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Occasional Paper N° 25



Social Protection and the World Food Programme

Rachel Sabates-Wheeler and Stephen Devereux
Institute of Development Studies



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Foreword

Social protection is an increasingly popular strategy for governments to reduce extreme poverty, hunger and inequality. Virtually every country in the world has at least one social safety net or social protection scheme in place. Yet, four billion people in this world – in particular the poorest – are not covered by any form of social protection.

As a global leader in fighting hunger and malnutrition worldwide, often in very difficult contexts, the World Food Programme (WFP) is increasingly called upon by governments to help implement or strengthen their social protection systems. WFP has been implementing various safety nets for many years, but the growing demand to support national systems creates opportunities of a different type and scale. As WFP embraces an approach of working through and strengthening national systems, WFP can truly aspire to help countries make measurable contributions to the Zero Hunger goal (SDG2) as well as the reduction of poverty and the expansion of social protection floors.

The commissioning of a think piece that examines the relationship between food security, nutrition and social protection was a first step in defining WFP's potential contribution to national social protection systems. This paper provides some insights into WFP's added value in the social protection arena and can help inform global, regional and country-level planning of technical support.

Sarah Laughton
Chief of the Safety Nets and
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Every effort has been made to accurately incorporate and reflect the responses of stakeholders. However, all inferences from these responses as well as the opinions and recommendations expressed in this paper remain those of the authors.



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Rationale for WFP Engagement in Social Protection

Over the last ten to fifteen years social protection has become widely recognized as a powerful tool for alleviating shocks, mitigating risks and promoting conditions conducive to household level resilience and wider economic growth. Moreover, there is a direct connection between food security and social protection. Food insecurity describes an inability to secure subsistence needs, while the mandate of social protection is to ensure that subsistence needs are met by public means whenever private means are inadequate. This implies that the World Food Programme (WFP), because of its mandate to protect and ensure food security through publicly funded interventions, should work closely with governments and other agencies that are engaged with social protection policies and programmes.

Safety nets (a core part of social protection) in a number of countries have evolved from fragmented stand-alone interventions into integrated programmes, becoming coordinated mechanisms for providing regular and predictable transfers to targeted populations over the long term. Many countries are also making progress toward articulating national social protection strategies, or have well-developed social protection systems in place. In fact, social protection is increasingly being seen an essential part of a country's poverty reduction and economic growth strategy. This trend in the rise and form of social protection, as well as substantial amassing evidence about its impacts, has led to the explicit incorporation of social protection into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) – included explicitly in SDG1, but also very much central to the achievement of many others, in particular the goal of Zero Hunger as embodied in SDG2.

Despite the rise of social protection, a huge, global unmet need for it remains: from an estimated 800 million people who are

hungry, only a small fraction are covered by national social safety net or social protection programmes. Of these, WFP is only able to directly serve a fraction. Due to the scale of the problem as well as the need for sustainable, long-term solutions to hunger and poverty, for WFP to make a measurable impact on SDG2 it will need to embrace a facilitating/contributory function and partnering role (primarily with governments but also with other agencies). WFP expects increasingly to assist governments in the development and implementation of national social protection systems, building on its expertise in short- and long-term safety nets and management of in-kind and cash-based transfers while maintaining its capacity for operational response.

WFP's new strategic plan (2017-2021) orients the organization completely around supporting country efforts to achieve Zero Hunger and sustainable development, and commits WFP to working to "strengthen countries' capacities to provide social protection measures that protect access to adequate, nutritious and safe food for all". In engaging in social protection, WFP's overall purpose is to support national and local capacity to ensure that all people at all times have access to the food needed for an active and healthy life. This is directly related to the achievement of SDG2: "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture". Practically speaking, this new orientation is achieved by facilitating independently led national zero hunger Strategic Reviews that inform 5-year Country Strategic Plans (CSPs) that are tailored to local contexts. CSPs offer an opportunity to use WFP's capabilities in a more strategic way and with a perspective that looks beyond direct assistance at longer-term strategic engagement around policy, technical support to system building and direct support through knowledge transfer. This is a relevant perspective and

contribution also in humanitarian contexts, where social protection can help to bridge humanitarian and development responses.

The purpose of this paper is to guide corporate decision-making in the area of social protection. In particular, the first part of the paper establishes a justification for the critical role that WFP can play by laying out how social protection is able to reduce hunger and food insecurity. This paper is intended to situate

WFP's contribution to social protection within the global social protection agenda and also to demonstrate the conceptual, empirical and practical linkages between food security and nutrition and social protection. The latter part of the paper offers concrete and pragmatic recommendations for how WFP can strengthen its support to national and global partners in order to deliver hunger results through social protection interventions and policy influence.

2 Review of Evidence for Social Protection as a Path to SDG2 Results

2.1. Social Protection, Food Security and the SDGs

There are multiple approaches to thinking about social protection. Rights-based models emphasize the legally-mandated human right that every person has to social security and protection, while justice-based approaches appeal to an ethical view that all people, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable, should have access to social protection. Others view social protection as instruments for dealing with risks and shocks, which might or might not be grounded on ethical or legal bases, and might sometimes be necessary for facilitating economic growth more generally. Whatever approach is taken, there is agreement on the core functions of 'protection' and 'prevention', and less agreement on some additionally proposed functions – 'promotive' and 'transformative'. 'Protection' usually refers to safety nets and social assistance, while 'prevention' describes social insurance mechanisms such as contributory social security schemes for employed workers. Social protection can also support livelihood 'promotion' and poverty reduction. Finally, social protection policies can be 'transformative' if they address the structural determinants of poverty and hunger.

WFP endorses the 'transformative social protection' framework (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler 2004), with protect, prevent, promote and transform as social protection's functions or objectives. WFP's definition of social protection is "a broad set of arrangements and instruments designed to protect members of society from shocks and stresses over the lifecycle. It includes social assistance for the poor, social insurance for the vulnerable, labour market regulations and social justice for the marginalised" (WFP 2014a, p. 4). Any programme that is temporary, unpredictable, or that does not build or support government safety net systems cannot be described as social protection (WFP 2014a, p. 9).

In the context of the 2030 Agenda and given WFP's mandate to support countries to achieve the vision of a zero hunger world, the need to integrate social protection into the organization's core business becomes obvious. This is because there is a proven relationship between certain types of social protection provision and food security results. While the implementation of 'nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures' is an explicit sub-goal of SDG1, many of the pathways and elements to achieving this are borne through SDG2 and other related goals.¹ For instance,

1. Four of the five targets under goal 1 (all except 1.3) have an explicit direct or indirect connection with food security:
 - 1.1. By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.
 - 1.2. By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.
 - 1.4. By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.
 - 1.5. By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.

many current, nationally-owned social protection systems and programmes in low-income countries contain the explicit objectives of reducing chronic poverty and food insecurity (often measured using child stunting as a key indicator). The design and delivery of appropriate social protection measures in these contexts must involve multiple sectors, frequently working on nutrition, agriculture, disasters, markets and food security. Once the various components of a social protection system are made explicit (such as building a beneficiary registration system, data requirements for targeting, payment systems, delivery mechanisms, appeals procedures, monitoring and evaluation), then it is clear that WFP has much to contribute through its mandate on SDG2, to ensure that the SDG1 goals are met. Furthermore, once we recognize that poverty can be measured across a range of indicators, not simply income and assets, then hunger, food insecurity and vulnerabilities to other negative outcomes are important contributors to the overall SDGs.

Moreover, social protection is a pathway to achieve SDG2 results directly. This is because the causes of food insecurity can be counteracted by social protection provision (as explained below). Over the last 10 years a large body of evidence has been built up establishing a range of positive, and causal, impacts from various social protection interventions on a range of livelihood and poverty outcomes. Below we review this evidence, as it relates to food security and nutrition.

2.2. How can Social Protection enhance Food Security and Nutrition?

The 'transformative social protection' framework, introduced above, illustrates several different pathways from social protection to positive hunger outcomes. 'Protection' measures – especially food and cash transfers, but also food vouchers and subsidies, impact access to food directly, by providing food or the means to purchase food. 'Prevention' measures aim to guarantee subsistence following a livelihood shock, such as loss of employment (unemployment insurance) or retirement (pensions) or loss of a source of income (crop/livestock insurance). 'Promotion'

measures typically combine short-term income transfers with investments in longer-term human capital (e.g. school meals) or physical capital (e.g. labour-intensive public works) and access to economic opportunities, including financial services, livelihood diversification and access to markets. Finally, 'transformative' measures can overcome structural barriers to employment (such as discrimination against minority groups, through anti-discrimination campaigns or 'affirmative action' legislation) and thereby raise the incomes and access to food of vulnerable and marginalized groups. Some interventions can achieve more than one of these four functions. For example, by protecting households against selected risks (e.g. drought), crop insurance has the potential to unlock investment in agricultural production, which will result in higher productivity and incomes.

It is important for social protection to consider food security and nutrition explicitly in its design and targeting, because social protection is usually designed as an anti-poverty measure, and food insecurity is related to, but not the same as, poverty or income insecurity. For example, the choice of social protection instrument (e.g. cash or food transfers) must be informed by an assessment of how local markets and local producers will respond to injections of either cash or food, and the impacts of social transfers on child nutrition often vary depending on whether mothers or fathers are targeted as recipients. Higher incomes do not always translate into improved food security and nutrition.

There is, of course, a clear relationship between SDG1, which refers to poverty "in all its forms", and SDG2, which focuses on hunger. People need to be well-nourished to take advantage of assets and economic opportunities, incremental income is used to purchase food, and poverty lines are often calculated on consumption expenditure or the cost of a food basket. So social protection that reduces poverty should also reduce hunger, but not as much as it could do unless it is designed in a nutrition-sensitive way.

2.3. Evidence on Food Security and Nutrition Outcomes for Social Protection Interventions

Social protection is usually seen as a set of instruments such as cash transfers, school meals, public works, etc. that achieves bigger impacts when these project interventions are linked to other social sectors (such as health and education) and economic sectors (such as agriculture and employment) in a coordinated system. Social protection can be either a single instrument or a comprehensive system.

Safety nets (one sub-group of social protection interventions) can include social transfers (food transfers, vouchers, social cash transfers, conditional cash transfers), school meals schemes, public works programmes, 'graduation model' and 'cash plus' programmes. Not all safety net interventions have food security and nutrition objectives, and even those that do are not always appropriately designed and targeted to maximise their impacts on food security and nutrition.

