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Summary evaluation report of the WFP humanitarian protection policy for 2012–2017

Executive summary

An evaluation of WFP's humanitarian protection policy¹ covering the period from the policy's approval by the Executive Board in 2012 until December 2017 was commissioned by WFP's Office of Evaluation. The evaluation is particularly timely given the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and the rollout of WFP's Integrated Road Map (2017–2021).

The evaluation questions were:

- How good is the policy?
- What were the results of the implementation of the policy?
- Why has the policy produced the results that have been observed?

The evaluation revealed that the policy clearly drew on international discourse on protection in humanitarian settings. Although it did not articulate a specific vision or contextual analysis, the policy was also clearly informed by WFP's 2005–2008 protection project.² Development of the policy helped to increase sensitivity to protection issues in WFP and encouraged the development of related strategies, such as strategies for ensuring accountability to affected populations and data protection.

¹ "WFP Humanitarian Protection Policy" (WFP/EB.1/2012/5-B/Rev.1).

² Ten Minutes to Learn About...WFP's Protection Project, vol. I, No. 9, WFP January 2008.

In line with the Evaluation Policy (2016–2021) (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-A/Rev.1), to respect the integrity and independence of evaluation findings the editing of this report has been limited and as a result some of the language in it may not be fully consistent with the World Food Programme's standard terminology or editorial practices. Please direct any requests for clarification to the Director of Evaluation.

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The evaluation noted improved corporate reporting on protection, but corporate indicators were found to be too narrowly defined to inform programmes about specific protection issues. The evaluation also found a broad conflation of gender issues with protection.

Ambiguities in the policy document and supporting guidance were initially useful in helping WFP to define its role in protection but ultimately led to an operational focus that gave inadequate consideration to broader protection risks and hampered the translation of norms into practice.

WFP has found ways of enhancing protection through effective programming and good protection practices, and abilities were found in various types of operation, including in development settings. Staff were often motivated to protect the people that WFP serves but were uncertain about how to apply the humanitarian protection policy in practice.

The evaluation found uneven progress in the six policy directions, with greater advancements in internal capacity development than in other areas such as the management of partnerships and protection-related information. Considerable investment was made in protection training, but there was little evidence that the training translated fully into practice. A lack of consolidated systems for managing protection data has implications for the protection of beneficiaries and affected populations. At the same time, there is greater understanding in WFP of the linkages between risks to populations, reputational risks and operational risks to staff and assets.

Factors affecting implementation included lack of leadership and corporate prioritization of policy implementation; limited investment in meeting protection needs in the increasing number of complex operations with high protection risks; a diffuse normative framework with multiple policies relating to protection to varying degrees; and active participation in protection clusters but limited use of partnerships to implement protection approaches.

The evaluation concludes that there is need for renewed commitment from senior management; re-engagement with WFP's core partners; and deeper understanding of the connections between cross-cutting results on the one hand and the Integrated Road Map, the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021) and Corporate Results Framework (2017–2021) on the other.

The six recommendations deriving from the evaluation call for the development of a new protection policy; the integration of protection considerations into corporate risk management; the strategic use of partnerships to achieve protection aims; strengthened staff capacities; strengthened analyses of contexts and protection issues; and a new strategy for engagement with affected populations and vulnerable groups.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the WFP humanitarian protection policy covering the years 2012–2017 set out in document WFP/EB.A/2018/7-B and the management response set out in document WFP/EB.A/2018/7-B/Add.1 and encourages further action on the recommendations presented in the report, taking into account the considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the decisions and recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

