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STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

WFP
World Food Programme

Methodology and disclaimer

The Kyrgyzstan case study is one of four country case studies in the first phase of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute–World Food Programme Knowledge Partnership. For each case study, a joint team of staff from SIPRI and WFP conducted in-country research for approximately two weeks to identify the possible contributions to improving the prospects for peace that result from WFP programming. The methodology for this analysis involved a literature review of the country context and of WFP and other programming; key informant interviews with WFP country office staff, beneficiaries and local experts; focus group discussions with beneficiaries; and consultations with partners and experts in the country. Each country visit culminated in a presentation of the findings and a discussion with the managers of the country office on possible ways forward. This included a discussion on the contemporary political, social and technical challenges of incorporating a conflict lens, conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding work into WFP programming. The country report was then written up in consultation with the country office, incorporating clarifications and additional evidence as these became available. As a result, this analysis is not independent of context. The findings of all four country case studies informed the *World Food Programme's Contribution to Improving the Prospects for Peace*, the preliminary report on phase 1 of the partnership, which was published in June 2019.

The findings and recommendations and any errors or omissions are those of the authors and do not represent the position of SIPRI, WFP or the management, executive directors or boards of these institutions.

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Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

CCAPS   Climate Change and African Political Stability
CSVM   Climate Security Vulnerability Model
DAC   Development Assistance Committee
FAO   Food and Agriculture Organization
FFA   Food assistance for assets
FFA   Food assistance for assets programme
MOLSD   Ministry of Labour and Social Development
OECD   Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSMP   Optimizing school meals programme
PBF   Peacebuilding Fund
PDM   Post-distribution monitoring
PTA   Parent and teacher associations
SDG   Sustainable Development Goal
SMP   School meals programme
SO   Strategic Outcome
TOC   Theory of change
UCDP   Uppsala Conflict Data Programme
UNDP   United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF   United Nations Children's Fund
WFP   World Food Programme

Executive summary

This case study is part of a wider knowledge partnership between the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which aims to better understand and strengthen WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace. Kyrgyzstan was one of four case studies, along with El Salvador, Iraq and Mali, selected for the pilot phase of the research. The objectives of this phase 1 case study were to understand WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace, identify how WFP could enhance its contributions to improving such prospects and make recommendations on how all this could be measured.

This research sought perspectives on whether WFP has a role to play in peacebuilding from WFP staff and partners, as well as critical friends and conflict specialists. It involved a desk review of programme documents and data, discussions with staff, a field visit to the southern province of Batken, two focus group discussions and a wide range of interviews across the UN, NGOs, civil society, local leaders and partners, as well as representatives of the Kyrgyz Government and Parliament, academics, donors and experts in conflict and peace.

WFP's current added value in contributing to peace in Kyrgyzstan

The research identified several areas where WFP adds value in contributing to improving the prospects for peace:

- **Unique operational reach and field presence.** WFP understands the communities it works with and is a trusted and recognized partner with field operations in all seven of Kyrgyzstan's provinces.
- **Food as an entry point.** WFP creates opportunities to build relationships and trust at the community level, which can be built on later on to enable work on more sensitive issues.
- **Access.** WFP provides an entry point for other partners, as it has already laid the foundations with communities in remote and hard to reach locations.
- **Working at all levels of governance.** WFP works at the national, subnational, community and household levels to create opportunities to improve the prospects for peace in multiple areas.
- **Programmatic base.** WFP's wide focus area and intervention tools, which address food insecurity, improve livelihoods, mobilize communities for common goals, transfer knowledge, build resilience and respond to crises, provide the foundations for building peace and multiple opportunities for integrating peacebuilding approaches into programming. For example, work to enhance natural resource management is a natural entry point for possible conflict prevention activities.

Existing achievements

WFP has been working in Kyrgyzstan since 2008. It initially worked in an emergency and recovery capacity but now focuses on a wide range of development interventions and activities. Since 2015, WFP has been working in partnership with other UN agencies—the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UN Women—to directly alleviate the drivers of conflict in the tense southern border region of Batken (Kyrgyzstan) and Sughd (Tajikistan).

Enhancing access to and the supply of contested natural resources

Cross-border distribution of natural resources, in particular water, is widely recognized as a major driver of conflict in the disputed Tajikistan–Kyrgyzstan border area. Irrigation canals cross back and forth between areas claimed by both countries. The lack of border demarcation means that there are no functioning governance structures for dealing with natural resource management. In addition, the water infrastructure has deteriorated, resulting in significant losses, which means that in drier periods there is not enough water for all users. This contributes to tensions between communities on either side of the border, and among communities on the same side of the border, which sometimes erupt into acts of violence.

By improving the water infrastructure to reduce losses, the intervention directly addresses one of the critical local drivers of conflict and, in the absence of national level solutions on demarcation, helps to prevent community level conflict over water. These contributions to improving the prospects for peace have been documented in the project's monitoring and evaluation processes. The role of WFP is to bring in unskilled labour from poor and vulnerable households to work on canal rehabilitation and construction in order to improve access and to transfer knowledge on improving livelihoods management.

Beyond the specific project funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), WFP Kyrgyzstan implements similar small-scale infrastructure projects in 300 sub-districts of the country's five regions, engaging over 200 000 beneficiaries. This may also be helping to prevent conflict over water elsewhere in the country.

