Fighting Hunger Worldwide

Issued in 2013

Protection in Practice:
Food Assistance with Safety and Dignity

EDITED BY NICHOLAS CRAWFORD AND GINA PATTUGALAN

WFP
World Food Programme
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Foreword

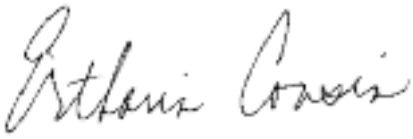
This book highlights the impact of providing food and nutrition assistance on the protection of people in need. The premise is simple: for hungry, crisis affected people – including women, minority groups, children and the elderly – the way WFP provides food assistance is critically important to their safety and dignity.

WFP and other humanitarian agencies with a deep field presence are working in increasingly complex and dangerous places. It is clear that humanitarian organizations must 'think protection' in every facet of our work, from needs assessment and programme design to delivery mechanisms and training for front-line staff. Without sufficient protection in communities that seek our assistance, meaningful food security or nutrition outcomes are threatened.

Our commitment to protect civilians requires that we constantly refine and deepen our understanding of the contexts where we work, assess the root causes of violence and rights violations, and think through steps to being part of the solution. When circumstances change, we must be ready to adjust, bearing in mind that as humanitarians, our accountability is foremost to the people who need our assistance. States themselves are responsible for protecting their citizens; we must work with authorities whenever possible but be ready to advocate for the voiceless when States are unable or unwilling to meet their responsibilities.

Some of the stories in the following chapters – not just of hunger, but of insecurity for millions – are truly heart-wrenching: women being raped while collecting firewood, sick and elderly people having food rations stolen, and people being denied assistance because of their ethnicity. No single agency can overcome these kinds of injustices alone. We must rally communities, nations and other organizations to work together in order to protect the dignity and safety of those in need.

As this book illustrates, this is a learning process for WFP. The authors are independent and were given free rein to observe, interview and draw their own conclusions. Only by learning from the past can we do better in the future. It is my hope that the lessons learned in this book will be shared beyond WFP so that we can all be part of building a more hopeful, food secure and safer future for people in need.



Ertharin Cousin
Executive Director
World Food Programme

Editors' Note

This book considers the protection concerns of beneficiaries within the context of WFP's food assistance mandate. It was inspired by an emerging consciousness among humanitarian actors that the tendency to consider beneficiaries' protection and assistance needs separately is producing disappointing outcomes on both fronts. How and to what extent has WFP, as the United Nation's frontline agency in the fight against hunger, grappled with protection dilemmas in its own work? This book documents a growing consciousness within WFP about protection and its links to food assistance. It also provides a glimpse at some of the obstacles to wholeheartedly adopting a 'protection lens'.

The introductory chapter discusses the rise of the notion of protection within the humanitarian sector, and WFP's efforts to integrate protective practices into its own work. The succeeding chapters – based on studies conducted from the latter part of 2004 through 2011 – illustrate some of the opportunities and challenges experienced when applying a protection lens in WFP's operations. Each chapter portrays a different angle of WFP's approach to maximizing its protective impact on beneficiaries through food assistance. The book concludes with a discussion of challenges, prospects and recommendations derived from the various chapters.

The field research and case studies that comprise this book would not have been possible without donors' support to WFP's Protection Project. WFP therefore thanks the Australian Agency for International Development, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the United States Agency for International Development's Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance.

Liana Simmons, Michael Kaethler and Veronique Barbelet contributed research, writing, editing and ideas to the shaping of this book, and were essential collaborators throughout its production. Ashley South provided initial editing during the early phase of production. Michela Bonsignorio, Sheila Grudem, Colin Hourihan and Pia Skjelstad spent hours perusing and commenting on the chapters with a critical eye, and we thank them for their generous contribution and time.

Nicholas Crawford and Gina Pattugalan

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Acronyms

AAGE	anti-government element
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance
AUC	*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*; United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CBO	community-based organization
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ELN	*Ejército de Liberación Nacional;* National Liberation Army (Colombia)
EMOP	emergency operation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FARC	*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia;* Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
GBV	gender-based violence
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	internally displaced person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force Afghanistan
LTSH	landside transport, storage and handling
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
MONUC	United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MSF	*Médecins sans frontières;* Doctors without Borders
NADRA	National Database and Registration Agency (Pakistan)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority (Pakistan)
NGO	non-governmental organization

NWFP	North-West Frontier Province (Pakistan)
OAS	Organization of American States
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
PRT	provincial reconstruction team
RUT	*Registro Unico Tributario;* Unique Tax Register (Colombia)
SAFE	Safe Access to Fuel and Alternative Energy
SLA	Sudanese Liberation Army
SUR	*Sistema Único de Registro;* Unique Registration System (Colombia)
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIL	United Nations Mission for Liberia
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan
UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Force
WFP	World Food Programme

Introduction

Protection in Practice: Adaptation and Application in the Context of Food Assistance

Nicholas Crawford, Gina Pattugalan and Liana Simmons

Material assistance to populations – alleviating the suffering of those affected by conflict, natural disaster, structural marginalization or human rights abuses – has long been a cornerstone of the humanitarian mission. Over the past two decades, humanitarians have broadened their vision to emphasize the protection of civilians from violence, coercion and rights violations as integral components of relief operations. Calls to engage in humanitarian protection – assuring civilians' safety, rights and dignity alongside material assistance – have become central to discussions surrounding humanitarian agencies' roles and responsibilities.

This chapter describes the emerging notion of protection within humanitarian thought and practice, and summarizes WFP's approach to integrating protection concerns within its food-assistance activities. It draws lessons from WFP's experience in the field, exploring how WFP's various operations provide opportunities for protection. It also highlights how the challenges WFP faces limit its role in the protection of civilians.

I. Evolving ideas on protection

The discourse on civilian protection within the humanitarian relief sector has been closely linked to changes in the international arena during the 1990s. In 1992, United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's *Agenda for Peace* disputed the assumption that the protection of human rights is the sole responsibility of citizens' governments. This thinking gained ground as the security guarantees afforded by Cold War structures diminished, leaving a political and security vacuum in which mass violations of rights such as those in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia could take place. These events prompted the international community, including the United Nations, to examine its role in promoting peace, security and human rights.[1] The result was an increased international commitment to peacekeeping and stabilization operations and the birth of the 'responsibility to protect' doctrine, culminating in the United Nations General Assembly's adoption of the Responsibility to Protect Resolution in October 2005.

1. Alex De Waal claimed that, "...the end of the Cold War created a vacuum in Western strategic interest in Africa" and that "into this vacuum rushed humanitarianism". De Waal, A. 1997. *Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa*, p. 133. London, Africa Rights and the International African Institute.

Alex De Waal wrote: "At the end of the Cold War, leading international humanitarians began to sense a historic opportunity lay within their grasp. The geo-political straitjacket was at last being removed and it seemed that the humanitarians could set their own agenda for the first time."[2] The United Nations therefore increased its role in human rights, including promoting the protection of civilians, as articulated in the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna. At this conference, 171 States adopted a Declaration and Programme of Action calling on all United Nations agencies to engage in the formulation, promotion and implementation of human rights instruments.[3] United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Anan's Programme for Reform, in 1997, acknowledged human rights as both a principal goal of the organization and a means by which its other goals could be advanced. Human rights have been designated as an issue that cuts across all pillars of the United Nations work programme: peace and security, economic and social affairs, development cooperation and humanitarian affairs. The General Assembly concluded that, "A major task for the UN therefore is to enhance its human rights programme and fully integrate it into the broad range of the UN's activities."[4]

Against this background, some began to question the effectiveness of the aid industry's ethos of humanitarianism, which had been dominated by a 'pure' relief consensus – a model built around asserting neutrality and the impartial delivery of humanitarian materials (food, blankets, medicine, etc.). Duffield and Prendergast (1994), for example, questioned the notion of neutrality: "…it is impossible to be neutral within the logic of internal war, a war whose destructive consequences are aimed precisely at disrupting the lives of the people whom humanitarian aid seeks to sustain."[5] They also argued that neutral humanitarianism avoids the political reality and eschews the need for humanitarians to also support participatory and accountable structures and institutions.

The debate gradually pushed aid agencies to accept the need for engagement designed more consciously around the wider socio-political context when rights violations and abuses continued to cause human suffering and the need for material assistance.[6] Sometimes the very action of alleviating suffering has a negative impact on the socio-political dynamics of a humanitarian crisis.

2. *Ibid.*
3. United Nations World Conference on Human Rights. 1993. *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*, A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), Chapter III.
4. United Nations General Assembly. 2007. *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform*. A/51/950 (14 July 2007), p. 63.
5. Duffield, M. & Prendergast, J. 1994. Sovereignty and Intervention after the Cold War: Lessons from the Emergency Relief Desk. *Middle East Report 187/188, Interventions and North-South Politics in the 90s*.
6. For example, see: Slim, H. 1997. Doing the Right Thing: Relief Agencies, Moral Dilemmas and Moral Responsibility in Political Emergencies and War, *Disasters* 21(3): 244–257; Anderson, K. 2004. Humanitarian Inviolability in Crisis: The Meaning of Impartiality and Neutrality for UN and NGO Agencies Following the 2003–2004 Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts. *Harvard Human Rights Journal* (17); and McClellan, J. 1995. Moral and Ethical Issues. Presentation at the Symposium on the Role of NGO Emergency Assistance in Promoting Peace and Reconciliation. Copenhagen ICVA Humanitarian Affairs Series (8).

Harrell-Bond's (1986) work on Ugandan refugees in Southern Sudan argued that compassion in humanitarian action does not suffice; it only helps to create the problems it attempts to solve.[7] The work of Mary Anderson (2002), which produced the 'do-no-harm' approach, also noted that assistance is linked to context and can affect conflicts, and vice-versa. Anderson noted: "In the context of complex emergencies, humanitarian and development assistance – even when effective in terms of the mandate to save lives, alleviate suffering and/or support sustainable enterprises – nonetheless very often feeds into, exacerbates or prolongs conflict."[8]

All this soul-searching chipped away at the ethical premise of humanitarianism and provoked a new resolve that aid should be delivered with consideration of its impact on the socio-economic and political environment, including civilian protection.

Humanitarian agencies and NGOs began to broaden their approach, at least rhetorically, beyond supplying materials to better understanding the contexts where they work, the impact of aid, and finally to embracing humanitarian principles and the aspiration of fulfilling human rights.[9] This reorientation, known as 'new humanitarianism', was characterized by a rejection of the notion of beneficiaries as passive recipients of aid and a recognition of needy populations' rights. With this shift, more humanitarian actors – beyond the traditional, protection-mandated agencies[10] – began seeking practical ways to promote the protection of civilians in their work. According to O'Callaghan and Pantuliano (2007), many were driven by the "realization that, in many crises, the overwhelming direct threat to the civilian population is not lack of material assistance but lack of safety". As a result, several agencies without a protection mandate have reconsidered their role in crises and asked "whether it should be accompanied, or even driven, by protection concerns."[11]

7. Harrell-Bond, Barbara. 1986. *Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees,* p. 182. Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press.

8. Anderson, M. 2002. Food Aid in Conflict Workshop Report (Keynote Address), p. 43. Rome, WFP.

9. Shannon, R. 2009. Playing with Principles in an Era of Securitized Aid: Negotiating Humanitarian Space in Post 9-11 Afghanistan, *Progress in Development Studies*, 9(1): 15–36; Ignatieff, M. 2001. Virtual War: *Kosovo and Beyond.* New York, Metropolitan Books; Leader, N. 2000. *The Politics of Principle: Principles of Humanitarian Action in Practice.* Humanitarian Policy Group Report 2, March 2000. London, Overseas Development Institute; Phelan, J. & Woods, G. 2005. *Bleeding Boundaries: Civil-Military Relationships and the Cartography of Neutrality*. Woking UK, Ockenden International.

10. Agencies with a legal mandate for protection include: the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

11. O'Callaghan, S. & Pantuliano, S. 2007. *Protective Action: Incorporating Civilian Protection into Humanitarian Response*, p. 5. Humanitarian Policy Group Report 26. London, Overseas Development Institute.

As the focus of humanitarian assistance widened, agencies also began to recognize the urgent need to meet the protection needs of specific vulnerable groups such as internally displaced persons (IDPs), women, children, elderly people and minority groups. This was a response to the changing nature of war, especially the proliferation of internal armed conflicts and indiscriminate targeting of civilians. The 2005 Humanitarian Response Review[12] identified critical gaps in emergency response, including the protection of IDPs. This prompted the creation of a Protection Cluster as one element of reform centred on ensuring accountability within the humanitarian community. The Protection Cluster also reflected a consensus that better collaboration among a wider pool of actors (including agencies without a legal protection mandate) was necessary for a more coherent and effective humanitarian response to protection problems.

Adapting the notion of protection to the humanitarian community

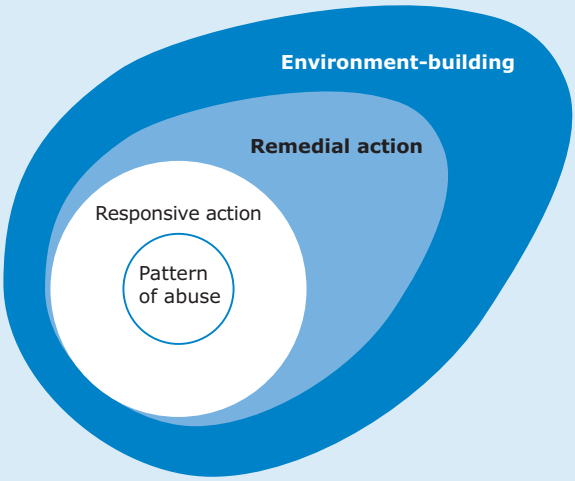
The notion of protection has shifted significantly over the past decade. In the humanitarian aid sector, its meaning has expanded from simply implying a shield from harm. Humanitarian protection combines the notion of a shield and the principle of humanity; it is rooted in the belief that all possible steps should be taken to respond to human suffering and denial of dignity, which are often caused or perpetuated by abuses or rights violations. This notion is captured in the consensus on protection adopted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), a group of United Nations and non-governmental humanitarian organizations:

> *"The concept of protection encompasses all activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law i.e., human rights, international humanitarian law and refugee law".*[13]

The widely referenced 'egg model' (Figure 1) illustrates some possible protection activities of humanitarian organizations. It delineates three spheres of action for addressing the consequences as well as the root causes of abuse. The first sphere is *responsive action*, defined as any activity aimed at stopping, alleviating the immediate effects of or preventing the recurrence of abuse.[14] Strategies include convincing authorities to act, providing services to people exposed to abuse, alleviating immediate suffering and providing legal assistance. The second sphere, *remedial action*, seeks to restore dignified living conditions following a pattern of abuse. The third sphere, *environment building*, involves long-term work to build and strengthen laws and institutions that protect rights.

12. OCHA. 2005. *Humanitarian Response Review*. Commissioned by the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator and Undersecretary for Humanitarian Affairs. New York.
13. Caverzasio, G. (ed.) 2001. *Strengthening Protection in War: A Search for Professional Standards*, p. 19. Geneva, ICRC.
14. Slim, H. & Bonwick, A. 2005. *Protection: An Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) Guide for Humanitarian Agencies*. London, Overseas Development Institute; IASC. 2002. *Growing the Sheltering Tree: Protecting Rights through Humanitarian Action*, p. 16. New York, United Nations.

Figure 1. The egg model



The egg model implies that protection should be more than just a set of activities or tools: it should be desired outcome whereby rights are respected and fulfilled, and dignity and freedom are enhanced. Protection is achieved when individuals who would otherwise be at risk of abuse or deprived of rights are able to exercise those rights.

Protection in humanitarian action

Applying the concept of protection to humanitarian action has led to a range of approaches among humanitarian agencies (see Table 1). The first of these approaches views assistance activities through a 'protection lens' and aims to reduce the risks to people and communities that come with being the beneficiaries of assistance. Often referred to as 'mainstreaming protection', this approach applies the tenets of the do-no-harm principle: assistance should not exacerbate or create more risks to already vulnerable populations, legitimize conflicts or fuel further conflicts. The do-no-harm principle does not prescribe solutions to rights abuses, but advocates for directing assistance towards 'connectors' in affected populations who can foster a sense of community cohesion.

The second approach leads to interventions that meet both assistance and protection objectives. In recent years, a growing literature on the linkages between livelihoods and protection[15] has examined how livelihood interventions can also address the humanitarian consequences of violence by assisting affected

15. See the series of field-based research studies undertaken by the Overseas Development Institute (www.odi.org.uk/projects/details.asp?id=345&title=linking-livelihoods-protection; last accessed 12 July 2012) and Feinstein International Centre at Tufts University, including a partnership with WFP on protection and livelihoods in Darfur (https://wikis.uit.tufts.edu/confluence/display/fic/research-+programs; last accessed 12 July 2012).

populations in meeting basic needs and protecting livelihoods. For example, livelihoods interventions can be tied to efforts to advocate for protection such as freedom of movement by highlighting the need for market access. When planning for assistance outcomes, this approach focuses on safeguarding or advocating for rights.

The third approach involves undertaking specialist or stand-alone programmes dedicated to meeting protection objectives, which are implemented in parallel with assistance. Expertise in protection programming is concentrated within protection-mandated specialist agencies, but an increasing number of other agencies also engage in this type of protection work. In order to provide common guidelines for protection – including the application of humanitarian principles, risk mitigation and accountability measures – the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has led the development of professional standards for humanitarian and human rights actors in armed conflict and other situations of violence.[16]

Table 1. Approaches to protection among humanitarian agencies[17]

Approches	**Mainstreaming protection**	**Protective action**	**Specialist or stand-alone protection programming**
Definitions	Protection principles and concerns incorporated into programming. A risk analysis is undertaken and programmes are designed to minimize risk to the greatest degree possible.	Projects or activities that have both assistance and protection objectives, or are a means of addressing protection problems through assistance. This can involve advocacy or assistance activities.	Dedicated protection projects undertaken in parallel with other assistance work. Implemented by specialist protection agencies, their primary objective is to meet civilians' protection needs.
Examples	Protection considerations incorporated into food, water and sanitation programmes, such as by considering lighting around latrines, installing family/non-communal latrines and monitoring latrine use to ensure safety. Safe collection of food rations by women or spaces for vulnerable groups in food distribution sites.	Interventions enhance protection, such as through presence or targeting assistance to at-risk populations. Provision of fuel-efficient stoves. Information campaigns on places of return. Advocacy with local authorities to change relocation policies.	Rule of law programmes. Refugee registration and assistance with documentation. Monitoring compliance with international humanitarian law and reporting abuses to authorities. Provision of medical and psychosocial care to survivors of gender-based violence.

16. ICRC. 2009. *Professional Standards for Protection Work: Carried Out by Humanitarian and Human Rights Actors in Armed Conflict and Other Situations.* Geneva, ICRC.

17. Adapted from O'Callaghan, S. & Pantuliano, S. 2007, p.21.

Many humanitarian agencies have refined their approaches to protection in accordance with their mandates. Regardless of the approach, there is agreement on two imperatives for protection-related activities: better analysis of context and enhanced awareness and application of humanitarian principles. A situation analysis with a focus on protection can assist agencies in: understanding what causes human rights abuses; and making programming decisions that provide greater options for safeguarding their rights. While humanitarian actions are driven by the imperative to alleviate suffering, there are times when these actions may compromise neutrality, impartiality and independence – and undermine the rights of affected populations.

II. Adaptation and application in the context of WFP food assistance

While debates on the role of the United Nations and other actors engaged in protecting the rights of crisis-affected populations were taking place at the global level, WFP was reflecting on how well it links its own assistance to beneficiaries' human rights and protection. Since the protection of civilians' rights is ultimately the responsibility of national governments, organizations such as WFP without an explicit protection mandate have struggled to clarify their protective roles.

In 1999, WFP conducted a review of its assistance to IDPs in 12 countries, which clarified WFP's role in protection: "By meeting the needs of refugees, IDPs and other civilian victims of famine, natural disaster and conflict, WFP protects and promotes the rights of individuals to adequate food."[18]

The review was followed in 2001 by the workshop Food Aid in Conflict, which explored the negative ramifications of food assistance in complex emergencies and the ethical dilemmas confronting WFP. Mary Anderson, who elaborated the concept 'do no harm', stated at the workshop: "Food aid is the form of humanitarian assistance that is most easily and frequently manipulated and misused by parties to conflict to support their own purposes of warfare."[19]

The 2001 workshop led WFP to affirm the humanitarian principles that guide its work. WFP's Executive Board formally approved its Humanitarian Principles in 2004 (see Annex 1). In addition to humanity, neutrality and impartiality, these principles included respect, participation and accountability, including towards beneficiaries.[20] Translating these principles into action required WFP to explore ways of delivering on these commitments.

18. WFP. 2000. Experiences with Internal Displacement; and WFP. 2000. Reaching People in Situations of Displacement. This review included qualitative and quantitative surveys of field staff, inter-agency issues and 12 country case studies. It provided a background on protection issues, and contextualized these issues within WFP's operational framework.

19. Anderson, M. 2002. Keynote Address, Food Aid in Conflict Workshop Report, p. 43. Rome, WFP..

20. WFP. 2004. "Humanitarian principles" (WFP/EB.1/2004/4-C). Executive Board document. Posted at www.wfp.org/eb.

Prompted by increasing requests for advice from field offices in the face of growing international concern, WFP began to explore how protection could be integrated into emergency food assistance in 2005. This required an understanding of the impact of protection issues on WFP's hunger mandate and whether food assistance can contribute to the United Nations' commitment to the protection of civilians. Some basic questions arose: What does protection mean to an assistance agency such as WFP? Does WFP already engage in protection-related activities? Is there reasonable scope for improving food assistance outcomes through a protection approach, and if so what skills and tools are needed?

Defining protection for WFP

Between 2005 and 2010, WFP's research on protection and food assistance included country case studies, reviews of various protection frameworks and definitions, discussions with protection-mandated and assistance agencies, and participation in the United Nations Protection Cluster. This research was carried out concurrently with experiments in guidance, training and support to field-level operations that aimed to improve food-assistance outcomes in insecure settings.

As an assistance agency, WFP sought a pragmatic definition of protection that combined the delivery of food assistance with the conditions that enable beneficiaries to enjoy that food. Borrowing heavily from NGOs' experiences of mainstreaming protection into their assistance work,[21] WFP embraced the practical definition of protection in the publication *Protection: An Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) Guide for Humanitarian Agencies*,[22] and adapted it to its mandate. For WFP:

> *protection means carrying out food-assistance activities in ways that contribute to the safety, dignity and integrity of people in the communities receiving that assistance.*

Including dignity and integrity as part of this definition captures the fundamental guiding principle of a humanitarian agency – humanity – and ensures that the individual is considered to the greatest extent possible. It also emphasizes that accountability goes beyond donors and governments to encompass beneficiaries and their well-being. This working definition of protection is reflected in WFP's Strategic Plan (2008–2013), which states that all WFP activities will be "carried out in conformity with humanitarian principles, and therefore in ways that

21. WFP particularly looked to Oxfam and the International Rescue Committee, which had already made efforts to integrate protection issues into assistance programming.

22. Slim, H. & Bonwick, A. 2005. Protection: An Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) Guide for Humanitarian Agencies.

contribute to the safety and dignity of affected populations".[23] It was subsequently included in WFP's Protection Policy, approved by the Executive Board in February 2012.[24]

A protection framework for WFP: The concentric circles model

WFP developed a conceptual framework for protection that: was accessible to staff and partners in the field; positioned protection within WFP's mandate; and defined the limits of WFP's protection role. Figure 2 illustrates this framework.[25]

The inner circle – protection issues within WFP's traditional activities: The concentric circles in Figure 1.2 begin with the protection concerns that most directly affect WFP and its beneficiaries. The inner circle represents the question: Is food assistance causing or perpetuating the protection problems of affected populations? This question is not new, but the approach outlined here demands a systematic situation analysis that goes beyond the traditional, natural disaster-related model and examines the impacts of food assistance as conflict or other crises evolve.

Figure 2. WFP's 'concentric circles' model of protection

23. WFP. 2008. "WFP Strategic Plan 2008–2011" (WFP/EB.A/2008/5-A/1/Rev.1). Executive Board Document. Posted at www.wfp.org/eb. The Strategic Plan was extended until 2012 as per WFP Executive Board Decision (WFP/2009/EB.A/3).

24. WFP. 2012. "WFP Humanitarian Protection Policy" (WFP/EB.1/2012/5-B/Rev.1). Executive Board Document. Posted at www.wfp.org/eb.

25. The 'concentric circles' model shown in Figure 1.2 was adapted from a WFP workshop on protection in Khartoum, Sudan in October 2005, which was led by Liam Mahony, Hugo Slim and Marc Vincent.

The inner circle refers to core food-assistance activities carried out by WFP and its partners: general or targeted distributions, school-feeding, nutrition and food- and cash-for-work programmes. In these activities, the protection of beneficiaries is WFP's direct responsibility in line with its mandate and instruments such as the Enhanced Commitments to Women,[26] which call for women's protection needs to be addressed in food-assistance activities.

While important, the 'inner circle' protection obligations are also modest. For example, distribution sites should be safe for beneficiaries; adequate facilities such as toilets and shade should be in place to protect their well-being and dignity; and activities should be implemented to minimize travel and waiting time. Measures to protect against sexual exploitation and abuse by WFP staff or partners must also be in place. Post-distribution monitoring should ensure that beneficiaries return home safely from distributions and are free from attacks or extortion linked to their food rations.

The middle circle – causes of food insecurity and assistance-related violence: The middle circle refers to food-related protection problems and causes of food insecurity. This raises challenges since it implies taking responsibility for protection issues beyond food distribution. It also interprets the food-assistance mandate as a protective vehicle to reduce the risks arising from food insecurity. For example, the risk of women being assaulted while collecting fuelwood is a well-documented food-related protection issue. During 2006 in Darfur, an estimated 200 women per month were raped or killed while collecting fuelwood for cooking their food rations or generating income; this situation continues.[27] Women in Kenya's Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps consistently report cases of abuse as they seek firewood outside camps.[28] This issue alone spurred the IASC to adopt a policy and guidance on fuel in emergencies – known as Safe Access to Fuel and Alternative Energy (SAFE).[29]

Other protection issues that undermine food security include bribery, obstruction of farmers' access to their farmland, extortion and other forms of illegal taxation on properties, and attacks on personal safety resulting from disputes over property. The middle circle suggests that WFP must design and implement its operations without perpetuating these protection problems.

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26. WFP. 2002. "World Food Programme, WFP Gender Policy – Enhanced Commitments to Women to Ensure Food Security (2003–2007)" (WFP/EB.3/2002/4-A). Executive Board Document. Posted at: www.wpf.org/eb.
27. Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. 2006. F*inding Trees in the Desert: Fuelwood Collection and Alternatives in Darfur*. New York.
28. Barbelet, V., Bonsignorio, M. & Pattugalan, G. 2010. *Mapping Sexual and Gender Based Violence in the Context of WFP Operations in Dadaab and Kenya*. Rome, WFP.
29. Created in 2007 and co-chaired by WFP, UNHCR and the Women's Refugee Commission, SAFE triggered a global analysis of the challenges associated with the collection, provision and use of fuel for cooking. Using the SAFE approach, WFP is working with partners to address this protection challenge.

The middle circle also touches on sensitive issues that exacerbate hunger. Sustainable hunger solutions require recognition of efforts to address the underlying causes of hunger, including violence, intimidation, discriminatory practices, deprivation and policies that threaten household food security or push people into unsafe coping mechanisms.

The middle circle recognizes that hunger is often a political and access issue rather than a supply issue. WFP can provide humanitarian assistance in a neutral manner – filling a crucial gap at critical moments. But while expedient, this type of short-term neutrality does little to reverse repeated abuses or policies that cause hunger. Helping to reverse those policies requires advocating in ways that may not be perceived as neutral.

The outer circle – protection issues are not directly related to hunger, but are present in WFP's operational context: WFP is neither a human rights agency nor an enforcement arm of the United Nations, and does not aspire to these roles. It therefore has no mandate or competency for dealing with the outer circle. Nevertheless, WFP is sometimes the only United Nations presence in remote areas. WFP staff and partners witness protection problems that may not be directly related to food insecurity but that nevertheless pose immense challenges. When local authorities are incapable of addressing abuses – or when they are the perpetrators of abuse – to what extent should WFP provide a protective presence? Is WFP's presence alone a sufficient deterrent to abuse and violence? Hesitancy to address broad protection issues stems from a lack of capacity, the risk of repercussions on staff security and the need to maintain access for food distribution.

WFP's protection framework illustrates two additional elements of protection: partnership and advocacy. As protection issues move from the inner to the outer circle – away from incidents at food distribution sites – WFP's capacity to act on behalf of, or advocate for, local populations diminishes, and the need to partner with other actors increases.

Changing an environment that is causing food insecurity is more difficult than adjusting procedures at a food distribution site. Partnerships with protection actors, including national authorities with primary responsibility for protecting all people within their borders, are essential. The Protection Cluster, led by UNHCR, (or, in some situations, OHCHR or the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), represents an overarching humanitarian response to protection gaps. NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), bilateral donors, traditional and religious leaders, and other development actors can also contribute to a protective environment or assist WFP in advocating on behalf of food-insecure populations. In the outer circle, strong partners such as OHCHR are important in establishing a United Nations-wide system for responding to abuses.

Tools for protection within food assistance

Research and support to country offices have revealed major knowledge gaps within WFP and the need for tools to analyse and respond to protection issues that impact food security.

First, as humanitarians, there is both a practical and ethical need for all staff to understand humanitarian principles and the legal framework for providing assistance in crises. Neutrality and impartiality are essential for securing access to vulnerable populations, and are therefore crucial to meeting WFP's fundamental objective of saving lives.

Second, staff must understand that their responsibility extends beyond food distribution to include beneficiaries' safety and dignity. This responsibility reflects the core ethics of humanitarianism and the vision of delivering food assistance through a protection lens.

Third, a protection lens requires practical, field-based solutions to the challenges that threaten the outcomes of food assistance.

Box 1.1 summarizes the main elements of a three-day training and facilitation package for preparing WFP country offices to incorporate protection into food-assistance activities. More details are provided in the protection checklist at the end of this book.

Box 1. Outline of protection training for WFP staff

- **The meaning of protection:** Understanding the concept and how it relates to assistance.
- **International law:** Identifying and demonstrating the relevance of international treaties and norms for humanitarian assistance.
- **Humanitarian principles:** Understanding the sources of ethical obligation for humanitarian agencies in order to make appropriate decisions and take action when faced with moral dilemmas. The principles include WFP's obligation to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse.
- **Context analysis and response planning:** Introducing techniques for mapping protection issues and their linkages with food insecurity and humanitarian actors, and identifying solutions to protection threats.
- **The do-no-harm approach:** Reviewing current practices to ensure that WFP's assistance does not cause more harm to beneficiaries or members of the community.
- **Humanitarian negotiations:** Coaching staff on the tools and techniques for effective negotiations.

III. Action research on protection across WFP's operations

WFP has applied an incremental, field-driven method to integrate protection into its work. From late 2004 to early 2011, WFP conducted case studies in 15 countries, including conflict, post-conflict, natural disaster and protracted political crises. Understanding WFP's relationship to protection entailed some basic questions: What role do humanitarian agencies such as WFP have in protecting civilians? Does WFP already engage in protection-related activities without acknowledging this role? What impacts do WFP's assistance and presence have on the protection of beneficiaries and their communities, and how can these impacts be maximized?

The field-based studies involved discussions with a variety of actors, including beneficiaries, community leaders, CBOs, government representatives, NGOs, United Nations agencies and donors. Discussions focused on WFP's role in promoting protection through its presence and on how WFP's operations can be designed to support overall protection concerns.

The following chapters summarize the field research and highlight recent developments. Each chapter emphasizes different aspects of WFP's protection approach. For example, the chapters on Colombia, Sudan (Darfur), Uganda and West Africa focus on the protection impact of typical WFP food assistance. Those on Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka look at the broader food assistance context, the dilemmas arising in specific settings and the implications of adopting a WFP protection agenda. One chapter examines the linkage between protection and gender-based violence – a recurring challenge confronted by assistance agencies. The following paragraphs consolidate lessons learned from the field studies.

Direct protection impacts of food assistance: Doing good or increasing harm?

A large percentage of food-assistance beneficiaries suffer from violations, abuses or denial of rights. Food insecurity is often a consequence of people's inability to exercise their basic rights. In addition, food insecurity can exacerbate political instability and violence, which in turn result in human rights abuses. Food assistance can therefore protect crisis-affected people's most fundamental right: the right to life. The chapters on Haiti, Myanmar and Darfur provide examples of WFP's critical role in saving lives and providing stability for IDPs, stateless people and the victims of natural disasters.

However, food assistance itself may not be enough to ensure the safety and dignity of crisis-affected population. The way in which assistance is delivered can either support or undermine people's protection. In order to understand this, it is important to recognize that food assistance can have a major impact on power structures in communities. Food assistance shapes the perceptions and attitudes of a wide range of stakeholders, and entails risks to beneficiaries, their communities

and WFP staff. These risks can be heightened or mitigated by WFP's method of targeting and registering food-insecure populations, distributing food and engaging in partnerships.

Misjudgements or manipulation of targeting and registration can be divisive for communities and can perpetuate corruption. The 2008 case study in Karamoja, Uganda illustrated that beneficiary targeting was not adapted quickly to populations' movements and local perceptions, and that registration lapses resulted in exclusion of many food-insecure populations. This led communities to mistrust local authorities and WFP, undermining the reputation of WFP as impartial and eventually contributing to violence at food distributions. In Darfur, the massive registration and verifications carried out by WFP and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) caused confusion and conflicts in IDP communities. This stemmed from an inadequate understanding of community structures and insufficient engagement with traditional leaders. Inadequate information for IDPs and their host communities regarding WFP's targeting rationale in Côte d'Ivoire contributed to violence within the community.

In a number of settings, registration was a useful tool for communities. Although controversial, the policy of registering IDPs and issuing ration cards may provide their only source of identification and enable entitlement to other basic services, such as in Liberia and Darfur.

The following chapters also highlight that when information sources and data collection methods are reliable, WFP's registration data can facilitate the other agencies' protection activities.

There are also examples of gaps in distribution that have elevated risks for beneficiaries – especially women. In Karamoja, Uganda, women, children and elderly people have been at particular risk of violence at distribution sites. The chapter on gender details protection threats to women throughout the food-distribution process. While returning to their communities with food rations, women have become targets for abuse, including sexual harassment in countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Liberia during civil wars. Mitigation measures included scheduling food distributions early in the day in order to avoid night-time attacks, but nothing could prevent attacks in situations of pervasive lawlessness.

WFP has adopted practices to ensure safe and dignified food distributions. The Colombia case study illustrates how WFP has become adept at exercising flexibility in food distributions through its well-established network among local communities. Based on information obtained from local partners, WFP cancelled distributions with little notice and used unmarked bags for rations to minimize the possibility of attacks after food distributions. Following the 2011 earthquake in Haiti, WFP programme officers gave WFP food monitors and volunteers – many of whom were newly recruited – a crash course on strategies for safe and dignified food distributions. WFP aimed to both respond to the immediate threats linked

with food distribution and to restore the dignity of affected populations. Discussions with experienced local staff and early assessment findings led WFP to integrate protection measures into its food-assistance activities.

Another recurring theme is the importance of relationships with partners and local communities to integrating protection into humanitarian action. WFP's local partners in Colombia were not only the conduits of protective programming, but also invaluable sources of information on threats in Colombia's politicized environment. In Afghanistan's restricted humanitarian space, community development councils or *shuras* have assisted in understanding threats to local people and facilitated the movement of supplies. In other areas where WFP had no established contacts or knowledge networks, weaker ties at the community level resulted in a lower level of local acceptance. As the chapter on Darfur implies, a better understanding of the local community can prevent confusion and mistrust among community members.

Knowledge of contexts

Many of the field studies underscore the need for sound context analysis to understand communities' power dynamics and develop insights into the needs of beneficiaries, including the most marginalized groups. Inadequate context analysis has repercussions for all aspects of food assistance programming, from targeting to post-distribution monitoring. More rigorous context analysis can also help WFP and its partners to design interventions that address protection issues as well as food requirements. These issues include violence against women, infringement of land and property rights, and restriction of movement.

Its extensive field presence and partnerships provide WFP a vantage point for examining local politics and connecting with local communities. However, the nature of emergencies often means that WFP often cannot delay life-saving assistance to undertake in-depth analysis. Even after the early stages of a major emergency, intense pressure to deliver food assistance to large populations can overwhelm calls for refining WFP's analytical capacity.

The Darfur study highlights the impact of food assistance on local community power dynamics, using analysis carried out by external experts. The Pakistan study demonstrates how the very act of delivering reliably and at a large scale can build legitimacy with authorities and local communities, facilitating protection efforts. In Karamoja, Uganda, context analysis was overlooked, especially when WFP interventions were periodic and short-term. Restoring order at previously precarious food distribution sites in the region highlighted the importance of understanding local power relations and engaging with community leaders. The studies on protection and gender in Colombia, DRC, Liberia and Uganda concluded that in order to apply the principles defined in WFP's Enhanced Commitments to Women, it is necessary to examine the context and risks causing harm.

In Colombia, information from local communities and networks allowed flexible and safe delivery of assistance. In Myanmar, integrating protection into WFP's operations began with understanding the local context in ceasefire regions, which paved the way for more informed advocacy on humanitarian access.

Beyond immediate delivery concerns: Principles and advocacy

In the context of its food-assistance activities, WFP can easily play an advocacy role, ensuring that its operations are safe for beneficiaries. WFP has significant control over these operations, and can invest in the analysis and planning necessary for sound and safe programming.

But what about responding to broader protection concerns that are not directly within the realm of WFP's operations? The chapters that follow offer various viewpoints, dilemmas and best practices for addressing the underlying abuses and rights failures that cause food insecurity as well as the broader protection gaps encountered in WFP's daily operations.

Seeking sustainable hunger solutions is WFP's ultimate goal. This requires recognizing and addressing the underlying causes of hunger, including those that are a result of protection gaps: violence, intimidation, discriminatory practices and policies that compromise food security directly or push people into unsafe coping mechanisms. WFP's work on land access and land tenure in Myanmar and Sierra Leone are two examples of food-assistance activities designed to mitigate the protection issues underpinning food insecurity.

However, before WFP can truly adopt a protection lens, a more explicit rights-based model may be required. The WFP Protection Policy, adopted in 2012, is a major step - at the policy level at least - in this direction. It explicitly places WFP's protection approach within an overall human rights context, including the right to food.

Nevertheless, even with a rights-based protection policy, it is challenging to address sensitive political issues within an agency culture that has long held the conviction that obtaining access to populations at risk is contingent on a being strictly non-political and technical. An agency that forcefully advocates for hungry people's safety and dignity will inevitably face more situations where authorities threaten or deny access. The complex balance of access and advocacy often involves interacting with host governments that may be parties to conflict and perceive the humanitarian community as being aligned to political and Western interests, as exemplified in the chapters on Afghanistan, Colombia and Sri Lanka.