Introduction

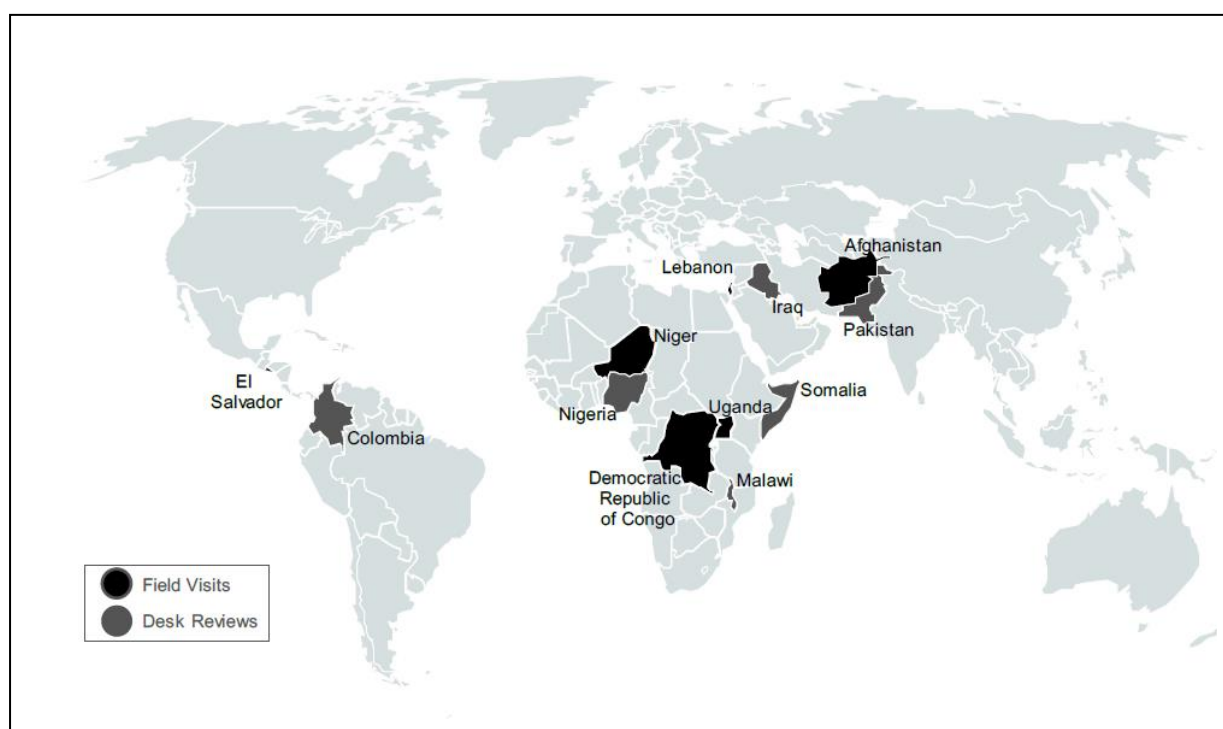
Evaluation features

1. The WFP humanitarian protection policy was approved by the WFP Executive Board in February 2012,³ and an update was presented to the Board at its 2014 annual session.⁴ As well as complying with the WFP requirement that policies be evaluated within four–six years of first implementation, the evaluation was timely given the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the rollout of WFP's Integrated Road Map (2017–2021).
2. The evaluation assessed implementation of the policy from 2012 to 2017 and posed three main questions:
 - How good is the policy?
 - What were the results of the implementation of the policy?
 - Why has the policy produced the results that have been observed?
3. The evaluation was conducted between January and December 2017 with evidence collected at the global, regional and country levels through:
 - extensive review of documents and literature, including 23 standard project reports and related evaluations, policies and guidance;
 - field missions to country offices in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Lebanon, the Niger and Uganda;
 - desk studies of Colombia, Iraq, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan and Somalia;
 - electronic surveys of cooperating partners and WFP staff;
 - review of comparator organizations;⁵
 - analysis of data from monitoring and complaint and feedback mechanisms; and
 - more than 500 key informant interviews with WFP staff at headquarters, regional bureaux and country offices, beneficiaries, partners and donors.
4. Data were fully triangulated during the analysis phase.

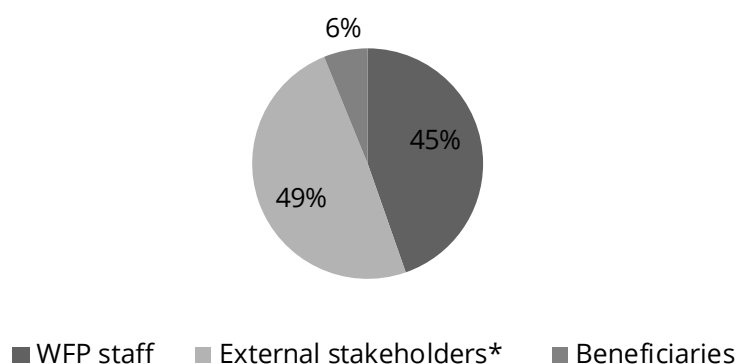
³ As presented in the document "WFP Humanitarian Protection Policy" (WFP/EB.1/2012/5-B/Rev.1).

⁴ "Update on the Implementation of the Protection Policy" (WFP/EB.A/2014/5-F).

⁵ DanChurchAid, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

Figure 1: Geographic coverage of the evaluation

Source: Evaluation team.

Figure 2: Categories of people consulted across the 12 country studies

* External stakeholders included protection professionals and the staff of partner non-governmental organizations, other United Nations agencies, governments, donors, etc.

Source: Evaluation team.

5. Limitations constraining the evaluation included difficult access to some beneficiaries and affected groups because of logistics and security constraints in several countries; lack of outcome-level data; and limited access to data on protection because of fragmented reporting. Despite these limitations, the evaluation team developed valid findings and conclusions.
6. WFP's Office of Evaluation launched the evaluation in parallel with an evaluation of WFP's policies on humanitarian principles and access in humanitarian contexts. As a result, the security of WFP staff and operations, access negotiations, partnerships other than with cooperating partners and general adherence of partners to humanitarian principles were considered to be outside the scope of the protection policy evaluation.

Context

7. The past two decades have witnessed a convergence of human rights and development, particularly in international political statements and policy commitments.⁶ The conclusions of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit confirmed the importance of protection as one of five “core responsibilities”.⁷ Similarly, the 2013 statement on the centrality of protection⁸ by the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) affirmed the commitment of IASC to making protection a core element of humanitarian action.
8. The IASC definition of protection is widely used by the humanitarian community. It states that protection encompasses: “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”, namely, international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law.⁹
9. United Nations organizations are increasingly making practical links among global and corporate policies and guidelines and actual practice in the field.¹⁰ This work includes addressing the protection challenges faced by affected populations and the dynamics that undermine the safety, integrity and dignity of people in complex, high-risk operational contexts.
10. In the United Nations, systemic constraints on improving protection include resistance to change in the humanitarian system; geopolitical factors shaping decisions of the United Nations Security Council; and the instrumentalization of humanitarian action in support of political or military agendas.¹¹

WFP policy framework for protection and its implementation

11. Among the United Nations system humanitarian entities that do not specialize in protection, WFP was one of the first to formalize its protection responsibilities by adopting an explicit policy. The policy, adopted in 2012, was supported by an implementation plan of the same year, and an update on the implementation of the policy (figure 3).

⁶ World Bank and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 2013. *Integrating human rights into development: Donor approaches, experiences, and challenges*, second edition. Washington, DC; OECD. 2007. DAC action-oriented policy paper on human rights and development: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/governance-development/39350774.pdf>

United Nations. 2010. World Summit Outcome Document.

<http://www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010/pdf/mdg%20outcome%20document.pdf>

OECD. 2008. Third High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, 2–4 September 2008, Accra:

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/theaccrahighlevelforumhlf3andtheaccraagendaforaction.htm>

⁷ World Humanitarian Summit. 2016. *The Grand Bargain: a shared commitment to better serve people in need*. Istanbul: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/grand-bargain-shared-commitment-better-serve-people-need>.