WFP has participated in the implementation of other PBF-funded peacebuilding projects in Kyrgyzstan. Two projects on the improvement of vital community infrastructure in multi-ethnic villages were implemented in partnership with the FAO immediately after serious inter-ethnic violence that occurred in 2010.

Build the state-citizen link by strengthening social safety nets

WFP's work with the Kyrgyz Government to strengthen social safety nets can contribute to building citizen-state trust. In Kyrgyzstan, poor governance has been a key driver of conflict. In particular, high and increasing levels of inequality, poor and worsening public services, social inequality and the failure to reach the most vulnerable lead to frustration and alienation. When such inequality or lack of access to services and participation in local decision making align with ethnicity, this can fuel ethnic or intercommunity tensions. WFP works with the Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MOLSD) at the national level, alongside local government representatives at the subnational level and directly with communities and the vulnerable people who are the main recipients of social assistance. Furthermore, WFP's support for the government-led school meals programme strengthens social safety nets nationally. Improving service delivery can strengthen contact and accountability between government and citizens, enhancing governance and building output- and performance-based legitimacy, and potentially also levels of citizen-state trust.

Community-based participatory approach

WFP's work at the community level can contribute to building relationships across dividing lines within and between communities. The team's observation of PBF-funded projects found that programmes in which different ethnic groups participate in projects of mutual interest create opportunities for structured interaction around non-contentious issues. This can help build trust and dispel negative myths, potentially contributing to changes in attitudes to and behaviour towards different groups. While

inter-ethnic tensions have eased since the 2010 violence, there is more work to be done to fully heal community divisions.

Integrating peace and conflict into programming

WFP Kyrgyzstan has piloted internal mechanisms for strengthening its programming. In 2018 the country office developed a conflict sensitivity, gender and environmental risk screening checklist, which requires field monitors to examine whether, and then confirm that, they have considered the local conflict context and possible conflict sensitivity risks. In the Batken–Sughd project, for example, WFP is carefully navigating decision making about what infrastructure to rehabilitate and which communities should be involved. Furthermore, WFP has experimented with monitoring mechanisms to help it better understand the links between water availability and conflict or the level of tension in the local area.

Recommendations and way forward

WFP Kyrgyzstan could enhance its programmes and systems to strengthen its contributions to enhancing the prospects for peace and improving conflict sensitivity by:

Recommendation 1.
Enhancing accountability and visibility. Research shows that service delivery models with built-in grievance redress mechanisms, and which foster relationships between service providers and users, have greater success at shifting attitudes. It is often the process (multi-stakeholder engagement) that is more important than the output (improved services) in enhancing legitimacy.

Recommendation 2.
Reconsidering training programming. If food assistance for training (FFT) programming is to contribute to improving the prospects for peace, then a much stronger role is needed in making the link into paid employment. WFP should establish a minimum threshold for people entering into jobs by supporting small processing businesses in communities and providing additional support with locating other stakeholders and finance for employment/self-employment opportunities.

Recommendation 3.
Having a greater focus on peace and conflict in high-risk areas. Some regions of Kyrgyzstan face greater tensions and higher conflict risk than others. More attention should be paid to the possible conflict sensitivity risks and the potential for supporting peace in these areas. WFP Kyrgyzstan has already taken steps in this regard by piloting an enhanced community assessment process that includes an understanding of specific drivers of tension and activities tailored to meet the diverse needs of specific groups in the community.

Recommendation 4.
Understanding the overlay of ethnicity in communities. Ethnic mapping would provide a picture of the presence of ethnic or other bias in the distribution of resources. Generating detailed data would require government approval and could be contentious. However, other data collection approaches, such as collecting staff and cooperation partner insights, might give a reasonable idea of whether there are concerns that warrant more careful and detailed data gathering or this can be disregarded as a non-issue. If concerns emerge, there may be a need to adopt specific mitigation actions.

Recommendation 5.
Establishing indicators to monitor social capital. There is a sizeable literature on the conceptualization and measurement of social capital. WFP's Food Security Outcome Monitoring already includes a basket of indicators on social capital. Other approaches can be found, such as that of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC). WFP should develop applicable social capital indicators to measure possible contributions to enhancing the prospects for peace where there is a strong and convincing theory of change.

Recommendation 6.
Strengthening food assistance for assets programme design outside the border region. Natural resource management programmes make a sustainable contribution to peace when they create a clear system of ownership, create mechanisms for resolving disputes and promote equity in benefits. WFP should explore how to integrate these elements into food assistance for assets programme interventions that address water conflicts.

Recommendation 7.
Supporting improvement of the social passport registry to address exclusion errors. WFP should explore a more transformational role for itself by monitoring possible exclusion errors resulting from use of the social passport for targeting. This will need to go beyond WFP's Post Distribution Monitoring as it will need to reach non-beneficiaries and should happen at the household level rather than through administrative representatives. The spot checks process could provide a useful model.

Recommendation 8.
Strengthening monitoring of peace/conflict outcomes. This could include: (*a*) ensuring that assessing and analysing changes in tensions between cross-border/ neighbouring communities draws input from both sides and captures details of the local nuances of tensions over natural resource management; (*b*) adapting/using existing outcome measurement tools (Food Security Outcome Monitoring) to ensure water stress- and tensions-related information is tracked continuously during Country Strategic Plan implementation (baseline, follow-up and end-line); (*c*) exploring the use of more qualitative open-ended inquiry to understand changes in people's lives (Most Significant Change, for instance, is a technique that can help capture peace outcomes); and (*d*) taking a longer-term approach to monitoring, such as follow-up monitoring of the transition into employment following WFP training. Enhancing contributions to improving the prospects for peace and minimizing conflict sensitivity risks also require action at the corporate level, above and beyond the remit of the Kyrgyzstan Country office.