Nonetheless, most social protection has been demonstrated to increase food consumption, thereby reducing hunger and food insecurity. A meta-review found that 17 of 20 social protection programmes resulted in improvements in several food security indicators – notably food intake, dietary diversity and food quality (Tirivayi et al. 2013). This section summarises the current state of knowledge on the food security impacts of several types of social protection interventions.

Food transfers and vouchers: food aid or commodity-based vouchers are expected to have a positive impact on food security and nutrition outcomes most directly, by increasing the amount of food consumed by beneficiaries. However, the net consumption impact is often lower than the gross amount of food transferred, due to the fungibility of resources (food transfers or vouchers allow the household to spend money they would have spent on food on other things). The nutritional impact can also be compromised if food-based transfers are not nutritionally appropriate.

Cash transfers: Empirical evidence from evaluations of cash transfer programmes (CTPs) confirms that they typically achieve significant positive impacts on some indicators of food security, but only limited impacts on nutrition outcomes. Interestingly, a systematic review found no statistically significant difference in nutrition impacts – specifically, height-for-age – between conditional cash transfers (CCTs) and unconditional CTPs (Manley et al. 2012). The income effect of cash transfers – whether conditional or unconditional – releases more resources to households to buy food, so positive impacts are usually recorded on self-reported food security indicators such as spending on food, meals per day, and dietary diversity. All these shifts tend to increase food consumption in cash transfer recipients.

However, it is important to separate out a transfer modality from its objectives. Cash transfer programmes are not always designed as food security interventions – they tend to have multiple objectives. Cash transfers are allocated to many uses – including investment in livelihood activities, asset purchases, education and health care – which reduces the proportion of the incremental cash that is spent on food purchases. Also, cash transfers might not be distributed equitably within the household, and are not necessarily spent on the neediest household members, or the intended beneficiaries. In South Africa, the Child Support Grant (CSG) is spent on the food needs of the entire household, including unemployed adults, and on a range of goods and services, not only food – and not necessarily nutritious food. These factors might explain why the most recent impact evaluation of the CSG – the largest cash transfer programme in Africa – found very little impact on child stunting (DSD, SASSA and UNICEF 2012). Once again, this is partly because the CSG was designed as a poverty reduction programme rather than as a food security intervention – and even less to achieve nutrition results.

School meals: Most school meals programmes contribute to improved food security results but achieve a negligible impact on indicators

of chronic undernutrition such as stunting (height-for-age), because they target children of school-going age, which is too late to reverse the nutrition deficits that affect children in the first 1,000 days (Bundy et al. 2009). Also, the 'flypaper effect' (when a meal received by a child at school substitutes for a meal at home) reduces the nutritional benefits (Kristjansson 2006). However, a few studies have found that well-designed school meals programmes can reduce child stunting to some extent, if they increase not only caloric intake but also micronutrients, through providing fortified foods (Alderman et al. 2008). Also, home-grown school meals programmes that create structured demand for agricultural produce address food insecurity by raising the incomes of local farmers (Sumberg and Sabates-Wheeler 2011).

Public works: Seasonal or emergency public works programmes can stabilize access to food during periods of scarcity or crisis, by paying participants either in-kind (food-for-work) or with cash wages to buy food (cash-for-work). Evidence from Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme evaluations shows that the transfer and public works component have increased the food security of beneficiary households in terms of experiencing fewer months of food gaps. However, public works are problematic on their own as a response to short-term food security, because they exclude vulnerable groups who are unable to work (older persons, children, persons with disability, the chronically ill), because self-targeting requires setting the wage payment or food ration below local market wages, and because manual labour is often demanded that reduces the net nutritional value of the cash or food transferred. All of these challenges can be circumvented with sensitive design and implementation: for example, women can be offered lighter work than men, workers can be paid fair wages if other forms of targeting are applied, and 'full family targeting' allows one person to work on behalf of all household members.

Public works also aim to support household- and community-level food security in the

longer-term through the assets that are created, rehabilitated or maintained, which often include rural infrastructure that benefits farmers and agricultural production: micro-dams for irrigation, feeder roads to link villagers to markets and services, soil and water conservation to protect the natural resource base and increase crop yields, and so on. All of these public works assets – if they are well-constructed, if they are maintained after the project ends, and if their benefits are distributed equitably – can enhance household- and community-level food security, by raising crop production, access to markets, etc. However, if the community is not involved in identifying and designing appropriate public works projects, or if there is no provision for assuring the sustainability of the assets created, the longer-term food security and economic benefits of public works will either be negligible if the assets are not maintained (Subbarao et al. 2013) or will accrue to wealthier community members rather than the food insecure and vulnerable who work on these projects (HLPE 2012).

'Graduation model' and 'cash plus' programmes: A new generation of holistic approaches are being piloted, where cash transfers are one component in a package of support provided to poor or food insecure households. Complementary components that aim to enhance food security and nutrition impacts include linkages to health services and 'behaviour change communication' (BCC), where case managers or social workers deliver messages on good hygiene practices, the importance of breastfeeding, balanced diets, and so on. Following the success of BRAC's 'graduation model' programme in Bangladesh, which delivers a package of support including cash, assets, training, and BCC, pilot projects were implemented in eight countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Impact evaluations found that participants in these pilot projects improved their food security on several indicators, including 'household gets enough food', 'no adults or children skipped meals', and a 'food security index' – not only between baseline and endline, but also in a follow-up survey one year later (Banerjee 2015).

Nutrition outcomes were not assessed, but the expectation is that nutrition status would also be boosted, not only by enhanced access to food but also by the application of BCC messages around feeding practices and hygiene.

Also in Bangladesh, the WFP-supported Transfer Modality Research Initiative (TMRI) project tested five transfer packages: cash, food, cash + food, cash + BCC, and food + BCC. Only cash + BCC had a statistically significant impact on child nutrition: stunting fell by 7.3 percent and the average height deficit fell by 0.9 cm (Ahmed et al. 2016). This seems to confirm that cash transfers alone are not enough – but this was only another pilot project. More evidence is needed to understand better the causal pathways from different combinations of transfers to improved nutritional outcomes.

In summary, most forms of social protection tend to improve food consumption and other food security indicators, when properly targeted. However, the food security impacts are often less than predicted (Alderman 2016). They can be enhanced by designing these interventions while paying explicit consideration to the causes of food insecurity, and by targeting for food insecurity, not poverty. For example, as discussed below, India's National Food Security Act aims to provide subsidised food to two-thirds of the population. It is not always recognized that almost all food insecure people are poor, but not all poor people are food insecure. For instance, bigger impacts on children's nutrition could be achieved by social transfers that target adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers (Bundy et al. 2009). On the other hand, coverage (access to social protection) is a major challenge in the hardest-to-work areas and the hardest-to-reach people.

It is also important to recognize that the determinants of nutrition status are more complex than just food consumption, so nutrition needs to be explicitly considered in order for social protection to produce nutritional impacts. Specifically, if the disease environment undermines effective utilization of food (poor hygiene practices and sanitation facilities, unclean water), or if infant feeding and caring practices are inappropriate, then nutrients might be inadequately absorbed. For this reason, "there is a consensus that CT programmes need to be complemented with other nutrition-specific and nutrition sensitive interventions to maximize effectiveness" (Fenn 2015). Limited evidence from 'cash plus' programmes suggests that nutritional impacts can be enhanced if cash transfers are linked to nutrition education.

3 Global Context

3.1. Growing Government Investment in Social Protection

Although social protection was initially seen by many governments as unaffordable and as a costly expenditure rather than an economic investment, these attitudes are changing and social protection is increasingly seen as an essential government mandate and as an investment in poverty reduction. The impetus for this change in 'global' attitude and attention comes from a number of directions: 1) increased political attention to the importance of equity in promoting stability, 2) improvements in technology that enable more accurate and efficient identification and targeting of the most vulnerable people, 3) increasing number and duration of disasters and crises, and 4) greater momentum behind coherence, integration and government ownership agendas. For these reasons social protection has expanded rapidly since the late 1990s. Nonetheless, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that 73 percent of the world's population still have no access to social protection, or are only partially covered (ILO 2014, p. xix). Extending coverage has been identified as one of the priority challenges facing social protection in the coming years. Governments still spend very little on social protection, and less in low-income than in high-income countries. For example, governments in Western Europe allocate 2.2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) to child and family benefits and 5.9 percent of GDP to social security for working men and women, but governments in Africa allocate only 0.2 percent and 0.5 percent, respectively, of their much smaller GDPs (ILO 2014, p. xx).

On the other hand, rising numbers of countries across the world have now adopted a National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS). Most of these are framed by the 'life-cycle approach' (child grants for children, public works for working-age adults, social pensions for older persons) or

by 'transformative social protection' (livelihood protection plus livelihood promotion). In low-income countries social protection strategies are often financed by external actors, but governments are increasingly taking responsibility for financing their social protection programmes. Many governments are creating fiscal space to generate resources for social protection, by increasing tax revenues, reallocating public expenditures, taking concessional loans from international financial institutions, raising social security contributions, and other modalities.

A recent review by ILO identifies numerous examples of governments that use innovative financing mechanisms to create fiscal space for investment in social programmes such as education, health, and social protection:

"Costa Rica and Thailand reallocated military expenditures for universal health. Brazil used a financial transaction tax to expand social protection coverage. Bolivia, Mongolia and Zambia are financing universal pensions, child benefits and other schemes from taxes on mining and gas. Argentina, Brazil, Tunisia, Uruguay, and many others expanded social security coverage and contributory revenues. [...] South Africa issued municipal bonds to finance basic services and urban infrastructure. More than 60 countries have successfully re-negotiated debts, and more than 20 defaulted/repudiated debt, such as Ecuador, Iceland and Iraq, using savings from debt servicing for social programs" (Ortiz et al. 2015, p. ii).

The Government of Egypt was, at the time of writing, enhancing its targeted safety nets within its overall social protection funding, reallocating resources of the subsidies' reform to conditional cash transfers for education and nutrition and in-school meals.

One example of a major government investment in social protection with food

security objectives is India's National Food Security Act (also known as the Right to Food Act), which guarantees access to subsidised food for about two-thirds of India's population of 1.2 billion, in the form of either food subsidies, cash transfers or vouchers. This intervention alone raises the Government of India's annual spending on food security programmes to approximately US\$ 21bn, equivalent to 1.2% of GDP (IFPRI 2014, p. 7).

