



World Food Programme

SAVING
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How to Mainstream Child Protection into Programme and Operations

Step by Step Guidance

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Introduction

Given the high proportion of children targeted and supported through WFP programmes and operations and the fact that girls and boys with and without disabilities face unique protection risks, responding to their specific needs is a key priority for WFP. A recent internal mixed-methods review – conducted through a proxy population method – estimated that, across 63 countries and all WFP's activity portfolios, adolescents represent an average of 27% of all WFP's beneficiaries, ranging from 3% to 60% depending on the country¹⁷. This proportion represents approximately 15 million adolescents reached in 2018. In most cases, WFP reached them via school feeding and general food assistance, suggesting that the organization has enormous potential for leveraging its platforms to more appropriately and comprehensively address the needs of children (WFP, 2020).¹

WFP does not have a specific Child Protection Policy. However, considerations for child protection are included in the WFP Protection and Accountability Policy (2020) and in the ED Circular on Child Safeguarding (forthcoming 2021).

Furthermore, WFP recognizes that children's rights are enshrined in international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In particular the provision that states all children have the right to be protected, nurtured and free from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, maltreatment and exploitation.

This guidance aims to provide WFP and partners with practical information on how to implement actions and decisions that respect the best interests of the child.. It is advised that the guidance is considered at the design stage of an activity but certain components such as the safe and meaningful consultation of children and the identification of child safeguarding violations should be considered throughout the project implementation. Section 5 includes useful tools and templates that can be easily adapted to a given context.

WFP documents that integrate child protection principles include:

- WFP Protection and Accountability Policy (2020)
- Protection and Accountability Handbook (2021)
- Guidance Note to Prevent the Use of Child Labour in WFP Operations and Programmes (2017)
- WFP Accountability to Affected Populations Guidance Manual (2017)
- WFP Gender-Based Violence Manual (2017)
- WFP Guide to Personal Data Protection and Privacy (2016)
- ED Circular on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (2014)
- WFP Beneficiary Identity Management Guide (2019) (section on children's biometrics)
- Practical note: For WFP and Partners on Preventing and Responding to Child Labour (forthcoming 2021)

¹ See "[Programming for Adolescents: Why Should WFP do More?](#)".

Key Definitions

Child: The Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 1 (CRC) 1989, defines a child as “any human being below the age of eighteen years (18), unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”.

Separated Child/Separated Minor: children separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members.

Unaccompanied Child/Unaccompanied minor: a child without the presence of a legal guardian or any form of family. Are children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.

Child headed household: is a family in which no adults are left to care for them and a minor (less than 18 years) has become the head of the household. For example, an older child takes responsibility for siblings, a girl child who has a baby, a group of children self-organize themselves as a family unit or a child who has taken on the role of head of household as the adult member/s is unable to fulfill this position for various reasons (age, illness etc).

Orphans: are children, both of whose parents are known to be dead. In some countries, however, a child who has lost one parent is called an orphan.

Guardianship/Formal Caretaker: The precise definition, function and manner of appointment of a guardian varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. However, the term guardianship refers to the designation of responsibility to an adult or organization for ensuring that a child’s best interests are fully represented.

Young People/Youth/Adolescent: The definitions of adolescent and youth vary across countries, cultures and organizations. The Child Protection in Minimum Standards (CPMS) defines children aged 9–17 years as adolescents whilst the United Nations refers to 10-19 years of age. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines ‘adolescents’ as individuals in the 10-19 years age group and divide it into early (10–13 years), middle (14–16 years) and late (17–19 years) adolescence. The great majority of adolescents are, therefore, included in the age-based definition of “child” - adopted by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Other terms in use are: ‘youth’, defined by the United Nations as the 15-24 year age group - endorsed by the General Assembly through resolution 36/28, 1981; ‘Young people’, defined as the 10-24-year age group, and used to combine adolescents and youth.

Best Interests of the Child: The best interests of the child constitute the basic standard for guiding decisions and actions taken to help children by WFP. Elements to consider when analysing what is in the child’s best interest:

- The safety of the child
- Respect for the opinions of the child
- The age and maturity of the child
- Preservation of the unity of the family
- Preservation of the child’s health
- The child’s unhindered access to education.

Child Safeguarding: Child safeguarding refers to all the actions WFP takes to keep all children it comes into contact with safe – and includes the proactive measures put in place to ensure children do not come to harm as a result of any direct or indirect contact with WFP and partners. Child safeguarding encompasses the prevention of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and maltreatment of children by WFP employees and other persons whom WFP is responsible for, including contractors, vendors, partners etc.

