



World Food Programme  
Programme Alimentaire Mondial  
Programa Mundial de Alimentos  
برنامج الأغذية العالمي

**Executive Board**  
Second regular session  
Rome, 16–20 November 2020

Distribution: General

Agenda item 4

Date: 31 October 2020

WFP/EB.2/2020/4-E

Original: English

Policy issues

For information

Executive Board documents are available on WFP's website (<https://executiveboard.wfp.org>).

## **Update on WFP's implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279 (repositioning the United Nations development system)**

1. This information note builds on the update presented to the Executive Board in June at its 2020 annual session<sup>1</sup> by providing additional information on WFP's implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279<sup>2</sup> on repositioning the United Nations development system (UNDS).

### **Introduction – United Nations development system reform in the context of COVID-19**

2. The United Nations is marking its seventy-fifth anniversary at a time of great disruption for the world, caused in part by a large-scale public health crisis with severe economic and social impacts on vulnerable people and communities. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the members of the UNDS continue working to operationalize the remaining components of UNDS reform, while other aspects of reform that have been implemented over the last two years are being reviewed for efficiency and effectiveness. A resolution adopted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council following the Council's operational activities for development segment in May 2020, on the remaining aspects of UNDS reform, including the regional review and the multi-country office review, paves the way for a new quadrennial

<sup>1</sup> [WFP/EB.A/2020/5-D](https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-eb-a-2020-5-d).

<sup>2</sup> General Assembly resolution 72/279 of 31 May 2018, Repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/RES/72/279). <https://undocs.org/a/res/72/279>.

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comprehensive policy review (QCPR), which will be the next milestone to occur this year as the United Nations and its Member States embark upon the Decade of Action for sustainable development.

3. WFP is currently involved throughout the QCPR process, from participating in working groups to providing updates on progress in deliberations to engaging with entities of the United Nations sustainable development group (UNSDG) and Member States. WFP is working closely with other operational agencies, funds and programmes during these QCPR negotiations. WFP is well placed to help shape global policy because it plays an important part in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and sustainable development through its dual mandate for humanitarian and development action.

### **Remaining aspects of United Nations development system reform**

4. Since management's last update to the Executive Board in June 2020, the United Nations Economic and Social Council, after its operational activities for development segment in May, adopted a resolution in July 2020 that was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 74/297. The Council resolution focuses on the final elements of UNDS reform – namely the regional review, the multi-country office review and the system-wide evaluation. With this resolution in place, UNDS reform has advanced towards implementation of these three topics through a series of roadmaps developed by the Deputy Secretary-General in early October in her capacity as chair of the UNSDG. Furthermore, in coordination with the UNSDG, the United Nations Secretariat has undertaken a review of the cost-sharing formula for the resident coordinator system. The country chapter of the management and accountability framework (MAF) is in the process of being reviewed and the regional and global components are expected to be developed later this year. WFP is engaging actively in these processes to ensure coherence, collective ownership and mutual accountability within the UNSDG.
5. Through the roadmaps for operationalizing the outstanding pieces of UNDS reform, the work of the regional review has now largely passed from the design phase at the global level to the various regions for implementation based on each region's specificities and unique context. Regional collaboration platforms (RCPs) are planned to begin convening in October and November 2020. Efforts to launch regionally tailored issue-based coalitions are proceeding under the leadership of the vice-chairs of the RCPs (each region's respective executive secretaries of the regional commissions and the regional directors of the United Nations Development Programme) and with the close collaboration of the other entities of each RCP, including WFP's regional directors. WFP's regional teams are closely engaged in the work of the RCPs and issue-based coalitions. The demands of the COVID-19 pandemic response have strained the capacity of all regional staff, who are increasingly backstopping country operations, to participate in the RCPs and coalitions but WFP is fully committed to doing so.
6. Operationalization of the roadmap for the multi-country office (MCO) review is also proceeding, with the Deputy Secretary-General as UNSDG Chair providing overall leadership. The UNSDG Core Group currently serves as the main interagency platform for the day-to-day oversight and monitoring of the implementation of these commitments and for ensuring close contact with and support for the United Nations country teams (UNCTs). While WFP's operational footprint is limited in MCO contexts – WFP is currently present in the Barbados MCO and the Fiji MCO – WFP and other United Nations operational entities are starting implementation of the various commitments outlined by the Secretary-General in his May 2020 report to the Economic and Social Council on the repositioning efforts of the UNDS. Already, WFP's interim multi-country strategic plan for the Pacific is aligned with the United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022). In the Caribbean, meanwhile, WFP's interim

multi-country strategic plan matches the timeline of the United Nations Multi-country Sustainable Development Framework for the Caribbean, which is also aligned with the SAMOA Pathway and national development plans.

