

Minimum Standards in Food Aid

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Minimum Standards in Food Aid

Introduction

The minimum standards for Food Aid are a practical expression of the principles and rights embodied in the Humanitarian Charter. The Charter is concerned with the most basic requirements for sustaining the lives and dignity of those affected by calamity or conflict, as reflected in the body of international human rights, humanitarian, and refugee law. It is on this basis that agencies offer their services. They undertake to act in accordance with the principles of humanity and impartiality, and with the other principles set out in the *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief*. The Humanitarian Charter reaffirms the fundamental importance of three key principles:

- * the right to life with dignity
- * the distinction between combatants and non-combatants
- * the principle of non-refoulement

The minimum standards fall into two broad categories: those that relate directly to people's rights; and those that relate to agency processes which help ensure people acquire these rights. Some of the minimum standards combine both of these categories.

1 The importance of food in emergencies

All people need to consume adequate quantities of food of sufficient quality for their health and well-being. If a community's normal means of accessing food is compromised by disaster, a food aid intervention may be required. When people are unable to gain access to enough food, they are more likely to engage in short-term survival strategies, such as excessive disposal of household assets, which can lead to destitution, ill health and other long-term negative consequences. Food aid can thus act as an important mechanism to help develop people's self-reliance and restore their capacity to respond to future shocks.

Without enough food, other humanitarian assistance interventions are likely to be less effective. Cases of observable malnutrition will increase, despite the existence of nutrition programmes; health interventions alone will not be enough to prevent illnesses that are compounded by lack of adequate nutritional intake; and even if there are adequate hygiene facilities, people will continue to be susceptible to risk of disease because of weakened immune systems and diminished bodily reserves.

The purpose of food aid is to:

- * Sustain life by ensuring adequate availability and access to food by people affected by disaster. (See also Minimum Standards in Nutrition, chapter 2.)
- * Provide sufficient food resources to eliminate the need for survival strategies which may result in long-term negative consequences to human dignity, household viability, livelihood security and the environment.
- * Provide a short-term income transfer or substitution to people to allow household resources to be invested for recovery.

Women usually assume overall responsibility for food in the household and because they and their children are the major recipients of food aid, they have an important role to play in helping to ensure that food aid programmes are equitable, appropriate and accessible. Gender roles and the cultural practices that are likely to affect how women and men access food aid will need to be taken into consideration; and measures to monitor, prevent and respond to gender-based violence or sexual exploitation at food distribution points will be needed. It is important therefore that women's participation in the design and implementation of food aid programmes is encouraged wherever possible.

2 Finding your way around this chapter

This chapter is divided into seven sections (analysis, participation, coordination etc), each of which includes the following:

- * **The minimum standards:** these specify the minimum levels to be attained in each area.
- * **Key indicators:** these are 'signals' that show whether the standard has been attained. They provide a way of measuring and communicating both the impact, or result, of programmes as well as the process, or methods, used. The indicators may be qualitative or quantitative.
- * **Guidance notes:** these include specific points to consider when applying the standard and indicators in different situations, guidance on tackling practical difficulties, and advice on priority issues. They may also include critical issues relating to the standard or indicators, and describe dilemmas, controversies or gaps in current knowledge. Filling these gaps will help improve the minimum standards for food aid in the future.

Additional critical issues are highlighted in Appendix 1 and a select bibliography is provided in Appendix 2.

The standards have been developed and arranged in a deliberate sequence. The first section deals with the analysis of the problem and participation of the people affected by the disaster. The remaining sections (requirements, targeting, resource management, logistics and distribution) follow in a logical progression and cover the main aspects of the food aid programme. Section 7 applies to all work and deals with issues related to the human capacity required to implement effective food aid programmes.

Reference to other sectors' technical standards is made where relevant. The purpose of this is to highlight how work in one sector is closely linked to work in other sectors, and that progress in one is dependent on progress in other areas.

In particular, there are close connections between the food aid and nutrition standards. The two sectors overlap in terms of the types of information required for assessment of the situation and identification of needs. There is also commonality with respect to defining nutritional (and hence food) requirements.

The two have been kept as separate chapters for three reasons. First, nutrition in emergencies is concerned with more than making decisions about food aid needs. Second, food aid programming carries with it specific requirements regarding financial and logistical management procedures; merging the two sectors would have made the chapter too long and too broad. Third, nutrition is associated with broader issues of food security rather than simply food aid. Food aid might be one component of a food security response and further standards are needed to cover this area.

The Minimum Standards

1 Analysis

Programmes that meet the needs of disaster-affected populations must be based on a clear understanding of the current situation, including political and security factors, and anticipated developments. The people affected by the disaster, agencies, donors and local authorities need to know that interventions are appropriate and effective. Analysis of the effects of the disaster and of the impact of the food aid programme itself are therefore critical. If the problem is not correctly identified and understood then it will be difficult, if not impossible, to make the right response.

Analysis of the need to provide food aid to a disaster-affected population presents special difficulties. Disaster may reduce people's access to food directly, by affecting production or household food stocks; or it may reduce access indirectly, by preventing access to markets, for example. In some situations, food aid may be only one of a number of ways of restoring people's access to food; alternatives might include road repair after an earthquake or the sale of food to stabilise market prices.

