



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

Executive Board
Annual session
Rome, 20–24 June 2022

Distribution: General

Agenda item 10

Date: 17 May 2022

WFP/EB.A/2022/10-F

Original: English

Administrative and managerial matters

For information

Executive Board documents are available on WFP's website (<https://executiveboard.wfp.org>).

Security report

Introduction

1. In 2021 WFP continued to operate in a humanitarian environment that was increasingly demanding owing to protracted emergencies, new outbursts of conflict, economic downturn (further exacerbated by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic) and climate change.
2. The climate crisis is no longer a glimpse into the future but the daily reality for communities around the world. Climate shocks such as drought, storms and floods are increasingly putting lives and livelihoods at risk and eroding development. When combined with other problems in the most food-insecure parts of the world, such shocks exacerbate conflict as people compete for scarce resources, driving displacement and social tensions.
3. WFP scaled up its operations to reach over 115 million beneficiaries in 2021 alone. The increasing demand for humanitarian support prompted WFP security services¹ to respond more rapidly and with augmented capacity in locations affected by the main drivers of hunger.
4. As WFP has scaled up its humanitarian operations, exponential change has been noted in the locations where WFP security operates, with urban scenarios characterized by numerous threats adding their complexity to the challenges posed by remote field locations.

¹ In this report, "security services" or "WFP security services" refer to the security activities and personnel of WFP collectively. The term Security Division refers to the headquarters-based unit that provides guidance and support for field operations.

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5. According to internal United Nations assessments, three major trends dominated the global security environment in 2021, with adverse effects on the levels and types of threats faced by United Nations and other humanitarian organizations, including WFP. The role of non-State armed actors continued to gain prominence. Further, growing disinformation campaigns aimed at discrediting the United Nations and promoting anti-United Nations and anti-humanitarian organization sentiments presented an emerging threat. Violent extremism continued to expand, in particular in areas lacking employment opportunities for young people and basic State services such as security.
6. WFP security support has been crucial to the enabling and timely delivery of WFP programmes, collaborating with partners and assisting staff in the most affected countries, to facilitate reaching beneficiaries wherever and whenever possible. This has helped to reduce disruptions to humanitarian operations.
7. On the interagency side, the Security Division has continued to play a major role in the United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS), which defines roles, accountabilities, responsibilities and policies on matters related to security risk management, enabling United Nations entities to conduct their activities within acceptable levels of security risk.

Incident analysis

8. The number of safety and security incidents affecting WFP personnel, as well as cooperating partners and contractors providing services for WFP, increased significantly in 2021.
9. Looking only at incidents affecting WFP personnel or programmes (69 percent of total), it is apparent that the majority – 66 percent – are related to the conduct of WFP operations or activities. Taking into consideration the number of personnel in the organization, the overall global incident rate was 65 incidents per 1,000 WFP staff members (up from 49 in 2020).
10. The change in trends in terms of incident numbers, frequency of violence and casualty figures is evidence of the continued deterioration of the threat environment in which WFP operates and may also be attributable to the opening up of many countries from COVID-19-related lockdowns and restrictions.

Summary of incident reports and trends

- In 2021, there were 1,746 incidents involving or affecting WFP personnel, WFP cooperating partners and contractors providing services for WFP, a 40 percent rise compared to 2020.
- Nineteen fatalities were recorded, including four among WFP personnel and two among WFP dependents; of these six, two were due to violence.
- Fifteen abductions involving 40 employees were also reported (down 10 percent from 2020).
- Eastern Africa had the highest number of incidents and incident rate, by a large margin.
- Crime remains the most common threat for WFP globally, although hazards account for half of deaths and serious injuries.
- The share of incidents involving violence – or the threat thereof – rose sharply (from 26 percent in the previous period to 31 percent). Approximately 60 percent of the incidents that had major impacts on WFP personnel and their dependents were security incidents involving violence; this rises to 85 percent for WFP partners and contractors.
- An increasing share of security incidents affect WFP partners.

