UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | EMERGENCY HANDBOOK

In-Kind Non-Food Item Distribution

30 August 2024

النقاط الرئيسية

- Do not plan an NFI distribution without coordinating with local authorities and other humanitarian actors, ensuring harmonization and complementary of assistance.
- Ensure that the NFIs selected and procured for the distribution are based on real needs and are culturally appropriate for the target population, based on consultations with groups of different age, gender and diverse characteristics if feasible in the emergency context.
- The target population should receive clear information on the distribution that is tailored to their language, literacy and preferred means of communication. They should also have access to a feedback and response mechanism through which UNHCR can solve immediate concerns.
- The distribution site, inclusive of its access routes, location and layout, must guarantee the safety, security and accessibility of all stakeholders involved, as well as the safeguarding of the NFIs and other equipment on site.
- Prioritize post-distribution monitoring exercises to adapt and modify future NFI programming; determine the usefulness, quality and preferences of NFIs with an AGD lens; ascertain if the NFIs have reached the intended recipients and if they have been used according to the intended purpose.

1. لمحة عامة

This entry describes how to plan, implement, and monitor the distribution of in-kind non-food items (NFIs) in an emergency, either through funded partnerships or directly by UNHCR personnel.

Non-Food Items (NFIs) are any items other than food that are distributed to people affected by natural hazard-induced or conflict-induced displacement or other situations of crisis. NFIs are individual and household items that enable forcibly displaced and stateless persons to conduct

their daily lives (eat, drink, sleep, cook, wash and store belongings) and maintain a minimum standard of living.

Core Relief Items (CRI) are a **sub-set of non-food items** and are those life-sustaining NFIs that are most widely used by UNHCR operations around the world. The following NFIs are defined as CRIs: reinforced plastic tarpaulins, canvas rolls, mosquito nets, refugee housing units, multi-purpose sleeping mats, cloth for sanitary material, family tents, synthetic sleeping mat, plastic buckets, synthetic blankets, semi-collapsible jerry cans and kitchen sets.

From here on in, this entry will refer to NFIs only, which encompass all CRIs.

For detailed guidance on NFI distributions in a non-emergency context, see the Operational Guidelines on NFI Management (accessible to UNHCR staff only).

2. الصلة بعمليات الطوارئ

In an emergency situation, people often flee with little more than the clothes they are wearing and consequently find themselves displaced without any personal belongings. In addition to food and water, they urgently need certain 'standard' non-food items (NFIs) to survive, including items for shelter (plastic sheeting), sleeping (blanket, sleeping mat), cooking (kitchen sets, i.e. pots, pans, utensils etc.), energy (fuel, portable light) and health and sanitation (bucket, soap, jerry can, sanitary cloth, diapers, mosquito net). If it is not feasible or appropriate to provide **cash-based assistance** to meet these urgent needs, the distribution of in-kind NFIs is required.

3. التوجيه الرئيسي

a) Principles/Requirements

aa) Minimum principles/requirements:

- The displaced population has access to sufficient, culturally appropriate and gender sensitive individual and general household domestic items to meet their basic needs, contributing to their good health, dignity, safety and well-being.
- The distribution is fast and effective to save lives and prevent distress in the displaced population.
- The target population is aware of when and where the NFI distribution will take place (inclusive of any last-minute changes), as well as the selection criteria (if applicable).
- The distribution is free of any charge and this has been clearly communicated to the target population in advance of the distribution.
- There is zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption and this is clearly communicated to the target population.
- The distribution site is in a neutral, accessible, safe and secure location for all stakeholders to conduct the distribution. Age, gender and diversity aspects are considered in the site layout and distribution process. For instance:
    - The site includes an emergency exit and there is a first aid kit available.
    - The distribution site is accessible for the entire target population. Possible alternative

modalities of distribution are in place for persons with mobility restrictions.
    - There is a clear and gender-sensitive (as applicable) crowd control mechanism in place at the distribution site.
  - The target population can share their feedback/complaints on the NFI distribution through a mechanism that is established as soon as feasible.

