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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Reader:

I am delighted to share with you the USAID Office of Food for Peace (FFP) Food Assistance and Food Security Strategy, 2016–2025. It has been developed in partnership with our stakeholders and is the culmination of a year-long consultative process that engaged hundreds of colleagues in Washington and overseas.

Through this process, we reaffirmed our shared vision of a world free of hunger and poverty, where all people live in dignity, peace and security and together set out an ambitious goal for the next decade—to improve and sustain the food and nutrition security of vulnerable populations.

Our agenda is vitally important, whether we consider the growing impact of humanitarian crises that have displaced more people than any time on record, or the more subtle but equally intractable issues of chronic poverty and recurrent crisis which today preclude millions of people from achieving their potential.

While the challenge is great, so too is our commitment. There is unprecedented consensus that building the resilience of vulnerable communities, including their food and nutrition security, is key to our larger goals of ending extreme poverty, enhancing stability and spurring economic growth. The communities we work with, driven to improve their lives, as well as the committed governments, non-profit organizations, United Nations agencies, and private sector actors that support them agree on the urgency of this agenda.

FFP and our partners have an outsized role to play. With an annual budget of more than $2 billion and the experience of working in both humanitarian response and development in areas of recurrent crisis, we have a unique vantage point and much to share. Our new strategy is steeped in evidence-based learning and is designed to maximize the full range of tools available to us, from much-needed American food commodities and specialized nutrition products, to locally-sourced foods, and a broad range of complementary programming to better protect and enhance the lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable.

We extend our thanks to the U.S. Congress and the American people for their sustained support of our global efforts to end hunger. And to all of our partners, whose expertise and tireless efforts in some of the most challenging environments in the world shaped this forward looking strategy.

It is truly a privilege to be part of this community.

Sincerely,

Dina Esposito
Director
Office of Food for Peace
Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance
INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1990s the world has seen tremendous progress in reducing hunger and improving the lives of the most poor. In addition to nearly halving the proportion of the population who are undernourished, the proportion of those living in extreme poverty dropped from nearly 50 percent in 1990 to 14 percent in 2015. Globally, the number of people living in extreme poverty declined by more than half, falling from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 836 million in 2015. Millennium Development Goals were also met for the share of people without access to improved sources of water, while child mortality was reduced by more than 50 percent and childhood stunting by 41 percent.¹ These are important gains.

Progress has been uneven, however. By the end of 2015, 65.3 million people had been displaced by war, conflict or persecution—the highest level ever recorded.² Meanwhile, gender inequity has continued to undermine the potential of women and girls, and a burgeoning youth demographic has posed significant challenges in countries struggling to provide access to healthcare, education and jobs to their people. In sub-Saharan Africa, while the rate of hunger has fallen, the number of undernourished people and chronically malnourished children has continued to rise, as has the number of households trapped in extreme poverty. And globally, the impacts of climate change are expected to push another 24 million more children into hunger by 2050.³

It is fitting therefore, as the international community moves to develop strategies to achieve an ambitious new set of “Sustainable Development Goals,” and commits itself to addressing the last-mile challenges to ending hunger and extreme poverty, that the U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Office of Food for Peace (FFP) review and update its own strategy and goals.

FFP’s new strategy, the 2016–2025 Food Assistance and Food Security Strategy, builds on the FFP 2006–2010 strategic plan, draws on lessons learned during its implementation, and embraces new approaches and tools that have emerged in recent years to increase the impact of U.S. Government food assistance as a critical tool in global efforts to end hunger and poverty.

WHO WE ARE

The U.S. Government remains the largest donor of food assistance in the world, with FFP programming more than $2 billion annually in Title II, International Disaster Assistance (IDA) and Development Assistance (DA) resources to meet both chronic and acute food needs in vulnerable populations. Since FFP’s establishment in 1954, the office has assisted nearly 4 billion people with U.S. Government food assistance resources. Over the past decade, as the number of complex conflict and climate-driven emergencies has risen, assistance has become more difficult—and more costly—to provide. Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of every food assistance dollar, and doing more with the resources available, has become essential.