This book argues that access does not need to come at the cost of abdicating the responsibility to advocate for people's rights and for the fundamental freedom from fear and harm. In fact, negotiations around access present opportunities for asserting WFP's neutral impartial and independent role while broaching protection concerns. In

Myanmar, WFP's engagement with local authorities opened this window of opportunity, while in other countries WFP has been more timid in asserting its independence and voicing protection concerns. However, the future well-being of crisis-affected people (and the global effectiveness of humanitarian assistance) may be better served in some instances, by pressing beneficiaries' protection concerns and insisting on operational independence rather than risking a reputation for being a willing instrument of political actors. This, however, is an assertion that will always be difficult to prove and even more difficult to argue in the heat of a humanitarian crisis.[30]

WFP's hesitancy to use its leverage and presence to promote the protection of civilians – particularly marginalized groups with scarce access to food because their rights are threatened and abused – results from limited resources and a strict interpretation of its mandate (see the chapter on West Africa). The perceived risks of limiting WFP's access and jeopardizing staff security are often cited.

Protection-related work is a contentious, political endeavour, which always carries risks. The protection approach seeks to understand the causes and impacts of rights abuses or other types of harm, and the actors responsible for them. The field studies revealed an aversion to risk resulting from poor or non-existent confidential reporting systems and from lack of skills and capacity for effective advocacy on protection. (There appeared to be less aversion to risk among those closest to field operations, who often witness abuses and violations first hand perhaps because they understand with greater immediacy the failure of inaction.)

While fear of risk is justified in some contexts, it may be unfounded or exaggerated in others. The possibility of risk is a justification for inaction in many situations, especially when WFP's involvement in political issues is not encouraged and is believed to jeopardize access. This book suggests that even basic protection-related activities such as threat analysis and the use of aggregated data to inform operational strategies can reduce the risks faced by beneficiaries and staff, and minimize residual reputational risks to WFP.

IV. Conclusion

The studies that form the basis of this book were intended to collect country-level experiences for shaping policy thinking in WFP and building practical field-based strategies and tools to manage protection concerns in the context of food-assistance mandate and operations.

The chapters illustrate varying perspectives on WFP's engagement in protection. This variation shows how much the practice of humanitarian protection depends

30. Keen, D. 2009. Compromise or Capitulation: Report on WFP and the Humanitarian Crisis, in WFP, Humanitarian Assistance in Conflict and Complex Emergencies. June 2009 Conference report and background papers.

on each context. WFP's unique experience, relationships with host governments, coordination with implementing partners and understanding of socio-political issues all play a part in defining its role in protection. The chapters that follow provide several examples of food assistance that: (i) supports the protection of beneficiaries; and (ii) heightens protection risks.

There is general agreement that WFP can engage in protection more effectively by correcting inconsistencies across operations and ensuring that its operations do no harm to beneficiaries. Beyond this, WFP's horizon becomes more uncertain as its roles, responsibilities and limitations are defined by individual country settings and staff members. The adoption of WFP's Protection Policy in February 2012, however, clarified that WFP's leaders in the field should be actively engaged in seeking better food security outcomes by embracing a protection lens.

The following chapters – the results of case studies in a variety of contexts – showcase the richness of reflections on WFP's role and its contributions to the protection agenda.

Part 1
Complex Emergencies

Chapter 1

Humanitarian neutrality and independence in Afghanistan: Implications for WFP and the protection of beneficiaries

Mariangela Bizzarri and Stefano Porretti[31]

Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, Afghanistan has been host to a large and diverse international presence, including international military contingents, donor countries, the United Nations and international NGOs. The international community's increased attention to Afghanistan has led to positive changes in the country, but its presence and government support have also sparked opposition from armed groups. In addition, the interaction among different actors, combined with the presence of armed groups, has intensified the dilemmas faced by humanitarian agencies, making Afghanistan one of the most complex countries for humanitarians.

There is a perception in Afghanistan that political and military agendas have co-opted humanitarian agencies' neutrality and independence.[32] This view has been shaped by the military strategy of 'winning hearts and minds' of local populations through assistance, which blurs the perceived objectivity of humanitarian relief efforts. This problem is exacerbated by the necessary coordination between Government and humanitarian agencies operating in the same area.

The second factor relates to the multiple mandates of United Nations agencies operating under the integrated United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the challenges of establishing neutral and independent humanitarian actions in this context. The complex interaction of political, military and humanitarian agendas has constrained humanitarian assistance and contributed to a disconnect between humanitarians' agendas and their ability to address local needs.

This chapter provides a glimpse of the complexity of humanitarian operations in Afghanistan. It focuses on the difficulties of balancing military and political objectives, and humanitarian assistance, and the implications for WFP's operations and the protection of civilians. It details the measures that WFP has taken to adapt to this complex operating environment while striving to uphold basic humanitarian principles in its assistance.

31. Pia Skjelstad, former WFP Policy Officer, was a collaborator in researching and writing this chapter.
32. For example, Donini, A. 2009. *Afghanistan: Humanitarianism Under Threat*. Somerville, Massachusetts, Tufts University, Feinstein International Center. http://wikis.uit.tufts.edu/confluence/download/attachments/22520580/Donini-Afghanistan.pdf (last accessed 27 April 2012).

I. Attacks on civilians and humanitarian actors

Afghanistan has been in the midst of violence for more than 30 years. Following the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001, armed conflict continued unabated in some areas. After a period of relative stability between 2002 and 2004, operations by anti-government elements (AGEs) and insurgents increased, including attacks on humanitarian staff. Long-standing local conflicts are perpetuated by the activities of local warlords. This internal conflict, coupled with military retaliation against AGEs' attacks, has led to a deterioration of security in most parts of the country.

The current security environment is characterized by a rise in civilian casualties, mainly attributed to AGEs' actions.[33] While the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)[34] is struggling to limit civilian casualties, the infiltration of insurgents among the general population is testing both national and international security forces.

For example, Taliban fighters take refuge under the *Pashtunwali* code of honour, which obliges a host to provide food and shelter to guests. Some civilians comply with the insurgents' demands for fear of reprisals. This exposes them to attacks by the ISAF. Many have been killed, injured and suffered the destruction of property and livelihoods from the vicious cycle of violence. Vulnerable people such as women, elderly and disabled people, and children have suffered the most.

In Afghanistan's deteriorating environment, international aid has become a means of survival for many conflict-affected populations. WFP's operations continue in Afghanistan's 34 provinces, but the consequences of insecurity are significant: serious risks to staff and partners' safety, and high costs of transporting goods.[35] Humanitarian workers are under threat and their capacity to respond to beneficiaries' needs is limited.

As the 2009 presidential elections approached, most humanitarian interventions were reduced to essential life-saving operations.[36] For WFP, this was a temporary measure meant to protect staff from security threats. Food was prepositioned in locations at risk of becoming inaccessible. Following presidential elections, the security situation continued to deteriorate.[37] In October 2009, 12 people, including

33. UNAMA noted a 14 percent increase in civilian casualties in 2009 compared with 2008: UNAMA. 2009. *Afghanistan: Annual Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, p. 2. http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Protection%20of%20Civilian%202009%20report%20English.pdf (last accessed 12 May 2012).

34. A total of 46 nations, including the United States, contributed troops to ISAF.

35. WFP country office Afghanistan. 2010. "Annual Report 2009". p. 18.

36. United Nations. 2010. *Humanitarian Action Plan*, 2010, p. 9.

37. UNAMA. 2010 *The Situation in Afghanistan and its Implications for International Peace and Security*. (S/2010/463). Kabul.

five United Nations staff members, were killed in an attack on a guesthouse in Kabul.[38] This assault occurred as WFP staff were mourning the recent loss of colleagues after an attack on WFP's office in Islamabad.[39] Following the Kabul attack, most United Nations agencies temporarily relocated staff, and activities were scaled down. Consolidation of living arrangements to protect staff – including the closure of United Nations' guesthouses – contributed to the United Nations' weakened image in Afghanistan.

The security situation also affected the delivery of assistance. Although a drop in security incidents was recorded in 2009 compared with the previous two years,[40] attacks on food convoys resulted in the loss of 450 mt of food intended for 122,000 beneficiaries. The reduction in attacks was attributed to the increased the use of Afghan national security forces to escort commercial unmarked convoys.[41] While reliance on police escorts for convoys became a necessity, it created a dilemma: humanitarian workers' association with uniformed personnel bred negative perceptions regarding the function of humanitarian aid, and posed serious challenges to the safety of staff and beneficiaries. However, it is important to note that armed escorts were almost exclusively used on the ring road between Kandahar and Herat, and from warehouse to warehouse, which limited the risk to beneficiaries.

Multiple actors and political agendas have shaped local views about the role of the United Nations, and the larger international aid community, which is often seen to support the Government and military coalition.[42] This has provoked attacks on humanitarian staff who are increasingly perceived as targets by insurgents opposing external intervention in the country. There are growing concerns about the perceived lack of distinction among humanitarian actors, their mandates and levels of cooperation with military forces. This threatens the principles of neutrality and independence, which underpin humanitarian action. The resulting limitations on access to Afghanistan's most vulnerable people also limit the transparent provision of impartial assistance based on need.

38. United Nations News Center. 28 October 2009. *Top Officials Roundly Condemn Attack that Killed at least five UN Staff in Kabul.* www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32748&Cr=Afghan&Cr1 (last accessed 12 May 2012).
39. WFP country office Afghanistan. 2010. "Annual Report 2009".
40. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Hoffman, M. & Delaunay, S. 2010. *Afghanistan, a Return to Humanitarian Action*, p. 3. Geneva, MSF.

II. Civil-military relations and implications on humanitarian action

Military/police and WFP coordination: Dependency on security

In secure environments, the assessment, delivery and monitoring of assistance should be an entirely civilian enterprise. However, in the high-risk areas of Afghanistan, armed police escorts are a necessary security measure to enable the delivery of assistance (although used as a last resort in line with UNDSS requirements). In areas such as Herat, national security forces have a special United Nations protection unit, but it is not clear how much training on the United Nations mandate and mission they have been provided. It is also not clear how aware they are of civil-military principles in humanitarian work, including the need to keep a minimum distance from beneficiaries and United Nations staff during field visits.

Although armed escorts can deter attacks on staff and commodities, they can also attract danger from militants. A United Nations convoy with a national police escort may be more attractive to insurgent elements than the convoy or police alone. While there is ample evidence of police responding to insurgent attacks in defense of WFP's convoys, the potential risk posed by armed escorts to convoys is more difficult to establish.

Unsurprisingly, the attitudes and behaviour of police escorts and other security forces towards local populations are different from those of humanitarian workers. Such attitudes contribute to perceptions that perpetuate a climate of war. By affiliation, a military and police presence exposes communities to reprisals from militants.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs): Winning hearts and minds through relief assistance

Humanitarian actors' association with international military forces is an even more critical concern than the relations with the Afghan security forces. This concern is grounded in the military coalition's continued involvement in relief and reconstruction, both directly and through Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs).

Spearheaded by ISAF member states, PRTs comprise both civilian and military personnel.[43] Since the 27 PRTs[44] in Afghanistan are entirely funded by governments contributing to ISAF operations, they are guided by their governments' political

43. PRTs' operating methods vary according by region commander and contributing states' national policies. A more detailed description of the PRTs' mandate is available at www.isaf.nato.int/mission.html (last accessed 12 July 2012).

44. As of 6 July 2010. http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/Placemats/100706%20Placemat(6).pdf (last accessed on 14 May 2012).

and military agendas. Their objective is to assist the local authorities in maintaining security, carrying out reconstruction and supporting governance structures.

PRTs sometimes provide local communities with relief assistance, including food. Although PRTs' relief efforts are relatively minor, they are sufficient to create confusion among beneficiary communities and to undermine the principles of neutrality and impartiality. Relief assistance delivered by PRTs tends to blur distinctions between political, military and humanitarian actors' roles, objectives and agendas, putting the safety of humanitarian actors and beneficiaries at risk.

Noting these concerns, the Guidelines for the Interaction and Coordination of Humanitarian Actors and Military Actors in Afghanistan were prepared by the Afghan Civil-Military Working Group in 2009. The Guidelines call for: "…a clear distinction between the role and function of humanitarian actors from that of the military as a determining factor in creating an operating environment in which humanitarian organizations can discharge their responsibilities both effectively and safely".[45]

As part of WFP's effort to understand the protection risks affecting beneficiaries of food assistance, a WFP research team[46] identified areas of concern arising from the failure to maintain clear distinctions between actors, as called for in the Civilian-Military Guidelines.

Some PRT efforts at food distribution demonstrated varying approaches. Unlike humanitarian agencies, which are guided by humanitarian principles, PRTs are driven by political interests, and assistance is regarded as a tool to achieve political gains. Representatives of one PRT claimed that their distribution was a means of gaining the community's acceptance and collaboration; they appeared to lack a thorough understanding of community dynamics and humanitarian needs. According to the Civilian-Military Guidelines, humanitarian assistance "must not be used for the purpose of political gain, relationship-building, or 'winning hearts and minds'. It must be distributed on the basis of need and must uphold the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality."[47] The PRTs' practices jeopardize the effectiveness of humanitarian action, which depends upon adherence to humanitarian principles. Their actions also endanger humanitarian personnel and beneficiaries.

Another issue relates to the widespread use by PRTs of unmarked white vehicles, which are commonly used by the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies.

45. UNAMA. 2008. *Guidelines for the Interaction and Coordination of Humanitarian Actors and Military Actors in Afghanistan*, p. 10. Kabul.

46. WFP Protection Assessment Mission to Afghanistan was conducted by Mariangela Bizzarri, Pia Skjelstad and Colin Hourihan in March 2009.

47. *Ibid.*

The PRTs' indiscriminate use of these vehicles is not only a breach of Section 6 of the Civilian-Military Guidelines, but a contravention of international humanitarian law, which calls on combatants to distinguish themselves from civilians.[48] Representatives from one PRT argued that international humanitarian law makes no specific provision for the colour of a military vehicle; however, they acknowledged the potential protective benefit of white vehicles in humanitarian operations.

This lack of visible differentiation between actors compromises the neutral and civilian nature of humanitarian action, which rests on the distinction between humanitarian workers and political actors. The use of white vehicles helps to identify humanitarian vehicles and ensures the protection of humanitarian personnel in conflicts. The risk of misidentification hinders the entire humanitarian community's ability to respond to crisis, limits its access to vulnerable people, increases security risks and impedes operations. In addition, although insurgents may be well informed about the major humanitarian actors and their mandates, humanitarians' perceived affiliation with national security forces and international military forces has led to direct targeting of humanitarian actors. In Afghanistan, these risks were acknowledged at the military's highest level and the use of white vehicles by military personnel was forbidden.

A third challenge involves the increased pressure on humanitarian actors to coordinate and exchange information with PRTs. Representatives from one PRT complained that humanitarian organizations were not sharing information and were refusing to use PRTs' assets and support for delivering assistance. Although exchanging information helps to ensure security, more visible coordination and association between PRTs and humanitarian agencies has the potential to exacerbate perceptions of eroded humanitarian neutrality and pose greater risks to staff and beneficiaries.

WFP has maintained a clear and visible distinction and physical separation from the activities of the PRTs and military forces operating in Afghanistan. Coordination with international forces has been undertaken at the highest levels of WFP management and limited to strategic concerns.

A fourth issue regards inadequate understanding of the impact of PRTs' presence on communities. In one incident, community members staged a protest in the wake of a PRT visit, at which the local mullah spoke about the inappropriateness of the visit and the PRT's activities.[49]

Even when PRTs' projects are implemented by civilians, they remain linked to political objectives, and their beneficiaries may be subject to reprisals by AGEs. A recent study by the NGO Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE)

48. Geneva Convention, Additional Protocol I, Article 44:3.

49. Glad, M. 2009. *Knowledge on Fire: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan, Risks and Measures for Successful Mitigation*, p. 42. Washington DC, CARE/World Bank.

and the World Bank noted that schools constructed by PRTs – or even visited by PRT representatives – are at greater risk of attack by AGEs.[50] When asked about the potential risk of communities assisted by PRTs being targeted by insurgents, a PRT respondent minimized the issue, asserting that communities were "controlled by the Taliban". Although it is difficult to assess the actual threat posed by communities' association with PRTs, better analysis and preventive and measures are needed to ensure the safety of civilians.

III. Perceptions of a multi-faceted United Nations presence

The biggest challenge faced by all United Nations humanitarian agencies in maintaining a neutral image stems from the integrated nature of UNAMA, to which all United Nations agencies in the country are linked. UNAMA's areas of operation include: development and humanitarian issues; and political affairs. UNAMA is mandated to lead international civilian efforts and support government efforts to: (i) improve governance and the rule of law; (ii) combat corruption; (iii) and establish strong institutions. UNAMA is also central in facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and is charged with promoting coherence and coordination of international aid. This includes cooperation with ISAF for improved civil-military coordination.[51] The political function of this United Nations mission has not only constrained its role in delivering humanitarian assistance, but has impacted local perceptions of the humanitarian community, which struggles to assert its neutrality and impartiality. Humanitarians' association with political actors in UNAMA, and resulting perceptions of their political partisanship, put the safety of humanitarian staff and beneficiaries at risk.

The function of the Humanitarian Coordinator mirrors the integrated nature of UNAMA. Although he is only responsible for relief, recovery and reconstruction, his position under the Special Representative of the Secretary-General affects his independence in drawing the line between humanitarian priorities and the interests of the Government and its international supporters, and reduces his capacity for humanitarian coordination.[52]

The credibility of WFP and other humanitarian agencies is brought into question by their position within a politically mandated United Nations mission. The blurred lines between political and humanitarian efforts in a highly politicized environment such as Afghanistan can lead to the politicization or militarization of humanitarian assistance,[53] with life-threatening consequences.

50. *Ibid.*

51. United Nations Security Council, 2010. Resolution 1917. New York.

52. Donini, A. 2009. *NGOs and Humanitarian Reform: Mapping Study Afghanistan Report*, p. 2. Somerville, MA, Tufts University, Feinstein International Center.

53. Some humanitarian actors described the delivery of humanitarian aid by PRTs as part of the counter-insurgency strategy implemented by United States.

On several occasions, tensions have arisen from the perceived erosion of humanitarian neutrality. In 2007, a group of international NGOs called for the establishment of a separate OCHA office outside UNAMA to improve humanitarian coordination and establish a visible distinction from the political mission. But despite the re-establishment of OCHA in early 2009[54] and efforts to better coordinate humanitarian action, problems of perception remain. Although OCHA now holds responsibility for humanitarian coordination, it still lacks resources and capacity.

In an effort to distinguish the political UNAMA from humanitarian United Nations agencies, black United Nations logos were used on UNAMA's vehicles and blue logos on humanitarian agencies' vehicles. WFP staff felt this distinction was insufficient, and increased WFP's visibility by putting its logo and acronym along with the United Nations logo on its vehicles. WFP has also maintained a physical distinction from political United Nations agencies by maintaining separate office compounds and staff guesthouses across the country.

Physical distinction is not enough, however. As some observers noted, WFP's technical cooperation with government authorities may also damage perceptions of its neutrality.[55] Technical cooperation aims to strengthen government capacity and ensure delivery through functional infrastructure. However, government affiliation – especially in conflicts – poses a dilemma for United Nations agencies. While the United Nations works with government institutions, humanitarian agencies must remain detached from governments' political agendas and provide assistance without discrimination.

The integrated nature of UNAMA and the limitations of the current humanitarian leadership structure make the entire United Nations a potential target for attacks by AGEs. Invocations of neutrality are rhetorical in a setting where operations are carried out with national authorities and their international supporters, ultimately eroding the Afghan people's trust. Humanitarian actors walk a thin line between upholding the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality, and operating within the integrated UNAMA scheme.

IV. Implications for WFP's operations and innovative solutions for maintaining humanitarian space

Dialogue and engagement with communities and other stakeholders are necessary for better assessment of needs and concerns, and for enhancing local ownership and sustainability of assistance. They are also requisites for preserving beneficiaries' safety, dignity and integrity. As humanitarian access in Afghanistan

54. OCHA operated in Afghanistan since 1988, but was disbanded when UNAMA was launched in 2002. A humanitarian unit was established in UNAMA in 2007; however, international NGOs deemed this unsatisfactory.

55. Donini, A. 2009. *NGOs and Humanitarian Reform: Mapping Study Afghanistan Report*. Medford, MA, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University.

continues to shrink, humanitarian actors are seeking innovative solutions for reaching communities and ensuring the safe delivery of assistance.

Humanitarian access and safe space for operations

The extent of WFP's contact with beneficiaries influences its ability to engage in humanitarian protection. Access varies from region to region and over time. In general, security in the country falls into three classifications: low-medium-risk areas, high-risk areas and 'no-go' areas.[56] Low-medium-risk areas such as Bamian, Dai Kundi and Panjsher in the central region are relatively calm and WFP can operate freely. WFP's very presence in these areas may have a protective impact (Box 1.2) on communities.

Box 1.2. Impact of presence

Determining the protective impact of humanitarian agencies on local populations in a volatile conflict is very challenging. The capacity of humanitarian organizations such as WFP or UNICEF to be present in local communities contributes to maintaining a degree of calm and stability, and can help prevent acts of violence and abuses. For example, following the 2010 ISAF offensive in Helmand Province, WFP stopped distributing cooking oil since communities feared that this donor-marked commodity was putting them at further risk of attack. However, the large scale of WFP's activities also translates into major day-to-day operational challenges and diminishes the Programme's ability to dedicate staff time and resources to maximizing its protective impact.

In high-risk areas, access and movement are restricted and depend on UNDSS approval and armed escort by Afghan police. No-go areas are deemed too hostile for United Nations staff and access is not permitted; these areas comprise 22 percent of the country.[57] In 2010, five provinces in the southern region, including Kandahar, were declared Security Phase IV by UNDSS.[58] This severely limited the oversight and monitoring of all United Nations agencies.

Barring insecurity in some areas, WFP operations continue. Food is distributed by cooperating partners, which include government ministries and local NGOs; while external consultants and NGOs undertake assessment and monitoring in no-go areas. Programme assessment teams are trained as WFP field monitors but are not bound by the security restrictions on United Nations staff. Since programme assessment team members generally originate from the provinces in which they work, they are able to move freely and are trusted by community elders and local authorities. These teams ensure a degree of community participation, outreach and advocacy as well as operational monitoring.

56. UNDSS issues all United Nations agencies with regular region-specific updates on risk levels and accessibility.

57. United Nations. 2010. *Humanitarian Action Plan*, 2010, p. 13. New York.

58. The United Nations operates a five-phase security system that registers escalating threats and outlines the security measures required under each phase. Phase IV is the second highest and requires the evacuation of all internationally recruited staff members, with the exception of those directly involved with emergency, humanitarian relief or security operations.

However, in some areas such as Kunar and parts of Nuristan in the eastern region, a lack of outsourced monitors has hindered beneficiary targeting and food distribution, which ultimately affects WFP's ability to address shortcomings in its operations. Challenges include inaccurate targeting of beneficiaries, delays in distributions and food losses. In 2008, WFP's country-level management team adopted a temporary 'no access, no food' policy. For example, in the eastern region, many assistance projects were put on hold because of a lack of access for assessment and monitoring. Although postponing operations is a last resort, it can prevent the harm that could be caused by a misuse of resources arising from a lack of assessment capacity.

Limited access has particular repercussions on women beneficiaries (who are often only reached by women staff members). This problem is exacerbated by the high risks women staff and partners face by working in a highly conservative country and working with a foreign organization that is exposed to attacks. As intimidation and threats of violence increase, travel within Afghanistan is further limited. As a result, WFP has few women staff members and the majority of programme assessment teams include no women who can access no-go areas.

Mis-targeting and limited monitoring – inevitable results of obstructed access – hinder WFP's ability to reach the most vulnerable people. In addition, limited government capacity means that WFP cannot rely solely on national partners. Capacity building for government ministries is a priority for WFP, but efforts are hampered by security incidents, poor access, high staff turnover and a lack of resources.

Under these circumstances, WFP is not always able to maintain operational standards and controls throughout the entire process, from assessment to monitoring of assistance. This raises questions about whether WFP's activities alleviate or exacerbate protection risks. Each WFP food-assistance activity should be considered within the larger operational framework, which is often unpredictable.

Maintaining a protective presence in inaccessible areas: Innovative solutions

In Afghanistan's complex operating environment, WFP has developed an operational approach to enable food distribution to the most vulnerable people. Reaffirming the distinctions between WFP's identity, role and activities, and those of military or political actors (including United Nations agencies) is an essential element of this approach. Other important elements include: coordination with local leaders; dissemination of information about targeting criteria; distribution points close to beneficiaries; verifying beneficiary lists with community leaders and headcounts; outsourcing monitoring to programme assistance teams in no-go areas; and maximizing the number of safe corridors for transporting commodities. Building staff awareness and protection capacity has also been a significant factor in enhancing outreach and programming.

To increase its reach to local populations and overcome some of the obstacles mentioned above, WFP has increasingly relied on local community structures such as *shuras* and community development councils.[59] Although their capacity varies greatly, these councils are the most important community structures for vetting beneficiaries' needs and ensuring continued access and safety for WFP staff. WFP's experience with these entities has been largely positive and WFP encourages community involvement in its activities.

In insecure areas, insurgents may attack beneficiaries when they are receiving humanitarian assistance. Although WFP has not always been a target for insurgents in Afghanistan, it is continuously evaluating the possible negative impact of its assistance on beneficiaries. For instance, when implementing school construction activities in the provinces where its donors' PRTs are operating, WFP keeps coordination with their representatives to a minimum and maintains a low profile during donor visits to project sites.

Box 1.3. Back to school: Affirming girls' right to education

The 2008 attacks in Kandahar – in which Taliban members threw acid at girls going to school – prompted WFP to assess whether food assistance as an incentive to girls' school attendance may be increasing their exposure to harm. No evidence for this was found: in fact, the victims' parents reported that the girls would continue attending school regardless of the incentive of receiving cooking oil. Nonetheless, WFP negotiated with district-level authorities to ensure safe access to school for all students.

In areas of intense conflict, some donors prefer to earmark contributions in order to ensure visibility in districts where their military forces are present. WFP continues to advocate against geographic earmarking[60] and requests that donors avoid marking food assistance in conflict areas. This minimizes beneficiaries' perceived political association with donor countries, which could trigger attacks against them.[61]

The commercial transporters used by WFP in Afghanistan are not bound by UNDSS security regulations, and are able to deliver supplies to the most dangerous parts of the country. They can also travel without the WFP or United Nations logo. However, commercial vehicles are still vulnerable to attacks. Most attacks on WFP food convoys have occurred on the ring road between Kandahar and Herat.[62] Local communities have engaged in negotiations to ensure the safe passage of trucks in

59. Community development councils were created in 2003 through the World Bank National Solidarity Programme and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) as a means of building communities' capacity to identify, plan and manage their own development, and enhance local governance.

60. Donors' geographic priorities are taken into consideration as long as they align with the needs of the assisted population.

61. WFP. 2010. "PRRO 200063: Relief Food Assistance to Tackle Food Security Challenges". (WFP/EB.1/2010/9/1). Executive Board Document. Posted at: www.wfp.org/eb.

62. While Pakistan continues to be the most important entry point for deliveries into Afghanistan (81 percent of food in 2009), additional corridors have been established from Iran, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

places where police escorts are not possible. As outlined in the 2010 PRRO document, WFP has taken steps to improve its operations and ensure staff and beneficiary safety, including: recruitment of more programme assistance teams in no-go areas; recruitment of women staff along with mechanisms to ensure their safety; expansion of northern and western corridors to avoid overburdening the main Pakistan corridor for commodity deliveries[63] and reduce the risk of attacks on food convoys; and establishment of new sub-offices to improve WFP's outreach and monitoring capacity.

V. Conclusion

The lines between political, military and humanitarian responses to conflict-induced emergencies have become blurred. In conflict settings, it is impossible for WFP and other humanitarian agencies to sever all links with political and military actors. The significance of this challenge in Afghanistan should not be exaggerated: PRTs represent donors, while WFP as a United Nations agency must seek to maintain neutrality in line with its mission while it will always be affiliated with the integrated mission and must operate within that scheme.

WFP's association with PRTs has led to a perceived erosion of humanitarian actors' neutrality and independence. The blurring of political, military and humanitarian objectives constraints efforts to alleviate suffering, exposes humanitarian workers to greater risk of attacks, and creates more restrictive security measures. This puts humanitarians in a constant struggle between upholding humanitarian principles and responding to humanitarian needs. Instead of ensuring their protection, beneficiaries' association with international actors may increase their vulnerability to attacks.

Despite these challenges, WFP was able to provide food to 9 million beneficiaries in 2009.[64] However, this massive food-assistance operation came at a high price. Although WFP continues to maintain a distance from political and military actors, it has taken measures to ensure operational effectiveness by increasing community outreach and oversight.

WFP's efforts represent only part of what is needed to create a protective environment for humanitarian workers and beneficiaries in Afghanistan. State and non-state actors, donors, other United Nations agencies and NGOs must also take collective action to safeguard humanitarian space. At a minimum, they should ensure that their interventions do no harm and instead contribute to beneficiaries' safety, dignity and integrity.

63. While Pakistan continues to be the most important entry point for deliveries into Afghanistan (81 percent of food in 2009), additional corridors have been established from Iran, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

64. WFP country office Afghanistan. 2010. "Annual Report 2009"; WFP country office Afghanistan, 2010. "Executive Brief: Afghanistan".

Chapter 2

Defining boundaries in food assistance implementation: The use of a principled approach in Sri Lanka

Nicholas Crawford, Roger Nash and Liana Simmons

Humanitarian agencies operating in complex emergencies confront different challenges linked to their relationships with host governments, especially if they are party to a conflict. In Sri Lanka, the Government was party to a 26-year conflict that led to widespread displacement and loss of livelihoods. WFP's presence highlighted the difficult trade-off between responding to humanitarian needs through government structures and the long-term benefits of neutrality and operational autonomy.

In 2007, when the ceasefire between the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) collapsed, WFP attempted to strengthen its operational autonomy and convey its neutrality through the Humanitarian Principles document.[65] This document provided a framework for establishing WFP's independence following a decade of implementation with the Government; however, a principles-based dialogue became more challenging as the conflict escalated in the following years.

This chapter draws on three reports written by independent analysts from 2005 to 2009 and describes how WFP took refuge in its imperative of food delivery but struggled to assert the principles of neutrality and operational independence as the conflict developed. Faced with the perceived risks of jeopardizing its relationship with the host country or losing access, reaching the most vulnerable populations was WFP's dominant priority. WFP argued its obligations to the "humanitarian imperative" outweighed any real or perceived damage to its credibility as a neutral and impartial humanitarian actor.

In order to understand the decision to favour immediate humanitarian gains and risk undermining long-term beneficiary protection, it is necessary to view relationships with host governments as dynamic. WFP's propensity for maintaining the status quo reflects an ongoing ontological struggle regarding when and how to embrace a more questioning posture; how to assert its independence and neutrality; and how to more actively contribute to protection.

65. WFP. 2004. "Humanitarian Principles". Executive Board Document (WFP/EB.1/2004/4-C). Posted at: www.wfp.org/eb.

I. Working with governments that are party to a conflict: Intrinsic challenges

Two questions arise whenever humanitarian agencies deliver assistance in tandem with host governments that are party to a conflict: can an agency represent the humanitarian interests of its beneficiaries when they diverge from the government's security strategies? To what extent can principles guide humanitarian action?

WFP's presence in a country is contingent upon the host government seeking humanitarian assistance for food-insecure populations. In protracted conflicts in which the government participates in hostilities, there may be occasions when the government's interests do not coincide with those of WFP's beneficiaries. In such cases, representing beneficiaries' interests often implies divergence from the government. Some examples are provided below:[66]

- A government may attempt to direct WFP's resources for its own political benefit instead of according to need.
- Food insecurity may be the result of government policies; addressing the causes of food insecurity therefore requires advocacy with the government.
- WFP's beneficiaries may be suffering from non-food-related effects of government action; ignoring these issues risks damaging WFP's reputation and beneficiaries' trust.

Disagreement between an international actor and a host government does not necessarily create irreparable tension. When advocacy with a government is required, careful management of expectations can mitigate any damage to the working relationship. However, if a government increases its engagement in conflict or seeks greater control of relief assistance, humanitarian actors find it more difficult to maintain a principled distance. In situations where host government actions threaten agencies' capacity to protect beneficiaries, assertive and diplomatic advocacy is required.

II. Political and humanitarian background

Sri Lanka's 26-year civil war saw the polarization of society along ethnic lines and produced a highly insecure environment. This protracted conflict came to a violent end in May 2009 with the defeat of the LTTE by the Sri Lankan military.

WFP has been present in Sri Lanka since 1968, when it was invited by the Government to support its national programmes. A country programme addressed

66. Nash, R. 2009. *WFP Sri Lanka: Strategic Protection Framework*, p. 8. Rome, WFP.

the immediate needs of vulnerable people, including young children and pregnant and lactating women, through nutrition interventions linked to government health and nutrition programmes. WFP implemented activities through various ministries, including the Ministry of Nation Building and Development, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and the Department for Agrarian Development. At the local level, WFP coordinated its activities with provincial and district coordinators reporting to these ministries.

Tensions between the Sinhalese ethnic majority and Tamil separatists first erupted into war in 1983. After two decades of fighting, the Government and LTTE formalized a ceasefire agreement in February 2002. Violence between LTTE and government forces intensified again in 2006, although neither side had formally withdrawn from the ceasefire.[67] When the October 2006 peace talks failed, fighting broke out in several districts. The hostilities seriously impacted the civilian population's food security.

Following the 2002 ceasefire agreement, WFP had begun moving from relief towards recovery, helping returnees and host communities to resume their livelihoods, and improving nutrition. As a result of the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004, WFP included disaster-affected populations in these activities. After fighting resumed in 2006, WFP readjusted its operations from recovery back to relief in conflict-affected areas. An additional 400,000 conflict-affected people in the LTTE-controlled north and east were added to WFP's caseload in 2007.

By early 2009, heavy fighting in the north had resulted in a major humanitarian crisis. Approximately 300,000 people were displaced in the northern region of the Vanni because of the fighting. Displaced Tamil communities were interned in camps with limited access to relatives, land, job possibilities or other support structures. Others living in Tamil areas were heavily affected by security restrictions. Farmers and fishers had no access to agricultural lands and coastal areas, which the Government had designated as high-security zones. Embargoes and closures of main transport routes also destroyed livelihoods, exacerbating the crisis. With hundreds of thousands of civilians trapped between Government and LTTE forces in the shrinking LTTE-controlled areas, human rights groups accused both LTTE and the Sri Lankan military of human rights violations.

III. The confines of the relationship: Refuge and leverage in humanitarian principles

The changing nature of the relationship

With the resumption of fighting in 2006, WFP increased food assistance to affected

67. The Government announced its withdrawal from the 2002 ceasefire on 2 January 2008. The ceasefire agreement formally ended on 16 January, following the required 14-day advance notice.

populations while considering the operational implications of the shifting conflict. For example, WFP's 2005–2006 protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) 'Assistance to Vulnerable Groups for Peace Building in Conflict- and Tsunami-Affected Areas' was based on a continuation of the peace process.[68] The PRRO document noted that "…should the peace process break down, implementation of the PRRO would still be relevant, but the activities and scope would have to be adjusted to the changing circumstances."[69] Other concerns mentioned in the PRRO document included: increased insecurity; lack of support from LTTE for interventions in the areas under its control; inadequate government policy commitment, budget and staff; and insufficient donor support pending resumption of the peace negotiations.

By 2007, many believed that both LTTE and the Government had been using relief assistance for political aims,[70] which challenged WFP's impartial delivery of food assistance and access to beneficiaries. Government assistance had reportedly been prevented from reaching LTTE-controlled areas since the 1990s.[71] Civilians claimed that the Government had done little to help them to escape from unsafe areas. Others reported that they had been forced to return to conflict areas, with food assistance used as a tool to encourage these forced displacements. Of 119 conflict-affected divisions, WFP had full access to 102, partial access to 12 and no access to 5.

Traffic into LTTE areas from Government-controlled areas was allowed only after careful vehicle inspection and scrutiny of passenger documents, and often resulted in the blockage of humanitarian supplies such as food and medical equipment.[72] The northern border of the LTTE-controlled Vanni area, near the Jaffna peninsula, was closed to all ground transport and air traffic was highly restricted; this closure isolated the peninsula's 600,000 residents. Waters to the peninsula's north and east were heavily guarded by LTTE combatants, who refused to guarantee the safety of ICRC or United Nations ships.

In the eastern part of the country, the borders were not clearly defined and continually shifted as the conflict continued. In LTTE-controlled areas, WFP worked through government counterparts, informing LTTE officials of movements to ensure safe access to beneficiaries. Although sharing information with LTTE was indispensable for maintaining safe access, it risked the perception that WFP was conferring political legitimacy to what many actors considered a terrorist organization.

68. WFP. 2004. "PRRO Sri Lanka 10067.19" (WFP/EB.3/2004/8-B/3) Annex III: Logical Framework Summary. Executive Board Document. Posted at: www.wfp.org/eb.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

70. Human Rights Watch. 2006. *Improving Civilian Protection in Sri Lanka: Recommendations for the Government and the LTTE*, Number 1, September 2006, p. 19. New York; International Crisis Group. 2006. Sri Lanka: The Failure of the Peace Process, Asia Report No. 124, 28, p. 21. Brussels.

71. *Ibid.*

72. Update provided by country office in November 2007.

Neither the Government nor LTTE could ensure that humanitarian assistance reached its intended beneficiaries. Frequent air strikes, armed retaliation and explosions made these areas highly insecure.

While both parties to the conflict embraced international humanitarian law and human rights law in theory, their actions led to the forced displacement of many civilians, with little regard for their safety and dignity. WFP staff struggled to maintain access to populations in the Vanni, to assure the Government of WFP's impartiality and to ensure that the Government dispatched WFP's assistance according to independently assessed needs.

The legacy of cooperation

During WFP's four decades in Sri Lanka, joint management of operations with the Government had created a strong legacy of cooperation. WFP had come to rely upon government infrastructure, assessment expertise, co-financing and shared management to implement WFP-supported national food programmes. This model of implementation was considered adequate for Sri Lanka as a middle-income country with significant administration capacity.

With the failure of the peace process and renewed hostilities, WFP had to adjust its objectives and activities. This meant finding new strategies for reaching beneficiaries. This adaptation was undertaken in consultation with the Government, but WFP's conflict-specific emergency response required increased operational independence.

The use of principles as a framework for negotiating humanitarian space

With the return to conflict in 2007, WFP took stock of its options and considered how best to expand its operational autonomy and preserve the perception of its humanitarian character. WFP's long history in Sri Lanka meant that change would have to be gradual. It required a long-term vision of how to position itself as a humanitarian actor.

In order to integrate a protection lens into its work in Sri Lanka, WFP experimented with employing its Humanitarian Principles document as a framework for renegotiating relationships with implementing partners. Table 2.1 provides examples of how these principles were used as a platform for negotiation. The principles – approved by the WFP's Executive Board in 2004 – have potential as a diplomatic and mutually acceptable means of opening dialogue on protection with staff and partners.

Both the Government and LTTE were hypersensitive to any perceived political bias by the United Nations, but the Humanitarian Principles were seen as a platform for WFP to negotiate humanitarian space. WFP sought to employ the principles of neutrality, impartiality and humanity to establish firm boundaries beyond which it would not be willing to tread. By demarcating these boundaries with the Government, WFP could negotiate a more effective humanitarian response to the conflict.

