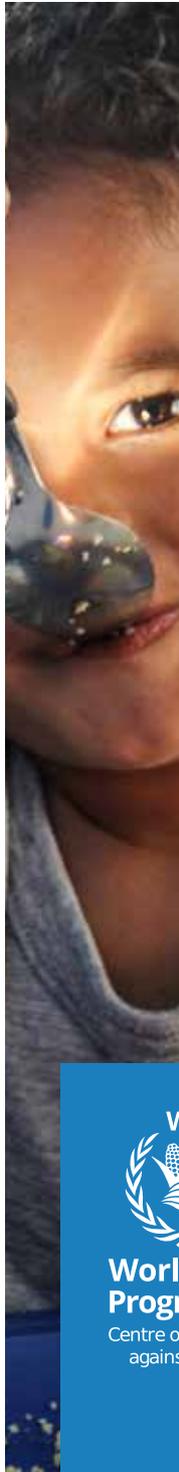


WFP CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

VIRTUAL EXCHANGES

REMOTE SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES



VIRTUAL EXCHANGES

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Since 2011, the WFP Centre of Excellence (CoE or Center) against Hunger in Brazil has been engaging, either onsite and/or remote, in technical assistance and capacity strengthening in development contexts for Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The WFP Strategic Plan 2017-2021 and Agenda 2030 provide the WFP CoE with an opportunity to strengthen its remote assistance's conceptual and operational framework to further contribute to national SDG2 efforts and results.

This document provides partners with a summary, rationale, and framework of WFP CoE's Virtual Exchanges, a remote assistance concept for SDG2 solutions, with focus on school feeding programmes. The methodology is consistent with the demand-driven approach of the Centre and it will support countries to engage in South-South cooperation within a broader programmatic and development context by: working with partner countries to identify the challenges to the strengthening of national programmes and defining a combination of technical assistance instruments and activities to overcoming the given challenge that will be implement in an adaptive and learning-focused manner.

WFP CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE AGAINST HUNGER IN BRAZIL

The WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger was established in 2011 to assist developing countries in strengthening their national food and nutrition security frameworks via South-South and Triangular Cooperation. Starting from Brazil's world reference experience in this field, in partnership with the Brazilian Fund for Education Development (FNDE) and the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), WFP CoE continuously supports over 30 countries develop their capacities and has engaged with over 80 countries worldwide.

Considering WFP estimates for school feeding, WFP CoE technical assistance, remote assistance, and capacity strengthening can benefit more than 4 million school-going children and thousands of smallholder farmers participating in home-grown school feeding (HGSF) programmes.

While delivering its South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) programme, the WFP CoE responds to requests by WFP HQ, RBs and COs,

as well as partner country governments to help identify, capture and package their national solutions in matters of school feeding and share these solutions with peers. For that, WFP CoE offers advice and various types of support to WFP RBs and COs and governments in the preparation of normative frameworks such as draft legislation, institutional development plans, pilots' elaboration and roll-out, country-level strategies, and implementation actions towards sustainable programs. WFP CoE responds to capacity gaps identified through an assessment process that is led by the partner government. Considering national contexts, available resources, operating constraints & opportunities and identified demands to achieve SDG 2 - Zero Hunger, some countries require closer technical assistance and capacity strengthening, while others can have their demands fulfilled by remote assistance's Virtual Exchanges.



VIRTUAL EXCHANGES

REMOTE SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES



HOW CAN WFP COE REMOTE ASSISTANCE HELP YOU?

South-South knowledge exchange initiatives are a powerful way to share, replicate, and scale up what works in development. Development practitioners want to learn from the practical experience of others who have gone through, or are going through, similar challenges. They want to be connected to each other and have ready access to practical knowledge and solutions, with specialized support from a third-party used to conducting such exchanges, as is the case of the WFP CoE. When done right, SSTC initiatives can strengthen the capacity, confidence, and belief of individuals and entities to perform better. Results from SSTC exchanges can also influence outcomes at the institutional and even systemic levels. Participants from successful HGSF SSTC initiatives are empowered and motivated to make things happen. They will pursue to change the environment in which they work, affect policies and norms that impact the way people perform, and strengthen the institutions where they operate.



