



# IMPACT REVIEW II

## FOCUS ON PROTECTION

FEBRUARY 2016

## SYRIA CRISIS REGIONAL RESPONSE



For information on WFP's Syria Crisis Response in 2013 - 2015, please use the **QR Code** or access through the **link: [wfp.org/syriainfo](http://wfp.org/syriainfo)**

### HIGHLIGHTS

- While protection mainstreaming is an essential tool used in humanitarian programming, the integration of protection into programmes is becoming ever more critical, particularly within the context of Syria, to better ensure affected populations' rights are respected and protected.
- WFP is working to improve the integration of protection into its programmes through targeted programming and accountability mechanisms.
- WFP will continue to utilize existing coordination structures both inside and outside Syria to 1) strengthen its integration of protection into its programmes and 2) build greater partnerships with organizations/agencies with expertise in protection programming.

WFP/Mohammad Batah



**World Food Programme**

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## OVERVIEW

The ultimate goal of integrating protection in the Syrian response is to transition the current mentality of humanitarian programming – where sectors work in silos – to one which honors and respects the holistic needs of the people we are serving. According to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the primary mechanism for coordinating humanitarian assistance, “protection broadly encompasses activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of all individuals in accordance with international law (international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law) regardless of their age, gender, social ethnic, national, religious, or other background.”<sup>1</sup> In armed conflict environments, this means all parties to the conflict are responsible for ensuring that the civilian population is respected and protected.

At present, through established coordination structures both inside Syria (Whole of Syria-WoS) and in the region (Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan-3RP), WFP is working to uphold its mandate, of providing humanitarian protection to civilians, which, at this stage in the crisis, must be complemented with measures to protect human rights.

### The role of protection mainstreaming and protection integration within the Syria crisis response

In the humanitarian context, particularly with regards to the Syrian crisis, protection has commonly become a box that agencies and organizations alike tick. Protection is often an abstract concept not always fully understood by humanitarian actors. In practice it should entail working with “responsible authorities, mandated agencies and the population in need to reduce the incidence of attacks on civilians by all parties to the conflict, and to reduce the impact of the attacks on health, access to food and economic security by enabling the free movement of the civilian population and access by humanitarian agencies.”<sup>2</sup> Within the Syria context, though a large amount of inter-agency protection strategies have been developed, shared, and approved by key stakeholders, operationalizing these strategies remains a challenge due to complexities on the ground.

Currently, WFP is striving to provide civilian protection to those affected by this crisis. However, such measures must be accompanied by human rights protection (investigations on international human rights and humanitarian law violations) from other United Nations (UN) agencies, otherwise it is impossible to achieve our respective mandates.

Last month, particularly in the light of the situation in Madaya and other besieged locations in Syria, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Ms. Elver, underscored that “the deliberate starvation of civilians in both international and internal armed conflict as a tactic of war constitutes a war crime, and could also amount to a crime against humanity if it can be shown that denial of food is a deliberate and systematic tactic to cause civilian suffering.”<sup>3</sup>

As the Syrian crisis becomes increasingly protracted, it is important to remember that under international human rights and humanitarian law, all factions involved in the conflict must ensure that civilians and prisoners of war have access to adequate food and water during armed conflict. Ms. Elver further stressed that “the right to food does not cease in times of conflict, indeed it becomes more crucial as a result of the acute vulnerabilities of individuals and communities.”<sup>4</sup> This message acknowledges the fundamental linkage between key humanitarian sectors, food security and protection, and the importance of aid organizations working collaboratively to achieve holistic outcomes, which respect meaningful access, safety and dignity to aid activities.

### The linkage between food assistance and protection

The delivery of food assistance in the midst of a humanitarian conflict undoubtedly involves various protection risks. For example, beneficiaries may face the risk of being hurt or assaulted after collecting their assistance from a food distribution point. To avoid such risks, WFP has worked both inside Syria and its neighboring countries to mainstream protection into its programmes. Mainstreaming protection into programmes is

1 UNOCHA <http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/policy/thematic-areas/protection> 21 February 2016

2 Bonwick, Andrew; Slim, Hugo, Protection An ALNAP Guide for Humanitarian Agencies 2005, p.98

3 OHCHR Syria: UN Expert Warns Against Deliberate Starvation of Civilians – 400,000 people at risk in 15 besieged locations <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16967&LangID=E#sthash.Fg5Q5iyc.dpuf>

4 Ibid.

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essential to ensure that protection principles, such as “do no harm,” are upheld. This principle suggests “humanitarian organizations must strive to ‘do no harm’ or to minimize the harm they may be inadvertently doing simply by being present and providing assistance.”<sup>5</sup> This protection principle is critical to ensuring beneficiary safety remains central to programming.