A matrix (Table 2.1) was devised for framing protection threats within these universal Humanitarian Principles. They provided options for addressing protection threats and weighing risks to staff and beneficiaries, including the risk of limited access.

Table 2.1. Using the Humanitarian Principles as a negotiation platform

***Neutrality:* WFP will not takes side in conflict**			
Challenge	**Real or perceived protection implications**	**Recommended actions**	**Risks**
WFP relies on the Government, party to an internal conflict, for implementation in conflict-affected areas.	Perception of WFP's neutrality and impartiality threatened. WFP unable to deliver food assistance to most vulnerable areas. Beneficiaries encouraged choosing sides in the conflict in order to obtain access to humanitarian aid. WFP's delivery of food to non-priority areas constricted. Perception of neutrality of other United Nations agencies questioned.	Expand WFP sub-offices' capacity for direct delivery of food in the north and east. Negotiate with the Government for expanded WFP implementation in conflict areas in the PRRO. Consider an emergency operation (EMOP) in conflict areas, relying on WFP and NGO implementation. Refuse or suspend further support to country programme/PRRO activities in the south until impartial treatment achieved in the north and east.	Government restricts WFP sub-offices' capacity to deliver in conflict-affected areas. Government denies implementation of EMOP and demands sovereignty. NGOs' access to LTTE-controlled areas further limited. NGOs lack capacity to assume distribution role, especially in non-camp situations. Government or media perceives this as tacit support for LTTE.

Impartiality: **Assistance will prioritize those most vulnerable and will not discriminate based on ethnicity, nationality, political opinion, gender, race or religion.**			
Challenge	**Real or perceived protection implications**	**Recommended actions**	**Risks**
Implementation constraints resulting from Government bias, such as lengthy call-forward processes, routinely limit food distribution in the north and east.	WFP perceived as biased towards one area or ethnic group. Food assistance fuels conflict. Staff security in north and east threatened as they are blamed for poor distribution. Increased displacement from north and east towards other areas. Increase in beneficiaries' negative coping mechanisms	Advocate bilaterally and as part of the United Nations Country Team for the Government to dispatch food promptly to the most vulnerable areas. Build capacity within WFP's special operation to implement assistance. When possible, purchase food locally to eliminate distribution delays. Encourage Government to donate rice instead of landside transport, storage and handling (LTSH) costs. Advocate with donors to enable WFP funding of LTSH in order to gain more direct implementing capacity.	Government responds negatively to increased pressure and further reduces support and access to vulnerable areas. Government restricts sub-offices' capacity to deliver to conflict-affected areas. Government perceives local purchase in LTTE-controlled areas as supporting LTTE. WFP unable to carry the additional cost; Government unable to provide sufficient quantities of rice as harvest decreases owing to conflict.
Needs assessments are sometimes restricted or findings suppressed by the Government.	WFP's impartiality questioned. WFP unable to plan and implement accurately and according to assessed needs. United Nations and NGO partners unable to rely on WFP data for their own programming.	Advocate with Government for independent needs assessments and public release of findings. Consider withdrawing WFP food assistance in areas denied independent needs assessments.	Government restricts needs assessments and their publication. Vulnerable populations do not receive food assistance. Increased targeting errors cause community social problems.

A fragile balance: A call for precaution

In 2007, WFP's difficulties in contributing to protection through impartial and neutral food assistance were highlighted as a major concern that could be addressed through an analysis of WFP's implementation practices. Employing humanitarian principles to redefine WFP's relationship with the Government and LTTE was seen as a basis for advocating with both parties to the conflict in order to maintain full humanitarian neutrality and access.

Possibly jeopardizing a historically positive partnership with the Government posed challenges for WFP's operations in Sri Lanka. However, it was clear that if the conflict intensified, rendering the existing implementation arrangements untenable, WFP's dependence on those arrangements would have to be re-examined.

Given the developments of 2007, it seemed appropriate for WFP to examine the dynamics of its partnership with the Government and to reposition its operations in order to achieve better protection results. Otherwise, WFP risked falling into a common pitfall of assistance agencies operating in protracted crises: applying long-standing operational arrangements that now risked perpetuating or worsening beneficiaries' assistance and protection needs.

Although there are risks involved in altering operational arrangement during conflicts, adjusting WFP's humanitarian assistance according to new realities was thought essential to fulfil its mandate.

IV. Escalation of the conflict and related operational issues[73]

The war, violence and displacement witnessed between 2008 and 2009 intensified the dilemmas that WFP had encountered in previous years. WFP faced: the continued obstruction of access to LTTE-controlled areas; allegations of the use of its convoys for military purposes; the internment of displaced persons in camps; and persistent threats to perceptions of its neutrality, impartiality and independence.

The continuation of established implementation arrangements with the Government further weakened perceptions of WFP's neutrality and impartiality. There was concern that WFP had fallen in line with government policies that threatened food security and protection. Some critics reported that direct government control of WFP food had delayed its response to food needs. In Jaffna, the perception that the food 'belonged to' the Government undermined WFP's

73. Much of this discussion is based on the Sri Lanka country office's Strategic Protection Framework, which involved interviews in Colombo, Jaffna, Ampara, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Vavuniya and Anurdhapura from May to June 2009.

assertion that food was used for humanitarian rather than political purposes. The alleged use of WFP convoys as cover for military manoeuvres combined with strong political pressure to keep the convoys operating not only drastically undermined WFP's neutrality but also created risks for WFP staff.[74]

The 2009 displacement emergency in the Vanni, which was mostly controlled by LTTE, reflected the tension created by WFP's limited operational independence and waning neutrality. Before 2009, it had appeared unlikely – and unacceptable – that WFP would assist the entire population of 250,000 people housed indefinitely in detention centres. However, WFP was gradually drawn into feeding most of the IDP population although this risked prolonging their internment. By late 2009, there was still no firm government commitment to releasing IDPs. As the situation continued, WFP became trapped by its commitment to continuing assistance, contributing to the indeterminate internment of most of the Vanni population.

The United Nations Country Team, led by the Humanitarian Coordinator, advocated publicly and privately for applying the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and a quick resolution to the interment. Pressure was also applied from United Nations Headquarters. Although WFP held some leverage, it did not, for example, publicly suggest it might suspend or phase out assistance to the camps; and it is not clear that a more assertive WFP advocacy role would have strengthened the United Nations-wide stance to the internments.

Government control over humanitarian action had helped to create this situation. Until the final stage of the conflict, the Government had asserted that there were only 70,000 people in LTTE-controlled areas, and expected the United Nations to plan accordingly; there were actually 300,000 people. In addition, the screening process used to justify internment in the camps was described as 'brief, but was extended indefinitely. The Government predicted that internment in camps would be short term while requesting long-term solutions for shelter, sanitation and other services. When the Government's assertions were discovered to be inaccurate, it rarely triggered an operational reassessment. This might explain why the United Nations was denigrated as merely the implementing partner of the Government.[75]

Too late to change? Establishing the humanitarian imperative

Changing its well-established, government-controlled operational arrangements for a relief response largely aimed at beneficiaries in LTTE-controlled areas had already pushed WFP towards a new relationship with the Government. In the conflict's later years, a more robust assertion of WFP's neutral and impartial role

74. Keen, D. 2009. *Report on WFP and the Humanitarian Crisis in Sri Lanka*, p. 8. Rome, WFP. This study was based on a field mission to Sri Lanka in April 2009.

75. *Ibid.*

was required. However, without a precedent for voicing concerns, some basic questions remained: How could WFP challenge the existing arrangements in a non-threatening way? What role did the broader humanitarian community have in this?

Box 2.1. Dialogue: Small steps to change

Moving forward on difficult issues can sometimes be easier than it seems. In the Food Cluster meeting in Vavuniya, a government agent asked, "Complementary food will run out in the camps – what can I do?" The clear response from those present was "You can let the people out."

In another meeting, one of the authors was able to discuss protection concerns openly with a senior military officer in Vavuniya, resulting in a request for WFP to conduct more training of senior military personnel. At the end of this meeting, the military officer was asked "How long do you think you can really keep these people in the camps?" The officer responded that the planned release of elderly people and young children was only the start of a gradual process. Persistent follow-up on this issue had the potential to secure further releases.

Although it was hoped that the principled approach (summarized in Table 2.1) would be used to reassess WFP's operations in Sri Lanka, continued escalation of the conflict made this impossible. WFP's ability to employ humanitarian principles was tested as tensions rose within the humanitarian community. Asserting non-collaboration with government policies that contradicted WFP's mandate became more urgent at exactly the moment that continued operational collaboration was needed. In this environment, there was little room for using the principled framework to push for humanitarian space.

WFP staff hesitated to raise publicly conflict-related issues that contributed to beneficiaries' food insecurity, and the effectiveness of its private, informal dialogue with the Government appears to have been mixed. Nevertheless, standard WFP operations work – programme briefs, programme documents, routine monitoring - offered ample opportunities for highlighting protection threats that affected food security. Project proposals routinely mentioned the need for sustainability and self-reliance, providing opportunities for mentioning the causes of food insecurity and the need to address them. But indicators of self-reliance in the PRRO reflected the obstacles to achieving such self-reliance. Since WFP still depended on government support for implementation, there was significant pressure to avoid issues that would cause difficulties with the Government. This limited the influence on protection of WFP's operations and perpetuated the status quo.

Although local staff felt a need for WFP to assert its independence from the Government, this was difficult to act upon.[76]

76. Nash, R. 2009. *WFP Sri Lanka: Strategic Protection Framework*, July 2009, p. 2. Rome, WFP.

Staff in field offices increasingly raised concerns related to the dual role of the Government as a military actor in the conflict as well as WFP's principal partner for humanitarian assistance. WFP's focus on delivering assistance had, rightly or wrongly, reduced its ability to assert neutrality and impartiality. The IDP emergency in the Vanni was one example of this tension between the humanitarian imperative to assist needy people and a principled approach to assistance.

A 2009 analysis by London School of Economics academic David Keen noted that the dilemma of advocacy versus food delivery may be oversimplified.[77] In practice, humanitarian decision making is not simply a question of weighing delivery against advocacy. Other considerations include states' assertions of sovereignty over humanitarian interventions and incentive structures (e.g., within aid agencies) that favour the status quo, particularly if change has budget implications. According to Keen, this suggests that in situations such as Sri Lanka there are layers of biases affecting the balance struck by the international community between advocacy and delivery – generally to the detriment of target populations.

When it comes to advocacy, exerting pressure at an early stage is important. In Sri Lanka, this would have meant putting more pressure on the Government regarding IDP rights while the scale of these movements was still relatively small. Advocacy and pressure on protection issues became more difficult later, when there was a mass influx of IDPs that the Government was unable to support. By this point, the pressure of humanitarian imperative overshadowed negotiations based on other humanitarian principles.

V. Conclusion: Endorsing variability

WFP staff recognized that there were advantages to WFP's partnership with the Government, including access to otherwise inaccessible areas. In 2008, it was noted that,

> *"…continued working through government structures will require considerable effort and initiative to ensure appropriate standards of delivery but, if successful, will allow for better access and a greater, more integrated response capacity than working independently. Eventually maintaining this approach should also allow WFP to cease food distribution activities in Sri Lanka."* [78]

77. Keen, D. 2009. *Compromise or Capitulation: Report on WFP and the Humanitarian Crisis*. In: WFP, 2009. "Humanitarian Assistance in Conflict and Complex Emergencies". June 2009 Conference report and background papers.

78. PRRO Concept Paper. In Keen, D. 2009. *Ibid.*

However, there are also severe limitations to partnering with a party to an internal armed conflict. In these circumstances, maintaining the perception of neutrality and exerting operational independence were undermined by the implementation arrangements.

The Humanitarian Principles were a strategic entry point for discussions with the Government rather than a knee-jerk reaction to protection threats. This approach represented a framework for adapting WFP's implementation practices, which would require time, diligence and advocacy. But, although the Humanitarian Principles could have served as a useful platform for negotiations between WFP and the Government in 2007, the appetite for such negotiations was not there. In subsequent years as the conflict intensified, this principles-based approach was not effectively employed. This raised questions about whether humanitarian principles can be 'operationalized', particularly for United Nations agencies that are 'owned' by their Member States.

WFP's engagement in humanitarian protection in protracted conflicts involves seeing the variability in its relationship with host governments. Instead of accepting long-standing relationships with parties to a conflict as static, WFP should monitor the evolution of conflicts and assess the risks to implementing food assistance based on humanitarian principles. Failure to do so reflects an unquestioning posture that can have negative repercussions on the protection of beneficiaries. Unless WFP is sensitive but assertive in negotiating the boundaries of its relationships, it may become too cautious and default to the sometimes debatable 'bottom line' humanitarian imperative.

Chapter 3

Pursuing a principled humanitarian approach in Pakistan: Rhetoric or delivery

Nicholas Crawford, Wolfgang Herbinger and Pia Skjelstad[79]

> *"It is important to remember the inherent limitations of the enterprise, and to judge it within contexts of what is possible rather than against ideals of humanitarian perfection".*[80]

Executive summary

This chapter reviews WFP's response to the conflict and floods in Pakistan between 2008 and 2011, and considers the inevitable tension between principles and pragmatism faced by humanitarian actors in fast-paced and complex crises. The pursuit of protection in the midst of a massive relief effort is a utopian vision ("…ensuring full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law…"[81]). This chapter examines the fundamental choices faced by humanitarians in trying to seek best possible, but never complete, protection outcomes for the greatest number of crisis-affected people. It argues that in Pakistan, meaningful protection outcomes were achieved by scaling up relief assistance – including through pragmatic arrangements with the Government and military.

The chapter suggests that the humanitarian community's current approach to protection, as reflected in the Protection Cluster (with a mandate that encourages the identification of protection gaps but with limited capacity to deliver assistance) needs to be rethought. It also argues that responses to widespread crises should not be excessively waylaid by arduous deliberation among humanitarian actors in the capital over the need to achieve theory-heavy 'principled response'. Humanitarian principles serve a function by framing the ideals for a response; but every complex emergency requires compromise and pragmatism along with concrete action to deliver tangible assistance at scale. Dialogue with communities and local authorities is sometimes the most effective means of opening protective space for

79. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not represent the official position of WFP.
80. ALNAP. 2010. *The State of the Humanitarian System. Assessing performance and progress. A pilot study*. London.
81. Caverzasio, G. (ed.) 2001. *Strengthening Protection in War: A Search for Professional Standards*, p. 19. Geneva, ICRC.

people. The chapter elaborates a number of lessons learned from WFP's experience in Pakistan:

- Debates around humanitarian principles must consider the totality of needs and responsibilities of all the major humanitarian actors, including governments. They should not be overly influenced by certain role models in the humanitarian community who, because of their more independent stature (and often their limited size or delivery footprint), are able to best embody a 'principled' posture in their response. In Pakistan, using the very few civilian helicopters, operating only in neutral humanitarian space and rejecting some government contributions would have left millions of people without food assistance and other material support.

- The time-consuming pursuit of flawless, principled assistance for every individual case of human deprivation can compromise the delivery of life-saving assistance to many beneficiaries.

- Providing humanitarian assistance in a reliable manner is fundamental to protecting human rights and securing greater access (in contrast to demanding access or insisting on absolute adherence to all humanitarian principles as a pre-condition for humanitarian action).

- Each humanitarian response is unique and provides opportunities to learn more about protection. Universal models for what constitutes correct protection practices must be adapted to specific contexts.

- The entire humanitarian community must accept that there are limits to furthering a transformational human-rights agenda during a humanitarian crisis.

- Positive protection outcomes can be achieved through dialogue and local solutions, which should be explored before employing strong advocacy and escalation approaches.

- Hewing to principles in a complex emergency raises dilemmas that require vigilant management of perceptions, especially for a UN dual-mandated agency: parts of the UN family may be pursuing political and security objectives that undermine perceptions of another United Nations agency's neutrality; the needs of different groups and partners may be at odds (for example, the need for IDP and refugee relief versus long-term community development or even nation building).

- Resources from some donors may meet critical needs while creating security risks. Distancing the United Nations humanitarian assistance agenda from governments' stabilization and security agendas - important to building a perception of neutrality - can be rarely fully realized.

- In debates about the use of military and civil-defense assets, the focus should be on achieving lasting humanitarian outcomes for needy people and their

communities. Political and military considerations should not drive these debates, nor should excessive "standing-on-principle-for-the-sake-of-principle" delay needed assistance.

- Discussions on continued reform of the humanitarian system, including the cluster approach, should consider mainstreaming protection across different sectors instead of further building up self-standing protection structures.

Introduction

In 2009 and 2010, Pakistan was beset by two large crises: a conflict and colossal flooding in an area that partly overlapped with the conflict area. The conflict in the Northwest, security threats throughout the country, displacement from flooding and exploitive socio-economic patterns all contributed to protection concerns for vulnerable people in Pakistan. In the span of weeks, 3 million people were displaced and more than 7 million were devastated by floods. The pace and scale of these crises, and the need for a rapid response understandably drove WFP's priority-setting and decision-making, especially in the initial period of response. In such situations, WFP's mandate – consistent with the overarching principle of humanity - is to meet the immediate needs of as many affected people as possible.

Difficult choices and compromises are inevitable, and as a United Nations agency with a humanitarian mandate, WFP (unlike ICRC, UNICEF and UNHCR, which have dual protection-assistance mandates), must help protect the lives of affected populations through food assistance and must therefore keep an eye on the bigger picture. WFP views itself as prizing action over rhetoric and has a responsibility to provide tangible relief on a large scale while remaining accountable to its beneficiaries, donors and host governments. As regrettable as every individual case of violation, suffering and deprivation is, WFP cannot let the pursuit of an unobtainable, flawless response deflect from its overall responsibility to provide life-saving assistance to the greatest possible number of needy people. That said, the credibility that WFP earns by reliably providing assistance and the ways it adjusts its operations as a crisis evolves, can contribute to mitigating short- and long-term protection threats and to opening up space for lasting and complete protection and assistance package for individuals and communities.

Part one of this chapter introduces an approach that balances principles and humanitarian realism, which was used by WFP to meet the needs of conflict- and flood-affected populations. Part two discusses the actions taken to ensure the safety and dignity of affected populations, including: (i) improvements in beneficiary registration and targeting; (ii) security management for safer and more accessible distribution; (iii) implementation of a beneficiary complaints mechanism to increase accountability; (iv) advocacy with local communities and United Nations partners for protection actions; and (v) strengthening capacity and legitimacy of local NGOs in areas contested by militants by entrusting them with food

assistance responsibilities. The final part of the chapter suggests good practices that can assist humanitarian actors in Pakistan – a country likely to continue experiencing complex emergencies and natural disasters – in improving the effectiveness of their operations by engaging effectively with the government, military, local communities and donors in ways that serve the long-term interests of vulnerable populations. Many of these lessons are equally applicable in other complex humanitarian environments.

Part 1

Humanitarian dilemmas in Pakistan

Pursuing a principled humanitarian approach in the conflict and food crises of Pakistan between 2009 and 2010 — that is, applying the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence as a means of contributing to the immediate and longer-term welfare and protection concerns of affected populations—has proven challenging. Working with and through the national government —as all UN agencies do—that is strong and determined to pursue legitimate national interests, including security interests, has strained perceptions of the United Nations as a neutral actor and made it difficult to provide timely and impartial assistance. The larger stability agenda in Pakistan and the region – driven by some of WFP's largest donors – has contributed to a perception of the United Nations as an extension of the United States' political and military agenda. The suicide attack on WFP's country office in October 2009, in which five staff members died, was a tragic confirmation that extremists view humanitarian workers as extensions of a western agenda and therefore as legitimate targets. Investigations following the attack suggested that potential targets were all linked to the Pakistani government through years of development work.

Some observers have cited WFP and other humanitarian actors as contributing to an erosion of principles. In Pakistan and elsewhere, the United Nations' association with stabilization has raised uncomfortable questions about whether UN neutrality, even in the context of humanitarian operations, has been reduced to a catchphrase, trotted out to tick a rhetorical box but increasingly empty of substance. At the operational level, the 'principled approach' to humanitarian assistance has at times hijacked resources and time from the United Nations Humanitarian Country Team and other decision-making bodies, to the detriment of delivering the assistance that is at the core of achieving the overarching principle of humanity. There are discussions on principles worth having; there are important short- and long-term risks that must be weighed against rigid adherence to real or perceived erosions of principles; and there are critical moments when strongly defending principles makes sense for the people and communities we are serving.

There are also limits to what humanitarian actors, even acting in concert, can achieve through advocacy with governments and major donors. For example, the

expectation that a transformative human rights agenda can be pursued during a humanitarian response must be tempered with realism. In the case of Pakistan, this would require reversing centuries of inequality and injustice.

The United Nations' inadequacy in this regard is reflected in the absence of an international human rights envoy in the country, thereby transferring responsibility to other actors. Nonetheless, the Pakistan experience has shown that realism, practicality and perseverance can be powerful tools for creating protective space for vulnerable populations. Although criticized by some humanitarians, WFP's assistance contributed to significant achievements in protection. For example, in a tribal area considered off limits by many aid agencies, WFP's presence facilitated the acceptance of other international and local humanitarian actors because the tangible food aid provide through these actors built confidence with the locals. The theater and theology of humanitarian debate – occasionally a distraction from the Pakistan response in recent years – cannot be allowed to dominate the humanitarian agenda nor divert attention from the principle of humanity.

WFP's performance has not been perfect, and WFP staff have faced tough ethical dilemmas related to humanitarian principles and the protection of crisis-affected communities. This chapter aims to explore those dilemmas, to reflect on what WFP has learned in Pakistan and to discuss how WFP continues to adjust its operations in order to achieve best possible protection outcomes.

Pakistan's thorny operating environment

Any protection approach must be structured around the specific characteristics of each emergency response. Pakistan demonstrates how a strong government asserting its sovereign right to direct humanitarian policy can shape the character of humanitarian action. In addition, the 'One UN' strategy[82] has affected the humanitarian community's ability to rapidly shift towards neutral and impartial humanitarian response.[83] On the positive side, government and military capacity can be deployed to meet humanitarian needs.

The floods of 2010 affected 20 million people and about half the districts in Pakistan.[84] However, casualty figures remained low compared to other disasters

82. "One UN" countries emerged from the United Nations reform process initiated by United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan in 2005, with a United Nations goal to "Deliver as One". The Government of Pakistan along with those of Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uruguay, and Viet Nam volunteered to become "Delivering as One" pilot countries. The initiative seeks to increase United Nations agencies' efficiency, efficacy, transparency and accountability to beneficiaries. More information is available at http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=173 (last accessed 12 July 2012).

83. Péchayre, M. 2011. *Humanitarian Action in Pakistan 2005-2010: Challenges, Principles, and Politics.* Somerville, MA, Tufts University, Feinstein International Center. Briefing Paper.

84. Polastro, R. et al. 2011. *Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to Pakistan's 2010 Flood Crisis.* ALNAP: http://www.alnap.org/pool/files/1266.pdf (last accesses 18 October 2012).

such as the 2005 earthquake. This was partially the result of a successful evacuation in Punjab and Sindh – facilitated by collaboration between military and humanitarian actors.[85] In fact, the Pakistani military's experience with United Nations peacekeeping operations means that many soldiers are adept at working alongside United Nations actors.

Nevertheless, a number of factors make operating in Pakistan unpredictable and often dangerous for humanitarians: the country is on the frontlines of the war in Afghanistan; it is pursuing its own internal counter-insurgency; western diplomatic and military resources are deployed in Pakistan; and extremists who flout international humanitarian law are operating throughout the country.

In this situation, maintaining an unblemished appearance of neutrality is unrealistic for any humanitarian agency that operates through the national Government. The political side of the United Nations has designated some organizations operating within Pakistan as 'terrorist' and some Pakistanis may find it difficult to accept that an arm of the UN—such as WFP - is a neutral or benevolent entity. The fact that WFP's major donors[86] are aligned with the Pakistani Government and military exacerbates this problem. However, this does not mean that efforts to maintain a perception of neutrality and impartiality cannot be effective. It means that hard realism must be mixed with the sentiments of humanitarian ideal.

Following military offensives in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)[87] in August 2008 and the Swat Valley in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province in April 2009, which provoked the displacement of 3 million people,[88] the Government pursued a hearts-and-minds campaign with the affected population. WFP and the Government shared the objective of providing timely food assistance to displaced people and other conflict-affected groups. With IDP-assistance operations still ongoing in mid-2010, the country was hit with unprecedented monsoon floods, initiating a humanitarian crisis that affected 20 million people. Large swathes of the conflict-affected areas – such as Swat, Shangla, Mardan, Charsadda, Nowshera and Dera Ismal Khan – were hit by the floods, precipitating a large-scale natural disaster

85. Further elaborated in the principles of "non-interfering coordination" by Nadeem, A. and McLeod, A. 2008. Non-interfering Coordination: The Key to Pakistan's Successful Relief Effort. Liaison Online 4, no 1 (2008). Posted at: http://coe-dmha.org/Publications/Liaison/Vol_4No_1/Dept05.htm (last accessed 12 July 2012).

86. The top five donors in 2010 were: the United States of America, Australia, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund. In 2009 they included: the United States of America, the European Commission, Pakistan, Japan and Germany. See WFP. 2010. "Annual Performance Report for 2009". (WFP/EB.A/2010/4). Executive Board Document. Posted at: www.wfp.org/eb.

87. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) became semi-autonomous within Pakistan in 1947, the same year that Pakistani gained its independence from Great Britain

88. Cosgrave, J., Polastro, R. and Zafar, F. 2010. *Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to Pakistan's 2009 Displacement Crisis*, version 1.95, no.9. http://daraint.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/IARTE_PK_displacement_2010_report.pdf (last accessed 18 October 2012).

response in an already complex and dangerous setting. The security ramifications of operating in Pakistan cannot be understated: in 2009 alone, 17 humanitarian staff members were killed – many deliberately targeted by extremist groups.[89]

The scale of the flood response demanded that WFP confront a series of operational challenges centred on sourcing life-saving food, finding ways to reach inaccessible communities and setting up distribution points to reach displaced people across hundreds of communities. WFP reached 7 million people in October 2010 – a massive response with a strong focus on responding to humanitarian needs. However, the IDP response was beset by questions about the politicization of assistance and targeting. The legacy of decades of development cooperation between the United Nations and the Government further complicated the situation. As an agency with a dual emergency and development mandate, extricating WFP from Government policies (such as the counter-insurgency strategy), but not others (development plans) was particularly challenging. Can long-standing government counterparts and infrastructure cease to be acceptable overnight? At what moment does a life- and livelihood-saving intervention cease to be purely humanitarian and become recovery or development?

In a conflict, the United Nations agencies' primary accountability must shift towards individuals affected by the crisis. However, such adjustments always happen within the framework of the relationship with the Government. The Pakistan United Nations Country Team's fixation on implementing the 'One UN' initiative with the Government limited some agencies' ability to shift quickly to an emergency footing.[90] Still, an entrenched institutional partnership with the Government is a fact of life for most humanitarian agencies (including international NGOs), particularly those with dual emergency-development mandates. A concrete example was experienced during the IDP crisis in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. While concerns about IDPs were raised with the Government, there were also negotiations to avert the forced return of over 100,000 Afghan refugees. Delicate interactions with the Government were required to achieve optimum protection outcomes for both groups of vulnerable people.[91]

In Pakistan, pursuing a principled humanitarian approach that considers beneficiaries' basic needs, safety and dignity cannot rely on theoretical rules. Delivering life-saving assistance on a large scale while remaining flexible to shifting needs amount to a major protective achievement on its own. These efforts create the leverage to advocate with governments, militaries, and donors whose actions may be threatening the rights and well-being of crisis-affected people.

89. Aid Worker Security Database, a project of Humanitarian Outcomes: http://aidworkersecurity.org /search.php (last accessed 3 June 2011).

90. Péchayre, M.2011. *Humanitarian Action in Pakistan 2005-2010: Challenges, Principles, and Politics. Somerville*, MA, Tufts University, Feinstein International Center. Briefing Paper.

91. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres at the WFP Global Meeting in Madrid, July 2010.

The scale of suffering and the geo-political importance of Pakistan attracted donations to WFP operations that were sufficient to cover the assessed needs of both conflict- and flood-affected people. Independent evaluations of the humanitarian response to both emergencies lauded WFP's performance in scaling up life-saving assistance quickly under government leadership.

Some were troubled however by what they perceived as an erosion of principles among humanitarian actors, including WFP and other United Nations agencies.[92] Detractors argued that successes had come at the cost of access to provide impartial assistance; that the safety of humanitarian workers had been compromised as a result; and that the credibility of the humanitarian enterprise worldwide had been undermined.[93] It is impossible to prove that consistently adhering more religiously to principle throughout these two emergency responses would have better served the interests of vulnerable people. However, it is evident that during the crisis, few needy people were refused assistance for the sake of future humanitarian access.

Nevertheless, it is important to consider how humanitarian principles were employed in Pakistan in response to massive humanitarian need. The overall humanitarian response was successful during both the IDP crisis and the floods, especially WFP's emergency food assistance.[94] While there were failures by the Government and humanitarian actors to protect affected people, they were minimal compared to the scale of need that was addressed. Setting aside the emotions of the moment and institutional agendas that rightly aspire to defend and spread international humanitarian norms (aspirations that by nature will never fully be met), were critical mistakes made in Pakistan as a result of a failure to adhere sufficiently to humanitarian principles?

In light of the difficult operating environment and scale of the disasters, a pragmatic approach to delivering assistance prevailed within WFP. This meant not getting bogged down in every Humanitarian Country Team debate, nor being sidetracked by every threat reported in the Protection Cluster. Instead, WFP engaged in getting the machinery moving to deliver critical assistance. The principle of humanity, saving lives and alleviating suffering took precedence.

92. See Whittall, J. 2011. We don't Trust That': Politicized Assistance in North-west Pakistan. *Humanitarian Exchange*. No. 49. Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute; and Péchayre, M. 2011. *Humanitarian Action in Pakistan 2005-2010: Challenges, Principles, and Politics*. http://www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-49/we-dont-trust-that-politicised-assistance-in-north-west-pakistan (last accessed 18 October 2012).

93. Interview with ICRC Head and Deputy Head of Delegation in Islamabad, 11 February 2011.

94. Cosgrave, J., Polastro, R. and Zafar, F. 2010. *Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to Pakistan's 2009 Displacement Crisis,* version 1.95, no. 9, p. 3. http://daraint.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/IARTE_PK_displacement_2010_report.pdf (last accessed 18 October 2012); and Polastro, R. et al. 2011. *Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to Pakistan's 2010 Flood Crisis*. ALNAP: http://www.alnap.org/pool/files/1266.pdf (last accesses 18 October 2012).

Far from undermining humanitarian principles or the protection of crisis-affected people, the experience in Pakistan shows how being practical and relevant – first to needy beneficiaries, then to the Government and donors – enhanced WFP's ability to impartially deliver assistance. This realization even began slowly, to rehabilitate a perception of neutrality around United Nations humanitarian assistance.

Part 2

Balancing pragmatism and principles

A principled approach to humanitarian assistance in Pakistan cannot be implemented independently of the ongoing counter-insurgency effort and reliance on a strong government for coordination, logistical support and security. It would also be naïve to expect much convergence of interests between United Nations agencies and some armed non-state actors in Pakistan, especially those openly attacking soft targets. Humanitarian access and local acceptance in a conflict rely on shared interests: humanitarians offering something useful to parties in conflict.[95] In the absence of that, a perception of neutrality must be created by demonstrating the ability to deliver consistent and impartial assistance to households.

Declaring neutrality or wielding humanitarian principles as an ideal does little to feed hungry people or to change perceptions on the ground. Throughout both the IDP crisis and the flood response, WFP's approach was to respond quickly with the best information available in order to reach needy people – sometimes erring by including too many beneficiaries. Later, operations were adjusted as WFP obtained better information. This built confidence with local partners and in communities. It also allowed WFP to more effectively advocate with the Government and military for operations that better protected crisis-affected people.

This pragmatic approach did little to placate some critics from the Humanitarian Country Team and among donors who argued for a different prioritization of time and resources - a prioritization arguably shaped more by relatively minor shortcomings in the overall response or sometimes unreliable anecdotal reporting. WFP's partnership with government institutions was rarely seen as an opportunity to better reach beneficiaries. More often, it was viewed as an unholy alliance, which contributed to exclusion from assistance and rights violations. Humanitarian Country Team meetings were criticized in the evaluation of the IDP crisis as heavily operational rather than strategic.[96] The experience of WFP staff was quite different:

95. WFP, 2009. "Humanitarian Assistance in Conflict and Complex Emergencies". June 2009 Conference report and background papers.

96. Cosgrave, J., Polastro, R. and Zafar, F. 2010. *Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to Pakistan's 2009 Displacement Crisis*, version 1.95, no. 9, p.25. http://daraint.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/IARTE_PK_displacement_2010_report.pdf (last accessed 18 October 2012).

too many Humanitarian Country Team meetings were occupied with process issues and were neither strategic nor operational. Meetings were dominated by discussions of frameworks, formats, principles and issues of limited importance given Pakistan's massive displacement and need. These meetings provided a forum for considering all the activities and mandates of the humanitarian actors present – whether they affected 10 or 10,000 people, or whether they concerned developmental and transformative issues rather than emergency response. Discussions on operational principles for the IDP response dragged on for months, and when the principles were finally adopted, they added little to the general humanitarian principles already guiding humanitarian actors.

By contrast, coordination meetings led by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) focused on the actual implementation of humanitarian assistance, resulting in the swift resolution of bottlenecks and procedural changes - on registration and targeting gaps, for example - that improved assistance to affected people.

In WFP's operations, issues such as humanitarian access, neutrality and human rights were often better addressed at the field level than at the meeting tables in the capital. In Pakistan, WFP focused on analysing humanitarian dilemmas at the field level. Instead of focusing on any single approach, field staff sought direct means to fulfill WFP's mandate. Too often, humanitarians in Islamabad were inclined to escalate issues to higher levels without attempting to better understand the local background or find practical solutions. For example, when concerns about movement restrictions in Punjab were raised, WFP and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) engaged with district authorities to negotiate access at the field level. Another example was the Sukkur humanitarian staff camp, which was a cause of concern to the local police chief. Again, dialogue to understand the real concern led to an acceptable outcome for the authorities and WFP alike.

In more than a one situation, talking directly to local authorities about the reasons for movement restrictions and understanding their concerns provided quick and sustainable solutions to challenges. It also helped to identify patterns of obstacles that could be raised, and resolved, at higher levels.

A lesson worth stressing is how to ensure a learning approach and open dialogue among stakeholders to seek context-specific solutions. The humanitarian community has a long way to go in learning how to focus on outcomes without getting lost in process and coordination. This shortcoming was reflected in numerous coordination meetings where operational results and efficiency were not prioritized. When coordination of the humanitarian community itself becomes one of the most time-consuming tasks for humanitarian staff (and this is not exclusive to Pakistan) alternatives must be sought. Entrusting the lead agencies of clusters to represent their respective membership at Humanitarian Country Team meetings would limit the number of actors engaged and better focus their efforts.

That said, the cross-cutting clusters (Protection and Early Recovery) still need to establish their relevance to other sectors. For example, one shortcoming of the Protection Cluster in Pakistan was its inability to contextualize protection concerns within the overall scale of the response. Escalating protection issues to the national level can actually stand in the way of their resolution when a field-level response might be the most effective remedy. Integrating protection concerns into the operational clusters —i.e. within those agencies which have the means to take remedial or environment-building action on the ground—may be more effective than a Protection Cluster that attempts to play both an operational and advocacy role.

While the Protection Cluster drew limited praise during the IDP crisis,[97] WFP's experience with the Cluster was not always positive, especially during the flood response. The Cluster appeared unable to weigh the urgency and severity of reported protection threats. For example, attention was raised through the Protection Cluster regarding allegations of minor instances of targeting exclusion (a frequent complaint in large food distributions). This shifted the Humanitarian Country Team's focus away from overcoming delays in the massive humanitarian response. Major flaws included: (i) a hesitancy to recognize the fundamental protective nature of people in need receiving tangible assistance; and (ii) an inability to prioritize among many different sorts of reported protection violations and to focus on those patterns of violation that warranted immediate attention.

The Protection Cluster was also inconsistent in its pursuit of protection issues resulting from the disasters versus the pursuit of a long-term human rights agenda. In Pakistan, where being perceived, rightly or wrongly, as promoting Western ideals can compromise humanitarian space , attempting to overcome structural gender inequalities in the midst of an emergency risked alienating national partners or communities whose collaboration was necessary to deliver lifesaving assistance. In addition, the majority of donors and the Government expressed a preference for more concrete interventions. Within the Pakistan Flood Relief and Early Recovery Response Plan, only 3 out of 48 protection projects were funded. By comparison, 9 of 14 projects food projects were funded and 20 of 52 water and sanitation projects were funded.[98]

The growth of the entire cluster system may have diluted the Protection Cluster's focus during the IDP and flood response. More members, more meetings and more reporting requirements do not necessarily achieve better strategic focus. McLeod and Nadeem argue that cross-cutting issues such as human rights and gender were relatively well-integrated during the 2005 earthquake response (the United Nations' first 'clusterization'), essentially because all major humanitarian actors were in the

97. *Ibid.* The Cluster was commended for promoting and supporting the pilot of vulnerability-based registration.

98. Pakistan National Disaster Management Authority. 2011. A Review of the Pakistan Flood Relief and Early Recover Response Plan up to December 31, 2010.

same room.[99] The view that the cluster system was careening out of control was put forward recently within the IASC, which described the clusters as too complicated and costly, with "too much talking at the expense of action". One recommendation was that clusters should be composed of organizations with the capacity to carry out operational decisions.[101]

A principled humanitarian approach means putting life-saving needs first and, recognizing that meeting those needs opens up space to protect affected people's rights. WFP advocated for: balancing principles; being realistic and remaining consistent with actual needs and available options. In crises of massive scale and rapid onset, protection concerns need to be prioritized – i.e. humanity first, while the fuller list of protection issues can be confronted over time. Guidance documents like the Humanitarian Country Team's Basic Operating Rules for Humanitarian Organizations Working in Pakistan are inadequate as operating tools because they are underpinned by generalities and by the imprecision of principle and ignore field-level realities. For example, the document states that,

> *"While fully committed to the humanitarian imperative, we will consider curtailing and, in extreme cases, suspending our activities if we are unable to operate in accordance with humanitarian principles and the present Basic Operating Rules. In such circumstances the humanitarian community will continue its advocacy efforts and explore alternative humanitarian options."*[102]

Is it realistic to halt life-saving assistance if it is not 100 or 90 or 80 per cent in line with humanitarian principles?[103] How is humanity weighed against neutrality or independence? And how is overall alignment with principles measured?

99. McLeod, A. and Nadeem, A. 2008. Non-interfering coordination: The Key to Pakistan's Successful Relief Effort. Liaison Online 4, (1). Posted at: http://coe-dmha.org/Publications/Liaison/Vol_4No_1/Dept05.htm (last accessed 20 June 2011).

100. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) includes Principals, which are heads of United Nations agencies and invitees from other humanitarian organizations. The Principals meet twice each year and the Emergency Response Coordinator chairs these meetings. For urgent matters, the Principals schedule ad-hoc meetings. More information can be found at: http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-princip-default&mainbodyid-=3&publish=0 (last accessed 11 March 2011).