FFP is unique in working in both emergency and development contexts, with emergency and recovery programs comprising 80 percent of total spending, and the remainder supporting development programs assisting chronically food insecure populations. These programs are supported by data-driven early warning systems (the Famine Early Warning System Network, or FEWS NET), an improved in-kind food aid basket and a modern supply chain management system that ensures the rapid movement of commodities.

FFP coordinates its assistance efforts closely with other parts of USAID and the U.S. Government, including USAID’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, Bureau for Food Security and Bureau for Global Health; and the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM).

The new strategy provides a programming framework that captures the best of what FFP currently does, but challenges FFP and its partners to strive for greater impact with greater efficiency and sustainability. It maintains the vision of the last FFP Strategic Plan—“A world free from hunger and poverty, where people live in dignity, peace and security,” —but broadens the office’s previous goal of reducing food insecurity to one that envisions improving food security and sustaining it. FFP’s new goal, “Food and nutrition security in vulnerable populations improved and sustained,” also embraces “nutrition security”—deliberately signaling the importance of a wide range of nutrition, sanitation and health factors which, together with the stable availability of and access to nutritious food, contribute to improved food security outcomes.
The strategy reflects FFP’s increasing focus on affecting change at both an individual and a systems level across the spectrum of its emergency and development activities and recognizes the importance of partnership and collective action to achieve desired results.

FFP’s new strategy:

- Contributes directly to the vision, goal and objectives of Feed the Future—President Obama’s signature initiative to combat global hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition—and the whole-of-government Global Food Security Strategy called for in the 2016 Global Food Security Act (GFSA)

- Maintains the centrality of the office’s commitment to working with vulnerable groups but recognizes that sustainability requires linkages to community level and systems-oriented interventions

- Brings clarity to the office’s commitment to supporting good governance by highlighting opportunities to promote social equity and strengthen social accountability

- Strengthens the office’s commitment to providing lifesaving food in crisis settings, including the use of an expanded set of specialized commodities and complementary activities in keeping with the growing global understanding of the consequences of malnutrition in the critical “1,000-day window” between pregnancy and a child’s second birthday

- Operationalizes the office’s commitment to providing assistance in ways that reinforce markets and promote dignity and security of beneficiaries
• Operationalizes the office’s commitment to providing assistance in ways that reinforce markets and promote dignity and security of beneficiaries

• Reflects a commitment to supporting household, community and institutional capacities that contribute to resilience and reduce the need for external food assistance

• Reaffirms the office’s commitment to enhancing the productivity of resources held by smallholder producers but recognizes that diversification of livelihoods is the path to resilience for many poor households, and that increased income is foundational for transformative change

• Builds on FFP’s commitment to gender equity, and its growing understanding of the gender dimensions of food insecurity and the importance of engaging men, women, boys and girls equitably in the process of advancing female empowerment and women’s access to economic opportunities

• Embraces a commitment to conflict-sensitive programming, acknowledging the potential of food assistance, like other resource flows, to aggravate social grievances or contribute to other unintended impacts on social cohesion. This commitment also acknowledges that the way that food assistance is delivered can have positive impacts on social cohesion and improve capacities for peace—especially important given that a significant proportion of FFP resources are programmed in contexts of fragility and conflict

VISION

USAID’s Office of Food for Peace and its partners envision a world free of hunger and poverty, where all people live in dignity, peace and security.

MISSION

We work together with others to reduce hunger and malnutrition and assure that adequate safe and nutritious food is available to, accessible to and well-utilized by all individuals at all times to support a healthy and productive life.

We are committed to contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and to pursuing USAID’s mission to end extreme poverty and promote resilient, democratic societies.