- UNSMS incident statistics are similar: both the Security Information Management and Security Analysis System used by WFP and the Department of Safety and Security incident reporting system show the same top five incident types and a similar distribution of safety versus security incidents in 2021. Moreover, the sharp increase in incidents seen by WFP between 2020 and 2021 (40 percent) was also seen across the United Nations (44 percent).

Major incident trends

11. The share of incidents involving violence – or the threat thereof – rose sharply (from 26 percent in the previous period to 31 percent); however, the number of incidents resulting in the abduction, serious injury or death of personnel dropped by 10 percent compared to 2020, with 58 incidents involving WFP-linked personnel. Approximately 60 percent of the incidents that had major impacts on WFP personnel and their dependents were security incidents involving violence; this rises to 85 percent for WFP partners and contractors.
12. In 2021, there were 15 abduction incidents involving 40 employees. This represents a significant decrease from 2020, with 23 incidents involving 54 personnel. In cases involving WFP personnel, the individuals abducted were released without major physical injury within a day; however, partner staff have been held for days and even weeks. Most incidents occurred in Afghanistan and Cameroon. There is still one unresolved incident of abduction of a WFP staff member in Nigeria from 2020, to which the Security Division has dedicated missions and external resources in its efforts to resolve it. In addition, careful consideration has been given to after-action review and lessons learned to define concrete actions to mitigate the risk of similar future incidents.
13. In the light of these trends, the strategic and operational response of the Security Division has been to resume first response training for WFP personnel in West Africa. The gradual lifting of COVID-19 restrictions globally also allowed for Safe and Secure Approaches to Field Environments training to be delivered to WFP staff deploying to high-risk countries. Women's Security Awareness Training was also provided to WFP staff and partners at headquarters and in the Latin America and the Caribbean region; this training covers captivity coping mechanisms, among other things.

By threat

14. Overall, trends in security threats are unchanged from previous periods: over half of reported incidents are rooted in crime and nearly a quarter stem from hazards in the operating environment.
15. The number of crime incidents has risen steadily in recent years but rose more sharply in 2021. Thefts, robberies, burglaries and intrusions accounted for over half the incidents in the crime category. While fewer in number, incidents of harassment, intimidation and arrest of WFP personnel are also on the rise, as are threats of violence against WFP personnel. Countries² disproportionately affected by crime incidents include South Sudan, the Sudan and Cameroon.
16. The number of incidents in the **hazards** category rose more gradually, consistent with previous years, with road safety incidents accounting for 65 percent (see additional details in the section below). Moreover, hazards account for a disproportionately large number of deaths and serious injuries – 49 percent. Countries disproportionately affected by hazard incidents include South Sudan, the Sudan and Uganda. The Security Division and the

² WFP incidents described in this report are those that occurred within the areas of responsibility of WFP country offices.

Occupational Safety and Health Unit³ have joined efforts to implement fact-finding processes in field locations with the aim of preventing recurrence of reported hazard incidents. Awareness campaigns have been conducted among WFP staff with the aim of preventing security incidents and occupational safety and health accidents.

17. Armed-conflict-related incidents appear to be on the rise, reversing the drop seen through 2020 and returning to the trend of previous years. In Ethiopia in particular the number of incidents reported more than tripled as a result of the high-intensity conflict that affected the country throughout 2021. Similarly, Afghanistan witnessed a spike in incidents linked to the transfer of power that occurred mid-way through the year, while Yemen remained predominant, as it has in previous years.
18. Civil unrest spiked in 2019 but fell in 2020 (probably due to COVID-19 restrictions on movement) and started to rise again in the second half of 2021 as the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic and other grievances led to a revival of anti-government sentiment around the world. While the effects of unrest on WFP have been mostly indirect, in particular in the case of unrest focused on political grievances, there are early signs of a return of hunger riots like those that the world experienced in 2008, during the last period of sharp increases in food prices. Countries with a disproportionately high number of civil unrest incidents in 2021 include the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria, the Sudan and Yemen.
19. The number of incidents linked to extremism and terrorism has remained low over time, with such incidents accounting for 2 percent of security incidents in 2021. Given the potential for transnational terrorist organizations to carry out acts of violence with severe impacts, however, the subject is discussed in more detail below.