⁸ IASC. 2013. *The centrality of protection in humanitarian action*, Statement by the IASC Principals:

<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/principals/content/centrality-protection-humanitarian-action>

⁹ IASC. December 1999. *Protection of Internally Displaced Persons*. New York.

¹⁰ There is a growing array of models for linking global policy and guiding principles for operations. See OECD. 2007.

Principles for good international engagement in fragile states and situations: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/docs/38368714.pdf>

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2017. New way of working

https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/NWOW%20Booklet%20low%20res.002_0.pdf

¹¹ Niland, N., Polastro, R., Donini, A. and Lee, A. 2015. *Independent whole of system review of protection in the context of humanitarian action*. Norwegian Refugee Council:

https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/independent_whole_of_system_protection_review_report_may_2015.pdf

Figure 3: Key protection milestones

2004	2005/08	2009	2010/11	2012/13	2014/15	2016
February 2004: Approval of Policy on Humanitarian Principles	2005/08: Protection Project (field studies, trainings, consultations, staff capacity, CO support)	2009: Training Manual on Protection in WFP Operations	2010: Start implementation of Access to Firewood and Alternative Energy in Humanitarian Settings (SAFE) initiative.	Feb 2012: Approval of WFP Humanitarian Protection Policy	May 2014: Update on Implementation of the Protection Policy	Feb 2016: AAP Theory of Change
	2006: Start engagement with the global protection cluster	2009: Roll-out of corporate-wide training prog. On protection in up to 20 country operations (1000 staff)	Sep 2010: Seminar on Humanitarian Protection in the Context of Food Assistance	2013: WFP Guidelines on Protection in Practice in food assistance	2015: Integrating protection and AAP, OSZPH strategy	Feb 2016: Protection Theory
	2006: Consideration of Note on Humanitarian Access and its implications	Feb 2009: Approval of WFP Gender Policy	Nov 2010: WFP Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy	Sep 2013: WFP/UNHCR case studies on: Examining Protection and Gender in Cash and Voucher Transfers	2015: Global baseline survey on CFM	June 2016: AAP Strategy delineating WFP's approach to AAP (2016–2021)
	2008: Approval of Strategic Plan (2008–2013)	June 2009: Conference on Humanitarian Assistance in Conflict and Complex Emergencies	Oct/Nov 2011: Literature review of studies of cash and voucher transfers and survey on C&V	Oct 2013: Approval of WFP Peacebuilding Policy	Nov 2015: Minimum Standards for Implementing Community Feedback Mechanisms (CFM)	
		July 2009: Training on trainers on protection	2011: "Enhancing prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence in the context of food assistance in displacement settings"		2015: Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) 3 focus areas: info provision, participation, CFM	
					2015: WFP Gender Policy (2015–2020)	

12. The policy accords with the principle of mainstreaming protection throughout programming. It reflects a definition of protection that draws on the IASC definition; international policy discourse on protection activities; and WFP's internal reflections on protection. In addition, it includes a description of the implementation process.
13. The policy adopts a specific definition of protection that is "practical" and "centred on assistance": "designing and carrying out food and livelihood assistance activities that do not increase the protection risks faced by the crisis-affected populations receiving assistance. Rather, food assistance should contribute to the safety, dignity and integrity of vulnerable people".
14. The policy sets out six interlinked, non-sequential directions for WFP to follow in order to achieve the overall goal of enhancing protection (see table 1). It was supported by a phased implementation plan from July 2012 to June 2016, but lacked an explicit objective and intermediary milestones for measuring progress. A theory of change was developed in 2016 but was not formally adopted as a tool for implementing the policy.
15. Protection is referenced in a number of other policy documents, notably those on gender,¹² peacebuilding¹³ and WFP's role in the humanitarian assistance system.¹⁴ WFP has acknowledged that underlying causes of hunger and vulnerability include those resulting from protection issues.¹⁵

¹² "Gender Policy (2015-2020)" (WFP/EB.A/2015/5-A).

¹³ "WFP's Role in Peacebuilding in Transition Settings" (WFP/EB.2/2013/4-A/Rev.1.).

¹⁴ "WFP's Role in the Humanitarian Assistance System" (WFP/EB.1/2010/5-C); "Update on WFP's Role in the Humanitarian Assistance System" (WFP/EB.A/2013/5-C); "Update on WFP's Role in the Humanitarian Assistance System" (WFP/EB.A/2014/5-A).

¹⁵ This acknowledgment informs WFP's emergency and transition programme framework, in which one of the "5 Rs", the "Right Way", refers to the importance of protection and accountability to affected populations – see <http://docustore.wfp.org/stellent/groups/wfp/documents/communications/wfp280952.pdf>

16. The WFP Integrated Road Map and associated strategic planning documents reference the protection policy and related policies.¹⁶ In the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021) and the Corporate Results Framework (2017–2021), protection figures as a cross-cutting objective for development and humanitarian operations, alongside gender equality and accountability to affected populations.

¹⁶ “WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021)” (WFP/EB.2/2016/4-A/1/Rev.2), sect. III, “Positioning WFP in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