With the exception of specific cases of population displacement where people probably have no access to food at all, disaster-affected populations are often able to find part of their own food supply from their own resources. No practical assessment technique exists which can discriminate precisely between the different food aid needs of households within a population. It is therefore impossible to determine exactly the food aid needs of a population, except when people are wholly dependent on food aid for survival. Nevertheless, an agreed population estimate must be established. There are also practical limitations to the accuracy with which food aid can be targeted to those in need. It is important to be aware of these practical difficulties when using the analysis standards.

These standards apply before any programme takes place and throughout the programme cycle. Analysis should start with an immediate initial assessment that identifies the impact of the disaster and whether and how to respond. It continues with monitoring, which identifies how well the programme is meeting needs and determines whether changes are required; and with evaluation, which determines the overall effectiveness of the programme and identifies lessons for the future.

Given that techniques for assessing food needs in a disaster are limited, the sharing of information and knowledge among all those involved is fundamental to achieving a full understanding of the problem and coordinated assistance. Documenting and disseminating

information from the analysis process contributes to a broad understanding of the adverse public health and other livelihood consequences of disasters, and can assist in the development of improved disaster prevention and mitigation strategies.

Analysis standard 1: initial assessment

Before any programme decisions are made, there is a demonstrated understanding of the basic conditions that create risk of food insecurity and the need for food aid.

Key indicators

* An immediate initial assessment that follows internationally accepted procedures is carried out by appropriately experienced personnel.

* The assessment is conducted in cooperation with a multi-sectoral team (water and sanitation, nutrition, food, shelter, health), local authorities, women and men from the affected population and humanitarian agencies intending to respond to the situation.

* The information is gathered and presented in a way that allows for transparent and consistent decision-making.

* Data are disaggregated by sex and age.

* The information collected should include:

- The extent and nature of any population displacement.

- Information on people's access to food before the disaster including:

- The affected population's normal means of access to food prior to the disaster, including any seasonal considerations.

- Social, economic and political factors that influenced the affected population's access to food prior to the disaster, including variations within and between populations in the area concerned.

- Information on, and analysis of, the effects of the disaster on people's access to food including:

- Morbidity and malnutrition.

- Direct effects of the disaster on households of different economic types.

Indirect effects on the wider economy and political economy including changes in market supply, demand and price; changes in political control of food supply.

Factors affecting the safety and security of the population and constraints on freedom of movement and access.

Evidence that households are unable to meet food deficits.

The relative needs of different groups within the population (eg with respect to age, gender).

The extent to which intervention is required to prevent impoverishment through the loss of productive assets or adoption of extreme measures to earn income.

The possible negative impact of food aid.

* Recommendations are made about the need for external assistance and the options available. If assistance is required, recommendations are made on priorities, a strategy for intervention and resources needed. There is reference to:

- The size, scope and duration of a food aid programme.
- The estimated number of people affected and demographic characteristics.
- The social and political structure of the population.
- Local capacity and resources.
- The needs of groups at risk.
- Access to the affected population and the best methods for making food available.
- The length of time food aid may be required.
- The necessary logistical requirements and resources to support the effective delivery of food aid; local infrastructure and existing facilities and services.
- Factors affecting the personal safety and security of the affected population: the specific security threats faced by vulnerable groups, especially women and girls, are taken into account in the design of food aid programmes.

- The possible immediate negative effects of food aid including: population movements to food distribution sites; increased insecurity around food aid sites; depopulation of agricultural production sites; disruption of local markets; decreased agricultural production.
- The possible long-term implications and environmental impact of the interventions proposed.

* An assessment report is produced that covers key areas and appropriate recommendations.

* Assessment findings are made available to other sectors, local authorities, participating agencies and male and female representatives from the affected population.

Guidance notes

1. **Internationally accepted procedures for initial assessment:** see MSF (1995), Young (1992) and WFP/UNHCR (December 1997).

2. **Timeliness:** timeliness is of the essence for the initial assessment, which should be carried out as soon as possible after the disaster. As a general rule, a report should be generated within a week of arrival at the site of the disaster, though this depends on the particular event and the wider situation.

3. **People conducting the assessment:** people who are able to collect information from all groups in the affected population in a culturally acceptable manner should be included, especially with regard to gender analysis and language skills. Ideally, there should be a balance in the numbers of men and women taking part.

4. **Assessment procedure:** the procedure for conducting the assessment should be agreed upon by all participants before field work begins and specific tasks contributing to the assessment should be assigned accordingly.

5. **Gathering information:** there are many different techniques for information gathering and these should be chosen carefully to match the situation and the type of information required. As a general rule, information should be gathered more frequently when the situation is changing more rapidly, and when there are critical developments such as new population movements or an epidemic outbreak of diarrhoea. Initial assessments may be quick and unrefined but analysis improves as more time and data are available. Checklists are a useful way of ensuring that all the key questions have been examined.