By region

20. Eastern Africa was the WFP region with the highest number of incidents in 2021 (accounting for 43 percent of incidents), a continuation of the trend seen over the past two years, mainly owing to a large number of incidents in Ethiopia, South Sudan and the Sudan. There was a particular spike in incidents in Ethiopia in 2021. More information on these countries is provided in the box on page 6 of the present document.
21. The Asia and the Pacific region and the Middle East and Northern Africa region accounted for a greater portion of incidents in 2021 than in 2020. This was mainly due to the rise in violence and related impacts in Afghanistan and Yemen, in the latter case reversing the drop in incidents reported in 2020. The overall number of incidents reported for Western Africa rose by only a small percentage despite a doubling of incidents in Cameroon, where WFP partners were the target of attacks by non-State armed groups. The regional totals were balanced out somewhat by a drop in reported incidents in Burkina Faso, where operations were challenged by the security environment. In Southern Africa, despite an increased spotlight on the conflict in Mozambique, the number of incidents remained steady, with minor changes from last year in all countries. Meanwhile, while incident numbers in Latin America and the Caribbean vary from year to year and are relatively low, the number of incidents rose to 80 in 2021, a historical high for the region (up from 61 in 2020), mainly due to the number of incidents in Colombia more than doubling as violence in the Venezuelan border region increased.

³ The Occupational Safety and Health Unit aims to reduce workplace injuries, and thus improve the physical and mental well-being of staff, by establishing workplace safety and health rights, responsibilities and duties and ensuring that staff receive occupational safety and health training and support. Workplaces include WFP offices, warehouses, workshops, garages, port and aviation operations, clinics, guesthouses, construction sites, logistic hubs and fuel storage areas.

Operational security response

Operationalizing enhanced WFP regional and country access strategies

22. In 2021, WFP operations continued to be challenged by a lack of secure, principled and consistent humanitarian access to beneficiaries, stemming from increased bureaucratic and administrative impediments imposed by State and non-State actors and de facto authorities on personnel and humanitarian activities, poor infrastructure, interference in humanitarian activities, protracted hostilities in civilian areas, attacks on humanitarian personnel, misappropriation of WFP relief items and internal organizational issues and constraints.
23. More WFP country operations institutionalized multifunctional technical access cells in 2021, resulting in the design of structured access strategies and workplans in countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and South Sudan. The Security Division has contributed to expanding the operationalization of the WFP country access strategy and optimizing the implementation of dedicated toolkits in hard-to-reach areas where access is constrained by elevated insecurity.
24. In Haiti, the focus has been on information management, mapping and analysis of gang actors, structures, areas of presence and networks of influence to assess the level of WFP's acceptance and enhance negotiation of humanitarian access and humanitarian space for WFP programmes.
25. In South Sudan the security team continues to lead the crisis management component of the WFP country access strategy and contribute to collaborative work on conflict analysis, powerbroker mapping, negotiation of security guarantees and capacity building. In collaboration with colleagues from the Regional Bureau for Western Africa and the Emergency Operations Division Geospatial Support Unit at headquarters, the Security Division has developed a mapping tool to support the subregional access strategy, aimed at integrating and mapping data on access constraints such as security incidents and armed actors' presence and networks of influence. The tool is available for use in Mali and Burkina Faso.
26. The roll-out of the tailor-made mapping tool has supported the review of the WFP access strategy in Mali by enabling enhanced information gathering and analysis, planning based on acceptance and local capacity for humanitarian negotiations and strengthened civil-military coordination. This is achieved through data integration and mapping of data collected through monitoring by both WFP personnel and third parties, thereby helping to measure access in qualitative terms. The Security Division has also fostered the safe implementation of operational modalities established as security risk management measures in an array of WFP country operations.
27. WFP security services have increasingly approved the use of low-profile missions as a means of managing security risks in areas where United Nations and other humanitarian workers can be considered legitimate targets in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and Yemen. The use of low-profile missions was extended in 2021 to address emerging access constraints such as the imposition of armed escorts on United Nations movements and operations presenting a risk of diminished acceptance among beneficiaries and association of humanitarian operations with legitimate military targets.