Recommendation 9.
Conflict sensitivity first and foremost. While WFP is committed to conflict sensitivity, there is currently no guidance or leadership on putting this into practice. Nor is there any clarity on whose responsibility it is. A stronger leadership steer backed by the necessary resources will be essential to implementing conflict-sensitive programmes.

Recommendation 10.
New metrics for measuring contributions to enhancing the prospects for peace. WFP will need to evolve what it measures, such as changes in attitudes and relationships, and how it measures, going beyond survey tools in order to document

contributions to enhancing the prospects for peace. Drawing from best practice in the peacebuilding field would be a logical place to start in order to design new monitoring mechanisms. Additional funds will be needed for this purpose.

Recommendation 11.
Data. There is a lack of up-to-date, comprehensive, disaggregated data on the ethnic composition of programming areas, which makes it difficult to identify: (*a*) whether programming inadvertently benefits any specific group, for instance, whether vulnerability coincides with ethnicity; and (*b*) where programming has the potential to support inter-group connections, for example, when school management committee members are from divided communities. There are also some issues with data collection as external data sets are not sufficiently detailed or up to date. Additional efforts will be needed in areas where ethnicity is mixed. This will require additional funds and other resources in order to properly document the situation. In addition, WFP's corporate position is not to collect data on ethnicity as this could lead to misperceptions that programming is ethnically targeted.

1. Introduction

The World Food Programme (WFP) and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) have established a knowledge partnership in order to build an evidence base to assess whether—and if so how—WFP's programming contributes to improving the prospects for peace, and to identify where—if anywhere—it has unintended negative effects. The partnership will support future operational refinement based on the research conclusions, and it is expected that this work will inform an evaluation of WFP's policy that is planned for 2021.

WFP Kyrgyzstan was the first case study, and similar research was conducted in Mali, Iraq and El Salvador. The objectives of the case studies were to understand in each context: (*a*) WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace; (*b*) how WFP might enhance its contribution to improving the prospects for peace; and (*c*) how WFP can measure its contributions to improving the prospects for peace.

The case study research involved a desk review of programme documents and data, discussions with staff, a field visit to project sites in Batken province, two focus group discussions with communities and semi-structured interviews with a range of key stakeholders in Batken and the capital, Bishkek. The major stakeholders are UN agencies and NGOs, civil society, local leaders and partners, including representatives of the Kyrgyz Government and Parliament, academics, donors and experts in conflict and peace.

The case study analysed WFP's entire programme portfolio as outlined in the five-year Country Strategic Plan (CSP). The case study employed the concept of theories of change (TOCs) as a tool for facilitating analysis and stimulating new thinking about how programming can contribute to improving the prospects for peace. The availability of relevant data for measuring WFP's contribution to enhancing the prospects for peace was evaluated in the light of these TOCs. The detailed methodology for using TOCs in the research is set out in the preliminary report, which was published in June 2019.[1]

The portfolio analysis is the first step on a longer process of reflective learning for WFP Kyrgyzstan. Subsequent revisions to consultation processes have continued to provide new insights as the Country Office further develops the evidence base on peace prospects.

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[1] Delgado, C. et al., *The World Food Programme's Contribution to Improving the Prospects for Peace* (SIPRI: Stockholm, 2019).

2. Peacebuilding and theories of change

Peacebuilding differs in some significant ways from development and humanitarian programming. First and foremost, there are significant differences in objectives. Peacebuilding typically seeks to achieve changes within individuals (e.g. attitudes, behaviours, capacity); in relationships between people (e.g. communication, interaction); in the way institutions operate (e.g. institutional policies and practices that exclude certain groups); and at a fundamental cultural level (e.g. discriminatory attitudes that cut across a community).[2]

In peacebuilding, there is a much greater emphasis on process, and outputs may simply be the vehicle for enhancing relationships and trust in the process of creating the output. For example, a parents' committee to oversee the provision of school meals (process) could have greater peace potential than the school meals themselves (output).

Measuring peacebuilding outcomes is difficult as the changes are often intangible (e.g. attitudes to 'others' or levels of 'trust' in the state). It also involves different critical success factors, notably relationships with relevant groups and having the credibility to take on the role of peacebuilder.

For some of WFP's usual programming areas, such as nutrition, there is a strong body of evidence to support the programme interventions and it is known with some certainty what the outcome of an action will be. The peacebuilding field is younger and has a smaller body of evidence that is highly context-specific.

Peacebuilding programme design, therefore, is often articulated through a theory of change (action X will create outcome Y), which provides a clear picture of the intended activity and result. This can strengthen intervention design and provide a testable hypothesis of how it is assumed that change will be achieved. If the results are not achieved, having a theory of change enables an assessment of whether this was due to implementation failure or design failure. The case study research identified and assessed theories of change as a vehicle for clarifying possible contributions to improving the prospects for peace.

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[2] Lederach, J. P., *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (United States Institute for Peace: Washington, DC, 1997).

