



Shelter/NFI Distribution Guideline in the Context of COVID-19 Outbreak

1. Overview

The Shelter and NFI (S/NFI) Cluster in Ethiopia strives to improve the living condition of vulnerable conflict- and climate-affected populations through the provision of life-saving emergency shelter and non-food items (NFIs). With the primary objective of coordinating appropriate, adequate, efficient, relevant, and timely services to displaced, host, and returnee populations living under substandard shelter situations. As the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to spread unpredictably, it presents a growing risk to partners and beneficiaries, particularly during distributions. This document sets forth the guideline for distributing shelter and NFI in the COVID-19 context to minimize the risk of exposure of personnel, partners, and beneficiaries.

2. Safeguarding and Protection

In line with the Core Principles in the Ethiopia S/NFI Cluster 2019-2021 Strategy¹, partners should prioritize the protection of displaced and conflict-affected populations and mitigate the risk of exposure to COVID and other protection concerns such as SGBV and PSA.

Guidance on essential actions to reduce risk and mitigate Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) associated with the distribution of shelter, NFIs and cash can be found on the Global Shelter Cluster website: <https://tinyurl.com/yyslxosv>

3. Planning the distribution

Existing vulnerabilities, particularly of the displaced affect population, are likely to be exacerbated. In contrast, new ones may be developed (not least driven by the social-economic consequences of COVID-19), and these need to be carefully monitored by humanitarian agencies and prioritized in preparedness and responded². COVID-19 outbreak reports indicate that vulnerable member of the community such as Elderly is more susceptible to the pandemic and partners needs to ensure that their activities do not place them further at risk.

3.1 Selecting the distribution approach

- Preference should be given to direct delivery to the homes of beneficiaries, and this is subjected to the volume of distributed materials, the number of households and locations, nevertheless a vulnerable member of the community such as elderly, female households, or lactating mothers should receive the items in their shelters. If a house-to-house distribution does not apply to the vulnerable member of the community can nominate a member of the family or friends.
- When house-to-house is not applicable, distributions can be done from a safe location outside of the community (a school, health center, or a gated woreda compound) with only a few beneficiaries being called at a time to collect their materials. While this approach reduces the risk for the recipients, it can simultaneously increase the risk of assault, theft, or lack of access to assistance due to long distances from beneficiary homes. To prevent protection and security risks, partners should coordinate with government officials.
- Consider increasing the number of distribution days to decrease the number of beneficiaries on any given day or increasing the number of distribution points to reduce the number of beneficiaries gathering at each site.

¹ Ethiopia Shelter and NFI Cluster Strategy 2019-21. Available online: <https://tinyurl.com/yyqmw596>

² COVID-19 Response: Key Protection Concerns from the National Protection Cluster Introduction



3.2 Selecting the distribution site

If it is determined that distributions should be done from set distribution points, the main elements to consider are:

- Is the site accessible via a safe road and reasonable distance from beneficiaries' homes?
- Will beneficiaries be able to return home from the site before dark?
- Is the site perceived to be safe, is there a possibility to disinfect the site?
- Is the site well known to beneficiaries?
- Will selecting this site block access to essential services (health center, school)?
- Does the site have sufficient space to accommodate the beneficiaries in line with Health recommended spaces between individuals?
- How is access to the distribution, is an entry and exit access are separate? It is mandatory the distribution site has to have exit and entry.
- Does the center have enough space and facilities for suspected COVID cases?
- Can the most vulnerable beneficiaries physically access the proposed site? If not, is there an alternative distribution point that they can access?
- Will the beneficiaries carry their materials home by themselves, or will they require transport? If they need transportation, is there a way to access it from the site?
- Do trucks have access to the site to drop off the distribution items?

Discussions should determine if there is a need for gender-separated queues and appropriate times and dates for the distribution.

It is usually best to select distribution points that are as close as possible to beneficiary homes to reduce protection and COVID risks related to travel. Cluster partners must evaluate their resources and the availability of available sites in the area when deciding on how many distribution points to set up.

3.3 Communications and coordination

Community engagement and clear interfaces and feedback mechanisms will be crucial to reduce transmission, contain the spread of the disease, and alleviate fear, misinformation, confusion, and tension. Existing community mechanisms, as well as distribution activities, should be leveraged to disseminate sensitization messages at the community level. Messages should be broadcasted in simple/local language, taking into consideration the cultural context, as well as the special needs of marginalized communities, with the involvement of relevant stakeholders conducting risk communication activities (i.e., health/hygiene promotion)³.