### **Supporting the United Nations resident coordinator system**

7. With nearly two years since the launch of the empowered resident coordinator system and the country-level aspects of the MAF, efforts have begun to review any challenges encountered and any areas that need to be revisited for clarification. To that end, the United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO) launched a survey at the end of September for all resident coordinators and members of UNCTS to assess the country-level aspects of the MAF based on their first-hand experience. WFP has encouraged its country directors to actively participate in this survey to provide their views on what needs improvement and what works well. At the time of writing the results are still being gathered and analysed. Once they are analysed by DCO they are expected to inform the revision of the MAF as well as the creation of the regional and global components of the MAF. The Executive Office of the Secretary-General is spearheading the MAF review process and the development of the remaining components of the MAF. The expectation is that a draft of the full MAF will be sent to the UNSDG principals for their endorsement. Throughout the process WFP will participate to ensure coherence, collective ownership and mutual accountability within the UNDS. Furthermore, WFP continues its engagement in the interagency taskforce on the redesign of the resident coordinator assessment centre and the talent management taskforces, which are look at the revamping of the resident coordinator selection system to ensure that the United Nations identifies the most suitable candidates to serve as resident coordinators and to fill other posts in the resident coordinator offices.
8. The full MAF will also inform an overall review of the UNSDG and its working arrangements. WFP's Executive Director and leadership group have provided input for this review through interviews with the external consultant undertaking the UNSDG review. It is expected that changes to the UNSDG architecture resulting from the review will be rolled out in 2021.
9. As part of the funding structure for the resident coordinator system, WFP continues to implement the guidance on the 1 percent coordination levy. During the first half of 2020 WFP transferred USD 96,000 generated through the levy to the special purpose trust fund for the resident coordinator system. In most cases, donors have elected to allocate 1 percent of their overall contributions to the levy rather than adding 1 percent, thus reducing the amount contributed directly to programming. For the remainder of the year WFP expects to transfer approximately another USD 50,000, for a projected 2020 total of USD 146,000.
10. At present, all members of the United Nations development system share an annual cost of USD 77.5 million. Since 2018 WFP has paid USD 2.9 million per year. In coordination with the UNSDG, the United Nations Secretariat hired an external consulting firm (Dalberg) to review the cost-sharing formula. WFP has been closely involved in this process. The consulting firm recommends that the formula be updated through one of three possible options, including a simple update of the baseline data used to calculate the cost-sharing amount paid. The second and third options, if endorsed, could see an increase in WFP's share of the annual cost. The three options and the way forward will be discussed by the Deputy Secretary-General and the UNSDG principals in November 2020. WFP, together with several other agencies, funds and programmes, has advocated that only development projects be subject to the cost-sharing formula given that humanitarian work already has established coordination mechanisms that operate through the clusters, working closely with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

