



TIPSHEET

PROTECTION AND WASH¹



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Humanitarian protection is about improving safety, well-being and dignity for crisis-affected populations. Protection refers not only to what we do, but also the way we do it. These principles include:



Humanitarian protection also includes being aware of specific protection issues that arise in disasters and emergencies, but do not fall within a particular sectoral or organisational mandate or capacity. These issues require information-sharing, advocacy or referral to specialized actors for appropriate response. Such issues include:

- Child protection concerns (e.g. identifying and assisting separated and unaccompanied children);
- Gender-based violence;
- Sexual exploitation and abuse; and
- Protection of people with disabilities (e.g. physical, neurological or mental); people displaced by disaster; and other vulnerable groups.

Protection problems may include discrimination, violence, abuse, exploitation, deliberate deprivation or neglect of vulnerable individuals or groups (e.g. religious and ethnic minorities; people with disabilities; women; children; youth; older people; and people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sexual characteristics - SOGIESC) within the affected population. Some of these issues may have existed in the community before the disaster, and may increase with the shock and stress of the disaster or emergency. Others may arise due to humanitarian assistance and the way in which emergency relief activities are designed and delivered (e.g. inappropriate, inaccessible or unfair distributions).

Assistance or services provided must be (i) appropriate and accessible to all those in need within a population and (ii) provided in a manner that does not expose vulnerable people to further risk of harm.

Disasters affect people differently based on their age, gender, disability and other factors. Vulnerable individuals or groups face different risks and barriers to accessing assistance and services before, during and after a disaster. These diverse needs should be reflected in assessments and response actions across all sectors. Below is a non-exhaustive list providing initial guidance in supporting protection-oriented relief and recovery activities.

General Protection Considerations for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

- Identify which government agencies and other national actors are responsible for the provision of assistance and take steps to work together with the responsible government authority or authorities.
- Identify the most vulnerable individuals or groups within the community and be aware of specific needs of all groups according to age and gender. Use this information to guide the design and delivery of assistance to ensure the most vulnerable can access assistance in safety and dignity.
- Disaggregate beneficiary data by sex, age and disability.
- Communicate information on relief and recovery activities to the affected population in a range of formats (e.g. radio, TV, newspaper), and in the local language, to ensure accurate and timely information reaches the most vulnerable.
- Consult with disaster-affected people (including women, children and vulnerable groups) on the design and location of water points and sanitation facilities to identify and address any concerns.
- Design sanitation facilities to ensure privacy and safety including separate lockable toilets and bathing facilities for women, girls, boys and men. Bathing and toilet facilities should have doors, be well-lit, and be located in visible, central locations with a secondary enclosure around the facility to ensure privacy. Pit latrines should be constructed taking into account child safety. There should also be sufficient space for women and girls to clean sanitary materials.
- Ensure water and sanitation facilities are accessible for children, older people and people with disabilities.

¹ A Protection Mainstreaming Tool for Emergency Response in the Pacific Region drawing on Global Protection Cluster Essential Protection Guidance and Tools. For more information contact pacificprotectioncluster@gmail.com or +679 3301 178 (UN Women, PHPC lead agency).

² Updated from the PHPC Think Protection! A Quick Guide to Integrating Protection into Disaster Response in the Pacific Region 2012.

- Design water points to be safe and easy to operate by all and provide water carriers suitable for children, older people and people with disabilities to easily collect and carry water.
- Ensure that women, children and vulnerable groups are included in the provision of hygiene kits and awareness activities.
- Provide the host community with WASH services on an equitable basis in cases where they are also experiencing difficulties in accessing water and basic sanitation.
- Ensure that facilities are not dominated or controlled by a particular social group and that women, children and vulnerable groups have equal access to water resources (e.g. access to water should not be subject to discriminatory conditions, such as requiring displaced persons to pay a tax in order to access it).
- Provide a feedback mechanism for individuals or groups to raise concerns about the water and sanitation facilities.
- Promote hygienic practices and ensure that garbage is regularly collected, including in children's play areas.
- Encourage (or set quotas for) representation of women, children and vulnerable groups on WASH committees.
- Assess awareness of WASH staff on issues related to gender, GBV, human rights, social exclusion and sexuality (including knowledge of where survivors can report risk and access care) and links between WASH programs and GBV risk reduction.
- Review existing and proposed community outreach material related to WASH to ensure it includes basic information about GBV risk reduction (including where to report risk and how to access care).
- Include the following questions in on-going monitoring of WASH programs:
 - Do women, girls, boys or men face any barriers or obstacles to access adequate water and sanitation?
 - Is access to water equal for everyone or do some groups face difficulty accessing water sources?
 - How far is the nearest water source?
 - Who is responsible for collecting water (women, girls, boys or men)?
 - Does the design and location of WASH facilities create or increase protection risks?

Child Protection and WASH

- Collaborate with the education and child protection clusters on peer educator programs for hygiene promotion.
- Be wary of hidden dangers that can lead to injuries such as:
 - During construction, beware of holes that children could fall into – especially when filled with water.
 - Place a fence, gate or danger signs around construction sites to avoid children playing in unsafe areas.
 - Don't tell children to wash their hands with ashes. They may pick up ashes directly from the fire and get burnt.
 - When arriving onsite with trucks, slow down to protect children who may come running.
- Hold an induction for new WASH employees (and a repetition for experienced employees), including:
 - Your organization's child safeguarding policy, i.e. rules on how to keep children safe, outlining a clear set of behaviours when dealing with children, which is binding on all staff.
 - Share a Humanitarian Code of Conduct (e.g. Fiji Government Post-Tropical Cyclone Winston Code of Conduct)
- When establishing and maintaining latrines and showers:
 - Increase the capacity of women's latrines compared with men's as they will serve both women and children.
 - Make latrine openings smaller to decrease the risk of children falling inside.
 - Children's latrines should be less than 50 metres from housing areas, well-lit and lockable from the inside.
- If you come across a child (girls and boys under the age of 18) who is at risk of, or experiencing violence or abuse:
 - Report immediately to mandated professionals such as medical practitioners, social welfare officers, police officers, school teachers or legal practitioners.
 - These professionals will then report to the designated authority for the necessary action.

Protection Considerations for Emergency Assessments

- Analyze the composition of the affected population in detail, ensuring the population and household composition is disaggregated by sex and age. Include the number of single-headed households disaggregated by woman/girl/boy/man head of household; pregnant or lactating women; unaccompanied girls and boys; elderly women and men; people of diverse SOGIESC; women, children and men with disabilities (disaggregated by type of impairment); and women, children and men with serious or chronic illness.
- Assess the situation of all displaced people (including those in temporary settlements, those dispersed in smaller groups and those living with host families).
- Identify existing coping strategies adopted by the affected population to respond to the disaster and prevent further harm (i.e. positive and negative coping strategies).
- Based on the above information, sectoral staff should consider what arrangements are needed for females and for males with specific needs (such as those in the population groups listed above) to ensure they are able to access humanitarian assistance or services in safety with dignity, including consideration of privacy or mobility issues.
- Ensure host communities are included in assessments to avoid tensions arising between displaced people and host communities in terms of assistance provided (or not provided).
- Seek out the GBV coordination mechanism for support and guidance and, whenever possible, assign a WASH focal point to regularly participate in GBV coordination meetings³.

³ https://gbvguidelines.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/2015-IASC-Gender-based-Violence-Guidelines_lo-res.pdf.