WFP
World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

World Food Programme Strategy for Support to Social Protection

July 2021

Foreword

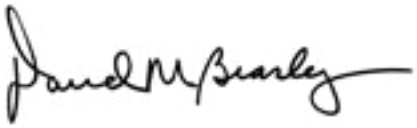
Social protection systems play a vital role in achieving a Zero Hunger world. Effective investments and interventions which address poverty and vulnerability can help individuals and households to better cope with the threats to their food security. These programs provide support to people in need, help prevent temporary needs from becoming entrenched, support resilience-building and ultimately lay the foundations for more prosperous and peaceful societies. In so doing, they create a pathway to tackling some of the root causes of hunger and malnutrition.

National social protection systems have the potential to improve the lives of billions of people — operating at a scale much larger than any humanitarian program. The global COVID-19 pandemic has made this work more urgent than ever. At WFP, we partner with governments and others to establish and strengthen national systems in order to maximize the impact of our technical and operational expertise in the most cost effective way. Our global field presence and our history of reaching people in need in diverse and challenging contexts — including many communities living with conflict or protracted crisis — mean we can contribute a wealth of advice and assistance to help resolve the practical challenges of reaching Zero Hunger.

WFP has been contributing to the field now known as social protection ever since the 1960s. It is an integral part of our work. In 2020, for example, when the pandemic swept across the globe, we worked with governments and others to strengthen national social protection systems in 78 countries.

This strategy builds on WFP's extensive experience and consolidates our approach to social protection for the years ahead. The strategy offers a coordinating framework that outlines how we will systematically support efforts to achieve long-term national social protection goals, while continuing our work responding to hunger emergencies. It is informed by a range of operational and analytical evidence that illustrate how social protection activities help WFP deliver on its mandate, and enable governments to meet their global commitments.

Effective social protection policies are a way to make a real and lasting difference for billions of the world's vulnerable people as we work together on saving lives and changing lives.



David M. Beasley
Executive Director

Executive summary

CONTEXT

Social protection is essential if we are to reach Zero Hunger. Hundreds of millions of people contend daily with food insecurity and malnutrition, poverty and inequality. These are often linked in complex ways. What's more, as the COVID-19 pandemic reveals, all people—whether currently in a vulnerable situation or not—risk welfare declines owing to shocks and stressors. Social protection is a cornerstone of policies that address these issues by redistributing resources and by interventions that help individuals or households to manage risks. It is an accelerator for many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Countries define social protection according to their context. An interagency definition describes social protection as the, 'policies and programmes aimed at preventing, and protecting people against, poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion throughout their life [...with] a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups' (SPIAC-B, 2019, p.1). These typically cover a range of cash and/or in-kind transfers; they may also include some fee waivers, active labour market schemes, targeted subsidies and/or social care services (see Annex B).

Social protection can enhance food security and nutrition through several entry points. Food security has four elements: food availability, access, utilisation and stability over time. Improving food access (by enhancing economic capacities) and stability (smoothing consumption during disruption) is intrinsic to social protection. Food availability and utilisation are less intrinsic and so require special attention. With respect to nutrition, social protection tends to be more effective when nutrition goals are pursued deliberately.

Commitment to social protection by governments and their partners has long been increasing. Many challenges remain, some already the subject of global cooperation and others meriting attention. These include expanding social protection across the three dimensions of the Universal Social Protection 2030 agenda—coverage, comprehensiveness and adequacy; improving quality; and embedding programmes in a cohesive system. Taking better account of food security and nutrition considerations, and of extra needs in crises, are other important concerns.

WFP'S ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL PROTECTION

For the World Food Programme (WFP), poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion—the three conditions cited above as the remit of social protection policy—are part of three broader domains of concern, relating to needs, risks and inequalities respectively. All three resonate with our mandate:

- **Needs.** Certain needs must be met for people to have a decent life—not just food but a range of essential needs, all of which can affect food security and nutrition—and social protection can help them attain it
- **Risks.** Social protection's risk management function is of primary importance to WFP as it can relieve some negative impacts of shocks and help build resilience
- **Inequalities.** The role of social protection in combating inequalities matters as these affect vulnerability. Opportunity and disadvantage are influenced by social, economic and/or geographical factors e.g. age, gender, disability or migration status.

In this strategy we focus on formal, public social protection initiatives that tackle these concerns.

WFP has contributed to social protection for decades. In 2020, WFP supported national social protection systems in 78 countries, especially in response to COVID-19.

Our social protection work is aligned with WFP's twin roles in 'Changing Lives' and 'Saving Lives'. It is a route by which we enact our commitment to working 'at the nexus' of humanitarian and development assistance and peace. National social protection systems, with their annual expenditure of trillions of dollars, operate at a scale that is orders of magnitude greater than any international humanitarian response. By continuing to invest catalytic amounts in strengthening those national systems WFP aims to improve outcomes among the several hundred million hungry and malnourished—and those at risk—whom we do not reach directly and who may also need support if Zero Hunger is to be achieved.

This strategy provides a strategic direction and a coordinating framework for ongoing activities. Building on the 'Update of WFP's Safety Nets Policy' (2012), and following an evaluation in 2018–19, it contains new features including: consideration of major agreements since 2012, such as the SDGs, Social Protection Floor Initiative, USP2030 and Grand Bargain; a more detailed articulation as to how social protection can contribute to food security and nutrition; and a greater focus on strengthening the effectiveness of social protection in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, to build resilience and as a channel for shock-response.

Feedback from our partners is clear and consistent about the value that WFP adds to our partnerships with governments and other actors working in this field. These are: (1) our global footprint and frontline presence (2) our on-the-ground operational experience and strong 'delivery culture' (3) our analytical capabilities (4) our food security and nutrition expertise and (5) our ability to work across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.

We will adhere to principles that ensure we offer effective, context-specific support. While remaining guided by our mandate, we will provide evidence-based support that starts from nations' own objectives and capacities and does not presuppose the adoption of any particular approach. We will keep people at the centre, maintaining a firm focus on accountability to affected populations. Collaborative partnerships are fundamental: we will align with UN Cooperation Frameworks, strive to avoid duplication and aim to add value by seeking explicit agreement about our contribution relative to others'.

THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

We set out our strategic framework in five parts (see diagram on pp.26-27). These are: (1) Our vision (2) The priorities (3) Social protection for whom? (4) Modes of support (5) Areas of work.

Part 1: Vision

The vision for this strategy is that, 'By 2030 people will have substantially increased access to national social protection systems that safeguard and foster their ability to meet their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs, and to manage the risks and shocks they face' (Figure 3). With this ambition we reaffirm our readiness to support nations worldwide in their pursuit of the commitments they have set for that date.

Part 2: Priorities

Two distinct but interconnected priorities emerge from the vision: social protection that, first, helps people to meet their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs; and second, helps them manage risks and shocks.

For the first, where appropriate, we will:

- **Support 'food security-specific' or 'nutrition-specific' programmes** (i.e. where one of these is the primary objective), e.g. our support to school feeding, or to institutionalising lean season assistance
- **Support 'food security-sensitive' and 'nutrition-sensitive' approaches.** These are measures that consciously strive to increase relevant impacts in programmes (e.g. cash transfers) where these are not the main objective but that contribute hugely
- **Assist programmes that aim to reduce multidimensional poverty broadly even when a food security or nutrition lens is not directly applied, but in contexts where food insecurity and malnutrition are a major concern.** Examples could be programmes that promote income generation or human capital development.

The second priority is closely related. Shocks jeopardise people's ability to meet their essential needs; in turn, vulnerability to shocks is heightened if the ability to meet essential needs is already compromised. We aim to help address both idiosyncratic and covariate risks.

The second priority comprises supporting improvements to social protection for resilience-building, and also for responding in contexts of disruption. By building resilience we may reduce the scale of humanitarian needs, making efficient use of our resources for emergencies by not having to, 'save the same lives over and over again'. And when a shock hits, social protection can be a central response. Our approach depends on whether or not government services exist and are functioning. Whether for resilience-building or for shock-response we will continue to assist the expanded coverage, comprehensiveness, adequacy and quality of social protection.

In respect of both priorities we will support the strengthening of the enabling environment that facilitates programme delivery. This includes e.g. policies, institutional arrangements and evidence generation.

Before committing to national system-strengthening we will always assess whether our actions are likely to create conflict or protection risks. This is paramount in situations of active conflict where international humanitarian law applies, where actions directly supporting government programmes may not be immediately feasible. In such contexts the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence are primary and will not be compromised.

Part 3: Social protection for whom?

All people have different needs, preferences and capacities, and face opportunities and disadvantages deriving from their unique circumstances. Taken individually, the implications of identity markers such as gender, age or disability can be broadly characterised. However, nobody fits into just one category: everyone is disadvantaged by some identity markers while being privileged by others. The 'Leave no-one behind' pledge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is rooted in the recognition that people have multiple inequalities, and attempts to mitigate them.

We will mainstream considerations of social, economic and geographical identity in our social protection work. This means that we do not focus on pre-determined population groups. Rather, we will aid national actors and their partners to conduct vulnerability analyses to identify how different attributes affect people's needs and preferences in a given context (including rapidly identifying emerging needs in covariate shocks). We will assist the design and implementation of social protection programmes adapted to people's needs and capacities, and the reform of the enabling environment so as to accommodate and/or address certain factors of vulnerability.

For WFP, helping to address geographical inequalities is, and will continue to be, a major focus. Where people live greatly affects their exposure and vulnerability to shocks and hazards—including conflict and protracted crises—which in turn are key determinants of food security, nutrition and many other outcomes. Many people live in places that are remote, hard to reach or poorly linked with basic services. Geographical disparities often intersect with other forms of deprivation, compounding economic and social exclusion. If we are to leave no-one behind we must step up efforts to support social protection for people living in difficult contexts, including in ways that contribute to prospects for peace and security.

Part 4: Modes of support

To implement the priorities, in our country-level assistance we will:

1. **Support nationally led systems and programmes.** We will work alongside, or on behalf of, governments and their partners on the design and delivery of national social protection, e.g. by providing advice and guidance or implementing on governments' behalf as needed and within our remit
2. **Provide complementary actions in WFP's own programming.** Assistance in our own programmes—whether as an emergency or longer term response—will be made with a clear intent to strengthen national social protection where possible. Where national systems have gaps, we will explore opportunities to fill them. Conversely, where elements of the national system are operating, we will draw on and complement them. Not all of WFP's own programming delivers this complementary role, nor should it: sometimes a clear delineation is required between WFP as a humanitarian agency and national actors, or between emergency and development functions.

The approaches are neither mutually exclusive nor static over time.

Part 5: Areas of work

Adopting these objectives and methods, we have identified actions that can be grouped into four broad areas of work. They are to:

1. Contribute to strengthening the national social protection system architecture
2. Support enhancements to the quantity and quality of national social protection programming
3. Improve the effectiveness of social protection in the shared space between humanitarian, development and peace actors
4. Build social protection partnerships and evidence globally.

The first two comprise our assistance to national system-strengthening. This covers, respectively, the overall system architecture (the enabling environment) and the programmes that deliver services. We conceive of national social protection as having 12 building blocks such as policy and legislation, or platforms and infrastucture delivery (see Figure 5). Across the two areas of work we explain how we will—and do—contribute to each.

The third area covers our social protection activities consistent with our commitment to the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. These are particularly pertinent to situations of conflict, protracted crisis and fragility, including post-conflict contexts. Since the majority of the world's poor and hungry live in fragile and conflict-affected settings, a nuanced understanding of conflict-sensitive approaches is vital if social protection coverage is to be extended effectively to all.

Finally, the fourth area explains how we will fulfil our commitment to an evidence-based, partnership-oriented approach, not only in countries but also regionally and globally. In social protection we have partnerships for operations, resourcing, knowledge and advocacy. Our activities range from joint advocacy and programming, to partnering to help governments mobilise complementary investments. We will contribute to the building and application of shared knowledge, through research and evidence-generation, communication and capacity-strengthening.

ENSURING SUCCESS

This strategy is being integrated into processes for planning, monitoring and reporting. Internally we will align with WFP's strategic plans at corporate and country level, its thematic policies and standard monitoring practices. An illustrative theory of change (Figure 7) suggests how our priorities may be linked to WFP's national-level strategies, and identifies assumptions and risks. Beyond WFP, we place a high value on coordinating and ensuring complementarity with partners, particularly—but not only—with the UN. We also aim to maximise the relevance of our monitoring and reporting for governments and other national and regional partners.

To deliver this strategy keeping pace with growing demand for our assistance, WFP must sustain and develop its capacities accordingly. The skills themselves are not new to WFP. We are now being asked to contribute to social protection in most countries where we work and expect this to continue. Our approach to workforce planning aims to strike the best balance between building the capabilities of current employees, hiring to fill new positions and optimising the use of external experts.

With this strategy and our commitment to continued investment, we aim to maximise the effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of our work with governments and their partners to establish and strengthen high quality social protection systems and programmes globally, as we strive towards our vision.

Acknowledgments

The World Food Programme (WFP) **Strategy for Support to Social Protection** has been prepared under the overall guidance of WFP's Social Protection Unit in close consultation with very many colleagues in headquarters, regional bureaux, country offices and field offices worldwide. We express our warm appreciation and thanks to all contributors, who have devoted substantial time to share their expertise and insights, exchange ideas and review drafts. The authors extend their thanks, too, to WFP's leadership team, the Oversight and Policy Committee, for their review and endorsement.

We are grateful also for all the comments and inspiration we received from interlocutors and reviewers beyond WFP, including in partner agencies and academia. An independent evaluation of WFP's 2012 Update to the Safety Nets Policy, commissioned by the WFP Office of Evaluation and undertaken by Avenir Analytics in 2018–19, formed the starting point for this new social protection strategy. We are most appreciative of their wide-ranging and thoughtful review and engagement.

The strategy presented in this document is the fruit of WFP's decades of experience in saving lives and changing lives, building not only on previous policies and strategies in the area, but also on practical operations and innovations in all the countries where we work. We enormously value our strong working relationships with governments and all our partners—including, of course, the communities with whom we work—and those engagements have contributed substantially and directly to the activities, lessons and ideas that have both prompted and steered this document. The authors trust that the strategy does justice to that inheritance and provides a valuable guidance for the years ahead.

Abbreviations

CODI	Core Diagnostic Instrument
COVID-19	2019 novel coronavirus
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
ISPA	Interagency Social Protection Assessment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SPIAC-B	Social Protection Interagency Cooperation Board
UN	United Nations
USP2030	Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection
WFP	World Food Programme

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1

THE CONTEXT

1. The context

1.1 THE CHALLENGE OF REACHING ZERO HUNGER

Every day, countries around the world are working to deliver on the global commitments set in 2015 in the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Adopting the Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), governments asserted their determination to end poverty and hunger, reduce inequality, build peaceful, inclusive societies and stimulate sustainable economic growth, emphasising the respect and protection of human rights[1].

The World Food Programme's (WFP's) corporate strategic direction aligns fully with that Agenda, focusing on two goals that are also central to the present social protection strategy: SDG 2 on Zero Hunger, and SDG 17 on partnering to support implementation of the SDGs[2]. Progress on these requires action across sectors and contexts, paying attention to the interconnected root causes of poverty and hunger as well as the integration of development and humanitarian efforts. Advances in other SDGs, and especially SDG 1 on ending poverty, can therefore promote advances in WFP's priority areas.

Of particular importance to WFP, the 2030 Agenda notes that some people and countries are more exposed to risk than others and require special attention so that no-one is left behind. Vulnerability and risk are at the core of the Agenda: managing risks and reducing vulnerability are not only a humanitarian but also a development imperative.

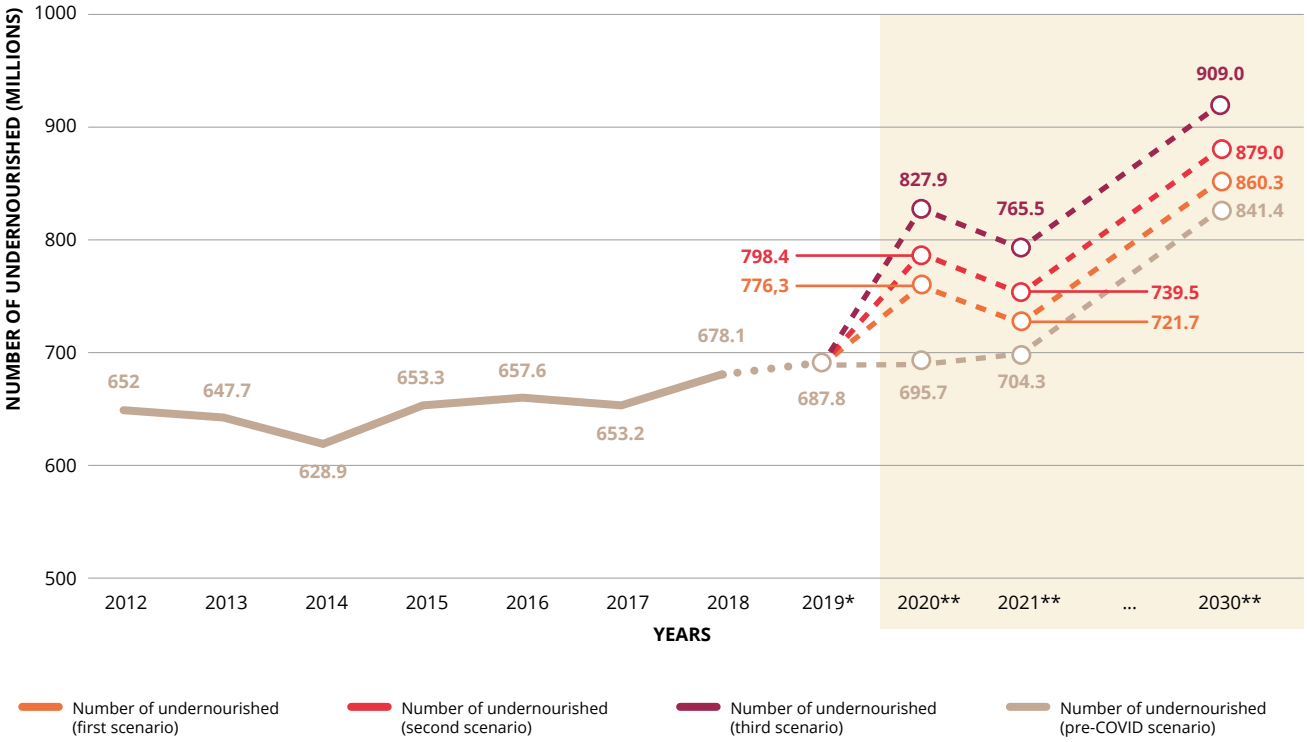
In 2020, five years on, progress was already uneven when lives and livelihoods worldwide were suddenly and dramatically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of writing, in the midst of 'one of the worst international crises of our lifetimes', the eventual full health, social and economic impact of the pandemic can only be conjectured[3]. It is clear that the crisis may reverse years of progress in some areas, and that, while all segments of society are affected, impacts are disproportionately severe among people who were in a vulnerable situation beforehand[4].

Efforts to reduce poverty, hunger and other forms of food insecurity and malnutrition attest to the enormity of the challenge even before the pandemic. A substantial decline had been seen over many decades in both the number of people living below the extreme poverty line of US$1.90 a day and their share in the global population, from 36 percent in 1990 to 10 percent in 2015. Since then the pace had slowed: close to 9 percent, or 736 million people, were estimated to be in extreme poverty in 2018, and before the pandemic the rate was projected still to be at 6 percent by 2030[5]. The impact of COVID-19 is of great concern: early projections estimated an extra 50–70 million people in extreme poverty in 2020, the first rise in over 20 years[6].

Meanwhile, chronic hunger has been rising since 2014 after a decade of steady decline. As of 2019 almost 690 million people, or 8.9 percent of people globally, were chronically undernourished, their dietary intake insufficient to meet even minimum energy needs[7]. Undernourishment is a marker of chronic food insecurity: people with a severe inability to access food are unlikely to be able to meet their energy requirements[8]. By 2030, if recent trends continued, the figure had been projected to rise to 840 million[9]. Now, as a consequence of COVID-19, chronic undernourishment may have affected an additional 83–132 million people in 2020 alone, on top of the original projections. Higher rates of hunger owing to COVID-19 may persist throughout the next decade (Figure 1).

The task of addressing food insecurity and malnutrition, though, extends much beyond the first step of reaching those who cannot obtain a basic 'energy-sufficient' diet. A healthy diet contains not only enough calories but also a balanced set of nutrients from several different food groups. On average, a healthy diet costs US$3.75 per person per day—nearly five times as much as an energy-sufficient one[10]. This cost vastly exceeds the US$1.90 a day poverty line, and certainly the portion of that line expected to be used for food.

Figure 1: Undernourishment is on the rise



Source: FAO et al., 2020. Note: Figures are for SDG indicator 2.1.1 on the prevalence of chronic undernourishment, with preliminary scenarios showing the impact of COVID-19. * = projected value. ** = scenarios.

A healthy diet is unaffordable for more than 3 billion people (38 percent of the world's population). There is considerable geographical variation: the share of people unable to afford a healthy diet is highest in sub-Saharan Africa (77 percent) and southern Asia (58 percent), and rises to 86 percent of people living in protracted crises[11]. As a recent study proposes, this discrepancy underlines the importance of paying attention also to the income and affordability constraints of the billions of people who are vulnerable to monetary poverty but not currently poor, and potentially even a revision of the poverty line itself[12].

Alongside chronic hunger and other types of chronic food insecurity is the phenomenon of acute food insecurity. This is when food security is disrupted at a specific point in time by events—often conflict and other sudden changes or shocks, such as extreme weather, or seasonal or cyclical stresses—whose severity poses an immediate threat to lives and livelihoods. Some 135 million people across 55 countries were estimated to be suffering acute food insecurity in 2019, requiring urgent food assistance[13]. Again, COVID-19 is worsening the situation dramatically, possibly having doubled that number to about 265 million by the end of 2020[14].

As for malnutrition—which covers chronic and acute undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity—here, too, a considerable challenge remains[15]. In many countries several types of malnutrition coexist—this is the 'multiple burden' of malnutrition—even in the same communities, households or individuals, placing a severe strain on economic and health outcomes.

- **Chronic and acute malnutrition have declined only fractionally in recent years.** About 144 million children under five are stunted, and about 47 million suffer from wasting[16]. The rate of

change is not fast enough to reach global nutrition goals. In fact, estimates suggest that child wasting could have risen by an extra 14 percent owing to COVID-19 in 2020 alone, afflicting nearly 7 million more children than the pre-COVID projections. This is only the, 'tip of the iceberg', as other types of malnutrition will also increase[17].

