

TIPSHEET: Door-to-Door Distributions

Deep Dive: COVID-19 and CVA No3

Building off the [Covid-19 and CVA tipsheet](#), and the [Payments and Digital Data Management tipsheet](#), This tipsheet serves as guidance to help field teams think through how to conduct door-to-door distributions of payment cards/vouchers and cash with other in-kind items, as relevant, in the event that even small multi-household distributions are not appropriate or possible. Many of these tips could be used to guide other activities conducted door-to-door, if required.

You will also need to carefully review any local restrictions on movement as well as risks posed by this way-of-working; including health/hygiene and security for your distribution teams and program participants. This should be thorough and in collaboration with your country management/security teams, as normal. Remember it's good to try to update your donor on adaptations as much as possible, and it's useful to document specific challenges, and solutions, for audits etc in the future. Finally, try to maintain a robust program overall. If you need to remove certain processes within your programming, *try* to find an alternative that's feasible; to ultimately ensure and evidence that eligible participants receive the type(s) of assistance they're entitled to.

This is a living document and subject to change and adaptation. We recommend frequent checks on the Digital Library and Hub COVID Info Center for the most up-to-date information.

Since this guidance is generalized, we are ready to work with you to tailor advice. If you have questions or need support, please contact us:

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As a final reminder, all team members must be sure to follow Mercy Corps' general COVID-19 guidance carefully, including: [Annex 11 Working in the Field During an Infectious Disease Outbreak](#). This intended to keep you, other team members, and program participants safe and healthy.

1. Preparation

- **Contact your program participants to get detailed addresses and secondary phone numbers if possible.** Explain why you are doing so, and ask for clear informed consent to deliver items to participants' doorsteps.
- **Organize your participant lists by program participants' addresses.** Use this to plan distribution routes where there are cohorts of program participants residing. You can break each cohort down into smaller groups; to limit the number of goods/cards/cash your team carries at any given time.
- **Look at your existing data to consider if certain cohorts should be prioritized.** I.e. households with pre-existing health conditions, or with elderly members of the household. Develop strict and clear interaction protocols for dealing with households and cases with pre-existing conditions, especially those reporting chronic disease. Ensure staff are trained in protocols prior to conduct of distributions.

- **If you distribute cash:** Can your payment provider access the areas where your program participants reside? With all your precautions, would they be willing to have a representative join door-to-door distributions? It would help if payment providers remain responsible for cash distribution itself. If the payment providers are unwilling/unable to distribute in this way, continue with great care. The risks/challenges posed by door-to-door cash distributions, including compliance, theft, fraud and security, can be high and you may need to explore other modalities. Please contact us to discuss.
- **Prepare your items carefully and hygienically.** If distributing goods, make sure they are compiled into boxes in a [clean/sanitized environment](#), and limit the number of people handling each item over the course of that process. Consider putting them in sealed plastic boxes/wrapping them in plastic -- to make it easier to wash the package down and prevent contamination. If distributing cards, make sure they are wiped down with soap/sanitizer that does not erode the card itself, in a [clean environment](#). Confirm this with your FSP. Consider putting cards or cash in paper envelopes, accompanied by separate envelopes including PINs if required, so they can be placed on the ground to limit hand-to-hand contact.
 - **Make sure to clearly label all packages/envelopes and organize them so it's clear which household receives which set of packages.**
 - **Package items in a way that makes it easy for households to confirm their contents.** If distributing cash, then try to balance useful denominations against the ability to count them reasonably quickly. With items, pack them in a way that enables households to easily see what's contained. Smaller denominations are preferable because they provide households with more flexibility.
 - **Ensure all packages/envelopes are loaded into vehicles in an order that reflects how you will distribute them; i.e. which packages you'll deliver first.** Make sure the [vehicle](#) is properly cleaned first.
 - **Consider adding concise cards/leaflets including information on accountability/feedback mechanisms (ie. telephone hotlines) into the packages/envelopes.** This will help save time during the distribution. Be careful to consider local languages and use pictures if literacy is low.
- **Draw upon established relationships with community representatives.** Are there community representatives you can engage to help prevent crowd control issues? Make it clear the team members conducting the door-to-door distributions will not be decision makers on who receives assistance, and would not be able to add any other households to future distributions. Explain your routes, and ask for their assistance to prevent crowds gathering, which would result in the team having to leave. If you hold your arm out straight ahead of you; for the average adult that's likely just under one meter, so if you add a little more on top then it serves as a rough guide for the minimum "social distancing" staff should try to maintain as much as possible. More distance is better if feasible, of course. In general, two meters (double your arm length) is preferred.

2. Conducting Door-to-Door distributions

- **Conduct the distribution at a quiet time.** This will likely require local knowledge. To what degree are people still moving? What key services are still running? Avoid times and locations which you expect them to be busy.

