



WFP EVALUATION



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Evaluation of the WFP South-South and Triangular Cooperation Policy

Centralized Evaluation Report – Volume I

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Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION AND EVALUATION FEATURES

1. Approved in 2015, the WFP South–South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) policy is now in its sixth year of implementation and its inclusion in the Office of Evaluation work plan for the period 2019–2021 was therefore timely. The evaluation of the policy is also relevant against the backdrop of rising country demands for WFP engagement in SSTC, the new WFP strategic plan for 2022–2026 and evolving global, regional and country contexts.

2. The three main evaluation questions for this policy evaluation were:

- How good is the policy?
- What were the results of the policy?
- Why has the policy produced the results that have been observed?

3. The evaluation covers the period 2015–2020. Between March 2020 and February 2021,¹ the evaluation team collected data at the global, regional and country levels through the following lines of inquiry:

- retrospective construction of the theory of change underlying the policy;
- document and literature review;
- remotely conducted field missions to country offices in Benin, Burundi, the Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, India and Sri Lanka;
- desk reviews “plus”, combining document review and a limited number of interviews, at country offices in Bangladesh, the Dominican Republic, Kenya, Malawi and Zimbabwe;
- key informant interviews with WFP staff based in Rome, in the centres of excellence in Brazil, China and Côte d’Ivoire and with global and regional SSTC experts;
- review of comparable organizations: the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF); and
- case studies covering four thematic focus areas: social protection and safety nets, including school feeding; smallholder support and market access; nutrition; and emergency preparedness and response.

4. 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 that have been making use of SSTC as a programming modality, 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.

5. Limitations for the evaluation included a lack of comprehensive data on WFP-supported SSTC beyond the activity level and in relation to gender equality, equity and inclusion; and limited data on financial resources allocated to or expended on SSTC work at the corporate, regional and country levels. Due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the evaluation was conducted entirely remotely, which limited access to target programme recipients in situations where SSTC had been brokered. As a

¹ Documents and reports reviewed for the evaluation were received until June 2021 to ensure the greatest possible accuracy and completeness.

mitigation strategy, a larger sample of countries than originally envisaged was used, allowing for extensive stakeholder consultations.

TERMINOLOGY

6. In accordance with current United Nations system definitions, the evaluation understands *South-South cooperation* to refer to a broad framework of collaboration among countries of the South in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains. *Triangular cooperation* refers to traditional donor countries and multilateral organizations facilitating South-South exchange through various types of support, including funding, training, management and technological systems. To facilitate readability, the evaluation consistently refers to *South-South and triangular cooperation*.

7. The evaluation uses the terms *SSTC provider* and *SSTC recipient* (country) as shorthand expressions to indicate the predominant relationships between countries engaged in SSTC. The terms are used with the caveat that they are an oversimplification of complex webs of SSTC interactions.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

8. Relevant changes beyond WFP during the review period (2015–2020) included the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in 2015; the 2016 updating of the 2009 framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation (SSC/19/3); the second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, known as BAPA+40, held in Buenos Aires in 2019, which resulted in more than 160 member states renewing their commitment to SSTC; and completion of the first United Nations system-wide strategy on SSTC for sustainable development, in 2021. Since late 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has constituted a global challenge to continued progress towards the SDGs.

9. Developments at WFP during the review period included the adoption of multi-year country strategic plans (CSPs) as the frameworks for planning, budgeting and implementation. CSPs are informed by national zero hunger strategic reviews carried out under the leadership of governments and their partners to identify priority actions needed to achieve SDG 2, including in relation to upstream work such as country capacity strengthening. This is aligned with the ongoing shift of WFP from being primarily an implementer to also acting as an enabler working across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, as is captured in the organization’s dual focus on both “saving lives” and “changing lives”.

10. Changes in WFP’s internal set-up for SSTC during the period included the creation of new centres of excellence in China (2016) and Côte d’Ivoire (2019) in addition to the one in Brazil, which had been established in 2011; the launch in 2019 of SSTC field pilot initiatives in Ecuador, Kenya, the Congo and Sri Lanka; and the establishment of a WFP COVID-19 SSTC “Opportunity Fund” (2020). Until 2018, all the progress on global SSTC advocacy, guidance and country support was made by a single staff member (SSTC focal point) in the WFP Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division, individual senior managers advocating SSTC and individual focal points in some WFP regional bureaux (e.g., the Regional Bureau for Latin American and the Caribbean), with the support of WFP’s existing centres of excellence. Then in 2018 the size of the headquarters SSTC team increased from that single employee to five full-time staff members and one additional member on temporary duty.

11. The SSTC policy provided a brief overview of how SSTC was already being addressed at WFP at the time the policy was developed. As shown in table 1, it named six priority activities for SSTC work and outlined eight guiding principles for WFP engagement in SSTC.

Table 1: South-south and triangular cooperation policy priority activities and principles

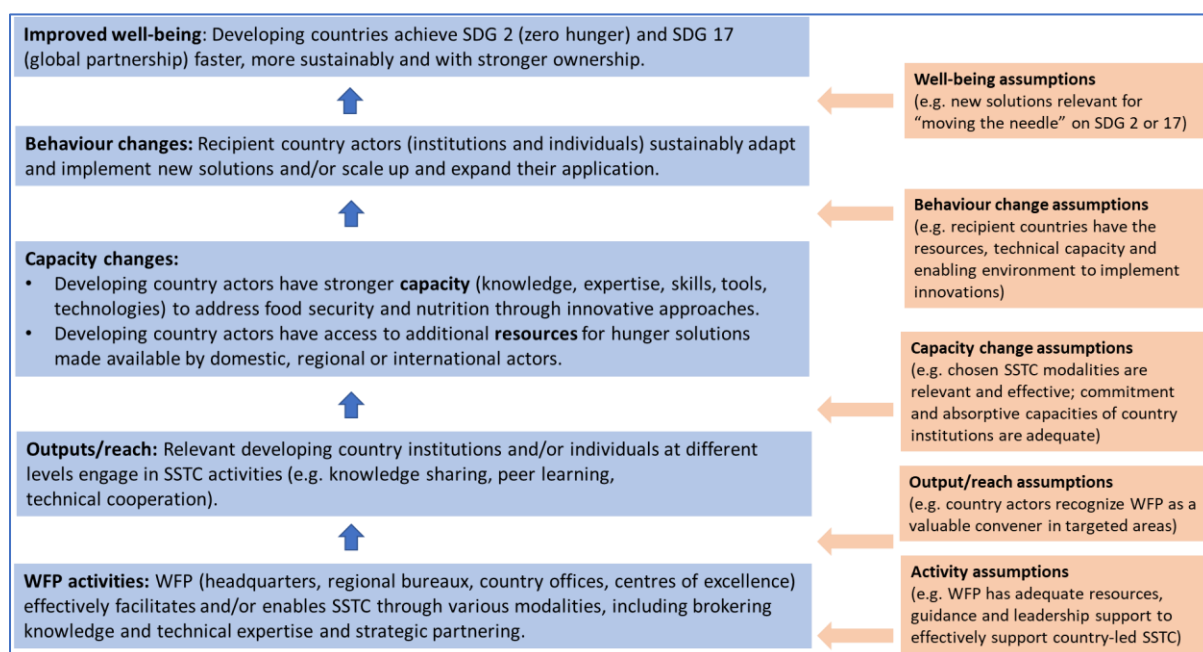
Priority activities	Principles for WFP engagement in SSTC
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Put in place an effective information and knowledge management system to facilitate knowledge sharing among countries. 2. Encourage innovation. 3. Establish appropriate and customized institutional mechanisms for sharing country-specific expertise and capturing country experience. 4. Support regional and subregional organizations to enhance cooperation in improving food security and nutrition. 5. Build the evidence base for zero hunger activities through enhanced links to local research institutions and non-governmental organizations in developing countries. 6. Integrate and align WFP's work with United Nations initiatives for promoting South-South and triangular cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the most vulnerable • Promote local ownership • Emphasize complementarity with traditional North-South cooperation • Ensure inclusiveness and balance • Facilitate learning and innovation • Strengthen country systems and capacities • Focus on adding value • Build on existing structures

12. Since approval of the policy, the headquarters SSTC team has led numerous activities to support policy implementation, including the development of guidance materials, an SSTC manual, an e-learning module, “how to” briefs, periodic newsletters and compilations of regional updates and good practice examples. The SSTC team also provides technical support to regional bureaux and country offices.

13. The SSTC policy did not provide information on the expected budget for policy implementation. In 2018, internal sources indicated that around USD 500,000 was spent to support SSTC capacity at headquarters and in regional bureaux. Since 2019, the Government of China has provided WFP with earmarked resources for its SSTC work (USD 1 million for 2019 and USD 1.5 million for each of 2020 and 2021), which WFP has used to fund SSTC country pilot projects. In 2020, WFP launched a new facility, the COVID-19 South-South Opportunity Fund, to enable rapid and flexible responses through SSTC in the context of the pandemic while promoting and mainstreaming SSTC in WFP programmes of work at the country office level. With a budget of USD 260,000, this fund has to date supported projects in eight countries, using the contributions from the Government of China (approximately 80 percent of the total budget) and internal seed funds.

14. The SSTC policy did not include a standalone results framework, logic model or theory of change; however, an overarching theory of change for WFP-supported SSTC was developed in 2020 by the headquarters SSTC team, with input from the Corporate Planning and Performance Division, based on an earlier draft created by the evaluation team. It identifies direct WFP responsibility for results at the level of SSTC activities and outputs (immediate effects). In the long term, WFP inputs are expected to contribute to more high-level results in the form of changes in the capacity of targeted actors (individuals and institutions) at the policy, technical and/or grassroots and community levels, subsequent changes in behaviours and practices and the ultimate impact of accelerating progress towards SDGs 2 and 17. Figure 1 shows a simplified version of the theory of change.

Figure 1: Simplified theory of change for WFP-facilitated South–South and triangular cooperation work



Source: Evaluation team, with input from the WFP headquarters SSTC team and the Corporate Planning and Performance Division.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Quality of the policy

15. 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’ interest in and 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. In 2021, the main SSTC principles in the policy remain relevant. The policy is outdated, however, against the backdrop of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs; WFP’s increased focus on working across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus; changes in WFP’s organizational set-up for SSTC, including the creation of new centres of excellence; and the new WFP strategic plan for 2022-2026.

16. The WFP SSTC policy is comparable in content and quality to the SSTC strategies or equivalents formulated by FAO, IFAD and UNICEF. Like the WFP policy, the SSTC strategies of FAO and IFAD are linked to their agencies’ corporate plans and priorities. They embed SSTC strategies in ongoing institutional reform processes and existing partnerships with emerging economy and middle-income countries. The strategies of both FAO and IFAD offer substantial plans for SSTC mainstreaming, funding and reporting on SSTC. In contrast, UNICEF’s descriptive approach offers no such details. The absence of clearly defined results and reflection on gender equality is a gap in the policies and strategies of WFP and the three other organizations.

17. Furthermore, WFP’s SSTC policy only partly meets its current policy quality criteria (see table 2). Acknowledging that SSTC was still largely nascent at WFP at the time of its development, the policy deliberately refrained from formulating specific results to which WFP-brokered SSTC would contribute, with the intent of allowing regional bureaux, country offices and centres of excellence to experiment with SSTC modalities. The policy also provided little clarity on what its implementation would require from internal and external stakeholders and on related financial resources and accountabilities. Moreover, it did not explicitly address gender, disability or other equity or inclusion considerations.

Table 2: Assessment of the quality of the South-south and triangular cooperation policy against current WFP policy quality criteria

Policy quality criterion	Does the SSTC policy meet the criterion?
1. Existence of a context analysis to ensure timeliness and wider relevance	Meets
2. Clear and consistent use of terminology	Meets
3. Policy appropriately defines its scope and priorities	Partly meets
4. Policy develops a vision and a theory of change	Partly meets
5. Policy development included internal consultations	Meets
6. Policy provides guidance on timeliness, institutional arrangements and accountabilities for its implementation (inclusion of an action or implementation plan)	Does not meet
7. Policy identifies the financial and human resources required for its implementation	Does not meet
8. Presence of a robust results framework	Does not meet
9. Existence/quality of a monitoring and reporting framework and systems for the policy	Partly meets
10. Policy based on reliable evidence	Partly meets
11. External coherence	Partly meets
12. Internal and strategic coherence	Partly meets
13. Incorporation of gender consideration into the design of the policy	Does not meet

Source: Evaluation team, drawing on “Top 10 Lessons for Policy Quality in WFP” and “Synthesis of evidence and lessons from WFP’s policy evaluations (2011–2019)”.

RESULTS OF THE POLICY

Institutionalizing South-South and triangular cooperation at WFP

18. 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. As of 2011, WFP engagement in SSTC was spearheaded by the centre of excellence in Brazil, initially focusing on home-grown school meals. WFP support for SSTC has since expanded in terms of thematic areas and the number and types of WFP thematic units and actors involved. *The* share of country offices reporting engagement in SSTC increased from 48 percent in 2014 to 85 percent in 2019, and all CSPs and interim CSPs approved in 2019 mentioned SSTC among their envisaged modalities of work. An expansion of WFP engagement in SSTC was further signalled by the establishment of the two new centres of excellence in China (2016) and Côte d’Ivoire (2019) and by the centre of excellence in Brazil expanding its SSTC work beyond school feeding to encompass other dimensions of social protection, nutrition and smallholder farmer support. Through the SSTC team at headquarters, WFP also deepened its participation in and contributions to the United Nations-wide SSTC policy dialogue.

19. WFP has further systematized its support for SSTC. The headquarters-based SSTC team has worked to create a shared understanding within WFP of the “what” and “how” of SSTC. Efforts have included developing SSTC guidance and compiling regular reports on WFP-facilitated SSTC, developing a prototype 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. In addition, the SSTC team developed and piloted a methodology for regional SSTC mapping and country-level South-South reviews to help

regional bureaux and country offices systematically capture SSTC opportunities and select related short- to mid-term priorities. This contributed to, for example, the preparation by the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean of a targeted step-by-step guide to mainstreaming SSTC in social protection programmes in the region. Over the past two to three years, several country offices have made efforts to engage in and support SSTC more deliberately and systematically than before. This was driven by increased host government demand for SSTC and the realization that earlier SSTC initiatives had sometimes been driven by an interest in learning about a new issue but lacked clearly spelled out follow-up actions.

20. While the headquarters SSTC team engaged with various actors at WFP throughout the review period, efforts to engage the entire organization with regard to SSTC truly gained momentum in 2019, when the Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division initiated the first organization-wide internal SSTC meeting in Rome, with participation at the technical staff, headquarters and regional and country director levels. One outcome of the meeting was the establishment of a corporate SSTC task force that brings together various units at headquarters, the regional bureaux and the centres of excellence and constitutes a promising milestone in the process of institutionalizing SSTC at WFP.

21. *The extent to which thematic units at headquarters have actively furthered the use of SSTC in their respective areas varies. Among the WFP entities working on SSTC, those covering nutrition and climate and disaster risk reduction have advanced the most. The Nutrition Division has developed a strategy for scaling up SSTC in nutrition and prepared and disseminated detailed thematic guidance on this. The Climate and Disaster Risk Reduction Programmes Unit has developed a checklist for SSTC cooperation expertise for climate change adaptation to accompany its capacity development strategy and workplan, although the roll-out of the checklist among field-based officers has been hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Country-level results of WFP-supported South–South and triangular cooperation

22. The use of SSTC has created the potential for WFP to increase its reach beyond those directly benefiting from WFP-led food assistance or cash-based transfers by facilitating the use of knowledge, technology and financial resources existing in low- and middle-income countries to help other such countries. Across thematic areas and regions, WFP-brokered SSTC has contributed to changes in country capacity at the policy level, the institutional level and, to a lesser degree, the community level, as follows:

- 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. Positive effects of SSTC at the policy level were demonstrated most frequently in the thematic areas of social protection, including in relation to the development of school feeding policies, programmes and action plans, such as in Bangladesh, Benin, Burundi, Kenya, Libya, Malawi and Zimbabwe; and nutrition, especially in relation to supporting “recipient” country governments in the development of policies or action plans regarding rice fortification, such as in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.
- At the institutional level, it is likely that WFP-supported SSTC has contributed to strengthening the technical capability (knowledge, awareness, skills) of relevant actors within and outside of government institutions across various thematic areas and provided them with access to innovative technologies, resources and professional networks. These changes have increased the likelihood of countries successfully translating policy commitment into practice by adopting, implementing and sustaining solutions gained through exchanges with other countries. For instance:
 - In the area of social protection there are many documented examples of SSTC contributions to the strengthening of institutional and technical country capacity, almost exclusively in relation to (home-grown) school feeding programmes, often through facilitation by the Brazil centre of excellence. In the sample of countries reviewed for this evaluation, such was the case in Bangladesh, Benin, Burundi, Kenya, Libya, Malawi and Zimbabwe, with special emphasis on linking school feeding programmes to local markets. At the regional level, the support provided by the

Brazil centre of excellence to the African Union led to the creation of the African Union's school feeding cluster.

- Regarding nutrition, WFP-supported SSTC activities in, for example, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka, contributed to increasing the knowledge and awareness of technologies and approaches of technical staff in relevant ministries and in private sector partners in relation to, for example, preparatory processes for grain fortification.
 - In the area of smallholder support and market access, an SSTC pilot project allowed Kenya to receive technical and financial support from China for strengthening the capacity of local government officials to use, and to promote the use of, improved practices and more cost-efficient technologies for supply chain management, food processing and marketing.
 - In relation to emergency preparedness and response, WFP-supported SSTC contributed to strengthening partner countries' national disaster risk management capacity, including among civil protection/civil defence entities, emergency response centres and meteorological and hydrological offices and institutes. For instance, Haiti and the Dominican Republic adapted numerical weather prediction models from Cuba, and Haiti increased its capacity to evaluate disaster risks at the local level based on the Cuban experience, while Cuba learned operational standards for shock-responsive social protection from the Dominican Republic.
- At the community level, WFP-facilitated SSTC has helped increase awareness of new approaches and technologies and assisted stakeholders with their initial implementation. Direct contributions of SSTC emerged primarily in strengthening smallholder farmer resilience and access to markets. All projects under the first wave of the China-funded SSTC pilots included elements of strengthening the capacity of smallholder farmers. For example:
- In the Congo, the China and Côte d'Ivoire centres of excellence and the WFP country offices for the two countries facilitated exchanges with experts from Côte d'Ivoire and Benin on technology and skill transfer for cassava transformation.
 - In Kenya, smallholder farmer leaders learned about China's experience using cost-effective technologies and practices for fresh food and grain preservation, storage and milling. Participants were expected to act as multipliers to raise awareness among their peers.

23. WFP-supported SSTC has also helped countries obtain additional financial resources. This includes directly mobilizing resources (for example, through SSTC provider countries such as Brazil and China offering comprehensive capacity strengthening packages, including financial resources for implementing pilot projects); and indirectly mobilizing both national and external donor resources by helping to strengthen advocacy, programmes and systems, which contributed to scaled up and more effective use of funding. Especially for SSTC provider countries, WFP-facilitated SSTC has also provided an opportunity to strengthen strategic partnerships with recipient country governments. *As an unplanned positive result, WFP support for SSTC has also contributed to increasing recognition among external stakeholders of the organization's dual mandate spanning both development and humanitarian action.* Furthermore, SSTC has sometimes helped deepen existing collaboration between WFP and other United Nations agencies, in particular the other Rome-based agencies.

24. It is difficult to verify whether and to what extent SSTC has contributed to results at the outcome and impact levels. This is due to the fact that SSTC is only one of several interlinked modalities of work used by WFP. Nevertheless, plausible SSTC contributions to such high-level results, in terms of sustainable changes in national practices or measurable progress towards achieving SDGs 2 and 17, have been demonstrated in home-grown school feeding programmes. The thematic case studies compiled for this evaluation indicate that WFP-supported SSTC work in other thematic areas such as nutrition and smallholder farmer support also has the potential to contribute to outcome- and impact-level results.

25. WFP-supported SSTC has varied in the extent to which it incorporates gender equality, equity and inclusion considerations. Gender- and equity-related objectives were consistently reflected in CSPs to which SSTC aimed to contribute. There is limited information, however, on the extent to which individual SSTC exchange activities or results reflected commitments to, or contributed to progress towards, increased gender equality, equity and inclusion. In the 12 countries reviewed, the evaluation noted only one WFP-facilitated SSTC initiative with such a focus: an exchange between Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras and Peru to support the development of Ecuador's new national policy for rural women, which featured women not only as beneficiaries but also as providers of knowledge.

EXPLANATORY FACTORS FOR THE RESULTS ACHIEVED

26. 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, including the team's work to develop SSTC guidance materials and provide technical assistance to country and regional offices; 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. At the country level, the SSTC team at headquarters has worked with country offices on integrating SSTC considerations into new CSPs. At the corporate level the formation of the global SSTC task force in 2019 created strong potential for further strengthening WFP internal collaboration and organizational capacity for supporting SSTC.

27. Internal factors that negatively affected policy implementation 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.

28. Since 2015, WFP has improved its work on monitoring, reporting and disseminating internal knowledge on SSTC. In 2018, WFP integrated an SSTC-specific indicator in its corporate results framework focusing on the number of country offices benefiting from SSTC. Reporting against this indicator has been fragmented and, while it has provided insights into how SSTC gained in visibility within WFP, has not generated any insight into the results of WFP-facilitated SSTC. In 2020, an additional three SSTC-related output indicators for institutional capacity strengthening were included in the revised indicator compendium for the corporate results framework. At the time of the evaluation, reported data relevant to these indicators was not yet available. The headquarters SSTC team has strengthened internal knowledge management for SSTC through regular newsletters and reports that provide narrative examples of WFP-supported SSTC. The three centres of excellence have their own knowledge repositories and databases for capturing good practices and promoting innovative solutions. WFP has also developed several methodologies and tools for strengthening SSTC-related knowledge management for matching host government demands for South–South exchange with offers of relevant country expertise, including through an internal South–South knowledge matching platform developed by the Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division. Roll-out of these tools is ongoing and, at the time of the evaluation, WFP employees still often relied more on their own professional and personal networks for identifying suitable “matches”. Overall, WFP still lacks a system for systematically capturing, analysing and learning from evidence of its support for SSTC beyond individual activities and outputs.

29. WFP strongly relies on extrabudgetary resources to fund its SSTC work. The absence of comprehensive data and clearly articulated organizational objectives and targets makes it impossible to assess the extent to which the resources available for SSTC at WFP were adequate. Nevertheless, available data indicate that the increase in dedicated financial resources for SSTC, primarily through extrabudgetary contributions from the Government of China, has allowed the SSTC team at headquarters and some WFP country offices to broaden and deepen their work on SSTC. At the same time, WFP budget allocations to SSTC have remained minimal and below the 0.5 percent of its total programme support and administrative

budget recommended by the Joint Inspection Unit in a 2011 report.² WFP's almost exclusive reliance on extrabudgetary financing runs the risk of narrowing its ability to support SSTC in all countries and thematic areas regardless of donor priorities or earmarking.

30. 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. In comparison, the SSTC policy, which is not well known among WFP staff, did not have a significant influence on country office use of SSTC. Only 27 percent of the WFP employees consulted (30 out of 111) stated that they were familiar with the policy, while 18 percent had never heard of it. The remaining 55 percent knew of the policy but were not familiar with its content, either because they had not read it or because they had read it long ago. This is, however, not unusual for cross-cutting and older policies at WFP.

31. The main external factor influencing the evolution of WFP support for SSTC has been strong host government demand for South-South cooperation, both from the "provider" and the "recipient" perspectives. For many governments, SSTC is a preferred way of learning as it focuses on solutions that are more likely to be relevant and applicable than those developed in the global North and because it has both practical and symbolic value related to self-determination and solidarity.

32. WFP's comparative advantage in relation to SSTC derives from its deep field presence and extensive networks, including at the community level. The existing network of centres of excellence provides WFP with an additional comparative advantage in terms of visibly promoting and supporting SSTC. Except for its support for school feeding, WFP's engagement in development work is still less known than its vast experience and strong global reputation as a humanitarian organization. This is a weakness because it may limit the extent to which host governments perceive WFP as a partner of choice in relation to brokering SSTC, but it is also a strength because it has contributed to perceptions of WFP as being more flexible in its support for SSTC than some other United Nations agencies.

33. Global events since 2015 have resulted in an environment that is currently more conducive to WFP's support for SSTC than at the time of policy approval. Commitments to SSTC are enshrined in, among other things, the SDGs and BAPA+40, and the ongoing process of United Nations reform reinforces demands on United Nations agencies to strengthen their support for country-driven capacity strengthening and cross-country cooperation.

CONCLUSIONS

34. Overall, 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.

35. The WFP SSTC policy was adequate at the time of its development, when the organization was only beginning to support SSTC more widely. In 2021 the normative principles outlined in the policy continue to be relevant but the policy is partly outdated in relation to changes in WFP's external and internal circumstances and increased experience with SSTC. Furthermore, the policy only partially meets WFP's current policy quality standards.

36. Since 2015 WFP has broadened and systematized its SSTC engagement, and it is currently among the United Nations-system 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. The SSTC policy has played a limited role in encouraging country offices to engage in or expand their work on SSTC. Instead, the main drivers for country office engagement have been increasing host government demand for SSTC, paired with advocacy efforts at headquarters, regional bureaux, country offices and centres of excellence and targeted initiatives that have demonstrated the value of WFP-facilitated South-South exchanges.

² Joint Inspection Unit. 2011. [South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the United Nations System. JIU/REP/2011/3.](#)

37. WFP-supported SSTC has contributed to improvements in country capacity at the policy, institutional and community levels and, in some cases, aided countries in mobilizing resources from national and international sources. WFP engagement in SSTC has also contributed to strengthening regional and global partnerships. WFP has established itself as a respected broker of SSTC in relation to school feeding and, increasingly, in selected aspects of nutrition, including nutritious school meals and rice fortification. In the areas of smallholder farmer support and market access and in relation to emergency preparedness and response, WFP is an increasingly active supporter of SSTC, but it has not yet established clear niches or areas of focus in those areas.

38. 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 provide WFP with an additional comparative advantage in promoting and supporting SSTC through dedicated hubs.

39. 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. Indeed, by partly overlapping with both dimensions, SSTC has the potential to serve as a bridge between country capacity strengthening and partnerships. WFP has not yet clearly defined the relationship between SSTC, country capacity strengthening and partnerships, however, which makes it more difficult for WFP staff at all levels to plan, budget for and report on SSTC-related work.

