

## PROGRAMME CYCLE MANAGEMENT TECHNICAL BRIEF

### Planning

Planning is the process by which findings from assessments are translated into the design of UNHCR's and WFP's response, taking into account the local context as well as global and regional priorities. This phase involves an important resource allocation element as operations formulate budgets based on needs identified, and an analysis of implementation capacities and prioritized budgets based on projected resources available.

### Corporate Strategies

#### UNHCR

- **UNHCR's Strategic Directions (2017-21)** describes the challenges and opportunities that characterize forced displacement in today's complex global environment, and sets out the strategic directions that UNHCR will pursue in the five-year strategic period. It describes the approach that will shape UNHCR's work, including its commitment to put people first, to strengthen and diversify partnerships, to work across the entire spectrum of forced displacement, and to provide practical, concrete support to States to secure protection and solutions for refugees, the internally displaced and stateless people.
- The strategy is informed by global agreements including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), World Humanitarian Summit Commitments, Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).
- The Strategic Directions presents **five core directions** on which UNHCR will focus: 1) protection; 2) responding in emergencies and beyond; 3) promoting inclusion and self-reliance, including through the engagement of development actors; 4) the empowerment of the people UNHCR serves; and 5) the pursuit of solutions.

#### WFP

- **WFP's Strategic Plan (2017-21)** aligns the organization's work to the 2030 Agenda, which prioritizes efforts to end poverty, hunger and inequality, encompassing humanitarian as well as development efforts. It sets out WFP's vision to lift the most vulnerable and marginalized people out of hunger.
- The Strategic Plan builds on the activities approved by the Executive Board in past strategic plans and policies and presents them in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It has further been informed by agreements made at major international conferences and summits and takes into consideration United Nations General Assembly resolutions and complementary global and regional frameworks aimed at ending hunger and malnutrition. The plan draws on lessons from the mid-term review of the Strategic Plan (2014–17), evaluations and external reviews.
- WFP prioritizes **SDG 2 on achieving zero hunger** and **SDG 17 on partnering** to support implementation of the SDGs. This focus reflects WFP's dual mandate and its strengths and

capacities as demonstrated in its programme of work and the demand for its technical, operational, and common services.

- The Strategic Plan sets out **five strategic objectives**: 1) End hunger; 2) Improve nutrition; 3) Achieve food security; 4) Supplement SDG implementation; 5) Partner for SDG results.
- The Strategic Plan will be reviewed and can be extended or adjusted in 2021, with reviews every four years thereafter to harmonize WFP’s strategic planning cycle with UN Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review resolutions.

