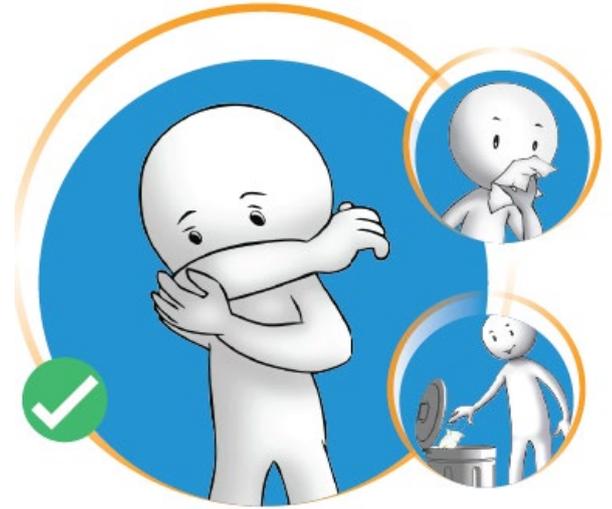
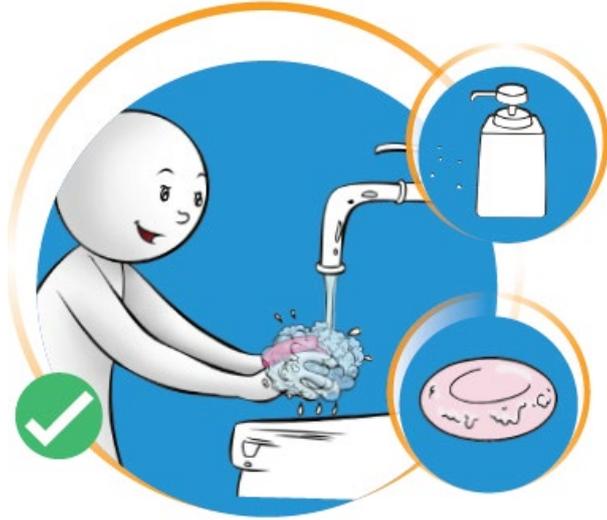




Shelter/NFI Cluster
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Recommendations for Shelter and NFI activities in the context of the covid-19 outbreak

North West Syria

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1. Introduction

People affected by humanitarian crisis in North-West Syria (NWS), particularly those displaced and/or living in collective centres, camps and camp-like sites, are often faced with specific challenges and vulnerabilities that must be taken into consideration when planning for readiness and response operations for the COVID-19 outbreak. They usually face difficulties in accessing health services as well as challenges in maintaining the necessary hygienic conditions to avoid infection from the virus. In this guidance, the people in humanitarian situations include internally displaced persons (IDPs), host communities, refugees and returnees.

It is of extreme importance for cluster members to mitigate the risk to the extent possible.

This guidance addresses specific needs and considerations required in humanitarian situations, including collective centres, camps and camp-like settings and the surrounding host communities, in scaling-up readiness and response operations for the COVID-19 outbreak through empowering and supporting SNFI cluster members.

2. Objectives

Limit human-to-human transmission of the virus through the following:

- Providing assistance to the affected population through specific mitigation measures.
- Mitigating the risk in overcrowded shelters, collective centres, tents, or any other shelters at risk.
- Reducing secondary infections among close contacts.
- Ensuring protection remains central to the response.