40. Globally, there is increasing demand for and appreciation of SSTC from developing country governments, especially in countries with emerging economies and middle-income countries, many of which declare SSTC to be their preferred approach to country capacity strengthening and networking. In 2021, within the United Nations and around the world, South-South and triangular cooperation is viewed more prominently and in a very positive light as having a strong rationale. As a result, there is much more expectation that United Nations entities will support it than was previously the case. This is reflected, for example, in the ongoing United Nations development system reform, which focuses on strengthening country ownership, as well as in efforts led by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation to mainstream SSTC within the United Nations development system.

41. Looking ahead, if under its new strategic plan for 2022–2026 WFP wants to position itself as a player within revitalized United Nations country teams and as a valued partner for countries with emerging economies and middle-income countries, there is a need for WFP to explicitly embrace SSTC as a strategic opportunity to enhance its role as a facilitator and enabler in the context of its changing lives agenda; articulate where it wants to go as an organization in terms of mainstreaming SSTC across thematic areas; continue to clarify the distribution of roles and responsibilities among WFP units for using, monitoring, reporting on and providing technical backstopping for SSTC; further strengthen its existing systems for capturing and learning from WFP support for SSTC; identify financial and human resource needs for the SSTC-related work of WFP at the global, regional and country levels and develop a plan for meeting them through a combination of internal and external sources; and continue to work with the other Rome-based agencies and other United Nations agencies towards a more integrated United-Nations system approach to supporting SSTC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

42. The six recommendations below are aimed at encouraging WFP to continue to expand the positive changes in its SSTC agenda as set in motion before and during the review period since 2015. They are presented in two groups: strategic recommendations with a focus on setting the overall direction of WFP support for SSTC; and operational recommendations related to selected aspects of operationalizing WFP's overall vision for SSTC.

Recommendation	Responsibility and deadline
Strategic recommendations	
<p><i>Priority: High</i></p> <p>Recommendation 1: WFP should revise the SSTC policy based on an agreed upon and widely shared corporate vision.</p>	<p><u>Overall lead:</u> Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division (PRO) SSTC team.</p> <p><u>Deadline:</u> EB.1/2023 (February 2023)</p>
<p>1.1 To inform policy development, WFP should build on the ongoing work of the SSTC task force to clearly articulate its vision and comparative advantage for engaging in and supporting South-South cooperation, including in relation to the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.</p> <p>Related efforts should reflect and address the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> articulate how SSTC has the potential to further WFP's work in relation to country capacity strengthening, partnerships and other policy and programme and cross-cutting areas; clarify and, as needed, prioritize any specific thematic or geographic areas of focus of WFP's support for SSTC in the short and mid-term; and reflect on how SSTC can be relevant in furthering gender equality and broader equity and inclusion objectives. 	<p><u>Lead:</u> PRO – specifically the PRO Director, including in his role as chair of the SSTC task force.</p> <p><u>Support:</u> SSTC task force members (including thematic units at headquarters, the regional bureaux and the centres of excellence); Gender Office; PRO – country capacity strengthening (CCS) team; Partnerships and Advocacy Department (PA), including Public Partnerships and Resourcing Division (PPR) and Strategic Partnerships Division (STR); PRO – Programme Cycle Management Unit (PROM).</p> <p><u>Deadline:</u> June 2022</p>
<p>1.2 WFP should revise the SSTC policy based on the standards for policy quality in WFP.</p> <p>The revised policy should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> articulate specific objectives and targets for what effective mainstreaming of SSTC into WFP's work will look like in the short, mid and long term; include an overarching theory of change that outlines the results that WFP support for SSTC is expected to contribute to at the global, regional and country levels and across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, reflecting both “recipient” and “provider” countries; describe the envisaged internal division of SSTC-related labour and assign clear roles and responsibilities to different units and teams at different levels within WFP, including for SSTC resource mobilization and for knowledge management; and make a case for identifying and sustaining adequate resourcing of SSTC work at the global, regional, centre of excellence and country levels. 	<p><u>Lead:</u> PRO – specifically the PRO Director, including in his role as chair of the WFP SSTC task force.</p> <p><u>Support:</u> WFP SSTC task force members; Gender Office; CCS team; PA, PPR and STR; PROM, Monitoring and Evaluation Liaison Unit.</p> <p><u>Deadline:</u> EB.1/2023 (February 2023)</p>

Recommendation	Responsibility and deadline
<p>1.3 WFP should develop a costed implementation plan to accompany the revised SSTC policy.</p> <p>Based on the vision (sub-recommendation 1.1) and revised policy (sub-recommendation 1.2), the implementation plan should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help operationalize WFP’s expanding SSTC work at the global, regional and country levels through a combination of financial instruments (in particular programme support and administrative funding) and mechanisms (such as a programme or trust fund); • identify resource requirements for policy implementation, including for full-time and part-time SSTC human resources at headquarters and regional bureaux, including but not limited to the headquarters SSTC team and the network of regional focal points; WFP staff capacity strengthening at various levels and across thematic areas; SSTC-related data collection, reporting, evaluation and knowledge management; and financial incentives for country offices to engage in SSTC and serve a wider range of countries across more thematic areas; • specify when, how and by whom progress in policy implementation and in mainstreaming SSTC within WFP will be monitored and reported; • define a set of shared quality standards for SSTC-related services provided by WFP units, including the centres of excellence; • review and confirm or adjust, as required, the membership, objectives and ways of working of the SSTC task force; and • formulate priorities and strategies for SSTC-related collaboration and coordination with other United Nations agencies, in particular the other Rome-based agencies. 	<p><u>Lead</u>: PRO – specifically the PRO Director, including in his role as chair of the WFP SSTC task force.</p> <p><u>Support</u>: SSTC task force members; PPR.</p> <p><u>Deadline</u>: EB.1/2023 (February 2023)</p>
<p><i>Priority: Medium</i></p> <p>Recommendation 2: WFP should ensure that SSTC considerations continue to be reflected in second-generation CSPs and any relevant new corporate frameworks and policies.</p> <p>At a minimum, whenever SSTC is reflected in CSPs they should be checked to ensure that there is broad alignment with the common country analyses and the United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks.</p> <p>Relevant guidance and a system for ensuring that those checks are regularly made should be in place by June 2023.</p>	<p><u>Lead</u>: PRO – specifically the PRO Director, including in his role as chair of the WFP SSTC task force.</p> <p><u>Support</u>: SSTC task force members and regional bureaux (programme and monitoring and evaluation units).</p> <p><u>Timing</u>: June 2023</p>

Operational recommendations	
Recommendation	Responsibility and deadline
<p><i>Priority: High</i></p> <p>Recommendation 3: WFP should further strengthen its approach to generating evidence and fostering learning from WFP-supported SSTC.</p>	<p><u>Overall lead</u>: PRO</p> <p><u>Support</u>: SSTC task force; Office of Evaluation; Corporate Planning and Performance Division (CPP); regional bureaux (programme and monitoring and evaluation units)</p> <p><u>Deadline</u>: November 2023</p>

<p>3.1 Ensure that approaches to generating evidence and fostering learning on SSTC draw from both qualitative and quantitative analysis and reporting.</p> <p>By November 2023, approaches and related guidance should be developed at the minimum in a pilot format to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that SSTC-specific indicators in WFP’s corporate results framework for 2022–2026 allow and are used for quantitative tracking of country office use of SSTC; and complement anecdotal reporting on SSTC with occasional studies that, using qualitative and quantitative data, explore SSTC value-added in specific geographic and thematic contexts. 	<p><u>Lead:</u> PRO</p> <p><u>Support:</u> SSTC task force; CPP; headquarters divisions that engage in SSTC; regional bureaux (programme and monitoring and evaluation units).</p> <p><u>Deadline:</u> November 2023</p>
<p>3.2 Consider introducing an SSTC marker at the project level (similar to the marker used by FAO) that would trigger shared responsibility of a thematic unit and either the SSTC team at headquarters or the regional SSTC focal point.</p>	<p><u>Lead:</u> PRO SSTC team</p> <p><u>Support:</u> SSTC task force; CPP; regional bureaux (programme and monitoring and evaluation units).</p> <p><u>Deadline:</u> November 2022</p>
<p>3.3 Update existing or develop new Office of Evaluation guidance on how SSTC perspectives can be integrated into centralized evaluations that address CCS or partnerships and into guidance on decentralized evaluations that include questions on CCS or partnership issues.</p>	<p><u>Lead:</u> Office of Evaluation</p> <p><u>Support:</u> PRO SSTC team; CPP; CCS team; PA.</p> <p><u>Deadline:</u> November 2022</p>

<p><i>Priority: Medium</i></p> <p>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.</p> <p>At a minimum, all new guidance should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> clarify why and how SSTC can support implementation of the WFP strategic plan for 2022–2026 and CSPs in a given thematic area; clarify what types of technical support programme officers in country offices and in regional bureaux can draw on in relation to SSTC; describe how SSTC engagement and related learning in any specific thematic area will be monitored and reported on, and by whom; and provide advice on how programme leads and programme officers can plan and budget for SSTC work, both within regular WFP budgets and with dedicated SSTC funding mechanisms. 	<p><u>Lead:</u> PRO</p> <p><u>Support:</u> SSTC task force; PA, including PPR and STR; CPP; headquarters divisions (as they decide to develop SSTC-specific guidance for the specific programme and policy areas they cover); regional bureaux (programme units).</p> <p><u>Deadline:</u> December 2023</p>
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Operational recommendations

Recommendation	Responsibility and deadline
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<p><i>Priority: Medium</i></p> <p>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.</p> <p>At a minimum, these efforts should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that at least basic SSTC-related responsibilities are incorporated into the terms of reference and job descriptions of WFP programme and partnership officers in regional bureaux and country offices to enable cross-fertilization and the effective mainstreaming of SSTC; • support thematic units and teams at headquarters, regional bureaux and country offices in exploring opportunities to integrate staff capacity development on SSTC into capacity development initiatives related to CCS and partnerships in order to facilitate links between these areas; and • review and strengthen communication and coordination mechanisms within and among WFP actors and units engaged in SSTC, including in relation to the collaboration between country offices, regional bureaux and centres of excellence. 	<p><u>Lead:</u> PRO</p> <p><u>Support:</u> SSTC task force members, especially in centres of excellence and regional bureaux.</p> <p><u>Deadline:</u> June 2022</p>
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<p><i>Priority: Medium</i></p> <p>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 (UNOSSC), including by leveraging new partnerships with other United Nations entities and strengthening ongoing collaboration with the other Rome-based agencies in this field, and to report on it annually starting in 2022.</p> <p>By November 2022 WFP should have identified and prioritized the relevant points for engagement with the global and UNOSSC-led agendas and ensure that this information is then regularly considered as part of the SSTC work planning process and reported on, as part of the Rome-based agencies annual report.</p>	<p><u>Lead:</u> PRO</p> <p><u>Support:</u> PRO Director and PRO SSTC team.</p> <p><u>Timing:</u> November 2022</p>
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1. Introduction

1.1. EVALUATION FEATURES

Evaluation rationale, scope and objectives

1. **Rationale:** The World Food Programme (WFP) Evaluation Policy (2016-2021)³ specifies that corporate policies should be evaluated within four to six years of implementation. Approved in 2015, the WFP Policy on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC)⁴ (the Policy) has been since included in the WFP Policy Compendium. It is now in its sixth year of implementation and its inclusion in the Office of Evaluation (OEV) work plan (2019-2021) is therefore timely. The evaluation is also relevant against the backdrop of rising country demands for WFP engagement in SSTC and evolving global, regional and country contexts. The Summary Evaluation Report is to be presented to the Executive Board (EB) in November 2021.
2. **Objectives and Scope:** As stated in the evaluation terms of reference (ToR) (see Annex I), the evaluation serves the dual objectives of accountability and learning. The evaluand is the 2015 South-South and Triangular Cooperation Policy. The summative evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability of the Policy and its implementation from 2015 to 2020.
3. **Intended users:** The primary intended internal stakeholders and users of the evaluation are the Programme – Humanitarian & Development Division (PRO), which comprises the headquarters SSTC team as focal point for this evaluation; various thematic units and divisions covering nutrition, school-based programmes, smallholder agriculture market support (SAMS), and climate and disaster risk reduction that have been making use of SSTC as a programming modality; Public Partnerships and Resourcing Division (PPR), Strategic Partnerships Division (STR), Corporate Planning and Performance Division (CPP), the Centres of Excellence (CoE) in Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire and China and emerging/planned outlets such as in Egypt and Turkey. Additional key internal stakeholders are regional bureaux (RB), country offices (CO) and sub-offices, and WFP senior leadership. Key external users include host governments and local authorities and civil society organizations, private sector representatives and local community organizations/leaders in their roles as contributors or receivers of WFP-brokered SSTC exchanges and initiatives, and representatives from regional organizations and international financial institutions in their roles as (potential) facilitators or funders of SSTC.

1.2. CONTEXT

Terminology

4. Throughout this report, we use the following terms:
 - **SSTC “provider”** and **SSTC “recipient” (country)** are used as shorthand expressions, in keeping with the language used in the evaluation terms of reference, to indicate the predominant stance within SSTC relations among countries in the context of a specific SSTC initiative. The terms are used with the caveat, however, that they are an over-simplification of more complex webs of SSTC interactions between or among two or more countries.
 - **Dual partner(s)** refers to cases where involved partners acted as both provider and recipient of knowledge within the context of one SSTC initiative.
5. The evaluation team acknowledges the difference between South-South cooperation (SSC) and triangular cooperation as shown in the United Nations definitions below, which are also used by WFP. To facilitate readability, however, the report consistently uses the acronym SSTC, rather than distinguishing on a case-by-case basis between SSC and SSTC.

³ WFP. 2015. *Evaluation Policy (2016-2021)*. (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-A/Rev.1). 5 November 2015.

⁴ WFP. 2015. *South-South and Triangular Cooperation Policy*. 27 April 2015.

- **South-South cooperation:** A broad framework of collaboration among countries of the South in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, and technical domains. Involving two or more developing countries,⁵ it can take place on a bilateral, regional, intra-regional or inter-regional basis. Developing countries share knowledge, skills, expertise and resources to meet their development goals through concerted efforts. Recent developments in South-South cooperation have taken the form of increased volume of South-South trade, South-South flows of foreign direct investment, movements towards regional integration, technology transfers, sharing of solutions and experts, and other forms of exchanges.⁶
- **Triangular cooperation:** Collaboration in which traditional donor countries and multilateral organizations facilitate South-South initiatives through the provision of funding, training, management and technological systems and other forms of support.⁷

External context

6. Within the context of the United Nations system, the following events and changes since 2015 influenced WFP work and positioning in relation to SSTC and have implications for the continued relevance of the WFP Policy on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (see Section 2.1):

- The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) on financing for development, both in 2015
Several United Nations agencies besides WFP developed strategic frameworks for their SSTC work in 2016, including the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and (albeit unofficially) the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- The update of a Framework of Operational Guidelines on United Nations Support to South-South and Triangular Cooperation (2016)
- The Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2016)
- The Second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, known as BAPA 40+ in Buenos Aires (2019), which resulted in a political declaration agreed by more than 160 Member States renewing their commitment to SSTC
- The development of a Joint Roadmap towards BAPA 40+ by the three Rome-based agencies (RBA) in 2017, and collaboration among the Rome-based agencies on SSTC-related monitoring and evaluation since 2019
- The launch of the South-South cooperation Galaxy (SSC Galaxy), a large-scale network platform to promote global sharing of southern countries' development experience, by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and its partners (2019)
- The development of the United Nations System-Wide Strategy on SSTC for Sustainable Development (2020-2024).

7. Since 2015, new or expanding challenges that countries face, such as negative effects deriving from climate change and acute challenges deriving from the COVID-19 pandemic, have contributed to a growing demand for South-South learning. In addition, the global context for SSTC has been characterized by an increasing number of emerging economies demonstrating a stronger interest and engagement in South-South (and, sometimes, triangular) cooperation. In some cases, for example, India and China, this has included countries making available new financial resources for funding SSTC opportunities, some of which

⁵ The term "developing country" is used in both the WFP SSTC Policy and the United Nations Framework but is, in 2021, widely considered outdated. Unless directly or indirectly quoting the SSTC Policy or other documents, in this report we therefore use the alternative term "low- and middle-income countries" or WFP "host country" instead.

⁶ United Nations Secretary General. 2016. Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and Triangular Cooperation. SSC/19/3, paragraph 10.

⁷ Ibid., paragraph 11. The term "traditional donor", while not explicitly defined in the Framework of United Nations operational guidelines on SSTC, commonly refers to members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD- DAC).

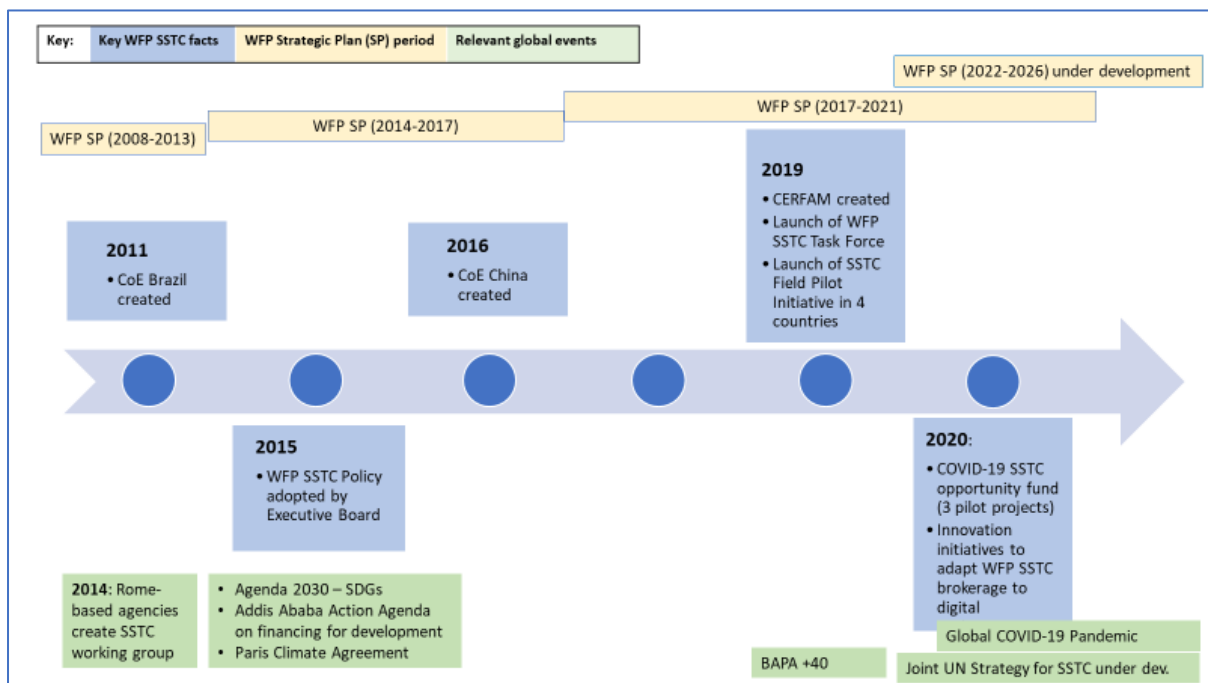
are accessible to, and have been tapped by, multilateral organizations, including WFP. The United Nation's BAPA 40+ declaration implies the existence of a global consensus of what SSTC is. In practice, the expansion of SSTC actors has contributed to a diversification of approaches to, and understandings of, South-South cooperation that are located along a continuum from, at one end, viewing SSTC as a means of self-interest free solidarity among countries to, at the other end, approaching SSTC as a means of furthering the provider country's economic and political agendas.⁸ WFP and other multilateral actors face the challenge of navigating these diverse SSTC philosophies and approaches when supporting partner countries.

WFP context

8. During the evaluation period, WFP underwent several internal reforms that were also relevant for its engagement in SSTC. The WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021) involved a shift from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) towards Sustainable Development Goals, with a focus on SDG 2 (end hunger) and SDG 17 (partnerships). At the country level, WFP introduced mandatory multi-annual country strategic plans (CSPs) as the framework for planning, budgeting and implementation, which placed increased emphasis on upstream work, including country capacity strengthening (CCS). Overall, the role of WFP shifted from implementer to enabler working across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

9. Figure 1 provides an overview of key SSTC-related events in the internal context of WFP that are relevant in the context of the SSTC Policy's development and implementation. The overview also includes the selected global milestones that were mentioned above.

Figure 1 South-South and triangular cooperation-related milestones in WFP



Source: Evaluation Team.

⁸ See, for example: Haug, Sebastian. 2021. Mainstreaming South-South and Triangular Cooperation. Work in Progress at the United Nations. German Development Institute. Bonn 2021.

1.3. THE SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION POLICY

10. The WFP South-South and Triangular Cooperation Policy was approved in April 2015, almost two years after the approval of the WFP Strategic Plan (2014-2017), which had highlighted the role of SSTC as a tool to strengthen local capacity especially in relation to social safety nets and school feeding. The Policy aimed to expand WFP engagement mechanisms with developing countries to facilitate progress and support country-led efforts towards addressing the Zero Hunger Challenge launched by the United Nations Secretary General in 2012 and meeting the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals under Agenda 2030.

11. The Policy provides a brief overview of SSTC in the WFP programme of work at the time of policy development, noting that WFP was already supporting SSTC in a wide range of programmatic areas including school meals, nutrition improvement, connecting smallholder farmers to markets, procurement, sustainable agriculture, social protection and safety nets, access to adequate food through markets, climate change services for resilience-building, and development of zero hunger strategies. It describes several examples of WFP-supported South-South cooperation, especially in the region covered by the regional bureau in Panama (RBP), including the work of the Centre of Excellence in Brazil as the only Centre of Excellence established at the time of policy development.

12. As shown in Table 1, the Policy named six priority types of activities that correspond with key modalities for SSTC work, and outlined eight guiding principles for WFP engagement in SSTC.

Table 1 South-South and Triangular Cooperation Policy priority activities, key modalities and principles

Priority type of activities for policy implementation and key modalities for SSTC work	Principles for WFP engagement in SSTC
<p><u>Priority activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put in place an effective information and knowledge management system to facilitate knowledge sharing among countries • Encourage innovation • Establish appropriate and customized institutional mechanisms for sharing country-specific expertise, and capturing country experience • Support regional and subregional organizations to enhance cooperation in improving food security and nutrition • Build the evidence base for zero hunger activities through enhanced links to local research institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in developing countries • Integrate and align WFP work with United Nations initiatives for promoting South-South and triangular cooperation <p><u>Key modalities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge-sharing • Technical cooperation • Policy support • Joint advocacy • In-kind support • Regional initiatives 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Focus on the most vulnerable. The main beneficiaries of WFP engagement in SSTC cooperation should be the most vulnerable people 8. Promote local ownership. WFP welcomes and supports South-South cooperation at the national, subnational and community levels, led by country demand and ownership at the national and local levels 9. Emphasize complementarity. South-South cooperation complements but does not substitute traditional North-South cooperation. Triangular cooperation combines the advantages of both approaches 10. Ensure inclusiveness and balance. South-South cooperation supported by WFP must be inclusive and based on equality. WFP recognizes that all countries – independent of their stage of development – have experiences to share 11. Facilitate learning and innovation. WFP supports countries in sharing innovative practices and designing solutions with other countries 12. Strengthen country systems and capacities. In facilitating SSTC, WFP focuses on local systems and institutions to promote the sustainability of food security programmes and local ownership 13. Focus on adding value. WFP engages in SSTC when it can add value through its global network, expertise, cost-effectiveness, and implementation capacity 14. Build on existing structures. As far as possible, WFP supports SSTC through existing programmes and structures at the country, regional and global levels

Source: WFP SSTC Policy.

13. Since 2015, the headquarters SSTC team has led a variety of activities for policy implementation (see Annex II for a list), including: the development of guidance materials and “how to” briefs, including an SSTC manual and a toolbox for country offices, regional bureaux and Centres of Excellence; an e-learning course on SSTC; SSTC regional updates, periodic newsletters and good practice examples targeting both SSTC specialists and Executive Board members amongst others; and creation of the online platform South-South Match.com to facilitate identifying and connecting SSTC supply and demand. The SSTC team also provided ongoing technical support to WFP regional bureaux and country offices.

14. The SSTC Policy did not provide information on the expected costs of policy implementation or how it would be resourced. Citing an internal source, the evaluation terms of reference mention an estimated figure of around USD 500,000 in 2018 for headquarters and regional bureau staff capacity dedicated to supporting SSTC. The evaluation did not obtain more recent information on these expenses. Additional resources that benefitted policy implementation were provided by the governments of Brazil, China and Cote d’Ivoire through their resourcing of the Centres of Excellence.⁹ Since 2019, the Government of China further provided WFP with dedicated resources for its SSTC work (USD 1 million for 2019 and USD 1.5 million for 2020), which WFP used to fund dedicated SSTC pilot projects at the country level. In 2020, WFP launched a separate COVID-19 SSTC Opportunity Fund that, to date, has supported SSTC projects in eight countries for a total of USD 260,000 that came out of the Government of China and internal WFP seed funds. In the region covered by the regional bureau in Panama, resources for SSTC initiatives were also provided by the International Development Agency of Chile. In 2020, WFP also identified its Emerging Donor Matching Fund (EDMF) as a financing mechanism to support South-South cooperation initiatives by matching in-kind contributions from “provider” countries with cash contributions for full cost recovery. As of February 2021, one country (the Republic of Congo) had accessed USD 51,623 through the EDMF.