3. Conflict context analysis

Low levels of economic development and poor governance remain relatively constant drivers of conflict.[3] Issues around inter-ethnic conflict, however, have eased since the events of 2010.[4] The fragile political environment could serve as a trigger that pushes back and worsens service delivery and economic growth, further exacerbating problems over access to scarce natural resources and inter-ethnic tensions. Parliamentary elections are scheduled for 2020 and could result in a reshuffling of the political landscape, with more parties represented in parliament. There is, however, widespread dissatisfaction with the current conduct of elections and how parliament is formed. Poor governance and corruption are key factors driving poor basic service delivery, resulting in population grievances.

Economic inequality, and high levels of unemployment in particular, are significant drivers of conflict.[5] Perceptions of inequality and lack of opportunity are prevalent in Kyrgyz society, although official data indicates that these perceptions may exaggerate the actual level of income inequality.

Use of natural resources is a source of local and regional level conflict. The growing competition over access to irrigation water has fuelled conflicts in many rural areas.[6]

Cross-border conflicts are driven by competition for natural resources (water and pasture) in areas where border demarcation is incomplete. There have also been significant localized tensions around mining companies in relation to their limited contribution to the local economy and potential to cause environmental damage.[7]

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[3] Combaz, E., *Political Economy of Conflicts in Kyrgyzstan Since the 2000s*, GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report no. 1339 (University of Birmingham: GSDRC, 2016).

[4] In June 2010, violence erupted in the southern cities of Osh and Jalalabad and their surrounding areas, resulting in the death of at least 470 people and the displacement of 400 000 more—75 000 of whom fled temporarily to Uzbekistan. See Jantzi, T., Faria, F. and Alymkulova, A., *Evaluation of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) Project Portfolio in Kyrgyzstan: Evaluation Report, Final* (Bishkek: UN Peacebuilding and Kontrra Group, 2017).

[5] Unemployment remains steady at approximately 8%.

[6] ACTED, *Conflicts on Irrigation Water in the South of the Kyrgyz Republic* (Bishkek: ACTED, 2013).

[7] Tiainen, H., Sairinen, R. and Novikov, V., 'Mining in the Chatkal Valley in Kyrgyzstan: Challenge of social sustainability', *Resources Policy*, vol. 39 (2014), pp. 80–87.

4. WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace in Kyrgyzstan

The research team articulated a number of TOCs linked to WFP programming activities. Drawing on the available documentation and a literature review, and more broadly on interviews with key informants about project aims and results, these TOCs were narrowed down to those included below for which there is support from the evidence base. Attribution of WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace is complicated by the complexity of the conflict context and the difficulties in measuring resilience in such an environment. The TOCs are linked to the Strategic Outcomes in WFP Kyrgyzstan's Country Strategic Plan, 2018–2022.

Strategic Outcome 1: All primary school-aged children in the Kyrgyz Republic have access to safe, adequate and nutritious food all year round

In 2013, WFP launched the Optimizing School Meals Programme (OSMP) to improve the existing national school meals programme (SMP) for children aged 6–9 years old. The programme upgraded the standard daily 'tea and bun' provision to a nutritious hot meal. To date, WFP has introduced improved school meals in approximately 500 primary schools, and 500 additional schools will receive financial and technical support from WFP to improve their school meals provision. The government aims to replicate WFP's model in all of the 2200 schools across the country in the next five years.

WFP works with the Government of Kyrgyzstan, which provides part of the financing; local authorities, with support from the Ministry of Education which pays for the relevant infrastructure and renovations required for schools to shift to hot meals; and communities, including village committees as well as parent and teacher associations (PTAs). PTAs, in particular, function as project management committees through daily monitoring and follow-up, management of the meals (such as collection of funds and the purchase of additional products), daily oversight of the quality of the food, and support for the day-to-day running of the programme. WFP also provides technical assistance with the reconstruction and re-equipment of school kitchens and canteens, and of water/sanitation infrastructure; the introduction of new nutritious menus; training managers and cooks; and promoting and supporting school farms and gardens. At the policy level, WFP has provided technical assistance to governments to develop national policy on school nutrition as well as capacity for the effective management of the school meals programme.

The minimum criteria for selecting schools for the OSMP—in particular water availability and the existence of water and sanitation facilities, based on the country's food quality and safety requirements and regulations—can exclude schools serving impoverished communities. It is estimated that 25 per cent of schools do not meet the standards and most of these are located in rural areas. In the current phase of the programme, WFP is targeting 190 schools that do not reach the minimum criteria in order to assess what is needed to bring them into the programme.

TOC 1: ***If*** *parents actively engage with school committees to oversee the school meals programme,* ***then*** *they will build relationships with each other (trust and social capital).*

Analysis

This theory of change builds on the assumption that when members of communities engage in regular communication and collaborate on projects of mutual interest, they

build trust among themselves. Management of a school initiative, which involves regular work to collect and manage funds, making purchases, monitoring kitchens and engaging with school management, provides an opportunity to develop trust within and between communities, given the joint efforts required to implement the programme.

This theory of change is most relevant in specific conditions where divided groups live in close proximity and share common services (a school), where social capital is weak and prejudice between groups is a significant driver of tensions. However, the TOC is of limited utility outside of these circumstances.

WFP monitors have observed evidence of better communication within communities, enhanced cooperation on joint initiatives such as community run farms and gardens to improve school meals, and local fundraising initiatives. However, questions remain as to whether the above conditions, such as divided groups sharing a common school, exist in the supported schools, and regarding the impact of the common engagement. The programme would benefit from a corporate approach and guidance on measuring the impact on social capital.