bb) Ideal principles/requirements:

- The distribution is based on a rapid needs assessment so that no assumptions are imposed with respect to the household size, structure or needs of the displaced population.
- The displaced population actively participates in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the NFI distribution.
- There is a comprehensive information campaign to ensure that the target population receives detailed information about the NFI distribution (when, where, what, why, how).
- There are storage facilities at the distribution site to allow for stock to be safely locked away during/after distributions.
- There are gender-segregated WASH facilities (toilets, handwashing stations and drinking water) at the distribution site for the target population and separate gender-segregated WASH facilities for the distribution team.
- The waiting area at the distribution site is protected from the elements (e.g. shaded in summer).
- There is a comprehensive distribution report which outlines the total number of individuals/households reached and the total number of NFIs distributed (per item).

b) Distribution kits:

Partial NFI kit	
Components	Lifesaving NFIs that can be carried by the recipients on foot. For example, blankets, semi-collapsible jerry can and cloth for sanitary material.
Appropriate contexts	Cross-border. Transit or reception centres. Temporary communal accommodation. Settlements, camps and urban (if there are stock shortages or funding gaps).
Applicable populations	All forcibly displaced and stateless persons who will not be ‘fixed’ in the location where the distribution will take place, i.e. people on the move/in transit.

Complete NFI kit*	
Components	NFIs that meet the basic needs and well-being of the target population for shelter, sleeping, cooking, energy, health and sanitation.
Appropriate contexts	Settlements and camps. Urban.
Applicable populations	All forcibly displaced and stateless persons who are foreseen to remain in the area of the distribution location for the near future (at least 1 month from date of arrival).

* If a partial NFI kit has already been distributed to the target population, only the remaining NFIs (that would make up the complete NFI kit) would be distributed if resources are available, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication.

c) Distribution methods:

Distribution to/via local authorities	
Appropriate contexts	Cross-border. UNHCR and/or funded partners cannot reach the target population (e.g. due to insecurities, access constraints, political sensitivities).
Applicable populations	All forcibly displaced and stateless persons.
Advantages	Quick and simple handover. No need for registration data for the target population. No need for UNHCR/partner personnel for NFI distribution to target population. May improve UNHCR's relationship with local authorities. Opportunity to strengthen capacity of local authorities to respond to an emergency.
Risks	1. Not possible for UNHCR or distribution partners to monitor if NFIs reach intended final recipients. Potential for NFIs to be diverted from their intended purpose. 2. Local authorities may not have sufficient infrastructure and capacity to carry out the distributions.

Mitigation measures	1. Request for a distribution list from the local authorities and conduct post-distribution monitoring (PDM) with sampled households from target population. 2. Provide a training for local authorities on the process and principles of NFI distributions.

Distribution to representatives for the target population	
Appropriate contexts	Cross-border. Rural and urban. Target population is dispersed over a large geographical area. Target population comprises small undivided communities.
Applicable populations	All forcibly displaced and stateless persons who are unregistered.
Advantages	Quick handover. Social and cultural values of the target population are respected. Representatives are likely to know who are the most vulnerable within the target population and who should therefore be prioritized for the NFI distribution. No need for registration data for the target population. No need for UNHCR/partner personnel for NFI distribution to target population. Participation of target population in the NFI distribution.
Risks	1. Not possible for UNHCR or distribution partners to monitor if NFIs reach intended final recipients. Potential for NFIs to be diverted from their intended purpose. 2. UNHCR may select people who are not actually true representatives of the target population's communities. 3. Representatives may abuse their power if social structures are inequitable or broken ("gate keepers"). 4. Representatives may not give due consideration to age, gender and diversity when subsequently distributing the NFIs to the target population. 5. Since the target population is not registered, some households may receive more NFIs than what they are entitled to.