3. Ongoing actions from the SNFI Cluster and inter-cluster coordination

Enhancing inter-cluster coordination to mitigate the risk and avoid duplication of work/effort. Coordinating with Health and WASH clusters' active members and using the referral system if applicable.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Status</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Covid-19 focal point has been nominated in order to coordinate the Shelter NFI response with the Health Cluster and Wash Cluster, and other relevant Clusters if needed 	Mohammad Alamir, SNFI Cluster Co-Chair started to coordinate the response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a Collective Center Assessment for the purpose of understanding the living conditions especially the density of population, water and sanitation facilities available, and repair/upgrade work that needs to be carried out. The assessment will be shared with the Health Cluster to identify the areas most at risk: areas where people are living in particularly overcrowded conditions, with higher densities, with less space for expansion, with more contact with the population at risk or with a higher proportion of vulnerable populations. 	Questionnaire completed. Assessment to start the last week of March
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a Guidance note to reduce the risk of transmission in NFI Distribution 	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote strong coordination between the SNFI Cluster and the WASH Cluster including hygiene promotion carried out by WASH actors during NFI distributions, provision of hygiene kits when distributing NFI kits, improvement of water and sanitation facilities in collective centers. 	During the duration of the crisis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share with SNFI Cluster members Awareness materials prepared by the Health Cluster and/or WASH Cluster 	24 March

4. Recommendations for staff

- Ensure that all staff, contractors, workers and labourers follow preventive measures and handwashing.
- **Wash your hands frequently.** Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Washing your hands with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands. **Avoid touching your face.**
- **Maintain social distancing.** Maintain at least a 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing. When someone coughs or sneezes, they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain the virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.
- **If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early.** Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. This will also protect you and help prevent the spread of viruses and other infections.
- **Use Personal Protection Equipment (PPE).** Wearing a medical mask is one of the prevention measures that can limit the spread of certain respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. However, the use of a mask alone is insufficient to provide an adequate level of protection, and other measures should also be adopted. Masks should only be used by medical staff, people with symptoms and staff at risk (for instance when it is difficult to maintain a distance of at least 1 meter). If masks are used, they must be combined with hand hygiene practices to prevent human-to-human transmission of COVID-19. Wearing medical masks when not required may result in unnecessary costs and procurement burdens and create a false sense of security that can lead to the neglect of other essential measures, such as hand hygiene practices. Furthermore, using a mask incorrectly may hamper its effectiveness in reducing the risk of transmission.

5. Overcrowded shelters

People living in crowded shelters are vulnerable to COVID-19 in particular because of the health risks associated with movement/displacement, overcrowding, and services/facilities among affected populations. SNFI Cluster members are encouraged to change the methodology of services provision considering best practices to avoid infection and virus transmission that will also ensure the safety of the staff, direct beneficiaries and host communities. Overcrowded shelter is one of the main priorities for the SNFI Cluster.

a) Recommended action for the SNFI Cluster members

- Provide extra shelters/shelter solutions in overcrowded locations and sites to minimize in-person interactions. This might contribute to decreasing the burden of overcrowding and mitigating the COVID-19 infection.
- Personnel working in collective sites need to understand the risks of COVID-19 introduction and propagation in the site, be trained and monitored on self-protection measures and the rational use of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE). Avoid direct physical contact and shaking hands with others. It is also recommended to avoid touching the face, nose, eyes and ears before washing/cleaning the hands.
- Collective sites in which households are sharing the same shelter should be upgraded as much as possible to achieve minimum shelter standards.
- Perceptions, rumours and feedback from residents and host communities should be monitored and responded to through trusted communication channels, especially to address negative behaviours and social stigma associated with the outbreak. Rumours could be verified in coordination with the Health Cluster.
- Be aware about the referral health facilities and inform the staff about these allocated facilities.
- Designate one of your field staff as a focal person for COVID-19 who will be responsible to ensure actions run smoothly and coordinate with other staff/members within the collective centres, camps and camp-like sites.
- In places where several households are sharing latrines or cooking facilities, additional facilities should be built to reduce the number of households using the same basic facilities.

b) Recommendation for activities to be done in collaboration with WASH actors

- When rehabilitating/upgrading collective centres, ensure there are sufficient WASH facilities and coordinate with WASH actors to include WASH facilities and ensure the supply of hygiene items to beneficiaries. Make sure that WASH services are continuously running and monitored as well.
- Coordinate with the WASH Cluster to ensure awareness campaigns are conducted in collective centres, camps and camp-like sites and that they target IDPs and host communities. Awareness campaigns would include:
 - Washing/cleaning hands multiple times per day and when needed using soap/solution and clean water. Hand sanitizers are highly recommended to be used when available.
 - Distributing Arabic brochures using stickers and banners highlighting the best practices to mitigate the risk of being infected.
- Increase hygiene kits delivered and ensure that all the centres/shelter facilities are sufficiently clean. Garbage collection and safe disposal/trash management must be given attention.