15. The Policy did not include a stand-alone results framework, logic model or theory of change. Since 2018, it has been monitored through a SSTC-specific indicator in the revised WFP Corporate Results Framework (CRF) (2017-2021) that measures the “number of programmes benefitting from WFP-facilitated South-South and Triangular Cooperation”. In October 2020, the revised WFP indicator compendium for the corporate results framework introduced three additional output indicators for institutional capacity strengthening that addressed SSTC.¹⁰

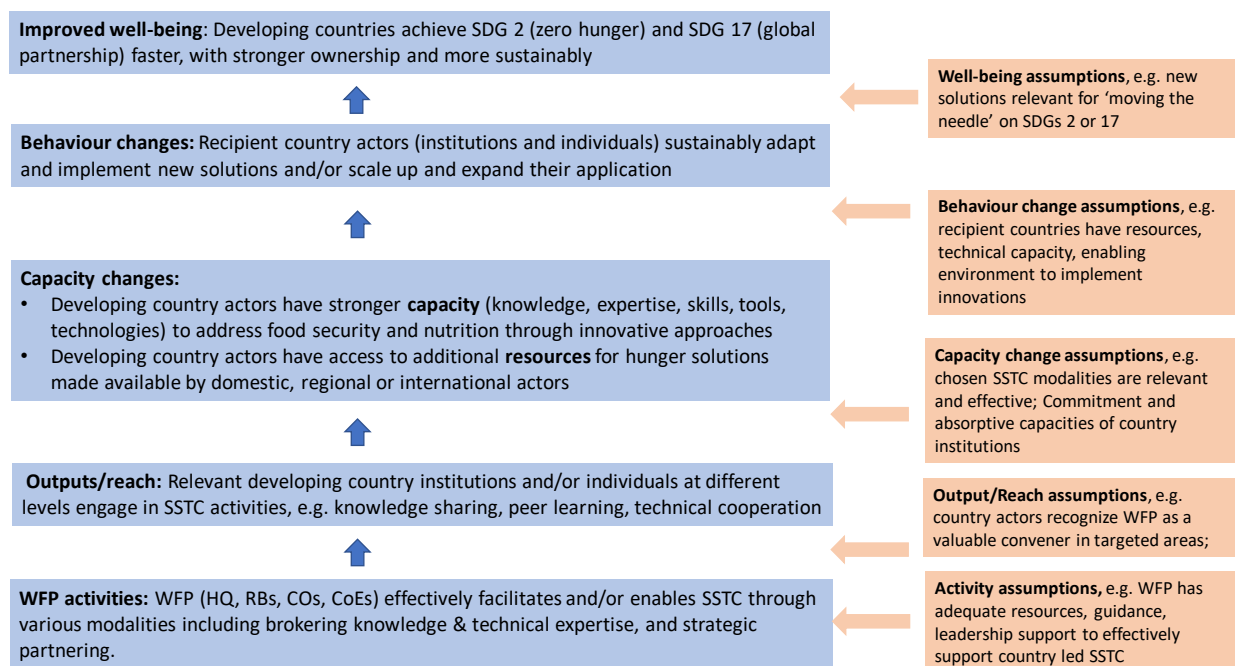
16. An overarching theory of change (ToC) for WFP SSTC work was developed in 2020 by the headquarters SSTC team with input from the Performance Management and Monitoring Division (RMP) based on an earlier draft created by the evaluation team. It conceptualizes WFP direct responsibility for results as being focused on SSTC activities and outputs (immediate effects). WFP inputs are envisaged to contribute to, but are not responsible for, higher level results in terms of changes in targeted actors’ and institutions’ capacity at policy, technical and/or grassroots/community levels, subsequent changes in behaviours/practices, and the ultimate impact of accelerating progress towards SDGs 2 and 17. Figure 2 provides a simplified overview of the initial draft theory of change that the evaluation team developed based on the SSTC Policy. See Annex III for the full theory of change as developed by the WFP headquarters SSTC team.

17. The theory of change emphasizes the envisaged function of SSTC as a means to bring about country-level change, especially in relation to national capacity for addressing food security and nutrition challenges. It also reflects potential benefits of SSTC on country-level resource mobilization. One aspect implied by, but not explicitly captured in this or the working version of the WFP theory of change, is the potential of SSTC to contribute to host country governments’ objectives not only in relation to national capacity strengthening but also in relation to establishing or deepening strategic partnerships with other governments/countries.

⁹ In 2018, the WFP SSTC estimated the costs of running the CoEs in Brazil and China at USD 1.5 million per year. The evaluation obtained no more recent data.

¹⁰ WFP (2020). 2017-2021 Programme Indicator Compendium. Revised Corporate Results Framework. October 2020 Update.

Figure 2 Simplified theory of change for WFP-facilitated South-South and triangular cooperation work



Source: Evaluation team based on the SSTC Policy.

18. Since 2015, WFP continued to acknowledge the relevance of SSTC. WFP Strategic Plan (2017-2021) noted SSTC as one of the mechanisms WFP would use to support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and strengthen host country capacities. Similarly, a context analysis conducted to inform WFP Strategic Plan (2022-2026) highlighted the role of SSTC, both in relation to the school feeding agenda and, more broadly, in the context of the growing WFP “enabling agenda” and the related increasing need for WFP to facilitated knowledge-based transfers.¹¹ In 2015, while several existing WFP policies mentioned SSTC as a relevant modality (see Section 2.1), no explicit links were established between SSTC and gender equality issues. The Gender Policy (2009) had included no reference to SSTC, and although the SSTC Policy and the subsequent Gender Policy (2015-2020) were developed in the same year, neither included reflections on the other.

1.4. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY, LIMITATIONS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Methodology

19. The evaluation was conducted between March 2020 and February 2021 by an independent team of four evaluators, including one SSTC expert, and two analysts. In addition, data collection during the remote field mission for Egypt was supported by an Arabic speaking consultant. The WFP Office of Evaluation prepared the terms of reference in consultation with key stakeholders, oversaw the evaluation’s design and quality assured its implementation and products. Annex IV shows the revised evaluation timeline.

20. A full methodology for the evaluation was set out in the inception report (October 2020) and is summarized in Annex V. All evaluations of WFP policies address three main evaluation questions (EQ), which also provide the structure of Section 2 of this report:

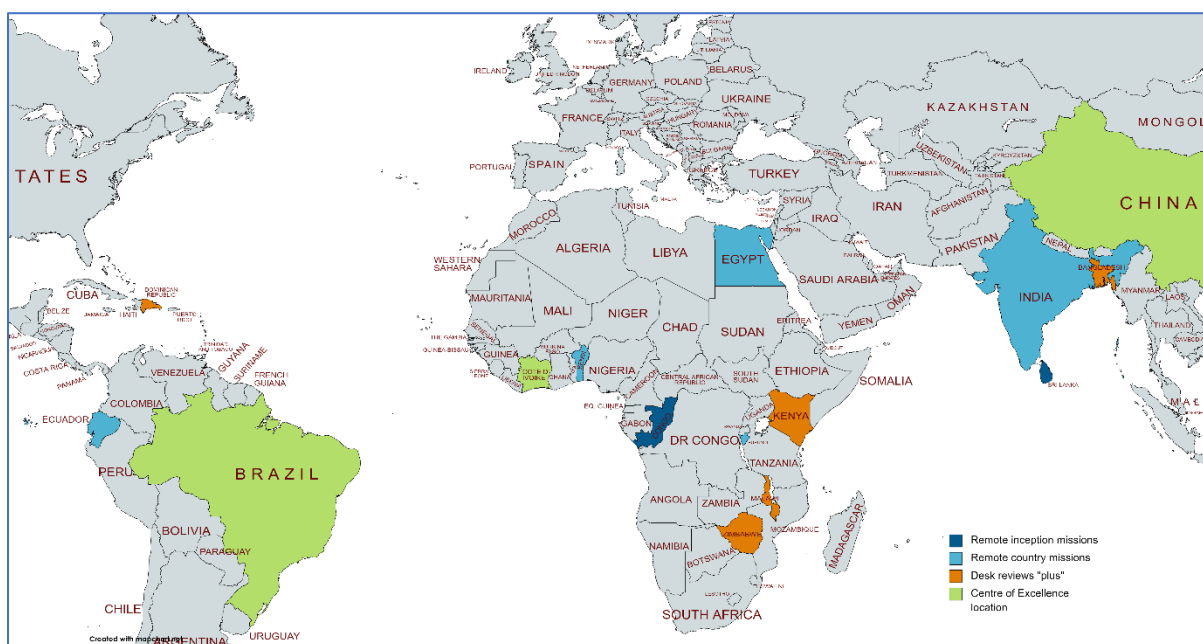
- EQ1: How good is the Policy?

¹¹ WFP (2020). Background Paper: Context Analysis to inform WFP Strategic Plan (2022-2026). WFP internal document.

- EQ2: What were the results of the Policy?
- EQ3: Why has the Policy produced the results that have been observed?

21. The main features of the evaluation methodology were: (i) retrospective construction of a theory of change underlying WFP work on SSTC drawing from the policy, in collaboration with the WFP SSTC unit and their teams at headquarters (see Annex III); (ii) a full evaluation matrix (Annex VI); (iii) extensive reviews of internal and external documents and relevant literature and datasets such as existing reporting against the SSTC indicator in the WFP corporate results framework; (iv) remote field missions to seven country offices¹² as well as desk reviews “plus” of another five country offices as shown in Figure 3 (see Annex VII for a schedule of field work);¹³ (v) key informant interviews with WFP headquarters staff based in Rome and in regional bureaux, the Centres of Excellence in Brazil, China and Côte d’Ivoire, and with global SSTC experts; (vi) a review of three comparator organizations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), using document review and interviews (see Annex VIII for the full comparator review); and (vii) compilation of mini-case studies on the four thematic focus areas of: social protection and safety nets, (including school feeding); smallholder support and market access; nutrition; and emergency preparedness and response, in order to help focus data collection and analysis. These case studies are included as Annex IX.

Figure 3 Countries covered by remote missions and desk reviews “plus”



Source: Evaluation team.

22. Stakeholder consultations were conducted remotely in the form of individual and, in some cases, pair or small group e-interviews using web-based platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Annex X has a list of the 172 stakeholders (79 women and 93 men) consulted during the course of the evaluation. Of the consulted stakeholders, 68 percent were WFP employees and, of these, 53 percent were from country offices. A total of 22 (13 percent) of the consulted stakeholders were host government representatives (17 men, 5 women), while another 31 consulted stakeholders (19 percent, 20 men and 11 women) represented other groups including academia and non-governmental organizations, as well as representatives of other

¹² Country offices in Benin, Burundi, Ecuador, Egypt, and India. In addition, remote missions to the Republic of Congo and Sri Lanka were conducted during the inception phase.

¹³ Country offices in Bangladesh, Kenya, Malawi, Dominican Republic and Zimbabwe. Desk reviews “plus” combined document review with a limited number of stakeholder interviews (usually 2-4 and, in one case, 6 per CO).

United Nations agencies at global or country levels. Interview protocols are shown in Annex XI. A bibliography is presented as Annex XII.

23. An updated version of the triangulation and evidence matrix included in the inception report is shown in Annex XIII. The evaluation was able to draw upon complementary lines of evidence for all three evaluation questions. Given the nature of the evaluation subject and availability of data, the evaluation primarily relied on qualitative information. A discussion on limitations is presented below and in the methodology in Annex V.

24. The evaluation used an adaptation of the outcome harvesting approach to test the validity of, and nuance the constructed overarching theory of change for, WFP SSTC work. Unlike many other evaluation approaches, outcome harvesting does not measure progress towards predetermined results/outcomes, but rather collects (“harvests”) evidence of what has changed and, then, working backwards, seeks to establish whether and how an intervention (or series of interventions) contributed to these changes.¹⁴ The approach catered to the fact that the SSTC Policy itself did not formulate specific outcomes and related indicators, and to the diversity of programmatic focuses and geographic contexts in which WFP has been supporting SSTC.¹⁵ A mapping of evaluation findings against an updated version of the (simplified) theory of change is provided in Annex XIV.

25. Gender equality and equity-related questions and indicators were included in the evaluation matrix and in data collection tools. Data collection activities carried out by evaluation team members adhered to WFP and global ethical practices and codes of conducts for evaluation.¹⁶ Team members ensured that interactions with stakeholders were appropriate to the socio-cultural contexts, and in relation to gender and other social roles of the respondents. Confidentiality of stakeholder contributions was ensured by avoiding direct attribution of views to specific individuals. There was no indication that existing power imbalances among consulted stakeholders affected stakeholder responses to the evaluation questions.

26. The evaluation team systematically applied the WFP Evaluation Quality Assurance System (EQAS) quality criteria, templates and checklists. Also, it used the services of a quality assurance reviewer who was not involved in data collection or analysis but focused on providing autonomous quality assurance.

Limitations

27. The main limitations of the evaluation and related mitigation strategies are noted below. Annex V provides additional information. The limitations included:

- A lack of comprehensive data on WFP-supported SSTC initiatives beyond the activity level. To address EQ2 (What were the results of the Policy?), the evaluation therefore strongly relied on primary data collected through interviews at global, regional and country levels to fill in gaps in available documents related to processes and contributions to results. For country-level data this also meant that the evaluation strongly focused on the 12 countries assessed through remote missions and desk reviews “plus”
- Next to no secondary data on gender and other equity or inclusion-related issues in the context of WFP-supported SSTC work. This was partly mitigated by drawing upon primary data collected in the 12 focus countries
- Limited data on financial resources allocated and/or expended on SSTC work at corporate, regional and country levels. As there was no suitable mitigation strategy available, the evaluation report clearly indicates where available data prevented making an informed assessment

¹⁴ For an introduction to outcome harvesting information, see, for example Wilson-Grau, R. (2015) *Outcome Harvesting*. BetterEvaluation.

¹⁵ Throughout the report, we use the terms WFP “supporting”, “facilitating” and “brokering” SSTC interchangeably.

¹⁶ As described in relevant OEV guidance; OECD-DAC (2010). Evaluation Quality Standards for Development Evaluation; UNEG (2020). Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation; ALNAP (2016). Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide; and Sphere (2015). Sphere for Monitoring and Evaluation.

- A restriction of movement due to COVID-19. The pandemic meant that in-person data collection was not possible in Rome or in focus countries as originally envisaged in the evaluation terms of reference. This challenge was mitigated by using web-based platforms for conducting interviews remotely and allowing for a longer and more flexible schedule to complete the remote missions and desk reviews “plus” than originally anticipated in the terms of reference. In some countries,¹⁷ the remote mission modality allowed the reaching of stakeholders not only in the WFP country office but also in, or connected to, WFP sub-offices.

Ethical considerations

28. The evaluation was guided by principles of gender equality and equity in alignment with the EQAS Technical Note on Gender and United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidelines. The evaluation team ensured that the stakeholders consulted during the evaluation represented diverse perspectives based on gender, ethnicity, geographic locations, and roles or organizational affiliations. Team members conducted data collection in ways that were sensitive to the geographic and cultural backgrounds and gender of different respondents.

¹⁷ For example in the Republic of Congo and Sri Lanka.

2. Evaluation Findings

2.1. EQ1: QUALITY OF THE POLICY

Introduction

29. This section provides an analysis of the quality of the Policy and is organized by the main subquestions related to EQ1 – “How good is the Policy?” The analysis draws on evidence from document review, remote field missions, desk reviews “plus”, the review of comparator organizations, and key informant interviews. The available evidence base was solid and allowed for adequate triangulation of data sources.

30. The criteria used by the evaluation team to assess policy quality drew upon the “Top 10 Lessons for Policy Quality in WFP” study (2018) and the WFP 2019 “Synthesis of Evidence and Lessons from Policy Evaluation (2011-2019)”. A summary of the evaluation team’s assessment of the Policy against 13 resulting criteria is provided in Table 2. The evidence is discussed in Findings 1-4 and an expanded version of the table is provided in Annex XV.

Table 2 Assessment of the quality of the South-South and Triangular Cooperation Policy against WFP criteria

Policy quality criterion	Does the SSTC policy meet the criterion?
1. Existence of a context analysis to ensure timeliness and wider relevance	Meets
2. Clear and consistent use of terminology	Meets
3. Policy appropriately defines its scope and priorities	Partly meets
4. Policy develops a vision and a theory of change	Partly meets
5. Policy development included internal consultations	Meets
6. Policy provides guidance on timeliness, institutional arrangements and accountabilities for its implementation (inclusion of an action or implementation plan)	Does not meet
7. Policy identifies the financial and human resources required for its implementation	Does not meet
8. Presence of a robust results framework	Does not meet
9. Existence/quality of a monitoring and reporting framework and systems for the policy	Partly meets
10. Policy based on reliable evidence	Partly meets
11. External coherence	Partly meets
12. Internal and strategic coherence	Partly meets
13. Incorporation of gender consideration into the design of the policy	Does not meet

Source: Evaluation team, drawing on “Top 10 Lessons for Policy Quality in WFP” and “Synthesis of evidence and lessons from WFP’s policy evaluations (2011–2019)”.

Extent to which the Policy provided conceptual and strategic guidance on the WFP vision for South-South and triangular cooperation

Finding 1: The SSTC Policy constituted an important milestone by making WFP commitment to broadening its support to South-South cooperation explicit and by setting out parameters for how WFP would engage in SSTC. It remained vague, however, on what types of results WFP support to SSTC would contribute to in different thematic areas. Similar to other cross-cutting WFP policies, the SSTC Policy is not well known among WFP staff.

31. The Policy formulated the overall objective “to expand WFP’s engagement with developing countries to facilitate progress towards the objectives of the Zero Hunger Challenge and the proposed SDGs”.¹⁸ In doing so, it positioned WFP SSTC work in a broader global context. The Policy also outlined eight overarching principles to guide WFP support of country-led SSTC, thereby providing a normative framework for the desired “how” of the agency’s engagement and provided some operational guidance by describing key types of suitable activities to support SSTC.

32. The Policy included definitions of key concepts, drawing upon relevant United Nations frameworks and definitions at the time of its development. It deliberately refrained from formulating specific results to which WFP support to SSTC would contribute. This reflected the still emerging internal context for SSTC at the time, and the desire to allow regional bureaux, country offices and Centres of Excellence to further experiment with the modality rather than restricting their work. Accordingly, the Policy also did not include a theory of change and did not elaborate envisaged results in relation to intra-organizational changes around mainstreaming SSTC. While this allowed WFP actors at country, regional and global levels to pursue a variety of initiatives to address country-specific priorities and results, it remained unclear what success would look like, how failure would be avoided and risks mitigated, and how WFP activities and inputs would contribute to country-level results. The Policy did not contribute to clarifying the similarities, overlaps and differences between SSTC and the closely related cross-cutting areas of country capacity strengthening and partnerships. This is reflected in and contributed to ongoing challenges in monitoring and reporting on SSTC work (see Section 2.3).

33. According to interviewed WFP staff, and as indicated by the inclusion of several case study examples of WFP support to SSTC in different countries, the process of policy development included internal consultations with the Centre of Excellence in Brazil, the regional bureau in Panama, thematic units at headquarters and some country offices. The nature and scope of these consultations were not referenced in the Policy or other documents and could not be confirmed during primary data collection for this evaluation. While this ran the risk of weakening the perceived legitimacy of the Policy, consulted WFP leadership and staff had no concerns in this regard.

34. While there is no comprehensive record of policy dissemination efforts, a few consulted WFP staff at regional bureau and country office levels recalled presentations on the Policy organized by headquarters following its approval in 2015. Only 27 percent of consulted WFP employees (30/111) stated that they were familiar with the Policy’s content while 18 percent had never heard of it. The remaining 45 percent of staff knew of the Policy’s existence but were not familiar with its content, either because they had not read it or because they had read it long ago. Similar observations had been made in the 2017 evaluations of the WFP Corporate Partnership Strategy and the Policy on Capacity Development, as well as in the 2020 evaluation of the WFP People Strategy, indicating that this is not unusual for WFP policies on cross-cutting issues, especially several years after their approval.

Extent to which the Policy provided operational guidance and highlighted equity considerations

Finding 2: The Policy provided little clarity on what its implementation would require from internal and external stakeholders and on related financial resources and accountabilities. In addition, it was “blind” in relation to gender, disability, and other equity considerations.

¹⁸ SSTC Policy paragraph 8.

35. The Policy named six priority types of activities and described four broad deliverables of policy implementation, namely: providing regional bureaux and country offices with guidance and support on engaging in and facilitating SSTC; providing and/or linking to a platform for sharing knowledge on food security and nutrition; enhancing the WFP network of expertise by establishing additional mechanisms for tapping into the expertise of developing countries; and creating incentives for South-South cooperation on food security and nutrition issues.¹⁹ It did not include an implementation plan to spell out expected timelines, institutional arrangements, or accountabilities for its implementation.

36. While no organization-wide implementation plan has been developed since, in 2020, the SSTC team at headquarters prepared a forward-looking “SSTC Action Plan and Priorities” for the SSTC team’s work up until 2030. SSTC team members noted that their work throughout the review period has been structured based on internal work plans. The regional bureau in Panama and the three Centres of Excellence in Brazil, China and Cote d’Ivoire developed their own SSTC-related action plans. Throughout the review period the SSTC team has worked with country offices on integrating SSTC considerations into new country strategic plans (CSP) as the main frameworks guiding country office’s programming and resource mobilization. In some cases, such as in India and Sri Lanka, this integration was based on, or accompanied by, detailed South-South cooperation reviews conducted with support from the headquarters SSTC team. The reviews included analysing the “national picture” to capture where the country stood at the time as a partner for South-South cooperation, a mapping of South-South cooperation engagement opportunities and potential cooperation partners as per country strategic plan strategic results area, and identifying short- and mid-term South-South cooperation investment opportunities for WFP in the country.

37. The Policy did not provide information on the expected costs of policy implementation, how it would be resourced corporately or at regional bureau and country office levels, or on potential ways for WFP to mobilize required resources, such as through trust funds or embedding SSTC components in conventional programme budgets. Since 2015, however, the headquarters SSTC team has supported several country offices in accessing external funding opportunities for SSTC and has shared information on these opportunities through South-South cooperation newsletters and the WFP South-South cooperation webpage.

38. The absence of a results framework with targets and indicators prevented systematic tracking of policy implementation in relation to contributions to development results and of internal process results related to SSTC mainstreaming.²⁰ Nevertheless, during the review period, WFP did monitor and report on progress against several SSTC-related corporate indicators (see Box 1). This allowed some conclusions to be drawn about the extent to which SSTC has gained in visibility and attention within WFP offices and programmes but provided no insights into the results generated through WFP-facilitated SSTC within and outside of WFP, or on the “how” of related progress.

Box 1: South-South and triangular cooperation-related corporate indicators

Since 2014, in the context of indicators monitored for Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of United Nations system operational activities (QCPR) assessments, WFP has reported on the “percentage of countries that have engaged in South-South cooperation or triangular cooperation supported by WFP” and has included related information in its global annual performance reports (APRs). Since the introduction of country strategic plans, annual performance reports have also included information on the number of country strategic plans that include reference to SSTC.

Since 2018, the revised WFP Corporate Results Framework (2017-2021) measures the “number of programmes benefitting from WFP-facilitated South-South and triangular cooperation”. Reporting against this indicator has tended to be fragmented and incomplete (see Section 2.3).

As of October 2020, the revised corporate results framework indicator compendium includes three additional output indicators for institutional capacity strengthening that allow highlighting SSTC. At the time of writing, reporting against these indicators was not yet available.

¹⁹ SSTC Policy, paragraph 18.

²⁰ We use the term “mainstreaming”, which is not applied in the SSTC Policy, to refer to the process of expanding understanding and use of SSTC in WFP beyond CoEs and beyond the context of social protection/school feeding. The United Nations Operational Guidelines on SSTC provide United Nations agencies with some tools towards mainstreaming support for SSTC. However, as noted by Haug (2021, p.23), they do not clearly articulate what would count as “successful” mainstreaming.

39. The Policy is silent on gender considerations. While the first guiding principle for SSTC stipulates a “focus on the most vulnerable”, the Policy does not identify which specific groups this refers to and makes no references to how gender equality, disability, or broader equity considerations could or should be reflected or addressed through WFP-supported SSTC. Similarly, the Policy makes no reference to the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2012), the WFP Gender Policy, or other relevant gender equality frameworks. The same gender blindness applied to the SSTC policies or equivalents of the three reviewed comparator organizations. In addition, the framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to SSTC, on which the WFP Policy drew, is itself gender blind.

40. Consulted WFP staff who had read the Policy widely agreed that it was relevant but lacked detail on how it would be operationalized and by whom, and with what resources, especially at the country level. Only 34 percent of those WFP staff familiar with the Policy noted it had directly influenced their work on SSTC by providing high-level direction and helping to clarify the term “SSTC” for WFP.²¹ Across reviewed countries, WFP staff agreed that the Policy had not significantly influenced the country offices’ use of SSTC. Instead, related efforts were largely driven by the interest in, and commitment to, SSTC of individual country office leaders and staff, and by interest and demand from host country governments (see also Section 2.3).

Relevance of the Policy in light of changes in WFP internal and external contexts, and global good practice

Finding 3: At the time of its development, the Policy was relevant considering global good practice for SSTC and WFP internal and external contexts. In 2021, the Policy is outdated against the backdrop of the Sustainable Development Goals and the increased focus of WFP on working across the humanitarian-development nexus.

41. The Policy was relevant in 2015 when, with some exceptions such as in the region covered by the regional bureau in Panama, knowledge among WFP leadership and staff of what SSTC was, and why and how it was relevant to the organization’s work was limited. Consulted WFP staff who were aware of the Policy widely agreed that its mere existence helped foster visibility and awareness of SSTC within WFP and gave those in WFP interested in this approach permission to pay increased attention to the issue. Consultations with stakeholders involved in its development indicate that the absence of predetermined results in the Policy was intentional to give WFP actors room to experiment, thereby broadening the organization’s SSTC experience, which at the time primarily consisted of the work of the Brazil Centre of Excellence.

42. The normative SSTC principles outlined in the Policy reflected global good practice in South-South cooperation at the time. Most of these principles are still considered applicable as reflected, for example, in the BAPA +40 outcome document, including promoting national ownership, equality, and mutual benefit. The Policy also reflected the fact that most examples of successful SSTC, both within and outside of WFP, focused on experiences gained in comparatively stable country contexts and thus on the development side of WFP work at the time.

43. The Policy includes several examples of where and how WFP had already successfully used or supported SSTC. It is weak, however, in terms of presenting evidence from sources outside of WFP and does not refer to specific evidence, such as studies or evaluations, that illustrated the effectiveness or efficiency of South-South cooperation in the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals in force at that time.²² This limited the extent to which the Policy provided clarity on how SSTC could add value to other approaches used by WFP in different thematic areas. It also lacks reference to the comparative advantage of WFP in relation to other United Nations actors and to experiences in SSTC gained by other United Nations agencies, several of which (such as FAO, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United

²¹ Of the 41 (out of 111 consulted) WFP staff members who were familiar with the Policy, 16 were located at COs, 16 at HQ, 6 at RBs and 3 at a Centre of Excellence. This means that 27 percent of consulted CO staff (16/59) knew the Policy.

²² As discussed under Finding 4, the approaches of the comparator organizations were more visibly informed by dedicated evaluations and studies, possibly reflecting the fact that they were developed or updated more recently than 2015.

Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) had already put in place SSTC policies or equivalents by the time the WFP Policy was being developed.

44. The Policy is aligned with and refers to the WFP Strategic Plan (2014-2017) and its four strategic objectives, and the WFP Corporate Partnership Strategy (2014). It does not refer to other relevant policies or strategies in place at the time, including those on Gender (2009 and 2015), Capacity Development (2009), Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (2011), Safety Nets (2012), or School Feeding (2013). This limited the extent to which the Policy was situated within the contexts of WFP work in different thematic and programmatic areas.