Mitigation measures	1. Request for a distribution list from the representatives. 2. Protection personnel gain adequate knowledge of the social structures and power relations within the target population. 3. Ensure there is an effective two-way feedback and complaints mechanism in place for the target population. 4. Undertake spot checks when representatives distribute the NFIs. 5. Conduct a PDM that samples individuals/households with different age, gender and diversity characteristics.

Distribution to individuals and/or heads of households from the target population		
Appropriate contexts	Settlements and camps. Urban.	
Applicable populations	All forcibly displaced and stateless persons who are registered.	All forcibly displaced and stateless persons who are unregistered.
Advantages	Reduced risk of unequal distribution or duplication of assistance. Can record assistance in case management software.	No need for registration data for the target population.
	Control over the number of people assisted. May undermine abusive community-level power relations and leadership. Easy to monitor directly. Possibility for protection staff to be present and consult the target population. Useful in dealing with unstructured populations (no leaders, or social structure no longer in place).	
Risks	Delay in NFIs reaching intended recipients due to long and resource-intensive distribution process.	Duplicate assistance to one individual/household.

Mitigation measures	Ensure adequate human and material resources on site to conduct a smooth distribution. The distribution site needs a clear distribution flow with an entry, waiting area, reception area, distribution area and a separate exit.	Create a system of unique identification for each household (e.g. numbered wristbands or tokens) or use existing ration cards. To avoid real households separating (to obtain more NFIs), seek guidance from community leaders/ other key informants on household compositions. Conduct a PDM that samples individuals/households with different age, gender and diversity characteristics.

d) Distribution locations:

Location	Appropriate contexts
Ad-hoc temporary site with NFIs distributed from the back of the delivery truck	Cross-border. Transitory situation (populations on the move).
Ad-hoc temporary site with temporary structures (e.g. rub halls, tents)	Near an international border. Transitory situation. Remote/rural areas.
Transit / Reception Centre	Near an international border. Settlements and camps.
Distribution Centre	Settlements and camps.
Community Centre	Urban. Settlements and camps.

e) Additional Tips:

Emergency Assessment – NARE, MIRA

- Begin by reviewing secondary data sources, such as other assessments and reports, to understand the context and identify gaps in information related to the assessment objectives.
- Consider using a mixed methods approach that combines key informant interviews, direct observation, household interviews and focus group discussions.
- Assessment findings should be able to answer the following questions:
    1. What are the immediate priorities (considering the physical and psychological state of the displaced population, climate and seasonal changes)?
    2. What resources and items do people already possess?
    3. What are people’s preferences? And what cultural norms and practices are they accustomed to?
    4. Which types of assistance, whether in-kind or cash-based, would genuinely provide

meaningful help?

5. How do people prefer to receive assistance (in kind/ cash)?

- Perform a rapid assessment of the local market and its potential to support monetized NFI assistance to the target population.
  - Identify potential risks related to the NFIs and associated mitigation measures (e.g. a break in the supply chain could be mitigated by prepositioning contingency stock)
  - Identify whether the targeting of assistance is appropriate, and criteria for the prioritization of assistance if necessary.
  - Capture age, gender and diversity disaggregated data to the extent feasible (e.g. as estimations if the assessment is conducted through key informant interviews or observations).
  - Ensure the assessment team are aware of the correct referral pathways for protection cases, if already in place. Always secure informed consent when making referrals.
  - Include GBV specialized personnel in the assessment team or at least coordinate with GBV actors prior to the assessment. Ensure that non-protection members of the assessment team have a basic knowledge of how to refer GBV cases.
  - Coordinate the assessment with other actors and share findings to promote collaboration and prevent any duplication of efforts.

