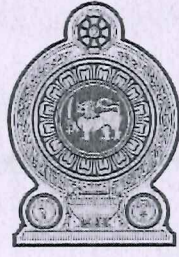


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சுவசிரிபாய
SUWASIRIPAYA

මගේ අංකය : MH/ND/2/A/99/Circular/2025

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Circular No: 01-49/2025

All Provincial Chief Secretaries,
All Provincial Secretaries of Health,
All Provincial Directors of Health Services,
All Regional Directors of Health Services,
All Medical Officers of Health,
All Heads of Institutions,

Guidelines for Providing Food and Nutrition to Affected People During Emergencies

Food is a basic human need, and ensuring uninterrupted access to safe food, clean water, and essential sanitation services is crucial during emergencies. In emergency response, food can be provided in two primary forms:

- I. Cooked food
- II. Dry rations

These guidelines provide minimum standards for food and nutrition support (providing cooked meals and dry rations) for populations affected by emergencies during the acute and recovery phases of emergencies in Sri Lanka.

I. Provision of cooked food

During sudden-onset emergencies such as floods, landslides and mass displacement, affected populations often lose access to their usual food sources. In the rescue and early relief phase, most people will require cooked meals delivered to their homes, temporary shelters, or evacuation camps.

Community kitchens or mobile cooking units may be used to prepare such meals. The following standards should be followed to ensure nutritional adequacy and food safety.

Meal planning and menu development

1. Balanced and culturally appropriate meals

Meals should be in congruence with the cultural and traditional food practices of the affected population and provide balanced nutrition, supplying energy, protein, and micronutrients.

2. Consideration of vulnerable groups

Special dietary attention should be given to: infants (6–12 months), young children (1–2 years), preschoolers (2–5 years), pregnant and lactating mothers, elderly persons and people living with non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Where possible, provide appropriate meal options suitable for these groups (e.g., soft-textured food for the elderly, low-salt meals for NCD patients).

It must be emphasized that infants up to 6 months of age should be exclusively breastfed, and thereafter, infants and young children (up to 2 years) should continue to be breastfed to provide adequate nutrition and protect them from illness. Infant formula should not be given.

During the acute phase, Thripasha / any other supplementary food (100g per day) or, if those are not available, a suitable cereal product can be used as complementary food until arrangements are made to prepare safe and nutritious complementary food (separate guidance is available in this regard from the Family Health Bureau).

3. Inclusion of main food groups in each meal

It is encouraged that, wherever practicable, every main meal (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) should include at least one item from the major food groups (Annexure I - Menu Example). Foods high in sugar and salt, as well as ultra-processed foods, should be limited.

a. Energy and staple foods (cereals & starchy foods)

Recommended items: rice (preferably parboiled or less-polished rice for better nutrition), food prepared with wheat or rice flour (roti, string hoppers), yams (manioc/cassava, sweet potato), jackfruit or breadfruit (if available).

b. Protein sources

Recommended items: Plant-based (pulses and legumes) - dhal (lentils), chickpeas, cowpea, green gram, soya meat. Animal-based - canned fish, dried fish (karawala), sprats, eggs, lean meats (chicken). These are economical, nutritious, and suitable for bulk preparation.

c. Vegetables and fruits

Recommended items: vegetables that can be cooked quickly and are safe during floods (e.g., pumpkin, beans, carrots). Provide at least two types of locally available low-cost vegetables.

Provide low-cost, locally available fruits (e.g., banana, orange) when possible.

Avoid green leafy vegetables during floods due to contamination risk. Cook all vegetables; avoid raw salads to maintain food safety.

Food safety and hygiene

Strict food safety measures are essential to prevent foodborne illnesses, especially during emergencies.

1. Raw materials and ingredients

- Select, store, and handle all raw materials carefully.
- Use potable, safe water for washing vegetables, grains, and other ingredients.
- Prevent cross-contamination by handling raw and cooked foods separately at all stages of preparation.

2. Food preparation

- All food must be fully cooked or appropriately processed.
- Avoid partially cooked foods.
- Always follow hygienic cooking practices.

3. Food handling and storage

- All food handlers must adhere to hand washing practices.
- Always keep food properly covered.
- Ensure all food storage areas are clean, dry, and well-protected.
- Use clean containers with tight-fitting lids for storing and serving food.
- When serving or packing food parcels, clean your hands and use clean spoons and other utensils.
- Avoid leaving cooked food at room temperature for extended periods.

