

A.9 – Gender & Shelter

Guidance note

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Gender Considerations in Shelter interventions

The shelter cluster in Haiti aims to promote diversity and inclusive programming. Shelter and site selection, as well as shelter allocation are especially important in providing protection and ensuring safety, but also in sustaining family and community life. Women, girls, boys and men have different needs, roles and responsibilities related to shelter and housing. Therefore gender considerations are to be integrated into shelter project and program design.

A gender analysis of the shelter needs per region should form the basis of any shelter programme. Affected families may either require transitional shelter or have specific needs due to their post-earthquake housing situation. Whatever the shelter needs may be, it is the households with the lowest income that have difficulties in meeting these needs. Women, disabled and older persons often fall into the lowest income group and female-headed households in particular face great difficulties in realizing their housing needs, since they are often the only income-earner. The fact that over half of all households in Haiti (an estimated 60%) are headed by women shows the importance of focusing on the needs and roles of this particular group.

The vulnerable groups mentioned above could also find themselves in the situation of having to host displaced family members, placing more burden on their income that may already have been stretched to the limit. The lack of space and privacy may further give rise to issues of gender-based violence (GBV).

The following measures (not an extensive list) can be put in place to actively mainstream gender in all aspects of shelter programming, in order to ensure that it benefits all.

Analysis of gender differences and needs

1. A focus group discussion should be held on shelter design, construction and allocation with women, girls, boys and men, including disabled and older persons. The results should be fed into programming.
2. Cultural and community practices related to housing should be taken into consideration, when establishing land rights related to housing.

Design and targeting

1. The design of the shelter and selection of the site should be done together with the prime beneficiaries and reflect the needs of vulnerable groups in the community.
The fact that households are the primary unit of targeting, together with the fact that over half of all households in Haiti are headed by women, should be reflected in the selection of beneficiaries.
2. Shelter of vulnerable displaced persons (e.g. elderly and disabled persons) may need to be adapted according to their (physical) needs. See also the accessibility guidelines in emergencies by Handicap International.
3. Families hosting elderly and/or disabled persons may require specific adaptation of their house.

Participation

1. Community shelter committees should be established with equal participation of men and women of different age groups.
2. Women, men, adolescent girls and boys should have equal opportunities in (construction skills) training and should be equally involved in all aspects of shelter construction, receiving equal pay for equal work.

Actions to address GBV

1. Those at risk of exploitation should be identified and mechanisms should be put in place, through consultation, to reduce the risks during construction/shelter programmes.
2. Latrines, washing, bathing and sleeping facilities should be able to be secured with latches and locks in case of communal and public buildings (e.g. schools). They should be lit, separated and segregated to ensure privacy and safe use.
3. Mechanisms to be put in place to ensure people can report any harassment or violence.

Monitoring and evaluation based on sex- and age-disaggregated data

1. Sex- and age-disaggregated data on programme coverage are collected, analysed and routinely reported on.
2. Plans are developed and implemented to address any inequalities and ensure access and safety for all of the target population.

For more information please see:

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action. "Women, Girls, Boys and Men Different Needs – Equal Opportunities" (December 2006).

Gender Do's and Don'ts in shelter allocation

Handicap International Guidelines for Accessibility in Emergencies