**Protection and accountability to affected populations (AAP)**

The purposeof this paper is to outline to WFP staff and partners our commitments on protection and accountability to the women, men, girls and boys affected by the crisis in Iraq. It should be used in conjunction with the Safe Distribution Checklist.

How WFP and its partners distribute food, cash and vouchers is vitally important in avoiding that our assistance activities have a negative impact or unwanted consequences on the people receiving our assistance. WFP aims to reduce any negative impact and strengthen positive effects by putting in place some simple measures to increase the protective environment for affected people and by being accountable to them.

**What does being accountable to individuals receiving food assistance mean?**

all WFP and partner activities and assistance should be implemented in a way that respects the rights, safety and dignity of the individuals we seek to assist

* People receiving assistance are the primary actors in their own survival and protection. They are therefore also primary stakeholders of assistance and building a positive relationship with them is key to the success of our programmes
* Often in our haste to deliver assistance, we overlook the capacities that local communities and affected people possess and, without meaning to, undermine their personal authority and control. Instead, we should take care to utilize and build on local capacities as much as possible
* Effective information provision and two way communication with affected women, men, girls and boys ensures that we provide information that enables people to make informed decisions about their own lives and survival, and that there are means by which they can give us feedback on the quality and effectiveness of our assistance. At a minimum, people should routinely have access to information regarding their rights and entitlements, who is providing the assistance to them, what the programme plans are and how they can get in touch or make a complaint if need be
* All programming should consider how each segment of a community by gender, age, disability or diverse needs experiences and accesses assistance and information. Participation in assessment and decision making should therefore be representative of different interest groups to ensure that we hear their point of view and that their needs are met, and that traditional power structures don’t cause vulnerable or marginalized groups to be disadvantaged.
* If you receive feedback from individuals or groups about food assistance programmes, be sure to try to use it! Being open to receiving feedback is a first step, receiving it may then be a sign that your communication systems are working, and then using it and giving feedback about how it was used will serve to improve programming and strengthen trust and relationships
* Involving affected populations in the design, monitoring and evaluation stages of programming is critical to our learning and to the improvement of our programmes
* Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) refers to anyone involved in the provision of humanitarian assistance using their position of power to exploit any person in need of that assistance. An example of SEA is to ask someone from the affected community for favours in exchange for food assistance, which is free. Exploiting this position is a serious breach of conduct and accountability, and is a failure of our obligation to promote protection.

**What does protection mean to WFP and its cooperating partners?**

* Protection is an obligation of all humanitarian actors and in a food security context means that all staff and programmes commit to respecting the rights of people affected by humanitarian crises, including their right to food, safety and dignity
* Our role is to ensure that our programmes and activities are designed and carried out in a way that does not increase the protection risks faced by affected women, men, girls and boys receiving assistance in Iraq, but rather, contributes to their safety and dignity
* We do this by analysing the context and risks, existing protection issues and community capacity for self-protection. We consult with stakeholders, incorporate protection into our programming tools, and keep watch during programme implementation for issues or events that might require some action to correct
* Some questions to consider to enhance the protection impact of food assistance programmes include:
* What protection risks are people exposed to, and how are these different according to age and gender? (Do people pursue negative coping mechanisms, such as child labour, transactional sex or trafficking? Is people’s safety threatened by conflict or violent crime? Are some people marginalised or not able to access basic services?)
* In what ways are food assistance programmes or assistance inadvertently creating or exacerbating protection risks? (Are people put at risk when they access assistance or participate in programmes? Do programmes inadvertently create or exacerbate household or community tensions? Does the beneficiary targeting criteria cause resentment?)
* How can WFP and its partners avoid exposing the people they are assisting to protection risks and instead have a positive effect on people’s protection? (Can food assistance reduce negative coping mechanisms that put people at risk? Can food assistance support reintegration of marginalised groups? Can food assistance help reduce household or community tension?)