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Findings from WFP's Global SSTC Initiative with MARA 2021

A Review of Results and Experiences

March 2022

Foreword

This annual report aims to provide an overview of the United Nations World Food Programme's (WFP) growing achievements of the South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) Field Pilot Initiative, first results of the SSTC COVID-19 Opportunity Fund projects in 2021, as well as efforts to strengthen institutional capacity for the pilot coordination, management and visibility, with thanks to the contributions and technical support from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) of the People's Republic of China since 2019.

Amidst the rising SSTC country demands for WFP's work as a broker and facilitator of knowledge and expertise exchanges, country capacity strengthening support and technology transfers among countries in the Global South, this report also provides a snapshot of WFP's work in brokering SSTC and mainstreaming it into WFP's mandate and major working areas at the country level.

In close collaboration with WFP Country Offices (COs) that host the SSTC field pilots in selected developing countries and the WFP Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Rural Transformation in China, this report was developed by the WFP Global SSTC Team, part of the Programme — Humanitarian and Development (PRO) Division based at WFP Headquarters in Rome, Italy.

Contents

Introduction	4
Milestones and Achievements.....	5
MILESTONES OF WFP'S GLOBAL SSTC WITH MARA IN 2021.....	7
KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2021.....	8
Findings of Performance 2021	9
SUCCESS FACTORS	9
CHALLENGES	10
LESSONS LEARNED	11
WFP-MARA SSTC Pilot Profiles	12
KENYA	12
SRI LANKA.....	14
REPUBLIC OF CONGO	16
PERU	18
ECUADOR	20
WFP SSTC COVID-19 Opportunity Fund	22
EXPERIENCES FROM THE FIRST WAVE PILOTS	22
PROGRESS OF THE SECOND WAVE PILOTS.....	26
ADDED VALUES AND KEY FINDINGS.....	26
The way forward: Mainstreaming	27
Annex	27
ANNEX 1: ONGOING WFP-MARA SSTC PILOTS IN 2021	28
ANNEX 2: GOVERNMENT REQUEST LETTERS FOR SSTC FIELD PILOTS	29
ANNEX 3: M&E METHODOLOGY AND SURVEY TEMPLATE	35
ANNEX 4: SSTC FIELD ACTIVITIES AND VISIBILITY PRODUCTS IN 2021.....	37
ANNEX 5: VIRTUAL COURSES AND SSTC ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY THE WFP CHINA COE.....	42
Acronyms	45

Introduction

Since 2019, the WFP Programme — Humanitarian and Development (PRO) Division, in collaboration with WFP China Centre of Excellence (CoE), has commenced the South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) of China in supporting WFP's direct programmatic delivery through the WFP-MARA global SSTC Field Pilot Initiative.

With MARA's financial support, WFP formulated and launched field-oriented SSTC pilots originally in Ecuador, Kenya, the Republic of Congo and Sri Lanka since 2019 and subsequently in Peru since 2020. These pilot projects aimed at creating benefits for the most vulnerable people suffering from food insecurity and malnutrition by tapping into China's successful experience through deployment of knowledge and expertise at the country level, using a number of modalities, including policy dialogues, expert deployment, study visits and workshops/seminars, with an agile modality adaptation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the shift to virtual modalities - online training and webinars - as a result of border closures and restricted mobility in various countries.

The SSTC Field Pilot Initiative (see Annex 1) has become a key component of WFP's contribution towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 in the host countries, supporting programmatic delivery within the framework of WFP's Country Strategic Plans (CSPs) in the field. This initiative also provided a space to expand UN Rome-Based Agencies (RBAs) and UN-wide operational collaboration on SSTC in the field, building on each agency's comparative advantages.

