



World Food Programme

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# Protection and Accountability Handbook

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# About this Handbook

This updated Handbook<sup>[1]</sup> supports WFP personnel to mainstream protection in their work. The handbook is conceived as a living document. Additional content will be incorporated over time, according to evolving needs and demand.

## HOW TO NAVIGATE THE HANDBOOK

The Handbook has been designed in a modular manner, so as to allow users and readers to determine which section is most relevant. Each section can be read independently but may also be cross-referenced with material shared in another section, or with additional resources published on the protection channel at <https://newgo.wfp.org/collection/accountability-to-affected-populations-aap>.

This Handbook is intended to inform and guide WFP personnel – in particular protection/programme officers – in the following four core objectives of their work:

- To Build a common understanding of protection in WFP and with partner personnel, thereby enhancing WFP's contribution to achieving meaningful protection outcomes. The Manual is a shared resource for WFP and partner personnel on mainstreaming protection in food and nutrition assistance programmes. The overall aim is to translate the common understanding of protection into practical steps.
- To Direct WFP personnel to better engage with communities and respond to community dynamics, at all stages in the programme cycle. The Manual recognises that protection is an ongoing and iterative process, one that cannot and should not be limited to any one single moment in the project management cycle.
- To Guide the implementation of a protection-mainstreaming approach in real-world situations. This should result in women, men, girls and boys both with and without disabilities and from diverse backgrounds being agents of change, developing common goals and action plans for protection, including assistance and solutions.

- To Show the different roles that WFP can play in implementing protection, ranging from direct implementation to advocacy.

The task of mainstreaming protection has no single blueprint, and will take many forms according to context: each situation and context is unique. WFP, partners and communities will always need to conduct an in-depth analysis of each situation to agree on the best strategies. WFP's role is to mainstream protection through its food and nutrition security programmes. However, it can also contribute to broader protection outcomes by providing protection through its presence, by providing logistical support to protection actors, or by referring cases to be managed by others.

*Note:* providing food assistance does not constitute protection. It is only by mainstreaming protection in our food and nutrition activities that WFP plays a protective role.

[1] Building on the 2016 Manual <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000013164/download/> which complemented WFP's 2012 Humanitarian Protection Policy.



Section 1

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# Protection and Accountability

# 1.1 Relevance of Protection

WFP has endorsed the ICRC/IASC definition of protection: IASC defines protection as: “... all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. International Human Rights Law (IHRL), International Humanitarian Law (IHL), International Refugee law (IRL).”<sup>1</sup>

WFP’s obligation to mainstream protection is grounded in the following normative framework:

- **International human rights law:** a system of international norms designed to protect and promote human rights of all persons; and
- **International humanitarian law:** a branch of public international law specifically designed to limit the effects of armed conflict;
- **International refugee law:** an area of law that ensures protection and assistance for refugees; i.e. people who are outside their country of origin and no longer protected by their own country, and are at risk or victims of persecution or other forms of serious harm in their country of origin;

Domestic or national laws, as well as traditional, social, and cultural norms also provide a framework for protection; and while not internationally recognised or universal, they are often more readily known and understood by affected populations.

WFP’s approach to protection is informed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) statement on the Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action and subsequent policy, which includes the following statement:<sup>2</sup>



Protection of all persons affected and at risk **must inform humanitarian decision-making** and response, including engagement with States and non-State parties to conflict. It **must be central** to our preparedness efforts, as part of immediate and life-saving activities, and throughout the duration of humanitarian response and beyond.

<sup>1</sup> Protection of Internally Displaced Persons, Inter-Agency Standing Committee Policy Paper, December 1999, [protection\\_of\\_internally\\_displaced\\_persons\\_inter\\_agency\\_standing\\_committee\\_policy\\_paper\\_0.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/agency_standing_committee_policy_paper_0.pdf) ([interagencystandingcommittee.org](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org))

<sup>2</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee. 2013. Statement: The centrality of protection in humanitarian action. [https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/the\\_centrality\\_of\\_protection\\_in\\_humanitarian\\_action\\_english.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/the_centrality_of_protection_in_humanitarian_action_english.pdf) and Inter-Agency Standing Committee. 2016. Policy on protection in humanitarian action. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/protection-priority-global-protection-cluster/documents/iasc-policy-protection-humanitarian-action>.

WFP's approach is further grounded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aim of "leaving no one behind" and the Secretary-General's "Call to Action for Human Rights".<sup>3</sup>

Based on this framework, the updated WFP Protection and Accountability Policy (2020) understands protection as **"activities that aim to prevent, reduce, mitigate and respond to the risks and consequences of violence, coercion, deprivation and abuse for persons, groups and communities"**.<sup>4</sup>

Food insecurity is often a consequence of people's inability to exercise their basic rights. Moreover, food insecurity can exacerbate political instability and violence, which in turn result in human rights abuses. A rights-based approach is a conceptual framework that integrates the norms, standards and principles of internationally recognised human rights standards into the policies, programmes and processes of development and humanitarian actors.

