

JOINT ASSESSMENT MISSIONS – TECHNICAL GUIDANCE SHEET NO. 6 – PLANNING FOR GENERAL FOOD AID RATIONS

This TGS is adapted from JAG 2008 and provides information on the basic nutritional requirements for general food aid distribution including the nutritional composition of key food items and illustrate the general principles to consider when planning a general food aid distribution.

6.1 CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PLANNING A GENERAL RATION

General food distributions aim to provide households with food to make up the difference between their nutritional needs – what they need in order to re-establish and maintain satisfactory nutritional health – and what they are able to provide for themselves without adopting distress strategies. It is important that the ration be designed with an aim to avoid nutrient deficiencies and to provide a diverse and balanced diet when combined with food which refugees or displaced persons might be able to provide for themselves.

A combination of a staple, a pulse, an oil, sugar and salt is the normal base food ration. However, where refugees do not have access to markets, micronutrient (vitamin and mineral) deficiencies can occur, which will endanger the lives of vulnerable groups. In this case it is essential to ensure a blended fortified food to vulnerable households, as well as augment the health care system to provide such commodities as micro-nutrient powders (such as sprinkles) and /or other supplements.

Distributions should be targeted to those who need them, usually the entire population in a refugee or internal displacement situation.

6.2 BASIC NUTRITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Energy requirements

For all planning purposes, 2,100 kcal/person/day is the average minimum daily energy requirement for a 'typical' population in a warm climate undertaking light physical activity. (The average requirements of different groups within a population are shown in the table below.)

When data are available, the initial planning figure should be adjusted according to:

- Temperature: Add 100 kcal for every 5°C that the mean daily temperature falls below 20°C (i.e. +100 kcal at 15°C, +200 kcal at 10°C, +300 kcal at 5°C, +400 kcal at 0°C);
- Age/sex distribution: When adult males make up more than 50% of the population, requirements are increased; when the population is exclusively women and children, requirements are reduced. Adjustments of plus or minus 5% may be appropriate; and
- Physical activity level: Add 140 kcal for moderate activity, and 350 kcal for heavy activity (e.g. during construction or land preparation works).

When the nutritional situation of the population is extremely poor (e.g. or the crude mortality rate significantly elevated, an additional 100-200 kcal may be added to the basic ration). However, this may not be needed if there is extensive supplementary and therapeutic feeding.

Other nutrient requirements

Protein: 10 to 12% of the energy in the diet should be in the form of protein (i.e. 52 to 63 g of protein).

Fat/oil: At least 17% of the energy in the diet should be in the form of fat (i.e. 40 g of fat).

Micronutrients: A range of micronutrients vitamins and minerals are required for good health.

The following chart describes the breakdown of individual energy requirements depending on age and sex.⁹

9 UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO, Food and Nutrition Needs in Emergencies (2002)

DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN AND ENERGY REQUIREMENTS
(FOR A TYPICAL DEVELOPING COUNTRY POPULATION)

Age group	Male		Female		Male + female	
Years	% of total population	kcal/ person/ day	% of total population	Kcal/ person/ day	% of total population	Kcal/ person/ day
0	1.31	850	1.27	780	2.59	820
1	1.26	1,250	1.20	1,190	2.46	1,220
2	1.25	1,430	1.20	1,330	2.45	1,380
3	1.25	1,560	1.19	1,440	2.44	1,500
4	1.24	1,690	1.18	1,540	2.43	1,620
0-4	6.32	1,320	6.05	1,250	12.37	1,290
5-9	6.00	1,980	5.69	1,730	11.69	1,860
10-14	5.39	2,370	5.13	2,040	10.53	2,210
15-19	4.89	2,700	4.64	2,120	9.54	2,420
20-59	24.80	2,460	23.82	1,990	48.63	2,230
60+	3.42	2,010	3.82	1,780	7.24	1,890
Pregnant	-		(2.40)	285 extra	(2.40)	285 extra
Lactating	-		(2.60)	500 extra	(2.60)	500 extra
Whole population	50.84	2250	49.16	1910		2080

Always seek the advice of a nutritionist when setting a food a ration; make sure you take into account the needs of people with specific needs of vulnerabilities, such as people living with HIV-AIDS or other chronic diseases, young children and women in reproductive age.

