



Non Food Items Distribution

EMERGENCIES IDPs/REFUGEES
and
NATURAL DISASTERS



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and
NATURAL DISASTERS

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Editor

Sonia Peyrassol

In collaboration with

Pierre Boulet Desbareau
Marc Delcorps
Philippe Maillot
Jérôme Michon
Vikki Stienen
Robin Vincent-Smith

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INTRO

This pocket guide, based on the model of a "quick start manual", is part of a series covering activities to be implemented in the first phase of an emergency (0 to 3 months).

It has the advantage of being short, simple and light (in your pocket)... and thus does not contain full details.... these you can find in the various guidelines quoted in this guide.

Have you consulted these guidelines and still do not have the information you are looking for ? Do not hesitate to ask advice from your field coordinator and/or medical or technical coordinator. (depending on the type of information).

There are technical sheets linked to this pocket guide. These technical sheets will facilitate the implementation of the activities. They are available on the CD-Emergency

On the CD you will also find a library. Most books and documents cited in the chapter "References" are there!

Your Comments

...are more than welcome.

If you do not understand how to use one or other of the sheets... perhaps because a sheet is badly designed or because insufficient explanations are provided... your comments will help us to improve the tool.

You have been confronted with particular situations which led you to adapt the strategy; you have found tricks and easier methods, documents or comments which could enrich the next version of this CD. Do not hesitate to contact us so that we can share your experience with everyone else.

Contact address : sonia.peyrassol@msf.be

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THE PROVISION OF NON-FOOD ITEMS CONTRIBUTES TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 10 PRIORITIES OF THE EMERGENCY PHASE

Especially priorities 3 to 6:

- Water, hygiene and sanitation (*jerrycans, tablets for disinfection,...*)
 - Food (*Kitchen utensils,...*)
 - Shelter (*plastic sheeting, blankets,...*).
 - Health(*mosquito net, soap,...*)
-

General objective

- To contribute to the psychological and physical survival of the affected population by providing the means to preserve their health and ensure their welfare, safety and dignity

Specific objectives

- The people affected by the disaster have sufficient clothing, blankets and bedding to ensure their dignity, safety and well-being.
- Each disaster-affected household has access to sufficient soap and other items to ensure personal hygiene
- Each disaster-affected household has access to cooking utensils and to communal cooking facilities or a stove for the preparation and consumption of food
- Each disaster-affected household has access to a supply of fuel for cooking needs and to provide thermal comfort.
- Each disaster-affected household has access to appropriate means of providing sustainable artificial lighting to ensure personal security
- Each disaster-affected household responsible for the construction or maintenance and safe use of their shelter has access to the necessary tools and equipment

MSF Policy

- Wherever possible MSF will not be involved in NFI distribution, preferring to concentrate on medical activities, included in this will be mental health and water-hygiene-sanitation
- If there are no other organisations present and/or able to deal with this activity, MSF will take emergency measures while lobbying other institutions and international organisations (*UNHCR¹, UNICEF, ICRC², Federation of Red-Cross Societies,...*) to take the necessary measures.
- **If MSF is the only operational organisation or if the extent of the emergency requires it, MSF will assume partial or total responsibility for this activity**

¹ Material assistance for refugees/displaced persons is the mandate of the UNHCR. This agency will generally act by the intermediary of implementing organisations which it will finance. These implementing organisations can be national or international.

² The ICRC intervenes in all situations of armed conflict to ensure the protection of, and assistance to, victims of war. The Federation is competent in times of peace or natural disasters.

Attention

Too often we rely on other international organisations but, if as time goes and little is being done, we may finally decide to handle NFI distribution... unfortunately we would then arrive too late and would be unable adequately to meet the needs of the population.

Distribution of NFI should always be viewed as a potential activity at the beginning of any emergency and, unless we have absolute assurance from other organisations, **we must be prepared to intervene in this domain.**

WHAT ARE NON-FOOD ITEMS ?

1. Definition

« Non Food Items » means any non-food article, tool, utensil,..., which contributes to the physical and/or psychological health of populations affected by a significant deterioration in their environment which threatens their survival.

It is impossible to make an exhaustive list of Non Food Items. the list below covers the most common items.

- Shelter :
 - ready made shelter (*tents,...*),
 - material to build a shelter (*ex. plastic sheeting, rope,...*),
 - material to rehabilitate existing shelters (*ex. saw, nails, hammer,...*)
 - cleaning-up kit (*material to clean/clear existing shelters*)
- Bedding equipment
 - mosquito nets
 - bed linen and blanket
 - mats or mattress
 - bed,...
- Kitchen utensils
 - stove for cooking
 - jerrycan to carry/stock water
 - pots
 - plates and cutlery
 - glasses and cups
 - plastic basin,...
- Hygiene material
 - soap and shampoo
 - toothbrush and toothpaste
 - hand towel
 - soap for laundry
 - razor and shaving cream
 - comb, brush
 - sanitary towels and baby diapers
 - toilet paper
 - anal cleansing recipient (*in countries where toilet paper is not used*)
 - children's potties,....
- Clothes
- Heating and lighting equipment
 - stove for heating
 - fuel
 - oil lamp,...

→ Sheet n° 1 : Catalogue of the most common Non Food Items

2. Presentation

2.1. Standard Kits

Items subject to « mass distribution » are generally in the form of kits :

- Kit 100 families (*material to build 100 shelters for 100 families*)
- Cooking set (*kitchen utensils for 1 family*)
- Hygiene kit (*Hygiene products for 1 family for 1 month*),
- Etc...

The « **standard** » kits were developed based on past experience. A quantity of these kits is available in the emergency stock (*located in MSF-Supply-Brussels*) allowing a rapid response to an emergency (see p.11 : *How to obtain NFI*).

N.B. « Standard » kits are only standard within the same organisation. Therefore, although the majority of the organisations intervening in emergencies have "hygiene kits", these kits, although similar, are normally made up of different contents, depending on the organisation.

Advantages and disadvantages of the standard kits

Advantages	Disadvantages
Quick response : <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ready to use, no assembly needed- Pre-positioned (<i>locally, regionally or in international</i>)	Not always adapted to local customs <i>(People may find themselves with material they do not know how to use, and therefore the reason for distributing the articles is not covered)</i>
Quality guarantee <i>(the items have been subjected to a strict procedure including market survey, tender,...)</i>	Some articles may turn out to be culturally inappropriate <i>(Ex. most hygiene kits contain razors for men...to be removed if you have to assist Sikhs in the Punjab or elsewhere in India, since they may not cut either their hair or their beard !).</i>
	Some items are not essential, so people will sell them on the local market *

** Resale on the local market : is it really a problem ?*

After all refugees/IDPs are best placed to know what they need, and if by selling an item that for them is not essential they can purchase something more essential in their view, there is nothing wrong with that.... The only potential problem to be considered, is that local businesses can be upset as their market is flooded with goods dumped on the market by the original beneficiaries...however if this occurs on a large scale, we must accept that we made a huge mistake in our NFI distribution !!!

2.2. Kits assembled locally

Kits locally assembled are, as the name suggests, « manufactured » locally, which means for the mission a big job to identify the suppliers, assemble and pack. Their main advantage is that they can better meet the needs of the population taking into account current requirements and cultural habits.

→ Sheet n° 2 : « *Guide for local purchase and assembling kits locally* »

Advantages and disadvantages of kits locally assembled

Advantages	Disadvantages
Quick response : - Ready to use - Pre-positioned → If you have a good Eprep !	Time consuming : - Search for suppliers for the various items <i>(market survey, tender,...)</i> - Assemblage of the kits
More economical: no costs for international transport <i>(unless local purchase at the last minute !)</i> .	No guarantee of quality <i>Many countries where we work are swamped by the Chinese market !!! Some privileged countries have suppliers already accredited by MSF for some items (India, Kenya,...)</i>
Adapted to local customs <i>Beware: within the same country there may be significant differences in customs and practices</i>	No guarantee of quick supply in case of emergency <i>Local suppliers are often less solid or reliable than international companies; moreover, in case of an emergency, they are likely to be solicited by many NGOs</i>
	Often not possible to find all the items locally

2.3. Separated items

All the items can be ordered and distributed separately *(i.e. outside kit)* :

- To meet an urgent need before the kits are available *(e.g. blankets in a cold country)*,
- To meet a specific need *(e.g. mosquito nets during a malaria outbreak, soap during cholera outbreaks,...)*
- To meet the needs of vulnerable groups *(disabled, elderly,...)*
- To complete a distribution that was made by another organisation,
- etc,...

HOW TO OBTAIN NFI ?

1. International orders

An emergency stock is pre-positioned in MSF Supply ³ (*supply centre of MSF-OCB*). It contains the most often requested items, namely :

Items	Quantity
Basic NFI Kit	5.000
Cooking set	2.880
Mosquito nets	16.500
Blankets	5.000
Jerrycans 10 L	
Winterised family tents	250
Summer family tents	250
Plastic sheeting, tarpaulin, 4x6m	5.000
Plastic sheeting, roll	20

For details of the Basic NFI kit, see sheet n° 4 : "All about the Basic NFI Kit"

This stock is replenished when goods are taken out of stock. The quantities listed in the table below are therefore, in principle, always directly available. However when there are different emergencies in a same week, the availability of goods for a mission introducing a later request, will depend on the time for restocking.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Guarantee of rapid availability of the quantity as described in the table below (<i>except for several emergencies at the same time</i>)</p> <p>→ it allows rapid deployment in almost all situations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - major disasters which are beyond the capacity of the mission - emergencies occurring in missions that have no emergency preparedness plan including emergency stock and/or a local supply strategy - emergencies occurring in a country where we have no mission 	<p>Delay in delivery varies depending on the country and availability of cargo planes</p> <p>(<i>After a major crisis, all organisations will be simultaneously looking for cargo planes, which means it can sometimes take some time to find a plane</i>)</p> <hr/> <p>High transport cost (80.000 to 200.000 € and more...)</p> <p>(<i>However, in some cases the total price of the goods (including the transport) can be less than the local compilation of the kits, especially if they are assembled at the last minute, when the emergency occurs, because at this time the demand of this type of items is high and suppliers can substantially increase prices (law of demand and supply) and in addition assembling the kits will require considerable human resources.</i>)</p> <hr/> <p>Need to be able to import equipment</p> <hr/> <p>Need to be able to clear goods quickly</p>
Advantages of the standard kits (<i>see above</i>)	Disadvantages of the standard kits (<i>see above</i>)

³ N.B. Strategies for regional stocks pre-positioning (Dubai, Nairobi, Delhi,...) are being studied in inter-section.

