World Food Programme
Programme Alimentaire Mondial
Programa Mundial de Alimentos
برنامج الأغذية العالمي

SAVING
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15 March 2018

Mr Navid Hanif

Director

Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination

Dear Mr Hanif

On behalf of the World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director, Mr. David Beasley, thank you for the invitation to contribute to the 2018 Integration Segment of the Council, to be held from 1 to 3 May 2018, at UN Headquarters in New York.

WFP is pleased to submit the following inputs:

I.   Introduction

1. Innovation has a crucial role to play in the fight against hunger. The availability of new technologies and approaches today present a tremendous opportunity to help vulnerable families overcome isolation, bridge knowledge gaps, create new livelihoods and strengthen community resilience.

III.   Approaches

2. Access to mobile money, agricultural technical advice or to jobs in the online freelancing economy are just some of the new tools and services that can build resilient communities. WFP has over 30 active projects around the world, which aim to test these approaches – to find out what works and what doesn't – and then scale up the most promising innovations.

3. WFP has witnessed the power of technology to enable change. Under the Purchase for Progress initiative, over one million farmers became better connected to markets, even in places where mobile connectivity was limited. Working through farmer organizations such as the Melik Siltie Cooperative Union in Worabe, Ethiopia, smallholders use the Internet to access real-time market price information about seeds and fertilizers and to check weather forecasts for the entire region. As a result, the Melik Siltie Cooperative Union tripled its food aggregation capacity within a three-year period, enabling a greater return on investment, better preparedness against risks and more nutritious food on the table.

4. WFP is a leader in the operational adoption of innovative digital technologies, including blockchain, artificial Intelligence, mobile communication, and 'big data'

analysis. We are applying these technologies to both strengthen our core business, but also to drive a broader change for good in the communities where we work.

5. WFP is currently implementing compelling and scalable innovations to build community resilience. By making communities more connected, better able to weather food security shocks, and grow skills that improve their employability, WFP is helping to create future generations who are able to thrive. A few examples include:

   a. Digital Identities: The international community recognizes that the right to a legal identity is fundamental to accessing to a host of other rights and services, from health care to having a nationality to protection from human trafficking. Thanks to its global footprint and innovation culture, WFP is well placed to unlock access to an identity, basic services and digital benefits for many of the world's most vulnerable people. WFP currently holds 25 million digital identities in SCOPE, its identity-based transfer system. The digital identities allow WFP to rapidly and effectively provide urgent assistance, especially in emergency situations.

   b. Farm to Market Alliance (Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Zambia): This consortium of public and private institutions helps smallholder farmers move from subsistence farming to market-oriented agriculture. It employs a comprehensive value chain approach, providing smallholder farmers with access to predictable markets, affordable finance, quality farming inputs and effective technologies such as post-harvest handling and storage. Approximately 170,000 farmers – 46 percent of them women – have benefited from improved value chain coordination.

   c. Tech for Food (Lebanon & Iraq): This unique digital skills programme puts job opportunities in the global digital economy within reach of young adults affected by war in Syria. It provides tailored digital training courses (e.g. data cleaning, picture tagging, graphic design) and soft skills that help bridge the gap between poverty and a new career in a globalized job market. Since 2016, Tech for Food has hosted more than 1,000 training classes across four different campuses in both Lebanon and Iraq. The programme, supported by the WFP Innovation Accelerator, has impacted the lives of over 3,000 Syrian refugees, including 1,800 women.

   d. Virtual Farmers' Market (VFM) (Zambia): This app-based marketplace connects smallholder farmers with buyers, providing a transparent, open and trustworthy space for smallholder farmers and buyers to negotiate fair prices and deals.

e. <u>Hydroponics</u> (Algeria, Chad, Peru, Jordan): WFP is testing hydroponics tools to increase resilience and create more sustainable food systems to reduce malnutrition. Hydroponics comes with significant benefits when compared to traditional agriculture, as it saves up to 80% of water and 75% of space and time. In Algeria, WFP has developed an innovative, low-tech system to grow barley for use as animal fodder by refugees in camps in Tindouf, south-western Algeria. With goats in the camps usually feeding off garbage, the fodder increases the refugees' access to milk and meat and thereby improves food security in the camps. The success of the Algeria model will enable WFP to take the technique to scale and implement it in other challenging environments such as Djibouti and Sudan.

6. While technology is rapidly advancing around the world, we still face great challenges in closing the digital gap and making sure that those furthest behind reap the benefits that these new advances have to offer. Humanitarian actors face a range of obstacles that can impede this much needed growth. A few examples include limited connectivity or availability of mobile technology in remote locations, data privacy and protection issues, national policy and laws governing the distribution and management of data, and insufficient human capacity to implement and manage complex data solutions. Greater investment in partnerships across the sector – from private companies to academia, national governments and humanitarian actors – will be essential in putting the power of technology into the hands of the world's poorest.

7. Designing and implementing sustainable technology solutions also requires an understanding of local mores and unique community hurdles, in particular a sensitivity to gender related issues. Women act in every role across the food system – they are producers, processors, sellers, and, of course, consumers. Yet they often have little say in decision-making and don't always have access to the information and tools that would enable them to maximize their contribution.

V.   Recommendations

8. WFP encourages greater focus on the following areas in order to achieve ECOSOC's ambitions:

a. Strengthen processes to scale innovation effectively across the system in a lean and agile manner, including through increased inter-agency collaboration and internal operational and regulatory frameworks to support the use of frontier technologies.

b. Develop internal innovative capacity through a process of human-centered design and lean start-up, thus ensuring we build products and services that fit the needs of vulnerable communities.

c. Stronger engagement with grassroots companies, start-ups and integrating the potential of entrepreneurship and youth to build resilient communities.

In closing, allow me to wish you every success with this important event. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you require any clarifications or additional information.

Yours sincerely,

Coco Ushiyama

Director of the UN System, African Union & Multilateral Engagement Division

World Food Programme

New York