

**NRC Jordan Country Office
Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) Children at Distribution Sites**

1. Purpose

NRC is now managing the vast majority of non-food item (NFI) distributions in Zaatari camp, Jordan. NRC operates two regular distribution sites in the camp: (1) a New Arrivals/NFI site in District 1 which provides all new arrivals in Zaatari camp with a standard package of NFIs and also distributes items to vulnerable cases recommended by specialised actors in the camp (primarily diapers); and (2) a Replenishment Site in District 6 which handles regular and one off NFI distributions on behalf of UN agencies and NGOs. NRC currently has a third compound for winterisation activities and when stocks permit distributes gas cylinders during winter months in coordination with UNHCR.

NRC has responsibility not only for distributing large amounts of items in coordination with other camp actors but ensuring that this is done in a safe and secure manner that does not increase protection risks to beneficiaries and upholds the fundamental protection principle of 'do no harm'.

NRC programmes continue to face the difficult task of managing large numbers of children trying to access the distribution sites and receive distributions on behalf of their families. This internal SOP details the steps that NRC takes to try to mitigate the numbers of children at distribution sites, procedures related to children who are allowed to access NRC sites/distributions and roles and responsibilities within NRC. It seeks to standardise NRC's response across all present and future distribution sites and ensure distribution activities in Zaatari camp are consistent with basic protection principles. It will be utilised to engage with child protection actors and UNHCR Community Services/Protection in the camp so that they are aware of NRC's policy and can provide responses to vulnerable children identified.

This internal SOP is targeting children who arrive at distribution sites unaccompanied rather than children who may access the sites with their parents/caregivers.

2. Camp distribution context

The reasons why children attempt to access distributions vary although in a recent NRC assessment of children at distribution sites only 33% of girls and 23% of boys indicated that if they did not come to the site there would be no-one else in their household who could access the distributions.¹ The primary reason given by both girls and boys interviewed was that one of the parents is working and the other stays at home to take care of the rest of the family. However, other frequently provided responses include a single mother taking care of children and elderly or disabled heads of households and socio-cultural reasons for boys i.e. all female households who are not allowed to leave the shelter/walk to access distributions.

NRC continues to face the challenging context where exact ages of children and household vulnerability details are difficult to determine given the often out-of-date or incorrect information currently in RAIS database accessible to NRC and utilised at all distribution sites. The planned UNHCR verification exercise may assist NRC to provide more support to vulnerable households to access distributions in the future.

3. Roles and responsibilities

NRC Project Officers and Data Entry Team Leaders have primary responsibility for operationalising these SOPs and ensuring that all staff and contractors are aware of NRC procedures. While the Project Officer has final responsibility for decisions made in their specific area of responsibility, for practical purposes the Data Entry Team Leader can have operational responsibility for managing any special cases determined through applying this SOP. In the large Replenishment Site the Community Relations Team will provide management support to the operation of the planned 'Children's Booth' and coordination with child protection actors and relevant UNHCR departments.

4. NRC mitigation activities to reduce numbers of children trying to access sites

NRC takes a number of steps in coordination with camp partners and the local community to try to limit the number of children at distribution sites including:

- Standard messaging in all community engagement prior to a distribution that children under 16 years will not be able to access distribution sites. Community messaging also requests children not to accompany their parents to distributions where possible given safety issues.

¹ NRC Jordan, *Children at Distribution Sites Assessment*, November 2013)

- Requesting humanitarian partners to include same messaging during any public announcements about distribution activities that will be managed on behalf of NRC at the Replenishment Site.
- Community messaging in education sites (NRC and others) and child friendly spaces in coordination with other NRC programmes, humanitarian actors and child protection service providers that children not accompanied by their parents/caregivers will not be able to access distribution sites.
- Boards outside of all distribution sites noting in Arabic and through visual diagrams that unaccompanied children are not able to enter and will be turned away.
- Use of 'catch-up' days during all replenishment distributions to allow for a day for adults to come and collect items who were not able to do so on the day corresponding to their family size on ration cards.