WFP understands the critical role food assistance plays within the Syria crisis and its inherent linkage to the protection of its beneficiaries. Since early 2015, the reduction of food assistance across the region has led vulnerable Syrian households to adopt more severe coping strategies, exposing themselves to worrying protection concerns. These include child labor and high risk jobs (including illegal construction work and/or prostitution). This intrinsic relationship between sectors (i.e. livelihoods, protection, food security, etc.) further emphasizes that to better respond to the needs of beneficiaries, integrated programming focused on protective outcomes must be adapted. Protective outcomes refer to results which respect the rights of an individual in accordance with the relevant bodies of law, namely human rights law, international humanitarian law, and refugee law.<sup>6</sup> These outcomes largely enable people to lead safer, more dignified lives, and to realise their wider social and economic rights.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Examples of protective outcomes:**

*The civilian population has sufficient food supply, regular and safe access to its fields and markets and sufficient clean water.*

*All people in towns in District X will have sufficient and safe access to food aid until free movement is secured again in the surrounding area.*

Next month, March 2016, the Syria crisis will enter its sixth year. At this phase in the response, integrated programming which encompasses protection is required to 1) ensure the strategic utilization of resources and 2) better respond to the dynamic needs of the displaced and the communities in which they live. This paper will present an overview of what WFP has done thus far to mainstream and integrate protection into its programmes, identifying the existing gaps and present recommendations on how to achieve a more holistic humanitarian response.

### **Taking stock – what has been and what is currently being done**

Within the international community, there has been an urgent plea for all humanitarian aid programmes to put on their ‘protection hat’ and focus on ways in which assistance programming in all sectors can reduce people’s vulnerability to other forms of attack, violation, coercion, cooption or deprivation.<sup>8</sup>

Over the course of the past few years, protection mainstreaming has become an essential tool used in humanitarian and development programmes. In WFP’s response to the Syria crisis, gender – a major protection concern – has been directly mainstreamed into programme design and implementation. Feedback from beneficiaries is continually used to inform programmatic decisions. These measures have served to warrant more responsible programming which respect the rights of beneficiaries.

*Protection mainstreaming<sup>9</sup> – is the process of incorporating protection principles and promoting meaningful access, safety and dignity in humanitarian aid. The following elements must be taken into account in all humanitarian activities:*

- *Prioritize safety and dignity, and avoid causing harm;*
- *Meaningful access;*
- *Accountability;*
- *Participation and empowerment.*

5 UNICEF Humanitarian Principles - July 2003

6 Protection Outcomes in Cash Based Interventions - IMPROVING CASH-BASED INTERVENTIONS MULTIPURPOSE CASH GRANTS AND PROTECTION Enhanced Response Capacity Project 2014–2015, A Literature Review January 2015 UNHCR and DRC [http://www.themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Guidelines\\_Protection\\_Outcomes\\_in\\_Cash-based\\_Interventions\\_Literature\\_Review.pdf](http://www.themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Guidelines_Protection_Outcomes_in_Cash-based_Interventions_Literature_Review.pdf)

7 Bonwick, Andrew; Slim, Hugo, p.74

8 Ibid.

9 Global Protection Cluster (GPC) <http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/en/areas-of-responsibility/protection-mainstreaming.html>

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A few examples of these gender/protection mainstreaming measures include: sex disaggregated food distribution lines,<sup>10</sup> gender balanced monitoring teams, and the employment of female cashiers in affiliated shops. Sex disaggregated food distribution lines serve to mitigate any protection related incidents beneficiaries may face when receiving their food assistance, in addition to respecting cultural norms. Gender balanced monitoring teams help to 1) collect reliable data, as beneficiaries often feel more at ease disclosing their responses to enumerators of the same sex and 2) minimize any protection related risk associated with having only female enumerators conduct households visits. Furthermore, WFP affiliated shops have employed female cashiers in an effort to ensure female shoppers are more comfortable when making their food purchases.