In 2020-2021, in response to rapidly growing SSTC requests from countries beyond the Field Pilots, WFP has launched the SSTC COVID-19 Opportunity Fund Pilots (see Annex 1) that is designed to provide quick and flexible smaller-scale support to Country Offices (COs) to help respond to COVID-19 related challenges through

SSTC. This initiative successfully mobilized WFP internal funds together with WFP-MARA SSTC investment, and helped further expand geographic and thematic diversification while achieving more results and visibility globally.

WFP's government partners in developing countries highly appreciated MARA's support and stood behind these projects, which had generated real value and evidence of how SSTC can reach and change the lives of those most at risk of being left behind.

MARA's investment continually catalysed WFP's SSTC institutional strengthening in 2021. The dedicated global SSTC team in WFP HQ expanded its capacity of project coordination, management and communication with two additional members being Chinese nationals. PRO Division also invested in the SSTC staffing capacity in WFP China CoE in 2020 and 2021, in order to support the Chinese expertise mobilization and implementation of the Global SSTC Field Pilot Initiative from China's side.

In addition, to strengthen institutional capacity at the regional and country levels in support of the SSTC Field Pilots, WFP HQs and Regional Bureaux (RBx) conducted regional SSTC mappings and country-focused South-South reviews and other backstopping missions. The intention is to further consolidate and expand WFP's global SSTC structure in line with the growing scope of WFP's SSTC work and funding levels from China and other partners. PRO has also worked on the integration/mainstreaming of SSTC with WFP's work on capacitating and providing services, which becomes apparent with the progress of the next WFP Corporate Policy on SSTC.

Milestones and Achievements

In 2021, **SSTC has become a key pillar for WFP's work on "saving lives" and "changing lives"** for progress on zero hunger. Leveraging WFP's wide network at the deep field level with over 80 countries and in some of the world's most difficult places, WFP-brokered **33 SSTC pilots**¹ driven by the demands of our host governments (see annex 2), and generated benefits for the most vulnerable people at risk of and suffering from hunger and malnutrition in **28 countries** across the world.