TABLE 1: THE SIX DIRECTIONS FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION					
Policy direction					
1 Investing in institutional capacity for context and risk analysis	2 Incorporating protection into programme tools	3 Integrating protection into programme design and implementation	4 Developing staff capacity	5 Establishing informed and accountable partnerships	6 Managing protection-related information
<p>1. Enhancing WFP's capacity for consistently thorough context analysis</p> <p>2. Providing WFP with insights into the power relations and dynamics that affect the protection of local populations and gender relations</p> <p>3. Understanding the risks that WFP faces in feeding vulnerable and marginalized populations and contributing to the protection of these populations</p>	<p>1. Identifying linkages between food insecurity and the protection risks, vulnerabilities, coping strategies and capacities of affected populations</p> <p>2. Facilitating more systematic tracking and measurement of protection risks</p> <p>3. Informing programme design and the selection of food assistance modalities that are safe and culturally appropriate</p>	<p>1. Ensuring that WFP programmes take into consideration the safety and dignity of, and respect for, the rights of beneficiaries</p> <p>2. Ensuring that programmes contribute to overall protection outcomes for the people WFP assists</p> <p>3. Enhancing programme design by implementing strategies for improving accountability to affected populations</p>	<p>1. Training staff in context analysis, risk assessment and the management and processing of protection-related information</p> <p>2. Raising the awareness and sensitivity of staff and partners to people's rights and the obligation of states to provide, respect and protect those rights, and to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief* and the humanitarian principles of WFP</p>	<p>1. Building the protection knowledge and competencies of cooperating partners and ensuring that all partners are sensitized to the principles and norms that underpin the protection of beneficiary communities</p> <p>2. Ensuring that protection is mainstreamed into activities of the global food security, logistics and emergency telecommunication clusters</p>	<p>1. Enhancing WFP's information management mechanisms in order to ensure that sensitive data are handled securely, in accordance with clear principles and procedures, to avoid putting beneficiaries at risk</p> <p>2. Ensuring that WFP has clear policies and procedures for guiding staff who become aware of or witness abuses and violations and for protecting the confidentiality of related information</p>

* <https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-1067.pdf>

Source: Prepared by the evaluation team based on document WFP/EB.1/2012/5-B/Rev.1.

Findings

Quality of the policy

17. The evaluation found that WFP's humanitarian protection policy clearly drew on international discourse. It did not articulate a specific vision or provide contextual analysis, but it was clearly informed by the WFP protection project of 2005–2008, which generated organizational change and increased recognition in WFP of the significance of protection and its importance in the provision of food assistance. Inclusive and participatory processes for formulating the policy allowed the assimilation of insights from a broad cross-section of WFP and non-WFP personnel.
18. The process of developing the policy contributed to greater sensitivity to protection throughout WFP, which was consistent with the increasing prioritization of protection and human rights in global emergency response, as expressed for example in the Human Rights Up Front initiative¹⁷ and the IASC protection policy.¹⁸ WFP's increased sensitivity to protection also reflects thinking in other areas relevant to development, including on the rights-based approach and greater use of partnerships.
19. The policy was found to be in line with relevant WFP guidance and policies and consistent with those of comparable humanitarian agencies. It encouraged the development of related strategies, such as those for accountability to affected populations and data protection.
20. The policy provided support for the development of a focus on human rights in both humanitarian and development contexts, with an emphasis on minimizing risks and maximizing safety, integrity and dignity in addressing the food needs of crisis-affected populations.
21. At the time it was formulated, the policy was deliberately kept broad in scope and ambition. This strategy succeeded in securing institutional buy-in and largely reconciling various internal and external perspectives on the nature and scope of WFP's responsibilities in protection.
22. The duality of the broad scope alongside the specific definition used by WFP reflected internal compromises, however. The difference between WFP's responsibilities to direct beneficiaries – the actual recipients of food assistance – and its responsibilities to broader crisis-affected or vulnerable populations has influenced how the policy is interpreted and applied in practice. In the absence of senior management's clear support for a broader understanding of WFP's protection responsibilities, a more restrictive definition has been applied by WFP staff.
23. Such tensions within the policy definition and its interpretation are considered to have increased the risk that some of WFP responsibilities will be neglected, particularly those towards affected populations that are not direct recipients of WFP assistance. Specifically, the "centrality of assistance" approach that was adopted by WFP concentrated on the way in which WFP delivers food assistance, but provided limited guidance or incentives to facilitate strategic-level action to address the protection implications of practices that deliberately undermine food security.
24. The evaluation found that both the policy and ancillary guidance material lacked a clear framework of responsibility and accountability for senior managers. Essentially, the policy focuses primarily on capacity development activities to serve the objective of what it calls

¹⁷ United Nations Secretary General. 2013. *Human Rights Up Front Initiative*
<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/ban-ki-moon/human-rights-front-initiative>.

¹⁸ IASC. 2016. *Inter-Agency Standing Committee Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action* (available at https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/iasc_policy_on_protection_in_humanitarian_action_0.pdf).

“sustained engagement”; this focus is reinforced in the 2014 update on the implementation of the policy.¹⁹

25. The policy was found to lack a precise objective that went beyond internal capacity building and related to external outcomes. During the evaluation, various WFP staff members referred to difficulties in translating the protection policy into practice in diverse contexts.
26. The evaluation noted improved corporate reporting on protection: between 2014 and 2015 an increasing number of projects reported on performance against the two corporate indicators for protection. Corporate indicators show an apparently improved performance, with a greater *number* of projects meeting their protection targets in 2015 compared with 2014. The overall *percentage* of all WFP projects meeting protection targets, however, dropped in 2015 compared with 2014.

Indicator	No. of projects reporting performance data		No. of projects meeting targets*		% of projects meeting targets*	
	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015
Proportion of assisted people who do not experience safety problems travelling to and from and while at WFP programme sites	57	80	57	78	100	98
Proportion of assisted men who do not experience safety problems travelling to and from and while at WFP programme sites	67	72	67	71	100	99
Proportion of assisted women who do not experience safety problems travelling to and from and while at WFP programme sites	66	72	63	71	95	99
Proportion of assisted people informed about the programme	49	77	43	51	88	66
Proportion of assisted men informed about the programme	65	76	50	52	77	68
Proportion of assisted women informed about the programme	66	76	50	53	76	70

* “meeting project target” means meeting more than 88.9 percent of the target.

Source: Evaluation team, based on 2014–2015 data from WFP’s DACOTA database and COMET country office tool for managing effectively.

27. The corporate indicators were found to be too narrowly defined to inform programmes on specific protection issues. They provided little information about empowerment or the extent to which WFP contributes to an operational environment where rights are respected.
28. The evaluation also found a broad conflation of gender and protection issues so that gender was considered in terms of gender-based violence rather than women’s empowerment.