WFP/Mohammad Batah

### Transition from mainstreaming to integrating protection

After WFP's Regional and Syria emergency operations transitioned from a rapid scale up to one of a more established nature, so too began the transition from mainstreaming gender and protection to integrating protection into programmes. Protection integration helps to prevent, mitigate and respond to protection threats faced by affected populations to achieve protective outcomes carried out by the food security sector as well as others, such as WASH or education. Examples of such integration measures are reflected through WFP's targeted programming and data collection tools.

*Protection integration<sup>11</sup> – refers to humanitarian activities designed to support protection objectives / achieve protection outcomes through multi-sectoral collaboration.*

### Targeted programming

Key demographic groups deemed to be in need of extra assistance have been targeted by WFP. For example, inside Syria, a fresh food voucher programme for pregnant and nursing mothers allows women to purchase healthy nutrient-rich food items such as produce, dairy, and lean meats. While this programme primarily serves to improve the food consumption and dietary diversity of mothers, it also helps to prevent and mitigate any protection-related threats pregnant/nursing mothers could potentially face when trying to meet their food needs. Such protection-related threats can include having mothers risk insecurity by leaving their relatively safe apartment to collect food rations, in addition to the possible fatigue associated with carrying in-kind food parcels (which can weigh up to 50 kilos) as opposed to vouchers. Another example of targeted programming includes school nutrition programme for children/adolescents ages 4-17 years old.

<sup>10</sup> For beneficiaries that receive either in-kind food parcels and or paper vouchers.

<sup>11</sup> InterAction Learning Event – Meeting Note 31 January 2014

<https://www.interaction.org/sites/default/files/InterAction%20Protection%20Mainstreaming%20Learning%20Event%20Meeting%20Note%20March%202014.pdf> 22 February 2016

This programme, currently implemented in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, seeks to increase school attendance through the provision of a healthy snack. Increased school attendance averts and mitigates potential protection risks associated with irregular school attendance, such as child labor. Therefore, this targeted programme is in line with one of the four protection themes<sup>12</sup> - protection of children - identified by the WoS Protection Sector, as well as the 3RP Regional Protection Framework, which advocates for the reinforcement of national capacities as a means to strengthen effective and sustainable protection and education services.<sup>13</sup>



### Accountability mechanisms ensure better protection

In addition to integrating protection into programmes across the region, WFP has also incorporated protection into its monitoring tools. Beneficiary feedback mechanisms, such as hotlines and helpdesks, allow beneficiaries to report incidents in 'real time' which they may have encountered when receiving/utilizing their food assistance. These tools help to monitor protection-related incidents and facilitate the immediate follow-up of any recommended actions.

### Utilizing monitoring tools to strengthen protection

Data collected in post-distribution monitoring (PDM) surveys is disaggregated by sex and age to facilitate the analysis of household level vulnerabilities, e.g. male versus female headed households. The disaggregation of monitoring data according to key demographic groups allows programme teams to better target their response, according to identified vulnerabilities. For example, a female headed household with five children under five years old would be categorized as more vulnerable than a female headed household with no children. Additionally, within the PDM tool, there is a section which asks beneficiaries if they encountered any protection-related issues when accessing their assistance. The inclusion of this section into the survey allows key protection-related concerns to be identified through regular monitoring, and facilitates the identification of possible mitigation measures. For example, if beneficiaries indicate that they faced a protection-related incident (i.e. harassment, physical pushing, and physical disability hindering access to the site) at a specific food distribution point, during the next scheduled distribution, additional staff would be present to monitor the distribution and/or assist with the recommended measure required (e.g. building a ramp way to provide wheelchair access).

Furthermore, monitoring tools, such as the PDM survey, assess household level coping strategies, both food consumption and livelihood-based, which serve as key proxy indicators to refugees' vulnerability. The usage of coping strategies further places households at risk of increasing their vulnerability, depending on the type of strategy and the frequency at which it is employed. Given that these strategies are cross-sectoral in nature, i.e. the withdrawal of children from school (education/protection), engaging in high-risk/illegal jobs (livelihoods/protection), the sale of household assets (protection), etc., it is becoming more relevant to share these findings with other humanitarian actors through existing coordination platforms – WoS and 3RP. This information can then be used to further explore avenues for 1) joint programming and 2) integrated protection programming.