Conflict sensitivity considerations

WFP does not collect any internal data or make use of external data on the ethnic make-up of schools. National Statistical Committee data provides data on ethnic composition only at the district and city levels. This makes it difficult to determine whether programming is inadvertently aligned with ethnicity, with the potential to feed inequalities and tensions. There are indications that the OSMP is helping to strengthen relations between parents. However, it is unclear whether these outcomes are being achieved within communities where the levels of trust were low, or if trust was already strong. Without an ethnic map, it is difficult to make any linkages between the OSMP and inter-group relations. A more nuanced understanding of the local drivers of conflict, social capital and ethnicity would be needed to determine whether the programme has had any impact on social capital and, if so, whether this is within ethnic groups or other lines of division (bonding) or across ethnic groups (bridging).

TOC 2: ***If*** *members of rural communities actively engage in the management of school meals,* ***then*** *they will contribute to building a stronger and more active civil society.*

Analysis

The assumption underpinning this TOC is that civic action, through PTAs and other formal parental committees involved in school meals management, links participants into more formal structures of civil society. This creates an opportunity for rural communities to become more aware of the potential role of civil society in enhancing governance and to gain knowledge and experience of the various legal and regulatory frameworks that govern their everyday lives, such as the rights of children, the regulation of voluntary contributions and the responsibilities of schools. This engagement helps build negotiation skills, provides experience of engaging with local authorities and enhances rural community members' interest in, capacity and opportunities to be more active in civil society.

When engagement with local authorities and formal institutions is successful, for example if the authorities listen and respond appropriately, this can contribute positively to increasing trust between the population and the government at the local and district levels. Through the everyday work of school canteen management, PTAs are involved in the management of funds and directly engaging with local government to deal with issues as they arise.

Strategic Outcome 2: Vulnerable and food-insecure smallholders, particularly women, in vulnerable areas of the Kyrgyz Republic have enhanced livelihoods and increased resilience to shocks, which supports food security and nutrition needs all year round

Vulnerable and food-insecure smallholders often need additional social safety net programmes in the event of shocks and stressors or to cope with chronic poverty. WFP is working in close partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Development to develop rural infrastructure, create and restore productive assets, organize income-generating skills training and set up facilities for processing agricultural produce. Consultations and joint planning activities to identify priority assets and on community mobilization have been undertaken in 300 districts. WFP provides direct support to food-insecure households in the form of fortified wheat flour and vegetable oil or cash-based transfers as payment for work on these assets so that vulnerable people can meet their immediate food needs.

TOC 3: ***If*** *natural resource infrastructure is enhanced,* ***then*** *vulnerable households will be able to sustain livelihoods at a time of crisis, which will reduce strons over natural resource management.*

Analysis

Through the food assistance for assets programme (FFA), WFP supports small and medium-sized community projects to construct, rehabilitate and protect productive assets that are important for the livelihoods and resilience of vulnerable sections of the population. FFA projects typically support:

- **Agriculture enhancement.** Reconstruction of irrigation hydro-facilities and reservoirs;
- **Infrastructure.** Drinking water pipelines, livestock treatment facilities, pedestrian bridges and pasture roads; and
- **Disaster risk mitigation.** Riverbank protection, tree planting and rehabilitation of drainage and mudflow canals.

WFP Kyrgyzstan supports more than 100 FFA projects annually in 300 districts to rehabilitate drinking/irrigation water facilities or infrastructure. Many of these either directly or indirectly reduce the drivers of conflict over natural resources in multi-ethnic and mono-ethnic communities throughout the country. In the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border areas, these projects have specific peacebuilding aims and are funded through the UN PBF.[8]

A major lesson learned from a wide range of programmes that combine conflict resolution with natural resource management (NRM) is that the design of the NRM components must always go beyond the analysis of livelihoods to consider conflicts related to NRM. To maximize the peacebuilding outcomes, such programmes should create clear systems of ownership and mechanisms for resolving disputes, and promote equity in benefits.[9] Work to enhance contested natural resources requires a careful, conflict-sensitive approach (see box 4.1).

The mission also reviewed the relevance of existing monitoring tools. UNDP baseline and end-line data show a reduction in tensions in the communities targeted by the joint project activities. WFP's post-distribution monitoring (PDM) has also collected data from project participants on access to natural resources and perceived levels of tension that found improvements after project implementation. This included data on

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[8] The PBF project theory of change is: 'Communities restore cross-border linkages and trust by jointly addressing the interdependent needs/challenges associated with community infrastructure and natural resources, as well as by establishing platforms for confidence building and cooperation between various societal groups'.

[9] See e.g. USAID, *Water and Conflict: A Toolkit for Programming* (USAID: Washington, DC, 2014).

access to irrigation water before and after the intervention, the likelihood of tensions over access to irrigation water, drinking water and livelihood sources before and after the project, the relevance of project activities to reducing tensions and perceived levels of mutual dependence on natural resources (water, land, pasture) between cross-border communities, as well as perceptions of change in relations between community members and members of other communities (cross border or neighbouring).

FFA activities are undertaken in the dry season to avoid interference with the agricultural cycle. PDM is undertaken 1–3 months after completion of the intervention. Assessing whether the intervention has reduced conflict over water stress would require an assessment timed approximately one year after completion, however, once there has been a full agricultural cycle that includes the critical moments of water stress.

There is some risk of bias in questions used only in PDM that ask people to rate the likelihood of tensions pre/post an intervention. It would be better practice to have a baseline prior to the intervention, with end-line comparisons potentially integrated into UNDP assessments. Assessment of the likelihood of tensions is also open to interpretation as different households may perceive the same scenario to be more or less tense.