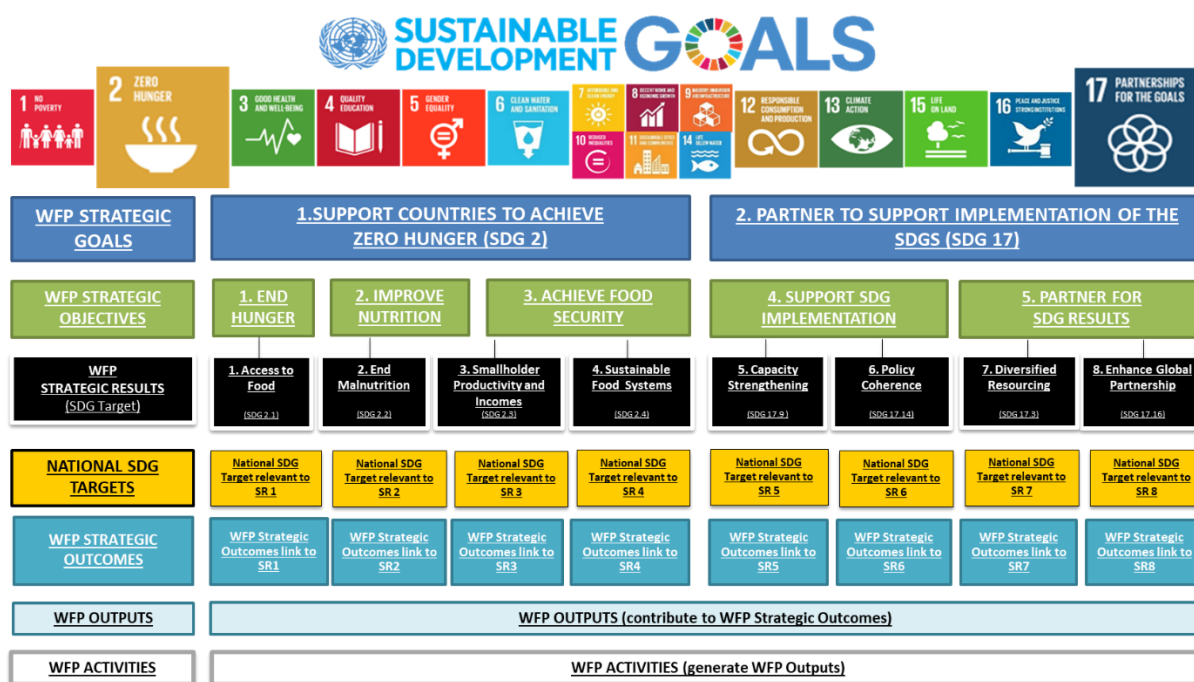


Figure 2: WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021) results framework

## Tools and Resources

- UNHCR’s Strategic Directions, 2017-21: <https://www.unhcr.org/5894558d4.pdf>
- WFP Strategic Plan 2017-21: <https://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/eb/wfp286743.pdf>

## Country Strategies and Operational Planning

### UNHCR

- **Global Strategic Priorities (GSPs)** are UNHCR’s corporate commitment to improve the protection and wellbeing of persons of concern in critical areas of intervention, and are issued every two years in the first quarter for the next biennium (e.g. March 2017 for 2018-2019).
- GSPs represent a common set of key imperatives for UNHCR in its efforts to strengthen protection for refugees and other persons of concern, to improve their quality of life and to seek solutions for them. UNHCR’s GSPs, first developed for the 2010-2011 planning biennium, are revised every two years.
- **Operations Management Cycle:** The main planning exercise in UNHCR takes place in field operations and Headquarters Divisions annually in February/March. The result is a series of operations plans (OP) that form the basis for UNHCR’s submission of its global budgets to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) for technical review, and the subsequent submission of its global plan to its ExCom for approval.
- **Instructions for the upcoming planning exercise** are issued annually in December (13 months prior to the commencement of implementation) as part of the consolidated reporting, implementation and planning instructions.
- In February, the **High Commissioner** normally communicates a message on **planning and priorities** for the following year, as well an **indicative budgetary envelope** for each Regional Bureau and Headquarters Division for the following year, based on projected income available - the **Indicative Operating Level (IOL)**.
- **Country Operations Plans (OP)** OP represents UNHCR’s plan of action or “business plan” for the coming year and is normally submitted in late March. OP are built around persons of concern – the population UNHCR is seeking to support. Population planning figures are entered in a web-based application (Population Statistics Reference – PSR), outside Focus. The figures provide a tabulated overview of past and present population situations together with figures for the number of PoCs in the planning period. They also show the number of PoC receiving assistance from UNHCR.
- A review of all OP– the **Annual Programme Review (APR)** – takes place at Headquarters in the April-May period. It is coordinated by the APR Secretariat. The end result is the approval by the High Commissioner of the OP and associated comprehensive and OL budgets. Approval is for only one year, with the exception of comprehensive budgets, which, in the year preceding a biennium, are approved for the following two years.
- Instructions for **detailed planning and budgeting** are issued in October (three months prior to the commencement of implementation). In the October to December period, detailed planning and budgeting takes place, including the identification of implementation modalities.
- Examples of changes that would necessitate an updating of the OP include a sudden influx of refugees due to the flaring up of a conflict, a new opportunity for local integration, an unexpected improvement in the situation in the country of origin that precipitates a return movement and funding constraints that necessitate a reprioritization of existing activities.

