

Before Distribution

In the days before the distribution, implementing organisations should think about how they will set-up and manage the distribution in a manner that is effective, efficient, safe, and respectful of the needs of beneficiaries.

Approach

The decisions made regarding the distribution approach should take into consideration the information provided by the assessments about needs and size of beneficiary population, including: the types of beneficiaries being served, the number of beneficiaries being served, the existing coordination and community leadership structures, the population literacy level and the security and access situations in the area.

Two questions arise when deciding the system to be implemented:

- How much responsibility is appropriate/efficient/worthy to give to the beneficiaries themselves?
- What kind of resources (i.e., time, space, staff, financial resources) are available to set up and run the system?

Another key aspect to consider when deciding the approach and setting up a sound distribution system is the access.

Access includes a variety of considerations including how individuals are informed about the distribution, how they will get to the distribution site, how they will transport the aid back to their homes, whether they will feel secure getting to and moving within the site, and whether they know how to use the aid provided. A critical element of ensuring access is the dissemination of information. Beneficiaries must be continuously and directly informed, not just through community leaders, about the distribution process and their entitlements as recipients of humanitarian aid.

Sites should also be established in a way that minimises the number of people who are attending a distribution at any one point, as this can be a critical element of crowd control and in ensuring equitable access to humanitarian aid. One way of avoiding large crowds is to call different communities on different days, while another way is to create multiple distribution points to be managed simultaneously. An organisation's decision on how to organize a distribution should be based on a variety of factors as detailed below:

	Few distribution points	Many distribution points
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need less staff.• Less infrastructure, sites, distribution structures, roads.• Less transport required for distribution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fewer crowd control problems.• Easier access for women.• Shorter journeys home.• Beneficiaries can see the distribution taking place.• Special arrangements easier.

	Few distribution points	Many distribution points
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer journeys to the households. • Potential crowd problems. • Difficult for beneficiaries to see the distribution. • Difficult access for weaker groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More staff and transportation needed. • More structures, roads, access, cleared sites needed for distribution.

Source: UNHCR

Location

A range of factors will determine the location and number of distributions centres. They include the number of refugees and the number at each site, their locations and the distance between each location, and the availability and location of resources such as storage sites.

As a general rule, it is best to have the distribution points as close to the beneficiaries as possible. For dispersed populations, beneficiaries should not have to travel more than 5 kilometres at a time, however terrain, conditions and insecurity may require that distribution points are established less than 5km. If it is not possible to locate the centre within walking distance, arrangements should be made to transport refugees to and from the centre. In selecting distribution points, factors affecting vulnerable people's physical access should be taken into consideration, such physical security of women who may be threatened, if beneficiaries need to pass near a military/police camp, the ability of disabled people to travel long distances, the inability to travel in the dark. Local tensions between ethnic or religious groups should also be considered when identifying which groups will receive aid in which locations.

The selected location must fulfil some conditions to facilitate the proper set up of the distribution. Distribution sites must be:

- Accessible for trucks or other vehicles used for transporting distributed items.
- Not overly exposed to wind or sun.
- As much as possible free from insects and other vectors.
- Not be prone to flooding.
- Easy to secure and evacuate if needed.
- Clearly marked in the appropriate language.
- Be free from debris or other harmful items.

Ideally, distribution points should be located far away from crowded areas such as markets or hospitals, in enclosed areas such as schoolyards that enable the distribution team to control entry and exit, and avoid over-crowding. Distribution teams can also create their own enclosed sites with stakes and rope or other local materials, in which aid agencies may have to invest in additional crowd-control staff to ensure order within the site. Distribution points should never be in the vicinity of military barracks or facilities, nor should they be in locations that force beneficiaries to travel to or through highly militarised areas.

Organising Distribution Sites

Distribution sites must be constructed in such a way that distributions and the collection of commodities can be carried out safely, efficiently and in an orderly way. UNHCR recommends at least one distribution site per 20,000 individuals and two distribution staff per 1,000 beneficiaries, not including monitors or security staff.

