

General Guidelines for Unsolicited Bilateral Donations (UBDs)

*While Bilateral Donations of appropriate priority items made in close coordination with the Clusters/partners on the ground are necessary to the response, **Unsolicited Bilateral Donations are to be avoided at all times. Any offers of cholera relief items destined for Yemen should be addressed to the WASH or Health Clusters prior to taking any action.***

WASH Cluster Coordinator: Marije Broekhuijsen,
mbroekhuijsen@unicef.org

Health Cluster Coordinator: Dr Alaa Abou Zeid,
abouzeida@who.int

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. They are usually delivered to a port of entry in the country facing the emergency. These goods may at times not be programmed as part of the emergency response and if not properly planned, may result in adversely affecting the response due to the below characteristics.

UBD CHARACTERISTICS

UBDs may be characterized by the below:

- Arrive unannounced or with very short notice
- Faulty paperwork
- Lack of clearly defined consignee
- Non-standard items
- Incorrect packaging
- Unable to be cleared or certified by local authorities

Experience of recent emergencies has shown that an international commitment to assist those affected by sudden-onset disasters, whilst vital for rehabilitation of affected nations, has also resulted in donations of goods accumulating at ports and airports 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 in coordination with national authorities and the humanitarian community coordinating the relief effort and fully compliant with national requirements for the importation or transshipment of goods. Therefore initially, for UBDs, it is important to remove possible areas of contention around:

- Ownership (i.e. who is the consignee?)
- Clearance processes
- Cold chain requirements
- Storage
- Transportation (inbound and outbound)
- Distribution
- Disposal where necessary
- Associated costs related to relief goods
- Donor responsibility (i.e. reporting, monitoring and accountability)

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, crucial space at airports and ports, warehouse facilities etc., and can place an additional logistics burden on organizations working on the ground.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Accountability/Responsibility:

Ownership of un-consigned relief items normally lies with the host government's disaster management authority or the appropriate government ministry. In some cases this could also be the responsibility of an alternate entity from the government or humanitarian community. However, in the case of transshipment goods in a foreign country (such as Djibouti for Yemen), local authorities are often not engaged in the emergency response and therefore relief goods can be delivered to the port of arrival and never be collected. Another important point is to establish accountability for distribution and associated costs for things such as clearance, handling, etc. Additionally, guidelines to mitigate the impact of UBDs must be put in place. Government authorities can take proactive measures by publishing lists of priority items for in-kind donations, accompanied with lists of items that are not required or acceptable. This has been an effective way of preventing donors, NGOs without a presence in-country and other entities from dispatching inappropriate (sometimes unwanted surplus) items. However, even when the items are appropriate there must still be a coordinated plan in place for the cargo to be received, stored, and distributed.

Consistent messaging/communication:

It is important to produce information products indicating defined Food and Non-Food Item (NFI) types to assist the disaster impacted country's needs.

Processing items at the point of origin:

The processing of items at the point of origin could 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/substandard/unusable items from being sent (saving freight costs); and discarding, or using locally, items which cannot make the journey. It would also be helpful to prioritize goods for sending to Yemen based on their relevance to the needs of the population. Additionally, there is a need for the highest level of agreement on standardized aid items in emergencies. A complete packing list is always essential in order for the goods to be accepted for handling on arrival, to ensure cold chain is maintained and to enable storage and distribution.

Guidelines for disposal of items:

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

Specific challenges and conditions of Medicines and WASH Supplies

Type of items	Shipping types	Challenges- packaging/shipping	Unsuitable Conditions of items	Inappropriate Items
Medicines	<p>Bulk Items</p> <p>Commodity cartons</p> <p>Individual items as part of relief packs sent</p>	<p>Lack of a packing list / medical items mixed with non-medical items leading to difficulty in immediately identifying storage requirements and the risk of contamination</p> <p>Glass packaging: leading to breakages/damage to contents and challenges in storing/onward shipping</p> <p><i>Poor shipping of items - Resulting in:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damaged cartons and exposure of products to contamination • Broken packaging resulting in spoiled 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 arrangements have been put in place to maintain cold chain • Time delay due to repackaging and palletizing of commodities 	<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)
WASH	<p>Bulk Items</p> <p>Dangerous Goods</p>	<p>High volume goods such as buckets, water tanks, pipes and hoses, etc. take up large amounts of space in warehouses and are also bulky during transport and handling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This results in large amounts of lost storage space if the goods are not moved, high costs of storage that organisations are often required to meet, and time delays due to repackaging for onward movement. • Items such as chlorine which fall under DG guidelines require special handling and storage as well as requirements with local authorities for transshipment and import clearances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Packaging with limited description of contents or in non-English language. • DG items that are not clearly marked pose a hazard in warehouses and during transit. DG require special handling and clearance for aircraft and sea transport and cannot be mixed with certain other commodities. 	