, WFP Headquarters

Context

Over the last two decades, a growing body of evidence continues to indicate the critical role played by integrated national social protection systems in accelerating progress towards achieving zero hunger. By better enabling people to meet their food security, nutrition, and associated essential needs and manage the risks and shocks they face, national social protection is helping countries achieve and safeguard progress across several SDG targets and promote inclusive economic growth.

Through its programmes, WFP directly addresses the food needs of 150 million beneficiaries across the world. Yet, over 80 percent of global food needs remain unmet: according to the 2022 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) Report, 828 million people continue to suffer from chronic hunger. Strengthening and leveraging pre-existing social protection systems is the means by which WFP and national government partners are able to address the food and nutrition needs of those who WFP does not reach directly.

Having effectively supported government-led social protection since the 1960s, WFP has significantly increased its engagements in national social protection over the past five years, currently supporting 83 countries.¹ In 2018-19, an independent evaluation of WFP's 2012 safety nets policy found that WFP's role in social safety nets had greatly expanded in recent years and recommended WFP should take a more comprehensive approach to social protection in order to take up neglected opportunities for addressing hunger.

[WFP Strategy for Support to Social Protection](#) was launched two years later, in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, and articulates WFP's approach offering a coordinating framework that outlines how the organization will contribute deliberately and systematically to collective efforts to achieve long-term national social protection goals. In light of latest developments in the sector, this **round table on WFP's critical role in social protection systems strengthening for zero hunger** will focus on the implementation of WFP's social protection strategy, discussing how it has been playing out on the ground across different contexts, and bring to the fore the increasing relevance of social protection in WFP's efforts to respond to various multifaceted and converging crises across the globe.

¹ As per the text analysis of WFP's 2022 annual country reports, through which 83 country offices have reported engagements in supporting national social protection in the year 2022.

In 2020, WFP provided technical advice and implemented parts of national social protection programmes and systems in 50 countries, and it did so in 66 in 2022 (an increase of 16 countries that amounts to a 33 percent increase). In parallel, WFP has worked together with other international partners through coalitions such as the Universal Social Protection 2030 initiative, the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, and is chairing a global working group on food systems and social protection.

Brought to the forefront of the organization’s work during the COVID-19 pandemic, the provision of technical and operational support to national social protection systems continues to be a core pillar of WFP’s response to crises across the globe due to an unprecedented demand and expansion of the sector. According to the World Bank, between January 2020 and 2022, the number of active social protection and labour measures introduced by governments went from 752 to 3,856 with a total expenditure for the sector across the globe averaging 2 percent of national GDP.

Objectives

The round table discussion will clarify WFP's understanding of, and contribution to national social protection. It will illustrate to Member States how the organization has been increasingly contributing to strengthening national social protection systems and discuss the importance for WFP to fund the implementation of the organization’s strategy that was released in 2021.

The session will count on the participation of governments, WFP headquarters/regional bureau/country office leadership, donors, academics and partners to further demonstrate the critical role WFP plays in actively advancing and convening social protection efforts with humanitarian and development actors to accelerate and achieve progress towards zero hunger at scale.

Agenda

9:30–9:35	<p>Opening and welcoming remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Valerie Guarnieri, WFP Assistant Executive Director, Programme and Policy Development Department
9:35–9:55	<p>Setting the scene: The relevance of social protection to hunger. Why is it strategic for WFP and the realization of its mandate, and why does social protection also need WFP?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Jane Nzisa Kitili, Director of Social Protection, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Kenya: on why social protection is critical to governments for achieving zero hunger • Prof. Stephen Devereux, Professorial Research Fellow, Institute of Development Studies: introducing social protection and reflecting on the organization’s added value to social protection (virtual participation)

9:55–10:30	<p>The significance of WFP’s role and mandate in supporting social protection for zero hunger, malnutrition as well as addressing complex and converging crises</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. James Ebitu, Director of Social Protection, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development of Uganda: presenting WFP’s support to the national social protection programme to reduce malnutrition • Ms Kinday Samba, WFP Country Director, Mauritania: presenting WFP’s support to shock-responsive social protection for lean season and inclusion of refugees • Mr. Antoine Renard, WFP Deputy Country Director (Operations), Lebanon: presenting how WFP is delivering social protection at scale on behalf of government • Mr. Horacio Coral, Social Development Director, National Planning Department of Colombia: presenting key contributions and added value of WFP in building national social protection systems integrating migrants
10:30 - 10:45	Q&A – moderated discussion
10:45–11:00	<p>WFP’s increasing relevance as a social protection partner across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Iffath Sharif, Global Director, Social Protection and Jobs, World Bank: speaking about the World Bank’s work in social protection and WFP’s role as a partner • Mr. Marco Knowles, Senior Social Protection Officer, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): presenting on WFP and FAO joint collaboration in social protection
11:00–11:10	Q&A – moderated discussion
11:10–11:35	<p>Way forward for the implementation of WFP’s social protection strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Federica Zelada, WFP Evaluation Officer, Office of Evaluation: presenting the summary of evaluation evidence on social protection • Mr. David Kaatrud, WFP Director, Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division: presenting the global and regional implementation plans for WFP’s social protection strategy
11:35–11:55	Q&A – moderated discussion
11:55–12:00	<p>Closing remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Valerie Guarnieri, WFP Assistant Executive Director, Programme and Policy Development Department: concluding on WFP’s vision and ambitions as a social protection partner for zero hunger
12:00	Lunch in the Peace Garden