

**Forum:** Economic and Social Council II

**Issue:** Providing and distributing food in refugee camps

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## Introduction

Refugee camps vary drastically in size, population and layout. These temporary places of shelter are built and maintained by various aid agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the UN, under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). A refugee camp must provide basic sanitation facilities, food, shelter and security for its residents. However, most refugee camps today are severely underequipped and undersupplied to support its population.

Food supply and distribution in refugee camps is a very complex process. Refugee camps set up by the UNHCR receive food aid from the World Food Programme (WFP), who coordinates the supply and delivery of food into refugee camps.

Many challenges remain to provide enough food refugee camp populations. These include the lack of funding, logistical challenges to deliver food to hard-to-reach areas, security issues and efficient storage and distribution.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Food distribution point

Food is distributed among various distribution centers around a refugee camp. Refugees do not receive food everyday; instead refugees receive rations at least once a week.

### Food storage warehouse

A warehouse where food is typically stored in a refugee camp.

### Malnutrition

Lack of proper nutrition; when a person is not getting enough, or the right sort of food. Malnutrition is the single largest contributor to disease and leads to reduced physical and mental development during childhood.

## United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly. The agency is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide

### Water point

Place to get water (usually a well); usually one water point for every 200 to 250 refugees. Sometimes, rivers are used as water points if they are situated near a refugee camp.

### World Food Programme (WFP)

The world's largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide; part of the United Nations system and is voluntarily funded.

## General Overview

### Providing food

The first step in the food process to refugee camps is food supply. Two primary steps constitute the process of food supply to a refugee camp: food outsourcing and food delivery. The primary goal for providing food to refugee camps is finding donors to fund aid activities to support refugee camp populations.

#### *Food outsourcing*

Food supply is usually handled by an aid agency, NGO or the UN who outsources food supplies internationally or domestically within a country. Food is either purchased or donated. Agencies that purchase food, usually in bulk amounts for staple foods such as sorghum, are funded solely by donors. Otherwise, some donors may donate food directly to an agency. For example, the WFP receives monetary donations to purchase food supplies in its aid activities.

#### *Food delivery*

Food that is supplied to UN refugee camps are directed through the WFP. Often times, other aid agencies or NGOs are involved in the delivery process. One of the biggest challenges is to ensure food security upon delivery. Trucks are often ambushed and raided in volatile regions, such as Sudan's Darfur region. Food is delivered to storage warehouses and then distributed to distribution points and centers in the camp.

### Distributing food

Food distribution must be well coordinated and handled in order to effectively manage food supplies. Food shortages are very common in refugee camps, thus rations are typically given out to residents in refugee camps. A shortage of food may result in unrest and oftentimes, violence among camp residents.

### *Distribution points and centers*

A camp may have only one, or several distribution points and centers. Refugee camp staff must keep an organized system for food distribution (handled with rations, see below). One challenge is to distribute food equally among all residents and families. Women are preferred in some camps to collect food rations, to prevent men from selling or keeping rations to themselves. Residents do not collect food rations daily, rather collecting food rations at least once a week.

### *Rations*

Food rations typically include rice, wheat or maize, beans, peas or lentils, vegetable or butter oil, sugar, and salt. The WFP recommends a minimum of 2 100 calories per person, per day in order to sustain a healthy diet. Food is typically given out in rations to better coordinate and manage food consumption in refugee camps.

## Timeline of Events

The following describes the typical steps taken for providing and distributing food to refugee camps. These steps and processes may take anywhere from a few weeks to several months, depending on factors such as food availability and location.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Description of event</b>
1	Refugee camp contacts aid agency, NGO or the UN to request food
2	Food is outsourced: agencies appeal to donors for monetary donations and/or food donations
3	Food is prepared for delivery, checked and documented
4	Food is delivered to refugee camp warehouse and distributed as needed

## UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Food production and distribution to refugee camps are handled by the WFP. The UN plays a huge role in establishing refugee camps around the world. These include refugee camps in Chad, due to the neighboring Darfur conflict in Sudan and refugee camps in Palestine due to the Situation in the Middle East.

- World Food Programme (WFP)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

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