Expressing the compassion and goodwill of the people of the United States, we mobilize America’s resources to predict, prevent and respond to chronic and acute hunger overseas. Through our emergency programs, we strive to provide food assistance to save lives, reduce suffering and support the early recovery of populations affected by both acute and chronic emergencies. Our development programs help to reduce the long-term need for food assistance by increasing household and community resilience and by strengthening the capacity of developing societies to ensure access to and utilization of food by their most vulnerable communities and individuals, especially women and children.
GLOBAL COMMITMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

Getting to “zero” hunger and poverty will require an ambitious and sustained level of global commitment and coordination, supported by shared innovation and learning. Over the past decade, the international community has made significant strides in this regard. Beginning with the 2005 Paris Declaration, which demonstrated a fundamental shift in how the international community would work to tackle common development challenges, several global, multi-donor and multi-agency initiatives have served to bring renewed focus, coordination, commitment and resources to the battle against hunger and poverty. These include the Millennium and follow-on Sustainable Development Goals; the international commitments made to agriculture and food security at the 2009 L’Aquila G8 Summit; a substantial global nutrition agenda driven by the 2012 World Health Assembly, the Scaling-Up Nutrition movement (SUN), and the Nutrition for Growth Compact; and, most recently, the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.

These global initiatives have influenced—and were influenced by—USAID and U.S. Government whole-of-government efforts including Feed the Future, the new Global Food Security Strategy, USAID’s Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy and the U.S. Government Nutrition Coordination Plan. These and other global, U.S. Government and USAID initiatives have shaped the development of FFP’s new strategy, and reflect the policy and operational context in which it will be implemented.
NEW LEARNING AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FOOD FOR PEACE PROGRAMMING

The high food price crisis (2007–2009), which emerged shortly after FFP issued its last strategic plan, was a wake-up call to governments, donors and the international research community. Food for Peace’s new strategy benefited from the many research and analysis efforts that were undertaken globally in the wake of the crisis and in the years since. Key areas of focus include nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive actions; agriculture (including agriculture to nutrition pathways and climate-smart agriculture approaches); cash-based food assistance; gender equity; social protection; conflict dynamics; and scaling up technology.

FFP also commissioned several of its own studies. One of these, the Food Aid Quality Review (FAQR), identified cost-effective ways to better match the nutritional quality of U.S. food aid with the nutritional requirements of vulnerable populations. As a result, FFP’s Title II food basket now has 21 products that are either reformulated with improved micronutrient specifications or are new—including specialized ready-to-use therapeutic and supplemental feeding products and fortified rice.

Two other studies—the Second Food Aid and Food Security Assessment\(^4\) and a study of sustainability and exit strategies among development food assistance projects\(^5\)—have fundamentally informed the strategic approaches of FFP’s new strategy. These include:

- Implementing robust behavior change communication and encouraging and incentivizing the adoption of new practices
- Identifying effective push/pull models, which prepare more vulnerable, less market-ready individuals to link to market-driven actors, and partnering with others to do so
- Integrating water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions to achieve improved nutrition outcomes
- Ensuring that vulnerable pregnant and lactating women benefit from behavior change efforts and have direct access to nutritious food
- Developing “theories of change” that encompass both a vision for exit and for sustainability
- Using facilitation approaches and/or “smart subsidies” that minimize the need for the creation of parallel and unsustainable systems and enable a gradual withdrawal of external resources

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• Grounding activity design in local demand and buy-in, particularly in the development of high-quality productive assets
• Carefully analyzing the context in which any resource transfer is proposed to ensure that it supports desired food security impacts. This includes weighing the benefits and risks to inter-familial, community and conflict dynamics; markets; and the pace of recovery
• Institutionalizing real-time and collaborative learning to identify unintended impacts as well as emerging program opportunities and/or implementation constraints

FOOD FOR PEACE STRATEGIC RESULTS FRAMEWORK

Food and nutrition insecurity robs vulnerable individuals, households, communities and countries of productive capacity and social and economic well-being. Hunger undermines hope, and frays the social fabric that is so important to community resilience in the face of social, political or climatic threats. Malnutrition in one generation can reduce opportunity for the next, perpetuating poverty and inequitable economic growth. The goal of FFP’s food and nutrition security efforts, “Food and nutrition security in vulnerable populations improved and sustained,” signals FFP’s commitment to partnering across USAID, the U.S. Government and the international community to support global efforts to end hunger and malnutrition.