TECHNICAL AND ADVISORY SERVICES

Programme/ Policy Design	Programme/ Policy Implementation
Transition Strategy	Country Strategic Planning Support
Smallholder Farmers Support in Supply Chain & Market Access	Project Preparation (resource mobilization and funding initiatives)



PARTNERSHIPS PROMOTION

Regional Networks Coordination & Facilitation
International Policy Dialogue
Multisector Coordination & Stakeholders Mobilization



ADVOCACY SERVICES

Identification of SSTC Opportunities
Study Visits & Knowledge Exchange Activities
Programme Cost-Assessment Support



KNOWLEDGE SERVICES

Data Collection and Evidence-Building
Good Practices Documentation and Dissemination
Monitoring & Evaluation Activities

VIRTUAL EXCHANGES

REMOTE SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES



WFP Centre's programme advice and technical assistance activities aim at nationally-tailored strengthened government capacities in policies and legislation frameworks, institutional capacity and coordination, strategic planning, national programme design, as well as engagement and participation of local communities.

Understanding that country resources may be limited, the WFP Centre developed its methodology for remote support - virtual exchanges.

WFP CoE Virtual Exchanges seize the recent digital transformation priority WFP has been going through and takes advantage of the increasing

global interconnectivity through the internet, promoting financial savings and reducing logistic hassles. WFP CoE Virtual Exchanges promotes Remote Assistance while facilitating Country Strategic Plans operation in the field and supporting high-quality school feeding programmes' designing and implementation. WFP CoE Virtual Exchanges develops data-informed and knowledge-based remote assistance resulting from the Centre's role and experience as a knowledge hub. Virtual Exchange initiatives are just a fraction of WFP CoE's menu of solutions and may be used as part of a change process to powerful effects.

STRATEGIC RESULTS WFP COE VIRTUAL EXCHANGES MAY ASSIST YOU PRODUCE



Access to knowledge, expertise and technology that strengthen global partnership to support your country's efforts to achieve sustainable school feeding programmes (SDG target 17.16)



Country's strengthened capacity to implement and deliver the sustainable school feeding programmes (SDG target 17.9)



Country's policies to support sustainable school feeding programmes are coherent (SDG target 17.14)

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES WFP COE VIRTUAL EXCHANGES MAY ASSIST YOU ACHIEVE



Enhanced capacities of WFP and national public institutions and systems, including local responders, to identify, target and assist food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable populations with school feeding programmes



National governments' demand for specific school feeding services fulfilled



Supported inclusive and sustained school feeding policy reform processes



Prioritized and implemented school feeding policy reforms



Enhanced common coordination platforms for nationally-owned school feeding programmes



Enhanced strategic partnerships with the public and private sectors and other operational partners for school feeding programmes

VIRTUAL EXCHANGES

REMOTE SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES



STRATEGIC OUTPUTS WFP COE VIRTUAL EXCHANGES MAY ASSIST YOU DELIVER

Strategic outputs are changes in skills or abilities and capacities of individuals or institutions, or the availability of new products and services that result from the successful completion of the Virtual exchange. They are achieved with the resources provided and within the period specified. Some examples of strategic outputs resulting from Virtual Exchange are:

capacity development and technical support, shared services and platforms, non-financial partnerships, national coordination mechanisms, policy engagement strategies developed/implemented, and policy reform identified/advocated. Strategic outputs for the exchange are agreed upon during the first stage of the process.

WHAT IS THE FOCUS AND THE ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE FOR VIRTUAL EXCHANGES?

WFP CoE Virtual Exchanges are directly linked to SDG 17, however to encourage more integrated programming, this modality of remote assistance is tailored for WFP COs and governments to produce results and achieve outcomes on SDG 2 as needed by each national context. Virtual Exchanges setup for

HGSF may be adapted based on operational context. There are 13 common HGSF programme areas for countries to choose from and for WFP CoE to tailor its assistance. This menu is not limitative, and depending on country needs, WFP CoE will develop new themes based on its knowledge hub:

-  Financing of the school feeding programmes
-  School menus design
-  School feeding legislation
-  Food and nutrition education in school feeding programmes
-  Social participation in school feeding programmes
-  Monitoring & Evaluation
-  Quality index of nutritional food safety coordination
-  Nutrition, food preparation and preservation
-  Gender-sensitive school feeding programming
-  Home-grown school feeding programming
-  Food waste
-  Nutrition-sensitive school feeding programming
-  Multisectoral coordination for national school feeding programmes

VIRTUAL EXCHANGES

REMOTE SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES

Available tools/activities for the exchange are aligned with the above-mentioned strategic outcomes and outputs, also depending on the national legal framework and local context. These activities are standardized categories that enable the creation of a starting point for action and will also be tailored to the requested country demand.