2. Local purchase

According to the country in which you are present

- a number of items can be purchased locally because suppliers exist for these products
- all items have to be purchased locally because importing equipment is prohibited (e.g. *India*)

The purchase will be made :

- either when the emergency occurs
- or prior to the emergency, creating an Eprep stock (*emergency preparedness*)

2.1. Purchase when the emergency occurs

You need items :

- meeting well defined quality criteria
- in very large quantities
- and immediately !

For this reason your “shopping” must be done before the emergency occurs ! However, to buy when the emergency occurs is possible if, as part of emergency preparedness, you have identified suppliers for items you will have selected as necessary to respond to the emergency.

These suppliers will have to be able to :

- provide items that meet the criteria as defined in the quotation request or tender
- in the desired quantity
- within the agreed time (*e.g. 10.000 jerrycans within 48h, 10.000 additional within the following 48h, etc....*)

Advantages	Risks
No costs for renting, maintaining or storage of stocks.	If your supplier is not reliable, you can find yourself empty handed at the moment you need the NFI
No equipment is out of stock or deteriorates because, contrary to forecasts, there is no emergency	When the emergency occurs, the suppliers will be under a lot of pressure as all the organisations will want to purchase the same items, hence the risk that even a normally reliable supplier : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no longer has enough stock (<i>because he has made too many commitments to various organisations using his full capacity</i>) - is obliged to raise prices (<i>as he himself needs to find other supply sources to be able to respond to the exceptional demand</i>) - if he is out of stock he may try to sell you inferior quality goods
Savings on international transport (<i>and with these extra funds more NFI can be bought and thus more people assisted</i>)	Even a reliable supplier is not immune to market fluctuations, and if production is not sufficient to respond to needs he will not be able to fulfil his commitment.

Decreased delivery time	The reason for the emergency can also have effects on the supply sources of your supplier. <i>(i.e. Georgia 2008, influx of 100.000 displaced persons in the capital as a result of the war with Russia. All supply routes were blocked by the Russian army).</i>
Advantages of the kits locally manufactured (see above)	Disadvantages of the kits locally manufactured (see above)

2.2. Eprep stock

An emergency stock is useful in starting up an operation until more equipment can be sent to the field or purchased locally.

But to have an emergency stock also means :

- Renting a warehouse to store it
- Paying staff to manage and control the stock
- Wastage of unused material, due to heat, rodents, thieves,...
- Equipment obsolete or spoiled before it could be used

Before you set up this type of stock you have to assess the real needs and therefore answer the following questions :

1. To what kind of emergency will you be confronted and, to respond adequately to this emergency, what NFI will you have to distribute and for how many people ? *(N.B. These issues will be discussed during the exercise of emergency preparedness).*
2. What are the facilities/difficulties in importing material into your country of mission ? *(In some countries it is totally impossible to import equipment, in other countries to import is possible for some products and not for others, or the customs clearance procedure is long,...).*
3. What is the delivery time for transport from Brussels (MSF-Supply) to your country of mission ?
(N.B. the delivery time is different for a full-charter⁴ sent in emergency than for items sent via regular airlines).
4. What items can we find locally ? *(quality, quantity, price, delivery time).*
5. What are the chances of finding adequate stock *(acceptable cost, stock secured by both its location and its type of construction, stock free of environmental risks : excessive heat, flood,...)*
6. Last but not least, what is the response capacity of the team in place while waiting for backup *(no need to have a stock for 50.000 people if you can only respond adequately to the needs of 5.000 people) ?*

⁴ Full-charter : means a leased aircraft in its entirety by an organisation to meet a special need

Based on the answers to these questions you can decide whether you should have an emergency stock, for which items and in what quantities.

Example	
Type of emergency	Flood – High probability of occurrence
Population at risk	100.000, = 20.000 families
NFI needed	20.000 tarpaulins 20.000 jerrycans 20 L 20.000 hygiene kits 40.000 mosquito nets 40.000 blankets (at least) N.B. World vision has 20.000 cooking set in stock
Importation	OK
Clearance	OK : special procedure for direct removal in case of emergency
Delivery time for full-charter transport	5 days
Items available locally	Everything but impregnated mosquito nets of good quality
Quantities available within 48h	5.000 tarpaulins 5.000 jerrycans 5.000 hygiene kits (separated items, kits have to be manufactured by MSF) 10.000 blankets
	Replenishment possible for the same quantities in 5 days
Stock	OK : appropriate stock available (<i>access – volume – security</i>)
Responsiveness of the team in place	NFI distribution for 25.000 beneficiaries (= 5.000 families)
NFI requirements for 25.000 beneficiaries	5.000 tarpaulins 5.000 jerrycans 5.000 hygiene kits 10.000 blankets 10.000 mosquito nets
Conclusion	In principle, no need for an emergency stock, except for the mosquito nets. Indeed, the quantities available from the supplier (<i>which is, after checking with other organisations and verification of his physical stock is a reliable supplier</i>) are sufficient to allow the team in place to start to respond to the emergency. Then, one part of the items will be ordered locally and another part will come in full charter with the emergency support team. However, for security reasons we recommend you have a “small” emergency stock for 5.000 beneficiaries, in addition to the 10.000 mosquito nets (for 25.000 beneficiaries).

3. Other MSF sections

If several MSF sections are present in the country, several options are possible :

1. each section uses its stock
2. there is an agreement stating that a section can ask to use the stock of another section when needed, and in this case each section could « specialise » in one domain (e.g. *MSF/B : Cholera kit, MSF/F : Surgical kits, MSF/H : NFI kits, etc. ..*)
3. there is a common stock for emergencies

This should be discussed between sections during the emergency preparedness exercise.

Advantages for options 2 and 3	Risks linked to options 2 and 3
Eprep stock cost reduction for each section	If there is cholera everywhere at the same time : who will be entitled to use the cholera kit in the first place ? The fastest, cleverest, strongest or wickedest ?.... In any case this can create tensions between sections !!!
Minimise the amount of similar equipment and products in stock (<i>e.g. instead of having 1 cholera kit in each section, there will be only 1 in a central stock or in the stock of the section responsible for cholera</i>) and so less risk in being left with outdated products in stock because the emergency does not occur.	Agreements between sections are made by people... and the strength of these agreements is often dependent on the ties that bind those people (<i>bonds often made during a nice evening, around some drinks</i>)
	→ To avoid these risks it is important to have solid agreements between sections, agreements that have to be signed by representatives of the HQ of each section.

4. Other organisations

Frequently other organisations present in the country have stock but lack the capacity to distribute all or part of it. It is therefore useful to know the organisations and/or United Nations agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF,...) who have material in stock which can be lent (*in this case it will be reimbursed with our material upon arrival*) or donated under certain circumstances.

However, keep in mind that not all promises become real at the moment you make the demand. For this reason, you should :

- Check that it is not a virtual stock but that the NFI are really (physically) in stock. Indeed, many organisations have a very beautiful « contingency plan » (*equivalent of « emergency preparedness plan »*), but in fact it's a « virtual » one that will only happen if the funds are released .. often several weeks after the beginning of the emergency !
- Have a formal agreement signed by a real "head" of the organisation.

In general it is better not to rely on this option as a primary source of supply. But it can be considered as a complement to what we can obtain by our own means, whether to increase the number of beneficiaries of our programme or to respond to a temporary « weakness » of our own supply (*delivery time longer than expected, missing item from the supplier,...*).

DISTRIBUTION STRATEGIES

1. Options

Systematic distribution

- Immediate reaction based on previous experiences of this type of emergency without waiting for the results of an initial assessment
- Standard kits adapted to the type of emergency and the type of context
- Distributed to all the affected population (*within the limit of our capacity*)

Targeted distribution

- Reaction based on the results of an initial assessment
- Standard kits or separated items, adapted to needs not covered
- Distributed to the entire population or a part of the affected population

2. Factors influencing the choice

1. The type of emergency
2. Whether an initial assessment is possible prior to distribution
3. At which point do we intervene at the beginning of the emergency
4. The presence or not of other organisations with a real capacity to intervene

2.1. The type of emergency

- Event sudden and of high amplitude
 - *Natural disasters of high amplitude : Earthquake, Tsunami, Hurricane,..*
 - *Massive and sudden influx of refugees/IDPs*

→ **Systematic distribution**
- Event requesting quick prevention measures
 - *Outbreaks (e.g. malaria)*

→ **Systematic distribution**
- Event progressive and/or of low amplitude
 - *Natural disasters of low amplitude : slow or minor flooding,..*
 - *Progressive influx of refugees/IDPs*

→ **Targeted distribution**

2.2. Whether an initial assessment is possible prior to distribution

In theory we should distribute NFI after a comprehensive needs assessment. In practice we must sometimes begin NFI distribution before that condition is met :

- At the beginning of an emergency : sudden and of extreme severity :

People are left with absolutely nothing and are in urgent need of assistance. A complete evaluation would cost precious time regarding the survival of the affected people, and from experience we know what are the priorities in this kind of emergency without having to conduct an (in-depth) evaluation

- During outbreaks, especially malaria epidemics, effective prevention requires the timely distribution of Long Lasting Impregnated Mosquito Nets to the entire population at risk without waiting to determine who already has one (*unless it is clear that everybody already has one...*).
- In some cases the conditions under which the emergency occurs make early intervention necessary. (*ex. if the outside t° is 0°C , it is urgent to distribute blankets, even in the event of low amplitude emergency,...*).

Attention

This does not mean that we will not carry out any assessment at all, but that the first NFI distribution will not be dependent on the results of this evaluation. It will be based on the experience we have of this type of emergency.

2.3. At which point do we intervene at the beginning of the emergency

We must distinguish several phases in the emergency :

- Phase 1 : in the early hours/days/weeks of the emergency
- Phase 2 : in the following weeks/months

Indeed, the needs change over time :

- people develop coping mechanisms,
And no, they will not stay under a tree until we arrive, they will try to find ways and solutions for them and their families to stay alive. The rural population especially is probably better positioned to adapt themselves to primitive/precarious living conditions and they will construct huts or shelter, while finding wild leaves to eat...
- on the contrary, the situation has deteriorated through lack of assistance,
A relatively minor event can become a major disaster because the environment in which the refugees/IDPs have arrived does not allow them to ensure their survival (lack of water,...) or their security (host population hostile to these newcomers,...), or because climatic conditions are particularly adverse.
- while we were wondering whether or not to intervene.... other organisations have arrived !!!
- And in any case, once the emergency is over, it is time to think about stabilisation/reconstruction, phases that require another type of intervention.

