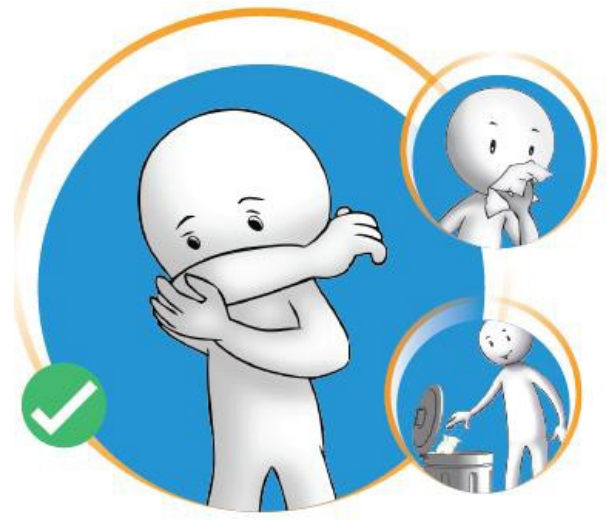
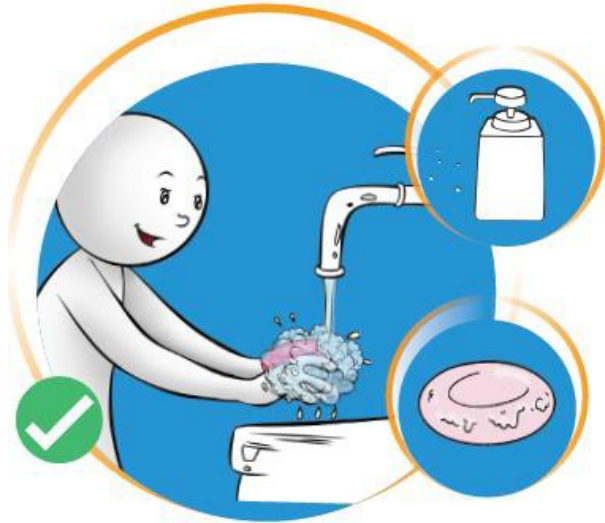




**Shelter/NFI Cluster**  
**X-Border Operation - Turkey Hub**  
ShelterCluster.org,  
Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter



# Updated Recommendations for **Shelter and NFI activities** in the context of the covid-19 outbreak North West Syria

**Version 3** - Publication 29 July 2020 – Modifications and consolidated recommendations are written in blue



Source of awareness material: WHO 

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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 risks 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.

Action	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A Covid-19 focal point has been nominated</b> in order to coordinate the Shelter NFI response with the Health Cluster and Wash Cluster, and other relevant Clusters if needed</li> </ul>	Mohammad Alamir, SNFI Cluster Co-Chair started to coordinate the response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Conduct a Collective Center Assessment</b> 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.</li> </ul>	Data was collected and is now being analyzed, the report will be published in April.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a <b>Guidance note to reduce the risk of transmission in NFI Distribution</b></li> </ul>	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Promote strong coordination between the SNFI Cluster and the WASH Cluster</b> 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.</li> </ul>	During the duration of the crisis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share with SNFI Cluster members <b>Awareness materials prepared by the Health Cluster and/or WASH Cluster</b></li> </ul>	Completed

### 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 preferably with soap and water, if these items are not available then use an alcohol-based hand rub. 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 physical distancing.** Maintain at least one metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and others, stay away from people who are 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. If masks are used, they must be combined with hand hygiene practices to prevent human-to-human transmission of COVID-19. [As outlined by WHO](#), health workers in specified scenarios, as well as those experiencing COVID-19 suggestive symptoms are recommended to wear masks. While governments/local authorities should encourage the general public to wear masks in specific situations. More detailed technical specifications on masks can be found in the WHO guidance document on masks as of June 2020. Furthermore, on behalf of the COVID-19 Task Force, the Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE group) has issued advisory messages on the public use of fabric facemasks and on the necessity of the continued application of COVID-19 preventive measures.