-  Sharing of knowledge through baseline publications
-  Conference calls
-  Country-specific webinars
-  Tailored videos
-  Development of new publications
-  Remote participation in national missions, events, workshops and seminars
-  In-person participation in national missions, events, workshops and seminars, if there is demand and available country funding

HOW DOES “VIRTUAL EXCHANGES” WORK?

Virtual Exchanges have three main steps (the “three Ds”).



Steps for a Virtual Exchange with the WFP Centre of Excellence include:



VIRTUAL EXCHANGES

REMOTE SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES



1. DEFINE

The first step is to agree on the national demand/goal that the Virtual Exchange will support, identify major challenges limiting the achievement of this goal, and consider what will transform due to the exchange (policies, institutions, coordination, resources, etc.). Stakeholder engagement: Building on its core principles for SSTC and considering the elements of the Country Strategy Plan (CSP) frameworks, WFP CoE will engage with stakeholders to debate and reflect upon actions able to define relevant, existing capacity assets and stakeholder needs to design and deliver a validated and demand-driven Virtual Exchange remote assistance. Demands from WFP country offices can be sent directly to WFP CoE by e-mail. Online confer-

ences and calls will be set to arrange first meetings for engagement process and to tailor requests. Demands from host governments should be channeled through WFP country offices for optimizing process and systems WFP has available for all partners. Validation of demand and baselines: Through an online dialogue process, WFP CoE engages with WFP country office to identify critical school feeding programme areas resources that will be required to support the exchange agenda. To help tailor the demands, WFP CoE and country offices should assess the CSP framework and the current level of capacities in each school feeding context and identify the appropriate exchange.

2. DESIGN

Once current capacity assets and needs are clear and agreed upon, an agenda for the Virtual Exchange will be tailored to context regarding stakeholders, capacity assets, objectives, and activities. A general action plan articulates the outcomes that typify a state of self-sufficient capacity along each of the six strategic outcomes

virtual exchanges can assist countries deliver. Guidance and tools to promote partnership scoping are available to support the process of relationship-building and knowledge mobilization across the 13 programme focus areas, a critical issue to a successful Virtual Exchange.

3. DELIVER

During this phase, the WFP Centre will prepare the outputs designed in the previous steps and direct all necessary material to the requesting country. Regular conference calls will also take place during this phase to close further knowledge gaps for the requesting country and regularly monitor the development of activities.

Review findings are mapped to a Virtual Exchange Activity Matrix, which captures critical operational information for each activity proposed and aligns with a new process monitoring approach to help track progress along the critical programme focus areas of change for each topic of work.



VIRTUAL EXCHANGES

REMOTE SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES



WHAT KIND OF PRODUCTS “VIRTUAL EXCHANGES” DELIVER?

Publications

Building evidences on good practices to overcome hunger and poverty and on the multiple benefits of investing in sustainable solutions to achieve zero hunger is a challenge shared by development agencies, universities, and other international development stakeholders. Reliable data and precise analysis on projects and programmes' results are indispensable to engage countries into initiatives to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and are critical for the decision-making process on investments. WFP CoE's publications are a key knowledge sharing and communication tool. The CoE's technical team prepare and publish a large and diverse array of publications. Publications are important instruments through which the CoE shares development knowledge and communicates with its partners and

stakeholders in terms of knowledge products and services, partnership promotion and advocacy support for home-grown school feeding, social protection and safety nets, nutrition and smallholders' access to markets. Issues related to South-South cooperation, financing, cost-assessment, food baskets, policy, programme, design and implementation, evaluation, transition, among others, are all part of the CoE's publications. These include flagship publications (stand-alone and serial flagships, e.g. CoE annual report), as well as knowledge and research publications (strategy, policy and administrative documents; articles; policy briefs; working papers; technical reports and studies; newsletters; and evaluations/assessments).