Planning the distribution

- Develop the distribution plan in consultation with other actors to avoid organizing several different distributions/activities on the same day for the same target population.
- Visit the distribution site in advance of the distribution (if possible) to ensure it is accessible, safe and secure.
- Set a realistic distribution target per day, based on the daylight working hours and logistical constraints (i.e. transportation of items, preparation of kits).
- Do not postpone the start of a distribution if there are delays or shortfalls in procurement. Distribute “partial NFI kits” and use a phased approach where the most vulnerable people at high risk are prioritised first. Once the missing items arrive, plan a second round of distributions to make up the “complete NFI kit”.
- If applicable and feasible, organize the NFI distributions at different sites to occur on the same day(s) to limit fraud (i.e. people moving from one distribution site to the next to receive several kits).
- Plan to begin the distribution early in the morning to limit the waiting time.
- Consider the target population’s habits and potential need to organise separate distributions for persons at heightened risks (e.g. due to diversity) or with mobility impediments.
- The target population needs to be able to carry the NFIs back to their shelters/accommodation so it may be necessary to break down the NFI kit into manageable/portable smaller kits (e.g. by dividing the kit into 4 packages and utilizing tokens to allow people to return several times to pick up their missing items).

Information campaign

- During the rapid needs assessment, identify the preferred means for the target population to receive information (e.g. social media, radio, community leaders, leaflets etc.).
- Clearly explain the eligibility criteria and distribution entitlement scale for the NFI kits, especially if different population groups are qualified for different assistance at the same distribution site. Use simple language and, if necessary, incorporate visuals in the campaign.
- Avoid informing the target population of the date and time of the distribution until the minimum required NFIs have arrived in stock.
- Some NFIs need to be distributed with instructions for use – e.g. mosquito nets, hygiene kits and solar lanterns. UNHCR or partner personnel should be available during the distribution to provide the instructions and answer any questions. Alternatively, instructional posters can be put on display at the distribution site.
- Make use of a range of communication channels, including community leaders (if a stable social structure is in place).
- Explain how the target population can report any concerns about the distribution and their treatment by the distribution team through feedback and complaints mechanisms.
- Keep people at the end of the queue well informed so there is no fear that when their turn comes there won't be any NFIs left.

Avoid tensions between different population groups

- If there are other agencies distributing their own NFIs to the same displaced population, ensure a harmonized approach to the distribution entitlement scale and average household size through an inter-agency coordination mechanism (sector or cluster).
- If the quality of NFIs between different agencies differs, agree at an inter-agency level on compensating the recipients of the poorer quality items by providing them with extra supplies (e.g. one household receives 2 poorer quality plastic tarpaulins instead of 1 good quality plastic tarpaulin).
- Ensure the NFI needs of the host/neighbouring communities are included in the distribution plan, subject to available funding.

When NFI needs exceed UNHCR's capacity

- Target the most vulnerable populations (as identified during the rapid assessment and in coordination with protection and with respected community leaders) in the most affected areas.
- If other agencies are present and active in NFI support, coordinate distributions and selection criteria with them.
- If no other agencies are present, lobby donors and international actors for the mobilization of external humanitarian support amongst relevant stakeholders.
- Continuously reassess the situation to ensure that the most vulnerable have not been overlooked.

Distribution to unregistered populations

- If the displaced population is relatively small, request that they organize themselves into

groups of households and compile a distribution list for each group, identifying the most vulnerable households to be served first according to the applicable protection criteria. The NFI distribution would use these household distribution lists, and each group would arrive in turn at the distribution site (i.e. not all at once). The person who prepared the list should be present at the distribution to help the team to check the recipients and prioritize the most vulnerable households.
- If the displaced population is large, distributions are not feasible at the household level and representatives should be identified to receive the NFIs.
- To avoid the risk of fraud and "recyclers", consider marking NFI recipients with indelible ink on one of their fingers at the exit from the site.

