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WFP CAPACITY STRENGTHENING SUPPORTS NATIONS TO END HUNGER

Beyond the Annual Performance
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I. INTRODUCTION



WFP'S ROLE IN CAPACITY STRENGTHENING TO END HUNGER

The United Nations Secretary General defines *Agenda 2030: To End Poverty and Hunger* as “our imperative for change” and states that “national capacity development remains the most critical function of the United Nations development system and must be given priority across all functions.”¹

Although WFP assists over 85 million people in 84 countries, approximately 815 million people continue to go hungry each year. The truth is that no organization can reach Zero Hunger alone, and country capacity strengthening (CCS) has formidable potential to scale up the impact of WFP's support by increasing the numbers and types of champions capable of driving progress to end hunger in their own contexts.

CCS is a service WFP offers in response to stakeholder requests for support in strengthening their own national food security and nutrition systems. WFP can provide needs-based and context-specific guidance and feedback across a range of areas, through a systematic and participatory approach that enables stakeholders to strengthen and embed essential capacities.

Capacity strengthening support that responds to national stakeholder needs and priorities also enhances the autonomy and resilience of nations. It decreases their need for external assistance and frees up key financial and human resources which can be used elsewhere to save more lives, change more lives and empower more nations: this is what the humanitarian-development nexus looks like in action.

WFP has been engaging in country capacity strengthening for years, in humanitarian and development contexts; its support benefits from the organisation's extensive field presence, solid understanding of context and beneficiary needs, and established networks and partnerships. Agenda 2030 and recent lessons learned provide WFP with the impetus to strengthen its conceptual and operational approach to CCS to better contribute to national Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) efforts and results. Indeed, an in-depth corporate evaluation² and an audit³ exercise concluded in 2016 identified several areas within the organization in need of attention to strengthen WFP's ability to deliver and demonstrate sustainable capacity strengthening results over time.

In this challenging era of responding to the global call from nations for assistance in meeting their SDGs, there is an organization-wide need to demonstrate effective and sustained contributions to a range of national development processes. It is against this backdrop that WFP has been working intensely to enhance its corporate approach to country capacity strengthening.

1 Para 19, Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: our promise for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet: Report of the Secretary-General (A/72/684-E/2018/7). Available at <https://undocs.org/A/72/684>

2 *Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Capacity Development: an Update on Implementation (2009)*

3 *Internal Audit of WFP's Country Capacity Strengthening (2016)*

II. WFP'S EVOLVING APPROACH TO COUNTRY CAPACITY STRENGTHENING



Photo: WFP/Deborah Nguyen

Capacity strengthening, or capacity development, has often been seen as “transferring skills or knowledge” to specific individuals. As a result, WFP CCS support has often been measured through short-term outputs expressed as the number of people trained, the number of workshops held or the number of assets transferred to individual participants. While these efforts are valid, they only impact a few people at a time and their highly technical and focused nature severely constrains the sustainability of CCS support as a whole. If individuals are not operating in well-functioning organizations, or in a favorable enabling environment, their ability to create positive transformational change within the larger system within which they exist is likely to be minimal.

Recognizing the need for more comprehensive and sustainable support to strengthen national systems, WFP has developed a robust conceptual framework and operational approach for capacity strengthening efforts that address individual, organizational and enabling environment needs. This ensures that the technical and functional capacities created in individuals are retained within their organisations and properly utilised in the long run.

WFP’s revised approach to CCS is grounded in ensuring partnership with, and ownership by, national stakeholders, and recognizing existing national capacity assets. It also acknowledges that achieving capacity strengthening results takes time and requires mutual trust and commitment by all parties. As a result, WFP focuses heavily on ensuring that its CCS support is demand-driven, context-appropriate and optimizes existing capacities. By using a systematic approach and engagement strategy, WFP puts national stakeholders in the driving seat; both parties jointly set objectives, assess national capacities and agree on concrete, multi-year work-plans. WFP also takes great care in ensuring that gender is taken into account, so that national food security and nutrition programmes and services perform better in addressing gender inequalities concerning access to nutritious food.

Finally, WFP takes a “Whole of Society” approach and is increasingly exploring opportunities to tailor its CCS support to other national actors including civil society, the private sector, academia and the media. This is a very pragmatic and important way to optimize and scale up support to governments. It also provides opportunities for humanitarians to fulfil their commitment to the wider development community to increasingly transfer capacity to a range of local actors.

COUNTRY CAPACITY STRENGTHENING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY: THE WFP-IFRC PARTNERSHIP

Building on WFP’s commitments during the World Humanitarian Summit and under the Grand Bargain to increase support for local and national responders and based on its “Whole of Society” approach to CCS, the first phase of a capacity strengthening initiative with the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) was developed and implemented in 2017.

This initiative is not business as usual. By focusing on sustainable organizational development, WFP and IFRC are working to position select National Societies as increasingly independent institutions able to effectively and efficiently address the essential needs of local households and communities, particularly the most vulnerable, and lead national crisis response.