Country operational focus

Sudan

Following the coup d'état in the Sudan between October and November 2021, the security team succeeded in enabling the continuation of WFP operations despite the emergency. There were no evacuations from the area, and WFP personnel stayed to deliver. The professionalism of the security team in Khartoum was commendable, as acknowledged by the country director.

Ethiopia

The conflict in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region offers another illustration of WFP security services' ability to support the distribution of assistance, in that case for 2 million refugees. Even the Department of Safety and Security relied on WFP, which was able to support all involved United Nations entities in managing the impact of an offensive in Tigray. In addition, the security team worked in a new context that was challenging for the UNSMS, involving the use of drones and soft-skin vehicles to support staff.

Somalia

In a palpable example of the climate crisis, where in addition to the existing threats in the country, insurgencies had a disheartening impact because of the drought, WFP security services showed great coordination and leadership in ensuring the security and safety of WFP staff. Climate change is dramatically changing the way security services operate. Outside-the-box thinking is required to be an effective partner to countries and go beyond the normal security risk management mandate. Waters are rising, operational areas are flooded and intercommunal violence continues, with convoys targeted on a regular basis. WFP security services need operational and mental flexibility to adapt so that food can reach beneficiaries and staff is not harmed. Evolving criminality linked to natural disasters calls for a new breed of security officers, one that is more agile and adaptable and has a deep understanding of the context.

Myanmar

The military coup d'état in Myanmar in February 2021 reshaped the security environment there. The country office, which previously did not have a significant presence of security professionals, had to face a highly insecure environment in which WFP continued to operate. Many of the incidents reported were related to public security and demonstrations that represented organized low-intensity resistance against the de facto authorities, with increasingly sophisticated attacks. Monitoring of the security implications of the incidents informed WFP operations to a great extent, especially considering the new urban operational setting.

Afghanistan

The rapid Taliban takeover of the Afghan government in August 2021 saw a sudden change in the security environment. WFP security services have been monitoring security incidents very closely, focusing on those in which WFP or its partners could be targeted, which could change the level of acceptance of WFP in affected communities. There have also been attempts by local government officials to influence beneficiaries, targeting distribution modalities. Due to the evolving situation, security staff in Afghanistan was strengthened by the addition of three international security professionals.

Developing a collaborative security culture with cooperating partners

28. Between 2020 and 2021, a 36 percent increase in the number of security incidents affecting WFP partner organizations was observed, with a 19 percent increase in the number of WFP cooperating partner personnel affected. In recent years, WFP has increasingly implemented its programmes through cooperating partners to achieve "localization" aimed at ensuring sustainability, effectiveness, improved security and access. Due to their proximity to physical front-line threats, WFP cooperating partners have been increasingly affected by security incidents globally. In addition to their proximity to local events, several other factors make it challenging to incorporate security risk management into many of WFP's partnerships; including limited investment in joint risk and context analysis and communication on perceived risks, perceived financial disincentives that deter discussion of security challenges and requests for support, and misalignment of risk management approaches for cooperating partners that have varying levels of risk ownership and habituation.