6. Sources of information: it is important to access information that is already available. This includes existing literature, relevant historical material and pre-emergency data. Discussions with appropriate, knowledgeable people including donors, agency staff, government personnel, local specialists, male and female community leaders, elders, health staff, teachers, traders, and so on are also useful. Group discussions with members of the affected population can yield useful information on beliefs and practices. Other sources of information include early warning systems and vulnerability assessments, and national or regional level preparedness plans.

The methods used for collecting information and the limits of its reliability must be clearly communicated. Information should never be presented in such a way as to provide a misleading picture of the true situation.

7. Underlying issues: an awareness of the rights of those affected, under international law, should underpin the assessment. Initial assessment and subsequent analysis should demonstrate an awareness of underlying structural, political, security, economic, demographic and environmental issues operating in the area. It is imperative that prior experience and the views of the people affected by the disaster are taken into consideration when analysing the dynamics and impact of the new emergency. This requires inclusion of local expertise and knowledge in data collection and analysis of resources, capacities, vulnerabilities and needs. The current and pre-emergency living conditions of displaced and non-displaced people in the area must also be considered.

8. Livestock: where livestock husbandry is a key livelihood strategy, assessment and analysis should determine the nature and scale of the threat to livestock health and mortality. Consideration should be given to terms of trade between livestock and grain, distress sale of livestock, right to pasture and water, and access to veterinary services as indicators of the impact of the threat.

9. Groups at risk: the needs of groups that are at risk of additional harm such as women, adolescents, unaccompanied minors, children, elderly people, physically and people with disabilities must be considered. Gender roles within the social system need to be identified

10. Recovery: thinking and analysis concerning the post-disaster recovery period should be part of the initial assessment, so that interventions to meet immediate emergency requirements can serve to foster recovery among the affected population.

Analysis standard 2: monitoring and evaluation

The performance and effectiveness of the food aid programme and changes in the context are monitored and evaluated.

Key indicators

- * The information collected for monitoring and evaluation is timely and useful; it is recorded and analysed in an accurate, logical, consistent and transparent manner.
- * Systems are in place that enable stock levels, movements and distributions to be monitored.
- * Supply chain monitoring is established, and identifies problems that require corrective action.
- * The quality of the food distribution system is monitored.
- * End-user monitoring through household-level visits and interviews ensures people can provide feedback on the effectiveness of the food aid intervention.
- * There is regular analytical reporting on the impact of the emergency and of the programme on the nutrition situation. There is also reporting of any contextual changes and other factors that may necessitate adjustment to the programme.
- * Systems are in place that enable an information flow between the programme, other sectors, the affected population, the relevant local authorities, donors and others as needed.
- * Monitoring activities provide information on the effectiveness of the programme in meeting the needs of different groups within the affected population.
- * Women, men and children from the affected population are regularly consulted, and are involved in monitoring activities.
- * The programme is evaluated with reference to stated objectives and agreed minimum standards to measure its overall effectiveness and impact on the affected population.

Guidance notes

1. **Duty:** agencies carrying out food aid programmes are entrusted with a considerable resource for the benefit of people whose ability to access food has been severely

compromised. As with other resources, agencies have a duty to monitor how food aid and programme funds are used.

2. Use of monitoring information: emergencies are volatile and dynamic by definition. Regular and current information is therefore vital in ensuring that programmes remain relevant. Information derived from continual monitoring of programmes should be fed into reviews and evaluations. In some circumstances, a shift in strategy may be required to respond to major changes in the context or needs.

3. Use of assessment information: information generated by the assessment process is used for monitoring and evaluation activities for the food aid programme.

4. Monitoring activities may include: regular audit review of inventory documents and reporting on commodity movements; independent checks on the quantity and equity of the distribution; review of distribution records and random checks on rations received; and random visits to households receiving food aid to ascertain the acceptability and usefulness of the ration.

5. Household visits: monitoring through sample household visits provides information concerning the acceptability of the ration and how people use it. Household visits also enable identification of people who meet the selection criteria but who are not receiving food aid.

6. Wider effects: monitoring should consider the effect of the food distribution system on: the agricultural cycle, market conditions, availability of agricultural inputs and agricultural activities.

7. Safety: monitoring of food distribution points is critical to ensure that food distribution is safe and equitable, particularly for women and children.

8. Using and disseminating information: information collected should be directly relevant to the programme, in other words it should be useful and should be used. It should also be made available as needed to other sectors and agencies, and to the affected populations. The means of communication used (dissemination methods, language and so on) must be appropriate for the intended audience.

9. People involved in monitoring: when monitoring requires consultation, people who are able to collect information from all groups in the affected population in a culturally acceptable manner should be included, especially with regard to gender and language skills. Women's involvement should be encouraged.

