



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

**Executive Board**  
Second regular session  
Rome, 15–18 November 2021

---

Distribution: General	Agenda item 6
Date: 5 October 2021	WFP/EB.2/2021/6-A
Original: English	Evaluation reports
	For consideration

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

---

## Summary report on the evaluation of the WFP South-South and triangular cooperation policy

### Executive summary

The evaluation of the WFP South–South and triangular cooperation policy was commissioned by the Office of Evaluation. It is timely as the policy is now in its sixth year of implementation.

The three main evaluation questions were:

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

The South–South and triangular cooperation policy was adequate at the time of its development in 2015, when the organization was only beginning to support South–South and triangular cooperation more widely. In 2021, while the normative principles outlined in the policy remain relevant, the policy is partly outdated and only partly meets current WFP standards for policy quality.

Since 2015 WFP has broadened and systematized its engagement in South–South and triangular cooperation. In 2021, WFP is among the United Nations entities that have made the most progress towards mainstreaming South–South and triangular cooperation even though it is not yet fully mainstreamed across the organization. WFP-supported South–South and triangular cooperation has facilitated improvements in national capacity at the policy, institutional and community levels, contributed to strengthening regional and global partnerships and, in some cases, aided countries in resource mobilization, but it has varied in the extent to which it has incorporated gender equality, equity and inclusion considerations.

*In line with the Evaluation Policy (2016–2021) (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-A/Rev.1), to respect the integrity and independence of evaluation findings the editing of this report has been limited and as a result some of the language in it may not be fully consistent with the World Food Programme's standard terminology or editorial practices. Please direct any requests for clarification to the Director of Evaluation.*

---

#### Focal points:

Ms A. Cook  
Director of Evaluation  
tel.: 066513-2030

Ms F. Bonino  
Evaluation Officer  
tel.: 066513-3438

---

WFP has established itself as a respected broker of South–South and triangular cooperation in relation to school feeding and selected aspects of nutrition. In the areas of smallholder farmer support and market access, and in relation to emergency preparedness and response, WFP has been an increasingly active supporter of South–South and triangular cooperation but has not yet established a clear niche for itself.

WFP's comparative advantage for South–South and triangular cooperation is rooted in its extensive long-term field presence; its expertise in food security, school feeding and supply chains and in relation to humanitarian response; and its network of centres of excellence. Implementation of the South–South and triangular cooperation policy was negatively affected by a lack of clearly defined related roles and responsibilities beyond those of the headquarters-based South–South and triangular cooperation team; a lack of clearly defined objectives and results for mainstreaming South–South and triangular cooperation; and a lack of operational guidance on how to mainstream South–South and triangular cooperation in various thematic areas.

Globally, there is increasing demand for and appreciation of South–South and triangular cooperation from developing country governments, especially in countries with emerging economies and middle-income countries, many of which declare South–South and triangular cooperation 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.

The evaluation team recommends that WFP explicitly embrace South–South and triangular cooperation as a strategic opportunity by articulating an organizational vision for South–South and triangular cooperation and by developing a new South–South and triangular cooperation policy and a costed implementation plan. WFP should also clarify the distribution of roles and responsibilities for South–South and triangular cooperation among WFP units, strengthen its systems for capturing and learning from WFP support for South–South and triangular cooperation and continue to work with the other Rome-based agencies and other United Nations agencies towards a more integrated United Nations system approach for supporting South–South and triangular cooperation.

### **Draft decision\***

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the WFP South–South and triangular cooperation policy (WFP/EB.2/2021/6-A) and management response (WFP/EB.2/2021/6-A/Add.1) and encourages further action on the recommendations set out in the report, taking into account the considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

---

\* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the decisions and recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

## Introduction

### 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,<sup>1</sup> 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, Food Systems and Smallholder 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,

---

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

the evaluation was conducted entirely remotely, which limited access to target programme recipients in situations where SSTC had been brokered. As a 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 South-South “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.