29. WFP recently incorporated capacity-sharing with cooperating partners on security risk management into the scope of both enterprise risk management and Integrated Road Map policies. It has also added lack of availability of and capacity for effective partnerships to its corporate risk register as an operational risk. To mitigate this risk WFP has committed to strengthened coordination of security risk management with WFP cooperating partners. For countries with high-security risks, this coordination has been streamlined in the second-generation country strategic plans. To further complement the corporate approach of supporting platforms and strengthening mechanisms for collaboration between WFP security services and cooperating partners, an array of field-based initiatives and practices has emerged and been implemented by WFP to foster the development of a security culture and raise awareness of the importance of security risk management to partnerships established by the organization.
30. In addition to longstanding collaboration mechanisms such as the Saving Lives Together framework, the Security Division provides additional security coordination support to cooperating partners and other humanitarian organizations at the country and headquarters levels with the aim of improving security information-sharing, providing technical advice and improving humanitarian access. WFP security services can assist cooperating partners at the local level by introducing local partners to international best practices and sharing knowledge and expertise, at the same time improving the security of WFP assets.

Strengthening WFP security risk management capacity to adequately support humanitarian emergency operations

31. While prioritizing requests for resources originating from corporate scale-up operations, the Security Division has diversified the profiles of security professionals selected to support security risk management operations in the Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa and the following 13 countries in 2021: Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Haiti, Iraq, Liberia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic. Security professionals with varied experience and backgrounds were selected from a dedicated surge pool of external candidates and from among the international and national WFP security professionals based at headquarters, regional bureaux and country offices. A total of seven experienced national security staff were deployed in response to the request for surge security officers, with the goal of further building internal capacity in high-security and safety risk environments accompanied by acute humanitarian need. These capacity building efforts were productive thanks to improved technical onboarding delivered by security professionals at headquarters and thorough support and mentorship by the regional security teams concerned. The efforts undertaken to defend and implement the internal capacity building and strengthening strategy began to pay off in 2021, with five national security professionals transitioned from WFP field offices into international security positions at headquarters.
32. The Security Division also provided more financial support to WFP country operations facing sudden increased security risks for WFP personnel, operations and assets that resulted in increased security costs that could not be anticipated and budgeted for. Such financial support benefits WFP country operations facing large operational scale-up in already high-risk contexts or escalating humanitarian emergencies, enabling them to swiftly allocate adequate resources and quickly put in place crisis management capacity. Thus, the Security Division allocated USD 1.7 million to six WFP country operations (in Haiti, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mozambique, Somalia and South Sudan) and the Regional Bureau for Western Africa in 2021.

33. Other initiatives have been developed and processes and activities rolled out to increase the Security Division's capacity to support WFP field security operations. WFP security teams involved in the development of country strategic plans have received guidance and mentorship to enable them to contribute to:
- review of key security risk scenarios during the formulation of country strategic plans;
 - incorporation of quality-oriented security considerations into risk management strategies; and
 - adequate budgeting for security costs and allocation of human resources vis-à-vis planned activities and relevant mitigation strategies.
34. Countries involved in this exercise were Burundi, Cameroon, El Salvador, Mozambique and the Syrian Arab Republic. A similar approach was taken for country strategic plan revisions in countries facing deteriorating security or insufficient security resources following operational scale-ups.
35. Furthermore, the Security Division has worked to improve its induction process for new staff by successfully launching an onboarding programme for all newly contracted security officers and analysts. Onboarding also included tailor-made sessions for staff deploying to WFP emergency response operations. With the support of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, the Security Division continued to undertake missions, providing expert fire safety management capacity to WFP country operations in Burundi, Cameroon, Mali and the Sudan. The division also provided support for country operations while establishing new long-term agreements for security equipment repeatedly reported as challenging to procure in domestic markets or subject to new standards, such as the first responder's equipment.
36. The succession of critical security incidents or developments over 2021 led the Security Division to take swift action on lessons learned and to ensure widespread and strict enforcement throughout the community of WFP security professionals. To that end, internal reporting processes and tools on critical security incidents were reviewed and new reporting procedures were piloted and successfully adopted within the security function. This has improved the relevance, timeliness and accuracy of flash reporting⁴ on critical security incidents from field operations to senior management.