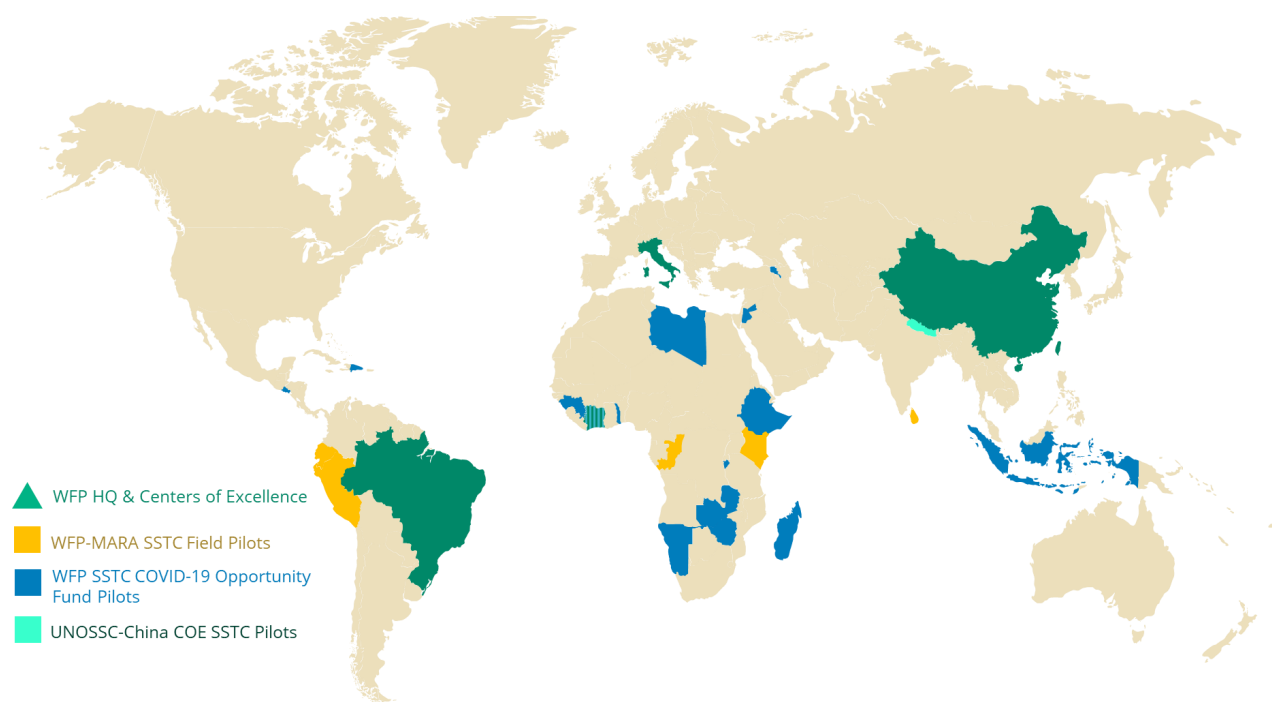


Figure 1: WFP Ongoing Global SSTC Pilots Map 2021

Through **WFP's global SSTC Initiative** with MARA, coordinated by WFP's global SSTC team in the PRO Division in collaboration with WFP China, WFP has strengthened China's engagement and visibility as a SSTC provider with **19 countries in the Global South**. The field projects contributed to strengthening national food systems in developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America in those three continents in line with MARA's priorities. WFP's field pilot initiative helped to address food security and nutrition challenges for resilience building and food systems strengthening, also linked to the full spectrum of emergency preparedness, disaster risk reduction, resilience building, school-based programmes, as well as social protection and safety nets, etc.

WFP's approach to **"smart field piloting"** is based on the following dual pilot "tracks":

- 1) **SSTC field pilots (longer-term projects)**, which promote the shift from "ad-hoc" SSTC exchanges to proper SSTC projects, and strengthen country capacities, resilience-building and national food systems, in line with the priorities of the host governments, MARA, WFP China CoE and WFP's CSPs. These projects aim to change the lives of vulnerable smallholders and their families in the field through a longer-term approach to country capacity strengthening.

¹ Including 5 WFP-MARA SSTC field pilots, 26 pilots of 2 waves of SSTC COVID-19 Opportunity Fund, and 2 field pilots funded by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC).

- 2) **South-South Opportunity Pilots (short-term projects)**, which enable host governments (with WFP's support) to respond to their capacity needs through SSTC exchanges in direct response to adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security and nutrition. These pilots aim to expand China and WFP's SSTC engagement with a larger number of host governments and raise the visibility of China as an SSTC provider.

WFP rolled out an independent evaluation of WFP's Policy on SSTC in 2021. The findings from the evaluation were approved in November 2021 by WFP's Executive Board. The evaluation resulted in a positive assessment for WFP and found that WFP, as a SSTC broker, is effective and has generated concrete and tangible results at the country level - despite the fact that WFP manages a much lower volume of resources and extra-budgetary contributions for SSTC brokerage than its sister agencies - FAO and IFAD. Hence, WFP has demonstrated good "value for money" when it comes to SSTC brokerage.

The evaluation also demonstrated that WFP's role in brokering SSTC has contributed to trust-building with developing countries, like the Dominican Republic, building on WFP's particular corporate strength and comprehensive approach to SSTC (from needs assessment to match-making, SSTC solutions transfer and country capacity strengthening support to help contextualize SSTC solutions in another country). WFP's effectiveness as a SSTC broker was further underscored by a report of *Mainstreaming South-South and triangular cooperation in the UN system* made by the German Development Institute (DIE)'s, highlighting that WFP was among the top six agencies in the whole UN system (alongside FAO, IFAD, ILO, UNIDO and UNDP) when it comes to mainstreaming SSTC.