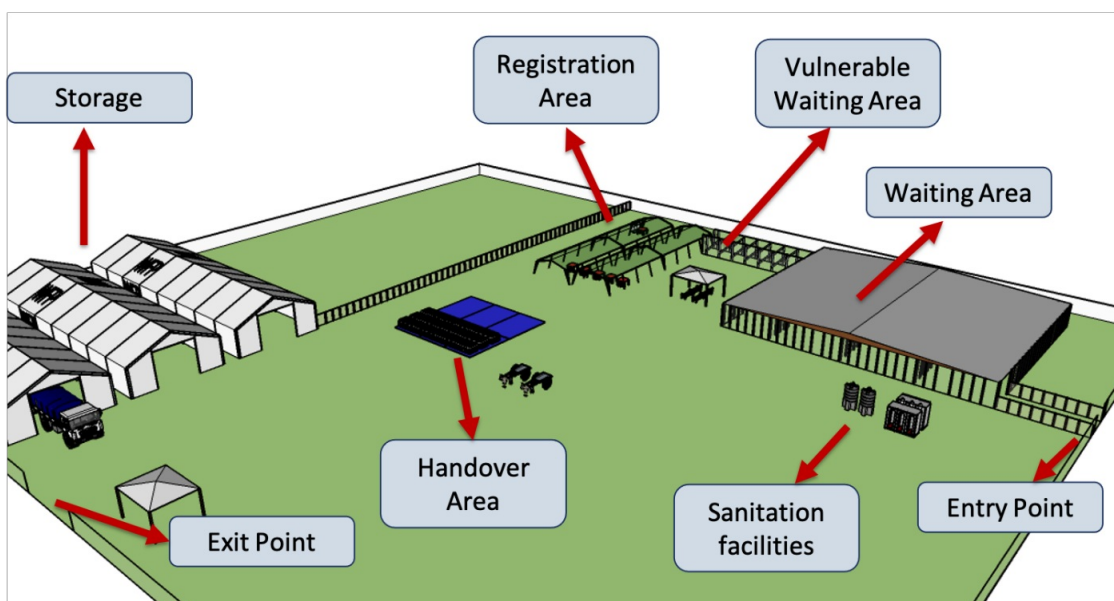
In general, distribution sites should be:

- Secure enough to ensure that items are not stolen or misappropriated.
- Near to water points and constructed with separate latrines for men and women.
- Big enough for on-site commodity storage and shelter for queuing during delays or rain.
- Near to rest facilities for distribution workers.
- Constructed near to vegetation or trees, which provide shade and act as windbreaks.
- Provided with chairs or benches for persons unable to stand in line.
- Safe for women and children.

Site Layout

The lay out composition of a distribution site will depend on factors including the available terrain, the weather forecasted for the distribution day, the distribution system, the size of the affected population, the available permanent structures. Every distribution site must have:

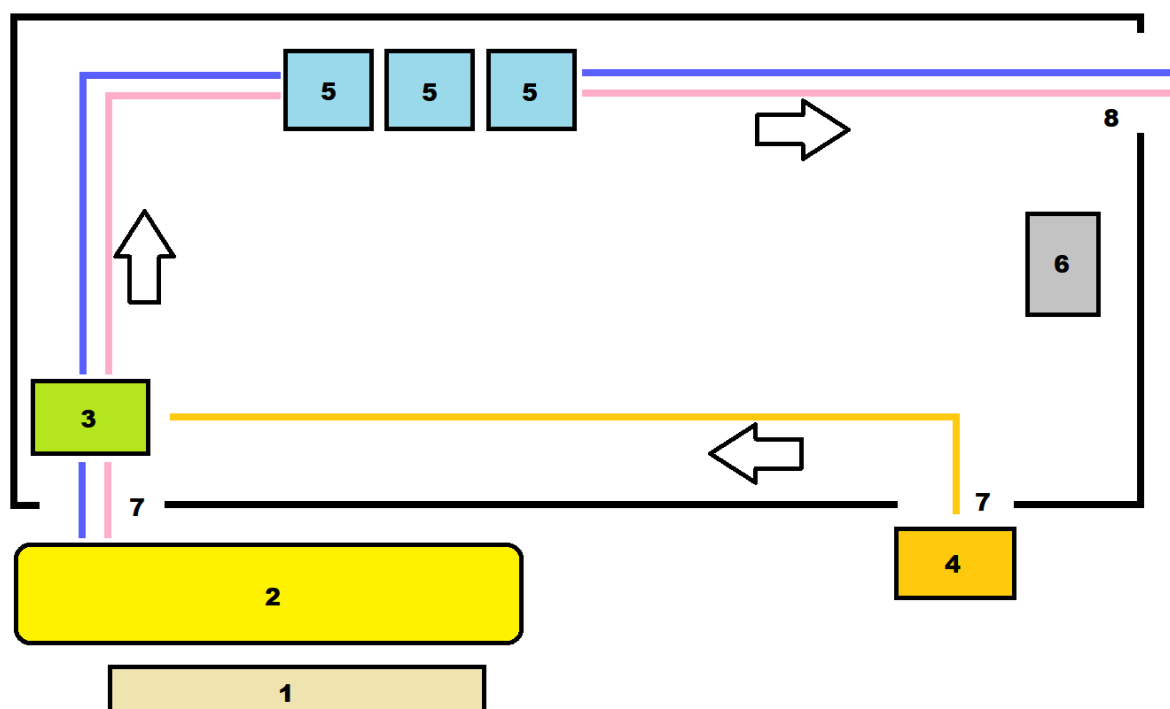
- Separate entry and exit points.
- A waiting area (*a place in which people can wait before being called for distribution*).
- A separate entrance and waiting area for vulnerable and PSN cases, assuring a protection presence to help identify them and provide referrals.
- A registration area.
- A handover area where people receive items.
- A storage area for the commodities and equipment (*permanent buildings, tent, lorry or clearly marked open space*).
- Staff facilities: latrines and source of water, but also a rest area for a 10-minute break away from the crowd and sheltered from sun or cold.
- Population facilities: latrines, water, covered resting space.
- The presence of a complaints desk, if this is the chosen method for dealing with complaints.



