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World Food
Programme

COVID 19 and conflict sensitivity

Rapid Operational Conflict Risk and
Prevention Tool

June 2020

Contents

Purpose

COVID 19, and the different actions by governments and other authorities to try to control it, are triggering tensions and undermining relationships in many of the contexts where WFP works - or run the risk thereof. At the same time our programming is adapting to the changing context, including suspension of some programmes, changing modalities (mainly from in-kind to cash, but also mixed) and target groups, including a major pivot from rural to urban populations.

There are risks that all these changes can result in our interventions being inadvertently caught up in, and contribute to, tensions or conflict. Similarly, it also offers new opportunities to support social cohesion, mitigation and reduction in tensions, as an important contribution to peace.

Analysing the possible risks and opportunities in a systematic manner enables us to make important enhancements and adjustments to our operations facilitating efforts to be conflict sensitive. This is important both in contexts where tensions are already manifesting in view of COVID, but likewise as a preventative measure making the impact of our adjustments more effective and reducing potential future risks. This document first outlines important risks emerging from COVID 19 and national responses to it, and secondly provides a simple tool which includes a list of key questions to support operational staff in analysing how WFP programming can get caught up in conflict. This is complemented by a table whereby the risks are accompanied by possible mitigation measures to support programme adjustments.

Should a country operation request further support in applying the tool, the may be supported with a virtual Diagnostic Clinic that will help them clarify the work needed for their operation to be conflict sensitive. This will be designed by the Regional Bureau and the WFP Peace & Conflict Advisor, where present, with the support of the Peace & Conflict Team at HQ and will draw on all relevant expertise to support a specially tailored 'clinic.'

This tool should be used in association with WFP's Medium Term Programme Framework (MTPF) related guidance, when planning for adjustments or scale up of existing programming or start of new ones. It is relevant for all MTPF support areas and pillars.

Conflict risks emerging from national responses to contain COVID19

01 Risk of politicization of coronavirus response

Differential responses of warring groups and efforts to discredit the capacity / intention of rival groups to respond to COVID 19 can feed polarization (Libya). Fragile coalitions can become stressed as rival groups push responsibility for the response to specific political parties (South Sudan) while tensions are emerging between national and local authorities over response to COVID 19 (Tigray in Ethiopia). Containment and curfew policies are exacerbating tensions around elections (Guinea, Ethiopia, Burundi) and are viewed as a deliberate tactics to hold on to power and to prevent political protests

Where WFP is supporting national social protection systems in a COVID 19 response, concerns over already existing targeting inclusion / exclusion errors may become amplified and more politicized. It may also influence government-led geographical selection / targeting.

02 Civic unrest against containment policies and differential response

Protests against quarantine measures and consequent deteriorating economic conditions have erupted widely across the globe, especially in communities living in crowded conditions, relying on the informal sector and hand to mouth means of living. While poor people struggle to access services, making ends meet and get arrested and harshly punished if not respecting containment rules (Libya, Kenya, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, India, El Salvador, Colombia etc.), economic and political elites or security forces can get privileged access to PPE, test kits and health support, and are able to flout control measures and get away with it. In Libya there has also been a liquidity crisis, resulting in people unable to withdraw their salaries from banks and unable to buy food, leading to protests. Overall there is a loss of faith in institutions, that can be exploited by, or cause a resurgence in, armed actors.

This creates a much more hostile and unpredictable operating environment for WFP, especially where WFP is perceived as responding insufficiently to food insecurity created by containment measures and quarantine processes. Increased antagonism between different sectors of society can affect community attitudes towards staff / partners.

03 Risk of Security Sector responses involving excessive use of force and creating a backlash

It can be hard to persuade populations with little trust in government to follow public health directives and comply with coronavirus measures, as was the case with Ebola in Liberia for example. In many situations containment is being enforced by the military, who are using violent means to impose strict measures, resulting in public protests, violence, increased tensions between state and citizens, and casualties (Kenya, Zimbabwe, Nigeria). With the army focused on containment measures, gang warfare has escalated resulting in increasing homicides and the passing of legislation to allow the use of lethal force to control both gangs and the pandemic (El Salvador). NSAGs may exploit this to expand control / presence. Using military language to address COVID 19 ("warfare") legitimises a military-driven law and order enforcement approach rather than framing the response in social security, individual responsibilities and solidarity terms.

In camp settings, the military might decide to exert pressure over the management of the camp, undermining existing aid delivery structures, limiting access for WFP, and possibly increasing rent seeking behavior. Increased civil unrest can make distributions more risky, since overall there may be more triggers for protest, and teams must increase field presence in order to reduce numbers of people at each distribution. Containment measures such as checkpoints create opportunities for graft, including along WFP's supply chain.

04 Vigilante responses are sometimes violent and can restrict humanitarian access

The diversion of defense forces to COVID 19 response could result in increasing of vigilante groups. In some situations medical evacuations of non-COVID cases have been attacked out of fear that the individual may be a COVID carrier (Colombia). Where there is a low trust in government capacity to respond local vigilante groups have emerged to enforce the isolation of villages.

In some circumstances this may inhibit WFP's humanitarian access / transit (Kyrgyzstan, Colombia).

05 Pandemic may affect peace processes and local conflict resolution mechanisms

Attention is being diverted from peace processes to COVID 19 responses, and some armed actors are using this as an opportunity to escalate military operations to change facts on the ground, with increased impunity (Libya, Myanmar). In terms of peace negotiations, the disarmament process in the Philippines has been interrupted; and Mozambique, Nigeria, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Somalia are refusing to acknowledge the UN secretary Generals ceasefire call. Conversely a ceasefire has been achieved in more than 12 countries, including arrangement in Yemen, Afghanistan and Syria. Local conflict resolution mechanisms involving face-to-face meetings will be severely disrupted by the prohibition of gatherings (Sierra Leone).