- **Meanwhile, over 2 billion people lack essential micronutrients such as vitamin A, iron, iodine and zinc.** Deficiencies of vitamins and minerals have negative effects on wellbeing, including morbidity and mortality. They especially affect young children and pregnant women, who have greater micronutrient requirements.
- **Overweight and obesity is increasing in every region and now affects one in every three people[18].** Childhood overweight and obesity has also shown a concerning upward trend. While overweight is higher in wealthier countries, it is increasing fastest in low- and middle-income countries.

The challenges of hunger and other forms of food insecurity and malnutrition are often interlinked with poverty and inequality[19]. Crucially, the links go in both directions. On the one hand, poverty is a major determinant of food insecurity and malnutrition. Even though the relationship is not linear, poorer households on average find it harder than less poor households to access adequate food and other essential goods and services; and when income constraints are eased (including e.g. by means of cash transfers), food consumption, food security and dietary diversity may increase[20]. In turn, food insecurity and malnutrition are among the causes of poverty. They can damage health, impairing physical and cognitive development and capacity, and so limit people's full potential. Income inequality and other forms of inequality, too, affect these interlinkages: income inequality increases the likelihood of severe food insecurity and is associated with undernutrition (though the relationship is less straightforward in respect of obesity)[21]. This strong bidirectional relationship creates the risk of hunger–poverty traps—but also offers an opportunity for a 'virtuous circle' whereby investments in food security and nutrition can help propel a development strategy.

Of course, the linkages are complex. Poverty reduction does not guarantee a proportionate reduction in food insecurity—either nationally or in households—and food security does not necessarily translate into better nutrition. Non-income factors are also at play, including all those addressed by SDGs, from education and health, to access to water, sanitation and housing, to gender equality. While many of the hungry are likely to be poor—in some cases by national definition in respect of extreme poverty, if defined as being unable to meet food needs—not all the poor are chronically hungry or otherwise food insecure[22,23]. Meanwhile some of the malnourished are also poor, but not all, especially in respect of micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity. For individuals, intra-household inequality plays a part: food within the household is not always adapted to or shared in line with people's varied dietary needs.

A final concept of note, and key to Zero Hunger, is that of vulnerability. Many people are not poor, hungry or otherwise food insecure right now, but risk being so in the future, depending on their exposure to hazards and capacity to deal with them: poverty and food insecurity are not static but can be transitory, seasonal or cyclical[24]. For example, a household whose income varies during the year may struggle to access food at times, so may be vulnerable today even if not now poor. Meanwhile, many of the currently poor are vulnerable to remaining so, but they can also recover.

Depending on the context, policies that address poverty, inequality and/or vulnerability—of which social protection instruments are a cornerstone—may therefore reduce food insecurity and malnutrition, and vice versa.

1.2 THE IMPACT OF SHOCKS, STRESSORS AND OTHER MAJOR TRENDS

Efforts to reach Zero Hunger and reduce poverty are impeded by shocks and stressors, amongst them conflict, climate variability and extreme weather, environmental degradation, other natural hazards, economic downturns and, of course, health shocks, as COVID-19 has shown[25]. Shocks and stressors often link to and amplify one another: COVID-19 and related responses, for example, have already led to an economic shock.

Shocks and stressors increase the scale, severity and duration of food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty. They can have an adverse impact on food systems, destabilising the production and availability of nutritious food, and limiting people's financial and physical access to food and its effective utilisation. For example, countries that are conflict-affected or otherwise fragile have higher average rates of undernourishment and undernutrition than those in stable contexts; conflict can also have short-term, acute impacts on food security and nutrition[26]. Climate change is another crucial example: it has already caused heightened uncertainty and resulted in changes to crop yields and the distribution of pests and disease[27]. Increased exposure to climate hazards is expected to accentuate vulnerabilities and inequalities and require households to adapt their livelihood strategies. Climate change could increase hunger and malnutrition by up to 20 percent by 2050, and increase poverty, especially for the 2.5 billion small-scale food producers whose livelihoods depend on agriculture and renewable natural resources[28].

Besides large-scale (covariate) shocks, people are also at risk of individual- or household-level (idiosyncratic) shocks such as accidents or illness[29]. These, too, can have a catastrophic impact on people's ability to meet their needs, resulting in negative coping mechanisms similar to those that households use to deal with covariate shocks. If not addressed promptly—before or soon after a shock happens—the problems that arise can become entrenched: a temporary shock to a household may cause a loss of income or livelihood or a rise in costs (such as major medical expenses), leading to food insecurity and hunger, which in turn may lead to chronic poverty. The poorest people tend to face frequent disruptions that prevent or erode sustained investments in addressing structural poverty and undermine efforts towards recovery and longer term resilience.

Policies that account for and mitigate shocks and stressors are already urgent, and will become increasingly so in the decade ahead. Extreme weather affects an ever greater number of people: natural hazard events recorded have tripled in frequency in the last 50 years, with a notable rise in floods and droughts[30]. Meanwhile about half the world's poor, and some 60 percent of the chronically hungry, live in fragile or conflict-affected states; and as poverty declines in more stable contexts, without action by 2030 around 80 percent of the extreme poor will be living in fragile states[31].

The result is that many governments have to address an increasing level of need, including with the support of the development and humanitarian community when demand exceeds their own capacity to respond. The disruption caused by covariate shocks, in particular, creates a dual challenge: it adds to the burden, while constraining policymakers' ability to tackle structural issues or assist those whose vulnerability is caused by other factors. In this context there has been a growing focus among the international community on supporting integrated, nationally led, longer term solutions to manage risks, build resilience and improve efficiency and impact[32].

Policymakers also have to contend with several other major and interlinked trends that will shape the world of 2030 and will influence progress—positively or negatively—towards Zero Hunger and reduced poverty:

- **An increasingly urban population, and a transformation of rural areas.** Over half the world now lives in urban settlements, with the growth rate highest in middle- and low-income countries. A declining share of labour in the agricultural sector is a typical feature of this transformation[33]
- **Rapid demographic changes.** As the population heads towards 8.5 billion in 2030, demographic changes are driving structural changes in economies
- **People on the move[34].** About 272 million people were living outside their country of origin as of 2019—a record high, though stable as a percentage of the global population (3.5 percent) since 2010. Nearly two-thirds (164 million) are labour migrants. Some 34 million international migrants are forcibly displaced, including refugees and asylum-seekers. In addition, an estimated 46 million people were internally displaced as of 2019. Some 80 percent are in countries most affected by acute food insecurity[35]. COVID-19 is expected to alter migration patterns: reduced mobility in the pandemic may shift to increased future mobility among people facing acute hardship in their present locations
- **Technology and automation.** Digital transformation is profoundly affecting every aspect of society, including public sector services. Digitalisation and automation, including artificial intelligence, may create opportunities for increased productivity and economic growth, and a streamlining of many administrative procedures. At the same time, these processes raise very real and immediate concerns about their impact on the labour market—under a medium scenario, some 400 million workers' jobs could be displaced by 2030, requiring people to change employment and acquire new skills—as well as about risks to privacy and accountability[36].

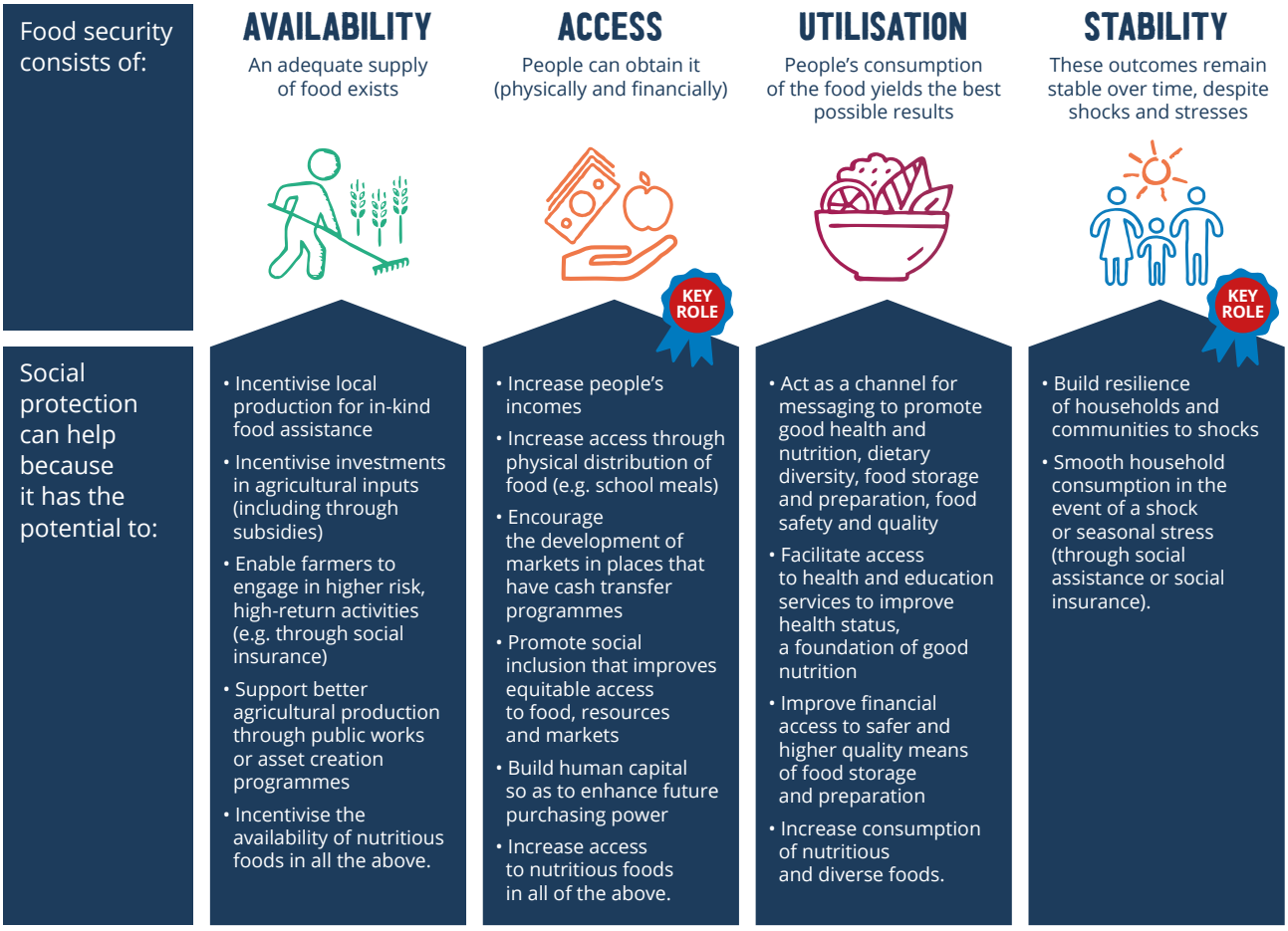
1.3 THE RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

Social protection plays a crucial role globally in this context. A common interagency definition describes social protection as the, 'policies and programmes aimed at preventing, and protecting people against, poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion throughout their life [...with] a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups'[37]. For WFP's interpretation of this definition in detail, see section 2.

Each country has its own definition of social protection reflecting its context and priorities. National social protection strategies therefore vary in their scope. Social protection typically covers a range of cash and/or in-kind transfers and fee waivers, collectively termed 'social assistance' when non-contributory (i.e. publicly funded), and 'social insurance' when contributory and not risk-rated (i.e. financed by or on behalf of the beneficiary, and where premiums do not vary according to personal level of risk)[38]. It generally also covers some active labour market schemes; and, for some countries, it may include social care services and/or some targeted subsidies. Annex B provides a full inventory as used in the interagency Core Diagnostic Instrument (CODI) for assessing social protection[39].

Broadly, social protection addresses vulnerability, poverty and inequality through the redistribution of resources, and through interventions that help individuals or households to manage the risks they face. These economic, social and other risks may be caused by structural inequalities, personal circumstances, life-course vulnerabilities or covariate shocks. Of course, social protection alone cannot eliminate crises and mitigate the downsides of global trends, but a well functioning social protection system can make a highly effective contribution. It can support those already in need, help prevent temporary needs from becoming entrenched, and promote conditions conducive to building resilience. It has the potential to foster human capital development, social cohesion and/or inclusive economic growth[40].

Figure 2: How social protection can enhance food security and nutrition



Source: WFP.

Social protection is a key policy instrument for governments and an accelerator for many SDG goals, including Zero Hunger. The 2030 Agenda envisages, 'a world with equitable and universal access to [...] social protection, where physical, mental and social well-being are assured' (United Nations 2015, p.7). Social protection is explicit in SDGs 1.3 (no poverty), 3.8 (good health), 5.4 (gender equality) and 10.4 (reduce inequality), and implicit in others.

With respect to food security and nutrition, social protection has the potential to make a positive impact through a range of entry points (Figure 2). Food security has four constituent elements: food availability, access, utilisation and stability over time. Addressing any or all of these will enhance food security outcomes. If the food that is produced and accessed is nutritious, and if people are in good health to make effective use of the nutrients, then nutrition outcomes will also be improved. Some of these aspects can be addressed through interventions at a household level, while others—especially those related to effective utilisation (consumption)—require closer attention to the needs of individuals.

Improving the 'access' and 'stability' elements of food security is intrinsic to social protection, given its purpose of enhancing households' economic capacities (one way of improving access) and smoothing consumption during times of disruption (providing stability). Social protection has been described as an, 'automatic economic stabiliser'[41]. In fragile and complex crisis settings, or in areas affected by repeated shocks or seasonal food insecurity, social protection can have a multiple dividend. It can enable people to cope with or adapt to risks, preventing shocks from turning into emergencies. If appropriately designed, social protection programmes can deliver prompt support in situations where a rapid response is still required, or can work alongside other emergency responses in a complementary way, such as by sharing systems, platforms and infrastructure. The global response to the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated hundreds of examples of this role.

The food 'availability' and 'utilisation' aspects are less intrinsic to the sector and so require special attention. Food availability may be improved through closer linkages with activities that strengthen food systems. Improving food utilisation, such as through better access to health services and nutritious food, has positive repercussions for nutrition, in particular.

Evidence on the contribution of social protection to food security and nutrition reveals many success stories—sometimes even when not designed for that purpose[42]. When social protection programmes achieve their core aims of addressing poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion, they may also help food security and nutrition outcomes. Such success is not guaranteed, however. Design choices may enable them to strengthen this effect, provided this is consistent with their core objectives[43]. Especially with respect to nutrition, social protection tends to be more effective when nutrition goals are pursued deliberately in programme design and implementation, in all aspects ranging from the choice of recipient to the value, modality and duration of a transfer, to ensuring that social protection does not inadvertently contribute to malnutrition by increasing access to unhealthy food[44].

1.4 COMMITMENTS AND GAPS

An increased commitment to social protection by governments and their partners has long been evident. Priority actions, embedded in countries' own policies, are also guided by regional and international agreements—not least the covenants governing the right to social security (see section 2.1) [45]. Two key global initiatives have been the International Labour Organisation's (ILO's) Social Protection Floors Recommendation in 2012, adopted by governments, workers and employers; and the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection (USP2030), launched in 2016 to expedite progress towards SDG target 1.3.1 of expanded social protection coverage (and of which WFP is a member)[46]. These call for nationally set guarantees of at least a minimum level of income security and essential health care provision for people across their lives, and the progressive achievement of higher levels of protection for a wider range of needs.

In practice, investments in social protection have been gradually rising for decades. Programmes are typically introduced incrementally, often starting with social security for the formal and public sector, and extending to old age pensions, support for poor families, child grants and/or other measures according to country priorities[47]. In low- and middle-income countries the expansion has been particularly marked since the 1990s[48]. Nonetheless, while expenditure on social protection in low- and middle-income countries reached an estimated US$2.1 trillion in 2019, there remains a considerable shortfall: the progressive achievement of universal coverage of four benefits in low- and middle-income countries by 2030 (for children, maternity, disability and old age) would require an extra US$284 billion in 2020 over and above 2019 spending, rising to an extra US$735 billion in real terms by 2030[49].

Effective coverage for all remains far off[50]. Only 45 percent of people—3.5 billion—have access to even one social protection benefit as defined by SDG 1.3.1, and only 29 percent can access a comprehensive set of programmes[51]. People on the move and workers in the informal economy are often overlooked. Social protection coverage tends to be lower where it is most needed, where rates of poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition are higher[52]. In Latin America and the Caribbean, some 60 percent of people are covered by at least one benefit while in Africa, despite substantial recent expansion, that percentage is around 13 percent[53]. The expansion of social protection is urgent; political dynamics as well as fiscal capacity determine its likelihood of being achieved[54].

Where the scale and scope of demand exceeds the capacity of nationally owned and financed social protection, some of the shortfall is met by other means. This may result in short-term public policy responses for long-term problems, financed either by governments or by their humanitarian and development partners; or else a heavy reliance on people's informal support networks. Some schemes may operate only as small pilots, or in a limited geographical area. This can result in fragmentation of service provision, and/or support that, while welcome, cannot be relied on.

A gradual process of system-building and institutionalisation of social protection may eventually accommodate some of these needs more effectively. In the meantime, efforts are being made to streamline and coordinate the activities of actors. With respect to the interface between humanitarian and development actors, the 'Grand Bargain' of the World Humanitarian Summit of 2016 and its associated Commitments to Action have been instrumental in shaping the nature of cooperation, including on the use of national social protection systems by international humanitarian actors[55].

The commitments and gaps cited here point to some key issues for those working in social protection in the decade ahead, some already the subject of global cooperation and others meriting more attention. Amongst these are:

- Expanding social protection across the three focal dimensions of USP2030—
  - **coverage,** so everyone can access social protection when they need it
  - **adequacy,** ensuring the right type and level of support to achieve aims
  - **comprehensiveness,** providing protection for a wide range of risks
- Improving **quality,** e.g. transparency and inclusiveness in programme targeting; timeliness, reliability and accessibility of benefits; the respect of dignity, privacy and accountability; sustainable long-term funding; and flexibility in the overall system[56]
- Sustaining the delivery of regular social protection (business continuity) in **emergencies and protracted crises** as well as accommodating people's additional needs
- Building resilience and mitigating the adverse impacts of major global trends
- Taking better account of **food security and nutrition** considerations
- Institutionalising social protection programmes as a **coherent system,** including through embedding them in legislation with dedicated funding.

WFP's expertise enables us to continue our work supporting countries in these areas within the bounds of our mandate. The following sections explain how we will do so.

SECTION ENDNOTES

1 United Nations, 2020.

2 WFP, 2017g. 'Zero Hunger' is used in this strategy to refer to goals relating to chronic undernourishment (hunger) and other forms of food insecurity and malnutrition.

3 United Nations, 2020, p. 3.

4 United Nations, 2020.

5 World Bank, 2018; United Nations, 2019b.

6 6 United Nations, 2020; World Bank, 2020.

7 FAO et al., 2020. This is SDG Indicator 2.1.1.

8 FAO, et al., 2020. Food security consists of food production, access, utilisation and the stability of these factors over time (see also section 1.3).

9 FAO et al., 2020.

10 FAO et al., 2020. See also WFP's 'Counting the Beans' index for further analysis of the affordability of food around the world (WFP, 2017b).

11 FAO et al., 2020.

12 FAO et al., 2020.

13 Food Security Information Network, 2020. Acute food insecurity is measured largely on the basis of populations estimated to be in Phase 3 or above (Crisis, Emergency or Catastrophe status) on the five-point scale of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) and/or the Cadre Harmonisé.

14 Headey et al., 2020.

15 'Chronic malnutrition' refers to being too short for one's age (stunting). 'Acute malnutrition' means being dangerously thin for one's height (wasting) (WFP, 2017a).

16 Global Nutrition Report, 2020.

17 Fore et al., 2020, p.518.

18 Global Nutrition Report, 2020; Haddad et al., 2020.

19 For a very detailed analysis of the relationship between these concepts, see FAO et al., 2019.

20 von Braun et al., 1992; Barrett and Lentz, 2013; Townsend, 2015; Bastagli et al., 2016; FAO et al., 2019.

21 FAO et al., 2019.

22 Data are unavailable on the overlap between the 690 million chronically hungry and the 736 million extreme poor even before the pandemic. Indicators for SDG 1.1, on extreme poverty, and SDG 2.1 are calculated in different ways. Some 56 percent of the chronically hungry are in Asia, with 33 percent in sub-Saharan Africa, while, for comparison, sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 57 percent of those in extreme poverty (Roser and Ortiz-Ospina, 2019; FAO et al., 2020).

23 For the links between poverty and food security see also Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux, 2018.

24 For vulnerability as the likelihood of future poverty, see e.g. Diwakar et al., 2019.

25 'Shocks' are adverse events; 'stressors' are persistent adverse trends (Porter, 2008; Hoddinott, 2014).

26 FAO et al., 2017; Global Nutrition Report, 2020.

27 IPCC, 2019; Solórzano and Cárdenes, 2019.

28 FAO et al., 2018; Solórzano and Cárdenes, 2019.

29 The difference between a covariate and an idiosyncratic shock relates to the type of risk that causes it (rather than by its consequences: events such as job losses can be either). Covariate risks are posed by events likely to affect many people in a community or region at once, such as an earthquake; idiosyncratic risks are posed by incidents that only affect one individual or household at a time. In practice, shocks are often a combination of both, as the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates: the virus is a covariate risk, but people's experience of it is mediated by idiosyncratic risks such as the presence of an underlying health condition.

30 Thomas and López, 2015.

31 OECD, 2018; WFP, 2019a. (Pre-COVID estimates.)

32 Delgado et al., 2019.

33 FAO, 2019.

34 Data in this paragraph are from IOM, 2019; UN DESA, 2019; IOM and WFP, 2020; UNHCR, 2020.

35 EPSC, 2017; UNHCR, 2020.

36 Manyika et al., 2017; Alston, 2019; Ohlenburg, 2020.

37 SPIAC-B, 2019, p.1. See also e.g. ISPA, 2016b.

38 Insurance that is risk-rated is simply regular insurance. See OECD et al., 2017.

39 ISPA, 2016a.

40 ILO, 2017.

41 McCord, 2013, p.5.

42 See e.g. Slater et al., 2014; Bastagli et al., 2016; Hidrobo et al., 2018; Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux, 2018; WFP, 2019b.

43 Devereux and Nzabamwita, 2018.

44 e.g. Alderman, 2015; Bastagli et al., 2016; Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux, 2018; Manley et al., 2020; WFP, 2020f.

45 For regional examples see e.g. African Union, 2008, and Arab Planning Institute, 2019.

46 ILO, 2012; Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection, 2019.

47 ILO, 2014; Ortiz et al., 2019.

48 OECD, 2014.

49 Durán-Valverde et al., 2019.

50 'Effective coverage' combines people making contributions to social insurance, with those in receipt of non-contributory benefits. Estimates depend, of course, on which programmes count as social protection (McCord, 2019).