2.4. The presence or absence of other organisations with a real capacity for intervention

As mentioned on p. 6 « MSF policy », we are not going to “fight” to distribute NFI !

If other organisations are present and have a real capacity for intervention (*i.e. not just a project that maybe will happen if they find funding, but NFIs in stock and human resources to organise the distribution*) we will coordinate with these organisations :

- Either they take care of everything and we do not intervene,
- Or they take over one or more regions and we concentrate on areas not covered,
- Or they distribute some items (*e.g. .hygiene kits*) and not others which we consider essential and which we will distribute.

WHEN TO DISTRIBUTE ?

1. Initial distribution

As soon as possible !

NFI are not an element of comfort but of physical and psychological survival. It is therefore important to distribute them as soon as possible. This requires a good emergency preparedness plan :

- We must know what we will distribute according to the type of emergency, the type of climate, cultural habits,...
See below : « What to distribute »
- We must have NFI in stock (*at international, regional or local level*), or have, locally, a list of reliable suppliers who can supply us quickly and in large quantities, and a local team to assemble and pack the material.
See p. 11 « Where to find the NFI ».
- We must have a distribution plan (*circuit, staff, equipment,...*) because a poorly organised distribution can quickly turn into a nightmare, risking the safety of staff and beneficiaries.
See p. 25 « The NFI distribution step by step ».

What to do if you have not received all the NFI ?

If all NFI cannot be provided at the same time (*because the supplier of one or more items cannot meet the deadline, because we cannot send all the full-charters at the same time, etc...*) we should :

- Either postpone distribution until you have enough for everyone,
- Or envisage several distributions (*first plastic sheeting and blankets, then hygiene kits e.g.*) rather than wait until all items are available and leave people without protection against the cold while you have tons of blankets in stock !
- Or select a target group (*e.g. children under 5 years*) and distribute only to this target group (*the rest of the population will receive blankets at another distribution*). In this case, to avoid frustrations and discontent, you will have taken care to explain to the population the reasons for your choice and that they will receive blankets during the next distribution.

2. Routine distribution for renewable items

Some items are renewable (*soap, shampoo, sanitary pads, fuel,...*) which must be replaced regularly.

- The frequency of routine distributions will vary depending on the content of the kits. We recommend you distribute kits containing renewable items for at least 1 month because distribution is an activity which requires considerable staff, time and energy, and in an emergency all these « products » are rare ! So avoid complicating your life by having to organise distributions every week !
- As a routine distribution involves only a few items that are not too heavy, it can be easily combined with a food distribution.

Other items may become worn or damaged in time. Some blankets, for example, will not withstand repeated washing, and a mosquito net or jerrycan with a hole in it is completely useless. You will need a reserve stock to replace worn out articles.

- The replacement of used items will not be made through distribution, but will be given on a case by case basis via the « home visitors⁵ » e.g.

⁵ Home visitors : persons of the community that are in charge of reporting all important events (birth, death,...) that take place in their community. Home visitors are generally in charge of a group of 500 to 1000 people

3. Distribution in special circumstances

In addition to the initial distribution and routine distributions, it may be necessary to organise distribution in special circumstances.

- There may be a sudden change in climate, a storm or a fire, looting by rebels of the material distributed,...or any other event.
- While carrying out a more in-depth assessment we may be able to identify vulnerable groups requiring special assistance (*elderly, disabled,...*)

4. Distribution during the stabilisation/reconstruction phase

After the emergency comes the time for stabilisation/reconstruction. Refugees/IDPs or persons affected by a natural disaster can indeed not live for months under a plastic sheet supported by a few pieces of wood. The emergency response measures need to be replaced by more permanent solutions

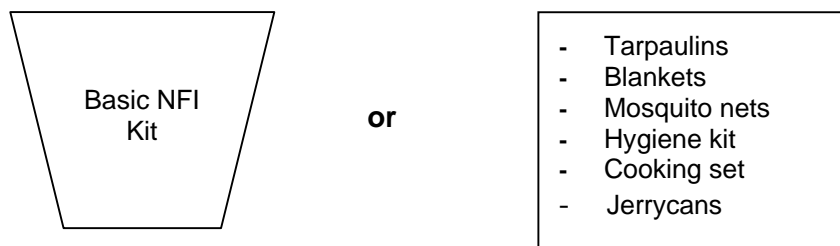
- Stabilisation :refugees/IDPs cannot return home and will have to live in camps for several months or years. In this case, we will have to distribute shelters adapted to the context and the climate.
→ see pocket guide « Shelter » and guideline « Transitional settlement : displaced population »
- Reconstruction : refugees/IDPs can return home but their homes have suffered major damage. In this case we suggest the distribution of items that can be used for the rehabilitation of their houses so that people can return to them. (*corrugated iron sheets, cement, carpenter kit,...*).

→ See sheet n°3 : Summary table of distribution strategies

WHAT TO DISTRIBUTE ?

1. Systematic distribution

During major disasters (*earthquake, tsunami,...*), it was decided to put NFI automatically in full-charters without waiting for the results of an initial assessment. This decision was based on our experience over the years. In this kind of disaster it is clear that a significant number of people have lost everything and are in urgent need of assistance with NFI. An initial assessment would only confirm this and delay assistance to people.



→ See sheet n°4 : All about the Basic NFI Ki”

2. Targeted distribution

In all other cases a NFI distribution will be based on the results of an initial assessment This assessment will help us determine:

- What are the priorities ?
- What do people already have ?
- What are people accustomed to ?
- What can we distribute that will really help ?

2.1. What are the priorities ?

Operational experience, knowledge of the context and observation of the refugees/IDPs’s living conditions should allow us to decide on priorities.

We will be particularly attentive to :

- Physical and psychological state of the affected population
In any case the people who have had to flee will be physically or psychologically affected, but some events are more traumatic than others (*famine, tsunami,...*). The more people are physically or psychologically affected by the events they have experienced, the more they will be vulnerable.
- Climate and seasons
What is the current climate and what can be expected in the coming weeks or months.
The goal being to prevent rather than to cure and not to have continuously to organise distributions. It is better to obtain weather forecasts for the area rather than wake up one morning with your feet in water !
- Environmental conditions
Presence of vectors or not (*mosquitoes source of malaria, dengue, Japanese encephalitis,...*)
Availability of sufficient vital products (*water, firewood,....*)

2.2. What do people already have ?.

- What they were able to take with them :

Depending on the circumstances to which the people have been exposed, they may have been able to take some personal belongings with them or not.

It should be noted that the rural population are often better organised than the urban population. The former, whenever possible, will take all their essential survival items : blankets, mats, kitchen utensils,... while the urban population will either not carry anything, hoping to receive assistance quickly, or carry what is most important in their eyes but which is not necessarily useful for their survival (e.g. of the Kuwaiti refugees, at the time of the first Gulf war, carried their television !).

- What they already received:

Frequently refugees/IDPs, if they are not too numerous, receive emergency first aid either from the local authorities, local organisations, or the host population. After major natural disasters (*earthquake, tsunami,...*) solidarity towards the affected population is often quite extensive.

- What they will receive soon:

If other organisations (*local or international*) are present, we must verify what they intend to distribute, in order not to duplicate the type of assistance offered. But make sure, as mentioned before, that their intentions are real and not virtual !

- Coping mechanisms of the population :

Depending on the circumstances of the catastrophe, the affected people will be in varying degrees of physical and/or psychological condition in reaction to their situation. We have seen refugees from rural areas who adapted very quickly to their new situation and began building themselves shelters, furniture,... with all that they could find on the spot (*wood, ropes made of lianas,...*).on the other hand, during earthquakes, we noticed that people were in states of extreme shock and practically unable to react for several weeks.

Attention, the « coping mechanisms » are sometimes used as an « alibi » not to intervene ! Whatever the situation, it is always necessary to carry out an assessment because appearances can be misleading and while one part of the population finds coping mechanisms, the most vulnerable groups are not able to cope.

2.3. What are people accustomed to in terms of housing, food, clothing, personal hygiene,...

Bear in mind that the refugees or displaced people are not necessarily a homogeneous group. There can be significant differences between them according to their upbringing, social status, ethnic or religious background,... Normally the rural population will have different needs and habits from the urban groups ; eating habits, clothing,...may also vary according to the ethnic or religious background,...

Moreover, refugees/IDPs, depending on their background, will have very different needs from what we consider essential. So, people used to sleeping on a mat on the floor will be disturbed and not necessarily happy to receive a bed. Similarly, do not distribute toothbrushes to people who have never seen them before. But be careful not to go to the other extreme by providing minimal assistance on the basis that these people are "culturally" accustomed to living under difficult conditions !

It should be noted that international organizations, including MSF, are especially prepared (in terms of available materials) to intervene in countries with hot climates and in rural contexts and to populations with relatively low living standards. They have trouble adapting when confronted with urban populations living in regions where winters are hard and in which living standards are comparable with ours.

2.4. What can we distribute that will really help ?

NFI distribution entails extensive human, logistic and financial resources, which is why we have to make choices taking these constraints into account.

Moreover, as the ideal solution is not always quickly available, we need to define what type of goods, which will really respond to the actual needs, we can distribute within a reasonable delay

As regards shelter, the ideal is obviously to have a « real » house, but this is not feasible in an emergency phase. And often, even tents cannot be distributed quickly because we never have sufficient in stock.... So what do we do ? Of course plastic sheeting and ropes are far from being the ideal solution. But if it rains and this is all that we can quickly distribute, it will help the population to protect themselves from the rain. In a second phase we may be able to distribute tents or material to repair their original houses...

