

General Guidelines for Unsolicited Bilateral Donations (UBDs)

Background:

Beginning in early summer 2017 a deterioration of the situation between the Rohingya population in Rakhine State and the Myanmar authorities resulted in a massive new influx of Undocumented Myanmar Nationals (UMNs) into Bangladesh. An estimated 655,000 crossed into Cox's Bazar District since 25 August 2017 and, coupled with the existing refugee populations, has put the total caseload at approximately 865,000 UMN's and refugees as of January 2018. The Government of Bangladesh's (GoB) National Strategy on UMNs and Refugees will provide basic assistance, which is further complemented and supported by assistance from the humanitarian community through immediate lifesaving emergency activities across all sectors. In line with GoB's National Strategy on UMNs and Refugees, the humanitarian community is scaling up its operation to support the national government's response.

Logistics Sector response:

Based on the needs identified and expressed by the humanitarian community the Logistics Sector aims to support the GoB-led response and facilitate access to critical logistics services, consolidate and share key information on logistics capacities and the operating environment, and enhance the capacity of the responding organisations to maintain an uninterrupted supply chain of life-saving relief items.

UBDs Background

Often during large-scale emergencies, in-kind humanitarian commodities are provided by governments, NGOs, civil society, solidarity groups, or private individuals. These relief goods are intended to meet some of the needs of the affected population, and are usually delivered to a port of entry in the country affected by the emergency. However, these goods may, at times, not be programmed or requested as part of the emergency response and if not properly planned, may adversely affect the response due to the below characteristics.

UBD CHARACTERISTICS

UBDs may be characterised by the below:

- Arrive unannounced or with very short notice
- Faulty paperwork
- Lack of clearly defined consignee
- Non-standard items
- Incorrect packaging

Experience of recent emergencies has shown that an international commitment to assist those affected by disasters, whilst vital for rehabilitation of affected populations, has also resulted in UBDs accumulating and congesting ports and airports due to the above listed characteristics. Resultantly, the arrival of UBDs can have a negative impact on the humanitarian supply chain, instead of being delivered to beneficiaries.

In order for humanitarian aid to be of the most benefit to affected populations, donations should be well-planned with coordination

of the relief effort between national authorities and the humanitarian community to ensure compliance with national requirements for the importation of goods. Therefore, initially, for UBDs, it is important to seek clarity on:

- Ownership (i.e. who is the consignee?)
- Donor responsibility (i.e. reporting, monitoring and accountability)

As well as who will arrange and cover associated costs for:

- Clearance processes
- Transportation (inbound and outbound)
- Disposal where necessary
- Distribution

Cargo that lacks documentation and adequate planning for onward delivery may have an adverse effect on the relief effort by taking up scarce resources such as aircraft landing slots or storage space, and can place an additional burden on the logistics operations of organisations working on the ground.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Accountability/Responsibility:

Ownership of unconsigned relief items normally lies with the host government's disaster management authority. In some cases this could also be the responsibility of an alternate entity from the government or humanitarian community. Another important point is to establish accountability for distribution and associated costs. To ensure responsibility for and the management of UBDs are delineated between government authorities and the humanitarian community guidelines to mitigate the impact of UBDs must be put in place.

Consistent messaging/communication:

It is important that the humanitarian community produce consistent information products indicating exactly what is needed throughout the response, and where possible, during preparedness phases. Given the challenges and constraints UBDs pose on the humanitarian supply chain, monetary donations to humanitarian organisations working on the ground is often noted as the best way to assist.

To strengthen matches between offer and demand of what is needed, government authorities can also take proactive measures, especially in rapid onset emergencies, to quickly publish and disseminate a defined list of priority items (both food and Non-Food Items (NFI)) for in-kind donations. Ideally, these lists should be accompanied with lists of items that are not required or will not be accepted, as well as guidelines outlining what is required for when donating items. This has been an effective way of preventing donors from dispatching inappropriate (sometimes-unwanted surplus) items.

BANGLADESH ROHINGYA RESPONSE



Processing items at the point of origin:

The processing of items at the point of origin can facilitate improved management of UBDs and reduce the workload in the affected country. This should include: sorting items before loading; separating product types requiring specific storage and handling; enforcing standards to prevent unsuitable/unusable/substandard items from being sent (saving freight costs); and discarding, or using locally, items which cannot make the journey. It would also be helpful to prioritise goods for sending based on their relevance to the needs of the population. Additionally, there is a need for the highest level of agreement on standardised aid items in emergencies.

Guidelines for disposal of items:

Assistance should be provided to the disaster management authorities in Bangladesh to facilitate the development of guidelines for disposal of unsuitable or spoilt UBDs. This would help to avoid some of the challenges faced by the receiving country in their relationship with the donor country.

Specific challenges and conditions of Food and Medicine				
Type of items	Shipping types	Challenges- packaging/shipping	Unsuitable Conditions of items	Inappropriate Items
Food	Bulk Items Family packs Commodity cartons	Glass packaging: leading to breakages/damage to contents and challenges in storing/onward shipping. Inappropriate packaging considering the logistics supply chain (multiple transshipment): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading to arrival of damaged cartons, resulting in spoilt products and contamination of other products • This causes time delay due to repacking and palletising of commodities • Items held in hangars in the country of origin for extended periods resulting in spoilage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expired/very limited expiry date • Packaging with limited description of contents or in non-English language • Items requiring controlled temperature/storage • Initially large quantities of food items stored outside in the holding area for too long, resulting in spoilage and product damage 	<i>Items which have to be discarded:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh milk and other dairy products • Bread products • Chocolate • Milk substitutes, infant formula and fresh dates as they increase diarrheal disease.
Medicines	Bulk Items Commodity cartons Individual items as part of relief packs sent	Glass packaging: leading to breakages/damage to contents and challenges in storing/onward shipping. Medical items mixed with non-medical items – difficulty in immediately identifying storage requirements and the risk of contamination. <i>Poor shipping of items - Resulting in:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damaged cartons and exposure of products to contamination • Broken packaging resulting in spoilt products and contamination (e.g. bandages/medicine tablets) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expired or very limited expiry date left on items being sent • Items requiring controlled temperature/storage (when no cold storage exists) • Time delay due to repacking and palletising of commodities • Packaging with description and instructions that aren't in local language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High value and controlled drug types being shipped at times without prior notice • Mixed products (i.e. by IV bags)