One of the best-known success stories in terms of improvements in food security and nutrition is the case of Brazil. The prevalence of child stunting in Brazil fell from 19% to 7% between 1990 and 2007, due to a coordinated set of pro-poor economic and social policies that included substantial public investments in education, health care, water supplies and sewage systems, as well as higher minimum wages and support to family agriculture. These interventions were supported by the Zero Hunger strategy with its flagship programme Bolsa Familia, a conditional cash transfer that reached more than 13 million families and cost 0.5 percent of GDP. Importantly, these interventions were grounded in a rights-based approach and underpinned by legislation, notably the right of all citizens to social security and the basic income law of 2004 (IFPRI 2014, p. 21). Brazil's experience highlights the importance of a coordinated approach. Social protection alone cannot achieve zero hunger; instruments such as cash transfers need to be closely linked to complementary investments in other social sectors and support to agriculture, in a coordinated, systematic approach.

3.2. Emerging Donor Consensus on the Social Protection Agenda

International development agencies have dominated the global social protection agenda following its emergence out of the social safety net responses to the financial and food crises of the 1980s, and have continued to do so ever since in some regions.² Three agencies have been especially influential in driving the growth and

direction of social protection: the World Bank, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and ILO. Apart from WFP, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is the UN agency with an explicit food security mandate, so its engagement with social protection is also reviewed here.³ The four agency approaches complement rather than contradict each other. All four have food security as one implicit outcome of their support to social protection. For example, poverty reduction (promoted by the World Bank) is expected to result in improved nutrition through higher incomes, but the persistence of the 'triple burden' of malnutrition has demonstrated that income security is not enough, and an explicit focus on food security is needed, in global social protection frameworks and in national social protection strategies and policies. This gives a clear role for the Rome-based agencies, especially WFP.

The **World Bank's** 'Social Risk Management' framework (Holzmann 2003) was an innovative approach to social protection in the early 2000s that classified livelihood risks (economic, environmental, health, natural, political and social) and risk management responses that mitigate, reduce or cope with such risks. Risk management providers could be public (social insurance or social welfare from the state), market-based (private life, health or property insurance) or informal (community support or remittances from relatives). In 2012 the World Bank launched its 'Social Protection and Labor Strategy' (World Bank 2012), a broader approach that retained a focus on poverty reduction and economic growth linkages. This strategy reflects three objectives for social protection: (1) improve resilience against shocks; (2) improve equity by promoting equality of opportunities; and (3) promote opportunity by building human capital, assets, and access to jobs.

UNICEF has a mandate to support the realization globally of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which leads this agency

2. Even in LAC this was the case as Brazil, Chile, Mexico and other governments started "exporting" the debate from national to regional/international agendas only after their programmes were well established. The difference in LAC is that national institutions and political leaders at the highest levels (not external institutions) strongly led the establishment, institutionalization and expansion of social safety nets in-country, in many cases supported by the banks (WB, IDB).
3. FAO also provides some useful, recent framing on the social protection provision and system building across different country contexts that has relevance for WFP.

to favour a rights-based approach to social policies for children, and for women especially in their roles as mothers and carers. UNICEF led a multi-agency initiative that published a 'Joint Statement on Child-Sensitive Social Protection' in 2009, and UNICEF published its Social Protection Strategic Framework, called 'Integrated Social Protection Systems: Enhancing Equity for Children', in 2012 (UNICEF 2012). Three principles are proposed for social protection systems: progressive realization of universal coverage; nationally owned systems with national leadership; and inclusive social protection that tackles social exclusion. UNICEF promotes three components of social protection: unconditional social transfers (to tackle child labour and ensure food and nutrition security); ensuring access to basic social services (by reducing economic and social barriers), including care; legislation and policy reform (to address discrimination and exclusion in access to services or economic opportunities).

ILO has a mandate to define minimum standards for social security (codified in Convention No. 102 of 1952). Although contributory social security schemes only cover formally employed workers, ILO advocates for extending social insurance to informal workers, and for 'decent work' standards, including fair wages. The ILO pursues a rights-based approach that advocates for social protection as an issue of social justice. In 2012 the International Labour Conference endorsed Recommendation No. 202 on 'National Social Protection Floors' (ILO 2012). Social protection floors aim to secure four "basic social security guarantees": universal access to essential health care, as well as basic income security for children, "persons in active age unable to earn sufficient income", and older persons. In 2015 the ILO partnered with the World Bank to launch a joint 'Universal Social Protection Initiative', which asserts that: "Anyone who needs social protection should be able to access it" (ILO and World Bank 2015).

FAO focuses on achieving household and national food security by raising food crop

production, reducing post-harvest losses and food waste, etc. FAO targets the rural poor and supports rural livelihoods: smallholder farming, pastoralism and artisanal fishing. FAO established a Social Protection Division only in 2012, but has supported food security interventions that align, or provide synergies with social protection outcomes, for decades: food subsidies, grain reserve management, and innovations such as weather index insurance for crops and livestock, which are also promoted by WFP and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). In 2016 FAO produced a framework called 'Strengthening Coherence between Agriculture and Social Protection to Combat Poverty and Hunger in Africa', which argues that hunger and poverty can be combated more effectively when "synergies between agriculture and social protection are promoted systematically and intentionally through policy and programming" (FAO 2016). Examples and evidence of the positive outcomes of these synergies are provided in the 2016 framework. FAO has also advocated for the right to food through 'The Voluntary Guidelines to support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food' (FAO 2004).

As noted, donor agencies are supporting several approaches to social protection, several of which are focused on food security and nutrition outcomes. These include social protection floors, graduation model and 'cash plus' programmes, all of which have been discussed above. A related approach is 'productive safety nets', which combine livelihood protection and livelihood promotion objectives in a package of support that typically includes public works employment for poor people who are able to work, cash or food transfers to poor people who are unable to work, and access to livelihood opportunities through microfinance and productive asset transfers. Examples include the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia – which is supported by WFP – and Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) in Rwanda. These programmes evaluate positively in terms of many outcome indicators, but their ability to 'graduate' participants out of poverty and food insecurity is constrained by challenging

environments (e.g. recurrent droughts in Ethiopia that undermine the assets accumulated by PSNP participants) and weaknesses in implementation. As a result of these constraints, these programmes are more effective as livelihood protection ('safety nets') than as livelihood promotion ('productive') programmes.

All these approaches address food insecurity, but they could do more to strengthen their impacts on malnutrition, by introducing nutrition-sensitive or nutrition-specific components. WFP is engaging

constructively with some of these approaches. For example, in Bangladesh WFP sponsored 'cash plus' interventions (through the Transfer Modality Research Initiative) to identify which combinations of cash, food and behaviour change messaging enhance nutritional outcomes for recipients. In Tanzania, WFP, with the Government, is running a pilot of the Fill the Nutrient Gap (FNG) Tool (see Box A), the results of which have great potential to feed into the future design of both the national social protection programme as well as the nutrition programme.

Box A – What is the Fill the Nutrient Gap (FNG) Tool?

SDG Target 2.2 sets forth the challenge to end all forms of malnutrition by 2030. Meeting nutrient requirements is a pre-requisite for the prevention of malnutrition. However, the availability and affordability of an adequate nutritious diet is not often reflected in typical nutrition situational analyses.

By combining an analytical framework and a stakeholder process, the FNG aims to strengthen analysis, build consensus and improve decision making for improving nutrient intake.

The FNG highlights nutrient gaps and identifies barriers to adequate nutrient intake in a specific context for specific target groups.

It uses innovative analysis (enhanced Cost of Diet analysis) combined with better use of existing secondary data on markets, local dietary practices and malnutrition to identify options for a more nutritious diet.

The tool is designed to contribute to national policy and programming planning cycles, with a myriad of potential entry points for nutrition-related action by different sectors.

Source: Fill the Nutrient Gap brochure, docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000023229/

3.3. Gaps and Challenges in the current global Social Protection Arena

There are a number of key challenges driving social protection thinking and practice in low-income countries, now and in the coming years. Pertinent for WFP are: how to contribute to the establishment of effective social protection systems; how to ensure social protection systems are responsive to acute needs (shock-responsive) as well as chronic needs; and, how to extend

coverage. Most of the ideological debates have been resolved pragmatically. Instead of deciding which option is 'correct' – cash or food? conditional or unconditional? targeted or universal? – policy-makers should choose what works best in their context, drawing on available evidence and given the financial constraints they face.

3.3.1. Building Systems

There is an emerging consensus that development (and humanitarian) partners need to focus their support to governments on strengthening national and local capacities to design, deliver, evaluate and finance their social protection systems. This emphasis is reflected in the title of UNICEF's Social Protection Strategic Framework – 'Integrated Social Protection Systems' – and the World Bank's Social Protection and Labor Strategy argues for "building social protection and labor systems appropriate for different institutional contexts" (World Bank 2012, p. 30). Building systems requires coordinating or scaling up the proliferation of small-scale projects into coherent and comprehensive national programmes; coordinating social protection activities and responsibilities across government ministries and development partners; and identifying regular and reliable funding streams. A country where food insecurity and malnutrition compromise national human capital, development prospects, achievement of SDGs 1, 2 and the other SDGs, and resilience must build a system that responds to food and nutrition insecurity.

It also requires technical work: establishing a management information system (MIS) including a database of all beneficiaries of all social protection programmes; moving from manual to electronic payments wherever appropriate; and strengthening accountability and transparency through introducing complaint response mechanisms (CRM), monitoring, evaluations and audits, among other things.

3.3.2. Building flexible, shock-responsive Systems

The worsening forecasts and outlook on climate and disaster-related shocks and threats, the increasing strain on humanitarian systems, and the massive rise in the numbers of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) – to its highest point since World War II – all coalesce to imply that crises are increasingly characterized by a combination of multiple and compounding vulnerabilities. Whether from violence, poverty, weak governance, natural disasters or instability, the complex and non-linear nature of crises means that any intervention to protect people from shocks

throughout the life cycle and support livelihoods will need to be specific to a wide range of contexts.