WFP's SSTC Policy Evaluation highlighted the **strategic opportunities for WFP to further partner with FAO and IFAD on SSTC**, building on the existing RBA Directors' Dialogue on SSTC, and RBA SSTC network at the technical level. In 2022 - 2023, WFP will revise its corporate policy on SSTC. Mainstreaming SSTC across a wider range of thematic areas (both humanitarian and development settings) and further strengthening RBA collaboration on SSTC will be key elements of the revised policy.

Amid the continuously rising country demands for WFP-brokered SSTC, **WFP stepped up its commitment to brokering SSTC by co-financing the SSTC COVID-19 Opportunity Fund** in 2021, and rolled out a Global SSTC Task Force, led by the Director of WFP's PRO Division. The Task Force serves as an internal WFP coordination mechanism on SSTC, bringing together all key decision-makers from WFP CoEs, RBx (as proxy's to COs), and HQ Divisions. In 2021, it has produced a set of six concrete deliverables and strategic decisions to consolidate and bring WFP's approach to brokering SSTC to the next level, clarifying roles and responsibilities for SSTC, and raising the visibility of SSTC as a key delivery mechanism in WFP to strengthen country systems.

All the outputs from WFP's SSTC Policy Evaluation and Global SSTC Task Force were endorsed by the **WFP second Global Meeting on SSTC** in November 2021, and agreed on three following-up actions in 2022: (1) Set up a revised WFP SSTC Task Force Process for 2022 in order to prepare the revision of WFP's SSTC Policy. (2) Develop a roadmap for the SSTC policy revision. (3) Further strengthen the dialogue among WFP's Centres of Excellence and across WFP's regions.

In 2021, **WFP also leveraged engagement with other diverse SSTC partners to expand the global SSTC partnership.** Just as an example, USD one million was mobilized by WFP's PRO Division, which is in the lead of WFP's global SSTC agenda, from the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Fund for a field pilot project in the Republic of Congo. The project complements WFP's existing field pilot with MARA, and seed funds from Brazil contribute to strengthening WFP's global SSTC function in Rome as well.

Milestones of WFP's Global SSTC with MARA in 2021



January - 1st WFP-MARA Consultation Meeting on SSTC Field Pilot Initiative

Set up WFP-MARA SSTC coordination and management mechanism, reviewed the previous results and approved the workplan in 2021. The meeting discussed MARA concerns and addressed the roles of WFP CoE for Rural Transformation in China (WFP China CoE) and the Permanent Representation of China to UN Agencies for Food and Agriculture (the China Mission) in Rome.



April - Launch of the SSTC Field Pilot Initiative Phase III

Based on requests from host governments, 5 concept notes were formulated by WFP and endorsed together with MARA to continue the SSTC support in Ecuador, Kenya, Peru, Republic of Congo and Sri Lanka.



May - Launch of the 2nd wave of SSTC COVID-19 Opportunity Fund

The new round enabled the expansion of the geographic coverage of SSTC and responds to COVID-related SSTC demands from countries. Seven proposals were selected by a joint screening committee for funding through the MARA's grant.



May - 2nd RBAs Directors Meeting for SSTC

WFP PRO facilitated the second RBA Directors Meeting for SSTC on 21st May 2021. RBA Directors outlined key priorities for a new joint plan to identify, strengthen and innovate SSTC in the future, in particular addressing synergy RBAs' efforts in SSTC with MARA.



October - 2nd WFP-MARA Consultation Meeting on SSTC Field Pilot Initiative

Both sides reviewed the progress of WFP's and MARA's growing partnership on the Global SSTC Field Pilot Initiative in 2021, and agreed on follow-ups: 1) reflection of China as a key partner for SSTC in the upcoming revision of WFP's SSTC Policy, including the development of the WFP-China SSTC Programmatic Framework; 2) continued rollout of WFP's Global SSTC Field Pilots and SSTC COVID-19 Opportunity Fund projects; 3) expanded evidence generation from WFP-MARA supported SSTC initiatives on the ground; and 4) continued mainstreaming SSTC into WFP's regular work including the gradual transition from the SSTC pilot stage to a proper SSTC programme.



