



DISTRIBUTION PROTOCOL DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: 'COVID-PROOFING' YOUR DISTRIBUTION ACTIVITIES

Introduction

This protocol aims to detail the precautions to be taken when distributing kits in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, to limit the risks of spreading the virus and to protect those involved (staff, volunteers and item recipients). The distributions can take the form of distributions at people's homes or via group distributions at specified sites.

All staff and volunteers involved in planning or implementation of distributions must be well-versed in general knowledge on COVID-19 prevention and procedures to apply before, during and after distribution activities.

1. FACILITIES AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

- Ensure presence of handwashing facilities/devices, with the below considerations:
 - Requires minimal touch/handling of water and soap.
 - A minimum of 2m distance between users or as directed by local authorities.
 - Height of the handwashing point should be accessible (age sensitive).
 - Provision of soap (or other appropriate/acceptable handwashing material).
 - Easy to clean taps and basin.
 - Connection to water source and storage capacity, and wastewater.
 - Acceptable to the recipients and easy to use.



Click [here](#) to see resources on different handwashing infrastructures and designs.

- Everyone involved in the distribution should have access to basic PPE such as masks. Distribution team members also require gloves. They should also be trained on how to properly put on their masks and its safe disposal. Some basic steps as follows:
 - Perform hand hygiene before putting on the mask.
 - Place the mask on your face carefully, covering your nose, mouth and chin.
 - Avoid touching the front of the mask while using it to avoid contamination.
 - When removing your mask, ensure you clean your hands before doing so.
 - Remove the straps from behind the head or ears, without touching the front of the mask.
 - After you have removed the mask, clean your hands again.
 - Discard the mask, preferably into a closed bin. Wastes should be disposed off as normal municipal waste. If the distribution site does not have access to municipal waste disposal services, carry the wastes with you and dispose off where these services are available.



- Click [here](#) to find out when and how to use masks properly.
- Click [here](#) to see a video on how to handwash with soap and water, and [here](#) for additional resources on handwashing.

- In the context of the pandemic, it is [recommended](#) for all persons, regardless of whether they are using masks or not, should:
 - Maintain physical distance of at least 2m from other persons, especially from those with respiratory symptoms e.g. coughing, sneezing.
 - Perform hand hygiene frequently.
 - Practice respiratory hygiene i.e. cover nose and mouth with a bent elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing, and dispose the tissue immediately after use, and perform hand hygiene.
 - Refrain from touching mouth, nose and eyes.

- Wear a medical mask if you have respiratory symptoms and perform hand hygiene after disposing the mask.
- Carry out routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces.

2. PREPARATION OF KITS AHEAD OF TIME AND ITS TRANSPORTATION

- Goods should be received with a minimum number of personnel.
- Disinfect the packaging before opening them up since studies indicate that the coronavirus can survive on surfaces for up to a few days and therefore pose a risk of transmission. This should be done with a [cloth or wipe](#) that has been soaked in disinfectant.
- Goods should be packed by volunteers wearing PPE, in a space allowing at least the minimum required distance and in a well-ventilated space.
- If the distribution is occurring at another location (i.e. a different than where packing is taking place), load onto the vehicles the needed number of kits (only those for the day's distribution), to avoid bringing back undelivered kits to the storage/packing area.
- Kits that were not distributed should be stored separately from the others to avoid cross-contamination. Disinfect the kits before storing them back.
- Disinfect with:
 - Alcohol with 70%-90% concentration or;
 - 0.1% chlorine solution or;
 - Bleach with 0.1% free chlorine (1L bleach with 2.6% active chlorine + 25L water; note that concentration of active chlorine in bleach varies from country to country).
- When preparing and using disinfectants, observe the following precautions:
 - Minimum recommended PPE is rubber gloves, impermeable aprons and closed shoes
 - Avoid contact with skin and eyes
 - Keep stored away from light and for a maximum of four days
 - Use clear water to prepare disinfectant solution
 - Prepare in a well-ventilated area
 - Use plastic containers for mixing and storing bleach solutions as metal ones can corrode



Click [here](#) to see resources available on disinfection.