Ensure clear and consistent communications regarding the prevention measures such as temperature taking and handwashing procedures to be implemented during the distribution. All beneficiaries must have a good understanding of why these measures will be taken and what they will entail avoiding confusion, panic, or misunderstanding.

Before and during distributions, Cluster partners should explain to beneficiaries what the distributed items are and how to use them properly (especially hygiene items and plastic sheets). This can be done using pictures, banners, posters, or boards posted in public locations that are accessible to all. Communications should take into account illiterate beneficiaries or beneficiaries with special needs and aim to reach recipients through as many different channels as possible (door-to-door visits, community meetings, phone calls). Women play a significant role as conduits of information in their communities, but they have less access to information than men typically. Thus, reaching women and girls and educating them on the disease is crucial to tackling the spread and enhance prevention .

³ Interim Recommendations for ADJUSTING FOOD DISTRIBUTION STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK, Version 2, March 2020, WFP



All activities should be undertaken in coordination with Health and WASH clusters and government officials both at the regional, zonal, weredas and kebele level.

Grouping distribution times: it will be recommended that beneficiaries are divided into groups and called to the distribution point at staggered times. This way, there will be fewer beneficiaries on-site at a time. However, communicating different distribution times can confuse if groupings and times are not clear. Extra attention must be paid.

Community support: for assistance in maintaining order, organizing the distribution site, and assisting beneficiaries in moving more substantial items to their homes, volunteers may be needed. Speak with the committee leaders to determine how to recruit volunteers after deciding upon the number of people required and the type of roles that need to be filled. The volunteers should be well briefed on COVID mitigation measures and provided with a mask, gloves, and other necessary preventing gears.

Accommodations for special needs: there should be targeted communications to beneficiaries with special needs to explain how they will be accommodated (home delivery of items, separate queueing line, assistance in moving items to their home, separate distribution point or time, the nomination of a neighbor or family member to collect the item for them).

3.4 Organizing the distribution site

Distribution sites should be demarcated with controlled access points, adequate space, and shade for waiting. Key features of the distribution site include:

- A clearly marked single entrance and a single exit that is separate (beneficiary movement should be in one direction only)
- A demarcated queuing system using stakes and rope or string, with different lines for men, women or those with specific vulnerabilities (if determined to be appropriate)
- Shaded waiting areas
- Establish sheltered/covered area for beneficiaries that do not receive clearance at the body temperature checkpoint.
- A complaint and feedback desk that is away from the queuing area
- Sufficient space between the waiting area and the stocks/items.
- Identify the Reception point, verification point, collection point, and exit to channel off traffic and allow for personal space of at least one meter between each beneficiary.
- Set up a handwashing area with an adequate supply of handwashing solution as per WASH/Health guidelines.
- Allocate areas for body temperature checks by health officials.
- The allocated area should be spacious enough to allow beneficiaries to sit/stand at least two meters apart from each other
- Organize the shelter items kits ahead of the scheduled distribution
- If not already prepositioned, offload the items into the temporary storage and organize packages ahead of the planned distribution.
- Adequate handwashing stands with soaps and water.
- Washrooms for men and women marked adequately with the local language.

Any disputes over at the distribution should be managed away from the main distribution queuing systems at complaints and feedback desks.

When planning the distribution site, Cluster partners should ensure that there are proper storage space and means of disposing of waste. Plastic sheets and NFIs often come wrapped in smaller pieces of plastic sheet or plastic



wrapping, which must be appropriately disposed of and not left at the distribution site to avoid harming the environment.

In case of evacuation, there should be vehicles for distribution staff to leave the area stationed at either the exit or entrance point, away from stocks, trucks or material transport.

3.5 Distribution staffs

Distribution staff should be trained and provided with the necessary mitigation gears as recommended by Health official. The distribution staff have to be a mixed gender to reflect the beneficiaries that are being supported, and to ensure that all recipients can comfortably engage with staff, including raising issues that may be gender sensitive. Adequate staffing is essential to successful distribution.