Child Protection: Child protection is only one part of child safeguarding. It is an umbrella term that covers all the child-centered actions and measures WFP needs to have in place in order to prevent and reduce the likelihood of concerns arising (e.g. codes of conduct, safe recruitment procedures, training and communication). While assuring the physical safety of children is crucial, mainstreaming the minimum standards of child protection in emergencies encompasses more than stopping attacks or moving children out of harm’s way. It includes measures that promote the child’s physical and wellbeing, provide them equal access to basic services and safeguards their human rights.

Working Child: A child can be involved in work under certain conditions as long as the child is above the minimum working age, as set by the International Labour Organisation and [WFP Guidance Note to Prevent the Use of Child Labour in WFP Programmes and Operations](#). WFP recognizes that children’s participation in work which does not interfere with their schooling and childhood.

Child Labour: refers to children working in contravention of the standards contained in ILO Conventions No. 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. Additional information can be found here: [WFP Guidance Note to Prevent the Use of Child Labour in WFP Programmes and Operations](#)

Worst Forms of Child Labour: The worst forms of child labour involve children being enslaved, forcibly recruited, sexually exploited, trafficked, forced into illegal activities or engaged in hazardous work. These forms of labour are prohibited for children of all ages without exception.

Child Marriage: Child marriage refers to any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18 and an adult or another child. Child marriage is often the result of entrenched gender inequality, making girls disproportionately affected by the practice. Globally, the prevalence of [child marriage among boys](#) is just one sixth that among girls.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: The term “sexual exploitation” means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Similarly, the term “sexual abuse” means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Child Abuse: includes physical, emotional/psychological and sexual abuse, neglect and negligent treatment, exploitation and violence in all form.

1. Child Safeguarding

WFP has a duty of care to ensure that children who come into contact with WFP and partners as a result of, or are impacted by, WFP activities are safeguarded to the maximum possible extent from deliberate or inadvertent actions that place them at risk of neglect, physical or sexual abuse and exploitation, injury and any other harm. This is only possible through careful risk management and designing programmes in a way that creates or contributes to a safer environment for all children. WFP has an obligation to ensure that any interaction with children is done safely and considers their best interest.

Therefore, it is mandatory for all WFP employees:

- To take all possible measures to protect children from harm and ensure that children regardless of their age, gender, disability status, language, livelihood, and other context specific relevant factors never experience abuse of any kind perpetuated by WFP and partners;

- To consider a child’s best interest at all times and to keep them safe;
- To combat discrimination based on age, disability, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation and other context specific relevant factors.

Prior to the implementation of any activity or programme WFP must conduct a **protection risk assessment to inform its context analysis, the design and implementation of activities**. The child safeguarding questions can be integrated into the broader needs assessment or consolidated based on information collected through protection and other assessments.

A protection risk assessment will help WFP identify the ways in which employees and partners acting on behalf of WFP understand the risks to children from the organisation, (its employees, programmes and operations) and identifies opportunities to address those risks with appropriate measures.



IN PRACTICE SAFEGUARDING MEANS ENSURING THAT WFP:

- Designs programmes to minimise the risk of harm to the children they come into contact with or impact upon directly or indirectly by taking sufficient account of child safety;
- Protects children from abuse and maltreatment within the context of its programmes and operations;
- Ensuring children have safe and equal access to assistance;
- Facilitates children’s engagement in processes that impact them;
- Has clear guidelines on what constitutes child safeguarding risks and establishes reporting mechanisms to report violations of child safeguarding commitments;
- Employees and partners are trained and familiar with the Child Safeguarding Circular (forthcoming 2021) and their obligations.