WHEN TRAVELLING IN A VEHICLE:

- Apply hand sanitizer each time getting into a vehicle.
- Wear mask when travelling in the vehicle.
- Keep the middle seat empty if possible, to maintain a minimum distance.
- Avoid switching on air conditioning in the vehicle. Windows should be open to allow for better circulation (provided there is no safety/security issue).

3. DISTRIBUTION MODALITIES

- Consider larger distributions in quantity or transfer amount, making it possible to cover needs over a longer period, hence minimizing frequency of distribution.
- Give a ration of several weeks up to three months, depending on availability and the method of distribution (the kit distributed must remain 'transportable' for the recipients).
- Adjust the distribution methods to limit gatherings and contact between the distribution team members and recipients, for example through cash transfer or vouchers.
- For in-kind distributions:
 - Determine the distribution method to adopt. It could be home delivery for the most vulnerable or isolated and/or direct distribution at a specified site.
 - Establish a clear distribution protocol limiting the number of recipients.
 - Clearly determine the task of each team member, for example person manning the reception, crowd control, temperature checking station, etc.

3.1. Distribution protocol for at home distribution

Home distribution makes it possible to target the most vulnerable and isolated beneficiaries. It can also be a good opportunity to raise awareness about hygiene practices and COVID-19 preventive measures.

However, this form of distribution requires more time and staffing and entail a higher level of risk for the distribution team members. See below steps on how to carry out home distributions (see supplementary information: *distribution layout and outline of distribution protocol*):

- The distribution team member should knock on the door and place the kit on the ground. S/He then moves at least 2m back.
- The team member should introduce himself/herself and explain the purpose of their presence.
- Complete the registration process and ensure the contact details of the recipient is captured.
- The team member to proceed with communicating key messages to all household family members (if not, at least to one household representative). Messages should include key hygiene messages (which should relate to what is considered as pertinent issues in that area and/or for that group of population), COVID-19 prevention measures, content of the kit and how to use the distributed items.
- Appropriate information, education and communication (IEC) materials can also be distributed to the recipients to supplement the distribution. Ensure that the IEC material is contextualized to the area and consider key factors such as the targeted population group, cultural and religious beliefs/preferences, literacy level, etc.
- Reminders for the distribution team members:
 - Do not enter people's homes.
 - Keep a distance of at least 2m throughout the distribution activity.
 - Do not have any form of physical contact (instead, give a friendly wave or a gesture which is acceptable to that area or population group).
 - Do not accept and politely decline any food, drinks or gifts from the recipients.

3.2. Distribution protocol at a specified site

Distribution sites have the advantage of being more efficient in terms of staffing and time. However, they require a high level of organization to maintain safety and security for everyone at the distribution site. Below are some key considerations (see supplementary information: *distribution layout and outline of distribution protocol*).

3.2.1. Layout of the distribution site:

- At the entrance area, provide handwashing stations with soap and water. If that is not possible, at least provide access to hand sanitizer. At the handwashing/hand sanitizing stations, put up a poster on how to wash/sanitize hands properly.
- Prepare the site with markings on the ground and make pathways clear (use ropes, barriers, markings on the floor, etc.). The flow and direction of movement of people should also be clearly defined. The distribution site should allow for physical distance of at least 2m between each other.
- Different zones of the distribution site should be marked clearly – recipients should be able to follow a simple flow from the reception area, collection zone and then to the exit point.
- Allow for a separate lane or a secure place for people at risk to collect the kit (e.g. elderly, pregnant or breastfeeding women, people with disabilities, people with pre-existing or chronic health problems).
- High-contact surfaces at the distribution site should be disinfected throughout the distribution process, such as tables, megaphones and some part of vehicles (such as door handles, gear lever, steering wheel, dashboard) with a disinfectant such as Dettol. Avoid spraying directly on the surfaces to be cleaned with the disinfectant. The aim is to avoid the suspension of potential droplets of virus which would be on the surfaces and which would then end up in the air, which may increase the risks of transmission by air. The disinfectants must be sprayed on a clean cloth, which itself is used to clean the surfaces.
- The distribution site should be well-ventilated. If possible, carry out the distribution outside e.g. in a yard of a school or community hall, unused land around the perimeter of a camp, etc. Get the needed approval from local authorities to use the site, if relevant.
- Ensure the site is relatively far from other gathering sites such as markets or stations hubs to avoid the risk of curious crowds. This is also to reduce the risk of transmission.
- Provide a mechanism for providing feedback and lodging complaints without contact such as using suggestion box or a hotline. Information about this can be displayed on a notice board at the entrance area of the distribution site (which could also display key messages on the kits which will be distributed on that day, distribution schedule, kit content, key COVID-19 preventive measures/reminders, etc.).