101. IASC Principals Retreat, 21-22 February 2011. PR/1102/3662.

102. Basic Operating Rules for Humanitarian Organizations working in Pakistan. Approved by the Humanitarian Country Team, Islamabad on 28 April 2009. http://www.pakresponse.info/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=_mBgoeI4dRc%3D&tabid=68&mid=445 (last accessed 12 July 2012).

103. One example was reflected in the 2009 real-time evaluation; Point 8 in the Basic Operating Rules stipulates that signatories "…will not make contributions in cash or in kind to any parties or actors". This excludes all signatories from paying taxes to the Government (a party to the conflict), illustrating the difficulty maintaining a neutral stance in such a context. See: Cosgrave, J., Polastro, R. and Zafar, F. 2010: *Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to Pakistan's 2009 Displacement Crisis*, Version 1.95, No.9. http://daraint.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/IARTE_PK_displacement_2010_report.pdf (last accessed 18 October 2012).

In both the IDP and flood responses in Pakistan, WFP focused on practicality, on prioritization "choosing its battles" strategically, and not elevating every challenge into a demarche with the authorities or a distracting debate on principles. Instead, it focused on finding operational solutions to ensure consistent delivery of life-saving assistance. This built credibility with decision makers in the Government, with the military and donors. For example, when the Government halted registration of new IDPs in autumn 2009 because its budget for cash compensation packages was exhausted, WFP successfully argued for the de-linking of IDP registration and the Government's poor cash position; new IDPs continued to be registered and therefore eligible for the same rights and assistance as previously displaced people. This shift revealed that the Government was not – as suggested by some in the humanitarian community - systematically excluding certain IDPs for political reasons. As argued in a recent review by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "You don't come in and pronounce a humanitarian space; you deliver and earn the space. It cannot be based on rhetorical principles; it has to be based on consistent delivery".[104]

Lengthy debates around principled humanitarian action were time consuming and did little to facilitate a more efficient or principled response. Nonetheless, they highlighted divides among agencies, governments and donors. The August 2010 offer by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) of a humanitarian air-bridge during the flood response highlighted legitimate disagreements on principles (the strong preference for non-use of military assets by the more purist humanitarian agencies, versus differing interpretations of "last resort" among other agencies) as well as the futility of engaging in theoretical debates independent of facts on the ground. By this stage, both Pakistani and United States military aircraft (some pulled from the Afghanistan theatre) had been providing humanitarian support.

With humanitarian assistance already delivered by non-neutral military actors in flood- and conflict-affected areas, how would civilian-chartered aircrafts financed by NATO further erode principles? In fact, WFP and UNDSS in Pakistan agreed that an inadequate relief response would be a larger threat to humanitarians' security than NATO affiliation. Extremist statements had already warned that foreigners roaming around in Pakistan without delivering actual assistance would not be tolerated.

Mitigating and Responding to Protection Threats with Operational Choices

WFP's approach to protection in the IDP and flood responses was to focus on saving lives and livelihoods in ways that safeguarded affected peoples' safety and dignity. The measures described below may not be recognizable as protection activities, but they arguably protected beneficiaries' well-being better than some other actors' specialized protection work and advocacy.

104. OCHA. 2011. *To Stay and Deliver. Good Practice for Humanitarians in Complex Security Environments*. New York, OCHA Policy and Studies Series, p. 19.

Christopher Stokes of *Médecins sans frontières* (MSF; Doctors without Borders) points to the risk of humanitarians losing independence, noting that:

> *"…in natural disasters it may be unavoidable for the United Nations and aid organizations to use military assets in order to reach those in need. However, in a region as tense as Pakistan and with the increased military campaigns in the country's Northwest over the past year, aid agencies must remain independent. Use of the same helicopter engaged in military activity one day and the distribution of aid the next day can associate aid with one side of a conflict and make it a target for the other side."* [105]

While this approach may be ideal for financially independent or smaller NGOs that can select their areas of intervention, compromise is sometimes necessary for United Nations agencies, which are answerable to all member states of the UN. Furthermore, an agency like WFP is mandated within the international humanitarian community to deliver, when required, large-scale life-saving food assistance as a reliable part of a comprehensive disaster response. Opting out or selectively delivering assistance in large disasters is rarely feasible. By the end of January 2011, MSF's medical teams had provided 106,600 health consultations to victims of the floods[106] whereas WFP delivered food assistance to 7 million people at the peak of the floods. This is not to argue that one intervention is more important than another, but simply that the vast scale of what is expected from an agency like WFP informs the debate about meeting the humanitarian imperative versus upholding humanitarian principles.

Contrary to expectations, working with Pakistan's Government and military — including in conflict-affected areas—opened up channels for advocacy that in some cases enlarged humanitarian space, resolving errors in targeting, which had been cited by some in the international community as proof that aid had been politicized. More surprising were the inroads WFP and its partners made in areas that had been hostile to outsiders prior to receiving food assistance. In Khyber Pakhtunkwa and FATA, local and international NGOs had been struggling for years with perceptions that they delivered little that was tangible and promoted a liberal agenda, including a focus on human rights, women's rights and reproductive health issues. But NGO staff reported that delivery of WFP-supplied food, which was sorely needed by the communities, began to shift that perception and created a climate of acceptance. This was true even though the food was branded with United States and other western donor markings.[107] The provision of life-saving assistance subsequently opened up space for the NGOs to initiate a more holistic, participatory, and protective relief response, including mother-and-child health services.

105. Stokes, C. 2011. Drowning Humanitarian Aid. Foreign Policy. 27 October 2010.

106. MSF. 2011. Pakistan – Six Months after the Floods: Medical Care. http://www.msf.org/msf/articles/2011/02/pakistan---six-months-after-the-floods-medical-care.cfm (last accessed 12 July 2012).05. One example was reflected in the 2009 real-time evaluation; Point 8 in the Basic Operating Rules stipulates that signatories "…will not make contributions in cash or in kind to any parties or actors".

107. Focus group discussion with NGO implementing partners in Peshawar, 10 February 2011.

Targeting and registration to address protection gaps

Exclusion from critical humanitarian assistance because of official policies, unofficial discrimination or extortion may be the most pervasive protection threat faced by crisis-affected populations. Addressing that exclusion can bring real protective benefits to vulnerable people.

WFP, like all humanitarian agencies, strives for needs-based assistance but acknowledges that needs-based targeting can be incompatible with life-saving emergency response. For example, the inter-agency IDP vulnerability and profiling exercise initiated in June 2010 took several months and was ultimately unsuccessful in establishing a widely accepted needs classification; the full report was not released until July 2011. Targeting at the initial stages of a response often requires a blunt choice between inclusion or exclusion errors since household surveys are too time consuming or impossible in complex emergencies.

In Pakistan, allegations of manipulated targeting and registration during both the IDP and the flood crises were widespread. These allegations were partly fueled by the inherent difficulty of targeting in a large, time-sensitive operation. That said, the injection of resources into such areas inevitably affects power structures, and some actors will seek their own best interests. During 2009 and 2010, Pakistani authorities and UNHCR refined the process of registering families for food assistance and other humanitarian relief. WFP strived to target food assistance impartially to those most in need. Registers were verified against Pakistan's National Database and Registration Agency (NADRA), which facilitated verification and prevented duplication errors.[108] While not all needy families possessed NADRA-issued cards, intensive efforts – including through mobile NADRA units – filled the gap. But targeting errors —some the result of political interference— were inevitable.

What actions are most effective in guarding against and correcting those errors? What actors are best placed to enact or advocate for those actions? From WFP's perspective, repeated assessments, food-market monitoring, an effective beneficiary feedback mechanism and engagement with the Government proved effective. WFP also benefited from the credibility and leverage that comes with its ability to deliver on a large scale.

During the 2010 flood response, there were reports that some local authorities aligned distribution lists with electoral lists. WFP's feedback hotline, established to increase its accountability towards affected populations, quickly detected such cases, giving voice to excluded people. The real-time evaluations confirmed the challenges faced by humanitarian actors in applying an independent needs-based response, while also noting that the government had largely met its obligations towards IDPs.

108. Polastro, R. et al. 2011. *Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to Pakistan's 2010 Flood Crisis*. ALNAP: http://www.alnap.org/pool/files/1266.pdf (last accesses 18 October 2012).

Targeting of conflict IDPs in the Swat Valley

Targeting for IDP assistance in the Swat Valley during the 2009 military offensive was based on geographic labeling of 'notified areas'[109] by the military. A debate revolved around whether the boundaries were accurate and whether relief to people within those boundaries should be limited. In addition, questions were raised about whether or not targeting could rely on national identity cards issued by NADRA.[110]

During that time, more than 2 million people had sought refuge over several weeks, moving south to Mardan and Swabi Districts, and to the Peshawar valley. Nearly 90 percent remained in host communities, which challenged accurate registration and targeting. Whereas humanitarian agencies could deliver swift relief to IDPs in camps, the majority of IDPs outside camps were excluded. Instead, off-camp IDPs were assisted by local communities and local governments, which provided shelter, water and sanitation. This local assistance was complemented by WFP's network of humanitarian hubs, which provided essential food items. The hubs were also used to provide shelter and non-food items.

WFP's assistance to off-camp IDPs relied on rapid targeting by local officials and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province's Social Welfare Department. After one month, the initial registration was checked against national identity cards, leading to a 30 percent elimination of duplications. At the same time, the Government activated mobile NADRA registration facilities to issue new national identity cards. A subsequent inter-agency assessment found that 93 percent of registered IDPs who were hosted by local families had been registered and had received food assistance at least once.[111]

However, massive exclusion errors did occur with organizations that refused to work with the Government or to accept national identity cards for targeting because of neutrality concerns; this meant that they were unable to identify off-camp IDPs. Some of these humanitarian actors subsequently cited pockets of targeting exclusion as justification for their refusal to work with national authorities. As a result of their inflexibility on principles, these actors lost sight of the bigger picture: 90 percent of all conflict-affected IDPs were located off-camp, and flexibility was required in order to reach them.

109. Notified areas were locations where the military notified the population that it would conduct operations and encouraged people to evacuate.

110. The National Database and Registry Authority (NADRA) issues a Computerized National Identity Card to every Pakistani citizen above 18 years of age. For more information, see: http://www.nadra.gov.pk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6&Itemid=9 (last accessed 12 July 2012).111. Focus group discussion with NGO implementing partners in Peshawar, 10 February 2011.

111. Multi-cluster Rapid Assessment Mechanism (McRAM). 2009. Assessment of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) from Conflict-Affected Areas of NWFP, Pakistan. p.32. Rome, WFP. Posted at: http://docustore.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp208647.pdf (last accessed 12 July 2012).

The humanitarian hubs were suitable venues for inter-agency assistance, but some agencies showed neither flexibility nor imagination in reaching off-camp IDPs. Instead, they expended energy on uncovering pockets of exclusion (in part to justify their principled stance). This prompted time-consuming debates, which were dwarfed by the massive exclusion errors caused by 'principled' agencies' refusal to use the best available targeting mechanism.

Targeting conflict-affected people in FATA

Delivering assistance to IDPs in FATA was more complex. While the vast majority of people threatened by Government fighting moved out of counter-insurgency 'notified areas', others stayed in FATA or fled to other insecure areas. Inter-tribal fighting further impeded the delivery of assistance. In addition, only 70 percent of the FATA population held national identity cards.

Some observers alleged that authorities were distinguishing between 'good' and 'bad' beneficiaries, and declining to designate areas perceived to be sympathetic towards insurgents as 'notified'.[112] Groups at greatest risk of exclusion included women, who were less likely to possess national identity cards than men, and those who had already fled the Taliban before the crisis.[113]

WFP neither fully embraced nor rejected government-led targeting. Independent of the official notification criteria, WFP and its partners gathered information from local communities in order to draw a more complete picture. Because WFP staff understood the Government's targeting system and because WFP did not repudiate the system, WFP was able to work with the Government to broaden assistance beyond 'notified areas' and to offer assistance to those without national identity cards.

Ensuring that people inside 'notified areas' received assistance remained a challenge, with little access for monitoring and inadequate information on tribal tensions. Only a few organizations were able to deliver for a limited time behind the lines. The Government also set up hubs within 25 km of 'notified areas' to further broaden assistance, but support to these hubs was limited because of their proximity to conflict areas. A WFP assessment estimated that less than 5 percent of the population that remained within FATA received food assistance while one third of the population of Malakand Division (IDPs and host communities) received support.[114]

112. Interview with ICRC Islamabad, 11 February 2001. See also Stokes, C. 2011: Drowning Humanitarian Aid. *Foreign Policy*. 27 October 2010.

113. Cosgrave, J., Polastro, R. and Zafar, F. 2010. *Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to Pakistan's 2009 Displacement Crisis,* Version 1.95, No.9. p. 45. http://daraint.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/IARTE_PK_displacement_2010_report.pdf (last accessed 18 October 2012).

114. WFP. 2010. "Food Security and Market Assessment in Crisis Areas of NWFP and FATA, Pakistan". p. 50.

Under these difficult circumstances, the Government, with the support of UNHCR and the KPK Social Welfare Department, made massive efforts to improve targeting in FATA. The Government's Benazir Income Support Programme, which provided monthly financial stipends to the senior woman in households was a powerful vehicle for registering women beneficiaries. The mobile NADRA registration facilities enabled the distribution of identity cards since they were a pre-condition for receiving a cash compensation package from the Government.

During the flood response, registration and targeting adjustments resulted in the correction of significant exclusion errors. Even so, members of the Protection Cluster were still complaining months later about WFP's rumored collusion with the Government in denying assistance.[115] As in most major natural disasters, targeting began with broad geographical coverage and was refined as more accurate data were gathered. Within affected villages, WFP's partners identified the most severely affected families using verifiable indicators such as destroyed houses or displacement. Any displaced person could register with WFP's implementing partners and receive a ration card. Once identities were confirmed by community leaders, those without a national identity card were issued a 'yellow slip' entitling them to a ration card with a unique verification number.

In the midst of the massive emergency response, mistakes were made, but solid data and an understanding of the mechanics and logistics of the food distributions had to drive programming decisions. In one emblematic incident in Sindh, WFP received reports from the Protection Cluster about a handful of widows being excluded from assistance. A time-consuming investigation by WFP staff revealed the incident to be a case of attempted fraudulent registration.[116]

In many cases, the technical agency working to provide assistance was better placed than protection observers to identify and respond to protection gaps. Technology was also helping WFP to improve: in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, all distribution points used an online verification system, which also allowed eligible beneficiaries to choose their most convenient distribution point.

Humanitarian hubs for more safe and dignified assistance

Faced by the challenge of responding to the IDP crisis and the flood response, WFP established humanitarian hubs. Initially conceived to improve logistics, the hubs demonstrated how operational decisions can ensure greater protective space for crisis-affected people. Community elders and local experts were consulted about where to locate the hubs and how to organize them. Given the counter-insurgency and inter-tribal tensions, it was important to identify safe and neutral spaces.

115. Protection Cluster meeting, Peshawar, February 2011. Some members of the Cluster insisted that targeting had been limited to those issued NADRA identity cards, a view refuted by members who were also involved in food distribution.

116. Interview with WFP staff member in Sindh, 5 February 2011.

At these hubs, IDPs could register and receive a 100 kg family food ration. The hubs also provided a platform for the distribution of non-food items and for directing IDPs to shelter within surrounding communities. At the peak of the IDP response in 2009, there were 50 humanitarian hubs accommodating up to 500 beneficiaries each time. In total, these hubs provided more than two million IDPs access to food within three weeks of their arrival.[117] In the absence of established camps (90 percent of IDPs were in host communities), the hubs became full-service protected areas where many of their needs could be met.

As with all IDP gathering spots, there was a risk that intelligence agents could use these hubs to arrest suspected insurgent sympathizers; however, no incidents were reported. WFP staff continuously advocated with authorities to avoid politicization of the humanitarian hubs.

Most humanitarian hubs were dismantled as the fighting abated and IDPs returned to their areas of origin. However, WFP's experience made it easier to replicate the hubs during the flood response.

Safe and dignified distributions

Security risks and restrictions posed an ongoing challenge during the IDP crisis response, some of which were mirrored during the flood operations. Staff at WFP's Peshawar office, which covered all conflict-affected areas, learned early on about the difficulty of finding suitable sites for humanitarian hubs. In some cases, the search was entrusted to a retired WFP logistics assistant – a Pakistani national with a thorough knowledge of WFP, its implementing partners, local communities and their elders. Analysis of local dynamics allowed WFP to avoid placing humanitarian hubs in contested spaces (a protection risk to beneficiaries) and to quickly respond to protection risks.

The 'first come-first-served' principle of distribution is often the default practice in the early days of a response, but in most cases, later adjustments are made to maintain beneficiaries' safety and dignity without sacrificing efficiency. Fostering protection-sensitive thinking – in WFP's case, valuing beneficiaries' safety and dignity while providing food assistance – usually results in giving vulnerable groups such as elderly people, women, children, sick and disabled people priority at food distributions. During the 2009 IDP response for example, separate areas for women, shaded seating areas, latrines, water points and complaint mechanisms were implemented with support from UNHCR and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

117. Cosgrave, J., Polastro, R. and Zafar, F. 2010. *Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to Pakistan's 2009 Displacement Crisis*, Version 1.95, No.9. p. 21. http://daraint.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/IARTE_PK_displacement_2010_report.pdf (last accessed 18 October 2012).

Of course, it is rarely possible to completely reverse centuries of engrained discrimination in the context of emergency distributions. In some places, WFP's cooperating partners were inadequately equipped to reverse neglect and discrimination against marginalized groups. 'Hovering air drops' and other improvised distributions designed to reach stranded populations in flooded areas could not guarantee access by women, elderly and disabled people (although WFP's partners and local volunteers made heroic efforts). In addition, many temporary staff, although badly needed, were not familiar with the operating environment or lacked experience in beneficiary protection. Thus, they may have missed opportunities to address these risks.

Staff involved in relief assistance were often required to allocate their time between life-saving activities and attending coordination meetings. While coordinating efforts are necessary, it was also important to have the right staff members to enable engagement with other sectors. According to the Protection Cluster coordinator in Islamabad, WFP's deployment of temporary emergency staff with a protection background made a positive difference in communication between WFP and protection-mandated agencies.[118]

In Pakistan after the floods, WFP benefited from standby partner deployees, with experience with protection-related emergencies. Although these staff were deployed for food security or logistics purposes, their familiarity with humanitarian protection community and language provided the Protection Cluster with greater insight into WFP operations. In recognition, the country office subsequently made efforts to improve inter-cluster and inter-agency engagement, including by engaging a full-time protection advisor.

Accountability to beneficiaries: Complaints and feedback desk

Learning from its experience in Pakistan's emergencies, WFP developed a more efficient complaints and feedback mechanism to better respond to beneficiary concerns. WFP's confidential complaints and feedback desk, established in Islamabad in December 2010, was advertised through posters at all distribution points across the country. The mechanism included a telephone number, email and postal address where beneficiaries could register their concerns. Operational concerns, such as exclusion from assistance or incomplete food rations, were referred to the relevant WFP office, which was required to provide a response to the country office for follow-up within ten days. All accusations of misappropriation or misconduct were investigated by a team of security and programme officers from outside the province.

Statistics revealed that the mechanism's accessibility and trustworthiness allowed beneficiaries to effectively communicate their concerns with WFP. But they also

118. Interview with the Pakistan Protection Cluster Coordinator, UNHCR Islamabad, 9 February 2011.

highlighted that most users of the service were men since Pakistani women may be hesitant to call when not certain of the operator's gender. As a result, WFP adapted its information materials to include messages reassuring women beneficiaries that they could reach a woman operator. This mechanism ensured WFP's accountability to beneficiaries by: incorporating beneficiaries' feedback on its assistance; providing a venue for reporting abuse or misuse of WFP food assistance; and assessing the performance of WFP's implementing partners.

Acting upon protection-related concerns

With no legal protection mandate, WFP sometimes struggles to balance the need for access to beneficiaries with an ethical obligation to report protection and rights violations. In such cases, it is crucial to identify protection concerns, to communicate them to partners and to help build on each partner's strengths to find solutions. This partly involves raising staff and partners' awareness of protection issues and collaborating on follow-up actions.
Judging how to address protection concerns is not always easy and often involves relying on national authorities and the United Nations Country Team. In Northwest Pakistan for example, WFP communicated protection concerns to local authorities through the Provincial Disaster Management Authority and the Social Welfare and Women Development Directorate. Others were raised in meetings of the Food Security Cluster, the Camp Coordination Cluster and the Government-led Emergency Response Unit. These issues included: NADRA's unresponsiveness to IDP grievances; the absence of social welfare staff at humanitarian hubs; beatings and thrashings at distribution hubs, which involved a cooperating partner; exclusion of vulnerable groups from humanitarian assistance; inadequate water and electric facilities; discrepancies in databases; registration issues; and security at humanitarian hubs.

Reinforcing staff security and beneficiary protection

The scale of the emergency in Pakistan – caused by the conflict and flood – required a thorough security approach. In October 2009, WFP faced a suicide attack on its Islamabad office in which five staff members lost their lives. This incident led to reflection on the tough choices between delivering assistance and maintaining security; the most difficult decision was whether to remain in Pakistan. This gross violation of WFP's office, in which staff members paid the ultimate price, provoked fundamental questions about the costs of maintaining WFP's presence.

Although subsequent investigations suggested that WFP had been among a number of potential targets, WFP's links to the Government (and likely also counter-insurgency allies such as the United States), along with the visibility of its operations made WFP a legitimate target. Could steps be taken to reinforce the perception of WFP as an independent and neutral provider of humanitarian assistance? Would this have any effect on extremists opposed to the Government

and the United Nations? What combination of soft and hard security measures could be adopted to minimize the risks to WFP staff while fulfilling its humanitarian mandate?

The first step was to enhance security at WFP's offices and international staff living quarters. But while strict security measures are necessary, WFP also recognized the need to develop an equally powerful security asset: the trust of local communities built through WFP's continued presence in Pakistan since 1968. Working with WFP's security team and UNDSS, the country office built its security strategy around staying to deliver instead of determining when and how to leave. An important component of this strategy —and one that contributed to the protection needs of beneficiaries as well as the security of staff—was increased engagement with local communities.

Security around humanitarian hubs was of primary concern. Masses of people gathered for relief distributions were potential targets for insurgents. (In December 2010, a suicide bomber targeted the area in Bajaur where one of WFP's hubs was located.) Investigations revealed that an ethnic group present at the distribution site – not WFP – was the target, but the incident underscored the importance of thorough context analysis in security planning. WFP subsequently invested many resources into the safety of humanitarian hubs. Alternatives to food assistance were also explored, including the provision of cash.

Cash distributed through banks allows beneficiaries to choose the time and place where they can claim their entitlement, avoiding a concentration of beneficiaries at any one time. This solution was adopted in a few cases where food markets functioned well and there was an adequate banking infrastructure. In addition, transport was provided for vulnerable cash recipients to safely access the bank. WFP also considered using mobile hubs that would lower the number of beneficiaries at each distribution point. However, this option was not found to reduce risk since a greater number of distribution points required more complex security arrangements and were not sufficiently suitable in terms of "neutrality".

In this volatile security environment, WFP developed a number of measures to move beyond a 'bunkerized' security approach. In addition to the political and context analysis conducted by UNDSS, WFP security officers analysed data on the security of offices, hubs, warehouses and transport routes. In order to ensure that distribution points were safe and took into account dignity of beneficiaries. a programme officer was placed within the Security Unit. In addition, field appraisal and monitoring missions frequently combined programme, logistics and security officers. Staff and partners were trained in the enabling model for safe distributions, which has become standard practice. Finally, efforts were made to build a network of contacts that can provide information on security conditions, perceptions of WFP and changing local conditions. This security approach is still being refined, but is beginning to yield good practices in balancing staff security with better protection outcomes for beneficiaries.

Part 3

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated several lessons from WFP's experiences in Pakistan's IDP and flood emergencies. On the positive side, the delivery of life-saving assistance to crisis-affected populations itself opens protective space. Protection issues are often best addressed through dialogue and operational decisions on the ground, near areas where beneficiaries' protection is threatened. In addition, humanitarian assistance is inevitably political, and diplomacy with parties to a conflict – including advocacy to change behavior – is only possible for credible actors. Without the Government's full partnership in both the IDP and flood responses, the humanitarian response would have been arguably weaker.

On a less positive note, the rhetoric and entrenched positions of some humanitarians can lead to losing perspective on how to achieve humanitarian outcomes. Humanitarian ideology can inspire and guide responses, but pragmatism and compromise are a requisite of every operation – especially for those agencies acting as 'providers of last resort'. Finally, seeking a transformative human rights agenda in the midst of an emergency response is less helpful than being modest but persistent in contributing to beneficiaries' protection.

Weighing these messages, balancing between humanitarian dilemmas and compromising based on information from the field is the essence of a principled approach. Finding practical strategies and tools to better achieve the humanitarian ideal is a continuous task, and this chapter has advanced some good practices acquired during a challenging few years for the Pakistani people.

Chapter 4

Food, political power and protection in Darfur

Liam Mahony

At the outbreak of the 2003 Darfur crisis, the entire humanitarian community was operating in dangerous security conditions. Along with the absence of infrastructure, this made distribution of relief assistance very difficult. The magnitude of the crisis challenged the resources and expertise of even the largest operations. Many protection risks associated with operations in Darfur were related to the need for greater investment in political and sociological analysis as humanitarian agencies moved quickly to respond.

Based on a 2005 field mission report,[119] this chapter provides valuable insights into one of the most difficult questions facing the protection community: what is the trade-off between moving quickly to save lives and investing in necessary measures to protect beneficiaries? Adopting a 'protection lens' requires WFP to acknowledge the indispensability of political and sociological analysis, and invest resources in more informed decision making.

The lessons learned in the chapter are based on the first two years of WFP's response to the Darfur crisis; since then, the crisis has changed significantly. Although these lessons stem from an analysis at a particular point in time, they are relevant to humanitarian actors in general.

After a brief summary of the political context at the time of the case study, the chapter outlines the impact of WFP's operations on protection using the 'concentric circles' model presented in the introductory chapter of the book. First, it analyses the protection dynamics directly associated with WFP's operations. Second, it discusses the broader impact that WFP can have on protection needs in Darfur. Questions include: How does WFP contribute to the international community's immediate preventive response and use its presence to mitigate the violence that causes displacement and hunger? How does WFP's intervention contribute to the long-term goals of reconciliation, rebuilding communities, and achieving sustainable food security?

119. This chapter was initially drafted following a field mission to Darfur in September and October 2005. The research team included Sarah Laughton, WFP; Mark Vincent, OCHA Internal Displacement Division; and Liam Mahony, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. The team carried out more than 60 interviews in Khartoum and Darfur. Respondents included WFP staff, representatives of other United Nations agencies, NGOs and community members. The research team gratefully acknowledges the assistance of WFP staff in Rome, Khartoum, El Fasher, Nyala and Ed Daein, and the frank and honest participation of other respondents.

In 2005, WFP was implementing a rapid, large-scale response to the Darfur crisis in a manner that ensured the safety of beneficiaries and staff; it had no mandated protection role. This chapter is therefore not intended as an evaluation of protection-sensitive operations. The findings from the field mission suggested that WFP's operations in Sudan had both positive and negative implications for the protection of local communities. This should not be read as a negative 'report card' for WFP, but as indicative of a learning process. The information is important for understanding the impacts of WFP's interventions in a major emergency ¬– especially in areas where protection is a major factor in food insecurity. WFP is challenged to increase its influence on protection within the context of its mandate.

I. Darfur in 2005: Conflict, humanitarian responses and local coping strategies

Since the war's escalation in 2003 and 2004, the situation in Darfur has attracted considerable attention from researchers.[120] The region has suffered from political and economic exclusion within Sudan, extreme poverty and environmental decline, including recurrent droughts. The region's multi-ethnic social fabric includes mostly African farming populations and mostly Arab nomadic pastoral populations. These groups include numerous tribes, each with its own social structure. Islam is the major religion in Darfur, with a small population of Christian IDPs from South Sudan. This mosaic of peoples coexisted for centuries, with tensions between pastoral and farming communities resolved through tribal or political mechanisms.

In recent decades, these conflicts have been exacerbated by growing Arab nationalism in the country, and supported by Arab nationalist currents in neighbouring countries such as Libya. The 1990s saw a steady increase in weapons in the region and attacks by armed Arab militias against African communities. Since long before the current war, these militias had links with the Khartoum Government and acted with impunity.[121]

In the late 1990s, military resistance movements formed among various African tribes, eventually combining to form the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA). The Government responded with a counter-insurgency strategy that took advantage of the growing Arab militia movement. The escalation of violence in 2003 and 2004 was a product of the mutually reinforcing strategies of Arab nationalists and the military counter-insurgency. The war was a classic paramilitary scorched-earth campaign, which destroyed villages, caused massive civilian fatalities and precipitated a crisis of internal displacement.

120. For a historical analysis of the roots of the conflict, see Flint, J. & De Waal, A. 2008. *Darfur: A Short History of a Long War*. New York, Social Science Research Council.

121. *Ibid.*

By early 2004, the international community was struggling to respond to the unfolding crisis, which involved profound risks of famine and disease. The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland labelled it as "one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world."[122] The crude mortality rate of one death per 10,000 people per day (used to define humanitarian crises) was exceeded in West Darfur, where there were as many as 2.9 deaths per 10,000 per day.[123] In addition, access to Darfur was difficult for humanitarian agencies. Many credited the United Nations with opening Darfur to the humanitarian community, following a call for attention to the situation.

The civilian population in Darfur faced a wide range of protection threats. Rural communities were impacted by murders, the burning of villages and rising banditry by Arab militias. The population in SLA-controlled areas was trapped by a Government cordon. This patchwork of government- and guerrilla-controlled territory constantly shifted, disrupting the movement of people and destroying commercial activity.

IDPs were often trapped in their camps or host villages, with frequent reports of beatings of men and rapes of women who left the camps. A July 2005 report by OHCHR[124] documented the systematic abuse of IDP women by Arab militias, the Sudanese army and police. In many camps, IDPs believed they were under surveillance by Government spies, and were fearful of public meetings. The majority of the victims were African, but some Arab villages were also displaced by violence and banditry.

By early 2005, the situation in the largest IDP camps had been stabilized. The ICRC and MSF were among the few organizations serving rural communities outside these camps. In spring of 2005, WFP joined them in a massive expansion of assistance to the rural population. The African Union was mandated to install a peacekeeping presence, access problems in rural areas diminished and peace talks began.

Local communities confronted by violence employed a number of coping strategies. In some cases, small communities merged for mutual support and self-defence. African and Arab traditional chiefs were mobilized to exert influence on the peace process. In some IDP camps, sheikhs banded together to report attacks to the police and demand action. Women facing the risk of rape when collecting fuelwood outside camps travelled in groups or older women were sent to collect wood since they faced less risk of rape. In addition, several civil society organizations were active in Darfur, including humanitarian groups and at least one legal-aid organization, which assisted people who were illegally detained.

122. OCHA. 2007. *Sudan – Darfur: Humanitarian Profile*. New York.

123. WHO. 2004. Survey Concludes Deaths in Darfur Exceed the Emergency Threshold. www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2004/pr63/en/index.html (last accessed 31 May 2012).

124. OHCHR. 2005. *Access to Justice for Victims of Sexual Violence*, 29 July 2005. Geneva.

The humanitarian response

The opening of Darfur to the humanitarian community is often attributed to the role of the United Nations in calling attention to the situation.[125] Most humanitarian actors did not enter Darfur until after 2003, and focused on the displacement crisis. By late 2005, there were approximately 1,000 international humanitarian staff in Darfur, and 13,000 humanitarian workers in Sudan. Efforts were concentrated around the three major cities of El Fasher, Nyala and Geneina, and in nearby IDP camps.

WFP and other organizations expressed concern that selective targeting risked ignoring the majority of vulnerable people, who had stayed in rural areas. However, security uncertainties in 2004 hindered humanitarian access to rural communities. The prioritization of IDP camps was a result of funding earmarked for camps amid claims that Darfur's rural areas had been emptied.

For WFP, logistics and supply constraints made it difficult to reach small pockets of people in need; this left the rural population in a precarious situation. It also created a perception of bias towards one side of an ethnic conflict. This perceived bias has continued to haunt the humanitarian community ever since.

The humanitarian environment at that time was characterized by violence, tension and uncertainty. Workers were often victims of government harassment and were denied access to rebel-controlled territory. Many humanitarian agencies had protection officers or protection focal points, who applied a protection lens to their agencies' operations. Another major component of protection in Darfur was the protection working groups in each of the three major cities. These groups aimed to share information and conduct analysis of the situation. OCHA coordinated these working groups and developed a database of protection incidents. The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) and OHCHR ensured the presence of 50 human rights observers in Darfur.

II. Capacity to anticipate effects while moving quickly to save lives

Drawing on WFP's 'concentric circles' model presented in Chapter 1, this section discusses the protection issues most directly associated with WFP's operations. They comprise the inner circle of WFP's protective action, and relate to the organization's primary protection objective: saving people from dying of hunger and preventing famine. This objective was met in Darfur owing to WFP's capacity to move massive amounts of resources quickly. Although WFP had implemented drought-related operations in Darfur before, the 2003 crisis unfolded quickly. WFP

125. Bonino, E. 2004. *Darfur's Agony is World's Shame.* Brussels, International Crisis Group.

launched a rapid, large-scale response for IDPs in 2003, and expanded it to the rural population in early 2005; this became the largest component of the international-relief effort in rural areas.

The expansion was based on a detailed assessment, which resulted in rural communities' emergence from isolation and demonstrated the humanitarian community's commitment to serving all needy people, regardless of ethnicity. But while the expansion was timely in ensuring food security, it came too late to meet broader protection needs. The rural communities had already suffered greatly in isolation, and Arab nomadic communities' perceptions of humanitarian bias were already entrenched.

There were also risks associated with moving quickly. For example, there was a lack of capacity to analyse the structure of beneficiary communities and to anticipate the impacts of humanitarian action. Some camps lacked clear management arrangements, and WFP could not undertake the necessary analysis of how IDP communities were organized.[126] Therefore, it could not ensure that its distribution mechanisms would not damage the social fabric of already traumatized communities. WFP instead assumed an active role in promoting competent camp management and expanded its community networking efforts.

Many rural areas were under SLA control, and neither WFP nor its partners could prevent food assistance from being politicized by SLA. Some cautioned that WFP operations were vulnerable to SLA infiltration and warned that humanitarians' lenient reaction to SLA criminal acts such as car theft encouraged SLA dominance in the region.[127]

Moving quickly requires investments in analysis to anticipate the effects of assistance and ensure that humanitarians do no harm. Similar challenges are faced in all large emergency operations and – as demonstrated in Sudan – require significant attention.

Food and political power

By late 2005, WFP was the largest economic actor in Darfur, and its resources represented the dominant commodity. Economic power is often linked to political power, and manipulation of resources such as food assistance is often triggered by conflicts. Although there was some 'taxation' of food and manipulation to maximize the amount of food distributed, researchers found no evidence of systematic looting.

126. For example, ICRC reported that it was able to avert many problems in its camps by replicating villages of origin in order to maintain existing social structures.

127. There was another security risk associated with the passive approach to SLA's systematic car-jacking. Since SLA used the vehicles for military purposes, the humanitarian community risked being perceived by the Sudanese military as a source of rebel military equipment. WFP later issued a public denunciation of vehicle theft in the region.

However, the danger inherent in this massive infusion of economic activity was much larger than looting. Influxes of resources change power relationships within communities, altering leadership patterns, contributing to corruption and increasing the power of those who control the resources. They also lead to changes in economic behaviour and livelihoods, with long-term implications. In addition, rapid resource shifts can have military and political implications.

In Darfur, there was no quantitative analysis of the impact of food aid on power relations. However, it was indicated to the research team that SLA's economic sustenance could have been partly drawn from the food resources being introduced into its territory while the Government used promises of WFP food to manipulate IDP returns.

Both the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations would benefit from an in-depth assessment of this political impact. Investing in information gathering and analytical resources to mitigate these unintended consequences is fundamental in enhancing beneficiary protection in complex humanitarian interventions.[128]

Despite these setbacks, WFP's intervention met its primary objective of saving lives and led to other positive outcomes after many years of conflict-induced shocks. The humanitarian community's massive, rapid response in Darfur proved effective. However, without a stronger commitment to information gathering, networking and political analysis, humanitarian agencies' commendable efforts in the region may not be sustainable.

III. Protection from exclusion: Registration and distribution

Humanitarian principles imply a commitment to ensuring that all needy individuals are included in the processes of registration and targeting. In a large-scale humanitarian disaster, this constitutes a significant challenge. In Darfur, there were many concerns related to new arrivals' exclusion from food assistance as a result of difficulties with the massive registration. In many camps, new arrivals were not registered or did not receive rations.

In addition to the lack of camp management structures for rigorous documentation, WFP's implementing partners needed more capacity to monitor changes within camps and the movement of people between camps and communities. This inadequate understanding regarding beneficiary dynamics resulted in the exclusion of needy people.

128. WFP was engaged in analysis related to its operations, but the political and economic analysis required to address this problem was not included in any WFP emergency operation. WFP's network of field-based staff represents an exceptional resource for assisting in such analyses.

Trust, community relationships and 'cheating'

As in many emergency operations, some 'cheating' was observed in the form of manipulation, false or double identities, duplicating ration cards and extortion; people in leadership roles are often in the best position to exercise this kind of manipulation. As a result, many humanitarian workers in Darfur became disillusioned. An experienced NGO worker who had watched this attitude develop over time shared the comment of other humanitarian staff: "We should just apply Shar'ia law to these sheikhs!" He added that humanitarians must be held to a strict code of conduct to discourage such prejudicial statements.

At times, actions to prevent cheating obstructed the goal of ensuring that no vulnerable people were excluded. Humanitarian workers' criticisms stemmed from a concern that widespread distrust of village sheikhs led to the exclusion of needy people. Sheikhs truthfully reporting the needs of new arrivals were sometimes not believed because cheating and manipulation by other sheikhs had created widespread suspicion surrounding all such reports.

Faced with cheating, some humanitarian actors attempted to bypass the established system of leadership, undermining existing power structures. Humanitarian agencies often sought to create alternative systems of decision making in order to avoid the sheikhs. These practices undermined the traditional social system while failing to offer a viable alternative. In addition, weakening community social structures also diminishes people's capacity to cope with threats. Avoiding a reliance on existing power structures for beneficiary registration can have a negative impact on protection. While the international community should aim to strengthen the functioning of communities, attitudes of mistrust can have the opposite effect.

Although most community leaders act in their constituents' best interests, in any emergency response, a small proportion will be self-interested and pursue personal gain. Others may take advantage of humanitarian resources to benefit their own constituents; their communities may not perceive them as cheaters but as good leaders. Others may keep extra benefits for themselves, but may still be respected by their people.

The humanitarian community in Darfur was insufficiently equipped to make these distinctions, so the mistrust that followed cheating incidents was inevitably damaging. It is interesting to compare WFP's experience with ICRC, which invests heavily in intelligence, networking and community analysis related to assistance planning.[129] As a result, ICRC sustained its commitment to working with the sheikhs and built trust with communities, allowing open dialogue about the benefits of a fair system of distribution.

