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LIVES

WFP
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**World Food
Programme**

Supporting national social protection responses to the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19

Outline of a WFP offer to governments

External Briefing Note

June 2020

WFP's intent

Drawing on decades of experience in safety net programming and technical expertise in analysis, assessment, programme design, delivery systems and accountability to affected populations, WFP offers its support to governments to design and deliver large-scale responses to the social and economic impacts of COVID-19.

This will enable WFP to contribute to mitigating the worst food security and nutrition impacts of the crisis and minimising the erosion of gains that countries have made towards SDG 2 on Zero Hunger.

WFP will work with governments and interested partners to:

- Increase understanding of needs and changing vulnerabilities arising from the crisis and design appropriate responses at individual, household and community level.

- Adapt existing programmes to increase the value or coverage of social assistance, or to enable them to continue to function

- Establish new schemes to reach populations that are not covered by current safety nets

- Maintain programmes that protect populations from other shocks that compound COVID

- Strengthen national social protection and emergency response systems and their coordination.

Supporting national responses to the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 is in line with WFP's longer-term intent to contribute to the establishment and strengthening of national social protection systems that support people to meet their essential needs; contribute to food security and nutrition; and reduce humanitarian need.

The Covid-19 problem

Containment and mitigation measures to COVID-19 enacted by Governments, private sectors and individuals (e.g. closing of borders, suspension of services, restrictions on movement) pose a threat to the normal operating of government systems, businesses, and markets that populations rely on. Beyond the health risks of a large-scale outbreak of the virus, containment and mitigation measures and related declines in economic activity will pose challenges and risks to the livelihoods of many, including many people not usually considered to be vulnerable. **The long-term consequences for people's ability to meet their essential needs, enjoy their rights and manage future risks - including the compound effects of other shocks - are of concern to WFP.**

Principles of engagement

1. PEOPLE-DRIVEN

WFP will support solutions that ensure that affected people's needs are met in a timely and effective manner. Keeping vulnerable and impacted people at the centre may mean taking on an advocacy role for more inclusive safety nets, when needed, both for the immediate response and for the longer term.

2. SYSTEMS-DRIVEN

WFP will use existing government social protection systems where possible, and make specific efforts to work in ways that strengthen long-term, nationally owned social protection.

3. COUNTRY-DRIVEN

The starting point will be what countries need and want to do. WFP will support governments to make policy and programme choices that will efficiently and effectively meet objectives of providing social and economic protection to people in need, preventing poverty and deprivation, safeguarding food security and nutrition, and providing economic stimulus.

4. ANALYSIS-DRIVEN

Decisions to provide technical and system-strengthening support to a country will be based on analysis undertaken with government of that country's social protection problems and possible solutions.

5. PARTNERSHIPS-DRIVEN

WFP's support to social protection is intended to add value to what other partners are already doing in any given country context.

WFP's offer to governments

WFP can help governments to adapt, design and/or implement social assistance interventions that respond to COVID-19. The scale and nature of people's needs are likely to exceed the resources available. WFP can help to: i) define or clarify the purpose of an intervention (who needs support, and their short- and medium-term needs) and ii) select the approach(es) that will be used, considering different options (cash and in-kind).

Three models of support

WFP can offer value to governments in social protection through three models, which can be combined or sequenced depending on government need and interest.

1. **Technical adviser.** WFP can help governments understand the needs of affected people, assess policy options and design social protection responses —either programme adaptations or the introduction of new ones—which the government itself will deliver. The model has a 'design + capacity-strengthening' focus.

2. **Service provider.** WFP can provide services to governments in the delivery of elements of their social protection programmes, in areas of WFP's operational competence, when relevant and appropriate. This may be through a contractual arrangement with government. The deliverables would count as contributing towards the government's own programmes and strategy and may be government-branded.

3. **Complementary actor.** Even when WFP delivers assistance using its own resources and own systems, neither channelled through nor branded as a government programme, it can still do so in a way that contributes to the strengthening of national social protection systems. WFP uses the literature on shock-responsive social protection and practice (much of it led by WFP) to inform models for aligning with, building on or using existing social protection systems and programmes to deliver emergency responses and has developed clear approaches to deciding when and how this can be done.

How WFP can contribute

Where current coverage of existing safety nets is limited, overwhelmed or disrupted, including in many low-income countries, partners must work with governments to explore the possibility of adapting schemes or establishing new ones to maximise the coverage, adequacy and quality of support to the affected population. WFP is well placed to support these efforts given the relevance of its technical and operational capabilities. Table 1 highlights some key options (non-exhaustive) for support.

