

Gender and Protection Checklist | WASH

Why does gender and protection matter in WASH programs?

- In disasters, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) are necessary for survival and prevention of disease. WASH programs can contribute to the dignity of affected people and protection (i.e. prevent and respond to exploitation, abuse, violence and injury to others).
- Responses need to be careful not to increase protection risks. E.g. bathing facilities and latrines without lights and locks can put women and children at risk of sexual abuse.
- All people have a right to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, so it is important to make sure that everyone, including vulnerable people, can access them. Vulnerable people may include women, girls and boys, people with disability and older people.
- Understanding the needs of vulnerable people and targeting them in WASH programs helps the whole community recover faster from disasters and build resilience.

Assessment

- Consult directly with vulnerable people to make sure their concerns and needs are heard; e.g. encourage women, girls and boys, and people with disability to speak for themselves.
- Assess the number of water points, latrines and bathing facilities needed for the number of women, girls, boys and men who will use them.
- Assess the locations for WASH facilities and availability of water collection containers in the community.
- Assess the different needs for water, sanitation and hygiene of vulnerable community members by sex, age and disability, and prioritise these, e.g.
 - what are the roles of women, girls, boys and men in collecting, handling and using water?
 - what are the sanitation and hygiene needs of menstruating, pregnant and lactating women and girls?
 - what accessibility features do people with disability, chronically ill and older people need to have adequate and dignified access to WASH facilities?
- Identify any protection risks associated with WASH facilities, e.g. harassment and sexual abuse of women, girls and boys around water points, latrines and bathing facilities; potential for injury of people with disability or older people around wet areas.

Access

- Prioritise the most vulnerable people for access to WASH facilities; e.g. women, children and people with disability for water distributions.
- Locate water points where vulnerable people can access them and transport water home; e.g. within 500m walking distance. Coordinate with local authorities, education and health sectors to make sure that public spaces, schools, and health posts also have WASH services.
- Make at least 15% of WASH facilities accessible; e.g. provide hand rails, ramps, safety barriers, seats in waiting areas, shade and priority queues; women- and child-friendly hand pumps and water containers.
- Consult vulnerable people to identify their specific needs for WASH programs; e.g. design hygiene promotion activities that target women, men, girls and boys.
- Aim for gender balanced staff teams and identify female staff as a contact point for women and girls in the community.
- Communicate information on WASH activities through different methods (e.g. extension workers, radio, sms messaging, posters, newsletters, television or loudspeaker), so that information reaches everyone (e.g. literate, illiterate or children).
- Follow 'build back better' principles when constructing WASH facilities to improve access for people with disability and older people.
- Consider any cultural practices that limit access to WASH facilities and discuss with community leaders ways to prevent discrimination, exploitation and abuse.

Safety and dignity

- The design and location of latrines and bathing facilities need to promote the safety and dignity of users. If a person doesn't feel safe or dignified in using these facilities, (s)he may go somewhere else, possibly exposing themselves or others to harm.
- Consult with vulnerable groups about ways to increase safety for WASH facilities, e.g.
 - safe locations of and routes to water points, latrines and bathing facilities
 - good lighting around latrines and bathing facilities, especially if they are communal or away from homes. If lighting is not possible, provide households with torches
 - separate latrines and bathing facilities for males and females, clearly labelled for all literacy levels, e.g. with pictures representing male and female
 - partitioned latrines and showers, with locks on the inside for privacy and safety
 - make sure collection of water by children does not: interfere with their education; force children to walk unreasonable distances or in dangerous places; water containers are age and size appropriate
 - safety patrols.
- Incorporate gender based violence prevention messages into hygiene promotion and other WASH-related community outreach activities (including where to report risk and how to access care).
- Monitor and respond to safety concerns with WASH facilities, including risks of exploitation, abuse, violence or injury for vulnerable people.
- Consult with gender based violence specialists on ways to respond safely and confidentially to cases of exploitation and abuse, including where to refer survivors to services and support.

Participation, empowerment and accountability

- Provide staff with guidance and training about the situation for and capacities of vulnerable people.
- Inform beneficiaries about their right to safe drinking water, where and how to get it, and the importance of hygiene, e.g. targeted information sessions.
- Engage vulnerable people in decision-making about WASH facilities. E.g. make sure women, boys, girls and people with disability participate in decisions on site layout and design of WASH facilities; support women to equally participate with men in WASH committees.
- Provide on the job training for both women and men in construction, operation, and maintenance of all types of water and sanitation facilities, including wells, pumps, water storage, treatment, water quality monitoring, distribution systems, toilets, and bathing facilities.
- Provide training and policies to staff on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. Provide clear information to communities explaining that beneficiaries, particularly women and girls, do not have to pay or provide services or favours in exchange for water or WASH services.
- Set up accessible, confidential and well-understood mechanisms for suggestions and complaints.

Monitoring

- Collect and monitor data on beneficiaries by sex, age and disability.
- Monitor programs to find out who is not able to access WASH facilities and address any barriers they face.
- Monitor for unintended outcomes of WASH programs; e.g. unsafe facilities lead to girls and boys defecating near their homes and creating a disease risk.

This checklist was adapted from:

- IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, 2015
- WASH Programs – Tips for Protection Mainstreaming, Global Protection Cluster, May 2014
- WASH Gender Marker Tip Sheet, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, September 2012
- Mainstreaming Child Protection into WASH) - Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, Child Protection Working Group (CPWG) 2012