



Standard Operating Procedure for Emergency Rapid Food Assistance during Multi-Hazard Emergency Response for Rohingya Refugees in Cox's Bazar

Food Security Sector | Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Background and Context

The Food Security Sector (FSS) co-led by World Food Program (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), was established in 2017 to coordinate the food security and livelihood interventions for the Rohingya refugee response in Cox's Bazar. The first prioritized objective of FSS, as indicated in the Joint Response Plan, is to ensure and sustain the timely provision of life-saving nutrition-sensitive food assistance for Rohingya refugees (JRP 2023). The sector provides three main interventions towards food assistance including, the General Food Assistance (GFA) that serves as blanket food assistance for all Rohingya refugees through e-voucher food rations, Fresh Food Vouchers (FFV) to target the most vulnerable Rohingya populations with supplementary access of top-up for Fresh Food Corners, and Rapid Food Assistance (including complementary dry food) for the distribution of life-saving rapid food during emergencies and natural disasters.

Cox's Bazar district is highly vulnerable to natural hazards and food insecurity due to its geography, human pressure, and unsustainable use of natural resources (RIMA, 2022). The district experiences seasonal climate variations and faces threats from monsoons, cyclones, and increased risk of fire incidents during the dry season. This poses a significant danger, especially in densely populated areas like the Rohingya refugee camps, where fires can rapidly spread and intensify.

The Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar have encountered various disasters since the 2017 influx, requiring immediate humanitarian response, specifically rapid food assistance. This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Emergency Rapid Food Assistance aims to enhance coordination, response activities, and stakeholder involvement. The goal is to ensure efficient, and equitable access to food for the Rohingya refugees during emergencies, considering their ongoing dependence on humanitarian food aid and the experience gained from previous emergency responses by FSS actors.

Overview of Emergency Rapid Food Assistance

At the onset of any emergency in the Rohingya camps, including natural and human-caused disasters, the Food Security Sector responds with emergency rapid food assistance for the affected populations through 3 different modalities:

- **For immediate coverage:** Fortified Biscuits (FB) are deployed to all affected households in the camps. In the Cox's Bazar Response, this initial coverage of fortified biscuits (FB) distributions is led by the World Food Programme (WFP) in collaboration with FSS.
- **Hot meals and community kitchens:** At the onset of emergencies, considering that affected populations do not have access to cooking tools and facilities, hot meals distribution should be activated as close as possible to the impacted area.
- **Complementary dry foods:** to complement hot meals and ensure nutritional and caloric intake, complementary dry foods are recommended to be distributed in coordination with FSS.

Minimum Standards for Emergency Rapid Food Assistance



In order to ensure a dignified, efficient, and equitable distribution of rapid food for all affected persons, all responding actors distributing rapid food must adhere to **minimum standards of quality and quantity of food provided, as well as timing of distribution** (Table 1).

Table 1. Minimum standards and specifications for modalities of rapid food distribution:

Assistance Type	Details	Timeline	Duration/Frequency
Fortified Biscuits (FB)	100 (50g) packets per family or equivalent	Within first 24 hours of emergency response	Repeated as needed (led by WFP for all affected persons)
Hot Meals (Lunch and Dinner)	Per individual: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boiled Rice (400 gm) Mixed Vegetables (200gm) Thick dal/lentils (200gm) TOTAL (800 gm) 	Lunch: 11:00 - 13:00 hrs Dinner: 16:00 – 18:00 hrs	Daily – begin within 24 hours of emergency and continue until access to basic provisions are restored and HHs are on e-vouchers.
Complementary Dry Foods	As recommended/ requested by refugees (Per HHs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bread 2 packets (40 slices) Puffed rice (1kg) Molasses / Sugar (0.5kg) Biscuit packets (5 packets, 400 gm) Peanut (Local) (1kg) Pulse (1 kg) Chickpeas (1 kg) Flatten rice (1kg) fruit/ local fruits 1kg (depends on availability) 	Breakfast: Refugees have noted preference for early morning distributions (08:00 – 10:00 hrs), to suffice until hot meals distributions, and ease of carrying.	1-2 times weekly – continue until access to basic provisions are restored and HHs are on e-vouchers.
<p>Additional Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responding actors should ensure packaging to reduce plastic waste. Use paper boxes, aluminum tins, reusable hard plastics. AVOID single-use packaging and non-compostable materials such as Styrofoam, low grade plastic bags. Partners may refer to the <i>FSS and WASH Sector Joint Guidance Note – Waste Avoidance and Management in Emergency Food Distributions</i>¹. Rapid food distribution does not include distribution of water, unless specifically requested by the Government of Bangladesh and/or the WASH Sector. This recommendation is in place to avoid and reduce plastic usage in the camps, as WASH Sector partners ensure access to water at specific access points. <p>Above points are in effort to address the RRRC circular from May 2022, urging the humanitarian community to stop the use of polythene materials in the Rohingya refugee camps².</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hot meals should not include eggs or meat of any kind – to avoid any health and cross contamination risks, especially during an emergency response. 			