Distribution team (when UNHCR or funded partners distribute to target population)

- As a minimum for each distribution site, the team should comprise the following functions;
  - team leader (holds overall accountability for a successful NFI distribution)
  - offload/onload NFIs and kit assemblage (if applicable)
  - registration / ID verification
  - distribution
  - translator (if applicable)
  - crowd control and fraud prevention
  - security officer (responsible for overall security of the site and crowd control personnel)
  - protection personnel for monitoring, consultation and referrals (including GBV)
  - management of two-way feedback and complaints at help desk
  - management of litigations (in case households/individuals cannot be verified against the distribution list)
  - logistics (driver, storage manager)

NB: The number of personnel per function will depend on the distribution site's capacity for accommodating the target population. For example, if the distribution site can hold 100 people (either waiting for or receiving the NFIs), there should be at least 4 crowd control personnel.

- Ensure gender balance within the distribution team.
- Invite volunteers from the displaced population and host/neighbouring communities to assist with the NFI distribution – e.g. crowd control, carrying kits for recipients who have specific needs (e.g. persons with disabilities, older persons, sick). Ensure to provide compensation for the volunteers' efforts by either providing them with meals during the day(s) of distribution, cash or other appropriate remuneration.
- For effectiveness and safety, each function within the distribution team could have a checklist of equipment that is required for their role, and this would be verified at the start of each day of distribution. Equipment may include a microphone, security tape etc.

Distribution site (when UNHCR or funded partners distribute to target population)

Select the site in consultation with relevant authorities, host/neighbouring community members and the displaced population.

- Locate the site in the open, away from crowded areas such as markets, schools or healthcare facilities, and not on a busy road or narrow street.
- Avoid sites that are prone to natural hazards and “uncomfortable” – i.e. exposed to the elements, depending on the climate/season (e.g. no shade in summer, exposed to strong winds in winter) or insect-infected.
- A flat and unobstructed area will enable an overall view of the site in order to quickly detect any signs of malfunction during the distribution.
- Ensure the site is physically accessible for people in wheelchairs or other mobility constraints.
- The site should be big enough for the following components:

1. space for delivery trucks to offload/onload NFIs
2. one entrance
3. waiting area for target population (protected from the elements)
4. reception area (where target population is verified against the distribution list or form of unique ID)
5. distribution area (where people receive the NFIs)
6. litigation desk (in a separated, confidential area)
7. one exit
8. at least one emergency exit
9. gender-segregated latrines and water sources for the target population and separate ones for the distribution team (if feasible)
10. lockable storage for NFIs and equipment (if feasible and if distribution takes more than 1 day).

- Enclose the site by a fence and use partitions to separate the different areas (i.e. waiting area, reception area, distribution area).

<u>Renewable items</u>

- Some NFIs are renewable (e.g. soap, sanitary cloth, fuel) and need to be replaced regularly, requiring a routine distribution.
- Ensure that the first emergency NFI kit contains a supply of renewable items for at least 1 month.
- If the market conditions are favourable and a cash feasibility study has been conducted, consider transitioning the renewable items to cash-based support.

<u>Onsite monitoring during distribution</u>

- Make a check on people leaving the site as to whether they were included in the distribution list and what they received in terms of NFIs. The frequency of these spot checks will depend on the total number of people moving through the site in one day and the distribution team’s capacity.

<u>Post-distribution monitoring</u>

- Decide on either household level surveys, key informant interviews, focus group discussions or a combination of all 3 modalities.
- The gender of the PDM enumerator should be the same as that of the respondent.

- Consider adding some key PDM questions to regular protection monitoring if there is limited capacity to undertake a full PDM exercise.
- Interview more people from sub-groups of concern and aim for a proportional number of respondents from these sub-groups.
- PDMs can be used to evaluate the NFI recipients' current situation and level of vulnerability, verifying if they are still eligible for future assistance.
- When conducting household level surveys, observe what items are available in the house and their condition, compared to what was distributed.
- Check the local markets to ascertain if any of the NFIs distributed are being sold.

مرحلة ما بعد الطوارئ

- Plan and prepare for the post emergency phase from the beginning of the emergency.
- Consider how to avoid creating dependency for forcibly displaced and stateless persons on NFI assistance from UNHCR and/or other humanitarian actors.
- See "Renewable items" above.