129. ICRC staff reported that its operation was very "expatriate intensive".

Box 4.1. Consequences of actions: Being aware of the context

In October 2005, WFP and its partners carried out a head count in Kalma, the largest IDP camp in Darfur. The count was completed without incident after previous headcount attempts had been disrupted. However, the result was a headcount of 90,000, whereas WFP had been supplying food for 160,000 people based on previous estimates. Obviously, there had been substantial over-counting and manipulation. There was also evidence that more of the population was returning home than had been suspected. A more effective census and accurate distribution plan would have resolved the negative consequences of this manipulation, but in the short run such a dramatic census change constituted a serious protection risk. It meant that those with power in the camp would lose some of their control when WFP began distributing less food.

In any community receiving food assistance, registration constitutes a redistribution of power involving gains and losses. Competition over resources is a common protection risk; registration and distribution changes require extensive planning in order to minimize this risk.

As for any protection risk affecting beneficiary and staff safety, the responsibility for planning cannot be left to WFP's partners. WFP must understand the political and social dynamics of the communities in which it exerts a powerful impact. Its extensive network of field-based staff is extremely valuable in this regard.

Confidentiality of registration databases

The registration databases established by WFP and IOM in Darfur had considerable potential for addressing protection needs. This was a delicate topic for WFP, which had collaborated with IOM under the premise that beneficiaries' personal information would not be shared with any party. WFP's database on the results of these registrations constituted a unique storehouse of information for decision making by other humanitarian actors. In essence, WFP was responsible for determining IDPs' status, and therefore determining their access to food and other services. But in order to protect confidentiality, WFP did not share all data with the broader humanitarian community. Some organizations reported that WFP's exclusive access to this information was a considerable loss of protection potential to the entire humanitarian community.

Confidentiality should serve to protect people; it should not detract from the United Nations' ability to aid in their protection. In the future, WFP should design data-collection systems and standards of consent that protect beneficiaries from the misuse of confidential information without preventing other agencies from using the information to protect them. This requires: (i) better strategies for communicating about confidentiality and consent to beneficiaries; and (ii) more complex data systems that can protect sensitive information while making other data available for protection measures.

IV. Presence, visibility and advocacy

By utilizing its significant presence and advocacy potential, WFP can have a protective impact beyond its food-assistance operations to affect the protection related causes of food insecurity.

An international presence can build confidence among the civilian population and increase global attention to an emergency. WFP's presence in a conflict area can influence the political calculations of authorities, armed groups and civilians. It can increase the cost of political abuses and decrease the risk to civilians; in addition, an international presence changes people's perceptions of political costs and risks. The more potential abusers of rights perceive that this presence represents a risk to them the more likely it is that they will refrain from repressive acts. The more civilians are encouraged by the international presence, the more likely it is that they will mobilize and demand their rights.

Although there was a significant international presence in Darfur by 2005, protection problems did not diminish. Yet local people described the humanitarian community's presence as having a protective impact. The growing African Union presence was also noted to have a calming influence. In addition, international NGOs shared examples of how their presence in communities had diffused tension and increased community confidence.

WFP security officers reported that their patrols' visibility seemed to calm and build confidence in communities. WFP's decision to expand out of major IDP camps and into rural areas echoed this strategy of 'protection by presence': this larger operation provided an international presence in communities where none had ever existed. Many respondents noted that WFP's presence in communities where no other agency operated was an important opportunity for protection.

Even amid the suffering in Darfur, WFP's presence was widely acknowledged to have a protective impact as one of the most visible components of an international presence. By deploying staff to locations where other agencies were not present, WFP ended these communities' isolation and sent a reminder to armed actors that the international community was watching. Every visit, assessment and distribution contributed to WFP's visibility, reinforcing a message of restraint.

WFP's potential for preventive action and protection advocacy

This chapter employs the term 'protection advocacy' in its broadest sense – including any diplomacy, communication or behaviour intended to persuade armed groups not to use violence against civilians. Protection advocacy can also send messages to decision makers at the national and international levels about their protective obligations. It can range from subtle implied messages to choices about deployment and delivery, the way WFP responds to incidents, confidential discussions and direct statements.

Beyond the protective influence of its presence, WFP's actions can directly contribute to protection. However, there is considerable confusion within WFP about its capacity for advocacy in this area, but there also appear to be many opportunities for protective impact that fall within WFP's mandate.

According to the WFP mission statement, "The ultimate objective of food assistance should be the elimination of the need for food assistance". In Darfur, where the need for food assistance was a direct result of conflict and protection needs, this statement is an invitation for WFP to address the causes of food insecurity. To this end, WFP should seek protection strategies that move communities towards re-establishing sustainable livelihoods.

Despite WFP's mission statement and the United Nations' system-wide commitments, there has been a hesitancy to engage in protection. Although many staff in Darfur saw the need for WFP to increase its engagement in protection strategies, others stated that protection was outside WFP's mandate.

The initiative that led to this study, the invitation from WFP's country office and staff members' response to the first WFP protection workshop all attested to enthusiasm about engaging in protection and exploring the practical implications of that commitment. However, clear signals from managers to staff about WFP's protection commitments were required. Engaging in protection in a conflict area was as delicate a matter as food delivery, and staff needed to know that they are supported in these efforts. There should also be an organizational commitment to building the necessary capacity.

The approaches to advocacy and protection adopted by WFP field offices vary significantly, and appear to lack any systematic guidance from WFP management. It would be far more effective – and less risky – for WFP to plan advocacy strategies with its programme staff. The question is not whether to engage in advocacy, but how to derive the greatest protective impact with the minimum risk to WFP's operations.

Stakeholders in Darfur repeatedly emphasized that WFP could play a more active role in protection advocacy. WFP was seen to have the greatest political clout of any international actor in Darfur, access to the Government and most reliable access to communities.

Many agencies expected OCHA and UNMIS to shoulder the burden of advocacy, even while complaining that these agencies did not undertake this task sufficiently. Clearly, advocacy in Darfur required coordination by the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Humanitarian Coordinator. However, there were still opportunities for WFP to engage in day-to-day advocacy in the field, either by coordinating locally or by acting independently within Country Team policy parameters.

Box 4.2. A case of advocacy: Rape, fuelwood and food

A serious protection problem during the Darfur crisis was the systematic rape of IDP women leaving their communities to collect fuelwood. This pattern of abuse resulted in the virtual imprisonment of women within the camps. Many had to sell their food rations to obtain wood for preparing food.

Humanitarian agencies had been pushing for the police and Government to address this issue. Many believed this advocacy had been successful, but could be strengthened by WFP's involvement. This was a protection issue in which WFP could advocate for change in line with its primary objective of ensuring access to nutritious food. An abusive criminal practice that hinders access to fuelwood is no different in nutritional impact from the decision to hold up delivery trucks at a checkpoint.

According to OCHA and UNMIS staff, a more active role for WFP would increase the impact of United Nations advocacy for the protection of civilians. Other members of the Country Team invited WFP's involvement in joint advocacy aimed at ensuring civilians' safety.

A common concern about humanitarian advocacy involves the risk of losing humanitarian access. Interviews with dozens of partner agencies suggested that this fear may be exaggerated. The humanitarian community's self-censorship was described by one observer as "anticipatory obedience". NGO respondents in North and South Darfur[130] reported that although vocal advocacy efforts may increase their risk of harassment, they do not have a significant impact on access to beneficiaries.

Both United Nations and NGO partners concurred that although some advocacy activities reduced humanitarian access in Darfur, the correlation between advocacy and losing access was overstated. More importantly, nearly every humanitarian worker interviewed believed that of all international actors, WFP was the most impervious to losing access because, according to one respondent, "WFP was bringing in something the Government and SLA want". Respondents from UNHCR, which also carries political weight in Darfur, pointed out that although advocacy always carries some risk, "…it is our responsibility to do it!"

Rather than directly denying humanitarian access, international organizations' access was more commonly limited by the harassment of their staff. One observer referred to this as "…calibrated harassment – a counter-strategy against the international presence". Government pressure on staff from targeted harassment and generalized security threats was effective in shutting down humanitarian space without direct orders or official expulsions. Attempts to establish a correlation between advocacy and harassment were unsuccessful: staff members from all agencies were regularly harassed, regardless of their degree of advocacy.

130. West Darfur was in a precarious security situation during the mission, and was declared off-limits for non-essential travel; however, many respondents had experience in West Darfur.

Protection advocacy is consistent with WFP's mandate, but this does not imply any simple recipes for doing it. Protection choices depend on context, and WFP staff should think strategically about how staff-members' behaviour can influence beneficiaries, taking into account the political factors and risks in each situation. Where some contexts may offer opportunities for WFP to affect protection, in others, those same actions might heighten the risk to beneficiaries. These choices are not determined by organizational mandate, but by field-based socio-political analysis. WFP's field staff have already engaged in some analysis, but WFP lacks any systematic approach to training in support of these efforts.

V. Recommendations

Given its substantial influence and political leverage in Darfur, WFP could make better use of its assets to support the United Nations Country Team's protection efforts. The recommendations for pursuing this objective relate to WFP's operations and to the broader impact of WFP's future work:

- WFP needs to articulate a clear commitment to protection, send unambiguous directives to its staff and provide guidance for implementing this commitment. This implies an obligation to invest in political analysis and advocacy in order to maximize WFP's protective impact. A protection focus should be incorporated into programme and job descriptions. External expertise can assist in developing internal strategies for better integrating protection into WFP's work, including a do-no-harm approach to operations. WFP can collaborate with other organizations to build this capacity.

- WFP must carry out more political analysis to avoid negative impacts on beneficiary protection, maximize positive protection impacts and engage in advocacy that contributes to protection without weakening WFP's access to beneficiaries. Analysis is necessary for understanding Darfur's political economy and assessing community decision-making structures and power relationships.

- WFP needs to be more proactive in promoting capacity building and accountability among its partners, and should support the United Nations Country Team in ensuring that camp management meets protection needs.

- WFP should collaborate with the United Nations Country Team to encourage staff and partners' compliance with ethical codes of conduct in their relationships with local communities. It should also determine whether allegations of cheating and manipulation are weakening communities' traditional social structures.

- WFP should engage in joint protection advocacy with the United Nations Country Team so that its political weight maximizes the impact of United Nations protection strategies.

- WFP should develop advocacy messages that link protection needs to food concerns and draw attention to the causal links between conflict and food insecurity. These messages would allow WFP to engage more actively in protection advocacy while continuing to champion food security.

- WFP field staff should engage in local advocacy, taking advantage of WFP's visibility and the political weight of WFP's presence as the face of the United Nations in remote areas.

- Recognizing that a United Nations presence can contribute to protection, WFP should maximize its own visibility in food insecure areas, including isolated rural areas.

Part 2

Post-Conflict and Protracted Crises

Chapter 5

Protection of women and girls: A comparative study of conflict-affected populations

An Michels

Women and girls form the majority of populations displaced by conflict and are often among the first beneficiaries of food assistance. They are also at greater risk of gender-based violence (GBV), particularly sexual violence. Rape and other forms of harassment are used as weapons of war. Women's unequal access to resources makes them more vulnerable to GBV, including coerced transactional sex, in order to meet their families' needs.[131]

The medical and psychosocial consequences of sexual violence are far-reaching and often underestimated. Women suffer from injuries, sexually transmitted infections and psychological symptoms that seriously impact their daily lives. Often, these consequences are aggravated by rejection of the victim by her family and community. Stigmatization and social exclusion not only have major implications for victims' recovery, but also they affect the food security of families and communities. Fear of violence and rape keep women away from their agricultural lands. Women who become pregnant after rape and girls formerly associated with combatants face particularly serious difficulties reintegrating into their communities. Women infected with HIV after sexual violence often enter a vicious circle of malnutrition and social exclusion.

Humanitarian assistance can protect women and girls. Distributing food rations directly to women also increases the likelihood that the food will reach other members of the household. However, humanitarian assistance can also worsen the situation for women if they are not consulted about their needs and concerns. According to the IASC Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Assistance, when 70 percent of IDPs and refugees around the world are women and children, "one of the most important challenges is responding in a gender-sensitive manner in these crises".[132]

WFP has taken steps to respond to the needs of women and girls across its operations. This chapter is based on research conducted during 2006 on the links

131. WFP. 2004. "Women's Control of Food in Relief: Case Study Project". Rome.

132. IASC Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Assistance. 1998. *Mainstreaming Gender in the Humanitarian Response to Emergencies*, p. 2. New York, United Nations

between protection and gender in WFP's operations in Colombia,[133] DRC, Liberia and northern Uganda.[134]

Each conflict is unique but common issues are encountered in all food-assistance operations. Some are directly linked to food assistance while others are common to the operating environment. This chapter explores how WFP's Gender Policy has been used as a protection framework for women's concerns in the food-assistance sector, and the challenges associated with its implementation. The findings from these field studies suggest that, when coupled with broader assistance programmes for women, food assistance can be an important asset for preventing and mitigating GBV.

I. Patterns of gender-based violence in conflict settings

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Widespread GBV became a disturbing feature of conflict-affected and impoverished regions of DRC. Years of destruction, ongoing fighting in the East and an ineffective legal system contributed to an ethical vacuum that not only allowed widespread impunity but also a degree of tolerance towards sexual violence.

Deep-rooted causes of violence against women are linked to women's subordinate position in Congolese society. Whereas women had traditionally been the backbone of economic activities – especially in rural areas – they are now considered to have second-class status. However, in spite of their disadvantaged position and under-representation in government, women are still the driving force for change. Local women's associations were among the first to organize grassroots networks, supporting survivors and speaking out against sexual violence.

GBV, particularly sexual violence, has become more pervasive over the years. Rape reached epidemic proportions and became part of daily life for women in eastern DRC: it was used by all parties to the conflict as a weapon of war or punishment for supporting enemies. Women and girls were also abducted to carry out domestic work or to be used as sex slaves. Many marginalized girls and women were forced into survival sex, including with staff of the United Nations peacekeeping mission.[135]

133. The Colombia case study was based on: Bizzarri, M. 2006. Gender-Based Violence in Colombia: Field Study Report. Rome, WFP. The three other studies on DRC, Liberia and Northern Uganda were carried out by the author.

134. The field studies asked: Who does what, how and for whom in the realm of protection? How can WFP contribute to the protection efforts of other actors and beneficiaries? What does WFP currently do and how is this perceived? How can WFP staff do more in the realm of protection?

135. On 1 July 2010, United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1925 renamed MONUC the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). The new mission was authorized to use all necessary means to carry out its mandate to protecting civilians, humanitarian personnel and human rights defenders under imminent threat of physical violence, and to support the Government in its efforts at stabilization and peace consolidation. See http://monusco.unmissions.org (last accessed 12 July 2012).

These trends have had dire consequences: systematic sexual violence likely played a major role in spreading the HIV/AIDS epidemic in DRC. For example, the HIV prevalence rate skyrocketed in eastern DRC[136] and the infection rate among victims of sexual violence was five times higher than the national average.

Colombia

In the course of Colombia's 40-year conflict, all armed groups employed sexual violence and exploitation as a weapon of war against women combatants and civilians.

In this insecure environment, the frequency of sexual violence against women and children increased dramatically. Forced displacement coupled with an ineffective criminal justice system left an ethical vacuum where violence proliferated.

In urban areas lacking traditional social-protection structures, women and children became vulnerable to domestic violence and transactional sex. The new dynamics of urban life and forced displacement unravelled communities' social fabric. Family ties were ruptured as a result of forced displacement, death and abandonment of families.

For men, the loss of identity as providers for families aggravated family tensions and heightened the potential for domestic violence. There was also an increase in the number of women-headed households among IDPs. Sexual violence against women in Colombia continues to be a severe problem.

Liberia

During the war in Liberia, thousands of women and girls were abducted and forced to fight, carry ammunition, prepare food or provide sex to men combatants. Young girls were conscripted as soldiers and routinely raped and enslaved. Many people were also forced to witness acts of sexual violence. At the peak of the conflict, one third of Liberia's population was displaced – most of them women and children.

The atrocities of the war triggered a breakdown in family and community structures, and encouraged tolerance towards violence and sexual exploitation. Domestic violence and rape had become so widespread that they were often not considered crimes. Traditional practices such as early marriage and female genital mutilation were also widely practised forms of GBV. Sexual exploitation and abuse integrated into corruption: sex became a commodity to trade or a bribe to pay for survival. Perpetrators included international humanitarian workers, and many allegations of sexual abuse by United Nations staff were substantiated.

136. See for example OCHA, 15 August 2001 (press release). *DRC: Conditions Ripe for HIV/AIDS Explosion*. New York.

Many Liberian women suffered the consequences of sexual violence during the conflict. The principal causes of the country's increased HIV/AIDS prevalence included the presence of peacekeepers from countries with high HIV prevalence[137] and widespread sexual violence during and after the conflict. The frequent social exclusion of people living with HIV and of victims of GBV created an additional protection problem.

Although women's position in Liberian society was increasingly undermined by the conflict, their central role in peace-building and reconstruction has been recognized. With the election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the first African woman head of state, high hopes were raised for women in Liberia. Since her appointment, the Government has made considerable progress, although challenges remain in tackling problems such as lack of opportunities, discrimination, illiteracy and limited access to land.

Northern Uganda

For years, the Lord's Resistance Army terrorized the Acholi population in northern Uganda, abducting children, killing and torturing men, and raping women and girls. The Ugandan Government responded by forcing people into IDP camps, justifying this as a means of protection against attacks. Many Ugandans are still recovering from the violence and forced displacement.

A combination of social factors and traditional practices weakened the position of women in Ugandan society and created power disparities in which GBV was tolerated. Poverty and lack of access to food, education and economic opportunities made women and girls particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Exchanging sex for money, food or other assets became the norm, and for many it was a necessary tool for survival. Many women and girls who were abducted during the conflict continue to suffer the devastating consequences.

Living conditions in IDP camps were characterized by congestion and restricted movement, leading to idleness, frustration, alcoholism and aggression among men, and contributing to an increase in sexual and domestic violence. Rape in and around the camps was common but under-reported, mainly because of fear of stigma, lack of access to support services and a prevailing tendency to blame the victim.

137. Krasno, J. 2006. *Public Opinion Survey of UNMIL's Work in Liberia, March 2006*. New York, United Nations. Posted at: http://www.peacekeepingbestpractices.unlb.org/pbps/Pages/Public/viewdocument.aspx?docid=749 (last accessed 10 July 2012).

II. Potential negative impacts of WFP's assistance

Field research and interviews with women beneficiaries in Colombia, DRC, Liberia and northern Uganda revealed strikingly common protection concerns. Women faced risks related to both WFP's food distributions and the behaviour of its staff and partners. In addition, the research uncovered broader social trends within beneficiary communities that can be altered by food assistance.

Protection threats arising from WFP's activities

The manner in which food is distributed reflects the complexities of population movements, security risks and operational constraints. In the areas studied, women encountered numerous protection threats at various steps in the food-distribution process – from the moment they left their homes to collect food to when they returned home with their rations.

In insecure areas where GBV was prevalent, there were significant protection risks for women waiting at distribution sites. In some areas, there were no barriers between men and women; in others there were no safe places for children to wait while their mothers collect food. In Liberia, there were reports of women and even children being raped at distribution sites. More commonly, food was stolen from women at these sites.

The location of distribution sites often required women and their young children to travel considerable distances and return with a valued commodity. Generally when food is scarce, food rations are a sought-after commodity and women travelling with rations are vulnerable to abuse. In both DRC and Liberia, women commonly reported being attacked on the road after distributions. Women who were interviewed explained that they often felt in danger when returning home with their two-month family rations.

The risks for women were particularly acute in situations where transport was difficult or slow. In Liberia, women explained that when food distributions started late in the day, many were forced to spend the night outside their villages with a considerable amount of food, which exposed them to aggressors.

Abuses also occurred in villages or IDP camps, which are sometimes attacked immediately after food distributions. This placed beneficiary women at risk of sexual violence. Information on these abuses was difficult to obtain because GBV was often a taboo subject and because it had the potential to jeopardize food assistance. In Liberia, some NGOs did not enter IDP camps on the day after a food distribution because of the increased risk of attack and abduction. In DRC, WFP staff reported that community members kept silent about post-distribution looting and rape, fearing that the distributions would be stopped. This made it difficult for WFP and its partners to evaluate the impact of distributions.

Protection concerns related to WFP staff and partners

In all countries studied, there were reports of sexual exploitation and abuse by people involved in providing food assistance, including camp managers, volunteers, members of food management committees, teachers and WFP or partner staff. Women and girls were asked to provide sex in return for registration, food rations or school meals, and transport to and from distribution points.

Since food and other humanitarian assistance are crucial assets, those with access hold a position of power. This unequal division of power along with women's vulnerability to transactional sex as a survival strategy has led to coerced sex in exchange for food assistance. In many areas where WFP works, transactional sex has become common, creating a challenging operating environment and affecting local culture and traditions.

For many families in Liberia, their daughters' prostitution became a major source of income. Transactional sex was often perceived as the only way to obtain essential goods or protection. In northern Uganda's IDP camps, long-term displacement led to a loss of traditions related to courtship and sexual relationships. For many women, sex in exchange for food, non-food items and even school fees became a tool for survival in the camps. Sex was also often a means of survival in Colombia, where interviews with displaced women indicated that there was little social intolerance of sex in exchange for goods or better living conditions. In many countries, WFP staff and partners are continually confronted with opportunities – and even offers – to use food as a means of obtaining sex.

In DRC and Liberia, there were frequent media reports of sexual exploitation by humanitarian workers. These violations undermine the principles of humanitarian assistance. The United Nations has a zero-tolerance policy for such misconduct. But despite efforts by the United Nations and NGOs to prevent sexual exploitation, the problem persists. The lack of reporting mechanisms and a culture of silence regarding corrupt behaviour make it very difficult to detect problems and respond adequately. The United Nations Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse required the appointment of focal points for prevention and new reporting mechanisms.

Indirect protection concerns: Effects of food assistance on households and communities

Field observations in the four countries showed that food was frequently at the centre of intra-household conflicts. This finding highlighted the importance of understanding each unique operating environment in order to anticipate the impacts of WFP food assistance on gender and family dynamics. Although WFP assesses households' vulnerability to food insecurity, it rarely assesses social dynamics or analyses how its assistance may affect them.

Northern Uganda's long-standing conflict triggered social changes and a subsequent breakdown of families, altering the region's social fabric and causing a shift in gender roles. While women in camps maintained the responsibility for childcare, providing food for their families and managing households, men lost many of their traditional roles and responsibilities, which impacted self-esteem. Many men reacted with frustration, alcohol abuse and aggression, leading to a significant increase in domestic violence. This dynamic was reinforced by WFP's policy of distributing food directly to women.

In Colombia, 40 years of conflict and forced displacement from rural to urban areas also disrupted traditional gender roles and social-support systems. Women appeared better able to adapt to these new dynamics than men, who could not always transfer their rural-livelihood skills to urban labour markets. This change in gender roles, combined with insecurity and the breakdown of support mechanisms impacted household dynamics and increased domestic violence. Changes in gender roles may have also contributed to men's abandonment of their families, resulting in an increase in women-headed households.

In Colombia, WFP's policy of delivering food directly to women has not been seen by beneficiaries of WFP food assistance to have directly contributed to domestic violence. But with increased responsibilities borne by women displaced due to the conflict, the distribution of food to women without alternative activities for men might have aggravated existing gender imbalances, exacerbating tensions within families.

III. Ensuring protective programming: Guiding principles and commitments in WFP's Gender Policy

WFP's 2003–2007 Gender Policy: Enhanced Commitments to Women[138] provided a framework for: examining the links between protection and GBV; ensuring a gender focus in programming; and mainstreaming gender in WFP's operations. The policy was driven by the recognition of women's essential role as managers of food within households. It also addresses women's particular vulnerability in emergency settings.

In the four countries studied, WFP assessed women's protection concerns using the principles embraced in the Enhanced Commitments to Women: entitlement, participation, transparency and facilitating access. In some cases, WFP implemented activities specifically targeting survivors of GBV. However, responding to women's protection concerns has proven difficult since vulnerability and risk are often related to cultural and social factors. Understanding these factors requires dedication and engagement with local people. Without such an

138. WFP. 2002. "Gender Policy (2003–2007)" (WFP/EB.3/2002/4-A). Executive Board Document. Posted at: www.wfp.org/eb.

understanding, attempts to empower women may be ineffective and even increase their vulnerability to GBV.

It is also important to understand the strategies many women have developed to protect themselves from attack. In Colombia and Liberia, women travelled in groups or sold food outside distribution points to pay for transport. In DRC, community leaders requested that WFP postpone food distributions when they believed it was unsafe or when they foresaw that distribution could provoke military attacks. Some communities also agreed to stay away from their fields one day per week so that militias or the army could 'harvest their share' of the crops. This form of 'taxation' protected communities from attacks and rape in the fields.

Women explained that they tried to protect themselves by bringing their husbands with them to the fields; however, militias would kill the men after raping the women. In other communities, women and children who feared attacks left their huts in the afternoon to sleep in the bush. In highly insecure areas, displacement was often the only option for communities seeking protection from violence. Yet many women resisted relocating because they did not want to abandon their fields and expose their families to the risk of food insecurity.

The subsections below provide examples of WFP's engagement in protecting women, and the challenges it faces in applying its Gender Policy.

Participation

Participation is essential for understanding women's needs. WFP consults with women before, during and after its activities in order to integrate their concerns into programming. Some of these participatory discussions include men and women while others include only women. Ensuring that women beneficiaries take part in food-distribution committees is another means of integrating GBV-protection concerns into WFP's work. Through women's participation, WFP can better assess security issues related to the location of distribution points and other logistics arrangements. Women's participation also allows them to express concerns and ideas regarding distribution arrangements, and enables them to plan their travel to and from distributions.

WFP's research in the four countries shows that a participatory approach not only mitigated potential negative impacts of WFP's assistance, but gave women a voice in their communities. Women's participation in planning and identifying types of food assistance also increased the benefits they derive from WFP activities. For example, in Uganda, WFP sought to include at least 50 percent women participants in its food-for-work programmes. In addition to benefiting men and women equally, this helped to strengthen women's position within communities, which helped to protect them against violence and exploitation.

However, equal representation does not mean equal participation. For example, although the goal of 50 percent women's participation was applied to food-

management committees and other coordination bodies, control over decision making often remained in the hands of men. Women's participation in decision making was limited by the fact that many were intimidated to speak out or because their voices were not heard by men. As a result, separate consultations with women's groups ensured that women's opinions and suggestions were heard. Interventions to sensitize communities about women's roles also contributed to shifting more decision-making power to women.

Transparency

Transparency in WFP's operations entails providing both women and men with information about food distribution and WFP policies. Information on the logistics of distributions, such as timing and amount, can enhance protection by allowing beneficiaries to better plan for collecting rations and designate delegates for collection or arrange child care.

Increased transparency also helps to prevent sexual assault of beneficiaries by distribution centre staff. Through camp committees and other civic bodies, and at distribution centres, WFP informs beneficiaries that rations are free and that they should not provide anything in exchange. Incorporating the United Nations Code of Conduct and Standards of Accountability into all staff contracts, and displaying this policy at all WFP distribution sites informs staff members that sexual exploitation is unacceptable. In line with the United Nations zero-tolerance policy, any WFP or partner staff member found in violation of the Code of Conduct faces dismissal.

Transparency relies on the clear exchange of information. This means WFP must be clear about its intentions and must assist beneficiaries in communicating their concerns.

Although the study teams found that WFP's methods of food distribution were transparent, reporting mechanisms were not sufficiently transparent. In some cases, no reporting mechanisms were in place; in others, beneficiaries were not informed about them or were not accustomed to using them. In Uganda, beneficiaries were well aware of ration sizes and methods of food distribution, but a baseline survey indicated that only a minority of women felt comfortable reporting incidents of abuse. In DRC a baseline study showed that WFP's partners generally offered accurate information about ration sizes, but only half the distribution sites had mechanisms for reporting abuse.

Entitlement

WFP is committed to issuing household ration cards in women's names: in all four countries, most ration cards were distributed to women. Holding food-entitlement cards helps women to control the food in their households and strengthens their roles in the community; this empowers women without overburdening them. In addition, there is a provision allowing women to delegate the food collection to

someone else. This measure places women in a stronger position to ensure their families' food security and reduces their vulnerability to sexual exploitation. However, the field studies revealed that putting food into women's hands did not always guarantee their control over it within households. In fact, empowering women with ration cards sometimes created tensions within households, leading to GBV.

Although issuing ration cards to women was generally perceived as positive, it was not without problems. In DRC, staff reported that some men initially protested their wives' registration; sensitization efforts were necessary to convince the men that they would benefit. In some regions, it was perceived as embarrassing for women to pronounce their husbands' names; issuing the ration cards in women's names mitigated this problem.

Distributing to polygamous families demonstrated the delicate balance associated with entitlement. In most case, each wife in a polygamous family received a separate ration card if she lived in a separate dwelling. Registering women in this way helped polygamous families to overcome the challenge of sharing rations among wives and their children. Nevertheless in DRC and Uganda, there were reports of tensions within polygamous families over the distribution of food among wives.

Safe access

Improving women's access to food entails ensuring that they do not suffer any harm before, during or after collecting their rations. The location of food distribution sites is an important factor in women's ability to collect rations and return home safely; major concerns include the long distances that many women must travel to reach distribution sites and the dangers along the way. WFP has improved the timing and location of distributions in order to minimize women's exposure to risk.[139] For example, WFP seeks to ensure that food is delivered early in the day and that distribution starts early.[140]

Other measures that WFP has adopted to ensure safe access for women include: moving distribution points closer to villages or camps; reducing the size of food packages; allowing women to delegate the collection of food; and introducing separate waiting areas for vulnerable women at distribution points. Involving women in decision making about food distribution is important to reduce the risk of GBV on the way to and from distribution points. However, there are massive logistics challenges associated with ensuring safe access in complex emergencies with high insecurity.

In eastern DRC, where sexual violence on roads is widespread, WFP sought to move distribution points closer to communities. Whenever possible, military

139. WFP. 2002. "Food Aid in Conflict Workshop Report", p. 15.

140. WFP. 2002. "Emergency Field Operations Pocketbook", pp. 90–95.

assistance from MONUC was requested for securing roads to and from distribution points. In Liberia, moving distribution points closer to beneficiaries was difficult because of poor road conditions. Nevertheless, efforts were made to ensure women's protection at the sites, including separate waiting areas for vulnerable women, child care and monitoring by NGOs.

In Uganda, food assistance was delivered to IDP camps so that women would not have to travel far from their communities. By keeping women out of high-risk areas, this practice reduced the risk of rape, theft and abuse outside camps. In addition, WFP's partners offered training on the economic use of fuel, which helped women to decrease the amount of fuelwood they needed for cooking. This reduced the dangers associated with looking for fuelwood outside camps.

IV. Reaching GBV survivors through food assistance

GBV contributes to the vicious circle of food insecurity by impacting the physical and psychosocial well-being of victims. WFP has therefore sought to target women for support that contributes to their recovery and enables them to avoid additional negative consequences.

In DRC, three-month food rations allowed hospitalized victims sufficient recovery time after surgery and before returning to their communities. This helped them to avoid life-threatening complications, chronic wounds and a higher risk of subsequent HIV infection. Women also benefited from peer support and social activities designed to minimize the psychosocial impact of sexual violence.

In Liberia, GBV victims in need of medical support also benefited from WFP food assistance during hospitalization. This assistance was crucial in facilitating their recovery and ensured that women with severe injuries could spend sufficient time in hospital. In addition, WFP's food-for-work initiatives supported the reconstruction of hospitals and health-care centres, which increased women's accessibility to medical treatment in areas where infrastructure had been destroyed.

In DRC and Uganda, formerly abducted girls – often victims of sexual violence – benefited from food-for-training activities that assisted them in becoming economically independent.

WFP can also protect indirectly against GBV by providing food assistance. School feeding has important impacts on the protection of girls: access to education increases their independence and lowers the risk of sexual abuse, exploitation, early marriage and domestic violence. Attendance at school also protects girls from abduction.

Food-for-assets and food-for-work programmes further protect women by building livelihood skills and management capacity, which makes them more independent

and less likely to suffer sexual abuse and exploitation. In addition, beneficiaries in Uganda reported that working together increased community cohesion, which had a protective impact.

V. Towards better protection of women and girls receiving food assistance

Over the years, WFP has received recurring reports of sexual abuse in its operations and other protection risks faced by women beneficiaries. The four country studies provide a glimpse into WFP's efforts to understand the negative impacts of its activities on women. The studies highlighted that WFP needs to increase awareness of intra-household dynamics in order to understand why food assistance does not always increase opportunities for women, and can even place women at greater risk.

The studies also highlight challenges in applying the protection principles of entitlement, participation, safe access and transparency. To this end, WFP must be sensitive to context, identify the different needs and vulnerabilities of men and women, and design and plan activities accordingly.

WFP's Strategic Plan (2008–2013) and the Gender Policy (2009) renewed its commitment to protection-related activities that address gender imbalances. There is room for WFP to expand its role in protecting women, as demonstrated in a recent initiative to provide safe access to firewood and alternative energy (SAFE) for millions of displaced persons, especially vulnerable women and girls. Following assessments in several countries, SAFE programmes have been initiated in Haiti (12,000 beneficiaries), Sudan (600,000), Sri Lanka (65,000) and Uganda (250,000). Nonetheless, given longstanding cultural norms surrounding gender, there is room for more attention to gender mainstreaming in WFP's operations. This includes increased consideration of men and boys, and anchoring WFP's work within local communities' social systems.

Chapter 6

Evolution of thought and practice in protection in West Africa since 2004

Maria Clara Martin and Michael Kaethler

Protection is not a new idea or a novel invention. On the contrary, the essentials of protection have been embodied in humanitarianism since its inception. Today, the term 'protection' implies a lens through which humanitarianism is to be understood and guided. This is a broad concept whose application includes much that is new and much that has already been employed.

This chapter reviews the findings of a study of WFP's involvement in protection in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, and examines the evolution of WFP's protection activities in the region since 2004.[141] The study reveals how protection was already part of WFP's work before it was introduced as a concept. Some of WFP's operating procedures can be seen as inherently protective, while others may have protective implications. In a few cases, WFP staff in West Africa sought to engage in explicit protection activities, but lacked the tools, support and capacity to do so. The 2004 report demonstrates that food-assistance activities can be placed along a continuum of protection engagement. Only by understanding the nuances of these activities can WFP fully assert its role as a protective actor in West Africa.

Since 2004, knowledge of protection has grown within WFP, but the challenge of identifying WFP's role in beneficiary protection persists. The second part of this chapter outlines the evolution of WFP's interpretation of protection in West Africa.

There is a notable variation in the definition of 'humanitarian protection' among non-protection mandated agencies. This has been influenced by staff members' different notions of applying protection. A core component of WFP's engagement in humanitarian protection – and a common recommendation in internal assessments – is the need for a common definition of protection for field staff. Training and sensitization of humanitarian personnel featured high on the

141. This chapter is based on Martin, M. 2004. *West Africa Coastal States: Review of Protection Issues and WFP's Role in Côte D'Ivoire, Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone.* Rome, WFP. In 2009, Michael Kaethler conducted an informal review of how WFP's country offices in the region have evolved in their views of protection.

protection agenda. There was a recognized need to translate the concept of humanitarian protection into pragmatic actions.

This chapter explores the growing understanding of protection in West Africa since this concept was introduced into WFP's activities in the region in 2004. It provides insights into how WFP staff members have understood protection and how mainstreaming protection has been translated into field-level actions. The chapter also examines how WFP's efforts to mainstream protection have altered staff perceptions of WFP's work. At the time of writing this chapter in 2010, awareness of protection remained limited and those with awareness of the protection approach interpreted the concept in diverse ways. However, there were shared views regarding how protection should be implemented – mainly within the framework of the do-no-harm approach. The research for this chapter relied on case studies in Cote D'Ivoire, Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone carried out in 2004 and on a questionnaire distributed to protection focal points in West Africa and interviews conducted in 2009 to determine how well focal points understood the concept in relation to WFP's work.[142]

I. West Africa's trans-nationalised civil wars

West Africa has endured instability since the end of the Cold War. Weak central governments and economic collapse triggered a regional civil war, which was fuelled by warlords and mercenaries in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone's war – an extension of an earlier Liberian conflict – precipitated the second Liberian civil war in 1999. Liberia's regional neighbours also fell prey to this expanding regional conflict.

Killings, abductions, rapes, forced labour and destruction of property were perpetrated in Liberia. According to a government survey, 92 percent of Liberian women experienced some form of sexual violence during this period, including gang rape and being stripped naked and publicly displayed.[143] The primary coping mechanism adopted by vulnerable people was displacement.

Sexual exploitation of unaccompanied IDP and returnee women in Liberia was also widespread. According to Oxfam's protection coordinator, women in some IDP camps were forced to trade sex for food, non-food items and shelter. The humanitarian community in Liberia lacked mechanisms to eliminate these practices, and the United Nations Mission's procedures for responding to allegations of abuse were inadequate. In addition, NGOs reported that aid had been diverted from IDPs by government authorities, service providers, camp

142. The workshop reports were prepared by Annarita Marcantonio, former WFP policy officer and trainer in humanitarian protection.

143. OCHA. 2006. *Liberia: Rape in Liberia still Goes Unpunished*. Posted at: www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportId=62311 (last accessed 17 May 2012).

management staff, IDP leaders and members of camp-management committees. Extortion was prevalent in many areas of the country, with armed gangs demanding money from civilians. There were also reports that individuals been asked to share their entitlements with commanders.

Throughout the 1990s, 500,000 refugees spilled into neighbouring Guinea, increasing the burden on an already weak state with poor governance and extreme poverty. The refugees generated suspicion and ethnic tension among Guineans, resulting in skirmishes, distrust, mutual accusations of border attacks and destabilization attempts.[144]

Guinea managed to avoid involvement in the conflict until early 2001, when fighters from Sierra Leone and Liberia attacked the Parrot's Beak region of Guinea. These attacks displaced local populations, as well as refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia. Following the assassination of the UNHCR Head of Office in late 2001, United Nations staff were evacuated from the area, to which there was no access until mid-2002. Most IDPs had returned home by late 2002, but security remained volatile in border areas with Liberia and Sierra Leone. Only with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2003, the departure of Liberian President Charles Taylor and the arrival of peacekeepers under the United Nations Mission for Liberia (UNMIL) were a sustainable ceasefire and stabilization achieved.

In 2002, Côte d'Ivoire, once hailed as a model of stability, had slipped into internal conflict. An attempted *coup d'état*-turned-rebellion in September 2002 split the country in two. Despite the presence of French troops and a United Nations peacekeeping mission, the major players in the conflict failed to find a political solution or implement the Marcoussis-Linas Peace Accord. The conflict was fuelled by – and contributed to – fighting in Liberia; armed factions from the same ethnic group were involved in fighting on both sides of border. More than 1 million people – including many Burkinabe and Malian workers – were displaced into neighbouring countries. Arbitrary arrests, executions, torture, persecution and disappearances were rampant on both sides of the conflict. In western Côte d'Ivoire, the movement of French forces was obstructed by militias and roadblocks hampered WFP's operations. Ethnic tensions also continued, especially in government-controlled areas: migrants and northern Ivorians were harassed by paramilitary, militia and youth groups.

