

## Distribution and Food assistance during COVID-19: A guide for networks



Distribution of immediate, life-saving assistance is one of the most urgent actions to be taken in an emergency response, and can significantly improve the safety and well-being of children. This guidance provides simple steps to take to make sure that your project has the maximum positive impact for children and communities and avoids creating further risk.

### GET READY: PLAN WELL FOR A SUCCESSFUL PROJECT

#### Who will receive your food parcels?

Food assistance should target the most vulnerable and be fair and equitable – and the community should understand who is benefitting and how you made your decision. Usually it is a good idea to set some criteria to make your decision – who is most at risk? For networks, this will likely be people already involved in your network programmes and their immediate families.

In this context it might be necessary to act fast and offer a general distribution to all households within a community where assessment is not possible due to lack of access. You will need to be flexible and re-prioritise as the crisis develops and access changes.

#### What will be in your food packages?

It is likely that you will be providing additional food, rather than the whole food supply for a family. However, a good guideline is the World Food Programme (WFP) food basket which includes:

- A local staple such as flour or rice
- lentils, chickpeas or other pulses
- vegetable oil
- sugar
- salt

Try to fill gaps in nutrients and diet and prioritise items that help to create a balanced diet. Food must be good quality, within use-by-date, and not tampered with.

Choose foods that do not require long cooking if fuel is scarce. While nutritional value is the primary consideration in providing food assistance, the commodities should be familiar to the recipients.

If possible packaging should allow direct distribution without requiring re-measuring or repacking.

#### How will you involve and communicate with communities?

Find a way to register beneficiaries if possible (even if by phone or by using existing network records) but do not do this in a way that increases risk.

When planning rations, consult with the community (including women and girls) to take account of local and cultural preferences.

If this is a one-off distribution, make sure beneficiaries are aware of this. Do not promise regular distributions unless you are sure this is possible, and rather make sure that beneficiaries are linked to whatever official channels of government support are available.

Make sure that communities know that all aid and relief items are free.

Try to use your distribution activities as a platform to disseminate sensitisation messages at community level to reduce misinformation and fear about COVID-19 – in simple, local language.

Schedule distributions in a way that respects people's travelling and working time and that prioritizes at-risk groups as appropriate.

## WHILE YOU WORK: ENSURING SAFETY AND EFFECTIVENESS

### Minimising the risk of transmitting COVID-19 for staff, volunteers and beneficiaries

At all stages of your response you must comply with the latest guidelines from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and your own government. You should not enter a quarantine area where movement is restricted by law, or require people to leave home when they are under instruction not to do so. Where vulnerable people are left without access to food, work with authorities to find ways to enable access.

At all times, including when obtaining food items, preparing food packages, or during distributions:

- There should always be at least 1 metre between people (both staff and beneficiaries)
- Wash hands frequently, and always before and after handling food items and packages
- Avoid touching your face. Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

During distributions where people come to pick up food packages from a central point:

- Do not allow crowding around the distribution point, and clearly mark queuing areas
- Set up a reception desk with 1 metre cordoned off with tape or rope for 1 person at a time
- Set up handwashing areas for beneficiaries on arrival
- Allow for personal space of at least 1 metre between each beneficiary
- Ensure there are clearly marked entrance and exit points
- Store food items separately from the collection points where possible

For distributions where you deliver packages directly to homes:

- Do not enter homes; leave deliveries at the door and step back from the doorway to enable the recipient to collect the food package

What to do when someone displays symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, difficulty breathing)

- Ensure you know where to refer beneficiaries for medical care and be able to share current government guidelines on isolation and quarantine
- If you or your team are displaying symptoms of COVID-19, do not continue working on the project and follow current government guidelines on isolation and quarantine

### How can you make sure your response keeps children safe?

- Make sure all project staff and volunteers have read and signed your child safeguarding policy
- Brief staff and volunteers on how to refer suspected cases of child abuse or vulnerable children
- Post visible child-friendly messaging on child protection at distribution sites

### How will you check your project is helping people?

- Set up a confidential feedback and complaints mechanism (e.g. a phone number) to enable beneficiaries to report any concerns
- Use simple indicators such as “% of recipients that report that food provided is of appropriate quality and meets local preferences” or “% that report the mechanism to receive food was appropriate” and use remote monitoring e.g. by phone to gather feedback.
- Collect disaggregated beneficiary data (boys, girls, men, women, people with disabilities)