FFP’s new strategic results framework (RF) supports this goal with two strategic objectives (SOs) that work in an inter-related manner across the spectrum of emergency and development activities, seeking to improve food and nutrition security outcomes at both the individual and systems levels, in support of FFP’s new theory of change:

“If we focus not only on protecting and enhancing the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable populations, but also on the positive transformation of the communities and institutions which support them, we will enable greater, more sustainable improvements in their food and nutrition security.”

Together, the RF’s SOs and accompanying Intermediate Results (IRs) address key drivers of food insecurity, creating a map of the broad platform of capabilities that FFP and its partners bring to bear in supporting improved food security for vulnerable populations. The framework includes three cross-cutting IRs which integrate the themes of gender equality and youth empowerment, social cohesion and social accountability across both SOs. The framework is supported by three corporate objectives that address how FFP and its partners carry out their work.

The entire framework is informed by, and supports, efforts to build resilience at the individual, household, community and systems levels—not as an objective in and of itself—but as a cross-cutting set of capacities that contribute to the goal of improved food and nutrition and security.

The RF is not intended to define FFP partner programs, or imply that every program needs to address the same key drivers of food and nutrition insecurity. Context varies dramatically between and within countries, and between acute hunger crises and chronic vulnerability. Each program will define its results frame in relation to these specific country and/or regional contexts, with FFP development programs maintaining their use of context-specific theories of change.
GOAL

A goal of improving and sustaining food security in FFP’s recovery and development activities reflects increased attention to activities contributing to resilience (e.g., community asset-building) in post-disaster settings, and the development of theories of sustainable change for multi-year development programs. However, the goal has relevance for FFP’s emergency activities as well. In emergency contexts, the words “improved” and “sustained” refer to the efforts required to stabilize the nutritional status of crisis-affected populations and to maintain a response capable of protecting that improvement. This has implications for targeting, choice of food assistance modalities, resource allocation, prioritization, and global and local partnerships. It also has implications for accountability, which is why FFP is increasing its focus on monitoring and measuring assistance outcomes in emergencies.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

FFP’s two SOs “Lives and Livelihoods Protected and Enhanced” and “Communities and Institutions Transformed” reflect its revised conceptual framework, which describes the “foundations” of food and nutrition security in terms of (1) individuals and households, and (2) communities and institutions. FFP’s theory of change builds on these, positing that sustained improvement in food and nutrition security is an outcome of change at both an individual and an institutional, or “systems” level, no matter what the operational context.

In this way, FFP’s two SOs are relevant to both emergency and development programs, serving as simultaneous and inter-dependent efforts. For example, while greater focus may typically be placed on protecting lives and livelihoods during an emergency (SO1), strengthening the capacities of local partners for the delivery of assistance may be critical to a sustained response (SO2).

Under SO1 FFP and its partners foster change at an individual or household level. In acute emergency situations, this may be accomplished by meeting the immediate food and nutrition needs of those most vulnerable to food deficits through the distribution of in-kind food, cash transfers or food vouchers distribution, and/or supplementary and therapeutic feeding with specialized, nutritious foods. In development programs, the emphasis shifts to improving the lives of chronically food insecure communities, especially those whose vulnerability to recurrent shocks lead to a regular need for humanitarian assistance. These programs invest in capacity building, knowledge transfer, household asset building and other productive investments that enable individuals and households to better manage risk, improve their nutritional status and increase their economic productivity. In
both emergency and development contexts, activities aim to foster positive behavior change and increase demand for information and services.