2.5. How to avoid tensions between the different populations ?

It is to be avoided that assistance be the cause of tension between different population groups (*refugees amongst themselves and refugees/host population*)

A distribution of NFI can indeed create tensions between the refugees/IDPs when there are inequalities (*real or perceived*) in the assistance provided. This can particularly be the case if several organisations are involved in the distribution of NFI not offering services of the same quality (*during the earthquake in Pakistan in 2005 there were very big differences in quality of the tents distributed by the various organisations... and everyone coveted the winterized MSF tents!*)

What are the living conditions of the host population ? This question is also important because we have to avoid that assistance to the refugees/IDPs is such that they enjoy living conditions far superior to those of the host population, and this to avoid hostility, or even conflicts, between these two populations. This should not be the case if assistance is limited to meeting the basic needs for physical and psychological survival. But it can happen that refugee/IDP camps are installed in areas where the host population (*partially or completely*) is extremely poor, and that their essential needs are not met. In this case, it is necessary to ensure that the host population (*partially or totally*) is included in our list of beneficiaries.

→ see sheet 5 : "Check-list priority needs"

3. What we do not distribute

So far, MSF has never distributed :

- money,
- household appliances (*television, refrigerator,...*)
- vehicles (*bicycle, motorbike, car,...*)
- telecommunications (*phone,...*)
- high-tech equipment (*computers,...*)

The reasons seem obvious : these items are not essential to the physical and psychological survival.

But times are changing, and for more and more refugees/IDPs, a means of communication (*such as a pre-paid card for their mobile phones*) is important for their psychological well-being.

After the earthquake in Pakistan in 2005 many people had relatives overseas they wanted to call, not only for psychological assistance but also for material help. In Georgia, during the conflict with Russia in 2008, displaced people wanted to stay in contact with family members who had not fled, for their news but also to know if they could return to their village.

Information on the political developments may also be important, therefore the distribution of newspapers or the installation of a television in the collective centres may be useful for the refugees/IDPs.

Also MSF changes and adapts to circumstances. After the Tsunami in South East Asia in 2004, we had a programme of construction and distribution of boats to allow the fishermen to restart a "normal" life

We can never say « never » ! Even if there are policies, standards, etc... we should always be alert to listen to the beneficiaries and maintain the capacity to adapt to new situations....this is the policy of “flexibility”.

The issue of money distribution is also often on the agenda. Why indeed spend enormous sums to purchase, deliver and distribute goods when we could simply hand out money to refugees /IDPs who could then buy what they really need

Apart from the security problems that would be generated by the distribution of money, both for the organisations and the population, we should also consider the problem of access to supplies. It is, indeed, not sufficient to have money, you also have to be able to spend it ! And where would the refugees of Darfur, arriving in the desert of Chad be able to find tents, blankets, jerrycans and other essential items ? Moreover, even if there are traders in the area where the refugees/IDPs have settled, it is important to realise that they will soon double, triple or quadruple the price of the most requested items (*in Pakistan the price of a corrugated iron sheet soared as soon as NGOs had shown their interest in this product*)

→ Sheet n° 6 : Examples of Non Food Items distributed in previous emergencies

4. Problems related to specific items

Some items pose particular problems, especially clothing and means of lighting. Other items cannot be distributed without explaining to people how to use them, such as items for vector control, and water purification products.

4.1. Clothes.

In some circumstances it is essential to distribute clothes :

- When people have lost everything including their clothes (*earthquake, tsunami, cyclone*),
- When people were not able to take anything but the clothes they were wearing (*refugees that flee from conflict*)
- When clothes are ruined or wet (*floods*)
- When the weather conditions are extreme (*cold spell, heavy rains,...*)

Which clothes to choose?

For obvious logistical reasons, it is impossible to have all types of clothes and in all sizes, therefore you need to find items that can be useful for a range of people. In some hot countries where people wear loincloths, sarongs, saris, ... or other garments made of fabric wrapped around the body, it is not difficult to find a solution for everyone. On the other hand, in cold countries and/or countries where such outfits are "Western", the problem is much more complex and we have no standard solution!

Some comments :

- MSF is not normally involved in clothes distribution; exceptions are made for special circumstances, notably in situations of extreme cold (*e.g. distribution of quilted vests in Russia*). It is useful to note that a sari is included in the “Basic NFI” kit.
- In large-scale disasters emotionally affecting the general population (*earthquakes, tsunami, conflict Georgia-Russia ,...*) there is a spirit of solidarity and many people bring second-hand clothes. This assistance, although well intentioned, is difficult to manage. To be effective there should be teams to sort the clothes according to their condition, type, size, ... but in emergency situations no one can do that. This is why these garments are often finally abandoned.
- An essential need too often neglected is underwear for which we could more easily find a solution (*we could simply have underwear in 3 sizes – small, medium, large – and when people come to take their NFI they choose the size that suits them*).

4.2. Lighting

To provide a means of lighting is a necessity insofar as it allows the person not only to move in the night (*and thus prevent falls*) but above all to feel more secure. Unfortunately safe and economic forms of lighting do not exist. The problem is even more difficult where there is no electricity, ie, in most contexts where we work. Oil lamps, and even more so candles, represent an obvious danger of fire, particularly in temporary shelters (*huts, tents,...*). The alternative – solar lamps – risk becoming a source of envy and may be stolen by the local population or the military...

In general, we do not provide means of lighting. This does not prevent us from being confronted with the problems they pose. Either the refugees/IDPs purchase candles or oil lamps in the local market, and in this case we face the risk of fire and its consequences, or there is no lighting system and the risk of violence and particularly sexual violence increases.

So far we have not found the solution to this problem!

4.3. Means of protection against vectors and products for water purification.

Some items must be distributed with instructions for use. It is not enough to distribute mosquito nets, we must explain to beneficiaries the importance of using them (*rather than using them as fishing nets or wedding dresses ...déjà vu!*) and how to use them for the protection to be effective. The same applies to tablets for water purification which, when improperly used, can have adverse health effects.

NFI DISTRIBUTION STEP BY STEP

Before beginning distribution

1. What you should know

- What is the target population
- What is your capacity
- What are you going to distribute
- Population in open or closed setting

2. What you need to decide

- To whom will you distribute
- Through whom will you distribute
- How will you organise the distribution
 - Selection of the beneficiaries
 - Distribution site : how many, where and how
 - Planning the distributions
 - Measures to ensure security

3. What you should have

- Logistic organisation
 - Warehouse
 - Equipment
 - Means of transport
- Human resources
 - Recruit staff
 - Train staff

4. And when everything is ready

- Inform the population

The day of distribution

1. Practical organisation

- Installation and organisation of the site
- Start distribution
- End of distribution and dismantling of the site
- Distribution report

2. Monitoring of the distribution process

- Process
- Logistic chain

3. Crowd control

After distribution

1. Household monitoring
2. Market survey

Before beginning distribution

1. What you should know

1.1. What is the target population

1.1.1. How many people are affected ?

It is of course absolutely necessary to know how many people are affected by the disaster to be able to organise a distribution (*ordering equipment, number of distribution sites, number of staff,...*).

But it is often difficult to obtain a reliable figure, especially at the outset of an emergency. Indeed, when there is an influx of refugees/IDPs, there are usually wide differences between the figures announced by the authorities and those presented by the representatives of the refugees, the UN agencies,... In the case of a major natural disaster the figures change from hour to hour and it often takes several days or even weeks before arriving at a reliable figure on the number of dead, missing, injured and homeless, as well as an accurate picture of the extent of the affected area.

1.1.2. What is the distribution of the population ?

Ideally you should also know how the population is organised (*families, clans, villages, ... what is the average family size, how many women per family, ...*) and its distribution (*% men, women, children <5 years ,...*)

To help you there is the table « Standard distribution of population by age and sex of a developing country »⁶, the demographic data that you can find in documents of the Ministry of Health or via websites and also, of course, from national staff or the local authorities, ... But none of this data is reliable!

Indeed, because of the crisis :

- Some groups may be under-represented (*in conflict situations, men will be under-represented because they are the first victims of war, or because they are themselves engaged in hostilities; in situations of famine, it is children under 5 who will be under-represented since they will be the first to be affected by malnutrition; earthquakes are very deadly and have a strong influence on the composition of the population, ...*)
- The average family size can be completely different from normal, not only because some groups may be under-represented but also because there are "reconstituted" family (*e.g. a grandparent becomes head of family in the absence of the parents, nephews are welcomed into the family in the absence of their parents ,...*).

⁶ You will find this table in the pocket guide "The Priorities".

What to do ?

Several methods can be used to estimate the affected population. However, this will never be more than an estimation : the figure will never be precise unless a census of the whole affected population is carried out.

So, we will need to live with this uncertainty, working on a figure, however inexact it may be, and facing the possibility of an under-estimation of the population (*buffer stock*) attempting to improve as soon as possible on the original figure.

→ see sheet 7 : *Estimation of the number of people affected* »

1.2. What is your capacity ?

Your distribution capacity will depend on:

- What MSF is willing to invest :
 - Wherever possible MSF prefers to concentrate on purely medical activities. If other organisations are present and properly equipped to handle this aspect, MSF will take little or no part in NFI distribution (see “MSF Policy” p.6)
 - NFI distribution involves considerable human, logistic and financial resources; when faced with large numbers of victims, no single organisation can meet all needs.

For these two reasons, and taking into account the context, type of emergency, needs, and our material capacity, the operations department will impose a limit on your participation.

Bear in mind that in the case of major natural disasters, we have decided to include NFI distribution as a matter of course for a specific number of beneficiaries to be determined on the basis of the potential numbers of victims

- Logistic means necessary and available
 - NFI distribution requires considerable logistic means, the more so when the target population is spread over a large area (*large parts of the territory affected by the disaster, as was the case with the Tsunami in South East Asia in 2004, for example*), or is located in places difficult to reach without exceptional logistic means (*boats, helicopters...as following the floods in Mozambique in 2000 and the earthquake in Kashmir in 2005*)
 - The more difficult it is to reach the population, the more limited will be our capacity, at least in the first days or weeks

- Human resources necessary and available

In the past, this has too often been overlooked, NFI distribution being the responsibility of the team on site, supplemented by a few national helpers. But NFI distribution is a complex task, entailing possibly significant security risks if not properly handled. A special team is required to deal exclusively with this activity.

1.3. What are you going to distribute ?

The answer to these question will depend on :

- Your assessment on priority needs (see chapter “What to distribute” p.20 and sheet 5 “Check-list of priority needs”)

And

- What you are actually going to receive or what you can obtain locally
 - It is true that the dream and the reality do not always match ! Even if you ordered precisely what you consider essential to meet priority needs, you cannot be sure of receiving everything at the time requested (*supplier may be out of stock, delay in customs,...*).