TABLE 1: Options for WFP to support governments in their social protection responses to COVID-19: a partial menu

PROGRAMME AREA		MODEL OF WFP SUPPORT	
		A. TECHNICAL ADVISER	B. SERVICE PROVIDER
SETTING OBJECTIVES	**OVERALL OBJECTIVES**	• Definition of the programme's primary and secondary objectives to guide detailed design	n/a (technical assistance role)
	WHO IS TO BE SUPPORTED	• Assessments and analysis to betterdefine the needs / profiles of the affected population (food security, nutrition, essential needs, multidimensional needs analysis), including user-centered analysis and participatory approaches • Identification of geographical areas / populations most severely affected by COVID-19, and the typical impacts	
	WHAT TYPE OF SUPPORT	• Market analysis and market functionality assessments • Selection of most effective and feasible transfer modalities (e.g. food, cash, vouchers), if transfers are proposed for which a detailed cash-based transfers (CBT) service catalogue is available • Fill the Nutrient Gap / Cost of the Diet analysis • Advice on adaptations to programmes where existing programmes cannot be delivered (e.g. public works programmes that cannot adhere to social distancing requirements) • Advice on complementary activities and referrals that bring broader programmatic results to social protection interventions (including e.g. messaging on public health or other relevant issues)	
	WHAT LEVEL OF SUPPORT	• Development of Minimum Expenditure Baskets (MEBs) —or review of existing ones— to inform transfer value setting • Setting transfer values, frequency and other transfer design parameters	
PLANNING/ RESOURCING	**POLICY FRAMEWORK**	• Guidance to government on setting up an implementation plan for all stakeholders • Technical advice on adjustments to regulations needed to accommodate adaptations to existing programmes	• Drafting of detailed implementation plan with Standard Operating Procedures for all stakeholders
	INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS	• Documentation of requirements and guidance for development of technical systems, e.g. digital information systems	• Development or provision of technical systems by WFP on behalf of the government, e.g. digital information systems, beneficiary registries, social registries • Secondment of consultants to ministries to support programme response
	FINANCING	• Technical advice on costing of different programme adaptations	

June 2020 | Supporting national responses to COVID-19: External Briefing Note   6

PROGRAMME AREA		MODEL OF WFP SUPPORT	
		A. TECHNICAL ADVISER	B. SERVICE PROVIDER
OPERATIONS	**TARGETING/ REGISTRATION/ ENROLMENT**	• Definition of targeting and prioritization strategy for cash- or food-based safety nets • Registration support (with or without WFP tools) • Digitalisation of existing records/ integration into a larger database (with or without WFP tools)	• Registration of beneficiaries of the government programme (with or without WFP subsequent transfer to government-owned solution) • Collection of information on beneficiary bank accounts, mobile accounts / phone numbers, home address etc.
	BENEFIT DELIVERY	• Design of delivery mechanisms/ payment instruments • Roll-out of e-vouchers (with or without WFP tools) • Analysis of risks and mitigation measures • Approaches to monitoring markets/commodity prices • Pursuing interoperability of payment services • Ensuring sufficient coverage of financial services, and financial inclusion of targeted beneficiary populations	• Designing, selection and procurement of appropriate delivery mechanisms • Delivery of transfer as a service • Offer of WFP solutions as proof-of-concept
	ACCOUNTABILITY/ ASSURANCE	• Advice on protection of beneficiaries, considering age-, gender-, disability- etc. related needs of individuals • Design of complaints and feedback mechanisms, help desks, call centres • Design of financial reconciliation mechanisms (or WFP solution as proof-of-concept)	• Design and operation of complaints and feedback mechanisms, help desks, call centres • Design and implementation of financial reconciliation, transfer reconciliation and data analytics • Routine audits, spot checks, assessments, etc. by external entities.
KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING	**ADVOCACY**	• Data analysis that makes the case for supporting those most affected by the crisis	
	COMMUNICATIONS	• Approaches to communicating with beneficiaries	• Design and delivery of communication activities
	ASSESSMENTS AND ANALYSIS	• Analysis as a public good	• Data analytics as a service
	M&E, REPORTING AND LEARNING	• Design of M&E frameworks for assessing the achievement of programme outputs and outcomes • Design of mobile data collection tools for monitoring	• Field monitoring of programme outputs and outcomes

June 2020 | Supporting national responses to COVID-19: External Briefing Note   7

Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and WFP: scaling up national assistance to vulnerable Jordanians

In order to respond to COVID-19 emergency needs of vulnerable Jordanians, the Government of Jordan has scaled up social assistance provided by the National Aid Fund (NAF), by expanding coverage of the existing cash transfer programme (Takaful) and launching in mid-April a new emergency cash assistance programme for 200,000 additional families who lost their livelihood sources. By early May 2020, close to 150,000 households had received NAF cash assistance. Given the strict lockdown in Jordan, it was decided that payments would be digitalised and made through remotely-opened mobile money wallets for each households. Jointly with the World Bank and UNICEF, WFP has been providing technical support to NAF for this response, as follows:

Digital Payments enrolment: WFP facilitated the remote opening of mobile wallets for the new beneficiaries of the Takaful and emergency cash assistance programmes. This was done by conducting virtual info sessions with beneficiaries to inform them about how to open and use mobile money wallets and by providing guidance to the Mobile Money Payment Service Providers (PSPs) on their role in these programmes. WFP is also supporting NAF to ensure the full automation of the digital payments process thus eliminating manual intervention and related errors.

Complaints and Handling Mechanism (CHM): WFP supported NAF to adjust its Complaints and Handling Mechanism to the COVID emergency response. This was done by facilitating the remote operation of the NAF call center, reviewing the script for the operators and setting up remote referrals with other national call centers.

Government of India and WFP: tackling needs early, swiftly and together during COVID-19

In a country of 1.3 billion people, COVID-19 and the consequences of policy reactions can be grave if not dealt with successfully. Combatting these challenges head-on, the Government of India, with WFP's technical support, have been able to swiftly adapt programmes, mitigate risks and reduce potential negative impacts on the poorest and most vulnerable populations.

WFP has been supporting the Government of India for several years in transforming their public distribution systems, both at national and state levels. Based on WFP's acquired contextual knowledge and analysed needs, WFP suggested nine recommendations focused on ensuring access to food to the Ministry of Food and Civil Supplies on 17th of March – a day prior to the country going into a national lockdown. The recommendations primarily involving adapting and adjusting India's Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), the world's largest food-based safety net that supports over 813 million beneficiaries every month. Recommendations addressed various concerns and foreseeable problems; (1) to meet increased beneficiary needs (by advance allocations of at least two months' rations, temporarily increasing entitlements and adding nutritious commodities to the food baskets), (2) to streamline of other safety nets into TPDS delivery channels (such as home delivery and take-home rations from mid-day meals and Integrated Child Development Services), (3) to address larger potential COVID-19 impacts (by ensuring availability of adequate stocks in all states, offloading excess stock in the open market to prevent scarcity and allowing general public to buy from ration shops). In addition, mass awareness campaigns and availability of updated information for every stakeholder involved would allow for speedy dissemination of critical information to the public. The State and Federal Governments of India accepted and implemented all recommendations, along with other changes, ensuring food and nutritional security even during the pandemic. WFP continues to monitor the various changes across the country on a regular basis, supporting the government in adapting programmes in light of COVID-19 and its policy responses.

Government of the Republic of Colombia and WFP: leaving no one behind

Colombia hosts the highest number of Venezuelan migrants in the region: 1.8 million. WFP surveys show that food insecurity is the primary concern of 85% of migrants, COVID-19 having exacerbated vulnerability of both migrants and Colombians.

The Government of Colombia has taken important steps to enhance both the adequacy of its social protection response to COVID-19, by increasing the value of transfers made to beneficiaries of existing programmes, and outreach, by introducing a new emergency initiatives, such as the Ingreso Solidario cash transfer programme. However, not all people in need are being reached and a few Venezuelan migrants are receiving this support.

To complement national responses, with a vision of leaving no one behind, WFP Colombia has scaled up assistance in support of both migrants and host communities currently excluded from any social protection or emergency support in the complex region of Arauca, bordering Venezuela. WFP is reaching approximately 42,000 people with this support.

The WFP pilot intervention in Arauca was developed in close coordination with national actors. For instance, the value of the cash transfer is aligned to the government's emergency cash transfer programme. The targeting is based on the data from the national registries, where the government provided the lists both from the Colombian and migrant households.

In addition to the cash transfer support, WFP will also be providing in kind support to vulnerable Colombians as well as Venezuelan migrant families in other hard to reach areas.

The Arauca pilot provides an opportunity to develop an effective model of collaborative and coordinated response in social protection, to be replicated in other parts of the country in the future.