10. Evaluation: evaluation is important because it measures effectiveness, identifies lessons for future preparedness, mitigation and humanitarian assistance, and promotes accountability. Evaluation refers here to two, linked processes:

a) Internal programme evaluation is normally carried out by staff as part of the regular analysis and review of monitoring information. The agency must also evaluate the effectiveness of all its programmes in a given disaster situation or compare its programmes across different situations.

b) External evaluation may by contrast be part of a wider evaluation exercise by agencies and donors, and may take place, for example, after the acute phase of the emergency. When evaluations are carried out it is important that the techniques and resources used are consistent with the scale and nature of the programme, and that the report describes the methodology employed and the processes followed in reaching conclusions. Outcomes of evaluations should be disseminated to all the humanitarian actors, including the affected population.

Analysis standard 3: participation

The disaster-affected population has the opportunity to participate in the design and implementation of the assistance programme.

Key indicators

* Women and men from the disaster-affected population are consulted, and are involved in decision-making that relates to needs assessment, programme design and implementation.

* Women and men from the disaster-affected population receive information about the assistance programme, and have the opportunity to comment back to the assistance agency about the programme.

Guidance notes

1. **Equity:** the participation of disaster-affected people in decision-making, programme design and implementation helps to ensure that programmes are equitable and effective. Special effort should be made to ensure the participation of women and balanced male and female representation within the assistance programme. Participation in the food aid programme may also serve to reinforce people's sense of dignity and worth in times of crisis. It generates a

sense of community and ownership which can help ensure the safety and security of those who are receiving assistance, as well as those who are responsible for its implementation.

2. People can be involved in the food aid programme in different ways: for example through provision of paid and volunteer labour for handling and distribution; through participation on distribution committees; through involvement in decision-making on ration levels and selection criteria; by disseminating information about food distributions; by supplying household lists; by assisting in crowd control and security.

3. Coordination committees: coordination committees help ensure people's involvement in the assistance programme. Gender, age, ethnicity and socio-economic status should be taken into consideration in order to ensure that committees adequately represent the affected population. Acknowledged political leaders, female and male community leaders and religious leaders should also be represented. The roles and functions of a coordination committee should be agreed upon when it is set up.

4. Seeking views and opinions: participation can also be achieved through regular polling and discussions. This can take place during distribution, through home visits or when addressing individual concerns. Group discussions with members of the affected community can yield useful information on cultural beliefs and practices.

2 Requirements

The initial assessment and analysis of the emergency situation should identify people's own food and income sources, and indicate the quantity and type of food assistance required to maintain adequate nutritional status for the general population.

The standard for food aid requirements is based on WHO's planning estimate for a typical population (for further details see Nutrition, Appendix 2, in chapter 2).

Food aid requirements may be established for:

A general ration: to provide a complete basket of food commodities in quantities sufficient to meet requirements (see indicators below).

A complementary ration: to provide one or two food commodities to complement existing foods available and accessible to the affected population (for example, pulses and oil might be provided to complement locally accessible cereals).

A supplementary ration: to provide specific foods as a supplement to the general ration, in order to cover the needs of particular groups. Typically such groups would include malnourished individuals, young children and/or pregnant or nursing mothers.

Requirements standard

The food basket and rations are designed to bridge the gap between the affected population's requirements and their own food sources.

Key indicators

* Requirements are based on the following WHO initial planning estimates:

- 2,100 kcals per person per day.
- 10-12% of total energy is provided by protein.
- 17% of total energy is provided from fat.
- Adequate micronutrient intake through fresh or fortified foods.

* Estimates of people's food and income sources include consideration of:

- Market and income opportunities.
- Foraging and wild food potential.
- Agricultural seasons and access to productive assets.
- Sources of income and coping strategies.

* Ration scales include consideration of:

General nutritional requirements.

Specific needs of vulnerable groups.

Access to alternative sources of food and/or income.

* Commodity selection includes consideration of:

Local availability and market impact.

Local acceptability and preparation.

Fitness and nutritional composition.

Fuel requirements for cooking.

Other nutritional factors (see general nutritional support standard 3, in chapter 2).

Guidance notes

1. **Initial reference value**: it is recommended that the initial reference value of 2,100 kcal per person per day is used as a planning figure when the adjustment factors are not yet known. The ICRC uses a ration requirement of 2,400 kcals per person per day as their reference point. The additional 300 kcal allows the needs of specific groups under the care of supplementary feeding programmes to be met. (See Nutrition standards in chapter 2. See also WFP/ UNHCR (1997), *Guidelines on Estimating Food and Nutritional Needs in Emergencies*)

2. **Coordination**: all organisations involved in providing food aid should be committed to coordinated assistance. Improperly coordinated food aid programmes can exacerbate existing problems or create new ones. Some groups may be over-served, while others are unfairly deprived. Different ration scales, food baskets and/or selection criteria may result in people moving to where they think they can receive the most benefit. It is also important to coordinate significant local purchases of food commodities. Failure to do so can create problems such as agencies bidding against each other and increasing prices. Excess purchases may create

shortages and generate price increases for the non-recipient population. Working together to agree on food aid policies and activities helps ensure that interventions are effective and may also serve to stabilise a volatile situation.

3. Adjusting the ration level: populations affected by natural disasters may adopt strategies that enable them to provide for a significant part of their food requirements (eg early harvesting/salvage of crops, livestock sales, cash labour). In this case the ration level may be adjusted down from the initial reference value.