The Food Security Outcome Monitoring Report, 2014–2017 notes that social capital was already high in these communities. Without any details on ethnicity, however, no distinctions can be made between social capital within a mono-ethnic community (bonding social capital) and social capital within a mixed ethnic area among divided groups (bridging social capital).

The Kyrgyzstan Country Office used qualitative indicators to measure social cohesion in communities in receipt of FFA, which covered the wider social safety nets and community resilience programme across all of Kyrgyzstan in 2014–2017 through Food Security Outcome Monitoring (FSOM). Two indicators were used to measure changes in levels of social cohesion: (*a*) the share of households reporting decreased likelihood of tensions as a result of poor access to natural resources within and between communities; and (*b*) the share of communities reporting increased levels of mutual self-help between community members in the event of shocks.

The Country Office has collected other qualitative evidence of contributions to improving the prospects for peace through community dialogues. According to the focus group discussion participants in Jalalabad (Yrys sub-district), tensions over water resources were resolved among around 200 households thanks to there being sufficient water available and increased harvests following the project. Project participants in another community in Osh (Zulpuev sub-district) noted that when community members saw how the WFP projects were being implemented, they started to trust and believe in the effectiveness, usefulness and sustainability of such projects and are now more willing to get together to work for a common result.[10]

TOC 4: **If** *poor and vulnerable people acquire new skills, diversify their livelihoods and increase their incomes,* **then** *they can meet essential household needs by remaining in their location, thereby reducing community conflicts and pressure on local natural resources, frustration and the level of grievance towards the state.*

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[10] Drawing on the insights from these anecdotes, WFP adapted its outcome monitoring tools in 2019 to include a basket of indicators to measure relationships, such as: perceptions of the likelihood of tensions over drinking/irrigation water or access to key livelihood resources (pasture, markets); the perceived level of mutual relations between community members and members of other communities (bordering or neighbouring) after the project; the perceived level of mutual dependence of cross-border communities around natural resources (water, land, pasture); and the appropriateness and relevance of activities that contribute to a reduction in potential tensions between the communities.

Box 4.1. Reducing water loss in disputed territories between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

Cross-border sharing of natural resources, in particular water, is widely regarded as a major driver of conflict in Batken province, Kyrgyzstan, and among the communities in the disputed territories between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The lack of border demarcation means that there are no functioning governance structures for dealing with natural resource management. The water infrastructure has deteriorated, resulting in significant water losses, meaning that in drier periods there is not enough water for all users. This contributes to tensions between communities on either side of the border, and among communities on the same side of the border, which sometimes erupt into acts of violence.

Working in conjunction with other agencies through the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), WFP implements the food assistance for assets (FFA) programme to rehabilitate irrigation canals and water pipelines in cross-border villages in the region. Priorities are identified and agreed by communities on both sides of the disputed border. In Karabak Ayil Okmoto, for example, Tajik and Kyrgyz communities live in close proximity, and the existing irrigation canal is implicitly understood by local communities as the de facto border. The canal itself is considered by both communities to belong to the Kyrgyz side but, with no alternative sources of water, Tajik farmers had illegally drilled holes into the canal to draw water, reducing the overall flow by approximately 50 per cent.

Through the programme, a new irrigation canal was built to serve the Kyrgyz side, and wells were constructed to serve the Tajik side. The programme has documented evidence of enhanced access to irrigation water, reduced tensions between communities over water access, and enhanced relations between communities.

Given the tacit understandings on ownership of the canals, the programme is carefully navigating choices over what infrastructure to rehabilitate and who can work on it. Since control over water is a contentious issue, the project needs to continually assess whether rehabilitation efforts might enhance actual control of water by one community, or whether it might give an implicit message of increased assertion of control over water to another.

Analysis

WFP Kyrgyzstan's food assistance for training (FFT) programme transfers livelihood skills and practical knowledge to vulnerable smallholders to ensure greater resilience in the community through improved farming practices, off-farm income-generation activities and post-harvest loss reductions.

Several types of FFT intervention are supported by WFP to build human capital and reduce the dependence of rural communities on scarce natural resources:

- **Capacity building.** Capacity building provides practical training on important livelihood sectors such as chicken breeding, orchard management, basic veterinary practices, hairdressing, sewing and carpentry. These provide life-long skills to vulnerable households to strengthen livelihoods.

- **Income-generation projects.** In addition to the transfer of skills and knowledge, WFP builds synergies with local government and development partners for the transfer of material assets (plots of land, money, construction materials, equipment and livestock) to project participants on condition of successful completion of training. WFP supports various sectors of the economy, such as greenhouse farming, beekeeping, fish-farming and agro-forestry.

WFP Kyrgyzstan also helps to build community capacity to reduce post-harvest losses and increase agricultural value chains through the provision of mini-processing equipment in the most remote and vulnerable districts of the country.

Conflict Sensitivity

Research across a broad swathe of employment creation programmes by the UN PBF, UNDP, the World Bank and the International Labour Organization has identified three common theories of change on how employment creation can contribute to peace:[11]

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[11] Brück, T. et al., *Jobs Aid Peace: A Review of the Theory and Practice of the Impact of Employment Programmes on Peace in Fragile and Conflict-affected Countries* (Berlin: ISDC, 2016).