Some of the main characteristics include:

- A clearly delineated distribution space.
- Different lines for men and women if needed and when culturally appropriate.
- A simple structure that facilitates the flow of beneficiaries through the distribution point; progressively organise people into single lines.
- The registration stage can be used to organise the beneficiaries according to the supply types (e.g., grouping different family sizes).
- A one-way flow of beneficiaries: avoid flows of people that overlap or the need to have people moving against the natural flow of distribution.
- Clear space between where people are waiting and the stacks of commodities for distribution.
- The waiting and registration area should be both shaded and have the presence of bathroom facilities in case beneficiaries have to wait for extended periods of time. Ideally there should be sufficient latrines for the crowd, but this is not practical in view of the large numbers of people assembled on the site. A rapid distribution will help offset the limited shade or facilities, as well as preventing beneficiaries from having to wait excessively long.
- It is important to provide a water source, especially in hot weather.

A general layout might look like:



1. Facilities

7. Entry Points

2. Beneficiary Waiting Area

8. Exit Points

3. Registration Area

9. Male Line

4. People With Special Needs (PSN) Protection Desk

10. Female Line

5. NFI Distribution Area

11. PSN Line

6. Complaints Desk

People with Specific Needs (PSN)

An extra effort must be made to assure the distribution is accessible for all beneficiaries and

that any potential special needs are covered. Beneficiaries with special needs may include older people, small children, those with impaired mobility, or breastfeeding mothers among others that could require any other special assistance or at risk.

Some measures can be implemented to assure that special support is provided without marginalising or undermining beneficiaries:

- Remove physical barriers.
- Prepare fast track queues and dedicated waiting areas.
- Train the staff and given resources to assist PSN.
- Facilitate transportation of heavy or cumbersome items from the distribution site back to individual homes with wheelbarrows, donkey carts, or community support groups.

Distribution area with pull carts to assist PSN reach their home location:

Distribution Teams

The size of a distribution team should be linked to the size of the distribution. Generally, the larger the distribution, the larger the team. At a bare minimum, distribution teams should contain the following:

- A team leader, who will be the primary focal point for communications with community leaders and beneficiaries.
- A logistics focal point to deal with offloading, counting of items, temporary storage, and arrangement of kits.
- A security focal point who is responsible for monitoring the security situation and making decisions, in consultation with the team where possible, on the evacuation of staff and/or abandonment of supplies.
- A complaints focal point to deal with issues on-site as they arise.
- A protection focal point, if possible, to assist in identifying vulnerable cases, facilitating their movement through the distribution point, and referring people for additional services as needed.

The rest of the team will usually be comprised of locally hired individuals who can fill the following roles:

- Translators.
- Crowd controllers.
- Enumerators to support check-in.
- Demonstrators (if necessary, to demonstrate the usage of a particular commodity).
- Off loaders/kit packagers.
- Security, as needed.

All distribution staff should be visible to both other staff and beneficiaries by wearing hats, vests, or other visibility materials, and be provided with the any equipment needed to accomplish his/her work.

Teams should be made up of both genders and be sensitive to the political context by trained and sensitised as well as informed and committed with applicable codes of conduct and protection measures.