45. Since 2015, the SSTC Policy has been referenced in several corporate WFP frameworks and policies, including the WFP Strategic Plan (2017-2021), the Nutrition Policy (2017), the Climate Change Policy (2017) and the School Feeding Strategy (2020), indicating its continued relevance to organizational priorities. The Policy is outdated against the backdrop of the introduction of WFP country strategic plans and the related greater focus placed on upstream work, systems and country capacity strengthening; in relation to the upcoming WFP Strategic Plan (2022–2026); and in the context of the “changing lives” agenda gaining prominence in WFP work. Given that the Policy was written in 2015, it does not reflect changes in WFP organizational setup for SSTC since, including the leadership role of PRO as the “home” of the headquarters SSTC team, the network of SSTC focal points, the SSTC working group, new Centres of Excellence in China and Cote d’Ivoire, the emergence of new WFP-supported regional knowledge hubs such as in Egypt, changes to WFP overall and to SSTC-specific guidelines and approaches in the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

46. In 2021, the Policy is also outdated due to some developments in the United Nations system and global contexts that have, or should have, implications for the “how” of the WFP approach to supporting SSTC. This relates to, for example, to the United Nations’ New Way of Working (2017), which calls on humanitarian and development agencies to work collaboratively based on their comparative advantages; United Nations reform efforts and expectations for stronger inter-agency collaboration and coordination through United Nations Country Teams (UNCT) under the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system; SSTC strategies or equivalents developed by other United Nations agencies since 2015, such as IFAD (2016), UNDP (2016) and UNFPA (2017) and related insights on good practices that could inform the WFP approach, such as evidence-based policy development; and the United Nations system-wide strategy for SSTC (forthcoming).

Comparison with the policies/strategies of other organizations

Finding 4: Overall, the WFP Policy is similar in content and quality to the SSTC strategies or equivalent formulated by the three comparator organizations FAO, IFAD and UNICEF. The absence of clearly defined results and reflection on gender equality are gaps in the policies/strategies of all four organizations.

47. Among the four organizations, WFP was among the first to develop a corporate framework for SSTC and has, until now, been the only one to develop an SSTC Policy. FAO has had a strategic SSTC framework since 2013 (living document revised in 2021); IFAD launched a dedicated approach in 2017; UNICEF lacks a corporate strategy but outlined elements of its approach in a 2019 joint publication with UNOSSC. At the time of the evaluation, all three comparator organizations were in the process of updating and/or upgrading their SSTC strategies, based on studies and analyses and linked to their corporate strategic planning cycles. The IFAD approach draws strongly on a corporate SSTC evaluation (2016). The FAO revised strategic SSTC framework draws upon an internal SSTC review (2019) and an external study on SSTC contributions to SDG 2 (2020). In February 2021, the evaluation of FAO SSTC work was launched. The full comparator study can be found in Annex VIII.

48. Like the WFP Policy, the SSTC strategies of FAO and IFAD are linked to their agencies’ corporate plans and priorities. FAO and IFAD embed their SSTC strategies in ongoing institutional reform processes, business model updates and the portfolio of partnerships with emerging economies and middle-income countries. The IFAD approach introduces a new institutional architecture for SSTC, while the FAO strategy stresses the need for decentralization to regional and country offices. The strategies of both FAO and IFAD indicate, explicitly or implicitly, plans for mainstreaming, funding, and/or reporting on SSTC. In contrast, the

descriptive approach of UNICEF offers no such details and does not explain how certain strategic objectives can be achieved or how SSTC support will be funded.

49. The strategies/approaches of IFAD and UNICEF include theories of change to frame their strategic objectives of supporting country-led SSTC, aiming ultimately to increase productive capacities, market access and climate resilience for poor rural people (IFAD) and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for children and safeguard children's rights (UNICEF), with intermediate results in terms of in-house capacity, funding, effective use of knowledge and improved national capacity and commitment, among others. FAO conceptualizes SSTC primarily as a modality to deliver on its overall strategic framework and implicitly as a driver for the process of becoming a more efficient and effective organization.

50. Like the WFP SSTC Policy, none of the comparator organizations' documents include specific expected development or partnership results, but largely remain at the level of process outputs related to resource mobilization (FAO), mainstreaming (IFAD) or the publication of good practices (UNICEF). There is a heavy focus on reporting of SSTC-related data (number and types of activities, number of country programming documents mainstreaming SSTC, etc.), but actual monitoring and evaluation systems have not been considered.

51. Among the three comparator organizations, only the FAO strategy reflects United Nations normative and operational principles, but adapts these less to the organization's context than is the case in the WFP Policy. None of the comparator agency strategies refer to gender equality, vulnerable groups or the principle of "leaving no one behind", and none refer to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, despite the fact that the strategies/approaches of all three organizations were developed after 2015.

52. Inter-agency collaboration is more pronounced in the strategies of both FAO and IFAD than in the WFP Policy. IFAD describes specific opportunities for joint initiatives with other Rome-based agencies and international financial institutions. UNICEF refers to global collaboration together with UNOSSC. FAO and IFAD also indicate the intent to work with a diverse set of partners at the country level and include detailed provisions for each of these. FAO features three layers of actors (policymakers, practitioners, and grassroots actors). These groups of actors are now identified in the WFP 2020 SSTC theory of change, but were not noted in the WFP SSTC Policy. The IFAD approach focuses on public and private sector players, including through business-to-business cooperation and investor-matchmaking, while the UNICEF approach refers only to governments as partners for its SSTC support.

53. Like the WFP Policy, the documents of all three comparator agencies identify different SSTC modalities. IFAD outlines both technical and financial/investment-related modalities. The FAO strategy includes innovative approaches such as virtual platforms (SSC Gateway), certification of country institutions (FAO reference centres) and e-learning tools, while UNICEF aims to deploy global communities of practice and Centres of Excellence.

2.2. EQ 2: WHAT WERE THE RESULTS OF THE POLICY?

2.2.1. INTRODUCTION

54. This section reviews progress made towards achieving the envisaged results outlined or implied by the South-South and Triangular Cooperation Policy. It addresses subquestions under EQ2 in the evaluation matrix (Annex VII). As the Policy has neither a comprehensive results framework nor an explicit theory of change, the evaluation team based its assessment on a combination of: (i) overall effects of policy on expanding and systematizing WFP engagement in SSTC; (ii) the expected changes in key actors' capacities and behaviour described in the constructed theory of change; and (iii) information on activities and results (confirmed as well as likely) derived from document review and stakeholder consultations. The assessment is not limited to those changes that can be strictly attributed to implementation of the SSTC Policy. It also considers all changes to which WFP support for SSTC contributed, regardless of whether the changes were verifiably driven by the Policy or by other country-specific factors. The evidence base to address this evaluation question was solid in that it included a variety of complementary, albeit largely qualitative, data sources, which allowed for the identification of trends over time and across thematic areas and countries.

55. Please note that due to the nature of the evaluation questions, many issues raised in this section on EQ2 are also discussed in Section 2.3 on EQ3.

2.2.2. RESULTS IN RELATION TO SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION-RELATED ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE IN WFP

Finding 5: Since 2015, and increasingly over the past two years, WFP has made progress in both expanding and systematizing its engagement in, and support to, SSTC.

Expanding South-South and triangular cooperation engagement

56. As of 2011, WFP engagement in SSTC was spearheaded by the WFP Centre of Excellence in Brazil and initially focused on home-grown school meals. Since then, WFP engagement in SSTC expanded in terms of thematic areas and the number and types of WFP units and actors involved.

57. As shown in Table 3, the evaluation team expanded the preliminary scan of SSTC initiatives that had been included in the evaluation terms of reference based on document review and the 12 country reviews. While the initial scan had listed 34 SSTC initiatives, the expanded list captures 132 instances, with most additional initiatives identified in relation to social protection (9 initiatives listed in the initial scan and 69 in expanded version) and nutrition (7 initially, 32 now). The list remains indicative rather than comprehensive. It focuses on identifying main drivers for SSTC work in the thematic areas. Other actors/units in WFP may play an occasional role but the evaluation did not find evidence of them acting as key promoters or enablers of SSTC. As illustrated in the table, social protection, especially school meals, remains the largest area for WFP of SSTC engagement, followed by SAMS, and then by nutrition and emergency preparedness and response (EPR) initiatives.²³ This distribution is indicative only, however, given that many SSTC initiatives that primarily focus on social protection are closely related to, and often overlap with, elements of the other thematic areas, especially nutrition and/or SAMS. Also, some initiatives categorized under one of the four thematic areas are also relevant to issues such as climate adaptation, resilience building, vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) and supply chain.

²³ WFP support to SSTC in thematic areas other than social protection/school feeding did not necessarily start only in 2011, but, as indicated by available documentation and stakeholder consultations, tended to be more ad-hoc and isolated than today.

Table 3 Indicative distribution of WFP-supported South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives since 2015 across thematic areas

Dimension	Social protection & safety nets (*)	Smallholder support & market access	Nutrition	Emergency Preparation and Response
Number (percentage) of documented SSTC initiatives (n=132)	69 (52%)	32 (24%)	16 (12%)	15 (11%)
Thematic sub-areas covered by WFP-facilitated SSTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home-grown school meals • Effective/efficient social protection systems (**) • Nutrition sensitive social protection • Shock-resistant, emergency-responsive social protection systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversification of production • Value chain development/linking farmers to markets (including in the context of home-grown school meals programmes) • Rural resilience • Supply chains • Product storage and avoiding post-harvest loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food, especially rice, fortification • Food processing and production • Nutrition sensitive social protection (including school meals) • Innovative approaches to addressing malnutrition and stunting • HIV and nutrition • Nutrition analysis and monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early warning and risk management • Use of geospatial data for risk monitoring and management • Resilience building • Shock resistant social protection systems
Key actors/main drivers within WFP beyond the Global SSTC Team	CoE Brazil Country offices Regional bureaux School feeding team at HQ	Country offices CoE China CoE Brazil CoE Côte d'Ivoire (Some) RBs	Country offices Nutrition division at HQ CoE Brazil CoE China Some RBs	Country offices Some RBs Climate & Disaster Risk Reduction Unit at HQ

Notes:

(*) During the review period, WFP support to SSTC in social protection focused almost exclusively on school meals

(**) Including, for example, in relation to the use of cash-based transfers and tailored information management systems

Source: Evaluation team elaboration based on review of WFP publications on SSTC and 12 country reviews.

58. The number of country offices reporting engagement in SSTC increased from 48 percent in 2014 to 85 percent in 2019.²⁴ All country strategic plans and interim country strategic plan documents approved in 2019 mentioned SSTC among their envisaged modalities of working.²⁵ These figures, while not speaking to the nature or quality of SSTC initiatives facilitated by WFP, illustrate a growing organizational awareness of and attention paid to SSTC. While the SSTC Policy and related activities of the headquarters SSTC team may have contributed to this change, the same can be said for several other factors, including the roll-out of the WFP Policy on Country Strategic Plans and related preparation of country strategic plan documents in consultation with host country governments, many of which expressed interest in SSTC.

59. Data deriving from the country analyses conducted for this evaluation indicate that at least half of the 12 country offices interviewed had broadened their SSTC engagement during the review period in frequency or thematic scope. For example, the Egypt country office, which in the past had only facilitated occasional SSTC on school feeding, is now also supporting a regional exchange related to vulnerability analysis and mapping/disaster risk reduction and management. Country offices in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka,

²⁴ Source: WFP (2020). *Leveraging Progress Against Hunger Through South-South and Triangular Cooperation*. Beyond Annual Performance Reports 2019 Series. June 2020 based on QCPR data.

²⁵ Ibid.

and India expanded the volume and geographic reach of their support to nutrition-related SSTC around rice fortification. In most cases, country-level changes were driven not by corporate WFP SSTC Policy guidance but by context-specific factors, especially growing demand for SSTC from host countries.

60. An expansion of WFP engagement in SSTC was further signalled by the establishment of two new Centres of Excellence - in China (2016) and Côte d'Ivoire (2019). During the same period, in order to further strengthen its service offer to potential partners, the Centre of Excellence in Brazil broadened its SSTC-based work beyond school feeding to also encompass nutrition, smallholder farmer support, and social protection beyond school meals.²⁶ Host governments in other countries also expressed interest in establishing additional (sub) regional knowledge hubs with WFP support. Related plans are most advanced in Egypt, where, in 2018, the country office and the Government jointly launched the Luxor Coordination Centre for Knowledge Sharing and Innovation to Promote Resilience in Upper Egypt.²⁷

61. Since 2015, through the work of the SSTC coordination team, WFP also deepened its participation in and contributions to the United Nations-wide SSTC policy dialogue. This included providing inputs to United Nations publications on SSTC, including annual reports of the United Nations Secretary General, joint publications on good practices in SSTC, and contributions to the United Nations-wide SSC Galaxy platform, as well as engagement in the BAPA +40 process, participation in the development of a forthcoming United Nations-wide SSTC strategy, and collaboration with IFAD and FAO on a joint Rome-based agencies framework for monitoring, reporting and evaluating SSTC.

Systematizing South-South and triangular cooperation engagement and support

62. During the 2015-2020 period, the SSTC coordination team worked to create a shared understanding among WFP employees of the “what” and “how” of SSTC. This addressed the fact that, before 2015, WFP employees tended to view SSTC as something “done by the Centre of Excellence in Brazil” and/or as anything related to sharing information across countries, including exchanges among WFP country offices. Related efforts included: creating SSTC guidance materials and compiling regular reports on WFP-facilitated SSTC initiatives (see Annex II for a list), developing a prototype internal knowledge platform on SSTC-related information and other activities, creating guidance, and providing hands-on support for incorporating SSTC dimensions into new country strategic plans, as well as setting up a network of SSTC focal points in regional bureaux. In addition, the SSTC team developed and piloted the methodology for regional SSTC mappings and country-level South-South reviews to help regional bureaux and country offices systematically capture SSTC opportunities and select related short- to mid-term priorities. This contributed to, for example, the regional bureau in Panama (RBP) preparing a targeted step-by-step guide to mainstream SSTC in social protection programmes in the territory covered by the regional bureau in Panama.

63. In several reviewed country offices, consulted WFP employees noted that over the past two to three years, their country office had made efforts to engage in and support SSTC more deliberately and systematically than before. In Sri Lanka and Egypt, for example, the country offices increased emphasis on ensuring that South-South exchanges were based on clearly identified needs and shared objectives, such as to inform the development of an action plan in the “recipient” country. Earlier SSTC initiatives had sometimes been driven by an unspecified interest to learn about an issue, and subsequently lacked observable follow-up actions. This put into question their relevance for facilitating change in the “recipient” country. The India country office, with support from the headquarters SSTC team, formulated a strategic approach to supporting SSTC to accompany its country strategic plan.²⁸ Across countries, WFP staff highlighted that the development of a new country strategic plan acted as a catalyst for supporting and using SSTC more explicitly and deliberately. The Centres of Excellence also made contributions to systematizing WFP work on SSTC by compiling and sharing information on successful examples of SSTC initiatives.

²⁶ For example, the “Beyond Cotton” initiative in Benin, Tanzania, Mozambique and Kenya is helping farmers link cotton by-products and associated crops/food to reliable markets, including school feeding programmes.

²⁷ WFP also explored the establishment of CoEs or equivalents in India (discussed in Section 2.3) and Russia.

²⁸ India CO. 2020. *Strategic Action Framework*. See also section 2.3.1.

64. Several WFP policies and strategies developed since 2015 either reference the SSTC Policy or mention SSTC as a relevant programming modality,²⁹ reflecting some progress in mainstreaming SSTC considerations across WFP programmatic areas. However, the extent to which thematic units at headquarters have actively furthered the use of SSTC in their respective areas has varied. The Nutrition Division is the only headquarters unit that has prepared detailed thematic guidance on SSTC. (See Box 2). Initial efforts to better mainstream SSTC were also made by the Climate and Disaster Risk Reduction Programmes Unit, whose capacity development strategy and workplan was accompanied by a checklist on SSTC cooperation expertise areas for climate change adaptation. Roll-out among country offices was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and is anticipated to commence in 2021.

Box 2: Strategy for mainstreaming South-South and triangular cooperation in nutrition

In 2019, with support from the headquarters SSTC team, the nutrition team developed a dedicated strategy for how to scale up SSTC in nutrition,³⁰ paving the way for integrating SSTC into areas such as food fortification, HIV-sensitive programming, nutrition-sensitive school feeding and the promotion of healthy diets. In 2020, the nutrition team conducted a series of regional webinars for WFP nutrition officers to disseminate the strategy and explore nutrition related SSTC opportunities in each region.

65. While the headquarters SSTC team has engaged with various actors in WFP since 2015, efforts to bring the whole organization on board around SSTC only truly gained momentum in 2019. In that year, WFP PRO led the first organization-wide internal SSTC meeting in Rome, with participation from 50 staff, including directors from country offices and regional bureaux, the Centres of Excellence and key headquarters divisions. The participants took stock of WFP engagement in SSTC and explored options to improve the integration of SSTC throughout the organization's programme of work. This led to the establishment of a corporate SSTC task force, engaging headquarters divisions, regional bureaux and the Centres of Excellence, which has since gained momentum despite its challenging start during the COVID-19 pandemic. The task force, which requires regular and active participation of its members, deliberately does not include country offices so as not to overload country office staff. It focuses on three streams of work: Stream 1 on partnerships and resource mobilization is chaired by PRO; Stream 2 on internal coordination is chaired by the Centre of Excellence in Brazil; and Stream 3 on match-making is chaired by the regional bureau in Panama.

66. Another relevant development was the introduction of new, dedicated SSTC funds that WFP country offices could apply for. In 2019, WFP, with financial resources provided by the Government of China through the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA), established the Multi-Donor Corporate Trust Fund for WFP facilitated SSTC projects (TSTC) to fund SSTC pilot projects, launched initially in Ecuador, Kenya, Sri Lanka, and the Republic of Congo. These projects allowed and incentivized country offices to shift from often ad-hoc SSTC exchanges towards developing and implementing coherent SSTC projects with dedicated results frameworks, monitoring and reporting.³¹ In 2020, WFP mobilized an additional USD 51,000 through the WFP Emerging Donor Matching Fund to support the existing SSTC pilot project in the Republic of Congo. Also in 2020, WFP established the COVID-19 SSTC Opportunity Fund, co-funded by WFP and the Government of China, which provided country offices with an additional mechanism and incentive for deliberately engaging in South-South cooperation initiatives. At the time of writing, this mechanism had funded projects in eight countries for a total of USD 1.5 million.

67. A 2021 scorecard that maps 15 United Nations entities based on their level of institutional focus on SSTC, places WFP among the top six "champions".³² Nevertheless, SSTC mainstreaming within WFP remains a work in progress, with WFP staff in several country offices reporting that they "feel left to (their) own devices" when navigating the strategic and political components of supporting SSTC. Perceptions varied by region and staff members' programmatic focus though, probably reflecting differences in regional

²⁹ For example, the Policy for Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition (2015), and the School Feeding Strategy (2020-2030).

³⁰ WFP (2019). Expanding WFP Nutrition's Engagement in South-South Cooperation. Defining the Vision for 2019-2021.

³¹ WFP (2020). Leveraging Progress Against Hunger through South-South and Triangular Cooperation. Beyond the Annual Performance Report 2019 Series, p.12.

³² Haug, Sebastian (2021), p.17. The other five "champions" are FAO, IFAD, ILO, UNDP, and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

experience in SSTC, and the varying degrees to which WFP has delivered guidance and operational support for SSTC work in specific programmatic areas.

Finding 6: WFP-supported SSTC takes many forms and no SSTC “model” is inherently better than others. This presents opportunities to apply SSTC flexibly and in context-appropriate ways. It also presents challenges though, with regard to providing operational guidance for, and monitoring WFP engagement in, SSTC.

68. WFP-supported initiatives reviewed by the evaluation team take many forms and have different characteristics that depend on the needs, objectives, and capacity of the countries involved. Table 4 shows the dimensions that characterize SSTC initiatives, some of which are “either/or” dimensions while others represent a continuum. The various dimensions allow for a multitude of possible combinations, creating different SSTC “models”. Examples of different “models”, as identified by the evaluation team, are provided in Annex XVI. Please note that the terms used to describe the ends of the different continuums are used as descriptive terms that are not linked to value judgements of one being better than the other.

Table 4 Dimensions that characterize South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives

From... (one end of a continuum)	To... (the other end of a continuum)
Asymmetric (*) - clear roles of knowledge ‘provider’ and ‘recipient’. This applies, for examples, to most documented exchanges involving Brazil (through the CoE) as ‘provider’	Symmetric - two-way exchange with both/all involved countries contributing and receiving relevant insights, e.g., in case of a partnership among Cuba, Dominican Republic and Haiti on early warning systems
Provider initiated - based and/or dependent on proactive offer of support from provider country as was the case, for example, for the SSTC pilot projects supported by the Government of China	Recipient initiated - based on request from recipient country for support from provider country, for example Libya approaching Egypt to learn about the country’s school feeding programme
Comprehensive country capacity strengthening ‘package’ - including exchange of knowledge/information and provider country financial and/or technical support for adapting and implementing or piloting solutions	Focused knowledge exchange - targeted exchange that does not include subsequent provider country technical or financial assistance. This was the case for many one-time study tours
Long-term collaboration (often linked to capacity strengthening packages described under the previous point)	One-off/short term exchange or visit
Bilateral collaboration between two countries (see various examples provided in section 2.2.3)	Multi-country collaboration, such as in case of the above-mentioned partnership among Caribbean countries
Inter-regional/global collaboration, such as in the context of the Global Child Nutrition Forum	Intra-regional collaboration among neighbouring countries in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, or Africa (see various examples in section 2.2.3)
With dedicated SSTC-specific funding such as in case of the China-funded SSTC pilot projects	Without dedicated SSTC funding; e.g., funded by one or more host governments and/or through regular WFP country office budgets
Notes: (*) A SSTC initiative can be asymmetric in the sense that in the particular learning context one country acts as the provider and the other as the recipient of the information, yet this does not mean that the partnership between the involved countries would be characterized by an imbalance of power	

Source: Evaluation team.

69. No resulting SSTC “model” is inherently better than others and there are examples of relevant and effective SSTC initiatives with different combinations of the various dimensions, reflecting differences in the needs, objectives, and capacity of the countries involved.

70. The diversity of what SSTC can look like is not reflected in the WFP SSTC Policy or addressed extensively in WFP corporate “how to” guidance on SSTC. This is despite the fact that different SSTC “models” have different implications for the purpose and nature of the role of WFP in supporting SSTC initiatives. The existing diversity of “models” also poses challenges to WFP efforts around providing

coherent guidance for, and capturing insights on, the WFP role in SSTC and on contributions to results deriving from the use of SSTC. (See also Finding 25.)

2.2.3. RESULTS DERIVING FROM WFP-FACILITATED SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION

71. Findings 7-12 below follow the structure of the overarching theory of change for WFP support to SSTC (Annex III), which identifies envisaged capacity change outcomes in the three dimensions of policy, institutions, and communities. These are expected to contribute to the achievement of behaviour-change outcomes and, ultimately, impact.

Finding 7: Across thematic areas and regions, WFP-brokered SSTC initiatives contributed to changes in country capacity at policy level, at the institutional level, and, to a lesser degree, at community level.

72. As illustrated in Table 5 below, SSTC contributions to capacity changes at the policy level were most regularly documented in the areas of social protection and safety nets, and in nutrition, while contributions to institutional-level achievements were noted across all thematic areas reviewed. Most direct SSTC contributions³³ to capacity strengthening at the community level were evidenced in strengthening smallholder farmer resilience and access to markets.

Table 5 Capacity changes facilitated through WFP-supported South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives by level and thematic area

Level	Social protection & safety nets (*)	Nutrition (**)	Smallholder support & market access (***)	Emergency prep. & response (****)
Policy	Frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Occasionally
Institutional/Technical	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently
Community	Indirectly ³⁴	Indirectly	Frequently	Indirectly

Notes:

(*) Assessment based on 7 detailed vignettes developed in the context of the 12 country reviews, as well as on extensive available WFP documents on SSTC in the context of social protection, especially in relation to school feeding.

(**) Assessment primarily based on 3 detailed vignettes developed in the context of the 12 country reviews and complementary information in WFP publications.

(***) Assessment primarily based on 7 detailed vignettes developed in the context of the 12 country reviews.

(****) The evidence base for this assessment is more limited than for other thematic areas as, within the 12 sampled countries, the evaluation found only two well-documented examples of SSTC in this area.

Source: Evaluation team.

73. Available evidence indicates that, overall, SSTC allowed for relevant WFP contributions to country capacity strengthening. In doing so, SSTC confirmed its potential to help WFP increase its reach by tapping into the knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources already existing in low- and middle-income countries to help other developing countries. In 2019, WFP noted that its operations were reaching

³³ “Direct contributions” refer to changes that immediately derive from South-South exchange activities, e.g. through participation of community-level actors in a study tour or training workshop involving provider country experts. “Indirect” contributions are changes occurring as the result of new solutions/programmes implemented in a recipient country, e.g. positive effects of a school feeding programme that was designed with input from a South-South cooperation partner.

³⁴ For an elaboration of what “indirectly” means in this context, please see the discussion of community-level changes below.

approximately 10 percent of the people affected by chronic food deprivation and that, to increase its capacity to reach all affected populations, WFP needed to rely on the expertise and resources of other partners, including host governments.³⁵ This understanding underlies all of WFP work with “tier 3” beneficiaries gaining from WFP-facilitated capacity development activities including through SSTC. In the experience of some consulted WFP staff, South-South exchanges also constituted a faster and more cost-efficient approach to country capacity strengthening than other approaches. As one officer noted: “Bringing 17 people on a study visit to [country] brought significant progress in terms of changing awareness and willingness to adopt changes – and it was faster and cheaper than bringing in international experts and trying to push an agenda.”

74. The specific nature and examples of SSTC contributions to capacity strengthening policy, institutional, and community levels are discussed below. Please also see the thematic case studies in Annex IX.

Finding 7: At the policy level, WFP-supported SSTC initiatives helped strengthen the confidence of decision makers to address domestic problems with tested solutions that were relevant and feasible in their own countries.

75. Table 6 summarizes the ways in which WFP-supported SSTC initiatives influenced policy processes, and the most reported SSTC modalities employed in this context.

Table 6 Overview of South-South and triangular cooperation contributions to policy/advocacy-level changes, and commonly used South-South and triangular cooperation modalities

Types of SSTC contributions to capacity changes	Common SSTC modalities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness among decision makers of specific food security or nutrition issues and related solutions being applied in other contexts, including in relation to cross-sectoral links • Exposing decision makers to/increasing their access to evidence on the benefits and challenges of implementing specific solutions in comparable country contexts • Improving the quality of (new) policies, action plans or guidelines • Enriching consultation processes and content discussions through experiences gained from other countries • Providing technical assistance during policy development • Informing resource allocation for the implementation of (new) policies or action plans • Embedding national discussions in broader regional or global discourse and networks thereby creating an incentive to showcase successes and ‘keep up’ with the neighbouring countries • Perpetuating and deepening existing political will and commitment to achievement made in countries that take on SSTC ‘provider’ rôle following successful policy implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study tours • Policy dialogue (in person or remotely) • Technical assistance (experts from provider country working with counterparts) • Regional/global knowledge exchange (e.g., conferences) and evidence generation (e.g., studies) • Evidence generation and dissemination

Source: Evaluation team.