1.4. Distribution in open or closed setting ?

The practical organisation of the distribution will be very different depending on whether the target population lives :

- In closed setting : refugees/IDPs camps

Or

- In open setting : scattered throughout the area affected by the disaster

It goes without saying that in such cases the distribution will be more complicated than in a closed setting, requiring additional logistic and human resources, particularly if there are urgent needs and you have to try to reach the entire target population as quickly as possible.

2. What you need to decide

2.1. To whom will you distribute ?

Taking into account the population affected by the disaster, and your operating capacity, you will need to decide to whom you will distribute, i.e. the beneficiaries of your distribution programme. In the case of major disasters (*whether natural disasters or a flood of refugees/displaced persons as a result of war*), you will not be able to meet all the needs and will have to make a choice.

2.1.1.. Not everyone is affected in the same way

Following natural disasters:

All the people in one area are not affected in the same way. Depending on the location of a house (*on a rise or a plain, beside a river or away from any source of water*) it may or may not be flooded.

Damage following earthquakes varies according to the type of building, the distance from the epicentre and various other geological factors.

In situations of conflict :

Some people flee without taking anything at all with them if the attack or bombardment of their village is imminent or actually happening; others flee before the conflict reaches them (*because they have heard that the neighbouring village is under attack....*) and, thus, are able to take some possessions with them.

Refugees/displaced persons may frequently arrive in waves. The most farsighted leave before the conflict degenerates; others only resign themselves to abandoning their homes when they really have no other choice (*the first refugees from Darfour arrived in Chad in April 2003; the second wave in August 2003 and the biggest waves in November 2003 and February 2004 when the frontier was being systematically bombed*). So, depending on our time of arrival, we may be confronted with several groups of refugees/displaced persons with very different needs.

In all cases :

Some people may be able to continue living in their home (*slightly damaged or even untouched by the disaster*) or may be taken in by family or friends, while others may have no choice but to go to a refugees/displaced persons camp or a community shelter. However, remember that just because someone has been taken in by the family, friends or inhabitants of the host region, it does not mean they have no needs.

In Darfour in 2004, some displaced persons were taken in by local inhabitants. The expatriates believed they did not need help because they were staying with "friends". It was only in 2005 after a nutrition survey, which enabled them to investigate the compounds in which these people were "sheltered", that they realized that the truth was very different from what they had imagined.

In Georgia in 2008, many people fleeing the battles in South Ossetia and Abkhazia were taken in by their families. But these were also displaced persons from the previous war and had been living in jeopardy ever since.

Similarly, if a person still possesses something which vaguely resembles a home, it does not mean they do not need help. During natural disasters people often refuse to leave their homes, even if they are at risk of collapsing (*particularly during after-shocks*) or are severely damaged or even completely flattened. Suffering the loss of one's house, which often represents a whole lifetime's work, is a grieving process which takes time. The people who wander in and around the ruins seeking the smallest piece of their previous life, are also in need of our help.

What to do ?

If the number of victims exceeds your capacity, you will need to establish the number of beneficiaries you are equipped to deal with (*operating limits, human, logistic and financial resources*):

- Target the most affected areas (*natural disasters*) – and/or – target the most vulnerable populations (*refugees/displaced persons following conflict*)

And

- If other organisations are present, coordinate actions with them (*to avoid duplicating aid in some areas while leaving others without help*)

And

- If no other organisations are present, lobby other organisations to mobilise (*as a first choice call on other MSF sections; in Chad in 2003, when faced with a flood of Sudanese refugees, we called on other sections to cover the whole length of the frontier*)

And

- While responding to the initial emergency (*team 1*), you should continue re-assessing the situation (*team 2*) to ensure that populations needing help have not been “overlooked” by humanitarian aid.

And

- On the basis of the perceived needs (*no other organisations present, or willing to mobilise, “overlooked” populations, ...*) see how we could increase our capacity to respond.



When major natural disasters occur, international aid tends to concentrate on a few sites which are both easily accessible and visible (*for television cameras*)
In this case, MSF's added value is often to « go where others do not » and help populations which are equally affected but not so accessible.

2.1.2. What about the host population ?

Should the local population (*who may have taken in the refugees in the first days/weeks*) receive some aid?

As previously mentioned (p.22), we need to be sure that the help provided does not cause tensions between the various populations by giving the refugees a much better quality of life than that of the host population. If the refugees are being sheltered in an area in which the host population (*in part or as a whole*) is so extremely poor that even its most basic needs are not covered, we must then ensure that the host population is included (*in part or as a whole*) in our list of beneficiaries.

→ see sheet 8 : « Examples of criteria and cards used in previous emergencies »

2.2. Through whom will you distribute ?

When organizing the distribution of NFI, the basic unit of distribution will be the family (*or household : the group of people residing under the same roof*) ; this does not mean that distribution must be made exclusively via families. Depending on the context and the resources available, you may opt for one of the 5 methods below:

N.B. the methods most frequently used are numbers 3 and 4

1. Distribution through the local authorities or a local organisation (e.g. Red Cross)	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No need to use our own means - Very fast ! - In some contexts we have to go through the authorities or, more frequently, the national Red Cross or Red Crescent. This is clearly not the best method but, in these circumstances, it is the only way we can meet the needs of the affected population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribution may be unfair if the authorities have a « political agenda ». - Do they really have the infrastructure in place, and the ability to organise distribution, or is the equipment liable to be left in the warehouses ? - No control over what is distributed and to whom. <p>→ Method only to be used if there is really no other choice !</p>
2. Distribution to groups of beneficiaries through the group leadership	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requires few resources (<i>HR, log,....</i>) - Gives responsibility to the community - Distribution can be started relatively quickly <p>→ Useful in the early days of an emergency with large influx of refugees and/or little space available for distribution</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are the leaders really representative of the groups ? - May easily abuse their position and discriminate against a part of the population : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - distribution may not be fair. Based on the communities' own norms, certain groups or individuals (<i>less, or not at all at risk</i>) may receive more than others. - those most vulnerable (<i>including women</i>) may have difficulty in asserting their rights - Difficulty in monitoring the distribution <p>→ Only possible :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In communities where there is a social structure (<i>leaders recognised as such</i>) - No leaders from a political or military group

3. Distribution to groups of families through a group representative	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requires more input than 2, but less than 4 and 5 . - Less risk of abuse by leaders - Participation of the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requires instructing the population on the method - Requires considerable participation in the organisation on the part of the community - Risk of overlooking people not living in a family : isolated persons, unaccompanied children,... → Only possible in a stable situation

4. Distribution to families through individual heads of family	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No risk of abuse between beneficiaries → Useful in dealing with unstructured populations (<i>no leaders, social structure no longer in place,...</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requires extensive resources - No community participation - Risk of overlooking people not living in a family : isolated persons, unaccompanied children,...

5. Distribution to individuals	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Surest method for reaching everyone - Useful for specifically targeted distribution (<i>e.g. special equipment for the elderly or handicapped</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requires extensive resources - The equipment, especially the kits, is designed for a family (<i>hygiene, kitchen, reconstruction kits,...</i>)

2.3. How will you organise the distribution ?

2.3.1. Selection of the beneficiaries

Who are the beneficiaries of your distribution programme ?

Depending on the decision you have taken (*see 2. What you need to decide – 2.1. To whom you will distribute*), you will need to establish a means of identification for your beneficiaries.

When a major disaster occurs and refugees/displaced persons are not assembled in camps or + /- organised locations, this is often not possible and :

- Either the lorries are swamped by the crowd (*e.g. Iraqi refugees - Kurdistan 1991 – see picture p. 39*)... and you can do nothing but evacuate !
- Or people receive an initial emergency package (*a few very basic items such as a jerrycan and a blanket*) as and when they arrive (*e.g. Rwandan refugees Goma 2004*). In this case, the team is stationed along the road used by the refugees/displaced persons who then receive their package as they pass by.
- Or an area is designated (*according to need and our capacity*) and equipment is distributed in this area by lorries delivering from house to house (*e.g. earthquake - Iran – Bam 2003*)
- Or distribution is organised close to mobile clinics (*usually one of the first activities to be set up*). The distribution team goes from house to house distributing equipment and referring the sick to the mobile clinic. This is only possible in small communities (*villages*).

These situations are exceptional and in most cases we are able to select and identify the beneficiaries.

The refugees/IDPs/homeless live in a camp or in a community shelter or in their village (natural disaster) AND they all have the same needs.

→ **Distribution house/house, family/family, without prior registration**

Or

→ **Distribution to the distribution site on the basis of lists of beneficiaries**

How to proceed ?

If the population is relatively small (*generally the case in villages and community shelters, but may also be the case in the initial stages of an emergency when refugees/displaced persons are not yet assembled in large camps but are living in small communities scattered over several areas*), this is relatively simple :

- Either distribute house-to-house or room-by-room (*in the community shelters*), without prior registration;
- Or ask the refugees/displaced persons/homeless to organise themselves into groups (*in a community shelter by floor, or by groups of 20 rooms, for example*) and compile a list of beneficiaries for each group, identifying the most vulnerable according to **our criteria** (*orphans, elderly, handicapped, pregnant and breastfeeding women,...*). The distribution would then be effected on the basis of these lists from a distribution site to which each group would come in turn (*the timetable to be communicated to the beneficiaries*) with the person who prepared the list present to help the distribution team in checking the beneficiaries and prioritising the most vulnerable..

If the population is large, house-to-house distribution will not be possible (*not only would it take too much time but, more importantly, the large number of people would render security too much of a hazard*) and we will have to organise the refugees/displaced persons/homeless ourselves. But how ?

- Split the group into smaller units : either by demarcation (*with ropes, marking tape,..or just by street name if in a village*) into districts (*North, South, East, West... be careful not to use words which may have political or other implications....coming from the North or South may have political connotations in some contexts... ; if this is the case, use colours or another form of classification acceptable to the refugees/displaced persons*), or by numbering the houses (*huts, tents,..*) with spray paint.
- Thereafter you can ask each district to organise themselves and appoint a representative and make up the lists. If this is not possible (*population disintegrated and unable to select or accept a leader ; population under the control of a political and/or military power, tension between the refugees/displaced persons/homeless; population too physically and/or psychologically traumatised,...*), we have to make up the lists ourselves.

The refugees/IDPs/homeless do not have the same needs.