II. Operational challenges for WFP

WFP began operating in West Africa in 1990. A major feature of the crisis was large-scale displacement; some civilians were displaced many times. WFP's operations during this time aimed to: (i) save lives by providing relief assistance;

144. Milner, J. 2010. *The Militarization and Demilitarization of Refugee Camps in Guinea*. Geneva, Small Arms Survey.

and (ii) contribute to long-term recovery. Both required WFP to take into account the ever-changing situation in the region.

WFP's assistance in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone began with a series of short-term, country-specific interventions. Later interventions were expanded to the regional level in order to provide a more flexible response to the movement of populations across borders. Activities included general food distribution, supplementary and therapeutic feeding, mother-and-child health interventions, school feeding, institutional feeding of vulnerable groups, and recovery activities such as food for training and food for asset creation.

Box 6.1. Code of conduct

After the looting of food assistance in Liberia in April 1996, there was a realization that food assistance could fuel the conflict. This prompted a group of humanitarian actors to issue the Joint Principles of Operation, a code of conduct for humanitarians in Liberia. The Joint Principles remained in effect throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s.

In West Africa, WFP was among the first humanitarian actors to assist war-affected populations. Immediate relief assistance such as food was often the only humanitarian support available to displaced, war victims. WFP food assistance was a valuable commodity in the war-torn countries; the supply was threatened by attacks on convoys and looting of warehouses. Staff were also threatened and rations stolen from beneficiaries by combatants after food distribution.

WFP was confronted with the need to protect its supplies and beneficiaries. There was also a risk of inadvertently contributing to the conflict by allowing belligerents to obtain food rations. As the peace process gained ground, WFP ensured that: (i) the delivery of food assistance did not play into the hands of those opposed to peace; and (ii) the efforts of all parties involved in peace-building and reconstruction were supported.

III. WFP's response to protection gaps

In 2004, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone were at different stages in the transition from conflict. In all countries, WFP implemented activities that contributed to the protection of conflict-affected populations. WFP's core functions related to protection included registration, food distribution and special beneficiary-protection activities.

Registration

Registration is a standard procedure that facilitates humanitarian assistance and protection. It entails establishing a profile of those in need of assistance, including name, age, gender, vulnerability and location. In refugee settings, UNHCR is

mandated to obtain this information, and to protect refugees. However, in internal conflicts, no single United Nations agency is responsible for ensuring the registration and protection of IDPs.[145]

Following the conflict West Africa, national authorities were too weak to carry out registration, and the task was left to humanitarian agencies. For IDPs, WFP beneficiary lists were often the only proof of many individuals' existence. In Liberia, WFP lists were used as the basis for interventions by governments, other United Nations agencies and NGOs.

Guinea also provides an example of how WFP ensured the protection of beneficiaries through registration. In late 2002, WFP, OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF and the Government organized a border registration system to track the arrival of those fleeing Côte d'Ivoire. The four United Nations agencies organized a system of jointly collecting information on new arrivals. Information included name, family composition, nationality and country of origin. Since UNHCR declined responsibility for those who were not citizens of Côte d'Ivoire,[146] WFP used this information to advocate with OCHA and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to take action on behalf of nationals of other countries. These individuals were transported to their countries of origin with the support of other agencies.

In other West African countries, registrations were more limited in scope. While UNHCR registered beneficiaries primarily for identification and protection purposes, WFP's objectives were to plan for food assistance and collect information on gender, family size and place of origin. Other information included age, vulnerability and intended place of return.

While NGOs and other United Nations agencies recognized the value of WFP's registration database, some expressed concern that it was incomplete, inaccurate and unreliable for planning purposes. Criticism was focused on data-collection methods and sources of information, which reportedly included camp managers, IDP leaders and government officials. These sources often proved to be corrupt and under pressure to include individuals not living in camps. There were also questions regarding verification methods, such as the checking of dwellings to make sure that registered beneficiaries actually lived there. This demonstrated that it is not always possible to apply standard procedures for data collection when protection is a high priority.

In Liberia, OCHA, UNHCR and other agencies highlighted that as the only organization working in all IDP camps, WFP should have ensured that its lists

145. In 2005, the IASC included the responsibility for protecting IDPs in the Protection Cluster, which is led by UNHCR in complex emergencies, and jointly by OHCHR and UNICEF in natural-disaster emergencies.

146. These included Ivorian refugees, Guinean nationals, people of Guinean ethnic origin who lived in Côte d'Ivoire and nationals of other countries.

could be utilized for protection and return planning. OCHA and UNHCR also expressed the need for WFP to redesign the registration process with protection in mind, and suggested that WFP could collaborate with other agencies in compiling beneficiary lists. This would not only ensure the accurate representation of IDPs' food needs, but also the collection of useful information for enhancing protection. However, the challenges in developing a comprehensive registration system in countries such as Liberia cannot be underestimated. Although it is important that WFP improve its registration methods and partner with agencies that have more experience in this area, registration in conflict and post-conflict situations is a sensitive issue, providing opportunities for corruption and exploitation. Registration is also costly since it requires periodic updates to ensure the reliability of data.

Safe food distribution

WFP country office staff in West Africa were generally aware of the negative impacts that WFP assistance could have if not conducted with beneficiaries' protection in mind. WFP staff were usually able to anticipate these negative effects and mitigate them by changing methods of operation. In some cases, WFP refused to distribute food because of the risks it would pose to beneficiaries. However, there was also evidence that WFP failed to identify the risks posed by certain activities.

One major risk to communities was the possession of certain types of food.[147] In the 1990s, WFP adopted the policy of delivering bulgur wheat instead of rice to its West African beneficiaries since possession of rice resulted in violence against beneficiaries and attacks on staff, convoys and warehouses.

In Liberia, where food was a valuable commodity for fighting factions, attacks on convoys and warehouses were common. In the first half of 2003, IDPs assisted by WFP also became the target of militias.[148] WFP responded by deploying the army during and after distributions, but government troops were often unable to hold off the attacks. In response, WFP reviewed its distribution methods and began distributing smaller rations (enough food for 15 days), which were less of an incentive for militias to attack.

Box 6.2. Protection concerns linked to distribution methods in Liberia

In Liberia, the Human Rights and Protection Unit of UNMIL reported that a 4-year-old girl in an IDP camp was raped by a former combatant while her mother went to collect food. Reports such as this prompted WFP to consider the risks faced by some beneficiaries and collaborate with partners to organize safe areas for children whose parents cannot arrange child care.

147. See WFP. 2002. "Food Aid in Conflict Workshop Report".

148. In April and May 2003, at least two camps in Montserrado County, Liberia were attacked immediately after food was distributed to IDPs.

There were also concerns about the way food distribution was carried out. While the scooping method[149] of distribution was widely employed in the region, the grouping method[150] was the preferred method in Liberia for all but one of WFP's partners. Although distribution methods were subject to much debate in Liberia, it appeared that protection considerations were not at the forefront of these discussions. WFP and its partners preferred the grouping method because it was much quicker and more cost-effective. However, the impacts of this distribution method on beneficiary protection were not properly analysed. Interviews indicated that it was linked to many cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. UNHCR was particularly opposed to grouping because many believed it did not ensure beneficiaries' access to their rations and exposed them to abuse.

Preventing gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation

The 2002 sexual exploitation and abuse scandal in West Africa led WFP to focus on activities designed with specific protection objectives in order to prevent further harm.

The scandal came to light in a UNHCR/Save the Children study, which revealed that humanitarian workers and peacekeepers were exploiting and abusing refugee children in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Based on focus-group discussions involving 1,500 children and adults, the study implicated 42 humanitarian agencies. The report led to public outrage that those committed to assist vulnerable people were actually committing grievous harm. This led to the creation of working groups dedicated to protecting vulnerable groups such as the IASC Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises.

In response to the scandal, humanitarian agencies took immediate steps to put an end to abuses and prevent their reoccurrence. In West Africa, WFP took measures to address assistance-related sexual exploitation. Although not all of these measures could be considered protection activities, they were linked with the wider protection agenda by the commitment to safeguard beneficiaries' dignity and protect them from sexual exploitation and abuse.[151]

When a protection threat appears to be linked to food insecurity, WFP responds by planning activities to address that threat. In Côte d'Ivoire for example, WFP

149. This method involves direct distribution of rations to individual beneficiaries. While the scooping method ensures that beneficiaries receive their rations, it involves lengthy and complicated logistical arrangements.

150. This method involves a two-step process whereby food is distributed to a local representative or relay centre, which then distributes the food to beneficiaries. This method is preferred when security is volatile, but requires beneficiary collaboration to ensure that rations are distributed properly.

151. These measures included: (i) incorporating into all staff contracts the United Nations Code of Conduct and the United Nations-NGO Standards of Accountability; (ii) adopting a zero-tolerance policy for staff and partners; (iii) training all staff and partners in the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse; (iv) sensitization campaigns in camps; (v) participation in inter-agency committees to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse; and (vi) increasing the number of women staff.

provided assistance to more than 7,000 IDP families in refugee camps run by IOM. WFP was very involved in these camps and enhanced protection by organizing sensitization sessions regarding sexual exploitation and GBV issues. Measures were also taken to ensure that women received food rations. Following reports that female genital mutilation was prevalent among the IDP population, WFP contributed to another sensitization campaign on this issue.

Advocacy on broader protection issues

Protection concerns beyond those related to food insecurity were a source of alarm for WFP staff who recognized the limitations of food assistance to address communities' needs. However, these staff members lacked communication mechanisms and tools for addressing structural protection issues, and WFP's mandate in this area was not clear. WFP's limited engagement in protection and advocacy can be attributed to many factors, including the need for a clear protection policy.[152]

At the time of the study, the United Nations did not assign overall responsibility for IDPs to a single agency. As a food-assistance provider, WFP was usually the only agency working with all IDPs in West Africa. For this reason, its role in advocacy was paramount to protecting of IDPs and other war-affected groups.

WFP's advocacy was mostly focused on humanitarian response and the need for more durable solutions within broader coordination bodies. Staff in Côte d'Ivoire expressed frustration at the lack of inter-agency coordination for confronting IDP issues. They also identified the need for clear procedures for reporting protection issues to regional bureaux and Headquarters for follow up. Staff recognized the need for advocacy, but did not understand their own roles and had no tools or guidance to respond.

A major advocacy issue in West Africa was the forced recruitment of refugees and IDPs into armed groups. Although WFP staff had not witnessed forced recruitment, both refugees and partners reported it. Conscious of the issue's potential to destabilize the fragile peace process, WFP staff repeatedly brought these reports to the attention of UNHCR and other United Nations agencies in the region.

In spite of these efforts, it was observed that WFP's advocacy initiatives had been few and far between, and that WFP staff had been hesitant to advocate for beneficiaries' rights. This may have stemmed from a fear of compromising the principle of neutrality, or from a lack of information and tools for staff members to engage in advocacy.

152. The second part of this chapter highlights how training and tools have clarified WFP's response to protection issues.

IV. Evolution of thinking and approach in the region

Following the 2004 review of operations in West Africa, staff were sensitized to the concept of protection and its importance in food assistance. Training sessions included modules on international law, humanitarian principles, the do-no-harm approach, risk analysis, humanitarian negotiations and mainstreaming protection into WFP's projects. Workshops were conducted in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Training has since expanded to other countries West African countries including the Central African Republic, Chad and Mali.

In addition, 'do-no-harm' workshops educated 200 staff members in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia on how to prevent WFP assistance from negatively impacting beneficiaries. Workshop modules focused on how to assess the operational context and on how assistance and must not exacerbate conflict.

A survey on awareness of protection

The 2004 review in West Africa highlighted staff members' lack of knowledge about the meaning of protection; this was WFP's first initiative related to protection. The few staff members who understood the concept had previously worked for an organization with a protection mandate. Among other staff, the most common understanding was that protection was a function of staff security. The word 'protection' as used across different sectors is associated with physical safety – the act of covering or shielding from exposure, injury or damage. Many staff members continued to associate protection with staff security and have difficulty associating it with providing protection to beneficiaries.

In March 2010, a survey was conducted among 25 WFP staff in Guinea with various levels of protection experience using a questionnaire that explored their understanding and engagement with protection.[153] Although it was not fully representative, the survey provided a glimpse of how staff in the region understood WFP's role in protection. The same questionnaire was also distributed to protection focal points in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The majority of respondents were unable to provide a definition of protection similar to that of the IASC, which defines it as "all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law". The vagueness of respondents' definitions was perhaps less a result of their lack of training than the wide range of issues encompassed by the concept, including legal aspects. Protection activities can be so wide-ranging that it may be easier to define what protection does not include.

153. These staff included three protection focal points, seven staff members who had attended a protection workshop and 15 who had not been trained in protection.

WFP country-level protection focal points[154] reported that understanding protection was especially complicated because WFP's definition of protection differs from that of other United Nations agencies. In fact, each organization's concept of protection depends on its mandate and capacity.

For WFP, protection was neither a specific activity nor a broad checklist: it is a lens through which its operations are viewed. This lens was established through training and other support; it is subjective and open to differing opinions and perspectives. The variation in staff members' definitions of protection was best reflected in the individual definitions provided by protection focal points, which tended to be abstract. The majority of focal points used words such as "rights" and "obligations", or referred to beneficiaries' dignity and respect to define protection:

> *"Protection in my own personal view or definition is a way of ensuring dignity, respect and honour. It has to be maintained to allow the person to feel that they are protected."*

Some definitions were more specific:

> *"Protection means ensuring full respect for the basic rights of a people. In addition, it means responding to the different threats that may exist in a given environment."*

Only three of the 13 focal points provided specific definitions related to the do-no-harm approach. Their answers focused on avoiding beneficiary abuse by staff, awareness of how WFP can trigger protection threats and attention to beneficiaries' needs. However, the focal points' tendency to articulate an abstract understanding of protection did not reflect the degree to which a protection lens was used in West Africa.

V. The predominance of protection as 'doing no harm'

Adoption of the do-no-harm approach in WFP

Some aspects of protection had been fully embraced by staff in West Africa over the past five years. Research in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone shows that there was a clear commitment to protection in assistance designed to do-no-harm. Staff in the region demonstrated a deep awareness of the potential for aid to affect harm. Although WFP had not implemented many stand-alone protection activities in West Africa, staff members were attentive to mitigating the risks arising from activities such as registration, targeting and food distribution.

154. National protection focal points were designated as part of the training process to follow up on WFP's protection activities in the region.

The do-no-harm approach is only one aspect of protection, but it was easy for staff to relate this approach to their work because it focuses on practical recommendations and solutions. In Guinea, participants in a protection training-workshop were able to list many possible negative effects of WFP operations and find strategies for mitigating them.[155]

The dominance of the do-no-harm approach in West Africa was also a response to the 2002 sexual exploitation and abuse scandal. This scandal represented a major turning point in engagement with protection by demonstrating to staff the possible negative impacts of WFP's work. It also precipitated a new culture of self-reflection on the risks of humanitarian efforts. According to one humanitarian staff member, "We asked ourselves, 'are we really different from peacekeepers?' We lost the naivety attached with our identity."[156] This paved the way for increased awareness of the do-no-harm approach. The sexual exploitation and abuse scandal continues to impact the way humanitarians view protection in West Africa.

Box 6.3. Targeting in ethnically diverse communities

"In the west of Côte d'Ivoire where inter-ethnic conflict was a serious concern, WFP had to stop distribution. One of the field staff claimed that beneficiaries were being put in harm's way because of the manner in which WFP was doing its work. Upon closer inspection, it became clear that the food-insecure Burkinabe population also became targets of violent attacks because of WFP's assistance.

After the staff were trained in the do-no-harm approach, a closer analysis of the problem was conducted. We learned that we did not consider the existing ethnic tension. We assisted the Burkinabe population, the most vulnerable in the community, without giving assistance to the Ivorians in the community and not informing them and the larger community of WFP's intentions.

In future situations, we learned either to target both the groups in the community or to work on educating the non-aid recipient groups on the rationale behind WFP beneficiary selection."

Interview with Annarita Marcantonio, former WFP policy officer, March 2010

Focal points struggled to define the difference between protection and doing no harm. Many of them did not distinguish between the broader concept of protection and the do-no-harm approach. For example, one staff member argued:

> *"Do no harm is the first step of protection within WFP activities; the rights of the people who are being protected must not be violated. A protection activity seeks to prevent, restore and create an environment that, among other things, leads to respect for human beings."*

155. WFP. 2007. "Workshop on protection in WFP operations in Guinea: A Narrative Report, 22–24 May 2007".

156. Interview with Annarita Marcantonio, former WFP policy officer, protection trainer and advisor for West Africa, March 2010.

This confusion between the two concepts was clarified when thought and practice were compared. Protection focal points listed the protection concerns in the areas where they operated, including refugee treatment, access to education, youth instability, inadequate healthcare and female genital mutilation. However, when asked how they were addressing protection concerns, most described the protective practices associated with WFP's core activities, such as targeting, locating food distribution sites, monitoring and ensuring adequate beneficiary feedback mechanisms.[157] These measures hardly address the more fundamental protection concerns they described.

However, it would be simplistic to claim that WFP's engagement was focused solely on applying the do-no-harm approach. WFP was also engaged in a number of direct protection activities in the region.

In Sierra Leone, WFP assessed protection concerns and implemented protection activities related to land tenure, youth integration and resettlement. With the exception of the west, much of Sierra Leone's land is not owned by individuals, but held according to a hereditary system and administered by district chiefs. During the last three decades, young people were largely excluded from controlling land and relegated to working for the community elders or chiefs. This led to embitterment, resentment, and inter-generational tension.

In the past decade, the return of soldiers and IDPs has led to high demands for access to farmland. Progress has been made in allocating land to young people and women, but discriminatory practices remain. This discrimination provides fertile ground for social conflict, which can erupt into violence. WFP supported the work of the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) on negotiating access to land for youth through food-for-work activities. After rehabilitating a community's unused or overgrown land, food-for-work participants were awarded renewable short-term leases or permission to process produce, including cacao and palm oil, from their food-for-work activity. In Côte d'Ivoire, WFP's food assistance was an integral component of the UNICEF-led reintegration of child soldiers into their communities.

Responsibilities in protection: Does mandate matter?

Another factor influencing efforts to mainstream protection was the ambiguity of WFP's protection mandate. Clarifying WFP's responsibility for protection was important in defining the required actions of country office staff. The question posed in 2004 regarding WFP's role in the protection agenda remains relevant. As a humanitarian agency, what is the limit of WFP's responsibility regarding protection? How should WFP address protection concerns not directly linked to its own activities? What advocacy efforts should WFP engage in?

157. *Ibid*

Questions about WFP's protection mandate resurfaced at a 2005 protection workshop in Liberia, where 34 staff members were asked whether protection was beyond the bounds of WFP's mandate. None of the respondents agreed that protection was beyond WFP's mandate; 87 percent stated that it depends on the context and that WFP may lack the capacity to deal with protection issues; and 13 percent deemed protection to be clearly within WFP's mandate. The workshop report indicated that,

> *"…while most agree WFP should be involved in protection, they also agree that its role should be cautious and limited according to what it is capable of doing within its mandate: primarily programming with protection in mind and using presence to gather and share information."*[158]

The problem with discussing WFP's mandate is that its focuses more on the agency's identity and operations than on field-level concerns. As one West African country director stated, "we must at all costs avoid setting up a parallel system [of protection] to avoid stepping on the toes of other agencies."[159] Protection focal points also commented that WFP's role in protection clusters was often one of support and collaboration.

Other humanitarian actors perceived WFP as an indirect protection actor with a minor role and weakly defined identity within the larger milieu of the protection community. For example, hostility erupted during an interview with a UNHCR staff member when WFP's role in protection was mentioned, and it took substantial effort to convince the staff member that both organizations are involved in protection, albeit in different ways and with distinct roles.[160] Partners also mentioned that WFP: (i) had limited engagement in protection in the past; and (ii) lacked a specific protection mandate. One respondent reported that perceptions about WFP changed when members of the protection network understood WFP's unique responsibility in line with its mandate. However, by lacking a well-defined role in protection and focusing on protection concerns only related to its operations, WFP has received limited acceptance within the protection community.

158. WFP. 2005. "WFP Protection Workshop Report: Liberia".

159. Interview with Alain Cordeil, Côte d'Ivoire country director, 5 April 2010.

160. Interview with staff member in UNHCR's Kenema office, 21 October 2009.

VI. Conclusion

In 2004, the concept of protection had not yet been introduced within WFP, but protection-related activities were already part of its operations. Although WFP do not have a protection mandate, it was in a position of responsibility to protect its beneficiaries. Activities such as registration had protective features that could be harnessed as a tool for protecting vulnerable beneficiaries, as was seen in Guinea. In Liberia, the impetus to protect beneficiaries from sexual exploitation and abuse can be seen as a precursor to more direct engagement in protection, although efforts to ensure secure food distribution or advocate for IDPs' rights were ad hoc and lacked clear guidance.[161]

Protection is understood and practised in many ways depending on agencies' mandates, operational contexts and organizational capacities. In West Africa, most WFP staff associated protection with promoting beneficiaries' safety and dignity. In WFP's operations, protection was driven by the do-no-harm approach, which does not always address the causes of protection gaps.[162] Because WFP's responsibility for protection was not clear to staff, doubts remain regarding what can be achieved within inter-agency bodies such as the Protection Cluster. The lack of clear guidance on WFP's role in protection also hindered its engagement in this area.

As WFP continues to incorporate protection into its work, questions remain regarding how to: (i) apply a protection approach beyond doing no harm; and (ii) address causes of food insecurity that are linked to rights violations, such as in Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone.

161. While WFP's Strategic Plan and other policies provide clear policy guidance, putting policies into action requires guidelines and tools. In 2012, WFP's Executive Board adopted a policy on humanitarian protection: See WFP. 2012. "WFP Humanitarian Protection Policy" (WFP/EB.1/2012/5-B/Rev.1). Executive Board Document. Posted at www.wfp.org/eb.

162. Protection gaps exist when the dignity, safety and rights of individuals are not respected.

Chapter 7

Myanmar: Seeking protective outcomes through humanitarian assistance and local engagement

Gina Pattugalan and Ashley South

While the political situation in Myanmar is rapidly transforming, lingering protection problems have resulted in food insecurity and posed enormous challenges for humanitarian agencies assisting vulnerable populations. This chapter analyses how the protection crisis - resulting from systemic policies and practices, and individual behaviours - defined the operational environment of WFP's assistance in Myanmar. It also assesses the impact of WFP's activities on beneficiary protection and WFP's progress in maximizing its protective presence in the country.[163]

Because access to Myanmar's higher decision makers has been constrained, engagement in protection, including through policy dialogue and advocacy with the Government, by humanitarian and other international organizations has also been limited. However, WFP has shown that 'partial protection engagement' through non-threatening food assistance activities at the local level can pave the way for dialogue on protection issues with local authorities and can have a significant impact. By clearly advocating its neutral humanitarian objectives with local authorities and community members, WFP's has helped to build trust in the humanitarian community.

In the process, WFP has facilitated the expansion of humanitarian space in locations that were previously inaccessible. This access has facilitated partners' engagement in delivering food assistance and protection-related activities such as community capacity building and mobilization. At the same, WFP's investment in internal training and capacity-building has afforded its staff and partners the space to analyse protection concerns and design appropriate responses within the context of food assistance.

163. This chapter is based on case studies and workshops conducted in Myanmar between 2006 and 2010, prior to the transformational political changes that began in late 2010.

I. Communist and ethnic insurgencies: History of violence in Myanmar

Myanmar has a population of 52 million and with 135 ethnic groups; it is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in Southeast Asia. The remote, mountainous areas bordering Bangladesh, China, India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand are populated by ethnic minorities who have long suffered from conflict and marginalization. Although these border areas contain more than a third of the country's population and most of its natural resources, many communities remain desperately poor and have little prospect for sustainable development.

Figure 7.1. Myanmar

Since its independence in 1948, Myanmar has faced a series of communist and ethnic insurgencies. In 1962, the army seized power through a coup d'état. Since then, the military has dominated, but elements of civil society and a movement towards openness have begun to re-emerge over the past decade.[164]

Between 1989 and 1995, 24 ceasefires were negotiated between the military regime and armed groups. These agreements resulted in the creation of Special Regions, where non-state armed groups exercise varying degrees of control. By 2006, only two large insurgent organizations remained at war with the military government.[165]

Many villages in Myanmar can only be reached on foot or by boat; these villages lack access to basic services and markets. Living conditions have deteriorated as a result of inadequate government policies, population growth and conflict-induced population movements, which have put increased pressure on marginal lands.

Major international donors reduced development assistance to Myanmar following violent suppression of the 'democracy uprising' in 1988. Before August 2005, when

164. South, A. 2004. Political Transition in Burma: A New Model for Democratization. *Contemporary Southeast Asia* (26).

165. South, A. 2007. *Burma: The Changing Nature of Displacement Crises*. RSC Working Paper No. 39. Oxford UK, Refugee Studies Centre.

the United Nations Global Fund pulled out of Myanmar, development assistance totalled US$121 million per year.[166] Because of donors' reluctance to engage with the Government on long-term development, most foreign aid had been directed to humanitarian needs. Many projects had focused on Myanmar's increasing health problems, particularly the HIV/AIDS crisis.

II. The protection crisis in Myanmar

A climate of impunity and lack of accountability

The complexity of the protection crisis in Myanmar can be analysed on two levels: (i) individual-level abuses perpetuated by agents of armed groups that are reinforced by (ii) systemic factors and a climate of impunity. Examples of these abuses include arbitrary taxation of local communities, deliberate physical harm, confiscation or diversion of aid, and forced labour.

Systemic-level issues are driven by government policies and widespread exploitation by those in power at the national and local levels. Examples of systemic issues include:

- the military's supremacy over civilian governance structures, resulting in a lack of respect for citizens' rights;
- the process of 'Burmanization', leading to discrimination of non-Burmese ethnic minorities and rights abuses;
- restrictions on the movement of people and goods as a means of military control by the Government and non-state actors;
- forced displacement in order to alter demographic distribution or in connection with infrastructure projects such as hydroelectric dams;
- an export-oriented economic policy based on cash crops, leading to confiscation of communal lands for large-scale farming; and
- the exploitation of natural resources and infrastructure development, which rely on forced labour and disregard the socio-economic impact on communities (such as the flooding of agricultural lands for hydroelectric projects).

166. International Crisis Group. 2002. Myanmar: The Politics of Humanitarian Aid. *Asia Report* No. 32. Bangkok and Brussels.

Weak governance, a lack of accountability and a climate of impunity are systemic problems that impact authorities' willingness to respect individuals' basic rights such as those to adequate food and nutrition, health, education and justice.

The Government's interest in maintaining relations with non-state actors is another important factor in understanding the need for protection in Myanmar. In addition, most non-state groups aim to achieve a degree of local autonomy, albeit usually under the authority of elite groups. In southeast Myanmar, armed non-state groups continue to wage armed conflict, provoking brutal responses from the government military, including forced displacement of the population.

Non-state groups that have negotiated ceasefire agreements with the Government control designated territories. While some groups have attempted to promote development initiatives in the areas under their control, others are unable or unwilling to provide services or protect the people within their areas. Some of these groups are considered a cause of protection problems, including physical violations, deprivation of livelihoods through land confiscation, exorbitant taxation, control of markets and forced production of non-sustainable agricultural crops. They also engage in the recruitment of children into armed groups and forced displacement of communities.

Humanitarian impacts of the protection crisis

Communities in some areas of the country are particularly vulnerable to abuse and rights violations. In Kayah and Kayin States, an ongoing armed conflict has driven the displacement of people, the recruitment of children into armed groups, economic vulnerability and acute food insecurity. Many of Myanmar's most acutely vulnerable people live in these conflict-affected areas. In the Shan States, ineffective governance and economic policies have led to tensions regarding land and property, and coercive production practices.

The Palaung and Kachin minority groups – living in ceasefire zones that are controlled by armed groups – are often excluded from resources, services and decision-making. Other vulnerable groups in the Shan States include women, girls from minority groups (who are vulnerable to human trafficking) and those who have migrated in search of economic opportunities following the ban on opium cultivation.

In northern Rakhine State, the Rohingya community continues to endure repressive government policies. Members of this community are denied citizenship, freedom of movement, the rights to marry and have children, and the freedom to work. Women's movement is further curtailed by this male-dominated community's strict interpretation of Islam. Women are denied education and most are illiterate; many are subject to gender-based violence. Children are commonly required to provide free labour to the army and government authorities.

III. Expanding humanitarian space: A precursor for assistance

WFP's presence in Myanmar

WFP began operating in Myanmar in 1978 under the umbrella of UNHCR following the return of 200,000 Rohingyas from Bangladesh. By 1981, the majority of returnees had attained self-sufficiency and the operation was completed.

Following a wave of suppression in 1991 and 1992, 250,000 Muslim Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh. UNHCR repatriated most of them in the late 1990s. Those refugees who returned to northern Rakhine State suffered from protracted food deficits, widespread forced labour and other abuses. By mid-2007, 28,000 Rohingyas remained in refugee camps in Bangladesh; an additional 100,000 to 200,000 were living illegally in Bangladesh. WFP began a new operation in April 1994 to address food insecurity caused by the Government's repression of the Muslim Rohingyas and control of market access.

In late 2003, WFP began emergency food assistance to ex-poppy farmers in northern Shan State; its operations then expanded into other Special Regions in North and South Shan States. In the government-controlled region, WFP's activities since 2005 have focused on: protecting livelihoods through food-for-work programmes; promoting children's education; and supporting people living with HIV/AIDS. In northern Rakhine State, WFP negotiated its own agreement with the Government in 2004, paving the way for WFP to provide assistance either directly or through select NGOs. In 2008, WFP began providing food assistance in Kachin State. However, the Government continues to restrict WFP's access to areas experiencing armed conflict.

Fluctuating access and humanitarian space

The ability of humanitarian actors to address Myanmar's protracted protection crises is determined by the extent of their access and freedom of movement within the country. From late 2003 to September 2004, humanitarian space opened rapidly in Myanmar. Authorities' willingness to allow access to previously unreachable areas was a response to increased pressure following the Depayin incident of 30 May 2003.[167]

Myanmar's humanitarian space deteriorated again following the downfall of General Khin Nyunt and his military intelligence establishment in October 2004. This trend

167. On 30 May 2003, a government-organized mob attacked opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's motorcade as it approached Depayin village in Magway division, killing and injuring a many National League for Democracy supporters. Despite the international outcry, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest, where she remained until November 2010.

was reflected in a set of guidelines for United Nations agencies, international organizations and NGOs on cooperation in Myanmar, which required government officials to accompany the all United Nations international NGO staff on field missions, and a plan to scrutinize all new national staff of United Nations agencies and international NGOs.

The restrictions on humanitarian assistance in Myanmar further limited the presence of international organizations, making it more difficult to reach remote areas. Access to decision makers in the military government was also restricted, limiting international organizations' ability to engage in policy dialogue or advocacy with the Government.[168]

During this period however, WFP expanded its presence in Myanmar. Since it was able to establish offices where other agencies were not present, WFP played a pioneering role in breaking the isolation of conflict-affected areas. WFP also provided the humanitarian community in Myanmar with a window of opportunity for mitigating the protection threats and violations faced in remote villages.

WFP's increased reach was a positive indication of its capacity for dialogue with government actors and local authorities, including ceasefire groups. In line with this expansion, WFP continued to seek access to the most restricted areas for international and local NGOs. Through a memorandum of understanding with WFP, the Government allowed several NGOs to provide humanitarian assistance. WFP also designed a tracking system for recording the number of partners' requests for access denied each month. This information has been useful for advocacy with local authorities. WFP has also been proactive in facilitating staff and partners' applications for local identification cards and extended travel authorizations.

Advocacy and dialogue

Quiet diplomacy has been complemented by public advocacy from WFP Headquarters and the regional bureau for Asia. Concerns include children's nutrition and restrictions on the movement of food within the country. Former WFP Regional Director for Asia Tony Banbury stated in October 2007 that::

> *"Humanitarian assistance is presently unable to meet the needs of the people of Myanmar and the Myanmar Government must undertake immediate critical reforms for the benefit of the country's desperately poor and needy people… Myanmar and its people have tremendous potential. But the government's policies, its harsh travel and trade restrictions unnecessarily trap millions in lives of poverty and malnutrition, even in food-surplus areas such as Shan State."* [169]

168. This constrained environment was illustrated by the expulsion of the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in November 2007.

169. WFP. October 2007. Humanitarian Aid Not Enough for Myanmar's Poor. http://www.wfp.org/news/news-release/humanitarian-aid-not-enough-myanmars-poor-un-official. (last accessed 1 June 2012).

In September 2007, as a result of public unrest following civil protest led by monks, the Government restricted the movement of food. WFP's Executive Director expressed concern that the unrest in Myanmar could impede efforts to feed 500,000 people.

WFP has had some success in opening dialogue with local authorities, especially regarding its activities and protection issues impacting beneficiary communities' food security. The presence of WFP staff and WFP-facilitated visits of international actors not only helped to expand humanitarian space but demonstrated that the international community is watching events in Myanmar.

In areas where WFP has been implementing assistance, such as in northern Rakhine State, there have been additional opportunities for visibility, advocacy and dialogue. For example, WFP staff members have informally negotiated with authorities to ease restrictions on the movement of goods. They have also successfully persuaded village leaders and mullahs to allow women to participate in WFP activities, and girls to attend school.

WFP's presence, together with its partnership with NGOs, has created a positive impact in these communities. Many of WFP's partners have provided their own essential services in addition to implementing WFP activities. Some apply rights-based and participatory approaches to identify and mobilize marginalized groups. They have also helped to build the capacity of minority groups, providing an element of diversity in the locus of power.

WFP and its partners have contributed to consolidating the ceasefire agreements in Special Regions and creating opportunities for extending peace-making into 'peace-building'. In Wa State, the presence of WFP and its partners in monthly consultations between authorities and humanitarian actors has facilitated communication between local authorities and the Government's Ministry for Progress of Border Areas.

Missions organized by WFP in collaboration with other humanitarian agencies have provided the isolated Wa State with exposure to the world beyond. Local NGOs and community groups such as the Women's Welfare Association, WFP-inspired food management committees, village development committees and the Kachin Baptist Convention have strengthened capacity to implement activities and increased their influence. Through WFP-supported programmes in Kachin, local NGOs have established extensive networks within their communities. These local groups have important roles in areas where community mobilization has not been impossible for some time.

Under its 2012 PRRO, WFP has sought to promote community-level conflict resolution through projects aimed at sharing community resources. In an ethnically divided and resource-starved society, encouraging communities to share public goods and spaces such as school premises and water is an important a means for strengthening community dialogue and cohesion.

Perceptions of neutrality

As a norm, WFP employs beneficiary targeting methods that are neutral and impartial, and that accurately reflect needs. Since resource constraints preclude WFP from assisting all marginalized communities in Myanmar, there was a perception that WFP lacked neutrality in its assistance, particularly in the opium-growing areas. This perception was exacerbated by need to seek government clearance for access – a standard requirement for WFP's operations in all countries. In some areas in Myanmar, the Government has used international assistance to reward its clients, while other vulnerable communities have been denied assistance if their leaders do not support Government policy.

WFP's entry into the Special Regions in the Shan States in 2003 – following a ban on opium production that resulted in widespread food insecurity – was regarded by many as an extension of the Government's efforts to consolidate control in semi-autonomous areas. WFP was permitted to operate in former poppy-growing areas controlled by ceasefire groups whose leadership supported the Government. However, the Government prohibited WFP from working in other ex-poppy-growing areas where local leaders had attempted to challenge the Government. This situation highlights the importance of understanding the local context in order to safeguard WFP's neutrality and gain access to all food-insecure communities impartially.

IV. Food assistance and protection

Although Myanmar is technically a food-surplus country, large portions of the population face food shortages as a result of poor governance, tight control over the movement of goods and people, and ongoing armed conflict.

Preventing hunger

In the Special Regions of the Shan States, the impact of food assistance on ex-poppy growing households has been significant. In recent decades, opium production has been an important crop for many households. Communities in these remote, conflict-affected areas often have access to only basic services and markets. WFP's food-for-work activities and provision of non-food items have helped to build an infrastructure for sustainable non-opium-based livelihoods. Improvements include village access roads, land terracing and sloping, and irrigation canals. WFP has also implemented land-development activities that benefit communities and strengthen local people's access to farmland such as in Wa State. Unfortunately, like most interventions of international organizations in Myanmar's former opium-growing areas, WFP's assistance focused on short-term food needs.

Box 7.1. Linking protection gaps with food insecurity

Although Myanmar is a food-surplus country, the majority of the population is food insecure. Hunger stems from restrictions placed on the movement of goods and people, and top-down economic policies that reduce opportunities for communities to create sustainable livelihoods. WFP's food-assistance programmes in Myanmar aim to fill the 'food gap' faced by marginalized communities and to develop sustainable livelihoods. It is therefore fundamental that WFP's food assistance addresses the protection issues that impact vulnerable families' ability to attain food security. .

WFP-Myanmar, Quarterly Newsletter, November 2007

In northern Rakhine State, where movement and livelihood opportunities are severely restricted, the Government allows WFP, UNHCR and a handful of international NGOs to provide services; the Rohingyas living in this area have few alternative sources of food or income. During the monsoon and lean seasons when food insecurity is greatest, WFP's assistance provides much-needed protection. An independent assessment of hunger in Myanmar noted the important role of WFP's food assistance in saving lives, adding that, "…in 2005, during the hunger gap coinciding with the monsoon season, a major humanitarian disaster was averted, thanks to direct food relief distributed by WFP."[170]

In addition to positive engagement with beneficiaries, the prompt delivery of assistance helps to establish trust among local stakeholders, and can be used as leverage in WFP's discussion of other protection issues. The importance of this assistance was demonstrated when WFP was unable to deliver food in a timely manner because the Government failed to issue authorization. Households in northern Rakhine State experienced significant food shortages, resulting in a high level of indebtedness. Pipeline breaks, which occurred frequently, undermined beneficiaries' trust in WFP, affecting staff security.

Frustrated beneficiaries repeatedly threatened food monitors during a 2005 delay in rice distribution in northern Rakhine State. On one occasion, beneficiaries awaiting WFP rice rations held a UNHCR staff member hostage (they mistook this individual for WFP staff). As a result, WFP food monitors were unwilling to visit beneficiary communities because they feared assault. Women food monitors were afraid to travel accompanied.

170. Lewa, C. 2006. *Northern Arakan/Rakhine State: a Chronic Emergency*. Paper delivered at the Burma/Myanmar Forum, Brussels, 29 March 2006.

Food for work

WFP's food-for-work activities aimed at constructing roads between villages have improved access to markets and health facilities, while school construction has improved the quality of education and created a sense of ownership of community assets. Dialogue with authorities in the Wa Special Region has resulted in a guarantee that any agricultural land improved with WFP's support shall remain in community hands and be excluded from large-scale commercial activities. Such initiatives have strengthened communities' livelihoods in the wake of increasing confiscation of agricultural lands for large plantations and the expansion of military bases. This approach also has helped to secure land rights in previously lawless areas.

Evidence suggests that WFP's food-for-work activities have helped communities to establish a model for paid and voluntary labour schemes.[171] However, food-for-work projects do not appear to have encouraged the authorities to abandon forced labour, especially when undertaking large projects or activities with direct benefits for those in power. In fact, the forced labour imposed in Wa and northern Rakhine States has often resulted in a suspension of food-for-work projects because participants were not available. For example, in November 2008, WFP's implementing partner in northern Wa State had to suspend its projects as a result of local authorities' use of forced labour for road renovations. WFP has initiated dialogue with local authorities to guarantee that local communities could participate in food-for-work activities and not be engaged in forced labour.