¹⁹ “Update on Implementation of the Protection Policy” (WFP/EB.A/2014/5-F).

Policy results

Policy directions

29. WFP invested in diverse efforts to strengthen its engagement in protection. These included boosting capacity through training and the recruitment of regional humanitarian advisers, integrating new indicators into the corporate results framework and developing guidance on protection, accountability to affected populations, gender-based violence and data protection.
30. The evaluation found uneven progress in the six policy directions, with greater advancements in internal capacity development than in the management of partnerships and protection-related information. In country offices, protection was found to compete with other organizational priorities.
31. *Policy direction 1:* A context analysis system was put in place and clear guidance on protection analysis was incorporated into the protection manual and training. The extent to which country offices actually engaged in analysis of contexts and protection risks, however, was highly variable and not systematic. Some monitoring and assessment tools were successfully adapted to allow the integration of protection analysis.²⁰
32. *Policy direction 2:* Protection practices and knowledge started to be integrated into programme tools, but integration was not yet systematic because of inconsistent application of the policy and related guidance. Post-distribution monitoring tools increasingly included questions on protection and vulnerability, but they did not always capture the harmful coping mechanisms that exist in many countries. In 2017, 87 percent of country offices had community feedback mechanisms,²¹ and the evaluation identified efforts to establish two-way communication with communities. These tools require further development, however, to ensure that grievance systems are more culturally comprehensible, trusted and accessible.
33. *Policy direction 3:* The evaluation found examples of protection being an important consideration in the design of assistance or targeting.²² Overall, the programmes observed by the evaluation demonstrated potential to deliver good protection outcomes, but these outcomes were often not planned for at the design stage, and are not yet reflected or understood as a cross-cutting result (box 1). There is evidence that modalities such as food assistance for assets and cash-based transfers enhanced the dignity and integrity of beneficiaries by providing greater choice in how they receive and use WFP assistance.

²⁰ Some country offices have made specific provisions for identifying protection issues in vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM), particularly in mobile VAM (m-VAM) as observed in Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

²¹ WFP. 2017. Annual Performance Report (advance draft).

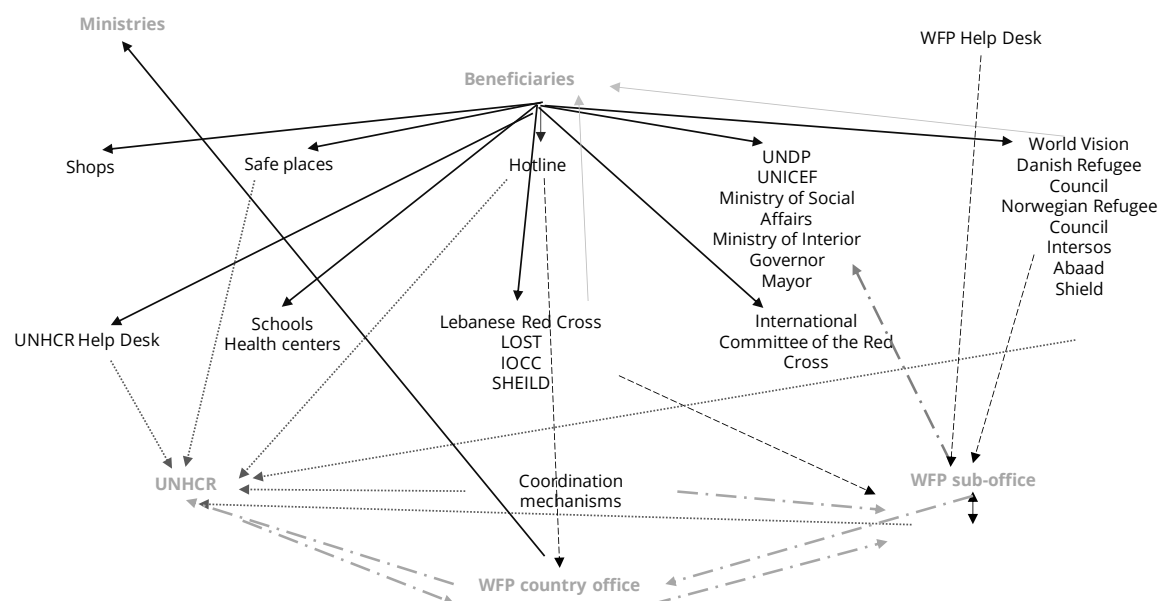
²² For instance, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and El Salvador country offices used protection risk as a criterion for targeting victims of violence – returnees and migrants.

34. *Policy direction 4:* Considerable investments were made in protection training, but there is little evidence that the training fully translated into practice. WFP personnel showed considerable interest in understanding and thinking through protection risks and opportunities for addressing them, but many remained unclear on specific practices that they should undertake.
35. *Policy direction 5:* Partnerships were found to be underutilized in implementing the policy, although progress was made through the inclusion of protection considerations in field-level agreements and strategies for partnering with retailers for cash-based transfers. WFP actively participated in protection clusters, but its engagement was often limited to the exchange of information and was generally not leveraged to flag protection issues for system-wide advocacy. The most significant partnerships for joint protection activities were with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the context of which referral systems and inter-agency follow-up were of varying quality.
36. *Policy direction 6:* One of the most striking things observed during the evaluation was a lack of clarity regarding protection reporting, hotlines and referral systems, including how to safeguard protection-related information collected by WFP and its partners. WFP has made pioneering progress in developing guidance and systems for ensuring the protection and privacy of beneficiary data but, as illustrated in figure 4, information is not systematized and consolidated at the organizational level, nor is it integrated into systematic context analysis. This potentially exposes beneficiaries to protection risks and WFP to reputational risks.