This can be the case :

- In the case of natural disasters when not everyone is equally affected by the event
 - when you have several waves of refugees,
 - when part of the host population is also in need
- (see « *Not everyone is affected in the same way* », p. 28)

→ **Distribution house/house or at a distribution site on the basis of registration cards distributed after assessment of needs**

N.B. This type of distribution is frequently used following natural disasters, but requires good communication with the population who need to understand and accept that not everybody will receive the same things. This is possible in villages or small communities which are not completely socially disintegrated. However, it becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible, in large communities or in those with no social ties (*e.g. groups of people from different backgrounds*).

How to proceed :

- Lay down clear criteria (*condition of the house, availability in the house of basic needs equipment, vulnerability of the residents,...*).
- Decide on what to distribute on the basis of each criterion.
- Fill in a registration card indicating the criteria and the items to be distributed.
- Inform the population of the whole procedure : criteria, items to be distributed, assessment, registration card, distribution.
- Appoint a team of people who will assess each house
- Assess each house and issue a registration card after assessment.
- Organise distribution either house-by-house or from a distribution site. In either case, people must present their registration card before receiving the items.

→ see sheet 8 : *Examples of criteria and cards used in previous emergencies »*

Who has already received ?

There are, and always will be, frauds and cheats – people who try to obtain more than that to which they are entitled – during distribution. This is human nature. When people find themselves in extreme situations, they will do anything in their struggle for survival, especially by trying to obtain a maximum amount of help.

On our side, we have to try to organise distribution in such a way as to reduce fraud to a minimum, thereby providing everyone with the help they need (*being fair, but also maintaining the wherewithal to distribute to everyone*).

To this end, we must establish a system which enables us to identify who has received a package and who has not.

Again there are situations (they are rare but they exist) in which any kind of organisation is practically impossible (e.g.. Kurdistan 1991) and in which only the strongest will gain access to the equipment. It is the law of the jungle... In this case, we can only hope that the strongest will ensure that part of what they have received will be re-distributed (at least to their family or group of friends,...) and that once they are “satisfied” a further distribution – organised this time – can be set up.

Several methods are possible (*depending on the type of distribution*), but none is 100% effective

- Marking with gentian violet (*or indellible ink*)
- Lists of beneficiaries
- Registration cards

Marking	
Method sometimes adopted for distribution without previous registration It is applied at the exit from the site. Once the person has received what he is entitled to, he must dip his finger into a small bucket or pot containing a dilution of gentian violet <i>(1 teaspoon (5 g) of cristallised gentian violet/litre of water, 1 litre for approximately 1000 markings).</i>	Marking is an ethically borderline and questionable method N.B. marking with gentian violet other than on the finger (<i>in the mouth, on the ears,.... which has been the practice in the past</i>) is forbidden. In some cases, gentian violet is replaced by indellible ink... which is in fact easily removed by thorough hand washing (<i>we tested this for you at headquarters !</i>), and even more easily if you grease your hands first (<i>a trick used by populations who are used to distributions !</i>).

Lists of beneficiaries	
<i>See instructions for use above</i>	It is not always easy to sort out family names. In some countries, all the members of one family may not have the same surname ; in other countries, all the members of a single tribe have the same surname, and throughout the world there are very common surnames (<i>such as François Dupont in France, John Smith in England,....</i>). The resulting confusion can create opportunities for fraud. Also, in the contexts in which we intervene, we rarely have access to papers which could prove a person's identity.
Registration cards	
<i>See instructions for use above</i>	As you can imagine, registration cards are relatively easy to falsify depending on how they are manufactured. And in the field, the sophisticated production required for creating non-falsifiable distribution cards is not often available....

2.3.2. Distribution sites : how many, where and how ?

How many distribution sites do we have to install ?

The number of distribution sites to be set up will depend on a number of factors :

Population size	A minimum requirement of 1 distribution site per 20.000 persons (<i>if you are distributing via heads of families, this means +/- 4000 people will attend the distribution site</i>). Several distribution sites will mean fewer people per site and, thus, fewer problems of crowd control ; on the other hand, you will need more equipment, transport and human resources
Localisation of the population	You need to be as close as possible to the beneficiaries, so that distribution sites are accessible to everyone, particularly the most vulnerable. So, if the population is assembled in 1 camp, a single distribution site could be located at a central point. On the other hand, if the population scattered over a large area or number of villages, you will need to set up a distribution site at each location or village ; or a central distribution site for a neighbouring group of locations or villages, while maintaining the maximum required distance of 5km between the distribution site and the beneficiaries.
Tensions between different populations	Obviously, if you are aware of tensions which may exist between groups of population, you will need to set up distribution sites for each population group to avoid security problems.
Resources available	HR, means of transport,...

Where to install the distribution sites

In a place accessible for trucks

Located as close as possible to the beneficiaries to ensure :

- Access for everyone (*elderly, handicapped,...*)
- Minimise the journey and thus :
 - The time spent away from home (*especially important for female heads of family*)
 - The risk of bullying and/or theft on the way back
 - Avoid having to carry the items home after nightfall
 - Not having to carry heavy bags too far

In a place « comfortable » for you and for the beneficiaries :

- Avoid deserted sites with no shade, or exposed to icy winds in winter
- Avoid insect-infested sites (*flies, mosquitos,...*)
- Avoid hollows or other places in which you could find your feet in water at the first shower of rain

In a place which can be easily secured :

- Do not set up distribution sites close to heavily populated areas (*market, hospital, religious building*), or in the centre of a place where refugees/displaced persons are assembled, but choose a location on the outskirts.
- Select a flat and unobstructed area which will provide you with an overall view of the site and enable you to detect any signs of malfunction rapidly.

Make sure the beneficiaries do not have to pass in front of :

- Military or police camps, or any other place where they may be harassed
- Uninhabited areas where thieves may be free to roam

How to install the distribution sites

It is important to ensure proper installation of the distribution sites as this will impact on :

- The smooth running of the distribution (*fluidity, rapidity,...*)
- Security

You must have :

- One, and only one, entry
- A waiting area (*a place in which people can wait before being called for distribution*)
- A buffer zone between the waiting area and distribution
- A distribution area (*place where people receive the NFI*)
- One, and only one, exit
- A storage area for the 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: ideally sufficient latrines for the crowd, but this is not practical in view of the large numbers of people assembled on the site. Your energy will be better spent in ensuring rapid distribution so that beneficiaries do not have too long to wait. Even so, you should try to provide a water source, especially in hot countries.

The site itself and the various areas must be clearly defined so you will need marking equipment (*boundary netting, stakes, ropes,....*)

→ see sheet 9 : «How to set up a distribution site : advice, timetable, equipment check-list »

2.3.3. Planning the distribution

You will need to establish a timetable of the distributions, not only for your own organisation, but also to inform the beneficiaries in good time.

In all cases :

- Do not announce the date of distribution to the population until the NFI have arrived in stock ! A lorry may break down, or dense fog prevent aircraft from taking off – these occurrences are common and may delay arrival of the equipment by several days,.... it is therefore better not to raise the hopes of the population who are waiting impatiently for your help.
- Do not organise distribution on a public holiday or, more specifically, a religious holiday (*except, of course, in an extreme emergency*).
- Make sure there are no exceptional security risks on the day you have decided to distribute (*seek advice from the authorities, representatives of the refugees, national staff,....*).
- Coordinate with other organisations on site to avoid organising several distributions on the same day (*e.g. distribution of food by the WFP on the same day as your distribution*).
- Coordinate among yourselves : make sure there are not several activities programmed for the same day which involve the target population (*e.g. no distribution on the same day as a nutrition survey*)

If you have several distribution sites for neighbouring camps or sites :

- Organise distribution in each of the camps or sites on the same day to limit fraud (*people going from one camp to another to receive several packages*)

2.3.4. Measures to ensure security

Staff

You need enough staff to control the crowd. These may include :

- MSF staff,
- volunteers (*representatives of the refugees/displaced persons, representatives of the village affected by the disaster,...*)
- staff appointed by the local authorities.

Ensure the staff :

- speak the language(s) of the beneficiaries
- are clearly identified (*MSF overjumpers*)
- possess means of communication in case of incident (*radio + whistle in case of emergency*)
- are well briefed :
 - distribution must be explained in detail (*criteria, items distributed, procedure,...*) so that staff are able to answer questions they may be asked,
 - it is not a matter of carrying guns or batons. The aim is not to provide heavy-handed control, but to listen, explain and guide with respect

Involve the authorities... except in contexts where it is inappropriate.

In any context where it is possible to work in collaboration with the authorities, they should be involved and asked to handle security outside the distribution site – inside the site being MSF's responsibility.

Involve representatives of the refugees/IDPs/homeless

If leaders are available, accepted and acceptable to all, involve them fully in the organisation of the distribution. They are well qualified to restore calm by talking to the groups they represent. In any case, do not hesitate to involve representatives of women, especially when women are the most represented in the target population (*which is often the case in refugee camps where 80 to 85 % of the population are women and children*).

Make a « complaints office » available

Not only complaints, but cheating or other behaviour which may cause disorder, all need to be dealt with quickly and with tact and diplomacy. To achieve this, and to avoid one person's discontent leading to general « rebellion », it is better to guide the malcontents to a complaints office away from the crowd where a member of staff can take time to listen to him, calm him down, give explanations in detail and/or correct a mistake which may have been made and of which they were unaware.

Site planning

As already stated above, the location of the site and how it has been designed and installed will have a significant impact on the correct functioning of the distribution and, thus, on security. Do not hesitate to read or reread sheet 9 (« *How to install a distribution site : advice, timetable and equipment check-list* »

In particular, you should :

- Avoid very large gatherings of people
- Locate your distribution site in an open space giving the supervisor an overview of the site enabling him to monitor progress of the distribution and detect any problems
- locate the waiting area in an appropriate place so that people do not have to wait in difficult conditions.
- Ensure the circuit is unencumbered, guaranteeing a degree of fluidity
- Protect sensitive areas such as equipment unloading and storage.

Planning distribution

Begin distribution early in the morning to limit the waiting time : security problems are more frequent in the afternoon because people are tired of waiting

Organising the distribution

A well-organised system will generally be respected... if people do not respect it, this is often because there is a "bug" in the system !

Communication

Lack of information about what is happening or will happen is a source of stress. It is therefore very important to take the time to inform the beneficiaries, listen to them and answer their questions. All staff should be briefed appropriately.

Know which way the wind is blowing!