If the distribution is expected to run for an extended period, there should be back-up staff or volunteers available. In particular, work shifts need to be organized to relieve staff who are managing and handing out stock, and a team who are helping beneficiaries carry items to their homes/transport/ distribution point exit, this will prevent negligence due to exhaustion

General distribution staff training: all staff members should know their roles and responsibilities. they should receive, basic trainings on COVI mitigation measure, GBV and PSEA trainings.

Safety measures for staff: there should be adequate COVID mitigation equipment for the team during the distribution (e.g. gloves, masks, etc.) and adequate spaces marked out for them to do perform their roles safely. One-meter area around the desk to be cordoned off (with a rope or tape) at the collection point. There should be no physical contact between the beneficiaries, the staffs and the volunteers.

4. Implementing the Distribution

4.1 On distribution day

All human and aid resources should be mobilized to the distribution site well before the distribution is scheduled to commence to set up the site. Remember that beneficiaries will likely arrive early and bring friends and family members for support. it is necessary to ensure that only the beneficiaries are allowed entrance to the distribution center. It can be very dangerous moving stocks through crowds, so the Cluster partner should ensure that all stocks are already on-site and prepared for distribution before crowds arrive. Sufficient stock must be available for distributions.

Depending on what accommodations for special needs are organized, the most vulnerable may receive their items first and transport support provided.

4.2 Management of distribution sites and items

- Instruct beneficiaries to maintain a distance of two meters from each other throughout the distribution process (staff provided with measure to guide social distance)
- Where the Kit is heavy, or the beneficiary is unable to carry they may bring someone to assist them with carrying the kit however they should maintain the two-meter distance between each other until they are collecting their kit
- The verification process should be done with minimum contact such as returning a coupon. If signing is used for verification, then beneficiaries have to wash their hands prior to signing the coupon
- Staffs and volunteers at the collection point should place the Kit on the tarpaulin/table at the distribution point and step back, permitting the beneficiary to collect the Kit.



4.3 Manage the flow of traffic at the distribution site

- Upon arrival at the distribution site, direct beneficiaries to the hand washing area and then to the temperature check area to have their body temperature assessed using a noninvasive thermometer. Ideally, the temperature check should be conducted by a medical or Health professional endorsed by government authorities.
- If a beneficiary is detected to have a fever, they should be directed to the specified sheltered/covered area for a follow up by the local government or health official.
- Inform identified beneficiaries that they will receive the items irrespective of the results of the temperature test by the nominated family member
- Beneficiaries cleared at the temperature check area are to be directed to the (identity) verification checkpoint.
- Beneficiaries should not pass through the distribution point more than once.
- There should be no physical contact between staff and beneficiaries or between beneficiaries.
- Following the collection of the Kit, beneficiaries are to be directed to exit the collection site and encouraged to depart the distribution site.

4.4 Staff at the distribution sites (Reception point, Queue Management and Distribution Point etc.)

- Monitor the entry of beneficiaries into the distribution point channel.
- Instruct beneficiaries to maintain a distance of two meters at all points during distributions.
- Ensure that the hand washing point is supplied with appropriate quantities of handwash solution
- Ensure that all beneficiaries wash their hands at the hand washing point and have body temperature checks before approaching the identity verification checkpoint.
- If a beneficiary presents high temperature, they must be directed to the sheltered/covered area and referred to the relevant health authorities.
- Oversee and assist with offloading and organizing rations before distributions are scheduled to start.
- Step back from the ration and direct the beneficiary to collect the ration and leave via the marked exit route.
- Instruct the beneficiaries to leave the distribution site immediately after the collection of rations through the exit door

4.5 Closing the distribution

- Closing a distribution appropriately is necessary to prevent contamination.
- On completion of distribution, ensure that the distribution point (room/ area/ tarpaulin) is swept clean and sprayed with disinfectant, as recommended by the WASH/Health sectors. Once dry, the tarpaulin should be folded away for storage/transportation.
- Remove all tapes, ropes and signage.
- Clear hand wash station and remove/store hand washing solution.
- It is mandatory that all staff at the distribution site perform hand sanitation and follow general hygiene practices.
- If there are remaining stock, ensure that the required disinfection has been carried out. Keep stocks in the warehouse overnight with guards in place and retrieve them early the next day when few people are around.

Important Note: All personnel involved in the distribution are responsible for complying with all aspects of the guideline and compile with WHO and Health official guidelines. If any individual demonstrates symptoms of COVID-19 they should avoid contact with beneficiaries and not be present at the distribution site.