Increasing offensives create a more risky and volatile operating environment for WFP, and create new population movements with needs for support, shifting power dynamics and marginalization, which can affect programming now and once lockdowns are lifted.

06 Damage to community trust, solidarity and relationships

The invisible nature of the spread of the virus fuels suspicion and can undermine mutual trust, solidarity and community relationships. Social distancing and prolonged isolation can have an impact on mental health, especially for people/communities already affected by trauma. In the looming economic recession, people may increasingly compete with one another for dwindling resources, undermining cooperative behavior and relationships.

For WFP programming previous achievements in building bridges across groups and building social cohesion may be undermined. This can have significant effects for (the re-introduction of) WFP's development programming.

07 Scapegoating, discrimination and stigmatization

Scapegoating of specific groups along ethnic, religious and other lines are exacerbating existing tensions (Muslims in India, Gorkha in Darjeeling for resembling ethnic Chinese). Irregular/seasonal migrants caught at closed border crossings, or not permitted access to rural villages (e.g. India) are being blamed as vectors of the virus. In some locations with early COVID cases among UN personnel, there has been a significant anti UN / foreigner backlash (South Sudan, Mali). Since the most marginalised communities live in crowded conditions, with a lack of access to water/hygiene and other control measures being put in place, the pandemic is expected to spread widely, which will likely result in scapegoating and stigmatization.

WFP's target groups may increasingly align with stigmatized / scapegoated groups, and WFP may be perceived as biased. Frontline staff / CPs wearing protective gear could appear increasingly distant and reinforce a message of different values for different lives (protection of aid workers but not of aid recipients).

08 Rumours and access to information

Misinformation, fake news and myths around how the COVID 19 propagates are already widely spread. In some places withholding access to information is a deliberate tactic to keep control (Cox's bazaar and certain areas in South Sudan are denied access to mobile phone networks). Denying access to information not only prevents people from receiving important health messaging but also obstructs understanding of the global pandemic, and leaves space for misunderstanding and the spread of local rumours.

In communities that have little access to trustful information, rumours can be powerful drivers of fear, panic and violent action, including against aid providers. Misinformation can also pertain to WFP operations, targeting, and COVID management practices.

09 Increased criminality, illicit trafficking, theft and diversion of coronavirus response

Decreased availability of food and health supply could lead to diversions (in East Libya government medical equipment bought in by the govt was taken by doctors for use in their private hospitals) or to illicit trade in medical supplies.

Food and cash in short supply could lead to a raise in criminality, looting of WFP's warehouses, or put recipients at risk of theft following distributions.

10 Gender Based Violence

With more stress over resources and heightened tension at household level, women and girls are being exposed to greater intimate partner violence (in China reports to police tripled during the outbreak). In IDP camps, worsened socio-economic conditions might expose women to greater sexual exploitation. Isolation undermines women/girls' ability to look for support in traditional community networks. In parallel, resources for SRH and GBV services might be diverted to the COVID 19 response and further weaken service availability.

Increasing violence in the household and community can affect decisions of women and girls to participate in assessments and distributions. Where WFP targets female household members the transfer may become a source of contention.

Overall COVID 19 is likely to exacerbate existing drivers of conflict / tension, and simultaneously undermine social and economic resilience / coping mechanisms.

Changes in resource flows and exploitation of domestic discontent and international distraction is creating new dynamics among existing conflict actors.

Rapid Operational Conflict Risk Tool

Each context is different, and some analysis is needed to identify possible risks and develop mitigation measures. In a fast changing context, this analysis can quickly become of out date, and staff have limited time available for reflection.

Outlined below are questions to prompt a quick identification of risks and opportunities to support programme design or course correction. What constitutes a 'good enough' analysis here depends on the situation – where risks to communities are low, an internal discussion of the questions / desk based review may suffice, but where risks are high a more thorough investigation and primary data collection through focus groups and key stakeholders interviews might be necessary.

THE SIXTEEN QUESTIONS HELP TO BUILD AN AGREED UNDERSTANDING OF CHANGING CONTEXT AND HELP TO IDENTIFY THE RISKS TO WFP'S OPERATION.

CHANGING CONTEXT

01

What were the issues or divisions creating tensions/conflict in this area prior to COVID 19? (**Who** was in conflict with **whom** and about **what**?) Have there been any recent developments in these tensions since COVID 19 (e.g. around raising food prices and availability/access to food)?

02

Are there any conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms in place in the area of intervention (early warning systems, conflict mitigation committees etc.)? Has the functioning of / access to these mechanisms been affected by COVID 19 response measures?

03

What are the areas and groups that have been most affected by COVID 19? Are they related to any specific ethnic / religious / political or other group (also exclude other groups)? Are any groups being scapegoated for spreading COVID 19?

04

What are the trusted sources of information here? What kind of misinformation, fake news and myths are circulating? What level of access to information do people have?

05

Are the government / state security forces leading the response seen as legitimate, competent and responsive to the needs/rights of marginalized groups? Are containment measures felt to be proportionate / acceptable? Have any specific groups (rival parties, opponent in a conflict etc) been excessively/unfairly targeted?

06

How have local non state armed groups (NSGAs) responded to the COVID-19 outbreak and response? Are they using movement restrictions and potential decrease in security force to gain control over areas or to their own benefit?

07

How are relationships changing at a local level: Have scapegoating, misinformation, social distancing and other measures (including any form of assistance) damaged trust and social cohesion?

08

What are potential triggers for violence in relation to the COVID 19 response? What capacities / opportunities to support tolerance and peace are emerging?

RISKS TO WFP'S OPERATION

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_3457