4. Other cases of food deficit: periodic food security assessments should target female- and adolescent-headed households to identify cases of food deficit which do not fall into normal assessment categories.

. Early use of food aid: using food aid early on to meet expected shortfalls in response to slow-onset disasters can result in a need for less food aid later on and less household decapitalisation, making recovery easier.

6. Fuel assessment: when assessing food requirements, a fuel assessment should be undertaken so that recipients can cook their food in ways that avoid adverse effects to their health or degradation of the environment. Agencies should provide appropriate fuel or establish a wood harvesting programme that is supervised for the safety of women and children who collect firewood. Grain mills should be provided to reduce cooking time and the amount of fuel required. (See Nutrition, general nutritional support standard 4: food handling and safety, in chapter 2.)

7. Unfamiliar foods: where the food basket contains unfamiliar food, cooking instructions should be provided to women and other food preparers to maximise acceptance and minimise nutrient loss.

8. Essential non-food items: it is important to ensure that there is adequate provision of essential non-food items, such as soap. A lack of these may result in recipients of food aid trading food commodities to meet their needs. (See Shelter and Site Planning, household items standards, in chapter 4.)

9. Additional food commodities: additional food commodities may be provided during selected times of the year (eg planting season) or for specific periods of increased activity to meet caloric requirements. In cases of food insecurity, it may be advisable to distribute food commodities at the same time as seed distribution. This serves to ensure that seed is not eaten, bartered or sold to obtain food, and provides additional energy for clearing and planting fields.

10. Supporting recovery: see Appendix 1.

3 Targeting

Targeting standard

Recipients of food aid are selected on the basis of food need and/or vulnerability to food insecurity.

Key indicators

- * Targeting objectives are agreed between the coordinating authorities, female and male representatives of the affected population and implementing agencies.
- * Targeting criteria are clearly documented, whether in terms of population group(s) or geographical location.
- * The distribution system is monitored to ensure that the targeting criteria are respected.

Guidance notes

1. The objectives of targeting food aid may include any of the following:

- Saving lives, if nutritional status is of immediate concern.
- Strengthening food security and/or the local economy.
- Protecting the nutritional/health status of specific sub-groups within a population who are physiologically vulnerable (such as young children, adolescents, breastfeeding mothers, pregnant women, elderly people and people with disabilities).
- Preserving households' assets (if these are being sold to cover food needs).
- Providing food supplements to those whose food need is caused by social/political vulnerability (for example, separated minors, refugees or displaced persons, female-headed households, people with disabilities and ethnic or religious minority groups).
- Effectively using limited available resources (whether this is available food, logistical infrastructure, experienced personnel, transportation and so forth).

2. **Cost:** targeting sub-groups or individuals within a population is more costly to administer than a general distribution. Thus, if the objective of the targeting is to manage limited resources, the cost of the targeting should be weighed against potential savings.

3. **Responding to change:** the objectives and criteria for targeting may need to be changed to respond to contextual changes. Any modifications should be clearly communicated to all stakeholders.

4 Resource Management

Food commodities, like all resources entrusted to humanitarian agencies, must be managed in an effective and accountable way. Many agencies have standardised commodity or inventory management procedures and accounting systems that are based on principles of sound, transparent resource stewardship. Inventory systems are essential for producing reports for donors. More importantly, they provide programme planners and managers with information to make decisions about service priorities for the people receiving food aid.

Agencies are expected to take all reasonable measures to safeguard the food commodities in their care. The theft or diversion of food aid cannot be tolerated, so third party contractors acting on behalf of agencies, such as transporters and forwarding agents, must accept liability for commodities in their care.

Resource management standard

Food aid commodities and programme funds are managed, tracked, and accounted for using a transparent and auditable system.

Key indicators

* Safe stewardship practices are maintained to ensure that all commodities are safeguarded until distribution to recipient households:

- Storage is safe and clean, and protects food commodities from damage and loss.
- Third party service providers assume total liability for food commodities in their care and agree to reimburse any losses.
- Food commodities are inspected and unfit commodities are certified and disposed of in accordance with standard procedures.
- Damaged commodities are inspected and salvaged to the best possible extent.
- Physical inventory counts are periodically reconciled with stock balances.

* Contracting for goods and services is transparent and fair.

* Inventory accounting and reporting systems are established:

- Waybills document commodity transactions.

- Stock ledgers provide summaries of receipts, issues and balances.
- All losses are identified and accounted for.
- Summary inventory reports are compiled and made available.

Guidance notes

1. **Reporting requirements:** most bilateral and multilateral donors of food aid specify reporting requirements for food aid. Agencies should be aware of these requirements and establish the means to meet them.

2. **Accounting system** *Generally Accepted Commodity Accountability Principles*, published by Food Aid Management (1993), provides guidance in establishing a food aid accounting system.

3. **Certification:** where possible, commodities purchased for distribution should be accompanied by phytosanitary certificates or other inspection certificates that confirm fitness for human consumption.