76. Consulted stakeholders inside and outside of WFP, including host government counterparts, widely agreed that SSTC – between two or more countries and through multi-country forums - had played a significant role in shaping more conducive national environments for policy changes. SSTC initiatives contributed to strengthening political will and confidence among decision makers to address specific problems by allowing them to see that relevant solutions existed and had been shown to work in countries that shared many of the same or similar challenges as their own.

77. Examples of contributions of WFP-facilitated SSTC initiatives to changes at policy level in different thematic areas are outlined below.

- Social protection (school feeding): Contributions to the development of school feeding policies, programmes, and action plans are well documented, for example, in Burundi (see Box 3), Bangladesh,

³⁵ Source: WFP (2019). Eight reasons for WFP to support SSTC.

Benin, Kenya, Libya, Malawi, Zimbabwe, among others.³⁶ Related contributions are also evidenced at the regional level, for example, through the Centre of Excellence in Brazil's support to integrating information on school meals into the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (2016-2025).³⁷

- **Nutrition:** In Libya, WFP-supported exchanges with Brazil and, more recently, Egypt led to the development and adoption of Libya's National Nutrition Action Plan. In both Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, WFP-facilitated exchanges with peers in the region, including in India, helped to build political momentum for expanding the use of fortified rice in national social safety nets including school meal programmes. India integrated lessons learned from an exchange with Costa Rica into its preparatory process of mandatory fortified rice. The Dominican Republic's shift of all public purchases of rice to fortified rice was informed by Peru's experience.
- **Smallholder farmer support:** In Ecuador, the process of developing the new national policy for rural women (2020) was informed by WFP-facilitated exchanges among rural women leaders from Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Peru (see Box 8 under Finding 13).
- **Emergency preparedness and response:** In the Caribbean, WFP – especially through the Cuba and Dominican Republic country offices – facilitated subregional learning among key stakeholders in Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti. This contributed to countries increasingly approaching early warning and shock-responsive emergency preparation from a holistic and interlinked perspective, as reflected in joint policy statements such as the Santo Domingo Consensus on Resilience Building in the Caribbean (2019).

Box 3 – South-South and triangular cooperation-facilitated advocacy and policy change in Burundi

In 2014, Burundian government officials from ministries of education, health and agriculture undertook a 10-day study tour facilitated by the Centre of Excellence in Brazil to learn from Brazil's experience in the development, design, financing, and implementation of school feeding programmes. The visit also included delegations from Benin and Togo, and entailed talks with Brazilian government agencies, school staff, students and farmers. Visiting country delegations outlined plans for the development of home-grown school feeding programmes in their own countries.

Following the visit, the Centre of Excellence in Brazil provided financial support for the participation of Burundi delegations to the 2018 and 2019 Global Child Nutrition Forums, and assisted the country through visits from Brazilian experts in the development of the country's National School Feeding Policy (officially endorsed in November 2018) and an accompanying implementation and resource mobilization strategy.

78. WFP Centres of Excellence, regional bureaux and country offices also facilitated SSTC through global or (sub)regional events and forums such as the Global Child Nutrition Forum, an annual event co-organized by the Centre of Excellence in Brazil, and the South-Asian School Feeding Network. Additionally, WFP supported regional knowledge exchanges through, for example, the Cost of Hunger series in Africa and the Latin American and Caribbean region (LAC), and the organization of regional peer learning workshops.³⁸ This included two regional school feeding seminars supported by the Government of Mexico, a country in which WFP does not have a presence.³⁹ While it is more difficult to trace the direct contributions of such events to country-level changes, stakeholder consultations indicate that they play an important role in shaping the discourse on a topic, setting benchmarks of good practice, and allowing decision makers to identify solutions to domestic challenges. They also provide countries with opportunities to receive international recognition for improvements made, which can provide motivation to continue to invest in related efforts.

³⁶ The 2019 Evaluation of the Update of WFP's Safety Nets Policy noted contributions of WFP-supported SSTC to school-feeding related policies in action plans in at least 21 countries.

³⁷ For further information, see CoE Brazil (2020). *WFP Brazil Centre of Excellence and the African Union Partnership*.

³⁸ For example, a workshop on nutrition & HIV and social protection organized in 2016 by the regional bureau in Johannesburg (RBJ) with representatives from Tanzania, Mozambique, Lesotho and Malawi; as well as regional school feeding seminars organized by RBP with the support of governments in the region.

³⁹ Similarly, the Government of Chile, another country in which WFP does not have presence, worked with WFP to support Paraguay, Guatemala and Honduras on nutrition-related issues.

Finding 8: SSTC-supported changes at the institutional level increased the likelihood of countries successfully adopting, implementing, and sustaining innovative solutions.

79. WFP-supported SSTC initiatives across the four focus thematic areas and in all countries contributed to changes in relevant institutional, including technical, capacities. Table 7 summarizes related insights and notes commonly used SSTC modalities.

Table 7 Overview of South-South and triangular cooperation contributions to technical/institutional-level changes, and commonly used South-South and triangular cooperation modalities

Types of SSTC contributions to capacity changes	Common SSTC modalities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the awareness and know-how of technical staff in key government entities on issues requiring attention and existing solutions. • Strengthening the ability of government teams to support community stakeholders in adopting new solutions (e.g., ToT for agricultural extension workers) • Transfer of technology and equipment (e.g., for post-harvest handling storage and produce aggregation) • Informing the creation and/or structure of new institutions or mechanisms at regional, national and sub-national level. • Strengthening awareness and technical know-how of private sector and other non-government actors (e.g., grain millers/producers in the context of grain fortification; private sector partners who provide training to smallholder farmers) and strengthening public-private partnership • Supporting the creation, expansion or solidification of (formal or informal) communities of practice and knowledge network that institutions/organizations can access as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study tours • Demonstration sites • Workshops/trainings for replicators (Training of Trainers) • Technical assistance through provider country experts • Production and dissemination of guidance materials (print, video, online) • Financial support to facilitate purchase of new technology/equipment • Regional/global knowledge exchange and evidence generation

Source: Evaluation team.

80. Selected examples of SSTC contributions to capacity changes at technical/institutional levels in the four priority thematic areas are provided below:

- Social protection:
 - There are many documented examples of SSTC contributions to strengthening institutional and technical country capacities in relation to home-grown school feeding programmes, often through facilitation by the Centre of Excellence in Brazil. In the sample of countries reviewed for this evaluation, this applied to Bangladesh, Benin, Burundi, Kenya, Libya, Malawi, and Zimbabwe, with special emphasis on linking school feeding programmes to local markets. Often, SSTC initiatives inspired and supported the establishment or strengthening of dedicated school feeding departments in the Ministry of Education (for example, in Burundi), and/or the creation of multi-sectoral coordination committees for school feeding (for example, in Benin).
 - SSTC initiatives also contributed to strengthening national technical capacity in other dimensions of social protection. For example, El

Box 4: South-South and triangular cooperation for shock-responsive social protection systems in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region

In 2020, actors from various government agencies in the Dominican Republic undertook a five-day mission to Peru. A planned return visit from Peruvian stakeholders to the Dominican Republic later in 2020 was replaced by videoconferences involving technical staff from various agencies in both countries. These exchanges were facilitated by the WFP country offices in the two countries.

As of February 2021, the Dominican Republic is planning to engage in further virtual knowledge exchanges on good practices of shock-resistant social protection systems with Colombia, Mexico and Peru as part of the countries' response to the COVID-19 crisis. The exchange will include a mixed approach of bilateral and multilateral sessions (technical staff) and strategic meetings (decision-makers). This exchange is supported with USD 15,000 from the WFP COVID-19 Opportunity Fund.

Salvador's Presidency's Technical and Planning Secretariat incorporated lessons from Peru into the design and implementation of a shock-responsive social protection pilot programme.⁴⁰(See Box 4.)

- At the regional level, the Brazil Centre of Excellence's support to the African Union (AU) led to the creation of the African Union's school feeding cluster as a dedicated forum for policy dialogue and cross-country exchange in the region.
- **Nutrition:** In Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka, WFP-supported SSTC activities contributed to technical staff in relevant ministries as well as private sector partners (such as rice millers) increasing their knowledge and awareness of technologies and preparatory processes around grain fortification. Sri Lanka's Thripasha factory, informed by a study visit to Rwanda, is putting in place the same quality control system for Super Cereal Plus production as used in a newly established facility in Rwanda. Similar contributions of WFP-supported SSTC to strengthening the technical capacity of relevant national institutions engaged in nutrition-related work are also documented for several countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region, including Paraguay,
- **SAMS:** Funded through an SSTC pilot project, Kenya received support from China for strengthening the capacity of local government officials to use and promote the use of improved practices and more cost-efficient technologies for supply chain management, food processing and marketing.
- **Emergency preparedness and response:** In the Caribbean, WFP-supported SSTC contributed to strengthening partner countries' national disaster risk management capacity, including among civil protection/civil defence entities, emergency response centres, and meteorology and hydrological offices and institutes. For instance, Haiti and the Dominican Republic adapted numerical weather prediction models from Cuba. Haiti increased its capacity to evaluate disaster risks at the local level based on the Cuban experience, while Cuba learned operational standards for shock-responsive social protection from the Dominican Republic.

81. Consultations with WFP country office staff and national partners highlighted the importance of strengthening country capacity at the technical/institutional level to facilitate changes in (government) actions and practices, and to increase the likelihood of such SSTC-brokered changes being sustained despite shifts in political leadership and related turnover of staff. Technical staff tend to stay in their positions and maintain networks with peers in other countries, thereby ensuring continuity of collaboration. (See Box 5.)

Box 5: Tandem approach

In several reviewed country offices, including in India and the Dominican Republic, WFP-supported SSTC usually employ a "tandem" approach that deliberately engages both government decision makers (politically appointed) and technical staff members (career civil servants) in South-South exchange activities.

Finding 9: At the community level, SSTC initiatives helped increase awareness of new approaches and technologies, and assisted stakeholders with their initial implementation.

82. Table 8 summarizes types of direct contributions of SSTC to community-level capacity strengthening.

⁴⁰ Source: WFP RBP (2018). Fact Sheet Peru-El Salvador.

Table 8 Overview of South-South and triangular cooperation contributions to community/grassroots-level changes, and commonly used South-South and triangular cooperation modalities

Types of direct SSTC contributions to capacity changes	Common SSTC modalities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the awareness and technical know-how of community actors (groups, organizations, and selected individuals) in relation to new/improved solutions, including peer-learning through replicators from the target group • Supporting communities/community actors in implementing new solutions • Providing actors with the technology and/or equipment required to implement new solutions (e.g. seed, fertilizer) • Facilitating collaboration and communication between community level actors and government institutions at central and decentralized levels, such as through trained government outreach workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study tours • Workshops/trainings • Training of Trainers; working with community members as replicators and peer educators • Demonstration sites • Production and dissemination of guidance materials (print, video, online) • Financial and in-kind support

Source: Evaluation team.

83. Selected examples of direct SSTC contributions to strengthening knowledge and skills of community-level actors are outlined below. While focusing on the thematic areas of smallholder support and market access, some examples also illustrate direct links to social protection and nutrition.

84. All four projects under the first wave of the China-funded SSTC pilots included elements of strengthening the capacity of smallholder farmers. The projects are detailed below:

- In the Republic of Congo, the Centre of Excellence in China, the regional Centre of Excellence against Hunger and Malnutrition (CERFAM) in Côte d'Ivoire and the country office facilitated exchanges with experts from Cote d'Ivoire and Benin on technology and skill transfer for cassava transformation. This included training Congolese artisans on the production of cassava machinery (processing machines, larger cassava mill) and training women smallholder farmers on the processing of *garri* and *attieke*, agricultural products derived from cassava. Stakeholders interviewed noted the project's potential for helping to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, the majority of whom are women, through increased diversification of cassava products in local markets.
- In Sri Lanka, the pilot project aimed at improving agricultural services, enhancing access to markets and equipping smallholder farmers with innovative tools and technology in post-harvest management. Representatives of smallholder farmers' organizations were involved in technical study visits to China to learn of successful models for harvest/post-harvest management, value aggregation and market access. Participants acted as multipliers in their communities by sharing information with their peers to enhance their willingness to adopt new approaches around rice fortification. The project aimed to strengthen local capacity through the development and dissemination of knowledge products based on Chinese expertise and adapted to the local context.
- In Kenya, smallholder farmer leaders were involved in learning events and on-site demonstrations to become aware of China's experience using cost-effective technologies and practices for fresh food and grain preservation, storage and milling. Participants were expected to act as multipliers to raise awareness among their peers and contribute to increasing interest in and willingness among other farmers to adopt new approaches and technologies. The project is striving to strengthen community-level capacity through the establishment of pilot farmer service centres in two counties to provide rural services to vulnerable smallholder farmers, and through five educational films on the reduction of post-harvest losses and food safety broadcast through a popular TV show that reaches up to 9 million viewers in the region.
- In Ecuador, the pilot project focused on the transfer of a rice and duck production model from China. Representatives from smallholder farmers' associations interested in adopting the model went on a study tour and field visit to China and received technical advice from Hunan University's experts during the setting up and running of the demonstration sites in Ecuador. Smallholder organizations took on

critical roles for rural extension services, including outreach and information sharing with their peers, while numerous public and private sector actors are part of a fast-paced scale-up of these pilots.

85. In the thematic areas of social protection, nutrition and emergency preparedness and response, community-level stakeholders were not usually directly involved in South-South exchange activities such as study tours, training or mentoring offered by provider country experts. In many documented cases, however, SSTC initiatives had substantial indirect benefits for community-level capacity strengthening. In Burundi, for example, implementation of the school feeding programme, which had been designed with support from Brazil, included training activities aimed at strengthening leadership and management capacities of women leaders of farm cooperatives, addressing the root causes of gender inequality and the effect of traditional customs. Similar benefits have been widely documented in other countries and regions.⁴¹

Contributions of WFP-facilitated South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives to resource mobilization and partnerships

Finding 10: WFP-facilitated SSTC initiatives helped countries access additional financial resources and broaden strategic partnerships.

Mobilizing additional resources

86. One objective of the WFP SSTC Policy is to facilitate access to additional resources in developing countries.⁴² The Policy does not elaborate, however, on how SSTC will contribute to achievements in this regard, and WFP has not tracked such information systematically. Anecdotal evidence collected in the 12 country studies indicates that SSTC had positive financial resource implications, both directly and indirectly.

87. Direct financial benefits occurred in contexts where provider countries offered financial resources to support the adaptation and implementation of solutions in the recipient country, for example, by funding the implementation of pilot projects. Box 6 has more detail. In the Gambia, the Centre of Excellence in Brazil provided technical support to the national Government for developing a successful funding proposal to a global fund financed by the G20 and managed by the World Bank.⁴³

Box 6: South-South and triangular cooperation mobilizing financial resources

In Zimbabwe, cooperation with China provided the country not only with access to much needed technical expertise, but also with access to precious financial resources to adapt and apply this expertise, which may not have been available otherwise given the challenges being faced by the Zimbabwean Government in accessing resources from traditional development donors.

With support from the headquarters SSTC team, Zimbabwe was also the first WFP country office to access funds (almost USD 1 million) from the India-United Nations Development Fund. While these resources will not be used to fund SSTC activities, they are relevant in that they derive from a global SSTC mechanism.

88. SSTC initiatives also showed strong potential for indirectly influencing country-level funding by contributing to improvements in national performance in key areas. This, in turn, enhances the likelihood of both national government and external donors increasing or continuing their support to related programmes. In Libya, for instance, an exchange with Egypt contributed to the Libyan Government investing in its first school feeding pilot project implemented with support from WFP Libya. In the Republic of Congo, stakeholders noted that the SSTC pilot project on cassava value chain improvement was generating interest from other donors, creating potential for continuation and scaling-up of related efforts. The same project also allowed the Republic of Congo to access resources from the WFP Emerging Donor Matching Fund to complement in-kind contributions from provider countries Benin and Côte d'Ivoire.

⁴¹ See, for example, the 2017 Evaluation of the Brazil CoE.

⁴² SSTC Policy p.4, paragraphs 2-3.

⁴³ See WFP CoE (2020). *Supporting the Development and Implementation of Resource Mobilization Initiatives. The Gambia*. Available at: <https://centrodeexcelencia.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/WFPCoECaseTheGambia.pdf>.

Establishing or strengthening partnerships

89. While the SSTC Policy refers to partnerships as an element of or condition for SSTC, it does not explore the reverse: the extent to which SSTC can contribute to countries' objectives in terms of strategic regional and/or global partnerships, which are often linked to political and economic interests. Box 7 has more details.

90. Consulted stakeholders inside and outside of WFP highlighted this dimension in relation to the increasingly strong role played by China as an SSTC donor and provider of expertise and solutions. While resources provided by China allowed WFP to expand its work on SSTC, working with and through WFP also allowed the Government of China to strengthen its global position in the SAMS agenda and generate stronger networks with partner countries and regions. Several national stakeholders in Africa and the Latin American and Caribbean regions were critical of the promotion of Chinese technology as part of the SSTC exchange that, in their view, created dependencies and were not always fully adapted to local contexts. Others noted that recipient countries could not always be "choosers", and that the collaboration with China in the context of SSTC initiatives offered much needed support that they were unable to obtain through other partners.

Box 7: South-South and triangular cooperation as a tool for regional partnering and positioning

In the context of its 2019 African Union presidency, the Government of Egypt's increasing interest in SSTC was based on the view that SSTC facilitated capacity strengthening and stability across the region. Both were relevant to Egypt from the standpoint of regional solidarity and in relation to opening future markets and positioning Egyptian expertise and made-in-Egypt solutions within these.

Contributions of WFP-facilitated South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives to outcome- and impact-level change

Finding 11: The nature of SSTC as a modality of engagement makes it difficult to determine the extent to which it has contributed to sustainable changes in behaviours and practice or, ultimately, impact. Nevertheless, available evidence indicates that contributions links are probable.

91. According to the WFP SSTC theory of change (Annex III), capacity change outcomes achieved with the support of WFP-facilitated SSTC are envisaged to contribute to behaviour and practice changes by recipient country actors adapting, implementing, or scaling up and expanding new solutions in their respective contexts. Ultimately, the aim is to assist countries in achieving measurable progress against SDGs 2 and 17 faster, with stronger ownership, and more sustainably than would be the case without WFP support.

92. Assessing the contribution of a modality such as SSTC to long-term results is challenging due to the fact that within WFP programming, SSTC is often only one among several modalities used in parallel, and that WFP support overall is only one among many factors influencing complex national processes and practices. Nevertheless, plausible links between South-South cooperation, subsequent behaviour/practice change outcomes and progress towards impact are relatively well documented and underpinned by evidence in the area of social protection, in particular school feeding.⁴⁴ In many countries, SSTC contributed to the design, implementation or expansion of home-grown school feeding programmes, especially through support provided through the Centre of Excellence in Brazil. In some cases, these programmes have been transferred from WFP to government-owned and financed programmes. Functioning school feeding systems not only contribute to addressing malnutrition among school-aged beneficiaries, but also create returns in the areas of education and gender equality, health and nutrition, social protection, and local economies and agriculture.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ See, for example, the 2017 evaluation of the CoE Brazil and WFP (2021). School Feeding Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals: A Strategic Evaluation.

⁴⁵ See WFP (2019). The Impact of School Feeding.

93. WFP-supported SSTC also has the potential to contribute to higher-level results in other thematic areas where SSTC has been shown to have influenced national changes in relevant policy, strategies or programme implementation. For example:

- Governments in Bangladesh, the Dominican Republic, India, and Sri Lanka are incorporating fortified rice into social protection programmes and starting to make fortified grains more accessible to the larger population. This creates the potential of contributing to large-scale effects on closing the malnutrition gap, especially for the most vulnerable population segments.⁴⁶
- In Zimbabwe, South-South exchange initiatives have contributed to changing agricultural practices of smallholder farmers in producing and marketing drought-resistant grains. If the Government can sustain and expand such practices, they could contribute to longer-term outcomes in smallholder farmer resilience and food security.
- In the Republic of Congo, the ongoing SSTC pilot project on cassava transformation is expected to contribute to the diversification of food sources and agricultural products, with potential to be included in the WFP home-grown school feeding programme in that country.
- In the Caribbean, the regional exchange among the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Cuba (see example provided under Finding 8), and the creation of a strong inter-country institutional network is contributing to improved emergency preparedness and resilience building in the participating countries.

2.2.4. CONTRIBUTIONS TO GENDER EQUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS

Finding 12: SSTC contributions to objectives around gender equality, inclusion, and accountability to affected populations were largely indirect through changes in the broader programme areas to which they contributed. Corporately, WFP has not yet articulated how SSTC can contribute to furthering inclusion or gender equality.

94. Across reviewed countries, WFP country strategic plans reflected WFP corporate commitment to principles of gender equality, inclusion (including youth participation), equity and accountability to affected populations. Also, consulted country office staff emphasized that all WFP country-level work was informed by and reflected these cross-cutting perspectives in terms of their objectives and processes.

95. The extent to which this commitment was addressed by individual, WFP-supported SSTC initiatives varied. Related considerations tended to be most visible in dedicated SSTC projects (such as the SSTC pilot projects), which included explicit gender equality objectives related to both the envisaged development results that the project was aiming to contribute to and the process of project implementation. In Sri Lanka, for example, the SSTC pilot project focuses on women smallholder farmers who are at risk of being left behind. It targets farmers' organizations that have strong engagement from women and encourages active participation of at least 50 percent women smallholder farmers in the training and other SSTC activities.

96. Country office reporting on national partners taking part in South-South exchange activities was not always available. This was especially the case when isolated SSTC activities such as a study tour constituted only one among many WFP-supported programming activities. Where participant data existed, it usually provided sex-disaggregated information on participants. The evaluation found no examples of participant information being disaggregated by age.

⁴⁶ See, for example, WFP and Sight and Life Foundation (undated, probably 2018 or 2019). Rice Fortification. Supply chain and technical feasibility. Evidence from 10 years of implementation around the world. Slide presentation.

97. The evaluation found only a few examples of WFP-supported SSTC initiatives engaging women not only as potential beneficiaries and users, but also as providers of relevant knowledge and innovation. (See Box 8.)

98. Consulted country office staff across countries noted that national partners usually made decisions on which participants would take part in exchange activities, and that differences in the representation of men and women often mirrored broader national or geographic patterns of gender representation.

99. As per the WFP Strategy for Accountability to Affected Populations (2016-2021),

engaging affected populations in programme decisions is a key element of ensuring accountability to these populations. For many documented WFP-supported SSTC initiatives, it was not possible to assess the extent to which affected populations had been included in their design, due to a lack of information on the genesis of the exchange. The evaluation found several examples, however, where the design of SSTC initiatives in SAMS engaged representatives from affected populations. (See Box 9.)

100. WFP has not yet tackled the issue of whether and how WFP-supported SSTC can play a role in shaping advocacy for gender equality or other inclusion and equity issues, including by providing opportunities for diverse actors to take on the role as providers of relevant knowledge.

Box 8: Ecuador: South-South exchanges in the context of the new National Policy for Rural Women:

Ecuador's new National Policy for Rural Women was launched by the President of Ecuador in October 2020. The process of its development included WFP-facilitated South-South exchanges of rural women leaders (or *lideresas*) from Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras and Peru. The exchanges helped Ecuadorian rural women feel more empowered to "speak up" during policy consultation processes. Learning from the experiences, particularly in Guatemala, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock leadership and technical staff became more aware of the practical implications of the policy and shifted their focus from the design process towards prospects for policy implementation.

Overall, the exchanges contributed to making the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock consultations more participatory, thereby increasing the new policy's legitimacy and relevance. Consulted stakeholders widely agreed that the consultative process for policy development was exemplary due to the participation of rural leaders from other countries, and also by "giving back" to these visiting *lideresas* by providing them with recognition for their achievements and the opportunity to compare their own country's progress with others. The successful knowledge-sharing experience motivated the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock to include mutual learning networks as one of the indicators of the new policy.

Box 9: Bottom-up approach for designing South-South and triangular cooperation pilot projects

In the Republic of Congo, consulted stakeholders involved in the SSTC pilot project widely agreed that one factor contributing to the success of the project was its bottom-up approach, with project design beginning with asking smallholder farmers about their needs. This approach was made possible by and benefitted from WFP field offices and their close ties to farmer organizations on the ground.

In Sri Lanka, the focus of the pilot project on reducing post-harvest loss reflected the result of consultations with local farmers who had identified related issues as one of their key challenges.

2.2.5. UNPLANNED RESULTS

Finding 13: WFP support for SSTC initiatives contributed to solidifying and broadening the role of WFP as a trusted partner to host governments and other United Nations agencies.

101. Stakeholder consultations in the 12 reviewed countries, as well as at global and regional levels, indicate that WFP support to SSTC contributed to growing recognition among external stakeholders of the organization's mandate that spans both development and humanitarian action. While not necessarily unintended, these effects were unplanned in that they were not explicit objectives for WFP support to SSTC. In the Dominican Republic, for example, government partners emphasized that WFP was one of the few United Nations agencies providing structured support to SSTC beyond ad-hoc events, and that WFP was highly valued by government stakeholders as a "noble" partner genuinely interested in building national capacity and resilience.

102. SSTC initiatives also sometimes helped deepen existing collaboration between WFP and other United Nations agencies, in particular the other Rome-based agencies. This was the case both at headquarters level, for example, in the context of Rome-based agency collaboration in preparation of BAPA 40+ and in relation to exploring SSTC-specific monitoring and evaluation, as well as at country level, especially in the context of the China-funded SSTC pilot projects, that required collaboration among Rome-based agencies. In Ecuador, the South-South exchange among rural women (see Box 8 above), fostered WFP-led collaboration not only with FAO but also with UN Women in one of its core thematic areas. In Egypt, several United Nations agencies have already indicated their interest in making use of the Luxor centre's facilities established jointly by WFP and the Government of Egypt.

103. Other unplanned positive effects are the indirect influences on national-level resource mobilization described under Finding 11 above, and new or increased interest among other actors and donors whose interest was sparked by a SSTC-informed pilot initiative. For example, in the Republic of Congo, work around the cassava value chain pilot project contributed to increased interest from the private commercial sector to invest in a cassava manufacturing plant.