School feeding

WFP's school feeding has increased school attendance in Myanmar, especially among girls. Compared with their mothers, the literacy rate among Rohingya girls has considerably improved. Indirectly, school feeding has removed children from the labour market, made them less vulnerable to military recruitment, allowed them to access public-health information through schools and ultimately safeguarded their right to education. WFP's support to schools in local languages helped to preserve local cultures, but may also have reinforced divisions between non-Burman communities and the dominant Bamar ethnic group; while support to government schools may also have reinforced the state-led assimilation or 'Burmanization' of minority communities.

V. Creative protection responses: Lessons from the Myanmar experience

Beginning with a situation analysis and review of protection concerns within its operations, WFP has engaged in building staff capacity to deal with protection issues related to food assistance. Since 2005, all WFP staff and most local NGO

171. *Ibid.*

partners have received training on the concept of protection and how it is linked to food insecurity and hunger. This process has helped staff and partners to understand communities' concerns from a protection perspective, and has challenged them to examine how delivering food assistance can reduce protection risks. Educating staff has been a major step in integrating protection into WFP's assistance.

The result of this learning process has been an emergence of creative thinking regarding strategies for responding to protection concerns, especially those linked with food insecurity and hunger. These strategies take into account each region's unique situation, including authorities, ethnic compositions, geographies, economics and cooperating partners' roles. They also capitalize on dialogue with local authorities to support livelihoods and achieve more sustainable impacts. Some of the examples of WFP's objectives in dialogue with local authorities are listed below.

- Communities should be allowed to undertake mixed cropping in order to mitigate the consequences of the government-mandated planting of particular crops. This has been combined with advocacy among actors concerned with the negative impacts of large-scale commercial plantations on the environment and food security.

- WFP supports the removal of taxes on households' agricultural production in WFP-supported paddy land terraces, to ensure that support to local communities does not increase funding to armed groups or authorities.

- In the face of widespread land confiscation, communities' should enjoy communal use and custody of any land improved in food-for-work activities such as reforestation and paddy land terracing.

- Community participation in WFP's food-for-work activities should be maximized in order to protect beneficiaries from forced labour, especially in Wa State.

- Community agroforestry should be expanded in Kachin to increase food production and protect the land against encroachment by Chinese-sponsored agribusinesses.

In addition to negotiating with the Government, WFP has undertaken several protective activities, including:

- dissemination of messages on human trafficking to food-management committees assisted by school feeding, such as in Kokang;

- monthly reporting and information sharing with district and township authorities to enhance communication, build trust and secure better humanitarian access, especially in Wa State;

- mobilizing NGO partners, government officials, international organizations and local authorities to promote clear, standard procedures for land certification and to understand local obstacles to land tenure;

- designing food-for-work activities related to farmland development and securing authorities' commitment to land certification as a strategy for preventing communities from losing access to land; and

- designing food-for-training activities and supporting income-generating activities for women in communities where gender discrimination prevails, such as in Paulung communities in Kokang and Wa, and Muslim communities in northern Rakhine State.

Food assistance activities and dialogue with protection objectives have been implemented using tools for mainstreaming protection into programming. These include the protection checklist, which provides simple guidance to mitigate the negative impacts of food assistance; the checklist has been translated into local languages and disseminated to partners. WFP designed a simple reporting format for field-level agreements in which for partners can inform WFP about protection concerns raised during their operations. Protection-related variables were not incorporated into vulnerability assessment or monitoring: this risked compromising staff and beneficiary security through what authorities may consider the collection of political information.

In Myanmar's complex and often restrictive operational environment, WFP has made progress in promoting the protection of local populations. Many factors have shaped this role for WFP and may be applicable in other countries where WFP operates.

WFP has made significant efforts to expand humanitarian space in Myanmar by using its resources to pursue dialogue with local authorities. WFP's presence has also benefited the larger international community by facilitating local authorities' acceptance of United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors. Equally important is WFP's partnership and dialogue with local NGOs, which enjoy access to remote areas and information about local dynamics; they are also often the first to witnesses protection problems. Future advances in protection, especially community outreach, will depend upon partnerships with NGOs.

Since 2006, WFP has made a significant investment in increasing staff and partners' awareness of protection and its links with food insecurity. WFP has undertaken annual training on protection for its staff and cooperating partners. This capacity-building initiative has provided WFP staff and partners the space to analyse relevant protection issues and design appropriate responses within the context of food assistance. They have also been crucial for WFP's recognition of the value of a protection lens in improving its impact.

Chapter 8

Communicating with local partners: Protective programming in Colombia

Jacqueline Cavalcante, Michael Kaethler and Liana Simmons

Informal social circles and *ad hoc* social arrangements with local partners are often immensely valuable as means to protect crisis-affected populations. They provide a deeper knowledge of field-level realities that helps to ensure safe and dignified delivery of assistance. This chapter takes stock of WFP's use of information from informal networks to support its food-assistance operations for conflict affected areas of Colombia, and offers best practices for protecting beneficiary communities.

Between 1985 and 2005, 1.8 to 3 million people were displaced in Colombia, the highest number of internal displacements in the Western hemisphere and second highest globally.[172] Forced displacement has continued to be the most urgent humanitarian problem in Colombia.

The internal conflict in Colombia was rooted in its history of colonial Spanish rule, unresolved agrarian reform issues and a capture of resources by the elite. The conflict spanned more than four decades, beginning in 1948 with *La Violencia*, a ten-year civil war that claimed more than 200,000 lives. Violence intensified with the emergence of armed revolutionary groups in the 1960s. Guerrilla groups such as the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia; FARC) and the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Army; ELN) promoted an agenda of agrarian, economic and political reform, which they believed would benefit marginalized people.

In the 1980s, the conflict was exacerbated by the drug trade and escalated into a violent struggle for economic and territorial control. Trade in narcotics brought two new participants into the ongoing conflict: the drug cartels and the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia; AUC), a collection of right-wing paramilitary groups that became the main rival of FARC. Many believed that guerrilla groups had transformed into criminal enterprises as their political agendas were replaced by economic interests. In 2002, failed attempts to negotiate peace with FARC led Colombia's President Alvaro

172. Glusker, A. (ed.) 2007. *Internal Displacement Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2006*. Geneva, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and Norwegian Refugee Council.

Uribe to combat the insurgents with military force through a policy known as 'democratic security'.[173]

In Colombia, forced displacement was seen as a deliberate conflict strategy rather than a by-product of war. It occurred when armed groups sought to establish control over strategic territories, expand narcotics cultivation or take possession of land. Civilians were forced to flee as a result of attacks and assassinations that often targeted community leaders, including kidnapping, illegal detention, torture, extortion and forced recruitment. Colombia's vulnerability to natural disasters compounded the crisis as IDP populations were resettled in areas prone to flooding, landslides and earthquakes.

In May 2006, WFP was operating in 50 percent of Colombia's departments, mainly with IDPs.[174] Its PRRO targeted 500,000 beneficiaries but assisted more than 700,000 per year. Of these, 366,000 were newly displaced households that received a six-month food ration. Urban areas – ranging from small towns to large cities – received 80 percent of food distributed.

I. Drawing from formal and informal partnerships and networks

Partnerships and networks are an important part of WFP's protective programming. In countries like Colombia, where the dynamics of conflict and internal displacement are fluid, partnerships play a crucial role in providing accurate and up-to-date information for humanitarian assistance and protection.

Box 8.1. Partnership in practice

Through its monitoring efforts, the Colombian Red Cross was informed about several communities in Chocó that had been displaced following clashes between guerrillas and paramilitary forces. This information was passed on to the WFP sub-office in Quibdó, which sent an informal verification mission to the area. The mission took stock of the situation and issued a decision on how best to intervene. This initiative was carried out in a matter of days, without bringing undue attention to displaced people.

173. Congressional Research Service. 2005. Plan Colombia: A Progress Report. Washington DC, United States Library of Congress. Posted at: www.ndu.edu/library/docs/crs/crs_rl32774_09may05.pdf#search=%22Plan%20Patriota%22 (last accessed 13 July 2012).

174. In May 2006, WFP conducted a field study and staff workshop in Colombia to understand its role in this protracted conflict and explore the protective role of food assistance in Latin America.

Reading the context through informal networks

In addition to formal arrangements with partners such as the *Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar* (Colombian Family Welfare Institute) and the Pastoral Society of the Catholic Church, WFP also has many informal arrangements with a range of partners in Colombia. In 2006, WFP had 1,300 partners throughout the country. These informal networks were instrumental in building WFP's knowledge of local contexts and strengthening its work, including its unstated role in protection. For example, in Medellín and Chocó, WFP staff noted that the main sources of information on blockaded or resistance communities were WFP's NGO and CBO partners. In both departments' capitals, informal partner networks acted as reliable early-warning systems. Community-level partners regularly communicated essential information on IDP issues. These networks also decided how to handle sensitive issues (in order to avoid over-publicizing them) and respond appropriately.

The importance of informal social capital cannot be underestimated. These partners represented a collective effort to ensure that IDP concerns were addressed in a timely manner. They also helped to bridge the information gap in areas where formal data collection was impossible.

Maintaining access through partnerships

The frequency of violence and the unpredictable humanitarian situation in Colombia threatened WFP's access to IDPs and restricted communities. Despite security constraints however, WFP maintained more than 1,000 distribution points in Colombia, which allowed for a range of geographic entry points. This was largely a product of WFP's reputation among state and non-state actors. Discussions with beneficiaries and partners indicated that WFP was perceived as a neutral actor providing humanitarian assistance that was needed by displaced populations. WFP staff reported that their high degree of access was the result of efforts to build confidence and relationships with beneficiaries and NGO partners.

As Colombia's volatile security situation continued, WFP relied on good communication with local partners and communities. Local groups played an important role in helping WFP staff to decide when to enter an area and understanding local challenges such as the probability of combat, the presence of armed actors and the obstruction of roads. Since WFP does not negotiate with armed groups, listening to communities reinforced the perception of its neutrality, allowing access to otherwise unreachable areas. Communities and partners also had a role in ensuring WFP staff safety, while contributing to their own protection by helping WFP staff to avoid unnecessary risk.

In order to deliver food to remote locations, WFP contracted national transport enterprises, which relied on local drivers who were familiar with the areas. Armed groups were reported to keep lists of 'acceptable' drivers and these were sometimes

the only drivers granted access to communities in insecure areas. WFP's collaboration with local drivers was often the only way to access vulnerable communities.

Targeting and registration in a politicized context

One of the most commonly mentioned risks in Colombia was the pressure on humanitarian staff from local authorities when targeting beneficiaries – and the possibility that they would provide staff with incomplete or misleading information. This risk stemmed from the concern that humanitarian assistance would reinforce power structures within communities or social groups while weakening the position of other groups. It was also related to armed actors' tight control over communities' resources. This was well known and documented in many areas of Colombia: armed actors sought to achieve social hegemony in order to maintain their power.[175]

The most commonly used systems for tracking and registering IDPs included: *Acción Social's Sistema Único de Registro* (SUR; Unique Registration System);[176] the *Registro Unico Tributario* (RUT; Unique Tax Register) managed by the Episcopal Conference; and the System of Registration of Services provided by ICRC.

Government and civil-society partners pointed out that all of these systems had problems, but SUR's failure to register all IDPs was the most notable. There were many reasons for these omissions. Some newly resettled IDPs were afraid of registering because they wished to hide their displacement to avoid attacks by armed groups. Other IDPs had fled from areas where illegal crops were cultivated and did not wish to be stigmatized as coca producers. Interviews with IDPs in Medellín revealed lists of displaced people who were considered guerrilla sympathizers.

As a result of difficulties in targeting IDPs for assistance, WFP resorted to alternative strategies following recommendations by partners, community members and staff. These included the use of community kitchens – some especially for children and woman-headed households.[177] Selection of beneficiaries of WFP in these kitchens was based on need alone and not on displacement status.

In Quibdó, where IDPs made up a significant part of the population, targeting included the host population. This safeguarded IDPs' anonymity and alleviated the tension between IDPs and host communities. In Soachá, children from both

175. CINEP and Justicia y Paz. no date. *Comuna 13: la otra Version.* www.nocheyniebla.org/com1301.htm (last accessed 4 November 2006) provides a case study as an example.

176. *Acción Social* was formerly known as *Red de Solidaridad Social.*

177. WFP. 2005. "Targeting in Emergencies Case Study: Colombia 24 May–7 June 2005".

displaced and host communities attended the same community schools and benefited equally from school feeding programmes. The targeting of registered and non-registered IDPs, and host communities avoided tensions between communities, promoting a protective environment.

Although broad targeting was justifiable in this case, WFP faced significant challenges in identifying the neediest people and providing appropriate food assistance. There were also challenges in monitoring and obtaining updates on the security situation, which often influenced how WFP carried out its activities. In addition to institutional registers such as SUR and RUT lists, WFP relied upon NGO partners to shape its targeting criteria. Informal social networks helped WFP to overcome challenges in targeting the most vulnerable people. Combining institutional and social networks strengthened WFP's ability to verify beneficiary data and improved the accuracy of targeting in insecure areas.

II. Flexible programming

In response to Colombia's changing humanitarian context and diverse regional conditions, WFP became flexible and adept at modifying its operations, relying on real-time information from partners and informal networks. The use of local knowledge and adaptation to changing political circumstances enabled WFP to promote the protection of local people while providing food assistance.

Adapting food-distribution methods to local contexts

It was crucial in Colombia for WFP to analyse communities' coping mechanisms. Some communities entered into direct negotiations with armed groups for access to their fields, fishing areas or markets, and even to allow WFP access to their communities. If WFP staff were not aware of such arrangements, they might have put communities at risk. To the greatest extent possible, WFP staff needed to remain aware of each community's unique dynamics.

In addition, by opting not to maintain warehouses in or near targeted communities, WFP protected these communities from interference by armed groups searching for food. It also ensured beneficiaries' safe access to food by establishing distribution points close to communities. However, distributions did not take place if there were armed actors in or around distribution points; distribution dates were flexible and changed when the security situation deteriorated. This required flexible logistics and up-to-date information from community members and local partners. On other occasions, food distribution was planned on very short notice: this was only possible by maintaining good relationships with a variety of partners.

Box 8.2. Improving monitoring through cooperating partners

When beneficiaries are geographically dispersed and access is constrained, maintaining partnerships with local community groups becomes especially valuable. Local groups open up a channel for establishing a knowledge base and forge stronger communication, ultimately leading to a better grasp of local security and access constraints.

In areas with armed groups linked to the drug trade, food donations from some countries were met with suspicion.[178] WFP food bags were often labelled with the donor country flag or name, which made it difficult for partners to pass through military checkpoints; these bags were routinely opened for inspection by armed groups. WFP and its partners used unmarked food bags or food donated by countries that armed groups viewed as neutral. For this reason, food from several donors was stored in warehouses, allowing WFP to choose the most appropriate bag for sensitive areas.

Some WFP assistance was also 'de-branded' at distribution sites. IDPs preferred this anonymity because they feared being singled out by host communities. At these sites, food was distributed in black unmarked garbage bags.[179] Such precautionary measures ensured the protection of vulnerable IDPs in delicate security situations.

III. Conclusion

The rapidly changing needs and security of beneficiaries warrant increased attention to patterns of information flow and flexibility in partnerships. WFP's experience in Colombia highlights the dynamic nature of information exchange and the importance of partners to WFP's activities. WFP should explore how information from multiple sources can be validated. This also facilitates a credible advocacy role for WFP without compromising its reputation or the safety of beneficiaries and partners. Finally, WFP's experience in facing protection challenges through informal networks brings to light a broader issue: the often insular nature of international organizations working with local networks. The cooperation between international organizations and local partners demands trust, transparency and accountability for information sharing aimed at addressing beneficiaries' real needs.

178. IOM reported an incident in which armed actors denied access to a delivery of United States-marked food bags.

179. Discussion with staff of *Ayuda Humanitaria* (Humanitarian Aid) in Medellín, May 2006.

Part 3
Natural Disaster Contexts

Chapter 9

Responding to insecurity and violence during food distribution in Karamoja, Uganda

An Michels and Gina Pattugalan

For more than 40 years, WFP was the only United Nations agency responding to recurrent food insecurity in Uganda's north-eastern Karamoja region. Early responses to food insecurity involved single interventions designed to mitigate the worst effects of recurrent natural disasters. After 2000, the frequency and extent of these interventions increased with rising food insecurity as a result of drought, declining agricultural production, loss of livestock and ongoing tribal conflicts. In 2008, there were reports of food grabbing and stealing, stampedes and assaults on beneficiaries at food-distribution sites in Karamoja.

The violence at distribution points prompted WFP to assess the protection risks faced by beneficiaries and the wider community, and their causes. This chapter highlights how gaps in assistance delivery can unintentionally provoke violence in situations that are already rife with tensions. The research team described one scene in its report:

> *"On 15 November 2008, the team arrived towards the end of the distribution. There were hundreds of people at the site, many of them young boys and men. Around 15 soldiers of the Ugandan People's Defence Forces (UPDF) were present to assist with crowd control, although there were no visible organized measures such as fences in place. Bags of WFP food were piled up and volunteers of a local NGO were calling women, grouped by parish, to come forward to hand them their monthly ration.*
>
> *The distribution took place in chaos: groups of mainly young men were constantly trying to raid the piles to steal the bags. As a reaction, volunteers and UPDF soldiers caned anyone who would come too close to the bags, causing panic among bystanders, who would disperse into even more unmanageable chaos.*
>
> *One pile of around 20 to 25 bags remained untouched and guarded by two soldiers. We were told by bystanders that the pile was the share kept aside for the local authorities, present at the site.*

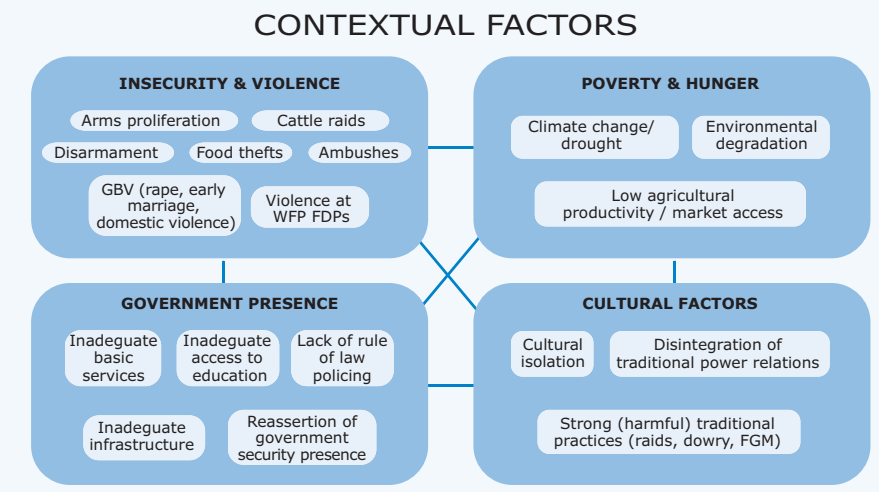
> *Towards the end of the distribution, the tension at the site was rising and a fight broke out between men, with one person injured on the head. In the struggle, a gun went off and a few seconds later soldiers started to shoot in the air and over the heads of people. We left the site, having observed that our presence has no impact at all on the behaviour of people at the site. We did not hear any follow-up report indicating more injuries."*

Based on recommendations from the assessment, protection measures were incorporated into an emergency plan (EMOP) for Karamoja in 2009. These included: the recruitment of new international NGOs as implementing partners; a region-wide registration and verification process; sensitization on protection at distribution sites; increased involvement of local leaders while decreasing their control over food distributions; exclusion of the army and police at distribution points; and protection training for WFP and partner staff. These measures provided remarkable results: safe, fair, transparent and organized distributions, with less mistrust of local leaders. The measures also mitigated the risk of the intervention leading to increased social unrest. These efforts underscored the benefits of understanding beneficiaries' changing needs and seeking opportunities for altering patterns of conflict.

I. The dynamics of insecurity in Karamoja

Protection risks in Karamoja were the result of many factors, as illustrated in Figure 9.1. Analysis was necessary for understanding the escalating tensions at food distribution sites and finding measures that could stop the violence and prevent it from recurring in the future.

Figure 9.1. The humanitarian environment in Karamoja



FDP = food distribution point; FGM = female genital mutilation; GBV = gender-based violence.

Poverty and hunger

Karamoja's climate is characterized by extended periods of drought and erratic rainfall. In past years, the agropastoralist population adapted to these unpredictable weather patterns through a dual system of animal ownership and farming around permanent settlements.[180] The climate pattern has led to a decrease in crop diversity and limited cattle-grazing areas, resulting in fewer heads of healthy livestock and diminished milk production.[181] Fertile areas have shrunk and farmers suffered two consecutive poor harvests in 2007 and 2008.[182] In April 2007, a WFP emergency food-security assessment classified 75 percent of households in Karamoja as food-insecure. Global acute malnutrition rates exceeded the emergency threshold in Abim, Kaabong and Kotido.[183]

In addition, to climatic changes, cattle and food raids have reportedly increased. A group of young Karamajong interviewed by the research team admitted participating in food raids and other forms of violence: "Hunger pushes us to cause havoc. Attacking other *manyattas* (settlements) is the only way to survive".[184]

Many people in Karamoja are forced to rely on coping mechanisms such as migration to urban areas, early marriage and more intensive firewood collection and charcoal burning. Together with overgrazing of pasturelands, the use of charcoal as fuel has exacerbated environmental degradation and made farming more difficult. Widespread poverty and lack of economic opportunities have further undermined the population's resilience, fuelling violence.

Insecurity and violence

In Karamoja, cattle rustling or raiding was traditionally used to redistribute wealth and food, acquire bride price and form alliances.[185] In the 1970s however, the number of raids increased and attacks became more violent. These changes were triggered by the proliferation of small arms, the waning role of traditional leaders and the disappearance of rituals that regulated the raids. Increased food insecurity and a shift towards commercial raiding and sale of stolen livestock also

180. WFP. 2007. "Emergency Food Security Assessment of Karamoja Region".

181. Personal communications with staff of Oxfam and other NGOs, Kotido, Uganda, 12 November 2008; and WFP. 2008. "PRRO Uganda 10121.2" (WFP/EB.1/2008/9/3). Executive Board Document. Posted at www.wfp.org/eb.

182. WFP. 2008. "Synthesis of Food Security Situation in Karamoja Using Integrated Food Security Phase Classification".

183. WFP. 2008. "PRRO Uganda 10121.2" (WFP/EB.1/2008/9/3). Executive Board Document. Posted at www.wfp.org/eb..

184. Focus group discussion with men in Nakapiripirit, 11 November 2008.

185. Agade Mkutu, K. 2007. Small Arms and Light Weapons among Pastoral Groups in the Kenya-Uganda Area. *African Affairs*, 106(102): pp. 47–70.

impacted the population's security.[186] As raiding patterns changed, the availability of arms created a vicious circle of violence. Tension and fear affected all aspects of peoples' lives, including their livelihood strategies.[187]

Fear of attacks by enemy groups or criminals drastically limited freedom of movement and hampered development in the region. Men and women feared venturing too far out of *manyattas* to farm, collect firewood or travel to markets. Even schools were unsafe and communities were not able to protect themselves.[188] According to one woman respondent:

> *"Before, our men would protect us if we would go to the field. Now they can't. They are as vulnerable as we are and they run away, just like us, when something happens. It often happens that women are harassed, undressed or raped when they go far outside the manyatta to collect firewood. To protect ourselves, we go in groups, and we scream very loud when something happens, to warn the others."*[189]

In an effort to contain the violence, Ugandan's Government launched a disarmament campaign. While disarmament decreased the violence, it did not address the underlying causes.[190] In addition, it was implemented unevenly, leaving communities that had agreed to disarm unprotected from attacks by neighbouring groups that remained armed.

Cultural factors

Traditional practices related to marriage, the use of livestock and the structure of *manyattas* and *kraals* (villages) have been part of life in Karamoja for generations. These traditions provided protection from the harsh climate, food scarcity and decreases in livestock. Communities shared food and cattle, with a complex system of age classes regulating the handover of power held by male elders.

For many years, Karamoja was culturally isolated from the rest of Uganda. Infrastructure and public services were inadequate, and insecurity made cultural

186. For a detailed analysis of the evolution of armed raiding, see Stites, E., Akabwai, D.Mazurana, D. and Ateyo, P. 2007. *Angering Akuju: Survival and Suffering in Karamoja*, pp. 55–77. Somerville, Massachusetts, Tufts University, Feinstein International Center.

187. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

188. Focus group discussions with women and men beneficiaries in Bokoro, Nakaaland and Kalapata; and meeting with partners in Moroto, November 2008.

189. Focus group discussion with women in Bokoro, 10 November 2008.

190. Stites, E., Akabwai, D., Mazurana, D. and Ateyo, P. 2007. *Angering Akuju: Survival and Suffering in Karamoja*, pp. 64–72. Somerville, Massachusetts, Tufts University, Feinstein International Center; and personal communication with OHCHR officer in Moroto, 11 November 2008.

exchange with other groups difficult. Although education was seen as a tool for assimilation, many Karamajong viewed it as an irrelevant government policy. As a result, enrolment and the quality of education remained low.[191]

Isolation helped to preserve the traditional power structure, but younger community members are now challenging their elders' authority while many elders believe they are losing control over their communities. This change was highlighted by a group of men in one community: "It is not like it was before. We no longer have real authority in our community. We try to set up a dialogue with the youth, but they don't listen to us."[192]

Traditionally, power was transferred from one generation to another when there was peace and a sufficient harvest. These conditions have not existed in recent years, preventing the ceremonies necessary for traditional handover from taking place.[193] Young men are increasingly manifesting their frustration through cattle raiding and ambushes.[194]

Government interventions

Successive Ugandan governments marginalized the Karamoja Region, leaving it with the lowest development and humanitarian indicators in Uganda, weak institutions and minimal livelihood support.[195] Regional policies focused on restricting the movement of pastoralists and removing small arms.[196] Development and education initiatives often failed because of a lack of trust in the government, a lack of qualified and civil servants and a failure to consider Karamoja's unique culture. Measures to improve the low literacy rate were unsuccessful for many years.

In addition, efforts to build local government institutions, including the election of local councils, had limited success owing to the lack of trust in elected officials, and because this administrative system was set up in parallel with the existing customary system.[197]

191. Stites, E. 2007. *Out-Migration, Return and Resettlement in Karamoja*. Somerville, Massachusetts, Tufts University, Feinstein International Center.

192. Focus-group discussion with men in Nakapiripirit, 11 November 2008.

193. Stites, E. 2007. *Out-Migration, Return and Resettlement in Karamoja*. Somerville, Massachusetts, Tufts University, Feinstein International Center.193. Focus group discussion with women in Bokoro, 10 November 2008.

194. Meeting with WFP staff of Moroto and Kotido sub-offices, 8 November 2008.

195. Human Rights Watch. 2007. *Get the Gun! Human Rights Violations by Ugandan National Army in Law Enforcement Operations in Karamoja*. Posted at: www.hrw.org/en/node/10693/section/1 (last accessed 23 May 2012).

196. Stites, E. 2007. *Out-Migration, Return and Resettlement in Karamoja*, p. 19. Somerville, Massachusetts, Tufts University, Feinstein International Center.

197. Meeting with United Nations agencies and NGOs in Moroto, 8 November 2008; Meeting with staff of the International Rescue Committee in Kampala, 17 November 2008.

Inadequate basic services in a climate of lawlessness directly undermined protection of communities and made it more difficult for people to protect themselves.[198] People in Karamoja still rely on the traditional justice system, whereby elders decide the fate of perpetrators. Men in the community execute the punishment, often through beating or flogging, which sometimes results in grave injury or death. Elders can also decide to respond to raids or attacks; retaliation often results in greater destruction of property and loss of life.

II. Gaps in food assistance and effects on beneficiary protection

Despite insecurity and poor infrastructure, WFP has gradually built an extensive field presence and enjoys widespread access to this region, helping to prevent acute food insecurity and supporting education through school feeding. WFP also provided coordination as security began to improve in 2007 and more United Nations agencies and NGOs began operating in Karamoja. WFP used its premises to host other agencies and to offer logistics assistance. However, gaps in knowledge of the region had serious repercussions for the protection of beneficiaries and their communities.

Karamoja as a "black hole"

Analysis is crucial for understanding community dynamics and the possible impacts of assistance. Although WFP staff were well aware of the challenges of working in the region, they lacked a sufficient understanding of local power structures and how WFP's work affects them. There was a long-standing perception among government entities, NGOs and United Nations agencies that Karamoja is difficult to understand.[199]

Inadequate knowledge of the region and its people was compounded by the scarcity of educated Karamajong and the difficulty in recruiting Karamajong-speaking staff. Most Ugandan civil servants, teachers and health workers were also unwilling to work in this isolated region.[200]

WFP's 2008 assessment of the regional context and local concerns was a first attempt to examine the protection risks faced in Karamoja.[201] Recent studies have enhanced knowledge about the region thanks to improved access and a recent increase in humanitarian interventions.

198. Meetings with UNICEF staff on 8 November 2008.

199. Meeting with OCHA staff in Kampala, 6 November 2008.

200. Stites, E. 2007. *Out-Migration, Return and Resettlement in Karamoja*. Medford, Massachusetts, Feinstein International Center.

201. WFP. 2006. Gender and Protection – A Project Brief.

Inflexibility in adjusting targeting

WFP has carried out several food-security assessments in Karamoja since 2007. These assessments have indicated an increased need for food assistance and emergency response. In 2008, findings were synthesized using the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC),[202] which classifies geographical units of analysis into phases of food security.[203] IPC also looks into the likelihood of a situation deteriorating in the future by analysing hazards and related process indicators.

The IPC mapping of Karamoja utilized the results of household surveys and interviews with local leaders and other decision makers. The resulting targeting system colour coded parishes in Karamoja according to their level of food insecurity. Red zones were entitled to monthly food rations covering 70 percent of their needs for six months. Orange zones received 50-percent rations, while little or no food distribution took place in yellow and green zones.

Although the IPC system was effective in reflecting the food security situation, the response to the food insecurity situation led to a number of protection-related problems. Some argued WFP did not adjust its targeting method quickly enough to adapt to local populations' needs in a rapidly changing environment. As a result, communities that were considered to be food secure at the time of the assessment may have since become food insecure. WFP did not have the flexibility to change targeting decisions, even though staff were often aware of these changing needs.[204]

In addition, while using the IPC results, WFP did not account for the perceptions of varying groups in different communities and the dynamics between them and their local authorities. Some parishes not targeted for food assistance perceived that their needs were similar to those in targeted parishes. As a result, the targeting system was seen as subjective by the population, who displayed great distrust towards local leaders.

Flaws in registration

WFP moved from a *manyatta*-based registration, in which traditional village leaders identified recipients of food assistance, to the use of birth-and-date registration at the parish level. In this system, representatives from local councils registered beneficiaries; however many of these lists were outdated or flawed, and others were in poor condition.

202. These assessments were undertaken in collaboration with FAO, UNICEF, government agencies, Oxfam and other stakeholders. See: WFP. 2008. Synthesis of Food Security Situation in Karamoja Using Integrated Food Security Phase Classification.

203. Red = humanitarian emergency; orange = acute food and livelihood crisis; yellow = chronically food insecure; green = generally food insecure.

204. Meeting with WFP staff in Moroto and Kaabong, 8 November 2008; debriefing with WFP staff in Kaabong, 15 November 2008.

Interviews with community members identified opaque and unclear registration processes in which most people were not informed about who was responsible. Community members believed that vulnerable groups such as widows and inherited wives were likely to be left out of food assistance, and that men rather than women were included on the list.[205] They also flagged concerns about cheating and double registration. Exclusion and inclusion errors, combined with lack of awareness about the timing of distributions, resulted in both targeted and unregistered individuals converging chaotically at distribution points.

Chaos at food-distribution points

WFP's large caseload necessitated intensive food distribution. Several distributions took place every day in each district, but WFP's implementing partners lacked sufficient capacity to manage them. A shortage of WFP staff made adequate on-site monitoring impossible. For example, the NGO Caritas was responsible for distributing food to 350,000 beneficiaries each month, but had only 30 volunteers with limited training.[206] In addition to unclear communication about the time and place of food distributions, transport delays also prevented timely distribution. Food sometimes arrived too late in the day to ensure beneficiaries' safe return to their *manyattas*, or to ensure that the food was not diverted from the site overnight.

Many distribution points became chaotic gatherings of people from various parishes. The confusion provided opportunities for theft: there were reports that businesses paid 5,000 shillings for each stolen bag of food. The researchers observed that women were particularly vulnerable in this insecure environment.

Limited accountability, staff capacity and monitoring

The low staff capacity – especially Karamajong-speaking staff – was often mentioned as an obstacle to proper monitoring, which compromised WFP's accountability.[207] There were not enough staff in Kotido and Moroto to cover large areas. This made it difficult for WFP to involve communities in programming decisions, assess their needs, build trusting relationships and monitor the impact of WFP's assistance on communities. The volatile security situation further constrained the movement of staff monitoring WFP's operations. Information on protection concerns and WFP's assistance was available, but these data were not analysed to improve programming.

205. Focus group discussions with women in Nakaal, and Kaabong, 13 November, 2008.

206. Meeting with staff of Caritas in Kotido, 13 November 2008.

207. Meeting with WFP staff in Kotido and Moroto, 8 November 2008.

III. Tackling the gaps

The assessment of the protection situation in Karamoja not only resulted in specific recommendations but also expanded WFP's dialogue with stakeholders. With a better understanding of the situation, WFP prioritized its response to insecurity and violence at food distribution points. The 2009 EMOP for Karamoja included several measures for restoring order and ensuring people's safety, particularly in the delivery of food assistance.

Expanding partnerships

To decrease its unrealistic over-reliance on the Government and two NGO partners in this large-scale food distribution, WFP increased the number of independent, international NGOs it works with. The new phase of operations in Karamoja provided an impetus for expanding new partnerships. The introduction of new partners with a solid understanding of protection and humanitarian principles gave WFP an opportunity to set high standards for its operations and enforce a zero-tolerance policy for corruption, abuse of power and lax operating standards.[208]

WFP and its new partners sought the participation and support of *manyatta* leaders. In collaboration with leaders of local councils, *manyatta* leaders spearheaded the removal of false names from registration lists. With more volunteers, it was possible to undertake physical verification of beneficiaries.

Better targeting and distribution, and a strategy for local engagement

With better understanding of community dynamics, the use of the IPC data was revisited and the amount of food provided to households reviewed. As a result, WFP expanded its coverage to more beneficiaries, preventing non-beneficiaries from migrating from one parish to another when distributions took place.

Other measures for addressing violence related to distributions included translating the targeting criteria into the local language and sharing distribution lists with stakeholders, who periodically amended them. WFP also encouraged joint public-awareness campaigns on issues such as protection, health and sanitation.

Outreach strategies were developed to inform beneficiaries about WFP's targeting, beneficiaries' entitlements, the objectives of food assistance and the function of the police and military in food assistance. For example, one message made it clear that

208. WFP Uganda country office. May 2009. Minutes of Internal Meeting on the Karamoja Protection Field Visit, 12–19 February 2009.

the police were not paid for guarding food. WFP used weekly radio talk shows as a communication tool and ensured that it was represented at large meetings. Important information was translated into the local language in order to reach local communities.

Table 9.1. Example of mapping protection concerns and responses

Protection concern	WFP action	Recommended action
Security threats during food distributions such as theft by people from town councils and youth in Kaabong, Abim and Nakapiripirit.	WFP increased presence of UPDF and police at trouble-stricken distribution points near trading centres, and will move distribution points away from these areas.	Ensure police and UPDF presence at food distribution points where problems are foreseen in order to prevent theft and riot. Move food distribution points away from trading centres where there is higher likelihood of theft. Do not start distribution if it is unlikely to finish before 16:00 ensuring that beneficiaries do not walk home after dusk.
Food stolen when stored overnight at a food distribution point in Kotido and when a truck was stuck in Abim.	Thieves reprimanded and disciplined by police and community members.	If food must be stored overnight at a distribution point, ask community members to guard it; make it clear that no payment will be offered. Remind the police that they are not paid for guarding food.
Partners threatened and denied access to community in Nakapiripirit by local leaders seeking more respect in Kaabong.	WFP staff negotiated with local leaders to build confidence and allow access. Communities in Kaabong are looking for new community leaders and partnerships to improve this working relationship.	Ensure that WFP supports partner staff through its presence at food-distribution points. Continue raising awareness of local leaders about the objectives of WFP and its partners. Consider a workshop for local leaders to build trust.
General verification exercise caused confusion and inflation of population figures in all districts.	Physical verification of beneficiaries carried out to address inclusion and exclusion errors in Kaabong. Community-leader list verification and cleaning in collaboration with local leaders and partners in Abim and Kotido. Lists printed and shared for verification by local councils and food-management committees in Moroto.	Continue with verification according to chosen method, but ensure community involvement, which encourages beneficiaries to eliminate false names from 'their' lists. Ensure partners have recruited enough volunteers to undertake thorough verification.

Reconsidering relations with the Government and military

Given local perceptions of the military and police, WFP reduced their presence and engagement at food-distribution sites. However, this necessitated WFP's increased presence and support to implementing partners. WFP also scaled up efforts to raise local leaders' awareness of its objectives and the new methods of delivering food assistance. Local political leaders were consulted, but their control over distribution was minimized. A concerted effort to engage leaders in crowd control and communication with beneficiaries at distribution points (while minimizing their role in distribution) decreased confusion and tension.

The previous lack of order at food-distribution points led to confusion and panic among beneficiaries. Food was piled up in open areas and people crowded around it, with no clear entry or exit points and little verification of who was in the area. It was easy for armed intruders to enter distribution sites and steal food. At the end of the day, beneficiaries panicked upon realizing that there was not enough food, and grabbed the remaining bags. The NGO World Vision used ropes and a staggered the process of distributing rations, which greatly reduced opportunities for grabbing food and intrusion by outsiders.

Investing in human capital

WFP's protection training assisted field staff and partners in identifying and analysing protection concerns, and understanding these concerns in relation to food insecurity. Trainees were also encouraged to recommend improvements in WFP's responses. This exercise enabled WFP and partner staff members to understand better their working context and to appreciate how their actions could have positive or negative impacts. The workshop demonstrated that WFP staff can make important contributions to beneficiaries' safety and dignity, and to the analysis of the effects of WFP's operations on protection in Karamoja.

IV. Lessons learned

Despite a long history of working in a volatile and insecure environment, the Uganda country office was alarmed by reports of violence at distribution points in 2007. The reasons for this violence remained elusive until a thorough context analysis was conducted. The analysis made it clear that WFP's activities were not meeting beneficiaries' protection needs, and that WFP was not adequately considering the socio-political implications of its assistance.

To address the negative impacts of its operations, WFP required a rethink of its strategy– from recognizing the symptoms to producing an accurate diagnosis of the problem. In the process, WFP increased its: reliance on partnerships with

international NGOs; engagement with community leaders; and focus on the underlying causes of conflict.