4. **Disposal of commodities unfit for human consumption:** if commodities are shown by qualified inspection to be unfit for human consumption, every effort must be made to ensure that they do not enter local markets. Methods of disposal may include sale for animal feed, burial or incineration.

5. **Transparency:** fair and open contracting procedures are essential to avoid the impression of favouritism or personal financial reward and should be followed. Most agencies have contracting and procurement guidelines that meet requirements for non-profit or charitable status.

6. **Expertise:** experienced food aid managers should be recruited to all food aid programmes in order to manage and train permanent staff, and/or to establish inventory management systems.

7. **Documentation:** a sufficient stock of inventory management documentation and forms (waybills, stock ledgers, reporting forms) must be available at locations where food aid is received, stored, and/or dispatched in order to maintain a documented audit trail of commodity transactions.

8. **Providing information:** the use of local media or traditional methods for disseminating news should be considered as a way of keeping people informed about food aid supplies and

operations. This reinforces transparency. Women's groups in the affected population may be enlisted to help provide information to the community about food aid programmes.

5 Logistics

Agencies must have sufficient capacity to manage the logistics of food aid programmes. If food aid is available, but agencies do not have adequate resources and systems to deliver it to the affected population, the programme will fail. The goal of logistics management is to deliver the right goods, to the right location, in the right condition, at the right time and for the right price.

The weight and volume of food aid required to sustain a large population severely affected by disaster may measure thousands of tonnes. The physical movement of food commodities to point of distribution may involve an extensive network of purchasers, forwarding agents, transporters and receivers, and multiple handling and transfers from one mode of transport to another. These networks, or supply chains, are put together using a series of contracts and agreements which define roles and responsibilities and establish liability and compensation among the contracting parties.

Establishing the supply chain entails cooperation between donors, humanitarian agencies and local authorities. Each party has specifically defined roles and responsibilities, serving as a link, or series of links, in the supply chain. As a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, all parties involved in food aid logistics share equal responsibility for maintaining the flow of sufficient commodities to meet distribution targets and schedules established by the food aid programme.

Logistics standard

Agencies have the necessary organisational and technical capacity to manage the procurement, receipt, transport, storage and distribution of food commodities safely, efficiently and effectively.

Key indicators

* The supply chain is established and includes procurement, documentation, transport, storage and handling from point(s) of origin to final destination(s) or distribution site(s).

* Local purchases of food commodities and contracting for logistics resources and services are coordinated; impact on the local market is taken into consideration.

* Information on food aid stock levels, expected arrivals, distributions and any other information relevant to planning, forecasting and managing the flow and availability of food aid is shared between agencies.

* Special staff are assigned responsibility for logistics management (eg planning and control, importation and clearance, primary and secondary logistics, warehouse and inventory management, transport planning and management, contract management and supervision).

* Delays in distribution arising from a commodity shortfall are no longer than than two weeks.

Guidance notes

1. **Sources of food aid commodities may include:** diversion (loan or reallocation) from existing programmes using food aid (agency programmes or government grain reserves); loans from, or swaps with, commercial suppliers; commercial purchases (locally, regionally, internationally); direct supply of food from bilateral and multilateral donor agencies.

2. **Agency roles:** in large scale disasters, WFP usually plays a key role in the mobilisation of food aid and in primary logistics. WFP may be responsible for all food aid logistics up to the Extended Delivery Point (EDP), an inland destination close to the affected area. Implementing partners (humanitarian agencies or government) assume responsibility for transportation from the EDP to the distribution site and distribution to recipient households.

3. **Using local services:** local or regional freight forwarders and/or transport brokers can provide general logistics services to a client under contract and are a valuable source of knowledge on local regulations and procedures.

4. **Stock levels:** tracking and forecasting of stock levels along the supply chain highlights anticipated shortfalls or problems with the supply of food commodities. Alternatives and solutions need to be sought to avoid or reduce problems in the supply chain.

5. **Measuring performance:** logistics accounting and inventory systems generate valuable information for measuring performance. For example:

- **Food distribution plans** can be compared with actual food deliveries.

Extreme deviations from the plan can direct managers' attention to problems or bottle-necks in the logistics system.

- **Budgeted and actual costs** for each activity in the logistics system (eg handling, clearance, storage, transportation and distribution) can be compared to assess cost control within the logistics system. Extreme deviations from the budget can direct managers' attention to inefficiencies and/or economies of scale within the logistics system.

- **Tonne-kilometres** are frequently used to measure performance and productivity in trucking fleets. Extreme deviations from an acceptable range of activity can direct managers' attention to problems in truck tasking and/or transit and turn-around times.

- **'Throughput'** measures the volume of goods handled and moved through the warehouse. It is useful for identifying the number of staff needed for a specific level of activity, and can be used to produce cost-savings and to increase productivity.

- **'Pipeline analysis'** views the logistics network, from origin(s) to destination(s), as a network of pipelines through which food commodities move. It is useful for producing an estimation of the expected duration of existing food aid stocks, and a schedule of delivery dates for shipments (to avoid stocks dropping below requirement). Pipeline analysis is key to forecasting potential problems and to planning procurement and delivery schedules.