## Strengthening system-wide support for the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda at the country level

11. The UNSDG issued seven companion pieces<sup>3</sup> providing technical guidance on the various steps of United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework (UNSDCF) design and implementation, as a complement to the global guidance on UNSDCFs. DCO is streamlining the annexes to the UNSDCF guidance to bring them in line with the companion pieces and is developing an online manual that will be updated from time to time to include good practices and tools as they emerge throughout UNSDCF implementation. Online training on the UNSDCF process is also being developed and should be available to United Nations staff later in 2020. In the light of this work WFP is updating its internal guidance on UNSDCF rollout with a view to aligning it with the companion pieces and providing country offices with both strategic and technical guidance on WFP engagement in all aspects of UNSDCF design and implementation. WFP's country strategic plan (CSP) guidance has been updated for use in the development of second-generation CSPs; it highlights the importance of close alignment with national priorities and UNSDCFs and supporting WFP offices in their proactive engagement in UNSDCF processes at the country level. WFP also continues to support country offices through the help desk function at headquarters.
12. The common country analysis and UNSDCF approaches continue to advance. In some countries, however, COVID-19 is affecting various aspects of these processes, including national and local consultations due to movement and meeting restrictions and the identification of United Nations strategic priorities in a rapidly changing environment. In some instances, UNSDCF preparation timelines are being delayed or revisited. WFP continues to adapt its internal CSP preparation process to the extent possible to ensure alignment with both the content and timing of UNSDCFs. Consistent with WFP efforts to align country level portfolios, the five interim CSPs presented at the Board's 2020 second regular session have been developed in close alignment with UNSDCF strategic priorities and outcomes. In terms of harmonization of timeframes, two CSPs (for Indonesia and Guatemala) are exactly aligned with the relevant UNSDCF timeframes, two (for Cuba and the Democratic Republic of the Congo) are being aligned one year after the UNSDCF start dates, while one (for Togo) is not aligned with the relevant UNSDCF because it has a duration of only one year.
13. UNCTs are mobilized to support a coherent response to the pandemic working with governments, international financial institutions and other partners in undertaking rapid socioeconomic impact assessments and implementing solutions in "development emergency" mode. UNCTs are progressively adopting socioeconomic response plans (SERPs) aligned with five high level strategic objectives<sup>4</sup> derived from the [United Nations framework for the immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19](#) to support countries and societies in the face of an unprecedented pandemic and its various knock-on effects. A set of indicators has been developed to help UNCT members report on the coordinated response to COVID-19 with the aim of enhancing synergies and complementarities with UNSDCF joint work plans. SERP monitoring and reporting are facilitated through the UN INFO platform, which provides up-to-date information on SERP implementation. In terms of complementarity, it is expected that the SERPs will be folded back into and inform

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<sup>3</sup> Guiding Principles underpinning UNSDCFs; UN Country Team Configuration; Funding UNSDCFs and Financing the 2030 Agenda; Economic Transformation; Programme Design and Management; UN Common Country Analysis (CCAs); and Development, Humanitarian and Peace Collaboration.

<sup>4</sup> 1) Protecting health services and systems during the crisis; 2) Protecting people: Social protection and basic service; 3) Protecting jobs, small and medium-sized enterprises, informal sector; 4) Facilitating macroeconomic response & multilateral collaboration; 5) Supporting social cohesion and community resilience

UNSDCF revisions during annual reviews of the latter. WFP is contributing to socioeconomic responses that address the immediate and long-term impacts of COVID-19 through its medium-term programme framework. In particular, WFP provides support to governments through three programme pillars that are central to effective, efficient and equitable responses: designing, strengthening and adapting national social protection systems; ensuring essential nutrition and school-based services; and sustaining, protecting and improving food systems during the crisis.

14. Regarding the United Nations multi-partner trust fund for the COVID-19 response, a second call for project funding proposals was conducted during August, which sought to allocate USD 17 million of the fund's resources for joint project proposals from UNCTs that met the funding criteria and expectations. This call focused on responses to the health aspects of the pandemic (window 1) or to its socioeconomic effects (window 2) and was open to all UNCT's - including those covered under the global humanitarian response plan. The only eligibility requirement for submission of a joint project proposal was the submission of a completed SERP for posting on the DCO COVID-19 data portal by 31 August 2020. In total, 104 joint project proposals were submitted by UNCTs (with WFP participating in 16 submissions) and have since been reviewed by a team of inter-agency experts. Following the review the proponents of 19 joint project proposals were invited to develop joint programmes. WFP is part of one of those joint project proposals that will advance to the next stage.
15. The joint project proposals that were unsuccessful in the first review will move to a pipeline of projects to be presented to potential donors. In terms of resource mobilization, many donors agree that the fund's resource mobilization and communication strategies require urgent review as the fund is far from its 2020 target of USD 1 billion. However, the effects of a global recession, unprecedented need and competing demands will probably have a negative impact on the replenishment of the fund.