While the chronically poor and vulnerable should be served by a nationally owned social protection system, acute poverty (measured in terms of food insecurity, wasting or asset depletion), as a result of crisis and shocks, can be responded to through a variety of well-designed contingency mechanisms that enable flexible coverage. Recent language to describe this latter function is 'shock-sensitive' or 'shock-responsive' social protection. Social protection programmes are increasingly being designed, and re-designed, with contingency funds and plans to be able to scale up for seasonal or recurrent crises (Slater and Bhuvandendra 2013). Shock-responsive social protection means that programmes and systems are designed to be able to respond to what is traditionally understood as an 'emergency' by the humanitarian community: a covariate shock that affects a large number of people at once, such as a natural disaster (Oxford Policy Management 2015).

Much of the institutional architecture required for a shock-responsive system is identical to, or is in addition to, an already existing social protection system. For instance, in the event of a sudden drought, in order to address an increased caseload of food insecure people, trigger events, pre-registration of potential beneficiaries, delivery systems, beneficiary identification systems, etc., must all be in place so that response is timely and efficient. This is a relatively new area of work within the social protection arena, yet there have been some successful cases (in Kenya and Ethiopia) of contingency planning and the ability of the system to scale up and out in the context of an emergency. WFP has delivered humanitarian assistance through national systems following a shock, as top-ups to national safety nets, most recently in Philippines (following both Typhoon Haiyan and Typhoon Ruby), Fiji (following Tropical Cyclone Winston), Sri Lanka (following the 2016 floods) and Ecuador (following the 2016 earthquake).

3.3.3. Extending Coverages

Despite the well-publicized surge in the number of social protection programmes across the world, coverage remains low and inadequate in most countries with high proportions of poor and food insecure people. According to 'The State of Social Safety Nets 2015', in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia "only one-tenth and one-fifth of the poorest 20 percent have access to social safety nets, respectively" (World Bank 2015, p. 1). This persistent under-coverage needs to be addressed, especially if social protection is seen as a right that duty-bearers (especially states) are bound to uphold. The reasons for this patchy coverage include limited institutional and human capacities, difficulties in reaching people in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, fiscal constraints, and lack of political will.

Also important is to focus attention on areas and groups that have been left behind.⁴ Most social protection in Africa and Asia originated in rural areas (e.g. public works and safety nets against seasonal hunger) and target smallholder farming families. Non-farming rural populations are often overlooked and the urban poor are also relatively neglected, especially urban informal workers who do not have access to formal social security schemes. Very few social protection programmes have been designed for urban areas.

Apart from expanding 'horizontal coverage', there is also a need to expand the level of social protection offered ('vertical coverage'), by raising the payment amounts on social assistance and social insurance schemes. Very few cash transfer programmes are generous enough to reduce the poverty headcount – most deliver only enough support to alleviate the worst symptoms of hunger and deprivation, but leave recipients chronically poor and food insecure.

3.3.4. Summary

A scenario-building exercise on the future of social protection concluded that "there is no single linear pathway for social protection in a given country, but multiple trajectories that are highly context-specific and subject to change over time" (Devereux et al. 2015, p. 6). Main determinants of the trajectory of social protection policies in particular countries and regions include: political ideologies (both domestically and in the global development discourse), institutional and fiscal capacities, and policy diffusion processes. For example, conditional cash transfers are predominant in Latin America; unconditional cash transfers (child benefits, social pensions) are more popular in Africa; and employment guarantee schemes and 'graduation model' programmes are found mainly in South Asia. On the other hand, there is increasing convergence around the view that uncoordinated projects and programmes need to be aggregated into comprehensive social protection systems, and that coverage needs to increase.

4. This would also include a gendered analysis of groups least likely to be covered by social protection.

History of WFP's Engagement with Safety Nets and Social Protection

4.1. Food-based Safety Nets

Over the past few decades, many WFP projects have served as safety nets or have contributed to social protection. Only in the late 1990s, however, did WFP start labelling some of its long-term activities explicitly as 'social protection'. A WFP research paper, published in 1998, analysed the role of WFP's 'food-based safety nets', focusing on the cases of Ethiopia, Malawi, Pakistan, Palestine and Bangladesh as examples of countries where WFP was channelling its food aid through national food-based safety nets (WFP 1998). The findings of the research paper were integrated into a Policy Issues Paper that defined WFP's food aid as an "enabler" for poor people to escape the hunger trap and enjoy longer-term development opportunities (WFP 1999).

In 2004, after a consultative process, WFP presented a fully-fledged policy on food-based safety nets to the Executive Board (WFP 2004). The policy described the three approaches WFP usually takes in implementing or supporting food-based safety nets:

(a) Transitioning. Where only a limited national social protection system is in place, WFP assists governments in laying the groundwork for the system. Sierra Leone and Afghanistan were mentioned as examples.

(b) Establishing. Where governments are in the process of establishing national safety net programmes, WFP supports the design and implementation of the programmes. The policy cited Ethiopia and Malawi as countries where WFP has been providing support to the development of the national safety nets programmes and implementing some food-based components of it.

(c) Improving. In countries with strong capacities and well-established national food-based safety net programmes, WFP helps improve the national social protection

system. In Indonesia, for instance, WFP employed the Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) methodology to better target the safety nets. In India, it helped combine the distribution of meals with nutrition and health education. WFP also introduced the use of fortified meals in the national school meals programmes. In Ecuador WFP helped coordinate independent safety net activities.

These approaches to food-based safety nets were further consolidated in the 2008-2013 Strategic Plan (WFP 2008a). Strategic Objective 2 of the plan purposed to "prevent acute hunger and invest in disaster preparedness and mitigation measures" by supporting and strengthening "resiliency of communities to shocks through safety nets or asset creation". The strategic plan explicitly cited school meals and food assistance for assets programmes as possible safety nets for communities living in food-insecure areas subject to frequent disasters. These flagship programmes of WFP reach 34 to 46 million beneficiaries annually.

In 2011, a strategic evaluation of WFP's role in social protection recognized that WFP's ability to engage with social protection had increased after the adoption of the 2008-2013 WFP Strategic Plan (WFP 2011a). However, the evaluation found that WFP's role was still very much limited to operational rather than systemic and strategic contributions to social protection. The evaluation recommended that: WFP base its social protection efforts on its comparative advantage in food-based safety nets; develop the capacities of the organization and staff on safety nets and social protection; clearly position itself on safety nets and social protection and engage positively with external actors; contribute to the development of national systems; and adhere to international standards of good practice on social protection.

WFP updated its safety nets policy in 2012 because it needed a higher sensitivity to the wide range of contexts in which WFP works and

a greater awareness of growing risks such as food price volatility, weather-related disasters, rapid urbanization, and widening inequality. The updated policy defined five different contexts (WFP 2012):

(a) Lower capacity, relatively unstable contexts. Examples include Afghanistan, Haiti, Liberia, the Niger, the Sudan and Yemen. In these contexts, WFP is called on to lead the implementation of large-scale food-based safety nets, or to provide a range of supportive functions, such as assessments, design, or monitoring and evaluation.

(b) Lower capacity, relatively stable contexts. Examples include Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Senegal and Uganda.⁵ While maintaining a strong focus on operational issues in these contexts, WFP also plays a technical advisory role, supports the formulation of national safety net strategies (as in Cambodia and Mozambique), introduces innovations, enhances programme quality, and helps foster evidence-based decision-making processes (as in Ethiopia).

(c) Medium capacity, relatively unstable contexts. Examples include Iraq, Palestine and Egypt. In these contexts, WFP is engaged in a blend of advisory and implementation roles. Hand-over opportunities emerge, yet recurrent shocks and lingering crises require WFP to remain a partner in the implementation of the safety nets programmes.

(d) Medium capacity, relatively stable contexts. Examples include Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, India, Indonesia, Namibia and the Philippines. In these contexts, WFP provides technical support and capacity strengthening, in particular to improve the quality of the safety nets or introduce innovations.

(e) Higher-capacity contexts. Examples include Brazil, China and Mexico. WFP has no operational presence in these countries, but

it can facilitate south-south cooperation and knowledge transfers.⁶

This differentiation usefully allows us to identify possible WFP roles and support within these contexts. For instance, in a lower capacity, relatively stable context such as Uganda and Bangladesh, safety nets are primarily externally financed, but the shares of government domestic revenues are growing. Social protection in this scenario has moved from emergency measures to larger cash-based safety nets and some insurance programmes are being introduced. “While maintaining a strong focus on operational issues, WFP has a role to play in performing selected technical advisory roles, support the formulation of national safety net strategies, introduce innovations, enhance programme quality and foster evidence-based decision making” (WFP 2012, p. 15). As the context changes to one of higher capacity and more stability, the Safety Nets Policy sees WFP engaging more widely “in technical support and national capacity development activities. WFP implements its programmes within the full institutional systems and structures put in place by governments” (WFP 2012, p. 18).

As set forth in the 2012 policy, WFP developed corporate Safety Net Guidelines to help develop internal capacities, particularly of practitioners in the field (WFP 2014a). The intention of the guidelines was to provide an overarching framework that interlinks and complements existing guidance, in particular on school meals, nutrition, cash-based transfer programmes, and food-assistance for assets programmes, as these are the most prevalent safety net programmes of WFP.

Reflecting on the 2012 policy, the identification and detailing of different social protection contexts with the relevant WFP niche within each context could be said to have been ahead of its time – a precursor and influencer to the recent discussions of the Social Protection Inter-agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B) and input into the

5. These countries were given as examples in 2012. Of course, this has changed since then. For instance, the WFP Bangladesh Country Strategic Plan (2017-2020), focuses very much on capacity strengthening and technical support, with limited direct implementation.

6. WFP currently has a Centre of Excellence in Brazil and China to facilitate south-south cooperation but has no direct implementation.

2016 World Humanitarian Summit. Moreover, the substantial discussion taking place globally on shock-responsive social protection has strong echoes and similarities to this approach. However, paradoxically, while WFP might have been setting the agenda some four years ago, the tenor of the shock-responsive agenda is fundamentally different to the approach of the 2012 Safety Nets Policy.⁷ The difference lies in the emphasis on how non-government partners contribute to the building of a responsive and flexible social protection system that will ultimately be hosted, implemented and fully function within national government capacities. The WFP Safety Nets Policy emphasizes the WFP role in terms of what WFP itself can contribute or provide – for instance, through assessments, monitoring and evaluation, data collection, delivery, design, innovations in programmes, technical support, providing expertise for VAM and targeting. While these activities play to WFP’s comparative advantage, brief mention is made of building government capacity in all of these technical areas, or working alongside government, or influencing and supporting the national systems to deliver themselves. The policy engagement and longer-term national sustainability of the social provision is not an obvious part of the Policy.

