

PREVENTING AND MANAGING DONATIONS OF BREAST MILK SUBSTITUTES

During an emergency, do not solicit, donate, accept, or distribute donations of breast milk substitutes (BMS)

Prohibited products

The following are prohibited products which put infants at risk in emergencies:

- Breast milk substitutes, including infant formula, follow-on formula and growing-up milk
- Other milk products, e.g. dried or liquid cow's milk, soya milk, evaporated or condensed milk, fermented milk or yoghurt
- Baby teas, juices and waters marketed as suitable for infants under six months
- Bottles, teats, breast pumps
- Any commercial complementary food marketed for use for children under six months.

What's the risk?

Inappropriate donations and distributions of BMS can cause mothers who would normally breastfeed to introduce formula to their baby.

BMS can cause a mother's breastmilk supply to decline and increase the risk of diarrhoea for the baby, leading to an increased risk of malnutrition, sickness and death.

Donations can also undermine breastfeeding in the general population leading to a longer-term increase in infant morbidity and mortality.

Managing donations during an emergency takes time away from improving the quality of programming.

BMS and any product that replaces breastmilk can put children and mothers at risk. Donated BMS products can be:

- In violation of the WHO Code
- Expired or nearing expiry
- The wrong type and quantity
- Not accompanied by instructions for safe use or support needed for baby's well being
- Labelled in a language the recipient may not understand
- Of variable quality
- Unreliable supply
- Unsafe in an emergency context, e.g. inadequately sanitised bottles, teats and pumps.

Do you know your role?

Donations can arrive early in an emergency. Emergency preparedness is critical, saves money and time

Everyone

- Be aware of policies on donations and distribution of BMS and other products that may put infants and young children at risk
- Do not call for donations of these products.
- Report on any offers of donations to designated coordination authority or donation taskforce in line with the response reporting system.
- Monitor online media and share any reports of donations or uncontrolled distributions so that identified donors and distributors can be targeted.

Food security sector

- Ensure rations include safe and appropriate complementary foods.
- Ensure food aid is compliant with the WHO Code and ensure that BMS and prohibited products are never part of a blanket distribution.

Media

- Do not call for donations of these products.
- Disseminate information that encourages helpful aid and discourage aid that causes harm.

Army, logistics and camp management

- Adopt policy on donations and distributions.
- Reject requests for storage, transportation and distribution of restricted products without official approval.

Government, Health and Nutrition Cluster Coordinators and partners

- Endorse and disseminate a policy clearly stating the government or organisation position on not accepting donations during emergencies. Should be in line with the Infant Feeding in Emergencies Operational Guidance.
- Activate a donations taskforce to deal with prevention and management of donations, distribution of inappropriate relief items and other WHO Code violations.
- Develop, clearly communicate and disseminate a joint statement on donations. Send to key stakeholders, including media, communications, logistics, donors and partner agencies.
- Repeatedly sensitise key actors, including other sectors and potential donors on risks associated with donated supplies in emergencies.
- Activate a monitoring system to support the reporting of any harmful donations.
- Nutrition cluster should systematically share information, including reports of violations, for action (e.g. enforcement) at a national level and global level (e.g. Netcode).

Child Protection and Social Welfare Sector

- Never solicit donations or include BMS in standard family kits.
- Coordinate with the nutrition sector to secure appropriate infant feeding support for separated and orphaned children.

Customs

- Put in place customs and importation control measures to implement government policy.
- Report on any offers of donations.
- Keep clear records and communicate regularly on confiscated relief items (source, type, quantity).

Detect and manage unprevented donations

Creating and implementing a donation management plan

1

Report donations via an agreed donation alert system

- Report unprevented donations of BMS, other milk products, bottles and teats to the IYCF-E coordination authority, Ministry of Health, UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO and Nutrition Cluster.
- Logistics Cluster and frontline responders should be aware and trained on how to report these items.

2

Collect, transport and securely store donations

- All efforts should be to collect and store all unsolicited donations.
- A designated agency – ideally the Ministry of Health – should be responsible for collecting the donations preferably at point of entry.
- Ensure security to ensure items are not stolen or re-used.

3

Sort and handle donations according to the donation management plan

- The donations management plan should include instructions on the safe use or disposal of the donations to prevent indiscriminate distribution.
- Required resources for a donations management plan: funding, expertise, HR (including teams for sorting and handling), storage facilities, transportation, equipment (for lifting or destruction).

Donation management plan

Can the product be returned?

No

Return

Return the product to the donor

Yes

Is the product suitable for re-use? (unsuitable products include: bottles and other inappropriate feeding equipment, expired products, etc.)

Yes

Is the product considered adequate complementary food? (product meets nutritional and safety standards and does not undermine local food use)

Yes

Consider to re-use while abiding by national standards and recommendations

Dispose

Safely dispose of items (milk products need to be removed from packaging before disposing. Bottles and teats need to be made useless e.g. put holes in bottles, cut off tops of teats etc.)

!

Keep the media and public informed to prevent uninformed journalists and politicians from sensationalising and politicising the storage and destruction of donations.

No

Is the product a BMS that is suitable for use (check expert, abide by national standards)

No

Consider re-using suitable milk **PROCEED WITH CAUTION**

Re-use

Suitable uses:

Encourage a decision-making process that is sensitive to the context

Use in preparation of bread, biscuits and cakes that can be distributed

Institutional nutrition support, e.g. for the elderly, orphans

Prepare a fortified blended food for use as complementary food for infants over 6 months

Use for school feeding programs

Other acceptable local solutions that are in line with the OG-IFE and other recommendations

Used in animal feed.

Can the intervention be justified and funded?

*Before embarking on using products received, it is important to cost whether the intervention can be justified

Yes