- if conflict is driven by negative perceptions of the 'other', then employment programmes can bring people together and begin to break down perceptions of 'otherness' (contact theory);
- if conflict is driven by inequity or injustice, then employment can address such exclusion; and
- if conflict is driven by unemployment or under-employment, then providing decent employment addresses economic incentives.

The contributions to peace are categorized as 'job effects' (employment and income) and 'programme effects' (contact with others). However, in the absence of an adequate understanding of labour markets, programmes risk increasing frustration and worsening tensions.

The theory of change is underpinned by an assumption that if people have no means of living in villages, they are more likely to move to cities and become part of the agitated urban poor. The ambition to diversify incomes through income generating activities is constrained by a concern not to become responsible for getting 100 per cent of the caseload into employment, due to the limitations on WFP's programme, market opportunities, private sector engagement and government resources. However, failure to deliver on job effects significantly restricts possible contributions to enhancing the prospects for peace. If FFT programming is to contribute to improved prospects for peace, then a much stronger role is needed in facilitating the move into paid employment. In order to avoid increasing frustration, the programme should as a minimum link FFT to onward opportunities or small business start-up opportunities provided by others. For example, WFP Afghanistan is taking a more proactive role in its programme 'from learning to earning', in which micro-credit programming links into FFT and longer-term support is provided to graduates of the training.

Strategic Outcome 3: Food-insecure communities in areas vulnerable to climate change have improved food systems and are more resilient to shocks all year round

WFP and the Ministry of Emergency Systems (MoES) are working to implement a variety of structural disaster mitigation strategies and projects to protect the most vulnerable, often those living in rural areas.

Over the next five years, WFP aims to support approximately 120 000 people in around 300 rural districts prone to disaster and climate change risks to improve their capacities to manage sustainable, shock-responsive and adaptable food systems. These actions aim to ensure access to economic opportunities and consequently to achieve food security and adequate nutrition for the most vulnerable people in the country. The project is in the very early stages of start-up and lacks a fully detailed design.

*TOC 5: **If** the risks associated with climate change are mitigated, and livelihoods are more adaptive, diversified and resilient, **then** stress over natural resource access will be reduced, and future conflict over natural resource management will be prevented*

Analysis

The Kyrgyz Republic is greatly reliant on agriculture, which contributes 14 per cent of gross domestic product and provides one-third of total employment. Increased weather variability is already discernible in Kyrgyzstan, and water availability is expected to reduce in the longer term. Climate change has negatively affected the livelihoods and food security of vulnerable people in the Kyrgyz Republic and water availability, in particular, is a key climatic variable affecting food security.

As noted above in Strategic Outcome 2, water stress is already a significant driver of conflict in border areas and within Kyrgyzstan itself, and disproportionately affects water users downstream in Tajikistan. Thus, mitigating the risks associated with climate change has significant potential to prevent future tensions and conflict, but the limited details on project design makes it difficult to assess this currently.

There has been a growing attempt to explain the mechanisms that link climate change to violent conflict, and areas where a large part of the population have resource-dependent incomes, such as from agriculture, have been highlighted as being highly prone to these risks. Worsening livelihood security through a loss of agricultural productivity and incomes, or a loss of natural resources such as water, can increase the risk of tension and the onset of violent conflict.

There are plans to analyse the cause-effect relations of climate change and food security. If the Country Office decides to analyse the relationship between climate change vulnerability and patterns of conflict, there is very little external data on Central Asia. However, there are a number of databases on other regions that might provide useful insights on how the relationship could be measured:

- Climate Change and African Political Stability (CCAPS) analyses how climate change, conflict, governance and aid intersect to affect African and international security. Its Climate Security Vulnerability Model (CSVM) aims to identify the places most likely to be vulnerable to climate security concerns in Africa at the national and subnational levels.[12]

- The Violence Early-Warning System (VIEWS) provides early warning on political violence identified by the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme (UCDP). VIEWS carries out climate-conflict mapping.

- The Expert Working Group on Climate-related Security Risks, which is hosted by SIPRI, will publish a report on climate risk in Central Asia.[13]

Strategic Outcome 4: Government institutions at the central and decentralized levels have strengthened their capacities on comprehensive food security and nutrition management by 2030

Strategic Outcome 4 delivers advocacy support to the three other concrete activity-driven outcomes. WFP supports the government at the central and decentralized levels to improve its capacities to manage food security and nutrition through coordinated evidence-based approaches to meeting the different needs of individuals. It aims to diversify the government's social protection mechanisms to include protective, preventive and promotional approaches with a view to improving equality of access to benefits, including by institutionalizing WFP-supported approaches. It uses the knowledge and practices learned from activity implementation to: (*a*) improve government policies; (*b*) facilitate the generation and transfer of knowledge and capacity in systems and tools at the central, regional and local levels; and (*c*) work towards achieving United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 on strengthening global partnerships by working together with national governments, the international community, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders.

In partnership with other development partners, WFP has provided technical support to the government in developing the food security and nutrition programme,

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[12] The CCAPS vulnerability model identifies four main sources of vulnerability: (*a*) climate-related hazard exposure; (*b*) population density; (*c*) household and community resilience; and (*d*) governance and political violence.

[13] The working group is also working on a proposal to examine regional integration and transboundary water cooperation in the Aral Sea Basin.

2019–2023 and strengthening the normative framework for the school meals programme and social development policy.

