

Food, nutrition and non-food items (NFIs)

Access to adequate and appropriate food and non-food items (NFIs) is crucial to beneficiaries' well-being, dignity, and health.

Food assistance shall be preceded by a needs assessment to define the size of rations, frequency of distribution, type of food and distribution modalities, as well as special needs of specific groups. Food must be available in sufficient quantities and be culturally and religiously appropriate, so depending on the profile of beneficiaries diverse food selections may be necessary. Beneficiaries shall be consulted in order to define preferred food lists and specific food requirements taken into account (e.g. formula milk for nursing children).

To meet **World Health Organization (WHO) baseline nutritional requirements**, food rations are 2100 kilocalories per person/per day (560 grams of food each day for an average adult, including 10–12% of the total and adequate micronutrient intake through fresh and fortified food). Pregnant women will need an additional 500 kcal per day and a breastfeeding woman will need an additional 500 kcal per day.

Best practices from the field

Food is a powerful instrument for social cohesion. In Ethiopia, IOM transit centers for refugees regularly organise cultural food events. Beneficiaries use the premises' kitchen to cook their traditional food, which will then be presented and shared with the other guests.

Some beneficiaries assisted in migrant centres may have experienced **malnourishment** before migrating or during the journey, so it is important to identify cases of malnutrition and ensure specialised treatment by health-care practitioners and supplementary feeding (for more guidance, please refer to the Sphere minimum standards for food security and nutrition). Furthermore, **eating disorders** can occur or be exacerbated by stress and trauma, so mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) interventions may be needed. If food is supplied by a service provider, the organisation running the facility is responsible to ensure the **quality, quantity and appropriateness of the meals** and, when needed, request for adjustments. Regular meetings shall be held with the

service provider, who shall ensure that national standards on food hygiene are met. If required, service providers shall be able to meet any specialised food requirements, for instance for medical or health reasons. Depending on the type of facility, it may be advisable to store some **dry food** (e.g. instant noodles, biscuits and snacks) to be distributed in case of unexpected circumstances or arrivals/departures outside of standard food distribution hours. In some facilities, in-house cooking arrangements can also be put in place but attention shall be paid to mitigate possible risks (hygiene-related issues, food poisoning, incidents, etc.).

Proper identification of **NFIs needs and gaps** is also an important component of MRRMs direct assistance interventions. The exigences of beneficiaries largely vary depending on a variety of factors, including their level of distress, their gender and age, the location and the weather conditions. The selection of NFIs should be done in consultation with the beneficiaries and the specific needs of all groups taken into account while respecting the context and culture(s).

NFIs packages usually include **clothing, bedding material, basic hygiene items, and other essential** Sphere's recommendations, beneficiaries shall be provided with two full sets of clothing in the correct size. Items as for instance hats or scarfs may also be added, as well as suitcases or backpacks to travel. If according to a combination of bedding items, including, when needed, insecticide-treated bed nets and blanket of suitable

Personal hygiene kits usually include a bucket, a towel, 200g of laundry bar soap, 250g of bathing soap, appropriate women's sanitary items and children's diapers (quantities calculated per month). Additional items, depending on appropriateness and availability, as for instance: disposable razor, comb, nail clipper, and repellent lotions. Vulnerable individuals, older persons, pregnant and lactating women, and children) may be provided with additional clothing

Last but not least, if **education or training activities** are offered by the facility, kits including notebooks, pens, and other materials for participants.

NFIs distribution is a particularly thorny aspect of direct assistance. Pre-determined, **clear and transparent criteria for NFIs distribution** shall be identified by facilities' staff and shared with beneficiaries in order to avoid possible tensions or inequalities. Issues that frequently arise during distribution include lack of familiarity with distribution procedures, faulty items or poor-quality goods and false claims in order to receive more quantity. Packages shall therefore contain standardised and comparable items so that cannot be perceived to be unequal. Priority lines for distributions shall be organised for persons with disabilities or other special needs, and beneficiaries shall be invited to volunteer to support in the distribution. As in the case of food, the organisation managing the facility is primarily responsible to ensure the quality and usefulness of the items provided, and it is important to have a system for tracking NFIs' distribution. Beneficiaries shall be briefed on what their entitlements are and what goods are distributed, and a complaints mechanism shall be established to ensure accountability and to prevent risks of exploitation and abuse related to assistance delivery (please refer also to [this entry](#)). Proper warehousing and storage is essential to ensure that items are kept safely and hygienically (for further guidance please consult [this entry on procurement and logistics](#)).

Depending on the context and on the specific needs of the beneficiaries, **modalities other than in-kind distribution** can be chosen for food and NFIs distribution, such as cash transfer for the purchase of food and goods or distribution of vouchers. The choice of the transfer modalities should be based on a thorough analysis of the context and the impact of the different options. Cash and voucher systems empower beneficiaries, reduce operational costs related to purchase and distribution and benefit the local economy. However, close monitoring shall be conducted by centres staff to assess how money is spent and how this impacts beneficiaries' needs. Furthermore, these systems entail a higher risks of aid diversion.

References and Tools

- [The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response \(Chapter on Food security and nutrition\)](#)
- [IOM, NRC and UNHCR Camp Management Toolkit \(Chapter 13 – Food Security and non-food items, pg. 186\)](#)
- [IOM and UNHCR Collective center Guidelines \(Chapter 10 – Food distribution; Chapter 11 – NFIs distribution\)](#)
- [Semera Ethiopia Migration Response Center SOPs \(NFIs, bedding, food, p. 40\)](#)
- [TC SOPs \(SSA\) Annex 3. Meal Control Sheet, p. 52](#)
- [TC SOPs \(SSA\) Annex 5. Clothing distribution form, p. 53](#)
- [TC SOPs \(SSA\) Annex 13. Example Menus, p. 62](#)
- [East Africa transit centers guidelines: Standard operating procedures, forms, new hotel SOPs and much more](#)

Category

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