If the population is under stress for one reason or another there is a greater risk of insecurity. So we have to know if there is a special reason for the refugees/IDPs to be stressed (*other than being a refugee/IDP, having lost his house and/or members of his family, have been bombed,... !!!*).

3. What you should have

3.1. Logistic organisation

3.1.1. Warehouse

Choose a warehouse suitable for storing NFI prior to distribution

You will need a warehouse in the capital for :

- Taking reception of equipment delivered from MSF-Supply or your local suppliers
- Re-packaging equipment when the original wrapping was damaged during transport
- Assembling kits if you have opted for local supplies

And a warehouse in the field for:

- Taking reception of equipment delivered from the capital or local suppliers
- Re-packaging equipment when the original wrapping was damaged during transport
- As a possible distribution point

3 basic elements to consider when choosing a warehouse :

- Accessibility
- Size of the warehouse
- Security

This should be borne in mind whatever type of storage you can obtain or install (*in emergencies it is often the case that no permanent buildings are available on the site and it may be necessary to store equipment in tents*).

→ see sheet 10 : «*The warehouse : Choice, organisation and staff* »

When a warehouse on the site is not necessary

It may be that distributions are made directly from lorries sent from the capital.

- In major emergency situations, with large influxes of people and desperate needs (*e.g. Kurdistan 1991- refugees from Iraq had spent several days in the cold, rain and mud before the first teams could reach the mountainous region in which they had taken refuge*)
- In situations where distributions are made in a number of villages a long way from the MSF base, and where the beneficiary populations in each village are not large (*e.g. Kashmir 2005*)

In these circumstances you should ensure that :

- Only one type of article is loaded on each lorry (*e.g. only blankets or hygiene kits,...*), as they will be used as warehouses and distribution points simultaneously.
- At least one MSF staff member accompanies the convoy from the capital to the distribution point to ensure that the load arrives complete and undamaged at the distribution site (*this because you will not have been able to take reception of the goods prior to distribution*)
- Send a team ahead of the lorries to prepare the location for their arrival : park the lorries well away from where the population is assembled and set up a solid system of security, because the risk of the lorries being swamped by the crowd is very real and if this happens your only choice is to evacuate as quickly as possible !

The truck is there, in the crowd !



Kurdistan 1991

The lorries are swamped by the crowd who have been waiting for aid for several days. In the mountains, where over 500.000 Kurd from Iraq had taken refuge in frightfully cold temperatures, there was nowhere to install a warehouse and no time to set up any kind of organisation.....

Equipment needed for the warehouse

You must have :

- Storage equipment (*shelving, pallets, ...*)
- Packaging equipment (*scales, scotch tape dispenser, rope, knife, labels,....*)
- Maintenance equipment (*broom, buckets, scraper, cleaning cloths and products,...*)
- Office equipment (*calculator, stationery,...*)
- Carrying equipment : trolleys are rarely to be found in missions, but they could help to avoid « broken backs » !
- First aid and firefighting equipment

→ see sheet 10 : «*The warehouse : Choice, organisation and staff* »

How to manage the warehouse

NFI are often only passing through the warehouse in transit until the organisation of distribution is complete. You can therefore manage this stock as a dispatch area, simply recording incoming and outgoing movements of goods in the area. The record must include the numbers of the documents accompanying the goods.

Documents needed in managing your warehouse are therefore:

- Incoming/outgoing goods record (*a register or school exercise book will do*)
- The freight manifests (*kept in a file*)

→ see sheet 10 : «*The warehouse : Choice, organisation and staff* »

Staff to manage the warehouse

You must have a storekeeper who will be mainly responsible for :

- reception and dispatch of the goods.
- administration : maintaining the incoming/outgoing movements records and filing the freight manifests.
- maintenance of the warehouse : well organised, clean, secure,....
- he must at any time be able to inform the programme supervisor of the stock situation.

He may be helped by warehousemen ; guards will take care of security.

→ see job profiles in sheet 10 : «*The warehouse : Choice, organisation and staff*»

3.1.2. The equipment

NFI

Yes, of course, to organise and plan distribution you need first to have the NFI to hand. Until they are physically present in your warehouse, you cannot be sure of what you will actually receive and when.

What if you have not received all the NFI and the remainder of the order does not arrive for several days or weeks ? See p. 18, chapter « When to distribute - 1 : Initial distribution ».

Equipment for the installation of the distribution sites

Before beginning distribution you have to install the distribution sites and for this you will need equipment (*boundary tape and/or netting, posts, ropes,....*)

→ See sheet 9 : « How to install a distribution site : advice, timetable and check-list material »

3.1.3. Means of transport

You must decide:

- What type of transportation you will need (*camels, lorries, boats, helicopters,...*) depending on the geography of the region but also the road conditions (*roads may be flooded or destroyed by the disaster, or too narrow for large lorries but accessible for vans,...*).
- How many vehicles you will need depending on the load, the capacity of the selected vehicles and the number of distribution sites to be served.

Remember that if your lorries are used as distribution points (see p.38) it is preferable to have a single type of item per lorry. It is better to have one or two more lorries and a well organised distribution than to limit the number of lorries and have problems at the time of distribution.

You will also need someone responsible for supervising the vehicles who will :

- Find appropriate vehicles : have to hand a list of owners of camels, lorries,.... (*ideally at least part of this task should have been carried out during the emergency preparedness exercise, especially the matter of exceptional means of transport such as boats, aircraft, helicopters,...*).
- Make sure the vehicles are in good working order and that safety equipment is on board (*safety belts, life jackets (except for camels !!!), sand-plates, spare wheel, tools, first aid kit, extinguisher,...*)
- Prepare the vehicles the day before distribution
- Control the movement of the vehicles on the day of distribution.

3.2. Human resources

3.2.1. Recruit the distribution teams

You must have a specific team for distribution.

This team will include at least :

- 1 distribution programme coordinator.
- For the distribution sites :
 - 1 coordinator per distribution site.
 - 1 distributor per kit or article to be distributed (*one person for blankets, one person for hygiene kits,...*)
 - Staff for unloading the lorries and for keeping the distributors supplied (*unless distribution is carried out from the lorries*)
 - Staff for crowd control (*in sufficient numbers, to be determined depending on the size of the crowd – caution : never leave a person alone in a crowd !*).
- For the warehouses (*in capital and in the field*) : storekeeper, warehousemen, guards

- For the transport :
 - 1 person to supervise the vehicles being used for distribution (*transport of teams and equipment*)
 - Drivers for the vehicles
- To assemble the kits locally:
 - 1 log supply
 - 1 purchaser
 - team to assemble the kits.
- To help you understand :
 - Translators

The tasks will be divided between :

- Expatriates
- National staff
- Daily workers (*warehousement, kit assembly,...*)
- Volunteers (*representatives of the refugees/IDPs, representatives from the villages affected by the disaster,...mainly for informing the population and crowd control*)
- Staff authorised by the local authorities (*crowd control*)

→ see sheet 11 : « *Example of an organigramme and job profiles of a distribution team* »

3.2.2. Training the distribution teams

Team training is a very important task and must not be neglected ! Remember that distribution is a highly sensitive activity which may cause serious security problems if not properly managed

All staff (*including daily workers, volunteers,...*) must :

- Be familiar with the general distribution of the organisation (*beneficiaries, criteria, items to distribute, circuit to follow,...*)
- Understand their role within this organisation
- Be able to answer the beneficiaries' questions
- Know what to do in case of problems (*when to call the supervisor on the radio, when to send people to the complaints office,...*) and what to do in case of a major incident (*whistle for help,...or evacuate !*)
- Be given a briefing + a short training session if necessary, the day before distribution at the latest
- Be given a rapid final briefing for each job category a few minutes prior to beginning distribution. This briefing, in situ, will allow final adjustments to be made, and ensure that each person has fully understood his function.

The staff in charge of crowd control, that will be first in line, has to receive a specific briefing on the attitude to have vis-à-vis the beneficiaries and in case of problem (*see job-profile, sheet 11*).

Equipment

In order to work effectively, you need the proper equipment. Make sure each staff member is provided with the equipment needed for his work and his personal safety (*MSF vest, radio, whistle*).

4. And when everything is ready

Inform the population

**Providing the population with full information before distribution
Is the key to a successful, problem-free distribution !**

- In order to be sure that everyone has been contacted, use several different means of communication, appropriate to the context (*posters, radio, religious congregations ...*).
- Use resources/intermediary people from a variety of backgrounds to avoid information being monopolised or manipulated by one group.
- Do not circulate information only via « leaders » as they may have their own political agenda !
- Involve women (*through women's groups or places where women get together,...*) they are often more sensitive to this type of information as it affects family life for which they are often the ones who assume most of the responsibility.
- Communicate in one or more of the local languages. N.B. in a number of countries the men speak the official languages while the women may only speak the local dialects.
- If possible, make sure the message has been understood (*by carrying out a few soundings*).

What the population should know ?

Who ?	Who will receive something ? Based on which criteria ? <i>The criterion may be the age of children (children < 5 years), it can also be the condition of the house (after a natural disaster, etc...)</i>
What ?	What will they receive and in what quantities ? It may be helpful to specify the number of packages and/or the total weight to enable people to organise themselves, if necessary, by bringing along several family members to help carry, or a donkey,...
When ?	When will the distribution take place : specify the days and times.
Frequency ?	If further distributions are planned (<i>e.g. consumables which need replacing</i>) it is a good idea to say so ; otherwise people may ration their use of soap, for example, and the aim of providing good hygienic conditions will be lost. N.B. however, announce only what you are sure of – do not make promises you may not be able to keep.
How much does it cost ?	Yes, indeed, some vulnerable people may be abused by the staff who use their power to obtain payment in kind (<i>sexual favours,...</i>) It is therefore quite helpful to stress that everything is free of charge !
Where ?	Where is the distribution centre located.. If you have installed several centres for a single population, everyone needs to be clear about which centre they should attend. A map of the camp, site, or town could be useful, indicating the distribution centre sites ; or showing, or giving landmarks familiar to everyone. You could mark the route to be taken.