Operational Guideline for Emergency Rapid Food Assistance

During emergency responses where rapid food assistance is required, the FSS coordinates all actors, while WFP and cooperating partners lead the rapid food response.

At the immediate onset of an emergency, the FSS will request all partners to engage the sector with any plans for rapid food distribution prior to operationalizing (via FSS mailing list). FSS will communicate with the Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation commission (RRRC) (through the Inter Sector

¹ [FSS and WASH Sector Joint Guidance Note – Waste Avoidance and Management in Emergency Food Distributions.](#)

² RRRC Circular – [‘Stop using polythene shopping bag and other polythene materials in Rohingya camps’](#)



Coordination Group (ISCG) to remind relevant Camp In - Charge (CiCs) to engage with the sector through the Sector Focal(s) prior to approval of any rapid food distribution activities. FSS will then continue to closely coordinate with the Sector Focal(s) and the WFP General Food Assistance (GFA) team throughout the duration of the rapid food response. Given these operating steps, below is the operational guidance for all agencies and partners implementing rapid food distribution.

Camp or Block Wise Targeting Approach

One of the key challenges faced by cooperating actors during emergency rapid food response is the overcrowding at the distribution points as multiple agencies operate from one site, resulting in confusion and grievance³ of beneficiaries from receiving different qualities of food with long wait-times. To avoid overcrowding not just of cooperating actors but of beneficiaries as well, as well as to ensure Accountability to the Affected Population, the FSS recommends cooperating actors to plan for rapid food distribution targeting entire camps or entire camp blocks as capacity allows, for at least 1 full day of hot meals – lunch and dinner hot meals for all affected individuals in the camp or camp block. Partners may refer to the monthly provided UNHCR population data⁴ to determine the number of affected individuals within the camp or block in consultation with the CiC's

Before emergency rapid food distribution:

FSS partners or responding agencies may engage FSS throughout any phase of an emergency to coordinate rapid food distribution.

1. FSS partner planning to respond should refer to this SOP for the **minimum standards and operational guideline** during their planning phase of rapid food assistance.
 - a. Responding actors should plan for rapid food distributions **targeting entire camp(s) or camp block(s)**, as mentioned above.
2. FSS partner planning to implement rapid food distribution should engage the Food Security Sector first, with their level of capacity to carry out the emergency activity.
 - a. FSS partner should inform FSS of how many days they can provide lunch and dinner hot meals for the entire camp or block they are targeting.
 - b. If an agency does not have the capacity to cover an entire camp or block, FSS will coordinate multiple agencies to operate together to cover the camp or block.
3. Once the distribution plan is finalized with the sector, and the FSS partner has agreed to follow the minimum standards of quality and quantity as well as timing of distribution, FSS will:
 - a. Communicate with the Sector Focal to endorse the partner's activity for CiC approval.
 - b. Coordinate with the Sector Focal and the CiC to allocate a specific camp or block for the partner to set up their own distribution point.

During emergency rapid food distribution:

1. As hot meal distributions should begin by 1100 hrs as outlined in Table 1., FSS partner should arrive earlier before their distributions in order to set up their distribution point, ensuring adequate shade coverage for staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries.
2. Sector Focal should be present to ensure that operations are set up adequately, communicate any issues or concerns with the FSS team, and communicate the status to the CiC.

³ [Grievance Analysis Sheet - May 23](#)

⁴ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/bgd>



3. FSS partner should begin lunch hot meal distributions for all affected and targeted beneficiaries by 1100 hrs and end by 1300 hrs in order to prepare for timely dinner hot meal distributions.
4. FSS partner should begin dinner hot meal distribution for all affected and targeted beneficiaries by 1600 hrs and end by 1800 hrs to finish operations for the day.
5. Throughout the day's hot meal distributions, FSS partner staff and volunteers should be mindful of waste generation and dispose of any waste properly at the end of the day.

After emergency rapid food distribution:

1. Partner should notify FSS of any issues or concerns raised during their operations.
2. Partner should inform FSS of any changes to their operational plan as soon as possible so that other partners can plan to cover the gap.
3. Partner should report requested figures regarding their coverage to FSS (number of hot meals distributed etc.).
4. Sector Focal should inform FSS of any issues or concerns that may have been raised by other agencies, Sector Focals, and/or the CiC.
5. Based on any and all inputs from stakeholders, FSS will communicate endorsement status to the CiC through the Sector Focal.
6. FSS will communicate with partners regarding the next days' operations.

Roles of FSS Stakeholders Engaged in Rapid Food Distribution

During multi-hazard emergency events where rapid food assistance is required, a wide variety of stakeholders are engaged within the FSS. The roles of the key stakeholders are outlined in this section below.