With the adoption of the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan, the focus of WFP shifted from ‘establishing’ safety nets to ‘providing support’ to governments’ safety nets. According to goal 2 of this Strategic Plan, WFP aspires to “strengthen the capacity of governments and communities to establish, manage and scale up sustainable, effective and equitable food security and nutrition institutions, infrastructure and safety-net systems, including systems linked to local agricultural supply chains” (WFP 2013). In other words, WFP was required to work through technical advice and support as well as at the strategic level of policy engagement and influencing.

The new 2017-2021 Strategic Plan continues along this line as it is entirely centred on SDG 2 and SDG

17, and aims to “strengthen countries’ capacities to provide social protection measures that protect access to adequate, nutritious and safe food for all” (WFP 2016).

4.2. Cash-based Safety Nets

While there is evidence of WFP using vouchers and cash transfers as far back as the 1980s, the interest in and use of these instruments has grown exponentially since 2008 across crises, geographical areas, affected populations and economies. In 2008, WFP had five cash and voucher operations in place with a total value of US\$5.4 million. In 2016 this had risen to 84 cash and voucher operations distributing US\$879 million. The largest cash-based operation currently in place is the regional emergency response for Syrian refugees, whereby WFP transferred US\$ 354 million to the refugees in 2016 alone.

The exponential increase in use of vouchers and cash transfers since 2007-2008 was to a large extent driven by WFP’s progress in needs and market assessments. These assessments were increasingly based on broader food security analyses – as opposed to narrower food aid needs assessments – and included recommendations on non-food-transfer instruments. For instance, the use of vouchers or cash transfers was recommended in about one-third of the 115 needs assessments conducted in 2006–2008 (WFP 2008b).

In 2007, WFP issued a first directive on The Use of Cash Transfers to Beneficiaries in WFP Operations: Interim Guidance for Pilot Projects (WFP 2007). In 2008 it adopted its first policy on Vouchers and Cash Transfers as Food Assistance Instruments to discipline the use of cash transfers and vouchers in the 2008-2011 Strategic Framework (WFP 2008c). The 2008 policy specified that vouchers and cash transfers were going to become an integral part of WFP’s toolbox, giving more flexibility to the organization to tailor its responses to the contexts. The policy also recognized that vouchers and cash transfer operations offer the opportunity to support national social protection strategies. In

7. It is acknowledged that WFP’s Safety Net Policy was not intended as a ‘shock-responsive social protection’ policy, but rather to frame WFP’s work around different country contexts that are more or less stable, given that so much of WFP’s work is built around shocks.

fact, most of the social protection programmes in higher-capacity countries are largely voucher- and cash-based. A Cash and Vouchers Manual followed in 2009 (WFP 2009).

By 2011, WFP claimed that it had become a “leading player in the use of cash transfers and vouchers for food assistance” and that “voucher and cash transfers are becoming central elements of responses to emergencies and protracted crises, and of national social protection and safety net systems” (WFP 2011b). The cash and voucher policy was updated to reflect this evolution and to allow a further expansion of cash and voucher programming. A second edition of the Cash and Vouchers Manual was published in 2014 (WFP 2014b).

An evaluation of the cash and voucher policies, carried out in 2014, suggested that WFP adjust its funding, skills and approach to support national capacity development and social protection, where feasible (WFP 2014c).

4.3. Institutionalization

In 2015, a Safety Nets and Social Protection Unit was created in the Policy and Programme Division of WFP headquarters. The unit brings together new and ongoing work in the areas of social protection.

It works to support the efforts of regional bureaux and country offices to strengthen countries’ capacities and provide technical assistance. The unit sees its role as bridging the work of the various parts of the organization that offer specific expertise to national social protection systems, including, for example, numerous units within Policy and Programme, Supply Chain and Nutrition.

As WFP is a strongly decentralized organization, regional bureaux are in the process of developing regional social protection strategies, on the basis of the corporate Safety Nets Policy and Guidelines. This has happened already in Southern Africa (RBJ), Latin America and the Caribbean (RBP) and Asia and the Pacific (RBB).

WFP coordinates its work on social protection with international partners through the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B), which brings together representatives of UN agencies, bilateral agencies, and international non-governmental organizations. At national level, it works with other UN agencies such as ILO and the World Bank to establish safety nets and social protection schemes that are in line with international standards, in particular the Social Protection Floors Recommendation (ILO 2012).

5

WFP's Value Addition to the Social Protection Agenda

Social protection systems aim to ensure that the right support gets to the right people at the right time. This is an area in which WFP has more than 50 years of experience – designing, implementing and handing over targeted safety net programmes for food insecure and vulnerable populations. WFP also supports improved access to and utilization of social services (e.g. school meals, maternal and child health, and nutrition) and risk reduction, contingency planning and financing and insurance innovations (e.g. the R4 Rural Resilience Initiative). WFP provides technical assistance to governments nationally and sub-nationally to help strengthen the operational tools that underpin effective safety systems (e.g. emergency preparedness, VAM, targeting, monitoring and evaluation, cash transfer delivery platforms). Targeted policy support to countries to develop school meals policies and nationally appropriate school meals models have also been a mainstay of WFP provision. Efforts to support smallholder agriculture and market development have also been linked to safety nets as a way of multiplying safety net programming's benefits. The support that WFP provides through social protection can be in-kind or it can consist of cash or vouchers. The transfers can be unconditional or conditional. They can aim at blanket coverage or target specific groups.

If much of what WFP already does is social protection (even if not necessarily labelled as such), what does a repackaged focus on social protection change? First, it enables WFP's current contributions in an increasingly important field to be recognized, internally and externally. Second, 'social protection' provides a conceptual framework for unifying a variety of different strands of WFP's work in support of governments. Third, it enables WFP to link its work to longer-term, broader national goals to which others also contribute, and finally,

it provides a basis for prioritization of WFP's partnership efforts as well as internal capacity investments.

WFP already works closely with the social protection sector and key players in many countries. Yet there are multiple points of engagement where WFP could contribute much more, by strategically thinking through (i) what it has to offer and (ii) adapting the offerings to country needs and partner requirements. In the sections below we indicate different key areas where WFP has the potential to contribute to the gap areas identified above, as well as other areas. We also detail the challenges for doing this as well as providing some recommendations for future policy engagement and programming. The final section provides recommendations for internal capacity development in the social protection sector.

These recommendations are made on the understanding that WFP intends to re-balance its focus in line with the expectations of the new corporate Strategic Plan, ensuring strategic alignment with, and support for, government priorities.

5.1. Using Social Protection to deliver Food Security and Nutrition Outcomes at Scale

There is a continuing role for WFP in helping to maximize the food security outcomes of social protection, along with nutrition outcomes. While social protection interventions frequently produce food security outcomes, these outcomes are not always sufficient or long-lasting and sometimes very minimal. In addition to a continued emphasis on food security, WFP has a clear contribution to make to country efforts to increase the nutrition impact of national safety nets and make social protection programming more nutrition-sensitive. This

contribution can be made at various levels, from the operational to the technical to policy advice. The added value of WFP comes from the organization's capacity to analyse food security and nutrition needs, to support the implementation of national and sub-national programmes that target nutritionally vulnerable groups and to analyse and advise governments on how to increase the supply of and demand for nutritious food products.

Opportunities

In the context of the SDGs, WFP's mandate to help achieve Zero Hunger by 2030 provides a strong opportunity and entry point to promote food security interventions in general and nutrition interventions in particular. Target 2.2 contains the challenge to end all forms of malnutrition by 2030. Meeting nutrient requirements is a pre-requisite for the prevention of malnutrition. Evidence indicates that many forms of social protection improve food consumption and access, yet this does not necessarily equate with improvements in nutrition outcomes (such as stunting and wasting indicators). It is now well known that the causes of nutrition status are complex, relating to the care environment, food access and food utilization (filtered through hygiene, sanitation, health services and environment). For social protection to have sustainable positive impacts on lives and livelihoods, nutrition needs to become a critical part of programming and design. Based on a history of work in the nutrition sector as well as the SDG agenda, WFP is well placed to contribute its expertise in the area of nutrition.

WFP should continue to advocate for nutrition results at all levels – policies, programmes, systems, targeting and support of studies that help to understand the linkages between social protection and food security and nutrition. Engaging strategically to contribute to SDG2 will require building and supporting client government capacity in many areas, including assessments beyond food security, for instance assessments on nutrition. The new methodology for nutrition assessment, FNG has the potential to make a substantial contribution to nutrition-sensitive social protection (see Box A). The results of a FNG pilot project in El Salvador contributed directly to the formulation of government social protection

policies while the results of a similar pilot in Madagascar fed into the national nutrition policy and action plan. In Tanzania, the pilot has just started and opportunities exist within the social protection sector for this pilot to make a real and lasting contribution.

FNG is a context-sensitive modelling tool that utilizes secondary information – such as food prices, food availability, local dietary practices and socio-economic data – to support national strategies aimed at tackling the barriers to adequate nutrient intake. FNG provides locally-specific analysis that can help to contribute specific recommendations on: (i) nutrient requirements and the locally available foods to meet those requirements; (ii) levels of cash required to purchase specific food bundles; and, (ii) groups of people that are vulnerable to malnutrition.

Challenges

WFP is well positioned to add value to the SDG2 agenda of ending all forms of malnutrition by 2030. While WFP is strong on technical credibility and capacity, challenges in realizing WFP's potential contribution relate to communications (internal and external actors may not fully realize what WFP offers to nutrition-sensitive social protection) and the dynamics of inter-agency collaboration.

If the FNG tool is to have long-term influence and traction, WFP will need to engage key stakeholders, such as ministries/institutions hosting the national social protection programme, and partners with nutrition mandates, such as UNICEF. These partners will need to be involved in the process and analysis from early on. WFP needs to be proactive and vocal in presenting the FNG tool in multiple fora. The main challenges, therefore, are to devote time to communicating both the FNG tool and its findings along the way, and to establish the key government counterpart in which to situate the tool.

In regard to employing a nutrition-sensitive approach to social protection, the scope for WFP may be limited by other key players in the field, such as UNICEF. However, the task of moving stubborn malnutrition indicators is a formidable one to which many partners need to harmonize efforts. The recommendations below detail some

possible ways in which social protection work can be designed and delivered in a more nutrition-sensitive way.