51 ILO, 2017. 'Comprehensiveness' is classified as being achieved when people have access to benefits in the event of nine contingencies defined by the ILO: benefits for children and families; maternity; unemployment; employment injury; sickness; old age; disability; survivors; health protection. Other types of social protection programme exist but are not included at present in the calculation.

52 Global data are not available on the number of the food insecure and/or malnourished who are covered by social protection. Given the dynamic nature of these conditions, it is even more complex to estimate the coverage of people at risk of becoming so.

53 ILO, 2017; UN DESA, 2018.

54 Hickey et al., 2020.

55 World Humanitarian Summit, 2016a, 2016b. WFP is a signatory to the Grand Bargain.

56 See e.g. ILO, 2012.

UTEMBWE
ZAMSEED
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CAUTION
PRODUCT OF ZAMBIA

2

WFP'S ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL PROTECTION

2. WFP's engagement in social protection

2.1 CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

Three concerns: needs, risks and inequalities

The interagency definition cited in section 1.3 explains that social protection aims to address the threefold challenge of 'poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion'. We consider these conditions to be part of three broader domains of concern, relating to needs, risks and inequalities respectively. Most conceptual and practical approaches to social protection globally incorporate a response to one or more of these challenges[57].

WFP's engagement in social protection is underpinned by all three. They form the heart of our strategic vision and understanding of the issues to be addressed.

Needs

A central perspective is that a certain set of needs must be met in order for people to have a decent life, and that social protection can assist them in attaining it. Our concern extends beyond only food to other essential needs, since the whole range of needs have an impact, be it positive or negative, on whether people can attain food security and nutrition (see section 1.1). Many people face multiple deprivations. Addressing poverty is one way to meet needs, though for WFP it is important to apply a multidimensional understanding, beyond only income poverty.

Risks

From a risk-based perspective, social protection can help reduce, mitigate, absorb or transfer many of the varied risks that people are exposed to (see section 1.2). The ability of social protection to provide this risk management function is of great value and resonates strongly with WFP's work (see pp.32-35). Much of our own emergency programming supports people suffering from food insecurity and/or malnutrition as a result of shocks and stressors. This function is primary to WFP and will continue to be so. If some negative impacts of shocks can be relieved or averted thanks to an effective national social protection system, the benefits may be twofold. First, households and individuals may attain immediate relief as well as the means to build resilience in order to better manage future risks with fewer negative impacts. Second, for governments and their partners, investments in system-building may increase efficiency in the long run, including by reducing the need for protracted international humanitarian assistance for large numbers.

Inequalities

The third key perspective for WFP is the significant role of social protection in combating inequalities, including disparities in income, wealth and many other economic and social outcomes as well as inequality of opportunity. Social protection measures can help by redistributing resources and by addressing marginalisation and social exclusion[58].

Inequalities affect a person's vulnerability—their likelihood of being adversely affected by risks that manifest themselves—by shaping both their exposure to risk and their capacity to deal with it. Opportunity and disadvantage may be influenced in part by certain group-based characteristics of individuals or households. People may experience combinations of factors that compound vulnerability and/or inequality.

Key characteristics that can generate unequal outcomes are[59]:

- **Social factors.** For example, age, gender, disability, ethnicity, citizenship, refugee or migration status, language, health status
- **Economic factors.** Income level and sources, assets and savings, access to credit and liquidity etc.
- **Geographical factors.** Social or economic inequality may be associated with urban or rural location, physical remoteness or high population density, topography, access to infrastructure, environmental conditions etc.

The hierarchies created by such characteristics may come about because of discrimination embedded in cultural norms, or may be fixed in policies and legislation. For example, citizens and non-citizens of a country may have different legal entitlements to access public services.

The existence of these inequalities does not mean that people's poverty and vulnerability status is pre-determined or static. Vulnerability is also affected by a host of community-level and macro-level factors ranging from the existence of community networks and social cohesion, to macroeconomic circumstances such as inflation, to political factors and many others. In addition, while some people experience chronic or intergenerational poverty, for others it is a temporary state: it may be transient, acute or cyclical.

For this reason, WFP prefers to talk of 'people in a vulnerable situation', acknowledging that this situation may change over time. We recognise the importance of countries having a set of programmes that cater for a variety and fluctuating volume of needs; that are based on a nuanced assessment of poverty and vulnerability; and that may support people with preventive measures even if not currently poor or hungry.

Within this frame, we will still pay particular attention to populations who are food insecure or malnourished, or who are vulnerable to becoming so. This remains at the core of this strategy.

Multiple routes to a social protection solution

Social protection addresses these challenges in many ways. A commonly used typology identifies four categories: (i) 'preventive' measures that enable people to mitigate risk without reaching socially unacceptable levels of deprivation or resorting to negative coping strategies (ii) 'protective' measures to help meet the needs of those who are poor, disadvantaged or in a vulnerable situation, or who have no other means of support (iii) 'promotive' measures that help people move out of poverty, or promote their well-being, livelihood opportunities and/or human capital development (iv) 'transformative' actions that serve any of the other functions in a way that recognises and advances people's rights and transforms power structures[60].

WFP values, and will work to support, all four functions in our engagements in social protection: each offers a different route to enable people to meet their needs and manage risks, and to address inequalities. While the interagency definition noted above explicitly cites the 'preventive' and 'protective' roles of social protection, we interpret it as referring implicitly to the 'promotive' and 'transformative' roles, too. Many programmes simultaneously serve more than one function. A school feeding programme, for example, might tackle immediate consumption needs (protection) while encouraging school attendance which may promote children's human capital development (promotion) [61].

Naturally, one programme cannot fully achieve all these objectives for everyone. For example, promotive activities may enhance some people's resilience to adverse circumstances by enabling them to be self-reliant; yet for other people in situations of the greatest vulnerability self-reliance may remain unachievable, and resilience may be enhanced by being in receipt of protective, long-term social assistance, even throughout their lives. It is therefore important that social protection systems incorporate a comprehensive range of programmes.

Governments have many reasons for making these investments in social protection, rather than leaving the job of addressing unmet needs and managing risks to people's informal support networks or private insurers. Understanding the justifications in a given context is crucial for WFP's effective advocacy and support. The way governments choose to frame their social protection activities is political and shapes the programmes they develop. Some of the main reasons as to why it is important to address needs, risks and inequalities by providing social protection are: for its instrumental value; to fulfil rights; or to improve efficiency (Box 1). For WFP, these compelling arguments are a sound justification for us, in turn, to assist governments to achieve their objectives in this regard, as a direct or indirect contribution to Zero Hunger.

Box 1

Three rationales for the existence of national social protection

- **Instrumental value.** Social protection can be a catalyst for economic growth and for healthier and more stable economies and societies. These outcomes may be achieved through its roles in poverty reduction, human capital development, reduced risk and enhanced social inclusion. From this point of view, economic and social benefits can be gained from investing in both the poorest and those who are better off, including, 'the "average" poor rather than the poorest [...] like small entrepreneurs and smallholders' (Bolling and von Wittmarschen, 2015, para.7). Cost–benefit analysis can quantify the potential gains.
- **To fulfil rights.** Drawing on the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has a fundamental right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, and a right to social security (United Nations, 1948). Social protection can therefore assist states to fulfil their obligations under national and international law (Sepùlveda and Nyst, 2012). Governments and their partners work to ensure the progressive realisation of these rights, as referred to and reaffirmed in the ILO Recommendation no. 202 on National Social Protection Floors and the USP2030 partnership. The right to an adequate standard of living also includes the right of all people to have physical and economic access to adequate and nutritious food, as spelled out in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (adopted in 1966) and subsequent clarifications (HLPE, 2012). WFP aims to protect and promote this right.
- **To improve efficiency.** Governments may find it efficient to offer social insurance to protect against labour market risks such as unemployment, as the availability of this insurance may encourage innovation and changes in the labour market (Mitra and Ranjan, 2011; Dubois, 2015). Social protection—and specifically social insurance—can offer protection that would not be willingly offered by private insurers because they relate to covariate risks which might be too big for a private firm, or because the people to be covered might not be able to afford the premium.

2.2 WHAT COUNTS AS SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR WFP?

By 'social protection we mean both the 'policies and programmes' cited in the interagency definition above, and the architecture of the overarching system.

We are focusing our attention in this strategy on formal, public social protection. The policies and programmes of the interagency definition are government-owned. They may be led by either national or subnational authorities—not only ministries of social affairs, but also other ministries or departments where relevant. We note that a vast amount of informal social protection also exists, being the initiatives and support that individuals, households and communities undertake privately to assist others.

For WFP, the types of programme that count as social protection are captured in the interagency inventory (Annex B). We endorse this comprehensive list as it best aligns with the varied usage of the term by governments. Social assistance and social insurance programmes that deliver cash or in-kind transfers to households or individuals are the mainstay of social protection worldwide.

Some of these transfers are sometimes referred to as 'safety nets'. We clarify our usage of that term in Box 2. Our particular expertise is in supporting the strengthening of cash assistance (including vouchers) and food transfers, including general food distribution, school feeding programmes, asset creation programmes and programmes with a nutritional component. We also support livelihoods programmes and work with some kinds of social insurance, notably weather-indexed crop and livestock social insurance. We sometimes support other types of social protection programme where relevant for meeting food security and nutrition needs, or in contexts exposed to risks and shocks.

We support global efforts to progressively expand programmes in terms of their coverage, adequacy and comprehensiveness, in line with the USP2030 agenda. We also have a strong emphasis on supporting improvements to programme quality.

Furthermore, we support efforts to integrate national programmes into a well resourced, coherent system. This should minimise gaps in coverage and comprehensiveness and fulfil the protection of people across the board, to better achieve long-term impact and sustainability.

Box 2

From safety nets to social protection

In some contexts the term 'safety nets' remains current to denote non-contributory social assistance programmes. This terminology is not wrong and still has a place in WFP usage. Besides being applicable to government-led cash and in-kind transfer programmes, it can denote transfers delivered by other actors (including WFP) for the purposes of poverty alleviation. It can refer to emergency, short-term transfers as well as those that fill a longer term social welfare function. It may therefore be appropriate for transfers in countries where the government itself chooses to use this term, or where direct links with national social protection are not specifically sought, or where the intervention is not expected to be sustained long term.

The use of 'social protection' in this strategy acknowledges WFP's alignment with the more ambitious agenda of the SDGs, Social Protection Floor Initiative and USP2030, and reflects WFP's role in supporting policy-making and institutional capacity-strengthening for government-led social protection systems, besides supporting non-contributory safety net programmes.

2.3 THE RATIONALE FOR WFP'S ENGAGEMENT

WFP has provided effective contributions directly or indirectly to the field now known as social protection for decades, in some cases dating back to WFP's foundation in the 1960s. With over half a century of documented operational experience of safety net provision we have contributed significantly to global understanding of effective delivery of transfers to households and individuals in development, emergency and protracted crisis contexts. In 2020, for example, WFP contributed to strengthening national social protection systems in 78 countries[62]. In many of these we supported governments to introduce, scale up or adapt social protection programmes to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its socioeconomic consequences.

Supporting national social protection more systematically is an approach that is fully aligned with WFP's twin roles in 'Changing Lives' and 'Saving Lives'[63]. It is an important route by which we enact our commitment to working 'at the nexus' of humanitarian and development assistance and peace, working in non-crisis times in a way that aims to reduce the severity of future emergencies, while meeting crisis needs in a way that strengthens systems for the longer term. By doing so we aim to use our resources to meet our global commitments as effectively as possible.

Supporting social protection is fundamental to our contribution to Zero Hunger. In 2019 WFP reached 97 million people—equivalent to 14 percent of the world's 690 million hungry—with our direct interventions in 88 countries, including the distribution of US$2.1 billion in cash transfers and commodity vouchers to almost 28 million people[64]. National social protection systems, with their annual expenditure in the trillions (see section 1.4), operate at a scale that is orders of magnitude higher. By continuing to invest catalytic amounts in strengthening those national systems WFP will contribute to improving outcomes among the several hundred million hungry and malnourished—and those at risk of becoming so—whom we do not reach directly and who may also need support if Zero Hunger is to be achieved. The COVID-19 crisis, together with the growing number and duration of protracted crises worldwide, have made the task more pressing than ever[65].

> *"Impact at scale, for WFP, means supporting millions of people while helping governments to support billions"*
>
> Valerie Guarnieri
> Assistant Executive Director, WFP

The work also enables us to contribute towards SDG 17, partnering for SDG results. This will be delivered through our collaboration with governments and their partners as a source and broker of knowledge, expertise and innovative operational approaches. The methods for doing so are described throughout this strategy (see especially pp.56-58 below).

2.4 WHAT'S NEW IN THIS STRATEGY?

This strategy provides a strategic direction and a coordinating framework for these ongoing activities. Inspired by WFP's diverse work in the field, it presents how we can—and already do—support the establishment and strengthening of nationally led social protection. While setting out a unified approach to understanding the challenges that social protection can address, and identifying our priorities in line with our expertise, it is not prescriptive about solutions to be adopted since our assistance is tailored to the context. The direction of our work in a region or country is reflected in the roadmaps of WFP's regional bureaux and in the Country Strategic Plans of each WFP country office, drawing on this strategy (see section 4 below).

The 2012 'Update of WFP's Safety Nets Policy' laid the ground for much of the increased attention to social protection evident in WFP's practices today[66]. In particular, it had brought into sharper focus the importance of aligning WFP's own directly implemented programmes with nationally led safety nets, and with working to support government programmes and their integration in a system-oriented approach.

All these considerations remain highly relevant. The changes in the global environment outlined in section 1, alongside a number of internal developments and lessons from WFP's greatly expanded contribution to social protection since 2012, have now prompted the decision to revisit and update the framework. An independent evaluation of the 2012 policy document undertaken in 2018–19 with the aim of contributing to accountability and learning put forward several recommendations including the development of this strategy[67].

What is new in the present strategy compared with its predecessors? Some key features are:

- Consideration of the implications for WFP of major global agreements since 2012, including the SDGs, Social Protection Floor Initiative, USP2030 and Grand Bargain
- A more detailed articulation of the pathways by which social protection can contribute to improved food security and nutrition, and how meeting essential needs can be a route to achieving Zero Hunger
- An increased focus on strategies for strengthening the effectiveness of social protection in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, to build resilience and as a channel for shock-response. This aligns with the greatly increased global demand for social protection as a response to covariate shocks and stressors, and for stronger linkages between humanitarian, development and peace initiatives
- Greater emphasis on WFP's potential contribution to government capacity-strengthening beyond the handover of our 'own' programmes, including through our support to institutionalising the system. Handover of existing development-oriented safety net programmes remains an important goal in many contexts, but is not the sole starting-point for our engagements
- An updated articulation of our potential contribution to global knowledge and partnerships for social protection.

Australian Aid
REGISTRATION OF
Cash-based transfers to the
affected by Typhoon

2.5 OUR VALUE PROPOSITION

Identifying and reaching those most vulnerable to hunger and other forms of food insecurity and malnutrition—including those in, or at risk of, income poverty and other deprivations—is WFP's proven area of expertise. Our history of delivering transfers to people in need in diverse contexts—including as a long-standing 'safety net of last resort' in our humanitarian work—means that we can provide impactful assistance as countries progressively address the gaps identified in section 1.4 above.

Feedback from our partners is clear and consistent about the value that WFP adds to our partnerships with governments and other actors working in this field[68]:

1. **Field presence.** WFP prides itself on its global footprint and frontline presence, including in very remote locations and situations of conflict and protracted crisis as well as stable low- and middle-income contexts. This means that we can offer practical support for establishing, using and strengthening social protection even in contexts of disruption where others are absent. Taking advantage of our 280 field offices, we have a deep understanding of political and practical realities, and build long-term local partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders.
2. **Operational experience.** Building on this field presence and our supply chain expertise, WFP has developed the largest global capacity to deliver and scale up food assistance, often in exceptional circumstances. This on-the-ground experience and strong 'delivery culture' offers us a unique perspective from which we can support countries to design, set up and run effective systems and programmes of their own—especially, but not exclusively, those that provide cash and food transfers. We understand how to turn policy into practice through the design of locally appropriate delivery systems, including those that use innovative technologies where relevant, and based on an appreciation of available resources and political feasibility.
3. **Analytical capabilities.** The experience of our Research, Assessment and Monitoring division makes WFP a partner of choice for countries seeking to understand the nature of vulnerability. We can help governments map, identify and target the people most in need of social protection. Our methodological expertise includes the use of participatory approaches and the collection of data in areas and contexts that many organisations do not have the possibility to survey. We provide support with vulnerability assessments; food security analysis and monitoring; market price monitoring; geospatial analysis; and analysis of climate risk and the likely disruption due to imminent shocks, among others. This includes assistance to strengthen governments' capacities in data collection and analysis.
4. **Food security and nutrition expertise.** We have a long history of designing and implementing programmes that contribute to food security and nutrition as well as supporting livelihoods and promoting human capital development. This has enabled us to support governments to incorporate food security and nutrition objectives into national social protection policies and strategies, and tailor the design of food-based and cash-based social assistance programmes for higher food security and nutritional impact.
5. **Working across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.** WFP is committed to making a positive contribution to resilience and peace while achieving core development and humanitarian outcomes. The awarding of the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize to WFP is testament to these efforts[69]. Social protection is a key area where the three branches of the 'nexus' coincide. WFP's expertise in emergency preparedness and resilience, the design of agile programmes that can scale up or down and adapt according to need, the transition from crisis to post-crisis contexts, issues of accountability and protection, and our experience in enhancing intersectoral coordination are all relevant to supporting improvements to national social protection.

2.6 PRINCIPLES

WFP will adhere to five principles that are valid for all our contributions to social protection and that will ensure that we provide relevant support tailored to the context. We will be:

1. **Mandate-driven.** WFP's primary accountability is to meet the needs of people experiencing—or at risk of—food insecurity and malnutrition efficiently and effectively, in both stable and crisis contexts. We support national social protection when we judge that food security and/or nutrition will improve as a result, directly or indirectly.
2. **Evidence-based.** Our support will be based on analysis of the immediate and/or longer term challenge(s) to be addressed. The solutions we put forward will be contextually appropriate and underpinned by an appraisal of the relative benefits, trade-offs and possible risks, to minimise adverse impacts. They will draw on lessons learned by WFP, governments and their partners about what works or does not work, as well as on insights achieved through innovation and excellence in analysis and programming.
3. **Country-focused.** Recognising state sovereignty and noting that WFP has no vested interest in the adoption of any particular approach, our work in social protection starts from a nation's own objectives and capacities. We will position ourselves as a partner to national actors to enhance their capacity to achieve their goals, taking into account national strategies, the SDGs, the USP2030 initiative and social protection floors where relevant. We will deploy our technical and operational capacities in ways that are as sustainable as possible for governments. Where a national system is absent, weak or disrupted, we will aim to work in ways that promote the (re-) establishment of long-term, nationally owned social protection. At the same time we will adhere to our binding international and corporate commitments. In conflict situations where humanitarian principles apply, these are primary and will not be compromised.
4. **People-centred.** Keeping people at the centre of WFP's work means, first, recognising that people experience differences in opportunity and disadvantage. We will take these inequalities into consideration in our support, and will advocate for more inclusive social protection. Second, it entails an emphasis on engagement, participation and empowerment: the role of programme participants, communities and civil society, among others, in the design, implementation and review of national plans and programmes, is central. Third, it means maintaining a firm focus on accountability to affected populations.
5. **Partnership-oriented.** For WFP, a fundamental component of effective programming is the establishment of collaborative relationships on a basis of mutual trust and commitment. No government or organisation can address complex challenges alone. We will aim to add value by seeking explicit agreement with governments and their partners—including sister UN agencies and other development actors—about our contribution and approach to national social protection system-strengthening in any context. Activities will be aligned with the UN Cooperation Framework in each country, and with internationally agreed normative documents. We will strive to avoid duplication, and will support governments to fill gaps as needed. Where appropriate, we will play a facilitator role with other partners for the benefit of the government, such as by brokering south–south and triangular cooperation.

SECTION ENDNOTES

57 A huge and longstanding body of literature highlights the centrality of these concerns for social protection. For reflections on various combinations of these goals see e.g. Norton et al., 2001; Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004; Munro, 2007; Barrientos, 2010; Jorgensen and Siegel, 2019.

58 See e.g. UN ESCAP, 2015.

59 See e.g. Kabeer, 2010; Kabeer and Santos, 2017; Jain et al., 2020.

60 Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004.

61 Burbano de Lara, 2019.

62 WFP, 2021b.

63 WFP, 2014a; 2017g.

64 WFP, 2020b.

65 Development Initiatives, 2020.

66 WFP, 2012. The 2012 Policy Update was not the first corporate statement in this field: it superseded a 2004 policy on 'WFP and food-based safety nets', and prior to that a 1998 policy paper entitled, 'Food-based safety net needs and WFP'.

67 Avenir Analytics, 2019. The evaluators' findings were informed by 250 interviews and extensive reviews of data, reports and literature, as well as field visits to five WFP country offices (Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Colombia, Egypt and Uganda) and remote studies of seven (Ecuador, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritania, Mozambique, Turkey and Sri Lanka).

68 WFP, 2014b; Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux, 2018; Avenir Analytics, 2019.

69 Norwegian Nobel Committee, 2020.

3

WFP'S STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION

3. WFP's strategic framework for social protection

Figure 3: The strategic framework

PART 1 VISION

WFP's vision is that by 2030 people will have substantially increased access to national social protection systems that safeguard and foster their ability to meet their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs, and to manage the risks and shocks they face

PART 2 PRIORITIES

This implies two interlinked priorities:

1

Social protection that helps people to meet their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs

Approaches that are:

- Food security-specific / nutrition-specific; or
- Food security-sensitive / nutrition-sensitive; or
- Aimed at meeting essential needs / poverty reduction / human capital development

2

Social protection that helps people to manage risks and shocks

- Reducing and addressing idiosyncratic and covariate risks
- Building resilience
- Providing effective support in contexts of disruption

Source: WFP.

PART 3
SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR WHOM?

We will support and promote the inclusion of people with diverse and often intersecting vulnerabilities and inequalities:

PART 4
MODES OF SUPPORT

We will provide our support in a variety of ways, which may also be blended or combined:

Supporting nationally led social protection systems and programmes

- Advice and guidance to national actors
- Delivery on behalf of national actors

Complementary actions in WFP's own programming

PART 5
AREAS OF WORK

We will pursue four key areas of work as we advance towards this vision:

1
Contribute to strengthening the **national social protection system** architecture

2
Support enhancements to the quantity and quality of **national social protection programming**

3
Improve the effectiveness of social protection in the shared space between humanitarian, development and peace actors

4
Build social protection partnerships and evidence globally

PART 1
VISION

WFP's vision is that by 2030 people will have substantially increased access to national social protection systems that safeguard and foster their ability to meet their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs, and to manage the risks and shocks they face

The vision for this strategy is that, 'By 2030 people will have substantially increased access to national social protection systems that safeguard and foster their ability to meet their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs, and to manage the risks and shocks they face'. With this ambition we reaffirm our readiness to support nations worldwide in their pursuit of the commitments that they have set for that date. Of course, WFP cannot do this on its own: it will only be achieved through concerted action by multiple actors.