- **Mobilize a carefully designed team.** Ensure each member of staff has read the [field essentials tip sheet](#), and can communicate easily with other members of the MC distribution/office team.
 - **Each member of the team should have a clear role/purpose and be restricted to only what is necessary.** This is important so that contact with particular equipment is drastically reduced. At a minimum, consider (1) a member of staff responsible for the list (directions, verification etc), (2) another to carry the items, (3) another to lead on communication with households (in the street, with the driver/MC, and at the households itself), and (4) a driver who will wait with the vehicle at all times. Ensure each team includes both men and women, if possible. If there are different dialects/languages in the area, then make sure the team can handle that. Try to divide these responsibilities across teams. For instance, programs, and M&E.
 - **If using mobile data collection to update/access your list, then the member of staff controlling the data collection equipment should not touch anything else.** This is important since mobile data collection equipment doesn't work with latex gloves. No other member of staff or program participant should touch the equipment either, and breaks should be used to clean the equipment regularly.
 - **Each team should have a reasonable number of households in a given area.** Door-to-door distributions take time; make sure to plan a realistic number of households to visit. **If possible, encourage staff to use hand sanitizer in between each household.**
 - **Incorporate breaks for the distribution teams.** It will be important to move through each cohort quickly, to reduce risks of crowd control. However, the team will need small breaks as well to promote quality services, plan next steps, and go with the vehicle to the next "drop-off/wait" location. Even if program participants have not touched data collection equipment, this also provides an important opportunity to clean all the equipment you're using.
 - **Plan the route in detail.** I.e. for these X households in X neighborhood, the vehicle will escort the team door-to-door. For these X households in X neighborhood, the team will take packages of X quantity at a time, then return to the vehicle to collect the next bundle.
 - **Prepare clear messages for every eventuality.** Prepared scripts will help you deliver clear information more quickly.
 - **Have clear, agreed upon, contingency plans.** I.e. If crowds gather and social distancing cannot be maintained, you will need to leave.
 - **Have a focal point at the office.** This is important because you may need extra information/support during the distribution. They will need access to your maps/routes/database, and must be available and easily contactable.
- **If security conditions allow, contact your program participants in advance to explain, very clearly, when/why/how the door-to-door distributions will take place.**
 - **Why are you distributing door-to-door? What will you distribute?** Given all the uncertainty, it's important you provide as much clear information as possible to your program participants.
 - **Who in the household will receive the distribution?** Do they have any Covid-19 symptoms? I.e. a dry cough, or fever? Should the recipient be/become unwell, who is the proxy?

- **What will the distribution team look like?** Try to give you program participants as much information about how many people will visit them, and what they should do.
- **When do they need to be ready? What do they need to prepare?** Provide an approximate time/day if you can. Explain what, if anything, they need to prepare.
- **How will the door-to-door distribution be structured?**
 - **Explain access.** I.e. When we're nearby, we will call you. Please ensure only the nominated recipient waits at the door of your shelter/home. Please do not leave your shelter, just wait at the door. Please also have your [specific type of] ID ready.
 - **Explain the team and the process.** I.e. A team of approximately X number of MC staff [wearing MC branded hats/t-shirts/vests] will stand at least 2 meters away from your front door and ask a series of questions to verify your identity. **Explain that the team will place an envelope, with a card enclosed and/or a package of items, on the wall/ground in front of you and step back.** Once the team member has stepped back, the recipient can then step forward to pick up the item(s) and confirm/count the contents.
 - **On the day, you will need to contact households again when you're nearby, to ask them to open their doors.** The timing will depend on the distance between households.
- **Waive distribution list signature/fingerprint requirements (NB. please reach out to us and/or compliance to discuss first), and ensure there are at least two team members present at each household distribution to confirm receipt of item(s) in the absence of normal processes.** Each team member should have their own distribution list/tablet to sign, and be sure to switch up the members of staff in these teams-of-two as you move from area to area.
- **Verify identity based on information you have.** You can ask households to confirm their identity by recalling their cell phone number, the number of people in their household, their date of birth, or a few other questions you've asked them before. You could also ask the program participant to read the number on their ID so your team can check it against information on your list, and ask a few other key questions. If necessary and feasible, you could ask participants to place their ID outside their house on the wall/ground etc and step back, then the appropriate distribution team member can approach the ID to look at it without picking it up while maintaining distance as much as possible.
- **Remember to deliver your normal communication.** Why are households receiving these items? What are the items intended for? How can accountability/CARM mechanisms be accessed?
- **Ensure the distribution team provides basic hygiene tips.** Crucially, make sure to end every house-to-house visit with advice to wash their hands for 20 seconds, with soap and water, after handling the cash/cards/items you distribute. If the items are wrapped up/boxed; urge the recipient to wipe them down with soap and water, before sharing them with the household. If distributing cash/cards; urge the household to wash their hands before/after each time they are used.