Recommendations

1. Develop a communications strategy for the FNG tool. The use and uptake of the tool will be minimal without efforts to communicate it globally and in-country. WFP has a wealth of experience in nutrition, data collection and analysis, and livelihoods analysis, but it does not have a strong reputation for advertising and promoting its activities and data.
2. Support and document options and successful approaches for increasing the nutrition impact of cash transfers, for example through BCC. WFP is well placed to provide advice and technical assistance on nutrition. WFP will need to coordinate nutrition inputs with other partners. Document, evaluate and share knowledge on how social protection can be tailored in different country contexts to maximize nutrition results.
3. Support and document successful approaches for bringing food security and nutrition considerations into social protection eligibility (targeting) and programme design (e.g. seasonality, transfer modalities, levels).
4. Help countries to maximize the food security and nutrition outcomes of social protection programmes: WFP has a substantial role to play in ensuring that the food security outcomes from social protection interventions are maximized in the immediate and long-run, through technical assistance support to design, delivery and evaluation as well as system support and institutional set up. Considering the countries and areas where WFP works, where hunger and food insecurity are real concerns, there remains a clear role for the organization in continuing to advocate for a food security lens in national social protection programmes.
5. Include nutrition content and linkages as a key component in the job description of any full-time social policy specialist. Ideally (and

given the importance of nutrition to the current social protection agenda as well as the SDG2 mandate for WFP), a critical part of any social policy specialist must be to actively engage and contribute to nutrition sector groups, nutrition policy and design of programmes for nutrition outcomes.

6. Ensure that food assistance programmes reflect a healthy, balanced and diversified diet. All food assistance programmes that are supported by WFP should either deliver a healthy basket of food items directly, or the resources needed for programme participants to acquire a diversified diet.

5.2. Developing scalable Safety Nets and bridging the Humanitarian-Development Divide

WFP is well positioned to respond to the demand for support from governments seeking to strengthen country systems to better manage risks, absorb shocks, respond to crises and deliver social assistance. WFP has a clear contribution to make in reinforcing countries' ability to reach and respond to those affected by crisis and shocks with flexible, scalable safety net programmes. The added value of WFP comes from the organization's core expertise in disaster risk management, humanitarian response, and emergency needs and response analysis, including the flexibility to support both cash- and food-based responses. Added value also comes from the organization's support for innovative models for linking countries, communities and households to risk insurance and sources of finance for crisis response.

Opportunities

A major area of innovation in social protection at present is the design of mechanisms which allow programmes that are otherwise targeted at chronic poverty to expand and contract in response to transient shocks. The national reach and growing systemization of social protection programmes means that their infrastructure (such as their registries or payments platforms) can be used for a wider range of purposes.

Notwithstanding this safety-net advantage, there is a strategic role for WFP to play in supporting social protection programmes and systems beyond humanitarian response and safety nets. The justification for this can be made from WFP's existing mandate as "the United Nations frontline agency mandated to combat global hunger",⁸ which includes chronic malnutrition and seasonal hunger as well as emergency relief.⁹ The traditional 'humanitarian client' niche can be leveraged to inform the emerging shock-responsive approach to social protection and the building of social protection systems. Another complementary role for WFP is to use the humanitarian and food security niche to support and influence partner governments to establish food-sensitive and nutrition-sensitive safety nets.

There continues to be space to inform the development of shock-responsive social protection, as no specific organisation has yet taken the lead globally, though various are active. With WFP's new Strategic Plan (2017-2021) and the associated Country Strategic Plans process, and with the global rising interest in shock-responsive social protection, WFP has a timely opportunity to re-position and build on its established Safety Nets Policy. This can be done by revising the policy in the context of WFP's new orientation towards supporting governments and government social protection systems to deliver results for food insecure populations.

There is a clear fit with WFP's core business and expertise in disaster risk management, particularly through the VAM Unit and its tools that support response to acute crisis (for instance, through risk mapping tools and market assessments). Risk financing tools can play a vital role in the vertical and horizontal expansion of safety nets to better manage risks and recover from shocks. WFP's Strategic Plan (2017-2021) highlights the resilience-building role of innovative risk management tools that link early warning systems with early response mechanisms such as insurance, forecast-based finance and contingency financing. When deployed as part of an integrated risk management strategy, these instruments allow the poorest and the most vulnerable people to make and protect investments that increase, improve and diversify

their productivity, livelihoods and well-being. As such, WFP has led the way in developing innovative risk transfer solutions such as micro insurance in the framework of the R4 Rural Resilience Initiative and supporting sovereign insurance mechanisms such as the African Risk Capacity (ARC). Such tools can complement and supplement social protection systems through risk layering, bridging financial gaps, and developing effective systems for delivery, data collection and management. For example, the R4 initiative in Ethiopia allows the use of insurance in tandem with the PSNP, to better protect productive assets, and allow for improved coping from the impact of both minor events and major shocks.

Globally, WFP's interest in this aspect of social protection is developing and there is some experience on which to draw. For example, in 2016 WFP Malawi hosted a high-level panel on shock-responsive social protection. Furthermore, WFP is institutionally well placed to take the shock-responsive social protection agenda forward, given that it often works closely with relevant government disaster departments as well as with ministries that have a longer-term development mandate. For instance, in Tanzania WFP is the chair of the Thematic Results Group on Resilience under the UN Development Assistance Plan II and of the Emergency Coordination Group, and has a well-established relationship with the Disaster Management Department in the Prime Minister's Office. WFP's field presence provides a further advantage since any shock-responsive system must function at both national and regional/district levels.

Challenges

Challenges in realizing WFP's potential contribution relate to the constraints in individual national contexts, the degree to which opportunities are seen to link WFP's important emergency response function to longer-term goals, and donor risk aversion (i.e. to channelling of humanitarian resources through national safety net channels).

Contributions to shock-responsive social protection means contributions to building nationally owned systems – something that WFP has limited experience with, yet plenty to offer to. System

8. <https://www.wfp.org/faqs> [accessed 25 July 2016].

9. It also includes malnutrition in general, undernutrition, over-nutrition and micronutrient deficiencies.

building requires long-term engagement at all levels: technical support, provision of best practice examples, engagement with key stakeholders, commitment to supporting institutional change, etc. In many contexts (see below table 1), as well, it will also mean supporting government on the implementation of response.

In many shock-prone countries, the social protection and disaster management functions remain separate due primarily to the fact that they are physically hosted in different institutions of the government. For instance, in Tanzania social protection responsibility sits with the Tanzania Social Action Fund, whereas disaster response is overseen by the Disaster Management Department in the Prime Minister's Office. These functions need to be brought together in some way in order to build systems that can respond to both chronic and acute need. Examples of this come from Kenya, where the institution responsible for drought management manages both the cash transfers to the chronically poor in drylands and the shock-responsive mechanism, while in Ethiopia it is embedded within the social safety net itself.

Clearly, WFP's level and type of engagement depend on, and are defined by, the capacities of the national government. Engaging in the way described above assumes a context with some level of stability, existing government systems and capacities, access to markets. Furthermore, different country social protection contexts require very different support. According to recent work from the SPIAC-B group as well as a position

paper by Winder-Rossi et al. (2016), it is useful to distinguish five scenarios of social protection provision in relation to national Government involvement and country context (see table 1). The scenarios range from a case in which the provision of social protection is completely absent, to a situation in which the social protection system is flexible (or fully shock-responsive) and able to respond in an appropriate and efficient manner after a shock. Category one (No system) and category five (Highly shock-responsive system) should be considered as 'reference scenarios'. The three intermediate categories range from a situation in which a coherent social protection system is not yet developed to a case in which the national social protection system is existing but is partially able to adapt and respond to shocks.

Given the context specificity of the framework presented below, WFP's role will vary accordingly and in coordination with what other partners are providing or supporting within the same space. Table 1, below, indicates potential initiatives, activities and areas where WFP can add value.

Table 1: Areas for WFP action across different social protection contexts*

	Type of social protection services**	Description	Potential areas of WFP intervention: hunger, nutrition and food security
1	Shattered or severely weakened system	Context where there is no formal provision of social protection and/or existing structures (formal and non-formal) have been shattered or severely weakened by crises or conflict	Primarily direct interventions but with awareness of opportunities to connect to and support longer-term social protection programming. In coordination with partners, WFP can contribute to the design, implementation and monitoring of emergency response interventions.
2	Ad hoc social assistance system	Initial components of a social protection system are being put in place, providing short to medium term support mostly in relation to acute risks, threats or crisis, yet a coherent system is not developed	Direct and technical interventions. Comparative advantage in delivery systems implies support to developing systems for beneficiary registration, payments, monitoring, targeting, analytical tools like Integrated Context Analysis and Integrated Context Analysis and VAM, technical training of government staff. Advice on transfer modalities. In coordination with partners, WFP can contribute to the assessment of early social protection structures, and their potential scale-up and use for the delivery of food and nutrition support or cash, vouchers or knowledge on a more predictable basis. If some institutional set up exists, WFP can promote some enabling policy discussion, capacity development, as well as development and dissemination of operational evidence to develop shock-responsive and coordinated systems.
3	State social protection system unable to respond to repeated crises	A social protection programme or system exists and is institutionalized within the state structure, yet it is rigid and inflexible or too overloaded; is unable to adapt to increasing burden of need in the event of a shock or crisis	To advise on how to strengthen the impact of social protection on food security and nutrition outcomes. Pilot test targeted electronic transfers. Support monitoring and evaluation system and ongoing assessments. Learn lessons for good practice from WFP monitoring and evaluation findings, both in-country and across countries; establish modalities for making nascent social protection systems shock-responsive. Work with the national systems to complement what is provided, supporting the integration of nutrition and food security dimensions in the targeting system. Enhance the capacity of the system to effectively respond to predictable crises. Where possible work with relevant sections of the state to strengthen delivery capacity at national and sub-national levels.
4	Limited shock-responsive social protection system	A social protection programme or system exists that includes committed state involvement (even if it is donor funded). The system is partially able to respond to predictable shocks and increase coverage of those households affected by the shock and eligible to receive social protection	Primarily move into enabling and influencing interventions, for example on emergency preparedness/readiness of national systems for shock response. WFP should advocate for food security and nutrition-sensitive social protection. Actively participate and influence policy discussions at country and regional level. Capacity building and knowledge dissemination. Support to operationalize linkages between social protection and food security and nutrition. Minimal resources should go to on-the-ground parallel interventions, unless there is a strong case for testing an innovative model.
5	Highly shock responsive social protection system	An ideal scenario where a social protection system is institutionalized within state structures and is prepared to respond nimbly and flexibly to predictable and unpredictable shocks and stresses.	WFP should advocate for food security and nutrition-sensitive social protection. Active discussion in high level discussions at global, regional and country level. Contribute to strengthen the linkages between social protection and food security and nutrition. Prioritization of policy influencing work, knowledge and evidence generation, as well as the facilitation of south-south collaboration so that countries can learn about experience and operational dynamics of shock-responsive systems.