Common across SO 1 is the use of resource transfers. Resources in the form of food commodities, cash transfers or vouchers can meet immediate nutrition needs, protect household assets and/or serve as incentives or an enabler for the adoption of positive new practices. Other transfers—agricultural inputs, for example—can increase household access to productive technologies that would otherwise be out of reach. All resource transfers come with risks and benefits that can change over the course of an intervention. Understanding food assistance as a resource transfer, and understanding the risk and benefits of any resource transfer, can help to ensure that it is used creatively and appropriately as a means to enable individuals and households to make strategic choices for themselves, and reduce the likelihood of dependence and/or competition or conflict over scarce resources.

SO 2 provides the means to make the gains achieved under SO 1 more sustainable. SO 2 provides a pathway to address root causes and drivers of food insecurity through efforts at the community level and, where appropriate, all the way up to national policy and planning, in ways that strengthen the capacity of institutions, reduce risks, and provide engines of growth, opportunity and change. It challenges partners to identify the capacities, resources, motivation and linkages required for sustained change and continued impact long after a program ends. Facilitative approaches that rely on and strengthen local actors help ensure that resource and knowledge transfers, and the incentives and linkages that support them, will be self-perpetuating beyond project end. Under SO 2, FFP partners employ a wide range of approaches to strengthen infrastructure and institutional capacity for service delivery, facilitate market linkages and institutionalize participatory processes in local governance. In addition, FFP partners are increasingly linking their activities to research—creating an evidence base for advocacy and policy change.

INTERMEDIATE RESULTS

The RF’s two SOs are each supported by four IRs that address social protection, nutrition, environmental management, and increasing incomes and assets. The IRs under SO 1 focus on the individual- and household-level capacities required for positive change, while those under SO 2 address the community and institutional capacities required to promote, support and sustain those changes.

Across all IRs, FFP’s new strategy calls for a broadened concept of risk management that, in addition to natural hazards like drought and flooding, addresses risks posed by fragility, conflict, pandemic disease and climate change, as well as idiosyncratic shocks, like the death of a household head. Working at multiple levels, protecting and enhancing the lives and livelihoods of individuals and households while also strengthening local systems, creates synergies between the two SOs and the IRs under them. It also increases the need for FFP and its partners to layer, sequence and integrate activities within FFP programs, as well as with other USAID and donor-funded efforts.

CROSS-CUTTING INTERMEDIATE RESULTS

Three cross-cutting IRs (CC IRs) underpin SO 1 and SO 2 to support the empowerment of women and youth, enhance social cohesion, and strengthen social accountability. They are intended to bring focus and clarity to the potential of FFP partners to positively influence the governance environment in which their programs are implemented, and they challenge FFP and its partners to hold themselves
directly accountable for achieving positive change in areas that FFP has not previously attempted to measure. Work under these CC IRs should support or complement activities implemented under other IRs; however, standalone activities under one or more of the CC IRs may also be considered necessary to achieve a partner’s theory of change.

CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

The new strategy includes three Corporate Objectives (COs) designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of FFP’s work:

- Leadership, coordination and partnerships strengthened
- Effective and accountable resource management enhanced
- Monitoring, evaluation, analysis and applied learning improved

With ambitious work streams under each, FFP’s COs provide a roadmap for strengthening FFP’s influence, the evidence base behind its work, and the capacities of its staff and systems. While written as FFP management objectives, they are intended to be equally relevant to FFP partners. To set forth real and achievable milestones, and to keep pace with new policy and partnership priorities, emerging evidence and technology, and a host of other factors, these COs, and the specific actions required to achieve them, will be reviewed and updated on a biennial basis.

LOOKING AHEAD

The challenges of global hunger are evolving, and U.S. Government food assistance is evolving to meet them. With an expanding programming toolkit, and an increasingly robust body of evidence about what works, FFP has an unprecedented opportunity to lead, influence and strengthen global efforts to end hunger. A growing number of coordination platforms—both global and within the U.S. Government—are focusing on some of the world’s most intractable challenges. FFP and its partners can bring both intellectual leadership and pragmatic approaches that are grounded in years of field experience to these forums: FFP’s 2016–2025 Food Assistance and Food Security Strategy provides a roadmap for this process.
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