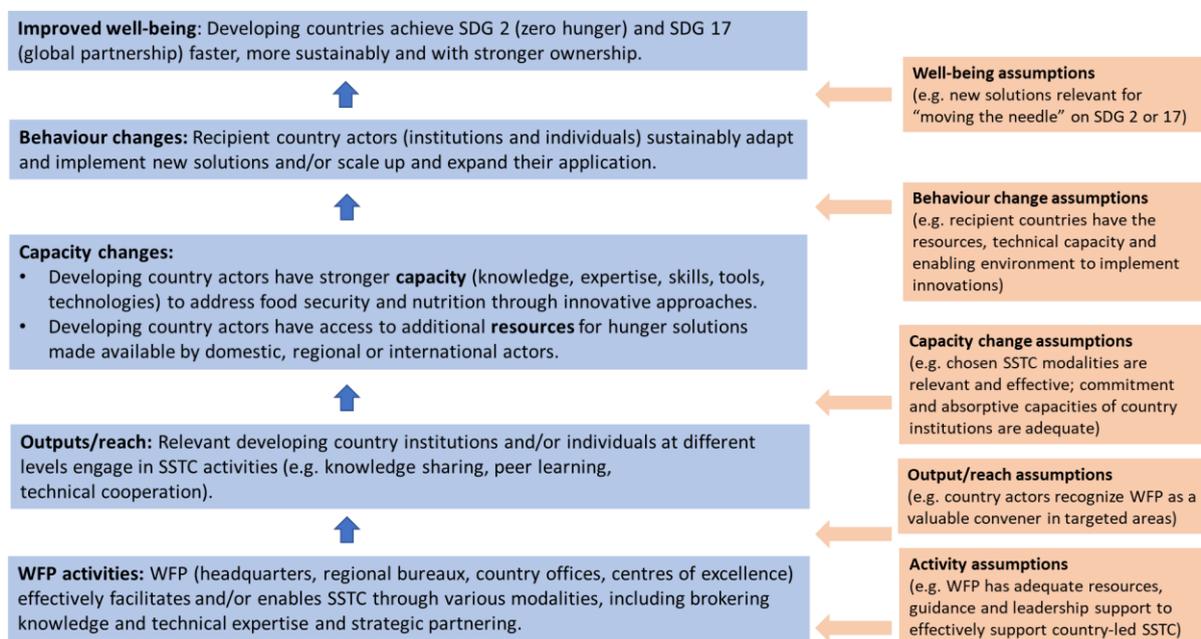
11. The SSTC policy provided a brief overview of how SSTC was already being addressed at WFP at the time the policy was developed. As shown in table 1, it named six priority activities for SSTC work and outlined eight guiding principles for WFP engagement in SSTC.

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

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

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

<b>TABLE 2: ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF THE SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION POLICY AGAINST CURRENT WFP POLICY QUALITY CRITERIA</b>	
<b>Policy quality criterion</b>	<b>Does the SSTC policy meet the criterion?</b>
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.<sup>2</sup> 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

---

<sup>2</sup> Joint Inspection Unit. 2011. [South–South and Triangular Cooperation in the United Nations System. IJU/REP/2011/3.](#)

“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.
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
<b>Strategic recommendations</b>	
<p><i>Priority: High</i></p> <p><b>Recommendation 1: WFP should revise the SSTC policy based on an agreed upon and widely shared corporate vision.</b></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><b>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.</b></p> <p>Related efforts should reflect and address the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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;</li> <li>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</li> <li>reflect on how SSTC can be relevant in furthering gender equality and broader equity and inclusion objectives.</li> </ul>	<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><b>1.2 WFP should revise the SSTC policy based on the standards for policy quality in WFP.</b></p> <p>The revised policy should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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;</li> <li>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;</li> <li>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</li> <li>make a case for identifying and sustaining adequate resourcing of SSTC work at the global, regional, centre of excellence and country levels.</li> </ul>	<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><b>1.3 WFP should develop a costed implementation plan to accompany the revised SSTC policy.</b></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"> <li>• 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);</li> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• specify when, how and by whom progress in policy implementation and in mainstreaming SSTC within WFP will be monitored and reported;</li> <li>• define a set of shared quality standards for SSTC-related services provided by WFP units, including the centres of excellence;</li> <li>• review and confirm or adjust, as required, the membership, objectives and ways of working of the SSTC task force; and</li> <li>• formulate priorities and strategies for SSTC-related collaboration and coordination with other United Nations agencies, in particular the other Rome-based agencies.</li> </ul>	<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><b>Recommendation 2: WFP should ensure that SSTC considerations continue to be reflected in second-generation CSPs and any relevant new corporate frameworks and policies.</b></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>
<b>Operational recommendations</b>	
<p><i>Priority: High</i></p> <p><b>Recommendation 3: WFP should further strengthen its approach to generating evidence and fostering learning from WFP-supported SSTC.</b></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>

Recommendation	Responsibility and deadline
<p><b>3.1 Ensure that approaches to generating evidence and fostering learning on SSTC draw from both qualitative and quantitative analysis and reporting.</b></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"> <li>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</li> <li>complement anecdotal reporting on SSTC with occasional studies that, using qualitative and quantitative data, explore SSTC value-added in specific geographic and thematic contexts.</li> </ul>	<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><b>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.</b></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><b>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.</b></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><b>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.</b></p> <p>At a minimum, all new guidance should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clarify why and how SSTC can support implementation of the WFP strategic plan for 2022–2026 and CSPs in a given thematic area;</li> <li>clarify what types of technical support programme officers in country offices and in regional bureaux can draw on in relation to SSTC;</li> <li>describe how SSTC engagement and related learning in any specific thematic area will be monitored and reported on, and by whom; and</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>	<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>

Recommendation	Responsibility and deadline
<p><i>Priority: Medium</i></p> <p><b>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.</b></p> <p>At a minimum, these efforts should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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;</li> <li>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</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>	<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><b>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.</b></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**

CCS	country capacity strengthening
CPP	Corporate Planning and Performance Division
CSP	country strategic plan
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
PA	Partnerships and Advocacy Department
PPR	Public Partnerships and Resourcing Division
PRO	Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division
PROM	Programme Cycle Management Unit
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSTC	South–South and triangular cooperation
STR	Strategic Partnerships Division
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNOSSC	United Nations Office for South–South Cooperation