



WFP in Nigeria—making protection central to food assistance

WFPs approach to humanitarian protection

The number of people facing food insecurity in northeast Nigeria is up from 3.3 million in March 2016 to 4.5 million in August 2016 representing 36% increment. (Cadre Harmonise). WFP's assistance is critical to meeting the food needs of the crisis affected people in Nigeria to prevent further deterioration in food security. WFP has assisted 236,100 beneficiaries through General Food Distributions (in-kind and cash) and 99,130 beneficiaries through Blanket Supplementary Feeding Program across North East Nigeria (as of September 2016).

Protection is intrinsically linked to food insecurity. Hunger causes and exacerbates existing protection risks. In crisis settings, people's access, usage and availability to food is altered. The degree of access to and control over food can affect all aspects of people's lives. Vulnerabilities to food insecurity are therefore often linked with vulnerability to protection risks. The most food insecure are frequently those affected by family separation, sexual and gender-based violence, forced displacement, physical attack and other severe protection risks. Food is a key factor impacting people's exposure to and ability to cope with such risks. But food assistance can help people to be safe and maintain their

dignity and integrity.

By making humanitarian protection an integral element of its work in northeast Nigeria, WFP shall contribute to improvements in the quality, effectiveness and durability of the impact of its food assistance by identifying the protection risks populations are exposed to both in relation to food-insecurity and during operations.

Addressing protection risks caused by food insecurity

In Nigeria, communities are faced with heightened vulnerabilities due to the conflict. Female headed households have engaged in negative coping strategies such as survival sex, transactional sex or children have been sent to earn a living, collect firewood and water, which can further expose them to assault. When the primary cause of protection risks is directly related to access to food, food assistance can have a protective impact. In Nigeria, WFP and its

Cooperating Partners aim to provide food assistance in form of in-kind, vouchers or cash to the most vulnerable households exposed to protection risks such as but not limited to female headed-, older persons- or unaccompanied minors headed households and widows at risk of exploitation and abuse.

Strengthening protection in interventions

Programmes must be designed and implemented with due consideration for the protection concerns of the population assisted. Measures range from considering safety issues to, from and at the site, altered intra-household dynamics through the distribution of cash, or devising special activities for persons with specific needs such as persons with disabilities to have meaningful access to food assistance.

Safety, dignity and integrity

Protection means designing and carrying out food assistance activities that do not increase the protection risks faced by the crisis-affected populations receiving food assistance. Rather, food assistance contributes to the safety, dignity and integrity of vulnerable people. WFP considers the whole of a person not only the physical dimension but their cultural and social dimension as well.

Safety applies to, at, and from distribution points. WFP actively engages with affected communities throughout General Food Distributions in order to consider women's, men's, boys' and girls' needs and protection concerns that affect our operations.



Which protection concerns are beneficiaries facing coming to our site such as long walking distances or paying money for transportation? Where to locate the distribution site? How do we ensure meaningful access for the most vulnerable individuals and groups such as older persons, female heads of household, unaccompanied minors, and those severely sick? What capacities do the local communities have that we can support to reduce and

mitigate protection risks?

Dignity is about beneficiary self-worth, esteem and giving people choices. Being



harassed at checkpoints or standing in the sun waiting for hours or days to receive food assistance impacts people's dignity and reduces their self-esteem. WFP's assistance protects dignity in the most fundamental aspect of being able to provide food for oneself and one's family. Affected communities should not be regarded as victims but as individuals that can adopt positive coping strategies in times of crisis that we need to support and respect.

Integrity entails respect for the whole of a person – not only their 'physical' dimension which requires food for survival, but also their social, cultural and religious dimensions. We respect beneficiary integrity when, for example, we enable men and women to move separately through distribution points. In northeast Nigeria, men and male adolescents for cultural reasons often do not wish to line up with women.

Accountability towards affected populations

Accountability towards affected Populations (AAP) reinforces and complements protection by providing methodologies for understanding and mitigating protection concerns. For example, by consulting with women and men across age and diversity right from the onset of a project can help to identify protection issues that need to be taken into account in the design and implementation of a project, as well as during evaluations.

Complaints and feedback mechanisms can help facilitate people raising such concerns while information provision to affected people

Protection considerations also need to be integrated into AAP activities to ensure

regarding their entitlements, that assistance is free, targeting criteria, their rights and how they can hold WFP and Cooperating Partners accountable for wrongdoings, can contribute to mitigate protection risks.

particular for those most vulnerable and marginalized groups among the community, and to relay information to affected people across age, gender and diversity that is respectable of the social and cultural custom.



Being accountable to the people that WFP and Cooperating Partners aim to assist also reinforces the dignity aspect of WFP's humanitarian protection policy. For example, building relationships with affected people that are characterized by respect, and making sure that they are included in processes and procedures that affect them, will result in more dignified programmes.

Protection considerations also need to be integrated into AAP activities to ensure they are carried out in a safe and dignified way. That includes carrying out community consultations in a way that does not put people at any further risks, that CFMs are designed in a safe and accessible manner, in

Protection in food assistance:

- **Safety and integrity** includes considering protection concerns at and en route to and from activities and services
- **Dignity, equality and non-discrimination** means programmes are solely based on needs and on full and equal respect for the rights of communities assisted without discrimination of any kind
- **Participation and accountability**—programmes are based on genuine dialogue and special efforts must be undertaken to consult groups across age, gender and diversity
- **Attention to difference** when providing assistance and services as different groups have different vulnerabilities and capacities

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