In the rest of this section we set out our approach to achieving this vision. We articulate it by responding to four questions: (i) What objectives will WFP prioritise in its support to social protection? (ii) Who are we intending to benefit? (iii) How will we provide our support? (iv) What actions will we undertake? Each is covered in detail in the four subsections that follow.

In brief:

Priorities: **The vision encapsulates two interlinked priorities for WFP in social protection.** First, we will support governments, other national actors and their partners to implement measures that enable people to achieve and maintain a decent standard of living, including the fulfilment of their right to access adequate, nutritious and safe food throughout their lives. Second, we will pursue actions that strengthen the contribution of social protection to building people's resilience to shocks and stressors, both idiosyncratic and covariate, and including situations of disruption, conflict and protracted crisis, with the aim of reducing the negative impact of these events. These priorities reflect some key challenges in the sector and draw on WFP's areas of expertise and comparative advantages.

Social protection for whom? **WFP is committed to supporting inclusive social protection interventions that assist people in a wide range of vulnerable situations.** This aligns with global goals to leave no-one behind. We will pay particular attention to those who are food insecure or malnourished, or vulnerable to becoming so.

Modes of support: **WFP will provide its support in many ways.** They may include providing technical advice to national actors, or delivering elements of a social protection system or programme on their behalf at their request. We will also seek to maximise the complementarity of our own (emergency or development) interventions with national social protection, including by sharing knowledge and innovation, or undertaking deliberate planning and consultation for a transition to national actors when the context allows.

Areas of work: **Working towards the priorities identified, we will undertake actions that can be grouped into four broad areas of work.** These are to:

1. Contribute to strengthening the national social protection system architecture
2. Support enhancements to the quantity and quality of national social protection programming
3. Improve the effectiveness of social protection in the shared space between humanitarian, development and peace actors
4. Build social protection partnerships and evidence globally.

PART 2
PRIORITIES

This implies two interlinked priorities:

1

Social protection that helps people to meet their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs

Approaches that are:

- Food security-specific / nutrition-specific; or
- Food security-sensitive / nutrition-sensitive; or
- Aimed at meeting essential needs / poverty reduction / human capital development

2

Social protection that helps people to manage risks and shocks

- Reducing and addressing idiosyncratic and covariate risks
- Building resilience
- Providing effective support in contexts of disruption

PRIORITY 1 - SOCIAL PROTECTION THAT HELPS PEOPLE TO MEET THEIR FOOD SECURITY, NUTRITION AND ASSOCIATED ESSENTIAL NEEDS

At the heart of this first strategic priority is WFP's recognition of the varied routes by which social protection can help achieve Zero Hunger. This is because of the linkages between food insecurity, malnutrition, poverty, inequality and other forms of deprivation (see section 1 above). Tackling any of those challenges may contribute to resolving others. This means that we are open to several different approaches. In each case the emphasis may be on improving coverage, comprehensiveness, adequacy and/or quality of social protection as required.

First, where appropriate, we will support national social protection programmes that can be viewed as 'food security-specific' or 'nutrition-specific'. By this we mean programmes with an exclusive or primary objective of improving food security and/or nutrition. Such interventions form a relatively small share of social protection programmes globally and are often overlooked in global analyses of social protection, in contrast to their visibility in humanitarian programming. However, in some contexts and for some population groups they are vital. WFP's long-standing support to school feeding is one key example of assistance to a food security-specific social protection intervention. Another is support to institutionalise lean season assistance: in some countries, particularly in southern and western Africa, governments are making efforts to shift from responding to seasonal food insecurity through annual emergency responses, to incorporating general food distribution as a more predictable social protection programme. Other examples might be interventions that specifically distribute fortified food or micronutrient supplementation. Note that programmes that are 'food security-specific' may still not be 'nutrition-specific' unless intentionally designed that way, since better nutrition is not an automatic consequence of better food security.

Second, we will support 'food security-sensitive' and 'nutrition-sensitive' approaches. This applies to social protection programmes where food security and nutrition are not the primary objective, but that pay explicit attention to one or more aspects in their design and/or implementation. They may address underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition, work towards food security- and nutrition-related objectives, or use social protection programmes as a delivery channel for nutrition interventions[70]. Hundreds of social protection programmes

worldwide, often cash transfers, do not state food security and nutrition as their primary goal but contribute enormously and directly to outcomes in that area. WFP will assist the design and/or delivery of measures that consciously strive to increase these impacts. Examples (among many) include the identification and targeting of nutritionally vulnerable groups, or the calculation of transfer values that promote people's ability to obtain an adequate quantity of healthy food.

Third, we will assist the development of, or improvements to, programmes that aim to reduce multidimensional poverty broadly in contexts where food insecurity and malnutrition are a major concern, even when a food security or nutrition lens is not directly applied. Among others, these include social protection programmes that help people meet their essential needs, or promote income generation and diversification, enhanced productivity, human capital development or risk management, or that address the intersecting inequalities that affect people's ability to fulfil their right to food and to social protection[71]. Such programmes are valuable for enhancing people's ability to contribute to and participate in a prosperous society, strengthening the capabilities that support the achievement of all the SDGs, with the potential to trigger virtuous circles of development. One example might be cash transfer programmes that support general household consumption, which can be used for food as well as non-food items and basic services.

Other programmes might aim to reduce the non-financial barriers that some people face in meeting their essential needs.

In addition, WFP will support the strengthening of the enabling environment—social protection policies, institutional arrangements, knowledge and evidence generation and so on—that facilitate programme delivery.

"I can tell you with conviction that during this pandemic I saw social protection as the most important tool of food security in a crisis situation. [...] I strongly feel that we must appreciate its potential, institutionalise it and use it for interventions at scale—because it can be a very powerful tool in the quest for building back better"

Dr. Sania Nishtar
Special Assistant of Pakistan's Prime Minister and Federal Minister, Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Ministry, Government of Pakistan

Box 3

Routes towards Zero Hunger: implications for targeting

The different routes towards Zero Hunger entail WFP supporting programmes that vary in their target groups. A programme with a primary aim of tackling food insecurity or malnutrition will necessarily be targeted at population groups known to experience deficits in those areas. Programmes where such aims are subsidiary or unspecified, but still relevant, may also target those groups (intentionally or not); or alternatively populations with characteristics associated with a greater risk of food insecurity and malnutrition; or that do not exclude such people, even if the link is not explicit.

This means that we will support national programmes that may adopt geographical, categorical or poverty-targeting, or universal approaches as needed. The policy choices most effective in leaving no-one behind do not always have to target those at the bottom, nor those at a particular stage of life. Moreover, a country with a mature social protection system will have programmes that cater for a range of needs and vulnerabilities. We have no expectation that a government should confine itself exclusively to one targeting method for all its programmes. Even individual programmes often use multiple targeting methods to maximise efficiency and effectiveness.

PRIORITY 2 - SOCIAL PROTECTION THAT HELPS PEOPLE TO MANAGE RISKS AND SHOCKS

This priority is closely linked to the first. Shocks jeopardise people's ability to meet their essential needs; in turn, people's vulnerability to shocks is heightened if their ability to meet their essential needs is already compromised. The COVID-19 pandemic starkly exemplifies both trends.

Through our support for social protection, we aim to help address both idiosyncratic and covariate risks. Programmes that promote people's capacity to deal with idiosyncratic risks may also be valuable for helping them address disaster risk, and vice versa.

Our approach to meeting this priority objective is twofold: supporting improvements to social protection for resilience-building, and for providing support in contexts of disruption. In our development work we will build resilience by supporting social protection activities that mitigate risk; in contexts of disruption, we will work alongside others to meet crisis needs in a way that also strengthens longer term resilience. These approaches are integral to, and will contribute to, global agendas and outcomes in areas variously described as shock-responsive social protection, adaptive social protection, linking humanitarian and development (or social protection) interventions, and strengthening of the nexus, be it double (humanitarian–development) or triple (humanitarian–development–peace)[72].

Building resilience through social protection

Shocks do not always lead to crises: the crisis comes when the event combines with people's existing vulnerabilities. By building resilience we may reduce the scale of humanitarian needs, making more efficient use of our resources for emergencies by not having to, 'save the same lives over and over again'[73].

Besides promoting resilience to shocks and seasonal stresses, we will also work with social protection actors to foster households' adaptation to the major stressors and processes of change that also have a huge influence in reshaping the risk landscape. Climate change, in conjunction with other socioeconomic trends, features strongly among these[74].

For WFP, strengthening social protection systems is a key approach to building resilience[75]. Social protection programmes are themselves a source of resilience, since their purpose is to address vulnerabilities and inequalities. They can strengthen the resilience capacities of individuals or households, and also of communities and institutions, enabling them to anticipate and adapt to change, and to withstand the negative impact of shocks. We are ready to continue our support in this area in a full range of governance contexts, be they stable, fragile or in a situation of protracted crisis.

First, we will continue to support the expanded coverage of social protection. This is particularly vital in contexts that experience protracted crisis or seasonal food insecurity, where emergency responses (including those delivered by WFP independently of government systems) typically respond to symptoms of structural poverty, in conjunction with the stress that prompts the action. Good social protection can lessen these symptoms, absorbing some of the natural fluctuations in the scale of demand for assistance.

Case study: Sub-Saharan Africa Promoting the use of index insurance as a social protection instrument

WFP, in collaboration with public and private sector partners, has been developing climate risk insurance programmes to help governments and vulnerable households anticipate, absorb and rapidly recover from climate shocks. In Ethiopia and Kenya, where food insecurity is exacerbated by extreme drought and flooding, we provide access to index-based social insurance to almost 50,000 smallholder farmers and pastoralists, subsidising initial premiums. If triggered, the payout provides households with a predictable cash transfer as a form of shock-responsive social protection. These programmes can also be linked to national social protection systems: in Zambia, WFP is providing technical assistance to the government to deliver index insurance to 1 million people through an agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Farmer Input Support Programme.

Second, we aim to contribute to greater comprehensiveness of social protection through support to the design and implementation of programmes that have resilience-building as an explicit or implicit goal. These might include:

- social protection programmes that promote livelihood opportunities and/or diversification (including e.g. for refugees or smallholder farmers)
- national public works programmes that can draw on WFP's Food Assistance for Assets approaches to promoting risk reduction by creating household or community assets, using participatory planning techniques and supporting food insecure populations[76]
- asset accumulation schemes, often in the form of livestock investments for households
- microinsurance programmes that enable risk transfer and allow households to take prudent risks with confidence, e.g. index-based social insurance.

Third, we will support improvements to the adequacy and quality of social protection in ways that should enhance resilience outcomes. Such features may include:

- the design of systems and programmes in a context of increasing uncertainty and volatility, that can adapt and innovate and are not rigid in their target groups or responses[77]
- the appropriate sequencing and layering of interventions
- the delivery of regular and predictable support to enable people to plan ahead of a shock
- flexibility, including facilitating households' own adaptation strategies, e.g. by not restricting benefits arbitrarily to certain types of expenditure or vendors
- transfer values and durations that take into account their potential contribution to livelihood adaptation beyond meeting immediate needs—e.g. by enabling people to take risks and expand their livelihood options—if affordable and feasible in light of other trade-offs
- adjustments to supply chains to optimise sustainability, efficiency and local economic impact
- the integration of complementary measures such as those that encourage saving and promote financial inclusion.

Using and strengthening social protection in contexts of disruption

Social protection can be a core element in the responses of governments and other actors—including WFP—when a shock hits and a crisis is provoked, be it short-term or protracted. Much of our work is in places where such disruption has occurred. This includes situations of post-conflict transition towards peace and the return and resettlement of displaced populations. Recovery is often not linear, and setbacks can result from even minor shocks and stressors.

Our objective in these contexts depends on whether the government is functioning, and whether national social protection systems and programmes have existed even if no longer able to operate (see Framework Part 4 below). Our work is likely to include collaborating with UN entities and other national and international non-government partners as well as with governments. This is especially the case in situations of active conflict where international humanitarian law applies, and where actions directly in support of government programmes may not be immediately feasible: in such contexts the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence are primary and will not be compromised.

In contexts of disruption we will aim to contribute to improved coverage and comprehensiveness of social protection by:

- supporting the establishment or expansion of long-term, national social protection if it has not previously existed or has not been available to some groups (such as displaced populations or refugees)
- being ready to fill temporary gaps in support to individuals and households during a transition phase between emergency and long-term social protection if required
- advising on methods for the rapid inclusion of affected populations into new or existing programmes
- supporting planning and coordination to facilitate the transition of caseloads and/or systems from an emergency setting to social protection programmes during post-disaster recovery
- delivering an emergency response via our own programmes in a way that meets crisis needs while laying the foundation for a future social protection system.

We will place a particular emphasis on supporting improvements to programme adequacy and quality with the intention of:

- reducing the severity of need, e.g. by facilitating early action through the identification of conditions that will trigger a social protection response
- strengthening the overall social protection system in ways that improve disaster preparedness, e.g. supporting the drafting of standard operating procedures, or the setup of contingency funds or relevant digital platforms
- ensuring 'business continuity' for social protection, providing guidance and support so that regular service delivery (such as the distribution of cash or in-kind transfers or the provision of free school meals) can be sustained and fluctuations in demand accommodated, even in very challenging environments
- leveraging elements of social protection systems and programmes in our own emergency responses, where appropriate
- facilitating coordination between national and/or international emergency responses and social protection where required
- supporting evaluations and the synthesis of 'lessons learned' to improve preparedness for future shocks.

Before committing to national system-strengthening we will always assess whether our actions, and especially the integration of international humanitarian response with national systems in a context of disruption, are likely to create conflict or protection risks (see p.52). This could arise if such actions were applied in unsuitable contexts where they might exacerbate conflict or tensions or provoke perceptions of bias. On the other hand, when delivered sensitively and in the appropriate context, they may even contribute to improving the prospects for peace in post-conflict settings by improving livelihoods and/or increasing trust between citizens and the state. WFP has commissioned research to further explore this theme[78].

The strengthening of the enabling environment is again relevant for this priority of managing risks, just as it is for supporting people to meet their needs. This includes actions that enhance the capacity of governments and local stakeholders to analyse the suitability of social protection as a vehicle to manage disaster risk, and to inform policy if appropriate; as well as actions that promote the emergence and institutionalisation of new social protection systems and ensure the resilience of the system.

Case study: India
Technical support to social protection during the national COVID-19 response, 2020

WFP India is a key provider of technical support and policy advice to the Government of India's Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), a social protection programme which provides highly subsidised food grains to more than 813 million people every month. In March 2020, COVID-19 prompted the world's largest lockdown which threatened the national supply chain for essential commodities. WFP shared nine recommendations with the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution for using the TPDS more effectively during the crisis. As a result, multiple schemes were launched to reach the 80 million migrant workers affected by the lockdown and provide them with advance rations and additional entitlements. WFP also designed awareness programmes around these changes, developed a market price dashboard which enabled the government to monitor and control prices of essential commodities, and designed a mobile app for the Government of Uttarakhand that allowed users to request doorstep delivery.

PART 3
SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR WHOM?

We will support and promote the inclusion of people with diverse and often intersecting vulnerabilities and inequalities:

The fact that all people have different needs, preferences and capacities, and face different risks, opportunities and disadvantages deriving from their unique social, economic and geographical circumstances (see section 2.1), poses a considerable challenge for policy-makers.

Taken individually, the implications of identity markers such as gender, age or disability can be broadly characterised (see Box 4 on pp.38-39). However, nobody fits into just one category: everyone is disadvantaged by some of their identity markers while being privileged by others. A woman in an urban area who does not have a disability will have a different experience to a man in a rural area who has a disability. Programmes that focus on a single identity marker—for example, gender, or a specific age group—will contribute to reducing vulnerabilities for one group while inevitably leaving gaps in support for others[79]. Naturally, it is impossible for a single programme or set of programmes to address all inequalities at once.

The 'Leave no-one behind' pledge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is rooted in the recognition that people are disadvantaged by multiple inequalities, and attempts to reduce the gap[80]. It is a principle of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework which guides the engagement of UN agencies—including WFP—in the countries where they work. The USP2030 agenda, too, aims to minimise exclusion.

For WFP, helping to address geographical inequalities has always been, and will continue to be, a major focus. Many people live in places that are remote, hard to reach or poorly linked with basic services; others face difficult conditions in urban areas, where some of the greatest increases in vulnerability have occurred in 2020 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Where people live has a strong impact on their exposure and vulnerability to shocks and hazards—whether human-made or natural, and including conflict and protracted crises—which in turn are key determinants of food security, nutrition and many other outcomes. Geographical disparities often intersect with other forms of deprivation, compounding economic and social exclusion.

If we are to leave no-one behind we must step up efforts to support social protection interventions for people living in difficult contexts, including in ways that contribute to prospects for peace and security. Over the lifetime of this strategy it will become increasingly imperative to do so, since both the absolute number and share of the world's extreme poor who live in fragile contexts is expected to rise considerably by 2030.

Mainstreaming considerations of social, economic and geographical identity in our support to national social protection means that we will assist national actors and their partners to:

- Use vulnerability analyses to identify how different attributes affect people's needs, preferences and opportunities in a given context, and the disadvantages and risks that result, including how they relate to multidimensional poverty, food insecurity and/or malnutrition
- Rapidly identify emerging needs and update this analysis in light of covariate shocks that can alter the drivers of disadvantage and cause big shifts in the number and characteristics of people requiring assistance
- Undertake reforms to elements of the enabling environment for the social protection system (such as legal frameworks) to recognise, accommodate and/or address certain factors of vulnerability
- Offer an opportunity for participation and a voice in programme design and implementation by stakeholders, including those at community level who expect to be included or excluded
- Identify impediments that people face when accessing services, be these policy or legal barriers, discrimination, behaviours and norms or practicalities such as limited time
- Design and implement social protection programmes adapted to people's needs and capacities, that may be tailored not only to respond to the existence of intersecting forms of deprivation and inequality but even to take a more transformative approach, contributing to reducing them.

We will support improvements to social protection both for those already covered by social protection and those not yet covered. For people who do not yet have access to social protection when they need it, or who are not covered for all contingencies, we will promote expanded coverage and/or comprehensiveness. This might include e.g. advocating adjustments to targeting criteria, or delivering complementary programmes in agreement with the government. Where programmes exist, we will support improvements to their adequacy and quality. This might entail e.g. assisting in the calculation of transfer values, or in the introduction of a nutrition component into an existing programme.

Box 4

How social identity markers affect people's needs and risks

Gender

WFP is committed to advance gender equality and women's empowerment by integrating a gender lens throughout its work, including on social protection. Gender inequality affects everyone differently, and can affect men as well as women. It may result in adverse outcomes including poverty, poor access to nutritious food and limited access to basic services. Its impacts are felt across all aspects of food security, including food availability (e.g. on issues of land rights, credit and information for food production), access (e.g. inequalities in the intra-household allocation of food) and utilisation (e.g. owing to differing nutritional requirements of men and women at different stages of their lives). Worldwide, women generally have the main responsibility for household food security and nutrition, yet may face constraints in their agency and ability to participate in decision-making. In regions where women shoulder most of the care responsibility, they may have limited opportunity to enter the labour market and enjoy the benefits associated with it, including those deriving from social protection schemes.

Incorporating a gender dimension in social protection policy and practice—making sure that programmes address the different needs, risks and vulnerabilities of women and men and avoid reinforcing gender inequalities—influences the types of risk tackled, and shapes programme design and impacts. This approach is in line with our Gender Policy which recognises the importance of a gender-transformative approach. To promote more equal gender relationships it is not enough to create evidence by disaggregating data by sex, nor just to target activities to women—or men, depending on the context—though both of these are important elements. A 'transformative agenda' requires social protection to contribute to some more fundamental and sustainable shifts in underlying social norms and behaviours.

Age

The fact that people's needs, vulnerabilities, risks and capacities vary throughout the life course is at the root of 'life-cycle' approaches to social protection. It is also central to nutrition policies, given that requirements for energy and micronutrients fluctuate enormously. The window of opportunity for nutrition of the 'first 1,000 days', from conception to the age of two, has long been recognised, and recent evidence extends the strategic focus to '8,000 days', up to age 21, in acknowledgement of the crucial changes of middle childhood and adolescence. As adults, the focus may then be on ensuring that energy and nutritional needs are met in accordance with work and other lifestyle attributes, as well as to help break the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition. However, the relevance of age extends far beyond nutrition: age-related contingencies typically include e.g. the need for education, the transition to the labour market, and the need to build and sustain a livelihood, including in old age. Social protection has a role to play at all stages of life.

WFP's support for the strengthening of national nutrition-sensitive social protection and school feeding programmes are two examples of our assistance in relation to age-specific contingencies.

Source: Gender: WFP, 2015d, 2016b, 2017d. Age: EPRI, 2018; WFP, 2020a. Disability: She and Livermore, 2007; ILO, 2012; Schwartz et al., 2019; UN, 2019a; WFP, 2020h, 2020i. HIV: WFP and UKRI GCRF (2019). People on the move: UNHCR and WFP, 2018; Sabates-Wheeler, 2019; WFP, 2020b.

Disability

Disability and food insecurity, 'produce and reproduce one another' (Schwartz et al., 2019, p.115). People with disabilities, especially in crisis-affected contexts, can face financial, physical and social barriers in accessing livelihood opportunities and basic services, and may be more exposed to risk. Financial constraints may be derived not only from higher rates of unemployment but also from higher expenses if adaptive equipment, care or special dietary needs are required. The importance of ensuring that people with disabilities can access social protection entitlements, as well as the need for specific disability benefits, has been recognised for decades and features prominently in the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation.

For WFP, disability inclusion is a key part of our corporate Protection and Accountability Policy and our programming. We are also committed to the operationalisation of the 2019 UN Disability Inclusion Strategy and, abiding by its accountability framework, will seek to ensure that a human-rights based approach to disability is reflected in our assistance on social protection as well as in our own complementary programmes.

HIV status

Structural deprivations, including poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, drive the AIDS epidemic. They can both increase vulnerability to HIV exposure and infection, and undermine treatment for those infected. Shocks including natural hazards, conflict and displacement can compound these risks, as they can force families, especially adolescent girls and women, to adopt negative coping mechanisms, such as transactional sex, further increasing vulnerability to HIV exposure. In turn the virus itself can have a negative socioeconomic impact, reducing work capacity and productivity, and endangering household livelihoods. Growing evidence links food security and nutrition with improved health seeking behaviour, adherence to treatment, and reduction in morbidity and mortality. Adequate dietary intake and nutrient absorption are crucial for effective treatment outcomes because HIV/AIDS compromises the immune system, impairing nutrient intake and absorption, and increasing vulnerability to undernutrition.