Food Security Sector

The Food Security Sector coordinates among emergency response actors, sector focals in camps, relevant CiC(s), other sectors, the ISCG, and the RRRC (liaised by ISCG). At the onset of an emergency, FSS will request the RRRC through the ISCG to ensure communication between relevant CiC(s) and the sector prior to approval of food distribution activities. FSS will request Sector Focals in camps to ensure that CiC(s) relay all incoming requests for rapid food distribution by agencies to FSS. FSS will then assess the rapid food needs based on WFP's determined needs, and upon ensuring that the requested agencies have the capacity to follow the minimum standards outlined in Table 1., FSS will communicate endorsement status back to CiC(s) through the Sector Focals for those agencies to distribute or not distribute rapid food.

WFP and Cooperating Partners

The WFP GFA team leads the emergency rapid food response, based on Site Management determined needs in camps. Within the first 24 hours of an emergency, WFP and cooperating partners distribute Fortified biscuits (FB) to all affected families and activate community kitchens to prepare hot meals distributions as per the affected population figures determined by Site Management. During this time or later in the emergency response, FSS may communicate with WFP of incoming requests by FSS partner agencies to distribute hot meals or dry food packages; FSS and WFP will determine the allocation and location (at the camp or camp block level) of rapid food distribution by the partners.

FSS Partners/responding actors



All FSS partners or agencies outside the Food Security Sector network responding to emergency food needs should engage the Sector prior to planning or preparing for rapid food distributions. At this initial phase, FSS can provide the appropriate guidance, including this SOP, and any other guidance requested by the agency to ensure that minimum standards are met, and procedural steps are well understood. (**Operation steps are outlined further below*)

Camp in Charge (CiCs)

In reference to the RRRC letter⁵, ' all NGOs and UN agencies working in the camps are required to coordinate directly with the relevant CiC(s) while CiCs and Sector Focals are making decisions . The purpose of this coordination effort is to avoid duplication or gaps in services, to ensure minimum technical standards as well as to rationalize the use of available resources.

FSS – Sector Focals

The FSS focals in camps are GFA focals to coordinate rapid food assistance activities in camps, at the Catchment and/or Sub-Catchment levels. During emergency responses, FSS works especially close with Sector Focals to coordinate rapid food distribution in the field, with distributing actors. Based on field level inputs from Sector Focals, FSS will communicate action points, concerns, and any issues with relevant stakeholders.

Inter Sector Coordination

During emergency responses, FSS regularly communicates with relevant sectors directly to raise any issues or concerns. For example, for Non-Food Items (NFI) distributions such as LPGs or cooking tools and utensils, FSS and Shelter-CCCM Sectors coordinate closely; to address solid waste management, and distribution or access to water, FSS coordinates with WASH Sector.

Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG)

During emergency response, ISCG coordinates the sectors, including FSS, to ensure all emergency needs are being met and coordinated. ISCG holds emergency meetings with Sector Coordinators and Refugee Operations and Coordination Team (ROCT), to provide overview briefings of the emergency as available. The Sectors regularly provide relevant Situation Reports to the ISCG as well.

As per the streamlining process, finalized in 'The Coordination System for the Rohingya Response in Bangladesh,' ISCG is the responsible body for direct engagement with the RRRC and ARRC, therefore liaises between all sectors and the RRRC. At the onset of an emergency response, any requests or communication needs to be channeled through the ISCG.

Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC)

The Office of the RRRC, under the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR), is the governing body responsible for the provision of humanitarian assistance for Rohingya refugees with support of the UN and the humanitarian community. As such, the RRRC coordinates closely with the ISCG and the sectors including FSS during emergency responses.

Archive of Past Emergency Rapid Food Response Actors

The Food Security Sector recognizes that many agencies are not regular members of the Food Security Sector network but operationalize Rapid Food Distribution during particular emergency events. In

⁵ Coordination with CiCs and Sectors in undertaking relevant activities in the camp. No-5808 | 28 December 2022



order to communicate and coordinate with all Rapid Food Distribution actors, FSS will maintain an archive of these agencies with their contact information. All interested parties may contact the Food Security Sector for this information.

https://wfp.sharepoint.com/:x:/s/fsc_cxb/EYorCAsv3yVMteKPApev0uYByPJRN6l_cZDuXvT_57ftBQ?e=xBD6ix

FSS Partners' Contingency Stock for Emergency Needs

The Food Security Sector requests partners to update their available contingency stock of items for emergency needs on a quarterly basis. FSS partners may contact the sector for the list of available items available for emergency operations.

https://wfp.sharepoint.com/:x:/s/fsc_cxb/EbVCghiVyoZDoIm3uijq48LoBa-rU00uXJmqEY7OML4fHaA?e=CPp7sb (to be maintained by FSS)