3.2.2. Procedure for recipient registration and identification

- Ensure the recipient list is ready before distribution activities begin and simplify the registration process as much as possible. This is to limit the interaction time between the recipient with the distribution team member.
- If possible, ensure distribution list contains contact numbers of the recipients, allowing for contact tracing if needed.
- Establish and practice protective measures during this process such as keeping at least a distance of 2m, no physical contact and practice hand washing with soap or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

3.2.3. Scheduling distributions

- Ensure that only one person from a household collects the kit. The kit has to be easily collected and managed by one person.
- Allocate time slots for different groups of recipients and communicate that information in advanced. The number of people allowed at one time at the distribution site varies. Key considerations should be that safe distance can always be maintained, and that sufficient number of volunteers are present to oversee the distribution activities¹.
- One way of doing this is to call different camp blocks or neighborhoods at a specific time or distribute tokens that can only be redeemed between certain hours. In more organized communities, house numbers can also be used to allocate times e.g. anyone with an even house number should attend distribution points between certain hours. Note that for protection and safety reasons, distributions should only take place during daytime hours.

3.2.4. Communication of messages during queuing time

- Hygiene promotion activities which traditionally happens in large gatherings may no longer be appropriate in the context of the pandemic situation. Therefore, alternative solutions to communicating key hygiene messages needs to be explored, while abiding to COVID-19 preventive measures.
- While recipients are queuing up to register or collect the items, seize the opportunity to do hygiene promotion activities. Communicate key hygiene messages, which could be supplemented with relevant IEC materials. This can be done on a one-on-one basis or through the use of a megaphone.

4. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Attached with this protocol is the distribution layout and outline of distribution protocol, which covers:

- Best practices and recommendation on things to do before, during and after a distribution.
- Proposed layout of a distribution site.
- Proposed steps to for a house-to-house distribution.

5. REFERENCES

This protocol has been contextualized from pre-existing guideline/protocol developed by Solidarités International and the French Red Cross. The key references as follows:

- Solidarités International COVID-19 guidance for programmes
<https://solidaritesinternationalecovid19.wordpress.com/>
- French Red Cross (2020). *Kit distribution protocol during COVID-19 outbreak (for distribution at-home and on-site)*
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ox63V3kbTqFyQs6ZG76_T02gEzgw1_n8/view?usp=sharing

Other relevant information/references as follows:

- WHO (2015). *How to handwash? With soap and water*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PmVJQUcm4E>
- WHO (2020). *Coronavirus diseases (COVID-19) advice for the public: When and how to use masks*
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>

¹ Solidarités International mentioned a maximum of 10 to 20 beneficiaries at once, while Action Against Hunger mentioned a [limit of 50 people](#) (or as per government standards).

- Resources on handwashing infrastructures and designs:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ZwSKFJ1E06m9Vkt4cmczPSz7qnaQX-eA?usp=sharing>
- Resources on handwashing:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Utag0XKR0M4vqCzGS-h66NT_P-aYRGEh?usp=sharing
- Resources on disinfection:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11ZbqIV7jwKxKTW6p0x9iljZE8Pl1lwib?usp=sharing>
- There are also other WASH resources related to COVID-19. This is a living document where relevant new and/or updated resources will be added over time. The resources are categorized according to different WASH-related topics and consists of internal and external sources:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1AuH65ytdKMPKDDiayBthI9HUpjmuLTpF>