6. **Links with other sectors:** the principles of good logistics management, accountability and transparency apply equally to the planning and delivery of materials and supplies for water and sanitation programmes, shelter and household support and health services. The logistics of food aid operations differ only from the other services in being quantitatively larger.

7. **Theft:** at all stages of the supply chain, there is the potential for loss of goods through theft. Stock control and storage systems must be designed and run in such a way as to minimise the risk of theft. This is particularly an issue in situations of armed conflict, where food may be at risk from banditry or could be commandeered by armed forces. Where large quantities are involved, this can be a significant factor in the war economy.

6 Distribution

An appropriate distribution method is central to the effectiveness of food aid. Distribution must therefore be considered during the initial assessment. Food aid may be distributed freely to the general population, or to specific segments or groups within a population. It may also be distributed as payment for work, or may be sold on the commercial market to address problems of supply.

Equity in the distribution process is of primary importance and the involvement of people from the disaster-affected population in decision-making and implementation should be encouraged. People should be informed about the quantity and type of food rations to be distributed, and they should feel assured that the distribution process is fair and that they receive what has been promised. Any differences between rations, for example adjusted rations provided to groups at risk, must be explained and understood.

Distribution standard

The method of food distribution is equitable, and appropriate to local conditions. Recipients are informed of their ration entitlement and its rationale.

Key indicators

- * People are aware of the quantity and type of ration to be distributed for each distribution cycle, and reasons for any differences from established norms are provided.
- * People receive the quantities and types of commodities planned.
- * The method of distribution is readily accessible and scheduled at convenient times to minimise disruption to everyday activity.
- * Recipients are involved in deciding the most efficient and equitable method of distribution; women are consulted and have an equal input into decision-making.
- * When deciding the frequency of distributions (monthly or more frequently) there is consideration of:
 - The cost of transporting commodities from the distribution centre.
 - The time spent travelling to and from the distribution centre.

- The security of recipients and commodities once distributed.

Guidance notes

1. **Participation:** the extent to which people feel able to be involved in the distribution depends on the effect of the disaster on their social structures. Communities affected by slow-onset drought or other natural disasters may remain intact and continue to function well, enabling them to participate fully in the distribution process. By contrast, communities that are severely affected by war and civil strife may not at first be able to assume a significant role in the distribution process; they are more likely to do so as the situation stabilises and civil structures emerge. Participation in distribution committees may also serve to stimulate civil society. The participation of women should be actively sought.

2. **Registration:** formal registration of households receiving food aid should be carried out in the initial stages. Independent registration should be carried out wherever possible by the agency concerned. Women have the right to be registered in their own names if requested. Lists developed by local authorities and community-generated family lists may also be used. Corruption and/or control by powerful individuals may mean that female- and adolescent-headed households and people with exceptional vulnerabilities are omitted from distribution lists. The involvement of women from various segments of the population should improve representation of the community. In situations where registration is impossible at the initial stage, it should nonetheless be completed after three months when the population has stabilised and if there is an expectation that food aid will be required for longer periods.

3. **Random weighing:** random weighing of rations collected by households leaving the distribution site measures the accuracy and competence of distribution management. It also helps to ensure equity.

4. **Distribution of food aid should be equitable :** variation of 20% between distribution targets (households or communities) is within the acceptable range.

5. **Distribution methods:** the method of distribution should evolve over time. In the early stages, community managed distribution based on family lists or population estimates provided by local communities may be the only way possible to get food aid distributed among the affected population. Community managed distributions should be monitored closely by the responsible agency to ensure that norms are met.

6. **Recipients should be informed about changes:** changes in the food basket or ration level caused by insufficient availability of food aid must be discussed with the recipients through the distribution committee, or female and male community leaders, and a course of action should

be jointly developed. The distribution committee can inform the population of the change and why this has come about.

7. Substitution ratios: WFP/UNHCR distribution guidelines recommend that the following substitution ratios are used for periods of less than one month when all commodities in the food basket are not available:

Blended food and beans	1:1
Sugar and oil	2:1
Cereals and beans	2:1
Cereal and oil	3:1

8. Minimising security risks: as with the distribution of any valuable commodity, food distribution can create security risks, including both the risk of diversion and the potential for violence. When delivery of desperately needed food is made, tensions can run high. Women, children, elderly people and people with disabilities may be especially vulnerable, and may be unable to obtain their entitlement, or have it taken from them by force. The risks must be assessed in advance and steps taken to minimise them. Steps should include adequate supervision of distributions and appropriate guarding of distribution points. One essential safeguard is to communicate clearly what people should expect to receive. For example, ration quantities should be displayed prominently at distribution sites, written in the local language and/or drawn pictorially so that people can know their entitlements.

7 Human Resource Capacity and Training

All aspects of humanitarian assistance rely on the skills, knowledge and commitment of staff and volunteers working in difficult and sometimes insecure conditions. The demands placed on them can be considerable, and if they are to conduct their work to a level where minimum standards are assured, it is essential that they are suitably experienced and trained and that they are adequately managed and supported by their agency.