The handover of food or commodities is a highly sensitive moment, especially if it is not well managed. Staff must be familiar with the general distribution organisation and understand his/her role, be able to answer questions or how to redirect them, and be instructed to know what to do in case of running problems or major incidents. The staff working on the front line

or dealing directly with beneficiaries must receive specific training.

Pre-Positioning Supplies

Sufficient commodities for the distribution ideally should be pre-positioned in the distribution enclosure the day before distribution. The pre-positioned quantities are based on prior calculations based on the number of beneficiaries to be served and the ration agreed upon. Up to 5% extra commodities should be pre-positioned to allow for damages, mis counting or additional beneficiaries.

Communicating with Beneficiaries and Host Communities

Providing the intended beneficiary population with full information before distribution Is the key to a successful, problem-free distribution.

The distributing organisation is responsible to duly inform recipient on the basis on what, when, where and how items will be distributed, and what criteria determines who will obtain items. The rationale employed will be different in the first phases of a rapid onset emergency than it will in longer protracted crisis. The key for any agency is to find the best approach to reach the affected population assuring that every vulnerable individual have as much accurate information as possible about the distribution.

Pre-distribution announcements should:

- Reach out to all different groups of the population using multiple channels of communication.
- Particularly involve women and the distribution committees (if already in place) in order to avoid information going out only through the community leaders, who might have their own political agenda.
- Use different methodologies and means such as meetings with groups of beneficiaries (including those at risk), posters and picture messages, information boards, radio, megaphone and others.
- Use the local language and reach out also to those who are non-literate.
- Allow them to fully understand the messages and give feedback.

During an information campaign, it is needed to indicate clearly:

- Distribution is free of charge.
- How refugees can report any abuses by the staff who manage distributions.
- Who will receive the commodities that are to be distributed, and selection criteria (if relevant).
- What items refugees are entitled to receive (quality and quantity).
- When distributions will occur (date and time).
- The location of distribution centres and the areas (populations) that each will cover.
- How distributions will be organised and how those who receive distributions should behave.
- The purpose and use of the items distributed (to avoid misuse or undesired effects).
- When future distributions are planned, and their frequency, so that refugees can plan ahead.

The Day Before the Distribution

Prior to the launch of the distribution, the team needs to ensure that all structures, commodities and equipment are in place and that operating procedures are clear; this can help

to expedite the distribution process and reduce the chances of disorder or problems at the site.

The team leader must ensure that everyone involved in the distribution knows their role, what is expected from them, and have enough knowledge about the exercise itself. A briefing to the core team is mandatory, and detailed briefings should be given to specific staff, such as those persons involved with crowd control, registration team, or complaint mechanism.

The Shelter Cluster has developed a check list as a guide:

Checklist for the Day Before the Distribution

- The team leader should brief the core distribution team on the following:
 - The number and type of items to be distributed per household.
 - Each team members' specific role during the distribution.
 - The distribution process (a walk-through of the site).
 - The start and end times each day, as well as any breaks (i.e. lunch), as agreed beforehand.
 - The complaints mechanism.
 - How issues or concerns should be raised throughout the day.
 - Means for feedback on the process; e.g. evening meetings to discuss how the distribution is going, any issues, gaps, etc.
 - Ensure organisers have the necessary enrolment lists for the first day of the distribution.
 - Ensure that all team members have functional communications equipment (VHF radio, mobile phones, etc.), and that all team members know how to reach each other.
 - Ensure that all needed local staff including daily labour have been identified and are aware of responsibilities and start/end times each day.
 - Confirm that the beneficiaries have been notified of the distribution, as per the plan.
 - If possible, pre-position all supplies in the right quantities at the distribution site (or nearby); the distribution organisation may need to hire security to watch the items overnight.
 - Have the following items ready for the distribution (as needed):
 - Drinkable water for the distribution team
 - First Aid Kit
 - Ink pad
 - Cutter/knives (for stock)
 - Megaphone (if needed)
 - Pens
 - Masking tape/extra rope
 - Flag or visibility materials, if available
 - Vests or arm bands for casual workers
 - Empty enrolment forms, if applicable
 - A hole punch
 - Table and chairs for staff and vulnerable people
 - If applicable, ensure that vehicles are filled with fuel and in good working order.
 - If applicable, ensure that the equipment above has been loaded into the vehicles.
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Adapted from Shelter Cluster, Guidelines for the distribution of Shelter/NFI kits