Box 1: Links between strategic programming and protection

Concerns about social cohesion in Lebanon, which hosts the largest refugee population per capita in the world, gave rise to the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan in 2014. The plan acknowledges the need to address vulnerability throughout the country and the implications of hosting large concentrations of refugees for communities that are “sharing their land, their schools, their water resources and health centres”. The plan is part of an overall stabilization strategy for addressing social discord while strengthening the capacity of national and local service delivery systems. While WFP was not heavily involved in the launch of the plan, WFP’s programmes and work to address protection concerns in its activities converge with the plan’s objectives. In addition, WFP’s country programming seeks to defuse tensions and hence enable refugees to maintain asylum in Lebanon.

Figure 4: Formal and informal referral and reporting of protection information in Lebanon



Legend

- ▶ Beneficiary content
-▶ To UNHCR
- . - . ▶ WFP reporting
- - - - ▶ Partner reporting

Source: Evaluation team.

Achievement of outcomes

37. The evaluation recognizes that measuring protection outcomes is challenging given the influence of many external factors on protection risks and coping capabilities and the lack of baseline data. Despite this, using the 2016 theory of change as a tool for assessing outcomes, the evaluation found that positive outcomes had been achieved in several areas, including reduced safety risks and heightened respect for beneficiaries.
38. The efforts of WFP and cooperating partners created an environment where the exposure of beneficiary groups to threats was reduced in many locations.²³
39. In more stable settings, the evaluation showed that WFP teams sought to mitigate hunger while minimizing protection incidents before, during and after distribution activities. The use of a “protection lens” when managing pipeline breaks was considered highly effective in revealing and addressing new risks regarding negative coping mechanisms.
40. WFP demonstrated a strong institutional awareness of the importance of avoiding discrimination and providing support in a manner that respected the dignity of recipients. Focus groups and individual interviews with affected populations showed that beneficiaries were treated with respect while participating in programmes, although they sometimes lacked a clear understanding of distribution priorities.

²³ The evaluation team observed such reductions in particular in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Lebanon.

41. By differentiating targeting by gender, age, disability status and diversity, WFP programmes were well tailored to specific needs and capacities. While there was no evidence of discrimination towards groups receiving assistance, some groups were less well-served than others.
42. In field operations visited, the specific food needs of young people and children were not specifically assessed outside school meals programmes. For example, in countries where youth are targeted by criminal groups, reinforced partnerships with local youth institutions could be given greater priority to reduce their exposure to risks. The use of adapted tools could have improved consultations with extremely vulnerable individuals, unaccompanied minors, host communities and minority groups.
43. Stakeholders interviewed highlighted that given its significant field presence and role in inter-agency coordination mechanisms, WFP was well positioned to advocate for and influence dialogue on protection issues more actively with local, national and international actors. It was felt that such decisions were left to the discretion of country offices, which generally prioritized the rapid delivery of assistance over more strategic engagement in protection.

Explanatory factors for results achieved

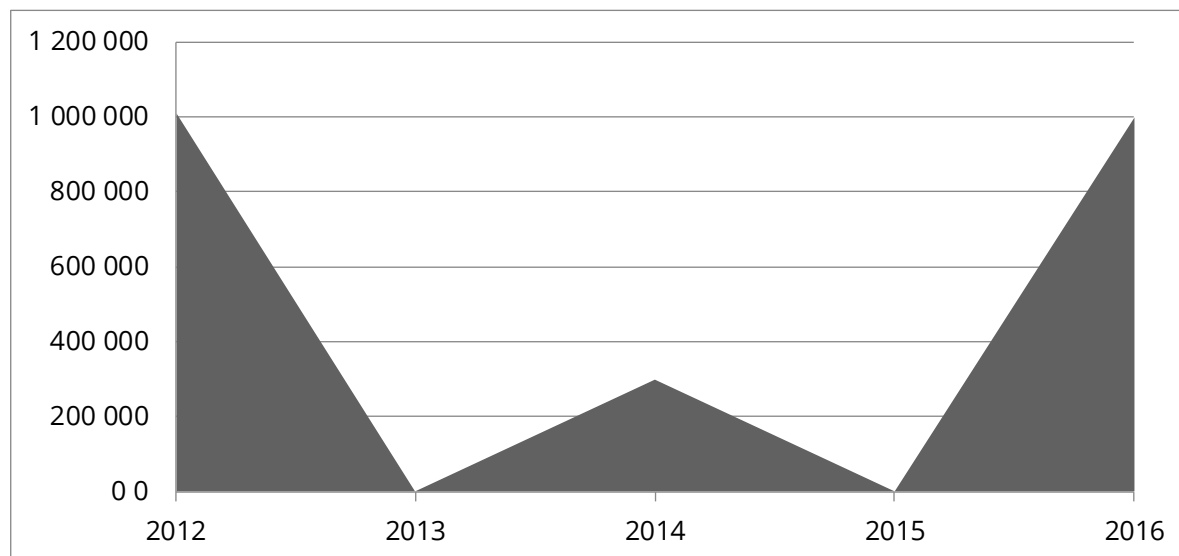
External factors

Donor support and funding

44. The evaluation revealed that donors consistently expect greater integration of protection into WFP analysis and programming. Interviews at the country level showed that donors were willing to fund positions and activities dedicated to protection, but the lack of systematic reporting on and analysis of protection concerns prevented WFP from mobilizing such resources by showing the full value of its interventions.²⁴
45. Overall, lack of resources hampered policy implementation and the hiring of dedicated protection personnel throughout WFP. Funding for the protection function at headquarters never exceeded USD 1.6 million per year and was critically low at the launch and rollout of the policy between 2012 and 2014 (Figure 5). Funds were used mostly for internal capacity development.
46. Expenditure at the country level was less easy to identify, however, and much of senior management in country offices admitted that investing in technical capacity for protection was not a priority.

²⁴ For example, programmes with impacts relevant to protection, such as emergency school meals in Uganda, had to be closed because of lack of funding.