As part of global efforts to respond to these challenges, the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) hosts an Interagency Task Team on HIV-sensitive social protection which convenes a wide range of stakeholders to consider how social protection can contribute. As co-convenor of the task team (together with the ILO), WFP can advise on, or augment governments' capacity to model, the integration of HIV-sensitive social protection approaches into the national system.

People on the move

People on the move—especially those forcibly displaced, inside or outside their country of origin—are a population of concern to WFP, making up some 26 million of the 97 million people reached by our food assistance programmes in 2019. Forced displacement has significant negative impacts across the humanitarian–development–peace spectrum, and its increasingly protracted nature is intensifying the urgency for durable solutions to the political, socioeconomic and logistical complexities that both cause and result from displacement. Irregular migrants are particularly exposed to food insecurity, malnutrition and other forms of deprivation owing to marginalisation, often characterised by a reliance on precarious and informal daily work, a lack of access to basic public services, and exclusion from national social protection systems. Large-scale displacement often occurs in crisis contexts where state service provision has broken down, including in conflict. Many forcibly displaced people end up in locations that are themselves disadvantaged, even for the settled population.

Working in close partnership with governments, our sister UN agencies and others—alongside the populations themselves—WFP aims to contribute to improved social protection for people on the move and, where relevant, for host communities, in numerous ways ranging from analysing needs and risks, to digital innovations for support to mobile populations, to advocating for and assisting the integration of refugees into national social protection programmes.

PART 4
MODES OF SUPPORT

We will provide our support in a variety of ways, which may also be blended or combined:

Supporting nationally led social protection systems and programmes

- Advice and guidance to national actors
- Delivery on behalf of national actors

Complementary actions in WFP's own programming

To implement the priorities outlined above, WFP offers two broad modes of support. First, we will work alongside, or on behalf of, the government, other national actors and/or international partners on the design and delivery of national social protection systems and their programmes. Second, we will ensure that assistance delivered under our own programmes—whether as an emergency or longer term response—is made with a clear intent to contribute to improved national social protection where possible.

These approaches are neither mutually exclusive nor static over time. We often play different roles in a country at the same time in different technical areas. Also, a technical solution initially delivered by WFP may later be adopted by government, with WFP providing advisory support: an example is in school feeding, where we engage with governments to develop sustainable handover strategies, supporting transition and scale-up. Our assistance will be formulated on the basis of dialogue, consensus and agreed objectives with stakeholders, with the intent of strengthening the national system in a sustainable manner.

We will always carefully consider how best we can strengthen the capacities of people, organisations and institutions, in line with our established approach to country capacity-strengthening[81]. We will identify existing capacities and aim to build on them, promoting a sustained change in skills, assets and practices.

Supporting nationally led social protection systems and programmes

Our direct support to national social protection may entail providing advice and guidance, or implementing elements of programmes on governments' behalf as needed. The precise form will depend on the nature of need, the government's priorities, the maturity of part or all of the social protection system, and the activities of other partners, as well as our own capacities in a country. We can—and do—contribute to all stages of design and implementation (see Framework Part 5).

To achieve this we can:

- Use our own staff to provide technical assistance, including sometimes through secondments to governments
- Contract expert firms, non-government organisations and/or individuals, leveraging our extensive networks of public and private partners
- Broker partnerships between countries (facilitating 'south–south and triangular cooperation')
- Consolidate and communicate best practices across countries and contexts
- Participate in coordination mechanisms and forums for information exchange including e.g. Social Protection Working Groups and Cash Working Groups.

This support may be delivered via different contractual arrangements. It can be funded by contributions from donor organisations, or delivered by WFP as a contracted service provider, according to context.

Complementary actions in WFP's own programming

Many of WFP's directly implemented activities, in crisis and non-crisis contexts alike, contain elements that mirror those of national social protection systems. This creates opportunities to explore complementarities between our interventions—such as cash and in-kind transfers, school feeding, nutrition and asset creation programmes, and the analytical tools, approaches and delivery systems that support them—and those of national partners (Figure 4). Often our interventions do not themselves constitute social protection—except by explicit agreement with national actors—but they can contribute to improved national social protection.

The precise nature of this approach is nuanced by the context. WFP often works in situations of fragility, conflict or recurrent or protracted crisis. The range of feasible and desirable linkages between our programming and the national social protection system is quite different there compared with stable contexts.

Where national social protection systems have gaps or are only nascent, WFP will look for opportunities to fill gaps or to set up the basic building blocks of a future system. Not only WFP's development interventions but also its emergency programmes and platforms may at times be of relevance to serve as the foundation.

This will be done by modelling new approaches, or establishing systems that can be directly adopted or transitioned. WFP can also harmonise its interventions with those of other actors in the field to facilitate the eventual emergence of a government led programme (Figure 4).

Conversely, in other contexts elements of the national social protection system are functioning. Here, for WFP, a 'social protection approach' means drawing on, learning from and complementing those elements if this will contribute to more effective outcomes for people and strengthened systems. This will be done by replicating aspects of the government programme to fill temporary gaps where requested, using the national system if this will not destabilise it, and coordinating WFP's interventions with those of the government in order to resolve inconsistencies and gaps and achieve fiscally sustainable long-term solutions (including e.g. as part of a scale-down strategy following an emergency). In all cases we will look continuously for opportunities to learn and share evidence about what does or does not work.

Not all of WFP's own programming delivers this complementary role, nor would one expect it to. Sometimes a clear delineation between WFP as a humanitarian organisation and national actors is required, or else WFP may be fulfilling a pure emergency response function in which it may be more appropriate to align activities with government-led emergency response rather than social protection. It also does not mean that emergency programmes must look like development ones, since they have different objectives; but rather that there should be a coherent approach to designing programme elements.

> *"We want to bring a solution that not only works for today but also serves a purpose for tomorrow"*
> Laurent Bukera, Country Director, WFP Yemen

Figure 4: What might WFP's complementary actions look like?

Source: WFP. Note: By 'building block' we refer to those in Figure 5 below regarding the system architecture, programme features and knowledge and learning elements.

مشروع الوجبة المدرسية
التابع لبرنامج الأغذية العالمي
USAID
Not for sale
WFP
HIGH ENERGY BISCUITS
Enriched With Vitamins & Minerals
HIGH ENERGY BISCUITS
Enriched With Vitamins & Minerals

PART 5
AREAS OF WORK

We will pursue four key areas of work as we advance towards this vision:

1

Contribute to strengthening the **national social protection system architecture**

2

Support enhancements to the quantity and quality of **national social protection programming**

3

Improve the effectiveness of social protection in the shared space between humanitarian, development and peace actors

4

Build social protection partnerships and evidence globally

OVERVIEW OF THE FOUR AREAS

Areas of work 1 and 2 cover the assistance we will provide to countries to put in place and strengthen the 12 'building blocks' of a national social protection system (see Figure 5 for WFP's conceptualisation of the system). The first covers our support to the system architecture or enabling environment that steers the sector as a whole—the policies, institutional arrangements, financing and so on, as well as to cross-cutting processes of knowledge and learning. The second covers our support to the social protection programmes that deliver services and support to the population.

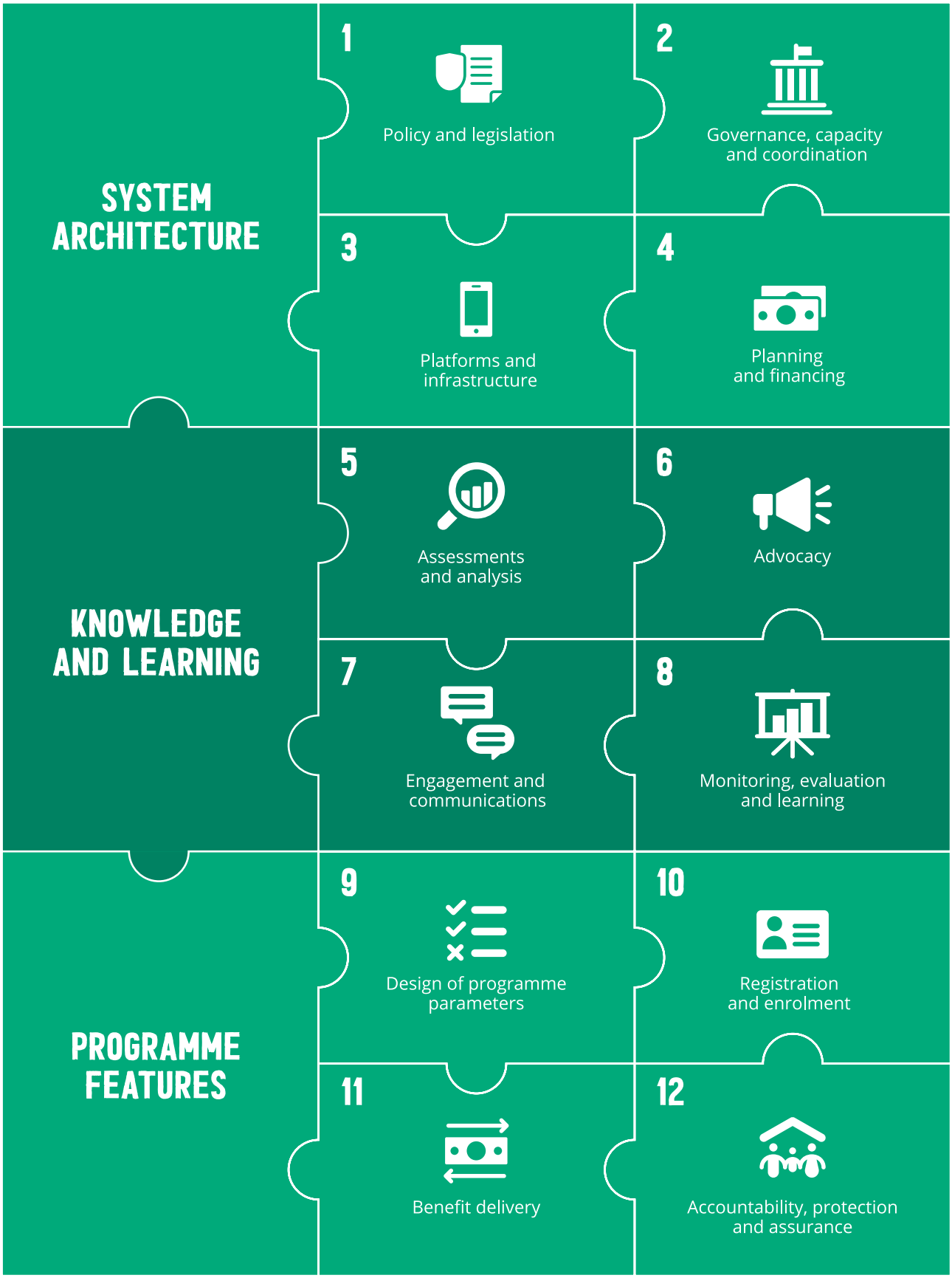
We outline below our added value and potential contributions to each building block, in accordance with our priorities and capacities. Annex C provides further details. Building on our experiences in the field and on WFP's framework for country capacity-strengthening, we also take into account the attributes of a strong system as classified in global documents such as the principles of Recommendation no. 202 on Social Protection Floors and the Interagency Social Protection Assessment (ISPA) CODI tool[82].

While we can and have supported each part of a social protection system in many contexts, in any given country we do not expect to pursue every activity but rather to identify what is needed. As noted throughout, our actions are guided by national needs and priorities, identified in consultation with the government and its partners and set out in WFP's Country Strategic Plans (see also section 4 below). These in turn reflect national planning documents and international standards and, going forward, the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. In each case we will follow the principles outlined in section 2.6 above: the selection of activities will draw on the evidence base and apply a country-led, people-focused and partnership-oriented approach.

The third area of work frames the additional activities and approaches required for providing support to social protection in contexts where development, humanitarian and/or peace actors are working alongside one another, often in situations of protracted crisis, conflict and post-conflict settings. The actions described here will be applied in conjunction with those outlined in other areas of work, facilitating the (re-)opening of a pathway to social protection in such contexts.

Area of work 4 outlines the actions that we will take in support of social protection partnerships, evidence generation and knowledge management within countries and globally.

Figure 5: Building blocks of a national social protection system



Source: WFP. Notes: (1) Area of work 1 presents our areas of focus for the system architecture and knowledge and learning elements. Area of work 2 presents those for the programme features. (2) The building blocks draw on, and expand upon, the five pathways identified by WFP in the corporate framework for support to country capacity-strengthening. The analytical approach is also coherent with many international frameworks, such as the 'three key aspects' of social protection in CODI.

AREA OF WORK 1 - CONTRIBUTE TO STRENGTHENING NATIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE

1. Policy and legislation

WFP's support to the development and updating of national, local and regional **social protection policies and strategies, laws and regulations** will include—but is not limited to—advice on the inclusion of food security and nutrition objectives, and also on effective strategies for delivering social protection in fragile contexts, using social protection to better manage risks and build resilience, and linking social protection with humanitarian assistance.

We will contribute to evidence-generation as an input into the drafting process, through the conduct of assessments and analysis; assist the development of standard operating procedures and other actionable guidelines; and support the integration of social protection considerations into related sectoral policies such as education (e.g. for school feeding), nutrition and disaster risk management. WFP's technical assistance to the development of Haiti's National Social Protection and Promotion Policy in 2017–20 is an example of this activity.

2. Governance, capacity and coordination

Our contributions to **governance, national capacity and coordination** are intended to enhance institutional effectiveness. We will support strengthened national capacities not only through training, coaching and mentoring in areas of our competence, but also by supporting communities of practice, exchanges of experience (including south–south cooperation) and the identification of sources of expertise through partnerships with third parties.

We will continue to participate in sector working groups and promote coordination—and, where appropriate, alignment—among social protection actors as well as across sectors, offering a bridge to agencies working in e.g. disaster risk management, emergency response, food security and nutrition. As part of our partnership activities (see pp.56-58), we will forge partnerships to strengthen the capacities of national and subnational institutions, formal and informal, with a 'whole of society' approach including civil society and communities.

Case study: Haiti

WFP's technical assistance for the development of the National Social Protection and Promotion Policy, 2017–20

The Government of Haiti adopted a National Social Protection and Promotion Policy in June 2020. This milestone in the strengthening of its system—an extraordinary achievement amidst the COVID-19 pandemic—is a major step towards reducing poverty and inequality, paving the way for long-term protection against hunger. WFP's Haiti Country Office is proud to have served as lead technical partner throughout its three years of development. In a participatory process, the team guided the drafting of the text, acted as the secretariat for key committees on targeting and cash transfers, assisted in putting in place the national governance structure for social protection and continued to support the transition of an existing beneficiary database to a national social registry. As a direct result, the World Bank awarded Haiti a US$75 million grant for the social safety net planned in the policy, for which WFP will be the key implementing partner.

3. Platforms and infrastructure

A priority for WFP is to support social protection delivery **platforms and infrastructure** for national and global actors, that improve programme efficiency and effectiveness without compromising the rights and privacy of individuals. These platforms may serve a single programme or several. Increasingly they are likely to be digital, though this is not a prerequisite. They include mobile apps, management information systems and databases—including integrated beneficiary registries, social registries or other types—that cover some or all of the functions for programme delivery and monitoring, ranging from registration, to generating a payroll, reconciliation processes, complaints and feedback mechanisms, data updates and reporting. An example of our work in this area is our technical assistance for the development of a social registry in Mauritania (see below)

Our role is not just to develop digital solutions and manage data on behalf of others where safe and appropriate, but more fundamentally to help national actors understand whether or not a digital solution will help address their policy problem, conduct landscape analyses of existing systems, and support them to put in place data protection, privacy and data-sharing protocols.

4. Planning and financing

WFP will support national actors in their strategic **planning and financing** for social protection in areas relevant to our competence. This includes contributions to the development of advocacy strategies and coherent action plans for social protection, for the integration of social protection into plans for emergency preparedness, and for the transition from internationally led interventions to sustainable nationally led social protection systems. We will support evidence generation as an input into planning and budgeting exercises.

WFP will assist governments to mobilise resources, including by calculating the cost, return on investment and value for money of programmes that promote people's ability to meet their needs in stable and/or crisis contexts; by identifying financing sources, such as co-financing across sectors or innovative funding models such as sovereign risk insurance; and by designing mechanisms for releasing funds, such as weather-related triggers for use in forecast-based financing. We will support governments to negotiate with and access funding from international financial institutions, and can serve as a conduit for the disbursement of funding for national social protection programme delivery in transition contexts.

Case study: Mauritania
Adapting social registries for targeting in shock responsive programmes

Mauritania's social registry was built over a multiyear period with extensive input from WFP and other partners. Initially designed to support targeting of long-term social protection programmes, WFP has also worked to make the registry a tool for targeting by humanitarian interventions during seasonal droughts. From 2017 onwards, WFP continued to work with partners to make the registry more adaptive and to develop a reliable methodology for its utilisation at times of shocks, thereby articulating linkages between regular programmes and shock-responsive interventions. With WFP's ongoing leadership, the use of the registry has been piloted during seasonal humanitarian response, with the methodology being continually improved through gains in functionality, timeliness and efficiency. Today, it stands as a widely trusted tool by the government and international partners to reach vulnerable households during times of drought and other crises.

5. Assessments and analysis

Examples throughout this section indicate how we put our expertise in **assessments and analysis** at the service of national actors to assist the definition of the parameters of their interventions, and the effective design and implementation of relevant programmes. Of primary importance will be our technical advice to governments to undertake assessments and analysis themselves, and to translate the findings into decision-making tools. We will also run these studies on their behalf where requested and relevant. Collaboration with other partners on evidence generation is a vital part of our approach (see p.58). Where we conduct assessments and analysis for our own programming, including e.g. in protracted crisis contexts, we will aim to share results with other national actors or as a public good.

We will draw on dozens of relevant corporate tools, ranging from 'Essential Needs Analysis' to the 'Fill the Nutrient Gap' tool, from the 'Shock-Responsive Social Protection Capacity Assessment' to the 'Three-Pronged Approach' to community-level planning. Where appropriate, and in partnership with others, we will also apply interagency tools, or variants of them, such as the ISPA CODI for assessing social protection systems.

6. Advocacy

WFP's partnership-oriented approach is key to our contribution to evidence-based **advocacy** for improvements to the coverage, comprehensiveness, adequacy and quality of social protection. Our activities include systematic and sustained advocacy for the inclusion of food security, nutrition and disaster risk management outcomes into social protection strategies and budgets; the promotion of more inclusive social assistance, such as for refugees and non-nationals who might not otherwise not have access to social protection; the development of policies, or alignment of existing policies, to achieve universal social protection; and the ratification of relevant global agreements.

We will support governments with their own advocacy (e.g. supporting social protection line ministries in policy dialogues with ministries of finance or planning, and assisting with south–south and triangular cooperation initiatives), and will work alongside or in support of other agencies where joint efforts are undertaken to assist national-level policy-making. For instance, among many recent examples, WFP has co-organised high-level fora on shock-responsive social protection and engaged in joint evidence generation and messaging around the response to COVID-19 and migration. These collaborations will continue.

Case study: Timor-Leste
Using nutrition assessments to measure the adequacy of social protection interventions, 2019

Led by the National Council for Food Security in Timor-Leste, WFP carried out a 'Fill the Nutrient Gap' assessment in 2019 to determine the extent to which local food systems have sufficient diversity and quality to meet nutritional needs and to estimate the cost of meeting nutrient needs using local foods. The assessment then modelled the affordability gap between the cost of nutritious diets and the value of assistance being given through social protection interventions: the national cash transfer and food voucher programmes, micronutrient and supplementary feeding programmes, and school feeding menus. Findings identified school children, adolescent girls and families with breastfeeding infants as target vulnerable groups who would struggle to afford nutritious diets, and led to an increase in budget by the government on the national school feeding programme to help fill this nutrient gap.

7. Engagement and communications

WFP's work on **engagement and communications** in social protection is an essential strand for improving programme quality and effectiveness, promoting participation, inclusion and transparency for greater accountability. We will continue to support national actors in designing and delivering approaches for taking into account the views of all stakeholders—not just programme implementers and their partners but also the community, civil society and the private sector—in programme design; sensitising communities; communicating with them throughout implementation and receiving feedback.

WFP will support the development of adapted and accessible modes of communication and materials that work in remote, marginalised or crisis-affected contexts, such as using technology-based channels or radio to reduce exclusion gaps; and materials that reach diverse members of affected populations. We will also offer guidance on effective behavioural change communication, such as messaging on good nutrition.

8. Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Drawing on our analytical and operational expertise, we will strengthen the capacities of national actors—including communities—to **monitor and evaluate** their social protection programmes and systems, and to use evidence to enhance the quality of service provision. This is in line with the commitments in WFP's Evaluation Policy and Impact Evaluation Strategy (WFP, 2015a, 2019c).

We can advise on the design of monitoring and evaluation frameworks, including to monitor food security and nutrition outcomes, or the ability of social protection to build resilience and respond to shocks. We will support the design and use of monitoring tools, analytic and insight platforms, including those for mobile data collection and/or remote monitoring which permit data collection and analysis in crisis contexts. We will also play a thought leadership role to fill knowledge gaps and support national actors to review their social protection programmes and share lessons learned, including with international counterparts through south–south cooperation. Our evaluation of the national school feeding programme in Namibia, conducted jointly with the government, is an example of this activity.

Case study: Namibia
A joint evaluation of the national school feeding programme

Namibia has one of sub-Saharan Africa's most comprehensive social protection systems. The government has been funding and implementing the National School Feeding Programme (NSFP) since 1996. The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and WFP conducted a joint evaluation, covering the period 2012-2018. Adopting a mixed-method approach combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, it assessed the extent to which the programme achieved the objectives outlined in a five-year roadmap. The evaluation found that the NSFP is very much at the nexus between food security and social protection, and highlighted opportunities for more explicit linkages with other ministries involved in social protection. Recommendations include the promotion of better integration of NSFP with other social protection programmes through participation in social protection sector coordination platforms and data sharing. Following finalisation of the WFP management response, the government will operationalise the recommendations, with WFP providing technical assistance.

AREA OF WORK 2 - SUPPORT ENHANCEMENTS TO THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF NATIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMING

9. Design of programme parameters

WFP will strengthen the capacity of national actors, in collaboration with other partners, to set programme **design parameters,** particularly to make informed decisions about eligibility and the nature of assistance in light of identified needs and objectives.