TOC 6: **If** *the government develops responsive, inclusive and accountable institutions at the national and subnational levels, and enhances service delivery,* **then** *citizens will increasingly engage with and trust the state.*

Analysis

In the Kyrgyzstan context, poor governance has contributed to inequality and poor and worsening public services.[14] Social inequality, notably a failure to reach the most vulnerable, leads to frustration and alienation. WFP's social protection work and other capacity strengthening initiatives framed under Strategic Outcome 4 address the conflict driver of resentment towards the state due to weak service provision. This theory of change also applies to Strategic Outcome 1, particularly if the OSMP model becomes institutionalized as a fully government-owned element of the national school meals policy.

This theory of change relates to the widely held assumption that improving service delivery can strengthen contact and accountability between government and citizens, thereby building output- and performance-based legitimacy. Although the evidence base is limited, this assumption has provided the basis for a vast quantity of donor funding globally. Questions have arisen as to whether strengthening service delivery in one sector (such as education) can affect attitudes to performance-based legitimacy in others.[15]

Service delivery models with built-in grievance redress mechanisms, and which foster relationships between service providers and users appear to have greater success in shifting attitudes. Thus, the process (multi-stakeholder engagement) is more important than the output (improved services) in enhancing legitimacy.[16] Furthermore, poor experiences of service delivery may have a disproportionately greater effect on people's attitudes to the state than positive experiences, and thus there are conflict sensitivity risks in programme failure.[17] There have been significant critiques of service delivery programming that focuses excessively on technocratic capacity building exercises while ignoring the politics that drive state decisions and directions.[18]

Supporting the visibility of the state in connecting with citizens and demonstrating accountability and responsiveness, rather than substituting for the state in service delivery, are key to building citizen-state links. WFP should therefore consider the question of visibility. WFP Kyrgyzstan could also explore what its potential might be to contribute to more transformative change by supporting the state to build an inclusive and human-centred social protection system, including enhancing the social passport registry to address exclusion errors, and enhancing the capacity of the government staff involved.

Radicalization and preventing violent extremism

WFP Kyrgyzstan has no programmes with the specific objective of preventing radicalization and violent extremism. However, a lack of social safety nets and

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[14] Combaz (note 3).

[15] See Slater, R., Mallett, R. and Carpenter, S., *Social Protection and Basic Services in Conflict-affected Situations: What do we Know?* Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) Working Paper no. 8 (SLRC, ODI: London, 2012).

[16] See Slater, R. et al., *Service Delivery in Fragile Settings* (SIPRI and ODI: Stockholm and London, 2016).

[17] Denny, L., Mallett, R. and Mazurana, D., *Peacebuilding and Service Delivery* (United Nations University-Centre for Policy Research: Tokyo, 2015).

[18] See e.g. Bennett, J. et al., *Aiding the Peace: A Multi-donor Evaluation of Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities in Southern Sudan, 2005–2010* (ITAD: London, 2010).

Box 4.2. Migration

Biases and exclusion errors in the national social protection system have been widely documented and the significant administrative hurdles to being registered for a social passport were mentioned by several key informants during the research. This creates the potential for bias. WFP uses the social passport system, in which social workers identify poor families and include them on a type of social registry of potential beneficiaries to be used by different social assistance programmes, as the entry point for targeting. In order to mitigate the risk of selection bias, WFP complements the social registry with other targeting strategies and tools to ensure that people eligible for WFP programmes are not excluded from these programmes, even if they do not have a social passport. Matching the social assistance transfer (compensation for unskilled labour participation in community asset rehabilitation and creation) to market rates provides strong grounds for self-targeting, thereby ensuring minimum exclusion and greater inclusion of the most disadvantaged groups.

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exclusion is widely seen as leaving people vulnerable to recruitment into extremist groups, and raises the question of whether programming does, or could, reach those who are vulnerable to recruitment and thereby help to prevent radicalization.

In the Kyrgyz Republic, which is a predominantly Muslim country, the government has encouraged the right to freedom of religious expression, in particular due to the repression of religion during the Soviet era. More recently, there has been a huge increase in the practice of conservative Islam. Assessments conducted in 2016 found that the risk of violent extremism in Kyrgyzstan is increasing.[19] The main drivers of violent extremism in Kyrgyzstan are existing and growing socio-economic inequalities, perceptions of injustice, human rights violations, socio-political exclusion, widespread corruption and the sustained mistreatment of certain groups.[20]

WFP Kyrgyzstan operates extensively in districts that have been identified by the government as being at risk of religious radicalization and violent extremism. There are clear dividing lines among community members who regard themselves as secular or religious.

To adapt to these changes and ensure that programmes do not antagonize communities, WFP ensures the inclusion of community members from different ethnic, religious, gender and age groups. In some communities, WFP is represented by female and male monitors who consult and work separately with women and men. It would otherwise not be possible to ensure the inclusion of women in consultations and project activities.

The renewed Peacebuilding Priority Plan for Kyrgyzstan, 2017–2020 focuses on increasing the resilience of target communities to radicalization and to pathways to violent extremism, and on improving state capacity to address the most pressing drivers of violent extremism. WFP does not directly implement PBF project activities under this plan. However, WFP Kyrgyzstan believes that it has the potential to add value to the activities of other agencies, in particular through building resilient communities, increasing safety net coverage and improving trust in government institutions.

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[19] Search for Common Ground, *Baseline Research: The Situation of Religious and Violent Extremism in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), Major Findings* (Bishkek: Search for Common Ground, 2015).

[20] UN Country Team in the Kyrgyz Republic, *Peacebuilding Priority Plan, 2017–2020* (Bishkek: WFP Kyrgyzstan, 2016).