Between 2017 and 2018, the initiative was piloted in six countries – Burundi, the Dominican Republic, Fiji, Pakistan, Uganda and Zimbabwe – where WFP could build on a long history of collaboration with Red Cross/Red Crescent National Societies. In Burundi, the initiative responds to requests from the Burundi Red Cross for support in strengthening its capacities, tools and processes for emergency preparedness in cash preparedness, logistics and supply chain, early warning systems and overall organizational development.

REVAMPING THE COUNTRY CAPACITY STRENGTHENING TOOLKIT, MOVING AWAY FROM “BUSINESS AS USUAL”

CCS plays an integral part in every WFP in-country portfolio. In fact, in 2018 more than 90 percent of the Country Strategic Plans had committed to strengthening national capacities at some level, across all areas of sectoral and thematic focus defined by the WFP Strategic Results; today the figure is 98 percent (in 83 of the 84 countries in which WFP is present).

In order to support stakeholders and country offices identify and prioritise capacity strengthening needs, WFP has developed a clear framework that enables them to define opportunities for engagement. This framework helps systematically identify capacity assets, gaps and priorities along five dimensions that are critical to effective national response systems. These dimensions relate to:

1. Policies and legislation;
2. Institutional effectiveness and accountability;
3. Strategic planning and financing;
4. Stakeholder programme design, delivery and monitoring and evaluation (M&E); and
5. Participation of communities, civil society and other non-state actors.

WFP has developed a series of innovative tools to help operationalise the framework. Between 2016 and the present, these tools have been field-tested, adjusted and validated by WFP colleagues on the ground in over 20 countries. Extensive testing and feedback are crucial to ensuring the CCS tools are user-friendly and adaptable to country offices, sectoral and thematic needs.

The tools, all of which are supported with detailed guidance, comprise:



a one-page, quick-reference guide for country offices and stakeholders listing 15 critical steps to facilitate participatory, multi-stakeholder engagement around CCS – from inception and early dialogue to finalization of stakeholder validated workplans;



an exercise sheet that helps WFP and stakeholders create a detailed roadmap for implementing the entire process;



a sheet that guides parties in articulating clear and coherent “Capacity Outcome Statements” for their capacity strengthening programmes;



a Capacity Needs Mapping (CNM) template that guides parties through a systematic assessment of existing capacities to define baseline conditions, and then feeds into an aligned work plan for collective review and discussion; and



the Database of Country Capacity Strengthening (DACCS).

WFP piloted the DACCS in 2018; it is an innovative, stand-alone software solution designed to help country offices capture quantitative and qualitative information emerging from the practical exercises. DACCS collects the information in a single repository and produces data visualizations for M&E purposes. This enhances WFP’s transparency and accountability, facilitates dialogue with stakeholders, donors and WFP management, and ultimately facilitates stakeholder validation of the entire CCS process. DACCS also features a Knowledge Management section where country offices can record challenges and share best practices and lessons learnt; this has the potential to serve as the organization’s first global CCS knowledge base. DACCS has received strong positive feedback from WFP staff during the pilot phase.

CHANGING COURSE, SHIFTING ORGANIZATIONAL MINDSET AND DEVELOPING INTERNAL CAPABILITY

To raise awareness and understanding of the new approach to CCS and related tools, WFP is also producing content and guidance that is disseminated using several corporate platforms, including the intranet, online manuals, communities of practice, newsletters and webinars. Extensive headquarters outreach to the regional

bureaux has occurred over the past three years. In 2018, headquarters organized regional workshops in collaboration with the Regional Bureau in Dakar – convening 19 country offices, and the Regional Bureau in Johannesburg – convening 10 country offices. Headquarters and regional bureaux specialists also provided in-country and remote support to country offices. These resources contribute to changing the corporate mindset on CCS and ultimately will facilitate a more systematic and robust engagement in capacity strengthening.



Photo: WFP/Simon Pierre Diouf

III. ROLLING OUT THE WFP COUNTRY CAPACITY STRENGTHENING APPROACH

To date, the CCS approach and tools have been field-tested and supported with missions in a number of countries and regional bureaux; more testing and missions are scheduled.



● = Done
(●) = Scheduled

Figure 1

OVERVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION IN WFP COUNTRY OFFICES AND REGIONAL BUREAUX 2016-2019



- Field validation of approach and tools
- In country mission and/or training
- Remote support sessions on CCS Framework

- Elaboration of one or more CNMs
- Elaboration of one or more CCS work-plans
- DACCS Pilot Country

Three examples of CCS “pioneers” are highlighted below because of their success in working with the CCS framework. These country and regional examples illustrate the benefits of a holistic, systematic approach to capacity strengthening.

SRI LANKA

The Sri Lanka country office’s initial CCS engagement began in 2014, when a government official reached out for support in developing a rice fortification programme. The initiative’s primary goal was to help reduce micronutrient deficiencies.

In close collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the Sri Lanka country office designed and delivered a comprehensive programme that followed the framework’s five pathways. As a result, WFP and national stakeholders have worked jointly over the last six years to undertake the activities listed in Figure 2.