Checklist: Distribution preparations

- **1. Know the context and stakeholders:**
  - What other actors (including local authorities) can temporarily store, provide and/or distribute NFIs?
  - Where can they distribute NFIs?
  - What NFIs can they provide?
  - Where can they safely store NFIs and what is their storage capacity?
  - Can NFIs of adequate quality be sourced on the local market?
  - Is there an inter-agency coordination mechanism in place for NFIs?
- **2. Know the target population:**
  - Who is actually in need of NFIs within the displaced population?
  - Are there members of the host/neighbouring communities also in need of NFIs?
  - How many individuals/households in total (even approximate) are in need of NFIs?
  - Is the target population registered?
  - What are the age, gender and diversity profiles of the target population?
  - Are there people with specific needs that will require 'non-standard' NFIs?
- **3. Know what NFIs to distribute:**
  - Is the target population on the move/in transit?

- Does the target population possess and/or have access to any standard NFIs prior to distribution?
- What are the cultural preferences for NFIs?
- What NFIs are in stock in country?
- What NFIs are already in the pipeline?

- **4. Know how many NFIs to source/procure:**

  - How many NFIs of adequate quality are available in the local market?
  - How many NFIs need to be procured internally from global stockpiles or externally from local and/or international suppliers (on top of current and pipeline stocks)?
  - Could there be any disruptions to the supply chain that need to be factored into the calculation?
  - How many NFIs should be procured and set aside for contingency stock?
  - What is the warehouse/storage capacity for new and existing NFI stock?

- **5. Know how many NFIs to distribute:**

  - What is the distribution entitlement scale for the target population?
  - What items are required at the household and individual levels?

- **6. Know to whom to distribute the NFIs:**

  - Will the NFIs be distributed to individuals, households or community representatives? Alternatively, will the NFIs be handed over to local authorities for their subsequent distribution to the target population?
  - How will NFIs be distributed for persons with reduced mobility?

- **7. Know where to carry out the distribution:**

  - Can a safe, secure and accessible location be identified?
  - Is there adequate access for the delivery transport?
  - Is there sufficient space for the safe offloading and distribution of NFIs?

- **8. Know when to carry out the distribution:**

  - Has a date(s) and time(s) been set for the distribution which suits the NFI recipients and aligns with site access and security parameters?
  - Is there an information campaign for the target population?

- **9. Know the impact of the distribution:**

  - Did the NFIs reach the intended final recipients?

- Were NFIs used for their intended purpose?
- Are the recipients still in possession of the NFIs? If not, how have they disposed of the NFIs and why?
- Are any of the NFIs that were distributed being sold on the local markets?

4. المعايير

Distribution site

One distribution site should handle no more than 20,000 individuals (e.g. if the average household size is 5 people, approximately 4,000 - 5,000 people would attend the distribution site).

The site should be no greater than 5km from where the target population are accommodated.

Post-distribution monitoring

A PDM is conducted between 2 weeks and 2 months after the distribution.

Sample sizes:

- 15% of the population for distributions to 200 households or fewer.

- 10% of the population for distributions to between 200 and 750 households.

- 5% of the population for distributions to more than 750 households.

Core output indicator

Number of people who received non-food items.

المرافق

Tip sheet on applying the UNHCR AGD Policy to persons with disabilities.pdf

5. الروابط

UNHCR/OG/2021/04/Rev.1 Operational Guidelines on Non-Food Item Management (acce... UNHCR Risk Management Tool: Management of Non-Food Items (accessible to UNHCR s... MSF Non-Food Items Distribution: Emergencies IDPs/Refugees and Natural Disasters WFP Emergency Field Operations Pocketbook The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian... Please read the connected entry "Requesting CRI from UNHCR's Global Stockpiles" Camp Management Toolkit

6. جهات الاتصال الرئيسية

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