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| The physical sites where commodities are distributed to recipients are called distribution sites, final distribution points (FDP), distribution centers, or end-user centers. | Distribution sites are generally identified during the program planning phase. Before identifying specific sites, it is essential to consider the following criteria. |

**Distribution Mechanisms**

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| **Method** | **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** |
| **Through local government** | * Quick and efficient when local infrastructure is sufficient * Builds local capacity * Commonly used during early stages of emergency response | * Government capacity may be limited * High cost when local infrastructure needs to be reinforced * Government (or officials) may have financial or political motives for controlling distributions to recipients |
| **Through community leaders** | * Social and cultural values of the population respected * Easy for dispersed populations * Low-cost and quick * No external registration or ration cards needed | * Knowledge of social structures and power relations essential * Effective only in small, intact communities * Risk of abuse if social structures are broken down or replaced by abusive leadership * Difficult to monitor |
| **Through new groups or committees** | * Undermines abusive power relations and has a lower risk of abuse * Occurrence of some community participation, particularly women’s representation * Self-monitoring * Low-cost | * External registration and ration cards needed in some cases * Appropriate in stable situations only * Groups must be elected so that they truly represent communities * Resentment from traditional leadership * Extensive information campaigns needed * Plans must be in place to counter any efforts to undermine new groups by old, established groups |
| **Direct to households in groups or individually(1)** | * Efficient for large, unstructured populations * Initial control over recipient numbers * Undermines abusive power relations and leadership * Less risk of unequal distribution * Easy to monitor | * High-cost (staff, materials, time) * Limited recipient participation * Registration and ration cards necessary * In group distributions, all members may not receive equal amounts |

Adapted from Emergency Field Operations Pocketbook, WFP, 2002

**(1)** Where distribution is to households:

* Distribution to representatives of **individual households** assures more direct agency control but requires considerable resources.
* Distribution to pre-defined **groups of households** is less resource-intensive and less demeaning for recipients, but is feasible only when there is good registration and homogeneous groups can be identified.

**Site Selection Considerations**

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| ⬜ | Population density |
| ⬜ | Year-round access for commodity transporters (preferable) |
| ⬜ | Accessibility for recipients (avoid sites more than 5 km from recipients’ homes) |
| ⬜ | Size (ensure adequate space to contain the commodity to be distributed, a partitioned area for distribution, and waiting space for recipients) |
| ⬜ | Distribution frequency (the interval of time between distributions-for example, weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly)   * More frequent (e.g., weekly or bi-weekly) distributions require more supervision and monitoring staff, and recipients spend more time (days) collecting commodity. * In less frequent (e.g., monthly) distributions, larger quantities are distributed, which may exceed recipients’ carrying capacity, create home storage problems, and increase the risk that commodity will be sold by or stolen from recipients. |
| ⬜ | Availability of drinking water, sanitation, and shade for recipients and staff |
| ⬜ | Crowd control (avoid sites too close to markets/bazars, rail station, or other areas prone to crowds) |
| ⬜ | Personal safety (avoid risky places, such as directly on a busy road or on the bank of a river or lake) |
| ⬜ | Security (try to select communal sites, enclosed by a fence, with emergency exits) |
| ⬜ | Compliance with USAID environment policy |
| ⬜ | Approval by project management (to reduce potential commodity misuse, the addition or deletion of a distribution site should be approved by program management) |
| ⬜ | Integration with other project activities |
| ⬜ | Availability of existing community infrastructure, such as churches, community centers, clinics, or health posts (ensure distribution activities can be coordinated with other community activities scheduled at these sites) |
| ⬜ | Distribution site storage (if commodity will be kept at a site)   * The community and/or partner should be involved in storage site selection. * Training of community representatives and/or partners in basic warehouse accounting and commodity management is usually required. * A written agreement or MOU should be signed with those involved in management of the storage facility. It should include: * Complete details on the roles and responsibilities of all parties concerned * Names of the individuals authorized to sign for the receipt of commodities * Standard procedures for the receipt, storage, handling and accounting of all stored commodity * Names of the individuals authorized to hold keys to the storage |