In 2019, these collective efforts contributed to the Cabinet of Ministers’ approval of the Minister of Health’s proposal to use fortified rice in social safety nets. This initiative is part of a broader public strategy to fight malnutrition and is the foundation for establishing national standards and integrating fortified rice into the National School Meals Programme (NSMP).

The NSMP will become the first pilot to achieve national coverage in 2020-2021. Fortified rice will enhance the NSMP’s nutritional quality and is part of the government’s strategy to increase its supply and demand in the commercial sector.

Figure 2: Application of the Country Capacity Strengthening Framework in Sri Lanka



SOUTHERN AFRICA REGIONAL VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME

The Southern Africa Regional Vulnerability Analysis and Assessment (RVAA) programme is an example of stakeholders embracing a strategy that creates and maintains capacities. The RVAA was established in 2006 by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Secretariat to strengthen the capacity of the National Vulnerability Assessment Committees (NVACs) in its member states. The southern Africa region is prone to climate change and variability, with drought and cyclones frequently creating spikes in chronic vulnerability. However, nations can mitigate the impact of climate variability on livelihoods by accessing reliable and timely data analyses of climatic events, food insecurity and vulnerability. It is the mandate of the NVACs to provide this type of data.

The RVAA Programme addresses a range of technical, functional and institutional capacity needs. WFP strengthens NVACs' technical capacities to deliver timely and relevant information. WFP helps NVACs to expand their focus from emergency food security and nutrition to capturing data and providing recommendations on poverty reduction, chronic vulnerability and climate resilience.

WFP's capacity strengthening support has resulted in the increased ability of the NVACs to integrate and harmonise different data-collection methods and datasets for vulnerability analysis and assessment. It also encourages NVACs to explore the intersection of gender with food security and nutrition vulnerability. In this regard, the NVACs in Lesotho, Eswatini, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe were empowered to collect gender-sensitive, household-level data. Similarly, other RVAA partners help the NVACs strengthen their role and engagement in national dialogue on policy and legislation. This is critical to securing sustainable funding and resources more effectively and transparently, and subsequently increases their institutional effectiveness and accountability.

The RVAA's holistic support to technical and functional capacities has contributed to the Zimbabwe NVAC (ZimVAC) being recognised by the government as a key contributor to developing emergency plans and programmes. More specifically, ZimVAC findings encouraged the government to revise the Zimbabwe Humanitarian Appeal that assists 3.7 million people: increasing it from USD 331.5 million to USD 464 million, representing approximately a 40 percent increase. The revised appeal was presented at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 2 August 2019 and directly quoted findings from the ZimVAC assessment.

MAURITANIA

In Mauritania, the WFP country office adopted the CCS framework and approach to guide the design of its capacity strengthening programme to support the government in establishing a robust early warning, preparedness and response scheme for food security and nutrition. This represented a milestone in establishing a national Adaptive Social Protection System. The tools were used to articulate a clear set of capacity outcome statements, perform required capacity needs assessments and elaborate a multi-year capacity support plan with the *Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire* (CSA) and the *Observatoire de la Sécurité Alimentaire* (OSA).

WFP used the framework to guide a holistic analysis of existing capacities. This demonstrated a more robust approach to developing a long-term institutionalization strategy, and fostered greater dialogue with, and support from, stakeholders and donors. Other partners such as the World Bank also engaged and used the exercise to define and align their own capacity support to the CSA and the OSA. The Mauritania CCS interventions are being undertaken as part of a project supported by the European Community Humanitarian Aid Office, which received extra funding and was extended until 2021.

Mauritania is at the forefront of adopting the new CCS approach and tools. The country office's feedback was also key to revising the CNM tool and the DACCS to make them more user-friendly. This benefitted the Sao Tome and Principe country office, which completed similar activities with the "Programa Nacional De Alimentação E Saúde Escolar" in preparation for capacity strengthening support to the national home-grown school meals programme.

IV. CONCLUSION





These and other achievements reflect a positive trend within WFP. Numerous challenges remain, though. WFP must continue to diligently shift internal and external perceptions – among stakeholders, donors and partners – of the organisation’s potential role in, and contribution to, Agenda 2030 through its capacity strengthening support.

The full effectiveness and impact of WFP’s CCS engagement and initiatives are not immediately visible and take time to emerge. They are built upon trust and flexibility among all players and continuity of relationships and investment. Current financing models and trends in WFP make multi-year funding hard to secure, and resources at the country office level are often redirected to pressing operational needs.

Despite these challenges, WFP remains committed to increasing the sustainability and reach of its support to nations working to achieve Zero Hunger. Investments in building CCS skills and knowledge among WFP staff will continue, with the ambition of seeing these mainstreamed throughout the organization.

WFP is taking concrete steps to operationalize and roll out its CCS efforts. It has finished field-testing the CCS framework and its accompanying tools and is ready to launch them and to make them broadly available to WFP country offices worldwide. This will help create the robust evidence needed to demonstrate the effectiveness and contribution of WFP’s support to strengthening national capacities in a sustainable manner.

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