### Modality of assistance impacting beneficiaries' protection

The modality by which food assistance is delivered has evolved since the start of the Syrian conflict, from in-kind food parcels to electronic cash-based transfers.<sup>14</sup> This change in modality can be seen as another way in which WFP has integrated protection into its programming. The shift in modality has reduced household

12 1) Access to civil status documentation, 2) prevention of and response to gender-based violence, 3) protection of children and 4) mine action.

13 3RP Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2016-2017 In Response to the Syria Crisis Regional Strategic Overview, p.16

14 This change in modality is primarily witnessed in the five regional response countries as inside Syria in-kind food parcels remain the primary modality of food aid.

expenditure on transportation to and from food distribution points and mitigated protection risks associated with collecting food assistance (as monthly food assistance is uploaded monthly on an electronic card). Furthermore, the change in modality has positively impacted households' food security as their dietary diversity and food consumption have improved across the region. Cash-based transfers have also contributed to restoring a sense of normalcy and human dignity for beneficiaries, as they can make their own decisions on food items to purchase. This change in modality is in agreement with the 3RP Protection Framework which underscores the vital role refugees can play in mitigating the protection risks they face on a daily basis by investing in their capacity to act as informed decision-makers and protection actors.<sup>15</sup>

Given the recent developments in Syria, WFP is planning to provide food aid via air drops, to reach vulnerable Syrians located in hard-to-reach and besieged locations. This modality of assistance is a last resort, however, is deemed most appropriate provided the urgent food needs on the ground. The objective of pursuing such modality is that by reaching these vulnerable families with food assistance 1) their immediate food needs will be met and 2) protection threats will be mitigated.

It is essential to note that no matter what type of modality is employed, WFP will work to ensure that its humanitarian activities "prevent and minimize as much as possible any unintended negative effects of interventions which may increase people's vulnerability to both physical and psychosocial risks".<sup>16</sup>

### London Contributions better ensure WFP beneficiaries are protected

In 2015, in the region, WFP was only able to provide 70 percent (on average) of planned cash-based transfer values to its beneficiaries. During certain times of the year, WFP provided only 50 percent of planned values to beneficiaries. In Lebanon, since September 2015 limited funding forced the implementation of capping the level of assistance to five members per household. While, in Turkey funding constraints led WFP to reduce its presence in the camps, fortunately, the government of Turkey was able to step in and provide the additional level of support to vulnerable Syrian refugees. Overall, in 2015 decreased levels in assistance led refugee families to increase their usage of coping strategies, exposing themselves to greater food insecurity and protection risks (as highlighted in the monitoring section).

Thankfully, due to the recent contributions made following the London Conference (February 4), WFP will be able to increase its assistance levels for vulnerable refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt to 100 percent of the planned cash-based transfer value as of March until the end of the year. In addition, the capping of assistance in Lebanon will also be removed, which will reduce the amount of sharing/stretching of assistance in households with more than five members.

Furthermore, WFP's Syria emergency operation will be fully funded until the end of October 2016. This increase in funds will better enable WFP's beneficiaries inside Syria, approximately 4 million people, to receive the recommended nutritional food intake as opposed to a reduced food basket (approximately 20 percent), which they have received for more than a year. Such increases in assistance will help to ensure vulnerable families are better suited to meet their food needs, and thus reduce their exposure to potential protection risks.

### Reduced CBT / Ration Values: January 2015 - Present

	2015 planned CBT (USD) / ration (kcal)	Length of reduced CBT / ration	Average value of reduced CBT/ ration	Planned CBT / ration value as of March 2016
<b>Jordan*</b>	28.2	14 months	Ext. Vulnerable: 20 Vulnerable: 13.5	Ext. Vulnerable: 28.2 Vulnerable: 14.1
<b>Lebanon</b>	27	14 months	18.8	27
<b>Turkey**</b>	23.2	1 month	22.8	20
<b>Iraq</b>	28.2	13 months	Ext. Vulnerable: 15 Vulnerable: 19.7	Ext. Vulnerable: 28.2 Vulnerable: 19
<b>Egypt</b>	24.2	14 months	17	24.2
<b>Syria</b>	1,646 kcal	14 months	1,382 kcal	1,704 kcal

\*Refugees in camps in Jordan received a full CBT value (28.2) throughout 2015 to present.