DIRECT	INDIRECT
Sexually or otherwise exploit children in return for access to assistance.	Communicating with children or young people through online platforms (an employee grooms children through direct messages on a WFP platform, text messages etc. related to the implementation of an activity with CBT).
Engaging children in livelihood and income generating activities that are not tailored to ILO guidelines (child labour).	Inappropriate use of information, stories and visual images (photographs, video or social media) of children. ²
Registration (incl. biometric) of children without the consent of the primary caregiver and the assent of the child.	Having access to child identifiable personal data and sharing it with a third-party without the consent from the care-giver and assent from the child. This could include registration for a school-based programme and sharing the data with government without informing the subject at the time of registration. <i>For example, in a context where there is recruitment of child soldiers by armed groups this would directly place children at risk.</i>
Any failure to consider the child's best interest in the design, implementation and monitoring of activities. <i>For example, a mother takes her child to a cash for work site. The site is not secure, and the child gets run over crossing a street.</i>	
Registration of separated or unaccompanied minors without prior consultation with dedicated child protection actors and the WFP Guide to Personal Data Protection and Privacy.	
Taking photographs of children without the consent of the primary caregiver and the assent of the child.	Receiving a case of child abuse, investigating and attempting to handle the case rather than safely referring the case to dedicated child protection actors or WFP protection officers to address.
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Interviewing children in the absence and without the consent of the designated care-giver, assent of the child and dedicated child protection actors or dedicated employees trained on consulting children.	Your organisation produced a publication for the website and media, which featured a photo and story about a girl and her family who fled a conflict. The girl and family had given permission for the story to be published. The publication shares the name, location and age of the girl and her family. The week following publication project staff tell you that the girl and her family were attacked by community leaders.
Recruiting employees that have a record of committing child abuse. This includes retaining employees that have engaged in child marriage.	
Abuse (physical, emotional or sexual) occurring on the way to, from or during the child's participation in WFP led programmes activities (this includes abuse by teachers in a school-based programming activity, use of physical force or lack of response to reports of GBV).	A man sends his son to the farm to harvest as he participates in a livelihood project because with the conditionality, he is unable to fulfil both tasks. Or A child is kept home from school because the adult member of the single headed household (woman) was targeted and selected for an asset creation activity but is unable to leave her younger children in a safe space on the worksite whilst she participates.
Discrimination based on gender, religion, disability other context specific factors that denies the child access to safe and meaningful assistance.	
Vendors, partners and suppliers engaging in child labour.	A child does not have the level of literacy required to understand programme communication explaining how to use the CFM. The child cannot access the CFM to report their abuse.
The use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances.	

² UNICEF Tips for good practice include:

- Images of children must not show them in stages of undress or in inappropriate poses.
- Details attached to images and included in stories must not allow that child to be traced to his or her home or community.
- Distinctive buildings, street signs or landmarks should not be included in an image if they identify where a child lives or works.
- Geotagging of images should be disabled when taking photographs.
- Ensure the photographer/journalist/translator you have employed has been properly vetted and reference checked.
- Make sure you have been given permission by children and their parents/carers to take their image and use their information.

IDENTIFYING CHILD SAFEGUARDING RISK

Below is a brief overview of the components that should be considered in a protection risk assessment to ensure it considers child safeguarding. The protection risk assessment should be led by programme with support from the CO level protection and AAP colleagues or in the absence of CO level protection colleagues Humanitarian Advisors should be consulted. The protection risk assessment is a fundamental component of the context analysis. If the CO is implementing activities that directly target children such as nutrition and school-based programming these areas of activities should be strongly engaged in the process.

Establishing the context, scope and setting of your Country Office (CO):

- Is your operation located in places where child abuse is prevalent?
- Is your operation located in places where laws and authorities are weak in responding to child abuse?

Identifying your Country Office's potential impact on contact with children:

- Does your country's programming, activities and operations involve working with children?
- What impact do these programmes, activities and operations have upon communities and children?
- Does your country office bring employees, partners, third party service providers including financial institutions in contact with children?

Identifying and analysing the potential risks of that impact or contact:

- Are there proper reference and police checks on employees?
- What level and type of contact and interaction do employees have with children in your CO?
- Do all employees have briefings/induction training on child safeguarding
- Do all partners have their own child safeguarding policy/directive/circular?
- Which other actors are supporting the implementation of activities and operations, and what policies/frameworks do they have on child safeguarding? What is their interaction with children (e.g., vendors, contractors, service providers)?
- What services do you provide that target children and families and how have those services been designed?
- What consideration has there been for children accessing the services, including community feedback mechanisms, and has the programme considered the needs of different children – boys and girls?
- What images and information on children does your CO use and how is this information stored and presented, and to whom?

Evaluating the risks in terms of likelihood they could occur and the seriousness of the impact on children:

- Definition of Risk Significance levels:
- High: Highly likely to happen and significant impact on child.
 - Medium: Either highly likely to happen or significant impact on child.
 - Low: Less likely to happen and less of an impact on child.

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