## 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 actions 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 especially the mouth, nose and eyes 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.
- Organize awareness sessions for the contractors and labourers working in the site on the preventive measures as indicated by WHO; including handwashing, respiratory hygiene and sterilization.
- When contacting beneficiaries, share the necessary information on the current situation and prevention measures. Make sure to guide beneficiaries on the precautionary measures they can take to ensure the safety of labourers.
- Provide beneficiaries with the option to opt-out of repairs/rehabilitations, explaining that the work can be conducted at a later date and will not jeopardize their assistance.
- For activities that demand direct interaction with beneficiaries (e.g. interviews for post-intervention monitoring); consider using alternate modalities such as remote communication and phone interviews.
- Regardless of the shelter rehabilitation modality type (contractor, self-help or cash for work) try to rely on local labourers and supplies as much as possible to minimize lengthy movements across different communities.

## **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 consider the following:
  - Washing/cleaning hands multiple times per day and when needed using soap/solution and clean water.
  - Awareness campaigns are essential, however there is a risk of transmission through physical materials such as brochures, thus online sources are helpful. It is better to avoid adding brochures to the kits, even if they are sanitised, as they will be transferred among the population and could be a rich environment for virus transmission. Hand sanitizer is not promoted to be included in kits, as it is a high-end and wasteful product, with soap and water being the preferred option.
  - It is not recommended to gather people to conduct promotion sessions. However, if there is a need to conduct physical awareness sessions, consider the WASH Cluster's recommended mitigation measures, target small groups of 10-15 people only, and maintain physical distancing of 1-2 m.
- 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.
- As recommended by the WASH cluster, use the modified hygiene kit, increase water supplies, soap, washing powder, and awareness. Hygiene kits are essential, but in case of delays in hygiene kit procurement or distribution, the key item is soap which has been frontloaded accordingly.
- Prioritize the WASH component of shelter repair to ensure targeted families have sufficient access to water and sanitation. The recommendation from the WASH sector is to increase water quantities and provide 30-35 L of water per person on daily basis.

## **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 actions 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 following WASH specific recommendation on How to Make Mild (0.05%) Chlorine Solution. Paying special attention to sanitize all touchable surfaces. Furthermore, all in-kind materials must be cleaned before packaging and delivering.
- 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.
- Regarding CASH & Voucher assistance, if a recipient household is self-isolating, they may not be able to reach markets and/or cash points. The member is recommended to think about how to enhance communication strategies to understand if and how a household is self-isolating and contact them to identify if they have nominated a proxy. Coordinate with stakeholders and review the process for households to nominate a proxy to receive the transfer and use it on their behalf.
- The cluster encourages members to reach out and advocate with the relevant donor counterparts to avoid collecting fingerprints or signatures from household members receiving assistance. If that is not possible, mitigate the risk as far as possible through sanitizing the touchable surfaces, pens and papers used.
- Avoid handlings to the extent possible. Use remote communication and avoid direct contact.
- Consider more mitigation measures in all phases of the project design, not only the distribution phase, but also phases such as selection of beneficiaries, assessment, verification, monitoring and evaluation. From the beneficiaries' perspective, having hygiene kits and flexible in-kind or cash modalities to facilitate purchasing hygiene materials from local markets since cross-border procurement may be restricted.
- To avoid gathering people during trainings, explore virtual options. If it's not possible to conduct virtually, then it is advised to suspend the training rather than risk gathering and possibly endangering participants.

- SNFI recommends including cloth-masks in NFI kits to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Detailed specifications on types of masks, who is advised to use them and in what situations, is detailed in the WHO guidance linked below. As the average family size is five, it is recommended to include five cloth-masks in the NFI kit or provide these masks when distributing with the single NFIs.
- Local manufacture of face masks within Syria is a further good practice, having the added benefit of creating income generative activities at a time when the devaluation of the Syrian Pound has led to severe economic problems and hardship in accessing basic goods and services.
- To avoid absorbing medical masks and other PPEs from the Syrian markets, procurement and supply from Turkey might be also good choice.