- Population figures form the basis for **Population Planning Groups (PPGs)**. A PPG is defined as a population of concern that is considered to be homogenous for planning and budgeting purposes. The population figures are then used to structure the OP, with a results chain, including indicators, targets and a budget, developed for each PPG. UNHCR PPGs include refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs and stateless persons.
- An effective OP is underpinned by a **multi-year protection and solutions strategy** that clearly outlines a vision of what the operation expects to achieve, including concrete targets, and how it proposes to pursue these objectives.



Figure 3: UNHCR annual planning cycle

*NB: UNHCR has launched a project - the Results Based Management (RBM) Renewal Project – to overhaul UNHCR’s current approaches and implementation of RBM, and to enhance UNHCR’s capacity to make decisions based on evidence; be accountable results; and inclusively, effectively and efficiently deliver and report on its protection and solutions results. The RBM Renewal project is an organization-wide initiative to review and revise UNHCR’s approaches, processes and tools in implementing RBM. The project is still under development, and therefore the current operations management cycle (OMC) remains valid.*

## WFP

- The **Country Strategic Plan (CSP)** is WFP’s programmatic planning tool in a country for a period of up to five years. Country Strategic Plans respond to national needs and priorities as reflected in national zero hunger strategic reviews. CSPs are approved by the WFP Executive Board.
- **National Zero Hunger Strategic Reviews** are consultative, inclusive, country-led and country-owned processes coordinated by WFP and/or other partners when needed. They provide a comprehensive analysis of the challenges a country faces in achieving zero hunger by 2030 and recommend priority actions to overcome these challenges.
- WFP country offices are responsible for the country strategic planning process, in consultation with governments, Headquarters and the relevant regional bureau. Country Directors work in coordination with governments to ensure an effective participation from all technical areas to facilitate adequate inputs and collective ownership. They also ensure **alignment of country strategic planning cycles with United Nations calendars and national development planning**.
- From 2020 onwards, as the lifecycles of several first generations CSPs are coming to an end, WFP Country Offices will progressively develop “second generation CSPs (2G)”. The main changes are that the CSP lifecycle has to be aligned with the UNSDCF cycle and CSP development and review process has been streamlined.

- The **Country Operations Management Plan (COMP)** is an external report prepared primarily for the WFP Executive Board, providing an annual operational plan showing how CSP activities will be prioritized according to forecasted funding. It presents a snapshot of a given year, including operational details such as beneficiaries, choice of transfer modality, and a prioritization plan in case of reduced resources. The COMP is not usually available publicly, but if deemed useful it can also be shared with donors at local level.
- The **Annual Performance Plan (APP)** is the corporate tool that helps any office in WFP define how it will implement the CSP. The APP describes how all the different functions and units in an office contribute to the achievement of the overall results, and identifies Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The **APP cycle** is launched in early October and completed by 15 January. A **mid-year review** is conducted by 31 July.
- WFP beneficiary planning is done by **beneficiary groups** (including breakdown of students, children and PLW) and **residence status** (refugees, IDPs, returnees and residents). Beneficiary data is also disaggregated by age and sex.