* The overall framework was developed by a SPIAC-B subgroup.

** These reference-only categories were developed based on the Core Diagnostic Instrument (CODI). CODI is one of the ISPA (Inter Agency Social Protection Assessments) tools. <http://ispatools.org/core-diagnostic-instrument/>

Recommendations

1. WFP could act as a broker and facilitator between institutions responsible for disaster response and those with a social protection mandate. An objective should be to help the different functions make better use of each other's assets in order to minimize duplication in both data collection and delivery, as well as maximize efficient and timely response. These assets would include: risk mapping profiles, hazard maps, targeting system, unified registry of beneficiaries, management information system, and transfer mechanisms. WFP would need to demonstrate its own competence in shock-responsive social protection in order to act as a credible facilitator, such as through early warning systems, delivery capabilities, targeting, etc.
2. Even when an ideal shock-responsive system is in place, the impacts of unanticipated shocks might be so severe that WFP could play a major role as 'temp agency' to backstop intentionally lean government programmes. This also has an advantage in allowing governments to build programmes slowly, in a financially and politically optimal manner, by shunting ad hoc, temporary (i.e. non-sustainable) scale-ups to a neutral, non-governmental player. Government social protection interventions are 'sticky upwards' in a way that WFP's are not.
3. Consider hosting a high-level conference to launch the idea of a shock-responsive element and WFP's contribution to it. Country level workshops or high-level panels could be held in priority countries also (Malawi has already successfully hosted such an event). This could have several objectives: (i) helping build a shared understanding of what shock-responsive social protection might mean for WFP and in a specific country context; (ii) connecting government to expertise and experience available elsewhere; and (iii) raising WFP's profile and potential added value in this area.

5.3. Designing, implementing and delivering Safety Nets

WFP has the opportunity to advise, broker and implement safety net programmes that promote and strengthen collective SDG outcomes and improve livelihoods, designed and implemented in partnership with national governments, international agencies and other actors. WFP's added value comes from its accumulated expertise in food- and cash-based safety nets; efficient supply chains; operationalizing policy; and its knowledge-brokering function.

Opportunities

While safety nets are acknowledged by many in the organization as representing only a subset of social protection instruments, nonetheless the knowledge of operationalization of safety nets is seen as a strong element of any social protection agenda and will continue to be, especially in situations of conflict and protracted crises and emergencies.

WFP is considered a key player in many countries for its role and expertise in the design, implementation and delivery of safety nets, thus indicating the agency's strong image of an operational partner.

WFP's established role in supporting the design, implementation and scale-up of sustainable national school meals programmes is worth highlighting. WFP and the World Bank have developed the SABER (Systems Approach for Better Education Results) analysis for school meals programmes, which is used to take stock of a government's policy and financial context for school meals and implementation arrangements; and generate consensus on gaps and priorities. WFP's 2013 School Feeding Policy also explicitly aims to support national capacity to sustain a contextually appropriate school meals programme. Technical support (versus direct assistance) is an increasing component of WFP's school meals assistance, and in nine countries WFP provides only technical assistance. Maintaining this role and increasing the menu of relevant services to offer governments seeking to support a national dialogue on school meals, linked to social protection, is both a current area of strength for

WFP, and an opportunity WFP should seek to maintain given the continued strong government demand for support for this globally significant safety net.

One specific area of opportunity is support to public procurement models to link local agricultural production to national food-based safety nets. There is strong national interest currently in 'home-grown school meals' models, but the potential opportunity for WFP is a broader one (smallholder-friendly procurement for a range of institutional safety nets can also be envisaged).

Many governments still implement food-based safety nets themselves, and here WFP's expertise in ensuring efficient logistics and supply chains represents an opportunity for another WFP contribution to social protection. In Ethiopia, for example, WFP is supporting the development of a tailored commodity allocation, accounting and tracking system to help the Government of Ethiopia improve the visibility of commodities moving along the supply chain. WFP is helping move this from a paper-based to an online, live system and is implementing a supply chain management training programme that results in international certification for logistics managers.

Supply chain expertise is also applicable to countries' efforts to ensure that sufficient nutritious foods are available to meet the demand of consumers who must and will become increasingly aware of the importance of nutrition.

WFP is also exploring how its knowledge of designing and implementing food-assistance-for-assets programmes can be applied at wider scale by governments. In particular, WFP's 'Three-Pronged Approach' is an innovative programming approach developed by WFP in consultation with governments and partners to strengthen the planning and design of resilience building, productive safety nets, disaster risk reduction, and preparedness programmes.

WFP has scaled up its use of cash and its investment in systems to permit delivery of cash through electronic and digital platforms. The use of technology has helped to bring greater efficiency

to cash transfers, and to provide greater choice to people. WFP has developed a set of services around responsible beneficiary management (e.g. through SCOPE), selection of financial services providers, payments and reconciliation, and data analysis, that are of value not only to WFP-implemented operations but more broadly to governments and other partners, particularly in humanitarian contexts where such systems are not well developed. Greater efficiency and transparency are generated by the use of cash- and digital-based platforms for humanitarian assistance.

Over and above this, a number of WFP partners highlighted the role that WFP could play through bringing a broader perspective to the table even at a global level, for instance, through knowledge sharing and south-south learning promotion. There is also a potential role for WFP at a regional and country level for brokering relationships between multiple sectors and actors, given that social protection and food security and nutrition require intersectoral action and a multidimensional approach.

Challenges

Challenges in realizing WFP's potential contribution relate to competition (governments' access to a range of competitive service providers) and relevance (can WFP update its service offerings quickly enough to be considered in an evolving and cash-oriented field).

Increasingly, technical agencies like the World Bank and ILO are involved directly in the design of national social protection programmes, including safety nets. In addition, management consultants are often contracted by development partners such as UNICEF and the European Union to provide a package of technical support to national social protection systems. This support includes capacity building of government policy-makers and operational staff, design of safety net programmes (e.g. targeting and payment mechanisms), and implementation issues (monitoring and evaluation, management information systems).

In this context, WFP's role as a provider of advisory services on the design and delivery of safety nets is

not always clear. Unless WFP is an active member of development partner or government-donor platforms on social protection, its leverage in the rolling out of national systems is likely to be limited, and its role might be restricted to designing and implementing specific projects and programmes, such as public works or school meals schemes.

There is also a risk that projectized approaches supported by WFP – such as public works and school meals schemes – could become marginalized if the development of national social protection systems favours other instruments, such as cash-based transfers or graduation model programmes.

Recommendations

1. Support to the design, targeting and delivery of cash-based transfers (CBT) for hard-to-reach populations and hard-to-reach locations. This is already core business for WFP.¹⁰
2. WFP continues to implement many pilots and small-scale projects with social protection functions that may have the potential to provide lessons to others or be taken to scale. These include the cash transfer projects, home-grown school meals, e-payments and the use of mobile money to refugees, etc. Three general recommendations are that:
 - i. There should be a clear justification for pilot projects based on their added value and potential to leverage wider change; on the whole, they should be limited to areas where there is a real gap in knowledge.
 - ii. The institutions that might take work to scale, or benefit from the learning, should be identified at the design stage and fully involved as the project progresses, rather than presented with a *fait accompli*.
 - iii. Pilot projects should invest adequately in ongoing learning and external evaluation.
3. An evidence-based case must be made for the contribution of WFP-supported safety net

programmes such as school meals and public works to broader social protection objectives – in other words, that these interventions are nutrition-sensitive, shock-responsive, and contribute cost-effectively to the achievement of the SDGs.

5.4. Supporting Evidence-based Targeting and national Capacity for Assessment and Analysis

WFP has built a strong reputation for its capacity and expertise in conducting analyses aimed at improving the effectiveness of humanitarian and longer-term responses to food insecurity, including safety nets and social protection. A major opportunity exists for WFP to contribute to nationally led, evidence-based targeting and decision-making about safety nets, by moving into a facilitating role at an enabling level.

Opportunities

WFP has invested over many years in developing, implementing and refining technical tools for the analysis of food security, in order to better understand local livelihood systems, food and commodity markets, and drivers of vulnerability. Some of these tools include VAM, Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA), and WFP's 'three-pronged approach' for partnered resilience building efforts – the Integrated Context Analysis (ICA), Seasonal Livelihood Programming (SLP), and Community-Based Participatory Planning (CBPP). The objective of all this investment in technical tools is to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian and longer-term responses to food insecurity, including safety nets and social protection. WFP has built a strong reputation for its capacity and expertise in conducting these analyses.

Some positive lessons come from WFP country experience. For instance, in Haiti, the nationally-run *Kore Lavi* programme aims to assist the most vulnerable and deprived households; establish a food voucher-based social protection programme; prevent maternal and childhood undernutrition; and build capacity of government

10. While WFP is obviously a leader on accessing people affected by spatial biases, the organization has also been very instrumental in ensuring the poor, and structurally disadvantaged populations get access to financial services.

partners and civil society with regards to social protection programming. WFP is working to assist the government in providing national coverage and institutionalizing an equitable and effective mechanism for targeting vulnerable households, by using VAM to establish a replicable national household-level targeting database. WFP contributes to the coordination and monitoring of food security while leading initiatives to increase the flexibility and adaptability of the targeting system for disaster response and social assistance programming.

Challenges

Challenges in realizing WFP's potential contribution in this area relate to the need to shift from building and employing capacity within WFP and delivering knowledge products to expanding the ability to enable and facilitate capacity building of others.

For WFP to engage effectively with the evolving social protection agenda it will require a change in focus and business-as-usual, with implications for building and employing capacity throughout the organization, but particularly at country-level, so that WFP can move into a facilitating role at an enabling level. In other words, a change in the traditional mindset – where WFP mainly delivers – to one of WFP delivering to support and build up governments so they can deliver themselves. This would apply to programmes, but also to activities such as VAM, and other assessments. Traditionally WFP always conducts VAM in-house as well as multiple household surveys. Some steps have been taken by a few country programmes to build VAM capacity in government (for instance NeKSAP in Nepal, PRISM in Cambodia and VAMPIRE in Indonesia), more can be done to support governments, particularly statistical agencies, in the inclusion of food security and nutrition components into national surveys.