How ?	<p>How will distribution be organised ?</p> <p>This is the time to stress :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Security regulations (<i>wait in the waiting area until called and follow the marked path,...</i>) in the case of an incident distribution will be halted either temporarily or permanently - Who is authorised to claim the packages (<i>according to the system you have adopted</i>) - What they must present to receive the packages (<i>if you have issued distribution cards,...</i>) - That there is enough for everybody, even those last in the queue - If there is a problem or a claim, people may go to the « complaints office »
What is it for ?	<p>It may be necessary to explain the purpose of some items and how to use them, so that beneficiaries know what to do with the article distributed, and to avoid undesirable consequences (<i>e.g. disposable items blocking toilets !</i>)</p> <p>This information should be given briefly during the first announcement, in more detail during distribution, and maybe even following distribution by the health advisors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First announcement : simply state the purpose of the item. - During distribution : a team of « demonstrators » could give detailed and practical explanations on how to use these articles. It would also have the advantage of occupying people while waiting ! - After distribution : health advisors should check that the equipment distributed is being properly used (<i>mosquito nets, water purification tablets,...</i>) and provide additional help if needed. <p>→ see sheet 12 : «<i>Example of equipment which could be used to show the population how to use the distributed articles</i> »</p>

The day of distribution

1. Practical organisation

1.1. Site preparation and organisation

You need to begin distribution very early in order to :

- Make your work easier :
 - The earlier you are on the distribution site, the fewer people will have already arrived and it will be easier for you to set up the site.
 - If there is an enormous crowd (*far exceeding your estimation of the population*) you may have time to bring in a second supply (*always providing that the distribution site is not too far from your base*)
- Make life easier for the beneficiaries :
 - In hot countries it is better to begin early in the cool of the morning, rather than having to wait in the sun during the hottest part of the day
 - beneficiaries can return home during daylight hours before nightfall.

The day before distribution :

- Prepare the vehicles (*fill up with fuel,...*) and check they are in good working order,
- Load the equipment onto the vehicles (*NFI and installation equipment*),
- Prepare items for the team (*drinking water + picnic*),
- Organise a briefing with the team

- Make sure the team is ready to leave on time – usually very early ; remember to set your alarm clock !

Before leaving for the distribution site :

- Check the team members are all present : MSF staff, staff sent by the authorities, and volunteers (*unless it has been agreed to meet them at the distribution site*)

Arrival at the distribution site :

- Assemble the staff responsible for crowd control and give a final briefing on the general organisation of the distribution (*to enable them to explain it to the beneficiaries*) and what to do in case of trouble. Also, make sure they have the necessary equipment (*MSF vest, radio, whistle,...*).
- Begin installation only once the crowd control supervisors are in place.
- One, and only one, person, with the help of 3 or 4 assistants, is responsible for marking out the distribution route, (*with tape, stakes, mallets*).
- Begin by marking the outer perimeter with marking tape. The vehicles are parked inside the site and no-one is supposed to enter the site during installation. Installation by an experienced team will take 20 minutes.
- Make sure you do not neglect the quality of the installation : pathways marked with straight parallel lines, upright posts, taut tape, all contribute to create an impression of good organisation, inspiring confidence.
- Once the site is installed, you can organise the teams : each member goes to his post, checks that he has the necessary equipment and receives a final briefing.

1.2. Begin distribution

Distribution can only begin after consultation with crowd control supervisor : distribution begins when the crowd is calm. At the least sign of trouble, distribution must be halted :

- temporarily if the incident is not serious
- permanently if it becomes impossible to continue distribution in an atmosphere of calm and security.

The population assembled in the waiting area must form a line at least 20 m from the entrance to the site (*buffer zone*). N.B. If it is possible to make people sit down to wait, this will reduce security risks.

Before beginning distribution the MSF supervisor must explain again to the crowd

- the criteria for admission,
- the procedure of distribution,
- safety regulations
- and assure them there is enough to go round

1.3. Dismantling the site

Dismantling begins with the interior installations. Exterior marking stays in place until the vehicles have been loaded. No-one is supposed to enter the site during dismantling.

! Remember to clean up the site before leaving.

1.4. Distribution report

A brief report should be made on each distribution :

- Number of beneficiaries (*counted at the exit with a manual counter*)
- Number of kits distributed
- Notes on the progress of the distribution (*duration, difficulties, incidents,...*)
- Information which could be useful for possible future distributions (*names of local representatives and volunteers who participated, location of the distribution,...*)

2. Monitoring the distribution process

The purpose of site supervision is to identify possible problems and, where possible, to solve them immediately, or use them as a lesson for future distributions.

The site supervisor is responsible for :

Logistic supervision covering :

- the quantity and quality of supplies,
- delivery dates,
- transport,
- stock
- distribution of equipment
- site installation

Supervision of the system of distribution :

The aim is to ensure that each beneficiary actually receives what he is entitled to (*quantity and type of article*)

To this end, every person leaving the site is not checked, but a random survey is made i.e. for every x people leaving the site (*x to be specified according to the total number of beneficiaries and your capacity*) a check is made on whether they are included in the list of beneficiaries (*do they meet the criteria*) and what they have actually received.

N.B. this is quantity, not quality control. It will not reveal :

- people excluded from the distribution by mistake
- people who use several cards or who swindle or cheat in some way.

→ see sheet 13 : «*Distribution monitoring check-list* »

3. Crowd control

Distributions usually involve several thousand people, often stressed, and assembled within a limited area.



Crowd management is fundamental ; any shortcomings in this respect can have dramatic consequences.

As you have already carefully read all our good advice on how to organise distribution (*p.31 onwards*), in particular the steps to be taken to ensure security, you should have no problems.... But a final briefing before distribution will not go amiss !

Test your system

- Barricades are in place to control the crowd, but will never stop a crowd bent on creating chaos ! Your guarantee of security is the system you have set up : a well organised system will usually be respected... if people do not respect it, there is a fault in the system somewhere.
- Identify any potential risks before distribution begins : test your system by pretending to be a beneficiary yourself.
- Ask advice from the crowd control supervisors (*MSF staff, volunteers, representatives of the refugees/displaced persons, representatives of the local authorities*).

Consider the comfort of the beneficiaries

- Carry out the distribution as quickly as possible (*ensure fluidity*) to keep waiting time to a minimum :
- If it is possible to have people sitting down, there is less risk.
- Are you sure that the area you have chosen for waiting is not in full sun at midday ?

Communicate

- Provide equipment for communicating with the crowd (*megaphone kit*)
- People at the end of the queue may fear that when their turn comes there will be nothing left : keep them well informed

Monitor the progress of the distribution

- You need to have an overall view of the site to allow you to monitor its progress and take appropriate steps if the slightest problem arises (*while not completely changing the system... see below*).

Stick to the system you have set up

- Avoid causing surprises at the time of distribution by inserting a new system !
- Irregularities in the system of distribution undermine the beneficiaries' confidence and they will divert from the system themselves.

Remember the « complaints office »

If, in spite of this, there is trouble

- Clearly identify who is responsible for security and may decide to evacuate, abandoning the equipment,... This person must be known to all staff and be clearly visible (*not only wearing an MSF vest, as do all staff, but why not a red hat, for example.*)
- Clearly identify all staff (*not just with an armband that may be difficult to see in the crowd, but with an MSF vest*)
- Make sure everyone has good means of communication : hand-sets, megaphones,...
- Provide whistles to warn of major trouble.
- Do not hesitate to halt distribution temporarily at the least sign of trouble, and advise the population that you will only continue if the situation is calm.

After distribution

1. Household monitoring

Objective

- Assess the impact of the NFI distribution
- If the results of the assessment warrant it, you can adjust the objectives of the programme (*target specific types of population, modify the content of the kits,...*)

This can be done in 3 ways

- Individual in-house questioning and observation
- Key informant interviews
- Focus group discussions

House Interviews and observations

- Select at random a number of families to visit
- Observe what items are available in the house (*compared with the items distributed*)
- Question people (*preferably the women*) on :
 - Access to the distribution
 - How they perceived the distribution (*their comments may be interesting in improving the circuit, the process,...*)
 - Suitability of the items distributed : how happy were they with each item ? Check especially the acceptance and use of hygiene kits containing very culturally sensitive items.
 - Do they have problems with some of the items distributed (*do not understand what it is for, not strong enough,...*)
 - If they were in charge of organising the distribution, what would they add to the distribution ?
 - Are there any items they have sold, will sell, or would sell if they had the opportunity to do so, in order to buy something else ? And what would they buy with the money from the sale ?

Interviews with key informants

Interviews are held with individuals selected for their knowledge of the situation in general or of a particular aspect of it. Key informants usually include teachers, religious leaders, women's group representatives, camp committee members, government officials, local staff of agencies in charge of the camp management or the watsan component,...

Focus group discussions

Focus groups can be composed of people selected widely from the whole camp (*site or village,...*), from a particular area of the camp, or from a particular group within the population (*e.g..women*).

The composition of your focus group will depend on what exactly you are trying to find out. If you have questions about the kit for shelter rehabilitation, it will probably be more interesting to ask the men generally in charge of this activity, while if you have questions on the composition of the hygiene kit, women will certainly be more appropriate and involved !

2. Market survey

It may be interesting to check on the market, if it exists, of items for sale, which were distributed. However, if items are available on the market, it does not necessarily mean that too much equipment has been distributed, but that people exchange articles for others which they consider more useful. It is in our interests to find out what they considered less useful (*the items they were most likely to re-sell*) and what they would consider more useful (*the items they acquired from the sale*).

You then need to understand whether it is simply a « preference » or a necessity. Thus, if you are in a country where the nights are cold and people have sold blankets to buy food, the problem is not that people did not need blankets (*unless they possessed enough of them prior to distribution –which you could have ascertained after the initial assessment before distribution and/or during the survey of families after distribution*), but that they did not have enough food !

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GUIDE of KITS and EMERGENCY ITEMS : LOGISTIC PART
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LOGISTIC CATALOGUE
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CD-MEMENTOS URGENCES/POCKET GUIDE EMERGENCIES
MSF-OCB - 2008

LIST OF TECHNICAL SHEETS ON THE CD

1. Catalogue of the most common NFI
2. Guide for local purchase and assembling of kits locally
3. Summary table of distribution strategies
4. All about the Basic NFI Kit
5. Priority needs check-list
6. Examples of Non Food Items distributed in previous emergencies
7. Estimation of the number of people affected
- 8 . Examples of criteria and cards used in previous emergencies
9. How to set up a distribution site : advice, timetable, and equipment check-list
10. The warehouse : Choice, organisation and staff
11. Example of an organigramme and job profiles of a distribution team
12. Example of equipment which could be used to show the population how to use the distributed articles
13. Distribution monitoring check-list