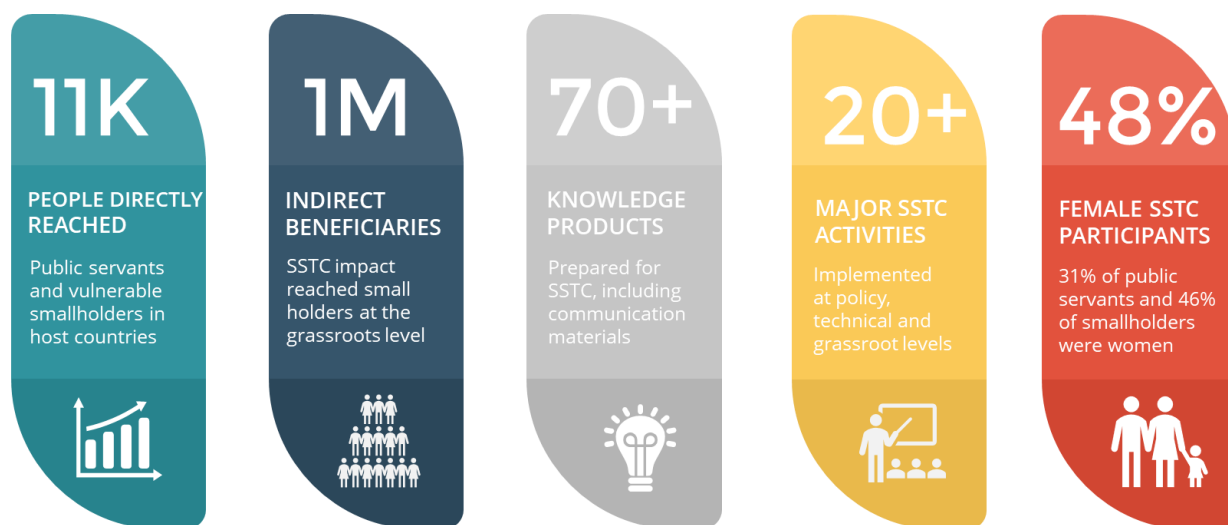
November - Meetings with the Permanent Representation of China

WFP global SSTC team facilitated senior-level meetings with the China Mission, reaffirming WFP's commitment to SSTC and strengthening partnership and cooperation with China.



Photo 1 and 2: Ms. Valerie N. Guarnieri and Mr. David Kaatrud meetings with H.E. GUANG Defu, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of China to UN Agencies for Food and Agriculture, on 10 and 3 Nov. 2021.

Key Achievements in 2021



Since 2019, WFP's Global SSTC Initiative benefitted a total of **10,821 people** in the host countries. **Over one million** indirect beneficiaries were reached by the SSTC impact at the grassroots level, according to the Monitoring and Evaluation survey results (see annex 3: M&E Methodology).

The **five field pilot projects** in Ecuador, Kenya, Peru, Republic of Congo and Sri Lanka have reached **9,577 smallholder farmers** and **school children** at the grassroots level so far. **573 officials of 16 national institutions** ranging from central to local governments, research institutions and private sector actors, have engaged in the field pilots to date. While the **first wave of COVID-19 pilots in seven host countries** helped **117 civil servants and public sector staff** to enhance their capacities on policies and technical solutions, and reached **554 beneficiary smallholder farmers** to improve their livelihoods.

More than **70 knowledge products** and **over 20 SSTC activities** were consolidated so far, including policy exchange, workshops, communication materials (e.g., videos, brochures, articles, social media posts, see Annex 4) and documentation of project activities. Across the MARA-funded SSTC pilots in 2021, a total of **23 video courses** and **ten SSTC initiatives** were implemented at policy, technical and grassroots levels with support from the WFP China CoE (see annex 5).

Facilitated by the WFP China CoE, in 2021, WFP was expanding its partnership with leading Chinese

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