Budget and staffing optimization through enhanced planning and tracking

37. In 2021, the Security Division continued to reinforce its internal control mechanisms to ensure that security considerations systematically contributed to the corporate programme review and approval process.
38. The division allocated USD 1.7 million from the Security Emergency Fund for the security upgrade of office premises in Haiti, Madagascar, Somalia, South Sudan, Mozambique and Lebanon.
39. With a total of USD 26.3 million in 2021, the estimated total security-related costs at headquarters and regional bureaux accounted for 5.9 percent of the total programme support and administrative (PSA) budget.
40. In field locations the estimated total security-related costs amounted to USD 62.1 million, representing 11.7 percent of the total direct support cost (DSC) budget at the country office level, as shown in the table below.

⁴ Flash reporting refers to the reporting of a security or safety-related situation or event that has an immediate or potential near-term impact on WFP personnel, operations, facilities, premises or assets.

2021 WFP SECURITY EXPENDITURES			
Headquarters and regional bureau costs	USD	Country office costs	USD
Headquarters and regional bureau personnel	9 398 979	Field personnel	37 777 560
Department of Safety and Security	13 058 790	Residential security country office	2 090 187
Headquarters and regional bureaux – other costs*	3 848 180	Security equipment	5 632 853
		Local cost – shared security budgets	8 071 000
		Security guards	8 493 908
Total for security under PSA	26 305 949	Total for security under DSC	62 065 507
% total PSA	5.9%	% total DSC	11.7%
PSA total	443 500 000	DSC total	529 625 391

* Security Emergency Fund, training, security assistance missions.

Other mitigating measures

41. New initiatives in 2021 included the development of a security compliance tool called the quarterly assurance statement. This automated system allows country offices to follow up and track security mitigation requirements at the field level in relation to the country's security risk mitigation measures and any WFP internal security assistance mission recommendations not covered by those security risk mitigation measures.
42. The quarterly assurance statement strengthens security accountability at all levels and is consistent with and complements the UNSMS and WFP's internal framework of accountability. It is an online questionnaire that country offices fill out on a quarterly basis for each location where there are WFP offices or facilities. It is used to pre-emptively address the questions and security issues that arise from the security assistance mission process and other audits with a security component.
43. Security assistance missions continued to be affected by COVID-19 travel restrictions in 2021, much like in 2020. While this allowed time for most countries to address recommendations stemming from previous security assistance missions and all regions to achieve over 90 percent compliance, a backlog has grown, which the Security Division has addressed with the launch of the above-mentioned quarterly assurance statement exercise. Despite these challenges, the Security Division completed nine security assistance missions in 2021 in four regions.
44. While COVID-19 has proven to be a significant challenge, the quarterly assurance statement process has allowed for a measure of self-monitoring at the country office level, ensuring that compliance with security obligations is maintained at reasonable levels. The Security Division is planning to conduct 34 security assistance missions in 2022.

Strengthening the Security Division's ability to respond to evolving security requirements using technology

45. The Security Division continued to strengthen and refine the use of existing and emerging technologies to gain efficiency in monitoring compliance with the UNSMS and WFP internal security obligations with minimal interruption of WFP country operations. Several initiatives were introduced in 2021 to improve resource-, labour- and time-intensive activities through automation of processes and data-driven analysis. These include the quarterly assurance statement, key performance indicator collection methodologies, creation and adoption of information management platforms, workflow imaging and digitized task control. These efforts have resulted in improvements to the onboarding process and record and data maintenance. A major project aimed at revamping the currently used Security Information Management and Security Analysis System began in 2021 and is expected to vastly improve the Security Division's analytical capability through more timely access to relevant security and cross-functional data.