6. Non-food items distribution

Modalities of service/assistance provision and activities on site (NFI and shelter kits distribution) need to be planned considering these measures to prevent the large gatherings and movement of people;

a) Recommended action for the SNFI Cluster members:

- Consider hygiene and sanitation measures when implementing field activities. This involves avoiding physical contact among the staff and beneficiaries when delivering aid and promoting personnel hygiene. It is mandatory that all staff at the distribution site ensure hand sanitation and follow general hygiene practices. Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials are available in the below links.
- Beneficiaries are advised to leave the distribution location the moment they receive assistance.
- Beneficiaries with a high temperature and the most vulnerable groups of elderly people and patients with chronic diseases (hypertension and diabetes) are advised to stay at home and receive the aid at the door in order to avoid direct contact with other groups of beneficiaries and staff.
- When applicable, prioritize delivering door to door/tent to tent services in order to avoid people gathering and overcrowding in queues.
- Create a clean environment at the allocated distribution points and centres.
- Organize and clearly mark the allocated spaces at the distribution site, this will facilitate the flow of people. (Personal space of at least one meter between people when queuing or communicating.)
- When applicable, it is recommended to allocate at the distribution point/centre hand washing facilities with soap/solution and water in order to minimize the risk of infection.
- Beneficiaries should not pass through the distribution point more than once. They also need to be advised to leave the distribution site immediately after the collection of assistance.
- Avoid direct contact and crowding around the distribution point/staff. It is better to communicate the measures with the beneficiaries and staff in advance.
- Oversee and assist with offloading and organizing items before distributions are scheduled to start.
- Step back from the assistance and direct the beneficiary to collect the assistance and leave via the marked exit route.
- On completion of distribution, ensure that the distribution point (centre/room/ area) is swept clean and sprayed with disinfectant if possible. Remove all tapes, ropes and signage, clear the hand wash station and remove/store hand washing soap/solution.
- When possible, the distribution process should be divided into batches/smaller groups which will take more time than usual in order to avoid queuing and overcrowding. It is also recommended to undertake multiple items distribution at the same time.
- If distribution lists need to be signed, pens should be sanitized after each individual use.
- Consider avoiding crowded staff transportation in vehicles, it is recommended to use up to 4 staff members per vehicle.

b) Recommendation for activities to be done in collaboration with Health and WASH actors

- Available latrines at the distribution points are cleaned and disinfected regularly, including door hangers, valves, sprayers and taps. Safety plumbing should also be checked (leakages, drains, etc.). Cleaning teams and distribution teams to be well equipped and trained to use masks, glove and sanitizers.
- If possible, involve Health actors to check the temperature of beneficiaries before queuing at the distribution point. Ensure the safety of the staff and field team and provide Personal Protective Equipment PPE kit.

7. Recommendations for Donors

Special consideration is recommended for the critical situation of the COVID-19 outbreak. With donors' consideration and support, SNFI cluster members will be better equipped to continue assisting vulnerable groups in NW Syria and avoid COVID-19 infection risks by implementing these specific procedures that will require additional time, staff, efforts and cost. The cluster is advocating for additional funding because the main, standard activities such as items distribution will also take more time and require additional staff and equipment. The donors are encouraged to contribute to mitigate the risks in overcrowded collective centres and camps through funding more shelter solutions in order to reduce the number of overcrowded tents, collective centres and other situations at risk.

The SNFI cluster members also need additional funding to upgrade unfinished building and repair damaged shelters with the objective of improving access to proper water and sanitation facilities.

8. Useful links

Global Shelter Cluster website:

<https://www.sheltercluster.org/global/library/covid-19>

WHO website:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/infection-prevention-and-control>

IEC materials:

<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/stima/document/nws-covid-19-iec-materials>
<http://www.emro.who.int/ar/health-topics/corona-virus/information-resources.html>