Regarding eligibility, we support analysis of who needs assistance, and for which contingencies. We can also support the design of criteria for entry, uptake and exit, including the use of conditionalities, and prioritisation decisions in the event of resource constraints. As for the nature of assistance, we can support the selection of transfer modality (if a transfer is provided), its value, frequency and timing: this includes calculations of typical household requirements for better managing risks or meeting essential food and non-food needs in a specific shock (the 'minimum expenditure basket'). Where food-based transfers are used, we can advise on the suitability of nutrient-dense or fortified foods, or the best package for a healthy diet. We offer guidance on trade-offs between coverage and transfer adequacy; and options for adjustments to respond to shocks or compensate for seasonal variations. We support the identification of complementary measures to enhance programme impact. Beyond transfers, WFP will support the design of social protection programmes that promote livelihoods and build resilience, including social insurance schemes that offer crop and livestock insurance.

10. Registration and enrolment

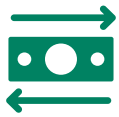
WFP is able to advise on many aspects of **registration and enrolment,** especially for cash and/or in-kind transfer programmes. This includes advice on the collection and treatment of sensitive data, potentially including biometric details; targeting approaches; and strategies for minimising errors of exclusion in implementation, including of potentially marginalised populations, such as those lacking identity documents. We can support the digitalisation of existing enrolment records, or integration and/or promotion of interoperability among databases and national registries (with or without WFP tools).

Beyond this technical advisory role we will also conduct registration or enrolment on behalf of national actors or provide services to parts of the process, if relevant. This might be done when there is a shortage of national capacity, provided that it promotes rather than impedes longer term system-strengthening and conforms to our standards of protection, personal data protection and accountability. When delivering our own complementary programmes, we will explore whether and how we can also strengthen registration and enrolment in the current or a potential future social protection system.

Case study: Jordan

Creating programme efficiency through enrolment re-verification and registration

WFP is helping the Government of Jordan's primary social assistance and poverty alleviation body, the National Aid Fund (NAF), by enhancing programme design and building features of a modern digital safety net. Our work includes supporting enrolment with digital payments and back-end system automation enhancements. WFP is contributing to a large-scale validation of NAF beneficiaries in a nationwide household data collection exercise. With the onset of COVID-19, a virtual data collection / home visit tool was developed to continue these efforts. We have supported the enrolment of 230,000 families by facilitating the remote opening of mobile wallets. WFP achieved a milestone by integrating the NAF's database with financial services to verify the e-wallet status in real-time, enabling faster enrolment. We have trained new beneficiaries in how to access payments. Concurrently we are supporting improved assistance provision through the establishment of a complaints and feedback mechanism, which can also address exclusion issues. Through this support, WFP brings long-term value and efficiency to the national social assistance programme.



11. Benefit delivery

WFP's technical advice and services to national actors on the design, selection and roll-out of mechanisms and payment instruments for **delivering benefits** to people will include support for cash transfer programmes, including those that use electronic vouchers and mobile money solutions; and support for food assistance, drawing on our expertise in logistics and supply chain as well as in nutrition, food safety and food quality. We will assist with the development of solutions to maintain and incentivise market activity and promote financial inclusion. We will also provide technical assistance on enhancing quality of delivery, such as ensuring that channels for delivering cash or food are reliable, provide regular transfers, are convenient and safe for beneficiaries and are flexible enough to avoid delays in disbursement if a shock occurs.

Many of these can be undertaken as complementary activities in WFP's own programming, generating a positive effect for national social protection systems. Where governments already have effective delivery mechanisms in place, WFP will consider channelling its own resources through them if that will help strengthen the national system by enhancing its legitimacy, or ease the beneficiary experience through the use of a familiar process.

12. Accountability, protection and assurance

For WFP, the integration and mainstreaming of **accountability, protection and assurance** considerations into programmes is a crucial function. Our approach is set out in our corporate protection and accountability policy[83]. In social protection we will support governments to develop processes and systems that are accessible, inclusive, dignified and safe, and that demonstrate accountability to donors and other stakeholders, including through accurate and transparent processes for reconciliation, verification, monitoring and reporting. A strong accountability framework has the potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of delivery, reduce fraud and corruption, safeguard recipients and increase conflict-sensitivity. It may strengthen the social contract between citizens and governments and enable the fine-tuning of programmes according to people's needs and preferences.

Among other actions we will support the application of community engagement strategies that promote awareness-raising and the application of rights, entitlements and responsibilities; enhance formal processes for handling updates, queries and complaints; and assist the design of mechanisms for the financial reconciliation of cash transfers or to detect process anomalies.

Case study: Somalia
Delivery of benefits on behalf of the national cash-based safety net programme

In Somalia, WFP is supporting the federal government to develop a social protection system and provide cash-based assistance to vulnerable Somalis. Beginning in 2019, WFP, in close partnership with the World Bank and UNICEF, assisted the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in establishing the first nationwide social protection programme. Utilising our unique set of experiences and resources from our existing large-scale cash transfer operation, and our operational know-how in insecure and politically unstable contexts, we deployed a programme for the national government that reaches 200,000 households, or 1.2 million people. We undertake specific actions to safeguard both implementing partner staff (e.g. delivering interventions in areas that can be monitored) and recipients (e.g. avoiding large congregations during consultation and programming). We maintain flexibility in selecting locations and in benefit delivery. We also use WFP's established mechanisms for feedback, complaints and reporting, to apply corrective measures where required, ensuring accountability.

AREA OF WORK 3 - IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL PROTECTION IN THE SHARED SPACE BETWEEN HUMANITARIAN, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE ACTORS

Situations of conflict, protracted crisis and fragility, including post-conflict contexts, give rise to challenges that merit being highlighted as a separate stream of work, undertaken alongside those outlined in the first two areas just described. Since the majority of the world's poor and hungry live in fragile and conflict-affected settings, a nuanced understanding of conflict-sensitive approaches is vital if social protection coverage is to be extended effectively to all.

The hallmark of these efforts is closer 'collaboration, coherence and complementarity' between humanitarian, development and peace actors, part of what is sometimes described as a 'nexus approach'[84]. WFP's approach in this space is consistent with our commitment to the OECD-DAC recommendations on the humanitarian–development–peace nexus[85]. It is fully aligned with WFP's policies on Humanitarian Principles (2004) and WFP's Role in Peacebuilding in Transition Settings (2013)[86]. It also reflects the practical experience and learning from our overall portfolio of work, some two-thirds of which (not just social protection) takes place in conflict-affected settings.

Improving social protection in these settings implies several specific actions. It means thoroughly understanding the causes of fragility, vulnerability and conflict, and the potential risks of supporting programmes in that environment. It means a commitment to conflict-sensitive programming, regardless of whether a conflict is active. And it means looking ahead, considering not only how current humanitarian operations might lay the ground for future social protection interventions, but also how the two might interact during phases of transition. We summarise these here.

Area 3.1 Understanding risk

WFP aims to integrate risk analysis into its work as much as possible, aligning its efforts with wider UN methodologies. This due diligence, which we are increasingly mainstreaming across our activities, is a crucial starting point to avoid doing harm. In conflict contexts the assessment is likely to require an emphasis on conflict analysis—including its root causes—and an understanding of the political economy, including grievances that may affect perceptions of programmatic issues such as targeting, grounded in local knowledge. Technocratic solutions to policy challenges may not succeed if the challenges themselves are political rather than technical in nature: this reality must be understood.

Multi-stakeholder analyses that extend across humanitarian, development and peace actors will be appropriate. Even in contexts where WFP is working in its capacity as a humanitarian rather than development actor, we will be open to exploring whether technical assessments conducted for humanitarian purposes can take into account potential information requirements of development actors, including for social protection, if appropriate.

Area 3.2
Conducting conflict-sensitive programming

Conflict-sensitive programming is vital because assistance such as cash and in-kind transfers does not bring automatic peacebuilding benefits. On the one hand, transfers may promote social cohesion, interacting with drivers of conflict by addressing marginalisation and/or discrimination, whether real or perceived. On the other, there is a real risk of inadvertently exacerbating conflict. The targeting process has been cited as, 'the most common conflict-sensitivity flashpoint across all international aid' owing to the risk of perceptions of bias, corruption and elite capture[87]. There is also a risk of diversion of resources. Participatory planning may ease tensions, but equally may worsen them if it fails to take into account community dynamics.

WFP's sequenced approach to conflict-sensitive programming is relevant to its work in social protection[88]. We support interventions locally where opportunities exist, and then at the national level when strategic and appropriate to do so. In conflict and immediate post-conflict settings there is likely to be a continued emphasis on analysis and coordination, especially with non-government actors, more than on overt support to programming. Supporting governments' capacity to design and run social protection programmes may be part of a process of peacebuilding itself, or may take place once other peacebuilding processes have been established. The overriding priority in all contexts is to 'do no harm', including on issues such as advising on data protection and privacy (since individuals may wish to remain hidden) or targeting.

All types of support (Framework Part 4) may be relevant—including delivering interventions complementary to a national social protection system, supporting the (re)establishment of governments' own programmes through technical advice or operational support, and linking national actors to expertise.

Area 3.3
Approaching social protection through a humanitarian lens in conflict settings

Where conflict is ongoing, WFP interventions are pursued in accordance with humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law, as per the commitment in our policies on humanitarian principles and on peacebuilding[89]. This means, for example, that we would not expect to provide technical assistance to governments for their social protection programmes where there is no imminent prospect of transition out of the conflict context. Plans for a post-crisis scenario are a prerequisite for policy engagement at the national level beyond independent assessments and analysis, to avoid the risk that WFP's support for a government or a particular ministry might be construed as favouring one side in an ongoing conflict or unresolved political situation.

This does not mean that social protection considerations will be disregarded during WFP's humanitarian operations in conflict settings. The emphasis of WFP's contribution to social protection is likely to be on the first three of the 'complementary actions' described earlier (Figure 4): modelling practical innovations in our humanitarian assistance, that could be adopted by a future social protection system; promoting qualitative enhancements to the environment that will be relevant to future social protection activities, such as improvements to financial inclusion, supply chain and the development of markets; and coordinating the design and delivery of assistance with that of other non-state actors to improve uniformity.

Area 3.4
Fostering a shared space in transition and protracted crisis settings

The process of transitioning out of conflict—and out of purely humanitarian operations—is a, 'non-linear process that presents tensions and trade-offs between the need to provide … life-saving activities [and] supporting the development of sustainable state structures'[90]. As such it may entail difficult trade-offs between, for example, humanitarian transfer values that aim to enable households to meet all of their essential needs and those that are affordable in the longer term for government budgets. It requires a concerted effort to explore interlinkages and partnerships between humanitarian, development and peace initiatives and actors, as well as a sensitivity to the political process, and a readiness for flexibility. Even once overt conflict has ceased, governments may struggle to deliver services: social protection systems and programmes, if they once existed, may require support to be revitalised.

Guided by humanitarian principles, WFP is committed to attaining the right balance for the context. There may be a stage where conflict-affected areas of a country continue to require humanitarian approaches, while elsewhere more stable settings permit development-oriented approaches including engagement at local level and perhaps subsequently at national level on social protection[91]. Phasing is likely to be gradual, as WFP's policy on transition settings stresses:

'Moving rapidly to […] very visible forms of integration at the outset in such contexts may result in greater risks to humanitarian space. Confidence in the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian organisations, once compromised, is extremely difficult to regain. [Where] visible forms of integration may not be appropriate, other less visible means of coherence—such as joint analysis and coordination—may be emphasised.' [92]

Case study: Iraq
Laying the groundwork for social protection in post-conflict settings

The turbulence of conflict in Iraq from 2003 disrupted social protection programmes and reforms, compounded by fiscal constraints stretching government capacity. As the conflict subsided, WFP has supported efforts to revive the social protection agenda. Our experience here shows how short-term humanitarian assistance during and post-conflict can be transformed into longer term social protection assistance and mechanisms. WFP Iraq is now contributing to the adaptation and expansion of social protection to address immediate needs of households (including the impact of COVID-19), while reducing negative impacts of the crisis on human development. We are also supporting digitisation of the Public Distribution System. Reforms aim to improve the public policy environment while reinforcing capacities of government authorities to deliver quality programmes, fill gaps and make schemes food security-sensitive and nutrition-sensitive. Through these initial steps, WFP is helping set up a national system that will provide stability as Iraq emerges from devastating conflict.

AREA OF WORK 4 - BUILD SOCIAL PROTECTION PARTNERSHIPS AND EVIDENCE GLOBALLY

In our principles we commit to an evidence-based, partnership-oriented approach to our work in social protection (see section 2.6). More than passive conditions, these are areas in which we will actively pursue engagements as they underpin the achievement of the strategy as a whole. Through these we aim to increase our impact within countries, and also regionally and globally. We summarise here our key strategic activities in this regard.

Partnerships

WFP pursues partnerships actively across all its operations as a means of achieving better outcomes for people. The corporate partnership strategy details our approach (see also Box 5 below)[93]. Among many benefits, partnerships can increase effectiveness and cost-efficiency; foster innovation, while building on existing knowledge; and enhance trust, credibility and the sustainability of interventions. At times, partnerships also entail potential risks or trade-offs in terms of conflicts of interest, or higher transaction costs in the form of time or resources; this is especially true in high-risk or fragile contexts. For this reason, WFP's view is that 'more does not necessarily equal better': we emphasise strategic partnerships for mutual benefit[94]. Partnerships entail combining and leveraging complementary resources of all kinds and, depending on the context, possibly also sharing risks, responsibilities and accountability.

In social protection our partnerships for operations, resourcing, knowledge and advocacy are likely to include the following priority actions.

Operational partnerships

This work aims to promote joint action in support of national priorities and needs, improve efficiency and lower transaction costs for governments. Our priorities are to:

1. **Participate in joint programming.** With respect to international agencies, this includes collaboration with the SDG Fund and other UN joint programmes. There is a shift away from an agency-specific 'division of labour', towards an emphasis on joint added value vis-à-vis governments, and concrete collective outcomes. As for other partners, we expect to maintain and further develop our partnerships with NGOs and the private sector to maximise impact, particularly

Box 5

Partnering: the wide array of WFP relationships

WFP's approach to partnerships, which applies fully to our social protection work, is presented in the corporate partnership strategy. Partnerships are viewed as embracing five broad purposes, namely operations, resourcing, knowledge, advocacy, and policy and governance.

WFP's partnerships take three forms: bilateral partnerships, multi-stakeholder partnerships (to which parties sign memoranda of understanding), and open, networked partnerships in which we collaborate informally with shared objectives. An important part of the latter are our relationships with the communities we support. We work as a trusted partner to governments in their capacities as host governments, donor governments and as members of WFP's governing bodies.

Other UN agencies, including the 'Rome-based agencies' (FAO, IFAD) and many more (e.g. UNICEF, UNHCR, UN Development Programme, ILO), are key partners to WFP. The 'One UN' approach and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework have brought a major shift to greater system-wide coherence (see section 4.4 below). WFP also engages with international financial institutions, and works with up to 2,000 civil society organisations a year as well as with the private sector, academia and think tanks.

Source: WFP, 2014b.

in contexts where we work as a complementary actor or implement parts of a social protection programme on behalf of a government.

2. **Bridge the approaches of humanitarian, development and peace actors to address social protection challenges.** The actions in area of work 3 above (pp.52-54) require continuous, close and varied partnerships. What was once termed the, 'New Way of Working' is now the way we work. We will continue to play a strategic role in Grand Bargain commitments regarding social protection, including the strengthening of national systems to build resilience in fragile contexts, and closer alignment of approaches, where appropriate, between international humanitarian cash programming and national social protection.
3. **Provide common platforms and services.** WFP will provide common platforms, e.g. the common cash platform, that support coordinated, integrated and cost-efficient responses by multiple partners and sectors.

Resource partnerships

We aim to expand the financial, technical and human resources available to governments to strengthen social protection by alleviating common resource constraints. Key actions are to:

1. **Engage in joint advocacy for resourcing.** As a partner in USP2030, we will work with others to build support for the international multi-year and national financing required to expand national coverage as well as adequacy, comprehensiveness and quality and achieve USP2030, including social protection floors.
2. **Mobilise innovative financing mechanisms and complementary investments.** Where required and where we have capacity to do so, WFP will continue to support governments to mobilise funding for social protection in the countries where we work. This includes receiving funds from international financial institutions on behalf of host governments, accessing pooled funds, and/or exploring innovative financing such as through social impact investment, green finance and blended finance mechanisms.[95]

3. **Extend technical services available to governments.** We will continue to manage a set of long-term agreements with academic partners and consulting firms, for a number of strategic and technical services related to social protection, accessible to governments and other UN agency partners (see also section 4.5 below).
4. **Support national solutions.** WFP manages three 'innovation hubs' in the global South and a global 'innovation accelerator'. Their purpose is to identify, support and scale innovative solutions to country-specific challenges.

Knowledge and advocacy partnerships

We will contribute to the building and application of shared knowledge. This work aims to shape global, regional and country-level social protection agendas, influence decision-makers' understanding of what works, and support evidence-based decision-making. Key actions are to:

1. **Jointly produce and capitalise on knowledge.** All aspects of our approach to knowledge and learning may be carried out in partnership with others (see specific actions in the subsection below). We will seek collaborations to generate and disseminate evidence, and learn from knowledge acquired.
2. **Contribute to joint advocacy on emerging topics within social protection.** Several forums promote coordination among actors on social protection, allowing for the opportunity to either identify common positions or differentiate messages and approaches where appropriate. Globally, the Social Protection Interagency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B), USP2030, the Social Protection Floor Initiative and the various digital platforms that have emerged to support social protection provide an opportunity for WFP to align and coordinate our support with key partners.
3. **Advocate for further collaboration among humanitarian, development and peace actors with respect to social protection.** We will contribute to multi-stakeholder efforts to advocate for the transformation in the international aid architecture required to move from short- to longer term responses for long-term problems, and towards increasingly nationally owned responses to need and vulnerability, taking into account actions that may improve prospects for peace where relevant. We will contribute to efforts to build the 'business case' for this shift, and analyse trade-offs, benefits and costs of different approaches.
4. **Support efforts to align technical tools and approaches for analysing national social protection needs and gaps and identifying solutions.** Aligned approaches facilitate coherence of action and can help governments dealing with multiple international partners who typically emphasise a variety of preferences and positions. We will contribute our own technical tools and methodologies to the public realm, where appropriate; work to align them with those of others to maximise utility to governments and other users; and support new methodologies intended for use by multiple actors (e.g. ISPA) where needed.

Case study: Niger
Leveraging partnerships for comprehensive and integrated social protection programming

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Niger in March 2020, WFP, the World Bank and UNICEF have been working with the government's Social Safety Nets Unit (the Cellule Filets Sociaux) to scale up the World Bank-funded national Adaptive Social Protection programme to address the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable households. WFP played a leading role in building this coalition of partners around a multi-shock adaptive social protection system at scale. WFP and UNICEF efforts to this effect are part of a joint WFP-UNICEF project financed by German development funding (BMZ/KfW), also covering Mali and Mauritania. Working across four areas (institutional arrangements and partnerships; programmes and delivery systems; financing; data and information), WFP and partners have been able to leverage each other's comparative advantages. WFP's experience in vulnerability assessment and monitoring, market analysis, the minimum expenditure basket and operational delivery mechanisms have been key to streamline the delivery of assistance and target vulnerable groups more effectively.

Promoting an evidence-based approach

An effective contribution to social protection requires systematic efforts to produce evidence, exchange knowledge and support the process of learning. In doing so we will maximise the quality, relevance and impact of our technical advice on social protection issues to governments and their partners. Our approach, which applies also to other technical areas in WFP beyond social protection, comprises a sequence of three distinct but mutually reinforcing areas of work:

1. **Research and evidence generation.** Filling knowledge gaps, within and outside WFP, through the production and consolidation of relevant knowledge.
2. **Communication.** Adapting and disseminating the knowledge acquired so that it reaches its intended user in a way that is accessible and amenable to generating new ideas, understanding or actions
3. **Capacity-strengthening.** Capitalising on and applying this knowledge over time, in order to maximise the return.

There is a positive feedback loop when knowledge generation and dissemination activities are combined with efforts to augment capacities in this way. The process of learning from, and capitalising on, knowledge can itself lead to the generation of new insights, the identification of gaps requiring research or new evidence, and better tailored communications. Key activities across the three steps are summarised in Figure 6.

Alongside these external-facing knowledge and learning activities, we will also continue to develop internal capabilities on social protection within WFP (see section 4.5). A detailed knowledge and learning plan is being developed to accompany this strategy, covering both external and internal actions.

Case study: Caribbean
Generating evidence and strengthening social protection systems in the face of disasters and emergencies

Since 2018, WFP has been supporting governments across the Caribbean to enhance the use of social protection systems as a critical tool for responding to increasingly frequent and severe disasters driven by climate change and other shocks. Drawing on its technical and operational expertise, WFP carried out a series of country studies, learning sessions and exchange workshops with ministerial partners and national disaster offices, identifying opportunities to strengthen data management systems, targeting in emergencies, delivery mechanisms, coordination and disaster risk financing options. The generation, synthesis and communication of evidence through research and regional learning laid the foundation of technical assistance, informing practical initiatives to assist governments to strengthen social protection systems and better prepare them to respond to shocks in the future. These efforts have helped governments to develop more risk-informed approaches to social protection in order to safeguard lives and livelihoods against the multiple risk scenarios in the Caribbean.

Figure 6: WFP's approach to knowledge and learning in social protection

STEP 1

Research and evidence generation

Identify the research agenda

- Regularly identify capacity needs, critical issues and debates that emerge locally, regionally or globally, drawing on perspectives from our on-the-ground experience and a clear appraisal of 'who needs to know what'
- Topics likely to include: links between social protection, food security and nutrition outcomes; the impacts of food security and nutrition on poverty; the ways in which social protection can improve people's resilience to both personal and large-scale shocks, stressors and crises; the efficient and effective delivery of social protection in crisis and conflict contexts; and links between social protection, government-led emergency response and international humanitarian assistance
- Emphasis on how people are affected differently on account of social, economic and geographical inequalities

Maintain and enhance activities in diagnostics, assessment and analysis

- WFP is already a partner of choice for governments, development and humanitarian actors in conducting analysis and assessments pertinent to social protection. We will continue to develop our offer in this area
- Includes analysis as to who is, or is likely to become, food insecure or vulnerable, where and why; the risks; and what can be done, including the cost of meeting essential needs and obtaining a nutritious diet (see also Area of Work 1 above)

Embark on critical research and evidence-generation ventures

- Generate new evidence that will directly enhance the quality of our support to governments and our overall impact
- Greater emphasis on impact evaluations. Includes evaluations of WFP's own programmes in development and emergency settings—in areas such as cash-based transfers, school feeding and asset creation—which may generate lessons that can be used not only internally but also to positively influence national social protection programme design and delivery (WFP, 2019c).
- Introduce innovations in WFP's own programmes, or through pilot-testing and 'proof-of-concept' initiatives conducted at the request of governments, in which to mobilise new ideas and solutions. The application of new technologies may be part of this research.