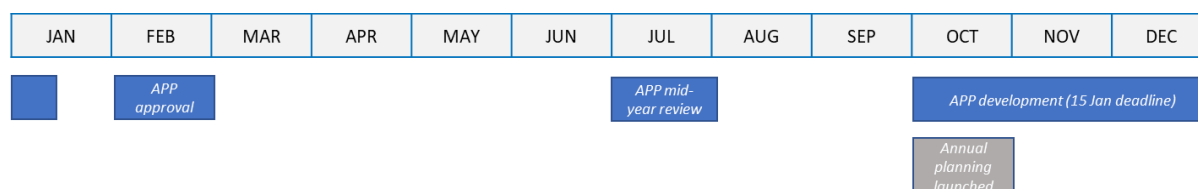


Figure 4: WFP annual planning cycle

## Budgets

### UNHCR

- UNHCR has a **biennial programme budget** that is approved by its governing body, the ExCom. It covers two calendar years and is divided into two annual budgets. UNHCR's budget structure is aligned to the results framework to ensure a linkage between resource allocation and expected results.
- In the year immediately preceding a biennium (e.g. 2017 for the 2018-2019 biennium), operations are required to provide only an indicative comprehensive budget for the second year of the biennium and a high-level narrative. In March of the following year the operation submits a regular OP for the second year of the biennium, with both comprehensive and prioritized budgets (OL), as well as the usual narrative and results chain.
- Following the approval of UNHCR's programme and budget by UNHCR's ExCom in October, the **Global Appeal** is issued to inform donors and other stakeholders of UNHCR's plans for the forthcoming year.
- The budget follows a four-pillar structure (refugees, statelessness, integration and IDPs):
  - Pillar 1 – The global refugee programme
  - Pillar 2 – The global statelessness programme
  - Pillar 3 – Global reintegration projects
  - Pillar 4 – Global IDP projects

- The budget under each pillar is then subdivided into three elements:
  - The **administrative budget (ABOD)**, represents the approved administrative annual budget for total non-staff costs, as well as the cost associated with temporary positions of six months or less.
  - The **operations budget (OPS)** covers the costs of goods and services provided to persons of concern directly by UNHCR and/or its partners.
  - The **staffing budget** covers salaries and entitlements for regular or temporary positions with a duration of six months or more.
- The **needs-based budget** is called the **OP (Operations Plan)**. There is also a **prioritized budget** called the **OL (Operating Level Budget)**. The latter is based on projected income available, taking into account donor earmarking and competing priorities at the global level. Resources which are required to implement the full comprehensive response but not currently available – is called the AOL (Above Operating Level).
- **Prioritization must incorporate planning and budgeting for 12 months. Operations cannot work on the assumption that there will be an increase in available resources later in the year.** Rather, difficult decisions must be made up front to ensure that the most essential activities are able to proceed uninterrupted even if there is no increase in the OL during the course of the year.

## WFP

- The **Country Portfolio Budget (CPB)** reflects the estimated costs to implement a CSP (inclusive of foreseen emergency operations, strategic outcomes and related activities). The transfer modalities (food transfers, cash-based transfers, capacity strengthening and service delivery) are the key drivers of the CP budget.
- The budget will provide a breakdown by the four **high-level cost categories transfer, implementation, adjusted direct support costs, and indirect support costs**. The CPB accompanying the CSP will be the total budget broken down by the four high-level cost categories and approved by total budget per WFP Strategic Outcome for the duration of the CSP framework.
- **WFP's budget structure** is aligned to the results framework to ensure a linkage between resource allocation and expected results. The CPB includes the following vertical dimensions: Strategic Result, Strategic Outcome, Activity, Direct Support Costs (DSC) and Indirect Support Costs (ISC).
  - **Activity:** The fourth vertical layer is the Country Office defined Activity. Country Office activities must link to a single WFP Strategic Outcome. This layer is the lowest planning and budgetary level for a Country Office; expenditures will be recorded at this level.
  - **DSC:** In-country costs that are managed at the country level and supports multiple activities related to transfer of assistance and implementation of programmes.
  - **ISC:** This cost category roll-up includes costs that support the execution of activities but cannot be directly linked with their implementation.
- CPB introduces the concept of (a) activity-based planning, (b) annual planning, (c) two-layer planning i.e. needs and implementation plan. In line with these concepts, the **pipeline tool**, which should be updated monthly, helps CO to plan and prioritize their programme of work by activity.

- **Needs Based vs. Resource Based Requirement:** WFP’s approach to developing a project budget is linked to which type of activities are being planned. For relief activities, WFP takes a needs-based approach in designing the budget. A needs-based approach enables WFP to identify, advocate for and provide resources required for a targeted population that have been objectively identified and quantified through needs assessments. This approach should also take into account WFP’s capacity for implementation (i.e. if a project were to be fully funded, would WFP be able to implement?). For development activities, WFP takes a resource-based approach in designing the budget.
- An **implementation plan** is the annual plan (budget) derived from a needs-based plan, which is prioritized and adjusted on the basis of the funding forecasts, available resources, and operational challenges. It allows COs to prioritize activities and related costs based on forecast and existing resources.

## Tools and Resources

- UNHCR Programme Manuel (Chapter 4)
- WFP Country Strategic Planning Manual