The objective of a human-rights based approach is to promote and protect human rights. It is guided by the principles of universality, indivisibility, equality and non-discrimination, participation and accountability. The principles of equality and freedom from discrimination are central. The participation and empowerment of individuals and communities to enable them to exercise their rights and promote change is key to implementing a human-rights based approach.<sup>5</sup>

Beyond the normative framework and the Protection and Accountability Policy, WFP's approach to integrating protection is in line with the Sphere protection principles, a set of standards for the delivery of quality humanitarian response.<sup>6</sup>

## 1.2 Mainstreaming Protection

Mainstreaming protection is an imperative for all humanitarian actors engaged in humanitarian response. There are 4 principles for mainstreaming protection:

**1. Prioritise safety and dignity and avoid causing harm:** Prevent and minimise as much as possible any unintended negative effects of intervention, which can increase people's vulnerability to both physical and psychosocial risks.

**2. Meaningful access:** Arrange for people's access to assistance and services – in proportion to need and without any barriers, for instance discrimination. Pay special attention to individuals and groups who may be particularly vulnerable or have difficulty accessing assistance and services.

**3. Accountability:** Set up appropriate mechanisms through which affected populations can measure the adequacy of interventions and address concerns and complaints.

**4. Participation and empowerment:** Support the development of self-protection capacities and assist people to claim their rights including – though not exclusively – the rights to shelter, food, water and sanitation, health, and education.<sup>7</sup>

Protection mainstreaming differs from protection integration or protection programming. See Table 1 for an explanation of the spectrum of protection activities.

<sup>3</sup> A Call to Action for Human Rights, 2020:

[https://www.un.org/sg/sites/www.un.org.sg/files/atoms/files/The\\_Highest\\_Aspiration\\_A\\_Call\\_To\\_Action\\_For\\_Human\\_Right\\_English.pdf](https://www.un.org/sg/sites/www.un.org.sg/files/atoms/files/The_Highest_Aspiration_A_Call_To_Action_For_Human_Right_English.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> WFP Protection and accountability policy, November 2020, <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000119393/download/>

<sup>5</sup> This is not the same as the Human Rights Up Front initiative, however it covers several issues including the human-rights based approach: <https://www.un.org/en/sections/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/index.html>

<sup>6</sup> See Section 6.A for more details.

<sup>7</sup> Global Protection Cluster Brief on Protection Mainstreaming, [brief\\_on\\_protection\\_mainstreaming.pdf \(globalprotectioncluster.org\)](https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/brief_on_protection_mainstreaming.pdf)

**Table 1. Spectrum of Protection Activities<sup>8</sup>**

	<b>MAINSTREAMING PROTECTION</b>	<b>INTEGRATING PROTECTION (PROACTIVE ACTION)</b>	<b>SPECIALIST OR STAND-ALONE PROTECTION PROGRAMMING</b>
<b>DEFINITION</b>	<p>Protection principles and concerns incorporated into humanitarian and development programming across sectors.</p> <p>A risk analysis is undertaken and programmes are designed to minimise risk to the greatest degree possible.</p>	<p>Projects or activities that have both food assistance and protection objectives, or are a means of addressing protection problems through food assistance.</p> <p>This can involve advocacy or assistance activities.</p>	<p>Dedicated protection activities focused on protection objectives as core to the programme.</p> <p>Implemented by protection agencies or those focused on delivering protection outcomes.</p>
<b>EXAMPLE</b>	<p>Protection considerations incorporated into food and nutrition programmes, e.g. considering lighting around latrines, installing family/ noncommunal latrines and monitoring latrine use to ensure safety.</p> <p>Safe collection of food rations by women or spaces for vulnerable groups in food distribution sites.</p>	<p>Interventions enhance protection, such as through presence or targeting assistance to at-risk populations. Provision of fuel-efficient stoves or alternative energy sources.</p> <p>Information campaigns on places of return. Advocacy with local authorities to change relocation policies.</p>	<p>Rule-of-law programmes.</p> <p>Refugee registration and assistance with documentation if more than 5000 people.</p> <p>Monitoring compliance with international humanitarian law and reporting abuses to authorities. Provision of medical and psychosocial care to survivors of gender-based violence.</p>

## 1.3 Integrating Accountability to Affected Populations

Accountability to affected populations (AAP) is one of the key principles in protection mainstreaming, and can be a practical way to contribute to protection outcomes. As such accountability is embedded in WFP’s protection and accountability policy (2020). In 2017, WFP renewed



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