The measures taken to address these protection gaps had remarkable results. Food distributions became safer, more transparent and more organized, and trust was gained within communities and with local leaders. More importantly, the reduced risk of violence at food-distribution sites decreased the risk of WFP interventions contributing to social unrest in Karamoja.

Chapter 10

Integrating protection into emergency food-assistance programmes: Experiences from the 2010 Haiti earthquake response

Lena Savelli

The 12 January 2010 earthquake in Haiti and the resulting emergency response were unique in many ways. The scale and scope of the catastrophe surpassed those of any other natural disaster affecting the Western hemisphere. Staggering deaths and injuries, massive population displacement and widespread destruction of infrastructure all created enormous needs for food, water, shelter and medical care.

Protection risks were numerous even before the earthquake: sexual abuse of women and girls, human trafficking, child labour and lack of access to basic services were common. Many of Haiti's protection risks were linked to food insecurity, including conflicts caused by land-tenure disputes, violence during protests against high food prices and unequal access to emergency food assistance following the 2008 Gonaives hurricanes.

The earthquake had a devastating effect on the already precarious state of human rights in Haiti. It exacerbated existing protection risks and social inequalities, and further weakened government capacity to uphold people's rights. It also increased the number of needy individuals and gave rise to new protection risks such as family separation, child trafficking and the loss of identity documents.

From the onset of its operations in Haiti, WFP began to consider protection concerns and integrate preventive and responsive measures into food-assistance operations. This chapter takes stock of WFP's efforts to integrate protection into an acute emergency response. It examines the opportunities and challenges presented by this new approach, and the lessons learned from the experience, which may be useful in future emergencies. In highlighting WFP's shortcomings in its push towards protection, the chapter also points out the limitations to what humanitarians can offer in terms of civilian protection.

I. Haiti's political and humanitarian situation

Ranked 149th out of 182 countries on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index, Haiti is the poorest country in the Western hemisphere, with 76 percent of the population living in poverty (less than US$2 per day); and 55 percent extremely poor (less than US$1.25 per day).[209] Even prior to the earthquake, 70 percent of the national budget was comprised of foreign aid, and the majority of basic services were run by private entities rather than the national Government.[210] Humanitarian indicators in all sectors were alarming: out of Haiti's population of 10 million people, 1.8 million were food-insecure, 58 percent lacked sustainable access to drinking water, 30,000 died of AIDS each year and fewer than half of adults were literate.

Many of the country's economic problems are related to its turbulent political history, weak institutions, entrenched corruption, highly centralized political power and inequitable income distribution. This prompted a succession of United Nations missions to Haiti, starting in February 1993 with the joint United Nations–Organization of American States (OAS) International Civilian Mission in Haiti, followed by the current United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). There were signs of progress towards stability after President Rene Préval took office in 2006, but deep political divisions and social discontent persisted.

The low capacity of the police and military had resulted in a precarious security situation, particularly in the sprawling slums of Port-au-Prince, where criminal gangs were fomenting violence. Along with widespread disregard for rule of law, the troubled judicial system lacked modern facilities, properly trained officials and resources to meet the demands placed on it.

The 7.0 magnitude earthquake in January 2010 left complete devastation. Estimates put the death toll at close to 250,000, with more than 300,000 injured, 1.3 million displaced and 2 million in need of urgent food assistance.[211] In the West Department, where Port-au-Prince and the earthquake epicentre are located, between 40 and 90 percent of buildings and infrastructure were destroyed, including the National Palace and the main seaport. Terrified survivors set up makeshift tents and improvised structures in public areas, or fled to outlying departments.

209. UNDP. 2009. *Human Development Report*, Haiti. New York.

210. International Crisis Group. 2010. *Haiti: Stabilization and Reconstruction after the Quake*, Latin America/Caribbean Report No. 32. Brussels.

211. *Ibid.*

II. Food insecurity and related protection risks

As social structures broke down and humanitarian needs intensified after the earthquake, protection risks became even more pronounced, including those related to food insecurity. Emergency assessments – including a protection assessment [212] undertaken by WFP – revealed that food was the biggest need in the initial aftermath and that protection concerns such as physical violence, theft and prostitution constituted strategies to obtain food. Women small-scale traders known locally as *Madame Zaras*, were at particular risk of violence since people believed that traders should give their goods to people in need. There was also frustration about the increased cost of food: the price of rice rose by 25 percent after the earthquake. Although there was no rioting of the scale experienced in 2008, there were serious concerns that further price increases could spark similar incidents.

For families in metropolitan areas, a common coping strategy in the earthquake's aftermath was to send their children to the countryside to ensure their access to food. This strategy also aimed to ensure the children's physical safety, and was more prevalent among families in camp sites. In some cases, the children were sent to relatives who cared for them; however others became *restavecs* – children from poor families who are employed as domestic workers. These children often lack access to education and health care, and are sometimes subjected to sexual exploitation. They remain at high risk of malnutrition and hunger.

The movement of people away from earthquake-affected areas to outlying departments was related to the search for food, shelter and other basic necessities. According to the National Civil Protection Agency, 598,000 people left Port-au-Prince, with Artibonite and Grand Anse receiving the majority of IDPs.[213] In addition to the protection risks commonly associated with displacement such as family separation and violence against women and children, problems were also posed by Haiti's complex system of land tenure. Most farmers do not enjoy secure ownership of their land because the Government lacks the capacity to enforce tenure. This was already a source of conflict among landowners prior to the earthquake, particularly in the northwest and in Artibonite.

With continued displacement, the risk of conflict increased between local communities and new arrivals looking to cultivate crops. Such conflicts affected agricultural production and access to food.

212. In February 2010, WFP carried out a rapid protection assessment in parallel with its emergency food security assessment to ensure that protection issues were included in emergency operations and future planning.

213. National Coordination for Food Security. 2010. Rapid Evaluation of Food Security Following the Haiti Earthquake (in French). Port-au-Prince.

III. WFP's surge operation

WFP began providing food assistance within 24 hours of the earthquake despite suffering losses of staff members and damage to its facilities. Initial food distributions were ad hoc, with high-energy biscuits and ready-to-eat meals provided to survivors. Targeting was based on the availability of food and access, which was extremely difficult in many areas. One week after the earthquake, WFP announced that food had been distributed to 200,000 people – only 10 percent of those in need. Delays in the arrival of assistance made the situation even more difficult, and violence erupted at some food-distribution sites as crowds grew hungry and restless.

It soon became evident that distributions of food and other items required rapid expansion to address people's needs and maintain security. A new strategy was devised for the first systematic food-distribution – the 'surge operation' – to begin in Port-au-Prince on 31 January. Dry rations comprising 25 kg of rice were distributed to 2 million beneficiaries over a 15-day period, with 10,000 people collecting rations at each site every day. This operation was unique in meeting the unprecedented challenges in this complex emergency. WFPs objective was to provide assistance that would reduce tensions and avoid food shortages, hoarding, and rising food prices.

Providing emergency assistance in a densely populated urban area facing a complete breakdown of infrastructure imposed protection risks that were very different from those normally encountered in WFP's operations. This necessitated a comprehensive do-no-harm analysis of interventions and heightened efforts to ensure that humanitarian principles were applied. Many of these protection risks, including physical violence, robbery, sexual exploitation and abuse, had direct implications on WFP's work.

The Haiti earthquake response was also the first WFP operation in which: (i) staff with protection expertise were deployed at the onset of an emergency; and (ii) concerted efforts were made to mainstream protection into operational assessments, design, implementation, monitoring and advocacy. This signified WFP's new commitment to integrating protection into an emergency response.

IV. Protection risks related to food assistance

The protection risks faced in Haiti had direct bearing on WFP's food-assistance operations: all sites were located in heavily populated urban areas with complex socio-political dynamics and high crime rates. Some areas were particularly dangerous following the escape of 4,000 criminals from prisons in Port-au-Prince, many of whom re-joined criminal gangs operating in Cité Soleil, Martissant and Carrefour.

The news media gave extensive coverage to violence and looting that erupted in connection with food assistance. Although these reports appear to have been somewhat exaggerated, incidents did occur in the first days after the earthquake, posing problems for food-assistance operations. On 22 February, a convoy of WFP trucks travelling from Cap-Haitien to Gonaives was attacked by 700 people wielding machetes and stones, despite the presence of a MINUSTAH escort. Following negotiations between police and assailants, four of the five trucks were released, but some food was lost. It was speculated that these incidents would escalate as national elections approached.

The tight schedule for distributing coupons to beneficiaries one day before receiving rations left little time for proper targeting. Some groups argued that the large size and monetary value of the food rations would put beneficiaries at risk. Women designated to collect rations risked assault and sexual violence, and the rations were too heavy for many women to carry home from distribution points.

Unequal access to humanitarian assistance was another problem. The coupons required to receive food rations were not allocated equally and impartially, especially when local committees were responsible for distributing them. These incidents occurred because of opportunism and favouritism among friends and family. Although these practices risked excluding some beneficiaries, solidarity among the Haitian people was reinforced by the crisis, which helped to avoid exclusion. In fact, assessments found that some previously marginalized groups such as street children, elderly and handicapped people living alone were now in a better position since they were taken in by others or assisted in obtaining food assistance. The Haitian proverb “cooked food has no owner” became a life-line for many vulnerable people and communal cooking and eating became more common.

Given the high rate of criminality and corruption in Haiti even before the earthquake, it is not surprising that fraud and exploitation were discovered in emergency-relief operations. The sale of beneficiary coupons was common; a coupon for 25 kg of rice was worth up to 300 gourdes (US$7.60). There were also allegations that women beneficiaries were asked to provide sex in exchange for ration cards. Although no cases could be confirmed, rumours of these incidents were plentiful, particularly in Port-au-Prince and in camps. While such practices had existed in Haiti before the earthquake, the risk was increased owing to the high monetary value of the assistance, the breakdown of any structures to prevent these abuses, and the special challenges women faced after the earthquake in meeting their basic needs.

The earthquake’s high death toll and family separations significantly increased the number of orphans and unaccompanied children, who were vulnerable to both food insecurity and abuse. Incidents of trafficking and irregular adoptions increased, and orphanages of varying standards requested food assistance. Within weeks of the disaster, 250 orphanages with 20,000 children had been registered;

85 percent of them were in Port-au-Prince.[214] Prior to the earthquake, WFP had opted not to support these institutions because of the child-protection risks they posed: some orphanages lacked the facilities for proper child care and some were implicated in child trafficking. After the earthquake however, media and donor pressure to assist orphanages was enormous. Assisting these institutions made it critical for WFP to work closely with UNICEF and the Government to ensure that food assistance was not attracting more children to orphanages at the expense of community-based care.

Criticisms of WFP's surge operation included the assumption that since the agency is not protection-mandated little attention was given to protection concerns. In hindsight however, the surge operation appears to have had a positive impact on protection risks. Focus groups confirmed that many of the protection risks encountered in the earthquake's aftermath, such as looting, violence and prostitution, declined when more food became available.

Despite the absence of a strategy for identifying hungry people, the blanket targeting model for assisting camp populations and those in residential areas made sense. Respondents stated that everyone was food-insecure immediately after the earthquake, and that heightened community solidarity ensured that all those in need benefited from food assistance. In addition, respondents did not perceive the strategy of issuing ration cards and coupons exclusively to women as putting them at risk. Instead, they believed this practice was in line with local culture, since women in Haiti are largely responsible for collecting and preparing food.

V. Minimizing risks

Even prior to the earthquake, WFP understood the importance of considering protection risks related to food assistance. Country offices had pushed for training of field staff, and had recruited additional staff members with protection expertise. This provided much-needed human capital at the onset of the crisis.

Strong networks had also been established with protection-mandated agencies operating in the country, especially the human rights section of MINUSTAH and UNICEF. As additional resources were marshalled to reinforce the relief operation, efforts were made to identify programme officers with a background in human rights and protection. This provided a foundation for WFP to mainstream protection into the emergency response – including assessment, monitoring of project design and advocacy. It also ensured effective collaboration with protection actors in the United Nations humanitarian cluster system.

214. WFP. 2010. Haiti Country Office Database on Orphanages and Hospitals.

From the onset of the emergency, WFP was in a position to respond in ways that minimized protection risks. First, it mobilized other actors to provide protection at food deliveries and distribution sites. United States military and MINUSTAH troops were organized as military escorts and some troops even assisted with food distributions. Although the involvement of armed forces can be a source of tension and may compromise perceptions of WFP's neutrality, this did not appear to pose any problems in Haiti. Since this was a natural disaster and not a conflict, the humanitarian character of the operation was maintained. Overall, using these actors' capacity and resources was fully justified by the security risks, and they represented important assets in WFP's response.

Other actors mobilized for the surge operation included NGOs, the Haitian Government and other United Nations agencies. NGO partners included established organizations with previous experience working with WFP and a commitment to upholding humanitarian principles. This commitment allowed many preventive protection measures to be implemented. For example, distribution sites met safety standards for physical layout, including the existence of 'safe spaces', and women staff members were usually present. Drawing on resources from the Protection Cluster, human rights officers from OHCHR and MINUSTAH monitored food and coupon distributions, and WFP volunteers and food-assistance monitors were trained in identifying, preventing and reporting protection incidents.

Particular attention was paid to vulnerable individuals including pregnant, handicapped and elderly women, who were provided with extra support. Communities were informed through radio and community networks about the rationale for giving food to women for their families. Men were urged to wait outside distribution sites and help the women to transport food home. Women also travelled in groups to and from distribution points, and friends and neighbours helped handicapped people to collect their rations. Post-distribution monitoring confirmed that this simple format of family and community mobilization had greatly contributed to beneficiaries' safety.

Both the media and other humanitarian actors suggested that local capacities had been overlooked. Proposals for addressing this issue ranged from unfeasible measures such as having women accompanied home by armed escorts, to unreasonable procedures such as requiring WFP to pay communities for cooking their own food. These suggestions exaggerated the extent of beneficiaries' protection concerns and risked undermining the dignity of affected communities. Focus-group discussions made it clear that the Haitian people did not want to rely on external assistance and sought to maintain a degree of self-reliance.[215]

215. WFP. 2010. "Emergency Food Security Assessment Haiti".

VI. Learning from shortcomings

Although the surge operation had a positive effect on food security and protection in Port-au Prince, it was not devoid of problems.

One of the major shortcomings was related to the targeting of beneficiaries for coupons, for which NGO partners were responsible. Although food distributions during the surge were fairly orderly, coupon distributions were disrupted by violence since they were carried out without a military or police presence. This was particularly true in the first days of the surge, and NGO partners were forced to either halt the distributions or let community members themselves distribute the coupons. This not only put beneficiaries and staff at physical risk, but opened opportunities for misappropriation and fraud. In the future, WFP must give greater consideration to protection risks at all stages of its operations and ensure that protection activities extend to all phases of assistance.

Lack of accountability also prevented WFP from holding its partners responsible for lapses in protection. Although efforts were made to explain the targeting criteria and entitlements through radio messages and during coupon distributions, there were few means to address complaints. Considering the history of sexual violence in Haiti, WFP could have done more to ensure that reporting mechanisms were in place for responding to incidents of 'sex for food'. There should also have been greater collaboration with agencies such as OHCHR, MINUSTAH and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The urgency of the situation led to a top-down approach to food assistance, with little participation of beneficiary communities and civil society. A more participatory approach and better understanding of local dynamics would have minimized the risk of violence during deliveries and distributions. While both national authorities and mayors' representatives were involved food assistance, their lack of capacity and conflicting priorities sometimes prevented them from making real contributions. A greater sense of ownership would have helped to rectify some of the misappropriation and favouritism that emerged in targeting. WFP should always invest in building local ownership and capacity, while recognizing that this is a long-term process requiring vision, time and consistency.

This was the first time that WFP had sought to integrate protection into an emergency response, and there was no precedent for its efforts. The urgency of the situation precluded WFP from carrying out the range of protection activities seen in other countries. Better priority setting should include an initial focus on immediate protection risks and ensuring that WFP does not harm beneficiaries or fuel conflicts. In Haiti, WFP should have analysed different beneficiaries' protection risks and devised activities that created an environment conducive to protection.

In addition to addressing protection risks linked to food security and supporting protection-mandated agencies such as UNICEF, WFP must analyse its capacity before embarking on projects that may be better implemented at later stages in an emergency. Maintaining clear priorities entails keeping clear of humanitarian politics and avoiding pressure to implement activities that are not in beneficiaries' best interest. When WFP assumes responsibilities such as the feeding of children in orphanages, UNICEF and government actors should be engaged to allow WFP an early phase-out.

Integrating protection into Haiti's emergency response also revealed a number of institutional shortcomings. Despite commitment from WFP's management, applying a protection lens in practice was challenging. Staff members lacked an understanding of protection and were uncertain about how protection activities should fit into WFP's organizational structure. Although it is an integral part of programming, mainstreaming protection into WFP's operations goes beyond project design, implementation and monitoring. A more holistic approach requires that protection be integrated into vulnerability analysis and mapping, logistics, external relations, partner selection, resource mobilization and advocacy. Protection should be a high priority throughout WFP and should be more strongly supported by management.

It is essential that protection activities are not associated with evaluations of WFP's performance in its regular activities. Instead, these activities should be seen as valuable to the smooth functioning of future emergency responses. To be effective, all staff must understand that protection is not optional, but is firmly anchored in the humanitarian principles adopted by the WFP Executive Board, and fully compatible with WFP's mandate. Protection activities should be integral components of WFP's response to future emergencies.

WFP's experience in Haiti highlighted the significance of its engagement in protection, even in the earliest stages of an emergency response. Although challenges were encountered, the strong links between food and protection necessitate a comprehensive approach in line with WFP's Humanitarian Principles. The Haiti experience shows that donors, other United Nations agencies and civil society expect WFP's commitment to protection in all its operations.

Conclusions

Moving forward: Opportunities, challenges and recommendations for WFP's role in protection

Nicholas Crawford and Gina Pattugalan

As the preceding chapters demonstrate, WFP often works in settings characterized by flagrant violations of human rights, massive population displacements, the absence of effective security and justice systems, and widespread impunity. In 2008, more than 80 percent of WFP's operational expenditures were concentrated in 32 conflict, post-conflict or fragile states. There is little evidence to suggest this trend will change in the near future. Complex emergencies typically range from 10 to 20 years, and current crises may be compounded by the effects of climate change, diminishing natural resources and rapid urbanization.

WFP's future operations will continue to be concentrated in places where there are strong links between hunger and protection gaps. It is no longer possible to deliver humanitarian assistance without understanding the protection gaps that shape food insecurity. WFP and other humanitarian actors will need to continue learning how to approach the protection of crisis-affected populations in the coming years.

Over the past five years, WFP has made significant efforts to assess what protection means for the organization and strengthen capacities for responding as the world's largest food-assistance agency. One of the lessons learned during this process is that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' response for integrating protection into daily humanitarian assistance operations. However, there is agreement that WFP needs to analyse the socio-political and economic contexts of food-assistance operations. As with other elements of WFP's recent transition towards a holistic food assistance approach, this entails a shift in organizational culture. This chapter provides suggestions for building a more protection-oriented WFP – along with constraints and opportunities – gleaned from the experiences described in this book.

I. Quality programming: Context analysis and bringing a protection lens to food assistance

In order to assist beneficiaries in a manner that contributes to their safety, dignity and integrity, WFP must first understand the complex and volatile socio-political dimensions of its operational context. Field studies repeatedly underscore the fact that context analysis is essential for WFP to adopt a protective approach.

Building on the knowledge of field-based WFP and partner staff, structured context analysis – such as the three-day workshop described in the introductory chapter – helps to elaborate the protection risks faced by beneficiaries. It also reveals the intricate socio-political environments and power dynamics within recipient communities, and the positive and negative impacts of humanitarian assistance on communities. In short, context analysis is central to maintaining security and safety, conducting vulnerability analysis and ensuring the optimal and ethical use of assistance.

Good context analysis constitutes an integral component of a broader protection approach that seeks to do no harm, as reflected in the review of WFP protection activities in West Africa. Other chapters provided examples of how WFP's food assistance contributed to the promotion of rights on the one hand, and to degradation and abuse on the other. For example, the Karamoja study emphasized that there are abundant opportunities for WFP – in addressing the positive as well as the negative impacts of assistance – to improve beneficiaries' immediate safety at food distributions. This implies a subtle shift away from a single-minded focus on efficient food delivery towards a more qualitative approach whereby WFP's presence is seen as an instrument to not just feed people, but 'to feed and protect'. A protection approach also reconnects staff with the United Nations' and WFP's ethical framework of independent, principled humanitarian action centred on – and accountable to – beneficiaries and the full realization of their rights.

The country studies show that adjusting programming in the light of protection gaps and threats to beneficiaries is not easy for WFP. First, there are the pressures of action in an agency that provides immediate response in emergencies. Taking time to reflect on issues that may initially seem extraneous to WFP's mandate can appear extravagant in a fast-moving emergency. Second, shifting resources away from tangible outputs – the delivery of food – to the thorny and troublesome protection concerns of vulnerable populations can seem a costly deviation from WFP's work. Dedicating resources to structured context analysis, seeking to do no harm and tackling protection gaps that contribute to hunger are not easy task for a country office

II. Beyond the basics: Addressing protection gaps that cause hunger

Much of WFP's protection-related work has emphasized limiting WFP's own negative impact and not the negative impacts resulting from other parties' actions. This book suggests that a holistic hunger approach must go beyond delivering assistance and doing no harm, to understanding and addressing the root causes of hunger. When rights violations, discriminatory policies, violence, lawlessness and protection gaps cause or exacerbate hunger, they become WFP's business. Can WFP solve all these problems on its own? Obviously not, and the apparent intractability of these causes of hunger, along with the political implications of taking a protection approach contribute to scepticism about even trying to further beneficiary protection.

The book demonstrates that WFP has not yet fully immersed itself in the process of understanding the socio-political factors, including rights violations and abuses, which contribute to hunger. Such an immersion would require accepting the need for a new emphasis in WFP's work: complementing food assistance with a focus on protecting beneficiaries and advocating for their rights as part of a broader effort at sustainable hunger solutions. Recent experience shows a positive trend in staff discussions of protection and integration of protection issues, but WFP's protection actions remain inconsistent and marked by confusion and restraint. This might be rectified by the recent adoption of a WFP Protection Policy[216] and by clearer guidance. But changing the internal culture of such a large agency is a gradual process that requires more than directives from Headquarters.

Despite the difficulties in changing WFP's culture, the preceding chapters have illustrated how protection can be embraced without threatening WFP's access to beneficiaries and in ways that advance WFP's mandate. In documenting some of the indignities faced by WFP's beneficiaries, the chapters also reaffirmed the ethical case for applying humanitarian principles: humanity, neutrality and impartiality.

Why are many humanitarian assistance agencies hesitant to embrace a broader protection role? For a large organization, any change that involves new and seemingly insurmountable challenges is never simple. This chapter does not aim to delve into organizational theory, but rather to highlight some of the trends and obstacles that have slowed the protection movement within WFP, and to suggest some recommendations for maintaining the momentum.

216. WFP. 2012. "WFP Humanitarian Protection Policy" (WFP/EB.1/2012/5-B/Rev.1). Executive Board Document. Posted at www.wfp.org/eb.

III. Moving forward: Operational and cultural factors that shape WFP's protection approach

The time and expense of carrying out WFP's core business – delivering food in complex, insecure and unpredictable environments – pose the greatest challenge in moving towards a more assertive protection approach. Time and resources are inevitably in short supply, and staff need to understand that time spent on protection issues is valued by the Organization and brings better food assistance outcomes. WFP's values and culture can be both an impediment and an incentive to embracing protection. Its funding structure also impedes the adoption of 'soft' programming approaches such as protection, which cannot be measured (or funded) as easily as food deliveries.

Emphasis on delivery

WFP's major operational challenges focus on the timely provision of food, often in difficult settings. Time and resources are limited in these settings, resulting in severe pressure to carry out WFP's core business of assessing and delivering food assistance. Analysis that explores the root causes of food insecurity or that draws linkages among protection gaps, livelihoods and food insecurity is time-consuming and might hinder quick action. For country office staff, the timely delivery of food subsumes the more intangible gains that a protection approach can bring. In addition, organizational systems that link budgets to quantifiable deliveries and outcomes are not always conducive to addressing the protection-related causes of food insecurity. Food assistance can be compatible with efforts to address protection issues, but at what point is a delivery imperative so dominant that it is no longer compatible with a protection lens?

Why evade the hard questions?

WFP often finds itself wedged uncomfortably between contending interests in fulfilling its humanitarian mandate. A protection approach can exacerbate this discomfort and present even more dilemmas. There is a natural hesitancy to churn up contentious issues if they may complicate access and relations with governments. In extreme cases, working to help beneficiaries protect themselves can put WFP or partner staff at greater risk. But the benefits of securing humanitarian access for food assistance – almost always a short-term gain – must be factored against the costs, including the erosion of principles that may serve WFP in the future, and the long-term well-being of vulnerable people.

It should be noted that WFP's ability to consider a more vigorous protection agenda is shaped by its position within the United Nations and the broader international community and their appetite for engagement in protection.

The perceived risks of engaging in rights-related advocacy may discourage WFP's efforts to take a more assertive role in humanitarian protection. However, as the country studies in this book suggest, these risks are sometimes overstated. Advocacy is often equated with public denunciation; however, it encompasses a spectrum of activities including dialogue, sharing information and mobilizing humanitarian partners. This oversimplification of the issue has allowed WFP's 'bottom line' – the humanitarian imperative of food delivery – to preclude a more nuanced approach to protection.

The chapter on Pakistan demonstrated that opportunities for protecting beneficiaries often arise in the context of WFP's daily operations, including negotiations with authorities, dialogue with partners, contractual arrangements with donors, engagement with civil society and interactions with beneficiaries. Recognizing and capitalizing on these opportunities is essential for supporting protection.

Accountability

The case studies on protection within WFP's operations raise important questions about accountability in general and whether, on balance, systems of accountability within WFP tend to be constructed to favour the needs of donors and host governments rather than those of beneficiaries. As a United Nations agency, a focus on accountability to Member States is understandable. However, the priorities of donors and host governments are not always consistent with humanitarian principles. An overall protection approach in humanitarian action can guard against the conscious or unconscious neglect of WFP's accountability to civilians affected by emergencies.

IV. Recommendations

The field studies covered in the preceding chapters yielded several recommendations for WFP to embrace protection more fully. These recommendations for improving WFP's protective impact revolve around: (i) improved context analysis, including analysis of the protection-related causes of hunger; and (ii) using WFP's presence and assistance to seek better protection outcomes for beneficiaries and their communities.

Prioritizing engagement with local communities and contexts

In order to engage with stakeholders on protection, it is necessary to:

- seek a better understanding of communities' decision-making patterns and power structures, and how they affect the rights of vulnerable people;

- commit to an improved understanding of armed groups, their interests and perceptions, and affected people's perceptions and expectations regarding WFP's presence; and

- understand communities' coping strategies, and work to support them.

Playing a stronger role in protection advocacy

Recognizing the links between protection needs and food insecurity, WFP should:

- draw attention to the causal links between vulnerability, conflict, abuses, and rights violations, and food insecurity;

- develop consistent protection messages based on humanitarian principles and international law, which allow field staff to engage in advocacy with local leaders, perpetrators, etc.; and

- educate field staff on the basics of protection, and encourage them to understand their roles within the United Nations, especially in the many areas where WFP is a dominant United Nations presence.

Making protection issues an explicit component of programme design and implementation

In designing new interventions with a protection lens, WFP should:

- ensure that assessments examine all the barriers to food access, including threats and rights violations that affect food security;

- highlight the risks of introducing food – a valuable resource – into communities, including the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse;

- clearly articulate the impacts of WFP's assistance on protection in operational plans; and

- modify existing tools such as post-distribution questionnaires for monitoring protection threats that affect food security.

V. Looking ahead: Reflections and questions

WFP's efforts to promote the protection of its beneficiaries begin with a commitment to "... designing and carrying out food and livelihood assistance activities that do not increase the protection risks faced by the crisis-affected populations receiving assistance", and therefore "...food assistance should contribute to the safety, dignity and integrity of vulnerable people".[217] Based on the country studies included in this book, what can be said about WFP's current and future ability to fulfil this commitment?

It is clear that WFP must be modest about its contributions to humanitarian protection. Even recognized protection actors such as United Nations peacekeeping forces, international police forces and legally mandated protection agencies are not reliable substitutes for states in guaranteeing the protection of their people. Whether carried out directly by a mandated humanitarian agency such UNICEF or UNHCR, embedded in the activities of WFP or NGOs, or covered by a cluster, humanitarian-protection activities are no substitute for national or inter-governmental action.

However, this book gives ample evidence of how a humanitarian agency such as WFP can open up meaningful space for vulnerable individuals, even in the midst of larger protection crises. Increasing WFP's ability to assist people in maintaining their dignity is a sufficient reason on its own for infusing a culture of protection. The field studies show how systematic situation analysis and local engagement – based upon a protection framework – can help WFP to provide people with practical options for protecting their own food security.

Culture and leadership

There are competing views regarding the extent of WFP's engagement in protection. Some argue that as one of the world's largest humanitarian agencies, WFP is not capitalizing on its potential to contribute to the protection of people, including by pressuring actors who fail to safeguard rights. Others argue that WFP should not be overly ambitious, should stick to its proven strengths and should avoid treading on politically sensitive ground. This debate mirrors a larger international debate on the function and scope of humanitarianism, and will not be settled in the near future. There is no single answer in a world with so many different humanitarian needs.

217. *Ibid.*

The recently adopted WFP Protection Policy combined with strong guidance is a requisite for WFP to integrate protection into assistance. But policies and guidance on their own are insufficient. Ultimately, WFP leadership at its headquarters and country offices will define the boundaries of WFP's engagement with protection. This process is influenced by a range of factors, including the commitment of WFP representatives, the capacity of country offices and the United Nations Country Team, the agendas of governments and non-state actors, and the trade-offs involved in addressing short- versus long-term food security needs.

If WFP Country Representatives and field staff are to push boundaries and assume risks, they need assurance that there is a real commitment at WFP's most senior management level to beneficiaries' safety and dignity. A culture of protection is not created overnight: after five years of research, experimentation, supporting country offices and training, it is only just beginning to take hold.

Annexes

Annex 1

WFP humanitarian principles [218]

WFP is driven by the need to respond to human suffering and support fellow human beings when they have nowhere else to turn. WFP will use food and related assistance to meet immediate needs and improve food security. It is committed to the principles of the United Nations Charter and to the values expressed in the United Nations Millennium Declaration. WFP will not use food, at any time or under any circumstances, as a means of applying political or economic pressure. WFP will adhere to the principles set out below when providing food assistance, non-food assistance and technical support in response to humanitarian needs.

Core humanitarian principles

I. ***Humanity.*** WFP will seek to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it is found, and respond with food assistance when appropriate. It will provide assistance in ways that respect life, health and dignity.

II. ***Impartiality.*** WFP's assistance will be guided solely by need and will not discriminate in terms of ethnic origin, nationality, political opinion, gender, race or religion. In a country, assistance will be targeted to those most at risk from the consequences of food shortages, following a sound assessment that considers the different needs and vulnerabilities of women, men and children.

III. ***Neutrality.*** WFP will not take sides in a conflict and will not engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature. Aid will not be provided to active combatants.

Foundations of effective humanitarian action

IV. ***Respect.*** WFP will respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of the states in which it is working. WFP will respect local customs and traditions, upholding internationally recognized human rights. WFP will act in accordance with the United Nations Charter and consistent with international humanitarian law and refugee law. WFP will also take into account the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, when applicable.

218. WFP. 2004. "Humanitarian Principles" (WFP/EB.1/2004/4-C). Executive Board Document. Posted at: www.wfp.org/eb.

V. Self-reliance. WFP will provide humanitarian assistance with the primary objective of saving lives in ways that support livelihoods, reduce vulnerability to future food scarcities and support durable solutions. WFP will work to ensure that food assistance does not undermine local agricultural production, marketing or coping strategies, disturb normal migratory patterns or foster dependency. WFP's programmes will be planned and implemented in ways that facilitate the link from relief to development.

VI. Participation. WFP will involve women and men beneficiaries wherever possible in all activities, and will work closely with governments at the national and local levels to plan and implement assistance.

VII. Capacity-building. Within its own capacity and resources, WFP will strengthen the capacity of affected countries and local communities to prevent, prepare for and respond to humanitarian crises. WFP will ensure participation by women's organizations and will integrate a gender perspective into capacity-building activities.

VIII. Coordination. WFP will provide assistance with the consent of the affected country and, in principle, on the basis of an appeal by the affected country. All States Members of the United Nations or Members or Associate Members of any specialized agency or the International Atomic Energy Agency are eligible to submit requests for consideration by WFP. WFP may also provide emergency food assistance, associated non-food items and logistics support at the request of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. WFP will work within established United Nations coordination structures at the global and field levels. This will include working with other humanitarian actors such as NGOs and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Standards of accountability and professionalism

IX. Accountability. WFP will keep donors, host country governments, beneficiaries and other relevant stakeholders informed of its activities and their impacts through regular reporting.

X. Professionalism. WFP will maintain the highest standards of professionalism and integrity among its international and national staff to ensure that its programmes are carried out efficiently, effectively, ethically and safely. All staff will adhere to the Standard Code of Conduct for the International Civil Service and the Secretary-General's Bulletin on Sexual Abuse and Exploitation in Humanitarian Crises and Other Operations.

Annex 2

Protection checklist for food-assistance operations

WFP's interventions – especially in conflict and post-conflict situations – are often linked to the protection of civilians. Food assistance – a scarce and valuable commodity in emergencies and protracted crises – is in itself a basic tool for protection. However, WFP's assistance can also create new risks, prolong the root causes of protection problems or harm already insecure populations. Assistance that does not take into account the protection needs and capacities of affected populations, and the principles of humanitarian action can undermine these individuals' safety, dignity and integrity.

This checklist provides guidelines for integrating protection into food-assistance operations. It underscores the importance of information exchange, sound analysis and informed strategies in every aspect of WFP's operations. It also puts into practice the do-no-harm approach, humanitarian principles and other standards of conduct for ethical humanitarian action.

A. Assessment and analysis

1. Analyse conflict and protection risks and their links to food insecurity.

2. Integrate conflict and protection risk analysis into food-security analysis tools.

3. Train staff and partners in conflict and protection analysis.

4. Establish contacts with multiple local actors to acquire better information for both food-security and protection analysis.

5. Engage United Nations and humanitarian actors, including protection-mandated agencies, in joint assessments.

6. Share assessments and analyses with partners to facilitate comprehensive assistance by a wider humanitarian community.

B. Programme design

7. Analyse the positive and negative impacts of WFP's activities on the protection of local communities.

8. Plan measures to reduce negative impacts and increase positive impacts.

9. Plan a food basket that respects religious and cultural traditions, but does not: (i) perpetuate the improper use of food; (ii) perpetuate discrimination at the household level; or (iii) expose beneficiaries to further harm.

10. Develop an exit strategy to encourage handover and sustainable solutions that promote food security and are managed by the government, other United Nations agencies and NGOs.

C. Targeting and registration of beneficiaries

11. Analyse the impact of targeting and registration methods, and formulate strategies that reflect community dynamics and security.

12. Plan measures to prevent negative impacts of targeting, such as between targeted communities and non-beneficiary communities.

13. Establish reliable controls to prevent and address inclusion and exclusion errors resulting from abuse of power, fraud and other forms of cheating.

14. Assess the impact of gathering sensitive information such as beneficiaries' ethnicity, age and family size, on their security.

15. Inform beneficiaries and non-beneficiary communities of WFP's targeting criteria and registration procedures.

16. Identify the potential negative and positive impacts of issuing ration cards in women's names, and devise measures to mitigate the negative consequences.

17. Maintain a system of confidentiality related to beneficiary registration information such as ethnicity, HIV/AIDS status, etc.

D. Logistics and distribution

18. Consult with beneficiaries and local authorities on secure distribution sites near beneficiaries' communities, and adjust distribution plans accordingly.

19. Coordinate with local governments, military and police to determine their roles in guaranteeing beneficiaries' safety during food collection, including crowd control.

20. Inform beneficiaries of the procedure, timing and frequency of food distributions, including ration size.

21. Create safe spaces at distribution points for vulnerable women, elderly people and children.

22. Establish a mechanism for reporting rights violations, abuse and corruption perpetrated by WFP staff, implementing partners, food-management committees and other actors during and after distribution.

23. Increase the visibility of United Nations and WFP food packages, trucks and distribution sites in order to increase WFP's protective presence in insecure areas.

E. Monitoring, programme review, evaluation and reporting

24. Orient staff about the consequences of their behaviour and communications with communities regarding civilian protection during monitoring.

25. Establish a mechanism for gathering and reporting beneficiaries' complaints.

26. Establish a confidential mechanism for reporting and investigating protection issues witnessed by WFP staff.

27. Establish a secure system of sharing information within WFP and with implementing partners and the United Nations Country Team.

28. Incorporate questions about protection into monitoring and evaluation tools, including topics such as beneficiary safety and the immediate impacts of WFP's food assistance on household and community dynamics.

29. Include an analysis of how food assistance positively impacts local capacities within programme reviews and external evaluations.

30. Conduct periodic reviews to examine the positive and negative impacts of WFP's food assistance on beneficiary protection.

F. Negotiations, advocacy and partnership

31. Map the causes and effects of conflict, the actors involved and their motivations.

32. Assess the perceptions of parties in conflict regarding WFP.

33. Develop negotiation messages for increasing access based upon humanitarian principles.

34. Engage NGOs, civil society and United Nations partners in WFP's negotiations.

35. Train staff on the principles and skills for humanitarian negotiations and advocacy.

36. Develop an engagement strategy with traditional leaders, local authorities and other local stakeholders to discuss WFP's principles and operations.

37. With implementing partners, develop a message of neutrality and impartiality to convey to the government and people.

38. Capitalize on joint advocacy opportunities with other members of the United Nations Country Team and other international humanitarian networks.

39. Convey food security and protection concerns in discussions with authorities and armed groups.

40. Establish a protection feedback mechanism within WFP and with implementing partners.

41. Defend and support cooperating partners if they are harassed, attacked or threatened.

G. Staff and partner recruitment

42. Raise staff and partners' awareness of and compliance with humanitarian principles.

43. Vet newly recruited staff to determine their association with government, armed actors or other groups with political agendas.

44. Incorporate WFP's Humanitarian Principles, code of conduct and strategies for protecting beneficiaries into field-level agreements and memoranda of understanding.

45. Agree on sanctions or remedial actions for abusive or corrupt behaviours of partner staff.

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Protection in Practice:
Food Assistance with Safety and Dignity

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Assisting populations affected by conflict, natural disaster, marginalization and human rights abuses is the core of humanitarianism. Over the past two decades, the humanitarian aid industry has developed a more nuanced understanding of how humanitarian assistance can and cannot contribute to protecting civilians from violence, coercion and deprivation of rights. The need to engage in humanitarian protection – working to ensure civilians' safety from harm and respecting individuals' dignity while delivering basic needs – is now central to debates about the roles and responsibilities of humanitarian agencies.

This book examines the notion of protection within humanitarian thought and practice, and takes stock of WFP's approach to addressing protection concerns within its food-assistance activities. It draws lessons from WFP's experience in the field –how WFP's operations provide opportunities for protective programming as well as the limitations faced by WFP in contributing to civilian protection.

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