Figure 5: Donor contributions to the trust fund for humanitarian protection Project III



Source: Evaluation team, based on WFP data and reporting on donor contributions.

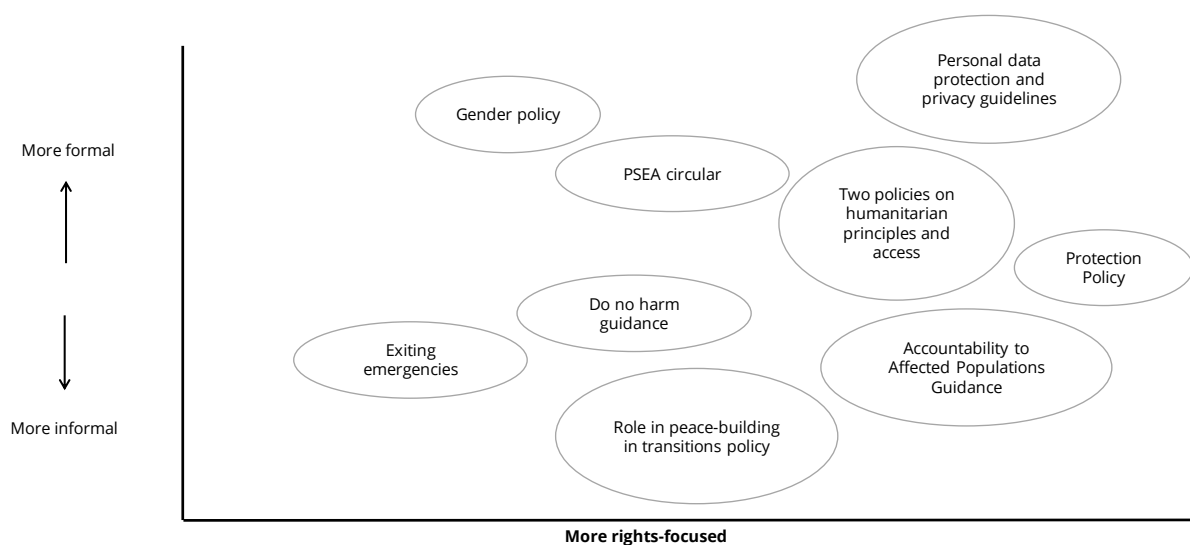
Partnership and coordination

47. WFP's active participation in protection clusters connected it to a range of partners with which to seek common approaches and solutions to protection issues. Interviewed staff spoke of a fear of encroaching on the specific protection mandates of other agencies, however. Most cooperating partners appreciated WFP's involvement in protection, but the organization was generally not yet perceived as a solid partner in protection. Despite training, the low awareness and capacity of some national cooperating partners were found to constrain WFP's approach to protection.
48. At times, strategic alliances and partnerships with governments constrained policy implementation. In some cases, the risk of damaging relationships with government and negatively affecting the access required for operations influenced WFP's approach to protection advocacy. Stakeholders suggested that WFP did not always use its leverage in favour of crisis-affected populations beyond adapting the way in which it delivered its assistance.

Internal factors

Policy building and quality

49. The relevance of the humanitarian protection policy was enhanced from the outset by the thorough bottom-up process of policy development, which made protection visible within WFP and allowed the policy to overcome internal resistance. A number of limitations undermined policy implementation, however.
50. The lack of a coherent corporate vision resulted in the policy being implemented to varying extents and in policy implementation being interpreted in different ways in WFP. In addition, the evaluation found that ambiguity in the definition of protection limited WFP's role in protection, which was "centred on assistance" and not "on people".
51. The evaluation found that the protection policy was one of the numerous policies in WFP's complex normative system. As such it was not sufficiently substantive to make protection a core responsibility in WFP. While all policies are in principle consistent and equally weighted, in practice interlinkages are not always clearly defined. Competing and overlapping policy priorities inhibited the organizational change called for in the policy.

Figure 6: Normative documents relevant to protection

Source: Evaluation team.

52. The pressure to demonstrate target-based results hampered full engagement in protection programming. WFP managers were compelled to develop and highlight an approach to protection that generated quantitative evidence-based results while understating more qualitative aspects. Reporting on protection against corporate indicators remained too narrow, while valuable information collected in the field remained scattered across WFP. This resulted in a failure to adequately convey WFP's potential and existing protection practices.
53. Interlinkages with the gender policy both benefited and constrained implementation of the protection policy.²⁵ Both policies faced similar challenges throughout implementation, but the protection policy was not given a comparable level of priority and visibility throughout WFP. Organizational responsibilities were weaker in relation to protection considerations than in relation to gender.²⁶ The protection policy did not benefit from mandatory corporate mechanisms similar to the gender action plans at the country and regional levels, which contributed to greater visibility and progress on gender. Over time, WFP has made significant progress in launching and consolidating gender mainstreaming mechanisms and mandatory analysis and in developing strategies for meeting the requirements of the gender policy.²⁷ At times, these tools have tended to replace or obscure protection analysis and programming.

Institutional factors

54. The primary factor affecting results was the low priority given to protection at the corporate level. Despite staff's strong acceptance of the new focus on protection, the policy did not receive corporate support sufficient for its full implementation.
55. Limited leadership and senior management support for the policy launch critically undermined necessary institutional change. In the absence of clear directives and adequate engagement of corporate leadership, protection was rarely addressed as a strategic issue

²⁵ The 2015 gender policy complements the 2012 protection policy and includes an objective related to protection: "Objective II: Women, men, girls and boys affected by emergencies benefit equally from nutrition and food security assistance according to their specific needs and opportunities and in safe conditions". The protection policy integrates gender considerations, notably on gender-based violence.

²⁶ "Summary Evaluation Report of the WFP Gender Policy (2008-2013)" (WFP/EB.1/2014/5-A).