2.3. EQ3: WHY HAS THE POLICY PRODUCED THE RESULTS THAT HAVE BEEN OBSERVED?

2.3.1. INTRODUCTION

104. This section presents evaluation findings on internal and external factors that influenced, both positively and negatively, progress in policy implementation and, more broadly, the extent to which WFP-supported SSTC initiatives contributed to results. It addresses subquestions under EQ3 in the evaluation matrix (Annex VII). The analysis drew on evidence from document, dataset and literature reviews, global stakeholder consultations, the review of comparator organizations, and from the 12 remote country missions and country desk reviews "plus". The resulting evidence base was solid in that it allowed triangulation of data sources.

105. Several of the internal factors described in Section 2.3.2 link back to observations in Section 2.2 on progress towards results in mainstreaming SSTC into WFP operations.

2.3.2. INTERNAL FACTORS

Alignment of WFP support with principles of "good" South-South and triangular cooperation

Finding 14: WFP support to SSTC initiatives generally reflected the normative principles outlined in the WFP SSTC Policy and global good practice.

106. As is illustrated in Table 9, WFP support to SSTC was overall aligned with the principles of "good" SSTC as described in the WFP Policy and global normative frameworks and agreements. This was despite the fact that most consulted WFP country office staff did not know the content of the SSTC Policy, and that only some reported that the Policy or corporate guidance materials on SSTC had directly informed their work. The fact that their work was, nevertheless, aligned with most of the good practice principles may be due to several factors, including: (i) advocacy and advisory efforts carried out since 2015 through the headquarters SSTC team, Centres of Excellence and regional bureaux; and (ii) the fact that several of the good practice principles are not specific to SSTC alone but characterize elements of good development work that apply in other contexts, including in relation to supporting country capacity strengthening or partnerships.

Table 9 Alignment of WFP-supported South-South and triangular cooperation with principles of "good" South-South and triangular cooperation

Principle as per SSTC Policy	Assessment	Observations/Comments
Focus on the most vulnerable		SSTC initiatives consistently aim to contribute to broader WFP-supported government objectives aimed at improving the lives of the most vulnerable. This alignment is not necessarily a characteristic of SSTC interventions alone but derives from the broader CSP and thematic objectives that SSTC contributes to.
Promote local ownership; demand driven		WFP-supported SSTC initiatives consistently reflected national needs and priorities as reflected in national policy frameworks and WFP CSPs that were developed in partnership with national governments. WFP aimed to assist national and local level partners in identifying and adapting solutions that were relevant to their specific needs and contexts, thereby facilitating local ownership.
Emphasize complementarity		WFP-supported SSTC generally aimed to complement rather than substitute traditional North-South cooperation. As such, related efforts were integrated into broader WFP programming and aimed to contribute to established objectives that were also pursued through North-South and Triangular cooperation. At both global and country levels WFP collaborated – to varying degrees – with other UN agencies on SSTC, especially with the other RBAs.
Ensure inclusiveness and balance		Dimensions such as gender equality and accountability to affected populations were reflected in the broader thematic objectives that South-South initiatives aimed to contribute to, mirroring commitments in CSPs and WFP corporate thematic policies and strategies. The extent to which such commitments were explicitly reflected in SSTC initiatives, either in terms of their learning and development objectives or in relation to the processes employed and the actors engaged, varied considerably.
Facilitate learning and innovation		WFP-supported SSTC initiatives facilitated the sharing of innovative practices and supporting countries in adapting these into context-appropriate solutions. During COVID-19 pandemic, WFP assisted partners in exploring options for remotely conducted exchanges, including webinars and video conferences. While similar modalities had been used occasionally in the past, their use increased across reviewed regions.
Strengthen country systems and capacity		SSTC initiatives supported by WFP consistently aimed at strengthening not only the capacity (knowledge, skills) of individual actors, but also of institutions, organizations or networks at both policy and technical levels, thereby enhancing the likelihood of adopted solutions being locally owned and sustainable.
Driven by clarity of intent, and focused on adding value		During the review period, several COs started to pay increasing attention to ensuring that WFP-supported South-South exchanges served clear objectives, and that there were mechanisms in place to support host country partners in ‘translating’ information gained through SSTC into action. Recent SSTC initiatives often included a formal or informal needs assessment to help stakeholders formulate specific learning needs. WFP consistently focused on supporting SSTC in thematic sub-areas where the organization was able to add value based on its comparative advantage (see finding 16).
Build on existing structures and programmes		The extent to which SSTC-related efforts at the country level were systematically supported through existing WFP programmes and structures varied though, and in several cases such efforts were largely due to the initiative of individual WFP staff members.
<p>Key: <u>Green shading</u> = the principle was consistently reflected across reviewed countries, thematic areas and throughout the review period. <u>Yellow shading</u> = the principle was frequently reflected, but with greater variation between countries, thematic areas, or weaker during earlier than later parts of the review period.</p>		

Source: Evaluation team.

WFP comparative advantage and strategic partnering

Finding 15: The comparative advantage of WFP in relation to SSTC is rooted in the organization's extensive field presence and networks, including at the community level. Its reputation as an organization historically focused on humanitarian issues is both a limitation and a potential strength.

107. Consulted stakeholders within and outside of WFP at global, regional, and country levels widely agreed that the organization's strengths, overall and in relation to its support to SSTC, lie in the following dimensions:

- The organization's often long-term presence in, and continued support to, host countries and their most vulnerable groups positioned WFP as a trusted government partner with the proven ability to identify and help implement hands-on solutions to problems.
- WFP is a global leader in issues of food security and school feeding, and it has an understanding of private sector supply chain actors at national and international levels.
- WFP expertise in humanitarian response positions the organization well to support host country partners in strengthening national and (sub)regional systems for emergency preparedness and response, resilience and shock-resistant social protection mechanisms.
- The extensive field presence of WFP means that, more so than most other United Nations agencies, WFP has strong ties to and knowledge of the challenges affecting vulnerable groups and communities. This allows the organization to advise government partners on specific learning needs or gaps, to mobilize networks of community actors and government representatives for adapting and implementing innovative solutions, and to effectively facilitate the gradual transition of programmes and policies to local ownership.
- WFP has its Centres of Excellence as hubs dedicated to supporting and promoting SSTC.

108. Compared to its strong global reputation as a humanitarian organization, WFP experience and engagement in supporting development work are still less well known, with the exception of its support to school feeding. Some consulted stakeholders, especially within WFP, perceived this as a limitation to the ability of WFP as a broker of SSTC, given that host governments might be more likely to approach other United Nations agencies with more defined development agendas to help them address learning or partnership needs. At the same time, several consulted host country partners saw the organization's emergent profile as a development actor as a potential strength because it meant that WFP was more willing to learn and engage horizontally, and to approach support to SSTC more flexibly than other United Nations organizations. Also, they perceived WFP as providing more space for government stakeholders to take the lead in designing South-South initiatives than other agencies.

109. During the 2015-2020 period, WFP, through the headquarters SSTC team, consolidated and expanded its engagement with other global SSTC actors inside and outside of the United Nations (see Findings 5 and 14). At both global and country levels, WFP worked closely with the other two Rome-based agencies, FAO and IFAD. In 7 of the 12 reviewed focus countries, SSTC initiatives were implemented or were being planned in collaboration with FAO and/or IFAD.⁴⁷ Ecuador was the only focus country where WFP also partnered with another United Nations agency (UN Women) in the context of SSTC. At the country level, WFP SSTC-related partnerships with other United Nations agencies tended to be project-based, and, in some cases, dependent on the availability of dedicated external resources, such as through the China-funded pilot projects. Interestingly, WFP was able to take the lead on inter-agency work in thematic areas least explored for SSTC engagement, such as emergency preparedness and response in the Dominican Republic and gender equality in Ecuador, where specialized agencies (such as UN Women in Ecuador) followed and highly appreciated WFP lead in one of their core agendas. There seems to be ample potential for WFP to contribute to inter-agency efforts, not only for its own sake, but in benefit of United Nations Development System (UNDS) reform and UNOSSC-led efforts to mainstream SSTC within the work of UNDS.

⁴⁷ SSTC-specific collaboration with FAO was noted in the Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Kenya, Malawi, Sri Lanka, and Zimbabwe. Collaboration with IFAD was planned in Sri Lanka. In other countries, RBA collaboration existed but not specifically in the context of SSTC.

110. The WFP approach to partnering with regional or subregional organizations has been fragmented. Examples of successful partnerships include the collaboration between the Centre of Excellence in Brazil and the African Union around school feeding and the collaboration between the Egypt country office, the African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa’s Development (AUDA-NEPAD) and private sector partners (see Box 10). However, WFP staff, especially in the Latin American and Caribbean region and Asia regions, noted that WFP had not yet sufficiently tapped into the potential of (sub) regional entities as partners for SSTC.

Box 10: Egypt country office and AUDA-NEPAD partnership for the Africa Environmental Portal

In 2015, the WFP Egypt country office and NEPAD renewed a long-existing but dormant memorandum of understanding between WFP and NEPAD. One focus of the collaboration is data infrastructure development for Africa through the development of and capacity strengthening around the use of the Africa Environmental Portal, a tailor-made geographic information system (GIS).

WFP Egypt is collaborating with ESRI Northeast Africa, an Egypt-based private sector firm specialized in geospatial intelligence, and Egypt’s Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics. In 2020, NEPAD approved seed funding of USD 250,000 to the Egypt country office for developing the platform and training NEPAD officers, WFP officers from other country offices in the region, as well as selected government representatives from other countries on the use of the platform. Ultimately, the intention is to help NEPAD develop its ability to strengthen regional capacity for data-based decision making through South-South cooperation.

Organizational transformation and culture

Finding 16: The increasing engagement of WFP in SSTC was supported by, and has the potential to contribute to, the prominence of the “changing lives” agenda within the organization’s work.

111. Interviewed WFP staff at global (including at the Centre of Excellence), regional, and country levels generally agreed that there has been growing awareness of SSTC among WFP leadership and employees and increasing understanding that SSTC is no longer something that is done exclusively by Centres of Excellence (as had been the case during the early years of the Brazil Centre of Excellence) but is of interest to all WFP units and teams. While the SSTC Policy may have played a role in bringing about this change, other factors highlighted by WFP staff are the internal advocacy work led by the headquarters SSTC team, and the broader ongoing organizational transformation from being a “doer” to also being a “facilitator”, especially in the context of stable, middle-income countries.

112. While many WFP leaders and staff have embraced the organization’s evolving role as a facilitator and have, as discussed in Sections 2.1 and 2.2, actively supported SSTC, others are still sceptical and are lacking the practical skills and experience required for adopting the new role. Similar observations were made by other global and country-level stakeholders and in the evaluations of the WFP People Strategy (2019), the Policy on Capacity Development (2016) and its Corporate Partnership Strategy (2017).

113. Views varied among consulted WFP employees on the extent to which the increasing emphasis on SSTC derived from stronger senior leadership support. On the one hand, interviewees acknowledged that SSTC had been explicitly referenced in the organization’s past two strategic plans, that a dedicated headquarters SSTC team had been established, and that senior leadership had actively supported efforts to expand the number of WFP Centres of Excellence. On the other hand, several stakeholders felt that WFP senior leadership had not sufficiently followed up on verbal commitments to SSTC with financial and/or human resource allocations to help regions and country offices translate ideas into action (see also Finding 24).

114. In some countries, consulted WFP country office leadership placed the observed lack of financial commitment to SSTC into the broader context of a general absence of clarity and strategic direction on how WFP should engage in and with middle-income countries (MIC). While meaningful engagement with middle-income countries is key for the WFP mandate that spans both saving lives and changing lives, WFP still operates without a clear organizational approach for its role in environments where it no longer provides food assistance.

115. Several individual country offices have been able to transform themselves into more agile and responsive partners to the host governments, but WFP corporate discourse has remained, to a large extent, focused on humanitarian issues, without providing country offices in middle-income countries and stable,

least developed countries with substantial strategic or political support (see Box 11). Continued organizational learning on how WFP can meaningfully engage with national partners in emerging economies, including through SSTC, has the potential to not only align with but also further the organizational transformation of WFP.

Box 11: Relevance of WFP branding in the context of emerging economies

Several consulted stakeholders inside and outside of WFP critically commented on what they perceived to be an undifferentiated approach to WFP branding and communication.

In India, for example, the WFP focus on “zero hunger” and “food security” does not resonate with many government representatives given that the country’s main concern is not hunger but malnutrition, and the fact that India produces surpluses of food/grains but faces challenges in food quality and standards.

Operational guidance

Finding 17: WFP has developed various corporate guidance materials to help operationalize SSTC. The extent to which these are known and used by country office staff varies, however, and guidance has been adapted to only a few thematic areas. As a result, WFP country office staff still sometimes feel on their own with regard to supporting SSTC.

116. During the review period, the headquarters SSTC team developed numerous corporate guidance materials to help translate the broad principles described in the SSTC Policy into operational guidance. These include an e-learning course on SSTC, an SSTC manual, and a dedicated page on SSTC on the WFP internal online network (see also Annex II). The guidance materials are written in clear and understandable language, explain key concepts including the rationale for WFP to support SSTC, and provide some practical guidance for WFP staff on how to help plan and implement South-South exchange initiatives. These tools were complemented by regular newsletters and reports that showcased examples of successful South-South cooperation. In addition, the Nutrition Division, with support from the headquarters SSTC team, developed thematic guidance for SSTC in the area of nutrition (see Section 2.2.2 and thematic case studies in Annex IX), and the regional bureau in Panama prepared a “how to” guide on SSTC in social protection for the Latin American and Caribbean region. The public partnerships and resourcing team developed guidance for WFP units on how to access resources from the Emerging Donor Matching Fund to support SSTC.

117. Efforts to disseminate available corporate guidance to country offices were made by both the headquarters SSTC team and WFP regional bureaux. This included passing on information to country offices on available funding opportunities for SSTC work. Despite these efforts, at the time of this evaluation, only approximately half of consulted WFP staff noted that they were aware of existing WFP-wide guidance and tools for SSTC. Available evidence does not permit identifying whether this is due to challenges in how information has been disseminated, or whether it reflects other issues, such as staff members being stretched and unable to take notice of available guidance materials unless there is an acute need for which they require support.

118. Among those WFP staff who did know of the existing guidance materials, the majority noted that these were often too generic to meet their needs, which tended to be specific to a thematic area and geographic context. To date, the Nutrition Division is the only WFP thematic unit at headquarters that has developed an explicit corporate strategy for integrating SSTC. The regional bureau in Panama is the only regional bureau that developed regional guidance on SSTC integration in social protection work. These factors likely contributed to the fact that country-level staff frequently reported on feeling “left to their own devices” with regard to SSTC. In this context, interviewees expressed a particular need for more tailored guidance for how to integrate SSTC into specific thematic areas.

Evidence-based “match making” for South-South and triangular cooperation

Finding 18: Since 2015, WFP has developed several methodologies and tools to strengthen SSTC-related knowledge management in support of the WFP role as an SSTC “match maker”. Roll-out of these is ongoing and, at the time of the evaluation, WFP employees still often rely on their own professional and personal networks for identifying suitable “matches”.

119. One important element of the WFP role as a “broker” of SSTC is the ability to identify and propose examples of good practice from other countries that may be relevant for addressing challenges in the host country. The South-South review methodology, (see Finding 5) supports systematically matching host governments with best available partners by facilitating stock-taking of the national landscape with regard to SSTC, mapping the host country’s SSTC needs and available SSTC offers in line with WFP country strategic plan priority areas, and identifying a set of concrete SSTC investment opportunities, taking into account host government demands and priorities. The reviews also informed regional SSTC mappings conducted in three regions so far (the regional bureau in Dakar (RBD), the regional bureau in Johannesburg (RBJ) and the regional bureau in Nairobi (RBN)). Additionally, the headquarters SSTC team developed the prototype of an internal database to assist WFP regional bureaux, country offices and thematic units in sharing information on SSTC demand and offers of country expertise from which others might benefit. In parallel, the three Centres of Excellence have their own knowledge repositories and databases to capture and share good practices and to promote innovative solutions. The China Centre of Excellence, for example, places strong emphasis on conducting a systematic needs assessment before proposing concrete SSTC support.

120. As of mid 2021, South-South reviews had been completed in 14 countries. The development of the online database was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is not clear at the time of report writing when and how this work will continue. This can explain why many consulted WFP employees at country office level and in some regional bureaux were not aware of existing efforts to support systematic and evidence-based match making. Consulted employees frequently expressed a desire for better access to information about “what is out there” in terms of relevant SSTC solutions. They usually relied on their own professional and personal networks to identify possible matches. While in most cases this approach was effective for meeting host government needs, WFP employees acknowledged that it ran the risk of introducing, or of being perceived as introducing, bias towards certain solutions or provider countries and thereby limiting the pool of solutions from which to choose.

121. Besides the ongoing roll-out of corporate approaches and tools, other plausible factors that may contribute to this tendency are: i) time, as it is often faster, or perceived to be faster, to send a quick message to members of one’s professional network than to search a database and reach out formally to other WFP units; and ii) greater confidence in recommendations from a trusted contact than in anonymous information from a central knowledge repository. Additionally, host country governments are not always interested in the objectively “best” technical solution available, given that decisions about which countries to engage with are also driven by political and economic considerations. Section 2.3.3 on external factors has more detail.

Distribution of South-South and triangular cooperation roles and responsibilities across the organization

Finding 19: The formation of the global SSTC task force in 2019 created potential for strengthening internal collaboration and WFP organizational capacity for supporting SSTC by clarifying and distributing responsibilities more evenly between the headquarters SSTC team and other units.

122. Throughout the review period, the headquarters SSTC team took leadership for the development and implementation of the SSTC Policy. Its responsibilities and positioning in PRO were formally confirmed during the global SSTC meeting in 2019. Until 2018, all the progress on global SSTC advocacy, guidance and country support was made by one staff member (the SSTC focal point) in the WFP Programme Division, individual senior managers advocating for SSTC, individual focal points in some WFP regional bureaux (for example, the regional bureau in Panama), and the support of existing WFP Centres of Excellence. The size of the headquarters SSTC team increased from a single employee (until 2018) to a team comprising five full-time staff members and one additional member on temporary duty. This allowed the team to expand and deepen its work in several areas, including: exploring new opportunities for SSTC-related resource mobilization; headquarters-level collaboration with FAO and IFAD on monitoring and evaluation of SSTC; providing hands-on technical assistance to the implementation of the SSTC pilot projects; and developing a prototype of the internal knowledge management platform. Box 12 has information deriving from the review of comparator organizations.

Box 12: South-South and triangular cooperation teams at the headquarters of comparator organizations

Among organizations reviewed in the comparator study, only FAO maintains a large SSTC team at headquarters (with 16 staff and 5 consultants); the IFAD team has four staff and occasional consultants; and UNICEF relies on one staff member. Overall, FAO follows a highly centralized pattern with at best limited structures at the regional and country levels. In IFAD, responsibility for implementation of the corporate SSTC agenda also lies at headquarters, with regional SSTC and knowledge management centres supporting implementation of SSTC activities at the field level, including through knowledge sharing and policy dialogue partnerships with governments and other stakeholders. The overall UNICEF SSTC-related staffing presence is relatively thin, but includes dedicated focal points in select emerging economies.

123. Consulted WFP staff across levels, who had worked with the headquarters SSTC team, appreciated the quality of technical support the team provided and emphasized that, despite the unit's small size, team members had always been willing to help when contacted. Its small size, especially before 2018, also meant, however, that the team was limited in the number of countries and frequency of support that it was able to provide to regional bureaux and country offices, and that it tended to focus on those countries in the process of developing or revising their country strategic plans.

124. Other thematic and cross-cutting units at headquarters engaged with the headquarters SSTC team throughout the review period, including teams focusing on the closely related areas of country capacity strengthening and partnerships. Areas of collaboration involved work around including a dedicated SSTC indicator in the corporate results framework section on country capacity strengthening. The Strategic Partnerships Division is deeply engaged in SSTC, in that the Centre of Excellence in China reports to its Senior Director, who has also provided advice on other SSTC-related efforts, such as the creation of the Luxor centre in Egypt. WFP thematic units at headquarters regularly collaborated with the headquarters SSTC team to include examples from their thematic areas in regular SSTC publications.

125. Until 2019, intra-organizational collaboration largely consisted of informal, ad hoc, and two-way interactions between individual teams and the headquarters SSTC team. This both reflected and contributed to the varying degrees to which SSTC was formally mainstreamed in different thematic areas, and the persistent lack of clarity over the theoretical and practical relationship among the areas of SSTC, country capacity strengthening, and partnerships. The creation of the global SSTC task force in 2019 put in place a formal structure and mechanism for regular communication and exchange and also for clarifying the potential roles and responsibilities of actors beyond the headquarters SSTC team for driving WFP support to, and learning about, SSTC. As one member of the task force with decades of experience in WFP noted: "This is the first time I have seen all of these different actors come together around SSTC."

Box 13: The Luxor Coordination Centre for Knowledge Sharing and Innovation to Promote Resilience in Upper Egypt

In 2018, the WFP Egypt country office and the Government of Egypt signed an agreement for SSTC. The Luxor centre will facilitate collaboration and knowledge transfer between Egypt and neighbouring African countries. The centre is fully owned by the Egyptian Government and run by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Luxor governorate. WFP will provide technical support. The centre was deliberately not labelled as a Centre of Excellence to signal that it aims to be a knowledge hub for the whole region and not just for showcasing Egyptian expertise.

Finding 20: The roles played by WFP regional bureaux in supporting the SSTC work of country offices tended to be ad hoc and reactive, albeit with variations.

126. The evaluation noted several instances where regional bureaux staff provided country offices with valued support for their SSTC-related work, as shown in Box 14.⁴⁸ Overall, however, regional bureaux support to country offices tended to be ad hoc and reactive. Consulted country-level WFP staff were not always aware if there was a focal point in their region who fulfilled this role. This may be due to turnover among SSTC focal points⁴⁹ and the fact that focal points were often assigned duties not only for SSTC but for other cross-cutting issues as well, which limited their ability to focus on SSTC issues. In addition, several country office staff noted that their SSTC-related support needs usually were specific to their thematic area. As such, when questions arose, their first point of contact tended to be a regional colleague in their thematic area. If this contact was unable to help, they would follow up with the thematic unit at headquarters, but not with the regional bureau SSTC focal point. In addition, coordination between some SSTC focal points and thematic units in the same regional bureau was limited or non-existent. This may reflect the fact that, to date, the terms of reference for programme, partnership and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) staff profiles do not include reference to SSTC-related responsibilities.

Box 14: Examples of South-South and triangular cooperation-related regional bureau support to reviewed WFP country offices

The regional bureau in Panama assisted the Ecuador country office with preparing a proposal for funding for one of the SSTC pilot projects supported with seed funding from the Government of China. The regional bureau helped identify women leaders in Guatemala, Honduras and Peru, and organize their visits to Ecuador. The regional bureau in Panama also provided occasional support to the Dominican Republic country office in relation to identifying regionally available solutions for shock resistant social protection systems.

The regional bureau in Cairo advised the Libya country office on approaching Egypt as a possible partner to help learn about successful school feeding programme models.

The regional bureau in Nairobi brokered contacts between the Kenya country office and WFP or other partners in the region interested in learning from Kenya's experience with its home-grown school feeding programme.

The regional bureau in Johannesburg supported the Malawi country office to organize an exchange to allow Zimbabwean government representatives learn from Malawi's experience with the design and implementation of a warehouse receipt system.

The regional bureau in Dakar supported the Benin country office in relation to several SSTC initiatives, including by facilitating exchanges between the country office and the Centre of Excellences in Brazil and China.

127. Corporately, regional bureaux played a role in collecting good practice examples of country office-facilitated SSTC to feed into corporate SSTC progress reports. Furthermore, all six regional bureaux occasionally facilitated (sub) regional SSTC initiatives, such as meetings, conferences or forums involving representatives from several countries. Regional bureaux also supported host government partners to attend events, such as the Global Child Nutrition Forum.

128. The evaluation obtained only limited information on the extent to which regional bureaux actively engaged in regional dialogue on SSTC, such as with other United Nations agencies. Anecdotal information indicates that regional bureau engagement tended to be stronger in regions with longer and more extensive engagement in SSTC, due to the existence of many stable middle-income countries (for example, in Asia-Pacific) and/or a strong culture of intra-regional collaboration (for example, in the Latin American and Caribbean region, where the regional bureau in Panama has created a regional mappings of SSTC supply and demand).

129. Since 2017, the WFP regional bureaux in Johannesburg (RBJ) and Dakar (RBD), with support from the headquarters SSTC team, completed regional SSTC mappings that identified future opportunities for

⁴⁸ Additional examples are provided in WFP publications, for instance in the 2020 thematic report on SSTC (Beyond APR 2019 series, p. 14-15). However, while the report lists WFP-supported SSTC initiatives by regional bureau, several of the examples reflect initiatives led by country offices in that region but without specifying related RB contributions.

⁴⁹ During the evaluation data collection period, the focal point position in one RB was vacant, while in two others the focal point had just changed, and the new person was in the process of familiarizing themselves with the role.

SSTC in the region. Evaluation data did not allow for an assessment of whether and to what extent this had changed either regional bureau's approach to or frequency of engaging with country offices on SSTC issues. In 2020, plans for expanding the roll-out of the mapping methodology to other regional bureaux were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finding 21: Country offices adopted varying models to assign responsibility for SSTC. This was appropriate given their differing needs, available resources, and the priority level they assigned to SSTC.

130. WFP country offices varied in how they assigned and distributed responsibilities for engaging in, and capturing results deriving from, support to SSTC. In all 12 reviewed countries, SSTC was mainstreamed into the current country strategic plans either as an overarching approach to WFP work in that country (India, Egypt), and/or as a modality for country capacity strengthening (Burundi, Dominican Republic, Malawi, the Republic of Congo, Sri Lanka), and/or as a modality in a thematic priority area (Bangladesh, Benin, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe). In the country strategic plans of the 12 reviewed countries, SSTC was mentioned most frequently in relation to school feeding, social protection, smallholder resilience and protection, but also in the context of emergency preparedness and response and responding to the influx of refugee populations.

131. In several country offices, including Sri Lanka and Kenya, WFP staff noted that SSTC-related questions and experience sharing was regularly included in country office team meetings and in discussions between the country office senior leadership and programme leads. These exchanges contributed to shaping new SSTC initiatives based on experiences gained in other thematic areas. Some larger country offices, such as those in Egypt, India and Zimbabwe, appointed dedicated SSTC focal points to help systematize and capture information on experiences in this regard, but also with a focus on SSTC-related resource mobilization, as in Zimbabwe (see Box 15). The absence of a formally appointed SSTC focal point did not necessarily have negative effects on the quality or scope of a country office's engagement in SSTC or the degree of its collaboration with the SSTC team at headquarters.