## **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. Whilst checking temperatures, health staff can advise the beneficiaries on whether to proceed with distribution, to stay at home or visit a health facility. It is recommended that health staff have the technical experience and required medical equipment to verify and conduct checks in the field.
- Awareness campaigns are recommended through delivering audio messages in Arabic, WhatsApp, community volunteers using social media, banners/posters in public places, animated videos, using TV and internet platforms, NGOs and community health workers on the ground. Roving cars with amplifiers could be used to share and announce awareness messages to people in camps, IDPs settlements and communities remotely and avoid gathering people. Most of the camps and Collective Centres have WhatsApp groups, so messages could be shared with them through the site managers.

## **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.

As COVID 19 is a humanitarian emergency, OCHA and the SNFI Cluster advocate to respect obligations under the duty of care for staff, and donors are encouraged to support to keeping staff on the payroll even if the capacity to resume work remotely is compromised. The cluster also advocates for additional funding to upgrade unfinished buildings and repair damaged shelters with the objective of improving access to proper water and sanitation facilities.

To achieve the objective effectively, flexibility in and simplification of funding arrangements, as well as sufficient resources are critical. Considering these points will help ensure operations can be sustained and adjusted as necessary, partners can be appropriately supported to conduct vital work. The cluster strongly advocates keeping the activities running and not depriving those in needs of essential items.

Minor modifications could be made to the project plans and budgets to proceed according to the cluster recommendations. The cluster is therefore advocating for donors to consider modifications and exercise flexibility.

## 8. Useful links

Global Shelter Cluster website:

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

**WHO:**

- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/infection-prevention-and-control>
- WHO Advice on the use of masks in the context of COVID-19:  
[https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)-outbreak](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)-outbreak)

**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>

PSEA

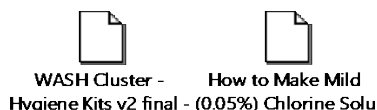
- Posters: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1L6BvijKUaLFG79eHhyFOPxmmElt1mUGc>
- Videos: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1l8vzUvYcgYPAH16x-D8xYJvsUZmag8Zl>
- PSEA hotlines: (+90 530 915 1895 (Arabic); +90 530 915 1897 (English); +90 537 040 7080 (Other Language))

**The list of COVID-19 related resources:**

- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EYTLsotmT3yNynkWRTqsvOnlwDWbGXPa/view>

**WASH cluster:**

- Wash cluster risk mitigation link: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/1r0by4a8f5t73m1/AABpInOdX2xBuAlUfGO9-B1sa?dl=0>
- Animated videos in Arabic, banners, posters and stickers link:  
[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/1r0by4a8f5t73m1/AACOhfHAbAfeEm449AsriHaWa/Print%20and%20Digital%20COVID-19%20IEC?dl=0&subfolder\\_nav\\_tracking=1](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/1r0by4a8f5t73m1/AACOhfHAbAfeEm449AsriHaWa/Print%20and%20Digital%20COVID-19%20IEC?dl=0&subfolder_nav_tracking=1)
- Useful WASH cluster files:



**Other resources and messages produced by the Corona Awareness Team for NW Syria:**

- [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17XNDy81Y4xS\\_rA7pWTeP8sgSW5\\_lxkJ4](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17XNDy81Y4xS_rA7pWTeP8sgSW5_lxkJ4)
- Reliable information and instructions via the WHO WhatsApp number: +41 22 501 70 23

**Syria COVID-19 resources:**

- <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/xu6o8lp7h0e7u5n/AABLG4rF9NyNJOH2CyLUpPmPa?dl=0>