Consolidate evidence in knowledge products

- Regular stock-taking of our analytical and operational work in social protection, synthesising experiences and seeking to identify best practices, challenges, and factors enabling change
- May include case studies of specific countries or interventions, and think-pieces on thematic issues within our areas of expertise
- Support national actors to capture, document and package their own social protection experiences and good practices, including to facilitate south–south cooperation
- Make evidence available in the form of reports, occasional papers and a range of other written and oral formats

Further enhance the knowledge base

Source: WFP.

STEP 2
Communication

Improve access to WFP's social protection knowledge

- Communicate knowledge, evidence and ideas to governments and their partners, communities and others at national and subnational level, as well as to policymakers regionally and globally
- Use a range of channels, from face-to-face events to written outputs and online media, in relevant languages and adapted and accessible formats
- Make use of existing forums wherever possible, such as sector working groups
- Maintain a database and repository of WFP's social protection knowledge products

STEP 3
Capacity-strengthening

Build and facilitate opportunities for learning from the knowledge acquired

- Convene lessons-learned workshops and other conferences at country and regional level to inform future programming
- Develop training materials, including for e-learning, on social protection topics within WFP's areas of expertise
- Facilitate south–south learning

Consolidate knowledge- and learning-oriented partnerships

- Seek opportunities to build and strengthen knowledge and advocacy partnerships
- Ensure that technical assistance work in social protection undertaken by external actors on behalf of WFP includes a component of developing knowledge products

Leverage WFP's agency-wide capacity-strengthening platforms and partnerships

- Leverage WFP's knowledge and innovation platforms, facilities and other relationships that exist to assist the agency as a whole to support capacity-strengthening and the creation of an enabling environment in implementing countries (not just for social protection)
- These include Centres of Excellence in Brazil, China and Cote D'Ivoire, innovation hubs and South-South and Triangular Cooperation support

Feedback loop maximising the knowledge acquired

More effectively communicate knowledge

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SECTION ENDNOTES

70 WFP, 2017a.

71 While there is no rigid list as to what constitutes essential needs, there is a general consensus that these include requirements—food, water, sanitation, shelter, clothing, life-saving health care and education—which are needed to ensure survival and a minimum level of physical and mental well-being. Governments, communities and key partners can define these for a population of interest in accordance with the local context (WFP, 2018a; 2020e).

72 Here we focus on how WFP's strategic contribution to social protection relates to the content of these agendas, rather than on the terminology. The application of the terms varies by country and region; English terms do not always have direct equivalents in other languages, and vice versa.

73 Beasley, 2019.

74 For a full treatment of WFP's approach to integrating climate change considerations into social protection, see Solórzano and Cárdenes (2019).

75 Others include e.g. strengthening value chains and market systems, and delivering basic services.

76 See WFP, 2016a.

77 The COVID-19 crisis has illustrated the extent and speed with which the population in need of assistance may change its composition.

78 Delgado et al., 2019.

79 Efforts have been made by numerous organisations in recent years, both within countries and globally, to identify and reduce the gaps. For example, the 'life-cycle' approach to social protection, adopted by many agencies, aims to identify the support that people may require at all stages of life, not just children and older people; while discussions about the 'missing middle' aim to close the gap between services that support the poorest and those available to the most well-off.

80 UN Sustainable Development Group, 2019a, 2019b.

81 WFP, 2017f.

82 ILO, 2012; ISPA, 2016b; WFP, 2017f.

83 WFP, 2020k

84 OECD, 2019, p.6.

85 OECD, 2019.

86 WFP 2004, 2013.

87 Delgado et al., 2019, p.18.

88 WFP, 2013, 2020c, 2020k.

89 WFP, 2004, 2013.

90 OECD, 2012, cited in WFP, 2013, p.6.

91 WFP, 2013; Delgado et al., 2019.

92 WFP, 2013, p.15.

93 WFP, 2014b.

94 WFP, 2014b, p.7.

95 Avenir Analytics, 2020.

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4

ENSURING SUCCESS

4. Ensuring success

For any strategy to achieve its goals its intended users must be familiar with and able to apply it. It requires a global plan for uptake and implementation, with progress tracked and evaluated regularly (section 4.1).

Further conditions for success are that the social protection strategy is coherent with, and integrated into, internal and external processes for planning, monitoring and reporting; and that it is resourced appropriately. The activities of integration and coherence avoid contradictory guidance and priorities. Key instruments with which the social protection strategy is or will be aligned are WFP's strategic plans at corporate and country level (see section 4.2), and thematic policies and strategies (section 4.3). Our alignment with processes beyond WFP is summarised in section 4.4. Adaptations to workforce capacity are outlined in section 4.5.

4.1 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This strategy is accompanied by global and regional implementation plans, which translate into annual workplans. These are available separately.

The global implementation plan sets out how WFP will ensure that it has the human, technical and financial resource capability to deliver the objectives of the strategy across the organisation. It includes a plan for knowledge management to promote uptake of the strategy, and an outline of actions to ensure WFP's value as an effective partner. The plan contains performance indicators that track progress in delivery of the strategy across several workstreams. Indicators cover a wide range of topics from the recruitment and training of staff, to the conduct and dissemination of relevant research, to contributions to interagency partnerships and platforms.

Each of WFP's six regional bureaux has developed a tailored version of the implementation plan. Regional bureaux have led much of WFP's thinking on social protection, publishing important guidelines, steering our activities in this field and compiling key pieces of evidence. Many have issued regional strategies for social protection. Their work has informed the direction communicated in this paper. The regional plans tailor the present strategic approach to their needs and opportunities and identify region-specific resource requirements.

The implementation plan will be translated into annual workplans for WFP's social protection workforce at headquarters and regional level. Progress will be reported annually.

4.2 COHERENCE WITH CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLANNING

WFP's corporate approach to strategic planning and implementation was transformed in 2016 with the adoption of a four-pillared framework that guides all our humanitarian and development activities: (i) a global five-year corporate Strategic Plan (ii) a set of Country Strategic Plans (CSPs), one per country office (iii) a budget framework, and (iv) a Corporate Results Framework for monitoring. The successful delivery of the present strategy therefore requires it to reflect, and be reflected in, those key documents.

Planning

Social protection already features in WFP's current corporate Strategic Plan 2017–21. Its value is recognised in connection with addressing vulnerabilities and inequalities and facilitating access to adequate, safe and nutritious food, as well as in disaster risk management and resilience-building[96]. It is seen to be relevant in both development and humanitarian settings.

Social protection will feature still more prominently in WFP's Strategic Plan 2022–26, guided by the direction set out here and complementing WFP's emergency response work. This reflects the importance of the topic throughout the organisation.

In our country offices this social protection strategy will inform the next generation of WFP's country-level plans, the CSPs, beginning in 2021. The 'first generation' of CSPs—those issued since 2017—show the centrality of social protection: some 90 percent of country offices planned related work. Indeed, the work already being implemented has driven the need for this strategy.

Country offices will identify the social protection actions relevant to their context and will incorporate them into the strategic orientation of their CSP and budget. These may be expressed as strategic activities, outputs and/or outcomes as required. Figure 7 offers an illustrative theory of change for how WFP may achieve the two priorities of the present strategy, through the two pathways of either supporting nationally led social protection systems and programmes or conducting complementary actions in our own programming. Countries may select and tailor any of the stepping stones along the path in order to best fit with national needs and priorities. Table 1 identifies the assumptions and risks in achieving the intended impact.

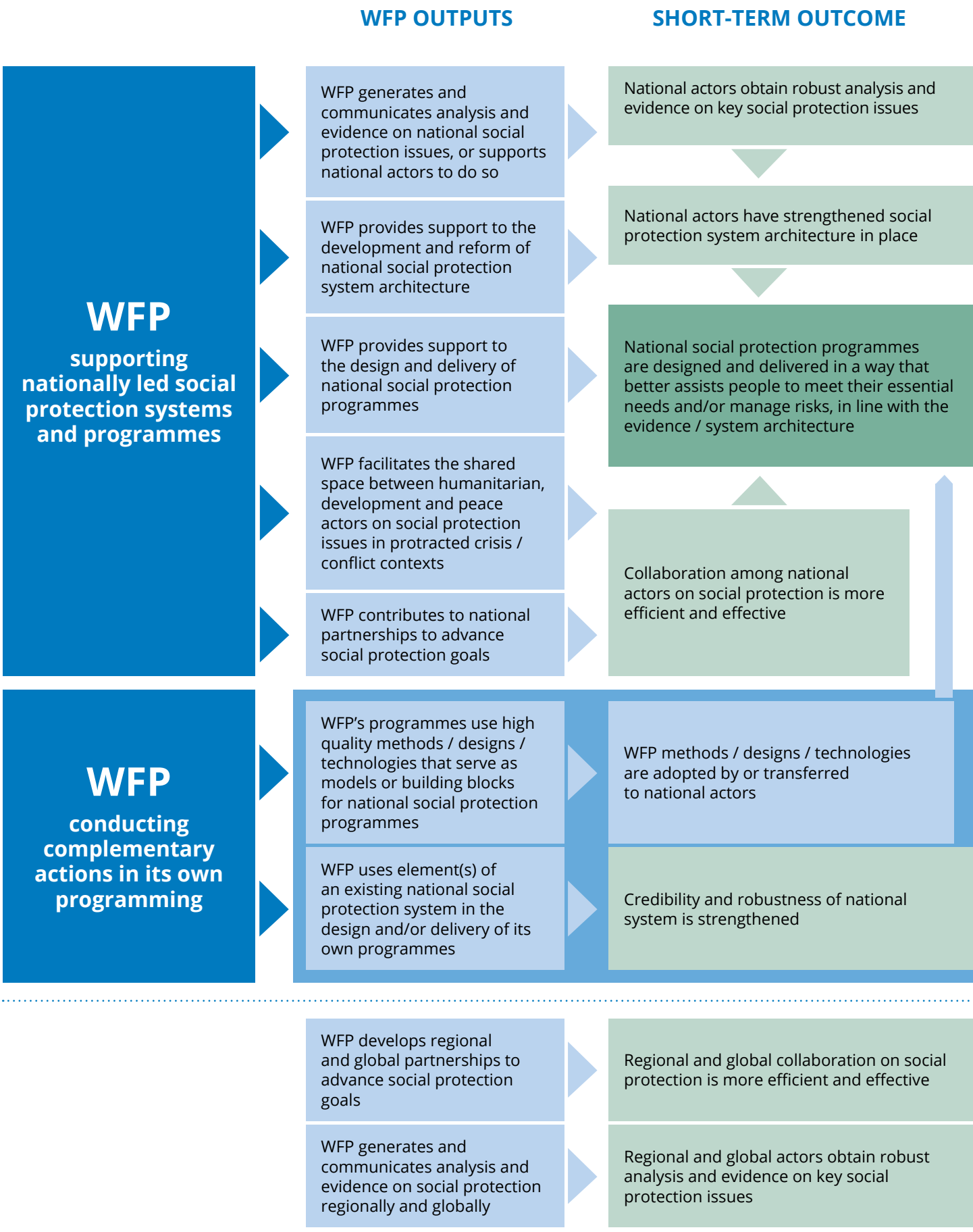
Any targets for social protection activities will be determined by country offices as part of their own planning. It would be inappropriate for targets to be imposed globally since our work in this area is a response to national needs.

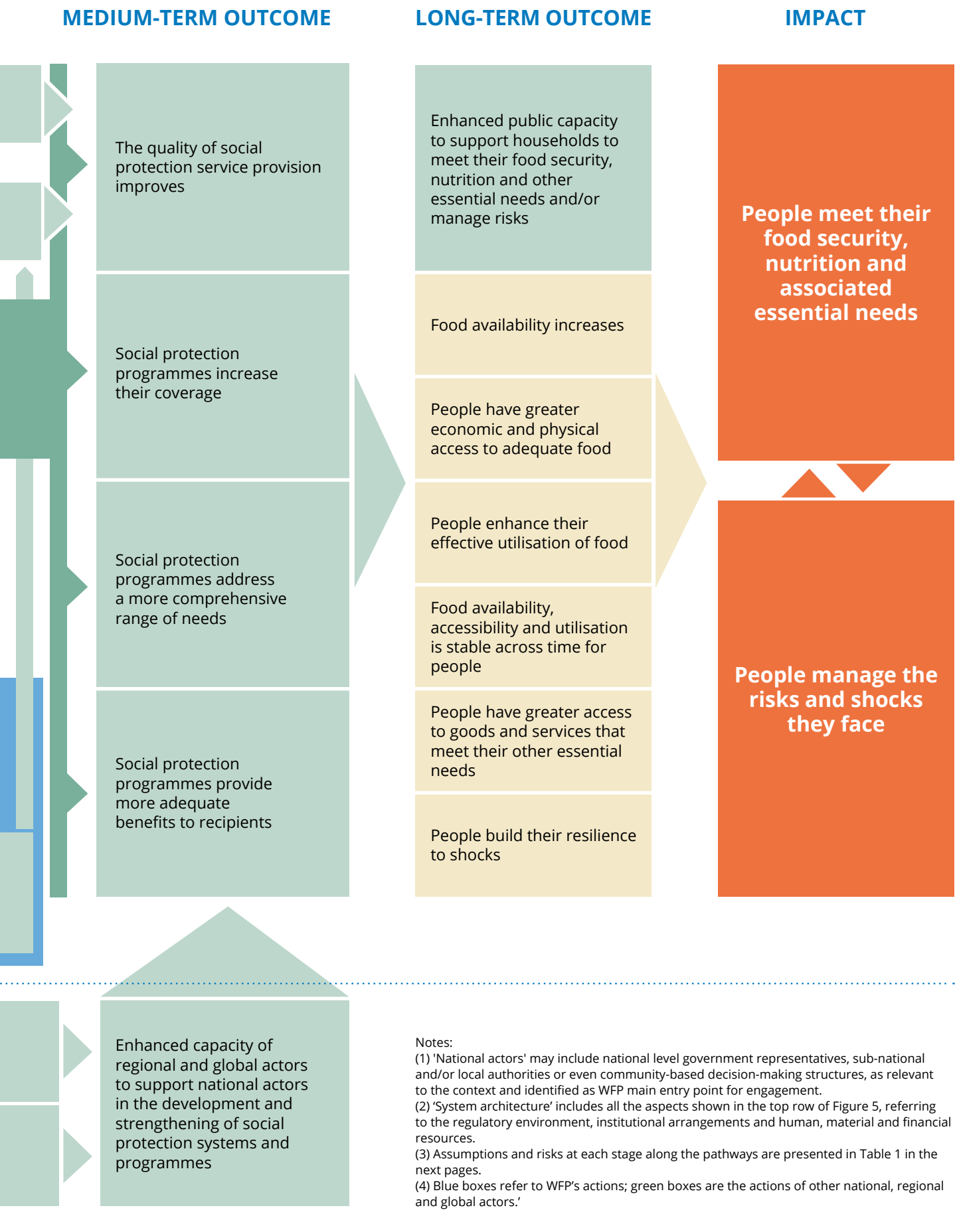
Monitoring and reporting

WFP's activities in support of social protection will be monitored using standard corporate practices[97]. WFP will adjust the Corporate Results Framework so as to adequately measure results on the ground, both to improve the quality of our activities and for accountability to stakeholders. The next iteration of the framework is being drafted to accompany the corporate Strategic Plan 2022-26.

Country offices, regional bureaux and WFP's Social Protection Unit at headquarters will also produce regular qualitative reviews of their social protection activities according to standard practices. A primary publication in this regard will be the Annual Country Reports.

Figure 7: Pathways to social protection impact for WFP





Notes:
(1) 'National actors' may include national level government representatives, sub-national and/or local authorities or even community-based decision-making structures, as relevant to the context and identified as WFP main entry point for engagement.
(2) 'System architecture' includes all the aspects shown in the top row of Figure 5, referring to the regulatory environment, institutional arrangements and human, material and financial resources.
(3) Assumptions and risks at each stage along the pathways are presented in Table 1 in the next pages.
(4) Blue boxes refer to WFP's actions; green boxes are the actions of other national, regional and global actors.'

Table 1: Pathways to impact - Assumptions, risks and risk mitigation

Explanation	Outputs
Assumptions underpinning successful achievement, by stage	National actors are committed to strengthening social protection systems and programmes National actors recognise and call upon WFP's technical capacities relevant to social protection WFP remains committed to supporting social protection at country, regional and global level, and has sufficient resources and capacities to provide this support where required WFP implements high quality programmes that comply with corporate standards WFP's funding partners remain committed to investing in WFP's support to social protection
Risks to successful achievement, by stage	National actors face competing public policy objectives, or unengaged political elite National actors change their policy priorities, e.g. resulting from a change in government National actors overlook WFP's operational and technical capacities in social protection Affected populations are not actively involved in the decisions that affect their lives WFP changes its priorities in its Strategic Plan and/or CSPs; or offices do not apply policy WFP has insufficient resources and capacities to provide support, e.g. owing to a shortfall in funding because of competing priorities Disruption including political turmoil, conflict and other shocks
Risk mitigation options for WFP	External-facing Conduct evidence-based analysis and advocacy on benefits and costs of social protection, and on WFP's potential contribution Support institutionalisation of social protection, including in law and organizational structures Support the development of robust accountability and feedback mechanisms Promote the engagement of affected people in programme design, implementation, and M&E Implement programmes with respect for people's needs, rights and capacities Develop partnerships with other non-government actors, e.g. in conflict settings where international humanitarian law applies Internal-facing Conduct evidence-based analysis and advocacy on WFP's contribution to social protection Apply WFP's guidance on accountability, assurance, protection, data protection, privacy, environmental and social standards, conflict prevention Continue to embed social protection in WFP's Strategic Plan, CSPs and other thematic policies Invest corporately in human resources, partnership development, knowledge management and learning

Source: WFP.

WFP's organisation-wide programmatic, operational, fiduciary and financial risks (not specifically related to social protection work) and the framework for their oversight and management are presented in WFP's enterprise risk management policy and our environmental and social sustainability framework (WFP, 2018d, 2020i). Additional guidance on particular programmatic risk assessment and mitigation measures are also available in e.g. WFP 2020c.

Note: (1) Maladaptation here refers to solutions that are beneficial in the short run but result in worsened vulnerability in the long run, especially in relation to climate change.

Short- and medium-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes and impact
National actors value WFP's social protection support and have the capacities to apply any recommendations or findings, adjusting their systems and/or programmes National actors include among their programme recipients the food insecure and malnourished and/or those facing risks and shocks, directly or indirectly WFP's own interventions are relevant for national social protection system-building WFP channels support through national systems that can absorb and account for assistance. WFP remains committed to supporting uptake of its analysis, evidence, recommendations and/or findings in social protection WFP engages in mutually beneficial partnerships	National actors can accommodate fluctuations in demand for social protection Producers of food are incentivised and/or able to increase or diversify production as a result of increased demand owing to social protection programmes Food supply is adequate and nutritious Economic value of social protection programme increases, rather than substitutes for, other sources of household income Markets and food are accessible (economically, physically and socially) People use assistance to obtain and consume nutritious food Basic public services are available and used
National actors face budget and/or other resource constraints National actors have competing priorities or limited awareness of food security, nutrition and/or risk management in the social protection discourse National actors' delivery of social protection support disrupted by extreme weather, conflict or other shocks. National actors and WFP have different standards of audit and accountability Affected populations do not receive the assistance (exclusion errors in programme design or implementation; elite capture) Affected populations receiving assistance face protection risks WFP's support is not relevant, or not conveyed in a manner conducive to uptake WFP's support (e.g. guidance, data, technology) is employed by national actors against the vulnerable, or results in cuts in budget, coverage or adequacy WFP's culture and/or funding impedes sustained long-term investment in social protection	Social protection programmes unable to accommodate varying levels of need Social protection programmes incentivise maladaptation[1] Food production diminished by extreme weather / climate change / over-extraction of natural resources / insecurity Food systems do not respond to increased demand arising from social protection Disruption to food supply chain Sudden closure of markets because of e.g. insecurity, extreme weather, lockdowns Food price spikes Discrimination prevents access to markets Social protection income substitutes for other sources of household income Recipients use assistance for low nutrient food or temptation goods. Basic public services (including health and education) are available but underused Basic public services are disrupted or not available for those in need WFP support inadvertently exacerbates tension, e.g. through perceptions of bias
External-facing Support the development of social protection strategies and programmes that are food security- and nutrition-sensitive and/or address risk; and/or that aim to reduce inequalities relating to gender, disability or other social, economic or geographical factors Support institutionalisation of social protection, including through capacity-strengthening Support national actors to strengthen audit and accountability mechanisms Support preparedness for shocks and planning to ensure business continuity Support engagement, communication, contingency planning in the event of unavailability of services Assess the national system prior to channelling WFP funds; avoid using in high-risk contexts Improve interagency coordination and agreements Secure funding that supports UN 'delivery as one' Link programmes directly implemented by WFP (e.g. for smallholder farmers) to national programmes Internal-facing Consult with partners to maximise relevance and effectiveness of WFP's contributions Conduct evidence-based analysis and advocacy on impact of WFP's contribution, and resources needed Invest corporately in human resources / skills. Apply, and continue to advance, corporate policies on accountability, assurance, protection etc.	External-facing Support national actors to design programmes that accommodate varying levels of need Support the generation and analysis of information to facilitate prompt action in the event of disruption (e.g. food price monitoring, early warning systems) Support national actors to take climate-related risks into account from design stage onwards Promote the sustainable use and management of natural resources by not exploiting them beyond their regenerative capacity Support the review of transfer modalities Support strengthening of food systems including supply chain Continue to assist the generation of evidence through monitoring, evaluation and other studies, to support real-time adjustments to programmes and lessons for future activities Support behavioural change programmes and sensitisation campaigns including those that enable people to make choices in favour of consuming healthier foods. Advocate the establishment and strengthening of basic public services Conduct conflict risk analysis and act on the findings

4.3 COHERENCE WITH WFP'S THEMATIC APPROACHES

Social protection objectives are included in many other global WFP policies and strategies or are distinctly pertinent to them. Social protection is mentioned in, or relevant to, our policies and strategies in the following areas: humanitarian principles (WFP, 2004), capacity development (WFP, 2009, 2017f), disaster risk reduction (WFP, 2011), peacebuilding (WFP, 2013), partnerships (WFP, 2014b), resilience (WFP, 2015b), south–south and triangular cooperation (WFP, 2015c), gender (WFP, 2015d), CSPs (WFP, 2016c), personal data protection and privacy (WFP, 2016d), emergency preparedness (WFP, 2017c), nutrition (WFP, 2017e), climate change (WFP, 2017h), school feeding (WFP, 2020a), field operations (WFP, 2020d), protection and accountability (WFP, 2020c, 2020k) and workforce (WFP, 2021a). The policies on humanitarian principles, peacebuilding and protection may influence any decision by WFP not to engage in social protection in conflict contexts.