Box 15: Country office focal point for South-South and triangular cooperation with focus on resource mobilization

In the Zimbabwe country office, SSTC was regarded as a cross-cutting issue relevant to all thematic units and officers. In 2018, the country office recruited a dedicated SSTC focal point whose job description included establishing and broadening contacts with potential SSTC partners, including China. For the initial years, the position was held by a Chinese national, which facilitated communication and collaboration with the Centre of Excellence in China and Chinese government partners.

The existence of a dedicated focal point position was also credited with having allowed the country office to access SSTC-related funding from other sources, including the India-United Nations Development Fund.

132. Similar to WFP, other United Nations agencies have also been hesitant to create permanent staff positions dedicated to SSTC and have largely relied on consultants. FAO and IFAD rely on programme staff interested in and able to lead SSTC exchanges for their portfolios. Much of the UNICEF SSTC agenda has been pushed by a small number of proactive SSTC focal points, for instance in Brazil and China, but these run the risk of becoming SSTC "islands", while headquarters staffing remains limited to one person only. The WFP Brazil Centre of Excellence has become an inspiration for all three agencies. To date, however, only FAO has partially advanced in creating "FAO reference centres", which are existing national institutions certified by FAO to provide SSTC reports. These are so far limited to five China-hosted reference centres focusing on food security and related aspects.

Finding 22: While the three current WFP Centres of Excellence share the same designation, they have different strengths, follow different approaches, and play different roles within WFP and in relation to external partners.

133. As illustrated in Table 10, the three WFP Centres of Excellence do not reflect a single WFP Centre of Excellence “model”. (Table 10 and Annex XVII show similarities and differences between the centres). WFP has not been clear on whether it embraces the diversity among the Centres of Excellence as a strength or whether it would like to strive for greater coherence between the centres. This has led to uncertainty among WFP staff and external stakeholders over what role Centres of Excellence play as part of the WFP organizational structure, and how country offices are expected to engage with them. This is also relevant in the context of past and current considerations over establishing new Centres of Excellence (see Box 16). While host country government interest, technical and resourcing capacity constitute necessary conditions for the existence of a Centre of Excellence, it is not clear who decides whether a new WFP-affiliated centre is created, when, and for what purpose.

134. WFP is aware of these challenges and, since 2019, there has been increasing interest and dialogue among members of the WFP SSTC task force, including the Centres of Excellence, to establish shared delivery and quality assurance standards for SSTC. This also entails ongoing efforts by task force members to further clarify roles and responsibilities of the Centres of Excellence in relation to other SSTC support functions and actors in WFP while, at the same time, preserving the unique profiles of each Centre of Excellence.

Box 16: Aborted plans to establish a Centre of Excellence in India

Between 2015 and 2017, the India country office had aimed to prepare the ground for the launch of a new Centre of Excellence for Food and Nutrition Security (CENEX) modelled on the Centre of Excellence in Brazil. The initiative received considerable interest and support from WFP headquarters. It progressed slowly, however, with the Government of India expressing increasing reluctance to create a new institution due to the fact that there were: (a) already well-established institutions; (b) a complex architecture of competencies and inter-institutional dynamics in the areas to be covered by the centre; (c) budgetary constraints and resistance by the Departments of Planning and Finance to create/fund a new and potentially contested institution; and (d) an overall preference on the part of the government to conduct SSTC on strictly bilateral terms. The project was aborted following the recommendations of the 2017 Mid-Term Review of the Country Strategic Plan (2015-2019).

Since 2018, the country office has shifted focus to positioning WFP as a trusted partner for SSTC and to creating a more flexible approach. This was galvanized in the 2020 Strategic Action Framework, which was informed by a South-South review supported by the SSTC team at headquarters and the regional bureau in Bangkok, and prospectively establishes specific engagement and investment opportunities.

Table 10 Comparison of Centres of Excellence along selected dimensions

Dimension	CoE Brazil	CoE China (*)	CERFAM(**)
Established in	2011	2016	2019
Funded by	Government of Brazil	Government of China	Government of Cote d'Ivoire
Thematic focuses	Originally focus on school feeding, since expanded to include social protection more broadly, nutrition, and smallholder farmer support	Value-chain development for small holders; post-harvest loss management and food system; disaster risk reduction and climate change resilience	Broad focus on issues relevant for addressing hunger and malnutrition, including social protection, home-grown school feeding, nutrition, post-harvest losses, rural development, and community resilience
Reporting line in WFP	HQ (AED Programme and Policy Development)	HQ (Director Partnerships and Advocacy Department)	The regional bureau in Dakar
Number of staff (***)	29	23	10
<p>Notes: (*) See also WFP (2021) China Country Strategic Plan Evaluation (<i>forthcoming</i>). (**) At the time of this evaluation, CERFAM was in the process of a leadership transition and was revisiting its governance structure, with the possible aim of integrating the centre into African Union structures. (***) Sources: Evaluation ToR and stakeholder interviews.</p>			

Source: Evaluation team based on compilation from various sources.

135. The existing Centres of Excellence are part of the WFP organizational structure in that they report to, albeit different, WFP units and are involved in internal WFP processes including corporate strategic planning. The Centre of Excellence in China also carries out WFP country office functions. At the same time, the centres are somewhat removed from other WFP units in that they are not funded through core WFP resources and are not formally accountable to WFP for the use of their resources.

136. This set-up offers both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, the centres have been able to play a facilitating role between WFP headquarters and the field. For example, based on its long-standing experience working with both WFP headquarters and various regional bureaux and country offices, the Brazil Centre of Excellence provided advice to the headquarters SSTC team on the development of guidance tools. On the other hand, their position adds to the noted uncertainty among many stakeholders over what the Centres of Excellence “are”. The centres’ different reporting lines to WFP contribute to this perception.

137. During the review period, all three Centres of Excellence provided valued support to WFP country offices and consulted stakeholders inside and outside of WFP largely agreed that the centres are an important element of the WFP organizational capacity for supporting SSTC, to varying degrees and in different ways. The Brazil and China Centres of Excellence have established reputations for expertise in relatively well-defined thematic areas (see Annex XVII) and for their ability to facilitate access to high-calibre thematic experts and technology⁵⁰ from their respective host countries. At the same time, CERFAM is positioning itself as a broker of expertise across sub-themes relevant in the broader context of SDG 2. This constitutes a potential strength as it supports the role of CERFAM as a neutral regional broker of expertise, rather than a promoter of solutions developed in Cote d’Ivoire. Not focusing on specific thematic areas of expertise may also make it more difficult for CERFAM, however, to articulate a recognized brand that would make it a compelling choice for partners seeking specific subject-matter expertise.

138. Besides short-term services, both the Brazil and China Centres of Excellence offer partner countries comprehensive capacity strengthening packages, including access not only to technical expertise but also to financial support through the respective host governments, to help adapt and implement innovations. Consulted WFP staff emphasized this role especially in relation to the China Centre of Excellence’s work in terms of its role to help navigate funding proposals and negotiations with the Government of China. This is a solid incentive for other countries to engage with the Centres of Excellence, which is important in light of the fact that many countries prefer to collaborate with countries in the same region and/or that speak the same language (see Section 2.3.3). The location of CERFAM and its focus on Africa constitutes a strength in this regard, in comparison to the Centres of Excellence in China and Brazil. At the same time, interview data indicate the perception that the centre is largely focused on west and Francophone Africa.

Financial resources and incentives

Finding 23: To date, WFP, like other United Nations agencies, has strongly relied on extra-budgetary resources to fund its work around SSTC. While this has allowed WFP to strengthen its work around SSTC, it also runs the risk of limiting the organization’s flexibility and independence in terms of SSTC-related programming decisions.

139. Assessing the extent to which financial resources invested in SSTC by WFP were adequate is difficult due to several factors. First, there is limited information available on the total amount of financial resources WFP invested, directly or indirectly, in the implementation of the SSTC Policy and supporting SSTC initiatives. No systematic overview is available of resources invested beyond the noted trust funds and staff costs for the headquarters SSTC team and regional focal points. Compiling or even estimating related amounts is exceedingly difficult due to the nature of SSTC as a cross-cutting modality of work, and the fact that related costs are often “hidden” in other budget lines and expenses, including for country capacity strengthening. There is no standardized approach yet to quantifying overall global SSTC flows.⁵¹ Second, given that the SSTC Policy has not been accompanied by a corporate implementation plan that would spell out specific objectives and related investment needs, there is no established basis against which to assess

⁵⁰ Especially in the case of the China CoE.

⁵¹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *2020 Financing for Sustainable Development Report*.

the extent to which allocated resources were sufficient. Third, it is not clear whether operating and programming costs of the Centres of Excellence, which are carried by their host countries, should be included or excluded from the calculation of WFP investments into SSTC. The evaluation of the UNFPA approach to SSTC notes similar challenges and states that “given the limited SSC results monitoring, it is not possible to accurately assess the adequacy of either human or financial resources for SSC within UNFPA”.⁵² Despite these limitations, available evidence points to the observations set out in paragraphs 140 to 143.

140. As noted in Section 1.3, during the 2015-2020 period WFP experienced an increase in dedicated financial resources for SSTC. This facilitated an expansion of the headquarters SSTC team, which allowed the team to deepen and broaden its work. The availability of resources through SSTC trust funds served as an incentive and enabler for several WFP country offices and host country governments to engage in SSTC in a deliberate and systematic way. In Ecuador, for example,

the China-funded SSTC pilot project was the only substantial WFP-supported SSTC initiative in that country during the review period. While substantial, SSTC trust funds in WFP have, until now, been considerably smaller than those established in other Rome-based agencies (see Box 17).

141. Despite the increase in SSTC financing, consultations with WFP staff reflect the common view that WFP had not yet sufficiently bolstered its verbal commitment to SSTC with adequate resources, in particular core budget allocations. To date, WFP allocations for SSTC remained far below the 0.5 percent of the core WFP programme support and administrative (PSA) budget recommended by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) in 2011.⁵³

142. Until now, the Government of China has been the sole contributor to the nominally “multi-donor” WFP SSTC trust fund (TSTC). In this role, it has influenced the thematic priorities and selection criteria for countries implementing TSTC-funded SSTC pilot projects. While this is not uncommon, it may result in the funding mechanism being perceived as supply rather than demand or needs-driven.⁵⁴ For WFP, being solely dependent on extra-budgetary resources thus runs the risk of narrowing its ability to support SSTC work across countries and thematic areas. Strong reliance on SSTC trust funds may lead to “projectizing” SSTC with a focus on short-term gains and thereby inadvertently working against the objective of SSTC mainstreaming in the context of longer-term planning cycles.

143. In most reviewed WFP country offices, financing challenges noted by consulted stakeholders were not specific to SSTC but derived, more broadly, from funding gaps for overall country strategic plan implementation or for “soft” country strategic plan elements around country capacity strengthening or partnership elements for which SSTC could have been used as a modality. This links to the broader question of whether WFP has developed adequate approaches and related financial instruments for its development-focused work, especially in middle-income countries (see Section 2.3.3).

144. As noted under Finding 22, reviewed country offices varied in their approaches to managing SSTC work, with some using dedicated country-level SSTC focal points and others focusing on mainstreaming SSTC across different teams. Regardless of which approach was taken, staff across country

Box 17: South-South and triangular cooperation contributions from China to FAO, IFAD and WFP

Since 2009, China has contributed USD 80 million to the FAO South-South cooperation programme through a trust fund, and USD 10 million to establish the China-IFAD South-South and Triangular Cooperation Facility in 2018.

In comparison, China’s SSTC-related contribution to WFP, through the WFP TSTC, was USD 1 million for 2019 and USD 1.5 million for 2020. In November 2020, China confirmed an additional USD 1.5 million for the TSTC 2021 programme of work.

The review of comparator organizations indicates that more dedicated resources do not necessarily result in more or better SSTC support at the country level or in better monitoring and reporting on SSTC-supported results.

⁵² UNFPA. 2021. Formative Evaluation of UNFPA Approach to South-South and Triangular Cooperation; p.51.

⁵³ Source: WFP investments in SSTC. Internal document prepared by the SSTC team in PRO. JIU report quoted in that document: South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the United Nations System.(2011), Report by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit.

⁵⁴ See Haug (2021) for a discussion of China’s evolving role as a promoter of SSTC globally and in the United Nations.

offices agreed that facilitating SSTC often required considerable investment of time and effort, for both WFP and involved partners. In their experience, transaction costs were often initially underestimated, and ran the risk of being a negative incentive for future support to SSTC. While dedicated country-level SSTC focal points strengthened country offices' capacity in specific dimensions, such as capturing SSTC-related learning or mobilizing resources, interviews also pointed to the broader need to ensure that thematic programme staff were enabled and incentivized to invest time in facilitative modalities, such as SSTC. The 2016 evaluation of the WFP Policy on Capacity Development noted that, at the time, there has been few incentives for staff to engage in, or excel at, capacity development and that the WFP organizational culture continued to be rooted in its delivery ability. (See Box 18.)

Box 18: Incentives for (or against) South-South and triangular cooperation engagement

Among consulted WFP staff across levels, only a few mentioned the availability of dedicated SSTC resources as a significant incentive for country offices' engagement in SSTC. Instead, most frequently noted drivers were:

- The experience that SSTC was an effective and efficient tool to further WFP objectives in terms of thematic advocacy, supporting country capacity strengthening and, in some contexts, facilitating resource mobilization. (See Section 2.2). This view was based on personal experience or from learning about the effective use of SSTC from colleagues in the same country office who worked in other programmatic areas.
- The conviction that facilitating SSTC needed to be part of a trust-based, respectful, and supportive partnering with host governments, especially in middle income and other stable country contexts where the focus of WFP work had shifted from humanitarian to development assistance.

Capturing, reporting on, and learning from results of policy implementation

Finding 24: Since 2015, WFP has improved its work around monitoring and reporting on SSTC but existing systems do not yet sufficiently permit systematically capturing, analysing and learning from information on WFP support to SSTC.

145. While the SSTC Policy did not include an explicit results framework or indicators (see Section 2.1), WFP incorporated one high-level indicator on SSTC into its corporate results framework in 2018. Reporting against this indicator has been fragmented,⁵⁵ which may be due in part to the fact that it is still comparatively new. WFP envisages to expand the existing set of indicators in the new corporate results framework accompanying the 2022-2026 strategic plan. Since at least 2014, WFP has also regularly reported against a similar Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) indicator that captures the number of country offices supporting SSTC. Combined, reporting against the existing indicators allowed WFP to identify trends in the extent to which SSTC was utilized across countries.

146. WFP country offices were encouraged to include information on the use of SSTC in the narrative descriptions accompanying corporate results framework indicators on country capacity strengthening or progress in thematic areas, such as school feeding. While some country offices have done so, resulting narrative information is difficult to aggregate and often activity-focused, thereby providing little information on how and to what extent the use of SSTC meant more, faster or more efficient progress towards results. Other factors that posed challenges for WFP country offices in terms of monitoring and reporting on SSTC were a lack of time and only limited incentives to go beyond the minimum reporting required against the corporate results framework indicator. Additional difficulties exist in countries that act predominantly as SSTC providers, where WFP support focuses on partnership-related rather than country capacity strengthening objectives covered by the corporate results framework indicator on SSTC. This made it difficult for country offices to report on their activities around SSTC, or on results that derived from SSTC in either the provider or recipient country. The extent and nature of country-level reporting is further influenced by the relevance assigned to SSTC in country strategic plans. While country strategic plans in all reviewed focus countries included reference to SSTC, the country strategic plan for Egypt is the only one that does so at the level of a strategic outcome, reflecting the host government's strong interest in the issue, thereby requiring explicit and more detailed reporting. Other country strategic plans tend to refer to SSTC at the activity level, sometimes generically in the context of country capacity strengthening, and sometimes in relation to

⁵⁵ Outcome indicator values as of May 2020, for example, provided only 17 entries from 12 countries.

specific thematic areas, most frequently school feeding and nutrition, resulting in reporting that is less extensive and more oriented to capturing progress towards thematic objectives.

147. In addition to formal corporate-level reporting, the headquarters SSTC team regularly captured information on SSTC through its regular SSTC newsletters, “snapshot” publications, and contributions to joint Rome-based agency or United Nations system-wide SSTC reports. In 2019, the headquarters SSTC team led the compilation of a comprehensive report on SSTC that captured highlights in the evolution of WFP work on SSTC since 2014.⁵⁶ These publications summarized examples of successful WFP-supported SSTC in different thematic and geographic areas. Different reports sometimes presented the same examples from a relatively limited number of countries (for example, rice fortification in Sri Lanka), while examples from other countries (for example, SSTC work supported by the Egypt country office) were not reflected. This derived at least partly from the absence of systematic capturing of, and reporting on, SSTC initiatives at country and regional levels for much of the review period since 2015, which meant that corporate reporting was dependent on information proactively provided by those country offices or regional bureaux that actively worked with the headquarters SSTC team. The corporate SSTC knowledge management platform that is under development (see Finding 20) is envisaged to address this challenge.

148. The largely descriptive reporting allowed WFP actors across regions and levels to get a sense of “what was going on” in terms of SSTC, thereby raising awareness of the diversity of issues and thematic areas in which WFP was supporting SSTC initiatives and providing SSTC champions to showcase successes. At the same time, it left a gap in adding analytical value - for example, in exploring how SSTC compared to other approaches used by WFP in enabling results achievement.

149. This analytical gap was only partly closed by evaluations. While several centralized and decentralized evaluations during the 2015-2020 period included observations on the use of SSTC,⁵⁷ these were often limited to observing that SSTC had been among the modalities used and provided few insights into the ways or degree to which this had facilitated progress towards country objectives. Consultations with the headquarters SSTC team and Office of Evaluation indicate that the terms of reference for decentralized or centralized evaluations do not routinely include questions about the role played by SSTC as a factor influencing WFP contributions to results.

150. The SSTC pilot projects were conceived as opportunities for country offices to not only use, but also monitor and report on SSTC in more systematic and in-depth ways than usual. Project progress reports tend to rightly focus on activity- and output-level achievements and provide few reflections on the benefits or challenges deriving from the use of South-South exchange modalities. At the end of the first phase of the pilot projects, the headquarters SSTC team facilitated a compilation of lessons learned and related exchanges among the involved country offices to inform a second phase. This exercise did not, however, engage technical staff involved in project implementation and exchange activities nor was it guided by explicit learning objectives specific to SSTC.

151. The review of comparator organizations showed that other United Nations agencies face similar challenges in their corporate approaches to monitoring and reporting on the use of SSTC and its contributions to results and impact. So far, none of the comparator organizations track or report on development results from SSTC systematically, but report on outputs, such as the number of agreements, activities, or country programming documents that make reference to SSTC. To this end, in 2019 FAO introduced a programme/project level SSTC marker.

152. FAO and IFAD indicated that future work on results measurement would follow once the Rome-based agency working group finalized a joint monitoring and evaluation methodology, and UNICEF will decide on a consistent results framework as part of its upcoming SSTC strategy. Overall, it seems that there are substantial limitations to tracking, measuring and communicating results from SSTC, which is used primarily as a “good-to-have” modality, with little attention to its effectiveness. Reasons may be found in the lack of a global results framework for SSTC, the relatively small-scale and low-cost character of SSTC, and the fact that SSTC supported by United Nations agencies is often embedded in larger programmes, the

⁵⁶ WFP (2020) Leveraging Progress Against Hunger Through South-South and Triangular Cooperation. Beyond Annual Performance Reports 2019 Series.

⁵⁷ For example, in the 2019 Evaluation of the Update of WFP’s Safety Nets Policy and the 2021 Strategic Evaluation of School Feeding Contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (ongoing at the time of this evaluation).

results of which are measured without considering SSTC contributions to these. It remains to be seen whether the upcoming Rome-based agency SSTC monitoring and evaluation framework provides a solution to the persistent void, potentially converting the Rome-based agencies, into pioneers in this area if implemented consistently.

2.3.3. EXTERNAL FACTORS

Partner countries' stage of development, capacity levels and exposure to risks

Finding 25: Strong host government interest is the main driver and necessary condition for WFP involvement in SSTC. This interest exists regardless of a country's stage of development and often derives from multiple technical, political, and economic objectives.

153. Host government interest in and demand for SSTC was one the main reasons leading to the development of the WFP SSTC Policy and, across reviewed countries, was noted as the main driver for WFP engagement in SSTC. Consulted government representatives widely agreed that for them, South-South and triangular cooperation was a preferred way of learning, as it focused on solutions that were more likely to be relevant and applicable than those developed in countries of the global North and encompassed important symbolic elements of national and regional self-determination and solidarity. As is also reflected in the global literature, political stability was a significant enabling factor in a country's ability to engage in SSTC.

154. In the context of WFP-supported SSTC, host government decisions or preferences on which countries to engage with were often driven not merely by considerations of where the technically best solutions to a problem might exist, but also by other considerations:

- Across regions, national partners generally expressed a preference for collaborating with partner countries from the same region due to linguistic and cultural compatibility, greater likelihood of solutions being applicable with minimal adaptations due to similarities in country contexts, and also because such cooperation was often able to build on existing regional ties, forums and networks.
- In some cases, political tensions between countries informed decisions on which countries not to partner with (such as between Bangladesh and Pakistan) or caused logistical challenges (for example, difficulties for some Libyan government officials to obtain visas for a study visit to Egypt).
- For some of the reviewed countries that had worked on China-supported SSTC initiatives (for example, Zimbabwe), China was also a major donor for other, non-SSTC related work. The choice of China as an SSTC provider both derived from, and was hoped to consolidate, existing political and economic relationships.

155. Countries with comparatively stronger developed economies and national capacity, such as India, Egypt and Kenya, tended to act primarily as providers of expertise. However, stakeholders in these countries emphasized that they had gained important insights from exchanges with countries that, while at a lower overall level of development, had developed expertise and good practice solutions in certain areas relevant to them. Similarly, some countries that were until recently categorized as low-income economies, such as Zimbabwe,⁵⁸ took on dual roles as both providers and recipients of expertise.

156. A country's stage of development and capacity did play a strong role in whether the national government was able to independently adapt, implement, and replicate or scale up solutions gained through South-South exchanges or whether they required technical assistance from WFP or others to do so. In some cases, the absence of dedicated resources (government or external) was noted as a limitation in a host country government's ability and willingness to act as a provider of knowledge. In Ecuador, for example, the country's positive experience in introducing an integrated duck and rice production model through the SSTC pilot project, financially and technically supported by China, might also be relevant to other countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region. At the time of the evaluation, it was unclear,

⁵⁸ As per World Bank data, Zimbabwe was re-categorized as a lower middle-income economy in July 2020.

however, whether the Ecuadorian Government had sufficient resources and incentives to support replicating its experience in other contexts.

Finding 26: In middle-income countries, there is an increasing need for United Nations agencies to clearly articulate how they add value to countries' existing South-South cooperation agendas.

157. In regions that encompass relatively high numbers of middle-income countries, such as Latin America and the Caribbean and South Asia, countries engage in considerable South-South cooperation without the involvement of United Nations agencies or other third-party actors. Host governments in middle-income countries across regions increasingly require United Nations agencies to clearly demonstrate how they add value and to justify overhead costs that usually go along with United Nations involvement.

158. Among the 12 focus countries, this was most clearly articulated in India (see Box 19), where consulted government stakeholders articulated the need for WFP and other United Nations actors to show how its involvement could improve Indian SSTC delivery, for instance by contributing to more efficient, effective, and/or faster delivery. This expectation is also rooted in the fact that India does not require external funding for its SSTC and is therefore looking at multilateral engagement from the perspective of technical benefits and returns. To date, the India country office has been able to demonstrate such value added in the context of nutrition-related SSTC, which was embedded in broader WFP support to piloting and scaling up nutrition programming, especially rice fortification.

Box 19: In some middle-income countries, there is increasing need for United Nations agencies to demonstrate value added to country-driven South-South and triangular cooperation agendas

India is a global driver of SSTC, engaged through a variety of modalities from soft loans, grants and technical cooperation to humanitarian assistance and cultural exchange. While focused on neighbouring countries, India is also deeply involved in cooperation with African countries and contributes substantial resources to international SSTC funds.

So far, almost all Indian SSTC is being delivered bilaterally, occasionally using multi-country or country-led regional platforms, and the Government has maintained a critical position towards multilateral engagement in its SSTC. Since the BAPA+40 conference, the Government is exploring options for letting multilateral actors support India's SSTC agenda. To date, however, it has remained difficult for such actors to do so beyond project-by-project engagement.

United Nations system, global and regional-level contexts

Finding 27: The current global and United Nations contexts provide stronger legitimacy and more obligations for United Nations agencies to support SSTC than was the case in 2015.

159. Compared to 2015 when the SSTC Policy was developed, the current global context provides United Nations agencies, including WFP, with stronger authority to engage in SSTC. Related commitments are enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals and outlined in outcome documents of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (2015) and BAPA +40 (2019). Within the United Nations, the QCPR 2020-2024 emphasizes the need for country-driven enhanced capacity-building for sustainable development and calls for the strengthening of cooperation in science, technology, and innovation, including North-South, South-South and triangular, regional and international cooperation.⁵⁹ As such, existing frameworks not only permit but also represent expectations for United Nations agencies to enhance their support to SSTC.

One of the aims of the ongoing UNDS reform is to contribute to more robust lines of accountability from UNCTs to host governments and better collaboration amongst United Nations agencies.⁶⁰ Consulted representatives from WFP and other United Nations agencies widely agreed that, in practice, inter-agency collaboration is often difficult to achieve at the country level, due to the fact that agencies compete for resources and are therefore interested in making their own clearly distinguishable marks. As such, inter-agency collaboration on SSTC is not yet systematically integrated into regular UNCT structures and

⁵⁹ Source: United Nations General Assembly Economic and Social Council. 2020. *A/75/79-E/2020/55*. 30 April 2020. Similar emphasis on SSTC had been expressed in: United Nations General Assembly Economic and Social Council. 2019. "Funding Compact". (*A/74/73/Add.1 – E/2019/4/Add.1*).

⁶⁰ On UNDS reform, see United Nations General Assembly resolution *A/RES/72/279* (June 2018).

processes. It remains to be seen to what extent implementation of the recently approved United Nations System-Wide Strategy on SSTC (2020-2024) will change this. It calls on United Nations agencies to jointly identify priority areas for collaboration on SSTC and focus related United Nations system engagement on common country analysis, capacity assessment, stakeholder engagement and programming.⁶¹

⁶¹ UNOSCC (2021). United Nations System-Wide Strategy on South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development. Paragraph 28.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1. CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1: The WFP SSTC Policy was adequate at the time of its development when WFP was only beginning to support SSTC more widely. In 2021, it is partly outdated and the organization's increased corporate experience around SSTC provides opportunities for developing more targeted SSTC objectives.