VIRTUAL EXCHANGES

REMOTE SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES

Online Courses and Videos

Over the past few years, videos have risen into popularity across the globe. You see them everywhere - on television, social media, text messages, billboards, online advertisements, and even restaurant menus. For the WFP CoE, these consist of awareness raising and multimedia materials, including training and instructive materials. Just like a picture is worth a thousand words, a video is worth a thousand pictures when it comes to supporting countries in knowledge sharing and remote support. For example, when a government team wishes to learn something new related to smallholder's food procurement, and chooses to conduct an extensive study visit, they may watch a series of videos on the topic instead. And, later on, in case more questions arise, they may either schedule online meetings with the CoE, or why not, conduct the study visit, but much more focused, thus generating much better results.

The WFP CoE is starting a series called "Virtual Study Visits" (VSV), where delegations will participate in, as the name indicatively suggests, a study visit made from various videos on a selected topic. It is as if the

delegation is right here in Brazil! As demands for specific topics grow, the WFP CoE designs a new series of "Virtual Study Visits" based on the requested topic, as part of its Virtual Exchanges methodology. In addition, videos are very important for knowledge sharing. They display nonverbal communication, engage the audience, comprise all other mediums, prompt to share (increase the effect of the knowledge exchange), present quick and rich content and incite to action, among other benefits.

Along with videos, online courses are also being prepared to support the learning process. Nowadays, thanks to the internet, learning is open to all. Hence, people in the countries where traditional learning is facing various obstacles can take advantage of online courses, including technical material related to zero hunger solutions. One example includes the online course on smallholder farming and links to home-grown school feeding that the WFP CoE recently made available in partnership with the Brazilian National Education Fund.



Remote Technical Assistance

Understanding that country economic resources – capital and human – may be limited, the WFP CoE is always looking into ways of supporting countries without the need to be physically present. For example, instead of providing a staff or consultant to be available for 6 months working on a task at a Country Office, a member from the CoE will participate in a 1 or 2 weeks mission, and continue support-

ing the country remotely, using all technological tools available at WFP to prepare documents, participate in meetings, advise on decision-making moments, supply knowledge material for country needs, along with all types of services that the WFP CoE provides. Savings can reach up to 300% of a project’s preparation budget, including saved time on field logistics and administrative issues.



VIRTUAL EXCHANGES

REMOTE SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES



WHAT ARE THE REAL BENEFITS OF USING “VIRTUAL EXCHANGES”?

Specific benefits from WFP CoE’s Virtual Exchanges include:

1) Speed

The current dynamics of countries demands quick responses to any possible issue that may arise in the WFP country office. This is where one of the undisputed advantages of remote support lies; because it allows the country office to contact the WFP CoE quickly to request immediate support and possible solutions;

2) Availability

Remote support allows country offices to have access to rapid technical assistance from any geographical location; with an internet connection. Thus, governments and country offices can feel confident about having technical support capable of responding efficiently; even in a context where the country characteristics require constant mobility of participants;

3) Savings

Usually, the physical presence of an Officer or Specialist implies extra fees related to the travel expenses, DSAs during the whole time present in the country, mission preparation, etc. As a result, these charges can significantly increase the final price of a project preparation, or any other technical assistance in a country. With Virtual Exchanges, on the other hand, the country office’s investment covers only the technical support service and an initial mission (usually 1-2 weeks); this involves a reduction of up to 300% (or even more, depending on the project) of the total cost in relation to on-site support;

4) Efficiency

Virtual Exchanges can resolve 90% of technical assistance request issues when building zero hunger solutions together with the country. This is very useful for WFP Country Offices as it minimizes the need to request the physical presence of an Officer or Specialist, even in identifying countries demands/needs; and

5) Knowledge sharing

Working with governments and countries involves real-time interaction. This means that as the Officer or Specialist works with the WFP country office on a policy creation (for example); the government can participate and offer inputs as the process takes place. It is very important to include as many country stakeholders as possible to make any development process inclusive and owned by the country.



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