Social protection is already a mainstream part of what WFP does. This is the case across functions (programme, supply chain, partnerships, technology), at all levels (global, regional, country), and in most contexts. To implement this strategy effectively we will continue to support people working across all sectors and functions within WFP—not only those whose primary task is to support social protection—to integrate it into their programmatic activities. A cross-functional coordination group for social protection facilitates this interaction.

4.4 COHERENCE WITH EXTERNAL PLANNING AND MONITORING

Planning

WFP places a high priority on ensuring complementarity with the policies and practices of partners. Being a credible and trusted partner is not only part of our offer but also important for ensuring that we fulfil our commitments. In some contexts we expect to have a comparative advantage and play a stronger role, while in others it will be appropriate for WFP to take a supporting role.

Planning and delivery of WFP's activities in coordination with UN partners is imperative. As part of UN reform, UN country teams have committed to shifting their focus to collective planning and implementation. The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework forms the centrepiece of the relationship between the UN and host governments. The development activities that WFP country offices plan in their CSPs, as with those for all UN entities, must be derived from the Cooperation Framework and related documents such as the Common Country Analysis which underpins it, not vice versa[98]. Where social protection is jointly identified by UN agencies as a 'strategic priority' for the Cooperation Framework, we envisage that WFP is likely to participate in the related Results Group, in which UN agencies develop a joint workplan and coordinate and review their respective activities.

Monitoring and reporting

WFP aims to maximise the relevance of its monitoring processes to governments and other national and regional partners. This includes aligning with national systems and procedures for monitoring and evaluation where possible. Ultimately, this may enable WFP's contributions to system-strengthening to be accounted for and reported against indicators of national interest. We will aim for compatibility in the exchange of information (e.g. indicators, data sources, means of verification, studies, reports) so that, when appropriate and subject to meeting protection requirements, governments and other actors can access WFP's data and reports, whilst WFP benefits from access to national data on the social protection system, programmes and/or recipients so as to facilitate planning. We will seek feedback from stakeholders including communities.

Where the UN Cooperation Framework includes a strategic priority on social protection, and where WFP participates in the related Results Group, we will contribute to the identification and monitoring of relevant outcome and output indicators. Frequent monitoring and reporting is expected as the Cooperation Framework adopts an 'adaptive programming' approach, updating planned activities on the basis of new information and evidence[99].This is especially important in fragile and conflict-affected settings where risks may transpire and assumptions may not hold.

WFP will also participate in supra-national conversations to enhance the range and quality of social protection data, applying its expertise in data protection and privacy and in systems for data collection and analysis. This may include reporting on social protection programmes that may sit in different sectors and are not currently systematically counted in global statistics on social protection coverage, such as school feeding programmes.

4.5 WORKFORCE PLANNING

To deliver this social protection strategy at a scale that keeps pace with the growing demand for our assistance, it is vital that WFP sustains and expands its capacities accordingly. Most importantly, we will continue to adapt our workforce to include sufficient people with the experience and capacities to meet demand for:

- working with governments, including support for system-building
- analysing policy issues and engaging in upstream policy dialogues
- contributing to long-term sustainable development objectives.

The skills themselves are not new to WFP: as noted earlier, we have been providing such expertise for decades (section 2.3). The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated demand as governments seek support for the urgent design and delivery of practical social protection responses that mitigate the impact of the crisis. We are now contributing to social protection systems in most countries where we work. We expect this to continue, even once the COVID-19 crisis has passed, as global attention turns increasingly to addressing the complex challenges of reaching Zero Hunger and helping people to meet their essential needs even in the most fragile and conflict-affected contexts, where WFP typically has a long established presence.

In 2020 WFP conducted a strategic review of workforce planning for social protection[100]. We have established dedicated capacity to articulate and cost workforce requirements, define job profiles, assess current capabilities and address any gaps. Core social protection functions have been identified at headquarter, regional bureau and country office level. Actions to deliver them will be undertaken on an ongoing basis as part of the implementation plan that accompanies the present strategy, and in line with WFP's forthcoming People Policy (WFP, 2021a). This commitment does not, of course, mean that the whole of WFP's workforce is expected to reorient itself to a

social protection function—or even to a development function—but rather that, across the organisation, we have available the skills and expertise in sufficient numbers to accommodate requests.

Our approach to workforce planning aims to strike the best balance between 'build, buy and borrow', the three options for securing talent. This means building the capabilities of our existing employees, hiring to fill new positions and optimising the use of external experts.

'Build': developing internal capabilities

Both national and international staff play a critical role in WFP's fulfilment of its social protection work. National staff provide the continuity for establishing networks and building long-term relationships with governments and their partners that is often required in order to most effectively deliver support to multi-year system reform[101]. Their insights are essential for understanding political priorities, institutional arrangements, programmatic realities and cultural norms. For international staff, mobility is an essential attribute of the workforce and continues to be a core requirement, bringing agility in the distribution of capacities according to need. Many international staff have cross-functional technical expertise in a wide range of programmatic areas relevant to WFP's priorities for support to social protection. Dedicated social protection specialists are present at WFP's headquarters and regional bureaux as well as in many country offices.

A key part of the implementation plan for this strategy is the development of global and regional knowledge and learning programmes to further strengthen internal capabilities. We will adopt a systematic approach to generating, communicating and capitalising on knowledge. WFP already has an e-learning course, and integrates social protection themes into broader corporate training programmes; these materials will be revised and regularly updated. We will provide both scheduled and ad hoc training and technical support to colleagues worldwide. We will ensure that social protection knowledge is systematically communicated across the organisation, including by maximising learning from on-the-job experience and exchanges, synthesising lessons learned across countries, and drawing on our many internal and external knowledge products on social protection.

'Buy': adjusting the workforce composition

A process of expansion of WFP's social protection workforce is already underway at the time of writing. There is a need to sustain this shift. The 2020 strategic review of workforce planning for social protection, and the related workstream under the implementation plan for this strategy, have identified the number and nature of posts required. Business cases and investment cases relevant to additional human resources are submitted for a three-year period and reviewed annually, as part of WFP's annual management plan exercises. At country level they are included as part of country portfolio budgets.

'Borrow': leveraging external expertise

In response to requests from country offices and recommendations from audits and evaluations, WFP has institutionalised processes for obtaining additional short-term expertise on an as-needed basis. A set of long-term agreements with renowned academic institutions and think-tanks has been in place since 2018 for the provision of technical services related to social protection. We have also established a roster of technical experts in relevant areas for short-term, targeted consultancies.

Our continued strengthening of partnerships with other national and international organisations enables us to maximise our effectiveness through joint and complementary actions.

4.6 LOOKING AHEAD

With this strategy and our commitment to continued investment, we aim to maximise the effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of our work with governments and their partners to establish and strengthen high quality social protection systems and programmes globally. Strengthening country systems involves a range of WFP disciplines and functions working in an integrated way towards defined goals. This is an organisation-wide role, not a role of an individual unit. Leveraging our expertise as we apply our principles, we will strive towards our vision that, by 2030, people will have substantially increased access to national social protection systems that safeguard and foster their ability to meet their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs, and to manage the risks and shocks they face.

SECTION ENDNOTES

96 WFP, 2017g. The next corporate Strategic Plan is under development at the time of writing.

97 WFP, 2018b, 2018c, 2019d.

98 WFP, 2020j. Only WFP's development outcomes must flow from the UN Cooperation Framework. Crisis response outcomes typically remain outside the Cooperation Framework and will be linked to other UN instruments such as Humanitarian Response Plans, where these exist.

99 UN Sustainable Development Group, 2019b.

100 WFP, 2020g.

101 Avenir Analytics, 2019.

Annex A - References

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Annex B - What counts as social protection

Table 2 below presents an inventory of social protection schemes, programmes and benefits as used by an interagency tool for assessing social protection systems. As noted earlier, we endorse the broad scope of this list as it best aligns with the varied usage of the term by governments. This does not mean that WFP expects to work on all these areas. As explained throughout this strategy, our focus is on making an effective contribution according to our expertise and capacity in order to deliver on our priority objectives, aligning with our mandate and in consultation with governments, their partners and communities.

A few points of note:

- Nine of these benefits are recognised under ILO Convention 102 on minimum standards of social security. They are benefits for children and families, maternity, unemployment, employment injury, sickness, old age, disability, survivors, and health protection (ILO, 1952). That is a key reference document for international standards in social protection, at least in the countries that have ratified the Convention, and especially for the aspects of social protection that relate to compensate for contingencies that affect people's ability to earn an income from employment.
- The full range of vulnerabilities that social protection is often called upon to address extends much further than those nine contingencies, covering also structural poverty and economic constraints in accessing food, housing and many other essential needs . Hence the longer list.
- WFP considers that some, but not all, emergency support in cash and in kind counts as social protection (see items 1.1.5 and 1.2.5 in Table 2). In order for it to count it would need to be an institutionalised, nationally led programme, or one explicitly perceived by a government to be part of its social protection system, not delivered independently or on an ad-hoc basis by an external organisation. The same principle applies broadly to many of the other schemes listed, in line with our recognition of social protection as being nationally led (see section 2.2 above).
- For WFP, 'Other social insurance' (item 2.2.5 in Table 2) includes some crop and livestock insurance, namely the instances where these are provided as social insurance, being contributory and not risk-rated (see also section 1.3 above). In some cases, as a further social protection mechanism, the insurance premiums may be subsidised by public or donor funds for those who cannot afford the contribution.

Table 2: ISPA inventory of social protection schemes, programmes and benefits

1. SOCIAL ASSISTANCE		
1.1 Cash transfers	1.1.1 Poverty targeted cash transfers 1.1.2 Family and child allowance (including orphan and vulnerable children benefits) 1.1.3 Public-private charity, including zakat 1.1.4 Housing / utility allowance benefits 1.1.5 Emergency support in cash (including support to refugees / returning migrants)	1.1.6 Scholarships benefits 1.1.7 Old age social pensions 1.1.8 Disability social pensions/allowance/benefits 1.1.9 War veterans benefits 1.1.10 Non-contributory funeral grants, burial allowances 1.1.11 Public works, workfare and direct job creation 1.1.12 Other cash
1.2 Food, in-kind and near-cash transfers	1.2.1 Food stamps and vouchers 1.2.2 Food distribution programmes 1.2.3 School feeding/take-home 1.2.4 Nutritional programmes (therapeutic, supplementary and people living with HIV) 1.2.5 In-kind emergency support (including refugees/returning migrants)	1.2.6 Targeted subsidies: Health benefits and reduced medical fees for vulnerable groups 1.2.7 Targeted subsidies: Educational fee waivers 1.2.8 Targeted subsidies: Housing/utility 1.2.9 Other food / in-kind programme 1.2.10 Food for work (including food for training, food for assets etc.)
1.3 Other social assistance	1.3.1 Tax exemptions 1.3.2 Other exemptions	1.3.3 Other social assistance transfer
2. SOCIAL INSURANCE		
2.1 Contributory / earnings-related pensions and savings programmes	2.1.1 Old age pension 2.1.2 Survivors' pension	2.1.3 Disability pension
2.2 Other social insurance	2.2.1 Sickness/injury leave 2.2.2 Maternity/paternity benefits 2.2.3 Contributory funeral grants / insurance	2.2.4 Health insurance 2.2.5 Other social insurance
3. LABOUR MARKET PROGRAMMES		
3.1 Labour market policy services (intermediation)	3.1.1 Labour market services	
3.2 Active labour market programmes	3.2.1 Training (vocational, life skills, cash for training), internship 3.2.2 Job rotation and job sharing 3.2.3 Employment incentives / wage subsidies 3.2.4 Employment measures for disabled	3.2.5 Public works, workfare and direct job creation including community development programmes 3.2.6 Entrepreneurship support/Startup incentives (grants, loans, training) 3.2.7 Other active labour market programmes
3.3 Passive labour market programmes	3.3.1 Unemployment benefits (contributory) / severance payment subsidised by government	3.3.2 Unemployment benefits (non-contributory) 3.3.3 Early retirement for labour market reasons
4. SOCIAL CARE SERVICES		
4.1 Care for children / youth	4.1.1 Day care services for vulnerable children, orphans 4.1.2 Foster care 4.1.3 Specialised social care for children (abandoned, neglected, abused, orphaned)	4.1.4 Non-residential psychological services for children and vulnerable youth 4.1.5 Social care for substance abusers
4.2 Care for family	4.2.1 Preservation and reunification counselling services 4.2.2 Domestic violence victims' basic and specialised social care services	4.2.3 Rehabilitation services 4.2.4 Community development services 4.2.5 Mother care and counselling services
4.3 Care for vulnerable working age	4.3.1 Social care services for the homeless 4.3.2 Social care for substance abusers	4.3.3 Immigrant counselling and care services
4.4 Care for people with disabilities	4.4.1 Residential care services for people with disabilities 4.4.2 Psychosocial care services	4.4.3 Personal assistance and day care
4.5 Care for older persons	4.5.1 Residential care facilities 4.5.2 Psychosocial care services	4.5.3 Homeless shelters 4.5.4 Personal assistance and day care services
4.6 Other social care services	4.6.1 Other social care services	
5. GENERAL SUBSIDIES		
	5.1.1 Food subsidies 5.1.2 Fuel subsidies 5.1.3 Electricity subsidies	5.1.4 Housing subsidies 5.1.5 Transport subsidies 5.1.6 Agricultural input subsidies (e.g. seeds and fertiliser)

Source: ISPA, 2016a.

Annex C - Support for nationally led social protection systems

Table 3: Examples of WFP's offer in support of the 12 building blocks of a nationally led social protection system

BUILDING BLOCKS	EXAMPLES OF WFP OFFER
1. Policy and legislation	• Evidence generation as an input into drafting (e.g. diagnostic assessments and analysis of vulnerabilities, needs, patterns of food insecurity and malnutrition and/or key risks), and/or technical advice on the conduct of such assessments • Technical advice on effective strategies for: – improving food security and nutrition outcomes and/or the realisation of other essential needs – building resilience, including through anticipatory and early action – improving the responsiveness of the social protection system to risks and shocks – delivering social protection in fragile contexts, including those affected by conflict or complex crises – linking social protection with emergency assistance • Support for drafting of social protection policies or strategies, or sections of them, particularly on the above topics • Support for integration of social protection considerations into related sectoral policies such as education (e.g. for school feeding), nutrition and disaster risk management • Support for drafting of actionable guidelines to operationalise policies and strategies, e.g. standard operating procedures for the use of social protection in emergency contexts
2. Governance, capacity and coordination	• Strengthening of organisational and institutional capacities and processes to enable national actors to deliver on their mandate, including through the advisory work and service provision described throughout this strategy • Strengthening of individual capacities through training, coaching and mentoring, supporting communities of practice and exchanges of experience on topics of WFP's expertise • Support to governments to identify and draw on sources of expertise through partnerships with third parties • Promotion of coordination, particularly across sectors e.g. as a bridge to agencies working in disaster risk management, emergency response, food security and nutrition. WFP regularly participates in social protection sector working groups, in some cases as a co-lead and in others with a strong supporting role. We are also co-lead, together with FAO, of the Food Security Cluster and lead the Emergency Telecommunications and Logistics Clusters • Forging of partnerships to strengthen capacities of national and subnational institutions (both formal and informal, with a 'whole of society' approach including civil society and communities)
3. Platforms and infrastructure	• Support for national actors to determine whether or not digital solutions will help address a given policy problem • Assistance with analyses of existing digital platforms and infrastructure for the social protection sector • Support to national actors to elaborate principles of data protection and privacy, and diagnose the minimum amount of data necessary to meet intended objectives • Technical advice on the design and implementation of digital solutions • Development of digital solutions and/or data management on behalf of other actors where safe and appropriate • As a complementary action, where appropriate, development of independent platforms with data sharing agreements that can be used by the government, international partners and WFP itself, interoperable with government systems
4. Planning and financing	• Evidence generation as an input into planning and budgeting, and/or technical advice on conducting such assessments • Support for the development of action plans for social protection, for the inclusion of social protection in plans for emergency preparedness, and for the transition from internationally led interventions to nationally led social protection • Calculation of the cost, return on investment and value for money of programmes that promote people's ability to meet their food security, nutrition and other essential needs, including in crises • Design of mechanisms for releasing funds e.g. weather-related triggers for use in forecast-based financing • Support to governments to identify financing sources and close financing gaps, including e.g. innovative funding models such as sovereign risk insurance that triggers a social protection response when a shock occurs • Support to governments to negotiate with and access funding from international financial institutions, such as by acting as a conduit for the disbursement of funding for national social protection programme delivery in transition contexts
5. Assessments and analysis	• Context analysis such as historical trends of food insecurity, weather, or patterns of natural hazards and land degradation • Micro-level analysis, diagnostic assessments and microsimulations or projections of people's vulnerabilities and needs, to identify key drivers of poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, and the scale and severity of the problem, in different contexts of disruption including conflict. Differentiation by age, gender, disability, livelihood strategy and other key factors. Tools include essential needs assessments and comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis • Community-level and macro-level assessments of market systems, market pricing, financial markets, supply chains; seasonal livelihood planning. Simulations to predict access to food during shocks, based on scenarios for income, prices and elasticity of demand. This is particularly relevant for urban areas • Risk impact assessments and/or rapid needs assessments if a shock occurs • Identification of gaps, capacity constraints and opportunities, assessments of policy and programme solutions, and simulations of policy alternatives to elucidate possible impacts and trade-offs • Assessments relating to accountability, including on issues of privacy and data protection

Source: WFP. Note: For the 12 building blocks of a national social protection system, see Figure 5.

6. Advocacy	Advocacy for: • Greater consideration of social protection in national planning and budgeting processes, as well as attention to food security, nutrition and/or disaster risk management within the sector • The inclusion of social protection in the strategies and budgets of other sectors and national planning documents • The ratification of relevant global agreements and the development of new policies, or alignment of existing policies, to achieve universal social protection • The promotion of more inclusive social assistance programmes, such as for refugees and non-nationals who might otherwise not have access to regular social protection provision, or for geographical areas currently underserved or repeatedly affected by shocks
7. Engagement and communications	• Support for the development of community engagement strategies that introduce participatory techniques and conflict-sensitive approaches in social protection programme design and delivery. These promote awareness-raising and the application of rights, entitlements and responsibilities, and tap into the knowledge and capacities of affected populations to support food security and nutrition and poverty reduction • Support for the development of adapted and accessible modes of communication and materials that work in remote, marginalised or crisis-affected contexts, and/or that reach diverse members of affected populations • Guidance on effective behavioural change communication, such as messaging on good nutrition • Messaging to promote people's awareness of their entitlements
8. Monitoring, evaluation and learning	• Guidance on the design of monitoring frameworks, including for measurement relating to the use of social protection to improve food security and nutrition, to build resilience and/or to respond to shocks • Design and use of monitoring tools including those for mobile data collection and/or remote monitoring, which may permit data collection and analysis even in crisis contexts • Development of data analytics and insight platforms • Support for development of evaluation policies and frameworks • Commissioning of joint evaluations, particularly for social protection programmes implemented jointly by, or in collaboration between, government institutions and WFP • Support to national actors to review and reflect on their social protection programmes and to share lessons learned—including with international counterparts through south–south cooperation • Capturing and sharing of lessons learned from WFP's evaluations of its own programmes and innovations, generating ideas to positively influence national social protection programme design and delivery
9. Design of programme parameters	• Identification of geographical areas and population groups most vulnerable to, or affected by, food insecurity, malnutrition and/or multidimensional poverty, as well as those most severely affected by, or exposed to, shocks; and the extent of their participation in existing social protection schemes • Support for determination of the type of programme best suited to respond • Guidance on applying conditionality to programmes, or additional measures (along the lines of the 'cash-plus' model) to include e.g. communication strategies for behaviour change on nutrition, access to basic social services, social cohesion or numerous other messages • Support for formulation of eligibility criteria, including prioritisation among affected groups in contexts of capacity or resource constraints, and strategies for minimising inclusion and exclusion errors • Support for identifying the modality and transfer mechanism, where transfers are proposed. Value chain and market functionality assessments are key analytical tools that assist decision-making as to the relative merits of cash, voucher-based or in-kind programmes • Support for determining the value, frequency, timing, duration and exit criteria where transfers are proposed. Includes consultation with non-government actors on alignment of programme design in complex crises or other situations where government-led programmes are not functioning, to facilitate possible future transition to a government programme
10. Registration and enrolment	• Support for registration of beneficiaries, including the collection and treatment of sensitive data—potentially including biometric details—in ways that maintain dignity, and maximise personal data protection, privacy and accountability • Advice on strategies to minimise errors of exclusion in implementation (non-enrolment of people eligible to enrol), including of migrants, refugees and other potentially marginalised populations, such as those lacking identity documents. In the latter case, support may include advocacy and strategies for the issuance of national identity documents • Digitalisation of existing records, or integration and/or promotion of interoperability among databases and national registries (with or without WFP tools)
11. Benefit delivery	• Support for cash transfer programmes, including those that use electronic vouchers and mobile money solutions. Includes e.g. technical evaluations and due diligence on financial service providers, risk analyses and the development of mitigation measures, support for procurement and contracting, the pursuit of interoperability of payment services, and advice on the opening of bank accounts • Support for food assistance, drawing on our logistical and supply chain expertise to advise on, and/or collaborate with suppliers to ensure, the functionality of national and regional supply chains, the availability of diversified and competitively priced food products at retailers, and improvements to food safety and quality • Support to design of solutions to maintain and incentivise market activity, e.g. ensuring the presence of market traders in areas with cash distribution, especially in underserved communities • Promotion of financial inclusion, including through better financial and digital literacy and through supporting the increased coverage of financial services, and especially for women and for smallholder farmers • Advice on enhancing quality of delivery. Examples include ensuring that channels for delivering cash or food are reliable, provide regular transfers, are convenient and safe for beneficiaries and are flexible enough to avoid delays in disbursement in the event of a shock
12. Accountability, protection and assurance	• Design of mechanisms for the financial reconciliation of cash transfers, or to detect process anomalies such as human error, fraud or corruption, including procedures for routine audits and spot checks • Support for design and delivery of approaches to monitor social protection programme implementation, including the identification of protection-related concerns • Enhancement of formal case management, community feedback and/or grievance redress processes to handle updates and queries and to address complaints and appeals, including through channels such as helpdesks, call centres and apps • Advice on the secure and sensitive collection, storage and handling of personal data, the maintenance of accurate records including among retailers and financial service providers, and the creation of dashboards and reports

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For further information, do get in touch with us at **socialprotection@wfp.org.**

To know more about WFP's work in social protection, follow this link:
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