While WFP is well-known for developing and piloting a number of successful food security tools (including seasonal analyses and crop and food supply and vulnerability assessments (Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis), it is not well-known for using the data and information from these tools to inform and influence policies and programming. In other words, the end result is often seen to be the

successful completion of a pilot project or the data collected from a CFSVA survey. However, in terms of long term results for the most food insecure, the development of such tools should be seen as just the first phase of a longer process of engagement with partners that is influenced by the findings from those tools.

More specifically, WFP generates a great deal of information from pre-intervention assessments and operational monitoring of the interventions it supports. However, this information and these findings tend to be used mainly for refining the design and implementation of WFP-supported programmes. Relatively few post-intervention impact evaluations are conducted, and the lessons learned from WFP assessments and project experiences are not always widely disseminated. A notable exception is the TMRI pilot project in Bangladesh, which WFP commissioned the International Food Policy Research Institute to evaluate. The findings are having a major impact on 'cash plus' programming and thinking worldwide.

Recommendations

1. As a strategic priority, WFP should contribute to strengthening the global evidence base on social protection, by carefully documenting lessons learned and evaluating the impacts of the projects it supports, especially pilot tests of innovative design and implementation modalities. WFP should invest in strengthening its internal monitoring and evaluation systems and dissemination strategy, for example by:
 - deciding to monitor and evaluate a certain proportion of interventions, by category (cash transfers, vouchers, school feeding, etc.) and by region (Eastern and Southern Africa, Middle East and North Africa, etc.);
 - establishing protocols for process monitoring (in terms of indicators to be monitored, frequency of data collection, reporting formats and outlets, etc.);
 - establishing protocols for conducting rigorous and credible impact evaluations (e.g. independence, use of mixed methods, post-intervention sustainability surveys, etc.);

- identifying a dissemination protocol that will maximise the impact of lessons learned from monitoring and evaluation for WFP programming, national policy and the global discourse; and
 - allocating a proportion of WFP's operational budget to these activities.
2. WFP should use data to influence and contribute to the establishment of shock-responsive social protection systems, management information systems, contingency planning and risk financing.
 3. WFP should support data systems, management information systems and targeting support, using WFP's comparative advantage in data generation, GIS, storage, early warning tools, VAM, and food security data collection and monitoring systems.

Summary

The discussion above suggests that WFP's historical and current comparative advantage lies primarily in its on-the-ground operational experience and capacity to respond to emergencies. It also emerges from its strong technical expertise to provide robust data analyses and assessments crucial to informing and planning responses to poverty, food insecurity and vulnerability. WFP's historical niche, mandate and reputation to focus on food security and nutrition implies that there is ample space and obvious advantages in developing strong linkages between this thematic focus, implementation expertise and the evolving global social protection agenda.

WFP's current and potential future added value lies in its ability to export its expertise for the benefit of national programmes and national social protection systems, along with its continued role as a direct implementer of safety nets where required.

6

Internal Capacity and Recommendations

Opportunities

WFP activities until 2030 will focus on supporting governments to achieve SDG2, by promoting social protection instruments that enhance food security and the right to adequate food for all. WFP has several initial advantages as it seeks to reposition itself as an agency that engages with social protection at the policy engagement level as well as in its more familiar operational level.

First, SDG2 ensures that all governments now have a commitment to focus on food security and nutrition. This provides an entry point for WFP to advocate for food security-oriented safety nets and nutrition-sensitive social protection. WFP is already supporting food security and nutrition objectives in national social protection strategies, which are increasingly understanding social protection as a response to food insecurity as well as poverty.

Second, WFP has a strong reputation globally as an operational implementation agency, and is especially recognized for its logistics capability in humanitarian relief, recovery and rehabilitation contexts. This reputation, built over many decades in countries and regions across the world, has generated goodwill with governments and development partners that can be leveraged.

Third, much of what WFP already does is social protection and safety nets, but it is not necessarily labelled or promoted as such. By relatively simple 'rebranding' of its existing and future activities, WFP can substantially raise its profile as a leading global social protection agency.

Fourth, WFP undertakes or commissions a substantial amount of technical work that contributes to the assessment of social protection needs or the design of social protection interventions, and their impacts. This ongoing body of work should be made more widely available to others engaged in social protection policy-making and

programming, as well as generating lessons for WFP programming.

Challenges

WFP faces several challenges as it seeks to reposition its activities and profile as an agency that operates at all levels in the field of social protection. Some of these challenges are discussed here.

First, WFP has a limited reputation as a policy-influencing agency. WFP needs to demonstrate its value-added as a technical and advocacy agency in the social protection area, so that governments and agencies are more willing to engage with WFP for technical assistance, policy advice and capacity building. A number of influential and well-resourced development partners are already active in many countries with policy advice and strengthening of national social protection systems – e.g. strategizing, policy formulation, technical support, training, monitoring and evaluation – including the World Bank, the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom, the European Union and other UN, multilateral and bilateral agencies. It might therefore be challenging for WFP to define a niche that complements what others are already doing, and it will take some time to build credibility in this niche.

Second, WFP has a strong cadre of relevant operational and technical staff (e.g. VAM analysts, nutrition advisors) at the global, regional and country levels, but this is stronger in some places – notably Asia and Latin America – and relatively weak in others – notably some African countries. Repositioning WFP as an agency that engages with social protection policy processes as well as delivering safety net programmes requires strengthening in-house capacity, or hiring in relevant expertise. WFP needs to invest in strengthening its own social protection capacity, before it can offer these services to governments and other partners. Skills needed to deliver technical support might

not match the current profile of expertise in WFP country offices, which has implications for staffing. New staff need to be hired with experience in social protection policy analysis, and existing staff need to receive training in social protection that will empower them to engage confidently and credibly in national dialogues about social protection policy formulation and implementation issues.

A closely related challenge is that of financing. Many development partners, especially donor agencies and multilateral financial institutions (MFIs) have used their financial leverage to build strong relationships with government ministries as strategic partners, and with non-governmental organizations as implementing partners. This financial leverage also gives these agencies policy influence – donors and multilateral financial institutions pay for the policies and programmes they prefer. But WFP is not a donor agency or a multilateral financial institution. For most of its activities WFP relies on short-term funding which is irregular and unpredictable, making it very difficult for WFP to engage with planning and supporting long-term social protection programmes that require reliable, predictable and sustainable flows of funding over an extended period. One positive example is the case of Ethiopia, where WFP was capacitated to sit at the PSNP table thanks to predictable resources provided by Canada, but this is a rare exception that proves the rule.

Lack of predictability of resources also compromises WFP's ability to invest in building technical capacity, by recruiting policy advisers on long-term contracts who can contribute to national social protection policy dialogues and work closely with governments on building social protection systems. The new CSP financial framework might smooth funding streams to some extent, but it is unlikely to resolve the underlying problem of too little predictable, flexible, multi-year funding that can be dedicated to strengthening WFP's technical work and policy engagement in social protection.

Recommendations

Finally, complementing the specific proposals made in each sub-section of section 5 above, the following recommendations are offered as broad principles for WFP engagement in social protection,

at global, regional, and national levels.

1. WFP should advocate for ending hunger as a fundamental goal of social protection and safety net interventions, and will seek to establish partnerships for this purpose in countries where WFP is operating. Potential partner agencies with a hunger focus include FAO (on support to local agriculture and rural livelihoods), UNICEF (for addressing malnutrition), DFID (on shock-responsive social protection), the World Bank (for cash transfers) and the UN Country Team.
2. WFP needs to promote itself more vigorously as a key social protection global player and partner. One option for doing this is to strengthen the knowledge management function of its activities, for instance by rigorous monitoring and (especially) evaluation of WFP-supported interventions – especially pilots that test innovative modalities for tackling hunger and food insecurity through social protection instruments – and dissemination of these findings through both policy influencing and academic research channels. Examples include: evaluating alternative transfer modalities for their nutrition impacts; piloting e-vouchers as a transfer payment modality; and targeting food insecure households through malnourished individuals.
3. Another option for WFP to position itself better in the social protection discourse at global and regional levels is to participate actively in global forums such as SPIAC-B, and in the Inter-Agency Social Protection Working Groups that have been established in all regions through the UN system.
4. To contribute more effectively to national social protection policy processes, WFP needs to invest in enhancing the capacities of its own staff, at three levels:
 - a. The first is general sensitization on social protection – and on WFP's evolving approach to social protection as a mechanism for achieving SDG2 – throughout the organization.

- b. The second is tailored training to senior management and policy-level staff on selected aspects of social protection, relevant to their job description and the country or regional context.
 - c. Third, staff with specialist technical expertise need to be recruited to provide in-house capacity building services, and to fill social protection gaps in high-priority countries. This could include creating new social protection/policy positions (at P4/P5) levels in a number of countries (such as Tanzania, for instance).
5. WFP can contribute to ongoing initiatives to build national social protection institutions and systems by sharing its expertise and good practice lessons with government counterparts, drawing on areas of WFP comparative advantage while co-constructing new approaches to topical programming challenges. Potential focal areas for such engagement include climate risk management tools for shock-responsiveness (insurance, contingency funds, scalability, climate services, early warning for early action), resilience strengthening at household and community levels, and integrated management information systems (e.g. SCOPE).
 6. A pragmatic approach must be adopted in identifying WFP's niche in social protection in each country at each time, which could range from operational delivery of safety nets to capacity building to engaging with policy processes, or some combination of these. WFP should tailor the assistance it offers to each country context in each programming cycle, based on:
 - a. Needs assessment: what social protection support does the country need at this time from its development partners?
 - b. Gaps analysis: which areas of support to social protection are not already being adequately provided by other development partners?
 - c. Capacity assessment: does WFP have the necessary expertise to provide the support needed, or can WFP acquire or sub-contract this expertise?
 7. WFP's on-the-ground presence and experience in many countries should be exploited as an opportunity to strengthen local institutional capacity to deliver social protection, by offering training of government staff at national, provincial and local levels in areas where WFP has relevant technical expertise – e.g. targeting, payment mechanisms, delivery logistics, design of public works projects, and monitoring systems. Identification of actual areas of support should be undertaken in a joint planning process involving WFP and appropriate government ministries or agencies, in collaboration with other development partners in the sector.

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