### **Funding Compact**

16. The Joint SDG fund, a key element of the Funding Compact, is also facing challenges in mobilizing the resources required to fully finance its second call for project funding proposals. The fund seeks to raise USD 290 million annually, although this target has yet to be reached. Nevertheless, for component 1 of the first call for proposals, on SDG financing, almost USD 30 million has thus far been disbursed, to 62 UNCTs. All three of the joint programmes under component 1 in which WFP participates (those for Ecuador, Djibouti and Armenia) have been approved. For component 2, USD 4 million has been awarded to 28 shortlisted joint project proposals to develop fully-fledged joint project proposals, which are to be completed by 31 October 2020. Two joint programmes in which WFP participates (for Sri Lanka and Zambia) were approved under this component.
17. To operationalize some innovative financing ideas emerging from the joint project proposals submitted in response to the second call for proposals (on financing the SDGs), the fund has approached private sector partners in a new initiative to facilitate public and private investment in achievement of the SDGs. The United Nations Secretariat is setting up investor advisory groups (IAGs) comprising private sector investors and led or co-led by United Nations bodies. The IAGs act as sounding boards, providing feedback and advice on how to make funding proposals attractive to private sector investors. The IAGs will operate in thematic areas that emerged from the joint project proposals: blue economy (marine preservation), natural ecosystems, agriculture and food security, resilience infrastructure, gender and health. WFP will co-lead the IAG on agriculture and food security.
18. WFP will report on progress in respect of the Funding Compact indicators at the Board's 2021 first regular session, by the time of which all final data for 2020 will be available.

## **Advancing shared business operations for greater efficiency and effectiveness**

### **Business operations strategy**

19. WFP, in coordination with DCO, is proactively engaged in the implementation of the new business operations strategy (BOS) guidance and tool (BOS 2.0), which are expected to be fully implemented by all 131 UNCTs by 2021. Since the launch of the BOS 2.0 online tool in January 2020, 84 WFP country offices have been progressively adapting it to their own use, developing an individualized BOS tool specific to each UNCT, and 13 WFP country offices have completed the entirety of the BOS exercise. WFP headquarters supported actively its regional bureaux in developing and strengthening the capacity of its regional focal points through active participation in various training events, including webinars organized by DCO. WFP further crafted internal BOS guidelines to complement the United Nations system-wide BOS package. Moreover, WFP, in coordination with DCO, is currently assessing the feasibility of incorporating the online humanitarian booking hub as one of the common service categories of the BOS online tool.

### **Common premises**

20. WFP is proactively engaging with the United Nations task team on common premises on the revision of the UNSDG common premises rollout plan proposed by DCO and, in parallel, is supporting the creation of a task team database on common premises. At the field level WFP has increased its footprint globally: it now has a presence in 182 common premises, a 4 percent increase compared to 2019. During the COVID-19 response, WFP developed, and then shared with the task team on common premises, COVID-19-related occupational safety and health guidance on the reopening of WFP country offices. In the absence of other COVID-19-related guidelines on facilities, WFP made its guidance available to other organizations to support the reopening of their premises.

### **Common back office**

21. In May 2020, WFP, along with the other entities in the United Nations Strategic Results on Business Innovations Group (BIG), reviewed and helped formulate the key concepts for draft United Nations common back office (CBO) financial guidance and governance models. WFP provided success stories regarding its delivery of location-dependent services and examples of mutual recognition in respect of other United Nations agencies for inclusion in the BIG's final report in June 2020. Following the handover of CBO guidance in June 2020 from BIG to DCO, WFP and DCO started discussions regarding DCO plans to roll out CBOs. In that context, WFP has worked to ensure that its country offices receive the capacity building and tools necessary to facilitate their engagement with other United Nations entities in CBOs within their respective UNCTs. WFP is currently drafting internal guidance for CBOs, which will be issued to country offices upon final review by WFP technical experts. Considering the COVID-19 situation, WFP is developing a dedicated CBO online learning channel for field staff, which will include materials on UNDS reform topics such as BOS, CBOs and common premises.
22. DCO has identified a list of UNCTs for the CBO rollout in four phases. The first phase involves 10 countries and serves to test the methodologies and stabilize the CBO approach in preparation for the later phases. Phases 2 and 3 will involve 20 countries each, with phase 3 ending by December 2022. Phase 4 will involve 66 UNCTs and is expected to be completed by the end of 2024. WFP has a presence in six phase one offices, 15 phase 2 offices and 17 phase 3 offices. WFP headquarters will provide additional support to the selected countries through its headquarters functional divisions and regional focal points.