6.3 NUTRITIONAL VALUES OF COMMON FOOD ITEMS

The following tables give the nutritional energy, protein and fat content of the most common food aid commodities and some tropical countries food items. NUTVAL calculator, available at www.nutval.net can be used to calculate the ration composition.

Common food aid commodities

(Nutritional value per 100 g)

The nutrition products in the table below are not part of the general food aid ration. They are delivered as part of specific nutrition interventions.

Commodity	Energy (kcal)	Protein (g)	Fat (g)
Cereals			
Wheat	330	12.3	1.5
Rice	360	7.0	0.5
Sorghum / Millet	335	11.0	3.0
Maize	350	10.0	4.0
Processed cereals			
Maize meal	366	8.5	1.7
Wheat flour	350	11.5	1.5
Bulgur wheat	350	11.0	1.5
Corn-soy-blend (CSB)			
Supercereal (CSB+)	380	15.0	8.0
Supercereal Plus (CSB++)	390	16.0	10.0
Wheat-soy-blend (WSB)			
Supercereal (WSB+)	380	17.0	6.0
Supercereal plus (WSB++)	400	18.0	10.0
Rice-soy- Blend (RSB)			
Supercereal (RSB+)	380	16.0	7.0
Supercereal Plus (RSB++)	400	16.0	10.0
Meat and fish			
Canned meat	220	21.0	15.0
Canned fish	305	22.0	24.0

Oil and fats			
Vegetable oil	885	0	100.0
Butter oil	860	0	98.0
Edible fat	900	0	100.0
Pulses			
Beans	335	20.0	1.2
Peas	335	22.0	1.4
Lentils	340	20.0	0.6
Miscellaneous			
Sugar	400	0	0
Dried fruit	270	4.0	0.5
Dates	245	2.0	0.5
Tea (black)	0	0	0
Iodised salt	0	0	0
Nutrition products: therapeutic			
F100 Therapeutic milk	535	14.7	31.2
F75 Therapeutic milk	442	5.5	15.2
RUTF - BP100™	527	14.5	31.0
RUTF - eeZeePaste NUT™	550	15.0	34.0
RUTF - Plumpy'Nut®	535	14.7	31.2
Nutrition products: miscellaneous			
RUSF - eeZeeRUSF™	550	14.0	34.0
RUSF - Plumpy'Sup®	544	13.9	33.2
LNS - Nutributter®	540	12.8	35.4
LNS - Plumpy'Doz®	561	13.0	35.1
High Energy Biscuits [HEB, WFP SPECS.]			
BP-5™	458	14.7	17.0

Common foods in tropical countries¹⁰*(Nutritional value per 100 g)*

Commodity	Energy (kcal)	Protein (g)	Fat (g)	Commodity	Energy (kcal)	Protein (g)	Fat (g)
Starchy roots, tubers and fruits							
Fresh cassava	160	1.2	0.2	Potato, Irish	77	2.1	0.1
Cassava flour	342	1.6	0	Potato, sweet	87	1.7	0.3
Ensete	190	1.5	0.3	Yam (fresh)	114	0.2	0.2
Plantain	135	1.2	0.3				
Legumes and vegetables				Legumes and vegetables			
Groundnuts	332	15.0	25.0	Beef (raw)	237	18.0	18.0
Groundnuts, dry	567	26.0	49.0	Goat (raw)	357	15.0	32.4
Vegetables, mixed	30	1.0	0	Mutton (raw)	249	15.0	21.0
				Poultry (raw)	139	19.0	7.0
				Eggs (hen, fresh)	149	12.5	10.0
Milk				Legumes and vegetables			
Cow, whole	66	3.2	3.9	Honey	286	0.4	-
Buffalo	102	3.8	7.5	Beer (maize/sorghum)	35	0.6	-
Goat	69	3.6	4.1				
Sheep	108	5.6	7.5				
Dried skim milk (DSM)	360	36.0	1.0				
Dried whole milk (DWM)	500	25.5	27.7				

¹⁰ The allowance for milling losses depends on the commodity, the type of milling and whether the beneficiaries have to pay (usually in kind). Typical compensation rates are 15% in East Africa, 20% in West Africa.