Capacity standard 1: competence

Food aid programmes are implemented by staff who have appropriate qualifications and experience for the duties involved, and who are adequately managed and supported.

Key indicators

- * All staff working on a food aid programme are informed of the purpose and methods of activities they are asked to carry out.
- * Assessments, programme design and key technical decision-making are carried out by staff with relevant technical qualifications and emergency experience.
- * Staff and volunteers are aware of gender issues relating to the affected population. They know how to report incidents of sexual violence.
- * Staff with technical and management responsibilities have access to support for informing and verifying key decisions.
- * Food programme managers and supervisors have experience in resource management, safe stewardship, logistics and/or using food as a resource in humanitarian assistance or development programmes.
- * Staff and volunteers involved in information gathering are thoroughly briefed and regularly supervised.
- * Food aid programme staff have the demonstrated ability to advise members of the affected population on safe and appropriate use and preparation of foods if these are included in a general ration.
- * Targeted feeding interventions have clear written guidelines and protocols.

* All staff involved in targeted feeding have been thoroughly trained and tested on application of the protocols.

* Female food monitors and distributors are equally represented on staff teams.

* Training and supervision mechanisms are in place.

Capacity standard 2: local capacity

Local capacity and skills are used and enhanced by food aid programmes.

Key indicators

* Women and men from the disaster-affected population are included in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of food programmes.

* Selection criteria for international staff recruitment include a commitment to building local capacities for long-term benefit.

* The skills base within existing local partners and institutions and the affected population is tapped and strengthened during the course of the humanitarian assistance programme.

Guidance notes

1. **See:** ODI/People In Aid (1998), Code of Best Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel.

2. **Staffing:** staff and volunteers should demonstrate capabilities equal to their respective assignments. They should also be aware of key aspects of human rights conventions, international humanitarian law and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (see the Humanitarian Charter).

Providing training and support as a part of emergency preparedness is important to ensure that skilled personnel are available to deliver quality services. Given that emergency preparedness cannot be assured in many countries, humanitarian agencies should ensure that qualified and competent staff are identified and properly prepared before eventual assignment to an emergency situation.

When deploying staff and volunteers, agencies should seek to ensure that there is a balance in the number of women and men on emergency teams.

Appendix 1

Other Critical Issues

This section refers in brief to a number of issues that need consideration when food aid is provided. In practice they will be addressed in different ways, according to the specific context and the needs of the people affected by the disaster.

1. Preparedness and early warning

Monitoring of early warning information and a continual state of preparedness are critical. Early warning information should be used to guide programming and to advocate for action and resources on behalf of the affected population. Information about increased levels of food insecurity should be communicated as a matter of course to the relevant bodies .

Agencies working in disaster-prone areas should identify and make use of appropriate early warning systems. These may include locally based agricultural and meteorological monitoring systems and extension networks, national monitoring systems or regional or international early warning systems such as VAM, GIEWS and FEWS. They may monitor specific phenomena such as hurricane development or more general issues such as food security or crop production.

2. Supporting recovery

Food aid can provide the affected population with time to recover from an event that has threatened life and livelihood, to consolidate resources and to start to re-establish the conditions for a normal life.

Programming that aims to improve the availability, access and utilisation of food resources should be put in place at the same time as food aid distributions in order to support recovery of food production capability, initiation of income generating activities and/or recovery of health status.

People congregate at distribution sites, so these provide a natural focus for communication and dissemination of information - such as health and safety awareness, or ration entitlements - adding value to that provided by food distribution activities.

The food distribution infrastructure can be used to support rehabilitation of local trade and markets, and to distribute other material resources, thereby avoiding duplication of costs and effort. Seeds, agricultural tools, other productive materials and non-food assistance items (jerry cans, kitchen sets, soap, shelter materials and blankets) can be distributed in this way.

3. Transition and exit strategies

Agencies that respond to an emergency should define their area of operation, the duration of their involvement and the desired outcomes of the intervention. They should also define a strategy for ending the programme, or making a transition to activities that provide support for further recovery, should this be required, when acute needs have been met.

When local people know the extent of an agency's commitment, they can make better decisions about how to employ household resources. By discussing with them the objectives of the programme, indicators of success and outcomes, problems that would otherwise result from differing expectations can be avoided.

Agencies have a vital role in helping to identify and support appropriate community and household investments that strengthen self-reliance and interdependence.

4. Interpreting nutritional data

Indicators of improved nutritional status must be interpreted with great care and should be used in conjunction with information relating to the population's food security status. Figures showing significantly improved levels of nutrition may mean that the ration mix, the quantities provided and the distribution of food have been effective. They should not be interpreted to mean that people's independent access to food has improved. If people are still unable to provide for their own minimum household food requirements, terminating the aid programme may result in an erosion of the nutritional gains that have been made and precipitate a return to emergency conditions.

Appendix 2

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Other Resources

The WFP *Catalogue of Institutions With Expertise in Food Assistance* is available on the WFP web site: http://.wfp.org/studies/catalog_fa/index.htm

WFP *Vulnerability and Analysis Mapping* web site: <http://www.wfp.it/vam/vahmhome/htm>