

RECOMMENDATIONS ON FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROCEDURES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GLOBAL OUTBREAK OF COVID-19

Background

Following the global outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the reported cases in Ethiopia, food operators - National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC), the Joint Emergency Operation Plan (JEOP) and World Food Programme (WFP), are taking the below outlined measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These measures are intended to help prevent transmission of coronavirus and to keep staff, targeted beneficiaries and stakeholders safe and healthy during food distribution activities. The measures will be critical to follow as food operators are planning to assist six million food insecure beneficiaries in targeted regions at more than 3,000 food distribution sites throughout Ethiopia, as determined in the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).

Expectations of food operators in preparation for distributions:

1. Ensure effective supervision at food distribution points to reinforce implementation of good hygiene practices¹ and social distancing. To this end, the following will be considered:
 - a. Identify space adequate to allow staff, beneficiaries and stakeholders alike to keep the appropriate social distance of two metres.
 - b. Ensure availability of adequate staff at distribution points.
 - c. Sensitize staff, beneficiaries and other stakeholders, including government representatives, on good respiratory hygiene - covering mouth and nose with bent elbow when coughing or sneezing. This can be conducted through recorded tapes or IEC materials.
 - d. Require all distribution staff to wear disposable gloves to prevent direct hand contact with food.
 - e. Consider not to have older beneficiaries (recipients > 60 years) or those with special needs at food distribution points. If this is not possible, older beneficiaries and those with underlying health conditions will always be prioritized during food distribution.
2. Coordinate with health officials to administer temperature checks during food distributions and to raise awareness about COVID-19.
3. Waive beneficiary verifications and post distribution monitoring exercises.
4. Consider increasing the number of distribution points, as the food distribution process will be delayed.
5. Ensure that a food distribution plan is communicated to beneficiaries and stakeholders, including health officials for a coordinated distribution process.
6. Organize rations ahead of the scheduled distribution.
 - a. If not already prepositioned, offload the food supplies into temporary storage and organize rations ahead of the scheduled distribution.
 - b. Separate storage from collection points where possible.

¹ good hygiene practices include handwashing with soap for 20 seconds, use of hand sanitizer and gloves, and covering coughs and sneezes with the arm; social distancing means keeping 6ft between individuals

Expectations of stakeholders during the food distribution process:

1. Organize and clearly mark the allocated spaces at the distribution sites (see Annex 1: Sample site plan for Food distribution sites in the COVID-19 environment).
 - a. Staff in place at reception, identity verification, and collection points as well as exits will monitor and channel traffic and to allow for personal space of at least two metres between each recipient.
 - b. Hand washing stations will be set up at each distribution point before the point of entry and within the distribution area, with adequate supplies of soap and clean water.
 - c. Distribution staff will designate space before reception points for body temperature checks by health officials.
 - d. Distribution staff will establish sheltered or covered areas for beneficiaries that do not receive clearance at the body temperature check point. The allocated area must be spacious enough to allow beneficiaries to sit/stand at least two metres apart from each other.
 - e. Distribution staff will ensure that there are clearly marked entrance and exit points in the distribution area.
 - f. Distribution staff will not set up complaints desks at food distribution points. In lieu of this service at distributions, staff will encourage beneficiaries to raise any complaints to the call center.
2. Consider hygiene and sanitation measures.
 - a. All food distribution staff will be required to frequently and thoroughly wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
 - b. Distribution staff will be requested to stay home if they are not feeling well.
 - c. There must be no physical contact between distribution staff and beneficiaries or between beneficiaries.
 - d. Distribution staff at the collection point will be instructed to place the food rations on a tarpaulin/table at the distribution point and step back, permitting the beneficiary to collect the ration.
 - e. Following the collection of the ration, beneficiaries will be directed to exit the collection site and encouraged to depart the distribution site

IMPORTANT NOTE: IF ANY INDIVIDUAL DEMONSTRATES SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19 THEY SHOULD AVOID CONTACT WITH BENEFICIARIES AND NOT BE PRESENT AT THE DISTRIBUTION SITE.

3. Do not allow crowding around the food distribution point.
 - a. Distribution staff will try to call limited numbers of beneficiaries to distribution points at a time to avoid unnecessary crowds at the site.
 - b. Distribution staff will instruct beneficiaries to maintain two metres from each other throughout the distribution process.

- c. Distribution staff will use a rope or tape at the collection point to cordon off a two-metre area around the desk, as much as is feasible. This will ensure that the collection point is accessible to only one beneficiary at a time.
4. Manage the flow of beneficiary traffic at the distribution site.
 - a. Upon arrival at the distribution site, distribution staff will direct beneficiaries to a hand washing station followed by the temperature check area to have their body temperature taken using a non-invasive thermometer. Ideally, the temperature check will be conducted by a medical or health professional endorsed by government authorities. Health officials will ensure that disinfectant is used to clean the thermometers between each individual.
 - b. If a beneficiary is detected to have a fever, they will be directed to a designated specified sheltered or covered area for follow up with health officials. Distribution staff will inform identified beneficiaries that they will receive rations irrespective of the results of the temperature test.
 - c. Beneficiaries cleared at the temperature check area will then be directed to the verification checkpoint.
 - d. Beneficiaries will not be allowed to pass through the distribution point more than once.
 - e. Once inside the distribution area, distribution staff will monitor the flow of beneficiary traffic and guide them to the identity verification and collection points, ensuring that all stakeholders maintain a separation of two metres between them at all times.

Annex 1: Sample site plan for Food distribution sites in the COVID-19 environment