### **Mutual recognition**

23. By November 2020 19 United Nations entities, including WFP, will have signed a mutual recognition statement<sup>5</sup> that allows any United Nations entity to use or rely on another entity's policies, procedures, system contracts and related operational mechanisms for the implementation of activities without further evaluation, checks or approvals. WFP signed the mutual recognition statement in November 2018 and selected five functional areas – engineering, global fleet, global supply chain management, emergency telecommunication, and the humanitarian booking hub – to provide services to other United Nations entities. An internal review of the normative framework for each functional area is under way to ensure consistency with the principle of mutual recognition. In tandem, the legal offices of WFP and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are working on a template service provision agreement to be used when one United Nations entity provides services to another under the mutual recognition principle.

### **Common fleet services**

24. WFP has continued to engage actively in the transition to common fleet services in support of the realization of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals at the country level and in alignment with the Secretary-General's vision for United Nations management reform. WFP work in this area is two-fold:
- i) In the medium and long term, WFP is working on a United Nations common fleet vision in a joint effort with UNHCR aimed at ensuring that all United Nations organizations in relevant locations have access, based on an opt-in approach, to effective fleet services. A joint WFP/UNHCR data analysis exercise was started in the third quarter of 2020 to inform the common fleet services business model.
  - ii) In the short term WFP is working to develop a model for the provision of light vehicle fleet services to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization under the Rome-based agency collaboration framework.

### **Digital solutions centre**

25. The United Nations digital solutions centre is operated in partnership by WFP and UNHCR and is supported by the United Nations International Computing Centre. By leveraging new technologies and United Nations expertise, the digital solutions centre aims to create a suite of digital solutions that can be shared among United Nations entities to transform common business operations and streamline time-consuming transactional tasks. Solutions developed by WFP and UNHCR will be made available to the entire United Nations system. Since its launch in October 2019, the digital solutions centre has developed an active pipeline in which various innovations are being developed, including Joint Sanctions Bot (to automate the sanctions screening process), Jambo (a phonebook app enabling colleagues across United Nations entities to contact each other), UN Digital Identity (which uses blockchain to securely store staff records and ease interagency transfers) and the Humanitarian Booking Hub Clearing House (an inter-agency platform allowing United Nations entities, NGOs and government partners to book United Nations accommodations,

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<sup>5</sup> United Nations Secretariat, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Labour Organization, International Organization for Migration, ITC, International Telecommunications Union, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Population Fund, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Office for Project Services, United Nations Relief Works Agency, WFP, World Health Organization.

drivers, flights and wellness services). Identification of additional innovations is currently under way.

### **Conclusions and next steps**

26. As the end of 2020 approaches, several of the remaining elements of UNDS reform have moved into the implementation phase, while others are being reviewed to understand how they can be refined to make them even more useful for national governments and the UNDS in the effort to achieve the SDGs. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a litmus test for the reforms, which have largely proven to be useful and have reaffirmed the “united” in United Nations development activities.
27. Less than ten years remain to reach the SDGs by 2030. Spurred along by the Decade of Action, the latest quadrennial comprehensive policy review, which is currently being negotiated by Member States, will come at a critical time for the UNDS as it aims to get SDG progress back on track, which was already off course before the COVID-19 pandemic but has only worsened during a tumultuous 2020. The 2021 food systems summit will be another major milestone for garnering world attention and action for SDG 2 and the related SDGs. WFP will continue to actively engage and support efforts to achieve a world with zero hunger.

**Acronyms**

BOS	business operations strategy
CBO	common back office
DCO	Development Coordination Office
IAG	investor advisory group
MAF	management and accountability framework
MCO	multi-country office
QCPR	quadrennial comprehensive policy review
RCP	regional collaboration platform
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SERP	socioeconomic response plan
UNCT	United Nations country team
UNDS	United Nations development system
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSDCF	United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework
UNSDG	United Nations sustainable development group