160. The Policy was relevant in that it responded to related demand from WFP Executive Board members and clarified the concept of SSTC in an organizational context at a time when most WFP staff had limited awareness and understanding of SSTC. It provided normative guidance on principles to guide WFP support to SSTC, thereby positioning the use of SSTC by WFP in the context of global good practice. The WFP SSTC Policy was of equal quality as the SSTC frameworks of FAO, IFAD and UNICEF. Weaknesses of the Policy were: the absence of clear expectations of what success in policy implementation would look like; a lack of information on, and commitment to, human and financial resources needed for its implementation; and the fact that the Policy was “gender blind”. Many elements of the Policy, in particular the guiding principles, remain relevant to current global good practice on SSTC, including the United Nations framework of operational guidelines. Changes in WFP and United Nations contexts provide opportunities to reposition SSTC in an environment that is, overall, more conducive to WFP support for SSTC than it was in 2015.

161. For most of the review period, policy implementation was driven largely by the small SSTC team at headquarters, whose work is highly regarded among WFP staff at global, regional and country levels. While various other WFP units supported SSTC-related activities, in particular the Centres of Excellence, country offices and regional bureaux, these did not have clearly assigned responsibilities for policy implementation. In consequence, ownership and uptake of the Policy beyond the SSTC team were limited and largely dependent on the interest and commitment of individuals. This is not unusual, however, for cross-cutting corporate policies and strategies in WFP.

Conclusion 2: Since 2015, WFP has broadened and systematized its SSTC engagement. WFP-supported SSTC initiatives have facilitated improvements in national capacity while also contributing to strengthening regional and global partnerships and, in some cases, aiding countries in resource mobilization from national and international sources.

162. In terms of overarching results, the development and implementation of the SSTC Policy contributed to raising organization-wide awareness of SSTC as a modality relevant to all of WFP and not limited to the work of the Centres of Excellence. Since 2015, WFP broadened the use of, and took steps to further systematize its support to, SSTC. The creation of a global WFP task force for SSTC in 2019 that brought together different units at headquarters, regional bureaux and Centres of Excellence was a promising milestone in this regard.

163. WFP support to SSTC initiatives contributed to positive changes in country capacity at all three reviewed levels. By facilitating the use of knowledge, technologies and financial resources existing in low- and middle-income countries to help other such countries, the use of SSTC created potential for WFP to increase its reach beyond those directly benefitting from WFP-led food assistance or cash transfers. The following are areas of positive change:

- In relation to policy, the use of SSTC fostered positive peer pressure between countries and helped instil confidence among host government decision-makers that feasible and cost-effective solutions to challenges faced in their country existed and had been shown to work in comparable contexts. Positive effects of SSTC at the policy level were demonstrated most frequently in the thematic areas of social protection, especially school meals, and nutrition.
- Across thematic areas, SSTC contributed to strengthening the technical capabilities (knowledge, awareness, skills) of relevant actors within and outside of government institutions, and/or provided

them with access to innovative technology, resources, and professional networks. These changes increased the likelihood of countries successfully translating policy commitment into practice by adopting, implementing, and sustaining innovative solutions gained through exchanges with other countries.

- At the community level, WFP-supported SSTC initiatives helped increase awareness of new approaches and technologies and assisted stakeholders with their initial implementation. Direct contributions of SSTC emerged primarily in the area of strengthening smallholder farmer resilience and access to markets. Other benefits for community-level actors were largely indirect, through the effects of the implementation of innovative solutions informed by South-South exchange.

164. WFP-facilitated SSTC also helped some countries access additional financial resources. This included: (i) directly mobilizing resources, for example, through SSTC provider countries such as Brazil and China offering comprehensive capacity strengthening packages including financial resources for implementing (pilot) projects on the ground; and (ii) indirectly mobilizing both national and external donor resources by helping to strengthen advocacy, programmes and systems, which contributed to scaled up and more effective use of funding.

165. The constructed theory of change for WFP work around SSTC is based on the link between changes in capacity and subsequent sustainable changes in behaviours and practices, which, ultimately, contribute to progress towards achieving SDGs 2 and 17. SSTC is one among several interlinked modalities of work, and it is difficult to verifiably separate contributions deriving from the use of South-South and triangular cooperation from the effects of other modalities employed in different thematic areas. Nevertheless, SSTC contributions to higher-level changes have been demonstrated in the context of home-grown school feeding programmes and are plausible to emerge in other thematic areas.

166. WFP-supported SSTC initiatives varied in the extent to which they incorporated gender equality and broader equity considerations. Related objectives were consistently reflected in the broader country and thematic objectives to which SSTC initiatives aimed to contribute. There is limited information, however, on the extent to which specific South-South exchange activities, such as study tours or workshops, reflected commitments to gender equality, equity and inclusion in terms of their content and participants. Among the 12 reviewed countries, the evaluation noted only one SSTC initiative that featured women not only as the beneficiaries but also as the providers of knowledge.

Conclusion 3: Since 2015, the internal environment of WFP for supporting SSTC has improved. The process of institutionalizing SSTC is ongoing and SSTC is not yet fully mainstreamed across WFP. Globally, there is increasing demand for, and appreciation of, SSTC from developing country governments, especially in emerging economies and middle-income countries.

167. Internal factors within WFP that positively influenced adoption and implementation of the SSTC Policy included: the stewardship provided by the SSTC team at headquarters; the role played by the three Centres of Excellence in providing quality technical assistance and, in the case of the Brazil and China Centres of Excellence, facilitating access to financial resources for South-South cooperation; the commitment of individual WFP staff members at headquarters, regional bureau and country office levels who were driving WFP support for SSTC in their areas of work. In early 2021, WFP is among the most advanced United Nations entities in terms of mainstreaming SSTC at the institutional level.

168. Internal factors that negatively affected policy implementation were: the absence of clearly defined roles and responsibilities for SSTC beyond the headquarters SSTC team; the absence of clearly defined objectives and envisaged results for mainstreaming SSTC within WFP; the small size of the SSTC team during at least half of the review period; and a lack of operational guidance on how to mainstream the use of SSTC in different thematic areas and across regions. Since 2015, WFP has improved its work around monitoring the degree to which country offices use SSTC, and around capturing and sharing examples of this work among units and offices. WFP still lacks an approach, though, for systematically capturing, analysing, and learning from information on its support to SSTC beyond the level of activities and outputs.

169. The introduction of the WFP country strategic plans and the related greater focus placed on upstream work, and the increased organizational emphasis on being both a “doer” and a “facilitator”, especially in the context of stable, middle-income countries, were conducive to expanding and systematizing WFP use of SSTC. While many WFP leaders and staff have embraced the organization's evolving role, others are still sceptical, however, and are lacking the practical skills and experience required

to carry out their new roles as facilitators. At the country level, neither the SSTC Policy nor related corporate guidance significantly influenced expanded WFP support to SSTC. Instead, the main internal drivers were the conviction of country office staff members and leadership that SSTC constitutes part of “good” development work, and the direct or indirect experience that SSTC is an effective tool for furthering WFP objectives in relation to country capacity strengthening, advocacy, partnerships, and, in some contexts, resource mobilization.

170. While several WFP staff expressed the view that WFP financial investments for SSTC were insufficient, available data are not sufficient to either validate or refute this assessment. This is partly due to the cross-cutting nature of SSTC, which prevents the reliable calculation of investments in SSTC separate from investments in other country capacity strengthening or partnership work. It is also due, however, to a lack of clarity over what fully mainstreaming SSTC into WFP work should look like, what human and financial resources are required, and at what levels, to make this happen, and what kinds of financial instruments or mechanisms need to be in place to mobilize and channel SSTC financial investments. At the country level, most noted challenges deriving from resource limitations related to resource gaps for implementing the overall country strategic plan and were neither specific nor limited to SSTC. In this context, WFP staff highly welcomed dedicated SSTC funds such as those made available for the SSTC pilot projects.

171. The main external factor that influenced the evolution of WFP use of SSTC was strong host government demand for South-South and triangular cooperation both from “provider” and “recipient” perspectives. For many governments, SSTC is a preferred way of learning as it focuses on solutions that are more likely to be relevant and applicable than those developed in the global North, and because it has both practical and symbolic value related to self-determination and solidarity. The comparative advantage of WFP in relation to SSTC derives from its deep field presence and extensive networks, including at the community level. Compared to its vast experience and strong global reputation as a humanitarian organization, WFP engagement in development work is still less known, with the exception of its support to school feeding. This constitutes both a weakness, as it potentially limits the extent to which host governments may perceive WFP as a partner of choice in relation to brokering SSTC, but also a strength as it contributed to perceptions of WFP as being more flexible in its support to SSTC than some other United Nations agencies. The existing network of Centres of Excellence provides WFP with an additional comparative advantage in terms of visibly promoting and supporting SSTC.

172. Global events since 2015 have resulted in a current global environment that is more conducive to WFP support to SSTC than at the time of policy approval. Commitments to SSTC are enshrined in, amongst others, the Sustainable Development Goals and BAPA+40. The ongoing process of United Nations reform reinforces demands on United Nations agencies to strengthen their support to country-driven capacity strengthening and cross-country cooperation.

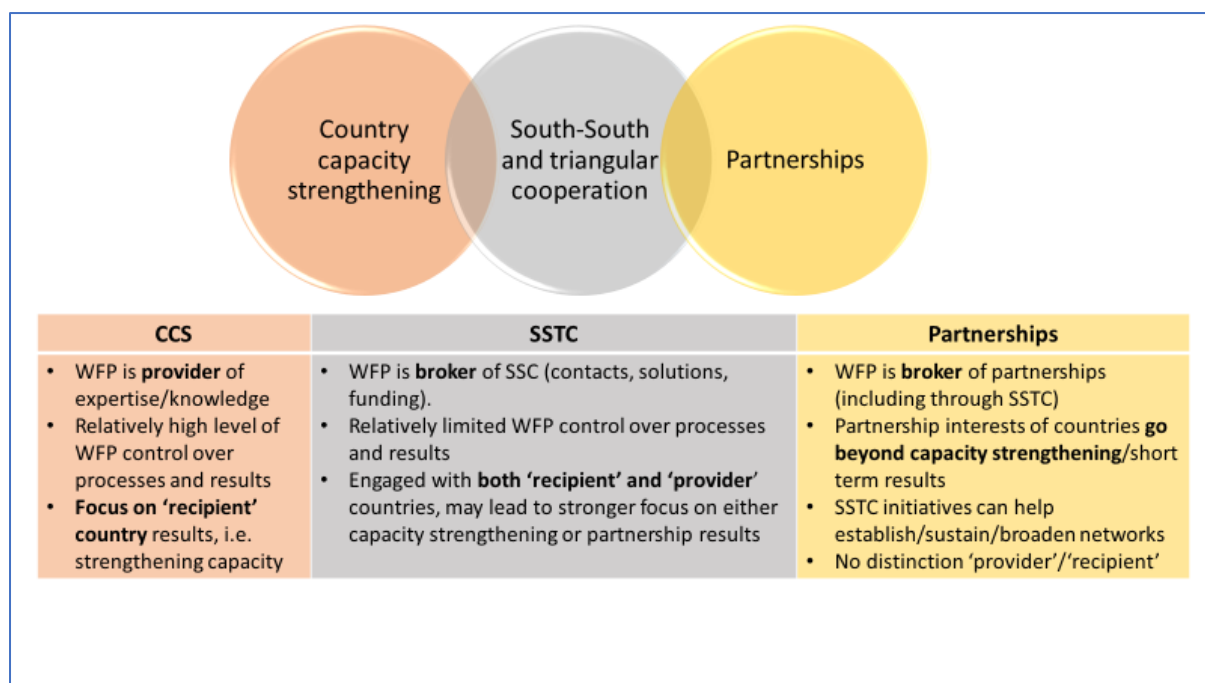
Conclusion 4: If WFP wants to position itself as a player within revitalized United Nations country teams and as a valued partner for emerging economies and middle-income countries, it needs to continue to strengthen its strategic use of SSTC and clarify the value that it can add as a broker or facilitator of SSTC.

173. In 2021, the global and United Nations environments provide stronger legitimacy but also more obligations for United Nations agencies to support South-South cooperation than was the case when the WFP SSTC Policy was developed. The evaluation found notable improvements in WFP support to SSTC since 2015. At the same time, it identified shortcomings that risk limiting the benefits that could derive from WFP SSTC engagement.

174. To date, WFP – largely through the work of the Brazil Centre of Excellence – has established itself as a respected broker of SSTC in relation to school feeding and, increasingly, in selected aspects of nutrition, including nutritious school meals and rice fortification. In the area of smallholder farmer support and market access, WFP – especially through the work of the China Centre of Excellence and also supported by the still relatively new CERFAM – became an increasingly active supporter of SSTC but has not yet established a clearly defined, sub-thematic niche that would distinguish its SSTC support from that of other United Nations agencies active in the same area, especially IFAD and FAO. Similarly, while WFP increasingly engaged in and supported South-South cooperation initiatives related to emergency preparedness and response, it has not yet developed a recognizable focus or niche in this regard.

175. Within WFP, SSTC has until now been largely discussed in its role as a modality for country capacity strengthening (CCS). Evaluation findings indicate, however, that SSTC plays an important role not only as a modality for country capacity strengthening but also in relation to supporting host governments' partnership objectives, especially in countries that act predominantly as SSTC providers. By partly, yet not fully, overlapping with both of these other cross-cutting dimensions, SSTC holds the potential for constituting a "bridge" between country capacity strengthening and partnerships (as shown in Figure 4). However, WFP has not yet clearly defined the relationship between SSTC, country capacity strengthening and partnerships, neither conceptually nor operationally. This makes it more difficult for WFP staff at all levels to plan, budget for, and report on, SSTC-related work. It also limits the potential role that the integration of SSTC, country capacity strengthening and partnership considerations could play for further nuancing the WFP approach to supporting middle-income countries.

Figure 4 South-South and triangular cooperation as a "bridge" between country capacity strengthening and partnerships⁶²



Source: Evaluation team elaboration.

176. Overall, evaluation findings are largely positive with regard to policy quality, results deriving from policy implementation, and WFP awareness and management of internal and external factors influencing support to SSTC during the review period 2015-2020. Within the United Nations system, WFP is among those entities that have made most progress towards SSTC mainstreaming. Looking forward, the normative principles outlined in the SSTC Policy continue to be relevant to global good practice, and to the organization's current and emerging priorities under the new WFP Strategic Plan (2022-2026), which emphasizes the dual responsibility of WFP to not only "deliver" but also "enable".

177. There is a need, however, for WFP to: (i) explicitly embrace SSTC as a strategic opportunity to enhance the organization's role as a facilitator and enabler in the context of its changing lives agenda; (ii) articulate where it wants to go as an organization in terms of mainstreaming SSTC across thematic areas; (iii) continue to clarify the distribution of roles and responsibilities among WFP units for using, monitoring, reporting on, and providing technical backstopping for SSTC; (iv) further strengthen its existing systems for capturing and learning from WFP support to SSTC; (v) identify financial and human resource needs that are specific to WFP SSTC-related work at global, regional and country levels and develop a plan for meeting them through a combination of internal and external sources; and (vi) continue to work with Rome-based

⁶² Source: Evaluation team informed by evaluation findings and supporting evidence, including consultation with members of the HQ SSTC team.

agencies and other United Nations agencies towards a more integrated United Nations-system approach for supporting SSTC.

3.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

178. The six recommendations below encourage WFP to continue and expand the positive changes set in motion since 2015. The recommendations are prioritized based on the evaluation team's assessment of their urgency and relevance. They are presented in two groups. The first group (in Table 11) includes strategic recommendations with a focus on setting overall directions for WFP support to SSTC in the short and medium term. The second group (in Table 12) entails more operational recommendations related to selected elements of operationalizing the overall vision of WFP for SSTC.

Recommendation	Responsibility and deadline
Strategic recommendations	
<p><i>Priority: High</i></p> <p>Recommendation 1: WFP should revise the SSTC policy based on an agreed upon and widely shared corporate vision.</p>	<p><u>Overall lead:</u> Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division (PRO) SSTC team.</p> <p><u>Deadline:</u> EB.1/2023 (February 2023)</p>
<p>1.1 To inform policy development, WFP should build on the ongoing work of the SSTC task force to clearly articulate its vision and comparative advantage for engaging in and supporting South-South cooperation, including in relation to the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.</p> <p>Related efforts should reflect and address the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • articulate how SSTC has the potential to further WFP's work in relation to country capacity strengthening, partnerships and other policy and programme and cross-cutting areas; • clarify and, as needed, prioritize any specific thematic or geographic areas of focus of WFP's support for SSTC in the short and mid-term; and • reflect on how SSTC can be relevant in furthering gender equality and broader equity and inclusion objectives. 	<p><u>Lead:</u> PRO – specifically the PRO Director, including in his role as chair of the SSTC task force.</p> <p><u>Support:</u> SSTC task force members (including thematic units at headquarters, the regional bureaux and the centres of excellence); Gender Office; PRO – country capacity strengthening (CCS) team; Partnerships and Advocacy Department (PA), including Public Partnerships and Resourcing Division (PPR) and Strategic Partnerships Division (STR); PRO – Programme Cycle Management Unit (PROM).</p> <p><u>Deadline:</u> June 2022</p>
<p>1.2 WFP should revise the SSTC policy based on the standards for policy quality in WFP.</p> <p>The revised policy should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • articulate specific objectives and targets for what effective mainstreaming of SSTC into WFP's work will look like in the short, mid and long term; • include an overarching theory of change that outlines the results that WFP support for SSTC is expected to contribute to at the global, regional and country levels and across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, reflecting both “recipient” and “provider” countries; • describe the envisaged internal division of SSTC-related labour and assign clear roles and responsibilities to different units and teams at different levels within WFP, including for SSTC resource mobilization and for knowledge management; and • make a case for identifying and sustaining adequate resourcing of SSTC work at the global, regional, centre of excellence and country levels. 	<p><u>Lead:</u> PRO – specifically the PRO Director, including in his role as chair of the WFP SSTC task force.</p> <p><u>Support:</u> WFP SSTC task force members; Gender Office; CCS team; PA, PPR and STR; PROM, Monitoring and Evaluation Liaison Unit.</p> <p><u>Deadline:</u> EB.1/2023 (February 2023)</p>

Recommendation	Responsibility and deadline
<p>1.3 WFP should develop a costed implementation plan to accompany the revised SSTC policy.</p> <p>Based on the vision (sub-recommendation 1.1) and revised policy (sub-recommendation 1.2), the implementation plan should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help operationalize WFP’s expanding SSTC work at the global, regional and country levels through a combination of financial instruments (in particular programme support and administrative funding) and mechanisms (such as a programme or trust fund); • identify resource requirements for policy implementation, including for full-time and part-time SSTC human resources at headquarters and regional bureaux, including but not limited to the headquarters SSTC team and the network of regional focal points; WFP staff capacity strengthening at various levels and across thematic areas; SSTC-related data collection, reporting, evaluation and knowledge management; and financial incentives for country offices to engage in SSTC and serve a wider range of countries across more thematic areas; • specify when, how and by whom progress in policy implementation and in mainstreaming SSTC within WFP will be monitored and reported; • define a set of shared quality standards for SSTC-related services provided by WFP units, including the centres of excellence; • review and confirm or adjust, as required, the membership, objectives and ways of working of the SSTC task force; and • formulate priorities and strategies for SSTC-related collaboration and coordination with other United Nations agencies, in particular the other Rome-based agencies. 	<p><u>Lead</u>: PRO – specifically the PRO Director, including in his role as chair of the WFP SSTC task force.</p> <p><u>Support</u>: SSTC task force members; PPR.</p> <p><u>Deadline</u>: EB.1/2023 (February 2023)</p>
<p><i>Priority: Medium</i></p> <p>Recommendation 2: WFP should ensure that SSTC considerations continue to be reflected in second-generation CSPs and any relevant new corporate frameworks and policies.</p> <p>At a minimum, whenever SSTC is reflected in CSPs they should be checked to ensure that there is broad alignment with the common country analyses and the United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks.</p> <p>Relevant guidance and a system for ensuring that those checks are regularly made should be in place by June 2023.</p>	<p><u>Lead</u>: PRO – specifically the PRO Director, including in his role as chair of the WFP SSTC task force.</p> <p><u>Support</u>: SSTC task force members and regional bureaux (programme and monitoring and evaluation units).</p> <p><u>Timing</u>: June 2023</p>

Operational recommendations	
Recommendation	Responsibility and deadline
<p><i>Priority: High</i></p> <p>Recommendation 3: WFP should further strengthen its approach to generating evidence and fostering learning from WFP-supported SSTC.</p>	<p><u>Overall lead</u>: PRO</p> <p><u>Support</u>: SSTC task force; Office of Evaluation; Corporate Planning and Performance Division (CPP); regional bureaux (programme and monitoring and evaluation units)</p> <p><u>Deadline</u>: November 2023</p>

<p>3.1 Ensure that approaches to generating evidence and fostering learning on SSTC draw from both qualitative and quantitative analysis and reporting.</p> <p>By November 2023, approaches and related guidance should be developed at the minimum in a pilot format to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that SSTC-specific indicators in WFP’s corporate results framework for 2022–2026 allow and are used for quantitative tracking of country office use of SSTC; and complement anecdotal reporting on SSTC with occasional studies that, using qualitative and quantitative data, explore SSTC value-added in specific geographic and thematic contexts. 	<p><u>Lead:</u> PRO</p> <p><u>Support:</u> SSTC task force; CPP; headquarters divisions that engage in SSTC; regional bureaux (programme and monitoring and evaluation units).</p> <p><u>Deadline:</u> November 2023</p>
<p>3.2 Consider introducing an SSTC marker at the project level (similar to the marker used by FAO) that would trigger shared responsibility of a thematic unit and either the SSTC team at headquarters or the regional SSTC focal point.</p>	<p><u>Lead:</u> PRO SSTC team</p> <p><u>Support:</u> SSTC task force; CPP; regional bureaux (programme and monitoring and evaluation units).</p> <p><u>Deadline:</u> November 2022</p>
<p>3.3 Update existing or develop new Office of Evaluation guidance on how SSTC perspectives can be integrated into centralized evaluations that address CCS or partnerships and into guidance on decentralized evaluations that include questions on CCS or partnership issues.</p>	<p><u>Lead:</u> Office of Evaluation</p> <p><u>Support:</u> PRO SSTC team; CPP; CCS team; PA.</p> <p><u>Deadline:</u> November 2022</p>

<p><i>Priority: Medium</i></p> <p>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.</p> <p>At a minimum, all new guidance should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> clarify why and how SSTC can support implementation of the WFP strategic plan for 2022–2026 and CSPs in a given thematic area; clarify what types of technical support programme officers in country offices and in regional bureaux can draw on in relation to SSTC; describe how SSTC engagement and related learning in any specific thematic area will be monitored and reported on, and by whom; and provide advice on how programme leads and programme officers can plan and budget for SSTC work, both within regular WFP budgets and with dedicated SSTC funding mechanisms. 	<p><u>Lead:</u> PRO</p> <p><u>Support:</u> SSTC task force; PA, including PPR and STR; CPP; headquarters divisions (as they decide to develop SSTC-specific guidance for the specific programme and policy areas they cover); regional bureaux (programme units).</p> <p><u>Deadline:</u> December 2023</p>
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Operational recommendations	
Recommendation	Responsibility and deadline
<p><i>Priority: Medium</i></p> <p>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.</p> <p>At a minimum, these efforts should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that at least basic SSTC-related responsibilities are incorporated into the terms of reference and job descriptions of WFP programme and partnership officers in regional bureaux and country offices to enable cross-fertilization and the effective mainstreaming of SSTC; support thematic units and teams at headquarters, regional bureaux and country offices in exploring opportunities to integrate staff capacity development on SSTC into capacity development initiatives related to CCS and partnerships in order to facilitate links between these areas; and review and strengthen communication and coordination mechanisms within and among WFP actors and units engaged in SSTC, including in relation to the collaboration between country offices, regional bureaux and centres of excellence. 	<p><u>Lead:</u> PRO</p> <p><u>Support:</u> SSTC task force members, especially in centres of excellence and regional bureaux.</p> <p><u>Deadline:</u> June 2022</p>
<p><i>Priority: Medium</i></p> <p>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 (UNOSSC), including by leveraging new partnerships with other United Nations entities and strengthening ongoing collaboration with the other Rome-based agencies in this field, and to report on it annually starting in 2022.</p> <p>By November 2022 WFP should have identified and prioritized the relevant points for engagement with the global and UNOSSC-led agendas and ensure that this information is then regularly considered as part of the SSTC work planning process and reported on, as part of the Rome-based agencies annual report.</p>	<p><u>Lead:</u> PRO</p> <p><u>Support:</u> PRO Director and PRO SSTC team.</p> <p><u>Timing:</u> November 2022</p>

Acronyms

AAAA	Addis Ababa Action Agenda
APR	Annual Performance Report
AU	African Union
AUDA-NEPAD	Agency African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa's Development
BAPA+40	Second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation in Buenos Aires
CCS	Country Capacity Strengthening
CERFAM	WFP Regional Centre of Excellence against Hunger and Malnutrition in Côte d'Ivoire
CO	Country Office
CoE	Centre of Excellence
CPP	Corporate Planning and Performance Division
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
EDMF	Emerging Donor Matching Fund
EME	Emergency Operations Division
EPR	Emergency Preparedness and Response
EQ	Evaluation Question
EQAS	Evaluation Quality Assurance System
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
LAC	Latin America and Caribbean region
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MARA	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (China)
MIC	Middle-Income Countries
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NUT	Nutrition Division
OEV	Office of Evaluation
PPR	Public Partnerships and Resourcing Division
PRO	Programme – Humanitarian & Development Division
PROC	Climate and Disaster Risk Reduction Programmes Unit
PSA	Programme Support and Administrative (budget)
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
RB	Regional Bureau

RBA	Rome-Based Agency
RBB	Regional Bureau in Bangkok
RBC	Regional Bureau in Cairo
RBD	Regional Bureau in Dakar
RBJ	Regional Bureau in Johannesburg
RBN	Regional Bureau in Nairobi
RBP	Panama Regional Bureau
RMP	Performance Management and Monitoring Division
SAMS	Smallholder Agriculture Market Support
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SSTC	South-South and Triangular Cooperation
STR	Strategic Partnerships Division
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TSTC	Multi-Donor Corporate Trust Fund for WFP-Facilitated South-South and Triangular Cooperation Projects
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDS	United Nations Development System
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOSSC	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation
UN-SWAP	United Nations System-Wide Action Plan
VAM	Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping
WFP	World Food Programme

Office of Evaluation

World Food Programme

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