4. Clean water and sanitation

- Clean and safe water to be provided for drinking purposes. Pipe water should be boiled.
- Ensure proper waste disposal in the community kitchens and relief centres.

II. Provision of dry rations

Dry rations become essential for families once the immediate need for cooked food decreases and people regain the ability to prepare meals independently. They help ensure continuity of nutrition until normal food supply chains are restored. Dry rations should be culturally appropriate, easy to store, and suitable for preparing simple meals with minimal resources.

Composition of a standard dry ration pack (Annexure II)

A standard dry ration pack for an average household (3–5 members) should include items from all key food groups:

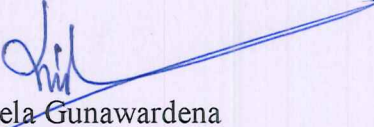
1. Staple food/cereals (to provide energy)
 - Rice
 - Wheat flour / Atta flour
2. Non-instant noodles/pasta
 - Pulses/legumes (to provide affordable protein) Dhal (lentils)
 - Cowpea
 - Chickpeas
 - Green gram
 - Soya meat
3. Protein-rich animal sources
 - Canned fish
 - Dried fish / sprats
 - Eggs (only for immediate use if transported safely)
4. Oil and fats
 - Coconut oil in sealed containers
5. Vegetables and fruits
 - Fresh produce may be included whenever possible, provided it is clean, free from contamination, and capable of being stored for several days.
6. Complimentary items
 - Bottled water
 - Salt
 - Spices (turmeric, chilli powder, curry powder etc.)
 - Non-instant tea or non-instant coffee

Food safety and quality standards for dry rations

To ensure dryness, cleanliness, and safety:

- Distribute only sealed, undamaged packages without tears.
- Avoid cans with dents, rust and bulging
- Store ration packs in clean, dry, elevated areas away from floodwater and other contaminants.
- Avoid placing food into unclean bags / boxes using food-grade packaging only.
- Clearly label expiry dates and allergen information whenever possible.

Your cooperation and commitment during this emergency is highly appreciated. You are requested to bring this directive to the attention of all relevant officers under your administrative purview.


Dr. Asela Gunawardena
Director General of Health Services
Ministry of Health and Mass Media

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6. Director, Nutrition
7. Director, Estate and Urban Health
8. Director, Youth, Elderly and Disability
9. Director, Non-Communicable Diseases
10. Director, Environmental Health, Occupational Health & Food Safety
11. Disaster Preparedness & Response Division, Ministry of Health

Annexure I - Cooked Food Package

Sample Menu for Adults

In cooked meals, provide balanced nutrition as much as possible:

Food groups	Meal 1	Meal 2	Meal 3
Starch / carbohydrates	Rice - cooked 2 teacups for each person	Boiled yams (sweet potatoes / manioc) 1 and ½ cups	String hoppers - 10
Proteins	One of below items Boiled egg - 1 Canned fish cooked 50 g Fish cooked 30 g (size of a large match box) Dried sprats cooked / fried 30 g -10 sprats approximately Soya meat - 15g	Dried shrimps sambol - 3 tablespoons Lunumiris with maldivé fish	One of below items Canned fish cooked 50 g Fish cooked 30 g - (size of a large match box) Dried sprats cooked/fried 30 g - 10 sprats approximately
Vegetables	Any vegetable cooked 3 tablespoons - pumpkin / radish / brinjals / long beans, etc.)	Coconut scraped 3 tablespoons	Mixed vegetable curry 3 tablespoons
Dhal curry 3 tablespoons			
Medium-sized banana / orange			

Avoid green leaves due to the possibility of contamination

Annexure II - Examples of Food Package (for a family of four for one week)

Adult male + adult female + adolescent boy + above 5 years child

Item	Approximate quantity
Parboiled rice	8 kg
Red lentils (dhal)	3 kg
Soya meat	500 g (approximately 5 packs)
Coconut milk powder	500 g
Cooking oil (vegetable or coconut)	400 mL
Salt	200 g
Sugar	600 g
Tea leaves	200 g
Spices (turmeric, chili powder, coriander)	Assorted small packets

Animal protein sources (add any one of below to the ration) approximate values

Dried sprats	500 g
Dried shrimp	250 g
Canned fish	4 cans (400 g each)