5. Standard procedure for dealing with children at distribution sites

NRC takes a number of steps to continue to analyse the causes behind children at distribution sites, to limit the number of children at distribution sites, provide basic safety mechanisms for children while at distribution sites and document cases where children are allowed to access distributions in special cases:

Initial access control/monitoring procedures

- NRC will allow all persons believed to be children to gain initial access to distribution sites with Jordanian and Syrian guards providing basic security and access control in line with current NRC protocols.
- Dedicated NRC staff will screen all persons they believe to be children out of the internal distribution queues on entry. At the larger Replenishment Site NRC staff will utilise a dedicated 'Children's Booth' near the front end of the compound to interview and counsel children to determine their ages and reasons for collecting distributions. At the New Arrivals Site NRC staff screening persons who enter the site will lead any persons they believe children to data entry booth for fast-tracked screening procedure.
- On both sites dedicated and trained NRC programme staff will interview children attempting to access sites to understand the reasons why children are at distributions. NRC Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) department will provide protocols to record this information for continued analytical purposes and to share with camp partners.
- All children turned away will be given a basic brochure addressed to parents/caregivers indicating the reasons why children are not able to collect distributions and highlighting catch-up day policy.

Children above 16 years²

- Children determined to be 16 years and above by NRC data entry staff will be permitted to access distributions if their ages can be verified by the NRC data entry team through RAIS and/or the NRC staff is reasonably confident of their age through follow up questions such as asking about their year of birth, year in school etc.

Children between the ages of 12 – 15 years

- Children under the age of 12 years are not allowed under any circumstances to access distributions. Any cases regarding vulnerability of children under 12 years will be referred to UNHCR Community Services using Inter-Agency Referral Form for their follow up.
- A child believed to be between the ages of 12 – 15 years meeting set criteria could be allowed to access distributions as determined by the Data Entry Team Leader.
- Criteria for special cases³: (1) where the child says that they are from a single parent family and they are the oldest child in the family; (2) where all the family are female and are not allowed/do not wish to walk to distributions; and (3) where the child says that the head of household are elderly and/or disabled and unable to access distributions and there is no other adult in the household/older sibling who can access on their behalf.
- One or both parents/caregivers working is NOT considered a special case and/or principled applicant being sick given the provision of catch up days during the distribution cycles. Given the current limitations in RAIS it will be up to the Data Entry Team Leader, in coordination with the Project Officer when

² Consistent with agreed practice with UNHCR about lower age limit for children and above the age of compulsory education (15 years) in Jordan.

³ The NRC *Children at Distribution Sites Assessment* (November 2013) revealed that in some limited cases NRC may need to distribute items to children until longer-term solutions can be found for identified vulnerable households through alternative collector schemes currently being explored by UNHCR.

necessary, to determine each case on a case-by-case basis until updated and better vulnerability information is available post UNHCR verification exercise.

- All special cases who are determined to be eligible able to access distributions will be recorded by the Data Entry Team on a master excel spreadsheet with name of child, ration card number, VAC number, size of family, location in the camp (district or near landmark), principal applicant's contact number (if available) and coding behind special case i.e. SPH or single parent family, FHH (female headed household) and EDH (elderly or disabled head of household). This information will be provided at the end of each cycle to UNHCR Community Services (CS).

Supported distribution procedures

- All children allowed to access distributions will be fast-tracked/escorted through the distribution process by NRC programme staff/Syrian labourers until they leave the compound.

6. Procedures for responding to any child protection and gender-based violence concerns

- All NRC programme staff should be aware of Child Protection (CP) and Gender-based Violence (GBV) protection referral pathways (regularly updated and circulated through protection sector working groups) and have them in hard copy on all sites to respond to any CP/GBV cases. Please refer to NRC internal SOP on Protection Referrals for further guidance. NRC data-entry staff involved in the processing of children should be particularly aware of NRC protection policies and a priority for existing NRC core protection training.
- In particular, all children saying that they are unaccompanied (i.e. a child separated from both parents and other relatives and not being cared for by an adult by law or custom responsible for doing so) will be referred immediately to IRC for follow up action using the Inter-Agency Referral Pathways identified for Zaatari. There are no circumstances which NRC should distribute items to children claiming that they are unaccompanied as if they are known to IRC will be placed in temporary foster care and under the ration card of that family.