6.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

A good distribution system has the following characteristics; keep the following points in mind when doing a JAM.

Fairness

- Rations and allocations are based on an objective assessment of need;
- Distribution is made according to household size;
- Ration cards or other means of identification are used as soon as the situation has stabilised sufficiently for a registration to be completed;
- The receipt of agreed rations is monitored. Absentees are recorded and consistent absences are followed up; and
- Targeting (if in place) is fair and exclusion or inclusion errors are minimal.

Accountability to beneficiaries

- The distribution system takes account of social, ethnic and political divisions within the population;
- Socially and politically vulnerable people are identified and arrangements are made to ensure that they receive their entitlements; and
- Beneficiary food committees are established to communicate beneficiaries' views on the distribution processes and any complaints. WFP and UNHCR and/or Non-governmental organisation partners carry out independent monitoring during and after distribution (Food Basket Monitoring (FBM) and Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM)).

Accountability to donors and within WFP and UNHCR

- There is regular reporting and analysis of the quantities being distributed and the numbers of beneficiaries. WFP and UNHCR and/or NGO monitors are present during distribution.
- FBM and PDM reports are available.

Transparency

- Information on ration entitlements and the method and timing of distributions is widely disseminated;
- Distributions are made openly in a public place; and
- Beneficiaries are informed in advance of any problems in food supply, changes in rations or distribution schedules, etc.

Respect

- The distribution process recognises the physical and psychological vulnerability of those being assisted and is specifically designed to preserve their dignity and self-respect.

Age, gender and diversity sensitivity

- Women, young people and the elderly are represented on food committees;
- Women (normally) receive the food in recognition of their role in household food management;
- Distributions are planned to avoid interfering with women's other domestic responsibilities and putting them at unnecessary risk;
- Measures are in place to ensure that young and old people access food; and
- Equal access to food is ensured for all groups of different characteristics.

Choice of sites

In general, especially in any area of high population density:

- Sites should be in open areas well away from crowded places such as markets or hospitals and, preferably, at some distance from dwellings and food stores; they must be easily accessible for food deliveries during all seasons;
- Sites should be enclosed by a fence and partitioned with separate areas for queuing, distribution and food stocks; there should be emergency exits;
- Water, shelter, sanitation facilities and first aid services should be available for beneficiaries as well as staff; and

- There should be a smooth floor, which is well drained and above ground level, on which to unload and move food sacks.

6.5 PHASING OUT GENERAL RATIONS

Extreme caution needs to be applied, however, when phasing down rations to refugees and displaced – given the overall level of dependency that often exists, as a result of loss of livelihood. Particularly, where market prices and food access can be unstable, it is important to ensure adequate safety nets of vulnerable groups, prior to deciding to reduce the overall food aid provided to a given refugee or displaced population.

Ration reductions should normally be contingent on¹¹:

- A stable and low level of malnutrition among under five children;
- Sound evidence of sustainable level of self-reliance among the population as a whole;
- Analysis of the potential impact of the change on different population groups (e.g. the proportion of households likely to be put at risk);
- Existence or simultaneous creation of safety nets (probably nutritionally-based) for the most needy/vulnerable households;
- Information/surveillance systems being in place to monitor the situation of the population, particularly marginalised groups;
- Agreement with the host government; and
- Timely sensitisation of the refugees.

¹¹ Food security assessments, self-reliance, targeting and phasing-out in ongoing refugee situations, report of an inter-agency workshop, Rome, Nov. 1999, UNHCR/WFP/ENN, Jan. 2000

6.6 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

FOOD AND NUTRITION NEEDS IN EMERGENCIES, UNHCR-UNICEF-WFP-WHO, 2002
(on JAM Practical Guide Flash drive)

NUTVAL CALCULATOR available at www.nutval.net

COMMODITY DISTRIBUTION, UNHCR, 1997