



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Evaluation of the WFP South-South and Triangular Cooperation policy

CONTEXT

The WFP policy on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) issued in 2015, has been evaluated in the sixth year of implementation, in line with the WFP Evaluation Policy 2016-2021. The evaluation was particularly relevant against the backdrop of rising country demands for WFP engagement in SSTC and evolving global, regional and country contexts.

Since 2015, overall, the global context has been increasingly conducive to WFP's support for SSTC. Commitments to SSTC are now enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in the commitments renewed at the second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, known as BAPA+40, and are reflected in the ongoing process of UN reform, which reinforces demands on UN agencies to strengthen their support for country-driven capacity strengthening and cross-country cooperation.

Within WFP, the adoption of multi-year country strategic plans (CSPs) and greater emphasis on WFP's enabler role, and engagement in country capacity strengthening, also contributed to a conducive environment to support SSTC.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The SSTC Policy aimed to expand WFP engagement to support country-led efforts towards strengthening national capacities, stimulate innovation, and expand funding sources for food security and nutrition through different measures including through knowledge exchanges; establishing mechanisms for sharing country-specific expertise; enhancing regional and sub-regional cooperation and supporting evidence generation on zero hunger solutions.

The evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability of the Policy and its implementation from 2015 to 2020. The WFP Strategic Plan (2014-2017) highlighted the role of SSTC as a tool to strengthen local capacity especially in relation to social safety nets and school feeding. The Policy provides a brief overview of SSTC in the WFP programme of work at the time of policy development and describes several examples of WFP-supported South-South cooperation, including the work of the Centre of Excellence in Brazil.

OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation served the dual objectives of learning and accountability. The primary intended users of the evaluation are

the Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division, which comprises the SSTC team as policy owners; various thematic units and divisions, including the Nutrition Division, School-based Programmes Division, Smallholder Agriculture Market Support Unit, Climate and Disaster Risk Reduction Programmes Unit and Emergency Operations Division. Executive Board members, the Partnerships and Advocacy Department, the centres of excellence in Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire and China and emerging centres such as the one in Egypt, as well as government counterparts, especially in countries hosting centres of excellence, are also intended users of the evaluation.

KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

How good was the policy?

The SSTC policy constituted an important milestone by making the commitment of WFP to broadening its support for South-South cooperation explicit and setting out parameters for how WFP would engage in SSTC. The development of the policy responded to WFP Executive Board members' requests for the strengthening of WFP engagement in SSTC. At the time of its approval, the policy was relevant, considering global good SSTC practice and both internal and external circumstances. However, in 2021 is partly outdated against the backdrop of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs; WFP's increased focus on working across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus; and the new WFP strategic plan for 2022-2026. The WFP SSTC policy is comparable in content and quality to the SSTC strategies or equivalents formulated by FAO, IFAD and UNICEF. WFP's SSTC policy only partly meets its current policy quality criteria established in the "Synthesis of evidence and lessons from WFP's policy evaluations (2011–2019)", WFP/EB.A/2020/7-D.

What results has the policy achieved?

Since 2015, the headquarters SSTC team and the centres of excellence have contributed to raising organization-wide awareness of SSTC as a modality relevant to all of WFP. Efforts have included developing SSTC guidance and compiling regular reports on WFP facilitated SSTC, developing an internal knowledge management platform for SSTC, supporting the incorporation of SSTC into new CSPs and setting up a network of SSTC focal points in regional bureaux. The extent to which thematic units at headquarters have actively furthered the use of SSTC in their respective areas varies, with those covering nutrition and climate and disaster risk reduction advancing the most.

Full and summary reports of the evaluation and the Management Response are available at <http://www.wfp.org/independent-evaluation>

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At the policy level, WFP-supported SSTC has helped foster positive peer pressure between countries and instil confidence among host government decision-makers that feasible and cost-effective solutions to the challenges faced in their countries exist and have been shown to work in comparable contexts.

At the institutional level, it is likely that WFP-supported SSTC has contributed to strengthening the technical capability (knowledge, awareness, skills) of relevant actors and provided them with access to innovative technologies, resources and professional networks.