²⁷ *Ibid.*

and occupied an inconsistent position on the agendas of country management teams. Little accountability and few incentives existed for engaging in protection: protection is not included systematically in performance reviews or corporate leadership training. Evaluative analysis of and learning on protection were found to be scarce.

56. Overall, organizational arrangements were inadequate for implementing the policy. The small protection team at headquarters provided adequate technical support with very limited resources but could not possibly have provided the support required to roll out the protection policy across the highly diverse and challenging operational environments in which WFP works.
57. Protection infrastructure – systems, structures, organization and capacity – at the field level was also insufficient to ensure implementation of the policy. While there has been a significant increase in personnel tasked with specific protection functions, protection focal points have limited authority to influence implementation and often bear responsibilities for several cross-cutting objectives.
58. Despite these constraints, the keen interest of WFP staff and the manifest linkages between violations of safety, dignity and integrity on the one hand and food insecurity on the other have led to important programming innovations and the adoption of good practices in several countries.²⁸

Conclusions and lessons

59. The policy was formulated in a consultative manner to maximize buy-in by senior management and staff. Ambiguities in the policy and supporting guidance were initially useful for WFP in helping it to define its role in protection but led to an operational focus that did not adequately consider broader protection risks and that hampered the translation of norms into practice.
60. Significant results were achieved, but there is considerable scope to increase the policy's impact with the systematic and sustained commitment of senior management. Tensions among the definitions of protection in the policy prevented systematic attention to strategic issues, including when food is used as an instrument for asserting power. WFP has found ways to enhance protection through effective programming and good protection practices and capacities were found in several operations, including in development settings. Staff are often motivated to engage in protection practices but are uncertain about how to do so.
61. The lack of consolidated systems for collecting, analysing and using protection data has implications for the protection of beneficiaries and affected populations. At the same time, there is a much better understanding in WFP of the linkages between risks to populations, reputational risks²⁹ and operational risks to staff and assets.
62. Policy implementation was positively and negatively affected by various internal and external factors. The evaluation highlighted:
 - lack of leadership and corporate prioritization of protection policy implementation;
 - limited investment of financial and human resources in meeting protection needs in the increasing number of complex operations with high protection risks;

²⁸ The evaluation cites in particular Iraq, Malawi, the Niger and Nigeria, with significant engagement at the strategic level in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

²⁹ Examples of reputational risks for WFP include perceptions that it is unable to meet humanitarian commitments or unable to adapt to global shifts.

- a diffuse normative framework with various policies relevant to protection to varying degrees; and
 - active participation in protection clusters but limited use of partnerships in facilitating protection approaches.
63. These findings imply a need for clear commitment from senior management, re-engagement with WFP's core partners and deeper understanding of the connections between cross-cutting results on the one hand and the Integrated Road Map, the Strategic Plan (2017–2021) and Corporate Results Framework (2017–2021) on the other.
64. The growing consensus in the United Nations regarding the need for respectful and systematic upholding of human rights has placed WFP in a privileged position. WFP is undertaking a transformational change to align its results with the SDGs. WFP can now build on the significant work carried out over the past five years to reinforce the priority given to protection within the organization. Such changes will require increased engagement of leadership and resources and a robust accountability framework.

Recommendations

65. The following six recommendations derive from the evaluation findings and conclusions and were informed by an evaluation workshop in September 2017 attended by staff from throughout WFP.
66. **Recommendation 1: A new policy.** WFP should in 2018 formally affirm and in later years regularly reaffirm that protection of and accountability to affected populations are among its core responsibilities in playing its role in food security and partnerships (SDGs 2 and 17).
67. By 2019, WFP should prepare a new humanitarian protection policy. The new policy should have a single objective that encompasses all populations affected by crisis and vulnerability – in both emergency and development settings – and that reflects the IASC definition of protection. The policy should define a role for WFP in reducing the risks for populations; should clearly articulate linkages to all policies, strategies and guidelines that are relevant to risks to populations; and should include a formal framework for accountability at all organizational levels.
68. **Recommendation 2: Integration into risk management.** By 2019, the Enterprise Risk Management Division should ensure that the corporate “line of sight” clarifies the links between risks and programming for protection. A WFP-wide risk and protection framework should be developed to include both risks to populations and programming objectives. The framework should include the integration of protection issues into existing internal control frameworks and security risk management systems, and specific regional and country-level training to build skills in protection-related risk analysis among senior staff.
69. **Recommendation 3: Partnerships.** By the end of 2018, the Partnerships and Governance Department and the Policy and Programme Division should develop a formal approach to resource mobilization to support the achievement of cross-cutting protection results. The approach should include strategic engagement with donors in order to increase voluntary funding for the protection function. It should also include communication materials and guidelines for all partners, including commercial suppliers, and should cover WFP's engagement in clusters.
70. **Recommendation 4: Leadership and human resources.** By mid-2019, the Policy and Programme Division and the Human Resources Division should increase and formalize protection staffing and put in place skills training for targeted staff members. Among other actions, this will require the integration of protection into leadership and induction training and individual performance assessments. Senior managers should be trained and assessed

in protection analysis and negotiation skills. New measures should include the allocation of additional funding to protection and humanitarian adviser positions and the formalization of country office protection focal point positions at an appropriately senior level and functionally separate from gender focal points.

71. **Recommendation 5: Evidence base.** By the end of 2018, WFP should strengthen its analysis of contexts and protection issues by reinforcing the data systems for monitoring and evaluation and building on existing information management systems to capture protection-related information. This work will include elaboration of a “big data” pool of information on protection that combines the qualitative and quantitative information gathered; revision of corporate protection indicators; and inclusion of protection analysis in evaluation.
72. **Recommendation 6: Stakeholder dialogue.** By the end of 2019, the Policy and Programme Division should develop a new strategy for engagement with affected populations and vulnerable groups, which should be based on strengthened community feedback mechanisms.

Acronyms used in the document

IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VAM	vulnerability analysis and mapping