\*\*Refugees in Turkey received a reduced value of 17 in January. From February to December, the Government of Turkey complemented WFP assistance to provide a full voucher value of 23.2.

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## WFP's future programming – Syria + five 2020 Vision Objectives

As WFP moves toward more long-term programme development to address the needs of populations affected by the Syrian crisis, the integration of protection into its activities will become increasingly important. WFP's 2020 Syria + five regional strategy will focus on the following three key objectives: 1) maintain life-saving food and nutrition interventions for the most vulnerable people 2) invest in people by harnessing the knowledge, talents and skills of displaced Syrians and host communities, and 3) restore livelihoods and create economic opportunities inside Syria and in host countries. Within each of these objectives, coordination, and collaboration with other actors in the education, livelihoods, and protection sectors will be critical to ensure more integrated and holistic programming.

An example of a future initiative is to expand the current school nutrition programme to also support the employment of female Syrian refugees. This type of employment would include food production, food handling and packaging and healthy meal delivery to schools. This means women would be involved in the school nutrition programme from start to finish - the whole supply chain. The children of women participating in the programme would also partake in the programme as they would receive the healthy meal (contingent upon the minimum attendance requirement). This initiative seeks to strengthen the resilience at the household level, targeting the needs of vulnerable women and their children. Women would be employed and their children (the future generation of Syria) would receive 1) an education and 2) have access to nutritious food.

### What are the existing gaps? What can be improved? Moving forward, how will WFP better integrate protection into its programming?

Currently, WFP has developed a wide range of partnerships with UN agencies and international NGOs across the region. Such partnerships have allowed WFP to provide inputs to WoS protection strategy through the Strategic Steering Group for Syria (SSG) and the 3RP Protection Framework via the Regional Technical Review Committee. In order to better respond to the needs of WFP's beneficiaries through the integration of protection into its programmes, existing partnerships must be strengthened and new partnerships must be fostered to bring in expertise to better inform WFP programming. Building and maintaining strong partnerships is one of the six key criteria for the litmus test WFP will adhere to according to the 2020 Syria + five regional strategy.

Data collection tools and methodology will also need to be harmonized across the region, to better understand the holistic needs of beneficiaries. This effort will allow WFP to know where it can strengthen protection integration measures, the plausible ways to attain such integration, and whom to partner with to achieve holistic protective outcomes.

While data has been collected throughout the region over the course of the past five years, the strategic sharing/dissemination of this information has not been uniform. This information could be used to better inform partners of 1) protection-related issues that have occurred, 2) key vulnerabilities identified of joint beneficiaries, and 3) the plausible ways to pursue integrated protection programming. All of these efforts could serve as a vehicle to streamline humanitarian agencies' response, avoiding duplication and identifying remaining gaps in programming.

## Conclusion

In the Syria crisis response, the integration of protection into humanitarian programming is essential. While WFP has mainstreamed gender-related protection concerns into its programmes, and has begun to integrate protection into them as well, more work remains to be done to further strengthen its response. This can be achieved by taking stock of where greater linkages to protection integration can be pursued, and by partnering with agencies and organizations with expertise in protection programming. Through stronger partnerships, WFP and the humanitarian community will be better positioned to respond to the dynamic protection challenges affecting populations both inside and outside Syria.

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## FUNDING REQUIREMENTS (in USD million)

Following the generous pledges announced at the London Conference, WFP needs **USD 250 million** to fund activities through 2016. This includes funding required for WFP operations inside Syria for November and December 2016 (**USD 120 million**).

In addition, WFP will respond to increased humanitarian needs in the region (**USD 88 million**). This includes, for example, the recent escalation of the conflict inside Syria which has seen over 25,000 newly displaced people fleeing Syria who are currently stranded at the border with Jordan, in a strip of land known as 'the berm.' These people are in desperate need of daily humanitarian assistance (in-kind food deliveries).

Finally, WFP is seeking an initial **USD 42 million** for start-up projects that would lay the foundation of longer-term resilience, under the 'Syria + 5 2020 Vision.'

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*Donors are represented in alphabetical order.*

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