At the community level, WFP-facilitated SSTC has helped increase awareness of new approaches and technologies and assisted stakeholders with their initial implementation.

What were the enabling or hindering factors for results achievement?

Internal factors within WFP that have positively influenced policy implementation include: the ongoing transformation of WFP from “doer” to enabler; the stewardship provided by the SSTC team at headquarters; the role played by the three centres of excellence in supporting SSTC; improved access to earmarked external funding for SSTC work for some WFP country offices; and the commitment of individual WFP staff members at the headquarters, regional bureau and country office levels who were driving WFP support for SSTC in their areas of work.

Internal factors that negatively affected results are the absence of clearly defined roles and responsibilities for policy implementation beyond the headquarters SSTC team and a lack of clarity on how regional bureaux and country offices were expected to engage with, and best use the support of the centres of excellence; the absence of clearly defined objectives and envisaged results for mainstreaming SSTC at WFP; the small size of the SSTC team during the first half of the review period; and a lack of operational guidance on how to mainstream the use of SSTC in various thematic areas and across regions.

At the country level, the main drivers of WFP's expanded support for SSTC have been the conviction of country office staff members and leadership that SSTC constitutes “good” development work and their experience that SSTC is an effective tool for furthering WFP's objectives for country capacity strengthening, advocacy, partnerships and, in some contexts, resource mobilization.

The main external factor influencing the evolution of WFP support for SSTC has been strong government demand for South–South cooperation, from both “provider” and the “recipient” perspectives.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Assessment

The evaluation findings are largely positive with regard to the quality of the SSTC policy, the results of its implementation and WFP's management of internal and external factors influencing support for SSTC during the review period of 2015–2020.

Since 2015 WFP has broadened and systematized its SSTC engagement, and it is currently among the UN entities that have made the most progress towards SSTC mainstreaming. The process of institutionalizing SSTC is ongoing, however, and SSTC is not yet fully mainstreamed across WFP units and thematic areas

WFP's comparative advantage in supporting SSTC lies in its extensive field presence and networks and its thematic experience in relation to food security, logistics and supply chains. Its centres of excellence also provide an additional comparative advantage in promoting and supporting SSTC through dedicated hubs.

Increasing WFP engagement in SSTC has been supported by, and has the potential to contribute to, WFP's mandate, which spans both saving lives and changing lives. Within WFP, SSTC has until now been largely discussed as a modality for country capacity strengthening. The evaluation findings indicate, however, that SSTC also plays an important role in supporting host governments' partnership objectives, especially for countries that act predominantly as SSTC providers

Recommendations

The evaluation makes 6 recommendations aiming at encouraging WFP to continue to expand the positive changes in its SSTC agenda. They are presented in two groups: strategic recommendations with a focus on setting the overall direction of WFP support for SSTC (1, 2); and operational recommendations focusing on operationalizing WFP's overall vision for SSTC (3,4,5,6).

Sub-recommendations provide further detail in the evaluation report regarding how each recommendation can be implemented.

Recommendation 1

WFP should revise the SSTC policy based on an agreed upon and widely shared corporate vision.

Recommendation 2

WFP should ensure that SSTC considerations continue to be reflected in second-generation CSPs and any relevant new corporate frameworks and policies.

Recommendation 3

WFP should further strengthen its approach to generating evidence and fostering learning from WFP-supported SSTC.

Recommendation 4

WFP should support interested divisions in developing and disseminating strategic and operational guidance for programme staff on how to integrate SSTC into their work in line with the new SSTC policy.

Recommendation 5

WFP should continue to invest in and expand efforts to strengthen staff capacity for SSTC at the headquarters, regional bureau, centre of excellence and country office levels.

Recommendation 6

WFP should continue to contribute to the system wide SSTC engagement in United Nations development system reform, led by the United Nations Office for South–South Cooperation, including by leveraging new partnerships with other United Nations entities and strengthening ongoing collaboration with the other Rome-based agencies in this field.